

# The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

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★ Remember September 11, 2001 ★ [arv@colorado.edu](mailto:arv@colorado.edu)

September 1, 2010

## 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

16. Trusting my luck with Japanese

(Cont'd) When I showed my mother the various souvenirs I had brought her--embroidery from China, a doll of Benkei in a heroic pose that somebody had given me in Japan--I felt like a tourist returning from his first trip abroad. But when I took out my prize, the sword the Japanese general in Tsingtao had given me because (as he wrote) he thought I possessed Yamato-damashii, my mother let out a shriek and said she would not allow anything so terrifying in the house.

Strange to say, although I had eagerly awaited release from the Navy, I had never given much thought to what I would do afterwards. Most of the other language officers planned to return to the work they had been doing before they joined the Navy, but I had no profession. I knew Japanese, but this was not

much of an asset. It was commonly assumed that it would take at least fifty years for Japan to regain its prewar importance. Some language officers, deciding that China was likely to replace Japan as the leading power in East Asia, shifted to the study of Chinese. But most of those who had learned Japanese lost all interest in using the language. If I met them, they would say with a touch of pride they had forgotten every word of Japanese or they would declaim the few phrases they remembered, such as "Teki wo mizugiwa nite gekimetsu subeshi" (Annihilate the enemy at the water's edge!). (to be cont'd)

Donald L. Keene  
JLS 1943  
Daily Yomiuri Online  
April 29, 2006

## In Memoriam: John Lacey



This past spring, the Friends of the Ashland University Library lost a devoted, special friend, John Albert Lacey.

Mr. Lacey, a founding member of the Friends of Ashland University Library, passed away on March 25, 2002, in Westford, Massachusetts. The former Ashland resident graduated from Ashland High in 1935. He went on to earn a degree in Oriental Languages and Literature from the University of Chicago and served as a Japanese language officer with the U.S. Navy's Office of Communications and Intelligence and in China during WWII.

In 1954, he entered the United States Foreign Service, acting first as Consul General in Hong Kong and Macao from

1960-1964, then in Singapore from 1964-1965, and in Perth, Australia from 1969-1972. He was a deputy chief of mission to the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, Burma from 1972-1975.

Upon returning to Ashland in 1976, John Lacey became an involved member of the local community, serving in a number of organizations, including Rotary International and the City-County-Council. Between 1977 and 1979, he was a fellow-in residence and adjunct professor of the John W. Brown Center for Current Government Studies at Ashland University.

In 1976, Mr. Lacey joined with Professor Tom VanOsdall and library director, Dwight Robinson, to establish the Friends of the Ashland University Library. Mr. Lacey was appointed as the first Chairman of the Executive Committee, serving in that capacity until 1980. The organization was formed in response to the library's need for external financial support, but when he was honored at a Friends of the Library meeting in 1994, Mr. Lacey pointed out that the group always had a nobler goal, noting, "In all of our eighteen years we insisted that the Friends be founded on loftier ideals than just raising money. We have tenaciously clung to a focus on scholarship and learning as well."

Mr. Lacey remained involved with the Friends of AU Library even after he moved to Massachusetts to be near his family. He continued to contribute articles to the Friends newsletter and our readers benefitted from his insight on the changing political conditions in China. He would also drop frequent notes to the library, suggesting new titles or the names of potential speakers for our luncheons. In 2001, the Friends were honored when he returned for the Friends Annual Fall luncheon to visit with old friends and celebrate the Friends 25th Anniversary.

John Lacey is survived by his daughters and sons-in-law, Priscilla Lynne and Richard Williams of Westford, Mass and Patricia Anne and William Wallace of Newton Square, Pennsylvania, his two grandchildren and a sister, Jean Lacey in California.

