

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

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★ Remember September 11, 2001 ★

arv@colorado.edu

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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.

Chronicles of My Life in the 20th Century

11. The Battle of Attu

On April 30, at a place aptly called Cold Bay in Alaska, we transferred from the Pennsylvania to a transport. It was pretty clear by this time that we were not bound for the tropics, but only now, aboard the transport, did we learn we were to participate in a landing on Attu, an island the Japanese had occupied. We were still wearing summer uniforms, but the soldiers aboard the transport were dressed for winter. We asked for warmer clothes but were told that they couldn't give any to Naval personnel. This is how it happened that Cary and I landed on Attu where there was still snow on the ground, shivering in summer clothes.

Aboard the transport we met some Nisei Army interpreters. They had been told that the Navy interpreters were incompetent, but Cary's fluent Japanese changed their minds. Talking

with these Army interpreters made me realize for the first time why the Navy had founded the Japanese Language School. It was because it did not trust Japanese-Americans. It refused to allow even one Nisei to join the Navy and it therefore needed non-Japanese interpreters. The Nisei in the Army demonstrated their loyalty on many occasions, but the Navy refused them even the chance to die in its service.

The attack on Attu was scheduled to begin early in May, but the fog surrounding the island was so dense that the landing was delayed for two weeks. The American ships circling the island waited for the fog to lift. The Japanese garrison had been alerted to the likelihood of an American attack, but when none materialized, they decided that the intelligence reports had been mistaken. That was why the American landing was unopposed.

We left the ship on rope ladders and boarded landing barges bound for the beach. I am not a courageous person, but I felt not the least fear of danger until suddenly I heard a terrible screaming. The ramp of the landing barge ahead of ours had dropped before the barge reached the shore, and the soldiers were thrown into the icy water. This was my first taste of war.

Our barge made it to the beach. Nobody told us what to do once we were ashore, but a soldier said there was a Japanese prisoner on the other side of a nearby stream. We headed in that direction. On the way we saw a dead Japanese soldier, the first dead person I had ever seen. This was a shock, but we continued on, shivering with the cold. The tundra released cold water with each step we took. There was no prisoner.

When I recall now the weeks I spent on Attu, I think first of the cold and the fog. When I had captured documents to translate my nose kept running all the time, interfering with my writing. We managed to get

warmer clothes, but the cold was unrelenting and it was hard to sleep at night. The landscape of Attu was virtually invisible in the fog. Two years ago, aboard a Japanese cruise ship, I saw Attu again. The weather was miraculously clear and I was astonished to discover that Attu is beautiful.

Attu was the site of the first *gyokusai*, called "banzai charge" by the Americans. On May 28 the thousand or so remaining Japanese soldiers staged a charge against the Americans, who did not expect such a powerful show of resistance, and came close to dislodging them; but in the end, abandoning hope of success, the Japanese took their own lives en masse, usually by pressing a grenade to their chests. I could not understand why the Japanese soldiers had used their last grenade to kill themselves rather than hurl it at the Americans.

There were only 29 Japanese prisoners. One was from Otaru, and Cary, after conducting a brief interrogation, reminisced with the prisoner. Cary seemed extremely happy to have found someone with whom to talk about Otaru, his real home, more than any town in America.

We left Attu by ship, expecting we were headed for San Diego, but when the ship stopped at Adak, a Navy intelligence officer came aboard and said he needed us. We had no choice but to go ashore on this dismal island.

During my stay on Adak, I spent about twelve hours a day translating documents captured on Attu. Cary spent much of his time interrogating the prisoners. We were within a few meters of each other twenty-four hours a day, but never got on each other's nerves. That was a proof of friendship.

