

# The Camp Zama Historical Monument Walking Tour



陸軍士官学校正門 正門から学校本部を望む。昭和15年ごろ。

Rikugun Shikan Gakko (Japanese Imperial Military Academy), Main Gate (1940)

## *The Rikugun Shikan Gakko*

Camp Zama and the surrounding community have many historical monuments related to the *Rikugun Shikan Gakko* – the Japanese Imperial Military Academy – and its students. These monuments were dedicated to the academy campus by the staff and students between September 1937 and August 1945.

The *Rikugun Shikan Gakko* was the principal school of the former Imperial Japanese Army for military science studies and career officer training. It opened as an officer training school for the sons of the Kyoto nobility when Emperor Meiji (1852 – 1912) restored the sovereignty of the state from the Tokugawa Shogunate government in August 1868. As the school grew larger, it moved from Kyoto to Osaka and then to Tokyo.

In 1874, the Army Ministry of the Meiji Government built a modern occidental military academy on the former estate of the Owari-Tokugawa at Ichigaya in Tokyo, where training in the French military system officially began the following year. Its training programs were modified when the Imperial Army adopted the Prussian military system in 1884.

In 1920, when the government revised the school law, the academy changed its school year to begin in April instead of September and reorganized its curricula to include *Yoka* (junior) and *Honka* (senior) programs. Both programs included combat training at a regiment and were two years long.

The *Yoka* curriculum provided college level general education courses with basic military training, which included traditional martial arts and horsemanship. It accepted 16 and 17 year-old boys who either completed the preparatory military school, known as the “*Yonen Gakko*”, or the first four years of the five-year middle school education.

The young men completing the *Yoka* program were assigned three-month regimental duties to become familiar with Army weapons and platoon leadership before resuming studies in the *Honka* program.

In peacetime, students underwent these two programs in four years and received the rank of apprentice officers at graduation. They were then assigned to respective regiments. Three months later, they were commissioned as second lieutenants. In wartime, the academy often curtailed the schooling periods and increased the number of enrollees.

The Manchurian incident broke out in September 1931 and by the mid-30s, the Imperial Army had almost one million soldiers on the Asian continent. This presented an acute shortage in the officers’ corps and the Ministry of the army decided to expand

the academy. The Ichigaya campus was changed to the “Rikugun Yoka Shikan Gakko” – the Military Academy for Junior Program (it was later transferred to a new larger campus at Asaka in Saitama Prefecture to accommodate a greater number of students). Two new campuses for senior programs were built outside of Tokyo. They were the “Rikugun Shikan Gakko” – The Military Academy for the Senior Army Program – at Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture and the “Rikugun Koku Shikan Gakko” – the Military Academy for the Senior Aviation Program – at Tokorozawa in Saitama Prefecture, which was shortly relocated to the more spacious Toyooka in the same prefecture.

On September 30, 1937, the 50<sup>th</sup> class senior students moved from the Ichigaya campus to Zama to start their training at the new campus.

A student’s normal day began with reveille at 5:30 a.m. in warm weather and at 6 a.m. in cold weather. Study time lasted from 8:20 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. From that time until 6 p.m., supper hour, the students participated in extra-curricular activities or self-study. From 7 to 9 p.m., they had two 50-minute self-study sessions. The day ended with taps at 10 p.m.

The billets located in North Camp Zama were used mostly by regular senior class students, while those on South Camp Zama accommodated regular junior class and other students, including those from foreign countries (Some of these buildings remain today at Camp Zama. They can easily be spotted because their roofs are covered with dark-grey tiles).

School life at the new campus was hard for the students of the 50<sup>th</sup> class because the construction was still under way. A large portion of the maneuver grounds was covered with sharp stumps of trees, which cut into the students’ bodies when they threw themselves on the ground during the exercises. When it rained, the school grounds became muddy and gave out under their feet.

Despite such conditions, 426 students in the 50<sup>th</sup> class completed their program and the academy had its first graduation ceremony December 20, 1937, with Emperor Hirohito, the 124<sup>th</sup> Emperor of Japan in attendance.

On that day, Hirohito named the campus at Zama, “Sobudai” - the Military Training Heights in Sagami. The local people renamed the academy’s neighborhood area Sobudai; the railway lines changed their station names to Sobudai-Mae Station and Sobudai Shita Station (“Mae” means in front of and “Shita” means below). Zama Village became Zama Town on the same day.