Ashland University Library  
Friends  
Vol.XV, No.2, Fall 2002  
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## Bit Part in a Big Theater

(Cont'd) I had one last brush with history in those momentous final weeks. Ever since my arrival on Tinian, I had been asking people for a ride on a B-29. Finally, early in September, I was told that I could have it if I were to report to a certain building on north Field at midnight. When I got there, I was ushered into a brightly lighted hall crowded with flight crews. At the front of the room, before a huge map of the western Pacific, a briefing officer explained what this extraordinary flight -- coming just a week or so after the Japanese surrender -- was all about.

"We have pulled together all the operational B-29s in the Marianas for this mission," he began. "All the planes will be armed [most of them had had their machine guns removed earlier for the expected flights back to the United States], and aircraft commanders have permission to fire on any bogeys [unidentified aircraft] they see. We will rendezvous here [he pointed to a spot in the Sea of Japan], form a tight formation, and fly at low altitude across Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, turn, and fly back. Then the formation will break up for the return flight to the Marianas."

The officer went on to explain the purpose for the foray. When the Soviet Union declared war on Japan a few weeks earlier, many of the million-odd Soviet troops massed along the Manchurian border with Korea

had pushed down to the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. This had been expected – indeed agreed upon by President Truman – but now they were there somebody in command was not happy about it, and we'd been asked to put on a show of strength for the Soviets. "It's the biggest nose-thumbing in diplomatic history," is how our briefer put it.

So our armada droned menacingly over Korea. No bogeys were sighted, but the Russians knew we were up there flexing our muscles at them. Thus the mission could be regarded as one of the first manifestations of what would be called the Cold War.

I left the military soon afterward, well satisfied with the bit parts fate had given me.

*John Holton in  
"My Brush with History:  
by the Readers",  
American Heritage,  
April 2000, 36-40*

*Sent to us by Euan Davis, JLS 1944*

*[John Holton had recently retired as  
vice president of NBC.]*

## BEST LAID PLANS

(Cont'd) What could I lose, I thought – so I made the appointment. I really did not expect to get in, not being trained in anything related to languages. One of the questions the commander asked was, "Do you know any languages?" I said that I spoke Finnish. He asked me to say something in Finnish and when I did, he said, "That sounds like Japanese," and I was in.

Except for the first week or two when the elevation seemed to bother me, the time in Boulder was wonderful. Of course, we were kept busy, but who could ask for a nicer place? I was sad to read that both Don and Anna Robertson have died. They were the ones we were closest to in Boulder; probably because we were the only ones of our group to live off campus. Anna and Phyllis often did things together while we were in class and on Sundays the four of us would hike in the foothills along Boulder Creek. Anna had had polio as a child and had one weak leg, but it didn't seem to slow her down much.

Just as we were about to graduate President Truman dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I am ashamed to admit that I don't remember feeling shock at the killing and burning of thousands of innocent people. My thought was that maybe the war will end and we won't be sent to try to coax Japanese soldiers to leave their caves. (to be cont'd)

*Veikko Jokela*

*OLS 1945*

*<jokela@frontiernet.net>*

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION SARRA KLIACHKO OLS Russian Instructor (1895 - 1979)

Sarra Kliachko Sabsay (née Litt), an Emerita Assistant Professor of Russian at Stanford, and a long-time member of, first the Asiatic and Slavic Department, later the Modern European Languages Department, and, finally (in retirement) the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, died of heart failure Friday December 7, 1979 at Pleasant View Convalescent Home in Sunnyvale. There was no funeral service and her body was cremated and ashes scattered over the sea, in accordance with her wishes.

Sarra was born in the town of Simferopol in the Crimea in southern Russia. She graduated from the St. Petersburg (now Leningrad [*probably back to St. Petersburg now*]) Conservatory of Music, having majored in piano, and shortly thereafter married a fellow musician, the Russian cellist Samuel Kliachko. That was before the Revolution of 1917.

In 1919, the Kliachkos with their infant daughter Mura left Russia, via Odessa on the Black Sea, and landed near Constantinople (now Istanbul) in Turkey. They spent two years in Turkey and Greece leading the somewhat uncertain existence as refugees. In 1921, they received an invitation and visa from the United States, and settled in New York: where a year later their second child, son Savel, was born.

