

The Battle of Manila – Myth and Fact



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I have been one of the lucky few in American History who has both filed War Correspondent's reports from an active war zone, and who has owned a newspaper. It was only small, but owning it has earned me the right to hold a deep and abiding contempt for those of the revisionist liberal media hive who prefer to publish falsehoods than truths because they believe themselves the appointed filters of what constitutes history and what is mere fact filler. They have paved a road to hell along which good intentions trump outcomes, even when those intentions lead to catastrophe. To them, the evil of MacArthur is the counterpoint of Yamashita, an honorable man of good intent who should not be sanctioned by history irrespective of the consequences when he turned his back upon 100,000 Manileños.

*This is an edited text of paper I presented at a Battle of Manila conference at the Ortigas WWII Library on 7 February, 2008 and deals with the truths which my colleague Lucky Guillermo and I embedded in our film documentary, **Manila 1945 - The Forgotten Atrocities**.*



This is the cover girl for our video. We felt that this image told pretty much the whole story of the innocents.

I have stated from the outset, when I was first invited to present a paper here, that I am not an historian. I worked 35 years in California as a newspaper person and printer. I have retired from that to a life of reading and writing. My first writing was fiction--short

stories and novels—still my preference if I were not so addicted to history. Some would like to suggest I am still writing fiction.

But the demands of history are very interesting. I do not feel that the restraints of truth are a terrible burden to labor under. . But I have also discovered that truth is as elusive as water in your hand, it wiggles like an eel. My former partner in videos, Morgan Cavett remarked once, after we had two totally contradictory interviews, one with guerrilla Edwin Ramsey, and one with Luis Taruc. Each ended up calling the other a liar (Ramsey added "sonofabitch") (and Taruc added a "disrespectful womanizer")—Morgan, who was running the camera, said, "Well, that seems to be how history is constructed; our job is just to record what the participants say."

Trying to find out the truth about my father's life and work here in the Philippines, for instance, was a wonderful training ground. So many things written about him, and even by him, were untrue: his US Navy biography gives his birth year as 1902. Wrong. No one knew until the late 80's, just before he died, that he was born in 1900. The only document where he stated his correct birth date was his

marriage certificate; this was also the only document wherein my mom's age was entered incorrectly (probably to make it seem like she was eighteen instead of her real age: 16).



Filipinos learned to move fast – an art that saved many lives during the unpredictable events of the battle.

He included in his resume that he had two years of college at the University of Tennessee. And two more years at the University of the Philippines. Wrong again.

A search of records in Tennessee did not reveal him as a student at any of their campuses.

And as for UP, I found a letter from the bursar at UP indicating a partial refund of my father's tuition – at his request – as he was dropping his classes there.^[1]

The trail my father left behind was an intellectual boot camp, and led me to the National Archives in both Manila and in the United States, as well as to many military repositories of war documents. And, of course, to many people whom we interviewed because they either knew or had worked with Commander Chick Parsons, or had good stories to tell about him. While we did this, we inadvertently picked up hundreds of hours of wonderful – and now-invaluable oral history – as about 90% of these interviewees have died. I know there are several of you in here tonight

and I can only thank God that he has spared you! ^[2]

Now, more to the point of our documentary, Manila 1945, The Forgotten Atrocities. I will say that I stumbled across these atrocious findings while searching for my father. I acquired nearly all the still pictures as well as the military footage (both American and Japanese) at College Park, Maryland, as well as from local historians such as Ricardo (Rico) Jose and Edgar Krohn and, Ernie de Pedro at Santo Tomas, and the material to be found at the Lopez, Ayala and Intramuros locations. Videographer Lucky Guillermo, my partner in this film, has a surprising collection of WWII footage.

I found that the state of the war crimes papers in Manila was very poor with bundles of papers being tied together with a twine that was cutting into the deteriorating bundles. The photos seem to have disappeared long ago, and the woman whom I asked about them got very surly and uncooperative. This was probably an appropriate reaction to my natural charm.

In Maryland I learned to use white cotton gloves to handle any archival photographic material. All pictures copied were imprinted with the National Archives permiso and logo – [“Reproduced at the National Archives”]; all textual material was similarly marked as OK. You could stay there from 9:00 a.m. to about 9:00 p.m. And we did. We were carefully inspected as we left. I wanted to live there, I

mean inside there.

