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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Takejiro Higa (TH)

Mānoa, O`ahu

April 12, 2005

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Takejiro Higa. This is our first session on April 12, 2005, and the interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

And to start today's interview, Mr. Higa, what year were you born?

TH: Okay, I was told that I was born 1923 at Waipahu, Oahu, just a short distance from Honolulu. Then, my sister tells me, at the age of two, my mother took three of us - my older sister, who's six years older than me; and a brother, three years older than me - three of us, to Okinawa to meet with grandparents. In the meantime, Father remained in Waipahu and operated a small family store. Waipahu, yeah, just below the sugar mill, I'm told.

Then, three years later, when I was five, I was told that my father went back to Okinawa. The idea was to bring the family back to Hawaii. But when he got to Okinawa, he found my mother was sick with pleurisy and no longer able to travel. And Father has a store whose friend is managing while he's in Okinawa. So he has to come back to Hawaii. So, after a family discussion, they decided - family decided - Father would bring back my older brother and older sister with him. And I'm being only five years old, and still need mother's care, they decided that I be left behind with the mother. And Mother and I lived with the grandparents in Okinawa.

Then when I was eleven, my father passed away in Hawaii, heart attack. And the next year, when I was twelve, my mother died in Okinawa because of illness. Then, unfortunately, within the same two-year period, my grandparents passed away also. So in two years, four family members passed away. So, after that, my father's younger brother, my uncle, took me in. And from his home, I was

able to finish the grade school up to eighth grade. And after that, I lived with Uncle and worked for him. I did the men's size job from age fourteen.

Then, when I became sixteen, I wrote to my sister, "Call me back quick." The reason being, in those days, Japan used to send young people, healthy young people from age sixteen to nineteen, to Manchuria under Manchuria Development Youth Corps. I didn't want to get caught in there, so I wrote my sister, "Please call me back quick." And luckily, she managed to scrape up enough money to send me back to Hawaii. So I came back to Hawaii, I believe was in June or July maybe, 1939.

MK: And, you know, before we get further into your story, I want to ask you what your father's name was . . .

TH: Okay.

MK: . . . and your mother's name.

TH: Okay. My father's name was Takeo Higa. Mother's name was Ushi Higa. In those days, Okinawa has a habit of naming ladies in an animal name. Hard-working animal name (chuckles). *Ushi* is a cow, yeah. And other common name is *Kama*. *Kama* is a cooking area. *Kame* is a turtle. It's very common, those names. And that's the reason I think my mother's name was Ushi. I don't know for sure, of course. Anyway, that's the name.

MK: And I was wondering, what village or area . . .

TH: Oh.

MK: . . . did your parents come from?

TH: Oh, the village known as Shimabuku. Shimabuku and Nakagusuku-son. Presently is Kita-Nakagusuku. After the war, 1946, Nakagusuku-son was divided between two, regular Nakagusuku-son, southern part; and the northern part, Kita-Nakagusuku. Because it was so big. Today, still remains the two parts. Although there was talk about the merger, but the merger failed.

MK: And I was wondering — I know you were very young — but what have you been told about your mother's and father's family backgrounds in Okinawa?

TH: Well, my mother is one of five sisters. Two of her sisters came to Hawaii. Then one of them went to the Philippines (clears throat) and only one lived right through in Okinawa.

MK: And your father's family?

TH: My father, the brother, one of the brothers, went to Peru and one went to Argentina. The youngest uncle. The other uncle remained in Okinawa.

MK: Would you know from what you've heard, how come your family immigrated out of Okinawa?

TH: Well, as everybody else, only the poor family ventured out to foreign country. We are from the poor family, farming family. So, I guess they wanted to carve out a new life for themselves. So they venture out. And I found out, after I came back to Hawaii, my father was actually called by Grandfather. Grandfather came first. One of the earlier so-called contract labor. My grandfather and the two brothers came together to Hawaii and that's how my father was called to Hawaii, I found out. Then afterwards, of course, my father married my mother from the same village. They knew each other, it's not the picture bride [marriage]. See, they knew each other, so-called. And I don't quite remember what year they came over, but at home I have a record when they came. And I found out through Japanese consul office, when they came. And even the fact that my father was so-called *yobiyose* [summoned] by my grandfather. I was surprised to find that (chuckles). I thought my father came first and then happened. But no, the other way around.

MK: And . . .

TH: I was quite surprised.

MK: And would you know what kind of work your grandfather and father were doing?

TH: I don't quite know. But I imagine it being the sugar cane, *häpai kö* [carrying sugar cane] (chuckles). I imagine, I don't know. Nobody seems to know (chuckles).

MK: It's so long ago.

TH: Yeah.

MK: And, you know, you mentioned that when your brother, sister, and you were taken to Okinawa; later on, your brother and sister returned with your father.

TH: Father, right.

MK: But you stayed in Okinawa and you were schooled in Okinawa.

TH: Yeah.

MK: Tell us about your schooling in Okinawa.

TH: Okay. As you know, in Japan, up to sixth grade is compulsory, yeah. So when I became – what, eight? – I went to school. And much to my surprise, I wasn't supposed to be there. Because according to my sister, my father asked somebody and paid the fee to register me at the consul general's office. But somehow, he did not. So I had no Japanese citizenship. I wasn't supposed to be in that school. But luckily, the teacher, Mr. Kina, comes from the same village my father comes from. So he knows who I am. So with his testimony, I was able to go to school. I was 100 percent American. (Chuckles) Different color. I was quite surprised. I wasn't supposed to be in Japanese school, I had no citizenship. My brother and sister has dual citizen[ship]. But I did not. So I may not have been called up by Japanese government to go to Manchuria, but I don't want to take a chance, yeah. I don't want to find out after being sent to Manchuria. So I scam out. I literally ran away and saved myself.

MK: And then before you left Okinawa, what was it like going to school in Okinawa?

TH: Well, nothing special, I was just like a regular Japanese student. I spoke – at home, I spoke Okinawa lingo, and in school, of course, standard Japanese. In those days, we had a policy of trying to encourage everybody to speak standard Japanese. And if you speak Okinawa lingo in school, we used to have demerit tags, *högen fuda*. And it's a shame, you know, to have a hanging thing all the time until you find somebody who speak the Okinawa lingo, and then pass on. So I guess I was a naughty guy, too, you know. If I ever get one, I used to go behind my friend, kick him from behind. And then he'd yell back in Okinawa *högen* [dialect], eh. I'd say, "Ah, ah, ah." So I report to the *sensei* [teacher], and *sensei* passed the tag to him. I guess I was kind of naughty. (Laughs) And I don't think I was the only guy that would do that. It was quite common, I think. So anyway, because of it—this was way prior to the war, of course—the Okinawans spoke so much their own language, when you go to Mainland Japan, they'll look down, like a lower-class of people. So the school policy was, if you want to succeed in your life, you got to master standard Japanese. To encourage that, they had the demerit system of *högen fuda* if you speak *högen* at school. At home, it's – day and night, just same Okinawa *högen* with the elders.

MK: What did you think about that policy as a child?

TH: Well, as a kid, I would say humbug, yeah. Because I was kind of – I shouldn't say protest[er]—but I didn't like it.

Forced to have that system. But as I grow older, and as I get real old man, I appreciate what I went through. And especially during the Battle of Okinawa. I was able to use that and to help out the people coming out from the cave.

WN: So you were more comfortable speaking Okinawan dialect?

TH: No, no.

WN: When you were young then, what was . . .

TH: Oh, yeah.

WN: . . . your best, what was your . . .

TH: Oh, yeah. Okinawa *högen*. That's everyday, daily language. So when you go to school, you've got to make an extra effort to speak Japanese, yeah.

MK: I'm wondering, what were your family's feeling toward that policy? Your mother, and your uncle, and grandparents.

TH: Oh, I don't think they had anything in particular, attitude. No. They just say, "Well, it's a school, you just have to follow school policy." That's about it, I think. I cannot tell you, really, how they felt because we never discussed how they feel.

MK: And then in the school, how much did you learn about the Japanese emperor or . . .

TH: Oh, it's . . .

MK: . . . meanings of patriotism, or whatever . . .

TH: Oh, it's being brainwashed throughout your school year. In fact, as a kid. . . . See, in school, there's a special dome-like thing where they store the emperor's picture. When you pass in front, you're not supposed to look, you just bow your head and then go through. The only time you have an emperor's picture is some kind of ceremony in the school, and the picture is displayed in the front. Every student line up, you know, and they sing [the national anthem of Japan] *Kimigayo*, yeah. And then service goes on. That's the only time you see the picture straight, you can see straight. Otherwise, even when you pass in front of the storage, what you might call, just storage shell like. It's a nice concrete building. Stone structure, yeah. Inside there is permanently kept the pictures of emperor and empress. And the only time they take out is ceremonial purpose. And so as I say, when you pass over there, you're not supposed to look into that. Pass over there, just bow

your head and go through. That was that strict.
Brainwashed. (Chuckles)

MK: And how were the teachers when it came to teaching you the language, the reading, the writing, the speaking of Japanese?

TH: I can't think of anything special. Just ordinary teaching, I guess. They don't tell you why you have to study. Just keep reading the textbook, whatever textbook says, and teach you the *kanji* [Chinese characters used in Japanese writing] and whatnot. They don't tell you - they don't try to brainwash you, it's part of the. . . . In Japan, they have a course known as *shūshin* [ethics, morals], yeah. I think it's a part of a propaganda course, I think. Teach you ways of life, yeah. What you're supposed to do as a human being. Be respectful to your elders, authority, and anybody above you, yeah. Or treat your people below you. So I don't know how you say in English, that *shūshin*. More cultural teaching, yeah. As a human being. And in that, of course, they stress the fact, imperial system.

WN: I think they call that "morals."

TH: Moral, yeah, I guess. Moral teaching, maybe. *Shūshin*, they call 'em in Japan.

MK: And I don't know how much you remember, but how were your marks in school?

TH: I tell you, I was pretty good.

(Laughter)

I was pretty good. There were two of us, always competing one or second. But that's why. . . . See, in Japan, in those days, either very early April or late April, every year, next to the principal's office, there's a bulletin board. Little bit high ground. They record those who took examinations to high school, name come out. Every time I look at that, I used to be real envious. Because my family, being poor, I couldn't afford to go to high school. And I felt that if I took that test, I have self-confidence I can pass it. Because those written-down names, I was above them in class every year. So I used to be real envious of seeing the names of my fellow students written up, yeah. There's one section for high school girls and one section for boys, eh. *Jogakkō* and *shōgakkō*, eh. I used to be very envious.

MK: And, you know, like you said that your family was poor. What was their livelihood in those days?

TH: Well, farm just enough to survive, yeah. Subsistence farming. Not even profitable business farming. Just enough to survive. So main product was, of course, potato. And your own vegetable. And my grandfather was so-called – what you shall say – unofficial butcher-like. He used to go to a slaughterhouse, slaughter place, pick up the pig, portion out pork, and they used to retail. So sometimes he get leftover and we have a chance to eat meat. And Okinawa, as a general rule, of farm, general rule, just about every farmer has a pig, yeah. Domestic animal. Pig and goat, usually.

Pig – I don't know if I should say this to you, but it's a dirty place. In Okinawa, in the olden days, (coughs) they used to have a pig and human waste, pig used to eat 'em. Yeah. Anyway, raise the pig, that plus regular food. And at the end of the year, many families slaughtered the pig for one year's supply of meat. (Coughs) They'd slaughter the pig, salt 'em up. Fatty portion, they'd make into oil. And the leftover from oil – *aburakasu*, they call 'em – we'd keep 'em in a separate jar. And every now and then, take a few pieces and put 'em in the *miso* [soybean paste] soup, floating. Was quite a treat in those days (chuckles). Vegetable, we have enough because we raise our own vegetable. Meat items, very rare. Especially in the countryside, yeah.

And, of course, fish is very rare. Unless you catch yourself, your own (coughs) fish from the pond or the river. They call *funa* [a carp], yeah. It's a small fish, *funa*. It's a small fish. But even then, once in a while, you can catch 'em and you can make into soup. That's about the *gochisö* [delicacy] you can think of.

MK: And, you know, like you said, you folks have pig, and vegetables, potatoes. What kind of chores did you have as a child?

TH: Hmm?

MK: What kind of chores . . .

TH: Toys?

MK: Chores. Chores. What did you do to help out your family?

TH: Oh. After school, go to farm. Either bring back – you know, potato leaves. Before you harvest, you've got to cut the leaves, yeah. You bring that leaves to feed the goat, domestic goat. That's a perfect feed for goat, see.

And in my house, we had a big horse because my uncle was formerly a cavalry man. You know, in those days, all the young men have to serve military. I think was three years, I believe, yeah. Everybody. Healthy guys, yeah, have to serve three years in the army. My youngest uncle was a so-called discharged cavalry man. And because of that, my grandfather was so proud of him, we had the big horse. And Okinawa had two kinds of horse. Regular, small pony; and one big one, like a regular American horse. It's a tall, regular, big horse. It's good for real hard work. So my grandfather had a bigger horse because of my uncle. And he used to be very proud of showing that horse to everybody. And I remember, as a child, whenever my uncle takes the horse to the pond to wash, I used to ride on that horse. And my uncle takes me to the pond, yeah. And then wash the horse and come back. And sort of, what, smoothing out the skin before putting 'em in the corral.

And for feeding that, I used to go in the morning, cut the grass. Before I even go to school, many times I used to go out and cut grass and come home and then go to school. And same thing with the potato leaves. And in the afternoon, after school, go to the field and dig potato. Daily ration. You don't dig the whole place and store like American potato. Just you dig as much as you need.

MK: You had a lot to do then.

TH: Oh, yeah. But all those things turned out to be a good lesson to me, I think. (Chuckles)

WN: Did your classmates that went to the same school, were they all farming families?

TH: Just about because we were in an area that had nothing but farms. Our school was composed of twelve villages those days, yeah. Twelve village people come school. And our school was centrally located. Just in the center part of the so-called district. Although our village was farthest away from the school - we have to go over the mountain trail.

MK: So how long did it take for you to go school . . .

TH: To school?

MK: . . . in the morning?

TH: Well, it's kind of hard to say. I don't know the exact time, but it took quite a while. I would say even distance-wise, gee, I don't know how to say how long it might be. Maybe a mile. Over the mountain trail. Stony mountain

trail. And being a poor farmer's kid, no more shoes, yeah. Barefoot. So winter months, sore, walking on the stone path. But yet, in those days, our sole was so thick, just like got a rubber slipper, yeah. No problem (chuckles).

MK: And it's like you worked in the morning, you worked when you came home. Were there any times when you could just play with . . .

TH: Well, every now and then, yes. But no more such thing as organized sports. The only play, probably play around in the taro patch. You know, with rice paddy area, run around, that's about it. No organized baseball, or basketball, or volleyball. That's only available in school. Poor district, you know, farm district. School has, yeah, basketball court and volleyball court. Or even tennis court, but those days, tennis was played only by teachers. Students can't afford tennis. Nobody knew how to play tennis. Only teachers, you know. Every so often, they used to play. Young teachers. Even teachers, only about a handful. You know, maybe three, four people only. Nobody plays tennis ball in those days. Basketball is part of the sports activity, I mean, exercise activities that we played. Volleyball, same thing. But we never played volleyball with the girls. All separate. Baseball, volleyball, basketball, all separate. Girl students and boy students.

MK: You know, because you folks were living in a rural area, you know, with mountains, ponds. As a child, did you use those surroundings for fun?

TH: Yeah. Especially summer months. We used to swim around in the pond. And the pond is kind of shallow. So we kick around so much that a lot of times, became muddy. At the end of the day, you had a muddy moustache underneath, with the mud. And yet, we swim, and wash ourselves, and go out. Probably the dirty water was more dirty than before (MK and WN chuckle.) That was one of the fun parts. Summer months, only. Winter months, of course, you don't go inside there, too cold. See, Okinawa, temperature-wise, almost like Hawaii but there's a tremendous difference between the summer and the winter. Winter is quite cold, summer is quite hot. Muggy. Not like Hawaii, no tradewinds.

MK: And you mentioned that, you know, when your grandparents died, your uncle took you in and you worked for your uncle.

TH: Yeah.

MK: What kind of work did you do?

TH: Well, after I got to be about fourteen, I used to transport – you know Okinawa black sugar? During the sugar harvesting season, I used to transport that to Naha on a horse cart. And that's a hard job. So, because of that, I used to go to Naha about three or four times a week. Transport.

WN: How far away was that?

TH: Twenty kilometers. So, let's see, one mile is five-eighth – I mean, one kilometer is five-eighth of a mile. So five-eighth times, what, twenty. A little over ten miles I guess.

WN: Twelve miles?

TH: Twelve miles, yeah, about.

WN: Your father had sugar cane? Had sugar cane . . .

TH: Well, my grandfather had a small patch of sugar cane. Just about everybody had a small patch of sugar cane. Not the real big scale. Because the main portion of the farm is always for subsistence purpose, yeah, potato and vegetables. Mostly potato. Potato takes about three to four months after planting, ready for harvest, see. And you cannot plant all one time either. You have to sort of – installment like. As you dig, and when it opens up, and get ready for new planting. And in the meantime, other parts have matured, yeah. So you cannot have too much sugar cane, either. Sugar cane was only cash for crop. Because the farm, as I said, wasn't for business purpose, so not for sale. Primarily for your own subsistence.

MK: And, you know the sugar that you would transport to Naha, what company would take the sugar?

TH: I forgot the name of the company, but I think we had the two company we used to deal in Naha. Of course, there may be other companies, yeah. Because other parts of Okinawa might bring to somebody else, yeah. My area – I think was only one or two, I don't remember quite well. But anyway, this company, warehouse, was near the Naha wharf. Very close to the wharf, yeah. So from the prefecture road, *ken dōro*, I used to transport, on the horse carriage. The black sugar, we'd pack 'em in a wooden tub, see. I mean bamboo. And we used to pack in there, what, *hyakusanjūgo kin* [135 Japanese *kin*]. I don't know how to convert it into pounds right now. [1 *kin* = 1.323 pounds] Anyway, *hyakusanjūgo kin*, that tub, yeah. I used to pack ten of those on the horse-drawn buggy.

MK: And when you say that you used to transport the Okinawan black sugar, was the processing done in your village?

TH: No, no. The sugar itself, the black sugar, is made in the village. Each village has a – what do you call? – a very crude sugar factory. Several. And from villages, we would collect the sugar tub and then I'd transport. I was only one of the other two to transport regularly to Naha. Not everybody transports, yeah. Only two – my uncle was only one of the two.

MK: And were there other cousins, or other people working with you . . .

TH: No.

MK: . . . for your uncle?

