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Remember Bataan

Cecilia I. Gaerlan



The 41st Infantry Regiment

On November 11, 1919 President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Veterans' Day to commemorate Armistice Day, the temporary cessation of war between Germany and the Allied powers, which took effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918.

Armistice day was generally regarded as the end of the "war to end all wars." Ninety-four years later we all know that another World War took place alongside many other wars that sacrificed the lives of so many.

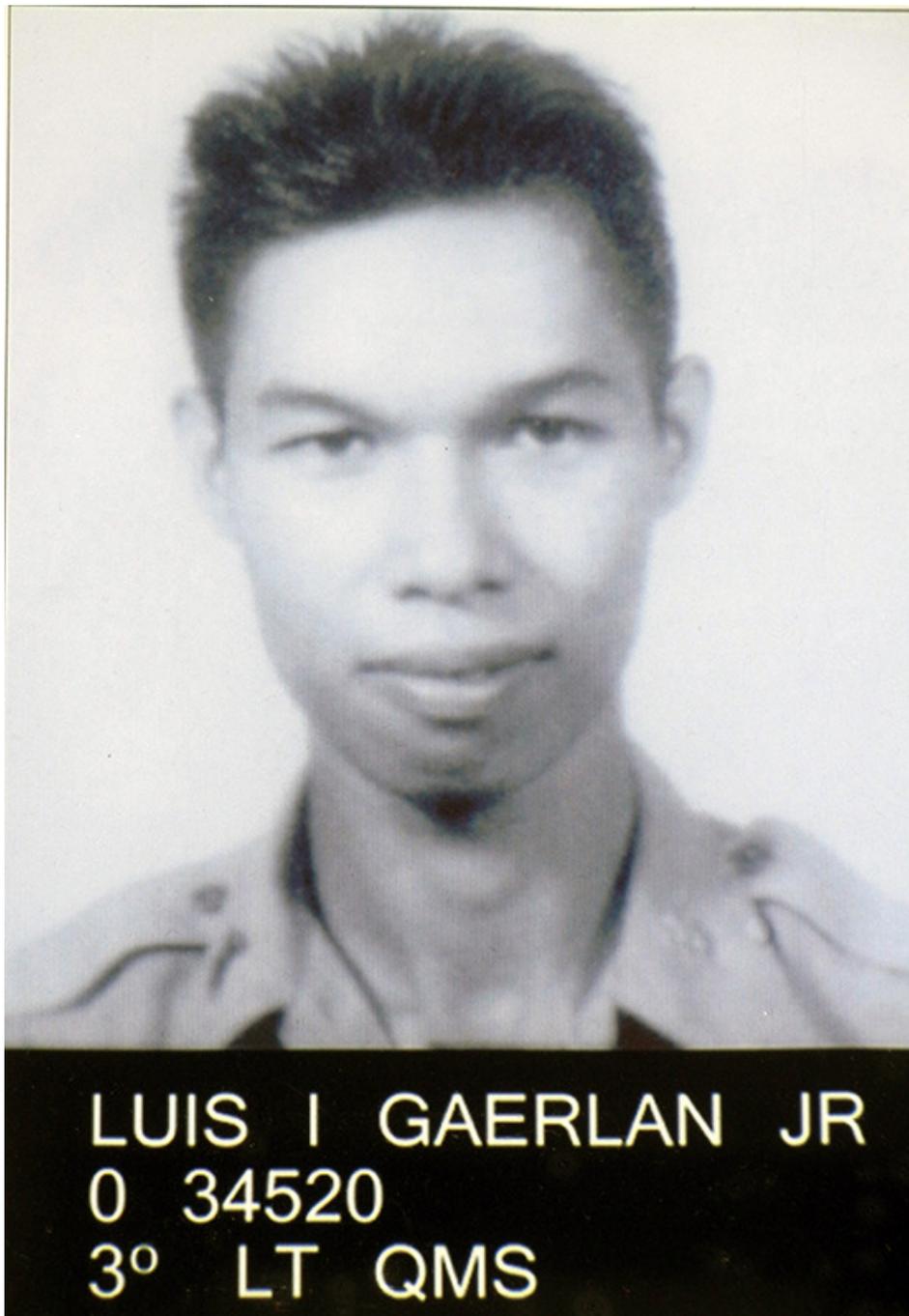
Over a year ago, I embarked on the Bataan Legacy project to address the lack of information on the Filipino defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. It started out on a personal level as my father, Luis Gaerlan, was with the 41st Infantry Regiment. I grew up hearing his stories about the Bataan Death March and Capas, which he told us with great animation.

Many years later, these stories inspired me to write a historical fiction novel, *In Her Mother's Image*, set during WW II in the Philippines. During public readings of the book, I was flabbergasted to learn that not too many people in this country

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had heard of Bataan and its place in history. And even young people with Filipino ancestors who fought during World War II were unaware of its significance.



