



Jose P. Gozar and Narciso Ortilano

OUR subjects this month proved themselves heroes by turning two serious accidents of combat into victory, through sheer courage and fearlessness. Jose P. Gozar's exploit took place a few days after Pearl Harbor; Narciso Ortilano's happened during the latter part of February, 1942.

In between these two acts of heroism are other deeds by many other valiant men long since dead and unknown. For them the peace of anonymity. But as we read from month to month the stories of the daring of such men as Gozar and Ortilano, we realize that other stories of deeds as great must lie untold beneath hurriedly dug graves among the buttes and mountains, and under the trees in Bataan and elsewhere in the Philippines where our men held their lines to the last and are holding even now.

Jose P. Gozar was a third lieutenant of the Philippine Army Air Corp at the outbreak of the war. Zablan Field in Quezon City, to which he was assigned, was constantly under heavy enemy fire. The Japanese were bent on knocking the field out of commission. And they always came in superior numbers.

In one of these raids over Zablan Field—on December 10, 1941—Lt. Gozar led a small number of defending planes. In the thick of the dogfight, while he was busily engaged with one of the attackers, Gozar's guns jammed. But instead of fleeing from the scene of combat, he continued the attack and attempted to ram his opponent. After a series of such maneuvers, he forced the Japanese plane to flee without further attacks against the airdrome. For this "display of courage and leadership", Gozar was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

This young man hails from Calapan, Mindoro. He is the son of Mr. Juan Gozar.

Narciso Ortilano was a first class private in the Philippine Scouts. A veteran of this contingent, he had lived through severe and dangerous combat duties. He had been assigned rear guard positions to allow vital supply lines to pass through, or to give ample time for our harassed armies to consolidate new lines of defense. He had patrolled for snipers in the jungles of Bataan. He went through these heroic assignments like his comrades in arms, the Philippine Scouts, who emerged hardened veterans, ready for more action.

During the latter part of February, 1942, in one of those critical days when our lines were fast receding into the sea, Ortilano found himself manning an isolated machine gun alone. Suddenly out of nowhere, eleven Japanese started moving toward him.

The Philippine Scout veteran held his position, mowing down four of the Japanese before his machine gun jammed. Then he whipped out his automatic and disposed of five more of the Japanese. Then his automatic jammed, too.

The two remaining Japs, with bayonets fixed, were still advancing toward him. He was now without a weapon, but the undaunted trooper held his ground.

In the hand to hand fighting that followed, one of the Japs lunged at him, slashing off Ortilano's thumb. But he wrested the weapon from the Jap and killed him with his own weapon. Then turning around he shot the eleventh Japanese with the captured rifle.

When Ortilano's comrades reached the machine gun nest, they found him repairing his machine gun, unmindful of his bleeding wound.

His was a new record—single-handed, he had killed eleven Japanese in one engagement.

A Distinguished Service Cross was immediately recommended for him by his commanding officer.

Corridor:

"Intrinsically it is but a barren war-torn rock, hallowed as so many other places by death and disaster.

"Yet it symbolizes within itself that priceless, deathless thing, the honor of a Nation.

"Until we lift our flag from its dust, we stand unredeemed before mankind.

"Until we claim again the ghastly remnants of its last gaunt garrison, we can but stand, humble supplicants, before Almighty God.

"There lies our Holy Grail."

—General Douglas MacArthur