

## Fatigue and Malaise

### LYKE'S STORY

Lyke won't hesitate when you ask her what day she remembers most clearly: "August 15, 1945." The day was remarkable because she had just turned nine and an American Thunderbolt fighter plane (P47) flew over the "camp of living death" she was in. Lyke was in a Japanese concentration camp on her home island of Java, a Dutch possession before World War II. "We could see the pilot, he flew so low. Wind from the propeller blew up dust, shook the buildings, and the palm trees blew. The noise of the engine was so loud I thought my eardrums would burst. I was so inspired by this flight that I can tell you exactly where I stood, what I wore, who was with me, and what they wore. To the survivors in the camp, it meant deliverance. We knew the allies were winning the war and we would soon be delivered from the hell that we faced 24-hours every day."

When the Japanese took Java, Lyke's father had been forced to keep his coffee and quinine plantation going for the Japanese war effort. However, 20 months after they invaded, the Japanese decided all Dutch citizens should be placed in concentration camps. Lyke, her mother, and brother were sent to a camp for women and children, and her father was sent to a camp for men. Then, shortly after, her brother was separated into a labor camp for men over the age of 10. Yes, at that time and in that part of the world, boys 10-years-old were classified as men. The family wasn't reunited until 1946.

Life in the camps went from difficult, but survivable, to a grim, 24-hour-daily struggle to stay alive. People lost weight, became skinny, and finally looked like walking skeletons. Life was so delicate that any extra work, a simple illness, or a beating for any minor infraction could mean death. Lyke's mother got beriberi (a simple B vitamin deficiency). By sharing their rations, Lyke and the other women kept her alive and out of the hospital. The camp hospital was not a place to restore health, but a place where they let you die. After the war, statistics showed that about 50 percent of Japanese prisoners died in the camps. This compares to about 1 percent in comparable German prisoner-of-war camps. Don't confuse these prisoner-of-war camps with the German death camps which were the basis of the holocaust.

Any source of protein in the camp disappeared—snails, rats, cats, dogs, large bugs, worms, and just about anything that crawled. Any animal kingdom member hapless enough to enter the camp became food. However, even that extra food wasn't nearly enough. Life hung by a thread, with death waiting as a friend in the shadows.

Dysentery caused by tropical parasites that thrived in the poor water and on the unwashed food given to the prisoners, was a constant reality with people living in the camp. Add the use of excrement for fertilizer, and conditions were right for chronic illness and epidemics. Diarrhea that accompanies the dysentery, brings the secondary problem of dehydration. Dehydration increases fatigue and makes a person more susceptible to the ravages of malnutrition. Fatigue had the other possibility of making you look lazy and become a

candidate for a beating. A beating was usually a prelude to death.

Lyke often felt weak. Starch, once used to press shirts, became food. Now she realizes that her constant fatigue was from not enough nutrients, including protein. Lyke also remembers pounding headaches that today she knows were consistent signs of B-vitamin deficiency. Ironically, the people in the camp divided a rare Red Cross food package containing a meal for one person among about 25 people. Even her small share was too much food for Lyke to tolerate at one time in her weakened condition. She had become so skinny and her stomach so small that food had to be parceled out in small doses. Food was divided among the people with a small, delicate Dutch teaspoon, which is one-third the size of an American teaspoon.

Shortly after Jan Banning, the Dutch pilot flying for the U.S. Air Force, had buzzed Camp Lampersari on August 15th, 1946, the island was liberated. At first, Lyke, her mother, and brother were placed in what had been a Japanese army camp where they were, at last, given enough food. From there they were transported across the island and reunited with her father. Somehow, the entire family had survived. In contrast to their good fortune, two of her uncles, who were placed in the same camp with her father, died. Two out of three survivors were typical for men in the camps.

Lyke's mother was in such bad condition, in spite of being given enough food, that American and Dutch army doctors decided to send the family back to Holland for better medical facilities. Lyke remembers the stopover in Egypt, because they were given blankets for use in Holland where it was cold. Lyke still has her blanket as a reminder of kindness in another time. When they reached Holland, Lyke was the first person at the door of the plane to see the waving crowds. She said, "Mommie, mommie, there is a fat man waiting for us." The "fat man" was her slender uncle. In contrast to the slender uncle who had also survived the German occupation, Lyke and her family were skin and bones.

In spite of double rations and efforts by the Dutch doctors, Lyke's mother died in 1948 at the age of 42. Her body had simply been deprived past the point of no return. No matter how much food she ate, and how hard the doctors tried, her body couldn't rebuild itself. She simply couldn't extract enough nourishment from food.

One could ask, "Why did she survive the camp only to perish in the midst of adequate food and medical care?" Of course we'll never know, but we can speculate that it has to do with the human spirit and a mother's determination to save her family. When that job was complete, it seems her body said, "It's okay to go now." Other families didn't fare so well. Lyke's family had an inner source of stamina that kept them all going, because the odds predicted that only two of them would make it back. As it was, four made it until 1948.

Lyke and her brother lived with several families in Holland for a time. She even lived in a girl's school in Holland. Indonesian prisoner-of-war children without mothers were often shifted from family to family. Lyke's dad and other men returned to Indonesia to start rebuilding what was once a thriving economy. This complex family relationship imposed a great deal of stress on a teenage girl who was still recovering from serious malnutrition and the loss of her mother. Now that her father was half a world away, she had to accept the fact

that she was a guest wherever she stayed. Lyke learned to get along and not complain.

