

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

The Official Bi-Monthly Publication of the Society. Membership - \$10.00 Annually
c/o

Volume 9 No. 5

September - October 1977

DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS

Once again it is time for nominations to be made for members of our society Board of Directors for the two year term-of-office for the years 1978-79.

This is an important position in the functions of the JSS/US. Primarily, the duties of a Director is to approve, as a member of the Board, any proposals made by the society Officers. We of course need our Officers leadership, but we must have our Directors review and approval for official acceptance. Nominations should be made with this responsibility in mind and only seriously concerned and willing members nominated. The time factor required of a Director is minimal but we must have Directors who are interested.

Each member of the JSS/US is asked to think about this important task and, if possible, to make a nomination to the Board for this up-coming election. Send your nominations to the NEWSLETTER EDITOR who will in turn pass on these nominations to the official Election Committee, to be selected during our annual meeting at the coming Chicago TGS sword show (see announcement in this issue).

An election will be held via a mailed ballot to be sent to each JSS/US member with the November/December issue of the NEWSLETTER. Details will be stipulated on this official ballot at that time.

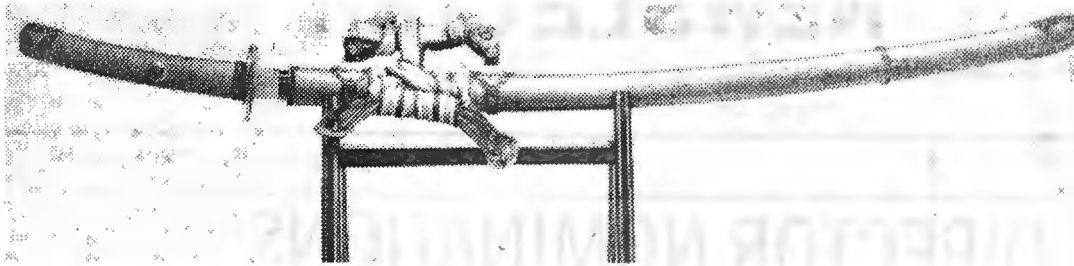
NEW MEMBERS -

We are proud to welcome the following new members to the JSS:

Pucci, L. Richard -
Allen, L.W. -
Galeno, W.A. -
Stathis, James K. -
Looze, John E. Jr. -
Clements, Charles -
Terry, Thomas L. -

STOLEN TACHI -

The membership is asked to be on the look-out for the sword shown below. The article is from the Fairhaven STANDARD TIMES - 9/2/77 - and describes the incident and present reward for the return of this historic item.



Missing 14th Century samurai sword.

Symbolic Fairhaven sword stolen

The 14th Century samurai sword, a visible symbol of the long-standing friendship between Japan and Fairhaven, was stolen early yesterday afternoon from the town's Millicent Library.

Miss Rita E. Steele, librarian, said the three-and-a-half-foot sword — presented to the town by the Japanese ambassador 59 years ago — was taken from the Rogers Room of the library by a thief, or thieves, who carefully removed the cover of a glass case and placed it on the floor.

Also taken were a gold ceremonial bowl and an honorary medal housed in the case.

"I walked into the room and saw the case on the floor," explained Miss Steele. "The case was not broken, just detached from the base and put carefully on the floor.

"It's amazing how they did it because the sword is practically visible from the door," she said adding it usually takes two persons to lift the cover.

None of the stolen objects had been recovered by today, Fairhaven police said. However, police want to question two persons of the following descriptions:

The first is described as a white male about 6 feet, 3 inches, of medium build with brownish-blond hair cut in an Afro-style, and a heavy beard. At the time he was seen in the library, he was wearing a light blue shirt, plaid, bell-bottomed dungarees and black-rimmed clear glasses. He is said to be between 23 and 26.

The second is described as a white male, about 5 feet 11 inches, to 6 feet, with black hair of medium length and a well-trimmed beard. He was seen wearing a blue spring jacket and dark blue pants. He also is said to be between 23 and 26.

According to police reports, the pair was "seen hanging around the library all morning." They left before noon, the report says, and returned later. They were not seen leaving again.

Fairhaven police were called to the library at 2:48 p.m. yesterday. They were informed the sword was valued at more than \$1,000.

It was on July 4, 1918 that Viscount Kikujiro Ishii, ambassador from Japan to the United States, presented the ceremonial sword to Fairhaven on behalf of Dr. Toichiro Nakahama, whose late father, Prince Manjiro

Nakahama, had been rescued from an island in the Pacific Ocean by Captain William H. Whitfield of Fairhaven in 1841.

