

Primary Sources Packet: Camp

Document One

Aaron Clyde Hopper, "Most Vivid Experiences as an American Prisoner of War of the Japanese During World War II," 2011

Veterans History Project, Library of Congress

"Shortly after arriving in Cabanatuan, we observed three almost naked prisoners being tortured by being beaten while tied to poles in an upright position in the hot tropical sun. This lasted for a couple of days. Then, one morning as we were lined up for a portion of watery rice, these prisoners were marched over to a point a short distance across the fence in the front of us and made to dig a shallow trench. At last, when they were finally forced to stand in the trench, I turned my head and closed my eyes. After an extremely long delay that seemed like an eternity, I glanced up at the wrong time just as they were shot and slumped into their graves. At this profoundly sad moment, I could not keep from thinking that they were probably better off. We were told that they had attempted to escape. At some point after this, we were placed in 10-man squads with the stipulation that if one man escaped, the other nine would be shot."

Primary Sources Packet: Camp cont.

Document Two

William E. Dyess, *The Dyess Story: The Eye-Witness Account of the Death March from Bataan and the Narrative of Experiences in Japanese Prison Camps and of Eventual Escape*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1944 (excerpt).

"About 1 June 1942 the American prisoners of war [at Camp O'Donnell] were removed ... to the Cabanatuan Concentration Camp, where they met the prisoners from Corregidor. Conditions were slightly improved, though the camp was still filthy and overcrowded. Rice remained the principal item of diet, although mung beans, juice, and small fried fish were sometimes issued. In one instance three chickens were issued for 500 men. The Japanese later stated in their propaganda that they were feeding the prisoners of war chicken and eggs.

"Officers were not forced to work at Cabanatuan. The Japanese continued to beat working prisoners. Attempts to escape were punished by death. Lieutenant Colonel Biggs, Lieutenant Breitung and Lieutenant Gilbert, USN, were caught. The Japanese stripped them, tied them to a post in front of the camp gate, and forced passing Filipinos to beat them across the face with a two-by-four board. The officers were kept in the blazing sun for two days without water. Colonel Biggs was then beheaded and the other two were shot."

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Document Three

Ken Wheeler, "For My Children," (excerpt)

Defenders of the Philippines

"Disease was rampant in the camp. Already there was ahead of us what remained of the American troops from Bataan. These were the survivors of the "Death March" and the infamous Camp O'Donnell ordeal which followed. The majority of the prisoners had malaria or dysentery or both, and medical care was virtually hopeless since our own doctors were sick as well and none had enough medicine to really help. The Japanese guards seldom came inside the barbed wire enclosures, and then only with masks on. They threw our [] over the fence once each day and the remaining time kept their distance in the guard towers and sentry positions. Our pleas for help went completely unheeded. The comparatively well prisoners had great difficulty caring for the sick and the death rate was very high. We lost upwards of thirty men each day for the first three months, not counting those who were executed.

"Dietary deficiencies such as beriberi, scurvy and pellagra soon began to appear, causing acute discomfort, pain and numerous deaths. An epidemic of diphtheria likewise took an enormous toll of life before some anti-toxin was smuggled into the camp by Catholic priests under their vestments. The Filipino or European priests were at first allowed into the camp to hold mass on Sundays and did much good, but this privilege was soon withdrawn like so many other small concessions allowed for short periods only."

Primary Sources Packet: Camp cont.

Document Four

Eugene Jacobs, *Zero Ward at Cabanatuan*, 1942

Eugene Jacobs Papers, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (59108285)

