

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Judy Cupp

Current home town: Greenville

Age: 75

My uncle, Donald F. Kincaid, served in the Army during WWII in New Guinea, the Philippines and Japan. He was a Military Police guard. I was a young girl and did not realize the significance of a war. I do have printing papers from the first grade saying "Buy US War Bonds." I remember that we had to practice ducking under our desks and discussing blackouts at home.

There was a sad feeling in my grandparent's home and for my mother, Marjorie Hurst, who was Uncle Donald's only sibling. She had gone to the train station when Uncle Donald left Dayton. She is 92 and still remembers that sadness. While in the Philippines, Uncle Donald made friends with a family who had a daughter my age. We were pen pals for a while and we exchanged gifts. I still have some slippers and a purse. Uncle Donald brought me, his favorite niece (actually his only niece), a beautiful red silk kimono. That was taken to show-and-tell, plus shown to family and friends. I was proud.

As a Military Police guard Uncle Donald had a very unusual experience. He was one of the guards for a very famous prisoner, Japanese Premier, Hideki Tojo. He was on duty, September 9, 1945. the night Tojo was to be executed. Tojo's dress uniform was brought to him. He called his interpreter over, pulled his ribbon bar off his tunic, indicated that it should be given to Kincaid as a souvenir, and then personally handed the bar to my uncle who was startled. Surprisingly Uncle Donald was allowed to keep them. The interpreter wrote a letter of authenticity.

The Army flew the metals home to my grandparents. The Dayton Daily News covered this event. Uncle Donald did not talk much about the war and this unusual happening. Putting war behind him, he entered civilian life as a pressman for McCall's printing.

We saw the ribbon bar occasionally. It was never on display. When Uncle Donald was ill with cancer, our mother was his primary caregiver. They discussed the ribbons and she suggested that Paul, a history teacher, would be the logical one to have them. He often shared them with his students He checked some museums for possible display. But none were interested, not even Wright Patterson. Our younger brother, John Hurst, who was an administrator at Pensacola Christian College, discussed them with people at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola. The bar of ribbons and two letters authenticating them are on loan to the museum. Museum historian, Hill Goodspeed, considers the ribbons from the WWII leader and the letters the rarest and most interesting collection at the museum. He said he knows no other museum -- even in Japan-with personal artifacts of Tojo's.

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Tojo's Medals

Japanese general gave his ribbons to the MP from Dayton



By ANGELLE HANEY
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He wanted no badges of honor, no signs of pride. The 60-year-old general tore the bank of ribbons from his chest and, through his interpreter, presented them to the young military policeman standing guard in his hospital room.

The architect of Pearl Harbor, well enough to be released from the 98th Evacuation Hospital in Tokyo, was responsible not only for the deaths of more than 2,400 Americans in the early morning hours of Dec. 7, 1941, but also the 1.7 million Japanese war dead.

He was in disgrace after his country's defeat by the U.S. military and his own failed suicide.

But before he was delivered to a military prison, Gen. Hideki Tojo was given back his elaborate dress uniform, covered with insignia befitting the premier of imperial Japan.

And Pfc. Donald Kincaid, who had grown up in Dayton, was in the right place at the right time to receive one of the ultimate souvenirs of World War II. Each of the two dozen ribbons signified a medal earned during Tojo's ambitious 40-year military

MEDALS

Japanese general's ribbons on display

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"It's akin to getting something of Hitler's or Stalin's or Churchill's," said Hill Goodspeed, historian for the National Naval Aviation Museum. "Something tied to a figure of that magnitude, it's a once-in-a-lifetime event."

They rest in a glass case, between messages of encouragement air-dropped to prisoners of war and a replica of the atom bomb that ultimately ended one war and changed all future wars. For 25 years, the ribbons had mostly sat in the dark safety deposit box of Greenville High School teacher Paul Hurst, one of Kincaid's nephews.

The museum learned about the existence of the medals almost by accident from Hurst's brother, an administrator at Pensacola Christian College.

"John Hurst wrote us a thank you letter, and mentioned, just offhandedly, that the family had these artifacts," Goodspeed said. "We literally fell off our chairs."

Kincaid, a graduate of Dayton's Parker Cooperative High School, joined the Army and was originally stationed at Fort Hayes, Kan.

"They told the soldiers to get ready for an inspection," Hurst said, "and my uncle said these big brass came through the barracks. They stopped to look at him, and the next thing he knew, he was assigned to MP duty."

"He told me he thought they were just taking any really big guys," said Hurst, whose uncle stood 6 feet 4 inches tall. After tours in the Philippines and New Guinea, Kincaid's unit was sent to Japan. He watched the ships maneuvering in Yokohama Bay, preparing for MacArthur's landing.

