

The Filipino American Experience Research Project

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**A DOCUMENT COLLECTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE**

**1<sup>ST</sup> FILIPINO INFANTRY REGIMENT IN WORLD WAR II**

A Field Study submitted to the faculty of  
San Francisco State University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
degree

Master of Arts

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Alex Sandoval Fabros, Jr.

San Francisco, California

August, 1997

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## **CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL**

I certify that I have read A DOCUMENT COLLECTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FILIPINO INFANTRY REGIMENT IN WORLD WAR II by Alex Sandoval Fabros, Jr., and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University.

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## **Preface**

Among the annals of American military histories, the First Filipino Infantry Regiment, Army of the United States, is considered to be unique. A military unit is created out of a need for a purpose, each with a mission to fulfill. The First Filipino Infantry Regiment, in its creation, was based upon the circumstances of the period in time.

Dating back to the Revolutionary War, many of the original militias began in the colonies for a purpose. The Civil War and subsequent military campaigns and hostilities, justified the creation of specialized units. World War I, brought back those units, long ago deactivated to continue the lineage of their famous counterparts and further distinguish themselves on the battlefield.

The circumstances of World War II, brought about the constitution of various ethnic American Military Units. Among them was the First Filipino Infantry Regiment, consisting of a blend of Filipino expatriates, Filipino-Americans by birth, and Americans. Humble in its beginning, however, dramatic in the challenge of the mission it had to fulfill, to finally retire with honors earned through individual sacrifices, that resulted in a brilliant and illustrious history.

The American people, by Act of Congress in 1935, promised the Filipino people their full independence by the year 1946. The new Philippine Commonwealth government proceeded to assume the task of a new democracy, and in doing so, had established a militia, with the help of General Douglas MacArthur, then assigned as Military Advisor by the United States government.

Just six years into being formed, the Philippine Army, with the American trained Philippine Scouts, and the American Armed Forces stationed in the Philippines, came under attack, and within a few months found the invading Japanese Military Forces solidly entrenched on Philippine soil. The following year American and Philippine Forces stubbornly fought to defend the islands, only to surrender to overwhelming conditions in early 1942. Freedom and democracy was not to be earned easily. Many Americans and Philippine troops refused to accept surrender. Some escaped to eventually return with allied forces. Others remained behind and began a crusade against the enemy.

By the time America entered World War II, there were over a hundred thousand transplanted Filipinos in Hawaii and the U. S. mainland. The impact of the unprovoked attack brought on the call for volunteers for our armed forces. Thousands of Filipinos answered the all to arms, which began a new page in Filipino heritage. These Filipino American units played a tremendous role in the liberation of their former homeland.

What these Filipino-Americans did to the Japanese invaders of their homeland is unmentionable. What the Japanese said of these men is unspeakable in any language.

To the surviving veterans, and to those who paid the supreme sacrifices as members of these units, a salute in their honor is presented.

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A DOCUMENT COLLECTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FILIPINO  
INFANTRY REGIMENT IN WORLD WAR II

Alex Sandoval Fabros, Jr.

San Francisco State University

1997

## **Abstract**

This field study is undertaken to create a collection of the historical documents of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiments, the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, and the special Filipino American detachments of the United States Army in World War II. It is intended to be used by researchers interested in the Filipino American experience..

The documents were collected from various sources to include the National Archives, the U. S. Army Institute of Military History, the Filipino American National Historical Society Archives, and the personal papers of many of the men who served in these units.

The collected data was organized by unit type. A timeline of the unit histories was created to enable future researchers to navigate through the data. An analysis of the collection produced the narrative description that accompanies the document collection.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this field study.

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(Chair, Thesis Committee)

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(DATE)

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This document collection looks at a period of history that had a major impact on the direction of the Filipino American communities in post World War II America. There are only two or three footnotes in a few studies of the history of the liberation of the Philippines that mentions the existence of these Filipino American men in the military. When the declassified after action reports of the units that were created from the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Regiment are examined, the significance of their contribution is then understood.

Five major archives provided much of the data needed to begin this study. Three of the archives, The National Archives at Suiteland, MD,<sup>1</sup> the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA,<sup>2</sup> and the General Douglas MacArthur Library, Norfolk, VA<sup>3</sup> provided most of the official records of the Units. The Pinoy Archives of the Filipino American National Historical Society, Seattle, WA<sup>4</sup> was a rich treasure trove of personal papers of soldiers who served in World War II. The Filipino American Experience Research Project at San Francisco State University (FAX-RP) provided the most in-depth source materials of Filipino

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American history from the 1920's to 1965 from its automated database of ethnic Filipino American newspaper articles, audio and video taped interviews, and personal papers collections.<sup>5</sup>

Using the data t found in these archives, a structure was developed that permitted a logical organization of the data collection. One of the difficulties in organizing the material was that the activities of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment did not lend itself to a chronological organization of the collection. So much was happening at different locations at the same time by the various sub-units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment that it would have been confusing to the researcher trying to track a specific unit's activities. The obvious solution was to identify the major units and create separate volumes for them.

A narrative discription of the activities of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment provides the researcher with an introduction to the Filipino American communities of the 1940's using information never before used to analyze the contributions of these men. Anecdotal material from recently declassified individual after action reports paints a different picture of these men from the stereotypical, down trodden, uneducated farm workers that writers have portrayed these men. For instance, the MacArthur Library has a file that consists of a 3x5

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card of each and every Filipino who served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Regiment. A random sampling of 150 cards from the five thousand cards produced a composite of a Filipino with 10½ years of education, technical skills not normally found in a farming background, and an IQ of 115.6

The FAX-RP database provided a rich source of newspaper articles of the Filipino community structure. Instead of scattered, isolated communities, we found a unified organization along the Pacific coast states with ties to the major metropolitan centers east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. These communities had come together under the umbrella of the Filipino Inter-Community Organization of the Western States and had laid forth the political agenda that needed to be acted on before the July 4, 1946 deadline that would give the Philippines their independence.<sup>7</sup> The stated goals of the FICOWS was American citizenship for Filipinos already in the U.S., elimination of laws aimed at Filipinos including job discrimination, property ownership, and anti-miscegenation laws. From 1939 through 6 December 1941, limited progress was being made in Washington (land ownership) and California (civil service jobs for college graduates). The question of U.S. citizenship was being carried by Congressman Vito Marcantonio of New York and it seemed that there was growing support to

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grant Filipinos in the U.S. the elusive goal of all Asian immigrants, citizenship and all the rights it entailed.<sup>8</sup>

World War II gives the Filipinos all that they had been fighting for prior to the war but it also went far beyond the expectations of the Filipino war veterans. The impact of The War Brides Act of December 28, 1945 on Filipino communities was astounding. Instead of what appeared to be a multi-racial community of future generations of Filipino Americans, over ten thousand Filipino women slipped through the immigration limitations of the Tydings McDuffie Act to create the Filipino American communities that we have today. Some even claim that it was the demand of these women to bring their families to America that has made the Filipinos the largest and fastest growing Asian immigrant group in the U.S. today..<sup>9</sup>

Another benefit of the war was the G. I. Bill of Rights. Not only were Filipino veterans returning to college at war's end, but they were entering the white collar job market through the protections that the act provided. For the Filipinos who did not serve in the military during the war, the shortage of workers meant job opportunities for them in the war industries. Many of the men ended up working in the ship yards, construction, and white collar clerical jobs. After the

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war, many of these men stayed on in there new careers and helped their fellow Filipinos to enter this once restricted job market.<sup>10</sup>

By using the information contained in The Document Collection Of The History Of The 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment In World War II, future researchers will have resource that will permit them to explore the Filipino communities before and after the war. The advantage this study has over all previous works is access to the automated database that was created from the document collection. Not only is the story told from the Filipino viewpoint, whenever possible, news stories from main stream papers were entered into the database to provide contrasting points of view. Many of the personal notes and papers of the men from this period are also available on-line and will provide appropriate the researcher with anecdotal material. For instance, entering the name “Fermin Tobera” into the database provides not only the story of his murder in January 1930 during the anti-Filipino riots at Watsonville, CA, it also shows his role within the local Filipino community.<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Saturnio Silva’s mission into the Philippines is based on over 20 after action reports from men who served with him and from, material in Colonel Wendell Fertig’s unpublished journals, message logs in the Douglas MacArthur Library, and over sixty pre-war

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references in the Filipino American newspaper collection. These references are on line and helps to flesh out Silva's story.

