

For Middle and High School Students of History

Spring 2022

A Partner of HISTORY®

Issue XLV



How the *USS Grunion* Story Began

Hello students. My name is Yutaka Iwasaki, age 64, and I live in Kobe, Japan.

When you have a question, you may ask the Internet and get several answers. So possibly you think each question is already examined and someone got the answer. I once thought so, but now I know it isn't always the case. Even in what millions of people have looked for over time you can still come across the first discovery in the world. 20 years ago, not aware, I located a missing submarine to become that first in the world. It was a discovery

that led to unexpected human relations and wonderful stories. Those are 'like pearls slipping off a string, following one another softly.' Here, I shall tell some of them.

The *USS Grunion* SS-216 was a submarine that was lost in July 1942 in Kiska, Alaska. 70 men were on the boats, age 17 to 42, from Ohio to California, with various races, including two African American men. All were declared 'Missing in action. Cause unknown'. Their fate was a mystery until 2007 when kin of the crew, the Abele Family—led by brothers Bruce, Brad, and John—organized a private expedition and found the sub. The Abele's father, Lieutenant Commander Mannert Abele, was the captain of the submarine when it was sunk. At the same time another group of family members—called the 'submarine ladies'—Mary Bentz, Vickey Rodgers, and Rhonda Raye found all 70 kins of the *Grunion* crew. And in 2007, the Internet was somewhat limited, so the major tool used to connect was phone, radio, and e-mail. One by one they did.

The *Grunion* story is long and vast. However, the origin is tiny and common. It is an old blueprint of a wiring diagram that was selling at an antique shop in Colorado around 1995. The price was one dollar! This blueprint had a Japanese stamp that indicates it came from the Japanese cargo ship *Kano Maru*. You know Colorado state has no sea. Rich Lane, a collector of Imperial Japanese Navy antiques, was curious, and purchased this garbage and stored it.

In 2001 Rich posed a question to an Internet board if someone knew what this blueprint was. I saw it and I knew *Kano Maru* was abandoned on Kiska Island in July 1942. I answered so, plus added one known fact in Japan but unknown in the United States, '*Kano Maru* claimed they sank *USS Grunion*'. This post spread and reached to the Abeles. In 2002, they asked me if I knew about the missing submarine *USS Grunion*. Have you ever read "The Gold-Bug" by Edgar Allan Poe? It is a story of treasure hunting and decipher. The cipher by Captain Kidd is thus, "A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the

continued on page 2...

devil's seat twenty-one degrees and thirteen minutes northeast and by north main branch seventh limb..." It was the "Gold-Bug" moment for me! To the question posed by the Abele Family, I only knew an article by *Kano Maru* captain, Seiichi Aiura. The description is thus, only text without map; 'July 31, 1942 04:40 Set course 268 degrees at 10 nautical miles north of Segula Is. Go ahead to Kiska, avoiding McArthur reef. Speed 15 knot.

- 05:15 At 158 degree to Gula Pt. of Segula Is, change course to 255 degrees.
- 05:47 Suddenly two torpedoes came and found at starboard 45 degrees.

That's all that was needed for me to realize I had a "The Gold-Bug cipher" moment. I made the translation of Aiura's article for the Abeles and thought some explanation must be needed. So, I borrowed a scale and protractor from my son, copied the Kiska map, and tried to mark a circle by pencil where one must throw flowers to mourn, thinking time and speed. 15 knot is 27.8 km per hour. 255 degrees is west-south-west. Later I knew I had pointed the location of the *USS Grunion* for the world to see.

