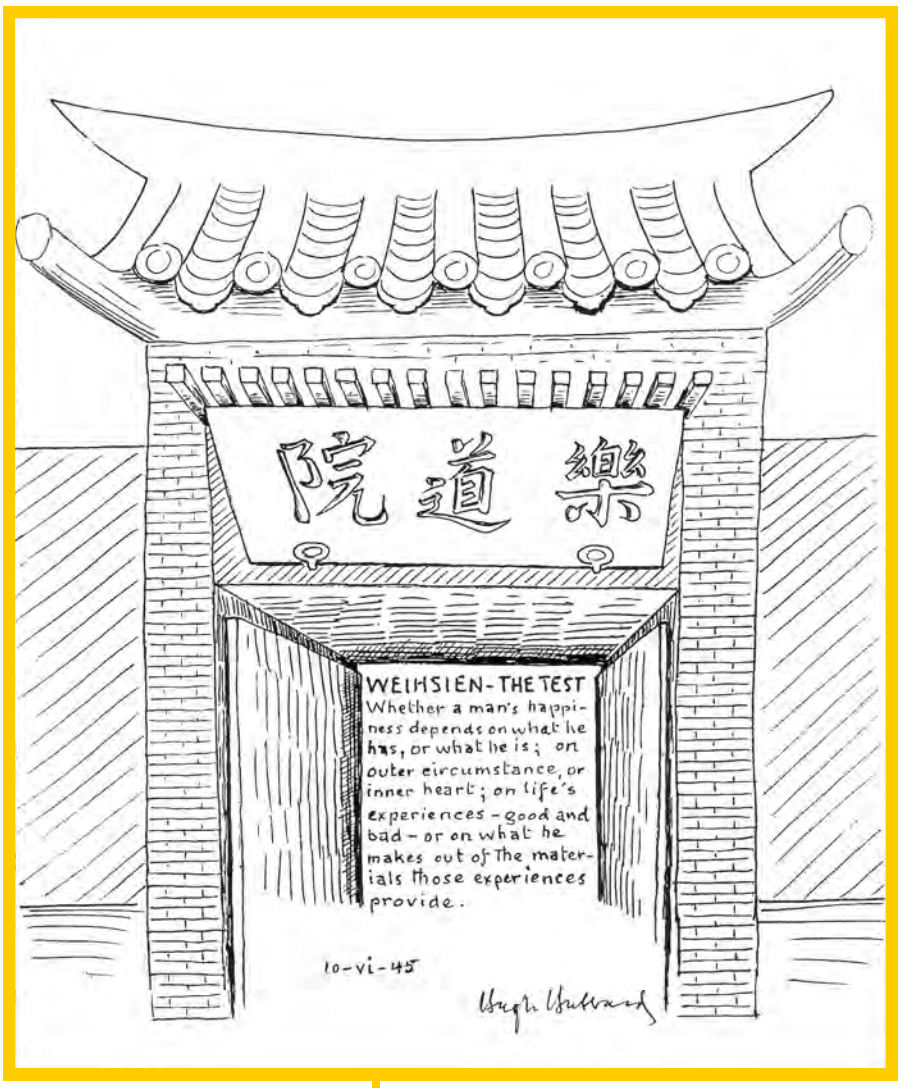


WEIHSIEN

excerpts

www.weihsien-paintings.org

Mary Previte
née TAYLOR

***TAYLOR FAMILY REUNION**, Fenghsiang, Shgensi, September 1945.*

Standing: Mary, Jamie, Kathleen, John
Seated: Alice and James Hudson Taylor with Bertie, almost 5 years old. Separated from their parents by warring armies, the four older children did not see their parents for 5 1/2 years,. Bertie was born while his brothers and sisters were prisoners of the Japanese. #

Prisoner artist's sketch of Duck Team parachutists autographed by the seven liberators. Nagaki was the second jumper.

How I Found My World War II Heroes

AMERICA HAS HEROES: I KNOW THEIR NAMES

Mary Taylor Previte

Who can forget that August day? Who can forget those heroes?

When I was a child, I could understand the mad excitement of August 17, 1945 -- a sweltering, windy day -- seven men parachuting at only 400 feet from an American bomber to liberate 1,500 Allied prisoners in the Weihsien internment camp. I was 12 years old, interned for three years by the Japanese and separated from my parents for five and a half years. I had never seen grown ups so dizzy with joy. I had never seen such hysteria. They were weeping, screaming, dancing, waving at the sky.

We trailed these gorgeous liberators everywhere. With the wonder of children, we cut off pieces of their hair for souvenirs. We begged for their signatures, their buttons, their insignia, pieces of parachute. We sat on their laps. We made them sing the songs of America —"You Are My Sunshine" and "Maresey doats and doesey doats and little lambsey divey." We sang these songs until the grown-ups held their ears.

But I was too young to understand the miracle of seven men—against how many Japanese? -- risking their lives to rescue me and 1,500 prisoners whom they didn't even know.

As I grew up, I wondered about that miracle. I thought about heroes like that. Who were these men? Where could I find them after all these years? In Japanese records? In American military records? I had no idea. But I had their names.

In 1997, when I was running for political office, a New Jersey State Senator—my running mate—asked me to substitute for him at a Saturday night banquet reunion of World War II veterans—a banquet in a hotel located only ten minutes from my house. He wanted me to honor the group with a thank-you proclamation from the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey, a thank you for their service to America. These are veterans of the China-Burma-India Veterans Association, my running mate told me.

China-Burma-India veterans! I had never heard of this group before. But I felt the goose bumps ripple up my spine. "China-Burma-India veterans. That's who rescued me," I said. So to prepare for that Saturday night, I dug into my treasure chest and typed out the names of our Weihsien heroes.

The banquet hall was filled with 150 men and women in their 70s and 80s -- all American veterans who had served in the China-Burma-India theatre of operations during World War II. They had assembled from the north eastern region of the United States. When my turn came at the microphone, I read the thank-you proclamation from the New Jersey Legislature. Then I said, "I know it was not an accident that I was invited here tonight to substitute for Senator Adler."

I told them the miracle story of August 17, 1945 -- an American B-24 "Liberator" bomber flying low over the treetops of the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center. I was a child, I told them, watching parachutes drop from the belly of the plane, dropping into the gaoliang fields beyond the barrier walls.

Weihsien went mad. With 1,500 other prisoners, I dashed for the gates.

I poured out the story—prisoners bursting through the gate and into the fields to welcome seven angel liberators. I told about the Salvation Army Band up on a mound by the gate, playing the Victory Medley to welcome these sun-bronzed American heroes.

"I brought their names," I said. Slowly, clearly, I read each name into the microphone. "Major Stanley Staiger, Ensign James Moore, 1st Lt. James J. Hannon, T/4 Raymond Hanchulak, Sgt. Tadash Nagaki, T/5 Peter Orlich, Eddie Wang."

I paused. I was hoping against hope. "Is any one of my heroes in this room tonight?"

I was greeted by silence. I was greeted with men and women weeping. But when the banquet ended, they crushed me in their arms. They told me to write these names down in their national magazine. "Write their names, their rank, anything you know about them." They told me to write that I was looking for all of these heroes—to include my name, address, and telephone number.

So I wrote a notice for their national magazine.

At the banquet, one veteran from the state of Maryland became so excited by my story that he took my list of names. A few days later, a fat, brown envelope arrived in the mail from Maryland. He had done a computer search for every telephone number in the United States that matched the names of my heroes. Out of how many million Americans, he had listed pages and pages of names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Somewhere in those pages on my kitchen table were the whereabouts of my World War II heroes. I was campaigning door-to-door for a seat in the New Jersey General Assembly, and I had no idea where to start. Should I phone? Should I send out letters -- "Are you the Stanley Staiger who liberated the Weihsien concentration camp in China, August 17, 1945"? Should I include self addressed, stamped, return envelopes?

Some of my self-addressed envelopes returned with loving responses: "God bless you in your search."

But still no heroes.

The first break came in September, 1997. I couldn't believe it! The call came from a woman who lives ten minutes from my house. She had read in the "China-Burma-India Veterans Association Soundoff" magazine that I was looking for men who had liberated Weihsien. She had served in Burma as a nurse, she said. "My sister lives next door to Raymond Hanchulak," she told me. Hanchulak was the medic on the Weihsien rescue mission. She gave me the telephone number in Bear Creek Village, Pennsylvania.

I decided to make my telephone calls on Sunday nights. Sunday night calls gave me a cheap 5-cents-a-minute rate.

When I asked for Raymond Hanchulak, the woman who answered the telephone, asked me the purpose of my call. My words stumbled; Raymond had liberated 1,500 Allied prisoners from a Japanese concentration camp. I wanted to say thank you. I heard her gasp. "My Raymond died last year," she said. Here was a widow begging me for every detail I could give her about her hero husband. "He was trained in secrecy," she said. He had gone to war from the ethnic enclaves of Pennsylvania's mining region. He had been a member of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and later served in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He was trained not to talk. Until I told her, Helen Hanchulak had never heard her husband's Weihsien story.

I began to have misgivings. Would I find only widows? I knew I needed to speed my search.

My list included only one Peter Orlich. Peter Orlich was the radio operator—and the youngest member of the rescue team. A lady answered the phone when I called. Another widow. Carol Orlich told me that Peter had died four years before. But she knew Pete's Weihsien story. She had corresponded with him throughout the war. She told me he had volunteered for the rescue mission. She told me that he had feared being excluded because he wore glasses. So as he stood in the physical examination line, he tucked his glasses into his pocket. He listened to each man in front of him reading the letters on the eye chart. He passed the exam by memorizing the letters. On his first practice parachute jump, his glasses flew up onto his forehead so he couldn't see. For the jump to liberate Weihsien, Pete taped his glasses to his head.

Taking a gift from the bottom of a drawer in Pete's bedroom bureau, Carol Orlich mailed to me one of the treasures of my life today—a piece of silk parachute embroidered with the rescue scene and autographed by each of the liberation team. A woman internee had given it to Pete as a goodbye gift when the team was leaving for Tsingtao. Carol wanted me to have it.

Now I had found two widows. I knew time was not on my side. My telephone bills provide a history of my search. On a Sunday night, I phoned Alliance, Nebraska, deep in America's heartland, hoping desperately to connect with the only Tadashi Nagaki on my list. Nagaki was the Japanese American interpreter on the rescue team

"I'm calling for Tadashi Nagaki," I said.
"Speaking," he said.

I began to cry. I had found my first hero. We chattered for an hour. I was full of questions. A widower, Tad farms beans, and corn, and sugar beets on his farm outside Alliance and is most comfortable with the solitude of his tractor. So I had to pull. "What did it feel like to have all of us children following you around?" I asked.

"Like being on a pedestal," he said. I knew that was the understatement of the century. They were heroes. They were gods. Tad remembered a girl cutting off a chunk of his hair so she'd have a souvenir.

Tad said he could help me find Jim Moore in Dallas, Texas. Their families had remained friends for more than fifty years, exchanging cards at Christmas time. Bless my soul! I wanted to hug the world. I had dreaded the task of phoning more than 150 James Moores on my list.

Jim Moore bowled me over with his story. He was the child of missionaries to China, he said—just like me. He had attended the Chefoo School for children of missionaries—just like me. When he graduated in 1936, he returned to the United States, graduated from college, started law school, and joined the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI). After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the Chefoo School's alumni magazine announced that the Japanese had captured the school and marched it to internment camp. Jim could picture it all—his teachers, the little brothers and sisters of his classmates, all marched off and locked up. The magazine listed his classmates already serving in the military.

By this time, Jim had a wife and two children. Because the FBI was already protecting America's homeland, the rules said he didn't have to go to war. His heart said something else. He had to go. Jim Moore resigned from the FBI, joined the Navy and the super-secret OSS, signed up to go to China because he could speak Chinese, and volunteered for the rescue mission. When he parachuted into the goaliang fields outside Weihsien, the first person he asked to see was "PA" Bruce, head master of the Chefoo School. Jim had retired from a career in the CIA when I found him.

I had come to a dead end in my search. I couldn't find Major Stanley Staiger. I couldn't find 1st Lt. Jim Hannon. Jim Moore promised to help me search. With a retiree's time and the skill of an intelligence professional, he didn't take long.

One morning, he phoned me at work to say he had found Stanley Staiger. He had searched in a program listing every driver's license in the United States and found Staiger in Reno, Nevada. "I talked with him today," he said.

Forget about the 5-cents-a-minute phone calls! I used my personal credit card at my desk at work and phoned at the high priced, middle-of-the-day rates. Stanley Staiger was

fragile and recuperating from a fall and a broken hip. Here was the hero — wasn't he ten feet tall? -- who had lead the mission that rescued Weihsien, hoping out loud to me—once a little girl he had rescued—the hero-rescuer hoping out loud that he'd be able to walk again.

I promised him. "Anyone who had the guts and spizerinctum to lead a mission that rescued 1,500 people is definitely—guaranteed—going to walk again."

In December, Jim Moore phoned again. He had found Jim Hannon in Yucca Valley, California. I connected by phone again.

As I found each hero, I telephoned the newspapers in each of their towns and trumpeted the news: "Your town has a hero in its midst." Our heroes made headlines that they had never made after World War II. Today, when I tell this story to students in schools and colleges, I bring the names and addresses of our rescue team and ask students to write to the men and the widows. Tad Nagaki and Peter Orlich's widow each says they have a heaping box full of these letters and Valentine's day cards made by adoring children. I phone the men on holidays and send cards on their birthdays. My heroes have become my friends.

Four months after I was sworn into office as an Assemblywoman, the agency of retired FBI agents flew Jim Moore and his wife from Dallas, Texas, for a surprise—and very public—reunion with Jim Moore and me on the floor of the New Jersey General Assembly. I wept. No-nonsense legislators wept. Even cynic TV cameramen wept.

My heart said it wasn't enough. So late in 1998, I started my pilgrimage, crisscrossing America to say thank you to each one of these heroes face to face. I went looking for the soul of Americas and it is beautiful.

Who are these men? The war snatched Stanley Staiger out of business studies at the University of Oregon. After the war, he never returned to college. Tad Nagaki was a Nisei farm boy who didn't speak English until he went to a tiny elementary school in America's heartland. His immigrant father had come to America to work on the railroad and sent for a "picture bride" from Japan. Jim Hannon was the youngest of a very large family and an adventurer who had mined for gold in Alaska. He, himself, had escaped from a German concentration camp in 1944. Raymond Hanchulak came from coal mining regions of Pennsylvania and served his whole career in the military, including service in Vietnam. Jim Moore was son of Southern Baptist missionaries to China and the only college graduate in the group. Growing up in the Queens, New York, Peter Orlich was offered a scholarship to Columbia University. But his family needed Pete to work to help support the family, not go to college.

I'm still looking for "Eddie" Cheng-Han Wang, the Chinese interpreter on the mission.

What a journey of joy to honor these heroes in public and private meetings—in church, civic groups, veterans' meetings and conventions! I celebrated Stanley Staiger's 81st birthday with him in Reno, Nevada. What a journey! Face to face, I have honored each of the six Americans on the team or his widow.

I could never say enough thank yous. Some people say America has no heroes. *I know their names.*

(Mary T. Previte, 351 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield, New Jersey, 08033, USA.)

#

The Philadelphia Inquirer

August 17, 2005

Survivors celebrate liberation

By Mary T. Previte

Push bombings and hurricanes and grief off the front page. Today is the anniversary of our Liberation Day: August 17, 2005. The day the American heroes came.

What does a child remember from almost three years of imprisonment in a Japanese concentration camp?

Yesterday, I remembered the gut-wrenching hunger, guard dogs, bayonet drills, prisoner numbers and badges, daily roll calls, bedbugs, flies, and unspeakable sanitation. Yesterday, I remembered the Japanese soldiers commandeering our school, marching us, shipping us, trucking us to internmemnt camp. Guards with unfettered power over 1,500 prisoners. Yesterday, I remembered my 5 1/2 years separated from my missionary parents, with warring armies keeping us apart.

But not on Liberation Day.

Today, a world away, we children (all senior citizens now) will stand in that place in China where we saw American liberators parachuting from the skies. We will gather in Weihsien, coming from the United States, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong. We will stand where winds buffeted the parachutists as they drifted down beyond the barbed wire and the barrier walls. We will tumble our memories of six gorgeous, sun-bronzed Americans. Bless them!

Someone will remember the ragamuffin crowd of scrawny prisoners stampeding through the gates -- stumbling past Japanese guards -- into the open fields

Screaming, Dancing. Weeping. Hysterical with joy.

Teddy Pearson from Montreal will remember 21-year-old Peter Orlich, the team's radio operator, standing by a crumpled parachute in a field of corn stubble.

"I was the first to reach him," he will say. He will remember Orlich's brush-cut -- 1945 flattop -- and his glasses taped with pink "medical tape" around his temples. In 1945, the 10-year-old walked Orlich back to the camp, chattering with a hero.

My brother, Jamie, from Hong Kong -- imagine it! -- finding himself locked outside the camp. As the stampede dashed out to welcome the liberators, Jamie raced with his classmates through the wide-open gate, through he fields, running to explore the sleepy, farming town nearby. When they returned, after almost three years of being locked in, they found themselves locked out!

And, yes, someone will remember the Salvation Army Band playing a victory medley. The Salvation Army had guts. The band coupled hymns of the faith with the national anthems of America, China, England and Russia. "One of those will rescue us," members said. Every Tuesday night, right outside the Japanese commandant's office, they practiced the medley. And on Liberation Day, up on a mound by the gates, they blasted away, "O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" A teenager in the band crumpled to the ground and wept. We were free.

Someone will surely remember the Juicy Fruit gum the Americans gave us children. They chewed it, then passed the sticky wads from mouth to mouth.

I remember trailing these gorgeous liberators around. My heart went flip-flop over every one of them. I wanted to touch their skin, to sit on their laps. We begged for souvenirs, begged for their autographs, their insignia, their buttons, pieces of parachute. We cut off chunks of their hair. We begged them to sing the songs of America. They taught us "You are my sunshine." Sixty years later, I can sing it still.

Only three of our heroes are alive today -- all 85 years old. They are too frail to join us in China. Jim Moore in Dallas, we will remember you, honor you, thank you again today, and Jim Hannon in Yucca Valley, Calif., and Tad Nagaki in Alliance, Neb. Just like today, our heroes came from all across America.

O, yes, America has heroes. I know their names.

_____

Assemblywoman Mary T. Previte writes from Haddonfield, New Jersey.

Finding My Heroes from Weihsien Prison Camp

Mary Taylor Previte

I fell in love with America fifty-five years ago.

They were spilling from the guts of this low-flying plane, dangling from parachutes that looked like giant poppies, dropping into the fields outside the barrier walls. I dashed to the barracks window in time to see the American red, white, and blue emblazoned on its belly. The Americans had come. It was August, 1945.

"Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center," the Japanese called our concentration camp in China's Shandong Province. I was twelve years old. For three years my two brothers and sister and I had been captives of the Japanese. For five and one half years we had been separated from our missionary parents by warring armies.

But now the Americans had come. Six young American angels.

Weihsien went mad. I raced for the entrance gate and was swept off my feet by the pandemonium. Men ripped off their shirts and waved at the bomber circling above. Prisoners ran in circles and pounded the skies with their fists. They wept, hugged, cursed, danced. Wave after wave of prisoners swept me past the guards into the fields beyond the camp.

A mile away we found them -- six young Americans, all in their twenties, and a Chinese interpreter -- standing with their weapons ready, surrounded by fields of ripening broom corn. Advancing towards them, intoxicated with joy, came a tidal wave of prisoners. We were free in the open fields.

Back in the camp, we trailed our angels everywhere. They were gorgeous American men, sun-bronzed, with meat on their bones. We wanted their insignias. We wanted their signatures. We wanted their buttons. We wanted snips of their hair. We wanted souvenir pieces of parachutes. They gave us our first taste of Juicy Fruit gum. We chewed it and passed the sticky wads from mouth to mouth.

We made them sing to us the songs of America. They taught us "You Are My Sunshine, My Only Sunshine." Fifty-five years later, I can sing it still.

As the decades passed, I could never understand how or why six Americans would parachute in a suicide mission to rescue 1,500 people they didn't even know. Even men in the O.S.S. It was beyond my imagination. How would you go about finding these heroes? I had no idea.

In 1997, when I was campaigning as a candidate for the New Jersey General Assembly, a Senator asked me to substitute for him at a Saturday night banquet reunion of a group of veterans -- China-Burma-India veterans, he told me, from World War II, an All-East Coast reunion. He asked me to honor them with a proclamation of appreciation from the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly.

China-Burma-India veterans! A feeling rippled up my spine. That's who rescued me. I rummaged through ancient treasures in a rusty trunk and found their names. Along with

the gold-imprinted proclamation from the New Jersey Legislature, I carried their names to the banquet on that Saturday night.

When my turn came to take the microphone, I spoke to a roomful of 150 men and women in their 70s and 80s.

"I know it's not an accident that I was invited to be here tonight," I said. I told them the story of America's rescuing angels parachuting from a B-24 bomber to liberate the Weihsien Concentration Camp.

"I brought their names," I said. I read them slowly into the microphone.

"Major Stanley A. Staiger, Sgt. Tadash Nagaki, Ensign James W. Moore, T/5 Peter C. Orlich, radio operator; Eddie Wang, Chinese interpreter; 1st Lt. James J Hannon; T/4 Raymond N. Hanchulak, medic." I paused when I finished reading the names. "Is any one of my heroes here tonight?" I asked.

I was greeted by silence and by people weeping. But when the banquet ended, they enveloped me. They told me I must write the story and print the names in their national China-Burma-India Veterans Association magazine, Sound Off. "Write that you're looking for these men," they said. "Write your name address and telephone number."

Fascinated with my story, one of the veterans, Ed Kennedy from Maryland, took my list of names. That was May, 1997. A few days later, a fat brown envelope arrived in the mail. From an Internet program with every telephone number in the United States, Ed Kennedy had sent me a printout of hundreds of addresses and phone numbers with names that matched my heroes. I was dazed with wonder. I looked at the fat envelope. There on my kitchen table were the whereabouts of my heroes. Hundreds of names.

In September, I got the first break. Miracle of miracles! A nurse who served in the CHINA-BURMA-India theatre of operations and who lives ten minutes from my own house, read the article in the CBIVA magazine. Vinnie Camp had served in Burma. Her sister in Pennsylvania lived next door to Raymond Hanchulak, one of my heroes, she said.

In a frenzy of hope, I took to the phone and the U.S. mails. My first two finds were widows. It made me shudder. I might never find the men alive to say thank you.

There was only one Tad Nagaki on my list of names. Tad Nagaki in Alliance, Nebraska. I phoned on a Sunday night. "I'm calling for Tad Nagaki," I said.

"Speaking," he said. I could hardly talk. I had found my first hero.

On my MCI, 5 cents-a-minute-on-Sunday rate we chattered for an hour, me in New Jersey and he in Nebraska, half a continent away. Did he remember how he felt with us trailing our heroes everywhere they went? I asked. "Like putting us up on a pedestal," he said. He remembered girl prisoners cutting off pieces of his hair for souvenirs.

What words would ever be enough to thank a man who risked his life to give me freedom, to give me all the opportunities America gives its children?

By December I had found them all and thanked them. Imagine it! After more than 50 years! Two widows and four heroes, all in their 80s now -- in Pennsylvania, New York, Nebraska, Texas, Nevada, and California.

But talking to them by telephone, sending them cards, and creating a rumpus in newspapers in their home towns didn't feel like enough.

So I started my pilgrimage -- crisscrossing America to visit each one of them face-to-face to honor them. From New York to California, I went looking for the soul of America. And it is beautiful!

Each one is different: A Japanese-American farm boy who didn't speak English until he went to school. A son of missionaries to China. An adventurer who prospected for gold in Alaska. An ROTC student snatched from his third year at the University of Oregon. A boy from the coal mines and ethnic enclaves of Pennsylvania. The youngest of the team -- a kid with a scholarship to college whose family needed him to work, not go to school -- who memorized the eye chart so he wouldn't be excluded from the rescue team because he wore glasses.

(And he taped his glasses to his head when he parachuted down to liberate the camp.)

I could never say enough thank yous. I love you, America.

Note: My search continues. Who was the pilot who flew that B-24 bomber that liberated the Weihsien Concentration Camp in August 17, 1945? Named "The Armored Angel," the B-24 Liberator took off from Kunming on August 16 and stopped overnight in Sian (Xi'an) in Shensi Province. In the early morning of August 17, the plane flew east to Weihsien in Shandong Province where the seven-man rescue team parachuted to liberate the camp at 9 a.m. The B-24 did not land.

It was one of several humanitarian rescue missions that flew out of Kunming that day to liberate civilian concentration camps dotted around China and Manchuria.

I continue to search for "Eddie" Cheng-Han Wang, the Chinese interpreter on the rescue mission.

If you have information, please contact Mary T. Previte, 351 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield, NJ 08033, or phone: 856-428-4909.

#

I know a ditty nutty as a fruitcake
Goofy as a goon and silly as a loon
Some call it pretty, others call it crazy
But they all sing this tune:
Mairzy doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey
A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you?
Yes! Mairzy doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey
A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you?
If the words sound queer and funny to your ear, a little bit jumbled and jivey
Sing "Mares eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy"
Oh! Mairzy doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey
A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you-oo?
A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you?
(REPEAT)

Thanks, Mary for the story of your discovery.

I have often been struck by how many of the world's creative and innovative things only happen because someone -- some individual person -- becomes deeply involved and committed to them in a way that other people who don't share that commitment find hard to understand. Your "magnificent obsession" is an example of how that kind of single-minded focus and deep commitment can truly make the world a better place. Thanks again.

Don Menzi.

At 11:29 PM 3/9/2004 -0500, you wrote:

Weihsien rescuer Jim Hannon has been hospitalized with a stroke and has started physical therapy. Jim's wife phoned me yesterday.

My saga of finding these heroes who liberated Weihsien started in 1997.

Shortly after being asked to run for election to the New Jersey state General Assembly, I was asked to honor American World War II veterans from a group called

the China-Burma-India Veterans Association. They were holding an all-East coast of the United States reunion banquet at a hotel about 10 minutes from my house.

I had never before heard of the China-Burma-India Veterans Association. When it occurred to me that some of our Weihsien heroes might be attending that reunion banquet, prickles rippled up and down my spine . So I took to the banquet the list of names of our heroes. I found 150 men and women in their 70s and 80s, swapping World War II stories. When I got my turn at the microphone, I presented them with a proclamation from the New Jersey Legislature, thanking them for their service to America. Then I told them the story of Americans parachuting from a B-24 "Liberator" -- August 17, 1945 -- to liberate 1,400 prisoners in the Weihsien Concentration Camp -- me among them. I read the names into the microphone and asked if any of my heroes were in the room. I was greeted by men and women weeping, and I was greeted by silence. But after the banquet, they swarmed me, wrapped me in their arms, gave me souvenirs. They said I must list the name of our heroes in their national magazine and include my name, address, and phone number -- and ask for help in finding them. I did exactly that.

By the end of that year -- 1997, with letters, and phone calls, and luck, I had found them all and said thank you by telephone. As I found each one, I made a rumpus in their towns, phoned their local newspapers to say they had a hero in their town. I told their story. Many of their families had never heard it. Newspapers ran stories of their heroism.

I wrote a story for the Chefoo Magazine, listing their names, addresses and telephone numbers.

When I was elected and sworn in as an Assemblywoman in 1998, an Assemblyman who is a retired member of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), orchestrated the surprise of the century in the legislature. This Assemblyman and other retired FBI agents flew Weihsien rescuer Jim Moore and his wife from Dallas, Texas, for a surprise reunion with me and Jim Moore on the platform of the Assembly chambers. Grown men wept. (Jim Moore, by the way, is a retired FBI agent.)

That's when I decided I would start my pilgrimage across America to visit each one and say thank you face to face. What a wonderful journey! It took me about a year and a half.

I keep in touch with them by telephone and letter. And whenever I tell the story to school children, I ask the children to write letters. As a result, these aging heroes get a fairly frequent flurry of letters and drawings, full of the innocent admiration of children. Then the heroes write back to the children and even send photos from World War II. Our mailmen carry joy. The joy most certainly splashes over me.

In one of my other worlds, I'm taking the lead in the state legislature in reforming the state's criminal code. These Weihsien friendships provide a delightful change of pace.

Mary Previte

China, World War II

A mother cut off from her own youngsters.

We *thought* the children were safe, there on the coast of China — safe from anything. Until the Japanese invaders came.

James and I were Free Methodist missionaries, a husband-and-wife team, deep in the Chinese province of Honan. Our four children were in the Chefoo School in Shantung Province, 1000 miles away. My husband had attended that school. His grandfather, James Hudson Taylor I, had *started* it. The school had known four generations of Taylors, and the teachers were more family than not.

My father-in-law Herbert Taylor was there in Chefoo, too. I felt as if the children were in their own home, safe and snug. I was an American, my husband was British. We'd long been missionaries. So it seemed to me that the children would be safe anywhere in the world.

Then suddenly the Japanese swept into China. Mortars screamed overhead. Bombs plunged to the earth, maiming and killing people. Entrapping and scattering people. We were cut off! It was impossible to get back to Chefoo.

Pushing farther inland from the east, the Japanese overran Honan in 1939, and James and I ran for our lives. I was six months pregnant at the time. We escaped to the town of Fenghsiang, far, far inland, on the western border of Shensi. But my thoughts were constantly in Chefoo.

How could I have known when I married into the Taylor family, missionaries to the Chinese since the 1800s that this was how life would turn out? I had melded into their ways: of teaching and loving and sharing with the Chinese, of riding bicycles or walking or hiring the jolting horse-drawn carts, of eating with chopsticks and sleeping on a mat atop a large brick bed. China was home, and when the war came, disrupting the lives of the Chinese, splitting apart families, it did the same to the Taylors.

I sent frequent letters to Chefoo, telling the children where we were and somehow, miraculously, a few letters came to us from the children: They'd had Sunday dinner with Grandpa. Kathleen, 14, had earned another Girl Guides badge. Jamie, 10, had breezed through his exams. Mary had just celebrated her ninth birthday. John, eight, had been sick, but was much better. And, briefly, there had been some ground skirmishes between Japanese troops and Chinese guerrillas, but the school had escaped harm, and the fighting subsided.

I would take out the children's letters and reread them until they became frayed at the edges. I agonized over the lack of news. "James," I would say, "do you think the children are all right? It's been so long since we've heard anything."

With his quiet faith, James reassured me. But I saw the worry in his eyes. And I knew that his very human fear for the children's safety was just as great as mine.

I pictured them over and over — the times we had spent together reading and talking and singing around the organ. I remembered them the way they looked the day James and I left Chefoo — Kathleen in a navy blue jumper and white blouse, her long, wavy hair falling past her shoulders; Mary with her blond bob and pretty blue eyes; our sons, so young and full of promise.

"Heavenly Father, keep them safe," I prayed. "Watch over Grandpa Taylor."

The air raids sent us running for shelter day after day. Epidemics and disease raged among the Chinese soldiers. In parts of China, food was so scarce because of drought that people were eating tree bark. In the midst of this, with missionaries helping with relief programs, passing out food and clothes to refugees, James and I started the Northwest Bible Institute to prepare young people for the ministry. Somehow, we knew, God's work had to go on; and we spent long hours developing a curriculum and preparing teachers, then enrolling students.

One day, after teaching a class, I was just entering our house when the newspaper deliveryman came. The paper's large Chinese characters announced: "**Pearl Harbor Attacked. U.S. Enters War**." As I absorbed the news, I realized why there had been a long silence from the children. *Chefoo had been in the Japanese line of attack.*

"Oh, dear God," I whispered, "my children, my children. . ." I knelt beside the bed. Not even tears came at first, just wave after wave of anguish.

As the fear penetrated deeper, I remembered the horror stories of Nanking — where all of the young women of that town had been brutally raped. And I thought of our lovely Kathleen, beginning to blossom into womanhood. . .

Great gulping sobs wrenched my whole body. I lay there, gripped by the stories we had heard from refugees — violent deaths, starvation, the conscription of young boys—*children*—to fight.

I thought of 10-year-old Jamie, so conscientious, so even-tempered. "What has happened to Jamie, Lord? Has someone put a gun in *his* hands? Ordered him to the front lines? To death?"

Mary and John, so small and so helpless, had always been inseparable. "Merciful God," I cried, "are they even alive?"

Kneeling there by the bed, pleading with God, I knew

without any doubt at all that I had no other hope but God. I reached out to Him now, completely. "Please help my children. Let them be alive, *please*!" Then, as if in a dream. I drifted back to a time when I was a girl of 16 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. I pictured our minister, Pa Ferguson, sitting there telling me words he had spoken years ago: "**Alice, if you take care of the things that are dear to God. He will take care of the things dear to you**." That was Pa Ferguson's translation of "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you**." (Matthew 6:33) It was his way of making his point to the teenagers he was working with.

In the stillness of the bedroom, I pondered Pa Ferguson's words. Who were the ones dear to God? The Chinese to whom God had called me to minister. And who were the ones dear to me? My children.

I did not know whether my children were dead or alive, nevertheless a deep peace replaced my agony. This war had not changed God's promise. With that assurance, I felt the aching weight of fear in my stomach lift.

"All right, God," I said finally. "John and Mary and Kathleen and Jamie are in Your care. With all my heart I believe that You will guard them. I know that You will bring us back together, and until that day comes. I will put all my energy into Your work. *I promise*."

We had a pact. God and I, and I knew He would keep His part of it. And I must keep mine.

So it went, each day — taking care of the things dear to God. Like the day at the house of Mr. Chang, whose body and mind were devastated by disease. "He will not let anyone near the house," his wife warned.

I walked to the window and called, "Mr. Chang, we have come to pray for you. You can be healed. Please let us come in." And he did! He turned his life over to God. *And I knew that God was watching over my children*.

There were times when I rode into the hills with our new baby Bertie strapped on my back and held open-air meetings with people in remote villages. "This is for You, Heavenly Father," I would say in prayer, "because these are Your children, dear to You." *And I knew that He was caring for my children, too*.

And in the compound, when I worked as a midwife delivering babies, I would say to God, "Thank You for letting me deliver this child." *And I thanked Him for delivering my children from harm.*

In time we received word that everyone in Chefoo School had been captured and crammed into a concentration camp in Weihsien along with 1500 other captives. But we had no way of knowing, from day to day, whether the children were alive.

People would say to me. "You have such great strength, Alice, carrying on, yet knowing that your children have been captured."

September 10, 1945: Six Chefoo School children lined up to board U. S. cargo plane at Weihsien for flight to OSS base in Si-An: Left to right: Raymond Moore, David Allen, John , Mary, Jamie, Kathleen Taylor. The four Taylor children were reunited with their parents, Reverend James and Alice Taylor, the next day after a separation of 5 1/2 years. They were also introduced to a little brother, Herbert, , almost 5 years old, whom they had never seen before. Notice children wearing winter coats in September's heat.

I remember September 10, 1945, the day six of us Chefoo children were flown out of the camp from the air strip beyond the walls -- Raymond Moore, David Allen, and four Taylors -- Kathleen, Jamie, John, and me. We were only the second planeload out. For how many weeks the B-24s and the B-29s had been dropping food and clothing into the camp. It seemed so easy. So onto the plane I carried my own tiny relief and memory package to drop to the girls who for almost three years had been my dorm mates in the Lower School Dormitory. Sorrow of sorrows! When the plane got into the air, Weihsien shrank to a tiny, unreachable target beneath us and I don't think the airplane windows opened. I curled up and went to sleep on a heap of used parachutes piled on the floor of the plan. When the plane touched down in Sian, the men at the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) base served us ice cream and cake and showed us a Humphrey Bogart movie . I think it was "Casablanca." Kathleen and I slept that night in an officer's tent -- unaccompanied by bedbugs. The next night -- 9/11 -- we were home. We hadn't seen our parents for 5 1/2 years.

And I would say. "My strength is God's strength. I know He will not forsake my children. I know this'."

Through it all — the scarcity, the sickness, the dying, through the bombings when I didn't breathe until I heard the explosion and realized I was still alive — I did what I knew God wanted me to do. I took care of the Chinese. I passed along His Word to doctors, to army officers and troops, to students, to parents and grandparents. Over and over. Day after day.

In spare moments after school I began sewing clothes for Kathleen and Mary.

"What is that you're making, wifey?" James asked, using his usual term of endearment.

"Some pajamas for the girls, James, for when they come back. I hope I've judged the sizes right."

He was silent. Just looked at me.

Then one Sunday morning, as I held services in a village 20 miles from Fenghsiang, one of the students from the Bible Institute appeared in the crowd, pushing my bicycle, and announced,' "They say that the Japanese have surrendered!"

The crowd burst into excitement. But for days, confusion reigned. Families had been torn apart, homes demolished, records lost or burned. Communication and transportation were haphazard. People groped for life and roots.

I longed to hear some word, just to know... And as I sat one September evening in our home during a faculty meeting, my mind wandered once more to the children. Again I pictured them as I had seen them last, waving good-bye. I heard their voices, faintly, calling excitedly … then I heard their voices *louder*. Was I imagining this? No, their voices were real!

And they came bursting through the doorway. "Mommy, Daddy, we're home, we're home!" And they flew into our arms. Our hugs, our shouts filled the room. We couldn't let go of one another. It had been five and a half long, grueling years. Yet, there they were — thin, but alive and whole, laughing and crying. Oh, they had grown! But Kathleen still wore the same blue jumper she had worn when I last saw her. It was as God had miraculously preserved the children and returned them to us.

Later, medical checkups showed their health to be excellent. There were no emotional repercussions, and when we went to the States a year later, our children were *two years* ahead of students their own age.

While many in Japanese concentration camps suffered horrors, the children of the Chefoo School were spared. They received dedicated care from their teachers, and when there was not enough food to go around, the teachers helped the children gather wild edible plants. They continued their lessons and they attended church. Jamie looked after Grandpa Taylor, who was flown back to Englandafter the war. And today Jamie—James Hudson Taylor III — works with Overseas` Missionary Fellowship in Singapore.

For our family, that advice from Pa Ferguson long years ago will always hold special meaning. I pass it along to you, for it is truly so: "**If you take care of the things that are dear to God, He will take care of the things dear to you**." •

Mary Remembers the Day …

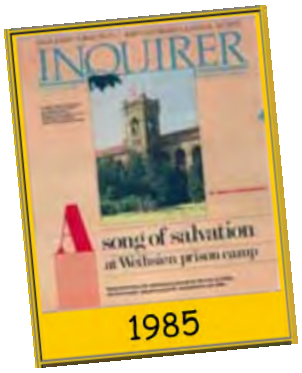
I will never forget that sight — large yellow and white poppies floating down from the sky. American paratroopers dropped to the ground, and like a great human sea, all 1,500 captives swept out of our concentration camp to meet them!

Grandpa Taylor was on the first plane-load flown out. We four Taylor children were on the second. We were flown to Sian, 100 miles from home. A Chinese friend of Father's took us by train to within 15 miles of Fenghsiang, then hired a cart and began driving us in the rain down the rutted road. It was dusk.

But the mule was too slow for us, and we jumped off the cart and raced ahead, sloshing barefoot through the mud until we met one of our parents' students, who led us through a moon gate, then across the Bible school compound. We saw our parents through the window, and we ran stumbling and shouting, "Mommy! Daddy!" through the doorway and into their arms.

Years ago, Mother had taught us to sing Psalm 91: He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty... " God *had* been with us those five and a half years. And the night he brought us back together was like a dream come true. No, it was even more; it was a promise come true.