In the early thirties, the Kliachkos moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There Samuel

Kliachko continued his career as a concert cellist and Sarra continued with her own career as a teacher of the piano, and also lectured on music for RCA before various organizations.

Samuel Kliachko died in 1941, and Sarra continued her activities as teacher and lecturer of music.

With the entrance of the United States in World War II, Sarra began her second career as a teacher of the Russian language (her native tongue) on the staff of the ASTP at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City. In 1944, she joined the faculty of the Russian Department of the Navy Language School at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and became one of the outstanding teachers on the faculty of over fifty native speakers of Russian. By that time, she decided to make Russian language teaching her principal occupation.

In 1946, she joined the faculty of the newly-created Department of Asiatic and Slavic Studies at Stanford as Instructor in Russian. In the same year she married Mr. David Sabsay (though, for professional reasons, she retained the name of Kliachko), and settled with her new husband in Palo Alto. She found the time to continue with her own graduate studies, and obtained a M.A. degree in French under the guidance of the late Professor Lemaitre, there being at that time no graduate program of Russian Studies at Stanford. Some time later, she was promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor of Russian. Mr. Sabsay died in 1964, and Sarra became a widow for the second time. She retired as an Emerita Assistant Professor of Russian in 1965.

This brief outline of Sarra Kliachko's career does not begin to convey the richness of her personality, her devotion to her task as a teacher of Russian, her rapport with her students and colleagues, and the many varied aspects of her character. It may be safely stated that everyone who came in personal contact with Sarra Kliachko up to the time of her retirement felt the impact of those qualities.

Her post-retirement years were less happy because of various

ailments (which, though possibly present, were not noticed by her while she was active and busy). Eventually she was placed in a convalescent home. Toward her end in 1979, she hardly recognized anyone around her.

Her daughter Mura, with her own family, lives in Los Angeles. Her son Savel is on the staff of SRI, and resides in Sunnyvale with his wife and two daughters.

*Jack A. Posin, Chairman*

*[OLS Russian Instructor]*

*Elizabeth Stenbock-Fermor*

*Joseph A. Van Campen*

*1979*

## *The JLS Experience of T. Howell Breece*

(Cont'd) I left Cairo with a new courier bag and in a different airplane, a C46, this time, in which I was the only passenger. The rest of the load was artillery shells destined for General Stilwell and his Salween River Campaign [*Flying with ammunition, not my favorite traveling cargo*]. I was already seated in the plane when the pilots and the navigator came aboard. The captain looked at me and looked at the cargo and said, "If you want to smoke, you'd better come into the cockpit." [*I'll bet*]. In that distant past, I smoked a pipe and before long I moved forward where the navigator, who had nothing to do, was glad to let me have his seat. The captain asked me if I had ever been anywhere it was hot. I said, "Yes, Cairo." He said, "No, I mean REALLY hot!" We flew across desert at 5,000 feet where the temperature was comfortable, but as we began approached our landing at Abadan at the head of the Persian Gulf, the captain removed the ventilation hose from its mount and turned it on me. It was like having a jet of steam directed at me.

I spent that night at the US Airbase at Abadan: a night of dreadful discomfort in steaming heat with sand everywhere. Someone told me that the aircraft mechanics had to have sheds over their work places because otherwise both their tools and the aircraft grew so hot in the sun that they would sear the men's hands. The next day in the same

airplane, but with a different crew, I flew to the Bahrain Islands, where we landed to refuel for Karachi. I had a night flight through tremendous thunderstorms of the monsoon to New Delhi where I was finally able to give up my courier bag and my 38 to the US Naval Attaché.

