



From the Commander

It's the new year, which means it's time to register for our April 2023 Reunion, registration closes on April 1. The information to book your room at Embassy Suites by Hilton Sacramento, and to send in your registration to CPOW, is on page 3, along with the program for the meeting. The bulk of the arrangements for this event have been managed by Angus Lorenzen, with strong support by Cindie Leonard, I appreciate all the work they've done to pull together this meeting. Please join us in Sacramento to hear our many interesting speakers and for the opportunity to reconnect with, and commemorate, those that were in the camps.

At the same time, you can renew your membership for 2023, so send only one check for both membership and reunion registration. Also on the renewal form (page 4), we have the last chance to participate in our first CPOW membership directory. This will be a members-only, hard-copy booklet, and only those who provide their information for the directory will receive a copy.

On a different topic, December 14, 2022 marked 78 years since the Palawan Massacre. Just a few weeks before that anniversary, Vice President Kamala Harris paid her respects to the victims of the massacre at the Palawan Massacre Memorial. The historical significance of the Memorial is described by the organization *American War Memorials Overseas* as follows:

"On December 14, 1944, with US Forces advancing through the Philippines, enemy prison guards commenced to kill the American POWs located at POW Camp 10A. It is estimated 139 Americans were killed; 11 escaped and with the assistance of the local population and partisans, were able to evade the enemy until US Forces arrived. 123 of the 139 that perished were buried in a mass grave at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in Missouri. [Coincidentally, very near the site of the Museum profiled on this page.]

As a result of eleven men who survived the massacre to confirm the ordeal, American military leaders realized the imminent threat to other POWs and detainees. Senior commanders were determined to prevent more atrocities. With several thousand American and Allied lives at stake, the rescue of POWs and internees became a high priority. Four raids were done in short succession, freeing over 7,000 POWs and detainees in less than a month."

On page 6, there is a photo of VP Harris at the Palawan Memorial which was posted on her official Twitter feed.

Warm and healthy wishes for 2023. I hope to see many of you in Sacramento in April.

Sally Meadows

Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum

By LtCol Raymond L. Ruetsch
USAF, Retired

There is an old saying that the light at the end of the tunnel is a freight train. That is what it has seemed like in the work being done on the construction of the POW/MIA Museum in Jefferson Barracks (St Louis, Missouri). The light at the end of the tunnel is now our porch light as we can finally see the completion of all our work coming to fruition.

The mission of the Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum is to reverently honor all who were captured and those missing in action from any conflict. This mission includes raising the awareness of the American public to the numbers of those captured who returned alive, those who died in captivity, and those who never returned.

Our sincere hope is to provide a space that educates the public with thoughtful and meaningful exhibits that honor our POWs and MIAs.

In January of 2013 we were given the keys to a cavalry officer's duplex built in 1896 at the Historic Jefferson Barracks. Through many grants, donations, book sales, etc., it started to come together. Not only did we have to bring it up to current building codes, it also had to be restored to 1800s historical standards (windows, doors, roof tiles, etc.). We have spent over \$500,000 so far in the massive renovation. On May 1, 2013 we held the formal dedication ceremony.

A lot of work has been accomplished since then. Much of it was donations from local contractors and local unions using the museum as a training tool for their apprenticeship programs. We have constructed a WWII POW Camp guard tower and built our memorial brick garden around our flagpole. Also the entire building has been repainted, plumbing and electrical replaced, a new HVAC system, alarm system, and a lot of other interior work completed



(POW-MIA Museum, continued on page 2)

(POW-MIA Museum, continued from page 1)

Recently the Air Force Academy Class of 1970 donated over \$40,000 to assist in this reconstruction. They did this in honor of their classmates who lost their lives in Vietnam. One such member was Lieutenant Mike Blassie. When his remains were returned to the states they were not identifiable and those remains were chosen to be placed in the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington. With advances in DNA testing his remains were later identified and they were removed from the Tomb and returned to his family in St Louis and are now buried at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. The Blassie family has entrusted the museum with the items interred with Lt Blassie in the Tomb of the Unknowns. Home Depot also donated \$24,000 of materials and labor for the reconstruction process.

