

News from

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A History of the Salinas National Guard Company 1895-1995

by Burton Anderson

It has been 50 years since the surviving members of Company C, 194th Tank Battalion, were liberated from Japanese prison camps. In honor of those indomitable men, I am writing a three-part history of the company in peace and war. It is also a tribute to those fallen Company C tankers who died during World War II in the service of their country; in combat and their brutal prisoner of war ordeal.

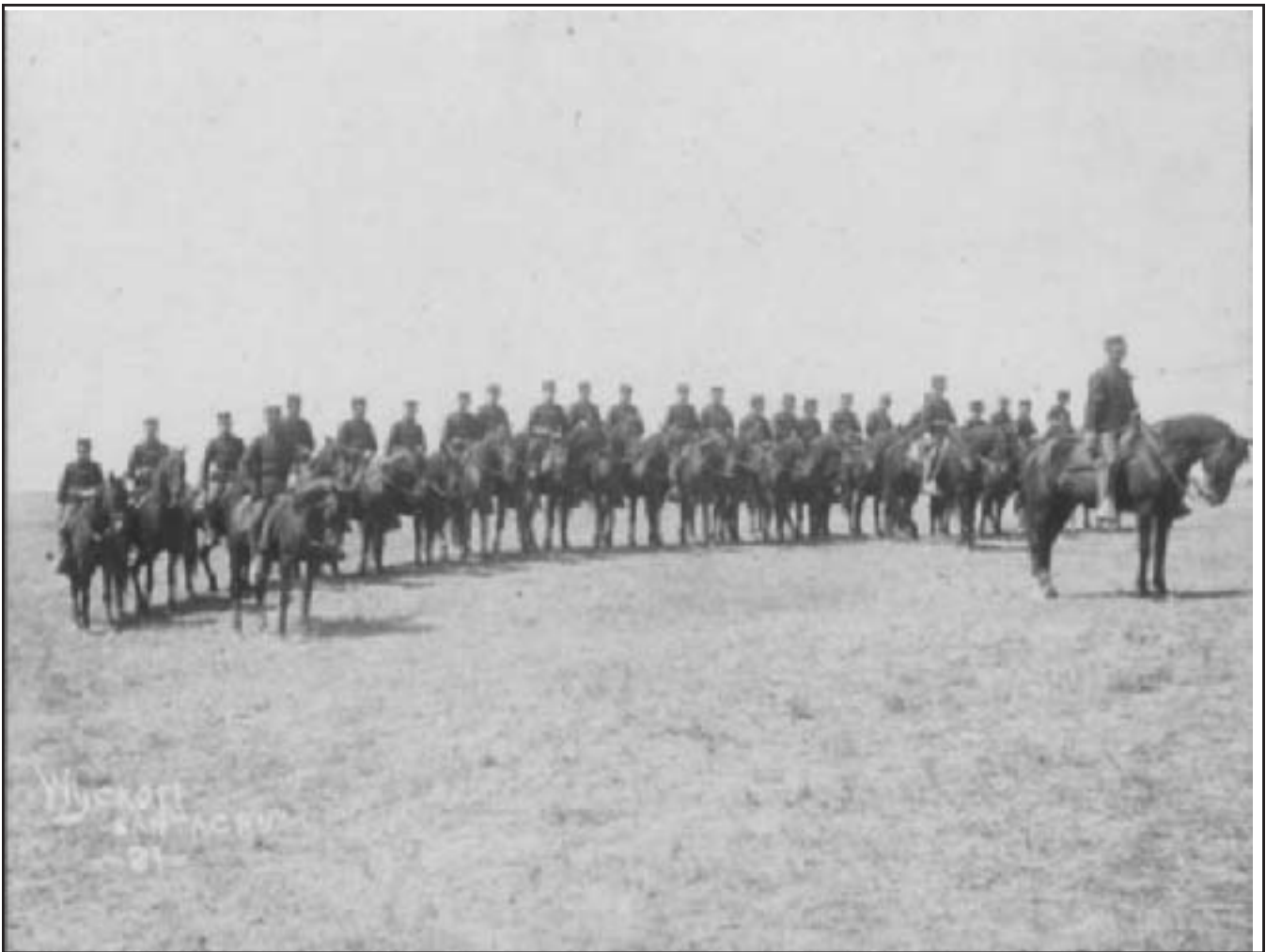
The Salinas company was organized as Troop C, Cavalry, National Guard of California on August 5, 1895.

It was the first guard unit formed in the Central Coast region and was headquartered in the new brick armory at the corner of Salinas and Alisal Streets in Salinas, California. The commanding officer was Captain Michael J. Burke, assisted by 1st Lieutenant J.L. Matthews and 2nd

Lieutenant E.W. Winham. The armory was dedicated on August 15, 1896 and housed the company's equipment including supplies, ammunition and its single shot Springfield 45-70 carbines left over from the Indian Wars.

Other than routine training with its horses, the troop wasn't called into active duty until April 1906, after the San Francisco earthquake, when it was deployed to the city and bivouacked in Golden Gate Park. The troop facilitated law and order in the devastated area for





Troop C in Santa Cruz, about 1908-1909.

a month and one day. After the crisis was over the troop returned to Salinas and resumed its normal operations.

On May 1, 1911 the National Guard of California integrated Troop C into the 1st Squadron of California Cavalry; the other troops in the squadron were A Bakersfield, B Sacramento and D Los Angeles.

The next duty involving Troop C occurred as a result of Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico, March 9, 1916. President Wilson immediately sent U.S. Regular troops into Mexico in pursuit of Villa. He later called 75,000 National Guard troops into federal service, including the entire 1st Squadron of Cavalry to patrol and secure the U.S. Mexican border. On June 24, 1916 Troop C marched up

Main Street to the Southern Pacific depot to entrain for mobilization at Sacramento. The troop's horses, wagons, and equipment were loaded on a freight train leaving simultaneously. After assembly at Sacramento, Troop C was shipped to Nogales, Arizona where it performed patrol and guard duty. The troop didn't encounter any hostile action but in performing its duties it endured many hardships, notably from heat and fatigue while carrying out countless hours of surveillance. After the punitive expedition terminated, Troop C was released from federal service and returned to Salinas on November 18, 1916, with just a few of its horses.

The Troopers barely had time to resume their civilian occupations when the United

States declared war on Germany, April 6, 1917. On August 12, Troop C was again inducted into the army and entrained with its horses, wagons and equipment for assembly at Arcadia, California and then onto Camp Kearney, San Diego County. At Kearney the cavalry was dismounted and converted to Company B, 145th Machine Gun battalion in the 40th Infantry (Sunrise) Division. The reason for the change was that the introduction and use of machine guns on the Western Front had inflicted unbearable slaughter on infantry and cavalry, thereby rendering horse cavalry obsolete and drastically changing infantry tactics. The company trained until August 1918 when they were shipped to France with the 40th Division. The war was over before the 40th saw any action and it was returned to the U.S. in March 1919. Company B was released from federal service May 20, 1919 and returned to Salinas and deactivated.

In 1920 the U.S. Army underwent a reorganization and the National Guard became a permanent part of the Army Reserve. Due to the success of tanks in World War I, the Army organized one tank company in each of the 18 National Guard Infantry divisions scattered across the United States. Salinas was selected as the site of one of these tank companies and on June 18, 1924 the 40th Tank Company was authorized and equipped with eight light tanks of French Renault-design left over from World War I. The 40th became the first tank company formulated in Cali-

fornia and recruited men from the surrounding cities and counties as far away as Watsonville, Hollister and King City.

The old armory was inadequate for a mechanized outfit and was vacated by the guard and converted to other uses. In 1924 the new 40th Tank company occupied the Lacey Building at the corner of Market and Monterey Streets in Salinas. Later in the decade the 40th moved to another building in the 100 block of Monterey Street that eventually became the home of the *Salinas Index Journal*.

