



Beyond the Wire

CPOW

Civilian Ex-Prisoners of War
(Formerly BACEPOW)

Volume 18, Number 2

Sally Meadows - Commander@CPOW.org

July 2025

Editor: Angus Lorenzen - cpowst@gmail.com

Websites: CPOW.org and [Cliff Mills' PhilippineInternment.com](http://CliffMills'PhilippineInternment.com)

From the Commander

This newsletter focuses on our recent February reunion in Sacramento which celebrated 80 years since the liberation of the Philippines. As always, it was a moving event with much to learn from, and share with, each other including at the "Show and Tell" tables where people brought their memorabilia to display before our closing luncheon. We had close to 70 attendees over the two days of programming.

Highlights included a superbly researched and presented talk, "Let's Show Them How Democracy Works: Agency in Adversity at Santo Tomas", by Mary Beth Klee, and our Keynote talk at the luncheon was another riveting presentation by renowned WWII in the Pacific historian, James M. Scott, entitled "Strangling the Home Islands: America's Air War Against Japan."

Updates from the Board are that we agreed to donate \$2,000 to the "Last Reunion" documentary (more on that project later in this newsletter) and Mary Beth Klee was appointed to our Board. Over the last few years, the Board has transitioned to majority descendants vs former internees. Members are Ted Cadwallader, Dan Doolan*, Mary Beth Klee*, Chris Larsen (survivor of WWII in Manila but not interned), Cindie Leonard*, Angus Lorenzen, Sally Meadows*, Cliff Mills*, and Suzie Reynolds* (descendants indicated with an asterisk).

Regarding future reunions or trips, the Board agreed to consider supporting, financially or otherwise, efforts to meet again if proposed by a team of members/descendants willing to take responsibility for all aspects of organization, logistics, and timely follow through to make such an event happen. We eagerly await your proposals!

There are more updates about the reunion throughout this newsletter. It was another wonderful event, and tremendous thanks are due to Cindie Leonard, Daniel Doolan, Angus Lorenzen, and Cliff Mills for their help in pulling it off, plus Arden Lewis and her colleagues for filming.

Until next time, take good care.

Sally Meadows

Descendants Group Update

Daniel Doolan
Descendants Chair

During the February 2025 CPOW reunion, the descendants group met on the morning of Sunday February 23rd. Approximately 2 dozen descendants attended the meeting. As has been historical practice for recent descendants' meetings, all attendees had an opportunity to speak, stating what brought them to the reunion and what their connection was to the internment camps in the Philippines during World War II.

Attendees indicated interest in attending future CPOW events, if such events end up continuing. The descendants meeting occurred immediately after the CPOW Board of Directors meeting. Just as the Board of Directors discussed the challenges of maintaining events with fewer survivors than we had in decades past, the descendants are often faced with having to determine how they would like to move forward given the changing demographics of event attendees and a higher proportion of descendants present at events.

Descendant attendees included a mix of individuals, some with living survivors of WWII internment in the Philippines and others whose loved ones who survived internment have since passed away. There did remain an overt enthusiasm to, if possible, have future events to bring together members of the CPOW community. Several February event attendees had also attended the October 2024 Norfolk CPOW event.

The descendants group remains highly appreciative of all those working hard to keep the history of World War II internment camps in the Philippines alive including but certainly not limited to: Cliff Mills, James ("Jim") Zobel, James Scott, Arden Lewis, and Sally Meadows. Cliff Mills maintains the (robust) website dedicated to Philippine Internment Camps during World War II, link at: <https://philippineinternment.com/>. James Zobel, MacArthur Memorial Archivist, is a long time friend of CPOW and speaker at many events. He, along with Amanda Williams (MacArthur Memorial Director), were

(Descendants, continued on page 2)

(Descendants, continued from page 1)

among those who welcomed CPOW to the October Norfolk event and put together the museum special exhibit: "The Price of Unpreparedness: POWs in the Philippines during World War II". James Scott has presented at CPOW multiple times and written numerous books relevant to the war in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Arden Lewis, a CPOW descendant member and Emmy Award winning documentarian, is actively creating a documentary about CPOW featuring many of our members and historical information. Last, but certainly not least, Sally Meadows has been the Board Commander now since 2020 and has kept events lively and (with the assistance of newsletter editor Angus Lorenzen) kept information flowing to the membership via the "Beyond the Wire" Newsletter.

