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The Sgt. Frank Dunlap Story

My name is Frank A. Dunlap; I was born just outside of Greensboro, North Carolina. I spent my younger days, during the depression working on my father's dairy farm in Anson County, just outside Waynesboro, North Carolina until October of 1940 when I signed up for the military at age 17. My father died that year and I tried working in a hosiery mill to help support the family, but I didn't like that work after farming. So one day I came home from work and told my mother I was going into the service, like many others were doing during the depression. I was inducted into the Air Force on April 1, 1941 and I was sent for training at a base just outside of Savannah, Georgia. The base I was assigned to, Hunter Field at Camp Stewart a brand new airfield, and my group was the first to be trained there. My MOS (military occupational status) was in the "ordinance division" handling high explosives, loading a minimum of 2,000-pound bombs onto the aircraft. After 7 months of training, we received our orders to move out, we didn't know the final destination at that time, but we did know we were headed to the island of Guam in the Pacific. Once we arrived in Guam, the Captain said our final destination would be the Philippines, and we arrived at Manila, the Capital City on Thanksgiving Day, 1941. Upon our arrival we



Courtesy of Graphic Maps.Com

Immediately began unloading the ship, we also served Thanksgiving dinners to the civilians who were working with us at the dock. Little did we know at the time that within just two weeks, the Japanese would bomb Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and we would also be in a fight for our lives in WWII.

Since we were across the International Dateline, it was actually December 8, 1941 in the Philippines when the Japanese launched that attack. On their return from Pearl Harbor just 2 ½ to 3 hours later, those Same Japanese bombers were now pounding us at Manila. Meanwhile, at the north end of the island, the Japanese 14th Army under General Masaharu Homma started the invasion of the Philippines landing ground troops at Batan Island (not Bataan) off the north coast of Luzon. It was the last coordinated effort of the U.S. Far East Air Force, two B-17's and their fighter escorts attacking these advancing Japanese

forces, but with very limited results. The Naval Forces under the direction of Admiral Thomas C. Hart withdrew most of the United States Asiatic Fleet because of heavy damage sustained at the Naval facilities at Cavite. The only ships left were submarines that were no match at all for the superior Japanese forces. It was on December 22, 1941 that the real attacks began when General Homma landed more than 40,000 troops and artillery support at Luzon's Lingayen Gulf. The Japanese would ultimately land more than 100,000 troops at various points on the island in a battle the Japanese expected to last only 4 to 6 weeks. We remained just outside of Manila in tent camps for about 17 days, and then I think it was December 12, 1941 we were ordered to move out to our airbase, Clark Field, just north of Manila, across the bay from Corregidor.

As the situation worsened on the island, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered that General Douglas MacArthur be relocated from Corregidor to Australia on March 12, 1942, as the Supreme Allied Commander of the South West Pacific area. On his departure, General MacArthur turned over control of the forces in the Philippines to General Jonathan Wainwright. Before MacArthur's departure, we received orders to move all of our equipment and our front lines away from the airfield and into the jungle, which was on Bataan Peninsula, and continue our stand against the assault by the Japanese Army. No matter what you were trained to be in the military, we all became Infantry Soldiers in the fight to win. It was on March 20, 1942 when General MacArthur, speaking in Australia gave his infamous "I came out of Bataan and I shall



MacArthur and Wainwright courtesy Wikipedia

return" speech. By March 28, 1942, the Japanese, who had sustained heavy losses battling the U.S. and Philippine forces, launched an all out assault on the island again. We continued our fight against those 100,000 Japanese troops, with very few infantrymen and kept them at a standstill fighting from the jungles. On April 8th, the U.S. 57th Infantry and the 31st Infantry Division were overrun by the Japanese forces along with the U.S. 45th Infantry Regiment. Out of food, water, ammo and troops suffering from dehydration, no medical supplies, dysentery, malaria and more, Luzon Force Commander General Edward King informed General Wainwright of his decision to surrender to the Japanese on April 9, 1942.



