

PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS IN JAPAN AND JAPANESE CONTROLLED AREAS
AS TAKEN FROM REPORTS OF INTERNED AMERICAN PRISONERS
LIAISON & RESEARCH BRANCH AMERICAN PRISONER OF WAR INFORMATION BUREAU
by JOHN M. GIBBS, 31 July 1946

FUKUOKA CAMP #1 ON THE ISLAND OF KYUSHU, JAPAN

1. LOCATION:

This camp had 3 locations within a period of 10 months, namely, from March 1944 to Jan. 1945. It was first situated at Kashii, said to be a suburb of and 5 miles north of the city of Fukuoka on the Island of Kyushu, Japan. About 17 April 1944 it was moved to an airport between Kashii and Fukuoka. In Jan. 1945 the third location placed the camp in a grove of pine trees slightly north of and inland from Fukuoka, about 1,000 feet from a main-line railway very close to a new Japanese military installation, and within a few miles of coal mines. From the pine trees on the land this new installation took the name of Pine Tree Camp. Its coordinates are 33°36'N. 130°23'E.

The size of the compound was 1000' x 300'. The soil was sandy and level. The compound was surrounded by a wood fence topped by electrified barbed wires. Drainage and sanitation were satisfactory.

There were no markings to indicate the installation to be a prisoner of war camp.

2. PRISONER PERSONNEL:

This camp was first occupied by British (300 prisoners) Dutch (10 prisoners) and American civilians taken on Wake Island (4 prisoners). More than 100 deaths in the group occurred in 1943.

A detail of 200 American Medical Officers from Cabanatuan reached Fukuoka #1 on 17 March 1943. On 25 April 1944 100 civilian prisoners captured on Wake Island arrived and a month later a group of 100 prisoners from Netherlands, E.I., was interned at this location. On 30 Jan. 1945 193 American prisoners starting from Manila 13 Dec. 1944 on the ill-fated Hell Ship, ORYOKU MARU, reached the camp. The total prisoner personnel listed was: American 493 divided as follows, Army 293, Navy 30, Marines 20 & civilians 150, British 150, Dutch 250, Australians 20, making a total of 913.

Col. Curtis L. Beecher, USMC was the Sr. Officer; Col. Arthur Schreve, G.S.C.; Lt. Col. Karl H. Houghton, M.C.; Maj. Raymond McWilliams, A.M-C. & Maj. Walter Kosteci, A.M.C.

3. GUARD PERSONNEL:

Commandant: Yuichi Sakamoto, 1st Lt. Japanese Imperial Army, sadistic, conniving & brutal. Medical Officer: Matsate Hata, incompetent, inconsiderate and brutal. Interpreters: Mr. Kitiyoka and Mr. Katsura.

Guard: Mr. Honda, cruel who administered many beatings without cause to sick men as well as to those able to discharge assigned work.

4. GENERAL CONDITIONS:

(a) HOUSING FACILITIES: This camp was comprised of 12 unheated barracks 22' x 60', 10' ceiling of very light frame construction set in excavations of 4 ½' into the ground with tar paper roofs and sand or dirt floors. To enter these barracks the prisoners stepped down to a sand floored aisle. On either side were the sleeping bays single deck about 3' off the ground running full length of the buildings. The conventional Japanese sleeping mats were fitted into the bays and the men slept with their heads to the wall in a space 2' x 7 ½'. The parts of the superstructure of the barracks above the ground were covered with mud plaster to protect them against the weather. 48 to 60 prisoners occupied each building and there was one small central light in each structure which was not allowed to be turned on during the day, therefore the barracks were in semi-darkness. No washing or toilet facilities other than one wood tub at either end of the barracks. The window openings, 6 on either side, had slat shutters. The Japanese headquarters buildings (2) and guardhouse were located in the prison compound.

A hospital building, dimensions same as the barracks, had been erected in front of the barracks, about 50' away, and close to this building was a small dispensary. The hospital did not contain any beds, therefore patients were allotted floor space, about 2' wide and about 6' long. Four Japanese army blankets and a pillow bag filled with rice husks constituted the bedding. Ventilation was very poor. There were two windows at either end of the hospital, no roof vent, and no side windows. The bathhouse and kitchen were behind the barracks.

(b) LATRINES: Four latrines in separate wood buildings were located within 50', of and back of, the barracks, straddle type, aperture in wood floor over separate concrete septic tanks, each with about 12 cubicles. Bacterial action prevented any overflow. A urinal trough was located in each latrine. There were no urinals or bedpans in the hospital.