## **Chapter 2: Review Of Literature**

### **National Archives**

Most of the documents used in this study came from the unit files in the National Archives at Suiteland, Maryland. The records of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment were incomplete and often mixed in with other units not associated with the two Filipino units. For instance, one regimental file was found in the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army, an entirely different unit. The “roadmap” to the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment provided by Alex L. Fabros proved invaluable in locating the scattered records of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment. For instance, the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment went through many manifestations in its short military history. The history of its soldiers were found in the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Battalion, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment. The roadmap provided by Fabros pointed the way to the Allied Intelligence Bureau and its Philippine Section. This then led to the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion which in turn led to the 5217<sup>th</sup> Recon Battalion, 5218<sup>th</sup> Recon Company, the 978<sup>th</sup> Signal Service Company, the Parachute Detachment. The Regiment never commanded all of its units in combat because it was fragmented out to support other missions such as the Counter-Intelligence Corps, Alamo Scouts, 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion, and the Philippine Civil Affairs Units.

Several oral histories and personal papers were located at the U. S. Army Institute of Military History. A collection of taped oral interviews conducted by Daniel P. Gonzales in the 1980's as part of the Presidio of San Francisco Military Museum exhibit of the Filipinos in World War II was added to the collection.

After a review of the collected documents, it was discovered that organization of the data by type military unit and specific collection type was the best way to present the information. The following is a summary of the major collections.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Since the purpose of this field study was to collect documents relevant to the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment, a simple data collection plan was used to locate appropriate documents for this project.

Initial research was in the National Archives at Suiteland, MD, the U.S. Army Institute of Military History at Carlisle Barracks, PA., the General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Library, Norfolk, VA, and the Filipino American National Historical Society archives, Seattle, WA. Arrangements were made with these archives to obtain copies of the documents selected for inclusion in this field study.



## **Chapter 4: Narrative Summary Of Findings**

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment.<sup>12</sup>**

The day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Filipinos in the United States, those we now respectfully call the “manongs,”<sup>13</sup> began a drive to form an all-Filipino military unit. Quickly trained, Filipino immigrants turned-soldiers would be sent to help push the Japanese out of the Philippines. They would fight bravely for the liberation of their homeland and for their right to be American citizens.

These members of the manong generation were so despised by white America that senators from the western states pushed for Philippine independence, hoping these men would return to the Islands. They were relegated to the bottom of American society, yet they saw opportunities here for a better life and they fought for the right to be Filipinos in America. By 1941, the manongs had been fighting in the United States for over 20 years for wages and living conditions equal to whites and had built militant labor unions in Hawaii,

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12 The Principal unit that will be looked at is the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment. This unit began as the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion. From this unit evolved 2 regiments, a separate battalion, a reconnaissance battalion, and special units and detachments. For the purpose of clarity, the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment will be considered to be the parent organization of all the other units.

13 Cordova, Fred. Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans Kendal Hunt: 1983

California and Alaska. In the courts they were pioneering civil rights issues, including the right to own property, equal job opportunities and the repeal of racially biased laws. And they were winning.<sup>14</sup>

The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 treated the Filipinos in the U.S. as aliens. Although the Philippine Commonwealth Constitution permitted the U.S. to draft Filipinos in the Philippines to defend American interests there, Filipinos in the U.S., quite ironically, were exempt from military service.<sup>15</sup>

Thousands of Filipinos had petitioned for the right to serve in the U.S. military immediately after December 7, 1941. On January 2, 1942, President Delano Roosevelt signed a law revising the Selective Service Act. Filipinos in the U.S. could now join the U.S. Armed Forces and they were urged to volunteer for service. President Roosevelt quickly authorized the founding of a Filipino battalion, which would be organized for service overseas. It estimated the number of available Filipino volunteers between 70,000 and 100,000.<sup>16</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion was formed on March 4, 1942 and activated on April 1 at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. Lieutenant Colonel Robert H. Offley, who had served in the Philippines and spoke passable Tagalog,

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14 Philippines Mail, 1941.

15 The Tydings McDuffie Independence Act (Public Law No. 127, 73d Congress)

16 Philippines Mail, January 1942.

Video taped interview of Pacita Todtod on June 26, 1996, by Daniel P. Gonzales.

volunteered to be assigned to the unit as its first commander. He assumed command on April 8. The War Department also directed Philippine Army officers and soldiers who were stranded in the U.S. at the start of the war to report to the unit.<sup>17</sup> An unusual point is the designation of the unit. Previous Filipino units in the U.S. Army had been designated “Philippine” such as the Philippine Scouts. All units raised in the U.S. during the war were designated “Filipino.” Also, it would not be until the end of the war that the Filipino military units would carry the designation “Infantry” in their title although their regimental colors from the very beginning were displayed on a blue field, the traditional color of the infantry branch of the army.<sup>18</sup>

A number of wounded Philippine Army and Philippine Scouts had escaped to Australia from the Philippines on board the U.S.S. Mactan in December 1941.<sup>19</sup> Some remained in Australia to form the nucleus of what would eventually become the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, but the rest were sent to the

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17 Colonel Robert H. Offley Papers, The Filipino American Experience Research Project Archives, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University.

Major General Tirso Fajardo Papers, The Filipino American Experience Research Project Archives, Fresno, California.

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U.S. for further medical treatment. These men eventually reported to the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion.<sup>20</sup>

Contrary to popular belief, the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion was not established as a result of the American policy of social segregation. Only Filipinos who volunteered for assignment to the unit were sent to it.<sup>21</sup> Many others, such as Eutiquio V. “Vic” Bacho<sup>22</sup>, served with distinction in “American” (white) units in the European theater of operations during the war.<sup>23</sup> Doroteo Vite wrote in a national magazine that Filipinos should take the opportunity to serve in all-white units to educate them so that at the end of the war, white Americans would support the Filipino American agenda of equality. Vite in the spring of 1944 rowed ashore in a rubber dingy from a submarine to establish guerrilla operations in the southern Philippines.<sup>24</sup>

Many of these men were part of the migratory labor force that followed the harvest season along the Pacific Coast, from California farms to Washington fruit orchards and Alaskan fish canneries. Others had lifted themselves by their “bootstraps” into college and took the limited white collar jobs that were open to

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20 Noyer, William L. Mactan: Ship of Destiny Rainbow Press, Fresno, CA 1979

21 War Department Orders, dated March 1942, Colonel Robert H. Offley Papers

22 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

23 Cordova, Fred. Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans Kendal Hunt Press, 1983

Bacho, Eutiquio de la Victoria “Vic” & Bacho, Peter. The Long Road: Memoirs of a Filipino Pioneer Self Published, 1992.

them. Having endured white America's racism, these men knew how to adapt to rapidly changing situations. They relied upon one another for strength. Communal living on the farms permitted them to adapt quickly to military life.

