

Primary Sources Packet: Camp cont.

Document Three

Ken Wheeler, "For My Children," (excerpt)

Defenders of the Philippines

"Disease was rampant in the camp. Already there was ahead of us what remained of the American troops from Bataan. These were the survivors of the "Death March" and the infamous Camp O'Donnell ordeal which followed. The majority of the prisoners had malaria or dysentery or both, and medical care was virtually hopeless since our own doctors were sick as well and none had enough medicine to really help. The Japanese guards seldom came inside the barbed wire enclosures, and then only with masks on. They threw our [] over the fence once each day and the remaining time kept their distance in the guard towers and sentry positions. Our pleas for help went completely unheeded. The comparatively well prisoners had great difficulty caring for the sick and the death rate was very high. We lost upwards of thirty men each day for the first three months, not counting those who were executed.

"Dietary deficiencies such as beriberi, scurvy and pellagra soon began to appear, causing acute discomfort, pain and numerous deaths. An epidemic of diphtheria likewise took an enormous toll of life before some anti-toxin was smuggled into the camp by Catholic priests under their vestments. The Filipino or European priests were at first allowed into the camp to hold mass on Sundays and did much good, but this privilege was soon withdrawn like so many other small concessions allowed for short periods only."