

THE AUGUST VIRTUE OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY

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January 1989

In commemoration of 88th birthday

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* 88 is written in a Chinese character as “rice”, which represents long life and since it is our national staple food, it is considered very lucky and important.

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PREFACE

The army and navy forces of Iwo Jima Island died game in the most relentless battles in the history of war. I was commander of Navy Corps on the island before it fell. After the war I entered the Buddhist priesthood to morn and pray for the departed souls of those who sacrificed their lives on the island and to pray for the eternal peace of the world. I was ordained as Jushoan Koami of Kuya Sect in Tendai School in Buddhism. Later I established the association of Iwo Jima with the religious purpose for the dead I have been presiding the association performing periodical religious rights and keeping communication with the families. I celebrated my 88th birthday on July 24, 1988. In commemoration I decided to commit to writing what I have thought and how I have lived in this nation of August Virtue of him Imperial Majesty which is unique in the history of the world.

He said, “In the original form they were there but were deleted by the war department.”

The hypothetical war ended in October with the U.S. on its winning side. I was assigned as a member of the special communication squad in the Naval Staff.

When I was sent to Mexico two years before, my duty was with the U.S. With the outbreak of the war, the importance of communication activities increased and we organized a special squad attached directly to the general commander of the naval staff

and we had authority over all the communication squad throughout the nation and the communication activities as well.

Due to the nature of our communication process, we needed specialists in various languages. We hired college graduates specialized in languages and appointed them reserved officers.

The interception was done at the communication squad in Ohwada, Saitama Prefecture. We had more than 1000 interceptors. When I was the first commander of the squad in 1937 as Lt. Commander, I had only twenty-five men to work with. So the scale had developed very fast. However, a small flexible sized system that had been, it could respond promptly and delicately to any communication needed.

It was my duty, with these things in mind, to take care of personnel administration not to mention of planning and putting into practice. As for the personnel arrangement, our system was so confidential that it was all up to ourselves, what, who, and how to investigate, pursue or study.

In October 1942, Japanese navy had its foremost bases on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands and Truk Island in the Yarus Island. The General Headquarters of the Combined Squadron was watching over the U.S. Fleet in the Hawaii Islands. General Kakimoto was over on the island with his staff.

Before I resumed my actual duty as a member of the communication system, I was assigned to visit around those foremost bases to get in touch with their headquarters with two purposes; to get their up-to-date information in the South Pacific and to provide them with the latest U.S. information I had acquired in Mexico and the U.S. I returned to Tokyo toward the end of the year after visiting those wide spread bases stretching from the west to the east.

In 1943 the U.S. began their counterattack. Starting with our losing Admiral Yamamoto, we were defeated in notable consecutive battles one after another. During that time I can recall there were many events concerning the U.S. and Japan communication battles but I am short of necessary actual materials that describe them in detail, so I must skip the comment of them as of now.

Toward the end of 1943, however, we reported the U.S. information that we intercepted to the operation squad, they had no more measures to counteract the U.S.'s could-be moves. So our information was simply received as news.

Our assignment seemed not of much importance any more under such circumstances since Japan was on the verge of her catastrophe. I didn't feel like sitting at a desk performing communication duties anymore. I wanted to prove myself a military man.

3. Garrison Commander of Iwo Jima Island

I requested the personnel department of the Navy staff for transfer. In early 1944 I received a call from them. “We are going to set up a new Garrison squad on Iwo Jima. Navy is going to be responsible of the defense under the supervision of Yokosuka Navy Station. Army is going to send five troops for now. We made an agreement with them that you are to be the Garrison Commander General.”

Immediately I began a survey of the island. As for its location, it is situated at the southernmost end of the Bonin Islands and on the part of administration; it is included in Tokyo Metro police, though it is far south in the Pacific. All the military facilities had been forbidden to be installed on the island in peacetime by the Washington Treaty.

