

Spady Koyama

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Question: What I'd like to do is just to get your name, first and last name and your rank so that I have that on tape.

Answer: I see.

Question: So if you could go ahead and give me that?

Answer: My name is Spady

Answer: Koyama, I'm a retired Army colonel.

Question: And the spelling of your name?

Answer: It is spelled K-O-Y-A-M-A

Question: And S-P-A-D-Y?

Answer: That's right.

Question: All right.

Answer: And you know what it means? Small mountain. Yama is mountain. Fujiyama,

Question: Oh, okay.

Answer: Wisteria Mountain. If I left the "K" off and left the Oyama, I'd be a big mountain. If I ever get to be six feet tall, I might be tempted.

Question: (laughs) Is that what -- is Fuji big or is --

Answer: Wisteria

Answer: Fujiyama, Wisteria Mountain.

Question: See -- I'm learning all this little bits and pieces to -- Iwo Jima -- what is Jima? Is it island?

Answer: Iwo Jima is -- is -- shima -- shima is island. But it gets a soft reading, it becomes Iwo Jim

Answer: Instead of saying Iwo Shim

Answer: Harder -- harder to say. You say Iwo Jim

Answer:

Question: Ahh.

Answer: But Americans say -- karaoke. Let's go to that restaurant because they got karaoke. And it isn't -- if you say karaoke in Japan, the Japanese would not understand you. Is supposed to be ...

Question: Now do you -- you grew up in Spokane?

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Answer: Most of the time. Although I was born north of Spokane, where my father was assigned to the Great Northern as a section foreman. But I grew up -- I went to school here and high school here in Spokane, and I was raised here.

Question: So did you learn to speak Japanese at home then or --

Answer: Broken Japanese. Partly Japanese. In order to converse with my parents. But rest of time I was -- I was busy learning English, of course.

Question: So what was it like as a child growing up in Spokane? You were just coming out of the depression at that time?

Answer: No, we didn't feel it too badly. In fact I took up smoking when I was about 11 or 12 and I learned after awhile to get -- get one of these Bull Durham packages with all these wrapping papers, and after awhile, I could roll it up with one hand and (gesture) like that and stick it in one corner of my mouth and spit out of the other corner. I was getting pretty good. And every night my mother would -- would have my brother and me -- Jack and I -- stand before her after we got out of the bathtub, before bedtime. And then she would say "All right". And then we'd have to stick our hand out and she'd look at it, you know, and look at it like that and years later I said, Momma, what were you doing every night, when you have us stand -- stand before you and we'd go like this and you go look at our -- she said -- I looking for nicotine. Why didn't you say that Momma? I never smoke with that -- I'm left handed. I smoke with this hand, like this Momma

Answer: (gestures) And that's the first time I ever saw her laugh and cry at the same time. (laughs)

Question: It sounds like you had a fun -- a fun childhood?

Answer: Yeah, it was. Hm-hmm.

Question: Now growing up, did you think of yourself as Japanese? Japanese family?

Answer: Oh, nothing whatsoever. Because I sang just as loudly as any other kids, whenever we sang God Bless America, or My Country 'Tis of Thee, and I never thought of myself as anything but American. That's why, when Pearl Harbor happened, we thought just like -- just like any other kid who wanted to go fight for our country. And then when I'm in the Army, well, actually I already told you how I managed to get into the Army. I had to threaten members of the Selective Service Board in Spokane in order to get into the Army in the first place. And then evacuation starts while I'm in the Army. I hear about this evacuation. You know.

Question: So tell me that, because I don't have that on tape, about how you -- you decided to enlist. Now this was before Pearl Harbor, right?

Answer: Right after Pearl Harbor. Right after Pearl Harbor, 7th of December. 1941. My mother comes into my room and says I want to talk to you. And she said, you know that this is your country, no matter what -- who says what to you. I say I know that Mom. And she says, this is your country and you know it. You should be thinking about going to fight for your country now that we're at war, she says. My mother, born in Japan, is telling me that. Half in Japanese, half in English. And she says, but I want you home for kurisumasu and shougatsu. That meant Christmas and New Years. And then you go, she said. So I waited

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until 5th of January, 1942 and I packed up, said good bye, and took off to the location of the Selective Service Board here in Spokane, Hutton Building. And the fellow at the desk greeted me and pushed across a paper and said sign here. And I signed. As soon as I signed that and he saw my name, he stopped smiling and said, you better go home. You know we're at war. I said I know we're at war, that's why I'm here. He said you better go home, think this over. I said I come from home. He wouldn't process me. And I wouldn't go home. And I finally found a piece of paper and I went up to the desk and I pushed it in front of him. I said give me your name, don't-- print, write it -- just print it, and print me the names of the rest of the fellows here in this office. And he wanted to know what do you want our names for? I said, look, if they tell me on the Coast that I don't qualify, then I'll come back to Spokane. But you fellows here in Spokane don't even want to send me there. Human interest story. I've got a friend working for the newspaper. Give me your names. And that's how I got processed, sent to the Coast, and on 8th of January, 1942, a month and a day after Pearl Harbor, I raised my right hand to earn 21 bucks a month, buck private, US Army.

Question: Was the attitude of this gentleman -- was it prejudice angry, or was he thinking that you didn't understand that it was Japanese that had bombed Pearl Harbor? I mean did he think you were stupid or what?

