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Memories of Warren Tsuneishi from Family, Friends, and Colleagues

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Memories of Warren Tsuneishi from family, friends, and colleagues

On behalf of my family I would like to thank the *Journal of East Asian Libraries* for honoring my father, Dr. Warren M. Tsuneishi.

Even though he was busy with his professional duties he found time to spend with his family. We went fishing and camping as a family. He encouraged all his children to further their education formally or informally. When I was in elementary school he “edited” a short story I wrote and I am sure that a large percentage of the grade I got can be credited to his editing. He helped me obtain a position in the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Library. As a grandfather he was concerned about his grandchildren’s education and careers. Even while in the hospital before he passed away he expressed this concern and asked me how I was doing.

He also took interest in my mother’s activities as a potter and painter and built an outdoor kiln for her. We shall all miss him very much.

My grandmother met my grandfather [Satoru and Sho Murakami Tsuneishi-Ed.] when he was giving a talk at the normal school she was attending. According to family legend she attended that meeting and decided that he was the man she wanted to marry, which she did supposedly against the wishes of her father, who disowned her. As the legend goes, on his death bed with all his family around him he said, “One of my daughters is missing,” referring of course to my grandmother. Upon her death my grandfather sent a lock of her hair to be buried with her parents.

My daughter interned at the Library of Congress last summer in the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program. At the end of her internship the interns from all parts of LC put on a presentation of their work in the Jefferson Building. Her grandfather went to see that program. (One of the other exhibits showed a military map of Leyte Gulf and so he took time to talk to the presenters.) When we left we walked through the Asian Reading Room, and the librarian there recognized him. Also, later other librarians approached her and said that they remember my father. She was very impressed by this and by the fact that given his extreme myopia he could still navigate the halls and underground tunnels of the LC complex.

David Tsuneishi
Reference Librarian
U.S. Department of Education
National Library of Education

Dr. Warren Tsuneishi was my friend and colleague. When he died on January 29, 2011 at the age of 89, I lost someone with whom I'd enjoyed a warm, close relationship for many years. We met during JAVA's early days. We both were involved in planning, organizing, and participating in the 1993 MIS reunion and Warren and I then co-edited a collection of the personal experiences described by MIS panelists at that reunion. This was published in 1995 by JAVA as *MIS in the War Against Japan* or, as it is more popularly known, *American Patriots*, an additional title that Warren placed on the front cover. The book has enjoyed wide circulation, especially when Warren and I sold and personally autographed copies during JAVA's participation in the annual Washington DC *Sakura Matsuri*. Each year Warren also monitored the number of copies still available and saw to it that more were republished when needed.

During World War II, Warren volunteered for the MIS and served on Leyte and the Camotes Islands in the Philippines and then on Okinawa. By an odd coincidence, the chief of the language detachment in which he served was an old friend of mine from MIS and the occupation of Japan. Following Japan's surrender, Warren was stationed in Korea, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. When he returned home, he earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale, published several scholarly works, and ended his professional career as chief of the Asian Division of the Library of Congress. He and I had a mutual interest in the war in the Pacific, Warren for having served there and I as an historian who wrote about it. I have fond memories of our many warm discussions.

Warren was a kind, friendly, and gentle man—although he looks rather fierce in the picture of him on Leyte that we included in *American Patriots*. He was solicitous of the feelings of others and considerate when dealing with them. He never hesitated to ask for other opinions and was willing to discuss them openly and carefully while always firmly stating his own view. As his eyesight began to fail in his last years, he never complained and was grateful for any help he received. When it came to signing our book at the *Sakura Matsuri*, he would ask me to guide his fingers as he carefully wrote his name. He was rightfully proud of his service in the war, and people at the *Matsuri* to whom he described his experiences were always fascinated by what he had to tell them.

Warren's death was a personal loss to me and I shall miss him very much.

Stanley L. Falk

Stanley Falk was in the Army Japanese language program (Military Intelligence Service Language School) and met Warren Tsuneishi in Washington in JAVA's early days.

Our fond memories of Warren include the fact that he was our mentor for the Army portion of our book, *Kanji and Codes, Learning Japanese for WWII*. He and Betty graciously invited us to their home when we were beginning our research on MISLS, and his continued guidance through the development of the project was invaluable. Dr. Tsuneishi will always be remembered by us for his scholarship and for his friendship.

