

Washington County Museum  
Oral History Interview with Akira Iwasaki  
At Mr. Iwasaki's Home  
May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Informants: Akira Iwasaki  
Interviewer: Linda Dodds  
Transcriber: Pat Yama

L: Linda

A: Akira

L: The date is May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998. We're in Mr. Iwasaki's home in Hillsboro and the interviewer is Linda Dodds.

Mr. Iwasaki I wanted to start our interview by asking you about your family history. You mentioned earlier that you were born here so I was wondering how long your family had been in America.

A: My father came in about 1920s and he came here as a \*\*00:57??? and worked in the railroads and after a couple of years he went back to Japan to find a wife, my mother. And this is kind of an interesting anecdote but the girl that he wanted to marry did not want to come to America so her sisters said – if you're not going to go I'm going to go. I would want to go. So it turned out that my mother is the one that wanted to come to America. So they married in Japan and came to America in the early 1920s. And at that time they lived in Canada and then came into the United States around, I'm not sure about the date but around 1910. They settled in a place called Sumner, Washington, close to Seattle and that's where my older brother George was born in 1912. About two years later they moved to \*\*2:35 Missoula?? and then they, I think they farmed there for a year or two and then in 1916 they came to the Hillsboro area.

L: What were your parents' names I should ask.

A: Well, my father's name was Yasukichi (spells it out) and ? name was pronounced (E)wasaki. And my mother's maiden name was Iko Baba (spells out). And my parents origin is from Shigaken, Japan. That's spelt S-h-i-g-a-k-e-n, near the city of Kyoto. To get back to my conversation of my early days – I was born in Hillsboro in 1916 and when I was six months old my parents came to the current place where we are still living. So we have been here almost 81 years. And we have not moved (chuckles).

L: That's interesting. Why, what brought your parents here, to this area. What brought your parents here to this area?

A: I'm not sure what they had – they had no skills. All they knew was possibly farming. When they came here my dad bought some cows and he sold milk and he cleared ground here and raised some vegetables. And gradually the milk, the dairy did not appeal to him so he disposed of the cows and gradually raised vegetables on ground that he cleared. In fact, in those days I remember helping my dad use dynamite and blasting caps to blow stumps to clear the ground.

L: Where was their property?

A: The location of the property was about a mile and a half southeast of the city of Hillsboro. At that time we lived on what's now called Minter Bridge Road. And at that time there were only about two families that lived on this road, very sparse. I recall the road was just a dirt road and some places it was improved with planks that wagons would travel on. In fact it was interesting I still kind of remembered my mind that when it rained and the road got wet and when I'd walk on top of the planks the planks would give and squish water up and I'd have to be careful about not getting splashed on me because it was that kind of a situation condition.

L: Do you know anything about the origin of the name Minter Bridge?

A: No I'm sorry I do not know that.

L: Do you remember the other families that were here in the area?

A: Yes I do remember them and their names and so forth.

L: Who would that have been?

A: Well, the \*\*7:42 Sawfells? lived about a quarter mile past on Minter Bridge Road. They had a big family. I recall more than anything that was a big family and they were very....religious, let's say and went to – they were Catholics and went to a Catholic church in Hillsboro. They were farmers and the father would always...hitch up his wagon and he had a - it's not like surrey but it was a big wagon that had several, had roof with tassels on top and several seats. The Sawfell family was very interesting. They were very religious. They had a big family. Next there was a family called Konigan (spells out). That was also a large family. I think probably they were Russian descent. But they were a nice family and in fact, one of the daughters was my teacher when I was going to school in Hillsboro. Her name was \*\*9:42 Fanny? ? remember her name.

That's about the only families I remember on this road – the farms were very few and far between. And we didn't fraternize too much because my parents couldn't speak much English and the names – I had trouble speaking, I was reserved. In fact I'm going to tell you a little bit about my school days. When I was six years old we had to go to school and we had to walk to Hillsboro which was about an hour and a half of country road. I'd never been exposed or been with any neighbor kids and so it was all strange to me. I just hated school. The first day my dad took me out there and with his broken English we tried to register to go to school and I just hated it. And I didn't want to go back anymore but of course I had to so that was a really unpleasant time for me when I was small.

