

Prisoner-of-war survivors gather for reunion



LAS VEGAS (AP) — Margaret Sams remembers Japanese soldiers knocking on her door in the Philippines and ordering her to prepare three days worth of food and clothing for herself and her 3-year-old son.

Three days stretched into three years and two months in a World War II prison

camp where the young American mother gave birth to a daughter and nearly lost her own life.

Sams and her husband celebrated her 79th birthday on Saturday and the 50th anniversary of the American liberation of prison camps run by occupying Japanese forces in the Philippines.

They were among more than 560 survivors and rescuers who gathered for their

fourth reunion this weekend at the Gold Coast Hotel & Casino. The liberators were members of the U.S. Army's 44th Tank Battalion and 1st Cavalry Division, the first to liberate a Japanese camp, on Feb. 3, 1945.

"Feb. 3 is a significant day for those of us in Santo Tomas, and Feb. 4 is the first time we were able to see the [American] flag in three years," said Terri Johnson,

one of the reunion organizers, who was interned during much of her teen-age years.

Santo Tomas was one of several camps in the Philippines.

"We have people from all over the world here ... Australia, England, Wales, the Philippines, Canada and all over the United States," Johnson said. "It's a time to rehash. There were many hard times."

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Conditions falsely indicate abuse

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Strep infections, bowel disease, lice, folk medicine and even celery soup can leave marks that people mistake for child abuse.

These conditions are extremely rare but can have devastating consequences, said Dr. Howard B. Pride, who was among the lecturers at the American Academy of Dermatology convention, meeting in New Orleans through Thursday.

Medical journals include reports of parents ordered to stay away from their children before the medical condition was diagnosed and even of one father who killed himself in jail, he said.

"Obviously, it's devastating for parents to be accused of molesting their child or told that someone in their environment has been molesting when it hasn't been occurring," Pride said.

Out of roughly 500 children a year brought to Children's Hospital in New Orleans for suspected sexual abuse, 20 to 30 turn out to have medical conditions that include diaper rash and infections, Dr. Kathryn Coff-

man said.

Some conditions look like bruises, burns or blisters, or make hair fall out in clumps. Others cause redness, bleeding, blistering or what look like scrapes or scratches on the genitals or around the anus, she said.

Pride, of Danville, Pa., remembers one young patient brought in with brownish, bruise-like marks on her face that suggested she'd been beaten up.

It turned out the marks were an allergic reaction to celery soup.

The 20-plus conditions Pride described make up such a small percentage of all suspected abuse cases that they are easy to overlook, he said.

New York University Medical Center doctors reported a father was kept away from his family for a year before his daughter was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition that causes blisters and raw skin in and around her vagina.

The disease is called bullous pemphigoid, and Pride said, that as of 1991 only 33 cases had

been reported in children.

The father who killed himself was arrested because his son bore bruises from a Vietnamese folk remedy called cao gio, which calls for rubbing the skin with a spoon, coin or other hard object, Pride said.

A letter from an Oklahoma City doctor in the Journal of the Academy of Dermatology said the boy died of influenza, but his bruises led doctors to suspect abuse. The father went to jail, where he committed suicide, Pride said.

Strep infections can turn a baby's buttocks deep red, and some bowel infections can leave the anus gaping, as if it had been penetrated, he said.

Then there are lice. Their bites can cause bluish marks the size of someone's little fingernail, as if someone had been pinched. Pride remembers a 7-year-old patient with spots on his shoulders.

"Abuse was suspected until nits were found in his scalp and a diagnosis of head lice was made," Pride said.

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Snowstorm surprises eastern states

NEW YORK (AP) — Winter came out of hibernation in the East on Saturday with a blizzard that dropped a thick layer of snow from West Virginia to New England.

"This is impossible to keep up with," said Pat Rodgers, of the Transportation Department in Connecticut, where 2 to 3 inches of snow fell an hour, leaving a foot in Milford and 11 inches in New Canaan.

About 9,000 customers in the state were without power by late afternoon.

The East's first major storm of the season started Friday in the Midwest and gained strength as it moved eastward and pounded the Middle Atlantic states overnight with heavy snow, winds up to 40 mph and low wind chills.

It dumped 6 inches of snow in Kentucky and 4 inches in much of Indiana and Illinois. The nation's capital was blanketed with 6 inches. Eleven inches fell in Baltimore County, Md., and up to 14 in the Philadelphia suburbs. Ten inches covered the West Vir-

ginia mountains and up to 16 fell in central New Jersey.

By Saturday night, up to 18 inches had fallen on parts of eastern and central New York. New York City got 10 inches.

The storm arrived during a so-far mild winter in the East — a sharp contrast to last year, when about 17 storms dropped 50-plus inches of snow.

"It's about time!" said Deborah Fedelli, riding a commuter train from Connecticut to her job at Macy's in New York City. "I just hope it doesn't hinder people from getting to where they want to go."

Guess again. In New York, La Guardia and Kennedy Airports were closed most of Saturday morning, stranding thousands of people. Newark International Airport was able to clear the snow by early afternoon and flights that weren't canceled were departing on time.

Driving was treacherous as snow turned to sleet and freezing rain in some areas, and high winds decreased visibility elsewhere.

At least four traffic deaths — two in Kentucky and one each in Massachusetts and New Hampshire — were blamed on the weather.

The Massachusetts Turnpike was closed to propane trucks and tandem trailers. Numerous minor accidents and three rollovers were reported, state police said. There were no immediate reports of serious injuries.

In New York City, 3,000 sanitation workers using 1,300 plows and 350 salt-and-sand spreaders were out, Sanitation Department spokesman Lucian Chalfen said.

Things were different for those who didn't have to work against weather, however.

"I love the snow! I can hardly wait to get home and make a snowman," said 63-year-old Louise Clark, as she walked down a Princeton, N.J., street, drinking a cup of coffee. Princeton had at least 18 inches by Saturday night.

Clark said she hiked 12 blocks in 16 inches of snow from her house to the supermarket in her brand new snow boots.

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