After I received the call from the operation officer of the staff. I called on Captain Nagasawa who was in charge of personnel administration at his office. He said, “Captain Shinozaki, Air Force commander on Chichijima Island in Bonin Islands is over on Iwo Jima and doing things on his own. When you commence your duty on the island, ask Captain Shinozuka to return to his duty and you are to take the command of the defense.”

With his encouragement I felt myself relieved of my worries as for my inexperience as a naval fighter. I had never known at that moment that the rest of my life would tightly be connected with the island from then on.

My adjutant was Lt. Takano, who had been making in calligraphy fair copies of the entire document, which had been issued by the naval headquarters ever since the outbreak of

the war to offer to His Majesty Emperor. Together with Lt. Takano I reported myself to Yokosuka Navy Station and received all the necessary equipment and arms and flew to Iwo Jima from Kisarazu Air Base in Chiba Prefecture.

Lt. Hiratsuka was there on the island waiting for me sent from Chichijima with a handful of men. He had everything ready for us as adjutant of the defense. I was much obliged because this assistant of mine was efficient enough to help his inexperienced commander. I was also very satisfied to hear that at the time of the German seizure of Fort Chintao, Korea during the World War I he was a member of naval gunnery unit and cooperated with them to make the action more rapid and effective. In the meantime, Admiral Nagumo was assigned as commander general of Central Pacific Fleet and the headquarters was set up on Saipan Island. Army sent their forces from Magoya and stationed them on Guam, Tennian and other Southern islands. They all formed the 31st Forces under Admiral Nagumo. Our Iwo Jima Garrison was also included.

In March 1944, we were just undergoing the construction to reinforce the defense; Army Commander General Obata of the 31st Forces visited the island to inspect. While I was showing him around the lava and Sandy Island, I sighed, "It would make my duty as a commander much easier if I had a horse." He said in surprise, "I've never heard of a navy officer taking a command on horseback!" I answered, "I'm a navy officer but I ride as well as a cavalry. In fact I was a language student when I was a sub-lieutenant and during my vacation I formally served with Cavalry First Regiment." "Very well, I'll send you some immediately." He promised me.

A week later three horses, they're feed, and two caretakers were delivered from Chichijima on a motor-powered vessel. At that time there were about one thousand islanders living on the island and for the children it was the first time to see live horses with their own eyes and they were delighted with the new experience. The three horses were divided among two reserved officers, Col. Watanabe, Maj. Oka and me. The caretakers went along with the reserved officers. For my own horse I appointed one out of sailors who had taken care of farming horses at home.

Every ship that arrived was loaded with not only soldiers and sailors but also 25mm anti-aircraft machine guns and shallow-water mines. As far as my previous experience went, they were all totally new to me. Fixing those arms on the island and building up a strong point was just like the work of public engineering.

Most of all those newmen were sent by the nation-wide mobilization. So they had never been drafted. They had had no experience in military training. They were just civilians. I discussed the matter with the adjutant and decided that one day a week we would stop the construction work and instruct them military discipline with the aim that we hold a military parade on April 29, Emperor's birthday to encourage their morale.

By the time the parade was held, the second runway had been completed. On Emperor's birthday about 5000 army and navy men stood at attention while I inspected and saluted them on horseback. All cheered "Banzai" three times and wished for the recovery from

the discouraging situation of the war.

The daily report, however, became more unfavorable for us every day. We were very much afraid that the island would be involved in the bloodshed battle any moment. We set May 27 the Navy Day as the day for trial shooting of all the anti-air ammunitions. So I sent words to all the army and navy forces to complete the construction of all the batteries.

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*Banzai Long Live the Emperor!

When the time came, on May 27, with a signal at 3:00 a.m. we all started firing. Every anti-aircraft gun fired five shots, 25mm machine guns one cartridge in 45 degrees upward angle all aiming toward the sea. All went well as had been expected and we were satisfied that we were ready to defend the enemy attack.