There are two very basic books on the Battle of Manila, Bibles sort of. One is Alfonso Aluit’s *By Sword and Fire* published in 1994; the other is a US Army publication of 1963 by Robert Ross Smith called *Triumph in the Philippines*. There are a lot more, including one I refer to herein published to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the catastrophe. More on this one later. But there is little that can be added to what is written in the first two. The many memoirs and personal stories lend depth and color and horror, and it is recommended to any student or researcher to read them all. There was also an early equivalent of Aluit’s book in Spanish called *El Terror Amarillo en Filipinas*, by Antonio Perez de Olaguer which was published in Spain in 1947 while the wounds were still open. An abridged version of this--in English--with a new title, a bit more politically acceptable these days, *Terror in Manila*, February 1945. This was undertaken by the Memorare Manila 1945 Foundation in 2005. These three books form a deeply and broadly researched platform from which to dive into the subject. I did not know of any of these in the mid-90s. The memories of those times were so dire that many memoirists, like Lourdes Montinola and Elena Lizarraga only dared face their pain after the passage of 50 and more years. [I am batting 500 here; Elena died shortly after our interview, but I am happy to say that Lourdes marches on strongly—though she is not here tonight because she is seeing a doctor.]



These kids are going to survive. Many did not.



Part of what used to be called "The Pearl of the Orient."

When I came across the War Crimes Investigation report ^[3] compiled during February, March, and April of 1945, I nearly swooned. There were dozens of people there that I knew or had known both before and after the war. I never knew that my father's office manager in Hong Kong had lived on Calle Estrada and that his father, Eustacio Barros, had been wantonly killed by a Japanese soldier when he left his burning house. I read about the massacre at the Perez Rubio home on Vito Cruz, complete with my own father's testimony. And the simultaneous massacre on the other side of the shared-wall at the home of Lianteng Sy (on Balagtas St.)—whose only surviving family member is a good friend of mine. On and on.

I also discovered that the massacre and rape of Manila was not owned by a Spanish and mestizo elite. Here were the names and pictures of Filipino after Filipino, plus Irish, Russians, Germans, Chinese, Spanish, Americans, Jews (of whatever nationality) all being killed indiscriminately. But at heart, it was a Filipino event, a Filipino massacre: a

nearly totally forgotten occurrence. And this became what I wanted to portray in our documentary. But at that time my main effort was to discover material about the Philippine resistance movement, the guerrillas, and wherever possible about my father in particular.

Finally, there was, on pages 33-35, the blazing testimony of Nicanor Roxas, a secretary to President Laurel in the provisional government, telling what he had been told by Pio Duran, the second supreme head of the MAKAPILI, that the Japanese had planned to destroy Manila and the civilian population. He said that the Japanese had located heavy artillery and aimed it at Manila from positions surrounding the city.^[4] In the documentary film by David B. Griffin it is said that Yamashita asked for instructions from Tokyo and the destruction of Manila and its population was his answer. I had not come across this brief documentary before doing my own, and I am surprised and gratified that our conclusions are nearly identical.

At the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia, we read guerrilla reports being radioed to MacArthur's GHQ outlining the build-up of defenses within the city of Manila by the Japanese. These reports ^[5] were from people like Captain Bartolomeo Cabangbang, who came in by submarine with my father on the east coast of Luzon, and Lt. Edwin Ramsey, leader of the East Central Luzon Guerrillas Area. This defensive/offensive build-up started immediately after the departure of President Laurel and others of his cabinet to Baguio. The communiqués are replete with locations of pillboxes, ammunition dumps, fortifications, troops, and information about buildings and bridges being prepared for demolition. This began while Yamashita was still in Manila.^[6] The fortification was going on during December and January. There is even one astonishing recommendation from Cabangbang in which he recommends to MacArthur that US planes bomb a certain location on the Escolta where Japanese had stored weapons and explosives.

That President Laurel was told by General Yamashita that Manila would be declared an Open City ^[7] may have been true. Even the guerrilla messages confirm this. But his words were belied by the heavy fortification of key points and intersections throughout the city, especially south of the Pasig River, and the setting of explosive charges in the important buildings and bridges. The Japanese Military Dispositions map which you will see in the video (albeit briefly) shows at least 15 manned fortifications throughout Manila during February 1945. A radio message to MacArthur on January 13, 1945, from Cabangbang, tells of Yamashita's reneging on his promise of an open city. His logic now was that "the complete demilitarization of the city would lay it open to a possible paratroop invasion from Mindoro." The General's reasoning is baffling, especially in view of the further observation in the same report that "As of January 7 [Japanese troops] have constructed foxholes and pillboxes on practically all street corners." ^[8]



With a raging fire a block away, these people seem remarkably unconcerned.



Another view of the former "Pearl of the Orient."

Does this sound like anyone is thinking "open city?"

