

A kiss 71 years in the making! American prisoner of war meets and thanks the Chinese man who rescued her and 1500 others from a Japanese Second World War camp after searching for him for 18 years

Mary Previte, 83, of New Jersey, met Wang Chenghan, in Guiyang, China

The pair last met in August 1945 when he rescued the 12-year-old in Japan

She was held in a school-turned-prison also home to rats for three years

Wang, now 91, rescued 1500 people from 30 nations from the prison camp

Ms Previte brought with her 18 'thank you' letters from other survivors

By PATRICK LION FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 15:35 GMT, 28 July 2016 | UPDATED: 19:21 GMT, 28 July 2016

A former child prisoner in a Japanese camp during the Second World War has flown half way around the world to thank the Chinese interpreter who helped rescue her 71 years ago.

Mary Previte, 83, of Haddonfield, New Jersey, met Wang Chenghan, 91, in his home in Guiyang city, Guizhou province, China.

The long stint in the camp during the war had seen Mary, then just 9, separated from her parents and held in a school-turned-prison camp for three years of her childhood in often tortuous conditions involving food shortages, dysentery and extreme heat.

But in an operation titled 'Duck Mission', Wang, together with a group of US soldiers, rescued Ms Previte, along with more than 1,500 others from 30 countries, from a Japanese internment camp in Weifang, Shandong province, in August 1945.

Ms Previte brought Wang, the only man alive of the seven rescuers, 18 thank-you letters, written by New Jersey Congressman Donald Norcross, US Ambassador to China Max Baucus, and other then



It was all smiles as Mary Previte, 84, of Haddonfield, New Jersey, met Wang Chenghan, 91, in his home in Guiyang city Guizhou province, China, this week

camp internees.

She told the Philadelphia Inquirer it had taken 18 years to locate Wang - who she knew as Eddie Wang and first spoken to last year by telephone, after making contact with four other rescuers in the late 1990s

She had also found the widows of two others. But she was only able to contact Wang, the sev-

enth soldier on the mission who was a Chinese interpreter, until a Chinese student studying in the US saw an article about her and realized that the missing man was his grandfather, according to the BBC.



Mary Previte (third from right), her siblings and other children board a plane after their release from the Japanese camp in August 1945

'It is the end of a dream to actually have found all of the heroes and have an opportunity to see them face to face,' she told the Philadelphia newspaper.

'It's really an opportunity to say thank you.'



Mary Previte, from New Jersey, hugs Wang Chenghan who rescued her 71 years ago as they reunite at Wang's home in

Mary had been living in China with her parents, who were Christian missionaries who ran a Bible school in the city of Kaifeng in Henan province, before the war began, according to a BBC report last year.



Ms Previte and Wang hold hands in Guiyang city Guizhou province, China.



Ms Previte reportedly said: 'It's really an opportunity to say thank you'

She had attended a school, Chefoo School, set up by her great grandfather, but America's involvement in the war soon meant Westerners in China became 'enemy aliens'.

The BBC said that the day after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Japanese troops marched into the Chefoo school and declared themselves in charge, turning the school into a military head-

quarters and later moving their prisons to a larger camp at Weihsien.

Her missionary parents had left Ms Previte and her siblings at school-turned-war prison along with her grandfather Herbert Hudson Taylor, a retired missionary - and all were held captive.



Ms Previte presented Wang with 18 thank you notes from people he helped save in 1945



The pair had an instant bond over the rescue in August 1945, holding hands during their meeting

Mary, who had been called Taylor at the time, said she would never forget the day they were all marched out of the school.

'That was the end of Western domination of China,' she told the BBC.

'They had crowds of Chinese along the roadside as these white people were carrying whatever they could in their hands - no servants were helping them now - marching off to concentration camp.'



The pair also shared photos during their reunion 71 years after the Second World War brought them together



Onlookers snapped photos of the pair as they witnessed the historic meeting in China

The camp reportedly had little medicine and some people died while food became scarce towards the end.

In one example detailed, people who traded in black market eggs were ordered to save the shells, which were crushed and baked - and fed to the calcium-deficient children.

Mary told the BBC Chefoo School's teachers would help the children by turning the problems into games - telling children to try catching rats, flies or bed bugs and award prizes for the winners.

