

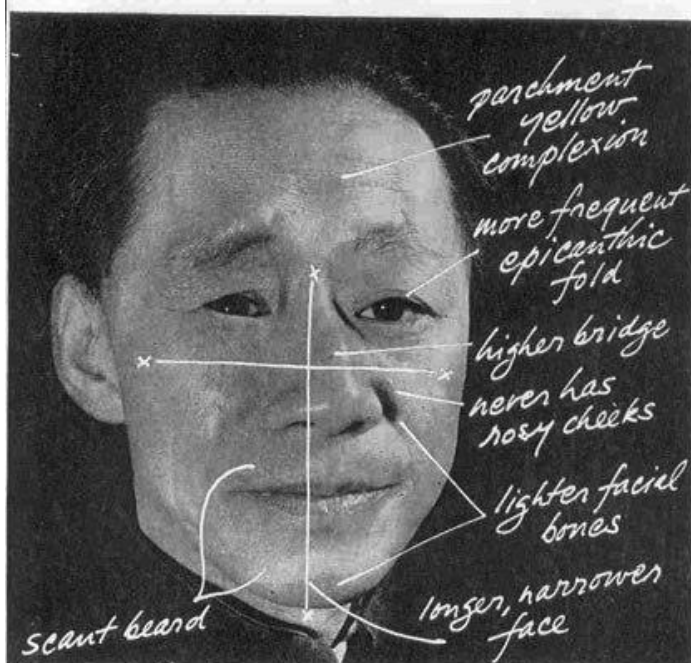
1945 June 11-17

Are You Sure He is On Our Side?

When the Japanese invaded China in the 1930s, the average American did not pay much attention. It was just Asians killing other Asians, and they all look alike anyway, right? There was an international outcry about the Japanese bombing cities and committing atrocities (e.g. The Rape of Nanking), but that was happening in a foreign land on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

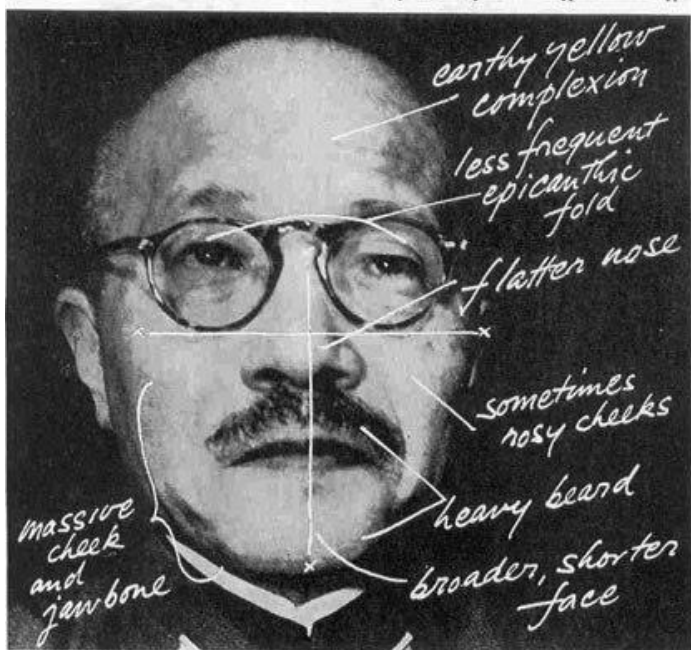
The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, changed all that. The Japanese were now definitely the enemy, and the Chinese, who had already been resisting the Japanese for years, were now our allies. But since [all Asians looked alike](#) to the typical American, how to tell friend from foe? Many did not make a distinction, and all Asians, including American citizens of Asian descent, were targets of discrimination and even physical attacks.

Life magazine, a weekly staple by the 1940s, tried to be helpful with an article in its December 22, 1941, issue, just weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹ It provided pointers on how to identify the friend and the enemy.



Chinese public servant, Ong Wen-hao, is representative of North Chinese anthropological group with long, fine-boned face and scant beard. Epicanthic fold of skin above eyelid is found in 85% of Chinese. Southern Chinese have round,

broad faces, not as massively boned as the Japanese. Except that their skin is darker, this description fits Filipinos who are often mistaken for Japs. Chinese sometimes pass for Europeans; but Japs more often approach Western types.



Japanese warrior, General Hideki Tojo, current Premier, is a Samurai, closer to type of humble Jap than highbred relative of Imperial Household. Typical are his heavy beard, massive cheek and jaw bones. Peasant Jap is squat Mongo-

loid, with flat, blob nose. An often sounder clue is facial expression, shaped by cultural, not anthropological, factors. Chinese wear rational calm of tolerant realists. Japs, like General Tojo, show humorless intensity of ruthless mystics.

