

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

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**Many Filipinos no longer remember their ancestors who served in the U.S. Army during WWI and many of the Filipino soldiers died or were injured in combat in the European "trench warfare."**

The Saga of Filipino Soldiers Drafted to Serve the American Expeditionary Force to Europe during World War I (as discussed in one of the monthly meetings of the Philippine History Group of Los Angeles in the late 1990s):

Young Filipinos were hired from the Philippines to work as contract workers in the sugar and/or pineapple plantations of Hawaii starting in the early 1900s. On April 6, 1917, when the United States got involved in World War I on the side of Great Britain, France and their allies, Filipino workers were required to register for the U.S. military drafts in 1917 and 1918. The Filipinos were drafted as they were "American nationals." More often than not, the Filipino draftees were assigned in the kitchen (often referred to as the "KP or Kitchen Police") and mess hall. The musically-gifted served in the army bands. Those that had experience in fixing farm vehicles were assigned to work in the motor pool.

It was estimated that more-than four thousand Filipino workers were drafted to serve in the Hawaiian Infantry regiments or the equivalent of the state national-guard units.

Some Filipinos working in the agricultural fields in California and other states such as Alaska (where they were fishermen) were also drafted by the U.S. military. Many of the Filipino agricultural workers in the U. S. Mainland and in Hawaii came from the Ilocos Region, Pangasinan and also from the other regions in Luzon such as the Bicol Region and the Visayan islands.

The U.S. Army sent also Filipino soldiers serving in the Philippine Constabulary and army units in the Philippine Islands to the U. S. mainland for further training. The more-experienced ones, especially those that had combat experience in the so-called "Moro Wars" in Mindanao, were sent without much stateside training to the European front lines.

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Many Filipino soldiers died in combat in Europe. Others were injured. From anecdotal sources, a Filipino corporal, Tomas Mateo Claudio, who was said to have hailed from Morong, Rizal, died in combat under heroic circumstances in France in the Battle of Belleau Wood. At this battle, many Allied soldiers, including Filipino recruits, were cited for their legendary bravery. But as the result of the so-called "trench warfare," both sides in the conflict suffered massive casualties. It was also in this battle that a brother of Carlos Bulosan (from Pangasinan) was also presumably killed.

Per reference books, the Battle of Belleau Wood (1–26 June 1918) occurred during the German 1918 Spring Offensive in World War I, near the Marne River in France. The battle was fought between the U.S. Second (under the command of Major General Omar Bundy) and Third Divisions and an assortment of German units including elements from the 237th, 10th, 197th, 87th, and 28th Divisions.[2] The battle has become a deep part of the lore of the United States Marine Corps. (As stated in the Wikipedia).

Gen. John J. (Black Jack) Pershing was one of the commanders of the American forces in the said Battle of Belleau Wood. As he just came from the Philippine Islands as the Military Governor of Mindanao, it is presumed that he brought with him some of his most-experienced Filipino soldiers that fought with him in the so-called "Moro Wars." It was ironic that General Pershing and his Filipino soldiers defeated the Germans as part of the Allied Forces but they could not vanquish the Muslim rebels in Mindanao, as some Filipino-American historians tend to conclude.

[Alfonso Y. Gonzales Jr.](#) of Bulusan, Sorsogon Province, added to this research by saying that in 1917 the Philippine Assembly created the Philippine National Guard with the intent to join the American Expeditionary Force. By the time it was absorbed into the National Army, it had grown to 25,000 soldiers. However, these units did not see action in Europe, as WWI ended before they could depart for the "Old World." The first Filipino to die in World War I was Private Tomas Mateo Claudio, who served with the U.S. Marine Corps as part of the American Expeditionary Forces to Europe. He died in the Battle of Chateau Thierry in France on June 29, 1918. The Tomas Claudio Memorial College in Morong Rizal, Philippines, which was founded in 1950, was named in his honor.

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