

The Life, the Legacy

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#### YOUTH

Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind; it is not a matter of rosy cheeks, red lips and supple knees; it is a matter of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions; it is the freshness of the deep springs of life.

Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity of the appetite, for adventure over the love of ease. This often exists in a man of sixty more than a boy of twenty. Nobody grows old merely by a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals.

Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, fear, self-distrust bows the heart and turns the spirit back to dust.

Whether sixty or sixteen, there is in every human being's heart the lure of wonder, the unfailing child-like appetite of what's next, and the joy of the game of living. In the center of your heart and my heart there is a wireless station; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, courage and power from men and from the Infinite, so long are you young.

When the aerials are down, and your spirit is covered with snows of cynicism and the ice of pessimism, then you are grown old, even at twenty, but as long as your aerials are up, to catch the waves of optimism, there is hope you may die young at eighty.

#### Foreword

Thousands of wonderful and sometimes strange fads have captured the public fancy in the almost five decades since the end of World War II. Most have been short-lived and soon faded away.

There is, however, a poem that has not only withstood the vicissitudes of time, but has spread around the world like the waves lapping at a beach. This is the poem "Youth," by Samuel Ullman.

In December 1945, the *Reader's Digest* published the poem and reported that General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of the Allied Forces, Far East, kept a copy of the poem near his desk.

Around that time, Yoshio Okada, a Japanese businessman, bought a copy of that December 1945 edition of the *Reader's Digest*, read the poem and was deeply affected by it. He translated it into Japanese and displayed it in his office as a guiding inspiration. Many of Okada's friends read the poem and were fascinated by its beauty. It began to receive national publicity through newspapers and magazines and became popular throughout Japan, especially among the intellectual community.

Part of the reason for this widespread popularity is the excellence of the translation. Yoshio Okada, a man of noble character, gifted with a profound philosophy of life and literary talent, translated the poem into a beautiful, soulstirring Japanese version.

ix Foreword

Samuel Ullman's "Youth" reflects the truth of life, and his outcry of spirituality touches the intrinsic nature of man.

I first encountered the poem in 1965 while busily engaged in the many responsibilities of establishing Toppan Moore Company, a joint venture business between Japan and Canada. It was given to me by a friend. I glanced at it and was immediately struck with its beauty and profound message. It was something worthy of sharing with others.

Over a span of some twenty years that I served as president of Toppan Moore, I distributed more than ten thousand copies of the poem.

In 1985, The Youth Association was formed in Tokyo. This is an organization of some 150 corporate members and 1800 individual members from all walks of life throughout Japan, from the island of Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa in the south. It has no political, religious or commercial association. It is simply an organization of people meeting to praise the spirit of youth, empathize with one another and share the joy and hope of life that is put forth so eloquently in Samuel Ullman's poem.

Japan has been completely rebuilt since the devastation of World War II. I believe Samuel Ullman's poem "Youth" played a part in this process by sustaining the Japanese mind with its inspiring message. Certainly, it is fair to say that the name of Samuel Ullman echoes throughout Japan, along with the name of his home state, Alabama.

I extend my deepest gratitude and respect to the memory of Samuel Ullman and wish The University of Alabama Press every success for this very worthy publication.

Jiro M. Miyazawa Tokyo, Japan May 1992

## Acknowledgments

On a mild day in March 1989, my colleague and friend Dean Tennant McWilliams visited my office in the Ullman Building on the campus of the University of Alabama at Birmingham to ask if I would consider producing a brief biography on the late-nineteenth-century Birmingham civic leader for whom the building was named. He asked me to meet with local attorney Wyatt Haskell who represented a group within the local community that was interested in the life and work of Samuel Ullman. I met Haskell, who wondered aloud why a wide segment of the Japanese population knows of Ullman and Ullman's poem, "Youth," while most Alabamians and Americans have heard of neither. To me, that seemed a reasonable question, so I agreed to do some preliminary research to see if I wanted to pursue writing a brief overview of Ullman's life. I soon found that Ullman's life incorporated what I like best about history: It was a good story.