The areas surrounding the academy were turned into military and industrial communities. They included Sagami Arsenal (presently Sagami Depot), an Imperial Army communication school (presently Sagami Women’s College), a telegraph regiment (presently Sagamihara Housing Area), and an armor equipping school (later serving as

Camp Fuchinobe for the U.S. Army from 1945 to November 1974). There were also two military hospitals. One hospital is now the National Sagamihara Hospital, and the other served as the U.S. Army Medical Center at Sagami-Ono from 1945 until March, 1981. The center was later turned into a housing complex by Sagamihara City.

These military schools chose the large wooded area next to the academy's maneuver grounds for their training grounds. As a result, the students at these schools and at the academy were able to have joint exercises on the wider grounds.

With the China War Theater expanding, the academy increased its enrollees each year from 426 students in 1937 to 1,824 students in 1945. The academy also intensified the curricula to produce able leaders in a shorter period than the normal two years.

The records at Kaikosha, the association of the academy's alumni, show that from 1937 to 1945, 18,476 cadets were trained at Sobudai and 8,956 men at the Air Academy in Toyooka. The combined number of students was greater than the cumulative number of students (22,586) who had been trained at Ichigaya in 63 years.

In addition to the regular cadet classes, the Sobudai academy simultaneously had exclusive classes for noncommissioned officers and reserve officers, and these classes produced about 8,500 combat leaders.

The letters, diaries, and journals written by those young men reveal their feelings and thoughts. The thoughts of most men centered on how they could best serve their country with their lives. About 20 students lost their lives during exercises as they were intent on doing their best. Expecting no return from the fronts, 19- and 20-year-old men erected graduation monuments on the campus before their departure.

There were no weekends nor holidays for the students; their days were filled with studies and military skill training toward the end of World War II. In April 1945, several teachers and students were killed or injured in an air raid, and the intensifying air raids interrupted the schools activities.

In June, as a precautionary measure against Allied bombings and invasion, the academy officials sent the entire staff and 3,000 students on a long-term bivouac in the mountainous region in Nagano Prefecture. They pulled down the Otakebi Shrine, which was located on the present Chapel Hill area, and transferred its sacred items to a Shinto shrine in Nagano. The Sobudai campus was left in care of a small unit of soldiers. On August 15, the academy staff and the students in Nagano were informed of Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies and they disbanded on August 30, 1945.

In September 1945, one battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division of the U.S. Army entered the Sobudai campus and took control of the academy from the Japanese soldiers guarding it. Shortly after, a smaller unit replaced the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and for a while, the post was named the 4<sup>th</sup> Replacement Regiment Depot. Later, the name was changed to

Camp Zama, whose main mission was to serve, along with Atsugi Base, as a stop over for Soldiers awaiting transportation to and from the Far East.

In 1952, a fire broke out on South Camp Zama, destroying five buildings of the former academy. At that time, U.S. Army Headquarters in downtown Yokohama was searching for a more suitable location in the countryside. Consequently, it was decided to construct a new headquarters building on South Camp Zama and the command was relocated to Camp Zama in October 1953. Building 101 has served as the United States Army Japan headquarters since then.

After the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, Camp Zama once again became a staging area for troops, including the 1st Cavalry and the 7<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions on their way to Korea. In 1954, IX Corps was assigned to U.S. Army Forces, Far East on Camp Zama. In 1956, IX Corps was reassigned to Ryukyu Command Headquarters in Okinawa until 1972 when it returned to Camp Zama to form the USARJ/IX Corps.

The American forces have made many changes to the original academy campus since their arrival. Although some of the old buildings are still being used, most have been remodeled or changed to meet American needs.

Forests, which once enclosed the Otakebi Shrine, were cleared for the Chapel Hill housing area. The old maneuver grounds, where the Emperor watched academy student exercises, is now the golf course. The U.S. Army Kastner Airfield was built on the hill with Cadet Tanaka's monument in 1954.