Miss Steele believes that the gold bowl and the medal (Sacred Treasure third class) also valued at more than \$1,000 came from the late Charles Sumner Hamlin, a Mattapoisett summer resident. Hamlin, for many years with the Federal Reserve Board, had participated in special missions to Japan earlier in his career and been decorated by that government.

Miss Steele said the theft was the third at the library. A mantle clock was taken a few years ago and two bronze lions some months ago.

All thefts appeared to have been well planned with only specific items taken in each instance, the librarian noted.

\$500 reward posted for Fairhaven sword

A \$500 reward is being offered for the return of this sword on a "no questions asked" basis. The money for the reward is coming out of private funds of interested individuals.

STOLEN SWORD (cont'd.)

The blade is a O-suriage tachi, mumei, with wide full groove each side at shinogi-ji. The length is approximately 27".

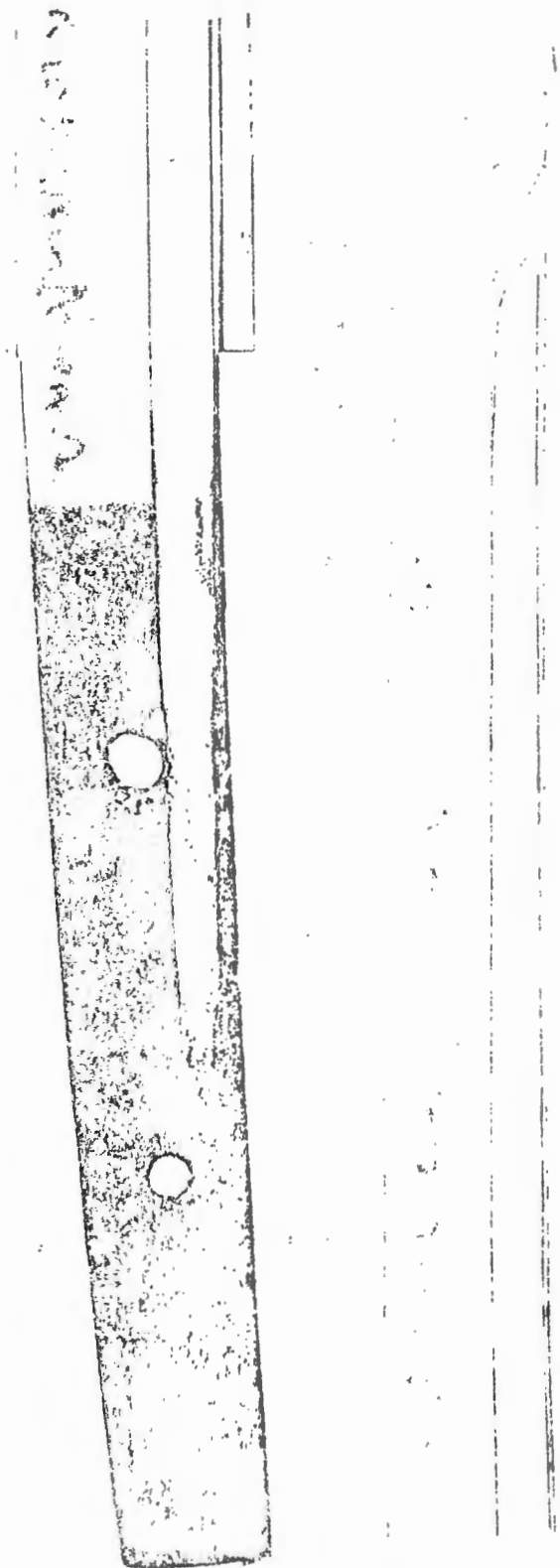
Yakiba is choji-midare with tobiyaki and ashi. Hada is itame with fine utsuri.

The blade is of the Bizen ICHIMONJI YOSHIOKA GROUP. The maker is probably Morimitsu or his brother Moromitsu, c.1350. It is in 1st class polish.

Mounts are tachi form, gold nishiji lacquer saya. Fittings are nanako shakudo, gold edged tsuba. The saya ashi, menuki and tsuba are shakudo with gold DOVES. On the kabuto-gani there is a design similar to a KIRI MON in gold.

Anyone knowing of the location of this sword should contact the Millicent Library c/o Miss Rita Steele, Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

Stolen swords are always a great financial loss to the owner, but often it is a great emotional loss too as in the case of this symbolic sword of Fairhaven. We must always do what we can to eliminate such thefts from museums and personal collections.



