

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

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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.

Reunion Review & Extras

Dear Mr. Hays:

You have done such a remarkable and welcome job of keeping our Boulder memories alive [*You are too kind*] I thought I would send you the enclosed obituary in yesterday's *Washington Post*, although it doesn't say so, it would seem that Mr. Bridgham was a "Boulder Boy" [*Yes, he was*].

It's always a pleasure to be reminded again in *The Interpreter* of the memorable events during one's short time at Boulder and to read about the many different "paths" the JLS grads took after they left Boulder.

And again thanks for organizing a broadly scoped and wonderful 60th Reunion. It was a pleasure to find one's way again around the University campus and along the downtown streets. Looking at the old chapel reminded me of the Paul Robeson concert there (We wouldn't let him leave the stage until he sang "Old Man River"). Seeing the Flatirons recalled our

hikes there and our ability to drink the water right from the creeks. Regrettably though, I could not make my way out of the old Men's Dorm lobby to go upstairs and stand once again before the door of old room 351.

Sincerely
Arthur Dornheim
JLS 1943

[Ed. Note: There may be something we can do about that, stand by. As always, we appreciate your good wishes.]

Philip Low Bridgham (1921-2003) JLS 1944

Philip Low Bridgham, 81, a China specialist for the Central Intelligence Agency from 1952 until retiring in 1984, died January 4 at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville. He had pneumonia and osteoporosis.

Mr. Bridgham, who had lived in Rockville since 1952, was a native of Mount Vernon, Iowa. He was a graduate of Grinnell College and received masters and doctoral degrees in international relations from Tufts University.

From 1942 to 1944, he attended the US Navy Japanese Language School at the University of Colorado at Boulder and was commissioned an Ensign after the course. After graduation, Ensign Bridgham interrogated Japanese POWs in California and translated and decoded captured Japanese documents and interviewed prisoners in New Guinea, Australia, and the Philippines.

He taught at the University of Hawaii and Dickinson College before joining the CIA, where he was among the first agency analysts to publish articles concerning China's domestic policy.

In the 1980s and 1990s, he taught Japanese studies at the Institute for Learning and Retirement, a program affiliated with American University. He

was a member of Rockville Presbyterian Church.

Survivors include his wife of 56 years, Elizabeth "Betty" Bridgham of Rockville; a son, Timothy, of Powell, OH; a daughter, Amy Kamble, of Derwood, and two grandchildren.

*From the Washington Post,
January 10, 2003
And the USN J/OLS
Archival Project*

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JLS Sensei, Caught in the Middle

Many JLS instructor's found themselves caught between discrimination by the US Government and resentment from their fellow Japanese and Japanese Americans when they assumed the role of Japanese language instructor to Naval officers. In particular, those instructors who were coming directly from relocation camps and from the angry environment of internees who had been stripped of their rights, found sentiments against the helping the US government to be extremely fervent. In the face of their fellow internee's hostility, the instructors' individual reasons for accepting a JLS appointment varied considerably. Some took the job to prove their loyalty to the US. Others longed to lead a 'normal' life outside barbed wire fences.

In November 2002, Secretary of the Navy awarded the Instructors of the US Navy Japanese Language School the Distinguished Public Service Award. However, sixty years ago Japanese American participation in the Navy's Japanese Language Program caused little applause, as it was a cause for resentment in the Japanese American community. The Japanese American reaction to Nisei

internees who enlisted in the Army mirrors the response that met those who accepted instructorships in the US Navy Japanese Language School. Instructors faced opposition from internees for seeking to assist the very government that had stripped them of their rights in order to aid in the destruction of an enemy that was neither foreign nor entirely unfamiliar. Accounts related by their children reveal the criticism and blame endured by JLS instructors regarding their decision to come to Boulder and teach Japanese for the US Navy.