You have to realize that Holland itself was recovering from devastation and starvation, but the Dutch government did everything it could for its citizens. Help came from the Marshall Plan and other war relief efforts. Ex prisoner-of-war children, like Lyke, were given double rations to help them return to normal.

In spite of having plenty to eat, Lyke never really felt good. She had no energy, was always tired, and longed for evenings to come so she wouldn't be criticized for sleeping. Her gums often bled when she ate crusty bread or hard crackers and during the night when she slept. Both were definite signs of poor health from prolonged deprivation.

At 18, Lyke and a girl friend toured England as a celebration. One day of sightseeing called for a day of rest. This tiredness concerned her friend so, on her advice, Lyke's dad requested she be given a complete physical.

"I can't find anything wrong," was the doctor's report. But Lyke knew the fatigue was real. She couldn't shake it even though she looked okay to the doctors. In fairness, the doctors of 1954 were dealing with many unknowns at the time. Never in history had so many people been so completely deprived for so long. A few vitamins and minerals were still being discovered. So when the doctors compared Lyke's health to other young women of the same age who had been living under poor conditions, she fell into that range they called "normal." Their criteria were based on weight, height, blood pressure, pulse rate, and other such measures. In 1992, doctors have more knowledge and look for other indicators.

By the age of 30, Lyke not only felt tired all the time, she looked tired all the time. The corners of her lips were always cracked, her complexion was poor, and she had frequent diarrhea. In spite of this, Lyke kept going—she called on the same reserves she needed to survive in the Japanese concentration camp. No matter how she felt, she moved forward. She lived in this state of health until the age of 38.

In November 1974, Lyke was introduced to Shaklee food supplements. After one week of taking Vita-Lea and Instant Protein, she noticed two things: she wasn't tired and the cracks around her mouth were almost gone. Lyke had found a solution to her problems. Within a month her complexion had color, she looked younger, healthier, and felt better than she could ever remember. No more faking energy. No more saying "yes" to an invitation when her mind said "no!" Her hair had body, her gums stopped bleeding, and she jumped out of bed in the morning. Life had the same joy she remembered it had in 1942 before the Japanese took over her island.

### IS IT IN LYKE'S HEAD?

No! We know today that Lyke and countless others left prison camps with an intestinal problem that will never clear. We call this problem malabsorption—literally sick absorption. These people can absorb the fat and calories from food, but not enough of the vitamins and minerals that make everything work. In short, they're getting food, but not nutrition.

A few clues are pertinent: bleeding gums are usually a sign of inadequate vitamin C and some B vitamins; cracks at the corners of the mouth are sure signs of B-vitamin deficiency; both C-vitamin and B-vitamin deficiencies cause

fatigue. In addition to lack of vitamins C and B, a shortfall in iron and zinc completed the picture.

Malabsorption probably accounts for these nutrient shortfalls. In the concentration camp Lyke had developed dysentery, which damaged the absorptive capacity of her small intestine. In the camp it was normal to be constantly fatigued and have symptoms of deficiency. For some inmates, once they returned to freedom, simply getting enough food solved the problem. Other inmates never recovered, no matter how much food they ate. Lyke's mother is a good example of that. Chance led Lyke to the only solution for malabsorption: supplementation.

Vita-Lea, a complete supplement, overcame Lyke's nutrient need by mass action. Mass action is a simple process that is built on the idea that if you absorb a small percentage of a nutrient, simply getting more will solve the problem, because a small percentage of a lot is enough.

Instant Protein gave Lyke's body two things. First, she got enough high quality protein as essential amino acids to restore and rebuild tissues. Simultaneously, Instant Protein provides an excess of nonessential amino acids that her body could use as energy. In addition, it gave a dose of more B vitamins necessary to keep her metabolic machinery running. Not surprising, by simply taking both Vita-Lea and Instant Protein, Lyke got a new lease on life.

When I interviewed Lyke, I got another impression that I can't quantify. Along with the supplements came an optimistic spirit. She had been raised in a spirit of optimism that was broken by the war and then obliterated by her mother's death. At Shaklee meetings an optimism came into her life with the supplements. An optimistic outlook with unquestionable nutrition is an unbeatable combination.

Today, almost 50 years after her ordeal began, Lyke is a mature, energetic woman, who shares her good fortune with others. She uses many supplements, is tireless, and never feels fatigued. Her eyes sparkle, complexion glows, and she radiates sunshine wherever she goes.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Scala was educated at Columbia (B.A.), Cornell (Ph.D.), and Harvard (Post-doctoral studies) Universities.

He has spent his career in research, research management, and teaching. His accomplishments include over fifty published papers on research in nutrition, biochemistry, and biology. His teaching includes courses for undergraduate, graduate, medical, and dental school students.

As a research manager, Dr. Scala held positions at Procter and Gamble, Owens-Illinois, Unilever, General Foods, and was the Senior Vice-President of Scientific Affairs for the Shaklee Corporation. He now devotes his energies to writing and speaking for the general public.

Dr. Scala lives with his wife Nancy in Lafayette, California. For recreation, they sail the ketch La Scala from its home port on San Francisco Bay.