Because of the requirements of General Stilwell's Salween River Campaign, it was impossible for several weeks to find space in the airplanes flying the "Hump" for men and material not directly involved in the campaign. I, therefore, spent weeks doing something or other, I can't remember what, in the office of the Naval Attaché. Whatever it was, it had nothing to do with Japanese [*Of course not*]. Despite the humid heat of the monsoon, the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi was a better place than most to spend some weeks of the war. There I passed a driving test and could use jeeps from the motor pool to go to places like the Red Fort and its neighbor the great mosque. There were wonderful English style tea shops where military officers went every afternoon at 5 o'clock. It was enough to make one feel guilty, except that we all learned to enjoy what luxury we could get, because soon enough we knew there would be hardship, danger and perhaps death. (to be cont'd)

T. Howell Breece  
JLS 1944

### **Robert Manson Bunker OLS 1945 (Russian) 1918-2007**

Beloved son, brother, husband, father, friend and teacher. Dear heart.

Bob died in his home in Chacon, NM, with his beloved wife of 65 years, Patricia Fleitmann Bunker, at his side, surrounded by his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, his dear friend Joan Buresch and his caretaker and loyal friend, Darlene Duran. He was preceded in death by his sons Stephen and James Bunker and his son-in-law William Yanda.

Bob grew up in Boston with his parents Emily and Philip and

his brother John. Bob attended Roxbury Latin School in West Roxbury, MA. After graduating with honors from Harvard in 1939, he left the East and traveled for the first time to the Southwest. When he first got off the train in Albuquerque, Bob wrote, "I've never seen land so flat or mountains so high." His first job was with the Indian Service (now the Bureau of Indian Affairs) and on assignment to Mexico he discovered he "wanted to work with people, and thought I could learn to." His books *Other Men's Skies* and *The First Look at Strangers* are about his years with the Indian Service.

During World War II, Bob served in the Navy. He attended the US Navy Oriental Language School in Russian at the University of Colorado from October 1944 through April 1945. "I was lucky in wartime. Quite apart from losing neither my life nor my health, I wasn't even one of those for whom the years were lost. I met Priscilla; we were married and had our first two children.

Bob received his Ph.D. in American Studies (1956) from the University of New Mexico.

He was a professor and head of the English and Philosophy Departments at New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, from 1956-66, and a tutor at St. John's College, Santa Fe, from 1966 until he retired in 1983. Bob inspired his students and was beloved by many of them. He helped them discover how to read philosophy and literature, to love dialogue, to listen to the voices of others and to find their own.

Las Vegas OPTIC  
August 27, 2007

[Ed. Note: Priscilla Bunker wrote, "He enjoyed reading The Interpreter ..." We were glad to have brought him information on the JLS/OLSers, especially those in the Russian Program.]

### **John Joseph Craig 1918-2005**

(Cont'd) Especially in Norwalk, CT and Pelham, NY, Jack Craig was involved in local Democratic politics, usually helping with advertising/PR for local elections. He also was

involved with the Norwalk, CT chapter of the NAACP (treasurer) until moving to Pelham. He belonged to the Chemists Club in NYC while he worked there. He and Ruth kept in contact with several couples who also went to the JLS, especially Norton and Marylou Williams, plus Betty and Sol Levine and Martin Packman and his wife [Jack was also close with Larry Vincent with whom he was on *Two Jima*, and mentioned Jack Bronston and Ned Coffin]. They would have reunions every few years. Also, some of the JLS instructors kept in touch with them (I think they mostly lived in California and Hawaii). At least once, Kimi Kato came to our house and cooked a Japanese dinner for our family. Some Japanese American friends of hers also came, but I do not recall if they, too, were instructors at the JLS.

Jack was an honorable man who was loyal to his family. When his brother was sick with TB (a result of his WWII Pacific experience), hospitalized in a VA hospital in California for about a year in the late 50s, Jack sent a sizable portion of his monthly salary to support Francis's family of six while his brother was unable to work. If the roles had been reversed, Francis would have done the same.

