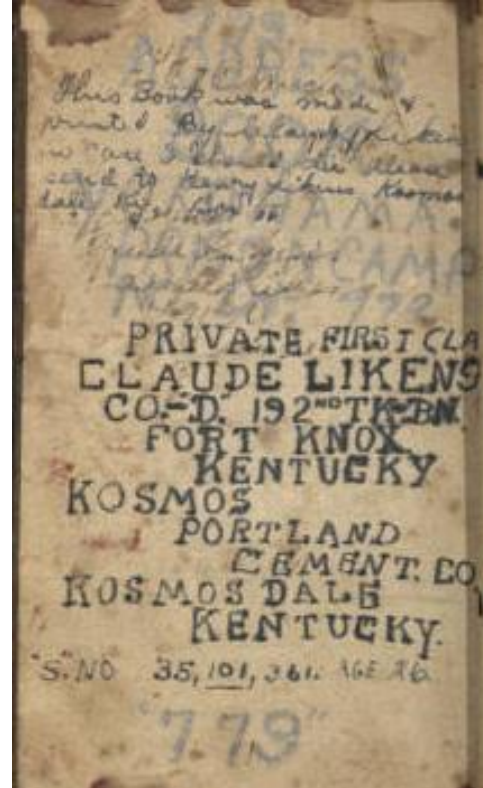


Kentucky's Company D: The Harrodsburg Tankers

During World War II a Kentucky National Guard unit based in Harrodsburg, Company D, 192nd Tank Battalion, was sent to the Philippines just before Pearl Harbor. These Kentuckians fought in the famously brutal battles of Bataan and Corregidor and, after their army's ordered surrender, endured one of the war's worst atrocities, the Bataan Death March. None of the Harrodsburg Tankers died on the march, perhaps partly because of luck but partly because the Company D men looked out for each other – sharing water, food and emotional support – and sometimes physically carrying each other along the way.

The next 3 ½ years in Japanese prisons exacted a heavier toll. Harrodsburg Tankers died from a host of diseases, accidents and the cruelty of guards in camps from the Philippines to Manchuria to Japan, in factories, coal mines and shipyards. They were scattered across the war theatre, but when even two or three were together in a prison camp, on a work detail or on a Hell Ship transporting them to yet another prison, each Tanker “did what you could for your buddy,” as one recalled decades later. Even so, only 37 of the 66 returned to Harrodsburg after the war. A similar percentage of Company D's draftees and volunteers from other Kentucky towns also came home. All the survivors bore scars, some physical and some psychological, but they were home.

Oral histories with survivors of the Bataan Death March, including those returning home from Company D, can be found at <http://passtheword.ky.gov>. Image: page from the diary of Claude Liken, kept during his time as a Japanese POW, KHS Collections.



Pass the Word™ is a discovery tool for oral histories throughout the state of Kentucky. To learn more about this topic, visit <http://passtheword.ky.gov>.