

Former Louisburg man earns POW medal

Editor's note: Some of the information for this story was obtained from the Fort Leavenworth Lamp newspaper.

Nearly 45 years after he was captured by the Japanese in World War II, a former Louisburg man was awarded a prisoner of war medal Sept. 19 at Fort Leavenworth.

Harry T. Kelley, who lived 6 miles south of Louisburg for 15 years with his wife, Audrey, and their three sons, was honored at the special ceremony by Lt. Gen. Leonard P. Wishart III in Constitution Grove on the fort grounds.

Kelley, 69, who now resides with Audrey in Basehor, was captured by the Japanese in March 1942. He was a prisoner of war for 3 1/2 years until he was liberated Sept. 6, 1945.

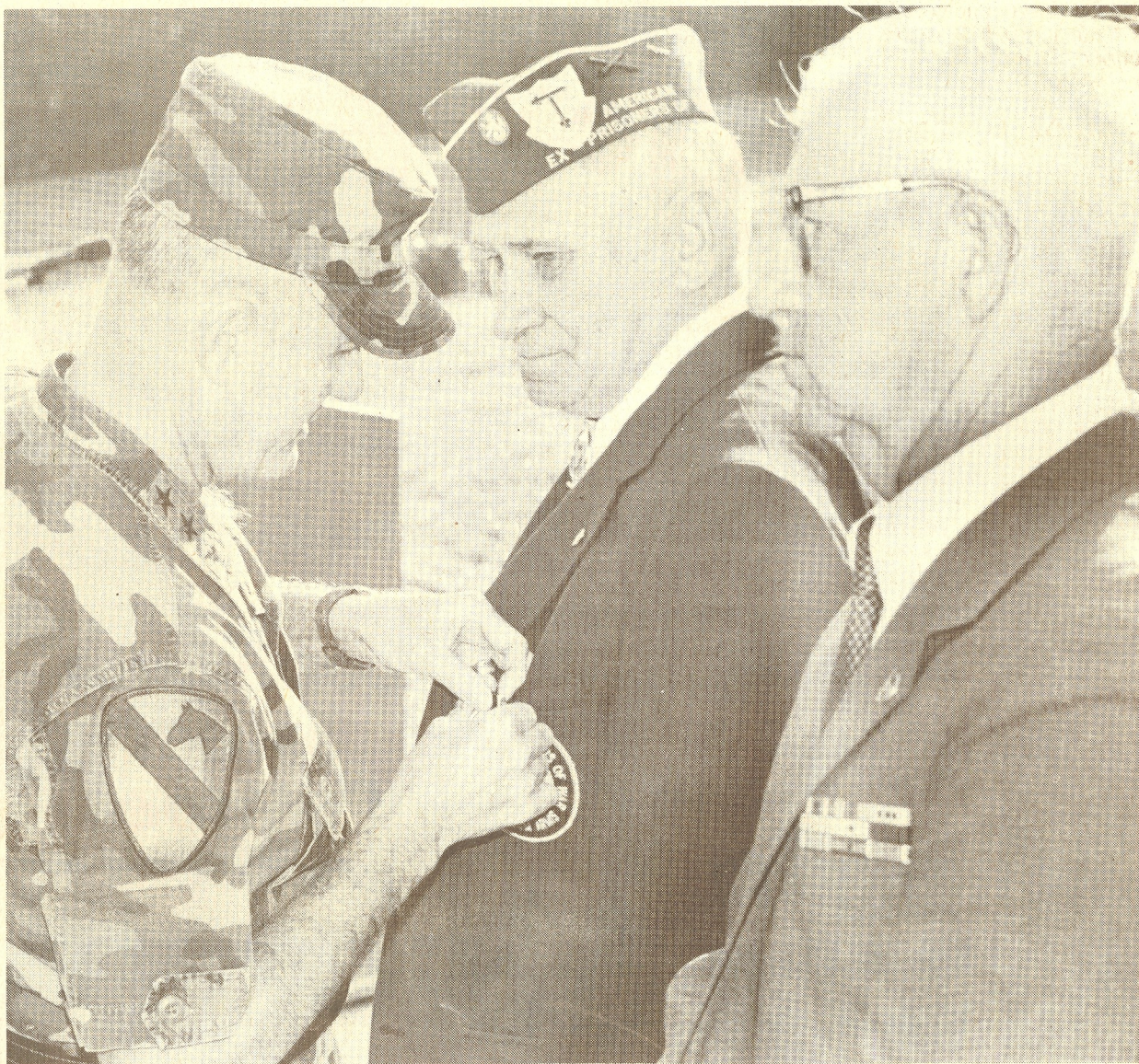
He was serving aboard the USS Houston when it was sunk March 1, 1942, by the Japanese in the Sunda Straits during the Battle of the Java Sea. Kelley, who jumped overboard when the seamen were ordered to abandon ship, floated in the water for 11 hours before being plucked from the sea by a Japanese gunboat.

"We lost about 700 men that night," Kelley said. "About the only ones that survived were those who were topside. There just wasn't much time — the guys below deck really didn't have a chance. It's hard to realize unless you've been through it."

After a few months of captivity in Java and Singapore, Kelley and 3,000 other American, Dutch, British and Australian POWs were shipped to Burma to build a railroad from Moulmein, Burma, to Bangkok, Thailand.

Kelley said the POWs were forced to work under terrible conditions on the railroad for 12 to 16 hours a day. The prisoners were given very little food, and Kelley dropped from 170 pounds to 92 pounds. Many of the prisoners died building the railroad, which took 15 months to complete.

"If you got sick, you weren't on the food line. To them being cap-



POWs honored

Lt. Gen. Leonard P. Wishart III awards a POW medal to Edgar M. Scarborough, Lansing, while Harry T. Kelley, Basehor, looks on. Scarborough and Kelley, prisoners of war during World War II, were honored during ceremonies in Constitution Grove at Fort Leavenworth. Scarborough, a U.S.

Army corporal at the time of his capture by the Japanese May 6, 1942, was held for three years and three months. Kelley, who was held by the Japanese for three years and six months, was a U.S. Navy seaman first class at the time of his capture in March 1942.