Answer: I have no idea

Answer: One -- about that time there was apparently rumors about -- about evacuation, I suppose. He knew about that, I didn't know -- nobody knew about. Because the evacuation order came after I'm already in the Army. And I'm taking basic training in California

Answer: At Camp Roberts, Caucasian officer.. hauls me to his office -- there were about seven, eight of us. And when my turn came, I went in there, I saluted, and he says sit down there. I sat down in front of him and he stood in front of me, and with a big thick book, and he's rifling through it, page after page. And I went like that (gestures). I could see that they were written in Japanese. No pictures. And he finally seemed satisfied, closed the book, gives it to me. Naturally it's upside down to me. I looked at it, turned it over and he -- he smiled and.. oh you passed. I said what did I pass, sir? He said you passed to go to a secret intelligence school. I said oh, I said, thank you sir. And he said call the next man in. I saluted and went out. About a week or two weeks later, I'm ordered to pack up and get on that truck outside because you're leaving. I get on the bus -- on that truck and -- and it takes me down to a railroad station and there were about -- oh, about seven, eight, nine other Japanese-Americans like me, in uniform, at the station, and I thought, we -- all of us can't be going to that intelligence school. Some of those guys don't look too bright, you know. And then a long train comes in and an MP jumps off the train and says come on over here and get on board. So we all went on board. And I was amazed to see everybody on board the train was -- were Japanese Americans, in uniform. And some with stripes. Old timers. And then they start -- and then all the blinds were down. And then we started going eastward and the train wouldn't stop until we hit Oklahoma

Answer: And by that time some of the fellows were getting nervous and they said you don't think this train is going to stop someplace and we're all ordered to get off and when we get off, we're facing a row of machine guns aimed at us? What are you talking about, this is the US of

Answer: And then the train stopped in Oklahoma and to our relief, some names were called off and some guys got off. And when the train hit Little Rock, Arkansas, my name was called off and I wound up in Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas. And the -- about that -- so many days later, the same officer who had interviewed me in California comes over and says,

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Koyama, oh, I had a fellow named Koyama in California was -- I said you interviewed me, Sir. And he looks up and says, why, what are you doing here? I said just following orders, Sir, here I am, following orders. He says, well, you missed the first course at the school. You're going to make it for the second one. He writes something down. So I figured, well, I'm going to go, eventually up to school. He said up in Minnesota, he said. So I get on the train, when my orders come, figuring I'm going up to Minnesota

Answer: And I fall asleep. When I open my eyes, I look out, all I see is just open area, looked like a desert. I said where are we? Somebody said you're in Kansas. I said what are we doing in Kansas? You're going to Fort Riley, Kansas. And so I got off at Fort Riley, Kansas and I am assigned to a - a quartermaster, I think. I think it was a quartermaster corps, dishing out supplies to troops at a warehouse. And then I get called into report to certain building. So I report there, and there's that same colonel, I recognize him. And he looks up. He recognizes me. What the H are you doing here? I says, Sir, I'm just following orders. I thought you were going to send me from Arkansas up to Minnesota, but you send me to this place. And he say (inaudible) (gestures) say you're going up there yet. And then -- then I get my final order some weeks later. So this time I don't fall asleep. I keep my eyes open. And we go through Nebraska and then we start heading north. I'm finally going to Minnesota

Answer: And then we wind up at Camp Savage, Minnesota, the location of the military intelligence service language school. To learn anything and everything about Japan and Japanese. History, language, customs, everything. A to Z. And after we graduate, it was a six months accelerated course. After we graduated in June, 1943, we're shipped to Fort Snelling, near St. Paul, awaiting orders to travel. And then my orders finally came and then I'm sent aboard a ship -- on a train to California, San Francisco, and then we board a ship and the ship starts headed down south towards South America, Central America

Answer: And I thought how come we're going that way. The war in the Pacific is that way, east. And we're going south. We kept on going towards south, and I thought, well, how come, where are we going anyway? Maybe we're going to join other ships someplace, and a big fleet -- armada, you know. And then we're on the central America, just before we come close to the South American continent, the ship slowly turns east. One ship now, unescorted, our ship. And then takes a southern route straight across to New Zealand. And it took about 11, 12 days I suppose. And every day we're gambling aboard ship. We're throwing dice, playing cards, you know, poker, or throwing three dice, what they call it, shigoroku, four, five six. And somebody noticed that I'm playing every day. And so a sergeant says, Koyama, you -- you start going downstairs for mealtime to check on when we can, as a unit, can go down and eat. So from there on, I'm -- I have to give up gambling ever so often and run downstairs and see when we can go down and eat. Because I'm not seasick at all, you see. In fact I told somebody, if I had my choice, I didn't want to join the Army. I wanted to join the Navy, but they wouldn't take me. They won't take me in the Army Air Corps, either. Only thing open to me was the Army. So I'm a -- in the Army.

Question: Now how old are you at this time?

Answer: I'm 20 -- it was four years after I graduated from high school and I'm working on a farm near Spokane. Able to get in the Army so I'd be about 23, 24, I suppose, yeah.