Mary Taylor Previte
Haddonfield, New Jersey



A SONG OF SALVATION AT WEIHSIEN PRISON CAMP

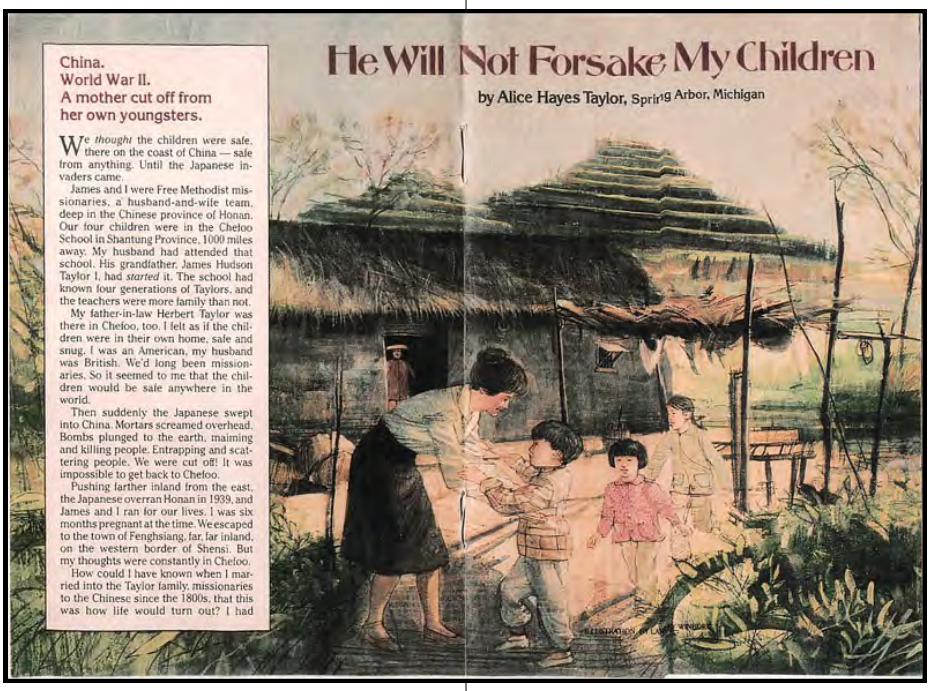
By
Mary Taylor PREVITE
August 25,1985

THEY WERE SPILLING from the guts of the low-flying plane, dangling from parachutes that looked like giant silk poppies, dropping into the fields outside the concentration camp. The Americans had come.

It was August 1945. "Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center," the Japanese called our concentration camp in China. I was 12 years old. For the past three years, my sister, two brothers and I had been captives of the Japanese. For 5½ years we had been separated from our parents by warring armies.

But now the Americans were spilling from the skies.

I raced for the forbidden gates, which were now awash with cheering, weeping, disbelieving prisoners, surging beyond those barrier walls into the open fields. Americans, British, men, women, children - dressed in proud patches and emaciated by hunger - we made a mad welcoming committee. Our Japanese guards put down their guns and let us go. The war was over.



He Will Not Forsake My Children

by Alice Hayes Taylor, Spring Arbor, Michigan

China.
World War II.
A mother cut off from her own youngsters.

We *thought* the children were safe there on the coast of China — safe from anything. Until the Japanese invaders came.

James and I were Free Methodist missionaries, a husband-and-wife team, deep in the Chinese province of Honan. Our four children were in the Chefoo School in Shantung Province, 1000 miles away. My husband had attended that school. His grandfather, James Hudson Taylor I, had *started* it. The school had known four generations of Taylors, and the teachers were more family than not.

My father-in-law Herbert Taylor was there in Chefoo, too. I felt as if the children were in their own home, safe and snug. I was an American, my husband was British. We'd long been missionaries. So it seemed to me that the children would be safe anywhere in the world.

Then suddenly the Japanese swept into China. Mortars screamed overhead. Bombs plunged to the earth, maiming and killing people. Entrapping and scattering people. We were cut off! It was impossible to get back to Chefoo.

Pushing farther inland from the east, the Japanese overran Honan in 1939, and James and I ran for our lives. I was six months pregnant at the time. We escaped to the town of Fenghsiang, far, far inland, on the western border of Shensi. But my thoughts were constantly in Chefoo.

How could I have known when I married into the Taylor family, missionaries to the Chinese since the 1800s, that this was how life would turn out? I had

KATHLEEN, JAMIE, JOHNNY AND I were the children of Free Methodist missionaries. We and all our classmates and teachers had been taken prisoner in the early years of World War II when Japanese soldiers commandeered our boarding school in Chefoo, on the east coast of China. As the Japanese army advanced, my parents, James and Alice Taylor, escaped to China's vast Northwest, where, for the remainder of the war, they continued their missionary work.

Before the war came, the fabled land of my childhood was a country of ancient Buddhas, gentle temple bells and simple peasants harnessed to their plows. But across the China Sea, a clique of militarists was rising to power in Japan and pushing for expansion. They wanted "Asia for the Asians," with China, Manchuria and Japan cooperating under Japan's leadership.

They struck first in 1931 with an "incident" in Manchuria, and within six months they controlled it under a puppet government. Next, Japan started nibbling at China, eating her, as Churchill said, "like an artichoke, leaf by leaf." No Allied power was willing to use military force to stop the takeover.

As the Japanese continued to eat away at China, Dad and Mother were finding it increasingly difficult to continue their work in the Henan province in central China. The Japanese soldiers were cocky. When you pass through the city gate, you dismount and bow to us - that was the order. Twice, when Mother hadn't dismounted fast enough from her bicycle, soldiers struck her across the head with a stick.

So Dad and Mother took Johnny and me and headed for a breather in Chefoo, where the two older children, Kathleen and Jamie, were already enrolled in school.

The Chefoo School was, more than anything else, a British school. Its purpose was to serve the many children of Protestant missionaries in a vast, foreign continent - to be a tiny outpost where we could learn English and get a Western-style education. The original school had been 10 rooms and an outhouse, but by our time it had grown into a modern campus, a schoolmaster's dream, just a few steps off the beach.

When the Japanese army arrived in Chefoo, Latin master Gordon Martin was teaching a Latin noun to the Fourth Form. "So," he said softly, "here are our new rulers."

Wearing steel helmets, bemedaled khaki uniforms, highly polished knee-high boots, and carrying bayonets, Japanese soldiers took up duty on the road in front of the school. Swords swaggered at their waists.

From an aircraft carrier in the harbor, a plane dropped leaflets in Chinese explaining "The New Order in East Asia."

The Japanese Army is coming soon to protect Japanese civilians living in China. The Japanese Army is an army of strict discipline, protecting good citizens. Civil servants must seek to maintain peace and order. Members of the community must live together peacefully and happily. With the return of Japanese businessmen to China, the business will prosper once more. Every house must fly a Japanese flag to welcome the Japanese.

- Japanese Army Headquarters

There was no effective resistance. The New Order in Asia had arrived.

IT WAS THE SCHOOLTEACHER IN HER, I think, but Mother believed in learning things "by heart." And with so much turmoil around us - war, starvation, anxiety, distrust - she was determined to fill us with faith and trust in God's promises. The best. way to do this, she decided, was to put the Psalms to music and sing them with us every day. So with Japanese gunboats in the harbor in front of our house, and with guerrillas limping along Mule Road behind us, bloodied from their nighttime skirmishes with the invaders, we sang Mother's music from Psalm 91 at our family worship each morning:

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust....

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night....

"A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but ... He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.... "

Our little choir soared with the music -

"to keep thee in all

thy ways.... Thou shalt not be afraid.... "

We children had also sat wide-eyed in Sunday school, listening to spine-tingling stories of such pioneer missionaries as David Livingston in Africa, John G. Paton in the New Hebrides, and J. Hudson Taylor in China.

Hudson Taylor was my great-grandfather. At 21, he decided to give up his medical studies in England to pursue a dream - to take the Christian faith to every province of China. He sailed to China in 1853, and it was he who founded the Chefoo School in 1881.

He did not believe in public pleas for money or elaborate recruiting drives. He believed in God - and miraculous results.

"We do not expect God to send three million missionaries to China," Hudson Taylor had said, "but if He did, He would have ample means to sustain them all." Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission, and God sent a thousand missionaries - and money to support them.

We Taylor children grew up on that kind of faith. Our father was the third generation of Taylors preaching in China. It seemed only natural to us when, in early 1940, Mother and Dad left us at the Chefoo School and returned far into China to continue their work. After all, it was China's war, Japan's war. England and America were neutral.

I was 7 years old at the time. My brother Johnny was 6.

ON THE MORNING OF DEC. 8, 1941, WE AWOKE to find Japanese soldiers stationed at every gate of our school. They had posted notices on the entrances: *Under the control of the Naval Forces of Great Japan*. Their Shinto priests took over our ballfield and performed some kind of rite and - just like that! - the whole school belonged to the Emperor.

There was reason enough for panic. The breakfast time radio reported the American fleet in flames at Pearl Harbor and two British battleships sunk off the coast of Malaya. When we opened the school doors, Japanese soldiers with fixed bayonets blocked the entrance. Our headmaster was locked in solitary confinement.

Throughout the month, Mr. Martin, the Latin master, had been preparing a puppet show for the school's Christmas program, and as far as he was concerned the war was not going to stop Christmas. Mr. Martin was like that. With his puppet dancing from its strings, he went walking about the compound, in and out among the children and the Japanese sentries.

And the Japanese laughed. They were human! The tension among the children eased after that, for who could be truly terrified of a sentry who could laugh at a puppet?

But with the anarchy of war, the Chinese beyond our gates were starving. Thieves often invaded the school compound at night, and, to our teachers' horror, one morning we came downstairs to find that all the girls' best overcoats had been stolen. After that, the schoolmasters took turns patrolling the grounds after dark, and our prep school principal, Miss Ailsa Carr, and another teacher, Miss Beatrice Stark, started sleeping with hockey sticks next to their beds.

MEANWHILE, IN FENGHSIANG, 700 miles away in northwest China, a Bible school student interrupted a faculty meeting and pushed a newspaper into my mother's hands. Giant Chinese characters screamed the headlines: Pearl Harbor attacked! U.S. enters war!

Mother was stunned. America at war! She had visions of the Japanese war machine gobbling her children - of Kathleen, Jamie, Mary and Johnny in the clutches of the advancing armies. She knew the stories of Japanese soldiers ravishing the women and girls during the Japanese march on Nanking. Numb with shock, she stumbled to the bedroom next door and fell across the bed. Wave after wave of her sobs shook the bed.

Then - it might have been a dream - she heard the voice of Pa Ferguson, her minister back in Wilkes Barre, Pa.,

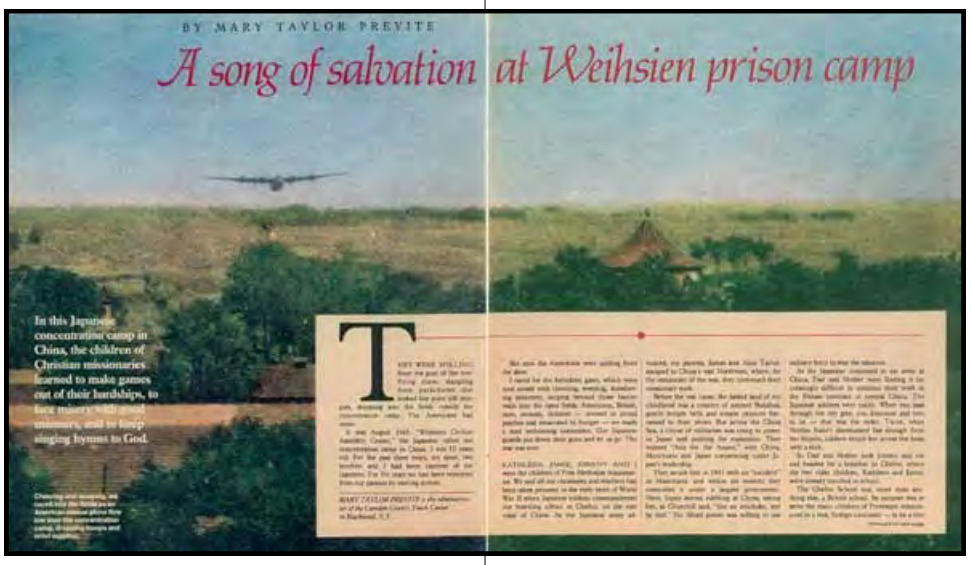
speaking to her as he had when she was a teenager, saying: "Alice, if you look after the things that are dear to God, He will look after the things that are dear to you."

In later years, she told the story a hundred times.

"Peace settled around me," she said. "The terror was gone. We had an agreement, God and I: I would look after the things that were dear to God, and He would look after the things that were dear to me. I could rest on that promise."

In the years to come, she said, as Japanese bombs fell around them and as armies marched and mail trickled almost to nothing, "I knew that God had my children sheltered in His hand."

I REMEMBER SO WELL WHEN THE JAPANESE came and marched us away from our school. By then, the war had made us enemy aliens. Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya had fallen to Japan. Burma had collapsed, and U.S. Maj. Gen. Joseph Stillwell put it bluntly: "We got a hell of a beating." The Philippines had toppled.


BY MARY TAYLOR PREVITE

A song of salvation at Weihsien prison camp

In this Japanese concentration camp in China, the children of Christian missionaries learned to make games out of their hardships, to face [illegible] with good manners, and to keep singing hymns to God.

It was November 1942. Wearing olive uniforms, the Japanese soldiers led us off to our first concentration camp, three miles across town. A straggling line of perhaps 200 children, proper Victorian teachers and God-fearing missionaries, we went marching into the unknown, singing from the Psalms. *"God is our refuge and strength. .. therefore we will not fear...."*

We had become prisoners of war.

We all had to wear armbands in those early days of the war: "A" for American, "B" for British. When our teachers and the Japanese weren't looking, the American children turned the "A" upside down, chalked out the crossbar and proudly wore a "V."

We were crammed into the camp like sardines. There were four family-size houses, each one bulging with 60 to 70 people. Ten months it was like this. We always sang to keep our spirits up:

We might have been shipped to Timbuktu.
We might have been shipped to Kalamazoo.
It's not repatriation,
Nor is it yet stagnation
It's only con-cen-tration in Chefoo.

We would hit the high note at the end and giggle.

To supplement the dwindling food supply, one of the servants from the old Chefoo School smuggled two piglets and some chicks over the wall for us to raise. For the first few nights, we hid the piglets under the veranda and fed them aspirin to keep them quiet. When the Japanese finally discovered them, they accepted them rather affectionately as our pets.

In the daytime, propped up on our steamer trunks, we practiced our English lessons, writing iambic quatrains about life in concentration camp:

Augustus was a pig we had,
Our garbage he did eat.
At Christmastime we all felt sad;
He was our Christmas treat.

After 10 months, they stacked us like cords of wood in the hold of a ship and brought us to the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center, a larger concentration camp across the Shandong peninsula. This camp contained about 1,400 prisoners, mostly British and European, including some other children from Tientsin, Peking and elsewhere.

IN A PRISON CAMP, HOW DO YOU ARM YOURSELF against fear? Our teachers' answer was to fashion a protective womb around our psyches, insulating and cushioning us with familiar routines, daily school and work details.

Structure. Structure. Structure.

Our teachers taught us exactly what to expect. They marched us off to breakfast for a splash of steaming gao hang gruel (animal feed, even by Chinese standards). They trooped us back to our dormitory, mug and spoon in hand, to scrub the floor. We grouped for morning prayers, and sang:

God is still on the throne;
And He will remember His own ...
His promise is true;
He will not forget you.
God is still on the throne.

We lined up for inspection. Were we clean? Were we neat? Did we have our mending done? We settled down on our steamer-trunk beds for school: English, Latin, French, history, Bible. School must go on.

Structure. It was our security blanket.

One of the predictable routines of the camp was daily roll call. The ringing of the assembly bell would summon us to our assigned roll-call "district. " Then would come the strict lineups, with our prisoner numbers pinned to our chests, and the numbering off when the uniformed guards counted us, and then the delays while the guards tallied the totals from all six roll-call districts. And finally, the all-clear bell.

To the Japanese soldiers who missed their own families, our district, with more than 100 children, was their pride and joy. And when visiting Japanese officials monitored the camp, our roll call was the highlight of the show - little foreign. devils with prepschool manners, standing with eyes front, spines stiff at attention, numbering off in Japanese: *Ichi ... nee .. . san...she...go....*

Delays to the all-clear bell often dragged on and on. In summer we wilted in the insufferable heat; in winter we froze in the snow. But the innocence of children turns even the routines of war into games. While the Japanese tallied the prisoner count, we played marbles, or leapfrog, or practiced semaphore and Morse Code for our Brownie, Girl Guide and Boy Scout badges.

THE WEIHSIEN CONCENTRATION camp had once been a well-equipped Presbyterian mission compound, complete with a school of four or five large buildings, a hospital, a church, three kitchens, a bakery and rows of endless rooms for resident students. Many years before, novelist Pearl Buck had been born there, and so had Time and Life publisher Henry Luce.

The compound stretched only 200 yards at its widest point and was 150 yards long. Though the buildings themselves were intact, everything else was a shambles, wrecked by how many garrisons of Chinese, then Japanese, soldiers. Now, with 1,400 prisoners, it was hopelessly overpopulated.

In the dormitories, only 18 inches separated one bed from the next. Your snore, your belch, the nightly tinkle of your urine in the pot, became your neighbor's music. For adults, this lack of privacy was the worst hell.

The grownups in the camp knew enough about war to be afraid. Indeed, a few came to Weihsien with the baggage of hate from earlier Japanese prisons. But I saw the war through the eyes of a child, as an endless pajama party, an endless campout. I entrusted my anxieties to our teachers in the belief that they would take care of us. Or if they couldn't, God would.

Our spirits could scamper to the heavens atop the hundreds and hundreds of God's promises, such as: "All things work together for good to them that love God."

We could tell endless stories about God's rescuing His people: Moses leading God's children out of slavery into their Promised Land. The ravens' feeding the hungry prophet Elijah in the wilderness. God's closing the mouths of the lions to protect Daniel in the Lions Den.

You could breathe the anticipation: *God was going to add our very own story* to the Miracles of the Ages.

"I was not afraid of our Japanese guards or of being interned," our prep-school headmistress, Miss Ailsa Carr, would write me years later. "There was no sense in taking thought for the future, for there was nothing we could do about it anyway. Occasionally, I faced the end - whichever way it went - as being forced to dig a trench and then being lined up and machine-gunned into it, and prayed that my turn might come near the beginning."

I thought about it once when I was young, how curious it was that children watching enemy bayonet drills at dusk could know no fear.

What I did fear, though, were the guards' Alsatian police dogs. Forty years have not dimmed the terror of one screaming night. Victoria was only a tiny ball of fur. Sometimes, under my bedcovers after dark, she would purr and suck on my finger as if it were a nipple. I wondered whether mothers felt warm and soft like that. Along with the "remember-me-forever" signatures and the fingerprints of all my 11 dorm mates, I had Victoria's paw print. I have it still. Victoria Frisky Snowball ---- Miss Broomhall's kitten. Miss Broomhall was our headmistress.

I hated the dogs. You could play with the Japanese guards but never with their dogs. The dogs were trained to kill.

Tucked under my mosquito net, I listened to the nighttime sounds from the roll-call field below our window. I heard the tread of footsteps - one of the Catholic priests, perhaps, pacing in his nightly meditation. Then I heard the coarse crunch of gravel - I knew that sound - rough leather boots of the Japanese soldier on his night patrol. His police dog would be with him, I knew. How, I wondered, does he get to be friends with a killer dog?

Suddenly, below our window, a terrified, yowling shriek ripped the stillness, clashing in a hideous duet with a guttural barking muffled by the tiny ball of fur between those bloody teeth. My little body froze, and my throat retched on a voiceless scream. Perhaps my dorm mates ran for the window. I do not know. I buried my head in terror and stuffed the pillow around my ears.

They cleaned the mess by morning - perhaps our teachers, perhaps our older brothers. But we knew. Miss Broomhall, always sensible and very proper, walked a little slower after that.

SELF-GOVERNMENT AT WEIHSIEN ruled that every able-bodied person should work. The prisoners did everything - cooked, baked, swabbed latrines. My older sister, Kathleen, scrubbed clothes. Jamie pumped long

shifts at the water tower and carried garbage. John made coal balls. Before and after school, I mopped my square of floor, mended clothes, stoked the fire, and carried coal dust. Not coal. The Japanese issued only coal dust.

Like every other Weihsien problem, coal dust had its dark side and its bright side. You could take your pick. You could grump yourself miserable about having only coal dust to burn; or, when you were breaking the ice in the water bucket in the morning to wash your face, you could count your blessings that you had anything at all to fuel the stove.

We younger girls made a game of carrying the coal buckets. In a long human chain - girl, bucket, girl, bucket, girl, bucket, girl - we hauled the coal dust from the Japanese quarters of the camp back to our dormitory, chanting all the way, "Many hands make light work." Then, in the biting cold, with frostcracked fingers, we shaped coal balls out of coal dust and clay - two shovels of coal dust, one shovel of clay and a few splashes of water. Grown-ups swapped coal ball recipes. Winter sunshine made the coal balls dry enough for burning.

One person in the camp who didn't work at a job was Grandpa Taylor. Almost 80, and the only surviving son of J. Hudson Taylor, he had dwindled away to less than 80 pounds. His clothes bagged around his emaciated frame. "Grandpa Taylor," people begged him, "let us take in your clothes to make them fit."

He always smiled, his face haloed with glory: "God is going to bring me out of Weihsien," he used to say. "And I'm going to fit in these clothes again." (He was right: he did survive the war and was flown back to England.)

The grown-ups said Grandpa looked as though he had one foot on Earth and the other in heaven. I snuggled up next to him on his bed and ran my little fingers through the crinkly silk of his snow-white beard to feel the cauterized scar on his cheek where a rabid dog had bitten him in his early days in China. Of all the children in the Chefoo School *we* Taylors were the, only ones to have a grandpa in the camp.

Why do I remember Weihsien with such tender memories?

Say "concentration camp" to most people, and you bring forth visions of gas chambers. death marches, prisoners branded and tattooed like cattle. Auschwitz. Dachau. Bataan.

Weihsien was none of that.

Awash in a cesspool of every kind of misery, Weihsien was, nonetheless, for us, a series of daily triumphs - earthy victories over bedbugs and rats and flies. If you have bedbugs, you launch the Battle of the Bedbugs each Saturday. With knife or thumbnail, you attack each seam of your blanket or pillow, killing all the bugs and eggs in your path.

If you run out of school notebooks, you erase and use the old ones again - and again - until you rub holes through the paper.

If you panic at the summer's plague of flies, you organize the schoolchildren into competing teams of fly-killers. My younger brother John - with 3,500 neatly counted flies in his bottle - won the top prize, a can of Rose Mille pate, food sent by the Red Cross.

If you shudder at the rats scampering over you at night, you set up a Rat Catching Competition, with concentration camp Pied Pipers clubbing rats, trapping rats, drowning them in basins, throwing them into the bakery fire. Our Chefoo School won that contest, too, with Norman Cliff and his team bringing in 68 dead rats - 30 on the last day. Oh, glorious victory! The nearest competitor had only 56.

One, two, three, four, five years I hadn't seen Daddy. I could hardly remember his face now, but I could still hear his voice: "Mary Sweetheart" - he always called me Mary Sweetheart - "there's a saying in our family: A Taylor never says `I can't.' "

In the far reaches of my mind, like a needle stuck on a gramophone record, I heard the messages playing:

A Taylor never says "I can't. "

Thou shalt not be afraid....

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE, THE WAR dragged on. Midway. Guadalcanal. Eniwetok. Saipan, where more than 40,000 were killed or wounded in one battle. Forty million people

INQUIRER

AUGUST 25, 1985

A child in captivity

MARY TAYLOR PREVITE'S ACcount of her childhood years in a Japanese concentration camp in occupied China will probably surprise you in several ways. For one thing, the Weihsien facility where she and hundreds of others were forced to spend World War II was not the "death camp" one might expect it to have been. Although at least two generations of Americans have been raised on accounts of the cruelty of Japanese soldiers — accounts that history by and large supports — Mary can recall no real atrocities.

Despite the prevalence of filth and malnutrition at Weihsien, she actually remembers the place with a certain fondness. This is due, in part, as Mary explains, to her own youth, and to the fact that her entire Christian missionary boarding school — teachers, students and administrators — were imprisoned as a group, and throughout their captivity the adults were able to maintain the school's basic organizational structure. Not only did the children's education continue, but even inside the walls of an enemy prison camp, many of the habits and traditions of peacetime endured, serving as a buffer against the harsher reality.

Also, Mary said, "our teachers didn't tell us everything. They kept us in the dark about a lot of things — things that would have frightened us."

This was so much the case that before Mary could write her own account she had to track down some of her old fellow prisoners, including some of the teachers — people she hadn't heard from since 1945. Only through them, and through a good deal of historical research, did Mary learn the full significance of her experience.

Charles Taylor

FEATURES

would die before the madness ended.

But inside our prison walls, we preserved the wonders of childhood. From the third-floor window of his dormitory, Jamie perched in a hollow tree trunk behind a rain gutter and watched a family of sparrows nesting and raising their young. If he did it right, he could chew up bread saved from Kitchen Number One and get the fledgling sparrows to eat the mush right out of the side of his mouth.

There were also sports. If the food supply is dwindling and starvation is near, should you expend your energy on sports? In other Japanese prison camps in Shanghai and in Hong Kong, doctors advised against games and exercise because prisoners had no energy to spare. But Weihsien was different. Nourishing the spirit was as important as feeding the body. So on any weekend after school, we children played basketball or rounders, hockey or soccer. The man who organized these games was Olympic gold medal winner Eric Liddell - Uncle Eric, we called him. The Flying Scotsman.

Almost everyone in camp had heard of Eric Liddell. The folklore about him seemed almost bigger than life. In later years, the film Chariots of Fire would dramatize the accomplishments of this man who refused to run in the Olympics on Sunday because of his religion. But Uncle Eric wasn't a Big Deal type; he never sought the spotlight. Instead, he made his niche by doing little things other people hardly noticed. You had to do a lot of imagining to think that Liddell had grabbed world headlines almost 20 years earlier, an international star in track and rugby.

When we had a hockey stick that needed mending, Uncle Eric would truss it almost as good as new with strips ripped from his sheets. When the teenagers got bored with the deadening monotony of prison life and turned for relief to the temptations of clandestine sex, he and some missionary teachers organized an evening game room. When the Tientsin boys and girls were struggling with their schoolwork, Uncle Eric coached them in science. And when Kitchen Number One competed in races in the inter-kitchen rivalry, well, who could lose with Eric Liddell on our team?

One snowy February day in 1945, Liddell died of an inoperable brain tumor. The camp was stunned. Through an honor guard of solemn schoolchildren, his friends carried his coffin to the tiny cemetery in the corner of the Japanese quarters. There, a little bit of Scotland was tucked sadly away in Chinese soil.

FOR A CHILD WHO USED TO HAVE to be bribed to eat a bite of food, eating the concentration camp fare was no problem at all. I was hungry! In the early days of the war, we lived on gao Bang, the roughest broom corn, or lu dou beans cooked into hot cereal for breakfast, and all the bread we wanted. Lunch was always stew, stew, stew. "S.O.S.," we called it: Same Old Stew. Supper was more leftover stew - watered down to soup.

Only the stouthearted could work in the butchery with the maggot-ridden carcasses. Plagues of flies laid eggs on the meat faster than the team could wipe them off. When the most revolting-looking liver - horribly dark, with a hard, cream-colored edge - arrived with the day's food supplies, the cooks called in our school doctor for a second opinion. Was it fit to eat? Probably an old mule, he guessed. So we ate it.

If you wanted to see the worst in people, you stood and watched the food line, where griping and surliness were a way of life. Hungry prisoners were likely to pounce on the food servers, who were constantly being accused of dishing out more or less than the prescribed half dipper or full dipper of soup. It was a no-win job.

Having been taught self-control, we Chefoo children watched the cat fights with righteous fascination. Shrieking women in the dishwashing queue hurled basins of greasy dishwater at each other. Fights were common. But not among the Chefoo contingent.

Our teachers insisted on good manners. There is no such thing, they said, as one set of manners for the outside world and another set for a concentration camp. You could be eating the most awful-looking glop out of a tin can or a soap dish, but you were to be as refined as the two princesses in Buckingham Palace.

Sit up straight. Don't stuff food in your mouth. Don't talk with your mouth full. Don't lick your knife. Spoon your soup toward the back of the bowl, not toward the front. Keep your voice down. Don't complain.

Food supplies dwindled as the war dragged on. If you wanted to be optimistic, you could guess that the Allies were winning and that you were going hungry because the Japanese weren't about to share their army's dwindling food with Allied prisoners. Grown men shrank to 100 pounds. But our teachers shielded us from the debates among the camp cynics over which would come first, starvation or liberation.

By 1944, American B-29 Superfortresses from bases in Calcutta, China and the Marianas were bombing Japan. There were many meatless days. When even the gao hang and lu dou beans ran out, the cooks invented bread porridge. They soaked stale bread overnight, squeezed out the water and mixed up the mush with several pounds of flour seasoned with cinnamon and saccharin. Only our hunger made it edible.

An average man needs about 4,800 calories a day to fuel heavy labor, about 3,600 calories for ordinary work. Camp doctors guessed that the daily food ration for men in our camp was down to 1,200 calories. Although no one said so out loud, the prisoners were slowly starving. The signs were obvious - emaciation, exhaustion, apathy. Some prisoners had lost more than 100 pounds. Children had teeth growing in without enamel. Adolescent girls were growing up without menstruating.

That's when our teachers discovered egg shell as a calcium supplement to our dwindling diet. On the advice of the camp doctors, they washed and baked and ground the shells into a gritty powder and spooned it into our

spluttering mouths each day in the dormitory. We gagged and choked and exhaled, hoping the grit would blow away before we had to swallow. But it never did. So we gnashed our teeth on the powdered shells - pure calcium.

Still, there was a gentleness about these steely teachers. On my birthday, my teacher created a celebration - with an apple - just for me. The apple itself wasn't so important as the delicious feeling that I had a "mother" all to myself in a private celebration - just my teacher and me - behind the hospital.

In the cutting of wondrously thin, translucent apple circles, she showed me that I could find the shape of an apple blossom. It was pure magic. On a tiny tin-can stove fueled by twigs, she fried the apple slices for me in a moment of wonder. Even now, after 40 years, I still look for the apple blossom hidden in apple circles. No birthday cake has ever inspired such joy.

It was a lasting gift these teachers gave us, preserving our childhood in the midst of bloody war. But if we children filled our days with childish delights, our older brothers and sisters had typically adolescent worries: college, jobs, marriage. Kathleen, quite head-over-heels in love by now, was sporting a lovely page-boy coif with a poof of hair piled modishly over her forehead.

"God has forgotten all about us," one of her friends moaned one day. "We're never going to get out of here. And we're never going to get husbands." With malnutrition slowing down my hormones, no such foolishness entered my mind.

WE LISTENED WIDE-EYED TO THE whisper that passed from mouth to mouth one day at roll call: "Hummel and Tipton have escaped!"

My heart pounded against my ribs as I grabbed Podgey Edwards and started jumping up and down. I tried to recall what Hummel and Tipton looked like. Shaved bald and tanned brown like Chinese, someone said. Chinese clothes. But how in the world, I wondered, did they get over the electrified wire atop the camp wall without getting killed?

Our teachers and the older boys were more subdued. Escape would mean instant reprisals.

Roll call that day dragged on and on. With Hummel and Tipton missing, the guards' count failed to tally, and when the Japanese realized what was wrong the commandant unleashed the police dogs. And Japanese soldiers promptly arrested the nine remaining roommates from the bachelor dormitory and locked them up in the church for days of ugly interrogation. But nothing worked. Hummel and Tipton were gone.

Roll call was never the same after that. Instead of one, we now had two roll calls a day. Japanese guards cursed and shouted. They counted and recounted us each time. They also dug a monstrous trench beyond the wall, 10 feet deep and five feet wide, and beyond that they strung a tangle of electrified wire. No one would ever escape again.

Laurance Tipton had been an executive with a British tobacco importing firm. Arthur Hummel Jr. had been a professor of English at Peking's Catholic University; today, he is the U.S. ambassador to China.

Not until years later did I learn the story of their escape. Shortly after the nightly changing of the guards, in a prearranged plan with Chinese guerrillas, they had gone over the wall at a guard tower. For the rest of the war, maneuvering in the hills within 50 miles of Weihsien, they employed Chinese coolies - either repairmen or "honey-pot men" who carried out the nightsoil from our latrines and cesspools - to smuggle coded messages in and out of the camp.

This was our "bamboo radio," known only to the camp's inner circle. It was a deathly dangerous business. The Japanese had once found a concealed letter on a Chinese coolie as they were checking him before entrance into the camp; they dragged him into the guardhouse and beat him until he was unconscious. He was never seen again. Another Chinese confederate who was passing black-market supplies over the wall to hungry prisoners slipped, in his hurry to get away as the guards approached, and was electrocuted on the wire that crisscrossed the wall. The Japanese left his body hanging there for most of the day, as a grim warning.

News from the "bamboo radio" was delivered, therefore, with extreme care. A message would be written on the sheerest silk, wadded into a pellet, placed inside a contraceptive rubber and then stuffed up the nose or inside the mouth of a Chinese workman. Once inside the camp, at a prearranged spot, the coolie would clear his sinuses and spit out the news. Insiders then pounced on the spit wad and took it to the translator.

Ironically, the Japanese themselves helped confirm the accuracy of some of the smuggled information. They distributed English editions of the Peking Chronicle, a carefully doctored propaganda rag filled with hideous lists of sunken Allied ships and downed American planes. In our Current Events class, we followed the names of the places where battles were in progress: the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, Guadalcanal, Kwajalein, Guam, Manila, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. It was obvious where the battles were raging: closer and closer to Japan! Our bamboo radio was right. Japan was on the run.

For some of the adults, the prospect of Allied victory was tinged with terror. If the Japanese knew they faced defeat, what would they do to us? Does a defeated army rape and kill its prisoners? Would it hold us hostage to prevent more bombings of Japan? Those were some of the unvoiced agonies of the adults.

We children ached, instead, for the Japanese guards who had become our friends. Hara-kiri, someone told us, was the honorable way for a Japanese soldier to face defeat. Ceremonial suicide. The Chefoo boys who knew about these things demonstrated on their bellies where the cuts of the samurai sword would be made - a triangle of self-

inflicted wounds, followed by a final thrust to the heart. I shuddered. The Japanese guard who lifted us girls up so gently into his guard tower and dropped us for delicious moments of freedom into the field beyond the wall - would he commit hara-kiri?

NONE OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS, our teachers said, was to interfere with school. The Chefoo School had been called "the best English-speaking school east of the Suez," and our teachers had no intention of dropping the standards now. In times of peace, the Sixth Form (roughly equivalent to the senior year in an American high school) boys and girls crammed each year for their Oxford matriculation exams. From these, a passing grade would open the doors to universities in England. And jobs.

Nothing will change, our teachers said. You will go to school each day. You will study. You will take your Oxfords. You will pass.

Sitting on mattresses in the dormitory, we conjugated Latin verbs with Mr. Martin. In summer heat, we studied Virgil and Bible history and French under the trees. Between roll calls, scrubbing laundry, scouring latrines, hauling garbage and stoking kitchen fires, the Sixth Form boys and girls crammed for their Oxford exams.

In the blistering August heat of 1943, 11 students sweltered through the test, and 11 passed. The next year, Kathleen and her 13 classmates took the exams. They all passed. The year after that, 11 more sat for the exam. Nine passed. And when the war was over, Oxford University confirmed the results.

The missionary and education community of northern China in those days was a remarkable collection of talent. Besides teaching the young, the internees organized adult education classes on topics that ranged from bookkeeping to woodworking to the study of such languages as Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian and Russian. They could also hear lectures on art or sailing or history, and they could attend lively evening discussions on science and religion, where agnostics debated Roman Catholics and Protestants about creation, miracles and the Resurrection.

On Sundays there were early-morning Catholic masses, then Anglican services at 11 a.m., then holiness groups, Union Church, and Sunday-night singspiration. We also worshiped in glorious Easter sunrise services.

Weihsien was a society of extraordinary complexity. It had a hospital, a lab and a diet kitchen. It had its own softball league, with the Tientsin Tigers, the Peking Panthers and the Priests' Padres playing almost every summer evening. Though we young ones never knew it, Weihsien also had its prostitutes, alcoholics, drug addicts, roving bands of bored adolescents, and scroungers and thieves who filched extra food from the kitchens and stole coal balls left to bake in the sun.

Compressed into that 150-by-200-yard compound were all the shames and glories of a modern city.

Including music. Someone found a battered piano moldering in the church basement and made it the centerpiece of a 22-piece symphonette. It was a glorious combination - brass by the Salvation Army band, woodwinds by the Tientsin Dance Band, and violins and cellos by assorted private citizens.

There was also a choral society that sang classical songs and madrigals - Handel's The Messiah, Mendelssohn's Elijah and Stainer's The Crucifixion. And yet another group of prisoners organized a sophisticated drama society, whose ultimate triumph was its production of George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*. To costume 10 Roman guards with armor and helmets, stage hands soldered together tin cans from the Red Cross food parcels.

The church was always jammed for these performances. It was our escape from the police dogs, barbed wire barriers, stinking latrines and gnawing hunger.

SOME OF US CHILDREN HAD GROWN more than a foot since our parents first sent us off to Chefoo School. Providing clothes for a school full of growing children was going to take a giant miracle. But hadn't the Lord promised: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall He not much more clothe you?"

Clothes and shoes for us little ones was easy. We grew into hand-me-downs. We patched and then patched the patches. But clothing the older boys posed a serious problem: They were facing the third winter of the war - with no winter trousers - until Mrs. Lack had her dream. In the dream, she was going from mattress to mattress looking for dark blankets that could be made into winter slacks. Blankets for trousers. Of course! Why hadn't they thought of it before?

In the dinner queue - where hunger heightened contentiousness - the skeptics started in on Mrs. Lack.

"Trousers out of blankets?"

"Blankets, my dear, aren't made of woven fabric. The seats will be out the first time the boys sit down."

How could they understand that if God had told her to make trousers out of blankets, He would make it His business to keep the seats in?

But just then, a kindly old stranger interrupted. "I used to be a tailor in Tientsin," he told Mrs. Lack. "I'm old and not much good these days, but maybe I could help you cut them out."

By early December, when the thermometer dipped to 17 degrees, the trousers - hand-tailored - were ready. Temperatures reached 3 below zero that winter. At the end of April, when the last snows were melting, the first boy came to Mrs. Lack.

"May I wear my khaki shorts now?" he asked. "It's still a bit cold now, isn't it?"

"But the seat is splitting in my trousers," he said with an uncomfortable blush.

After five winter months, the first seat had given way.

WE WOULD WIN THE WAR, OF COURSE, AND when we did, we would need a Victory March. So on Tuesday evenings - all so clandestinely, in a small room next to the shoe repair shop - the Salvation Army band practiced a newly created Victory Medley. It was a joyful mix of all the Allied national anthems. Because the Japanese were suspicious of this "army" with its officers, uniforms and military regalia, the Salvation Army in China had changed its Chinese name from "Save the World Army" to "Save the World Church." -

The Salvation Army had guts. Right under the noses of the Japanese - omitting the melodies so the authorities wouldn't recognize the tunes - Brig. Stranks and his 15 brass instruments practiced their parts of the victory medley each week, sandwiching it between triumphant hymns of the church - "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Rise Up, 0 Men of God" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic." We would be ready for any victor - American, English, Chinese, Russian - or God. And victory would surely come.

In May of 1945 the war was escalating to some kind of climax.

In the darkness, I sat bolt upright in my bed. Off in the distance the bell in the bell tower atop Block 23 was ringing. Within moments the camp was in pandemonium. On the roll-call field, angry Japanese voices shouted a staccato of commands. It was clear that they hadn't rung the bell. What could it mean, a bell tolling at midnight? An escape signal? A victory signal?

Numb with sleep and dressed in pajamas, we stumbled outside to the roll-call field where an angry soldier, pistol drawn, barked lineup orders at us in the darkness. The Japanese counted us and counted us again. They demanded explanations. They were particularly angry, we found out later, because the bell was their prearranged alarm to call in the Japanese army in case we prisoners reacted with a disturbance that night. It was 1 o'clock before they finished the head counts and sent us back to bed, but by then, the rumor of what had happened filtered through the ranks. The Germans had surrendered! Our "bamboo radio" had brought the news. The war in Europe was over.

