

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Tadami Izutsu (TI)

May 22, 1997

By: Ted Tsukiyama (TT)

TT: This is May 22, 1997 and this morning we are interviewing Mr. Tadami Izutsu who is one of the 442 veterans who served with K Company of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Okay, let's start off and ask, ah, give us your full name, Tad.

TI: My name is Tadami Izutsu.

TT: And you were born when and where?

TI: I was born April 27, 1924 at Makaweli, Kauai.

TT: What were your parents' names?

TI: My parents' names were Ryozo and Iseno Izutsu. They're from Fukuoka, Japan.

TT: And when did they come to Hawaii, your parents?

TI: Gee, I'm not too sure. In the early 1900s.

TT: And do you know why they came or under what circumstance?

TI: Like all the other immigrants, I guess, for a better life. Life in Japan wasn't very good, I presume.

TT: They came on contract?

TI: That I'm not sure. I'm not too certain on that.

TT: Your parents were already married when they came?

TI: No, I think my mother was a picture bride. She came later.

TT: So what kind of work did your father do?

TI: He was, as far as I remember since I was a little boy, he was working in the plantation store. He was a manager for one of the plantation stores. They have in outlying areas, plantation camps, and they have a plantation store in each camp. As far as I know, he was managing one of those stores.

TT: What plantation was this?

TI: That's Makaweli. That's under A&B at the time.

TT: What do you remember about your early life? Incidentally, how many children were there in your family?

TI: I have four sisters and two brothers. I think it was really a close knit family. To me, I thought it was. Strict. My mom and dad were pretty strict.

TT: You lived in a plantation camp?

TI: Yes, we lived in a plantation camp. At first we were at Camp Four Makaweli, and then we moved to Camp Six Makaweli. That's all under A&B. That's when my dad took over the store at camp six. [He was the manager until A&B lost its lease to C. Brewer. Dad bought the store from A&B.]

TT: Is that what is now Olokele Sugar Company?

TI: Right now it's Kaumakane, I think. It was transferred from A&B to C. Brewer just about the time we left Kauai.

TT: So what was your early childhood life like?

TI: To me it was a pretty close-knit family: four girls and three boys. It's a happy time. I recall I had happy times with my brothers and sisters as far as I can remember. That's a long time ago.

TT: Were the plantations sort of racially segregated? Or all the workers live in one camp?

TI: Yes, looked like. It seems like Japanese on one side and Filipinos on one side. It seems that way.

TT: And so this is a typical plantation community life that you were brought up in.

TI: That's right.

TT: Do you have any recollection of any particular influence that your parents had on you? Was your father a real strict man?

TI: Yes, he was sort of strict. He was a small man, five one maybe. But he was really strict. Also, my mother was compassionate but very stern. Both of them.

TT: You said you grew up with all kinds of other kids with other races?

TI: Yes.

TT: Did you experience any prejudice because you were Japanese?

TI: No. Well, I don't think I felt prejudiced. You mean like, I'm being suppressed by other people, or we suppressing [them]?

TT: Either way.

TI: (Laughs.) I didn't feel that way. I didn't feel any prejudice toward me. I hope I didn't demonstrate prejudice to others.

TT: Did you grow up feeling you were Japanese or American?

TI: Although physically I was Japanese, I went to American school, learned American ways. We were brought up being American. I grew up knowing that I was American first and also of Japanese Ancestry.

TT: And during your life do you ever recall your parents telling you what you were?

TI: What do you mean by that?

TT: That you were, whether you were American or Japanese?

TI: My parents always stressed that I was an American first but to be proud of my Japanese ancestry.

TT: Do you feel that your parents imparted or taught you or instilled in you any values that were to become, you know, had an impact on your later life?

TI: What do you mean by...

TT: You know, values that ah, like... You went to Japanese school?

TI: Yes.

TT: And you learned *shushin*.

TI: The what?

TT: *Shushin*, you know, the ethics.

TI: Oh.

TT: You know, *oya-koko*.

TI: Oh, yes.

TT: And *on*, and the *giri*, and the...

TI: Oh, yes, those are the things that are stressed all the time.

TT: At home as well as at Japanese School.

TI: At home, yes. Respect [honor and duty for parents, community, country was stressed] and like you said, *oya-koko* [faithfulness to parents], and all those things. Get along together, among siblings. Those are things that are stressed all the time.

TT: So you also went to Japanese School for how many years?

TI: At least six, seven years. It's almost compulsory.

TT: And this was after public school?

TI: That's right. Right after English school we walked to Japanese School. [About a mile apart.]

TT: Did you ever feel that your having to go to Japanese School interfered or conflicted with your education at English School?

TI: No, I don't think so.

TT: Did you ever feel any bicultural conflict during your youth? As far as growing up as a person of Japanese ancestry in an American environment?

TI: No.

TT: At home they spoke Japanese?

TI: Yes. Well, half. My parents basically spoke Japanese and some Pidgin English and some Hawaiian.

TT: And you observed all of the Japanese *bon odori*, boys day, *hanamatsuri*, and everything else.

