



0. CAMPS O'DONNELL and CABANATUAN - Story
Preface

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On the 9th of April, 1942, General Wainwright sent a message to General MacArthur: "At 6 o'clock this morning General King . . . without my knowledge or approval sent a flag of truce to the Japanese commander. The minute I heard of it I disapproved of his action and directed that there would be no surrender. I was informed it was too late to make any change, that the action had already been taken. . . . Physical exhaustion and sickness due to a long period of insufficient food is the real cause of this terrible disaster. When I get word what terms have been arranged I will advise you."

This image—another of the many later-captured Japanese photographs—depicts "Surrender on Bataan." It is included in "The Fall of the Philippines," by Louis Morton, [at page 463](#). It is part of the series "United States Army in World War II" and is online via the Center of Military History.

NOTICE:
SOME OF THESE LINKS LEAD TO GRAPHIC PICTURES OF WAR

All the Bataan prisoners initially ended up at Camp O'Donnell. (It was located barely twenty miles north of Mt. Pinatubo, the volcano whose massive eruption, in 1991, closed Clark Air Base.)

It is believed more than 1,600 Americans and 10,000 Filipinos died at Camp O'Donnell within the first six weeks. Insufficient food and water, and no medicine, were just a few of the issues. (During the march from Bataan, Japanese troops took everything from American doctors.) Camp sanitation was virtually non-existent.

Dealing with grossly overcrowded conditions, the Japanese granted all Filipinos (who were drinking polluted water) amnesty (on June 6, 1942). They transferred Americans to a prison camp near the Filipino city of Cabanatuan, in Nueva Ecija Province, on the Pampanga River.

Soon after prisoners arrived at the camp, in the summer of 1942, men were already being buried at Cabanatuan's cemetery. Life was extremely hard and there was never enough food. (A Ranger who eventually helped to rescue the Americans, and one British civilian, found the drawings in this paragraph.)

"Zero Ward at Cabanatuan," drawn by Medical Officer Eugene Jacobs, reveals the place where dying men had a "zero chance" to survive. Many American soldiers breathed their last here.

Ben Steele, professor emeritus at Montana State University and a Bataan Death March survivor, also made drawings of life at Cabanatuan. His work is part of the first-hand record of the march and the many months which followed.

Americans remained at Cabanatuan more than 2½ years. By January of 1945, only 511 (some accounts say 512) were still alive. Word of their plight had reached military officials who wanted to rescue them. Concerns for their safety had grown dramatically for several reasons:

- A message (later introduced at the war-crimes trial) from the Japanese Vice Minister of War to the

Commanding General of Military Police in Taiwan (then called Formosa), regarding Japan's treatment of prisoners, was intercepted and decoded on August 1, 1944. The policy - which allowed local commanders to execute prisoners of war without orders from Tokyo - became known as the "Kill-All Policy."

- General MacArthur, making good on his famous promise "I shall return," had begun the liberation of the Philippines. As he came closer to known camps, would local Japanese commanders implement the "Kill-All Policy?"
- In December of 1944, the Japanese executed approximately 139 prisoners of war in what became known as "the Palawan Massacre." The very thing they were trying to prevent - stories of torture and execution being told by survivors - happened when eleven prisoners escaped.

What is the evidence of such atrocities which caused Allied officials to be so concerned about their fellow countrymen? Let's examine part of the record, starting with the "Kill-All Policy."

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CAMPS-O-DONNELL-and-CABANATUAN-Great-Raid-The)

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Media Stream



Camp O'Donnell

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Camp O'Donnell Prisoners of War

Image, described above, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Clark Air Base - Damaged by Mt. Pinatubo Eruption

U.S. Geological Survey Photograph taken on June 24, 1991, by Willie Scott. Online, courtesy USGS.

PD

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Clark-Air-Base-Damaged-by-Mt.-Pinatubo-Eruption>



Map Showing Cabanatuan

Image from *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II* (by David W. Hogan, Jr.), Chapter 4 at [page 66](#). Online, courtesy U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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Drawing of Cabanatuan's Cemetery

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Drawing-of-Cabanatuan-s-Cemetery>



HOME SWEET HOME AT CABANATUAN
A typical scene of the barracks, and barracks life of a Prisoner of War in Cabanatuan.
(This pencil drawing was based under the cat-trail of one of the Barracks in Cabanatuan. By one of the Barracks who went in to release the Prisoners of War there in early 1945. Artist Unknown.)

Cabanatuan Barracks Drawing

Image online, courtesy NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) in an [oral history story](#) from a [Cabanatuan POW](#), Commander Ted Morris, Jr.

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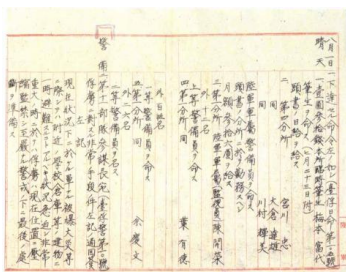
CHOW LINE AT CABANATUAN
A typical scene of the chow line at Cabanatuan, with the men in the line. They are waiting for the food will be given by the time they get to the counter.
(This pencil drawing was based under the cat-trail of one of the Barracks in Cabanatuan. By one of the Barracks who went in to release the Prisoners of War there in early 1945. Artist Unknown.)

Cabanatuan Chow Line Drawing

Drawing online, courtesy Robert H. Cowan and the [Battle of Batan](#) (a website honoring his father, Hank Cowan, a Cabanatuan survivor).

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Japanese Message - Intercepted and Decoded

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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General MacArthur at Leyte Island

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/General-MacArthur-at-Leyte-Island>



American War Ships at Leyte Island

Photo included in *United States Army in World War II - The War in the Pacific - Leyte: The Return to the Philippines*, by M. Hamlin Cannon. Online, courtesy iBiblio, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Americans Firing at Japanese - Philippines, April 1945

U.S. National Archives image 111-SC-205918. Online, courtesy National Archives.

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Landing in the Philippines

US Coast Guard photo now in the collection of the US National Archives. Online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Liberation of the Philippines - US Fleet Arrives

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. ARC identifier 513206.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Liberation-of-the-Philippines-US-Fleet-Arrives>



MacArthur's "I Shall Return" Photograph

Photo of General MacArthur returning to the Philippines, during October of 1944, [online](#) courtesy U.S. National Archives. ARC identifier 531424.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/MacArthur-s-I-Shall-Return-Photograph>