

# from Tara Gully-Hightower

Weihsien Internees											
Surname	Given Name	Title	Age	Natly	Occupation	Additional Information	From	In date	Event	To	Out date
Hightower	James R		30	Amer	student	Sinologist	Peking	Mar 43	repatriated	USA	Sep 43

On Monday, June 5, 2017, 10:20 PM, Greg Leck <gregleck@epix.net> wrote:

Hello Tara,

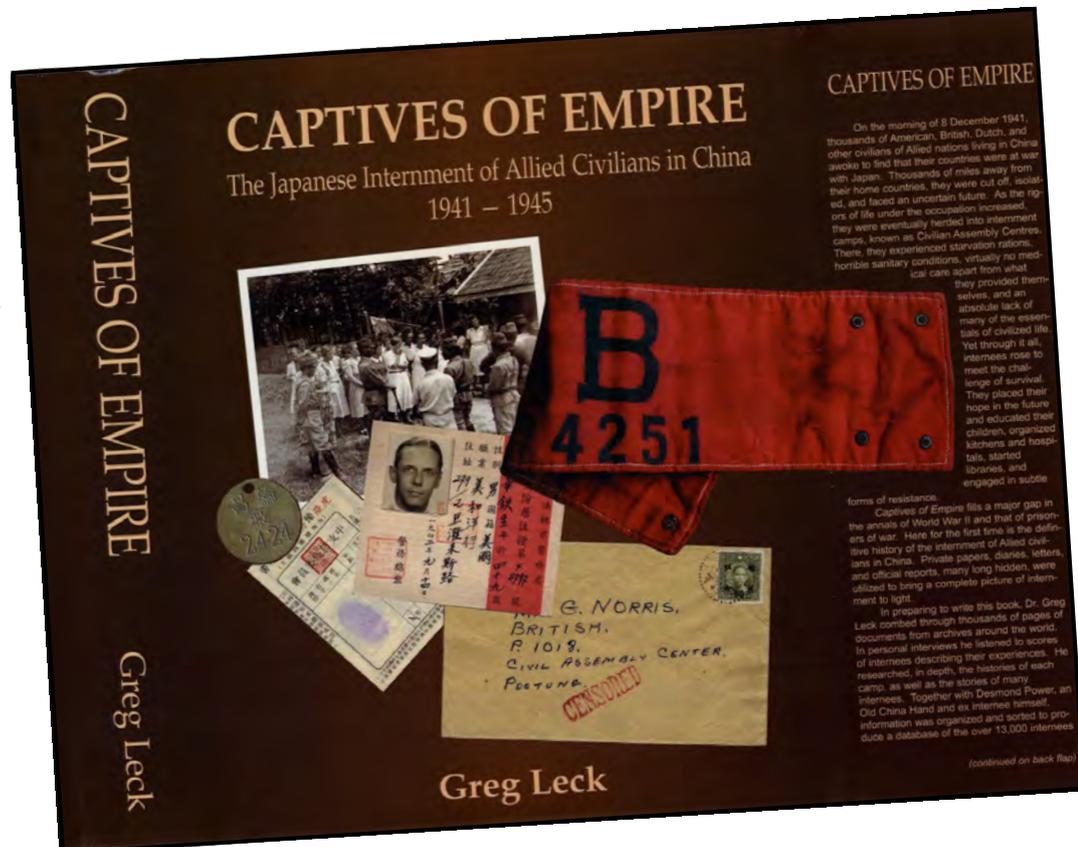
Your grandfather was held in Weihsien Camp, in what is now Weifang, China, until he was repatriated in September, 1943.

A large group of Weihsien internees made the journey by train to Shanghai, where they were housed at St. John's University for a few days until they boarded the Japanese ship *Teia Maru* which took them to Goa, India, where they were exchanged for Japanese nationals from the US, Canada, and South America. The Swedish ship *MV Gripsholm* then took them to New York City. This journey, as well as life before the war, life under the occupation, and life in camp is covered extensively in my book.

If you are in Shanghai, I can highly recommend a guide who helped me immensely while there – Henry Hong, who speaks excellent English and is one of the few Chinese who has extensive knowledge of Shanghai of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. I have spent dozens of hours walking about the city with him. His email address is: [henryhong206@hotmail.com](mailto:henryhong206@hotmail.com)

used to house internees which has been preserved, as well as a few of the main buildings. I should warn you that when I published my book with the lists of internees, the Chinese were surprised to see hundreds of names they had missed on their memorial. I had painstakingly identified hundreds of Weihsien internees who had been repatriated or transferred to Peking and the Chinese, working from a 1944 list, did not know they had been in Weihsien. As such, your grandfather's name may not be on the memorial.

