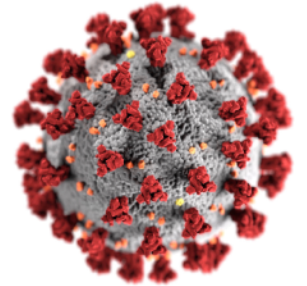


# OBON SOCIETY

## Pandemic Problem

Coronavirus has turned the world upside down and forced many businesses to suspend their services. Here at OBON SOCIETY we are happy to report very little change in our operations.

OBON SOCIETY has never had a centralized base of operations where our team members gather to work. Our efforts require the unique skills of a variety of people scattered across many different time zones. In fact, we have never met face to face with several of the people who have worked for us during the past six years.



As a result of our unique organization OBON SOCIETY is practically unaffected by this current pandemic. Our team receives packages, processes the items we are sent and uploads the data to our scholars. They, in turn, carry out the search for surviving relatives and the items are returned. We feel truly blessed to report our operations are working exactly as they were last year at this time.

However, this coronavirus pandemic is interrupting the Returning Ceremonies in Japan. Instead of public gatherings the items are mailed directly to the families. Also future OBON SOCIETY board meetings will be held via teleconferencing.

Judging from the amount of inquires we have received these past couple days it seems that some people are using their confinement at home to clean our their closets and put things in order. We are receiving a number of inquiries every day.

Yesterday I received an email from "John" with this image of a flag his father had given him twenty-six years ago. He wants it returned to the family. However, after a quick glance our scholars suspect it came from a school near Osaka. We will have to explore this in more detail when John mails the flag to OBON SOCIETY for a thorough search.



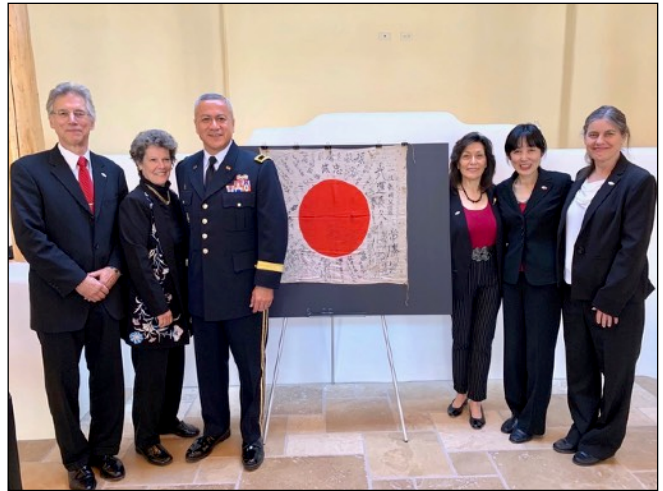
On the same day we received an inquiry from Shane. His grandfather, a U.S. Marine, returned home from the war with two Katana. A tragic house fire destroyed all of Shane's belongings, but these two blades survived and he wants OBON SOCIETY to return them home to their family in Japan.

Note: Without any identifying tags with family names and addresses it is impossible for OBON SOCIETY to find the correct family in Japan.

## One good deed leads to another

Last October OBON SOCIETY was invited to attend a very special ceremony in Santa Fe, New Mexico. For the first time in history a *Yosegaki Hinomaru*, that had been proudly displayed in the National Guard museum, was removed and officially presented to OBON SOCIETY for the purpose of returning to its family in Japan. The local newspaper wrote a cover story of this unique gesture of peace and reconciliation.

This news story prompted action from Mr. Lee of Santa Fe who had a flag in his possession. This flag was shipped to OBON SOCIETY and we fortunately found the family. Mr. Lee was very pleased with this news and wrote the letter below for us to translate and send along with the flag.



October 2019 the New Mexico National Guard, in cooperation with American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society, presented a Yosegaki Hinomaru to OBON SOCIETY. (L to R) Rex Ziak; Jan Thompson, President ADBCMS; Major General Kenneth Nava; Margaret Garcia, daughter of Bataan Survivor; Keiko Ziak; Bethany Glenn, Board Member of OBON SOCIETY.

Willis F. Lee

Santa Fe, New Mexico 87506

March 20, 2020

Dear heirs of Yosegaki Hinomaru and OBON SOCIETY,

In 1963 I was given this flag from my stepfather. I was 15 years old at the time. He never told me how he acquired it. As a young man I had no idea what to do with the flag but understood it was an heirloom of great importance and should be returned to the rightful heirs. The flag was folded and stored in a protective container and stayed there for decades.

On October 27, 2019 on the front page of our local newspaper, The Santa Fe New Mexican, I read that through the grace of The OBON SOCIETY the New Mexico Military Museum was holding a repatriation event to deliver a Yosegaki Hinomaru flag to the OBON SOCIETY. I realized that this occurrence was an act of honor and respect between two countries that are now such true friends. I finally had a source I could trust the flag would be delivered to the proper individuals. I then located the flag and made arrangements to send it to the OBON SOCIETY. OBON was quick to locate an heir.

I am regretful that so many years passed with the flag in my possession. I hope that it brings some solace and closure to the heirs.

With respect and love,

Willis F. Lee



The Willis Lee yosegaki hinomaru