

The Interpreter

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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.

A Little Garbage

David - It's diary stories like Arthur Dornheim's that make your humble rag such good reading.

I may have mentioned this before but in 1952-3 (I don't remember exactly) Tsunemasa Tenma and I were shipmates so to speak on the first flotilla of Japanese naval vessels to visit US waters since the peace (a daring goodwill gesture for the times). The squadron (frigates I think) started in Canada and proceeded to Seattle where I met them as official representative/interpreter/press liaison/escort.

Tsunemasa-chan was my counterpart with the ships and we had such glamorous duties as arranging garbage off-loading (local authorities had doubts about garbage containing sushi and tofu). We shared a mutual battle line.

When our busload of Japanese reporters reported to the gate of the Boeing factory (the Bomarc was then on the production line) and were requested to leave their cameras

behind. About half refused and undiplomatically sulked while the cameraless others enjoyed a walk-thru of the original mock-up of the 707.

On to San Francisco, where I was rudely awakened at 3:30 in the morning to go out with the harbor pilot to bring the squadron in under the Golden Gate Bridge, relaying directions to the Japanese helmsman as the pilot gave them out. Tsunemasa was beside me and could have done it better than I but I guess they wanted an American to blame if they ran aground. Same garbage routine only stricter as I recall we were somewhere near Fisherman's Warf. Then to San Diego where Yokohama-San Diego Sister Cities festivities were in full swing. My only real break - I snuck off to go kelpbed fishing, where I fileted a yellowfin for everyone's lunchwell, not everyone.

Till shortly before his death around 2000 Tenma and I never lost touch. Mostly it was New Year cards and family news - his daughter in a professional violinist and both my son and I are professional musicians. Along the way he sent me a bilingual New Testament - terrific study tool - English and Japanese text line by line opposite each other (Gideon, if anyone wants one). He was a life member of the Tokyo Christian Men's Association and Professor at Tokyo Women's College (Joshi Kyoiku Dai) wrote a lot on international economics. So that's how completely a little garbage can bond people. Thanks for your patience.

Bryan Battey
Ensign USNR
JLS Class of Oct. '44.

Study & Humor

The study schedule at the JLS was brutal. We studied Japanese conversation, reading and writing during four hours of classes each weekday morning and took a written examination every Saturday morning.

Afternoons and evenings were spent in cramming with just enough time out for meals, P.E., field drill (and occasional elective recreation for those brave souls who felt they could spare the time before the next weekly test.)

Needless to say, the majority of newly minted JLOs were better prepared to read and translate Japanese than to interpret it orally or even to hold conversation beyond fairly elementary level. Despite these difficulties, most of us managed to improve our competency in the language once we were out in the Pacific and clearly we were at least moderately effective in helping to win the war and facilitate the Occupation.

I can't remember how many of our fast-dwending group of JLS graduates attended the reunion last June; it must have been about 70. Thank heaven Harry Muheim made it, because with his incomparable sense of humor he was able to tickle our funny bones and soothe still echoing memories of our fears through a toast that will be legendary among attendees at the reunion until the last of us is gone.

Imagine the setting: a large banquet room with about sixteen or so round tables, each serving 7 or 8 people (not all attendees were graduates). Before dinner was served but after people had had time for a glass or two of wine, champagne was served and people were invited to make toasts to appropriate subjects.

Toasts were made to many individuals who figured in the administration and management of the JLS, to the faculty, to the Navy, even to the U.S. Army (by an attendee who had been a JLO in the Army but was attending the reunion with his brother who was a Navy JLO), and to our deceased colleagues and comrades. *[As you can see, very serious and ceremonial!]*

Finally, Harry stood up and began to speak. I can only approximate his words and the

toast that he made. We all know he had a flair for drama and the timing that is so essential to its effective practice. This is a paraphrase of the message he put to us:

"Like all of you I was nervous when I left Boulder to go out to the war in the Pacific. Mindful of the complexities of Japanese and the trouble I had handling the increasingly difficult weekly tests we took at Boulder, I had grave misgivings about how well I could perform my duties when assigned to jobs under pressure afloat or at Pacific bases."