The need for a permanent armory became compelling and the city council and various community organizations launched a campaign to construct a new armory between Salinas Street and Lincoln Avenue. Seeded by the city's purchase of the land for \$40,000 and \$10,000 in cash from the community, the federal government and the state provided the balance of funds to construct the building at a total cost of \$250,000. The tank company moved in November 1, 1932 and at that time consisted of 65 officers and men commanded by Captain Frank E. Heple; assisted by 1st Lieutenant Harry J. King, 1st Lieutenant L.E. Johnson, 2nd Lieutenant Fred E. Moffitt. The 40th continued to be equipped with the six-ton Renault tanks, three of which were in Salinas and five at Camp



Postcard showing Troop C training at Hunter Liggett (date unknown).

San Luis Obispo where their annual two week training was carried out.

The next call to duty for the guard came in July, 1934 when the 40th Tank Company was mobilized for duty during the Longshoreman's strike on the San Francisco waterfront. The strike had turned violent and Governor Rolph sent in the National Guard. The 40th spent eight days in San Francisco and was then immediately sent to Camp San Luis Obispo for their annual two week field duty.

In 1937 the tank company received the new M2 A2 light tank which was to serve during the remainder of peace time and during training at Fort Lewis, after its induction into federal service.

When Germany went to war in 1939, and its tanks overran Europe, the U.S. Army suddenly woke up to the fact that horse cavalry was no match for armor. Due to the lack of tanks in the regular army, on September 7, 1940 a contingency plan ordered the formation of four National Guard Tank battalions from the 18 widely dispersed National Guard Companies. The 40th Tank company designation was changed to Company C, 194th Tank battalion on September 9, 1940. The Battalion Headquarters Company and Company A were from Brainerd, Minnesota and Company B from St. Joseph, Missouri. The Battalion was

not called into service immediately, but there were ominous signs that the battalion was going to be called up in the near future.

The order came in January, and on February 18, 1941 Company C was inducted into the Army and entrained to Fort Lewis, Washington with 103 officers and men. The men were told that they would be in federal service for only a year until the regular Army had time to train and field an armored force. As it turned out, February 18 was the last time some of the boys would ever see Salinas.

At Fort Lewis Company C was brought up to full strength in April 1941 with draftees, and due to the fact that some of the Company C officers were too old in grade for field duty they were left behind in Salinas and Captain Fred E. Moffitt assumed command of the Company. Some of the other officers were assigned to the Headquarters Company of the 194th including Captain L. E. Johnson as G-2 (intelligence) and Lieutenant Ben F. Gwynn and Ted Spaulding. Company C consisted of three platoons of five tanks each, with First Sergeant E. "Ben" Saccone the top enlisted man.

The regular Army officers, for the most part, did not have a very high opinion of the National Guard, and the commanding general at Fort Lewis made life difficult for the 194th. The battalion was short many essential items,

even adequate uniforms. During their training period, Company C and the 194th were rotated to Fort Knox, Kentucky—the base of the newly created U.S. Armored Force. At Fort



Postcard showing Troop C training at Hunter Liggett (date unknown).

HEADQUARTERS 194TH TANK BATTALION (L)
Office of the Battalion Commander
Fort Lewis, Washington

September 1, 1941

SPECIAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 70)

1. Pursuant to orders contained in paragraph 14, Special Orders Number 306, Headquarters Fort Lewis, Washington, dated August 29, 1941, The 194th Tank Battalion (L), Fort Lewis, Washington, will proceed to Port of Embarkation, San Francisco, California, so as to arrive not later than September 5, 1941, for permanent change of station.

No dependents, household effects, or private automobiles will be taken. In this connection, paragraph 12, a, (1), AR 30-960 is construed by the War Department as authority for shipment of household effects within the prescribed weight allowances of personnel ordered to overseas stations and not permitted to have their dependents accompany them, to place of storage or place of residence, at Government expense.

The travel directed is necessary in the military service and payment when made is chargeable to: Travel of the Army: PD 1437 P 1-06, P 3-06, P 15-06, P 17-06, A 0410-2. (For travel of officers and enlisted men; and for travel of dependents of officers and enlisted men of the first three grades.) Army Transportation - Commercial: QM 1620 P 54-01, P 54-02, P 54-13, P 54-07 A 0635-2 "D". (For packing, crating and shipping equipment, impediments, and authorized household goods allowances of officers and enlisted men of the first four grades, and for tolls and ferrages en route.)

2. The following named officers and enlisted men (first three grades) of the 194th Tank Battalion (L), Fort Lewis, Washington, have been ordered to a permanent change of station, to arrive at Port of Embarkation, San Francisco, California not later than September 5, 1941:

a. OFFICERS:

(1) BATTALION HEADQUARTERS:

Major	E. S. MILLER	O-182956
Captain	J. S. LUIR	O-167343
Captain	P. G. SPOON	O-347171
Captain	L. E. JOHNSON	O-228316
1st Lieutenant	C. D. QUINLEN	O-348750
2nd Lieutenant	L. S. SCHNECK	O-423717
2nd Lieutenant	B. E. GWYNN	O-425168
2nd Lieutenant	B. W. DUBY	O-401818

(2) HEADQUARTERS COMPANY:

Captain	C. S. CUNY	O-182074
2nd Lieutenant	J. C. RILEY	O-396960
2nd Lieutenant	W. A. PIERRE	O-422569
2nd Lieutenant	A. J. HERFOLD	O-423109
2nd Lieutenant	T. I. SPALDING	O-423931
2nd Lieutenant	J. T. FURRY	O-372101
2nd Lieutenant	E. C. MILLER	O-398760
2nd Lieutenant	E. B. SLICK	O-391973
2nd Lieutenant	L. W. BAKER	O-372652
2nd Lieutenant	W. L. COCKRUM	O-370693

(3) COMPANY A:

2nd Lieutenant	E. L. BURKE	O-397073
2nd Lieutenant	A. J. HOOT	O-397167
2nd Lieutenant	J. H. HART	O-422617



Knox the 194th was rated the best tank outfit in the Army by the Training command.

The gathering war clouds in the Pacific caused the U.S. Government to begin reinforcing the Philippines in July 1941 since it was assumed Japan would strike the Philippines first, in case of war with the United States. A force of 35 new B-17 bombers and 107 P-40 fighters were flown or shipped to the islands, and were based primarily at Clark Field. In addition, the Army decided to reinforce ground troops with two tank battalions.

Perhaps because the 194th was the best available tank battalion, the order was given for the 194th to embark for the Philippines—the 194th was moved to San Francisco. On September 8, 1941 the battalion (Maj., later Lt. Col. E.B. Miller of Brainerd, Minnesota, commanding) was loaded on the liner *President Coolidge* at Fort Mason and sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge at 9 PM. In the hold of the *Coolidge* were 54 new M3 (Stuart) 14-ton tanks, 19 half-tracks and other combat vehicles. There were three companies of the 194th on board (Headquarters, A & C) since Company B of St. Joseph, Missouri was detached at Fort Lewis and shipped to Alaska.

On September 26, 1941 they arrived in Manila and had the distinction of being the first U.S. Armored Force de-

The above photographs are courtesy of Frank Muther.

ployed overseas in what was to become World War II. The battalion of 410 men was loaded on trucks, minus the tank crews, and was taken to Fort Stotsenburg, 65 miles North of Manila. The tanks followed as soon as the turrets were reattached that had been removed in shipping.

At Fort Stotsenburg the 194th bivouacked in tents until November 15, when native-type bamboo barracks were completed. It was a time of frustration for the tankers since there was no gas to fuel their tanks, and parts and supplies were scarce due to snarls of peacetime Army red-tape. Even though supplies were available in Manila, a request for spare parts often took 30 days.

