The Fallen Cougars Project

James Ralph Judge Jr.

The Geographic boundaries of the Pacific Northwest have been, and remain, a source of debate to this day. Is the Pacific Northwest constituted solely of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho? Does it stretch as far South as Northern California? If so, why would Western Montana be excluded, is there a magical dividing line hidden somewhere in the 50 mile width of the Idaho panhandle? And, of course, where does Alaska fit in the equation? In any case, western Montana is more northern, and western, than all but two states, so we can approach it as part of the Great Pacific Northwest. The nineteenth century Pacific Northwest was a place where people settled to extract natural resources needed to feed the industrialized and more populace urban centers back east. To that end, railroads were constructed just as quickly as they could be, to link the hinterland west to the industrialized east. The history of James Ralph Judges Jr.'s hometown, Dillon, Montana, is no different.

In 1880 the discovery of gold deposits in western Montana and the Idaho panhandle caused a stir among settlers in western territories. Meanwhile, never known to lose out on easy cash, railroad Presidents quickly designated those areas as vital for their railroads to reach. Unsurprisingly then, in 1880, the town of Dillon was established in the Beaverhead Valley of southwestern Montana by Sidney Dillon, President of the Union Pacific Railroad. While many such towns established for the gold trade died out as years wore on, Dillon innovated and expanded its economic repertoire as gold ran out. By 1882 there were 300 people in the little mining hamlet, and agricultural production skyrocketed, wooden sidewalks were even constructed, an indication that the townspeople intended to make their homes there permanent. In 1892 the Montana State Normal School, called the University of Montana Western today, was

opened in Dillon to train the teachers necessary to service the growing population.[1] Today the town is home to roughly 4,000 inhabitants, and with the exception of a tragic lightning-related death of a popular circus elephant named Pitt in 1943, has been the quintessential quiet, idyllic, and small Agrarian Pacific Northwest town.[2] This little community is where Jim Ralph Judge was born and raised. He was a lover of history and a wanderer that became both a Montana State and a Washington State Cougar. He was a soldier that became a prisoner of war, and a man who died thousands of miles from home in service of his country.

Early Years:

James Ralph "Jim" Judge Jr. was born on April 17, 1911, though Washington State College's records list his birthday as April 18, in Sheridan, Montana to James Ralph Judge Sr. and Mary Hudson. The 1920 census shows that at that time James was the youngest of five children born between 1911 and 1917. He had three older sisters: Fifteen-year-old Velma, eleven-year-old Esther, and ten-year-old Marion. He also had an older brother, the oldest of the Judge brood, sixteen-year-old Paul.[3] Records also show two tragedies that hit the Mary and James Sr. in a ten-year span. The first was the death of four-year-old son Stephen H. Judge on

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[1] Beaverhead County Museum, History, Located: https://web.archive.org/web/20161023220306/http://beaverheadcountymuseum.org/Dillon,%20Montana%20history%20B.htm Accessed: July 27, 2020.

[2] *Atlas Obscura*, "Old Pitt's Burial Site: The Famous 102-year-old Circus elephant was struck and killed by lightning." Located: https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/old-pitts-burial-site Accessed: July 26, 2020

[3] Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. (NARA microfilm publication T625, 2076 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington. Located: https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4313235-00098?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=mki74&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.140923899.895801280.1592123214-1449977970.1591918488&pId=71873217 Accessed: July 27, 2020.

March 12, 1910.[4] The second was the death of James Sr. on November 20, 1917, at just 41 years of age. Mary was left to raise her sizable family by herself.[5]

James attended the local Beaverhead County school through to his Junior year in high school in 1928. However, the 1930 Missoula High School yearbook reported that James transferred to Missoula high to finish out his education. James must have settled in well in the new Missoula school as he was on the French club in 1929, and the pep club his senior year of 1930, and was on the "senior carnival," what today we usually refer to as "senior skip," planning committee in both 1928 and 1929. He grew into a good-looking young man, with black hair he wore combed straight back, with a strong jawline and wide-set but kind eyes, he had plans for his future upon graduation.[6]

James Judge Jr.: College and Pre-War Years

Jim Judge graduated from Missoula High School in 1930 and decided to go to Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. After some time, he transferred to Montana State Normal School (modern University of Montana Western) back home in Dillon.[7] Normal Schools were

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[4] Stephen H. Judge Burial Information, Located: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47937390/stephen-h_-judge Accessed: June 10, 2020.

