

Spady Koyama

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Answer: The first time that I met Takayama, the prisoner that I interrogated in New Guinea, was -- we usually go through an induction ceremony, so to speak, in which we had them line up, take off all their uniforms off, dirty, bug-ridden uniforms, and empty their pockets and anything they don't want, throw it in the bag. Anything they want to keep, drop it in front of you. And put your uniforms aside. And MP comes around, picks up all the dirty uniforms, throws them on a bonfire, burns them up. Because we'll issue each of them new uniform from the captured warehouse. And I explained all that as I go down the line, offering each man a cigarette. But some of them think that this is it. They're offering us a chance to go over there at that big tub and wash ourselves before they shoot, kill us all. And that's why they took off our uniforms -- made us take off our uniform. So some of them start trembling, one fellow can't stand up, he just crumbles to the ground. And so when I got to Takayama, this big guy, Navy guy, he turns out of the way. So I thought, oh, this big guy doesn't smoke. So I kept on going down the line and then I turned around and as I come back in front of Takayama, he suddenly sticks his hand out. So I thought, oh, he wants a cigarette after all. Maybe he's going to go give to somebody. I give to him, right away he puts it in his mouth. So I light it for him. Oh, he smokes. So I told one of my buddies, save that big guy for me. I want to interrogate him. So we take them, to a place where we give them a new uniform and then take them inside to be fed their own chow, own food. Couple days later I finally get hold of Takayama

Answer: My first -- one of my first question was: you refused my cigarette the first time I came around, but you -- as I came back you stuck your hand out and I gave you a cigarette. He said, some of the fellows thought that we were going to be executed. So on that basis he said, I didn't even want to accept a cigarette from an American. So I declined. But as you went down the line, from some place I heard, he says, I heard every day Japanese being spoken in a normal tone of voice. He says, well, this can't be a place for execution, so when you came back I changed my mind. I wanted that cigarette. So I gave it to him. So after that, everything came -- worked just fine.

Question: So was that a lot of what, in your mind, you tried to do was, to reassure these -
- I mean you kind of knew what they were --

Answer: Yes. So once I -- once I convinced them, that they are not going to be tortured or -- or executed, like one man in Hollandia was a guard at one of the big war plant manufacturing building, so huge and so important that a railroad track ran right into it. You know that's important -- that what they're making is important and big enough, and so forth. And so I finally convinced him by cigarettes and talk that you're not going to be -- you're going to be sent from here down to Australia and kept until after the war and then be sent back to your home, back home. Nothing else going to happen to you. And I finally convinced him and so he start to open up about what was being manufactured there and -- and how it was transported. The railroad track came in and at the very end, he said, let me draw you a diagram, he says. So he drew me a diagram of the railroad track that came in this way and went out that way and -- here was his post where he stood guard and so forth and so on, all the details. And I submitted that along with my report. About three weeks later, the liaison officer for the 5th Air Force comes looking for me. So when he saw me he says I've got something to show you. Two pictures, he said. Here's the first picture of the building that your man that you interrogated drew. That's this picture. Here's the second picture. I look at it. Nothing but dust. He says that's after we dropped the bomb on it. He said thanks to your report, we eliminated that big manufacturing plant. And at that time, I was still an enlisted man, of course. And my boss was American major. And when we finally -- war ended and I finally got to Japan in 1949, yeah, 1949, my major who was my boss in New Guinea, is now working for the CI

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Answer: And he said, say, Spady, did you get that Bronze Star? I said, no, what Bronze Star? He said for the work you did in New Guinea -- you know, that plant that the 5th Air Force liaison man came asking -- asking for you and I directed him over to -- didn't you get a Bronze Star out of that? I said no. And then he hems and haws and finally says, you want me to look into it for you? And I said, forget it, George, I said, too much water under the dam. I thought, probably to myself, dumb dodo, if he wants me to have it, why ask me for it. Why doesn't he go get it for me? You know? That was the end of it. And about three, four years later he passed away. So I never brought up his name -- leave it.

Question: When you interrogated a lot of these soldiers, did you find out, as you talked to them, they were just the same as you?

Answer: Oh, certainly.

Question: By that I mean just people to people?

Answer: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah.