Company C spent the months of October and November in dry-firing exercises (live ammunition wasn't issued until December 2), reconnaissance and checking bridges to determine if they would support the weight of its tanks. The company studied the terrain, which was difficult since the only maps it had were Atlantic Richfield service station maps. The lack of live ammunition didn't enable the company to fire its 37 mm main gun and machine guns until it was in combat against the Japanese. This fact underlined the lack of preparedness by Army brass, including General MacArthur, who didn't believe war would come until April, 1942.

The 194th finally got gasoline on November 14, and made a training march to Lingayen Gulf, traveling 80 miles in five hours, a creditable achievement for an armored column.

During November the 192nd Tank Battalion arrived in Manila and the two battalions were formed into a Provisional tank Group under the command of Col. R.N. Weaver. The Provisional Tank Group was directly responsible to only General MacArthur U.S. Army Forces Far East, even though General Jonathan Wainwright was in command of the ground forces at Luzon. As far as tanks were concerned, the split command between MacArthur and Wainwright was to cause problems, later, in the defense of Luzon.

One the eve of war there were only 10 un-

derstrength Filipino divisions available, plus the Philippine Division (with one American regiment), the 26th Cavalry (American officers) and the Army, Air Force and Navy personnel. Americans in the defense of the Philippines totaled about 25,000 men plus a few American nurses.

On December 1, 1941 Company C along with the rest of the 194th moved into position around the perimeter of Clark Field which was adjacent to Fort Stotsenburg. The mission of the battalion was to guard against saboteurs and to repel paratroopers. Clark Field was critical to the defense of the Philippines since nearly the entire Far Eastern Force of B-17s and P-40s was based there. Company C remained in position at Clark Field for the remainder of the first week in December, completely unaware that the field was going to be the prime target for the first strike by the Japanese in the Philippines.

The Pearl Harbor attack began a few minutes before 8 AM, December 7, and in Manila, the corresponding time was 2 AM, Monday December 8, since Manila is across the International Date Line. There is evidence to support the fact that the Naval Base at Cavite copied the radio flash saying Pearl Harbor was under attack at 2:18 AM, and that General MacArthur was awakened at 3:40 AM and informed of the attack. What followed was a paralysis of command even though the Japanese didn't bomb Clark Field until 10 hours later at 12:15 PM. At that time the B-17s and P-40s were neatly parked and the crew was having lunch. The result was that one-half of the Far East Air Force was destroyed on the ground in the first hour of the attack. The disaster at Clark Field was to seal the fate of the Philippines in spite of the heroic battle the American and Filipino troops waged on Luzon and Bataan for four months. Company C was heavily engaged in this battle from the first minutes of the attack until the surrender of U.S. and Philippine forces at Bataan, April 9.

When the Japanese struck Clark Field on December 8, 1941, Company C tankers were

in defensive positions around the perimeter of the field. They had just finished lunch and were cleaning their mess kits when they heard the roar of airplane engines and saw an approaching formation of high flying bombers. They thought the planes were U.S. reinforcements until the bombs started falling. The attacking force consisted of 53 bombers followed by 34 fighters. Ironically, the first bomb hit the mess hall where the pilots were having lunch causing heavy casualties. C Company soldiers ran to their tanks and halftracks and commenced firing in spite of the bombs falling all around them. The enemy bombers smashed the neat rows of B-17s and P-40s lined up on the runways and then the fighters strafed everything that was left. At the end of the raid some 40 minutes later one-half of the U.S. Far Eastern Air Force was destroyed. In all 55 men killed and over 100 wounded but miraculously Company C suffered no casualties even though they were firing from exposed positions.

The fighters flew so low it seemed a shotgun could bring one down. At one point a "green" Lieutenant grabbed a PFC's arm and yelled that shooting at the planes would give away their position—as if it mattered at that point. The GIs ignored him and blazed away with everything they had. Private Earl G. Smith was credited with downing one of the nine fighters shot down that day.

Company C spent the night of December 8th loading 30 cal. machine gunbelts from rifle ammo clips since they had fired most of their ready machine gun ammo. The next day the company was ordered to bivouac two miles North East of Clark Field, except for the executive officer's tank which remained at the field to maintain radio contact with the company. On December 12th they were detached from the 194th Tank Battalion and ordered to join the South Luzon Force under the command of Brig. Gen. Albert M. Jones. The mission of the South Luzon troops was to protect Manila from an invasion from the south. They left the vicinity of Clark Field and marched South during a dark and stormy night, about 40 miles, to a bar-

rio near Manila. Then on the 13th they made a daylight dash to Muntinlupa and on the 14th moved into a readiness position on 2000 foot Tagatay Ridge. The company remained in this area from December 15th to the 24th. During this time they ran reconnaissance and patrol hunted presumed fifth columnists who were flashing mirrors by day and setting off flares at night near our ammo dumps. No one was ever captured but after shooting up some suspected native huts the suspicious activities ceased.

The Japanese landed 7000 troops at Lamon Bay at 2 AM on December 24th and they proceeded inland in the direction of Lucban. Company C moved into position to nearby San Pablo on Christmas Eve to assist the Filipino 1st Infantry Regiment.

On the morning of December 25th, Brig. Gen. Jones, escorted by a Company C half-track, was reconnoitering near Piis, Luzon; when it came under fire from an enemy advance guard. The half-track was manned by Sgt. Keith D. Lewis, Sgt. Leon Elliott, PFC Jim Hicks, Pvt. William Hennessey, and Pvt. Fred Yeager. The half-track was hit but the crew, commanded by Sgt. Keith Lewis was able to back off and provided covering fire as they retreated, enabling Gen. Jones and his driver to escape unharmed. For this action all of the above men were recommended by Gen. Jones for the Distinguished Service Cross but nothing came of it until after the war when Sgt. Lewis and his crew were finally awarded the Silver Star, but by then only Sgt. Leon Elliott was still alive.

In the afternoon of the same day the 2nd platoon was ordered to reconnoiter down a one track mountain trail near Lucban toward the enemy. A Filipino Major assured the platoon leader that the enemy only possessed small arms. The tankers set out and promptly ran into an antitank gun and some concealed field pieces. The lead tank was hit, mortally wounding Lt. Needham and PFC Robert G. Bales. Staff Sgt. Emil S. Morello, in the second tank, drove around the disabled tank and ran over the antitank gun. Sgt. Morello's tank was also

hit, wounding Private Eddie DiBenedetti, hit in the neck by a flying rivet. (This incident prompted the War Department to change from riveted to welded doors in new tank production.) Another tank, commanded by Sgt. Glenn Brokaw was hit and PFCs Jim Hicks, McLeod, and Seifort were killed and Brokaw seriously wounded. (This was the second action that day for Jim Hicks, as he volunteered to drive Brokaw's tank when the regular driver became ill.) In all, five tanks were hit and immobilized by the time firing ceased. Sgt. Morello, DiBenedetti and four wounded stayed buttoned up inside their tanks not daring to move since the Japanese tanks, unaware that anyone inside was alive. In the morning the enemy left the area and Sgt. Morello opened the hatch and began tending the casualties. He gathered up five wounded and they escaped through coconut groves and rice paddies. Sgt. Morello, with the help of a Filipino guide they hired (from their pooled resources) for 100 Pesos, showed up in Manila five days later with all the wounded still alive after fleeing through enemy infested territory. He left DiBenedetti in a Catholic Hospital in Manila and with the other wounded made their way by Banca to Corregidor. Later, during February, Sgt. Morello was able to rejoin the company at Lamao on Bataan. For this action Sgt. Morello was awarded the Silver Star.

