



# COMMITTEE ON RULES

*I Mina'trentai Tres na Liheslaturan Guåhan* • The 33rd Guam Legislature  
155 Hesler Place, Hagåtña, Guam 96910 • [www.guamlegislature.com](http://www.guamlegislature.com)  
E-mail: [roryforguam@gmail.com](mailto:roryforguam@gmail.com) • Tel: (671)472-7679 • Fax: (671)472-3547

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June 25, 2015

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Rennae Meno  
*Clerk of the Legislature*

**From:** Senator Thomas C. Ada   
*Acting Chairperson of the Committee on Rules*

**Subject:** Supplemental to Committee Report on Bill No. 94-33 (COR)

*Hafa Adai!*

Please include this attachment as a "Supplemental" to the Committee Report on Bill No. 94-33 (COR).

Please make the appropriate indication in your records; and forward to MIS for posting on our website. I also request that the same be forwarded to all Senators of *I Mina'trentai Tres Na Liheslaturan Guåhan*.

*Si Yu'os Ma'ase'!*

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**VICE SPEAKER BENJAMIN J.F. CRUZ**  
Committee on Appropriations and Adjudication  
senator@senatorbjcruz.com | www.senatorbjcruz.com



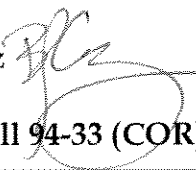
*I Mina'trentai Tres na Liheslaturan Guåhan*  
**THE 33RD GUAM LEGISLATURE**  
155 Hesler Place, Suite 107, Hagåtña, Guam 96910  
T: (671) 477-2520/1 | F: (671) 477-2522

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June 25, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**To: Senator Thomas C. Ada**  
*Acting Chairperson, Committee on Rules, Federal, Foreign & Micronesian Affairs,  
Human & Natural Resources, Election Reform and Capitol District*

**From: Vice Speaker Benjamin J.F. Cruz** 

**Re: Supplemental Documents for Bill 94-33 (COR)**

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*Håfa Adai!*

Please be advised that I have received supplemental documents for Bill 94-33 (COR). I would greatly appreciate if the documents were included as an addendum to the Bill No. 94-33 (COR) committee report, submitted on June 16, 2015. Thank you for your consideration to this request.

**June 12, 2015**

**I MMIA'TRENTAI TRES NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN**

**Re: Support for Bill No. 94-33 An act to add §1037 to Chapter 10 of Title 1 Guam Code Annotated to delare an annual War Survivor Day for Guam.**

My name is Lillian Rita Mesa Duenas Dizon. I am currently 78 years old and a survivor of the War. I reside in the village of Mongmong in the U.S. Territory of Guam. I am a married Chamorro woman who has spent over 50 rewarding years with my late husband Oscar P. Dizon. I have been blessed with 4 children and 13 grandchildren. Throughout my life I have had many accomplishments. I am a college graduate, a retired Probation Officer, a homeowner, a sales consultant (Princess House) and a happy grandmother. In my 78 years I have had the opportunity to travel around the world and have many memorable experiences.

My life has had its trials and tribulations; joys and disappointment; triumphs and tragedies. Guam's involvement in World War II's history is a part of my life along with all of our surviving fellow Chamorros of my generation share. It was a time when our freedom as loyal Americans had been taken away. From the year 1941 to 1944, freedom was something we were only able to dream about. As a child, we sang in whispers for our dear Uncle Sam to please come back to Guam.

While it is difficult to discuss and relive that time so many years ago, it is important for us Chamorros to acknowledge the past, correct an injustice and to finally put closure to an issue that has affected each survivor of the War. I humbly submit my statement and my recollection as a young child living through the hardships and burdens that War brings.

I was only 5 years old and I had to experience the atrocities and the subsequent events that happen during the War. I was old enough to be an active participant of the war, yet, too young to completely understand what really was happening. Prior to December 8, 1941, Guam was a happy, peaceful place. We were an island proud to be under the U.S. American Flag. As a 5 year old, I learned that war for me meant that I had to leave my home and cherished belongings, learn someone else's culture and language, work tirelessly and bear witness to my island being destroyed, that, once was beautiful.

**December 8, 1941:**

It was a December 8, 1941. I was dressed in white dress with feathery wings on my back. I was at church with my sisters; Patsy Mae , Frances, my Auntie Lah (Maria Mesa Mendiola) and 1<sup>st</sup> cousin Edith in Hagatna at the Dulce Nombre de Maria Church. My older sister Patsy Mae was receiving her First Holy Communion and the rest of us were angels as part of the Feast Day celebration of Our Lady of Camarin.

