

OBITUARY

Snyder, survived WWII Bataan Death March

■ Pastor bore his captors no bitter feelings

By **LYNWOOD ABRAM**
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The Rev. Wilburn Snyder, a Baptist pastor who survived the Bataan Death March in the Philippines during World War II, died Tuesday in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. He was 85.

Although Snyder endured the horrors of captivity in a Japanese prison camp and suffered lasting effects from that ordeal, he bore no bitter feelings for his captors, said his daughter, Theda Cuellar of Houston.

"He had no hatred towards those people," Cuellar said. "As a Christian, he put away all that hatred, but he wanted people to know what they went through," Cuellar said.

Twice during his years in the camp, Snyder, suffering from malaria, was "put out with the dead people," but his Army buddy brought him back both times, she said.

"There was no medicine in the camp and the buddy stole



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some from the Japanese and nursed him," Cuellar said. When in December 1941 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, Snyder was a combat medic in the Army with the 3rd Battalion of the 31st Infantry Regiment. After U.S. forces surrendered in 1942, Snyder, along with thousands of American and Filipino defenders on the Bataan peninsula, was forced to march about 80 miles to the prison camp. On this journey, a large number of them perished.

After the war, Snyder returned to the Houston area and joined Ethyl Corp. as a pipefitter. A co-worker conducted a Bible study group which Snyder joined. He eventually became a Baptist minister.

Churches Snyder served as a pastor in the Houston area included Kashmere Garden, Northwood Manor, East Houston and Candlestick Baptist churches, Cuellar said. Snyder also was chaplain for the Gulf Coast Chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War.

"My dad was caring, loving, and most of all loved his Lord, his family and his country. He was a very good dad," Cuellar said.

Wilburn L. Snyder was born on Jan. 23, 1923, in Plain Dealing, La., the son of Mary and G.A. Hammer. He was a graduate of Lee High School in Baytown and attended Lee College and the University of Houston. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Florence, and his brother, Clyde Snyder.

In addition to Snyder's daughter, Theda Cuellar, survivors include his wife, Lan'l Snyder of Baytown; sons, Kyle Snyder of Goliad, David Smith of Crosby and Gregg Smith of Baytown; another daughter, Renae Haskins of Pasadena; brothers, A.J. Hammer of Baytown, C.J. Snyder and Michael Snyder, both of Louisiana; sisters, Margaret Selzler of North Carolina and Judy Knippers and Faye Harris, both of Louisiana.

A celebration of life is scheduled at 10 a.m. today at First Baptist Church, 206 Woolfe, in Galena Park. Burial will be in San Jacinto Memorial Park Cemetery.

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