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INTERNATIONAL PROSECUTION SECTION

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ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

DESCRIPTION OF ATTACHED DOCUMENT

Title and Nature: Sworn Statement of Cmdr Richard H. O'Kane, former POW, Concerning Maltreatment at Ofuna

Date: 1 Aug 1946 Original  Copy  Language: English

Has it been translated? Yes  No

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL

Document Division

SOURCE OF ORIGINAL: Legal Section, SCAP

PERSONS IMPLICATED: Ofuna POW Camp Officials

CRIMES TO WHICH DOCUMENT APPLICABLE: POW Crimes

SUMMARY OF RELEVANT POINTS

Sworn statement of Commander Richard H. O'Kane, former POW, concerning maltreatment at Ofuna.

Analyst: JAMES HOYT

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Exhibit \_\_\_\_\_

I, Commander R.H. O'KANE, 73324, USN, being first duly sworn on oath do depose and say:

I was the commanding officer of the U.S.S. TANG, which was sunk by her own last torpedo while attacking a Japanese convoy about 2 a.m., October 25, 1944, in Formosa Straits.

I arrived at the Japanese Naval Interrogation Camp at Ofuna, Japan on November 3, 1944, and was transferred from there on 23 July 1945.

The camp at that time was divided into two compounds, the western half containing one barracks building divided into about forty cells where the eight other survivors of the U.S.S. TANG and myself were confined together with about twenty U.S. Army and U.S. Naval aviators and one civilian.

The aviators just mentioned above were all kept in solitary confinement, but as all nine TANG survivors including myself acted as mess cooks delivering food to the aviators in solitary, and scrubbed all the passageways, I was personally able to observe the clubbings and other tortures administered by the Japanese guards and senior petty officers.

The first beating I observed was on November 6, 1944, three days after arrival at Ofuna. About 0830 in the morning all the TANG survivors were marched through a gate to the eastern half of the compound where we were lined up with other prisoners. Apparently all the Japanese guards and chief petty officers were present including the Warrant Officer head of the camp named Iida. The camp's pharmacist's mate, Kitamura, read a list of names including Lt. Kofman, USA, Lt. Harris, USMC, Lt. Galvin, USNR, Lt. Bullard, USN, Lt. Brown, USN, and two or three others. He then called Lieutenant Commander Fitzgerald, USN and stated in a smattering of English that all prisoners were bad, that the first men called had not properly bowed to some of the guards, that Fitzgerald was to be punished too as he was the senior officer in the camp.

The above men were then lined up about five paces in front of the rest of the prisoners and made to stand with their hands over their heads. Then with the head of the camp, Iida, watching, the Pharmacist's Mate Kitamura, Gochyo, Aramaki and guards named Asoma, Nishi and Sugata provided with a wholesale beating. Each of the above used a club about the size of a baseball bat, that used by Nishi was a piece of two by two inch timber about three feet long. Every blow was as viscious as possible resembling an attempt to hit a "home run". They fell anywhere between the shoulder blades and knees of the prisoners, knocking them down, and in three cases unconscious. Two of those were Lt. Galvin and Lt. Harris. The unconscious men were held up by other guards and their beating continued. I counted the blows administered to Lieutenant Commander Fitzgerald. They were twenty-seven in number. I consider he must have been "out on his feet" about half way through this torture when Kitamura knocked him clear of them and then to the ground. This beating was so severe that I fully expected several of the prisoners would be killed. Iida, the head of the camp watched all this and made no move to stop the beating. It ended only because the above guards and pharmacist's mate and Goycho were too exhausted to continue.

Richard Hetherington

During my stay at Ofuna the galley was run by a civilian cook nicknamed "Curley", whose real name was Hata. He alone prescribed the meals we received and accounted for the stores sent by truck from Yokosuka. Within a day after stores arrived he would send out approximately half of six bags of rice by hand truck, presumably to be polished in the village. A personal check by myself, and my inquiry from the prisoners working continuously in the galley showed that never more than two of these bags returned. I personally carried bags of rice and barley and several wooden buckets of both bean paste and soya sauce from the stowage cave across from Ofuna to civilian carts. This was on the direct order of Hata who was present. The carts were driven off and the supplies never returned.

