

Filipino Bataan Death March survivors mark 75th anniversary

By Janie Har
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Ramon Regalado was starving and sick with malaria when he slipped away from his Japanese captors during the infamous 1942 Bataan Death March in the Philippines, escaping a brutal trudge through a steamy jungle that killed hundreds of Americans and thousands of Filipinos who fought for the U.S. during World War II.

The former wartime machine-gun operator joined a dwindling band of veterans of the war in San Francisco's Presidio to honor the soldiers who died on the march and those who made it to a prisoner of war camp only to die there.

They commemorated the mostly Filipino soldiers who held off Japanese forces in the Philippines for three months without supplies of food or ammunition before a U.S. Army major general surrendered 75,000 troops to Japan on April 9, 1942.

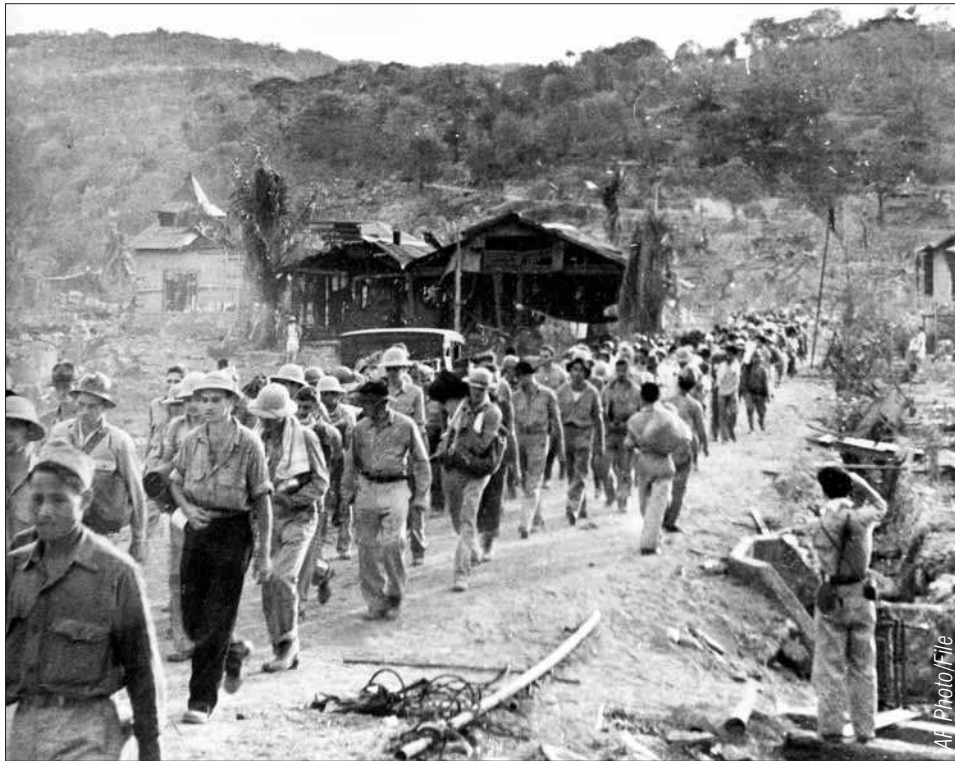
Few Americans are aware of the Filipinos who were starving as they relentlessly fended off the more powerful and well-supplied Japanese forces, said Cecilia Gaerlan, executive director of the Berkeley, California-based Bataan Legacy Historical Society organizing the event at the former military fort.

"Despite fighting without any air support and without any reinforcement, they disrupted the timetable of the Imperial Japanese army," she said. "That was their major role, to perform a delaying action. And they did that beyond expectations."

More than 250,000 Filipino soldiers served in World War II, when the Philippines was a U.S. territory. But after the war ended, President Harry Truman signed laws that stripped away promises of benefits and citizenship for Filipino veterans.

Only recently have they won back some concessions and acknowledgment, including the nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal. The veterans also received lump-sum payments as part of the 2009 stimulus law.

An estimated 18,000 Filipino veterans of World War II are still alive and living in



the U.S.

Tens of thousands of Filipino and U.S. troops were forced on the 65-mile march and Gaerlan said as many as 650 Americans and 10,000 Filipinos died in the stifling heat and at the hands of Japanese soldiers who shot, bayoneted, or beat soldiers who fell or stopped for water.

More than 80 percent of those forced on the march were Filipino.

After they arrived at a prison camp set up at Camp O'Donnell, she said, an additional 1,600 Americans and 20,000 Filipinos died from dysentery, starvation, and disease.

Gaerlan grew up knowing that her father, Luis Gaerlan Jr., had been in a wartime march in which a lot of people had died. But he rarely spoke about it or he would re-enact it with rat-a-tat-tat sound

DEATH MARCH REMEMBRANCE. In this 1942 file photo (top), American and Filipino prisoners of war captured by the Japanese are shown at the start of the Bataan Death March after the surrender of Bataan on April 9 during World War II, near Mariveles in the Philippines. Hundreds of American soldiers and thousands of Filipinos died along the way. In the bottom photo, survivor Ramon Regalado looks over a map showing where he marched, with Cecilia Gaerlan outside his home in El Cerrito, California. Survivors of the infamous march marked the anniversary in San Francisco with speeches and a 21-gun battery salute to the thousands who died.

effects for the guns that made her laugh.

