



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