



COURTESY OF JOHN BUMGARNER

PARADE OF THE DEAD

Lt. John Bumgarner, a physician with the U.S. Army Medical Corps, had been serving in the Philippines for a little more than a year when the Japanese drove Allied forces from the island's Bataan Peninsula — one of the worst defeats ever suffered by the United States — on April 9, 1942. A native of Wilkes County, Bumgarner was a prisoner of war until the Japanese surrender in 1945.

Lacking medical supplies, suffering from disease and malnutrition, and witnessing harrowing atrocities, the young doctor tried to care for the thousands of American and Filipino soldiers who were forced to march north out of Bataan to Camp O'Donnell, where they were held in captivity. "Death from a bullet," Bumgarner said in his memoir *Parade of the Dead*, "would have been preferable to the desolate and hopeless circumstances which overcame hundreds of others. ... By the middle of June [1942] the grisly procession of dead had grown alarmingly to average 20 deaths per day — 20 men who had endured the terrible ordeal of Bataan, who were 10,000 miles from home, and who then died in the most miserable circumstances. For me, as a doctor, the most distressing thought was that they could have been saved, almost without exception, by proper diet and medical care."

— Diane Silcox-Jarrett



COURTESY OF BARBARA GOUGE

AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'

Barbara Gouge of Hickory stayed state-side while serving in the women's section of the Coast Guard (SPARs), but learned that the military meant business. "The leaders in the Coast Guard were not fooling around. They made sure that we kept on a schedule and followed all the rules. They didn't have time for us not to do what we were supposed to do."

Gouge joined up to help out with the war and make a change in her life. "My mother had died when I was young. I wasn't married and I needed to take charge of my life. I needed to feel I was accomplishing something and not just sitting back not taking an active part. It was the best thing I could have ever done."

— Diane Silcox-Jarrett

NO ORDINARY TIME Pilots such as Mary Nelson, a WASP at Camp Davis, followed Eleanor Roosevelt's 1942 call to action: "This is not a time when women should be patient. We are in a war and we need to fight it with all our ability and every weapon possible. Women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used."



ANGEL OF MERCY

As if joining the Army Air Corps wasn't adventurous enough, Virginia Reavis of the Onslow County community of Hubert became part of an air evacuation unit. "I was with the 65th General Hospital from Duke University down at Fort Bragg and they were looking for nurses for Air Evac. Only four of us were accepted from Fort Bragg."

Reavis went to Europe in December 1943. "We knew D-Day was coming because they had us flying patients from Europe back to the States, so they could empty out all the beds. It was a sickening feeling knowing what was going to happen. We went in five days after D-Day and took in supplies and loaded up the injured. We could take six in an ambulance. There were so many head injuries; it was horrible. They left home as strong young men. I thought to myself, this is worse than death."

— Diane Silcox-Jarrett