"The Last Reunion" Documentary in Progress

Arden Teresa Lewis Documentarian

Here's an update from The Last Reunion Documentary Film Project. After a very successful fundraising drive on the Seed & Spark platform, we received another donation from the Kaplan-Loring Foundation specifically to fund a trip to Manila. Their goal is to include a few Filipino stories for added context of this huge story of survival. As luck would have it, the same week, we interviewed Gloria Villareal Hutchins, 90 years young, who was in a province just outside of Manila as a child, and has



*Arden Teresa Lewis interviewing
Angus Lorenzen*

clear memories of the Japanese occupation. She had us in tears during her interview. We also had a chance to interview Angus Lorenzen and hear his stories of trading shrapnel with other boys in the camp the way kids trade baseball cards.

He drove up to my house from Palos Verdes for the filming and we so appreciated his knowledge of events that are still so clear in his mind and heart.

We are very close to having enough interviews to make a film. I plan to make a trip out to DC to visit the archives there with Bonnie Rowan and get down to Florida to meet up with Martin Meadows and Chris Lehman. We have begun working on some music to go with our story. We are also discussing animations. All part of the long process of what is called "post production" which may take us into next Winter. We are so grateful to all the interviews captured in Norfolk and Sacramento, especially the "lightning round" which was so unique and moving. Wishing you all the best this summer and many blessings. – Arden (ardenteresalewis@gmail.com)

Sacramento Reunion Photos

(From posts shared on CPOW's Facebook page)



Clockwise from top left: James Scott; group photo; Roberta Bemis with William Laschuk and Douglas Luyendyk; Arden Lewis and Cindie Leonard; Sharon Davis and Karen Kerns Lewis.

Memories of a STIC Internee

Don Thompson

Don Thompson, a former Commander of CPOW (then BACEPOW), told the story of his capture and internment in Santo Tomas, "Mister, and Other War Recollections", at our reunion in Sacramento in February. Since that presentation was streamed on Zoom, some of his cousins were able to view it. They were so impressed that they arranged to have Don speak again on Zoom to the rest of their extended family, to inform them and to preserve this important piece of family history.

This was accomplished on June 14, 2025 when Don spoke for more than an hour and related his impressions of the significant experiences in his life that occurred during those eventful years, in a fascinating and deeply moving account. Others may wish to do something similar, in order to preserve their family histories. To view Don's recorded video, which he has graciously agreed to share with us, you can access it online at:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/swkwz7e9zulnbgyl7p70b/GMT20250614-173854_Recording_640x360.mp4?rlkey=whrgvpz85p9pc94oqse02bi2&st=uaet351m&dl=0

AXPOW Transition to a Legacy Organization

*Update Courtesy of Ted Cadwallader
Former STIC Internee*

The AXPOW legacy is now transferred to the Friends of Andersonville.

Transfer of one half of AXPOW funds to the Friends of Andersonville (FOA) was accomplished on April 9, 2025. In two years (April 9, 2027) the balance of the AXPOW account will be transferred to the FOA. The AXPOW Board of Directors was disbanded on April 5, 2025. Three members of the former BOD will be available to wrap up loose ends, attend to final financial matters, and communicate with members and others as necessary until April 9, 2027.

Note from the Commander:

We appreciate the many decades of good work AXPOW has done to keep the memories and sacrifices of our former POWs alive, and also for providing a home for civilian internees who have often felt like "orphans", and overlooked as prisoners during war, especially during WWII in the Philippines.

Advertisement

**William A. Karges Fine Art
Carmel, California**

We are seeking early paintings of the Philippines by the following artists for private collectors in the Philippines. We pay very high prices and offer free appraisals as well.

