and that same year he returned to Little Rock for another stint at private practice. Soon, however, he found himself back in public service. Wassell was a public health unit director in Caldwell Parish, La., and Pulaski County, Ark., and spent six years as health director of the Little Rock schools.

Wassell championed public health systems, particularly affordable diphtheria immunization. During the Great Depression, he was given the task of battling malaria at camps of the Roosevelt administration's new Civilian Conservation Corps. Based at St. Charles, Ark., he supervised the control of malaria at seven CCC camps from 1936 to 1938.

The U.S. Navy had not forgotten Corydon Wassell. He resumed regular commissioned duty at the age of 52 in 1936, and was called to active duty in 1940 when the CCC was disbanded. He served on a submarine inspection board at the Key West Naval Station in Florida, and in September 1941 was ordered to the naval base at Cavite in the Philippines. Wassell was scheduled to sail on December 7, 1941, but his departure was delayed because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was assigned instead to Java to take over as the chief medical officer at the Surabaya Navy Base. He arrived there in January 1942.

Now, Wassell and his nine dispirited patients rode the train back into the Javanese interior. There was no way of knowing if they could reach Australia or if they would be trapped by the advancing Japanese. Arriving at the hospital just after dawn, Wassell and the sailors were welcomed by nurses with sherry, tea, and cakes. They could now hear the rumble of distant explosions, and the American doctor learned from his Dutch colleagues that Tjilatjap had been bombed during the night and several ships sunk.

While his men slept, Wassell put through a call to an airfield three miles away where some British and U.S. planes were based. An American major told him to call back in an hour. The doctor did so and was told that there would be room for him and his charges on the 13th and last plane leaving the field. They were to take no luggage—not even a razor blade—and should be ready at an hour's notice.

Later that day, Japanese planes strafed the area, and concussions shook the little hospital. As heavy chunks of plaster dropped from the ward ceilings, the sailors took refuge under their beds, smoking and giggling with the nurses while trying to stay calm. The next morning, a wounded British soldier was wheeled into the sailors' ward from the operating room, where he had had two machine gun



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