As the sound of the invasion could be heard at a distance, Father Ramon interrupted the Mass and informed the congregation to return to their homes. My mother, Esther Muna Mesa Duenas was at the hospital because she had cut herself on the hand while cooking food for the feast day. My father; Francisco A. Duenas was working for the Naval Government and had arrived home with my mother in a truck. We were all gathered and instructed to pack our belongings because we had to evacuate from the capital to the village of Toto. We all loaded ourselves in the truck. My sisters, my extended family; Maternal Grand Father Joaquin M. Mesa, Grandmother Rita Muna Mesa, Maternal Auntie Agit (Margret M. Mesa), Maternal Uncle Pepe (Jose M. Mesa), Autie Lah and cousin Edith. I believe some neighbors rode with us to the village of Toto. In the rush to pack, I remembered that I had forgotten to

bring my toy doll called “Dolly.” The doll was a gift from my father from one his trips abroad and meant a lot to me. It would be my Uncle Pepe, who had to return to our Hagatna house and retrieve my doll amidst the gunfire and the Japanese troops invading the Capital. As a child, during such harsh times, one clings to something familiar for comfort. Later in life, this story would be a point of conversation that my uncle will tell my husband that “Did you know she made me go back to get her doll”.

### **The Ranch in Toto:**

We lived with my father’s family on a ranch in Toto. This is where we would live during the war before our forced relocation to Manengon Hills. My father was a very resourceful man and was able to collect building materials, such as lumber, to construct a simple Ranch house for the family. His cousin, Ramon Duenas, had given him a lot of land for us to live on. We were able to build a house and we were able to remain in that house until the force relocation to Manengon. The house was large enough for us to be comfortable, but by no means like the house we had left in Hagatna.

When the Japanese military completely occupied the island, an order was sent out for the families with children, new births to 16 years old to report to Hagatna. We went and stayed overnight at our house. We were all ordered to go to the hospital for vaccinations. We were all fearful as children of needles, the needle resembled a small knife in appearance. Four shots were given to each of us on our left arm. What would ensue thereafter were days and nights of excruciating pain, fever and the feeling of being close to death.

Our grandmother and her sisters treated us with traditional Chamorro herbal medicines to help with our reaction to the shots. In the delirium of my fever, I had asked for a can of Pork & Beans which was impossible to get now that we were fully occupied by the Japanese.

### **Learning Japanese:**

It was important for the Japanese to indoctrinate us and to assimilate us to the Japanese culture and way of life. A big part of it was the loyalty and obedience to the Emperor of Japan. My cousin and I were sent to Joseph Manibusan's House to attend school which was quite a distance for any 5 year old to do. My older sisters Patsy and Frances would attend school in Tiyan. We would have to travel by foot in the early morning darkness to get to school. School started when the sun rises. We would start with stretching and calisthenics and followed by facing to the north and bowing to the Emperor. Our lessons included basic Japanese vocabulary, signing songs, counting and importance of bowing. We were forbidden to speak English.

### **The Basket & Knife:**

Another part of the indoctrination was manual labor to provide for the Japanese. Following our lessons at school, depending on our age we were assigned different jobs. As a 5 year old, I was expected to bring a large woven basket and knife every day. My grandmother wove the basket and my father fashioned a knife from scrap metal for my cousin Edith, who was 6, and I. We were lined up in a row and this pint-sized army would march to the Hagatna Swamp area to cut watercress and fill up our baskets. You had to cut them a certain way that was in keeping with the Japanese way of order and balance. After filling our baskets we would then march up San Ramon Hill in the Tutujan area, we would bow to the Japanese guards and proceed to the Collection House to present our cut watercress for inspection and delivery. Thankfully, we were always able to complete our jobs and did not face the dreaded beatings that others were subjected to. If we had exhausted the supply of watercress we were

then sent to Tiyan to assist the older children and had to pick up the smaller rocks and place them in piles under the heat of the mid-day sun until the sunset.

My older sisters' assignment was to dig and break rocks in the Tiyan area. The Japanese were building an air field and it was the task of those in our area to construct a runway for the Japanese air planes. Later, this area would become the Naval Air Station, which has since, been returned back to the island in the 1990's

My father and uncle worked in different capacity for the Japanese by having to carrying weapons and munitions from one place to another.

