The US Navy Japanese/Oriental Language School Archival Project

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

Number 213 ✯**Remember September 11, 2001**✯ arv@colorado.edu November 1, 2015

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.

George E. Brankey
OLS 2/6/45-

George Edward Brankey passed away Tuesday evening, October 29, 2013 at the Eastpointe Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Chelsea. He was 90 years of age. Born in Lombard, Illinois, he is the son of the late Benedict D. and Henrietta M. (Johannes) Brankey. George attended high school in Illinois and graduated from Harvard Business School in 1949. He received a law degree in West Los Angeles, California. George practiced law in the Federal Courts in Washington D.C. He subsequently became a member of the Massachusetts Bar Association and practiced law in Mass. for 20 years. George is a late US Navy Veteran, having served during WWII. He attended the US Navy Oriental Language School at the University of Colorado and Oklahoma A&M in 1945. Late member of the Harvard Club of Boston, the Boston Bar Association and the Massachusetts Bar Association.

He is the beloved husband of Wilma "Billie" (Orchard) Brankey. Brother of Joseph J. Brankey of Cooskia, Utah, Rose Marie Zieja, Ann George both of Spokane, WA. Also lovingly survived by many nieces and nephews.

http://carafafuneralhome.com/page31/

& David M. Hays
Editor and Archivist

Professor Paul Boller's linguistic role in World War II is part of an upcoming episode of the "History Detectives."

Paul Boller, shown here on Guam in the spring of 1944, helped create leaflets dropped over Japan during World War II. (Photos courtesy of Paul Boller)

Before firebombs rained from the sky in Japan during World War II, words of warning dropped from the heavens.

A series of U.S. air raids in the spring and summer of 1945 inflicted heavy damage on one Japanese city after another. But a U.S. Navy campaign involving a young language officer and three Japanese prisoners of war helped curb civilian casualties in Japan in the deadly final months of the war.

Paul F. Boller Jr., TCU Emeritus Professor of history, was the Guam-based Navy language officer who supervised the creation of a series of U.S. propaganda leaflets dropped over Japan in advance of B-29 air strikes. The two-sided documents called for Japanese surrender on one side, and on the other urged the evacuation of civilians in cities identified as possible bombing targets.

"The true heroes were at the front," says the 94-year-old Boller. "They are the ones who deserve to be honored. Still, I felt like I did a little something. It did save lives. I felt some pleasure in that."

After all this time, Boller is receiving attention for his part in history. He will appear on an upcoming episode of "History Detectives" that focuses on some recently uncovered World War II propaganda leaflets. The show aired on June 28 but will run again on Sept. 13 on most PBS stations. Or you can see it online at pbs.org/video.

Host Wes Cowan and a camera crew came to TCU in December to film an interview with Boller.

"I don't know how much I'll be featured on the show," Boller says. "Maybe they'll just get a fleeting look at me."

In the episode, Cowan and company will delve into the origins of a collection of recently uncovered WW II propaganda leaflets. It turns out that the leaflets Cowan and his crew showed to Boller were produced at a U.S. Navy base in Honolulu.

The leaflets produced in Hawaii were quite different from the ones Boller worked on in Guam. For one thing, the Honolulu-produced leaflets depicted graphic images of death and destruction. Moreover, the Honolulu leaflets called for Japan's surrender but offered no warnings aimed at protecting Japanese civilians from harm.

"The one I worked on had the effort to save some civilians' lives," Boller says. "I couldn't find any other leaflet drops in the war — not in Europe, either — that provided for the possibility of avoiding civilian casualties."

Boller arrived at the Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) Fleet Headquarters in early 1945 feeling dejected. He had wanted to experience the rush of being a battlefield translator. Instead, he was reporting for yet another desk job.

Boller was a history graduate student at Yale in 1942 when a recruiter persuaded him to enroll in the Navy Japanese School at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He completed the intensive yearlong course and became an ensign in the Navy Reserve. Boller was assigned as a language officer in Pearl Harbor, where it was his job to read over recovered Japanese materials to search for valuable intelligence.