The author's father, Luis Gaerlan, Jr., of the 41st Infantry Regiment

Moreover, most history books only mention the American defenders, even though seven-eighths of the main line of resistance was held by Filipino soldiers who died at a ratio of more than ten to one compared with the American soldiers.



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Most of the fighting and the dying were borne by the Filipinos. And yet, their sacrifices have been ignored, derided and sometimes even maligned.

During the outbreak of WW II, the entire U.S. army consisted of fewer than 200,000 troops and ranked 17th among the world's armed forces. Despite the Japanese occupation of Manchuria (1931), Nanking and Shanghai (1937), massive recruitment of soldiers did not take place until after July 26, 1941 when President Franklin Roosevelt federalized all organized units in the Philippines into the service of the U.S. Army Forces of the Far East. This was in direct response to the Japanese occupation of French Indochina on July 22, 1941.

Moreover, the Japanese bombed the American gunboat Tutuila in Chunking, China, on July 30, 1941. The Filipino soldiers barely had any training. Most of them were given WW I artillery and ammunition (50 percent of the ammunition were duds) and they were garbed in one set of khaki uniform, rubber-soled shoes and coconut husk helmets.

“What is not remembered today is how the defenders of Bataan, despite massive illness and starvation, held on for four months to delay the timetable of the Imperial Japanese Army and prevented them from reaching Australia.”

General MacArthur did not expect war to happen until April

1942. He also deviated from War Plan Orange, which called for the prolonged defense of the Philippines from the Bataan Peninsula in the event of a successful Japanese invasion, where reinforcements could be transported from the United States. Resources were distributed according to a new plan, which called for meeting the enemy on the beaches.

On December 8, 1941, six hours after Pearl Harbor was bombed, the Philippines was invaded. The majority of U.S. air power was destroyed during the first day with the bombing of Clark and Iba Air Bases and two days later, naval power was severely crippled with the bombing of Sangley Naval Base in Cavite. On December 24 General MacArthur declared Manila an open city, and the defense plan was switched back to War Plan Orange so that all troops in Luzon were ordered to Bataan.

THE WEATHER
Yesterday's Max.: 72.0 C. or
95.4 F. at 1:00 P. M. Min.:
73.3 C. or 71.9 F. at 6:55 A. M.

The Tribune

5 Centavos
4 Pages

MANILA, PHILIPPINES, FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 1942

YEAR XVIII

BATAAN COMPLETELY OCCUPIED BY JAPANESE

Japanese Forces Take Cebu

15 Generals Among War Prisoners



RELIEF—Japanese officers and soldiers shown distributing food to Filipino civilians whose homes were caught between cross firing on the Bataan front. The Japanese also gave medicine for the sick and helped war refugees in all other ways possible, showing great concern for their welfare. (Photo taken by the photography section of the Japanese Propaganda Corps.)

Japanese Flag Planted In Cebu City

ABOARD A JAPANESE WARSHIP, April 11 (Domei)—Crack units of Japanese blowfishers at 10 o'clock yesterday securing a first successful landing near Cebu City, Cebu Island; Basilan on the western coast of Cebu, and Argao, a town 62 kilometers south of Cebu City.

The Japanese forces which landed from Cebu bay in the face of enemy resistance are now engaged in violent street fighting with the enemy in Cebu and are rapidly expanding their operations.

Cebu City is shrouded in smoke as the enemy has set fire to vessels in the bay and other establishments in the area.

Landed south of Mindanao Island, the island of Cebu forms a key strategic point in the southern part of the Philippines.

LINGON, April 12 (Domei)—The United States war department issued a communique today stating that Japanese forces supported by bombers and heavy naval gunfire effected a landing on Cebu island, south of Mindanao, according to report from Washington.

The communique added that Japanese forces continued their intense attacks on Corregidor and Fort Hughes, one of the fortified islands in Manila Bay.

FROM AN UNDISCLOSED BASE IN THE PHILIPPINES, April 11 (Domei)—Alert units of the Japanese land forces maintaining an airtight blockade of Manila Bay, captured three American transports attempting to escape from Bataan peninsula on April 9, it was learned today.

CEBU ISLAND, April 12 (Domei)—It was learned that Jose Abad Santos, former secretary of justice of the Philippine Com-

TOKYO, April 11 (Domei)—Imperial Headquarters announced at 4:10 o'clock this afternoon that Japanese forces since the commencement of the general offensive against the beleaguered Filipino-American forces in Bataan Peninsula up to Sunday captured a total of 48,000 war prisoners, including 13 generals and 670 American troops.

The officers captured included Major General Edward P. King, Jr., commander of United States forces in Bataan Peninsula; Major General Albert Jones, commander of the First Army Corps; Major General George Parker, commander of the First Army Corps; and Major General Guillermo B. Francisco, commander of the Philippine Forces.

The communique said that the spoils taken by the Japanese during the same period amounted to 120 guns including heavy artillery, 250 machineguns, 500 submachine rifles, 175 tanks including armored cars, 250 automobiles and many other arms and munitions.