The U.S. began attacking Saipan and their maneuvering forces began flying over and bombing our island as well. The “A” operation was issued and the air forces with 300 planes of Hachijojima Unit composed of fighters and bombers led by Admiral Matsunaga flew over to the island. We were to carry out the “A” operation. However, the operation itself became of no use under the impending circumstances. It could not be carried out any longer. All the Hachijojima Unit could do was to air-fight against the U.S.

Those waiting on land had no chance of doing anything. We just looked up to see the courageous airfreight and kept cheering up yelling “Banzai.” I heard Hachiman Unit had

been made up of excellent trainer pilots from Yokosuka Air Base, so their fighting spirit and skill in both shooting and navigating were absolutely worth the praise.

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*A Take off the carrier, their temporal base, perform their duty and fly
back to their original base.

Although most of my men were inexperienced, I was not too worried about the circumstances. In June Saipan was seized by the U.S. and the headquarters of the Central Pacific Fleet was demolished as well. The U.S. operation of attacking Japan right across in the middle of the South Pacific amputating our powers into pieces was not in the information that we gathered in the beginning of the war in Mexico. So it must have been revised in the operation meeting in San Francisco afterwards.

Now Iwo Jima was right on the frontier of the battles. The information we had that the test of B29 had been finished about the time the war broke out and they would be on the production line in large number within three years was then proved to be true. We gathered that by October those long-distance high altitude bombers, which would take off Saipan, would directly bomb the mainland of Japan. Besides it was the only island suitable for an airbase. If we could totally defend the island, we could break the U.S. plan to attack the mainland by B29's. On the other hand, if the U.S. seized the island and made use of it, the mainland would be an easy prey to B 29's. Therefore, it was imperative for us to defend it by all means.

It was no more a situation for navy alone to take the responsibility of the island defending under only a Garrison commander. The Military Headquarters were to take the command directly as for the defense of the island. General Kuribayashi was assigned as commander general and came to the island from Bonin Islands. His new strategy was to

“Destroy them after they are lured to get ashore”, which contradicted the one we had been following. Therefore, there occurred a great dispute between army and navy.

Our original Navy Forces on the island and the Hachijojima Unit that I had already mentioned became the 27th Air Force and Admiral Ichimaru came to take the command.

Captain Inoue also came to the island as a commander from the newly established Air Force in South Pacific Islands. Both of them belonged to the 3rd Carrier Fleet in Kisarazu. Chiba, while I belonged to Yokosuka Navy Base. Such circumstances made it unable for me to take the command of the defense as Garrison Commander any more.

Owing to the battle situation of Saipan, the pessimistic view of the war began to prevail. The natives of the island that had once counted about 1000 began to decrease observing the order dispatched by the Headquarters to leave the island. It was for us Garrison men to take care of their evacuation from their villages because we had closely been living with them until then.

About 120 islanders lived on the North Iwo Jima. After they would all desert the island, it would be just a deserted island. So I appointed 2nd Sub-Lieutenant Endo as a commander of the island with thirty men. He had been serving me at the Garrison Commander's quarters and he was the right man to command a detachment.

Army Forces had been reinforced one after another. 145 regiments from Kagoshima, 26 tank regiments from Manchuria, trench motor, rapid-firing-gun and motor battalions, all landed on the island with their heavy arms. By October 15,000 army and 6,000 navy landed the island.

With the fall of Saipan, about 50 B29's in a formation at a time began to air raid the island. They repeated bombing two or three times every day. At that time Garrison Commander was taking the general lead of all island army and navy but our anti-aircraft battle was not very effective because those bomber's altitude of over 6,000 meters was just beyond our anti-aircraft missiles of 1944.

While the anti-air fighting's were going on, those whose duty was not directly to do with the missiles, all evacuated into the under-ground caves. But the anti-air fighting units were fighting unguarded. So there were many casualties among them. When luck was not with them, they had their anti-air guns bombed on the spot and a few scores of men lost their precious lives all at once.