King surrenders. Captured Japanese Photo

The surrender by General King included 11,800 American and approximately 58,000 Filipino forces; tired and emaciated to the point they could almost no longer lift their weapons. However, before the surrender the troops were ordered to destroy all of their equipment, weapons and any ammunition that could fall into the hands of the Japanese forces. After fighting against the Japanese for months, especially the 31st Infantry Division, on the front lines the entire time, now overrun by the Japanese, we had no choice but to give up. We didn't know what lay ahead for us, but the members of our Infantry Divisions were already experiencing the brutality of the Japanese forces.



Courtesy of the National Archives

When we surrendered, we were told to assemble at a little airfield located on the Southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula called Mariveles Airfield. It was there that we would officially surrender to the Japanese and on that airstrip some 70,000 soldiers grouped as the Japanese soldiers moved in. When the Japanese moved in, we were stripped of all personal belongings, watches, rings, pictures, etc., the only thing left was the uniforms we were in and the clean outfits we saved for something other than surrendering. It didn't take us long to find out that the same Japanese soldiers we surrendered to were the same Japs we had been fighting all along and they were not happy with our "stand" against them. If you were found to have any Japanese souvenirs of war, they pulled you off to the side and beheaded you; if a ring didn't come off your finger, they cut your finger off to remove it. A rifle butt to the gut or the head was the order of the day along with severe beatings for non-compliance with any orders the Japanese gave. Any resistance at all to the Japanese was met with either a bayonet or a .25 caliber pistol shot to the temple. These Jap's were really pissed off that it had taken them so long to win the battle they were told they would win in 4-6 weeks and took over 4 months. We now bore the brunt of their anger, frustration and losses for the valiant stand our forces put up; little did we know what our Japanese captor's planned for us, this was only an introduction as to the horror that would follow. Under the rules of the Geneva Convention, none of this brutality was supposed to have taken place, but these Japanese soldiers were "radicals" and like the "Kamikaze Pilots" they had no regard for loss of life, only their Emperor and their mission.

On April 10, 1942, the death march of Bataan began for me from Mariveles, Bataan to my final destination, Camp O'Donnell to the north. The march was some 65 miles north of where we assembled and lasted anywhere from 5 to 6 days depending on where the prisoners started the route. Without any food or water, dealing with the intense jungle heat, humidity and sun, our troops began the march, a march that would be the last for more than an estimated 15,000 troops. As you can see from the next picture, the condition of our troops after we came out of the jungles from months of fighting, most of us

living on C-rations that were limited to about 800 calories a day per man. Even though many trucks were still available, and with one of the conditions of the surrender by General King that we be trucked to our final destination, it was totally disregarded and treated as a form of disrespect by Japanese General Homma.



