

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.

Beckmann Cast a Long Shadow at UW, Literally and Figuratively

At 6 feet, 5 inches, George Beckmann [OLS 1945] loomed large on the UW campus. But Beckmann's contributions to the recent history of the University of Washington loomed larger.

Beckmann, 70, died Jan. 22, [1996?] after a long illness. His family requested there be no memorial service.



George Beckman

Beckmann, as first a dean and then provost, presided over crippling budget cuts, program reductions and faculty layoffs. He had his office trashed and his library vandalized. He was physically threatened by angry

students and verbally attacked by angry faculty members.

He also oversaw the beginning of the construction of the Allen Library, the creation of the College of Ocean and Fishery Sciences and the acquisition of a facility in Rome for students studying abroad.

When Beckmann stepped down as provost in 1988, UW President William Gerberding said, "For nearly 10 years, he has been an excellent provost, a tower of strength who has never lost his perspective or commitment to excellence. He deserves a major share of credit for holding this splendid university together during the lean years."

As provost, Beckmann, was not only the chief academic officer but also was in charge of the UW's budget process. With Beckmann's leadership, the financial crisis of 1982 was weathered—though not without the elimination of three departments and 19 degree programs.

Beckmann was regarded as a tough, resolute and forthright administrator.

Provost Lee L. Huntsman noted that during those "great fiscal challenges" Beckmann "exercised remarkable judgment in reallocating budgets so as to preserve the essential character of the University and to avoid a collapse of institutional morale."

"Under his leadership," Huntsman continued, "the strength and quality of key programs continued to grow and the contributions to the life of scholarship expanded. He created the momentum for the expansion of the library which resulted in construction of the Allen Wing and he championed the idea that the UW must increasingly expand linkages and exchanges with academic institutions around the world."

Beckmann was an internationally known scholar whose major academic interest focused on the historical processes of Japanese

modernization and the study of Japanese radical politics in the 20th century. He has been called one of the pioneers of post-war American studies of Japan.

Prior to coming to the UW in 1969, he was professor of history, associate dean of faculties and chair of the Council on International Programs at the University of Kansas, then professor of history and chair of the Asian Studies faculty at Claremont College in California.

His initial UW appointment was as professor of Asian studies and director of the Far Eastern and Russian Institute—later to become the Jackson School of International Studies. It was Beckmann's vision that created a school of international studies from a collection of area studies programs. He presided over the integration of disciplines and a change of focus to international politics and economics.

"Dr. Beckmann played a major role in moving area and international studies to the forefront of the College of Arts and Sciences and University activity," said Jere L. Bacharach, director of the Jackson School. "He was committed actively in creating and enhancing student and faculty exchanges in many parts of the world."

Last December the George M. Beckmann Reading Room was dedicated in the East Asia Library in Gowen Hall. A former Jackson School director and, like Beckmann, a professor of Japanese history, Kenneth B. Pyle, said in his dedicatory remarks that Beckmann was a "tough, decisive, no-nonsense administrator to whom one could take a problem and get a clear and reliable response. He had a reputation for fairness and a keen sensitivity to everything important that was going on in the University. He knew the faculty firsthand, our strengths and our foibles."

For two decades until Beckmann retired as provost, Pyle added, "... there was no more vibrant and exciting

environment for Asian Studies anywhere in the country . . . We built a faculty second to none."

As dean of the University's largest college, from 1971 to 1978, Beckmann faced some tough times. He became dean just as the "Boeing Bust" cast a pall over the University's fortunes. In 1974, students angered by the failure to hire a Chicano candidate for a faculty position in political science occupied his office and before leaving vandalized it.

When asked if he learned anything from these confrontations, Beckmann responded, "Every crisis is different. You think you are going to learn from one to another, but the issues are different, the context is different."

Beckmann was a 1948 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard University with a doctorate in 1951 from Stanford University. His doctoral thesis was entitled "The Constitutional Development of Japan in the Early Meiji Period, 1868-1890."

Born August 19, 1926 in New York City, he served in the Navy during World War II and attended in 1944-45 the U.S. Naval Language School at the University of Colorado to concentrate on Japanese. He continued to serve in the Naval Reserve from 1947 to 1951.

His teaching experience at Stanford, the University of Kansas, Harvard, Claremont and the UW gave him vast academic administrative experience, scholarly activities, consultant-ships and publications.

Author of five books and numerous articles in the field of Japanese, Chinese, Korean and non-Western history and other subjects, Beckmann served as program director and consultant for international programs of the Ford Foundation and as a consultant on Korea for the U.S. State Department.

