Professor Keene, I'll start out by saying that I've just finished reading very quickly this morning your book on Meeting With Japan and I know that you've already discussed in print quite a number of answers to the questions that I have. Nevertheless, I'll try to work in and around what you've already written so that you don't have to necessarily repeat. Could I go over again just a little bit more about your childhood, where you were born and where you grew up.

DK: I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I don't really remember the place where I was born, but the place I grew up was a rather superior section of Brooklyn with private houses and lawns and big yards and dogs and things of that sort. It actually was above our means. The house was bought in 1929 with a huge mortgage and paying back the mortgage was the main element in my life until finally we sold the house. That must have been about 1936. But there was almost nothing at all in my life which had any relation to Japan. The only thing that was there was—well, there were two things. First of all, at some Christmas I was given a set of Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia, which had three volumes on foreign countries. The three countries were France, Holland and Japan. I was the most extreme Francophile. I loved everything about France and possibly because of this particular book with its pretty pictures of 18th century ladies and gentlemen dancing on the bridge at Avignon and so on. And I also loved the descriptions of France in Child's History of the World I read—-I think the author was Calvert or some such name—.
which I read again and again. I had a completely unhistorical approach to
history. I thought if you read a history book often enough eventually things
would turn out the way you wanted them to turn out so that Marie Antoinette
would get away at the end. I was always cursed when she was caught on the
flight to Valonne and so on. But I had almost no interest in Japan. The
only other thing was there was a Japanese girl in my junior high school class
and I have almost no recollections of her. I just remember there was such a
person. I wasn't especially interested in her as she didn't seem actually
exotic or anything at all. She was just another girl in the class. That was
about all I can say about it.

Q: What school was this?

DK: This was called Seth Lowe Junior High School. At that time bright pupils
in elementary schools in New York would skip a grade and I did that twice.
And then there was another possibility which was if you went to junior high
school, you could do three years, which would correspond to the last two years
of elementary school and the first year of high school, I think, or something
like that and you could save another year. This appealed to me and so the
junior high school was very far from where I lived. I had to take a long bus
ride to get there. It would sound very immodest if I were to say I was so
bored by study at the usual pace that I'd do anything to go faster. And so I
was very glad to go to this junior high school and the result of that was that
I entered college at the age of 16.

Q: It just occurred to me that it would have been most unusual for a Japanese
to have been in one of these schools on the East Coast at that time. She
must have been from a diplomatic or a business family.

DK: A business family probably. I mentioned it in my book. The only time I really
became aware of—her name I think was Amiko or something like that—her was at the graduation ceremony. The principal read each of our names one after another. Then he came to her name and read it backwards and we were all terribly embarrassed for her and for him, and it was not for years later that I realized that Japanese names were all backwards. In other words, we were using them the wrong way and the principal, who probably knew the right way to read a Japanese name, was trying to please her parents by reading her name in Japanese style, but none of us knew that.

Q: You mentioned in Meeting With Japan you father's business and how the family was hit by the Depression. I wonder if you'd like to say a little bit more about your mother. Did she very much encourage your reading, your interest, as a child?

DK: Not that I recall. My mother had a kind of gift of languages. She had grown up in New York and she had had playmates who spoke several different languages. And she learned enough of these languages to carry on a simple conversation. And she was very proud of the fact that she could speak French. Her French was sort of peculiar but she had only studied it in high school and had almost no opportunity to use it afterwards. But she would write little poems in French to me on my birthday and so on and so on. I think she was pleased that I studied French but I don't recall that she ever or anybody ever encouraged me in my studies. I loved reading and at that time and probably still in New York City schools one would be given textbooks for the year, be lent them at the beginning of the term, and generally I'd read them the same day, read the whole textbook and then wouldn't have to look at them again. All this I'm sure sounds terribly immodest but it points, I think, to the fact that there wasn't very much provision for unusual students.
When I got to college at the age of 16 I began to suffer for the things I had previously thought of as being advantageous because there's an enormous difference between a 16-year-old and an 18-year-old as far as social life is concerned, and I suffered in many ways because of that. But I somehow took to reading, I took to books, studying foreign languages. My father took me to Europe when I was nine at my insistence. I'm almost incapable even now of weeping even a single tear, no matter what terrible things happen, but then I wept for three hours in a row. And my father, astonished and horrified, finally agreed to take me to Europe, and it was the best thing that could have happened. It couldn't have happened after then because my father wouldn't have had enough money. I said, "Use all of my money." I knew how much was in my account, money given when I was born and so on. He took me to Europe and I realized for the first time the great importance of learning foreign languages and the terrible frustration when one is with someone and one can't talk to them in their language.

Q: Did your father know any foreign languages?

DK: My father learned German very well. He was sent to Hanover as a young man to learn German and did. He was hopeless in any other language. I remember trying to teach him Spanish. I had studied Spanish in high school. In 1936 we were going to move to Spain and my father thought he should learn some Spanish. So I was giving him lessons in Spanish, but he couldn't learn it, too late perhaps. And then in July of 1936 the Spanish Civil War broke out and we couldn't go. Again, all these things, one's life is determined not only by things that you consciously do but by such acts as the outbreak of a war. I think my whole life certainly would have been different if we had gone to Spain. I'd probably be in Spain at this moment.
Q: Was he going to reestablish business?

DK: Yes. My father then had business in Spain. He had two factories, one in Barcelona and one in Madrid, and that was where his business was. He had sold things in America that were made in Spain. It was essentially in Spain, we were going to move to Spain and stay there. It was not just a visit. I was already inscribed in the register of the English school in Barcelona. We were supposed to move in September and then the war broke out in July.

Q: When he took you on this trip to Europe in 1931, did he take you all over many, many countries?

DK: No. We went to Paris where we spent the most time and then to Switzerland for a short time and then to Vienna and then I flew from Vienna to Berlin. It was the first time I had ever been in an airplane and I was petrified. The planes in those days would do about 100 miles an hour and they'd stop for lunch in Prague. Then we flew on to Berlin where I spent again perhaps a week or so and then went to Bremen where we boarded a ship. My memories are mainly of Paris, which I remembered very well even years later, and of Vienna for various reasons. One was my first real encounter with poverty, a kind of poverty which I'd never seen anywhere, children kneeling on the street corners begging. I remember my father giving the guide a tip and the man bursting into tears of gratitude. It was a terrible experience for a child to realize that that kind of poverty existed in the world.

But the experience as a whole made me very eager to learn foreign languages. When I first went to college I thought I wanted at Columbia to do nothing but foreign languages. I was going to do Greek, Latin, French and German for four years. This was partly because at that time St. John's College in Maryland had started a new program which did involve the use of four languages and
reading in the original text the great books of the world, and I thought this was marvelous and I thought I would like to do the same thing. But although Columbia was extremely liberal, much more liberal than any other college, with the exception of St. John's, they still required that I take some required courses and I did. But I took Greek and French and dropped Latin and German from my original plan. I did that for about three years until Chinese came into the picture.

Q: I just wanted to, before talking more about Chinese and Japanese and your study of the languages, I wanted to ask a few more questions about the atmosphere of the middle and the late thirties. You said in Meeting With Japan that FDR /Franklin D. Roosevelt/ was your idol.

DK: Yes.

Q: And I wondered if it was because of the speeches promising hope, promising some kind of recovery from the Depression, or if you were responding to your first political consciousness that was being developed. Was he your idol because of certain domestic policies such as civil rights, foreign policies?

DK: 1931 was the year I went to Europe where I had this first traumatic contact with poverty. When we got back to America I began to see poverty in my own house. My father who had had an office with a great big view of New York Bay, couldn't afford to keep up the office and he moved to the cellar of our house. Other kids on the block all had allowances, 10 cents a week or something, but I was not even allowed 10 cents and there was no money. I did something which I think now of with horror but I stole stamps from my father's box and took them to the post office where they gave me money for them. I didn't know that they would do that but they did. And it wasn't that I needed anything but I felt so ashamed of being the only kid who had no money at all.
In 1932 then I remember listening to the inaugural address of Roosevelt on the radio and I don't know why it happened, but I knew something momentous was happening. I took my favorite book, which was A Child's History of the World and I started to copy into it phrases from his inaugural address. "I mustn't forget these things," I thought. Of course it was idiotic because they would appear in the newspapers. There was no need for me to do that but I had to participate in some way. And this voice that kept on assuring us that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself, and all these other unforgettable phrases, brought courage to our lives. I can remember wanting to be back home always with fireside chat and one time being somewhat delayed and running all the way home. But it really wasn't necessary because every house on the block had it on and I could hear it coming from all the windows along the block. It was entirely audible but he seemed like—well, after Herbert Hoover, whom my father loathed . . . but I should say that my first awareness of an election was the election between Hoover and Smith. And at that time, like all the other kids on the block, I thought that only the poor people would vote for Smith and we wouldn't. Only the vulgar and low classes would vote for such a man. Children will parrot anything that they hear but by 1932 my outlook had changed totally and Hoover encompassing all that was most terrible. He was the man who personally had taken all my father's money away and Roosevelt offered us hope and a relief from the sights that I'd become accustomed to: long lines of men waiting for soup or people selling apples on the street corners in New York, those desperate signs of poverty everywhere which I had first seen in Vienna but within a year I was seeing not quite as extreme but forms of it in New York, too, and the general atmosphere that "This is going to last forever." As a matter of fact, even after Roosevelt I was privately convinced
that the Depression would last forever. There didn't seem to be any way ever
one would/get out of it, and my idea was to get a job which was absolutely
safe and work very hard and save all my money and then when I reached a cer-
tain venerable age, let's say 40, I would go off to an island. And I'd
decided--I collected stamps--it would be the Isle of
which seemed
so far away from everything that probably the Depression hadn't caught up to
it.