Courtesy of National Archives

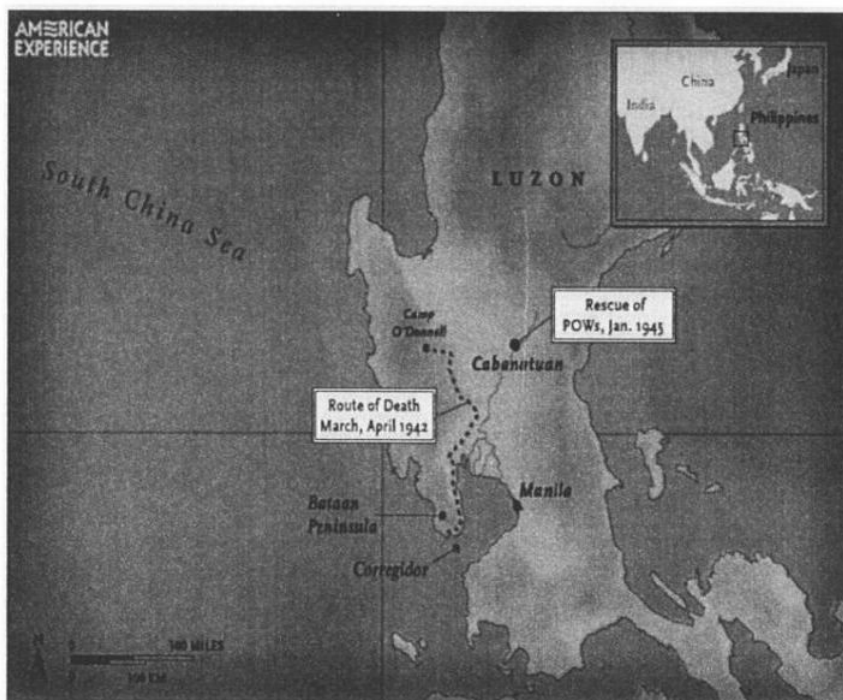
On the route to Camp O'Donnell, the atrocities of the Japanese continued to be inflicted upon all of the prisoners on the march. With the intense heat and lack of food or water, troops would drop out or just fall out of the formation. If they didn't get up, they were shot or bayoneted, or just left lying on the road to die in the dirt and the sun. Some of the troops who fell out of the March formation were run over by Japanese tanks or hit by trucks going by, there were bodies all over the place; many were in no condition to endure a march like this. We marched by day and by night the Japanese would pack us in buildings or formations so tight that we couldn't even lay down to sleep. Once daybreak came, we were back on the road in the heat marching again, with no food or water. The Japanese would torture us in many ways; stopping by clear flowing streams of flowing water, making us stand in the sun and watching the Japs quenching their thirst while we continued to dehydrate and die by the thousands. Even allowing their horses and mules to drink while they made us watch. This treatment continued all along the march, if civilians came out to offer us food or water, were killed by the Japanese for offering their assistance to us, the enemy. If the Japanese did allow us to stop and drink by any watering holes or streams it would be the ones with muddy or contaminated with decaying corpses.



Courtesy National Archives

Before reaching Camp O'Donnell we were loaded up in boxcars and packed in like sardines in a can at a railway station in San Fernando, Pangpanga and transported North to Capas, Tarlac, about 25 miles

away. The intensity of the heat, combined with the stench and the smell of the boxcars was so bad you could hardly breathe. After we reached Capas, we were marched again about 6 more miles to camp O'Donnell. The treatment at Camp O'Donnell was not any better than the march, since we were still being guarded by those same Japanese soldiers we were in combat with for all those months. Even at Camp O'Donnell, because of lack of medicine to treat conditions such as dysentery, beriberi and the lack of proper food, approximately 200 Americans and 200+ Filipinos were dying every single day. The violence we experienced on the march



Courtesy PBS American Experience

seemed to intensify at Camp O'Donnell instead of getting better, until some new fresh younger troops that we didn't fight against were brought in. On June 6, 1942 all of the American troops were taken and loaded onto boxcars again and transferred to another POW Camp, Cabanatuan just Northeast of Camp O'Donnell. At that camp it wasn't too bad in relation to Camp O'Donnell, we were placed on different details, farming and raising a few vegetables not only for the prisoners, but also for the Japanese troops as well, since they were running short of supplies. The Americans knew the camps and as they would fly over they would wave their wings and let us know they knew we were there. Because of these flyovers and MacArthur's "I shall return" statement along with governments literature we received about thousands of troops and hundred of planes on the way, we continued to think our rescuers were on the way, but it turned out to be a long, long wait. A lot of people have asked me "Frank, I guess you went through hell over there didn't you?" Yes, I did go to hell and I want to tell you, I never ever want to go back". It was our faith and trust in God, our Almighty Father, and praying to him each day to guide us and to help us do what we were forced to do in order to survive.

The detail I was assigned to at Cabanatuan was a huge project about sixty miles north of Manila, building an airfield for the Japanese. The airfield was originally laid out by the Army Engineers, but they never had a chance to build it when Pearl Harbor was bombed and we were attacked on the return trip. This project was more like slave labor for us because we had no machinery at all, just wheelbarrows, picks, shovels and concrete mixers. We moved dirt, crushed stone for the underlay for the concrete, did the leveling, everything to make the airstrip operational. This was not a small airfield; the runway was 1-