Question: So do you know what they're sending you over to do at this point or --

Answer: By that time, you see, those of us who are the expert types, who wouldn't let an enemy take over a conversation or interrupt or anything like that, are grouped into one group and trained to become interrogators. The submissive types, the quiet types, the studious are

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trained to become translators who could translate documents miles behind enemy -- way back, you see, but we're in the forward areas because we're the interrogators. We have to interrogate -- this one is -- when an enemy is captured, you see. So I'm an interrogator in MacArthur's headquarters. And I start wearing this GHQ shoulder patch, you see. And then I get asked to interrogate prisoners captured by the Australians. So I'm on placement, temporary duty, TDY, temporary duty, and every day an Australian sergeant will come around, pick me up and take me to camp right outside Brisbane in Queensland, to interrogate Japanese prisoners. And at noontime, he would say, first day he say, let's go eat. And he take me to a building. And he said do exactly -- you follow me and do exactly what I do. So I follow him, keep my eyes on him, and then so many feet forward, he suddenly stopped and stuck his hand out, and a pitcher of beer was placed in his hand. So when I got to that place, I did the same thing, and I got a pitcher of beer. So we both go to a long table and we sat down and we're quaffing away, and then food is brought in to us. Sergeant's mess hall, mind you, not an officer's mess hall, but sergeant. And that's when I told this fellow who came from Australia two years ago, two years ago, 1999, to ask me about -- about my life in Australia and how I helped the Australian Army. So I told -- I wrote back and I described this sergeant's mess hall. And he wrote back and says we enjoyed your description of the sergeant's mess hall in Australia and please accept this as a token of -- of our appreciation. And he sent me a key ring which had, on one side it had the picture of the Australian flag. And when you pushed that, in the middle of the key ring, it turns around, and out comes a picture of a kangaroo. And that's what I wore during the last Olympic. And I say I don't have an Olympic medal, but I've got a medal from Australi

Answer: (laughs)

Question: So is that where you first ended up being stationed, or did you go --

Answer: That's my first station overseas, Australi

Answer: And then -- then I know some fellows who were going over to some -- to forward areas. And that was a general headquarters, you see, so my -- my boss was an Australian major. And I kept asking him, when can I go overseas like some of the others are going forward areas. And he kept telling me Koyama, you go back and you continue doing a good job and we'll see. And I -- I kept after him and after him, and then one day I'm assigned to interrogate an officer. Japanese officer. And as soon as I go in there, I explain to him what we're going to talk about, and more I talk, I could see that his face is getting redder and redder, he's getting angry at me. For some reason I couldn't figure out. And after awhile, I explained to him now let's get going and let's start. By that time he comes forward, he leans forward, and he spit in my face, this Japanese officer. Naturally I reacted like a true American, I cussed at him in Japanese and spit back in his face. And as soon as I did that, this Japanese officer complexion changed from red to white. He suddenly realized this fellow who's standing in front of me like a Japanese innocent man speaks perfect Japanese -- he's not a Japanese -- he's an American. No Japanese enlisted man would dare do what he did to me. So he figures, I just signed my death warrant. I'll be dragged out of here and get shot any moment. So he -- his complexion changes to white. After awhile he starts -- his body starts shaking, and he says, I must go to the restroom. I said never mind that, stand over there you so and so. I'm cussing at him in Japanese. And my buddy, about two blocks away, has an earphone on, sitting in front of a big recording device, and he's going what the heck is going on over there. All he can hear is me just raving and ranting at him. And that's all he hears. And finally he said, I said stand over there. And pretty soon he couldn't stand it. He urinated in his pants in front of me. And by that time I called -- I pulled a cord, rang a bell, and the Australian guard came in. I said take him away. And then I report back the guy -- and my buddy with the earphones -- he said what the heck happened. Said, I don't

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understand at all what happened. And I explained to him. Said no wonder you were raving and ranting. Yeah, I says I spit back at him because he spit in my face. And then he says man, on man, am I going to have a time. And he translated what's on there and sends it forward. The major, Australian major, my boss, calls me in. Not a word, not a word about it. But he says, Koyama, you still want to go overseas? Forward areas? I says yes, sir. All right, you're going to go. That's how I left Australia and went to New Guinea, place called Hollandia

Answer: Location of the 6th US Army headquarters. To interrogate prisoners -- all prisoners captured by subordinate units of the 6th Army Headquarters. And there's where I came in contact with a Japanese Navy prisoner, petty officer, fellow named Takayama, big fellow. And I noticed that he was nice physique -- big fellow. And since this was a newly built prisoner of war compound, we need to have prisoners go outside and clear the area around the camp so we would have a clear field to fire, just in case, you see. And every day, have to write down who among the prisoners are healthy enough to be worked outside. After we made roll calls and so forth. So I told the officer in charge there, why don't we get one of them, to do the roll call and select from them who the healthy ones are, who could be worked outside. And we would supervise, but let them do that. He says, how would you work it? I said, we've got quite a bit of blue looking cloth in the warehouse over there. We could cut that into strips and have them wrap around their arm as a token of authority. And we could assign one man to be in charge. He said, how would you do that? That Navy fellow, that big fellow, put him in charge, Takayama, Yashiro is his name, Yashiro Takayama

Answer: Put him in charge and have him select subordinates, assistants. Half dozen of them, and they can all wear the blue armbands. And we did that, and from there on, everything worked just perfectly. Week after week, month after month. I was there about five months, I guess. And then suddenly one day we get orders to pack up, break down your tent and pack up because we're all leaving. So I started breaking down the tent where I had my typewriter and so forth. And Takayama came to the entrance and he motioned for me so I stopped and went outside and he -- Takayama says I know you're all leaving, but I have one final request. I say what is it? He says, I would like to know your name and address so that possibly after the war I could thank you properly for all the kindnesses you've shown us. And I was surprised. I thought I was just doing my job. And I said you know I can't give you my name. There was an order. We never -- always used nicknames or whatever, never our full names, our rank or anything like that. We -- we never wore any rank, insignia, you see.

Question: I didn't know that.

