

*The Interpreter*

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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.*

## Chronicles of My Life in the 20th Century

### 12. Landing on Okinawa

During my absence from Pearl Harbor a new translation office had been established in Honolulu. The personnel consisted of Navy officers and Army enlisted men, all of them Nisei. It was probably because the Navy refused to permit Nisei, even in Army uniform, into the Pearl Harbor base that the office was established in Honolulu. In order to maintain the secrecy of our office, furniture was displayed in a window facing the street with a sign saying the shop was temporarily closed. However, the young women working in the nearby cushion factory or in the restaurant across the street had no trouble in guessing that the thirty Nisei soldiers must be performing some secret work.

The commanding officer, an Army major, was truly disagreeable, but this caused the rest of us to band together against him. Except when the

major summoned us, it was a cheerful place to work. At this office only handwritten Japanese documents--mainly diaries and letters--were translated. I doubt that our translations ended the war even one second earlier, but reading the diaries was a valuable part of my education as a scholar of Japanese.

We had one day off. I used this day to study Japanese literature at the University of Hawaii. The first term we read a modern novel each week and wrote a report in Japanese. The second term I persuaded the professor to read "The Tale of Genji" with us. By this time I had begun to feel confident in my ability to read Japanese, but I was by no means prepared for "The Tale of Genji." Often I spent an hour or more trying to read one sentence.

I shared a house in Honolulu with five other Navy interpreters. I liked living in Honolulu so much that I had no desire to return to New York, but this was not true of my companions who had wives and children they missed. The pleasant humdrum of work at the office was interrupted from time to time when men were sent out on operations and came back with sunburned faces and stories to tell. Although I hated war, I thought I must experience more of it so that I could understand it better and perhaps write about it. (to be cont'd)

Donald L. Keene

JLS 1943

Daily Yomiuri Online

April 1, 2006

### *JN MEMORIAM: NORMAN MELLER*

NORMAN MELLER. 86, died July 2000. His University of Hawaii affiliation ran from 1947 to 1977. He was director of the Legislative Reference Bureau in 1947-1955 and held the title of UH political science professor from 1955 to 1977, serving a few years as department chairman. Also, he was briefly acting

deputy chancellor of the East-West Center.

His earlier career included service as a deputy from 1938 to 1946 with the California Department of Legislative Counsel, with time out for World War II Navy service as a Japanese language officer from 1943 to 1945. His strong attachment to the Pacific led to visiting professorships in Australia, Canada, Japan and the U.S. mainland. He had numerous consultantships, including one with the U.S. Senate Committee to American Samoa in 1960, to set up the first congress in 1965 and 1975, and with the Micronesian Constitutional Convention in 1975. He published eight books and scholarly monographs, 10 chapters in edited books and 25 articles in learned journals. Titles included "Land and Politics in Hawaii," "Fiji Goes to the Polls," "Papers on the Papua-New Guinea House of Assembly," "The Congress of Micronesia," "Constitution Making in Hawaii," and "Institutionalized Adaptability: Legislative Reference in Japan and the United States."

The Center lost one of its staunchest supporters and contributors with the death this past July of former Center Director Dr Norman Meller. Center Director Robert C Kiste contributed the following:

"A major figure in Pacific Islands Studies was lost with the death of Norman Meller on July 19, 2000, less than a dozen days shy of his eighty-seventh birthday. A native Californian, he completed a law degree and an AB in political science before serving as a US Navy officer in the Pacific during World War II.

"Meller joined the faculty at the University of Hawai'i in 1947 as director of the Territory of Hawaii's legislative research and reference service, and as professor of government. Upon the completion of his PhD at the University of Chicago in 1955, Meller continued his role as the

chairman of the UH Department of Political Science, as a professor, where he remained until his retirement in 1976.

Meller was also a resident Rockefeller Foundation scholar visiting Bellagio, Italy in 1981 where he was working on *Constitutionalism in Micronesia*, published in 1985.

