

Joseph Ichiuji

Tape 1 Side A

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Abstract

This part starts with a discussion of the Japanese/American reunion in 1995 in LA and ends with the Japanese/Americans being awarded \$20,000 each and an apology resulting from an Act in 1988. Then Joseph explains his family emigrating here and their difficulty making a living. His father learned shoe repair and Joseph and his mother worked in a cannery. Joseph was drafted into the US Army but after Pearl Harbor he was discharged due to his race and he and his family went to an internment camp. He had the opportunity to leave the camp by volunteering for the US Army. He served with the artillery in Europe and they were the first allies to liberate prisoners from a sub-camp of Dachau, a concentration camp. He completed his service in December 1945 and was shipped home and discharged. Upon his sister's suggestion, in May 1946, Joseph went to DC where he obtained a position with the VA and went to school at night where he completed B.A and M.A. degrees in Commercial Business. He helped with an organization that planned to erect a memorial in Washington, DC. for the Japanese/Americans who served in World War II.

Summary

- 00:00 This part starts with a discussion of the Japanese/American reunion in LA where Joseph meets a former Jewish prisoner of Dachau which they had liberated and someone they knew in New Mexico. The prisoner was not liberated by his company but by Barracks C. A Rabbi spoke to them at the reunion and then they marched to the memorial program at the Jewish Community Center. Joseph was asked to light one of the six candles, each candle representing one million Jews killed. A string quartet played music written by Jewish musicians. It was a moving and sad experience. The Anti-Defamation League was helpful in the enactment of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which awarded \$20,000 each to each living internee along with an apology. Joseph had asked why he received an honorable discharge from the Army as he and his friends felt bad. They were ordered to go to the Aleutian Islands due to their Japanese descent. It was thought they would be a problem if sent overseas.
- 05:00 His parents had immigrated to the US in the early 1900s and first worked in farming and ended up in the shoe repair business. They were in Salinas, California and did truck farming raising onions for the War effort and over-fertilized and spoiled their crops. His father asked a shoe repair shop in Salinas to train him and he started a business in Simpro

(?). Since he was Japanese, he could not own property according to US laws. He bought property in the name of his eldest son. After the War an immigration law was passed that permitted Japanese to become citizens. Joseph's oldest brother helped in the shoe repair business. His sister and two brothers attended grammar and high school. After Joseph graduated high school, he worked in a fish cannery with his mother and did piecework. Whenever sardines would arrive whether it was 2 AM or when they were in church, they ran to work. They would line up the sardines and cut them. They were paid by the bucket according to the weight of the fish in the bucket. When cannery season was over, Joseph helped his father in the shoe repair business.

- 10:00 When Joseph got drafted, the eldest brother helped in the business. His parents' plan was to come to the US and make a lot of money and return to Japan but this did not happen. They were not treated like other Americans and were restricted to farm and rail labor. The Japanese were determined to succeed and faced hardships by using land that was not formerly used in order to make a living. After Pearl Harbor, Joseph was in the 41st Division and set up a tent with three others. He had a roommate from North Dakota or Minnesota of German extraction who said, "Heil Hitler" in jest and Joseph thought it funny that they said it. Joseph thought it racial that those of German and Italian ancestry were retained in the Army but he was discharged due to "military necessity" though there was no evidence of his wrong doing. He returned home to Civic (?), California and his parents moved to Zone B as they were not restricted to the area around Fresno. They received order 9066 to evacuate away from Zone A. His brother tried to rent the shoe business and give their household to friends. Joseph drove from Fresno with his brother and two sons of friends to Colorado. It was very hot and they stopped for ice cream.
- 15:00 The saleslady said she would not serve Japs. He felt bad and ran out. Such treatment the Japanese/Americans faced even before the War. The E. O. 9066 ordered the Japanese to evacuate from Zone A to the inland Zone B or to an Assembly Center. Many friends went to an Assembly Center and his parents went to Reedley, California in Zone B. They stayed until August 1942 when they were ordered out and decided to go to a camp rather than evacuate east. Many Japanese/Americans had to abandon their property but his parents held on. Friends abandoned their homes and businesses for next to nothing. His parents knew the Mayor, the Chief of Police and businessmen and rented their business, and friends took their home and car. They left Reedley and went to an internment camp. They boarded a train for Arizona which took a couple of days and stopped at Flagstaff.
- 20:00 They took a truck to Post 3 where they lined up and were assigned a block and number of an apartment which was part of a barracks. They were given straw mattresses which they took to their block. Internees were assigned various positions such as manager and he was assigned to be Chef although inexperienced. He had to go to the mess hall and cook for the block. In the barracks was a common rest room, a shower and a laundry room. This Post was a family camp. They were just allowed one suitcase and were assigned a

number which they placed on the suitcase. It was fortunate that they were told to bring a water cooler which worked like an air conditioner and helped cool the room. With his parents, they were six people together and they were fortunate to be together. His parents lost family control as at home his mother cooked dinner for everyone and they ate together. Here they ate at the same time at the mess hall. They shared the bathroom, shower and wash room. There was no privacy. They were regimented like the Army. Being of Japanese ancestry, they tried to make the best of everything. They went to the riverside and got palmetto to obtain shade.