The HAMON pattern

The stolen sword

MENUKI AND TSUBA BY THE ARTIST

JIRITSUSAI TOMOHIDE

by John Yumoto

The menuki are made of gold finished in KATCHI-BORI with KEBORI engraving. There is the usual NE with YOTSU-NE (four-piece anchor metal) with the signature done in TANZAKU-MEI style. One menuki has JIRITSUSAI and the other has TOMOHIDE.

The tsuba is 7.1cm high and is 0.5cm thick at the seppa-dai. It has a maru-mimi (rounded rim). The tsuba is made of good quality shakudō and has the motif of two puppies and reed with a background of clouds. The ji is of fine ISHIME ground finish. The reed was inlaid of better quality shakudō and the top section is of gold. The two puppies are inlaid in the style of SUEMON-ZOGAN, or the two puppy shapes are made one with better grade of shakudō and the other of shibuichi and these two individual pieces were set into the ground. The spots of the two puppies were inlaid in the style of OKIGANE of gold and silver. The OKIGANE is a type of inlay, however, it covers a more broad area. The Ura, or the reverse side of the tsuba, has the motif of reed and stream.

The tsuba is signed on the omote, or the obverse side, with the name JIRITSUSAI TOMOHIDE with kao.

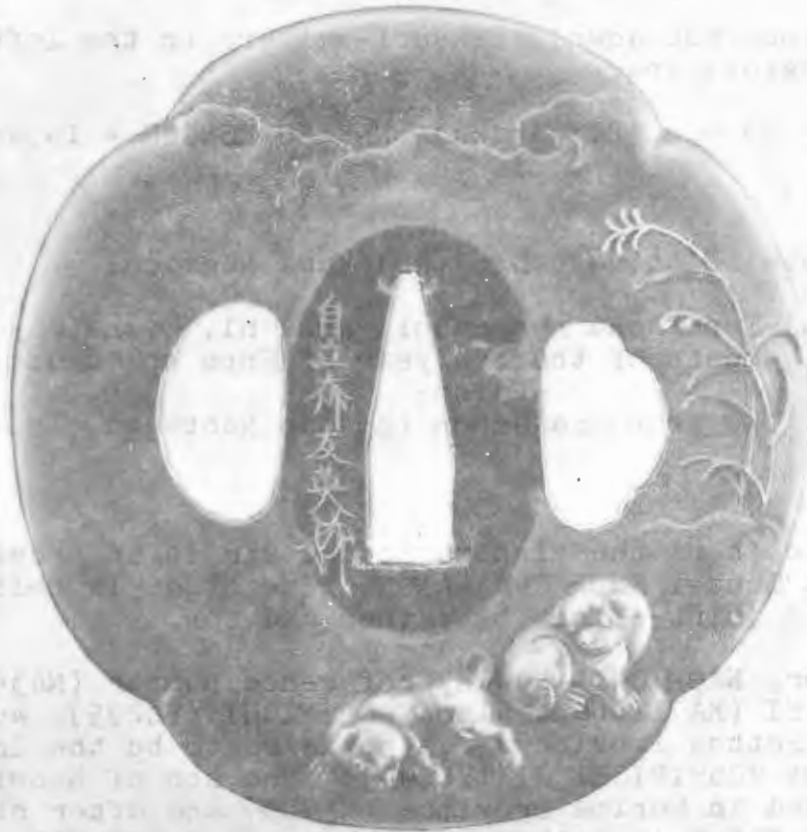
Mr. Homatsu Wakayama said in his excellent book KINKO JITEN, Tokyo, 1970 (page 277) TOMOHIDE; "Family name was Miyake and given name was Motojiro. In his late years he used the name of Hokukyu. Possibly he was affiliated with Miyake Terumitsu. TOMOHIDE worked in the temple compound of Eishio-ji, in Kamichikugo section of the town of Nagasaki in the province of Hizen, then moved to Higashi-naka machi area. He died at the age of 70 on May 10th, 4th year of Koka (1847) at Hondo village on the island of Amakusa. TOMOHIDE was an expert kinko artist in the area of Nagasaki around the end of the Tokugawa Period."

The Miyake Terumitsu who died very young, age of 36 in the 4th year of Tenmei (1784). He was a very promising kinko artist and studied under the great kinko artist Yokoya Soyo II, and also very possibly under Omori master.