Months before, on a dare, two of the prisoners had made a pact that when the Allies trounced the Germans, they would ring the tower bell at midnight.

The camp was delirious with hope. We had licked the Germans, and we were going to lick the Japanese. One month? Two months? Three months more? We dreamed and conjured up visions of The End.

IT WAS FRIDAY, AUG. 17, 1945. A SCORCHING heat wave had forced the teachers to cancel classes, and I was withering with diarrhea, confined to my mattress atop three steamer trunks in the second-floor hospital dormitory.

Rumors were sweeping through the camp like wildfire. The prisoners were breathless with excitement - and some with terror. Although we knew nothing of the atomic bomb, the bamboo radio had brought the news two days ago that Japan had surrendered.

Was it true?

Mr. Izu, the Japanese commandant, was tightlipped, refusing to answer questions.

Lying on my mattress in mid-morning, I heard the drone of an airplane far above the camp. Racing to the window, I watched it sweep lower, slowly lower, and then circle again. It was a giant plane, and it was emblazoned with an American flag. Americans were waving at us from the windows of the plane!

Beyond the treetops, its silver belly opened, and I gaped in wonder as giant parachutes drifted slowly to the ground.

Weihsien went mad.

Oh, glorious -cure for diarrhea! I raced for the entry gates and was swept off my feet by the pandemonium. Prisoners ran in circles and pounded the skies with their fists. They wept, cursed, hugged, danced. They cheered themselves hoarse. Wave after wave of prisoners swept me past the guards and into the fields beyond the camp.

A mile away we found them - seven young American paratroopers - standing with their weapons ready, surrounded by fields of ripening broom corn.

Advancing toward them came a tidal wave of prisoners, intoxicated with joy. Free in the open fields. Ragtag, barefoot, hollow with hunger. They hoisted the paratroopers' leader onto their shoulders and carried him back toward the camp in triumph.

In the distance, from a mound near the camp gate, the music of "Happy Days Are Here Again" drifted out into the fields. It was the Salvation Army band blasting its joyful Victory Medley. When they got to "The Star Spangled Banner," the crowd hushed.

0, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave, o'er the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave?

From up on his throne of shoulders, the young, sun-bronzed American major struggled down to a standing salute. And up on the mound by the gate, one of the musicians in the band, a young American trombonist, crumpled to the ground and wept.

OVERNIGHT, OUR WORLD changed. Giant B-29s filled the skies each week, magnificent silver bombers opening their bellies and spilling out tons of supplies. While they provided us with desperately needed food, the B-29s were also a menace. Suspended from giant parachutes, monstrous oil drums crammed with canned food bombarded the fields around the camp. Once, a crate of Del Monte peaches crashed through the kitchen roof.

Outside the walls, a falling container fractured the skull of a small Chinese boy.

Our teachers issued orders for us to run for the dormitories whenever we sighted bombers. They were not about to have us survive the war and then be killed by a shower of Spam.

One Saturday in September, as I was running for cover from the bombers, my dorm mate ran toward me, shouting, "Mary! Mary! You may be leaving on the next plane."

The following Monday, on the tiny landing strip beyond the camp, Kathleen, Jamie, Johnny and I boarded an Army transport plane. After being separated from Daddy and Mother for 5½ years, we were headed home.

We flew 600 miles into the interior, traveled 100 miles on a Chinese train, and found ourselves at last on an old-fashioned, springless mule cart for the final 10 miles of the trip, escorted now by a Chinese Christian friend. It was a rainy September day, and as the squealing wooden wheels of the cart sloshed a foot deep in the mud, it seemed to us that the journey would never end.

We finally decided to brave the world on our own, running ahead on foot while our escort, Mr. Soong, brought the baggage along after us in the mule cart. Chinese peasants in the fields along the road blinked in amazement at the four foreign devil children struggling through the mud. We were a soggy mess.

Along the lonely, mud clogged road the gao bang corn stood tall in the fields - the frequent hiding place for brigands and bandits to pounce on unwary travelers. Evening was coming, and off in the walled town of Fenghsiang, the giant city gates would be closing at dark - shutting for the night to protect the populace from bandits.

Kathleen and Jamie, who knew about these things, worried about the city gate. Would we reach Fenghsiang before it closed for the night? If so, would the gatekeeper break the rule and open it to strangers?

But on that night of miracles - Sept. 11 - at 8 o'clock, the city gate stood wide open as we approached. On we walked, through the gate and along the main street lined with packed mud walls. Without electricity, the town was black, the streets largely deserted.

Kathleen walked slowly toward a man who passed us in the darkness. "Would you take us to Rev. Taylor of the Christian Mission?" she asked in her most polite Chinese. The man muttered something and moved away. In China, no nice girl approaches a man. Neither does she walk in the street after dark.

Kathleen approached a second man. "Would you take us to Rev. Taylor of the Christian Mission?"

His eyes adjusted to the darkness as he looked at us. Four white children. "Yes. Oh, yes!" he said.

The man was a Bible school student of our parents, and he recognized at once that we were the Taylor children for whom the Bible school had prayed for so long. He was gripped by the drama of the situation.

Down the block, through the round moon gate and into the Bible school compound he led us, stumbling as we went. There, through a back window, I could see them - Daddy and Mother - sitting in a faculty meeting.

I began to scream. I saw Father look up.

At the front door, the student pushed ahead of us through the bamboo screen. "Mrs. Taylor," he said, "the children have arrived."

Caked with mud, we burst through the door into their arms - shouting, laughing, hugging - hysterical with joy. And the faculty meeting quietly melted away. O

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The author wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to the following for supplementing her observations of life in the Weihsien concentration camp: Norman Cliff, author of Courtyard of the Happy Way (Arthur James Ltd.); Langdon Gilkey, author of Shantung Compound (Harper & Row); and Beatrice Lack, author of In Simple Trust (Overseas Missionary Fellowship Books)

MARY TAYLOR PREVITE is the administrator of the Camden County Youth Center in Blackwood, N.J.

A schoolgirl POW thanks her rescuers a half-century later

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BLACKWOOD, N.J. (AP) -- On a sweltering summer morning more than 52 years ago, seven men dropped from the heavens and liberated Mary Previte from a Japanese prison camp.

They were like "angels falling from the sky," she recalls. She never forgot them, but she never had an opportunity to thank them, either. "It was like unfinished business," she says now.

But last year, Previte set out to tell these men how much she appreciated the efforts they had made, the risks they had taken to restore her freedom.

In May, while speaking to a New Jersey reunion of veterans of the China-Burma-India theater, she read the names of her seven rescuers. No one in the room knew them, but it led to a chain of contacts she followed as far as she could.

Previte (pronounced PREH'-vuh-tee) was the daughter of Methodist missionaries in China. Mary and her three siblings studied at Chefoo, a boarding school for children of American and British missionaries.

The school on the coast was converted into a military base by Japanese invaders in 1942. The children and teachers were taken to the prison camp across the Shandong peninsula, where they awaited the end of the war. Previte's parents, working in central China, were never taken prisoner.

Previte was 12 years old when the paratroopers landed on Aug. 17, 1945, just outside the gates of the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center. Three days before, the Japanese had announced their surrender, but another two weeks would pass before the surrender papers were signed.

The men were sent by the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, to liberate 1,400 captives taken by the Japanese during the war. Unable to land at the camp because of the guards, they made a low drop from a B-29 into a nearby cornfield.

A Salvation Army band began playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the prisoners hoisted their rescuers onto their shoulders. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the war was over for them, and they were free.

This photograph, taken in north-east China in 1945, shows four of seven paratroopers who rescued Mary Previte from a World War II Japanese prison camp. Rescue team members, from left, were: James Moore, Tad Nagaki, Stanley Staiger and Raymond Hanchulak. Previte tracked down these men in 1997.

The A.P.

"The camp went berserk. We didn't know the war was over," Previte recalls. "People were dancing, weeping, pounding the ground."

Weeks would pass before Mary and her siblings would be reunited with their parents after a 5 1/2-year separation.

They returned to the United States. Mary married, had a daughter, divorced. She taught English, and went to work as administrator of Camden County's youth detention center.

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"It's never too late to say thank you," Previte says. "It's been like goosebumps up and down my spine to be able to say thank you to these men after 52 years. I told them I have so much to be thankful for."

She has been getting to know her rescuers and what happened to them after the war. They were surprised by her interest in their lives.

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"We were bonded by a war that wrapped us together for so many different reasons," Previte says. "We've become family now."

EX-CAPTIVE, LOCAL HERO'S WIDOW CELEBRATE EDWARDSVILLE NATIVE RAYMOND HANCHULAK WAS ONE OF PARATROOPERS WHO LIBERATED MARY PREVITE FROM A JAPANESE PRISON CAMP. NOW SHE WANTS TO MEET THE REST OF HER RESCUERS

By MELANIE BURNEY; Associated Press Writer

Sunday, November 29, 1998 Page: 1A

MOORESTOWN, N.J.- A year after setting out to thank a Luzerne County native and six other men who liberated her from a Japanese prison camp 53 years ago, Mary Previte is on another mission.

She has embarked on a cross-country trek to meet her rescuers to express her appreciation for their valiant efforts in a cornfield thousands of miles away a half-century ago.

This month, she met the widow of one of her rescuers, an Edwardsville native.

Raymond Hanchulak, who died in 1996, had been a medic on the mission. His wife, Helen, lives in Bear Creek Village.

"Raymond would have cried," she said. "Then he'd say OK, let's have a drinkie- the ceremony is over."

Previte was just 12 years old when Hanchulak and other paratroopers landed on Aug. 17, 1945, just outside the gates of the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center. Three days before, the Japanese had announced their surrender, but another two weeks would pass before the surrender papers were signed.

She never forgot the men, who were like "angels falling from the sky." Last year, she began what seemed like an impossible task: to find her rescuers.

"I want to find out who they are. These are the people who saved the world," Previte, 66, of Haddonfield, N.J., said in a recent interview. "I'm trying to find every detail I can about them."

Hanchulak said she wasn't surprised that Previte called to request a meeting. "She's a very persevering woman."

The two women embraced at an emotional meeting the Thursday before Thanksgiving, arranged by a Moorestown couple who gave Previte her first lead in locating the rescuers.

Mrs. Hanchulak gave Previte a bouquet of pink roses; Previte showed her a piece of yellowed silk parachute embroidered with the men's signatures.

"This is so exciting. My third hero," Previte said as she wrapped her arms around Hanchulak. "Oh! I cannot believe it. I have looked forward to this so much."

Raymond Hanchulak signed up for military duty soon after graduating from high school, his wife said. He had a decorated career, which included service in the Office of Strategic Services.

It was only at his death at age 79 that relatives and friends learned of his security background. His wife, once sworn to secrecy, speaks guardedly about his career, even today.

"When he died they were all shocked at what he did," his wife said. "They didn't talk like they do now. He was something else, he really was. Thank God for men like that."

"I would have loved to have known him," Previte said. "How I wish he were here."

Reflecting on her meeting with Previte during an interview Saturday, Hanchulak said it brought back a flood of memories of her husband.

"I was just speechless. So many things ran through my mind at the time about my husband. His jump into the camp, all his missions ... you just get a quick flashback of his career," she said.

Hunchulak said she and Previte have talked about once every month since Previte first contacted a year ago.

"She knows what (the men) did. There's a person who was actually in one of their missions. It forms a bond with all of these people. It's sort of a common denominator," Hanchulak said.

Previte located Hanchulak and another widow, before eventually finding four of the surviving men. She ended her search without locating the seventh, a Chinese nationalist.

The men were sent by the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, to liberate 1,400 captives taken by the Japanese in the China-Burma-India theater.

Previte and her three siblings were studying on the coast of China at Chefoo, a boarding school for children of American and British missionaries. The school was converted into a military base by Japanese invaders in 1942.

After the war, Mary and her siblings were reunited with their parents and returned to the United States. She later married, had a daughter and divorced.

During the past year, Previte has been getting to know her rescuers and what happened to them after the war. They married, had children; some landed civilian jobs, others continued to work for the government.

She wanted to organize a reunion of the group, but the men's failing health prevented that. The men are scattered around the country.

Previte traveled in October to Alliance, Neb., to meet Tad Nagaki, a Japanese-American interpreter on the mission. Now 78, he is a widower and a beet farmer.

In August, Previte was moved to tears at reunion with James Moore in Trenton at the Statehouse, where she is serving her first term in the state Assembly.

"I'm doing it step-by-step," she said. "There's something wonderful to be able to look a person in the eye and say thank you."

Next, she hopes to arrange a meeting with Peter Orlich's widow, Carol, of the New York City borough of Queens. Orlich, a radio operator and the youngest of the group, died in 1993 at age 70.

Stanley Staiger, 80, the mission commander, a retired stockbroker and hotel owner, lives in Reno, Nev. The last, James Hannon, 79, is Yucca Valley, Calif., where he is a writer, drafting plot summaries about the war.

Previte says she is still awed by the men.

"They all say `I'm not a hero. Any American would have done it,' " she said. "It just blows my mind."-

Times Leader Staff Writer Steve Mocarsky contributed to this story.

AP PHOTO

Mary Previte, left, and Helen Hanchulak of Bear Creek Village hug as they meet for the first time in Moorestown, N.J. Hanchulak's husband, Raymond, who died in 1996, was one of seven men who liberated the Japanese prison camp Previte was in 53 years ago. Raymond Hanchulak was an Edwardsville native.

SouthCoast TODAY

Previte's Magnificent Seven

Schoolgirl liberated from POW camp 52 years ago finally gets to thank rescuers

By Melanie Burney, Associated Press writer

On a sweltering summer morning more than 52 years ago, seven men dropped from the heavens and liberated Mary Previte from a Japanese prison camp.

They were like "angels falling from the sky," she recalls. She never forgot them, but she never had an opportunity to thank them, either. "It was like unfinished business," she says now.

But last year, Previte set out to tell these men how much she appreciated the efforts they had made, the risks they had taken to restore her freedom.

In May, while speaking to a New Jersey reunion of veterans of the China-Burma-India theater, she read the names of her seven rescuers. No one in the room knew them, but it led to a chain of contacts she followed as far as she could.

Previte (pronounced PREH'-vuh-tee) was the daughter of Methodist missionaries in China. Mary and her three siblings studied at Chefoo, a boarding school for children of American and British missionaries.

The school on the coast was converted into a military base by Japanese invaders in 1942. The children and teachers were taken to the prison camp across the Shandong peninsula, where they awaited the end of the war. Previte's parents, working in central China, were never taken prisoner.

Previte was 12 years old when the paratroopers landed on Aug. 17, 1945, just outside the gates of the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center. Three days before, the Japanese had announced their surrender, but another two weeks would pass before the surrender papers were signed.

The men were sent by the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, to liberate 1,400 captives taken by the Japanese during the war. Unable to land at the camp because of the guards, they made a low drop from a B-29 into a nearby cornfield.

A Salvation Army band began playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the prisoners hoisted their rescuers onto their shoulders. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the war was over for them, and they were free.

"The camp went berserk. We didn't know the war was over," Previte recalls. "People were dancing, weeping, pounding the ground."

Weeks would pass before Mary and her siblings would be reunited with their parents after a 51/2-year separation.

They returned to the United States. Mary married, had a daughter, divorced. She taught English, and went to work as administrator of Camden County's youth detention center in Blackwood, N.J.

She has run the jail since 1974 and says she draws upon her prison camp experience as she seeks to bring a sense of safety and order to the lives of juveniles awaiting trial.

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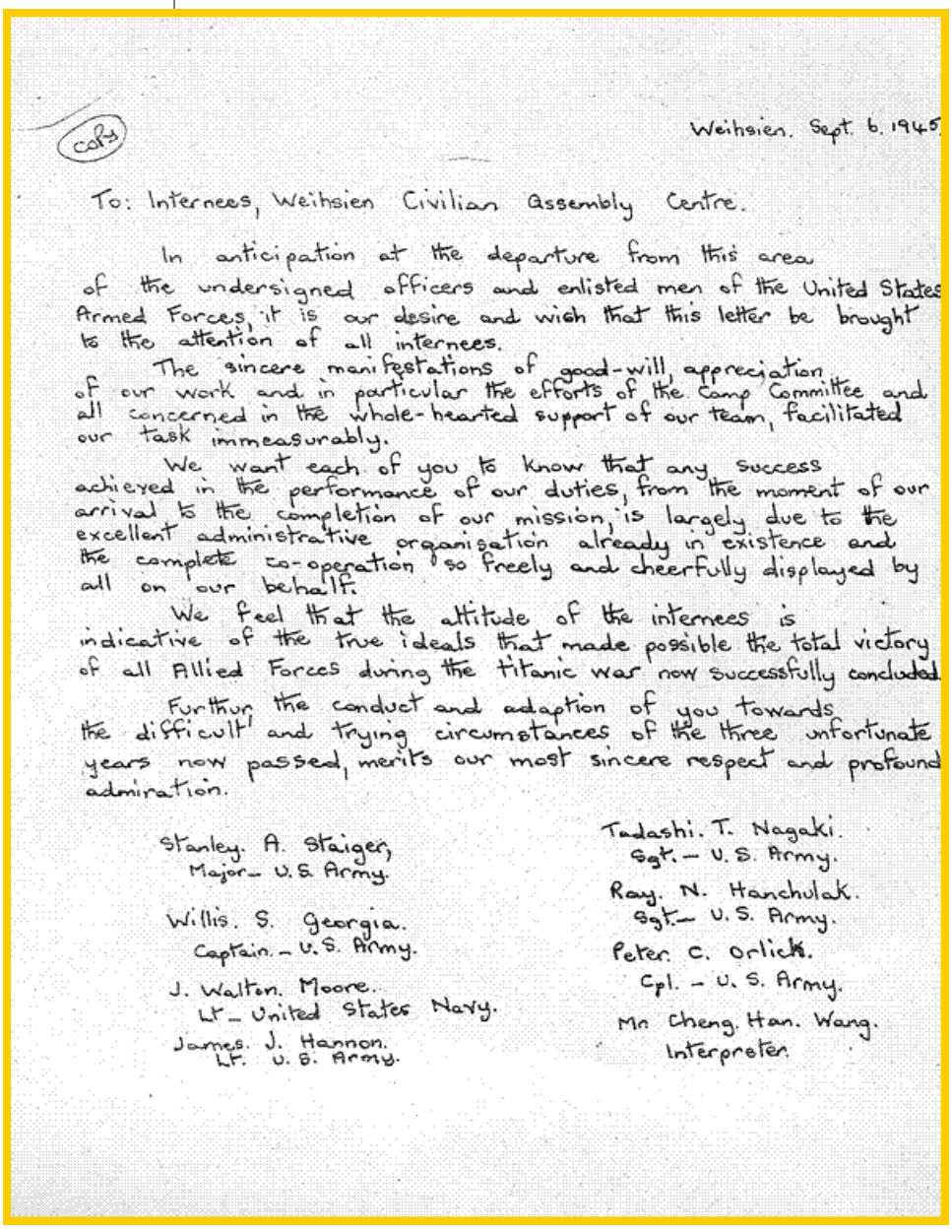
Photos by The Associated Press

Top: A photograph taken in northeast China in 1945 shows four of the seven paratroopers who rescued Mary Previte from a World War II Japanese prison camp. Duck Mission Rescue team members included, from left, James Moore, Tad Nagaki, Stanley Staiger and



Weihsien. Sept. 6. 1945.

To: Internees, Weihsien Civilian Assembly Centre.

In anticipation at the departure from this area of the undersigned officers and enlisted men of the United States Armed Forces, it is our desire and wish that this letter be brought to the attention of all internees.

The sincere manifestations of good-will appreciation of our work and in particular the efforts of the Camp Committee and all concerned in the whole-hearted support of our team, facilitated our task immeasurably.

We want each of you to know that any success achieved in the performance of our duties, from the moment of our arrival to the completion of our mission, is largely due to the excellent administrative organisation already in existence and the complete co-operation so freely and cheerfully displayed by all on our behalf.

We feel that the attitude of the internees is indicative of the true ideals that made possible the total victory of all Allied Forces during the titanic war now successfully concluded.

Further the conduct and adaption of you towards the difficult and trying circumstances of the three unfortunate years now passed, merits our most sincere respect and profound admiration.

Stanley. A. Staiger,
Major – U.S. Army.

Willis. S. Georgia.
Captain. – U.S. Army.

J. Walton. Moore.
Lt – United States Navy.

James. J. Hannon.
Lt. U.S. Army.

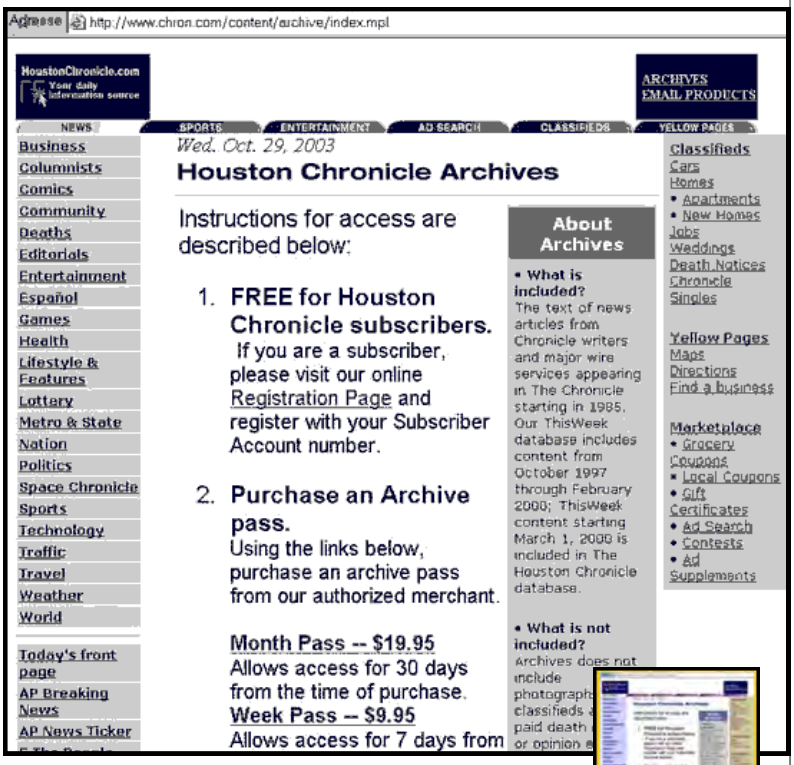
Tadashi. T. Nagaki.
Sgt. – U.S. Army.

Ray. N. Hanchulak.
Sgt. – U.S. Army.

Peter. C. Orlich.
Cpl. – U.S. Army.

Mr Cheng Han. Wang.
Interpreter.

Raymond Hanchulak. Previte finally tracked them down in 1997. Middle: Mary Previte holds the parachute fragment given to her by the widow of one of the paratroopers. Bottom: The photo rests on a piece of silk parachute embroidered with details of the mission.



Web Site, The Houston Chronicle 2000

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Sept. 11, 2000, 11:00AM

Former captive recalls U.S. liberation of camp

By BOB TUTT

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By the morning of Aug. 17, 1945, Mary Taylor Previte, the 12-year-old daughter of missionaries in China, had been a Japanese prisoner more than 3 1/2 years.

When she awoke that day in a prison camp near the city of Weihsien in a coastal area of northeast China, she was still recovering from a bout with dysentery and diarrhea.

"I can remember lying there feeling horrible," Previte recalled, "and then I that was getting closer."

She sprang from the top of a steamer trunk serving as her bed, and through a barrack window she glimpsed a low-flying four-engine aircraft.

Appropriately enough, it was an American B-24 Liberator bomber, and she shortly spotted six parachutists dropping from the aircraft's bomb bay.

"Believe me, that was an instant cure for diarrhea," Previte recalled.

She shared the story of her camp's liberation at a recent gathering here of veterans who had served in World War II's China-Burma-India theatre.

"I decided to run for the prison gate and be one of the first ones to welcome whoever it was," she said, "but it seemed that everyone else got there first."

The camp's prisoners had had no way of learning that Japanese leaders had agreed to surrender unconditionally three days earlier.

Similarly unarmed, six-man teams like the one coming to Previte's prison camp were in the process of going to other Japanese camps.

Altogether about 30,000 prisoners, military and civilian, were being successfully freed.

In her camp, she recalled, "Everyone went berserk, weeping, hugging each other, pounding the ground. Men were taking off their shirts and waving them because they wanted to be sure those in the plane had spotted the camp."

Ignoring the Japanese guards, she said, "people just pushed out the camp's gate, something that previously could have got them shot."

Men who were "just skin and bones, who had lost 100 pounds" lifted these "six beautiful, young Americans on their shoulders and carried them into the camp."

There, Previte says, a Salvation Army Band welcomed them with a specially prepared "victory medley" that it had been practicing for a long-hoped-for day of liberation.

It was an amalgam of Happy Days Are Here Again, strains of the national anthems of the Allied powers and excerpts of hymns.

She says that as the band played the part of the American anthem, Major Stanley A. Staiger, leader of the rescue team, slid from the shoulders of the prisoners to a standing salute.

And then, she added, "A young American trombonist in the band crumbled to the ground and began to weep. He knew what we all knew. We were free.

"There were some brief, very nervous moments, "Previte said, "but the Japanese must have known the war was over and turned over the camp.

"And did we love those American men. They were like the Pied Piper.

There was a trail of children wherever they went. Those guys went gaga over older girls like my sister, Kathleen, who was 17. (The girls) got insignias as souvenirs; younger children got pieces of parachutes."

Previte regards the camp's six rescuers as "guardian angels" who saved her life and notes that the name given the B-24 that transported them happened to be Armored Angel.

She stays in contact with all of them or their widows.

In addition to Stanley Staiger, who lives at Reno, Nev., they were the late Raymond Hanchulak of Bear Creek Village, Pa.;

James J. Hannon of Yucca Valley, Calif.; James W. Moore of Dallas; Tad Nagaki of Alliance, Neb.; and the late Peter Orlich of Whitesen, N.Y.

Previte notes the special significance of Moore's participation in the operation. The son of Southern Baptist missionaries to China, he was born there and learned to speak Chinese.

He had attended the same school in the city of Chefoo as had Previte, her sister and two brothers and their classmates being held at the Weihsien prison camp. It was set up for the children of missionaries and was called the Chefoo School.

The Japanese had claimed ownership of that school the day after their Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor and later moved the students and faculty to the Weihsien camp.

Moore had gone to live in America, graduated from Hardin Simons College in Texas, then became an FBI agent. That made him exempt from military service, but he felt a duty to contribute directly to the war effort.

So, over the objections of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, he joined the Navy and became an officer.

Because he spoke Chinese he was assigned to the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. He volunteered to participate in the rescue of prisoners at the Weihsien camp because he knew people from the Chefoo School were there.

When he arrived at the prison camp he immediately asked to see P.A. Bruce, the school's superintendent.

Previte, 67, who resides at Haddonfield, N.J., is director of an agency that assists juvenile delinquents in mending their ways. She also serves as an assemblywoman in the state legislature.

She speaks with reverence of the teachers and other adults at the Weihsien prison camp. They nurtured the children there and strived "to keep hope alive" that ultimately the Allies would win the war.

Of some 1,300 prisoners, mostly British and Americans, held there, she estimates that about a third were children.

Their teachers stressed that the Chefoo students continue their studies so as not to fall behind children in the free world. Thus they provided these youngsters a very structured life.

The prison camp was set up on what had been the campus of a Presbyterian school. A wide variety of people were held there, including businessmen, academics, physicians and entertainers.

The prisoners promoted cultural events ranging from plays to musical programs to philosophical discussions.

As time went on, Previte said, doctors in the camp became alarmed about how the camp's poor diet, especially insufficient in calcium, was affecting the health of children.

Those able to get eggs on a black market were asked to save the shells so that they could be roasted, ground into a powder and administered to children as pure calcium.

Previte remembers how awful spoonfuls of that powder tasted.

About 15 years ago Previte gained an insight into what a brave front so many adults in the camp must have been putting up for the sake of the children.

This came when she visited the headmistress of the school, who was then living in England.

"I would pray every night," she confessed, "that when the Japanese would line us up and make us dig death trenches before shooting us, that God would let me be one of the first they would shoot."

Previte's parents, James Hudson Taylor II and Alice Taylor, Free Methodist Church missionaries, had been working in the Yellow River basin in central China before managing to escape advancing Japanese forces.

After liberation, Previte, her sister, and two brothers, James Hudson Taylor III, 16, and John Taylor, 10, and their grandfather, Herbert Hudson Taylor, 80, a retired missionary with them in the prison camp, were reunited with their parents for the first time in 5 1/2 years.

First, fighting between Chinese and Japanese forces, then the internment of the Chefoo School students and teachers had kept the family apart.

Tad Nagaki by Mary Previte

Tad Nagaki was full of memories when I tracked him down 52 years later.

I cupped the long distance phone to my ear and listened to his voice. Wave after wave of memories blurred my eyes. I was a wide-eyed 12-year-old again listening to the drone of the airplane far above the concentration camp. Racing to the window, I watched it sweep lower, slowly lower. It was a giant plane, emblazoned with an American star. Weihsien went mad. I raced for the entry gates and was swept off my feet by the pandemonium. Grown men ripped off their shirts and waved them at the sky to flag down the low-flying plane. Prisoners ran in circles and punched the skies with their fists. They wept, cursed, hugged, danced as the B-24 circled back, its belly open. Americans were spilling from the skies, drifting into the fields tall with ripening *gaoliang* grain beyond the barrier walls of the Weihsien Concentration Camp in China. The Americans had come!

In 1945, I was a child prisoner in that concentration camp. "Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center." That's what the Japanese guards called it. Tad Nagaki was an American hero in the office of Strategic Services (OSS), one of the seven-man Duck Mission" that liberated 1,400 Allied civilian prisoners there. For five and a half years, my brother and sister and I had not seen our missionary parents. August 17, 1945. I shall never forget that day. Tad Nagaki was the Japanese-American interpreter on the rescue team.

In a cross-country search, I tracked him down - I found them all - in 1997, 52 years later. By then, Tad was a widower, 78 years old and farming corn and beans and sugar beets in Alliance, Nebraska. I had to pull. Tad is comfortable with the solitude of his tractor and his fields. These 0SS men were trained to keep secrets. I was not! I was a woman from New Jersey - full of questions.

So, I pulled - with half a continent between us - trying to be polite but tumbling the questions like a breathless child. Today, I call that rescue a suicide mission - six Americans and one Chinese interpreter against how many armed Japanese guards in 1945. Slowly, slowly, Tad Nagaki talked about that windy day, the low-flying drop using British parachutes so the Japanese would have less space and time to shoot the rescue team. It was only his second parachute Jump, he said.

I remembered out loud the crowds of child prisoners. Oh, yes, we trailed these gorgeous liberators around, begged for their insignia, begged for buttons, and begged them to sing the songs of America. They were sun-bronzed American gods with meat on their bones. My 12-year-old heart turned somersaults over every one of them. We followed them day and night like children following the Pied Piper.

"What did it feel like?" I asked Tad Nagaki.

"Like being put on a pedestal," he said. That was the understatement of the century. We made them gods. Tad remembered a girl cutting off a chunk of his hair so she'd have a souvenir..

What Tad didn't say - that's what surprised me. Didn't he know that as an ethnic Japanese, if the Japanese caught him in 1945, he'd be the first they would torture and would kill? Didn't he know their most ghastly interrogation techniques would come first? Didn't he know - of course, he did - the ritual executions of Americans, would follow - oh, yes - by the Japanese warriors' code of *Bushido,* which prescribed execution by be-heading? I shudder still to think of it.

And, in Burma or in China, what if American soldiers thought you were the Japanese enemy? I asked.

"I never gave it any thought," he said. "I was American." H e made it sound so simple. "I was American!" I kept prodding.

"In war," he said, "if you're going to think about that, you're not going to make a very good soldier."

So, how did a Japanese-American soldier - mistrusted as a *Nisei* and limited to pruning trees and landscaping the grounds on a wartime military base in World War II - arrive in an elite team of Japanese-Americans serving in the China-Burma-India Theater? How did he become part of the first espionage unit the United States used behind Japanese lines?

Minoseke Nagaki, Tad's father, emigrated from Japan to Hawaii in the early 1900's when American employers were recruiting Japanese to work in the mines, forests and canneries. Tad's father worked first on plantations in Hawaii then moved to the mainland to work on the railroad. By 1906, 13,000 first Japanese were working on the railroad. Pay was 95 cents to one dollar a day. The Central Pacific Railroad climbed the High Sierras, wound through the Donner Pass and stretched through Nevada. Along the way, small groups **of Japanese** remained inland to open restaurants, laundries and slaughterhouses, to mine coal and copper, and to farm. Minoseke Nagaki settled in a valley with 40 or 50 Japanese families near Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and, like many Japanese men, he sent to Japan for a "picture bride." The law then said Japanese were not permitted to become American citizens. But, he started farming. He grew a family.

Tad and other Japanese-American children started speaking English when they went to the two and three-room schools around Scottsbluff, but someone started a Japanese language school in the summers so *Nisei* - native U.S. citizens born of immigrant Japanese parents - would also read and write Japanese. This gift of two languages would shape his future.

War was brewing across the ocean. Tad Nagaki was drafted into the Army in November 1941, the first of the Nagaki brothers to go. Born in Nebraska, he was America. His Japanese-born parents considered it Tad's duty to go. Tad was 21. Men of the Scottsbluff Elks Lodge sent him off and the other 18 draftees from the valley with a buffet supper. The Nagakis celebrated with a goodbye get-together. Tad would defend America. It was a simple equation: You love your country, you must be willing to fight for it.

But, for Japanese-American soldiers it was more than that. Military service would prove their patriotism. It would show America. Tad Nagaki's mother posted a proud sticker in the farmhouse window, boasting that her boy was serving his country.

Pearl Harbor

Any American who was alive on December 7, 1941, can tell you where he was when he heard the news. Joseph Harsch of *The Christian Science Monitor* wrote from Honolulu, "Planes with red balls under their wings came in through the morning mist today and attacked America's great mid-Pacific naval base and island fortress here."

If Japan's sneak attack at Pearl Harbor shook America with anger and shock, Japanese-Americans felt instant terror. Many smashed their Japanese recordings and burned or buried

letters from kinfolks, books, ceremonial dolls, Buddhist family shrines and Japanese flags.

Japanese had killed or wounded 4,612 Americans, many of them buried under the waters of Pearl Harbor. "REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR" - the slogan fanned the flames. In the war hysteria, the Rose Bowl football game was moved out of Pasdena for fear of an air raid. Burma Shave signs sprouted along highways: SLAP THE JAP. Some Asian-Americans began wearing "I am Chinese" or "I am Filipino" pins: they would differentiate us from them. When a nation is attacked, how does it judge loyalty? Before long, the Selective Service System classified Nisei "4-C" - enemy aliens not subject to military service. Some were mustered out of the Army and sent home. Some were disarmed and assigned to menial labor.

Tad Nagaki didn't notice any change of people's attitude towards him at first - not until his training buddies in the signal corps were all shipped out - and Tad was not. Like everyone else, Tad was itching for action. He had always dreamed of flying. He passed his physical and collected recommendations to become an air cadet. Then came the personal letter from his commander: They could not accept him because he was Japanese-American. Shipped to Ft. Thomas, Kentucky, he now was assigned to a barracks with about 40 Japanese-Americans. Other American boys were doing important stuff - going to war, fighting for America. Tad and his *Nisei* buddies were pruning trees and landscaping the post, loading food onto troop trains. But, what kind of job was that for a *gung-ho* American soldier when a war was going on?

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt issued *Executive Order 9066,* evacuating people of Japanese descent from coastal areas.

Just before the war started, a tiny handful of Army Intelligence specialists were alerting superiors of the importance of training Japanese language interpreters to master the incredibly complex Japanese language. But, could youth of an alien race - only one generation removed from the land of their ancestors - be trusted in battle or in top secret intelligence work? While one hand of the Army was removing Japanese-Americans from the West Coast, another was searching for qualified Nisei for its language and intelligence effort. In San Francisco, the Army opened a small-scale language school in a converted hangar at Crissy Field, The Presidio. It hand-picked 58 *Nisei* for its first class - sitting on apple boxes and orange crates. When the top brass saw its value, the school was transferred to Camp Savage, Minnesota, where it was reorganized as the Military Intelligence Service Language School.

In 1943, as Tad Nagaki and *Nisei* volunteers from the relocation camps were increasingly frustrated to spend the war trimming trees and loading food onto troop trains - two years of menial labor - the War Department posted an announcement on the camp bulletin board. It was a plan to accept volunteers for a special *Nisei* combat unit. "Every chance we got, we had tried to get into a combat unit," he says. "They kept saying. 'No"' Now *Nisei* from Hawaii and across the mainland rushed to volunteer. Half of the mainland men volunteered from America's relocation camps. Absolutely, yes! Duty, honor, and country. They would fight for America.

At Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the *Nisei* formed the 442nd Regimental (Go for Broke) Combat Team. The average I.Q. of the entire 442nd was 119, nine points higher than that required for Officer Candidate School. The 442nd's shoulder patch sported a hand, holding high. a torch of liberty against a blue sky. Deployed mainly in Europe, they would earn that patch. The 442nd would become the most highly-decorated American unit in World War II, receiving 18,143 individual awards, not including Purple Hearts which are estimated at 3,600. "Skeets" Nagaki, Tad's older brother, served in the 442nd.

Just as Tad Nagaki was joining the 442nd in July 1943, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) asked for *Nisei* volunteers for "highly secret" intelligence work. "More hazardous than combat," some of them were told, "a one-way ticket." At a height of 5' 5", Tad wasn't thinking about being a hero, but his choice was better than pruning trees. He enrolled and found himself selected for an elite team of *Nisei* in 0SS Detachment 101. Of the 23 men who started, only 14 made it. Some people dubbed the OSS "Oh So Social" - because so many came from the Ivy League. There was nothing Ivy League about the *Nisei* group. Tad Nagaki was a farm boy from Nebraska. Three were from California and the rest, from Hawaii.

"Oh So Secret" was a better nickname. The assignment was hush-hush from the start. Rule Number One: You didn't ask questions. You didn't write home to Mom about what you were doing or what you had seen. The team was bound for no -one-knew-where. Whatever was going on involved more than one service. If you asked an insider, he might tell you the 'OSS' was a crazy mix of the FBI and the Office of Naval Intelligence rolled together, plus Errol Flynn in one of those war movies where he parachuted behind enemy lines and took the whole enemy army by himself." The OSS trained the *Nisei* team first in radio school in Naperville, Illinois, then the Military Intelligence Service Language School in Fort Savage, Minnesota, then six weeks of survival and demolition at Toyon Bay on Catalina Island. They toughened up with fitness training in the mountains, exercised with water drills from LST boats. They could survive by fishing or shooting mountain goats. Catalina Island was ideal for coastal surveillance and commando training. It was 1944, after begging for action since 1942, the *Nisei* were about to get their chance.

Front - L to R: Calvin Tottori, Sho Kurahashi, Fumio Kido, Wilbert Kishinami, Tad Nagaki, Takao Tanab
Dick Hamada, Tom Baba

Back - L to R: Susumu Kazuhaya, Lt. Ralph Yempuku, Lt. Richard Betsui, Maj. Crowe, Lt. Junishi Buto,
Lt. Chiyoki Ikeda, George Kobayashi

In December 1941, Japan had moved to protect its gains in Southeast Asia, cut off Allied supply routes to China, and gain additional rice and oil by invading the British colony of Burma. It took them only three months to capture Burma. a country about the size of Texas. War in this China-Burma-India Theater would be fought over control of supply routes to China. In Burma, troops fought Guts War. You melted with intense heat. You slogged through monsoon rains and jungle rot. Your gut gushed and your body melted with tropical diseases. Your feet blistered with long marches. You fought off - slapped off - leeches, poisonous snakes, and biting insects. Supplies often came only through parachute drops.

