

# RAMSEY FIGHTS ON

By Rochelle Mabilangan

**Living Legend: Edwin Price Ramsey joined and helped organize the underground resistance movement, which earned him legendary status.**



“I love the Filipinos. I will probably always be better remembered and loved by the Filipinos than I will be in America because of what I did during the war,” declares retired Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Price Ramsey of the U.S. Army.

In 1942, Colonel Ramsey, as Filipinos called him, led the three-year guerrilla war effort during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in preparation for General Douglas MacArthur's return to the

islands.

With 40,000 Filipinos and Americans, Ramsey remained behind enemy lines, fighting disease, harsh jungles and the Japanese enemy. Despite the great odds, Ramsey proclaimed, “I had not surrendered.”

Born in Illinois and raised in Kansas, Ramsey attended the Oklahoma Military Academy, where he received his ROTC training and learned how to be a cavalryman. He was presented the opportunity to play polo with the famous 26th Cavalry Philippine Scouts, and on his 24th birthday, he volunteered to transfer to the Philippines, not knowing that his life was about to change dramatically.

The massive Japanese army invaded the Philippines and overpowered the Allied (American and Filipino) forces, making it impossible to protect the main island of Luzon. Ramsey's cavalry charge took place at the Battle of Morong, Bataan in January 1942. In an effort to sustain the last line of defense in Bataan, Ramsey was ordered to occupy the village of Morong. Despite their weakened state from continuous fighting and diminishing rations, he led his troops into the seemingly deserted village and found themselves at the onset of a Japanese advance. Ramsey finally commanded the last horse cavalry charge, and after a long battle, the troops were able to secure Morong.

Although Bataan eventually surrendered, stories of the treatment of POWs (Prisoners of War) fueled hatred against the Japanese. The resistance movement began. Ramsey joined the guerrillas and soon learned that MacArthur was depending on him to continue the fight until the Americans returned to the Philippines.

For three grueling years, Ramsey organized and sustained the guerrilla forces, fought and weakened the enemy, gathered intelligence, endured disease and malnutrition, and resist-

ed opportunities to escape.

In his book *Lieutenant Ramsey's War*, he writes, "I, an American, was leading their crusade for liberty and the life of their nation, and it was a heavy responsibility. Yet ultimately I was nothing but a symbol, a paraclete reminding them of the promise of salvation (by MacArthur)...Not until he returned would the Filipino people be liberated, nor would I be liberated, either."

Ramsey's efforts made him a legend in the Philippines. He is the recipient of several medals, awards and honors from both countries. In the U.S., he was awarded the

Distinguished Service Cross by MacArthur for heroism in combat; Silver Star with Cluster; Bronze Star Medal; Purple Heart; and Honorary Green Beret, among many others. In the Philippines, he was the recipient of the Distinguished Conduct Star, equivalent to the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross; Distinguished Service Star, equivalent to the U.S. Silver Star; Gold Cross, equivalent to the U.S. Bronze Star Medal; Wounded Personnel Medal; Philippine Legion of Honor—Degree of Commander; *Sagisag Ng Kagitingan* (Cross of Valor); Philippine Defense Medal; and Philippine Liberation Medal with Bronze Service Star.

Ramsey's book chronicles his transformation from Philippine scout to guerrilla commander, and eventually, to Filipino patriot. Ramsey writes, "I was no longer merely with the Filipino people; I was of them. I was not simply organizing among them; I had grown organically to be a part of them. Their struggle had become my struggle, and their liberation, inevitably, would be mine as well...We were one people fighting for a single ideal."

Ramsey continues to help Filipinos today. Appearing before congressional committees on two occasions, he has been pushing Congress to pass the acts that will give

the Filipino World War II veterans the benefits promised to them over 50 years ago. He feels this is the least that could be done for the sacrifices they and many other Filipinos have made, noting that many actually died protecting him.

*Lieutenant Ramsey's War* has had profound effects on Filipinos across the globe. He receives books from all over the United States and abroad from strangers, asking for his autograph. He also had the second largest book signing at a Harvard bookstore,

after astronaut Neil Armstrong. One fan of the book was a Filipino survivor of the Bataan Death March. The man held Ramsey, cried and thanked him for saving his life and his home country, the Philippines.

The word "hero" is often used today. Ramsey defines a hero as "somebody who has a job to do that may be dangerous, but he does it anyway—whether he lives or dies. It isn't a question of whether he lives through it or not, it's the fact that he takes on something which he believes is the right thing to do. And in spite of the problems involved, in spite of the danger involved, he carries it on the best he can."

His own heroes are MacArthur and the many courageous men and women who fought with him during the war.

Ramsey recently celebrated his 85th birthday. He and his wife remain active with all the media activities surrounding the book, including a potential movie deal. Two major motion picture companies have shown interest thus far. The show business news source, *Variety*, announced "New Line Cinema has joined Ramsey's War." The Ramseys also met with a director hired by the company, but the complexities of Hollywood movie making have prevented the film from becoming a reality just yet.

To read more about Colonel Ramsey, visit [www.edwinpriceramsey.com](http://www.edwinpriceramsey.com).

Rochelle Mabilangan is a marketing manager in Silicon Valley and aspires to cultivate her love for acting and become more involved in the Filipino community. She can be reached at [RochelleMabi@sbglobal.net](mailto:RochelleMabi@sbglobal.net).



**Art Imitating Life: Ramsey's war exploits, as chronicled in his book, may soon be immortalized on celluloid, courtesy of Hollywood.**