Answer: Oh, yeah, just uniform only, and no -- no name either. This comes after World War II, you see, we never wore a nameplate. And so I said you know I can't give you my name and he seemed so disappointed. So I said look, if I survive and get to Japan after the war, I know who you are and where you come from. I know you come from Kagoshima -- I will look you up. And with that, he saluted me so I saluted back and we parted. And then I got on board this ship, LST 552 -- LST -- landing ship tank to the Navy, but to us Army passengers, LST stood for large slow target. 552. We all headed northward and -- and we finally found out that we're going -- heading for the Philippines someplace. That's where we're headed. And within sight of our destination, that's where we're going to go, somebody said. You could see the islands. We got attacked. By Japanese Kamikaze dive bombers. Divine wind, Kamikaze, dive bombers. And by -- in the meantime, I had tied my -- part of my body to a part of the ship so I wouldn't roll over at nighttime. And a fellow stumbled over me one time and I looked up and he looked down and I recognized him as my favorite driver who always volunteered to be my driver in New Guinea

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Answer: He said what are you doing down there? I said, well, I found a place so I can sleep. And he said, look, I've got a command car all by myself. Come on over and share it with me. So from there on, I'm riding like a prince. As we approached that target, Leyte, Philippines, right beside our command car, he's standing to my left, and we're getting attacked. And at one time there was a dive bomber directly overhead and I looked up and I could see the black dots coming. I knew what they were. So I hollered flop, and both of us started to flop together, and the -- but the bomb landed on his side, Andy's side, that's his name, Andy, and he got the brunt of it. And I never saw him since then. I even tried -- had a Congressman try to locate him in Minnesota

Answer: All I knew was that we just called him Andy, Andy, and big guy, and that he came from Minnesota

Answer: I got the -- I got the -- he got the brunt of it, I got the ricochet. Because I burned my front here, all -- all my left side, my ear drum is broken, and hot pieces -- from my left side of my face and I think I was wearing sunglasses. I think the lens protected my eyesight, eyeballs. But the rim caught me right here -- you can see this scar right here. And so when I came to, there's a noise in my left ear, broken ear drum, and I couldn't see out of my right eye because of the blood pooling into my right eye. I don't know that. So I thought, maybe I lost my left ear and maybe I lost my right eye -- eyeball. So from this position, there about 26 of us lying on the beach when I came to. Naked except for our shorts. Somebody had cut off all our uniforms and shoes, boots and everything else. So I thought, what are we doing here in the open are

Answer: We could get strafed any moment. And I said, oh, I know, we're -- we must be waiting our turn for medical attention. So that they could tell at a glance where our injuries are. That's why we're stripped naked, I thought. And then I thought, well, I can't -- by then I could hear firing going on but I couldn't hear too well. So I -- from this position, I lifted my right arm to check my face. Oh, there's my left ear. And then went this way, I could feel jagged pieces stick -- sticking in my face, and went this way and then I was pleased to discover that I had my right eyeball. There's my right eyeball. And then I started to put my arm down to my side and then the -- I got the message from someplace -- the good Lord, an angel, that said don't put your arm down the way you was, leave it on your chest. So from this position, (gesture) I left it on my chest. Out of 25, 26 naked bodies, I'm the only one with their arm on his chest. And that attracted their attention. To make a long story short. That's why I never got buried. Two guys came running over after chaplain came over, gave me the last rites, read the 23rd Psalm over me, Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall not -- I thought holy Moses, where does he think I'm going? Two guys came running over with a stretcher, pulled me aboard and then took me to a tent and put a -- one of those face masks over me so that I could breath easier. And from there, they put me aboard the ship and the ship took me to a hospital nearby, and that happened to be one of the Admiralty Islands. And I'm in the hospital there and couple days later. By that time I'm wide awake. Guy comes in with a clipboard, he says Sarge, what's your home unit. I said GH

Question: MacArthur's headquarters, Australi

Answer: He said no, no, no, your home unit. I said, well, I was on temporary duty with 6th Army Headquarters in New Guinea

Answer: He says Sarge, I want your home Marine unit. I said I'm no Marine, I'm Army. And he stops writing, took off. Couple days later I'm wheeled out of there by myself, placed aboard a ship and taken to an Army Hospital on New Caledonia

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Answer: Couple days later there, somebody comes in with white hospital -- says all you guys straighten up in here because you're going to get your purple heart today. General's going to come around and give you a purple heart. And so we straightened up and look spiffy and sure enough here come the group of officers and I could see a general, I think it was a one or two star general. And the officer on the right with a piece of paper would read off the name and the officer to his left would pass -- pass a purple heart to the general, and the general would go up to the guy and pin it on. And as they approached me, finally my name is called off, and the guy on the left side gave the general the purple heart and the general takes a couple more steps then finally looks up, sees my face. He stops walking, and another officer behind him walked into the general, 'cause the general stopped so suddenly. He's looking at my face, so the officer who had read my name to the general says, in a loud whisper, "Sir, he's one of us." And the general looked at him as if to say you better be right about this, and took the last remaining couple steps forward and with trembling fingers pinned the purple heart to my hospital garb. And I -- I'm glaring at that general. I thought, if he pricks me, with that pin, I'll holler in Japanese right into his face. I'll fix him. And I'm glaring at the general. But he didn't. And that's how I got my purple heart.