The day before, December 25th, General MacArthur had ordered the implementation of Orange Plan-3 which provided for the withdrawal of all Philippine and US forces into Bataan as a last defensive position.

In compliance with the order Company C commenced withdrawing from South Luzon on December 29, acting as the rear guard for Brig. Gen. Jones troops. They moved to Tagatay Ridge and on the 31st, led by 1st Sgt. "Ben" Saccone, they made a sleepless 100 mile, night dash to Bocaue in six hours where they rejoined the rest of the 194th Tank Battalion.

Manila had been declared an "Open City" on December 24th and troops heading North were to bypass it. However, Company C, on the night of the 31st, was unsure of the route

around the city and decided to go through central Manila. In all the chaos it didn't seem to matter that the city was off limits. In the dark one of Company C's tanks hit the Jose Rizall statue while trying to avoid hordes of fleeing civilians. The tank threw a track on impact and bent an idler. The crew worked all night trying to fix it but by daylight they saw it was hopeless. They disabled the tank and tried to hitch a ride with some Filipino troops in Bren Gun Carriers. None would stop until the tankers leveled their 45 cal. sub-machine guns at the convoy and they got a lift; they were the last armored troops out of Manila.

From Bocaue the company headed for the Calumpit Bridge over the Pampanga River on Route 3. This was a vital structure since all traffic fleeing Manila toward Bataan had to pass over this bridge. It was here that the tankers witnessed 100-150 empty Filipino trucks in headlong flight from Manila, where there were ample supplies in the warehouses. Had these supplies been moved while there was still time (12/10-12/23) the U.S. and Filipino forces could conceivably have held out longer on Bataan and with far less suffering.

All the South Luzon forces were across the Calumpit by 2:30 am January 1st, followed by Company C in the rear guard, and the bridge was blown up. From there the tanks moved through San Fernando at the critical junction of Route 3 and Route 7 from North Luzon. Again the tankers formed successive road blocks, during the next 3 days, toward Guagua on Route 7.

On the night of January 6th, Captain Moffitt leading two tanks and two half-tracks, assisted by four self-propelled 7 mm guns and the 31st infantry, ambushed 750-800 enemy troops. Our forces inflicted 50% casualties on the enemy and left the town of Lubao in flames. Had the Japanese not been stopped there our retreat into Bataan would have been cut off.

Moving toward Bataan on January 7th another night battle took place near Remulus. Captain Moffitt's half-track took a direct hit from an enemy shell that took off PFC William

Hennessey's left foot and wounded PFC Martella; he died within a few days due to gas gangrene and Hennessey died at Camp O'Donnell after the surrender on Bataan. In the same battle Sgt. Carl F. Abbott scored a direct hit on an enemy tank before his tank was hit and disabled, however he escaped injury and the tank was retrieved the next day.

The withdrawal toward Bataan continued and by the night of January 7th Company C was at the Culo River guarding the left flank of the Layac Bridge which was the gateway to Bataan. As soon as all forces were across the tankers withdrew and the bridge blown up, temporarily sealing off the Bataan Peninsula.

The retreat into Bataan to a bivouac south of the Abucay Main Battle Line afforded the troops a slight lull from battle. They had been in action for 30 consecutive days and were exhausted. To add to their misery Maj. Gen. Wainwright ordered the food ration cut in half to only 30 ounces per day per man.

In the first month of combat Company C had lost seven tanks and six men killed in action. This necessitated reorganizing the company into three platoons of three tanks each (instead of four prewar strength) plus one command tank. The remaining tanks were long past the 400 hour scheduled maintenance and had been run so hard the rubber track plates were worn down to the metal. Fortunately, some replacement parts were available from the Service Command area in Southern Bataan.

The next significant action involving a platoon of Company C was when Gen. Wainwright sent three tanks to Bagac on the West Coast of Bataan on January 15th. The following day they were ordered to advance north to reopen the coastal highway to Moron. The tanks were moving in advance of the main line and as they rounded a curve the lead tank (Staff Sgt. Frank Muther) was fired on at point blank range by an antitank gun. Incredibly, the round went right over the turret and in returning fire the C tank knocked out the enemy gun. Two tanks following 600 yards back hit land mines placed by the Japanese after the lead tank

went by. This use of land mines was a favorite tactic used by the enemy. Muther's tank was able to turn around and withdraw past the disabled tanks and the platoon got out without any personnel casualties. The disabled tanks were towed out the next day and used for spare parts. This incident was a case where a general ordered tanks out alone ahead of Infantry that nearly became a suicide mission. Throughout the campaign tanks were not properly deployed by the generals who tended to regard them as mobile pill boxes. In reality tank crews have poor external visibility and need to be supported by Infantry to defuse mines, knock out snipers and act as lookouts for the buttoned up tanks.

By the middle of January the lack of food and medicine caused malaria, dengue, (dingy fever) and dysentery to take a heavy toll on the malnourished troops. Especially critical was the lack of quinine to treat a virulent form of malaria prevalent on the Bataan Peninsula. The constant hordes of flies and mosquitoes made their problems worse, as well the fact the troops had not received any mail since the war started. Occasionally they could get some news via short wave radio from San Francisco, but otherwise they listened to Tokyo Rose for entertainment.

On January 26th company C covered the withdrawal from the Abucay Main Battle Line toward the next defensive position at the Pilar-Bagac Road. (The only satisfactory road across Bataan). As Company C was moving across an area called Hacienda Flats the US Forces inflicted at least 1500 casualties on the enemy. The Japanese retaliated by a heavy bombing attack during which a dud bomb went through the fender of Muther's tank but didn't explode. Another tank stalled on a bridge and had to be pushed over the side to prevent a roadblock. Captain Moffitt was wounded in the leg by a flying timber while crossing a bridge just as it was blown up.

By February 8th the U.S. and Philippine forces had fought the enemy to a standstill in spite of their supply, disease and malnutrition

problems. There was a lull in infantry action but the Japanese kept up the relentless shelling and bombing of our lines. Company C was on the East coast of Bataan and used mainly for beach defense to ward off any attempt by the Japanese to invade Bataan from Manila Bay. During early March the platoons of Company C were assigned to various positions, not necessarily together. The 3rd platoon under the command of 1st Sgt. "Ben" Saccone defended a beach position around the Lamao on Manila Bay.

By the middle of March the food ration was cut again down to 15 ounces a day per man. The troops subsisted mainly on rice supplemented by anything they could scrounge including worms, snakes, monkeys and an occasional native caribou. General Wainwright (an old cavalry man) had to order the slaughter of 250 horses and 42 mules from his beloved 26th Cavalry Regiment. In spite of the extra meat the Bataan forces were in dire straits with one-fourth of the troops in the hospital with disabilities associated with disease and malnutrition.

Toward the end of March the Japanese resumed their offensive after being reinforced by "crack" Imperial Marines released after the fall of Singapore. On April 3rd the enemy began an all out offensive accompanied by constant bombing and shelling. To counter this offensive Maj. Gen. Edward P. King (in command after Wainwright moved to Corregidor) made one last effort to stop the enemy across Southern Bataan.

In an attempt to stop the Japanese on April 7th, four tanks from C Co. 2nd platoon were sent from Lamao over the mountain trails to the vicinity of Mount Samat in south and central Bataan. The tanks were to support the Philippine 45th and 57th Infantry, Philippine Scouts, who were opposing the enemy coming down Trail 20. On the morning of April 7th, the Filipinos were in head-long flight and the tanks moved down Trail 8 to try and stem the tide. At the junction of Trail 6 the lead tank encountered antitank fire which blasted it off the trail knocking out the tank officer. PFC

Ray Peoples took over command of the tank and with the others covered the withdrawal under intense enemy fire. The retreat was made more difficult by the hundreds of troops and vehicles clogging the narrow trail. The tanks managed to regain their starting point without further casualties except Sgt. Morello's tank which suffered an engine lockup and had to be towed to the shop at Cabcaben.

