

ADDRESS BY GORDON W. PRANGE AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONY

May 6, 1979

Room 2203, Art-Sociology Building

University of Maryland

[The following is an excerpt from Eizaburo Okuizumi's *Memoirs of Dr. Gordon W. Prange (1910-1980) and His Collection* (University of Chicago Libraries: December 1991), 1-9.]

Introduction

The following speech given by Gordon W. Prange was transcribed from a one-volume videotape which was compiled from two U-Matic Videotapes produced by the University of Maryland Education Technology Center over ten years ago. The contents of the tape include footage of the Dedication Ceremony of the Gordon W. Prange Collection, [May 5, 1979]*. It is approximately 1 hour and 13 minutes long, with Toll speaking for 4 minutes, Ogata for 15 minutes, Harrar for 5 minutes, Elkins for 5 minutes, and Prange for 35 minutes. For educational purposes, this videotape may be obtained from Mr. Eizaburo Okuizumi of the University of Chicago Libraries.

*The correct date is May 6, 1979.

Gordon W. Prange's Address at the Dedication Ceremony

Thank you, President Elkins, for your fine introduction. After that, I can scarcely wait to hear what I have to say. And thank you Dr. Ogata, for your stimulating address. I only hope mine will be half as good.

President Toll, Chancellor Gluckstern, Dr. Harrar, Dr. Evans, Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the outset, I should like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have had anything to do with naming the Japanese collection in the McKeldin Library for me.

It is a great honor which I humbly accept; it fills me with happiness and tremendous humility. The story I have to tell this afternoon is one that is almost unbelievable. Yes, virtually impossible. It is a combination of many elements working over a period of time. Fate, fate at its most elemental; the luck of the draw; being at the right place at the right time under the right circumstances. The decisions of others which were beyond my powers to add to or detract from. A little vision, much hard work, and a strong desire to help the University of Maryland.

This story has many elements of what Thomas Wolfe called the "Dark miracle of chance." But this particular miracle is not a dark one. On the contrary, it is so bright that one can much more readily see in it the working of a benevolent purpose than the blind gropings of chance. My dear friend, the late Captain Mitsuo Fuchida of the Japanese Imperial Navy undoubtedly would say that this story demonstrates how the hand of God guides, nudges, and even occasionally cuffs

one of his children into the path designed for him. This story has never ceased to fascinate me and I hope you find it half as fascinating as I do. Time forces me to leave out many things but permit me to give you at least a bare outline.

We begin with that fateful day of December the seventh 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I was just as shocked, bewildered, astonished, grieved, and angry as any American. And like millions of my countrymen, I was abysmally, and I admit it, disgracefully, ignorant of Japan and her people. At that moment, I was engrossed in the subject of Hitler's socialist nationalism. I had studied at the University of Berlin in 1935 and 36, heard Hitler speak several times and was preparing a book about Hitler as a demagogue and propagandist. Had anyone said to me "Akagi, Kaga, Hiryu, Soryu, Shokaku, Zuikaku," I would have concluded that he was speaking Japanese. Little did I know that these were the six carriers that formed the nucleus of the Japanese task force--the largest in the world at that time. I was almost as ignorant of the United States Navy. And if anyone had mentioned Pearl Harbor to me, I probably would have thought of an oyster bed. Had anyone told me on Pearl Harbor Day that I, poor little old me, a newly minted associate professor of history at the University of Maryland, would eventually go to Japan and talk at length with virtually every surviving Japanese who had anything to do with that audacious operation, I would have said, "Man, you are beyond hope and redemption." Had the same person added that I would write a 4-volume work on the subject, from both the United States and Japanese points of view, I would have replied, "You're out of your mind." And then had Mr. Whosit taken another look at his crystal ball, and predicted that someday the leader of the Pearl Harbor attack Captain Mitsuo Fuchida and I would become close personal friends and collaborate on his biography, I would have sent for the men in white coats to cart him back to the asylum. On Pearl Harbor Day, as Fuchida led his airmen on their flight into destiny, he hated the gizzard of the United States. He believed in maximum destruction, and wanted nothing more than to sink as many American ships as possible and turn every available American aircraft into a torch lighting the way for a decisive Japanese victory. He would have laughed in the face of anyone who told him that after the war, he would convert to Christianity, become an ardent evangelist, preach many times in the United States to receptive audiences, live in this country for years at a stretch and call the United States his home. Nor would Fuchida ever have believed in his wildest dreams, that his fine son Yoshio would finish his education in the United States, take his degree in architecture at the University of Oregon, marry an American girl of Caucasian race, become an American citizen, and establish his own architectural firm in New York City. Nor could he have possibly imagined that his beautiful daughter Miyako, and I tell you she is beautiful, would also come to the United States, study interior design in California, marry of all people an U.S. marine corps sergeant, and plan to take out her citizenship papers.