25:00 They had activities. Joseph volunteered as the timekeeper for everyone on the block. Some worked as cooks, orderlies, managers, medical, police force and sellers of goods. They asked for volunteers for the 447th combat team and, although discharged previously and placed in the camp, he felt like volunteering to serve his country and get out of the camp. He told his mother and she hated to see him go to war and he felt it is his country and he should show loyalty to his country. His father supported him and said it's his country and he must fight for it. When he left, he got a big send off which he liked. Several people thought the Japanese/Americans should be used in the military including Generals McCoy and Milton Eisenhower and were forceful in this. The Japanese/Americans in Hawaii and the National Guard served the people well so the citizens protested when the National Guard was sent away. Though they were ordered to be discharged, two regiments were retained while awaiting replacements from the mainland and participated in projects. The Hawaii community saw this and told the government to retain them for military service. As a result, the commanding general reversed his decision and 1300 were retained.

30:00 Some reported to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin for infantry training and some to Mississippi for maneuvers. They were outstanding in their training but it was still questioned as to how they would act in combat. They were ordered overseas to the 34th Division and fought in battles with General Patton and bravely in Anzio. The 100th Infantry battalion did well and JCL lobbied for the use of Japanese/Americans in combat and swayed General McCoy. In March 1943 they asked for volunteers for combat and 1500 internees volunteered and 3,000 from Hawaii and formed a combat team. The 1500 had family behind wire. They reported to Mississippi. Some of the Japanese/Americans obtained field commissions and later they became officers in the Army and the Navy. During the War, they were not accepted in the Navy or the Air Force. In February 1943 there was a call for combat volunteers and Joseph was one of the first to volunteer though he was mistreated. This was a chance to show his loyalty. In May 1943 he went by train to Hattiesburg, Mississippi where they saw colored and white rest rooms. He asked which to use and was told the white one. He thought it was not right how the blacks were treated. He reported to Camp Shelby. A Caucasian Sergeant took the roll call and had difficulty pronouncing the Japanese names.

35:00 Since he had already completed basic training, Joseph was assigned to the 442nd combat team which consisted of three infantry battalions and one military, one engineer, a medical detachment and a band. He was assigned to artillery which was fortunate as he could ride instead of hike. He rode to the front lines with a medic and they were scared but he was several thousand feet behind. The men in the 442nd basic training established a great record. Army Chief of Staff General Marshall reviewed them and ordered them overseas in May 1944 from Newport News, Virginia. There was a convoy of 100 ships crossing the Atlantic which took 28 days. They stopped at Gibraltar and at the Mediterranean Sea broke into two groups. One went to Naples and Joseph's landed on the East coast of Italy where they got into freight trains and crossed over Italy to meet the other group.

Tape 1, Side B.

40:00 They landed in Italy in 1944 and waited for the 100th battalion to join them. They were attached to the 34th Division and entered the front lines at Civitavecchia, North of Rome, where the Germans dug in. They fought up to the Po Valley and liberated Livorno. They pushed the Germans north of the Arno River. After 3 months, they pulled back for replacements and reported to France to the 36th Division. They boarded a boat in Naples to Marseille and saw the liberty ship that sunk in the Bay of Marseilles after it crossed the Atlantic. In Marseilles they boarded a freight train where it was cold so they huddled together. They arrived at Briare in October where they fought for three days and liberated the city. Then they got orders to rescue the last battalion. There were 211 men from the 101st battalion of the 34th Division and 800 casualties. Joseph wonders whether the General ordered them to rescue the 211 men because the Japanese/American were expendable or whether because they were good fighters. They broke the line and rescued the 200 men. Manpower was depleted and sent to guard the border between France and Italy.

45:00 On the way to Southern France they stopped at Dijon. Joseph had a cousin in Company E in a weapon carrier of eight men, the remains of their company. They guarded the border and were given passes to Nice where they had champagne. At Nice they were treated as any American GI. It was a nice resort and they enjoyed it. There was also a resort in Menton which was close to the Italian border. The men had to act as servers. They volunteered to go as observers to look down on the Germans. He saw tigers near the railroad station. They were shelled at night by the Germans. The shells landed near the mess hall and he was scared and hid behind it. They held the line and got replacements from the mainland. In March 1945 he was detached from the 442nd and reported to Northern France for rest. He returned to his last fight in the Po Valley. He went to the Siegfried Line and fought in the final battle in Germany. They moved rapidly and found themselves in front of the Infantry. They used over 150,000 rounds in support

of seven Divisions and units. They were considered one of the fastest of five artillery units.