TI: Yes, that's right.

TT: And your family had a religion? Were they Buddhists?

TI: Yes my dad and mom were Buddhist.

TT: You didn't go to Buddhist church?

TI: No, I used to go with them to bon dance and *odaisan*, as a little boy. I used to tag along, but as far as an adult, no.

TT: So you had all these Japanese influences because you were born and raised in a Japanese family, and the question is did that raise in you any feelings of conflict between the two cultures as you grew up?

TI: No, I don't think so. If their belief in Buddhism, and their way of thinking made me think less of the stars and stripes, if that's what you're trying to say, then no. No, I don't think that made any effect.

TT: What kind of teachers did you have in public school, and did they have any influence on you?

TI: What kind of what?

TT: The teachers. Were they all *haole* teachers?

TI: No, no. They were mixed. There were Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian.

TT: Some local too?

TI: Oh yes, oh yes. There were a lot of local teachers.

TT: Now, ah, going over to the Pearl Harbor attack, December 7, 1941. Where were you and what were you doing on December seventh?

TI: You know, on December 7, that's a Sunday. We supposed to play football that day. When we were in high school. We were supposed to play football with the St. Louis High School team from Honolulu on Kauai. They were supposed to play football with us that particular morning. I remember picking up my football equipment and going to the field, but that's when the war broke out and they canceled the game. That's the only thing I can remember. But that's when Herman Wedemeyer and Arthur Joao and Opunui and all those guys came to play. I still can remember that. I remember that Sunday very clearly.

TT: What grade were you on December 7th?

TI: I was a senior at Waimea High School.

TT: Senior in high school. So how did you find out about the Pearl Harbor attack?

TI: The radio.

TT: What was your feeling and reaction when you heard Japan is attacking Pearl Harbor?

TI: Now that I think about it, Ted, it didn't affect me too much. Being a teenager on Kauai, in a small community, it didn't seem to affect me too much. At that time I didn't see it as a catastrophe. It did affect my parents, though.

TT: Being a person of Japanese ancestry and here the sudden enemy is also Japanese, did that raise any kind of a...

TI: Well, given how young I was, there is a slight hatred, of course for the enemy. This is your *home*, you know.

TT: Did you have any feelings about Japan and Japanese?

TI: Maybe slight anger, but as far as having direct animosity, I don't think so. But that [the attack] was wrong, you know that was wrong, something that shouldn't have been done... I had feelings of anger toward our enemy for attacking the U.S. soil or my homeland.

TT: Being of Japanese ancestry, how did the rest of the people in the community look at you and treat you after December seventh?

TI: Being from a small plantation, there wasn't too much animosity. I guess here, in Honolulu, probably there must have been some animosity, but being in a plantation, small community, there wasn't that much. But I can tell you that right after Pearl Harbor my dad was interned, taken away and shipped to New Mexico, outside Santa Fe.

TT: Would you know why they took him away?

TI: To this date, I don't know. Even the taxi driver who drove us from the hotel to the interment compound to visit my father when I was on furlough from the army says, "how come you guys in uniform and your dad's in here?" How can anybody answer? I couldn't answer his question.

TT: Well, your father must have been a leader in the Makaweli community, at least.

TI: Well, running a store for the plantation and being active in the Japanese Community at that particular camp, I presume they considered him to be suspect. I don't know. I was a young boy, and he was just running the store.

TT: So when the head of the household is gone, how were you folks? Your family able to survive in his absence?

TI: Yes. I have a sister [Thelma]. She was a schoolteacher so she ran the store after school. So it functioned for a while.

TT: So, did you continue school until you finished?

TI: Yes, I finished high school, and then after that...

TT: So you graduated Waimea High School in what year?

TI: Forty-Two.

TT: Forty-two. So from December 7, '41 you were you said senior? So you finished one more year.

TI: Yes, it wasn't a full year, but we finished, we graduated in '42. In June of '42.

TT: So from your graduation on, what did you do, June '42 [you stayed on Kauai?]

TI: Yes. I helped my sister run the store, doing odds and ends.

TT: Your Dad still there? They didn't take him on December 7, immediately?

TI: Right after that. I don't know how soon after December 7th they took him away but I helped around the house. Manual work, you know.

TT: So you were 18 years old and you graduated high school in June 1942, so for the rest of '42 you were on Kauai. Did you do any defense work or anything like that?

TI: That's right, we were building roads, you know, doing manual labor, driving trucks, things like that for a few months before we signed up...and I attended a welding school for a short period of time.

TT: You worked with the U.S. Engineers or something like that?

TI: I don't know. There was a construction company that was building roads. I worked for them for a while.

TT: Were you aware at that time, after December 7th that all Americans of Japanese ancestry were reclassified the 4C, enemy alien? Not eligible for military service? Did you know that?

TI: No, I didn't.

TT: So how did you hear about the call for volunteers for the 442nd Infantry?

TI: Well, everybody was talking about it so obviously the word gets around.

TT: So this was right in the beginning of 1943, January.