#



Weifang is closer to Peking. In addition to the Memorial, there is a small section of the huts

# James Robert Hightower

## James Robert Hightower dies at 90

### Chinese literature expert

By Eva S. Moseley

Special to the Harvard News Office

Professor of Chinese literature James Robert Hightower died Jan. 8, 2006 at the house of his daughter, Josie, in Germany. He was 90.

Robert Hightower (as he preferred to be called) was born in Sulphur, Okla., on May 7, 1915, and grew up mainly in Salida, Colo., with his father, Loris Denzil Hightower, a teacher and superintendent of schools. His mother, Berta Mckedy, died when he was 2.

While earning a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Colorado, Hightower discovered Ezra Pound's translations of Chinese poetry and arranged to study Chinese. After graduating in 1936, he traveled in Europe, determined to be a poet. He studied Chinese at Heidelberg and the Sorbonne.

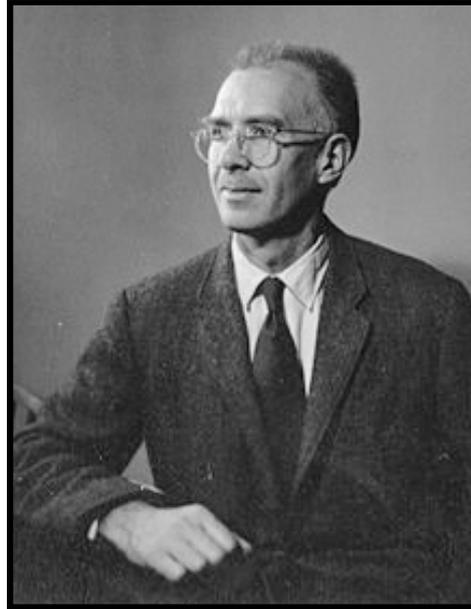
When he concluded that he could study poetry but not write it, he returned to the United States to take up graduate study of Chinese at Harvard. His father paid his first year's tuition. After that, living on practically nothing, Hightower received a scholarship; he was financially independent from then on. One of his jobs while at Harvard was working in a boardinghouse, where he learned to bake.

In June 1940, with a master's degree from Harvard, he married Florence "Bunny" Cole. The newlyweds were soon in Beijing (Peking then), where he continued to study Chinese and Chinese literature and directed the Sino-Indian Institute. With the Japanese occupation of Peking, his wife was allowed to return to the United States, but Hightower was for a time interned in a prison camp.

Upon repatriation in 1943, he served in the Army's Military Intelligence Division at the Pentagon, where he worked on the team that broke Japanese military codes; the head of the team was Edwin O. Reischauer, a colleague at Harvard and later U.S. ambassador to Japan. Hightower was discharged with the rank of captain in January 1946.

After receiving his Harvard Ph.D. in comparative literature (1946), he was appointed an instructor there but in 1946-48 was on leave, again in Peking, with his wife and two small boys. He continued his literary studies and served as associate director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and director of the American Institute for Asiatic Studies. The family left China before the

communist victory in the civil war. From 1948 until his retirement in 1981, Hightower held Guggenheim, Fulbright, and other fellowships and was a visiting professor at universities in Oxford, Hamburg, and Vancouver. He chaired Harvard's Committee on East Asian Studies (1960-64) and the Department of Far Eastern Languages (1961-65). His publications included "Topics in Chinese Literature" (1950, 1953, 1966), "The Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien" (1970), and, with Chia-ying Yeh, "Studies in Chinese Poetry" (1998), as well as numerous journal articles. His translations and interpretations were, and are, highly regarded by his peers.



In 1952, the Hightowers bought a house in Auburndale, Mass., where they raised their four children, and a summer place on Bustins Island in Casco Bay, Maine. Both houses provided opportunities for Hightower to exercise his carpentry and painting skills. After Bunny's death in 1981, he took over her lavish flowerbeds, adding vegetables and fruit trees. Even into his late 80s, he remained staunchly committed to a frugal, active, and independent way of life, doing his own cooking, cleaning, and baking, hanging out laundry even in winter, and bringing home groceries on a bicycle, which he still rode 10 miles each way to his office at Harvard. In 2003, no longer in robust health, he was persuaded to sell the house and live with his oldest son in Ohio; seven months later he moved to Germany to live with his daughter.