TH: No. My uncle had one regular outside helper working for him. See, my uncle was a village head. I mean, unelected village head. I guess my uncle was pretty smart, I think (chuckles.) Anyway, because of him, all the village people used to come to my uncle's house, all kinds of discussions. Talk over things and discuss. And my uncle, he was sort of liaison between village to *yakuba* [government office]. And because of that – I'm being a curious little rascal – I used to hear a lot of things. And those things taught me a lot of things to my knowledge. And I'm glad I was a nosy kid. (Laughs)

MK: Can we ask what kinds of things you learned about?

TH: Well, a lot of things, you know. About family problems in village. Some kind of dispute you hear about. Or good things. All kinds. Hard to pinpoint, but all kinds of other – I wouldn't say rumor – just conversation. And some of the things I learned, I felt, was about safety purposes, too.

Oh, in ancient times, Okinawa used to have a famine quite often. So people survived on the wild plants and fruits. And many of them ate *sotetsu*. You know what *sotetsu* is? The Japanese [sago] fern, palm fern, yeah. That is edible, the trunk. But you have to know how to prepare properly. If you don't prepare properly, it changes to severe poison. So some people, not knowing the proper way to process, ate that and died. This period in Okinawa history is known as *Sotetsu jigoku* [Palm hell]. *Sotetsu jigoku*. And *sotetsu* – I think you see *sotetsu* here and there – but there are two kinds of *sotetsu*, male and female. Male is the one get almost a stick – something comes out every summer. Female bears fruits. Almost like – much bigger than macadamia. During the harvesting season, quite often you find snake

inside. Round in there, yeah. So my uncle used to say, "Before you harvest that, stick your hand inside. Be sure to stick your sickle and crisscross. Make sure there's no snake in there. If there is a snake, you cut 'em up before you put your hand inside." Those things, I learned from my uncle. And some people talking about it, eh. And that became, I think, useful. And another thing, Okinawa is known for poisonous snakes, see.

And Okinawa, on the grave, *haka*. Unlike regular graves, Okinawan *haka* is dug in, or built. Because in the ancient days, Okinawa had no practice of cremation or burial. All in preserving the *haka*. *Haka* is built in the shape of a woman's womb. Entrance is about, oh, this much, yeah. Enough space where two guys can carry the casket inside. And once inside, it's quite big. Ooh, I hate to guess what the footage would be, but anyway, wide enough for even six-footers can walk around inside. And in the backside, there's regularly, usually, a two-shelf where you can store your remains. After the *senkotsu*, after you wash the bone, they put 'em in a ceramic container. In Okinawa, known as *jishigami*, see. It's a very beautiful ceramic container. So after *senkotsu*, after you wash the bone real carefully, you lay the bone from feet down, build up, and put the skull on the top. And permanently display, I mean preserve. And they put 'em in the back of the *haka*. Preserve.

So during invasion [of Okinawa in World War II], first day of invasion, we landed on the beach and then we moved up to the hill, halfway up the hill. And we came to one *haka*. I don't know for what reason, but the *haka* door was open. So one of the GIs from headquarters wanted to go in right away, see. I stop him first, I said, "Wait, lend me your flashlight." So I look inside.

He said, "What are you doing?"

"Wait, wait, I explain to you later."

The reason being that, I was told that *hebi* often sneak into the *haka*. Especially when you have a dead body inside, yeah. So I was told that Uncle used to teach me that kind of stuff. So I said, "Wait, wait." So I look around, make sure there's no snake. And then say, "Okay, go inside."

Then later on, I found out from one expert. Snake doesn't like the sulfur smell. So during the bombardment, all the snakes crawled into the hole someplace and you cannot find them. So, in spite of all the snakes in Okinawa, we never saw even one snake during the wartime. This, I found out later from one American GI who knows about this kind of stuff. He tells me, "Yeah. . . ." First, I used to tell

him, see, to the GIs, "Be careful, Okinawa get plenty snakes. So be careful, especially dry places." See, they never found one, see. And then I found out why. (Laughs) I learned a lot.

MK: So from your youth then, you learned a lot that helped you in later life . . .

TH: Yeah.

MK: . . . and during the war, then. And then going back, I know that you mentioned at age sixteen, you wanted to get out of Okinawa to avoid being sent to Manchuria, and you asked your sister to call you over. How did she manage doing that?

TH: Well, my sister was already married at that time, yeah. So she and my brother-in-law scraped up enough [money]. And luckily, there was a Mr. Kiyabu from Hawaii – from the same village – based in Okinawa. Same time. So, with him, I came back in Hawaii. He was my escort. I was lucky. He went to Okinawa to visit the family for a few months, so he brought me back with him.

MK: So all those years when you were in Okinawa, and the rest of your family, your surviving family, was in Hawaii, you folks were able to still correspond, . . .

TH: Oh, yeah.

MK: . . . keep up the relationship.

TH: And every now and then (clears throat), my father used to send few dollars, you know. Very little, but still is big money. Every now and then. The letters used to come in quite often. And I used to write to him, write him back. Because, oh, Japanese, yeah. So, not too many *kanji*, but at least able to respond to Daddy. I don't know my father. I don't remember my father. The last time I remember seeing him is five years old. The only thing I remember about him, looking at the picture, he had a small moustache. Black moustache over here, like Hitler.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

TH: Just was over here, that's all I remember. I don't know anything about my father, unfortunately.

MK: And then so, when you came back to Hawaii in June or July in 1939, . . .

TH: Thirty-nine.

MK: . . . what was that reunion like with your family?

TH: Well, with my sister, I guess, instant rapport, yeah. I call her "Nē-san [Elder sister]," yeah. My brother, I don't know, no more close feeling. We never grew up together, yeah. So just like a stranger. Ooh, that's my brother, okay. But my sister, I used to write to her all the time, you know, Nē-san, Nē-san, yeah. So much, much closer feeling to my sister. And then, not knowing one word of English, I wanted to go back. In fact, three or four times I think I complained to my sister. "Nē-san, I think I want to go back to Okinawa." Because Uncle told me, "If you don't like Hawaii, come back anytime. I'll treat you like my son. So come back and live with us." So, not knowing one word of English, I told my sister, "You know, Nē-san, I want to go back Okinawa. *Bakarashii koko* [Useless here]." Because even young kids insult me and take me cheap. Japan *bobora* [bumpkin], eh. Japan *bobora, bobora*. Not knowing one English. In fact, the first English, I mean, the first Hawaii language I learned was "F" words. That's the thing you hear all time when the kids talking among - lower kids, below my apartment, eh. So one day, my father's cousin came to visit me just because I came back from Okinawa. So I greeted her with "F" words. Yeah. She look at me, "What did you say?"

I repeat the same thing.

So she'd grab my neck. "You know what it means?"

I said, "That's hello, or *ikaga desu ka* [how are you?]."

(Laughter)

"What?"

So she explained to me what it was. Ho, I wanted to hide under the table. And I never used that word again until I went into the army.

(Laughter)

I can never forget that incident. I never used that word until I went in the army. Once in the army, it's everyday language, yeah. Every other word is "F" word. So I began to use it shamefully. Although I tried to avoid using that word even now, but. . . . That was a real sad experience. She

grabbed me by the neck, explain to me. And I wanted to hide under the table.

MK: And then you mentioned that when you came here, you were in an apartment. Where did you live when you first came?

TH: Vineyard. It's part of the Mayor Wright Housing area now. There's a Salvation Army on Vineyard Boulevard, yeah. Little bit toward Kalihi side, and right across. Above the Muranaka Store, grocery store.

And not used to sleeping on beds, quite often I fell off from the bed, *katonk!* (Chuckles) Next morning, when I go tell her Muranaka Store to buy bread.

"*Yübe ochimashita, në.* [Last night, you fell, huh.]"

(Laughter)

Then she used to laugh at me.

MK: They would know if you fell off your bed, huh?

TH: Yeah. *Katonk*, middle of the night, eh? And our apartment was right above their store, see. And the Muranaka people used to live in back of the store. Those days, small store frontage, and a family used to live in the back of the store, yeah. A lot of them. Small family store. Grocer - hole-in-the-wall store. But bread was an everyday stuff so I used to go down. My sister tell me go buy bread, eh. I go down buy bread.

MK: So, when you came back to Hawaii, what did you do then? You're, you know, about sixteen years old or so.

TH: Summer months, so I went to CPC [California Packing Corporation] pineapple work with my brother. And so he and I worked in a warehouse stacking cased goods. Cased goods, you know, you get a little more pay and you don't have to know the language, eh. So I worked in the cased goods department. And, I think *warukatta*, you know. [I think I was naughty.] Lunchtime, we go to the cafeteria, yeah. I steal straws and bring with me to the working area. And I had the small nail, eh. Cased goods juice department. I'd make a *puka* [hole] (slurps).

(Laughter)

Every now and then. If you think about it, oh, real *warukatta*, no?

(Laughter)

MK: You were naughty.

TH: I did it quite often. I don't know how many times I did, but more than five times, I'm sure. So somebody who buy the case and then found one can empty.

(Laughter)

Think about it, how bad I was.

MK: And then, so you worked CPC during the summer. And then what did you do after?

TH: And then September, I started going to a special English school taught by Mrs. Suehiro. Nu'uaniu Day School. This school was on Nu'uaniu Avenue, part of Japanese[-language] school. Nu'uaniu Day School was right next to what is now Foster Gardens. Between Foster Gardens and Nu'uaniu Day School, there was a Hosoi Mortuary. Original Hosoi Mortuary was more up to the upper side, yeah. Then just north, I mean, well, east of that, the Nu'uaniu Day School, I mean, Nu'uaniu *Chüö Gakuin*, Japanese[-language] school. So eight [A.M.] to twelve [P.M.], the special school, taught by Mrs. Suehiro and several other teachers, basic English. Started off was just like kindergarten, yeah.

And in the meantime, I got the job as dishwasher at Nu'uaniu Y [Young Men's Christian Association] Cafeteria. Twelve [P.M.] until dinnertime, yeah. About seven to eight o'clock [P.M.]. And luckily, we had a two-hour period between lunch and dinner preparations, see. Two to four, yeah. I used that period to join Nu'uaniu YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], young men's club. My age group, they don't even bother with me, see. So I play around with the little kids, the smaller kids. And I grabbed one of the kids - I don't remember this kid's name anymore - but I believe he was the son of Dr. [Shunzo] Sakamaki. I'm not sure. Dr. Sakamaki was a professor at the university, yeah, history. I think that was his boy. I grabbed him every day, practice on him what I learned in school. And if he doesn't understand me, next morning, I go back to school and ask my teacher, Mrs. Nash. She's a *haole* lady. I believe she was a wife of a serviceman stationed in Hawaii. I'm not sure of that. But anyway, she was part of our teachers. There were two *haole* ladies, Mrs. Nash and Mrs. McGruff, besides Mrs. Suehiro. Mrs. Suehiro was the headmaster. Mrs. Nash was my teacher, yeah, assigned teacher. So I asked Mrs. Nash, "I said this to this kid, he didn't understand me, what did I do wrong?" So she corrects me. So that same afternoon, I grabbed the same kid, repeat what I said, and this time he understood. So after that, I put new one. I repeat that day after day after day, every day. And so I picked up fast. At

the Nu'uanu Day School, I skipped the second grade and the fourth grade. So when the December 7 came, I was at the fifth grade already (chuckles). And because it's run by a Japanese lady, school got closed up by the military. So I got stuck. Where am I supposed to go, you know.

Then I found out, Hawaii Mission Academy, run by Seventh-Day Adventist people, had a special school for guys like me, taught by Mr. Gima. Not the newspaper Mr. Gima, but Mr. Gima. And I found out that there was a special school so I applied. So principal told me, "If you can pass the minimum aptitude test, we'll let you in." I get nothing to lose, so I took it. I don't know how I passed, but somehow I passed it. So I was admitted and I was put into ninth grade. Ninth grade, okay. Start studying hard. I studied about three, four times harder than the regular student. Then one day, I was minding my own business in my class, I was eating a sandwich, lunch, Spam sandwich. My English teacher saw me eating Spam sandwich. She reported me to the principal's office, Mr. Rice. So I got called into the principal's office. I got scolded, you know, "I understand you were eating Spam sandwich."

I said, "Yeah." And I said "Why, why am I being reprimanded for this?"

"Well, we Seventh-Day Adventists believe it's not necessary to kill animals to satisfy your stomach."

But by then, one of my father's cousins, a Seventh-Day Adventist believer, knows that they can eat fish and chicken. So I asked Mr. Rice, "For Seventh-Day Adventists, is it okay to eat chicken and fish? Is that right?"

"Yes."

"Okay."

Then I rethought it, you know, "Why, chicken and fish, not animals?"

He got kind of stuck. So anyway, he said, "Okay, as long as you're in this school, please refrain from eating meat items."

I said, "Okay, yes, Sir." I was dismissed, I went back to school.

Then several weeks later, one Monday, composition class, I was told to write something what I did over the weekend. See, I couldn't think of anything interesting to write about so I wrote about going to a cowboy movie. I used to

go to Roosevelt Theater on Maunakea Street, used to see cowboy picture. See, cowboy pictures you don't have to know English to understand that, by action. So I used to enjoy for another reason, cheap. I think it was only five cents or ten cents admission. Five cents I think it was, [19]39. So I wrote about the cowboy picture. And I got called in again to principal's office. "I understand you went to movies over the weekend."

"Yes." So I said, "Why, is it wrong to go to movies?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Why?"

"Jesus Christ. As long as they had any free time, he studied book, Bible, and prayed. He didn't have to go to movies to spend time."

So I retorted again, "Well, Mr. Rice, even if he wanted to go, I don't think they had movies those days."

(Laughter)

I guess this time, Mr. Rice kind of disgusted with me, too. I was totally disgusted. I was totally disgusted with the school. Not necessarily against the religion, but the way they tried to influence me. So I told my brother, "Eh, Brother, ask Farrington [High School] if they can accept me."

So, at that time, Farrington principal was Mr. Walter Gordon who happened . . .

WN: Walton Gordon.

TH: Walton Gordon, who happened to be his teacher at Central Intermediate when my brother was going over there. So I asked him, "Eh, ask Mr. Gordon if he can admit me to Farrington."

So again, they told me, "If he can pass a minimum test, I'll let you in."

Again, I don't know how I passed it, but I was admitted. So September 1942, I transferred to Farrington. But in between, I've been working right through, yeah, part-time. Admitted Farrington, and then finished Farrington [19]42, [19]43, June. Sophomore. At that time, this nisei volunteer group came out, see, 442nd volunteers stuff came out. My brother [Warren Higa] was already at the university taking ROTC [Reserve Officer's Training Corps] also. So he signed

up right away. I don't sign up for a long time. So my brother keep asking me, "Eh, what are you going to do? All the nisei are going, signing up, you know."

So I told my brother, "Eh, brother, remember I ran away from Okinawa because I didn't want to be drafted into the Japanese army? And still, my lack of English understanding, you expect me to volunteer, go in the army? Bullshit." You know.

He said, "Well, everybody's volunteering, you know."

Then, in those days, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] was rounding up all Japanese community leaders, eh. Especially schoolteachers and the ministers. And here, I'm only a young punk that came back from Japan only two years before the war. Eh, they might lock me up in Sand Island. So I said, "Eh, if I don't volunteer, they might lock me up." So I did volunteer. But somehow, they didn't take me. My brother got selected, they didn't take me.

WN: We have to change tapes.

TH: Okay.

WN: Stop right here.

MK: Hold it, just hold that thought.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 44-31-1-05; SIDE ONE

MK: Okay, you were telling us, at the end of the last tape, you were telling us about your brother, Warren, encouraging you to go volunteer.

TH: Oh, oh, oh.

MK: And then you decided to volunteer, finally, when you noticed that all these other Japanese were being pulled in by the FBI. So, from there.

TH: Okay, as I said, at first, I was very reluctant to volunteer because as I told you, I ran away from Okinawa because I didn't want to be sent to Manchuria. And another thing is, still lacking proper English knowledge. But after seeing that - reading the newspaper, all the community leaders, Japanese community leaders, being rounded up by FBI and thrown into - what shall I say? - relocation camps

in Sand Island. I just came back from (clears throat) Japan a couple years ago, so they might throw me in there. I was afraid of that, I did volunteer. But they didn't take me. My brother was accepted, but they didn't take me for some reason. So, at that time, I kind of felt sad. Why wasn't I selected? Was it because they suspect me? You know, they suspect me of being disloyal? That was my concern.

Anyway, about three months after the 442nd left the Islands for training on the Mainland, I got a letter from the war department. The content was, "This time, we're going to organize language soldiers, Japanese-language soldiers." And the content was, "Are you still interested in serving your country?" Hey, that put me on real turmoil, I tell you. Because if it's Japanese, it's understood that after training is over, I'd be thrown into the Pacific warfront. My big concern was, what if I meet up with someone I know at the warfront? My relative, my classmate, my good friends, you know. What am I supposed to react? That was my biggest concern. Then I thought about it, thought about it, and said, "Well, since I did volunteer for combat duty, I cannot say no now." I cannot say that I cannot volunteer for a language. So I said, "Oh, I will." So I responded, said I will.

So a few weeks later, I got a letter, said come to Dillingham Building, room so-and-so, for an interview. So I went. There was an intelligence officer and an FBI agent, too. So they start asking me a lot of questions and some of the things they asked me, I forgot the answer. Yeah. I forgot what it was all about. Then they look at their notes, "Oh, no. You so-and-so, you did so-and-so." I was surprised they know more about me than I remember myself. Yeah. So at that point, I had a tremendous respect for American intelligence and the FBI. At the end of the - toward the end of the conversation, they stick in front of me one small article - I don't know what kind of book it was, but "Can you read this?" So I read it, *nenenenene* you know. "What does it say?"

So, I said, so-and-so, so-and-so.

"Okay, we'll let you know if we're going to accept you or not."

WN: This is English you read?

TH: No, Japanese.

WN: Oh, Japanese, okay.

TH: And then I read the Japanese and they tell me, "Do you understand what it says?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Okay, translate."

WN: How was your English at that time?

TH: Well, I just finished Farrington High School sophomore year. Speech wasn't good, but at least I knew some English words. Sentencing, and whatnot.

So afterwards, say, "Okay, we'll let you know by letter whether we're going to accept you or not."

So about several weeks later, I got another letter. Said this time, "Please report to Schofield on so-and-so, certain room, certain-certain day, certain time." So I went. (Chuckles) They were almost three hundred people over there. At that point, I was inducted. (Chuckles) Altogether, 239 of us joined.

WN: Were there others that went to that same building and had that same kind of interview?

