

## FEATURE

# Bataan Death March: Remember Our Fallen Soldiers

The horror of the Bataan Death March, and the American and Filipino lives lost, must never be forgotten.

By Nancy Kragh

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I was invited by the White House to hear the remarks by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Obama, who met at Pearl Harbor last month. My path to this historic event began in 1941.

That year, my father, Maj. Clarence White, was an Army doctor stationed in Manila. My first childhood memory is of Pier 7 in Manila, where my pregnant mother and I were evacuated back to the U.S. along with other military families only months before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In April 1942, when Army Maj. Gen. Edward King surrendered the Filipino and American forces on Bataan, my father became a prisoner of war and endured the Bataan Death March before being imprisoned at Cabanatuan.

This was the beginning of three and a half years of starvation, torture, disease and death for the POWs. Beginning in 1942, the POWs were transported on ships - now known as "hell ships"- to Japan to be used as slave labor in mines and factories. My father was on the last transport ship to leave Manila, the Oryoko Maru, in December 1944.

The ship was bombed by Navy bombers and he survived this attack. He was moved to another ship, the Enoura Maru.

On Jan. 9, 1945, American planes bombed the ship and my father suffered shrapnel wounds. He died two days later of these treatable wounds. The survivors went on to Japan. Of the

1,621 men who boarded the Oryoko Maru in Manila, fewer than 400 survived to the end of the war

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Eventually, I began doing research and connected with the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, the organization founded by surviving POWs in 1946. When they decided they could no longer maintain the organization, I became a founding member of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society. My involvement with these organizations resulted in my invitation to Pearl Harbor.

I have made lasting friendships with both POWs and their families and have come to understand the depth of the trauma they experienced. This chapter of World War II must not be forgotten. To this end, we were pleased to hear Prime Minister Abe's remarks indicating support for more education about the war. His visit was the first time a Japanese prime minister has made an official visit to Pearl Harbor.

Prime Minister Abe spoke of reconciliation: For our POWs and their families, reconciliation is a multigenerational process. Prime Minister Abe's visit to Pearl Harbor was a significant but not final step in that process.

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*Nancy Kragh, of Seattle, worked in information technology, including early aerospace programs as well as the Gemini and*

*Apollo space programs. She retired from Weyerhaeuser in 1999.*

Comment from a **richlandman**:

Nancy: The valor of your father and his fellow WWII vets that endured the brutality of the death march and subsequent captivity at the hand of the Japanese cannot ever be calculated. The ghoulish behavior of the Japanese armed forces toward the population of all Asian countries they invaded and occupied is a stain that will be nearly impossible to forget.

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As a Filipino, I remember the millions of innocent men, women, children, and babies that the Japanese butchered during the war. And they butchered half of my family. Japanese soldiers slashed open our pregnant women and ripped out their fetuses. They also gang-raped little girls with bayonets. And cut our babies to pieces in front of their grandparents. Shinzo Abe does not truly seek reconciliation. Along with Pearl Harbor, Abe should've visited Nanjing, Manila, Harbin and all the other cities and countries that Japan utterly devastated...

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