Our headquarters got bombed in the vicinity three times and was partially damaged. On the second time it was bombed I was blown away by the blast and lay unconscious for a while. Fortunately, however, I came to myself. Every night we had to make sure of our survival.

On October 15, 1944 I was promoted to Captain and transferred to Yokosuka Naval Station. My successor was Captain Inoue of Air Unit of the South Pacific Islands. Iwo Jima Defense Garrison was shuffled into the Third Naval Air Force. All the navy forces were to be controlled under the command of Admiral Ichimaru.

Due to transportation I had to leave the next day I received the transfer cable. I didn't even have a split second to bid goodbye to men with whom I had shared my life under severe firing. That was the most unwilling transfer I had ever undergone in my navy career.

4. Live to the end of the war and enter Buddhist priesthood

After eight months of Garrison life in Iwo Jima, I returned to Kisarazu Air Base. I was dismissed by the Commander of the Third Air Unit and reported to Yokosuka Naval Station. Then I went to the Personnel Administration Bureau of the Navy Department and asked Captain Nagasawa about my abrupt transfer even without a proper successor. I also proposed my request as for the personnel reshuffle.

I first got acquainted with Captain Nagasawa when I was a second-year cadet in Naval Academy. He was assistant corporal of the Second Division and also our trainer then. He explained about my transfer saying, "Admiral Ichimaru was of the opinion that they were not able to afford two captains and an admiral for 6,000 navy especially when Japan faced her crises on the losing side. You may not like it but we had to call you back. We

will, however, take your desire into consideration for the next assignment.” He was also generous enough to add, “You look very exhausted, too. I suggest that you’d take a leave for a while until you shape up.”

Captain Nagai was beside him and said, “A few days ago I met your wife and a daughter at the Naval hospital in Setagaya. I told them that you’d be back soon. I’m sure they’re all looking forward to your homecoming. You’d better go home at the earliest time possible. By the way, I’m sorry to hear of your father-in-law’s death last September.

Captain Nagai lived in the same town with us. So while I was away he dropped in at my home once in a while and took care of my family. Since he was close to Captain Nagasawa at the Personnel Bureau he must have told him about my family situation. So I thought my transfer back to the mainland from Iwo Jima might have something to do with his knowledge of my father-in-law’s death. I later heard that whenever he heard on the radio the news of air raids on Iwo Jima, he would say, “Tsunezo must be in tight situation. I do hope he is all right and return safely.”

The Navy as annex to the Officers’ Club had reserved one of the first-class hot spring hotels in Atami. I was able to reserve a room there. I took my then six-year-old son with me and stayed there nearly a month until I recovered physically. Incidentally, he is now fifty years old. He is one of the 5th graduates of Defense Academy and is now Mari-time Captain serving as a liaison officer in Yokosuka U.S. Navy Headquarters.

After one month's rest in Atami, I gained weight and recovered completely. Toward the end of November I reported myself to the Personnel Bureau, Captain Kawai, Nagasawa and Nagai, all three were there waiting for me. On seeing me they said that they had just received a request from the Naval Construction Bureau that Admiral Kanazawa wanted me as a project officer there. They were ready to assign me for the post and asked for my consent.

Captain Nagai and I had known each other over ten years. When I was a communication chief on the Second Destroyer Flotilla Flag ship, he was a staff officer and we served on the same ship together for a year. I used to handle important cables as a matter of a split second during the night attack drills and whenever we had officers' parties we were together and we used to go out together a lot, too. So although he was a senior officer at the Personnel Bureau, I was on friendly terms with him.

I told him what actually was in mind. "In 1924 when I was on the light cruiser Tama along the West Coast of the U.S. about a month with a special mission, Admiral Kanazawa, then a gunnery Lieutenant while I was an ensign and a gunnery officer and served under the captain of the ship, later Admiral Idemitsu. So whenever we had the Tama crew reunion, I had met him and known him very well. So I appreciate Admiral Kanazawa's thoughtfulness in providing me with a safe position in Tokyo. However, returning safely back from the bloody battle site of Iwo Jima by myself, I didn't feel like working at desk.