Leading Filipino musicians of the time made up the regimental band. Sergeant Urbano Francisco composed the regimental marching song, "On to Bataan;" but it was not uncommon for the men to march to the strains of the latest "boogie woogie" or "swing" song.

By the end of May 1942, the strength of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had reached over 2,000 men. The unit was ordered to Salinas, California where it became the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment on July 13, 1942.

The Salinas Rodeo Grounds which had just been vacated by Japanese Americans who had been sent to remote concentration camps, housed the regiment. Because of the strict anti-miscegenation laws then in effect along the U.S. west coast, many of them married into other non-white ethnic groups. Among the most popular group to choose from were Japanese women, the daughters of Isei immigrant farmers. The manongs must have impressed the Japanese women greatly to cause many of them to reject the strong Japanese dislike of "Gai-jins" (foreigners. C. Sales wrote in the January 29, 1934 issue of

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the *Philippine Mail* of a young Romeo-and-Juliet couple. A certain Silvestre, a Filipino, and Alice Taneka were engaged to be married. When her family tried to force her to break off their engagement, they committed double suicide.<sup>25</sup>

On April 1942, Lieutenant General John L. Dewitt, Western defense commander, ordered the Japanese on the West Coast into concentration camps. Miguel Ignacio, secretary of the Filipino Community of San Francisco, called attention to several American-born Japanese women, citizens of the United States, who had Filipino husbands, and Filipino-Japanese children who were U.S. citizens by birth. Despite the efforts of the American Civil Liberties Union, Dewitt ordered the women and children to spend the duration of the war in the internment camps.<sup>26</sup> Many of these Filipino husbands went on to serve in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Regiments, defending the nation whose racist policies held their families hostage.

In September 1942, the first group of qualified Filipino enlisted men was sent to the Officer Candidate School, Fort Benning, Georgia. Upon graduation, they were commissioned second lieutenants in the U.S. Army. The War Department planned to have Filipino officers eventually command the majority of

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25 *Philippines Mail*, January 29, 1934

26 *New York Times*,

the combat units in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Regiments..<sup>27</sup> Events beyond the control of the military planners in Washington, D.C. intervened to prevent this from being fully implemented.<sup>28</sup>

So many Filipino volunteers came from all over the U.S. that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment was formed at Fort Ord, California on November 22, 1942. In January 1943, the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment was reassigned to Camp Beale, near Sacramento and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment to Camp Cooke, near Santa Maria. The two regiments were to be joined by a third regiment consisting of Filipinos from the Hawaiian National Guard. However, the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association argued successfully with the martial law commanders in Hawaii that not only was cheap labor on the plantations necessary to support the war effort, the Filipinos in Hawaii were forbidden by the Tydings-McDuffie Act from going to the continental U.S.<sup>29</sup> The men could not leave the sugar plantations and were paid substandard wages for the duration of the war.<sup>30</sup> This would have serious consequences in 1946 when the militant Filipino labor unions shut down the

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27 Colonel Robert H. Offley Papers. Official orders, 1942.

28 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

29 Tydings McDuffie Independence Act (Public Law No. 127, 73d Congress). Section 8 stated "Citizens of the Philippine Islands who are not citizens of the United States shall not be admitted to the continental United States from the Territory of Hawaii...."

30 Dioniso, Juan C. Filipinos in Hawaii: The First 75 Years Honolulu, 1981.

islands until their demands for wage increases and better working conditions were met.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of a May 1942 Gallup Poll showing strong support for the naturalization of Filipinos, the Filipino Naturalization Bill was passed. *Pinoy* GI's<sup>32</sup> were urged to apply for U.S. citizenship. A mass swearing in of over 1,000 soldiers was held at Camp Beale on February 20, 1943.<sup>33</sup> Many of the men, however, resisted becoming citizens. T-5 Julius B. Ruiz stated that although he had lived in the U.S. for and was now serving in the U.S. Army, his goal was to liberate his country, the Philippines.<sup>34</sup> By the time the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment left for the western Pacific in May 1944, over half of the men in the unit were U.S. citizens.<sup>35</sup>

From January 1943 through the spring of 1944, the two regiments went through extensive combat training at Camp Hunter-Liggett and Camp Roberts.

Although the Filipinos along the Pacific coast were restricted by anti-Filipino laws from becoming professionals, there was no such restriction for Filipinos residing east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Filipinos who aspired to

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31 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

32 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

33 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

34 Julius B. Ruiz Papers, The Filipino American National Historical Society Archives, Seattle, WA.

35 Philippines Mail, May 1942



enter the medical and legal professions were able to graduate from schools and practice their profession in the east. The officer ranks were filled by these talented men. One officer, Lieutenant Frank Aquino, a U.S. born medical officer from Salinas, California who had studied in the east, saved the live of Gen. Hideki Tojo, former Japanese Premier who attempted suicide in September 1945.<sup>36</sup> Major Gregorio Chua, a medical officer who assisted in the evacuation of wounded personnel from Manila aboard the USS Mactan was pulled from the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment and sent to the serve in the Pacific in the summer of 1943 because of a shortage of doctors. He rejoined the Regiment at the end of the war in Leyte.<sup>37</sup> Captain Gregorio Sese, company commander in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment was a successful practicing attorney in Washington, D.C. before the war. He was assigned to review the death sentences of Japanese accused of war crimes at the end of the war.<sup>38</sup>

Another reason for the drop in strength was passage of what was commonly called the “P-38 Law” that exempted soldiers over the age of 38 from having to serve in combat or the military. Many of the Filipinos chose to leave the service and returned to work on the farms where they were badly needed or

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36 The Philippine Star Press, October 27, 1945, American Blood For Tojo

37 Interview with Dr. Gregorio Chua, January 12, 1990 and August 10, 1992.

38 Video taped Interview with Greg Sese, Washington, D.C. on May 27, 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

sought opportunities in the defense industries. Because of the acute shortage of skilled farm labor, California, like Hawaii, was able to restrict the number of Filipinos permitted to join the military. Combined with the demands of General MacArthur for men to fill the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn, the two regiments were never able to come to full combat strength. In March 1944, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment was used to bring the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment up to 125% strength. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment was disbanded on March 27, 1944 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Battalion (Separate) was formed.<sup>39</sup> Thirty officers were sent to Charlottesville, Virginia for Civil Affairs training in April 1944.<sup>40</sup>

Before the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment departed for the Western Pacific in May 1944, Colonel Offley had a major dilemma on his hands. Even though his regimental chaplains were prepared to perform marriage ceremonies between the Filipino soldiers and their white girlfriends, the strict anti-miscegenation laws in California prevented the men from applying for marriage licenses. Colonel Offley solved this by sending his soldiers and their sweethearts to Gallup, New Mexico on chartered busses that soon came to be called the “honeymoon express.”<sup>41</sup>

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39 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

40 Colonel Robert H. Offley papers, in the Filipino American Experience Research Project archives.

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion**

The regiments also became a pool of Filipino personnel for special assignments and missions. Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), had surrendered his command to the Japanese Army in the Philippines on May 6, 1942, and a curtain of silence fell on the Islands. In far off Australia, MacArthur needed to reestablish communications with U.S. and Filipino forces who were still resisting the Japanese.<sup>42</sup>

How would he fulfill his promise to return if he couldn't break through and muster all available forces in the conquered archipelago? MacArthur would eventually look to the fields of California and Hawaii and the canneries of Alaska for the answer, to the ranks of the ostracized manong generation of Filipino immigrant workers. With daring and stealth, Filipino American commandos eventually solved MacArthur's problem. In the end, however, their office-bound white officers snatched all the glory.

