

KENNETH B. PYLE

IUC SUMMER '61

Growing up near historic Gettysburg in State College, Pennsylvania, Kenneth B. Pyle enjoyed reading Civil War history. Pyle's father, who was on the faculty at Penn State, often told his son, "Asia is going to be important in your lifetime." During the early 1950's -- shortly after the Pacific War and throughout the Korean War and Chinese Revolution -- Asia did appear as though it would play a significant role in world affairs. However, Pyle doesn't believe his father was referring to Asia's potential as an enduring trouble spot, but was somewhat prophetically forecasting the social and economic rise that it eventually experienced. "I picked up on that," Pyle remembers, "and when I got to college I majored in American diplomatic history, but I began taking courses on Asia at that time."

Pyle earned a B.A. at Harvard and eventually took a Ph.D. in History from Johns Hopkins University in 1965. During graduate school, he recognized his fascination with the subject of U.S.-Asian relations. "I decided it was time to get serious about my interest in Asia and to begin language study. Beginning language study after the second year of graduate school is exceedingly late by today's standard!" Pyle notes.

Winning a Ford Foundation Fellowship to study at the newly-established Stanford Center in Tokyo, Pyle spent three years at this early incarnation of the current IUC program. There, he received tutorials and instruction from Stanford Center teachers Kamikawa Rikuzo and Osone Shosuke, in addition to Kawazoe Kunimoto, a professor of Japanese literature at Waseda. In his third year, he studied privately with the eminent intellectual historian Matsumoto Sannosuke, and the formidable sociologist Tsurumi Kazuko, the first woman to receive a Princeton Ph.D. Arrangements were also made for Pyle to audit a seminar taught by Maruyama Masao and a lecture course taught by



Ienaga Saburo, two leading lights at Today. "My three years at the Stanford Center were an extraordinary time, in part because it was still the formative stage of the Center. As a consequence, the number of students was small and the attention of the faculty and resources of the Center were made available to me in a way that was tailored to my interest. The outcome of that experience was my first book, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan*, and the launching of an academic career," says Pyle.

Now a professor of History and International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, Pyle has since authored numerous books and articles

on Japan and chaired a number of councils and agencies -- including an appointment to head the Japan-US Friendship Commission. In 1999, he was recognized for his contributions as a professor of modern Japanese history and his service to cultural exchange between the United States and Japan, and awarded the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun medal. In 2008 he was the winner of the Japan Foundation's Special Prize in Japanese Studies and was given an audience by the Emperor and Empress.

"I suppose one might say I was among the first generation of Japan specialists in the U.S. to come to the field by an academic path. Earlier generations came by way of Japanese birth or ancestry, or missionary families or experience in the military during and after the war. My interest grew out of an academic interest in history," Pyle concludes. Coupling a dispassionate eye to an earnest commitment to the field of Japanese studies, Pyle has established a reputation for insightful analysis into the strategic thinking behind Japan's relations with the world, and is recognized today as one of the world's leading authorities on the history of modern Japan.