Irwin and Carole Slesnick

The passing of Dr. Warren Tsuneishi caused me to remember my relationship with him and the impact he had on my life. I especially recall our first contact. In 1969, while I was a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, my advisor, Dr. T.H. Tsien, asked me to serve as a graduate assistant for Warren, who was brought in to teach advanced courses in Asian research and bibliography. I was both pleased and intimidated by the prospect. But Tsuneishi Sensei could not have been more generous or supportive. It was the beginning of a cordial relationship that continued when we both were in Washington, and I was occasionally a guest in his home, and later when I was at Yale. After he retired, we had fewer opportunities to see each other. To me, he was a giant in the profession, an inspiration to many of us, and a warm and generous human being. I valued his friendship and am grateful for the impact he had on my life.

Jack A. Siggins
University Librarian
The George Washington University

It must have been in fall, 1973, that I first met Warren Tsuneishi. I intended to do some research at the Library of Congress and had announced my visit; he received me kindly and then left me in the competent hands of K. T. Wu. I was allowed to see the rare items and was even locked in the cage to go through some uncatalogued materials. It was difficult to get a hold of Warren—there were always staff meetings, management meetings and other appointments. He was a manager librarian, very much committed to his job, and I remember the resignation in his voice when years later, on another visit, he indicated that the library's policy went a way that he did not consider the most desirable one. That was shortly before the responsibility for the Orientalia Division was laid into other hands.

I remember that Warren and his wife took me on an outing one Sunday afternoon. They probably took pity on the young foreigner who was still struggling with English. So we went to an oyster roast organized by the local fire company; it was not unlike a German volksfest in the country, save for the oysters and sweet potatoes, of course. And they took me to Chesapeake Bay to get a glimpse. It really was a glimpse only, and thus I was introduced to the American way—in Germany people would have spent at least half an hour walking around and enjoying the landscape. But we had looked left and right, so it was time to get into the car and head back. Warren impressed me as being very American, even his Japanese had a good American accent. If my visit to the Library proved very successful it was owing to Warren's and K. T. Wu's hospitality and support.

Hartmut Walravens
Berlin, Germany

Dr. Tsuneishi was easy to approach and always helped whoever sought his help or guidance. He had kind words for everything we did, even little things. When I was looking for information to compile Ms. Naomi Fukuda's obituary not knowing where to start, he called our

library's circulation to help me to contact with the right people. Although he could not see very well nor write due to his eye problems, he always responded to my Christmas card year after year after his retirement with his own hand-written kind words, except the past Christmas which made me worry about him. He was one of my mentors, and he influenced me to support to junior librarians.

Yasuko Makino
Japanese Bibliographer
The East Asian Library
Princeton University

As we recall the wonderful contributions that Warren made to our field, let's not forget that his service was broader. When he spoke, his words often seemed wise. It was a hard won wisdom, I think.

Fortunately the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress recorded an interview with Warren in 2002 in which he tells his story in his own words. Born on the Fourth of July, he was truly a great American, a member of the Greatest Generation.

I recall hearing Warren speak on several occasions of how glad he was to have chosen librarianship for a career, and about what a great field it is. He never worried about recruiting future librarians, because he saw our work as attractive and interesting.

Warren's presence among us raised us all up, and his legacy is lasting.

Maureen Donovan
Japanese Studies Librarian
Ohio State University Libraries

Dr. Tsuneishi was instrumental in bringing the "Japan Documentation Center" project at LOC to fruition. No small task! It was a pioneering effort that filled research needs at a time when digital resources were limited and a mindset of openness in information flows needed to be actively promoted. He was unfailing in his encouragement and support to Ichiko Morita (director of the JDC) and myself, as well as our colleagues in Tokyo, to make this project work.

After Dr. Tsuneishi retired from LOC and he was no longer "my boss," I got to know him through activities related to his military service in World War II. As others have said, his personal courage and optimism in difficult times is exemplary. As a Nisei, he was a native English speaker who came forth to use his language skills in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). On a personal level, I found this to be an inspiration to us in the library field to work just a little harder to improve our Japanese, Chinese, or Korean as second languages. I came to know some of his other service buddies through veterans events at the Library of Congress.

A funny story to share. I always addressed him as "Dr. Tsuneishi." His buddies would say, "we don't call him Dr. Tsuneishi." Moreover, he would often tell me, "just call me Warren." I tell you, this felt so unnatural to me. Being rather old-fashioned myself, I feel once a sensei, always a sensei. right? First name basis?!!! Gradually, however, when I telephoned him occasionally, I would take a deep breath and say, "Hello, Warren."

Indeed, he will be missed. A giant in our field.

Laura Wong
Johns Hopkins University

I was pleased to hear such kind and generous words about Warren Tsuneishi [posted on Eastlib], and I am somewhat astounded at how many years he has been away from our relatively closed world.

