Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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Sailor brings war-era flag to Japan, tries to find original owner

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Lt. j.g. Michael Reid brought a World War II era Japanese flag back to Japan with him while he is standing duty in the area. He had hopes of finding someone with a connection to the flag so he could return it to its original owners.

Reid inherited the flag, along with several other possessions from his grandfather when he passed away in December 2000. The flag is about 70 centimeters square and is covered in more than 100 names, written in kanji, from the time when the Japanese Imperial military was fighting the U.S.military during WWII. Four large kanji around the red sun reads "good luck in battle."

"My grandfather was a signalman in the Navy. He was close to his brother who was serving in the Army at that time. Both were part of the battles around Palau. Either his brother gave him the flag or he got it some other way. I know he liked traveling and he liked serving with the people over there. He might have traded it for something he had. I know for sure, it was with him when he came back from the Philippines," explained Reid.

After Reid received the flag he brought it to a reserve center in Minneapolis to be in a shadow box display with his grandfather's uniform. Around the same time, Reid was a student at the University of Minnesota and he brought the flag to the Japanese language department.

"They told me that this type of flag is similar to ones that were given to soldiers leaving for the war. All the people from their town would sign their names and give it to the soldier," said Reid. "Usually, they would write the name of the soldier on the back but, this one doesn't have a name like that."

Some information also suggested that the names on the flag might have been from a military unit. All the names in the flag are from men. There are no women's names on the flag. Reid wanted to find out more information on where the flag came from or to whom it belonged.

"I thought it was a nice piece, a nice reminder of my grandfather," said Reid. "But, the more I thought about it the more I was convinced that a piece of military history like this would mean so much more to someone with a connection to one of the names on the flag."

In November 2011 Reid started communicating with Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Japan (CNFJ) to find more information. In December, CNFJ posted information about the flag on their Facebook wall and Twitter feed. Then, in January, Reid brought the flag with him while he was assigned to CNFJ, Headquarters Reserve Component, when his reserve unit took part of the Keen Edge 2012 exercises. Japanese newspapers and media reported on the flag. Through all this attention, a potential link to one of the names on the flag, a Japanese man named Akimasa Ota.

see *Flag,* pg.10

Lt. j.g. Michael Reid holds a flag from the time when the Japanese Imperial military fought the U.S. military during World War II. Reid brought the World War II-era Japanese flag back to Japan with him while he is standing duty in the area. He had hopes of finding someone with a connection to the flag so he could return it to its original owners. Reid inherited the flag, along with several other possessions from his grandfather when he passed away in December 2000.

米軍予備役兵、第二次大戦時の日章旗の所有者探し

文・写真：ジョー・シュミット、CFAY広報課

第二次世界大戦当時の旧日本兵による寄せ書きが記された日章旗の返還を望む米国予備役兵が来日、所有者を探している。

旗の所有者であるミネソタ州在住の在日米海軍予備役部隊所属マイケル・リード中尉は、日本での任務のために来日、同時に旗を所有者に返還すべく関係者を探し出したいと望んでいる。

元海軍兵で元々の旗の保管者であるリード中尉の祖父は、2000年12月に亡くなった。その遺品の中にこの日章旗が含まれていた。約70センチ四方の日章旗には100を超える名前が漢字で記されており、日の丸の周りには、4箇所に『武運長久』などと大きく漢字が記されている。

リード中尉は「祖父は米海軍で通信隊員を務め、その当時に仲の良い陸軍兵であった兄弟とパラオ地域に赴任していました。その兄弟から日章旗を手渡されたのか、他の方法で入手したと思います。あるいは旅行好きだった祖父は、旅先の人々と交わるのも好きだったので、そこで持ち物と日章旗を交換したとも考えられます。確かなことは、祖父がフィリピンから帰国したときに持ち帰って来たことです」と語る。

Lt. j.g. Michael Reid, assigned to Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan, Headquarters Reserve Component, discusses a World War II-era Japanese flag with reporters from the Yokosuka Press Club.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Brock A. Taylor

中尉はミネソタ大学に通っていたこともあり、同大学の日本語学科に旗の調査を依頼した。「日本語学科の話では、この種の旗は兵士が出征の際に贈られるものと酷似しており、故郷の住人が名前を書き連ね兵士に贈ります。通常は、裏に兵士の名前を書きますが、この日章旗には名前がありません。」

いくつかの情報から旗に記されている名前は、ある部隊のものである可能性があり、女性の名前はない。リード中尉は旗の出所や持ち主など、より多くの情報を求めている。

「祖父の形見としてとても良いものだと思いましたが、考えれば考えるほど、このような軍事史の一部が日章旗に記されている名前の関係者にとって重要であるとの思いを強くしたのです」とリード中尉。

2011年11月、リード中尉は新たな情報を得る為、在日米海軍司令部（CNFJ）と連絡を取り始めた。CNFJは日本語版ツイッターとフェイスブックに日章旗の情報を掲載。今年1月、リード中尉は所属するCNFJ予備役部隊の訓練に参加するため日章旗を持って来日、国内の各紙などで取り上げられた結果、多くの注目を集め、旗に署名した一人の関係者とみられる太田顯正さんより連絡を受けた。

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Sailors mourn loss of aviation boatswain's mate pioneer

Sailors assigned to *USS Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) held a memorial foreign object damage walk-down for fellow shipmate Jan. 25.

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Naturalization ceremony makes U.S. citizens of Sailors, Marines, spouses

A naturalization ceremony on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka was held at the Chapel of Hope Jan. 20, where 46 Sailors, Marines and spouses, from 15 different countries, became naturalized U.S. citizens.

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