



OBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

October 2025

Washington D.C.

Anniversary of the First Day of Peace

Part Two

OBON SOCIETY's visit to Washington D.C. last September involved two separate missions.



Sentinel from 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment: Arlington National Cemetery; Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Our first purpose was to accompany the Japanese war orphans who traveled to our capital to pay their respects. They planned to lay a wreath at the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* and pray for the Americans who lost their lives in that war. We assisted and supported them throughout that noble mission.



Left: Bethany Glenn, Rex and Keiko Ziak, along with Japanese officials and delegates honoring the Americans at Arlington National Cemetery

After successfully completing the first objective, they could begin the second reason for their visit to Washington, D.C. Months earlier, the Chairman of the Bereaved Association, Mr. Toshiei Mizuochi, had asked us to arrange meetings with U.S. Senators. He had a message for the Americans and hoped to speak with as many influential people as possible.



Keiko Ziak with Chairman Toshiei Mizuoichi

His message aimed to inform the Senators about the life-long desire held by many Japanese families who wanted nothing more than to have their missing father's remains returned to them. His message reads in part...

"In particular, the project to collect the remains of the deceased, which is what the bereaved families wish for most, is extremely difficult, as many years have passed since the end of the war...the climate and natural features make it extremely difficult."



In 2015, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited a remote battlefield to witness the recovery of bone fragments from missing Japanese soldiers. Chairman Mizuoichi is seen kneeling behind, second from the right.

"In addition, for bereaved families who do not have the remains, let alone personal belongings, the Hinomaru flag...given from the local area when they went off to war, is a memento of the war dead that is no different from the remains."



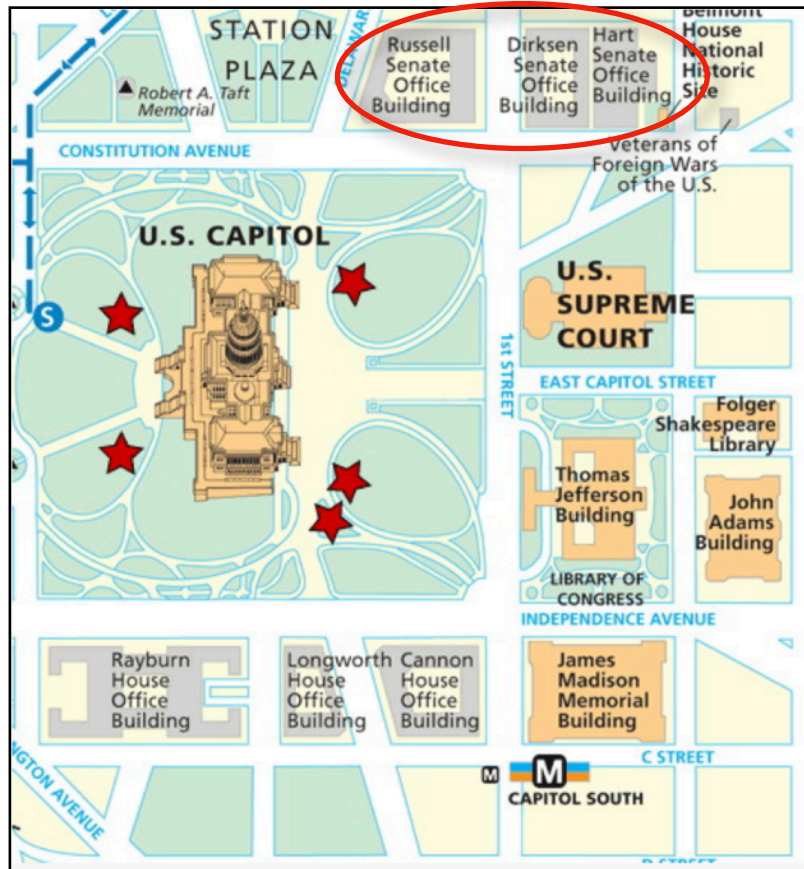
A missing soldier's son holds his father's portrait, surrounded by solemn relatives and neighbors who have gathered to welcome home the father's spirit, which they believe was contained within Yosegaki Hinomaru flag.

We spent more than a month in conversation with each Senator's staff, arranging the days and times when Mr. Mizuochi could deliver his message. This was meticulous work because everyone is busy and the schedules change from one day to the next.



