

# JAPANESE DESTROYER CAPTAIN

Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway—  
The Great Naval Battles  
as Seen Through  
Japanese Eyes

**CAPT. TAMEICHI HARA**  
of the Japanese Imperial Navy  
with Fred Saito and Roger Pineau

From the best-selling Japanese edition of Captain Hara's book, Fred Saito of the Associated Press and Roger Pineau—assistant to Admiral Morison on the U.S. Navy's official history of World War II—have prepared a book of paramount interest to all who want to know the facts about the great naval battles of the Pacific War.

Errors in U.S. accounts of famous sea battles are set right by inside reports of high-level Japanese strategy meetings and Hara's eyewitness account of six years of war. At times sharply critical of famous Japanese admirals, Hara also gives credit to Japanese and "enemy" officers whose daring and seamanship were proved in the savage battles of the Pacific.

Illustrated with eight pages of photographs from official U.S. and Japanese Navy files, and filled with exact maps of naval actions, this is a book for the permanent shelf of works on sea warfare.

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Naval Institute Press  
Annapolis, Maryland

The latest edition of this book has been brought to publication with the generous assistance of Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest.

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## FOREWORD

As Japan began to get back on its feet after World War II, the Japanese public came to consider that war with detachment, and growing numbers of persons began to demand that the story be straightened out. Several excellent books were written by my colleagues in response to the demand. Most of these books, by former Imperial Navy flyers, are properly reflective of the authors' aerial background.

I was urged by many friends to tell the story from the surface side. It has not been an easy job, for destroyer men are trained in fighting not writing. This book, indeed, could not have been produced but for the all-out co-operation of friends too numerous for mention here. I can state, however, that all persons referred to by name in this book were either interviewed by me or voluntarily submitted their statements to me.

I am particularly grateful to my friend Ko Nagasawa who, as Commander in Chief of the new Japanese Navy, 1954–1958, not only gave me his own accounts willingly, but also instructed the Navy's Historical Section to cooperate with me. I am much indebted to all the naval historians who contributed so much to this work by allowing me to use the results of their research and study.

I trust this book will provide a comprehensive view of the Japanese side that will complement the many excellent American books which, in almost every case, are sadly lacking in accurate Japanese information. Accounts based solely on interrogations of Japanese survivors and veterans by the conquerors in the early days of the occupation were too often subjective.

In writing this book my greatest effort was to render as objective an account as possible. To do so, I had to be ruthlessly critical not only of myself, but also of friends who had helped me devotedly. It is a human trait, and the failing of every military officer, to try to cover up his friends' mistakes, if not his own. It has involved real pain, indeed, for me to avoid that failing.

My critical and straightforward account may hurt the feelings of many colleagues and possibly of those who fought against me. I hope, however, that all such readers will take a broad view and try to understand that it has been my desire to offend no one personally.

After surviving the sinking of my destroyer off Okinawa in April 1945, I was assigned to the Kawatana Torpedo Boat school near Sasebo and Nagasaki. My new command was to provide training for guerrilla warfare tactics in anticipation of American landings in our homeland.

Emperor Hirohito's surrender order of August 15, 1945 reached me at Kawatana while I was engaged in training young men to assume disguises as women or priests in order to fight enemy invasion troops. I surrendered the Kawatana base to a United

States Navy detail headed by Captain Francis D. McCorkle on September 23, 1945.

The American captain astonished me by behaving more like a friend than a conqueror. He asked my permission to have as a souvenir a speedometer from one of the Shinyo Suicide Torpedo Boats then moored at Kawatana. I was delighted to oblige.

Since the end of the war, I have been working at a salt transport company. My two daughters were happily married in 1957, one to a merchant ship officer, the other to an office worker. My son Mikito is in senior high school. My wife, Chizu, is healthy and happy.

*Tokyo, February 25, 1958*

Tameichi Hara

## PROLOGUE

### 1

Japan's Imperial Navy had an over-all wartime inventory of 25 aircraft carriers, 12 battleships, 18 heavy cruisers, 26 light cruisers, 175 destroyers and 95 submarines.

But it was the destroyer flotillas, totaling never more than 130 at any one time, which shouldered the heaviest burden of the war. They were the work horses of the Imperial Navy.

