

Prelude to Battle

Introduction

The thousands of Nikkei (Japanese Americans) and hundreds of Hakujiin (Caucasians) who served in the Army Military Intelligence Service came from all walks of life and many areas of the United States. Some were already in uniform when the war began, some were still in school. Some were teaching. Many others were working at a variety of other jobs and occupations. Almost all of the Nikkei came from the West Coast and Hawaii; the Hakujiin hailed from cities and towns throughout the country. And, within a few short months after Pearl Harbor, many of those Nikkei entering the MIS program were plucked from exile in so-called "relocation" camps and asked to serve their country despite the discrimination and mistreatment that America had so unfairly meted out to them. Many of those who entered the program spoke little or no Japanese. Some had lived in Japan, or had studied the language at home or in school in America. But for many, the Japanese tongue was practically a new experience. That they embraced it so readily and achieved so much is a tribute not only to themselves but also to their Nikkei teachers who brought their own unique background enthusiastically to the program.

While the stories of those who shared these experiences are similar; each is just a little bit different. No one tale is completely typical, but each is a part of a broad mosaic offering an overall view of the entire program. The six personal accounts in this section show how some MISers began their military service. Takashi Matsui, an early graduate of the MIS Language School, and "Tusky" Tsukahira, who had lived in Japan, were both sensei (teachers). Faubion Bowers and Dempster Dirks both entered the program because they had lived in Japan and had a good basis in the language. Allen Meyer came to MISLS from a college campus where he had studied Japanese, whereas Ben Obata knew little of the language but volunteered from a desolate "relocation" camp to join the Army and the MIS program. Their stories serve as a broad introduction to the varied MIS experience.

[TOP]

Teaching at the MISLS - Takashi Matsui

Long before Pearl Harbor, higher authorities in the U.S. military establishment in Washington predicted that the rapidly deteriorating relations between the U.S. and Japan might eventually culminate in open hostilities involving the American military forces. They knew that the military would be in combat with the distinct handicap of not having the necessary linguistic assistance for support. U.S. Army officers with previous tours of duty in Japan, such as Brigadier General John Weckerling and Colonel Itai E. Rasmussen, then lieutenant colonel and captain respectively, were convinced of the dire need for training linguists in combat intelligence among the military, but at that time there were very few Caucasians

with an adequate knowledge of the Japanese language. From outside the military, they knew they could count on one missionary and some businessmen who had resided in Japan, and so the War Department had no alternative but to utilize bilingual Americans of Japanese ancestry, or Nisei.

In conducting a survey of potential linguists, Colonel Rasmussen interviewed some 3,700 Nisei enlisted men at various Army installations, but much to his dismay he found that only a small fraction-3%, or about 100, qualified-and another 8%, or less than 300, had potential after a long period of training. As a result of these discouraging findings, the War Department directed the Fourth Army in San Francisco to establish a Japanese language school, which came to be known as the Fourth Army Intelligence School. General Wecklerling and Colonel Rasmussen were instrumental in launching the MIS program on November 1, 1941, just five weeks prior to the outbreak of the war, with an appropriation of a mere \$2,000. To serve the very important, secret language training school as chief instructor; the organizers located a highly qualified person by the name of John E Aiso, an attorney by profession. Three civilians of instructor caliber were recruited to teach the initial class of 60 students (58 Nisei and 2 Caucasians). Of the 45 students that graduated in May of 1942, 35 were sent to the Pacific theater of operation.

With the signing of Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, whereby all Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry were to be removed from Western coastal regions to guarded camps in the interior, the school had to be relocated from the Presidio site.

Colonel Rasmussen traveled all over the U.S. in search of a school site-a place where the Japanese-Americans in the armed forces would be accepted by the local residents. Thanks to the good understanding of then Governor of Minnesota, Harold Stassen, who rose to the occasion, it was possible to relocate the school on June 1, 1942 to an abandoned facility which once housed elderly, indigent men in a remote area called Savage, some 25 miles from Minneapolis. The school then came to be known as the Military Intelligence Service Language School and was placed directly under G-2, General Staff, War Department, with Colonel Rasmussen as the Commandant.

