



Remembering the Stories of Early Asian-Americans

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a resolution that declared the first ten days of May as *Asian American Heritage Week*. This later became a month-long recognition when it was renamed *Asian Pacific American Heritage Month* by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. This month, we would like to pay tribute to the previous generations of AAPI figures in our own Delta community. Their stories of struggle and sacrifice are an integral part of Asian-American history and have humbly paved the way for AAPI acceptance today.

My Father's Survival of the Bataan Death March

by **Debra Panganiban Louie**

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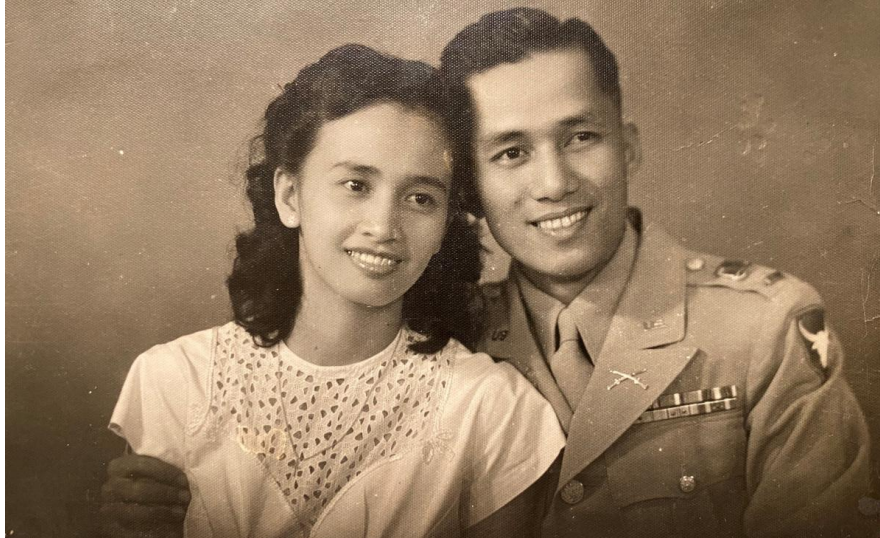
My dad joined the Philippine Scouts in 1941 as a 22-year-old private from Lucena City, Philippines. As a part of this special unit of the U.S. Army, he fought valiantly in ground combat to prevent the Bataan Peninsula from being overtaken by Japan's Imperialist Army forces.

Unfortunately, reinforcements did not arrive, and in April 1942 my father became one of 75,000 American and Filipino soldiers who suffered the infamously horrific Bataan Death March -- a 60 mile uphill march in sweltering conditions to a prison camp (Camp O'Donnell) in Tarlac, Philippines.

All but around 10,000 American and Filipino soldiers died during the march and many others later succumbed to battle injuries, malaria, starvation, and dysentery.

By the grace of God, my father was one of the surviving POWs who were eventually liberated by General MacArthur's American forces. He was presented with the Bronze Star Medal and the Prisoner of War Medal for his heroism and sacrifice for the Allied forces during World War II.





Despite these harrowing experiences, my father continued to serve throughout the next three decades. He provided support for South Korean forces in the Demilitarized Zone in the 1950's and at the end of the 1960's, he completed his last overseas assignment in Vietnam where he was a member of the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division.



In Vietnam, he launched air assault operations that helped the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces win a number of major battles, including Hamburger Hill in 1969.

For his courageous service in combat in Korea and Vietnam, he received the Korea Presidential Citation Medal, the Vietnam Gallantry Cross Honor Medal, and the United Nations Service Medal.

My father retired in 1972 as a First Lieutenant after continuously serving for 31 years from 1941-1972.

I am immensely proud of my father, who passed away in 2015, and will be forever grateful for his service to our country as an American soldier. My siblings and I try every day to live lives worthy of our parents' sacrifices and services to our country. In our hearts, our father was one of the country's bravest war heroes and a true-blue American patriot.

Guillermo Garcia Panganiban
(August 11, 1919 - November 3, 2015)



Life for My Parents After Japanese-American Internment

by Janice Takahashi
Professor & Counselor

I was born and raised in New York City. After graduating from high school, I moved to Stockton to attend UOP, where I met my husband, who is also Japanese-American. Both of our American-born families were sent to incarceration camps during World War II. His went to Gila River, and my mother's family went to Manzanar.

After the war was over, the first wave of individuals released from the incarceration camps were required to leave California and were given \$15 dollars each to start a new life.



Thanks to a network of Quaker families, my mother made it out to New York City where she got a job and a place to stay. I remember her telling me the story of her first day in her new apartment.

Despite being spit on and called a derogatory name, she got on the bus with her bag full of groceries and headed to her new place. When she arrived, she realized there were no pots and pans for cooking nor were there even plates or eating utensils. She opened the refrigerator to put away her food and found two metal ice cube trays: she used one to cook in and one as a dish for eating. Opening her sewing basket, she pulled out her scissors and cut her food. As she continued her story, she got a big smile on her face and told me how for the first time in a long time, she was so happy and proud to be Japanese because she also found a pair of knitting needles and was able to use them as chopsticks.

I can still hear her voice whenever I hit a hard spot in life. "Yamato damashii, Janice!" loosely translated means be strong, and keep going with the pride and honor of a warrior.

My father's story was different and was told to me by my mother, never by him. He was born and raised in San Francisco and was recruited after high school to play basketball for Meiji University in Japan.

Working in Japan when the war broke out, he was denied re-entry back to the United States. Because he was born and raised in the US, Japan also considered him the enemy at the time.

Selling all his possessions, he managed to flee to Shanghai and hid there until his sister completed the paperwork to allow him re-entry after the war was over. When he did return to the US, I was told that he was very thin but grateful just to have survived and to be able to be back home.



My family history, and their stories of strength and perseverance have definitely shaped and influenced my life choices, values, and actions.

In case you missed it: Last month, Delta's Active Minds hosted an AAPI Town Hall where speakers within our campus community shared powerful stories and experiences, including the ones in this newsletter. A recording of the event is available here:



ACT to CHANGE

NATIONAL AAPI DAY AGAINST BULLYING AND HATE

May 18, 2021

We are also proud to announce that Act to Change is hosting their 3rd annual AAPI Day Against Bullying & Hate event on **Tuesday, May 18th** from **4:00-5:30pm**. We hope you'll be able to make it to this star-studded event!

[Details & Registration Info for this Free Event!](#)

For the 29th year, APIASA is doing our best to sponsor Asian-American events and support our AAPI students with access to higher education through monetary scholarships. Many of Delta's AAPI students are among some of the most economically disadvantaged; according to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, over 90% of our Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, and Samoan students are low income. If you would like to support our cause, please consider making a one-time donation. Every dollar goes 100% to awarding student scholarships and is tax deductible.

[Donate Now](#)

You can also consider donating through a monthly payroll deduction! If all Delta employees contributed just \$5 a month (the price of a Venti Latte at Starbucks), all of our annual awards would be easily sustained.

[Set a Monthly Contribution Here](#)

For more information about the work we do, please contact Dr. Dustin Tsai (dustin.tsai@deltacollege.edu) or Dr. Le Phan (lphan@deltacollege.edu).

Thank you for reading!

APIASA Team
San Joaquin Delta College



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