

# Veteran: 'We knew the war was over'

Continued from Page 1A

The campaign lasted until July 1945 — though the Manila Bay had another battle coming.

### Kamikaze attacks

An old photo of the Manila Bay captured the VC-80 squadron posed around a plane. Beck sits on the left wing, his arms straight to his knees.

"I look pretty proper in the photo," Beck said. "And young. I think the oldest guy was 25. He didn't make it."

The crew was standing on a metal plate, which blocked a hole from a Japanese aircraft that dived onto the deck loaded with explosives. A pole protruding from the tower has a slight bend, left from a suicide plane that missed the ship and hit the ocean.

"I was where I shouldn't have been, right on the deck as they flew in," Beck said.

U.S. attacker pilots took to the sky too and the Japanese offense was stalled. The ship lost 14 men and 52 were wounded. All of the carrier's radio men were killed and Beck was trained to take their place.

On Jan. 17, the carrier headed back to Pearl Harbor for repairs.

"We knew the war was over, it was only a matter of time" Beck said. "We could see the desperation of the Japanese, those poor boys. For us, it was back to waiting and playing cards."

### The American dream

Today, Beck plays Hearts on his home computer. He lives on the same street he grew up in a home he and his wife, Eunice, built together.

The dining room is decorated with flowered wallpaper Eunice put up. She died last year. Their bookshelf holds titles like "500 Cakes" and "Practical Problem Solver."

The home embodies the American lifestyle the couple pulled around themselves during the 1950s. They were the generation whose fathers fought against the Central Powers, who fought against the Axis and whose sons fought in Vietnam.

"We hoped this time it would mean peace, you always do," Beck said.

Asked about his dreams for life after World War II, Beck laughed. "It wasn't about dreams," he said. "I got a job, hoped I hit it off with a lady — I did — had kids and built a house."

He put away his papers from war and he reached for the TV remote.

"I hope we haven't missed the World Series — those guys have a tough night up ahead."

故郷を離れた將兵諸君

東京首脳部では此の戦争の實狀を詳細に亘り良く理解して居る。其の例を擧ぐれば一、現況の續く限り最後の敗北を喫せざるやも推かり知れぬ。(東京無電 昭和十九年七月三十一日)

二、全般的戰況に對して充二分に進行して居ると思ふ事は出來ない、敵が我が内部防禦線に近づくに從ひ我々は益々困難になるのみである。(米内海相昭和十九年九月七日)

三、聯合軍の吾本土上陸の可能性を念頭に置くべきである。(小磯首相 昭和十九年九月七日)

右東京當局聲明は果して何を意味するものたらうか。それは諸君の戰友が太平洋各地に於て惡戰苦闘して來たにも係らず聯合軍の大進撃は着々と日本々土に向ひ進行しつつある事を意味するものである。

野望逞しい軍部當局は最早や自己の犯した誤算を包み隠し切れぬ時が來た、然も勝運なきと知り乍ら己の面目保持の爲に諸君をなほ徒らに犬死させんとする軍部當局は果して正道を踏みつゝあると言ひ得るたらうか。

Printed fliers like this from Bob Beck's collection were dropped over the Philippines in an effort to sap the morale of Japanese soldiers.



ABOVE: American soldiers and sailors recapturing the Philippines from the Japanese in World War II carried flags like this — with the Philippines design on one side and the U.S. flag on the other — to help islanders make the connection between American intervention and the return of their national sovereignty. LEFT: American forces carried simple graphic representations like this, both to inspire the troops and reach out to English-speaking Filipinos. Bob Beck Courtesy Photos

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