He is survived by four children, James Robert Jr. of Garrettsville, Ohio; Samuel Cole of Troy, Maine; Josephine "Josie" Steiner-Neukirch of Elsen, Germany; and Thomas Denzil of Amsterdam; 12 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. A memorial service is being planned at Harvard University.

-Was it exciting for you?

# interview:

Interview between **Tom Hightower** and **James Robert Hightower** in 1994 with inserted pictures

Yes, it was exciting. And from Dairen we took a coastal boat up the river and it let you off in Tientsin. And this was China for the first time. And China here was flat and brown.

What time of year was it?

Summer. It's not a pretty landscape. But the Chinese people, in contrast to the Japanese, were cheerful. Not that they had any reason to be cheerful, but the whole feeling of the place was different, and I immediately felt comfortable there, as I never did in Japan. We took a train to Peking. And then, following the Stells, Charles had been there as a child, we went to the missionary language school. It wasn't just the missionaries, but it was who it was founded by, and was mostly inhabited by. But they had a hostel. Where we lived for a month, before we found a place with C.G..., whom we didn't know, but met through connections, who was looking for someone to share a house where he could play his piano and have his pupils come, and the household expenses would be shared. And we shared the food on a two to one basis. Which in the end he complained about. There were two of us and one of him, but he used it professionally as well.

Then we got on this Japanese freighter, twelve passengers, to Yokohama. And two of the passengers were C. S. and M.S., and two of the other passengers were a Mr. and Mrs. R, they were the parents of E. R. He was a Japan missionary. There

(pause)

That summer I started to work. I think I had three tutors and **Pear** enrolled in the language school course. The Peking American school wanted a Latin teacher.

And the job was offered to Pear, but she didn't feel competent to do it and she didn't want to do it because she wanted to learn Chinese. I was a little disappointed because I thought it would be nice to have an income. My scholarship money (... pause) – we lived very well indeed. We had two servants, one of them a cook, there was no housework ever for anyone. And I had these private tutors, who came to me, I didn't have to go out to them. Pear had her language course. And we bought things. And Pear loved Peking because there were things to buy. And she bought. And I

bought books, bought a lot of books, made a lot of mistakes buying books, but when we first got there Charles took us to the Peking Hotel, where there was a French bookshop, Henri Veche. And Veche stacked an enormous amount of standard sinological literature – things that I had seen in the library, but never dreamed of being able to own. And I came out loaded with all sorts of things, including Gile's Chinese dictionary, which was literally a foot thick, a great big volume. It



circa 1940

were a few other passengers. And the meals were Japanese mostly, and not very good, and presided over by the purser and the captain. Yokohama, we stayed overnight, and the S went to Tokyo. Then we all went by train to Kobe, where we would get a boat that would take us to China. And we spent one or two weeks in Kobe, waiting for a passage. The Japanese were occupying China at the time, for them it was wartime, and it was a very gloomy place. And the Japanese were gloomy. And none of us cared much for any of it. The only touring, we went up to Kyoto in one day, poked around, came back to Kobe and waited. Then we got a Japanese passenger boat to what was then called Dairen, in Manchuria. It was a Japanese puppet state. Spent the night there. Dairen had been an old imperialist Russian concession. Like Hong Kong was British. And we stayed in a hotel that could have been out of Moscow, 1980, or so. But it was empty and echoing halls.



Residential Permit,  
Peking March 7, 1943  
– March 6, 1944

- What was it like? This was your first time ...

Yeah. Well this wasn't really China. The Japanese were everywhere.

was the best bilingual dictionary around at the time. I got that and a lot of sinological stuff, which I used then for the rest of my academic career, really.

We moved out of the language school hostel into our own quarters, in the west city, and Pear then rode a bicycle to her classes. We got Chinese bicycles, I think about \$10 a piece. Perfectly all right, as good as that German "klunker" I'd ridden all over Europe on. We were both of us occupied and were happy. There was entertainment, there were parties.

**- Mummy was happy, too?**

Oh yes, she was very happy. She liked Peking. There were other American students there. Stell was (*pause*) — he had a commission from the Harvard Yenching Institute. The same thing that I had when I went out the second time, to visit universities. And I got to know Francis Cleeves, who was running the Sino-Indian Institute. And got to be very good friends with him. The Wrights were there. The Wrights didn't come till the second year. They went to Japan the first year, which was a tactical error on their part, because it put them noticeably behind. They never got much Chinese. They arrived in 41 in the summer and immediately went off to the seaside resort (PeiTaiHo?) which I never got to, for a month, which is what foreigners did in the summer. It got hot in Peking, so you'd go to the ocean. So they didn't get started studying till September. The war was very much in the air. It was hard to work, because you had the feeling this was all borrowed time. It wasn't going to last. So they didn't get down to work then. And then the war did start, and it took six months after that before they settled down to work again. They were going to be there for the duration. And then we were shipped off to internment



camp, where you can't work. They were there for the whole war. They didn't get out until 46. And then they stayed on another year, after the end of the war. But they had very little real exposure to Chinese while they were there. And neither of them ever got any degree of competence. But they were both extremely able and both made adequate careers, with the limitations.