Two years later, I completed a larger manuscript than originally envisioned. In that time I came to know, appreciate, respect, and have deep affection for Mayer Ullman Newfield, who generously, energetically, and with unwavering optimism aided and abetted my research. This grandson of Samuel Ullman opened his heart, memory, and files to me during the course of this project. In Natchez, Mississippi, his cousin Elaine Lehman and her husband Robert were equally hospitable and helpful as I researched the Natchez part of Ullman's life. Another Ullman in-law, Hank Gaggstatter of Miami,

Florida, became an enthusiastic supporter of the project and came forward with interesting and useful documents related to Ullman's life and career.

As all researchers must, I depended during this project on the help, knowledge, and pleasant dispositions of librarians and archivists across the country. My friends at the Archives and the Tutwiler Collection of the Birmingham Public Library — Yvonne Crumpler, Jim Murray, Don Veasey, Marvin Whiting - were, as always, full of information and unfailingly cheerful when they saw me approach. Of the many librarians and archivists to whom I am indebted in research facilities in Louisville, Norfolk, Washington, Cincinnati, and Natchez. one stands out in my memory: Connie Randazzo, who directs the Natchez-Adams (County) School District Library-Media Services, spent several days locating and searching the earliest records of the Natchez Board of Visitors, the city's early board of education. She combed those records for references to Ullman, and when she discovered the "mother lode" her excitement and delight matched mine. Historical detective work is fun, but it becomes especially sweet when someone else joins you in the discovery process.

Colleagues in the UAB Department of History, especially Virginia Hamilton, buoyed my spirit by giving encouragement and acting as critical readers of the manuscript. Katharine Stark, Jodie Hudson, and Janene Riley remained patient when both the computer and I tried to self-destruct. James Penick and Debra Givens provided me with every support and consideration to facilitate completion of this work. Finally, my family — Rodger, Amy, and Rod — showed their usual forebearance with my always having my nose in a book or a stack of papers. Their reward, I hope, is that by studying Ullman's life I have grown younger in spirit. While my debt of gratitude is great, I alone bear responsibility for the content of this book.

#### SAMUEL ULLMAN AND "YOUTH"

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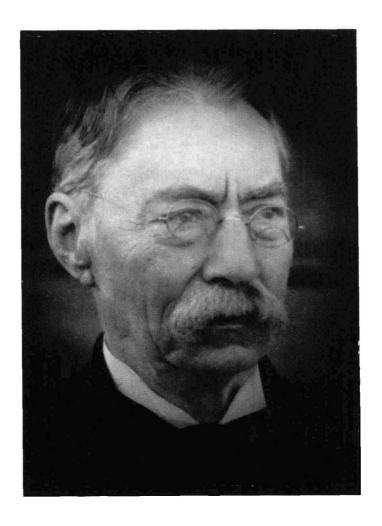
## "Youth": A Philosophy, a Bridge

In late June 1990, Kokichi Hagiwara, the majority owner and new chairman of National Steel Corporation, stood before a press gathering in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and pulled from his briefcase a single sheet of paper that held, he explained, his plan for making National Steel a more profitable business. The paper contained no tables, graphs, or profit-and-loss statements. To the surprise of those present, it was merely a brief prose poem entitled "Youth," written around the turn of the century by Samuel Ullman of Birmingham, Alabama. The poem, said Hagiwara, "touched me at the core of my heart," and embodied his philosophy for creating a successful future for National Steel.1

Ullman's poem, "Youth," has appeared in "Dear Abby" and "Ann Landers" columns and in *Reader's Digest*. United States senators and a television anchorwoman have quoted from it. Anthologies of Ullman's poetry have sold widely in Japan. Yet the poet and his poetry remain largely unknown in America. Soldier, merchant, rabbi, philosopher, and progressive community activist, Ullman lived an authentic American life—a life that stretched from Europe to America and, through his poetry, to Japan.

In 1944, twenty years after Ullman's death and during the waning months of World War II, war correspondent Colonel Frederick Palmer visited General Douglas MacArthur at his Manila headquarters. Palmer's attention was drawn to an arrangement on the wall behind MacArthur's desk where pictures of presidents George Washington and Abraham

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;Youth": A Philosophy, a Bridge



Samuel Ullman, April 13, 1840–March 21, 1924. Relatives, noting the thinning of Ullman's face and neck, believe that this may be one of the last photographs taken of him. Although known as an exuberantly happy man, Ullman often posed with a somewhat stern expression on his face. (Photograph courtesy Mayer U. Newfield.)