[5] James Ralph Judge Sr. Burial Information. Located: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47937131/james-judge/photo Accessed: July 24, 2020.

[6] James Ralph Judge in *"U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," Missoula County High School, 1930.* Located: https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/1265/31764_218505-00066?pid=192982909&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D1265%26h%3D192982909%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3Dmki75%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=mki75&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.65559655.895801280.1592123214-1449977970.1591918488 Accessed: July 25, 2020.

[7] *The Montana Standard* (Butte, Montana), "James Judge Dies in Prison Camp: Was Captured at Fall of Bataan." June 18, 1943. Located: https://www.newspapers.com/image/350456060/?article=184042b8-d4a8-47ab-b3c8-d10fe0b7fa5e&focus=0.13173318,0.43049735,0.2517451,0.67760843&xid=2378&_ga=2.104354761.895801280.1592123214-1449977970.1591918488 Accessed: July 25, 2020.

designed to educate and train teachers, Central Washington University was the Normal School for the state of Washington, for instance. It appears that James had settled on a possible career path for himself. But this did not seem to suit him, so he transferred to Washington State College in Pullman, Washington. He attended the college from 1936 – 1937, majoring in history. According to the *Montana Standard* in Butte, Montana, he attended his sister Marian's wedding to Bert Orr Jr. in a Catholic ceremony at the Judge residence. Marian had attended Montana State University Missoula where "she was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority" And Mr. Orr was "the son of Bert Orr Sr., A member of Montana's pioneer families" and part owner of the local livestock company. The Judge's and the Orr's were described as "two prominent Beaverhead county families."[8] Not much is printed about James's time at the various institutions he attended. But, as Pullmanites know, once a Cougar, always a Cougar.

After his time in higher education, now 27-years-old, both James and his brother Paul got jobs with the Forest Service and moved to Alaska. James was employed as a clerk when he met and married 21-year-old Margery Clarine Littlepage in Juneau, Alaska.[9] James was later transferred to clerk at the Fairbanks Office, but transferred back to Juneau to clerk for the Civilian Conservation Corp, one of the many federal agencies designed to mitigate the economic impact of the Great Depression, in March of 1939.[10] What happened between March of 1939

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[8] *The Montana Standard* (Butte, Montana), "Dillon Notes," May 24, 1936. Located: https://www.newspapers.com/image/350814368/?terms=%22James%20Judge%22&match=1 Accessed: Jun 17, 2020.

[9] James Ralph Judge and Margery C. Littlepage Marriage Certificate in Alaska State Archives; Juneau, Alaska; *Marriage License Docket, 1937 - 1939;* Reference Number: *VS 1237;* Volume: *No. 4.* Located: https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/61458/100744970_00143?pid=8363&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D61458%26h%3D8363%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3Dmki66%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=tr Accessed: June 18, 2020.

[10] *The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* (Fairbanks, Alaska), "Transfer of Clerks," March 24, 1939. Located: https://www.newspapers.com/image/4521910/?terms=%22James%20Judge%22&match=1 Accessed: June 17, 2020.

and January of 1940 is difficult to discern. According to the 1940 census, whatever happened in the intervening months, by January of 1940 James was back in Dillon at his mother's residence, and listed as single in the census.

James Judge Jr. and the Battling Bastards of Bataan: The War Years

After spending some time back home in Montana, James decided to join the military. On November 27, 1940 James enlisted in the United States Army Air Corp.[11] The United States Air Force did not exist in 1940 and was instead a department of the army. James completed his training and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. He was assigned to the 20th Air Base Group on the Philippine Islands. The 20th Air Base Group was part of the Division of the Far East Air Force stations at Nichols Field outside of Luzon in the Philippines. James had no way of knowing that the Philippines were a major part of Japanese battle plans in the Pacific.

The Philippines was technically an independent nation in 1940, even more technically, however, it was not, Instead the Philippines is most easily considered a quasi-independent colonial holding of the United States. The islands were of vital strategic importance in the Pacific, something Philippines Commonwealth, the United States, and the Empire of Japan knew quite well. The islands were rich in tin, rubber, and oil, and provided the optimal location to launch attacks on other important targets in the Pacific like the Dutch East Indies (modern day Indonesia) and Australia. The surprise attack on the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on

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[11] James Ralph Judge, World War II Draft Card, October 16, 1940. Located: https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2238/44021_01_00002-01974?pid=24777686&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D2238%26h%3D24777686%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3Dmki71%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=mki71&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.62501861.895801280.1592123214-1449977970.1591918488 Accessed: June 26, 2020.