TI: Somewhere in that area: January, February, I think March, that we were inducted. But that's when my brother and I volunteered. But lucky he didn't get in because his eyes were bad. After volunteering, I don't know why I volunteered. Maybe because being a teenager, being adventurous, I don't know. It's nothing patriotic or heroic. I just...everyone was doing it, so I just went ahead and volunteered.

TT: Being of Japanese ancestry, did you ever feel since Pearl Harbor that you as a Japanese were on the spot? Your loyalty was in question?

TI: Yes. Sometimes I felt my loyalty was being questioned, especially since my father was interned.

TT: Did that trigger in you as far as...

TI: In that respect, yes. Because my dad was taken away, obviously you would think that, you know. But I guess that didn't stop me from volunteering, but it affected my mom. She was disturbed at first because my Dad was taken away, and her two sons volunteered, but what could she do? What do you call that in Japanese? *Shoganai*, you do the best you can, and that's all you can do.

TT: You can articulate any further about what prompted you to volunteer?

TI: Well, like I said, being adventurous, young, the idea of going to the mainland. Everybody else is doing it.

TT: All your friends and former classmates, who were Japanese, they kind of wanted to be part of that too? They volunteered?

TI: Yes, I have friends that volunteered.

TT: I mean, did you guys talk it over? Say, "let's go."

TI: No, it seemed as though it was a spur of the moment kind of thing. Me and my brother, we just went and volunteered because everybody else was doing it, for one thing.

TT: So what happened during your induction and after the induction. This is around March of 1943?

- TI: Well, after we got inducted, we shipped out to Schofield, right? We stayed in Tent City, Schofield.
- TT: About how many guys from Kauai were in that bunch?
- TI: I couldn't say, Ted. I really don't know how many. But anyway, from Schofield they took us down to the pier and from there they shipped us out to Camp Shelby, Mississippi.
- TT: How did it feel going to Schofield and suddenly seeing that you're part of a big group, maybe two thousand, two thousand five hundred guys all volunteering?
- TI: What do you mean, how do I feel?
- TT: What did you feel?
- TI: Like a normal guy. I don't know what you mean, how did I feel being part of the two thousand people? Well, I guess we were just part of a group, and from then it's just a plain bunch of guys going overseas.
- TT: Made you feel you did the right thing?
- TI: I think so, I think so. I don't think there was any second thought, after I volunteered. Although my mom didn't think so.
- TT: What are your recollections of Schofield and also get a...you know, you remember the march to the Capitol?
- TI: Yes, I remember the march to the Capitol and all that.
- TT: And getting on the boat, going to the Mainland?
- TI: I remember marching down into the boat. I can see my brother was here at the time. Luckily he didn't get in because of his eyes. Thank goodness he didn't get in. It would have been a catastrophe – the two boys and the father being away from the family. So I saw him, you know, here in Honolulu, before leaving for basic training. Going into the boat, me walking into the boat. I told my brother to look after mom and the family.
- TT: You remember they had provisional companies – one, two, three, four, five. Do you remember what provisional company you were assigned to?
- TI: I don't know there was things like that. I don't recall. All I know is we were down in the hole. They converted the passenger liner Lurline into a troop ship. It was the ship that took us over.

- TT: And then you recall about your first, your reactions on being on the Mainland for the first time. Seeing the great USA?
- TI: Oh, yes, I remember the train ride from the West Coast, right through the United States – through Utah, Kansas and down to Mississippi. I still remember that. We already had our uniforms, as a matter of fact. I enjoyed that trip from the West Coast to Mississippi. There were a bunch of boys [from Hawaii] together. That was, I thought, enjoyable.
- TT: You remember when you got off the boat in San Francisco, and they took you across to the train, yeah? Do you remember whether when you marched and had to get on the train that you had to pass between American, U.S., American soldiers that had guns on both sides.
- TI: I don't remember that.
- TT: You don't recall that? Remember the train ride, had the shades down?
- TI: The what?
- TT: The shades were down? They made you put the shades down?
- TI: No, I don't think the shades were down. I don't recall the shades being down.
- TT: The first part.
- TI: Oh, is that right? I don't even recall that. I recall that in Kansas, a place called Smith Center, and there were guys out there that welcomed us. I guess they didn't know who we were, I suppose. But they welcomed us on the train. I remember that because they said that Smith Center was the center of the United States.
- TT: You have any recollections about going into the south for the first time?
- TI: No, because I didn't know anything about the south – any good or bad thing about the south. So I don't know, I couldn't form any opinion on that.
- TT: When the train stopped in the train station, didn't you notice that there were two kinds of toilets, white and colored?
- TI: Oh yes, oh yes. I noticed that.
- TT: What unit were you assigned to at Shelby?
- TI: Company A, 1st Battalion.
- TT: And you went through all the basic training with Company A?

