

*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.*

## Henry F. May

### JLS 1944

### 1915-2012

Henry Farnham May, Jr. one of his generation's most distinguished historians, died Saturday, September 29, at the age of 97. May was Margaret Bryne Professor of American History Emeritus at the University of California Berkeley, where he had taught from 1952 until his retirement in 1980. He was a prominent campus citizen throughout his tenure at Berkeley, and served as Chair of the Department of History during the Free Speech Movement of 1964. He was honored by the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate in 1981 as Faculty Research Lecturer.

Two of May's numerous books still help to define scholarly discussion of the two periods of American history to which they were addressed. The *End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*,

published in 1959, argued that the cultural rebellions of the 1920s were well underway before World War I and that these rebellions were less dependent upon that war's impact than earlier scholars had assumed. The *Enlightenment in America*, a book of 1976 that won the Merle Curti Prize of the Organization of American Historians, persuaded a generation of scholars that the Protestant culture of late-18th century America rendered the American version of the Enlightenment strikingly different from its European equivalents. May was honored by the Organization of American Historians with its Distinguished Service Award in 1997. He was also an elected Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

May's passing triggered an outpouring of appreciations from historians throughout the nation. Bruce Kuklick of the University of Pennsylvania described May as "the most prominent American intellectual historian of his generation, a caring mentor, and a gentleman of the sort that we sorely miss in today's academic world." According to Charles Capper of Boston University, "May virtually created the field of American intellectual history for the post-World War II era as well as trained more of its practitioners than any other historian of his time." One of these many doctoral alumni, Berkeley's David A. Hollinger, remembers May as "indefatigably conscientious and fair-minded." Another of May's students, Daniel Walker Howe of Oxford University, said "May's most important and distinctive quality was his intellectual integrity--his determination to be accurate and fair, to get the story right, not only in its factual specifics, but to recreate and convey the authentic spirit, purposes, and values of the people whom he studied and taught about."

May was born in Denver, Colorado, on March 27, 1915, but spent much of his youth in Berkeley. He was a 1937 graduate of UC Berkeley, and a classmate of Robert McNamara, later Secretary of Defense under President Lyndon Johnson. In an autobiography published in 1987, *Coming to Terms: A Study in Memory and History*, May wrote extensively about his Berkeley youth and his experiences as a graduate student at Harvard in the 1930s, where he was involved in the left wing political activities common in that era. In 1993 May wrote a detailed study of the cultural and intellectual life of the Berkeley campus in the early years of the twentieth century, *Three Faces of Berkeley: Competing Ideologies in the Wheeler Era, 1899-1919*. A legendary raconteur about local life and times, he liked to tell stories about Berkeley's great Wimbledon tennis champion of the 1930s, Helen Wills Moody.



Oahu, 1944: Alfred Ferguson, Henry May & Art Kruckeberg, Pineau 31\_02\_00\_28

May completed his Ph.D. in history at Harvard University in 1947, having first served as a Japanese language translator for the United States Navy during World War II and in the post-war occupation of Japan. He taught briefly at Bowdoin College and Scripps College before coming to Berkeley in 1952. His first wife, Jean, died in 2002. He is survived by his second wife, Louise Brown of Oakland, by his two daughters Ann May of Berkeley and Hildy May of

Guerneville, and by three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Department of History  
University of California Berkeley  
Department News  
<http://history.berkeley.edu/news/henry-may-1915-2012>

## Sensei and Sensibility

After 73 years,  
Donald Keene '42,  
'49 GSAS leaves  
Columbia for Japan

(cont'd from Issue #201) It was also in 1938 that he graduated from James Madison High School, a Brooklyn public school that also has produced four Nobel laureates, three U.S. senators and a Supreme Court justice — Ruth Bader Ginsburg '59L (not to mention Judge Judy, songwriter Carole King and comedian Chris Rock). Thanks to a Pulitzer scholarship, Keene was able to attend Columbia.

Apart from his studies, college proved to be rough going for the commuter student. "I had no campus life," Keene says. "Other people were living in the dormitories or near the University. But my mother was pretty hysterical at that time; she depended on me, and I had to make the long journey every day. The subway cars were badly lit and I ruined my eyes. I knew very few people, had almost no friends."

His closest acquaintance was a Chinese student named Lee who happened to have been seated behind him in Van Doren's class. The following summer, in 1939, they took to swimming together at the Riis Park beach in Rockaway, Queens. Lee taught Keene some Chinese characters, which he practiced drawing in the sand. It was his introduction to Asian languages. For the next two years, they ate lunch together

every day at the New Asia restaurant at Broadway and West 111th Street, which became Moon Palace.