There was shot-lived joy in MacArthur's headquarters when a lone radio message from somewhere in the Philippines broke through the silence on the night of June 28, 1942. This unknown operative kept sending reports on the

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41 Notes of Alex L. Fabros interview with Colonel Robert H. Offley at 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment reunion, Salinas, CA on August 15, 1971.

42 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

guerrilla activities of stubborn USAFFE units in northeast Pangasinan, until August 22, 1942 when he was heard no more. Later, it was learned that the shadowy operative. Lieutenant Colonel Guillermo Nakar, Philippine Army, was captured by the Japanese in September 1942 and executed at Fort Santiago in Manila.<sup>43</sup>

Now MacArthur really needed men to infiltrate back into the Philippines and report to his command by radio. In July 1942, the Allied Intelligence Bureau, Philippine Section was formed, with Lieutenant Colonel Allison W. Ind in charge. Ind quickly gathered the few Filipino soldiers who had escaped to Australia and trained them to be secret agents steeped in radio operations and commando tactics.<sup>44</sup>

Over the next few months, additional radio contacts were made with the Philippines, with Lieutenant Colonel Praeger reporting from Luzon, Colonel Peralta in Panay, and on February 19, 1943, Colonel Fertig from Mindanao. MacArthur sent a team of six Filipinos led by Captain Jesus Villamor via

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43 Hieb, Harley F. Heart of Iron Pacifica Publishing, Lodi, CA 1987.

Willoughby, Charles A. The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines Vantage Press, 1972.

MacArthur, Douglas. Reminiscences McGraw Hill Book Company , 1964

Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 978<sup>th</sup> Signal Service Company, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1993.

44 Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1994.

submarine to the Philippines. Villamor's team landed at Catmon Point, Negro Occidental on January 14, 1943 and made contact with Peralta. Five more missions were sent from Australia, the last one commanded by Captain Irineo A. Ames who landed in Iloilo.<sup>45</sup>

The success of these forays convinced MacArthur to send more teams to blanket the Islands with a clandestine radio network, disrupt the Japanese forces, as well as to train guerrillas. The problem was there were no more Filipinos left in Australia for these new missions.

On MacArthur's orders, Colonel Courtney Whitney and Lieutenant Colonel Jaime Velasquez visited the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiments in February, 1943. Whitney was overwhelmed by the number of Filipino American volunteers who were eager to avenge the rape of their homeland by the Japanese. He chose over 800 of the best and the brightest of these men and ordered them to join him in Australia. Velasquez stayed behind to coordinate final selection and training.<sup>46</sup>

On July 1, 1943, MacArthur ordered the formation of what would become the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn composed of the 5218<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Company and the 978<sup>th</sup> Signal Service Company. The Filipino Americans were divided into two groups

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45 Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1994.

for training as radio technicians or commands. Their base was an abandoned Australian Army camp in Queensland, some 45 miles southeast of Brisbane and four miles from Beau Desert. It was called Camp “X.”<sup>47</sup>

Training was hard – assembling and reassembling radio equipment over and over until the men could do it blindfolded; encoding and decoding messages and sending them quickly. Most importantly, they learned how to set up radio networks. By October 20, 1944, the men had so infiltrated the Philippines with these networks that the Japanese never made a move MacArthur did not know about.

The commandos also underwent rigorous training in demolition techniques, sniper fire, infiltration and hand-to-hand combat. They learned how to organize, train and lead Filipino guerrillas. A parachute detachment went through arduous training to earn silver jump wings.<sup>48</sup> Aware that they were being trained for suicide missions, they adopted the fatalistic unit motto, “*Bahala Na*” – Come What May, and plenty came.

In a way, these men were the grand uncles of the U.S. Army’s Special Forces or Green Berets. Many of the training techniques and missions

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46 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

47 Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1994.

requirements are still being taught to soldiers at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and practiced all over the world, wherever special operations units are required.

The first of the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn missions departed Brisbane, Australia on October 23, 1943. MacArthur was there to bid them farewell as they left on the submarine USS Narwhal. The party consisted of Major Lawrence Phillips, Captain Galang, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Ruben Songco, four radio operators and two Recon men. They landed in Mindoro on November 13, 1943. The Japanese immediately knew of their landing from an informer in the town of Paluan and hunted them down. Only Galang and two men survived the war.<sup>49</sup>

The fate of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Ruben Songco was a shameful tragedy. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, he was denied a commission in the U.S. Navy because he was a Filipino. Wanting to help liberate the Philippines, he accepted a commission in the U.S. Army and trained with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiments. After a series of gallant exploits, he was ambushed and killed in Panay in December 1944, betrayed by pro-Japanese Filipinos.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the first missions' setback, more and more Filipino Americans were sent into the Philippines. Staff Sergeant Daniel B. Sabado from Salinas,

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48 Video taped interview of Cecil Walter, Portland, OR, on June 20, 1994 by Daniel P. Gonzales.

49 Galang, Ricardo After Action Report

50 Galang, Ricardo After Action Report

California was with Party Two when it landed at the mouth of the Agusan River, Mindanao on December 2, 1943. His personal report to MacArthur said all the members of his party kneeled and kissed the ground. Later, they were “entertained by Filipina *dalagas* (young ladies) who came to see the new arrivals from the other side of the world.”<sup>51</sup>

Second Lieutenant Saturnino R. Silva slipped through Butuan Bay and landed in Agusan, Mindanao on March 3, 1944 with Party Three. He was immediately assigned as the Plans and Training Officer of Colonel Fertig’s headquarters. In an official after-action report, he would be cited for bravery and coolness under fire. On March 18, 1944, Silva’s unit was attacked by Japanese planes. Philippine soldiers abandoned their positions, but Silva and his Filipino Americans continued their mission. Silva eventually became a regimental commander in Davao with the 107<sup>th</sup> Division. He was wounded in action and evacuated to Leyte on May 11, 1945.<sup>52</sup>

Party Four – five officers and 30 enlisted men – was divided into two teams. Team One landed in Oras, Samar on May 24, 1944 and Team Two at Tokuran Bay, Pagadian, Zamboanga on June 2, 1944. Members of this party infiltrated all the way into the northern Philippines, setting up radio stations and

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51 Sabado, Daniel After Action Report

52 Silva, Saturnino After Action Report



harassing the Japanese. First Lieutenant Paul P. Mauricio survived the war only to be killed in action in Korea in the fall of 1950.<sup>53</sup>

