

E 2035

## R E S T R I C T E D

Classification changed from  
 "CONFIDENTIAL" to "RESTRICTED"  
 by order of the Secretary of War  
 By /s/ T.R.C. King, Lt. Col. Inf.

IN THE MATTER OF The Beheading )  
 of an American Citizen by )  
 Japanese Officer at Wake Island )  
 About May 1942. )

DEPOSITION OF Robert Hugh  
 LANCASTER, Box 331, Mountain  
 Home, Idaho,  
 Formerly Employed as a Foreman  
 at Wake Island by Pacific Naval  
 Air Base Contractors.

Taken at Naval Hospital, Mare Island, Vallejo, California.

Presence: Lieutenant S.A. CRANE, USNR

Date: 10 October 1945

1. Please state your name, permanent home address, and date and place of birth.
- A. Robert Hugh LANCASTER, Box 331, Mountain Home, Idaho, born 3 February 1908, at Miami, Oklahoma.
2. What is your occupation, by whom have you been employed, and where?
- A. I am an excavating foreman by occupation, and on 4 June 1941 I was employed by Pacific Naval Air Base Contractors to work at Wake Island. I arrived at Wake Island on 2 August 1941.
3. Were you ever held as a prisoner of war by the Imperial Japanese Government?
- A. Yes. I was held in custody as a prisoner of war by the Imperial Japanese Government from 23 December 1941 to 14 September 1945. I was taken prisoner when the Japanese Marines invaded Wake Island.
4. What were your major places of imprisonment while you were a prisoner of war?
- A. I was held at Wake Island from 23 December 1941 to September 1942; at that time 257 civilian prisoners of war were moved from Wake Island to Camp 18, Saeco, Kyushu, Japan, where we were held until about May 1943, when Camp 18 was dissolved, and we were moved to Camp One, Fukuoka, Kyushu, Japan, where we were held until liberated on 14 September 1945.
5. Name or identify, if you can, any of the enemy officers or persons in authority at your places of imprisonment.

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- A. The only name I can remember at the moment is that of an interpreter at Camp One named KATSUOR (?). In my personal effects, which I do not have possession of at this time but which were returned to the United States by plane, I have the names and date of other officers and persons in authority at the aforementioned places of imprisonment.
6. Do you have direct personal knowledge of any incident that occurred while you were held as a prisoner of war which improperly subjected any American national to injury or death?
- A. Yes.
7. Describe this incident in detail, with particular reference to the circumstances under which it occurred, the manner in which it happened, and the identity and nationality of the persons involved.
- A. At Wake Island, in about April or May 1942, an American civilian employee of Pacific Naval Air Base Contractors was beheaded by a Japanese Officer using a two-handed sword. I do not know the victim's full name, but I can locate it when I get my personal effects, which were shipped back with me by plane. I recall his first name was "Babe", that he was employed as a roofer, and his home was in San Francisco, California. "Babe" had been apprehended stealing cigarettes and other commodities from the warehouses at Wake Island and, aside from this, had been very belligerent and uncooperative with the Japanese guards, who seemed to have a particular dislike for him. I do not know what he had any sort of a trial. He was held a prisoner in the contractor's main office for about a week, where the guards made him walk back and forth continuously until he was totally exhausted. When exhausted, they would beat him and make him continue walking. After he had been held for about a week, we understood that the Commanding Officer received orders or permission from Tokyo to execute him. A grave was dug and a board placed across it. "Babe" was led out blindfolded and tied and made to assume a kneeling position on the board over the grave. The Japanese Commanding Officer, his entire staff, and a great number of Japanese Marines and soldiers were present to witness the execution. Several other prisoners who had also been supervisors and foremen were required to witness the execution. I was standing in the front row about eight or nine feet from "Babe" when he was executed. I recall that just before the execution, the Japanese officer in charge read a long indictment in Japanese, and the interpreter repeated the substance of most of it. I do not recall exactly what was said, but in substance it was to the effect that the Japanese are honorable people, that they do not believe it is necessary to keep locks on warehouses, and that "Babe" had been found guilty of breaking into an unlocked warehouse and stealing material.



8. Name or identify, if you can, any other persons who witnessed this execution.
- A. "Chuck" DAVIS, a foreman from Boise, Idaho, and Ike WORTLI, foreman, also from Boise, Idaho. I can furnish the names of additional witnesses when I obtain my personal effects, which includes a notebook and papers relating to this incident and others.
9. Does the testimony you have given cover all the pertinent details of this execution which you are now able to remember?
- A. Yes.
10. What type of work were you required to do while you were held as a prisoner at Wake Island?
- A. There were 350 civilian American citizens held for nine months at Wake Island, and they were required to finish the runway at the airport, digging a ditch wide enough to drive an automobile through completely around the island, where machine guns were mounted, and also to build pillboxes.
11. Do you recall that any other American citizens were tortured or beaten at Wake Island?
- A. Yes. All of the prisoners were slapped or beaten practically every day. I recall that "Swede" FOLSON, a rigger superintendent, was beaten severely with a crowbar until the ligaments in his legs were torn, and he has been unable to walk without a cane or crutches since that time. I understand he is enroute back to the United States at this time. I also recall that Cashola, fnu, from Boise, Idaho, was so severely beaten with clubs that he was unable to walk for four or five days.

/s/ Robert Hugh Lancaster



STATE OF CALIFORNIA :  
:  
County of Solano :

I, Robert Hugh Lancaster, of lawful age, being duly sworn, state that I have read the foregoing transcription of my interrogation, consisting of \_\_\_\_\_ pages, and that all answers contained therein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

/s/ Robert Hugh Lancaster

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 18 day of October, 1945, at San Francisco, California.

/s/ W.O. Johnson  
(Rank) Lt. U.S.N. .

STATE OF CALIFORNIA :  
:  
County of Solano :

I, Lieutenant S.A. Crane, USNR, certify that (Name) Robert Hugh LANCASTER, (Rank) Civilian, personally appeared before me on the tenth day of October, 1945, and testified concerning war crimes; and that the foregoing is an accurate transcription of the answers given by him to the several questions set forth.

Place: Naval Hospital, Mare Island, California

Date: 12 October 1945

/s/ S. A. Crane  
LIEUTENANT S.A. CRANE, USNR

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

/s/ Edwin F. Svare

EDWIN F. SVARE  
1st. Lt., Inf.



C E R T I F I C A T E

7 January 1947

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the attached document is a true copy of an affidavit sworn and subscribed to by

ROBERT HUGH LANCASTER

at San Francisco, California, on the 18 day of October, 1945.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that it was copied from an original in my custody as Chief, Criminal Registry Division, Legal Section, GHQ, SCAP, Tokyo, Japan. The original of this document can not be made available immediately as it is required for the trial of minor war criminals.

s/ Charles A. Reinhard  
CHARLES A. REINHARD  
Major., F.A.  
Chief of Criminal Registry  
Division, Legal Section