

Newsweek

FEBRUARY 7, 1944

p. 25

Our Soldiers Know

**Brutality of Japs Is an Old Story
to Men Who Now Fight to Kill Them**

NEWSWEEK asked one of its war correspondents, William W. Boddie, who covered the campaigns in the South Pacific last year, to write the following impression of how the men actually fighting the Japs react to enemy cruelty and atrocities of the sort revealed in last week's Army-Navy report (see page 19).

The Americans who are fighting the Japs may be enraged but they will not be astonished at the treatment of prisoners in the Philippines. All along, they have known that the Japs are ruthless, remorseless, without morals or ethics. The motto in the South Pacific has always been: "Kill the bastards!" or they will kill you.

For example, in August of last year, some 300 Japs attacked an unarmed litter train on the Munda Trail. They hacked twenty of the wounded to death. On the days following there was great anger on New Georgia. But it could not be said that many were surprised.

Everyone accepted the fact that capture would mean death, probably after torture. There was not even any argument about it. No man I knew considered he had a chance if the Japs got him. Like the Indian fighters of the West, each planned to save a bullet for himself.

But the results of capture are not drilled into our forces by their officers. The men can figure it out for themselves after seeing a mutilated American. On the other hand, the Japanese Army tells and retells its soldiers that capture means execution by the Allies. That makes them fight all the more desperately.

One afternoon on Guadalcanal I visited a small prisoner camp. The officer in charge pointed out a well-nourished, healthy Jap. He had been captured while sleeping. His leg had been horribly infected. For three days he shivered, expecting to be put to death. He had been trained to expect it.

The prison camp was clean and neat. The sleeping facilities were equal to those of American enlisted men. The Japs had all the water they wanted to use for drinking, cooking, and washing. They were supplied with the standard Army ration as well as quantities of captured Japanese foodstuff and cigarettes were regularly rationed to them. Their cleanliness and politeness had aroused in the guards a sort of amused fondness.

But that is not the American attitude in the jungle. There the Jap is loathed for the inhuman enemy he is. One night in a foxhole during a bombing raid a corporal who had killed about 25 told me: "I get a kick out of shooting them. It's just like shooting an animal, and a damned dangerous one."

OldMagazineArticles.com