But Chairman Mizuochi had waited years to visit Washington, D.C and deliver this message, so we made a diligent effort throughout the month to confirm the meetings would occur as he expected.

For those unfamiliar with Washington, D.C., it is important to know that all Senators have an office in one of three buildings known as the Russell, the Dirksen, and the Hart Senate Office Buildings.



These large buildings contain the principal office for each Senator and their staff, who might occupy four or five adjacent office spaces. In addition, there are Committee Rooms, conference spaces, meeting rooms, dining facilities, printing shops, media and broadcast facilities. For the first-time visitor, it is a very confusing maze, especially the underground corridors that connect each building and the miles of hallways and stairs.



The polished halls are used by senate staff, lobbyists and determined citizens like ourselves who wish to speak with their Senator.

After the morning ceremony at Arlington Cemetery, we drove immediately to a meeting with the Japanese American Veterans Association, who fought in Europe as part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. This was followed by lunch and then a meeting at the U.S. State Department. From there, the Japanese delegates met with Senator Bill Hagerty of Tennessee, who had served as Ambassador to Japan in 2017.

The group's average age was 85 years old, but they showed remarkable energy and determination. However, after lunch and several long meetings, the fatigue began to set in. The different time zone did not help matters; Noon in Washington, D.C. is 1:00AM in Japan.



Some of the men began to nod off. Their eyelids became heavy for want of sleep. It was unanimously decided that OBON SOCIETY should carry on representing them in all the afternoon meetings so they could return to the hotel for a much needed nap.



Bethany Glenn and Keiko Ziak await the appointed time.

A flurry of phone calls from us informed each Senate office of this unforeseen change of plans. However, the Senate staff are unflappable professionals who deal with the unexpected every day of the year. They quickly reassigned staff and the meetings stayed on schedule.



Meeting with the staff of Senator Patty Murray.



Meeting with the staff of Senator Maria Cantwell.



Meeting with the staff of Senator Jeff Merkley.

After the sixth meeting concluded, we immediately dashed across town to a dinner engagement with the Japanese delegates, who had recovered from their nap and were eager for a meal.



Chairman Mizuochi wanted to know the details of the meetings and how effectively we conveyed his message. He himself had served eighteen years in the Upper House of the Japanese Parliament and he knows all too well from experience how busy and distracted working Senators can be.



Chairman Mizuochi is retired. At the age of 82, he should be spending time with his grandchildren or golfing. Instead, he dashes around the world from Mongolia to Washington D.C. to Kazakhstan, and places beyond, searching for the remains of the 1,120,000 missing Japanese servicemen who never returned home.



Bethany Glenn, Chairman Toshiie Mizuochi, Rex & Keiko Ziak

His journey to Washington D.C. was a sincere demonstration of his respect for the Americans lost in the war and also an attempt to persuade our Senators to help OBON SOCIETY retrieve the remains of missing Japanese so they can be returned to their families in Japan.



Chairman Mizuochi knows that *Yosegaki Hinomaru* held by families and museums in America is the largest potential source of unreturned Japanese remains anywhere on earth.

OBON SOCIETY would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the supporters whose generous donations made this special journey to Washington, D.C. possible. Your kindness not only carried us there, it carried the spirit of peace, remembrance, and reconciliation that guides our mission.

We are also deeply thankful to the Senate staff in Oregon, Washington, Hawaii and Tennessee. Your professionalism and willingness to accommodate our many requests made an extraordinary difference. Thank you for listening with care and responding with such respect.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the many friends and supporters in the Washington, D.C. area who warmly welcomed and assisted the visiting delegation from Japan. This includes Andrew Wylegala, President of NAJAS and his staff, James Zumwalt, Chairman of JASWDC, Mr. & Mrs. Dan Tani, Dale Denton, Izumi Greubel, Kyoko Kramp, Mr. & Mrs. Chris Dorsey from GA, Eddie Malone & Jennifer Peek from OK and Mr. & Mrs. Pete Osgard from FL. Your hospitality ensured that the Japanese visitors felt truly honored and embraced.

And finally, to all OBON supporters across the country and around the world, including those with us in spirit, we extend our heartfelt thanks. Your generosity makes our work possible.

Thank you so much for your kind support!



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