

Preface

The era that my parents grew up in was termed “The Greatest Generation”, they were born right around the time of World War 1 and came of age during World War II. The young men of this generation answered the call to defend their country.

One of those men was my father, he was working inside the Sangley Point U.S. Naval Base in Cavite home of the Asiatic Fleet as a pinsetter in the bowling alley. One of the officers approached him and asked if he would like to join the Insular Force of the U.S. Navy. He did and was recruited that day. That was July 1, 1941 and it was during the time when the United States Army Forces of the Far East (USAFPE) was being organized in the Philippines. War was coming.

My father Ramon Vales was with the 500 Filipino naval reservist that was deployed to the southern tip of Bataan after the Asiatic Fleet sailed down to the Dutch Indies when Cavite was bombed by the Japanese on December 10, 1941.

During the Battle of Bataan, the sailors and marines that were stationed at the U.S. Naval Base in Mariveles were credited with repulsing a Japanese amphibious landing at Longoskawayan Point. This was known as the “Battle of the Points” a triumph for the defenders of Bataan. Airmen without their planes were also holding their ground against the Japanese invasion and with the help of the Philippines Scouts, The Constabulary and a Division of the Philippine Army the seaborne invaders were driven back at the cliffs edge. Rather than admit defeat to their superiors, the Japanese soldiers instead jumped to their deaths.

“Reflections on Bataan: A Valiant Sacrifice – An Honorable Surrender” is my interpretation of the Philippine War during World War II. Early accounts of the war in the Philippines were generally written by American writers and historians and narrated one side of the story. As a result, the roles of the Filipinos were omitted.

The article that I have written with 36 chapters is a result of my seven years research on America’s colonial period in the Philippines. Growing up and educated in the United States, there were no shared Philippine-American history lessons. Most of my generation did not know what happened during this period which the

Filipino elders called “Panahon ng Hapon” (Era of the Japanese Occupation). This writing is to fill that void.

Since that I’m connected with both Filipinos and Americans fighting this war, this writing comes with some emotional attachments, and so, I did not hold back on my comments and reactions especially on the leaders directing this war. Those comments are mine...I own it! Readers are able to agree or disagree.

This year April 9, 2022 is the 80th Anniversary of the Fall of Bataan and in scanning through the social media websites numerous organizations throughout the country have planned events in keeping the memories of the Filipino and American soldiers alive. A well deserve tribute in their honor.

However, a common theme had been given to this historical period which I believe diminished the Bataan Defenders heroic performances in the battlefields. The term “Death March” have somehow become an identity a “signature” portraying the soldiers. I personally believe this is not what these fighting warriors wanted to be remembered by, they deserve better. Emphasis was put on the “Death March” by journalist and writers after the war. They either didn’t dig deep enough or else were vetted by the censorship-of-the press section of the military; they should have been heralding the fighting spirit of the Filipinos and Americans and the victories they scored.

The “flesh and blood” of this history happened between December 8, 1941 to April 8, 1942. The significance of the sacrifice made by the Defenders of Bataan is not their record setting surrender but how they stood their ground against all odds....this is their story.