½ miles long with two additional taxi lanes for the planes to use. Our workday was from sunrise to sunset and we worked on that airstrip for just about a year and a half, no matter what the weather, even in the monsoon “rainy season” with mud up to you knees. We did that work being fed almost nothing but rice; a little bit for breakfast, little for lunch and more rice for dinner. While we were working on the airfield, we got word that other American prisoners were be sent over to Japan by ship and used as “slave labor” by the Japanese in their shipyards building aircraft carriers and other projects. All during the time we worked on that airfield, the brutality by our Japanese captors continued. If you weren’t deemed to be working fast enough, you would feel the butt end of the rifle, or they would think nothing of picking up a shovel and smacking you in the back, in the neck, in the head, anywhere they felt like it. A lot of the guys who didn’t make it were the ones, and I hate to say this, from the city, who were soft and not used to hard work or the hard labor that was required. Since I was raised on a dairy farm, I knew what hard work was and from getting up and working from sunrise to sunset. For these soldiers that didn’t have that upbringing, the labor and the beatings and lack of food was just too much for them. If you tried to escape, and many tried, and didn’t make it, they made an example of it in front of the troops and their favorite way to discourage you was “beheading”. So much for the Geneva Conventions rules for prisoners of war.



Courtesy of National Archives

I looked as this treatment as nothing more than “barbaric” but some of the soldiers just could not take the treatment anymore. Death was around us so much, it got to the point where we would say, “we’re not doing bad today, we only lost 5 men, or we only lost 6 men”, figures pale in comparison to what we lost on the Death March and in our first camp at Cabanatuan where we lost hundreds of prisoners each day. My worse beating came just as we were finishing up working on the runway one day when I tossed a shovel to the ground instead of setting it down and it started bouncing, ping, ping, ping across the ground. The guard saw this as a sign of “disrespect” and I was immediately knocked to the ground, as I lay there I could see this image of a boot coming at my head and I rolled over and put my hands up. As soon as I did this, I could see another boot coming at my head and I tried to cover and rolled again. I ended up getting a broken wrist out of the ordeal that I still have trouble with today. Due to the lack of medicine and treatment, I basically got a couple of sticks and some gauze and made a splint for it. When I wasn’t working I kept it in a sling, but was very careful how I used that hand.

When we finished that airfield, we worked on a couple of other farming projects before finding out that we were going to be moved out from Camp Cabanatuan to Japan. The freighters that we were to be transported on were called “hell ships” and it wouldn’t be long before we found why. There were about 700 to 800 prisoners on these ships, down in the hole of the ships, packed in once again where we could stand or sit, but could not lay down. Our food was very limited and the conditions were even worse with no medical treatment and no sanitary facilities, the stench was just horrible below. Some of these ships were used to carry cattle and other animals and the holds where we replaced the cattle were never cleaned

before we were loaded on the ship. We were also told that many of these "hell ships" that were transporting prisoners from the Philippines to Japan were at the mercy of our subs and planes since they bore no markings and were deemed to be Japanese Supply ships. It is estimated that out of the 156 such voyages by these Japanese "hell ships" that about 134 of them made it to Japan successfully. We lost many POW's on those hell ships, it is estimated that approximately 21,000 men were lost as those ships were attacked, all because they bore no markings of POW's being transported onboard.

Many of the ships that did make it all the way to Japan did so because of intercepted military intelligence that told our navy that POW's were on those freighters. When I left the prison camp

6 SEP 1944

From: KE WA 41 (Vessel)*
 To : KE YA 51
 Info: SI MU 23 (Garble)
 and others.

1. ~~C-07(67)~~ CONVOY #9 Escorts (KISO MARU, SUBCHASER #55, and #12 MARU) left Zamboanga 070200 (Sabsara (Kana) Anchorage). Estimated time of arrival Cebu 061900. Speed 7.5 knots.

Ship SHINYOO MARU (750); SEHO (MARU) for Manila
 (*A*) Ship #2 YOO MARU, 900 tons heavy oil
 for Cebu.
 SHIRO(GA?)NE MARU (250 passengers) 270 tons
 ammunition).

