

Biographical Sketch
Chester Keiser Britt
by his son, Donald E. Britt

Born June 13, 1915.

Hometown --- La Crosse, Wisconsin

Graduated from West Point, USMA, in 1940

U.S. Army #0-23078

Served under Lt. Col. Alfred J. D'Arezzo, #0-21109

92nd Coast Artillery Corps, Battery "D"

Involved in Evacuation of Fort Wint, Grande Island, Philippines into Bataan

301st Field Artillery, Battery "A"

Bataan Death March survivor

Camps incarcerated at in the Philippines:

Camp O'Donnell

Cabanatuan

Davao Penal Colony, Mindanao Island

Cabanatuan

Bilibid Prison

Moved to Japan and Manchuria:

Oryoku Maru

--- bombed in Olongapo Bay, abandoned ship

Enoura Maru, horse freighter to Formosa

--- bombed in Formosa harbor, abandoned ship

Brazil Maru to Moji, Japan

--- Arrived on January 29, 1945

Fukuoka Camp #3

--- January 30-April 24, 1945

Shipped to Fusan, Korea - April 26, 1945

Sent by train to Mukden, Manchuria, Camp Hoten

--- April 29-September 2, 1945

Liberated:

Left Mukden upon liberation, September 2, 1945,

was hospitalized in several places --- Siam, Kunming, Manila.

Deceased:

Died on July 6, 1953, after having suffered a stroke 2 years before, of a rare disease called periarteritis nodosa. He was 38 years old at the time of death.

When we left the ship we had to shift for ourselves and find our own life preservers, boards, or whatever article we could to help us get ashore. I believe the distance most of us had to swim to shore was about 300 yards. Before leaving the ship, we took off all clothing except our shorts and shirts. As the Japanese took no charge of the abandoning of the boat, it was up to us to get off as best as possible, and make our way ashore. The shore was lined with Japanese soldiers armed with machine guns, rifles, and automatic weapons. They did not hesitate to use these against us, and many prisoners were killed or wounded in the water and never reached shore. The Japanese were very nervous and apparently afraid we would escape. Those of us who did reach shore were taken to a tennis court in the Olongapo Naval Yard, and confined in that small area. After a count was made, in the tennis court, it was found that there were approximately 1300 survivors.

It is obvious that while confined in the area of this tennis court, we were very crowded. During this time American aviators were bombing and strafing the area but they apparently recognized us and we were not hit. For a period of 2 days, during this confinement, we received no food, nor were we issued any clothing. We were exposed to the heat of the sun during the day, and to extreme cold at night, and many men suffered from this direct exposure. When the Japanese did finally feed us, each man received about one GI spoonful of raw rice per day, with about a canteen full of water per man per day. One enlisted man had his arm amputated without any anesthetic or anesepctic, and he died the next day. We received absolutely no medical help during this time, from the Japanese. On the 20th of December we were moved by truck to San Fernando, Pampanga, and were placed in the city jail. It was there that we received our first cooked meal, since leaving the ship. While here, several men died, and about 15 of the more sick were taken out to be moved back to Bilibid Prison. On the 24th of December, we were moved to San Fernando, LaUnion, and spent Christmas Eve on the railroad station platform. We received no food or water all that day. Our move from San Fernando, Pampanga to San Fernando, LaUnion was made in Phillipine boxcars, and about 100 men were crowded into these cars, making it necessary for about one-third of us to stand during this trip. During this trip it was extremely hot, and ventilation was poor. Men passed out regularly; as soon as this happened the victim was moved

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up near the doorway until he revived, and would be moved back as other men were moved up to be revived. We started to tear holes in the box car to get more air, but the Japanese threatened to shoot us so we were forced to discontinue this project. Due to the fact that only so many men could be put inside the boxcars, many had to ride on the top of the cars. We had no latrine facilities in the car whatsoever and were obliged to relieve ourselves out thru the door—we were even required to get permission of the Japanese guard to do this. At San Fernando, LaUnion, we were marched to the school yard and were kept there until the middle of the night. We were then marched to the beach — everyone was barefooted, and placed among gasoline dumps to await embarkation on another ship. On Dec. 27th, from 2 to 4 AM, we were very roughly put aboard a horse freighter, which had not been cleaned after use by its former occupants. We sailed about 8 o'clock that morning for Formosa and on the 28th, three torpedoes were fired at us but missed. On the 29th of December our convoy suffered an air attack but our ship was not hit, and we finally arrived in Takao Bay, Formosa. From the 30th of December 1944 to the 9th of January 1945, we received an average of 2 meals a day, consisting of one-half a canteen cup of rice per meal, and approximately eight GI spoonfuls of water. Latrine facilities were very bad; we were allowed to use five gallon cans and had great difficulty in getting them emptied. Conditions underfoot became very filthy, and the hold was filled with flies. During this period, an average of 5 men died per day from dysentery, exhaustion and exposure. The corpses were not covered, and we had to leave the bodies in the hold until the following day, at which time the Japanese guards would haul them out by means of a rope and dispose of them. On the morning of January 9th, the freighter was bombed; one bomb landing in the forward hold killing about 224 of the approximate 473 prisoners. In the 2nd hold about 50 men were killed; mainly from the machine gun fire of the dive bombers. Many men were wounded and sick but we were not given any bandages or medical supplies, although we could see Red Cross medical supplies on the deck of the ship. Men who could spare their clothing, tore up what clothing they had, to give to the medical officers to use in bandaging up the more seriously wounded. For two days the holds were piled with the bodies of the dead, and conditions became worse hourly. Men became so hardened that they would sit on the bodies of their dead comrades and eat their lunch. The odor caused by body waste and the dead was undecipherable and almost choked one. On January 11th these bodies