"The whole spectacle was the most breathtaking thing I've ever seen," he wrote to his parents back in Dayton.

At the hospital in Tokyo, Kincaid took his turn in a rotation of guards in the room of the

He died of bone cancer in 1979.

"They were in remarkable condition," Goodspeed said, marveling at the improbable elements in the story that brought the ribbons to the museum. "That Tojo would have given them to an enlisted man. And that a private first class could have held onto them!"

According to family lore, no less than Gen. Douglas MacArthur tried to claim Tojo's medals for himself. But Lt. Gen. C.P. Hall, commanding officer of the 11th Military Police Corps, made sure Kincaid's treasure made its way to the Fauver Avenue home of his parents.

Hurst is now retired and travels the country in an RV with his wife, Beverly. The two of them work around the country as interpretive rangers at national parks and historic sites. After spending the summer at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Mont., the couple was heading back east to visit family and see the display for the first time. He spoke to the *Dayton Daily News* by phone from somewhere in east Texas, getting ready to throw some pork chops on the grill.

"My uncle gave them to me in 1977, a couple of years before he died," Hurst said of the pieces of military history. "He was divorced, with two sons who had moved away. My mother took care of him while he was sick, and she suggested he give the ribbons to me since I was a history teacher."

He tried to interest several other museums in the one-of-a-kind artifacts, but had no takers.

"I had approached Wright-Patterson about them, but they seemed cool on the idea," Paul Hurst said. "With so many things turning up missing from there, I'm glad I didn't pursue it."

Concern about unaccounted for items led to a report submitted to Air Force Secretary James G. Roche last month that recommended sweeping improvements in security, staffing and space at the U.S. Air Force Museum.

HOW TO GO

- > **What:** The National Naval Aviation Museum.
- > **When:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
- > **Where:** 1750 Radford Blvd., Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla.
- > **Admission:** Free.
- > **Phone:** 1-(800)-247-6289

Tojo's reputation in Japan has undergone something of a renaissance over the last decade, sparked by a memoir his granddaughter wrote that portrayed him as a patriot and a victim of a vindictive prosecution by the Allies.

Pride, a 1998 movie based on Yuko Tojo's book, brought rave reviews in Japan and outrage in much of the rest of the world, particularly other Asian nations, which saw it as revisionist history

at best and belligerent propaganda at worst.

Tojo's decorations have waited a long time to see the light of day. The term of the loan is set to expire in 2005, and Hurst intends to pass them on to his son someday. But he's not in any hurry to pull them from public view.

"I'm just thrilled they're finally on display," Hurst said.

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John Hurst of Pensacola has loaned a set of priceless military ribbons to the National Museum of Naval Aviation at Pensacola Naval Air Station. The ribbons were removed from the uniform of General Tojo Hideki, Japan's premier during World War II who ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor. Tojo gave the ribbons to his guard, a U.S. Army military police officer, who handed them down to a nephew.

Artifacts of WWII infamy on loan to Naval museum

Japan premier gave ribbons to U.S. guard

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A handful of military ribbons from one of America's most infamous enemies has become a priceless exhibit at the National Museum of Naval Aviation, thanks to a Pensacola man and his brother.

The 24 ribbons of Gen. Tojo Hideki, the Japanese pre-

mier who ordered the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, recently were loaned to the museum by Pensacola resident John Hurst and his brother, Paul Hurst, of Dayton, Ohio.

The ribbons have been in their family since 1945, when Tojo himself handed them over to the brothers' uncle, Donald Kincaid, who was then a young military police officer.

Museum historian Hill Goodspeed considers the ribbons from the World War II leader and two letters authenticating them the rarest

and most interesting collection at the museum. He said he knows of no other museum — even in Japan — with personal artifacts of Tojo's.

"They are priceless artifacts because they are from one of the big three leaders of World War II," he said.

John Hurst, 56, an administrator at Pensacola Christian College, said the loan to

See WWII, 4A

maneuvering in Yokohama Bay, preparing for MacArthur's landing.

"The whole spectacle was the most breathtaking thing I've ever seen," he wrote to his parents back in Dayton.

At the hospital in Tokyo, Kincaid took his turn in a rotation of guards in the room of the disgraced general. After trying to take his own life with a service revolver just before his arrest, U.S. military command didn't think it was safe to leave Tojo in his room alone.

"There was a guard in the hall, to protect him from the people that blamed him for the war," Hurst said, "and one in the room, to protect him from himself."

Kincaid said he didn't treat this prisoner any differently, and was surprised when he was given such an impressive gift.

"I don't know why I was singled out to receive the ribbons," he told the *Dayton Daily News* in September 1945. "I've been guarding . . . prisoners for 18 months, and we treated this guy like all the rest."