- 50:00 They were the only Japanese/Americans fighting in Germany and the first allies to liberate the prisoners. In late '45 they went North from Innsbruck and approached Munich. They were in a convoy heading for Munich and Joseph was in the middle of the convoy and as he approached the area he noticed a sub-camp. It was opened by advanced scouts and he saw many Jewish prisoners coming out of the camp. He saw a carcass of a dead animal, perhaps a horse, on the side of the road and the prisoners were eating it. They bivouacked on the side of the camp and built a bonfire to warm them as it was cold. The Jewish prisoners had black and white striped uniforms and asked for food so they gave them their C and K rations. The prisoners were skin and bones and you could see they were suffering from malnutrition so he felt bad for them. It was a sight that he will never forget. They did not know that the C and K rations were not good for them as they could not digest them. Joseph did not go inside the camp but his buddies went in and opened the gate of the barracks. They saw a stack of bones. At the LA reunion ten years ago, one person attended who saw the stack of bones. The prisoners were Jewish but Joseph did not know it was Dachau. About 15 years ago he found out that it was a sub-camp of Dachau. It was ironic that many of those interned came across the Jewish prisoners in the Nazi camp. The difference between the two was that the American camp was temporary and the German camp was for extermination.
- 55:00 It should never have happened. Anti-Semitism and racism still exist in Western culture so we should tell the story. Joseph left the concentration camp after one night and they took prisoners with him. The Captain took an orderly and a tailor, Mr. Bloom. Mr. Bloom knew his wife and family were placed in a concentration camp in Austria. He asked if it was all right to locate them. He found them and they stayed together. The orderly relocated in California and since he was in the East, Joseph did not see him but his buddies in LA did. The former orderly sold surplus army goods and later passed away. Both prisoners were from Lithuania. The orderly had asked the captain if it was all right to visit a German woman who furnished food and water during their forced march to Dachau.
- 60:00 The captain had his driver take him and he was able to thank the lady. Joseph does not know exactly what the US Army did to care for the liberated prisoners. He had more points for service than the others so in December 1945 he was ordered to get ready to go home. They joined soldiers from other outfits and boarded the Lucky Strike ship in Normandy. They crossed the Northern Atlantic in winter and it was rough. When they arrived in New Jersey, they were fed by German prisoners. Joseph received his discharge papers and went home. In April '45 when he arrived at the sub-camp of Dachau, the prisoners were very hungry as the German guards had run away and the prisoners were not fed for three days. When Joseph arrived home after his discharge, he found his father

working at his business with the elder son's help. The father was well known by the Police Chief and was welcomed home without prejudice. His father had a friend in real estate who tried to find homes in the Monterey and Pacific Grove area for the other Japanese/Americans returning from camps. Joseph's father received an award for his help in settling these people. Joseph's sister lived in DC and said there were good schools there including George Washington and Georgetown.

65:00 The GI Bill of Rights was available to Joseph so he went to DC. In May 1946 he reported to the VA to apply for the Bill of Rights and saw an ad for a job. He got the job and went to the Benjamin Franklin School at night where he received a BA and an MA in Commercial Science. Joseph married and had a child and worked for a CPA. He was working for the government in accounting and got promoted to Deputy Division Chief and retired with 37 years of service including his military service. After the War, Joseph saw that his parents were fortunate with their friends but his younger brother felt discrimination. He ran for President of the Student Government and lost. Also, he was a star basketball player and went to Junior College in Salinas where he was not accepted into the team. Salinas had an organization for Japanese/Americans who returned. Some were friendly but one person was not friendly with his brother. Joseph felt that the War had separated the family as his sister went to DC, the older brother went to Denver and another brother to Salt Lake City. The older brother returned. After the War there was more opportunity for the Japanese/Americans but they should not have been placed in internment camps as they were not guilty. The family always talked about their camp experience. A monument for Japanese/American soldiers who served in the War was planned to be erected in DC.

70:00 Veterans from the 442nd Company got together at Joseph's home to make plans to place the monument in Arlington Cemetery. Joseph was the original member who met with Mike and they had 300 members. They tried to have Congress pass legislation. Their organization handled solicitation of funds and erection of the monument. Congress rejected the legislation as no military monument can be placed in Arlington Cemetery. When Mark Murrell (?), the Director of their board passed away, they had to find a new board. They decided members of the board should be wealthy and prominent national leaders who could donate their own money for the \$8 million they needed for the site by October '99. The site was located at the intersection of Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues near Union Station, close to the Capitol. Mr. Buckley designed the monument. Joseph was not wealthy enough to be a board member but helps out. He took a trip to Europe for the 50th anniversary of the end of the War in Europe.

75:00 In October 1994 Joseph and his wife attended the reunion in Briare with 600 people. They had a choice of 10 different tours that converged in Briare. He took the tour from DC to Rome which covered battlegrounds. They went from Civitavecchia to Livorno to Florence to Milan to Menton to Niece, to Lucerne and ended in Briare. They had a big

reception and placed a wreath on the WWI monument and on Ben Fontaine. After lunch, one person from Battery A joined him and one of the Jewish prisoners that his battalion had liberated came from Germany to see them. They took his picture, embraced him and took his name. In 1995 there was a reunion in LA of the Japanese/American soldiers in the 442nd company. Two Jewish prisoners they liberated attended. One was a lady from Poland, the daughter of a physician who had been placed in Dachau because she sympathized with Jews.

79:00