Question: So could you get them down to -- I mean, was it -- was it always an interrogation or was it a point where you got them where you had conversations and --

Answer: At a certain stage, oftentimes, it become a conversation. Cigarette, for him, (gesture) cigarette for me and we're just smoking away. Conversing. How many -- now what did you say you're -- how many kids you have and what do they do and so on and so forth. Oh, they like to talk about their families, you know, cause they miss them. Especially they been there without any communication for months and months. For example if they're sent from Japan to say, China and from someplace in China they're sent down to say, Formosa

Answer: Taiwan. And from there, down to southern islands. And so they -- they go from flip -- flip flop all over the islands, they're completely at a loss. They're just lost. So when a friendly guy comes along, with a -- oh, they loved the American cigarettes -- we could just about say we won half the war with American cigarettes. Compared to the lousy tasting, saw-dust tasting Japanese cigarettes. So they're just -- just pleased. Especially when I say, okay, I'll see you again, maybe next week. Here, take some cigarettes with you. Oh, they're pleased when I give them some extra cigarettes, oh, yeah.

Question: Were a lot of them demoralized, because wasn't it -- I hear the stories of the -- rather than surrender or be captured --

Answer: They thought that they were going to be captured and interrogated and afterwards, executed. That's the problem we had. That's the reason why there were so many civilian suicides in Okinawa

Answer: Women holding babies jumping off cliffs. Because they didn't want to be captured by the Americans -- propaganda

Answer:

Question: The same as we provided propaganda to our soldiers -- the Emperor was providing propaganda to the soldiers in Japan, saying if you get captured, these terrible things --

Answer: Hm-hmm.

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Question: Wow. But it sounds like everybody was treated fairly --

Answer: So it must have been -- it was an eye opener, for them, when they finally realized, that guy who speaks good military Japanese, he's not Japanese, he's an American who speaks perfect Japanese, he looks Japanese but he isn't, and he's very kind, he gives us cigarettes galore.

Question: How did they train you to interrogate? Did you like practice or --

Answer: Yeah, we practiced. And first of all they separated us among those who were the silent, extroverted types -- and the -- and so I was among those -- trained from the very beginning to become an interrogator. I think the fact that we treated them kindly spread the word among the prisoners. Because at one time in New Guinea we had a -- what would you call it -- a field day. Like a miniature Olympic day. In which we had running races with legs tied together and so forth, you know. And we give them prizes for -- that we captured from the Japanese warehouse, all kinds of food prizes or what not, you see. And our -- our kitchen had extra food prepared, as prizes -- we'd give them out. And then American cigarettes. Oh, they were just pleased, happy. So the day came when 500 of them were to be sent down to Australi

Answer: Now on that occasion I happened to be the only linguist there, available, so I accompanied them -- the military police, with truck loads, down to the -- place where they would board the ship that -- to take them down to Australi

Answer: But at the beach there were oh, maybe there were about seven, eight big Lister bags full of water -- drinking water. So many yards apart along the beach. And the -- one of the prisoners with an arm band says, well, do you think we could get some drink of water from one of these bags before we board? And I ask the MP, he says, yeah, go ahead and do that. So the MPs spread around and make sure that nobody started running or anything like that. But, so I was standing next to the -- one of the Lister bags, and then here comes a screeching noise of trucks coming down on us, and -- and the leading truck came to a halt and a big, burly sergeant jumped off, and he starts running towards the Lister bag where I am. And the prisoner was about ready to drink and he sees the sergeant bearing down on him so instead of drinking, he went like this and dropped all the water out of the cooler -- handle, you know, cup, attached to a long handle about so big. And as the sergeant approached, he started to hand it toward that sergeant, turned that handle around. And the sergeant came to a stop, realized these were prisoners so he says, he swore, he said I'm not about to take a drink from any of them or something like that. So I hissed to the prisoner, I said, give it to me. Hand it over. And I grabbed the handle from the prisoner and went like this (gesture) and let the sergeant know that I'm dumping all the water out of there, and then turned it around and stuck it in his stomach, and I said in loud English, I said, "Okay, Sarge, here you are, then." And he says something about, well this is different. And then he took it, see. And then I told the MP, get them on board right now. They all boarded, no problem. By that time everything was quiet because the sergeant had cussed at him, he said I'm not about to take it from any of them, you know. And so on the way back the MP next to me, he says, how come you were at that particular Lister bag? I said I don't know. Good Lord saw to it that I'd be at the right time at the right place. And Sergeant came towards me. And good thing I was standing right next to the prisoner and able to grab that handle from him and give it to that sergeant. I said, and good thing I remembered to speak in Japanese -- not in Japanese, but in English, I should say. If I spoke in Japanese, there might have been some blood shed there. (laughs)

