

Cassiani, Helen

St. Luke's Grad, Long In Jap Prison, Arrives On West Coast With 10 Other Rescued Nurses

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DENVER (INS)—Before stepping into their big C-48 transport plane to resume their eastward journeys to their home towns, 11 Army nurses—rescued 23 days ago from the Santo Tomas internment camp at Manila—today said “everybody at home has the same two questions.”

Those two questions, they explained, were:

1.—“How does it feel to be back home?” (The answer is: “It’s wonderful!”)

2.—“Did the Japs molest you?” (The answer is “no!”)

Dark-haired, brown-eyed Lt. Helen Cassiani of Bridgewater, Mass., said she would like to amplify the answer to the second question.

“It was nerve racking on Corregidor,” said the pretty, 28-year-old heroine. “The plan was to take out all the nurses by submarine to Australia. Sixty-eight of us didn’t get out.

“Frankly, we were scared when we learned that it would be impossible to evacuate any more nurses by submarine. We didn’t know what to expect from our Jap captors—nobody could tell us what might happen to us.”

“We turned out to be a problem

and a liability to the Japs. They seemed surprised to find women on Corregidor with the U. S. Army.”

The Army nurses, Lt. Cassiani explained, were taken to Santo Tomas with the civilian internees and “were kept too busy working to be molested.”

It was work, work and more work from July 2, 1942, to February 3, 1945, at Santo Tomas, said Lt. Cassiani.

Her “biggest thrill,” during her days on Bataan, Corregidor and in Santo Tomas, she said, came when Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s troops started blasting their way into the internment camp.

Among those traveling with Lt. Cassiani were:

Lt. Adele F. Foreman, Bethlehem, Pa.; Lt. Helen L. Gardner, Dayton, O., and Lt. Eleanor O. Lee, Lonaconing, Md.

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