These destroyers were assigned not merely as fighting ships, but also as escorts to transports, and even as transports for many months of the war—particularly from early 1943 to mid-1944 when most of the larger Japanese warships were being “conserved” at a safe distance from the battle zones.

Japanese destroyers took part in scores of intense sea battles and scored many brilliant victories in the early days. These victories demonstrated the superiority of Japan's destroyer seamanship over that of the Allies.

Starting in mid-1943, however, Japanese destroyers had to work month after month without proper maintenance or upkeep, and without adequate rest or replenishment for their crews, until they lost supremacy over their Allied counterparts. That was largely owing to the amazing Allied development of scientific equipment and also to the growing superiority of Allied aircraft.

Nevertheless, Japanese destroyers fought gallantly and valiantly until the end of the war. I think their records deserve a full presentation for posterity. Although destroyer actions do not compare in scale to the larger and more famed battles like those at Coral Sea, Midway, the Marianas, or Leyte Gulf, which were largely fought by airplanes and capital warships, the efforts and achievements of destroyers in the lesser battles—which tend to be gradually forgotten—are worthy of being recorded in detail.

Japanese aircraft carriers played the lead role at Pearl Harbor—which was after all a one-sided action—as well as in three subsequent large operations that ended in complete defeat for the Japanese at Midway, the Marianas, and Leyte Gulf.

Japanese battleships treasured by the high command and “conserved” at every cost, fared even worse. *Musashi*, 72,400 tons, which consumed fuel at the rate of 30 large destroyers, took part in only one action in the war. It was sunk in Leyte Gulf before there was even a chance to level its nine 18-inch guns at any worthy targets.

*Yamato*, her sister ship, participated in only two battles. At Leyte, it broke off before the cornered American light carriers. Five months later, it sortied for Okinawa on a suicide mission and was sunk in the East China Sea more than 300 miles short of its goal.

But Japan's little destroyers worked throughout the war escorting much larger ships, sinking enemy ships and submarines, and transporting troops and supplies.

My happiest duty in the Imperial Navy was in destroyers, and that is where I spent most of the war. During the war my Navy friends called me the "Miracle Captain" and my destroyer *Shigure* was nicknamed "Indestructible." I don't think such compliments were really deserved. The officers who died in the 129 Japanese destroyers lost during the war covered a range of ability just as in any other navy, and many of them were better than me. The fact that I survived was entirely a matter of luck.

Among the survivors are others who were as capable, and more so. Thus far they have all been silent about their war records, perhaps in accord with the ancient Oriental saying: "Defeated men should not talk about their battles."

I have decided to challenge this precept, not for myself, but to give proper credit to the destroyers and the men who sailed them. That the war was lost does not detract from their credit and achievement. If this writing seems to be too much about myself, the reader is reminded that I am merely trying to present a typical Japanese destroyer man, with his typical merits and faults—nothing more.

This book cannot give a full history of every Japanese destroyer. Particularly inadequate is my account of destroyer *Yukikaze*, which survived eight major operations and battles until the last day of the war, and, in my opinion, deserves an entire book to itself. But the man for that job is her 1941–44 skipper, Captain Ryokichi Kanma, who, I hope, will eventually write his own account in full detail.

## 2

On April 7, 1945 Japanese light cruiser *Yahagi* endured a 90-minute aerial attack by American Avengers and Hellcats in which she absorbed six torpedoes, twelve direct hits by 250-pound bombs, and numerous smaller bomb hits. This punishment proved to be too much for even that gallant warship.

She had sortied from the Inland Sea early that morning with eight destroyers and the giant battleship *Yamato*. Their goal was Okinawa where they were to make a suicide attack against the American invasion forces. Clearly a suicide attack, because the Japanese warships were provided with enough fuel to reach Okinawa—not enough to return.

Now, less than 100 miles from Japan, the fury of an enemy attack had struck the *Yamato* task force, and light cruiser *Yahagi* was sinking.

As her skipper, I was standing on *Yahagi*'s bridge as the waves lapped closer. Near me on the bridge stood Rear Admiral Keizo Komura, commander of the escort force. All around us were signs of the havoc worked by the enemy attack. Bodies and debris were everywhere in *Yahagi*, hardly anything remained intact after the withering air attacks. The ship was listing 30 degrees to port and sinking fast. Admiral Komura was uninjured and, though blood streamed down my left arm, I was unaware of having been hit.