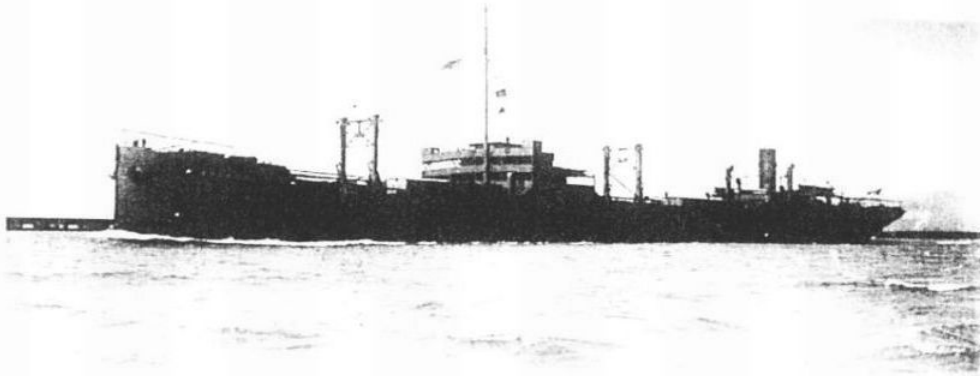
FRUEP COMMENT: FRUEP September 090224 represents part 2 of this message.
 (FRUEP-101913-101918-DISC-D1) CARDER ONLY/RMG

GI COMMENT: #12 KYOO MARU,
 #2 EIYOO MARU,
 SHIROMINE MARU,
 TOYOHIME MARU.

*Inserted by GI.

Handwritten:
 All 7 Aug 310 719 Dec 44

Courtesy National Archives Intercepted Report Shows 750 POW's on the Shinyoo Maru



The Japanese Freighter Hell Ship Shinyoo Maru as listed above from National Archives

at Cabanatuan in June of 1945, we sailed to Hong Kong, where we laid over for 13 days in Hong Kong Bay before we made the trip to Formosa, the main island of Taiwan, where we stayed for about a month, before being transferred to Japan. It was scary on the last leg of that trip, because we received word that two of the "hell ships" that left for Japan before us were sunk with an average of 800 POW's on each ship. The time I spent in Formosa I worked on a farm, raising vegetables to feed the Japanese and try to have something to eat for us.

When we left Formosa after that month and reached Japan, I then found out my final destination would be in a POW Camp on the north end of the island called Osaka. The camps were much smaller there, holding 200-300 prisoners instead of thousands, and I was put to work in a sheet metal department and also doing mining work, laboring for the Japanese. Just like we damaged or destroyed all of our equipment and weapons in the Philippines, we did what we could in the shops to jam up equipment to slow down the Japanese war machine. But in doing so, you had to make sure it did not look intentional or you would suffer harsh consequences. My thoughts were to continue what I was told to do from day to day and to continue to pray to our Almighty Father that one day soon we would be liberated from this ordeal. The conditions were a bit better in Japan because we were not the captives of the troops we had fought in the Philippines. Most of the guards we had were civilians but they were all part of the Japanese Government.



P.W. Camp Middle of Osaka Honshu Parachutes dropped by B-29.
September 6 1945.

Courtesy U.S. Air Force National Archives

We never gave up on our government coming to our rescue, and as the war was winding down, we would see more and more planes flying over us in the POW camp waving their wings, showing us they knew we were there. You can see from the photo above the PW that was scratched into the ground so our forces coming over and bombing the Japanese Mainland didn't bomb us. On August 15, 1945, the Air Force flew over and was dropping leaflets to let us know that the Japanese had surrendered and everyone was whooping it up, hollering, hugging and crying, knowing that our ordeal with the Japanese had finally come to an end. The Air Force also came by and dropped down food, medicine and other provisions by parachute in barrels. When the General of the camp came out and read the order that the Japanese had formally surrendered to us, we looked at the General and his troops and said "stack your guns, open the gates to the camp and get the hell out of here" and they did. Where they went, I don't know, but they never came back to the prison camp. We now had food, medicine and weapons and just had to wait for the troops to come and take us home. The tears and joy that spilled out that day were immeasurable and



