

OK. When you're ready.

OK.

We're ready.

Today is January 9, 1988. And I'm Judy Weightman here with Stanley Kaneshiro at the Jewish Federation office in Honolulu, Hawaii. And Stanley, I'm going to ask you just a few questions to set up for data, your name and address, where you were born, and when you were born.

OK. Fine. Let me start by saying that I was born on the island of Kauai in 1923. My parents were from Okinawa. And growing up on Kauai, I moved to Honolulu in 1940 and was employed with Dairymen's association as a soda jerker when the war broke out.

After that I went to a defense project but was called back to Dairymen's and was working in the Dairymen's milk plant as a truck loader and going to the University of Hawaii-- not-- Cannon School of Business when the war broke out. And when the announcement came out for volunteers, I volunteered. That's about the gist of it.

So you were living on Oahu at the time that Pearl Harbor was bombed.

That's right.

You were working in Dairymen's at that time as well when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

Right.

Can you remember what happened to you that day?

Well, I was living in Waikiki. And when I heard all the guns bursting and planes flying all over the place, I ran out to look and saw all of these air bursts and planes. And a little later, there were some smoke within the area. Like, I think the school in McCully burned down.

Actually, we were just scared. And I, myself, was concerned what's next, whether we will be attacked by the Japanese.

Did you talk to anyone at that time about who was bombing you?

No. But the radio came right out and started to blare that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor.

Did you talk to your parents about it at the time?

No, I didn't.

Did you talk to any friends?

No, I didn't. Because I was supposed to report to the soda fountain at 9 o'clock. And I was kind of concerned what do I do now, whether I should go catch the bus and go to work or not. But I did catch the bus and go to work. And I think I was the only one on the bus.

And what happened when you got to work?

Well, they were using the soda fountain as a feeding area for all the emergency shelters that they had established within the area.

And were there a lot of other Japanese-Americans there at the time?

Well, I don't--

Where you were at the soda fountain?

There were only myself and one Chinese boy running the soda fountain.

And you were feeding other people then?

Well, we were feeding whatever we could feed them. Because they all came over for lunch and things like that, sandwiches.

And do you remember hearing anything at all about your being Japanese-American?

No. I would like to say that I was kind of fortunate that I didn't experience much discrimination before the war, during the war, after the war.

Do you remember hearing any others?

Yes, I did.

What did you hear about others?

Well, there were lots of stories about searches being made of houses and things like that.

But not-- your family was not--

No, not that I know of.

Now did you talk to your parents at all about the relocation camps at that time?

No, I didn't.

Did you know about the relocation?

Yes, I did.

What were you thinking about at that time with the--

Well, I wasn't too sure what the reasons were and why they were getting relocated.

Did you worry about it?

No, I didn't.

Did your parents? Do you know, maybe later, did they worry about being relocated--

I don't think so.

--at all?

I think we were fortunate in a way.

OK. Did you know anyone who was relocated?

Not anyone close to us.

Oh, OK. So then you went into the military. And what year was that?

1943, March.

What did you do between 1941 and 1943?

I worked at Dairymen's.

That whole period of time you were working there?

Well, I mentioned that I went to work on a defense project at Kahuku. Then after being there for a few months, I was called back. Dairymen's was an emergency work place. And they had a right to call all Dairymen's employees back. So I had to go back to Dairymen's.

And when you went into the military then, did you go to Camp Shelby, or where were you going to train?

Straight to Camp Shelby.

And when you were at Camp Shelby, do you want to talk a little bit about the experiences that you had?

Well, again, I would like to say that I was fortunate in that I was first assigned to the infantry. But by some stroke of luck, they reassigned me to the artillery.

And that was 522nd?

Right. That's right.

Field artillery battalion.

That's right.

OK. And then you went to Europe. And you were in Italy with the group and with France.

Mhm.

And could you tell us what happened when you went to Germany?

Germany? Well, I was a Jeep driver. And I was always the last one in, the first one out. You can say that. But I remember going through Germany. It was very, very cool.

