

THIS WAS IN RESPONSE TO
QUESTIONS POSED BY BILL
HOSOKAWA, WHILE HE WAS
COLLECTING MATERIAL FOR
THE BOOK "NISEI." AT THE
TIME I WAS SERVING ON THE
BOARD OF THE JAPANESE AMERI-
CAN RESEARCH PROJECT FOR
JACL.

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE POOR
REPRODUCTION. IT WAS TAKEN
OFF A CARBON COPY.

Akiji Yoshimura

QUESTION WHERE WERE YOU AND WHAT WERE YOU DOING WHEN YOU FIRST GOT WORD THAT PEARL HARBOR WAS BEING BOMBED? WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST THOUGHTS?

I WAS STATIONED AT FT ORD, CALIFORNIA, ASSIGNED TO COMPANY "C", 7TH MEDICAL BN. I HAD BEEN DRAFTED IN APRIL 1941, AND LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHERS SERVING OUT THAT "MYTHICAL ONE YEAR" IN UNIFORM. SUNDAY ON A MILITARY POST WAS NOT UNLIKE SUNDAY ANYWHERE, USA. I PROBABLY MISSED BREAKFAST, AND WAS DEBATING THE PROS AND CONS OF EATING LUNCH AT THE MESSHALL OR CATCHING THE BUS INTO MONTEREY OR SALINAS.

TO ACCURATELY REPORT MY REACTIONS TO THE NEWS OF THE BOMBING AT THIS LATE DATE IS NOT EASY. I SUPPOSE MY EMOTIONS RAN THE GAMUT OF SHOCK, BEWILDERMENT, ANGER, SHAME AND SORROW. BUT MOSTLY, I BELIEVE IT WAS DEEP ANGUISH AND DESPAIR, BECAUSE NOW THE LAND THAT I HAD BEEN TAUGHT TO HONOR BY MY PARENTS HAD COMMITTED AN ACT OF WAR AGAINST THE COUNTRY THAT I LOVED.

QUESTION WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES DURING THE FIRST DAYS AFTER PEARL HARBOR?

THE 7TH MEDICAL BN HAD A HIGH COMPLEMENT OF JAPANESE AND CHINESE AMERICANS. WHILE FOR THE MOST PART, RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ALL OF THE TROOPS REMAINED NORMAL, BY DAY'S END THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE UNDERCURRENT OF STRESS AND STRAIN. ONE ^{WHITE} GI MADE SOME DEROGATORY REMARK ABOUT THE "JAPS" IN THE COMPANY, WHICH LED TO A HEATED EXCHANGE OF WORDS. THE FOLLOWING EVENING, THE BATTALION COMMANDER ORDERED ALL OF THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS TO HEADQUARTERS FOR A "BRIEFING", AND AS A CORPORAL AT THE TIME I ALSO REPORTED. THE BN CO MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE EXPECTED EACH OF US TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE RANKS, AND THAT HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE ANY MISTREATMENT OR PREJUDICE AGAINST THE NISEI, AND THAT HE HAD EVERY CONFIDENCE IN THE LOYALTY OF AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY. I CAME AWAY FEELING REASSURED AND MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO FULFILL MY OBLIGATIONS AS AN AMERICAN.

THINGS WERE RELATIVELY CALM AT THE FORT UNTIL ONE LATE EVENING, A WILD RUMOR STARTED AND SPREAD THAT ENEMY PLANES WERE APPROACHING. SOME EXCITABLE GIs WERE RUNNING AROUND TRYING TO BLOW OUT STREET AND BUILDING LIGHTS WITH ROCKS OR ANYTHING HANDY. IT WAS A SCENE RIGHT OUT OF AN ABBOTT AND COSTELLO COMEDY. NOT LONG AFTER THIS INCIDENT THE UNIT MOVED OUT INTO THE FIELD BEHIND THE FORT, AND AROUND CHRISTMAS WE WERE BILLETED BRIEFLY IN SAN JOSE. IN EARLY JANUARY, THE OUTFIT MOVED TO CRISSY FIELD, SAN FRANCISCO.