Question: So they, even at that stage, a lot of the military still wasn't --

Answer: They -- hardly anybody knows that we're there, all over, in every campaign in the Pacific. Five, 6000 of us are scattered in small groups, see. In every campaign in the Pacific, from Guadalcanal on. In fact Attu and Kiska, in the Alaskas where the first graduates went. And then the first graduates, to Attu, and Kiska, by the time I get there, New Guinea campaign, see.

Question: You seem like a pretty happy-go-lucky guy. A lot of things probably just float off your back like --

Answer: Oh, yeah, yeah. In fact, in Australia, I almost got into a fist fight with a -- with an Australian guard.

Question: Huh.

Answer: Yeah, he was a guard. Because he kept referring to us as Japs. You know, Jap to us is derogatory. And I said -- I talked to him quietly. I say, you know, Japs are the ones that I go down to interrogate. I said I'm a Yank. Down under, like other Yanks. He said that's right. Nodded his head, looked kind of funny. And a few moments later, I hear him say Japs again. And I went up to him, I said, look, I just told you, don't use that word. We're Yanks. And he looked kind of surprised. He said yeah, I know that. I says then why do you call us Japs? Japs -- then he -- he said wait a minute. I was getting -- I had my fist cocked by that time. He held up his hand -- chaps -- C-H-A-P-S. I say holy Moses. That's what happened. (laughs)

Question: Was there -- did you feel ... did you feel separated, as -- within the Service, because you were a Japanese-American? Because you had some heritage?

Answer: Right because, like in 6th Army Headquarters, we were placed -- bunch of us -- there were a few translators and few of us interrogators in a big -- one big tent. And that tent is right next to the tent occupied by the military police. So if we ever get called towards dusk or on a cloudy day and we have to go interrogate, go someplace, we always go next door to the MPs and a tall, blond MP, not a short, dark-haired MP, but tall, blond MP would always

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come out to accompany us to wherever we had to go, for our protection. Because there were several occasions when some of my buddies got shot at because they were mistaken.

Question: Was that tough? I mean, 'cause that seems kind of interesting -- here we say, you're an American. You were born here and you were raised here.

Answer: Yeah, right.

Question: Because you have -- I have German heritage. You know, they weren't interning my relatives --

Answer: I know, yeah.

Question: -- and what Hitler was doing, but yet here they come to you and not only do they say we want you to serve and you willingly go to serve, but we're going to put you on the front line where you're going to go interrogate people that, for all you know could be relatives --

Answer: Yeah, because could have been my brother. My younger brother, who went with me to Japan after we lost our father, when I was five and he was about 3-1/2 or four years old. He went to another relative. We're -- four of us were scattered. Two sisters and two brothers. Four of us were sent to Japan. My older brother, Jack, remained here in Spokane with my mother. So, I went to one and my younger brother went to another relative. He got inducted into the Army and he was a sergeant in the Japanese Army when war ended, but fortunately for him, he never left Japan. He stayed in Japan, doing what? Training others how to drive a tank -- one man tank. Because on the farm where we worked before -- we went to Japan, we learned how to drive a truck, you see. So I knew how to drive and he knew how to drive. So fortunately, for him, he never left Japan.

Question: So your brother was, during World War II was he --

Answer: He was Japanese Army.

Question: Boy, was that --

Answer: We didn't know that until after the war, of course. We didn't know what -- what had happened to any of -- my brother or my two sisters. Yeah.

Question: Did you think about that, though? I mean, did you ever wonder, boy, I wonder if he's in the Service over there or --

Answer: Yes, and so after -- while we're in the so-called Occupation Army of Japan, my mother -- my brother, of course, tickled pink to see me. Finally, as an officer in Japan, you see with the Occupation Force. So he takes -- and he's got a job working as an interpreter at a US base that repaired helicopters and planes damaged in the war. So he says come on, I want to show you something. So I thought he was going to show me some damaged planes. But he takes me around to show me to the American US Air Force platoon assigned there, and he says this is my brother. He puts arm around -- this is my brother -- he's a colonel. (laughs) So he got a big bang out of showing me off.

Question: He was proud of what you --

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Answer: Yeah. He's deceased now because I'm the only surviving member of the family now.

Question: It's interesting because, I mean, you, you know, I hear different stories with all of the things that happened back in the States, all the internment camps and things like that. Now you married -- you joined the Service and then got married, is that correct?

Answer: That's right. And then the evacuation started. So my first wife came from place called Pasco, Tri-Cities. On the east -- east side of the Columbia River. Members of my wife's family who lived on the west side of the Columbia River in Kennewick were evacuated and placed in a barbed-wire enclosure that we referred to as relocation camp. So the rest of the family in Pasco said we better sell our restaurant and get rid of our belongings and move to Spokane so that we'll be with our friends in Spokane when the evacuation order comes. So they did that. Moved to Spokane and lived out of their suitcases throughout World War II for the evacuation order that never came. My mother lived out of suitcases throughout World War II. For, waiting to be evacuated.

Question: Did you get letters from your wife then? Could she correspond?

Answer: Oh, yes, yes.

Question: So you knew what was going on?

Answer: Yes, yes.

