

I, Yasuo KOHARA, after having been duly sworn to speak the truth conscientiously, adding nothing and concealing nothing whatsoever, testified at the Sugamo Prison, Tokyo, Japan on 14 November 1946, as follows:

My name is Yasuo KOHARA.

My home address is: #651 Oaza-Nishiatchi, Nishiatchi-cho, Asakuchi-gun, Okayama-ken. At present I am confined in the Sugamo Prison as a suspected war criminal.

I joined the Imperial Japanese Navy in June 1929. At the outbreak of the Pacific War, I held the rank of Chief Petty Officer and was stationed at the Kure Naval Training Station.

From 25 December 1941 until the end of January 1942, I was assigned as a Prisoner of War Guard aboard the liner NITTA MARU. The NITTA MARU called at Wake Island on 13 January 1942 and took aboard some 1200 American Prisoners of War who had been captured at the time Wake Island surrendered to Japanese military forces in December 1941. From Wake Island the NITTA MARU went to Yokohama, Japan, and put ashore some fourteen American Prisoners of War. From Yokohama the NITTA MARU sailed to Shanghai, China, arriving there about 22 January 1942. All the Prisoners of War remaining on the NITTA MARU were put ashore at that time. Then the NITTA MARU went to Kure, Japan, and I went ashore and took up my regular duties at the Kure Naval Training Station.

The following persons were in the Prisoners of War Guard Detachment on board the NITTA MARU in January 1942:

| <u>POSITION</u> | <u>RANK</u> | <u>NAME</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Guard Commander 2nd-in-Command | Captain 2nd Lt. | (FNU) SAITO Young, short, graduate of the Merchant Marine School. |
| Guard Officer | W.O. | (FNU) YOSHIMURA |
| Guard N.C.O. | Senior C.P.O. | Usaji HIDA |
| Guard N.C.O. | C.P.O. | (FNU) TAKEZOE |
| Guard N.C.O. | C.P.O. | Yasuo KOHARA |
| Guard N.C.O. | C.P.O. | (FNU) ASAKAWA |
| Guard N.C.O. | C.P.O. | (Name Unknown) |
| Guard N.C.O. | P.O. 3/c | Tokuichi TAKAMURA |
| Guards | Seamen | About thirty men, names unknown. |

In the afternoon of the second day after the NITTA MARU had departed from Yokohama, Japan, for Shanghai, China, with about 1200 American Prisoners of War from Wake Island on board, Captain SAITO called me into his cabin aboard the NITTA MARU. At this time he showed me a piece of paper which was an execution order for executing five American Prisoners of War aboard the ship. After I had read this order over, Captain SAITO told me that he was ordering me to kill one of these American Prisoners of War. I was astonished that he would order such a thing, and I flatly refused to carry out his order. When I refused, Captain SAITO told me that since I was the senior "GOCHO" of the guard I had to carry out his order. I refused again. But Captain SAITO explained to me that he was giving me a direct order and to use my Japanese sword. I was confused. I didn't know what to say. However, I reasoned to myself that the order from my Commanding Officer, Captain SAITO, was also an order from the Emperor of Japan. I must obey it. I also realized that if I refused this order I would be the one who would be executed.

Therefore, I could do nothing but carry out the order of Captain SAITO to execute by my own hand an American Prisoner of War. After receiving this order I returned to my cabin as I was feeling ill.

Sometime later, someone came to my cabin, called me, and told me that the execution was ready to take place. I left my cabin and went up on deck. When I reached the quarterdeck, I saw five American Prisoners of War lined up on the port-side portion of the deck. Many of the Prisoner of War Guards and the crew of the NITTA MARU were standing around the American Prisoners of War and on the decks above the deck on which the Prisoners of War were standing. I noticed that it was late afternoon. Very soon Captain SAITO got up on a small platform near the American Prisoners of War and started to read the execution order. I cannot remember exactly how the execution order went, but it sounded something like this.

(First the names of the five American Prisoners of War to be executed were read off).

Then Captain SAITO read:

"Since you have committed -- a crime, it will do no good to the world to let you people live. I hope you will find happiness in the next world. When you are born again, I hope you will become peace-loving citizens."

After reading this execution order, Captain SAITO left his platform and proceeded to have the executions carried out. Captain SAITO ordered Warrant Officer YOSHIMURA to carry out the first execution.

The first American Prisoner of War was blindfolded and his hands were tied behind his back. He was made to kneel down on a small straw mat on the deck. Warrant Officer YOSHIMURA stepped out by the American Prisoner of War, raised his sword, and struck the American Prisoner of War heavily across the side of the neck. The head was not severed. Therefore, Warrant Officer YOSHIMURA struck the American Prisoner of War again with his sword. I cannot remember where this second blow landed, but I do know that the head still was not severed from the body, and the American Prisoner of War did not die immediately.

