

For the WAR CRIMES OFFICE

Judge Advocate General's Department - War Department

United States of America

In the matter of the mistreatment of * Perpetuation of Testimony of
Allied Prisoners of War by the Japanese * Clarence M. Taylor, Lieutenant, United
in the Philippine Islands and in * States Navy, Serial Number 83478,
Japan. * Fourth Naval District, Philadelphia
* Naval Base, Philadelphia, Pa.
*

Taken at: Philadelphia Naval Base, Fourth Naval District.

Date: 7 May 1947

In the Presence of: Leslie R. Harrison, Jr., and James P. Fristoe,
Special Agents, 109th Counter Intelligence Corps
Detachment, Second Army

Reporter: Dorothy C. Kinslow, Stenographer, Philadelphia District
Office, 109th Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment,
Second Army.

Questions by: Leslie R. Harrison, Jr.

- Q. State your name, rank, serial number, and permanent home address.
- A. My name is Clarence M. Taylor, Lieutenant, United States Navy, Serial Number 83478. My home address at present is 925 Potter Street, Chester, Pa. I am permanently assigned to the Fourth Naval District Staff Headquarters.
- Q. State the date and place of your birth and personal circumstances prior to World War II.
- A. I was born 24 October 1907 at Cloverdale, Virginia. I have been in the Navy for the past twenty-one years.
- Q. Were you a Prisoner of War?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Have you recently been returned to the United States from overseas?
- A. Yes. I landed in Oakland, California, 12 October 1945.
- Q. At what places were you held, and state the approximate dates.
- A. I was captured on Corregidor 6 May 1942. I was transported, along with other Prisoners of War, by ship and barge to Bilibid Prison in Manila. I remained at Bilibid Prison for approximately three days, and then was transferred by train to the City of Cabanatuan, and from there, approximately ten kilometers distant, to an area that later became Cabanatuan Prison Camp No. 1. I arrived at that camp 2 June 1942. I remained there until 19 October 1944, at which time I was transferred to Bilibid Prison by truck and, in company with other Prisoners of War, was placed aboard a Japanese prison ship. This ship left Manila on 13 December 1944 enroute to Japan, but was sunk by American planes on 15 December 1944 in the harbor of Olongapo, Philippine Islands. On 28 December 1944, I was placed aboard ship No. 2 and arrived in Formosa 10 January 1945, at which time I was transferred to another ship, which became

known to us as Ship No. 3. Shortly after being placed in a hold of this ship we were bombed by Navy fighter bombers in the Harbor at Formosa, causing the ship to settle on the bottom and killing many of the prisoners confined below deck. Three days later we were placed aboard Ship No. 4, which left Formosa and arrived in Moji, Japan, on the Island of Kyushu. This was the night of 31 January 1945. On 1 February 1945, we were taken to Camp No. 17 at Fukuoka, Japan, where we were confined until 17 August 1945, at which time the American Prisoners of War confined in that camp assumed operation of the camp and took over all areas.

- Q. State what you know concerning atrocities or abuses committed by Japanese upon Allied Prisoners of War while you were confined as a Prisoner of War in the Philippines Islands.
- A. While I was confined at Cabanatuan Prison Camp No. 1, the Camp Commander, name unknown, was aware of all abuses committed by men under him upon American Prisoners of War and I believe him to be directly responsible as I do not know that orders came to him from a higher authority to treat us, or permit us to be treated, as harshly as we were. In approximately August 1943, the Camp Commander ordered the execution of two Army Lieutenant Colonels, whose names I do not know, and a Lieutenant Roy Gilbert, United States Naval Reserve, who allegedly attempted to escape. These men were not given a trial. They were stripped, beaten, and executed approximately one hundred and fifty yards away from our barracks in clear sight of us American prisoners. Among the witnesses were Jesse K. Lee, Boatswain, United States Navy, from the 11th Naval District; E. W. Downey, Boatswain, United States Navy, from the 8th Naval District; and T. E. Turnipseed, Radio Electrician, United States Navy, PRNO.