In the video you will hear testimony from one woman, Lita Rocha Clearsky,^[9] who was warned by a Japanese officer to get out of Manila, to take everything and leave because Manila would be "no good." And Ramsey's agents reported that four German nationals in Manila received a circular from Japanese High Command to evacuate the city.^[10] It was known to the Japanese officers that Manila and its civilian population were going to suffer horribly; some were good enough to tell people to leave. Charo Manzano, who had spent months in Ft. Santiago after the disappearance of her army/guerrilla husband Narciso, told me that she was continually being warned by Japanese to move; they moved and they survived. Japanese planned out their neighborhood killings and knew about them in advance. There was for the most part not much randomness about these attacks

on civilians. Some people were lucky enough to be forewarned.

The two myths I have intended to put to question, if not demolish, with this documentary are:

1. That the city was destroyed because the American forces did not let the Japanese have an escape route; that they completely bottled up the Japanese who were forced to lash out, understandably and reasonably, in a fight to the death, much as cornered rats do; [the burning and demolition of the city began on the first three days of February—long before there was any encirclement by US forces.]; And that the concept of "shelling" be applied to both Americans and Japanese, even more so to the latter who had heavier weapons set up all around the city.

and

2. The equally indefensible, from my point of view, tenet that Yamashita intended to leave Manila an Open City. On this latter myth, a brief observation: Gen. MacArthur had left the city OPEN in 1941. There were no American or Filipino troops in Manila. All fortifications, like Forts Santiago and McKinley and Nichols Field were abandoned.[Side note: at the end of the war the Japanese were saying that every living Filipino was a guerrilla, regardless of age or sex, but in the early days no one knew this, not even MacArthur, nor any Filipino.] Yamashita, after telling Pres. Laurel he was going to declare Manila an Open City, dedicated 4,000 of his Shobu Force to defend North Manila. There was no OPEN CITY in 1945. And Yamashita was not a misunderstood and disobeyed saint. It was in fact these very forces that began the fires and massacres of civilians even before the Americans had set foot within the city.

It is also interesting that the Japanese planned a defense of the city of gradually falling back from their north Manila positions, crossing the Pasig and literally digging in among the local populace there. When they left north Manila they set in on fire. Not content with torching Binondo and Tondo, they also began setting fire to the Ermita area. So much for the bottle theory.

Two books, one by three British writers, *The Battle For Manila*, and *By Sword and Fire* by Alfonso J. Aluit, fall into the trap of blaming the Americans. The irony of the British book is that the conclusions of the authors do not coincide with the man who is largely responsible for funding their writing of the book, Roderick Hall, who is a survivor of the Japanese Occupation and of the Battle for Manila; it was all the more personal for him since the Japanese gratuitously killed his mother.^[11]

The British authors put it this way: “The third lesson (on urban warfare) is even more

mundane: never surround a city entirely, but always leave an escape route so that the enemy is not forced to fight to the death. Again, the Americans failed to bear this in mind.”^[12] Among my responses to this is: even if they were trapped, is that enough to excuse their wanton massacring of civilians? Aside from the fact that many if not most of the most egregious massacres occurred *before* the Japanese were sealed in. And since they had made every building in the city a fortress, it doesn’t seem to me they were planning an exodus. Or do they mean “fight to the death of all civilians?” This was a fairly rogue concept.

They began rounding up civilians in Fort Santiago on February 4th. On the 6th they start killing off these people. They also begin rounding up civilians along Singalong Street and beheading them—this went on for a long time. On February 9th behold the massacre of more innocents at St. Paul’s College; the near elimination of Elpidio Quirino’s family; the Vincentian Fathers and the Chinese civilians at the Paules Church on San Marcelino met horrible fates on this day. And the next day, the 10th is a particularly black date for Manila. The German Club was turned into a brutal and cynical killing field with no one spared on account of age, sex, nationality. *[Note: I have interviewed one of the two survivors of that massacre and her ordeal is told in my video.]* Various killings took place house to house throughout Ermita and Malate and Paco not to mention those committed at the Red Cross HQ on Isaac Peral.

And the Japanese were still not “bottled up” or trapped. Although some think this might have happened as early as the 10th, it is Rear Admiral Iwabuchi himself who declares this be a fact on February 17th, the date of the massacre of the San Juan de Dios Hospital staff.

But Aluit puts it this way: “...[General] Douglas MacArthur bears as much responsibility as [Rear Admiral] Sanji Iwabuchi does for the cruel fate that was inflicted on Manila.



Battle over, steel helmets parked, people still dazed but the tension is over.