By the time all of us children were allowed to return home, we had to help gather, husk and grate coconuts. The older women of the house had to produce 1 gallon of coconut oil each. My grandmother, Auntie Lah and mother had to supply this every week. My Aunty Agit, who was 13 years old and other younger ladies were assigned farm work. They had to plant fruits and vegetables as well as maintain the livestock. We had to produce a certain amount of produce and raise chickens and pigs. Everything was accounted for by the Japanese. The pigs were counted, the pregnant pigs' liters were counted, even the ones that die had to be accounted for. For us as children, we had to pull the weeds growing in the fields at night by oil lamp.

### **My Grandfather:**

My maternal grandfather, Juakin M. Mesa was very severely ill with kidney disease. He was in a great deal of pain and at one point, had to be taken to the hospital but was told to go home. The hospital by this time only treated the Japanese Soldiers, staff and their families. Some of the hospital staff known to us, Dr. Ramon Sablan was my grandma's nephew and chief nurse Amanda Guzman (Mrs. Shelton) secretly helped my grandfather. They were able to at least smuggle out of the hospital some aspirin. Proper treatment would not be allowed to him by the Japanese. I remembered seeing the pain he was suffering and yet he did not complain. Reflecting on this today, a sadness remains because of my inability to help. We, as children, tried to help ease the pain by spending his remaining days with us by singing songs and with prayers. My grandfather finally passed away before we went to Manenggon.

### **The Japanese Doctor:**

On the ranch one day, a Japanese Soldier was walking by and arrived at our home. Fearful but curious, I wondered who is this man and why is he here. He spoke to us in English. Fearful of the repercussions of speaking English we simply nodded as if we did not understand what he was saying. He would explain to us that he was from America and that he's an American born citizen. He traveled to Japan to visit his grandparents and was drafted into the Japanese Army. We would come to find out that he was a doctor before his untimely recruitment. For the first time, among all the hate and brutality was a glimmer of humanity. He wanted to speak English with people and so we were careful with our words. This doctor would come and eat dinner with us and would spend time on his day off. He would take care of my baby brother Joseph (Sonny), carry him and play with him. He would bring us foot socks filled with rice. My mother would cook the rice and serve it with a main dish of vegetable and chicken that was made into a clear broth soup (Kadun Mannok). He would be given the breast of the chicken the rest would be divided. I was given the neck as my part of the chicken.

### **Family Life:**

Amidst all the hardship and suffering we able to pass the time to temporarily escape this life of fear

and work by singing songs and playing games. For a couple of hours we could forget that we were in war and be once again a family. As a family we would recite the rosary and pray the novena. My mother taught us the prayers required for First Holy Communion which I received after the war. When there was a full moon our families would gather on the ranch, build a small bon-fire. My Uncle Frank would play his violin and others would join in on guitar. We would sing songs and dance around and play games like hide and seek, the adults would drink tuba and eat whatever food we managed to have.

### **Manenggon:**

On July 10, 1944, a day that would be like any other, an order came to relocate to the southern part of Guam to Manenggon. We were all instructed to leave our home and we brought only what we could carry. Our luggages were pillowcases filled with some clothing and other essentials. I had to leave "Dolly" on a chair and had promised her that I will return soon. The march from our ranch in Toto coursed through the villages of Barrigada, Mangilao, Yona and finally to Manenggon . It was raining and darkness soon fell upon us with the constant view of armed Japanese soldiers keeping us moving along. My mother was carrying my brother in her arms when she noticed her best friend, Hanna Torres sitting under a tree, very sick and unable to get up. She tried to go and comfort her but Hanna told her to go on and so they said, their goodbyes with a gentle whisper from afar.

Upon arriving at the concentration camp, there was nothing there except mud. The Japanese left us in a desolate area to fend for ourselves. Everyone had to find a spot to build a hut to live in. Near us there were three older ladies by themselves, so our family took them in and took care of them.

My father, being resourceful, was able to collect enough coconut leaves and bamboo to put up a hut for our family and these three ladies. It was difficult to get much because there were many people doing the same thing. It seemed as if the entire island was moved to this part of the island.

While in this camp there were many rules to follow. We could only cook when it was scheduled. There was even times when the young single ladies aged 16 to 25 would form a single line and be selected by the Japanese. My Auntie Agit was lucky her cousin from Saipan, Jose Muna Cabrera, was a camp guard and interpreter and will let her know what to do make herself look ugly and dirty, so she would not be selected. In the night you could hear faint sounds of the women who were "selected" crying. Later in life, I would find out these women, who were selected were used as "Comfort Women" for the Japanese Soldiers.

