

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

ONE MORE YEAR

OBON 2015 now enters the final year of its intended goal to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII by returning personal items taken as battlefield souvenirs.

We will now begin to communicate with Americans, Canadians and other allied countries where these personal items were taken and we would like you to help us spread the news of our effort.

This monthly newsletter will keep you informed about current situations and give you some background to OBON 2015's efforts. Please forward it to whomever you think might be interested.

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THE OBON 2015 STORY

In May of 1909 a story unfolded from America and Japan's past which triggered the need for OBON 2015.



The story went like this; when war broke out the Japanese called up their young men to serve in the military.



Each family prepared a unique personal keepsake for son to bring along when he was away from home.



The family signed their names on a small flag which each man carried with him and carefully guarded.



When it was discovered that every Japanese soldier carried one of these flags they became a highly prized treasures of war. These flags were taken and brought back home by the thousands and thousands.



Now, after 70 years, many veterans and their children realize these battlefield souvenirs are personal family items and want to return them back to the family in Japan.



This flag, for most Japanese families, is the only surviving trace of their husband, brother and father.

OBON 2015 was created to help.

OBON 2015 receives these flags and through their network of scholars, dedicated priests and government agencies they search across Japan until the family is found, and to them the flag is returned to this family at no cost.



A MARINE'S STORY



Typical young Marine with souvenir flag; c. 1944



Ken Udstad, 4th Marine Division
(1921-2014)



Ken Udstad was a U.S. Marine who served on Saipan and Tinian during WWII. During the war he gathered Japanese “souvenirs” such as family photographs, a rifle and tools. He also brought home a *Yosegaki Hinomaru*. After many decades Ken began to feel the need to return the *Yosegaki Hinomaru* to its rightful owner.

We lost Ken earlier this year, but before he passed away he made one heroic trip to Japan to return the flag.

OBON 2015 lent their resources to help search for the family which led to several conversations with Ken. Following his trip to Japan we sent him some questions about his final mission.

Q: If another veteran, or their family members, told you they had a Japanese flag, and asked what he should do with it, what would you tell him?

A: By all means make every effort to get it back to Japan. I know personally (sic) how important it is to them. When I think of how excited they are to get a connection to their ancestors after almost 70 years I get tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat that I am blessed to be a part of it. They are a gracious loving people. I love them dearly.

Q: How do the Japanese feel about these flags?

A: I don't think there are the right words to tell you how happy and grateful (sic) they are. But you get a feeling about them that warms your heart you can't explain. Its a really great and satisfying feeling you can't forget.

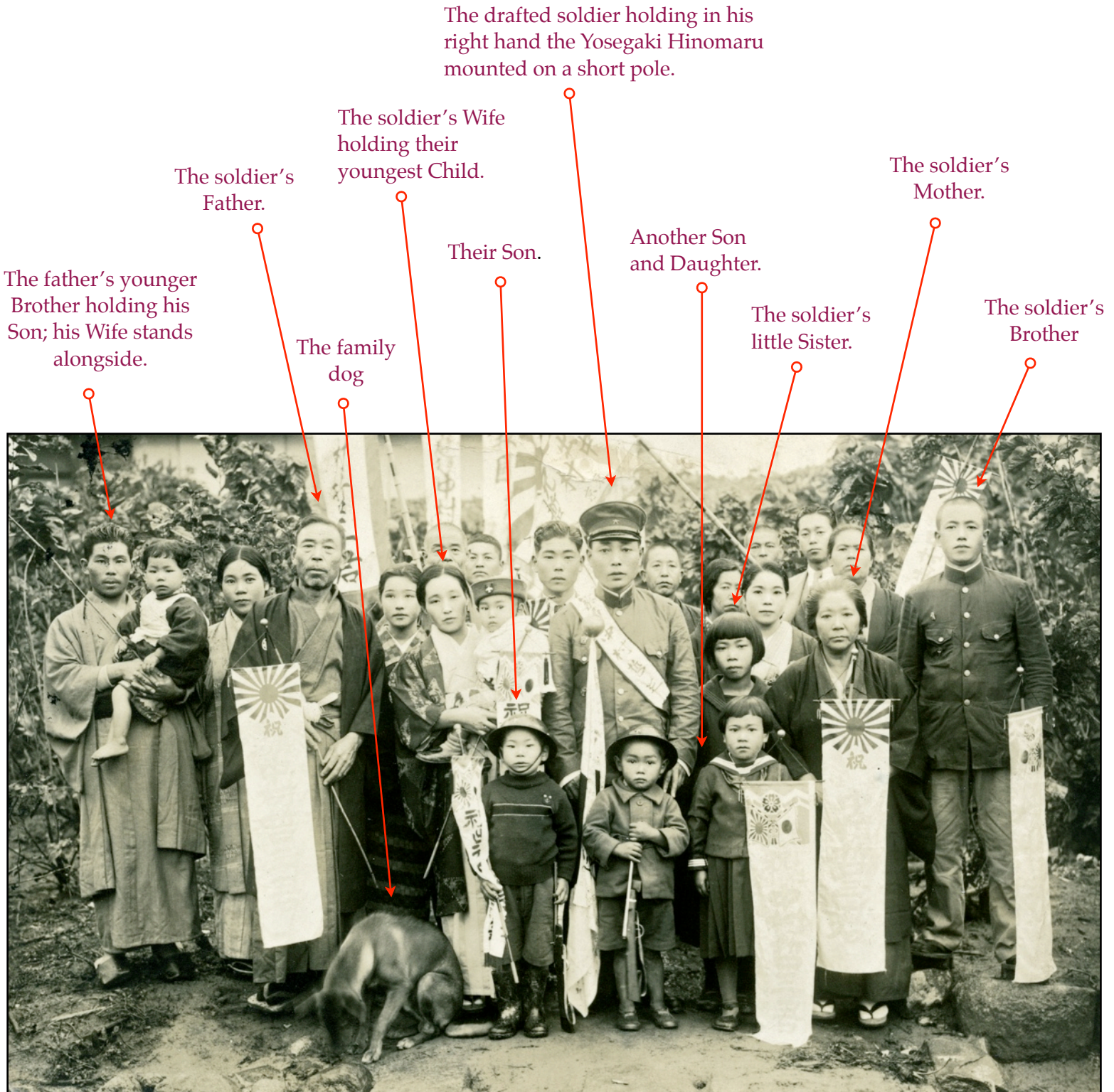
Q: What do you think about our mission OBON 2015 to return these flags and photos back to Japan?

