

BATAAN DEATH MARCH

Texas-born William E. Dyess (1916-1943) enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1938. In 1941 he became the commander of the Twenty-first Pursuit Squadron in the Philippines where he led many successful aerial attacks against the Japanese. With supplies and equipment to fight the Japanese dwindling in 1942, Dyess and his men were captured on April 8, 1942, at Bataan. They were then subjected to a brutal sixty-five-mile march across the Bataan Peninsula to prisoner of war camps. The environment was difficult enough, but what made the march particularly lethal was the atrocious behaviour of the Japanese soldiers guarding the American prisoners who, under accepted laws of warfare, were entitled to humane treatment.

The first thing I heard after our arrival was an urgent whispering which came to us from all sides. "Get rid of your Jap stuff, quick!"

"What Jap stuff!" we whispered back.

"Everything: money, souvenirs. Get rid of it!" We did so without delay—and just in time. Jap noncommissioned officers and three-star privates were moving among us ordering that packs be opened and spread out. They searched our persons, then went through the other stuff, confiscating personal articles now and then.

I noticed that the Japs, who up to now had treated us with an air of cool suspicion, were beginning to get rough. I saw men shoved, cuffed, and boxed. This angered and mystified us. It was uncalled for. We were not resisting. A few ranks away a Jap jumped up from a pack he had been inspecting. In his hand was a small shaving mirror. "Nippon?" he asked the owner. The glass was stamped: "Made in Japan." The solder nodded. The Jap stepped back, then lunged, driving his rifle butt into the American's face. "Yaah!" he yelled, and lunged again. The Yank went down. The raging Jap stood over him, driving crushing blows to the face until the prisoner lay insensible.

A little way off a Jap was smashing his fists into the face of another American soldier who went to his knees and received a thudding kick in his groin. He, too, it seemed, had been caught with some Japanese trifle. We were shocked. This treatment of war prisoners was beyond our understanding. I still didn't get it, even after someone explained to me that the Japs assumed the contraband articles had been taken from the bodies of their dead. I was totally unprepared for the appalling deed that came next [...]. The victim, an air force captain, was being searched by a three-star private, Standing by him was a Jap commissioned officer, hand on sword hilt. These men were nothing like the toothy, bespectacled runts whose photographs are familiar to most newspaper readers. They were cruel orfface, stalwart, and tall.

"This officer looked like a giant beside the Jap private," said my informant, who must be nameless because he still is a prisoner of war. "The big man's face was as black as mahogany. He didn't seem to be paying much attention. There was no expression in his eyes, only a sort of unseeing glare. The private, a little squirt, was going through the captain's pockets. All at once he stopped and sucked in his breath with a hissing sound. He had found some Jap yen. He held these out, ducking his head and sucking in his breath to attract notice. The big Jap looked at the money. Without a word he grabbed the captain by the shoulder and shoved him down to his knees. He pulled the sword out of the scabbard and raised it high over his head, holding it with both hands [...]. Before we could grasp what was happening, the black-faced giant had swung his sword. I remember how the sun flashed on it. There was a swish and a kind of chopping thud, like a cleaver going through beef. The captain's head seemed to jump off his shoulders. It hit the ground in front of him and went rolling crazily from side to side between the lines of prisoners. The body fell forward. I have seen wounds, but never such a gush of blood as this. The heart contin-

ued to pump for a few seconds and at each beat there was another great spurt of blood. The white dust around our feet was turned into crimson mud [...]. When I looked again the big Jap had put up his sword and was strolling off. The runt who had found the yen was putting them into his pocket. He helped himself to the captain's possessions."

This was the first murder. In the year to come there would be enough killing of American and Filipino soldier prisoners to rear a mountain of dead. Our Jap guards now threw off all restraint. They beat and slugged prisoners, robbing them of watches, fountain pens, money, and toiletry articles. Now, as never before, I wanted to kill Japs for the pleasure of it.