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were removed and taken ashore on a barge by a detail of prisoners for burial.

On this same the survivors of the two holds were consolidated, taken off the ship and put on a third ship. From the period of January 12th to January 29th we were enroute from Takao to Japan. During this time we received a canteen cup of rice per day and about one-sixth of a canteen cup of water. Our officer in charge pleaded with the Japanese interpreter for more food and water, and was told that all Americans were murderers and deserved nothing. The name of this interpreter was Mr. Wada, a civilian. He was a rather meek appearing individual with a hunch back, and wore heavy rimmed glasses. He was said to have operated a store or some type of business in California prior to the war. The Japanese officer in charge of us on the entire trip was a Lt. Tashino. We were never able to contact him and he took no interest in us whatsoever. We still had not been issued any additional clothing and had to huddle together, and massage one another to keep from dying of exposure. Many men died hourly from exposure, starvation, dehydration, dysentery and complete exhaustion. Due to the lack of clothing some men who were too weak to defend themselves, were stripped naked just before they died. Watches and West Point rings were traded undercover to members of the crew for small amounts of water. The ship was followed and attacked several times by American Submarines but was luckily never hit. We sailed during the day and anchored at night so that our chances of getting through would be increased. Toward the end of the trip men became so weak that most of them could not move about. On January 30th, upon our arrival at Moji, those able to crawl up onto the deck were issued shoes and clothing. We disembarked, at Moji, and were then marched in small groups into a theatre building, where we were confined the remainder of that day. An estimated total of 450 of us reached Moji alive, but due to the poor physical condition of the men, many more died after reaching Japan. In my group of 100, 24 died after arrival. I normally weighed 190 pounds, but after this trip it had fallen to 100. I believe that today there are about 230 survivors out of the original figure of 1619 prisoners who originally boarded the Oryoku Maru.

The following named men underwent the same privations as myself and would be able to substantiate the above given facts: George C. Faulkner, 1st Lt. A.C. from San Francisco, California, Cecil LeBrun, Captain, C.A., from Van Buren,

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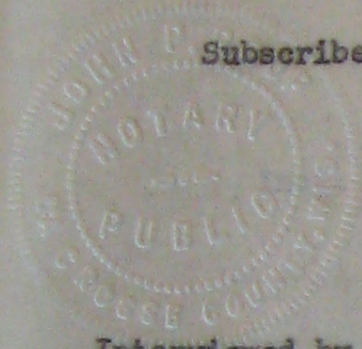
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Maine, Sidney Stewart, Sgt., from Texas, and Maynard Booth, Captain, Inf., from South Dakota.

The testimony I have given covers all the pertinent facts of this incident that I am now able to remember.

Chester K. Britt
CHESTER K. BRITT, Captain

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30 day of Nov 1945.



John P. ...