Along with the ribbons, Kincaid obtained an authentication letter from another Japanese officer. Kincaid kept them in the attic of his home on Wayne Avenue, and rarely talked about them to anyone but Hurst. After the war, Kincaid returned to Dayton and worked as a pressman at McCall's Printing.

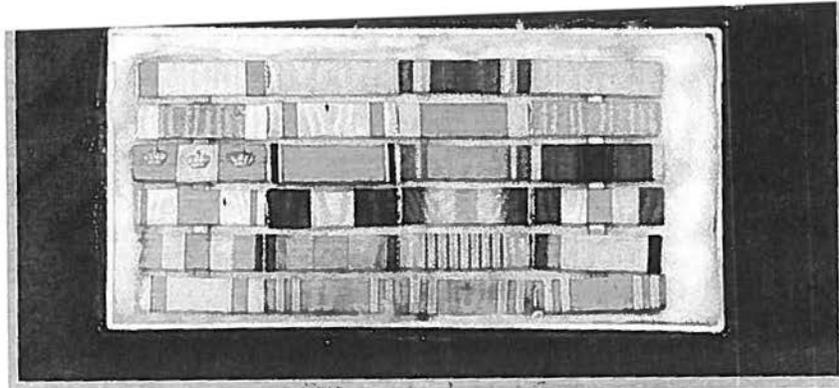
Hurst said. "With so many things turning up missing from there, I'm glad I didn't pursue it."

Concern about unaccounted for items led to a report submitted to Air Force Secretary James G. Roche last month that recommended sweeping improvements in security, staffing and space at the U.S. Air Force Museum.

The *Dayton Daily News* reported in August that more than 3,500 items were missing from the museum, including the wooden pattern used to cast the engine for the first powered flight in 1903. Smaller and more personal items, such as medals, citations and documents have also been listed as stolen, missing or simply not properly accounted for.

Once among the world's most powerful men, Tojo chose to give the tangible symbols of his glorious career to a young man whose name he did not know and whose rank was far below his own. His reputation and legacy remain complicated.

The son of a military strategist in a family descended from samurai, Tojo assumed command of the Japanese secret police in 1937. He was vice minister of war and in 1941 he was promoted to full general and became Japan's prime minister. His cabinet was full of his war-minded cronies, and a special act of the emperor allowed him to hold his military and civilian offices simultaneously.



Premier Hideki Tojo's decorations include those from Manchuria, Italy, Siam and Germany, as well as the Order of the Golden Kite (third from right in top row) for exceptional bravery in action. Campaign medals include those awarded for service in Siberia during World War I and participation in the Mukden Incident in 1931 – the impetus for the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. NMNA photo

As a military policeman, Private First Class Donald Kincaid guarded numerous Japanese prisoners during his service in New Guinea, the Philippines and Japan and according to him did not treat any one differently from another. This was even true in the case of his most famous prisoner, Japanese Premier Hideki Tojo. Born in 1884, Tojo was a career Army officer, and a leading figure in the nation's militaristic expansion. He was appointed Premier 16 October 1941, and served in that post until forced to resign on 18 July 1944. Facing arrest by American forces in September 1945, Tojo shot himself, but American doctors saved his life. It was while the enemy leader was recuperating at the 98th Evacuation Hospital that Kincaid was assigned to guard him. The young MP never conversed with Tojo, who did not speak English, and therefore had no reason to expect what happened on 19 September. On that day Tojo's dress uniform was brought to his bedside. Calling his interpreter over, the former Premier pulled his ribbon bar off his tunic, indicated that it should be given to Kincaid as a souvenir, and then personally handed them to the startled guard.

Surprisingly, Kincaid was able to keep his prize and he received attention from

his hometown newspaper in Dayton, Ohio, which stated that the "shy" Private First Class was "not impressed" with them. Telling a reporter that two of the ribbons looked like the U.S. Good Conduct Medal, the MP was quoted as saying "That guy ought to have a bad conduct ribbon with nine poison oak leaf clusters." Eventually returning stateside, Kincaid, like many veterans, entered civilian life and soon put the war behind him. The ribbon bar was rarely pulled out for anyone to see, and after his death, it was eventually left to his nephew, Paul Hurst. With a desire to have the historic artifact placed on display where the public could see it, Hurst was advised by his brother John, an administrator at Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola, that the National Museum of Naval Aviation might be a good venue for their uncle's treasure. On loan to the Museum, it will soon be placed on display, accompanied by the original affidavit declaring the bar's authenticity signed by Tojo's interpreter. "This is one of the most historic military artifacts we have ever exhibited," according to Museum curator Buddy Macon. "Through the generosity of the Hurst family, we are honored to have the opportunity to share it with the visiting public."