



PRESS

ANNOUNCEMENT

American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society

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American POWs of Japan Descendants undertake trip of reconciliation

Seven children and descendants of POWs are visiting Japan this week as guests of the Japanese government. They are the 10th delegation of the U.S.-Japan POW Friendship Program to promote reconciliation and remembrance between the two countries. This program began in 2010.

The families represent five American POWs of Japan who were members of the U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Artillery Corps, and U.S. Army Air Corps. Japan attacked the Philippines and other American Pacific territories hours after their surprise air 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. Four survived the Bataan Death March, four were slave laborers for Japanese companies, and one perished in the bombing of the “hellship” *Enoura Maru* in Takao Harbor, Formosa.

The delegation is composed of:

LINDA, 70, and DAVE ANDERSON, 70, of El Paso, Texas are the daughter and son-in-law of the late **Clarence Delbert Neighbors**, a Private with the U.S. Army Air Corps, 20th Air Base Group, 28th Materiel Squadron at Nichols Field. He survived the Bataan Death March, work details on the Philippines, a hellship to Manchuria, slave labor for Mitsubishi at Mukden, and slave labor for Mitsui at their lead mine in Kamioka.

CAROLYN BUNCH DIAZ, 82, of Santa Ana, California and **CATHY MATZEK, 55,** are the daughter and granddaughter of the late **Wilbur J. Bunch**, who was a Master Sergeant with the U.S. Army, 54th Signal Maintenance Company (Aviation) stationed at Ft. Stotsenburg. He survived the Bataan Death March, work details at the Cabanatuan POW Camp, and the sinking of the hellship *Oryoku Maru*. He died January 9, 1945 from the bombing of the hellship *Enoura Maru* in Takao Harbor, Formosa.

ANNA KEEVER LYON, 69, of Greensboro North Carolina is the daughter of the late **Joe W. Keever**, a Staff Sergeant with 60th Coast Artillery Corps of the U.S. Army stationed on Corregidor. He survived imprisonment on Corregidor and at Cabanatuan as well as a hellship to Manchuria to be a slave laborer for Mitsubishi at Mukden.

DAVID A. TOPPING, JR., 65, of Chestertown, Maryland, is the son of the late **David A. Topping**, a Private with the 27th Bomb Group (Light), 91st Bomb Squadron. He survived the Bataan Death March, work details on the Philippines, hellships to Japan, and slave labor for Kawasaki Steel in Maibara.

JAMES WRIGHT, 82, of Madison, Alabama is the son of the late **William R. Wright**, a Tech Sergeant with the 24th Pursuit Group, 17th Pursuit Squadron. He survived the Bataan Death March, work details on the Philippines, a hellship to Japan and slave labor for Meiji Mining in Keisen.

Full profiles of the POWs can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m35wxUTkG0yQGDzJosTwrujK8r7EjAA2/view?usp=sharing>

They will visit the sites of their loved ones' imprisonment and rescue as well as a number of Japanese cultural properties.

This is the 10th trip of this much appreciated Japanese government-funded program of remembrance and reconciliation. Jan Thompson, president of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society that works with the U.S. State Department to identify participants, applauded the inclusion of POW children and grandchildren in the program.

Ms. Thompson said, "It confirms Japan's commitment to overcoming its dark history and shows their modern understanding that the traumas of past atrocities and war crimes are intergenerational and enduring. The goodwill and healing resulting from these trips are a model for more Japanese efforts to acknowledge and console Imperial Japan's wartime victims. The result strengthens the personal ties that undergird the U.S.-Japan Alliance."

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