



From the Commander

How long should you carry a grudge? Well what happened to us in the Philippines 75 years ago merits more than a grudge. We were imprisoned for more than 3 years, friends and family members were killed, we were ill-treated and starved, and everything we owned was confiscated and much of it was never recovered.

My family was a prime example of the loss incurred, though we were fortunate enough to all survive the war. But our lives were so torn up that it was 6 years before we were together again. And the life we faced was near poverty as we had lost our home, all of our belongings including valuable Chinese artifacts, our bank accounts and investments, and had suffered several years of extreme deprivation. We entered the war years as a comfortable upper middle-class family with a high lifestyle, and when we finally resettled in America in 1947 we could scrape by only because of a modest inheritance my mother received, a small pension from my father's company, and both parents had to work to make ends meet.

The U.S. government promised that we would be compensated for our losses through the War Claims Commission. We waited many long years, and the Commission finally settled all claims in 1974 at pennies on the dollar, which had depreciated enormously in more than 30 years since the losses were incurred. And in our case, we received nothing because my father died weeks before the claims were settled and my mother was ineligible to receive the compensation.

For years, we all held a grudge, no, a hatred, for the Japanese who had destroyed our lives. We would not think of buying anything made in Japan and we disparaged the Japanese people at every opportunity. Our views were shared by others who had been victims of the Japanese holocaust in Asia.

Time softened our views as we rebuilt social circles and the children grew up to have successful marriages and careers. It became impractical to shun all Japanese products, and America became a friend and business partner with Japan. Japanese leaders who had sustained the Imperial Army's rape of Asia disappeared from the political and business scene, and new generations who had not been part of the war apparatus, or even were aware of it, took over the government and management of Japan's business community. Japanese schools do not teach about Japan's role in the Pacific War, and younger generations are largely unaware of that history. The younger generations are well educated, progressive, and worldly. How can we continue to hold a grudge against them?

Instead, we can help to educate them about their own history and the devastation their ancestors brought to the world. They are receptive to being educated about the events of World War II because they are not taught about it in their own school system. They are not to blame for what happened, and yet giv-

Commander, Continued on Page 2

A History Lesson

The history of World War II is not taught in the Japanese school system, and if it is true that to neglect your history is to create the danger that you will repeat it, then Japan needs to be more open with its students. BACEPOW has been working with Kinue Tokudome, founder of U.S.-Japan Dialogue on POWs for several years to attempt to develop a cultural exchange where we can inform the young Japanese students about our experiences as prisoners so that they better understand how their predecessors severely impacted a large region of the world.

We finally made some progress when Kinue worked with Mitsui Materials Corporation to sponsor a group of 3rd and 4th year college students to visit America to talk with various groups of ex-POWs about their experiences in the war. Mitsui was one of the companies that used American POWs as slave labor, and has sponsored meetings with them when they visited the sites where they were held and labored, and last year apologized for using them as slave labor.

In August, Kinue along with six students and Daiki Nishikawa, the sponsor's representative, visited Southern California, and were joined by Aki Tsurukame a local associate of Kinue's to meet with Francine Bostrom and Angus Lorenzen of BACEPOW. Over a wonderful Chinese luncheon an open and wide ranging conversation was held with students Satomi Fujimoto, Royosei Suginaka, Eri Usami, Mai Matsumoto, Aoi Nakabayashi, and Yushi Harada.



Francine Bostrom and Aki Tsurukame

Discussions included the kind of medical care the prisoners received, how drugs and food were smuggled into the camp, the kind of punishments meted out for breaking rules, the

History Lesson, Continued on Page 2

Commander, Continued from Page 1

en this knowledge they can help to influence their own politicians and business people who deny Japan's role in creating the horrors that overcame Asia, some of whom now seek to remilitarize their nation. As always, the hope for the future is in the young people.

This is a role that BACEPOW can fill, and our recent meeting with Japanese students in Southern California created an aura of good will. Those students will return home with a better understanding of their nation's role in WW II, and will be more amenable when they hear other nations and people who suffered make pleas for apologies and atonement.