Four years after this in 2006, the search project advanced, and we were informed there exists the original of Aiura's article with map. Today we can see this map directly on the Web (JACAR archive C08030762400) However, at that day I must go to NIDS (Japan self-defense force search laboratory) in Tokyo to see. One day I went to Tokyo by a bus trip at night to save money. (For years after I read Mary Bentz's 'We remember them' and knew Richard Harry "Dick" Carroll, seaman age 18 from Springfield OH, had gotten on C&LE bus and Pullman sleeper on Dec. 12, 1941 to Chicago to enlist in the Navy. When I read it, I remembered the night I had got on a bus to the Metropolis.) At the NIDS library the librarian was sorry to say they keep only military documents. But he tapped the keyboard and left the desk. Within five minutes after the library opened, I got the *Kano Maru* combat action report by Aiura from August 1942 on Kiska Island. It contains a sea map that indicates the location of the confrontation accurately. I was amazed at the map because it is the same as the one I had drawn four years ago. I saw the 'McArthur reef' that was the 'bishop's hostel' for me. The flavor of the original is special. The scent of paper, silence of the reading room, sunlight from the window, all of that made me forget the time. I really felt this paper was waiting for me year by year and in fact tears welled up in my eyes. This report has a memo by the collector, Kanayoshi Sakamoto, a surviving submarine captain. He copied and stored it in 1961.

This chain of events led to the Abele Family launching a search for the submarine, and after its fate being a mystery for 65 years, the *Grunion* was located in the Bering Sea in 2007 and the U.S. Navy verified its identity in 2008. As I mentioned earlier, in addition to the Abeles, Mary Bentz and her submarine ladies were instrumental in helping to notify other families of the search. Mary is a niece of torpedo man's mate Carmine A. Parziale aged 21, who had a tough confidence and with her husband Dick, collected all 70 members of the crews' military records and family history. The whole sum of her effort became a book published in 2014.

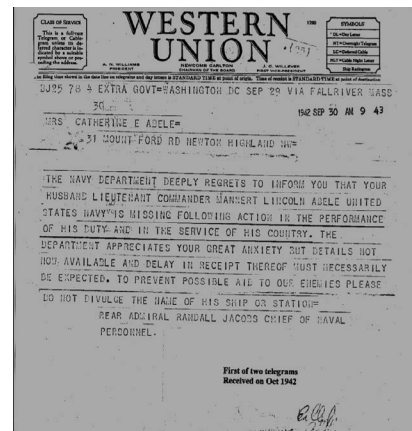
In 2008, at the *Grunion* Memorial at the *USS Cod* SS-224 submarine museum in Cleveland, Ohio, Mary Bentz played a roll of all the names of the men lost at sea. She was majestic in a white suit on the sub deck. Before the ceremony, she repeatedly read the 70 names hearing the same music at the scene. Without practice she could not speak out the names without tears because she knew so much detail of the 70 lives lost. She e-mailed me and said she believes the words in the air have soul and the angels live in our neighborhood in Japan.

Before writing this, Bruce Abele told me 'Yutaka, it is common here in the U.S., there are many Americans who cannot speak English.' I thank him for his words that pushed me dare to write this Janglish.

I thank you for listening to me. Now, tell me what is your first in the world? ■

For more information about the *USS Grunion* and the search to find it here are some recommended resources with links embedded:

- * *Slide Trail: USS Grunion on Eternal Patrol at Kiska* by Susan Abele
- * "Lost for 60 Years: The Most Unusual Search for the USS Grunion" - John Abele's talk at the National World War II Museum
- * Additional information on the Grunion and men who have been lost while serving in the U.S. Submarine Force can be found at <http://slidetrail.com>