While we were in the camp, my sisters and cousins devised a method to gather food from the jungle and river without detection. We would pretend to play games by jumping and running. We would head to river where our cousins Catherine (Castro Blas) and her sister Marian (Castro \_\_\_\_\_) would meet us. We would exchange whatever we had for food. We were fortunate that my sister Patsy and cousin Catherine were good tree climbers. They were fast climbing up the coconut trees to pick coconuts, husk them and bring it with us . We would also look for any vegetables and fruits along the way back to our hut in the camp. As we departed each other we will say "until we see each other". We would return with our food and whatever we could find.

We had a little more food than some of the other people on the camp. We were fortunate enough to have a father who had to work at night, carrying munitions and other supplies to transfer from Yigo to Manenggon. He was able to befriend a Japanese man, working in the galley and this man would save some food such as rice wrapped in seaweed (Sushi) to give. My father would hide the food inside his

clothes and when he would come home, we would eat it and share it with the three ladies. We were grateful for whatever he would bring. Even at that age, we knew that other families were not as fortunate.

As time passed finding food and supplies dwindled and we would have to make sacrifices to survive. People were getting sick and dying. As a child we learned not to complain, not to cry or even talk. There was no freedom at all. In our hut, we would sleep on the ground with very little coconut leaves as a mat. When it rained the water would come in and we have to get up and wait for the rain to stop and the ground to dry. I remember a night when the three ladies' entire hut fell down on them, they were all wet and my father had to help rebuild the hut in the rain. The surroundings, the people and life itself was really depressing.

### **Liberation:**

It was a very joyful day when we learned that the US troupes arrived and will liberate us. This information we kept to ourselves. We were elated when the soldiers finally came we and we were told that they were Allied soldiers from Australia. They were very strong and tall and gave us candies. The journey from Manenggon requited us to travel up the mountain. It was dangerous and tiring but was rewarding. Crossing the river was a difficult for me. We had to walk over the bodies of dead soldiers, I had to be carried because of my fear. We found out that river water we drank from at the bottom were coming from the dead Japanese soldiers on the top of the mountain. We arrival at Pigo Cemetery in the village of Asan. This area was used as a refugee camp. Our village was a barren wasteland from the bombing of the Americans. In Agana our home was gone. At our ranch in Toto, our house was burned from an insinuary bomb. The walls were charred , shadows were left where our family pictures once were. My precious doll was burned only the outline of her body was left, that would crumble to ashes when touched. I grieved over the loss.

### **Life after War:**

Following the war, My family moved to the village of Mongmong. We build a modest two story house, opened a general merchandise store on the ground floor and lived a peaceful life. Experiencing the war gave way for myself and my family to have a strong faith in God, the resiliency to overcome hardships and to pledge loyalty to the the United States. For many years we did not really talk about the experiences, hardships, fear and suffering during the war. It has been years since our Liberation. In my family there are only 2 survivors left. Myself and, my older sister Patsy Mae Duenas Biros.

I look back , I can't believe that I was only 5 years old and had to endure such emotional, physical stress. I think about my own children and grandchildren and think about when they were 5 years old. What was required by us to do from the Japanese would be unthinkable in the world we live in today.

### **The Duenas Family:**

#### **Surviving Members**

Patsy Mae Duenas Biros - Sister  
age: 81 – Adams, Massachusetts

Lillian Rita Mesa Duenas Dizon  
age: 79 – 412A Roy T. Damian Jr. Street. Mongmong, Guam

**Deceased Members:**

Joaquin Mesa Mesa – Maternal Grandfather  
died: 1943

Rita Palomo Muna Mesa – Maternal Grandmother  
died: 1970

Maria Muna Mesa Mendiola – Maternal Aunt  
died: 1950

Jose Muna Mesa – Maternal Uncle  
died: 1971

Margret Muna Mesa – Maternal Aunt  
died: 1984

Francisco Arriola Duenas – Father  
died: 1992

Joseph Thomas Mesa Duenas – Brother  
died: 1997 – US Army, Vietnam Veteran

Edith Mesa Mendiola Sanchez - 1<sup>st</sup> Cousin/ Reared Sister  
died: 2010

Frances J. Mesa Duenas Suba - Sister  
died: 2011

Esther M. Mesa Duenas – Mother  
died: 2011

Lillian Rita Mesa Duenas Dizon  
Survivor: born August 3, 1936

Resident of Mongmong

P.O. Box 2119  
Hagatna, Guam 96932

Tel: (671) 472-8588