

# Memorial to U.S. POWs at Sasebo may be corrected

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SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan — They died in a Japanese slave-labor camp, but during more than six decades, their names became lost to history.

Now, with the help of uncovered historical documents, 53 Americans who died building Sasebo's Soto Dam during World War II could finally receive their proper memorial, according to local military historian Phil Eakins.

Eakins said he used survivor accounts and Japanese military records this year to comb the original 31 names and 23 anonymous casualties listed on the dam memorial plaque. One name originally listed on the plaque was deleted because it should not have been included.



The records have provided names of anonymous casualties and also showed that only five named casualties were listed correctly on the memorial, he said.

Eakins plans to present his findings to Sasebo city in the coming weeks and ask that the memorial be amended.

The city created the memorial in 1956 near the site of Fukuoka Camp 18, where about 265 American civilian contractors from Wake Island were held. Some died in the harsh conditions.

The prisoners of war were forced to take over the dam project in January 1942 and toiled through two winters in only the light tropical-climate clothes they were wearing when captured.

“They were mostly used as slave labor to mix the cement and dig up the rocks,” Eakins said.

Disease and malnutrition were widespread, and the prisoners subsisted on thin soups, flour balls and an occasional piece of fish, he said.

Pneumonia and dysentery took many lives, Eakins said.

Their individual stories remained buried until amateur historians began to dig in earnest.

Eakins, an unofficial base historian, had been fascinated with the dam memorial since he first came to Sasebo in 1989, particularly with finding the names of anonymous casualties.

His break came this summer when he came in contact with another man with a longtime interest, Barry C. Kelso of Boise, Idaho, who is the nephew of Camp 18 casualty Orval Allen Kelso.

Kelso never knew his uncle but began researching his military service in 1981 through a Wake Island survivors group. He approached Sasebo Naval Base in June about adding his uncle’s name to the dam memorial.

That connection led Eakins to an unpublished manuscript and a set of records from two Camp 18 survivors. Those documents contain matching lists of the men who died at the camp.

Records kept by survivors were compared to Japanese military records of prison camp casualties, Eakins said.

“I was overjoyed beyond belief” when the three sources agreed, he said.

However, Kelso said he believes there might still be more undocumented casualties.

There are “possibly 100 or more POWs unaccounted for, as the Japanese would take men out of the camp and that would be the last they would be heard from,” he said. “I think that Camp 18 may [have] had about 250 or 350 men in it when it first had opened.”

The new list of 53 casualties will be presented to the city’s water authority later this month or in early December, and the department said it likely would fulfill the request to amend the memorial.

The corrections could help heal old war wounds between the two countries, said Yuka Ibuki of US-Japan Dialogue on POWs, a group that works to foster understanding and forgiveness among former prisoners and their captors.

“It would be a real healing process” if the names of the memorial are corrected and former POWs revisit the site and meet Japanese residents who remember them from the war, Ibuki said.

“The real human relation will be renewed,” she said.

## Those who died at Camp 18 ...

Wake Island civilian workers who died at Camp 18, Sasebo, Japan, and their dates of death:

Bailey, George Edward: Feb. 6, 1943  
Brown, Edward James: May 6, 1943  
Davis, Lee Russell: April 21, 1943  
Dixon, Theron B.: March 7, 1943  
Dyer, Pat: Oct. 1, 1943  
Easter, George Carey: Feb. 27, 1944  
Esmay, Wayne Edic: Feb. 19, 1943  
Farstvedt, Knut: March 26, 1943  
Follett, Frank Fay: March 23, 1943  
Franklin, Mark Baum: Jan. 12, 1943  
Gehman, Ralph Alison: Jan. 22, 1944  
Greve, Louis: March 15, 1943  
Grim, William Bertson: March 9, 1943  
Hance, Loren Howard: April 25, 1943  
Hardisty, Herbert Arthur: July 4, 1943  
Hart, Irving Warren: March 19, 1943  
Hensel, Theodore: May 1, 1943  
Hewson, Albert Arthur: Jan. 11, 1943  
Hill, Norman Lester: June 4, 1943  
Huntley, John William: March 1, 1943  
Jimison, Harold Elmore: Nov. 9, 1942  
Johnson, Edwin Waldeman: March 30, 1943  
Kelly, Frederick William: March 8, 1943 brother  
Kelly, Samuel D.: Oct. 26, 1943 brother  
Kelso, Orval Allen: April 8, 1943  
Kent, Lloyd Robert: Feb. 27, 1944  
Knox, Elbert Henry: Jan. 15, 1944  
Larson, Julius Leonard: Feb. 17, 1943  
Lindquist, William Oscar: Feb. 22, 1943  
McEvers, Ralph: March 22, 1943  
McKeehan, Lloyd Sterling: Feb. 25, 1943  
Meyers, Lester Theodore: April 29, 1943  
Miller, Charles Myrlin: Feb. 14, 1943  
Miller, Frank B.: April 27, 1943  
Miller, Silas Warren: March 21, 1943  
Nicks, Quinton Doke: April 2, 1943  
Niklaus, John Florian: Jan. 26, 1943  
Nygard, Andrew: March 15, 1943  
O'Neal, John Hubert: Feb. 27, 1943  
Pawlofske, Richard Paul: Feb. 17, 1943  
Peterson, Hjalmar Magnus: Nov. 2, 1942  
Proteau, George Francis: March 30, 1943 father  
Proteau, Lawrence Harold: March 23, 1943 son  
Puccetti, Elmer: March 11, 1943  
Reid, Russell: Aug. 16, 1943  
Robbins, Paul James: March 25, 1943  
Stone, Clinton Manchester: March 20, 1943  
Thomas, Owen Griffith: April 30, 1943  
Villa, Edward Elyson: March 20, 1943  
Walker, George Milton: May 4, 1943  
Williams, Donald MacLeod: March 8, 1943  
Yeramian, Vahram John: Jan. 5, 1943  
Zeh, Fred: Feb. 26, 1944

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