The thing that almost drove me crazy was the certainty that the officer who had just been murdered couldn't have taken those yen from a dead Jap. He had been in charge of an observation post far behind the lines. I doubt that he ever had seen a dead Jap. Gradually I got control of myself. By going berserk now I would only lose my own life without hope of ever helping to even the score.

The score just now was far from being in our favor. The 160 officers and men who remained of the 21st Pursuit Squadron were assembled with about 500 other American and Filipino soldiers of all grades and ranks. They were dirty, ragged, unshaven, and exhausted. Many were half starved [...]. We stood for more than an hour in the scalding heat while the search, with its beating and sluggings, was completed. Then the Jap guards began pulling some of the huskiest of our number out of line. These were assembled into labor gangs, to remain in the area [...].

The Japs made no move to feed us. Few of us had had anything to eat since the morning of April 9. Many had tasted no food in four days. We had a little tepid water in our canteens, but nothing else [...]. When I thought I could stand the penetrating heat no longer, I was determined to have a sip of the tepid water in my canteen. I had no more than unscrewed the top when the aluminum flask was snatched from my hands. The Jap who had crept up behind me poured the water into a horse's nosebag, then threw down the canteen. He walked on among the prisoners, taking away their water and pouring it into the bag. When he had enough he gave it to his horse.

Whether by accident or design we had been put just across the road from a pile of canned and boxed food. We were famished, but it seemed worse than useless to ask the Japs for anything. An elderly American colonel did, however. He crossed the road and after pointing to the food and to the drooping prisoners, he went through the motions of eating. A squat Jap officer grinned at him and picked up a can of salmon. Then he smashed it against the colonel's head, opening the American's cheek from eye to jawbone. The officer staggered and turned back toward us, wiping the blood off. It seemed as though the Japs had been waiting for just such a brutal display to end the scene. They ordered us to our feet and herded us back into the road.

We knew now that Japs would respect neither age nor rank. Their ferocity grew as we marched on into the afternoon. They no longer were content with mauling stragglers or pricking them with bayonet points. The thrusts were intended to kill.

JAPAN'S COMFORT WOMEN

The abduction and forced recruitment of young females of various ethnic and national backgrounds (Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Japanese, and Dutch, among others) by the Japanese military as concubines for Japanese troops abroad remains unacknowledged by the Japanese six decades after the war. Known as 'comfort women,' these unfortunate females (including some preteens) were forced to administer to the sexual needs of Japanese officers and enlisted men alike and threatened with punishment and even death should they attempt to escape their horrible fate. The number of "comfort women" is estimated upwards of 200,000, with the majority of them Koreans. While the Japanese government issued an apology in 1993 for overseeing the brothels, in March 2007, prime minister Shinzo Abe continued to deny that women had been forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese. What follows is an excerpt from the reminiscences of one such unfortunate woman, Yi Okpun, who was twelve when she was captured by the Japanese.

The soldiers occupied an elementary school [in Taiwan] not far from the escarpment. It was a single-storey building with 17 classrooms. Each classroom was divided into three by wooden boards. There were about 40 women there. In front of the school was a sign saying, 'Commando Unit Comfort Station.' The distance from the barracks to the station seemed to me to be about 2 km.

On Saturdays, the Japanese soldiers formed long queues outside the school building. The ends of the queues were sometimes invisible. They each had a piece of paper with a red chop mark on it. They came from 9:00 a.m. until midnight on both Saturday and Sunday. Sometimes, after the soldiers had returned to barracks, officers came and stayed the night, leaving at about 5:00 a.m. On such nights we got no sleep. Each woman had to serve 20 to 30 soldiers a day. We were already very weak, but going without good food and being forced to serve so many men left some of us half dead. If anyone was too weak to work, the receptionist dragged them out and put a more healthy woman in their cubicle. Three to five weak women were typically kept in a back room without any food. If they thought such a woman could not recover her health with herbal tonics and medicines, she would be loaded on to a truck and taken to a mountain. She never came back. Anyone who died was also carted away to the mountain, the bodies left there, barely covered with grass.

