

U.S. veteran returns dead Japanese soldier's flag

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

HIGASHISHIRAKAWA, Japan — Tatsuya Yasue buried his face into the flag and smelled it. Then he held the 93-year-old hands that brought this treasure home, and kissed them.

Marvin Strombo, who had taken the calligraphy-covered Japanese flag from a dead soldier at a World War II island battlefield 73 years ago, returned it to the family of Sadao Yasue. They had never gotten his body or — until that moment — anything else of his.

Sadao and Tatsuya's sister, Sayoko Furuta, 93, sitting in her wheelchair, covered her face with both hands and wept silently as Tatsuya placed the flag on her lap. Strombo reached out and gently rubbed her shoulder.

"I was so happy that I returned the flag," Strombo said. "I can see how much the flag meant to her. That almost made me cry ... It meant everything in the world to her."

The flag's white background is filled with signatures of 180 friends and neighbors in the tea-growing mountain village of Higashishirakawa, wishing Yasue's safe return. The signatures helped Strombo find its rightful owners.

"Good luck forever at the battlefield," a message on it reads. Looking at the names and their handwriting, Tatsuya Yasue clearly recalls their faces and friendship with his brother.

The smell of the flag immediately brought back childhood memories. "It smelled like my good old big brother, and it smelled like our mother's home cooking we ate together," Tatsuya Yasue said. "The flag will be our treasure."

The return of the flag brings closure, the 89-year-old farmer and younger brother of Sadao Yasue told The Associated Press at his 400-year-old house. "It's like the war has finally ended and my brother can come out of limbo."

Tatsuya Yasue last saw his older brother alive the day before he left for the South Pacific in 1943. He and two siblings had a small send-off picnic for the oldest brother outside his military unit over sushi and Japanese sweet mochi. At the end of the meeting, his brother whispered to Tatsuya, asking him to take good care of their parents, as he would be sent to the Pacific islands, harsh battlegrounds where chances of survival were low.

A year later, Japanese authorities sent the family a wooden box with a few stones at the bottom — a substitute for his body. They knew no details of Sadeo's death until months after the war ended, when they were told he died somewhere in the Mariana Islands presumably on July 18, 1944, the day Saipan fell, at age 25.

"That's all we were told about my brother. We never knew exactly when, where, or how he died," he said. The family had wondered whether he might have died at sea. About 20 years ago, Tatsuya Yasue visited Saipan with his younger brother, trying to imagine what their older brother might have gone through.

So Strombo was able to give Yasue's family not just a flag, but also some answers.

He said he found Sadao Yasue's body on the outskirts of Garapan, a village in Saipan, when he got lost and ended up near the Japanese frontline. He told Yasue's siblings their brother likely died of



FAMILY TREASURE. World War II veteran Marvin Strombo, top photo, right, returns to Tatsuya Yasue, left, a Japanese flag with autographed messages which was owned by his brother, Sadao Yasue, pictured in the bottom photo, who was killed in the Pacific during World War II, during a ceremony in Higashishirakawa, in central Japan's Gifu prefecture. Strombo returned to the fallen soldier's family the calligraphy-covered flag he took from the man's body 73 years ago. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

a concussion from a mortar round. He told them that Sadao was lying on the ground on his left side, looking peacefully as if he was sleeping and without severe wounds.

And there is one more thing Strombo delivered: a little hope that Yasue's remains might one day be recovered, given the details about where he found the body.

The remains of nearly half of the 2.4 million Japanese war dead overseas have yet to be found. It's a pressing issue as the bereaved families reach old age and memories fade.

Allied troops frequently took the flags from the bodies of their enemies as souvenirs, as Japanese flags were quite popular and fetched good prices when auctioned, Strombo said. But to the Japanese bereaved families, they have a much deeper meaning, especially those, like Yasue, who never learned how their loved ones died and never received remains. The Japanese government has requested auction sites to stop trading wartime signed flags.

Strombo said he originally wanted the flag as a souvenir from the war, but he felt guilty taking it, so he never sold it and vowed to one day return it.

He had the flag hung in a glass-fronted gun cabinet in his home in Montana for years, a topic of conversation for visitors. He was in the battles of Saipan, Tarawa, and Tinian, which chipped away at Japan's control of islands in the Pacific and paved the way for U.S. victory.