In August the American attacked Kiska, the other island captured by the Japanese. For weeks the photo interpreters had said they could detect no movement of the Japanese troops. They believed that the

Japanese had left the island, but the pilots insisted that they were still getting anti-aircraft fire. The pilots were believed and the operation went ahead as scheduled. Just before the landing, Cary and I were told we would land before anyone else in order to ascertain if the Japanese had indeed left. This seemed like a suicide mission, but luckily for us, the pilots were mistaken. There was not a Japanese on the island. We found an underground headquarters. The cushions around the table were made of American flags. On a blackboard someone had written, "You are dancing on foolish order of Roosevelt." (to be cont'd)

Donald L. Keene

JLS 1943

Daily Yomiuri Online

March 25, 2006

Most Rewarding

I have read *The Interpreter* with interest, as many of the people mentioned are familiar to me [*Fred Schumacher had directed me to her address in 2006*].

Enclosed is my husband John's obituary at the time of his death in April 1988.

The year and a half that we spent in Japan was most rewarding in many ways. Our oldest daughter, nine at that time, went to the Canadian Academy in Osaka. We made many Japanese friends and enjoyed entertaining them later in our home in Central New York.

Ms. Marjorie Thompson

"Secret" Service

("Nabe" Pierce continues) "We were too late in arriving to make the 1 November D-Day landing, but came up with a convoy that landed on 7 November. Some of us happened to be back on the beach the following day when the 37th Division (Army) 'staged its landing' with planted explosives and fixed bayonets, assaulting the clothes lines the Seabees had just put up to dry

their washing. We even put this military miracle into a verse of "Bless 'Em All". I composed it.

On D-Day plus eight and a little bit late, Our dogfaces came in on time.

With planted explosives and fixed bayonets, Assaulted the wash on the line.

There's many a camera a grinding away, And Seabees washing their clothes,

"I've come to your rescue through perilous odds",

Says MacArthur where ever he goes.

(You know the rest, I presume.)

We language men didn't have too much to do, the Raiders being reluctant to bring in prisoners. We did go back to the 3rd Division stockade and talked to some prisoners there. Back at Headquarters, we put Japanese characters on home-made flags the guys later sold to swabbies and Seabees.

Besides the usual 'May your good fortune in battle be eternal,' we also put 'Tojo eats s---,' while another put characters from Japanese food cans on the flags.

It is more than certain that many souvenir Japanese flags brought home by unknowing and naïve sailors, merchant seamen and others, who paid dearly or traded ships stores goodies for them, brought home counterfeits manufactured by some enterprising language guys.

I also recall on Bougainville, going out on patrols, usually Platoon size, for reconnoitering. But there were no prisoners captured or action on any of the ones I was on," Pierce concluded. (to be continued)

Patch Editor
Raider Patch
No. 98, 4th Quarter, '06

A Note on Otis Cary

Otis Cary was a close friend of mine, especially after the two of us were sent as the only Naval translators-interpreters on the Attu operation. We were in sight of each other approximately 24 hours a day, a situation more likely to make for lifetime enemies than for lifetime friends. Fortunately, it was the latter case

for us. We saw each other often, mainly in Kyoto where he taught at Doshisha University. He spoke the best Japanese of any American I have ever met.

It occurred to me that I might have a letter from him that I could send you for your files. There was one, typical of Otis in that it was written on the back of somebody else's letter. He was equally likely to write around the margins. I am sending the letter along with a photograph that shows Otis at left, and his wife, Alice to the right. I am in the middle. The Japanese to the left is Professor Fujikawa Yoshiyuki of Tokyo University, and the Japanese to the right is Professor Nakaya Kazuyoshi of Keiō University. The occasion was a dinner in Osaka to which we were all invited in return for my having written an article in praise of the restaurant's cuisine.

Donald I. Keene
JLS 1943

JOHN H. THOMPSON OLS 1945, GEOGRAPHER

John H. Thompson was a professor of economic geography at Syracuse University from 1949 until his retirement in 1981. He was the author of four books, best known for his *Geography of New York State*, a standard reference work.

Early in his career, Mr. Thompson was a field geophysicist with Kerr-McGee Oil Company of Oklahoma City and carried out seismic oil exploration from Texas to Montana.