We had a good year and a half, 40, 41.



*I tending geranium in a garden of house at Fang Chia Yuan. You can see why we didn't like to move. Note moon gate in summer with vines. (June 1941 Bunny)*

It was September 41 that Pear got pregnant, and in that situation, we decided it would be better for her to go home, so we put her on a boat.

**- Would she have stayed if she hadn't gotten pregnant?**

Oh, of course she would, yeah. She had no desire to go back home at that point. It was the right thing to do. If she had stayed, we would have been, like the Wrights, stuck there until the end of the war. The Stanleys, who also had a child, were interned all through the war. She had a rough trip from the north China port down to Shanghai. They had a hurricane en route, they call them Taifoons out there. And then from Shanghai she came back by way of Hawaii, and on (...) I don't know how she got across the country at that point. But anyhow she went to Concord.

*(pause)*

I then moved — we'd moved before she left. Francis Cleeves had come home that summer. And I had been made his successor in charge of the Sino-Indian Institute. And so we had quarters, rent-free there. And stayed there until the war started, in December 41. My attempts to join the guerillas and get out by way of west China were frustrated by a matter of timing — a matter of hours, really.

*(pause)*

Of the party I was going to go with, (...) only two of them actually escaped. They were Yenching teachers and they were living out in Yenching at the time, so they took the university president's car and drove off into the hills and ditches — and took off. But this was the group I was supposed to be going with. And if I had stayed out there with them that night, instead of coming back to Peking, I would probably have been with them. They stayed with the guerillas all through the war. It would have been very good for one's Chinese, but not professionally — not very helpful. Again, I wasn't able to go, and it was probably a good thing. It was not the safest thing in the world. They survived, but survival wasn't guaranteed. When the war started I was living in the legation quarter. Nothing happened for about a month, — I suppose. The Japanese started visiting the Institute quarters. One of the things that had worried me, was that we had stored in our — storeroom the entire edition of a Russian-Chinese dictionary the one that had been compiled by one Mr. Poneboi (?) He had — thanks to Mr. Eliseef, — had been brought back to Cambridge and was working on our Chinese-English dictionary. He was a white Russian, but not that white, he was in bad

odour and had been imprisoned and badly treated by the Japanese. And had been released and Mr. Eliseef got him over to Cambridge. Anything Russian was communist, in the eyes of the Japanese. It was not just one, but a thousand copies of the dictionary and I worried about getting into trouble with that. The head of our staff and I and my helper Lu Fang, who was in charge of our establishment, a former rickshaw puller whom Francis Cleeves had picked up off the street and had taught to read and write Chinese and worked as a kind of clerk and general manager of the place. Lu Fang, and the elder of the staff, burning the whole edition of Mr. Poneboi's dictionary in the furnace. Try to burn a dictionary, particularly one printed on glossy paper. Any book. Books don't burn, you have to tear them apart, page by page. And you get quantities of ashes. It was not a pleasant job, but we disposed of the whole thing before the first Japanese delegation arrived, and they looked through everything that we had. It was a primarily Buddhist collection of books. And Buddhism was fine by the Japanese. We pointed that out to them and we showed them what work we were doing, and it was innocuous. They kept coming back, though. That is, different groups would come, representing different services. And it became clear that all of them were looking for room and they were probably competing with one another, but we were not going to be able to stay. I had met through Cleeves Jean Pierre du Bosque. He was in the French Embassy at the time. I guess these were Vichy days, although the Embassy staff hadn't changed any. He was also interested in the sort of work the Institute was doing, mainly Indexes. He had a group making Indexes of Chinese books and he agreed to house the library for me, and use the staff as best he could. So, I felt that I was taken care of and when the Japanese evicted us finally, I got permission to move the books to this French center. It was well disposed of. I hadn't lost anything, of our work or of the books.