One day in fall 1940, Keene was browsing the remainder shelves at a Times Square bookseller when he spotted a two-volume edition of the classic work *The Tale of Genji*, selling for just 49 cents. He bought it and was so enchanted by the story, and by Arthur Waley's elegant translation, that he yearned to read it in the original Japanese.

At a time when news of mounting violence overseas dominated the head-lines, the tale offered a more peaceful vision. "The hero, Genji, unlike the heroes of European epics, was not described as a man of muscle ... or as a warrior who could single-handedly slay masses of the enemy," Keene wrote. "He knew grief, not because he had failed to seize the government, but because he was a human being and life in this world is inevitably sad." Keene says today: "The book became, literally, my salvation from the newspapers, from the horrible things that were going on in the world."

Chance continued to play a part in Keene's turn to the Orient, as it was then commonly called. In spring 1941, a stranger approached him in the East Asian Library, housed in what is now the Faculty Room in Low Library. He introduced himself as Jack Kerr, and mentioned seeing Keene often at the Chinese restaurant. Kerr was forming a small group to study Japanese that summer at his house in the North Carolina mountains, and wondered if Keene might care to join them. Keene accepted. It was Kerr — who went on to teach Japanese history at other universities — who recommended that Keene register for Tsunoda's class for the Fall 1941 term.

On December 7, 1941, Keene went hiking on Staten Island. When he returned to lower Manhattan, he saw the news: The Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Tsunoda was detained the next day as an enemy alien. He was accused of espionage, but a judge dismissed the

charges a few weeks later and Tsunoda returned to teaching.

Keene graduated the following spring, wondering what the war would bring. He had been a pacifist since childhood; he remembers how he felt visiting a Vienna museum with his father in 1931 and looking at the automobile in which the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife had been assassinated in Sarajevo in 1914, touching off WWI. The sight of the archduke's blood-stained uniform and the white plume in his ceremonial helmet "crystallized my hatred of bloodshed," Keene wrote in his *Chronicles*. So when he learned that the U.S. Navy needed intelligence officers and was training Americans to speak Japanese as well as shoot guns at them, he signed up.

Wm. Theodore de Bary '41, '53 GSAS was just a year ahead of Keene at Columbia, but they met at the Navy's Japanese Language School in Berkeley, Calif., which later moved to Boulder, Colo.



**USN JLS 13 Jan 1943 graduates: Keene, Osborn, de Bary, Turner, Allman, etc., Pineau06\_04\_01\_10j**

The pair became roommates and close friends. "We just took to each other right from the beginning," says de Bary, the John Mitchell Mason Professor Emeritus, Provost Emeritus and Special Service Professor in East Asian Language and Culture, who still teaches in the Asian Humanities and Civilizations

program of which he was the principal architect. "I think we were soul brothers, because we shared a Columbia soul."

When they finished their training in 1943, both men were assigned to the headquarters of Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific fleet, at Pearl Harbor. They rented a house in Honolulu to serve as home base while they were sent out on different missions, in different campaigns. Keene and de Bary crossed paths in the Aleutians and at Okinawa in 1945, and they remained in touch as their tours wound down after the war. (Their correspondence later was published in *War-Wasted Asia: Letters, 1945-46*, edited by the late historian Otis Cary, who served with Keene in the Pacific.) De Bary's postwar plan was to continue graduate work at Harvard, but Keene had a better idea. "Donald persuaded me not to return to Harvard," de Bary says, "but to come back and join him and study with Ryusaku Tsunoda." As a scholar, teacher,

encountered, and felt empathy for some of the POWs he questioned.

There's a Japanese sensibility to him — modest, quiet, extremely diligent, but never patronizing or condescending.

"I had to fill out a form — color of hair, color of eyes ... idiotic questions to be asking a Japanese," he says. "But then we could start on other questions, and I discovered these people had read the same books that I had — the kind of books one got in the Humanities course at Columbia. They knew them very well. And I felt they were closer to me than some of the rough-and-tough Americans I had to deal with, like the lieutenant commander who asked me to get him a pair of Japanese ears."

Keene does not minimize the extraordinary cruelty the Japanese visited on so many during that era. "I can't justify it," he says. "The Americans in Hawaii, where I spent much of the time, treated the Japanese extremely well. But the Japanese didn't. They were proud of the fact that they had their own traditions, which did not include mercy towards foreigners. There's no way of excusing that. I think almost any people are capable of it. It depends a great deal on their strength of belief — whether in religion or in decency — that leads them to say no when they're asked to do something under orders."