By then, there were 8 civilians and 10 enlisted men on the faculty to train the 200 Nisei and a few Caucasian students. All graduated on a bitterly cold wintry day in December 1942. I remember that occasion vividly as I was one of them. Upon graduation, I received orders to remain behind and serve as instructor and was promoted to staff sergeant with a base pay of, I believe, \$76/month. Some of my classmates received orders to ship out around Christmas time and as I saw them off I practically choked up, not knowing what their fate might be under wartime conditions.

In April of 1943, Sergeant Churo Sakata, another faculty member, and I were separately teamed up with a Caucasian officer to visit various concentration camps to recruit Nisei volunteers to undergo language training at Camp Savage. Subsequently other recruiting teams were dispatched. Before long, volunteers from Hawaii arrived by the hundreds.

When the students arrived at MISLS, they were given reading and translation tests to determine their language capability so that they could be assigned accordingly to the various Divisions -- the Upper; Middle or Lower -- based on their test scores.

The school curriculum consisted of:

- Translation of excerpts from text books -- from Japanese to English, and from English to Japanese, to a lesser degree.
- Reading cursive style of writing, or Soshō (for Upper Division students)
- Japanese military terminology, or Heigo
- Subsequently, translation of captured Japanese documents
- POW interrogation
- Translation of intercepted radio messages
- Lectures on Japanese culture, customs and manners, tradition, and national characteristics.

The classes were scheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the daytime and from 7:00 to 9:00 in the evenings for an additional two hours of supervised study. On Saturdays, examinations were scheduled in the morning. Many of the students were said to have studied well into the night just to keep up with the class. After "lights out" at 10:00 p.m., some were said to have continued their studies in the latrine. Besides academic training, the men participated in close order drills and occasional parades.

I was assigned to teach mainly the upper level classes in which there were a number of highly educated men enrolled -- lawyers, judges, engineers, educators, etc., including PhDs, both Nisei and Caucasians. I learned a great deal from them because as they say, "Teaching is the beginning of learning." I had an advantage over most of them for I had eleven years of formal education in Japan behind me at the time and I had studied just to keep ahead of them. I never, ever pretended that I was better than they. The instructors, including myself, instilled in the students an awareness of the seriousness of the study because on their ability to translate and interrogate lay the lives of many members of our armed forces.

There were a couple of students whose Japanese was quite good, and they occasionally argued with me over the translation work. One of them was a scholar, but he was a sloppy soldier. To me, because we were soldiers, discipline was just as important as linguistic ability. I gave him a bad time. But, strangely enough, after he was shipped out, he wrote to me several times about his first

hand experience from the front line. I always responded. I read all of his letters with great interest and shared them with my colleagues. I continued to keep up my friendship with him long after the end of the war.

Among the Caucasian students was a genius. He was gifted with a photographic memory and therefore there was no need for him to study. While others were struggling and cramming in the day before the exams, this young blue-eyed blond was reading a book on Greek mythology. He always turned in a perfect paper.

By August 1944, MISLS at Camp Savage had graduated more than 1,500 students. Among them were some Caucasians who were assigned to the special classes and immediately upon graduation given a commission. But no such recognition or privilege was given to any of the Nisei graduates. Most of them were promoted to TIS or Corporal at best with a monthly stipend of about \$36.

As war progressed, classes were accelerated as there were ever increasing requests for more intelligence language specialists. This meant that there was need for additional facilities at Camp Savage and that is when construction was launched. Even then, as more students arrived, space limitations became more pronounced and the need for larger facilities became clear. As a result the school was moved to larger facilities at nearby Fort Snelling, Minnesota in August of 1944. A few of us enlisted instructors were elevated to division chairmen and promoted to warrant officers. The 21st and last commencement exercise was held in May of 1946. By then in excess of 6,000 linguists had been trained.

