

the Philippines

On December 14, 1944, Japanese soldiers forced 150 American prisoners of war at a compound on Palawan into an air-raid shelter. Then they doused them with gasoline and threw in a match.

A Survivor's Story

A few of the Americans, a very few, survived. Army PFC Eugene Nielson was one of the survivors. He later described the atrocity to U.S. intelligence officers:

The trench smelled very strongly of gas. There was an explosion and flames shot throughout the place. Some of the guys were moaning. I realized this was it – either I had to break for it or die. Luckily I was in the trench closest to the fence. So I jumped and dove through the barbed wire. I fell over the cliff and somehow grabbed hold of a small tree... There were Japanese soldiers down on the beach. I buried myself in a pile of garbage and coconut husks. I kept working my way under until I got fairly covered up... The Japanese were bayoneting [prisoners on the beach]. They shot or stabbed twelve Americans and then dug a shallow grave in the sand and threw them in.

Nielson hid in the garbage until the Japanese left. He then made a break for