So I explained my state of mind to Captain Nagasawa and asked him to forward my appreciation and desire to Admiral and asked them for reconsideration of my next assignment. Listening to my appeal, Captain Kawai said, “We have just decided your new post in a conference and we haven’t even reported it to the commander yet. We’ve understood you very well, so we’ll discuss the case once more from the scratch. It will take some time before we reach a decision. So please be patient a few more days.” I indulged myself in taking advantage of knowing the right person at the right chance.

In early December I received a call from the Personnel Bureau. I reported myself right away and said to Captain Kawai, “Thank you for your calling me. I have had enough rest by now and I am not in a position to be idle staying home at this time of our national crisis. I’m ready to be of service for my country.”

Captain Kawai’s reply was, “In fact, the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines needs a Naval Attaché to fill a vacancy. Would you like to take it?” “Yes, Sir. I have no reason why not. I understand Army is in general charge of the islands and I have known the Army Attaché Colonel Utsunomiya. When the war broke out he was in Brazil as Attaché. We evacuated on the same boat. Aboard the exchange boat we were roommates. General McArthur is likely to make an attack on Luzon in the impending future so I’m already to resume my duty there.” I gave him a spirited acceptance.

My predecessor Captain Hiraide was already sent back to Tokyo from Manila due to his suffering from high blood pressure. I met him at the Naval Officers’ club and took over

the duties in detail. The organization of the Japanese Embassy in the occupied Philippines was so large that the duties of the attaché were very important accordingly.

On December 28, 1944 I was assigned to work with the Naval Headquarters of the Southwestern Fleet. Then the order was issued to appoint me as a naval attaché to Japanese Embassy in the Philippines as of January 10, 1945. Since my family was mourning with my father-in-law's death we were not celebrating the New Year as the rest of Japanese people did observing the traditional custom, and if I went to Manila, there would be no guarantee of my safe home-coming judging from the pessimistic prospect of the war of that time, we decided to spend our would-be last New Year vacation together at Nagisa Hotel in Zushi near Yokosuka Naval Station since it served as an annex to the Naval Officers' Club accommodating navy officers and their families.

In the meantime General McArthur began attacking Luzon Island from Layte. The Embassy had to seek shelter in Baguio. I waited home to make use of my reserved flight to Manila, which was due in mid-January. My flight, however, had to be cancelled and postponed repeatedly due to the retreating war situation. It was not long before I was finally discharged of my duty in Manila on February 15.

I was then assigned as trainer of Torpedo School and Garrison Commander in Kawatana, Kagoshima. I was ordered to make a study of seaside crash boats. Kawatana Garrison had already been undergoing the training of seaside crash boats in Omura Bay in Nagasaki. They needed another squad to enlarge their power, so they planned to

establish a new school in Kawatana. I reported myself to Admiral Matsubara, Commander there and began studying on seaside crash boats.

The seaside crash boats had hastily been under construction at Navy Shipyard in Seasebo, Nagasaki. They were to send them to Kagoshima Bay on their completion. We discussed the procedure of bringing the boats to Kagoshima and got everything ready to have them in the bay.

We were to set up the headquarters in Tanimachi town, which is along the bay in the south of Kagoshima City. The bases for crash boats were to be built at Shinjo, Tarumizu and Ibusuki, all along the bay. I went back to Kawatana to send the crash boats to newly built bases from there. The situation of Okinawa, however, turned for worse very fast and we didn't have any more spare time to start training crashers in the bay.

The situation was so impending that Navy had to be prepared to attack and hold back the enemy when they would get ashore any place on the mainland. And that seemed a matter of time. We simply waited for the order for the suicide attackers to take action. For the time being, the temporal order we received instead was to defend the whole Southern Kyushu.

