



Henry Mucci needed Robert Prince - a man whom he called "my wonderful Captain" - to plan the raid on Cabanatuan.

Listening to (and following) the advice of a Filipino Captain (Juan Pajota) - and carefully assessing how 120 men could possibly free around 512 sick and emaciated prisoners of war while at least 200 Japanese guards were very close by - Prince developed a plan.

There was no time to rehearse. There was no time to plan for contingencies. No one thought that the prisoners themselves might become obstacles (because they feared the rescue was a trick).

The raiding men knew there were thousands of Japanese soldiers nearby. Besides the guards in the camp, a Japanese battalion was just a mile away. The town of Cabanatuan - a Japanese-soldier transit hub - would have had around 8,000 more Japanese troops.

The men would have to crawl on their stomachs into the prisoner camp, traveling about 300 yards through a dry and stubbled rice paddy while loaded-down with guns and ammo.

Mucci's job in the raid was to get the rescuers to the camp. Prince's job was to get them - and all 512 prisoners - out.

Prince's main strategy was to surprise and confuse the Japanese guards. With the help of a P-61 "Black Widow" flying around 500 feet above the camp - to distract the guards while the Rangers were approaching - he and his men accomplished their mission.

Before the war was over, the Army sent Captain Prince back to the South Pacific - after he made some Stateside war-bond tours - so he could help to plan the invasion of Japan's home islands.

Captain Prince's strategy, for the Cabanatuan raid, is still taught at West Point's U.S. Military Academy.

Although he wasn't really thinking about it at the time, the successful raid happened on Captain Prince's third wedding anniversary.

He lived a long, productive life - in the Seattle area - after the war. Robert Prince died on New Year's Day in 2009. He was nearly 90 years old.

A member of the Army Ranger Hall of Fame, Prince was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross - America's second-highest honor for valor - for his participation in the Cabanatuan raid and rescue.

Credits:

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Captain Robert Prince and the Cabanatuan Raid

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