

American Heritage
90 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10011

Dear Sirs:

I would like to comment on the article on the trial of Gen. Homma, appearing in the Feb./Mar. issue.

A few miles southeast of Manila is located a large, three-lobed lake named Laguna de Bay. On the southern end is situated the town of Los Banos, where the Japanese established an internee camp, which held 2,147 prisoners, consisting of nuns, British and American civilians and captured Allied military personnel.

In what was to become one of the most daring and complicated successful raids of WWII, members of the 511th Parachute Infantry descended upon the camp, killed the entire complement of Japanese guards and rescued the 2,147 prisoners, while the entire mission lost two men with four wounded.

At 0700 on the 23rd, at the precise moment the paratroopers hit the ground, guards were supervising the digging of a large trench, presumably for a mass grave. Before the day ended, the Japanese had intended to kill the entire complement of the prison.

General Homma was the commander of these Japanese forces, and if he did not directly issue orders to kill these prisoners, he certainly was derelict in his duties if his subordinates were so obviously unsupervised.

The fact that Homma was executed at Los Banos seems to indicate, although not specifically stated in your article, that he had been officially held responsible for what very nearly might have become one of the worst acts of atrocity in the Pacific Theater.

John Potpolak,
Member of the 511th Airborne,
153 Spencer St
Winsted, Connecticut 06098