

*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.*

**Donald K. Robertson**  
**OLS 1945**  
**Died July 1, 1999**

Thank you for your kind letter and the update on OLS. My husband, Donald K. died on 1 July '99, after a cancer onset he couldn't overcome. He would have enjoyed very much your letters and materials. I've been reading *The Interpreter* and enjoying it also. I was there at the time of my husband's studies; we'd just been married and figured, as most married people did, that we'd take the time to be together. We enjoyed the hiking to Green "Hiru", and the lovely campus, a good way to start a marriage that lasted almost 55 years.

Don's class consisted of seven members. I remember Magee well; we saw him once in Baltimore. I don't remember whether it was before or after Don got poliomyelitis. He contracted it in 1950 and was able to walk, with crutches, the rest of his life. He was with the Naval Reserve until he got polio. He went back to his former

employer, Martin Marietta and was with them until he retired, almost 45 years later. He enjoyed his work and rose in rank with the years. Don very much enjoyed sports car rallies and participated in them for years both as competitor and as rally master. Our three children will also enjoy your letter and learning that the OLS graduates are being honored in the U of C Archives. In reading about that special ceremony to honor the sensei [in *Pomona*], I wish to add my thanks, also. I apologize for my arthritic handwriting, if you've made it this far. I tell my children that they will be able to read, maybe, the first three words; after that they're on their own. You get the same instruction. If you have the occasion to contact Magee, thank him, for me, for remembering Don.

Sincerely, Anna Robertson

[Ed. Note: Very regrettably, soon after I was contacted by Mrs. Robertson, her daughter wrote to inform me that after unexpectedly falling into a coma from unknown causes on June 8, she passed away on June 16, 2004. Her children saw my letter to her requesting permission to print this letter and wrote, "The three of us respond with a definite yes. We know that Mom wrote an accurate account of Dad's life and achievements and a loving tribute to her husband. We would like to add her to that tribute because they were truly supportive of each other in everything from challenges to joys. Mom was Dad's greatest admirer and stood fast by his side so together they approached what life brought their way and made the best of it."

They were newlyweds when Dad was assigned to the JLS and, despite the War, that time held some of their fondest memories. We have heard stories of their little house with apple crates for furniture, the movies they saw in Japanese, Dad and his classmates having to speak Japanese outside the classroom, and even about Nagabo, their cat. We grew up with Dad asking "Shio to pepparu wo kudasai" and for a fresh glass of "mizu" at the dinner table. I think all eight grandchildren know the meaning of "ame Mommy", the shortened version of "Ame ga

futemasu, ne?" That sprinkling of Japanese trickled through us and to two grandchildren even took Japanese classes in high school.."(Ms. Patricia R. Traveria)]

**Magee's Navy**

My career in the US Navy was perhaps unusual and hardly distinguished.

In the summer of 1944, I was a seventeen-year-old student at Bowdoin College in Maine. I was in my junior academic year, somewhat ahead of the conventional schedule for a person of my age due to some unusual circumstances. In a few months (December) I would be eighteen and a target for the draft. By the summer of 1944, most of the military training programs were phasing down or full; even the Navy was not taking many draftees. The obvious, and not particularly inviting, prospect seemed to be the Army, a trip to Fort Monmouth and then the European Theater with a rifle. By chance I heard of the Navy language program and having nothing to lose, applied. (A math major, I had little evident facility in language, as was pointed out clearly to me by my college advisor.) I went to Washington to meet with Commander Hindmarsh.

I wanted to study Russian, but Cdr. Hindmarsh refused that choice. He said by the time I finished the six month course I would still be under age to be commissioned and he would lose control of me. So Japanese it would be since the thirteen month course would see me through my nineteenth birthday.