December 7, 1941 is well known. However, the impact of the attack on Pearl Harbor distracts from the broader campaign throughout the Pacific that, when viewed in its entirety, constitutes the largest military campaign in history. Between December 7th and December 10th, 1941, the Japanese empire attacked or invaded British colonies of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong as well as the United States naval bases on Wake Island, Guam, the Philippines, and more. They opened a battlefront that was 6,000 miles wide north-to-south. Their intent was to seize the resource-rich territories and islands and fortify them against counter-attacks. When the attack came in the Philippines, James Judge and the 20th Air Base Group were on the frontlines of a war they did not know was coming.

Japan believed that the buildup of American air-power in the Philippines was their biggest obstacle. The American air forces on the island were abysmal at best, only through deft political maneuvering did the 20th Air Base Group gather some modern P-40 fighter planes. Much of their arsenal was still extremely out-of-date especially when compared to the cutting-edge planes of the Japanese Empire. The attack on the Philippines technically came on December 8, 1941. But it is important to remember that the Philippines is on the other side of the international dateline, the attacks occurred simultaneous to those on Pearl Harbor and other points in the Pacific. Due to a botched attempted defense of the air-fields in the early hours of December 8, the Japanese air forces caught the 20th Air Base group at Nichols and other bases on the islands completely by surprise and bombed American planes while they were refueling on the ground. The Japanese assault annihilated American air power on the island. By the end of December 10,1941, the Japanese had also chased off all American naval vessels in the

Philippines. The men on the ground were on their own.[12] James Judge survived the initial attacks and, like the rest of the Air Corp personnel on the ground had to figure out what the Air Corp was without airplanes. The answer, it turns out, was infantry. Air Corp units, referred to as "blue jackets" by the other infantry, including James Judge, dissolved into existing infantry units to resist the Japanese advance.[13]

The Japanese Imperial Army made landfall at Lingayen Gulf and Lamon Bay and were initially met by combined American and Filipino resistance. However, the Japanese advance was moving much faster than anyone could have anticipated. The poorly trained and supplied American and Filipino soldiers, almost 100,000 strong, in forward positions were no match for the battle-hardened Japanese army with overwhelming naval and air superiority. On December 23, 1941, American General Douglas McArthur announced that "WPO-3 is in Effect." (War Plan Orange - 3) This plan was a general withdrawal of all American and Filipino forces to the Bataan Peninsula and the small island fortress of Corregidor. The Army forces, containing the hodge-podge collection of Air Corp units were ordered to construct defensive fortifications to the best of their abilities. Their orders were simple and seemingly impossible: slow down the Japanese advance at all costs.

James Judge and the combined American-Filipino forces managed to turn a desperate retreat into a tactical withdrawal while turning the Bataan Peninsula into a 15-mile-wide rolling gun-battle. Instead of a quick victory over a disoriented enemy, the Japanese advance slowed to a crawl before stopping completely. While the Japanese waited for reinforcements and resupply, many American and Filipino military personnel, including General MacArthur, managed to

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[12] Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific: The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History Department of the Army, 1953) 85 – 96.
[13] Ibid, 297 – 298.

retreat to Corregidor fortress.[14] Over the next three months the Japanese tried again and again to crack the defenses but could not break through. The American and Filipino soldiers held out despite being outgunned, surrounded, cut-off from supplies, starving, and rife with illness. A poem written by war correspondent and Idaho native Frank Hewlett summed up the mindset of the soldiers on the Bataan Peninsula in those dreary months:

We're the Battling Bastards of Bataan;
No mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam.
No aunts, no uncles, no cousins, no nieces,
No pills, no planes, no artillery pieces.
And nobody gives a damn.[15]

Under such withering fire and in the complete absence of support of any kind, the defenders eventually retreated to Corregidor Fortress and held out as long as they could. Finally surrendering on May 6, 1942. It was the largest surrender of American forces in the history of the United States, comprising some 12,000 American, James Judge among them, and 65,000 Filipinos. While it may be easy to see this as a clear defeat, it is much more complicated. Filipino and American forces had severely hampered Japanese plans for the Pacific, they forced the Japanese to commit thousands more soldiers and precious resources to capturing the islands than they had anticipated, and provided the American public with much-needed good news in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor.

[14] Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines: United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1953) 162 – 170.
[15] John A. Adams, *The Fightin' Texas Aggie Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2016) 54.

