



# Four Thousand Bowls of Rice: A Prisoner of War Comes Home

*Linda Goetz Holmes*

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This work tells how one prisoner of war prepared himself, mentally and physically, for his journey home after three and a half years of brutal captivity in Java, Burma and Thailand during World War II. Staff Sergeant Cecil Dickson was a member of the 2/2 Australian Pioneer Battalion, which was forced to surrender to the Japanese in March 1942. His engineering unit bore the heaviest work in constructing the Burma-Thailand railway. The author draws on Dickson's letters home to his wife, and on research and interviews with many surviving Pioneers, to paint a dramatic picture of prisoner-of-war life under the Japanese. Readers can discover what it felt like to emerge abruptly from one day's starvation to the next day's air-drops, and from being in regimented captivity to being in charge of one's own time again. Dickson's writings also provide a glimpse of one man's determination to free his mind from continued captivity by replacing bitter memories with the sights and sounds of post-war Bangkok, and with tender thoughts of reunion with loved ones.

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