L: Was George in school then?

A: Yes my older brother George was in school but he wasn't much help to me (both chuckle).

L: Oh. Well let's go back. Was, what was the language that you used at home? Did you, spoken in the home, what...

A: We always used Japanese language in the house. And that's about all I, when I was in first grade why I couldn't speak very much English and I was somewhat embarrassed and intimidated because of my background, Oriental background and all the other kids were all Caucasians and so I felt very, not intimidated but... I can't think of the word.

L: I'm sure it must have been difficult. How did you think the children responded to you – your classmates and your teachers?

A: Well I don't recall. They were friendly to me and we played together and this kind of thing but I didn't experience any discrimination. So I felt comfortable that way but I always felt I was apart. And so I think it kind of reflected in my learning in school co's I wasn't very bright as I remember. I'm still not \*\*\*13:34 ???

L: Oh I think you're being very modest. You said your parents were farmers. Now the land that they had, did they own their own land?

A: In 1916 when my father moved here he decided that he wanted to buy the farm and so our landlady, the owner, a Mrs. Kelsey, that lived in Hillsboro said that she would sell the farm to my father for – and at that time a 50 acre \*\*14:25? wooded and very little clearing, the price was \$10,000. So when I was going to school my father said he had to make \$500 payments twice a year for 10 years to pay that. And I guess there was no interest charge at that time. So when I would go to school and I would walk to school from home, about every six months my dad said – well here's a check for \$500. I don't want you to lose it and be very careful. During your lunch time, eat your lunch and then walk to Mrs. Kelsey's house and give her the check, which I did during the time I was going to school.

L: Oh he must have really trusted you.

A: I beg your pardon?

L: Your father must have trusted you.

A: Well in those days he had, his mode of transportation, he'd have to either have to walk or take a horse and a wagon so he felt that since school was not too far away from Mrs. Kelsey's home I took the opportunity to do this. And I still remember when I took the last check – my dad said - this is the final payment, you don't have to take anymore, Mrs. Kelsey was very elated. She said – yes your father paid every dime. This is the last one. And she was very happy. So, that's the thing I kind of remember.

L: Did they – you said 50 acres – did they have anymore, ever acquire anymore land or was their farm 50 acres?

A: No that was, 50 acres is still on the place. So this house is on the place.

L: Getting to almost be a century farm. You're less than 20 years away (both laugh) from being in the same family.

A: Yeah, that's right.

L: Goodness. So you went to school in Hillsboro then. What school did you attend?

A: Well it was Hillsboro grade school and Hillsboro High School. Graduated there in 1934.

L: Let's go back to your parents for a second. You said they didn't leave home very often. They stayed on their place pretty much.

A: Because my father had limited language skills and my mother didn't speak any English so as far as socializing, no socializing hardly ever with neighbors or anyone. They just kept to themselves. So their only exposure would be say, to go into the grocery store, that kind of thing, the feed store to get feed for the cows and this kind of thing. So very little exposure in those days.

L: Do you think they missed their native culture?

A: Well I would imagine they would because there were very few Japanese living in the Portland area and of course it would be an effort to go into Portland at that time because of the distance which was about 15 miles from Portland. And in those days there was a railroad, you might say a suburban railroad from Portland. It was called, we called it \*\*18:55 ginza red trains. We called it the red electrics. It was motivated by electricity. My dad would take us kids maybe twice a year into Portland to buy Japanese goods, groceries, this kind of thing. But it would be a rare occasion that we would get to go. And that was the extent of exposure to other Japanese people or families.

L: Did they have any relatives and family here at all?

A: My dad had a sister living near Seattle and their family. And that's the only – my mother didn't have any relatives here. That was the extent of our families here in the States.