Angus Lorenzen

History Lesson, Continued from Page 1

torture and executions, the death rate from starvation, and the joy of liberation.

Matsumoto, who is studying law, commented "... that while the Japanese government might not have a legal obligation to acknowledge what happened, it has a moral one". Suginaka said, "We can't change the past. But what we can do now is know the history. We can be open. That's one of the things our generation can do to not repeat tragedy anymore."

We hope these students return to their university in Japan and spread the word about what they learned on their trip to America. This meeting was an illustration of the value of such cultural exchange, and we hope that we can repeat it with future such meetings.



We Knew You When

Wanda Werf Damberg died on September 6, 2016. She was an active member of BACEPOW and was held in both Santo Tomas Internment Camp and Los Baños. As a prisoner, she worked in the hospital and was active in smuggling desperately needed medicines and drugs into STIC through her contacts with the Dominican priests in the seminary that was a part of the University before the war. This was highly dangerous and she risked her life if she was caught. She and her family were transferred to Los Baños in December 1944.

Born in Manila in 1921, she moved with her family back to the Netherlands, and then returned to Manila in 1937

due to her father's work with the Dutch consulate. After liberation Wanda worked in Tokyo, and testified in the War Crimes Trials. She met Col. Carl Damberg and they moved back to the States, where she became a U.S. citizen, raising 4 children. After her youngest left for college, she began a volunteer career, working for 36 years and spending 50,000 hours at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Torrance.

Wanda was a peppy and outspoken person who entertained BACEPOW members when she spoke about her career as a drug smuggler in the prison camp at reunions and meetings in Southern California.

Frank Mendez

We are sad to have to inform you that Frank passed away this summer. He was with the first 250 men of the 1st Cavalry Flying column that crashed through the gate at Santo Tomas, took control of the camp, and surrounded the Education Building where the Japanese were holding over 200 hostages on February 3, 1945. In recent years, Frank has attended many of our BACEPOW reunions, and is always popular as we exchange remembrances. On that fateful night more than 70 years ago, Frank met a young girl named Liz and shared a candy bar with her. That was the start of a friendship that has endured all these years, and we are honored that Liz Irvine is willing to share some of their experiences with us.

I met Frank the night that we were liberated. In the midst of all the mad confusion, Jeanette West and I wound up sitting by him on the steps of the main staircase. During our conversation, he pulled out a chocolate bar from his field ration kit and gave it to us. Boy, did that taste good!

Many years later, on one of the Ex-POW Philippine trips, the group included Frank, his wife Laura and her sister, as well as John Henke (gunner on Battlin' Basic) with his wife and daughter. While touring Santo Tomas, Frank and I sat on that same step to recreate the chocolate bar moment. He was pretending to offer me a chocolate bar when Henke spoke up, "Here, I've got a real one in my jacket - give her this!", and we captured a great photo.

While we were touring Leyte, Frank told us about a Kamikaze coming straight for them when it was hit by our fire and crashed into the bay. When his unit was leaving Leyte, the officer of the boat that was supposed to take them to Lingayen balked at taking the pet monkey one of the men had acquired, saying, "I'm not taking a monkey on my ship!" The men responded that if the monkey didn't go, they weren't going. The poor officer had to get them to Lingayen, so he had to give in and make the trip with the monkey on board.

Over the years, Frank's family and my family have become close. We've been to his home in Tucson, and they've been to our home in San Antonio. Frank and I talked on the



phone quite often, but he never mentioned his health. Our kids text back and forth, so that's how we got updates about Frank's illnesses.

Frank's granddaughter Heidi recently graduated with a degree in Industrial Engineering and accepted a job with a company that sent her to Nacogdoches, Texas for her new position. When she told Frank about that, he said "That's where Liz's daughter lives!" Indeed, that is where my daughter Susie, her daughters, and their families live. Heidi is actually in what was Susie's office at one time, and works with some of the people Susie worked with when she was there. She has become a part of Susie's family gatherings, and we see her when we go to Nacogdoches. My daughters have made the comment that they have to keep reminding themselves that they are not actually related to us, it seems they surely must be some distant cousins! Who would have thought, all those years ago when we sat on the steps and shared a chocolate bar, that it was the beginning of a lasting friendship and our families would still have a close connection more than 70 years later. He will be greatly missed.

