

Tape is rolling. 5, 4, 3--

This is December 21, 1987. We will be interviewing a member of the 522nd Battalion. Mr. Shimazu, could you please state your name, address, and your place of birth.

My full name is Satoshi "Don" Shimazu. And I live at 3342 Loulu Street, here in Honolulu. And I was born on the neighbor Island of Maui at Puunene.

Could you tell me what your military background was exactly, during the war.

This was before the war? Or--

During the war.

During the war. During the war. Well, I served as staff sergeant in charge of the battalion survey section. And this group had the responsibility of accurately locating all the gun batteries relative to targets.

OK. Mr. Shimazu, I would like to take you back to a period in 1941. Specifically, I would like to ask you, what was it like being a Japanese-American in the year of 1941? Did you experience any form of discrimination of any kind?

Well, the immediate years before 1941, I spent on Maui. Only the last three months was in Honolulu. So my answer to that would be based mostly on my Maui experiences. And the community I lived in was a plantation community, which was controlled at that time by one of the big five organizations. And most of us in that situation, the Americans of Japanese ancestry, the Filipino ancestry, Korean, Chinese, Hawaiian, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, at the lower levels we were all very even, I would say. We got along well.

But I think at the higher levels, maybe there was some subtle discrimination because you didn't see any non-Caucasian in any position of responsibility in those days.

So do I understand you correctly, you were aware that you were part of a minority group?

Yes. Oh, yes. Those days, freedom of movement such as we know today was unknown.

Mr. Shimazu, could you please tell me about your, I guess, pre-military experience in 1941. I understand Mr. Tsukiyama was your leader.

Yes. Ted Tsukiyama was my first sergeant in the ROTC unit at the university. Now, I started attending the university in September of that year. So when war broke out, I had, you might say, three months only of ROTC training, which consisted mostly of close-order drill and that sort of thing. We never fired a rifle, you know. And I guess for the great majority it was that type of experience.

But on December 7, because we were in the ROTC, they called us out very early, right after we noticed the bombs falling and the radio blaring, "take cover." This is the real McCoy. Then I think the orders came over radio, too, for all our ROTC students to report immediately to the university. So we were in uniform in just a few hours

OK. Perhaps I'd like to clarify something. Did all of the Japanese-Americans that you knew, were they all part of the ROTC organization?

Well, I think there were some who were not in ROTC because it was still, I think, an elective course. Or maybe, if it wasn't, they had some kind of reason for not getting into it. So not everybody was in it, but the majority were.

OK. OK. Mr. Shimazu, could you tell me, relate to me your experiences at the time that Pearl Harbor was bombed, to the best of your knowledge.

Well this was the day after a big football game, which the university was involved in. It was the Shriners game. And that night we had all the balloons going up, everything was festive. And then the following morning, bright and early, we were aroused by the sounds of gunfire, heavy artillery pieces going off. And some of us went outdoors to see. And we could see black powder puffs up in the sky, which was not the ordinary.

If it was a practice or maneuver kind of situation, those would be all white puffs instead of black. And at about the same time, some people had the radio on and it began saying, "Take cover. Take cover. This is the real McCoy. We are at war with Japan."

And I remember climbing up on a monkeypod tree to try to get a better look of what was happening down in the Pearl Harbor direction. And during that first few hours, news used to spread pretty fast. I don't know how, but we were told that some of the shells fell pretty close to the Manoa area. One fell in McCully. And of course, there were reports of others in other parts of the city.

What were your feelings at that time, when you heard of the attack and you climbed up in the monkeypod tree?

Well it was one of incredulity, you might say. I mean, it was incredible that a tiny country like Japan would take on a country like ours, the United States. And it took a good long while, I think, for the full impact to sink in.

Did you experience any-- did you experience any form of, I guess, animosity immediately after Pearl Harbor was attacked?

By that you mean animosity toward the Japanese?

Yes, towards the Japanese.

Well, some maybe. And then, of course, knowing that my parents were aliens, I mean they were Japanese citizens too. So I was naturally concerned for them too. But we were, at least our generation, I would say-- this was the second generation in general of Japanese ancestry-- most of us were educated and raised, whether we knew it or not anyhow, in the samurai kind of tradition.

