

**Living in Manila, The Philippines during WWII**  
**An Interview with my Grandmother, Susan Llopis Yocom**  
**(interviewed by Galen Hurley Yocom)**

My grandmother, Susan Llopis Yocom was born on April 18, 1932 in the capitol of the Philippines, Manila. Her father was an American Naval

Officer stationed at Sangley Point, near Manila, from 1931 until his ship was sent to Corregidor before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Galen: Where were you during the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Susan: That was December 8, 1941 on our side of the international dateline. My mother , my brother , and I were in Manila. My father's ship had already left for Corregidor. My two uncles who were in the U.S. Air Force had just left the Philippines and were half way to Hawaii when the Japanese attacked. We knew that the Philippines would be in harms way before the attack. We saw news of the attack on newsreels in movie houses.

Galen: What do you remember about the Japanese occupation of Manila?

Susan: The President of the Philippines declared Manila an "Open City" on January 1, 1942. I was not quite ten years old. This meant there would be no resistance. The Japanese troops treated the Filipinos fairly well but we were American citizens.

Galen: Did your family have to pretend that you were not American citizens?

Susan: Yes. My father was Basque, so we had a Spanish last name. We spoke Spanish, Tagalog, and English. We hid all of our papers and never spoke English. If they knew we were an American Officer's family we would have been captured or killed.

Galen: What do you remember about the American liberation of Manila?

Susan: In April of 1945 I was almost thirteen years old. One night my brother and I heard loud noises and far away voices shouting "victory!" and "Hooray!" in Tagalog. Manila is split in two by the Pasig River. There are nine bridges that connect one side of the city to the other. My mom was across the river at her friend's house at an all night mah jog party. I called her and said, " Mama, you'd better come home, I think the Americans are coming". She didn't make it home that night. The next morning my brother and I were sitting on the window ledge on the second story of our house when at about 8 a.m. a bomb went off so close that it shook the windowsill. We didn't move away from the window until a second bomb went off. After the third bomb, we started counting them and sure enough there were nine bombings. The Japanese knew the Americans were coming and they bombed the bridges so they would have more time to escape. At 3-4 p.m. we saw our mother walking up the street with two Filipino men. They

had given my mother a ride across the river in their banca (canoe) that had been repaired with a large piece of tin they had pulled off a roof. The Japanese had cut all the boats in half before they bombed the bridges. The men would not take the Japanese money my mother was trying to pay them with because they knew it would be no good. She told them to come to her house and she would pay them with large sacks of rice and beans. Two days later the Americans were at Malacana Palace which was two blocks from our house.

Galen: Where did your father serve during the war and what became of him?

Susan: He was in Corregidor and his ship was captured. For over three years he was MIA. We didn't know if he had been killed or captured .It wasn't until the Americans liberated Manila that we were able to take our papers to the Palace. When they saw that we were American citizens and our father was an officer they treated us very well. They eventually told us he had been captured on his ship and was held as a prisoner in Osaka, Japan and according to some of his men who survived internment, he was killed for being defiant and throwing his rice in the guard's faces even when he was starving. We had his remains shipped to the states and he is buried at the Golden Gate National Cemetery. I was seven years old the last time I saw my father.