Interview with Chloe’ Huber

At a football game in the fall of 2001, Chloe’ Huber first heard about Bataan.

Harold Poole, a World War II veteran, was honored at the game along with other veterans. His brief biography in the program told about his military experience in World War II and the three years he spent as a prisoner of the Japanese. Those years as a prisoner began with the notorious Bataan Death March in the Philippine Islands in April of 1942, in which over 1,000 Americans and 10,000 Filipinos lost their lives.

Chloe’ was looking for a story to tell. A 9th grader at Cypress High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, she was working with classmates Colby Bryson and Erica Jones on an entry for their school’s history fair. The year before, Chloe’ made a video of oral histories of survivors of Pearl Harbor, and this year she wanted a less familiar topic. So she began reading about Bataan.

She started with Hampton Side’s Ghost Soldiers and read Lester Tenney's My Hitch in Hell. She read about Bataan on the Internet and in her local library. Her research intrigued her; her group had their story.

Their next step was to contact Mr. Poole. He was experienced in talking to school and community groups about his experiences and enthusiastically embraced the project. He also introduced Chloe’ to Johnny Johnson, the other veteran interviewed for the video. Although Mr. Johnson was not as experienced as Mr. Poole in sharing his story, he provided the most powerful emotional moments in the video.

Chloe’ and her teammates met with the veterans and recorded their stories with a Canon digital video camera. They carefully combined this footage with pictures from books and music from World War II and from movie soundtracks. They used iMovie on the Huber family G-4 iMac for the editing, which took about 2 months. The video was displayed at the history fair with a projector. Following wins at the school, regional, and state levels, the team’s video earned them a trip to the National History Fair in Maryland.

The video begins with voices of the veterans describing their idyllic pre-war life in the Philippines, waited on by native servants at a leisure-filled tropical military base. The veteran’s voices are central to the video and recount the surprise attack on December 8, 1941, the four-month siege, the surrender and Death March, and imprisonment. Both veterans share the inevitable question of survivors: Why did I live when so many others died?

Chloe’ believes that the lesson of Bataan is one of preparedness. The soldiers in the Philippines were not prepared to fight the war-tested Japanese, and their tropical outpost changed overnight to war zone. She feels that the troops serving in the military today are better prepared than were those who, despite their lack of equipment, served their country so well.