

RAWLEIGH LITERARY ASSOCIATES
6356 Watchtower Rd.
Julian, NC 27283

A REVIEW OF
MY BOOK

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Contact: Carol Rawleigh, 1-910-685-9135

"Parade of the Dead" Offers Uncommon View of World War II

In his second book, "Parade of the Dead: A U.S. Army Physician's Memoir of Imprisonment by the Japanese, 1942-1945," N.C. native John R. Bumgarner, M.D., reaches back to vivid World War II memories of his experience in the South Pacific as a young physician in the POW camps of Cabanatuan, Bilibid Prison, and Camps Bibai and Kamiso. Assigned to Sternberg Hospital in pre-war Manila in 1941, the author's idyllic days were ended by the bombing of Pearl Harbor, December 7. Casualties from Clark Field, Cavite Navy Yard, Fort McKinly and Corregidor poured into Sternberg. With the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, thousands were crushed into prisoner-of-war camps where they were subjected to horrific conditions of filth, disease and slow starvation.

Not a conventional story of war, however, *Parade of the Dead*, offers intriguing insights into the clinical diagnosis of tropical diseases and nutritional deficiencies. The medical personnel -- pathologists, surgeons, internists, and dentists, trained by profession and committed by oath to heal the sick--were tragically handicapped. Their captors provided almost no medication or provisions for basic sanitation. Examining hundreds of men going blind from the vitamin deficiencies brought on by a diet of milled rice and tea, an eye surgeon, deprived of resources for treatment, can only record his findings.

Yet Bumgarner's story abounds with illustrations of inventiveness, comedy, and great courage that rose above helplessness and death. Fellow survivors of the author at Camp Kamiso -- Irish, Scottish, and British soldiers who labored in a Japanese cement factory--showed their gratitude to him with a written testimony. This card is reproduced in the book. It reads in part: "We will never forget your ability, tenacity, patience and discretion during those days and wish you, with all our hearts, a long happy and prosperous life." -- Nisi-Asibetu, Japan, August 1945.

The author, who received the Bronze Star for his service in Bataan, says of his experience: "Not many can survive alone. To endure, having the support of friends can be more important than a few more calories or vitamins."

Bumgarner, who also wrote "The Health of the Presidents" (1994), is a retired cardiologist living in Greensboro, NC. "Parade of the Dead" may be ordered from McFarland & Co, Inc., Publishers, Box 611, Jefferson, NC, 26840 for \$21.99, plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

Dr. & Mrs. John R. Bumgarner
7 Brownstone Lane
Greensboro, NC 27410