IF THERE WAS ANY HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE NISEI IN THE UNIT, IT WAS NOT ALLOWED TO SURFACE IN UGLY EXCHANGES OR INCIDENTS. SOME OF US APPLIED FOR OCS IN THE MEDICAL ADMINISTRATIVE CORPS, BUT OBVIOUSLY OUR APPLICATIONS DID NOT GET BEYOND BATTALION HQ, EVEN THOUGH WHITE GIs WITH LESSER QUALIFICATIONS (~~and~~ SOME OF WHOM HAD TO TAKE THE IQ TEST OVER TO QUALIFY FOR THE MINIMUM SCORE) WERE ACCEPTED. OFCOURSE, WE WERE BEING VERY NAIVE, BUT WE WANTED TO TRY IN ORDER TO SERVE OUR COUNTRY TO THE UTMOST OF OUR CAPABILITIES.

IN LATE FEBRUARY I WAS CALLED OUT BY THE COMPANY CO AND ADVISED THAT AN AGENT OF THE FBI WISHED TO QUESTION ME. IT SEEMED THAT SEVERAL NIGHTS

EARLIER, A NISEI GI FRIEND AND I HAD VENTURED INTO SAN FRANCISCO TO VISIT, FIRST WITH MY NISEI FRIENDS AND LATER WITH HIS BROTHER, WHO I WAS TO DISCOVER LATER, WAS A TENRIKYO PRIEST. THE INTERROGATION WENT ALONG SMOOTHLY ENOUGH UNTIL I ANSWERED THE QUESTION: "WILL YOU FIGHT AGAINST JAPAN, IF YOU ARE CALLED UPON TO DO SO?" I REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE, AND INDICATED THAT I FULLY EXPECTED TO SERVE AMERICA AT ANYPLACE, ANYTIME TO THE VERY BEST OF MY ABILITY. WITH THIS THE AGENT BLEW HIS CALM, AND IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS SAID, "YOU SOB, I EXPECT YOU TO SAY THAT YOU WILL SHOOT DOWN THE EMPORER AND TEAR DOWN THE JAPANESE FLAG AND STOMP IT INTO THE GROUND." APPARENTLY, I FAILED TO PASS HIS TEST OF PATRIOTISM BECAUSE ON FEBRUARY 14, VALENTINE DAY, I WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE ENLISTED RESERVE AT THE CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT. I HAVE WISHED MANY TIMES SINCE THAT I HAD MADE A NOTE OF THIS AGENT'S NAME SO THAT I MIGHT REMIND HIM THAT PATRIOTISM CANNOT ALWAYS BE MEASURED BY THE VENOM IN ~~ONE'S~~ VOCABULARY.

THIS WAS A BITTER EXPERIENCE FOR ME, AND ONE WHICH TROUBLED ME FOR MONTHS AFTERWARDS. HOWEVER, I HAD LITTLE TIME TO DWELL UPON THE INJUSTICE OF IT ALL, BECAUSE SOMETHING FAR MORE TRAGIC WAS ENGULFING THE ENTIRE JAPANESE POPULATION ON THE WEST COAST.

QUESTION WHERE WERE YOU EVACUATED? WHAT KIND OF EXPERIENCES?

I SPENT THE NEXT FEW MONTHS HELPING THE JAPANESE OF THE AREA PREPARE FOR THE EXODUS, WORKING THROUGH THE JAFL CHAPTER AND THE WCCA. I WAS KEPT SO BUSY THAT I HAD TO POSTPONE MY OWN PACKING UNTIL THE NIGHT BEFORE OUR DEPARTURE. IN RETROSPECT, I AM THANKFUL THAT I COULD BE WITH MY FAMILY AT THE TIME OF THE EVACUATION. I WAS THE "HEAD OF THE FAMILY" AND HAD BEEN, ALONG WITH MY MOTHER, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE YOUNGER BROTHERS AND SISTERS SINCE THE AGE OF 12. BUT, THAT'S ANOTHER STORY.

BEFORE LEAVING COLUSA, I WROTE A "LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY", WHICH WAS GRACIOUSLY PRINTED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER. IT MIGHT BE ADDED HERE, THAT THE COLUSA SUN HERALD WAS ONE OF THE FEW CALIFORNIA PAPERS THAT URGED FAIR TREATMENT OF THE JAPANESE SHORTLY AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES. I'M SURE THAT I MEANT EVERY WORD OF MY MESSAGE TO THE TOWNSPEOPLE, AND I AM EQUALLY CERTAIN THAT THEY RECIPROCATED IN KIND. BUT, WHO COULD PREDICT THEN THE INTENSITY OF THE ANTI-JAPANESE FEELING THAT WAS TO SWEEP THE WEST COAST AFTER OUR DEPARTURE.