Our board president illustrated a children's book called "N is for Never Forget". It takes each letter and relates it to a POW/MIA issue. Proceeds from the sales go toward the museum.

In February 2000 the museum was gifted by the US Navy and the USS Arizona Association with an actual piece of the battleship USS Arizona along with a sample of the water surrounding the ship with the oil which is still leaking from the ship. For an Eagle Scout project a display case and model of the USS Arizona were constructed. The Museum of the St Genevieve Art Guild has donated a multi-panel mural done by German POWs held at an American POW camp near St. Genevieve, Missouri. We also currently have a Bible (with a POW's diary notes in it) and other memorabilia from him when was in Stalag 17. He knew the author of the book which

was later made into a movie and one of the characters was based on him. A 38 service revolver from survival equipment and a Japanese Bayonet have also been donated. Many celebrities have sent autographed pictures thanking the POWs for their sacrifices. We even have an autographed Star Wars Darth Vader helmet autographed by James Earl Jones, Darth Vader's voice.

It would be an honor to include any pictures and/or memorabilia from the CPOW membership. We feel that the civilians held captive is an important story to tell and we welcome stories from the CPOW members and their families.

We are looking forward to opening the museum to honor these brave men and women. Check us out on Facebook at POW MIA Museum in Jefferson Barracks or on our webpage <https://jbpow-mia.org/>. Our motto: No One Left Behind, No One Forgotten.

If anyone has items they would like to donate for display at the museum please contact Paul Dillon, Museum President (whose father was a WWII POW). Monetary donations are also accepted and Memorial bricks can be purchased.

For more information contact Paul Dillon, 314-609-9037, rpdelw@sbcglobal.net, 11833 Sologne Ct, Maryland Heights, MO 63043.

The author, LtCol Raymond L. Ruetsch, USAF, Retired, is the son of WWII POW SSGT Robert Ruetsch. He can be reached at ruetschray@aol.com.

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Image: Detail of a painting by Fernando Amorsolo



CPOW 2023 Reunion Agenda
Thursday April 13 through Sunday April 16
 Embassy Suites by Hilton Sacramento Riverfront Promenade

Thursday Registration, Cindie Leonard, **Atrium** 2:00 to 5:00

Friday morning, Self-Registration, **Atrium**

Friday, Steamboat/Central Pacific Room
 9:00 Opening & Welcome, Sally Meadows
 9:10 Presentation of the Colors, California National Guard
 9:20 Los Baños Liberation, Sondra Shields
 10:05 Bilibid Liberation, Francine Bostrom
 10:50 Break
 11:05 Video of Internees, Melanie Chapman

12:35 Lunch Break

2:00 Twice a POW, Angus Lorenzen
 3:25 Break
 3:40 Telling Stories, Mary Beth Klee

5:00 End of Session

Saturday, Steamboat/Central Pacific Room
 9:00 “Black Snow, ... the Fire Bombing of Tokyo ...”, James Scott
 10:30 Break
 10:45 Hunger in Internment, Panel Discussion, Karen Lewis, Curtis Brooks, Mary Beth Klee, Angus Lorenzen
 12:00 Group Photo Opportunity, Hotel Atrium

12:15 Lunch Break

1:30 Descendants Meeting, Daniel Doolan, **Tower Bridge A Room**

3:30 End of Session

Sunday, Various Rooms
 9:00 Book Discussions and Sales, **Atrium**
 9:00 CPOW Board of Directors, Sally Meadows, **Tower Bridge B**
 10:30 Authors Work in Progress, Mary Beth Klee, **Tower Bridge B**
 12:00 Banquet, **Steamboat/Central Pacific**
 1:00 Reunion Summation and Closing Remarks, Sally Meadows
 1:15 Keynote Speaker, Jim Zobel
 2:30 Adjourn, Sally Meadows

CPOW 2023 Reunion Registration

Please fill out the required information below. Attach a separate sheet if needed.

First Name	Last Name	Member (Yes/No)	2023 Dues (Yes/No)
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

* If you do not plan to attend the banquet, you can deduct \$50 from the full registration cost **Total**

Annual Dues If you want to include \$15 for 2023 dues, please put yes in the 2023 Dues column and amount here. \$ _____

Full Registration including banquet Member \$70/Non-Member \$80 Number of Members ____ Non-Members ____ *\$ _____
 (Please Note: The price in the September newsletter was incorrect, this is the cost for the reunion as of January 1, 2023.)

