

**JA LIVING LEGACY.ORG**

The real story. Japanese American History told by those who lived it.

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NEWS RELEASE
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Ex-POW/MIA Korean War Veterans Reunion 2008



Photo: Nick Nishimoto Ex POW along side two Hawaiian Purple Heart Members

The Ex-POW Korean War Veterans held their annual reunion in Honolulu, Hawaii earlier this month. Over 160 attendees gathered to honor the POW/MIA survivors and those who perished while defending our country during the Korean War. Nick Nishimoto, an ex-POW Korean War veteran, invited Japanese American Living Legacy to participate in this year's event. This reunion was organized by Nick Nishimoto, and assisted by Francis Yasutake and Tommy Tahara to commemorate and recognize the POW/MIS soldiers and veterans.

Nishomoto, along with retired Colonel Al Streck (master of ceremony), hosted the opening banquet on April 3, 2008 at the Hale Koa Hotel. The Consul General to South Korea and various military personnel welcomed all of the ex-POWs. During the banquet, ex-POWs described their individual stories; some of the stories were shared with a sense

of humor. However the severity and cruelty of being a prisoner was never misplaced. Clarence Pang described one moment when he told his captors, “The best thing my grandmother ever did was leave your country!” This defiant comment earned him a brutal beating and had him literally thrown out the door. Shorty Estabrook had pogs made that read “Tiger’s Survivors” across them; Tiger was one of their most cruel punishers during captivity. Most of the ex-POWs knew “Tiger.” Tiger had a reputation for tormenting his prisoners on long marches; many did not survive.

The following days included a relaxing picnic on the beach at Waikiki, a private tour around Ford Island and the USS Arizona, a re-enlistment ceremony for five naval personnel, a tour of the Pacific Aviation Museum (on Ford Island), lunch at Sea Breeze Restaurant and a private tour of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC).

Susan Uyemura, Chief Executive Officer for JA Living Legacy described the experience as once in a lifetime. “Listening to their stories about being imprisoned for 30 months made it hard not to get teary-eyed. They are true American heroes,” said Uyemura.

Goichi Tamaye agreed to an interview with JA Living Legacy and found himself not being able to answer the question, “How did you survive?” Tamaye doesn’t know why he did and others did not; however, he remembers those he buried. To this day, he still has nightmares about those experiences and wonders what life would have been like had the circumstances been different. Susumu Shinagawa still bears the physical scars on his arm from the injuries he sustained before and during his prison days. These men clearly do not want to relive their 30+ months of nightmares, yet it is something they must do to remind us that there was a Korean War and that the survivors bear the physical and emotional scars to prove it. These and other stories are being transcribed and kept at the Center for Oral and Public History at California State University, Fullerton.

President Bush signed a proclamation declaring April 9 as POW/MIA National Recognition Day. Nishimoto has already mentioned that if his health permits, he will host this event one more time.

Japanese American Living Legacy is a nonprofit (501c3) organization based out of California State University, Fullerton. All of the board of directors, staff and advisors are volunteers. For more information on Japanese American Living Legacy, please visit their website at www.jalivinglegacy.org or call them at (714) 278-4483.

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