Admiral Matsubara and I agreed to name the Forces "Storm" and use the emblem of traditional Satsuma Lord of Kagoshima. Which was a cross in a circle. Every time a new crash boat was built in Nagasaki and Sasebo, the emblem was painted in white on it.

We sailed those boats to the new bases only at night in dark lest the U.S. planes flying from Okinawa might attack them. In the daytime we pulled them ashore and camouflaged them with twigs and leaves.

Now the assault squad of Northern Kyushu was included in the Fourth Suicide Attackers' Forces and their headquarters was in Kawatana. In Southern Kyushu the Fifth Suicide Attackers were stationed on Sakurajima Island in Kagoshima. Captain Oishi was the General Commander of the Squad. He was a year my senior in Naval Academy and he went to the same high school in Yokosuka as mine.

The Attackers' Force included a commander, adjutant, Chief attackers and crew. There were about twenty bases along the bay and each of them had about 200 to 300 crew according to their sizes. So the Force was of quite a large number.

The suicide attackers were paid double and well fed while all the nation was starving with scanty ration of food. Such unit as the suicide attackers' had never existed in the military history of our country nor ever had in any other nation of the world.

It was particularly difficult to keep up the morale of young attackers of sixteen or seventeen of age. They were ready to be desperate and wild at any moment. IT was imperative for the commander to discipline them.

I had to discipline them to die for our country. All the actions had to be based on the significance of brave death. To achieve this aim we went thru training after training until we could handle the seaside crash boats as our own limbs. Fortunately they judged that the U.S. from Okinawa would attack the area, which was under responsibility of the 32nd Assault Unit, so they gave us priority to be equipped with what little assault arms they could afford us. We waited in growing tension ready to charge never to return till at last the day came when we all listened to the declaration of surrender without any condition announced by Emperor.

Then the disposal of the war, which no one had ever experienced, began. We managed one by one according to instructions dispatched by the headquarters of the Combined Fleet.

However, everything was out of order. Various orders were issued one after another irrelevantly by the headquarters of the Fleet. While we were minutely observing the orders, they had to be revised by the Occupation Forces on the way.

When the Noma Peninsular Division was putting out all the seaside assault boats along the beach of Kataura Base to remove explosives from the bows, an explosion took place.

It developed into a big blast involving some other boats and causing a few scores of casualties to my great regret. I rushed to the spot on receiving the report. The cause of the explosion was unknown in spite of our investigation. I was sorry and felt

responsibility as commander.

A U.S. Marine Battalion led by Lt. Col. Hayward came to Kagoshima in the end of August to confiscate our bases. While he and I were discussing the confiscation procedures, I happened to tell him why and how I was there after experiencing the initial battles of Iwa Jima. I also told him how sincerely I wished to go back to the island to pray and mourn for the departed souls of all the colleagues, officers and men who had bereaved me. He kindly took my appeal to heart just like a comrade of many years and suggested that I should write an application to the G.S.Q. of the Allied Occupation Forces so that he would forward.

About the same time, British Headquarters sent Col. Thomas to the G.H.Q. as liaison officer. He flew down to Kagoshima and visited me at the quarter of the 32nd Assault Unit, which was, then at Hakamazaki on Sakurajima Island, Kagoshima. He asked for our operation plan since the Allied Forces had been planning to attack us from Okinawa in November.

After the business, I treated him with curry and rice. While eating he happened to catch sight of the draft of my English application of a trip to Iwo Jima.

He read it thru and said, "I can make out what you mean but there is room for improvement in English. I'll do it for you if you so wish." And he generously volunteered to make my draft a beautiful formal application on the spot.

I made thirty copies of it and handed in one to Lt. Col. Hayward, who read it thru and stared at me in surprise and asked, "Have you written this English yourself?" I told him the truth as it was. To which he said, "It must have been so. This is such fine English that I can't even write myself." I was sure that English letter of application would help me a lot to carry out my desire into practice in the future.