- TI: Majority of the time, not all, because eventually we were transferred to K Company. They abolished A. That's when we went overseas, there were two battalions. That's when the 100th joined the 1st Battalion, so to speak.
- TT: What do you recall about your basic training experience at Shelby?
- TI: Not very eventful. Twenty-five mile, full-pack marches. Bivouacking. Chiggers. And ticks. Pine trees. Rifle range. Passes to New Orleans. But the thing I remember most is like I said was on the first furlough. A guy named David Miura; his father was also... Do you know David? Okay. His father was also there, interned at Santa Fe. So that's when the taxi driver asked us "How come you have somebody in here when you're in that uniform." That's something I couldn't answer, of course. But still. Thank goodness we were in the Army. He [Dad] was home before we came home anyway. My dad was home way before I came home. Maybe being in the Army helped bring him home, I don't know.
- TT: Did you feel any friction or tension, conflicts with kotonks that you met up with?
- TI: You know, Ted, I don't recall having any conflicts with kotonks. One of my best friends is a kotonk. And I don't think that I had any conflicts with them, because I didn't have any animosity toward them. They're good people. They were friends of mine. I imagine some other people had conflicts, but I never did.
- TT: You never saw any kanakas busting up the kotonks?
- TI: Who?
- TT: You never saw some of the Hawaii boys fighting, busting up the...
- TI: ...the Hawaii boys getting in fights with the white boys, but not with the kotonks. Lot of stories: about a Hawaii boy driving the bus back from Hattiesburg to camp. The driver wanted him to sit in the back, so he threw the driver out and drove the bus back to camp. Those are the things that I...
- TT: You heard that?
- TI: Oh, yes. I think he was a dark Japanese boy. They wanted him to sit in the back. He got mad, so he threw the bus driver out and drove the bus back to camp.
- TT: Oh yeah? Was that guy in your unit?
- TI: No. I heard about that.
- TT: So you visited Santa Fe and went inside the internment camp.

TI: Um hum.

TT: What was your feeling seeing all these old Japanese men...

TI: They were well fed, Ted, and they seemed to be a little happy. I mean, not overjoyed, but happy. Good spirit. It was a very intense emotional moment when I hugged my father. I was relieved that he was in good health and appeared to be in good spirits amongst the injustice inflicted upon him. I know he missed the family, and I told him not to worry because my mom and sister Thelma were running the store.

TT: Your father was happy to see you?

TI: Oh, obviously. He was abruptly taken from us months ago with no telephone contact. We made the most of the meeting.

TT: What did he think about your being in the U.S. Army?

TI: He never questioned it. It's one thing; he never questioned why I volunteered. He wished me well, to take care and to do the best for my country. I told him to take care. Parting with my dad was very difficult.

TT: How did the company commander and other officer treat you?

TI: The officers, I think, to me, they were good. Company captain was a good captain. I didn't have him all the way, but I thought he was a pretty good captain. [Captain Blake of A Company and Captain Lazinsky of K Company.]

TT: This was, in other words, you trained with A Company until when?

TI: About, I would say, about a month, month and a half before we shipped overseas.

TT: How did you, you trained for almost a year at Shelby?

TI: Yes, March, I know we spent...

TT: You got there in April.

TI: April, okay, April. I know we bivouacked in a cold area, so it must have been winter in Mississippi. So that would be winter of '43. So, yes, about a year. [Summer through winter of '43 and spring of '44.]

TT: And then they shipped you overseas in June of '44?

TI: '44. Yes.

TT: And how did you feel when they said you finally going overseas?

TI: It's more that you don't know what to expect. The feeling is, now your trained, now it's your turn. But you don't know what to expect!

TT: You had already heard about what the 100th Battalion's battle record was?

TI: Oh, yes, oh yes. Because a lot of news would come through about what they were going through. We had heard of the 100th Battalion and their record for bravery in battle in North Africa and the invasion of Italy. We also had daily casualty reports, because they were pulling guys from training to replace their casualties.

TT: So, leaving on a troop ship, where did they ah, where did you land in Italy?

TI: Well, we started off in Newport News, Virginia. We were in a convoy of, I don't know, a vast amount of ships. Stuck in the hole for 25, 26 days. The convoy zigzagged across the Atlantic, went through the strait of Gibraltar, to the Mediterranean Sea, to Naples. It was a disaster for me because I was sick almost for the whole trip.

TT: So, you remember going from Naples to Civitavecchia?

TI: I remember we went to a seaport city [Naples].

TT: 'Remember when the 100th joined you guys?

TI: No, I don't remember that.

TT: This was in June of 1944. Okay. So where was your first combat experience?

TI: I don't know what exact area it was, somewhere north of Rome, but I know we were digging foxholes in a vineyard for protection from the artillery shells that were falling. That's when I saw Captain Lazinsky, you know... I think his runner and his radioman, or one of them, got killed and one of them got hurt so he (Captain Lazinsky) was kind of in shock. I think he had shell shock. I briefly saw him walking down the hill. The shells bursting all around him didn't faze him, because he had shell shock. He was so concerned about the two soldiers that he lost. But he was a good soldier. I still think about what happened to him.

TT: Did he come back to the company?

TI: No, I think he was sent home. I never saw him again. I think he was sent home on the first day of the battle.

TT: This was a place called Suvereto?