I have seen a few of TOMOHIDE's works and am always impressed with his skillful and clean touch and classic work, yet the touch of human feeling. I am specially impressed with the excellent execution of kebori on the menuki. His signature is also shown on page 277 of KINKO MEIKAN.



Menuki by JIRITSUSAI TOMOHIDE



Tsuba by JIRITSUSAI TOMOHIDE

MISHINA TANGO (no) KAMI NAOMICHI

oshigata by Howard Sloan

TYPE AND FORM - Katana in shinogi-zukuri form with torii-zori and a medium degree of taper.

JI-HADA - The hada is Itame Hada mixed with larger pattern itame.

BOSHI - Suguha chu-maru (typical Mishina school).

HAMON - (omote) Mixture of midare-gunome in sudare (Mishina school) style.
(ura) komidare and gunome style.

NAKAGO - Ubu (not cut down). Yasuri-mei are to the left. There is one mekugi-ana.

BLADE LENGTH - 69.8cm (2.3 Shaku) NAKAGO LENGTH - 19.9cm (6.6 Sun)

SIGNATURE (MEI) -

(omote) Mishina Tango (no) Kami Naomichi

(ura) Enpo Roku nen Hachi gatsu hi. (one day of the 8th month of the 6th year of Enpo or August 1678)

-also-

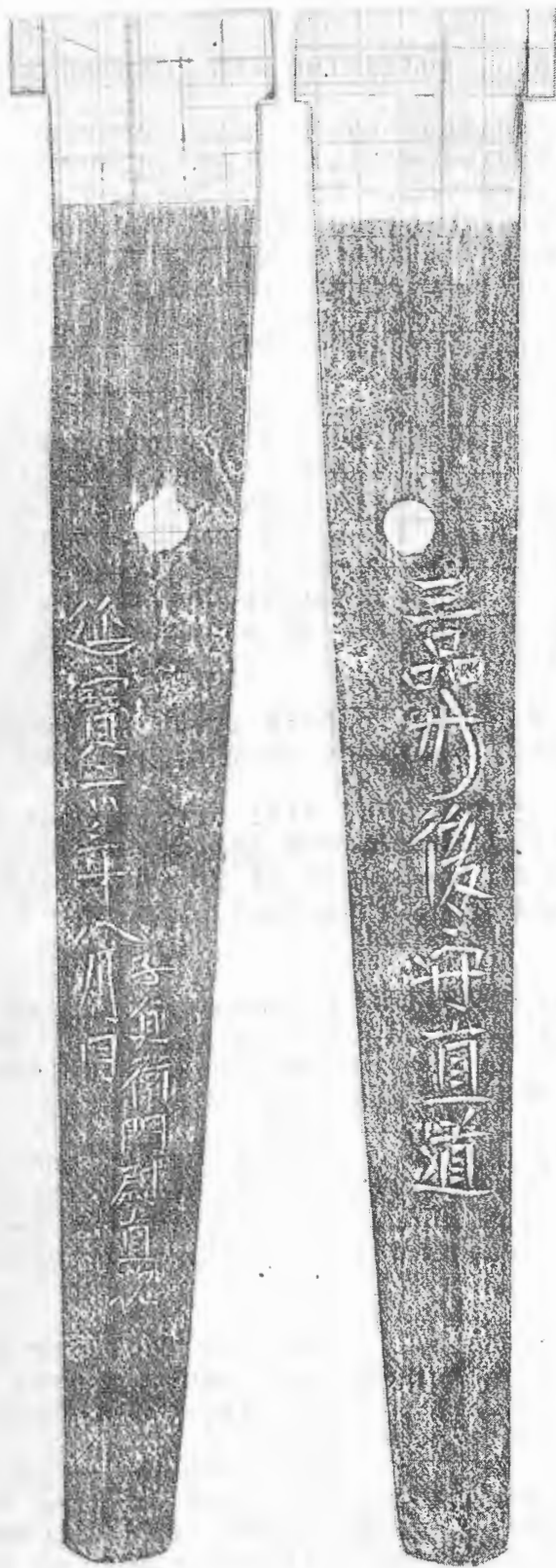
Ko (son) Sadaemon (no) Jo Naotsugu.

REMARKS -

This blade is of the Mishina School and is an excellent example of the Mishina School SUDAREBA HAMON. The blade is believed to be the result of a joint-effort by father and son.

The father, NAOMICHI, Hawley reference number (NA346, later called KANEMICHI (KA712) and also YOSHIMICHI (YO295), working in Yamashiro and Settsu Provinces, is believed to be the 2nd son of Tamba (no) Kami YOSHIMICHI II (YO294). The son of Naomichi, named NAOTSUGU, worked in Harima Province (NA400) and after his father's death took his father's ~~took the father's~~ name and title. This is then NAOMICHI (NA347) of Settsu Province.