Anyway, it was very significant and humanitarian that two officers of enemy forces until a few months ago generously offered me their helping hand to make my appeal come to light. I was deeply impressed. It actually marked the very first step of my devotion to the problems of Iwo Jima and to this day I appreciate the thoughtfulness and friendship rendered me by them right after the dreadful war.

On Kagoshima Bay, not far from Kanoya Air Base, was Shinjo Base for seaside crash boats. The commander there was Lt. Kuzuhara, former reserve officer. He was a graduate of Ryukoku Buddhist College and he was a son of a Buddhist priest and an heir to the temple. He had already been demobilized and was at home in Kyoto.

When all the tasks had been managed and my responsibilities had been accomplished in November 1945, I wrote a letter to ex-Lt. Kuzuhara asking to tell my intention of getting ordained by his priest father.

I was finally demobilized and on my way home from Kagoshima; I got off the train at

Kyoto where exp-Lt. Kuzuhara met me. He took me to his father's temple. I introduced myself to Rev. Kuzuhara and told him my experience, responsibility and wish about Iwo Jima and explained my intention to fulfill my desire to perform religious services for the departed souls. I added that although I was totally ignorant in Buddhism, I would devote myself in the religious life and wanted to practice in the shortest possible period to be ordained and qualified as a priest.

He listened to me with all his heart and said most serenely, "Your ignorance in the line does not in the least disqualify you from becoming a Buddhist priest. If you have any particular sect of your choice, it may be difficult, but if you prefer our sect, you stay with us about a week making religious practice every day."

His temple was called "Shiunzan Gokurakuin Koshoji Kuyado." It was founded by Peer Kuya Shonin (similar to a saint in Catholicism) and his temple was very famous. It used to have 36 branch temples and his sect was on the top of all the sects among Kyoto Buddhist temples.

left themTo my great regret, I had to suffer a broken heart when I heard that ex-Lt. Kuzuhara, heir to the temple made a suicide shortly after I left them. bear 1. He couldn't bear the chaotic social situations of after-the-war days.

After a week's practice I was exceptionally speedily ordained a Kuya sect Buddhist priest as Jushoan Koami. Coming back to Tokayo, I reported myself to the 2nd Demobilization

Bureau and explained my issue. Ex-Admiral Kawai was at the office as the chief of Personnel Section. Listening to my report, he said, “Such a man of the world as you can’t make a priest! Stop being funny!” He knew me very well because I was on the same Flagship Naka of the Second Torpedo Fleet. “If you don’t trust what I say, Sir, please make reference to the Religious Bureau of Educational Department of the government, I’m sure I have already been registered as a religious.”

Then I visited the G.H.Q. and made inquiries about the application I had sent from Kagoshima, It was, however, the time when everything was confused and inexperienced so nobody was sure where the letter had been wandering about.

In the meantime, I was imprisoned at Sugamo by the name of General Willoby with a proviso, “not a suspect of prisoner of war” My imprisonment lasted for five months about which I have written in my another volume so here I’ll skip going in detail.

Nevertheless, I can’t help wondering about the way I was always given a chance of narrow escape from death. Yes, I went thru the experience three times. All those positions were closely connected to matter-of-life-or-death situation. First, Iwo Jima Garrison Commander, second, Naval Attaché to the Japanese Embassy in Manila and last of all the 32nd Seaside Crash Boat Commander in Kagoshima.

All those could have been accidental but I felt strong power of supernatural providence. It was quite natural for me to retreat from the world to be a Buddhist priest.

In 1949 four Buddhist priest including me got together and established a company. One of them was a prison chaplain, one was a Buddhist college professor, another a scholar and me. Our office was on the premises of Gokokuji Temple near Sugamo Prison. Our business was to raise money selling used clothes imported from the U.S. and help with the prisoners of war and their families with what little profit we made.