Photo # 80-G-490446 Released POWs at Aomori, Japan, 29-30 Aug. '45
Courtesy U.S. Air Force Archives

a very long time coming. We expected the return of MacArthur to free us from Camp Cabanatuan in the Philippines in 1942, not August of 1945. Our condition as you can see was like walking skeletons, nothing but skin, bone and flesh from the lack of proper nutrition. Before the battle started, I weighed about 150 pounds, and when we were liberated, I weighed in at 89 pounds, about the average for all prisoners, no matter what your weight originally was. It was the Navy who came in to pick us up from the Osaka Prison Camp and took us to Tokyo, Japan. From there we went to the Philippines, but had to stop in Okinawa because of a typhoon that liked to wipe out everything on that island. We thought we would get a flight home to the United States, but from the Philippines, but they put us on the little troop carriers they used to bring the troops overseas. What a ride that was on that little ship with waves coming over the bow and going up and down it felt like we were riding in a little canoe, but we were finally going home to see our family and friends. Our ship was due to arrive in San Francisco, California on October 16, 1945 and what a site that will be, to see "civilization" again.

It wasn't until after we were prisoners for more than a year when my mother was notified by the postcard like you see below that I was a prisoner of the Japanese. My mother knew that I was in the Philippines and thought when General MacArthur went to Australia to re-group, that I was with him on some sort of secret mission.

| | | |
|---------------|---|---------------------|
| From: Name | | 俘虜郵便 米軍捕虜 郵便局 |
| | DUNLAP | |
| Nationality | AMERICAN | |
| Rank | PRIVATE FIRST CLASS | |
| Camp | PHILIPPINE MILITARY PRISON CAMP NO. 10-B | |
| To: | Mrs. Lulu Page Dunlap | |
| | 218 W. Morgan St. | |
| | Wadesboro, N. C. | |

EXAMINED
SEP 1 1945

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY

1. I am interned at Philippine Military Prison Camp No. 10B

2. My health is — excellent; good; fair; poor.

3. I am — injured; sick in hospital; under treatment; not under treatment.

4. I am — improving; not improving; better; well.

5. Please see that _____
_____ is taken care of.

6. (Re: Family): God bless you and keep you

7. Please give my best regards to all my friends

Frank P. Dunlap

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Reproduction of POW Postcard from "The World War II Collection" by Bob Zeller and Lee Kennett and Chronicle Books

The cards we were given by the Japanese in the Philippines were already filled out and underlined as you see and just needed our signatures before mailing. My mother was also notified by the War Department; I was alive and also a prisoner of war following our surrender to the Japanese, and well after the fact.

The things that kept us alive while being treated so harshly by the Japanese were the "little" things we cherished most from our families. We would sit down in the evenings and write out recipes of our favorite desserts, like how to make apple pie, or dishes our parents made like country fried chicken, meat loaf, imagining we were eating that food in the camp. We also relived any vacations, hunting, fishing, and any stories to take us mentally out of that camp to someplace much nicer. We would remember all the things we could do when we were free, and not be able to do now. We also prayed day and night to our Lord, Jesus Christ and God the Father Almighty to give us the strength to endure our captivity for another day until our troops came to set us free.

My mother was also notified by telegram on October 17, 1945. The telegram read:

"THE SECRETARY OF WAR HAS ASKED ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON SGT DUNLAP FRANK P WAS EVACUATED TO UNITED STATES 27 SEPT 45 IT IS ESTIMATED HE WILL ARRIVE SIXTEEN OCTOBER AT SAN FRANCISCO COLIFORNIA PERIOD THIS ARRIVAL INFORMATION IS TENTATIVE AT THIS TIME AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE IF SUCH CHANGE IS NECESSARY TO MEET MILITARY REQUIREMENTS PERIOD EVERY EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO INFORM YOU IF CHANGE ARE MADE IN SCHEDULE OR ARRIVAL"

//EDWARD T WITSELL ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY//

After getting back to the United States, I was sent to a hospital near Asheville. This is where my mother came to see me for the first time in over 4 years. I really can't remember the exact words we said at that time, but we continuously hugged and embraced each other for a very long time; about the whole day my mother was there. The war was over, so was my ordeal, I was finally home. And that's my story!



Sgt. Frank Dunlap, left and Merchant Marine John Thomas Schmidt - WWII Memorial 2008