**- Except for the dictionary.**

Well, the dictionary wasn't the Institute's. That was a casualty. The Japanese would certainly not have permitted it to leave. I then had to move back to Language School where many of the American aliens were residing and lived there for the next year. And I had two rooms because I brought my own books and I had an enormous work table that filled one of the rooms and I slept in another. So that was luxury. And I worked on my thesis and I worked with a sense of desperation. There is nothing else to do, so get it finished, now or never. And I did.

**- Was that this book here?**

Yes, Han Shuh Wai Chuan. I made some new friends

in the hostel. There was a Brit by the name of .... who had gone to Cambridge, was an ornithologist, had collected birds and brought back King Penguins from Antarctica. He was there. I don't know why he was there. He was younger than I, I believe. And again a natural delinquent. We had a meeting of unscrupulous minds ... But he was unemployed. They'd given him a nominal job as a code clerk at the British Embassy, which gave him diplomatic status, but the embassy was closed, so he didn't have anything to do. And he would come in and talk interminably. And I had work to do. We stayed on good enough terms for a while.

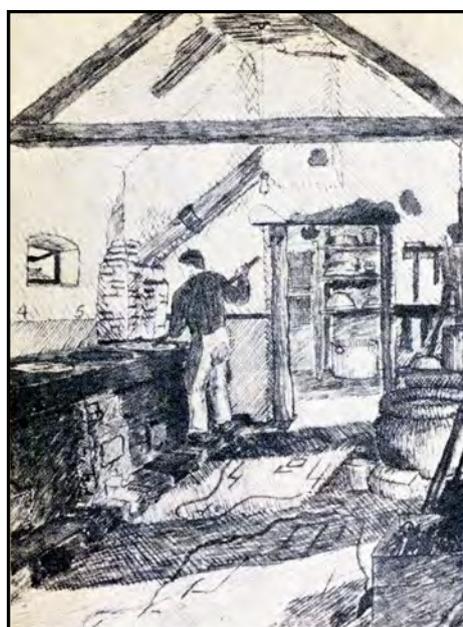
I finished my thesis. I really had quite a good time. I went out once a week with Achilles. We had an allowance through the Swiss representative. So we had spending money. Not lavish, but enough to have dinner out once a week. So Achilles, Elizabeth and I went out every week to a different restaurant and sampled the fare. And I read a lot of books while I was working on my thesis. Then, it must have been early that next year, the Japanese said they were sending us off to internment camp. We'd had the run of the city, we had to wear **armbands**, labeling us as enemy aliens. And we couldn't travel outside the city. But it wasn't internment. It was a walled city, so it was a kind of internment, but you didn't feel it because the whole city was around you. Life went on as usual. They shipped us out to Weih sien.... in Shantung.... province to what had been a missionary boarding school. This was half a day anyway on the train, maybe longer. East of Peking. And for the next six months I lived in an internment camp. When we arrived we were told that we would have to feed ourselves. There was a Tientsin kitchen already there. They would feed us supper, but then we would have to feed ourselves. The food was provided in unprocessed form, which we had to prepare and cook. The facilities were large kettles, cast-iron kettles, 40-50 gallons, with a concrete frame that you could build a fire under, so that your choices were pretty limited to soup and cereal. And who was going to run the thing? I had boasted at some point to someone that I had worked at a boarding house and cooked for sixty people. And so I became the manager chef in charge of the Peking kitchen. Which I did for two weeks. And I've never worked harder in my life. I literally slept in my clothes, and not very many hours. I was a very poor administrator, because I can't delegate authority. If it is an unpleasant job I feel I have to do some of it, or work alongside of someone. And anyhow

there was no authority attached to it, you just went out into the street and grabbed somebody, and said, come help me carry this... We were four hundred from Peking. And the Tientsin kitchen was larger, I think six-seven hundred. It was crowded. There were five of us in a room where we slept. The first thing I did, well one of the many things I did... we baked our own bread, we had some bakers. We had everything — all possible professions. And people sort of found their own level. It was a good exercise in communism. We had no property, we had our own belongings, but everything else was common. Facilities, such as they were, toilets had to be cleaned every day. The nuns did that. I think some of the monks could bake, and they ran a bakery, and they baked a couple or three hundred loaves of bread every day. Some of the nuns made propot (?) That's what we had for breakfast. And I got some of the women together to prepare vegetables and the meat came in chunks and Arthur Wright was one of the butchers. And everyone did what he could do. But for a week I did this, while everyone else was staking out his little corners. I'd had no time to do that. But at the end of the two weeks I'd had it and asked to be relieved. By that time, they had organized a work committee, and an administrative staff



and all. I asked to be assigned — I had also started a special diet kitchen for people with dietary problems — in the hospital. They had reconstructed the hospital, we — had some of the best medical people in North

