

## Lore of the Corps

### From Camp Judge Advocate to War Crimes Prosecutor: The Career of Captain Frank H. Morrison II, Judge Advocate General's Department<sup>1</sup>

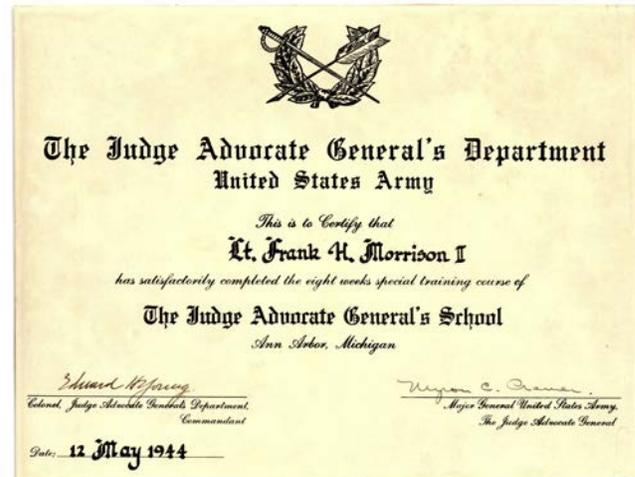
Fred L. Borch  
Regimental Historian and Archivist

Even attorneys who served briefly as Army lawyers in World War II had remarkable experiences, as illustrated by the two-year judge advocate career of Frank H. Morrison II. After “satisfactorily” completing “the eight week special training course” at The Judge Advocate General’s School (TJAGSA) in May 1944<sup>2</sup>, First Lieutenant (1LT) Morrison served as the lone “Camp Judge Advocate” at Camp Van Dorn in Mississippi until he was transferred to the Legal Section of General Douglas MacArthur’s General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, in February 1945.<sup>3</sup> For the next eighteen months, until he was discharged from active duty and returned to civilian life, now Captain (CPT) Morrison investigated war crimes in the Philippines and Japan. He also assisted in the prosecution of more than 300 Japanese war criminals, and was part of the “prosecution staff which sent Generals Yamashita and Homma to the gallows.”<sup>4</sup> This is the story of his time as an Army lawyer in World War II.

Born on June 18, 1912 in Nashville, Tennessee, Frank Hamilton Morrison II graduated from Boys’ High School in Atlanta, Georgia in 1931 and earned his law degree from Emory University in 1937. He was certainly popular with his classmates, as he was voted “wittiest” boy in his high school class and elected president of the law school while at Emory. Morrison also was a good athlete and was passionate about tennis.<sup>5</sup>

After passing the Georgia bar, Morrison joined the law firm of Howard, Camp and Tiller in Atlanta, where he practiced law until being inducted into the Army in October 1942. Morrison subsequently attended the 16th Officer Class at TJAGSA and, after receiving a diploma signed by Colonel Edward H. “Ham” Young, TJAGSA Commandant, and Major General Myron C. Cramer, The Judge Advocate

General, reported for duty at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, in May 1944.



For the next eight months, 1LT Morrison served as the “Camp Judge Advocate.” He was the lone Army lawyer and consequently was responsible for the delivery of all legal services at Camp Van Dorn. This small installation, commanded by a colonel and located near Centreville, Mississippi, began training troops in November 1942. When Morrison arrived, the 63d Infantry “Blood and Fire” Division was still in training; the unit left Camp Dorn for New York in November 1944.<sup>6</sup> Prior to the departure of that division, however, 1LT Morrison was incredibly busy.

<sup>1</sup> The author thanks Ms. Margaret “Nan” Morrison for her help in preparing this Lore of the Corps about her father.

<sup>2</sup> Diploma of Lieutenant Frank H. Morrison, II (May 12, 1944).

<sup>3</sup> *Frank H. Morrison II, Atlanta Attorney, Dies*, ATLANTA CONSTITUTION, January 5, 1959, at 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Email from Margaret Morrison to author, (June 24, 2015, 3:46PM) (on file with author)

<sup>6</sup> For more on the 63d Infantry at Camp Van Dorn, see 63D INFANTRY DIVISION, [www.63rdinfdiv.com](http://www.63rdinfdiv.com).



First Lieutenant Frank Morrison with a client at the Camp Van Dorn Judge Advocate Office, 1944.