As the war in the Pacific moved on, I along with most of my other countrymen followed the exploits of that legendary figure General Douglas MacArthur. Never did it cross my mind that one day I would stand before that five-starred general in his sumptuous office in Tokyo, and brief

him for an hour on the four volumes of his reports that the chief of his historical section, which I prepared for him. Or that thereafter General MacArthur, his G-2 Major General Charles Willoughby and I would sit in that awesome sanctum for another 50 minutes, discussing the war in Korea, conditions in the Far East, and communism in the world in general. Neither could I have anticipated that I would sponsor a Japanese student in the United States, one Toshio Ikeda, that he would live in my home for 5 years, become the much beloved elder brother of my three children, and graduate from the University of Maryland in 1956. Nor did I ever visualize that one day in Tokyo during the summer of 1949 that I would begin shipping to the University of Maryland one of the largest collections of materials anywhere in the world on the Occupation of Japan. Neither could I have foreseen that 30 years after I sent the first shipment, the university would do me the signal honor, by naming these documents the Gordon W. Prange Collection.

As I told President Elkins and as I wrote to Chancellor Gluckstern on May 30th of last year, "I had no idea when I prepared these materials in General Headquarters Far East Command Tokyo in 1949, that anything like this would develop. Nor, did I think in such terms when I returned to the University in the fall of 1951. My only consideration was to acquire this valuable material for Maryland's library because at that time it was sorely in need of help of every possible kind. I was so greatly pleased to be able to this." So you can believe that today is a very special occasion for me that I shall remember with pride all the days of my life. In fact, today is the highwater mark of my career, here at the University of Maryland.

How did this all come about? That is something of a Ripley's Believe It or Not. For roughly the first third of my life, nothing seemed less likely than I would have anything to do with Japan. The chances of my encountering the Japanese were approximately those of meeting a little green man from outer space. Even during my college years, I never gave a thought to taking a course in Japanese language, history, or anything else Japanese. On the eve of World War II, by the standards of that day, I was fairly well educated, and I say fairly well, establishing a foothold on the beachhead of academia, yet profoundly ignorant of one of the major nations and greatest peoples of this earth. In this state of mind I had a lot of company. Far too many Americans wallowed in the state of ignorance of Japan so-profound that we thought we knew all the answers. In the period 1940 to 1941, U.S. newspapers and magazines hammered home the myth of Japanese inferiority with the consistency of a pneumatic drill. A few objective observers saw the light, but for the most part the American people assured one another that Japan was virtually bankrupt, short of raw materials, lacking in foreign exchange, and hopelessly bogged down in China.