Jack and Ruth enjoyed living in rural New Jersey, and with their adult children out of college and married, they could travel more frequently. They loved Boulder and went out west often. They also traveled to Europe. In 1998 they moved to Williamsburg, VA to be closer to their children, Tony and Kim, as their health became frailer. Jack took care of Ruth, with the help of his family, when she began to suffer from Alzheimer's disease. He made an effort to fix attractive, healthy meals for them (a real role reversal). When she had to move to a residential facility, he was a daily visitor who looked after her needs as well as helping with other residents. He kept in contact with his Boulder friends as well as his friends from work. He even made one last visit to Connecticut to see Norton and Marylou Williams in 2002 or

2003, and attended a reunion in Boulder about the same time. He took classes at the nearby College of William and Mary, including one in Japanese.

It seems ironic that Jack (and later Ruth) was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, since he was an adamant liberal Democrat who rarely brought up his war experiences and was never involved in any veterans organizations. But his grandchildren thought he was a war hero and pumped him for information. A few months prior to his death, I asked if he would object to being buried there, so that his grandchildren could visit and think about his contributions. He was touched, and agreed to it, saying, "I didn't think that anyone would care."

Kim Craig Lambey  
Biographical Sketch

### **During WWII, CU Taught the Language of the Enemy**

One of the best-kept secret during World War II was the US Navy's Japanese language school at the University of Colorado. In the spring of 1942, shortly after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, students and instructors slipped in unnoticed from their former location in Berkeley to study the language of the enemy.

The Navy reasoned that if its personnel knew the language, the United States would be in a better position to interrogate prisoners, translate documents, and break codes.

"What we didn't know about the Japanese was tremendous," said Dr. Ross Ingersoll, a graduate of the school. Ingersoll, 84, now lives in a Denver apartment decorated with Japanese art [*he died on December 20, 2002*]. Recently he shared with me his recollection of the clandestine wartime operation.

Although Ingersoll had graduated from the University of Colorado in 1937 and received master's and doctoral degrees in Romance languages from Northwestern University, the Navy's Japanese class clearly became the most intensive course of study in his life.

Ingersoll had wanted to serve his country but could not because of an ulcer and an elusive heart murmur. He had returned to CU and was teaching Spanish when the Japanese language school was implemented. Its goal was to provide a practical working knowledge of Japanese in one year.

At its peak, there were 600 students as well as 125 teachers who were mostly women born in United States of Japanese parents. Classes were staggered. Ingersoll's began in March 1943, and consisted of five or six men. They met four hours a day five days a week in the old Memorial Building [now the Econ Building]. Unlike a conventional language approach, there was no discussion of grammar, just a gradual unfolding of the language during the first two hours spent with texts called the "Naganuma Readers."

After the reading period there was an hour of conversation with a final hour of dictation including a drill in Japanese calligraphy. After classes there were ten or more hours of individual concentrated study.

Every Saturday the students took a three-hour exam covering the week's work. Immediately following the weekday classes and the Saturday exams was an hour of "undō" or physical exercise, a combination of military drill and calisthenics.

"This murderous schedule continued without noticeable variation week after week," Ingersoll said. The only break he and his friends got was when they "slipped around behind the Field House, sat on the banks above Boulder Creek and smoked, drilled each other in vocabulary, or just philosophized on the state of the world."

The more Ingersoll learned, the more he faced a conflict. "Generally the study of a foreign language serves to develop an interest in and empathy with the people who speak the language under study," he said. "It was hard not to become interested in and sympathetic with the people, their customs, literature. But we were not there to learn to like the Japanese, and occasionally we were reminded of that fact."

By mid-summer, Ingersoll had been commissioned as an ensign.

Ingersoll felt fortunate that he could serve his country within the safety and comfort of the campus. "Life wasn't as bad as we sometimes pretended it was," he said.

After he graduated from the language school in May 1944, Ingersoll reported to the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, DC. Some of the other graduates became Japanese scholars. The Japanese language school evolved into CU's Oriental language department. Eventually, Ingersoll became a humanities professor at Woodbury University in California, but he never lost his interest in Japanese language and culture.