China among our internees. The diet kitchen cooked for maybe a hundred or less. But people had special requirements. There was a lot of things like Sprue (?) and Dysentery patients and there was a need for this kind of food which couldn't be done in the big kettles. We had smaller pots and pans to cook in. And I asked to be assigned to that as a cook. — And so I cooked one shift there. That was good, because you could cook food and I ate better than most. The whole dietician staff ate better than most. In the course of time



Weih sien — kitchen

the nuns and monks were all sent back to their houses in Peking. Some deal between the Vatican and the Japanese. That left a gap in some of the labor slots. One of them, was the laboratory technician in the hospital. And I volunteered to do that because I had done that many years before in Salida, when I was in pre-med, had spent one summer with the lab technician there. I thought I knew how to make blood counts and I learned from the nun who was doing it I learned what she did. And so I had two jobs. I was unwilling to give up my cooking job. In addition, we were students, there were six or seven Chinese students and we met regularly and read texts together.

## - What became of Achilles at that time?

Achilles wasn't an enemy alien. He passed as a Chinese. He'd graduated from Chinese university, had Chinese identification, papers and lived with a Chinese family. And he worked on the dictionary.... Oh, Achilles is such a difficult man. And he has an instinct for self-destruction. ...When he had meningitis I said, He's too mean to die. He was in Peking ... I had quite a good time in internment camp, actually. I was very busy, doing things that I liked to do and that I thought were useful. Leaving the camp, we left... I've told you the story, and I'm not going to repeat it, about trying to smuggle my thesis out with me. And I did smuggle out a copy, but not the most recent copy, with annotations, so I had still a lot of work to do when I got back. But the one I had in the thermos bottle, wrapped between the liner and the case got through all right, all the way to New York, where it was confiscated by the American customs officials. I thought, Oh I'm back home. Anything written? Oh yeah, I've got my thesis. Well, I should have walked right through with it. The trip was harrowing, it wasn't dangerous, but the communists, the guerillas, were always blowing up the tracks. The Japanese had control of the cities, but the communication between the cities was very uncertain. The trip down south to Poukou, where you cross the Yangtse, took a long time, certainly more than a day, two days anyhow. It was terribly crowded and occasionally you had to stop and carry all your junk to the next — the track was up, and you had to get on another train. And the people that were repatriated were people over sixty, women, prisoners, people who had been prisoners of the Japanese, and a few able-bodied males like me who were being sent home according to State Department instructions. There weren't many of us and there were a lot of them and they had a lot of luggage. And we were the ones who had to carry it when it had to be carried. I mean there wasn't anyone else to carry it.

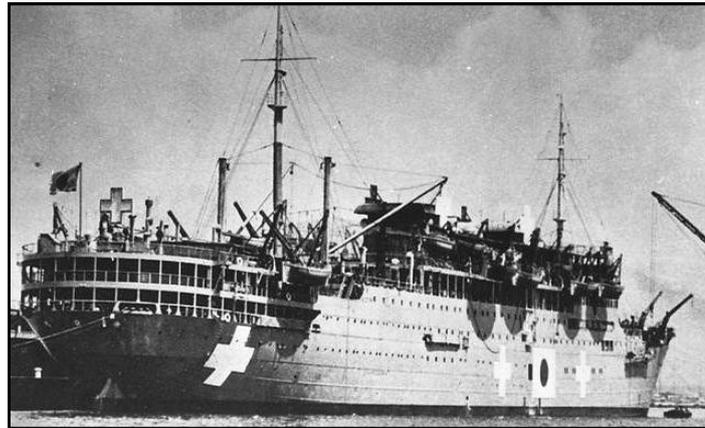
## - And all your possessions, your books...?

Everything. Well actually I packed a trunk. I didn't have to carry the trunk. That came to Shanghai with ... We were allowed to take...