[damaged section]...something of a throwback to the days of Nelson. And it took a certain amount of nerve to face him. But in those days I had enough gall to be divided into three parts. That's the truth. And still young enough to consider it quite my duty to point out to the Navy the errors of its ways. The captain listened impassively while I presented my case and asked for a

transfer to the European theater of operation. When I seemed to nm out of gas, this latter day Ahab asked, "Are you through, Lieutenant?" He indicated somewhat sardonically that if I was, he would like to get a word in edgewise. He made it quite clear that so called European "experts" were a dime a dozen. For as those knowledgeable about Japan were in such short supply that the Navy had to more or less shanghai likely prospects and make them experts on Japan in spite of themselves. "You should be proud to have been selected for this important duty," he emphasized. He added by remarking with words to this effect: "We're going to get along fine, Lieutenant, and you're going to be the one doing the getting." I emerged from this session, battered an ego, disgruntled, and disgusted. In fact, I felt like a harpooned Moby Dick. My first executive officer in the Navy had told a group of us raw recruits at the Fort Schuyler Indoctrination School that the Navy consisted of three types: little twerps, big you-know-whats, and lieutenant commanders. Only he didn't say "big you-know-whats" and I'm not going to repeat what he said. I wondered into just what category that old barnacle fit. But later I came to realize that the Captain had done me a tremendous favor. By his firm decision, he gave me a whole new world, a lifetime's direction, and a host of wonderful Japanese friends I would never have met otherwise. Sometimes it takes a real charge of dynamite to blast people out of their comfortable little ruts they have worn for themselves. The captain lit the fuse and I am eternally grateful to him.

From Columbia I moved on to Princeton University where I switched from student to teacher on the staff of the U.S. Navy School of Military Government. There I taught Japanese administrative policy, procedures, and organization. From Princeton, the Navy sent me to the Civil Affairs Staging Area at Monterey, California for final polishing and to await assignment. After completing the courses, I was somewhat bored, and decided to brush up on the Russian language which I had studied in Berlin and at the University of California which I attended for 10 weeks in 1937 as a post-doctorate student on a scholarship from the Institute of Pacific Relations. The Navy gave me permission to study at California for 90 days. While there, I made arrangements with the Russians in the History Department that after my tour of duty in Japan, I should work out a program with Maryland which would enable me to study Russian history and language intensively at California for another year and two summers, then work in the academic field of Russian-German relations. So I went to Japan with the idea of fulfilling my obligations, collecting my points, and getting out. Not that I disliked Japan--quite the contrary. The ravages of war could not conceal the sheer beauty of the country. And several early experiences predisposed me in favor of the Japanese people.

On my very first visit to Tokyo, I happened to drop my fountain pen in a terribly bombed out area. I did not even notice the loss until a Japanese man shouting and waving his hands about 50 yards behind me caught my attention and handed me my pen. It was a good one and I would have been none the wiser had he pocketed it. There was nothing stopping him, nothing that is, except his own integrity. And in my account book, that scored a big plus for the Japanese. On another occasion, I boarded the wrong train from Tokyo to Yokosuka Naval Base--this was in

mid-November. I was the only American in a car full of Japanese. They could have murdered me, and buried my body beside the track, and my disappearance probably would have remained forever a mystery. Or they could have ganged up on me and snatched my wallet. Instead they inquired among themselves until a man who lived near Yokosuka understood my problem. He volunteered to put me at a station near a U.S. Marine Corp Post where I could catch a bus to Yokosuka. What is more, he accompanied me to the Post to be sure that I made it safely. But regardless of how much I liked the country and its people, at this stage to me Japan was simply an interlude, although an unexpectedly pleasant one in my prearranged life pattern.