The average amount of vegetables in the soups would never exceed a level table spoon per serving. This insufficient amount was directly due to the unscrupulous dishonesty of Hata who would retain the major part of each vegetable shipment for garbage to trade to the local piggery for pork. I personally used to help unload the bimonthly vegetable truck which arrived from Yokosuka, and observed the vegetables to be in good condition. Hata ordered me and the other prisoners to stow them in a cave across from Ofuna where he would let them rot. Periodically I and other prisoners would sort out the vegetables which had not spoiled and load the spoiled ones in a tub on the back of Hata's bicycle. I have watched Hata make as many as three trips a day out the compound and down the road with this garbage. He would bring back a piece of pork after the last trip which the guards and the head of the camp would eat. Again and again Hata supervised and ordered our burying good vegetables in the ground. They would be dug up a week or ten days later and the same procedure as outlined above would take place again.

For a period of three weeks in January the prisoners were able to salvage the potato peelings from the guards potatoes and the few that were thinly sliced and put in the prisoners soup. The peelings amounted in volume to about three times our normal vegetable ration. When Hata became aware of this addition he ordered it stopped, he had Arakawa, the guard cook, administer beatings with his fists to the prisoners working in the galley, and proceeded to use the peelings for additional garbage which was disposed of as outlined above.

When prisoners acting as mess cooks, no matter how new they were to the camp, came to the galley to get water Hata required them to bow and request the water in Japanese language. If they made any mistake in the Japanese language he would order Arakawa to beat the prisoner with his fists in the face. When Arakawa, the guard cook was not present, Hata would strike the prisoner himself. Hata hit my torpedoman Hayes O. Trukke, and my machinist's mate J. DaSilva so severely about the head and face for this cause alone that their faces were swollen, and DaSilva especially was in a dazed condition from which he had not recovered nine months later.

*Richard Hetherington Kane*

The day before Christmas 1944, while I was a prisoner at Ofuna, three Englishmen, survivors from the British submarine Stratagem arrived at Ofuna. They were housed in cells adjoining ours in the western barracks. On the following morning for no apparent offence Lt. Douglas of the Royal Navy and Seaman Robinson were severely beaten by a guard named Nishi. I observed this from my cell as they were each taken out to the west of the barracks near a washstand in full view from my window. Each was given fifteen full swings across the legs and back with a club the size of a baseball bat. When the Englishmen were first allowed the weekly bath with us, about two weeks later, they were still black and blue and lame from this beating.

From my arrival at Ofuna until February the Japanese guard cook in the galley was named Arakawa. When prisoners on mess cook duty came to the galley for water or to return mess gear he required bows and requests in exact Japanese. If the bow was not low enough, or a prisoner fumbled with the Japanese terms, Arakawa would strike them with his fists about the face and head using full swings and closed fists, the blows are best classified as "hay-makers". I observed him hit Lt. Savadkin so severely that he bled in the mouth, and his face remained severely swollen for over a week. On the same occasion Arakawa hit me with his closed fist only two times, but severely enough to chip the corners off two of my teeth. Our only offense was in not setting down the turines of mess gear before bowing and thanking the guard for the food we had just had.

Every member of my crew, Lt. Flannagan, Lt. Savadkin, Leibold, Trukke, Decker, Caverly, DaSilva, and Narawanski were either observed by me to be beaten by Arakawa, or reported the fact to me personally.