And people used to accuse some of our Japanese school teachers of teaching things otherwise. But that is not true. My Japanese school principal was Mr. Tichu Maehara. And are many Maeharas here in Honolulu. Well, I thought he was a great instructor. He was Christian and all that. And he always used to tell us that, even if we are Japanese citizens, and we will have to fight for Japan, in case of anything happening you owe your allegiance to this country, the land of your birth.

We got that in Japanese school. I went for 12 years, incidentally. And at home too, my parents also taught me that. And we were brought up listening to Japanese samurai stories, where father and son would be on opposite sides or brother and brother would be on opposite sides. And they didn't hold back anything. They fought them like anybody else. So the tradition of the samurais was like that.

And I think all the people who fought in the 442nd were raised that way too. And this, more than anything else I think, could be the explanation for the outstanding performance of the 442nd.

And the 522nd.

And the 522nd, of course, the entire combat team. Many of us who volunteered for service, when we got into the army it was already with the full knowledge and determination that we were going to die. And that's the way, I guess, you might say the samurais always fought.

OK, how did that--

Now let's hope this camera is going to stay.

Stand by in 5, 4, 3--

Mr. Shimazu, could you please tell us how your cultural upbringing affected your decision to enlist, to serve your country?

Well, as I was telling you earlier, because of the way we were educated in the Japanese schools of those days and also the way we were raised at home-- you see, in a typical Japanese family, if there are daughters in the family, they were the ones who did all the menial tasks. The men or the boys in the family were treated like lords. They were waited on. And I was brought up that way by my parents. And so with all of this kind of exposure and training, when war broke out, there was no question in my mind which side I am supposed to fight for.

And I didn't even tell my parents that I'm going to volunteer. I volunteered first, and then I told them later. And of course, before we shipped out, I had to go home to Maui. And the first thing I did was, of course, to tell my father. He didn't say a word, not one word. But his eyes communicated everything.

Mr. Shimazu, could you relay to us the experiences, the feelings that were going on during the period when the population here in Hawaii realized that a large number of Japanese-Americans were bearing-- were holding arms as members of the particular organizations that were in existence at that time.

Well, the day of December 7, after we got called in, we were given a quickie set of instructions on what to do. And I remember I was posted in downtown Honolulu, right in front of the main library. And we were told to challenge every person who comes by us, hold them, let them identify themselves. And we did this all night long. Many of whom, in responding, they were shaking. I don't know what their thoughts were. But as far as any anti-Japanese feeling to us, I did not get any feeling of that until, of course, they disbanded this unit, this special unit made up mostly of, in fact, all of Japanese mostly.

Our commanding officer was, I think, Nali Smith. And our company commander was Lieutenant Coulter at that time. So only after they disbanded this group, then I got a very strong impression that gee whiz, they are looking at us not as Americans, but maybe as enemy agents. And this was very distressing, very, very distressing. And I hope that kind of thing never happens again in the future, at least here in Hawaii.

Now of course, after the war-- I mean, after we were disbanded, some people organized the Triple V, the Varsity Victory Volunteers. In my case, I had all kinds of economic problems. I was working my way through school. And if I didn't have an income of my own, I'd be in real trouble. So I started looking for other kind of work. And at that time, the USAD was one of the few agencies employing people. And I was able to get one, and this was as a carpenter's helper working on ammunition bunkers and things like that at Hickam Field.

But because we were of Japanese ancestry, we were not allowed in anything remotely resembling a sensitive area. We all had identification badges.

When did you first become aware that Japanese-Americans had been placed in internment or relocation camps? Were you aware of it at that time?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It used to come out in the newspapers. I remember reading about all of that. And it was our good fortune that we were not treated in the same manner as they were on the mainland. Of course, I'm an engineer, so I can appreciate all the logistics that would have been involved if they tried to move a population as huge as ours over water to some other place. Yeah. So there must have been the practical side to it too. But there were enough people here who were cool-headed, who knew us well enough to go to bat for us, saying that I don't think you have any problems with our Japanese here in Hawaii.

Do you think that there were general feelings of fear throughout the Japanese community here in Hawaii because of what was going on, for example, on the West Coast?

Well, I think there was some of that too, no doubt. A few people who were in very influential positions, even here in Hawaii, were pulled in. And my Japanese school principal was one of them, Mr. Tichu Maehara. He got pulled in too. And of course, within the Japanese community, because they were mostly Japanese citizens, they were, among themselves, rooting for the other side. So there was that kind of friction too.