Party Five, according to Sergeant Carlos S. Placido, was the “all-American team,” with Corporal T. J. Rallojay from Arkansas, Sergeant J. Reynoso from Iowa and men from Massachusetts as well as California. Master Sergeant Amado Corpus, 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, was in charge. They landed on Ramos Island, south of Palawan on June 9, 1944 and later moved to Brookes Point to set up a coast watchers station, the USS Robalo, a submarine, exploded and sank at Brooke’s Point on July 3, 1944. On August 19, 1944, the USS Flier also struck a mine and sank. Corpus was reprimanded for not reporting the presence of mines in the area. Feeling he had lost face and failed in his mission, Corpus put a bullet through his heart.<sup>54</sup>

First Lieutenant Alfredo Eufronio Guillermo Ornez de Hernandez (his friends called him Al) was the executive officer of Party Six that went on July 7, 1944 into Mindoro, the site of the tragic Party One disaster. Hernandez, stage director of the Philippine Exposition prior to the war, and his wife Carmelita, were internationally acclaimed dancers. He was sent into Manila. His skills as a dancer were quickly put to good use when it was learned that a Japanese major,

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53 Mauricio, Paul B. After Action Report

54 After Action Report

who loved to dance, had a key to a file cabinet that contained a map with vital information on all Japanese military installations. Hernandez was soon teaching the major how to dance. He got the major drunk one night, snatched the key from the officer, entered his office, took the map and quickly forwarded it to Australia via submarine.<sup>55</sup>

More parties led by Filipino American officers such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Vicente W. Labrador, Carlos E. Ancheta, Jose T. Mendoza and Luis P. Padilla slipped into the Philippines. First Lieutenant Claudio M. Tamayo co-led one of the largest teams into Central Luzon on September 1, 1944. Tamayo was assigned to the Pangasinan area and gathered information on the Japanese defensive positions around the Lingayen Gulf.<sup>56</sup>

A party of 14 enlisted men were on board the USS Seawolf which was sunk off Morotai Island on September 25, 1944 on its way to the Philippines, the overzealous commander of the destroyer U.S. Richard M. Rowell sank it.<sup>57</sup>

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- Willoughby, Charles A. The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines
- 55 Earle, Dixon Bahala Na: Come What May  
Video taped interview of Al Hernandez at Las Vegas, NV on June 28, 1994 by Daniel P. Gonzales.
- 56 Tamayo, Claudio After Action Report  
Ramsey, Edwin Price & Rivelle, Stephen J. Lieutenant Ramsey's War.  
Interview with Edwin Price Ramsey at General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Library, Norfolk, VA on October 20, 1994.
- 57 Hoyt, Edwin P. Submarines At War. Stein and Day, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510. 1983, Page 279.

On October 20, 1944, MacArthur redeemed his pledge to return to the Philippines. On the beaches near Tacloban, Leyte, he was greeted by men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn who eagerly sought out their fellow Filipino Americans in the Philippine Civil Affairs Units (PCAUS), Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) and Alamo Scouts.

On October 22, 1944, as the Japanese navy began a climatic battle for the Philippines, Filipino American coast watchers from the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn reported the progress of the enemy's Southern and Central fleets. The Americans destroyed the Japanese Southern fleet, and the Northern fleet was able to lure the main bulk of the American Navy towards the northeast, away from the San Bernadino Straits. The Central fleet, which was attacked along the western coast of Palawan, disappeared into the fog only to reappear near the San Bernadino Straits, heading straight for the defenseless invasion fleet at Leyte. A timely report from station BEG (Staff Sergeant Daniel B. Begonia) on the southern tip of Mindoro, helped alert the U.S. Navy to this threat. The fleet after suffering savage attacks from the outnumbered Americans, turned tail, throwing sure victory to the wind.<sup>58</sup>

Some acts of courage of the men in the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn did not occur in combat. On May 13, 1945, a plane crashed on a remote mountainside in New

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58 Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 978<sup>th</sup> Signal Service Company, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1994.

Guinea. Two men, Staff Sergeants Benjamin C. Bulato and Camilo Ramirez, members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn parachute detachment and trained as medics, volunteered to jump to rescue the three survivors. Later, additional members of the unit jumped into the jungle to clear a landing site for a rescue glider.<sup>59</sup>

As U.S. military forces liberated areas of the Philippines, the men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn reported back to their unit which by August 1945 had moved to San Miguel, Tarlac and wrote reports of their missions. By the end of the war, the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn had sent 264 party missions into the Philippines. Casualties totaled 164 killed, 6 wounded, 75 captured, and 178 missing in action.<sup>60</sup>

All of the men who had gone on missions to the Philippines were nominated for combat decorations, including the Silver Star for heroism, the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct and the Bronze Star for

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Daniel B. Begonia After Action Report, August 10, 1945.

59 Taped interview with Camilo Rameriez at Tacoma, WA on November 11, 1992.

Video taped interview of Sergio Solidarious at Tacoma, WA on November 12, 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Video taped interview of Cecil Walter at Portland, OR on June 20, 1994 by Daniel P. Gonzales.

Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1994.

Hastings, Margaret with Robb, Inez, A WAC In Shangri-La Readers Digest November 1945

60 Willoughby, Charles A. The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines

heroic achievement. They were also nominated for the Combat Infantryman's Badge for their close-in-combat with the enemy.<sup>61</sup>

Return to the Philippines.

A few days after the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment arrived in New Guinea in May 1944, the unit was diverted from its training mission. A white general assumed that the men were to be used as "coolie labor" to unload the ships and to perform personal services for white officers and enlisted men. Colonel Offley protested the treatment of his soldiers and he was overruled by the Port Commander. Lieutenant Colonel Velasquez, however, had a direct line to MacArthur's headquarters. As soon as he found out, General MacArthur unleashed his wrath on the white officers and the regiment quickly returned to intensified jungle training. They were not bothered again.<sup>62</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Sallman, joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment at Oro Bay, New Guinea on July 4, 1944.<sup>63</sup>

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61 Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Herbert, Annalissa A. Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1994.

62 Notes of Alex L. Fabros interview with Colonel Robert H. Offley at 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment reunion, Salinas, CA on August 15, 1971.

63 Notes of Alex L. Fabros interview with Colonel Edwin Sallman on the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment at Salinas, CA on August 15, 1971.

From mid-1943 through August 1945, Filipino Americans serving in the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn had thoroughly infiltrated the Philippines and had established contact with guerrilla units. The information gathered by these commandos gave MacArthur a true picture of the Japanese strength. The map provided by Lieutenant Hernandez pin-pointed the exact location of all Japanese units in the Philippines and their current combat strength. His presentation of these facts at the July 26-28, 1944 meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii convinced President Roosevelt to approve the invasion of the Philippines, instead of Formosa (Taiwan).<sup>64</sup>

In the summer of 1944, General MacArthur had gotten into a dispute with Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, who was responsible for the Commonwealth of the Philippines through the Bureau of Insular Affairs (BIA). Ickes felt that control of the future of the Commonwealth should be directed by the BIA. He felt very strongly that all Filipinos who had collaborated with the Japanese be arrested and barred from Philippine politics after the war. MacArthur disagreed and was able to get the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to concede “nearly all the authority the general desired.”<sup>65</sup>

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64 Earle, Dixon Bahala Na: Come What May Howell-North, Berkeley, CA 1961.

Hunt, Frazier The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur Devun-Adai Company, New York. 1954.

