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UNITED STATES NAVAL CENTER  
FARRAGUT, IDAHO

PERPETUATION OF TESTIMONY OF  
RICHARD ALPHONSE DENNIG  
ENSTON SC, USN 487224

My name is Richard A. Dennig. My permanent home address is 119 West Fourth Street, Shakopee, Minnesota. I am now 25 years old. I enlisted in the U. S. Navy in July 1938 and went to the Asiatic Fleet for duty. I served aboard the USS CANOPUS (Sub-tender) from February 1939 until the war started in December 1941. I returned to the United States on the 9th of September 1945. I re-enlisted in the Navy and am now on duty at the U. S. Naval Center, Farragut, Idaho.

When I left the USS CANOPUS, I served on Bataan until the fall, 8 April 1942, and then I went to Corregidor for duty. I stayed aboard that island until the final surrender, 6 May 1942. There I was taken prisoner by a unit of the Japanese Army and Navy and was held aboard the island for a period of approximately three weeks when I was moved by a landing barge to Manila, P.I. There I was forced to march about three miles through the city of Manila in what I believe was a victory parade for the Japanese. Our final destination was Bilibid Prison in Manila where I stayed for three days. Then I was transferred to Cabanatuan Prison Camp Number 3, where I stayed for about five months. During that time I saw only one incident that I thought was wrong. Either three or four men (I don't recall how many for sure) were shot to death for attempted escape. The men's stories were that they had missed the truck on their working party and that they were walking back to the camp to report in when they were apprehended by the Japanese guards and brought back to camp and accused of trying to make their escape. They were actually returning to the camp via the road. The Japanese did not believe them however, and after a very short trial with no defense they were ordered to be shot. They spent the entire day out in the broiling sun tied very securely and given no food or drink. Then at sundown, they were led out to their graves and shot. A proclamation was issued by the camp commander (Japanese) that it was done to serve as a warning for the rest of the prisoners. Many men in that camp died of dysentery and diarrhea, due to lack of medical treatment. The Japanese in that camp refused to give us any sort of medical treatment at all. I do not remember the names of any of the Japanese guards in that camp.

I was then put aboard an old cattle boat of the Japanese and taken to UMEDA BUNSHO, UMEDA, OSAKA, JAPAN. The entire trip lasted about three weeks. We were confined to the holds of the ship. There was not enough room for all the fellows in the holds to sit down at once, much less lie down during the night. Toilet facilities were provided by buckets given



to us for our use in the holds. Many of the men had diarrhea and it did not take long to fill up every one of the buckets. They would not let us dump them except at designated times and quite often the buckets overflowed onto the decks of our confines. About nine or ten of the men died on that trip and were buried at sea. I do not recall any of the names of any men involved.

I was then stationed at the Umeda Bunsho at Osaka, Japan. There were 400 American Army, Navy and Marines at the camp when we arrived. We arrived there on Thanksgiving Day of 1942. Most of the men had only the clothing they brought with them from the Philippines which was usually shorts. The Japanese issued every one of us one suit of clothes made out of what looked like gunny-sack material. It was very thin and not at all suitable for the cold weather that was then the case in Japan. Many of the men took sick but were forced to work regardless, thus causing their deaths. The entire camps in that area were supervised by a Colonel in the Japanese Army by the name of Marata Tyso. I saw him only once or twice in the entire time I was in that camp. Our camp commander was a man by the name of YAMATA Shoy, Lieutenant in the army. His executive officer was a Sergeant by the name of CANARI Socho. The other men at the camp were as follows: Yamata San - Army (retired) guard, nicknamed "Silly Willie", Shimiochi San - nicknamed "Shim". The rest of the men I know only by nicknames as follows: "Joe Hollywood", "Grandma", "Four Eyes". All these men were GUNZOKOS. There were a lot of civilian company guards but I do not remember any of their names. They changed guards quite often and we did not have much of a chance to get acquainted with them.

Quite a few of the men were sick by this time so they usually stayed in from work. One day the camp commander, Yamata Shoy, came into the sick-bay and took out three of the sick men and stood them at attention in front of the guard house. He then took off his sword and belt and proceeded to beat the men. He hit them with his fist and finally knocked all of the men down. He said that the men were not sick and were goldbricking and that he did that as an example to the rest of us if we tried it. One of the men in that experience contacted pneumonia and died a few days later. Many times did I see the Lieutenant hit the men for not saluting the right way. It was a rule that all of us were to salute all the army personnel in the camp and every time that we failed to do so, we were severely slapped and made to stand at attention for hours at a time. We were never issued any shoes regardless in what shape ours were at the time. We had to steal the Japanese rubber shoes and wear them. Of course, every time we got caught with stolen shoes or clothing on, we were punished for that too. Our clothing was of the type issued for the tropics and not for the temperate climate we were in then. Quite a few of the men contacted pneumonia, bari-bari and various other diseases for which the Japanese gave little or no medicine at all. They did get medicine in from the International Red Cross but they would not give it to us to use.

This Lieutenant, YAMATA Shoy, soon got transferred to some other camp and his executive officer, Canari Socho was then made commanding officer.



He was somewhat better in his command until he made warrant officer and then he turned for the worse. He knew of the many times that the men were beaten and slapped and did nothing to prevent it, even watching the proceedings at times.

Then this man was relieved by a Lieutenant whom we called "The Pig". It was during his command that red cross boxes started to arrive from the States. He was forever giving parties, etc., for all his girl friends and used the red cross supplies to do it with. They would have lots of saki to drink and while they were drunk, for their girl friends enjoyment, they would call out some American prisoner that they said had done wrong and beat him. He never did the beatings himself but ordered his staff to do it.

Then he was relieved by a Lieutenant who was very military but just as the Japanese go. He issued an order that the Americans would not be beaten or slapped unless authorized by him and he was very fair to all of us. We were still beaten quite frequently only out on our various work details, not in camp.

By this time it was early in 1945. Of all the men that had originally opened up this camp, approximately 130 of them had died due to malnutrition and disease. Every time the American planes flew over and bombed their country, the Japanese would take it out on the prisoners the next day. We were not furnished with adequate air-raid shelters the entire time we were in Japan.

We were then transferred to another camp at Tsuruga, Japan. Here we were again placed under command of "The Pig". We loaded and unloaded ships and box cars. We then got a new group of guards, some of whose nick names were as follows: "The Emperor" who used belts and belt buckles to beat us; "Stiff Arm" who had a dead nerve in his right arm, and he could beat us with it and never feel it himself. He is the one who broke many mens' ear drums and broke blood vessels in their cheeks. Here it was again that the Japanese had parties on the red cross food that the Americans had sent to Japan for our relief. All this time in Japan we were troubled with fleas and lice and were given nothing by the Japanese to get rid of the pests. We were not even given any soap to keep ourselves clean. We had to steal everything we wanted. Of course every time we got caught, we were severely punished. We were bombed out by the American planes about two months before the end of the war. None were hurt very severely but our home was burned to the ground. They then put us in the warehouse right on the dock. Our American camp commander tried to argue with the Japanese camp commander about the quarters we were furnished and how it was against International Law keeping us quartered on the target like that. "The Pig" told him there were no other quarters available for our use. We stayed in that warehouse for about one and one half months until one day we were blown out of there too.

Then came the end of the war and my return to the United States.

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State of Idaho        )  
County of Kootenai    ) SS

I, Richard Alphonse Dennig, of lawful age, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have read the foregoing statement consisting of three pages, and that it is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Subscribed and sworn to before me at the U. S. Naval Center,  
Farragut, Idaho, this 29th day of August 1946.

M. M. NELSON, Lieutenant Commander, USN