Some of his work involved advising on military justice matters and reviewing courts-martial for legal sufficiency. Camp Van Dorn's commander was a special court-martial convening authority, and he convened about fifty courts-martial a year.<sup>7</sup> But it seems that the majority of 1LT Morrison's time was devoted to legal assistance matters.

According to an article published in the Camp Van Dorn newspaper in September 1944, the "Office of the Camp Judge Advocate" was heavily involved in providing legal counsel to soldiers stationed at the installation. The office had "over 250 divorce cases . . . pending in almost every state in the union."<sup>8</sup> But Morrison also assisted "in the naturalization of approximately 15 to 25 aliens a month." He had this large number of naturalization cases because of wartime changes made by Congress to the laws governing citizenship. In 1942, desiring to ease the naturalization process for non-U.S. citizens serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, Congress eliminated age, race, and residence requirements for American citizenship.<sup>9</sup> As if this were not sufficient incentive for non-citizen men and women in uniform to fill out naturalization paperwork, the Congress went even further in 1944, removing any requirement to prove that one had lawfully entered the United States.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> HISTORICAL AND PICTORIAL REVIEW OF CAMP VAN DORN 2 (1944).

<sup>8</sup> *Van Dorn's Mr. Anthony*, THE VAN-GUARD (Vol. 1, No. 46), Sept. 9, 1944, at 2. From 1935 until 1953, millions of radio listeners tuned in to a popular show hosted by John J. Anthony. The show's format was for listeners to call in to the show to ask about family problems, and each show began with the preamble, "Mr. Anthony, I've got a problem . . ." The phrase was a popular American saying during World War II, and the headline about 1LT Morrison's legal assistance work being akin to Mr. Anthony's show would have struck a responsive chord with readers. See Bob Thomas, *Radio's Mr. Anthony Has New Problem*, MIAMI NEWS, July 13, 1966, at 8.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Military Naturalization During WWII*, <http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-story/agencyhistory/military-naturalization-during-wwii> (last visited 22 June 2015).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

With this as background, 1LT Morrison's unusual, if not amusing, experiences with naturalization make sense. In one case, a Chinese national serving in the Army at Camp Van Dorn was filling out a form so that his petition for naturalization could be submitted to the local U.S. District Court. The Chinese soldier, however, spoke poor English and had only been in the United States for a short time. First Lieutenant Morrison needed an interpreter but the only person he could find was a Russian "who had a very meager knowledge of the Chinese language."<sup>11</sup> As a newspaper article explained:

When asked how he entered the United States, the Russian informed Lt. Morrison that the Chinaman stated he swam in. Lt. Morrison, feeling that certainly the Russian had misunderstood, repeated the question several times and gesticulated with his arms and used all manner of sign language to elucidate the proper answer from the Chinese and the answer always came back that he swam in.

After approximately one hour of cross examination on this one particular question . . . it was learned that this [Chinese] alien had been a cook on an oil tanker which had been torpedoed off the Atlantic coast and that he actually swam into this country. So the answer as it appears in his petition for naturalization to the question asked is "I swam into the United States."

Needless to say, this petition was acted on favorably and the man is now a fully naturalized American citizen.<sup>12</sup>



First Lieutenant Morrison (far right) at the Camp Van Dorn Officers Club, 1944.

<sup>11</sup> *Van Dorn's Mr. Anthony*, *supra* note 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

In February 1945, with training operations at Camp Van Dorn winding down, Morrison was reassigned to the Pacific Theater. He “was one of the first members of General MacArthur’s staff to investigate Japanese atrocities at Cabanatuan Prison and during the Bataan Death March.”<sup>13</sup>

Now CPT Morrison started his work in Manila as part of a five-man team; this eventually grew to be a staff of 150. As Morrison explained to a newspaper reporter in May 1946, the “hardest part of the job in connection with the war crimes activities was to find those responsible for the atrocities, tortures, and other crimes and then apprehend them.”<sup>14</sup> The American soon discovered, however, that Japanese soldiers suspected of war crimes would commit suicide rather than allow themselves to be apprehended by the Americans. After Japanese Emperor Hirohito was directed to order accused Japanese military personnel to report for hearings, however, these suicides ceased. As Morrison explained, “the Japanese believed hari-kari was honorable, but if they were ordered to report by the Emperor, they would obey rather than face disgrace and the wrath of their dead ancestors for refusing to comply with an order from their ruler.”<sup>15</sup>