Q: I was also interested in what you said about pacifism because your father was
a pacifist and that was your inclination, too. And I wondered if this was a
very, very highly developed or highly internalized philosophy of yours or if
it was just aversion to the horrors of war.

DK: I was horrified at the idea of killing or being killed. The whole idea of war
was so hateful for me. I said and it's true that my father had implanted this
in me but it was not--I don't think my father ever went to the degree that I
came to as a child, being more impressionable and if anything like purer than
an adult. I remember that I couldn't bear to look at pictures of warfare, not
only pictures of corpses but even pictures of cannon or anything of that sort.
And I wouldn't dream of going to a movie of the Red Baron or somebody like
that. Anything to do with warfare, people killing, was horrible but I was a
terribly serious child. I'm not that way any more but when I saw a comedy and
somebody let's say threw a pie in somebody's face, everyone else in the audience
would laugh and I would feel sorry for the person and then I would feel sorry
for the waste of a perfectly good pie. Nothing seemed the least bit funny
to me.

Q: I can commiserate with you, being two years younger than your college peers.
In other words, your views must have been quite different from most of the
other young men at Columbia College, the pacifism, perhaps not the interest
in foreign languages, but the depth of interest that you had.

DK: Yes, there were a couple of people. There was one friend of mine who was very much interested in French and I enjoyed his company for that reason, but I made almost no friends in college, only one friend of significance and he was a Chinese whom I met my first year and who remained my friend throughout my four years of college and who was actually again one of these accidents which determined my whole life. But at the time that the Spanish Civil War was going on and there were people who were thinking of volunteering or speaking about the heroism of it, well, I didn't want Franco to win but on the other hand, the thought of people killing each other was just so terrible to me that I couldn't see any justification for killing a man just because you didn't agree with his political point of view. The campus was full of activity at that time and of course with the Munich Agreement during my first year, the year the Munich Agreement was signed, there were all kinds of protests, betrayal of Czechoslovakia and so forth, my only reaction was I thought, "Thank God. That will stave off a war." Everyone else made fun of Chamberlain and Daladier and so on and all I could think was well, they'd kept us out of war for another year or for a period of time. And then when war finally broke out the next year, there were students on the campus, the left-wing students who just dismissed it as the imperialistic war, like any other imperialistic war. It didn't matter one side was so-called "democraties" and the others the so-called "fascist countries." Just another imperialistic war. And then after the invasion of Russian it was no longer an imperialistic war. It became a war to save democracy and so on. Well, all of these things went on and without changing my own feeling that war was wrong and bad and absolutely reprehensible. I stayed the same but since the world was changing around me, staying the same
actually was just as much of a change as moving, you know. If you stay the same, sometimes people think you're doing something noble and sometimes they think you're doing something idiotic whereas you think you're always the same. But in any case I never really have changed. I think of the war with Japan and some of the most unforgettable memories are the contrast between the Americans with whom I had meals, the officers who were so uninteresting to me, whose prejudices I didn't share, whose ideals I didn't share---I had nothing in common with them---and then going from them to the prisoner-of-war stockade and talking to Japanese with whom I shared a great deal. It was a climate of a different kind. It wasn't that I was in favor of Japanese military expansionism but I'm not sure these Japanese were either. I knew I was against the man who said about niggers that they were different, that their flesh was tougher than ours or something, suggesting he'd stuck his knife into a number of them. I knew I was against him, that sort of thing.

Q: I have been recalling now what I read this morning in Meeting With Japan. You were in Hawaii and reading all these field reports. They were absolutely uninteresting and of no military worth, and then you started reading these diaries and were developing new feelings and new emotions about the Japanese and saying, "Well, maybe"

DK: You know, it really was true. Once a week I had to do censorship of American sailors' mail. Well, first of all, you could have changed the contents of the envelopes and no one would ever know the difference because all the letters were exactly the same. They would complain that they had pork again, had pork three nights in a row, and they would talk about the movie that they had seen and "Can't wait to get back and see the folks. Ha, ha!" There was always a "Ha ha!" each followed by an exclamation point. Then I'd read the diaries
of these people, Japanese who were malarial, starving, no prospect of being
rescued and still going on and not one word of complaint. Well, you may say,
it's because they were afraid if they wrote a word of complaint the sergeant
would read their diaries and punish them or that they were fanatic. Well,
maybe that's true but the number of American sailors who were suggesting that
they were ready to desert. "Over the hill in October" that's what they were
saying. And these people were suffering nothing at all except deprivation of
being with their families and their barter. It was totally unequal.

Q: I'd like to go back a little bit to those years 1940/1941. Was there more
sense of the war that was going on in Europe than of the Sino-Japanese War on
the Columbia College campus or was there any student interest in this movement,
non-participation in Japanese aggression, this movement that was started by
Roger Greene and others at Harvard?

DK: I don't recall anything of that sort. The people were certainly interested
in, enormously interested in the war in Europe, different aspects of the war,
for example, the invasion of France, the establishment of the Vichy government,
what our attitude should be toward the Vichy government. Perhaps the most
crucial thing that happened was the Soviet invasion of Finland. Up until this
time I suppose it would have been typical for most young Americans to be
friendly towards the Soviet Union if not actively Marxist. But the idea was
that this was a country which was not aggressive and that was striving to help
its people to achieve a better standard of life and it was also hoping to help
other countries, workers throughout the world, to shake off the chains of
oppression and so on. But when they moved into Finland, a country which in
America had enjoyed special respect because it was the only country which paid
back the war debts. And that's one way to an American heart by paying your bills.
And to move into this country, enormous Russia attacking this little Finland, there was no justification that one could think of. And a lot of people who up until that point had been very outspokenly left wing changed their remarks. There was also at the same time a faction which was called "America First" which I remember hearing a talk by one of them, Macmillan here at Columbia. The America First tended to be people who were isolationists, not pacifistic so much as simply feeling "It's their war. Let the British who've always exploited other countries learn for a change what it's like to be exploited. They've had their innings," that sort of feeling or to some degree, not much, but there was a slight degree of sympathy or understanding, shall we say, for the Axis Powers, mingled with a kind of anti-Semitism that one found even on a college campus. But the America First was relatively small and I think there were more people who thought that it was important for us to help Britain in every way that it was possible. As for Japan, the war there had been going on for a very long time and it was nothing new. There were no developments and the fact that the Japanese moved south to take Tonkin or Saigon and so on. It didn't have all of that impact on us. I don't recall it in any case. I think there was a general loss of interest in Japan would be what I would have said. In 1941 when I signed up for Mr. Tsunoda's course on the History of Japanese Thought at first I was the only student in the class and I felt sorry for him. I'd say, "Well, you don't want to give it for one student." "Yes," he said, "one student is enough." Later on, well, two Japanese-Americans and one Japanese also appeared. The one Japanese....
... Well, he was the one who always just chimed in or seemed to appreciate Mr. Tsunoda's very anti-militaristic expressions whereas the other Japanese looked very sour and disapproving, and that was Mr. Shirato. I didn't realize that one was Japanese and the other was Japanese-American. I never talked to them. And Shirato was the teacher during the whole of the war, teaching Japanese here. It's just a difference in their expressions.

But I don't recall any special interest in Japan one way or another because our interests were so taken with what was going on in Europe and one thing after the another, especially 1940 invasion of the Lowlands followed by invasion of France and Norway and all these other things happening. And the danger and the horror of Hitler was very much closer to us than anything that was going on in Japan.

Q: I was very interested in reading about your friend, Lee and your wrestle with Chinese. And you had to slip off and go see by yourself these Japanese people so that you wouldn't embarrass or you wouldn't insult him.

DK: Yes, it's true.

Q: This really then was the second time you had any personal contact with Japanese, would that be right, other than the friend you had in high school?