And they were always denigrating the American successes-- you know, that's propaganda. It didn't happen like that. That used to go on until the end of the war. And they wouldn't believe that Japan lost in the end. But that's the kind of feelings we saw. I mean, observations that we had.

Were any of your family members affected by the relocation?

No. Not one. Well, my direct family, you mean?

Yes.

Not one. But I had some cousins on the mainland, and I'm sure they were relocated to-- they used to live in the Seattle-Tacoma area.

How did that, to the extent that you were aware of their detention, did that make you feel angry or create any other feelings at that time?

Yeah, when I and became aware that many of them were being indiscriminately relocated, citizens and non-citizens, that was, I thought, something very terrible.

OK. Mr. Shimazu, could you tell me when exactly did you enter the army?

I volunteered along with all the others and got signed in, given the oath, and all that on March 24, 1943.

Was that here in Hawaii?

Yes, here in Honolulu. I'm sure you remember that time when they called for so many volunteers and actually got a response that was overwhelming, two maybe three times. And I saw many grown men, who tried to get in and were rejected, crying at that time, many of them. So the 442nd, who actually were picked were really the cream of the crop, you might say.

What exactly was your rank and your serial number at that time?

My serial number is hard to forget. It's 30104807, almost like my Social Security number. But I started off as any other private. And in the artillery, when we got to Camp Shelby, we found that the T-0 was all practically filled up. Anything above buck sergeant was filled already by a mainland cadre. These were mainland, these things. They were our cadre.

So in the artillery, because of the lack of upward room, it was very hard to get promotions. But through competition, at least in my survey section, I became the number two under my mainland Nisei cadre person. He was the staff sergeant. I rose to T-4.

And the way they selected us, after exposing us to all the training, was to give us a field problem. They would assign two guys to me and two to another competitor and so on. And they say, see that target way out there? I want you to survey that point in on the map, the correct coordinates, compass direction, everything. And based on that kind of examination, although I was much younger than this other guy, who was maybe 10 or 12 years older than I am, I was picked. Yeah.

So besides my two vehicle drivers, Mike Hara and Sokushi Mabuku, I was the youngest in a group of seven people. And there were some who were graduate engineers.

It's my understanding that the 522nd was the most accurate division, artillery battalion [CROSS TALK].

Artillery, yeah. I think we earned this reputation very early in Italy. Many times, due to problems of delivery shipments, we would run short. The whole war front of the Allies would be short of ammunition. So they used to parcel out only to those units that could make maximum use of them. And we used to get the lion's share of these shells because of our reputation as accurate artillery people.

Now, to be accurate in artillery, every element in the whole organization must be on the button. One mistake and the shell goes someplace else. We had a tremendous fire direction center made up of people whose IQs ranged in the 150s, 160s, and some higher. That's the kind of fire direction center we had. And all our radio operators, too, were trained so that they would handle three separate fire missions on the same channel. This is, toward the end of the war, that's how good we were.

And each gun battery would be able to take care of one target by themselves so that the battalion, with three batteries, could handle three targets. And they were fast. Many times the observer would call in for fire-- now towards the end of the war, when we were up against competition, you might say, from many, many other units, see, with each passing day targets became fewer. And we would beat the other units to the punch. We'd finish our mission. But that's getting ahead of the story a little.

Anyhow, in Italy we also earned the reputation as the time fire experts. In artillery parlance, time fire means to have the shells burst in the air, optimum height maybe about 25 yards. But to do that, the gunner's got to cut the shells-- I mean the fuses-- as directed by the fire direction center. Everything has to be just so. And the charges must be the correct charge. The barrel elevation or sighting must be OK and all that.

But they used to put it right on the money. Many times we wiped out whole German companies, dug in people now, in trenches, foxholes. We wiped them out with airburst, which is something few of us can talk about.

OK. Mr. Shimazu, I'd like to go back to your experiences in boot camp. Did you feel a sense of camaraderie with the other Nisei, people that were with you? Was there a special feeling that was created.

