

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
to the
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and House Veterans' Affairs Committee
Joint Hearing
To Receive Legislative Presentations of Veterans Service Organizations

By

Jan Thompson

President

American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society

3 March 2020

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR OF JAPAN
75th Anniversary of Liberation

Chairmen Moran and Takano, Ranking Members Tester and Roe, and Members of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees, thank you for allowing us to describe how Congress can meet the concerns of veterans of World War II's Pacific Theater. The American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society (ADBC-MS) represents surviving POWs of Japan, their families, and descendants, as well as scholars, researchers, and archivists. Our goal is to preserve the history of the American POW experience in the Pacific and to teach future generations of the POWs' sacrifice, courage, determination, and faith—the essence of the American spirit.

Today, 75 years ago, the Battle of Manila ended. The Japanese did not let liberation come without a cost. The “Pearl of the Orient” was in ruins, hundreds had been raped, and over 100,000 civilians killed. Historians have described the aftermath as less a battlefield than a crime scene. On the eve of and during the battle, U.S. troops swept into POW and civilian internment camps throughout the Philippine islands liberating thousands of Americans who were reportedly hours away from execution.

This year, 2020, is the 75th anniversary of the final battles of World War II. Whereas Nazi Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945, Imperial Japan fought on until August 15, 1945. Implicit in any account of Allied victories across the Pacific is the liberation of tens of thousands of Allied and American POWs and civilians. Most were imprisoned and interned in the early months of WWII and survived nearly four years of starvation, abuse, slave labor, and disease. [Please see Appendix II for our *Timeline of WWII 1945*]

I testify today to encourage your efforts to remember the American men and women who became POWs of Japan after fighting the first desperate battles of WWII in the Pacific and

suffering some of its worst consequences. Nearly 40 percent did not return home. To this end, I have a number of proposals for Congress to ensure that this history of sacrifice, perseverance, and patriotism is not forgotten. These are:

1. Award, collectively the American POWs of Japan the Congressional Gold Medal.
2. Instruct the U.S. Department of State to prepare a report for Congress on the history and funding of the “Japan/POW Friendship Program” began in 2010 and how it compares with programs for Allied POWs and Takahashi groups.
3. Encourage the Government of Japan to continue the “Japan/POW Friendship Program.”
4. Encourage the Government of Japan to expand its “Japan/POW Friendship Program” into a permanent educational initiative.
5. Request the Government of Japan to include the history of POW slave labor in the information provided about the sites of Japan’s “Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining” on the UNESCO World Industrial Heritage list.
6. Work with the Government of Japan to create a memorial at the Port of Moji on Kyushu where most of the POW hellships docked and unloaded their sick and dying human cargo.

Our history

On December 7, 1941, Imperial Japan attacked not only Pearl Harbor but also the Philippine Islands, Guam, Wake Island, Howland Island, Midway, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Three days later, Guam became the first American territory to fall to Japan. At the same time, the U.S. Far East Air Force on the Philippines was destroyed. By March 1942, Imperial Japanese Armed forces had crushed the U.S. Asiatic Fleet in battles off Java.

Although the aim of the December 7th surprise attack on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor was to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet in its home port and to discourage U.S. action in Asia, the other strikes served as preludes to full-scale invasions and brutal military occupation. Starting with the China Marines on December 8th in Peking and Shanghai, Americans throughout the Pacific became prisoners of war.

Only in the Philippines did U.S.-Filipino units mount a prolonged resistance to Imperial Japan's assault. They held out for five months. Help could not and would not be sent. They were abandoned. On April 9, 1942, approximately 10,000 Americans and 70,000 Filipinos became POWs with the surrender of the Bataan Peninsula. April 9th also marked the beginning the 65-mile Bataan Death March (85 miles in its entirety). Thousands died and hundreds have never been accounted for from the March and its immediate aftermath.