After months of investigative work in the Philippines—interviewing witnesses and visiting crime scenes—CPT Morrison served on the military commission prosecution teams that tried General Tomoyuki Yamashita, whose moniker was the “Tiger of Malaya,” and General Masaharu Homma. These men were tried in Manila in late 1945 by a commission consisting of five general officers. Convicted of failing to provide effective control over his troops, who were committing horrific war crimes in the Philippines in late 1944, Yamashita was sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was carried out in 1946.<sup>16</sup> Homma, who was the commander in the Philippines at the time of the infamous Bataan Death March, was likewise convicted by a military commission; he was found guilty of allowing members of his command to commit “brutal atrocities and other high crimes.”<sup>17</sup> Homma was executed by firing squad in April 1946.



Captain Morrison at his desk in Yokohama, Japan.

Some time after the Yamashita and Homma trials in Manila, CPT Morrison was reassigned to General Douglas MacArthur’s General Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. According to an article in *The Emory Alumnus*, Morrison was “selected by the chief of General MacArthur’s legal section to assist in the prosecution of more than 300 accused war criminals in Yokohama.”<sup>18</sup> As a result of his exemplary work as a war crimes prosecutor from May 1945 to March 1946, CPT Morrison was later awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious achievement by the Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces, Pacific.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Frank H. Morrison II, supra note 2, at 7.*

<sup>14</sup> *Obedience to Will of Emperor Halted Wave of Jap Suicides, ATLANTA CONSTITUTION, May 20, 1946.*

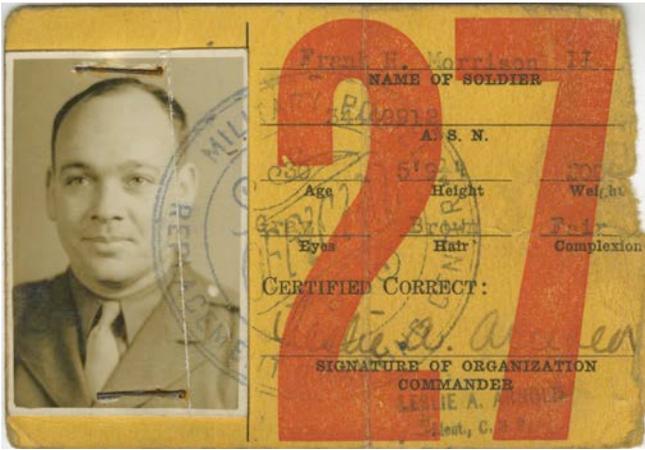
<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> ALLAN A. RYAN, *YAMASHITA’S GHOST-WAR CRIMES, MACARTHUR’S JUSTICE, AND COMMAND ACCOUNTABILITY* (University Press of Kansas, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> GARY D. SOLIS, *THE LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT* 384 (2010) (quoting Theater Staff Judge Advocate’s Review of the Record of Trial by Military Commission of General Masaharu Homma, 5 March 1946, at 1).

<sup>18</sup> *Emory Soldier-Lawyers Prosecute Jap Thugs, THE EMORY ALUMNUS, March 1946, at 13; see also Capt. Morrison Aids Prosecutor in Jap Trial, ATLANTA JOURNAL, January 7, 1946, at 5.*

<sup>19</sup> *Georgians Get Army Awards for Service, ATLANTA JOURNAL, August 18, 1946.*



Captain Morrison's identification card used during war crimes investigations.

After being released from active duty in mid-1946, Frank Morrison returned to Atlanta, where he rejoined his old law firm.<sup>20</sup> He tried his hand at politics, and ran unsuccessfully for the Fulton County seat in the Georgia State Legislature in 1948.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after Christmas in 1958, Morrison suddenly took ill. He died a week later on January 3, 1959 of cirrhosis of the liver.<sup>22</sup> He was only 46 years old. It was an untimely end for a man who had a remarkable career as an Army lawyer in World War II and who likely would have had an equally distinguished career as a civilian attorney in Atlanta.

*More historical information can be found at*

The Judge Advocate General's Corps  
Regimental History Website

<https://www.jagcnet.army.mil/8525736A005BE1BE>

*Dedicated to the brave men and women who have served our  
Corps with honor, dedication, and distinction.*

<sup>20</sup> Although released from active duty in 1946, Morrison was not discharged from his Army Reserve obligation until 1950. Email from Margaret Morrison, *supra* note 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Frank H. Morrison II, supra* note 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*