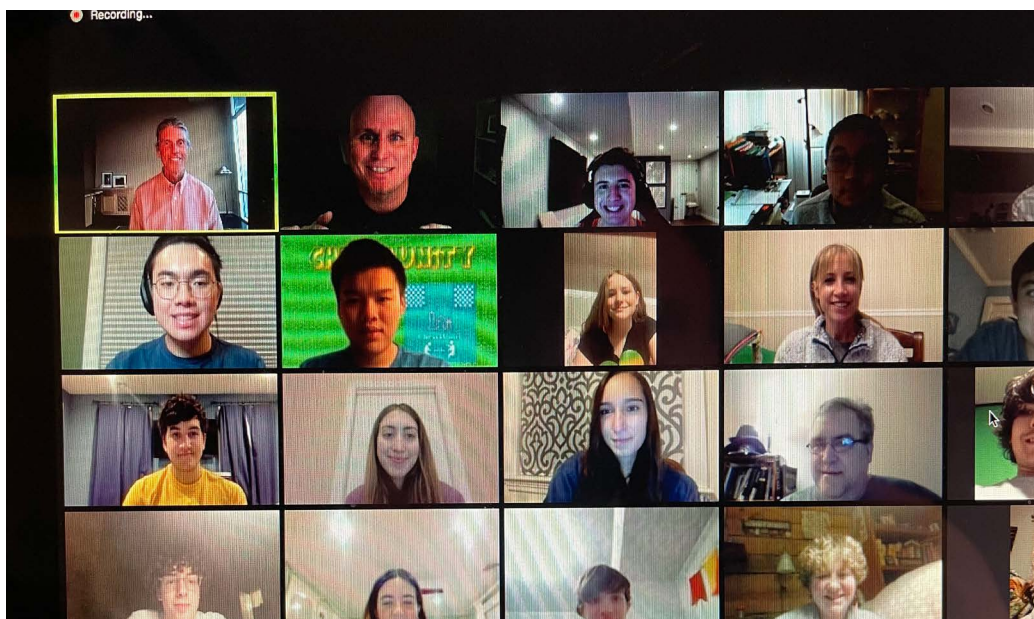
Access to the NHC network, which includes chapters in 46 states and over 18,000 members, is a great benefit of joining the NHC. We encourage you to read about other chapters in your state or across the country and explore new opportunities! To explore specific sites click on the **bolded** text to be redirected!



The Blake History Club (MN) has created a hallway gallery entitled "Behind The Bricks". This rotating display is a history of landmarks in their community and communicates the impact these historic sites continue to have. They have focused on locations ranging from their city's landmark flour mills to their nationally recognized outdoor sculpture garden, and the gallery includes a game of "Fact or Fiction?"



Frankton High School (IN) continued their annual tradition of attending the Battle of Mississinewa in nearly Marion, Indiana from the War of 1812. A search and destroy mission, the Battle of Mississinewa was one of the major engagements fought during the war, and it marked the first offensive victory of the American army during the war.



The NHC was fortunate to host **H.W. Brands** this past winter through Zoom. Over 100 students and Advisors from all over the country were able to attend, where they heard Dr. Brands talk about his life-long passion for history and the numerous books he has authored.



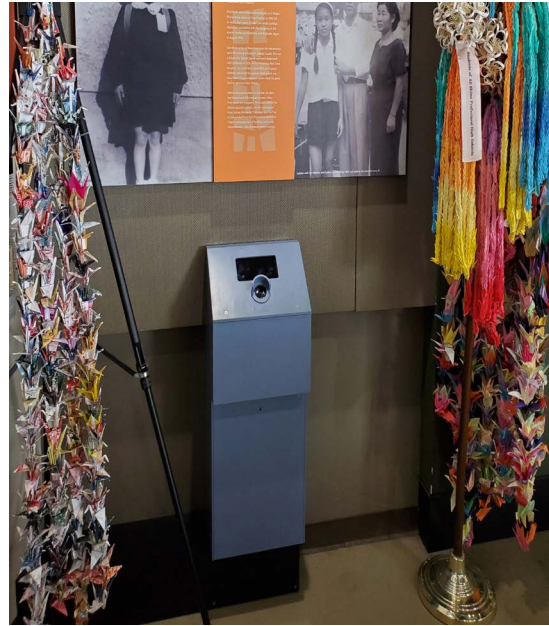
Moline High School (IL) unveiled a timeline project that they completed over the course of this school year. Students constructed a timeline on Moline, Illinois history by researching and visiting local places, and used a hallway in their school to put up a 100 foot timeline of local historical places and events for all students and teachers to view.



Mukwonago High School (WI), whose club has been in existence for nearly three decades, made a recent trip to a local museum, where they heard the story of a Holocaust survivor.



San Joaquin Memorial High School (CA) ventured to the Sierra foothills for its spring field trip to learn more about the history of the California Gold Rush. The first stop was at the Mariposa Museum and History Center in the small gold rush town of Mariposa. This museum is an award winning small museum chronicling the life and times of Mariposa in the Gold Rush era. Here students saw how gold was mined and extracted from solid rock as well as learned how to pan for gold. Students also toured a house of a merchant in the 1850s and 1860s and discovered how people lived in the gold rush era.