By June 1942, most of the estimated 27,000 Americans ultimately held as military POWs of Imperial Japan had been surrendered. If American civilians in Japan, the Philippines and throughout the Pacific held as POWs or internees are also counted, this number is closer to 36,000. Nearly all remained captives until the end of the war. The Japanese paroled Filipino soldiers in June 1942. By the War's end, 40 percent or over 12,000 Americans had died in squalid POW camps, in the fetid holds of “hellships,” or in slave labor camps owned by Japanese companies.

Surviving as a POW of Japan and returning home was the beginning of new battles: finding acceptance in society and living with serious mental and physical ailments. In the first six years after the war, deaths of American POWs of Japan were more than twice those of the comparably aged white male population. These deaths were disproportionately due to tuberculosis, suicides, accidents, and cirrhosis. In contrast, 1.5 percent of Americans in Nazi POW camps died (as noted above as the mortality rate for POWs of Japan was 40 percent) and in the first six years after liberation Nazi POW camp survivors deaths were one-third of those who survived Japanese POW camps.

Supporting today's veterans

As the representative of veterans who faced often-insurmountable challenges obtaining adequate healthcare for their exotic ailments and severe PTSD, the ADBC-MS is especially supportive of the Disabled American Veterans' (DAV) efforts to expand healthcare for all service-related illnesses and mental health.

The American POWs of Japan who survived the war had the highest rate of post-conflict hospitalizations, deaths, and psychiatric disorders of any generation of veterans. Their families endured and inherited their trauma. These veterans universally suffered debilitating illnesses from the residue effects of vitamin deficiency, starvation, beatings, torture, and exposure to dangerous toxins in lead and coal mines as well as chemical factories in Japan. Many of these facilities became internationally infamous for begetting the world's worst coal mining accidents and industrial mercury and cadmium poisonings.

Thus we join with the DAV in calling on Congress and the VA to: a) Support legislation to provide comprehensive support services for caregivers of severely wounded, injured and ill veterans from all eras; b) Support legislation to provide for service connection for disabling conditions resulting from toxic and environmental exposures; and most importantly, c) Improve service and enhance resources for VA mental health programs and suicide prevention. This latter request especially speaks to my veterans as all endured life-long mental health challenges and was the WWII veterans with the highest suicide rates.

Progress toward Remembrance, Reconciliation, and Preservation

An essential element of showing respect and acceptance to today's servicemen and women is to ensure that they are not forgotten. This is the primary mission of the ADBC-MS. To this end, we have had a number of significant achievements in the last decade.

In 2009, the Government of Japan, through its then-Ambassador to the U.S. Ichiro Fujisaki issued an official, Cabinet-approved apology to the American POWs of Japan. In the following year, 2010, Japan initiated the "Japan/POW Friendship Program" of trips for American former POWs to visit Japan and return to the places of their imprisonment and slave labor.

Thus far, there have been 11 trips, one each in the fall of 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and two in 2015, one in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. In 2016, 2018, and 2019 due to the advanced age of surviving POWs, only widows and children participated in the program. In all, 46 former POWs, all in their late-80s or 90s, as well as nine widows and 18 children have made the trip to Japan.

A number of the caregiver companions were wives, children, and grandchildren. [Appendix I lists the members of the 2019 delegation.]

On July 19, 2015, the Mitsubishi Materials Corporation (MMC) became the first, and remains the *only*, Japanese company to officially apologize to those American POWs who were used as slave laborers to maintain war production. This historic apology was offered to the 900 Americans who were forced to work in four mines operated by Mitsubishi Mining, Inc., the predecessor company of MMC. This apology was followed by a \$50,000 donation to the National American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor (ADBC) Museum, Education & Research Center in Wellsburg, West Virginia.

In April of the same year, a former National Commander of our organization, Lester Tenney, a Bataan Death March survivor and slave laborer at Mitsui's Omuta coal mine on Kyushu, attended Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's historic address to a joint meeting of Congress. Dr. Tenney was also invited to official banquet where the Prime Minister personally greeted him. That same year, Abe included in his war anniversary statement on August 14th, his recognition of "the former POWs who experienced unbearable sufferings caused by the Japanese military."