DK: I don't remember even having talked to her. I must have talked to her at some stage but I have no recollection of it. And I remember going into the Japanese pavilion just out of curiosity, my Chinese friend refusing to go in. And the people there seemed pleasant and they didn't seem like militarists or any menacing force. That surprised me but I mean even later than that when I first began to study Japanese in the fall of 1941 with Mr. Tsunoda, I felt a certain tension when I talked say to the Japanese librarian at Columbia as if I were doing something wrong in talking to a Japanese because I had a Chinese friend whose country was being mauled by the Japanese.
Q: Did you start to get—I'm thinking now of another entry that you've written on the delights of being a Japan specialist. Did you start to get at that time when you were doing your restaurant Chinese and then you went to North Carolina and spent the summer and then came back and enrolled in the Japanese class at Columbia, did you start then getting this question, "Why study a remote civilization when you still have your own to learn about or Western civilization?"

DK: Oh, yes. Almost everybody thought that; there was nobody—well, of course with the exception of my father who thought learning foreign languages was a good thing in general. Everyone else said, "Why do you have to learn that? What good will it do you? You can't possibly learn it." I remember my own attitude in 1938 when I was a freshman at Columbia, the Columbia Spectator had an article describing the presentation of Chinese books and I remember reading that and thinking, "Well, who in the world is going to read them? It's all very well to present Chinese books to a library but obviously no one's going to look at them." That was my reaction at that time and people in 1939/1940/1941, that period, all thought of East Asian languages as being utterly remote, unlearnable, get of interest to a handful of missionaries, people of that sort. And I did/a letter from a cousin who'd never written me before and hasn't written me since saying, "Why do you study that when you don't know about your own civilization?" One of my classmates, when he heard that I was studying Chinese, said, "Turn around." I said, "Why?" He said, "I want to kick you." I don't know why he said that but I remember his saying that. He just thought it was so absurd for anybody to want to study anything like Chinese that he deserved a kick in the pants.

Q: What was your answer to these people if you answered your cousin's letter?

DK: I didn't answer it and I didn't turn around and get kicked. But I knew that an I wanted to do it. I don't really know whether I was especially good student
or not because my studying was so irregular. Beginning Chinese restaurant, reading as our text a Cantonese novel which of course had no selection of words. Even when I'd learn to use a Chinese-English dictionary, some of the words, which were Cantonese dialect words, didn't appear in the dictionary. It was all a completely unsystematic way of beginning but instead of starting off with a first year Chinese, I went immediately into second year Chinese course and similarly with Japanese. I started in the mountains of North Carolina reading the National Language Readers and then went into the second year course.

Q: Well, that's what I wanted to ask you. You mentioned Yurahata was your tutor and I wondered where he came from, how your friend who took you to North Carolina found Yurahata and then what--

DK: He knew... Well, this young man was born in the United States, Southern California, of Japanese parents and then was taken back by them at a young age to Japan and eventually to Taiwan. And my friend who invited me to North Carolina had taught English in high school in Taiwan. And this young man came up to him and said, "I'm an American citizen and I'd like to return to America." I don't know what my friend did to help him or whether he helped him at all but the young man did get back to America and then that summer, the summer of 1941, my friend decided that he would really learn Japanese. He'd been talking Japanese in one way or another getting across to people, but he never properly learned Japanese. And so he was going to study but he wanted to have other people there so that he couldn't say to the teacher, "Let's take off a day" or something like that. I was approached by this man who had seen me eating in the Chinese restaurant now called "The Moon Palace" but then it was called "The New Asia." He'd seen me eating there and he thought I must be especially interested. He'd also seen me studying in the East Asian Library
and he asked me eventually whether I would like to go to the mountains and be one of the people studying Japanese there. I was eager to get out of New York for the summer. I was less eager to study Japanese because again I thought this was a betrayal of my Chinese friend. But in the end I decided to go. Well, the three of us studied from the Japanese language readers, which were the only textbooks we had.

Q: So you weren't introduced to Noganuma at this time?

DK: No, no. That was only when I got into the Navy.

Q: And then you came back and enrolled in Japanese at Columbia and I'm especially interested in the state of Japanese language teaching at Columbia in the pre-war days and in Japanese studies generally. And you mentioned in Meeting With Japan that there was a new text and you were learning your Japanese and the teacher was also apparently learning how to read the text. I wondered if you'd tell me a little bit more about that.

DK: Well, the new text was the first which had been designed to teach non-Japanese adults the Japanese language. The textbooks that I had used in North Carolina and everyone had used everywhere had been the textbooks used to teach Japanese six-year-olds how to read and write their own language. It started off with, "The cherry blossoms are blooming" and moved on to the cries of the and various other things of that sort, things that a six-year-old would be interested in. The text /Serge/ Elisseeff and /Edwin O./ Reischauer at Harvard had prepared was introduced there and at Columbia too for the first time in the fall of 1941. I don't really know why they made this text, what the reason was, but it may have been connected with the Navy Japanese School which was established at Harvard in the fall of 1941. The Navy established a school there and one in Hawaii. Let me see, I think also in Berkeley. I'm not actually clear about
that. The one in Hawaii was really Marine Corps. Shiri was there. And this may have been something that spurred them into writing something that they had intended to do anyway, but you'd have to ask Professor Reischauer about that if you don't know already. But in any case, it was adopted here at Columbia. The class consisted, as I recall, of four people, three women and myself. Two women were women who'd lived in Japan at one time or another and the young woman, who was Eurasian, and myself and the teacher who was not a scholar. He was a person who had naturally good taste and understood without being a scholar what was worthwhile in Japanese art and had learned Japanese the way amateurs did at that time. And he was suddenly faced with a new textbook and he didn't devote the proper amount of time to preparing it and so it was sometimes embarrassing for us to realize that he didn't really know what a sentence was saying. He would fall back on standard translations. For example, the prodigal "wa" was always translated as "as for." Well, sometimes that works, you know. As for me, American is and so on. But it was a very slow-moving class and I felt dissatisfied with it even though my preparation was most unsystematic. And at the end of the term--well, the term began in September and ended in January. In December of course came the attack on Pearl Harbor and I heard at that time, I forget how, that there was a Navy school for teaching Japanese. Somebody in the class knew somebody who was going to such a school and I wrote to the Navy Department. I didn't get any answer at first, so I went on with my studies and began the new term at the beginning of February taking a third year of Japanese, a second half of third-year Japanese on the basis of summer plus the first half of second year. I went into third year where Professor Hugh Borton was teaching and I discovered I could keep up with it.
I always preferred to do things that were hard than things that were easy, so that was more stimulating. But I'd only been in that class about two weeks, perhaps a little bit more, when I had a letter from the Navy asking me to go to Washington for an interview. And then subsequently very soon after that I went out to Berkeley to join the Navy language school.

Q: Were there any naval officers on the Columbia campus at that time studying Japanese?

DK: Not that I know of; I don't believe so. Later on there were. There was a very large naval contingent here. There was a military government place here at Columbia and the man who invited me to North Carolina, whose name is George H. Cara, was one of the people in charge of this military government planning center, wherever it was, which was in a building, I think, on 117th Street or somewhere like that.

Q: Yes, I know that that was set up in 1942/1943 but I had thought that there was some earlier language training of military people on the campus.

DK: There may have been in 1942 after I left but while I was here--I left in February of 1942--there was none that I was aware of. The only people were Columbia students or there were usually a couple of missionaries, but not naval personnel that I was aware of.

Q: What was the interview like in Washington?

DK: I honestly don't remember. I just remember waiting in the corridor to see Lieutenant Commander Heinmarsh and taking in the people in the corridor, wondering who they were. They were from many different American universities. I later discovered that two groups of people were eligible for this school. One were people who had lived in Japan, preferably those who'd received part of their education in Japanese, and the other were people who were from what
were considered the best American universities, the top five percent or something like that. And I daresay at the interview that he accepted Columbia as one of the best and the interview probably had to do with my knowledge of foreign languages and whether I'd ever studied any East Asian language. And I must have told him about my study of Chinese and my beginning of study of Japanese. In any case, it was not long afterwards, I think within a week, that I had a letter saying, "You will report to Berkeley, California where you will be inducted as a yeoman second class." I left in February with great feelings of excitement and no feeling whatsoever that this had anything to do with the war. As far as I was concerned, it was solely Japanese language. The word "yeoman" to me was like Robin Hood and his Merry Men, you know. I couldn't take that seriously. If I was going to really become a yeoman, I wanted to do it that way.

Q: Do you think that you might have registered as a conscientious objector had the opportunity to study Japanese and be a yeoman not come your way?

