

## Hanami Letter: Side-By-Side Comparison

(Changes Hosono Gunji Made or Untranslated Statements in Bold/Red)

Hosono Gunji Translation (1952)	Yellen and Tomsovic Translation (2021)
<p>I am informed from Dr. Gunji Hosono that a warship sunk by a destroyer of the Japanese navy during the Solomon Islands Battle in August 1943 was under your command. This is a big surprise to me <b>as I happened to be the Commander of the destroyer which sunk your ship.</b> When I read the Time magazine August 18, 1952 which mentioned the battle in question, my memory being refreshed, I can vividly recall what happened at that time.</p>	<p>I was surprised to learn from Mr. Hosono that the warship sunk by collision close to Kolombangara in the Solomon Islands in August 1943 was under your command. In those days, sorties occurred night after night, damaging our airplanes and warships. The battles were life-or-death situations in the dead of night, so I do not remember everything for certain, but after seeing the article in <i>Time</i> magazine, I recalled [what happened] at that time.</p>
<p>I regret very much that I missed the opportunity of meeting you during your last visit to Japan. As I was living in the <b>Fukushima Prefecture, northern part of Japan</b>, I could not make contact with you during your brief stay in Tokyo <b>although Dr. Hosono succeeded in locating me after great difficulty.</b> I am looking forward to seeing you in your next visit to Japan.</p>	<p>I very much regret that we were unable to meet during your visit to Japan. I was living in the countryside so could not be contacted. I would very much love to meet with you and talk about those days [the war] the next time you visit Japan.</p>
<p>Now allow me to take this opportunity to tell about myself. I had been the destroyer commander since October 1940. In view of an international crisis at that time the Imperial Japanese Navy was prepared for the worst while attaching the last hope in the eventual success of the America-Japan diplomatic talk. As even we young officers were quite aware of the risk of fighting the combined force of the U.S. and British navies with our inferior naval strength, the attack of Pearl Harbor which was entirely secret to us, therefore, seriously disturbed us.</p>	<p>I had been a destroyer captain since October 1940. At that time, owing to the worsening international situation, the Japanese navy was making steady preparations for war while holding out hope for a peaceful breakthrough via the Japan-US diplomatic talks. We were aware that the worst case-scenario would mean war, and that it would be extremely difficult to prosecute the war favorably owing to the [comparative] national strengths of Japan, the United States, and Great Britain.</p>
<p>While the most of our naval officers except the war like minority were naturally pessimistic about the outcome of the war, the unexpected victory at the commencement of the war and</p>	<p>Our astonishment upon learning of the opening of hostilities was thus truly great, as it is indisputable that most of our naval officers were pessimistic about our prospects in war. <b>However, unexpected</b></p>

the skillful propaganda of the General Tojo's cabinet led us to entertain a wishful thinking for the chance of victory. Following our defeat at the Midway Islands, however, the whole situation changed against Japan and became favorable to the United States which displayed tremendously the strength of war political and the fighting spirit.

I was engaged in the battle of the Solomon Islands following the seizure of Laboul (New Britain Islands). I was very much concerned with the situation which then was further aggravated by the successive defeat in the battle of Guadalcanar.

From November 1942 to May 1943 I was assigned to the duty in the Track Islands Water. It was early June 1943 I was transferred to Laboul again as the commander of the destroyer Amagiri. From that time the counter-attack of the American force became increasingly offensive. As Americans controlled the air, we were in no more position to attack in daytime and we had to operate in night, attempting in vain to prevent, by destroyer force, the transportation of the American men and munitions.

We met the disastrous defeat in Kure in early June when our flag ship was instantly sunk at the first encounter by your fleet, equipped with radar (which we were not aware) and this was followed by the subsequent defeat with the result that we were forced to retreat to Laboul after the series of the unsuccessful battle.

**military victories at the outset of the war made us hope that we could somehow prevail.**

Additionally, the Tōjō Cabinet's propaganda was that "America and Britain are not worth fearing," so at this critical time where we should have been bracing ourselves, the people and even the military lacked sobriety in our preparations to wage war.