A: I wish I could somehow explain how much it means to the Japanese people. I strongly urge everyone who has a souvenir to return it now. You'll never know the effect you'll have on some one's life. Its a really awesome feeling.

PORTRAIT OF A JAPANESE FAMILY GOING TO WAR

Before any son went off to war he was given a *Yosegaki Hinomaru* signed by all his family and friends. Often a portrait was taken of the family, documenting the last time they would be together.

OBON 2015 has analyzed this photograph and will attempt to explain who appears in this portrait.



This family is unknown. OBON 2015 would like to return this photograph to a family member. Their identity is speculation.

The Scholar's Corner

OBON 2015 often researches *Yosegaki Hinomaru* that have very few clues indicating who the family is and where they lived. However, OBON 2015's scholars and researchers are among the best in Japan.

When presented with a new *Yosegaki Hinomaru* our researchers analyze every detail looking for clues. Every bit of information is important.

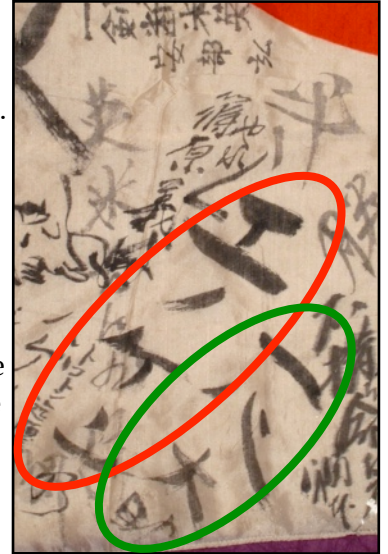
In this situation the flag's date was discovered.



This hinomaru contained a wide variety of writing, names and even a handprint.

In the upper left corner our scholars noted an unusual grouping of names.

They noted the name of a movie (green circle) "Appare Isshin Tasuke", the the name of an actor (red circle) "Enoken."



The name "Enoken" was actually the nickname of Kenichi Enomoto, one of Japan's most famous actors. Throughout his career (1934-1969) he appeared in 47 movies.

The movie mentioned on the flag featured the character "Isshin Tasuke" a fictional comical individual who has appeared in Japanese literature for 400 years.

The screenplay for this version of the Isshin Tasuke was authored by 35 year old Akira Kurosawa, who later obtained international fame as a movie director.



Kenichi Enomoto



"Enoken" as Isshin Tasuke



Akira Kurosawa

This movie released on January 11th, 1945, which tells us the flag was created after that date. On February 26th of that same year the government called up 1.5 million men between the ages 15 to 60.

These additional soldiers were to protect the country against rumored invasion by America. One theory suggests this flag belonged to a young man who answered this call to defend the homeland.

OBON 2015 F A Q

OBON 2015 FAQ

Can OBON 2015 help me return this flag to its family in Japan?

Yes! That is exactly what we do. OBON 2015 is a non-profit, independent humanitarian effort. There is no charges or fees for searching a family in Japan or for the item's return.

How do you find the family?

OBON 2015 has a network of scholars and researchers who closely examine every article looking for clues of its origin. It is detective work.

In addition, OBON 2015 has a unique relationship with numerous Japanese government agencies, private organizations and religious groups who possess records, lists and addresses of military personal and where their families lived.

By combining information from these different groups we have the ability to find families of veterans anywhere in Japan.

Can I be part of this process?

OBON 2015 will keep you informed step by step during the search if you would like.

We will send you personal emails describing every major breakthrough made by our researchers and you will be the first to know when the family is found.

What happens to the flag if you can't find the family?

Every flag OBON 2015 receives is returned to Japan.

We conduct extensive searches for family and do not give up easily.

In cases where the family cannot be found the flag will be returned to the community closest to where the soldier lived. Most communities have shrines dedicated to the young men who lost their lives in the war and they care for such items.

It should be remembered that the signatures and names appearing on the flags often come from the surrounding neighborhood and many of the people who signed those flags are alive.

They, and their families, have a great interest in these flags and support their preservation.

How can I be sure OBON 2015 can be trusted?

OBON 2015 has gained the trust and respect of numerous Japanese governmental organizations and Gokoku Shrine priests. In addition, the American Embassy in Japan has given their enthusiastic approval for our meaningful work.



Contact OBON 2015

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

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