And I think by the time we got to Germany, we were kind of war weary. And I remember the night we came into Dachau. It was about 9 o'clock in the evening. And there were fires where the boys, some of our comrades had made fires.

And there were all of these prisoners that had come out. And they were standing around the fire. That's the first time I experienced the Dachau prisoners there.

What did you think when you saw them?

I thought it was horrible. Because they were all gone, you know, sunken cheeks, and just skin and bones, and their hairs

were shaved or short-haired and recently grown. It was really, really a pitiful sight.

Did you do anything?

No, I couldn't. Because as soon as I went to the fire, I think I made some comments to the boys about things I had to do. Then I went right back to my Jeep. And I guess I must have been running around most of the time.

Was that the first time you had heard about the death camps and the Dachau camp.

We heard quite a bit about a concentration camp. But I think it didn't hit us at the time we read those things in The Stars and Stripes. But the actual sight of the prisoners was a real shocking thing.

Did you talk to any of them at all?

No, I didn't.

And is there anything else that you can remember about the way they looked or what--

Yes. The thing I would like to mention is the fact that some of the boys mentioned that they were eating. And the prisoners would not ask for food. They will accept something that is offered to them.

But one impression I have is the day after or a couple of days after we passed Dachau, I had gone back. And I seen all of these prisoners walking down the roads, that kind of countryside. And all of these German farmhouses.

And I thought to myself, how come these prisoners are not ransacking the houses? And I was kind of surprised to hear today that the prisoners themselves didn't feel that it was the right thing to do. Yeah. Remember someone said that was a mixed good.

Yeah. I remember that. Mr. Nagata, I believe, mentioned that. And did you talk to any of your fellow soldiers at the time about what you were seeing with the Holocaust survivors?

No, I didn't. Like I said, I was always a busy man, running around constantly by myself, running errands for the company.

And when you came back to Hawaii, what was your experience then in terms of being Japanese-American? Did you have any special experiences at all?

No, again, I can say that I was fortunate. I went up to the university, signed up, and went to school. And I worked at the Halekulani Hotel at nights and went to school in days.

And I don't know. I was just occupied constantly. And I don't recall any case of being discriminated against. Did your parents ever say what happened while you were gone and they were here?

No.

They didn't talk to you about that? Have you talked to your children at all about these experiences?

Well, I would like to tell you something now.

OK.

I used to be a Boy Scout leader. And my son was in a Cub Scout. And I remember one day that my m he was about eight or nine years old, was playing soldiers. And they were chasing each other.

And my son told me, Dad, were you a captain in the army? I said no. Were you a lieutenant? I said no. And he said were you a sergeant? I said no. He said oh, no!

Did you tell him why you weren't a captain or a lieutenant?

No.

Do the kids know today, or your children, the reason for your being enlisted and having a Caucasian--

I think they have an idea of what went on. But I think the kids are more interested in things that they're doing themselves. Maybe as they grow older, they might kind of think of some of the things their parents did.

So they haven't asked you any questions about your doing this project at all?

No, so far, not yet.

Do they know you're doing this?

I don't think so.

So maybe one of the things on the list is to talk to them.

I'd like to mention the fact that my children, you see, I've lived in Washington, DC and my children grew up in Washington, DC. So they're kind of an outwardly type children. And most of their friends are Haole friends.

Oh, I see. Because they grew up on the mainland for the most part. And you came back here when you retired?

No, I came back early, before retirement. But still, we were away most of the time. We spent eight years on Guam and six years in Washington, DC.

Did they ever experience any discrimination at all in DC?

Yes.

Well, from the colored people. They called them Chinese.

Oh, they thought they were Chinese. But that was the only thing that ever happened?

That's about the only thing I can think of.

Hmm.

Well, of course, the area we lived, there were no colored people. This was Montgomery County.

Maryland.

Yeah.

Have you talked to your children about the relocation camps and that experience of the Japanese?

No, I haven't.

Have they ever seen on television any-- maybe watching together as a family?

Oh, yes, they have. And they are aware of what went on.

And what was their response, do you know?

Well, I guess it's the same like us. They think it's horrible. But they're in no position to do anything, I guess.