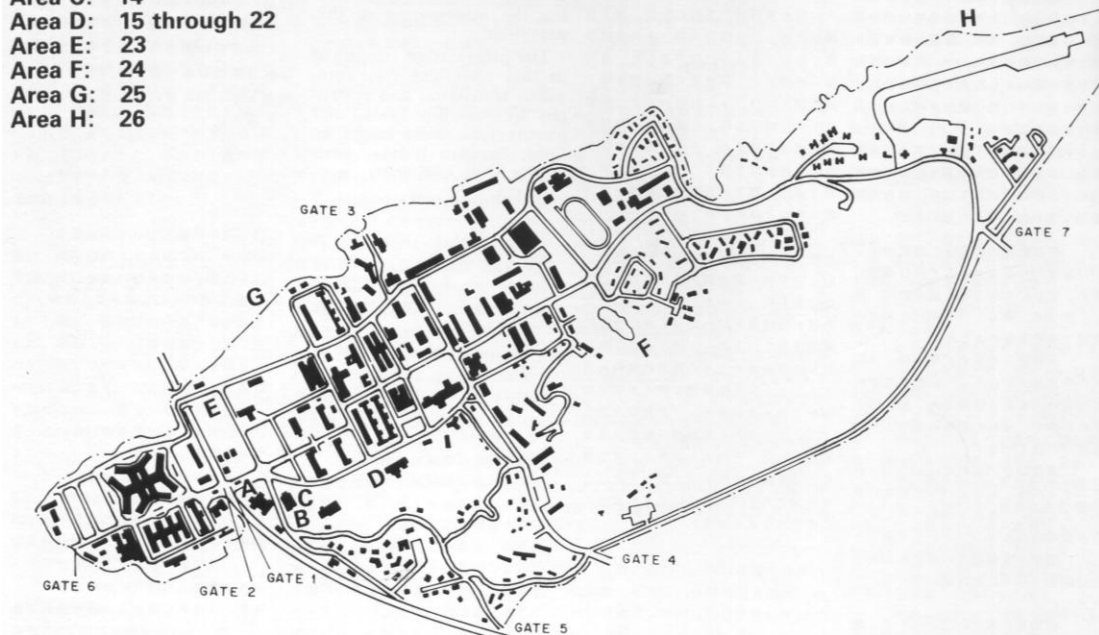
During the 1960s, Camp Zama, along with the Sagami General Depot and the hospital at Sagami-Ono, experienced an increase in activity as the Vietnam War escalated. Soldiers were sent here for further medical care, recreation, and rest, and Sagami Depot was a supply center for the war.

October 1971 marked the return of Japanese military units to Camp Zama. They included the 102<sup>nd</sup> Construction Battalion (which became the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Group the next year) and other units of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force. Camp Zama became a US-Japan joint use facility. With the initiation of a joint command post exercise named Yama Sakura in 1982 and through the successive annual joint exercises, USARJ/IX Corps and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force have developed a closer bilateral relationship.

Both American and Japanese commanders here have shown their respects to the monuments related to the Military Academy all these years. The good condition of the monuments can be attributed to the assistance extended by past and present commanders. They also have made it possible for academy alumni to revisit their alma mater. During their visits, the alumni invariably stop before the Sobudai monument, located to the right from North Camp Zama's main gate.

## Location of the monuments

Area A: 1 through 12  
 Area B: 13  
 Area C: 14  
 Area D: 15 through 22  
 Area E: 23  
 Area F: 24  
 Area G: 25  
 Area H: 26



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**1. Sobudai Monument** The Sobudai monument is the largest of all the Military Academy's monuments here (No.1). It bears the name the 124<sup>th</sup> Emperor of Japan Hirohito gave to the new campus of the academy on his first visit there.

After observing the graduation maneuvers and ceremony of the 50<sup>th</sup> class students, the Emperor told the Army Minister General Gen Sugiyama to name the campus Sobudai – The Military Training Heights in Sagami – after the name mentioned in an epic of Crown Prince Yamato Takeru (82-113 A.D.), described in the Ancient Chronicles of Japan.

General Sugiyama composed the name in three Chinese characters with a brush. His writing was enlarged and carved on the natural stone; however, locating the appropriate stone took more than two years. As a result, it was in August 1940 when the monument was finally erected.

The Sobudai monument was concealed in the ground by a group of soldiers at the academy shortly after Japan's surrender to the Allies in 1945. It remained buried until it was restored to its original spot in 1947.



**2. Makoto Monument** In front of the Sobudai monument, there are two round rock monuments with a single Chinese character inscribed on each face. The letter on the left rock reads “Makoto” and means “Sincerity” (No. 2). In May, 1974, the surviving members of the 55<sup>th</sup> Class (December 1938 – July 1941), totaling 2,349 graduates, dedicated the Makoto monument to their 953 classmates who died in action during the war overseas or in concentration camps in the postwar period.