If you wanted to survive, you had to be tactful. If we made faces at the men we were taken to a confinement room by the receptionist, so we smiled regardless of whether we felt like doing so. Each man was given 30 minutes in the cubicle, and I would try to prolong the time in an effort to lessen the number I had to serve, even to lessen the number by one. At first, I got away with this, but later on I was too exhausted to do anything but lie still like the dead with my face turned to the wall, avoiding his stare [...].

For my first eight months I only served Yamamoto, the captain of the unit. But once he was transferred to Tayoko, I had to join the other women and serve 20 or 30 men a day. It was better to serve officers, as they would order the proprietor and receptionist not to send anyone else to me until they were spent and satisfied.

During my time there I was called both Haruko and Kohana, whichever name the men chose. We took turns to cook our meals, typically rising at 5:00 a.m. We ate rice with some vegetables or pickled radish as side dishes. Since we were given food only twice a day, we were always hungry. We had breakfast in the kitchen at 9:00 a.m. and supper at 6:00 p.m. We often looked at each other's rice bowl, wishing we could have some of our neighbour's food as well. If one of us was ill or looked extremely hungry, we would each give them a spoonful from our own bowls behind the backs of the Japanese. But if we were caught sharing food, both sharers and recipient got a severe beating.

The Japanese had their own rations and didn't have to eat such meager food as we received [...]. The cubicles

were just large enough for two people to lie down in, and we each had two blankets for bedding. There was a small box for clothes and possessions and a dustbin in each room. Toilet paper was provided.

The soldiers all used condoms. We had a medical examination twice a month for venereal disease in a big room resembling a warehouse more than a hospital [...]. If the surgeon found any of us had caught a disease, he gave us an injection. The shot was so strong that we couldn't eat properly afterwards. It was said that the drug was strong enough to separate the womb from the body. We didn't have any cosmetics, and we were given two pairs of baggy trousers for our clothes in winter, spring and summer. There was a war raging, so we were not allowed to go out. Nevertheless, Yamamoto did take me out occasionally, and we went twice to a Chinese restaurant.

Because of the war we had to cut hay during the weekdays, wearing a military uniform topped by a cap. Each of us was told to cut a certain amount of hay [...]. On weekday evenings we were made to sing, dance and play the violin in the bomb shelter. Even there we weren't allowed to sleep properly [...]. The shelter was huge, 4 km long, big enough to accommodate all the soldiers. We were taught how to play the violin by the soldiers so that we could entertain them. They had eight instruments. If we couldn't play well, we were beaten. The men drank heavily and would quickly become very violent [...].

The war was coming to an end, and Japan was thrown on the defensive. The soldiers moved about in a frantic muddle. They fought during the day, and at night they hid in caves. As the American bombing raids became more frequent soldiers could no longer come to the school. Instead, they would abuse us in the caves at night [...].

When I recall my life, I feel an unspeakable anger rising in my throat. Whenever any of us were beaten by the soldiers for having shared our rice, I used to grind my teeth together, saying to myself: 'One day I am going to kill you all. I will wipe out your descendents.' At the same time I used to ask myself 'Why is life so tough? Why can't I have my life, instead of living so wretchedly?' I lived each day hating myself that I continued to live. One morning I left the shelter at 3:00 a.m. while the others were fast asleep. I went to the seashore, intending to throw myself into the water, but I didn't have the courage. I tiptoed back and never told anyone.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF A KAMIKAZE ATTACK

The term "kamikaze" (divine wind) evoked the miraculous survival of Japan against numerically superior forces centuries earlier when a threatening enemy fleet was dispersed by a timely typhoon. Seaman James Fahey (1918-1991) was a Manhattan-born antiaircraft gunner who served about the light cruiser USS Montpelier. He scribbled diary entries whenever he had sufficient paper and free time. In November 1944, his ship was participating in action in Leyte Gulf. The following excerpt is from his diary, which was published in 1991.