"Beginning with the founding of the Pacific Islands Studies Program (now the Center for Pacific Islands Studies) in 1950, Meller was instrumental in promoting Pacific Islands studies at UH. He served as the program's director during most of the 1960s and persuaded Renée Heyum, Pacific Curator at UH Manoa for years, to move to UH and build the Pacific Collection here. Another major breakthrough came in 1973, when Meller obtained the program's first grant as an area and language studies program from the US Department of Education. Funding as a National Resource Center has been continuous since then.

"Meller was most known for his work in Micronesia. He served as a consultant to island governments preparing for self-government, and he played a significant role in the formation of the Congress of Micronesia. The Congress of Micronesia (1969) and *Constitutionalism in Micronesia* (1985) are his two best-known works. Meller earned the respect of Micronesians, and anthropologists drew heavily on his work. His impact on political anthropology in Micronesia is reviewed in Glenn Petersen's chapter in *American Anthropology in Micronesia* (1999), edited by Robert C Kiste and Mac Marshall.

"As a young navy officer, Meller had attended a Japanese language school, and his first assignment in the wartime Pacific was Hawai'i. His first exposure to Micronesia came in early 1945 when he was assigned to the US Navy military government, Camp Susupe,

Saipan, Northern Marianas. Susupe was an internment facility for Japanese, Korean, and Micronesia civilians who had survived the American invasion of Saipan, and Meller eventually became the commander of the Japanese compound and its 13,500 people. In the latter years of his life, Meller's thoughts returned to where it had all begun, and somewhat closing the circle, his reflections on that time were the basis for his last publication: "Saipan's Camp Susupe" (Occasional Paper 42, Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i, 1999).

Meller is survived by his wife, Terza, and his son, Douglas, among other family members.

<http://webdata.soc.hawaii.edu/fredr/Necrology.htm#alm> and  
Robert C. Kiste et al  
Pacific News from Mānoa  
No. 3 July-September 2000  
Center for Pacific Island Studies  
University of Hawaii

## Recollections of a Year in the Navy Japanese Language School

(Cont'd)  
AT BERKELEY (January 1942-  
June 1942)

In early January, 1942 our group, or "class", were shepherded to a crowded Navy enlistment facility in San Francisco where we had the first of a seemingly endless series of physical examinations over the next year, and were then duly sworn in as "Naval Agents". This designation, it turned out, was temporary, perhaps because the Navy had not yet quite figured out what level of ranking we deserved. About a month later we were again taken to San Francisco, for another physical examination and a swearing in as Yeomen 2nd class, an enlisted rank we retained until commissioning as officers upon graduation.

I should add here, parenthetically, that we were actually the second Berkeley "class", having been preceded by a short time by a small group of about 20 that may have begun their language training at

Harvard before the schools were consolidated. There was minimal interaction between the two classes – there was little time or inclination for "socializing" – and of course they were far advanced in their training. As it turned out, they graduated and were off to their assignments when the school was moved to Boulder in June or shortly thereafter.

We did not wear uniforms throughout our school time, and had almost no formal Navy indoctrination. Discipline was largely self-imposed, the one absolute requirement being that we attend all classes – but we were given to understand that the price of flunking out was to be reduced to the lowest level of Apprentice Seaman and tossed into the standard Navy hopper. This was a decided incentive to study, and especially since the war news then was anything but optimistic, the atmosphere was serious.

I still remember my first direct encounter with the Japanese language when, on the opening day of classes, we were introduced to Susumu Nakamura (the principal sensei) and subjected to an intensive round of so-called "first-aid" phrases in elementary conversational Japanese. Feeling almost overwhelmed at that point, I began to wonder why I had gotten into this in the first place – but it was too late. But we were also introduced to Florence Walne, the director of the language school, who then and throughout was helpful and encouraging.