In a last look around, I saw that battleship *Yamato*, some 6,000 yards ahead, was still fighting. Two of our eight destroyers were already sunk. Three others were

burning, dead in the water, and sinking. The other three were zigzagging desperately.

“Let’s go,” said Komura. I nodded. We took off our shoes and jumped into the water. The next moment the ship went down, dragging us down toward the bottom of the East China Sea. The gigantic whirlpool of the sinking ship caught us like a mighty fist, and I writhed and struggled in vain. I ran out of breath and gulped sea water. All around me was inky darkness. Was I dying? Not yet. I kept struggling. I would never know how many minutes passed, but it was a long time to me. Suddenly the clutch of the immense fist seemed to loosen. In the darkness a faint suggestion of light above me showed that I was going up. A stream of foam came from my nose as again I gulped in water. I kicked and struggled as the black darkness gave way to blue sky and daylight.

With startling, unbelievable suddenness I was back on the surface. Dazed, unthinking, and barely able to keep afloat, I was heartened to see that *Yamato* was still fighting. Scores of American planes swarmed gnatlike over and around her, launching their deadly missiles, but the giant ship still fought on. This encouraging sight helped to rouse me from my stupor. But the sight was short-lived.

At 1420 a frightening pillar of fire and white smoke came belching from the battleship, hiding everything. The smoke towered 20,000 feet into the sky.

While I watched the smoke gradually lifted, revealing nothing. The great battleship *Yamato*, pride of the Imperial Navy, had vanished into the sea. The Imperial Navy was finished.

I shuddered. Hot tears gushed from my eyes and streamed down my checks. I clung morosely to a piece of floating debris.

I was finished. Since the beginning of the Pacific War I had gone out on more than 100 sorties; and while countless friends and comrades fell, I always came back victorious. Now I tasted miserable defeat for the first time in my career.

Suddenly many things from the past flooded to mind as I knew there was no chance for my survival.

I recalled the heated discussion of the day before when three admirals and ten ship captains contemplated the orders for what was to be the last sortie of the Japanese Navy. Not one of us had seen any hope of success. *Yamato* with my cruiser *Yahagi* and eight destroyers had to sail for Okinawa with fuel enough for only a one-way trip. We were to reach Okinawa and, as warships on a suicide mission, there expend all our ammunition against the American fleet. We were blasted into the sea less than halfway to the target.

I saw vividly my family at home. Suddenly, their faces blurred as rain began to fall. I wept, mumbling aloud, “Farewell, Chizu. You have been a good wife, and a good mother to our children. Farewell, daughters Yoko and Keiko, and son Mikito! After your father’s death and the defeat of your fatherland, you will face untold miseries. Ah, forgive your father! Try to remember me as a man who fought and did his best.”

Then I heard a voice singing. I was not alone! I looked around to find that there were scores of other sailors in the water. Gradually they all joined the chorus, despite training instructions not to exhaust themselves thus. In this grim setting I listened to the haunting strains of the ancient *Song of the Warrior*:

If I go away to sea,

I shall return a corpse awash;  
If duty calls me to the mountain,  
A verdant sward will be my pall;  
Thus for the sake of the Emperor  
I will not die peacefully at home.

My weeping stopped and I closed my eyes to see again my childhood, school days, our cadet training cruise, the glorious battles in the Java Sea, the Solomons. . . .

part one

BORN A SAMURAI

1

I was born October 16, 1900, in a suburb of Takamatsu City on the northern coast of Shikoku Island facing the scenic Inland Sea.

My family was poor. I was the last of five children. My parents had to work their small plot from dawn to dusk. Like most of the farms in Japan, which is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, ours was less than one acre. It did not produce enough to support our family, so my father labored at night in a home workshop making crude farm tools for sale.

Most of my recollections of my parents are of their days and nights of toil; they had little or no time to play with us children. From early childhood my two brothers and two sisters had to help in supporting the family.

