

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.

WAVES, Ahoy!

When the US declared war in December 1941, my parents were missionaries in Korea (then a possession of Japan). So my parents became prisoners, incarcerated in their own home. However, other missionaries whom I knew were thrown in jail or even tortured. I heard about this in the summer of '42 when the US and Japan agreed to an exchange of prisoners, which included my parents.

This was my motivation for asking the dean of the college where I was teaching to allow me to quit in mid-term and join the Navy, the acceptance of women by the armed Forces having just been announced. The Navy was willing to accept me but said that I must go in as an enlisted WAVE because my father was Canadian and I had been naturalized for less than 10 years. They did, however, give me the interesting job of aerial free gunnery instructor (using synthetic devices). I taught both officers and enlisted gunners at Pensacola, NAS, and Norfolk. In one class, a young class member

became bothersome; so I asked him to stay after class. As soon as we were alone, he said, "How about a date?" "Henderson," I replied, "I wouldn't go on a date with you if you were the last man alive." After that he behaved fairly well in class.

The dean of my college, CDR Margaret Disert, was the CO of the boot camp I attended. When she heard about the JLS she recommended me because of my Korean background and *cum laude* at college and at that point the Navy seemed to forget that I could not be an officer because I had not been a citizen for ten years. So I struggled through Boulder and was commissioned. *[You could not be a normal officer, but you could be an officer in a highly classified field. The same thing happened to me for other reasons – bumped from military intelligence only to be assigned to a nuclear capable, field artillery unit. Go figure, some security risk.]*

Since the WAVES were not sent overseas, most of us JLS Wave grads ended up in Washington, DC, working at Naval Communications. The US had broken some of the Japanese codes and the messages we worked on were in language (Japanese), but were often fragmentary and jumbled. I still feel traitorous talking about this hush-hush work, although I've often wondered whether the old messages most of us worked on really were very important in the war effort *[Virtually all the WWII intelligence papers have been declassified, allowing RAD Layton and others to write their books. Most of the authors stress that decryption would have been of little use without translation and interpretation].*

Anyway, life in Washington, DC was difficult because transportation and housing were so over-taxed with the swollen war population. I had an old ('35) Chevy coupe which ran with difficulty. One rainy day as I drove along I spotted a Navy Captain on the crowded

sidewalk; so I stopped and offered him a ride. He jumped in with alacrity. Remembering my boot camp training, I saluted as well as I could while driving and said, "Ensign Fletcher, Captain." To which he replied, "Captain Richardson (or whatever his name was)".

Four of us WAVES, studying ads in the paper, found an old farm house in Falls Church for rent that was something like \$50.00 a month. It was a cute little house with a screened-in porch and a big, beautiful yard, but no running water. There was a hand pump by the sink, a coal stove, and an outhouse. We moved in. When the weather was good, our Navy friends liked to visit us, and we exchanged country visits for city showers. One time we decided to invite a group and serve sukiyaki. This entailed carefully saving up red meat points, but we finally had enough.

The party was going well. Everyone had had a few drinks, and the first pan of sukiyaki had been served. I went in the kitchen to prepare the second pan-full only to find that the cocker spaniel belonging to one of us had managed to get on the low kitchen table and eat the rest of the meat. However, all was not lost. We had some carefully hoarded luncheon meat in the ice box; and everyone had had a couple of drinks, as mentioned, and had enjoyed the first round; so they didn't seem to notice that the second round was inferior, or they were too polite to say so! Such was the life of the JLS WAVES during WWII.

*Elsie Fletcher Caldwell
JLS 1944*

Ann Arbor to Boulder to Pearl Harbor

I started Law School at the University of Michigan in the Fall of 1941. I soon began dating a girl who lived in the Martha Cooke Dormitory across the street from the Law School. A close friend of hers was Maxine Goode, then dating and later

married to Roger Pineau. We frequently double-dated and Roger and I became close friends.

After Pearl Harbor, Roger learned that the University of Michigan undergraduate school would be offering an eight hour intensive course in Japanese. I had flunked the draft medical examination in the summer of 1941 because of poor eyesight, but heard that the Navy was giving waivers for prospective officers entering into the Japanese Language School.