Keene returned to Columbia after the war to study with Tsunoda, earning an M.A. in 1947 and a Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and cultures in 1949 (sandwiched around a year of graduate study at Harvard). He then earned a second master's at Cambridge University in England, where he lectured from 1949-55.

On Keene's first night at Corpus Christi College — in the "coldest rooms in Cambridge," he was told — a porter brought him a dinner of whitefish with a white sauce and white potatoes and white cabbage on a white plate. "I had never realized before how important color is to food," he later wrote.

He found sustenance in other ways: in the splendid architecture, the library, the sound of proper English, and of

defender of principle, de Bary has become one of the most significant figures in the history of the University; now 91, he has taught at Columbia in eight different decades.

During his service in the Pacific theater, Keene acted as an interpreter, translated documents and conducted prisoner interrogations. He was moved by some of the diaries of captured or killed soldiers he

course, his scholarship and teaching, which he pursued despite a marked lack of encouragement. At one point, he considered abandoning Japanese in favor of Russian literary studies, a notion he dropped when he found that “the vocabulary refused to enter my brain.”

When Keene taught his final class at Columbia last spring, it was a major event for the Japanese news media.

One who did encourage him was de Bary. In 1948, College Dean Harry Carman '19 GSAS had asked de Bary to develop an Oriental Studies program, which spawned Columbia's ground-breaking courses in Asian Humanities and Civilizations. When the real work began in 1949, de Bary sought out Keene to produce translations of significant Japanese texts. “He was a key figure, because we couldn't have done it without the translations,” de Bary says. “He's extremely gifted, both in Japanese and as a writer.”

Those gifts earned Keene increasing renown in the years that followed. While teaching at Columbia in the 1950s and '60s, he spent summers in Japan coming to know many of the country's leading literary and cultural figures — among them Yukio Mishima, Kanzaburo Oe and Kobo Abe — while deepening his own knowledge and appreciation of their world.

“Japanese are always saying Donald Keene knows more about Japanese culture than they do,” says Gluck. She recalled a New Year's party at which Keene's good friend, Abe, raised a toast: “I'd like Keene to make a resolution,” Abe said. “I want him to forget one thing he knows about Japanese culture every day for the coming year.”

Fortunately for Japanese studies in the United States, de Bary was able to persuade Keene not to emigrate in the early '70s. In a unique arrangement, Keene taught in New York each spring while spending the fall semester in Japan. By now, two generations of Keene's Columbia graduate students have gone on to prominence in Japanese literature, among them such leading lights as Karen Brazell '69 GSAS, Susan

Matisoff '73 GSAS and J. Thomas Rimer '71 GSAS. Students of Keene also were among the first female tenured professors in the field, Gluck points out. Not that Keene was inclined to make such distinctions. “He encouraged all of us equally,” she says. “So as women we didn't feel at all disadvantaged.”

Keene's passion and feeling for the subject, his depth of understanding and his prodigious hard work all contribute to the respect and warmth so many feel for him. “He's very close to you when he speaks about Japanese literature,” Gluck says. “You don't feel like it's a kind of knowledge. His generosity and spirit, combined with his delight in Japanese literature, generates affection even in people who are very shy and think he's a great man. There's no space between him as a teacher and his subject, and you as students.”

After a round of tributes and symposia last spring — covered by dozens of Japanese reporters and camera crews — Keene spent the summer preparing to move from spacious faculty digs on Riverside Drive to a modest Tokyo apartment, where he's finishing a book about 19th-century poet Shiki Masaoka. “My apartment is in a quiet neighborhood where I've lived a long time, so people are accustomed to seeing me there. These streets are narrow and they're not meant for cars, and you can walk pleasantly,” Keene says. “And having become very Japanese in my attitudes, I feel happier there.”

The subtle virtues of Japanese culture — and the challenges of translating and communicating its beauty — continue to animate Keene.

“The Japanese language is characterized among other things by evocative vagueness,” he says. “You try to avoid being too precise. I used to write to a Japanese friend, and he would send back my letters with things crossed out or changed. If I said ‘I've been sick for four days,’ he would correct me: ‘You should say “about four days,” or “four or five days.” We Japanese never say “four.” We never say “five.” And it's true. There's a liking for a fuzziness, which the Japanese

find more exciting because it leaves space for the imagination.”

Having witnessed Japan's rebirth after the catastrophes of WWII, Keene has faith that his adopted country will heal from this year's natural disasters.