I must really hand it to the Nisei and Caucasian graduates. They served with distinction and did a superb job. All these men risked their lives. Some were wounded, and some gave their lives-their last full measure of devotion. Their important tasks included:

- Translation of tons of captured documents
- Interrogation of Japanese POWs
- Being air dropped behind the enemy lines to assess the enemy situation
- Listening to enemy radio messages
- Joining shoulder to shoulder with landing parties under enemy fire
- "Flushing out" die-hard Japanese soldiers hiding in fortified caves
- Urging the Japanese troops to surrender... and surrender they did in droves.

The majority of our men were assigned to ATIS or the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section initially headquartered in Australia, translating captured Japanese military documents such as battle plans, field orders, tables of organization, and so on. Others, a thousand or more, were assigned to more than 100 combat units of the Allied Army, Navy, and the Marines during the

landing and subsequent battles in the Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, and other Pacific islands. Some others saw action in the China-Burma-India Theater, and Alaska.

In praising the Nisei linguists who played a vital role in the U.S. Intelligence, General MacArthur said, "Never in military history did an army know so much about the enemy prior to actual engagement," and Major General Willoughby, MacArthur's Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, stated, "The Nisei saved a million lives and shortened the war by two years."

After V-E Day, the school curriculum was shortened in order to ship out linguists more rapidly to prepare for the eventual invasion of Japan. More emphasis was placed on spoken Japanese for immediate and practical use.

At the end of the hostilities in August of 1945, the emphasis at the MIS training shifted from military to civilian requirements, namely the reconstruction of Japan—from high level government policy making to industry, business, war crimes trials, counter-intelligence, civil censorship, etc. All these peacetime endeavors required more sophisticated and higher level Japanese, not only the language itself but more importantly the understanding of Japanese history, culture, customs and manners. In these areas the Kibei Nisei who previously received their education in Japan played a very important role.

In June of 1946, the school with its humble beginnings was relocated for the third time to California where it had its roots—to the historic Presidio of Monterey, a 2,000 mile nostalgic trek back to the Pacific coast. The school eventually came to be known as the Defense Language Institute.

In August of 1946, I received orders to report to Seattle, the port of embarkation, to proceed to Japan aboard the troop ship, the "Chapel Hill Victory." As a member of the Occupation Forces, I was determined to contribute in some small way to the reconstruction of Japan where I had spent my formative years. As to the extent of the impact the MISLS training had on our graduates later in life, I believe that I can safely say many of them pursued fields which were language-oriented, whether in the teaching or legal professions, business or interpreter/translator service or even research work. To all of them MISLS training must have been a wonderful and rare experience, an education for which the government was happy to pay. It was an education that gave them their livelihood and more than anything else a capacity to appreciate the culture and beauty of their ancestral land. I sincerely believe it enriched their lives immeasurably.

[TOP]

The MISLS: Some Contributions - Toshio Tsukahira

My name is Toshio Tsukahira, nicknamed "Tusky". I believe I am the only one present here today [October 1993 MIS reunion] of the eight instructors who constituted the original civilian faculty of the Fourth Army Intelligence (Japanese Language) School located in the Presidio of San Francisco. Shortly after the war broke out, I applied for an instructorship at the school and was accepted. I was then a graduate student and a teaching assistant in the history department at U.C.L.A., but I had spent three years as a student at Meiji University in Tokyo and had learned enough Japanese to earn an Associate of Arts degree. All of my colleagues on the faculty were Nisei who had had some school experience in Japan. It happened that two of them, Akira Oshida and Tad Yamada, were fellow students with me at Meiji.

In June 1942, the Presidio school, renamed the Military Intelligence Service Language School [MISLS], was moved to Camp Savage, Minnesota, where we found ourselves in a rather isolated rural setting on the outskirts of Minneapolis. During the next two years the school grew with a greatly enlarged civilian and enlisted faculty, a more sophisticated curriculum and an ever-expanding student body. In February 1944, I was named chairman of the Special Division, which was set up to meet the needs of the increasing number of non Nikkei (non-Japanese American) students who were coming to Savage from the University of Michigan and other institutions where they had been studying basic Japanese. Among their special needs, I recall, were rational explanations of why the Japanese language behaved the way it did. So we devised a course on Japanese grammar which seemed to satisfy this need.