Question: Did -- I mean, how did you feel about that? I mean, didn't -- didn't -- was it --

Answer: Well, by then, -- by that time, the powers that be finally gave authorization for an Infantry unit to be formed based around the Hundredth Battalion from Hawaii. And that came to be the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which came to be known as the most decorated in the history of the US Army, most decorated. And it's out of this Army, Regimental Combat Team, smaller than a division, bigger than a regiment, with its own artillery, own engineer, own medical detachment, that fought in Italy and France and became so well known that at that time, during the war, one man from that unit, 442nd was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for diving on a live hand grenade and sacrificing himself. That was it. Last year, just last year, in the year 2000, they investigated. If this unit is so well decorated and so full of achievements, how come there's only one Congressional Medal of Honor? So they investigated and came to realize that there were so many others who qualified but never got decorated. So June, year 2000, in Washington, D.C., President Clinton awarded 20 Japanese-Americans, most of them post-humously, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Including one to the one-armed senator from Hawaii, Senator Dan Inouye that the average fellow couldn't say his name at first. They say that one arm senator, you know, Senator I-know-you. That's Senator Inouye. He became also a Congressional Medal of Honor winner. Just last year. And out of those 20, two happen to be from the State of Washington. And one is going to be honored fully, in fact 26th of March, year 2001, by having his name attached to the Seattle Federal Courthouse. It will be known as Nakamura -- Nakamura Federal Court House in Seattle. That's after Bill Nakamura of Seattle.

Question: Does -- does that make your service bittersweet?

Answer: Yes, it does. And to me, because I'm -- all my three wars are in the Pacific, it is -- is good feeling to know that not only do we have a Nakamura honored in Seattle, but we also, in Fort Lewis, Washington, have a Sakakita Building. Named after Lt. Col. Richard

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Sakakita of Hawaii whom I nominated about five, six years ago, because the commanding officer, the colonel in charge of the 201st Military Intelligence Brigade wanted to know if there's a intelligence man who could be honored. He must be deceased, however, who could be honored by having the name of the -- of the building changed to that individual's name. So I nominated Sakakita because he had just died about three or four months earlier. And Saka - - Richard Sakakita was captured by the Japanese in the Philippines and tortured, but he never broke. And to his credit, years later, when we were having a big national reunion of the military intelligence personnel in the current location of the -- of the intelligence school which is now located at Monterey, California

Answer: I was asked to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and I noticed that Dick Sakakita is on the stage, off to the side, and I asked somebody, what's he doing up there? And I found out for the first time that he's going to be the main speaker. And when he got up to speak, he talked about his background and how he's captured and tortured. None of us had ever heard of -- of -- about his background before. Because I used to play poker with him at the Army Intelligence School; he never said anything about his background. And his wife was with him, this time in Monterey, with her mouth to her -- (gestures) with her hand to her mouth, in shock, because it's the first time that she's hearing about what her husband had gone through. That's how close-mouthed he was.

Question: Wow.

Answer: And he's now honored -- being honored with a -- with a building named after him. At Fort Lewis. The Sakakita 201st Intelligence Brigade Building.

Question: That's great.

Question: When you were overseas in the South Pacific and interrogating soldiers, did they usually bring them back off -- they would capture them and bring them back off the front somewhere, and you would interrogate them or -- how -- were you out in the field interrogating them or --

Answer: Ah. When they were captured they would be brought into the POW compound, prisoner of war compound, and that's where I would interrogate them. And I did that the same thing to this Takayama at Hollandia, New Guinea

Answer: And as I told you, we finally placed him to be in charge of POW compound in south, and we finally parted and then I got wounded and -- in the Philippines at Leyte on 25th of October, 1944, and I'm hospitalized for one whole year until October '45. Including my 34-stitch operation to try to get that shrapnel out of my chest. And that's when I became five pints Irish. And I'm working here in Spokane at the Kalena Air Depot which currently is known as the Fairchild Air Force Base. I'm working there and they found out that I had a security clearance in MacArthur's Headquarters, so they assigned me to the post office, assigned a tall, lanky six-footer as my assistant, and they gave me a pistol to wear on my hips, and together we would drive a fortified truck down to the main post office in Spokane, load up all the classified mail, and we'd lock it up and then we'd saunter across the street to the nearest coffee shop. And people around Spokane would see me with -- with my pistol, and they would go around me, avoid me, and go to my assistant and ask about me. And he'd say, with a -- with a straight face, why don't you go ask him, he's my boss. And we were doing that when I got this strange letter from Pentagon. And the letter said, oh, I give a lot to know where that letter went to -- I don't have it. But the letter said would you please consider going back on active duty? We will be happy to give you a special waiver of your 40% World War II injury. Number two, despite the fact that you have been out all these months, you may return with

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the highest World War II rank. I was a five star sergeant in World War II. Number three, if you pass your physical minus your disabilities, you may qualify -- may qualify to become an officer for the US Army. And I explain all this to my Japan-born mother again, and she just smiles. She say, "You go again. General MacArthur needs you." And she was right. General MacArthur's the one who discovered -- he's in Japan now, head of the Occupation. He's losing by the -- by the dozens all the linguists that he had during the shooting part of the war. So he apparently notified Pentagon that he's got to get -- get some of those linguists back. He can't use -- he doesn't want to use a Japanese who speaks perfect English. He needs American of Japanese descent qualified. So I get this strange letter. So I went back in again. January 1947, and a five stripe sergeant. And with -- about six months later, I'm on a direct field commission. So one day I'm a five star sergeant, next day I'm a second lieutenant, US Army. And I stayed on through the Occupation, through Korea and through Viet Nam, and I'm assigned back to Army Intelligence School, back in Ft. Hollerberg, Maryland. And once a month, I should say once a week, I go down to Washington, D.C. in a chauffeured vehicle, in civilian clothing, and I'm contacting the Pentagon, the FBI and the CI

Answer: And that's how come I have -- I have a autographed picture of J. Edgar Hoover when I took off for Viet Nam. Anyway, I'm doing that, and then I suddenly get a notice from the Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C. I'm to go down there for a physical of some sort. So I go down there and I -- oh, come to find out, it's not a physical, I'm -- I'm going to face a medical board. And it's headed by a full colonel and Colonel says, Colonel, we find that you've been on active duty all these years with a special waiver of your 40% disability from World War II. I said that's right. Couple more years, if you leave me alone, couple more years, I'll have 30 years. He says, we find now that you don't qualify any longer to be on active duty as an officer. So we want you to go home to the state of -- he turns to one of his members -- state of what? Washington. We want you to go home to state of Washington and go fishing. That's what I've been doing for 31 years now. I'm still fishing.