Meanwhile the 3rd platoon under the command of 1st Sgt. "Ben" Saccone, with two tanks and two half-tracks was ordered to attempt an enveloping maneuver by moving to the west coast of Bataan via the coast road to Mariveles and on to the Pilar Bagac Road. They were in the vicinity of Mt. Samat when they encountered fierce resistance at an enemy road block. (It was virtually impossible for the tanks to get off the trails because of the thick jungle and trees.) The platoon was out of radio contact with the battalion headquarters and were unable to assess the situation so they reversed their march and made it back to Mariveles where they rejoined the rest of the Company.

These two actions were the last for Company C which by April 8th had been in combat for 4 months, lost 10 tanks and had 6 men killed in action.

Major General King, on April 8th, acknowledged that the situation was critical and that further resistance would result in the massacre of his troops including 6000 sick and wounded and 40,000 refugees. The troops still on the line were less than 25% effective and couldn't last for more than a day. Consequently he ordered the troops to cease fire and to destroy their equipment when the code word "Blast" was given. This occurred at 7 AM April 9, 1942 and hostilities ceased.

As it turned out the US and Philippine troops were doomed from the start of the war by the lack of air power, supplies and reinforcements. However, due to the heroic efforts of units like company C, the Japanese advance was critically slowed. General Homma had expected to take the Philippines in three months

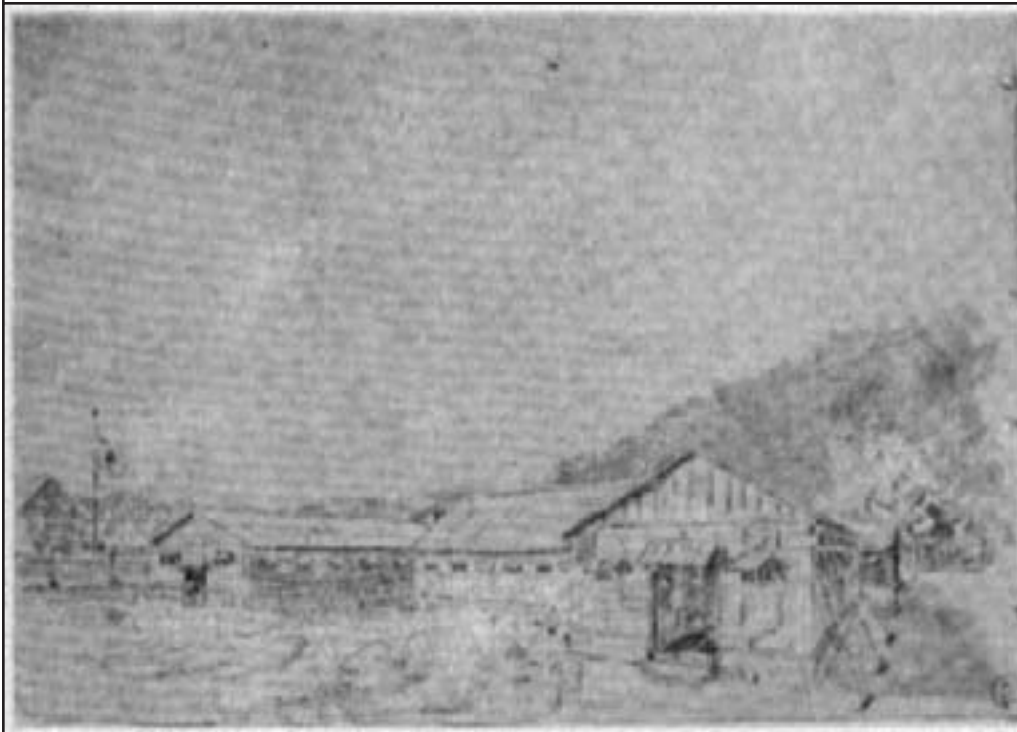
and the U.S. gained precious time needed to go on the offensive in the Pacific.

After the order to cease fire on, April 9, 1942, there was a 24-hour lull before the Japanese troops appeared. During this time Company C was ordered to destroy their weapons, equipment and records. More salient to the starving troops the Quartermaster Corp. distributed their remaining food supplies to any men fortunate to be in the vicinity. They were completely unaware that as prisoners of war they would not be humanely treated. (The Japanese warrior Bushido Code regarded soldiers, who surrendered, as contemptible and deserved to die.)

The Japanese commander arrived on horseback, April 10th, and among other things was amazed to learn how few tanks had been opposing them. General Homma had estimated U.S. tank strength at 600 to 900 and afterwards acknowledged that the tanks and artillery were the primary reason that the Japanese offensive timetable was seriously delayed.

The rumor was that the Japanese would load the prisoners into trucks and travel north to a prison camp on Luzon. This proved to be an ugly deceit as the men were looted of their

personal possessions and lined up in column of fours and marched north from Mariveles, which is at the southern tip of Bataan. Along the way the Japanese picked up U.S. and Filipino troops until by the time they reached Lamao April 11th, there were an estimated 55,000 Filipinos and 10,000 Americans in the column. The troops had not had any food or water since April 10th and weren't allowed anything to drink until the night of the 11th, in spite of the oppressive heat and humidity. Anyone stepping out of line to try and drink from roadside ditches was bayoneted, shot or had his skull crushed by a rifle butt. Friendly Filipinos tried to give food and water to the marching men but the guards quickly killed the Filipino or the GI, and in some cases both; at the very least a severe beating was administered. Any hope of humane treatment as prisoners of war vanished after these incidents. In many cases a wounded or ill soldier owed his life to a buddy who would help him along, since stragglers were usually killed. The march took 10-13 days and covered 62-85 miles, depending on where the soldiers were forced into the column. As the march approached San Fernando, Co. C Tech Sgt. Don Lang was helping his sick and exhausted



Front view of Ofuna, a questioning camp (1942). Buildings of scrap wood, put together in prefabricated 3' x 6' sections. Thirty cells, 6' x 9' each with wooden barred window. Building braced by wires to stakes. Very cold and dirty when windy.

brother, Staff Sgt. Sid Lang, to remain with the column. The guards executed Don Lang on the spot for aiding a straggler, but somehow his brother survived. This was the first execution to a GI of Company C in a gruesome practice that included three more executions at Cabanatuan prison camp.

Accurate figures of the death toll during the march are unobtainable but it is estimated that about 10,000 Filipinos and 600-1000 US soldiers died before the ordeal culminated at the railroad depot in San Fernando.

At San Fernando the prisoners were loaded into 6 x 18 foot boxcars, as many as 110 to a car and the doors locked. The heat and crowding were unbearable and along with the fact that some men were terminally ill caused near hysteria. Men died on the journey and since there was no way to dispose of the bodies the corpses added to the terror of the situation.

The railroad cars were unloaded at Capas and the prisoners were marched 3.5 miles in the blazing sun, again without water, to Camp O'Donnell. The brutalizing and starvation continued at O'Donnell, and it quickly became apparent that to remain there meant certain death. Ben Saccone flatly states that if he had remained at O'Donnell he would have died.

When the Japanese called for volunteers to go on bridge and equipment repair details, Co. C GI's seized upon the opportunity to get away from O'Donnell. The lucky ones left in late April and among them were Ben Saccone, Frank Muther, Joe and Richard Errington, John Anderson, Roy Diaz, William Braye, Dick Walker, Carl Abbott, Ray Peoples and Mel Madero. They were taken back to the battlefields and worked on bridges and equipment repair details from April to September. Some of the other C Company soldiers worked on the prison farm where they temporarily, at least, escaped the horrors of O'Donnell.

