



Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, a son of a Filipino World War II veteran, shakes the hand of 101-year-old Celestino Almeda, the oldest living Filipino veteran in the Washington, D.C. area, during the Bataan Day commemoration at the National World War II Memorial. □ (Photo by Bing Branigin)

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WASHINGTON — “I can think of no other place I would rather be today than at this ceremony,

remembering with you the courage and sacrifice, the resilience and the strength of the Defenders of Corregidor and Bataan.”

U.S. Army Lt. Gen. David H. Huntoon (Ret) said those words at the National World War II Memorial on April 9, 2019 where community leaders, diplomats, veterans, families and veteran advocates gathered to mark the 77th anniversary of the Fall of Bataan and Corregidor.

On April 9 and May 6, 1942, over 72,000 Filipino and American soldiers surrendered to Japanese Imperial Forces and were forced to march for over 65 miles to prison camps.

In the infamous Bataan Death March, approximately 10,000 Filipino and 700 American soldiers died.

“Here at this national shrine of service, we pause to reflect on their service, to remember their courage, and their resilience in the face of death,” Huntoon added.

“Learning about and teaching others the stories of these heroic soldiers from the U.S. and from the Philippines matters. In doing so, we are reminded of our common values, of our purposeful lives, and of our mutual respect and compassion for each other that transcends and, in time, can surmount the pain and suffering of war.”

A 40-year veteran with the U.S. Army, Huntoon served as Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

He has a deep personal connection with the war in the Pacific as his father worked in the staff of Gen. Douglas MacArthur during the New Guinea campaign.

His father-in-law was assigned at Clark Air Force Base for a number of years.

In his remarks, Philippine ambassador to the U.S. Jose Manuel G. Romualdez noted that this year's theme of the "Day of Valor" or "Araw ng Kagitingan" is "Sakripisyo ng Beterano ay Gunitain, Gawing Tanglaw ng Kabataan Tungo sa Kaunlaran."

This theme "underscores the sacrifices of our war veterans and urges our youth to draw inspiration from this selfless act of giving oneself so that they too can contribute to the advancement of this nation," Romualdez said.

"Knowledge of history is an essential guide to the future. We have to know where we have been and what brought us to the present, in order to be able to chart a course toward a better tomorrow."

Brig. Gen. Marlo M. Guloy, Defense and Armed Forces Attaché of the Philippine Embassy, expanded on the ambassador's point by citing Proclamation No. 466, S. 1989, designating April 5 to 11 of every year as Philippine Veterans Week, in order to "promote, preserve and memorialize the principles, ideals, and deeds of the Filipino war veteran as a means to enhance patriotism and love of country, especially among the youth of the land."





World War II veterans Celestin (left) and Don Cabacar share a light