Sunday Events Only Members \$57/Non-Members \$67 Number of Members ____ Non-Members ____ \$ _____

Please send your check made out to CPOW for the total to: **TOTAL** \$
 Cindie Leonard, 1675 S. Lake Crest Way, Eagle, ID 83616

Please note that registration for the reunion ends on April 1, 2023.
 Late registrants will be charged an extra \$25 if space is still available.

To reserve a room at Sacramento Embassy Suites using our discount code:

- Visit www.sacramento.embassysuites.com and make a reservation using the group/convention code: POW
- Call (916) 326-5000 and let the Front Desk Agent know you would like to make a reservation under the CPOW Civilian Prisoners of War discount rate.

CPOW 2023 Membership Form

Now is the time to renew (or sign up for) membership to keep receiving our newsletter. Please fill out this form and mail it with your check for \$15 (per person) to:

Cindie Leonard, 1675 S. Lake Crest Way, Eagle, ID 83616
Please make your check out to "Civilian ex-POWs"

Name(s): _____

Current Mailing Address: _____

Email Address (please print clearly): _____

Phone Number: _____

How would you like to receive the CPOW newsletter? Email US Mail Both

If you are a new member only, please complete the following information by checking the appropriate box indicating your connection to CPOW and provide the requested information below. You do not need to fill this out if you are a renewing member.

Former POW or internee

Camp(s) Check all that apply: Santo Tomas Baguio/Bilibid Los Baños Other

Name in camp (if different than current name): _____

Descendant, Relative or Friend _____

Describe your relationship to the ex-POW. Please share the name(s) of your relative(s) or friend(s) -- including the name(s) they went by in camp, along with the camp(s) they were interned in.

Military Branch of Service _____

If you have any questions, please contact Cindie: cindieleonard@gmail.com or (208) 890-5694

CPOW Membership Directory

By popular demand, we are creating a membership directory! If you would like to participate, please fill-out this form (for more space, feel free to use your own paper) and mail to:

Cindie Leonard, 1675 S. Lake Crest Way, Eagle, ID 83616
or send by email to: cindieleonard@gmail.com

The directory is open to internees, relatives, and friends. Only those who participate will receive a directory.

Name:

Mailing Address:

Email:

Phone Number:

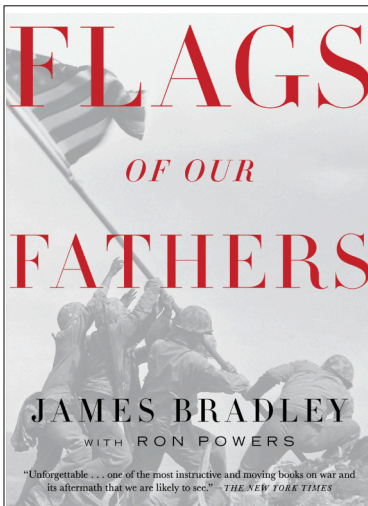
For Ex-POWS: Camp (s)

Feel free to share whatever information you like (e.g. family, work history, etc.), but especially tell us about your connection to the camp(s) and how you or your family got there.

Book Review by Angus Lorenzen

Flags of Our Fathers

By James Bradley with Ron Powers | Bantam Books, May 2000



On February 23, 1945, three newsworthy events happened in the Pacific war. The first followed an artillery barrage that was used to break down the massive wall around the Intramuros in Manila, which allowed the 37th Infantry to enter the enclosed old city, freeing hundreds of occupants from being hostages of the Japanese. Second was the airborne and guerilla raid on Los Baños that freed

about 2,400 civilian prisoners of the Japanese in the internment camp and has been called the most daring rescue of American prisoners during WWII. Third was the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima and the taking of a picture that became an icon of WWII in the Pacific which totally negated the news of the other two events.