65 Schaller, Michael, Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General. Oxford University Press: 1989

### **The Special Detachments.**

When the invasion fleet sailed for the Philippines, the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion remained in New Guinea. Its men, however, were scattered throughout the invasion fleet and in the Philippines. The beaches between Dulag and Tacloban had been surveyed by the commandos and later by elements of the Alamo Scouts. These Filipino Americans accompanied the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion on October 19, 1944 as it seized the islands guarding the approaches to Leyte Gulf. The PCAUS came ashore at Leyte on October 20, 1944 and quickly proceeded to reestablish the Philippines Commonwealth control over the liberated areas. The Counterintelligence Corps sought out known Filipinos who had collaborated with the Japanese and quickly arrested them.

### **Alamo Scouts.**

The code name for the Sixth U.S. Army that invaded the Philippines was “Alamo.” A special detachment was formed that would be responsible for conducting clandestine landings on enemy islands to survey the condition of the beaches and the location of obstacles and minefields. Filipinos from the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment eagerly volunteered to serve with the Alamo Scouts. In January 20,

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Ickes was not informed of General MacArthur’s extensive guerrilla operations in the

1945 on Luzon, a task force consisting of the Alamo Scouts, 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion, and 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn trained guerrilla forces conducted successful prisoner of war rescue operations deep behind enemy lines at Cabanatuan and Los Banos.<sup>66</sup>

### **6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion.**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion was formed by General MacArthur to provide a counterpoint to the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Battalion. Where the Recon unit was used in clandestine operations, the Rangers were used in hard hitting strikes deep inside enemy territory to take out strategic targets prior to the landing of the Sixth U.S. Army in Leyte and later Luzon. A few Filipinos were initially assigned to the battalion to serve as interpreters, however, many of the unit vacancies were soon filled by volunteers from the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment.

On October 17, 1944 D Company landed on Suluan Island, the outermost of the northern islands guarding the approaches to Leyte Gulf and quickly overran Japanese defensive positions. A and C Company stormed ashore at Dinagat Island on the south side of the channel and found no resistance from the Japanese. B Company waded ashore on Homonhon Island on October 18. Once the islands

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Philippines or who in the Islands was involved in its operations.  
66 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED



were secured, the Ranger companies established lighthouses that were used to guide the invasion fleet towards the Leyte beaches on October 20.<sup>67</sup>

### **The Philippine Civil Affairs Units and Counterintelligence Corps**

To support his planned control of the Philippines, MacArthur ordered the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to contribute over 400 men to form eight Philippine Civil Affairs Units (PCAUS). They were to go in with the invasion forces and reestablish control over the civilian populations in the combat zones. Because of their success on Leyte, an additional 22 PCAUS were formed to support the final liberation of the Philippines.<sup>68</sup> The plan called for the PCAUS to accompany combat units and set up provisional governments in liberated areas. Immediately after an area was cleared of Japanese resistance, the PCAUS turned over control to the Philippine Government.<sup>69</sup>

The first eight detachments, called the invasion PCAUS, were activated at Oro Bay, New Guinea on September 16, 1944.<sup>70</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Earl L. Mullinix, executive officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Regiment was responsible for

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67 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

68 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

69 Schaller, Michael, Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General. Oxford University Press: 1989

70 The Provost Marshal General's School. Case Studies on Field Operations of Military Government Units. The Military Police School, Camp Gordon, Georgia. February 1950

selecting the officers and enlisted men to fill the PCAUS. Each of the PCAUS consisted of ten officers and thirty-nine enlisted men.<sup>71</sup> The detachment commander was usually a white officer with a Filipino deputy. In addition to the administrative and supply officers in the unit, Filipinos with a medical, legal, or financial background were assigned to the unit. The Filipino enlisted men provided administrative and logistical support to the unit. Many of the men were college graduates in the U.S. who had been unable to practice their trade in California. In the Philippines their talents were recognized and appreciated. Many of the men returned to the U.S. after the war determined to practice their chosen profession in the peacetime economy, and succeeded.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the PCAUS, MacArthur used General Charles Willoughby's Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) to control local politics in the Philippines. The CIC, also staffed with men from the two units, arrested all known Filipinos who had collaborated with the Japanese. Much of this information had been gathered before the Leyte landings by the men in the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn operating in the Philippines. In Central Luzon where the Philippine communists, the Hukbalahap

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71 The Provost Marshal General's School. Case Studies on Field Operations of Military Government Units. The Military Police School, Camp Gordon, Georgia. February 1950

Fabros, Alex S., Jr. & Gonzales, Daniel P. Unit Histories of Philippine Civil Affairs Units 1 - 30 Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University. 1996.

72 Notes of Alex L. Fabros interview with Colonel Earl L. Mullinix at 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment reunion, Salinas, CA on August 15, 1971.

(Huks), were in control, MacArthur saw them as a threat to post-war control of the Philippines. Many Filipino soldiers who served in these units were Illocanos from northern Luzon and secretly supported the goals of the Huks. Regardless of their personal feelings, men in the CIC arrested the Huks who controlled the villages and the PCAUS replaced the village leaders with men loyal to the Commonwealth government.<sup>73</sup>

Demonstrating his total control of the Philippines, MacArthur turned over control of the country to President Sergio Osmena on the steps of Tacloban's city hall on October 20, 1944.

On the morning of October 20, 1944, T-5 Ponciano S. Dacones from PCAUS #5 was in the first wave to hit the beach near Dulag, Leyte. He raised the Philippine national flag on the beach. He was killed in action a few days later.<sup>74</sup>

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment

Meanwhile in New Guinea, the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment quickly integrated its first batch of replacements consisting of Filipino Americans from Hawaii. Colonel Offley gave Lt. Col. Leon Punsalang, a West Point graduate, command of the 1<sup>st</sup>

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73 Schaller, Michael, Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General. Oxford University Press: 1989

74 After Action Report, PCAU #5, Record Group, National Archives, Suiteland, MD.

Battalion. This was the first time in the history of the U.S. Army that Asian Americans commanded white troops in combat.<sup>75</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment landed at Tacloban, Leyte on February 7, 1945 and fought the Japanese troops on Samar. In one combat action, the regiment reported killing 1,572 Japanese soldiers while five of its men were killed in action. In May 1945, the regiment began operations in northern Leyte in the Villaba-Palompon sector where it fought heavily for the next two months, registering an average of 40 Japanese killed and 32 captured a day. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Battalion, as a unit, never saw combat. It was sent to Manila to provide support to the PCAUS operating there.

On August 10, 1945, all operations for the “1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>” in the Philippines came to a close. Sergeant Urbano M. Francisco, 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn, in his after action report, complained that white soldiers who served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn returned Filipino hospitality with prejudice and disrespect.<sup>76</sup> On August 15, 1945, in an open field in San Miguel, the unit was called together for one last time. The commanding officer and several other white officers who never went on a mission but stayed in relative safety in Australia and New Guinea, had nominated themselves and received the Legion of Merit. The Filipino American officers who

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75 Video taped interview with Colonel Leon Punsalang at Norfolk, VA on April 12, 1992.

76 FOOTNOTE TO BE ADDED

had been nominated for the Legion of Merit for their dangerous work in the Philippines stood in shocked disbelief and seething anger as they each received the Bronze Star Medal instead. Lieutenant Al Hernandez as lucky; he received his Legion of Merit directly from General MacArthur.<sup>77</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Bn was deactivated. The PCAUS were disbanded and their operations turned over to the Philippine government. The men assigned to the CIC, 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion, and Alamo Scouts were released back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment. The men were given leaves and told to report to the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment in Ormoc, Leyte.