Out of the Savage experience there developed a method of teaching Japanese and other "hard" foreign languages to non-Nikkei Americans, which proved very successful. This was the "total immersion" method, pioneered by the Army. It consisted essentially of dawn-to-dusk (and then some) intensive and concentrated immersion in the study of a foreign language. The method, in modified form, is still used today in some language schools.

In July 1944, I enlisted in the Army and was sent to boot camp at Fort McClellan in Alabama. When I reported back to the school, which had by then been moved to Fort Snelling, I was posted to Camp Ritchie, Maryland, along with several MISLS personnel. JAVA president Phil Ishio, MIS Northwest president George Koshi, and Ken Alba of the Rocky Mountain MIS Veterans Club, all of whom are here at this reunion today, are a few of my Ritchie colleagues. We were members of an organization called the Pacific Military Intelligence Research Section (PACMIRS), which had the task of translating captured Japanese documents for the War Department. After the war ended, many of us were sent to Japan as members of an operation called the Washington Document Center (Advanced), to collect more Japanese documents for intelligence exploitation.

Eventually, I ended up back in Washington, D.C. with the Washington Document Center, which was later to be absorbed into the newly created Central Intelligence Group, the forerunner of the CIA. I decided in 1947, however, to leave government service and go back to school. I enrolled at Harvard University, where, after receiving my doctorate, I taught modern Japanese history for three years. I then spent a year teaching at U.C. Berkeley before joining the State Department and the U.S. Foreign Service.

Both in my academic and foreign service careers I met and worked with a large number of MISLS graduates, many of whom became outstanding scholars or distinguished diplomats. There are even more individuals in other professions and in business whose Japan interest and expertise were spawned by their MISLS experience. Thus, when we evaluate the contribution that the school and its graduates have made to the United States, I think that we should not forget that the school not only trained linguists for the war effort but also created a pool of Japan experts and specialists who became invaluable assets to American in the post-war world. I believe that full credit should be given to the school for its positive contribution to bettering this country's relations with our important ally across the Pacific.

[TOP]

The Hakuji Experience - Fubion Bowers

In 1941, the year war with Japan broke out, there were 25 American Hakuji (Caucasians) who could read, speak and write-more or less-the Japanese language. Most of these were older, scholastic men who had spent years in Kyoto among art treasures or were missionaries who had set their minds on converting the Japanese from their heathen ways. Twenty-five is not much of a number when you are planning on an Army and Navy of five million or so against a nation of 100 million. The idea of using Nisei or Kibei had only begun to glimmer in 1940, and, even then, the idea was roundly rejected by the Navy. It would later use its own method of developing linguists: it would go to the Ivy League colleges, assemble the cum laudes and phi beta kappas and offer them a commission (instead of the draft) in exchange for a year's intensive language training at Boulder, Colorado. The idea was a good one, because it produced, among others, Donald Keene, Ed Seidensticker and Robert Ward, some of the best Japanese scholars in the world today.

The Army was sloppier. Anyone, any White man, who went to Washington in 1940 or 1941, and said "Ohayo gozaimus," ("Good morning") or said he had been to Japan as a missionary's son or businessman or whatnot, was immediately given a commission in Military Intelligence. I had spent the year from March, 1940, to March, 1941, in Japan and, since there were no other tourists, and foreigners were scarce in that country which had been ostracized for the Shina Jihen (China "Incident") since 1937 and the capture of all of China's main cities, I had no alternative but to learn Japanese or die of loneliness. I learned it so well,

thanks again to the absence of English speakers in the country that, when I left Japan (reluctantly, but it had become impossible for an American to remain there, as war was drawing near), and I continued my travels on down to Indonesia, the Dutch there assumed I was a Japanese spy and put me under armed guard until a ship could be found to send me back to America.

