

OBON 2015

Returning personal items to their families.
個人の遺留品をご遺族の元へ



EVERYONE HAS A FAMILY
誰でも一人一人に家族がいます

OBON 2015 - OBON 2020

We enjoyed a spectacular *Returning Ceremony* on March 23rd. Three WWII veterans participated, along with family of deceased veterans, the Army, the Coast Guard and local officials. The public filled the room with warmth and local media documented the entire affair.

The question everyone asks now is, "*when can we have another Returning Ceremony?*"

Table of Contents

Page 2: Returning Ceremony

Page 3: Returning Ceremony

Page 4: Elmer Bechtold

Page 5: Museum Exhibits

Page 6: Scholar's Corner

Page 7: Contact OBON 2015

Returning Ceremony

The *Columbia River Maritime Museum* in Astoria, Oregon offered their “Barbey Center” room as a place to host OBON 2015’s first *Returning Ceremony*. This refurbished train station was a perfect choice of locations to hold the event. *CRMM* also provided space in their conference room for technicians from Oregon Public Broadcasting to set up for a live remote broadcast and interviews. (photos below)



The one-hour ceremony featured numerous distinguished individuals who shared their thoughts and stories.

- 2:00pm Presentation of the Colors by Matt Zedwick,
U.S. Army National Guard, Silver Star, Iraq 2004
- Welcoming Remarks: Cindy Price, Astoria City Council
The Honorable Arline LaMear, Mayor of Astoria
- Remarks by: Brig. Gen. Steven R. Beach, Asst. Adjutant General Army, Oregon National Guard
Capt. Sean MacKenzie, Deputy Commander, Sector Columbia River, US Coast Guard
Mr. Jerry Ostermiller, State Heritage Commissioner; former director,
Columbia River Maritime Museum
- Presenting: OBON 2015, Rex and Keiko Ziak
- Returning from: Ed Bartlein, member of PNP-41st Signal
- Returning from: Leland “Bud” Lewis, member of SC-186
- Returning from: Leslie O. “Buck” Weatherill, member of AT-162
- Returning from: Calvin Edward Warren, SC-163, Represented by Todd Johnson, grandson
- Returning from: Dale Bassett, U.S. Army 112th Regimental Combat Team,
Represented by Ursula Bassett and Jerry Bassett, wife and son
- Returning from: Kenneth Clegg, Royal Air Force, Represented by Elaine Locke, daughter
- Remarks by: Mr. Hiroshi Furusawa, Consul General of Japan to Portland

Returning Ceremony

Representing their fellow members of the 41st were three guests of honor veterans who all traveled several hours to attend the ceremony.



Leland "Bud" Lewis



Ed Bartlein



Leslie "Buck" Weatherill



Five Yosegaki Hinomaru were handed into the care of OBON 2015 to begin the search for family in Japan.



Brig. Gen. Steven Beach



With his uniform in good repair and his physique unchanged, Ed Bartlein came properly attired for the ceremony.

OBON 2015 would like to thank Carolyn & Bob Bach, representatives of 41st Infantry Division. (see jungleer.com) Also our thanks for David Funk of Portland, Oregon for his invaluable assistance connecting with the 41st and the Oregon National Guard. Our thanks to Maureen Smith for returning her father's flag, also Jerry Bassett and Ursula Bassett, Todd Johnson and Elaine Locke.

This ceremony can be seen at the links below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA1plknm-mw>

<http://koin.com/2015/03/23/oregon-ww2-vets-return-japanese-flags-to-families/>

Elmer Bechtold

News of OBON 2015's *Returning Ceremony* was reported across the country through various media outlets which made many more people aware of this effort. One such person was a WWII veteran named Elmer Bechtold, who called us asking for help.

Elmer told OBON 2015 that he was part of the U.S. Marine's 5th Division and took part in the first wave that invaded Iwo Jima. Out of two hundred men in his company Elmer was one of twelve still alive two hours later.

Elmer describes his ordeal with a soft voice, but the trauma he experienced is still very evident. He had gone through living hell for 24 days. Finally a bullet in his right arm put him out of war. However, just before being shot Elmer picked up a wallet from a Japanese who had been killed. When he returned home after the war the wallet was still in his possession.