He is survived by his wife, Janet, in Seattle, and by two grown children.

[Ed. Note: We have had some mention of George Beckmann in prior issues of the newsletter. But I recently found this extensive obituary, which I thought I would include, plus the great photo.]

The JLS Experience of T. Howell Breece

(Cont'd) By the second half of July 1944, planes flying the "Hump" began to have some space for passengers to China. I was told to get ready to travel. For some reason, no planes flew directly from New Delhi to Assam. The Naval Attaché expected me to fly to Calcutta, but I wanted to go by train in order to see what I could of India even though the journey would take two days instead of a few hours. To my surprise, the Attaché agreed. A few days before my departure for Calcutta, a courier from Washington arrived in New Delhi. He bought with him a parcel I was to carry to China. I heard the Naval Attaché and the courier discussing whether or not I should be told what was in the package. The courier thought not, but the Naval Attaché prevailed and they told me that the parcel contained \$400,000 in new US \$100 bills, destined for the naval paymaster in Chungking. With my 38 once more in my shoulder holster and my parcel firmly in my hands, I made the rail journey from New Delhi to Howrah, the great railway station across the Ganges from Calcutta. My fellow passengers in the first class compartment [*I suppose \$400K always rides first class*] were an Englishman who was a lieutenant in the Indian Army, two Indian men, one of whom proved to be a Muslim and the other a Hindu. Both of the Indians were very senior lawyers. No one had told me that even first class passengers had to provide their own bedrolls, with the result that I spent a very uncomfortable night on a flat board. I still remember the lieutenant's name which was

clearly painted on his trunk. It was Lt. Twelvetreets! The four of us got along amicably although the Hindu slyly provoked his fellow Indian by offering Scotch whisky all around, which, of course, the Muslim could not accept.

I had about a week in Calcutta before my flight to Assam [*maybe why the Attaché agreed to the train ride*]. The Navy Office in Calcutta stored my revolver and the parcel of money for me. I managed to spend several days with my good friend Basanti Nag who had lived in the International House in Berkeley when I did while he was getting his Ph.D. under Professor Lawrence, the inventory of the cyclotron. Basanti was, by 1944, a professor of physics at the University of Calcutta and was building India's first cyclotron.

Finally, the Navy Office gave me back my loaded 38 and parcel of money and drove me to the military airfield to start for China. After a night flight to Assam, and a couple of days wait, I made another night flight over the Hump to Kunming. Transient quarters at the Kunming airfield were simple tile roofed buildings in one of which I was left quite alone in the early dawn. I put my parcel of money under my feet on a cot and my drawn 38 under my pillow and slept a few hours. Later that morning, I had to find my way unaided to the Navy Post at the airfield. I had no idea what dialect people in Yunnan spoke, but fortunately in Kunming, at least, it was similar enough to the Peking dialect that the Chinese and I could understand each other. I asked Chinese sentries on guard duty outside the barracks where to find the US Navy Headquarters. They pointed me in the right direction. I do not know what I would have done had I not been able to speak Chinese. When I told an officer at the headquarters that I wanted to store my parcel in safety, he said that he was paymaster from Chungking on a trip to Kunming. He took my parcel, gave me a signed receipt and released me of all further responsibility.

It turned out that I was not going to fly to Chungking. A

CPO from Chungking had been sent to Kunming to collect a jeep that had been flown over the Hump for the Naval Attaché in Chungking. I was to drive with him the several hundred miles from Kunming to Chungking. There was a regular relay route of missionary stations where military personnel making that drive could stop. But travelers usually trusted to village restaurants for midday meals. The chief was astonished that I spoke fluent Chinese and said he had eaten better on this trip than on any of his earlier ones. A few short hours from Chungking the jeep broke down on the outskirts of a town. I was able to find the Chinese Military Headquarters and persuade the officer in charge to let me use his military telephone line to call the naval office in Chungking to explain our plight. Fortunately, the chief, who was a good mechanic, found and corrected the trouble and we were able a few minutes later to call back and report that we could reach Chungking on our own power. Very late that night, we drove in through streets filled with people sleeping in the open, not because they were homeless, but because their houses were too hot to sleep in. (to be cont'd)

T. Howell Breece
JLS 1944

Edward Seidensticker 86, Pioneering Scholar and Translator of Japanese Literature

Edward Seidensticker, a pioneering scholar and translator of Japanese literature, including the epic "Tale of Genji," has died in Tokyo. He was 86.