L: Did they get letters from Japan or write?

A: Yes, yes. My folks exchanged letters. I remember times, many times when my mother or dad would sit down and write letters and then occasionally we would get letters from Japan. So there was that limited correspondence. Yeah.

L: So did you celebrate Japanese holidays.

A: No, in those days, really we didn't. One thing in particular was, I guess it's Japanese customs – at New years, they did observe new years. And I can still remember that my mother said well we must clean the house and set everything, our fresh clothes and everything. On New Year's day you're not suppose to do any, any work or anything. So a day or two before my mother would have us kids help and we'd clean the whole house and do the laundry. And then she would prepare foods, kind of like Japanese New Year's foods, she would prepare you know several dishes on New Year's day while we would do nothing but you'd enjoy the day. And that was a, in fact I think that custom still exists in Japan you know. But that's the only thing that I remember. Of course as far as American holidays, I don't think meant much to them but living here, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July there was a lot of fireworks and this kind of thing. So we were exposed to those experiences.

L: Why do you think they came here in the first place to America?

A: Well I think my father wanted to come to America and I think this was the, at that time in Japan, to come to migrate to America and work a few years and get rich and go back to your families was the primary motivator. But then, and many Japanese men did do that but when my dad came at that time, for some reason or other he never had the desire to go back. So when

he came he never did go back to Japan. My mother went back a couple, two or three times when we were young. But he just never had the desire to go back.

L: Well let's see I guess I have one more question about your parents. You said they were engaged in dairying and grew vegetables and any other pursuits or ...?

A: No, that was the extent of it. They had a few cows and marketed milk in Hillsboro and raised a few vegetables. And that was what kept us going I guess.

L: You were more or less self-sufficient on your farm?

A: Yes, my folks, my dad was. My dad was quite a, not an entrepreneur person but he butchered cow for us for winter, butchered cows and pigs for our meat supply. Our neighbors helped of course. In fact, not every winter we would butcher a cow. I still remember my mother would can these cold packs. Put meat in jars and she would cook the jars for two or three hours and put them away in the pantry. In those days, I can still relate it but there's a Japanese mushroom called Matsutake **\*\*25:09 reds and gray**. Tasty and so when we would go out and get Matsutake, my mother would can those. So that was quite a treat for us is canned, home canned meat and Matsutake cooked together. That's co's we looked forward to it. So I remember those things as some of the goodies we had.

L: So did you have rice as well in your diet?

A: We had rice and I don't remember where it came from. It must have come from a Portland import company that we bought. Probably bought it in 100 pound bags at that time. Gunny sacks. And I don't recall too much more. Well we did have Japanese goods. And there was a Japanese store in Portland my dad would buy supplies from.

L: Did they bring Japanese objects from Japan when they came.

A: No not very many, no, no there wasn't. One thing I remember and I guess this is when they came, initially came from Japan, they had kind of a, well I don't know what they call but it's made out of a basket material and I shouldn't maybe mention this, I think it was made out of woven bamboo type of thing. It was a basket where they would put their clothes in it and it had a cover to cover it and this is how they handled their luggage. It wasn't a suitcase or a trunk. It was just kind of a basket. Very crude but it seemed to serve the purpose. But I have recall of those things.

L: Did Mrs. Kelsey, did she have a house on the property that you lived in.

A: Yes.

L: So you just moved into that house.

A: Yes that's correct. It was an old house – 19... it was...we lived in it until 1940, about that period, from 1916.

L: Is that house still there?

A: No it is not. We tore it down. I don't know if I should mention this but during the war – okay up until 1939 we lived in this old house. There were eight of us in fact. I have two brothers and five sisters and we all lived in that house – outdoor toilet. It was not very pleasant. But at that time I guess we were finally able to be successful enough and my dad says he wanted to build a new house so we did start in 1939. And I still remember in 1941 we were just finishing the house - we had, of course we had a contractor build the house but we were helping, I was helping nailing hardwood floors in the living room when Pearl Harbor, December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 came along. I still remember that time when the radio announced that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.

