

-TITLE-JOSEPH OBAYASHI  
-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-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

This one-hour and fifteen minute interview concerns a liberating soldier and his experience in World War II. As a Japanese - American, he was in a platoon with only his people, Japanese-Americans. He talks about topics ranging from his feelings toward the Japanese concentration camps in America to his experience passing Dachau (sp) for the first time after the war.

Joseph Obayashi was born on April 18, 1924. He was born on Maui, an island of Hawaii. The community he grew up in was called Whalo (sp) and is no longer existent.

His father was a farmer who raised pineapples and his mother was a housewife. He has two brothers, one lives in Los Angeles and the other in Chicago. Both brothers were in the service. He also has many sisters.

Before Pearl Harbor he was going to school. He felt Japanese - Americans weren't really discriminated against and had never met a Jew until the war.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor he said he saw no visible signs of discrimination, but he admitted he had no real contact with the average person. Before he had time to find out he enlisted into the 442nd, partially because of Pearl Harbor.

Didn't really know anyone who was relocated to the camps. He believed the United States was telling the truth about the Japanese-Americans who were relocated. For that reason he thought these people were bad and justified the relocation. His mother and father both weren't relocated.

Another reason he enlisted was because he was insecure. When he heard others were going, he went also.

Left Maui and went to the mainland. There, in Camp Shelby, he was trained with all the other Japanese-Americans. He wondered why he had joined, but was glad he did.

During the war he was in the third and fifth divisions. He was shot down in the third division. He wasn't upset that all the officers were caucasian.

The Captain of the 442nd was a Jew, Captain Fiberman. He is now deceased. He was a brave man and Joseph wants to talk to him because he is confused about what he saw at Dachau. (sp) His squadron commander was James Harrison.

In 1944 he landed in Italy with his Japanese-American group. His job was to carry a radio on his back to help the intelligence of the first division. The 442nd and 100th (rifle company) never drew back, even with people dying. He felt there was a different feeling in the front lines than that of the back lines.

He wasn't upset that the Japanese-American's were all together, knowing about the camps in America.

He went from Italy up through France, which was routine. Before he went to Germany, he only heard rumors about the concentration camps. He heard them in America while he was training. They were for the "imprisonment of the Jewish People." He felt that it was because of their religion. "That was awful, you shouldn't judge someone by their religion, only their individual personality."

As he was going through Munich he passed what he thought, until recently, was the main camp at Dachau.(sp) The first time his jeep passed it, the gates were open. He said that was because the Germans had just left. He saw dead bodied laying around, but they drove on. They also saw a dead horse laying on the ground. After completing their errand, they drove back (Jewish Captain, Joseph and somebody else.) On the way back they saw many people outside. There were about 20 to 30 almost nude Jews eating the dead horse, ripping meat from the bones. This was a sight he will never forget. He was afraid of them because they were imprisoned people, so they must be "mean and irresponsible." Commenting on the horse, he said, "So hungry, but eating a dead horse, not happy, but eating." Some were smiling, most were not. It was a "terrible sight."

During his last trip to Germany in 1984, he saw the main camp at Dachau (sp) and said that the one he saw couldn't be it. He met people with numbers on their arms from the war. The one he saw was the size of Aloha Stadium. There was a cement wall, two doors and a fence. It was a lonely feeling the first time he was there, with the Germans gone. Whole 422nd in Germany, but three with him.

Were wearing black and white uniforms and couldn't even tell if they were male or female. They were too skinny and all looked alike. It wasn't like a prison break, they were all confused. One man went in and out many times, like he didn't know what he was doing.

Later at the Brirluah (sp) he fed a few people, but was later told to not feed the Jews for their own good.

Thought to himself, "poor guys couldn't eat." He didn't expect to see what he saw. These three soldiers were probably the first to liberate this camp. There was no smell because they were on the outside.

Couldn't communicate with the prisoners, but food is the "international language."

Invited one man to eat his ration. The short and bald man ate and drank a lot of coffee. They had to stop him to let others eat, but all of them were very polite.

He had no order to talk or not talk to the Jews. When he left Dachau, (sp) they didn't seem to want to go with him, they were indifferent.

It was very cold out. The snow and wind made it freezing. A lot of the prisoners seemed warm, but some were freezing.

When finally found out about Japanese-American camps, he was upset and thought he did bad.

MESSAGE: "Everyone should be treated and created equal, this thing shouldn't happen."

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