Burma churned out an unpredictable mix of jungle war, mountain war, desert war, and naval war. It was a death match of hand-to-hand combat appropriate for the Stone Age and air transportation, whole divisions and their artillery and vehicles flying through the sky, a marvel even for the 20th Century. Soldiers landed by glider on remote jungle strips. Troops inched through acres of muddy paddy-fields under solid sheets of monsoon rain that rotted their boots as they moved. Boats probed mangrove swamps.

Dropping into Northern Burma in January 1943, OSS Detachment 101 was the first espionage unit the United States used behind Japanese lines. Deployed in China, Burma and India, it had 250 officers and 750 enlisted men trained in parachuting, radio operations, infiltration, survival training, hand-to-hand combat, cryptography and guerrilla tactics. An American-led intelligence outfit with unconventional methods, it was led by Carl Elfier and William "Ray" Peers. But, what an in-hospitable place for Allied soldiers who were inexperienced in jungle warfare! Repelled as they were by the tribal practice of collecting ears of the dead, Detachment 101 needed native talent. To recruit the local Kachin tribesmen and gain their trust, they slept in villages and took part in village festivals, watched Kachin musical processions, joined their games, foot races and feasts. They lead 10,000 Kachin tribesmen - Kachin Raiders - from villages, mountains and jungle hideouts against the Japanese in Burma. With support of the Kachins, U.S. troops could feel the jungle was on their side. They used the 'jungle grapevine." They pinpointed enemy targets for Allied bombers. By late 1943, Detachment 101 had eleven radio stations reporting regularly from Japanese controlled areas.

In 1943, when the Japanese announced that captured flyers would be given "one way tickets to hell," Detachment 101 and their Kachin Raiders began rescuing downed crews. Morale of Allied airmen in the Tenth Air Force - many of them flying over "The Hump" - improved. Detachment 101 rescued some 400 Allied flyers.

If Detachment 10 l's *Nisei* team was glued together with the unparalleled brotherhood that men find in battle, they were also bonded as a blood brotherhood hell-bent on proving their patriotism. Every one of them knew when he volunteered that it was much more dangerous for him as a Japanese-American than for others.

Late in 1944, Tad Nagaki arrived in Myitkyina (pronounced mich-chi-naw). Burma, at a bend in the Irrawaddy River. Myitkyina was the strategic key to the entire plan in the north. It had the only hard-surface, all-weather airstrip in Burma, north of Mandalay. This was the airfield the legendary

Soldier's Medal: Sgt Tadash Nagaki, intepreter, and T/4 Raymod N. Hanchulak, medic, are awarded the Soldier's Medal for heroism in'Shanghia, 1945, for their part in liberating 1,400 Allied prisoners from the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center in China's Shantung province, August 1945. Photo courtesy Mary T. Previte.

Merrill's Marauders had seized. From there, Nagaki helped establish headquarters in Bhamo. Burma was his introduction to living in straw thatched huts (bashas), riding bare back on cargo-bearing elephants, slathering insect repellant, and eating K-rations. C-rations and native rice and chicken curry.

The *Nisei* plunged into the work of sabotage, guerrilla warfare, hit-and-run harassment operations. translating Japanese documents preparing propaganda leaflets, interrogating prisoners and building airfields. Calvin Tottori, a member of the *Nisei* team, documents their exploits in a fascinating collection of unpublished memories, The O.S.S. *Niseis* in the China-Burma-India Theater. Dick Hamada attached to 2nd Battalion in Central Burma. He recalls: "Second Battalion was constantly on the move, setting up ambush, using punji (smoke-hardened bamboo spikes) set on both sides of the trail to impale the enemy. The punji were crude, but very effective. After one skirmish with the enemy, the Kachin Rangers brought some clothing and captured weapons. I inquired, 'How many enemy soldiers were killed?' 'Twenty,' said the soldiers. When doubt spread across my face, they quickly took 20 ears from their pouch. From that day on, I never doubted their claims."

The team was supposed to interrogate Japanese prisoners. "I never had the chance," Tad Nagaki says. They resisted capture with fanatical zeal. Surrender would bring shame to their family and country. "The Japanese always committed suicide," he recalls, "blew themselves up with grenades."

Being mistaken for the enemy was always a possibility. *Nisei* Lt. Ralph Yempuku was assigned to the 1st Battalion Kachin Rangers under Captain Joe Lazarsky. The Kachins hated the Japanese. Japanese had tied villagers to trees and bayoneted them to death. "The Kachins were initially very wary about me because I was a Japanese-American," Yempuku recalls. "On the first day, Captain Lazarsky paraded me in front of the whole battalion introducing me as an 'American' and ordering them to study my face so that I would not be mistaken for and shot as an enemy Japanese."

"I told them Lt. Yempuku was 'BIG DUA,' like the rest of us white men, Lazarsky says. Lt. Yempuku lead his own country

of Kachin guerillas in ambushing and attacking Japanese-held villages behind enemy lines near Lashlo and along the Burma Road.

Every *Nisei* knew, death would be better than capture. Cal Tottori's first mission was to gather intelligence on Japanese troop movements in the area north of Maymyo. "Since there were only two of us, we were expected to protect each other. I recalled what we had been told over and over during our training - always save the last bullet for ourselves." Combat bred its superstitions. After the first recruit was wounded, Tottori's team felt very strongly that a tattoo on one's body had some mystical power of protection. "In a moment of sheer madness, we had a Burmese priest *(pongyq* do the tattooing on us, Tottori recalls. "Mine was a Burmese tiger on my left forearm and is a constant reminder of what I went through in that country."

Nagaki plunged into his assignment of training two platoons. Kachin tribesmen in the north and Shan in Central Burma. It was a breathtaking mix of combat danger, Red Cross coffee and colossal boredom. In the field, he parachuted behind Japanese lines to monitor Japanese troop movements and gather information. At headquarters in Bhamo, he processed reports.

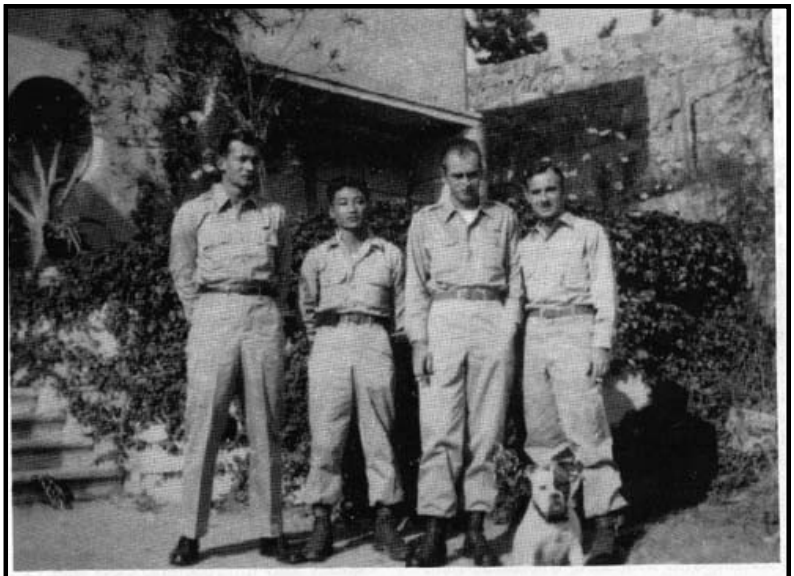
As the war wound down in Burma in the summer of 1945, Detachment 101 *Niseis,* battle-hardened in India and Burma, were deployed to China, to report to OSS Detachment 202 headquarters in Kunming. Tad Nagaki, who had been driving tractors on the farm in Nebraska since he was twelve years old, drove an Army 6x6 truck in the truck convoy over "The Hump" to China on the Burma Road.

Mercy Missions

As America closed in on Japs in late summer 1945, reports reached American headquarters in China that Japan planned to kill its prisoners. Rescue became a top priority. American commander, General Albert Wedemeyer, directed agencies under his control to locate and evacuate POWs in China, Manchuria and Korea. He pulled together seven-man rescue teams. including medical, communications specialists and interpreters. OSS had two assignments: rescue prisoners and gather intelligence.

OSS organized eight rescue missions, all under code names of birds: Magpie (heading to Peiping), Duck (Weihsien), Flamingo (Harbin), Cardinal (Mukden), Sparrow (Shanghai), Quail (Hanoi), Pigeon (Hainan Island), and Raven (Vientiane, Laos). The 14th Air Force was ordered to provide the necessary staging areas. The teams took off from Si'an (today called xi'an).

Nisei Dick Hamada was a member of the team that parachuted into Peiping (Bejing) to liberate 624 Allied prisoners including survivors of the Doolittle raids on Tokyo. *Nisei* Fumio Kido parachuted with the team that rescued American General Jonathan Wainwright, hero of Bataan, and 1,600 other Allied POWs in Mukden. Cal Tottori was a member of the OSS mercy mission that flew to Taiwan to seek release of Allied POWs there. Ralph Yempuku parachuted into Hainan Island with the team that evacuated 400 starving prisoners there. On August 17, 1945, Tad Nagaki parachuted from a B-24, named "The Armored Angel," with five other American heroes to rescue me and 1,400 other



FOUR HEROES OF DUCK MISSION: After liberating the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center, August 1945, Ensign James T. Moore, Sgt. Tadash Nagaki, Major Stanley A. Staiger and T/4 Raymond N. Hanchulak helped establish an OSS base in Tsingtao, China. Photo courtesy Mary T. Previte.

prisoners from the Weihsien Concentration Camp in China's Shangtung Province.

Tad Nagaki and members of these rescue teams were honored with the Soldier's Medal for heroism. He was one of about 25,000 JapaneseAmerican men and women who served in U.S. Armed Forces during World War II.

"The *Nisei* bought an awful hunk of America with their blood, said American General Joseph Stilwell, who commanded U.S. forces in the China-Burma-India Theater. "You're damn right those *Nisei* boys have a place in the American heart forever!"

Post script:

Tad Nagaki says he's not a hero. He says he did what any American would have done. After helping to establish an OSS base in Tsingtao, China, he returned to America in 1946 and married his *Nisei* fiancee, "Butch." He had met her on a blind date while he was attending Military Intelligence Service Language School in Minnesota. "Butch" and her *Issei* parents had been imprisoned in the Poston relocation camp in Arizona. After America changed its laws in 1950, Tad Nagaki's parents became American citizens. They never returned to Japan. Today, Tad Nagaki farms corn and beans in Alliance, Nebraska, not far from where he grew up. He is 82.

Mary Previte is an Assemblywoman in the New Jersey legislature. Address:

351 Kings Highway East, Haddonfleld. NJ 08033.

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Associated Press photo (B&W Xerox copy)
Assemblywoman Mary Previte kisses Stanley Staiger during a December reunion in Reno, Nev. Staiger was the commander of a seven-man team that rescued Previte and 1,400 others from a Japanese concentration camp In China In 1945.

Assemblywoman seeks out group that rescued her from WWII camp

• Mary Previte, who has tracked down all but one of the soldiers who liberated the Japanese concentration camp, says she found 'the soul of America.

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. - Mary Previte found a lot more than she bargained for when she went looking for the seven soldiers who freed her from a prison camp in China during World War II.

"What I found was the soul of America," said Previte, 66, now a state assemblywoman in New Jersey.

"They are all different kinds of people. To a man, they claim they are not heroes," she said.

The Haddonfield, N.J., woman was among 1,400 prisoners, many of them children, liberated from the Japanese concentration camp on Aug. 17,1945.

To a 12-year-old British girl, the seven paratroopers were "like gods" dropping out of the sky in the days after World War II ended and rumors were spreading that the Japanese intended to kill their prisoners.

Today, their pictures fill the scrapbooks that she carries to reunions with the rescuers or their widows - a cross-country, cross-section of the young men who volunteered for the surprise attack one commander in the Office of Strategic Services called a "suicide mission."

They included:

• Stanley Staiger, 81, of Reno, a young aspiring stockbroker who was 23 credits away from an economics degree at the University of Oregon when his ROTC class was called to active duty in World War II.

• Tad Nagaki, 78, a Nebraska beet farmer who overcame the suspicions directed at all Japanese-Americans of the time to become a member of an elite team that did spy work in Southeast Asia.

• Jimmy Moore, 79, an FBI agent from Dallas, who attended the same missionary school as Previte in China and joined the OSS after reading in an alumni newsletter that it had been captured.

• Peter Orlich, who died in 1993, a nearsighted radio operator from Queens, N.Y., who stayed up nights memorizing the eye chart so he wouldn't be kicked off the rescue team.

"I couldn't even make up a story like this," said Previte.

Over the past two years, she's been reunited with four of the soldiers and two soldiers' widows. Only the Chinese interpreter, Eddie Wang, hasn't been accounted for.

At her recent reunion with Staiger, she sounded more like the blond, blue-eyed kid rescued in 1945 than the state politician she has become.

"I'm so excited I can hardly stand it," said Previte, visiting Staiger on his 81st birthday.

"I knew it was an act, of God when the day I picked to visit turned out to be your birthday," she tells him.

"You're still blond," Staiger says, "and blue-eyed."

Staiger, the commander, remembers the rescue much the same as his colleagues.

"It was just another mission. None of us received any attention until Mary Previte started this crusade," he said.

Actually, Staiger's previous mission had been more trouble.

"We jumped at night and landed in a Chinese graveyard," he said. "There were mounds and tombstones."

This time, the soldiers parachuted out of a B-29 bomber just 400 feet above the ground "so we'd be exposed for a shorter, period and surprise them," Staiger said. ` '

"It was only seven men against 45 guards," he said.

"No," Previte corrects, "200 guards."

"Oh," said Staiger. "That would have scared the hell out of me."

Dozens of Parachutes carrying food and supplies "floated, alongside the rescuers" "They thought it was a whole damn army. It was incredible we took over the camp without bloodshed," Staiger said.

A Salvation Army band captured by the Japanese started playing.

"They had been practicing ''Happy Days Are Here Again," the "Star Spangled Banner" and four other national anthems so they'd be ready for whoever came to rescue us," Previte said.

She remembers Staiger slithering down a pole and saluting the trombonist.

"I began to cry. We knew what it meant. We were free," Previte said. "I'm just thrilled to have a chance to meet him after all this time."

The children in the camp wouldn't let the soldiers out of their sight. They made, them sing songs from America, she said.

Staiger sang, "You Are My Sunshine." '

Staiger marched to the headquarters of the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center and presented a letter to the commanding officer "ordering the Japanese to cooperate with us - that we were on a humanitarian mission, the war was over, so knock it off. " '

Previte and her three siblings had been studying on the coast of China at Chefoo, a boarding school for children of American and British missionaries. The school was converted into a military base by Japanese invaders in 1942.

The rescuers brought chewing gum and chocolate bars to the youngsters who'd been living of rice and an occasional canned meat from the sky.

"We used to have to go inside during the air drops. The teacher used to say she didn't want us to survive three years in a prison camp only to be killed by a can of Spam," Previte said.


Section One The Dallas Mor
MacArthur Snubs Japa
Gen. Wainwright Rescue
Hero of Corregidor, Hundreds of Others Freed from Prisons
Yank Teams Risked Death To Bring Aid
Million Japs Surrender To Russians
Truman Nomi Forecast by Co

Former prisoner tracks down rescuers

Student held by Japanese tracks down her rescuers 52 years after liberation

By John McCoy

Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

A half-century after seven men rescued 12-year-old Mary Taylor from a Japanese prison camp in World War II, she got the idea to say thank you once again. It took a bit of doing.

Beginning in May, the former prisoner - now New Jersey resident Mary Previte - used veterans' association newsletters, word of mouth, military documents and Internet searches to track down six of her seven liberators, one of whom lives in Dallas.

"It feels great," said James Moore, 78, a Lake Highlands resident who was second in command for the Aug. 17, 1945, paratrooper mission that liberated the Weihsien internment camp in northeast China. "It's nice to be appreciated. At my age, there are not too many things that are this exciting."

The mission's commander - Maj. Stanley Staiger, now living in Reno, Nev. - was also amazed at Ms. Previte's determination. The men for this particular mission, members of the espionage-centered Office of Strategic Services, were thrown together quickly for rescue missions after Japan surrendered, he said, and had not kept up with one another following their return to the U.S.

"It was quite a surprise - 52 years, you know," he said. "I don't know where she gets the time to look these people up."

The Japanese army captured Ms. Previte and her three siblings shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. They were students at a missionary school in Chefoo, a coastal city in Shandong province that is now called Yantai.

Their parents were away working as Free Methodist missionaries in northwest China at the time, Ms. Previte said.

Later in 1942, the mostly British and American students and teachers were transferred about 130 miles to Weihsien (now Weifang) and held for the duration of the war along with a total of 1,400 prisoners.

Luckily, as civilian prisoners, they were spared the torture and extermination that marked other Japanese and German prisoner-of-war camps, but Ms. Previte spent three years separated from her parents and lived in difficult conditions, often with little to eat.

Mr. Moore, himself a former student at the China Inland Mission schools, read about the internment in the school's alumni magazine, he said. He was working as a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation until he felt called to join the war effort in 1944, when he joined the Office of Strategic Services as a Navy ensign and was sent to China.

"Growing up abroad, I may have felt more patriotic than if I had been raised in the U.S.," he said.

Japan surrendered on Aug. 14, 1945, but the first the Weihsien prisoners knew of it was the morning of Aug. 17 when they heard a low-flying B-24 circling overhead. With a modified bomb bay and quick-opening parachutes, the team of seven jumped from an altitude of less than 500 feet to minimize its exposure to Japanese gunfire, records show.

"The belly of the plane was open and all these parachutes were coming out of the sky," Ms. Previte said. "Everyone in the camp went berserk."

Actually, the mission team had very sketchy reconnaissance and wasn't sure which compound held the prisoners, Mr.

Staiger said. It was the prisoners' excited reactions on the ground that let the crew members know they'd found it.

Strangely enough, the Japanese guards did not fire on the paratroopers, Mr. Staiger said. The troop of about 200 soldiers retreated to its guardhouse and began talks with the Americans.

"They were stunned and didn't know what to do or what to say," he added.

After the war, Mr. Staiger went on to be a stockbroker in Oregon. Mr. Moore worked in Asia for the U.S. State Department. He later joined the Central Intelligence Agency, which brought him to Dallas in 1954 to monitor Texas companies' business dealings abroad.

Ms. Previte went on to run the Camden County Youth Center in New Jersey. This fall, she was elected to the New Jersey State Assembly and will take office in January.

Over the last several weeks, Ms. Previte has been collecting records and mementos of the camp's liberation and sharing them with the four living crew members and the others' widows. Several of them have talked about getting together at some point, but Mr. Staiger is not sure he can travel since he is still recovering from a broken hip lie suffered in August.

For Ms. Previte, the discovery of people and documents has been a great reward.

"I have had the most joyful time turning this group into family again," she said. "I was getting a piece of American history every time, I picked tip the Phone."

EMBRACING HER SAVIOR FROM WWII

Legislator was held in Japanese camp

By Michael Raphael STAR-LEDGER STAFF

The day before the bubblegum, Spam, chocolate bars and grape drink fell from the sky was a hot one. The Chinese sun was thumping on 12-year-old Mary Previte in a Japanese concentration camp.

It was the sound of an airplane that caught her attention.

She looked out the window and saw men falling from the belly of an American bomber. Like colorful pieces of poppies, she would later say, the soldiers parachuted to the edge of the camp and then promptly freed the 1,400 men, women and children inside.

Yesterday, more than half a decade late, little Mary Previte, now grown up to be Assemblywoman Mary Previte (D-Camden), finally got a chance to thank one of her saviors in person. Jim Moore, now a 78-year-old retired CIA agent, surprised her on the floor of the Statehouse.

It was a belated Memorial Day salute and it brought the room of legislators to their feet.

"I was dumbfounded," Previte, 65, said, a crumpled napkin in her hand, streaks of mascara on her cheeks. "I'm almost never speechless, but this time was close."

Assemblyman Peter Barnes (D Middlesex) arranged the reunion. He sits next to Previte in committee meetings and one day she told him her story.

It begins with Previte's parents, third generation missionaries for the Methodist Church. Instead of taking their four children into the depths of the country, they put them in a boarding school in Chefoo, a coastal town between Shanghai and Beijing.

While war broke out across Europe, the Japanese invaded China and rounded up foreigners. The international school was overrun. The children, teachers and the administrators were told to grab up what they could carry and march.

Eventually, they ended up at the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center, a dirty, overcrowded concentration camp across the Yellow Sea from South Korea.

Previte slept on her steamer trunk, just inches from the other children. She was given a prison number. More than 200 guards patrolled the walls.

It was not a death camp, but little girls didn't know of things like that. Previte only knew what she saw.

"The (guards) practiced bayonet drills in front of us morning, noon and night," she said.

The food was unforgettable. In the morning, the prisoners

got watered-down animal feed. For lunch, it was a weak stew. Whatever was left over, that was dinner.

Previte was allowed to write 100 words a month to her parents. But they had to go through a censor first, and she rarely received letters back.

"You kept pictures of them in your head," Previte said. "I had a picture of my daddy in my head. But after five years, you kinda' forget."

To keep her spirits up, she sang the psalms her parents had made her memorize during their daily morning prayers. One of her favorites was Psalm 91. It was about the greatness of God and his protection, "And He shall give his angels charge over thee."

And when 12-year-old Mary Previte saw those men parachuting from above on Aug. 17, 1945, she believed they were sent by God to save her.

"How could I not think of these people as angels coming out of the sky? I had sung the song in my heart for five years. How couldn't I?"

Inside the B-24, Jim Moore was concentrating on the jump, one of his first since flight school. With the plane flying at just 400 feet off the ground, Moore knew he would have precious seconds to open his chute. Should it fail, there would be no time for the backup.

Even if they did land okay, there was still the issue of the Japanese. Moore had just a .38-caliber revolver in his holster and there was considerable doubt whether word of the end of the war had made it to the camp.

"If anybody came out at us, we were dead ducks," Moore said. "If there had been any Japanese troops out to capture us, they wouldn't have had any trouble."

There was no trouble. The guards quickly surrendered and Moore and his six colleagues were swamped by the people of the camp. Gaunt, bony men lifted the soldiers on their shoulders. A camp band played the national anthem.

For Moore, there was double satisfaction. He had attended the same school just a few years before Previte and was able to help free his old teachers.

In the days that followed, American bombers dropped care packages near the camp, and the children skipped over to eat up the chocolate and canned meat contained inside. Twelve-year-old Mary ran to put her feet in the stream just beyond the gates.

"They gave us back our lives," she said. "They were our heroes."

Just a year ago, she began ;to search for the soldiers. She has located six. Two are dead. The others live in Texas, California, Nebraska and Nevada. Yesterday was her first reunion.

When she saw Moore walk out on to the Assembly Chamber floor, she gasped and threw her hand up before her mouth. Moore, a straight-walking man with the sounds of Dallas in his voice, slowly made his way over.

They hugged, and the Legislature applauded.

Later, Moore told of the importance of the mission to his life.

"I haven't done anything too exciting, " said the former Navy ensign who served with the Office of Strategic Services. "A lot of war is standing in line and waiting and having missions cancelled. This really made the war worthwhile to me."

They held hands and kidded over who was the real hero. He said she was for what she survived. She said he was for what he did.

They agreed to disagree.

Sunday World-Herald

OMAHA, NEBRASKA, January 11, 1998

World War II "Angels" Are Not Forgotten

BY PAUL HAMMEL
WORLD HERALD STAFF WRITER

Alliance, Neb. - Tad Nagaki doesn't feel much like a hero. He said he was just following orders during World War II when he parachuted into a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp to liberate the 1.400 captives.

But to one of the prisoners, then 12 years old, Nagaki and his five colleagues were an answer to five years of prayers.

"We were missionary kids. We were always taught to put our trust in God," Said Mary Taylor Previte. now 65 and living in Haddonfield, N.J. "In the Bible, He said He would give His angels charge over thee to keep thee. And what happened? We had six American 'angels' fall out of the sky."

For Nagaki. a 77-year-old sugar beet farmer, the heroic story from 1945 had become a distant memory of his service behind enemy lines in China and Burma with a top-secret unit of Japanese-Americans.

But the tale is now being retold in newspapers across the country thanks to the efforts of Previte, who through luck and persistence was able to track down her rescuers during the past few months. Now. 52 years later, she has been delivering her personal thanks to the paratroopers or their widows.

"There are not enough thank-yous on earth for rescuing someone from a concentration camp," Previte said by telephone from New Jersey. "And they don't feel it's such a big deal."

Particularly Nagaki. "it was a duty," he said. "If it had been anybody else, they would have been willing to do it."

The circumstances of war led to the first contact between the Panhandle farmer and the young girl who is now an authority on corrections programs for juveniles and a recently elected member of the New Jersey State General Assembly.

Some odd twists of fate led to their reunion.

Previte (pronounced "preh-vuh-tee") was a 7-year-old student in a boarding school on the coast of China when war with Japan broke out.

Japanese soldiers took over the school for use as a military base and shipped the students and teachers off to an internment camp at Weihsien in the northeast province of China.

The crowded camp held about 1,400 civilians, including many British and American citizens and Previte's two brothers and a sister. "They did not want enemy aliens on the loose." she said.

One prisoner, she said, was Eric Liddell, a Scottish missionary and Olympic track star made famous in the movie "Chariots of Fire." He helped organize games for the kids as a diversion from the cramped conditions and scant rations.

Previte's parents, missionaries with the Free Methodist Church, were stationed far inland and were never taken prisoner. Yet they would not see their children for 5½ years.

Nagaki was the son of Japanese parents who settled near Minatare, Neb.. in the North Platte river valley.

He had enlisted in the Army before the war but after Pearl Harbor was recruited into a special squad of Japanese-Americans that worked behind enemy lines in Burma, China and India. He gathered information on troop movements and enemy installations and helped train resistance fighters as part of a unit of the Office of Strategic Services, a forerunner of the CIA.

When the war ended on Aug. 15, 1945, Nagaki's squad was transported from Burma to China and its mission changed to securing and liberating Japanese prisoner of war camps in Asia.

"It was more or less a humanitarian mission," he said. "We just went in to make sure nothing happened to the prisoners, if there were any emergencies and to see if we had to evacuate anyone."

Two days after the war ended, Nagaki, five OSS colleagues and one Chinese interpreter boarded an airplane to the Weihsien prison camp. Because a nearby airfield was still under guard. they parachuted into a cornfield near the camp.

For the prisoners, who had not been told that the war was over, the sight of a low-flying American B-24 and the soldiers floating to the ground created a near riot, Previte said.

It turned into all-out bedlam as word spread that these were their liberators.

"The whole camp went berserk," Previte said. "People started to cry and scream and dance. Some people just charged out of the gates. It was mass hysteria. People knew the war was over."

The captives, she said, hoisted some Americans on their bony shoulders in celebration. A Salvation Army band, which was among the captives, struck up "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Nagaki said there were worries about whether the prison camp guards knew whether the war was over.

"There was some doubt if you were going to get shot or not, but that part didn't enter into our minds." he said. "When they said we were going to help POWs, we were all ready to go."

The guards retreated to their barracks after the Americans landed. The camp was freed without incident.

Previte and her siblings soon were reunited with their parents. Nagaki returned to the States, where he married a Japanese-American woman he met on a blind date during the war, and he began farming with three brothers near Alliance.

The story might have ended there if Previte hadn't stumbled into some leads in relocating her rescuers.

In 1985, she obtained the names of the OSS squadmen from a declassified document but had no way to trace where they were living.

Then, last May, a veteran General Assembly member asked her, a freshman representative, to substitute for him in giving a speech before an East Coast veterans' reunion. Previte said she had never heard of the China-Burma-India Veterans' Association before, but figured the invitation was not an accident.

After her speech, she related her World War II story and read off the names of the six rescuers.

The names were reported in the association's newsletter and in a national military magazine. By October, she was contacted by a widow of one of the men who was living in Pennsylvania.

Soon afterward, she located another widow, this time in New York. She provided Previte with a piece of silk parachute on which she had embroidered the names of the six rescuers. It not only encouraged Previte, but also provided correct spellings for a couple of the men's names.

Then, a veteran gave her a list of possible telephone numbers for the six men. While there were about 150 listings for "James Moore," the list led her to telephone Tad Nagaki in November.

"I was just sitting here reading and watching the evening news," Nagaki said. "and someone said, 'Do you know me?' No. Should I?"

Nagaki. whose wife. Butch. died 1½ years ago, helped

Previte find Jim Moore in Texas. Moore, in turn, helped her locate the final two men in Nevada and California.

"It's just a miracle." Previte said. "It's like a whole family has been connected together by this miracle."

She discovered ironies in her search: One of her rescuers had attended the same missionary school in China as Previte, and Nagaki's wife had been imprisoned in an American relocation camp for Japanese-Americans during the war.

Since locating her liberators, Previte has talked many times with them or their widows. Nagaki sent her photographs, and she sent back clippings of stories that have appeared in papers in Philadelphia, New Jersey and Dallas.

Previte said such heroism should not be forgotten.

Nagaki, meantime, expressed surprise about the recent publicity about a long-ago incident. "I've been leading the quiet life." he said. "I never figured I was a hero or anything."

Finding her angels

Good Housekeeping, May 2001

"real lives" *by Bebra Gordon.*

She was a prisoner of war in China, liberated by American troops.

Five decades later, she vowed to find her saviors and tell them what they meant to her.

At first the steady droning sounded like insects to 12 year-old Mary Taylor. She'd been too feverish and nauseous to even get up that stiflingly hot day; instead, she lay on a trunk that served as a bed in her wartime prison. Three years earlier, during the Japanese invasion of China, a boarding school for children of American and British missionaries had been occupied. The Japanese force-marched Mary, her sister and two brothers, and dozens of other students and teachers to a prisoner camp located in northeast China.

Weak from illnesses caused by the Weihsien camp's filth -they had no running water and little food-Mary struggled to reach the window as the whirring noise outside grew louder and people started shouting with joy. To her astonishment, she saw a plane flying so low she could see the red, white, and blue flag painted on its belly. The plane yawned open, and seven figures hurtled down, their parachutes bursting open. It was August 17, 1945. Although none of the Allied prisoners knew it, Japan had surrendered three days earlier. The plane, an American B24 bomber, had been sent by the Office of Strategic Services to liberate the 1,400 children and adults at the camp.

The soldiers wrested control from the Japanese and were soon surrounded by euphoric prisoners who, despite their frailties, hoisted the men on their shoulders. For the next few weeks, Mary and the other children trailed the bronzed, muscular young soldiers, snatching buttons off their shirts and clamoring for stories and songs from the United States. Most of all, these rail-thin youngsters, who'd subsisted for years on boiled animal grain and ground eggshells, begged for sticks of Juicy Fruit chewing gum, which the soldiers handed out with pleasure. "We were madly in love with them," Mary remembers.

In September 1945, the Taylor children were reunited with their Free Methodist missionary parents in central China- "My mother felt she had to measure us to know who was who"-and the family's life slowly returned to normal. As an adult, Mary settled in New Jersey. She married, becoming Mary Previte, and had a daughter.

As she got older, she thought more and more about the courage of the men who'd rescued her from Weihsien. "A kid has no clue," says Previte, now 68. "We told each other that God was going to send us angels, and these were God's angels. A child never imagines that someone could have died in the rescue."

In 1985 Previte obtained a copy of the declassified mission report listing the men's names, but didn't know how to locate them. Twelve years later she ran for a seat in the state assembly and won. During a campaign speech at the China-Burma-India Veterans' Association, she decided to explain her quest. Calls trickled in, and Previte made time to follow up each lead. To her sorrow, two phone calls led her to widows; she'd found the right veterans, Peter Orlich and Raymond Hanchulak, but they had already died. Orlich's widow sent Previte a piece of the parachute her husband had tucked away in his dresser.

Then came the breakthrough. "I'm calling for Tad Nagaki," she said to the voice on the other end of the phone in Alliance, Nebraska.

"Speaking," said Nagaki, 81. A Japanese-American farmer, he had returned to his native Nebraska after World War II.

The two of them chatted for an hour-about the camp, the rescue, the prisoners' adoration. During the next year she managed to track down three of the other veterans: James Moore, Stanley Staiger, and James Hannon. Mary called each of them and then crisscrossed the country to meet them. She even phoned the men's local newspapers: "Did you know you have a hero in your midst?" she asked.

Previte learned that the soldiers' mission had been high-risk. Each of the men stepped forward and volunteered, even after their base commander explained what it would take to liberate the camp - a low-flying plane in hostile territory. But to a man, the veterans today deny they deserve any special praise. "I am not a hero," Nagaki insisted to Previte.

But Previte feels differently. "They risked their lives," she says. "I could never honor them enough for what they did. And God gave me the opportunity to say thank you."

-Debra Gordon

Gao-liang — by any other name

September 24, 2005

By Mary Taylor Previte

Estelle Cliff Horne made my day today.

Her package arrived in New Jersey from England by Royal Mail. Inside the insulated wrapping, a yellow cardboard box said "**Maltabella, The Malted Porridge**." The package showed a happy family gazing adoringly at a bowlful of something reddish-brown that looked like -- **gao-liang**!

Remember **gao-liang**? It grew tall in the fields beyond the barbed wire and those barrier walls. And, yes, we ate it -- boiled animal grain.

"Maltabella porridge has been a trusted favourite with South African families for over half a century," said a notice on the newly-arrived package. It also said "tasty breakfast."

It looked like -- **gao-liang**.

" Maltabella brings home the good rich flavour of malted grain sorghum…" the package said.

I knew it! **Gao-liang**!

Bless my soul! Cooking instructions told me how to cook it the convenient way -- by microwave. No one made gaol-iang by microwave in Weihsien. Remember the giant metal guos heated over coal dust fires? And no one served it with milk and sugar -- the way I served myself today. But it flooded me with memories.

I remember marching with young girls from the Chefoo Lower School Dormitory into Kitchen Number One carrying my spoon and my white, chipped enamel bowl. I was one of the lucky ones. Lots of folks ate out of empty tin cans with the lid fashioned into a handle. I had a bowl. At the breakfast serving line, someone would ladle me a scoop of **goa-liang** gruel -- sometimes cooked smooth, sometimes cooked un-ground and rough.

I didn't like **gao-liang**. But I liked hunger less. So while our Chefoo teachers were watching someone else at those wooden tables, I'd let a classmate spoon her **gao-liang** into my white enamel bowl. And I'd eat it -- just as I ate the green **lu dou** bean gruel -- which I hated even more.

At a very proper reception last month at our Weihsien celebration, I found myself sitting on a couch, side by side with the mayor of Weifang in a roomful of government dignitaries all dressed in very proper suits and ties. What do you talk about in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity like that -- one American woman in a roomful of important Chinese leaders?

I said thank you, of course, for their exquisite generosity that had brought a whole group of us from around the world to Weifang as their guests. I talked of my wonder at the tiny, country town called Weihsien 60 years ago -- turned now into a thriving, beautifully-landscaped metropolis called Weifang. I talked about Chinese students competing successfully in American universities with the best-of-our-best. I talked of Chinese friends eating Thanksgiving dinner turkey at our house in New Jersey for more than twenty years and our eating a Chinese New Year's feast at their house every year.

And I talked about -- **gao-liang**.

I put my hand on the sleeve of the Mayor. "Do people in Weifang still eat **gao-liang**"? I asked him. I had switched too quickly from the sublime to the ridiculous. He needed the translator to repeat my question.

I laughed as I told them the story of how watery **gao-liang** gruel helped keep us alive in Weihsien.

Do we eat **gao-liang** today? Well, not **gao-liang** like that, the Mayor replied. Today, people of Weifang eat gao-liang -- as

dessert!

A few minutes later, I was ushered into our reunion's opening banquet. Amidst all of the elegance of the tables and the exquisite bounty -- course after course of this sumptuous Chinese feast, I saw on a plate by each of our wine glasses an unfamiliar, cupcake-shaped, reddish-brown -- uh -- lump.

"**Gao-liang**," my host said.

For my pleasure and to satisfy a childhood memory, they had rushed out and bought **gao-liang** -- the 2005 version. I felt overwhelmed with wonder -- as I did throughout our visit. What unexpected thoughtfulness!

And, my! How gao-liang has changed! In pure delight, I walked it around from table to table of former internees. It was my evening's "show-and-tell."

Try as I might to like that delicacy on the elegant China plate at that opening-night banquet just a month ago, and try as I might to like the steaming Maltabella porridge in my breakfast bowl today, my memories of long ago get in the way. Every bite is seasoned with memories of crowded wooden benches and wooden tables in Kitchen Number One and hungry children struggling to stomach -- **gao-liang** gruel. #

WEIHSIEN Concentration Camp

Rescue from the Sky

by Mary Taylor Previte

Navy Ensign Jim Moore tensed with the rush of adrenalin as the B-24 flew above the Chinese fields. The six-man, American rescue team raced against the clock to prevent the last minute massacre of Allied prisoners -- he shuddered -- the massacre of his school, his teachers by diehard Japanese guards.

Moore had not faced combat before, but today he was electric with the picture swirling in his head. Somewhere beneath the bomber, his own school, his own teachers were now almost within his reach. But for now they were clutched in the bloody hands of Japan. Moore knew too well. Japan had earned its grisly reputation: Rape, enslave, execute civilians. Massacre prisoners. Or prisoners could be kept alive for prisoner swaps, like bargaining chips.

The American rescue team had set out only one day after the Emperor had announced Japan's surrender. The bomber had started 600 miles away that morning and now circled over fields of ripening broom corn, searching for the "Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center." Fifteen hundred Allied prisoners were somewhere beneath them. It was 9:30 A.M., Monday, August 17, 1945. Flying at 2,000 feet and armed only with scanty photographs and information, the crew scanned the landscape, trying to locate the camp. They had few clues. They knew only that Allied internees were being held in a Japanese internment camp, a compound somewhere outside a sleepy town called Weihsien (pronounced WAY-shyen).

When the bomber drew no enemy fire, it circled lower in buffeting winds, then lower, hugging the terrain at 500 feet. The drone of the plane posed a frightening provocation for artillery pointed to the sky. The team knew that anything could be in the fields below. Bandits, guerrillas, Chinese communists, Chinese Nationalists, Japanese -- they had all bloodied themselves for this territory.

Amid the horror of atrocities and death camps, feel-good stories still spin out of World War II. In my book, the story of Ensign Jim Moore ranks very near the top. This is the saga of James Walton Moore, Jr., born to a family who believed in miracles. It is the story of his part in the rescue of 1,500 Allied prisoners and the Chefoo School -- his Alma Mater -- imprisoned in the Weihsien Concentration Camp in China.

I was a student in the Chefoo School. I was a child in that camp.

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They were spilling from the belly of a low-flying plane, dangling from parachutes that looked like giant silk poppies, dropping into the gao liang (broom corn) fields beyond the barrier walls. August 17, 1945. Every former Weihsien prisoner can tell you exactly where he was that sweltering August morning when the heroes came. Six Americans parachuting from the sky, dropping from a B-24 "Liberator."

One of them — Jim Moore — James Walton Moore, Jr. — was a Chefoo School boy, one of our own.

Jimmy Moore's parents were Southern Baptist missionaries from East Texas when they settled in Chefoo in China's Shantung province with Jimmy and his sister, Martha Jane. It was 1920. Jimmy was just a year old — the family's first and only son. They lived in a compound just off Mule Road and near the Chefoo School, a boarding school founded in 1881 to educate the children of British and American missionaries. Jimmy started as a day student at the school in 1926. Chefoo teachers taught Bible stories and miracles every day. Every student could scamper to the heavens with endless stories about God's rescuing His people: Moses delivering God's children out of captivity into the Promised Land, ravens feeding the hungry prophet Elijah in the wilderness, God's closing the mouths of lions to protect Daniel in the Lion's Den. Yes, miracles!

Even after 80 years, Jim Moore still remembers the winters when steamers became icebound in the harbor, and students ice skated on tennis courts near the school. Chefoo (now called Yantai) was a picturesque, seaside city in north east China, tucked between the hills of Shantung Province and the Yellow Sea. At the very proper Chefoo School, students wore uniforms, and missionary teachers expected proper, Victorian-style manners. Teachers were known as "Masters." Jim remembered his favorites: Masters Gordon Martin, Bruce, Duncan, Chalkley, Welch, Harris, and Houghton. Who could forget teachers like these?