Seidensticker died Sunday after slipping into a coma after a head injury suffered in April, said Tetsumi Yamaguchi, a longtime associate and caregiver.



Edward Seidensticker, JLS 1943

He translated more than 100 literary works including "The Sound of the Mountain," "Snow Country" and "Thousand Cranes" by Yasunari Kawabata, who won the 1968 Nobel Prize for Literature; "The Makioka Sisters" and "Some Prefer Nettles" by Junichiro Tanizaki and "The Decay of the Angel" by Yukio Mishima.

"Without his translations, the Western world would not know about much of these major Japanese authors," Haruo Shirane, a professor of Japanese literature at Columbia University who studied with Seidensticker, told The Times on Tuesday.

Seidensticker is also credited with a critically acclaimed English translation of the "Tale of Genji," an 11th century epic by the courtesan Murasaki Shikibu chronicling the romantic adventures of a good-looking prince. Seidensticker worked 15 years on the translation, which was published in 1975.

"You could feel the emotions and the nuances that the original writer wanted to convey" in Seidensticker's translations, said Andrew Horvat, a Japanese language professor at Tokyo Keizai University.

"He did more to make Japanese people appear human to foreigners than all of Japan's public diplomacy combined," Horvat said.

Though there have been other translations of the "Tale of Genji" since Seidensticker's pioneering work, his translations of Tanizaki and Kawabata have not been duplicated and "are still the standards in the field," Shirane said.

A native of Castle Rock, Colo., Seidensticker earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Colorado and studied Japanese at the US Navy's Japanese Language School before serving in the Marine Corps in the Pacific during World War II. He first traveled to Japan in September 1945, a month after the end of the war, to serve as a translator for the U.S. occupation forces. After his discharge he worked for the Foreign Service as an educator, translator and writer.

He did postgraduate work at Harvard and studied literature at Tokyo University before

launching a career in translation and literary criticism. He also held teaching posts at Sophia University in Tokyo and at Stanford, Columbia and the University of Michigan in the United States. He retired from academic life in 1986.

Over the last 15 years, his interest turned to the cultural history of Tokyo. His original works include a two-volume history of Tokyo titled "Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the Earthquake" and "Tokyo Rising: The City Since the Great Earthquake." He also wrote essays on various parts of the city.

In Japan his contributions to the field of Japanese literature and culture were acknowledged by numerous awards, notably the Tokyo City Cultural Award and the Order of the Rising Sun.

For years Seidensticker split his time between Tokyo and Hawaii, but he took up permanent residence in Japan in the spring of 2006.

He is survived by a niece and a nephew.

*Staff and Wire Reports
LA Times
August 29, 2007*

[Ed. Note: Professor Seidensticker was a man of such renown that such a short obituary would seem to do injustice, but we have posted a number of long articles on him in recent issues, to lengthen this obituary might be repetitive. He was an active supporter of the USN JLS/OLS Archival Project and had donated his papers to the Archives.]

Reprise on Seidensticker

The name "Seidensticker" rang a bell in my memory when I saw it in the New York Times recently, so I wrote my former Naval Officer, John B. McCubbin, who attended your 60th reunion of the JLS in 2002, as he recently wrote me. I recalled that he attended the Language School, but John reported that Mr. Seidensticker was not of his acquaintance. Nevertheless, he enclosed a copy of your #114B, a most impressive report on your progress these past 7 years. I am enclosing a small check as a contribution in the hope that it will be of some help *[You can bet that I sent him a packet and*

put him on our mailing list]. I've never attended such a language school, although I hold an earned doctorate from Indiana University and served as a professor at three universities and a dean at another college.

The purpose of my writing you is simply to enclose the obituary of Mr. Seidensticker in the unlikelihood that you were not given it by someone else. I learned long ago not to assume in life, so I'm not assuming that you already have it.