The families of many of these men had given up hope of ever seeing their sons and brothers return from the land of broken promises and dreams. The manongs, who were despised by white America, and yet were needed in the American farms and fisheries, returned to their Philippine homeland as heroes. When the men reported back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment on Leyte, many brought with them new brides. The Filipino soldiers took advantage of Public Law 271: The War Brides Act of December 28, 1945 and Public Law 471: The Fiancees Act of June 29, 1946 to marry Filipina women. Colonel William Robert Hamby, who

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77 Earle, Dixon Bahala Na: Come What May

had replaced Colonel Offley, established a “tent city” for the married couples.<sup>78</sup> Before its expiration on December 31, 1953, many manongs took advantage of the War Brides Act and returned to the Philippines to marry. These families became the nucleus of a new generation of Filipino Americans and invigorated the Filipino American community in the United States..<sup>79</sup>

In March 1946, men who wanted to remain in the Philippines or were not yet eligible to return to the U.S. were transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion, then stationed in Quezon City. It was disbanded on March 31, 1946 and the men were assigned to the Filipino Section, 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment troops returned to the United States aboard the USS General Calan and arrived in San Francisco in the early morning hours of April 8, 1946. They were bused to Camp Stoneman, near present-day Pittsburgh, California and quickly discharged. A few men were present on the morning of April 9, 1946 when the flag, hand sewn by the wives of the Filipino officers of the regiment, was folded for the last time.<sup>80</sup> A member of the unit stole into the mailroom and took the flag home with him. It continues to be flown at unit reunions throughout the U.S.

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78 Colonel William Robert Hamby Papers, The Filipino American Experience Research Project archives, Fresno, CA.

Alex L. Fabros notes, October 15, 1992.

79 Shukert, Elfried & Scibetta, Barbara. War Brides of World War II 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Presidio Press, 1988

80 Alex L. Fabros notes, October 15, 1992.

Having been denied the right to be Americans in the 1930s, many manongs fought for the right to be citizens of this country by serving in the armed forces in World War II. After the war was over, the G.I. Bill of Rights opened the doors to education, employment and opportunities. Some of the men remained in the military; others took advantage of the new opportunities. Many returned to the fields and canneries, while others took urban jobs in the hotels, restaurants and the civil service.

Unlike the Japanese who immigrated as family units or were able to send for brides, and the Chinese through the use of “paper sons” born in China, the Filipino community in the U.S. was doomed to disappear within a few generations because of the immigration restriction in the Tydings McDuffie Act. The Japanese American community had a strong incentive to forge strong political organizations to ensure that the concentration camps would never happen again. Development within the Filipino community was late in coming but its true potential is only not being felt.

The impact in the Filipino American community did not come to fruition until the early 1970’s when the children from the “War Brides” generation came of age. Many of the future leaders and activists of the Filipino communities in the 1970’s and 80’s had fathers who served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment and its special detachments in World War II. Today, with the infusion of their relatives from the

Philippines through family reunification programs, the Filipino community is experiencing what the men of the manong generation could only dream of on the eve of World War II -- a vibrant, dynamic community participating in the full political, economic, and social process in America as equals of the rest of society.



## **VOLUME I: 1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

The record on these units is incomplete and the private collections of individuals with a direct knowledge of the historical events in the life of the Regiments have been lost or misplaced. A few collections remain but are fragmented. There are leads to the possible location of several others. In order to rebuild this history, I have used a combination of existing official orders and files, contemporary news clippings, the reconstructed historical summary by Mr. Alex L. Fabros, Sr., and the taped interviews of individuals who served in the Regiments. Additional interviews are needed to gain a more diverse understanding of the daily pulse of the Regiment's history.

### **Personnel Index Cards**

It is estimated that at least 10,000 men volunteered to serve in the Regiments and that 8,000 of them were accepted for service. This represents approximately 10 percent of the known Filipino male population in the United States in 1941. These records will provide the IQ's of this population group, educational attainment, professions, marital status, origins in the Philippines or

the United States, post war assignments in the military, as well as a host of other demographic information.

Mr. Fabros' timeline is included in this volume to enable the researcher develop a full understanding of the scope of the Regiment's history and varied missions during the war.

**List of Documents:**

**Official Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry**

**Personnel Index Cards**

**Alex L. Fabros, Sr. 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment Timeline.**

**Alex S. Fabros, Jr. "The Boogie-Woogie Boys," Filipinas Magazine.**

## **VOLUME II: News Articles on the Regiments**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

These are clippings from the Regimental and Battalion newspapers and other sources that provide information on these units.

### **List of Documents:**

**Alex L. Fabros, Sr. Newspaper album.**

**Colonel Robert H. Offley newspaper clippings.**

**Colonel Mullinex newspaper clippings.**

**FAX-RP newspaper collection of World War II.**

## **VOLUME III: Historical Documents**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

Official Documents: The set consists of all the documents that impacted on the operations of the 1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments and the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion.

### **List of Documents:**

**Official Documents of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment**  
**Official Documents of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment**  
**Official Documents of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion**  
**Official Documents of the Philippine Civil Affairs Units**

## **VOLUME IV: 1st Reconnaissance Battalion**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

The first group to leave were the volunteers who went to Australia in 1943. There they were trained to conduct special operations in the Philippines. These were "The Mission Men and the Commandos." Documentation for these soldiers is very solid due to the efforts of Dr. Gregorio P. Chua, Alfredo H. Despy and Julius G. Ruiz. Their efforts resulted in three bound volumes at the U.S. Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania that covers the history of these men. I am in the process in transcribing these documents and creating an index of people, places, and events to assist future historians.

Just recently the Julius Ruiz collection, in the Filipino American National Historical Society Archives, was cataloged. This collection consists of original documents that should either have been destroyed after the "official report" on the history of the units were forwarded to General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters on 15 August 1945. They provide an initial glimpse of possible subtle discrimination against Filipino soldiers by their American superior officers at the end of the war.

**List of Documents:**

**Official Unit History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion**

## **VOLUME V: 978th Signal Service Company**

**Introduction to the volume:**

**List of Documents:**

**Official Unit History of the 978<sup>th</sup> Signal Service Company**

# **VOLUME VI: Commando: After Action Reports**

**Introduction to the volume:**

**List of Documents:**

**After Action Reports of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion**

**Julius B. Ruiz Collection**



## **VOLUME VII: Philippines Civil Affairs Units: Teams 1 to 30**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

The Philippine Civil Affairs were established by General MacArthur to assist in the interim period between the liberation of Philippine territory by U.S. military forces and the return of that territory to the duly authorized and recognized representatives of the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines. The majority of officers and enlisted men in PCAU's 1-8 were from the Regiments and were known as the "Invasion PCAU's" because they participated in the invasions of Leyte and Luzon and they were at the forefront of the liberation from Leyte to Baguio and places in between. PCAU's 9-20 primarily consisted of some officers and enlisted men who were not from the Regiment. PCAU's 21-30 had even fewer enlisted men from the Regiment and no officers at all. The PCAU records vary in quality as well as quantity. Some reports provided an indepth record of their achievements while others provided only a two page document acknowledging that their officers were entitled to certain military decorations. More research is required to bridge the gaps in these records.