So to get back to my story, at that time was the first time we were able to live in this new house. Up until that time we had lived in this old two storey frame house.

L: I better catch up on the rest of the family. Who were your other - let's see you have one more brother and five sisters. Now they, who were they?

A: Would you like their names?

L: Yes.

A: Okay. George is my oldest brother and I'm the next and then Arthur is below me. Then my five sisters are all younger than the three of us. Their names are Kate (spells it) and then the next one is, has a Japanese name. Her name is Taka. Then my next one is Aya. And the next one is Dorothy. And I don't know why my folks picked Caucasian names. And then the last one is Rose. So we have a mixture of Caucasian names and Japanese names. Mine is Akira. It's spelt A-k-i-r-a, but I just go by Ike.

L: I see. All right. But George and Arthur are their Caucasian names, your brothers. Interesting.

A: Yes it's interesting, yeah.

L: Were you named after anyone particular?

A: I don't know really why those names were chosen but it's a mixture.

L: Yes it is. Well so jumping forward then did your brothers and sisters, did they all have the same kind of schooling that you had?

A: No, my brother George at the time just went to business college and I'm not sure when he graduated. He took some courses in business. I just went to a trade school and my brother Arthur, I think he went to a business college. But in those days **\*\*32:46?? I don't even know finished any degrees.**

L: But you did all go to high school.

A: Yes, yes we all graduated high school.

L: And grade school here. That was kind of what I was getting at.

A: My sisters did all finish – Kate was in Home Ec. She majored in Home Ec. And Taka in education and Aya, my sister Aya in, well Home Ec. I think her major was Dietician type of thing. And Dorothy was a school teacher and my last sister Rose is a nurse.

L: Interesting. And so your mother took care of all these kids. I guess she's had quite a few here. You have eight.

A: Yes, well of course us older ones kind of took care of our younger siblings so we all had to work. My mother, she worked on the farm. She would help right along with my dad on the farm, whatever hands we needed. She was a very hard worker. And I guess that's one reason that we kind of - \*\*34:54 ? families was the custom.

L: Oh yeah.

A: Yeah so.

L: Did you have – well this would have been when you were very small but did you have – was your house electrified and did you have telephone or any kind of ...

A: I remember, I can't recall just about the time but it was electrified. I'm going to guess it was around 1929 or '30. Before that we had kerosene lamps and I think that was one of my chores was to chop some wood and fuel the base of the kerosene lamp from our supply. I had to do that every day and then also one other thing – in those days the kerosene lamps had a glass chimney and those things would soot up and I had to clean those or I'd get scolded (chuckles). So that's some of the things I remember.

L: Interesting. Well let's talk about your high school years and you said you graduated in 1934.

A: Yes.

L: From Hillsboro High School. What was your ambition at that point in your life?

A: Well I don't know. I wasn't very ambitious at the time. I had really no goals. During the time I was going to school I was more or less indifferent. And because I was the only Oriental person there I felt a little bit different than the others. I guess it affected my schooling too. I wasn't that excited about higher education. So when I graduated I went back and helped my dad on the farm.

L: If you had been more interested in education and would have decided to pursue higher education, were there opportunities available for you to go to school. I mean if you would have gone away to college or....

A: Well we were struggling and so the three of us older boys we had to kind of help on the farm and .....

L: It was a Depression.

A: It was during the Depression and since then we were able to make ends meet a little better so when my sisters became of age and finished high school my mother said – let's send them to

school. And so, that's why all my sisters have college education but our boys you might say kind of had to subsidize that. Yeah.

L: Goodness. So what did you do then when you got out of high school? You said you went to business school?

A: Oh I did go to a trade school in mechanics.

L: Trade school. Was that right out of high school?

A: Yes but it had to do with trade not anything in academically. It's just for hands-on learning.