- TI: Somewhere in that area. 'Cause I just had a short glimpse of him (the Captain) walking down the hill; that's the only thing I remember.
- TT: Do you remember what K Company had to do in that first battle? Third Battalion? What do you remember about that first battle?
- TI: Not much. The only thing that I remember is that we dug some holes, we got shelled a little bit, and after a while, we just march on. They said start going through the grapevines and march on.
- TT: What was your rank?
- TI: My rank was PFC.
- TT: And you were infantryman?
- TI: Rifleman.
- TT: Rifleman. What platoon?
- TI: Second Squad, Second Platoon, K Company.
- TT: And who was your leader?
- TI: The platoon leader was Sgt. Kohashi and the squad leader was Oliver Hashizumi.
- TT: What were your emotional reactions in battle? You know, to be shot at, to kill, and to... the risk to be killed?
- TI: [Searched for words] I still think about it. It was in a little town called Luciano. That's when it all, practically everything, happened to me. That's where I think I killed the first enemy. Hopefully it wasn't my bullet because three or four of us fired together. You know a lot of time when you shooting, you shooting in the direction. But this particular one we actually saw, and three of us fired, and hopefully mine wasn't the one that killed him, but anyway, I recall that particular town. And that particular town was where I almost got killed. Three of us walking in a open field. There was a sniper that fired two shots; one of 'em hit Naito. Naito, Yoshii and myself were walking. The sniper hit Naito on the leg, and good thing there was a haystack, or cornfield stack or whatever it was so that we could hide behind. But now to get Naito out of there, that was the problem, because there was an open field of maybe about forty feet into a trench, and then into a farmhouse where the rest of the guys were. But there was one young kid, Harry Nakabe, as I recall. He was a rifleman. He put on a Red Cross hat and came to get Naito. And they brought Naito out. But now it was for me and Yoshii to get back. We were fair game for that guy, the sniper out there. We made it okay, though. We got into the ditch, about three feet wide. We had to crawl. It was full of human waste. We

got stuck, but made it out okay. That is the same town where I killed an enemy soldier for the first time. Hopefully it's not me, but I'll never know

TT: What is the feeling like to be under enemy fire, mortar fire, bombardment?

TI: Sometimes it's helpless --Mortar fire or tree bursts--you feel helpless. I got hit twice. Once in the Vosges forest at the rescue of the Lost Battalion, and once at Northern Italy, just about a month before the war ended. So it's helpless. When you have tree bursts like that, there's not much you can do.

TT: So from June to September the 442 Combat Team took part in what they called the Rome Arno Campaign, they were pushing up toward the Arno River. So what other battle recollections or memories do you have of that campaign?

TI: At that phase of the war the Germans were retreating pretty fast. We encountered small resistance of rifle fire and some German tanks firing 88mm shells. In these situations, the only way to survive is to hide.

On the lighter side, I had an interesting experience while we were resting on the roadside, in a small town called San Mauro. An old Italian woman came directly to me and placed a rosary with a cross around my neck, saying some Italian words. She chose me among all the soldiers. It gave me some kind of security. I was touched.

TT: So, fighting all the way up the Arno River, you have any other recollections or memories of that battle?

TI: Well, during a rest period in Lecco, there was an ammunition truck explosion.

TT: This is the first push in Italy?

TI: The first push. Before we went to...

TT: France.

TI: Bruyeres. There was an explosion in Lecco.

TT: Oh, yeah.

TI: I know somebody from Kauai that passed away on that one. One of the debris, whatever you call it [shrapnel] from one of the huge explosions in the truck went right through this toilet and hit a guy. They were loading ammunition, I guess, and somehow they ignited it.

TT: The guy from Kauai, was that Betsui?

TI: David, no not David -- Daniel Betsui -- was loading the truck that exploded.

TT: You knew him?

TI: Yes, slightly. I knew him because he was from Hanapepe.

TT: Any other recollections of that first push? You never got hurt?

TI: I got hurt twice, but not on the first, central push.

TT: Who were some of the other guys who were with you in K Company?

TI: Mino Takashima Joe Shimamura Seichi Sakaida
Benty Tachibana Richard Oda Rudy Tokiwa
Eichi Oki James Oura
Yoshii from California

TT: Did you see any heroism or acts of bravery among your K Company boys?

TI: There were many incidents of bravery. The one that stands out most in my mind is the courage of Harry Nakabe as I mentioned previously. Harry was a rifleman in our company, but he had the guts to put down his rifle and put on a Red Cross helmet and armband and run out with the medic to pick up Naito who was wounded in the field. Such bravery deserves recognition. Naito was from Seattle and I think Harry was from Sacramento.

TT: How did you feel about being transferred to the French Campaign? How did you feel when you heard that you gonna be transferred from Italy to France. The French Campaign?

TI: Well, from Italy to France? I didn't have any opinion. It was just something that had to be done, I guess. The higher ups knew what they were doing. But at that time we didn't know what it was for -- or the intensity of the move.

TT: K Company, Third Battalion, took part in the attack on Bruyeres?

TI: That I remember. We were the point company to enter Bruyeres.