During World War II, he was an officer in the Navy and graduated from the Navy Oriental Language School in Boulder, Colorado. Mr. Thompson served as a geographer-geomorphologist on the staff of Naval Intelligence, compiling and evaluating captured Japanese documents. After the War, he spent a year and a half as a Fulbright professor of economic geography at Kobe University in Japan.

Mr. Thompson was once on the staff of the Babson Institute in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

From 1969 to 1974 he was a contributor to and consultant for publishers of encyclopedias,

including World Book, Funk and Wagnalls and Crowell-Colliers. He was a reviewer of geographic manuscripts for major publishers of textbooks for more than 35 years. He had served with many governmental agencies, including the Office of Planning Coordination for the National Council of Geographic Education.

Mr. Thompson served as chair of the Tully Town Planning Board for 20 years and was responsible for formulating the master plan for the town of Tully.

Mr. Thompson was a native of North Dakota. He received his Bachelor's Degree in 1941 from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, his master's degree in 1943 from the University of Colorado and his Ph.D. in 1949 from the University of Washington.

Mr. Thompson was a member of the Association American Geographers, the American Geographical Society, the National Council for Geographic Education, the Regional Science Society and Sigma Xi.

The [Syracuse] Post-Standard
April 23, 1988
A-8

Melvin Eggers JLS 1944, Chancellor, Syracuse University

Melvin A. Eggers was born February 21, 1916, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Despite the fact that his family was particularly hard hit by the Great Depression—his father lost his job and, for a period of time, the family was on the dole ("I know what it's like to eat salt pork through the courtesy of the county")—Eggers was quick to note during a 1994 interview that he nevertheless got some "important breaks." Upon his 1933 graduation from high school—hardly a good time to be entering the work force—he concluded that he could not as yet go on to college, but he got a \$50 per semester scholarship to Indiana University. This covered all but \$25 of a semester's tuition at Indiana University's Fort Wayne extension program. For his first year, Eggers worked in a neighborhood drugstore for 50

cents a night, and \$1.25 for all day Sunday. This money was given back to the family. When he lost that job, he became a dispatcher in a local dairy for 10 cents an hour. When it seemed that that job would be phased out, he worked for milk. He then got a job in a local bank, where he worked for four years.

In 1938, having saved \$400 (of which he gave half to his parents), he quit his job at the bank and moved to Bloomington, enrolling at Indiana University as a full-time junior majoring in economics. Two years later, Eggers received his bachelor's degree; the following year he received his master's. Toward the end of that year, on April 5, 1941, Eggers married Mildred Chenoweth, whom he met while the two were officers for the local YMCA and YWCA. He did some graduate work at the University of Chicago, but World War II intervened. In 1942, he enlisted in the Navy; he attended the Advanced Naval Intelligence School in New York City, and was then stationed in Washington, D.C., as a Japanese language translator. After the war, he was an economic analyst for the U.S. War Department in Tokyo. He was discharged in 1946 with the rank of lieutenant.

Following his discharge, Eggers enrolled at Yale University, which had offered him an assistantship before the war. Immediately after earning his Ph.D. in 1950 (his dissertation was on the economic development of Japan from 1868 to 1900), the 34-year-old Eggers came to Syracuse University as a member of the economics department. Eggers later told the *Syracuse Record* that "when I came I thought I'd be here three or four years." Ten years later, he was made chairman of his department; in 1968, he was named chairman of the Agenda Committee of the University Senate....

This man was clearly no political neophyte that Corbally "plucked from the faculty" to be his vice chancellor for Academic Affairs and provost in 1970.... There was no real search for Corbally's immediate successor; as provost, Eggers's elevation to acting Chancellor was virtually

automatic. That did not, however, mean that he was a shoo-in to be named the ninth Chancellor. Eggers remembered that "my total administrative experience did not warrant my being appointed Chancellor...[I did not have] any business management experience [of that] magnitude as department chairman, where the nature of administration was to turn in a list of proposals for faculty salary adjustments."...

The minutes of [the search committee's] meetings make it clear that Eggers was at the top of everybody's list—throughout the balloting, he was the only candidate who consistently scored high marks with the entire committee. On June 4, 1971, Eggers was presented to the Board of Trustees as the single, unanimous choice of the search committee....