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Question: It sounds like the soldiers, for awhile, the Japanese soldiers, had to kind of gauge you a little bit. Say, are you Japanese, are you American --

Answer: No, it spread right away. Because Takayama spread the word. You do as he says, yeah.

Question: So you were okay then.

Answer: So we had no problem at all -- no disciplinary problem at all.

Question: So nobody -- the Japanese soldiers didn't look on you and say traitor or anything --

Answer: No, no, no, yeah.

Question: I guess it's the human aspect --

Answer: They realized that that guy who speaks perfect military Japanese is an American. Yeah.

Question: Boy, your service was very important to our South Pacific efforts.

Answer: Well, I think so, because ... except for the time I'm back in the States at the Army Intelligence School, with the staff and faculty, I'm overseas. And my Japanese is being utilized, even in Viet Nam. In Viet Nam, there were two, I think there were two Korean divisions, from Korea, in Viet Nam. And since I'm in charge of the counter-intelligence efforts in Viet Nam in the G-2 office, in the, USRV Headquarters, United States Army Viet Nam Headquarters, with a daily control over one military intelligence detachment, commanded by a lieutenant colonel who reported to me every day. One day he says one of my men's having a hard time interrogating one of the informants. I said what kind of informant? Well, he's a Korean, Korean colonel. He doesn't speak too much English and my man doesn't speak Korean, of course, too much. So I said, well, how, if he's a colonel, he must be fairly old. I said, let me know when he goes out again, I will go with him. Because all Koreans over certain age all spoke Japanese because they were part of Japan. So when I went with him and as soon as I saw him and spoke Japanese, the colonel responded in Japanese, of course. So from there on I said what do you want to know? You ask me and I will interpret. And I was, the guy's interpreter. And he wrote down everything, oh, he was very pleased getting all the information. Yeah, so even in Viet Nam I was able to use my Japanese.

Question: Are you proud of your service? Your time --

Answer: Oh, yes. Cause I -- I'm 83 now. Too old for any military consideration. But if I were young and they would take me, I'd be willing to go to my fourth war. Every chance I get as you see me now, since I lost my paunch seven years ago, and I survived my eight by-pass coronary, I wear my uniform very proudly. This is my World War II uniform. Because when I'm overseas in Japan, I'm with the intelligence and I wore civilian clothing every day. So I hardly wore my uniform. So even the Japanese police that I contacted never saw me in uniform.

Question: Boy, that had to make it even more challenging, you being in civilian dress --

Answer: Right. And now Hirano is now is very -- not only surprised but delighted, I guess, to be able to describe me as a US Army colonel, to all his buddies in Tokyo, you see.

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Question: What was your favorite part of being in the Service?

Answer: The fact that I was overseas, the fact that I'm able to do something overseas, like the Korean War, when I interrogated those seven Communists, okay, Viet Nam when I'm in charge of all the counter-intelligence efforts in Viet Nam. And I made two trips around in -- in convoys, vehicular convoys and also on helicopters. And that's where I got exposed to Agent Orange. So I -- I liked being overseas. But of course, being back in the States, I'm always assigned to staff and faculty. Like in Ft. Hollerberg. And back there they utilized me to the maximum by having me conduct liaison in addition to teaching requirements by my subordinates. So once a week, I get in my civies -- that was my requirement, never come in uniform. Always be in civies. And so I'd always have a brief case because I would pick up documents from the FBI or the CIA, you see, or the Pentagon. And when I go into -- when I -- my driver would take me up to CIA, they thought that I was -- that I was a civilian doctor from Pentagon, see. So said, Doctor, good morning to you, sir. They always addressed me as Doctor. Good morning to you.