With his classmates, he played Prisoners' base in the Chefoo School Quad, watched billowy-sailed, wooden junks in the harbor, and challenged the waves in row boats named "Hero " and "Leander. " The school always named its row boats from Greek mythology. He took the launch to the white sands of Lighthouse Island across the bay. Long before television or movies came to China, he sat spellbound when Masters Martin and Houghton read Kipling aloud to the boys during lazy winter holidays.

In the Chefoo Boys' School, Jimmy Moore brought glory in athletics to the Carey team. The school named its teams after pioneer missionaries. William Carey was an English Baptist, long dead, who had pioneered Christian missionary work in India in the early 1800s. Jimmy Moore captained the Carey soccer team and its boating crew. He earned a certificate for swimming five miles. At six feet tall, he starred as a runner. Once famous as the home of Emperor Qin Shi Huang, Chefoo had become an outpost for British business. On Saturdays, Jimmy Moore and his teachers played the city's foreign business team in cricket and soccer.

He was 16 years old when he passed his junior Oxford exams in Chefoo in 1936, opening the door to Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. There, he earned his B.S. and met Pat, the woman he would later marry.

As the war heated up in Europe, he took a clerk's job at the F.B.I. in Washington, D.C., and started studying law at night. A few months before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, he married Pat.

In America, every able bodied young man was going to war. Everyone bought war bonds. Posters said UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU. In round-the-clock shifts, women built battleships and airplanes. At home, women knitted socks for soldiers and wrapped bandages for the Red Cross. Jim's Chefoo School alumni magazine listed "Chefusians in the Forces" -- six serving in the Royal Navy, forty-nine in the Army, twelve in the Royal Air Force, four in nursing. He knew so many of them. The magazine listed classmates killed in the war.

Then he read the horror: A carefully-worded story in his alumni magazine said his Chefoo School had been captured, imprisoned in Japanese hands.

By now he was Special Agent James Moore of the F.B.I. He and Pat had two babies. On assignment, he searched for draft-dodgers and fugitives, chased down rumors of German agents in California. Yet something else kept hammering on his mind: Teachers and students in his beloved Chefoo School had been marched and shipped and trucked in lorries to the Weihsien Concentration Camp. He could picture it all — Japanese troops rampaging through the countryside, executing civilians, massacring prisoners. In his mind he could see a kaleidoscope of terror — little children, his teachers locked up behind barbed wire and walls — school children, bayonet drills, guard dogs, prisoner numbers, roll calls.

Home and whatever else that was dearest to him were still dear, but this horror was pushing them into the background. It was a daily tug of war. In Washington, J. Edgar Hoover preached security — said F.B.I. agents had important jobs to do to protect America without facing the guns overseas.

So why did Jim Moore choose to go to war?

You read the school's alumni magazine, Moore says today, lists of classmates who have died in the war. You read the news — your school — your Alma Mater — marched into concentration camp. You could see it in your head. Your

teachers, the little brothers and sisters of your classmates — little children who looked for "cats' eyes" shells at the beach where you had played, little children who panted and puffed up Adam's Knob where you once climbed in the hills behind the city — little children, all of them prisoners.

"He HAD to go...WANTED to go," says Pat, his wife. She was terrified to have him leave and frustrated that her husband wanted to go when he didn't have to. None of it made sense to her.

Moore heard that the super-secret Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) was looking for people with a China background. He could speak Chinese, the language of his childhood. Jim Moore resigned from the F.B.I. When the O.S.S. let him choose an Army or a Navy commission, he chose the Navy because its $6 per diem gave him more to send home to his wife and children. He would go to China. A new thought took root in his mind. He would sign on for the rescue mission.

The O.S.S. gave him the rank of Ensign, trained him, and sent him to Kunming, China's "City of Eternal Spring." Kunming was an outpost at the China-end of the Burma Road that crossed the Himalayas. G.I.s called these mountains "The Hump." In Kunming, 6,000 feet above sea level, he went through jump school -- the only American -- with 14- and 15-year-old Chinese soldiers learning to parachute from a C-4. A plan formed in his imagination. He would support Chinese Nationalist forces in Shantung province. It prickled in the back of his mind. Yes, yes! The concentration camp was in China's Shantung province. In Shantung, he would be within reach.

Back home in Texas, Pat Moore worried. "The high point of my day was going to the mailbox," she says. "I didn't know where Jim was or what he was doing. I'd send him pictures, keep him up to date about the children." Trained to keep secrets, Jim rarely wrote.

America closed in on Japan in late summer, 1945. Reports reached American headquarters in China that Japan planned to kill its prisoners or use them as bargaining chips. Everyone knew recent history -- Bataan, Singapore, Manchuria, the rape of Nanking. Japanese troops had rampaged through one defeated country after another, enslaving "comfort women," slaughtering civilians, and exploiting prisoners of war. In Weihsien, Japanese guards passed on their grisly message: When the war was over they would shoot the prisoners then fall upon their swords. Prisoners could see what looked like a death trench outside the walls of the camp.

Rescue became a gut-wrenching priority. American commander, General Albert Wedemeyer, ordered agencies under his control to locate and evacuate POWs in China, Manchuria, and Korea. It was a daring plan that tempted fate. Wedemeyer pulled together six-man rescue teams with medical and communications specialists and interpreters. Six-man teams against how-many armed Japanese? O.S.S. had two assignments: rescue prisoners and gather intelligence.

If you knew the Japanese, you knew these rescue missions might be death traps. Moore asked the rescue and development branch to cut down cavalry boots and to convert his .38 belt holster for the left side. He would be ready.

Heading for Japanese prison camps, Americans threw nine rescue missions together at the last minute, all under code names of birds: Magpie (heading to Peiping), Duck (Weihsien), Flamingo (Harbin), Cardinal (Mukden), Sparrow (Shanghai), Quail (Hanoi), Pigeon (Hainan Island), Raven (Vientiane, Laos), Eagle (Korea). The 14th Air Force was ordered to provide the necessary staging areas.

Moore signed on to the Weihsien rescue team called the "Duck Mission." The waiting was over. A day after the Emperor announced Japan's surrender, the O.S.S. launched the teams. The six Americans bound for Weihsien flew from Kunming in a

B-24 "Liberator," named "The Armored Angel" headed for an O.S.S. base in Si-an. They were Major Stanley Staiger; Ensign James W. Moore; 1st Lt. James J. Hannon of the Air Ground Aid Service; Nisei interpreter, Sgt. Tad Nagaki; Sgt. Raymond Hanchulak, medic; and Cpl. Peter Orlich, radio operator. In the early morning of August 17, they took off for Weihsien. A young Chinese interpreter, "Eddie" Cheng-Han Wang, accompanied the team.

Yes, the war was over and they were flying into Japanese-held territory to locate and rescue Allied prisoners— a humanitarian mission. But would Japanese in these outposts know that Japan had surrendered? Would it be peace? Or would it be guns bristling like needles, pointing at the sky? Twenty-four years old, Moore itched for action. He had been sitting around Kunming way too long. His Chefoo School, his teachers were beneath them on the ground, somewhere hidden in the unending panorama of villages and fields of ripening grain.

The pilot had trouble locating the camp. They circled. Then—

"There it is." Moore jabbed his finger towards a walled compound tucked among the fields, crowds of people waving hands, waving clothing at the American plane. A small air strip stretched across a field not far beyond the camp. Should they land the bomber? Was the air strip mined? Should they jump?

Team commander, Major Stanley Staiger made the decision: If the worst came to worst, he said, you lose fewer men and less equipment if you jump. By dropping lower, you give the Japanese less space to shoot you and your parachutes.

It was a miserable day and the plane, ill-designed for a parachute drop. To prepare the bomber for the drop, someone had removed panels from the bomb bay door and closed the hole with a makeshift plywood cover. The B-24 now hugged the ground at a gut-wrenching 500 feet. The rescue team sat poised on the edge of the makeshift opening. With a small push, Moore was on his way. Strong winds buffeted the fast-opening British parachutes.

Mary's Story

Nineteen forty-five had brought a sweltering summer to the camp, now awash in every kind of misery — plagues of rats, flies, bed bugs. Our Chefoo School teachers organized us children into competing teams of fly killers, teams of rat killers. With food supplies dwindling, teachers sent us foraging

for weeds to eat. Some prisoners had lost 100 lbs.

We would win the war, of course. The grown-ups told us so. We kept ourselves alive with hope. So on Tuesday evenings, all so clandestinely in a small room next to the camp's shoe repair shop, the Salvation Army band practiced a Victory Medley, created to celebrate whoever rescued us. But who would that be? America? England? Russia? China? So they played a joyful mix of all the Allied national anthems. Because the Japanese were suspicious of this "army" with its officers and military regalia, the Salvation Army had changed its Chinese name from "Save the World Army" to "Save the World Church."

The Salvation Army had guts. Right under the noses of the Japanese, Brig. Stranks and his 15 brass instruments practiced their parts of the Victory Medley each week, sandwiching it between "Happy Days Are Here Again" and triumphant hymns of the church — "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," ¬"Rise Up, O Men of God." We would be ready for any victor.

In 1939, with so much turmoil around us before the war started — starvation, anxiety, distrust — Mother was determined to fill us children with faith and trust in God's promises. But how do you anchor children for the storms of war? The school teacher in her decided that the best way to do this was to put the Psalms to music and sing them every day. So with gunboats in the Chefoo harbor in front of our house, and with Chinese guerrillas limping behind us, bloodied from their night time skirmishes with Japanese invaders, we sang Psalm 91 and Mother's music at our family worship every morning. We learned the psalm "by heart":

"Thou shalt not be afraid...He shall give His ANGELS charge over thee to keep thee...."

Like a needle stuck in a gramophone record, the words kept playing in my head: "He shall give His ANGELS charge over thee to keep thee...."

Angels, angels, angels.

In 1939, Mummy and Daddy had returned to their far away missionary service in northwest China. Now, separated from them by warring armies, Jamie, Johnnie, Kathleen and I had not seen Daddy and Mummy for five and a half years.

It was Friday, August 17, 1945. In a scorching heat wave, I was withering with diarrhea, confined to my "poo-gai" mattress atop three side-by-side steamer trunks in the second floor hospital dormitory. Inside the barrier walls of the concentration camp, I heard the drone of an airplane far above the camp. Sweaty and barefoot, I raced to the dormitory window and watched a plane sweep lower, slowly lower, and then circle again. An awe-struck, scrawny 12-year-old, I watched in disbelief. A giant plane emblazoned with the American star was circling the camp. Americans were waving from the bomber. Leaflets drifted from the sky.

Beyond the tree tops, its belly opened. I gaped in wonder as hot August winds buffeted giant parachutes to the ground.

Angels!

Weihsien went mad. It was instant cure for my diarrhea. I raced for the entry gates and was swept off my feet by the pandemonium. Prisoners ran in circles and pounded the skies with their fists. They wept, cursed, hugged, danced. They cheered themselves hoarse. Very proper grown-ups ripped off their shirts and waved at the B-24 "Liberator" circling overhead. Wave after wave of prisoners swept past Japanese guards into fields beyond the camp.

A mile away we found them — six Americans — standing with their weapons ready, surrounded by fields of ripening broom corn. Advancing towards them came a tidal wave of prisoners, intoxicated with joy and free in the open fields. Ragtag, barefoot, and hollow with hunger, they hoisted the American major onto a bony platform of shoulders and carried him back to the camp in triumph.

In the distance near the gate, the music of "Happy Days Are Here Again" drifted out into the fields. It was the Salvation Army band blasting its joyful Victory Medley. When it got to "The Star-Spangled Banner," the crowd hushed.

"O say, does that star-spangled banner still wave,

O'er the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave."

From up on his throne of shoulders, the 27-year-old American major struggled down to a standing salute. Up on a mound by the gate, a young American trombonist in the Salvation Army Band crumpled to the ground and wept. He knew what we all knew. We were free.

Jim Moore recalls it after more than 60 years. "People running out from the camp," he says, "people clapping us on the back, the prisoner band playing as we got to the gate. I felt like a hero."

The Japanese put down their arms.

Inside the camp, the first person Jim Moore asked to see was his former Chefoo School's Head Master "Pa" Bruce. In an emotional reunion, Moore, 6 feet tall and wearing cut-down cavalry boots and the khaki uniform of the United States of America, towered over his emaciated head master. There stood Chefoo teacher Gordon Martin, who had played soccer with Moore, and Mr. Houghton, who had played field hockey. There was Mr. Welsh, who had officiated in Chefoo's intramural games. Steely teachers wept. Chefoo students celebrated. My 12-year-old heart turned somersaults.

Grown prisoners wanted American cigarettes — their first request. That's not what we children wanted. We trailed these gorgeous liberators around, begged for their insignia, begged for buttons, begged for their autographs, begged for chewing gum and swapped the sticky wads from mouth to mouth. We begged them to sing the songs of America. They were sun-bronzed American gods with meat on their bones. Who could look at these men and not want to be like them? We followed them day and night, like children following the Pied Piper. We made them gods. We wanted to sit on their laps. To capture a souvenir, girls cut off chunks of the men's hair. In the cool of the August evenings, our heroes taught us the songs of America. I can sing one still:

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine;

You make me happy when skies are gray.

You'll never know, dear, how much I love you.

Please don't take my sunshine away."

Back in America, The Associated Press trumpeted the story on August 20, 1945:

YANK TEAMS RISKED DEATH TO BRING AID.

"Chungking, China (AP) American rescue teams parachuted into Japanese-occupied areas at the risk of instant death to bring food, medical aid and encouragement to about 20,000 Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees.... The teams were parachuted down to nine places -- from Manchuria to Indo-China...."

The war was over.

Post script: After it was over

Late in 1945, Pat Moore learned by reading the local newspaper in Texas that her husband had won the Soldier's Medal for liberating Weihsien. Today, Jim Moore remains shy of admitting he's a hero. He says he did what any American would have done.

More than sixty years later, Weihsien prisoners still remember. Hardly a week goes by without former prisoners — from Australia, New Zealand, England, Belgium, Canada, the U.S.A. — on an Internet memory board, winging the globe with their memories of that day — AUGUST 17, 1945 — FREEDOM DAY, the day the Americans came.

After the war, Jim Moore was assigned to the U. S. State Department and served as American Vice-Consul in Tsingtao and later in Calcutta. In 1950, he returned to the United States and worked for the Central Intelligence Agency until he retired in 1978.

As the decades passed, I could never understand why six Americans would parachute — defying death — to rescue 1,500 people they didn't even know. It was beyond my imagination. I wanted to know these men. I wanted to know what makes an American hero.

In 1997, in a series of miracles and with the help of China-Burma-India Veterans Association, I tracked them down. What words would ever be enough to thank a man who risked his life to give me freedom? Talking to them by telephone, sending them cards -- it didn't feel like thanks enough to me.

So I started my pilgrimage -- crisscrossing America to visit each one of them face-to-face to honor them — Jim Moore, Ray Hanchulak, Pete Orlich, Tad Nagaki, Stanley Staiger, Jim Hannon. I went looking for the soul of America. And it is beautiful!

Each one is different: Jimmy Moore, a former FBI agent and the son of missionaries to China. Tad Nagaki, a Japanese-American farm boy who didn't speak English until he went to school in a small, Nebraska town. Jim Hannon, an adventurer who had prospected for gold in Alaska. Major Stanley Staiger, an ROTC student, snatched from his third year at the University of Oregon. Raymond Hanchulak, a man from the coal mines and ethnic enclaves of Pennsylvania. The youngest of the team — 21 years old — Pete Orlich, a kid with a scholarship to college, but whose family needed him to go to work, not go to school — who memorized the eye chart so he wouldn't be excluded from the rescue team because he wore glasses. Pete taped his glasses to his head when he parachuted to liberate the Weihsien Concentration Camp that day.

I found them in New York, Nevada, Nebraska, Texas, Pennsylvania, and California.

On holidays I call them on the phone, four heroes and two widows. I send them cards. I call them to say thank you. I often tell their story to school children; the boys and girls send to my heroes hand-made Valentines and hero letters. More than 85 years old now, they all act modest. They say they're not heroes.

Some folks tell me America has no heroes. They're wrong. I see the face of heroes in the weathered faces of these six men and the thousands of American men and women who look like them. These are the heroes who saved the world. Yes, America has heroes. I know their names.

#

TheLenMapesStory

By LtCol Tom C. McKenney, USMC (Ret) and John B.Tonkin

LtCol Louis Metzger (center, right) explains the evacuation process to prisoners at Weihsien as Maj Henry Sabatier (to Metzger's left with leather strap around his shoulder) and an unidentified MAG-25 pilot stand by to assist. (Photo courtesy of Greg Leck/NARA)

Leonard H. "Len" Mapes grew up wanting to fly. He began at age 14 and soloed at 16—on snow in a 1936 Taylorcraft rigged with skis. This was not your customary first solo in a user-friendly Cessna on a 5,000-foot concrete runway. Nevertheless, Mapes was a natural.

He enlisted 1 Oct. 1942, was selected for flight training and went to Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. Graduating from flight school near the top of his class, he was given his choice of military services and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve, 1 Jan. 1944.

Aviation cadet Len Mapes at Pensacola, 1942, had hopes of flying fighters and downing Japanese Zeros in the Pacific. It was not to be.

To the Pacific

Mapes had dreams of following in the footsteps of fighter aces like Joe Foss and John L. Smith; however, that all-powerful administrative trump card called "needs of the service" sent him to multiengine flying. Like fellow Marine Tyrone Power of movie fame (one class behind him at Pensacola), Mapes would fly R4Ds all over the Pacific and be decorated for it.

From San Diego and Camp Kearney (now Marine Corps Air Station Miramar), he was off to the war. Assigned to Marine Transport Squadron (VMR) 152, Marine Aircraft Group 25, First Marine Aircraft Wing, Mapes flew first out of New Caledonia and later from the captured airfield at Piva on Bougainville.

He flew all over the Pacific theater, carrying supplies, equipment, troops and casualties into and out of battlefields from Guadalcanal and Peleliu to Samar, Leyte, Mindanao and Luzon. He used captured airfields with cratered runways, sometimes facing shot and shell. Only after the war officially ended would Mapes have his defining moment of combat, and it would be the kind of which legends are made.

From Bougainville and Mindanao To China

In September 1945, MAG-25 moved from Mindanao to Okinawa, then to North China. Mapes temporarily was assigned to wing headquarters in Tientsin, transport ing senior Chinese officers, both nationalist and communist, to peace negotiations, but early October found him back with VMR-152, flying in support of the First Marine Division out of Tsankou airdrome, 10 miles north of Tsingtao.

It was a difficult and dangerous time of transition, with intact and armed Japanese units scattered throughout the area, some of whom did not believe the war was over. Ground fire was an everyday occurrence. To make the situation more dangerous, Chinese Communist forces of Mao Tse-tung were advancing. The situation, especially in the contested area of North China, presented not only volatile diplomatic challenges, but at times resulted in armed confrontations with the Japanese and brief but deadly engagements with the communists.

According to historian and author Robert Sherrod, MAG-25's two transport squadrons, VMR-152 and -153, provided "the only kind of reliable transport in China."

In addition, the situation was a political minefield with hot wires leading back to the White House. A Marine Corps presence in North China was not just volatile and dangerous; in terms of its political implications, it was downright nuclear.

MAG-25 to the Rescue

One of the most commendable yet least- known chapters in Marine Corps history took place in North China and Manchuria in the late summer and autumn of 1945, when MAG-25 and its R4Ds, along with the Army Air Corps and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), participated in the rescue and evacuation of Allied civilians from Japanese prison camps. Those missions were made more difficult by the Chinese Communist and Japanese forces resisting the rescue operations at times.

Preparation for the Rescue

The liberation began with an OSS team, inserted by parachute, to create an American military presence and take possession of the prisoners.

They laid the groundwork for liberation. Leaflet drops usually followed, notifying the prisoners that food and clothing would be dropped soon and cautions about what and how much the prisoners should eat.

By that time the prisoners were starving. The average man had lost 100 pounds, and many were walking skeletons. Some children's teeth had grown in, but without enamel.

After the leaflets, parachutes containing food and medicine followed. Next, a small group of officers were flown in to make arrangements for the prisoners' evacuation by train or aircraft.

The food, medicine and clothing drops greatly improved the

Evacuees from the Weihsien camp assemble at the airfield as a MAG-25 R4D approaches, October 1945. (Photo courtesy of Greg Leck/NARA)

Assisted by two Army paratroopers and two Marine officers, Weihsien evacuees, dressed in a mixture of Army, Navy and Marine uniform items plus a few personal possessions that survived more than four years captivity, board a MAG-25 R4D in October 1945.

condition of the prisoners, with even their ragged clothing replaced. One survivor, who was 12 at the time, remembers that soon "men, women, and children were wearing khaki clothing, including underwear."

To the Rescue

From October through December 1945, Mapes flew in support of Marine operations in North China, including 17 missions to rescue civilians in the prison camps. Because the R4D could carry only 18 to 20 evacuees, the flight crew on rescue missions typically consisted of just pilot and copilot. When armed resistance was likely, extra weapons and sharpshooters were taken along. The sharpshooters were combat veterans provided by security units in Tsingtao. Of the 17 rescue missions Mapes flew, the one to the camp at Weihsien was unforgettable.

One Hero's Sacrifice

One prisoner at Weihsien was "the Flying Scotsman," Eric Liddell, legendary Olympic gold medalist and missionary. Liddell gained fame during the 1924 Olympics by refusing to run on Sunday in an event he was sure to win, a story portrayed in the movie "Chariots of Fire." A greatly respected leader, teacher and organizer of athletics in the camp, "Uncle Eric" died before the rescue teams arrived. When he became very ill from a brain tumor, the Japanese offered to set him free to find his own medical care. He might have lived, but he insisted that a pregnant woman be released in his place. His remains lie buried at Weihsien.

Complications at Weihsien

Only one railroad evacuation from Weihsien was made before the Chinese Communists resumed destruction of the tracks. It soon became obvious that evacuations by rail would not be feasible. The remaining 1,500 prisoners at Weihsien would have to be taken out by air.

The airfield at Weihsien was garrisoned by a Japanese army unit still not convinced that the war was over. Even after the seven-man OSS team, led by Army Major Stanley Staiger, took nominal possession of the camp, an Army B-24 met opposition. As the B-24 approached the runway, the Japanese garrison went to battle stations, manned their guns and prepared to open fire. The B-24 wisely departed. A furious MAJ Staiger confronted the Japanese commander, but the situation at Weihsien continued to be unpredictable and explosive. Nearby, a Chinese Communist garrison was anxious also to take control of the area, its airfield and railroad station.

On 12 Oct., the first R4D of MAG-25 landed at Weihsien to evacuate prisoners. Eight days later, the camp was empty. But the process wasn't peaceful.

A Mission to be Remembered

Among the prisoners at Weihsien was a 72-year-old White Russian of distinguished background. She might have been a countess, related to the late Czarina Alexandra, wife of Czar Nicholas. Her husband was a Romanov, related to the late czar. She would have had enormous propaganda value to the Chinese Communists, who were aware of her presence.

Lt Mapes was briefed about her presence and that the Chinese Communists might take her, and the team was prepared. Sharpshooters were stationed at open windows, instructed to open fire on the Chinese the moment a shot was fired by anyone.

Into Weihsien

Mapes landed at Weihsien without opposition and taxied to the loading area. The prisoners had been trucked to the airfield, and when the R4D rolled up and stopped, they were ready.

Leaving the copilot at the controls with one engine running and the brakes on, Mapes climbed down to supervise the loading of the prisoners as the sharpshooters took up firing positions. The prisoners climbed aboard on the fold-out ladder, and the loading was accomplished smoothly. The starboard engine continued to run at a fast idle, with the R4D straining against the brakes.

"I Will Have the Countess"

As the last prisoners were being seated, a Chinese Communist colonel arrived with an escort of soldiers. With an air of belligerent authority, he announced that he would take possession of "the countess." The sharpshooters were at the ready, their M1s locked and loaded. To fire they had only to push the safety forward with their trigger fingers and squeeze. The colonel's escort stood at order arms.

Mapes' reply could not be misunderstood, no matter what the language, and the colonel seemed to expect that negative reply. Without another word, his hand moved toward his pistol and opened the holster flap. Mapes instinctively drew

his .38 from its shoulder holster. In one uninterrupted motion, before the colonel's pistol cleared its holster, Mapes shot the colonel in the forehead.

There was no turning back. With that first shot, the Marine sharpshooters opened a fusillade on the colonel's escort. Shocked at what they were seeing, the Chinese soldiers hesitated, and most were down before they could bring their rifles to the ready. It happened in a matter of seconds.

"A Little Too Quick on the Throttles"

When the firing began, the copilot started the port engine, released the brakes and eased the throttles forward. The Chinese were not all dead and fired a few ineffective rounds as Mapes sprinted after the R4D. He caught the trailing edge of the fold-out ladder, skipped along as the R4D picked up speed and, with help from the sharpshooters, scrambled through the open door. As he caught his breath, the aircraft lifted off the runway.

Mapes and the sharpshooters pulled in the ladder and closed and secured the door. He then went forward and settled into his seat as the R4D's 1,200-horsepower engines roared, clawing for altitude at maximum power, climbing away toward safety. Mapes made a climbing, wide left turn, set a course for Tsingtao and chastised the copilot ("he was a little too quick on the throttles"). Everyone began to relax. It had been quite a day, but they had taken no casualties. They were headed for home, and the prisoners were free.

Great Work That Never Happened

Although there were free drinks and backslapping in the officers' club back at Tsingtao, the rescue of the prisoners, including the distinguished Russian, without taking a casualty, was one of those exceptional accomplishments covertly appreciated, but never recognized officially. The incident had the potential to produce a political hurricane. For that reason, Mapes never would be decorated for the rescue or have it mentioned in his fitness report. He was, however, decorated with the Breast Order of the Cloud and Banner by Chiang Kai-shek; he even was kissed on the cheek by Madame Chiang.

An indication of the award's other-thanroutine nature is that the citation was not cleared by Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps for presentation to Mapes until August 1948, 21/2 years after presentation of the medal in China. Even then, Headquarters Marine Corps had second thoughts; two months after receiving the citation, Mapes was ordered to return it to the Commandant. It finally was returned in 1949 after careful parsing and perhaps some redaction of the Chinese wording. Almost four years after receiving the medal, Mapes finally had the citation.

The Years That Followed

In January 1946, Mapes was transferred from MAG-25 to Headquarters, Department of the Pacific at Tsingtao, awaiting transportation. On 2 Feb., he left the war and North China astern, in the wake of USS Seminole (AKA-104). In the States, he was promoted to first lieutenant and released from active duty on 25 April 1946. He would return to active duty for the Korean War and retire as a major, USMCR, on 1 Dec. 1966.

Now 89, Mapes lives with his wife, Dora, outside of Lebanon, Ohio. The controversial Chinese citation hangs on his wall, reminding an old Marine of one long-ago day: the day he saved a distinguished lady in North China from a cruel imprisonment, public humiliation and death.

***Authors 'note**: No official record of the details of this particular mission is available; this account is based on Maj Mapes' recollections, which remain vivid after more than 65 years.*

***Editor's note:** LtCol McKenney enlisted in 1949, was commissioned in 1953 and was retired in 1971 for disability incurred in Vietnam. He contributed "Yemassee, Gateway to the Corps" for the March 2008 Leatherneck. Former Cpl Tonkin enlisted in 1955 and is a retired labor-relations executive. He and LtCol McKenney served together at Marine Barracks Clarksville, Tenn., in the late 1950s under the command of the legendary Col Walter Walsh.*

人民日报社
PEOPLE'S DAILY

(Chinadaily.com.cn) 16:21, July 28, 2016

Woman reunited with Chinese rescuer 71 years on

By courtesy: People's Daily

Mary Previte, 84, has taken long trip across the world, from New Jersey to Guiyang, to thank her rescuer Wang Chenghan, with a hug.

Seventy-one years ago, Wang, together with a group of US soldiers, rescued Previte along with more than 1,500 interns from 30 countries, imprisoned in a Japanese internment camp in Weifang, Shandong province.

Wang, 91, is the only man still alive among the seven rescuers from the August, 1945 rescue operation dubbed "Duck Mission".

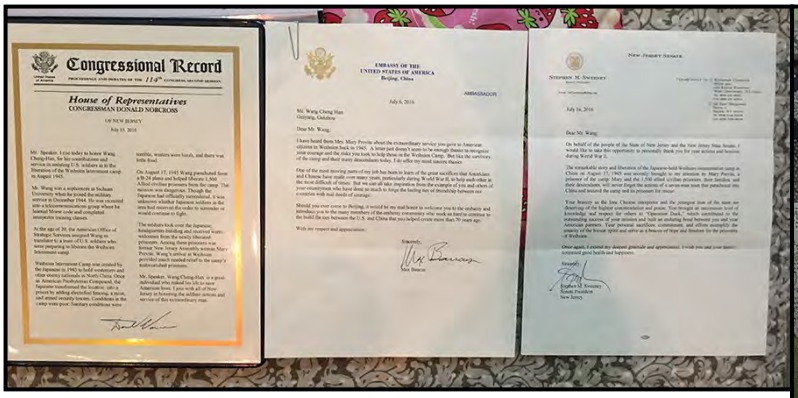
Today, Previte brought Wang more than just a hug. She also presented 18 thank-you letters, written by New Jersey Congressman Donald Norcross, US Ambassador to China Max Baucus, and other then internees.

Previte and Wang embrace each other as the two finally see each other after 71 years.
[Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]

Previte and Wang embrace each other as the two finally see each other again after 71 years.
[Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]

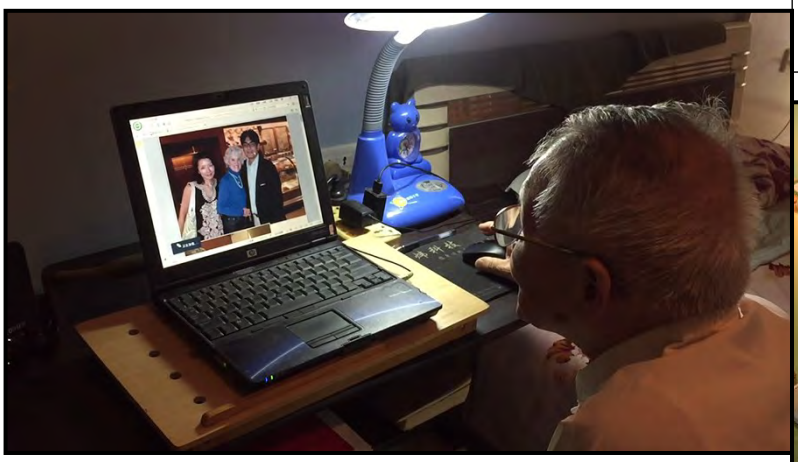
Mary Previte (left) kisses Wang Chenghan as the two finally see each other for the first time in 71 years, in Guiyang, China on July 27, 2016.
[Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]

Wang looks at a picture of some of the internees he helped rescue 71 years ago.
[Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]



Previte brings Wang 18 thank-you letters written by New Jersey Congressman Donald Norcross, US Ambassador to China Max Baucus, and other then internees. [Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]

Previte and Wang look at thank-you letters written to him by New Jersey Congressman Donald Norcross, US Ambassador to China Max Baucus, and other then internees. [Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]



Wang looks at a picture of an internee he helped rescue 71 years ago. [Photo by Li Jiaxu/chinadaily.com.cn]

Previte and Wang sit for a group picture. [Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]
Mimi and James Taylor, Mary Taylor Previte, Wang Cheng Han, Wang Jia Yang (son of Mr. Wang),
Long Yun Fei, (daughter-in-law of Mr. Wang)

Previte and Wang sit for a talk. [Photo by Yang Jun/chinadaily.com.cn]

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2014 CHINA DAILY

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Editor's note History is, by definition, about past events, and while nothing can be done to change those events, forgetting diem may lead to the wrong roads being taken in the future During the coming months, China Daily will present a series of regular reports about ordinary lives during World War-11 and the continuing impact of the conflict on the present and the future. This is the first report in the series.

Weihsien: Life and death in the shadow of the Empire of the Sun

Weihsien is a story of Chinese heroes — farmers who risked their lives to smuggle food over the wall to prisoners — we called it the 'black market' — and those who brought us food so generously when the war was over."

Mary Taylor Previte, 81-year-old US citizen, who was interned at the age of 9

File photos show Weihsien Concentration Camp, the largest Japanese camp in China. It housed 2,008 people — 327 of them children — from more than 30 countries during World War II.

FROM PAGE 1

The establishment in Weifang, known as Weihsien Concentration Camp, was the largest Japanese camp in China. It housed prisoners from many countries during World War II. Most of the internees endured three years there.

Rotten meat

Edmund Pearson, 78, a retired Canadian engineer and businessman was among the internees. Although he was just 6 years old when he was interned, he remembers every-thing.

Fearing the internees could make contact with the outside world or even escape, the Japanese covered the walls with electrified wires and set up searchlights and machine guns in the guard towers. The camp was under military management and the internees were forced to wear armbands displaying a large black letter to indicate their nationalities — "B" for British, "A" for American, and so on.

"We were there as a family and lived in a small mom with no sanitary facilities. I have many memories of the camp, such as being counted by the Japanese three times a day, attending school, being hungry most of the time. I was 6, but still had to work. My job was that of a bell ringer, waking people for the first roll call. The latrines were awful because we moved from flush toilets to `squatters" Pearson recalled. "We very seldom had meat, and when we did it was often rotten. We had a lot of egg-plants, to the extent that after-ward I could not eat eggplant until I was in my 30s. As children we still had school, but the teenagers also had jobs. My older brother worked as a cobbler:", he said. "Coffee and tea was reused, over and over. We arrived in late fall, around October, so our living quarters were very cold".

Pearson remembered that the adults made young children eat powdered eggshells to pre-vent tickets. "They got eggs on the black market and the shells had to be saved and powdered. There's nothing worse than eating a spoonful of powdered eggshell" he said.

British writer Norman Cliff was 18 when he entered the camp. In his memoirs, he said that every effort was spent acquiring fuel, food and clothing.

"The fortunes of war produced some strange situations; he wrote. "One fine British Jewish millionaire could be seen working regularly through a pile of ashes behind the kitchen, and a leading female socialite [sic] could be seen chopping wood. Our bodies were tired from long hours of manual labor. We often went to bed longing for more food. Two slices of bread and thin soup were hardly a satisfying supper after a day spent pumping water and arraying heavy crates of food."

Loss of dignity

Some people have called Weihsien camp "the Oriental Auschwitz".

"Because of the poor sanitary conditions and the shortages of food and medical care, several people died in the camp. But still I don't agree with calling it 'Auschwitz' because there was no slaughter there. That's the truth. Japan mainly wanted to humiliate the allied countries," said Xia Baoshu, 82, a Weihsien camp researcher and former president of Weifang People's Hospital

Mary Taylor Previte, 81, who later served in the New Jersey General Assembly, was interned at the age of 9.

"The second day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese soldiers appeared on the doorstep of our school. They said we were now prisoners of the Japanese. I remember so well when the Japanese came and marched the school away — perhaps 200 teachers, children and old people — to the concentration camp. I will never forget that day, A long, snaking line of children marching into the unknown, singing a song of hope from the Bible," she said.

"Separated from our parents, we found ourselves crammed

into a world of gut-wrenching hunger, guard dogs, bayonet drills, prison numbers and badges, daily roll calls, bed bugs, flies and unspeakable sanitation."

A time of heroes

For Previte, the story of the camp is one of heroes, hope and triumph It shaped her life. "Weihsien is a story of Chinese heroes — farmers who risked their lives to smuggle food over the wall to prisoners — we called it the 'black market' —and those who brought us food so generously when the war was over; she said.



From left: Survivors look for their names on the memorial wall during a 2005 visit to the former Weihsien Camp in Weifang, Shandong province, on the 60th anniversary of the World War II. The camp's hospital block is still standing. Survivors comfort one another during the 2005 visit.

Xia recalled: 'Some peasants operating the black market were caught red-handed and tortured. Some were killed. The camp was closely guarded. Apart from the Japanese, only Zhang Xingtai and his son, who deaned the latrines, could enter and leave the camp freely. They took many rislcs to help intern-ees deliver iinportant messages and also helped Arthur W. Hummel (called Heng Anshi in Chinese) to escape; he said.

Zhang Xihong, 84, Zhang Xingtai's youngest son, remem-bered the aftermath. "After Heng escaped, the Japanese immediately caught my father and brother. They were heavily beaten and tortured, but nei-ther gave in. They were finally released because ofa lack ofevi-dence. They came back with injuries and blood everywhere. They are heroes in my heart, because myfather never regret-ted what he had done," he said. Zhang's story was echoed by Wang Hao, director of the Weifiing Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office.

"The supply of food to the camp dwindled and the intern-ees suffered a lot from long-term hunger. The local people donated more than $100,000, a lot ofmoney at that time, to buy food, medicines and necessities that they managed to send into the camp to help the internees survive the toughest periods; he noted.

Hopes of survival Pearson said the children were lucky because the adults quiddy formed a camp com-mittee. They restarted the school, hospital, and church, and even set up an entertain-ment committee that put on oratorios, plays and ballets. Cheng Long, a professor at the Beijing Language and Culture University, has just returned to China from the US where he interviewed surviv-ing internees. "The deeper I research the history, the more I am interested in it. I found that even in such harsh condi-tions, the internees maintained a positive attitude toward life. The Japanese didn't allow the band to practice, so instead of making a sound, they kept practicing by gestures in the hope of playing on victory day Even under such hardship and without freedom, their paint-ings still featured bright colors — flowers, green trees and blue skies," he said.

The respect shown for edu-cation moved Sylvia Zhang, a post-doctoral researcher at Shih Hsin University in Taiwan. "Even in the camp, the teach-ers still followed strict teaching guidelines just like in Britain. They held the Oxford Local Examination in the camp for higher-grade students to help them deal with the changeable future. It's the reason that many ofthe child internees were suc- cessful after liberation; she said Previte said that although children from her school were separated from their parents, the missionary teachers and adults did everything they could to protect than

"The teachers would never let students give up. They insist-ed on good manners. We could be sitting on wooden benches at wooden tables in the mess hall and eating the most awful-looking glop out of a soap dish or an empty tin can, but those hero-teachers kept repeating the rule& Sit up straight Do not stuff food in your mouth. Do not talk while you have food in your mouth; she recalled.

Liberation

"The Japanese army was los-ing ground in most of China in 1945 and victory was almost assured, but the news was blocked. It wasn't until the US arranged rescue planes to liber-ate the camp on Aug 17, 1945, that people knew their days in hell were over; said Cheng. Liberation came as a surprise to Previte. 'It was a hot and windy day. I was sick with an upset stomach in the hospital when I heard the drone of an airplane over the camp. Rac-ing to the window, I watched it sweep lower, slowly lower, and then circle again. It was a giant plane, emblazoned with an American star. Beyond the treetops its belly opened. I gaped in wonder as giant para-chutes drifted slowly to the ground. People poured to the gate to welcome the heroes. All the internees were celebrating liberation and we even cut off pieces of parachutes, and got their signatures and buttons to cherish; she said.

The long years of malnour-ishment affected the children's physical development. Even after 70 years, the experience of the camp can provoke night-mares among former internees. Pearson said that after being so hungry for more than three years, he will eat almost any-thing now.

"I am obsessed with food, so I do all the cooking. More important, the camp expe-rience made a very strong impression on me. It took a long time before I could deal with the Japanese, even though as an adult I went to live in Hong Kong with my family and had to do business with the Japanese. The people are fine, but the government has never adcnowledged what they did to us; he said.

Previte said conflict is a catastrophe that destroys everything. "War and hate and violence never open the way to peace. Weihsien shaped me. I will carry Weihsien in my heart forever':

Contact the author at hena@ chinadaily.com.cn

FIRST PERSON EDMUND PEARSON

Returning to the camp

Of those interned in the camp, the only person I am in contact with is my cousin who was born there. As you can imagine, we survivors were children at the time, and our parents decamped all over the world afterwards.