**3. Wa Monument** The letter on the rock reads “Wa” and means “Harmony” (No.3). On October 10, 1982, it was erected to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Class reunion as well as to promote harmonious relationships of the people in the world. The class (March 1944 to August 1945) had 4,704 students, who were on bivouac in Nagano Prefecture when World War II ended.





#### 4. 3<sup>rd</sup> Officers Class

**Graduation Monument** In addition to the two small round rock monuments, there are nine post-type graduation monuments, forming an arc from the right to left as if guarding the wings and back of the Sobudai Monument. Each of these monuments has two columns of Chinese characters. The right large letters read “Sotsugyou Kinen” which means “Graduation Commemoration”. The left small letters show the class number of the graduates. The letters on the back show the graduation date.



The first post-type monument is on a box-like foundation in the pine tree area. It sits right of the Harmony monument and is the graduation monument erected by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Officers Class (January to November 1943) on November 15, 1943. The inscriptions on the metal plate on the foundation explain that the surviving 112 members of the class formed a fraternity called, “Sankikai” and renovated the monument on September 18, 1976, in honor of 69 classmates who died during World War II.

#### 5. 22<sup>nd</sup> Second Lieutenant Candidates

**Class** The second post-type monument counter-clockwise from the *Sankikai* monument was erected by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Second Lieutenant Class (November 1941 to September 1942) on September 17, 1942. There were 481 noncommissioned officers in the class who left for the front lines immediately after graduation.



**6. 56<sup>th</sup> Class** The third post-type monument was erected by the 56<sup>th</sup> Class (December 1939 –to December 1942) on December 17, 1942. The class had 1,672 graduates in the Senior Army Program and 627 graduates in the Senior Army Air Program.

These Army Air graduates initiated a *tai-atari* aerial fighting method, in which a pilot rammed his plane carrying explosives into an enemy aircraft or ship. The men tested this method when they encountered enemy aircraft over the Nicobar Islands in the Andaman Sea near the Malaya Peninsula in October 1944. They became known as *Kamikaze Tokubetsu Kogekitai* or, the Divine Wind Special Attack Force”.

Because of the high casualty rate of pilots, 257 Army program graduates volunteered for the Post Air Program training to supplement the loss. Of the total 884 pilots, 514 died during World War II. As a result, this class had the highest casualty rate. Out of 2,299 graduates, 1,071 died in War.



### **7. 21<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Candidates**

**Class** The fourth post-type monument was erected by the 21<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Class (December 1940 to September 1941) on September 30, 1941. 267 non-commissioned officers completed this class.



8. *50<sup>th</sup> Class* The fifth post-type monument behind the Sobudai monument was erected on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1937 by the 50<sup>th</sup> Class (April 1934 to December 1937), who only received three months of training at Sobudai before graduation. Off the 466 graduates, 176 died in action.



9. *2<sup>nd</sup> Officers Class* The sixth post-type monument was erected by the 90 reserve officers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Officers Class (November 1941 to September 1942), who completed in one year a two-year military officers' training before resuming to active duty status.



**10. 1<sup>st</sup> Officers Class** The seventh post-type monument, located on the western corner of the Chapel, was erected by 51 graduates of the 1<sup>st</sup> Officers Class (October 1940 to July 1941). Few things are known about these former officers.



**11. 51<sup>st</sup> Class** The eighth post-type monument was erected on December 22, 1938 by the 51<sup>st</sup> Class (April 1935 to December 1938). Of the 506 graduates, 176 were killed in action by the end of World War II.



**12. 52<sup>nd</sup> Class** The ninth post-type graduation monument was erected by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Class (April 1936 to September 1939) consisting of 635 students on September 7, 1939. Of these graduates, 245 dedicated their lives to the country by August 1945.

While they were at the academy, both junior and senior curricula were revised to meet the wartime needs. All the modern foreign language courses were replaced by practical military science courses and the training period was shortened from 48 months to 36 months.



**13. Hirohito's Air-Raid Shelter** The next historical monument, the air-raid shelter for Emperor Hirohito's use, is located to the right of building 506 behind the Music Theater Workshop (formerly the academy auditorium). The shelter was built in 1942, and 506-1 is painted on the door. The 55-foot long zigzag tunnel behind the door leads to a 300-square-foot chamber with a six-foot high ceiling. The tunnel and chamber walls are two-foot thick ferroconcrete and their ceilings are five-foot thick ferroconcrete. The chamber can be reached through another tunnel, whose entrance is located near the Y-road going up to the Chapel Hill.