In August 2018, a historic ceremony was held in Hawaii remembering the 400 American and Allied POWs who died on January 9, 1945, in the sinking by American planes of the hellship *Enoura Maru* in Takao Harbor, Formosa (today's Taiwan). Unknown to their families until 2001, their remains had been retrieved in 1946 and moved to Hawaii. The ceremony marked the placement of a memorial stone in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific for these POWs who were buried there as "unknowns."

Success should encourage more action

The benefits of Japan's long-awaited acts of contrition have been immeasurable for former POWs and their families. The visitation program is a great success. It has given the participating veterans a peace of mind and their families a connection to their fathers' challenges. For the Japanese people touched by these visits, it is often their first introduction to the non-Japanese victims of the Pacific War.

But we are concerned for the future. There is no formal agreement between the U.S. and Japan to continue the visitation program, and Japan's Foreign Ministry must request annually its line-item in the budget. We know that despite the tens of millions of dollars being expended by Japan on "Takahashi" exchange programs in the United States, the funds for the POW Friendship exchanges have been slashed. There is the possibility that the program may end altogether.

This is profoundly shortsighted. And it is something that should worry members of Congress. Our relationship with such an important ally can only strengthen through reconciliation efforts. History does not end when the last witness dies. The proliferation of revisionist history in Japan is cause enough to encourage greater work to tell a multi-faceted history of the Pacific War.

We have been especially alarmed by how the Government of Japan treats the sites of Japan's "Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining" on the UNESCO World Industrial Heritage list. There is no mention of POW slave labor at the sites nor have we

been assured that it will be noted at the soon-to-be-opened Tokyo information center. In five of these eight new World Heritage areas there were 26 POW camps that provided slave labor to Japan's great industrial giants including Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Aso Group, Ube Industries, Tokai Carbon, Nippon Coke & Engineering, Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corporation, Furukawa Company Group, and Denka.

Prime Minister Abe wants to position Japan as following the path of a "value-oriented diplomacy" to defend the "liberal international order." This goal, however, cannot be accomplished until Tokyo is trusted to have come to terms with its wartime past. Only an active, ongoing, and public program of remembrance and education will guarantee Japan not falling into moral complacency. The "Japan/POW Friendship Program" is essential to this.

What we ask Congress

We ask Congress to encourage the Government of Japan to hold to its promises and responsibilities by preserving, expanding, and enhancing its reconciliation program toward its former American prisoners. We want to see the trips to Japan continued. We want Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to publicize the program, its participants, and its achievements. We want to see a commitment to remembrance. We believe that both countries will be stronger the more we examine our shared history.

We ask Congress to encourage Japan to turn its POW visitation program into a permanent Fund supported by Japanese government and industry. This "Future Fund," not subject to Ministry of Finance yearly review, would support research, documentation, reconciliation programs, and people-to-people exchanges regarding Japan's history of forced and slave labor during WWII. Part of the Fund's educational programming would be the creation of visual remembrances of this history through museums, memorials, exhibitions, film, and installations. Most important, the Fund would support projects among all the arts from poetry, literature, music, dance, and drama to painting, drawing, film, and sculpture to tell the story to the next generation.

We ask Congress to instruct the U.S. Department of State to continue to represent rigorously the interests of American veterans with Japan. It is only the U.S. government that can persuade Japan to continue the visitation program, to create a Future Fund, and to ensure that the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution include the dark history of POW slave labor.

We ask Congress to instruct the U.S. Department of State to prepare a report for Congress on the history and funding of the "Japan/POW Friendship Program" and how it compares with programs for Allied POWs established in 1995 by the Peace, Friendship and Exchange Initiative and current Takahashi exchange groups. This report can provide a metric to evaluate the POW program, highlights its success, and assess how to expand it into a more permanent course of remembrance and learning.