Fernando Amorsolo
Fernando Zobel

Fabian de la Rosa
Jose Joya

Ang Kiukok
Cesar Legaspi

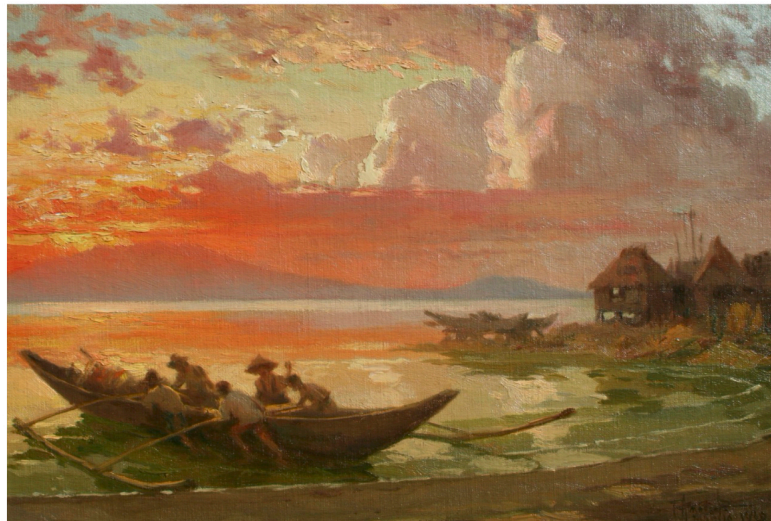
Anita Magsaysay-Ho
Vicente Manansala

Alfonso Ossorio
Romeo Tabuena

Please contact Patrick Kraft at Karges Fine Art (831) 625-4226 or (831) 601-2071

pkraft@kargesfineart.com

<https://www.kargesfineart.com>



Painting,
"Manila Bay", by
Fernando Amorsolo.

More from the Commander ...

Lightning Round – Internment Camp Memory Sharing

One of my favorite parts of our February reunion was set aside for something we called the “Lightning Round – Internment Camp Memory Sharing”. What is that, you might ask? Think of speed-dating internment style! More seriously, the Lightning Round consisted of a series of questions, detailed below, which we asked of as many former internees attending the event as wanted to participate. Some people shared their own memories of each of the topics and others shared family members’ stories that they’d heard but weren’t themselves there for (or were too young at the time to remember).

We called this the “Lightning Round” because we wanted to condense the time for answers so we’d get a chance to hear as many experiences as possible. Along with other parts of the reunion, this too was captured by “The Last Reunion” documentary crew.

Even if you couldn’t make it to Sacramento, it’s not too late to participate and share your experiences. You can write your responses to the same questions (below) and submit them to me. Please indicate if it would be okay to include your answer or answers in a future newsletter or if you’d prefer they be kept within the CPOW “family”.

Questions

Q1: What are your memories of the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor (December 8, 1941, west of the International Date Line), and where were you?

Q2: What is your memory of first entering internment camp, and which camp was it?

Q3: What do you remember about school in camp; what grades were you in?

Q4: Describe your most enduring memory of food, or lack thereof, from your time in camp.

Q5: Was there an interaction with a guard or another internee that sticks out in your memory?

Q6: Describe your experience of when you were liberated.

If you’d like to share answers to these questions in written format please email them to commander@cpow.org or mail to Sally Meadows, 250 S. Gordon Way, Los Altos, CA 94022.

TILL DEATH DO US PART: MEN'S AND WOMEN'S INTERPRETATIONS OF WARTIME INTERNMENT

Reviewed by Angus Lorenzen

This is a study done by Lynn Z. Bloom at Virginia Commonwealth University based on a questionnaire and interviews with people who were interned during WWII by the Japanese at Camp Holmes in Baguio. The internment camp is uniquely different from the other two camps on Luzon – Santo Tomas and Los Baños. First, it was located at 5,000 feet elevation and not subject to the hot and humid conditions of the other camps, and second, the Japanese camp commandant, Tomibe, was a humanist and did not subject his prisoners to the harshness imposed at the other camps. The result was that the ex-internees held him in high regard and were friendly to him, inviting him to attend a reunion after the war. This was unlike at Santo Tomas where Lt. Col. Hayashi, commandant of Santo Tomas was killed by guerillas after liberation and Lieutenant Abiko, his cruel lieutenant, was killed during liberation. Also, the commandant for Los Baños was discovered working at a golf course in Manila in 1946 and was arrested, tried by a U.S. military court, and when found guilty of murder was taken into the jungle and hanged. [Note: text in italics was added by the reviewer.]