He performed his duties admirably at Pearl Harbor and was picked to serve as a linguist on the front lines of Iwo Jima. Boller envisioned playing hero by prying military secrets from Japanese captives or finding and translating key Japanese battle plans. However, his superiors decided at the last minute that Boller was needed instead at CINCPAC Headquarters in Guam. His new assignment carried the seemingly glamorous title of senior translator in the language section of the Advance Intelligence Center. But it was mostly a mundane position filled with hours of combing through recovered Japanese military manuals and geography books and finding nothing of importance.

"It sounds crazy, but it was a disappointment," says Boller, who described himself as an isolationist who had come around to the view that Nazi Germany and the Japan's militarist regime needed to be defeated at all costs. "I knew some translators from Boulder who got to serve as translators in combat, and I was young and wanted to do it."

Luckily for Boller, his direct superior in Guam, Lt. Frank Huggins, allowed him to slip away from the office on slow work days and trudge several miles to the Japanese prisoner stockade. Boller's visits with the prisoners were not just opportunities to gather intelligence but a chance to practice his conversational Japanese.

An early attempt to chat with a Japanese officer went poorly. Boller greeted the prisoner in Japanese, but the man refused to converse with an American officer in his native tongue. "Speak English," the officer scolded in a heavy accent. He then proceeded to berate Boller in Japanese.

Other prisoners proved more cooperative. Boller soon made the acquaintance of a number of Japanese POWs, including Maj. Yanagi, a physicist from Tokyo who desperately wanted the war to end so he could return home to his wife and three teenaged daughters.

Boller's contacts in the stockade proved vital. In April 1945, Lt. Cmdr. Robert Morris, a specialist in psychological warfare, asked Boller to round up some prisoners who might be willing to help on a propaganda leaflet campaign. Morris needed the POWs to translate the propaganda messages from English into Japanese.

"I could have probably translated them myself, but they wouldn't have been authentic," Boller says. "They just wouldn't have."

Boller was placed in charge of supervising Yanagi and two other acquaintances from the stockade to make certain they transcribed the messages correctly and did not try any funny business. The POWs assured Boller they would work hard and follow instructions. Indeed, two of the prisoners worked diligently each week translating the words.

The other prisoner, an artistic young man, concentrated on writing out the completed messages in beautiful brush-stroke characters.

"They were convinced Japan could not win," says Boller, who worked alongside the POWs inside a Quonset hut decked out like an office. "And if these leaflets got the war through sooner, that was OK with them."

Every weekend, Boller called a friend in the Air Force who had the scoop on where the next week's raids were likely to happen. Instead of identifying the exact locations, the leaflets would list eight or 10 cities that were possible targets. B-29 pilots then dropped the leaflets over potential target cities during routine runs to survey weather conditions.

The leaflet campaign continued through July. But something changed the first week of August. Boller's Air Force contact suddenly had no info to pass along. "They must be up to something special," Boller's contact said.

A few days after that unusual phone conversation, Boller traveled to the island of Saipan, which along with Guam was part of the Marianas — a strategically important island chain within easy bombing range of Japan. He was there to help coax a Japanese officer hiding out in a cave to surrender peacefully. But Boller learned shortly after arrival that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima.

"When I heard about the atom bomb, I was filled with depression," Boller says. "War is bad enough. Now we have this?"

Boller quickly boarded a plane back to Guam. Once there, he and the POWs assembled in the Quonset hut to craft a dire message imploring the Japanese to surrender or risk another atomic bomb attack. The prisoners went diligently, but calmly, about their task of creating a leaflet warning their fellow Japanese citizens about a weapon they called "genshi bakudan."

Conversing in Japanese with the prisoners, Boller professed his uneasiness over this new era of nuclear warfare the world had just entered.