L: Where was that school?

A: In Portland.

L: Would you go in every day or live in town or how...

A: No I would .... I don't recall. There was a neighbor that lived close by and he drove in to Portland and I guess I rode with him. I'm a little hazy on how I did but I didn't live in town. We lived on the farm.

L: So what did you – you said it was mechanical kind of trade school. So what did you...

A: Oh it was learning diesel and gasoline engine type of thing. I don't know why I chose that. My mother thought it might be helpful to learn those things and I guess at that age it kind of appealed.

L: Did your family have a car?

A: Yes at that time they did have an old Ford I believe but that's the extent of our mechanical aids.

L: So are you thinking – I sort of am getting the impression that you're saying that your mother chose this field for you.

A: She encouraged it.

L: Oh, she did, okay.

A: She was a – my father was always kind of passive and my mother was the aggressive one and she would rule the roost, you might say (chuckles).

L: And she knew that you needed to have something to do (chuckles).

A: Yeah right.

L: So what did you do after you went to trade school?

A: Well I didn't apply that type of thing. I just came back to the farm and continued helping my dad. We raised, of course we extended our farm because we cleared more ground and raised vegetables, strawberries and beans and this kind of thing. And my dad initially sold through the grocery store in Hillsboro but then eventually there were canneries and so we raised cannery crops there and that was more of our a principle endeavors - crops.

L: Did he ever belong to a grange or a crop or anything.

A: Not that I recall. I don't recall. My dad didn't do much socializing with limited language.

L: Farmers now often require some fairly extensive financing to be able to do business. Did your father ever need any kind of....

A: I don't recall too much about that but there is a little anecdote to that story. Around in 1935 on some Japanese farmers moved into the area and they wanted to raise strawberries which seemed to thrive pretty well here. And my dad met, let's see at that time, many of the farmers would come to see my dad to see how things are and they would need funds and so they would go to the bank. But they couldn't borrow money because they had no collateral. And so the fact that my dad owned this piece of property, the bankers felt that that was, if they had my father's endorsement on the note that they would consider loaning to these other farmers. So my father did co-sign many, many notes.

In 1940, yeah just prior to the outbreak of war, there must have been 40 families in the Washington County principally raising strawberries and many of them came from Washington, the State of Washington. And I know many times we would have people come and visit our family or the visitors left I said, why did they come. Well they wanted to borrow some money so my dad had, they'd asked my dad to co-sign a note at the bank. I still remember the name of the banker. It was Ed Schullard. And he, I guess he was an old family banker.

L: What bank was it?

A: It was Hillsboro Commercial National Bank – something like that. But the very fact that my dad owned this piece of property gave them enough security so they're always relied on - so they always said to these newcomers and my dad had an American name. It's Billie Yasukichi Iwasaki so Mr. Schullard always said – go see Billie and have him sign it so (chuckles) \*\*46:05 ???

L: Well this raises a whole bunch of questions for me. So, I didn't ask you this before but were you one of the - you were one of the first Japanese families in Washington County.

A: Yes.

L: If not the first.

A: Yes, the first.

L: You think you were the first?

A: Yes, yes.

L: Oh my goodness. Then why did these other people come all about the same time do you think in 1935?

A: Well to go back on my story. There were other Japanese farmers that came here in about 1922. And there was, and they settled near Hillsboro and they raised strawberries and it appealed to them and they were somewhat successful. So by word of mouth other people moved here and started raising strawberries. And so by 1940 it was the crop to raise for the Japanese. In fact, \*\*47:40 Banks was the main area where we all settled.

L: The strawberry growers or....

A: Yes. Yes.

L: Now...

A: They all, in fact all of them – there was not a single farmer that bought their land. They all rented because strawberries has about a four year life so they would want to rotate so they would rent and raise strawberries and then after the four year stint they would rent another place and rotate their growing.

L: Well weren't there, let's see a lot of major things going on here in history at that point but weren't there the Alien Land laws that sort of forbid the purchasing of land.

