

From PEARL HARBOR to Calvary

“I would give anything to retract my actions ... at Pearl Harbor, but it is impossible,” said Mitsuo Fuchida, former general commander of the air squadron responsible for the 7:49 a.m. attack on Pearl Harbor — December 7, 1941.

“Instead, I now work at striking the death-blow to the basic hatred which infests the human heart and causes such tragedies. And that hatred cannot be uprooted without assistance from Jesus Christ,” states Fuchida.

With the release of a new movie this summer about Pearl Harbor, interest in the wartime tragedy is high and a frequent subject of conversation. What many Americans do not know is that the same man who led the 360-plane raid on Honolulu that bright Sunday morning eventually became a Christian evangelist — traveling across Japan and the Orient preaching the Gospel. And if that were not amazing enough, commander Fuchida was

led to Christ through a testimonial pamphlet written by an American prisoner of war, Jacob DeShazer!

DeShazer was a Japanese prisoner of war for 40 months during WWII — captured on April 18, 1942 during a secret bombing raid known as Jimmy Dolittle’s “30-seconds over Tokyo,” when the plane ran out of fuel. Close to death as a result of starvation and torture, he begged his captors for a Bible. On June 8, 1944, DeShazer read Romans 10:9, and received Christ as Savior: “I suddenly discovered God had given me new spiritual eyes ... I found my bitter hatred for them [enemy officers and guards] changed to loving pity. ... God, in that hour, revealed to me

how to endure suffering.” DeShazer was set free on August 20, 1945 by parachutists. He completed missionary training at a Seattle Pacific College in the States and returned to Japan, saying, “God clearly commanded me: ‘Go, teach those people who held you prisoner the way of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ!’”

Fuchida was stepping off a train at Tokyo’s Shibuya Station when he saw an American distributing literature — DeShazer! The former Japanese naval commander read the pamphlet entitled *I Was a Prisoner of Japan*, and was deeply moved in his heart. Fuchida was desperately unhappy and seeking peace of mind. Although raised a Buddhist, he purchased a Bible, and read it over the ensuing weeks. “I read in Luke 23:34 the prayer of Jesus Christ at His death: ‘Father, forgive them; for they don’t know what they are doing,’” said Fuchida. “I was impressed that I was certainly one of those for whom He had prayed. The many men I had killed had been slaughtered in the name of patriotism, for I did not understand the love which Christ wishes to implant within every heart. ... I requested Him to forgive my sins and change me from a bitter, disillusioned ex-pilot into a well-balanced Christian with purpose in living.” The date was April 12, 1950.

Mitsuo Fuchida passed away in his home near Nara (Japan) in 1976. The last 25 years of his life he was an “ambassador of peace” — sharing the gospel message of forgiveness through Christ. “He [Jesus] is the only One who was powerful enough to change my life and inspire it with His thoughts,” said Fuchida. “He is the only answer”†

— by Deborah Anne Perez

God’s Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor, written by Gordon W. Prange, Donald Goldstein and Katherine Dillon, published by Brassey’s: Washington [Library ISBN #0080374417/210.75].