

From Whence They Came

About 1400 men* from Cabanatuan were selected to go to the Mukden area based on their skills and general health. Many were too sick to go. They left Manila aboard the Totorri Maru on October 8, 1942. They were packed in tightly in the holds with little room, little food or water, and in darkness for days at a time. Buckets for human waste were passed up from the hold, and waste spilled on people below. Animals had been carried in the holds before the men and the holds were not cleaned. On October 9, an American submarine shot two torpedoes at the unmarked ship. The torpedoes simultaneously passed on either side of the ship.



Totorri Maru

The ship arrived in Pusan, Korea on November 9, 1942 where 1300 American POWs were unloaded and sent to the first Mukden POW camp called Fengtien. They arrived in China to encounter freezing weather while wearing the ragged remains of their tropical clothing.

None of the men were given enough food at Mukden to regain their vigor. Many dropped to under 100 pounds.

*There were women on both Bataan and Corregidor, but while they were also starved and deprived of medicine, none were sent to Mukden.

Australians and New Zealanders fought alongside the British to defend Singapore. The Japanese bombed fuel supplies and fired a lethal barrage of long range artillery fire, which damaged roads, the city of Singapore, communication lines, and hospitals. British and Australian planes were rarely able to get off the ground. As soon as possible, they were moved off the island to save them.

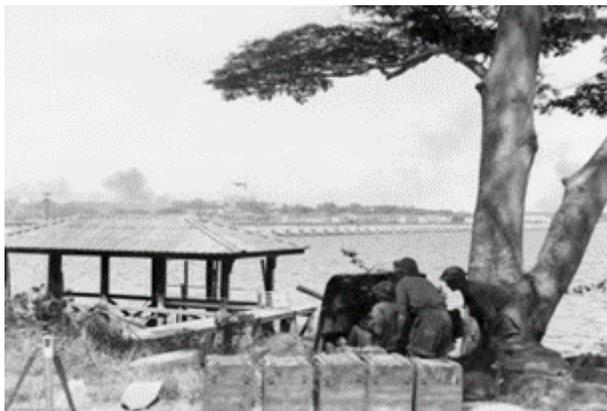
The Japanese overwhelmed the defenders with sheer numbers. A story that is told to illustrate the perception of how many Japanese soldiers there were, is this: The Japanese had so many men, that when they were ready to cross the swampy, causeway area between Malaysia and Singapore, the first waves of soldiers fell and drowned. Eventually enough of their own dead soldiers filled the swamp and the later soldiers could walk on their backs and cross into Singapore with dry feet.



After seven days of retreating as the Japanese troops advanced, on February 15, 1942, General Percival, the British Commander, decided to surrender in order to save the lives of his men. His troops consisted of men from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and India. They were housed at Changi

As a former British Army camp, Changi had piped water and sanitation facilities. The men had some food each day. However, because the supply lines were broken, neither POWs, the local people, nor Japanese soldiers had full rations.

The men were divided into “forces”, or groups, some of whom stayed in Singapore, some were sent to build the infamous Burma railroad, and some were loaded into Hell ships to be sent to Japan, Formosa, and Korea, with a few shipped to China. They spent 6 weeks at Keijo, Korea, working and acclimating to the colder weather. Then they were put on a train to Mukden, where they met the larger group of Americans. In general, they were in better health than the Americans when they arrived at Mukden.



Australian anti tank gun in Singapore overlooking the Johore Causeway between Singapore and Malaya in February 1942.



The “Pig Farm” where Australian forces engaged the Japanese in 1942.