

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

Number A

★ Remember September 11, 2001 ★

May 8, 2002

The Japanese Language School Archival Project

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, correspondence, photographs, and records of graduates of the US Navy Japanese Language School, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1942-1946. We assemble these papers in recognition of the contributions made by JLS graduates to the War effort in the Pacific, the successful occupation of Japan, the creation of Japanese language programs across the country, and the development of cultural reconciliation programs after World War II.

Second Pre-Reunion Issue

A second Pre-Reunion *Interpreter* is being issued as it turned out we have too much news to wait for later.

Attendance Roster As of May 2002

Registered

Adelson, Theodore
Brown, Sidney
Bruns, Robert
Chaffin, Verner
Craig, John
Cross, Charles
Chung, Kathleen
Dingman, Roger (S)
Dornheim, Arthur
Dunbar, Cal
Elsbree, Willard
Foley, Mike
Furnas, Wendell
Hackett, Roger
Hauck, Paul
Himel, William
Hodes, Michael
Imai, Mrs. Martha
Jenson, Neil
Jones, Carl

*Sensei

Judd, Morris
Lefko, Orville
Luthy, Ray
Mallory, Frank
Martin, Harris
Mayer, Jean
McCubbin, John
Mendenhall, George
Moss, Mike
Muheim, Harry
Myers, Larry
Newman, William
Okamoto, Allen
Orlean, Martin
Ostensoe, O.
Pratt, Harry
Prestrud, Stuart
Riccio, Guy
Schwantes, Robert
Seymour, Lawrence
Sheeks, Robert
Slaughter, Glen
Slesnick, Carole (S)
Slesnick, Irwin (S)
Stone, Elmer
Tucker, Frank
Vincent, Larry
Wald, Roy
Weil, Bill
Weisbard, Sam
Weissberg, Al & Muriel
Wiles, Ernest
Williams, Dan
Wren, Harold
Yumoto, Mrs. Vickie

Call-Ins to Archives

Boller, Paul
Moss, Richard
Tucker, Simon
Walker, Robert
Imai, Mrs.
Hoshino, Hiromichi*
Hirabayashi, Martin
Yamashita, Kiyoshi*

Locals

Willes, Don
Sano, Miya

Requests for Invitation

Yamamoto, Joyce
Suzuki, Victor
Matsuzawa, Deen
Shinoda, Yo (K.Yokouchi)
Ishizaki, Takako
Suzuki, Mikao
Chung, Kathleen Iwata
Kirsh, June Tomita*
Imai, Fumi Morita*
Kreider, Lillian Inana*
Scott, Grace Nakasone*

Calling All WAVES

The Archives is wondering where the WAVES are! Are any of you coming to this reunion? Regrettably, Emma Layman passed away earlier in the year. She had been looking forward to attending a reunion, but thought the June 2002 date too far in the future for her. She was right. Marie Edwards has had several knee operations and cannot make this reunion, however much she had been looking forward to doing so.

We strongly urge interested WAVES to come to the reunion. We want to honor *all* the US Navy Japanese / Oriental Language School graduates and instructors who came to Boulder. "Just say no to 'Boulder Boys'!"

Tributes to Sensei

In order to properly honor JLS instructors present and absent, as well as their kin, short, five to eight minute, tributes will be offered by picked JLS graduates at each function. During the reception at the University Club, following the Plaque Dedication, four such tributes will be read. A number of graduates have expressed interest in locating or meeting their Sensei. Those who would like to be one of the seven offering testimonials to the Sensei, please send a copy of your comments to the Archives. Those tributes that are not selected for presentation at the reunion will be published in future issues of *The Interpreter*.

JLS Graduates & Sensei Unable to Come

The following graduates have told us that they will not be able to come, either due to prior or unexpected commitments, or health considerations. Perhaps friends at the reunion may want to use the Archives phones to call their friends or send

postcards to those absent friends during the Reunion. We will be providing telephones and some postcards, at Archives expense, during the Reunion:

Amos, Bill
Conroy, F. Hilary
Croyle, Bill
Dur, Phillip
Edwards, Marie
Flaherty, Duane
Harrington, John
Hudson, Bill
Ingersoll, Ross
Juster, Norman
Karasick, Daniel
Kinsman, Robert
Levine, Sol & Betty (Registered anyway)
Masser, William
Packman, Martin
Williams, Norton & Marylou

A Note to The Interpreter: The Revue

We, the people of the JLS, men and women now rounding into our eighties and heading for our nineties and beyond, have been badly in need of an archive. And fortunately, we now have one—a coherent and concerned archive that actually puts out a publication on a regular basis. Terrific!

We needed the archive simply because in our ever-lengthening lives, so damned much *stuff* has happened to us! On our screens of memory, we can now access the vast panorama that we call our past. But we can never see the whole thing. We see only *shards* of the past. The archive lets us put our shards together with the shards of others. This is for our own pleasure and edification- and for the benefits of the curious researchers who will inevitably follow. They always show up, looking for grist. And they will research anything.

The following Muheim shards are inspired by Gene Sosin's detailed and jolly letter dealing with the musical comedy mounted by JLS people in University Theatre in the spring

of 1943. As I was one of the men in the chorus, it was wonderful to read the witty lyrics that were written by Mr. Sosin, and that have been resonating undiminished in his head for more than half a century. The lyrics described what our oddly disparate group was doing at C.U.- and how we got there. (The WAVES had not yet arrived, so we were indeed, the Boulder Boys.)