Back in America, by September 1941, I was drafted. I didn't know about that trick of going to Washington and saying "Ohayo gozaimus." At the induction center, I filled out all the forms, and, when it came to languages, I noted that I knew well French, Russian, Japanese and Malay (as Bahasa Indonesia was known in those days). The Army was so screwed up then, that my language ability went unnoticed. I was a private, trained in the Artillery, and, when Pearl Harbor exploded, I was in basic training in Fort Bragg, given a quick leave and readied to be sent to Africa for eventual landing in Italy.

However, *mirabile dictu*, when I reported back to camp, a Major Dickey appeared out of nowhere and said "Ohayo gozaimus" to me. I immediately answered in astonishment, rather homesick for the language, the people and the country I had come to love. My Japanese was better than Dickey's, and we continued in English. From then on, Army life was more pleasant. I was instantly transferred to the Presidio in San Francisco, and was surrounded by Nisei and Kibei. All of us were privates, or at least none of us was an officer.

Then, we were sent to Savage in cold Minnesota. Savage had been an Old Folks' Home before the Army took it over, and it was a mess. All of us worked long and hard to clean it out. Then, as our military training continued -- long hikes with full gear on our backs, PT, tattoo and taps -- we began, rather continued, our studies in Japanese. If the hikes had been John Aiso's idea, he was so conscientious, the Japanese lessons were an antidote. The instructors were marvelous. There was Tusky Tsukahira, a civilian. There was Tom Sakamoto, a staff sergeant, if I remember correctly, and others. Our classes consisted of Japanese-Americans and about 5 or 6 Hakujiin -- Matt Adams, Jurgenson, Charlie Fogg -- I can't remember the rest. Some of the students were simply marvelous in Japanese. Others were simply awful.

The Hakujiin officers, aside from Colonel Rasmussen and Major Dickey, were splendid men; those Hakujiin who had gotten their commissions by going to Washington ahead of the hot pursuit of the draft, well, their Japanese was terrible, to put it politely. Trouble began to brew. Here were the Nisei, brilliant in Japanese far beyond the ken of the Hakujiin officers. They were drafted privates or PFCs at best. Their parents were confined in camps, their worldly goods and homesteads sold at fractions of their value. And here they were, serving their country in the most invaluable way possible -- intelligence.

Rasmussen and Dickey were alarmed at the growing resentment. They were, in addition to being regular Army officers, experienced men of the world, having

been military attaches at various embassies throughout the world, notably Japan. It became imperative that some-the best-Nisei be commissioned. However, the Army moves on precedent, and never in its history had anyone ever been commissioned on the basis of language. Further complicating matters was the prejudice against the Japanese-Americans, who had yet to prove themselves in battle.

So, Rassmussen decided to make me a test case. I was the best of the Hakuju linguists, and he reasoned with the authorities in Washington, that, to keep this poor private a private was a grave injustice. So, I was commissioned on the basis of language and given my little gold bars. Rank mattered a lot in those days, and I well remember having a little tiff with Paul Aurel, one of those Washington "Okayo gozaimus" officers. He barked at me, "Look here, Faub, I'm a first lieutenant, and you're only a second lieutenant." That taught me a lot about human nature and the importance -- to some -- of having a rank. At any rate, Rassmussen championed me, and, once I was an officer on the basis of language, it became possible for the first time in the U.S. Army for all the more deserving, far better than I, Nisei and Kibei to be commissioned. And a rather sticky moment in Army history passed without incident.

I also remember in Australia, it became urgent for a Nisei to be given a medal of some sort. Morale, again, was low. Their work was so invaluable that it had to be recognized in some public way. Finally, in New Guinea, my friend Kozaki was wounded. He was strafed while ducking in a boat, as a Japanese plane flew over. We were all assembled in formation, and the citation -- Purple Heart and Silver Star -- for bravery for Kozaki was read out loud to all of us. He was wounded in the Hopoi sector of New Guinea, it said, and for the duration, "Hopoi" and "ass" were synonymous at ATIS.

[TOP]

Muddling Through - Allen H. Meyer

As a 1945 graduate of the Fort Snelling program, my insights into the wartime experiences of many of the upwards of 540 non-Nikkei who passed through Presidio, Savage and Snelling through Septembet; 1945, are somewhat limited, but, while in training, word trickled back to us of their exploits -- to give us some idea of what might be expected of us.