Question: It sounds like you were kind of caught in the middle. When you -- when you interrogated -- it sounds like you were kind of caught in the middle where you built some good friendships up within the Service, but now you go interrogate people and the soldiers are looking at you and thinking you're Japanese and you speak Japanese, and then all of a sudden they realize you're a Yank. And so now, it sounds like maybe --

Answer: Most of the fellows knew. Only ones had to worry about are the new personnel coming over from the States. Sometimes they would get nervous if they're on guard duty and shoot first, ask questions later. That happened to several of my buddies -- they got shot at. But I'm -- talk to you -- I mention about -- this Takayama

Answer: This Navy prisoner that I interrogated. So I'm in Japan. And one day I'm driving a jeep and I drive across a -- the Army Demobilization Bureau Office Headquarters. And I suddenly, oh, I made that promise to Takayama that if I got to Japan, I would look him up. So I drove my jeep inside and told my story to the first man and he excused himself, he comes back with the head man himself, who's just flabbergasted that there was such a story during wartime, between American and a Japanese. And he says I realize now that from what I've heard, that you're looking for this man who was a Navy man when this is an Army demobilization bureau, but I will be honored if you would give us the job of looking for your Navy man. I said, fine, fine. Within two days, he had him. Takayama is back on his farm, back, way down south, southern part of Japan. And so I said -- I said -- I will come back this afternoon. So I went to a bank, got some money, went back to the Army demobilization bureau, and the head man himself, and I said will you send him this money and ask him, don't tell him, because of war crime, trial is going on in Tokyo. Ask him to buy a round trip ticket so that he'll know that's -- it's not one way but round trip. Ask him to come up to Tokyo and you

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find out when he's coming, what day, and then you call me, let me know. No sense giving him my name, he doesn't know my name. So comes the day that he's going to come up. Takayama come to Tokyo. So I go down to the Tokyo station and I look around. There's a big crowd and right there, in the middle of the round, something. So I thought, what are they looking at? So I shoulder my way inside and there's Takayama seated on the floor with Navy leggings on, Navy knapsack on his back and a Navy cap on. He tried to find out -- in back down south in the country, about -- who's been to Tokyo lately, what do you wear in Tokyo, what can you wear? Nobody could tell him, so he thought well, I can't be wrong if I wear part of my Navy uniform. So he's got leggings on and cap on and so forth and so forth, and people around Tokyo are milling around him, trying to find, what the -- where did this guy come from? Wearing part of a uniform of a defeated country. And they're looking around and milling around him and then our eyes finally met and he recognizes my face immediately, big tears flow -- started flowing down. I said come on. And I dragged him out of that place and took him to nearest clothing store and outfitted him properly and then I took him home to the quarters in Tokyo and he stayed -- he slept on the downstairs couch. And about seven or eight days later I said don't you have to -- you can use that telephone. Don't you have to call home and let them know you're safe -- you're with me? And he said I think they know. Because he says, I thought of you, and he said -- he told the family most of the time, if it is, don't expect me back right away because I will be working for him as long as he's in Japan. So he says, I don't have to call them -- I'm sure they realize that it is you. So I says, no, no, no, you've got to call. You're the head of a family, you're the head of a farm, you've got parents to look after, I finally got him on the train, he went home. About a week later, young teenager, he's 18. Eighteen year old kid, comes up to Tokyo, asking for me. And he starts talking in -- in local Gibberish. I said speak regular straight Japanese. And I find out that his name is Hirano.. Satochi. Satochi Hirano. Next door neighbor of Takayama's farm. And he says I am here as his substitute to work for you. I said I can't use you either, I have a house boy, I've got a house maid, and he says, well, I can't go home. I thought, oh my. Well, wait a minute, what if I got you a job in Tokyo, then you can look in on me as often as you want, check on me, make sure I'm all right, and then you can report back to the farm. He thought that was fine, so I got him a job in Tokyo. He stayed in Tokyo, he's still in Tokyo, he's married to a Tokyo gal, no kids, but for the past 30 years, he's been elected Tokyo City Assembly Member. Member of the Diet. You know. And he's -- in 1989, Hirano and Takayama, two of them, together, come to Spokane to stay at my place. And at that time I'm in the midst of forming -- 1989 -- I was still involved in the doings of Spokane Chapter of the Retired Officers Association of which I was a three term president. And I know that Col. Sam Greshio who came into the Chapter quite recently, is a former prisoner of the Japanese. And he and I are good friends, good buddies, anyway, because I gave a talk before the Ex-prisoners of war, Spokane Chapter, down at the Veterans Hospital where they are located. So I says Sam, how would you like to meet your counterpart? A Japanese prisoner of ours is coming over. He'll be over on a certain date. And maybe you -- you would like to bring your wife and come over and meet him. He said, "Would I", he said. Sure I would. So they came -- Sam Greshio and his wife, Divonia met Hirano and Takayama, but the Greshios brought a reporter. From the Spokane Review, the leading newspaper from Spokane, who is now a retired from the editorial board. And, and -- it's a she. Rebecca Nappe is her name. And she is intrigued, of course, with the story. She's asking all kinds of questions and I'm the interpreter, you know. So at the very end, Sam says, you fought for your country, I fought for my country. We were enemies but now we are friends. And they both crying and hugging each other. And that occurred in 1989 at my house about two miles from here. And since that time, Hirano has falling in love with the United States and he -- he comes over practically every year, so many times a year, I think, any time there's a need for something to be done from Tokyo government, Hirano is included. So he has been to every one of our 50 states. Seven years ago, in 1994, he was in Alaska, touring Alaska, when he found out about my eight bypass coronary surgery that I survived. And so he -- he has his driver -- he brings his