Silvia Pettem  
Boulder Daily Camera  
January 19, 1999

## A Shanghai Incident



4<sup>th</sup> Marines in Shanghai  
<[http://fourthmarinesband.com/photos\\_os\\_band.htm](http://fourthmarinesband.com/photos_os_band.htm)>

In July of 1940 I was a Marine Corps captain carried on the rolls of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines in Shanghai, China, but was working operationally under the Commander in Chief of the Asiatic Fleet. I had not been back to the United States since sailing from San Francisco on the SS *President Coolidge* in August of 1935 under orders to Tokyo, to study the Japanese Language.

In Tokyo, I had met and married an American girl who had lived there for many years of her life. After our wedding we were stationed in the Philippine Islands for a short time and then ordered to Shanghai. Because of this chain of events, I had not seen my own family for five years and was anxious to return to home country again. I had just received my orders back to the United States, and my wife and I had just given up our house in the French-controlled section of

Shanghai. We had our furniture packed for shipment, and my wife preceded me to Tokyo to spend a month with her family before we traveled together to my new duty in San Diego. I had requested permission to leave Shanghai on 10 July aboard the SS *President Coolidge*, disembark in Kobe and join my wife for a short vacation before sailing for the States on the SS *President Taft* on 23 July. This had been approved. We were eagerly looking forward to revisiting places of our courtship and to our first time in America together [Not so fast! Sorry I couldn't help myself].



The Shanghai Bund, in the 1930s

On Saturday, 6 July, however, I was unexpectedly summoned to the office of the commanding officer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines, COL Dewitt Peck, who was later promoted to the rank of Major General. There was an air of apprehensive excitement in the office, and COL Dewitt's pipe was working overtime. The verbal orders he gave me came as a complete surprise, and it was only after many questions that I felt I understood well enough to carry out my unusual assignment. I was to take a truck and one enlisted Marine on Sunday morning at exactly 10 o'clock and proceed to where Bubblingwell Road entered the American Zone. It was in this vicinity I was to arrest an undetermined number of plain clothed Japanese gendarmes expected to be stationed there. I was assured that they would be posted at approximately 100-yard intervals. It was obvious that I had been selected for this assignment because of my knowledge of the Japanese language.

I was told that the information about this unusual situation had come from the French Zone Intelligence Office. And that the gendarmes were being placed in our zone for the protection of Gen. Juzo Nishio of the Nanking Office of the Imperial Japanese

Army. He was going to inspect some of the Chinese temples within the American Zone for reasons unknown to either the French or ourselves. Due to the fact that the day was close to one of the big Chinese holidays, the Japanese feared the presence of a Japanese general might create an incident. The proper procedure in such a case would have been for the Japanese Army to inform the American Consul General or the commanding officer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines. The American Forces would have provided Gen. Nishio with adequate protection. However, the Japanese Army, perhaps overwhelmed with its own importance, apparently felt that it would be beneath its dignity to ask any foreign nation to provide protection for one of its own officers.

I had my orders and the picture of what was to happen clearly in my mind. Unfortunately, the action was scheduled for the next day, which left me all of Saturday night to conjecture on the possible results of my assignment. I must confess that I had a few butterflies in my stomach thinking that my actions in the morning could possibly inspire and incident capable of causing grave trouble. Many a war in the East had started with incidents no more serious than the arrest of soldiers of a proud and egotistical nation. I knew that all these gendarmes would be armed, and I think, although my memory is rather hazy about my thoughts after all these years, that I must have given some regard to the possibility of one of these guns being used against me. I can't remember that concern weighing as heavily on my mind, however, as the fear of possible international implications resulting from the incident. I am sure that I went to sleep that night for I don't recall being anything but alert and ready to go that Sunday morning. (to be cont'd)

COL A. Bryan Lasswell, USMC (Ret)  
Marine Corps Gazette  
September 1980; 64, 9: 54-57.  
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