While I was a prisoner at Ofuna, early in January 1945, I was working cleaning up the compound close to the cell occupied by Lt. Emil. Emil told me that he had just been questioned by the "Little Commander", and had told him he didn't know the answers to the questions. That the "Little Commander", sometimes called the "Little Captain", but whose real name is Sanematsu, had said he would be made to talk. This was further confirmed by an English speaking guard named Hirose, who told me of Sanematsu's orders to beat Emil. Emil was very worried and as events followed, rightfully so. His severe beatings started that night with clubbing by guards named Asoma, Nishi and Sugata in rotation as they came on watch and supervised by the pharmacist's mate named Kitamura. On succeeding nights when I went to the head I observed each of the above mentioned Japanese clubbing Lt. Emil including Kitamura, as they dragged him into the passageway where bulkheads did not interfere with swinging their clubs. On two occasions I saw Emil unconscious on the deck at the end of these night-time flails. The guards would then dump him back into his cell. I am sure that Emil never got another chance to talk.

Starting about a week later the aviators were taken from solitary confinement and made to push a handleless swab up and down the passageways. I observed this through the open door in a partial bulkhead dividing our barracks. The weather was bitterly cold and the initial water from the swab froze immediately on deck. The majority of the aviators including Lt. Emil were made to push the swab without shoes or socks. The ice cut the skin off their feet. Whenever they slipped, slowed up from exhaustion, or collapsed,

*Richard Hetherington O'Keefe*

-3- they were clubbed with timber the size of baseball bats.

they were clubbed with timbers the size of baseball bats. I observed Kitamura, the pharmacist's mate, Asoma, Nihi, Sugata, and Obara administer this clubbing. On one occasion especially when Asoma, Nihi and Sugata were beating Emil he collapsed completely. They called Obara who was the duty guard, who in turn sent me for the pharmacist's mate Kitamura. The pharmacist's mates treatment was to pick Emil up and throw him into his cell.

The above torture continued with the screams of the aviators reaching throughout the compound and the sound of the blows clearly audible.

In the first week of March after I had been transferred to the eastern half of the compound Emil was again beaten unconscious. I know this as I was told of it by a civilian prisoner named Frank Ogara. On the next day Kitamura told my boatswain's mate Leibold that Emil was going to die that day. He did and I buried him two days later. His death was the direct result of the beatings administered as outlined above and ordered by Sanematsu, formerly a Captain in the Imperial Japanese Navy.

While I was at Ofuna in late March or early April an aviator named Hunt, I believe he was Ensign Richard Hunt, USNR, was brought to the camp. He had minor burns on his legs, an injured arm which he could not use, and a broken arm in a wire splint. The pharmacist's mate Kitamura's treatment of this prisoner consisted of taking off the wire splint so his arm would bend at the break causing him terrific pain as could be seen by his facial expressions, and sending him back to his cell. Hunt could walk steadily but slowly when he arrived at camp and there is every reason to believe that with reasonable food he could have survived. He could not feed himself however and Kitamura forbade the guards to let any of the prisoner mess cooks feed him. I sent word to Sanematsu, the head intelligence officer, of this situation by an interpreter named Isamu Sato, nicknamed the "Kanaka". Sato reported to me two days later that he had talked with Sanematsu, had delivered my request that one of the prisoners be allowed to feed Hunt and that the request had been refused. I consider that Kitamura and Sanematsu are both responsible for the death of Hunt, Kitamura because he forbade our feeding him and Sanematsu for refusing the requested permission although fully informed of the circumstances and the absolute necessity if Hunt's life were to be saved.

Hunt starved slowly and died in about three weeks. I buried him.

While I was a prisoner at Ofuna, on April 1, 1945, Kitamura inspected the barracks and found five cigarettes in an open can in my cell. They had been given me by a Japanese to pass out to other prisoners. I was promptly accused at the morning call of receiving rationed cigarettes when I already had some in my possession. There was no written or otherwise published rule about this. It was evident that Kitamura was out to get someone. I was made to stand up against the wall while Kitamura directed the number one guard to commence hitting me. After five full swings from the six-foot guard with closed fists to my jaw and ear, I was still standing mainly because of the wall behind me. Kitamura who was standing in back of the guard watching each blow then ordered him to hit me five more times in spite of blood coming from my mouth and chips of my teeth falling out.

*Richard Hetherington Kane*

Immediately following identical punishment was administered to Captain Charles Taylor with Kitamura in attendance and supervising each blow.