At O'Donnell, aside from beatings and shootings, the prisoners died from a variety of causes, including beri-beri wet and dry), malaria, dengue fever, amoebic dysentery, yaws, Guam blisters and malnutrition. Many of these deaths could have been prevented if the Japanese had given the U.S. prison doctors even the simplest of medicines, but all requests were denied.

A U.S. prisoner who worked in the camp office at O'Donnell recorded the deaths of 1600 U.S. soldiers, 49 U.S. sailors, 27,674 Filipinos and 857 civilians in the period April 11, 1942 to August 4, 1942.

A view of the camp [Rokuroshi]. Poles for fence and also those in foreground were carried by POWs from hill forests on work project. PS. They also made an excellent fire after VJ day.



O'Donnell was closed down early in 1943 and the prisoners transferred again by the minuscule railroad cars, and then forced to march 10 miles to Cabanatuan camps 1 and 3. There they were joined by some soldiers that had been in field hospitals on April 9th, and after capture were taken to Bilibid Prison in Manila at bayonet point past jeering Filipinos to the railroad station. (Sgt. Elliott who was in this march suspects that the Japanese ordered the Filipino civilians to humiliate the bedraggled Americans.)

At Cabanatuan new perils arose such as pellagra, scurvy, dobie itch, worms, pneumonia, TB, blindness, bacillary dysentery and diphtheria.

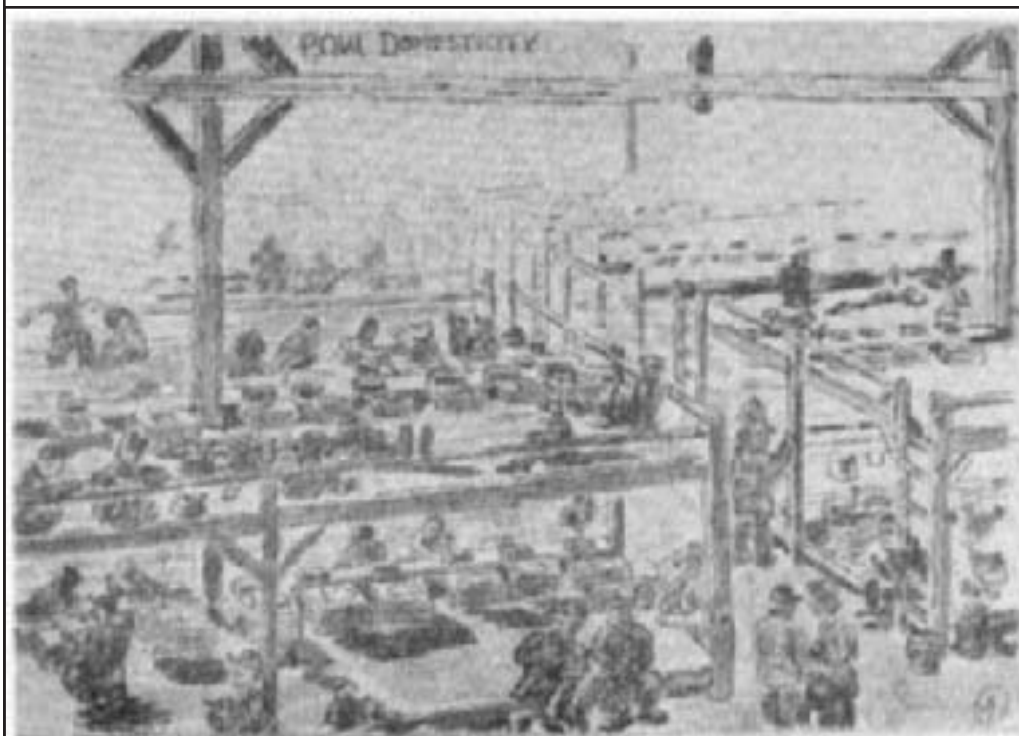
To discourage prisoners from running away the guards formed the internees into groups of ten. If anyone escaped the remaining members of the ten were executed and their heads impaled on bamboo poles, as a gruesome reminder of the consequences of an escape.

Various means of torture were applied for any real or imagined infraction of the camp rules. Men were strung up by their thumbs in the hot sun; forced to kneel with their hands tied behind their backs to a 2 x 4 and water-tortured where water was forced into their

bodies. Sometimes these treatments resulted in death but at the very least, the men suffered severe body damage. All these atrocities occurred in addition to the deliberate starvation and the ever present lice, fleas, mosquitoes and flies.

The brutal horrors of the prison camps are too many to detail here but the deaths and beatings went on all during the time of incarceration. The dead were buried in shallow graves dug by their fellow prisoners at O'Donnell and Cabanatuan. After the war the bodies were exhumed and reinterred in the U.S. National Cemetery near Manila; many were never identified and they repose in graves simply marked "unknown."

Beginning in September of 1942 the Japanese began moving prisoners to Japan for work in mines and factories. Thus began the phase of captivity known as the "Hell Ships." These ships were unmarked freighters and men were packed into covered holds without any sanitary facilities and little or no food or water. Again men suffered and some went insane from sheer terror and hardships in the holds where even dead bodies were not promptly removed. Men became so desperate for water they even drank urine in an effort to



Showing inside living conditions at Yokohama (Tokyo POW camp branch #2). This building had been a warehouse. Damp, dirty and dusty. Each POW wore a number on the back of a suit of work clothes given him by Mitsubishi. Fabric was of some "ersatz" material, flimsy and porous.

stay alive.

Another jeopardy presented itself when the unmarked ships were targeted by U.S. planes and submarines. One ship, the *Enoru Maru* was torpedoed in October 1944 between the Philippines and Formosa. The Japanese shot the desperate men as they tried to escape from the hold; of the 1800 men aboard only 9 survived. Another freighter, the *Oryoku Maru* was bombed in Olangapo Harbor on December 13, 1944 and again on December 15. There were 1620 men on board and only 490 survived.

The surviving members of Company C were scattered all over Japan, Korea and even Mukden, Manchuria where Sgt. Leon Elliott and Sgt. John N. Anderson were imprisoned. The remnants of the tank company were survivors and by being able to work they at least received enough food to stabilize their bodies. The ration for a workers was 500 grams (a little over one pound) of rice per day, while a non-worker received only 250 grams a day.

The prison routines continued all during 1943 and 1944 when prisoners in a camp on Kyushu witnessed an air raid by B-29s on July 4, 1944. From that date on, the Japanese became apprehensive of an invasion. The in-

ternees were told in no uncertain terms that if the U.S. invaded Japan they would all be put to death immediately.

Upon the surrender of Japan and the liberation of the prisoners in August 1945 by U.S. and Russian armies, the men were gathered up and sent, in most cases, to the Philippines for preliminary examinations, medical treatment, new uniforms and an attempt to straighten out pay records. By various means they were sent home to an Army Hospital nearest their home town where they were eventually discharged. At stateside hospitals young U.S. Army doctors couldn't believe the former prisoners stories and had never heard of some of the ailments. The doctors kept asking for records and proof of their claims; in spite of the fact the men said their records had been lost in the Philippines. It got so bad some of the former prisoners were accused of being psycho and placed in mental wards.

To some men, even after discharge, their ordeal still wasn't over as they had difficulty in readjusting to civilian life. Depression, alcoholism and difficulty finding jobs caused a toll on survivors. Many a former prisoner owes his successful recovery to a strong and understanding woman.

At Zentsuji a "Death Watch" was stood by two POWs over each corpse. This is a night scene in bathhouse with cement tub and wooden buckets in background. In most camps the deaths were so frequent that no such custom could prevail. The large rat population was another reason for this death watch.