Mount Suribachi was a key objective of the American Marines because it dominated the landing beaches and was heavily fortified. Like the rest of this tiny island, the Japanese had fortified it by excavating underground chambers and tunnels from which they could pop out to surprise the invaders and in which they were heavily armed with weapons, food, ammunition, and soldiers determined to die for their Emperor. Why such fortification and manning of an island that was mostly bare and only about 8-miles long and 2 or 3 miles wide? First, it was a part of the Japanese home islands, only 600 miles from Tokyo and a part of the capital city's administrative responsibility. Second, it held two airfields that were on the direct route from the Mariana Islands where the American Airforce was launching its deadly air raids on Tokyo and other major Japanese cities. Fighters from the island were attacking the enormous air raids being launched by General Curtis LeMay, and if the Marines could take the island, those airfields would be a life saver for American bombers crippled in the raids.

The Japanese forces were fanatics and were not going to lose the island without a long and fierce battle. Their opponents, the U.S. Marines, were equally tough and determined. The Marines' reputation was earned during WWI at the battle for Belleau Wood in 1918. They were attached to the U.S. 3rd Army which had stopped the German spring offensive just a short distance from Paris.

Now the French ordered the Americans to capture Belleau Wood, which was a wooded hill in flat country that had been fortified by the Germans and reinforced with a large amount of artillery, not too different from the conditions on Iwo Jima. But the French knew better than to expect a successful outcome as in 5-years battling the Germans, they had never captured a fortified hill from them. In fact, the previous summer at the Chemin des Dames the French Army, including the first mass tank attack, tried to take the ridge and the poilus were forced to advance into fierce resistance resulting in enormous casualties. There was a revolt in the ranks, and some of the leaders were executed, but the French army was useless for the remainder of the war, leaving most of the fighting to the British and Americans. But at Belleau Wood, the Marines attacked in small groups taking shelter in shell holes as they advanced. After a week, they reached the toe of the slope and moved into the wood, sweeping the Germans out. The German general complimented the Marines, saying they were the finest shock troops in the World.

Now the Marines would again be tested by a force of 21,000 Japanese troops extremely well-fortified and willing to fight to their death. The Marines of the 5th Marine Division, 28th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, Easy Company landed on the beach virtually in the shadow of Mount Suribachi. They moved to the south of the mount on D-day, February 19 and had it isolated from the rest of the island. For four days they tried to approach the base of the mount but were rebuffed by heavy machine gun and artillery fire from hidden positions inside the mount.

By February 23, the Japanese on, or inside, Suribachi were depleted and a reinforced platoon from Easy Company was able to climb the mount, facing only light resistance. When they reached the top, they found a length of Japanese water pipe to which they attached the battalion's American flag, raising it on the summit. Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, who had just landed on the beach, wanted a larger flag. So, the Marines on the summit received a larger flag and reenacted raising a flag, which was the subject of the Joe Rosenthal photograph which became famous and the iconic image of Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima.

The assault on the island took 36 days of some of the fiercest and bloodiest fighting of the Pacific war. American casualties were 26,000, with 6,800 dead. This is the only case where American casualties exceeded those of the Japanese most of whom died.

The book describes the fighting by Easy Company and the aftermath as the famous photo raised a lot of media

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(Flags, continued from page 5)

attention back home and resulted in the three surviving “heroes” in the photo being escorted around the U.S. on a major and highly successful bond drive. Three of the identified Marines raising the flag had later died in combat. Later investigations showed that two of those “heroes” were not the men shown in the photo. Still, Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima became an iconic part of the story of the Pacific War, and a statue using the photo as a basis was erected at Arlington National Cemetery. Most of the story is about the aftermath of the flag raising and what happened to the principals in the photo. At the very end, we learn of a huge error made in identifying the men raising the flag. It is an ending to look forward to as the lives of the principals is devastated by the publicity.



Marines on the beach at Iwo Jima below Mt. Suribachi

(Palawan, continued from page 1)

During her trip to the Philippines in November 2022, Vice President Kamala Harris traveled to Puerto Princesa, Palawan. She is the highest-ranking U.S. official ever to visit Palawan. While there, she paid her respects at the Palawan Massacre Memorial for the American POWs, 139 of whom were killed by their Japanese prison guards on December 14, 1944, and eleven escaped.