I SUSPECT THAT I FELT SOMEWHAT LIKE THE ISSEI VET OF WWI WHO WAS BEING INCARCERATED; BECAUSE HE, TOO, HAD ONCE BEEN IN UNIFORM AND HAD SERVED HIS COUNTRY. WE WERE SENT TO THE MERCED ASSEMBLY CENTER, AND WHEN I SAW THE BARBED WIRES AND THE GUARDS, I VOWED TO GET OUT OF THERE AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY. SOON AFTER BECOMING UNCOMFORTABLY SETTLED IN OUR NEW SURROUNDINGS, I WAS APPOINTED "WARD REPRESENTATIVE" OR "BLOCKHEADS" AS WE WERE IRREVERENTLY CALLED. UNTIL LEAVING MERCED FOR THE AMACHE RELOCATION CENTER, I DUTIFULLY FULFILLED MY ROLE AS A MESSENGER FOR THE ADMINISTRATION.

IT WAS DURING OUR STAY AT MERCED THAT COL RASHUSSEN CAME BY ON HIS RECRUITING MISSION. I MUFFED THE FIRST CHANCE TO LEAVE CAMP BY FLUNKING THE LANGUAGE TEST. FORTUNATELY, TIME PASSED RATHER SWIFTLY BECAUSE I NEVER ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE IDLE. I ORGANIZED A BOY SCOUT TROOP, HEADED THE YOUNG BUDDHISTS, MANAGED AND PLAYED ON A BASEBALL TEAM, AND EVEN PARTICIPATED IN A TALENT SHOW. (DON'T ASK ME WHAT I DID.) AND, ~~IT~~ ALWAYS SEEMED TO CLOSE THE ENTERTAINMENT WITH THE SINGING OF "GOD BLESS AMERICA."

I RECEIVED MY FIRST TASTE OF FREEDOM DURING OUR MOVE FROM MERCED TO ANACHE, WHEN AS A "TRAIN LEADER" I WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE THE MP OFFICER THAT HE SHOULD ALLOW THE CAR MONITORS TO GET OFF THE TRAIN AT SALT LAKE CITY TO BUY MAGAZINES, CANDIES, CIGARETTES, ETC FOR THE OTHER PASSENGERS. BEFORE REACHING SALT LAKE, HOWEVER, I RECALL OUR TRAIN BEING STOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT SO THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO STRETCH OUR LEGS. AS WE STEPPED OFF THE TRAIN, WE WERE GREETED WITH THE OMINOUS SIGHT OF MPs WITH THEIR GUNS POINTED DIRECTLY AT US.

QUESTION DID YOU RELOCATE? GO INTO THE ARMY? WHAT KIND OF MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES?

ANACHE WAS A MORE COMFORTABLE ACCOMODATION THAN MERCED, BUT NO LESS A CONCENTRATION CAMP. HAVING HAD MY FILL AS A "WARD HEALER"; I APPLIED FOR A JOB DIGGING DITCHES, AND AT THE MUNIFICENT RATE OF \$.65 PER HOUR I HELP TO LAY THE SEWER LINES AROUND THE CAMP. THIS SUDDEN WEALTH MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO TAKE A CONTROLLED TRIP TO LAMAR, COLORADO TO HEAR IGOR GORIN, WHO WAS PERFORMING AT A THEATER THERE. FREEDOM, HOW SWEET IT IS!

ALL THIS HARD PHYSICAL LABOR AND HIGH LIVING WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME, AND I FINALLY ACCEPTED A POSITION AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR THE BOY SCOUTS, AND IN THAT ROLE I ORGANIZED AND MAINTAINED SERVICES FOR THE VARIOUS SCOUTING UNITS IN ANACHE.

IN EARLY DECEMBER A RECRUITING TEAM FROM CAMP SAVAGE ARRIVED, AND ONCE AGAIN I TOOK THE TEST. THIS TIME I PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS, HAVING COMMITTED THE READING TEST TO MEMORY AND MASTERED THE ART OF WRITING A FEW VIDEODRAMAS WITH A FLOURISH. RECRUITING SGT GEORGE ICHIKAWA, AN OLD BASEBALL ADVERSARY FROM PRE-WAR DAYS REMARKED: "AKI, YOU'RE JUST THE KIND OF GUYS WE'RE LOOKING FOR."