My grandfather, Moichiro Hara, was nearly 70 when I was born. He nursed me and played with me. He had been a real samurai in his youth, and he exerted a great influence on me.

Until 1871 the people of Japan were divided into four estates or classes. In that year all the feudal lords relinquished their titles and estates to the Emperor.

Before that time the ruling class was the samurai. As a member of that class, my family had served the lord of Takamatsu for centuries. The samurai's duty in time of peace was to administer local affairs and to keep constantly in training for a military emergency. In return, the samurai's livelihood was insured by his lord. So the samurai lived proud and aloof from the mundane routines and considerations of the merchant, artisan, and peasant classes.

With his status and privileges gone, a samurai found it hard to adapt himself to a new mode of life. Most samurai ended up as failures working at trades for which they were untrained. My grandfather was no exception. It was all he could do to cling to the small farm granted him on separation from the feudal clan. It is curious how closely my own life was to follow the course of my doting grandfather's.

The Imperial Navy was disbanded after Japan's surrender in World War II, and I, a naval captain, was without a job. The Allied occupation denied pensions to all former military officers and barred them from holding public office. Thus for several postwar years my family eked out a living only by selling personal belongings and doing manual labor. Despite this, I have never regretted my choice of a naval career. I am

grateful for the many lessons my grandfather taught. Those lessons helped me to win battles and enabled me to survive defeat in that great war. The toll of my crews throughout the war was lower than that of any other Imperial Navy captain with equivalent combat experience.

My grandfather was wonderfully good to me. Because my mother was so busy, he tended and cared for me throughout my infancy. As I began to walk, it was he who took me along to nearby shrines. He would watch me, play with me, and buy candies for me.

As I began to talk, he told me endless samurai stories. My mother told me later of grandfather's hope that I would restore glory to the family, for he thought I was the brightest child of the five.

I can close my eyes now and see the white-haired old man sitting erect in the samurai manner morning and evening before the family altar. The altar contained the tablets of his ancestors, as well as that of his own lord, Yorichika Matsudaira of Takamatsu. This daily routine of worship and reciting Analects of Confucius was never varied or disturbed until he became seriously ill.

As he lay on his deathbed surrounded by the family, he called my name and asked that I come close. As I was just six, my parents brought me to his side and put my hands in one of his. The other hand clutched his treasured samurai sword, which he finally placed in my tiny hands. He coughed and struggled to say, "Tamei, this is yours. Now listen carefully to your grandpa's last words."

All of us were silent as the dying old man went on falteringly.

"Tameichi Hara! You are the son of samurai and you will remember that. 'A samurai lives in such a way that he is always prepared to die.' Don't misinterpret that teaching. Never seek an easy death, for that would be against the true spirit of Bushido.

"I have told you many times about fine samurai who suffered great hardships to achieve their missions. Try to do likewise. Always be on guard, and redouble your efforts to better yourself."

Though I was too young to understand all he said, the dying man's expression of great affection for me was clear and unforgettable.

The following year I enrolled in grammar school. Throughout its six years of courses, I stayed at the head of the class and graduated as the first honor pupil of my family.

We were still poor. My brothers, ten years and eight years older than me, were already working. Neither they nor my two sisters went beyond grammar school. Seeing my fine school record, the brothers persuaded Father to send me to middle school, saying, "We'll help with his expenses." So it happened that I was able to continue my education. I will always be grateful to my family for making this possible.

I passed the middle school entrance examination and was one of five applicants fortunate enough to be chosen for admission. The school was one of the best in Japan, open only to carefully selected children. In five years there, I could not achieve top honors, but I finished about tenth in the class of 150 boys.

As that schooling drew to an end, I had to think about a career. Naturally I aspired to higher education. But college or university required expenditures that were prohibitive for my family. The only advanced education available to me was in

government-financed institutions. This meant either a normal school and study for a teaching career, or a military school. I was of samurai blood. My choice was the military. I had not forgotten my grandfather's last words.

## 2

Upon graduation from the Takamatsu Middle School in March 1918 I applied for the Military Academy in Tokyo and also for the Naval Academy at Eta Jima near Hiroshima. I applied for both because my chances were small of winning either. My preference was the Navy but, failing that, the Army would have been acceptable because I could not afford to wait another year for the next examinations.