“In 1955 I took a journey to the northern parts of Japan, which was the same one that had been taken in 1689 by the great Japanese poet Basho,” Keene says. The haiku master was particularly inspired by Matsushima Bay, with its hundreds of tiny, pine-clad islands.

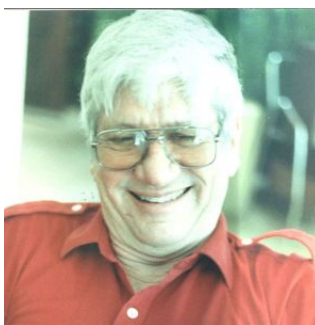
After the Tohoku earthquake of March 11, a monster tsunami wreaked destruction along that coast, killing thousands. When Keene heard the news, his first concern was for the well-being of his many Japanese friends. But his thoughts also turned to Matsushima's delicate islands.

“I wondered what had happened to that,” Keene says. “And I was told that the tsunami cut the pines down, but their roots are still there, and they can hope that in 20 years or so, the islands will be covered with trees again.”

By Jamie Katz '72  
Columbia College Today  
Winter 2011

<http://www.college.columbia.edu/cct/winter11/features/>

## LEVY, WALBERT G. "TURK"



Walbert G. "Turk" Levy age 87 was called home on January 27. He was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana on November 30, 1924. After a grammar school Italian class he began a lifelong passion for studying foreign languages.

In 1942 he began his studies at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and was a member

of the R.O.T.C. During WWII he enlisted in the US Navy and after basic training became a 1st Lieutenant. He trained for a time to become a Naval Aviator and then decided to become a Naval Intelligence Officer. He was sent to the Japanese Language School in Stillwater, OK and became fluent in the language in the matter of a few months.

After WWII he became a Naval Reserve and moved to Korea to work as a civil servant. While there, he learned to speak several East Asian languages and dialects. He returned to the States in the late '40s and resumed his education. He graduated from LSU in 1951 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. In 1952 he began a 45 year career with Sandia National Laboratories, retiring in 1997.

During the 1960's he became heavily involved in Democratic Party politics. In 1966 he won his party's primary for his district's State Senate seat, but was defeated in the general election. The defeat stopped his political aspirations, but not his commitment towards Democratic Party causes.

After his retirement he reveled in being one of UNM's oldest language students. While at UNM he studied; Russian, Chinese and Arabic. He traveled separately to both Russia and East Asia. A series of strokes beginning in 2006 ended his dream of returning to East Asia to teach the English language.

He said he could carry on a pleasant conversation in these languages as well as French, Spanish and Italian. Over the years he had been a member of Queen of Heaven, St. Bernadette's and St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center Catholic communities.

He is survived by son, W. Gregory Jr. and wife, Kim; grandchildren, Darlene, Kyle, Gregory and Karroll Ann of Oklahoma City; daughter, Marie Levy Ryan and husband, Tom; grandchildren, Shannon, Cary, Patrick and Keenan of Albuquerque; son, Matthew and wife, Meg; grandchildren, Anthony, Dominick and Joseph of Albuquerque; five great grandchildren; brother in law, Edward LaBruyere; a nephew



and three nieces and their families from Louisiana. He is preceded in death by his youngest daughter, Natasha Katherine and former wife, Karroll Jones Levy within a week span in 1998.

<http://www.tributes.com/show/Walbert-G.-Turk-Levy-93177170>.

## Robert S. Schwantes 1922 – 2012

Robert Schwantes passed away peacefully in his sleep on October 25, 2012. He was born on July 11, 1922 in Lancaster, WI, oldest child of Lillian and Kurt Schwantes.

Robert attended Harvard University, graduating in 1943 with a Bachelor's degree in History. He married Marion Miles in 1943. He attended the Navy's Japanese Language School in Boulder, CO and then served in the Navy in Australia, the Philippines, and Japan.



**"The Harvard Ten" – Ainsworth, Haff, Litzel, Schwantes, Cox, Satterthwaite, Thornton, Dawson, Lobrutto, Mervine, b&w, 5x7, Pineau27\_26\_00\_04j**

He received his PhD from Harvard in 1950. From 1954 through 1988, he worked for The Asia Foundation in San Francisco and Japan. This job was very satisfying to him both professionally and personally, as he enjoyed meeting and working with people from many Asian countries on programs to foster educational, cultural, and economic development.

Robert was a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Burlingame for over 50 years. He served on the vestry, helped write a history of the church,

served on the Columbarium and renovation committees, and assisted with many Rummage Sales.