“By adopting the strategy of bottling up the adversary in an area with a resident population of one million, the Americans permitted the Japanese no alternative but a last ditch, scorched earth stand. That the Japanese behaved like the cornered rat of legend was to be expected.”^[13] I have words to describe this observation that cannot be printed. Aluit’s own accounting of daily activity in the battle defies the logic of what he concludes. This amounts to one of the most unjustified and inaccurate statements ever made about the Battle of Manila.

This phrase “bottling up” the Japanese is in error, I feel; Japanese who wanted to were fleeing from Manila during the first two weeks of the battle. Robert Ross Smith says that about 4,500 of them escaped across the Marikina River. They had nearly free passage to the east, past Ft. McKinley. And even in mid February there was no action at either Nielsen Field nor at Ft. McKinley. And they had such a strong defense in the south of

Manila (Nichols Field) that the American penetration there was delayed until the 12th.

Roderick Hall has written me saying that it is his own opinion that MacArthur should have planned and launched two simultaneous attacks on the City, so that from the very onset of the Battle for Manila, Feb 3, the Japanese would have had their hands full on two fronts. He means that landings should have occurred on both Lingayen and Batangas beaches at the same time. And that this might have saved many lives.

The research materials available today were available to those writers in the early to mid ‘90s. The chain of command of the Japanese military organization was well understood, better understood by many others than by me. To establish an order, signatures had to go all the way up and down the chain of command in the Japanese military system. Signatures of staff officers, chief-of-staff, and commander-in-chief would all have to be on

the form that had to be delivered to the staff officer in charge of coded signals; the order would be copied to all ship captains, the commander of the naval base force, and the naval garrison unit^[14]. If this was the procedure for local decisions, consider the added complications of needing permission from Tokyo. Neither Iwabuchi nor Yamashita could have ordered the massacres that occurred without having received such orders, or received permission to commit them.

The important thing to remember is that they were doing what their Emperor would want, a “logic” that was behind all atrocities and brutalities committed by Japanese military forces during the war.^[15] It is important to note the hidden role of Emperor Hirohito in all the military actions of the war; and it is inconceivable to think that he did not know of the horrible things his troops were doing in China and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, as far back as the various “Rapes” in China and the Bataan Death March, including the horribly-conceived Ishii Unit 731 which had its biological warfare counterpart here in the Philippines—in Mindanao and who knows where else.^[16]

This, by the way, introduces another myth, that of the gentle, mild mannered marine biologist who happened also to be the Emperor of Japan. He was in fact a deeply militaristic person, having been taken away from his parents at an early age to be brought up by family members who were generals and admirals. He was interested in all facets of the war; he had agents reporting to him from the various fronts, and he knew about the horrors being committed in Bataan. He even had a relative in the armed forces in China, and it can surely be said that he even knew of the darkly secret doings of the Ishii Unit 7 and its devilish human experiments often sans benefit of anaesthesia. The fact that no one was tried from this “medical” group is a black mark on post war justice.

I wish that the Emperor would come under more severe attack these days (it is beginning—with books like Herbert Bix’s

Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan.) The fire bombings from B-29 attacks on Japanese cities were much worse than those of the two atom bombs; they killed more people, destroyed more cities and were more ghastly in their manner of killing—by suffocation, by melting, and by simple cremation. But the Emperor gave in only after the second A-bomb was dropped. I think that had he known there was no third bomb, we would be still fighting in Japan today. Yes, the Emperor was a war criminal of the first order.

The American troops in Manila had come across diaries of Japanese soldiers that revealed they had been ordered to kill all civilians on the field of battle; instructions were given as to how to carry out these orders in a most efficient manner (burning of groups that had been herded into houses, bayoneting, hand-grenading, and lastly, shooting). Decisions of this sort throughout the Japanese-occupied war theater were normally dictated from Tokyo. This was true even of the disastrous order to move Australian prisoners from one side of Borneo to the other – a decision which caused the elimination of ALL 2,500 Australian POWs (except for the six who escaped).^[17]

The unnamed and undistributed film by USMC photographer Captain David B. Griffin shows the finding of one such diary. It also shows a very-young Carlos P. Romulo stating that the Japanese had orders from as high as Tokyo to inflict death and destruction on the Filipino populace. His warnings that the guilty would be brought to trial proved toothless. But his statement that the film would be a witness against them was accurate, if only belatedly. It would be a good research project to find out why this film was suppressed.