John Robert Green,
"The Eggers Years,"
Syracuse University Magazin,
Summer, 1999,
Page 2.

[Ed. Note: The remainder of this article deals in some detail with the Eggers Chancellorship at Syracuse, 1971-1994. Eggers died November 20, 1994.]

CODE BREAKER HELPED WIN BATTLES IN THE PACIFIC FROM HOME FRONT

(Cont'd) Lawrence Myers, JLS 1944, stated "We had stations all over the Pacific, intercepting radio traffic." Myers says, "This was just great, enjoyable work. You didn't mind putting in the long hours or working into the middle of the night. This was all part of a big, big puzzle and it was right up my intellectual alley."

One particular incident continues to stick out in his memory. In the latter part of the war, Japan was desperate to remove some of its high-ranking personnel from Luzon, an island in the Philippines. The Japanese military sent in four submarines for the rescue mission.

"Fortunately, they were using cables. I was working," Myers says with a smile.

"They sent word that they would be resurfacing at a certain location to recharge their batteries, and then proceed."

He pauses a moment, thinking of that deed some 60 years ago. He still remembers the longitude and degrees of those submarines.

"Three or four of them were sunk. I think one was heavily damaged."

When he received word of the success, he says, he was happy. But, it was a sobering thought.

"It was war," he says. "Everyone was trying to do their best."

Fred Brown
KnoxNews
July 24, 2004
brownf@knews.com

[Ed. Note: I had sent a message to Larry Myers telling him I was using this article. He sent back the expected caveat, as all reporters and editors, including yours truly, get things wrong.

Thanks for the warning. The article is OK except it inferred my 25 years of Navy service was in Naval Intelligence. In fact, only my first year, from Dec. 1941 to Dec. 1942, was in the 12th Naval District Intelligence Office (DIO-12) in San Francisco as a Yeoman Second Class (E-5). After graduation from Boulder I was assigned to the Naval Security Group (Op-20-G) until retirement Dec. 31, 1966. Then another 15 years with NSA, retiring July 30, 1982.

Lawrence S. Myers
Commander, U. S. Navy (Ret.)
JLS 1944]

"Secret" Service"

(Raider Patch editor continues) No doubt about it, the language guys were valuable members of the Battalions and certainly did a hell of a great job, in spite of deceiving their fellow servicemen.

Then there were "Gung" and "Ho". History has lost their real names but these two Koreans served the Raiders well in the Solomon Islands. The Raiders had effectively applied their motto, "Gung Ho," meaning "Work in Harmony" or "Work Together" to the two eager allies against the Japanese. LTC Carlson had brought the term to his Raiders from his times in China while on Mao's 2,000 mile march in China. As the Japanese had been in Korea

since 1932 [sic], many native Koreans spoke fluent Japanese.

As we all know, the Japanese had a thing about surrendering. When one or two were captured, they were most reluctant to supply any information to any one, even to people that communicated in their own tongue. The interpreters were very helpful at translating documents, maps and other captured items that could be of vital use to our side.

Not nearly enough has been recorded about these tremendous assets to the Raiders and other combatants in the Pacific War. Maybe some day, someone will tell of their entire and most unique service to our country at a time when it was really needed.

Patch Editor
Raider Patch
No. 98, 4th Quarter, '06

[Ed. Note: I sent the Raider Organization an email about our JLS/OLS project, as well as blurbs on the Slesnick book and Roger Dingman's forthcoming book. Thanks to Glen Slaughter for sending in this article. It was good to get such a long story by John Pierce. The Japanese were in Korea long before 1932, "In 1895, Empress Myeongseong of Korea was assassinated by the Japanese under Miura Goro's directive. In 1910, Japan forced Korea to sign the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty, although executed by Korean ministers and advisors rather than the Korean head of state, the emperor."According to the history in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Korea.]