To further add to their problems the Veterans Administration, in the following decades, was not entirely sympathetic to the claims for disability since all their documentation had been lost and they couldn't substantiate their claims. A host of problems weren't resolved until the decade of the 90s. The resentment of having some chair-bound bureaucrat tell a veteran he couldn't prove his story and therefore wasn't eligible for benefits still lingers in the surviving veteran's minds.

Company C, 194th Tank Battalion, was officially inactivated April 2, 1946 in the Philippines and thus the chapter closed on a heroic outfit. The combat and prisoner of war ordeal had taken a heavy toll on Company C and out of 107 men who left Salinas on February 18, 1941 only 47 returned. During the time the company was in combat it earned three Presidential Unit Citations (Defense of the Philippines, Luzon, and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation) for service from December 7, 1941 to May 10, 1942. In Company C there were 6 Silver Stars awarded to tankers and the entire company received the Bronze Star. Unfortunately this didn't happen until well after the war and by then some medals were given posthumously. It took tire-

less effort by men such as 1st Sgt. Ben Saccone (later Chief Warrant Officer) to enable these men to receive their well-merited medals.

Immediately after WW II Salinas was without a National Guard company until May 27, 1947 when the local guard was reorganized as the new headquarters company of the 1st Battalion 149th Armor. Its first commanding officer was Lt. Col. L.E. Johnson, assisted by Staff Sgt. Jacob Gamboa and Staff Sgt. Warren Smith; all survivors. It is to the credit of these men that they were still physically fit enough to re-enlist and had the mental strength to volunteer after what they had been through. Major Frank Heple rejoined the company after having been forced to remain statewide during WW II because of his age in grade.

In the early 1950s, under a National Guard reorganization, four other companies were formed as part of the 1st Battalion as follows: Company A Monterey, Company B Watsonville, Company C Santa Cruz and Company D Hollister. The Salinas company retained its function as Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 1st Battalion 149th Armor.

Since the 1950s the local companies have



Lt. Turk Critchlow, USNR, a sack of bones but he made it.

participated in various guard duty deployments beginning with the Pajaro River flooding of Watsonville in December 1955. The guard was called out again for flood duty at Mission Fields at the mouth of the Carmel River in 1958. When floods on the Russian River inundated Guerneville in January 1965 the local National Guard went to the aid of the stricken area. A different duty confronted the Battalion when they were sent to Watts during the race riots in August 1965. Within 24 hours there were 20,000 California National Guard troops on the scene, including the entire 149th Tank Battalion. When the Central Coast experienced disastrous forest fires in 1977, 1987 and 1989 the guard was there assisting the U.S. Forest Service and the California Division of Forestry, especially during the Marble Cone Fire. In May 1992 the guard was again deployed to Watts to help quell another civil disorder. Another disaster relief task came in October 1989 after the Loma Prieta earthquake. More recently the guard provided assistance to Monterey and Santa Cruz county authorities during the Salinas and Pajaro River floods during January and March 1995.

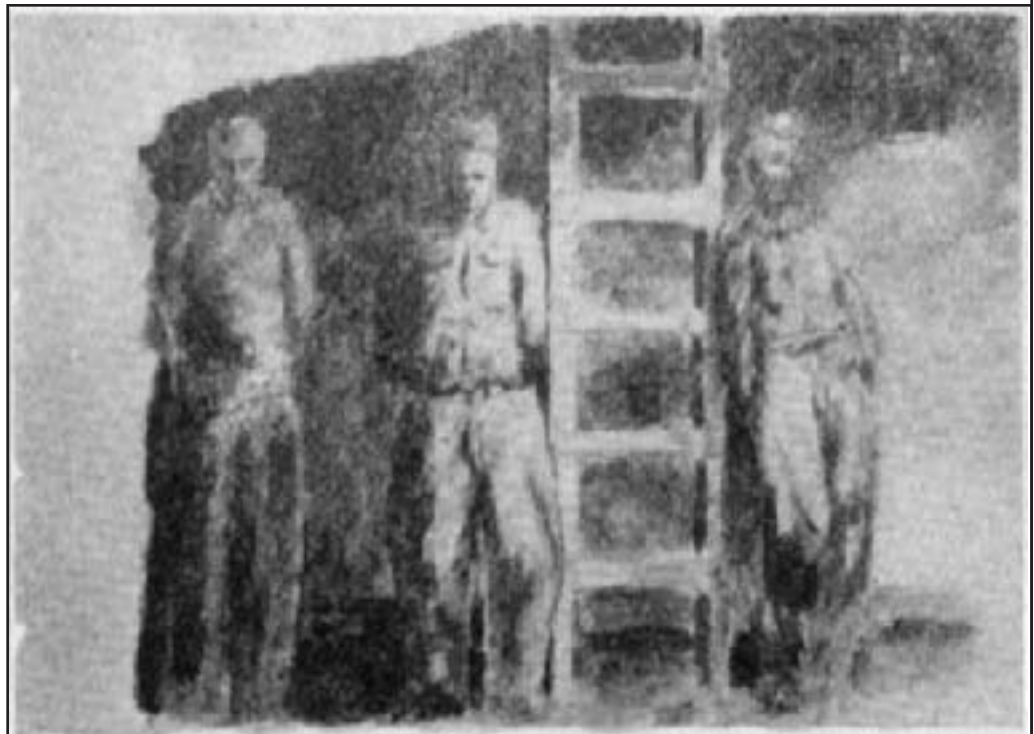
The Battalion is currently authorized to

field 57 M60A3 medium tanks which are mostly parked at Camp Roberts and Fort Irwin in the Mojave Desert. Each company's Table of Organization calls for a strength of 14 tanks plus one for the company commander.

In conclusion, we can be proud of our local National Guard units who are instantly available in case of emergency as opposed to regular U.S. Army troops who would have to be deployed from bases far from the Central Coast now that Fort Ord has been closed. In time of war the National Guard units are among the first called-up even though the Army is often critical of the Guard. Company C and the 194th Battalion were practically the only available armor in the US Army in early 1941. When the 194th was sent to the Philippines in September 1941 it became the 1st armor unit overseas in WW II and the first to be in combat. Another National Guard outfit, the 34th Infantry Division (Minnesota, Iowa and North Dakota) was the 1st U.S. Army division to be sent abroad, arriving in Ireland in January 1942.

These deployments of the National Guard underline the critical importance of the citizen soldier available at any time for a call to arms and may we never forget that reality.

Waiting for evening muster at 7:30 PM. Blackout lights giving a small cone of light did little to dispel the gloom of prison life at Rokuroshi.



The author wishes to thank Chief Warrant Officer Ero "Ben" Saccone, Staff Sgt. Frank Muther, Sgt. Leon Elliott, Cpt. Stack, 149th TB CNG, Brig. Gen. Hayden Fields, and Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Tyra Jr. for their input into this article.

A slightly different version of this article (without these illustrations) appeared in *Coastal Grower* as a three part series beginning Winter 1995.

194th Tank Battalion, Company C, Salinas Unit

Names of the 58 dead listed on the memorial plaque at the Garden of Memories on Abbott Street. Source: *The Californian*, December 13, 1991, Dave Nordstrand, author.

First Lt. B.E. Gwynn, 2nd Lt. J.H. Hart, 2nd Lt. A.H. Hook, M. Sgt. F.W. Bickmore, M. Sgt. W.G. Boyd, T. Sgt. A.D. Lang, S. Sgt. C.F. Abbott, S. Sgt. M.J. Bernard Jr., S. Sgt. C.E. Emlay, Sgt. W.F. Anson, Sgt. F.E. Aram, Sgt. J.D. Brink, Sgt. H.E. Cunningham, Sgt. R.L. Errington, Sgt. V.L. Gosney, Sgt. E. D. Lewis, Sgt. H.E. Lee, Sgt. R.H. Mitchell, Sgt. G.W. Schlosser, Cpl. R. N. DeCloss.