The koshirae consists of black lacquered saya with a tint of gold, with kurikata and saguri. Habaki is silver wrapped with the traditional "cat scratches". Tsuba is iron open-work of chrysanthemum and leaf design in positive silhouette with the body of the design sunken below the main surface and with light chasing. The Fuchigashira is of plain shibuichi ground. The fuchi displays a mon of half of 16 petal kiku in gold and the kashira a gold kiri mon. The set is signed YOSHITADA with kakihan. The tsuka is wrapped in black tsuka-ito.



MISHINA TANGO (no) KAMI NAOMICHI
and his son NAOTSUGU dated 1678

HIGHLIGHTS OF A VISIT WITH MESSRS. FUJISHIRO AND YOSHIHARA -

The following article was written by Mr. Bill Trevino as a follow-up to the interview entitled, An Interview in Dallas - JSS/US Newsletter Vol.9 No.4. The article is comprised of noteworthy highlights from a visit with Mr. Yoshindo Yoshihara and Mr. Okisato Fujishiro at the home of Mr. Mike Quigley the day after the Dallas interview. Bill felt that the membership could benefit from these highlights and thoughts and is sharing them with the membership through this writing.

After a wonderful cheese puff and sausage breakfast with our families, we retired to Mike's "Mei Butsu" room, accompanied by the resounding drums of the Japanese Taiko ensemble. The atmosphere was relaxed and our guests were free and cordial with information we sought. Shozo Miyashita was present, and as always his translations guided us over the rough technical details we foundered upon. The following is but the highlights of a delightful four hours spent this last 4th of July.

Only about one percent of Japanese blades polished today in Japan are Yari. I understand why, they are most difficult.

Modern makers, such as Mr. Yoshihara, will accept orders to make a blade in any style or size; price was not discussed. He will put your name on the blade as the owner if you so desire. Use tape to cover opposing edges when polishing Yari; it saves sliced fingers and palms.

The weather in Japan is very similar to Texas this time of the year. Mike Quigley has one hell of a Jakushi collection. We were astonished at the quality and condition of the many fine pieces we were privileged to handle, gloves notwithstanding.

Chinese ink stone, Sumi, is better in quality than the Japanese stone. To test, try both types on oshigata paper backed by a smooth surface. Do normal oshigata strokes. Compare the two sheets. Caking or black spots, separation of texture denotes the lesser quality.

Both Fujishiro and Yoshihara have a wonderful feel for blades which is rounded out with a great sense of humor when a real bummer of a blade pops up. Case in point was a piece without temper that I asked an opinion on. We all had a good laugh.

Fujisniro uses a padded wooden clothes pin and doubles the oshigata paper over the mune. His oshigata reveal the thickness at the nakago as well as both of its sides without removing the paper.

Yosnimichi (Tamba no Kami) blades have a slight out-sweep from the ko-shinogi to the mune. Somewhat like a naginata but almost imperceptibly so.

HIGHLIGHTS (cont'd.)

The Kagi's anvil is about 10 x 4 inches and over two feet long. Weight is 3,000 pounds. It is buried over half it's length in the ground and the top surface is hard steel.

Fujishiro takes many pictures and knows his cameras. He uses an Olympus FP, wide angle 1.2 lens with Fujicolor, ASA 400.

Mike's wife Diane brings coffee, our kids are raising Cane downstairs, the lilt of their laughter almost overpowering the Taiko drums.

Both Fujishiro and Yoshihara are young men. Fujishiro is 29, and Yoshihara 34. Yoshihara has a young son and daughter and Fujishiro has two daughters. We didn't pass around snapshots.

Fujishiro has not heard of any American Desai polishers in Japan. Miyshita has acquired the gift of translating American humor. What does "Junk Wa" mean?

A very long flame-grooved Yari I have been polishing for Dean Hartley has a probable kantei of "Nanto Kimbo Masatsugu".

Sword manners are reflected by the white gloves in use; there will be no fingerprints tonight.

Some magnets are too strong for oshigata paper, it tears.

Kizu must be judged either as kizu or rust before polishing, the danger being that a kizu may become enlarged.

Fujishiro was most helpful to me with constructive suggestions. He has a most keen eye for contour, immediately detecting the most slightest imperfection. No wonder he is rapidly becoming one of the foremost polisher in Japan.