Are they on the mainland now.

One is in New York. One is in Alaska. And I have five children. And three are here. Only one is married. The oldest is 38. The youngest is 28.

Oh, I see. So their experience, all five of them had grown up for the most part on the mainland then.

Yes.

And do you know whether you as a family have ever watched any Holocaust films together?

Yes.

Could you tell me a little about that?

How's that?

What happened when you were watching the film?

Oh, I think the children, whoever was watching, was kind of shocked to see what went on. And I thought the people who did that did a good job of it. I thought it was tremendous.

What was that?

The Holocaust movie.

And did they respond to-- or maybe you could talk, did you talk to them at that time about--

No, no.

You didn't say that you had seen any of this at all?

No. Why do you think you didn't mention it?

I don't know. I think this interview we're going on and the discussion we are having now of the war is something that we never thought about after we came out. We kind of forgot the war and just put it aside. Myself, I don't want to delve too much in the war. I want to do what needs to be done today.

What do you think we can do today to make sure this doesn't happen again?

Well, I think we have to be more tolerant of other people's wishes, desires, and way of thinking, and so forth. We have so much intolerance.

And how do we deal with that in an everyday world, do you think?

Well, I think it's difficult. But you have to start with yourself, I guess. Like, even our children, we have to be tolerant of their own style of living, and so forth.

Of course, the Jewish problem is a religious problem and the Japanese Japanese-American problem is the racial problem. But I think it all stems from the fact that you have human beings who have love and hatred. And they're going to find something to hate. And I think color is an easy way to hate people. I guess religious thinking, too.

That's probably true. And have you read any of the letters to the editor lately on some of the reactions to the reparations?

Yes, I do. I do read them.

And what is your response when you read that? Or what are your feelings?

Well, I don't have too strong feelings one way or the other. But I think the US government had done something bad for those people who were relocated. And the thing that really kind of bothers me is the fact that all these people who were relocated lost so much of their possessions, not only their possessions, but the many years they spent in a relocation camp are just lost.

And so you think that reparations definitely should be given?

I think they should be. Yeah.

OK. And I just wanted to ask a few more questions. Were you angry when you heard about the relocation camps?

I wouldn't say I was angry because I wasn't personally involved. My friends weren't involved or my families weren't involved. I didn't think it was the right thing, definitely.

And did you want to ask?

I just wanted you to move your head back just a bit. [INAUDIBLE].

Is that all right? I could feel that they were over there saying-- yep.

One of the things you might to talk about is what do you think is important about doing this, what you're doing right now.

OK. That was on the list. Stanley, what do you think is the reason, or what is important for you and significant for you about taking part in this interviewing experience?

Well, as I mentioned, I hate to delve into things in the past for my own benefit. But I think in this particular case, it's a project that we want to do to make it better for many others today and in the future. And I think this is a worthwhile project.

OK.

In what way do you think it would benefit the future or the people?

Well, we're sure going to educate them, for sure. Plus the fact that if we can document this and leave it for posterity or for history, I think it's a good thing.

OK. And did you really know about the relocation camps before you left for the mainland?

No, I didn't.

OK. So it was after you were in the military.

Yeah. Right.

And a few of the other questions I wanted to ask is-- I think there's an echo. Is there an echo on the-- hmm?

What was your first awareness of Hitler and the Nazis?

I'm trying to think back.

It's a long way, yeah.

It may have been just before the war that we saw all this movement by the-- well, for that matter, the United States government was getting concerned about what Hitler and the Nazis were doing and whether they were going to attack or not attack the various countries within the area.

You read about it in the newspaper.

Right. That's right. It was a constant growing and developing thing, even the war by Japan.

Did you go to the mainland to see the exhibit for the 442nd?

No, I didn't. I couldn't make it.

OK. You do want to tell us a little bit about your involvement with the 442nd in civilian life?

Well, as I mentioned, I was in DC and Guam for a long time. So I came back sometimes in the middle of 1970. And the first thing that happened was they made me president of the chapter.

The 442nd Veterans Club is made up of 1720 chapters. The artillery battalion has three chapters. And each company of the 442nd Regimental Combat team has a chapter for themselves.

