

Griffith Way



was born December 21st, 1920 and raised in Seattle, attended Queen Anne High School, and the University of Washington for two years, plus a year at McGill University, where he majored in history until the outbreak of World War II.

Griff was selected by the Navy to attend the highly regarded Japanese Language Training School in Boulder, Colorado. It was on the train to the school he met a beautiful and talented Navy recruit Patricia O'Sullivan. He and Pat studied diligently but still found time to develop a serious relationship during the three months together.

In 1943 Griff graduated from the language school and was assigned to the Pacific Command. In 1944 he was assigned to front lines with the 2nd Marine Division HQ to handle translations in the field and participated in the invasion of Saipan and Tinian. He was one of the first Americans in the occupation of Japan where using his language and diplomatic skills helped settle and rebuild before returning to Seattle in late 1945.

When Pat finished her training at the language school, she was assigned to Washington D.C. She was finally able to join Griff in Seattle when he returned from the Pacific and they were married in January 1946, and so began a partnership that would last nearly 73 years.

They both finished their Bachelor Degrees at the University of Washington and Griff subsequently obtained a law degree from the University of Washington.

After Griff became a lawyer in Seattle, he pondered how he might make use of his knowledge of Japan and the Japanese language. He met a tall American lawyer by the name of Thomas Blakemore who had, after being the first American to successfully pass the Japan Bar Exam, established a practice in Japan in 1950. He joined Mr. Blakemore in a legal partnership and friendship that lasted over 40 years. Dividing his time equally between the two countries he was active in the representation of major American and European companies doing business with Japan. He authored several works on Japan, including the well-used *Business Operations in Japan*.

It was also the beginning of a life that would link the Way family and Japan for nearly eight decades and three generations.

Shortly after graduating from Law School in 1949, he volunteered to work on a new community organization, the Washington State International Trade Fair. The Trade Fair was an effort to encourage Japan, whose economy was in shambles at the end of World War II, to revive the export of both industrial products and its unique arts and crafts. From 1950 to 1960, under the leadership of Griff (serving as President in 1954 and 1955), the Fair was gradually expanded to include all of the countries of Asia and created the basis for the 1961 Seattle World's Fair.

Griff's love of Japan included a deep appreciation of its art. During their years in Japan he and Pat acquired an extensive collection of modern Japanese paintings and prints. Griff was one of the earliest collectors outside of Japan to focus on late 19th and early 20th century Japanese painting, and the Way Collection is among the more significant collections of modern Japanese painting in the United States. The paintings were exhibited in 1999 at the Seattle Art Museum (where he served on the board for 23 years) and in 2000 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and then during 2001-2002 the collection toured seven museums in Japan. Their gift of over 150 Nihonga paintings to the Seattle Art Museum has made available to the public the largest collection of Nihonga paintings outside of Japan.

During their long stays in Japan Griff and Pat also acquired modern Japanese prints (Sosaku Hanga). The collection of the works of Azechi Umetero is one of the largest outside of Japan. Prints from the Way collection have been regularly exhibited at the Seattle Asian Art Museum and Phoenix Art Museum.

Griff had a passionate love of the outdoors. Starting as a precocious 14-year-old Boy Scout who sailed a dinghy up to Canada (causing a minor international incident and his first experience in international law), to a rugged 16-year-old sailing to Hawaii. Griff's frequent outdoor adventures had him occasionally ending up on the wrong side of the mountain (causing frequent bouts of anxiety for Pat).

Griff scaled every major peak in the West and was a member of both the American Alpine Club and the Japan Alpine Club, climbing extensively in the Japan Alps. He assisted several Japanese members on international climbs, particularly Japan's most famous explorer, Uemura Naomi, in connection with Uemura's solo expeditions to the North Pole and Greenland. He occasionally sought his exercise on level ground and participated in dozens of marathon races all over Japan and assisted the Japanese Veteran's Runners Association in its international activities.

Griff helped found and manage the Blakemore Foundation, established by Tom and Frances Blakemore in 1990. Annually the Foundation makes up to 20 grants to individuals for the advanced study of Asian languages and also makes grants to American museums and universities to support projects that help improve the understanding of Asian art in the United States. Nearly 500 scholars and numerous institutions have benefitted to help foster better relations between the US and Asia. Griff loved the work of the Foundation and found time to personally read every application, a feat still admired by the board. He loved connecting and staying in touch with the many scholars.

Griff was recognized throughout his life for his many accomplishments. In 2004 Griff was presented with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Commendation Award. The University of Washington Law School awarded Griff the Distinguished Alumnus Award and he was honored in 1993 by the Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal as the outstanding lawyer of the year in foreign practice. He was a frequent lecturer at the University of Washington Law School, The Jackson International School, The Asian Law Center and was Adjunct Professor in 1996 and 1997.

Japan-America Society of Washington State, awarded the Thomas S. Foley Award in 2006 for his efforts over 50 years to improve relations between Japan and the United States.

Griff's counsel was sought by many. He assisted former Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida and his son, Kenichi, in the publication of an English translation of the Prime Minister's memoirs, *Kaiso Junen*, spending many hours with the Prime Minister in his home in Oiso.

Perhaps his highest recognition was the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, bestowed by His Majesty Akihito, the Emperor of Japan, on April 29, 2007, in recognition of Mr. Way's outstanding contribution to developing economic and culture exchanges between Japan and the United States.

Griff will be lovingly remembered and missed by his wife Pat and his children Susan (Clark Sorensen) Way, Nancy (John) Boyd, Gerald Way (deceased) and Bill (Mary) Way. In addition, grandchildren Sean, Colleen, Molly, Scott, Patricia, Mary, Barrett and John, five great-grandchildren and his sister Barbara Barter.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Griffith and Patricia Way Lecture Series at the Japan Studies Program, The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington.

Griff passed away July 27th, 2018, age 97, surrounded by family and friends. To our Dad, Grandfather, Great-Grandfather, Husband, Brother, Uncle and Friend - また会うまで Mata au made (until we meet again).