Well, the Niseis I was rubbing shoulders with, people that I got to know very well and like, like one guy, you know, Yuki Akaki, he's one of the fire direction center guys with a high IQ up in the 160s and above. But we used to affectionately call each other "24." If you have army goldbricks, and jokingly, we were pure gold. See? I call him 24 karat, and he used to call me 24 karat. That's the kind of camaraderie we used to have.

And other guys, like William Sadataki and Fred Yamaguchi of my service section-- incidentally, those I had in my service section, you know, Fred Yamaguchi, became T-4 under me. Then we had James Imada, who passed away, Sazao Hironaka, Kaoru Sakima, Mike Haru and Sokushi Mabuku, seven people. But of course, in that bunch, one was the [NON-ENGLISH]. Fred Yamaguchi, he was very sharp with his repartee, terrific. And Kaurus Akimo, on the other hand, a local guy, was a one-man USO team. He kept us laughing all the time with his crazy kind of antics.

But my impression, talking about the mainland people, when we first reported to Camp Shelby and we were in formation, and then these mainland cadre would be giving us the orders of the day and so on, I was really impressed with their diction, the way they spoke. If you didn't see their faces, you'd think they were haoles. That's how good they were. And against them, us from Hawaii talking plantation style and-- oh, I'm telling you, the contrast was tremendous. Yeah. But that's how good they were. People like Mike Masaoka, I remember. Yeah.

Did you feel that there was a, in hearing the stories from the Kotonks about their families being interned, what were your feelings about that, or in general?

Well, I had great sympathy for them, those who had relatives in these relocation centers. And of course, occasionally the unit used to arrange trips for those in camp to come and visit their relatives. And on those occasions, they used to put on a special show and allow dancing and that sort of thing. And I met a few girls too. But nothing came of it, of course.

Did you feel that those particular, well, the Kotonks, the Japanese-Americans from the West Coast, for example, who had individuals, individual members of their families that were in camps, did you feel that they were angry or that they felt that they had a special need to show America that they were, indeed, loyal Americans.

I think those who were in the 552nd and the 442nd, these were the people, who in spite of the way they were treated, put loyalty to their country way up there and came in. I mean, these were the kind of people we had in [INAUDIBLE], even from the mainland. Yeah.

OK. Mr. Shimazu, could you tell me, when did you land in Europe and where?

We landed in Europe after a long trip on one of these liberty ships. I think we were on the ocean about a whole month, sometimes going backwards, you know. But we landed in Brindisi. The exact date escapes me right now. But it was in 1944, somewhere in April, around there-- either late March or early April.

Of what year? 1944. And from Brindisi, of course, by we were put into cattle cars and shipped over to the neighborhood of Naples. The action, the war front, was already beyond Rome. And in Naples, we got all our gear together in what they call a staging area and went through some practice exercises. And then we joined the front.

When you were in that, in Europe, did you or any other members of the Nisei group that you knew, did they or yourself experience any form of ambivalence by the American-- the Caucasian officers or enlisted men?

Our own officers?

Yes.

No. Our own officers were very much a part of the whole outfit. I mean, although they were Caucasian commanding Americans of Japanese ancestry, there was nothing obvious about discrimination of any kind. We had terrific esprit de corps from the colonel right down, Colonel Pence in the beginning, and I think at the end it was Colonel Miller.

How about from the other enlisted soldiers that you didn't know of?

Outside of our group?

Yes. Outside of your group.

Well, you see, we followed another famous organization, the 100th Infantry Battalion into action. They were there at least a year ahead of us. And they had already built up a tremendous reputation as Nisei soldiers, part of the 34th Division. So when we went over there, we were the beneficiaries already of that reputation. They treated us, I would say, like they would have treated any 100th infantrymen.

Could you describe the event, which I have become aware of, that when the 522nd first landed in Italy, they were asked to demonstrate their field accuracy to one of the [CROSS TALK].

[LAUGHS] I was afraid you would ask me that one because that was the one time when everything didn't exactly fit maybe or somebody was unaware of the elevation of the observation post that the division artillery commander was observing from. But it so happened to be right in the line of our fire to the target, you see. We have so-called checkpoints. We survey these checkpoints in, and then the guns registered on these to see what charge it takes, what gun settings it takes to hit it right on the nose.

Well, to do that, of course, we were responsible for the survey, locating the target, the guns and so on, the fire direction, scales of distances. They calculate the instructions to the guns, the sight angle, which is how high the barrel is relative to the horizontal plane-- that's called the sight angle-- and then the azimuth, you know in which it's supposed to be on and the powder charge to use, that sort of thing.