AMONG THE VOLUNTEERS FROM ANACHE WAS KENNY YASUI, WHO LIKE ME HAD BEEN RELEGATED TO RESERVES IN FEBRUARY OF 1942. HE WAS THEN WITH CO "B" OF THE 7TH MED BN. KENNY, A KIBEI NISEI, SERVED WITH OWI AND WON A DIT FANE AND A SILVER STAR IN BURMA FOR HIS CAPTURE OF OVER A DOZEN JAPANESE PRISONERS. IT WAS A SOUL SEARCHING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL OF US WHO VOLUNTEERED. NOT SO MUCH A CONCERN FOR OUR OWN LIFE AND LIMB, BUT WHAT WAS TO HAPPEN TO OUR AGING PARENTS AND THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY. I WAS OFTEN HAUNTED BY THE VISION OF MY MOTHER AS SHE WAVED FAREWELL. THERE COULD HAVE BEEN BUT A THIN LINE BETWEEN THE TEARS OF BITTERNESS AND THE TEARS OF PRIDE.

NISLS, FOR ME, AS IT WAS FOR MANY NISEI, WAS AN ENDLESS STRUGGLE TO ABSORB IN SIX MONTHS WHAT SHOULD HAVE REQUIRED SIX YEARS TO BECOME PROFICIENT ENOUGH TO PERFORM WITH ACCURACY AND COMPETENCE ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE. NO ONE FELT MORE KEENLY THE TERRIBLE WEIGHT OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY OF DEMONSTRATING TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THE LOYALTY AND PATRIOTISM OF JAPANESE AMERICANS, THAN DID THE NISEI IN G-2.

SOON AFTER GRADUATION FROM CAMP SAVAGE, I RETURNED HOME (AMACHE) ON A FURLOUGH, AND WHILE THERE I WAS ASKED BY THE ADMINISTRATION TO SPEAK TO A GROUP OF DRAFT AGE NISEI. I DID NOT PARTICULARLY RELISH THIS ASSIGNMENT, BECAUSE I WAS BEING CAST AGAIN IN THE ROLE OF A "BLOCKHEAD." I RECALL THAT THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE ADMINISTRATION KEPT SUGGESTING TO ME: "DIDN'T I BELIEVE THAT BY VOLUNTEERING THE NISEI WILL HASTEN THEIR ACCEPTANCE AND INSURE THE FUTURE." I JUST AS PERSISTENTLY OFFERED THAT IF THEY VOLUNTEERED, EXPECT NOTHING MORE THAN TOUGH TRAINING, DISCIPLINE, AND THE USUAL INCONVENIENCES THAT A MILITARY LIFE IMPOSES. VOLUNTEER BECAUSE IT IS YOUR DUTY AND YOUR RIGHT.

IN AUGUST 1943, I WAS AMONG THE 14 NISEI WHO WERE SELECTED AS VOLUNTEERS FOR AN HAZARDOUS MISSION WHICH WAS TO TAKE US TO BURMA BEHIND ENEMY LINES. OUR PROCESSING FOR MOVEMENT OVERSEAS WAS SWIFT AS IT WAS SECRET, AND IN LESS THAN TWO WEEKS WE WERE ABOARD THE USS LURLINE BOUND FOR THE CBI.

MY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CAMPAIGN WERE PALE AND UNSPECTACULAR WHEN COMPARED TO THE HEROIC EFFORTS OF FELLOW INTERPRETERS HANK GOSHO, ROY MATSUMOTO AND OTHERS. HOWEVER, WHEN ONE DEBARKS AT BOMBAY, INDIA TO BEGIN HIS OVERSEAS DUTY AND ENDS UP 22 YEARS LATER IN SHANGHAI, CHINA, ONE IS BOUND TO STUMBLE INTO SOME SITUATIONS OF INTEREST, EITHER DELIBERATELY OR ACCIDENTLY.

