

Tribute to Filipinos and Filipino-Australians who died in the Bombing of Darwin (19 February 1942)

(Excerpts from *The Territory Remembers. Commemorating the Filipinos*
by Maj Paul A. Rosenzweig (ret.)

19 February 1942 -- On that fateful day in Australia's history, the war came to Australia's shores. Darwin bore the brunt of the most devastating wartime attack on the country with 252 known deaths listed in the Historical Society of the Northern Territory in 1994, including 21 Filipinos and Filipino-Australians who died in Darwin and in the northern waters of Australia.

SS Don Isidro and SS Florence D

Eight (8) civilian ships had been contracted by the US to act as blockade runners to resupply the besieged troops in Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor Island. There were 105 Filipinos onboard two ships, SS Don Isidro and SS Florence D.

SS Don Isidro, built in 1939 for the De La Rama Steamship Company in the Philippines, was contracted for one mission "to deliver food and ammunition to the Philippines Islands." On 19 February while seeking shelter in Darwin Harbor after evading a Japanese bomber, seven fighter planes strafed her. Eleven (11) Filipinos died on the ship, with their bodies never recovered, and two other Filipinos later died from their wounds. Don Isidro drifted and came onshore north of Fourcroy off Bathurst island, still burning on 20 February 1942.

SS Florence D was used in the Philippines in 1925 by the Cadwallader-Gibson Lumber Company. By 1942, she was owned by Madrigal and Company of Manila and had been procured under charter by the United States Navy. She, too, was a blockade runner on a secret mission to deliver primary 3-inch artillery shells and .30-.50-inch calibre ammunition to the Corregidor garrison. She was first attacked at 2 pm but the bombs missed her by a wide margin. When she was attacked again at 3.30 pm with five direct hits, she immediately sank in the Timor Sea west of Bathurst Island. Three Filipino crew were killed. The exact location of Florence D was unknown until 2009. She is now known to have sunk approximately 85 nautical miles northwest of Darwin.

The only witnesses to the heroism of our fellow Filipinos and all those who perished onboard that day, *Don Isidro* and *Florence D* are today protected historic shipwrecks, undersea war graves, under Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976. Although these ships never berthed in Darwin Harbour, they became inextricably linked with the Bombing of Darwin when their deaths were included in the Royal Commission tally.

USS Peary

Onboard the warship DD226 USS Peary was Cook Second Class Joseph Tapia, an officer's cook. He had enlisted in the US Navy on 08 October 1937 in Cavite, Philippines. On 19 February 1942, USS Peary was moored south of Darwin wharf when she was bombed and sank stern first. Joseph Tapia was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart in recognition of meritorious service and wounds received in action resulting to his death. In Darwin, his name is recorded on the plaque honouring those from DD226 who lost their lives. In addition, his name is inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing in the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Fort Bonifacio, Manila.

Darwin Wharf

During the first air raid on Darwin, 22 civilians were killed on the wharf including 20 men from the mercantile trading firm Burns, Philp & Co Ltd and the Commonwealth Railways, plus two railway employees who later died of wounds. Among them were five Filipino-Australian civilians working as wharf labourers.

They were Darwin residents from the families of the *Manilamen*, the first wave of Filipino migrants to Australia who worked as pearl and shell divers and processors since the 1880s or even earlier. They were descendants of the first Filipino families in Darwin who came to be known for playing music at social gatherings and actively participating in sporting activities, such as boxing and football.

In honor of their selfless sacrifice, their names are listed with the civilians who died in Darwin on a large plaque at the Darwin City Council offices.

Killed on Darwin wharf
Francisco Augustus Chavez
Ricardo Warivin Conanan
John Rigue Cubillo
Domingo Dominic
Catalino Spain



<http://www.territoryremembers.nt.gov.au/history/don-isidro>

Killed in or as a result of the attack
on SS Don Isidro

Antonio Cordova	Maximo Mangan
Raul Delgado	Agapito Masangkay
Alberto Jimenea	Frederico Montalegra
Melchor Jaruvilla	Antonio Reyes
Loreto Jaime	Quirino Sabando
Amado Logno	Unidentified (2)

Killed in the attack
on SS Florence D

Francisco Beltran
Librado Briones
Mariano Reyes

*They are today honoured
on a plaque unveiled at
Darwin Military Museum.
They are also recalled in a
Roll of Honour provided
by the Northern Territory
Library Service.*



<http://www.environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/wreck/wreck.do?key=3531>

Killed in the attack on USS Peary
Joseph Tapia

Today, the Philippine Embassy pays tribute to the Filipinos who have fallen in the Bombing of Darwin. We join their families in Darwin who keep their memories alive by commemorating the Bombing of Darwin Ceremony every year on the 19th day of February at the Wharf and at the Cenotaph.

As wreaths are cast into the Darwin harbour today in remembrance, may we Filipinos take pride in the memory of our fellowmen who died that day in the name of service and sacrifice. *Lest we forget.*

The Embassy extends its deep appreciation to Major Paul A. Rosenzweig MA JP (ret.), 70th Anniversary awardee for security and defense cooperation, for his dedication in keeping the stories of these Filipinos alive. Paul has been a volunteer military historian for over 35 years. Most recently, he has been documenting the Filipino-Australians who volunteered for military service. Through his publications and also his 'Thanks Digger' page on Facebook, he pays tribute to Filipinos who served in the Australian military forces in five wars between 1915 and 1975, and those who lost their lives during the Bombing of Darwin.