I returned to the camp in 2005, when the city of Wei-fang decided to host a week of meetings for the survivors.

Only seven buildings are left, one being a block of rooms like the one in which I lived, although it's not the same one. Even though the buildings are now surrounded by the city, I recognized them all, even those in which the Japanese lived. I remember one of them especially well, because my brother and I would steal coal from the basement I also recognized the hospital where I had my tonsils removed. Mostly, my feelings were pride at the accuracy of my memory after all these years.

Edmund Pearson at age 11

I was 70 in 2005 and I was surprised that the city had built a memorial wall with all of our names inscribed on it.

-

Edmund Pearson spoke with He Na.

FIRST PERSON WANG HAO

Connecting with the world

Editor's note Wang Hao is director of Weifang Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office.

I remember one of the US internees told me that Weihsien camp is not only a part of Chinese history but also a part of US history too. The unique history of Weihsien camp has provided a connection with the rest of the world.

To allow more people at home and abroad to know about this history, including key events and how people helped each other to survive the hard times, the Weifang government attached great importance to the investigations into the history of the camp. Staff members are in a race against time to collect information and stories 70 years after the event because most of the internees have died.

Also, the government is drawing up a long-term plan for the camp, and we hope to restore some of the buildings and to make the few buildings that still stand into a camp-themed memorial park.

Next year will be the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, and a series of memorial activities will be carried out One of the most important will invite survivors to return to Weifang, where seminars will be held to further study the pod.

Wang Hao spoke with He Na.

How I Found My World War II Hero in CHINA

By Mary Taylor Previte

On a quiet Sunday afternoon, March 29, 2015, I opened an e-mail that took my breath away. The subject line said: **" I am the grandson of Eddie Wang (Cheng-Han Wang)"**

I read it again. **" I am the grandson of Eddie Wang (Cheng-Han Wang)"**

Eddie WANG, when he graduated ...

Eddie Wang was the Chinese interpreter on the American rescue mission that parachuted from a B-24 to liberate 1,500 Allied prisoners from the Weihsien concentration camp in China. **August 17, 1945**.

I was twelve years old when Eddie Wang and the Americans came**.**

For eighteen years I've been looking for Eddie Wang. I've always hit dead ends. I remember seeing a byline in the New York Times: Edward Wong, reporting from Asia. No, Edward Wong wrote back to me. He knew nothing about Weihsien.

Finding someone named Wang in China is as difficult as finding someone named Smith in the United States. Finding one very special Wang from almost a billion and a half people? Not so easy.

In 1997, I searched successfully and found all of the **six** Americans who liberated Weihsien. But **seven** rescuers liberated the camp. Where was the Chinese interpreter, **Wang Cheng-Han**? We called him "**Eddie."** His high school English teacher had given him that name**.**

Now here was his e-mail note.

"My name is Qian Wang (Daniel Wang)," the letter said. "I am the grandson of Edward Wang, who was the Chinese interpreter of the rescue team going to the Japanese concentrate camp in Weihsien, China, on August 17, 1945. I am currently living with my wife in Lexington, SC with a temporary VISA."

Bless my soul! **Answers in South Carolina!**

"My grandfather is still alive, 90 years old now, living in China," Daniel continued. "He is very healthy!"

The note said that his grandfather had once told him about his experience in Weihsien. But Daniel had almost forgotten a long-ago promise -- that he would try to find for his grandfather other members of the rescue team.

Daniel is a photographer. "I was reading a story about an American military photographer who served in Flying Tigers during WWII. And I remembered my promise. My grandfather helped. He gave me a name, **Stanley Staiger**. I googled it, and I found this page: *http://www.weihsien-paintings.org/topica/archives/2009-1to12.htm*.
I confirmed with my grandfather about the time, place, and all the seven peoples' names.

"I can't describe how excited I am now!" Daniel wrote. "My hands are trembling! I enclosed two of my grandfather's picture taken on his 90-year-old birthday a few weeks ago. I don't know if you can receive this email, or still remember how he looked like. Please let me know if you are still try-

ing to find him. I look forward to hearing from you!"

Daniel Wang had sent photographs:

Pictures taken at Wang Cheng-Han's 90th birthday

I answered immediately and started buzzing family e-mail lines. The Japanese had interned five of us Taylors in Weihsien.

My daughter Alice jumped into my joy! "**Wonderful! The last hero!"**

What followed were weeks of phone calls and e-mails to Daniel Wang. Could this really be "our" Eddie Wang? How could I prove it?

With my successful search for the Americans on the team, I was helped because several of them had become close friends. They had kept in touch with each other. When I found each one, I called them, visited them, nudged their local newspapers to write about them.

With Eddie Wang, my search had to be different. He lives in China. He had not kept connected with others on the team. I drafted a long list of questions. I consulted my Chinese friends about proper etiquette. Were sixteen questions too many? Too stressful? After all, Mr. Wang is 90 years old. These Chinese friends added a very important fact: The name **Wang** is common. **Cheng-Han** is not .

My brother John wanted to know: "How will you know if he gets the answers right?" John, now a surgeon, had been interned in Weihsien, too.

"Because I already know the answers, " I told him. "I'll know if he gets them right."

Daniel Wang came back with four pages of answers that fascinated and reassured me. Where did the team stay while they were in Weihsien? How would Mr. Wang describe Major Staiger? How close to the camp did the parachutes land?

In Mr. Wang's answers, I was reading details I had heard from other members of the liberation team. Our family e-mails buzzed. "This Eddie Wang is for real."

"I've decided to believe he's real unless told otherwise," my daughter Alice wrote. "I think it's wonderful." Alice is a lawyer. She's trained to ask questions.

Complications piled up. How would I talk to Mr. Wang? Grandson, Daniel, was full of suggestions like "Can you use Skype?" Bless my soul! I'm technologically-illiterate. How do you Skype?

My own questions were more down to earth: Can Mr. Wang still speak English? Daniel wasn't sure. How would we talk to-

gether? My own Chinese is now disappointingly limited.

Having joined in every detail of this adventure, our dearest Chinese friends jumped in. I could drive to their home a half hour away, they offered, and use their speakerphone. If Mr. Wang needed an interpreter, they would sit beside me to help. Hui-Zhen even suggested the best time for the call: 9 a.m. when daylight lights the highway here for me in New Jersey and when rush hour traffic wouldn't be dangerous for my drive. That would be 9 p.m. in China, before Mr. Wang went to bed.

We prepared carefully. In every call to Daniel, I asked him: "Will this excitement make your grandfather sick, will it give him trouble in any way?" For each step, Daniel got approval from his grandfather.

I had one main request; **Tell me your story**.

Hui-zhen phoned Mr. Wang at exactly 9 a.m., Sunday, May 3. We were seated side by side at their dining room table, talking into the speakerphone – all the way across the world. Mr. Wang, talking from Guizhou Province in China, sounded like he was sitting with us, chatting with friends. He amazed me. Now 90 years old, in good health, with an amazingly sharp memory, he still has an amazingly good mastery of English.

His is an amazing story. I vowed I would not cry. But I get goose bumps as I think about this conversation.

How do you thank a hero who risked his life for you?

"Mr. Wang, I thank God that he has given me the gift of living long enough to talk with you and to thank you for helping to liberate all of us in Weihsien from the Japanese."

I asked Mr. Wang to tell his story. Bless my soul! We chatted for more than an hour.

Here are some tiny details that fascinated and delighted me: A teenager, **Betty Lambert,** and another teenaged girl taught him to dance in Weihsien. A Greek girl gave him a piece of silk parachute embroidered with the rescue scene and autographed by the seven liberators. He knew nothing about religion, so someone had to stop him when he was smoking in the church. The team ate their meals at first from the three camp kitchens but later from food dropped by American bombers. The team lived in and ate their meals in the building that had been Japanese Headquarters. Once, he made a funny translating mistake when the team ate in an eating place in the town of Weihsien. "In this Chinese restaurant where I was translating for the team, I heard 'chicken legs' as 'chicken eggs.'" Sometimes he got diarrhea and had to be treated by team medic, Raymond Hanchulak.

When I asked Mr. Wang (I COULD'NT call him "Eddie.") what he loved most about his experiences there, he said, "Everything was so new to me. I loved it all," -- that he was only 20 years old, so many, many children, and everyone talking English.

He loved to play sports with the children.

There was nothing he didn't like, he told me.

BUT the parachute drop was a nightmare! He had been trained to do parachuting in a Chinese camp, a simulation on the ground only, never

a real jump from an airplane during his training. He said he once questioned his training instructor that his life could be endangered doing real parachuting if he was trained only by simulation. The instructor told him, "You'll be fine. You are not a big guy," So he always worried about a real jump. Fortunately, the parachutes they

used on that mission would be automatically deployed. It saved his life. When he jumped from the B-24, the sudden strong flow of air made him dizzy, almost unconscious. But the parachute deployed in about 15 seconds, and the powerful pulling force awakened him. This was his first jump from a plane. He landed safely.

Wang Cheng-Han began to learn English in Chengdu's Shude High School, one of the tops in China. He was a sophomore student in Sichuan University when he joined the military service in December 1944 and trained in Luzhou. But he didn't like the training there because they were not trained for how to fight, only non-combat drilling. Non-combat drilling? There was a war out there! He wanted to fight the Japanese army.

Later, he was recruited into the telecommunication group in Chongqing where he learned Morse code. After that, he was recruited in the interpreter training class and completed a 25-day translation training before he was assigned, in May 1945, to the interpreter pool in Kunming. The American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) recruited interpreters from that pool. There, he was employed and assigned to Special Intelligence (SI) group and to Major Stanley Staiger's team. Major Staiger headed the Weihsien "Duck Mission" rescue team.

The Weihsien rescue mission was organized in Kunming, the headquarters of OSS. In Xi-An, on the early morning of August 17, 1945, Eddie Wang was informed that the team was about to carry on a rescue mission at Weihsien, Shandong province. Only then, was he informed of the details about flying to Weihsien.

Previously, Mr. Wang had trained in using small arms, light machine gun, Bazooka (a small rocket launcher) and TNT at Kaiyuan where he had learned parachuting.

So at the age of 20, Eddie Wang parachuted from a B-24 over Weihsien. He remembers carrying a pistol, a carbine, and a dagger.

An early model of a B-24

The plane that flew over WeiHsien on August 17, 1945

Team members landed in a field of gaoliang not far from the camp.
He says he was closest in friendship with **Peter Orlich**, the radio operator on the team. Peter Orlich was 21 years old.

Rescue team members took over and stayed in what had been the small Japanese headquarters building, not far from the entrance to the camp. There was a toilet downstairs that allowed only two people to use it at the same time.

Mr. Wang says his job in Weihsien was to translate for the team anything to do with China. When twenty Americans of the Special Intelligence group later arrived in Weihsien, they brought their own Chinese

interpreter.

In the turmoil that swept China after the war, Mr. Wang says he lost most of his treasures from that rescue mission in Weihsien. Here's a picture of the duffel bag he used in Weihsien.

Duffel bag used by Wang Cheng-Han in Weihsien. Note the letters "U. S." printed on the bag.

After the war, Wang Cheng-Han graduated from Sichuan University. He became an engineer. Once on a business trip, he visited Weihsien. He retired in 1990. #

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这是一段尘封了70年的记忆。这段记忆，因远隔重洋美国老太的不懈找寻，这才得以启封。

今年5月3日，一个越洋电话打进了住在贵阳的王成汉老人的家中。电话的那端，是美国新泽西州82岁的老太太Mary Tay-lor Previte。16个问题的提问，证实了王成汉就是 Eddie Wang，一个参与了代号为"鸭子行动"的山东潍县（现在的潍坊）集中营解救行动的中国翻译，美军7人解救小组的成员之一。至此，Mary18年的寻找终于划上了圆满的句号。

呼吸，在一瞬间停顿

今年的3月29日是一个宁静的星期日。午后的阳光，从窗外照射进了美国南新泽西州哈登菲尔德Mary Taylor Previte的家中。82岁的Mary坐在电脑前，习惯性地打开电脑，准备阅读自己的电子邮件。

"I am the grandson of Eddie Wang (Cheng-Han Wang)"（我是王成汉的孙子）。一个电子邮件的标题，让Mary瞬间的呼吸停顿了下来。摇了摇头，Mary让自己慢慢恢复了平静，之后，她又把标题重复地读了一遍。这才小心翼翼地打开了邮件。

邮件是一个名叫王谦的中国男子发来的。

"我叫王谦（Daniel Wang），是Eddie Wang的孙子。他曾是解救小组中的中国翻译，于1945年8月17日到过中国潍县集中营。现我和妻子持临时签证居住在南卡罗来纳州的Lexington镇上"。

"天哪！ 是来自南卡罗来纳的消息。"Mary不由得发出了感叹！

王谦接着写道，"我的祖父仍然健在，现年90岁，居住在中国，他十分健康"。王谦在信中还说到，他的祖父曾同他讲过在潍县时的情况，但是，王谦差不多忘记了很早以前他曾承诺会替祖父找寻解救小组中的其他成员。

王谦是一位摄影师。他写道，"我正在看一个故事，是关于美国军事摄影师在二战中的飞虎队服役的，于是我想起了我的承诺。我的祖父帮助了我，他告诉我一个名字：Stanley Staiger。通过谷歌搜索，找到了一个网页。我和我的祖父一起确定了时间、地点及小组7个成员的名字。我现在说不出有多兴奋了！我的手在颤抖！ 我把几星期前他90岁生日的两张照片附上。我不知道你是否能收到这个电子邮件，是否还记得他的长相。如果你还在寻找他的话请告诉我。我期盼着你的回音"。

Mary立即用电子邮件给予了回复："是日本人把我们Taylor家的5个人囚禁在了潍县集中营。"接着，她讲述了自己18年来一直在寻找王成汉的经历。

在与王谦的邮件交往中，Mary的思绪又回到了中国，又回到了那个让她刻骨铭心的潍县集中营。轰鸣声，从集中营上空传来时间回到1945年8月17日，山东潍县(今潍坊)。

对于12岁的Mary来说，她的脑海中，总在梦想着从天而降把她及家人从恶魔手中解救出来的超级英雄。

Mary的父母都是传教士。她随父母一道在山东一带生活。日本人占领胶东半岛后，她们兄弟姊妹4人与爷爷被关进了潍县集中营。集中营中非人的生活，让她总是幻想，终有一天，她及家人会被英雄解救出去。

阴沉的天空中，一阵隐隐约约的声音传了出来。不一会，一架B-24飞临集中营上空盘旋，而且飞得很低。"我们看到飞机侧面的星形标记，知道那是美国的飞机。"今年5月15日，美国《The RETROSPECT》(美国回顾周报)发表的《七十年后Mary终于找到了解救她的人》描述了Mary当时的心情。

当天，一个以"鸭子行动"为代号的解救小组从一架B-24轰炸机

上空降到潍县集中营来解救被关押的外侨。
“从飞机上空降了6名美国人和一名中国翻译，他们一个个地跳离飞机，随即张开了降落伞。他们每个人都意识到，与死硬的日本人之间并未达到可以协商交流的境地，他们可能在空降中被日本人射杀。当他们落地后，集中营的外侨们就冲出大门去迎接他们了”。Mary描述道，“我们想问许多问题，我们想和他们直接谈话。他们身体都很健壮。”
她说：“这些人冒着生命危险来解救我们。对于他们来说，我们都是陌生人，但他们却来使我们获得自由。”她是强忍着泪水这样说的。“集中营的孩子们带着羡慕的心情跟随在他们周围。他们带来了口香糖、糖果和其它物品，这些是我们多年都未见到过的。他们教孩子们唱歌，比如‘你是我的阳光’。在等待物资到来和安排1500多外侨如何返回家乡的日子里，他们还和孩子们玩垒球。孩子们想知道这些飞行的英雄们的一切，把他们看作是神”。
在Mary和其家人被解救时，她的父母还正在中国工作着。
Mary兄弟姊妹四人乘飞机离开潍县后，就去和他们的父母及一个新出生不久的小弟团聚了。
离开时的兴奋，使Mary都未能对解救她的英雄们表示一声感谢。而这，也成为了她在52年后开始漫长的找寻英雄之路的成因。18年，漫漫寻找路
1997年，Mary已经成为了南新泽西州的女议员。
在美国Mt. Laurel举办过一次中、缅、印退伍军人公告会。
Mary代替她的同事参加了这个公告会。会上，Mary开始询问参加过二战的老兵，是否有人知道她幼时将她从集中营解救出来的几位英雄，她列举出他们的名字：Stanley Staiger少校、Jimmy Moore、Jim Hannon、Tad Nagaki中士、PeterOrlichk下士、Ramond Hanchulak和中国翻译Eddie Wang（即王成汉）。
Mary说：“这个问题引起大家风暴般的兴趣。其中有一位情报官说他能够提供与六位美国人名字相同的、居住在美国的任何人的电话号码和住址”。
得到这样一份名单后，Mary对名字和电话号码进行了仔细的查找，她成功地找到了其中健在的4人，对他们逐一表示了感谢，对另两位的遗孀，Mary也找到了她们的住址，并表达了感谢之情。
一位老兵的遗孀保存有一块当时跳伞时所用降落伞的碎片，上面绣有B-24轰炸机和每个空降人员的姓名。这一物件现存于美国博物馆中。这块降落伞碎片上有着小组中的中国翻译Eddie Wang的名字。
“在一个拥有十几亿人口的国家寻找Eddie Wang是几乎不可能的事，”Mary说，“直到2015年3月29日，我从王谦的电子邮件中得到消息，这个人就是Eddie Wang的孙子。”
王谦在南卡罗来纳州和他的妻子在一起。他正急于完成他对祖父王成汉的承诺，为他寻找在第二次世界大战中他那六个同志的住址。Daniel在潍县社区网站上寻找到Mary Previte的名字，知道她经常查询有关Eddie Wang的消息。于是，王谦给Mary发了那封电子邮件。
Mary说：“当我看到这条消息，知道王谦就住在南卡时，实在是惊奇万分”。Mary必须确定这就是她要寻找的Eddie Wang。“我提出了许多问题，Daniel通过他的祖父确认。他的祖父现住在中国贵州省，现年90岁，真是太不可思议了”。16个问题，确认英雄身份
由于Mary成功地寻找到了其他小组成员的下落，并和他们成为了好朋友，他们彼此之间也常接触。Marry每找到一个人就会通电话或去拜访，并促使当地的报纸宣扬他们的事迹。
对Eddie Wang的寻找是另一回事。他住在中国，未曾与小组的其他成员有过联系。对此，Mary决定提出16个问题，以进行确认Eddie Wang的真实性。
Mary的问题都是实实在在的。王先生仍能说英语吗？如果不会，那又怎么在一起交流呢？ Mary说，自己的中文水平是很有限的。
5月3日上午9点（贵阳当天晚9点），Marry准时给王先生打电话。Marry一家人挨坐在餐厅的桌边，电话通向了遥远的中国。
王成汉在贵阳和Mary通话，Mary的感觉就如同是大家坐在一起聊天似的。一个90岁的人，身体健康，具有超凡的记忆力，而且他仍然有使人惊异的英语能力，这一切，都让Mary感到惊奇。
Mary的16个问题得到了很好的回答。她确定这就是她要找的Eddie Wang。
当王成汉和王谦了解到，一个当年在集中营的12岁小姑娘一直在寻找救援小组成员时，都非常惊奇。王谦说，“这事肯定对她的一生十分重要。我只知道我祖父在第二次世界大战中参军，但直到我和Mary联系并在她问到许多问题之前，我并不知道有关祖父的一些细节”。今年8月，潍坊重逢
今年8月，山东潍坊将举行“潍县集中营解放70周年纪念会”。
Mary被邀请为一本关于潍县集中营的书写序言。这本书将在中国出版和发行。对于许多至今健在却不能去参加这次纪念会的外侨，这本书和网站将有助于他们之间的联系和交流。
90高龄的王成汉也被邀请参与这一盛会。记者了解到，身体硬朗的王老参会应该不成问题，但毕竟是90岁的年龄了，出行的安全问题怎样解决？远在重洋的Mary能否前来参会？她的身体还允许她漂洋过海吗？
这一切，都成为了大家关注两人能否再次重逢的问题。

最后一个英雄
5月26日上午9时半，几经辗转，记者来到了位于贵阳的王成汉老人家中。楼下，王成汉的儿子王家扬早已等候在此。
上楼的过程中，记者问王家扬，王成汉老人现在正在家中干什么？“上网。”简短的回答，让记者吃惊不小。印象中，90岁的年龄，不说老态龙钟，也应该是少动多坐了。上网这种年轻人干的事情，好像与90岁的老人相去甚远。带着一份惊奇，同时还带着一丝疑虑，记者走进了这个充满了传奇的老人家中，听他讲述那一段难忘的历程。

投笔从戎
一进门，一个身材并不魁伟的老人就出现在眼前。精神矍铄这个词用在他的身上，应该没有一点奇异。
王成汉今年已经90岁了，但身体非常健康，耳聪目明，说话也利索，这让这次的采访进行得很顺利。听他说着当年的故事，记者很诧异他竟然还记得如此多的细节，看来那段经历的确让他难以忘怀。
老人出生于武汉汉口，1965年来到贵阳冶金设计院工作直至退休。
1943年，18岁的王成汉考进了四川大学物理系。第二年的秋天，大二的王成汉在学校听了冯玉祥的演讲后，毅然决定辍学到庐州参加国民革命军青年军。当时四川大学去了20几个人，加上其他大学的共有100多人，这批大学生们组成了203师搜索连。王成汉在这里待了半个月，每天机械的重复下操的内容，这让他很失望：“我到这里来是想打鬼子的，天天下操干啥

子，又不教打仗的事情，我不干了。”
这时，正好遇到电信大队搞了个培训班，到部队上抽调学员学习拍电报的事情。虽说学完还是要返回连队的，但是王成汉心想，管他的，先去学门技术也好就报名参加了。在电信大队学了20几天，还是觉得没意思。这时候，战时紧张，对翻译的需求也加大，国民党外事局便办了个译员培训班，电信班里好多人都去报名。最初，王成汉知道不少人都是教会学校毕业的，英文很好，自己只是一个高中英文，不敢去考。但是看到其他人都考上了，就也准备试一试。王成汉回忆说，当时考的是口试，也就是问一些在哪学习呀？ 为什么学英文之类的，自己回答得应该不错，因为教官说话太快，他还让考官“take it easy”。
考上是自然的，译员训练班急需要人。但电信班也一样，所以不肯放人，说是如果去了就给他抓回去。王成汉便和译员训练班招聘的人商量，换了一个名字--王作英，在那里还得了英文名字：Edward
Wang。
1945年的4月25日，王成汉从译员训练班毕业，5月便到了昆明的译员人才库。这批毕业生要在这里等着，哪个单位要人，就来这里抽调。后来OSS（美国战略服务办公室）来这里招募，王成汉便被选走了。OSS里面有四个行动组，王成汉最开始被分到SO（特别行动组）。在这里，王成汉和同组的6人被派到湖南芷江的前敌指挥所。准备去衡山跟中国抗日游击队取得联系，在敌人后方袭击敌人。结果去了没多久，日本人占领了衡山，游击打不成了。回去后又到云南开元受训，在那学习了跳伞，小武器等。学跳伞是在地面模拟学习的，从未真正的跳过。王成汉说，当时觉得有点不靠谱，就跟教官请示能否真正的学跳一下，结果教官回答他：“没事的，你个子这么小，又不是个大块头，没问题的。”但这样随意的态度让王成汉心里很害怕，真要跳下来估计很危险哦。在这个时候王成汉一定想不到，没多久他就真的要跳伞了。开元的训练结束后，王成汉回到了昆明。在这期间，日本天皇宣布投降，便不再有游击任务，王成汉被重新分配到了SI（特别情报组）。

营救任务
1945年8月15日，日本天皇宣布投降。但是，还有不少日本军队是不服输的，很有可能对集中营内的侨民们实施报复。
8月16日，行动组就被派到西安，当时还不知道要做什么。17日一早到了机场，队长才宣布了从美国驻中国总司令魏德曼那里收到的信件，要他们去潍县搭救集中营内的侨民。王成汉说，当时日本在中国有好几个集中营，都派了SI成员去搭救。每个组都以鸟类名称为代号，王成汉这只队就叫“鸭子行动组”，早上9点半就飞到了潍县。
王成汉笑着说，当时他是第五个跳伞下去的，因为从来没有真正跳过伞，其实非常害怕，也不敢跳。是后面的一个人推了他一把，他才跳下去了。一下去就感到一股力往下坠，他几乎晕了过去，幸好他们的降落伞是自动打开的，他才活了下来。他们当时降落在集中营外不远的高粱地里，营内的侨民们见到他们落地后都从营内跑出来迎接，他们是被扛着进去的。他说不少侨民出来时还带着刀子，就怕万一日本人不服气，会引发暴乱，好在日本人睁一只眼闭一只眼，没去挑事。
鸭子行动组在潍县集中营里待了一个多月，中途也有一些人员和物资的补给，生活过得倒不错。
说到Mary，他说，Mary大概是唯一一个记得他的名字叫Eddie的，这让他很感动。而他也记得当年那个只有12岁，个子不高，挺乖的，披着头发的美国小女孩。由于一个20岁，一个12岁，他俩的年龄最接近，理所当然地就成为了好朋友。当时他们一起玩垒球，一起去教堂做礼拜。不懂宗教的Eddie还在教堂里抽上了烟，吓得Mary赶忙提醒这样是不行的。

最后一个英雄
联系上了王成汉之后，Mary的女儿开心的说：“太棒了！ 最后一个英雄”。
1997年，Mary开始尝试寻找当年鸭子行动组的7位成员，其他6位美国人或其遗孀很快被找到，之后都保持着联系，唯独王成汉一直没有找到。Mary在接受美国回顾周报采访时笑称，要在中国找一个姓王的人，就好比在美国找一个叫史密斯的，根本无法寻找。
收到王谦的邮件后，Mary还列举了一系列的问题给王成汉以确定他真的是当年那个Eddie。王成汉笑着说：“她问我当时在集中营内做些什么呀?怎么出去呀？ 以及一些当时的细节，我就一一回答了。后来还通了一个多小时的电话，当时真的很激动，没想到时隔70年还能联系到当年的小女孩。”

本报记者刘昌敏 龙璇璇 摄影报道

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Audubon's Felix Drafted for Ice Hockey in SPORTS about TOWN
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Camden County's Oldest Weekly Newspaper
The RETROSPECT
www.theretrospect.com
Volume 116, No. 46 Hometown News Since 1902 75¢ Friday, May 15, 2015

Seven Decades Later, Previte Connects with Liberator

by Shelly Castorino

Kids dream of superheroes flying through the sky and saving them from the villains below. For 12-year old Mary Taylor Previte and her three siblings held prisoner at the Weihsien Concentration Camp in China during World War II, their dreams came tile when seven heroes flew down from the sky.

On August 17, 1945, members of an operation named Mission Duck jumped from a B-24 bomber to liberate prisoners held at the Weihsien. concentration camp. "I remember that day," recalls Previte, who is now 82 and lives in Haddonfield. "A B-24 was flying very low and circling the camp. We could see the star on the side of the plane so, we knew they-were Americans."

One by one, a team of six Americans and one Chinese interpreter, descended from the sky waiting for their parachutes to open. Each was very aware that communications may not have reached all Japanese war supporters and that there may be sharp shooters taking aim at the floating ducks. When the men landed, prisoners from the camp ran out of the front gate to meet them.

"We had so many questions and we wanted to touch them," said Mary. `They were strong and healthy, they had meat on their bones," she recalled.

Living in the concentration camp since the age of nine, Mary had no idea if the war was over or who won. -

"These men risked their lives for us, we were total strangers to them but they came to free us," she said, holding back tears. All of the kids in the camp followed the soldiers around with admiration. They brought chewing gum, candy and other treats that no one had seen for years. They taught the kids songs, including "You are my sunshine" and played softball with them while they waited for supplies and departure arrangements for the 1,500-plus prisoners. The kids wanted to know everything about the flying heroes who were gods in their eyes.

When Mary and her siblings were liberated, their parents were still working in China. The four Taylor children departed Weihsien on the second plane and- were reunited with their parents and their new younger sibling. The excitement. of leaving did not allow young Mary to properly thank her heroes.

In 1997, Mary was an Assemblywoman in Southern New Jersey. She was asked by her colleagues to present a proclamation to a China Burma India veteran's group in Mt. Laurel. After reading the proclamation, Mary asked if anyone in the audience knew her heroes from her childhood who liberated the concentration camp. Mary recited each of their names, Major Stanley Staiger, Jimmy Moore, Jim Hannon, Sgt. Tad Nagaki, Sgt. Peter Orlich, Raymond Hanchulak and Eddie Wang, a Chinese interpreter.

"That question started a firestorm of interest," said Mary. "One man in the group was an intelligence officer and was able to provide phone numbers -and locations for anyone living in the United States with the same name as the six Americans."

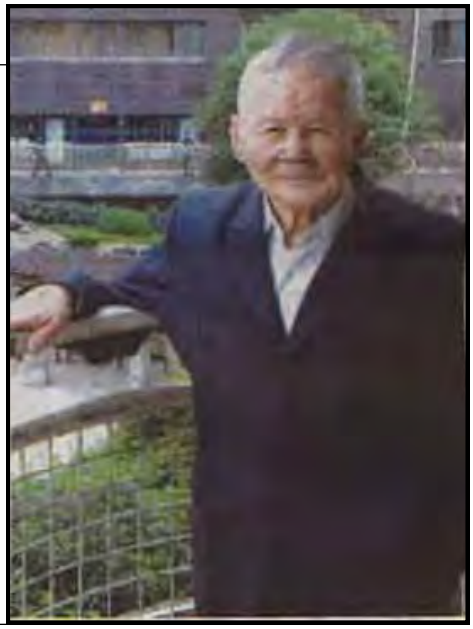
After years of going through the list of names and numbers, Mary was successful in her quest to thank her American heroes. Four of the six were still living and she was able to thank each in person. For the heroes who had passed away before Mary located them, she shared her story of gratitude with the widows of the remaining two Americans.

One widow had a piece of the actual

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

Mary Taylor Previte, of Haddonfield survived a Japanese concentration camp that ;was liberated by seven men-six Americans and a Chinese interpreter. Almost20 years ago she sought to personally thank the seven liberators. This year she connected with the seventh man, Eddie Wang of China, right, seen on his90th birthday.

Photo courtesy of Daniel Wang



parachute used during Mission Duck. On it was an image of the B-24 bomber and the names of each man who parachuted to the camp. That piece of parachute was photographed and included in a book about memories of Weihsien. The original is at the Smithsonian.

That piece of parachute included the name of Eddie Wang, the Chinese interpreter on the liberation mission. "Finding Eddie Wang in a country with over a billion people is next to impossible," said Mary. "Until one day in 2015, almost 70 years after being liberated from Weihsien, I received an email from a man claiming to be the grandson of Eddie Wang."

Daniel Wang, who is currently living in South Carolina with his wife, was busy fulfilling a promise to his 90-year old grand father Cheng-Han "Eddie" Wang, who asked Daniel to locate his six comrades from World War II. During Daniel's Internet research, he found many entries on a Weihsien community website and the name of Mary Previte who often asked for information about Eddie Wang. Daniel reached out to the woman seeking information about his grandfather.

"Imagine the surprise to read an email from Daniel Wang, who lives in South Carolina," said Mary. After all of these years, Mary had to be certain she was communicating with the correct Wang. "I asked so many questions, and Daniel was able to confirm the answers through his grandfather, who is still living in the Guizhou Province in China at the age of 90 -- unbelievable!" she said.

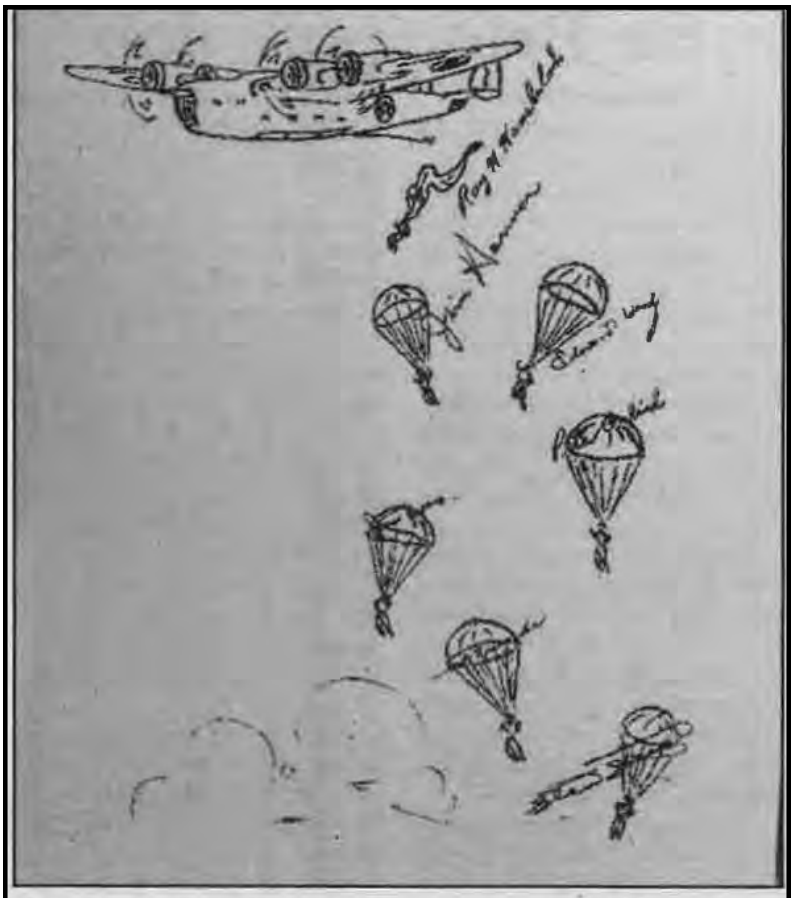
Mary wanted to make certain Eddie was well enough to answer her questions without too much stress. She has friends who are Chinese Americans who happily agreed to sit in on the conference call for Mary to speak to Eddie and help with any language barriers.

On Sunday, May 3, Mary spoke to 'her seventh hero. "We spoke for over an hour," said Mary. "I cannot believe I found Eddie Wang and he is healthy and living in China. Daniel even sent pictures from Eddie's 90th birthday to me."

Both Eddie and Daniel Wang were surprised to learn that a 12-year old girl in the camp was still looking for every single man in the rescue team. "It must be something so important to her life,", said the younger Wang. "I knew my grandfather was in World War II, but I didn't know many details until I began to contact Mary, as she asked my grandfather a lot of questions through me."

All Daniel knew about his grandfather's experience in the war was that he was in a rescue mission but they didn't fire any shots against the Japanese army. Daniel said he mistakenly thought his grandfather was working with the Flying Tigers.

Since communicating with Mary, Daniel learned the entire story of. what his grandfather did before he joined the army and after the war was over. He also became aware of how deeply that rescue mission influenced the former internees in the concentration camp.



ANGEL AND PARACHUTES: An internee of Weishen concentration drew this image of seven rescuers parachuting from The Armored Angel as part of Mission Duck. The internees defied Japanese sentries upon seeing the rescue plane and burst through the camp's gates to greet the liberators.

With the 70th reunion of Weihsien taking place in August, Mary was asked to write the preface for a book about the concentration camp that will be published and distributed in China. With many of the remaining internees unable to make the trip to China for a reunion, books and websites help the group remain connected.

For Mary, some of the most important life lessons learned took place when she was a child living in China.

Mary's parents were missionaries and the family prayed every morning. Her" mother taught the children a singing version of Psalm 91 which says "...if you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go..."

And the heroic angels came through for Mary and her family 70 years ago. Written on the side of that B-24 bomber with the six Americans and Eddie Wang was "the Armored Angel" and all seven have now been accounted for and appropriately thanked for their heroism by that little girl from Weihsien.

The Inquirer
DAILY NEWS philly.com

Haddonfield woman finds the last of her seven daring heroes

Melanie Burney, Inquirer Staff Writer
POSTED: Sunday, May 31, 2015, 11:59 PM

Nearly 70 years ago, Mary Previte was liberated from a Japanese prison camp in China during World War II by a daring group of seven rescuers she called her heroes.

Over the years, she managed to find them all, one by one, until there was only one name remaining on her must-find list.

It took 18 years for Previte to locate the last man - Wang Cheng-Han, who was the Chinese interpreter for the liberation team. They were reunited last month when they spoke by telephone.

She called the twist of fate a miracle - with a little help from the Internet and Wang's doting grandson, who connected Previte to cherished family-history stories told by his grandfather growing up in China.

"It's miraculous when you think about it," Previte, 82, of Haddonfield, said in an interview. "I never dreamed it would happen."

Previte and her rescuer, whom she knew as Eddie Wang, chatted for about an hour through an interpreter. She had lots of questions about that fateful day, but mainly wanted to express her gratitude.

Former New Jersey Assemblywoman Mary Previte of Haddonfield was just a child, the daughter of missionaries, when she spent nearly four years in a Japanese prison camp. She says finding her seventh rescuer, a Chinese translator, was a twist of fate. (ALEJANDRO A. ALVAREZ / Staff Photographer)

"I thanked God for letting me live long enough to find him and say thank you," she said. "It is such an astonishment."

Previte would like to meet with Wang in person, possibly at the camp's 70th anniversary international reunion this summer in Weifang, in the central Shandong province. He has been invited by the Chinese government.

Finding Wang was especially bittersweet because he is the only surviving member of the liberation group. She made contact with four others in the late 1990s, and found the widows of two others.

Wang, now 90, retired, and living in China, was surprised to hear from Previte, said his grandson, Daniel Wang, who lives in Lexington, S.C.

"He takes his story as an important part of my family history," the grandson said. "He wants me to know and to remember it."

Wang Chen-Han and six other paratroopers, whom Previte described as "seven heroes dropping from the sky," liberated the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center on Aug. 17, 1945.

The men rescued Previte, who was 12, her grandfather, her three siblings, and about 1,400 others who had been imprisoned at the camp. Her family spent nearly four years there in captivity.

Previte's missionary parents had left her and her siblings at a boarding school in China in 1940. Her grandfather, Herbert Hudson Taylor, a retired missionary living on the grounds, was also interned. The parents resumed their work until the end of the war.

The Japanese army captured the school shortly after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. About 200 students and teachers, mostly Europeans, were sent to the prison camp.

The detainees endured horrible living and working conditions - cramped quarters, extreme temperatures, poor sanitary conditions, and unappetizing food. They were also forced to work.

Previte said the captives were sustained by their strong faith. They sang hymns and recited Scripture, especially Psalm 27, which begins 'Wait on the Lord."

'We were anchored with these words of faith," she said.

When the U.S. rescue planes arrived, the captives had no idea that the Japanese had surrendered and that the war was over. It was the first time that Eddie Wang, then 20, parachuted from a B-24, his grandson said.

"He was quite worried about jumping from the plane," said Daniel Wang, 32. "He risked his life."

The men had met days before the assignment, which was commissioned by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner to the CIA.

Because Japanese guards were standing at the camp with guns loaded, the men landed in a nearby cornfield to carry out the "Duck Mission" to liberate the camp. The jubilant prisoners pushed past guards and a Salvation Army band played "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Leopold Pander, of Belgium, was 4 when the camp was

liberated. He recalls very little about his imprisonment, but vividly remembers the rescue.

"Everybody running all over the place that very day the Americans came to liberate us from the claws of our captors," he wrote by e-mail. "That special day was printed in my subconscious."

After the liberation, the former captives were reunited with loved ones and settled around the world. Many have died.

Wang married, became an engineer, and had three sons. He lives in Guizhou province in China with his only remaining son.

Previte eventually became an English teacher, raised a daughter, ran the Camden County Youth Center in Blackwood, and served eight years in the state Assembly.

In 1997, she began trying to track down the rescuers. She found them easily, except Wang. She located Stanley Staiger, the mission's commanding officer, in Reno; Tad Nagaki in Alliance, Neb.; James Moore in Dallas; and James Hannon in Yucca Valley, Calif. She found the widow of Raymond Hanchulak in Bear Creek, Pa., and Peter Orlich's widow in Queens, N.Y.