Our class (all men of course at that time) numbered a few over 40, many out of the Ivy League universities, but some from a range of areas and backgrounds. I was impressed from the outset with the caliber of the group, and even though I had thought I was a good student, I had to run hard all too often just to keep up. Several who had been born and/or raised in Japan (known as the BIJs – born in Japan) already were fairly fluent in basic conversational Japanese, and although sometimes the vocabulary they remembered was of the children/street level, I envied their proficiency. (This

was especially true when, after graduation, I had to do some interrogation, when it was all too clear that my speaking proficiency lagged far behind my reading and writing capabilities.) We were divided into groups of 5 for daily rounds of, in turn, reading, writing, and speaking. My particular group at the outset included Ward and Ford, along with Wald, so that, if the sensei pronounced our names with a Japanese intonation, we sometimes were uncertain which of us was being called on. The groups were not static; members were reassigned from time to time, partly to try to keep a consistent level of competence in each group, and partly to introduce a change of pace, I suppose.

While the married students could live in whatever quarters they chose, the bachelors (that is, most of us) were housed in a 3-story apartment building leased by the Navy, located on College Avenue a few blocks from campus. The building was divided into a number of apartments, to each of which was assigned about 5 students. I was especially fortunate in my apartment mates – Jack Harrison, Harry Allen, Frank Turner, and John Bryson – who turned out immediately to be wholly congenial even though most of us had been strangers up to that point. Everyone was considerate of each other's study habits and bathroom time. The only time any problem arose was when, early on, "Jock" Bryson tried to practice in the apartment on his bagpipes. He quickly agreed to go up on the roof, but then the neighbors began to complain, so he then disappeared from time to time into the Berkeley hills with his bagpipes, while quiet reigned at the apartment. We were fed in a common dining room on the ground floor of the apartment building. The food was plentiful but somewhat tasteless and starchy. Dissatisfaction was muted however until we found what seemed like little white worms (which we called maggots) in some servings, which occasioned a sort of protest meeting with the manager. A gentleman friend of hers who attended sought to reassure us that "them ain't

maggots, them is weevils!" The food did improve a little and soon we had a new manager or cook.

It did not take long to settle into a routine that lasted several months. Since I had been attending Berkeley, there seemed not all that much difference from my previous existence, especially considering what might have been if I had been drafted or had enlisted as an ordinary seaman. So I considered myself quite fortunate, on the whole, despite the thoughts always present in the background that this privileged life had a set duration after which I and my fellow students would face the "real world." Indeed, I (and I think all the others) became increasingly impatient to graduate and take our place in the "real" Navy, at the same time worrying whether I would become competent enough in Japanese to perform whatever duties came to us.

The Berkeley routine was soon to end, however. In late May or early June we were informed that the school – lock, stock and barrel – would be moved to Boulder, Colorado, because our sensei otherwise would be liable for internment like others in California of Japanese ancestry. The disruptions and hardships imposed on the Japanese-American population was bad enough, but this threat to our sensei, whom we had come to regard with great respect and friendship, struck us as blundering. We were glad, however, that at least the move spared our sensei and their families from similar internment. The school did lose at least one of the sensei – Chitoshi Yanaga, who had been an assistant professor of political science at Berkeley (in fact I had taken one of his courses), left the school in order, I think, to transfer to a position with the Office of War Information. (In the postwar period, he became a professor at Yale.)

Otherwise, I had no objections about the move to Boulder itself – indeed, I was pleased, being fairly well acquainted with the area because my mother's family were

Coloradans. My grandfather, Sigmund Porges, lived for some years and raised a family in Cripple Creek where he had a general store before the mines gave out. (The building still stands there, with his name at the peak, on one of the main streets.) My mother was born in Denver, and several aunts and uncles and other relatives lived there. (to be cont'd)

*Royal J. Wald  
JLS 1943*

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION Jack A. Posin, (1920-1995)

Jack A. Posin, [former head of the USN OLS Russian Program] a retired professor of Russian at Stanford who prophesied the collapse of the Soviet empire in campus speeches during the 1950s, died Tuesday, Jan. 31, 1995, of an apparent heart attack at the Sharon Heights Convalescent Home in Menlo Park. He would have been 95 on Feb. 4.

A native of Ashkhabad in Russian Turkestan, Posin came to Stanford in 1946 to head the Russian section in what was then the Department of Asiatic and Slavic Languages. In addition to language courses, he taught Russian Literature and Civilization from 1800.

