

70 Years After WWII, Japanese Company Apologizes to POWs

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Saying they felt a “deep sense of ethical responsibility for a past tragedy,” executives from a major Japanese corporation gave an unprecedented apology Sunday to a 94-year-old U.S. prisoner of war for using American POWs for forced labor during World War II.

At the solemn ceremony hosted by the Museum of Tolerance at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, James Murphy of Santa Maria, California, accepted the apology he had sought for 70 years on behalf of U.S. POWs from executives of Mitsubishi Materials Corp.

Hikaru Kimura, senior executive officer for Mitsubishi Materials Corp., said through a translator that the company offered a “most remorseful apology” to the about 900 POWs who suffered “harsh, severe hardships” while forced to work in Mitsubishi mines and industrial plants.

Murphy, who toiled in Mitsubishi copper mines and is one of the few left alive to accept such an apology, called it sincere, humble and revealing.

“This is a glorious day,” said Murphy, who stood tall and slender in a gray suit at the ceremony and looked much younger than his 94 years. “For 70 years, we wanted this.”

Murphy stood and shook



AP Photo
In this 1942 photo provided by U.S. Marine Corps, Japanese soldiers stand guard over American war prisoners just before the start of the Bataan Death March following the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

hands with Kimura and others as cameras clicked throughout the museum theater, with giant American and Japanese flags projected side-by-side behind them.

Other POWs subjected to forced labor sat in the audience along with many members of Murphy’s family.

Stanley Gibson, whose late father worked alongside Murphy in the mines, flew from Scotland to Los Angeles for the ceremony to represent his family after hearing about it in news reports just a few days earlier. On the stage was a photo of the two men being liberated from their captors.

The Japanese government

has twice apologized to U.S. POWs used as forced laborers during World War II.

But Rabbi Abraham Cooper, an associate dean at the center whose primary focus in the past has been Holocaust education, said he and the event’s other organizers believe the apology is unprecedented from a major Japanese company.

Cooper, Murphy and others who spoke urged more Japanese companies to come forward to express their own remorse.

The ceremony was preceded by a private apology that ended with a long, deep bow from the Mitsubishi representatives.

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR WERE FORCED TO LABOR IN

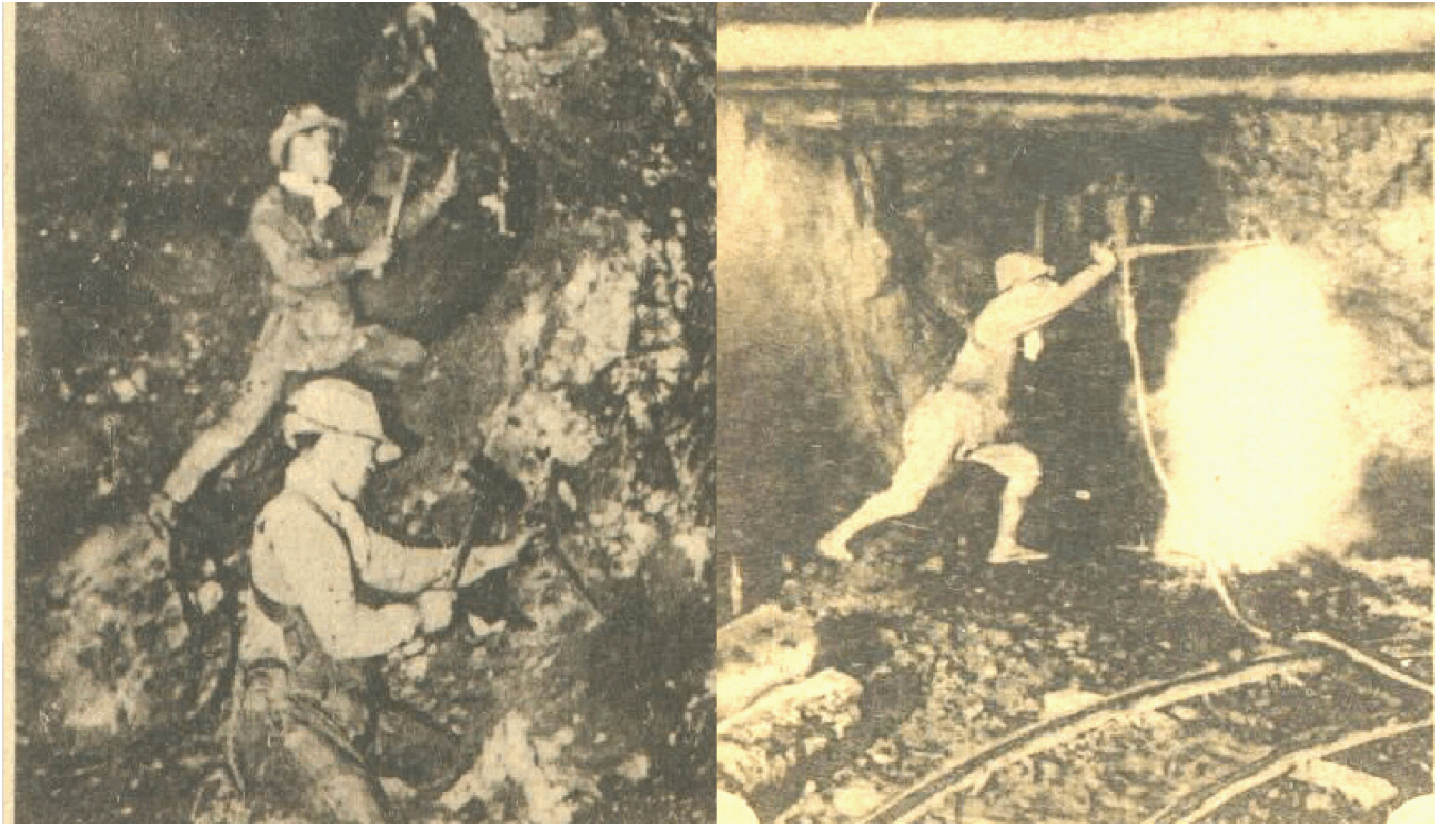


PHOTO SHOWS RESCUE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR WHO WORKED IN A COPPEER MINE

JAMES T. MURPHY AT SENDAI PRISONERS OF WAR CAMP RESCUED BY AMERICAN FORCES