The professor priest had to teach at a college in Tokyo leaving his temple in Nikko. So I volunteered to take over his temple and practiced all the necessary practices to make me a secular priest. I made a retreat and made more advanced practice for certain days abstaining from all animal food and sometimes fasting. The practice began at 4:00 a.m. with singing chant and visiting so many temples of the area and meditating, and being taciturn all day.

In August 1951 about the time my long and severe practice was over, I received a letter from G.H.Q. that they would consider my application advising to make a formal application thru the Japanese government as to performing religious ritual on Iwa Jima. I immediately consulted the Welfare Department and Foreign Department of the government. They agreed on sending ex-Maj. Shirai and ex-Col. Nakajima, two officials of the Demobilization Bureau, to accompany me to the island.

It was still under occupation when we first landed Iwo Jima in February 1952 by L.S.T. We stayed on the island about a month. While there I put up two Kannon statues at the

north and south of the island for all the departed souls without distinction of nationality. My idea was to carry out religious services and pray and mourn for them as I had stated in my application based on Buddhism principle; to pray wholeheartedly for all the souls evenly for their eternal rest beyond human resentment.

In the meantime we went down into the raidbeaten and flam-thrower ruined caves to search and collect bodies and relics of the departed. We discovered to our sorrow that quire a number of skulls had been removed from the bodies. We immediately reported to the U.S. Marine there and asked them for measures to prevent further mishaps.

Later in December 1955 I was informed by a staff officer of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Headquarters of the fact that the caves had been sealed with the bodies lying as they were. That might have helped prevent further removal of the skulls but it brought about another grave obstacle. It made it almost impossible for us to collect other relics which had been sealed in with the bodies unless we used heavy machinery.

5. The Nation of August Virtue of His Imperial Majesty

As the result of the defeat in the war which had never taken place in the long history of our nation, so-called “Democracy” came along.

The idea had developed in the West but it was totally new to our nation. Many people took it as their golden rule to replace the August Virtue of His Imperial Majest which had

always existed ever since the dawn of our national history.

In the beginning of the occupation Emperor Hirohito visited General McArthur, Mr. Okumura was the interpreter for the meeting. What dialogues were exchanged was never told to anyone. However, Emperor kept his reign without being disturbed by anybody. Unless people observe this fact carefully they would not understand what the August Virtue of his Imperial Majesty means.

Mr. Okumura was the first secretay to the Japanese Embassy in Washington D.C. at the time when the war broke out. He came back on the same exchange boat with me. He came back on the same exchange boat with me. He must have difficult time keeping all the conversation that he had interpreted to himself. To conclude this I sincerely express my patriotism toward my country which enjoys the prosperity of the August Virtue of his Imperial Majesty.

END

Typed Copy

Dear Colonel Hayward:

I am writing to ask whether you would be kind enough to help me in obtaining official permission regardin a request which is of particular importance to me.

In February of last year I was appointed Garrison Commander of Iwo Jima and carried out my duties with the utmost zeal. On many occasions, I directed the anti-aircraft defence of the island against the raids made by the U.S. Naval Task Forces and later against the raids made from the air bases established on Saipan.

At the end of October last year, I was ordered to return to Japan and therefore had to leave behind on the island 5,000 of my subordinates, together with num`erous army friends, to face the American attack.

In view of the fact that the vast majority of these officers and men died in the battle of Iwo Jima, I feel myself under an exceedingly stong moral obligation to do whatever lies in my power to ensure that the necessary religious rites are carried out in respect of them.

On demobilization, it is my intention to become a priest and I should be eternally grateful in permissions could then be granted to me to proceed to Iwo Jima to carry out the necessary religious services, and also to erect a religious monuments to their memory.

Also, I should be pleased to give any information I possess regarding the defence of Iwo Jima against air attack, if the American authorities so desire it.

Yours respectfully

Ex-Navy Captain Tsunezo Wachi