TH: No, only me. I was really surprised they knew so much. I mean, I was only a sixteen-year-old young punk that just came back from Okinawa two years before the war. And why they were keeping dossier on me, I don't know. Because I didn't do anything, outrageous things in the two-year period. Somehow, they keep track of me, I guess. They know some of the things I don't remember, I forgot. That really shake me.

WN: You said that the main reason why you enlisted in the first place was that . . .

TH: Afraid that . . .

WN: . . . you thought that you were going to get . . .

TH: . . . I might be turned in.

WN: . . . turned in. Was that the major reason? Were there other reasons why you . . .

TH: I mean, loyalty and service to the country, farthest thing from my mind.

WN: What about your brother, did he tell you why he enlisted?

TH: Brother, well, he was already in the ROTC program, so he and his group, all volunteered right away. Ted Tsukiyama was one of them. And as you know, afterwards, they were inducted into Hawaiian home guard [Hawaii Territorial Guard], yeah. And they were guarding the beach. And later on, army discharged them from their duty. And thereafter, Hung Wai Ching and somebody else's influence, they organized Varsity Victory Volunteers, Triple V. Those are the forerunners, my brother, Ted Tsukiyama group, all of them.

MK: You know, when you realized that you were really inducted into the army, how did you feel?

TH: I had a mixed feeling. I had a mixed feeling. Now that I'm inducted. One good thing was, I was going to be sent to Minnesota, yeah, for training. And going to Mainland is a dream, eh? (Chuckles) I didn't know what to expect over there. But at Minnesota, Camp Savage. . . .

To go back a little bit to the history of the MIS [Military Intelligence Service], somehow, some offices, intelligence officers – the United States Army, especially 4th Army, Western Division, headquartered in Presidio, San Francisco – among them, Colonel [Kai] Rasmussen. I don't know what was his rank at that time, but he was one of those officers recognized a possible conflict with Japan. And he wanted to train language personnel. So in November [19]41, he started school in San Francisco, Crissey Field, San Francisco. One of the old, unused hangars, converted into classrooms. They started a class with sixty-two students. Four of them, *hakujin* [Caucasian]. And I think six of them failed, or something, of the original class. Okay, class was conducted in San Francisco, Presidio.

But in early [19]42, there was an executive order, I forgot the number [9066], but FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] issued an executive order, evacuate all Japanese from the West Coast. So even school has to move somewhere. And luckily, Camp Savage, in Minnesota – formerly, I understand was a Civilian Conservation Corps camp. Happened to be empty, available. So the school was moved to Camp Savage, early [19]42. Exact month, I don't know. If you look at our MIS history book, you might be able to find the date. But offhand, I don't know the date. Anyway, Camp Savage available. All barracks-type, yeah. So school was transferred over there. And the first class started the [19]42. We were the [19]43, second class.

MK: And you mentioned that you had mixed feelings. The good feeling was . . .

TH: Going to the Mainland.

MK: . . . that you get to go to the Mainland. What were the bad feelings?

TH: Bad feeling is got to go in the army.

(Laughter)

I don't know what to expect in the army. I mean, excitement, too. But deep inside, inner feeling is fear, what to expect.

MK: And, you know, I never asked you, but when the war first started – when Pearl Harbor was bombed – what did you feel?

TH: I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. War actually came. See, the day the invasion, December 7, I was still at the cafeteria, working. Sunday. About nine o'clock, one *haole* lady came into the cafeteria asking for coffee, see. "Coffee, coffee, coffee." And she was really upset. And she say, "War, war, war, coffee, coffee." So we gave her a cup of coffee. She shake so much, half of the coffee spill over into the plate. So we look at the girl, say, "Eh, that lady must be cuckoo little bit." You know, we didn't know what it was.

"War, war, war. I just dropped off my husband, Pearl Harbor."

Among us, we say, "Eh, this *wāhine* [woman], I think little bit cuckoo, yeah."

She went out. And then about eleven o'clock – oh, before eleven, yeah, I think – the radio announcement came, this is the war. So when the second attack came, instead of watching the sky, we ran to the basement. First attack, we didn't know it was war, yeah. I was one of the guys who went up to the rooftop of YMCA, second floor, observing Pearl Harbor side with the binoculars. So every time a plane dived, black smoke come out, see. "Wow, today, *renshū* [practice] must be real terrible, terrific *renshū*." We didn't know it was war.

And in the meantime, about four or five shells landed along Nu'uaniu Avenue, you know. *Totan* [corrugated iron] roof, if hit, and you can hear. And one of them hit in Kukui, just off the Nu'uaniu Avenue, in front of a saimin stand. Several Hawaii people were there. That one [shell] landed right in front of the saimin stand. Those are the anti-aircraft guns from either Hickam or Pearl Harbor. Being an old shell, defective, yeah. They're supposed to explode in the air.

But they failed to explode in the air and came down and exploded. Several hit Nu'uaniu Avenue. We could hear the *totan* roof flying. Right across from *Nihon gakkö*, you know the Japanese[-language] school, the Nu'uaniu *shogakkö*. Hit over there too, I heard. I didn't get to see the roof, but we heard that noise. Anyway, eleven o'clock, attack. We knew by then, war, so everybody hid underneath the basement.

MK: And then as the days and the weeks went by . . .

TH: And then that night, from that night, total blackout. Everybody stay out of the street after dark. And only those who volunteered to go block warding were issued permits to walk around. And block wardens, you could use a flashlight all blued out in the center, you know. Even automobile, headlight has to be blued out. Just a small light, you can see the road. Regular headlight all gone. So I wanted to go see my friends, so I volunteered for block warding. And we had a gas mask issued, block warding. With the flashlight, I was able to walk around, see. By then, my house was moved to Olona Lane, above School Street. We moved from Vineyard to above School Street, Olona Lane. So from there, I used to come down to Vineyard Avenue where my friends are. We used to get together between Miyagi Store and Taiyo Bakery. In between, there's a room. So we'd hang around over there and talk story. And just to see them, (chuckles) I volunteered to be a block warden so I can walk around nighttime without being arrested. (Chuckles) Name only. Only purpose was to go out and be with my friends. I had a pass, as well as a gas mask, and flashlight with the blued out. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you have to tell people, thought, to, you know - were there people who violated and you had to . . .

TH: I'm sure they got some arrested, yeah. I don't know personally. But I wasn't arrested because I have a permit. There's an armband, block warden. And I get written permit, too, in my pocket. (Chuckles)

MK: But did you ever have to do your job as a block warden?

TH: Nothing doing.

(Laughter)

WN: That was my question.

TH: My only purpose was to go to Vineyard to play around with my friends. Care less, block warding. (Laughs)

MK: And then, because there were two brothers who volunteered, how did your sister react to Warren and you both going off to war?

TH: Okay. So, just prior to we being assigned overseas at Camp Savage, there was a terrible accident in the South Pacific area. Five brothers, [Sullivan] brothers, killed all one time. They were the crew members of a cruiser, got torpedoed, and they're killed. So, from that time on, I understand, there was a policy in the war department not to assign two brothers in the same combat team, same time. In our case, my sister, I later learned, I later found out, asked the war department, begged the war department to assign me and my brother together, hoping that two brothers serving together help each other and survive the war. I found that out after the war. (Chuckles) So that's how we were together. I think we were the only two brothers serving the same outfit, same time. That was prior to we left Camp Savage. Of course, at that time, I didn't know she did that. After the war I found out. She asked the government, war department, to assign two of us together.

MK: And before you left the Islands, I'm just curious, did your family or neighborhood follow the Japanese custom and do the *senninbari* [thousand-stitch belt]. . .

TH: No.

MK: . . . or give you going-away party or anything?

TH: No. No *senninbari* or *fukubukuro* [lucky bag], or *imonbukuro* [comfort bag]. (Chuckles) No, no such thing.

MK: No such thing. And then, how long were you Schofield {Barracks} before you went?

TH: Ooh, I forgot. It was just a few days. A few days, I don't know, I don't remember.

MK: So could you do anything to prepare to leave since it was so soon?

TH: I guess not. Of course, they had issued a uniform, basic uniform. That's about it. We had a basic uniform. And in those days, uniform is shabby, yeah.

(Laughter)

MK: What did you get for uniform?

TH: Khaki pants. Khaki pants and the old khaki hat. That's about it. No more stripe, no more nothing. Buck private.

WN: Did it fit?

TH: Somehow fit, yeah. Look kind of baggy, but.

(Laughter)

Somehow managed.

MK: And then when you were leaving Schofield, did you know where you were going?

TH: No. We just transported by truck to the pier, we boarded a ship, and arrived in San Francisco. First time I seen the Golden Gate. And the first time I see — what's that famous rock?

WN: Alcatraz?

TH: Called Alcatraz. I read about Alcatraz but never seen before. "Oh, *kore ga* Alcatraz [this is Alcatraz]." Golden Gate, of course, you read about it, you see the pictures, so you know. Then we got into the San Francisco. And from there, right away to the train station, trucked out, and went somewhere. And then, I don't know what route we took, but a couple days later, we're passing the middle part. Midwest I guess, no? In the morning, you see wheat fields. Evening, we're still passing wheat fields. *America no hirosa wakatta, bikkurishita.*

MK: You're just surprised at the size of America.

TH: The size, yeah. I mean, train traveling, now. In the morning, you see wheat fields on both sides. Evening, we still passing wheat fields. Until we reach Minnesota. Once we reached Minnesota, I don't remember what kind of field it was. And from there, trucked out to Camp Savage.

MK: And you know that trip across the U.S., what were you guys doing in that train?

TH: Nothing special, just monkeying around. (Chuckles) Talking story, playing cards.

WN: Your brother was with you?

TH: No. My brother [Warren Higa] was at Camp Shelby already, training.

WN: Oh, Shelby, okay.

TH: They went through training first, yeah. So while I was in Camp Savage, we used to correspond to each other. So, in

Minnesota, being dairy country, we have all the fresh milk we want to drink. And fresh egg in the morning for breakfast, yeah, with scrambled egg. Compared to Camp Shelby. Camp Shelby get powdered milk, powdered egg. And the dirty ground, eh. Minnesota was nice. Summer months were nice and green, you know. You can roll around in the grass. Whereas Mississippi, hell, it's sandy, it's a dusty place, you can't do all those things. I used to write about that. So when the recruiters went to Shelby, from Savage, my brother was one of the first ones to sign up.

(Laughter)

He was one of the first to sign up. So his group came up as soon as we finished our basic language training, and ready to go to basic training. So when he came over, we were just about finished. And soon after, we finished our language course so we were sent to Camp Blanding in Florida for basic infantry training. Prior to that, basic training consisted of sixteen weeks, yeah. But in our case, because of urgency, they need more interpreters and translators in the front, our training was cut in half. Eight weeks. But we have to cover the same subject matter. So from one training to training area, instead of marching, we were trucked out. Trucked out to save all the time. Although we have to cover the same subject training. So we finished in eight weeks, then we came back. By that time, they finished accelerated training program. We took eight months, but they took only a few months.

MK: You know, going back to Camp Savage, you were there for eight months of training.

TH: Eight months training.

MK: Now, what was the training, how was the training done?

TH: Oh, eight o'clock in the morning to about four o'clock, classroom training. We studied the Japanese textbook based on Japanese Military Academy. We learned military terminology. All *heigo* [military terminology], yeah. (Chuckles) *Sore ga yo*. The class was divided according to Japanese knowledge, see. Section 1 was the top class. Many of them had Japan education, university grad. Many of them American university grad. And many of them became instructors afterward. And then down the line. I was in Section 5. In my class, we had two Japan University grads, two University of Hawaii grads, the rest, all high school grad at least. I was the only one who never even finished high school. Only one year high school. So everybody breaking their 'okole to study Japanese. *Heigo* yeah. I was studying English.

(Laughter)

I was studying English. *Bakatare*.

(Laughter)

So, at the army. Okay, four o'clock, school is over. Then between four to six, there's a time period for dinner, see. Dinner as well as shower and do other odd work. And then go back to school another two hours, night school. So come back about eight o'clock. Eight to ten you had whatever you wanted to do. So after ten, lights out, yeah. Everybody got to go sleep. Me, I go bathroom. Latrine, we call 'em in the army, yeah. I study. And then one day, charge of quarters, CQ, came around and caught me studying after ten o'clock. They scold me, see. "What are you doing, go back and sleep."

I said, "Okay." No can disobey sergeant, yeah.

Then again, same thing happen, day after day. Then, about the third day, he found out why I have to study so damn hard beyond ten o'clock. He found out. So after that, he didn't bother me. Oh, no. Before that, I used to make believe I'm doing the business, sit on the toilet bowl with pants down and studying. "What are you doing?"

"Oh, you know what I ate? I don't know what I ate today, but kind of upset my stomach. I'm sitting down."

"Oh, okay. Then okay. Anyway, finish quick and go back sleep."

"Okay."

Again. Very obedient. "Yes, Sir, sergeant?" And about a few days later, he found out why I was studying so damn hard. So after that, he didn't bother me. Every time he look at me, "Oh, again?" He'd just smile and he'd let me go. But I really studied hard to catch up with them.

WN: When you say "study," were you reading like novel books . . .

TH: No.

WN: . . . like what, what were you reading?

TH: Some kind of textbook. English textbook.

MK: How come you studied so hard, though?

TH: I told you, I had to, to catch up with the rest of the guys. Everybody else had high school education and above, yeah. I was the only guy without a high school education. I've got to keep up with them, Section 5.

WN: I'm wondering, you know the group that went with you directly to Savage, you know, that weren't recruited from Shelby, they must have been kind of good in Japanese though, right?

TH: Well, not that good, but passable. That's why they were selected. Like, my brother had only a few schooling at Japanese school. He knew a little bit Japanese, not enough, but he was selected. The ones who went to Japanese[-language] school after the English school, at least they knew a little bit, so they were selected.

MK: And then who were your instructors?

TH: The nisei.

MK: Nisei.

TH: American, mostly Mainland nisei.

MK: And, in your estimation, what was their knowledge of Japanese.

TH: Oh, they're all Japan university grads. *Kibei* nisei [nisei who spent youth in Japan].

MK: And then I was told that there were also many Caucasians who went through the MIS.

TH: Oh, that's the kind, yeah, I think. Officer candidate, ninety-day-wonders.

MK: What did you think of them?

TH: Junk. (Laughs) We had one of them, don't know nothing. Later on, a navy intelligence officer was assigned to us. He was good. Donald Keene. He became a university professor, Columbia, as well as in Japan. He was real good. See, first we had a Caucasian army officer, ninety-day-wonder, assigned to us. In the Philippines, he caught a cold and he got shipped out, back. So, at that time, 96th Division, we were known as 318th Language Special Team [314th Headquarters Intelligence Team], see. Needed a language officer. So Donald Keene was assigned to us from that time. So he joined us and went to Okinawa. And he was real good. He and I became very good friends. Yeah, very good friends. And too bad I never got to see him after the war. I

understand he passed through here several. . . . Oh, I think one time we met, you know, I think, Pagoda [Hotel]. I'm not sure on that. But he passed through Hawaii many times back and forth between Tokyo and Columbia.

MK: And getting back to the time you were at Camp Savage, what were conditions like? You said weather-wise, it was better than Camp Shelby . . .

TH: Oh, yeah. Well, . . .

MK: . . . but how about your living conditions, food, . . .

TH: The living condition, nothing to complain. Winter months, of course, cold, eh. So every barracks had, I think, three pot-belly stoves with the coal inside. And my bunk was right next to the pot-belly stove, see. In fact, that thing come red, you know. So the middle of the night, sometimes I used to take the blanket off. Then in the morning I got to put back the blanket. Because I was right next – close to it. I was very close to the stove, so very warm. The first snow, all Hawaii guys run out to the snow and play around in the snow. Afterwards, of course, everybody stay in. (Chuckles) First snow, everybody went out to play around, like a bunch of kids. Something never seen before, yeah.

MK: And what was it like for you living up on the Mainland? How much contact did you have with people outside of the camp?

TH: Very little. Very little. The only time we go out is weekend pass, yeah. Few hours. So we used to go to Minneapolis. And in Minneapolis, there was a serviceman center. Just about the center of the city. And right next to it, there's two chop suey houses. Nanking and – what was the other one now? – Nanking was the one I remember most because right next to the entrance. So we often went there, chop suey. So then, after Sunday evening, bus comes around and takes us back to camp.

MK: We're you missing Asian foods already?

TH: Chop suey was the most sought after. (Chuckles) Not so much Japanese food, no. Chop suey.

WN: How was the chop suey?

TH: Very good. (Chuckles) Very good. Compared to today, today's one may be better, but to me, that was the most delicious. (Chuckles)

MK: And then because you folks have Japanese faces, and you folks are up there on the Mainland, how were you folks treated?

TH: Minnesota people were very nice to us. I have nothing but good memories of Minnesota. And then during the training, we had the furlough, yeah. I went to furlough in New York City, yeah, with a couple of other guys. And here, I get another story I don't think anybody else had. One day, we happened to go into a spaghetti house. I forgot the name of the restaurant, but spaghetti house. Three of us eating spaghetti. And we noticed one man from the balcony looking down at us kind of curiously, looking at us, see. Never mind, we just keep eating spaghetti. And then he finally came down, started talking to us. "Where you boys from?"

"Oh, from Hawaii."

"Oh, I see. Then you're Japanese? You're Japanese? You're not Japanese." He pointed to me.

"No, I'm Japanese."

"No, you're not Japanese, you don't look like other nisei I've seen." Before that, 100th Infantry boys from Camp McCoy happened to go in there, I heard. So he start talking to me, "No, you look different, you don't look like Japanese. You look more like Italian. Nose a little bit higher than others." And so and so, see. They talk story with us. At the end of the conversation, he picks up a beer, "Oh, the meal is on me, nice talking to you." (Laughs) On account of my nose, three of us got a free meal.

(Laughter)

So just before we left New York, going back to camp, we went back again. So we tell him, "Mr. So-and-so, we came back to thank you, and we're going to eat one more spaghetti again before going back to camp."

So he said, "Oh, this time you got to pay."

(Laughter)

It was so funny. On account of my nose, three of us got a free meal.

(Laughter)

WN: You know at Camp Savage, the basic training, was that only language?

TH: No, military training, too. Every now and then, military training. You got to go through the formality. In the morning, stand up and the flag raising. And afternoon, lower the flag, retreat formation. Got to go through. And in between, we have a drill in between. Not only strictly language training.

MK: How did you take to that drilling, how did you do?

TH: No big deal. Yeah. I did some – not basic – but some training while I was in school, yeah.

MK: So you were in shape.

TH: Yeah.

WN: Rifle, too? You learn how to . . .

TH: No. At that point, just a wooden rifle. Carry a wooden rifle. Only when we went to basic training then we actually handled a rifle, M1.

MK: And then your basic training, you took at Camp Blanding in Florida.