She started researching the march in 2011 and tried to elicit more details from her father. He broke down crying, telling her that some men were so desperate that they killed themselves. Others wrote goodbye letters to their relatives during the march.

"And he said he was starting to write his farewell letter, because a lot of men did that, and I asked him, 'Well, were you going to take your own life?' she said. "And he didn't answer."

Gaerlan's father died in 2014 at age 94.

She successfully lobbied California last year to mandate teaching details of the battle and march in high schools.

She also collects march veterans' stories before they die, including the memories of 99-year-old Regalado, who lives in the San Francisco suburb of El Cerrito.

When the war broke out, Regalado was a member of the Philippine Scouts, a military branch of the U.S. Army for Filipino soldiers.

He and two other soldiers were assigned to feed horses during the march and slipped away when guards were not watching them, Regalado said.

A farmer took in the three, even though the penalty for doing so was death. All were sick with malaria. Only Regalado survived.

He went on to join a guerrilla resistance movement against the Japanese and moved in 1950 to the San Francisco Bay Area to work for the U.S. military.

Regalado credits his survival and long life to his high morale.

While being cared for by the farmer, he recalls telling himself: "I'm not going to die."

Lawyer says dragged passenger lost two teeth and broke his nose

By Don Babwin and Sara Burnett
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — The passenger dragged from a United Airlines flight lost two front teeth and suffered a broken nose and a concussion, his lawyer said, accusing the airline industry of having "bullied" its customers for far too long.

"Are we going to continue to be treated like cattle?" attorney Thomas Demetrio asked.

The passenger, Dr. David Dao, has been released from a hospital but will need reconstructive surgery, Demetrio said at a news conference, appearing alongside one of Dao's children. Dao was not there.

The 69-year-old physician from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, was removed by police from the United Express flight at Chicago's O'Hare Airport after refusing to give up his seat on the full plane to make room for four airline employees.

Cellphone video of him being pulled down the aisle on his back and footage of his bloody face have created a public-relations nightmare for United.

One of Dao's five children, Crystal Pepper, said the family was "horrified, shocked, and sickened" by what happened. She said it was made worse by the fact that it was caught on video.

For Dao, who came to the U.S. after fleeing Vietnam by boat in 1975 when Saigon fell, being dragged off the plane "was more horrifying and harrowing than what he experienced in leaving Vietnam," Demetrio said.

Demetrio, who indicated Dao is going to sue, said the industry has long "bullied" passengers by overbooking flights and then bumping people, and "it took something like this to get a conversation going."

"I hope he becomes a poster child for all of us. Someone's got to," the lawyer said.

Early on, United CEO Oscar Munoz added to the furor when he apologized for the incident but accused Dao of being belligerent. Later, Munoz offered a more emphatic mea culpa, saying, "No one should ever be mistreated this way."

He promised to review the airline's policies to make sure something like that never happens again, and said United will no longer use police to remove bumped passengers. The airline also said all passengers on the flight would get a refund.

In a statement issued immediately after the news conference, United insisted that Munoz and the airline called Dao numerous times to apologize. Munoz himself said he had left a message for Dao.

But Demetrio said neither Dao nor his family had heard from United.

Demetrio said his client accepts the apology. But the attorney questioned its sincerity, suggesting United acted because it was taking a PR "beating."

The attorney was unable to say precisely how Dao was injured. Dao didn't remember exactly what occurred because of the concussion he suffered, Demetrio said.

Pepper said her father and mother had been travelling from California to Louisville,

Kentucky, and had caught a connecting flight at O'Hare. After what happened, Dao "has no interest in ever seeing an airplane" and will probably be driven to Kentucky, Demetrio said.

United had selected Dao and three other passengers at random for removal from the plane after unsuccessfully offering \$800 in travel vouchers and a hotel stay to customers willing to give up their seats.

The three officers who removed Dao have been suspended from their jobs at the Chicago Aviation Department.

At a city council committee hearing, aldermen ripped into officials from United and the department about the episode.

"There are no excuses," alderman Michael Zalewski said.

John Slater, a United vice president, said that bumping passengers to accommodate airline employees happens infrequently, and that federal guidelines requiring rest for crew members made it necessary to get the employees on the flight to Louisville.

The Aviation Department's roughly 300 officers guard the city's two main airports but are not part of the regular Chicago police force, receive less training, and cannot carry guns inside the terminals.

"To be quite frank, Chicago employees should not be doing the dirty work for the friendly skies airline," said alderman Ed Burke, who played video of Dao being removed.

Aviation commissioner Ginger Evans told the committee that the officers had the authority to board the flight but that what happened on the plane is being investigated.

My Turn: Refugee from war

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these stories with the portrayals of the original interviews performed by teen actors. Each performance is followed by a panel discussion with former refugees. In collaboration with Sophorn Cheang of the IRCO Asian Family Center and Coi Vu of the Multnomah County Library, Refugee Dreams Revisited is being featured at three Multnomah County libraries. The shows take place at 2:00pm on May 28 at the North Portland Library, at 4:00pm on June 11 at the Central Library, and at 4:00pm on June 17 at Midland Library. The project closes June 24 at 2:00pm with a celebration at IRCO, located at 10301 N.E. Glisan Street in Portland. To learn more about the events, visit <www.mediarites.org>.

TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA



■ Polo

Polo's "Talking Story" column will return soon.