

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.

Red Flags and Christian Soldiers

(Part IV)

By Tim Shorrock

GOD OR GOVERNMENT?

My father, who is retired and living in a community of former ministers and missionaries in Southern California, first learned about Japan as a boy in Seattle as he watched sleek Japanese freighters gliding in and out of Puget Sound. But his admiration for Japan's economic potential was mixed with apprehension when his grandfather, a Baptist missionary in the Philippines for many years, returned from a voyage to Asia in 1938 predicting war with Japan. In 1942, a few months after Pearl Harbor, my father joined the Navy. After a short stint on destroyer duty, he was selected to study Japanese at the Naval language schools in Colorado and Oklahoma. For the rest of the war, he was a member of the "Boulder[jites]," an elite group of

scholars who parlayed their Japanese language skills into careers as interpreters, occupation officials, C.I.A. officers and diplomats.

My father might have gone that way, too, but he was persuaded by one of his language professors, a Japanese-American, to take a different approach. "We had a small class of people," he recalls. "One day, an older Japanese teacher, who must have been a Christian, was talking about what we would be doing after we left language school. And he just said off-hand, 'I wish at least one of you would go, not with the government, not with the Navy or State Department or whatever, but go to Japan and be a friend in Christ, just be a civilian and have no strings attached.' I thought, well, that's kind of interesting. And I wasn't too thrilled with the Navy. So I did it."

First, he wrote the YMCA, which was overwhelmed with applicants eager to go to Japan, and then his own church, the Disciples. They were interested, and brought him to church headquarters in Indianapolis. But before sending him to teach at a boys school in Tokyo, the Disciples asked him to learn theology at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut. There, he met my mother, the daughter of a Connecticut dairy farmer whose ancestors first came to New England in the 17th century.

My mother developed her interest in the Far East from childhood conversations with a retired English teacher who had founded a Christian girls' school in China and returned to Connecticut in the late 1930s with gripping stories of the Japanese invasion that began in 1931. Those tales sparked a driving ambition in my mother to become a doctor and go to China; but fate, sexual discrimination and economic circumstances led her instead to seek a career as a minister. In 1946, after working for two

years at the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company in Hartford, she enrolled in Yale Divinity, one of ten women in a class of over 100.

Ed. Note: For the entire article on the Web, see the site: http://www.killingthebuddha.com/dogma/red_flags.htm/

Reprise on 'Sensei Caught in the Middle'

I have read with much empathy the account by Jessica Arntson in the July 1, 2003 issue of *The Interpreter*, titled "JLS Sensei, Caught in the Middle". As a member of the Berkeley and then the Boulder Navy Japanese Japanese Language Schools, I often felt that our Japanese instructors were in a very awkward position. On one hand they had to have jobs to provide for their families, and on the other hand they wanted to show their appreciation for their adopted country in its time of need.

Emotionally the Issei and the Nisei had to feel for their Japanese heritage and for their families in Japan. They could not avoid having split loyalties. So it is very easy to understand how those in the internment camps might [have] looked upon them as traitors or as opportunists.

Having spent my early life in China as the child of missionaries, and if the situation had been reversed and I had been in the position of the Japanese in the early 1940s in this country, I am sure the dilemma would have caused me to agonize much in trying to reach a decision.

R. Stuart Hummel
JLS 1942

[Ed. Note: R. Stuart Hummel lost his wife of more than 62 years on March 13, 2003. I know I can speak for our entire staff in offering our deepest condolences. I try to separate like articles and since their was a response to Jessica's article several issues ago, Mr. Hummel's article was pushed into this issue.]

Lt. Cdr. K.D. Ringle Naval Intelligence Gathered & Disregarded

III: The Tachibana Network

Lt. Cdr. Ringle stated that the processed films yielded lists of agents, codes and contact points for Japan's entire West Coast spy network, headed by an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy, Itaru Tachibana. Tachibana was taking English language training in America. He was under suspicion by the ONI and the FBI for espionage, but had been protected by his quasi-diplomatic status and by a lack of hard evidence against him.