Lincoln hung and, between them, a framed document entitled "How to Stay Young." Palmer inquired about the poetic essay and the general told him that he received the unattributed work from an admirer, John W. Lewis, Jr., in April 1942 while he (MacArthur) was stationed in Melbourne, Australia. When Colonel Palmer wrote of this exchange and reproduced the poem in the September 30, 1945 This Week magazine supplement to thousands of newspapers around the country, the demand for copies was enormous.<sup>2</sup>

Determined to see their ancestor recognized as the author of the poem, members of Ullman's family sent *This Week* a full, original version of "Youth" as it appeared in the 1922 edition of *From the Summit of Years, Four Score*, an anthology of Ullman's poetry published by family members after the celebration of his eightieth birthday. Ullman was acknowledged as the author of the poem when *Reader's Digest* reproduced the *This Week* article in its December 1945 issue. The poem also appeared in a Japanese version of *Reader's Digest* in January 1946. Japanese soldiers in the process of repatriation from Pacific locations read this edition while on ships returning them home. Slowly "Youth" began to invade the Japanese consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

This "invasion" was encouraged by the respect which a subject Japanese people held for MacArthur, who hung Ullman's poem in the same decorative arrangement on the wall of his office in Tokyo when he arrived there in September 1945 to oversee occupied Japan. Among the most important of the Japanese leaders who came to that office to consult with MacArthur on matters related to their recovery was the eminent businessman Yasuzaemon Matsunaga, who later earned the title "King of Electric Power" (Den-Ryo-Ku-O). Matsunaga took note of the poem hanging on the general's wall, translated it into Japanese, and distributed it to friends and associates. Matsunaga's fame, as well as that of Mac-

Arthur, helped to spread the work's reputation among a small but elite group of businessmen and intellectuals in Japan.<sup>4</sup>

As "Youth" made its way into Japan's culture, it remained almost unknown in the United States. The poetic essay, with Ullman cited as author, appeared in a 1934 anthology, *The Silver Treasury*, compiled by Jane Manners (New York: Samuel French), and the privately published collection of Ullman's poems, *From the Summit of Years*, *Four Score*, was cited in Joseph L. Baron's *Treasury of Jewish Quotations* (New York: Crown, 1956). In 1952, *The Monitor*, a publication of the Associated Industries of New York State, sought MacArthur's permission to use the "creed" in a future issue. Lawrence Bunker, MacArthur's aide, responded by citing Ullman's authorship but continued, "General MacArthur has, of course, no objection to your reference to him in the caption." 5

After his "retirement" from the Korean conflict in 1952, MacArthur returned to the United States for the first time in sixteen years and became a corporate advisor and much sought-after speaker. On January 26, 1955, his seventy-fifth birthday, MacArthur gave three well-publicized speeches in Los Angeles, California. During the evening event, before an audience of American Legionnaires at the Ambassador Hotel. MacArthur delivered a talk later described as "one of his best in delivery and effectiveness." According to MacArthur's biographer, the portion of the speech that received the most notice and comment was a quotation MacArthur used from a "little-known, brief essay that some thought he penned but that was actually composed by a long deceased Southern business and civic leader, Samuel Ullman." In that speech MacArthur declared that he was still young at seventy-five because he believed that "youth is not entirely a time of life it is a state of mind." Previously, in 1952, MacArthur had quoted from Ullman's poem in a speech before a Remington Rand executives' dinner, but the 1955 speech was more widely covered by major newspapers and magazines, most of which included portions of Ullman's work in their coverage of the speech.<sup>6</sup>

One journalist who was impressed with the message of the quotation used by MacArthur sought the identity of its author. George Sokolsky wrote an article for the New York *Journal American* in which he identified Ullman as the author of the original essay. Later, during MacArthur's final illness in 1964, news articles again carried portions of "Youth" to explain the general's philosophy of life and his determined will to live.<sup>7</sup>