My grandfather had been a cavalryman. Why did the Navy have so much attraction for me? Perhaps my spirit was simply responding to the tradition of my ancestral region. Takamatsu and its environs have a special naval significance, for it was here that the Japanese Navy had its beginning.

The Inland Sea is to Japan what the Aegean was to ancient Greece. Early Japanese life revolved and developed around the Inland Sea with its thousands of picturesque islets, just as the Greek culture began on the shores of the Aegean.

The first major naval battle in Japanese history was fought off Takamatsu in February, 1185. The following month a naval force was collected at Takamatsu and it formed the nucleus of a winning fleet at Dan-no-ura in the greatest Inland Sea battle ever recorded in Japanese history.

In the 13th century when Kublai Khan's mammoth Mongolian fleet with 200,000 men attempted the invasion of Japan from northern Kyushu, the Takamatsu contingent again played a vital role in destroying the enemy at Japan's shore. Michiari Kono, a famed admiral from near Takamatsu, is noted in history books as the man who climbed victoriously on board the Mongolian flagship in the crucial battle of 1281. The entire Mongolian armada was demolished at Hakata Bay. Thereafter many Japanese fleets streamed out from the Inland Sea in "retaliation sorties" against the Chinese mainland.

These medieval Japanese fleets functioned somewhat in the manner of modern commandos. Unlike the Mongolian armada, they did not carry large numbers of land troops, for they did not aim at permanent occupation of mainland China. Crack Japanese sailors would land on the continent, chew up the immediately opposing Chinese troops, and return with loot. Chinese history shows that these Japanese commando raiders attacked the China coast until well into the 17th century and contributed to the toppling of many a dynasty, including that of the famous and powerful Ming.

My desire for a navy career was no doubt inspired by the naval heritage of my native province.

The Naval Academy at Eta Jima was one of the most highly competitive educational institutions in Japan. Enthusiastic youngsters who failed the first examination would wait a full year, or even two, for another chance. But my family situation would not allow a year of idleness, so I also applied for the Military Academy.

Entrance examinations for the Academies were given in principal cities throughout the country. In April, the month after my graduation from Takamatsu Middle School, I went to nearby Marugame for the Army examination. It did not seem too difficult and I felt sure that I had qualified.

The next month I traveled to Honshu—my first waterborne journey—to take the Navy examination at Hiroshima. Takamatsu Middle School had sponsored class excursions to Honshu, but I had never joined because of lack of funds.

It was quite exciting for an 18-year-old country boy to make this trip for the first time, and all alone. Hiroshima was already the largest city in Western Honshu. Its busy, thriving streets bewildered me.

I registered in a modest-looking hotel, located in a back alley, away from the busy thoroughfares. This was my first such experience and, as it turned out, my choice of lodging was not wise. In Japanese hotels a guest's meals are served in his room by a maidservant. Mine was in her early twenties, pretty, and friendly. So friendly, indeed, that she made me very nervous.

"Would you like to have liquor, sir?"

"No, miss, I'm not of age to drink and, besides, I am taking the entrance exams for Eta Jima tomorrow."

"Oooh," she squealed, "so you are going into the Navy. How nice! You will be a terrific officer. Will you come back to this hotel in uniform after you are in school? I'd like to see you again."

This conversation made me uneasy. In my typical Japanese upbringing I had never before talked with young women, except my sisters. It upset me to have this girl keep asking me questions. I barely managed a few curt words of reply each time, and I heaved a deep sigh of relief when she left. I opened a few books I had carried along. I was anxious to study and prepare for the Eta Jima examinations. I pored over textbooks for several hours but simply could not concentrate. A guest in the next room seemed to be having a drinking bout with his maid. Between drinks they sang. This was awful. I realized ruefully that I had picked the wrong hotel.

I gave up around midnight and asked at the front desk to have my bedding prepared. In a Japanese hotel room there is no bed. When a guest wants to retire, servants spread futon (bedding) on the matted floor.

That aggressively friendly maid reappeared and prepared my bed. But instead of leaving she insisted on helping me change, and fold and arrange my clothes. I was plainly embarrassed.

"Young gentleman," she said mockingly, "you look strained. You need a massage. If you aren't trim and fit tomorrow, you may flunk."