TH: Blanding, Florida.

MK: How was that basic training?

TH: Rough. Sandy place. And got a lot of snakes. Rattlesnakes, coral snakes. And rattlesnake is a beautiful snake. I mean, not the rattlesnake, coral snake. It's just like a feather lei. Right in the back of the head, there's a black band, yeah. And in between, just like a flower lei. Beautiful. So one day, one Hawaii guy was playing around with the snake, see. Cadre grabbed this guy from behind and threw him over, say, "You know what that is, you stupid? That's a coral snake. If you're ever bitten by that, by the time we take you to the aid station, you'll be dead. Don't you ever play around with that." We didn't know what kind of snake it was, see. So after that. . . . Rattlesnake makes noise so you afraid, you know, eh. You avoid, of course. *Ko-ko-ko-koron*. Coral snake is the most beautiful snake I've seen. Beautiful. Just like a flower lei, colored, yeah. Small, only about this long but. Right behind the head there's a black band.

MK: But very poisonous.

TH: Very poisonous, I heard.

WN: At least you had some background with snakes before, as opposed to the other . . .

TH: Yeah, well, Okinawa snakes, all triangle head, see. The more triangle, the more poisonous. Get two kinds of snakes in Okinawa I know of. What they call regular *habu*. And the other one is *akamata*. *Akamata* is reddish. That is less poisonous than the regular *habu*. But still, both of them are poisonous. But, as I told you, I learned later, that snakes avoid, don't like sulfur smell. So during the wartime, all crawled into the hole and hide. Lucky for us. (Chuckles)

MK: And then, you know, going back to the basic training in Florida, what did they train you in? How . . .

TH: Oh, regular infantry training. How to shoot the rifle, how to shoot machine gun, how to throw hand grenades, how to dig foxholes.

MK: And did you think that training was adequate?

TH: In the combat? No way. (Laughs) That's *manegoto*, that.

MK: Just imitation. Not the real thing.

TH: Imitation. Imitation. That's real kindergarten training. Then, we came back to Hawaii. Before shipped out to overseas, we went through jungle training, on this island [Oahu]. Other [windward] side of the island. I don't know what part of the island, but, yeah. Just over the mountain, there's a terrible place training. Man, I never thought we had such a place in Hawaii. Jungle. It rains a lot. So for one week, we hardly had a dry moment. And then once we dry up, we get river-crossing training. And get wet up to here again. And then the other side you get sandy ground, hand-to-hand combat training. Then muddy again. Then go back in the river, wash up again. And then come home evening for dinner and sleep, yeah. First thing, we go to shower room. Scrub off all our uniform, wash, and hang 'em. And then change to regular fatigues for dinner and sleep. And next morning, five o'clock, you try put on the half-wet pants, (tape inaudible). (Chuckles) For one week. Hardly a dry moment. It's a wonder that you know, we were in shape, that's why we survived, I think. If you're not in shape, you would catch cold and become sick. Rained so much. And if not raining, they make you wet in the river crossing. Jungle training, one week. Just before we shipped out.

WN: At Camp Blanding, was it your whole [Camp] Savage group that went down?

TH: Well, the ones that went to training are schooled together.

WN: Yeah.

TH: One company.

WN: Were you folks combined with any other company down there?

TH: No, just separate. Ourselves.

WN: So you didn't have to know new people or anything, down there, in Florida, as much.

TH: No, not the same. The ones that went to school together, that's one company.

MK: And then you went to the windward side of the island. By that time, you were already assigned . . .

TH: Assigned to the 96th Division. So we went together with the other *haoles*, yeah.

MK: So that's the 318th Intelligence Team [314th Headquarters Intelligence Team].

TH: Yeah.

MK: And then, you know from there, I think you said you were shipped out to the Pacific?

TH: On the way to - when we left Oahu, I understand, the original plan was to land on Yap Island. Date, I don't know. But somehow, while we were on the way, the navy bombarded Yap Island, neutralized the island. So no longer need to land. So our unit was sent to New Guinea. New Admiralty Island. And then we came under General [Douglas] MacArthur's command. And at that moment, over there, we came under the command of General MacArthur's headquarters. And then became part of the unit. . . . In fact, I think 96th was the only division landed in Leyte. We landed on October 20, 1944.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: And I was wondering, how long did you folks stay in New Guinea? The New Admiralty Islands.

TH: Ah, kind of hard. Forget. *Chee*, I forgot how many months we were there.

MK: So you were there for months then.

TH: Yeah.

MK: And what was your work over there?

TH: Nothing. Just hang around. Sort of a what they call, *taiki* [stand-by]. Alert. (Coughs) Doing nothing, just exercise, do whatever you want. Some training, of course. Exercise training. Not regular training, but calisthenics, more like. Keep in shape.

MK: And what were conditions over there like?

TH: Kind of humid. Other than that, I don't remember.

MK: And were you folks living in barracks or tents?

TH: I think it was tents. I don't remember, I kind of forgot the details.

MK: And then later on, you were with the 96th, landed at Leyte in the Philippines.

TH: Yeah. October 20.

MK: And then while you were in the Philippines, what happened?

TH: Okay. Before that, there was a tremendous air raid in Okinawa, October 10, 1944. October 10, a big carrier base plane air bombing of Okinawa. And after that bombing, they took hundreds, perhaps thousands of aerial pictures, entire island, then. . . . Before I got called into corps headquarters, my brother, who was in the Philippines, Leyte, yeah, one day happened to go to G2 tent, right next to our tent. And on Master Sergeant Duffy's desk, he saw one big book, *Ryūkyū*. Thick book, yeah. Just the cover, you know. Being a son of an Okinawa immigrant, he was curious what the *Ryūkyū* book was all about. So asked Sergeant Duffy, "Eh, Duffy, let me take a look at that book."

And Sergeant Duffy, think nothing of it, "Yeah, take 'em."

So my brother brought the book back to our tent. About to open - he just had the chance to open the front cover - Sergeant Duffy run in, came in, "Hey Warren, where's the book I just loaned you?"

So Warren pointed at the book on his desk. And then Duffy grabbed the book and started going out of the tent, see. From behind, my brother told Duffy, "Eh, Duffy, if we go

into Okinawa, maybe my kid brother can help, you know, he lived over there for fourteen years."

He didn't tell me that until March 2. No, no, I mean not March 2, but two days after we left Mindoro, he didn't tell me all those things. Anyway, about a few hours later, I get a call from General, I mean not general, Colonel Lindsey, my G2 colonel. "Junior, go to corps headquarters with Captain Fernandez right away."

By the way, "Junior," there's a reason for it. My brother and I were assigned to the same division headquarters. My brother has an English name, Warren. I don't have. So the officers and the non-coms in the division headquarters get hard time to pronounce my first name. Take. . . . You know. So, I forgot which sergeant, but one sergeant, one day, said, "Oh shit," pardon my language. But, "Oh shit, you, from now, Junior. Junior Higa." So I was known as "Junior," you know, division headquarters.

(Laughter)

So I kid myself, "Ho, I better not be arrested, boy. If I'm arrested, I'll be also known as Junior." (Laughs)

Anyway, colonel called me on the phone and said, "Junior, go to corps headquarters with Captain Fernandez right away."

So, as ordered, I was ordered by Captain Fernandez and I went with one Filipino jeep driver. Go in the jeep, went to corps headquarters. And on the way, I was wondering why the hell corps headquarters wants me. You know, only staff sergeant. Why they wanted me in the G2 in corps headquarters. I was kind of worried. So, anyway, ordered, so I had to go. I went, and I reported to G2 tent. And in the center of the tent, there was a huge blown-up map of the southern half of Okinawa, see. When I saw that, I kind of froze in front as if somebody poured a bucket of cold ice water on my head. I froze to realize, "Oh, next target," you know. Quick conclusion, eh. I was just looking dumbfounded, looking at it.

Then the G2 officer called me, "Junior, come, sit down. I understand you lived in Okinawa for a number of years."

"Yes, Sir. Fourteen years."

"Sit down."

So he pulled out one picture, blown-up picture, about this size, you know. Showed me in front, see. I looked at it. At

first glance, I didn't recognize. Just burned out, everything burned out, yeah. Then after I look real carefully look at it, it's part of Naha, main part of Naha. All burned out, October 10 bombing. And a few landmarks are remaining. Like a *torii* [shrine gate] in front of Naminoue Jingü. And one small wall of one school. I'm quite familiar with those areas because, as I told you, three or four times a week I used to go to Naha, transporting black sugar. So that area was quite familiar. So after a careful look, I recognized what it was. So I described to the G2 officer what it was.

And then I even described Naha Harbor. How narrow, how small it is. Afterwards yeah, after they show me the special glass, I felt myself like a stupid asshole you know. Because I was describing to him, in detail, what the place looked like. How wide, how narrow the place is. Everything. Freighters and regular passenger ships coming in. The harbor is too small so cannot turn around by itself. So two tugboats push each other and turn the boat around. And then push toward the pier. I was explaining to him all that. And deep inside the harbor, there's a small island. Harbor is kind of long, just like Pearl Harbor. Inside there's something like Ford Island, small island. And there's a bridge between the island and the northern half of the harbor to the southern half. Oroku Peninsula, yeah. I'm describing all that. And okay, that, they all right. And the entrance, this Naminoue, rock formation. On top, we used to have a shrine, this and that, see.

Then next, he showed me – oh, he asked me, "Where did your grandfather used to live?" So I pointed in the general area of the map. And then he pulled out one big picture again. And this entire block of my village, exactly how I remember, 1939. Because this village has no military value, so no bombing, no nothing, no shelling. Entirely as is. So I quickly located my grandfather's house. And from there, I finger traced all my relatives homes. All intact. Okay, I feel good, you know. *Anshin* [relieved], yeah. Then third one, he pulled out one more map. One more picture, showing a bunch of Okinawan *haka* facing the ocean. Beautiful scenery. So I look at that, I guess I look at the G2 officer, "What's the big deal about this picture" kind of face, I think. Ho, he scold me, "Goddamnit, look at it carefully, we think the whole island is fortified."

Quickly realizing they had a misconception, so I said, "No, no, no, no. *Chigau, chigau* [You're mistaken]. This is the Okinawa special grave above the ground burial tomb. And then I described to him how it's made, what the inside looks like, what its shape, all this for. And I explained to him it's shaped like a woman's womb. And the entrance is

where the baby comes out. And in front of the entrance, there's a square mound, see. That represents the woman's breast. And in front, get the small opening where families get together on special occasions. *Obon* [Buddhist summer festival] like. And then celebrate, offer *senko* [incense] and whatnot. I explained to him and what the inside looked like. So this is not fortification. And I described everything, what the inside looked like.

So at that point he tell me, "Junior, you're going to help us from here on. Every day. For that, whatever you see, whatever we talk about, whatever anybody else talks about, not a word to anybody unless on a need-to-know basis. You understand?"

"Yes, Sir."

Okay. So from then, he showed me or told me about other things. And at that point, he gave me a special eyepiece. Just like upside-down binoculars. You look with that, all the area pictures, just like you're seeing actual ground. So how I explained to him in the Naha Harbor and whatnot, the intelligence officer easily could figure out by the scale of the picture how wide it is. After that, I felt like a two-cent piece, you know. "Goddamn, how, stupid. Why did I do that?" you know. I described everything to him, even ditch kind. It clearly shows, with that glass. And being an intelligence officer, easily can figure out, with the scale of the picture, they can figure out how wide the harbor is. No, not knowing any better, I explained to him how wide, how narrow the place is. (Chuckles)

WN: Why did you feel bad about doing that?

TH: Well, not knowing any better. Just like exposing myself how idiot I am, eh. (Laughs)

WN: Did you feel bad because you were giving the American intelligence all this information about Okinawa?

TH: No, no. That's my duty. (Chuckles) And then - no, the reason why I felt so bad is, not knowing any better, I'm explaining to intelligence officer, what he can actually see with the eyepiece.

MK: You felt kind of embarrassed . . .

TH: I'm embarrassed.

MK: . . . that he already knows.

TH: Yeah. They know exactly what I'm talking about. And here, I'm explaining, earnest face, eh? *Bakatare*. (Laughs) *Ahö yo*. [Stupid. Foolish person.]

MK: That's just being *majime* [earnest].

(Laughter)

WN: Tie up loose ends now. I wanted to ask about seeing Warren for the first time. You met in Florida?

TH: No, no, no. I mean, the army?

WN: Yeah. When were you reunited with Warren?

TH: In the army. Oh, no, in the army, or back home, Hawaii?

WN: No, no. But when did he join up with your unit?

TH: Oh, Camp Savage.

WN: Oh, Camp Savage. How did you feel about that?

TH: No, I didn't know that we were supposed to be in the same team.

WN: Right, right, right.

TH: When the team was announced, I was surprised. Because we already heard about the [Sullivan] brothers. So I was surprised. But he became a team leader, see. Our team leader.

WN: Were you glad to see him?

TH: Well, yes and no.

(Laughter)

Yes and no. Not really, particularly, either way.

MK: Well, I'm thinking, because we're running out of tape, can we stop here?

TH: Okay.

MK: And then the next session, we'll continue with your relationship with General [Claude] Easley, and then heading out to Okinawa and what you did, and how you felt, and then the rest . . .

TH: Well, General Easley, what happened was in Okinawa. I mean Philippines first, but shower room, eh.

MK: Okay, so that story, I'll have you tell us in the next session, okay?

TH: I brought quite a few books.

MK: We'll stop.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 44-32-2-05 and 44-33-2-05

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Takejiro Higa (TH)

Honolulu, O'ahu

April 15, 2005

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Takejiro Higa. This is our second session on April 15, 2005. And the interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

So, Mr. Higa, I'm going to start today's interview by having you make a correction that you felt had to be made.

TH: Yes. Okay, the team that I belonged to, assigned to, the 96th Division, was known as 314th Headquarters Intelligence Team. And it consisted of, altogether, ten of us. But four at the division headquarters, two each at the three regiments, assigned to the regiment. These are the advanced parties. So the first prisoner been captured by our unit, will be interviewed by these two guys first. These two guys weren't too *akamai* [skilled] on the Japanese. So if they needed further interrogation, they used to send them to the division headquarters for me to interrogate. Very basic interrogation was done at the front. There's two each assigned to the headquarters, the regimental headquarters. They are further up in the front than the division headquarters. So a lot of prisoners came through division headquarters for me to interrogate.

WN: So last time you said 318th, but it's actually 314th.

TH: 314th Headquarters Intelligence Team.

MK: And was it when you were assigned to that 314th Headquarters Intelligence Team that you got to know General Claude Easley?

TH: Well, when we. . . . General Easley, okay. You know, Easley, the first time I found out after the incident happened at Leyte during the shower room incident. Although we were assigned to the 96th Division Schofield, before we went overseas. But being a small potato, you don't get to see generals, okay. So I never knew who he was. Division commander, I saw the face, so I recognized him. Smiling Jim Bradley, yeah. But the assistant general, I never met him until the shower room incident (laughs).

MK: What was that shower room incident?

TH: See, as I told you at the previous interview, I was assigned to the corps headquarters intelligence team during the daytime. Ever since either very late October [19]44 or very early November [19]44. And during the daytime, I worked at corps headquarters intelligence office, helping intelligence officers. And during the evening or the afternoon, go back to division headquarters for dinner as well as sleeping. And overseas, officers and men take the same shower, out in the open shower. Not like regular camp. Regular camp, you have segregated facility for the officers and men. But overseas, generals, down to the buck private, take the same shower room, out in the open. One day, I was minding my own business taking a shower. And here comes a little old man. Kind of old man, I didn't know who he was. And he starts talking to me, "Junior, what did you do today?"

I look at him, I didn't recognize him. So I pretend as if I didn't hear him. I took a real fast shower and scrambled out and went back to the tent. And I described it to my brother. So my brother hit the table and said, "Goddamn, don't you know who he is? He's a one-star assistant commander general."

I said, "What?" Yep, assistant commander general, General Easley.

So, oh my god, I think I'm going to be court-martialed. So I ran to Colonel Lindsey's office. Colonel Lindsey is our G2 officer. So I went to Colonel Lindsey's office and I told the colonel, "Colonel Lindsey, I might get court-martialed."

So he look at me, "Now what did you do, Junior?"

"Sir, it's not what I did, it's what I did not do." So I described to him what happened in the shower room.

So he kind of smiled at me, "Don't worry Junior, he might even give you a medal for that."

I said, "Why?"

"You did exactly what you were told to do. Not to say a word to anybody unless on a need-to-know basis. You didn't know him. It's for you not to say anything."

Ho, that kind of filled me – gave me a good feeling. I went back to my tent. And about fifteen minutes later, here comes the general with the star on his shoulder. Ho, I stood up and salute him and apologized to him what happened in the shower room. So he looked at me, "No big deal, Junior. Nothing, no big deal."

So from that time on, he and I became a real good acquaintance. You know, it's kind of farfetched to say staff sergeant and general talking on an equal term. But he and I became such good friends. And he treated me like a grandson. So from that time on, very close. So every time we ended up in the shower room together, alone, I used to bring him up to date what happened at corps headquarters. To the colonel, I used to report every afternoon because he is the man who needs to know. My brother asked me, "What did you do today?"

"Don't ask me, I'm being under strict orders not to say anything to anybody unless on a need-to-know basis. And you are not one of them." (Chuckles)

Then we left Leyte to the invasion of Okinawa, I think, the late part of March. I forgot the exact date. Two days out from Leyte, an announcement came over the radio – I mean, ships announcement PA system, that we're heading toward Okinawa. So I told my brother, "Eh, Warren, now I can tell you what I was doing."

He looked at me, said, "I kind of felt it must be Okinawa." Because then he told me the incident that happened to him at Leyte. One day, one afternoon, he happened to go to a G2 tent right next to our tent. And the Sergeant Duffy, Master Sergeant Duffy's desk, there was a thick book with the title, *Ryūkyū*. So, being the son of an Okinawan immigrant, he was curious. So I asked Sergeant Duffy, "Hey Duffy, let me take a look at that book."

Sergeant Duffy thought nothing of it and said, "Eh, take 'em."

So my brother brought back the book to our tent. And about to open, Sergeant Duffy ran in, said, "Hey Warren, where's the book I just loaned you?"

So Warren pointed to the book on his desk. And Duffy grabbed the book and going out. So from behind, my brother told Duffy, "Eh Duffy, if we going to Okinawa, maybe my kid brother can help. He lived there for fourteen years, you know."