## -You had that with you in internment camp?

I had that damn thing with me in internment camp along with a fur coat for

Pear, and I brought that all the way back. And it immediately fell to pieces. I guess it had not been cured very well. In Shanghai we had to go through another customs inspection by the Japanese, and I got through that one by saying a few words in Japanese to the very unpleasant soldier, who looked at my things. He was a peasant I think. I said I didn't have any photos, and he said all right, he didn't bother to look. But they gave some of them a hard time, looked at all their luggage. It had all been sifted through before we left and then it was done again in Shanghai. But finally we got on a Japanese boat that took us to Manila. More internees being exchanged. And then to Saigon to get some more, and then finally to Goa, where we transferred to the Gripsholm. A Japanese contingent got off the Gripsholm and got on the .... (?) They didn't move up in the

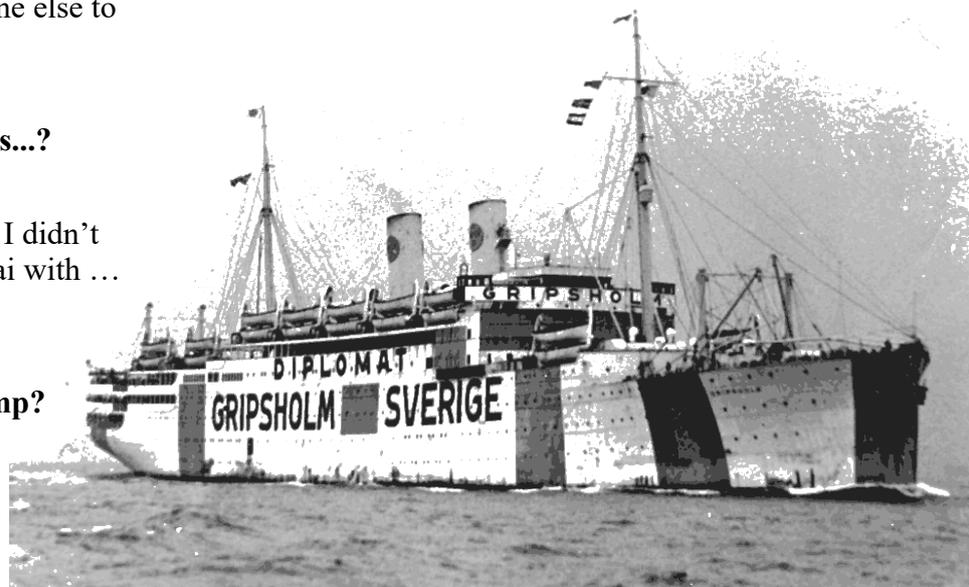


*Japanese: Teia-Maru ex: m/v Aramis*

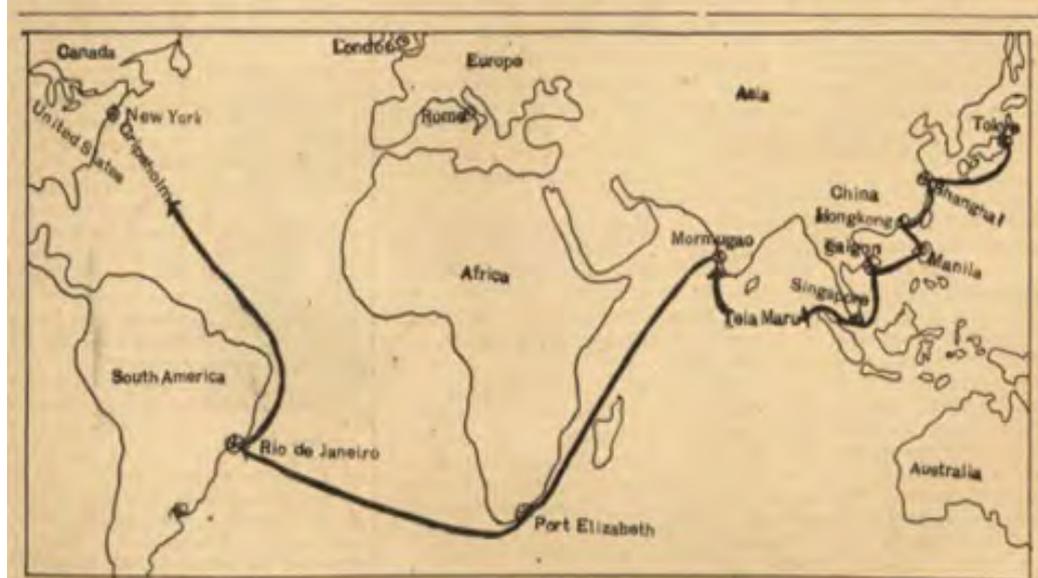
world when they did it. Getting on the Gripsholm they had a smorgasbord spread for us. One whole deck. All the delicacies that one had been dreaming of. And I couldn't eat any of it because I had Jaundice. However, the Gripsholm trip was a long ocean trip, and very crowded. I guess there were three of us in a room, a cabin, way down

in the bowels of the ship. It was too hot to sleep there and I always went up to sleep in one of the common rooms. We came to Port Elizabeth in South Africa, where we spent a day or two. I saw some poisonous snakes in a zoo. And then to Rio de Janeiro, another few days. And it was there that we were as close to the United States as we were when we left Shanghai. But it was still a long way to New York.