The arrangement was straightforward: I would go to Boulder while still seventeen with the impressive title (to a teenager) of "naval agent" and at a pay level that after charges for room and board would leave me net pay equal to that of an apprentice seaman. On my eighteenth birthday, I would go to the recruiting station in Denver to be inducted into the

Navy as an apprentice seaman and ordered immediately back to Boulder. If I lasted three months in the course (through the infamous Book Two), I would receive a second class rating which would bring my net pay up to that of an ensign. If not, boot camp, still preferable to Fort Monmouth. When I was old enough, presumably I would be commissioned. (to be cont'd)

John F. Magee  
 OLS 1945

[Ed. Note: I thought I would start John Magee's letter next to that of Mrs. Robertson, friends that they are. Placing these letters together seems even more poignant considering the sudden death of Mrs. Robertson.]

**Enemies in the**  
**Heat of Battle,**  
**Friends for 60 Years**

SAIPAN, Northern Mariana Islands, June 15 - When he first met John Rich [JLS 1943], Takeo Sato, a 25-year-old Japanese Imperial Navy officer, had just been pulled shell-shocked from the ruins of a sniper cave here. Placed on a volcanic rock, he braced himself for interrogation by Mr. Rich, a battle-hardened 26-year-old US marine.

"I expected that as a captured enemy soldier, someone would hit me," Mr. Sato recalled on Monday. "But John-san was a real gentleman. He was very levelheaded. He was not forceful."

Giving his side of the story, Mr. Rich, a former first lieutenant in the Marines, said, "We realized we had a very intelligent and wonderful man."

That first encounter, a prisoner interrogation as the sun set over the Western Pacific, began a friendship that has spanned six decades. It was this lasting bond, between onetime victor and onetime vanquished, that brought Mr. Sato, now 85, and Mr. Rich, now 86, back to Saipan this week for the 60th anniversary of the start of the

battle that broke the back of Japanese military power in the Pacific.

With the American capture of Saipan and nearby Tinian, both in July of 1944, American bombers were able to launch direct attacks on Japan's main islands, including the nuclear bomb missions that flew out of Tinian in August 1945.

In the fighting that raged for 25 days over this 72-square-mile volcanic island, about 30,000 Japanese and 3,144 American soldiers were killed, and another 10,952 Americans were wounded. For the roughly 40 American veterans who traveled to Saipan, about 3,700 miles west of Hawaii, it was not the numbers but the faces that brought them here.

Perhaps the most singular reunited pair has been the former Japanese prisoner of war and his onetime American interrogator. The bond was strong enough to bring them together one more time, traveling from their seashore retirement houses - one from Maine, the other from near Yokohama. For Mr. Sato, it was his first return to the scene of his ultimate humiliation as a Japanese soldier, his capture by the Americans.

Drawing on their own experiences, both men say they cannot understand news reports of American military abuses of prisoners in Iraq. Cautious about drawing wider conclusions, they say their friendship illustrates how mortal enemies can overcome the passions of the past.

As cows munched on forest grass and roosters crowed in the distance, the two men toured the cliffs and caves of northern Saipan, the jungle-clad redoubt where Japanese defenders had retreated to make a last stand against the inexorable advance of American troops, fighting men backed by tanks and awe-inspiring naval artillery. In the final days, some 4,000 Japanese women and children had jumped off northern cliffs in mass suicides prompted by fear of capture.

"I was in a cave like this," Mr. Sato told Mr. Rich as they stood in a high-ceilinged limestone cavern, with vines and roots obscuring the light from

the overcast day. Their wives, Doris Lee Halstead Rich and Kishiko Sato, stood on the dry leaves of the cave's snug interior, quietly absorbing new insights into men they had known for half a century.

"When the Americans landed on Saipan, we knew the Americans meant business," recalled Mr. Sato, who had attended one of Tokyo's top technical universities. "We all knew we were going to die; it was just a question of when."

"Occasionally, one of our snipers would fire at American soldiers walking nearby," said Mr. Sato, who as a lieutenant in a navy construction unit had been on the island for four months, building a military airfield. "The Americans would return fire, but we knew they never fought inside the caves. They threw in grenades, used flamethrowers."

That final moment seemed to come when an American naval shell hit the cave, blowing open a wall and half burying Mr. Sato. Deafened in his right ear, he came to his senses to see a marine taking aim.

"Don't shoot him," I heard another American say," Mr. Sato said in a mix of English and Japanese, with Mr. Rich's twin sons, Whitney and Nate, alternating as translators.

