

Hisao Tanigawa
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Re: Family Flag Reunion

Honorable Japanese Family:

This letter from me is in the way of introduction of our family. Families be they be in Japan or the United States all have one thing in common (Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters) each one of which has their own individual personalities.

The picture you sent with your family and your priest was a wonderful testament of your love for your lost brother. I cannot find the fully appropriate words to express my happiness that your beloved brother's flag is back home where it belongs. Perhaps even more important that you after all these years able to know what happened to him. So many families on both sides of the war will never know that fate of their loved ones lost in battle.

The Japanese newspapers question of why did I take the flag that day. My answer to him was correct. being just barely 19 years old the flag was at first just a trophy of war. Had I not taken it your brother's circumstances would have been lost forever.

For some reason I always treasured the flag and kept it folded in a secure box along with the three photos just as I found it. The writings on the flag baffled me. Therefore, I had no sense of the deep meaning of the flag to your brother or later to your family.

The picture of your brother in the armor standing so strong and proud and the photos of the children were in my heart sad event. For over 30 years I wanted to return the flag to the family and tell them how their soldier relative died. However, I was at a loss as how to accomplish this. Then by chance through my profession as a sand dune management consultant I met Kenso Ariki and Takenori Ishikawa. Last year when they were here I mentioned the flag and my desire to return it to the relatives of the soldier, at this point not knowing if any relatives were still alive.

This year Kenso and Takenori offered to make a serious attempt to find the family when they returned to Japan. Through Mr. Ishikawa's persistence your former small town was located and later the city which swallowed it up. Then came the call from you, the youngest son. Your families joy at the flags return was truly shared by ours. Truly really good things still happen in this troubled world.

It is my desire to perhaps learn more about your brother and his family. For all these long years I had a special close relationship with this young man in the photo. Now I learn that

he was the eldest of seven children and that like I was raised in small coastal town. I am also told that you all were part of a farming family and obviously very close to one another. I therefore am sending you with this letter photos of our family and brief resume of my own life and pursuits.

Unlike you I was an only child and for the most part was raised by my Grandparents. I shared by childhood with my dog who saved me from drowning twice. At a very early age I became interested in plants, birds and animals, a trait I still have today.

After the war I returned to Oregon and worked for the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service for ten and one-half years. Since that time I have operated my own business, which includes landscaping, consulting/contractor on wetlands, beaches & dunes (planting and management) research projects. I am now 75 years of age and still working 6 to 7 days a week. I am an avid reader and have nearly 3,000 books in my personal library, mostly non-fiction.

Then I met and married Joyce Ann and we raised five children. As can see from the mosaic family photo our family tree continues to grow. Our experience with the children as they grew up was both interesting and rewarding.

When the children left home to start their own families we were lost for a while. Then going back to my childhood love of birds and animals we became licensed wildlife rehabilitators at our home. My wife and I cared for injured or small orphans of all species for 15 years. The enclosed photos illustrate some of our patients.

I have also included some of my resume of work and political duties. I was elected to the Port of Siuslaw Commission for 29 years. Served on the Florence City Council for 16 years, the last 6 years as Mayor. Also served as Chairman of our 30 member Coastal Conservation and Development Commission. For 20 years I testified before congressional committees in Washington D.C.

Enough about us, it is my fervent hope that you will find time to tell me about your brother and your family. If you have a photo of the town where you were raised could you send me a copy. Finally my long relationship with your brother through his photo and flag is at an end. It is however our wish that we may keep in contact and learn more about your lovely family.

We look forward to your visit and I will discuss more details of the Okinawa encounters if you wish. Until then we will pray for your good health and peace of mind.

Sincerely,

Wilbur E. Ternyik
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