John and I were attached to General MacArthur's headquarters in a way as naval censors of cables in and out of Japan, with a few dozen other helpers. I was only a Yeoman and he was one of several officers. There was another man named Klaus Pringsheim who had been a prisoner of war in Japan but who, upon being freed by the Americans, came to work for us as an interpreter. He and I lived in the same room with a dozen others in the Tokyo Finance Building. He worked elsewhere in the city and for another branch of the military, I think. But he and I became fast friends, a friendship which lasted until his death a few years ago. His widow lives in Toronto and he wrote a fascinating book entitled, *Man of the World* [also the author of *Neighbors across the Pacific: The Development of Economic and Political Relations Between Canada And Japan, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, c1983)*]. It really is a fascinating read, even for anyone who has no interest in him. My grandson, for example, was really turned on by it. *[He's still checking with people to find out where he heard Seidensticker's name. We have made him our enlisted naval liaison on our mailing list.]*

*Robert W. Strain
P.O. Box 1520
Athens, TX 75751*

CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARINES

Dear Aubrey *[Farb]*:

To resume,

In the segment of the winter class at Boulder that graduated in May there were three Marines - James Jefferson, Toni Degraasi

and I. After a brief leave we were ordered to report to Quantico where we were to be transformed into real Marine officers as quickly as possible. They assigned us to a session of the Aviation Ground Officers School which was about to begin. AGOs did not fly but managed Marine airfields. The class was an assorted lot of engineers, construction men, technicians, businessmen, etc. What we got was a compressed version of OCS, probably relaxed a bit on the physical side..

From Quantico we were ordered to join the new 6th Division which was then forming on Guadalcanal. We went to Pearl Harbor on the escort carrier *Thetis Bay* and reported to FMF/PAC which arranged our onward flight to Guadalcanal. The division was being formed with two existing regiments, the 4th and the 22nd, which had just come back from participation in the Guam campaign as the 1st Provisional Brigade. The 4th Marines included the old Marine Raider battalions. Glen Slaughter was one of these. On arrival on Guadalcanal we found Glen and the other old hand LOs assigned to the regiments and division D-2. The division was preparing for the Okinawa invasion. There was little to do for the LOs so the D-2 sent us back to Hawaii for some weeks of work to keep our hands in by working in JICPOA, translating documents, interrogating POWs, and gaining some useful experience.

I found trying to read musty ragged documents boring and difficult, and spent most of my time in the POW interrogation enclosure at Iroquois Point. The POWs there were being held as "persons of Interest" - possible sources of valuable information. The most interesting one I talked to was from Nagoya, where his home was near a major aircraft factory. On a map he showed me the exact locations of the factory complex. He must have realized we wanted this information so that we could bomb the factory, but he never hesitated. He volunteered his knowledge that he could never go back to Japan, and that he was ashamed of having been taken prisoner.

Back on Guadalcanal we spent time lecturing the troops, telling them prisoners could be sources of valuable information, so please save some them for us to talk to.... "don't kill 'em all!" There was some eye-rolling by the old hand gyrenes.

On the way to Okinawa we passed through a typhoon and stopped for a couple days at Ulithi. Boat loads of beer were hauled onto Mog-mog Island and doled out to the thirsty Marines. We then proceeded into the East China Sea, losing our hangovers en route and landed on Okinawa April 1st - Easter and April Fools Day.



Karasik Collection

We went in with the 4th wave. The fierce beach defense encountered in other island landings was not there and there was only desultory fire from the Japanese. The division then turned north where again there was little opposition until we got to the mountainous Motobu Peninsula. En route, in one of the villages we passed through, one of our corpsmen (medics) was attending to an elderly woman who had a gaping slash in her neck. I asked one of the bystanders what had happened. He said she feared being captured by the American barbarians and had tried to kill herself - perhaps with assistance. This gave me a fuller understanding of the efficacy of the Japanese propaganda on the people. In the middle of the Motobu Peninsula was Mt. Yaetake, which was fiercely defended by the Japanese and took some days of heavy fighting to subdue. We took only a few prisoners of no consequence. One old guy dragged in was in a black uniform, and told me he was a mailman. A bystander Marine colonel said he was probably a spy, in disguise.

After the northern campaign the division returned south to

await its next assignment. More to follow.

Semper Fi
Glenn Nelson [RIP Glenn]
JLS 1944

A Shanghai Incident



The 4th Marines Band, Shanghai
http://fourthmarinesband.com/photos_band.htm [Maybe he didn't have a brass band to see him off.]

(Cont'd) At long last I left Shanghai on 21 July aboard the *SS Coolidge*. Needless to say I felt a sense of relief as we sailed out of the yellow waters of the Yangtse River into the clear, blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. By this time the *SS President Taft's* departure was only one day behind my ship's arrival, and fortunately or unfortunately my extended holiday would be wiped out. I would barely have time to go from Kobe, where we were to land, to Tokyo by train, pick up my wife, and embark on the *Taft* in Yokohama. My wife's family had a second home in a mountain resort called Karuizawa, where they went every summer to escape Tokyo's humid heat. It was there we had planned to spend a holiday to revisit scenes of our courtship two years earlier.