TT: Yeah, tell us about that Battle.

TI: K Company was the first to enter Bruyeres. It was a cold, cloudy, dismal, drizzly morning. The enemy must have just left because the town was full of debris and the people were still locked in their homes.

TT: K Company had to take one of the hills, huh, that surrounded Bruyeres first.

TI: There is a round hill outside of Bruyeres. However, we took it after the town was freed.

TT: Before you get to the lost Battalion, though, just to capture Bruyeres, the Germans fought and resisted pretty hard.

TI: Before entering Bruyeres, the fighting wasn't that intense. After Bruyeres, however, when we were going up that round hill, the fighting intensity increased.

TT: So, you remember entering Bruyeres after the Germans...

TI: Yes, I remember that very distinctly.

TT: How about the reaction of the French people?

TI: You know, there weren't too many people out at that time. The Germans were just there hours ago, I guess. So most of the people were still confined in their homes. The town was still in shambles, really. Maybe the guys after us saw more people.

TT: So you didn't experience them coming out and welcoming you and all that?

TI: A few, yeah. One or two of the brave ones came out.

TT: Happy?

TI: Oh yes, of course they were. Oh, yes. But it's not like the whole town came out. They were still afraid, I guess.

TT: I heard that the French, when they first saw American troops that looked like Asians they were quite surprised. Did you see that?

TI: The few people who greeted us did not seem surprised. I guess they were glad to see American soldiers, Asian or not.

TT: So after Bruyeres, you folks pushed toward the hills, the Mountain, and ah, do you remember what K Company and your group had to go through? This is before the ah...

TI: Yes, before the Lost Battalion. After Bruyeres, we went up and around the round hill and into the dark and dismal Vosges Forest to rescue the lost Battalion. In this push, I got my first injury. It was a tree burst, and a piece of shrapnel pierced my earlobe, causing some bleeding, but nothing serious. I kept going. The shrapnel is still in my ear.

At night the Vosges Forest is so dark that you can't even see your own hand. One night, while sitting in my foxhole, camouflaged with tree branches, I smelled a cigarette

burning. That told me that someone was walking near my foxhole. It must have been a lost German soldier wandering in the middle of the American troops. I froze for a few minutes and in time the cigarette smell disappeared.

TT: So do you recall what K Company and Third Battalion had to do, this is before the lost Battalion, after you captured Bruyeres you were still fighting in the hills and in the forests.

TI: We had to push further forward into the Vosges forest. We encountered increasing rifle and artillery fire. There were combat patrols whose duty was to find out the location of the enemy and fight them to clear the way for the rest of the American troops to move forward. One of these combat patrols was led by Sgt. Joe Shimomura and his men who risked their lives to clear the way for the others.

TT: Joe Shimamura? You mean the guy who's president of K Company now?

TI: Yeah. I don't know if he received a medal, but he should have been recognized for that.

TT: So, um, do you remember any German counter attacks?

TI: As I mentioned previously, the rifle and artillery fire increased considerably. This could have been a counter attack. Since the forest was so thick, we could not see the enemy. We retaliated by shooting in the direction from where the firing was coming.

TT: So this is October and what was the weather like?

TI: It was very cold in the Vosges Forest. We dug foxholes to try to protect ourselves from the cold. There was snow all around.

TT: How 'bout trench feet?

TI: A few days after we rescued the Lost Battalion (we were on a rise and could see the Texans walking back), I got trench feet. I took my shoes off and I couldn't put them back on! They were too swollen from trench feet or frostbite.

TT: Well, before the lost battalion, you folks were called to rest. You were given a rest, a break, after many, many days of fighting. Remember that? They called you off the line and you were given hot showers and...

TI: Your question takes me back to the time we rescued Bruyeres and went up the round hill. We had a rest period after Bruyeres. After taking my hot shower, I forget to put back on the Rosary that the old Italian lady had given me in San Mauro. I was upset because the Rosary represented my security and protection in battle.

TT: ...protection...

TI: Yes, protection! It seems that way. [The rosary meant a lot to me. When the old woman gave me the rosary, I had just lost the *Omamori* that my mother had given to me for good luck before I left Hawaii. Lucky for me, another *Omamori* arrived in the mail for me from Hawaii during that same rest period. I was wounded shortly afterward. As I said, it was pretty minor, but it could have been much worse. I was fortunate.]

TT: Then you got wounded after that?

TI: Slightly, yes. Right after that I got that shrapnel in my earlobe. It wasn't a big thing, but still...

TT: So you guys just came back to rest and I understand the General, 34th Division General, ordered you guys to go out and rescue the Lost Battalion. How did, what was your reaction? What was your reaction when you're ordered right back to rescue those guys?

TI: Well, one of those things you have to do! I mean, you cannot say, "I don't wanna go!" They ask you to do it. Somebody's in trouble.

TT: Tell us what you remember about the push for the Lost Battalion.

