

Taiwan abounds with the multiple histories of its complex past. This June has proved to be a typical example, for it was an active month for the Taiwan Prisoner of War (POW) Camps Memorial Society. On June 6, we dedicated the Toroku Prison Camp Memorial at the Gou-ba Elementary School in Douhlio. Then on June 20, we dedicated a memorial to fourteen American airmen who were executed at the former Taipei Prison on June 19, 1945. Both memorials were part of the society's on-going campaign to never forget those who suffered imprisonment in Taiwan. In the complexities of history, these men had fought in World War II for the freedom of their own countries, and they had in their own small way contributed (directly or indirectly) to the eventual democracy that Taiwan enjoys today.

The Toroku POW camp was activated in November 1944 when the former Gou-ba Elementary school (now torn down) was turned into a prison camp to house and help recuperate prisoners primarily Americans from the Philippines on their way to Japan. Called "the Schoolhouse Camp," the prisoners fared better there than in the many other more brutal camps.

Participating in this ceremony were not only members of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society, but the principal, teachers, and students of the current Gou-ba Elementary School, the Gou-ba Parents Association, representatives of Douhlio township and Yunlin County and the ROC Veterans Affairs Commission.

Participating in the memorial dedication at the former Taipei Prison wall were representatives from Taipei City Government Department of Cultural Affairs, the ROC Veterans Affairs Commission, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the POW Camps Memorial Society as well as interested citizens.

The former Taipei Prison wall spans an interestingly long period in Taiwan's history. Many of the stones that make it up came from the old Taipei City Wall constructed in the Qing period of Taiwan's history. The wall has since survived through the Japanese Colonial period, the post WWII period, Taiwan's White Terror and Martial Law era and finally into Taiwan's current democracy.

More details on the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society and its activities as well as these ceremonies can be found at www.powtaiwan.org .

Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society Active in June

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