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own driver. Driver him down to Seattle to Spokane to check on me. And all he did was take my -- take pictures of me to show to Takayama, his next door neighbor, you see. And he's been to every one of our states. And like one time he said our next trip will be from New York State up to Canadian border. Will you give me a list of things I should be looking for. I said I can give it to you right now, one word, Niagara Falls. That's all I know. 'Cause I've never been there, I said. And he says you've never been there? I says no, I haven't. And so last year, last year, last May, May, year 2000, he and the driver, same driver, and his wife and three, four other -- seven of them. Landed in San Francisco on a Saturday, Sunday they rent a car, big van for seven, and drive up -- straight up north, Oregon, Washington, to a cheap motel in Spokane and he calls me. We're here. I say where are you going from here? Where are you headed from here? He says we're headed for Seattle. From Seattle, where are you going? He says back to Tokyo. I said, what did you come for? To see how you are. Because we heard after all these years, we want to check to see how you are. So their main, only purpose was to check on me. Last year, May. And I said well tomorrow is Wednesday, I said Wednesday is my exercise day. We go exercise Monday, Wednesday, Friday. I says by the time you're getting ready to leave, I've got to go to exercise. He says where do you go? Oh, not too far away. Great big church, big parking space. He says do you have to pay to get in? I say, no, no, no, free. He say can we go and watch you? I say of course, if you -- if you want to, you come over and you come over to my house and I'll lead you, drive you over there. So I led them over to the exercise place and I explained to the people at exercise -- about 75 of us exercise -- I said, I'm going to have a group of seven Japanese from Tokyo led by an elected politician. From here they're going back to Seattle to board a plane to fly back to Japan but their only purpose in coming to Spokane is to check on my health. And by that time my wife is telling the leader of the exercise group, oh, they'll be seated back there, if you -- stand up at a given signal, turn around, smile, wave and say "Ohio". Don't say "Indiana" or "Pennsylvania" or anything else. "Ohio" -- that means good morning. So if everybody could say Ohio, then they will know that we appreciate their presence. And so they did that, and the visitors were very flabbergasted -- oh, they know Japanese? Oh no, they don't know Japanese, but they know Ohio. Happen to be one of our states. So that's what happened a year ago. And -- but two weeks ago, Hirano calls me, 3:30 in the morning. And he says what time is it? I says 3:30. Oh, that's good. I says, it's 3:30 in the morning. Oh, he says. Just flabbergasted. I said what can I do for you -- are you coming over? He say no, no, no, we have heard all about the earthquake. We want to know was Spokane affected? I said oh, no, no, no, none of us are affected; we're all right here. The majority of the damage was on the Coast, Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia way. And he says oh, that's good then, I will tell everybody. That was it. Last November, on the 10th of November, I'm -- we're getting ready to leave on the 10th of November for Pasco where I'm going to participate in a two-hour ceremony the next day, on Veteran's Day, 11th of November, in Pasco at this great big building called Trac Building, Trac, T-R-A-C, stands for TriCities Agricultural Center Building. I think it can take in 10,000 people maybe. But anyway, two hour program at an estimated 2000 people. Very long program, two hours. But I'm the keynote speaker. So on the 10th -- 10th of November, day before that, we're getting ready to leave that day for Pasco, get a phone call from Tokyo from Hirano. He says I have bad news. I said, oh, what happened? Takayama just passed away several hours ago. That's the former prisoner of war that I had interrogated. He said I just got the call and I know you'd be interested so I'm calling you. I said well I appreciate that. I think I better make arrangements and send flowers. He said in your name, I already sent flowers. Hirano's telling me that. So I'm waiting for him to -- for him to come to the States the next time so I can reimburse him and pay him for his thoughtfulness. So all started from World War II.

Question: Did you -- did the two of you ever, after the war, really talk about the war, or was it more like the two POWs that met and said we were enemies, we're friends --

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Answer: Yeah, yeah. They never talked in details as to what happened and so forth. Because Takayama knew that Sam Greshio had survived the Bataan Death March. Because I had told him already. So they didn't talk too much about the war except the fact that they were on the opposite side and they now feel a complete difference as far as the current relationship is concerned between Japan and United States. They were hugging and crying in each other's arms at the end.

Question: Did you feel when you talked to the gentlemen that you met at the POW camp about the fact that he was doing his duty and you were doing --

Answer: Oh, yes, because I include that as part of my interrogation anyway. I know you're hesitant to tell me all you know about that plant where you worked because you think that as soon as you get through telling me all you know, that you're going to be taken out and shot. You're not going to be. I'm going to take you inside so you can get fed. And I come visit, I give him a cigarette. The first time that I met Takayama --

Question: Let me change tapes.