Liz Irvine



A Priceless Artifact

This article was excerpted from the October 2016 MacArthur Memorial newsletter

In 2013 the MacArthur Memorial took in a priceless artifact, one that symbolizes the resilience of American internees in the Philippines - a handmade map of the United States. The map was donated to the MacArthur Memorial by the family of Helen Angeny, a missionary working in the Philippines when Japanese forces invaded in December 1941. Helen taught art at the Brent School in Baguio, northern Luzon, when the city was occupied in late 1941. She and her husband Ed were interned with 500 other Allied civilians in Camp Holmes outside Baguio where they spent most the war.

The Japanese banned all reminders of western influence - especially items with strong patriotic content concerning the United States. The map was secretly made by Helen and her students as a class project, teaching principles of art, social studies, and geography. Handmade paper cards around the map's edge show different aspects of U.S. history and life. Helen used the art project as a teaching device, but also to keep up the morale of her students and keep their focus off their imprisonment. Knowing she would be severely punished if caught, Helen did this at great personal risk to herself.

Helen and Ed Angeny were liberated by General MacArthur's forces in early 1945. When she returned to the United States, Helen brought papers, drawings, personal accounts, and artifacts with her, including this map she took great care to conceal for three years from the enemy. The MacArthur Memorial is honored to be the permanent home of her entire collection,

including this map.

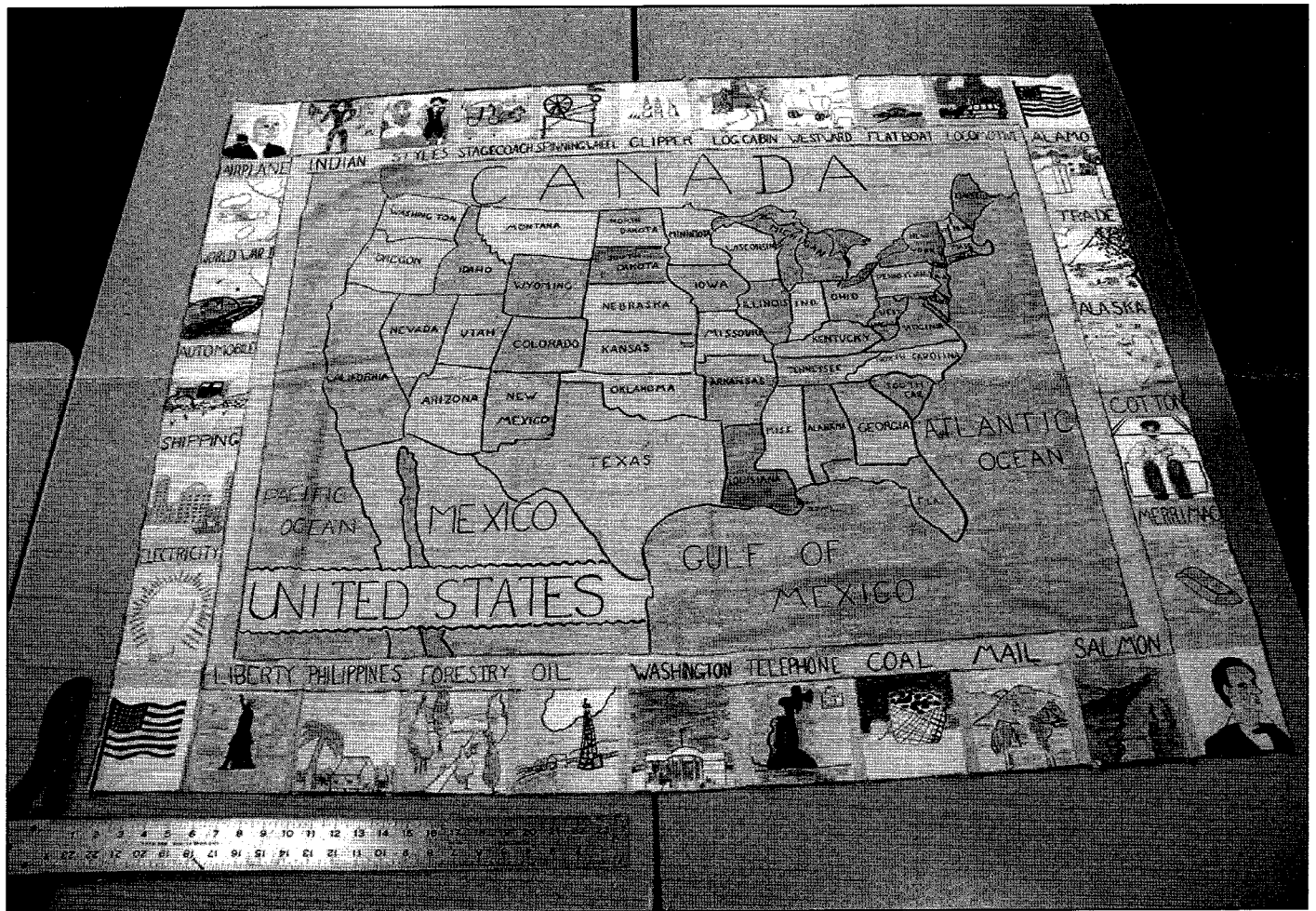
The map is in fair condition, and is faded and worn in spots. There are also several areas in which the paper cards are beginning to come away from the cloth. Because of its condition and uniqueness, the Virginia Association of Museums just named Helen's map as one of the Top Ten Endangered Artifacts in all of Virginia.