The emperor did not use the shelter even though he attended seven of the nine graduation ceremonies held at the academy between 1937 and 1945. He missed the 51<sup>st</sup> Class ceremony due to illness and the 58<sup>th</sup> Class due to air raids over the Tokyo Metropolitan area.



**14. 53<sup>rd</sup> Class** In the vicinity of the Community Center (Building S-510), there is a post-type graduation monument erected on February 27, 1940 by the 53<sup>rd</sup> Class (April 1937 to February 1940). The class originally started with 1,050 enrollees, but when the China incident occurred in July 1937, 800 more students were admitted into the class in August. The academy curtailed the training period from 48 months to 34 months, reducing extra school activities. In June 1940, the school took away the privilege of enjoying beverages on student leaves because of the grave situation of the time. Of the total 1,710 graduates, 800 officers died in the Sino-Japanese War and World War II.



**15. Otakebi Torii** Between the Community Center and the Recreation Center, Building S-533 (which the academy students used as their recreation center), there is a path going up to Chapel Hill. Four monuments related to the academy are located along this path.

The most prominent is the Torii gate, which is a replica of the original wooden arch of the academy's Shinto shrine named Otakebi. The shrine building once stood on Chapel Hill and the souls of the alumni who died for the country were enshrined in it with Amaterasu Omikami – the Sun Goddess and three other founding deities of Japan.

The present arch was dedicated by the Kaikosha, an association consisting of about 15,000 alumni and their families, on December 8, 1985.



**16. 59<sup>th</sup> Class** The monument whose inscriptions are painted white was erected by the 59<sup>th</sup> Class (April 1943 to August 1945) in September 1986. The class had 2,850 students, of which 1,600 were in the Senior Air Program. They were bivouacking in Nagano when the war ended.



The students in the Military Senior Air Program at the Toyooka campus were getting practical skill training in Manchuria when the Union of the Socialists declared war against Japan in August 1945. Since there was not enough transport to send back all the trainees to Japan at one time, about 100 student-pilots were left behind for the second transport. However, half a day later, before the second transport could arrive, the Soviet troops invaded the school and took the student to concentration camps in Siberia. While being detained there, many of the student-prisoners died of hard labor and malnutrition. It was four years later when the survivors were able to return to Japan.

**17. 58<sup>th</sup> Class** The vertically-set rectangular monument near the Torii gate was erected by the 58<sup>th</sup> Class (April 1942 to June 1945), the last graduates of the Military Academy. It carries their pledge *Shichi sho ho koku*, which translates as, "Were we blessed to be reborn seven times, we would gladly give our lives to our country each time".



By the time 2,395 students became seniors, Japanese towns and cities had been raided frequently by air. The Sobudai campus also had an air-raid in April 1945, which killed and injured several officers and students. During the raid, anti-aircraft student gunners of the class shot down an enemy aircraft. They were the first students to be involved in real warfare on their campus. They graduated in June 1945, but most were unable to join the troops in overseas combat zones because Japan had already lost command of their airspace and sea

routes. As a result, casualties were smaller than in other classes. 90 graduates were killed by the end of the war.

**18. 57<sup>th</sup> Class** The plaque located about 10 yards beyond the Torii gate on the hilly side was set in memory of the 57<sup>th</sup> Class (April 1941 to April 1944). Those at the Sobudai campus wrote a pledge to serve the country with their lives and signed their names in blood on their graduation day, April 20, 1944. They buried it in the ground where the plaque now stands.



The men had their combat training at the regiments that were actually engaged in war before resuming the study of their senior programs. Those who completed the Senior Air Program volunteered for the *Kamikaze Tokubetsu Kogekitai*. They carried bombs and just enough fuel to reach their targets when they flew out from their bases on missions of no return. Of 1,134 Army Air graduates, 339 died in action. Of 1,268 Army graduates, 351 died in Burma, the Philippines, New Guinea and other areas in Southeast Asia by the end of the war.

### 19. Azimuth Rock

There is another monument at the end of the path, up on Chapel Hill in the clearing near house S-5, where Otakebi Shrine used to stand. It is a huge rock about eight-feet long, seven-feet wide and two-feet high. Its top is made into a disc-shaped hollow, which held a marble azimuth disc. The disc had Chinese characters and



arrows to show the directions to the Imperial Palace and Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, the Grand Shrine in Ise, and other significant places to the military. Academy students came to the rock to pay their respects to the Emperor and to pray to the national guardian deities on festival days.