**Following the failure in the Battle of Midway, we were met with a fierce assault at Guadalcanal. By this time the U.S. brimmed with fighting spirit, and we were astonished by its tremendous industrial prowess. This led across the board to an unfavorable war situation, and we had no time to plan countermeasures.** At that time, I was stationed at Rabaul and engaged in fighting near the Solomons, and as I saw our struggle for Guadalcanal fall apart, I keenly felt that it would be difficult to continue fighting.

From November 1942 to May 1943, I was assigned as a destroyer captain in the Truck Atoll [Chuuk Lagoon]. In early June 1943, I was transferred once again to Rabaul to serve as captain of the destroyer Amagiri. At that time, there was a brief lull in the fighting that lasted until the end of June. From then, the U.S. attack rapidly intensified, first at Rendova Island, and our naval strength at Rabaul was extremely weakened. We were at a loss as to how to cope. We had lost air supremacy, and daytime raids became impossible to carry out. So we shifted to operating our destroyers at night, making frantic efforts to disrupt the U.S. fleet from transporting soldiers and military supplies.

At the Battle of Kula Gulf, which took place from the night of July 5 until dawn on the 6th, we took a beating from the radar-equipped U.S. fleet. **Our flagship was sunk early on, and the Amagiri and two or three other destroyers were also damaged. Our destroyer squadron, which took pride in its specialization in night operations, lost its**

In one of the night battle in early August 1943, I sighted a bold enemy boat of small size was heading directly toward my destroyer of a larger type. Having no time to exchange gunfire **as ships came so close to each other**, my destroyer had to directly hit the enemy boat, slicing in two. To my great surprise this boat happened to be the P.T. boat which was under your command.

I take this opportunity to pay my profound respect to your daring and courageous action in this battle and also to congratulate you upon your miraculous escape under such circumstances.

**[Untranslated]**

**[Untranslated]**

**freedom of maneuver. In the end, the gap in scientific and industrial might was just too much to overcome, and from that point on we saw no improvement to our facilities and were forced to help our soldiers by making sorties at night. There was no recourse against [U.S.] material strength, and by November U.S. forces had finally landed at Bougainville Island.** After several battles at sea around the island, we retreated to Rabaul.

During one of those nightly sorties, on a dark August night, I sighted a vessel heading straight toward us at close range. Having no time to open fire, we slammed into the vessel and sank it. I now know that that boat was yours, and I am deeply moved when I recall that boat's bold and fearless action. Be that as it may, your boat was split cleanly in two, so nothing gives me greater joy than to hear of your safe return from that burning and sinking wreckage.

**I had been taught that courage in war was a unique characteristic of Japanese soldiers and sailors, and I had deeply believed this. But I was struck by a feeling of wonder at the bravery of U.S. sailors, which I experienced not simply at the Solomons but again and again, and keenly realized how the U.S. Navy's fighting spirit had been elevated in war.**

**Today, now that we are at peace, I believe that the only path to stand up as an independent Japan is to join the democratic camp. Nonetheless, there is something extremely distasteful about U.S. policies toward Japan and the completely pro-American sentiments in today's Japan. I strongly believe that a true**

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**improvement in Japan-U.S. relations can only be realized if we both do away with our past as bitter rivals in war, discard the victor-vanquished mentality, talk frankly to one another as equals, and promptly revise the extraterritorial unequal [mutual security] treaty.**

**I come to know from the Time magazine that you are going to run for the next election of Senators.** I am firmly convinced that a person who practice tolerance to the former enemy like you, if elected to the high office in your country, would no doubt contribute not early to the promotion of genuine friendship between Japan and the united States but also to the establishment of the universal peace.

**In my country the election is being held at present for the Diet members.** I do wish the best of your success in the coming election in your country.

With personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

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In line with this, when a tolerant man like you who holds no ill intentions becomes Senator, I beseech you. **By fully considering the voices of the Japanese people and making efforts to resolve these problems,** I believe that you will contribute not only to true goodwill between Japan and the United States, but also to the establishment of world peace. I offer my deepest prayers for your success in the coming election.

Lastly, I beg you to take care of yourself and earnestly wish you the best of luck in the height of the electoral campaign this autumn.