Baguio was a small town where everyone pretty much knew everyone else, but in the year before Pearl Harbor, several missionary groups evacuated over 100 people from China to Baguio in anticipation of war between Japan and the U.S. On December 8, 1941, the Japanese bombed the U.S. army base at Camp John Hay in Baguio shortly after Pearl Harbor. The town was the first to fall to Japanese troops that landed at Lingayen Gulf, and on December 27, 1941 they rounded up some 500 Americans and British civilians and incarcerated them at Camp Holmes.

With efficiency, the internees organized a structured community (subject to Japanese veto). They set up a school and a hospital, and managed their own work details – kitchen, sanitation, woodcutting, a machine shop, and entertainment directors. Until some of their medical staff were transferred to other camps, they had nine doctors and a dozen nurses. They had little medical equipment, but one doctor devised a diet cure for bacillary dysentery, and another performed surgery for a brain tumor to appendectomies on a kitchen table. Married couples

and families with children interned together could care for each other, but some children who had been separated from their families at the Brent School were supervised by other adults in place of their parents.

Adults of both sexes lost about 12.5% of their body weight. (*That compares to weight loss in Santo Tomas Internment Camp of 30% for men and 24% for women.*) Loyal Filipino servants were able to sell their employers belongings and buy lifesaving food and supplies for those in the camp. Men on work details left the camp daily under escort and were able to smuggle contraband back into the camp.

Most of the internees believed that their cooperation, particularly in respect to food, health, and safety served them well and helped develop a positive community spirit. Camp organizations sustained a wholesome concept of self-identity and elicited better treatment by the Japanese. The internee's relationship with Captain Rokuro Tomibe was positive. Many internees characterized him as "humane" and "an officer and a gentleman" when he was commandant of the camp. It was through his insistence that each internees received a 49-pound Red Cross package of food and clothing at Christmas in 1943.

Of the three internment camps on Luzon, Camp Holmes was the most benign. That ended at Christmas 1944 when the internees were transported to Bilibid in North Manila, a harsh prison for military POWs, where they were housed in the hospital wing for the last 6 weeks of their imprisonment. They were liberated on February 4, 1945, when the American 37th Infantry Division entered Manila.

One ex-internee remarked, "My experience has been most positive, in that we survived and learned firsthand the futility of greed, hatred, and war." (*It's doubtful that the internees at Santo Tomas and Los Baños felt the same way.*)

"Till death do us part: Men's and Women's Interpretations of Wartime Internment"

**Author: Lynn Z. Bloom
Published for the Women's Studies
International Forum by Elsevier Ltd., 1987**

Tolling the Bell for Civilian POWs

Sally Meadows

On April 5, 2025, Cliff Mills and I attended Bataan Legacy Historical Society's commemoration of 83 years since the Bataan Death March and the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII in the Philippines at the San Francisco National Cemetery in the Presidio. It was an honor to be invited to read the prayer for civilians lost in the war during the Tolling of the Bells portion of the ceremony. That prayer was:

*"We remember the American and Allied civilian prisoners of war who died during their internment at Santo Tomas University, Camp John Hay, Bilibid, Los Baños and other prison camps in the Philippines as well as all civilians who were executed during the Battle of Manila.
May they all rest in peace."*

It was a beautiful tribute for the innocent civilians who perished in WWII in the Philippines, and to be included in the ceremony commemorating those who served. A video of the event is available on Bataan Legacy's YouTube channel:

https://youtu.be/N9BT8yyiSKU?si=o96CED7_-JW06Ljp

