

Great Cloud of Witnesses

An urbana.org column by [Jack Voelkel](#)

Love Sowed in a Field of Hatred (part 1)



On December 7, 1941, 360 Japanese planes were launched from aircraft carriers in range of the Hawaiian Islands. Ace airman, **Mitsuo Fuchida**, gave the famous attack signal: *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!). They wreaked havoc on the unsuspecting U.S. Pacific Fleet anchored in exquisite Pearl Harbor. By the end of the attack, eight battleships, three destroyers, and three cruisers had been sunk or severely damaged; 188 aircraft were destroyed; 2,403 people had been killed; and 1,178 were wounded (Benge, p. 26).

As Fuchida guided the planes back to their carriers, he was filled with pride for his men and for himself. The surprise attack had succeeded beyond all expectations. His admiral congratulated him, and later he had the extraordinary honor of personally giving his report to Emperor Hirohito.

But Fuchida left behind more than smashed ships and aircraft and dead and wounded men. His raid left behind a nation “welded together by the fires he and his men had set – a United States that would not rest until the Japanese had paid in full for their morning’s work” (Prange, p. 37).

The Doolittle Raid

As a result of the raid on Pearl Harbor, the next day the United States and Britain declared war on Japan. President Franklin D. Roosevelt mandated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to bomb Japan as soon as possible, to boost public morale. Lt.Col. James Doolittle, the daring and much decorated flyer ordered to plan and lead the mission, noted in his autobiography, “The Japanese had been told they were invulnerable. An attack on the Japanese homeland would cause confusion in the minds of the Japanese people and sow doubt about the reliability of their leaders” (Doolittle, pp. 1, 2).

Sixteen B-25 “Mitchell” bombers were carefully prepared to enable them to take off from an aircraft carrier. The 80 crewmen were volunteers, invited to participate in a dangerous mission the details of which they knew nothing until they were at sea heading for Japan. One of them was **Corporal Jacob (Jake) DeShazer**, a bombardier. His fear mingled with a sense of honor and privilege to participate in retaliation for the carnage of Pearl Harbor. His anger toward Japanese, born on Pearl Harbor Day, had grown into a deep hatred and obsession for revenge.

On April 18, 1942 the bombers began their flight. Fourteen hours later, Jake’s plane dropped its bombs on their target, and headed for free China. They never made it. He and his fellow crew members bailed out in

the dark and landed in territory occupied by the Japanese army. Several airmen were executed; he and four other survivors were given life sentences.

A Prisoner of War

For 40 months, Jake and his companions were prisoners of war, often brutally beaten, tortured, poorly fed, and for most of the time kept in solitary confinement, their only companions lice, fleas, and rats. Sometimes they had to sit on tiny stools facing a wall for 16 hours a day. The only source of strength Jake had to draw upon was his bitter hatred for the enemy. During the lonely hours Jake reviewed his life. His father had been a Church of God lay preacher. When he was a child his family had easily prayed and talked about spiritual things. But when Jake had left home, he had put it all behind him. He felt that now under these horrible conditions, since he had forsaken God, it would be dishonest to pray.



On one occasion when he and Bob, one of his fellow prisoners, were allowed to weed the courtyard, his companion said to Jake, "I do believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Coming King, and that He is God's Son...The war is not going to stop until Jesus Christ causes it to stop" (Benge, p. 124). Bob later died, and Jake's only thought was how anyone, even Jesus, could dare to suggest that a person love his enemies when they were mistreating and starving good men to death (p. 125). Uplift came when without fanfare the guards distributed several English language books among the prisoners. The prize volume was a Bible, but Jake had to wait nine weeks for his turn to read it, and he would only have it for 21 days.

"From the moment the Bible was brought to his cell, Jake barely slept or put the book down. Despite the fact that the light in his cell was dingy and the Bible text small, the words seemed to leap off the page at him" (Benge, p. 126). He read straight through, beginning with the Old Testament and continuing on with the New. As he read he became conscious of a Presence in the cell with him, "God right there beside him, reaching out to someone who was lost, alone, and abandoned" (p. 127). One day, as the Gospel truth come through the verses he was studying, he prayed "Lord, though I am far from home and though I am in prison, I ask for your forgiveness" (p. 127). His heart filled with joy. He knew he was a new man.

Changes

As he continued to read and study the Bible, the Lord spoke to him about forgiving others. One day a guard intentionally kicked his bare foot with his hobnailed boot several times, causing him intense pain. His first reaction was a desire for revenge. But pondering the verses he had memorized, including Jesus' admonition for Christians to love and forgive their enemies, Jake recognized that Jesus was asking him to forgive his tormentor and to reach out to him with love.

As his attitude toward the guard changed, illustrated by forgiveness and grace, the man responded in kind, and Jake began to receive better treatment. Although he suffered repeatedly from dysentery and boils all

over his body, Jake became more and more conscious that God was with him. His desire to pray grew and he began to cry out to God to put it in the hearts of the Japanese leaders to sue for peace. Then one day he sensed the Lord say, "You can stop now. You don't need to pray anymore. The victory is won" (Benge, p. 140).

"The victory is won!" A wonderful promise, but what he would do when the war was over? What would happen when the Emperor surrendered, leaving the Japanese without the assurance that they were invincible? Then, a startling thing happened. The room seemed electrified. Without warning he heard an audible voice speaking to him: "You are called to go and teach the Japanese people and go wherever I send you" (142).

Within days, God's promised victory was corroborated. The guards brought him his own uniform and said, "The war is over now. You can go home." The next weeks were a blur: he was flown back to the U.S., had a medical review, and returned home on a nine-week vacation. His family had heard that all the Doolittle Raiders had been killed, so the reunion was a very emotional one. Jake was a celebrity, constantly invited to speak and share his experiences. But deep within his heart burned the conviction that God had called him to return to Japan as a missionary.