As the time neared for me to return to the United States, one evening in late August of 1946, I was having a drink or two at the Dai-ichi Hotel with two good friends, Lt. Col. Percy Bout and Commander Stan Reese--the latter came from Dublin, Georgia and had an accent you could sit on. "Gawdon," he used to say to me, "Gawdon." I called him Pork Chops and Georgia Boy. As we sat chatting about this and that in Commander Reese's room, an Army Colonel named Ronald Ring joined us. He was from G-2 and he told us that he needed someone, or they needed someone, excuse me, for their historical section to help prepare the volumes for MacArthur's campaign in the Pacific and other related subjects. They were having difficulty in finding anyone who had the necessary background in military matters, plus experience in historiography. Commander Reese pointed to me and said, "There's your workhorse." Whereupon Col. Ring asked if I was interested. And if so, what salary I wanted. I wasn't really interested, for I had already packed and was preparing to board ship from Yokosuka within a week to resume my academic career here at the University of Maryland. So, in a mischievous spirit, I replied, "10,000." That was a terrific amount of money in 1946. More than twice I could expect when I returned to Maryland and no offense implied. "That'll hold him.", I thought. And when Ring answered, "We'll be in touch with you," I took this to be the army version of "Don't call us, we'll call you." In this, I was mistaken. To make a long story short, the next morning Ring offered me the job with a grade of GS-14 which in time was raised to GS-15. Not only would this give the salary I asked for and more, I would have free housing and access to the PX, I could bring my family over and have free medical and dental care. All told this would mean about \$15,000 a year. Over the protest of my friends, who thought I was losing my marbles, I turned down this offer not once, but three times. In fact, I recommended two other people for the job.

Finally came the day when I boarded ship at Yokosuka bound for Sasebo, the big naval base on Western Kyushu. There, we would pick up about 1,000 marines and head for San Diego. As the ship weighed anchor, I thought, "This is it. Sayonara, Japan." At Sasebo, the Marines came aboard. But then that dictator, the weather, took a hand. Up flew one of those typhoons in which Japan specializes. Bringing winds that make bamboos kiss the ground, uproot the oaks, soak the country, and blow away entire seaside fishing villages. No skipper in his right mind would leave harbor in a typhoon so there we stayed at Sasebo waiting for it to blow itself out--a period of three days. The second night, a man came aboard. Commander Guy Slope, whom I knew well.

He was a former Congressman from Pennsylvania who had been Governor General of Puerto Rico and was a good friend of President Roosevelt. He had been in my class at the Naval School at Columbia University. Slope wanted to know why I didn't ask for a job with the Occupational Forces. I explained that I already turned one down. When I gave him the story, he was amazed and lectured me on what I would be missing. Not only the monetary rewards, but the chance of a lifetime for a rich experience and an inside view of history in the making. He was so urgent, and so genuinely interested, that his words penetrated my consciousness as those of my other friends and colleagues had not. That night, laying in my bunk, I thought and tossed, tossed and thought. When I arose somewhat bleary-eyed the next morning, I decided to write to G-2 saying that I had reconsidered and would like to have the position if it were still open. So I sailed back to the States, arranged to postpone my Russian studies and called Harry Seaberg, the President of the University of Maryland from San Diego. He agreed to give me a leave of absence, provided I sign a contract to return to Maryland. Meanwhile, MacArthur's headquarters confirmed that the job in Tokyo was mine.

Do you wonder, that many times, I have asked myself a number of questions about this unexpected turn of fortune's wheel? Why did Col. Ring drop in at the Dai-ichi Hotel that particular August evening? What impelled him to mention the need for an historian in G-2? Why did the typhoon pick that occasion to strike Kyushu and hold up that ship? Why did Commander Slope come aboard at Sasebo and not capture another vessel, earlier or later? It may seem a little conceited to imagine that the good Lord directed Ring's and Slope's footsteps in my direction, not to mention scaring up a typhoon for my special benefit. But I like to think he might have done so with the University of Maryland Library in mind. There's no use denying the nature of our human destiny. The Russians have a proverb which reads, "One cannot escape his favor." So that is how I found myself on a plane, back to Japan, this time as a civilian to work for the Army.

My boss was Major Charles A. Willoughby, MacArthur's Chief of Intelligence, an interesting, complicated man, who stood out in a staff by no means devoid of characters. He was a big man, about 6 feet 3, and weighed 220 pounds. He was conceited, opinionated, and worshipped MacArthur with an almost sacrilegious fervor. He was also a gentleman, well-educated, and spoke several languages fluently, although when he was excited, his English carried a German accent as heavy as knockwurst and his neck swelled like a bullfrog in the running season. He was a terror, but I worked for him like a machine and we got along famously. We had a large number of Japanese ex-Army and Navy officers working in the Historical Section of G-2, truly outstanding people. They knew what, they knew the war from the Japanese side from personal experience. What prodigious workers they were! And they were absolutely reliable. The only day they took off was May 27th, the anniversary of Japan's decisive victory over the Russians at the famous Battle of Tsushima off the southern tip of Korea in 1905. We Americans did not begrudge them their memory of that past glory. We weren't all that too crazy about the Russians ourselves. Without those wonderful Japanese colleagues, I could never have gained the insight into the