Upon retiring in 1965, he taught at Amherst College for two years.

Posin spoke often at Stanford alumni conferences, using such provocative titles as "Is the Soviet Empire Crumbling?" and "Is the Iron Curtain Rustproof?" In 1953, just four months after Stalin's death, Posin told a campus business conference that "some people say that the communist bosses can push the Russian people around indefinitely. But I am inclined to think that they cannot. After all, the Russian people did have a revolution once, in March 1917. They may do it again, and regain the respect of the world as well as their self-respect.

"No one can tell how long it will take before the break-up comes. But it would not surprise me if, once started, the whole structure of dictatorship collapses."

Posin considered democracy to be the best weapon against communism: "At all times we must preserve and strengthen our own democracy. Our democratic way of life is, in the final analysis, our strongest weapon because it wins for us support and admiration even among the common people beyond the Iron Curtain."

"There are strong indications that there is something definitely rotten in the Communist hierarchy itself, which like fish, spoils in the head first."

At the annual alumni conference in 1957, Posin said Americans should not be afraid of competition from the communists:

"Our system is immeasurably more vital and abundant than anything they can devise. That is why their leaders hate us so: the very existence of the free world is a threat to the communists and spells their eventual doom."

He suggested two ways to "speed the crumbling process of the Soviet Empire":

"1. We should keep our powder dry, i.e., keep up our defenses. If we give up on any point, we shall make the task of inimical forces that much easier. We must not, therefore, make the mistake of yielding on any essential point, and we can do that only if we are strong.

"2. We must keep our democracy bright and shining. Every time we deny the safeguards of the Constitution to anyone, we weaken our strongest weapon. Conversely, every time we demonstrate to the world that we have respect for law – as interpreted by our Supreme Court – we gain the equivalent of several modern divisions. While it is true enough that only the strong are free, it is even more true that only the free are really strong."

Posin emigrated to the United States in 1918, driven by the Great War and the Russian revolution and drawn by the promise of a new future. He first studied chemistry at the University of California at Berkeley, but his love of Russian literature – particularly the works of Alexander Pushkin – drew him to Slavic languages and literatures. He earned a bachelor's degree in 1933, a

master's in 1935 and a doctorate in 1939.

In 1931, Posin married Frances Perstein, a biologist he met when she attended the Russian course he was teaching for the U.C. extension service. They lived in the old Stanford Village for two years, then spent 40 years in Palo Alto. His wife died in 1992.

Posin taught at Cornell from 1939 to 1942, then served as director of the intensive Russian program at the University of Iowa for two years. From 1944 to 1946 he was head of the Russian department at the U.S. Navy language school at the University of Colorado.

Posin wrote numerous articles and published Russian prose and poetry in translation. He marked his 30th year of teaching in 1964 with publication of *Beginner's Russian*, published by D.C. Heath.

Posin's close friends, mechanical engineering Professor Milton Van Dyke and his wife, Sylvia, said the Russian scholar was a "charming and delightful companion, ready with a Russian saying for any occasion." He had a tremendous memory for poetry, they said, and could quote Pushkin and sing old Russian folk songs.

Posin served as vice president of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages in 1955. He was a life member of the Modern Language Association and a member of the American Association of University Professors.

He is survived by a brother, Professor Dan Q. Posin of Millbrae, who teaches physics at San Francisco State University and biology at the Jewish Home for the Aged in San Francisco. A sister, Mary, of San Francisco, also survives.

*Presented to the  
Senate of the Academic Council  
by Richard Schupbach  
Professor of Slavic Languages  
and Literature  
SenD#4548  
Stanford University Faculty Senate*

## An Airport Economist in the Ryukyus [1949]

I was a member of a small team or mission detached from SCAP's Economic and Scientific Section (E.S.S.) for temporary duty on Okinawa in November 1949. Most of us were economists of some sort; we came and went by plane; few if any of us had ever been to the Ryukyus before; call us "airport economists" in the best tradition of development economists 20 years later.