The academy placed the same azimuth rock on the hill in its south campus for the students billeted there. The hill is now part of Zama Municipal Fujimiyama Park (whose entrance is located east approximately 100 yards from the Gate 2. The rock is preserved by the Education Board of Zama City and still has fragments of the marble disc with inscriptions and arrows.

**20. 24<sup>th</sup> Class** In the small wooded patches between the Torii gate and the Recreation Center (Building S-533), there are three monuments. The first one is a small post-type granite monument on a flat stone foundation. It was erected in 1942 by the alumni of the 24<sup>th</sup> Class (December 1910 to May 1912) to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their commission into the Japanese Imperial Army.



**21. 22<sup>nd</sup> Class** The second upright stone monument was erected in 1940 by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Class (December 1908 to May 1910) to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their commission into the Japanese Imperial Army. The alumni planted a Ginkgo tree near the monument on that occasion. These senior alumni regarded the Sobudai campus as the core campus of their Alma Mater, though they studied at the Ichigaya campus.



## 22. Site of the Imperial Family

### Visiting Quarters

The third monument is located near a fire hydrant in the wooded section on the right of the Recreation Center. The massive natural rock with a metal plate was jointly dedicated on April 6, 1977 by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Group, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and U.S. Army Garrison Honshu at the site of a two-story quarters which was intended to accommodate Imperial family princes while they attended the academy. However, the princes seldom used the quarters because they preferred living in the same barracks as their classmates. The United States forces did not use the building in a show of deference to the Imperial family. In 1976, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Group dismantled the 8,000 square-foot building and reconstructed it at Camp Asaka, Saitama Prefecture, which is now the headquarters of the Eastern Army, JGSDF.



**23. 54<sup>th</sup> Class** The parking lot on North Camp Zama near the Yano Fitness Center has two graduation monuments of the 54<sup>th</sup> Class (December 1937 to September 1940). One is the kusunoki (camphor) tree and the other is the stone monument. The graduates planted the tree because its name was the same as the loyalist military leader Masashige Kusunoki (1294-1336), whom they respected for his loyalty to Emperor Godaigo. Kusunoki fought and died for the 96<sup>th</sup> emperor of the Northern Court when the Imperial family members were divided into the Northern and Southern Courts. (The Emperor Hirohito was a descendent of the Northern Court).

Swearing that they would fight like Kusunoki, the young apprentice officers had their resolution “Fun-chu”, which translates as “Inspire Loyalty”, engraved on their graduation monument, which was erected September 4, 1940. Of the 2,186 graduates in the class, 891 dedicated their lives to Japan.



**24. Memorial Monument of Military Horses** The stone monument located near the east end of Dewey Park fishing pond was erected on July 20, 1967 by the academy's stable hands in memory of 64 military mounts that perished in the stable fire on October 25, 1944. A large number of horses were kept at the campus to teach students horseback riding. The epitaph reads, *Junnan Gunba no Hi*, which means "Memorial for Military Horses Killed in a Disaster". The names of the three originators of this monument are engraved on the back.

There is another monument for military horses in Zama City's Zama Park, which used to be part of the Sobudai campus. The park is adjacent to the western perimeter fence of North Camp Zama. The entrance is located on the right sidewalk near the end of the tunnel which can be seen west from Gate 1.

The tall stone monument was dedicated to all the military horses that had served the Military Academy since its opening in 1875. It was erected by Lieutenant General Munetake Yamamuro, the 33<sup>rd</sup> superintendent of the academy in the summer of 1939. The engraved Chinese characters, *Gunba Koro Hi*, mean "In the Honor to the Meritorious Service of All Military Horses".



**25. Special Dedication Stone** The last monument related to the Military Academy rests at a spot where Cadet Hiroshi Tanaka of the 56th Class died while participating in a field exercise on May 21, 1942. The round natural rock is located in the wooded area outside the western perimeter fence of Kastner Airfield.

The inscription on it with two characters reads, *Ru-Kon*, which means that his soul will remain forever at the academy. The other three characters read *Tanakayama*, which means, "Tanaka's Hill".



Although the original buildings of the *Rikugun Shikan Gakko* have been replaced with new ones over the years, the stone monuments linked with the history of the academy have been preserved well. Camp Zama will be remembered as the alma mater in the hearts of all the academy's alumni as long as the monuments remain on post.