I actually began to sing aloud as I read the lyrics, for the rollicking Gilbert and Sullivan music came instantly to mind. In his letter, Gene Sosin did leave out one phrase, however, perhaps in deference today's sensibilities. Omitted was the lyric: "From the stories that you hear, you may think we are ir-re-vo-cab-ly queer." "Queer" was a much more benign word in those days, meaning simply odd or goofy. Today, the word inflames passions and even causes murder in the state of Wyoming. But Gene meant that we were simply an odd bunch- thoughtful, quiet, myopic men recruited from library stacks to become unlikely warriors in a global conflict. He was right about this: only a few of us resembled John Wayne.

I first heard of the proposed production one night in February of that year when Professor Francis Wolle knocked on the door of my room in the basement of Baker Hall. This man from the English Department had apparently been asked to be a kind of link between the JLS and the university administration. Francis Wolle was an amiable academic with a ready smile, the rimless glasses, the drooping cigarette, the salt-and-pepper suit- including the vest- and polished shoes. One of my clearest shards growing out of our talk this night- and as we came to know each other better—was the cascade of cigarette ashes that were always tumbling down onto his vest. He would brush them away without ever breaking the flow of the conversation.

Entering the room, he sat down, leaned forward quite confidentially, and said he thought I could help him. It seems that the people of Boulder, along with some CU faculty members, considered many of

the language students to be half-latin, disdainful young men with patronizing view of the town and the university. Or to use his word, they were "snooty." More specifically, the problem people were "snooty Easterners." Though I said nothing, I concurred with this estimate. Wolle went on to point out that the script of a musical comedy now being prepared for presentation by the JLS in the university theatre might be written to help change this perception, and so help heal this breach.

What would my role be? Wolle respected the First Amendment, and did not want to edit the script, but he had heard that I had written funny material for student shows at Stanford in the previous four years, and he thought that if I could gracefully inject myself into the project by joining the creative team, I might influence the material in a non-snooty direction. He was worried because the script was being written by a Harvard man; one of those Easterners.

I was sympathetic, and I was myself a plebian Westerner—forelock and all—but I had not come to Boulder to heal ancient North American social fractures. (Fractures that had been noted by deToqueville.) I had come here to study this damnably elusive Japanese language, and I was afraid that I might flunk out if I lost my shaky focus on the Nihongo for even a minute. I had to regretfully decline the professor's request.

A few days before the single performance, however, Ned Coffin and Nort Williams dragooned me into the chorus, from which there had been dropouts. Tom Flournoy was the chorusmaster. He was a kindly man with a long slender face that showed pain easily. He was also a Whiffenpoof, a member of that deservedly famous Yale singing group, and the expression on his face as he led us through Sosin's lyrics and other songs that were Whiffenpoof standards, often showed that we were indeed a watered-down version of the "gentlemen songsters off on a spree." But our chorus opened the show, and we were a success. Sosin's lyrics, as he pointed out,

were filled with good-natured kidding of Boulder landmarks. He says that "a good time was had by all." My shard of memory tells me, however, that a good time was had by the JLS people that comprised at least half the audience. They kept laughing all the way. The citizens of Boulder were more restrained in their response, and when Larry Vincent began his solo performance, they were stunned.

Larry did a nightclub turn that closed the first act and our part of the program. His act was in those days called a "female impersonation." Today, of course, the phrase is "in drag." Introduced in a muted voice by his accompanist, Larry moved gracefully out to center stage—wearing a long, pure-white gown. Leaning back against the grand piano, he began to sing in a clear, womanly voice. I don't remember the song, but it was torchy and suggestive. Clearly, this was not the kind of impersonation that you find when the football team dresses up as coeds and line dances, or when the sailors in *South Pacific*, string two coconut shells onto their chests and sang "There is Nothing like a Dame." No, this was a solid attempt at "the real thing." I learned later that Larry was impersonating the singer, Hildegard—an icon of the era—but he sang much better than she did.

In an instant, the social problem of snootiness had been replaced by the older social problem of erratic eroticism. Looking back, it is clear that this was simply not the kind of material you brought to a small western town, situated at the first up thrust of the grand Rocky Mountains in the year 1943. The down-to-earth citizens of Boulder simply could not fathom that that this lovely creature on the stage was in physical fact a male Yeonman First Class in the United States Navy, whose day job was to assist in the defeat of the Empire of Japan. I don't mean to sound experienced or blasé about this moment, I had grown up in the roaring City of San Francisco, but I had never seen *anything* like *this*!.. Larry was stunning, and even, in his own way, wistful. A memorable

shard, indeed. But during the intermission, I could hear mutterings in the lobby. What was Boulder coming to? That was the question.

Act Two- for which a pale and shaken Professor Wolle did not stay—was an earnest student performance of John Millington Synge's one-act tragedy, *Riders to the Sea*. And a memory shard for me here remains a rich and sentimental one. For when the curtain went up, I saw for the first time the beautiful woman who would three years later become my wife. And who still is. All throughout the performance, I just kept looking at Jane Curtze, and, my memory of the play itself is faint to non-existent.

Well, those are my shards—for now. It was perhaps one of the most bizarre and mismatched evenings in the history of the American theatre. The Japanese work is "irimajite." Mixed up. Yet the evening was but a sidebar in the majestic mews story of World War Two—the largest and most expensive public event of the twentieth century. It will be interesting to see what those researchers of the future make of it. And it was wonderful, of course, that we won the war.

Harry Miles Muheim
JLS 1944
(303) 417-1093

[Ed. Note: Now it's clear. "Boulder Boys" came from the lyrics of the Revue. Since the Review took place before the WAVES came, of course the WAVES wouldn't remember the lyric. Since there were no women taking the course up to that time, all the JLSers were boys. This explains why some graduates remember the term and the rest do not. I used to think that Boulder's inability to take criticism or political incorrectness were recent phenomena, I guess I was wrong. These failings seem to have a historic underpinning. Harry took myself and a student to lunch at Tom's Tavern, where he regaled us with memories and insights.]