

Second in Series Tells of Japan's Royalty, Military

(This is the second of three articles by Yoshiko Seki, Japanese student now attending the University of Oregon, relating the last days of the Japanese Empire. Miss Seki was a secretary in the offices of the Imperial Japanese General Staff during 1944 and 1945, and after the surrender was personal secretary to two prime ministers of Japan.)

By Yoshiko Seki

As was to be expected, the headquarters of the Imperial Japanese General Staff saw many prominent military leaders throughout the war. General Masaharu Homma, erstwhile commander-in-chief of the Japanese troops in the Philippines, though now retired, dropped in every now and then. He always appeared in his civilian suit. When he came, we used to prepare a map showing the latest line of battle between Germany and Russia. I do not know why he took such an unusual interest in that particular war theater. He was connected with our section as an unofficial staff member.

(During this period in Europe the Allies had invaded France and the Russians were pushing the Germans back into Poland and the Balkans. Japan and Russia were still officially at peace with each other and Japan and Germany were still partners in the Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Ed. Note)

Saw Royalty Often

Japanese royalty came to my office frequently, including Emperor Hirohito and Prince Mikasa, his youngest brother, who was attached to the General Staff as a major. The Emperor usually came on his way from the regular graduation ceremonies at the Military College or the Military Academy. In order to supply manpower needed at the front, training in the two military schools was often expedited, and graduations were frequent.

Whenever the Emperor attempted to visit, the Imperial General Staff closely checked with the cable to ascertain the whereabouts of the Allied planes on patrol in the Marianas skies. Then this report was telephoned to the Imperial Palace so the Imperial Household officials could judge whether the Emperor would be exposed to the dangers of a possible air raid.

News Later Made Public

After the Emperor had safely returned to the Palace, the news of this visit was made known to the public through radio and the newspapers. The last time he called at the Imperial General Staff was July 30, 1944. The weather was fine; the heat excessive. I well remember the Emperor looked unusually solemn.

(Saipan, in the Marianas, had been invaded June 15. This island was entirely Japanese, and had been a part of the Empire since it was given to Japan as a mandate following World War I. In addition, the Imperial Navy had met the American fleet in the first battle of the Philippine Seas, coming out with severe losses. Ed. Note)

After the fall of each tiny coral reef island, the General Staff members would lay their heads together, stoop over and inspect the map of the Pacific. On such occasions it was our duty to draw with brush and poster-color the anticipated Allied operations. Our conjectures were invariably right. The Allied advance came upwards and northwards towards the mainland of Japan.

Saw Life Tarawa Pictures

One day during the early part of May, 1944, shortly after I had gone to work. I showed Prince Mikasa a most appalling sight in Life magazine, pictures from Tarawa atoll where the Japanese garrison resisted to the last, and were finally burnt to death by flame throwers. He did not utter a single word, just looked and nodded.

Military officials were among the first ones to send their families to rural areas so that they would be well protected from the danger of the air raid; consequently the officers lived a rather rough life. One very cold morning, I went to

the office to find a captain darned his socks. New ones were hardly obtainable without quota points, and neither could he send his worn-out socks to his wife to be mended. Transport capacity was so limited that even parcel post was practically prohibited except for official and military business. The officers and men of the General Staff sometimes tried their inexperienced hands at patching and button-sewing. The girls in the office often helped them.

Captured Booty Inspected

Once in a while, the Chief of the General Staff went to the Imperial Palace, accompanied by his aide, to submit booty taken from the crew of B-29's and carrier planes. Needless to say, the booty had been disinfected for the Emperor's inspection. Afterwards it was brought back to the General Staff for further examination. I saw an emergency signaling mirror and some sunburn ointment among such trophies.

Even though the strong winter gales blew outside, no heating apparatus was working in the offices. Due to the strict rationing system, the lunches served were very poor. Prince Mikasa managed to eat the same atrocious food as we did. Under such circumstances there was nothing whatsoever to create energy in us. It was impossible to raise our level of efficiency. Day by day during the winter of 1944-45 everyone became more and more pessimistic.

Commodities Distributed

Every now and then there was a distribution of daily essential commodities within the General Headquarters. This, however, was not made public. Beans, peas, butter, electric light bulbs, and cigarettes, which were very scarce, were first monopolized by the commissioned officers and higher civil service officials. Then what was left was distributed among the non-commissioned officers, junior officials, or the clerical staff, employees of which included telephone operators, typists, office boys and girls.

(During the winter of 1944-45, the Philippines had been invaded, in October, the Burma Road in China retaken. At this same period, nearly the entire Japanese fleet was lost in the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea, including 2 battleships, 3 carriers, and 12 cruisers. In November, Tokyo was subjected to its first air raid since the Doolittle raid of April, 1942. No further raids were experienced until the early spring of 1945. Ed. Note)

When a change in the staff was announced in the early spring of 1945, I overheard the following conversation which took place between the officers who had been transferred to new posts.

The question apparently was whether they should pack their winter gear. One of them thought that he would see Japan still waging war during the coming winter. Another one shouted, "Don't be silly! We shall be unable to wear military uniforms soon. People are already murmuring at us!" His premonition came true a few months later.



NIGHT STAFF

Night Editor: Rusty Holcomb
Night Staff: Connie Ohlsen, Marilyn Olson

'Gay 90's' Show Set

The Virginia City Players, the renowned Gay Nineties variety show, will present their "Bale of Hay Varieties" type show at 8:15 p.m. Saturday in the Student Union ballroom.

The Players are touring with the same authentically staged and costumed nineteenth century melodrama and Gay Nineties Variety shows that have been presented before record crowds in Virginia City's Old Stone Barn Playhouse, Director Larry Barsness said.

Top billing of the variety shows goes to the mustachioed barber-shop quartet with their songs of the Nineties, comic and sentimental.

Melodrama-Farce

Each Variety show will feature a short melodrama-farce, "Clem, the Miner's Daughter, or Lord Help Us," with the miner's daughter being pursued by the Lord Swinehart. Bernard Tone, leading actor of the Players, will present "The Shooting of Dan McGrew and Cremation of Sam McGee."

The fast-moving melodramas are enhanced with the addition of entre acts, curtain raisers, and afterpieces.

Nationwide Interest

The Virginia City Players, the professional stock company whose summer activities in Alder Gulch's historic mining camp have attracted nationwide interest, have been featured in "Holiday" and "Theatre Arts."

The Variety shows have entertained Montanans and out of state visitors at the Wells Fargo Coffee House, the Bale of Hay Saloon, and The Old Stone Barn Playhouse.

Admission price to the production is 50 cents for students and 70 cents for adults.

TODAY'S STAFF

Ass't M. E.: Eugene A. Rose
Desk Ed: Al Karr
Day Staff: Bill Holman

Phi Sigs' Moonlight Girl



Pat Foley, Alpha Chi Omega, has been chosen "Moonlight Girl" of the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity.

Miss Foley, a junior in applied design from Pendleton, Ore., was selected in a final nomination which was held at the chapter house Saturday evening.

Assembly Canceled

An open assembly of the United Students Association, campus political organization, formerly scheduled for today, has been cancelled.

Ron Phillips, USA party head, announced Monday.

Purpose of the assembly was elect 13 steering committee members on recommendations by the present committee.



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