TI: Constant rifle fire was all around us. We pushed forward from tree to tree, always moving forward slowly through the thick forest. We were full of fear surrounded by the cold of winter but when duty calls, we carry out our orders. Being on the Offensive is harder. Because you are moving forward, particularly in a dark forest, you can't tell exactly where the enemy fire is coming from.

TT: Did you see a lot of casualties in your own?

TI: I've seen many wounded and dead soldiers. I got a glimpse of a dead friend whose name was Blondie Takemoto. Blondie and I played football on opposite high school teams on Kauai. He was a husky, well built, healthy person but it takes only a small piece of shrapnel the size of ½ of one's thumb to take a life. May the good lord be with him always.

TT: Understand that there was a bayonet banzai charge by the 442 as part of the Lost Battalion rescue. Was K Company involved in that?

TI: I don't know if K Company was involved. There could have been by other platoons.

- TT: After the Lost Battalion was rescued, but up to the rescue didn't K Company lose a lot of men? There was only a few guys left?
- TI: Oh, yeah, a lot of guys got hurt and killed.
- TT: You were one of the survivors?
- TI: Like I said, toward the end I had trench feet. After the rescue I had to pull back, but during the rescue, I was still there.
- TT: Do you have any memories of that last push to rescue the Lost Battalion and K Company suffering all the casualties?
- TI: I do recall that there was lots of machine gun and rifle fire, both ways. The Germans were trying to hold their positions as much as possible. Suffering was evident as many K Company soldiers were wounded and many died.
- TT: Did you see any extraordinary acts of bravery or heroism among your buddies in that push?
- TI: I'm sure there were many acts of bravery, but I cannot pinpoint any incident specifically. The visibility was at a minimum, and we were fighting in a wide area.
- TT: So some other company reached the Lost Battalion and you saw the Texans coming out of, down the hill...
- TI: K and I Companies were the first to contact the Lost Battalions. We saw the Texans walking down the hill.
- TT: Soon after the Lost Battalion, that's when you got trench feet. They sent you back?
- TI: Yes, I had to go back. I couldn't put my shoes back on!
- TT: So, what, you were hospitalized?
- TI: No, I was sent back to the rear of the company. In a day or so, the surviving members of K Company pulled back.
- TT: Do you remember there was an honor parade after the Lost Battalion rescue? You guys paraded in front of the general?
- TI: No, I don't remember that. [Possibly did not participate due to the condition of my feet.]

- TT: Okay, and soon after that, only a couple of weeks, I guess, they pulled off the 442 and sent them to Southern France for the Champagne Campaign. Where were you and what did you do?
- TI: Soon after the battle in the Vosges Forest to rescue the Lost Battalion, we were sent down to Southern France. K Company established their headquarters in the French Alps in a small town called Sospel. Second Platoon was in a large bunker right in the Maginot Line, high up in the mountains, looking toward Italy.
- TT: But there wasn't much hostility?
- TI: Yes there was hostility as there was constant shelling from both sides. This is where my friend Sugihara from Kauai got killed when an artillery shell burst where he was standing.
- TT: What that the one in the schoolyard, Sospel? The school yard. I heard two or three guys got killed in the schoolyard. There's a memorial plaque over there.
- TI: I know that because when we went over there in '71, I had to lay a wreath right on the step there.
- TT: Is that the same place?
- TI: That's the same place, but I don't know if it's a schoolyard. It was an open space, anyway. It could have been a schoolyard.
- TT: So, any other memories of the Champagne Campaign?
- TI: We had to do reconnaissance patrols from one valley to the next. We had to go through mine fields under constant German artillery fire.
- TT: Compared to the Vosges Mountains and the Lost Battalion that was the good life, eh?
- TI: Yes it was called the Champagne Campaign because we had Nice and Monte Carlo to go to for our R&R. We were fortunate to have this R&R in the midst of war. We were relieved to be out of the dark and dismal Vosges Forest.
- TT: So then in 1945, March, they sent you folks back to Italy. The last push.
- TI: Yes, the last push. I don't know what month it was exactly. It was already getting warm. We went back to Italy. That's when I got wounded the second time.
- TT: Okay. The very first battle was to capture the mountain, eh? There was a Mount Folgorito and ah, other mountains.

- TI: I don't know what the mountains were called.
- TT: Did K Company have to, K Company wasn't the one that climbed up the back of the mountain in a dark night...
- TI: We climbed many mountains and marched through olive groves and grape vineyards because the Germans were retreating rapidly.
- TT: What was the name of the place where you got hit?
- TI: A town called Castanello? Something like that. Full of olive groves.
- TT: That's after you folks captured that mountain?
- TI: I really don't know.
- TT: That's before Carrarra?
- TI: No, it's after, after Carrarra. I know because we went through Carrarra [before I got hit.]
- TT: So, do you remember the date you got hit?
- TI: No. It has to be sometime in late March or early April. I think it was early April, Ted. [April 19, 1945]
- TT: Well, April 11 they passed through Carrarra and then places like Fosteveno, Posterla, Colle Masatello, that's where Dan Inouye got hit, do you remember that?
- TI: Oh. [Dan Inouye was in the 2nd Battalion, which was far apart from the 3rd Battalion.]
- TT: At Calle Masetelo. You remember a place called Aulla? Where was it you got hit?
- TI: Was an Olive grove in a small place, starts with a "C"... Castanolla or something like that. I really don't know.
- TT: And they sent you back to the hospital?
- TI: Yeah, after I got hit, I was going back behind the line [On April 19, 1945, I got wounded in an olive grove from tree-burst artillery shrapnel. I didn't feel it at first until I discovered my boots were full of blood. Going back to Company Headquarters, I was limping of one leg and I was, you know, jumping olive grove terraces (one to the other) of about four feet. I sprained the other leg and struggled back. I remember Dr. Kawaoka treated me briefly. Rev. Masao Yamada was also present. From the Company Headquarters, I was transported by jeep to the evac

