

# 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.*

## A Judicial Career

I attended the Japanese language School from December 1942 until February 1944. As with many JLS/OLS alumni, use of the Japanese language did not cease with the end of the War.

[The JLS/OLS] project compels the observation that the ability to use the Japanese language has had a profound effect upon the occupational paths of many JLS graduates. I know from your publication that I share with many, a strong feeling of gratification for sound training that led to interesting and productive careers.

After graduation from JLS, I served as a translator at JICPOA in Hawaii, participated in the invasion of Saipan, served as a member of the staff of Admiral John Hoover (Commander Forward Area), participated in the original reconnaissance of the northern Mariana Islands, had occupation duty in Japan and compiled many reports of interrogations of POWs and civilians.

In early 1946 in Honolulu, while on terminal leave from the

Navy, I was recruited by an official of the United States Commercial Company for a year's duty as Senior Representative in the Yap-Ulithi area of the Pacific. That government corporation was responsible for rehabilitating the economy of the former Trust Territory of the Pacific and for assisting the Navy in governing the area. One of the principal reasons for my recruitment was the fact that I was familiar with the Japanese language, which was the language required by Japan throughout the former Trust Territory. My family and I lived in Yap from early 1946 until early 1947, when we returned to the University of Colorado for completion of my (legal) education [*Go Buffs!*].

After serving a legal apprenticeship of a year in Florida under my former commanding officer in Guam, Francis Whitehair (later President Harry Truman's Undersecretary of the Navy), my family and I returned to Hawaii, where I was engaged in private legal practice with the firm of Levinson and Cobb.

(To be continued)

*Judge Russell L. Stevens, ret.  
JLS 1944*

*[Ed. Note: An old letter relating a fascinating legal career. I included his honorific title.]*

## Newton L. Steward BIC/JLO, USNR

Newton Stewart's parents were educational missionaries in China, so he grew up in China for the first 17 years of his life. He then attended University of Redlands, and also did a year of graduate work at the University of California at Berkeley. During his time as a Japanese Language Officer in the war, starting when he was stationed in Noumea (1943), he suffered from severe migraines but pushed himself to work and perform his duties. The doctors were unsure of what caused his

headaches - and he was given shots and different treatments but nothing worked.

In the words of Cdr. John W. Steele, USN "He was one of the most conscientious, willing and capable young officers among some two hundred and fifty I had working for me. "Stewart refused a suggestion that he be sent back to the States because he knew there was a critical need for his Japanese linguistic skills, and when his severe migraines occurred (about once a week) he would use his leisure day so he would not have to miss work.

Persevering through his health problems, Stewart even volunteered for duty on Bougainville during the "Easter Push," but he was evacuated from Bougainville to Russell Island due to a dangerous kidney infection. However, once on Russell Island, the doctor that examined him did not think that he was sick, and so returned him to duty. In May/June of 1945 Stewart was on Okinawa where his headaches became so debilitating that he was sent to the hospital.

Despite his continuing infirmity, he still continued work (including arduous patrols and beach landings), sometimes doing more than his share. He earned a Bronze Star Medal for "meritorious achievement" and "exceptional skill and bravery" on Aka Shima. He was part of a group that went to Aka Shima, Ryukyu Islands to investigate the possibility of a peaceful surrender. After radio broadcasts and a flag system had been devised for communication (June 1945), he attended a conference with the island's commanding officer that brought about a peaceful surrender of island's military/civilian population.

During the war, his father (who besides a missionary was the head of the Botany Department at Nanking University) was a P.O.W. In San Francisco on October 20, 1945, Newton Stewart married

Elizabeth Sturen. They had three sons and one daughter.

Stewart managed and owned KIEN (TV) and KRED (radio), both in Eureka, California. In 1971 he was appointed to the State Board of Education by California Governor Reagan, and from 1972-75 he served as the president of directors. He was a member of the Rotary International Club, the American Legion, the Salvation Army, the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, Sigma Delta Chi, and the First Baptist Church. Stewart passed away on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, 1978.