John Rich, who arrived on the scene about an hour later, said: "When they say that marines don't take prisoners, that's a lot of baloney. We lost men taking prisoners. A man standing next to me was once killed trying to take prisoners."

After the interrogation - "He talked freely but he didn't blab anything that he shouldn't have as a Japanese officer," Mr. Rich said - Lieutenant Sato was sent on a long journey that culminated in an officers' prisoner-of-war camp in Honolulu.

One day, he received a visit from Mr. Rich, whose home base was Hawaii.

"We became friends with them," Mr. Rich recalled, noting that his team of interrogators had been eager to improve their Japanese language skills. "We played volleyball with them at the camp."

Six months after the war ended, in February 1946, Mr. Rich found himself posted to Tokyo as a wire service reporter. Armed with photographs and the home addresses of six of "my POW's," he "wangled a jeep" and, one by one, visited their family homes.

"Two little girls in wooden clogs led me up a little alley to Takeo's house," he recalled of the visit. "His mother and his kid brother, a college boy, were there. His picture was draped in black. They had his posthumous Buddhist name. They thought he was dead."

The news of their son's survival provided the bond for a family friendship that has lasted a lifetime. A one-year assignment to Japan stretched into almost 40 years of comings and goings.

"One day, Takeo introduced me to this cute schoolgirl. He ended up marrying her," he recalled, out of earshot of Kishiko, now a serene 77-year-old grandmother of four. "She was the daughter of the finest crystal glass maker in Japan."

For both couples, sons arrived at roughly the same time.

"We used to go down to their place on the shore for New Year's Eve," Whitney Rich, now 46, recalled, driving a rental car down Saipan's main road. "In the summers, it was Go Karting, swimming in the public pool, camping in the mountains. I gave a speech at Gento's wedding."

Over the weekend both former soldiers reflected on their close encounters with death and war.

John Rich visited Unai Chulu, a beach at Tinian where, 60 years ago, he spent a night dug in the sand just below the firing angle of five Japanese tanks. On Sunday afternoon at the beach, he watched the flash of flippers as his 7-year-old granddaughter, Madelaine, and his 10-year-old grandson, Dylan, snorkeled for sea slugs.

"You think of the ones who did not survive, who did not get married, who did not have kids," he said in the cool stillness of the hillside cave.

"Takeo is a great guy, one of my best friends," Mr. Rich said, grasping the hand of the man who was once his captive. "Wars

end. People can get along right, if you treat them right."

James Brooke  
New York Times  
June 20, 2004

[Ed. Note: Bill Hudson and Mr. Rich sent this article in 2004. For all those who do not get the New York Times, here it is].

## Reprise on Dr. Sheldon

[In reference to the article on Dr. Sheldon, *The Interpreter* (Aug.15, 2004)], I believe we can assume Dr. Sheldon passed away some time ago as Roger Pineau had guessed. My source was a retired Tokyo University Law Professor. We had all worked together at the International Military Tribunal, Far East during the early days of the Occupation. My contact [with him] resumed in Berkeley where Sheldon got his doctorate and then for a short time at the State Department. He then went to Cambridge and after many years passed on.

Yukio Kawamoto  
US Army MIS, 12/42

## 'The Older We Get..., The Better We Were.'

[Continued from last issue] Maybe I will pursue Dingman as he summers in Glade Park, CO near Fruita where my daughter lives. Dingman had contacted the late Jim Jefferson of Fruita. I had never met him until the 2002 Boulder Reunion.

I saw my friend George Ward of nearby Soquel again. He is the older brother of the late naval JLO David Ward who did radio traffic work at JICPOA earlier in the War. David located a IJN carrier, the brass notified a sub nearby that sank it. This is written in Holmes' *Double Edged Secrets*. David is on Pineau's necrology. George was the CO of the first USMC rocket detachment which worked Suribachi over at Iwo. He later went to Yale on the GI Bill, then back to Korea and retired a major after serving from his entrance into the USMC in 1936 as an 18 year old boot. He was an armorer by specialty. (Cont'd)

Cal Dunbar  
USMCEL 1943-1945