

**The Japanese Language School Archival Project**

*In the Spring of 2000, the Archives continued the original efforts of Captain Roger Pineau and William Hudson, and the Archives first attempts in 1992, to gather the papers, correspondence, photographs, and records of graduates of the US Navy Japanese Language School, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1942-1946. We assemble these papers in recognition of the contributions made by JLS graduates to the War effort in the Pacific, the successful occupation of Japan, the creation of Japanese language programs across the country, and the development of cultural reconciliation programs after World War II.*

### 60th Reunion of US Navy JLS at CU 6-9 June 2002

As a continuation of my discussion of suitable clothing for Springtime on the high plains, I submit the following. April to early August is Boulder's rainy season (18 inches per annum). Rainstorms are violent but short, usually occurring between Noon and 5PM. While the range of possible temperature is wide, and the springtime regular temperature fluctuates wildly, the range averages between 45° and 85°. So bring clothes that can be worn and taken off in layers. Sunglasses are good since it is inordinately sunny out here at high altitude. Sunblock and skin moisturizer is good for the high sunny dry days. Be prepared for anything, Scott says. We have a saying, "If you do not like Colorado weather, wait a minute." It can be 90°, but can snow in late May. So bring rain gear, they will bring the sun.

**Memorial Day Message**

*[Dear David: Here is another from the other side. In the closing hours of the Okinawa campaign, two battalions of the 29<sup>th</sup> Marines surrounded and squeezed several thousand Okinawan civilians and disorganized but armed Japanese soldiers onto the southernmost tip of the island. Advancing through the rocky and overgrown terrain would have resulted in excessive civilian and military casualties on both sides. Glenn Nelson and I were the Language Officers with the 29<sup>th</sup>. A decision was made to hold up the advance, and while Glenn remained with the troops ashore, "Tony" Komesu, our Okinawan foxhole buddy, and I were ordered out aboard an LCI to bombard the rocky shoreline with words of persuasion to see if we could soften fear and resistance and thus minimize casualties. Thanks to Tony and the writer of the enclosed translated letter, when the troops moved in the next morning, casualties (other than suicide) were virtually zero as hundreds of civilians emerged and masses of soldiers threw down their arms. (1/25/02)*

Glenn Slaughter  
JLS 1943]

Dear Mr. Slaughter: You may be surprised to receive this letter from a stranger. Please excuse me. My name is Uchizono Yozo. Although the name is unfamiliar to you, I am sure you know me. I was the army surgeon of the Japanese 24<sup>th</sup> Corps. You and your comrades saved my life in the final days of the Okinawa battle. For 50 years I have wished I could thank you in person but never expected it would come true.

However, recently I read a book entitled *Okinawa War Confidential* by the renowned Uehara Masatoshi, and in one chapter I encountered a story of the joint exploits of Glen Slaughter, Glenn Nelson and Komesu Seiichi. My heart skipped a beat when on one page was a story about me. It told how on a LCI off the shore of Kyan at the southernmost tip of Okinawa, Mr. Komesu used the ship's PA loudspeaker in an attempt to persuade Okinawan civilians and

Japanese soldiers to give themselves up. It told how a soldier dove into the water and swam to the ship and was lifted aboard and was found to be an army surgeon. Indeed the surgeon was no one but me.

I immediately got in touch with the author and got your address from him. Now let me tell you my own version of the story in more detail. The incidents of that day never escaped my mind.

At the end of the battle of Okinawa thousands of Okinawan civilians and Japanese soldiers were forced into the southernmost tip of Okinawa. With the collapse of their High Command the remnants of the defeated army were completely disorganized. We were indoctrinated by a century-old military doctrine not to be captured alive and disgrace yourself. Kill yourself or you will be brutally killed by the enemy. Fear of becoming a prisoner was the cause of so many suicides.

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, the LCI offshore had been shelling the rocky shoreline and cliffs where we had been hiding. I took cover and avoided injury. On the following day, June 21, the shelling ceased, a voice was broadcast in Japanese over the LCA's PA loudspeaker system urging us to surrender. I later learned that it was Mr. Komesu's voice we heard. But nobody dared give himself up on that day. Instead, Mr. Komesu's serious persuasion continued. I still remember his gentle voice urging, "Heitai San (Dear Soldiers), the war is over now. Your long battle is over. Please swim out to this ship. We cannot come to the shore to pick you up because of small arms fire. I guarantee you will be safe and well-treated here." He repeated it again and again. When civilians attempted to come out, soldiers threatened to kill them.

I had run out of food and water by nightfall. I could not sleep, and all night I thought of

surrendering. Early in the morning of June 22<sup>nd</sup> Mr. Komesu again started urging us to surrender. I had made up my mind. I said to myself, "Well, I have to take my chances now. If I failed, what would I lose? Americans are not all barbarians. If they are so, I will ask them to give me some decent food before they kill me."

Then I stood on a rock and waved a white cloth toward the LCI. I could not see anyone on the ship, but Mr. Komesu apparently spotted me and called over the speaker, "We cannot come to you. Please take off your uniform and swim to us." As suggested, I stripped to my undershorts and dove in the water. The sea was rough and the LCI was 200 meters away. I was almost swallowed by the surf, but fortunately I found a piece of driftwood and tied my left arm to it with the white cloth. I paddled with my right arm. Japanese soldiers on top of the cliffs must have been watching me all along, and thinking me a spy, began to fire at me. Bullets splashed the water around me, but I was no longer afraid.

As I approached the LCI, Mr. Komesu called to me to let go of the driftwood. He may have thought I was a suicide soldier with explosives. I would have drowned if I had let go of the driftwood. Ignoring his warning, I managed to reach the side of the ship. The deck looked 10 meters above the water. No sooner had I wondered what to do next than a rope was dropped down the side. I clung to the rope, and the next moment I was lifted smoothly and found myself lying on the deck. I saw that it was a huge black sailor who had pulled me up.

As I staggered to my feet, Mr. Komesu ran to me and said, "Heitai San, you must have gone through a lot of hardships. You have done a good job. I am working for the Prefectural Government. You are completely safe now." Repeating this time and again, he dried my body

with towels and handed me a ration. Oh, how delicious it was! Nothing has tasted better since. I was then interrogated by an officer who I was astounded to find spoke fluent Japanese. I now know that that officer was no one but you, Mr. Slaughter. At the corner of the deck I then saw the black sailor being given an intravenous drip injection. He was shot by a Japanese sniper while saving me. I always wonder what happened to him.

For the rest of the day, Mr. Komesu and I manned the speaker in relays, attempting to influence those ashore to give up peacefully. Many, including

Korean conscripts, did manage to swim out, and fortunately, no shots were fired at them this time. This may have been an indication of a change in attitude about surrendering.

That night, we POWs were taken ashore to a temporary POW Camp near Komesu. On the following day army trucks carried us to KIN POW camp in northern Okinawa where I remained until I boarded a repatriation ship, LST, in January 1946. Six days later I was back in my beloved home.

Thanks to your humane persuasion, I am now practicing medicine in my Kagoshima City

Hospital. I owe my life to all of you who were involved in saving me. I am enormously thankful for having been given this chance to express my deepest gratitude to you and your comrades.

Arigato gozaimashta

*Uchizono Yozo*  
12/18/95

*[Note: I kept in touch with the doctor until his death in 1998. "Tony" Komesu is alive and well at 99 years of age. GKS / Ed. Note: Yet another example the usefulness of Marine JLOs for Dr. Moore.]*

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## New JLS Website:

<http://www-libraries.colorado.edu/ps/arv/col/jlsp.htm>