[Laura Wong's] comments were particularly moving to me, in part, I guess, for the "Nisei connection." Among other experiences, it was a generous Nisei farmer (also Pacific Theater, Military Intelligence) who made it possible for me to complete my undergraduate education. He called me to his house one evening before my final school year was to begin and handed me full-year tuition in cash, telling me only to "pass it on to others younger."

I did not really meet Warren Tsuneishi until much later, though I had occasion to hear him several times, and had exchanged pleasantries. Thirty years ago, when I was at work on my dissertation, he took time out for me when he happened to be visiting Seattle. I had been working to support myself and my studies at the Public Library, dealing chiefly with Asian language, and had come to consider the idea of a career in academic librarianship. Mr. Tsuneishi urged me to complete my studies and then move on to librarianship, stressing the great need for trained subject specialists. I followed his wise counsel, and have been rewarded by many challenging and fulfilling experiences and by a wonderful group of people in the East Asia Library field. I am very grateful.

I treasure, too, his humility in an age in which so many seem to have an almost obsessive need for titles to add to their name. Titles are not really necessary for those like Mr. Tsuneishi, whose scholarship and knowledge shine in their day to day work.

Fred Kotas
Cornell University

While Dr. Tsuneishi received his doctorate from Yale ('60, Political Science) and worked at Yale (first as a Cataloger from 1950 through 1957 and then as Curator of the newly named Far Eastern Collection from 1960 through 1966), I never had the privilege of meeting him myself. I did know a bit about his life and career and was always impressed by his incredible vision and range of contributions.

He really exemplified a new breed of postwar curator/bibliographer who came into the field as a librarian first and later pursued a doctorate. At LC, he was very involved in the effort to standardize use of Roman and original script fields on LC printed cards, helped get the Tokyo "field office" off the ground in 1968, and also received LC's Superior Service Award for assisting with planning for the first U.S. library delegation to China in the 1970s. Maureen's description of him as a truly great American is absolutely true; it is interesting to know that (as an LC press release euphemistically described it in 1993) he was "evacuated to a relocation center in Wyoming" when the U.S. entered World War II and later served with distinction in the Pacific theater.

Ellen Hammond
Curator, East Asian Library
Yale University Library

Dr. Tsuneishi was also very generous with his advice in the early days of the NCC, helping with many issues. His thoughtfulness and knowledge were invaluable.

Amy Heinrich
Former Director, C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University
First Chair of the North American Coordinating Council for Japanese Library Resources (NCC)

Not only did Dr. Tsuneishi make great contributions to the Library of Congress Asian Division, but he gave a tremendous boost to LC's Exchange and Gift program. For more than twenty years Dr. Tsuneishi gave to the LC Exchange & Gift Division, now the China Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division, his own collection of library journals, namely *College & Research Libraries*, *American Libraries*, etc. to be sent to our exchange partner, East China Normal University. With his gift, we receive more than twenty journal titles from the university in return. Dr. Tsuneishi brought his library journals to us every year without fail. Last year was the last time he came to our office with his two bundles of library journals to be forwarded to the East China Normal University. I deeply admire his caring and unfailing support for the university Dr. Tsuneishi had promised to help build their library when he first visited them more than twenty years ago.

Anna Ho
Library of Congress

The last time I saw Dr. Tsuneishi was about two years ago when he came to my office in LC donating a few personal copies of recent library journals to the Asian Division, which he headed for many years decades ago. He looked rather weak, although still very sharp-minded. I had some ominous feeling after our brief conversation.

Dr. Tsuneishi left behind a rich legacy of East Asian library administration. His dedication and leadership exemplify a high standard for us. We grieve for the loss, and are filled with admiration.

Ming-sun Poon
Library of Congress

My contact with him was rather limited to CEAL meetings yet I sensed he left us his spirit of “commitment” to every situation and circumstance. Time moves on. Yet, he is there speaking and talking to us long after his departure. We all miss him deeply.

Hisako Kotaka
OCLC, Inc.

[From the Journal of East Asian Libraries, No. 145 (June 2008), special issue recalling Naomi Fukuda]

When Ms. Fukuda and I were chatting with Prof. Gitler, someone patted me on my shoulder. When I turned around I faced Dr. Warren M. Tsuneishi of the Library of Congress. He asked me who was the gentleman with whom I was talking. I replied that he was Prof. Gitler, my library professor at the JLS. Then, Dr. Tsuneishi said that he had heard of Prof. Gitler’s name, but never met him before. Immediately, it was my pleasure to introduce Dr. Tsuneishi to Prof. Gitler.

Tsuneharu Gonnami
University of British Columbia, retired