The US Navy Japanese/Oriental Language School Archival Project

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

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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.

Thomas Shelton Sutherland

T.S. Sutherland
OLS (Russian) 1945
(1911~1991)

Thomas Shelton Sutherland was born September 21, 1911 in Uvalde, Uvalde County, Texas. After moving with his family to Bell County, Texas, Sutherland hitchhiked throughout Mexico becoming fluent and enamored with the Spanish language and culture. Returning to the United States, he attended the University of Texas at Austin where he received a BA, and graduated Cum Laude, and a MA in Spanish. From 1929 to 1935, Sutherland served in the Horse Cavalry, 36th Division, 124th Regiment. He also served in World War Two as a Lieutenant J. G., Language Officer in the U. S. Navy. In 1940, Sutherland attended the National University of Mexico where he completed requirements for a doctorate. While attending the National University of Mexico, he also attended the Oriental Language School in Boulder, Colorado, where he studied Russian. In all Sutherland spoke seven languages. He used his affinity for languages to educate people across Texas and the Southwest. He taught high school in McCamey, Texas, college at the University of Denver, the Universidad Veracruzana, in Xalpa, Mexico, and was Coordinator of the Language Training Program for the Peace Corps. At the end of his career, he taught at Arlington State College, now the University of Texas at Arlington. Sutherland also worked in many international and intercultural arenas. He worked as a translator for the General Land Office, Senior Information Analyst with the Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and guided harmonious desegregation of Mexicans in schools with the Good Neighbor Commission of Texas. He also worked as the Regional Director of the Institute of International Education, guided Black and White desegregation of Texas Schools following the Supreme Court□s decision, and with the Unitarian Service Committee. Married twice, Sutherland had ten children and sixteen grandchildren.

Enclosed in the Cemetery Archives was the eulogy that Thomas' sister, Liz Sutherland Carpenter, gave at his funeral. In order for other Texans to know what kind of man is buried in the Texas State Cemetery, we have included her last words to her brother.

A true son of the West, loved horses, knives and guns, and women and he had them near all his life. He spoke Spanish with a lyrical love for the whole culture and he taught it as well as the literature of the Southwest. He traveled Mexico, hitchhiking as a teenager and he became the first executive director of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission where he fought for equality. He was a storyteller to his family or his classes, telling with gusto all he had absorbed by growing up in Bell County, graduating with an MA at the University of Texas, and the University of Mexico. He learned from "the trial fields of life" which he considered the best of all experiences. There was no one who didn't interest him...his children, grandchildren, or a clerk at Wal-Mart. And now for some personal observations because a Sister can say this:

Tommy Sutherland was the most loving, hilarious, and exasperating man I know. A word first on exasperation:

His head was full of poetry, philosophy, the great works of Mark Twain and Shakespeare...sometimes to a fault to those of us who are more compulsive about organization. He could overlook the ordinary rules of life, like tidiness and structure and even the most basic necessities of living.

Once when I dropped by his house, he was reading for the umpteenth time, Huckleberry Finn, reading it by a dilapidated old lamp. The globe had burned out, and with heavy silver tape Tommy had taped onto the shade a flashlight that furnished the light he was using. I was so disgusted and said, "so why don't you buy a light bulb" What are you going to do when the flashlight burns out?"

He grinned and said, "I'll just tape on a jar of lightning bugs."

That was the way he lived, keeping his mind on the larger picture, a picture always of hope and love and human happiness instead of coping with the mundane things of life, like electricity.

Only Tommy could bring together in this room two former wives, ten children from two families, most of his sixteen grandchildren, three stepchildren, and innumerable cousins, talkative Sutherlands, proud Robertsons, friends who spend their life arguing... and expect it to work.

But maybe it can work. And that's where the loving, and the high heart, and the laughter come in.