"This genshi bakudan is some bad stuff," Boller says, recalling the conversation. "They said, 'You mean it's real?' I find it so interesting that they prepared the leaflets even though they didn't believe the weapon existed."

It indeed existed. Three days after the Hiroshima bombing, genshi bakudan was unleashed again — this time over Nagasaki. Emperor Hirohito knew it was time to give up the fight. Japan formally surrendered Aug. 15, 1945.

The war was over, but Boller still had work to do. He was first sent to the Mariana island of Rota, 40 miles north of Guam, where 3,000 Japanese soldiers remained. In Rota, he served as interpreter for a ceremony in which surrendering Japanese officers would be asked to hand their samurai swords over to a battalion of Marines. Boller opened the proceedings by declaring in Japanese, "In the name of the United States, we take possession of this island."

"It was one of those moments when I thought to myself, 'Did I really just say that?'" Boller says.

After Rota, Boller spent six months in Japan as part of the U.S. occupation. He worked in Tokyo for the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, translating documents that revealed the effects of the U.S. firebombing campaign on the Japanese war effort. Boller also interrogated police, municipal government officials and members of the former War Ministry. The first time he learned of the direct effects of the leaflet campaign was during an interview with the mayor of Hachioji, a Tokyo suburb.

The mayor told him that B-29s dropped hundreds of leaflets one week, warning of possible raids to come. The mayor gave residents permission to evacuate if they wanted to, and most did. A few days later, the town was leveled by firebombs. Of those who read the leaflets but chose to stay, 360 were killed.

While in Tokyo, Boller visited the home of his physicist friend. Yanagi was still presumably in U.S. custody, but Boller had a chance to speak to the prisoner's wife. He told her he had seen her husband recently: "He is in good health. And he will be coming home soon."

Excitedly, she repeated his words: "He is in good health. He will be home soon." She invited Boller to dinner and spread word of her husband's whereabouts to friends and neighbors. They all greeted Boller with a paraphrase of his own words ("He is in good health. He will return soon."), but they never asked any further questions.

As far as Boller knows, Yanagi and the two other POWs he collaborated with did return home safely. As for Boller, he returned home to serve a brief stint as a translator for U.S. Naval Intelligence in Washington, D.C. before resuming his academic career in 1946.

He wrote about his time in the Navy in a 1992 book, *Memoirs of an Obscure Professor and Other Essays* (available at the TCU library). But it was not until recently that Boller began to wonder just how much of an impact the leaflets he worked on had on sparing civilians' lives.

"If I was younger, I would go back to Japan and research it," Boller says. "I can't think of another time when this was done."

He can at least rest easy knowing that, in the heat of battle, he and his superior officers — and some willing volunteers from the opposing forces — never lost sight of the value of innocent lives.

"I hate war so much," Boller says. "At least I was able to do something decent."

Mark Wright '07 (MS)
The TCU Magazine
June 28, 2011
http://www.magazine.tcu.edu/Magazine/Article.aspx?ArticleId=515

[Ed. Note: I alerted JLSers as to this History Detectives *episode in 2011 and have mentioned this story before, but I did not post this story before.]*

Charles M Best, Jr.
JLS 1943

Charles M. Best Jr., 92, of Ashland, OR, died Thursday, January 6, 2011 at the Linda Vista Care Center, Ashland, Oregon. No Services were held. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1940 and graduated from the US Navy Japanese/Oriental Language School in 1943. He was a member of the US Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association..

David M. Hays
Editor & Archivist

Veikko J. Jokela
OLS 1945
91, Cannon Falls

Veikko Johannes Jokela, age 91, of Cannon Falls, died unexpectedly on Sunday, Nov. 17, 2013, at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester as a result of a brain bleed.

Veikko was born to Finnish immigrant parents, Nikolai and Lempi Jokela. He grew up with his sister, Laina, on a subsistence farm in rural Sturgeon Township in northern Minnesota. He learned to speak English in school and graduated as valedictorian of his class at Alango High School. He earned a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and later a Master's degree, both at the University of Minnesota.

