

Roger Mansell

Tireless researcher of Allied PoWs in Japan whose formidable archive was a vital resource for veterans and their families

An American businessman who in retirement began researching the plight of war captives of the Japanese, Roger Mansell became an authority on the story of the 35,000 Allied prisoners of war held in camps in Japan during the Second World War.

Over a period of more than 20 years, he uncovered papers which had previously been inaccessible, making numerous visits to the United States National Archives, and copying thousands of documents. Finally he founded the Center for Research Allied PoWs Under the Japanese to post this information on its website, www.mansell.com, as a result of which rosters, photos, camp descriptions are now accessible online to the families of PoWs.

Mansell personally assisted hundreds of people from the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere, who came to the website looking for information about friends and relatives. On some occasions he was able to help families to locate the remains of soldiers missing in action during the war. He was also generous in assisting fellow researchers worldwide.

Roger Mansell was born in 1935 in New York. After graduating from Mepham High School in Wantagh, New York, he attended Brown University. Commissioned in the US Army artillery he was stationed in Korea then at Fort Bliss, Texas.

After military service, in 1962 he moved to California and a business

career, founding advertising, graphics and publishing firms. It was the impression made upon him by an employee who, as a child, had been a prisoner of the Japanese during the Second World War that set him on a course to discover more about the plight of such individuals.

A family friend and Second World War survivor, Major-General Ralph Smith, who died aged 104 in 1998, encouraged him to join the local American Legion and participate in such of their activities as a lunch group that met regularly to discuss the Second World War. When he met a veteran who had been taken prisoner by the Japanese on Guam, he realised that many ex-PoWs, now elderly, had

never told anyone about their experiences.

Mansell spoke at conferences in the USA, the UK and China. In 2006 he addressed the first International Researching Far Eastern Prisoners of War History Conference held in Britain at the National Memorial Arboretum, at Alrewas, Staffordshire. Only a fortnight before his death he sent a video recorded talk which was greeted with sustained applause at the 2010 Conference.

His chief goal was to compile a database of more than 100,000 records documenting what happened to every Allied soldier who was captured by the Japanese in 1941-45. This was approximately 90 per cent completed at the

time of his death. In September 2010 the Roger Mansell Collection, which consists of documents, dozens of first-hand interviews with former PoWs or their families, some 15 hours of video recordings, and around 400 published titles, many exceedingly rare, was donated to the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. Mansell's book, *The Forgotten Men of Guam*, will be published posthumously, edited by the historian Linda Goetz Holmes.

Mansell is survived by his wife Carolyn and by two daughters.

Roger Mansell businessman and historical researcher was born on October 8, 1935. He died on October 25, 2010, aged 75