DK: I honestly don't know. I should have, I mean, in keeping with my own ideas, but I don't know. I might have been under such, shall we say, pressure, not from any particular individual but from the whole of society, to show my disapproval of Fascism or Naziism or whatever it might be that I might have thought, "Well, I'll go and try not to kill anybody." As a matter of fact, I mentioned in the book which you may have read that the night before the landing on Kiska I had a talk with Otis Kelly on the deck as to whether we could kill anybody. And I said I couldn't, that would be impossible for me and he answered much more intelligently. He said he wouldn't kill anybody just because he was the enemy but if he saw someone coming at him with a felonious weapon, he would instinctively do something to save his own life and perhaps, probably I would
have done the same. But in principle at least I was completely against any kind of killing.

Q: I'm interested now in learning about your experience at the language school. First it was Berkeley and then in the course of your study it was transferred to Hawaii?

DK: Yes, that's right.

Q: You arrived in the spring of 1942. Were you part of what, the second class?

DK: The second class, yes. The first class had been quite small and most of the people in it had been in Japan. They had been teachers of English in Japan. They'd done something in Japan and included one or two very, very bright people whom we had occasion to look up to later on when we started to work in Hawaii. But our group was a very different kind of group. Most of the people were not familiar with Japanese, had no knowledge of Japanese. They were just terribly bright.

Q: Were you asked whether you were Phi Beta Kappa by Heinmarsh?

DK: I may have been. I don't remember it. It's quite possible and it's the sort of thing that he would have asked. Most of the people were and it was the most exciting group of people I'd ever met in my life. At Columbia, as I said, I made almost no friends. I really made one friend in the course of four years. But there I was able to make friends because I wanted to make friends and I wanted to be with these people who seemed to me so exceptional.

We arrived in California in February. Sometime after our arrival we had a physical examination and almost everybody failed it. But the Navy had given instructions that no matter how bad our eyesight was or how bad anything else was, we were supposed to be accepted. And these chief petty officers who examined us were of course horrified at what they saw. There was one man who
was—I remember he was told to remove his glasses and try to read the eye chart at the other end of the room and he says, "You must be joking."

Q: You didn't have to do any drilling or anything like that? You just had classes? You were studying the language?

DK: While we were in Berkeley there was no drilling whatsoever. When we moved to Boulder, at first there was a certain amount of drilling. I think it kept up for a while. At first it was terrible because we had moved to this very high altitude place and even if we'd been in fine physical shape, it would have been difficult to run twice around the track or something of that sort. Some people who were older were horribly out of breath and felt ill even. The physical exercise and so on occupied an extremely minor part and on one occasion somebody, when we had a general meeting, petitioned the captain for some instruction on the Navy, since we were going to be naval officers, and the captain who was a sardonic old type read aloud all the offenses punishable by death, such as deliberately running your ship aground on a shoal or something of that sort and then he said, "Any questions?" And that was the end of our naval instruction.

Q: Was Florence Walne in charge of the course when you took it or Glenn Shaw?

DK: Florence Walne, yes, she had been teaching at the University of California. She had lived in Japan and she was a kind of fluttery, very good-natured person. We all liked her very much. She was a mother figure to us, and everything went well until when we moved to Colorado they put a naval officer in who believed that we should get up at 7:30 and do things like that. Well, there was the contradiction and we were supposed to devote all of our time to studying Japanese and in some cases this meant studying until two o'clock in the morning in order to prepare the lesson properly. And there was really no need for us to
get up at 7:30 except in this man's mind. And so it was always a source of irritation and Miss Walne who was on our side couldn't do anything to stop this man from waking us up in a way that seemed to him proper naval discipline. But on the other hand, if our assignments had been reduced so that we could get to bed at 11:00 or something of that sort, it would have interfered with our learning Japanese.

Q: Were you pleased with the course that had been constructed for you by the Navy in Berkeley, for instance?

DK: There were some people who weren't. I remember one man, who is now a professor at a leading American university, the first time we had a group of scholars. Glenn Shaw was one of them, I think Sir George Samson came, and then Commander Heinmarsh also reappeared. This was—I forget—some months after we had started. This man said, "Why do we have to learn words like the word for spinach, horenso? I can't believe we'll ever need the word spinach as naval officers." Well, there was no way of removing one word from a text that exists. And just as it happened, the first operation that we had to deal with in the Pacific was known by the Japanese code name of "Horenso."

Q: The reason why I asked is that when I was doing some research at the Navy Yard about six or eight months ago, I found a 37-page description of the Japanese at Berkeley Language School/and at Boulder written by Heinmarsh and he was castigating Harvard and the materials that it was using and he was praising Berkeley and praising Walne and praising Shaw and saying that Harvard didn't understand what the Navy needed but Berkeley did.

DK: Well, I think he was right. The Harvard textbook was one which was intended to teach you to recognize Japanese. The textbook was revolutionary in that it was, as I said, designed for American adults but in a given lesson there
might be 30 or 40 new words introduced and most of them would not be repeated. There was no systematic presentation of different pronunciations for the same kanji. There was no attempt made whatsoever to establish conversation on the basis of the text. You couldn't converse on most of the information that you had there, and there were many sentences that were very stiff and they were intended only to introduce certain words or vocabulary, certain grammatical constructions, whereas the Noganuma readers that we used in Berkeley were specifically designed to teach you first of all conversation, secondly reading. As a matter of fact, we had each day six days a week two hours of reading, one hour of conversation, and one hour of dictation. In retrospect, it may have been the hour of dictation that was the most important. It's something that is not done very much now but is the one way to change a knowledge of Japanese from a passive knowledge to an active knowledge. If you see a character and you can recognize the meaning, that's all right under many circumstances, but the test is whether you can write it when you want to write it. And the teachers, one of them in particular, Nakamura, who was one of the professional teachers, he was a marvelous dictator. He dictated very clearly, very rapidly, and just as we were about to finish one thing he would give us the next. So there was no pause for reflection and I must say that I owe a great deal to that instruction and I'm not surprised that Heinmarsh would have been impressed by it. I don't know how it was taught at Harvard but if they used the Ellisseeff and Reischauer textbook, as I assume they did, they couldn't have had that. The most they could have produced would have been somebody who could read a Japanese text but not somebody who could speak Japanese and certainly not somebody who could write Japanese.

Q: Yes, because you have then answered my question. I wondered if you were being
trained in all skills: reading, writing, speaking.

DK: Yes. We were trained in all. Eventually when we went out to wherever we were sent— I was sent to Pearl Harbor—a certain group of people were chosen as primarily interpreters and some were primarily translators. But this was not solely on the basis of whether they'd been born in Japan or not because some of the people who were just gifted in conversation and learned it entirely from the Noganuma readers were in the interrogation section. But at the same time we were all expected to be able to do both and so once a month, I suppose, we'd have several days of interrogation practice. And on the other hand when Otis Cary was one of the chief people in the interrogation section and I went as a team of two to the Aleutian Islands, he had to do a great deal of translation. He couldn't just interpret. At first we had no prisoners and a lot of documents, so we both worked on documents. Later on when prisoners came in, he tended to take care of the prisoners' interrogations while I took care of the documents, but I also interrogated. So we were both capable of doing both. As far as writing was concerned, this was the aspect which the least emphasis was placed on. But more than the ability to write a letter in Japanese or anything of that sort was the active knowledge of the characters that you obtained so that they really became part of you as opposed to something you could recognize in a certain context or because it was the lower right-hand corner of the page or whatever it was. There were people who made kanji cards. I never did because I found they were self-defeating. You'd remember what was on the other side because of a stain on the card or something else, you know, that had nothing to do with the kanji itself. But when you can write a kanji, it's really yours. . . .

END TAPE I, BEGIN TAPE II
Q: It sounds to me from your description that your teachers were very gifted and that you also had very good materials, these Noganuma materials. Were the teachers—you've mentioned that they were in some cases nisei, in some cases Japanese, but they were amateurs or professionals?