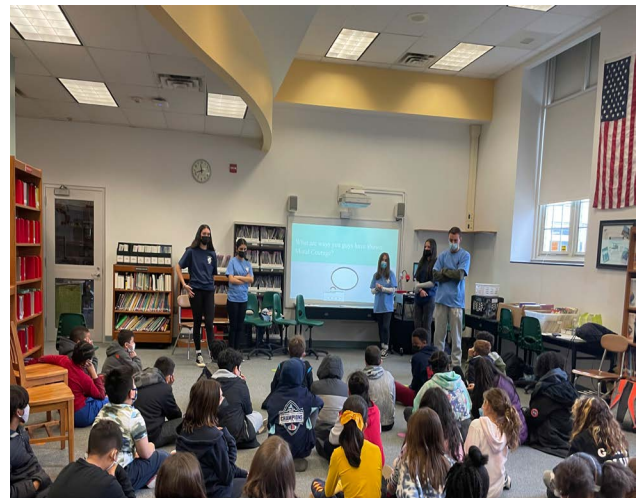
Luella High School (GA) History Club President Nicole Cortes and Advisor Jennifer Coleman were able to participate in National History Day's Sacrifice for Freedom® World War II in the Pacific Student and Teacher Institute last summer. Nicole shared her eulogy for Lawrence Waszkiewicz, a 19 year-old seaman who died at the hands of a Japanese bomber in June 1944. While in Hawaii, they were touched by the story of Sadako Sasaki (<https://sadakosasaki.com/>), a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, who later died of leukemia. Nicole decided she wanted the LHS History Club to make 1,000 paper cranes like the Japanese legend, and they started working on the cranes in August. Upon completion, they sent some of the cranes to Westin Saito, a Pacific Park Ranger they met in Hawaii. He then placed them in the exhibit in the Pearl Harbor Museum along with Sadako's, and sent some cranes from Japan to be displayed in their school.



Rainier Junior/Senior High School (OR) hosted their 10th annual Rainier Revisited this April, with members dressing up in costumes showing what life was like in 1853.



On Thursday April 7th, the **Manhasset High School** (NY) History Honor Society held their annual trivia contest and had over 80 students participate with the winning team being the “Articles of Confederation”.



Suffern High School (NY), as part of the NY State Seal of Civic Readiness Initiative, visited five elementary schools to conduct workshops on their theme: *Civics - An Exercise in Moral Courage*.



Temple High School (GA) lined over a dozen doors in their school's hallways with photos and inspirational quotes from U.S. and international leaders who have made a sizable impact on history.

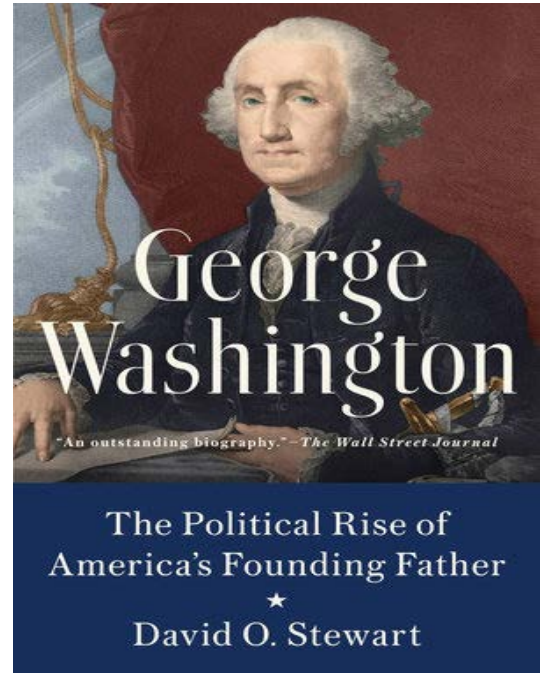


Williams Bay High School (WI) held a "Day of Remembrance" called "The Final Harvest" commemorating the 185th anniversary of the removal of their local Potawatomi People in October, which was attended by the public and held at their Ancient Native Burial Ground.

