

Dick Jorgensen, Author

O Tomodachi (Friend)

A Lush Depiction of Postwar Japan

In 1954, as a 29-year-old grad student and World War II veteran, Dick Jorgensen was selected to be one of four “ambassador” teachers in a first-ever exchange program with Japan. *O Tomodachi (Friend)* is his fascinating, detailed memoir of two years spent observing, experiencing and absorbing a bygone culture.

“Dick...reminds us of a Japan we can only imagine today, in the mind’s eye and old newsreels. His is a great story of an American’s love affair with a Japan that no longer exists, yet remains the Japan of our longings.”

—From the Foreword by David E. Sanger,
Chief Washington correspondent for *The New York Times*

Book Description:

Representing the University of Michigan, Dick Jorgensen arrived in Japan in 1954 and spent the next two years teaching at the University of Hiroshima, founded in the wake of the atomic bomb detonation in 1945. Thus began an incredible journey for, as he describes himself, a “kid from the Midwest.”

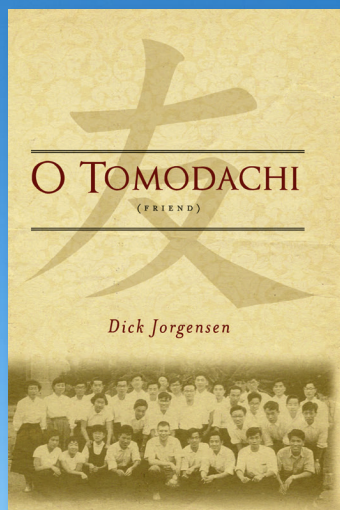
It was the start of a lifelong love affair with travel in general and Japanese culture, architecture and history in particular. While in Japan, Jorgensen met luminaries in the fields of history, politics and education, lived with two Japanese families, and discovered new ways to reach his young students, all of whom grew up in a Japan ravaged by World War II. Jorgensen visited many

parts of Japan, including Tokyo, Kyoto, Kobe, Sapporo, and Nagasaki. Jorgensen treats readers to luscious descriptions of all those cities, while at the same time providing histories that deepen understanding and perspective.

As a work of history, *O Tomodachi* (which means “friend” in Japanese) provides a perspective on postwar Japan that is both historical and accessible. As memoir, it gives readers a wonderful sense of what it was like for a young American to go off to a foreign land, a place that had only recently been the enemy of the United States, and to open himself to new experiences and people. Jorgensen fell in love with Japan, and that love has lasted a lifetime.

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About the Author

Author Dick Jorgensen is available for interviews, speaking engagements, book-signing appearances, and guest blog posts on the topic of Post-War Japanese culture and history, for venues including:

- Bookstores/libraries
- Community organizations
- Historical associations
- Cultural exchange groups
- Asian/Japanese art clubs

Raised in Depression-era Kenosha, Wisconsin, Dick Jorgensen served in the U.S. Navy for three years during World War II. He earned a BA in sociology/American studies from Carleton College in Northfield, MN, in 1950 and an MA in history from the University of Michigan in 1954. Under the sponsorship of The Asia Foundation, Jorgensen was selected to represent the University of Michigan in an educational and cultural exchange program as an English teacher at the fledgling Hiroshima University in Japan for two years. Following that life-changing assignment, he traveled around the world for the first time in 1956. He became a program officer for The Asia Foundation, and then taught U.S. history at Berkeley High School. Later,

Jorgensen trained history teachers at the University of California, Berkeley, where he directed the inaugural History Institute for Teachers in 1965. Moving to Washington, D.C., he joined the U.S. Department of Education, completed his Ph.D. in history (with an emphasis on U.S.-Japan cultural relations) at Georgetown University, and was named the DOE's national director of the Teacher Corps/Peace Corps program and director of dissemination for programs in foreign languages and international studies in America. More recently, Jorgensen has volunteered as a teacher in Kunming, China, Chennai, India, and the Cook Islands, with additional travels in Mongolia, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Afghanistan, and European countries.

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