The publicity surrounding MacArthur's seventy-fifth birthday and his death no doubt revived interest in Ullman's poetic essay both in Japan and the United States. Yet Ullman's authorship continued to be largely unheralded. Unattributed portions of "Youth" appeared in Allen Saunders's "Mary Worth" cartoon strip on January 1, 1971, in the "Ann Landers" column of February 15, 1977, and in "Dear Abby" on June 25. 1982. On June 8, 1968, Senator Edward M. Kennedy quoted from the poem in his eulogy at the funeral of his slain brother Robert, who earlier had used the same portion in a speech before an audience of South African young people. "The answer [to the world's problems]," said Senator Kennedy quoting his brother, "is to rely on youth, not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease." During a November 1991 story that aired on the "Sunday Today" program, NBC news anchorwoman Mary Alice Williams guoted lines from "Youth" and credited nineteenth-century English poet William Wordsworth as its author. From the 1960s through the early 1990s, "Youth" received limited recognition in the United States, but Ullman's authorship did not.8

During the 1960s, meanwhile, Ullman's poem began by various means to capture the attention and affection of a larger audience in Japan, especially among businessmen.

Kounosuke Matsushita, creator of the Matsushita Group, reminisced when he was ninety-two years of age (in 1987) that when he was seventy he felt too old to pursue a major expansion of his business. In the mid-1960s, as he began to establish the Panasonic division of the Matsushita Group, the founder feared that this new venture might be too demanding for the fading mental and physical energies of a man of his age. Then he discovered a copy of "Youth." Matsushita memorized portions of the poem and, for inspiration and encouragement, often repeated its lines to himself and to others. In the words of the poem he found a renewed enthusiasm and energy to continue building his business. He copied a portion of the poem in his own calligraphy and sent reproduced copies to each of his more than 20,000 dealers around the world. Referred to at his death at the age of ninetyfour as "one of Japan's leading postwar industrialists," billionaire Matsushita regularly greeted people with, "Have you made some money?" Yet this pragmatist found in the simple message of "Youth" spiritual and mental refreshment.9

Another successful Japanese businessman, Kyoichi Itoh, received a copy of the poem from his father, Chubei Itoh, founder of the internationally known trading firm C. Itoh and Company. The elder Itoh had received the poem from Matsunaga and both he and his son, who became a noted entrepreneur in his own right, used portions of it in speeches they made at social and business functions. Osamu Uno succeeded Kyoichi Itoh as Chairman of Toyo Boseki (the largest textile manufacturer in Japan) and later became chairman of the Kansai Federation of Economic Organizations (Kan-Kei-Ren). Uno came to know and appreciate "Youth" in 1965, during the publicity surrounding MacArthur's death. He, too, began to use the poem in speeches, and in 1982 he quoted from "Youth" in two articles he wrote for a leading economic journal, The Japan Economic Journal (Nihon Keizai Shimbun), the Japanese equivalent of The Wall Street Journal. The response to the articles and requests for copies of the poem astonished him. One of those who contacted Uno regarding the poem was Munehisa "Sam" Sakuyama. He and Uno became friends and developed a business association centered on their common interest in "Youth" and its author, Ullman. Uno and Sakuyama explained the poem's popularity by suggesting that, after World War II, Japanese citizens worked under "great tension and pressure in [a] controlled society." Under such stress, Japanese businessmen yearned for more satisfaction and meaning in their lives. "Youth" encouraged individual responsibility, "which is not unique to Americans," and offered the hope that people could stay young and strong by thinking optimistically. 10

Sakuyama visited Birmingham in 1983 to learn more about the person he had begun to call the "Phantom Poet" who wrote the simple, optimistic, and influential work that gained the affection of so many Japanese citizens. In Birmingham, Sakuyama met Ullman's grandson, Mayer Ullman Newfield, who told him of Ullman's community services, shared additional writings of Ullman with him, and escorted him to the home where Ullman lived until his death and to the building that bears Ullman's name on the campus of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Thirty-eight years after the Japanese discovered "Youth," they were finally beginning to discover its author. Armed with the additional writings of Ullman, Sakuyama and Uno collaborated in translating and publishing in Japanese The Poem Titled "Youth": The Phantom Poet, Samuel Ullman (Seisbun-to-Iunano-shi). This book includes a brief biographical sketch of Ullman's life, several versions of "Youth," information on how the Japanese came to know "Youth," and letters written by and about Ullman. As the Japanese learned more about Ullman and especially about his devotion to Judaism and American individualism, "Youth" took on even greater meaning. 11

Jiro M. Miyazawa also came to know and appreciate

<sup>7 &</sup>quot;Youth": A Philosophy, a Bridge