She ignored my stammered protest and started to massage my back. I gave in.

"My name is Noriko and I am from neighboring Yamaguchi province," she went on. "I have been working as a hotel maid for nearly three years. Sometimes the job is difficult because not every guest is a gentleman like you."

I was silent and, although the massage was relaxing, her words made me more strained than before.

"I have no more duties tonight," she whispered. "You may keep me."

Her voice was low, but it struck me like thunder, and I trembled. "What do you mean?" I croaked.

“Oh, come, young man, don’t play the fool. A handsome boy like you must have known dozens of girls. You better have a good time tonight so you can face the examinations tomorrow with real composure.”

“Oh, please leave me,” I begged. “I have never had any girl. I have never spoken to any girl but my sisters in my life. Tomorrow’s examinations are very, very important to me.”

“You seem to think I’m a bitch,” she said in a tone of hurt and anger. “I offered to stay with you simply because I fell in love with you at first sight. Also I know you’ll be denied girls for the four years you’re at Eta Jima. I am not a bitch. I will not charge you for my companionship. Listen! All is quiet next door. They are in bed.”

That was too much for me. I earnestly begged her to leave. Finally she stalked out of the room, giving me a last look of utter scorn.

This awkward incident so disturbed me that I could not sleep. I took the exams next day, but suffered badly from lack of sleep. I did not feel confident about any part of the examinations. I returned to Takamatsu, disappointed and dispirited.

About ten days later I received notice that I had passed the military examination and should report to Tokyo in August. I had about given up the idea of a navy career and was fairly resigned to being in the Army, when a telegram announced that the Navy had also accepted me. I shouted, “Banzai!” and leaped with joy.

### 3

Eta Jima, Japan’s Annapolis, was a shrine and a subject of dreams to millions of youngsters in prewar Japan. Every year hundreds of young aspirants, each with fine scholastic records and recommendations, would compete for the few public or unsponsored openings for admission. One would expect such a selective system to produce brilliant naval officers. But many graduates of this exclusive school were far from brilliant, and some failed completely to live up to the nation’s expectations. What I say about Eta Jima and its system is not intended as an indictment; I wish only to present the facts and let the reader judge them.

I was enrolled on August 26, 1918. On that day I put on the snow-white uniform with seven shiny brass buttons and became a real samurai. With the uniform I wore the short, ornamental dagger, just as my grandfather had worn it in his youth.

Eta Jima is a small island facing the spacious harbor of the naval port of Kure, near Hiroshima, in the Inland Sea. Our course of studies at the Academy lasted four years. Except for summer vacations and a few short days of home leave, we lived on this island in complete isolation from the outer world.

Three days after my enrollment, as I was about to enter my dormitory, a third-year man shouted harshly at me, “Halt!” When I did, he hurried over and demanded angrily, “Why did you fail to salute me?”

I did not know what to answer, as I had not even seen him until after his command.

“Attention!” he roared. “Stand with your feet apart and be prepared. I’m going to knock out some of your laxity.”

He hit me in the face with his fist a dozen times. If I had been standing at attention,

his first blow would have knocked me to the ground. This treatment came as a great shock to me. I trudged into my billet bruised and bleeding.

The next day at breakfast a senior discovered that my uniform was improperly buttoned, and I received another dozen blows on my swollen face. My second assailant was stronger than the first. My left ear kept ringing all the rest of the day.

When a plebe was singled out for discipline, all other students in his platoon were lined up and given one blow. All plebes were subjected to this unique system of discipline, from which there was no respite. Each Sunday the 180 freshmen were assembled on the parade ground and made to stand at attention for four or five hours under the broiling sun. Instructors and their upper classmen “assistants” kept watching and ordering us. The hours of this Sunday lesson were punctuated by almost continuous fist beatings.

After a few months of such treatment the newcomers became sheeplike in their obedience. Every man’s face bore evidence of the brutality we endured. My ear trouble became chronic, and I suffer from it to this day.

For some of the boys the rigors of this discipline did not seem to be too much of a shock. They had perhaps grown up in a similar environment. In some Japanese homes a stern father chastised his children liberally. In many provincial schools the boys were treated tyrannically by their teachers.