The Arizona Republic; March 14th, 1995

Twenty years ago, in preparation for the 50th anniversary of Iwo Jima, Elmer was interviewed by a reporter in Arizona. Elmer trusted the reporter with the wallet in hopes the sons could be located. This reporter wrote an article and then flew to Iwo Jima to cover the story from the island.

The wallet disappeared.

Elmer is haunted by the war. The intense trauma he experienced poisoned his brain. He feels that contacting the soldier's sons will give him relief. Unfortunately the only link to finding these sons were clues on the papers inside the wallet, and it has been carelessly lost forever.

OBON 2015 is trying to help Elmer.

After an exhaustive search we finally located the reporter. He clearly remembers receiving the wallet from Elmer, but has no memory of where it went.

Next OBON 2015 tracked down the photographer who took the picture for the article, hoping to have access of the other negatives which might provide more details. The photographer said it would take months or years to go through the Arizona Republic Newspaper archives from twenty years ago looking for a few negatives. He declined to help.



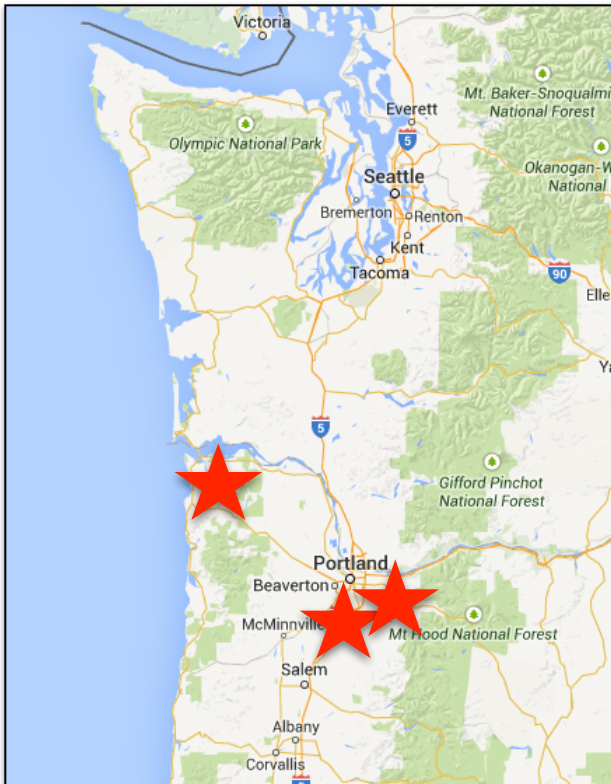
Elmer Bechtold; April 2015

OBON 2015 has few clues to pursue, but we are trying to help Elmer find these two sons in Japan. If he can contact these sons Elmer will receive relief from the nightmare that has haunted him for 70 years.

Three Museums

The Yosegaki Hinomaru story will appear in three museums. OBON 2015 staff is currently designing and preparing these exhibits for installation later this summer.

On June 15th the **Oregon Historical Society** in Portland, Oregon will open its doors on a major exhibit featuring the WWII collection of Mr. Pete Mark. OBON 2015 will have a small but important part of this exhibit. Our exhibit will fill three display cases with stories and artifacts.



A second, much larger exhibit will be installed in the **Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center** in downtown Portland.

This exhibit will explore the unique origin of the Yosegaki Hinomaru and what it became on the battlefield.

This large, visual exhibit will be designed to travel for installation in other venues. For inquiries about borrowing this exhibit for your community please write contact@OBON2015.com.

The third exhibit will be installed in the Maritime War room of the **Columbia River Maritime Museum** in Astoria, Oregon. Here OBON 2015 will create a major display telling the *Yosegaki Hinomaru* story from beginning to end. This spectacular exhibit, which will include authentic *Yosegaki Hinomaru* and a video, will become part of the museum's permanent exhibit and is expected to show for no less than two years. Opening date is July of 2015.