Chronicles of My Life in the 20th Century

11. The Battle of Attu

(Cont'd) The American troops followed us ashore. Everyone was relieved there was no enemy to fight, but a few days later we had a different kind of shock. The least capable of the Navy interpreters came up to me with a sign he had found. He said, "Of course I get the general meaning, but I'm not sure of a few things." The inscription on the sign was perfectly clear: "Gathering point for bubonic plague victims." Messages were hastily sent to San Francisco for plague serum and for days we looked

anxiously at our bodies for telltale spots. Many years later the wife of a Japanese army doctor who had been stationed on Kiska revealed that her husband, guessing the Americans would find it, had written the inscription. It was a joke, but nobody laughed.

From Kiska the Navy interpreters were sent back to Hawaii aboard an ammunition ship. Ammunition ships always travelled alone because an explosion aboard ship would destroy every other ship within miles. To reward the crew for enduring this danger, movies were shown every night. The seats were on sixteen-inch shells in the hold. There were only two films, shown alternatively. I forget one of them, but the other was Casablanca, which we saw about fifteen times. The sailors waiting in line for meals would recite passages from the dialogue one to another. When Hawaii at last appeared on the horizon I thought I detected its fragrance. In the Aleutians there were no flowers, no trees, nothing but tundra.

Donald L. Keene
JLS 1943
Daily Yomiuri Online
March 25, 2006

JLS/OLS Contribution to Postwar Intelligence

(Cont'd from Issue #119) The Navy and Marine Corps were able to retain many of their Reserve JLO/OLOs as intelligence officers after the War. Roger Pineau, Edward Michon, Lawrence Myers, and William Sigerson were among many who chose to remain in the Navy or the Naval Reserve in intelligence capacities. Harry Pratt, William Croyle, and Elmer Stone stayed on in the USMC and Marine Corps Reserves and held S-2 and G-2 postings. One former JLO, Howell Calhoun, even ended up in the 500th Military Intelligence Group.

But by far, the Central Intelligence Agency seemed to have attracted the most JLS/OLSers. Bryan Battey, Philip Bridgman, Blanche Belitz, Dick Greenwood, John Huizenga, Ross Ingersoll, Kenneth Kerst, S. Paul Kramer,

Martin Packman, and Avis Pick Waring were among those recruited by the CIA from the Japanese program. But others were pulled from the Russian and Chinese programs, as well. Robert Dreher, a Russian Language Officer, later founded Radio Liberty and worked with the CIA in Washington and overseas, analyzing international politics and policy developments and implementation. James Featherstone, Donald Huefner, Julius Richardson, and Walter P. Southard, Jr. all joined the CIA from the Russian program. Louis Sandine and E. Henry Knoche came to the CIA from the Chinese Program. Knoche was selected as the Agency's Deputy Director in 1976 and was named Acting Director when George Bush resigned upon Jimmy Carter's election as President.

Among their contributions, the CIA's Sino-Soviet Studies Group, which included JLSer Bridgham, OLS Russian Program's Southard and OLS Chinese Program's Sandine, examined Chinese leadership questions and Sino-Soviet relations. In 1956, the SSSG published its first major study on Sino-Soviet differences: *The Chinese View of Interbloc Relations*.

In addition to the CIA, JLS/OLSers also served in the National Security Agency Defense Intelligence Agency, as well as in intelligence offices duties within the State Department. Ernest Beath, Lawrence Myers, John Riordan, Louis Waters, Samuel Zeigler were among those who served with the NSA. Michael Vincent Forrestal was a member of the National Security Council.

Paul Hauck was with the Defense Intelligence Agency and At the time of his retirement, Maurice Hellner was the senior civilian and Deputy Director of the Intelligence Data Handling System of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Richard Curl and Foster Parmelee worked in the State Department's intelligence arm.

I am certain there were far more JLS/OLSers who went into careers in intelligence, but as anyone will testify, they are a closed mouth group. I would be very interested in their take on

Hollywood's version of the beginning of the CIA, *The Good Shepherd*.