HOW TO TELL JAPS FROM THE CHINESE

ANGRY CITIZENS VICTIMIZE ALLIES WITH EMOTIONAL OUTBURST AT ENEMY

In the first discharge of emotions touched off by the Japanese assaults on their nation, U. S. citizens have been demonstrating a distressing ignorance on the delicate question of how to tell a Chinese from a Jap. Innocent victims in cities all over the country are many of the 75,000 U. S. Chinese, whose homeland is our staunch ally. So serious were the consequences threatened, that the Chinese consulates last week prepared to tag their nationals with identification buttons. To dispel some of this confusion, LIFE here adduces a rule-of-thumb from the anthropometric conformations that distinguish friendly Chinese from enemy alien Japs.

To physical anthropologists, devoted debunkers of race myths, the difference between Chinese and Japs is measurable in millimeters. Both are related to the Eskimo and North American Indian. The modern Jap is the descendant of Mongoloids who invaded the Japanese archipelago back in the mists of prehistory, and of the native aborigines who possessed the islands before them. Physical anthropology, in consequence, finds Japs and Chinese as closely related as Germans and English. It can, however, set apart the special types of each national group.

The typical Northern Chinese, represented by Ong Wen-hao, Chungking's Minister of Economic Affairs (left, above), is relatively tall and slenderly built. His complexion is parchment yellow, his face long and delicately boned, his nose more finely bridged. Representative of the Japanese people as a whole is Premier and General Hideki Tojo (left, below), who betrays aboriginal antecedents in a squat, long-torsoed build, a broader, more massively boned head and face, flat, often pug, nose, yellow-ocher skin and heavier beard. From this average type, aristocratic Japs, who claim kinship to the Imperial Household, diverge sharply. They are proud to approximate the patrician lines of the Northern Chinese.



Chinese journalist, Joe Chiang, found it necessary to advertise his nationality to gain admittance to White House press conference. Under Immigration Act of 1924, Japs and Chinese, as members of the "yellow race," are barred from immigration and naturalization.

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Life, 1941 December 22, page 81

(Anthropology.net, 2007 August 6)

The proverbial man on the street at that time would probably do a double-take if he saw an Asian man in a U.S. military uniform. It is fairly well-known now, however, that Japanese-Americans, although many of their numbers were transported to internment camps in the interior of the United States during World War II, served with distinction in the armed forces of the United States during the war.

By 1945, more than 13,000 Chinese-Americans were also serving in the United States Army, including the Army Air Force. About 40 percent of them were not native-born citizens. When [Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act](#) in 1943, these men were able to become citizens because of their military service.²

About 25 percent of Chinese-American soldiers in World War II served in the Army Air Corps.³ One of them was **Lt. George Yep of La Crosse**. Yep did not need to serve in the military to achieve citizenship because he had been born and raised in La Crosse.⁴

George Yep was born on January 31, 1921, in La Crosse, Wisconsin. His father was Let Yep,⁵ who had a café and laundry in La Crosse.⁶

George attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison and studied journalism for three years.⁷ His father had moved to Milwaukee by this time. George was still a student at Madison when he registered for the draft. At that time, he was 5 feet, six-and-one-half inches tall, and weighed 130 pounds.⁸

Yep enlisted in the United States Army Air Force on March 22, 1943.⁹ He trained as a bombardier and was shipped to Europe in June 1944.¹⁰

This article from the June 17, 1945 edition of the *La Crosse Tribune*, describes his wartime experience.

8th Air Force Jinx Combine First Behind Russian Lines

Together Lieut. George Yep, bombardier, and the major who was his command pilot were called a jinx team by their colleagues in the 8th Air Force in England. The only two times the two ran into serious trouble on their bombing raids over Europe were the only two times they flew in the same B-17.

Yep went overseas in June, 1944, and went on his first raid in July over France, but the toughest was over Berlin with his command pilot on Feb. 3. Three engines were lost over Berlin and the crew was forced to crash land in liberated Poland behind the Russian lines.