The information gleaned from the break-in later helped Ringle, two ONI officers and the FBI to trap Tachibana and deport him for attempting to purchase military secrets. Seized with him was another Japanese spy, Toraichi Kono, who had once worked as a valet for Charlie Chaplin, along with a truckload of documents, which, taken together, allowed Ringle and his associates to effectively dismantle Japan's entire espionage effort on the US West Coast.

The consular break-in, however, yielded information Lt. Cdr. Ringle considered even more important. He found repeated evidence that Tachibana and other Imperial Japanese officials deemed most Japanese Americans, both issei and nisei, not to be potential allies, but to be cultural traitors not to be trusted. The Tachibana files verified a commonly held official viewpoint in ONI, in the War Department, and in the White House throughout 1941 – that the vast majority of Japanese and Japanese Americans living in the United States were loyal and trustworthy. Curtis B. Munson, part of Roosevelt's personal and unofficial intelligence network, reported to the President that if war came, the Japanese Americans would stay "very, very quiet" and that

90 percent “like our way of life best” and “were straining every nerve to show their loyalty”. In light of the Tachibana evidence and the official government view of Japanese Americans, the government actions following Pearl Harbor appear that much more appalling and regrettable.

[To Be Continued, III of VI]

*Adapted from Ken Ringle,
“What Did You Do
Before The War, Dad,”
Washington Post,
December 6, 1981*

Horace G. Underwood, 1917-2004, obit to follow.

nationally known, moot court competition carries his name].

Bert Wechsler, Accounted For

As you know, Burt Wechsler is not in shape to respond very well to questions about his experiences in the program. From previous conversations I recall him saying that it was a great program; that the immersion really got him speaking Japanese, (although the only words he could remember were “ohay_ gozaimasu”); that the teachers were very nice; and that in later life, he regretted not having taken the opportunity to

American History – a real eye-opener for younger people.

go to Japan after the War.

When I tried to discuss the program with him recently, the only thing he could remember was the name of the daughter of one of his teachers, whom he dated: Michiko Saibara. Amazing that the name came back to him. He could not recall her mother’s name [*Saibara, Yuki*]. He did say that when conversing with Michiko, he had spoken some Japanese.

After JLS , Burt was transferred to Chicago (what a lark, as his home was in Gary, IN, about 35 miles from

landed at Lake Erie College, in Ohio. As for work in Japanese, I Chicago), and after a while he lived at home and took the South Shore train daily to his job in Chicago. I always thought his Chicago job was a bit of a joke. He was counseling men about to be discharged from the Navy. He was all of 21 at the time, Some counselor.

Later Burt finished his college work and went to Harvard University Law School [*Where he ran across Leonard Rush*]; practiced law in Chicago and then in Gary; and then taught at Valpariso University Law School. A true civil libertarian,

he was active in the local ACLU and defended many unpopular causes.

In 1972, we moved to Washington, DC, where he taught for 5 years at Antioch School of Law and for 20 at American University Law School. He was a much beloved teacher; 13 times voted the most popular professor at AU Law School; and was given a grand send-off dinner when he retired in 2000 [*AU’s prestigious,*

We will be married 50 years in September (hard for me to believe) and have two splendid daughters, one a free-lance photographer and the other a documentary film maker; one son-in-law; two grandchildren; all of whom live in New York City.

Tell everyone you know who visits Washington to be sure to see the fine exhibition about the Japanese internment camps at the Smithsonian’s Museum of

Good luck in your most worthwhile project.

Frederica W. Wechsler

[Ed. Note: Thanks go Mrs. Wechsler for a fine letter. I always like to get letters from wives, as they add a different perspective. Yuki Saibara signed on as an instructor in 1945.]

Robert Nugent Reports

After the War, eventually, I did a Ph.D., in French, at Yale. Then held various positions until I

did a little here: some independent studies in the language, some supervision of students preparing to go to Japan for a term, a few times, contemporary literature. My main focus, as that of the college, was Western Europe. I taught mainly French, some Spanish and Italian, on occasion. I am in touch with Ed Seidensticker and really no one else from the past. We were both in the Marines.

*Robert Nugent
JLS 1943*

[Ed. Note: Another old letter.]