David M. Hays
Editor & Archivist

[Ed. Note: It is in the nature of the Intel. Biz, that its functionaries are not well publicized (see the recent Libby Case). So if any of you out there were not named, or friends went unmentioned, you and they just did a good job remaining concealed.]

Tsingtao Comment

I am still today very fond of Tsingtao beer and order it whenever I am at a Chinese restaurant. On the visit our task group made to Tsingtao in early September 1945, we had a boisterous staff party in the ballroom of the Edgewater Beach Hotel, which, like its namesake in Chicago, even then had a spring-loaded dance floor but, sadly, no debutants with whom to caper! Unfortunately, some entrepreneurial Chinese businessman supplied the party, not with Tsingtao beer, but with "whisky" in what appeared to be unopened pre-war Johnnie Walker Black Label bottles. In sooth, a small hole had been drilled in the bottom of each bottle, the original whisky drained and the bottles refilled with some sort of white lightning, which caused a few days of blindness for some of the more bibulous participants. The next day, we all had dreadful hangovers but were cheered by watching the Japanese soldiers march down to the waiting passenger vessel to be repatriated to Japan. Besides woefully tiny cloth bundles containing their meager personal belongings, their only baggage was an armful of dried fish heads and a ball of very dirty rice, their rations for the voyage. It was hard to credit these despondent, near skeletons with the atrocities which had been committed throughout Asia for nearly a decade.

H. H. Cloutier
OLS 1945, Russian

[Ed. Note: I had responded to Mr. Cloutier's multi-part story (starting with #110) on being a Russian OLSer, which contained interesting tidbits on altered "whisky" in China, with a comment about Glenn

Nelson's story about Tsingtao Beer. He came back with this story. I find the multiple viewpoints fascinating. As they say, 'when it rains, it pours.']

John T. Baker OLS 1945 (Russian) 1917-2006

John Thomas Baker died on Sunday, September 3, 2006 in Colorado Springs from pneumonia. He was 89 years old. John was born in New Albany, MS. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Phyllis E. Baker; daughter, Jane Olk (David); sons Kent Baker and Brad Baker (Melinda Knapp); and grandchildren: Jaime and Andrew Olk and Sarah Baker; sisters: Elsie Cowart (Hal) and Edna Dalrymple (Ray); brother, Eugene Baker (Anita); and several nieces and nephews.

John graduated from Baylor University and taught high school math and English before joining the Navy during World War II. In 1945, he was assigned to the Naval Language School in Boulder, where he became fluent in Russian. While in Colorado, he met Phyllis, his "Golden Girl of the West". She became his loving wife and life-long companion. After receiving his Honorable Discharge from the Navy, John joined the FBI and was assigned to Colorado Springs in 1950 as Resident Agent. In 1953, he joined Colorado Interstate Gas Company where he served in many capacities until his retirement in 1982 as Vice President of Public Affairs. For the next ten years, John served as the Executive Director of the Colorado Springs World Affairs Council and was elected to the National Board.

Throughout the years, John was active in many civic programs, serving as chair of the United Fund campaign, assistant chair of the 1972 Colorado Springs Centennial Celebration, past president of the Winter Night's Club, and a board member of the American Red Cross, Civic Theater, Colorado Springs Symphony, Opera Association, Pioneers Museum, Junior Achievement and El Paso Club. In addition, John was a member of the Garden of the

Gods Club where he was a fixture on the tennis courts during his younger days.

During the 1960s and 70s, John regularly appeared in Civic Theater productions at the Fine Arts Center and wrote or adapted many melodramas that were produced at the Diamond Circle Theater in Durango, CO. He loved literature, music and poetry and was a noted public speaker and toastmaster. John wrote poetry for many decades and published several volumes. In his later years he won many on-line poetry awards and accolades.

Colorado Springs Gazette
September 10, 2006
& David Hays
Editor & Archivist

[Ed. Note: Mr. Baker's theatrical and poetic talents seem to place him squarely with the JLS Revue crowd, as well as with Ernest Kroll, a Tokyo JLS poet. I regret we were unable to contact him before he passed away.]

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