Also stationed at this camp was a three star private by the name of Ihara. He was also known to us as "Air Raid". He was in charge of the prison farm. He was very sadistic and would beat one or more prisoners each day for the slightest infraction of the varying and changeable rules. Our beatings were administered with a heavy stick or club and his favorite sport was to line up a dozen Americans and force them to beat each other with their fists. If he decided that any individual was not beating another hard enough, this person was singled out and Ihara would beat him severely in demonstration of the way he wished other prisoners treated. I would describe Ihara as a typical Jap, approximately 5'2" in height and weighing approximately 155 pounds. He spoke no English other than the small amount or few words that he picked up in conversation with prisoners. He wore large, round, horn-rimmed glasses and was of a slim build. I do not recall that he had any peculiarities of speech or action that would enable me to further the identification. He would often use the flat side of his bayonet in these beatings and produced injuries of a permanent nature on five or six men confined in the camp. I cannot recall the names of these men at this time.

Also stationed here was a Japanese Army private, a Formosan, by the name of Chinboya (phonetic). He was known to us prisoners as "Laughing Boy", and was the most vicious of all the guards. He would force prisoners to load vegetables onto a litter, which was of heavy construction anyway, until it weighed in the vicinity of 700 pounds. He would then attempt to force four men to carry it for over a mile. When anyone faltered, he would beat them into insensibility with a club. His nickname was determined through his pleasure evidenced while beating American prisoners. Arthur Bernath, an Army Major, who was known as "The One Man Army", was singled out by Chinboya as soon as he learned that Bernath was a well known individual; he stated that he would work over "The One Man Army". He beat Bernath so severely with a club that Bernath was laid up several weeks and probably carries scars of this beating until this day. I would

describe Chinboya as being approximately 5'6" or 5'8" in height and weighing approximately 160 pounds. He was well built, strong and solid and presented a very neat appearance.

There was a Japanese by the name of Shintuska (phonetic) who was the tool room keeper and guard at the Cabanatuan Prison Camp farm. He would stand in the tool shed, which was a large shack with a door at each end, and beat each prisoner with a pick handle as the prisoner went through the building and took a tool for work on the farm. The prisoners were forced to run through this building, through one door and out the other. The longer they were required to stay inside the building, of course, forced them to take a heavier beating from Shintuska. If they obtained the wrong tool they were severely beaten by another guard due to their failure to get the right one the first time. This happened every morning about 7 A. M., when the men obtained the tools and again at 5 P. M., as they returned them. The Camp Commander was directly responsible for this as he has ordered Shintuska to get the men out of the tool shed faster so that they could work longer hours. Shintuska was approximately 5'11" in height and weighed approximately 180 pounds. He was very tall for a Jap, but was exceptionally well built. However, he was nervous and erratic as evidenced when Ship No. 1 was sunk by American planes, as I shall explain later. Shintuska lost his head and fired a machine gun into the hold where prisoners were confined, causing many casualties.

First Lieutenant Okemoda, height, 5'5", weight, approximately 160 to 180 pounds, hair clipped in Japanese Army manner, was Officer in Charge of guards. He spoke fair English and wore glasses. I know of no other identifying features. One day in the absence of the Camp Commander, he ordered an American soldier, name unknown, to be shot in full view of other prisoners of war after the prisoner dug his own grave. He passed sentence on this man because he allegedly attempted to escape. The man was given no trial to prove this allegation. The American soldier was of Mexican lineage and his home was located in New Mexico. Actually, the man had been observed by the Officer of the Day speaking with one of the guards, which was against the rules. The Jap soldier, in order to protect and cover his own breach of rules, accused the prisoner, in the presence of the Office of the Day, of attempting to escape. The execution was thereupon ordered without further investigation. I believe that Okemoda was directly responsible for all abuses committed by guard personnel at Cabanatuan Camp No. 1. Although abuses and atrocities committed by personnel under him were reported to him he made no attempt to rectify matters.

Although there were other abuses committed by Japanese Army personnel at Cabanatuan Prison Camp No. 1, I would say that it was a daily occurrence that each man was beaten or cut in some way by a member of the guard force. However, the foregoing testimony relates the main incidents of abuse committed by individuals who were most sadistic in their treatment of American Prisoners of War.