Then, you know, Duffy didn't respond to anything. And I don't know how many days after, or that particular day, or what, I forgot, but I got a call from the Colonel one day. He said, "Junior, go to corps headquarters right away with Captain Fernandez." Captain Fernandez was my constant escort officer. And to be with an escort officer is why because being a different faced Japanese, if you go roam around by yourself, I might get shot from my own troops, eh. Being a disguised enemy. Because there was an incident at corps headquarters. A guy named Ito from California, nisei boy, assigned to the 24th Corps Headquarters under George Takabayashi. One day, he was roaming around, away from the division, I mean, the corps headquarters maybe. So a Filipino guy grabbed him and treated him like a Japanese prisoner. And George Takabayashi, the team leader, has to go over there and bail him out. (Chuckles) So, because of that, for our protection, we had one *haole* officer assigned to us as a bodyguard anytime we go out from the headquarters out. And Captain Fernandez was my escort officer all the time. (Coughs)

I might add though, at the division headquarters, there were three other special teams attached to the division headquarters G2. And they were - one team was what they call Aerial Photo Interpreters Team. These are small group of people. . . . In fact, our division only had three: the commanding officer, Captain Krueger, and the two sergeants. Their job is to interpret and analyze aerial photographs for military value. And the other team is Japanese Order of Battle section, JOB. Their job is to identify the enemy unit. Its history, if possible. And knowing their background, the higher command can anticipate what kind of tactic these people might use. So that's useful information they can get. Knowing the officers in charge and the history, if they have it. And the third team is Counter-Intelligence Corps, CIC. (Coughs) CIC (coughs) excuse me. CIC's duty is to see any subversive or any irregular activity among our troops. To keep an eye on our own troops who might do something against a military rule, or the order of military rule, or custom. And they can punish the guys, yeah. Sort of FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] working for the army. And us, our job is to get the

information about the enemy. So these four teams, a special group of people, assigned to the division G2. G2 is intelligence, as you know.

So because of the safety reason, as I say, we had a bodyguard all the time. Every time when I went to caves, Captain Fernandez was always with me. Right beside me.

MK: And what was your . . .

TH: So protect me.

MK: What was your relationship with this Captain Fernandez?

TH: Very close. (Coughs) Very close. He's another person, I'm very sad to say, I never kept up with him. I'm don't know if he's still alive or what, but I never got to contact him after the war. For one thing, I didn't have too much time. Soon after the war - maybe I'm getting ahead of schedule - but I was shipped out to Korea. So I never got to him to know much about it after the war. Only during the campaign.

MK: And you were saying that he would always be with you when you went out of headquarters. When you say "always," it was virtually . . .

TH: Everywhere. Whenever I go out from headquarters, he [Captain Fernandez] was my officer protecting me against our own troops. Otherwise, they might shoot me, yeah. Being Japanese face. And even though I'm in uniform, they can easily say this guy is a disguised prisoner, you know. So protection. And one day, even general told me, one day, while taking a shower, "Hey Junior, do you realize in case of emergency and we have to get out from division headquarters, you get higher priority than me?"

So I told him, "Ho, General, that sounds real good."

(Laughter)

He said, "The reason being this: we know too damn much about our own unit. So if I'm captured, although we are trained not to say anything more than name, rank, and serial number, under pressure, you might spill out, yeah. So that's one. And the other one is, if you're captured by Japanese, guaranteed to be tortured and probably killed, yeah. So we're supposed to scam out before, ahead of anybody."

MK: And knowing all that, how did you feel, knowing that you were so vulnerable?

TH: Well, I knew that. But I knew also, I was well protected. Covered by all the non-coms and even officers in the division headquarters. And the only time I go out from division headquarters was when I go to caves. And a couple of times to POW [prisoner of war] camps, civilian compound. Other than that, always in division headquarters because I have to be ready to receive calls from regimental headquarters if the two guys in each regiment need help. I got to be available, you know.

MK: And, you know, before we move on to Okinawa, I remember you were telling me that the general treated you like a grandson. And when he was killed, you told us about how you felt.

TH: Yeah.

MK: If you could repeat that to us?

TH: Well, he treated me so nicely. And I was attached to him. So one day, almost toward the end of the battle, he got shot in the front line by a sniper. And he got killed. When his helmet was brought back to the division headquarters, I looked at that and I cried. Because just like losing my own flesh and blood, yeah. And I looked at the general's helmet. Bullet entered right below the star. And no marking behind. So I assumed the bullet was still in his head, or unless penetrated out, yeah, that I don't know. I never got to see the body, of course. So that really put me in a sad moment. As if I lost my blood relative.

So whenever I go to Okinawa – I've been back to Okinawa many times after the war – and there is a memorial at the southern tip of the island called, "*Heiwa no Ishiji*," or Peace Memorial Park. And over there, they have, on the marble, something like the Vietnam Wall. All the dead person's names inscribed, including the civilians, Japanese army, known dead, and the Americans. All in there, all different sections. So I looked for General Easley's marking. I go over there and I put – I know he's not Buddhist, but hell, this is the closest I can pay my respects. The first time I went, I even took a pencil marking of the name on the stone and I brought it home. With the lead pencil, you know, marking. So I know exactly where his name, inscribed names are. So each time I go, I go over there. If there was an incense-burning container, I would have put incense, but (chuckles) no such thing. So the closest I can do is just put my hands together. He was such a nice man, I tell you. Even to this day, when I think about him, I get near tears.

MK: I guess, you know, you mentioned that in the Philippines, of course, you knew General Easley. And then you had your escort officer, Captain Fernandez.

TH: Captain Fernandez. First name, I forgot. (Chuckles)

MK: And I was wondering, you know, what was your relationship with the other men in the division? In the headquarters.

TH: Individually, I mean, we don't have any very close ties. But overall, they treated us very nicely. They figured that we are the eyes and ears of the division. So nobody mistreated us. Nobody even mentioned "Jap" or anything. Always, everybody was treated very cordially. And we were very good friends together.

MK: And in the Philippines, I'm wondering, at that time, how much contact did you have with civilian Filipinos?

TH: Very little. Very little. In fact, I can't think of any one particular incident dealing with a Filipino. I know some of them came through the division headquarters and looked at us, but no personal contact.

MK: And, you know, I was wondering, what the conditions were like for you folks in the Philippines.

TH: Well, just like any war condition, I guess. We were living in a tent. And we had a bomb shelter right across of our tent. The engineers dug up the hole and covered it with coconut log, and then piled up the dirt. So unless you have a direct hit, you're probably safe. We, several times, ran into there. Air raid alarm. And nothing happened, of course. Luckily. And the first few days, we were very close to the front line. So we could hear, at night, banzai charges. (Chuckles) It's a real eerie feeling. Oh, about, I would say, I don't have a wristwatch so I can't tell exact time, but I would say after midnight, yeah. Early in the morning you can hear, in the distance, in the hillside, "*Tenno heika banzai!* [Long live the Emperor!]" And then bang, bang, bang, bang. And then soon after the machine gun open up, it's just like a firecracker. It's a funny kind of feeling when you hear those words. Banzai charge. And then a day or two later, we hear the report from the front, there was so many dead bodies and whatnot.

But during the Okinawan campaign, I understand American's didn't fear too much. Because by then, they're kind of used to it, eh. So American GIs - what I heard was this, oh, about five o'clock, they quit fighting, yeah. Set up a base, defense position. And then in Okinawa, first time they used the snoopy scope. You can see at nighttime. It's

an infrared sight mounted on a rifle. Not everybody had it, but few in the company platoon had it, eh. So what they do, according to what I heard – I never saw it, of course – what I heard was, they placed these guys with the snoop scope in a strategic position. And they would be the watchdog. And I saw, one time. See, that darker the night, you can see better. If it's an ordinary night, moonlight, probably can see better than the snoop. But the darker night, up to about fifty yards, you can see the difference between human being and a pig running loose. Only thing, you cannot tell is what kind of human being; Japanese, or *haole*, or native. Human being shape, you can tell. And compared with the domestic animal, yeah. You can see the difference. So what I overheard the infantry boys tell me was, late in the afternoon, they quit fighting. Avoid night fighting. And then set up a defensive position for the night. So they set up this guy with the snoop scope every so many yards. And then cover him, they have machine guns, yeah. So when the enemy penetration comes through, this snoop scope operator shoots a tracer bullet. And then crossfire yeah. So at that point, the machine gun opens up and slaughters all the guys coming through. So in fact, they said – it's kind of not nice words to use – but they welcomed the suicide charge. That way, they can slaughter more Japanese than individually. And by then, they're kind of used to banzai charge terms so they weren't too upset. They were mentally prepared for that.

MK: You know, for you, hearing the banzai charge, you know, you said . . .

TH: It's a real . . .

MK: . . . it's a eerie feeling.

TH: . . . it's a queer, I mean, real – what shall I say? – not sad – scary. Very uncomfortable feeling. You know, sort of an insufficient, or what, unprotected-like. Even though we know it's quite a distance away from us, but still, funny kind of feeling. You don't feel good hearing those words. And especially when soon after that, machine guns open up and bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. You know, just like firecracker, no more end.

WN: Well, you sort of grew up hearing that.

TH: Hmm?

WN: You sort of grew up hearing, "*Tenno heika banzai.*" You know, like at . . .

TH: Yeah. I mean, in school, yeah, *tenno heika banzai* is a happy occasion, eh. This one is not a happy occasion. So the feeling is different. This one, fear attached to that banzai charge, yeah. Ordinary banzai charge is a happy occasion banzai charge, so – I mean, banzai, – so no problem.

WN: 'Cause I was wondering, you know, like the *haoles* troops, the soldiers, they had no knowledge of that. The meaning, the words, had no meaning to them. As opposed to you.

TH: Yeah. So to the *haoles*, so far, in South Pacific, every time they have a banzai charge is severe fighting, yeah. And a lot of casualties. So because of that, probably, they had a fear in their mind. Same thing with the Tokyo Rose. Beginning part, when Japan was winning the war, there was a demoralizing effect on American troops. But when the tide turned, it became like a joke. So, in fact, toward the end, I think was acting like our entertainment. We used to look forward to that hearing. And that hearing, oh, bullshit again. Because from New Guinea to the Philippines, according to Tokyo Rose, we were sunk about three times. (Chuckles) And the ship's radio would put it on once in a while, eh, for entertainment purpose, really. We used to laugh at each other, "Hey, we sunk again. How come we're still alive?" (Chuckles)

Of course, Tokyo doesn't know we're listening, eh. You know why? Navy intelligence broke Japanese military code early in the war. So the intelligence upper echelon knew exactly what Japan was doing all the time. So Midway battle, famous Midway battle, they knew exactly what was coming. So they waited until close enough to Midway. And from Midway, there's a base, yeah. Bang, bang, bang, and bust up the Japanese navy. After that, the Japanese navy was a skeleton. And the same thing happened with Admiral [Isoroku] Yamamoto being shot down. They knew exactly what plane he was in. So the five P-38s, you know, the light fighter plane, two-fuselage plane. Five of 'em waited for them to come to Rabaul. So when the Japanese group of bombers came, approached Rabaul, they went straight to Admiral Yamamoto's plane and shoot 'em down. They knew exactly what plane he was in, about what time they would be arriving over there. Because of the intercepted message. It was the best secret message, I mean, information of the war, I think. They knew.

MK: Breaking the code and . . .

TH: Yeah. The navy intelligence broke the code early in the war. They knew exactly what the Japanese were up to.

MK: And then, you know, going back to the time you were in the Philippines. When you found out you folks were going to Okinawa, what were your feelings about going to Okinawa?

TH: Sad. Ever since I saw that picture at corps headquarters, every night, I used to dream about my uncle, aunty, and cousins, and some classmates. Every night I couldn't sleep. And the worst part is, I couldn't even say anything to my brother. And I just. . . . You know, when people tell you don't talk, it's hard to keep, you know. Don't say anything. It's the hardest thing to do. I found it very difficult to keep my mouth shut. Usually, I'm a real talkative guy. And when I was under strict orders, I couldn't say anything to even my brother about what I'm doing. So I couldn't even give hints. I could easily give hints if I wanted to. Say I saw uncle's picture, or uncle's house, like that. But no way. I'm a hardheaded *buggah* [fellow]. So when they tell me, "Don't say anything," I wouldn't say.

MK: And when it came time to go, what was your specific assignment?

TH: Well, I knew exactly where we were going to land and what units were involved. The only thing I didn't know was exact day of landing. April 1. I knew where we were going to land because I looked at the map and I'm telling them, by general area, what little I know. And one part of the beachhead, I know quite well, too, see, because it's only about a mile and a half from my village that grew up in. Down the slope. So I knew quite a bit about there. So I told them about. And the first thing I told them about - oh, if I can start from the beginning. The first picture the G2 officer asked me was, "Oh, I understand you lived in Okinawa for so many years."

"Yes, Sir."

"Where?"

I pointed the general area. Then he pulled out one picture, a blown-up aerial picture of one place. At first, I didn't recognize it. Then after a careful look, it turned out to be Naha. I'm very familiar over there. And I think I mentioned that prior to coming back to Hawai'i, two-and-half years, I worked for my uncle and I used to transport black sugar to dealers in Naha two, three times a week. Three, four times a week, during the sugar harvesting season. And I followed a certain path all the way to Naha Harbor. So I knew quite well in that area, detail. (Chuckles) As I mentioned last meeting, I described to the G2 officer everything in detail, as if the guy doesn't know

anything, including the size of Naha Harbor and how small it is so the boat cannot turn around so tugboat got to push 'em around. And even the small island deep inside the harbor. Afterwards, I felt like a two-cent piece, but (chuckles). Anyway, described to him everything.

And then the second picture he showed me, he asked me, "Oh, where did your grandparents used to live?" So I looked at the general area and pointed finger. And he pulled out an exact picture of the area. And this area, my grandfather's village, has no military value in surrounding area, so escaped bombing and shelling completely. Intact, left as I remember 1939. So I quickly located my grandfather's house. And from there, I finger traced all the relative's homes. And I see everything intact, the way I remember. So kind of relieved.

Then next, he pulled out another picture. Hillside, toward the ocean. Beautiful sight, view. Lined up with the traditional Okinawa burial, *haka*, see, grave. So I guess I look at that, and I looked back at the G2 officer as, "What's the big deal about this picture" kind of face. I think. I got scolding. So he said, "Goddamnit, look it carefully. We think the whole island is fortified." They mistook this as pillboxes. Gun emplacement of pillboxes. So I explained to him everything I know about Okinawan *haka*. Even construction, how it looks like inside. Then he said, "Ho, thank God. We thought the damn island was fortified form north to south. Entire island." So from that time on, he tells me, "Junior, you're going to help us with this from this day forward." For that, what you hear, what you see, what we talk about, not a word to anybody unless on a need-to-know basis. And that's how I started getting my involvement with the general.

So I knew exactly what units were involved, as I said. Only thing I didn't know what the exact landing date. I knew exactly where we were going to land. And I saw the Kita and the Naka Airfield on the aerial pictures. So I knew what airfields were involved in that vicinity. Of course, these are all just before the war constructed.

MK: So when your division landed in Okinawa, where did you folks land?

TH: Chatan.

MK: Chatan.

TH: Extreme western end of the beachhead. See, four divisions landed on the main island of Okinawa. Two marine divisions took the northern sector. Two army divisions, the southern

sector. And we landed primarily in the narrowest point of the island, Isthmus of Ishikawa being the center, yeah. It stretched from near Yomitan all the way to Chatan. Distance, offhand, I don't know. It's not too far, but several kilometers, I guess. And in that area, we had two airfields, Kita and Naka. Kita is Yomitan Airfield, and Naka was Kadena Airfield. But the Japanese army used to call Kita and Naka *Hikōjō*. Just before invasion, the army, general mobilization of civilians, and built the airfield with pick and shovel, he says. Because they didn't have the equipment. So pick and shovel. In fact, after the war, when I first met my cousin, he looked at me and said, "You know, we struggled to build that airfield in a little over one month. As if we gave the present to the American army." And because there was no fighting in the airfield because – now we're getting back to Colonel [Hiromichi] Yahara's book *Okinawa Kessen*, but, yeah.

Before we landed, Okinawa defense force, according to Colonel Yahara's book, manpower: 186,000, consisting of four divisions, two mixed brigades, and several other attached specialized units – signal, shipping engineer, transportation, communication, and whatnot, miscellaneous units. All total combined, 186,000 men. And December [19]44, Japanese central imperial headquarters, recognizing the hard time have in Philippines, they decided to pull out of the divisions, 9th Division. Supposed to be the cream of the crop of the defense unit in Okinawa. Pulled out in December [19]44 and shipped 'em out to the Philippines via Taiwan. But I think they got stuck in Taiwan, okay. So, because of that, Colonel Yahara, according to his book, he had to change his defense plan. He decided to abandon the two airfields, Naka and Kita Airfield, and no resistance at the beachhead. That's why we were able to land without any opposition on April 1. But because it was April 1, and no opposition, the assault troop commanders feared, being April Fool's Day, we may be running into a big trap. So warned the assault troops, be extra careful as you move forward. We didn't know, of course.

And prior to landing – I think I gave you the gist of the stuff, eh – the navy fleet anchored offshore, pounded something like 44,000 shells, or something. A little over 44,000 shells. And several, thirty some-odd thousand rockets pounded in the beachhead and immediate area. And plus, so many bombs, yeah. undefended area. And according to colonel, Japanese high command in Shuri headquarter, looking through the binoculars, say they were laughing to each other, they wasting thousands of thousands of shells in undefended area. They were laughing together, watching the invasion feat. Of course, we didn't know that. And because of that pulling out the 9th Division, considered

cream of the crop of the defense unit, Yahara has to change his defense plan, abandon the two airfields, and decide not to put up any fight at the beachhead but fight at the prepared position. And that's what happened. We succeeded in landing without any opposition. It was a funny kind of feeling. We expected to hear gunshots at any minute, yeah. As we step off the landing craft, everybody scared, of course, you know. We did not hear one gunshot. Just landed. And according to Yahara, I mean the book, exactly eight o'clock, first assault troops start moving toward the beach. And altogether, what, in two days I think, they landed something like 540,000 people or something on the beachhead. And they established a beachhead. So without any organized resistance, assault troops cut the island in two days. Reached the east coast, and cut the island in half. Army moved to the south, marines went to the north.

MK: And how about you?

TH: Army went to the south. The 7th Division and 96th Division were the front line. We moved to the south. And when we hit the Kakazu Ridge - it's north of Shuri but south of the landing area, yeah - we hit organized resistance. Because this was the first organized defense unit, defensive position. And from there, blood-and-guts battle started. And according to what I overheard one day, our division senior officers talking, said, "In two weeks of combat, our division lost one-third of combat strength." Casualties. So they brought the 77th Division back to the island. Oh, by the way, the 77th Division landed on the Kerama Island on March 26, one week before, to establish an artillery base on that small island. It's a small group of islands in the southwestern corner of the Okinawa island. Exact distance from the shoreline, I don't know, but it's close enough to set up an artillery base so they can fire support fire into the island. Mainland of Okinawa. So 77th Division quickly occupied the island. So they brought in the 77th Division to replace the 96th Division to pull out for reorganization with the replacement and retraining, yeah. So I don't know how long it took, but anyway, afterwards, then the 96th went back to the front line. And from there on, inch by inch, yard by yard, fight. Every day. All the way until they passed the Shuri Line. Shuri was the main headquarters.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: And while the division was advancing, what were your experiences during that advance?