USS President Coolidge [in 1942, as troopship, sank after hitting mines]
<http://www.aquamarinesanto.com/gallery/view_album.php?set_albumName=SS-President-Coolidge-historical-photos>

I was on the first class promenade deck of the *Coolidge* as she came alongside the dock in Kobe. This was the time of year for officers to move from one duty station to another, and the passenger list was filled with military personnel. Several

senior Navy and Marine officers were standing with me at the rail as we pulled up into the pier. Having spent three years with the American Embassy as a language student and traveled extensively in Japan, I was considered something of an expert on the Japanese Islands but I often doubt whether any Westerner really knows the Japanese people or understands their actions. In any case I guess there are degrees of expertness in everything, and relatively speaking I knew more about the country than any of the officers plying me with questions. I was trying to be helpful and give them the benefit of my knowledge. Suddenly a senior naval officer, a commander at that time and later promoted to the rank of rear admiral, noticed on the dock below us a large number of uniformed Japanese personnel among the many kimonoed men and women waving to their friends aboard our ship. He abruptly left the railing and walked away remarking, "Red, I wouldn't stand next to you for all the rice and tea in China." With that, he walked aft as far away from me as possible. Others took the cue, and within moments I was completely alone at the rail. I can remember feeling very much alone in the world. I could but stand my ground and see what would happen.

During my five years in the Orient I had been through Japanese customs at least a half a dozen times. It had always been a long and tiresome ordeal with the customs officer going through every square inch of every bag and trunk, asking innumerable questions in broken English about everything he did not recognize or did not understand. To my utter amazement this time they waved me through as if I were a V.I.P. It came as a let down, literally, and left me quite puzzled. I could hardly suppress a smile as I looked back and saw the luggage of my friend, the commander, being minutely searched.

I hailed a taxicab and headed for the railway station to make the earliest connection to Tokyo. Once on the train I had a chance to ponder the odd situation. I

could not but wonder if the Japanese wanted "it" to happen elsewhere. Perhaps they were not quite ready for a serious incident to occur. I was still worrying about my fate when my train pulled into crowded Tokyo station the next morning.

My anxious wife and her father were there at the station to meet me. They too were surprised and relieved that I had been allowed to proceed without incident. The arrest of the gendarmes in Shanghai was now two weeks past, but adverse publicity concerning the event was still being played up in the Japanese press.

There was not enough time for my wife and I to go to the mountains to see her mother, brothers and our friends. We spent the night in the family's Tokyo residence and embarked the next day on the *President Taft* for the United States.



The *SS President Taft* after having been converted to a troopship, the *USAT W.A. Holbrook*
<<http://hometown.aol.com/conroeqb/25thfightersqdnpage1index.html>>

Language training and expertise are discussed occasionally on the pages of the *Gazette* and are capabilities still required of many officers. May this personal experience serve to remind all concerned that such skills can give rise to unusual assignments.

COL A. Bryan Lasswell, USMC (Ret)
Marine Corps Gazette
September 1980; 64, 9: 54-57.
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An EAA Interview with Houghton Freeman

(Cont'd) **Lynn Parisi:** *Mr. Freeman, I want to thank you for talking with me today. We are very fortunate to be able to interview you for EAA and appreciate your time. Many EAA readers are familiar with the work of the Freeman Foundation, but may not know*

how deep your family roots go in Asia. Could you set a context for your commitment to this field by telling us a little of your family background?

Houghton Freeman: By learning a bit about my early life, I think you will get a good idea of why my family has been so interested in Asia. My parents, and even my grandparents, all have influenced our interest.

My father was Mansfield Freeman. Dad was in World War I in France. When the War ended, he took a year off and studied at Edinburgh University in Scotland. Among other things, he studied theology and philosophy. Around 1920, Dad answered an ad in the *New York Times* and became an English Professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing. My parents had just married, had never been out to that part of the world, so they decided to give it a try. I was born about a year later in Beijing.

A couple of years after I was born, my grandfather, Luther Freeman, decided that he and his wife would visit Shanghai to visit their first grandson. He had spent time as a Vermont farmer and was also president of Morningside College in Iowa. He was outspoken, stubborn, and didn't get along with the board of trustees, so he lasted only about two years at Morningside. He then became a minister. During his stay in Shanghai, my grandfather was appalled that there was no Protestant Church, so he started the first interdenominational Protestant church in Shanghai – the Community Church. (to be cont'd)

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