For me, for my brothers, George and Bill, we have lost our beloved oldest brother. And I have lost my "steady Bartlett's quotations"...my wordsmith ...who could always, even at 5:30 in the morning, remember the line from Browning or Tennyson that our mother used for appropriate situations. I would phone him and would read my copy for a magazine piece or a chapter of a book and he would give me a better word in a key part that made all the difference.

He had that rare capacity to rise above the mundane in the midst of disaster and turmoil. I never saw him lose heart or faith.

It is a great solace to his family that he will be buried among his ancestors and friends in the State Cemetery. A great great grandfather, the Empresario Sterling C. Robertson and William Meneffee, a great-great uncle both signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence are here.

Nearby he has friends and Texas storytellers Fred Gipson, Webb *[the great Walter Prescott Webb]*, Dobie *[J. Frank Dobie]*.

I find a sense of peace and continuity there under that grove of trees, as you will, and because I know something about life and death, I promise all of you that our association with his loving spirit is not over. In the years ahead, his memory will give us laughter, words and counsel

when we least expect it... for he loved us all."

http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us/pub/user_form.asp?step=1&pers_id=2554

The JLS Experience of T. Howell Breece

(Cont'd) The Navy had sent me to China to become a member of JICA, the Joint Intelligence Collection Agency, "Joint" meaning Army and Navy. It was a very small group in Chungking consisting of four or five officers and two or three yeomen. When I arrived in July 1944, the only other naval officer was Lt. (j.g) Stanley Townsend a JLS graduate *[JLS 1943, of Rochester, NY. Professor of German in the College of the Liberal Arts, Penn State University, from August 1, 1965, until his retirement July 1, 1975; died Feb. 17,1999 at the age of 88. Intercom Online.....March 25, 1999]*. He was the officer in charge when his superior officer, an even earlier JLS graduate, whose name I have forgotten, was killed in the crash of a C-46 in which he was flying from China to India to go on leave. The Japanese materials were newspapers, magazines, and intercepted radio messages. The newspapers filtered through the lines between occupied China and Chungking and I never really knew how they came into our hands, but I did know how we got the radio messages. OWI (Office of War Information) had a large receiving station staffed by Chinese radio operators who listened to Japanese commercial traffic, all of which was sent in the clear. The operators wrote the intercepted messages down in katakana and those texts came to us. We employed a staff of about twenty or twenty-five Chinese, a few of whom knew Chinese, Japanese and English, more of whom knew Chinese and Japanese, and most of whom knew Chinese and English. Those who could translate from Japanese to English did so, but far more messages were translated by one person from Japanese to Chinese and then by another from Chinese to English. Stanley and I went over the day's work and crossed out a large number of messages which provided no possibly useful intelligence. Most of the messages were from civilian Japanese in Indochina and Malaysia instructing banks in Japan to send specified amounts of money to people in Japan. A very few of them were more elaborate. I remember one message from Saigon asking an electrical firm in Japan to send parts for street car motors. I cannot believe that any of our intercepted messages provided a single bit of intelligence useful to any one. Nonetheless, every few days one of our yeomen typed up messages which Stanley and I had culled, and the documents went off to Washington in the JICA pouch.

Stanley and I spent much of our time translating articles from Japanese newspapers and magazines. Once when we had just finished translating an article from a Tokyo magazine describing B-29 raids, a B-29 that was pursued by Japanese fighters ran so low on fuel that it could not reach its base at Ch'engtu and had to make a forced landing on the civilian airfield at Chungking, which was on an island in the Yangtze. The B-29 could not take off again because the runway was too short. Someone directed the pilots to our office where they read with great interest our translation of the article on the B-29 raids. In return they invited Stanley and me to go with them to their aircraft. Except for the Norden bombsite, which was carefully shrouded in a canvas cover, we saw the entire aircraft. The Army Air Force sent mechanics from Ch'engtu who spent several days removing all the armament from the plane, while the Chinese crews constructed a dogleg on the runway. It had to be a dogleg because the island was too small to allow a straight extension. The plane was given just enough fuel to take it the 200 miles to Ch'engtu and then one afternoon the pilots and one flight engineer took their places. The river at Chungking is far below the level of the town and its steep banks provided an amphitheater for everyone in Chungking who could get there to watch. The plane sat at the extreme end of the runway with its brakes locked while the pilot gave all four engines full throttle. Suddenly he released the brakes and the plane lept forward. It was airborne as it reached the end of the original runway, so that the dogleg proved unnecessary *[Shades of the Doolittle Raid]*. A huge cheer went up from the people along the banks. The pilot buzzed the crowd twice and the plane flew safely off to Ch'engtu. (to be cont'd)