My Commission Expires
February 8, 1948

Interviewed by William H. Showers, Sp. Agent SIC

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DAVAO

1914

X BRITT, ✓	Chester K.	1st Lt	Army	1915	X BUNN, ✓	Kenneth I.	1st Lt	Army	1916
X BRITT, ✓	George T.	Major	Army	1904	X BURGESS, ✓	Harland F.	Lt Col	Army	1899
BRITTAN, ✓	Robert Neil	Lt Col	Army		✓ BURKE, ✓	Joseph C. ✓	Cpl	Army	
X BROCK, ✓	Clyde I.	S/Sgt	Army		X BURKS, D	Sanford R.	Private	Army	
X BROMEYER, D	James R.	Captain	USMC		X BURLANDO, ✓	Robert C.	Captain	Army	1917
X BROKAW, D	James C. Jr	1st Lt	Army		X BUREOLA, D	Reginald	Private	Army	919
✓ BROTHERSO, ✓	Charles R. ✓	Private	Army	1920	✓ BUSBY, ✓	Frank D. ✓	Private	Army	1921 17
✓ BROWN, ✓	Aloysius Wendell ✓	Private	Army	1915	✓ BUSE, ✓	Sam P. ✓	S/Sgt	Army	1916
✓ BROWN, ✓	Charles Minor	Captain	Army	1905	✓ BUTLER, ✓	James D. ✓	Private	Army	1920 9
X BROWN, ✓	Ernest L.	Captain	Army	1918	X BUTLER, ✓	John F. ✓	Private	Army	1921
X BROWN, ✓	Frank O.	Captain	Army	1917	X BYARS, ✓	Stephen M. Jr	Captain	Army	1916
X BROWN, D	George Robin	1st Lt	Army		X BYRUM, D	Harry E. Jr	Pvt lcl	USMC	
X BROWN, D	Harold B. ✓	Pvt lcl	Army		✓ CAFFOLA, D	Orlando E.	Private	Army	
X BROWN, ✓	Marvin Lee	Private	Army	1908	X CAIN, D	James Rupert	M/Sgt	Army	
X BROWN, D	Paul T.	Private	Army		X CAIN, ✓	Memory H.	Lt Col	Army	1894
✓ BROWN, ✓	Robert Morris	Cpl	Army		X CAIN, D	William P.	1st Lt	Army	
✓ BROWN, D	Roy A. ✓	Cpl	Army		✓ CAIRNS, ✓	Leonard Stanley	Captain	Army	1912
X BROWNE, ✓	Charles Janvrin	Major	Army	1914	✓ CALDWELL, D	Melvin ✓	Sgt	Army	
X BROWNE, ✓	Frederick B.	2nd Lt	Army	1916	✓ CALVAGE, ✓	Frank Tony ✓	Pvt lcl	Army	1921
✓ BROWNE, ✓	Vere R.	Captain	Army	1896	X CALVERT, ✓	Wilbert A.	Captain	Army	1916
X BROWNING, D	Paul L. ✓	Pvt lcl	Army		✓ CABELL, ✓	Hays ✓	Cpl	Army	
BRUAW, ✓	Michael H.	T/Sgt	Army	1897	✓ CAMPBELL, ✓	Charles Rumpy ✓	Cpl	Army	1919
✓ BRUBAKER, ✓	Paul K. ✓	Private	Army	1917	CAMPBELL, ✓	James Albert	S/Sgt	Army	
✓ BRUCE, ✓	Charles T. ✓	Pvt lcl	Army	1917	✓ CAMPBELL, ✓	Vern D. ✓	PO 2cl	Navy	1917
✓ BRUMLEY, ✓	Chester H. ✓	Pvt lcl	Army	1917	✓ CAMERON, ✓	Phillip J. ✓	Private	Army	1920
X BRUNDRETT, ✓	George C.	Captain	Army	1911	xx CANBY, ✓	Charles S. ✓	Major	Army	1895
BRUNN, - ✓	Othello Christian	Ch WO	Navy	1902	✓ CANCINAS, D	Benjamin	Private	Army	
X BRYAN, - ✓	William C.	1st Lt	Army	1919	X CAPLAN, D	Hilbert B.	Private	Army	
X BRYANT, - ✓	Alton H.	2nd Lt	Army	1919	xx CAPUTO, D	Marco A.	Private	Army	
X BRYANT, - ✓	Otis Connor	Captain	Army	1909	X CARBERRY, ✓	Richard E.	Captain	Army	1905
✓ BRZAK, ✓	Tony A. ✓	Cpl	Army	1918	X CARL, ✓	Jeff C. ✓	PO 2cl	Navy	1919
X BUBOLTZ, - ✓	Walter J.	Captain	Army	1902	X CARLETON, ✓	Robert K.	2nd Lt	Army	1917
X BUCHMAN, ✓	Arthur H.	2nd Lt	Army	1918	CARLTON, ✓	Arthur B.	Lt Col	Army	1895
✓ BUCKNER, ✓	Houston B. Jr ✓	Private	Army	1916	✓ CARMICHAEL, D	John W. Jr	S/Sgt	Army	
✓ BUDER, ✓	Archie F. ✓	Private	Army	1918	✓ CARMICHAEL, ✓	Otis A. ✓	Jr WO	Navy	1904
✓ BUGGS, ✓	Wayne T. ✓	Private	Army	1919	✓ CARNLEY, ✓	William D. ✓	Pvt lcl	USMC	1921
					✓ CARPENTER, ✓	Dee ✓	T/Sgt	Army	1908

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