He married the love of his life, Phyllis Fristedt, in 1944. They lived in various places, including Washington D.C. during World War II when he served in the U.S. Navy as a Japanese translator. He attended the US Navy Japanese/Oriental Language School at the University of Colorado. They settled in Plymouth where Veik worked as an engineer for Honeywell and had several patents in his name. In 1963 they bought the farm in Cannon Falls, and he farmed well into his 80s.

He will be greatly missed by his wife, Phyllis; his children, Bill Jokela and wife Mary Jane of Marshfield, Wis., Linda Jokela of Cannon Falls, Becky Jokela and husband, Dave Paxson of Cannon Falls, and Cindy Jokela and husband John Poling of Winona; 10 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Kara Hildreth
Northfield Press
November 29, 2013
http://www.southernminn.com/northfield_news/obituaries/article_ebfa0d52-b0e4-5192-94db-e4e96bd06a5b.html

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Louis A. Watres, II
OLS 2/1/45

Louis Arthur Watres, known as Arthur to most people, died January 10, 2014 from complications of pneumonia in Paoli Hospital, Paoli, PA. He was 91.

Arthur was a pioneering environmentalist who gave the remaining assets of a once-influential family (his grandfather was a successful Scranton businessman and Lt Governor of Pennsylvania, and his uncle a US Congressman) to the cause of preservation, education and research when he and his mother founded the Lacawac Sanctuary in Lake Ariel, PA, in 1966.

Arthur worked the rest of his life to assure the ongoing mission of Lacawac, a work that remains in progress.

Born in 1922 in Bermuda to adventurous parents Reyburn and Isabel Watres, he grew up on the move, living in various locations and on yachts of his father's making.

In all he attended more than 30 primary schools before enrolling in Phillips Exeter Academy. He studied fine art at Yale, though his university years were interrupted by his service as a Japanese interpreter for the US Navy during WWII. He was graduated in 1947 as part of the class of 1945W.

Following his father's death and a short stint as a securities trader, Arthur and his mother moved to the family's then-dilapidated country manor at Lake Lacawac in the Pocono Mountains.

They spent many years restoring the buildings and trying to eke out a living operating a sawmill, a fish hatchery, and earth moving business. He resorted to textbook editing.

A spirit of adventure and long winters at Lacawac led Arthur and his mother to explore the South Pacific in colder months. They booked themselves on a freighter to French Polynesia, and caught copra schooners under sail to various island groups. In 1949 they were passengers on the first commercial flight from Tahiti to the US.

An accomplished artist, he painted and sculpted what he saw, leaving a legacy of mid-century water colors of the Pacific and other island adventures in the Caribbean.

In the 1950s, Arthur began to read early environmental treatises about the limitations of the Earth's resources.

Determined to make a difference, he visited scientists at the Museum of Natural History in New York, which led to his acquaintance with a young Dr. Ruth Patrick, who became one of the world's pre-eminent limnologists.

It was her first visit to Lacawac that set the seeds of the Watres gift of the estate, which surrounds what Patrick called "the southernmost unpolluted glacial lake in the US."

Arthur spent the rest of his life sharing his passion for the natural world and interest in using science to understand and protect it.

His body of work, including founding the NE Pennsylvania Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, has been recognized by numerous national awards, Including the Thomas P. Shelburne Environmental Leadership award and the Hornaday Gold Medal, the nation's oldest conservation award, presented by Gov. Mark Schweiker.

He is survived by his son, Chad Reed-Watres, niece, Elizabeth Noble, grandchildren Sage and Olin Reed-Watres, and grand niece Megan Noble.

Wayne Independent
Jan. 15, 2014

RAY LUTHY (JLS 1943) REMEMBERED

Dave, only today (in March 2014) did I get around to opening Number 192 of *The Interpreter*, and in it I read with much interest, as well as sadness, the write-up about Ray Luthy. Ray, though a year or two ahead of me in The American School in Japan (ASIJ), was a good friend in high school. At Boulder, we roomed together in the Men's Dorm, and when he decided to marry, in Boulder, a girl he met at UC, I was his best man. Unfortunately, they later divorced, and sometime after the war, he remarried. I was glad to read that his second marriage was a long and happy one.