A: When my dad bought the place in 1916 there was no restriction but in 1924 the Alien Land law came into effect and so at that time they could not own land. Many of the families that came even rented could not, and I'm not sure whether they could rent to alien but many of them had teenage children and so they would rent the land in their children's names.

L: Because they were citizens.

A: Yes, that's correct. That's correct.

L: That's a difficult – I'm sure it must have been a very hard time.

A: It was yeah.

L: They couldn't get money and they couldn't have, they couldn't own land but their children could. A lot of barriers there.

A: Well they couldn't own. They always rented. The children would be the principle renter, yeah.

L: So when your father made these loans were they to the adults or to children (laughs) who could own the land.

A: Well, technically I don't know that answer but it was to the family and of course he endorsed the fact that that he would, if they defaulted that he would be responsible. But no one defaulted.

L: That was my next question.

A: Yeah.

L: I bet they were grateful for him to do that.

A: Well I'm sure they were, yeah.

L: So let's see. These were also in addition to the land laws there were these clouds circling on the international horizon with all this .....

A: You mean the Caucasian community?

L: Well I suppose there too but I was just thinking about the international scene with the trouble in Europe and in Asia. Was there any kind of thought about that in your family or?

A: Not really. I know my dad expressed some concern during around 1939 when Japan I guess invaded Manchuria or something like that. He didn't talk much about but occasionally he would talk a little bit about that. But gradually as the year 1941 grew near and there was a lot of agitation about the Germany, Japan and Italy as access was forming. And so I know he did wonder what would happen to us in this country. But I know it was a concern but it didn't bother us kids much. We didn't think too much of it until Pearl Harbor came along.

L: What about the Japanese community that was here as it existed. Was there any, I mean were things going along as normal?

A: Community-wide there was no discrimination prior to that. In fact we kind of assimilated into the community. We didn't participate too much in community activities I know. We were kind of by ourselves. We would have our own social gatherings and picnics and this kind of thing. We didn't fraternize that much with the Caucasian community.

L: Now, I think I read about the Japanese American Citizens League.

A: Yes.

L: Was that in existence prior to the war or is that a....

A: Yes it was just a few years prior to the war. Yeah that was in existence.

L: Is that something people out here might have belonged to or was that more of a city kind of organization or...?

A: Well it wasn't confined to city. It was to all Japanese wherever and we were members. And we felt that it was a worthwhile effort for an organization to look out after our best interests. And I know when the war broke out there was quite an issue that those of us that are born here are called Nisei. They're second generation. But at the time I was inducted into the service. In fact I went in on January 12<sup>th</sup> of 1942 just about a month after Pearl Harbor...let's see my status, okay I was on a deferred status but my number came up at that time and I felt that I should probably go in. I didn't want to go in but I felt because under the circumstances the war with Japan and myself being of Japanese ancestry it would not look good if I did not participate so I did go in.

L: This was in 1942. You said you were on deferred status.

A: Then on January 12<sup>th</sup> of 1942 which is a month after Pearl Harbor to the Selective Service I was asked to join and so I was recruited. I went to Portland to the Induction Center and there was a very traumatic experience for me. There I had to dispose of my civilian clothing and they threw new army outfits. I was small in stature and the clothes were real bigger than I would want but there was no alternative. They gave me an outfit. We rode on a backend of a truck along with other recruits all the way to Fort Lewis. And I still remember the smell of gas on the back of the truck. And it takes, it took about four hours going from Portland to Fort Lewis, Washington at that time. And being alone on the farm I was never, you know mixed or fraternized with Caucasians so I was a real lonely boy at that time. It was very depressing. I had no choice.

