*Camp Stories* Marjan Bruinvels/Marianne Bruinvels-Bakker In holdings of IWM

Plastic spiral-bound 8.5 x 11 book, copyright Marjan Bruinvels 2008

Written in 3rd person; moves back & forth from attempting a child’s voice to providing adult details.

Example of child’s voice: “The guard, a *heiho*, carried a gun. He shouted at Marianne and her mother. But after a while he accepted their package. Daddy’s name was written on its brown paper in real big letters” (2)

Example of adult voice: “The first camp to which Marjan and her family were sent was the infamous Cideng camp. This camp consisted of an enclosed quarter in the city of Batavia; formerly comfortable homes with a front lawn, a back yard, and outhouses for storage and servant’s [sic] facilities” (2).

Before internment, Marjan lived in Java with her parents (dad was a mining engineer, mom a chemical engineer) & sister. The Japanese invaded Java in 1942.

Father was imprisoned @ Struijswijk Prison separate from family; they were apart for 3 years, finally reunited & repatriated back to Netherlands in Feb 1947.

Cideng Camp: part of the city of Batavia, made from converting private homes into lodging for 10-12 families. Men were sent to prisons/camps all over archipelago. Cideng was a women’s camp – only boys aged 15 & younger and men aged 70 & over could live there.

Marjan’s family was late to go to the camps because an uncle ran a Swiss firm & was viewed as neutral; they went to camp in 1943 (?), at a time when things started to worsen in the camps and instances of hunger and disease increased. They brought beds, clothes, toys, books, and medicines/medical supplies – and a chamberpot.

The family was issued “remarkably beautiful” POW numberss: 121, 122, and 123. These numbers meant that house, Laan Trivelli 95, was close to the main gate

Both Grace Harvey (*Yangchow Years*) and Marjan mention having to leave pets, a rule that most people followed; some women tried to hide their small dogs in the camp, however, which led to a mass hanging of the dogs in front of the prisoners at roll call. Even a guide dog was taken away from a blind man in his 80s.

There was a morning roll call; there is a photo on page 1 of some of the 10,000 women in the camp standing in formation; slaps & shoves from guards were common, as was standing in hot sun for an hour.

Marjan sprinkles anecdotes within the larger historical facts; somehow 12 castoff pianos ended up on their front lawn one day (all eventually ruined by rains). Marjan won 1st prize at a raffle: a bag of 50 marbles. She became “Queen of the Marbles”, played cards, and climbed trees.

In 1944 (?), when Marjan was 9, Jews were transported to diff’t camp, Tangerang (M’s mother was Jewish). They spent all day in a hot, crowded boxcar to go 15 km – 10 min – to the other camp. (Note: this is one of the only instances I’ve found where a former internee mentions separate facilities for Jews.) Besides Dutch, Hungarian & German Jews, there were British & American women/kids in camp as well. There was also a lot of illness -- malaria, whooping cough, typhoid, jaundice, diarrhea, etc. Marjan was sick almost the entire 9 months in Tangerang.

Then there was another move on another train to ADEK., a former “transition camp for coolies” (11). There were horrible bedbug infestations, but no malaria. One prisoner organized a school – something rarely permitted by the Japanese. Marjan mentions several times in first 20 pages or so that conditions could vary widely from camp to camp – some transfers to ADEK arrived looking healthy and well-fed.

Meanwhile, the age at which boys were removed to men’s camps kept dropping; eventually, boys as young as 10 were separated from their families and sent to men’s camps.

At this point, (page 14) the narrative switches from random subject headings to headings by date (April 1945, May 1945, etc.).

June 1945: Marjan turns 10: friends & barracks inhabitants save their rations so that M’s gift is 2 days’ worth of bread that is cut into 40 slices, sprinkled with 3 grains of sugar, & distributed to celebrants.

Marjan & her sister wore blouses made of tea towels folded diagonally & tied at back, with a cord to make a sort of halter. “Plastrons” – hated by most girls, according to narrative. She and her sister had their heads shaved when they were 10 & 8 because lice were so bad.

“You should know that in ADEK people had a very satisfactory social life. All kinds of games and races were organized to keep the children busy. Although perpetually hungry and thirsty, the children were happily playing most of the time” (18).

There was no clear or sudden declaration of Japanese surrender or Allied victory after bombs dropped in August 1945. Marjan reports that it takes a few days; the behavior of the guards changes, roll call becomes erratic, food increases. The end of war means that prisoners finally have access to Red Cross care packages intended for prisoners that Japanese army had confiscated.

The gates of ADEK open but it’s not certain how safe the prisoners are outside the gates; “the Bersiap had started. Groups of murderous young men were roaming the streets, prepared to kill” (21).

Marjan becomes an orderly; she delivers messages throughout camp as death lists arrive via messenger or telephone. Marjan’s father returns & she finds him “very bossy.” (21)

Last section, “After the war”: “Batavia was *pacified.*  That means the soldiers shot dead all the warring youths. Marjan felt quite revengeful. When the Japs finally could take their leave and were transported out of the camp, standing close together in open lorries and looking very distressed, M asked if she could go and see their hangings” (22).

The narrative ends with the family moving out of camp, back into aunt & uncle’s house. “And so, life went on, returned to normal again” (22). There is foreshadowing of family’s upcoming return to post-war Netherlands.

OVERALL: text swings from specific anecdotes/incidents with dialogue to much more general descriptions. Violence and cruelty are described but not dwelt upon – often there aren’t enough specifics to understand the full scale of the incident (the reader doesn’t know what Mrs. DeHaan did to earn a beating & public punishment for hours in the middle of the roll call square, because presumably M as a child doesn’t know either). In this way, the violence is sort of “filtered,” for lack of a better term.

Some of what we’re dealing with here comes up in any memoir, particularly when an adult looks back over decades – in this case, more than 60 years – to recreate a story. \*\*\* IS ANY OF THIS ALSO APPLICABLE TO INTERNEE STORIES, TO HOW WRITERS WHO WERE INTERNED AS KIDS REMEMBER/REPRESENT THEIR EXPERIENCES? WHERE DOES THAT VENN DIAGRAM OF “NORMAL” MEMOIR PITFALLS AND INTERNEE STORIES OVERLAP?

**[GAH note: review articles on rhetoric of memoir – see African child soldier/memoir article. Is it handled any differently when it’s a trauma narrative? ]**