Monday, November 27, 1944

Jap planes were coming at us from all directions. Before the attack started we did not know that they were suicide planes, with no intention of returning to their base. They had one thing in mind and that was to crash into our ships, bombs and all. You have to blow them up, to damage them doesn't mean much. Right off the bat a Jap plane made a suicide dive at the cruiser *St. Louis*, there was a big explosion and flames were seen shortly from the stern. Another one tried to do the same thing but he was shot down.

A Jap plane came in on a battleship with its guns blazing away. Other Jap planes came in strafing one ship, dropping their bombs on another and crashing into another ship. The Jap planes were falling all around us, the air was full of Jap machine gun bullets. Jap planes and bombs were hitting all around us. Some of our ships were being hit by suicide planes, bombs and machine gun fire. It was a fight to the finish. While all this was taking place our ship had its hands full with Jap planes. We knocked our share of planes down but we also got hit by 3 suicide planes, but lucky for us they dropped their bombs before they crashed into us. In the meantime exploding planes overhead were showering us with their parts. It looked like it was raining plane parts. They were falling all over the ship. Quite a few of the men were hit by big pieces of Jap planes [...]

One suicide dive bomber was heading right [...] for us while we were firing at other attacking planes and if the 40 mm. mount behind us on the port side did not blow the Jap wing off it would have killed all of us. [...] Another suicide plane crashed into one of the 5 inch mounts, pushing the side of the mount in and injuring some of the men inside [...]. A Jap dive bomber crashed into one of the 40 mm. mounts but lucky for them it dropped its bombs on another ship before crashing [...].

Another suicide plane just overshot us. It grazed the 6 inch [gun] turret. It crashed into Leyte Gulf. There was a terrific explosion as the bombs exploded, about 20 ft. away. If we were going a little faster we would have been hit. The Jap planes that were not destroyed with our shells crashed into the water close by or hit our ships. It is a tough job to hold back this tidal wave of suicide planes. They come at you from all directions and also straight down at us at a very fast pace but some of the men have time for a few fast jokes, "This would be a great time to run out of ammunition." "This is mass suicide at its best." Another suicide plane came down at us in a very steep dive. It was a near miss, it just missed the 5 inch mount. The starboard side of the ship was showered with water and fragments. How long will our luck hold out? The Good Lord is really watching over us. This was very close to my 40 mm. mount and we were showered with debris. If the suicide plane exploded on the 5 inch mount, the ammunition would have gone up, after that anything could happen.

Planes were falling all around us, bombs were coming too close for comfort. The Jap planes were cutting up the water with machine gun fire. All the guns on the ship were blazing away, talk about action, never a dull moment. The fellows were passing ammunition like lightning as the guns were turning in all directions spitting out hot steel.

Parts of destroyed suicide planes were scattered all over the ship. During a little lull in the action the men would look around for Jap souvenirs and what souvenirs they were. I got part of the plane. The deck near my mount was covered with blood, guts, brains, tongues, scalps, hearts, arms etc. from the Jap pilots [...]. The Japs were spattered all over the place [...].

These suicide or kamikaze pilots wanted to destroy us, our ships and themselves. This gives you an idea what kind of an enemy we were fighting. The air attacks in Europe are tame compared to what you run up against out here against the Japs. The Germans will come in so far, do their job and take off but not the Japs [...]. You do not discourage the Japs, they never give up, you have to kill them. It is an honor to die for the Emperor. We do not know how many Jap planes were shot down or the total of planes that attacked us during all the action but they threw plenty of them at us [...].

The attack lasted for 2 hours, we went to battle stations at 10:50 a.m. in the morning and secured at 2:10 p.m. in the afternoon. The action took place not too far from Leyte. Every ship had its hands full with the Jap planes during those 2 hours. The Japs started the attack with 30 planes but after that more planes kept joining them.