James Otagiri and his family were in Topaz relocation center when he heard about the need for Japanese speakers to teach the language to Navy personnel, according to his daughter, Catherine. Fellow internees at Topaz criticized James, describing his teaching in the military as performing "traitor's work". The Issei community in the camp was torn and sometimes their anger overshadowed any affection for their adopted country. Some saw James' acceptance of the position as helping the 'enemy', according to Catherine. Despite criticism, James saw the position as an opportunity to resume 'normal' life outside the camp for him and his family. After James left the camp to go to Boulder, his wife, Chiyoko, endured the hostility of 'patriots' in Topaz.

JLS instructors ignored the opposition they encountered to take their opportunity to leave the relocation camps. Takako Ishizaki, the daughter of JLS instructor Koshi Suzuki, recalled there was a lot of opposition to her father leaving the camp to teach Naval officers. At the time, Koshi was running a Japanese language school at Topaz relocation center. According to Takako, his friends and his student's parents said that he would be "deserting" them if he went to work with the US Navy, when he himself was Japanese.

Koshi, however, saw the position as an opportunity for his family, a chance that would enable his children to continue their education in Boulder while he worked as an instructor. Takako attended the University of Colorado, graduating in 1946. Her sister graduated from Boulder High School the same year and Koshi's youngest son, Mikio, attended grammar and junior high school in Boulder. Despite the criticism he received from his friends and fellow internees, Koshi had been

determined to give his children an education and endured the resentment of fellow Japanese internees to achieve his goal.

The instructors' JLS experience was rendered complex by hostility they endured and overcame in order to perform their duties and give their families a life on the other side of the guard towers. To work for the government that had imprisoned their friends and family must have filled them with feelings of ambivalence and distress at times. Nonetheless, JLS instructors, such as James

Otagiri and Koshi Suzuki ignored adversity from all sides and performed their tasks with quiet dignity and unique talent. Regarded as traitors in the camps they had left, seen as possible enemies by certain of Boulder's citizens, Japanese Language School instructors performed vital war work, training a cadre of Japanese Language Officers. Their public service lay unacknowledged until sixty years later, when at last their contribution to the War is finally being recognized and praised.

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New JLS Website:

<http://www-libraries.colorado.edu/ps/arv/col/jlsp.htm>

Funny Story

We received an article from Frank Bauman, William Manchester, "The Man Who Could Speak Japanese," *American Heritage*, (December 1975) 36-39, 91-95. I thought many of you might like it if you have not already read it. Alas, it is too long to include in *the Interpreter*. It is about the activities of Harold V. "Whitey" Dumas, USMCR. If you would like us to mail you a copy, send us a note.

The Wolles Remembered

Editor:

I read with great pleasure Robert Schwante's note in a past *Interpreter* about Muriel Sibell and Francis Wolle. For me and my wife, as for others mentioned by the Schwantes, these were the permanent Boulderites who did the most to make our stay in Boulder enjoyable. And we learned a lot from them. Muriel, especially, became a good friend. She took us on many trips to Colorado ghost towns, which

were her passion. She introduced us to Central City and especially to Georgetown, a really fascinating place then unknown to tourists, especially exciting when its old buildings were outlined by snow. We often saw Francis Wolle at her house. At that time he wore a long black cloak, probably the only one in Boulder. Later, Muriel sent us her very good book on ghost towns. We learned later from Muriel that Francis became a deacon and then, at an advanced age, a priest in the Episcopal Church.

Incidentally, I remember

Robert Schwantes very well too, he and I were often in the same small language class.

*Henry F. May
JLS 1943*

[Ed. Note: It is with chagrin that I include this letter so long after it was sent. It arrived during the hectic preplanning for the reunion and was placed in its folder without further action. I discovered it after the CU History Department graduation and a discussion with Professor Mark Pittenger, who brought up Professor May's name in conjunction with the JLS. I apologize profusely. If you have not seen a letter you sent appear in the newsletter, please write. Mea Culpa]