The MacArthur Memorial, in partnership with the General Douglas MacArthur Foundation, is seeking funding to stabilize and preserve this priceless artifact for future generations. Our target amount is \$6,500.

Many members of BACEPOW were in the Baguio camps and some of you may have participated in drawing this map. It has survived almost 75 years since its creation in Camp Holmes, including a difficult trip to Bilibid in Manila aboard a Japanese truck, followed by the tumultuous days of liberation and evacuation of Bilibid, transport across the Pacific, and eventually finding a new home at the MacArthur Memorial. In recognition of this symbol of imprisonment, BACEPOW has made a donation to help with its preservation. If any of you wish to make an individual donation, please send it to:

**The General Douglas MacArthur Foundation
MacArthur Square
198 Bank Street
Norfolk, VA 23510**

Please write on your check, "Artifact Conservation". If any of you have a story to tell about the map and your internment, please also write a message that can be included in the archives.



WORD OF MOUTH

Guerrilla Priest – *An American Family in World War II Philippines*

by Stephen Griffiths, Dancing Moon Press, Newport, OR

This revue was written by Louis Jurika, known for his research and articles on Philippine guerillas, who was a student at the Brent School when the subject of this book was Head Master and remembered with affection.

This historical account of an Episcopal missionary on the run from the Japanese in the high Cordillera of Luzon Island during WWII is distilled from the recollections of Alfred and Ernestine Griffiths by their son Stephen, who was entrusted with their manuscripts years ago and has now brought them to life and into the light. It is a story of a young American couple and their toddler daughter among headhunting tribes, the nascent guerrilla movement, and evading capture by the enemy until forced to surrender and become POWs.

The rugged Cordillera Central of Luzon ranges up to 10,000 feet elevation for roughly 150 miles and is mostly rock and grassy tops above the tree line. Below are gold-bearing canyons, forested with huge pines, more like Colorado than the tropics. As a Ph.D. in anthropology who also grew up in the Cordillera, author Stephen Griffiths documents the life of an isolated mountain culture, the climate and geography of rain and white-water rivers crashing through gorges of boulders, a region of ancient rice terraces that was home to warring headhunting tribes, only partially pacified in the 1920's.