T. Howell Breece
JLS 1944

CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARINES

Dear Aubrey *[Farb]:*

After a couple weeks down time our 6th Division went into the lines to replace the New York National Guard 21st (?) Division *[27th Infantry Division]* nicknamed the Apple Knockers. I won't trace the tortuous course of continuing combat to finally prevail at the southern tip of the island, but will stick with the 29th Marines.

Glen Slaughter and I were the regiment's two LOs. A few vignettes of our southward may be of interest. While out of the lines our R2 *[Regimental Intelligence Officer]* sent out a platoon, under a lieutenant, to check out a trail for abandoned equipment, possible intelligence material or Japanese troops trying to escape northward. As we strolled along we spotted a shallow cave concealed behind some brush. The cave contained about a dozen cases of Japanese beer in big brown bottles. The Lt said we really shouldn't touch the stuff but should report it back to Hq. One Marine said it might be poisoned, but this seemed unlikely since the Japanese probably hoped to come back to recover it later. I decapped a bottle with that useful Marine belt buckle and we both tasted it, It was nectar - even slightly cool from the cave. Finally the Lt said "What the hell" and we passed out bottles of beer to the thirsty Marines as the passed by. Best patrol they'd ever been on. We reported the cache to Hq when we got back to but not our earlier access *[No need to know]*.

During another break several of our R2 men and I found a farmer's hut to overnight, as a break from sleeping under shelter-halfs *[halves? Or is it Shelters half? All I know is that they were: Half, Shelter, OD Green, on the inventory]*. As we sat there, one of the Marines, a farm boy, spotted a chicken in the farmyard. He managed to run it down. He gutted it with his Kbar and partially plucked it. We cooked it in one of our tin hats *[steel pots?]* with some C-rations - a gourmet stew!

"Glen Slaughter interrogating a prisoner during the Oroku operation, while I was lollygagging about in the MASH hospital," Glenn Nelson
Glen Slaughter Collection

Glen and I had difficulty getting Japanese to come out of caves and holes. We knew that our Japanese was understood but we also knew that we were recognized as Americans and distrusted. Another complication was that there might be Japanese troops in a cave. They would not allow anyone to come out and sometimes blew everyone up with grenades.

On May 11 or 12 just prior to the Sugar Loaf assaults I had been behind the lines with several R2 men to look at a couple by-passed caves which needed to be sterilized, lest they contain troops who might emerge later. We got some civilians to emerge from one hole but they said there were no troops in their hideout. No response from the other cave, so would have to be satchel-charged. En route back to the CP I felt my right leg struck by something. Looking down, I found my shoe filling with blood. I didn't yet feel any sharp pain and hobbled back to the CP