But when the orders went to shoot the first round, you see, if you're an artillery man, you get used to the sound of these shells. And the people standing on that hill, they could hear them coming like a freight train. And they must have sounded very, very close for comfort. It just so happened--

OK, anytime.

You want to change this? [BACKGROUND NOISES]

Yeah. See, people in artillery, they can judge closeness or distance.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Sorry. Just so we can-- go ahead now. Sorry.

OK? Anyhow, we had this observation party on top of this hill, including the commander of the division artillery. This is the 34th division artillery commander-- and all of our own officers like Colonel Harrison and all the various battery commanders, using their scopes and watching. Well, when the first shell started coming, they could hear it. And it just sounded too close, you see, too close to them. They all hit the ground. [LAUGHS]

It was a sight seeing the general hit the ground so fast. But that was the only time we came close to one being a sad experience. That was the only time. But it really wasn't a mistake, just somebody forgot that this mountain or this hill was going to be so close to the trajectory of our artillery fire. But after that, we showed them that we had what it took. And from then on, everything was just perfect in terms of our artillery fire effectiveness-- no more miscues.

In that regard, I'd like to mention Captain Billy Taylor, who, for the battalion, was the S-2 officer. S-2 is like G-2, intelligence for the small unit. And he had the job of picking the next gun position every time. And I used to go with him, as survey sergeant, on these recons. And after we decide this is the best place, then we come in and survey that position.

But Captain Taylor was a stickler for finding defilade. Defilade mean to be behind something so that they cannot observe you directly. He always picked these positions very, very carefully that way. So throughout the whole combat experience of the 522nd, we never once got enemy counter-battery fire. In other words, the enemy shooting at us or any of our comm positions. But we've seen other units on our side, maybe no more than 500 yards away, get it because they were not as careful as we were. But Captain Taylor was like that. Yeah.

Mr. Shimazu, could you describe the direction your division took from Italy, naming the relevant cities, battles, or dates, or extent of warfare, to the best of your recollection?

You mean, in Italy?

Yes. From Italy and throughout.

Well, in Italy, we joined the Battle somewhere near Grosseto. That's one name that sticks in my mind. And then we went through Leghorn. And there we did what is called a TOT in artillery parlance. This is Time on Target. And it involved a whole division of artillery.

And when you lay a TOT on any target, all units calculate the travel time of their shells so that when it lands, every other unit's shells are falling at the same time, time on target. So for that you have the cannon of the infantry companies, and one of our Howitzers we had, then the 155s farther back, and the 8-inch guns too. And they all would be firing so that every shell would hit at the same time.

And that must have been something terrible on the receiving end, to have a time on target. But Leghorn got it. And when we passed through, there was hardly a building intact. All were damaged. Yeah.

But we went through Leghorn. And then the time we wiped out a German company with our time fire was Hill 140. This was near Castellani. And we went on to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa first hand.

Turn the tape over.

Oops, sorry.

You guys can keep going.

OK.

Anyhow, we saw the Leaning Tower of Pisa. We came to the Arno River, which flows right through Florence. And that was the point from which we were ordered to leave the Italian front and go to France. But when we were there, one morning Captain Taylor told me, Sergeant Shimazu, I want you to meet me at 0600 hours. We're going to go on recon. You bring the jeep. What he didn't know was I didn't have a driver's license.

I had never driven on any road before that time, only in the parking lot. I used to play with some of these vehicles, going forward and backwards. But he wasn't the wiser for it. We went through all the winding roads in front of the Arno River, through narrow streets, up hills and down valleys. We had to shift into four-wheel drive many times. And I remember him saying, you're a damn good driver Shimazu.

[LAUGHTER]

Fortunately, of course, nothing happened. I brought us all home OK. But from there, of course, we were all put on ships. I think we left from Naples. Or was it Leghorn? One of those two places-- and we shipped over to Marseille, in France. And from there, of course, we joined the 7th Army. And we went through the French Riviera, of course. And Dijon is a city we went through. Gee, these names slip. We went through Lyon, too, and then Epinal, and then Bruyeres. And we joined the action just before we got to Bruyeres.