The entire Bataan Peninsula is now under the control of the Japanese Imperial Forces in the Propaganda Corps said in an announcement on April 12.

Bataan came under Japanese control following the surrender of Major General Edward P. King, Jr., commander of the eastern front, due to the force attack of the Japanese forces. Major General Albert Jones, commander of the western front of Bataan, has also been captured, according to the Propaganda Corps. Captured with him were his staff, composed of Colonel Mark, military chief of staff, Captain Cross and Captain...

Gen. Homma Thanks Officers And Men Under Him for Heroism

BATAAN FRONT, April 11 (Domei)—Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma, commander-in-chief of the Japanese forces in the Philippines, told the press yesterday evening that "it is still too early to identify myself to the world as commander of the Japanese forces in the Philippines in view of the fact that the war has just begun."

Gen. Homma revealed that "our battle has been one against difficult terrain rather than against American forces." He recalled that the fight started with the routing of American troops on the plains of Lingon, followed by the general offensive against the American forces who took shelter in the Bataan fastnesses.

He expressed gratitude to his officers and men for their heroism and bravery which led to the complete occupation of Bataan.



LT. GEN. MASAHARU HOMMA first photograph ever published in the Philippines of the commander-in-chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces here.

Surrender Of Bataan Praised

The occupation of Bataan by the Imperial Japanese Forces will bring back peace and tranquility to many Filipino homes and will enable the Filipino people to undertake the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country, Jorge B. Vargas, chairman of the executive committee, declared in a statement issued yesterday.

The statement reads: "The surrender of Bataan is a wise decision on the part of the Filipinos fighting there as it means the stopping of further sacrifice in futile and unequal resistance of so many young lives of which the nation is sorely in need during these critical times. With the occupation of Bataan and the rest of the Southern Islands, peace and tranquility will be returned to many Filipino homes disrupted by the armed..."



SURRENDER—The surrender of Filipino-American troops on the eastern front of Bataan was offered in this historic scene somewhere in Bataan when Major General Edward P. King, Jr., second from left, accompanied by Col. Williams (with face covered), approached his unit to a representative of the commander-in-chief of the Japanese Imperial Forces.

The Tribune headlines the fall of Bataan, April 24, 1942.

By January 1942 the troops were already on half rations and by February, quinine was no longer distributed. By March, it was down to quarter rations and five hundred men a day became ill with malaria in addition to dysentery, beriberi, avitaminosis and other diseases. Combat efficiency was down

to 25 percent. By the beginning of April there were no longer any reserve troops, and only a few days' worth of rations remained. Most of the men were suffering from disease and starvation.

Since the beginning of the war, they were told every day that help was on the way. Little did they know that their fate was already sealed on December 22, 1941 when President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met in Washington, DC, in what is now known as the Arcadia Convention, when they agreed to save Europe first.

The Fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942 is always remembered as the biggest single surrender in U.S. military history. Some 75,000 troops consisting of 63,000 Filipinos and 12,000 Americans were forced to surrender and march some 60 miles away under extreme tropical conditions with no provisions for food, water or shelter. Those who could no longer go on were beaten, bayoneted and some even beheaded by their Japanese captors. And civilians who tried to help were dealt with in the same manner. Between 10,000 to 15,000 Filipinos and 750 American soldiers died during the march.



POWs on the Bataan Death March

What is not remembered today is how the defenders of Bataan, despite massive illness and starvation, held on for four months to delay the timetable of the Imperial Japanese Army and prevented them from reaching Australia. This enabled the Allied Forces to harness the resources that eventually turned the tide of war and led to the Allied victory. It must be remembered that Singapore fell after only a week and Indonesia almost immediately.

But despite their sacrifice, the Filipinos were once again betrayed in February 1946 when President Truman signed the First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act. A rider was inserted in this bill, which deemed the service of the Filipinos as not being full-time, thereby barring them from receiving the full benefits under the G.I. bill of rights.

When the United States declared war against Japan, the ravages of war never reached the continental United States. The war was fought in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Philippines. Approximately a million Filipino civilians died

during WW II and Manila, once the Pearl of the Orient, became the second most devastated city, next to Warsaw.

The sands of time are running out on the few remaining Filipino soldiers who sacrificed so much to defend the freedom that all of us are enjoying today. As Filipinos, let us take great pride in their sacrifice. We must also remember that we have a duty and an obligation to spread this legacy so that this generation and future ones could learn the lessons of war.

NOTE: Bataan Legacy will be presented on Saturday, November 9 at 11 a.m. at the Holy Child and St. Martin Episcopal Church at 777 Southgate Ave. in Daly City. Admission is free. For more information, please go to www.facebook.com/BataanLegacy.



Cecilia Gaerlan is a playwright/novelist/activist based in Berkeley, California. She created the Bataan Legacy Project to address the lack of information about the role of the Filipinos during World War II in the Philippines and to seek justice for the Filipino veterans whose rights as soldiers were rescinded in 1946.

November 08, 2013 /

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