*Anne Getts  
Student Assistant*

## Samoa Marines: An Addendum

Harry Pratt told me the following:

Harry was at the Samoa school, and came back from the Pacific and reported to HQ USMC, he told the personnel guy that "it's going to be a long war," and that there were some marines out in the field who had some language training. He gave names and encouraged the Corps to find them and get them to the OLS in Boulder.

Selden, Croyle, Stone, and Pratt, among others, were recalled from their posts and reported to Boulder.

Two issues were immediately apparent. First, all these recalled Marines were combat veterans, and were looked upon with some degree of awe and trepidation by the other OLS students, who were mostly right out of the college campuses and would be ersatz officers in the future. Stone had endured Guadalcanal and survived Tarawa, for example. Second, since they all had some language skills -- and had actually used them in the field -- the sensei at first didn't know what to do with them.

The solution, offered by Harry Pratt, was for the new guys to form study groups of

their own, with a work plan created by the group and the sensei. The study group drilled on their own and then had their work checked by the sensei.

There are more stories from Harry, but those are for him to tell. Suffice to say that since he was the senior marine (and most of the time the senior officer overall), he got in the middle of just about every caper in the place. Harry ended up as one of the translators at the war crimes trials and lived in Japan on and off for years.

Bill Croyle, Jr.  
USMC, ret.

## Japanese Interpreters

Cal Dunbar of West Yellowstone, Montana, who served as a Marine Sergeant in World War II, has some interesting footnotes to add to William Manchester's article, "The Man Who Could Speak Japanese," in our December, 1975, issue of *American Heritage Magazine*:

As an ex-enlisted Japanese language interpreter with the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, I really enjoyed "The Man Who Could Speak Japanese". The article has all the flavor, color, and authenticity of the period –

particularly in regard to the manner with which Marines who could really speak Japanese were treated by the other Marines of all ranks.

However, I think it is only fair to venture that the impostor would have had a quick exposure in outfits other than the 29<sup>th</sup> Marines at that stage of the Pacific warfare. I graduated from the enlisted Japanese Language School at Camp Pendleton in May 1944. By that time the Japanese language School had sent out several classes, and we already had Major Wolf of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, of Guadalcanal fame, and Captain Pratt of the

2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, Tarawa operation, instructing at the Pendleton School. It would have been a delicate maneuver to con anyone very long at the battalion level in the field, as there were competent interpreters in the service, even if they were few in relation to the number of Marines involved.

But Manchester has the reaction of the Corps to these interpreters down pat. I recall one incident that took place in Early June of 1944 at Oahu, where seven of us sent from the school at Pendleton were waiting to staff the interrogation centers soon to be established at Tinian

and Guam. As the Saipan battle raged, replacements flowed through the camp to replenish the divisions engaged in heavy fighting. We seven mustered nightly in the formation as the others passed through. Finally, after a couple of weeks, the first sergeant began to recognize us. One night he asked us why we were still there. One of our more mature members replied that we were interpreters. "What?" the sergeant looked baffled.

"We speak Japanese," we explained grandly.

The grizzled, "old" NCO looked us over carefully for some time – apparently weighing the ferocity of the annihilation in the Saipan operation and its resultant steady flow of replacements – and finally asked in wonder: "But – *who* are you boys going to talk to?"

That was the common Marine attitude at that stage of the game out there. A little later, "psychological warfare" came to the Marines – who quickly realized they could use the POWs to retrieve Japanese

stragglers in the Marianas at no cost to the Marines. We got some 2,000 from the Guam jungles alone with no loss to our people (or theirs) by using Japanese POWs to go into the jungle and contact holdouts.

Sent by Cal Dunbar  
From "Postscripts to History"  
American Heritage Magazine  
[January 1976?] P.101

[Ed. Note: Perhaps a more accessible version of the Manchester story about Herbert DeGreve can be found in the NY Times Magazine, May 7, 1995, pp.96-97.]

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