MY FIRST MEETING WITH GEN FRANK MERRILL OCCURED IN THE HQ TENT DURING OUR TRAINING IN GUALIOR PROVINCE, INDIA. AT THE TIME, I WAS ASSIGNED THE DUTY OF KEEPING A UNIT DIARY, WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO WRITE IT IN A STYLE THAT WAS MORE PERSONAL THAN ORGANIZATIONAL. I WAS PREOCCUPIED AND UNMINDFUL OF THE GENERAL'S APPROACH. WHEN I LOOKED UP FROM THE TYPEWRITER, I SAW THE SILVER STAR OF A BRIGADIER GENERAL, THEN I HEARD FROM HIS LIPS SOME STRANGELY FAMILIAR JAPANESE WORDS. I JUMPED TO MY FEET, SNAPPED TO ATTENTION, BUT FOUND I COULD NOT FORM THE WORDS TO ANSWER HIS SIMPLE QUESTION: "WHAT IS YOUR NAME, SERGEANT?" GEN MERRILL WAS TO PROVE A WARM AND SYMPATHETIC LEADER, ESPECIALLY MINDEUL OF THE WELFARE OF THE NISEI INTERPRETERS. LATER AS THE DEPUTY THEATER COMMANDER, HE PLAYED A LARGE ROLE IN THE COMMISSIONING OF THE NISEI LINGUISTS.

AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF TRAINING, WE BEGAN OUR MOVEMENT TOWARDS NORTHERN INDIA, THE JUMPING OFF POINT FOR OUR MISSION IN BURMA. I WAS SELECTED AMONG THOSE TO DRIVE THE UNIT VEHICLES ACROSS INDIA TO CALCUTTA, THERE TO LOAD THEM ON FLATCARS FOR TRANSPORT UP THE ASSAM-BENGAL RAILWAY TO LEDO. IT WAS A TIRESOME JOURNEY ON THE TRAIN, AND I SUPPOSE TO FIGHT BOREDOM SOME OF THE TROOPS STARTED TO FIRE AT VARIOUS TARGETS ALONG THE WAY. IT WAS HARMLESS ENOUGH UNTIL A FEW BEGAN SHOOTING INTO THE HOMES. ALTHOUGH I WAS NOT

IN IMMEDIATE COMMAND OF THIS GROUP, I ORDERED A HALT TO THE SHOOTING. ONE OF THE BURLY GIs ADVANCED TOWARDS ME AND SAID, "WHO THE HELL YOU THINK YOU ARE, PULLING YOUR RANK ON US?" IT WOULD HAVE MADE A GOOD MOVIE SITUATION, AND I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE OFFERED TO REMOVE MY STRIPES AND INVITE HIM BEHIND THE VEHICLES TO SETTLE THE ARGUMENT. HOWEVER, I AM NO HERO AND I KNEW THIS GUY COULD WHIP THE PANTS OFF OF ME. I ANSWERED: "MY ORDER STANDS WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT. HOWEVER, IF YOU ARE WILLING TO ALLOW INDIAN SOLDIERS TO RIDE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES AND FIRE INTO YOUR HOMES, THEN YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO CONTINUE TO WASTE YOUR AMMUNITION." FROM THAT MOMENT ON, I WAS NO LONGER THE LANGUAGE SPECIALIST BUT THE RANKING NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER OF THE TRAIN.

FROM TIME TO TIME WHILE IN BURMA, WE WOULD LEARN ABOUT THE MOUNTING ANTI-JAPANESE FEVER IN CALIFORNIA, WHERE THE RACISTS WERE SCREAMING FROM OUR REPATRIATION AND REMOVAL FROM THE UNITED STATES BECAUSE WE WERE A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY. YET, THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY AND OFTEN A FEW HUNDRED FEET FROM THE JAPANESE ENEMY, NISEI INTERPRETERS WERE BEING ENTRUSTED WITH DUTIES THAT MIGHT WELL DETERMINE THE FATE OF HIS PATROL, COMPANY, BATTALION, OR REGIMENT. IF THE RACISTS ONLY KNEW HOW MUCH FREEDOM WE HAD TO MOVE ABOUT AT ALL LEVELS OF COMMAND, THEY WOULD HAVE HAD FEW RESTFUL NIGHTS.

ONE OF THE REAL CHAMPIONS OF THE NISEI INTERPRETERS WAS THE LATE BRIG GEN JOE STILLWELL JR., THEN A COLONEL AND G-2 UNDER HIS FATHER GEN "VINEGAR JOE" STILLWELL. COL STILLWELL USED A NUMBER OF NISEI LINGUISTS IN HIS SECTION AND WAS FAMILIAR WITH THEIR PERFORMANCE. I OVERHEARD HIM TELLING HIS FATHER, WHEN HE SAW US WITH THE NAPAUDERS, "THESE NISEI ARE INDISPENSIBLE TO OUR EFFORT." I LEARNED LATER THAT HE HAD ONCE DRESSED DOWN A NEWLY ASSIGNED OFFICER, WHO QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF ALLOWING THE NISEI TO MOVE SO FREELY ABOUT THE INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATIONS TENTS.