We ask Congress to press the Japanese government to create a memorial at the Port of Moji, where most of the POW hellships docked and unloaded their sick and dying human cargo. The dock already features memorials to the Japanese soldiers and horses that departed for war from this port. Nowhere in Moji's historic district is there mention of the captive men and looted riches off-loaded onto its docks. This tells an incomplete history of the landmark.

The Congressional Gold Medal

In this historic year, the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, we most importantly ask Congress to approve an accurate and inclusive Congressional gold medal for the American POWs of Japan. It is a long overdue symbol of the country's commitment to our veterans to "never forget."

Over the past few years, there have been Congressional gold medals given to groups that included American POWs of Japan. Eight members of the Doolittle Raiders were POWs, at least one Nisei member of the Military Intelligence Service was a POW, and nearly all the officers of the Filipino troops who were awarded Congressional Gold Medals were American.

Unlike previous WWII-focused Congressional Gold Medal awards that honor specific service units or ethnicities, the American POWs of Japan are men and women from many ethnic groups, religions, services, and regions. They come from all American states, territories, and tribal lands.

Seventy-nine years after the start of the War in the Pacific, it is time to recognize *all* Americans who fought the impossible and endured the unimaginable in the war against tyranny in the Pacific. Moreover, as I have described above, the Gold Medal would also recognize that the POWs are the only American wartime group to have negotiated its own reconciliation with the enemy.

High price of freedom

The American POWs of Japan and their families paid a high price for the freedoms we cherish. In return for their sacrifices and service, they ask that their government keep its moral obligation to them. They do not want their history ignored or exploited. What they want most is to have their government stand by them to ensure they will be remembered, that our allies respect them, and that their American history is preserved accurately for future generations.

Our history is one of resilience, survival, and the human spirit, good and bad. And it has become an example of a path toward reconciliation and justice between Japan and its former victims.

We ask Congress for support and to help our veterans in their unique quest for justice and remembrance. Congress needs to encourage Japan to do more toward reconciliation and considering its past truthfully. Congress can cement our past in the national history with the awarding of a Gold Medal. This is the year, the 75th anniversary of end of WWII, to do it.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your committees.

Ms. Jan Thompson

President

American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor Memorial Society

Daughter of PhM2c Robert E. Thompson USN, USS *Canopus* (AS-9)

Survivor of the hellships *Oryoku Maru*, *Enoura Maru*, and the *Brazil Maru*

Bilibid, Fukuoka 3B, & Mukden, POW# 2011

<https://www.adbcmemorialsociety.org/>

APPENDIX I

2019 Japan/POW Friendship Program Participants August 31 - September 6, 2019

Eight children of POWs of Imperial are visiting Japan this week as guests of the Japanese government. They are the 11th delegation of the U.S.-Japan POW Friendship Program to promote reconciliation and remembrance between the two countries. This program began in 2010.

They represent eight American POWs who were members of the U.S. Army, U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps, U.S. Army Air Corps and the U.S. Marine Corps. Japan attacked the Philippines and other American Pacific territories hours after their surprise raid on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. All the men fought to defend the Philippines against invading Japanese forces and all endured years of brutal captivity. Two survived the Bataan Death March, six were slave laborers for Japanese companies, two were sent to Mukden, China, one survived the sinking of “hellship” *Shinyo Maru*, and one was rescued in the epic “Great Raid” of the Cabanatuan POW on the Philippines.

Mr. Harold “Mick” Amos Jr., 62, of Afton, Iowa is the son of Army Medic **Harold Malclom Amos** who was at General Hospital #2 on Bataan, the medical unit at Cabanatuan, and rescued on January 30, 1945 during the “Great Raid” on Cabanatuan POW Camp, Philippines.

Ms. Georgianne Burlage, 64, of Denton, Texas is the daughter of **George E. Burlage** who was a “China Marine” who fought on Corregidor. He survived work details on the Philippines; hellships to Formosa and Japan, and slave labor at a Mitsubishi lead mine in Hosokura, Miyagi.