In 2012, he was connected to the Obon Society, an Oregon-based nonprofit that helps U.S. veterans and their descendants return Japanese flags to the families of fallen soldiers. The group's research traced it to the village of 2,300 people in central Japan by analyzing family names.

The handover meant a closure for Strombo too. "It means so much to me and the family to get the flag back and move on," he said.

To learn more about the Obon Society, visit <www.obonsociety.org>.

Cooking on a deadline: Korean-Style Grilled Short Ribs

By Katie Workman
The Associated Press

Those who love short ribs LOVE them. Those who haven't cooked them at home before might be a little intimidated by them. Let's bridge that gap.

In general, short ribs should be cooked either low and slow, or very quickly over high heat so they don't become tough. This recipe calls for almost flash grilling, just three or four minutes on each side.

Because this is a fast-cooked short rib recipe, the cut you'll want to buy is "flanken style," where the ribs are cut across the bones into thin slices. This allows the surface to caramelize while keeping the middle juicy and tender.

Sometimes, if you find a very, very nice butcher (and I surely did), he or she will cut the flanken in strips in such a way that there are no bones in the slices. This might be more expensive, and some flanken purists might insist that the bones add flavor and are part of the point of short ribs. But when it comes time to eat the meat, boneless flanken strips make for very easy dining.

You can serve these on their own, with a big pile of fluffy rice. I like to serve them the way a number of Korean meat dishes are served, with rice and lettuce leaves, and some condiments of your choice. A bit of the meat and a bit of the rice goes into a lettuce leaf, along with any extras, and then you fold up the lettuce around the filling. This is known as ssam, or lettuce wraps, and they are a lot of fun. The balance of the crisp vegetables, fresh



SUCCULENT SHORT RIBS. Pictured is a serving of Korean-Style Grilled Short Ribs in New York. In general, short ribs should be cooked either low and slow, or very quickly over high heat so they don't become tough. This recipe calls for almost flash grilling, just three or four minutes on each side. (Photo/Katie Workman via AP)

herbs, rich meat, and fragrant rice works, even though it might be slightly different every time. Part of its charm. Add what you like, skip what you don't, and wrap and eat.

Along with the easily available suggestions for add-ins below, sometimes kimchi is offered, and a condiment called ssamjang, which translates to "wrapping sauce." If you can find either, add them to the offerings.

You can also broil the ribs instead of grilling during the months when you are cozying up to your stove instead of your grill.

Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, *Dinner Solved!* and *The Mom 100 Cookbook*.

Korean-Style Grilled Short Ribs

Serves 8

Start to finish: 13 hours
(includes 12 hours marinating time)

5 scallions, trimmed and cut into pieces
1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce
1/2 cup brown sugar
3 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 1/2 pounds bone-in beef short ribs, cut across the bones into 1/2-inch slices
Cooked rice

Optional, for serving:

2 tablespoons sesame seeds
Large lettuce leaves, such as tender Boston or Bibb
Slivered scallions
Cucumbers and carrots, cut into matchsticks
Slivered radishes
Fresh herbs, such as basil, mint, and cilantro
Sriracha or other hot chili sauce

Place the scallions, soy sauce, brown sugar, ginger, garlic, vinegar, sesame oil, black pepper, and cayenne pepper in a food processor or blender and blend until smooth.

Place the short ribs in a container, pour the marinade over them, and turn to coat well. Cover the short ribs and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours.

Just before grilling, toast the sesame seeds, if using, by heating a small skillet over medium-high heat, then adding the seeds. Toss and stir for a few minutes until they become deeper golden in color, but watch carefully as they can burn quickly. Transfer to a small plate.

Preheat the grill to medium high. Remove the short ribs from the marinade. Grill for about four minutes on each side, until the outside is caramelized and the middle is medium-rare. Allow the meat to sit for five minutes before slicing across the grain and serving with the hot rice. Or, if you prefer (and do consider this), slice the meat thinly and serve it with any or all of the suggested accompaniments. Let each diner wrap up some meat and rice with whatever extras they want, and make it an interactive dinner.

Nutritional information: 241 calories (113 calories from fat); 13 g fat (5 g saturated, 0 g trans fats); 67 mg cholesterol; 365 mg sodium; 8 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 23 g protein.



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