It was to this remote wilderness that Alfred L. Griffiths, a Massachusetts native, made his way from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1931 to become chaplain at Bishop Brent's School in Baguio, a colonial hill station established about 5,000 feet high in the Cordillera. A brief return to the USA a few years later found Griffiths missing the Philippines, and in 1936 he returned to the Cordillera, this time as head of Saint Paul's Mission in the small isolated village of Balbalasang in Kalinga Province, a three-day hike from the nearest road. It was here the missionary work of Al Griffiths took root in the wild.

While the Spanish had generally opted to avoid the mountainous headhunting tribes when organizing their Catholic missions, this uncharted upcountry wilderness was exactly where the American Episcopal Church decided to go, converting new souls from among the near-naked heathen while avoiding antagonizing the established Roman Catholic population. It was a fateful decision that left its mark. At Balbalasang young Al Griffiths was soon accorded the honorific of "Padji", or father, in the local Tingguian dialect; and with a British nurse staffing the clinic, he set about his mission work.

Eventually Al took a break from the isolation for a journey to Manila on foot, horseback, train, bus and tram to Pier 7 to meet arriving friends. Aboard the ship was Elizabeth Ernestine "Nessie" Coles. A whirlwind nine-day courtship ensued, and the couple was married November 12th, 1938, at St. John's in Shanghai. Nessie had little idea of what to expect in Balbalasang but she was there for good and pitched right in, teaching school, quickly adapting to it all. The mission school became the pride of the community.

The outbreak of WWII changed everything, and when the Japanese landed at Vigan, Ilocos Sur, soon after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Griffiths were cut off from the outside world. However, their isolation saved them, *for a while*. Heading higher and farther into the mountains with their infant daughter, Katherine, born in December, 1939, the family was guided into the canyons and shepherded from hiding place to hiding place by the native tribes they had ministered to.

"Padji" Griffiths was a willing part of the organization of the guerrillas around Balbalasang in 1942, although Episcopal bishop Binstead in Manila would have had contrary ideas about

his involvement had they been in contact.

The Griffiths were close friends with Walter Cushing, a legendary guerrilla leader, and the book mentions his epic ambush of the Japanese Army convoy motoring through the town of Candon, Ilocos Sur, on January 19th, 1942; and also the surprise ambush of the Japanese army column marching through the pine forest at Lamonan on April 17th, 1942. These Cushing ambushes were among the very few American military successes in 1942. Tragically, Cushing himself was later ambushed when Filipino informants led the Japanese to his mountain hide-out, Cushing saving the last bullet in his pistol to put through his own head as the enemy closed in, knowing he would only be slowly tortured to death if captured alive.

Cushing made Griffiths, already a chaplain in the US Army Reserves, a lieutenant in charge of critical chores, especially an evacuation of Balbalasang, the successful performance of which also resulted in Al missing the Lamonan ambush. It could be surmised that Cushing was intent on keeping his good friend Griffiths, an ordained minister, from shooting another human being. #

The Japanese knew Griffiths was out there somewhere with the guerrillas, and they knew that his pre-war missionary role made his opinion respected among the tribes. If the Japanese could capture Griffiths, he and his influence would be separated from the resistance and it would lose a leader figure. While the pressure mounted from the Japanese to find the Griffiths family, the pressure also mounted from tribal leaders for Al and Nessie to continue to refuse to surrender and not to abandon the supposedly inaccessible mountain hideouts where they were protected by old tattooed barefoot men in loincloths armed with ancient spears and head axes.

Eventually the Japanese rounded up enough native hostages to make a real difference. If Al Griffiths didn't accept a last offer to surrender, the tribes would suffer and Al would be shot on sight when eventually found. After much consternation and debate, the question was resolved when the exhausted family and friends were caught at their last hideout, bound, and walked out of the mists to encounter the Japanese commander who had been chasing them for a year.

Griffiths was quickly told he was going to be shot, but was then chained to a wooden bed for several weeks until the Japanese decided that, for community relations with the surrounding tribes, padre Alfred Griffiths was better off left alive. The whole family was then transferred to Camp Holmes internment camp in Baguio, where they were reunited with Americans and expatriates who had surrendered earlier. The Griffiths had held out for 16 months in the wild.

