

THE PALAWAN MASSACRE

In mid-1942 some 300 Bataan-Corregidor prisoners-of-war were shipped to the Southwestern most island in the Philippines. The POW camp was in the Filipino Constabulary Barracks at Puerto Princesa, Palawan. The POWs were worked on airfields and in clearing land for auxiliary fields.

In September 1944 half of the detail returned to Manila. In October Puerto Princesa experienced its first B-24 air raid. Conditions in the camp grew worse. Men were beaten daily.

On December 14, 1944, the detail went out to work as usual; but about noon the detail was recalled with the explanation that an air raid was expected. They were herded into bomb shelters. Drums full of gasoline and boxes of dynamite had previously been placed near the shelters by the Japs. As soon as the POWs were in the shelters, the Japs dumped in gasoline and ignited it. Men attempting to escape the raging inferno were machine-gunned or bayoneted.

One small shelter extended to the edge of a cliff. An opening to the cliff had previously been made by alert POWs by removing a piece of coral just large enough for a man to slip by. Thus some eleven American POWs (although several were wounded or injured) were able to escape by swimming across the bay where they were picked up by friendly Filipino guerrillas who led them to US Rangers.

Later the Rangers caught Jap LT Sato, the camp commander, and 39 of the Jap guards who participated in the inhumane slaughter. All were tried, convicted, ~~and~~ sentenced and hanged, despite the fact that they had dynamited the charred remains of 139 Americans in the bomb shelters and had claimed that US bombs caused the holocaust. In 1952 bodies of the massacred Americans were brought back to the US and 123 of them were re-interred in a mass grave at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. Their names are inscribed on a bronze plaque at the gravesite with only the date: December 14, 1944.

AADC has procured a 24-inch bronze plaque which is being installed in the foyer of the new chapel at Jefferson Barracks Cemetery. The plaque will be dedicated with appropriate services at the May 1978 AADC national convention in St. Louis. A nine-inch high AADC emblem is at the top of the plaque. The words read:
IN MEMORY OF 139 AMERICANS WHO WERE MASSACRED WHILE THEY WERE PRISONERS OF WAR BY THE JAPANESE ON PALAWAN ISLAND IN THE PHILIPPINES IN DECEMBER 1944. 123 OF THESE VICTIMS ARE INTERRED IN SECTION 85, THE LARGEST GROUP BURIAL IN JEFFERSON BARRACKS NATIONAL CEMETERY.