And of course, in France, before the unfortunate Lost Battalion incident, the 442nd scored all kinds of successes. We were able to take the enemy's entrenched positions, making end sweeps, you might say, and with hardly any casualties on our part. It was a funny sight because we were on the observation post looking down in the open pasture, and we see Germans with their hands up coming back with a small, very short Nisei soldier following them. But these were common sights.

And when we went through the area after the front moved on, the dead bodies were still there, many of the Germans. And some of them crouched behind machine guns, with a clean hole right in the forehead. They didn't know what hit them. But that's the kind of marksmanship the 442nd was noted for. Yeah. And that was repeated over and over again.

But because of all of terrific work they did, we were given the chance to take a rest and pulled out of the line. And I don't think we were in the rest area more than 24 hours when word came down, we've got to go back again to rescue this lost battalion, the Texas 36th. And from there on, of course, it was a tremendous series of losses for the combat team.

Could you, Mr. Shimazu, could you relay your experiences--

Of that time?

--leading up to the 522nd's rescue of the Lost Battalion.

Yeah. You see, when he says the 522nd's rescue, that's a real truth. See, if you see some of the photographs of the before and after of that area, the before shows all very densely wooded mountains and valleys, so thick that if you were in there you can't see straight very far. There are all kinds of trees and bushes. And the after pictures, you see them all denuded. But many times our own infantry, in trying to rescue the Lost Battalion, were unable to locate themselves on the map,



their own position. They couldn't.

So there were times when they had to resort to special measures. And in the end, one time they asked us, the survey section of the artillery, to carry survey control all the way to the front, to where the infantry was, to locate them on the map. And we did that going through-- we did that going through all kinds of minefields. And these minefields had signs all right, but these signs all faced the enemy side. And written in German with the words "Achtung," meaning attention, mines.

And we didn't know we were in these minefields until we were almost across. And then we looked back, and there are these signs, you see. And really, I don't know how we got through all of these, with the tripwires and things. The Germans had what is called the Bouncing Betty. This was an anti-personnel mine about this size and that deep. They bury it in the ground. When you trip a wire, it flies straight up and then-- you know.

But we were able to avoid all of these and located the infantry that time. And the war went on. But the one that you are speaking of, the rescue, you see, in the heat of battle, many times the commanding general of the division would be right there on the front line. In fact, the son of Sinclair Lewis, the writer, was his aide. And he got shot standing right next to that general. That's how much he was in there.

And one time he called for artillery fire. He gave a set of coordinates. You know, I want you to lay fire right there. And word got back to our fire direction center. They looked at that, and they questioned the general's orders. That's the location of the Lost Battalion. And if we had blindly followed orders, blaming the general for the orders, and had laid fire at that exact coordinates, we would have wiped out the Lost Battalion. And just think what that would have meant. Good race relations after that would have been impossible for the Japanese, I mean Americans of Japanese ancestry. We would have been on everybody's S-list.

S-list, I think you're all familiar with that. But in those days, you see, from captain all the way down to the buck privates, there were very few guys who could even go through one complete sentence without all these four-letter words. In fact, they couldn't say about five words without one of them in there. But that's how it used to be. When you're fighting, not knowing when you're going to die, gee whiz, everything gets to gut level.

So for history's sake, the 522nd Field Artillery Division was actually the first--

The first to save them. Right. They were the first to save the Lost Battalion, before the infantry did.

And not only did they save those lost Texans, but they saved the Japanese-American community from a dreadful embarrassment.

Yes. It's beyond my imagination what might have happened if we had wiped them out at that time with a mistake. Yeah. I hate to think where we would be. All the sacrifices up to that point would have been forgotten completely.

But there's a story on that, too, about the communication back and forth-- Wildcat 6 to Ruby 6 and so on. They were using code names, our Colonel Harrison to Colonel Miller of the infantry. But I think it was because of our fire direction center's wide-awake performance, that they were able to say this is no good. Yeah. And of course, the officers took it from there and told the general, I guess, you can't do that.

What was the general's name?

Dahlquist-- Major General Dahlquist of the 36th Division.

It's my understanding that the 522nd also was involved in the-- In fact, was the first American division to liberate prisoners from some of the concentration camp, Jewish concentration camps in Germany. Strike that.

OK, go on.

