Interview with Washington Times

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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AMB - Hello.
A.G.- Hello, Ambassador? Ambassador Mansfield, is this you? How do you do?
AMB - How do you do?
A.G.- I know this is a bit of an imposition, especially on a subject you don't want to talk about - the Mansfield Center.
AMB - No, I won't. I am flattered but embarrassed.
A.G.- Oh, the usual answer.
AMB - Yes.
A.G.- I wanted to ask if there was some influence in your life that initiated your interest in the Orient.
AMB - Oh, yes. When I was young, I joined the Marines in addition to the Army and the Navy and I was stationed in the Philippines and China - 1921-1922 - and it was on that basis that I became interested in the Far East, an interest I have maintained during the years - I could say decades.
A.G.- What was the fascination?
AMB - The people, especially that they were of various kinds, the civilizations which were represented, and then they were in a state of decline but now in a decided up-swing, the customs, the smells, the everything.
A.G.- You mean being so different or unfamiliar? How do you mean?

AMB - Different and exotic and interesting.

A.G.- As a complete change from everything you had known?

AMB - I went back to Montana and with the help of a high school teacher, Maureen Hayes, I took my major in the Far East studies. After receiving my M.A. from Montana and teaching at the University, I met Kazuo Kawai, who was a Professor of History at U.C.L.A. and he is the person who strengthened and revitalized and kept up my interest in the Far East.

A.G.- Has he passed on, as they say?

AMB - He has passed on, but I lost track of him during the war and found out he was teaching at Ohio State University and we made arrangements for him to come to Washington, D. C. He died before he got there.

A.G.- Had he been incarcerated - in the round-up?

AMB - In some fashion I think he was, but I am not certain.

A.G. - You became a teacher and your field was the Far East. It is so impressive in view of your background and that you come from the other side of the world.
AMB - I kept up my interest and I served in the House for five terms and went to the Senate and got on the Foreign Relations Committee, and I was about the only one who was aware of the existence of this part of the world. A.G.- In the Congress?
AMB - In the House and Senate Committees.
A.G. - In both?
AMB - In both.
A.G.- It is wonderful to have predicted the importance of the Far East to us all.
AMB - I am delighted that I lived long enough to see that what I envisioned has come to pass and the facts and figures prove it. The next century will be the century of the Pacific and the most important bilateral relationship - bar none.
A.G.- And when you say the Pacific, what countries do you mean?
AMB - That includes four South American states, all of Central America, North America, Australia and New Zealand and all the islands in between, and without question, everything points to the Pacific Basin because that is where it all is; that is where the future is.
A.G.- When will you retire?
AMB - I have no idea. Too much to do.
A.G.- You know I am looking at a headline in the Washington Times "Japanese View Mansfield as an American Samurai". Is this an appropriate title?

AMB - I think Genro, which is a term that is used for elder statesmen and it is a high honor. I don't know that I will reach it, but I would like to.

A.G.- I am sure you have. How is your Japanese?

AMB - Very poor, very poor, but adequate.

A.G.- I think I shouldn't ask you anything else, because you don't want me to.

AMB - That's right. I am glad we got together - in a fashion.

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