One captured Japanese soldier, Taguchi Hiroshi ^[18]says he does not know why he was ordered to do such things, but he was. And he obeyed. He could only surmise that it was because the Filipinos preferred the Americans to the Japanese. As simplistic as this must sound, it is also probably an absolute truth in the limited mindset of the simple Japanese

soldier, that it had not started as a racist war, but it had become one now, and the Filipinos had become unworthy of the trust the Japanese had most generously extended to them. The culture of the Japanese military, the Emperor worship, the pride factor, the various codes of Bushido and Samurai all conspired to identify the unworthy Filipinos with the Americans, and beyond this, guerrillas all. Hiroshi was of a low rank, and one cannot expect him to have had a grand strategic thought in his head.

Here I feel constrained to add a viable alternative motive, one of a grand strategy brought to my attention by serious WWII commentators and observers: Tokyo was facing a more serious predicament than the mere loss of the Philippines. By this time, it was apparent, but unspoken at cabinet level that the war was lost, and that Japan needed to negotiate some sort of peace arrangement. But with what? There was very little to bargain with, in the political sense, so in the absence of anything positive, the extreme elements in the Army had decided to confront the Americans with their greatest fears--that the invasion of Japan could only be accomplished at the price of the greatest bloodbath of American manhood the world had ever known. What better way to place fear in the heart of the American planners than to make retaking Manila the most costly and terrifying presage of the war, a minor indication of a far more catastrophic outcome awaiting across the Japanese beaches and through every Japanese town and city. Manila was merely a junior grade indication of what they might face on the homeland, the Filipinos an expendable price to pay.

That the forecasts of American casualty figures for the invasion of Japan took into account an extrapolation of the military and civilian deaths during the Battle of Manila suggests that this approach was at least partially successful. This alternate view implies even more cynicism and cruelty than I had at first imagined.

In Manila, the thoughts of an escape route for the "bottled up Japanese" is totally

irrelevant. I have talked to Emmanuel Ocampo, a guerrilla with the ROTC Hunters, who has told me that the southern part of the city would have been easy for the Japanese to leave from had they wanted to. And this seems to confirm Rod Hall's thoughts that the southern attack began too late. The Lingayen invasion was on January 9; the 11th Airborne paratroopers (511th Parachute Infantry) did not begin to attack in the vicinity of Nichols Field until February 4th; they waited to be joined by the 188th Infantry coming down from Tagaytay Ridge. Then the combined forces, being shelled by Japanese artillery (from Fort McKinley), engaged the Japanese 3rd Naval Battalion in a battle to reclaim the air base. These were among the strongest defense positions in Manila and the US forces could not claim possession until February 12th.

The oncoming American force was somewhat undermanned and also somewhat lost and it actually depended on guerrillas for their advance to the city, which went along the coast from Cavite. But this begs the question. The Japanese in Manila (with few exceptions) did not intend to escape, and no one has yet written about their trying to or wanting to. Aluit himself writes that Gen. Yokoyama pointed out to Iwabuchi, as late as February 21, an escape route that a few others had been using, into the foothills of the Sierra Madre. Iwabuchi gave no response to this. This was essentially the same response he offered on February 14 when Yokoyama offered to organize a counter-attack to free Iwabuchi and his troops.^[19] The rear admiral was engaged in "gyokusai" (glorious self-annihilation).

The orders came from high up in the military command; they were carried out willingly and even gleefully. To accuse MacArthur of equal culpability is a real travesty of history and is totally unfair to a brilliant military man who personally cared for the country and its people. I suspect that in doing this, Mr. Aluit was responding to some revisionist pressure to bash Americans. The British authors seem to be flexing their intellectual military prowess in the comforts of

their English ivory tower. It is always a cheap and easy shot to demean Americans, especially dead ones. In these cases it is the truth that gets demeaned.

I confess to finding a definite and fairly strong anti-American, or at least anti-MacArthur bias in Aluit's book. But this is not altogether unusual. One of my oldest and best friends is Dr. David Steinberg is certainly no lover of MacArthur, and he is quick to let it show.

Aluit mocks the General when, at his speech in Malacanang Palace, returning the reins of government to President Osmena, he choked up and could not proceed. Aluit quotes the part of MacArthur's reminiscence that says "It had killed something in me to see my men die." And says that the General had nothing to say about the 100,000 civilian deaths. But why did he omit a very powerful and evocative sentence coupled to that quoted: "To others it might have seemed my moment of victory and monumental personal acclaim, but to me it seemed only the culmination of a panorama of physical and spiritual disaster." Does this make the man sound like a revenge-driven egomaniac, which is what Aluit claims for MacArthur. You can do anything with selective—and out-of-context—quoting.