hospital where first line surgeries are done, before being transported to General Hospital in Leghorn, Italy. This is where I stayed for about a month until the war ended. When I heard that the war had ended, and since my leg was better, I ran away from the hospital and caught a ride on one of the trucks going up north to join K Company in Milan.]

TT: Where was K Company at that time?

TI: The war was finished already. They were up in Northern Italy.

TT: Was it an airfield?

TI: Yeah. Brescia? Near somewhere up in that area.

TT: (?) Airfield?

TI: Yeah, I don't know what airfield that was. Above Modena. I remember Modena because we were bringing prisoners down to Modena after I rejoined the Company. Up around Brescia, Lake Como, in that area. That's a beautiful country.

TT: So you got to visit Florence and all that?

TI: Yeah, yeah. We used to visit Florence.

TT: When did you go home?

TI: With the rest of them. [September or October, 1945.]

TT: You know I guess you saw a lot of courage and bravery on the battlefield.

TI: Yes.

TT: What do you think motivated the men of the 100th and 442nd to fight so hard?

TI: I guess the way that were brought up, for one thing. The inner self, I guess. They're strong inside. And protect the others you're with. Mostly, I think it was the way they were brought up.

TT: What were your feelings when you heard that the war is finally over?

TI: Oh, I was elated because now we can go home. I mean, you're half way around the world, now we can go home. And this, what we went through, was quite an experience. You know, when you're 18 or 19, and you go halfway around the world, you know that's.... It takes its toll. I didn't know when I volunteered! I didn't know it was going to go to this extent. You're young, you're brash, you just go with the flow, go with the rest of them. You didn't know you were going to get

into something like this. And it's rather intense. So when the war ends, obviously, you're elated. You're going home!

TT: How do you feel about the war now?

TI: Although the war was necessary, as I reflect on my war experiences and recall the many men who died to preserve our freedom, I feel sad because they could not come home as I could.

TT: Did you feel that your combat experience changed you in any way?

TI: Absolutely! I volunteered for the Army at 18 as a teenager and returned home at 22 as a man. The horror of war devastating innocent people, of all ages in foreign countries. Seeing my buddies get killed in action and being wounded in battle made me grow up quickly. I got a new perspective on the importance of life. Every Memorial Day I pray for my deceased buddies who sacrificed their lives for our country.

TT: What does it mean to you to be a member of the 100/442nd?

TI: I feel proud to be a member of the 442nd regiment. I am happy for the privilege of having served my country to preserve democracy. The 442nd regiment was the most decorated regiment in WW II.

TT: So I was going to ask you I guess a related question, do you think the record of the 100/442nd to, has changed the way that Americans look at the issei (nissei)?

TI: I think so. I think it did change. They show a little more respect. I'm sure that there must have been some changes. Before WW II, we were considered to be 2nd class citizens. Our participation in WW II as a member of the 442nd regiment may have resulted in less prejudice and more respect and acceptance of the Japanese of American ancestry in the U.S.

TT: You know there's over 700 killed in action and almost 10,000 purple hearts suffered by the 100/442. Do you think that all those KIAs and all those battle casualties that the whole thing was not in vain?

TI: I don't think so. A lot of men made the ultimate sacrifice for the preservation of democracy, which was being threatened by fascism. Americans can today enjoy their basic freedoms because of courageous men like my 442nd buddies who sacrificed their lives for their country.

TT: You think the life of a Nisei is bettered because of their record and their sacrifice?

TI: I hope so. In any case, history will record the accomplishments of the 442nd regiment during WW II. I think that the attitudes toward the Nissei and all

Americans of Japanese ancestry have become more positive. Open-mindedness, acceptance, and understanding have opened opportunities for the Nisei, Sansei, and future generations.

TT: You have any final statement you want to make?

TT: ...as far as being a veteran of the 100/442?

TI: This is the most extensive interview I've ever made. I even didn't say anything to my wife and my kids but I'm proud to be a part of the outfit. And hopefully our effort and that of the guys that didn't come back was not in vain. Hopefully that it improved a lot of people's lives, and if it did then I'm grateful.

I thank God for sending me home safely to have a full life. With deep gratitude, I feel honored and proud to have served my country as a member of the 442nd regiment.

TT: Very good. Nice statement. Okay that's all for today. Thank you very much!