where an aid station doctor had a look. A round had gone through my leg, luckily without hitting a bone. The doctor gave me something to handle the growing discomfort and I was jeeped off to the nearest beach and put aboard a DUKW. We cruised up the coast and finally came abreast of an Army Field Hospital - like MASH - a long tent with 12-15 cots on either side. I slept for about a day, it seemed, between those wonderful sheets. Though woozy, I recall having been awakened frequently so more sulpha could be dumped into the wound. On one side of me was a lieutenant from the 77th Division and on the other a soldier from the 96th. In three days the pain was gone and I was encouraged to walk around. At the end of the week I was getting bored, despite the good chow, movies and some nurses (Red Cross?) who handed out free cigarettes, gum, etc. and I inquired about getting restored to duty. They finally said I could be released with the proviso that I would check in with an aid station to have the bandages changed. They gave me a pair of doggie boots since my old ones had been surveyed. Rather than wait for official transport I hitchhiked back to the 29th with traffic moving southward. I rejoined Glen who was just back from the Oroku landings. The division was awaiting orders to move on. One of the R2 wags said I was probably shot by some Japanese who was offended by my gaijin accent when I yelled into his cave.

Glen went back to one of the civilian internment camps and asked for volunteers to help us get their fellow Okinawans out of caves. Four or five volunteered but when they approached the combat zone where there were whizzing bullets, all but one chose to go back to the camp. The one man who stayed with us until the end of the campaign was Komesu Seiichi *[see Issues #45, #49, #58, #70]*, who was 35 or 40 and had been in the sugar business. He was a brave little guy, and never tried to avoid dangerous situations. Glen and I called him Tony, since he could perhaps have passed for an Italian. We put him in Marine dungarees with a black armband that said, INTERPRETER. We told Tony to always stay near one of us. Tony did not speak English and some Marine might well have thought he was an infiltrator.

Glen Slaughter, Tony Komesu, and Glenn Nelson
Glen Slaughter Collection

We had few prisoners until we got to the southern part of the island. Some Marines ferreted out several from a shallow concealment. When I talked to them they said they had seen me the day before, trying to get someone out of another cave. My back hair stood up, since they all had rifles. "Why didn't you shoot", I asked. One Japanese replied that they knew if they had fired, the Marines would have satchel bombed their hideout.

When the island was finally proclaimed SECURE on June 19th, there was still a lot of clean-up to do, since undiscovered Japanese troops would try to get through our lines at night to escape northward. We finally boarded ship and went to Guam where we were to prepare for landings in Japan Our G2 (renamed from D2) *[6 MARDIV Division Intelligence Officer, COL Thomas Williams, USMC, whose collection we hold]* again sent us to Pearl Harbor for language work. One night I was sitting with buddies at an outdoor movie on the base. All at once there were flares, sirens and ships' horns and the movie stopped. Turned out that the war was over! Truman was my hero too, Aubrey.

We were flown back to Guam. In our absence Glen, Jeff and Hart Spiegel had gone to Yokosuka, Japan, with a detachment of Marines under BG Clement, assistant division commander. They took over the huge Yokosuka naval base - where the US Navy still have important port privileges.

I'll pick up the tale when we arrive in China.

Semper Fi
Glenn Nelson
JLS 1944

Nancy Pearce Helmbold 1918-2007

Nov. 2, 2007
Nancy Pearce Helmbold, Professor Emerita in Classics and a renowned teacher of Latin at the University of Chicago for more than three decades, died at her home in Hyde Park on Tuesday, Oct. 30. She was 88.

Nancy Pearce Helmbold

A West Texas native, Helmbold had a tremendous gift and love for language learning — she translated Spanish language calls for the FBI in San Antonio and translated Japanese nautical documents for the Navy during the U.S. occupation of Japan in the late 1940s. But more than anything, Helmbold had a gift for teaching Latin.

"She was an outstanding Latin teacher," said Elizabeth Asmis, Professor in Classical Languages at Chicago, "She loved being in the classroom and teaching at every level."

Helmbold had a great interest in Virgil, St. Augstine's Confessions, the love poetry of Catullus, and she contributed to the journal Classical Philology, but, her longtime colleague, Peter White, Professor in Classics at Chicago, said, "She never set out to make a reputation as a publishing scholar," he said, "Her energies were devoted to teaching. Her life truly was devoted to teaching Latin."