TH: From the temporary position near the beachhead—I think we were there about three, four days, I forgot the exact date—for three or four days, we worked in somebody's grave, *haka*. (Chuckles) Okay, let me explain that a little bit. For some reason, yeah, as soon as we landed and started moving upward to the hill, I saw something moving on the side of the small dugout. I jump back, I aim my carbine, and start yelling, "Whoever it is, come out, come out." Under such excitement, I don't know exactly what I said, in Japanese, or Okinawa-*högen*, or maybe some Hawaiian pidgin, I don't know. But I was so excited. Anyway, that something moving but I didn't see anybody come out so I was about to squeeze my trigger. Then I saw a small leg come out. A thin, small leg. And no matter how I look at it, it cannot be a GIs, yeah. So I stop my trigger finger and continue to yell. And this time, I think start yelling Okinawa-*hogen*, "Come out, come out." And out came a small young girl, I would say about four or five years old. And then followed, one old lady came out. So, knowing that they're not GIs, I kind of cooled down a little bit and composed myself and I start asking questions. So I asked, "How come you folks are hiding in this place?"

The old lady said, "Well, family all ran away up in the hills. But I cannot keep up with them, so I decided with my granddaughter to hide inside here."

So I told them, "Don't you ever go back in there. Now stay here. Somebody else is going to come and take you to civilian compound." Not prisoner camp, but you know, relocation camp or refugee camp. "So don't go inside now, just stay here."

So keep moving. And then, short distance, we came close to somebody's *haka*. For some reason, the gate was open. I guess somebody was in there first and just scam out, you know. So as soon as we go inside, one GI wanted to go in, see. So I told him, "Wait. Give me your flashlight." I look inside.

"What you doing?"

"Never mind, I tell you *bumbai*." So I check and make sure there's no snake in there, yeah. Because I was told that you can find snakes often inside the grave. Snake inside, yeah. So I make sure there's no snake. So I said, "Okay, we'll go inside." So we go inside, we set up a temporary office. A small, mobile field desk with the gas lamp. And in the backside, see, the Okinawan *haka* is, as I told you, is built in the shape of a woman's womb, see. Entrance is, I would say, about this much, no. Big enough for two men to carry the casket inside during funeral time. And inside is

quite large. Even five-foot, six-footer GIs can stand around without bending your head. Exact measurement, I cannot tell you. But it's wide enough, I would say, from here to there easily, yeah. Height is about, I don't know how many feet. Maybe five-and-a-half feet, I don't know. And square, just a square. On the backside, there's a two-mound shelf-like. And on top there, there's a container, bone container. In Okinawa-högen, they call it *jishigami*. It's a very beautifully decorated ceramic container. After the number of years, or number of period, they take out the casket out in the front, and meticulously wash the bone. And the lady's bone in the container from feet down, build up, and the skull on the top. And preserve that in the backside for generation after generation, I guess. How long, I don't know. Anyway, family tomb is the oldest there. I guess there's some kind of sequence. That, I don't know. Anyway, usually there are two shelves. Dirt mound, yeah. And, of course, some of the graves are built by concrete and stone. But many of them built into the hillside. Clay. Very solid ground. My own family grave was built into the mound. And, if possible, they can always build facing the ocean with the nice view. In fact, Okinawa tradition was that they considered the *haka* as a permanent home. So they even spent more money to construct the *haka* than their own residence. Beautiful, yeah. They spend a lot of money. And not everyone can build a *haka* facing the nice view of the ocean. So if you cannot, why, they still build *haka* with the nice view to the front. In the valley, usually. You know, hillside, yeah. Valley. And I think, if possible, they always face east. If possible. And, as I said, not every *haka* can be built in the same way. So they take the next alternative with the best view. South, or whatever.

MK: So you used one of those *haka* as . . .

TH: Working. Temporary working. I think, according to Donald Keene, our navy language officer assigned to us, we spent three days. But I don't remember exactly. I thought was two nights, but two days we worked continuously without any sleep, I know. And as the captured documents come in, we have to translate. Especially maps. I know I worked throughout the night. And every now and then, we got to put the lamp on the side so you cannot see from outside. Open the curtain and exchange the air. You cannot continuously work in the enclosure, yeah. So every now and then we open the curtain and circulate the air.

MK: And then, you know, you mentioned like captured documents, like a map. What else would you folks get from . . .

TH: Whatever comes in. Whatever. Any kind of document they pick up, it comes in to our headquarters. They don't know what kind of material that is, so everything. Even sometimes trash that comes in. But the ones we're going to pay first attention is the map. Especially enemy troop disposition map, yeah. And then we look through. Among the captured documents, the most useful information comes from diaries. See, Japanese army, they have a habit of keeping a diary. In America, no-no. We're not supposed to keep anything with us. Because in case you're captured or dead, and in your pocket you find something, might be useful to the enemy, yeah. Whereas the Japanese, no such thing. No counter-intelligence training. Because they're told to fight until die, yeah. So they cannot give you training say, oh, in case you're captured. So regular soldiers, they have no training whatsoever. They don't know the value of intelligence. So they spill out everything they know. But the ranking non-coms and officers know the value of information. So they're tight-lipped. If they do talk, they give all bullshit. So very useless interrogation, those guys.

WN: What kind of information was in those diaries, like for example?

TH: Oh, what they. . . . First, their name, of course. Date where they move around from, you know. Today, what they did during the day. And sometimes they write some information about their family. All kinds of - just like daily activity. And that becomes real useful information to the higher command. They piece together. Not only one source, but from all the sources accumulated becomes a good picture. So sort of a crossword puzzle. My information, or the information I got from this guy, might fit into someplace else, make more sense. So it's an accumulation of this kind of information becomes real useful to the higher command, higher-echelon intelligence officer. For intermediate to me, not too much useful. Yeah, because I could care less where they come from.

WN: For the most part, were these documents legible?

TH: Well, yeah. I mean, there's some wet and hard to read. But many times. Especially written documents, the printed kind, it's pretty good. Ink, handwritten ones, were hard to read. Hard to read.

MK: You were mentioning just a little while earlier about how sometimes you could get useful information from some Japanese enemy, and how some you cannot get anything, you know, just bullshit. I was wondering at that time in

Okinawa, how did you folks interrogate the Japanese soldiers?

TH: See, Okinawa, I got more useful information than the rest of the guys because I know the locality, yeah. So they move around from one locality, locality, so I know their movement. Other than that, very little. Because for one thing, we didn't have too many prisoners in Okinawa. See, especially toward the south, very few. Because they all holed in the cave, yeah. And they wouldn't surrender, for one thing. If they don't surrender after so many - so much time spent at trying to urge to come out. If they don't come out, engineers going to throw the explosive and seal off the cave. Or they throw flamethrower, burn 'em. So I don't think they can really identify how many people died in caves. Many of them may be buried alive. And my own - one of my fellow members told me, he saw one time - he went to the front, cave, eh - they no come out, so the American engineers throw the can of gasoline, then they throw a grenade and explode the whole cave. And later on, flamethrower. And then toward the end - I don't know how soon that thing came. But anyway, I think you read about *uma nori kōgeki*?

MK: Mm-hmm [yes].

TH: That was the most feared tactic by the Japanese. What happened was, a few guys concentrate firing on the entrance to prevent the guys getting out. And the rest of the guys go around and line up on the top side of the cave. So when they tried to escape, they're just pigeon-shot, you know.

MK: And when you were in Okinawa, you were a cave flusher, you would try to . . .

TH: Well, primarily tried to save the civilians, knowing the GIs won't come out.

MK: And how do you get people to come out of the caves?

TH: Well, every cave I went to, first thing I did was I introduced myself in Japanese, regular Japanese. Who I am, where my parents come from. Although I was born in Hawai'i as a nisei, son of immigrant, I grew up in Okinawa from age two to sixteen. And grew up in Okinawa, went to school in Okinawa. So believe me, Americans are not savage like you've been told. "Come out, come out, while you still can." Then I repeat the same thing over and over and over in Okinawa-*hōgen*. Repeat the same thing. And I told myself, what my name is. That's how this Mrs. Tawada remembers after fifty years of saving her. Because my name is such a short name, and the fact that I spoke *hōgen*. She remembers

me, so she contact the newspapers. Tried to contact me when I went back in [19]95.

MK: So she was one of the survivors.

TH: She's - from what I gather - must have been the first cave that I went to, near Futema. And I think I told you about the meeting, yeah? At the Kentucky Fried Chicken (chuckles) over a cup of coffee. See, there were about a little over two hundred people in that cave. And all grouped up into ten, fifteen. And each group had a hand grenade to commit suicide, rather than surrender. Then there was a man, kind of elderly man - how old, I don't know - urged them, "Get out because you folks are still young, don't throw your life away. There's an Okinawa boy over there, he's not going to shoot you. Go." And then because of that, they came out afterwards. As I mentioned earlier, I never got to see anyone come out because I wasn't there all the time. I have to go to other caves. At the most, about ten minutes, and then we got to go to another cave, another cave.

At one cave, I forgot what location it was, but Captain Fernandez and I were hiding behind a small piece of rock and I'm pointing my megahorn to the cave entrance and talking, yeah. And we could hear the bullets flying through, (makes sound), you know, all around us. Scary, yeah. (Chuckles) So I told Captain Fernandez, "Ey, let's get the hell out of here." So we got out. As soon as we got to our jeep, hoo, we saw one enemy mortar shell land right on the rock. If we stayed there a few minutes longer, we would have been blown up to pieces.

Then later on, I talked to infantry boys from the front, and they tell me, "As long as you can hear, you're safe. If you cannot hear, you too late. By then you'll be shot." But when you can hear, it's scary. (Makes sounds), you can hear the bullet flying by. It's real frightening. Time?

WN: Okay, we're going to change tapes.

MK: Yeah, let's change tapes.

TH: It's real frightening.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 44-33-2-05; SIDE ONE

MK: Okay, second session with Mr. Takejiro Higa.

You know, we were just talking about your work as a cave flusher. Trying to get the civilians . . .

TH: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: . . . to come out of caves. You told us how, generally, you would try to entice them . . .

TH: Yes.

MK: . . . to come out. And I was wondering, when you were doing that, were you armed, too?

TH: Oh, yes.

MK: . . . or was it your escort . . .

TH: I had my rifle—I mean, carbine, yes, all the time. Fully armed, yes.

WN: Captain Fernandez, during all this time, was with . . .

TH: With me, right next to me.

WN: Why do you think he had to do that?

TH: No. I mean keep me company as well as protection from the other guys. Because of that, I was lucky because then I got to see the Japanese officer getting married to an Okinawa girl during the wartime. Didn't I talk to you about that?

MK: No (chuckles) what is that?

TH: See, soon after we landed — I don't know, within about two or three weeks, I think — this Japanese officer surrendered to front troops because he fell in love with his company nurse, Okinawa girl, Arakawa something. Shizuko or what. And in order to save her, he decided to give up. He threw his pistol, and his Japanese sword, and came out of the cave. And proposition to the frontline command, "If you let me marry this girl, I give you all the information you want to know about our unit in the front." So the front troop commander could not give permission. So how far up it went up the channel. But finally, the — what do you call? — permission was granted. And the wedding was conducted at one of the hillsides, yeah. One afternoon, Captain Fernandez came to my tent and said, "Hey Junior, let's go, let's go."

I tell, "Where, where?"

"Shh. Confidential."

So we went out together and ended up in a wedding scene. I forgot where it was now.

WN: You can find it later.

MK: Oh, you can show it to us later.

WN: Tell us the story.

TH: (Chuckles) Anyway, this Japanese lieutenant, Second Lieutenant Kimura, machine-gun company officer, surrendered. I think he was in the Kakazu Ridge area. Because that's very close to the front line at that time. And he surrendered and permission was finally granted. As I say, how far up toward the top it went, I don't know. And the ceremony was conducted by the American chaplain in one of the hills. If I was smart enough, I would have sit behind the couple, so my picture would have been in there. But I was so stupid, I guess, Captain Fernandez and I were standing to the side of the chaplain, facing the couple (chuckles). So our picture is not in there.

(Laughter)

But I believe I was the only nisei who witnessed that because it was held in confidence. And the reason why even Captain Fernandez found out was because he's the commanding officer of the counter-intelligence corps (chuckles). So he gets to know a lot of secret stuff. (Chuckles) So because of my relation with Captain Fernandez, I witnessed that, too. (Laughs)

MK: That's one of the happy things, yeah (chuckles). The happy events . . .

TH: Yeah.

MK: . . . of this campaign.

TH: The other one was, as I told you, that one particular cave that we went to. It was so frightening, I told Captain Fernandez, "Let's get the hell out of here." So we got out. And soon after we reached the jeep down the road, boom, landed on the rock. So that kind of saved us.

The other incident with Captain Fernandez was this. One day, we were coming back from the cave flushing and running through a village. It's a small farm village away from our division headquarters. We saw one man running, see. So we thought maybe that was Japanese soldiers. So he and I got off the jeep and chased him into the farmhouse. And in Okinawa house, usually, there's a pig pen. And next to the

pig pen, there's a cesspool, open cesspool. About a little smaller than this, I guess. Lengthwise, about this wide.

WN: Four feet?

TH: Four, maybe four, five feet. And about little narrower, but deep. I know what it is, so I don't try to jump over. Captain Fernandez, not knowing what it is, tried to jump over. He misstepped and fell into it up to here.

(Laughter)

So I had to drag him out. (Laughs) Stink like the dickens. So he tells me, "Junior, you know how to drive jeep?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, you drive."

And he sprawl out on the front, jeep, and I'm driving jeep, back to division headquarters.

(Laughter)

So the MP, watching the entrance, look at us with the curious eye, yeah. Everybody looking at us. But I drove him straight to the shower room first and hose him down.

(Laughter)

So everybody, "What happened?"

So I told them what happened. And in the meantime, I asked the supply sergeant, "Oh, go get the complete set of fatigues for Captain Fernandez." He had to throw away all that. Stink like the dickens. I got to brush him off and hose him down.

(Laughter)

That was . . .

WN: Did you and Captain Fernandez ever talk about what might have happened if you folks got captured?

TH: No.

WN: Nobody told you about it?

TH: No. Because we're within our defense unit. You know, our front troops all around us. That's why he got to be there to protect me. All around us, American troops.

MK: You felt pretty safe?

TH: Yeah. I didn't feel any fear about being captured. No. Of course, if you overran the position, then might, possibility. But other than that, no. I never even thought about being captured.

MK: And you know, you mentioned you spent maybe like ten minutes or so at each cave.

TH: Keep going to the next cave, yeah.

MK: How many caves did . . .

TH: Oh, there are lots of caves in Okinawa. Natural caves. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if Okinawa was a volcanic island maybe before. Get a lot of caves. And these caves can be used by army defensive position. That's why the troops moved to the south. Southside even get more.

MK: And when you gave your talk to the people in the caves, what kinds of reactions did you get from the people?

TH: Nothing. Only bullets flying by. Because as I said, I never saw anybody. I know they're in there, because I get the report from GIs, yeah. Frontline troops. That's why we go to the cave in the first place.

MK: So most times you don't see the people coming . . .

TH: No. Never saw even one. For one reason, I was there forever. I got to keep on going, moving, next cave, next cave. And they won't let me go inside the cave anyway.

MK: And during the time you were in Okinawa, you were in danger, you know. Like you said, you could hear the bullets going by. I know that you were telling us that at times like that, there were no atheists, you think.

TH: Oh, no. That's when you go in the invasion. Landing, for instance. Landing time. You don't know when, as you land, you know, machine gun might shoot at you, yeah. I don't think there's any atheists in the warfront. Especially the guys like the 442nd and the 100th Infantry guys, under constant enemy fire. Like me, I wasn't under enemy fire constantly. Even occasionally, I go to the front, close to the front, but not to the real front. Close enough, yes. But not actual fighting ground.

MK: How did being in the war affect your faith, or your religious views?

TH: Just *arigatai itte kaeta* [thankful I returned]. (Chuckles)
And as I said, my true religion, deep in my heart, is the traditional Okinawa belief, ancestral worship. Although I'm now officially a member of Honpa Hongwanji. Jikoen Hongwanji, that's only for form. I recite sutra without knowing what the hell I'm saying. *Kanji*, you know. I don't understand what I'm reading. Just recite what I'm being told to say. No meaning to me. But deep in my heart, I do believe my respect for ancestors. Because of my ancestors, I'm here. Not because of God or Buddha or what. That's my belief. That's why, in a way, I'm a renegade. I'm hard to instill in my head that because of God or Buddha, I'm here. Bullshit. Because of my ancestors, I'm here. That's my belief, okay. I can't say that to even my minister. I'm sure he's going to reprimand doing that.

(Laughter)

But I'm a hard-head *buggah*. No question about it. Stone head.

MK: But I know that, you know, when you were in Okinawa, you were carrying a carbine, right. And there were times when you almost had to shoot it. What were your thoughts on actually hurting another human being?

TH: You know, I'm very glad of one thing. Although I was involved in the Leyte invasion, and Okinawa invasion from the beginning, I never fired one shot out of my carbine against anybody. I was able to discharge my obligation as citizen soldier by use of a megahorn, notebook, and my mouth. Not one shot I aimed at anybody. Although the first day of invasion of Okinawa, I almost shot the young girl and old lady. Almost. But that's the closest I came. Never shot one. And I'm very happy I discharged my obligation.

My only regret is this. If the people that hiding in the cave believed in *usnisei* a little bit more, perhaps we could have saved more. Maybe in some cases, our effort wasn't strong enough, or far enough. But we did our best, tried to convince them. Tried to convince them, yeah, that, "Americans are not savage, please come out. If you come out, we have water, food. And if you are wounded, our aid person going to treat your wound and give you medicine." We repeated that over and over, and over and over. And tell them, you know, "Americans are not savage like you've been brainwashed."

WN: The incident with the young girl and her grandmother, what did you learn from that incident? Did that change your approach to your job?

TH: No. My belief, as soon as I found out I'm going to Okinawa, my true feeling was, I'm going in there and try to save as many innocent civilians as possible. I'm not going there to kill somebody. That was my inner thought. My innermost thought was save as many as I can. Innocent people. Combatant, I have no choice. If I have to face, I got to protect myself, I'm going to shoot him. But innocent people, I'll try to save as many as I can within my power. That was my inner thought. And I'm glad I was able to pull through that.

