

-TITLE-BARTON NAGATA

-I_DATE-

-SOURCE-HAWAII HOLOCAUST PROJECT

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-

-KEY_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-

-PERSONAL_NAME-

-CORPORATE_NAME-

-KEY_WORDS-

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I was born in Maui. My mother died when I was nine years old and my

father, brother and I moved to. I went to Maui High School and then

to Grinnell College in Iowa, I was drafted in 1942 and sent to Arkansas for basic training. I asked to be transferred to the 442nd Battalion. I was sent to Camp Shelby, in Mississippi, attached to Headquarters Battery as a clerk. I also worked in radio

and was in the foreign observatory team. In Italy I saw some action with the infantry. I was Colonel Harrington's Radio Operator.

I remained there until the end of the war. The Colonel was a southern gentleman. He was the commander of the Nisei unit.

I worked for two years after high school and saved money. I saved about one thousand dollars which lasted me for 3 1/2 years at Grinnell. I worked in the summertime. I was a senior when the war broke out majoring in history and I passed the comprehensive exams and was graduated although I did not attend my graduating exercises.

I went to Arkansas instead for basic training. In reply to a question, I was the only Nissei other than one in Grinnell. After a while he left and I was the only one. The students were friendly. I felt no discrimination.

I was on guard duty when I was not needed as radio operator on the Riviera in Southern France. I was detached from my unit and made a MP guarding German prisoners and AWOL American prisoners near Nice. All were Caucasian prisoners.

I remember we were in a small village and the French soldiers were slave laborers and were singing the Marseilles. When they saw the Americans they kissed the driver. This was in Germany. He said he hadn't been home in 4 years. He was free and was so happy. In

driving through Southern Germany, near Munich, I became aware of people in the little village wearing striped uniforms like pajamas.

These were concentration inmates. We did not know how much these people suffered.

They were walking along the road dying or dead. I felt sorry for a

Belgian who was deathly ill. I wanted to do something for him. He

was so feverish but I had to move on. We fed them what we could.

They were looking for food. No matter where you looked, you saw them. We were passing through. We read in Stars and Stripes what

was happening. Afterwards I went to Dachau but they were gone.

Besides giving them food, there was nothing we could do. I spoke to

a Polish prisoner and then we moved out. We had no other contact

with them.

Later when I was a high school teacher in my history class I discussed this with my classes about Hitlerism and racial discrimination and what I saw. It was in my mind and I did not forget about it. When I saw the movie Holocaust, it hit me again

how terrible it was.

The answer to discrimination of Jews by Nazis and the Japanese by the Americans is more education, this would help a lot. There is no simple answer. I am aware that we do not have a perfect society or a perfect democracy. Compared with other countries we are doing a far better job than they are. Do not lose faith. That is my contention.

I am president of my church, Protestant and am very active here.

Because of my background in history, the war was a chance to go to Europe and visit historic places, especially in England. After the war I was sent to a British University, summer session. I learned a lot about England and academic program.

I have 3 children. From time to time I tell them about my experiences. It is an educational process and it needs to be remembered, the work of the 442nd.

.END.