

## THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS AS A WORLD WAR II INTERNMENT CAMP

**1941 December 8:** Japan first attacked several locations in northern Luzon and advanced toward Manila. Over the succeeding days and weeks, Japanese forces occupied Manila and ordered all American and British citizens to remain in their homes until they could all be registered. Foreign enemies in Manila were transported by the Japanese to the University of Santo Tomas, which served as an Internment Camp (*Morton, 1953*).

**37 months in captivity:** About 7,000 people were in captivity, with a regular flow of people in and out of the camp (including missionaries, elderly, sick people right outside the camp) and more than 2,000 people being transferred to Los Baños Internment Camp.



Figure 1 Shanties in UST; Unknown author - US Army Corps

The internees were initially allowed to continue formal education for the children and to keep a vegetable garden, but conditions in the Camp became worse as the Japanese continued to lose the War (i.e., food shortages/lower food rations, typhoons and related damages to shanties, illness and malnutrition, and the like). The Japanese rule over the internees of their largest internment camp began to grow more oppressive.

**1945 February 3:** With Captain Manuel Colayco—who himself was a UST faculty member—serving as guide for American forces and falling in battle (*Business World, 2013*), American forces broke through the fence of the compound to begin the liberation efforts. Colayco Park in UST (now the Quadricentennial Square) would then be named after him. Fighting went on for several days.

**1945 February 7:** Gen. Douglas MacArthur visited the compound. He would later receive a Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* in recognition of his efforts in the liberation of Manila and the Santo Tomas Internment Camp.

**1945 February 11:** The evacuation began. 3,785 internees, of which 2,870 were Americans, were liberated from the camp (*Santo Tomas Documents, n.d.*). Fr. Juan Labrador, O.P., who became Rector in 1961, was an eyewitness (*The Academia, 2005*).



# UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**1945 September:** Santo Tomas internment camp was finally emptied, with the last internees boarding ships bound for the US.

**1995 February 3:** UST hosted the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Manila with re-enactments. US Amb. John Negroponte graced the event and presented a posthumous award to Capt. Colayco (*The Academia*, 1995).



Figure 2 The photo shows hundreds of Santo Tomas camp internees in front of the UST Main Building cheering their release (taken 05 February 1945); c/o Carl Mydans of Life Images

**2005 February 3:** UST hosted the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation with then US Amb. Ricciardone in attendance (*The Academia*, 2005).

**2015 February 3:** UST hosted the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation, with Bay Area Civilian Ex-Prisoners of War (BACEPOW) in attendance (*The Academia*, 2015).

**2020 February 3:** UST hosted the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation, with special guests: The Ambassador of the United States to the Philippines His Excellency Sung Y. Kim, the oldest veteran leader in the Philippines Sergeant José Quilatan, Jr., Undersecretary for Defense Policy Ricardo David, Jr., American internee Leslie Ann Murray, and the youngest son of Captain Manuel Colayco, Francisco Colayco (*The Academia*, 2020).

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