DK: There were a few professionals. I don't believe Miss Walne, who was a professional, ever taught in the school. She was the directress. But there were a few who had taught at the University of California or the University of Washington in Seattle. Most of the teachers were complete amateurs. Some of them were poor teachers, but no matter how poor they were, they were intensely devoted to it. And we were eager to learn. It was a very special school. There was no question of a teacher having to prod a student. It was an atmosphere of a determination to learn and a kind of rivalry, too, a rivalry which was not only personal but there was a kind of rivalry on the basis of which university you had come from and that sort of thing which was very salutary. The classes were divided into small groups. My group had about 60 people in it. I imagine there must have been 10 or 12 sections and they would change from time to time. The final group, the last group which stayed together that I belonged to was the top group which was very interestingly composed. It had two native speakers of Japanese, Otis Cary and a man named Leo Lake, and then two people who had learned Japanese, as I had, as foreigners. The other one was David Osborne, who later became minister to Japan, ambassador to Burma, and we worked perfectly. They were better in conversation and we were better in characters and we stimulated each other and the teachers, I think, were exceptionally good for us. In our class we had not only ordinary teachers but we had say newspaper reporters that elected to stay in America during the war rather than return to Japan. One man named Sakai, who wrote quite a bit about Japan during
the occupation time, he was one of our teachers. There was another man named Yoshida. I don't know what he was but he was also that kind of person who was professionally a writer of Japanese. And these people demanded an immense amount from us. At the time, unlike now, there was the traditional kana spelling and I remember there was some word, or something like that with the old And Yoshida sent us to the board for dictation and somebody wrote it with or , whatever it was. He said, "Do you think you're going to graduate like that?" It was a very special atmosphere which we responded to and we all imitated the teachers, I mean, in a curious way. Quite naturally Americans bumping into another American in the hall would I remember at that time when Japanese would pass each other in the hall and they didn't want to go to the trouble of saying, "Ohayo or whatever it was, they would just draw in their breath and soon we were doing that, too, you know. It was a most extraordinary experience and of course essentially it made it absolutely impossible for us to become anti-when Japanese. The school moved to Boulder, Colorado and we heard that one of our teachers had gone to a shoe shop to buy shoes and he was badly treated, we were all outraged. "We'll never go to such a place" and so on.

Q: I wanted to ask you about that move and your feelings at the time because it was because of the relocation orders.

DK: Yes.

Q: Did all of your teachers move with you to Colorado or were any of them forced--

DK: Well, it was the other way around. We moved with our teachers. You see, the Navy wanted the school to stay in Berkeley and the last Japanese or Japanese-American people to remain on the West Coast were our teachers. And finally the Army said, "Even these 20 people are a danger to the security of the entire
West Coast or something of that sort. And since the Army had jurisdiction over the West Coast, unlike Hawaii where the Navy had jurisdiction, the Army was in a position to order us to leave, order our teachers to leave. We could stay. So in June of 1942—that was at least a month and possibly two months after all the other Japanese had been evacuated—our school was moved to Boulder, Colorado, which was a safe distance from the coast. As it happened, I had an appendix operation just when the school was being moved, in the naval hospital in California. And so I arrived a little bit after the other people did in June. I must have arrived about the 25th of June. By that time the school had been reestablished at the University of Colorado.

Q: And the same routine was—

DK: Everything was the same and the one difference was that I was aware of a difference in the attitude of the townspeople. The people in Berkeley, after all, had been accustomed to seeing Japanese-Americans and as far as I know, there were no incidents. In Boulder there were some, probably not serious, and there was a loathsome newspaper called The Denver Post, which still exists and has on its masthead, "The Best Newspaper in the World" which would call for such things as separating the Japanese males and females in these relocation camps so there wouldn't be any more Japanese bred in this country and so on. And we, feeling so close to our teachers as Japanese and feeling so sorry for the Japanese in their relocation camps and wondering whether we couldn't do something to help them, reading this newspaper felt disgusted. It was a nasty time.

Q: So legally, technically, the Japanese could go and come as they pleased in Colorado—

DK: Yes.
Q: --or in the town. But they must have stayed pretty much, what, on the premises of the school?

DK: They went into Denver. At the time there was gasoline rationing so it was hard to get into Denver, but they got into Denver. And I remember on one occasion hitchhiking from Boulder into Denver and I was picked up by a Japanese-American family who lived there. There were quite a few Japanese-Americans in Denver; I knew some. They were able to move freely. There was no question about that and they could go to Chicago for that matter or New York. The one place they couldn't go was the West Coast.

Q: Were you learning other things besides language from these teachers? Were they using films to teach you, were they giving you any books to read about Japan or did it strictly focus on language?

DK: I don't recall reading any books about Japan, at least not at that time, but we were required to attend films once a week. These films were not chosen. They just happened to be the films that were available on the West Coast at the outbreak of war. There were no subtitles and at first we really couldn't understand anything, you know, and even after a while when we got to understand a few things, I still was far from clear. Well, eventually, someone like Otis Cary would get up before the movie and give a synopsis of what happened to help us follow the plot. But in the absence of that, of course, I think we actually learned very little except to get a general idea of Japanese architecture. For some reason or another in these films whenever a young man and a young woman were walking on a bridge, you knew that this was where they would separate, each in his own direction, sadly, tearfully. There were many other things one learned of a peculiar kind, nothing that you were likely to learn from books. But it gave us at least an idea of life in Japan. I remember there
was one film which had a sequence in which the young man and the young woman go to a concert and they hear the Mendelssohn Italian Symphony and when you've seen the same film six times and you haven't seen any other films, one gets the impression that the Japanese like only one symphony.

Q: Was there a high attrition rate in this group of 50 that you know of?

DK: It was very low, at least initially, and it was for various reasons. One man, for example, was summarily dismissed from the school after it became clear that he'd had a Japanese-American girlfriend. It was a waste of talent. He was from Los Angeles. He'd somehow become interested in local Japanese-Americans. He had gone to a Japanese school in Los Angeles and was very good at different aspects of the language. But the last time I saw him literally he was just an ordinary sailor. We just happened to meet. And there were one or two others I think who were dropped for ideological reasons. They thought they might be left-wing or something of that sort. But in my group none were dropped because of their poor performance. Later on when we moved to Hawaii, it became evident that certain people were simply not useful. They could neither read well enough or accurately enough to have their translations acceptable nor could they interrogate. And such people were usually put in charge of us, you know. They were given a jeep and told to do something, you know. The preferential treatment was almost always given to the incompetent.

Q: Did your Japanese teachers give you many historical or cultural explanations of things as they were teaching you the language? Did they really need to?

DK: I don't recall. Some of the exercises we had, some of the passages in the Nogisuma readers, dealt with historical characters and there were a few adaptations of plays or articles and so on which we might get a little bit of information about. But I think it would be an almost impossible task for
them to give us an idea of what Japan was really like. I don't recall at any point feeling that there was something they should be doing that they weren't doing. Our effort was given always to learning the language and sometimes, for example, there would be a proverb which would be hard to understand and we'd get some sort of explanation of it. But anything that went beyond that to let's say describe the Meiji Period or something like that, characterize the difference between Meiji Period and Taishō Period, would have taken us beyond what our essential job was, which was to learn the language. And the language, our group did the work in the shortest time, 11 months.

Q: Yes, that struck me as remarkably short.

DK: They needed us, they said. The previous group were few in numbers and they were scattered and I think a good many of them had been sent to Washington. And there was a need for people in the Pacific area and so they graduate as quickly as possible. We read the first five Noganuma readers and started in the sixth, which has bungotai. We were also given a couple of weeks instruction in reading cursory script, soshū, which in my case turned out to be terribly important later on because I gravitated towards reading diaries and letters. And the knowledge that I picked up in that short time was certainly extremely useful to me.

Q: Did they give you during this time any kind of intelligence training? Or did they give you films of another sort to watch, the "Why We Fight" series?

DK: Yes, I remember seeing a film on how the British interrogated German prisoners of war. First he establishes rapport as "What university did you graduate from? It's odd, I was at Heidelberg myself. What year? Did you know Professor So-and-So?" And then these two people talk about the good old days in Heidelberg and dueling and all the rest and then imperceptibly they shift to questions of
where he was immediately before being captured. And eventually he'd get onto the most important thing, what the strength of the unit was and so on. But my experience with Japanese prisoners was that there must have been some who deceived me completely. But the ones that I talked to were extremely willing to talk and in absurd cases they would say, "Why didn't you ask me about the minefields?" or that sort of thing. Because most of them, unlike the Germans, thought of themselves as being dead; a simile used by Professor Elisséeff once, I remember, they thought of themselves as being pieces in shogi. When you capture a piece in shogi, unlike chess, you turn it in the other direction. It becomes your piece fighting the other side. So these pieces who were called "Japanese soldiers" or "sailors" had been captured and now they were facing in the other direction. On Okinawa especially—of course the fighting there was very severe and there were more desertions and more Japanese became prisoners there than elsewhere. But there we had people who were willing, from the moment of capture, to induce their comrades of an hour ago to surrender. And in extreme cases when nothing happened even after they had used a microphone and shouted, they'd say, "Well, kill them all. They're so stupid they won't believe me." But I never saw any indication that it was necessary to use the techniques that the British had perfected for the use with the Germans. The social situation was different.

Q: Would they try to explain to you out there what our war aims were, why we fight the Japanese and the nature of the Japanese soldiers?

DK: They did but I think we laughed at them really. It was pretty absurd. At that time—this was a little bit later, 1943—an uncle of mine, thinking I should know what's going on in America, sent me a subscription to Life Magazine. And one of their features was how to tell the difference between a
Chinese and a Japanese. We saw films of that. For example, what did the Japanese take from the West, what did the Chinese take from the West? The Japanese took militarism. You see people with guns. And the Chinese took baseball. They took books and so on. Well, since we knew that the Japanese were very fond of baseball, this made us all laugh. I mean, the propaganda didn't work with us. It just seemed funny. We were the wrong audience for that kind of propaganda. I remember the description in Life saying the Chinese complexion was ivory but the Japanese complexion was more earthy in color.