During her years at Chicago, Helmbold taught Latin to legions of students, at every level. She taught introductory Latin, advanced Latin for graduate students and intensive Latin for non-classics students. She taught during the summer, said Asmis, and she continued teaching after she retired in 1989. Helmbold taught until she was in her early 80s. "She never wanted to stop teaching," Asmis said.

Helmbold was a famously demanding instructor, colleagues said. While many Latin teachers softened their approach in recent years, Helmbold never changed her approach.

"Nancy never scaled back the intensity of her drills," said White, "or her insistence on grammatical precision."

But students who kept pace with Helmbold were rewarded — and they were effusive with praise. "I have never been so pushed and prodded, stung and bitten, coaxed and cajoled — soothed and then pushed forward again," wrote one student, Dawn Quitno, in nominating Helmbold for a teaching award in 1989. "Nancy Helmbold should go on teaching Latin for eternity."

Nicholas Rudall, Professor Emeritus in Classics, Founding Director of Court Theatre, said his longtime colleague "professed to not being a teacher of literature." But in a central way, Rudall said, this was not true. "For she knew each syllable, each sound, of the language she loved," he said, "And in her prime, that meant that her students entered into the heart of the literature. That is her legacy ... her students learned the essence of her loved language and made it their own."

Born Dec. 16, 1918 in Abilene, Texas, Nancy Pearce was the second of three daughters of a typewriter salesman. She was a talented student, especially in Latin. For four years, she participated in a Texas state high school Latin tournament, and won first place each time. "I fell in love with Latin," Helmbold said, years later in a story in the University of Chicago Chronicle, "because if you got on the team the school would pay your way to the contest." This was, she explained, the only way she could get a chance to travel. Her father lost

his business during the Depression and left the family.

After graduating as her high school's valedictorian, Pearce attended the University of Texas-Austin, but chose not to major in Latin, describing it as "too square." After getting her bachelor's degree from Texas in 1939 in liberal arts, she took the Civil Service exam and began work for the FBI as a secretary. But while working for the FBI in the early 1940s, she learned about another, more adventurous opportunity to use her language skills. The United States Navy needed Japanese translators to work during the occupation. Waters throughout the Pacific — Okinawa, Iwo Jima, the Caroline Islands, Tokyo Harbor — were filled with land mines, and the captured nautical documents were all in Japanese. After attending the Navy's Language training school in Boulder, Colo. for 14 months, Helmbold began work for the Occupation Forces. She was initially based in Washington. From 1946 to 1950, she worked for the Occupation Forces in Tokyo, as a translator of a wide-variety of documents, such as Japanese Army orders, medical records of British prisoners of war, and a history of the war in the Philippines written by surviving Japanese officers.

She left Japan in 1950 for the University of California-Berkeley. Taking advantage of the GI Bill's provision for subsidized higher education, Helmbold studied East Asian Languages and Literature, with the goal of becoming a teacher. But during her time at Berkeley, she took a few Latin courses just for fun. Her Latin prowess was noticed by the Berkeley faculty, and she was steered back to Classics.

After receiving her Ph.D. from Berkeley in 1957, Helmbold served as a visiting assistant professor at Mount Holyoke College and the University of Oregon. She joined the Chicago faculty in 1963.

Helmbold's chief professional interests were the literature and history of the Ciceronian age. She was a member of the American Philological Association, and she contributed reviews to Classical Philology.

During her years at Chicago, Helmbold taught a wide variety of Latin classes, but the class that she was especially known for was the Latin 301 to 303 introductory sequence, designed specifically for graduate students in fields other than Classics, which required some knowledge of Latin.

In 1989, the year she retired, she received the Burlington Northern Faculty Achievement Award for her graduate student teaching. Speaking of her award to the University of Chicago Chronicle, Helmbold described teaching the same Latin class over and over again as "never boring. It's like a game or a performance" she said, "I would like to think that some of my students will read Latin poetry for the rest of their lives."

During her tenure at Chicago, Helmbold also served in administrative roles. She was Dean of Students in the Division of the Humanities from 1970 to 1973.