Question: Do you think if we faced a war again with Japan, not that I would think that it would ever happen, but do you think that what happened here in -- in Washington State with the internment, do you think that could ever happen again? Or do you think that we --

Answer: Well, I hope not. That whoever is president would know better than to incarcerate citizens without trial. The very fact that we didn't incarcerate Americans of Italian descent or Americans of German descent but only Japanese descent. And the fact that the President Bush had to apologize on behalf of the United States for that internment face, and give token sums of reparation amount. Something like that should never, ever occur again here in the States. And that's the reason why my mother, Japan-born mother, who egged me on in the first place to go fight for our country, is now buried here in Spokane as an American citizen. She got her citizenship. Based on the fact that our service in World War II proved we were Americans, like anybody else. So citizenship was open, so she applied and got her citizenship.

Question: Wow. Why do you think that they didn't inter the Japanese -- I don't mean the Japanese -- the Germans, the Italians.

Answer: Well, because this General DeWitt -- General Dimwit -- I always make a mistake, it's not General Dimwit, it's General DeWitt. Recommended to FDR that if we get invaded by Japan, the Pacific Coast, we're not going to be able to tell who's who. We better do some evacuation. From California, Oregon and Washington. And which is what FDR bought. And in a proclamation, put into effect. But in doing so, the entire -- like all I know of is about state of Washington -- entire state of Washington was not evacuated. The demarcation line was the Columbia River, TriCities. Those who lived on west side of Columbia in Kennewick like my relatives, they were incarcerated. The rest of the family in Pasco, east side of Columbia, were not. But they didn't know that. So they moved, sold their stuff, all their belongings, and moved to Spokane to be with friends in Spokane. So that they could all be together when the evacuation order came. So they lived out of suitcases throughout World War II in Spokane for the evacuation order that never came.

Question: And they gave up -- some of your relatives ran a restaurant? Was that right?

Answer: Yes.

Question: So they lost their business --

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Answer: Oh, yes, oh, yes, tremendous losses, yeah.

Question: That just seems -- you know, I've talked to a number of citizens that that had happened to and I don't hear any bitterness, which surprises me, because I don't think I would be that forgiving of it but --

Answer: Like my mother had remarried in the meantime. And her husband, my step-father, continued to work with about a dozen other Japanese citizens, down at the Great Northern Railroad, doing what? Handing mail, baggages, and -- and servicing all the troop trains that came in -- through Spokane. And some of the passengers would say, who are those guys, running around here, why, they're some of the hardest working Chinese we could find. That was the answer they got. They would have had a fit if they found out they were enemy Japanese.

Question: I heard in Seattle -- they had a pin, if you were Chinese --

Answer: Yeah, on your jacket.

Question: -- that they would wear --

Answer: I tried to buy one of them from a girl at a USO in San Francisco. I said how much for -- she says are you propositioning me, she says? I said, no, no, the pin you got there. (laughs) She wouldn't sell it. She said I wouldn't know what to do, once I lost that one. I don't know where to get -- I want to be known as "I am Chinese".

Question: Now I heard an interesting thing you said and I may have mis-heard this but you were talking about the -- the Australian who was calling you chap and you thought he was calling you Jap. But you said, and maybe I misheard you wrong, "Japs were those people" Or did you not say that?

Answer: Yeah --

Question: I mean, did you -- did you see -- I mean, in your vocabulary, was that a word you used?

Answer: No, no, no, just as necessary. Show him that you shouldn't be calling us Japs, Japs are the ones that I go down and interrogate is the way I put it, you see.

Question: Okay.

Question: No, but, it's always been derogatory. Even when I was a kid and get into a fight, some guy would say dirty Jap or something like that, you know, yeah.

Question: So you were aware of prejudice?

Answer: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah from kid --

Question: I talked to one gentlemen from Seattle and he said that until -- until Pearl Harbor happened -- again, he saw himself as white. He was an American, he was born here, he'd lived here all of his life. And he said he was coming home, he was just a little boy coming home from the movie and somebody said something -- after Pearl Harbor, said "Damn Jap" and he, you know, went home to ask his mom why they called him that.