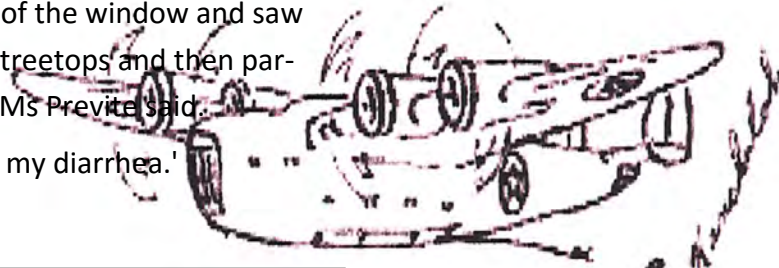
'Our teachers set up a comforting, predictable set of rituals and traditions. Do you know how safe that makes children feel?' she told the broadcaster.

She had fought dysentery and extreme heat during her time at camp - until she heard planes flying

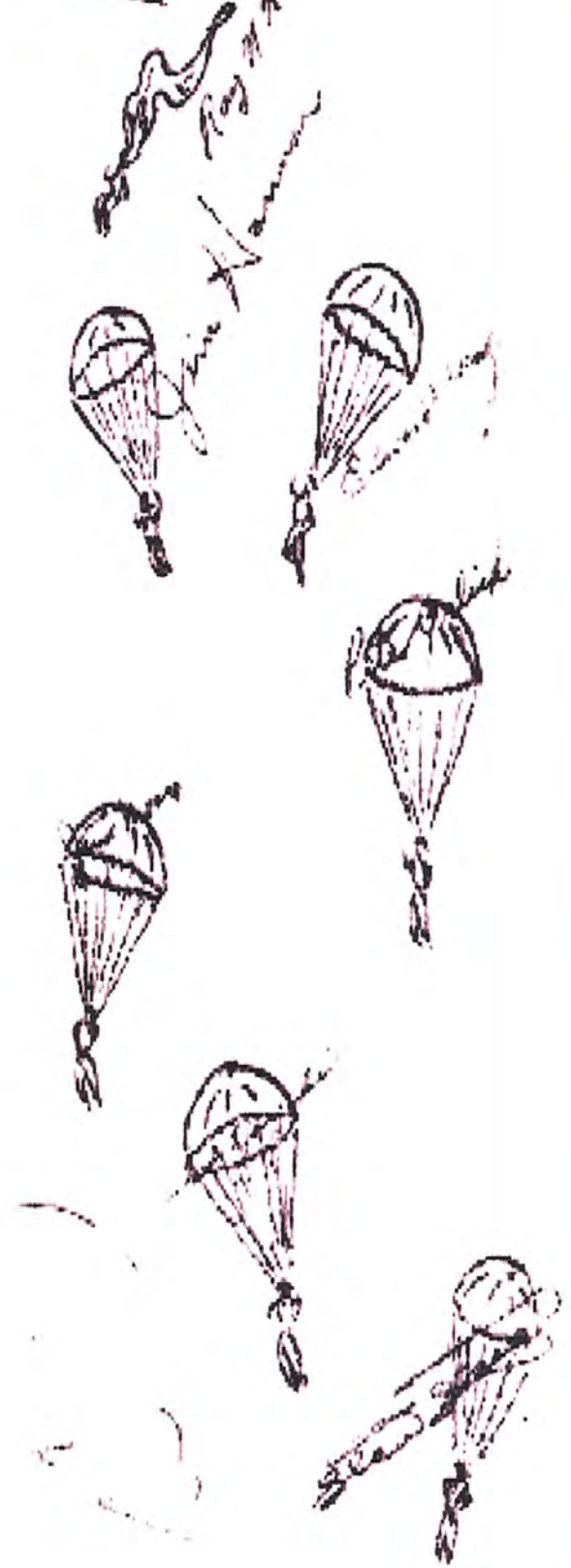
overheard carrying US soldiers who soon helped liberate the camp with Wang, the BBC said.

'I jumped and looked out of the window and saw a plane flying low over the treetops and then parachutes started dropping,' Ms Previte said.

'It was an instant cure for my diarrhea.'



The couple also discussed photos from the time of the Second World War when Ms Previte was in a prison camp in Japan



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