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This US Army photo depicts rescued POWs after a successful execution of "The Great Raid" on January 30, 1945. The image is online via "The Office of the Command Historian" where [it has this description](#): "Former POWs from the Cabanatuan prison camp celebrate their rescue in the town of Guimba, Luzon, Philippines. They were rescued by a combined force consisting of the Sixth Ranger Battalion, Philippine guerrillas, and Alamo Scouts."

Life for the Cabanatuan POWs was desperate:

- Food was scarce.
- U.S. forces wanted to rescue the remaining prisoners before their Japanese captors killed them.
- Every day closer to Allied liberation of the Philippines was a day closer to possible execution.

No one wanted another Palawan Massacre.

Lt. Col. [Henry Mucci](#) (conferring here with his personnel officer, Captain Vaughn Moss), believed his highly trained Alamo Scouts and Rangers (supported by two units of Filipino commandos) were ready for their [daring mission](#). Following their specific assignments, the men carried out the rescue exactly according to plan.

[Taking the Japanese](#) completely by surprise, the Allies sustained remarkably few casualties. Two Rangers were killed (one likely from "friendly fire"). Two prisoners died—one of an apparent heart attack (while a Ranger was carrying him from the camp) and the other from tuberculosis (after reaching American lines).

None of the Filipino guerillas were killed, although twenty were wounded. Japanese casualties were much worse: 523 dead or wounded.

Captain Prince [believed](#) that friendly territory had made the raid successful:

It was such a complex group of people, none of whom had any real dealings with each other before, not on such a scale... The main thing that made it conceivable to think we could succeed was that we were in friendly territory with friendly people. Trying to do that somewhere else, I don't think you could even come close.

Nor would the rescue of the Cabanatuan prisoners have happened without significant Filipino guerilla help.

After the war, the people of the Philippines sent the American people a rock from Corregidor in memory of the men who were killed or wounded. Joaquin Elizalde, then the Philippine ambassador to the United States, made the presentation. He was accompanied by Filipino and American veterans who were wounded at Bataan and Corregidor.

Stories told by escaped prisoners were later confirmed by captured Japanese photographs. The evidence was persuasive:

Atrocities had been committed against Filipinos and Americans.

According to a document (“American Ex Prisoners of War”) prepared by Dr. William Skelton, III, more prisoners of war were killed by the Japanese—especially in the Philippines—than in any other conflict to date. (Comparing WWII prisoner-of-war deaths, Dr. Skelton found the following percentages: 1.2% in Germany; 37% in the Pacific theater; 40% in the Philippines.)

In all, 11,107 Americans captured by Japan in the Philippines died:

- Some in country;
- Some in “hell ships” (which were bombed by unsuspecting Americans without knowledge their countrymen were being transported as slave labor to places under Japanese control); and
- Some in those slave-labor foreign lands.

When Japan surrendered, General Marshall informed MacArthur (who had earlier seen action in World War I) with a message appointing him Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. MacArthur continued to serve in that position (even during the Korean War) until President Truman relieved him of those responsibilities on April 10, 1951.

The Philippines, meanwhile, became an independent nation.

Lt. General Matthew Ridgway replaced MacArthur. Truman had been upset with MacArthur for years, as his June 17, 1945 diary entry plainly shows:

...what to do with Mr. Prima Donna, Brass Hat, Five Star MacArthur. He's worse than the Cabots and the Lodges - they at least talked with one another before they told God what to do. Mc tells God right off. It is a very great pity we have to have stuffed shirts like that in key positions.

After Truman replaced him with Ridgway, MacArthur returned to the States. He had not been inside his own country in fourteen years. Stopping off at Soldier's Field in Chicago, he addressed 50,000 people who had gathered to honor him.

MacArthur, like so many others during the war, had experienced this truth: Cooperation between different countries, various branches of service and local people can accomplish FAR more than any one group can achieve alone.

The human spirit, capable of extraordinary feats (including survival against seemingly insurmountable odds) kept the “ghost soldiers” of Cabanatuan alive. But life-threatening risks, willingly and cooperatively undertaken by so many people who did not know each other (or the captives), got them out.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HENRY-MUCCI-and-the-RESCUE-Great-Raid-The>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HENRY-MUCCI-and-the-RESCUE-Great-Raid-The>

Media Stream



Henry Mucci with Captain Vaughn Moss

Image from *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, by David W. Hogan, Chapter 4 (“Special Operations in the Pacific”), at page 84.

Image online, courtesy U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Henry-Mucci-with-Captain-Vaughn-Moss>



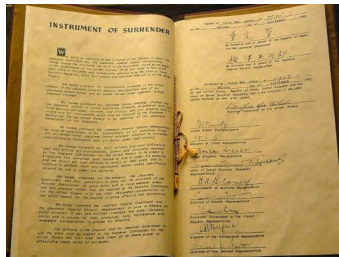
Japanese Internment Camps in the Philippines

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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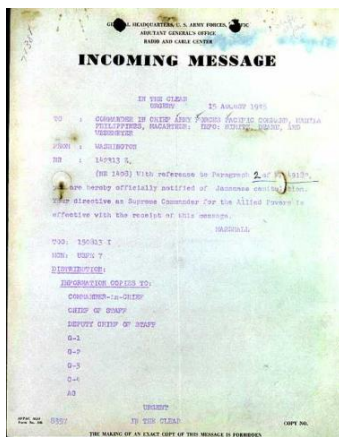


Japanese Instrument of Surrender

Image, described above, [online courtesy West Point Military Museum](#).

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Japanese Surrender - Message to Commanding Generals

[Image online](#), courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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General MacArthur - World War I Photograph

Image, described above, [online courtesy U.S. National Archives](#). ARC Identifier 530758.

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General MacArthur - Korean War Photograph

Image, described above, [online courtesy U.S. National Archives](#) - ARC Identifier: 541960

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Ghost Soldiers of Cabanatuan

Photo, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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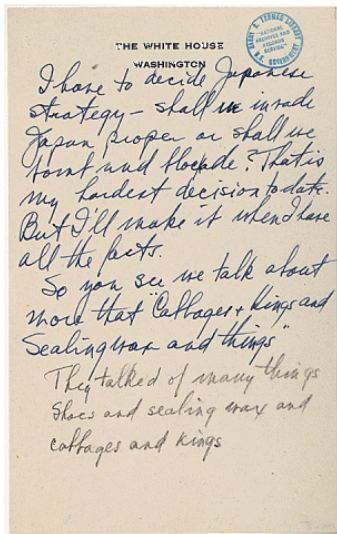
General MacArthur - Address at Soldier Field

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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President Truman's Diary - Japan-Attack Strategy

Image depicting original page from President Truman's diary - entry for June 17, 1945 - online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Great Raid - Historical Footage, Cabanatuan Rescue

Clip, end credits of the film, *The Great Raid* (2005)

Director: John Dahl

Writers, Source material: William B. Breuer (*The Great Raid on Cabanatuan*) and Hampton Sides (*Ghost Soldiers*)

Writers, Screenplay: Carlo Bernard and Doug Miro

Release Date: August 12, 2005

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Great-Raid-Historical-Footage-Cabanatuan-Rescue>



Philippines Become Independent

15 July 1946, Universal Newsreel.

Public Domain, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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