In addition to her passion for teaching Latin, Helmbold was also widely known as an opera buff. Despite a difference in age, Helmbold became close friends with two Chicago alumni, Tim Thurlow (PhD, '84, JD, '86) and Ken East (PhD, History, '84) who were also opera fanatics. They attended roughly 15 operas together each year and traveled to see operas. "Nancy was eternally young," said Thurlow, "She was always up for doing anything. She never said 'no.' That seemed to be her rule of life."

Helmbold was preceded in death by her husband, William C. Helmbold, and her older sister Miriam Hall Pearce. She is survived by her younger sister Martha Leipziger; her daughter Alexandra Balfour Genetti (Lab, '74), and three grandchildren, Cerrithwen Genetti, Bronwen Genetti, and Gaelen Genetti.

Josh Schonwald
The University of Chicago
News Office
November 5, 2007

Recent Losses:

An EAA *Interview with Houghton Freeman*

(Cont'd) **Freeman**: At first, my grandfather couldn't find a place *[in Shanghai]* for the church to meet on Sundays, but he finally got the Astor Hotel to curtain off the bar area on Sunday afternoons. He couldn't use it before four in the afternoon because the luncheon crowd was there; the congregation had to be out by five when the dinner crowd started to wander in. My grandfather stayed about a year-long enough to provide the impetus to keep the church going. The church grew over the years and was supported largely by American businesses in Shanghai. It continued during the Cultural Revolution, although underground. The church is still going today. We were there several years ago for Easter services and there were 2,000 attendees; they had to have closed circuit TV to broadcast the sermon. The congregation is mostly Chinese, services are in Chinese, and there is also an English service.

Lynn Parisi: *Your father was one of the "founders" of the insurance industry in China. How did he make the move from academia to insurance?*

Houghton Freeman: My father was quite happy in Beijing as a professor of English, philosophy and Greek. He also became very interested in Chinese philosophy. AIU* (American International Underwriters) had just started in Shanghai in the early twenties, and the founder, C.V. Starr, was beginning to get into life insurance. His company, Asia Life Insurance, initiated a summer promotion with a competition among Chinese universities. Universities established student teams whose members would sell insurance policies during their summer vacations. My father was quite a popular teacher and his students asked him to coach them for the competition. My father knew nothing about insurance, but he worked with them and his students won. When C.V. Starr came to award their prizes, the students, in proper Chinese fashion, attributed their success to their teacher. Starr and my father got to talking and he invited my father to Shanghai, saying something like, "Why don't you join me and make some money instead of all this teaching nonsense?" This was around 1924. My family moved to Shanghai and my father became one of the "founding fathers" of AIU.

[*Ed: AIU came under the AIG (American International Group, Inc.) "umbrella" after AIG was formed and went public in 1969.]

But my father's interest in Chinese philosophy was lifelong. Years after leaving Tsinghua, he published two books on Chinese philosophy. He also had the opportunity to return. Around 1982, Tsinghua discovered that my father - then eighty-seven – was the oldest living foreign professor to have taught there. They invited him back, and my wife, Doreen and I accompanied him. The high point for my father was giving a guest lecture to the philosophy class. My father asked the class questions about Confucius and found the class very knowledgable. He was surprised and pleased that Confucianism was back on the curriculum. My father's lifelong work and interest in Asia were the impetus for the Freeman Foundation.

Lynn Parisi: *You were one of a select group of young adults enrolled in the US Navy Japanese Language School at the beginning of World War II. How did your early roots in China lead you to the Navy Japanese Language School, and how did the language school, in turn, influence your wartime experience in Asia.*

Houghton Freeman: I spent all of my school years at the Shanghai American School except for 1937-38, my junior year. My family was in the US in 1937, and the State Department wouldn't let Americans return to Shanghai because of Japanese activity. We returned for my senior year and I graduated in 1939. (to be cont'd)

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