Most of my own later work involved Repatriation interrogations at various Ports, which ran the gamut from war criminals to possible security risks to Communist infiltrations. My earlier work at ATIS was in the Translation of Periodicals section, which gave us insights into the directions which the initial phases of the Occupation were to take.

Often as fascinating as the jobs to which we were assigned, however, is the manner in which we became involved in the language study. The early classes

were made up of businessmen, missionaries and teachers in pre-war Japan, and their family members, as well as prewar language students. Most had facilities in kaiwa (conversational Japanese), rather than translation. Later classes, however, were composed of a younger generation of college and graduate students with backgrounds in various languages, Gripsholm repatriates and graduates of ASTP programs, with greater emphasis on the written language. It was only when we had our first encounters with prisoners or Occupation duties that we were able to determine how well-versed most of our sensei (teachers) had been in hatsuon (pronunciation) or idiomatic language.

Not unlike you [Nisei], we too were dismayed by a caste system in the Army which gave commissions to most of us and only stripes to many of you. We certainly recognized the folly of a program that fostered segregation from the men with whom we would later be called upon to work, as equals, in close cooperation. Having undergone two separate infantry basic trainings before I arrived at Snelling, the Army taught me well who were the bosses and who were the underlings and support-but, throughout our language training, we realized that such an approach could rarely accomplish the desired results for linguists in our field and in the real world. Even at Snelling, the segregation continued, and our limited encounters at the radio building, the PX or occasionally in joint military terminology or geography classes did little to recognize that, ultimately, we would be working together as partners rather than as officers and subordinates. We, too, were captives of that system and could do nothing (while in training) to overcome an inbred alienation the Army approach had fostered. We constituted a distinct minority within a minority program and could attempt to rectify the situation only after we left Minnesota. However, 50 years later, we recognize that somehow we muddled through.

[TOP]

The 50th Year Reunion: A Good Time To Look Back and Look Ahead -- Dempster Dirks

This is a time for re-capitulation, a time for taking inventory. Before World War II, the Nikkei were less known by the non-Nikkei population. The parents, the Issei, maintained their family in America in relative isolation. The emphasis was on work, study of the Japanese language and culture, academic achievement at public school, and religious beliefs. It was a formative period during which the Nikkei needed to be known. They needed the support obtained by joining non-Nikkei activities. This would have helped them in knowing themselves, and in making as many close friends as possible outside the enclaved Nikkei community.

As a Hakujuin non-Nikkei, there is a similarity in my upbringing to that of the Nikkei. My father, a doctor of medicine, was a German Nisei. I am a German Sansei. A lot of my early training was done by my Issei German grandmother. It was delivered in a mixture of German and English. Being of German heritage, my

family experienced prejudice during World War I -- but considerably less probably than that shown Nikkei during World War II. My grandmother said that we must fight for what is right. We must learn to speak and write English well. We must get to know other kinds of Americans, join their clubs if possible, become involved, and know American culture.

At the start of World War II, as Nisei volunteered for military service, they did, indeed, become involved in the "American way." They became assimilated into American thoughts, values, behavior patterns, and priorities. But the Nisei found that in the military society, prejudice and stereotyped thinking still prevailed. This was particularly wrong, for the Nikkei provided vital intelligence and service in combat and other branches of service. However; it was rare for them to receive recognition other than a low ranking non-commission rating. Through the years, the Nikkei have been a source of encouragement to me since the time I was in high school and college. The J.A.C.L. (Japanese American Citizen league) gave me a chance to work with young people.