Q: All you earthen-complexioned Americans. Do you recall what you said in your valedictorian address?

DK: I honestly don't except I remember expressing gratitude to Miss Walne and pride that we had graduated from the school and we hoped that what we did in the future, we would make our teachers feel proud of us or something very conventional. It was not a patriotic address but really one of thanks to the teachers who really worked extremely hard. There was no question of how many hours and so on.

One other thing I haven't mentioned to you. You asked about whether we had any extra linguistic instruction. Well, it wasn't instruction but we were quite often invited to the houses of our teachers for dinner and they would serve us Japanese food or teach us Japanese card games and things of that sort. I'm not sure that I remember any of them now but one did have the atmosphere of being in a Japanese family. We talked Japanese with them but of course it induced feelings of warmth and friendliness, certainly not anything remotely resembling hostility, but it was important. It was important if only to counteract what we might have thought under other conditions that the
Japanese were totally unlike ourselves or that you could never tell what they're thinking and all the usual trite things that were being said at the time.

Q: Were all of the students Caucasian?

DK: Yes. I remember suggesting at some point--I don't know how I did it even--to somebody in the Navy--it might have been to Heinmarsh in a letter, not personally--that it seemed foolish to me not to have Chinese in the school, people who first of all were bitterly against the Japanese because of their attack, but they also knew characters and they could progress much faster than we can. And I got a very short, pointed letter saying no Chinese admitted to the school.

But don't forget at that time as far as I know there was only one Chinese officer, even petty officer, in the Navy. There were Chinese cooks. There were no black officers and no blacks except for stewards and so on in the Navy, no nisei, not even one nisei in any capacity in the Navy. The nisei of course felt very bitterly about that and on one occasion I had to go with a nisei soldier, sergeant in the U.S. Army, to Pearl Harbor. I had to arrange for this beforehand to allow a Japanese-American to be admitted to the naval base even though he was wearing an American uniform. It's hard to believe now but the Navy then still had its old bad gentlemanly traditions. One of them was on the color basis and they were not easily changed even during the war.

Q: So the nisei who served in the Pacific were all with the Army then?

DK: Without exception. We served together. I was in an office in Honolulu which had initially perhaps four or five naval officers and then three teams of nisei, each one headed by an officer. That was the way the Army had trained these people, to work as officers with a team of enlisted men, the nisei, and the officer's job was to--he'd been trained in Japanese but his main job was to coordinate their work, go over the English and so on. As it happened,
two of the three were very intelligent officers and we got along very well. But on the whole, most of the Army officers that we encountered seemed to us to be grossly inferior to the Navy, that they depended on the nisei. On the other hand, as people in the Navy we couldn't help but feel ashamed that it was out of the question for a nisei to be in the Navy. What I should say also, at that time there were no nisei officers in the Army either. There were master sergeants but that was as far as they went.

Q: From your personal experience serving with the nisei, how crucial do you believe their role was in the Pacific war?

DK: It's hard to say. It's hard to say how crucial the role of any of the interpreters was. I often wonder if anything I did, whether in translation or interpretation, shortened the war by even one second. The only instance I know of where intelligence activity—I'm not talking about codes; we didn't have anything to do with codes; the people who did codes were in an entirely different place. The only one operation where intelligence work really helped, that was on the island of Kwajalein where we had captured the documents of the Japanese fortifications there. And they built similar fortifications on Oahu somewhere and they learned how to destroy them. And the result of that was that when the attack on Kwajalein took place they destroyed the fortifications with an absolute minimal loss of American lives. I had nothing to do with that. As for the nisei themselves, of course they were taking great risks, especially those whose English was not all that good, the so-called kisei, who wanted to return. Oh, our passwords were always ones which had "l's" and "r's" in them. I remember the first one was "little library" and some of the nisei couldn't pronounce it, and "parallelogram" and so on. They in a sense were in a dangerous position, but I don't know of anyone who actually was wounded or killed.
And they certainly worked very hard. To put it in other terms, they were as useful as we were and if we were useful, they were useful in the same way. I don't know that one can say much more than that because the war in the Pacific until the very last day was not one in which prisoners or documents played a crucial role.

Q: Back in Washington there was an outfit, the Foreign Morale Analysis Division of the OWI (Office of War Information) which was eagerly trying to get the kind of material you alluded to to assess the morale of the soldier. But I'm learning more and more about the unwillingness of the Marines or others to take Japanese prisoners of war. It wasn't just a matter of the Japanese themselves being unwilling to surrender.

DK: Well, there were always rumors of this kind. We denied them and I never knew from personal experience of it. Even the operations which were strictly Marine operations like Peleliu, there were prisoners. In fact one of the prisoners is a friend of mine I still see. And at the Marine Brig or the Marine Prisoner-of-War Camp in Honolulu I saw marines there who showed the most extraordinary kindness towards the Japanese. So it wasn't uniform. I daresay there were instances where marines did actually kill Japanese and I know of instances where I've heard from people who did it that there were marines who searched the mouths of Japanese corpses for gold teeth and things of that sort. So it doesn't surprise me, but I didn't know about it at the time.

Q: If I just ask a few more questions. When I talked to Edward Seidensticker, he told me how much he enjoyed the war. He of course prefaced that with the usual remarks about it's a terrible thing to say but he very much enjoyed being in Hawaii and very much enjoyed the war because he read The Tale of Genji and he read it many times. And in your book, Meeting With Japan, you also mention
that during that year and a half in Hawaii where you taught yourself soshō, you 
also did some reading of The Tale of Genji with Uyehara?

DK: Yes, that's right.

Q: At Hawaii?

DK: Yes.

Q: I'm trying to think who Uyehara was.

DK: Nikko Uyehara was originally a Japanese who had come to Hawaii from Japan at 
about the age of 16 and at the time I knew him he was probably about 40. He's 
still alive, an elderly gentleman. And he was in charge of the teaching of 
Japanese. It was a very small group of people studying Japanese at that time 
and the whole of what was then the University of Hawaii is now a tiny fraction 
of this huge campus. I'd gone to him with an introduction from a friend, the 
man, Care, who invited me to North Carolina. And at the time we were told we 
weren't supposed to say we were in intelligence, but what else would I be? So 
I said falsely I was an engineer, something I know nothing about. If he had 
been alert he could have asked me some embarrassing questions but in any case, 
he accepted me eventually. I'm sure he knew I wasn't an engineer. But I 
wanted to keep up with my Japanese, especially with writing of Japanese, and 
I got a group together of naval officers who were willing to take off their 
one day a week and we went to the University of Hawaii and read each week a 
Japanese novel and wrote a book report in Japanese about it. And of course 
Uyehara would correct our book reports. Then after this we thought, "Wouldn't 
it be good to read The Tale of Genji in the original." We'd never done it.

Q: In the original?

DK: The original. And Uyehara had never done it either. So there was a Japanese 
woman in the class who had actually studied in Japan but apart from this
Japanese woman there were, I think, three naval officers who read the chapter with immense pain and immense sense of humility, thinking we had thought that we knew Japanese but so totally unlike what we had learned and these incredible ellipses and strange uses of honorifics and so on. But we stuck it out for a whole term. It was probably hardest on Uyehara because he had to know the answer whereas we didn't. We of course had access to the /Arthur/ Waley translation and we tried not to look at it until we had thought of what it had probably meant. Then we'd look at Waley and it usually seemed so much more beautiful in English than it was in Japanese. But my recollections....

END SIDE I, BEGIN SIDE II

My recollections of the war years was they were not happy. That was a pleasant interlude. There were other things that I enjoyed but I didn't enjoy being in Hawaii after a while. It was the unreality of it and I felt a kind of impatience and irritation. I don't know how to describe it but most of the time I was reading documents that I was convinced had no value whatsoever, translating lists of units that had been wiped out and who cares what their names were? Who cares what the equipment was? It doesn't exist any more. It just seemed to me futility itself and serving under a really dreary commanding officer was something I've never done before, having to obey someone I had no respect for. And the general feeling in my mind was that if you've got to be in a war, you should really experience war as war, not this strange never-never land where nothing was real. I don't know how to describe it better than that but although I was still pacifistic, I was very glad to go to Attu. Hawaii has a delightful climate. Attu is one of the worst climates in the world, but I felt that was reality and I wanted the reality. If you're in a war, it shouldn't be going to eat tempura in a Honolulu restaurant.
It should be experiencing the discomfort, even the horror, of war and I was glad to go to Okinawa. And I think I would have been glad to go in operations all the time without a gun. At least I would have had the feeling that what I was doing was of some use, that conceivably an order which was written an hour ago would fall into my hands which would help affect something whereas what I was doing seemed almost always to be meaningless.

