



American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Memorial Society Inc.

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National POW/MIA Recognition Day September 18, 2015

Today, National POW/MIA Recognition Day, is a time of reflection for the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society. Today, we honor our family members and friends who were prisoners of war of Japan, especially the many who did not return. We also wish to credit the hard work of descendants, researchers, scholars, and government officials who have labored to ensure that the history of the American POWs of Japan is remembered and respected.

On this 70th anniversary year of the end of World War II, we were heartened by and appreciative of the recognition of our POWs by the governments of both Japan and the United States. In his September 2nd VJ day statement, U.S. President Barak Obama remembered “those who endured unimaginable suffering as prisoners of war.” Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his war anniversary statement on August 14th recognized “the former POWs who experienced unbearable sufferings caused by the Japanese military.”

This October will see the sixth iteration of the Japan/POW Friendship Program. Nine American former POWs of Japan will be guests of the Japanese government as emissaries of peace, understanding, and reconciliation. There will be a seventh trip in December to ensure that this year all former POWs of Japan who are able and want to visit Japan can do so.

The ordeal of the American POWs of Japan is not just another facet of war history. Nor is it simply another saga of WWII suffering. It is a history of resilience, survival, and the human spirit, good and bad. And it has become an example of a path toward mutual understanding between Japan and its former victims.

We appreciate the efforts of the Abe Administration to recognize our shared past by continuing this important visitation program and we hope it will continue past 2015 and include descendants and widows as originally designed. It has done much to heal injured psyches, humanize past adversaries, and enlighten new generations. The program is the embodiment of Prime Minister Abe’s call to his citizens that “...we Japanese, across generations, must squarely face the history of the past. We have the responsibility to inherit the past, in all humbleness, and pass it on to the future.”