WN: Were you aware, or did you witness any incidences contrary to that? Your belief.

TH: Personally, no. Personally, no. I don't think anybody deliberately shoot civilians. Not even GIs. Although I heard one incident in my village. As I said, my village had a lot of people who came to Hawai'i and went back to Okinawa. So many of them can speak pidgin English. So the GIs told 'em "Come out, come out," they all came out. So they came out intact. And once you got home - one man, for some reason, was trying to run up a hillside path, and GIs told him, "Stop, stop." But he doesn't understand, so he got shot for no reason. Just because he didn't obey the GI's order. He's the only one casualty from my grandparent's village. And that's because he didn't understand what the GI was saying. Not because he was doing anything wrong. That's the only incident I heard.

WN: So for the most part, you would say that the GIs there, the *haole* GIs, . . .

TH: I never heard any atrocity. No. Never heard one. There may have been one, but I don't know. Because being mistaken for a soldier, disguised soldier, some of them might have gotten shot. That, I have no idea. I have no knowledge whatsoever about the innocent civilians being shot by GIs. There may have been some incidents of being killed by GIs, I'm sure. Because of the war condition. But mistaken identity, maybe. But not in the deliberate brutality that I know of. No.

MK: You know, as a *kibei nisei* serving under the American flag in Okinawa, how did Okinawans react to you?

TH: I didn't have direct contact. In fact, the general I spoke of, brigadier general, he knew my relative was very close to our division headquarters. Just about four kilometers away. So one day, general came to my tent, he said, "Hey Junior, your relative is only a short distance from here, eh?"

"Yes, Sir." Shimabuku is only four kilometers away to the north from Futema headquarters, see.

"Okay. Take Captain Fernandez, go visit. Two-hour time."

So we drove up. And we went up to my aunty's house, closest to the highway. (Chuckles) Before the war, my aunty's family had only five people living in the whole house, yeah. When we went, several hundred people, all the evacuation center. A lot of people, strangers. So not knowing any one of those people, three of us, my jeep driver and Captain Fernandez, we stand in a three triangle way, cover each other's back. And I'm talking to my aunty in *högen*, eh. So I could hear people in the background saying, "Eh, I understand this guy is that lady *no* nephew." This and that. I could hear, *högen*. They making comments behind me. But I don't know them. So I wouldn't know if any one of them might come up with a dagger and try to kill me. So we're watching each others background. Captain Fernandez watching me in the background and I'm watching someone else's background. And jeep driver watching this side, yeah. Three of us, three, triangle way. Covering each other's back. I'm talking to my aunty. Excitement. And I didn't realize Aunty was slightly pregnant. So after the war, baby was born. The youngest, Itsuko, born. So we got the letter. So my sister asked me, "When you went to see Aunty, you saw Aunty was *häpai* [pregnant]?"

"Hell no, I don't know." Must have been.

(Laughter)

Soon after the war, the baby was born, see. So must have been quite big, but I never noticed because my mind was the farthest thing from watching the behavior of the aunty, talking to Aunty. And the uncle asked, standing right next to her, so I told Uncle, "By the way, where's Hiroshi *Nisan*?"

"Oh, Hiroshi *Nisan* being a doctor, got drafted into military, doctor, went to someplace in the Philippines or someplace."

So I told my uncle, "Uncle, Hiroshi *Nisan*, don't worry. Americans would never bomb or shell a military hospital or aid station. Don't worry."

And my younger cousin, same age with me, Minoru, he was drafted into the air force. Some kind of technician. So he didn't know where he was. So I told Uncle, "Minoru might be in danger because he might be in the frontline troops. But the oldest cousin, Hiroshi *Nisan*, don't worry. As long as

he's with the military hospital. We will never bomb or shell military aid station or the hospital."

And sure enough, all came back alive. And so I told Uncle, "Don't worry about Hiroshimi Nisan." And this Hiroshi Nisan is one real *kawaigaru* [cared for] me, treat me like a kid brother, because I lost my parents when I was twelve years old, yeah. So they treated me like a kid brother. And really treated me nicely, the oldest sister and oldest cousin. So to this day, I'm very close to them.

MK: And during that visit to your aunty's place, no incident?

TH: No. There were a couple hundred people in that house. Every space in the house was occupied, including the pig pen. They cleaned up the pig pen, put straw. Horse stall, everything. Everything was occupied. And all neighboring community people, yeah, evacuated. My uncle and aunty's house was a nice house, see. And it was intact, so it was used as one of the evacuation centers. I was flabbergasted. So many people and all unknown, yeah. I was afraid, too, because not knowing any one of them. That's why the three of us watched each other. And because we only had two hours' time, so I couldn't go to my other uncle's house, the one I grew up with. And the uncle heard about me and came to my aunty's house. But by then, we're going back already (chuckles). So missed the uncle. They heard about, you know, I being in Shimabuku. So, spread like wildfire, yeah. So Uncle was running toward my aunty's house, but by then, we were on our jeep on the way to headquarters. Just missed him by about five minutes.

MK: And then by late June, Okinawa was all secured by the end .
. .

TH: Well, the actual organized resistance ended in June 22, or 23. But mop-up operation continued for a few days, I'm sure. That part, I'm not sure because I wasn't there. Then after that, after Okinawa was secured, our division went back to the Philippines for a short R-and-R. Rest and recuperation. And on the ship back to the Philippines, there was all kinds of rumors. One of the rumors was that after the short break, we were scheduled to land somewhere in Kyushu on November 3. Of course, on the way back, Philippines, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing took place, yeah. Then, the day we arrive at Mindoro, Philippines, August 15, the war officially ended. Unconditional surrender. So then we debarked and went to the plan. And then few days, there was talk about demobilization and the division was going back home for discharge. So I ran into my colonel's tent, "Colonel, send me back to Okinawa, maybe still can be useful over there."

Colonel looked at me, smiled, and said, "No, Junior, I cannot send you to Okinawa because you are scheduled to go to Korea."

I said, "What? Korea?"

"Yeah, you've been asked to be assigned to the 6th Division in Korea."

"For what?"

"No, you'll be asked to interrogate repatriating Japanese from north."

So I was sent to Korea in early September. I think it was September 3rd, I think, I went to Korea and stayed there until December 22 or 23, almost three months, interrogating the evacuating Japanese from north. Manchuria, as well what is now North Korea.

MK: What did you interrogate them about?

TH: What they saw. And what I heard from them, and what I heard from our own senior officers in division headquarters, really disturbed me. For one thing, war just ended. This is what I overheard a couple division staff officers talking to each other - I'm a nosy *buggah* so, you know, I'm listening to a lot of stuff, yeah. And a couple of them talking to each other, saying that we are Seabees - American Seabees, yeah - widening the entrance and deepening the Inch'on Harbor so that bigger ships can go in and out easily. And the air force engineers enlarging and expanding the Kimpo Airfield—one of the main airfields—so that B-29s can go in and out easily. And they plan to build a super highway near Kimpo Airfield. And that can be used as a fighter strip in case of emergency. Okay, these are American sources, now. Overheard. I don't know if it's a fact or not, because I never actually saw 'em, yeah. What I overheard. But, okay.

Then, from the Japanese side, they tell me they saw many airfields under construction in the north. Especially north of Yalu River. And some were carpenters, so, what appears to be the construction of a barracks up in the north. They don't know the identity of the airfield construction and the barracks. They didn't know who they were, whether Chinese or Koreans, they don't know. But anyway, construction was going on in the north. And this could be easily identified by the aerial reconnaissance. So I made a notation in my interrogation reports, this and that. But what I heard from both sides really concerned me. I was confident, deep inside myself, I was confident we're going

to have another conflict. Some kind of conflict within three years. And sure enough, five years later, Korea incident blew out.

So I came back in December [19]45. I think I got home about December 23, our time, yeah. I stayed overnight at Tokyo, from Korea. And on the way to Tokyo, from Korea, army plane, BC-3, two-engine plane. We flew around Mount Fuji once, and the captain, I mean, the pilot of the plane, he said that was his last flight. Next day, he was going home. So he said, "Oh, hell, I'm going home tomorrow, let's go one more time." (Chuckles) So we saw Mount Fuji twice, from the air. And that mountain is beautiful. No matter from what angle, you see the same shape. And being December, late December, snow was all the way to the bottom. I mean, not bottom, but way down, eh. It's so beautiful. Nice weather, beautiful scenery. So we had the opportunity to see Mount Fuji from the air twice, thanks to the pilot.

(Laughter)

And stay overnight in Tokyo one night. And in the few hours we had, I had the opportunity to go visit the Imperial Palace. I even took a memorial picture there. I have the picture at home. The Japanese photographer took the picture for us. Myself in a uniform, and standing in front.

And then came home by way of, I think it's Midway. I'm not sure which one, Guam or Midway. In those days, DC-4, the four-engine plane, not enough to make a direct flight from Tokyo to here, eh. Have to stop somewhere in between to refuel. So I'm not sure whether it was Guam or Midway. But anyway, we stopped at one island and flew back to Hawai'i.

And in the meantime, my brother had enough points to be discharged right away so he remained in the Philippines, waiting for shipment back home. But those days, Hawai'i GIs, I mean transport, all went back to Main[land]-San Francisco, Los Angeles, West Coast. Hawai'i guys came by plane. And coming back on the plane according to ranks, yeah. Higher ranks get higher priority. My brother was only tech sergeant so they would push back, push back. Then finally, he came on January [19]46. He was supposed to be home before me. So when he came back, I was waiting for him at Hickam (chuckles). So he look at me, "How come you got home already?"

(Laughter)

He knew I was sent to Korea, yeah. And then after that, I don't have correspondence with him, see. We didn't know each other. (Chuckles) Then, I got discharged January,

early part of January, [19]46, and I went back to Farrington High School.

MK: Before we get into Farrington, I was wondering, how was your homecoming when you came home?

TH: My brother-in-law and my sister had just opened a store on Kukui Street. Grocery store, hole-in-the-wall. I just came home on the bus from Hickam. Catching the bus, and stop over at the Kukui Street store. I walked in, yeah, my sister look at me, "Huh? When you got home?" (Chuckles)

"I just got home few minutes ago, few hours ago." So I talk story. They didn't know, they didn't expect me coming home.

WN: But nothing at Hickam?

TH: No. Hickam, just processing. Process coming home, processing. And then go home.

WN: I was wondering, when you were in Tokyo - I know you were there only for a little while, but did you get any feeling of the mood there . . .

TH: No.

WN: . . . or what people were saying?

TH: No. Was too busy. (Laughs) Too busy looking around. I know there were a lot of niseis stationed in Tokyo, NYK [Nippon Yusen Kaisha] building. That was their quarters. I think we slept in NYK, I'm not sure. Only one night anyway. That was nisei headquarters. All assigned to the occupation, eh.

WN: You weren't encouraged to re-up, sign up for occupation?

TH: No, no. Even if they did, I wouldn't have signed up anyway. I was going back to school. I told you, I only finished high school one year. So I was determined to go back to school. And we knew the GI Bill was in there, so I knew I could afford to go school.

MK: So you came back and you enrolled at . . .

TH: Farrington.

MK: How did you arrange that?

TH: I mean, I just went to Farrington and applied. And being a GI, I guess they gave me first semester credit without taking any courses. So I was assigned to Flora Ching. Miss Ching's class. Young teacher. I would say only about three,

four years older than me. So at the end of the semester, she gave me small gifts, see. Miss Ching, she gave me small gifts. "What this for, Miss Ching?"

"You know, Take," she called me "Take," see, "Take, when you came into my class, I told myself, what did I do wrong to get this guy in my class?" She thought, being a GI, ex-GI, going to give her trouble. But I was determined to be a good student, okay. I studied like hell. So when the kids making noise, all I got to do is look like that, eh, then you can hear a pin drop. Quiet. Because those days, we used to get a discharge pin, we used to call 'em "gooney bird." Discharge pin. They look at that, they respect. Highest respect. Today, they kill 'em, I think.

(Laughter)

Anyway, all I got to do is just look like that, hoo, quiet. "So, I'm grateful that you kept my class real quiet so that everybody studied."

"Oh, thank you." (Chuckles) So, I forgot what it was, but small gift, about this package. (Laughs)

She tells me, "When you came in, I told myself, what I did do wrong to get this guy in my class?"

(Laughter)

Yeah, actually she was a brand-new teacher, about three, four years older than me. I was what, [19]46, I was twenty-three already.

MK: How was it for you though, you know, older GI coming back to school with these younger kids?

TH: As I told you, I was determined to get education, basic education. So I never thought about anything other than study, study, study. And at the same time, I was working, too. Full-time work.

MK: Where were you working?

TH: Summer months, I worked at cannery, CPC [California Packing Corporation] warehouse, stack canned goods. Cased goods. I think I told you, during the lunch break, I stole a straw from the cafeteria, stick in my pocket.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

TH: And working in the cased goods on a stack, in break time, I had one small nail, make a *puka* in one of the juice cans, and (makes sound) suck 'em out.

(Laughter)

I was naughty, I think. So some days, some stores bought the case of juice and they find one can empty. And I'm the guilty one. I don't think, you know, how many people did that, but I'm one of them.

MK: And then school times, did you work, too? When you were going to Farrington?

TH: Yeah. Working, helping my brother-in-law's store.

MK: And what year did you graduate from Farrington?

TH: I finished one year, no. I went back to Farrington, [19]43, September, yeah. Then - no, [19]42, September. Wait a minute, no, no, cannot be, [19]46, yeah, September. In [19]47, graduated, senior year. Then, I applied for university. I took the entrance exam, whether I can pass or not, I didn't know, I had no confidence. But for some reason, I passed. I was lucky enough to pass. So I got to at the University of Mānoa one year. And being a *bobora*, I had to take Speech 100. (Chuckles) One more course, one-credit course. Mrs. Inouye, Margaret Awamura, was my teacher. And I knew Dan was dating Margaret, see. Being, you know, about the same age group, we used to talk to each other after, in between class. So we used to kid him around, say, "Hey Dan, why don't you take speech? You can credit without studying anything, you can get A easily, yeah?" I don't know whether he was required to take or not. But anyway, I was required, one of the guys that has to take one-credit course, Speech 100. Being a *bobora*.

(Laughter)

So, I finished one year. Then by that time, my brother-in-law still running the store, and his butcher was going to retire. Quit, rather. So he needed the help. So I told myself, "Even if I finish school, I still have to work, so I might as well work with my brother-in-law, get a full-time job." So I drop off from the university after one year.

Then in [19]53, I met a young girl, and we got married. And she was teaching school, public school. And weekends, she used to help me at the store, yeah. And one day, I don't

know how long after we got married, but one day she asked me, "Hey, are you planning to stay in the store all your life like this?" Because I used to work from six in the morning to eight, nine o'clock every day. Except Sunday, maybe two, three hours afternoon off. "Are you going to stick to the store and work all your life like that? No vacation, no free time? Why don't you go back school and finish up?" She told me that. "I think we can manage just ourselves, we can manage, eat. Why don't you go back to school?"

So I thought about it, and thought about it. And thinking, you know. So I came back to the university office to find out whether I can come back. And in those days - I don't know if it's still true or not - but if you come back within a ten-year period, you can come back without taking an examination. So I decided to come back in [19]57. And came back in [19]57, continued with my sophomore year, and finished up in [19]60.

MK: And what did you major in?

TH: *Chee*, I don't have enough brain to be an attorney, or doctor, or engineer. So I told myself, "*Chee*, after I get finished, a job, I don't know what I can be qualified." So I said, "Well, as long as there are business people, all businesses need a bookkeeper. So I think I better major accounting." So as I jokingly told my wife, "You know, I majored accounting because I wanted to look at the figures. But that's not the figure I had in mind."

(Laughter)

So anyway, I majored accounting and economics. And I was lucky, really lucky. I studied hard, too. But sophomore and junior year, I improved my grade quite a bit. So I was given, in addition to the GI Bill - junior and senior year - I was given a Matson scholarship. Academic scholarship. Two years, five hundred dollars a year. So, with that, I was able to finish the university without struggling. In [19]60, I graduated. And about two months, or three months, I forgot the exact month, I worked for a CPA company in town.

And in the meantime, there was a recruitment from Internal Revenue Service looking for income tax examiners. So, I didn't have any confidence, but I applied. And for some reason, I was selected. So I became an internal revenue agent. And because of that, I was lucky because each time you have a different kind of job, the government sends you to a school. So with your tax money, I was able to go to Mainland school many times.

(Laughter)

Yeah. I mean, being a government employee, anytime we get training school, it's a great deal. Not only do they pay you for your transportation costs, but they give you per diem for your hotel bill, yeah. You cannot live in luxury, but comfortable trip. So as I say, I was lucky, selected, and I went through a lot of training. First, I was trained as an office auditor. Primary individual income tax examination. Office audit, you stay in an office and audit. Then, two years later, I was selected into revenue agent. Examine business people. Corporations and businesses. And each time you get advanced, you go to additional training schools. So again, several times I was sent to either Los Angeles, or San Francisco. At one time, I went to Phoenix. And sometimes, I went to Seattle. Special school. So, with your expense, tax money, I had additional education.

And I don't know if you folks remember, some time ago we had price control. Price stabilization days. Okay, that, too, was a special program. And I was selected because I had some grocery experience, especially meat. Because with part of the GI Bill, I went to meat-cutting school in Toledo, Ohio. National school of meat cutting. Become a butcher, fancy name for meat cutter. Had to cut the beef and slice into chops, and whatnot. So I had some experience alongside, so I was selected one of the prime person in the price control days, price stabilization. I was taking charge of supermarkets, primarily. And that lasted a few - I don't know how long it lasted. But anyway, price control, officially, it's price stabilization program.

Then, continue on, continue with the regular business return examination. Quite a few years. And the five, six years before I retired, I was put in charge of excise tax. Excise tax is a special type of tax. Tax imposed on the gasoline, for instance. Diesel fuel, rubber tires, trucks and buses. And the transportation, air transportation. All kinds of special tax. I was in charge of that. All by myself, I took care of the Honolulu district. And being in charge of one, only by myself. I could select the time period when I want to go to neighbor islands. (Chuckles) Major islands like Kaua'i, Maui, and Big Island, and of course, this island. And I can select the companies I want to examine. I don't examine the same company. I select which company I want to select. Pretty much up to my own discretion. And I can arrange my own vacation neighbor islands (chuckles) by selecting the company on neighbor islands. I was lucky. There are a lot of different kinds of tax. Even trucks, for instance. Depending on the weight, different, higher tax rate. Trailer type, regular, heavy tax, I mean, heavy vehicle only. Buses, too. Of course,

city and county and government buses are exempt. Army buses are exempt. Private kind, civilian tax.