And then after the training we went to Fort Knox, Kentucky for my basic training. Then of course we were destined to go probably but prior to that they let of all us in basic training go home for 10 days to our families. At that time the evacuation order was not in effect so I was able to come home to my home in Hillsboro. I still remember not being ever away from home for any extent of time prior to my army days. Being away for two weeks and coming home. I came down Minter Bridge Road. We rode a bus home and then I was walking home from the highway on Minter Bridge Road. And I still remember how sad I felt because of the experience of being away and the coming home just for a short interim before I'd need to go back and we did not know what my destiny would be. You know going overseas or... I still remember my family – we lived in this old house and they had a pot bellied stove and my family, I guess they knew I was coming back but when they first saw me return why it was very, what shall I say – depressing reunion.

L: How long had you been in basic training?

A: Well this was three weeks, three weeks.

L: Was that all?

A: Well yeah, basic training, basic training was three weeks.

L: So what did you do while you were at home? Do you remember?

A: When I came home?

L: Yes.

A: I'm not sure whether this evacuation order, our order had come or not then but my dad and family were farming and they had to abandon the farm. We had strawberries and different crops and this was in the Spring. We had to abandon all that because the army order said that they had to be removed from the West Coast. So at that time we had a neighbor of German descent who was kind of sympathetic for us and we felt he would be a good person to look out at the farm. And he was willing to do that while – and we didn't know how long we would be gone so. But he took good care of the farm.

One incident at that time, like I said before, my dad had just built this new house and we never got to live in it because the evacuation order came just about the time that it was finished. So in desperation, I guess my dad found a renter. And it was a doctor and so he felt someone of that stature would, you know take care of the house and so forth. But it was a mistake. It was a family when we came back in 1945, the new house was just in shambles.

L: Oh dear.

A: Yeah. They didn't repair things, broken glass and no good housekeeping. So it was quite a disappointment experience yeah. But us kids to looked forward for the first time to live in a brand new house but it was never that way.

L: Oh dear.

A: So that was very disappointing.

L: I should say. Well I want to get back to this experience of your family being relocated but maybe we should pursue this - your military service at this point.

A: What our basic training meant, us Niseis as we were called were declared to be placed in a non-combative service because for whatever reason they felt that we were a security risk or because my background being of Japan and we were at war with Japan so we were assigned to a service centers in the States or induction stations for \*\*1:03:56 older? soldiers. And being on the non-combative status we were assigned to menial jobs – gardening, latrine cleaning and things of that nature. And this went on for, until 1943 when the government decided that that we would not be a risk. And so at that time, the group from Hawaii, Nisei from Hawaii, I think it's an old National Guard unit, they appealed and at that time this Under-Secretary of State, John MacQuarrie sanctioned forming an all Japanese-American combat unit. So this group from Hawaii basically formed the First Battalion of the 442<sup>nd</sup> regimental combat unit. They trained in Mississippi and Wisconsin and then later, they formed a \*\*1:05:55 second and third battalion of this regiment by, formed by Nisei from the States. And so after they put us on a different status. We took our second basic training in infantry and we were prepared to go to the fighting front. And so in 1943, late '43, let's see I was shipped to Italy and I joined the Hundredth Battalion at that time. And I served about a year and a half in a European \*\*1:07:09 theater?

L: Now, just backing up a bit, when you were at the service and induction centers....

A: Yes.

L: You said you were just doing menial jobs but which, where were you located?

A: Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

L: Oh, okay. How were you treated when you were doing that work?

A: Well there was a group of us there and there was, among G.I.s or among soldiers there was no discrimination.

L: How did you feel about moving to the European theater and getting into battle?

A: Well, I can't say that I wasn't afraid or concerned, but then I thought this was inevitable and it's our fate, so I thought to myself that I had no choice. Of course, it was a very lonely journey going overseas. Because I wasn't by myself with all these other buddies, we were all of Japanese extraction of course. But a lot of them were in different and involved in a lot of

gambling and this kind of thing on board. So we took a kind of happy-go-lucky type of thing I guess.

L: Did you know you were going off to Italy, or was that revealed later?

A: No, we knew at that time. We knew at the time. But

(tape ends)

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