He also demeans the American military policy of trying to protect "precious American lives." And he also does a deep intake of breath at the discovered cache of food at Santo Tomas Internment Camp, pointing out the scarcity of food in Manila.

Here is the monumental horde of food (in part):

40 2-oz bottles of Bovril; 120 pounds of coffee; 388 cans of corned beef; various cans of milk, both powdered and condensed; 122 kilos of tiki tiki; 300 2-5/8 oz cans of sardines; 300 6oz cans of dried peas; 6 pounds of black bean soup; kidney beans, 1239 kilos; mongo beans 283 kilos.

Ok, it seems like a lot at first glance, but here were about 3,500 people already on starvation diets. You figure how long this might last the prisoners. And yet the author writes: "It startles the mind that there was this much food of this kind at this time available in Manila. At least it was available for the Americans at Santo Tomas."

And why does he give a dig at the Lichaucos who were doing miraculous work at their home on the banks of the Pasig, by taking in hundreds of refugees? "In Santa Ana Marcial Lichauco had the problem of feeding 113 refugees in his home at 2915 Herran Street, but there was powdered milk and oatmeal for his daughters." Was this because Jessie is an American?

And how can a book of this magnitude and quality (it is possibly the best yet on this subject, given my own quibbling caveats) fail to mention the dirty work of the Makapilis. They get two mentions in the entire 456 pages. One is to comment that after the Japanese are routed from one building there were two Filipinos left inside, both of them Makapilis. The other mention of them gives an account of two Filipinos guiding some refugees to a "safe" place, only to return later, laughing with the Japanese soldiers who proceeded to kill the civilians who had thought they were well off. That's it. I am terribly disappointed in these uncalled for and rather stupid remarks of Aluit's; I can only imagine the kind of nationalist pressures being put on him. Filipino historians, expert in this phase of the war, tell me that it was the Makapilis, Filipinos, leading the Japanese to houses which they themselves set on fire. The Japanese then would kill those who fled the flames. Aluit's treatment of this grave Filipino problem is a serious flaw in his book.

I have talked with Filipino historians who have told me that had the American thrust towards Tokyo by-passed the Philippines, the suffering here by starvation and by Japanese brutality would have been nearly as bad, or worse, than what actually transpired. Guerrilla leader Ramsey wrote that "Manila [is] doomed

with widespread starvation”[20] There were guerrilla reports that the Japanese planned to take the entire new harvest of rice for their own military uses, and even supervise the harvesting to ensure this. Ramsey had written earlier that “In Manila [an] average of 100 persons [are] dying daily due [to] starvation. And Cabangbang had written on December 24 that the “Nip is busy killing civilians in Manila Districts and Bulacan towns just north of Manila” by gathering men, women and children and machine-gunning them. Town officials were being hanged and beaten. This apparently was a sort of preview show of things to come, or better yet, a dress rehearsal.

Which brings me to yet another myth about the Battle of Manila: the number of dead. The first time a number appears it is in Robert Ross Smith’s book. He tells how the US Army used the figures of the funeralistas who were tasked with picking up the bodies. To this is added an arbitrary number of those who were killed and never found; and another estimate of those who were burned beyond recovery. To show how arbitrary these figures are, one pair of historians shortly after the war, wrote that there were 240, 000 civilians who died during the battle.

I would like to add the deaths by starvation. If they were dying at the rate of 100 every day in December, what would have been the rate in February when food and water were essentially unavailable? So would this add another 6,000 people, mostly women and children? And those who died of some disease or sickness? Hardly any medicines or medical care was available. Why not add another estimate: say, another 6,000.

And what about the apportioning the responsibility for these deaths? Remember that everything here is an estimate, an arbitrary divvying up of sums. It seems that the convention is to say that of the 100,000, 30,000 were caused by shelling (meaning American artillery, thus absolving Japanese artillery of any culpability here?); the rest were caused by Japanese atrocities. What do we do now? Do we add 12,000 to the accepted

figure? Do we include these in that number and subtract 6,000 from the American and Japanese responsibilities?