It seems that the major focus of a good-better-best polish is centered in the kissaki. The contour, color, and style of the boshi indicate the polisher's technique. Whenever possible it is really beneficial to examine a great blade in great polish, especially with an expert polisher to point out all the facets.

Yoshihara signs his blades by writing his signature in colored pencil, then cutting it with a chisel. He believes his signature will change over the years and from blade to blade, but when examined in intervals of a few years, the subtle changes can be seen and traced, blade to blade. The evolution of the signature is the authenticating clue. Certain strokes remain somewhat constant.

HIGHLIGHTS (cont'd.)

Between making oshigata of Mike's superb Masanori collection, Fujishiro explained another technique to back the hazuya stone with Yoshino paper and Urushi (Sumac sap). The Hazuya is one of the essential steps in bringing up the hamon and finishing the boshi, a very technical process but a real boon to me.

Both Fujishiro and Yoshihara gave us their autographs. The afternoon ended with exchanges of business cards and picture taking.

This meeting was an honor for me and I would like to express my gratitude to Shozo Miyashita without whose help many points would still be nebulous, and most of all to R.B.Caldwell who made it all possible for Mike, our host this day, and me to meet these gentlemen.

CHICAGO SWORD SHOW -

Last call for the coming Token Study Group annual Chicago sword show. October 28, 29 and 30 at the O'hare Inn Ramada, Des Plaines, Illinois (6600 N. Mannheim Road). As always, it promises to be a great show and is always well attended. Advance table reservations are advised. Contact Mr. Ted Wysocky, for reservations of tables.

As mentioned earlier, the JSS/US will most likely hold a meeting during this show. It may be a joint TSG/JSS meeting, whatever, but something will take place of this nature. If you attend the show, keep an ear out for announcement of time and place for this meeting.

WANTED - FOR SALE ITEMS -

This section of the Newsletter is offered free to our members as a means to locate or sell specific items or to make specific requests.

- **Wanted:** Pieces of swords and fittings. I am starting an effort on elemental analysis on old swords and fittings.
Contact: Mel Oka

- **For Sale or Trade:**
I have recently acquired around (40) antique stereoscope pictures showing various camp shots, etc., of the Japanese during their 1898 (?) war with Russia. Not sword material but possibly of interest to any Japanese history buffs. For further info, contact: Ron Hartmann c/o the Newsletter address.

SWORD TOUR TO JAPAN IS IN PROGRESS -

A letter from John Yumoto reports that the 4th Annual Sword Tour to Japan is in progress. Some fourteen people signed up this year (including several couples). This is a wonderful opportunity for one to see and study the fine swords in Japan and anyone who can swing the cost of it (probably around \$2,000 in 1978) should definitely take advantage of this opportunity when it is offered. Anyone interested in 1978 should contact John as soon as this present tour is over.

Hopefully we will receive some informative reports from this present tour for printing in our Newsletter. I see one member is a professional writer so this sounds promising.

POLISHING SERVICES -

There has been a little confusion concerning "cost" of the polishing services mentioned in the last Newsletter, sponsored by John Yumoto through Kajiwara Kotoken and Associates of Japan. The cost was stated in "sun" which came out to be around \$21 per "inch".

A letter received the other day from Mr. Burton Sherman mentions that he will be sole agent in the U.S. for Kajiwara Kōtōken. It is not clear just what has taken place here but the members will be advised of particulars as soon as they are known. It looks like we will finally be given the chance to have our blades restored within a reasonable time period what with a number of polishing services being made available to us here in the states.

ARMOR AND SWORD BOOK AVAILABLE -

A rather nice book has been made available to us from the Galerie Robert Burawoy, Paris. This is a catalogue of an exhibition in Paris showing a selection of the best armor, helmets, masks, swords and fittings in various French collections. A limited number of the soft bound catalogues have been purchased for the membership. The book is 80 pages, 140 objects illustrated (70 in color), Japanese index and French text. Price is \$20 plus \$1 postage/insurance (U.S. \$ only). These can be ordered from your Newsletter editor.

NEW ENGLAND BRANCH -

The New England branch of JSS/US is continuing to drive ahead with excellent local programs. The latest lecturer was Mr. David Pepper of the Royal Ontario Museum who delivered a lecture on restoration. Before Mr. Pepper came an excellent lecture by Dean Hartley who I understand really captivated those attending.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - The November/December issue of the NL will come out in early December. Have all material into the editor well in advance of this time. We always need material!

RON HARTMANN