

Death Railway



Interview with ExPOW Nolan D. Anthony , 131st Field Artillery, Java Defence,
US Army.

Background

ExPOW Anthony was captured when the Dutch surrendered in Java on 8 March 1942, he was held in POW Camps in Java, Singapore, Thailand and Burma. He was 23 years old when captured and a POW for 1,256 days. His medals include, a Purple Heart, American Defence, 1 Bronze Star, American Campaign, Defence 1 Bronze Star, Pacific Campaign with 3 Bronze Stars, Distinguished Unit Badge 2 Oak leaf clusters. His military vocation was a 'Canoneer' and after the war he was a truck driver. After the war he was hospitalised for nine months where he discharged from the service at San Antonio Texas on 28 May 1946. Four months later to the day he married his childhood sweetheart and had two children and now is a grandfather.

Q. What main groups of men were you with whilst on the railway? Were you mainly with other Americans, British or Australians?

A. Now let me tell you I spent Christmas 1941 in Brisbane, Australia standing guard on an ammunition dump just outside Brisbane, we were camped at Ascot race track.

Q. You worked on the Bridge Over the River Kwai - what were your main work tasks there?

A. My job on the bridge was driving piling. (that was several men standing waist deep in water pulling on ropes to raise the weight that fell & drove the piling).

Q. How long did you work on the Bridge Over the River Kwai?

A. How long I worked on the bridge I have no idea.

Q. Were the guards ferocious in this work area?

A. First let me say all camps had terrible guards. All were extra mean to us Americans & Aussies. There was several Aussies in the camps, but I would say mostly British & Dutch. You would have to have an extra desire to live & help from God.

Q. Where was the POW camp at the Bridge Over the River Kwai?

A. I have no idea how far it was from camp.

Q. Were there many deaths on the Bridge Over the River Kwai?

A. I guess the deaths was about average with the rest of the rail road. I think it increased the longer the war lasted.

Q. What was your working hours on the bridge?

A. Work hrs. were long .From can see till cant see.

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- Q. I have heard of a story of a Jap or Korean Guard ending up in the concrete mix for one of the pillars - do you know about this story?*
- A. I know nothing about a Jap getting stuck in the concrete. The bridge we built was not concrete, it was bamboo, I hope this will be of some help to you. I had several Australian friends.

Nolan D. Anthony, Ennis, Texas.

(As you approach the Bridge on the northern side is a bronze plaque dedicated the 356 American servicemen who died on the line).