It's my understanding-- it's also my understanding that the 522nd was the only Nisei battalion to fight--

To fight in Germany.

--in Germany.

Yeah. Yeah. You see, after the Lost Battalion campaign, we were taken down to Southern France, in the Nice, Menton area, well actually, Sospel. And this was often referred to by everybody as the Champagne front. Of course, it wasn't all that easy too. We had a lot of work to do. But we stayed there till about March of the following year, through some of the worst winters on the French Maritime Alps. And our survey section worked through all that snow, climbing up peaks with our survey equipment, to prepare all the fallback positions, if they ever became necessary.

Of course, like some of the other people have said, as long as our own infantry is in front of us, we have no fears of the enemy ever breaking through. But, of course, our officers had to, at least, have contingency plans just in case the unforeseen happened. So that was our job, to survey all kinds of gun positions in the rear.

But anyhow, from that area, then the infantry went back to Italy. But the artillery was needed for the crossing of the Rhine by the Allied forces. And I guess because the reputation we had, they wanted us there. So we were assigned to different divisions. I think the first one we were assigned to was the 63rd Division. And then after that, the 45th, the 44th, and the 101st, like that.

But we joined the action in the eastern-- I mean westernmost corner of the Saar triangle. If you were familiar with the map of that area, the Saar area is a triangle. Kleinblittersdorf is the name that comes to mind. We joined it there. And from there to the Rhine it was about 95 or close to 100 miles. And that distance we traveled in about 14 days, roughly seven miles a day average.

And we crossed the Rhine in support of the Allied forces near the city of Worms. This is where Martin Luther tacked on his homily theses on the cathedral door. Yeah. It was close to that. And we crossed the Rhine early in the morning with no problems. And we hit cities like Mannheim, which is very close to Heidelberg. The Neckar River joined the Rhine pretty close to that.

And we crossed the Siegfried Line. And those of you who don't know anything about that, they used to say about the Siegfried Line like the French Maginot Line, but the two were far different, at least in the area where we crossed. The Siegfried Line consisted of a lot of concrete pyramids, maybe about 3 or 4 feet high, spaced close enough so that tanks trying to get through would be hung up.

But the Allied armies had no problem going through the Siegfried Line. And once we got through that, from then on it was a race. Every day targets got fewer and fewer. Firepower became more and more concentrated on our side. So with that scenario in mind, here's the 522nd, one of dozens of targets. And every time a target becomes-- I mean, a target is spotted, let's say, if one observer of one unit sees it, half a dozen other observers of other units would see it too. And they all call back to their respective outfits to shoot on that target.

And the procedure is first to register with one gun, depending on the size. Sometimes if it's a big target, they use four guns to register. But this is to range the guns until you're on target. And then they say fire for effect, and then you bring all the other guns into action. Well, the 522 used to be able to fire for effect, in other words to wipe out the target long before the other guys got there-- first round out there.

But this kind of thing was a very common occurrence, that many times we'd see officers of-- commanding officers of other artillery units visiting our colonel to congratulate him on the tremendous outfit he had. Yeah. These kind of stories, although I was not in the fire direction, my good friend 24 was there. And he used to tell me because they were right next to the CO in fire direction. And so I was well informed through that pipeline.

But other cities we went through--

[BACKGROUND NOISES]

Crailsheim was one. Ulm was another. And then as we began to approach major cities like Augsburg, we were already traveling on the German Autobahn. You know, the Autobahn is their superhighway system. This was one of Hitler's big projects, and it was already operational. The road compared to ours was really outstanding in terms of width, freedom of movement, all of that.

And the planes, the German fighter planes, were using these for takeoffs and landings. And they'd all be hidden in the woods alongside. And I don't know exactly what date it was, but we began to see their first jet fighters because they had fuel capacity to keep them airborne only a few minutes, maybe less than 10 minutes. So they didn't have too much time. But they'd make their passes at us, and strafe, turn, and go back for refueling.

Our gunners, you see, never experienced that kind of speed before. The propeller-driven ones were only half as fast. By the time we even try to shoot, they're gone already. But that was our experience with the German jet fighters. And we saw many of them still crated alongside the roads. It was a good thing that they didn't have it available sooner than that.

Of course, since then they've-- well, everybody has been able to improve on it. And now they can stay up in the air for many, many hours

Tape.