This particular guard, a tall three stripe seaman came to me about an hour after this incident apologizing and explaining that he had no choice in the matter. This is exactly the case as Kitamura forced him to administer the blows. No blame is considered attached to the seaman.

While I was at Ofuna on or about May 1, 1945, I was informed by a Goycho named Kohara that the prisoners had stolen red cross food packages. This was a practical impossibility since all the packages were locked in a storeroom in full view of a guard. Further the small eleven pound packages were still in the metal bound boxes which held four each, and there were no pliers or tools available to open these. It was obviously a trumped up charges to account for the packages that the guards, intelligence officers, and petty officers had taken from the camps. Reports to me from Lt. Taylor, Lt. Savadkin and others indicated that fifteen large boxes or sixty small packages had been seen to leave the camp. I personally saw Hata leave the camp with one on his bicycle, Kitamura do the same, and it was daily procedure to see the contents of the boxes in the camp office partially eaten. Further the empty cans frequently came from Iida, the head of the camp's room. I often emptied the trash from his room and observed this.

As no one could confess to something they didn't do, all prisoners in the eastern barracks, about thirty in number were made to hold a stoop falling position for about an hour. Each prisoner was clubbed with the usual timber the size of a baseball bat at least four times. All prisoners in the east barracks were then made to stand at attention for about six hours or until sundown. Then, as no one confessed all prisoners were clubbed again the following day. The Warrant Officer in charge of the Camp named Iida was present at the first days clubbing. Kitamura the pharmacist's mate and Kohara a Goycho personally beat all the prisoners present and set the example for about six newer guards whose names are unknown to me. On the following day the beating was under the direction of Kitamura and Kohara with other guards participating. It is considered that all the guards at Ofuna took part in this clubbing either on the first or second day.

When I was a prisoner at Ofuna during the months of May and June, Kohara became the leading Goycho. On trumped up charges of the guards he would line up all prisoners in the eastern barracks and hit them across the back and spine using a knurled twisted cane which raised terrific welts. On one of these occasions he hit Lt. Aldwell of the Royal Navy so severely that he collapsed completely. It required about two hours of massaging to bring him back to consciousness after his heart had apparently stopped.

This Goycho, Kohara, supervised both the stoop falling position with attendant clubbing by all guards at the camp, and the Ofuna Stance with clubbing by guards whenever a prisoner's knees gave way or hands faltered. This stance was an unnatural position of standing on the balls of ones feet, knees bent to a sixty degree angle and hands held over the head, which becomes very painful with passing minutes. Whenever one of Koharas flails would get underway Kitamura would soon join in both in urging the lesser guards or in personal clubbing.

*Richard Hetherington Kane*

In the months of June and July a guard by the name or nickname of Kinga, similar in appearance to Nishi, but with a slightly wider forehead and beadier eyes became the tyrant at Ofuna. He is further identified by his head being carried slightly forward. He would regularly beat prisoners over the head with a large club at meal time on trumped up charges. Generally these were of his own making on the spot. A typical example would be his kicking ones shoes out of line outside the cell door then administering the above punishment because shoes were not straight. I have observed him hit practically all prisoners in the eastern barracks one night after another, raising terrific welts on their heads. Immediately following the evening meal he would make all prisoners run around the compound as many as sixty laps, or about four miles. When they dropped or fell behind from exhaustion, this guard would club them unmercifully. Further at each call to quarters this guard would club the prisoners in the legs as they emerged from the barracks. This often took place in full view of both Iida and Kitamura who apparently registered approval.

To attempt to help this situation I sent word to Sanematsu by Isamu Sato. This was intercepted enroute in some manner by Kitamura and Iida. The following day, I with Lt. Flannagan were made to swab the deck of the eastern barracks alone with the usual handleless swab. We were beaten with clubs by four guards who relieved each other periodically. This started about eight-thirty in the morning and continued until noon, more than three hours later. Kitamura appeared on the scene frequently to watch the punishment. Lt. Flannagan and myself were barely able to move for several days. On the following day Kitamura told me that if I again attempted to do anything about the beatings in the camp I would be beaten daily like I had been beaten the day before. Fortunately I was transferred to Omori shortly afterwards.