Robert was an avid reader and book collector. He continued to do research in libraries and on the internet and to write articles until the last year of his life. He loved to travel in the US and abroad. He enjoyed time with his family. He was a very patient caregiver for his wife, Marion, in the final years of her life.

Robert was the beloved father of Virginia Manley of Carpinteria, CA, Janet Lockwood of Mukilteo, WA, and Ingrid Jackoway of Newark, DE. He was a caring grandfather of Eric Graves, Phillippa Manley, Alan Jackoway, and Daniel Jackoway. His loving wife of 66 years, Marion Schwantes passed away 2 years ago. He is survived by his sister, Marcella Graney of Lancaster, WI. His youngest

sister, Arletta McCarville, preceded him in death.

*Posted by the Schwantes Family*

*[Ed Note: A long-time supporter of the USN JLS/OLS Archival Project, his family has sent us his papers, which included his considerable Japanese subject area and Japanese language library of books. In such cases, we do not maintain the books in the collections, but provide the University of Colorado's East Asian Librarian and the Center of Asian Studies faculty the opportunity to cull the books for their holdings. Those that they do not wish to take are offered to area college and university libraries. One especially helpful taker of such books is the United States Air Force Academy Library, as they are attempting to build their holdings to support a new Japanese studies program at the USAFA. I*

*think it appropriate for such books to be used by future Air Force Officers, being educated on the Front Range, in Colorado, since all of the JLS/OLSers were likewise trained in Japanese in the Colorado Foothills under the auspices of the US Navy. That library also accepted a number of books from the Sano Collection. When we are unable to find takers for books in Colorado, we seek out libraries with East Asian holdings elsewhere in the country. Our goal is to make such libraries of books available to students to the greatest degree possible.]*

## CREATIVE INTERPRETATION: REMEMBERING FRED OLAFSON

Your report on the death of Fred Olafson reminded me of the week or so we spent together on the island of Izu no Oshima south of Tokyo Bay.

Shortly after the war's end Fred Olafson and I were assigned to a small task force charged with demilitarizing the island of Izu no Oshima, south of Tokyo bay, then occupied by several thousand Japanese soldiers. Our unit was commanded by a USN Captain aboard a cruiser, accompanied by two destroyers, and a number of LST landing craft. Fred and I were assigned as interpreters. On presenting our orders to the Captain I told him Fred and I had decided that since he was the more fluent he would act as the Captain's interpreter; I would serve as utility interpreter. The captain demanded the date and serial numbers of our appointments as Lt.JGs. Neither of us could remember either [true JLOs], but as the older I responded I was the senior, and had ordered Fred to be his interpreter. That pleased the Captain, and certainly didn't offend Fred [Learning to interpret civilian into regular Navy – an entirely different language].

Disembarking on the island Fred interpreted as the Japanese general surrendered and the three of them boarded a Jeep for a tour of the island. When the Captain started commending the Japanese with such phrases as "I'm glad to see the natives bowing as we go by", Fred translated "the Captain wants

you to stop this bowing which is contrary to the principles of democracy."

Meanwhile I was interpreting for the American beach commander in charge of the thousand Japanese soldiers [POWs] unloading truckloads of ammunition and other arms. Our sailors had recruited the soldiers [POWs] to load the landing craft and remain on board to throw the arms over board once they were clear of land. The first load of soldiers [POWs] became violently seasick, and it soon turned into a splendid game of Capture the Soldiers.

The first order I translated for the beach commander brought the Japanese to a standstill and looks of disbelief. Never having been taught by our Sensei to bark orders, I had apparently shouted out, "Everybody (Minna san) please be so kind as to take all boxes down to the waiting ships". [Polite orders-what a concept].

It was a lesson for me, and Fred somehow escaped a reprimand.

*Ned Coffin  
JLS 1944*

*[Ed. Note: Great story. From my reading of stories in The Interpreter, Kanji & Codes, Deciphering the Rising Sun, and One Marine's War, one of the major themes of the JLOS in combat and during the Occupation, had to have been the JLO's attempt to humanize and render comprehensible less understanding, impolite, crass, or outright cruel statements made by angry, brutal, or stupid Naval or Marine commanders. Sometimes JLOs had this effect through influencing regulations at a high level, sometimes at lower levels via educating the command structure, and most often through the intentional mistranslation of obtuse or counter-productive comments and orders on the ground. As you know, you guys were caught in the middle (or muddle), between two rather incompatible cultures, and two very proud and angry militaries. You had a very challenging task which you performed admirably, if you do not mind me saying so. Ned didn't.]*

**Recent Contributions:**