Ms. Joanna James Sieberg, 71, of Carlsbad, New Mexico is the daughter of **Charlie F. James** who was with New Mexico’s 200th Coast Artillery Regiment. He survived the Bataan Death March, work details on the Philippines, the *Nagato Maru* hellship to Japan, and slave labor at a Yodogawa Steel Mill near Osaka.

Ms. Dawne Clay, 72, of Mohrsville, Pennsylvania is the daughter of **Wayne I. Miller** in the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Among the first to be trained to use radar, he served on Bataan and Corregidor. He survived hellships to Formosa and Korea and transport to the Hoten POW Camp at Mukden in Northern China to be a slave laborer for Mitsubishi.

James Nelson, 71, of Topeka, Kansas is the son of **John Tillman Nelson** who was with the U.S. Army’s 60th Coast Artillery on Corregidor. He survived work details on the Philippines, the *Noto Maru* hellship to Japan, and slave labor at Mitsubishi Mining’s Osarizawa copper mine in Kazuno, Akita.

Mr. Alan Overmier, 70, of Albuquerque, New Mexico is the son of **William “Bill” C. Overmier** who was a member of the U.S. Army’s 200th Coast Artillery (AA). He fought on Bataan and Corregidor, survived hellships to Formosa and Japan, and slave labor at a coal mine owned by the Furukawa Mining Company in Yoshima, Fukushima.

Mr. Rick Szczepanski, 65, of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania is the son of **Joseph “Joe” L. Szczepanski** who was a member of the U.S. Army Air Corps. He survived the Bataan Death March, work details on the Philippines, the *Clyde Maru* hellship to Japan, and slave labor at Mitsui’s Omuta coal mine on Kyushu, which is today a UNESCO World Industrial Heritage site.

Ms. Andrea Tipton Krempa, 62, is the daughter of **Lawrence Tipton** who was a member of the 59th Coast Artillery Corps who fought on Corregidor. He survived work details at Cabanatuan and the Davao Penal Colony (DAPECOL) on Mindanao. He was one of only 83 survivors, out of 750 POWs, from the sinking by an American submarine of the unmarked hellship *Shinyo Maru* off the coast of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines on September 7, 1944.

Full profiles of the POWs represented can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A_AAMQ0tg4jKOvAvR5-3QteFJXP9P6VQDuesGPoqOhM/edit?usp=sharing

APPENDIX II



Significant Dates for American POWs of Japan Timeline of WWII 1945

January

2 - Japanese Americans released from Internment by [Public Proclamation No. 21](#) issued on December 17, 1944 by Major Gen. Henry C. Pratt, the commanding general of the Western Defense Command, based at the Presidio in San Francisco.

9 - Sinking of the hellship *Enoura Maru* in the Port of Takao, Formosa by aircraft from the USS *Hornet*. Ship held POW survivors from the sinking (also by aircraft from the USS *Hornet*) of the *Oryoku Maru* near Subic Bay, Philippines. 300 POWs killed and buried in shallow graves. In 1946, an American Graves Recovery Team exhumed the bodies. Their remains were put in 20 boxes and re-interred in 20 graves of “Unknowns” at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii (Q916).

9 - General Douglas MacArthur lands in the Philippines at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon.

19 - Moji, Fukuoka, the major port of entry into Japan for POWs, suffers major Allied attack.

22 - Burma Road reopened by Allied forces.

25 – Battle of the Bulge ends. Allied Victory. The Ardennes: Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany.

27 – Soviet Army liberates Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, the largest Nazi concentration and death camp.

30 – *Brazil Maru* arrives at Moji, Japan with the survivors of the *Oryoku Maru* and *Enoura Maru*. Last hellship shipment of POWs from the Philippines. Seventy-four die the first day out of Manila. Of the 1,622 aboard the original ship to Japan, the *Oryoku Maru*, only 403 survive to the end of the war.