JAPANESE BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

In 1925 the Geneva Convention banned both chemical and biological warfare. In defiance, Japan, under the guidance of Dr. Shiro Ishii (1892-1959), a member of the Army Medical Corps, initiated its own program to develop and test chemical and biological weapons during the 1930s and 1940s. Following Japan's invasion of Manchuria, Ishii began his experiments on germ warfare, among others with the infamous Unit 731, using Chinese as his victims. It has been estimated that roughly 200,000 deaths were caused by these various kinds of experimentation. American officials were eager to gain access to the Japanese research (and to deny it to the Soviets) and sought to keep much of Unit 731's work secret, even if this meant not punishing the principal perpetrators. Ishii, for example, went free in return for his assistance. The Soviets, who were no less fascinated by the implications of the Japanese research on biological warfare, placed twelve captured Japanese army personnel from the unit on trial in Khabarovsk, Siberia, in December 1949. The following excerpt is from the transcripts from that trial.

Evening Sitting, 26.12.1949, Examination of accused Nishi

STATE PROSECUTOR: Accused Nishi, what positions did you hold in Unit 731, and at what times?

ACCUSED NISHI: From January 1943 to July 1944, I was Chief of Unit 731's branch in the town of Sunyu. From July 1944 to July 1945, I was Chief of Training Division of Unit 731.

QUESTION: What did Unit 731 do? What were its functions?

ANSWER: Most of the work of Unit 731 was concerned with preparation for waging bacteriological warfare [...].

QUESTION: What bacteriological means did Unit 731 employ?

ANSWER: Its accepted weapons were the germs of plague, anthrax and gas gangrene.

QUESTION: Which of these disease carriers were considered the most effective?

ANSWER: Plague bacteria.

QUESTION: What methods of employing these bacteriological means were adopted by the Unit?

ANSWER: First, spraying bacteria from aircraft, second, dropping of porcelain bacteria bombs.

QUESTION: Were plague fleas employed to infect human beings?

ANSWER: Yes, they were employed in China

QUESTION: Will you tell the Court about the sweets which were prepared [...]?

ANSWER: They were not sweets, but ordinary chocolates, which were to be stuffed with bacteria and then wrapped in papers. The chocolates were to be of round shape—

QUESTION: What bacteria were these chocolates infected with?

ANSWER: [...] the chocolates contained the bacteria of anthrax. The chocolates were intended for sabotage actions.

QUESTION: Will you tell us what you know about the practical employment of bacteriological means of warfare by Unit 731?

ANSWER: I heard that the bacteriological weapon was employed against China in 1940. In August and September 1940, when I was at the headquarters of the Water Supply and Prophylaxis Administration in Peking, I heard there that bacteria were used in the Nimpo area, in Central China [...].

Evening Sitting, 27.12.1949, Examination of accused Mitomo

STATE PROSECUTOR: Accused Mitomo, when did you first join Unit 100?

ANSWER: I joined Unit 100 in April 1941 [...].

QUESTION: Tell us what activities were conducted by the 6th Section of the 2nd Division of Unit 100.

ANSWER: The main function [...] was to devise methods of bacteriological warfare and sabotage and the production of bacteria on a mass scale. This research was made in preparation for bacteriological warfare against the Soviet Union.

QUESTIONS: What germs primarily were studied?

ANSWER: Glanders, anthrax, cattle and sheep plague [...].

QUESTION: What were your functions in the 6th Section?

ANSWER: I was engaged, in the main, in cultivating the glanders germ. I also took part in experiments on human beings [...].

QUESTION: Tell us all you know about the experiments on human beings performed in Unit 100.

ANSWER: Experiments on human beings were performed in August-September 1944. These experiments took the form of giving the experimentees, without their knowledge, soporific drugs and poisons. The experimentees included 7-8 Russians and Chinese. Korean bindweed, heroic and castor-oil seed were among the poisons used in the experiments. These poisons were put in the food. The poisoned food was given to the experimentees five or six times over a period of two weeks. Korean bindweed was used mostly in soups, I think heroin in porridge, while tobacco was mixed with heroin and bactal. After eating the soup mixed with Korean bindweed the experimentees dropped off into a deep five-hour sleep 30 minutes or an hour later. After two weeks the experimentees were so weak that they could no longer be used.