While in graduate school at U.S.C., I worked with Nikkei on two radio shows, "Americans Related," and "These Are Your Neighbors." Later; Nikkei and I did some experimental production on two early Los Angeles television stations- W6XAO and KFIA. While teaching in Carlsbad, California at the San Diego Army and Navy Academy, a Nisei friend talked me into studying the Japanese language in a karate class taught by a journalist from a Tokyo newspaper. My high school-level academy students would practice writing katakana and hiragana (letters of the Japanese syllabary) -sometimes even Kanji (Chinese characters) -with me on the classroom blackboard in study hall after school. This was not a performance well-appreciated by the Commandant, Major Davis. I was drafted early in 1941 and sent to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for basic training in field artillery. When we were out in the hills on a firing problem, during a lull, I would study my Kanji cards, whether I was driving a truck or reporting on cannon hits from a hilltop. My mother was strongly opposed to relocation of Nikkei to the internment camps. She and her good friend, Valli Knudsen of Knudsen Dairy Company, took out double full-page ads in the Los Angeles Times and Los Angeles Examiner condemning the idea of relocation.

Life during combat overseas had its strange side. Sending letters to buddies in the service-even if they were stationed nearby-was unique. My friend, Mits Shibata, was stationed in Ormoc, Leyte, which was about 20 miles as the crow flies from where I was stationed in Burauen, Leyte-just over the hill. However, our letters to each other had to make the trip by "V-mail" to San Francisco first. Has mail service in 1993 improved?

While on Biak Island, Indonesia, we would sometimes have outdoor movies at night when it didn't rain and there was no bomb alert. At the end of the show when the lights came on, we'd often find our next-seat companion to be a Japanese soldier willing to surrender. He'd join us in donuts and coffee.

When I was stationed at the P.O.W. Station in Byron Hot Springs, near Tracy, California where we monitored the German and Japanese officers who were our "guests," our Commandant, Colonel Kent, felt it was only right that we would occasionally take some of the officers into San Francisco with us for dinner and a show.

Some of us, Nikkei as well as non-Nikkei, came into the service with advanced educational degrees. We had further intensive training after basic training in the service. We were told we were well-qualified for the tasks given us in combat. However, being in the M.I.S., most of us received no deserved-rank nor recognition for work well-done. For example, I, a non-Nikkei, was taken from two officer candidate schools-one in New Jersey, U.S.A., and the other in Brisbane, Australia-at the convenience of the military-to serve in the M.I.S. I had entered the M.I.S. holding a sergeant's rating. In 1946 when I received my honorable discharge, it was a tech-sergeant rating I held.

At home and overseas, I lived with, studied with, and worked with the Nikkei, gaining the greatest respect for them. As we get together at these re-unions, there is one thing that I have observed. As Nikkei and non-Nikkei Hakuji become older, they tend to appear to be more like each other. Well, we've come a long way since service in World War II. Those of us who have served in the public sector: teachers, journalists, writers, and many other professionals no longer think of the Nikkei as "minorities." You Nikkei have joined the majority. You have been assimilated into the multi-cultural traditions so important to Americans today. The Sansei and many of later generations, are now often marrying non-Nikkei.

The Nikkei have brought balance to my own life in many ways. When I took my doctoral exams for my PhD Degree at U.S.C. in Los Angeles, my two foreign languages were Japanese and French. Professor Inamoto at U.S.C. has provided me with much advice related to fields of research in anthropology and sociology. Professor John Kimura at California State University at Long Beach, California provided me with copious research material in both physical and cultural anthropology as well as geography.

One of my benefactors, Professor Moriyuki Takata, first came to the United States under my sponsorship. He was always available for assisting me in teaching and research. Also, as both of us have also been musicians, we shared interests. Over the years, besides Professor Takata, I sponsored Mr. Takahisa Anamo, a television newscaster in Los Angeles, and Mr. Susumu Endo, a banker in Los Angeles. Today, my Nikkei friendships are among my best and most enduring. As toshiyori (senior citizens), we're not finished yet. Join in. There is a lot that needs to be done. Be involved. Let your opinions be known.

At present we're giving the young a chance at government and at making very important, wide sweeping decisions affecting all of us. But, the way things are

going at home and abroad, stand up. Be ready to take the wheel. As senior citizens, demand the respect and recognition we all deserve. Most importantly give yourselves a chance. There are friends out there. Find them and join them and we'll all help ourselves.