As I believe I've told you, I was on a ship en route to Iwo Jima, carrying some 2,500 troops.

When our convoy rendezvoused at Saipan prior to the landings on Iwo Jima, I came down with an acute case of dysentery (passing blood and pus) which the doctors aboard feared could spread to many of the 2,500 troops aboard. As a result, I was off-loaded right away. That was on D-4 (Feb. 14), and I was placed in the Army's 48th General Hospital, which was there ready to receive the wounded from Iwo. The latter soon began arriving, and when I learned that among them was Ray, I went to see him right away. There he was, minus a leg and, understandably, horribly depressed. He was soon evacuated to the U.S., and the next time I saw him was, as I recall, three or four decades later at a small reunion of ASIJ friends, held just outside of San Francisco. We also saw each other at the Boulder reunion, during which we visited The Bastille together, which is where we were housed prior to being moved to the Men's Dorm.

I thought you might be interested in the background we shared.

Dick Moss
JLS 1943

[Ed. Note: We always welcome these recollections even if sadly inspired by obituaries. Ray Luthy was also a buddy of Glen Slaughter, as well as his fellow 4rth MARDIV JLOs, see, Issue # 118, in which a number of them commented on their group in response to a question, including Chuck Cross, Jerry Hoeck and Dan Williams.]

Remembering the Towners: A Cornerstone of St. Stephen's

Dean Towner's Funeral was held in the St. Stephen's Episcopal School Chapel at 1 p.m. on Saturday, December 7, 2013 with interment of ashes in the Memorial Garden following. A reception was held in the Buddy Temple Dining Hall.

The Towners were an integral part of St. Stephen's:

About Bert & Dean Towner

Dog's best Friend.
(Mr. Towner)

Dean Towner taught Latin at St. Stephen's for more than 30 years. He was also the college counselor, the alumni director, and Senior Master.

Some years after Mr. Towner began working at St. Stephen's, Velberta Millerick came here to teach music and play the organ in chapel. She was also choir director and dorm supervisor. To keep busy, she earned a Master's Degree in Music to add to the Bachelor's Degree she had already earned at the University of Texas at Austin.

The campus romance blossomed, and the Towners were married in 1963 and lived on campus until their retirement in 1985.

This is the Dean Towner retirement bulletin cartoon from March 1985.

Bert, as she was known to her family and friends, died on September 4, 1996. Her ashes are buried in the Memorial Garden below the Brewster Memorial. Dean Towner lived in Austin at Westminster Manor where he was frequently visited by alumni and current student performing groups. He died on November 5, 2013.

Bert's Lasting Influence on St. Stephen's

When Bert arrived at St. Stephen's, there was only one music course in the Upper School. She added courses in Applied Music and a course in Twentieth Century Music & Art. Bert also founded the Madrigal Singers and was a member of the Fine Arts committee that planned and oversaw the construction of the Helm Fine Arts Center. When Bert died, the Verberta Towner Fund for the Fine Arts was established in her honor, which financed the restoration of the Hines Steinway piano.

St. Stephan's Episcopal School
http://www.sstx.org/towners?rc=0

John B. O'Donnell, Sr. 92, OLS 1945 Salesman and Writer

John Brophy O'Donnell Sr., a retired office machine salesman and freelance writer whose fiction and nonfiction were published in magazines and Baltimore newspapers, died of pneumonia Friday at his Catonsville home. He was 92.

The son of a South Baltimore physician, Mr. O'Donnell was a city native. After the death of his father in 1918, caused by a heart ailment and overwork in the flu epidemic, he and his brother moved with their mother to Frostburg to live with her parents.