QUESTION: What happened to them then?

ANSWER : For purposes of secrecy all the experimentees were put to death.

QUESTION: How?

ANSWER : There was the case of a Russian experimentee who [...] was put to death with an injection of one-tenth of a gram of potassium cyanide [...].

Evening Sitting, 28.12.1949, Examination of witness Furuichi

PRESIDENT OF THE COURT: Witness Furuichi, I warn you of your liability to criminal prosecution for giving false testimony. In court you must speak nothing but the truth.

WITNESS FURUICHI: I understand that —

STATE PROSECUTOR: Witness Furuichi, tell us, under what circumstances, and when, you began to serve in Unit 731?

WITNESS FURUICHI: I joined Unit 731 in July 1941 [...].

QUESTION: What have you to say about the work Unit 731 as a whole was engaged in?

ANSWER: Although outwardly Unit 731 was the Prophylaxis and Water Supply Administration, actually, it prepared for the conduct of bacteriological sabotage [...].

QUESTION: Did you take part in any expedition carried out by Unit 731?

ANSWER: Yes, in 1942, I took part in an expedition into Central China:

QUESTION: Tell us, what were the objects of this expedition and what did you yourself do during this expedition?

ANSWER: The chief object of the expedition into Central China was to carry on sabotage against the Chinese troops and the civilian population in the region of the town of Yushan. In July 1942, a group from Unit 731[...] arrived in Central China, in the city of Nanking [...]. The final number of men in our expedition was 150-160 [...].

QUESTION: What did the expedition do in Central China?

ANSWER: The work of the expedition in which I took part consisted in the following: this was a bacteriological attack by contaminating water sources, wells and buildings with the germs of typhoid and paratyphoid [...]. The bacteria were put into peptone bottles and these bottles were placed in boxes marked "Water Supply." These boxes were sent to Nanking by aeroplane [...].

QUESTION: What did you yourself do during these acts of sabotage?

ANSWER: I helped to throw the flasks containing bacteria into wells, marshes and the homes of civilians. At that time there were [...] two camps for Chinese war prisoners, numbering about three thousand. Three thousand rolls were especially made; members of the expedition took part in making these rolls. A little later, these rolls were contaminated with bacteria with the aid of a syringe [...].

QUESTION: What was done with the Chinese war prisoners after they had eaten these germ-contaminated rolls?

ANSWER: They were released from the camp in order to cause an epidemic of typhoid and paratyphoid [...].

QUESTION: Tell us, do you know anything about the experiments performed on the Unit's proving ground near Anta Station?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Tell the Court what you know.

ANSWER: Experiments on the proving ground at Anta Station were performed in 1944, in the autumn and winter. In these experiments the germs of typhoid and plague, and also of anthrax were used [...].

QUESTION: Tell us, were freezing experiments performed in Unit 731?

ANSWER: Yes. I saw such experiments performed [...].

QUESTION: Tell us about the experiments in freezing human beings.

ANSWER: Experiments in freezing human beings were performed every year in the Unit, in the coldest months of the year: November, December, January and February. The technique of these experiments was as follows: the experimentees were taken out into the frost at night, at about 11 o'clock, and compelled to dip their hands into a barrel of cold water. Then they were compelled to take their hands out and stand with wet hands in the frost for a long time. Or else the following was done: the people were taken out dressed but with bare feet and compelled to stand at night in the frost in the coldest period of the year. When these people had gotten frostbite, they were taken to a room and forced to put their feet in water of 5 C. temperature, and then the temperature was gradually increased. [...]

QUESTION: What other experiments and tests were made on human beings?

ANSWER: I know that [a] researcher [...] performed experiments in applying ulcerating gas to people [...].

QUESTION: In what condition were these people? What symptoms of illness did they show?

ANSWER: I saw people with big ulcers on their hands and feet [...].