Our functions were not quite clear. Our mission chief, a Wisconsin trained Ph.D. was to report to SCAP on why the recovery of the Ryukyus was lagging behind that of the Japanese mainland, and also on the extent to which the disinflationary perestroika of the "Dodge line" might be applied there. My official title was that of Tax Economist in the Public Finance Division of E.S.S., and I was making my first visit to the Ryukyus. (During the war I had been a Navy language officer, but played no part in the Okinawan invasion.)

We were supposed to evaluate the way prices, wages, relief, taxes, public spending, money, banking, and international economics were being conducted in the Ryukyus, and interpose suggestions of our own in consonance with the Dodge reforms.

Okinawa was more like the immediate-postwar Japan that I remembered (from service in Kyushu in late 1945) than like the half-recovered Japan to which I was returning four years later. The capital of Naha, for example, was one big black market like the Shimbashi, Ueno, or Asakusa districts of Tokyo. The Okinawans were still wearing mainly cast-off G.I. clothing. In the countryside, many Okinawans were living in temporary shacks of the kind Americans had called "Hoovervilles" in the Great Depression and which Japanese had by now replaced after the bombings with something considerably better. The Americans were largely responsible, I heard, for the

miserable housing, because military facilities were also largely impermanent, and often shifted from place to place. (Wherever a military billet was set up, Ryukyuan homes within a mile radius were torn down. Their plumbing facilities were largely nonexistent, and their stench was offensive.) Another difference between Okinawa and Japan was the state of the roads. Japanese roads were gradually becoming passable, but we could not explore the scenic North of Okinawa, where four-lane superhighways now run, without risking tires and axles on dirt paths rutted by military traffic.

I'm neither an anthropologist nor a sociologist, but Ryukyuan and Japanese cultures appeared to differ much more in 1949 than they do 40 years later. A larger proportion of people's conversation was at that time carried on in the Ryukyuan language; there were more family "keyhole" tombs on the hillsides; more Ryukyuan carried loads on their heads, whereas the Japanese did not; many Ryukyuan with nothing better to do would form impromptu groups and pass the time by singing long, repetitive Ryukyuan songs to the accompaniment of harmonicas. Nearly everyone owned harmonicas; now their role is played by the "SONY walkman."

Communicating with Okinawans in Japanese, I picked up an ethnocentric history of the Second World War. It was about Okinawa. The Americans wanted to conquer it, and Japan helped the Okinawans to defend it. Eventually the Americans conquered Okinawa, whereupon the war ended. And now (1949), the Americans were naturally prosperous because of their control of Okinawa and the other Ryukyus, while the Japanese and Ryukyuan are miserable because of their loss of these territories.

The novel *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, laid in the Ryukyus, appeared two years later (1951) in the middle of the Korean War. Its picture of Ryukyuan culture is wrong, and its attitude toward Ryukyuan condescending. This much was obvious even from my short stay in Okinawa.

*first half of the article*  
**Martin Bronfenbrenner, JLS 1944**  
 (1914-1997)  
 The Ryukuanist  
 (Newsletter of the International  
 Society for Ryukyuan Studies), No. 9  
 (Summer 1990), pp. 4-5\*

## BEST LAID PLANS

After re-reading John Magee's amazing story, I thought I should write a little something – nothing as impressive as John's but just to let others that I'm alive. I knew that John was younger than the rest of us, but I wouldn't have thought that he was just 17.

In 1939 when I was just 17, I gave a graduation speech at a little country high school in northern Minnesota. It was not the usual type of speech expected at a high school graduation. The gist of it was that we should put an end to the expansionist actions of Hitler. Needless to say, reactions were mixed... [George Norlin, then ending his Presidency of the University of Colorado, had spent 1933 in Germany and witnessed Hitler's rise to power. His warnings about Hitlerism and anti-Semitism were likewise greeted with skepticism.]

Fortunately for me, we waited to declare war until December 8, 1941. By then, I was in my third year of college and was quite happy with the government's opinion that I was potentially of more value to the country as an educated scientist than someone on the front-line [Hmmm, scholar or ground-pounder, scholar or ground-pounder? Tough choice.]