Q. Relate the circumstances surrounding the transfer of American Prisoners of War from Cabanatuan Prison Camp No. 1 to Fukuoka Camp No. 17, Island of Kyushu, Japan.

A. A Lieutenant Tishima and his interpreter, a Japanese civilian by the name of Wada, accompanied us American prisoners on the Japanese ship that left Manila on 13 December 1944 bound for Japan. Tishima was approximately 5'7" in height, and weighed about 150 pounds. He presented a very military appearance, wore glasses, spoke excellent English, and I would say that he was the unemotional type. However, he was not a capable person, especially in assuming command during a period of crisis. Wada was a civilian interpreter. It is my impression that he was a civilian in the Philippines at

the time the Japs invaded the Philippine Islands, and collaborated closely with the Japs upon the arrival of the Japanese Army. There were 1618 prisoners destined for prison camps in Japan, and these men were loaded on the ship in Manila harbor, the name of which I recall as being Okoru Maru. Five hundred men were placed in the forward hold and approximately 850 in the after hold. The remainder were placed in No. 2 hold. Each hold was of the same capacity and if the men had been distributed more evenly fewer deaths would have resulted from this trip. Approximately forty men died of suffocation between 13 December 1944 and 18 December 1944. On the latter date American planes sank the ship in the harbor of Olongapoo, Philippine Islands. On 14 December 1944 due to the proximity of American planes, Japanese civilians, approximately 3000 in number, who were also destined for Japan, were disembarked; but the prisoners were kept aboard the ship until it was attacked by the planes which engaged in bombing and strafing. There were approximately five hours during which time the prisoners could have disembarked, but were not allowed to do so. Approximately 1300 men survived this attack and were assembled on a tennis court in Olongapoo. Although food and cooking facilities were available, Lieutenant Tishima refused to give the prisoners anything to eat other than a tablespoon of raw rice per day for a period of three days. We were then moved by truck to San Fernando, Pampanga Province, where we were held for approximately two days in a theater building, during which time we were given a total of two meals, consisting of one canteen cup of cooked rice. From there we were taken by box car to San Fernando, La Union Province, where we were held for two days in a school building and given a total of two meals, each consisting of a canteen cup of cooked rice. We were then marched barefoot five miles over a rocky road, from the school building where we were confined to the beach. During the march, the guards were under orders from Tishima to beat any man who straggled. We were forced to walk although trucks were available. When we reached the beach, we were held two days in the sun. Although both food and water were available, we were given only one rice ball, approximately two inches in diameter and three measured tablespoonsful of water during this period. The trip across Luzon resulted in the death of at least 25 Americans due to insufficient nourishment and fatigue.

I was a member of a group of 236 prisoners who embarked on what is known to me as Ship No. 2, at San Fernando, La Union. It took us ten days to reach Formosa, and the only food we had during this period was the small amount of rice, which represented the leavings of four Formosan guards, which was tossed from their food cans into the hold in which I was confined. Naturally, there was quite a bit of rivalry to obtain even a small bit of this rice. The ship carried sufficient water for the trip but we were issued only two tablespoonsful twice a day. On New Year's Day a box of hardtack was thrown into the hold and distributed, giving each man a small piece. Due to the lack of food and water on this trip, many men died and although Mr. Wada and Lieutenant Tishima were repeatedly informed of the deplorable conditions on this ship, they merely laughed and presented a disinterested attitude.

Approximately four or five days after we landed in Formosa, we boarded another ship, name of which I do not recall, that I shall refer to as Ship No. 3. We were thrown into No. 3 hold which was very crowded and there was not sufficient space for each man to lie down. We received one-half cup of dry rice twice daily, so we felt that this ship was feeding us better than the other two. Two days later, a flight of two Navy planes flew overhead and as we were tied up with an oiler, we presented probably the best target in the harbor. The ship was hit by two bombs, one which hit the No. 2 hatch and caused a large beam to fall on the prisoners in the hold and another near miss which sent shrapnel through the side of the ship causing many casualties. The ship settled slowly into the harbor; approximately 350 men died in this raid and the bodies were loaded onto barges and were then taken to the beach and cremated.