If one would listen to Manila movie maker Nick de Ocampo, for instance when he spoke to the Manila Studies Association last August, one would hear this incredibly inept observation: “It is obvious that the destruction of Manila was caused by the Americans.” The destruction of Manila includes the buildings and its inhabitants. Why would the Americans destroy the bridges and then paddle across the Pasig River? Why would they fight their way up to the fourth floor of the UP (Padre Faura) building and then explode it from under themselves only to come crashing down with the debris? This represents to me the loose cannon type of historical comment. I feel that the Japanese, by all rules of war, Geneva Convention (which they had signed but not “ratified”), by all human considerations had a duty to evacuate themselves from Manila; they chose not to; in one sense ALL the deaths and demolitions are attributable to them. Other than saying that, it is entirely possible that the conventions in place are fairly accurate. No one will ever know for sure. But it remains certain that it was the Japanese who blew up most of the important buildings and destroyed the bridges and other infrastructure. And they were shelling Manila every bit as heavily as the Americans. The Yanks were using portable howitzers, whereas the Japanese were using bigger guns from all land-based compass points around the city. Further, the Japanese were shelling as heavily as they could, whereas the Americans were circumspect because of the restrictions under which they were operating. It is a grave error to consider that the word “shelling” applies exclusively to the Americans. the devil is in the details, it was a matter of intent - the Americans intended to do damage to the Japanese military targets, but the Japanese cared not a whit.

When you listen to and watch the people who survived, you will feel their anger towards the heavy artillery shelling by the Americans; but you will also sense their hatred of what the Japanese did. On balance, then and

today, they were glad to be liberated even at great cost to themselves and their beautiful city.

Mrs. Lita Rocha Clearsky has told us of how her aunt tried to wring the neck of an American artillery director for having very recently killed her sister, Lita's (and Johnny's too) mother. Friends of my father had their husbands killed by American shells. And no one can forget Carmen Guerrero's spitting on the first American she came across. Luckily for him she had no saliva, only lots of intention. What is interesting is that having given a long paragraph devoted to the horrors of Japanese brutality that killed and tortured members of her family, her most heated vilification is saved for the Yanks, and seems to have become a sort of fashion statement.

The "shelling" was not merely from the Americans, however, and I know that there are people in here tonight that could distinguish between the Japanese and the American fire,

and between mortars and howitzers. But after the Americans took over Rizal Stadium, the Japanese began to shell the area from Ft. McKinley. And it is really hard to understand how flying spotters for the Americans could not make out that people on rooftops waving at them were NOT Japanese. And why did they continue to direct artillery at PGH for over a week? I have a number of people who say they stopped waving and took to their shelters because every time they waved in friendship and hope, down came the shells!

One thing that no one mentions is the "infernal noise machines" [mentioned by Modesto Farolan in his war crimes testimony] meant to simulate artillery fire that the Japanese had set up at PGH. I have learned that these machines produced a flash and a noise that duplicated exactly the sounds of large guns. Perhaps it is too inconvenient a truth to include.





The Japanese would burn a home and kill those who fled the fire.

Yamashita never declared Manila an Open City, not when he was there and had the power and the authority to do so, and certainly not later when he was holed up in Baguio. The intent seems clear from the start to defend it to the last man and to kill off the civilians therein. Don't forget his leaving behind 4,000 of his own forces to defend north Manila. Nor that his reason for bringing the "puppet" government to Baguio was to save their lives! I think we should also remember that when these accused generals, like Yamashita, Homma, Yokoyama were testifying [my dad took us to several of the hearings at the US Embassy] they were not under any constraints to tell the truth before any Christian God; their purpose was to protect their own God, their Emperor. Better they should be found guilty of some US law than a man, a god, who we are finding of late was responsible for so much of the cruelty meted out by his troops throughout Southeast Asia, where they treated the captured and surrendered as "logs," and treated the civilians as worse. These generals

suckered the US legal system, and died happily in covering up their Emperor/God.

Today, nearly 70 years later, there are those afoot who would spend time and money to inform the world of Yamashita's innocence of the charges for which he was executed, of how he was legally railroaded on charges unheard of before, and of how General MacArthur (to assuage his own ego, of course) rushed Yamashita to trial and verdict.

Perhaps he should have paid the Japanese general in the same legal coin that had been minted to 2,000 Filipino guerrillas during December 1944 – their trials consisted of the accused signing his (or her) name, the giving of a thumb print, the reading of the charge and the pronouncement of sentence. In the event that a sentence of death was passed, the victim was not informed of this until arrival at the place of execution. Yamashita's

personal involvement in ordering and authorizing these summary disposals (and his personal message to those who effected these atrocities) are inconvenient facts to his apologists, and a clear example of how he was amenable to using atrocities as a tool of war.

These so-called proceedings gave even kangaroo courts a bad name, made all the more evil as they were being expedited so he could remove himself to Baguio, the summer capital, replete with the chosen few of the Philippine's collaboration cabinet.

Did Yamashita's trial in any way resemble these? His own conviction was cleared through the highest level of the US justice system, the Supreme court (albeit with a split decision).