Previte had almost given up any hope of finding Wang until she was recently contacted by his grandson. Daniel Wang found Previte's name on a Weihsien camp website started by Pander.

"Last hero found," her daughter, Alice, told her.

Daniel Wang had promised to help his grandfather track down the American soldiers. Eddie Wang kept the names of the men in a notebook and recorded details about the mission, his grandson said.

"It's an amazing story. He was just a normal person doing an honorable thing," said Daniel Wang. "I'm very proud of him."

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GUIZHOU DAILY

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Wonderful! The Last Hero!

By Vicky Long

Guizhou City Newspaper, CHINA (Translated by Daniel Wang)

Secret unveiled from an overseas call: 90-year old Chenghan Wang living in Guiyang was on the "Duck Mission" operated by U.S. office of Strategic Services 70 years ago.

This is a memory that has been sealed for 70 years. It is now unsealed by an old lady living in the United States who has been unremittingly seeking for it.

On this third day of May, Chenghan Wang, an old man living in Guiyang, received an overseas phone call made by Mary Taylor Previte, an 82-year old lady residing in New Jersey. His answers to her 16 questions proved that he is the Eddie Wang, who joined in the "Duck Mission" that liberated Weihsien (now Weifang) Concentration Camp in Shandong Province, China. Chenghan Wang was the Chinese interpreter of the American seven-people rescue team on that mission. Finally, Mary's 18-year searching reached a successful ending.

Breath-taking News

March 29th, 2015 was a peaceful Sunday.
The afternoon sunlight went into Mary Taylor Previte's house in Haddonfield, New Jersey. Mary, 82 years old, was sitting in front of her computer and ready to check her emails. That's her daily routine.

"I am the grandson of Eddie Wang (Cheng-Han Wang)". The subject of this email took Mary's breath away. She shook her head, calmed herself down, and read the subject line again. Then she carefully opened the email.

A man named Qian Wang sent it to her.

"My name is Qian Wang (Daniel Wang)," the letter said. "I am the grandson of Edward Wang, who was the Chinese interpreter of the rescue team going to the Japanese concentrate camp in Weihsien, China, on August 17, 1945. I am currently living with my wife in Lexington, SC with a temporary VISA."

"Oh my God! Message from South Carolina." Mary couldn't help sighing.

"My grandfather is still alive, 90 years old now, living in China," Qian Wang continued. "He is very healthy!" Qian said in his letter that his grandfather told him the story of Weihsien, but he had almost forgotten his promise to his grandfather: to find the other members of the rescue team.

Qian is a photographer. He wrote: "I was reading a story about an American military photographer who served in Flying Tigers during WWII. And I remembered my promise. My grandfather helped me. He gave me a name, Stanley Staiger. I googled it, and I found a webpage. I confirmed with my grandfather about the time, place, and all the seven peoples' names. I can't describe how excited I am now! My hands are trembling! I enclosed two of my grandfather's pictures taken on his 90-year-old birthday a few weeks ago. I don't know if you can receive this email, or still remember how he looked like. Please let me know if you are still trying to find him. I look forward to hearing from you!"

Mary immediately replied: "The Japanese had interned five of us Taylors in Weihsien." She then started to tell how she had been looking for Chenghan Wang for 18 years.

Since then, the email communication with Qian has brought Mary's memories back to China, back to Weihsien Concentration Camp that she could never forget.

Rumbling Coming From Above

Time: August 17th, 1945
Location: Weihsien (now Weifang), Shandong province

As a 12 years old girl, Mary kept a dream that superheroes dropped from sky and saved her and her families from the devils' hands.

Both of Mary's parents were missionaries. She lived with them in Shandong. After Japanese captured Jiaodong Peninsula, Mary was imprisoned in Weihsien Concentration Camp together with her grandfather, and her sister and two brothers. Living in an inhumane condition, she had kept thinking of heroes saving their lives someday.

That day, a faint sound coming from the sky. Soon, a B-24 bomber appeared and flew very low, circling the camp. "We could see the star on the side of the plane so we knew they were Americans." On May 15th, 2015, the article *Seven Decades Later, Previte Connects with Liberator* published by an American newspaper *The Retrospect* described how Mary felt at that moment. That day, a rescue team with the code name "Duck mission" parachuted from a B-24 bomber to liberate the imprisoned prisoners in Weihsien Concentration Camp.

"One by one, a team of six Americans and one Chinese interpreter, descended from the sky waiting for their parachutes to open. Each was very aware that communications may not have reached all Japanese war supporters and that there may be sharp shooters taking aim at the floating ducks. When the men landed, prisoners from the camp ran out the front gate to meet them." Mary said, "We had so many questions and we wanted to touch them."

"They were strong and healthy. These men risked their lives for us, we were total strangers to them but they came to free us," she said, holding back her tears. "All of the kids in the camp followed the soldiers around with admiration. They brought chewing gum, candy and other treats that no one had seen for years. They taught the kids songs, including 'You are my sunshine' and played softball with them while they waited for supplies and departure arrangements for the 1,500-plus prisoners. The kids wanted to know everything about the flying heroes who were gods in their eyes."

When Mary and her siblings were liberated, their parents were still working in China. The four Taylor children departed Weihsien on the second plane and were reunited with their parents and their new younger sibling. The excitement of leaving did not allow young Mary to properly thank her heroes, and that became the reason why she started her long hero-finding journey after 52 years.

The 18 Years of Finding

In 1997, Mary was an Assemblywoman in Southern New Jersey. She was asked by her colleagues to present a proclamation to a China Burma India veteran's group in Mt. Laurel. After reading the proclamation, Mary asked if anyone in the audience knew her heroes from her childhood who liberated the concentration camp. Mary recited each of their names, Major Stanley Staiger, Jimmy Moore, Jim Hannon, Sgt. Tad Nagaki, Sgt. Peter Orlich, Ramond Hanchulak and Eddie Wang, a Chinese interpreter.

"That question started a firestorm of interest," said Mary. "One man in the group was an intelligence officer and was able to provide phone numbers and locations for anyone living in the United States with the same name as the six Americans."

After years of going through the list of names and numbers, Mary was successful in her quest to thank her American heroes. Four of the six were still living and she was able to than each in person. For the heroes who had passed away before Mary located them, she shared her story of gratitude with the widows of the remaining two Americans.

One widow had a piece of the actual parachute used during Duck Mission. On it was an image of the B-24 bomber and the names of each man who parachuted to the camp. That piece of parachute was photographed and included in a book about memories of Weihsien. The original is at the Smithsonian.

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16 Questions to Help Identify

Mary wanted to make certain Eddie was well enough to answer her questions without too much stress. She has friends who are Chinese Americans who happily agreed to sit in on the conference call for Mary to speak to Eddie and help with any language barriers.

On Sunday, May 3, Mary spoke to her seventh hero. "We spoke for over an hour," said Mary. "I cannot believe I found Eddie Wang and he is healthy and living in China. Daniel even sent pictures from Eddie's 90th birthday to me."

Both Eddie and Daniel Wang were surprised to learn that a 12-year old girl in the camp was stilling looking for every single man in the rescue team. "It must be something so important to her life," said the younger Wang. "I knew my grandfather was in the World War II, but I didn't know many details until I began to contact Mary, as she asked my grandfather a lot of questions through me."

Reunion in Weifang in This August

With the 70th reunion of Weihsien taking place in August, Mary was asked to write the preface for a book about the concentration camp that will be published and distributed in China. With many of the remaining internees unable to make the trip to China for a reunion, books and websites help the group remain connected.

The 90-year old Chenghan Wang has been invited to attend the anniversary. We learned that he should be able to go to Shandong as he has good health conditions. However, he is 90 years old after all. How to keep him safe during his trip?

Will Mary be able to come, too? How about her health conditions that have to be considered in such a long trip? We still have these questions concerning if they would be able to reunite in Weifang.

At 9:30 a.m on May 26, 2015, we came to Chenghan Wang's home in Guiyang. His son Jiayang Wang had been waiting for us downstairs. We asked Jiayang Wang what his father was doing. "Using the internet." His short response surprised us. Generally, a man 90 years old would spend most, if not all, of his time sitting rest and doing nothing else at home. Internet is something in the world of young people, not of a 90-years old senior. With surprises and confusions in our mind, we walked in the house of this legendary old man, and ready to listen to his unforgettable experiences.

Exchange the Pen for the Sword

An old man appeared in front of us when we came in. He is not tall, but no one will deny that he is hale and hearty.

Though he is already 90 years old, Chenghan Wang is very healthy. He has good ears and eyes, and speaks clearly. Our interview was therefore very easy to proceed. When he talked about his stories, we were all surprised that he could still remember so many details. It must be an unforgettable experience in his life.

Chenghan Wang was born in Hankou. He came to work for Guiyang (should be Guizhou. Daniel.) Metallurgical Engineering Design Institute in 1965 and retired from there.

In 1943, 18-year old Chenghan Wang was admitted into the Physics Department of Sichuan University. In the fall of the next year, he determined to join the army after he listened to Yuxiang Feng's mobilizing speech at the university. He quitted his study and joined the Youth Troop of National Revolutionary Army in Luzhou, with another 20-plus students from Sichuan University and over 100 students from other universities. They formed the 203 Searching Company. Chenghan Wang was very disappointed with the everyday drilling which repeated for half a month. He said, "I was there to learn how to fight with the Japanese soldiers. Why so much drilling? Why not teach us how to fight a real war? I decided to quit."

At that time, he happened to know that the telecommunication unit in the army set up a training class and was recruiting new students. Students were required to return to the troops after they finish the training program, but Chenghan Wang did not care much about it. He saw a chance to learn new skills and signed up for the training. Over 20 days later, the training program seemed still helpless to Chenghan Wang. The war became quite urgent and to meet the increasing need for translators, the Foreign Affairs Bureau (FAB) of the Nationalist Party opened an interpretation class. A lot of people went to sign up for the admission test. Chenghan Wang, however, knowing that many of those people were church school graduates with excellent English skills, he did not have the self-confidence to compete with them at the beginning, as his English was only high school level. Nevertheless, seeing that many people were admitted, he decided to give it a try. He recalled that the test was a speaking test. He was asked questions like where and why he learned English. He was pretty satisfied with his own answers, because when he found the examiner was speaking too fast, he told him to "take it easy".

He obtained the admission easily, as the interpretation class was badly in need of students. So did the telecommunication class. They did not permit students to leave, and claimed that once they found anyone who left, they were going to catch them and send them back. Therefore, Chenghan Wang discussed with the interpre-

tation class recruiting staff, and came up with an idea: change his name to Zuoying Wang. He also got an English name: Edward Wang.

On April 25, 1945, Chenghan Wang graduated from the interpretation class. In May, he was sent into the interpreter pool in Kunming, waiting to be recruited by any unit in the army. In the end, he was recruited by the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS). There were four groups in OSS. Chenghan Wang was initially sent to Special Operations (SO) group. He met with other 6 members and they were sent to the Front Line Command Post in Zhijiang, Hunan province. Their mission was to contact the Chinese guerrilla forces in Hengshan and to attack enemies from behind. They, however, did not expect that Hengshan was seized by Japanese soon after they arrived. Without a war to fight, Chenghan Wang was sent to Kaiyuan in Yunnan province, and learned how to parachute and to use small arms. The parachuting training was a ground simulation only. They never learned in a real jump. Believing it was such an unreliable training, Chenghan Wang questioned his trainer if he could learn parachuting by jumping from a real plane and from the sky. “You’ll be fine,” said the trainer, “you are not a big guy.” This careless attitude made him feel scared. His life could be endangered in a real jump. He never knew that a real jump was actually coming for him. After the training in Kaiyuan, Chenghan Wang went back to Kunming. During that time, Japanese surrendered, and therefore Chenghan Wang would not be assigned any new guerrilla mission. He was distributed to Special Intelligence (SI) group.

The Rescue Mission

On August 15, 1945, the emperor of Japan declared surrender.

However, many Japanese troops denied to accept defeat, and they probably planned to retaliate upon foreigners imprisoned in the

concentration camp. On August 16, the SI group was sent to Xi An, but they had no idea about their mission. It was not until the morning of August 17 when the group arrived at the airport that the group leader announced a letter from Albert Wedemeyer, the commander of U.S. army in China. The letter said their mission was to rescue the foreigners imprisoned in Weihsien Concentration Camp. Chenghan Wang said that there were several Japanese concentration camps in China, and different SI members were sent to liberate them. Every SI group had a bird name as their code name. Theirs was called the “Duck Mission”. They arrived in Weihsien at about 09:30 in the morning.

Chenghan Wang continued with a smile that he was the fifth parachuter. He was in fact very worried and did not dare to jump, because he never did before. The man behind him pushed him and he finally jumped out the plane. The sudden strong air flow made him dizzy, almost unconscious. Fortunately, their parachutes could open automatically, and therefore he survived. They landed in a Gaoliang field near the camp. Internees excitedly ran out of the camp to meet them, put the parachuters on their shoulders, and escorted them back to the camp. He said some internees carried knives ready for possible riots if the Japanese soldiers took any action. The good news was that they turned a blind eye to what happened.

The Duck Mission team stayed in the camp for more than a month, during which they got more men and supplies to help them. Life in the camp was not bad.

When talking about Mary, Chenghan Wang said he was much moved that Mary was probably the only one who remembered his name Eddie. He still remembers that 12-year old lovely girl with her loose hair. They became close friends quickly. They played softball together and went to the church together. He remembered that it was Mary who stopped him smoking in the church as he had no idea of religion.

The Last Hero

After getting in touch with Chenghan Wang, Mary’s daughter told her mother with great joy: “Wonderful! The last hero!”

In 1997, Mary started to find the seven members of the Duck Mission team. She successfully found 4 of them and 2 of their widows, and kept in touch since then. Chenghan Wang was the only one she had not been tracked. Mary told the *Retrospect* that finding someone named Wang in China is as difficult as finding someone named Smith in the United States. That’s next to impossible.

After receiving Qian Wang’s email, Mary listed several questions for Chenghan Wang in order to make sure he was the real Eddie she had been looking for. Chenghan Wang smiled, “she asked me what we did in the camp, how we went out, and many other details. I answered every one of them. We talked with each other on the phone for an hour. I was really very excited then. I had never imaged that I could still contact that young girl after 70 years.”

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BBC NEWS MAGAZINE

Growing up in a Japanese WW2 internment camp in China

By Michael Bristow BBC News

17 August 2015

Mary (third from right), her siblings and other children about to board a plane that would take them back to their parents after their release from the camp

Mary Previte first had an inkling that World War Two had ended as she lay in bed, trying to fight off dysentery and the unbearable heat of a Chinese summer.

Suddenly, she heard an unusual sound: planes flying over the Japanese-run internment camp where she had been held for nearly three years.

"I jumped and looked out of the window and saw a plane flying low over the treetops and then parachutes started dropping. It was an instant cure for my diarrhoea," she said.

"People were crying, weeping, screaming, dancing, jumping up and down and waving at the sky. They were hysterical," said Mary, describing the scene at the camp when people realised what was happening.

The planes had brought US soldiers, who soon afterwards liberated Weihsien, an internment camp for 1,500 prisoners in China's Shandong Province.

Decision to stay

It was the beginning of the end of a long ordeal that had seen Mary, then just 12 years old, separated from her parents for more than five years.

Before the war, Mary had been living in China with her parents, Christian missionaries who ran a Bible school in the city of Kaifeng in Henan province.

Her mother and father worked for the China Inland Mission, one of the largest missionary organisations then operating in the country.

It had been founded by Mary's great-grandfather, James Hudson Taylor, a preacher from Barnsley, once an important coal mining town in the north of England.

The China Inland Mission, now renamed OMF International, recently held an event in Barnsley to celebrate the organisation's 150th anniversary.

Chefoo School was set up by Mary's great-grandfather, James Hudson Taylor, and taught the children of Western missionaries in China

When Japan first invaded China, its troops mostly left the Westerners there alone, so Mary's parents decided to stay on in Kaifeng.

"They had actually bought tickets to return to the United States, but my dad said, 'God didn't just call me to be a missionary here in good times, he called us to be here in good times and bad'," said Mary.

But as a precaution, the couple sent their four children - Kathleen, James, Mary and John - to a school for foreigners in Chefoo on China's eastern coast in Shandong.

The couple thought they would be safer there and, for a while, they were.

Japanese takeover

But that changed when Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour drew America into the war. At a stroke, Mary and her family, and many other Westerners in China, became enemy aliens.

The Japanese invaders decided to turn Chefoo School into a military headquarters

The day after Pearl Harbour, Japanese troops marched into the Chefoo school and declared themselves in charge.

"They brought a Shinto priest to the ball field who conducted a

ceremony. They came bringing pieces of paper with Japanese writing on them and glued them to tables and chairs, pianos, desks; all of it belonged to the great emperor of Japan," said Mary.

She remembers how the schoolchildren would watch the Japanese at bayonet practice. They called it "Ya" practice because that was the sound made by the soldiers as they charged towards each other.

The school had become a prison and Mary - then just nine - was a prisoner.

The young girl and her siblings were also cut off from their parents, who remained in unoccupied areas of China throughout the war.

The children stayed at Chefoo for a year, until the Japanese decided to turn it into a military base. The pupils and their teachers were transferred to a larger camp at Weihsien, set up to hold civilians from Allied countries who had been living in China.

Mary, who was then called Taylor, 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 said. "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."

'Rat-catching contests'

Life in the new camp was more difficult than in Chefoo. The Japanese guards were strict, although they would occasionally show kindness.

Mary praised Chefoo School's teachers who turned problems into games.

If there were too many rats, the teachers would set the children the task of catching them. It was the same for flies and bedbugs. There were small prizes for the winners.

Mary describes the teachers' actions as "beautiful triumphs".

"Our teachers set up a comforting, predicable set of rituals and traditions. Do you know how safe that makes children feel?"

But the children could not be shielded from all the horrors of an internment camp.

There was little medicine and some people died, including the British prisoner and former Olympic athlete Eric Liddell, or "Jesus in running shoes," as Mary describes him.

And then towards the end food became scarce.

The doctors among the prisoners asked anyone trading in black market eggs to save the shells, which were baked, crushed and then fed to the calcium-deficient children.

"It was vile. It tasted like you were eating sand," remembers Mary, who is now 82.

The first photograph taken of the Taylor family after their emotional reunion following more than five years apart

Mary Previte tracked down the US soldiers and Chinese interpreter who had liberated Weihsien internment camp

The prisoners knew little of the war going on outside the camp so when it ended it came suddenly and without warning.

When the US soldiers arrived at the gates of the camp, they were carried inside on the inmates' bony shoulders. They were treated as heroes.

A few weeks later Mary and her siblings were flown to Xi'an in central China and had a tearful reunion with their parents.

The family decided to return to the United States and Mary worked in education before being elected to the New Jersey state assembly for the Democrats.

Later in life, in the 1990s, she decided to try to find each of the six US soldiers who had liberated Weihsien camp.

She criss-crossed the country visiting each one, or their families in the cases where the soldiers had died. "I wanted to see them face-to-face to say 'thank you'," said Mary, who spent two years tracking them down.

The only person Mary was not able to contact was a seventh soldier on that mission, the Chinese translator who had accompanied the US paratroopers.

Then a few months ago a Chinese student studying in the US saw an article about Mary and realised that the missing translator, Eddie Wang, was his grandfather.

He got in touch with Mary, who was then finally able to have an emotional telephone call with the 90-year-old Mr Wang in China.

Weihsien was liberated 70 years ago, and Mary was just 12 at the time, but the friends she made there and the experiences she endured have stayed with her for a lifetime.

Japanese American Veterans Association Fall 2016

JAVA ADVOCATE

Retired New .Jersey Legislator Visits China to Meet Her Rescuer from WV I POW Camp

Haddonfield, New Jersey. During WWII, Mary Taylor Previte, then age 12 and daughter of Christian missionaries, who ran a Bible School in Fenghsiang. Shensi Province, China, was confined as prisoners of war (POW) to the Imperial Japanese-held Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center in Weihsien, China.

Previte and Nagaki in Denver, CO. Photo from Previte.

Mary was held for three years along with 1.500 other foreign nationals. On August 17, 1945, a seven-man rescue team from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) parachuted from a low-flying B-24 bomber to liberate the camp. The liberation team consisted of six Americans and one Chinese national, an interpreter.

After the rescue, members of the Team scattered across America to pursue their lives. Previte settled in Haddonfield, where she was elected as a member of the New Jersey State Assembly from 1998 to 2006. Wanting to say thank you face to lace to each hero, Previte began a two-year search in 1997. She met her tour heroes and two widows, including Tadashi 'Fad" Nagaki, an (.)SS Japanese linguist. Nagaki operated a farm in Alliance, Nebraska, where he grew corn, beans, and sugar beets. In 2013, invited by Nagaki's two grandsons, Previte flew to Alliance for a town-wide celebration of her hero's 901' birthday. Previte wrote an article of this reunion for the JAVA Advocate Spring 2013 issue.

Previte had one more mission: to locate a Chinese national, Eddie Wang Cheng-Han, who served as the rescue team's Chinese interpreter In 2015, Wang Qian, Eddie's grandson. a student from China studying in America, read an article about

Previte and Eddie Wang in China. Photo from Dazhong Website.

Previte on the Internet. The article said that Previte was attempting to locate Eddie Wang. The student contacted Previte, who, in turn, telephoned Eddie. The Dazhong Website noted that Previte, now 83, visited Guiyang, capital of Guizhou Province, on July 27, 2016. Previte went to Wang's home for the reunion. They embraced each other and discussed the rescue operation. Wang said in 1943 he was enrolled in the Department of Physics at Sichuan University. In 1944 he joined the Army and entered into the English interpreter training program following which he was assigned to OSS. Previte's 1 y year search for her rescuers is now complete.

(Ed. Note: Assemblywoman Previte contributed to this article.)

... by courtesy Sruthi Pinnamaneni
Sr Reporter, Reply All
Gimlet Media

TRANSCRIPT :

#28 Shipped to Timbuktu

June 22, 2017

An email to the wrong address sends us hurtling into the world of professional cookie advisors. Plus, a new Yes, Yes, No. This is a rebroadcast of a story.

Further Info

Adam West's Tweet

Show transcript

PJ: So I've got this friend, let's call him Dale. Dale has a gmail address that's pretty generic, like dsmith@gmail.com. And people who have email addresses like these get a lot of emails that aren't meant for them, like email wrong numbers. And this happens to Dale all the time. Last time I saw him, he'd just gotten an email written completely in Spanish from a kid somewhere asking if he can turn in an assignment late. Another time, he got a letter congratulating him on the low insurance rate for his two-door Chevy Cobalt. He doesn't have one. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, Dale's a nice guy but he likes to mess with people. He likes to play pranks. So Dale answers the emails. Here's one he got a while back.

DALE: I think it started off, "Hey Ladies, to all Calgary area district commissioners and district cookie advisors:" and then it it started talking about how they had a bunch of stale cookies that they didn't know what to do with, and we gotta move them off the shelves, if they're past the expiration date then we can't use them in the next cookie campaign.

PJ: The emails continue and Dale learns that the world of professional cookie advising is surprisingly bureaucratic. At the top, there's a national cookie advisor, and then beneath her there are provincial cookie advisors who report up, and then beneath them, there are district cookie advisors. He was picturing a corporate office building with a lot of people in fancy business clothes talking about cookies all day. And Dale decides that what he should do is send an intentionally stupid email detailing all these asinine solutions to their stale cookie problem. He says the advisors should sharpie over the expiration dates on the packages. Or he says they could just eat all the stale cookies themselves.

DALE: In my mind I was thinking no one's gonna believe this, what a stupid email to write to somebody. Who would hire a person with suggestions like these?

PJ: Instead, Cynthia, who's the Calgary area cookie advisor, responds to Dale's email with complete polite cheerfulness. She sends him a cookie freshness calculator to help him sort his stale cookies from fresh cookies. So Dale responds with even stupider responses. He was trying to make it more obvious that he was just kidding.

DALE: I said, "What's the status on the cookies? Yarr, me so hungry" with a picture of cookie monster. and I think she responded with something along the lines of, "Those orders were supposed to go in a month ago, or did I misunderstand your question?"

PJ: Rather than clarifying, Dale asks her, why are we even in the cookie advising business? He said his clients, they're all about chocolate bars now.

DALE: And Cynthia responded, "Chocolate bars," question mark, question mark, question mark, question mark. All of my other suggestions were met with like, "Oh maybe I misunderstood or something," but this one was very emphatic, it was like, "Chocolate bars?!!!"

PJ: It actually seemed like Dale had touched a nerve, because after that cookie advisor world went quiet.

DALE: There was radio silence after that. I felt bad. I felt like I was in a little bit too deep maybe.

PJ: The original email he'd gotten had been meant for a woman named Debbie. What if he'd gotten Debbie in trouble, or even just made her look bad.

DALE: I'm a little afraid. I'd like to think that, oh they just got it sorted out and now it's funny and Debbie is in on the joke and everybody can laugh at me and I hope that they're not

laughing at poor Debbie. They're just people trying to do their cookie job.

PJ: Hello?

CYNTHIA: Hello.

PJ: Hi Cynthia?

CYNTHIA: Yes, it's me.

PJ: Hi it's PJ. How are you doing?

PJ: I wanted to find out if Dale's prank had hurt anybody, so I tracked down Cynthia. She lives in Calgary. Cynthia has multiple sclerosis, so it can be hard for her to talk. Her friend Sheila volunteered to help out and I read them the emails.

PJ: "And of course the obvious solution is to eat them during our next member meeting. Please discuss with the rest of area and I will forward your decision on to national. Thanks so much." Do you remember getting that?

CYNTHIA: You know, I don't but-

SHEILA: We get a lot of questions all across Alberta at cookie time. Often they have suggestions that don't always fly. So we find a way to respond to them as best we can.

PJ: Cynthia and Sheila explained that they were part of Girl Guides. In the US, we have Girl Scouts. Most everywhere else they call them Girl Guides. Like the Girl Scouts, they wear uniforms, collect merit badges, and sell cookies to their parents' friends. Coordinating the thousands of underage cookie salespeople can be a logistical headache, and so some adults volunteer as cookie advisors. Those advisors frequently field confused emails. And they're used to handling them diplomatically. That's why Cynthia was so patient with Dale. It was her job. But she was very patient with me. Even as, for reasons unclear even to me, I explained to them the whole pattern of events that had led Dale to email her.

PJ: Yeah I guess the email was meant for a Debbie but it went to a Dale.

CYNTHIA AND SHEILA: Ohhhhhhh.

CYNTHIA: Now it's starting to make a little bit of sense.

PJ: The thing about talking to Cynthia and Sheila on the phone, is that they had this tone of voice. It had been in the emails too. And I was starting to think of it as girl guide voice. Girl guide voice is cheerful and patient, unrelentingly so.

PJ: Is there like a cookie general?

CYNTHIA: Cookie general?

SHEILA: No. We have advisors and commissioners but that's about the extent of the military terms.

PJ: And when I started reading about Girl Guides, I found out that that helpful, sunny tone is hardwired into their original mission statement, which reads, "A girl smiles and sings under all difficulties." So, all difficulties. When I first read this I'm thinking that this is hyperbole.

JANIE HAMPTON: Hello.

PJ: Hi, can you hear me okay?

JANIE: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

PJ: It's not. I talked to this woman named Janie Hampton. And she told me about this thing that happened that I literally found unbelievable. So a few years ago, Janie decided to write a book making fun of the Girl Guides.

JANIE: I have to admit that when I started writing the book I thought, you know I'm gonna make this a bit of a satire, and laugh at them.

PJ: Honestly it was sort of a Dale thing to do. And Janie says most people think about girl guides the way she did. They're not considered cool.

JANIE: What we call naff nowadays.

PJ: What's naff?

JANIE: Sort of unfashionable. Nerdy. Do you use the word nerd?

PJ: Oh we absolutely use the word nerd. I've had it applied to me.

JANIE: Right.

PJ: So, Janie sets out to tease some nerds. But then she starts researching and one day she's deep in the girl guides archive in their London headquarters. And she finds this old notebook. It's small. Seven by ten. And the book is a handwritten log of everything one Girl Guide troop did, years ago.

JANIE: And it said, we did skipping and we did knots and we did all sorts of jolly things. And then I came across this song that they'd written. And it said, "we sang our song yesterday, and it went: 'we might have been shipped to Timbuktu, we might have been shipped to Kalamazoo. It's not repatriation. Nor is it yet starvation. It's simply concentration in Chefoo.'" And I thought, what on earth does that mean? Concentration in Chefoo?

PJ: Janie doesn't know where Chefoo is, but she's sure it's not in England. So she looks it up. Chefoo is – was – a place in China. A coastal city. It's a good seven thousand miles from London. According to the guides' logbook, the song had been written and performed by a group of girl guides for a concert on Christmas Day, 1942. This Christmas concert, Janie discovers, was held in Chefoo. But not at a school. The girl guides sang their song in a concentration camp. Janie was baffled. Why would a concentration camp in China have a singing girl guide Troop? So Janie starts digging, and she finds another, more complete log of what happened to these girl guides. It's a website, run by an an old Belgian man named Leopold.

LEOPOLD PANDER: Leopold Pander. I'm seventy four years old.

PJ: So, the good news: Leopold was an actual witness, he was born in China, ended up in the same camp as these Girl Guides. The bad news:

LEOPOLD: I try to remember something but nothing comes back to me.

PJ: He has absolutely no memories, except for this nightmare he used to have when he was a kid. At the time it hadn't made sense to him, but later he thought it must've taken place at the camp.

PJ: What was the dream that you would have?

LEOPOLD: Well, I'm there in the hot sun, the blue sky, it's a brown slope, it's a brown earth and there are big stones next to myself. Dirty earth and people running all over the place.

PJ: Are there sounds?

LEOPOLD: No sound. Absolutely no sound. Somebody picks me up and then I wake up. That's all I remember. But the problem is, the curiosity is that that dream came back very often!

PJ: Leopold grows up, and as an adult, he wants to know about this place that he used to dream about. And so he builds a website. He invites people to write in with memories of the camp. And the story he learns is pretty crazy.

NEWS: Japan's latest invasion of China which has already lasted two years is war on a huge scale.

So I did not know this, but during World War Two, when Japan occupied China, they built concentration camps that were filled with American and British and other European civilians…

NEWS: Japanese put their prisoners of war to work.

PJ: …civilians who'd been living in China. One of those camps was called Weihsien. That was Leopold's camp. And among the inmates at Weihsien were a group of children. They were American and British. They were mostly the kids of missionaries. And they'd been studying at a boarding school called Chefoo. Japanese troops invaded Chefoo and captured the kids and eventually brought them to Weishen.

JANIE: With their teachers but no parents. So about a hundred and fifty children, who for four years were in this camp. And the teachers had very sensibly taken with them books, paper, musical instruments…

PJ: And, of course one more thing:

JANIE: Brownie uniforms, guide uniforms, all the things they thought, we're going to need this sort of thing to keep the kids occupied.

PJ: In the Japanese camps, there was very little food. Prisoners died of starvation. Take Weixen, imprisoned monks would smuggle in eggs and then everyone would share them, and then they'd also have the kids eat the ground up eggshells just to get some extra calcium. And the camp had almost no infrastructure. The prisoners had to build their little world from nothing, their own kitchens, their own lavatories, their own hospitals and their own Girl Guide Unit. The logbook Janie had found was the record kept by one of the girl guide's leaders. The leaders were called Brown Owls.This one was a woman in her twenties. And the tone of her writing was the exact same cheerful, impervious to bad news tone that Dale's Cookie Advisor email thread had had. This is the entry from the day they were marched into the camp: "Hullo. What's this? Behind bars? Yes. It's Weihsien camp! Well I guess there's a good deal of fun to be got out of this. Just the place to earn some badges." According to the logbook, The Brown Owl ran the troop as if it were any other girl guide unit. Concentration camp or not.

JANIE: They were all told: It doesn't matter how disgusting the food is, we still want good table manners. It doesn't matter how hungry you are, you're not going to steal. You're still going to do a good deed every day and help other people.

PJ: Obviously, the grim sadness of life in a concentration

camp should have overpowered this miniature world that the Brown Owls were trying to build for their young girls. But according to Janie, that's not what happened. Instead, it was the girl guides who started to exert an influence on the adults around them. They led by example.

JANIE: It made a difference to all the adults in this camp and kept them going. The whole atmosphere was better because they had this very strong promise that they wouldn't stop smiling. They wouldn't give up. They would carry on singing songs. They would insist on everybody washing.

PJ: This is the point where I wondered, was this true? I didn't think that anyone was necessarily lying to me, I just thought probably the Brown Owl had left the bad stuff out of her log book. I figured she'd put the best possible spin on an awful situation. That's what girl guides do, right?

PHIA BENNIN: Oh and the door's open? Oh, hello!

MARY PREVITE: C'mon in!

PJ: Fortunately, there's a woman who's still alive and remembers Weihsien.

PJ: It's the first time I think I've been right on time.

MARY: You timed that out. I mean from New York!

PJ: Her name is Mary Previte. She lives in New Jersey. I visited her with my producer Phia Bennin.

MARY: Oh by the way, can I pour you some tea? I am so bad about this.

PJ: Mary Previte is a small, beautiful eighty-two year old woman. She's one of the happiest people I've ever met. I don't know if anybody I've interviewed has ever fully broken into song, unprompted. Mary did. Seven times. She's like a real-life Mary Poppins or Maria Von Trapp. Also, unlike Leopold, Mary has a phenomenal memory. She told me about the day that Japanese troops arrived at her boarding school.

MARY: The day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, the Japanese showed up on the doorstep of our school. They put seals with Japanese writing on everything, the tables, the chairs, the pianos, the desks, everything belonged to the great Emperor of Japan. And then they put armbands on us, everyone had to wear an armband, A for American, B for British, whatever our nationality was.

PJ: The girls were eventually transferred into Weihsien. And Mary became a concentration camp girl guide. This was over seventy years ago, but when Mary talks about the camp, it sounds like she's still there, like she's twelve years old again. She said the story about the Brown owls insisting on good table manners, absolutely true.

MARY: So you're eating some kind of glop, out of maybe boiled animal grain cause goulain is a broomcorn that the Chinese feed to their animals, was often what they fed us, and you're eating it out of a soap dish or a tin can, and here comes Miss Stark up behind us, one of our teachers: "Mary Taylor, do not slouch over your food while you are eating! Do not talk while you have food in your mouth! And there are not two sets of manners, one set of manners for the princesses in Buckingham Palace and another set of manners for the Weishen concentration camp!"

PJ: Mary was separated from her parents, unsure of when she'd be released, surrounded by attack dogs and men with guns. She says that she spent a lot of her time just thinking about earning merit badges. In the winter, it would get cold, freezing. But no heat was provided to the prisoners by the guards. Instead, Mary and her friends had to go collect left over coal shavings from the guard's quarters.

MARY: I remember now the ritual of going to Japanese quarters to get the coal dust and carry it back.

PJ: Like making a new pencil from pencil shavings. Except the coal was heavy, and it had to be passed bucket by bucket in a line of girl guides. Then the shavings had to be mixed with dust and water and dried into balls of coal. It was long hard work. And then at the end of it, you still had to go use the recycled coal in a pot bellied stove, and keep the stove lit so that everybody would be warm. It sounded horrible. Like a childhood from a Charles Dickens novel. Except Mary remembers it as being surprisingly fun. A game she could win.

MARY: I and my partner Marjorie Harrison, we won the competition in our dormitory of which stove lighting team made the pot bellied stove in the winter turn red hot more times than any other girl in the camp. Well, you know here I am eighty-two years old and what do I choose to tell you? I won the pot belly turn red more times with me and Marjorie Harrison than any other girl in our dorm!

PJ: When you describe it it sounds like you're describing summer camp instead of describing like a concentration camp. Did it feel like summer camp?

MARY: Well I never was in a summer camp so I can't give you a, no. No, no. Absolutely, not. When you had guard dogs, bayonet drills, electrified wires, barrier walls, pill boxes with guards, armed guards in them, you know, you weren't in a summer camp. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying this was fun city. I'm telling you we lived a miracle where grownups preserved our childhood.

PJ: There's reference in the logbook to the trouble the adults were having keeping it together, but you'd have to know to look for it. A scout leader writes one entry that reads "Dear me! What a tragedy! Brown owl had an attack of neuralgia — let's hope she better for our meeting." Neuralgia is a nerve disease, but what that actually meant was that the Brown Owl was having a nervous breakdown. Years later, Mary went and tracked down one of the grown ups.

MARY: I said Miss Carr, what were you feeling when we were in a concentration camp? Well, all the grown ups in the camp knew about The Rape of Nanking.The atrocities the guards, the soldiers had done when they came to the southern city of Nanking.

PJ: Japanese soldiers went door to door systematically raping and killing tens of thousands of Chinese civilians.

Mary: So they knew what could happen. The teachers knew what could happen. So I said to Miss Carr, What were you feeling? She said, Well I would pray to God, that when they lined us up along the death trenches, and they were outside the camp, when they lined us up to shoot us so our bodies would fall into the death pits, that I would be one of the first, so I didn't have to see it.

PJ: So there were two sets of prayers. At night, the grown-ups, many of them not much older than the kids themselves, prayed grimly for a fast death. And then they woke up in the morning and they sung psalms with the kids, set to bouncy camp melodies.

MARY: It was like you weren't going to be afraid if you could sing about it. We would sing, "day is done, gone the sun, from the sea, from the hills, from the sky, all is well, safely rest, god is nigh." How can you be afraid when you're singing about "all is well, safely rest, god is nigh?" How could you be afraid of that? So we were constantly putting things into music. Often, there was a little bit of a twist of fun to it. One of the songs that we sang was, "We might have been shipped to Timbuktu, we might have been shipped to Kalamazoo, It's not repatriation, nor is it yet stagnation, it's only concentration in Chefoo.

PJ: There probably aren't many places on earth where you have less reason to be cheerful than a concentration camp. But it turns out in a place like that, being able to be cheerful, to have a positive outlook, it's not dopey or silly. It's how you survive. How you tell the story matters.

MARY: I can still, for example, one of the things that we sang when the Japanese were marching us into concentration camp was the first verse of Psalm forty-six: "God is our refuge, our refuge and our strength" and on it goes, "in trouble we will not be afraid," all of these words, just sung into our hearts, that sticks. It's like you've got a groove, sticking in the gramophone record. I am safe, I am safe, I am safe. That was just profound.

PJ: The first Chefoo brownies warded off despair for four years. Until finally, on August 17, 1945, they were rescued.

MARY: It was a windy day.

PJ: Mary remembers the American plane flying low over the camp.

MARY: Then the parachutes falling from the sky. All I knew was I was running to find whoever it was that was dropping out of the sky beyond the barrier walls.

LEOPOLD: I'm there in the hot sun, the blue sky, it's a brown slope. It's a brown earth.

MARY: And the people went berserk.

LEOPOLD: People running all over the place.

MARY: People were crying, screaming, dancing.

LEOPOLD: Somebody picks me up and then I wake up.

PJ: Leopold says the nightmare that used to haunt him is just his memory of that day, of being a four year old, lost and wandering around a riot of freed concentration camp survivors. Most of the people who were there on liberation day are now dead. One of the dormitories at Weihshen's a memorial, but mostly, the place exists as a footnote in some books, on a website designed by a Belgian man, and in the memories of the remaining survivors. It's a half disappeared world with a strong pull on the people who do still remember it. A couple weeks ago, at the grocery store, I watched a gang of brownie scouts rush down the pet food aisle. They had their uniforms on, covered in merit badges for public speaking and backyard astronomy. They were happy and safe in their own world, well-fed and rich and a million miles from Weishen. I wondered if they knew what they might be capable of.

Coming up after the break: The Riddler.

AD BREAK

ALEX GOLDMAN: Welcome once again to "Yes Yes No," the segment on the show where our boss, Alex Blumberg, comes to us with stuff that he finds on the internet that he doesn't understand and we explain it to him. And then afterwards he's like, "That's it?"