30 – **The Great Raid - Liberation of Cabanatuan POW Camp in the Philippines** by more than 100 U.S. Army Rangers, Alamo Scouts and Filipino guerrillas who traveled 30 miles behind Japanese lines to reach the camp. The 30-minute raid liberated 513 sick and dying POWs.

February

3 – Battle of Manila begins.

3 - Liberation of Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila by American paratroopers

4 - Liberation of Bilibid Prison holding American POWs in Manila

4–11 - **Yalta Conference**, Crimea to discuss the postwar order.

13-16 – Firebombing of Dresden, Germany by British and American forces.

16-27 - American and Filipino ground forces retake Corregidor Island in Manila Bay, the Philippines.

19 - **March 26** - Battle of Iwo Jima.

23 - The photo, [*Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*](#) taken by Joe Rosenthal.

23 - Liberation of Los Banos Internment Camp, Philippines.

March

3 – Battle of Manila ends - Rape of Manila – retreating Japanese destroy city, rape hundreds, and kill 100,000 civilians.

9-10 – Firebombing of Tokyo, single most destructive bombing raid in military history

24 – Announcement to the Diet of the formation of the People’s Volunteer Fighting Corps (国民義勇隊, *Kokumin Giyūtai*) to defend the Home Islands of Japan. A mobilization not of volunteers, but of all boys and men 15 to 60 and all girls and women 17 to 40, except for those exempted as unfit.

April

1 - U.S. submarine USS *Queenfish* (SS-393) sinks the Japanese Red Cross relief ship *Awa Maru* loaded with supplies for Allied POWs, resulting in a court martial for the captain of the submarine Cmdr. Charles Elliott Loughlin, since the ship had been granted safe passage by the U.S. Government.

1-June 22 – Battle of Okinawa.

7 - Japanese battleship *Yamato* is sunk 200 miles (320 km) north of Okinawa, while underway on a suicide mission.

7 - Kantarō SUZUKI becomes Prime Minister of Japan.

8 - Japanese government issues the operational plan to defend the Home Islands called *Ketsu-Go* (Decisive Operation). The intent of *Ketsu-Go* is to inflict enormous casualties on any invaders. It was believed this would undermine the American will to continue the fight for Japan’s unconditional surrender.

9 – Third Anniversary of Beginning of the Bataan Death March and Surrender of the Bataan Peninsula.

12 – U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dies. Harry Truman become President.

13 - Japanese cabinet orders reforming the People's Volunteer Corps *Kokumin Giyūtai* into a civilian militia.

18– American war correspondent Ernie Pyle is killed by Japanese machine gun fire, on the island of Ie Shima off Okinawa.

26 – Smothers Brothers' father, West Point '29 Major Thomas Smothers, Jr. (45th Infantry Regiment, Philippine Scouts) dies on the dock at Moji, Japan awaiting transport to Korea. He was a survivor of the *Oryoku Maru*, *Enoura Maru*, *Brazil Maru*, Cabanatuan, Bataan Death March, and the Battle of Bataan.

28 - Mussolini is captured and hanged by Italian partisans.

29 - U.S. Seventh Army's 45th Infantry Division liberates Dachau, the first concentration camp established by Germany's Nazi regime.

30 - Adolf Hitler commits suicide.

May

5 - B-29 crewmen captured near Kumamoto in Kyushu, Japan. They are soon killed by un-anaesthetized vivisections carried out for the edification of medical students at Kyushu Imperial University's College of Medicine with their body parts kept in formaldehyde jars for study until the end of the war.

7 – Nazi Germany officially surrenders to the Allies

June

1 - The Interim Committee, a secret high-level group tasked with advising President Truman on nuclear issues, recommends the atomic bomb be used on Japanese targets as soon as possible and without prior warning because the potential loss of U.S. life in an invasion of Japan would be unacceptably high.

10 - Japanese Prime Minister SUZUKI declares that Japan would fight to the last rather than accept unconditional surrender

12 - Japanese cabinet passes a special conscription law, and renames the recently formed militia units into the People's Volunteer Fighting Corps (国民義勇戦闘隊, *Kokumin Giyū Sentōtai*). Country fully militarized. Almost no "civilians" remain in Japan.