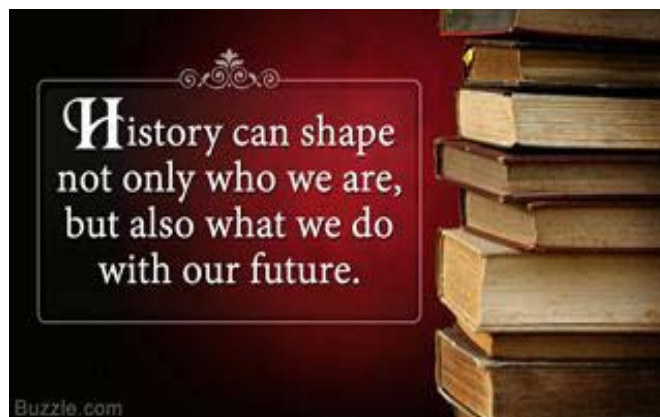
HISTORY STUDENT OF THE YEAR

This Spring the NHC and George Washington's Mount Vernon again co-sponsored the "History Student of the Year" prize. Each chapter chose a recipient for this award, and s/he received a copy of *George Washington: The Political Rise of America's Founding Father* by David O. Stewart. This is the 18th year of the partnership between Mount Vernon and the NHC to sponsor this prestigious award. To view recipients please visit this [page](#) on our website.

Mount Vernon is the most popular historic estate in America. The estate, gardens, and farm of Mount Vernon totaled some 8,000 acres in the 18th century. Today, roughly 500 acres have been preserved, and visitors can see 20 structures and 50 acres of gardens as they existed in 1799, as well as the tombs of George and Martha Washington. Mount Vernon welcomes over 1,000,000 visitors each year.



The NHC is proud to have the support of over 60 college history departments! We hope that any of our members who are interested in majoring in history in college will visit a college's website listed down below to find out more about the history department and its offerings.



American University	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of Alabama
Baylor University	Messiah College	University of Alabama Birmingham
Boston College	Mount Holyoke College	University at Buffalo
Boston University	Northern Illinois University	University of Chicago
Brandeis University	Northwestern University	University of Cincinnati
Carnegie Mellon University	Ohio State University	University of Colorado
Centre College	Princeton University	University of Illinois
DePaul University	Rhodes College	University of Iowa
Drew University	Rice University	UMass Amherst
Georgia Tech University	Rochester Institute of Technology	UMass Lowell
Gettysburg College	Rollins College	University of Michigan
Franklin & Marshall College	Santa Clara University	University of North Carolina
Harvard University	Skidmore College	University of Pennsylvania
Indiana University	Southern Methodist University	University of Rhode Island
James Madison University	Southwestern University	University of Richmond
Johns Hopkins University	Stanford University	University of Tulsa
Kenyon College	Stony Brook University	University of Utah
Lewis and Clark College	Suffolk University	University of Vermont
Louisiana State University	Swarthmore College	Vassar College
Loyola Marymount University	Texas Christian University	Wake Forest University
Loyola University Chicago	Union College	Wellesley College

NATIONAL HISTORY CLUB

The NHC would like to express our gratitude to the following people and organizations who make our important work possible...

John Abele	Smithsonian Institution
HISTORY®	Society of Architectural Historians
George Washington's Mount Vernon	The Concord Review
The HBE Foundation	The History List
Alexander Dreyfoos School of the Arts	Patrick Allitt (Professor, Emory)
American Association for State and Local History	Carter Bacon
American Civil War Museum	Peter Baldwin (Professor, UCLA)
American Historical Association	Jim Belcher
Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles	Will Fitzhugh
Gilder Lehrman Institute	Joan & Rick Gier
HarperCollins Publishing	Bill Haponski
History News Network	James Healy
History 500	Elizabeth Jones
Laurel Hill Cemetery	William Jordan (Professor, Princeton)
Museum of Florida History	John Lane
National Council for History Education	Howard Loken
National Vietnam War Museum	Rod McCaslin
National World War I Museum	Bryan Rogers
National World War II Museum	Guy Rogers (Professor, Wellesley)
Omohundro Institute of Early American History	Henry Seng
Organization of American Historians	Art Snyder
Parkview High School (GA)	Rick Sperry
Penguin Random House	Lisa Wingate

The National History Club is a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on grants and donations to support efforts. If you are passionate about history and would like to contribute to our mission of promoting history at the secondary level please contact Robert Nasson (rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org).