Japanese side of the Pacific War, which enabled the G-2 Historical Section to put together accurate histories and explode the few myths which had already begun to take root. Nor could I have moved behind the scenes of the Pearl Harbor operation.

My particular guide, sponsor, and translator was Masataka Chihaya, former officer of the Imperial Navy. Chihaya knew everyone in that organization worth knowing. He became my representative in Japan and continues to be so today. Actually, we are as close as two brothers. As soon as I settled in, I sent for my family. They, too, fell in love with Japan. Our devoted servants in the compound tried their best to spoil the children, especially my son Winnie, who could do no wrong in their eyes, but could in mine.

The excellent brochure you received with your invitation describes the nature and the extent of the materials which I was fortunate enough to secure for Maryland. At one time somebody here at the University, I won't mention his name, conceived the idea that the Occupation forces were collecting these items for the purpose of destroying them. And that if I had not asked for them, they would have gone up in smoke. While it might be romantic to picture myself as a knight in shining armor on a white charger, riding to rescue documents in distress, it would not be accurate. Whatever the faults of the American Occupation brass, they were not willful vandals. The choice was not whether or not to destroy the materials, but which of the institutions interested in them should be the recipient. That fine center, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University badly wanted these documents. So did several other university libraries. I hoped to scoop them in for Maryland, but I could not take the responsibility on my own. So I wrote to President Byrd and Howard Rovelstad, Director of the University Libraries, and told them about the Collection. Now, President Byrd could have said, "Sorry we do not have the space nor facilities to house properly such a large acquisition." And that would've been the truth. He could also have said, "However intrinsically valuable these materials may be, we do not have a program that could utilize them to the best advantage." That, too, would have been the truth. But President Byrd was a man of vision, who could see opportunity rolling over a hill 25 miles away. Later would be time to hunt for a vase, or a recipe, for candy rose petals. He operated on the good old principle, "Gather all ye rosebuds while you may." Thus President Byrd deserves full credit for bringing these materials to Maryland, and I am happy to salute him for it. Upon receipt of his signal, full speed ahead, I put in a strong pitch for the University of Maryland. Thanks to my excellent connections at General Headquarters, Maryland came up the winner.

Then the question arose, how to send these materials back to the University? In those days, this was not a simple matter of going to the Fujiyama Moving and Hauling Company and saying "I have a shipment of 20 tons of books and documents for College Park, USA, you take care of it." Nor could I wander into the Mitsukoshi Department Store in downtown Tokyo and ask for about 540 large wooden boxes. All this had to be done in Army style, by the numbers. First, I would

have to figure out how much lumber I would need and requisition it. Then I had to requisition carpenters to build the boxes and other labor to fill them. In the meantime, I had a full-time job to fill, so I could only work on this operation at night, on weekends, and on holidays. All told, this project took from the summer of 1949 until the summer of 1951 for sorting, recording, packing, lidding, and shipping.

At last the materials arrived at College Park and for a long time they had to be kept in special storage. When the McKeldin Library was on the drawing board, I had hoped it would be much larger than it turned out to be. I would have liked to see it at least 60 feet longer, 40 feet wider, and 20 feet higher. My eyes have always been bigger than my stomach. But the legislature kept whittling down its appropriations for the library and that was most regrettable. The library has been the poor relation in our university family. Of course, no administrator, high or low, can do anything about this unhappy situation unless money is available. The building of our library holdings is in my opinion a top priority, and we should all do everything in our power to achieve that end. For in a final analysis, the library is the hub around which the intellectual life of a university revolves. All the top-notch universities in the U.S., such as the Ivy League, the big 10, and the West Coast, have first-class libraries. Ours here at Maryland should be second to none. And I am happy to have been privileged to lend a hand toward that goal. I hope I may continue to do so in the future.