26 - United Nations Charter signed in San Francisco.

July

14 – **First Naval bombardment of the Japanese Home Islands.** USS *South Dakota* (BB-57), USS *Indiana* (BB-58), and USS *Massachusetts* (BB-59) of Task Unit 34.8.1 bombarded the city of Kamaishi,

Honshu, Japan. Significant damage to the Sendai POW Camp #5-B Kamaishi and its associated Nippon Steel iron mill killing at least 42 POWs.

16 – Trinity Test. U.S. Army completes the world's first atomic weapons test, at the Los Alamos research site in New Mexico.

17- 2 August 1945 – Potsdam Conference, to establish the postwar order, peace treaty issues, and countering the effects of the war.

21 – President Harry S. Truman approves the order for atomic bombs to be used against Japan.

26 – Potsdam Declaration. Demands Japan's unconditional surrender.

26 - Atlee succeeds Churchill as British Prime Minister.

28 - Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki publicly dismisses the Potsdam Declarations as a mere rehash (*yakinaoshi*) of earlier rejected Allied proposals, and says that Japan will ignore it (*mokusatsu suru*). This is interpreted in the West as “reject” the proposal. Quote: *My thinking is that the joint declaration is virtually the same as the earlier declaration. The government of Japan does not consider it having any crucial value. We simply mokusatsu suru. The only alternative for us is to be determined to continue our fight to the end.*

August

6 – Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima.

8 - Soviet Union declares war on Japan.

9 – Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki.

15 – The War Ends - The Emperor speaks directly to the Japanese people over the radio at noon.

But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone--the gallant fighting of our military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of our servants of the State and the devoted service of our 100,000,000 people--the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.

Hours after the surrender, 17 American captured fliers are executed by beheading on Aburayama in the suburbs of Fukuoka City.

16 - Six man Office of Strategic Services (OSS) team parachute into (Hoten) Mukden (today's Shenyang), POW camp in northern China to liberate the POWs and locate the senior officers held by the Japanese.

19 - Several dozen British, Dutch, and American senior officers including Lieutenant Generals Jonathan Wainwright and A.E. Percival located at the Hsian POW camp, 150 miles north of Mukden.

21 - Japanese authorities decide to set up the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) for the benefit of Allied occupation troops modeled on the military government's Comfort Women system.

27 - First airdrops of food and supplies to POW camps on Home Islands of Japan by the 20th Air Force. From 27 August to 20 September, aircraft of the 58th, 73rd, 313th, 314th and 315th Bombardment Wings flew 900 effective sorties against 158 prisoner of war and civilian internment camps.

29 – First POW camp on the Home Islands of Japan evacuated, Omori on Tokyo Bay and the nearby Shinagawa “hospital,” which rescuers said was “an indescribable hellhole of filth, disease, and death.” (Today, the Heiwajima Motor Boat Racing venue is located at the site of this former POW camp on the artificial island built by the POWs. The camp held Louis Zamperini and Pappy Boyington)

30 – Etta Jones, the first Caucasian American female taken prisoner by a foreign enemy on the North American continent since the War of 1812, liberated in Totsuka, Japan. She was captured in June 1942 when Japanese troops invaded Attu Island in the Aleutians. Her husband was killed and beheaded. She and the 42 Aleuts living on Attu were taken as POWs to Japan (22 of them died in Hokkaido—from tuberculosis, malnutrition, food poisoning, and starvation).

31 - Reconnaissance missions to Hainan Island, the Peking, Hong Kong and Shanghai areas of China, and the Mukden area of Manchuria to verify the existence and location of 57 additional POW camps.

September

2 – Formal surrender of Imperial Japan signed aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay. Lt. General Wainwright in attendance.



American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor Memorial Society

<https://www.adbcmemorialsociety.org/>

March 2020