We could all identify with Harry's feelings; we all had felt the same way. But we were not sure where he was going with this line of thought--how would this lead to a toast? We were on the edges of our seats. Harry continued:

"After all the expense and time that went into my training, how would I perform when the chips were down? I had trouble sleeping at night because of a recurring image in my mind. I was on the bridge of an aircraft carrier; we were approaching a Japanese naval force. A messenger from the radio shack appeared and handed the Admiral a document; he looked at it and handed it to me, saying, 'Muheim, this is an intercept of a Japanese message. What does it say?'" Then Harry said, "'This may seem far-fetched, but I was plagued by this fear and I sweat blood over it until the war was over. And so, ladies and gentlemen, I propose a toast to Me."

The banquet room exploded in laughter and applause. It was vintage Harry, but it was more than that. It was a catharsis for all of us. We knew exactly what he meant, and took it as a toast to all of us. Harry, we all thank you! I hope you felt a sense of relief and fulfillment. I did.

Harris "Jish" Martin
JLS 1944

[Ed.Note: In the planning for the 60th anniversary dinner, I planned to lend formality to the event by inserting a number of descending formal toasts à la military dining-in ceremonies: USA, US Navy, USMC, CU, USN JLS, Sesei, etc. Harry Muheim broke up this serious set of toasts at the end with a joking one of his own. In this way he exemplified the role that humor played in a very difficult curriculum.

Rest in Peace Harry.]

[Ed Note: We were informed that "Jish" Martin's story had to be accompanied by Glen Slaughter's "Surrender Story", so here it is.]

the formal stylized language reserved for the Emperor and we wouldn't have a clue. The solution was simple. We listened to the Emperor and then said to ourselves "What would we say if we were the Emperor" and then proceeded to make up a version out of whole cloth. We reported to the General and explained that of course our translation did involve some paraphrasing. He was happy.

You can imagine our pleasure and relief when the Emperor's words were officially

Naganuma Lesson No. 1: ...Or when in doubt, Bluff

We had just come off Okinawa to a new training camp on Guam when the US dropped the bomb and then another. The word must have been passed at the highest level that the Japanese were going to surrender because the 4th Regiment was ordered to prepare to embark to be the first US troops in Japan. Decimated and unprepared, the 4th was picked for symbolic reasons

transmitted. We weren't that far off, we had guessed well, and the reputation of Boulder grads had been preserved and enhanced.

Jim remained with the 4th and turned regular to go on to a distinguished 20 year career. Eventually he became the CO of one of the first of the sea-going Marine battalions now called Expeditionary units. I was glad to return home but not until learning in Tsingtao from a Japanese Consular officer that none of them understood what the Emperor had said in this

having been the "China Regiment" deactivated the hard way on Bataan and then reactivated from the four Raider Battalions in the Solomons eventually to become part of the 6th Division. Jim Jefferson and I, along with ten other officers, were ordered to embark immediately to go up as an advance echelon to join the 3rd Fleet off Japan ahead of the main body of the 4th. Again for symbolic reasons we were lead by the Division ADC, Brigadier General William Clement, who

En route on a fast combat ship, General Clement called Jim and me in and said that he had received the word that the Emperor would announce the surrender of Japan on a radio broadcast scheduled in 30 minutes and for us to get up in the ship's radio shack to translate his message and report back.

So there we were sitting in the radio shack asking ourselves what to do. We knew that the Emperor would be speaking in

broadcast until they got the word from Tokyo that Japan had surrendered.

And we did it all without having heard of a Boulder course entitled: BLUFF ONLY WHEN THE OTHER PERSON COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE A CLUE.

*Glen Slaughter
JLS 1943*

[The above anecdote was written for inclusion in the forth-coming history of WWII Japanese language programs instituted by all branches of military and is reprinted here by authorization of the history's authors, Irwin Slesnick and his wife had been the CO of the old "China" 4th.

Carole. Irwin's interest and credibility stems from his enrollment in the Camp Pendleton language school for Marine enlisted men and his service with the 22nd Marines on Okinawa and in postwar China. In private life he was a professor of Biology and the author of numerous publications. The history is in its final editing stage and will cover all the service schools, wartime experiences of graduates and postwar careers of graduates many of whom distinguished themselves in private and public using their Japanese language skills. Look for publication announcement. GSJ]