Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection

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Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection, circa 1941-1980

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection,
Date (inclusive): circa 1941-1980
Date (bulk): 1980
Collection number: MS 170
Creator: Waller, Kenneth L., 1920-1993
McKennon, Sandy J., 1958-
Extent: 1 box
Language: English
Repository: Special Collections, Robert E. Kennedy Library
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, California, 93407

Abstract: Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection contains materials recording Waller's years as a prisoner of war (POW) in the Pacific Theater, from September 1941 to August 1945. The materials include photographs, an excerpt from a book, an annotated map, and a transcript of an oral history compiled by Waller and Sandy McKennon in 1980. The oral history chronicles the Japanese occupation of the Philippines and their treatment of prisoners of war through Waller's account of enlisting in the army, being stationed in hospitals in Corregidor and Bataan in the Philippines, encountering prisoners from the "Bataan Death March," being relocated to a coal mining camp in Omine, Japan, viewing the drop of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, and release in 1945.

Provenance
Restrictions on Access
Collection is open to qualified researchers by appointment only. For more information on access policies and to obtain a copy of the Researcher Registration form, please visit the Special Collections Access page.

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Preferred Citation
Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection, Special Collections, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

Abbreviations Used:
c.: circa
POW: prisoner of war

Biography
Kenneth Leroy Waller was born January 13, 1920 in Chickasha, Oklahoma. His parents Gussie and Elver Waller moved the family from Oklahoma to central California when Kenneth Waller was three years old; brother Donald was born seven years later. Waller graduated from high school in Fresno, California in 1938, and went to work for the U.S. Geologic Survey in Coalinga, California.

On September 9, 1941 anticipating U.S. entry into the war, Kenneth Waller joined the medical department of the Army, requesting duty in the Philippines. He sailed on the U.S.S. Cleveland from San Francisco, landed in the Philippines October 23, 1941, and was stationed at Fort Mills Medical Detachment in Corregidor, Philippines. Waller worked as a corpsman in the hospital in Corregidor as a night orderly until he volunteered to go to Bataan to replace nurses who would be evacuated due to the possibility of an Allied surrender.

The Allies surrendered Bataan to the Japanese Army April 9, 1942, a few days after Waller arrived in Bataan. For a month the Army soldiers were left alone to live and care for the wounded with very little food and no medicine. After a month the Japanese Army moved the prisoners to a former Philippine Army training camp in Cabanatuan, Philippines, near the "Bataan Death March" prison camp, Camp O'Donnell. Waller continued his work as an orderly in the "Zero Ward," known for the terminal nature of its patients, tending to prisoners with malaria, beriberi, and diphtheria.

After a month Waller and 200 medical personnel prisoners were shipped to Bilabao Prison in Manila, and then transferred to a sugar boat sailing to Formosa to be loaded with sugar. Those who survived the trip landed in Moji on the island of Kyushu, Japan. Waller, a doctor, and two other American soldiers were moved to Fukuoka "#8 prison camp" (also known as Fukuoka #5) in Omine, Japan, where they joined nearly 500 English, Dutch and Australian prisoners working in the coal mine. On August 9, 1945 the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan; Waller and the other prisoners could see the flash and the mushroom cloud from their camp. Japan surrendered in September of 1945, and Waller and the surviving prisoner of wars were released from the camp and allowed to find their way home.

After the war, Waller returned to the United States, where he was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor and was awarded the Silver Star. He later married Mary Alice Smith, had three daughters, and worked in the oil fields of Taft, California. In 1979 Waller and his wife Mary traveled to the Philippines to visit the places where he was imprisoned during the war. Kenneth Waller died March 9, 1993 in Kern, California.

Sources
California Death Index, 1940-1997, ancestry.com
World War II Prisoners of War, 1941-1946, ancestry.com
U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, ancestry.com
Sandy J. McKennon
Kenneth L. Waller

Scope and Content Note
Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection contains photographs, a transcript of an oral history by Sandy J. McKennon, audio recordings of the interview, an index of the interview, an annotated map, and an excerpt from a book, that describe Private Kenneth L. Waller's years at a prisoner of war in the Philippines and Japan from 1941 to 1945.
The provenance, or original organization, of the papers has been preserved for the most part in the organization of the collection. Kenneth L. Waller Bataan Prisoner of War Collection is housed in one box and is divided into three series:

Series 2: Background Subject File, 1946
Series 3: Photographs, circa 1941

The National Endowment for the Humanities has generously funded the arrangement and description of this collection, along with matching funds from California Polytechnic State University.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Bataan (Philippines: Province)--History  
Bataan, Battle of, Philippines, 1942--Personal narratives, American  
History, 20th Century--Philippines  
Omine Fukuoka 5 (Prisoner of war camp)  
Prisoners of war--Japan  
Prisoners of war--Philippines--Bataan (Province)  
World War, 1939-1945  
World War, 1939-1945--Atrocities--Philippines--Cabanatuan  
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Philippines  
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Philippines--Cabanatuan  
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Philippines--Corregidor Island  
World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Philippines--Cabanatuan  
World War, 1939-1945--Japan  
World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives, American  
World War, 1939-1945--Philippines  
World War, 1939-1945--Philippines--Bataan  
World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons, Japanese  
World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons, Philippines

**Genre and Forms of Materials**

Photographs  
Oral History  
Audio Cassettes  
Index  
Maps

**Related Materials**

**Related Collections**

*Special Collections, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo:*
- Smith Family Papers on World War II, 1936-2005 (MS 065)  
- Manzanar Collection, 1942-1994 (MS 026)  
- Messinger Pacific Theater World War II Collection, August-October 1945 (MS 064)

*Special Collections, U.C. Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara:*
- World War II-Philippines, New Guinea, Okinawa Photograph Collection (Bernath MSS 38)

*Special Collections, Claremont College, Claremont:*
- William B. Simpson World War II Material Relating to the Philippine Islands Collection (h1992.6)

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   **Scope and Content Note**


A. Oral History Transcript

Scope and Content Note
Contains the typed oral history transcription with index, and a photocopy of an annotated map of the Bataan Peninsula, 1962, 1980. 2 folders.

Box 1, Folder 1
McKennon, Sandy J. “Prisoner of War From Bataan: An Oral History Interview of Kenneth L. Waller.” Typescript, 1980

Box 1, Folder 2
Physical Description: p.16.

B. Audio Recordings
Scope and Content Note
Contains audio recordings of the oral history of Kenneth L. Waller, conducted by Sandy J. McKennon, 1980. 1 folder.

Box 1, Folder 3
Kenneth L. Waller Oral History, Audio Cassettes, 1980

2. Book Excerpt, 1946

Scope and Content Note
Contains one subseries: A. ‘The Last Phase’ at Omine Book Excerpt.

A. ‘The Last Phase’ at Omine Book Excerpt
Scope and Content Note
Contains a typed cover page, and a photocopy of the foreword, acknowledgment, and sketches from the book ‘The Last Phase’ at Omine, 1946. 1 folder.

Box 1, Folder 4
Tyson, Geoffrey. ‘The Last Phase’ at Omine. Toz: Launceston, 1946

3. Photographs, circa 1941
Scope and Content Note
Contains one subseries: A. Photographs of Kenneth L. Waller.

A. Photographs of Kenneth L. Waller
Scope and Content Note
Contains two photographs of Kenneth L. Waller, circa 1941. 1 folder.

Box 1, Folder 5
Civilian and Army Photographs, circa 1941