Q: What about the interrogation for the POW's though? Do you have an evaluation of the kind of thing that Otis Cary, for example, was doing? And when you talked to POW's, were there many different backgrounds, many different types?

DK: At first yes but then after a while when Otis Cary came to be in charge of those things, he would see to it I only got intellectuals. At first I would get this average ignorant Korean who'd been in a labor force of some sort and I'd ask him a long, long question and he'd think a while and he'd say, "You mean me?" But with the Japanese intellectuals I had very interesting and even heartwarming conversations and the fact is that with a number of them I kept up acquaintance. Well, after the war, even now one of them I see quite regularly. We became friends, that's the only way to describe it, and interrogating the prisoners was wonderful, the only really enjoyable thing that I did in Hawaii, just meeting these people and having this eerie sensation of talking to them about their favorite music. "Do you like Schumann's First Symphony as well as his Fourth Symphony?" and things of that sort. It's extraordinary, you know, we have so much more in common than I have with my commanding officer, you know.

Q: I've been trying to draw a connection between your reading The Tale of Genji and the other literature at Hawaii and your eventual love of Japanese literature, but it seems to me your emotions at this time are being stirred by the letters
and the diaries more than when you've learned to like--

DK: I did read, I know, I remember reading that awful translation called *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan*.

Q: I wondered what was available then.

DK: I remember reading that on a warship going to Attu and writing a letter about it, quoting some of the ghastly things in it. At that time there wasn't very much available that was worth reading except for Waley. There were other translations. While I was in the hospital, the Mare Island Naval Hospital, somebody sent me a translation of *Wheat and Soldiers* and I remember reading that in my hospital bed surrounded by Americans who had suffered burns and so on in the Pearl Harbor attack and feeling very strange about it in a way. But the book, all the same, moved me very much.

Q: Somehow, I don't know how this got started, but I had heard some years ago that you didn't want to go to occupied Japan. You didn't want to see Japan in defeat; having studied Japanese during the war, you had become intrigued and enamored of the Japanese and developing some friendships with these POW's. Somehow the rumor got started that you didn't want to go to occupied Japan. I understand however from reading the book this morning that that's untrue.

DK: Untrue. I wanted very badly to go. I think the rumor might have started from something quite different and that was while I was in Ching Tao doing war crimes investigation, which I detested—it was enough to make you hate the human race—I was told that if I did it for three more months, although I was qualified to leave the service, that I would be given the present of a trip to Peking. First of all, I thought, "It's not worth anything to go on with this work." But certainly I thought that going to Peking, which I'd dreamt of doing for years and years—the illusion of going to Peking somehow,
having read Lin Yu-tang's *Moment in Peking* and so on, going in Marine uniform, which is what I was wearing then, would somehow deprive the experience of its reality, that I shouldn't go that way, I shouldn't go as an American conqueror striding through the streets. I should go as a student and so I thought, "I will have another opportunity" and I actually didn't get to Peking until two years ago. I thought I never would. But when my service in China was completed, I got on a plane in Shanghai and the Navy orders said, "You will report to your original command." I knew the original command was still in Pearl Harbor but when the plane landed in Otsuki I said, "I think my original command has been moved to Tokyo" and so I was allowed to land. And I pretended to be searching for it in these various buildings where American forces were housed, and after about a week I became scared and said, "I made a mistake. My original command is in Hawaii." But I would have loved to stay and I felt very much cheated that I couldn't. I tried to get back to Japan after I left the Navy but the only job that was available was as an interpreter at a war crimes investigation trials. And somehow the whole idea of war crimes was repellent to me. First of all, the crime itself is repellent, and secondly, the prosecution of the crime was repellent to me. So I decided I wouldn't and so I didn't actually get to Japan as a student until 1953.

Q: After the occupation ended?
DK: After the occupation ended, yes.

Q: You wrote a little bit about that week in Japan in December of 1945 and I wondered if we might be able to just dredge up a few more memories. You said you were trying to locate families of POW's?
DK: Yes, that's right.

Q: What in addition were you doing? Just soaking up everything you could?
DK: Well, yes. I went to Nikko because in the Noganuma readers it says, "Nikko..."
and I persuaded one of the nisei who had been in my office who was an especially close friend of mine, who could drive a jeep, and two other people to go to Nikko. We went in December and it was snowing, and we arrived in Nikko and stopped at an inn there. We had brought white rice with us from Tokyo and dinner was served, the white rice magically turning into brown rice. The next morning I woke up and I found snow next to my pillow. It had drifted in through the window. We went to look at the temple, the only people in Nikko, if you can imagine Nikko with four visitors altogether. And the young man showing us around, and the place of course was in need of paint--it looked much better without the paint and snow on it--and I remember him saying years ago an American had wanted to buy the for a million dollars and it was turned down. "But I suppose now the Americans will take it for nothing." And it was a very dreamlike experience going to see Nikko under those circumstances. I've gone there since and it hasn't been at all the same. That lives in my mind isolated.

I visited various--I tried to find the families of prisoners. Also, I had become friendly with a Japanese businessman in China and I went to see his father-in-law, who was a tea master in Tokyo. A couple of years ago I revisited the house. He was living in the cellar, the house having burnt down. And there was a beautiful house standing there where the old house had been and there was a dank little corner which was a memory of the old cellar where he had lived.

I also visited various Americans I had known and I visited bookshops. I went to a bookshop trying to buy books that might be useful to me, particularly recent books that had come out during the war, and I remember a conversation
in a bookstore on Yokosuka a woman saying that they had come from Yokosuka originally but they were sure that when the bombing started that would be a prime target of the Americans so they moved to a town where there wasn't anything, Kofu. Kofu got bombed every single time by the American aviators who wanted to dump their bombs somewhere and there wasn't any antiaircraft at Kofu, and Yokosuka wasn't attacked. I remember hearing this crazy story and thinking about these aviators whom I hated, talking in this calm way about dumping a load on Kofu because there was no ack-ack there. If you went all the way to Tokyo, you didn't know what would happen. And in terms of the personal tragedy you'd have this sardonic tragedy, someone going from an extremely dangerous place to a safe place and being bombed there. Well, anyway, they had all kinds of kaleidoscopic little memories of that time. Perhaps the most vivid was in Shanghai I had become friendly with a Japanese naval officer who wanted to marry a Japanese girl who was living in Shanghai. He asked me to take her family's documents to his own mother and I went out to which hadn't been bombed. The mother, first apprehensive and then started to read the letter and realized what it was. At the time there was no sugar in Japan. I guess it was the most precious commodity, and she gave me some tea which was about half sugar, undrinkable, but that was the greatest mark of welcome she could possibly give was to give me all of her sugar. I naturally tried to get it down. There were a lot of little memories like that.

Q: So when you arrived in December of 1945, the devastation in Tokyo was still very, very apparent, wasn't it?

DK: Oh, yes, that was the extraordinary thing. Going from the airport into the city, usually you see more and more buildings as you come closer, but this was the opposite. At first you saw a fair number of buildings, then they began to
disappear and then there'd be whole areas with nothing but chimneys or kura and only in the center of the city were there some whole buildings, buildings that had been gutted but still were standing on the outside.

Q: Were the street scenes pretty grim, the way the people looked, the way they were dressed?

DK: They were mostly dressed in the new uniform, the There was no sign, even the slightest, no sign of hostility, sulkiness or anything. Instead it was puzzling and baffling, even the welcome. When we drove to Nikko every village we went through people would line up to wave and cheer and so on. It was incomprehensible. I saw no signs of any kind of resentment or any feelings that one must imagine let's say the French showed toward the Germans after the occupation of Paris, nothing.

Q: How did you as a Navy men feel about MacArthur as Supreme Commander? Did you have any sense of him at all?

DK: We all had satirical songs, the Navy and the Marines, had songs they sung about MacArthur to the tune of "Waltzing Matilda" and others. "I've returned, I've returned, against Jap logistics I'll hurl my statistics and then I'll throw in my Marines" or something like that." But we all had a very low opinion of him and conversely we thought that Nimitz was absolutely marvelous man, and I think he was. The fact that the Japanese were not evacuated from Hawaii and there was no anti-Japanese feeling in Hawaii, that it was a human attitude was thanks to Nimitz. And MacArthur, his flamboyance and so on, didn't appeal to us in the least and his insistence on "I" always, not "we" but "I" was very upsetting to us.