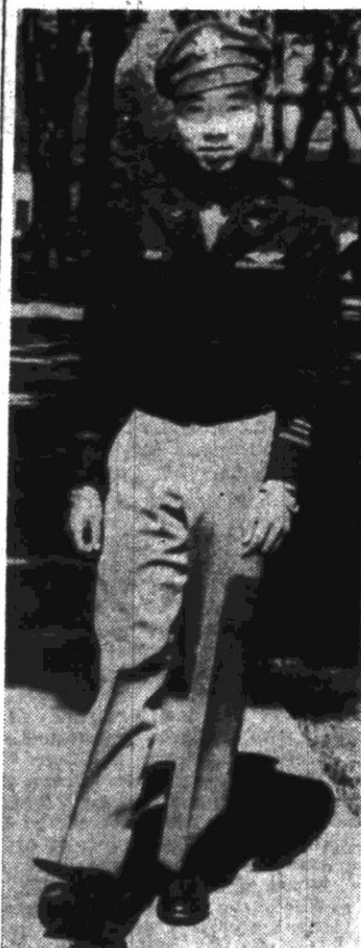
Polish patriots rescued the uninjured Americans and there followed 10 days of high living as the guests of the Russians. Yep recalls wonderful food and champagne for breakfast, wine for lunch and vodka for dinner. Their itinerary back to their English base is no less impressive than their bill of fare as Russian guests.

First Behind Russian Lines

First they were taken to Kiepe and then through an American base in Russia, on to Teheran, Cairo, Naples, Marseille and Paris, all by plane. This experience made the group the first from the 8th Air Force to land behind the Russian lines.

The next raid Yep went on in the same plane as his command pilot added fuel to the jinx myth. Their mission took them to Germany and over an airfield the plane got hit badly. Though the crew and the plane returned to England, the major was convinced that the pair of them were a jinx to each other. He was so convinced of it that he refused Yep transport on the B-17 he flew back to the States and the lieutenant hopped a boat and the trip back 17 days. He landed June 2 in New York.

Lieut. Yep is the son of Let Yep, Milwaukee, who formerly operated a cafe and laundry in La Crosse. Born and raised in La Crosse, Lieut. Yep attended the University of Wisconsin for three years, majoring in journalism. While he is in La Crosse he is the



—Tribune Photo

LIEUT. GEORGE YEP

guest of Earl Krause, 357 South 23rd street.

Completes 33 Missions

For his 33 missions Lieut. Yep wears the distinguished flying cross, the air medal with four oak leaf clusters, the ribbon for the European theater of operations with battle stars for Normandy, Northern France and Germany, and a presidential unit citation.

At the end of his 30-day leave he is to report to Santa Ana, Calif. His brother, William Yep, has just entered basic training at Fort McClellan, Ala.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 June 17, page 10)

Yep was discharged from the Army Air Force on November 27, 1945.¹¹

After leaving the military, Yep returned to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he earned a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1947. His home address was shown as 357 South 23rd Street in La Crosse.¹²

Less than a year later, he was married and living in Madison. He and his wife had a daughter in March 1948.¹³

In 1949, George Yep earned a bachelor of law degree from the University of Wisconsin.¹⁴

Most law school graduates then settle into a long, lucrative career practicing law. George Yep, however, took a different path by enlisting in the United States Air Force on April 9, 1951. He spent the next 19 years in the Air Force, leaving the armed forces for the second time, on June 30, 1970.¹⁵ Yep retired from the Air Force as a Lt. Colonel, having served in the Korean War and the Vietnam War, in addition to his World War II service.¹⁶

George Yep was living in Annandale, Virginia, when he died at the age of 64 in February 1985.¹⁷ He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery (Section 59, Site 2433).¹⁸

It was an impressive military career for a native-born, Asian-American who an ignorant person might have mistaken for the enemy in any of the three wars in which he served this country.

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Sources & Notes:

¹ "How to Tell Japs from Chinese," *Washington State University Libraries*, accessed 2020 June 20, <http://digitalexhibits.wsulibs.wsu.edu/items/show/4416>.

² James C. McNaughton, "Chinese-Americans in World War II," *U.S. Army Center of Military History*, 2000 May 16, <https://history.army.mil/html/topics/apam/chinese-americans.html>.

³ McNaughton.

⁴ "8th Air Force Jinx Combine First Behind Russian Lines," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 17, page 10.

⁵ The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; *Draft Registration Cards for Wisconsin, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947*; Record Group: *Records of the Selective Service System, 147*; Box: 805; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 2020 June 20).

⁶ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 17.

⁷ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 17.

⁸ *Draft Registration Cards for Wisconsin*.

⁹ U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs, *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 June 20).

¹⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 17.

¹¹ *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*.

¹² "Campus Courier," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1947 June 1, page 5.

¹³ "Births--(At Methodist)," *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1948 March 22, page 9.

¹⁴ "250 Madisonians Receive Degrees," *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1949 March 28, page 6.

¹⁵ *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*.

¹⁶ National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2019*, database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 June 20), entry for George Yep, 1985.

¹⁷ Social Security Administration, "United States Social Security Death Index," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 June 20), entry for George Yep, 1985, SS no. 399-16-1202.

¹⁸ *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2019*.