Next, Captain SAITO ordered P.O. 3/c Tokuichi TAKAMURA to execute an American Prisoner of War. P.O. 3/c TAKAMURA stepped up to the second American Prisoner of War who was kneeling on the deck. I was so sick from the sight of the execution of the first American Prisoner of War that I closed my eyes. When I opened my eyes, P.O. 3/c TAKAMURA was standing, sword lowered, over the sprawled out, headless body of the American Prisoner of War.

Next, Captain SAITO called out, "Senior 'GOCHO'". I answered, "Yes!". I was scared and shaking. I stepped out to where the third American Prisoner of War was kneeling on the deck. I raised my sword to strike the American Prisoner of War. However, being unable to bring myself to deliver the sword stroke, I lowered my sword. I opened my eyes, and I saw the red hair above the blindfold of this American Prisoner of War. Since Captain SAITO was standing right beside me and since he had ordered me to do this duty, I raised my sword and attempted to strike. Again, I could not strike. I lowered my sword.

Then realizing that I was acting on orders from the Emperor of Japan, I closed my eyes, raised my sword, and swung it forcefully downwards. When I opened my eyes, the body of the American Prisoner of War was lying at my feet. His head was severed from his body. I had carried out Captain SAITO's orders.

Next, Captain SAITO called out C.P.O. ASAKAWA. CPO ASAKAWA stepped out and stood beside the fourth American Prisoner of War. As CPO ASAKAWA raised his sword over the head of the American Prisoner of War; I closed my eyes. When I opened my eyes, the American Prisoner of War was lying dead on the deck, and CPO ASAKAWA was standing over him and shaking with excitement.

Next Captain SAITO called out CPO TAKEZOE. When CPO TAKEZOE was called out I left the deck and returned to my cabin. I felt so badly that I could not bear to witness any further executions. I did hear later, however, that CPO TAKEZOE had executed this fifth American Prisoner of War.

After the executions were finished I heard that the bodies of the five executed American Prisoners of War were thrown over the side of the NITTA MARU. I never heard of these five bodies being mutilated by the guards of the Prisoner of War Guard Detachment.

The morning after the execution, the NITTA MARU reached Shanghai, and the American Prisoners of War were put ashore. My duties as a Prisoner of War Guard were over.

While the NITTA MARU was en route from Shanghai to Kure, Captain SAITO called all the Prisoner of War Guards into his cabin and presented each of them several rings and watches which had been gotten somehow from the American Prisoners of War. I got a wrist watch and a gold ring. I lost this ring when my home in Kure was burned down during the American air raids on Japan during the war. I left the watch with my wife when I left home to come into Sugamo Prison.

When I got ashore at Kure, I discovered that the original execution order that Captain SAITO had read aboard the NITTA MARU was in the pocket of my coat. Along with this execution order there was a picture of an American civilian by the name of "TEPAS" or "TETER" who had been aboard the NITTA MARU and who was called "governor" by all the Japanese. I took this order home and kept it in my home until it was burned in the air raids. Captain SAITO never asked me for this order. Therefore, I am sure that Captain SAITO did not report the execution of the five American Prisoners of War aboard the NITTA MARU in January 1942 to his superiors at the Kure Naval Training Station. If Captain SAITO had reported the execution, he would have needed the execution order to substantiate the charge and sentence in this execution.

I have nothing further to add at this time.

/s/ YASUO KOHARA (Japanese
Yasuo Kohara characters)

ALLIED OCCUPATION FORCES)
CITY OF TOKYO)

I, Yasuo KOHARA, being duly sworn on oath, state that I had read to me and understood the translation of the foregoing transcription of my testimony and all statements contained therein, consisting of three (3) pages, are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

/s/ YASUO KOHARA (Japanese characters)
Yasuo Kohara

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 19th day of November 1946.

/s/ George F. Getty III
GEORGE F. GETTY III, 1st Lt., Inf.
Inv. Div., Legal Section SCAP

ALLIED OCCUPATION FORCES)
CITY OF TOKYO)

I, Robert HASHIMA, Civilian Interpreter, GHQ, SCAP, Tokyo, Japan, being duly sworn on oath, state that I truly translated the foregoing testimony and all statements contained therein, from English to Japanese and from Japanese to English respectively, and that after being transcribed, I truly translated the foregoing deposition containing three (3) pages, to the witness; that the witness thereupon in my presence affixed his signature thereto.

/s/ Robert Hashima
Robert Hashima, Civilian
Interpreter

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 19th day of November 1946.

/s/ George F. Getty III
GEORGE F. GETTY III, 1st Lt., Inf.
Inv. Div., Legal Section, SCAP

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, GEORGE F. GETTY III, 1st Lt., Legal Section, SCAP, Tokyo, Japan, certify that on the 19th day of November 1946, personally appeared before me, Yasuo KOHARA, and according to Robert HASHIMA, gave the foregoing testimony, that after his testimony had been transcribed, the said Yasuo KOHARA had read to him by the said interpreter the same and affixed his signature thereto in my presence.

/s/ George F. Getty III
GEORGE F. GETTY III, 1st Lt., Inf.
Inv. Div., Legal Section, SCAP

TOKYO, JAPAN

19 November 1946
Date