After their liberation in 1945, the Griffiths family returned to the U.S. But in 1946, they decided to return to the Philippines, Al feeling called back to the mountain tribes and his mission work above the clouds. After more years at Balbalasang, Alfred Griffiths went on to become the revered headmaster of Brent School in Baguio, but never mentioning his war experiences to anyone. He is still recalled as a white-haired square-shooter disciplinarian who, in the Philippines, was an American version of "Mister Chips", with Nessie teaching at Brent as well, both their children as graduates, and forever blessed with the gratitude of the indigenous people of the Cordillera whom they served for so long.

Reunion

Just a reminder that our reunion in New Orleans is imminent. The deadline for registration is January 15, 2017. If your registration form and check are not **received** by that date, we will have to return it to you. Sorry but we can't accommodate late registration.

Registration is \$75 for members and \$85 for non-members, which includes the banquet at the Embassy Suites on February 2 and all-day admission to the National World War II Museum, which is just a short walk from the Embassy Suites.

At the hotel, you can pick up your registration package during the following times.
Wednesday, February 1, 1:00 to 4:00 PM
Thursday, February 2, 8:00 to 10:00 AM and 3:00 to 5:00 PM

Transportation from the airport to the hotel includes the following options:

The hotel recommends the Audubon limousine service. <http://www.audubonlimousine.com/>
Cost for 2 or more people each way is \$135.

The regular airport shuttle service is <http://www.airportshuttleneworleans.com/>. Cost each way for 2 people is \$40 to \$48.

Taxis run from \$25 to \$40

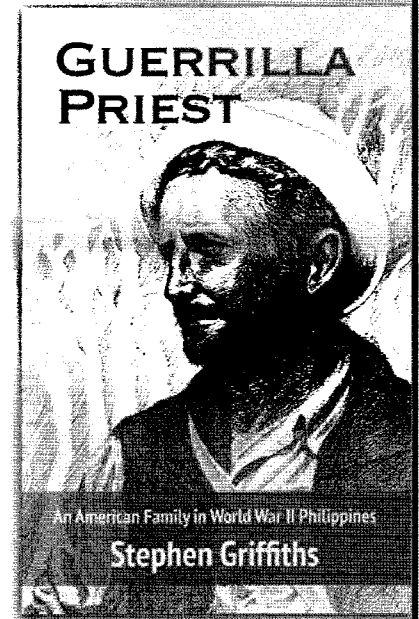
The National WW II museum is rated among the top 3 museums in the U.S. and top 15 worldwide, and its founding was spearheaded by historian and author Stephen Ambrose. It opened on June 6, 2000 as the D-Day Museum and has since opened the Solomon Victory Theater, the John E. Kushner Restoration Pavilion, the U.S. Freedom Pavilion, the Boeing Center, and the "Road to Berlin" portion of the Campaigns of Courage Pavilion. There are further plans to construct what will be called the Liberation Pavilion. The museum has several aircraft on exhib-

GUERRILLA PRIEST

An American Family in World War II Philippines

BY STEPHEN GRIFFITHS

GUERRILLA PRIEST captures a special moment in the history of the Pacific War: the formation of the first guerrilla resistance against the Japanese in northern Luzon. It also tells the story of how a young American family—Episcopal priest Al Griffiths, his wife Nessie, and their infant daughter Katy—resisted, were captured, and survived a horrific war.



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it, including a Douglas Dauntless dive bomber like the one that dropped the message of hope into Santo Tomas on the morning of February 3. A Higgins Boat landing craft is on display, as is a Sherman tank like the ones used by the 1st Cavalry Flying Column. And for those who like techie stuff, they can admire an Enigma coding machine and the famous Norden bomb sight.

Theaters in the museum include a showing of the cinematic experiences, *Beyond All Boundaries*, *Price for Peace*, and *D-Day Remembered*.

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