James Judge Remembered: Capture and Death

In the aftermath of the fall of Corregidor American and Filipino POW's were subjected to what is now known as the Bataan Death March. The POW's that had just finished a 3-month battle, were malnourished, dehydrated, and sick with a dozen different diseases, were forced to march more than 60 miles over brutal terrain in extreme heat and humidity. Those that fell behind were killed by Japanese soldiers escorting them to the POW camps. James Judge was one of the unfortunate American soldiers that fell seriously ill. He was sent to Cabanatuan prison Camp outside of Manilla. But his illness worsened and without proper medical supplies or treatment, he passed away from a malaria and dysentery on September 12, 1942 at 31-years-old.[16]

Back in the United States, news of the fall of Corregidor landed like a gut-punch. In 1943, President of Washington State College, E.O. Holland, distraught at the loss of so many WSC students in the war, set out to honor them in a series of brochures and pamphlets. To that end he contacted families of the deceased and asked for photographs and any information they could provide about their loved one's service and death. Dr. Holland sent Mary Judge a letter stating that he was "grieved when . . . informed . . . the other day of the death of your son in a Japanese prison camp." And asked her if she would be willing to help with his project to honor the dead.[17] She obliged and provided the photograph. By 1948 E.O. Holland had retired but was still working on the project alongside new university President Compton. In 1948 Mary Judge sent another letter with all the information she had received about James in the intervening years.

[16] Letter from Mrs. Mary Judge to E.O. Holland, September 2, 1948. Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC). Box 1, Folder 2.
[17] Letter from E.O. Holland to Mrs. Mary Judge, September 23, 1943. Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC). Box 1, Folder 2.

Her letter shed light on his actions during the battle and leading up to his death. Many of the details were related to her by a fellow soldier that "was with him all thru & seen him up to the last week." Mary related that "he was clerk of his company & stationed at Nichols field just a few miles out of Manilla. He had a rating of Sergeant Fifth Class Specialist." She went on to explain what happened during the fighting. "When the field was bombed, they were sent to Bataan & he yet was clerk of the company. . . I was told by a pal of his that when they ask for volunteers . . . to go to the front that James went two different times." She then provided a comment that offers a glimpse into James' personality as possibly an enduring optimist, or a leader that tried to help his fellow soldiers keep the faith: "He all ways [sic] thought they would get home this boy told me."[18]

It was not only Washington State College that noted and honored James' sacrifice. *The Independent Record* in Helena, Montana ran an article in May of 1945 about the absolutely staggering number of students from such a small school that had lost their lives in the war. The article was entitled "111 Former State University Students Listed as World War Casualties Against 21 Killed in First Conflict," the first conflict being World War I.[19] James was among the former MSU Bobcats listed as former students in the article. In June of 1943 *The Montana Standard* in Butte, Montana ran an obituary in it's "Dillon Notes" section about the local boy's death entitled "James Judge Dies in Prison Camp: Was Captured at Fall of Bataan."[20] The *Great Falls Tribune* in Great Falls Montana ran a similar piece.

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[18] Letter from Mrs. Mary Judge to E.O. Holland, September 2, 1948. Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC). Box 1, Folder 2.

[19] *The Independent Record* (Helena, Montana), "111 Former State University Students Listed as World War Casualties Against 21 Killed in First Conflict," May 17, 1945. Located: https://www.newspapers.com/image/528338773/?terms=James%2BRalph%2BJudge Accessed: June 12, 2020.

[20] *The Montana Standard* (Butte, Montana), "James Judge Dies in Prison Camp: Was Captured at Fall of Bataan," June 18, 1943. Located: https://www.newspapers.com/image/350456060/ Accessed: June 12, 2020.

Sgt. James Ralph Judge Jr. is memorialized on the Washington State University World War II memorial in Pullman, Washington. He was laid to rest and memorialized at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Manila, Capital District, National Capital Region, in the Philippines.[21] But perhaps the most touching memorial is one that was added to his father, James Ralph Judge Sr.'s headstone. It reads "James Judge: 1876 – 1917. In memory of Sgt. James R. Judge. 20th Air Base Bataan. Died Japanese Prison Camp"[22]

[21] James Ralph Judge Jr. Memorial and Burial Information. Located: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56789074/james-ralph-judge Accessed: June 12, 2020.
[22] James Ralph Judge Sr. Burial Information. Located: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47937131/james-judge Accessed: June 13, 2020.