



U.S. ARCHIVE PHOTO

Approximately 10,000 men died during the Bataan Death March that began April 19, 1942.

The Bataan Death March

A battle of endurance, courage

The 27th Fighter Wing traces its lineage to the 27th Bombardier Group, one of the units whose men endured the infamous Bataan Death March.

The Bataan Death March began at Mariveles on April 10, 1942. Troops who fell behind were executed. Japanese troops beat soldiers randomly, and denied the prisoners of war food and water for days, and tortured them by sun treatment. POWs were forced to sit in the sun without shade, helmets or water. Anyone who dared ask for water was executed. On the rare occasion they were given any food, it was only a handful of contaminated rice.

Prisoners were allowed to sleep for a few hours at night and were packed into enclosures so tight that they could barely move. Those who lived collapsed on the dead bodies of their comrades. For only a brief part of the march would POWs be packed into railroad cars and allowed to ride. Those who did not die in the suffocating about seven more miles — taking more than a week — until they reached camp.

As the end of war came near, the POWs were transferred to other prison camps or hell-ships. The only ones left behind were those so ill they were expected

to die within hours.

General Douglas MacArthur vowed to return to the Philippines. Toward the end of 1944, a possible reentry into the Philippines was becoming a reality. The battle of Leyte Gulf in October was one of the initial steps taken toward an American victory over Japan.

The POWs in the Philippines could see American planes and hoped liberation would be coming soon. The Japanese realized the same thing and decided to move the POWs, causing thousands more POWs to die, this time, by the hands of America. The POWs were put on hell-ships.

The Shinyo Maru with 750 POWs was sunk on September 7, 1944. Only eighty-two would be rescued by Filipino guerillas. This was followed by the sinking of the Arisan Maru on October 24, the first day of the battle of Leyte Gulf. The ship went down 200 miles off the coast of China. Of the 1,790 POWs eight were found, five survived. Nearby Japanese destroyers saw the POWs in the water and pushed them away when they came near.

Finally, the Oryoku Maru went down on December 13. The 1,619 POWs were on the ship for forty-nine days. Amazingly, 1,300 survived.

Adapted from <http://history.acusd.edu>.



MACH METER FILE PHOTO

In April 2005, six survivors of the Bataan Death March broke ground for the Bataan Memorial that was formally dedicated Wednesday. Four survivors attended the ribbon cutting ceremony led by Col. Scott West, 27th Fighter Wing commander.



PHOTO BY GREG ALLEN

Airman 1st Class Victoria Buterbaugh, 27th Security Forces Squadron, presents a pair of scissors to each of the four Bataan Death March survivors who attended Tuesday's dedication ceremony as Col. Scott West, 27th Fighter Wing commander looks on.

Cannon dedicates Bataan Memorial



PHOTO BY GREG ALLEN

Cannon Airmen and the base public view the Bataan Memorial following a dedication ceremony Tuesday.



PHOTO BY GREG ALLEN

The Bataan Memorial is a privately funded effort made possible by donations from organizations and individuals.



PHOTO BY GREG ALLEN

Cannon Honor Guardsmen posted the colors Tuesday to begin the dedication ceremony for the Bataan Memorial at Cannon.



PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. CRAIG SEALS

The Bataan Death March Memorial's foundation is a map of the area where the march occurred. The three small pillars in the background pay homage to the three units involved in the march. The 200th Coastal Artillery Battalion, the 27th Bombardment Group and the 515th Anti-Aircraft Battalion. The large plaque on the right gives a brief history of the events surrounding the Bataan Death March.