..... #



# FRIENDS AND KIN CONVERGE ON N.Y. TO MEET GRIPSHOLM REPATRIATES



The long voyage of North and South American repatriates from ports of embarkation in the Far East to New York was almost over this week as the Gripsholm neared her Jersey City berth, across the North River from New York. The voyage from Yokohama to the Portuguese exchange port of Mormugao was made aboard the Japanese repatriation liner Tela Maru.

The Shanghai Evening Post American Edition, Dec. 3, 1943, page 1.



The nearly 150 American and Canadian repatriates aboard the Gripsholm broke into the strains of "God Bless America" as the exchange liner passed the Statue of Liberty on the way to her Pier F berth at Jersey City, N. J., this week. Crowds of excited relatives and friends awaited near the dock to welcome them home on the arrival of the vessel.

WISCONSIN

## [James Robert Hightower arrives on Gripsholm]

NEW YORK CITY -- Carrying an armful of books, James Robert Hightower of Salida, Colo., comes ashore from the liner Gripsholm which carried him and other repatriates back to the United States. He had been studying in Pekin, China, when war was started and was interned by the Japanese at Weihasien camp." - News agency copy.

Show Fewer Details



Show Tags

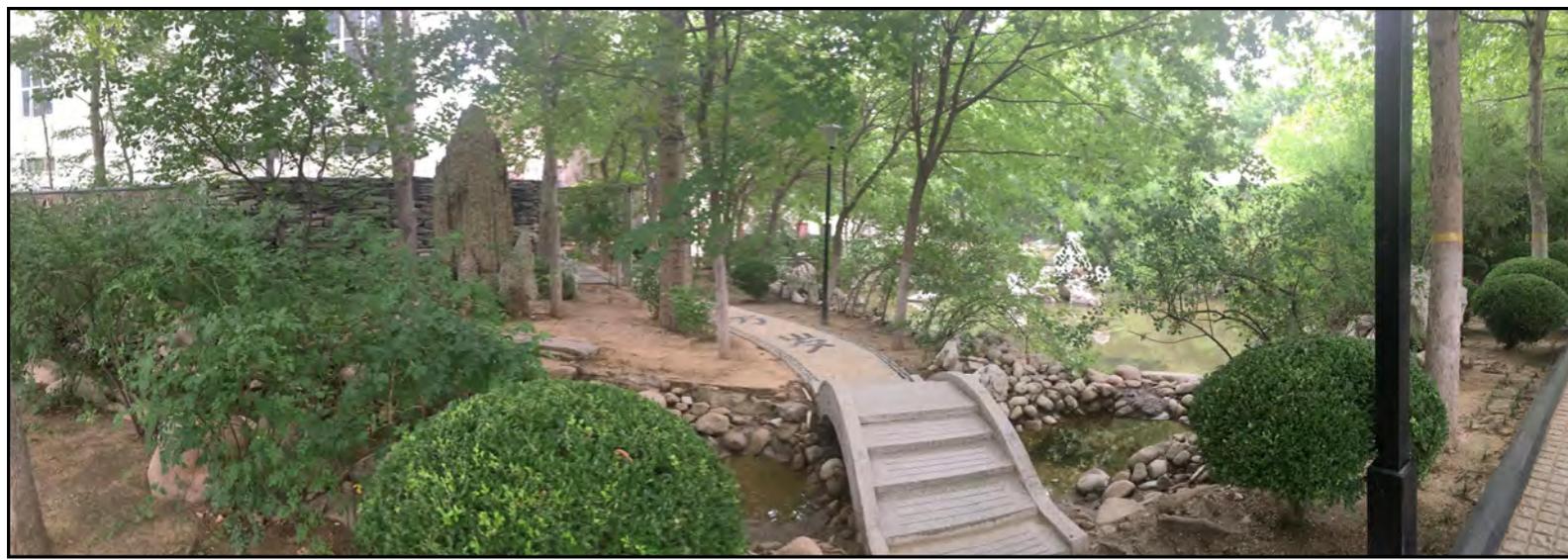
Catalog Detail

OCLC #: 874928858

Physical Location: Special Collections — Photographs — PHOTO 00271

Production, Publication, Distribution, Manufacture, and Copyright Notice: New York : Acme Newspictures, Inc.,

1943



Weih sien Park — 2017 © Tara Gully-Hightower