Mr. O'Donnell was a graduate of LaSalle High School in Cumberland, and during his teenage years worked in the Georges Creek Coal Co. and Piedmont Coal Co. mines that were owned by his grandfather, John S. Brophy, a prominent figure in Western Maryland's coal industry.

He attended Loyola College and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from St. John's College in Annapolis in 1935. During World War II, he enlisted in the Navy and was trained as a Japanese interpreter at the University of Colorado in Boulder, but did not go overseas because the war ended.

An ensign during the war, he remained active in the Naval Reserve and retired as a lieutenant commander in 1963.

"After World War II, he decided that Russian was the language he would need in the next war, so he learned Russian," said a son, John B. O'Donnell Jr. of Catonsville, a former Sun reporter and editor. "He became fluent in the language and read Russian books and periodicals until shortly before his death."

In his professional life, Mr. O'Donnell sold office machinery for Xerox Corp. and Addressograph-Multigraph Corp. until retiring in 1976. But writing was his lifelong avocation.

Mr. O'Donnell's prodigious output was published in *Esquire* and *Seventeen* magazines, as well as in *The Sun*, *The Evening Sun*, *Sun Magazine* and *EXTRA*, the *News American's Sunday magazine*.

"At one time, he was writing op-ed pieces on foreign affairs for *The Sun* and *Evening Sun* under the byline of Brophy O'Donnell while at the same time writing features for the *News American* under the pen name of John S. Brophy, his grandfather's name," his son said. "Editors of both newspapers knew he was doing this."

Mr. O'Donnell freely mixed serious topics, such as Communist control in Portugal or problems with Soviet Jewish emigration in the early 1970s, with the humorous, as when he wrote about lower cholesterol in eggs, Rogaine for baldness and increased postal rates.

When a letter that Mr. O'Donnell mailed took six days to go from Catonsville to Towson, he wrote in a profile of the Baltimore post office in *Sun Magazine*: "One of the mechanical marvels to speed the mails zipped [the letter] into the wrong slot, maybe for Los Angeles, and it crossed the continent twice before finding its destination in Towson."

In a 1988 piece in *The Evening Sun* about Rogaine, Mr. O'Donnell wrote that the hair restorer approved by the Food and Drug Administration might cause a "furry tongue" if mistakenly drunk and not applied to the user's pate.

He also pondered: "If Rogaine seeps through the skull and is absorbed into the brain, will it cause fuzzy thinking?"

In an interview with "Ms. Henny Penny," an environmental activist who retired to "Gizzard Land, the new henhouse for senior chickens in Chickasaw, Ala.," Mr. O'Donnell asked about low-cholesterol eggs and whiskey being watered down from 90 proof to 86.

"Yes, indeedy. The country started going to the bow-wows when the hair of the dog dropped. More bad things after that," Mr. O'Donnell wrote.

"Goosey Loosey Ford pardoned Foxy Loxy Nixon and we got Turkey Lurkey Carter. Turkey Lurkey told *Playboy* he lusted in his heart after strange chicks, and then things went from bad to worse and worst. We got Ducky Lucky Reagan and his Gander Lander," he wrote.

After being unable to purchase ribbons for his original computer's printer, Mr. O'Donnell was forced at the age of 89 to buy a new computer. He was still writing stories at 90 and had submitted two of them to a Tribune Co. fiction contest.

When he wasn't writing, he liked puttering around his Catonsville home of many years, reading and taking walks.

Mr. O'Donnell's wife of 66 years, the former Mary Catherine "Caukie" Nolan, died last year.

He was a communicant of St. Mark Roman Catholic Church in Catonsville, where a Mass of Christian burial was offered yesterday.

Also surviving are another son, James N. O'Donnell of Catonsville; a daughter, Sally J. Rooney of Drexel Hill, Pa.; nine grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. Another daughter, Mary Ellen O'Donnell, died in 1950.

Frederick N. Rasmussen
The Baltimore Sun
September 13, 2006

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