[TOP]

From the Gila Relocation Center to Korea - Benjamin T. Obata

Like many Japanese Americans living on the West Coast after war was declared in December 1941, our family was evacuated from California in early 1942 and was confined in an internment center-in our case, the Gila (River) Relocation Center located on an Indian reservation in Arizona. One day in camp, I found a notice tacked onto a bulletin board announcing that a U.S. Army recruiting team would arrive to interview candidates for the Army Military Intelligence Service (Japanese) Language School in Minnesota. This was the first instance of the Army looking for Nisei volunteers after the outbreak of war-the drafting of volunteers for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team did not begin until the middle of 1943. The notice also stated that prerequisites for admission to the school included at least Japanese high school equivalency in the language. Since my competence was at around the third grade (grammar school) level, I was about to ignore the notice until I read that one of the recruiters listed was a former classmate at the University of California, Berkeley.

When the recruiting team came to Gila in late November 1942, I stuck my head into the room to wave a greeting to my friend. He motioned me over to his desk, and after exchanging amenities, asked if I were interested in the school. I said I was but that my Japanese was very limited. My friend then explained that due to poor responses, they had had to lower their basic requirements. He then proceeded to help me to satisfy these requirements, so that I would be accepted by the school. They were apparently getting desperate to fill their quota. I found out later that there were others recruited whose Japanese was even worse than mine. The irony was that my mother was a Japanese school teacher during my younger years but I did not study Japanese as diligently as I should have. Instead, I conned my mother into allowing me to skip my Japanese lessons and then stop altogether if I did well in regular school. What a shame that I did not continue my study of Japanese! Who would have thought then that it would come in handy at a later date.

I left the Gila Relocation (Concentration?) Center with about 35 other volunteers in November 1942, and we arrived at Camp Savage, Minnesota, where the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) was then located. Our class, consisting of volunteers from other relocation centers and from other military units, finished our 6-month intensive language training by June 1943. In January 1944, our group of 60 men arrived in Brisbane, Australia, to join the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) at General MacArthur's headquarters. Our task was to translate captured Japanese military documents

and interrogate prisoners of war captured in Allied actions against the enemy. Other MISLS graduates were assigned to field units from the division level to the corps and army levels throughout the Pacific Theater.

In May-June 1945 ATIS moved to Manila, Philippines. In August 1945, about 60 of us who held noncommissioned officer rankings were promoted and received field commissions as second lieutenants in preparation for the planned invasion of Japan. We drew our equipment and were prepared to fly to Okinawa to join the invasion forces there when the atomic bomb was dropped first on Hiroshima and then on Nagasaki and soon thereafter Japan surrendered. Instead of making combat landings on Japan, we sailed quietly into Yokohama harbor. ATIS Headquarters settled into the NYK building in Tokyo, and ATIS servicemen were soon involved in various Occupation duties along with translations and interviews. Some of us were assigned to other units such as the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), the Central Intelligence Agency, CID (Criminal Investigation Division), CCD (Civil Censorship Detachment), and other Occupation offices throughout Japan. When the Korean War broke out at the end of June

1950, many of us ended up in Korea only a week or so later. Language teams assigned to infantry divisions in Japan accompanied their divisions to Korea. Other units in Japan, such as CIC (mine included) and CID units also were sent to Korea. Although most of us spoke only Japanese and English we discovered that many of the Korean military officers as well as the older general populace spoke and understood Japanese due to the occupation of Korea by Japan from 1910 to 1945. Since very few Koreans spoke English we were able to make good use of our Japanese in conducting liaison with our Korean counterparts. I recall once attempting to interview a Korean officer through a Korean-Japanese interpreter; and after a painful and increasingly frustrating period of working back and forth through the interpreter; the officer suggested direct communications in Japanese. We then sailed through the interview in jig time.

Let me conclude by reiterating my regret that I was not a more diligent student of Japanese in my youth. But fortunately there was sufficient grounding there reinforced by the intensive learning process at Camp Savage to stand me in good stead when my country needed my language skills.

[TOP]