Family Gift



Battlefield Souvenir



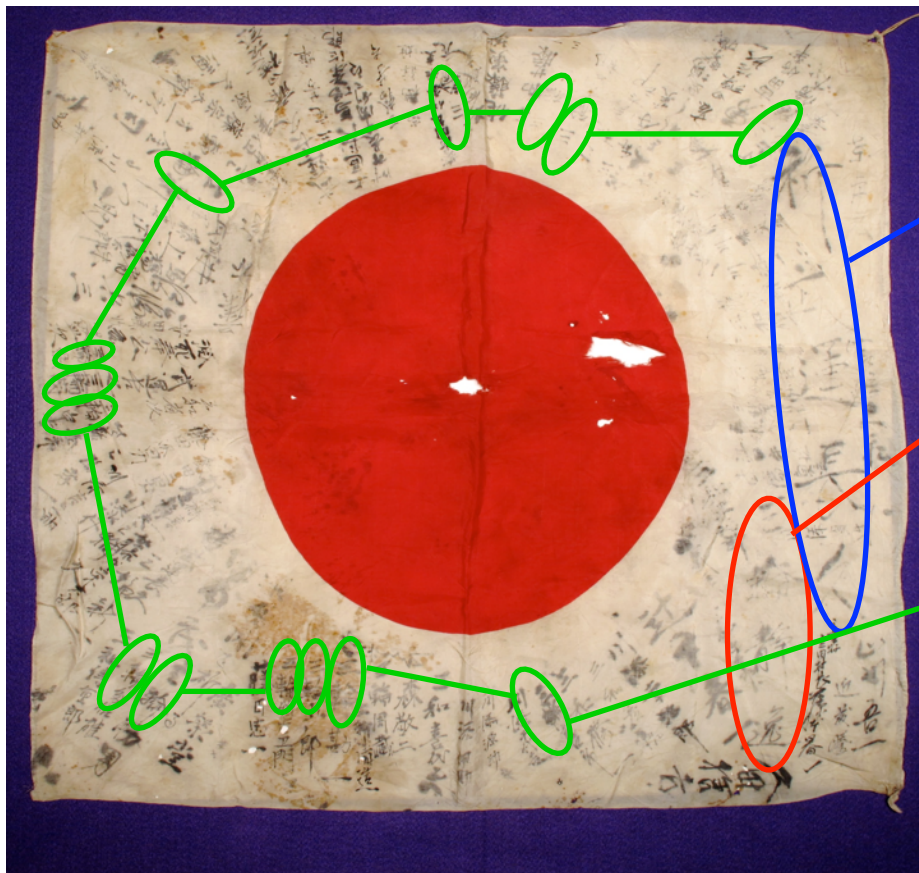
Spoils of War



Family Heirloom

The Scholar's Corner

This Yosegaki Hinomaru came to OBON 2015 from a family living in Idaho. It had been in their father's possession. The flag appeared to be very difficult, if not impossible. The writing was faded and the soldier's name did not appear.



This faded writing says a common phrase found on most flags "Bu un cho ku" which translates as "Long life & success in Battle."

In the same penmanship the scholars found a signature of a man, who likely created this flag. His last name was "Miwa".

There are many names on this flag with the "Miwa" last name, suggesting a large, extended family. The OBON 2015 scholars knew from experience that the name *Miwa* was common in the prefecture of Gifu. They put out word and a local associate residing there went to work.



By going door to door and visiting many cemeteries our field associate discovered that everyone who signed the flag is now deceased, the last person passing away only several months ago.

Nevertheless, local memories remembered the family and their three sons. It was the youngest son that went to war.



Gifu Prefecture

The soldier, Mamoru Miwa, never married, but had two elder brothers. One brother had a son, now living in Mie prefecture, who wanted to possess his uncle's flag. The flag is now on its way back home.

Contact OBON 2015

OBON 2015 needs your support. Please.

OBON 2015 is an affiliate of Astoria Visual Arts,
a 501(C)3 non-profit organization.
Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:

AVA/OBON 2015
P.O. Box 282
Astoria, Oregon 97103

Your contributions will help us reach more families
and return more personal items.

If you have a flag, or know someone who does, please contact OBON 2015. We will gladly answer any questions and fully explain our process. It will give us great pleasure to research the flag in your possession and return it to its proper family.

OBON 2015
P.O. Box 282
Astoria, Oregon 97103
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