For me it was different. I was the proud son of a samurai family. No member of my family had ever tried to hit me. In my schooling harsh methods of discipline were never employed.

Perhaps I was spoiled to some extent. Perhaps I was not ready for a military career. At any rate, the Eta Jima discipline outraged and embittered me. Even today I remember those early days in the Academy with a bad taste in my mouth.

Certain of my seniors were sadistic brutes. They took singular delight in terrorizing freshmen. To this day I feel a revulsion at seeing these men, even though we have since shared the labors and miseries of war, and the same luck in surviving it.

We were roused by bugles each day at 0530, and we studied and drilled until lights out at 2100, without a moment of relaxation. The harsh Sunday routine continued for six months. Freshmen were then given their first day off and life became a little more bearable. All regular beatings ended with our plebe year.

On days off, no students were allowed to leave the immediate vicinity of the town. Sunday routine was to climb hills, hike around the island, or sprawl in the club.

One of my most outstanding classmates was Ko Nagasawa. He came from northern Japan, was a most personable character, and did not seem to mind the Spartan discipline of the Academy. He often amazed me with his wisecracks after savage discipline by instructors or elder students.

He and I stood near the top of our plebe class of 180 men. He served well in command and staff duties during the Pacific War, joined the new Japanese navy in 1954, and became its top admiral in 1956. In the Eta Jima days he was liked and respected by all his classmates but no one foresaw such a future for him.

I know that many of my comrades look back on their Academy days with sweet nostalgia. But, because of the physical punishment alone, I do not share their feelings.

Letters from home often bore disconcerting news. They were another cause for my unhappiness at the Academy. First came the sad news that my elder sister, Uta, had

died of tuberculosis. Because she left two small children, my other sister, Kiyo, was persuaded to marry Uta's widower. Kiyo wrote me of her reluctance and then of her eventual resignation. That situation disturbed me greatly, for I was very fond of Kiyo.

A year later Kiyo deserted her husband and stepchildren and returned home. In those days such an act was a total violation of behavior for a Japanese woman. But I could not blame her. I knew that she must have had good reason.

Such developments coupled with the Spartan campus life served to keep me in a state of almost constant distress and depression for the first three years. There was a new commandant for the Academy during my last year. This was Vice Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, the first truly great man in my life.

Admiral Suzuki was in command for just two days when he summoned a faculty meeting. In a burst of anger he sternly forbade all physical discipline. "This school is supposed to produce fine officers, not cattle," he stormed.

Suzuki thereupon instituted a series of sweeping reforms in the entire Academy system. He sought to encourage the students' interest and thus their desire to learn, and he was unalterably opposed to all forms of brutality.

It was my feeling that Admiral Suzuki should have come much earlier. Unfortunately for the school, Suzuki did not stay long. He was too big a man for Eta Jima, or even the Imperial Navy. He was retired comparatively early to become chamberlain to the Emperor. In 1945 he became premier and steered the nation in its surrender to the Allies. After him a procession of mediocre admirals commanded Eta Jima, and Suzuki's reforms were gradually forgotten.

On July 16, 1921, I graduated fortieth out of 150 students. My parents were happy and proud when they learned it. I knew, however, that I could have done better.

#### 4

The year of my enrollment at Eta Jima marked the end of World War I. Japan took part in that war on the side of the Allies. The nation sustained no war damage, and Japanese businessmen made enormous wealth during the war.

With the armistice came world peace and a tremendous depression in Japan. Even at Eta Jima, secluded though it was from the outside world, the economic depression was much in evidence and reflected by the general atmosphere.

Within the year of my graduation the five great naval powers—Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France and Italy—concluded a disarmament agreement, setting a maximum tonnage for their naval ships.

The 150 cadets of my class were assigned to cruisers *Izumo* and *Yagumo*. I was in the latter. These 6,000-ton warships had been Japan's main strength in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5. Any 25-year-old ship is difficult to operate. A warship of that age is more a liability than an asset.

We youngsters, however, were so happy that we could hardly restrain ourselves from shouting with joy. We knew we would soon be leaving on a world cruise. Nothing could dampen our buoyant feelings. The ships were decrepit and awful to look at. But none of us cared.