While a prisoner at Ofuna about the first of July 1945, Lt. Flynn became weak from the normal dysentery of which the majority of prisoners suffered. Kitamura, the pharmacist's mate, who made no careful inquiry into the health of the sick, immediately took Lt. Flynn's complete ration away from him for ten full days. This was obviously more in punishment for not being able to continue with the camp work than as any cure. Flynn within a week became so weak that he could barely move and when a ration of white rice was restored at the end of ten days he could no longer eat. Flynn died a few days later in my presence directly as a result of Kitamura's sadistic punishment.

State of California) ss.  
County of Solano )

I, R.H. O'KANE, of lawful age, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have read the foregoing affidavit consisting of six (6) pages, including this page, and that all statements contained therein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

*Richard Hetherington O'Kane*

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1<sup>st</sup> day of August,  
1946, at Cornubod Island Calif

*Armed Services School*  
*and*



Doc. No. 3224

C E R T I F I C A T E

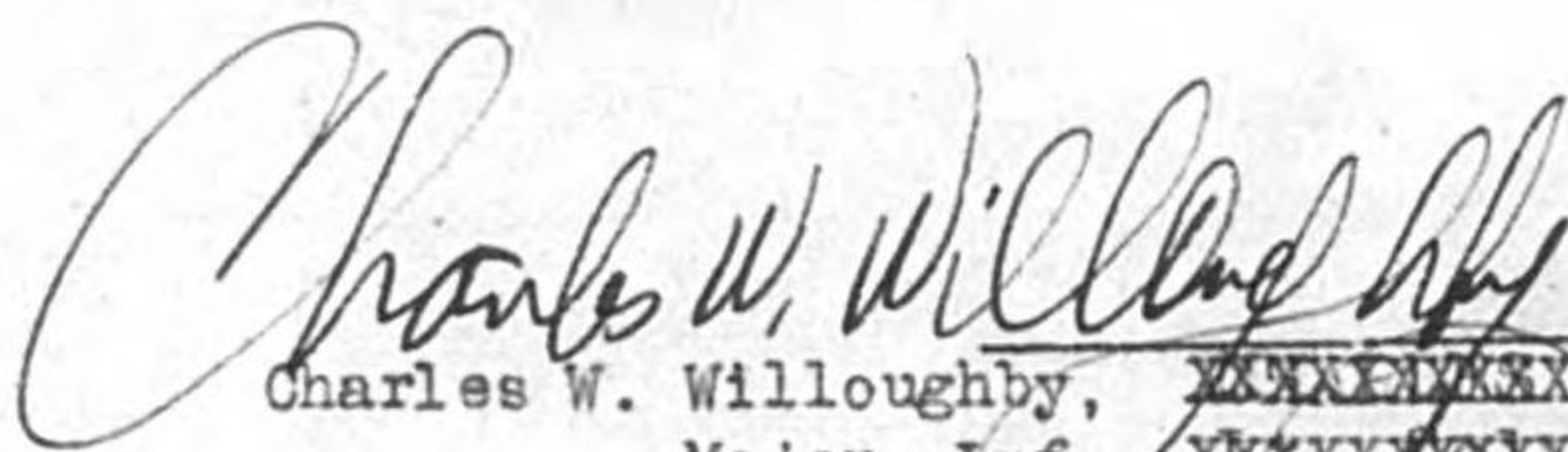
27 October, 194<sup>7</sup>6

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the attached document is a true copy of an affidavit purporting to be sworn and subscribed to by Commander Richard Hetherington O'KANE

at Mare Island, California

on the 1st day of August, 1946.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that it was copied from an original in my custody as <sup>Ass't</sup> Chief, Criminal Registry Division, Legal Section, GHQ, SCAP, Tokyo, Japan.



Charles W. Willoughby, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
Major, Inf. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
Ass't Chief of Criminal Registry  
Division, Legal Section