Isoroku Takano, born to the family of a Confucian scholar in 1884, was an intelligent youth and respected Benjamin Franklin since his junior high school days. He studied very hard and acquired a broad knowledge of various things. Becoming the successor of the family of Tatewaki Yamamoto, a counselor of the feudal lord in the old Nagaoka Domain, Isoroku married a daughter of a samurai family of the old Aizu Feudal Domain.

While mastering the arts of both the pen and the sword, working with a spirit of fortitude and vigor, and following a motto that showed the spirit of Nagaoka (“always have the spirit of being on a battlefield”), he focused his attention on petroleum and aviation early on in his career. Inspired by Lindbergh’s non-stop transatlantic flight, he especially stressed the significance of aviation. At the outbreak of the Pacific War, his foresight about aviation was proven to the world.

However, Yamamoto firmly opposed the outbreak of the war. Taking the risk upon himself, he strongly opposed the Japan-Germany-Italy Triple Alliance, stating that his spirit would not be defeated even if his physical body were destroyed. His way of thinking may have been a direct result of his sincere love and affection for his hometown and the people.

Despite his objections to joining the war, Yamamoto commanded the unprecedented battle as the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet. In 1943, Yamamoto died during an inspection tour over Bougainville Island. We hope to convey the humanity of Isoroku Yamamoto, who lived with a strong yet flexible mind during a turbulent century, to the 21st century.
A Letter from October 1942 to Masumi Meguro from the Warship Yamato

“...There will be no more excellent leaders from Nagaoaka if someone from Nagachū (Nagaoaka Middle School) with an unfavorable spirit tries to break up Wadokai, the alumni association.”

Yamamoto, who had to walk a dangerous path while being well aware of the situations of others as well as his own, wrote to his classmate Masumi Meguro, one of his best friends, in the beginning of October 1942. Yamamoto lamented over his bad luck that resulted from being put in a situation against his will.

It was the time when the Japanese Imperial Navy assumed the defensive after the Solomon Islands campaign. Yamamoto expressed his true feelings, saying “the USA is much more tenacious than Japan in terms of its national strength and the people’s determination.”

At the end of the letter, he regretted the reorganization of Wadokai and its name change and frankly deplored the tendencies that went against his will in that day and age.

The Left Wing of the Plane That Admiral Yamamoto Boarded

A part of the left wing of the Naval First Model Grand Combat Plane that 11 men (including Isoroku Yamamoto, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet) boarded.

Besides Admiral Yamamoto, there were 10 men including Noboru Fukuzaki (Lieutenant), Rokurō Takada (Chief Naval Surgeon), Kurio Toibana (Staff Officer), Ritsu Kotani (Chief Pilot) and his crewmen (Akiharu Osaki, Minou Tanaka, Nobuo Hata, Mitsuo Ueno, Harumasa Kobayashi, and Haruo Yamada).

During the scouting mission headed for Balalae Island of the Solomon Islands, the admiral’s plane was attacked and shot down by an American Army Air Forces Lockheed P-38 Lightning a little after 7:30 a.m. on April 18, 1943. All the men were killed.

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary for Yamamoto’s birth, members of the Keigyo Kai (the alumni association) of the Wadokai with an unfavorable spirit tries to break up Wadokai, the alumni association.”

Yamamoto cherished this doll every morning and evening. It must have been such a comfort for him to look at this doll every morning and evening. The doll has the Yamamoto family crest on her kimono.

Yamamoto’s Passport

This is Yamamoto’s passport, issued when he was going to attend the Preliminary Negotiation for Naval Arms Reduction Talks in September 1934. Upon leaving Japan, he put on his wall a sheet of paper with Takamori Saigō’s instructive words that read: “International communications should be completed only when taking steps on the right path and with the spirit of sacrificing oneself for one’s country.” He also said to Eiichi Sorimachi, a friend of his from home, “I will fulfill my mission with the same spirit of Tsuginouke Kawai (the Military General of the Nagaoka Feudal Domain during the 16th century) who went to Ojiya for a peaceful negotiation with his enemy in a friendly manner. Arms reduction must be decided upon for the sake of world peace and the security of Japan.”