(c) BATHING: A separate bath building, unheated and with concrete floors, had been erected convenient to all the barracks. The equipment was 5 large square vats made of wood with metal bottom 10' long 4' wide and 4' deep, with a facility under each tub to heat these tubs. The water in them was changed once weekly and would become so foul that many of the prisoners would not bathe, furthermore, during the winter months it was hazardous to bathe in the unheated building.

Soap was not furnished except on rare occasions. For one period of 11 months no soap was issued and then only

one small cake for four men. It was known that soap was available which, plus the Red Cross soap, gave the Japanese a surplus quantity. There were no separate bathing facilities for the prisoners in the hospital.

(d) MESS HALL: A separate building had been erected for a kitchen, but no mess hall. Buckets of food, consisting of rice and watery soup were given out at the kitchen to a prisoner representative from each of the barracks which representative divided the food in his barracks to the best of his ability and his moral integrity.

The kitchen was equipped with wood burning stoves, constructed of brick, and the cooking was done in flat iron cauldrons.

(e) FOOD: The basic ration per prisoner per day was 300 grams of a mixture of rice, kafir corn and rolled barley, 100 grams of greens and 10 grams of fish, all boiled. The food generally was inferior in quality due in large part to pilferage by Japanese camp officials of better quality camp rations, and articles removed from Red Cross parcels on a selective basis. In American measurement of this ration, the equivalent is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a canteen cup of steamed rice and of a canteen cup of soup. One small bun was added occasionally. This ration equaled 1500 calories. The food was prepared by British prisoner of war cooks. The diet was supplemented at long intervals by such perishable food as meat, fresh fish and vegetables, and on such occasions the regular Japanese ration was reduced. Usually some surplus of rice, dried fish and seaweed resulted when the supplemental food came into the camp. The surplus was pilfered, evidently with the knowledge of the commandant and converted into profit by and for the schemers.

(f) MEDICAL FACILITIES: Very inadequate medicines and medical supplies of all kinds made it impossible to efficaciously treat the sick prisoners in the hospital and in the barracks. Many of the Army doctors were themselves sick in the hospital and were too ill, due to diseases caused by malnutrition, to administer to the comfort and relief of other sick prisoners. The burden of looking after the sick devolved upon any Army medical officer, supported by 2 Dutch doctors who worked to the best of their ability, all under the supervision of a Japanese medical officer. A British Army officer was in charge. The Army medical officer highly praised one of the Dutch doctors for his efforts in behalf of the American prisoners. The hospital, which was inadequately heated and poorly equipped, was used largely for pneumonia cases. There were as many seriously sick prisoners in the barracks as in the hospital. Actually there was no difference between the hospital and the barracks. The capacity of the hospital was 15 patients. There was no operating room. Upon arrival of the 193 survivors of the ORYOKU MARU at this camp 30 Jan. 1945, many of them were seriously ill. Medicines and dressings were obtained in very limited quantity and after much persuasion. A supply of Red Cross medicines and surgical supplies were in the camp, but it was next to an impossibility to obtain them from the controlling Japanese medical officer. From April 1943 to Jan. 1945, an American Army medical officer who was in Fukuoka #1 at all 3 of its locations states that during this time, he lost by deaths approximately 100 Americans, British, Australian and Dutch prisoners in his care due to lack of medicines. The root of death, was malnutrition, and secondary to the slow starvation, was pneumonia, diarrhea or dysentery and brutal beatings of the prisoners by Japanese guards. This officer states that the camp commandant was definitely responsible for many of the deaths because of his concurrence in the brutal beatings. The hospital was badly crowded at all times.

(g) SUPPLIES:

(1) Red Cross, YMCA, and other relief: There were adequate Red Cross medical supplies stored in a Japanese headquarters building in the camp compound, but they were made available to the doctors in such niggardly amount that the use of them was frequently too late. Death had taken over. Red Cross food parcels were issued on 29 Jan. 1945 to be divided 1 parcel among 3 men and again in the same ratio, parcels were issued on 1 March 1945. There is no record of later Red Cross issues. An Army Medical Officer who was interned in this camp in March 1943 and who remained there for more than 2 years states that during this period the prisoners received only 2 issues of Red Cross food-stuffs which were parceled out 1 item (not package) at a time.

(2) Japanese Issue: During the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years prior to January 1945 there is no reference to the Japanese issue of clothing. It is taken for granted that the issue was reasonably adequate. When the detail of 193 from the ORYOKU MARU reached this camp in Jan. 1945 they were each given one heavy overcoat, full-length cotton underwear, clean topclothing, and 6 blankets. This distribution followed the bestowal of other clothing upon leaving the ship at Moji and before starting the short trip to #1.