Let me end my remarks by expressing some of the deep pride and pleasure that I feel of having had the privilege of serving and knowing three great presidents of this university, President Harry C. Byrd, who blazed the trail at Maryland. Not every man is capable of blazing a trail. But President Byrd was, because he had it where it counted--in his head, in his heart, and deep inside, where the real man in all of us lives. Then came President Wilson Elkins—one of God's great Christian gentlemen. And when you say that about a man, you say virtually everything. I say this not because we have been good friends over the years, but because it is the absolute truth. As many of you know, he took over the presidency at a difficult time. But he did a superior job and moved the university onward and upward in 24 years of outstanding service. Just think--almost a quarter of a century--what a record of achievement! As I look back through the arches of the years, I have often wondered what we would've done without him. Now we have President John S. Toll, who has all the credentials to lead the university to the position of preeminence we all wish for her--a keen mind, ideas, vision, courage, the human touch, the ability to work like a team of horses in harness, and a vital life force. Sometimes however, I fear that this human dynamo might crash right through the new administration building which was dedicated and named in honor of President Elkins last Sunday for his long and distinguished service to the University. Most certainly, we would not like to see that beautiful new edifice wrecked. And of course, we should not want anything drastic to happen to our new President with all the promise he holds for the present and the future. My special appreciation also goes to our fine chancellor, Dr. Robert L. Gluckstern, who in the midst of a most busy schedule took the time, energy, and

thought, to write me a most generous letter on April the 23rd concerning this occasion. He need not have written that letter, it was not a requirement of the hour, but the point is he did and that is why I shall cherish all the more for the rest of my days. I shall also to extend my thanks to Dr. Harrar, Jack Siggins, Frank Shulman, and other members of the East Asian Section of the Library for all they have done in putting the Japanese materials in order. Once again, may I thank all the good people who had anything to do with giving me the honor of naming this Collection for me. I am also grateful for the University of Maryland Libraries and the Committee for East Asian Studies for making the arrangements for this occasion. I should also be much remiss too, if I did not acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to my friend Howard Rovelstad, former Director of Libraries here at Maryland, for his help and cooperation and for putting up with me during the long shipping procedures from Tokyo and the period after 1951 when I returned to Maryland. Sometimes, I can be quite a lot up with which to put. You'll excuse my English. On that score, I can provide an abundance of evidence from original historical sources. What is more, I am sure, that at least a few people gathered here today could provide signed testimonials to buttress that fact. Whatever the provocation, Mr. Rovelstad was always so gracious throughout. I also wish to thank my many good friends in Japan for all the help and cooperation they have given me on my historical projects relating to the Pacific War. Without their counsel, advice, and support, I never could have written what I have. A few indeed, gave me a strong arm of assistance and helpful suggestions in relation to these Japanese materials. Above all, I owe the Japanese people so much for broadening my intellectual horizon, for enriching my life, and for helping me to see history in the long perspective of the years. To this great and noble people, I give my word, that I shall do all in my power to help promote and develop Japanese studies here at the University of Maryland. I pledge this, not because Japan is our ally, our anchor in the Far East, or because I consider her my second home; I do so because Japan intrinsically is so worthy of broad and serious study of every kind. Her resurrection for example, from the hot ashes of defeat in 1945 to the third industrial power on earth today, is a tremendous tribute to her people and another miracle of the twentieth century.

Now I will let you in on a little secret. I have several blueprints on the drawing board, which I intend to discuss with President Toll, Chancellor Gluckstern, and Dr. Harrar, and a few others before long. If they materialize, they could produce significant results for the Library, the University, and Japan, and the Japanese as well. Finally, my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you wonderful people in this audience for joining us today in these ceremonies and especially for listening to me for so long, patiently and courteously. God bless you all.