

Virginians at War WWII: POWs - Japan Resource Packet

Contains: Glossary, Timeline, Images, Discussion Questions,
Additional Resources

Program Description: Virginians at War: WWII - POW Japan covers the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war in Japanese camps, which by the end of the war had up to a 35% fatality rate. The stories told are those of Virginian soldiers as well as children who were imprisoned. The film describes the horrific conditions American POWs were subjected to, and demonstrates the will power and strength it took to survive.

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Length: 18:38

Streaming link: <https://vimeo.com/367246333>

Featured Speakers:

SGT John Cross, Covington
SSGT Cory Daughtery, Salem
MSGT James Downey Jr., Newport News
SSGT George Idlett, Herndon
CPO Jenro Lambaiso, Virginia Beach
CWSO Hugh Merrit, Virginia Beach
Frank Seegers, Midlothian
CEM Marion "Turk" Turner, Virginia Beach
CAPT John Zimba, Chesapeake



GLOSSARY

IMPORTANT TERMS

- **B-29's:** Boeing B-29 Superfortress; heavy bomber plane flown by U.S. forces during WWII and the Korean war
- **Bataan Death March:** the transfer of American and Filipino prisoners of war from Bataan to Camp O'Donnell; 60,000 to 80,000 prisoners were marched approximately 70 miles by the Imperial Japanese Army
- **Geneva Convention:** a collection of treaties and protocols that dictate the standards of humanitarian treatment during wartimes; international laws that establish the basic rights of all humans, particularly prisoners of war
- **Hell ships:** merchant ships with extremely inhumane living conditions or a reputation for hostile crews
- **Strafing:** attacking repeatedly with bombs or machine guns from low-flying aircraft
- **Weevils:** a type of beetle

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

- **General Jonathan "Skinny" Wainwright:** Commander of the Allied forces in the Philippines during WWII; he was the highest-ranking American prisoner of war and was held captive by the Japanese Imperial Army for three years

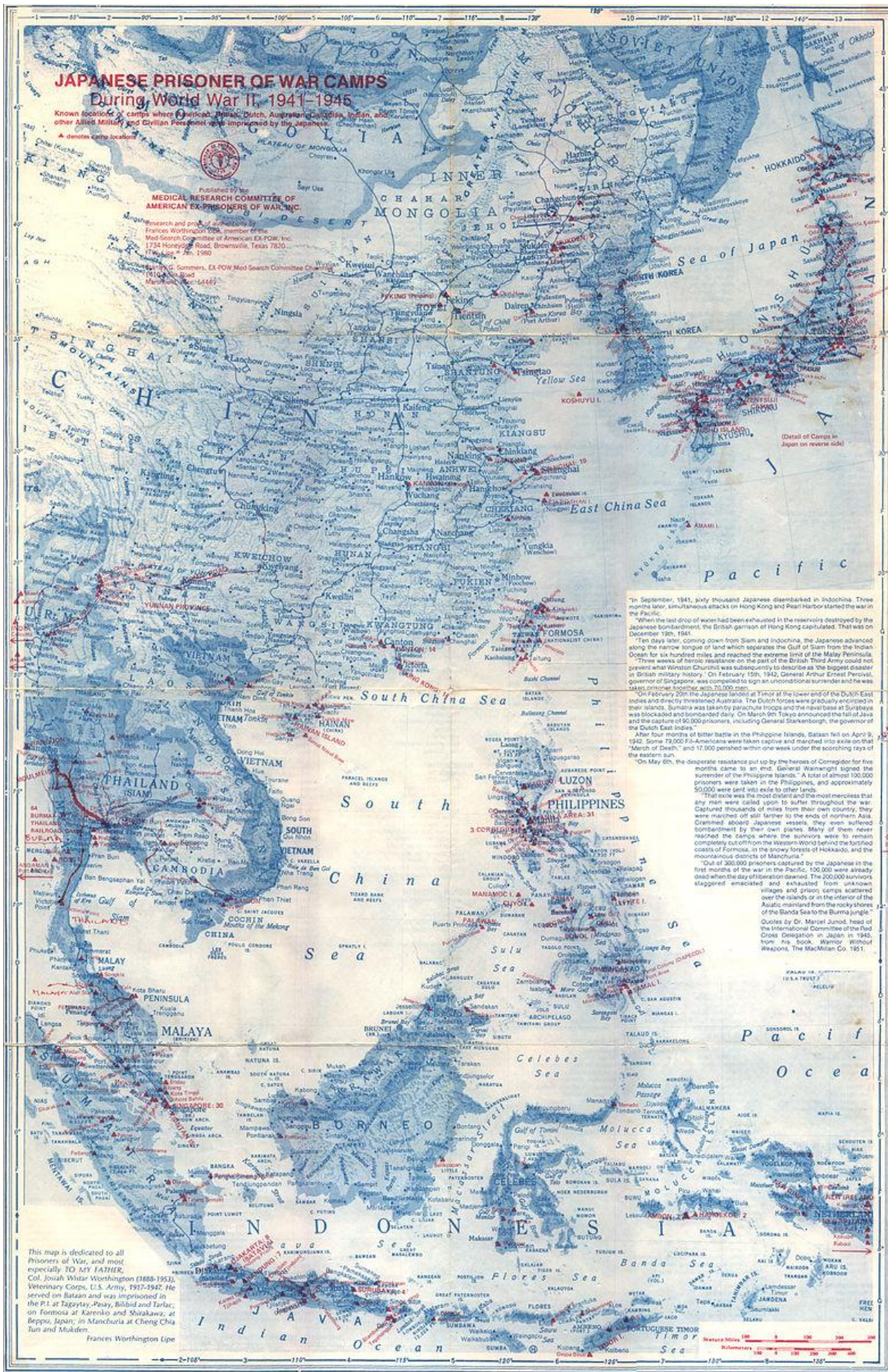
IMPORTANT PLACES

- **Bataan:** a province on Luzon Island in the Philippines; it was the site of a major battle (Battle of Bataan) in the spring of 1942; the Philippines were occupied by the United States from 1898 to 1946
- **Camp O'Donnell:** a military camp and, during Japanese occupation, prisoner of war camp in Capas, a town on Luzon Island in the Philippines
- **Corregidor:** an island in Manila Bay; site of the Battle of Corregidor, which resulted in the surrender of U.S. forces and total Japanese control of the Philippines
- **Manila:** the capital city of the Philippines; many civilians were killed by the Imperial Japanese Army in Manila during their takeover of the Philippines



Prisoner of War Medal

(U.S. Air Force)



Map of Japanese POW camps

(American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc.)





American prisoners of war burying the dead at Camp O'Donnell, 1942

(National Archives)



General Jonathan "Skinny" Wainwright (right) meeting General MacArthur (left) after being liberated from a Japanese POW camp

(U.S. Department of Defense)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What region of the world was the war against Japan fought?
2. Did the Japanese Army follow Geneva Convention law? What laws did they break?
3. Was it only American GIs the Japanese mistreated? Who else as subject to similar treatment from the Japanese military?
4. What were conditions like in the POW camps and why did they become as bad as they were? Did Japanese Imperial ideology play a role in this? Did the infrastructure of the Empire play a role as well?
5. How did civilians, whether Filipino or Japanese, view the POWs?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the experiences of Virginians in World War II, view *Virginians at War: WWII Home Front* and other films at vawarmemorial.org. Looking to do more research? Check out the links below.

- <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/1944/oryoku-maru.html>
- <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/winter/hell-ships-1.html>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Bataan-Death-March/The-march-and-imprisonment-at-Camp-ODonnell>
- <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/1945/philippines-navy-nurses.html>