And when I came back, I became a president of my chapter in no time. I also became a reporter for the chapter. And I've been stuck with those activities since. And as a chapter president, in no time they made me club president. And I've been kind of active in the 442nd Veterans Club.

The club has been established to serve the club members as well as the community. And many of the chapters go out and serve the community. Like, for instance, our chapter goes out every year and feed the people, patients, and old people in Kuakini Hospital. And they entertain them by singing and dancing for them.

I think Fox chapter, every Christmas, invites foreign students from the University to the Christmas party, and so on. We have a lot of activities going on all the time.

And do most of the people in the 442nd chapter know about these interviews that are taking place?

I'm not sure. I think it's already been mentioned in a board of directors meeting. But in fact, I, as a reporter, tried to write these things up. And my thinking is most of the other chapter members don't read my chapter news.

Well, one of my concerns is that I've tried so much to encourage the veterans to go out and do some things, like community work. And I said, that's one of the purposes of the club was established. But it's kind of difficult for us to get those people going and helping others instead of just sitting on their butts and retiring. Oh, maybe I shouldn't have said that.

[CROSS TALK] get that. That word's allowed.

OK.



And you play golf. I know that.

Once a month, just to keep the boys company. And we have a ukulele hula club and 442nd Veterans Club. We have a singing club. And we have many other auxiliary clubs.

And we try to accommodate the ladies. The ukulele club goes out and entertain some of the hospital, nursing homes, and so forth, too. But I think we should do more.

What would you like to see the clubs do?

Well, I think they should go and help all kinds of causes that benefit the people that are less fortunate than we are.

Now would you say that most of the people who took part in the 442nd regimental battalion, who were actually in the military during the war, have come back home to Hawaii and have been able to establish themselves in some way so that they're considered to be not the less fortunate?

Right, I think so, too. But then, by the same token, I think those of us who volunteered kind of missed the boat. Because when we came back, we found that all the other nationalities had jobs in Pearl Harbor. And we were the late comers. And well, of course, during the war, the military bases never hired Japanese-Americans, you know.

Why not?

Well, they didn't trust them. They felt that the Americans were-- I mean, the Japanese-Americans were disloyal. So they didn't allow them in those bases.

You mean even those Japanese-Americans who were born in Hawaii?

That's right. Yeah.

Did you have any feelings about that at all?

Well, I didn't. But like I told you, I wasn't involved in all of these base work. But I never worked at a military base.

So you didn't really find out all this until later, probably.

Yeah.

But the others have mentioned to me that all the other nationalities had all the jobs. And the government works on a seniority basis. So as volunteers, we did sacrifice job seniority, as well as many other things.

Of course, I would say that those of us who came back are fortunate. I think we have been treated pretty well.

It seems to those of us in the community, at least, that there were really strong ties among the men who fought in Europe and also in the Pacific Basin. And is it just your wartime experiences, do you think, that holds you together? Or what is it that holds you together?

I think it's the wartime experiences.

So even though you don't really talk about it to each other--

Yes.

--it's there.

Yeah, right. That's right.

You've shared a moment together.

Right. That's right.

And continue to do so. And do you have any plans of maybe how we can use this, the interviews we've been doing, the panel discussions and perhaps sharing it with your other 442nd members?

Yeah, well, let me ask you, what are your plans right now as far as using the films and video, from your standpoint?

OK. What we'll be doing is we'll be doing some archival projects first. We'll be doing the transcribing and the indexing of all the tapes. And then we'll make a documentary from that, about an hour documentary that we'll be able to use for the schools and for archives and libraries. What would you like to see happen?

Well, I'm not sure at this time. I never thought about it. But I think the 442nd Veterans Club should some way participate and help you folks do something about it.

Would you like to see them do that?

Well, I can't speak for the club.

Maybe you want to talk to them.

Yeah, I think I'll mention that to the secretary or the club president, current club president.

To continue having our involvement with--

OK. Whatever we can do to help you, folks. OK.

OK. We get this on tape now. We have you.