I arranged to drop five hours of law courses and enrolled in Professor Joe Yamagiwa's course in Japanese. Cliff Graham, Dave Parks, Jack Allen, Lee Perry, Dave Stockton and other future Boulder scholars also were in the class. It was a great group and Cliff then as in the future was outstanding. In the Spring of 1942, Commander Hindmarsh interviewed interested class members for admission to the Boulder course. Most of us applied and were accepted. So in July 1942 we went to Boulder as naval agents and in August were enlisted into the Navy. Roger was my roommate in the Men's Dorm until he married Maxine in November. Lee Perry and Jack Allen were in a nearby room, as were Dave Stockton and his fellow Michigan roommate. Near us were mostly Harvard men from the class before us. I think they started in Berkeley.

About half of the Michigan contingent took Navy commissions and the other half Marine. My recollection is that we started as an all or almost all Michigan group. The sensei included an Ashikaga, who we understood was a baron and a member of the family of shoguns. Things were very informal. The only Navy officers were a Captain and a Commander. They had little interest in us. There was a large school for enlisted radiomen that must have taken most of their time. Captain Walsh, who had commanded a battleship, is

believed to have said that he thought we should fight the Japanese, not talk to them. All I remember of Commander Hoover was that he was very kindly. We hiked-climbed the Flatirons about town and had little contact with the Navy, as such. Later we got regular calisthenics (undo) and finally our Michigan group got the use of a frat house for New Year 1943. Of the 10 or so hosts, only Roger and I wore black ties and most of the guests thought we were the sole hosts.

The class before us graduated

and kept in touch with us. One or more new classes started. The one after us wore enlisted uniforms. At some point, we got room inspections and had to hide our alcohol. Just before graduation we had a ten-day course in military matters. We learned to make beds and drill. We got a lecture from Captain Zacharias of the *Salt Lake City*. He warned us that we might all retire in uniform. We took turns issuing commands and I remember wheeling a squad through bushes as I didn't leave enough room. At graduation we

got our commissions and uniforms. Roger said I looked like a Japanese officer. (to be continued)

Frank E. Roegge
JLS 1943

From the Bottom of the Barrel

A Tribute to Susumu Nakamura, Part II

Mr. Nakamura, a handsome man with jet black hair, impressive presence, self-possession, and calm dignity, came in and gave

me what I thought was a surprisingly short test. Later, the picture of a highly skilled dentist probing at one's teeth for a half a minute and pronouncing them sound came to mind. He was very kind and I am sure he did not mean to, but I must confess that, in the circumstances, his efficient impassivity intimidated me just a little at first. He had read me a page of *Arabiya Uma*, (The Arabian Horse), which I did very easily, we conversed very briefly and, only at my suggestion, he asked me to write a few *Kanji*. It was over, and he

said, very gravely, that he would recommend me, but he couldn't possibly predict what the reaction would be.

I suspect that he must have written a favorable recommendation, because about two months later I was informed that Mr. Glenn Shaw and Commander Hindmarsh would interview me in San Francisco. There, I read from Naganuma the story the Zen monk Ikkyū and "hashi wo watarubekarazu," explained all about the pun on hashi, etc. Afterwards, Mr. Shaw

went next door. Inadvertently, he left the door slightly ajar, and I could hear him pounding on the Commander's table and saying, "We've got to get this man!"

Two months later, when I arrived in Boulder, I was scared stiff by the kind of competition which seemed, I thought, to confront me: all people with proven scholarly ability. The first night, I drifted to sleep and saw to my horror, a white apparition coming through my door. I couldn't quite believe it and struggled to wake myself; at

last when I woke up, covered with perspiration, the ominous white shape had disappeared. I believe this was a phantom of my fear at not being able to make it. (to be cont'd)

Charles D. Sheldon
OLS 1945

[Ed. Note: Dr. Sheldon, Lecturer of Japanese History at the University of Cambridge, was presumed by Pineau to have been deceased, but he had no detailed information in the necrology. We would be glad to hear any information on Dr. Sheldon.]

Marines JLOs at War

Roger Dingman, "Language at War: U.S. Marine Corps Japanese Language Officers in the Pacific War," *Journal of Military History*, is now available.

Anyone wanting a copy should contact Prof. Dingman at <dingmanr@aol.com> or by mail c/o Department of History, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90889-0034.