

"They Were Expendable" by Howard Kadohiro

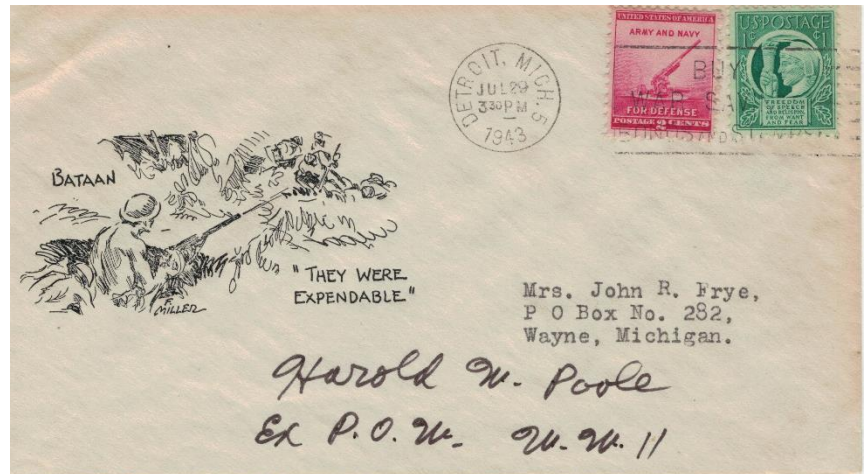
In an interview with a representative of the New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA), the reporter seemed intent of excoriating the manager for not providing adequate number of train cars, and buses to prevent overcrowding. The NYCTA had cut service and did not shut down to provide transportation for essential workers. Why did the NYCTA not put additional cars into service to prevent overcrowding? Her answer revealed how inadequately NYCTA was prepared for Covid-19. Transit workers were not provided with any PPE early on and when some workers showed up with masks, they were ordered to remove them because the mask will frighten commuters and they should only be for hospital workers and first responders. The MTA spokesperson's response was stunning. Because transit workers were not provided PPE the coronavirus had decimated their ranks, sickening thousands and killing many that the number of buses and train/subway cars was all that the MTA could provide. The Health of the NYCTA workers were sacrificed to protect the frontline hospital workers.

Using the analogy that the effort to defeat the Covid-19 virus is a war, at the beginning of WW2 the United States Armed Forces Far East, USAFFE, were ordered to defend the Philippines and never surrender to the Japanese with the promise of reinforcement of men, equipment, and supplies. These were empty promises. The leadership at the War Department had no intention of sending reinforcements to the Philippines. Yet they ordered the USAFFE to hold on and keep fighting until aid arrived.

The focus of the War Department was on defeating the Axis powers in Europe. The abandonment of the USAFFE in the Philippines led to the largest surrender US armed forces personnel in history.

Like essential workers today, the Bataan Death March survivors were not forgotten, and support continued through the war. At the end of WW2 veterans were given financial, education and health benefits under the G.I. Bill. How will history record how essential workers (hospital, transit, truckers, farmers, food processors, supermarket clerks) were treated? Will we provide aid to mitigate the cost of medical care from exposure to the virus, and other financial aid, or will we just pat them on the back, tell them what a great job they did, give them a pink slip and tell them they're on their own to deal with the effects of the virus?

Howard Kadohiro is a member who collects Hawaii material. He had relatives that served in the US Armed Forces in the Far East, North Atlantic, and Occupied Japan during World War II.



Patriotic cover signed by a prisoner of the Japanese



Cover with Bataan War Prisoner Cinderella to raise funds to support the Bataan POWs