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Answer: Yeah, like this Senator Dan Inouye who got the Congressional Medal of Honor. After the war, with one arm, in uniform, he went to a barber shop and they wouldn't cut his hair. Said no Japs allowed.

Question: Did you -- gosh, who was it we were talking to because that was -- they had -- oh, that's it. They'd gone to boot camp in the south, and they had drinking fountain for colored folk and they had the white folk. And this gentleman who was a Nisei said I wasn't sure where I was supposed to go.

Answer: That happened to me and this happened in Little Rock, Arkansas. And I got there on a weekend, so I got a pass to go into Little Rock. And before then, well, I got on the bus, first. And the bus wouldn't move. After awhile the bus driver turned around and says this bus ain't going to move until you move soldier. Who's he talking to, everybody looking around. And then lady in front of me, turned around, saw me, said, come over here, come over here. You mean me? She says yes, yes, you. So I went over, I sat -- and she moved over. I sat next to her. She said how long you been here? Why I just got in, my first weekend here in Arkansas. She says, oh, says don't you know that space back there -- that's not for you. That's for them, them, you know. I says oh? She says you shall sit right here and the bus will move. And shortly thereafter the bus moved; we went downtown. And someplace in downtown, I had to go to restroom, and under the -- there's officer restroom and for the enlisted men and for the blacks. And first one I saw was for the blacks. So I went in there and came out, MP's right there. He says what are you doing in there? Gave me hell. I said well I had to go so I went. But -- I didn't see anything for in-betweens. I'm not white, I'm not black, I'm in-between. Where's the restroom for the in-betweens. (laughs) Course there were none for that. But I got chewed out there for using the black.

Question: That's amazing the prejudice -- I mean the way that it works.

Answer: Yeah, when you break it down, it's so silly, so unnecessary.

Question: Well, that's why I was curious, when you were talking about interrogating, that sounds like what you did, you broke it down to just -- here's a person, here's a person, and I'm going to talk -- they -- you know, talk about their family and their home. That's how we all are.

Answer: Like tomorrow, in fact, my wife and I are going to a \$100 a plate dinner at -- here in town, for the purpose of raising funds for the Preservation of the Military Museum at Treasure Island Air Force Base. One of the leading speakers will be a fellow named, oh --

Question: I know who you're talking about, from Marysville -- from Idaho.

Answer: Idaho.

Question: Yeah, I keep thinking --

Answer: Who's -- I nominated him into my Spokane chapter -- the retired officers, because he's an ex-first lieutenant. I can't think of his name now that I try. Once in awhile I get stuck on names.

Question: Happens to all of us. But he's Medal award, Medal of Honor winner --

Answer: Right, right.

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Question: -- African-American gentleman --

Answer: That's right. He's a -- he's black. Yeah. And so I -- he knows that I put him into this Spokane chapter and I've seen him several other times here and there and he recognizes me and I go forward and like, I get invited by the Marine Corps every Memorial Day, which is coming around, down at Fairmont Cemetery, here in Spokane, where we have a military ceremony. And he was the main speaker at one time and he saw me. So he motions for me. So I went forward, I'm in uniform, and he puts his arm around me and we had a picture taken together. And people are saying, well, who's he? They're not talking about him, they're talking about me. Who's he, you know. (laughs)

Question: Well thank you very much.

Answer: Well, you're welcome. Do you have any other questions? Anything else?

Question: Pretty well ran the gamut of all. Oh, where were you when the war ended? Do you remember?

Answer: When World War II ended?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: I was in the hospital, here at Baxter General Hospital, because I was there until October '45, you see.

Question: You spent, what did you say, twelve months --

Answer: Twelve months in a hospital. I got hit in October '44 and I was hospitalized until October '45. And then I'm out of the Service, back in Spokane, working for Kalena Air Depot, forerunner of the Fairchild Air Force Base and then I get this letter from Pentagon, and then in January 1947 I'm back in the Army as a sergeant. Six months later I'm back in the Army as a -- I'm a second lieutenant. Two more wars, Korea and Viet Nam. And now I've been retired and still fishing for 31 years.

Question: Boy you look -- you said you're how old -- eighty?

Answer: Thirty eight --

Question: No, how old are you now?

Answer: Oh, eighty-three. I'll be 84 in June.

Question: Must be good living over here.