So, being able to speak Japanese, I was selected for a lot of things other than regular assignment. At one time, we had an organized crime conference in Japan, between Japan and the United States. I was one of the delegates from Hawai'i, I mean, the United States, selected from Honolulu. So, they gave me a plaque for participating in the conference.

MK: Your Japanese language ability came in handy again.

TH: Yeah, yeah. So I was lucky. So, come to think of it, I grew up in poverty in a poor farm country in Okinawa. But knowing the Japanese, knowing the Okinawan lingo, all became useful over the years. Especially Japanese. Once you get into the job, became useful because I became a resource person in the district office. Anytime when Japanese people come, I was called to interpret, or act as interpreter, or consult.

MK: And, you know, the education that you got in the post-war period, going to UH and going to the meat cutter's school in Toledo, Ohio. All that was possible with the GI Bill.

TH: Yeah.

MK: How much did you get on the GI Bill?

TH: I forget what it was. But anyway, in addition to the government pays the tuition, we used to have allowance. I forgot how much money. Not much, but nothing to sneeze at. Living expense, yeah. I forgot the exact amount I used to get.

MK: If you didn't have the GI Bill, . . .

TH: Probably I would never come back to the university. I don't think my wife could afford to send me to the university with her salary. She was just beginning teaching, too, yeah. She finished the university, what, [19]40-something. I don't know exactly when she finished the university, here.

MK: So she was a young teacher, and you had come back. Working, then you went back to school.

TH: So, what I am today, I owe it to my wife. That's why I'm very nice to her (chuckles).

MK: We should say her name.

TH: Hmm?

MK: We should record her name.

TH: Ruby Fumie Higa. Ruby Fumie Miyasato Higa. Her maiden name is Miyasato.

MK: And, you know, before we end the interview, I wanted to know, how do you think the war affected you?

TH: Value of human life, I guess. We only have one life, and the war is, I think, the worst thing human beings can think of. That's why I firmly believe this is just the, I guess, ideal. Ideal is just like a dream, yeah. All international disagreements should be settled by diplomatic process rather than war. War is the best - worst thing, I think, human beings can ever think about. I mean, everything we produce, to destroy something. Yeah. Not to reuse and to rebuild something. Any kind of war effort. Main purpose, to make something to destroy something. Just doesn't make sense. We spend billions and billions of dollars to perfect weapons. What for? Not to make anything useful items. Just to destroy what is useful. To me, that's the most sensible - senseless thing we human beings can think of. But again, as long as there's a greed among mankind, maybe war is inevitable. Everybody wants what the other guys have. What you going to have. Yeah? So, as I say, It's just a dream, maybe. Ideal dream, maybe, but none realistic. Realistically speaking, I'm against war. Not because I'm a peace monger. You know, have nothing to do with that. Of course, peace without war, too, they cannot co-exist. But no, I'm not being a peace monger, no.

And that's why I firmly believe the war we in, Iraq, I think is wrong. To a country where all major ethnic groups are fighting each other for supremacy, to impose democracy that we understand in America, to me, is unrealistic. To me, unrealistic. How are you going to impose something to a people that are fighting each other? Unless they, themselves, come out and realize, yeah. I don't think it's going to succeed. Look at Iraq today. Insurgents killing more people than before. And our own president, too. Philosophically, I think he doesn't know what the hell he's saying. All justification was what, fear of so-called WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction], yeah. When they couldn't find out, now he changed to war on terrorism. I wonder if he realized, instances of terrorism increased tremendously after the fall of Baghdad. I don't think he realized that. I'm really disappointed, yeah. Defense minister, as well as his cohorts, did not listen to General Shinseki. If General Shinseki, what he said, if they listened to, maybe they could have prevented the mass-what do you call that? -

lootage in Baghdad after the fall of Baghdad. If they had enough troops. And if they had enough troops over there to guard the ammunitions that came across and dispose of it, maybe these insurgents couldn't get a hold of that ammunition. Today, they're using the same damn thing, hurting us. That's why I'm disappointed with our leaders.

MK: And then, I guess this would be our last question. I know that you had one child born in 1960, another one born in 1964. And what would you want your children to know about the war, and you?

TH: Nothing. I haven't told them everything I know. All I know. I mean, they know I went to war. And they, because I've been featured in magazines and a book, they know about me quite a bit. But I never tell them about the war. All I tell them is war is bad.

MK: Okay.

WN: Thank you very much.

MK: Good ending.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 44-46-3-05

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Takejiro Higa (TH)

Honolulu, O'ahu

July 8, 2005

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is our third interview session with Mr. Takejiro Higa on July 8, 2005.

You mentioned that when you were in Okinawa with the MIS [Military Intelligence Service], you did meet your schoolteacher. And maybe you can describe to us how that happened.

TH: Okay. I think it was within the first ten days after landing, the MP [military police] guarding the civilian

evacuations center. So, one man, kind of nice physique and well mannered, he suspected he might be a Japanese imposter, Japanese soldier. So called for interrogation, interrogator. And I believe the camp was very close to our division headquarters so I was sent. And, of course, I often was asked to go to camp because I can speak the language—both Japanese and Okinawan native language. But anyway, for some reason, I was ordered to go to the particular camp to interrogate this suspected imposter. The minute I saw him, I recognized him. So I just looked in surprise and say, I yell out, I say, "Sensei," teacher.

So he look at me in equal surprise, "Oh, it's you." And between the two of us, so choked up, we couldn't say anything else.

So I told my escort officer, Captain Fernandez, "This man used to be my teacher during the seventh and eighth grade in the grade school. He's not a Japanese soldier, so please send him back to the camp where his family is retained." So that's the end of it.

And then I never saw him until after the war when I first visited him about either 1948 or — [19]47 or [19]48. After that, each time I go to Okinawa, I visit him and we talk about old, good old days, including the hardship, hard training, or the hard discipline he imposed on me during the school days (chuckles). So, unfortunately, he passed away two—three years ago.

MK: And . . .

TH: So real sad.

MK: And I think you mentioned that on one of the occasions that you did meet him later on, he described what he saw that day.

TH: Yes. On the day of invasion, April 1, he said he was atop the hill known as Kakazu Hill. It's a few miles, a few hundred yards away from so-called Futenma area, high ground. See, he was watching the invasion, beachhead, and never dreamed that one of his former students would be among them. Of course, he had no idea. So he took me over there to the site and then sure enough, from there, you can see the entire beachhead as if you're looking down Ala Moana Beach from the high ground. So I can just imagine his shock when he saw the fleet, invasion fleet, just literally cover the entire west coast of Okinawa, yeah. Hundreds of 'em. Ships. Various types. And he's not the only one who said that. It was so thick, you can almost step one ship to

the other, one by one. Covered, entire beachhead was covered with black spots.

MK: And, you know, you mentioned that your teacher was in a camp. What kind of camp was . . .

TH: Civilian – what do you call? – evacuation center. All the civilians were being rounded up and they put 'em in a camp. Must be near the beachhead, yeah. Just temporary shelter. There were hundreds of them over there in the camp surrounded by barbed-wire fence. And the MP posted here and there, yeah.

MK: You know, as an interpreter, were you ever assigned to any duties at that camp?

TH: No, no. I was assigned to the combat unit, so my job was with the combat division headquarters.

MK: And at about that time, you also mentioned another meeting with a Japanese colonel.

TH: Oh, this was much, much later. And, again, MP spotted this man among all the civilians in that camp. I don't know which camp it was, yeah. Anyway, MP, another MP, looked at this man, observing his behavior, and he looked different. So he suspected the guy might be a Japanese soldier, imposter. So I was called. And I forgot where the camp was, but anyway, knowing that he claimed to be a civilian, I didn't ask any military questions. So I asked, the first question I asked him was his name. And he gave some kind of Okinawan name. Next I asked him what village he come from. And at that point, he made a fatal mistake, telling me he's from village known as Yamachi. It happened to be the very next village I grew up with. So, I pretend I didn't know anything about Yamachi, I start asking all kind of questions: location in relation to a well-known location, like a beachhead, and another small town known as Futema, and a big city Naha. What direction is that from, you know, Naha. In what direction, north or south . . .

HY: I'm sorry to interrupt, there's some background sound. Tell us when you're ready. It's on again? Anytime you're ready.

TH: Okay. I don't know exactly what time of the period it was, but anyway, one day, MP suspected one man in the camp being a Japanese imposter because of his behavior, very straight and rigid, you know, very disciplined behavior. So called for interrogation, interrogator, and I was selected to go. Okay. And I went to start investi-interrogating, and first thing I ask him was his name. And he gave some sort of Okinawan name, I forgot what it was he told me, but anyway,

he gave me Okinawan name. And then, knowing that he was a suspected imposter, I didn't ask him any military questions, just ask his name, what village in Okinawa he come from. At that point, he made the fatal mistake of telling me he's from village known as Yamachi, which happens to be the very same, next village that I grew up for fourteen years. So I know the village like the back of my hand. So as if I don't know anything about the area, I start asking him a lot of questions: location relative to known area, like in relation to Naha, what direction is it. Is it south, north, or east, or west, you know, as if I don't know anything about the area. And, doesn't match. So then I say, "Oh, is there any small town nearby?" There's a little town known as Futema. "Is it far from there?" Again, the story doesn't match. And there's another town . . .

(Drilling starts)

. . . slightly farther away, Awase. So I asked him again. All wrong. So I couldn't stand any longer. So I look at him straight in the face, in Okinawan lingo, "Just tell me, exactly who are you?"

He said, "Huh, huh, huh?"

"That's right, you didn't understand a word I said to you because I'm asking you in Okinawan lingo, 'Who are you?' So far, your answers all wrong. You say you're from Yamachi, all wrong. See, for your information, I grew up in the next village known as Shimabuku, so I know Yamachi like the back of my hand. I know exactly where that location is, what the place looked like."

Then at that point he said, "*Shimatta*. Damn, I met the wrong guy." And he confessed.

He said actually, he's a full colonel in the Japanese army. And, unfortunately, I didn't have the chance to verify that, but knowing that he tells me he's a ranking officer, Japanese army, I figured, no sense ask him all kinds of military questions, he ain't going to tell me the truth anyway. If he does tell me, going be all baloney, you know.

So I said, "Ah, okay." So next question I asked him, "Why were you among the civilian evacuation camp?"

He said, "Oh, if I stayed with the civilians, I might get better treatment than the PW [Prisoner of War] camp."

So at that point I told him, "You know, so-and-so, America does not give any wrong treatment to prisoners or civilians. We treat 'em according to the Geneva convention."

We treat 'em all equally. Since you are a military man, I have no choice but sent you to PW camp." So I called MP, "Take this guy to (chuckles)—take him to PW camp." That was the end of it. I wish I had the chance to verify whether he was a real full colonel or what, but I didn't have the time, nor the opportunity to verify. If he was a real full colonel, I'm sure it was a shock to him, too. His face, I tell you, I can't forget it. "Shimatta. Wrong person I met." (Laughs) Now, if he said somewhere else, a village I don't know anything about it, he might have got away. But as I say, he made a fatal mistake of telling me he's from the village of Yamachi, which I know very well. (Chuckles) So, that's another coincidence, you know, just luck that I was able to bust him. Yeah, if he said something somewhere else that I don't know anything about the village, he might have got away.

MK: You know, you mentioned that you spoke to him in the Okinawan dialect. From what you know about the other MIS men that you worked with, how many of you knew the Okinawan dialect?

TH: Only one, Taro Higa. Taro Higa is the original 100th Infantry member (coughs), he fought in Italy with the 100th. And after VE-Day, he came home to be discharged. But seeing that how civilians suffered in the European war, instead of getting discharged, he requested transfer to Okinawa. Go to Okinawa instead of getting discharged. And he came to Okinawa, I believe sometime June. Of course, at that time, I didn't know that we were going to — Okinawa battle going to end in June, see. But anyway, very close to the end at the final count. About — I don't know, as I said, I don't know exactly when he came to Okinawa, but he came to Okinawa, and then he start working with the military, urging civilians to come out from the cave. And he's a trilingual. He grew up in Okinawa, too. So he starts speaking Okinawan, as well as Japanese, into people hiding in the cave. And at that time, I have no idea that June 23 will be the . . .

(Background hammering)

. . . final organized resistance.

MK: So having that knowledge, the knowledge of the Okinawan dialect . . .

(Hammering stops)

TH: I'm sure it helped a lot. See, I used to go to the cave, and just to give them some feeling of comfort and ease, I always used to introduce myself in Japanese. Who I am and

where my parents come from. Although I was born in Hawai'i, I grew up in Okinawa for fourteen years. Repeat several times my name, being easy to remember, yeah. So, and right away, I start saying the same thing in Okinawan lingo, several times. And that was they key to a lot of people, according to what I heard later. And I think I showed you a picture of a lady who came to see me, 50th anniversary. She said she clearly remembered my name because it's such a short name, and the fact that I spoke to them in Okinawan lingo. Actually, I went to many caves, but she's the only person I saw face-to-face thank me. (Chuckles) And she told me that on the day we met, another group of ladies were supposed to come with her, but in the end, they shame and they refused to come together. So she came alone with her daughter. So, four of us, including the Japanese newspaper reporter, Okinawan newspaper reporter, by the name of Miwa Saito. And there's a *Ryūkyū Shimpo* reporter. And she brought the daughter, young daughter, I don't know how old she was, but anyway, she came. We met at Kentucky Fried Chicken, over a cup of coffee (chuckles). I remember, I thought was Jack in the Box, but I look at the pictures, oh, it's a Kentucky Fried Chicken (laughs). Coffee cup. I think I showed you the picture, didn't I?

MK: Mm-hmm [yes].

TH: Yeah. Before that, I always thought it was Jack in the Box. But I have to correct myself, it was Kentucky Fried Chicken someplace in Naha. And she told me about the cave situation, and how she came out after several minutes later. She said two hundred—a little over two hundred people were in there, grouped into ten, fifteen, and each group having hand grenade, ready to blow themselves up. So when young girl sitting next to her tapped my shoulder and thanked me, personally, that kind of hit me, you know. I don't mind telling you, I had tears in my eye. I told them, "Thank you."

She tells me, "Because of you, I'm here."

She must have been a young kid because, I mean, there's fifty years later, she must have been only about, at the most, thirty something. Maybe between twenty-five and thirty. Young girls, hard to tell the age, but she tapped my shoulder and thanked me. That kind of hit me.

Okay, the very last instance I had in Okinawa was, again, very close to the end of the battle. Of course, again, at that time, I had no idea battle's going to end. After the fact — it was, I think, about a week before the actual end of the incident — two shabbily-looking dressed GIs were brought into our headquarters for interrogation. Very

shabby, you know, all broken uniform, and shredded, yeah. And so I look at them, pitiful sight. I give them water, and I try to give them chocolate candy, D Ration, we called it. D Ration, about the size of a quarter pound butter. Very hard chocolate. And this chocolate, we called it D Ration, each guy has two apiece before we land. And I was told that one of those of D Ration, if you eat that and drink sufficient amount of water, it's equivalent to one meal. Very nutritious high-energy bar. So I try to give them one apiece. They wouldn't eat. So I look at them, "How come you don't eat?"

They say, "Maybe it's poison."

I tell them, "Stupid!" I yell in Japanese, you know, "Bakatare!" So I make believe - I show them that it's not poison. I nibble a little bit, yeah. They look at me nibbling, so I give back. They gobble up in no time. You know, one big chocolate, you know. Hard chocolate. So, after gobbling up one, I told my brother, "Eh, you guys still get the D Ration left?"

They say, "Yeah."

"Okay, give me two." Two guys, you know, from two guys, I get one each. I give 'em, let 'em eat. Give them all the water they want to drink. And I start question: name, rank, serial number. That's military standard interrogation, yeah. So name is Okinawan name, see. I recognize the name. So I say, "Oh, what village you come from?" And certain village. "You?" Same village, you know. And the same village, very familiar village to me. It's the same village from which we assembled in the same school. Same school district. So, "What school did you go to?" Same school, yeah. Everything, answer, lead to me saying that they are my classmates. Indication. So I look at him. "Was there a teacher named Nakandakari Shunsho in your school?"

They look at me, "How come you know him?"

I tell you, "I am a graduate of a United States Military Intelligence Language Service school. I know everything about you guys, so don't lie to me." You know, I'm straight-faced, now. "Don't lie to me." So next question I ask, "Was this student from Shimabuku, Takejiro Higa, in your class?"

"Huh? How come you know about him?"

"Didn't I tell you, I know everything about you guys?"

"Yes, there was one," so-and-so.

"Where is he now?"

One of 'em said, "I think Higa went back to Hawai'i, I don't know."

The other guy said, "We haven't seen each other for some years now, I don't know where he is."

So I look at two of them, and say, "If you look at him today, you would think you would recognize him?"

They say, "We don't think so," you know, shaking their heads, see.

At that point, I couldn't stand any longer. So I look at, straight in the face, "You stupid, don't you recognize your own classmate?"

"Huh?" In Japanese, of course, you know.

Then they start crying.

"Why are you crying?"

"You know, until now, after this interrogation is over and our usefulness is over, you guys might take us over the hill and shoot. But now that my own classmate is on the other side of the fence, we figure our lives will be saved. We are crying for happiness."

And at that point, I couldn't stand it any longer, too. To tell the truth, yeah, three of us grabbed each other's shoulder, and I cried, (Clicking sound) too. Because if I didn't run away when I was sixteen years old, I may be in the same boots as they were, somebody may be interrogating me, you know. I couldn't hold back any longer. And to this day, (Clicking stops) when I think about it, I get cold sweat.

So after the war, I visited Okinawa many, many times. Each time when I go to Okinawa, *Ryūkyū Shimpō* used to write about me looking for a little girl and the old lady I met in the beachhead. And if they're still alive, I want to meet 'em, you know. And I was looking for my classmate. I never go to see 'em. At the 50th anniversary, the son of one of the deceased classmates saw the article, contacted the newspaper, and [I] arranged to meet with him. And then so the newspaper reporter, my cousin who was driving me around, and I think was Nakandakari *sensei*, too, I think, who went to see this boy, one of the sons of the classmates that went to *hakamairi* [visit graves].

The other one, nobody seems to know what happened. They think after the war, he got crazy. Nobody knows what happened to him. Every time I go to there, I'm looking for them. And newspaper article writes up about my visitation. But I never could meet them. Nobody knew what happened to them. Maybe nobody even talked about it, being a prisoner, or, you know, shame, this and that. Nobody knew. Except the son, you know, fifty years later, he remembers his father talking about it. So that was the last time I saw any of the people that I was connected with the civilian Okinawa battle.

END OF INTERVIEW