Q: Did you at that time know very much about the overall purposes of the occupation?
DK: Well, no, I didn't. We assumed that it would last a very long time because at that time almost everybody was of the opinion that the Japanese may have changed on the surface but they hadn't changed deep down underneath. And we must do everything until we extirpate Japanese militarism and the breakup of the zaibatsu and all the other things have to be done and Japan must forever renounce war. And all these things we were saying sounded like tasks that would require a great period of time and a country which had been living on war for so long could not be expected to renounce war, to give up overseas conquests, to reject all of its ideals, including the worship of the Emperor. This seemed to us a task for many years and we should have realized from the greetings of the children on the side of the street that it wasn't that big a task. But I don't think anybody knew it at that time. Everybody assumed that the occupation would be a very long, protracted affair.

There's also another feeling which came to the surface a bit later. It may have existed other places but I didn't know about it and that was that the Americans must do the occupation because, for example, if the Australians did it, they would be brutal. And there was a remark of some Australian general in Hiroshima who said, "You got what you deserved" or something like that. And we, that is to say, people like myself who had done Japanese and were sympathetic to the Japanese, felt that whatever the faults of the American occupation, at least we wouldn't be like the Australians, let alone the Russians.

Q: I in part because of the collection of materials at the University of Maryland, have been extremely interested in this immediate postwar period and I know that you're now, you've published one of three volumes on Japanese literature. You indicated you had just finished a chapter on postwar--

DK: I've finished the two modern volumes which include a chapter on the immediate
postwar writings, yes.

Q: Could I here at the end get a preview of the contents, the generalizations?

DK: I first tried to describe what happened to Japanese intellectuals immediately after the end of the war and for that I used the diary of Takami Jín, which is extremely rich. Not only does it have all of his own thoughts but the diary includes clippings from the newspapers and all kinds of other things that attracted his attention in the period say—well, it goes on much longer than that, but certainly the period I was interested in which is August to December 1945. It's the most detailed account of what a literary man had to say about the occupation, about his hopes, disillusionment, and the cries after the famous incident of the photograph of MacArthur and the Emperor having been banned by the Japanese censors. And the Americans said, "There's no more censorship of the press." Takami Jín says, "For the first time in my whole life I can write as a free man." Nowadays many Japanese have become cynical about that particular period. I urge them all to read Takami Jín. He may have been mistaken. Certainly in later years he reverted to his Marxian convictions that he'd had before the war, but I doubt that he would have wanted to change one line of what he felt at that time. It was a feeling of liberation, exhilaration. The incidence of censorship on the part of American censors, for example the story by Tanizaki about a woman in Izu Hanto who falls in love with a pilot without having seen him just because his plane seems to make more graceful turns than the others and the motors of his plane seemed to have a more musical sound and so on, a really silly, stupid story of no literary value. I suspect that Tanizaki just collected some letters from the woman who actually wrote them. This was banned by the Americans because it seemed to be militaristic and people who criticized the American censorship
mentioned this prominently. But during the occupation the ban was lifted and it was reprinted and it is a genuinely inferior work by Tanazaki. Other stories, such as the one by Ishikawa Jun which first appeared in Shirakawa in a magazine of large circulation even then, was forbidden when a collection of his stories was published and this title story was not allowed to be included. This is an example of American censorship. But then shortly afterwards—I can't tell you how many months later—it was included. What it points out is that censors tend to be stupid. The Americans at the time were terrified of a recrudescence of Japanese militarism. They were determined to wipe out feudalism, by which was meant the Emperor worship or the ideals of the warrior class and all the rest of it. And they sometimes did this too literally, sometimes did this in a most paranoid manner. But the fact is that nobody was arrested because of it whereas the Japanese who had published sentiments unwelcome to the government in 1939 or earlier were arrested, thrown into prison, kept in a cell next to a leper for years at a time. They were tortured. Takami Jin was tortured. He describes the scene of the tortures, pencils put between his fingers and his fingers squashed, beaten, told by the man who was interrogating him that he personally was the one who had killed Takagi and so on. That didn't happen. And any attempt to say that the censorship under the American occupation was even worse because under the old system you could eliminate offending words with circles or crosses whereas the Americans concealed the censorship by making you rewrite the whole, therefore it was worse. That is a complete exaggeration. I'm against censorship. I thought the American censorship was wrong and stupid but to compare that and what prevailed in Japan from 1933 until 1945 is irresponsible. Anyone who does it is entitled to be attacked very strongly.
Q: Do you think that apart from our censorship and whatever wrong individual writers might have been done or film producers or artists, do you think that generally other forces at work in the occupation period assisted in unleashing or releasing creativity. So much was made about the adverse impact.

DK: It's every field. Let's take the Japanese classics. The Tale of Genji was censored. Tanazaki's translation of *The Tale of Genji* could not be printed. The edition on my shelf there is the one printed just before the war with all the chapters relating to Genji's affair with Fujitubo and his son succeeding, all of that removed. *The Tale of Genji* was suspect. Seikaku couldn't be printed. Many other Japanese works of literature by famous people, even those of the distant past, would not be printed. Some could be printed but they were considered to be inferior because they were insufficiently marked by a spirit of *yamato damashii* or whatever it might be. And conversely, the writings of inferior people were glorified simply because they met the approved standards. So for people who were in Japanese classical literature, let alone modern literature, this was a true liberation. You could write about Genji for the first time. For people who were in modern literature, it meant that they could describe without resorting to elaborate circumlocutions affairs between men and women. They could describe political activity. The fact that Tanazaki's novel, *Sansho Dayu*, was prohibited during the war, the threat of closing down Chuokura if they continued, a work which has no political content whatsoever. This was printed immediately after the war. It was printed in its entirety. Not one word was excised. There was no need to excise a word. And the flourishing of literature in 1946 is incredible. It's one of the great years in the whole history of Japanese literature. All the new writers in 1946, the new writers, the writers who have been silent, the writers who
have had to write about things they didn't want to write, the critics. There's
a book called "1946" written in 1946 by Kotochirichi

It's an extraordinary book. These people talking about now. What are they
discovering? They're discovering Virgil, Dante, and they're excited about it.
They're also discovering modern writers, yes. They're discovering everything —
and their contempt for the literature that they've been forced to read up to
now and the feelings of exhilaration that now they can read books of real worth.

Well, it's a book to make you restore your faith in literature. And people
like Mishima when he published something during the war, he was dis-
covered after the war. If he had published only that book and nothing like
his Confessions of a Mask, he would be forgotten. Novelists like Dazai, the
only writer who kept up the standard of literature during the war, Dazai, but
after the war a sudden explosion of writing. And then many new writers, writers
all over the place, and then writers who hadn't been heard from for years like
Nagikafu. His writings couldn't be printed, not because he was against the
war—he never said one word about it—but because he was frivolous. And
suddenly he was in print again and people wanted to read Nagikafu and

All these people suddenly are popular and beyond that the fact that there
weren't many other kinds of diversion for Japanese in 1946 made them turn to
literature in an extraordinary way. The creation of new magazines, the number
of new publishing companies founded in 1946. Well, this is a fantastic cul-
tural explosion in every direction. Even the people who had been purged, say
Hino Ishihe, went on writing. And it...
**ERRATA**

The following corrections were submitted by Donald Keene on March 23, 2014.

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<tr>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Correction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marie Antoinette was captured at Varennes</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Seth Low (not Lowe)</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Emiko (not Amiko)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Réunion (the island I wanted to go to)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&quot;barter&quot; doesn't make sense. I suggest this be gone over again or deleted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>&quot;Macmillan&quot; was the Manmillan Theatre at Columbia University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Not &quot;Yurahata&quot; but &quot;Inomata&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Not Noganuma but &quot;Naganuma&quot; (many times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Shiri makes no sense. Possibly Shively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Not Cara, but George H. Kerr</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Hindmarsh (many times)</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Otis Cary, not Kelly</td>
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<td>20, 22</td>
<td>Hindmarsh</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Nakamura Susumu</td>
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<tr>
<td>24, 25</td>
<td>Naganuma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The blanks refer to the use of i instead of wi. (This can be eliminated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>we would &quot;bow apologetically&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mare Island Naval Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>&quot;it was still&quot; not &quot;I was still&quot;</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Naganuma</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>should be &quot;graduated us as quickly&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>&quot;absurd&quot; not &quot;absurb&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>kibei were Americans of Japanese ancestry who were sent to Japan for their education, but &quot;returned to America&quot;, the literal meaning of kibei</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Yukuo Uyehara</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>&quot;Care&quot; should be &quot;Kerr&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>&quot;Atsuki&quot; not &quot;Otsuki&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>The place I was given the tea with sugar was Musashino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>There is a Japanese saying, &quot;Nikkō wo minai uchi wa kekkō to iu na&quot; &quot;Don't say wonderful until you've seen Nikko&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Shirakawa? The book by Tanizaki that was banned was Sasameyuki, translated as the &quot;The Makino Sisters.&quot; It was published before banning in Chūō Kōron.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>