

50TH ANNIVERSARY



ALUMNI REUNION PRESENTATION

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MY EXPERIENCES IN JAPAN

Thank you for asking me to write about my experiences in Japan and at New Paltz (and hello to all in Asian Studies in New Paltz). I first enjoyed the charm of Japan when the Navy ship I was on had a 10-day stay at Yokosuka in 1968. The weather was delightfully autumnal. We took a bus tour to the resort area of Hakone and to Kamakura (it was only later, at New Paltz, when I realized the historical importance of Kamakura). We also saw Odawara Castle.

I wondered; it was only 23 years after the war – would I encounter resentment? I met only courtesy, warmth, and genuine curiosity about Americans. I enjoyed using bits of Japanese language. I returned five times between 1969 and 1972, twice to Sasebo on Kyushu. I traveled to Tokyo and Yokohama but I will always regret not going to Kyoto.

My impression of the Japan I saw was of an optimistic, very hard-working nation, which embraced modernity but took care to preserve the beauty of its past and its setting. My brother-in-law managed a big Sears store and I told him: “If you want to see amazing retail marketing, you should see a Japanese department store (e.g. Tamaya’s in Sasebo). Everything is packaged and presented so attractively that I wanted to buy everything I saw, even if I didn’t know what it was!” And the radiant beauty of Japanese cities at night was manifest.

STUDENT LIFE AT SUNY NEW PALTZ

So, I decided after that first visit to Japan that I would major in Asian Studies when I got out. My first few days in class I said to myself, “I can’t believe I’m actually doing this!” What a faculty! Lawrence Huang, Kil Yong Zo, John Lin, Al Marks, Eliot Feldman, Usha Agarwahl, Amiya Chakravarty, Hugo Munsterberg, Ray Huang, P.K. Li, Mrs. Lee, John Young and of course, Ron Knapp. Hope I have not forgotten anybody. Though I concentrated on China, I was very glad to take several courses wholly or partially on Japan and South Asia. I am not going to try to name all the fellow students I recall fondly; I know I would leave somebody out. I will say it’s very gratifying to read of Dennis Simon’s success; he was a very hard worker.

LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

After New Paltz, I got an M.L.S. and had a good career as a prison librarian (of all things!). My wife Lu and I have a grown son and a granddaughter, who are graduates of N.Y.U. and the University of Rochester, respectively. My wife and daughter are librarians too. I have been retired for 17 years. I am an Adirondack 46er and a Civil War reenactor. And yes, David, I still consume lots of corn.

Sorry I cannot get to the reunion this time.
It’s fun thinking of those days and people.