(h) WORK: Enlisted prisoners worked 10 hours per day at hard labor outside of camp compound in construction of air field bomb shelters and in coal mining. They were exposed to bombing raids and were very inadequately fed for manual labor. These prisoners also did such work as grave digging, carrying coffins to burial sites and other work in the cemetery. Numerous prisoners with malaria and suffering from intermittent fever were compelled to work. Outside details took lunch with them and on some days hot soup was delivered to them at noon.

Officers were not compelled to work. Those who were able were allowed to work in the garden. This was not unpleasant work and the officers were willing to undertake it, although many were too sick to work at all.

(h) MAIL:

(1) Incoming: None.

(2) Outgoing: Prisoners were allowed to write 1 or 2 letters and 2 cards during their internment, however these communications never reached the U.S. On two occasions the prisoners were permitted to send radiograms through amateur network.

(j) TREATMENT: The American army officers in Fukuoka #1 are unanimous in their condemnation of the Camp Commandant, the Medical Officers and other camp command. The prisoners were subjected to frequent beatings by the guards and stoning by the civilian population. In addition to deprivations of all kinds and the confinement of prisoners in unheated guard houses in zero weather the prisoners were poorly treated at all times and one officer among the ORYOKU MARU detail said "a healthy pig would have died." Words out of the mouth of an Army Medical Officer interned here are expressive and they are quoted as follows:

"I would like to emphasize that the Fukuokan camp was without question, excepting the hell ships, the worst experience of all which was probably partly due to the fact that we arrived in a very distressful physical and mental condition after having been bombed and sunk on two ships and having narrowly escaped being torpedoed on the third ship, and without food or water sufficient to sustain life for many days. Contrary to expectation, we did not receive adequate food or medical attention and I personally had approximately 23 streptococcic infections on my legs and body which were running with pus and blood and I was refused any form of gauze or cloth to cover them. There is no question but what many who died here, died from mental distress in a defeated attitude, as we had about reached our rope's end in hopes. There was no excuse whatsoever for our buildings not being heated as there were coal mines nearby and we were willing even to mine the coal if necessary, that is, those of us who were able to provide such fuel. Unsanitary conditions and body lice, added to the discomfort and ultimate death of many of the prisoners there. I feel that the Camp Commander of this camp is directly responsible for not having taken action to save the lives of these men. I feel sure that their lives could have definitely been saved by just a little effort. Many men left this camp who were hardly strong enough to stand alone.

I furthermore would like to emphasize strongly that the Japanese doctors in this camp are not worthy of any consideration whatsoever, that they were very neglectful in their duties and at times refused to supply medicine to the American Officers who were dying of pneumonia and whose lives could have been otherwise saved."

Out of 193 American prisoners who were interned here 30 January 1945 fifty three or 28% died before this detail moved out to Jinsen, Korea on 25 April 1945. The emasculated Japanese version of the Geneva Treaty seemed to suggest the imposition of all forms of brutality.

(k) PAY:

Officers: Were paid 50 yen per month less an unspecified deduction for mess. There was no opportunity for the officers to spend the money they were allowed to retain.

Enlisted Men: Were paid 10 to 15 sen per day with no outlet for spending any portion of it.

(l) RECREATION: No recreational facilities were provided. No library. A garden had been started by the officers and was maintained by them. Inasmuch as the officers volunteered for this work it may be assumed that they regarded gardening as a form of recreation.

(m) RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES: A chapel had not been erected in this camp, however British Army Chaplains conducting periodic services in the barracks for small groups of prisoners. A special commemorative service was arranged in honor of our late President shortly after his passing.

(n) MORALE: Due to malnutrition and the diseases caused by slow starvation, brutal treatment, very inadequate rations, the loss of prisoner friends by death and the heavy infestation of vermin, morale was low and a large number of the prisoners had practically given up hope of brighter days. The transfers from Fukuoka #1 to Jinsen, Korea, and the quiet comfortable travel conditions by boat and train, brought hope to the prisoners.

5. MOVEMENTS:

The remainder of the detail of 193 prisoners surviving the ORYOKU MARU tragedy, and which were sent to Fukuoka #1 on 30 Jan. 1945, were started on their way about 25 April 1945 to Jinsen, Korea. 53 prisoners out of this detail died while at Fukuoka #1, therefore it had dwindled to 140. They traveled by boat under fair conditions from Moji to Fusan, Korea, thence to Jinsen by train in chair cars. The prisoners were well fed on the train.