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, my goodness.

No, no. So is there anything else that you think that perhaps the lives have changed in any way as a result of the project? Have you seen anything happening as a change, as a result of the Hawaii Holocaust project?

Well, I think it's a good thing. I think it's bringing out lots of information that we weren't aware of. And one of the information that I was really intrigued with was the fact that the button I got, I mentioned that the prisoners didn't agree with going after the Germans and asking them for food, and so forth. And the fact that, well, the prisoners said that's nichts good, which the German says no good.

And the fact that the prisoner seems to have been well-behaved. And the other aspect is the fact that they, the prisoners themselves, thought that German people were decent people. And the only Germans they thought that was bad was the SS troops.

The ones inside the camps.

Right. I think there's a lot of truth to that.

Well, and it probably wasn't until later that they found out that many people outside the camps did know about what was going on.

Yeah.

But probably those in the camps maybe did not know what was going on.

But it's too bad that people themselves don't try to get out and see what's going on.

And become more aware.

Yeah. Sometime most of us are bovine creatures.

It's scary sometimes to find out some of these things, perhaps.

Yeah, we should participate more.

Is there anything else that you have or any advice for those that will follow?

No, I don't. No, I don't.

What we can do in terms of--

No, I don't. Unless you have any more questions.

OK. What would you tell people to do in a way to become more tolerant? Or what would you--

I think one thing people should go out more and communicate with people. Sitting at home and being by yourself just keeps people away from each other. And I think it's better to socialize and communicate more often.

And get to know the other people. OK. Very good. I think that if we get to know each other, that would be one way. We're all learning to know each other in a very different way here.

OK.

Anything else that anyone has that you think we should be touching on, that-- and it would tell me. Is there anything else that you would like me to ask?

I'm at a loss.

OK. Is it late in the day and no one can think of anything? Hideo, is there anything else you wanted on the 442nd part of it?

How about an anniversary that's coming up, an important anniversary?

OK. You want to talk about that.

OK. Besides the activities the 442nd Veterans Club carries out every year, they have an anniversary banquet once a year. And they do have a memorial service at the same time. Every three years, they have a nationwide reunion.

And in 1983, we had it here, 1982, we had it here. In 1985, we had it in Maui. And in 1988, which is this year, we'll have it in Reno, Nevada.

Oh, in Reno? When will that be?

It will be in June.

Do you think that at that time, does Lynn Cross go to those meetings?

I'm not sure I don't think she's attended any of the recent reunion. I think she's kind of retired now.

What about the officers that were with you? Do they usually attend?

Yes, we try to invite all officers to our reunions.

And who are your specific officers that you worked with? We didn't ask that question, in Europe, in Germany.

Well, there were many officers. Most of them Haoles, as they say, from the mainland. And recently, our battalion commander passed away. So all the officers are passing away, too. It's too bad.

Well, you guys are outliving all the officers, huh?

Right.

Well, thank you so much, Stanley.

OK.

Unless there's anything else? Anyone else?

[INAUDIBLE] should cover [? Lieutenant James ?] liberating the French POW camp?

French POW camp? I don't recall that one.

Do you remember that, Hideo? You can take over.

That's in our history. [INAUDIBLE].

No, I don't know anything about it. Of course, I guess you heard about the case at the Holocaust recently. We wrote to one of our officers to find out what he knew about the prisoners. And he wrote back and mentioned the fact that he was asked to attend a meeting of commanding officers. And the decision was to bulldoze and bury all the Jewish deads.

Where was this?

This was in Dachau area.

Who made that decision?

I think the United States commanding general. There were so many deads, you know. And they didn't know what to do with it.

So was this a cemetery or just a hole that--

I'm not sure exactly how they did it. But he said that was the instruction that they received. And they had to bury a whole bunch of dead prisoners. I guess it's the same as the story told by the other person, where this German person dug holes in his yard and buried them. So I think it was real tragic.

Thank you so much, Stanley. We really appreciate everything.

OK.

Thank you. OK. Watch. We got our mics on.

OK.

OK? We don't need reverses, do we? [AUDIO OUT]