When I graduated I was offered a job by ALCOA at their research laboratory, with the assumption that I would continue to be deferred. Phyllis and I were married and thought we would settle into a pleasant life in New Kensington [PA]. Little did we know that Uncle Sam had other plans. Hearing the rumblings of the Draft Board, I decided that I could at least make a little more money as a commissioned officer, so I applied to the Navy. The commission came through in the nick of time and I was sent to Princeton to be converted from a civilian to a "90 Day Wonder" Ensign.

At the approach of the end of this conversion, while Einstein

was wandering on the Princeton campus with his hands behind his back and possibly having second thoughts about his role in the development of the bomb, I was checking the bulletin board for possible assignments. I had assumed that as a mechanical engineer I might become an engineering officer running the boilers on a battleship or a cruiser. Nothing like that was available. It looked as though it would be LSTs or PT Boats, neither of which seemed very appealing to me.

Then one day, a small notice was posted. Commander Hindmarsh would be interviewing candidates for the language school at the U of Colorado, Boulder. (to be cont'd)

*Veikko Jokela*  
 OLS 1945

[Ed. Note: I remember a similar time when my high school and college friends were all jockeying, weighing their chances, figuring plans, comparing lottery numbers (1968-1972). One guy took Navy ROTC and bailed before he got commissioned with no hard feelings. Another tried the same dive and received mail addressing him as "Seaman". One of my brothers enlisted for combat, another signed up but was selected for Korea. I rode it out in Army ROTC.]

## Grilk, Anne van Patten (Mrs. Samuel P. King)

Born in Hinsdale, IL, Oct. 21, 1921. Moved to Exeter, NH in 1930. Robinson Female Seminary 1938, Smith College 1942. Graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude, with a major in Greek Language and Literature. I read about the Navy Language School in the Phi Beta Kappa Journal while working in Washington, DC, in 1943. I was interviewed for admission to the program by Lieut. Cdr. Hindmarsh. In three minutes he elicited the information about my educational qualifications and two weeks later I was installed at 1111 College in Boulder, CO where my roommate was Ellen Zeh. I have been in touch on occasion over the intervening years with Elsie Fletcher Caldwell, Kay Hoeriger Clauset, Margret Dillely Entzi, Carolyn Tyson Randolph, Daphne Shaw Stegmaier, Patricia O'Sullivan Way, and Margret Dena White.

The sensei I especially remember are Ashikaga, Nakamura, Johnny Sato, and Tomizawa who composed for me a beautiful graduation poem written in his beautiful sōsho which hangs on my living-room wall. I also remember the MacAlpines with great fondness.

Sam and I were married at the St. John's Episcopal Church in Boulder on July 8, 1944. My mother managed to get a railroad ticket and sat on the bride's side of the church with most of the sensei. The rest of the language school attended too because we had all just been authorized to wear white uniforms and it gave everybody a chance to try them out! We had no premarital counseling because the wife of the rector of the church has just run off with another man and he apparently didn't feel up to dispensing any advice on matrimony.

We produced three children, Samuel P. King, Jr., Louise King Lanzilotti, and Charlotte King Stretch. Sam and Charlotte (Becky) are lawyers married to lawyers and Louise is a musician and a teacher and her spouse has a doctorate in Adult Education. We have six grandchildren. Sam and Louise and their families live in Honolulu and Becky and her family live in Palatine, IL.

Since leaving Boulder and moving as a bride to Honolulu, my principal activities have been raising children, doing massive amounts of volunteer work for the Junior League of Honolulu, getting an M.A. in Linguistics at the University of Hawaii, teaching English to foreign students and instructing teachers how to do so. My chief volunteer activity for the past 14 years has been as a docent at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, a remarkably fine museum with one of the best collections of Oriental art in the United States. I will be happy to tour any of you through the museum. I have just returned from serving as a delegate to the National Docent Symposium in Atlanta, GA. (to be cont'd)

*Anne Grilk King*  
 WAVE JLS 1944