

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

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★ Remember September 11, 2001 ★

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Our Mission

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, letters, photographs, and records of graduates of the US Navy Japanese/Oriental Language School, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1942-1946. We assemble these papers in recognition of the contributions made by JLS/OLS instructors and graduates to the War effort in the Pacific and the Cold War, to the creation of East Asian language programs across the country, and to the development of Japanese-American cultural reconciliation programs after World War II.

Harvard v. Yale

*Bull Dog! Bull Dog!
Bow, wow, wow.
Harvard! Harvard!
Grr, Grr, growl!*

I read with delight Harry Muheim's account of Professor Wolle's description of the JLS students as "snooty Easterners" and his hope that Harry would infiltrate the group planning a musical review to guide it in a "non-snooty direction."

This called to mind my first impressions of the student body when I arrived in Boulder in January 1943: there were more Ivy Leaguers than you can find among officers of Wall Street investment banks and partners in high-powered New York law firms. Moreover, from the number of singers performing for social events, I was sure that at least half of the Yale Glee Club was in residence. Both Yale and Harvard seemed to have a greater representation – or visibility, perhaps – than other colleges and universities. I recall bon mots by Jack Bronston, a Harvard graduate, that reflected

the good natured Harvard/Yale rivalry at that time and place:

"At Yale, they don't have entrance exams, they have try-outs."

And to Ned Coffin, a popular member of the Yale contingent: "Hey Ned, say something in 'Yale'."

Jack Craig
USMCR
JLS 1944

[Ed. Note: Yeah, well, we felt the same way at the University of Idaho toward Boise State University. DMH]

Book Review

Anton Myrer, *The Last Convertible*

I submit the following review to you because this book is about your generation of educated elite, in this case, Harvard '44. They were one of the classes that had to interrupt their education to go to war. I feel you would enjoy this novel if you have not read the book before.

Anton Myrer, was made famous by his military cult novel *Once an Eagle* and his grim discussion of comrades rent by the realities in the Pacific in *The Big War*.

The book is actually an explanation by the main character to his godson. Like any historian, he makes a short story long. *The Last Convertible* is actually a 1940 Packard which appears at a dorm at Harvard, driven by a French sophisticate veteran, that beguiles and unites the disparate frosh dorm-mates and becomes central to their "honeied" pre-War youth at Harvard. Benny Goodman, big games, whiskey flasks, girls from surrounding schools and excursions in that beautiful convertible define a carefree time before decisions. They finish school, some in the married quanset huts. However, war and choices caught up with them and take their casualties, leaving divisions in the group of curiously bound classmates.

Return of Swords

Before the end of WWII, Captain Harold Willens USMCR [JLS 1945] was dispatched to a staging area in Guam as part of a possible American invasion force. However, the War ended in August 1945, and after a few weeks he was sent along with a large Marine contingent to Kumamoto City in Japan where he spent about a year as part of the Marine group administering that area.

To avoid any violence, the American command decided to have the Japanese surrender weapons of any kind to the Marine Corps authority. These weapons would be stored in a large central warehouse. This included among other types of weapons, large numbers of Samurai swords that had been passed down through generations.

One day a young Japanese from Tokyo came down to Kumamoto and asked to speak to the Japanese Language Officer named Harold Willens. In those days traveling anywhere was an arduous task.

He explained that his father was an old man living in Kumamoto and that he worshipped him. But he said his father was dying out of remorse and worries and fear that his surrendered Samarai swords would be destroyed, and asked if there was any way the swords could be saved. They had been in the family for a hundred years and the old man was very attached to them. Willens developed a respect for the young man's efforts and his desire to save the swords for his dying father. He promised he would take up the matter with his CO. Willens then spoke to his CO, who agreed that the swords should be protected and not destroyed.

Willens explained in his next interview with the young man that first it would be a tremendous effort just to find the swords in that huge warehouse

and then the question arose on how to keep them from being destroyed. The young Japanese said he would search the warehouse if he was given permission and when he found the swords he would give them to Willens, whom he had come to respect and Willens would keep them and guard them privately. Going in with several guards, miraculously the young man found these four of five swords along with identifying inscriptions in the hilts of the swords, establishing their authenticity and gave them to Willens to keep forever. Willens, in turn, had them shipped to his home in Santa Monica, California. As the story goes, the old man's neurosis disappeared and he was "saved."

As an old friend of Willens, I visited his home often, saw the swords, but never heard the complete story until recently. Some fifteen or twenty years later Willens was invited along with his family to visit China – a notable honor. Willens did some creative and magnanimous thinking about what agreeat gesture it would be to return the swords to their rightful owners in Japan. Before leaving for Japan, he got in touch with the Mayor of Kumamoto City to get his help in tracing the whereabouts of the son. This was done. Willens sent the swords to his hotel in Tokyo to hold for his arrival. He contacted the son and apprised him when he would be in Tokyo on return from China to give back the treasured swords.

To Willens' amazement and delight there was a TV crew at the airport on his return from Tokyo. The representatives of the large Japanese TV company told him they would pick him up the next day – a Saturday morning – to televise the returning of the swords.

At the Saturday morning ceremony, witnessed by a large TV audience, Willens handed over the swords to the son who never dreamt he would get them back. What a great example of

generosity and faith on the part of the Japanese and the American Willens and what a symbolic accolade for the trust between two peoples.

*William Newman
JLS 1943*

Fashion Bar Exec William Weil Dies

William Weil, who was instrumental in developing the Fashion Bar Chain of retail stores in Colorado, died May 24, 2002 after an accident during a

Stroke. He was 84. Weil “gave his whole life to Fashion Bar,” said his friend John Levy, whose father Jack Levy, and aunt Hannah Levy started Fashion Bar in 1936. Weil, a distant cousin of the Levys, was visiting Denver when Jack Levy invited him to join. So he did.

“It was a labor of love for him,” John Levy said. “He was absolutely essential in every aspect, the one who took the business from a store-by-store growth to a real horizontal growth where we were one of the

first stores in the country to develop specialty divisions.

Weil helped Fashion Bar expand to more than 50 stores in Colorado. It was his idea to come up with niche stores that became enormously popular. After the Levys retired, Weil became president of Fashion Bar. Following Weil’s retirement, Fashion Bar was sold to Specialty Realtors in 1992.

Weil entered the US Navy Japanese Language School in April, 1943.

Denver Post & Archives

JLS/OLS Plaque To be Hung On Veterans Day

The Veterans Lounge in the newly renovated University Memorial Center has finally been completed. Taking up _ of the reception area, one wall holds plaques to the CU fallen of WWI, WWII, Vietnam and Korea. The center of the room holds the bell of the *U S S Colorado*. I have arranged for Navy ROTC Cadets to hang the plaque at 11 AM on the 11th of November. Program TBA.