It is difficult for law books, as dispassionate as they strive to be, to convey the chilling taste of evil that was obvious to everyone there during the trials. My father's silence in the car as he drove us home told us as much, for silence was unusual for him. I had been there for long enough to taste the evil, young as I was, and the taste still lingers.

I cannot understand at all why someone would dedicate a good portion of one's life, and other people's money, to the exercise of clearing Yamashita from a guilt that was so obviously well deserved. I do not hear the victims of the battle for Manila gnashing their teeth in angst over this question; I think they would be horrified to see Yamashita declared innocent. It would be an insult to the victims as well as the survivors.

A more eloquent and better summary is provided by Armando Ang in his book *The Brutal Holocaust*: He writes:

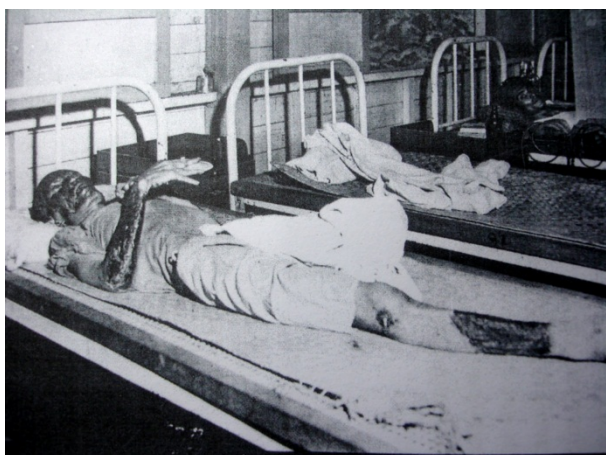
“According to reliable evidence gathered from prisoners of war, military personnel, Philippine officials and civilians, and Japanese

documents, the rape of Manila was not a random act of melee, mayhem and wanton destruction but an act of coldly planned atrocities by the Japanese high command from Tokyo.”^[21]

I couldn't say it better myself.

Thank you.





FOOTNOTES

- [1] Chick Parsons Archives, Baguio City, Philippines.
- [2] Material gathered was used in the video documentary, *Secret War in the Pacific*, by the author.
- [3] Report of Investigation of Alleged Atrocities by Members of the Japanese Imperial Forces in Manila and other parts of Luzon, Philippine Islands. Prepared for Headquarters XIV Corps, Office of the Inspector General. April 9, 1945. By Colonel Emil Krause, IGD. And Lt. Col. R. Graham Bosworth, IGD, during the period 25 February 1945 to 9 April, at Luzon, Philippine Islands.—National Archives, USA. [IGD Report]
- [4] Ibid page 33, item 63.
- [5] Some of these are in the Chick Parsons archives; the complete transmissions are located in the MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA, USA.
- [6] Aluit refers to Yamashita's transferring his headquarters to Baguio on January 2, 1945.
- [7] Cabangbang reports to MacArthur on Dec. 23, 1944 that his agents working within the "Nip" Army and Navy that Manila is to be declared an open city on Dec. 26.
- [8] Cabangbang to MacArthur January 14, 1945; and Ramsey to MacArthur December 24, 1944.
- [9] Interviewed by author for Manila 1945, *Forgotten Atrocities* video.
- [10] Ramsey to MacArthur January 13, 1945
- [11] Personal communication to the author from Roderick Hall.[BACK]
- [12] See page 200 of *The Battle for Manila*. [BACK]
- [13] See page 395 of *By Sword and Fire*. [BACK]
- [14] See Page 180 of *Hidden Horrors*. [BACK]
- [15] Ibid. page 164
- [16] See page 41 of *Horror in the East*.
- [17] Ibid. page 69.
- [18] Page 33, item 61 of the IGD Report.
- [19] See page 346 of *By Sword and Fire*.
- [20] Ramsey to MacArthur, January 7, 1945
- [21] See pages 156-157, *Brutal Holocaust*.

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Japanese colored map of the Military Dispositions in Manila, February 1945; from National Archives, USA.

Unnamed and unfinished and never shown 20-minute documentary narrated and photographed by USMC Captain David B. Griffin. We found this item AFTER we had finished our own film on the same subject. Our conclusions are identical! Gift to author from Bonnie Rowan.

WWII radio communications between Captain Bartolomeo Cabangbang and General MacArthur; also between Lt. Edwin Ramsey, head of the Eastern Central Luzon Guerrilla Area (ECLGA) and MacArthur. Some of these are in the Chick Parsons Archives in Baguio. The complete set resides in the MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA, USA; James Zobel, Archivist.

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Filipino civilians like these were the intended targets of Japanese aggression. It was a deliberate use of atrocity as a tool of war.