Cpl. M.E. Dolk, Cpl. O.H. Eaton, Cpl. H.D. McDonald, Pfc. R.G. Bales, Pfc. F.F. Barretto, Pfc. M.A. Cahill, Pfc. D.E. Cederblom, Pfc. L.O. Cole, Pfc. A.W. Eckert, Pfc. R.E. Emlay, Pfc. J.H. Fleener, Pfc. E.M. Fontes, Pfc. J. Gillis, Pfc. C.M. Grayson, Pfc. N.C. Heard, Pfc. J.A. Hicks, Pfc. F.F. Marbach Jr., Pfc. J.T. McLeod, Pfc. S.J. Montero, Pfc. R.E. Overstreet, Pfc. E.E. Rawson, Pfc. D.J. Reilly.

Pfc. A.P. Smith, Pfc. E.G. Smith, Pfc. J.E. Willrodt, Pfc. J.P. Zinani Jr., Pfc. E.P. Zingheim, Pvt. W.L. Casperson, Pvt. E.N. DiBenedetti, Pvt. D.W. Foshee, Pvt. W.M. Hennessey, Pvt. D.R. Jaramillo, Pvt. W.V. Martella, Pvt. R.L. Miller, Pvt. C.G. Stevens, Pvt. J.M. Thorp, Pvt. J.H. White, and Pvt. K.A. White.

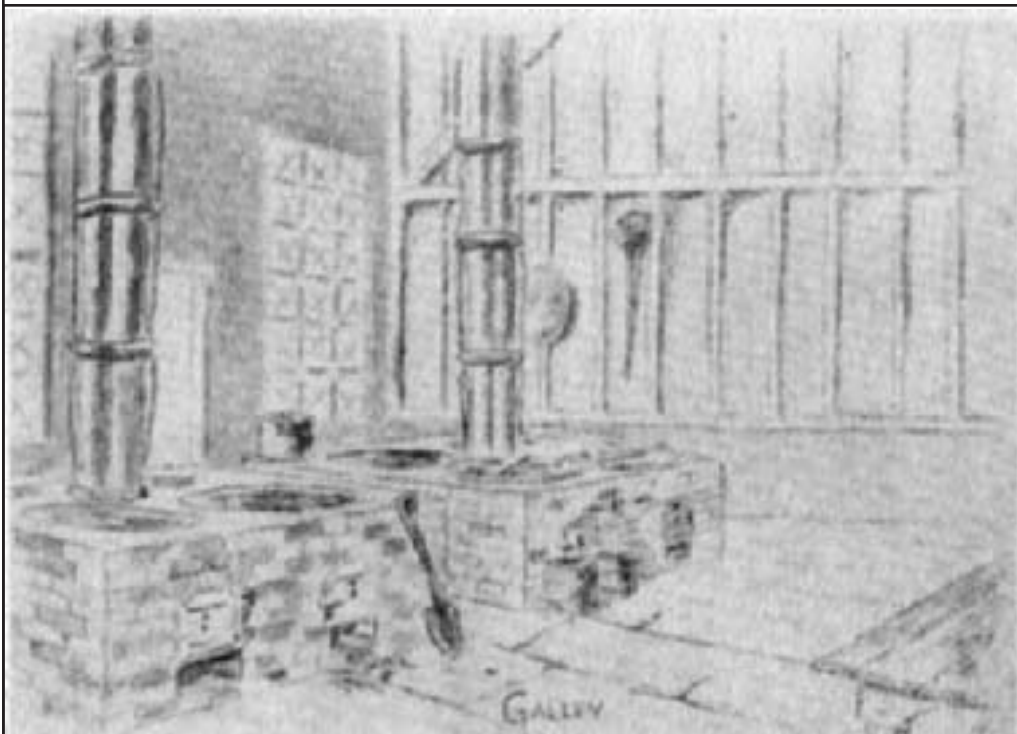
Names of the 47 who survived, as listed on the plaque. (Many have since died.)

Maj. L.E. Johnson, Maj. F.C. Moffitt, Capt. T.J. Spaulding, M. Sgt. J.E. Aram, M. Sgt. C.H. Thomas, T. Sgt. A.F. Gillis, T. Sgt. S.G. Lang, T. Sgt. E.S. Morello, S. Sgt. E.R. Barnes, S. Sgt. W.E. Braye, S. Sgt. G.D. Brokaw, S. Sgt. F.T. Cabral Jr., S. Sgt. E.C. DiGottarde.

S. Sgt. R.L. Diaz, S. Sgt. J.P. Errington, S. Sgt. J.E. Frost, S. Sgt. J.S. Gamboa, S. Sgt. W.A. Garrison, S. Sgt. W.L. Glenn Jr., S. Sgt. T.J. Hicks, S. Sgt. A.J. Holstein, S. Sgt. J.C. McKusick, S. Sgt. M.R. Madero.

S. Sgt. F.J. Orendain, S. Sgt. T.T. Paras, S. Sgt. J.H. Smith, S. Sgt. E.H. Stahl, S. Sgt. H.J. Vick, S. Sgt. C.R. Walker, S. Sgt. F.T. Wilson, Sgt. J.N. Anderson, Sgt. L.A. Elliott, Sgt. H.K. Fitzgibbons.

Sgt. W.F. Hall, 1st. Sgt. E. Saccone, Sgt. F.L. Muther, Sgt. R.J. Peoples Jr., Sgt. N.R. Rose, Sgt. W.B. Smith, Cpl. J.F. Alves Jr., Cpl. A. Cope, Cpl. M.G. Nevarez, Cpl. L.A. Rotharmel, Cpl. C.R. Sigala, Cpl. J.V. Speckens, Cpl. S.G. Suttie and Cpl. J.M. Warnick.



Galley scene at Zentsuji. Large pots, some for rice and others for soup.

MEMORIALS

Donor	In Memory Of
Nick G. Cominos	Harold R. Hullinger
Nick G. Cominos	Lloyd "Pop" Slaton
Nick G. Cominos	John Loris
Nick G. Cominos	Chris Loris
Carl Reich	Nona Panziera
George Fontes	Adeline Agostini
George Fontes	Nona Panziera
Harry & Barbara Rhodes	Miles Holaday
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Marie Cominos	John Gudgel
Santa Maria Seeds	John Gudgel
Michael Malone & Associates, Inc.	John Gudgel
Patti Williams	John Gudgel
Filipino American National Historical Society	John Gudgel
Burton Anderson	John Gudgel
Comgro, Inc.	John Gudgel
Mark E. Norris	John Gudgel
Frank & Patricia Terry	John Gudgel
Charles Willis	John Gudgel
Susan Watson	John Gudgel
Nick G. Cominos	John Gudgel
Louie & Aggie Manzoni	John Gudgel
Nick G. Cominos	Jack Nelson
Burton Anderson	Betty Ichikawa
Sophie C. Britton	John Ostarello
Burton Anderson	Herb Hinrichs

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MUSEUM UPDATE

The next phase for construction at the Boronda History Center will be installation of asphalt access roads, the parking lot, handicap access, and a walkway around the Adobe, as well as landscaping. We will also be installing a Bataan Memorial (see the architectural drawing on the back cover). We are hoping to begin construction before winter, but this depends on when we receive our permits. It will be a welcome change and allow easier access for all once this step is completed.

WEBSITE

Gary Breschini continues to upgrade and to add new material to the Society's Website. The site has generated researchers, new members and many donations of artifacts for our archival vault. *And we have a new website address* (our own personal domain, which hopefully is easier to remember). It is:

<http://www.mchsmuseum.com>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER WELCOMED

The editors of the *Newsletter* are always seeking photographs, historical recipes, articles, and other items for these pages. Please contact us if you have any appropriate materials.

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