PJ: Okay, so this is like, this is not typical in that this is a thing that I found on the internet that I don't understand.

ALEX BLUMBERG: Mixin' it up.

PJ: Yes.

BLUMBERG: Okay.

ALEX: Go for it.

PJ: I don't want to be agist or whatever, but I did look at it and I was like, "Maybe this is a thing that's like a reference Alex knows that I don't know.

ALEX: Oh.

PJ: Because of agism.

BLUMBERG: Oh.

ALEX: Which Alex?

BLUMBERG: Happy to help you out, sonny.

PJ: That one. Okay.

BLUMBERG: This is a tweet that you don't know.

PJ: It's not only do I not know, but like a lot of people are reacting to it so it means something. So you guys know who Adam West is.

ALEX: Yes.

BLUMBERG: Yes.

PJ: He played Batman on the old campy Batman.

BLUMBERG: Yes.

ALEX: Mmmhhhmm.

PJ: So I was looking up his Twitter account for other reasons and. . .

ALEX: Hold on, can we just like have a break out session here? What does other reasons mean?

PJ: It's not like embarrassing or anything. It just feels like a long story. There's this Twitter account that just tweets that Batman, like from the 60's or whatever. They just tweet the labels from that show. It's called like Batman Labels and it's so funny, cuz they're really specific. It's like, "Anti-theft Joker spray" or whatever. Like they're, they're, they were clearly the sign designer on that show was having a lot of fun.

BLUMBERG: Yeah.

ALEX: Right.

PJ: So they tweet that so I've just been like

BLUMBERG: : by the way i used to watch that show i had no idea it was comedy.

PJ: Me ,too!

BLUMBERG: Yeah, yeah.

PJ: So Adam West, that Batman, I was looking at his Twitter cuz I've been like thinking about it a lot and having weird Batman dreams because of it. And this tweet, like he tweets stuff and people like are whatever. This tweet like went crazy and it makes no sense to me. So, he says, "At my age I try not to let myself get bored. No nincompoopery allowed." And then there's a picture of him and he looks kind of plaintive. And in one hand he's holding a bunch of grapes and the other hand he's holding a garlic head.

What does that mean? Like I've never felt more profoundly "no" in my life. Like the old grapes and garlic joke? There,. . .you don't look in @ replies and get more. . .

ALEX: Clarity?

PJ: No, cuz it's all people who are just responding to a famous person. "You sure aren't a nincompoop in my book. You look great for your age!?" Like he didn't ask that question. Like, that sorta thing.

BLUMBERG: What's crazy is like how much, how many people are coming on to him in his @ mentions.

PJ: What did they say?

BLUMBERG: "Are you modeling for a still life Mr. West? You're still such a fine figure of a man." And then there's another one, like, "Wow, you're a real hottie." Stuff like tha. . .it's just weird.

PJ: It's not the the point of the thing.

BLUMBERG: “No nincompoopery allowed.” I have no idea.

PJ: But here’s what I wonder is if this actually a pure “No No No” tweet? Like if this was something like a joke he had with his wife or like his kid and he was like, “Brawp, put it on Twitter. People will just tell me I look hot. It doesn’t matter.”

ALEX: Heh.

PJ: Like, did anyone ever get this?

ALEX: I wonder if it’s somehow a joke about like a classic painting featuring a still life.

PJ: Called like “The Nincompoop”?

ALEX: Called like, “Still Life with Nincompoop, Grape, and Garlic.”

PJ: I looked up the definition of “nincompoop” to make sure it didn’t mean something I didn’t know about. It means exactly what you think it means. This is one where like I want. . .if we don’t know, I want to call Adam West.

ALEX: All right. So we have to call Adam West.

PJ: Yeah.

ALEX: Alright.

PJ: Alright.

BLUMBERG: Bring me back here when you find out.

PJ: Hold on a second. Okay. Alex. So it’s been 24 hours and I have news. So, Phia was able to get contact information for Adam West in under an hour. And I called him to find out what his tweet meant.

BLUMBERG: Huh . .

PJ: Yes.

BLUMBERG: : What?

PJ: Yes.

BLUMBERG: : Shut up.

PJ: Seriously.

BLUMBERG: : That’s why you brought me back into the studio?

AG/PJ: Yes

BLUMBERG: : Oh my god.

PJ: And I am now at a “yes” for this.

ALEX: I’m dying to know what it means.

PJ: You said that sarcastically but I know you mean it.

ALEX: No, I, I was not being sarcastic. I so desperately want to know what this means. Now more than ever because I just don’t like you having info. . .having knowledge that I don’t have.

PJ: Oh, get used to it. Anyway, so I called him.

ADAM WEST: Desert bat cave.

PJ: Hi, is this Adam West?

ADAM: It is.

PJ: Hey, it’s PJ. How’s it going?

ADAM: It’s going great.

PJ: Did you just say “desert bat cave?”

ADAM: Well it’s – you’re, you’re calling me in Palm Springs.

PJ: Oh, I’ve been there once, it is a beautiful beautiful place. It is not like New York in spring which is gray and cold and horrible.

ADAM: Yeah, I know what you’re saying. I like New York in … what, what was the old song? “I like New York in June?”

PJ: What song is that?

ADAM: That was an old Cole Porter song, I believe. You see. . .

PJ: He sounded like the most normal nice man in the world. We talked for, like, probably 35 minutes and then at the end I was like, I hung up and I was like, "Wait I never really asked him about the tweet." And then I called him back and was like, "Hey Adam West. I'm so sorry to bother you again."

So…okay. So the tweet. . .the deal is, it's a joke about vampires. The reason he's holding garlic and grapes, is the joke is like, "Oh what if you're such a nincompoop you that didn't know like which of these things warded off vampires, garlic or grapes."

ADAM: Yes.

PJ: Ah.

ADAM: What if you were such a nincompoop you didn't know and you thought it would be grapes and not garlic.

PJ: That makes sense to me. And So it was almost like a skit, but then the caption is being like, you're saying like, "Oh, I don't mess around." But obviously you're messing around.

ADAM: Yeah, I think was too obtuse.

ALEX: He's like describing a joke that he made to himself.

PJ: Yes. It's an Alex Goldman tweet.

ALEX: Oh, it's totally an Alex Goldman tweet.

BLUMBERG: : I still don't get it. He's describing a joke that he made to himself about vampires? What?

ALEX: All right, all right. Here's the scenario.

BLUMBERG: Okay.

ALEX: Imagine a guy. A guy who is so old and dumb, he doesn't know whether grapes or garlic ward off vampires. And he thinks to himself, "It'd be super funny to tweet this, but not give people the vampire reference, so they have no idea what I'm talking about."

PJ: It took me 40 minutes to get where Alex just got in half a second.

ALEX: Except vampires were never mentioned in the tweet, so .

BLUMBERG: : But then, "At my age I try not to get bored." What is that, what's that, so I come up with amusing scenarios to amuse myself and take pictures of them?

PJ: I think exactly.

BLUMBERG: : Ok – Alex Goldman, so you've, you've sent tweets like this?

ALEX: On April 12th, I was just looking through my Twitter feed.

PJ: I'm sorry.

ALEX: On April 12th I tweeted the words "Elk Neck".

BLUMBERG: : … So anyway, PJ

PJ: Yeah yeah yeah.

ALEX: It got 8 favorites.

PJ: Yeah, and similarly, if people really liked you like they like Adam West, like, that got like 100 retweets. There's a, there's a, a point where people were just like, "Adam West is just goofing around. I don't need to full. . .I don't need understand this on a 1-1 level. I like him and he's goofin' around and I support it."

BLUMBERG: Well that's what, so that was so confusing. So it was like sort of like, so like, you're looking at that tweet and looking at all the, all the responses to that tweet. Like we were sort of looking for meaning.

PJ: Yes.

BLUMBERG: And there was no meaning to be gotten.

PJ: The meaning was –

BLUMBERG: Like what percentage of the people commenting understood what his joke was?

PJ: I'm gonna say like maybe zero.

BLUMBERG: There's no signal in that whole thing.

PJ: It was all noise.

BLUMBERG: It's all noise.

PJ: Yeah.

ALEX: I love this tweet so much.

PJ: I think I mentioned, but like, we talked for a very long time. Like longer than I talk to most people.

ADAM: The. . .a podcast is like a radio show isn't it?

PJ: Yeah, exactly.

ADAM: I started in radio.

PJ: You did?

ADAM: Yeah.

PJ: What kind of radio?

ADAM: Well, it was AM at that time and I. . .

BLUMBERG: He has a beautiful voice.

PJ: He really does.

ALEX: Yeah, he really does.

PJ: And he said that his like big breakout hit was Batman. And that role actually created a lot of problems for him. So the thing that everybody already knows about Adam West's Batman is it was like a very goofy version of Batman.

VILLAIN: Ho ho, ha ha. Remember me old chum.

BATMAN: You jolly devil. Harm one hair of that boys head.

THE RIDDLER: Riddle me twice Batman. What kind of pins are used in soup?

ROBIN: Terrapins, Batman.

BATMAN: Right.

THE RIDDLER: Very good.

PJ: And this was supposed to be funny. Like, Adam West thought it was funny. The people making the show thought it was funny. But some of the viewers thought that Adam himself was not in on the joke. That he was trying and failing to play a very serious Batman. And that he was a dope. And so when Batman was over it was hard for him to get other jobs. Like other, particularly serious acting jobs.

ADAM: You know, there were times when I was so poor and desperate to work that I was shot out of a cannon.

PJ: Really?

ADAM: With my cape flying behind me.

PJ: Wait, not really though. Not really. I. . .

ADAM: Yes, once. In order to survive and take care of family and so on, I had to do a lot of stuff I didn't want to do.

PJ: So he kept trying out for all these serious roles, but he couldn't get them because nobody took him seriously. And then finally he was just like, "You know what? Fine. I will just embrace the joke that everybody's making about me."

ADAM: I realized that everybody loves Batman so why the hell shouldn't I love Batman. I am Batman.

PJ: So he started allowing himself to be typecast as Adam West, the guy who used to play Batman and used to make us all laugh.

BLUMBERG: Right

PJ: And he credits that with saving him.

BLUMBERG: : I still don't quite get the "no-nincompoopery allowed."

PJ: Yeah, and everytime I asked him about that he, he, he'd be like, "Oh, well, a nincompoop. . . " And I was like, "No, I know what a nincompoop is. . ." But I feel like. . .Erase that sentence in your mind, and just hear it as, like, "JK," or like, "Here's a joke." Or like, "Smiley face emoji." Like, you know what I mean? It's like. . .

BLUMBERG: Oh, right. "No nincompoopery allowed" is like a smiley face emoji.

PJ: Yes.

ADAM: Anyway I better, I better run and not take too much. . .

PJ: Thanks so much. And, yeah, just thank you for existing in

the world. You are a very wonderful person.

ADAM: Well you sound like a great guy, and my best to all your pals and fellow workers there.

PJ: I'll pass it on.

ADAM: Ok, Kiddo.

PJ: Alright, have a good one.

ADAM: You, too . Thank you.

PJ: Bye.

ADAM: Bye.

PJ. That conversation you just heard was originally recorded last year. This month, Adam West died. We feel very lucky to have gotten to talk to him.

You can find more episodes of the show at itunes.com/replyall. You can also find us on Google Play as of this week. Our website is replyall.fail.

Thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.

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A Hug after 71 Years: 83-year-old American Woman Flies to China to Thank Man Who Saved Her Life

GUIYANG, China, Aug. 17, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- The following is an interview by accredited journalists Fan Sisi and Qi Xiang that was first published on Chinese state-run news portal Dazhong Website.

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In 1945, a "Duck Action Team" composed of seven members, including Wang Chenghan, rescued Mary and other 1,500 prisoners from the Weihsien Internment Camp set up by Japanese troops in Shandong province in north east China.

Since the 1990s, Mary she has always been looking for the members of that rescue team to convey her thanks to them one by one in person. Wang Chenghan is the last team member she's found and so she has finally to express her gratitude after several decades.

The accredited journalists from Dazhong Website recorded the whole scene of this moving occasion.

Reminiscing about the rescue: Seven heroes dropping out of the clouds and into the internment camp

"Oh my goodness! That is my hero!" At 3:30 p.m. on July 27, Mary, who just got off the plane and was accompanied by her family, came to Wang Chenghan's home in Guiyang, the capital of southwestern China's Guizhou province.

She quickly saw Wang Chenghan, who was coming downstairs to welcome her. The two rushed to each other and held each other's hands, screaming and laughing, just like children, and gave each other a huge hug.

"I never thought I could wait until this day finally comes, never ……" Mary repeated this sentence over and over again. Then, she turned around and announced: "This is Mr. Wang! He is my hero!"

During World War II in the early 1940s, the Japanese troops reconstructed a monastery in Weihsien (i.e. Weifang City in Shandong Province today) into an internment camp to hold prisoners. Over 2,000 from Europe and the United States (500 of whom were released for an exchange of prisoners later), including 327 children, were collected from all parts of China and imprisoned there. At that time, Chefoo School, where Mary, who was less than 9 years old,

studied, was occupied by the Japanese troops.

Over 200 teachers and students were imprisoned in Yantai for nine months at first, and then they were brought to Weihsien. Thus, Mary, along with her brothers, sisters and her grandfather, started their life imprisoned in Weihsien Internment Camp. It lasted for three years. During this time, they not only went short of food and clothing and had to endure the extremely severe hygiene conditions for a long period of time, but were deprived of personal freedom as well. Mary couldn't see her parents for around five years.

The tough time ended in the summer of 1945. "August 17, 1945 is the day I will never forget," Mary said to the journalists of Dazhong Website. She had a stomachache that day so she lay in a ward in the internment camp. All of a sudden, she heard sounds like the roar of an aircraft from outside the window. When she rushed to the window, she saw an aircraft flying lower and lower. There was an American flag on the plane. Immediately, the whole internment camp went crazy with excitement. People took off their shirts, waved them and rushed outside the doors. Mary also hurried downstairs. "Can you imagine it? My stomachache cured itself automatically!" She said smiling.

Later, people saw parachutes falling from the aircraft down to the fields outside the camp. They were the 7-member action team sent by the United States to come to their rescue. And Wang Chenghan was the only Chinese among them. Joyful crowds broke through the defending lines guarded by the Japanese troops and rushed to the seven people, crying, hugging, and dancing. And together they walked to the gate of the internment camp.

To express the full extent of her gratitude at for her rescuers' bravery, Mary brought special letters of thanks from the United States.

"You know what, Mr. Wang had never tried parachuting before. However he did it when rescuing us. He is our hero," Mary said in admiration, holding Wang Chenghan's hand tightly in his home. When leaving the internment camp, the girl, who was less than 13 years old, did not know this detail. When she got to know this many years later, her admiration for this 'Eddie' Wang (they all called Wang Chenghan 'Eddie' at that time for his English name was Eddie Wang) was enhanced further. "It was under the guard of so many Japanese soldiers in the internment camp that he risked his life to rescue us, whom he hadn't known before," said Mary in excitement.

"I wonder how you took part in that rescuing action team dispatched by the United States. What was your first impression of us, the imprisoned people in the internment camp? What was the mission you received before getting on the aircraft that day? When did you go back home after we left the internment camp...?" After the exciting moment of the reunion, Mary, just like the then lovely girl, had a whole host of questions. She was curious about everything Wang Chenghan experienced in that rescue.

"I was a soldier back then. In 1943, I was enrolled into the Department of Physics in Sichuan University. I decided to join the army to serve my country the next year…" In Mary's expectation, Wang Chenghan, a 91-year-old man, introduced how he gave up his academic studies and joined the student volunteer units in the National Revolutionary Army, how he learned to send a telegraph in the army, how he got into the interpreter training class set up by the Bureau of Foreign Affairs of the Kuomintang, and how he was recruited by the United States Office of Strategic Services and worked as interpreter in the special action team.

Mary was all ears when listening, expressing her surprise and admiration every now and then. When hearing the thrilling parts of Wang Chenghan's introduction, she couldn't help hugging Wang Chenghan again, saying, "You are a hero."

Mary brought a special gift for the meeting with Wang Chenghan thanks from Stephen M. Sweeney (Chairman of New Jersey Senate) and Max Sieben Baucus (ambassador of the United States Embassy in China). In his letter of thanks, Stephen said, "as the interpreter and the youngest member of the then seven-member action team, your heroic and brave behavior deserve our highest praise and admiration. Your contribution, commitment and endeavor were not only the example of human beings' strong will, but also the lighthouse of freedom and hope of those in Weihsien Internment Camp."

Max said in his letter of thanks that, during the period of World War II, both the Chinese and American people suffered great sacrifice, that they rendered assistance to each other during those tough years, and that Wang Chenghan's heroic and brave behavior and other Chinese people's efforts have inspired them greatly. He also expressed his wish that he would introduce Wang Chenghan to his colleagues in the United States Embassy in China, those who have made

unremitting efforts, just like Wang Chenghan, in establishing the friendship bonds between China and the United States.

Moreover, learning that Mary was visiting "the last hero" in China, a dozen survivors rescued from Weihsien Internment Camp wrote letters to Wang Chenghan. U.S. Rep Donald Norcross put Wang Chenghan's name into the Congressional Record for his "selfless behaviors and contributions". Mary handed these letters to Wang Chenghan. With their glasses on, the two old people browsed the letters conscientiously. Wang Chenghan gently touched these letters with his trembling hands and couldn't help reading them softly.

Reminiscing about life in Weihsien Internment Camp: The children ate egg shells for nutrition; the teachers protected the children from knowing the "bad things".

"When in Weihsien Internment Camp, what frightened and scared me most was the Japanese people's dogs' killing our cat." Mary still felt very sad when talking about that even after a gap of over seventy years. The Japanese guards raised some big wolfhounds in Weihsien Internment Camp. The wolfhounds often followed the Japanese soldiers to go on patrol in the camp, which made the teenage girl Mary very frightened. Back then, the principal in Mary's school raised a kitten called Victoria. Mary described it as a "very soft, very docile and lovely" cat. The kitten often kept her company to go to sleep.

One night, not having fallen asleep, Mary heard the footsteps of the Japanese soldiers on patrol and the sounds of the wolfhounds outside the window. All of a sudden, the kitten's shrill screams were heard just from outside the house. 'That is Victoria! The wolfhounds assaulted and killed it!'

Mary was too scared to make any single sound. She cuddled up in a heap on her bed. "I think they cleared up the bloodstains before the morning came for fear that we children should see it," Mary said in sadness that the incident kept everybody sad for quite a long time.

Compared with such bloody incidents which were not frequent, the severe living conditions worried Mary and her fellow sufferers more. As Mary said, the food in Weihsien Internment Camp was awful. More undesirably, the supply of food later was shrinking constantly. What they got every day were merely several slices of dry bread. The meats were mostly rotten, and infested with mice and flies. Since the children did not get adequate food, the teachers turned blankets into trousers for children to live through the chilly winters.

Wang Chenghan still remembered clearly what he saw when he parachuted to the ground and a large number of prisoners rushed out: "Everybody was only skin and bone. Many of them had no shoes to wear." Mary told the journalists of Dazhong Website that the doctors (also fellow inmates) were worried so much that malnutrition might influence the kids' physical development. To supplement calcium for children, adults even conserved the egg shells (other prisoners risked their lives to get these eggs from the farmers outside the camp wall and then bring them in), dried them, ground them into powder, and then fed them to the children bit by bit.

Even in such severe conditions, the teachers still kept teaching the children including Mary. In addition, they demanded that the children should set high standards for themselves and never give up. In Mary's impression, Weihsien Internment Camp was not a violent, bloody or other scary place.

"Maybe some awful things happened. But the teachers were always protecting us. They never told us children about the bad things." Mary said that she once went to find, many years later after being rescued, the teachers who had been in the internment camp, and got to know that they had been praying every night, fearing that the Japanese soldiers would round everyone up and shoot them. However, the children were nicely protected because the teachers never said a single word to scare them.

Giving an account of "the pilgrimage to her hero" for over ten years: It's a miracle to meet him alive; China is my mother.

"It's a miracle," remarked Mary to the journalists of Dazhong Website upon her finding the last hero of the rescuing team and meeting him.

In the 1990s, Mary started to look for the seven members of the action team. With the help of her friends, she found the widows of two members and then succeeded in meeting another four members. However, after consuming so much time and energy, she still could not get a line on the Chinese member. "I have no idea where he went after the war, whether he was in China or even whether he is alive or not now. As you know, it is really very hard to find a Mr. Wang among billions of Chinese people."

And then one day in March 2015, Wang Qian, Wang Chenghan's grandson, coincidently read an article written by Mary on a website in the United States, saying that Mary was still looking for a Chinese man called Eddie Wang. Wang Qian read the story over and over again and became more and more convinced that the person Mary had been looking for was his grandfather. As a result, he wrote a letter to Mary.

"I remember that after asking about sixteen questions, she was finally sure that I was the one she had been looking for. Later on we made a phone call. We got extremely excited." With a smile on his face, Wang Chenghan reminisced about his getting in touch with Mary in April and May of 2015. Those questions were about the rescue in Weihsien Internment Camp. Only those who lived through the entire event could be familiar with the rescue mission. "I know all the correct answers and Mr. Wang answered the questions quickly and all were correct. He is the hero I am looking for," Mary added happily.

"I've realized a dream that I thought would never come true. There is nothing better than that." Mary describes her entire process of finding the seven rescuing team members as "the pilgrimage to her hero". Right now she's completed the pilgrimage successfully. "God bless me for finding you. I am alive and so are you. We've finally met!" In excitement, Mary's eyes were moist with tears. "Fate does all the things!" said Wang Chenghan with emotion. "Mr. Wang should have received the honor of a hero earlier," Mary said. "I hope that more people will know about his stories. If there are more nice stories like his, the whole world will be better. That is because we all work hard together and we are with each other together."

Never give up hope. Mary still remembers that even during the hardest times, the fellow sufferers in Weihsien Internment Camp firmly held the belief that the final victory belonged to them. They even made preparations for celebrating the victory in advance. There was an orchestra composed of dozens of fellow sufferers in the internment camp. Mary recalled that the band would secretly rehearse new songs every Tuesday evening, the one made up of some paragraphs from the national songs of the the main allies, the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union, as well as representative songs of China. To avoid the close supervision of the Japanese troops, the band even mixed some rhythms of extolling the Kingdom of Heaven.

On August 17, 1945, when the seven paratroopers dropped from the clouds, the people in Weihsien Internment Camp, wild with joy, all played this song, which they had rehearsed so long. It was not only a song celebrating the over 1,500 fellow sufferers' regaining freedom again, but also a song celebrating the victory of the allied countries. "Mr. Wang is my hero and my friend, forever and ever!" Mary said emotionally that we won that war together then, and that a profound friendship is still kept between our nations and between our peoples. May this friendship last forever!

When someone said "Welcome to China" to Mary in the interview, Mary corrected it immediately by saying: "No, we should say I've come back to China. I was born in Kaifeng, Henan Province, China. I remember kissing the land when I first came back to China because China is my mother and I was kissing my mother."

"You are my sunshine my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. "Time was fleeting that afternoon. The two old people held each other's hands and sang the song You Are My Sunshine, which they once sang in Weihsien Internment Camp. The sky outside was bright and blue. The sunshine poured into the tiny sitting room. The song echoed in the air, calm and peaceful.

About Dazhong Website

Approved by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, hosted by Shandong Internet Media Group, Dazhong Website is the number one news portal and overseas-targeted publicity website in Shandong province. By winning China Journalism Awards five times in seven years, including three first prizes in three consecutive years, Dazhong Website's comprehensive strength ranks the forefront among provincial news websites. Dazhong Website ranks sixth in China news websites comprehensive dissemination capacity ranking list, ranks first in provincial news websites comprehensive dissemination capacity ranking list in June and July 2016.

Dazhong Website actively explores new media development mode, grasps the law of internet communication, and builds internet matrix with main website as basis, Shandong Mobile Newspaper and Shandong 24 Hours News App as extension, local channels in 17 cities in Shandong province as guarantee, forming the mainstream public opinion field covering Shandong and adiating across the country.

Through making all-out efforts to promote media convergence and to integrate media resources within and

outside the group, Shandong Internet Media Group has been established to construct self-independent communication channels and industry chain, strengthening and expanding industry scale, forming professional internet group with comprehensive function by integrating news and information, leisure shopping and social mobility in a body.

Dazhong Website is accelerating the pace of listing and financing, continuously improving industrial capacity, enlarging industrial value, expanding profit margins, advancing the cause of the website with a sustained, rapid and healthy development.

Currently, Dazhong Website has established the development pattern of two websites (Dazhong Website and Palm-top Dazhong Website), one mobile newspaper (Shandong Mobile Newspaper), two mobile clients (Shandong 24 Hours News App and Shandong Mobile Newspaper App), two magazines (Dazhong Public Opinion Reference and Qilu Mobile Magazine), one publishing house (Dazhong Audio & Video Publishing House), one big screen (City Big Screen Broadcast Network), and two platforms (Dazhong Hailan E-commerce Platform and Touring Qilu Online Tourism Platform), forming multilevel, all-around and three-dimensional communication system with unified action from top to bottom, combination of fixed and mobile, complementarity between paper and network, co-existance of indoor and outdoor.

Dazhong Website is continuously and deeply promoting "four breakthroughs in transition", stimulating enterprise vitality by institutional innovation, expanding brand influence by content innovation, maintaining revenue growth by operation innovation, supporting construction of projects by technological innovation, thereby fostering enterprise's core competitiveness.

Photo - http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160815/397943

To view the original version on PR Newswire, visit:http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/a-hug-after-71-years-83-year-old-american-woman-flies-to-china-to-thank-man-who-saved-her-life-300314588.html

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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 instand 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 Ward 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 scare 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, predicable 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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The Inquirer
DAILY NEWS philly.com

Parachute that helped save 1,500 from WWII camp will return to rescuer's family

Updated: APRIL 26, 2017 11:51 AM EDT

DAVID MAIALETTI / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Mary Previte, 84, has spent most of her life gathering memories from her heroic rescue from a Japanese prison camp during World War II. Previte plans to give up a cherished piece of silk parachute that has come to symbolize the rescue.

by Melanie Burney, Staff Writer @mlburney (http://twitter.com/mlburney) | mburney@phillynews.com (mailto:mburney@phillynews.com)

Mary Previte has spent most of her life gathering memories of her heroic rescue from a Japanese prison camp during World War II.

She has collected letters and stories, and tracked down the seven men who liberated her and 1,500 others in 1945. Her travels have taken her around the world, and she has shared the story more times than she can remember.

Now, at age 84, the Haddonfield resident plans to give up a cherished piece of a silk parachute that has come to symbolize the daring rescue executed from a B-24 bomber. It was cut from a parachute that the men used to land at the camp in Weihsien, in northeast China.

Previte was given the piece of silk in 1997 by the widow of Peter Orlich, the radio operator on the mission. Betty Lambert, a young British woman who was also held captive at the camp and was smitten by the handsome young American, gave the parachute to Orlich before he left the camp in the fall of 1945, Previte said.

"For 20 years, I've shared this treasure with thousands of people. People in churches, in veterans' groups, civic groups, Scout groups, have seen it. Schoolchildren have touched it, and it has touched them with its story. Some have wept," Previte said. "I will not live forever. It is time to send it home. Let this piece of parachute silk tell its story."

Previte wants to return the piece of silk to Orlich's oldest son, Robert. Peter Orlich's widow, Carol, who kept the silk for years in a dresser drawer in their home in Queens, New York City, died in 2015.

"I would be happy to take it back. It was probably the one item that meant the most to us with respect to my father," Robert Orlich, a retired CEO for Trans Atlantic Holdings (now Transre), said Tuesday. "We're eternally grateful to get the parachute back."

The Museum of American History at the Smithsonian displayed the piece of parachute silk for 12 years, along with other artifacts from the prison camp. The museum returned the parachute to Previte last summer for preservation reasons. Textiles, especially silk, are vulnerable to light.

Previte said getting the parachute back prompted her decision to return the silk to the Orlich family. It also took her on a nostalgic trip, looking at old photographs and reading stacks of old letters from her rescuers and their relatives. The parachute is in her living room.

Previte said she wants to preserve the treasures and history of the rescue for generations to come. She has copied some materials to share with the grandchildren of her liberators. She may write a book, too.

"My search for the whole story of our Weihsien heroes will die only when I die," said Previte. "Who will love these treasures as I do? They are my story, too."

The seven paratroops liberated the Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center on Aug. 17, 1945.

They rescued Previte, who was 12, her grandfather, her three siblings, and about 1,500 others who had been imprisoned at the camp. Her family had spent three years in captivity.

The Japanese army captured the school in China's Shandong province shortly after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. About 200 students and teachers, mostly Europeans, were sent to the prison camp.

Previte's missionary parents had left her and her siblings at a boarding school in China in 1940. The parents resumed their work until the end of the war.

When the U.S. rescue planes arrived, the captives had no idea that the Japanese had surrendered and the war was over. The jubilant prisoners pushed past Japanese guards. They were eventually evacuated by U.S. planes.

After the liberation, the former captives were reunited with loved ones and settled around the world. Many have died, as have all but one of the liberators.

Robert Orlich said his father seldom talked about the risky Weihsien mission, one of many for Peter Orlich, who was assigned to parachute behind enemy lines to set up radio contact for U.S. troops.

"My father was very humble," said Robert Orlich, 69, of New Canaan, Conn. "He very rarely bragged in any way about his freeing of these people in the prison camp."

A former state assemblywoman, Previte spent years locating the seven liberators, who were commissioned by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner to the CIA. In 2015, she tracked down the last one, Wang Cheng-Han, who was the Chinese interpreter for the liberation team.

Now she is on a mission to learn more about the embroidered silk parachute pieces. She has identified at least two other pieces in existence, and there may be more scattered around the globe, she said.

The interpreter, known by Previte as Eddie Wang, has told her that he had an embroidered parachute piece, given to him by a Greek girl shortly after he arrived at the camp. A woman in Prescott, Ariz., also has a framed piece embroidered with gold thread by her sister that she takes out on the liberation anniversary.

Previte says she believes it unlikely that the same person who made the piece given to her by Carol Orlich also made the others. Rather, she said, she believes a pattern was passed around the camp and other prisoners copied the design.

Leopold Pander, who was also held at the camp with his family, said every prisoner was given a section from red parachutes that were used to drop supplies from U.S. planes to the camp a few days after the liberation, as a keepsake. Women in the camp also used the parachutes to make clothing for the former detainees, who were wearing rags after years in captivity, he said.

"Since that day, the red parachute is preciously kept by our family and goes wherever we go," wrote Pander, who lives in Belgium. "The new generation is now the rightful owner of this very sentimental object, and it will stay in the family for still many years to come."

The piece of unfinished embroidery given to Previte bears the scene of the liberation -- the B-24 flying over the camp and the rescuers parachuting down. Each team member autographed the silk: Stanley Staiger, the mission's commanding officer; Tad Nagaki; James Moore; James Hannon; Raymond Hanchulak; Orlich; and Wang.

Only the first name was completely embroidered. The edges of the piece of silk were jagged, suggesting that there may have been plans to frame it. Orlich and the crew left the camp abruptly, and Betty Lambert gave it to him, unfinished, as a parting gift.

Previte said she plans to give the parachute piece to Robert Orlich as is.

"It needs to be exactly like this. It should tell its own story," she said. "I weep as I remember."

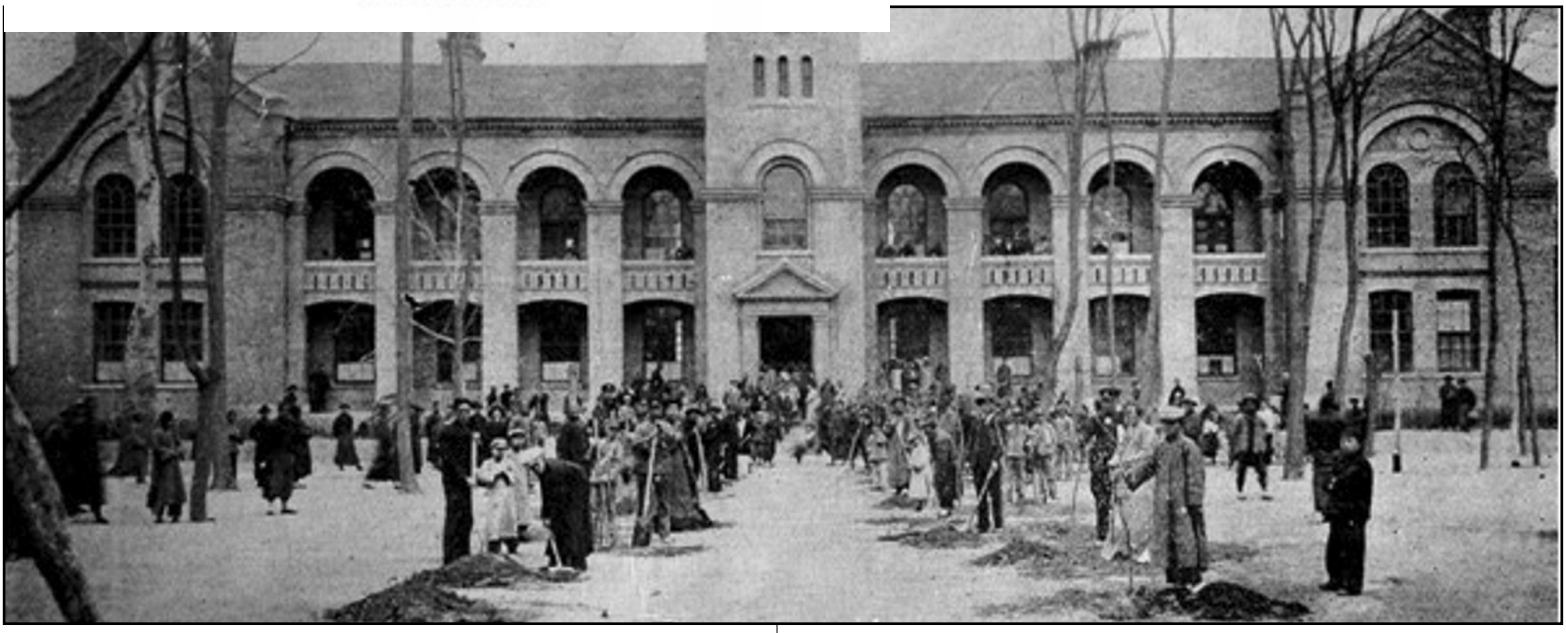
Read more by Melanie Burney

Published: April 26, 2017 — 11:53 AM EDT

courtesy of Mary Previte

Peter Orlich, a radio operator, was one of seven men who liberated the Weihsien concentration camp in Shantung province, China, during World War II.

South China Morning Post
南華早報



Eric Liddell's former roommate in China internment camp celebrates his centenary and the time of his life

Olympic runner immortalised in Chariots of Fire would have been best man at my wedding if he'd lived, says Joe Cotterill, who met the two loves of his life in the Japanese wartime Weihsien internment camp in Shandong province

By Helen Leavey
27 Apr 2017

About 15km from the spires of the university city of Oxford, Southmoor is a pretty village, with listed buildings and a couple of pubs; just the kind of place you would expect to stumble across while exploring England's leafy country lanes. A birthday celebration at the village hall is a common occurrence.

Not so commonplace was the birthday party held in the hall one Saturday in March for Joe Cotterill. The trimmings included a cake in the shape of "100", a card from Britain's Queen Elizabeth (whom Cotterill met a few years earlier), a champagne toast and origami peace cranes.

Becoming a centenarian is a reason to celebrate, and Cotterill's big day certainly rose to the occasion, bringing together some 110 people who had played a part in his long and varied life; family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, some of them travelling from as far afield as America and Taiwan. Among the sea of smiling, often emotional faces were five pensioners – a man and four women, alive for 425 years between them – who had been in the same Japanese intern-ment camp as Cotterill during the second world war.

The Weihsien camp, in Shandong province, was to be a major influence on Cotterill's life.

The Weihsien internment camp before the second world war.

He met and married his first wife, Jeanne Hills, within its walls and then, during post-war reunion events, got to know another former inmate, Joyce Stranks, who would become the then widower's second wife on Valentine's Day, 2002.

"China was a highlight partly because I got married there and partly because of the people I met," says Cotterill, when we speak after his party. "So much has happened since, it's difficult to say which is the best period of my life, but China was one of the crucial things."

I saw the rescuers coming, we all ran out of the camp to let them in. We carried them on our shoulders and as we got to the entrance the band started playing. It was very emotional

Joe Cotterill

Peter Bazire, 86, performed briefly at the birthday bash. He played the same tune on the same trumpet he had used as a teenager in the camp's Salvation Army band to comfort Eric Liddell, the Olympic runner and missionary who was immortalised in the 1981 movie *Chariots of Fire*, as the fellow internee lay dying in February 1945.

Cotterill shared a room in Weihsien with three men including Liddell, and the pair were good friends, he says. They often prayed together in the early hours, with light from a peanut oil lamp, after Cotterill had returned from stoking the camp's fires. Cotterill says Liddell, who was 43, would have been best man at his May wedding to Hills if an undiagnosed brain tumour had not claimed him.

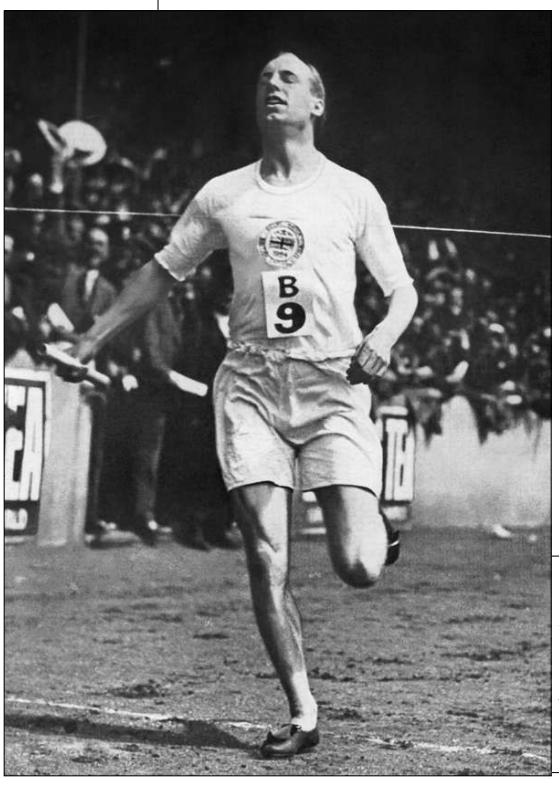
"We thought he was having a nervous breakdown; we had no means to diagnose him," he says. "When Peter Bazire began playing the trumpet at my party I closed my eyes and remembered where I'd been standing in the camp when I heard that music, Be Still My Soul. I was in the hospital laboratory and the band were outside. I think I'd introduced Eric to that hymn. It was very moving, and then the linking of it all together for my birthday moved me again."

After the war, Bazire – who had been a pupil of the Chefoo School (in what is now known as Yantai, in Shandong) before being interned – wouldn't play the trumpet again until he was 70.

Life in a Chinese treaty port: Eurasian traces great-grandparents' journey from London slum to Hong Kong and beyond.

"It was very cold in China when we played for Eric Liddell, but you can't play a trumpet with gloves on and there were no health and safety rules then. We had chapped lips and chapped fingers," says Bazire. "I'm not a classy trumpeter but I was honoured to play for Joe on the old trumpet, which I'd kept for sentimental value. It represented that period of his life."

Peter Bazire and Kathy Foster at Cotterill's 100th birthday party, in Southmoor, near Oxford, in Britain. Picture: Chris Carpenter



[Eric Liddell wins the British Empire vs USA one-mile relay at the International Athletics Meeting, in London on July 19, 1924. Picture: Alamy]

Cotterill, from Chapeltown, near Sheffield, in Yorkshire, northern England, was the fourth of five children. His father was a coal miner and he acknowledges his life would have been very different if he hadn't passed a 1920s exam that gave him a grammar school scholarship.

"Otherwise I would have probably become a miner," he says.