### **List of Documents:**

#### **PCAU 1 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 2 (Missing)**

**PCAU 3 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 4 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 5 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 6 (Missing)**

**PCAU 7 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 8 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 9 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 10 (Missing)**

**PCAU 11 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 12 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 13 (Missing)**

**PCAU 14 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 15 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 16 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 17 (Missing)**

**PCAU 18 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 19 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 20 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 21 (Missing)**

**PCAU 22 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 23 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 24 (Missing)**

**PCAU 25 Official Unit History**

**PCAU 26 (Missing)**

**PCAU 27 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 28 Miscellaneous Unit Records**

**PCAU 29 (Missing)**

**PCAU 30 Official Unit History**

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## **VOLUME VIII: Special Mission Detachments**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

#### **Counter Intelligence Corps**

An even more obscure group are the men who became part of the Counter Intelligence Corps. These records are not consolidated, but are scattered among the U.S. Sixth and Eight Armies and all of their subordinate units that were authorized to have CIC units or units that were supported by them. I have barely scratched the surface in locating these documents. There are references to the work of these men in assisting the PCAU's in identifying alleged collaborators and traitors in the liberated areas. Also, they accompanied the front line troops and guerrilla formations and conducted vital military intelligence gathering missions. General MacArthur attributed the overwhelming kill ratio of Japanese to U.S. soldiers killed to the success of the CIC in locating Japanese positions.

#### **Alamo Scouts, 6th Ranger Battalion, 11th Airborne Division**

The records of the men who served in these unit are fragmented. The men who served were often called upon to perform temporary duty with these units for a specific mission, after which they returned to their original units. Leads to the identity of these men are to be found through personal interviews of the men

themselves, their friends, or official records in their personnel files at Saint Louis, MO, the National Archives, or the General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Museum, Norfolk, VA.

**List of Documents:**

Unit History of the Alamo Scouts, Sixth U.S. Army Files (National Archives)

Personal Papers of John Bamont.

Articles of Alamo Scouts.

## **VOLUME IX: Personal Interviews and Remembrances**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

This is a collection of video taped or oral taped interviews of men who served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment and its subordinate units. The interviews were conducted by various individuals between 1971 to the present.

### **List of Documents:**

#### **Oral History Interviews**

Campos, Antonio Dixon, Colonel, AUS (Retired); served as Operations Sergeant, Headquarters, 3rd Battalion, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, Taped Oral History Interview, 8 January 1983 by Eric Saul.

Chua, Gregorio P., M.D., 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, USS Mactan Doctor, Taped Oral History Interview 27 November 1982 by Eric Saul and Oral History Interview, January 1991 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Corpuz, Rudolph F., Master Sergeant, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment 1942-1946, Taped Oral History Interview, 12 November 1982 By Eric Saul.

Despy, Alfredo H., Sergeant, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, Taped Oral History Interview, 12 December 1982 by Eric Saul.

Fabros, Alex L. Sr., 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment and retired military correspondent, Oral History Interview, January 1991 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Fisher, Ed, Bataan Death March, Taped Oral History Interview, 2 August 1983 by Eric Saul.

Flor Cruz, Pedro, Colonel, USA (Retired); served as Captain, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, 26 May 1983 by Eric Saul.

Friedlander, Alber B., General PA, Captain Philippine Army, Guerilla Leader, Taped Oral History Interview by Eric Saul.

Gale, William P. , 1st Commander of the 1st Filipino Battalion, Oral History Interview, July 1984 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Gavino, Manuel, 23rd Field Artillery Battalion, Philippine Scouts, Fort Stotsenberg, PI, Taped Oral History Interview by Eric Saul.

Gonzales, Dan, Historian and coordinator of 1984 Filipino Military Exhibit at the Presidio of San Francisco Museum, Taped Oral History Interview, August 1982 by Eric Saul.

Montesclaros, Melecio J., Colonel, USA (Retired); served as Captain, 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiment. Taped Oral History Interview, 8 February 1983 by Eric Saul.

Ovena, Emiliano, Bataan Death March Survivor, Taped Oral History Interview, 27 October 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Punsalan, Leon F., 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment and Commander 1st Filipino Infantry Battalion in Samar, Video Taped Interview, May 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Qugana, Paul, M/Sgt, USA Retired; served with the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment. Taped Oral History Interview by Eric Saul.

Rameriez, Camillio, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion and "Shangri-la Operations", Taped Oral History Interview, 26 October 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Rosal, Vincent V., 2nd Lieutenant, Heavy Weapons Squad Leader, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, Taped Oral History Interview by Eric Saul.

San Filipe, Clemente J., Colonel, AUS (Retired); served as 1st Sergeant, Company I, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, Taped Oral History Interview by Eric Saul.



Santos, Augustin L., Major, 1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments, Taped  
Oral History Interview by Eric Saul.

Sese, Gersavio G., 2nd Filipino Infantry Battalion and War Crimes Trials  
in Manila, Video Taped Interview, May 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

Solidarios, Sergio, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, Video Taped Interview,  
27 October 1992 by Alex S. Fabros, Jr.

**Army Service Experiences Questionnaire**

## **VOLUME X: Historical Photographs**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

This volume contains photographs from the National Archives as well as donations from the personal collections of the men and their families.

### **List of Documents:**

The collection is organized as follows:

#### **Official military Photographs.**

##### **Video Tapes**

Films of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiments in Training

Unsung Heroes, ABC Hawaii.

Untold Triumph, PBS preview tape

#### **Personal Collections:**

Alex L. Fabros collection.

Saturnino Silva collection.

Gregorio Aquino collection.

Pablo Tangonan collection.

Delfin F. Cruz collection.

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**D – R – A – F – T**

Miscellaneous collection.

**D – R – A – F – T**

## **VOLUME XI: War Brides**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

This volume serves as a repository for information donated to this field study. Although the field study did not actively collect data on the war brides of the men who served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment, numerous amounts of personal papers and information was donated to the field project.

### **List of Documents:**

## **VOLUME XII: Personal Collections of Documents**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

These are personal documents donated to this Field Study. It consists of the following named collection as well as a miscellaneous collection. In many cases the collections have been reorganized to fit within the structure of the Volumes in this collection. An annotation is included with each collection that directs the researcher to the appropriate volume.

### **List of Documents:**

#### **1. Alex L. Fabros, Sr. Collection.**

The collection consists of over 2,000 items of photographs, news paper clippings, official documents, and personal remembrances.

#### **2. Julius B. Ruiz Collection.**

The collection consists of 1,000 pages of documents that relate directly to the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion (Special). Information that points to blatant discrimination against Filipino officers and enlisted men is documented.

#### **3. Gregorio P. Chua Collection.**

The collection consists of personal documents and personal papers that were collected from members of the units.

**4. Colonel Robert Offley Collection.**

The personal papers of the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment.

**5. Colonel Mullinex Collection**

The personal papers of the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment, and  
PCAU 7.

**6. Gregorio P. Acquino Collection**

The personal papers, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

## **Volume Index**

### **Introduction to the volume:**

### **List of Documents:**

### **Index.**

This is an index to aid the researcher in locating specific documents. It is organized as follows:

Document Title/Type

Document Author

### **Bibliography**

This is a compilation of various sources that provides the researcher with additional background information of the role of the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment in World War II. It is not meant to be an indepth recommendation, but a starting point for the researcher.