WE WERE TOLD MANY TIMES AT CAMP SAVAGE, AND INFREQUENTLY OVERSEAS, THAT THE REASON OUR WORK COULD NOT BE FULLY PUBLICIZED WAS THAT IT WAS CLASSIFIED INFORMATION, AND IT WOULD NOT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO HAVE THE ENEMY KNOW OF OUR PRESENCE. FURTHER, THAT SHOULD OUR NAMES BE KNOWN TO THEM, OUR RELATIVES IN JAPAN WOULD BE SUSPECT AND PUNISHED. THE LATTER MADE VERY LITTLE SENSE TO ME, BECAUSE THE ONLY RELATIVES I CARED ABOUT WERE PRISONERS IN AN AMERICAN CONCENTRATION CAMP.

(ONCE ON A THREE MAN PATROL TO LOOK FOR DEAD BODIES AND DOCUMENTS, WE GOT CAUGHT IN A CROSSFIRE BETWEEN TWO OTHER FRIENDLY PATROLS AND A JAPANESE DETAIL, WHICH WAS ATTEMPTING TO RECOVER THE BODIES OF THEIR DEAD COMRADES. THERE WAS UTTER CONFUSION, AS EACH AMERICAN PATROL THOUGHT THE OTHER WAS FIRING ON THEM BY MISTAKE. ALL THE WHILE, IT WAS THE JAPANESE SHOOTING AT US FOR "SCAVENGING." ALL OF THE AMERICAN PATROLS MADE A QUICK DASH BACK TO OUR LINES, EXCEPT HUNT CRAWFORD, A FOXHOLE BUDDY THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, AND I. BY MUTUAL, THO' UNSPOKEN, AGREEMENT WE RECOGNIZED THAT SOMEONE SHOULD COVER THE DISORGANIZED WITHDRAWAL. SUDDENLY, WHEN ALL WAS QUIET, THE THIRD MEMBER OF OUR PATROL DISCOVERED US MISSING AND CALLED OUT OUR NAMES AT THE TOP OF HIS VOICE. I TURNED TO CRAWFORD AND REMARKED WRYLY, "WELL, WE'RE BOTH ON TOJO'S S LT LIST NOW."

FOR A SINGLE MISSION, I WAS ASSIGNED TO THE AMERICAN LIAISON TEAM ATTACHED TO THE CHINESE 113TH REGIMENT, WHICH WAS IN SUPPORT OF ONE ELEMENT OF THE MARAUDERS. WHEN I JOINED THEM, THERE WAS GREAT INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM AMONG THE CHINESE SOLDIERS, WHO SAW IN ME A FELLOW COUNTRYMAN IN AN AMERICAN UNIFORM. THEY INSISTED I WAS CHINESE. I TOLD THEM I WAS AN AMERICAN. I DIDN'T FEEL QUITE SAFE IN ADDING THAT I WAS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY. I NOTICED AFTER A TIRESOME DIALOGUE OF: "YES, YOU ARE CHINESE. NO, I'M NOT.", THAT THEY WERE BECOMING VERY UPSET. FORTUNATELY ABOUT THIS TIME, A CHINESE OFFICER HAPPENED BY, WHO SPOKE ENGLISH, AND I HAD HIM EXPLAIN MY CIRCUMSTANCES. AFTER THAT I COULD DO NO WRONG. I WAS ASSIGNED A PATROL OF 6 CHINESE GUARDS, AND NO MATTER WHERE I WENT THEY MOVED WITH ME; THREE IN FRONT AND THREE IN BACK, ALL ARMED WITH SUBMACHINE GUNS. I CALLED THEM BY "HATCHET MEN" AND IT WAS APPARENT THAT THEY ENJOYED THEIR ROLE AS THE PROTECTOR OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN WHO WAS WILLING TO SERVE ALONGSIDE THE CHINESE AGAINST THE LAND OF HIS ANCESTRY.

AFTER 7 MONTHS IN THE COMBAT ZONE WITH THE MARAUDERS AND THEIR REPLACEMENTS, I WAS RETURNED TO INDIA FOR REST AND RECUPERATION, BUT NOT BEFORE SPENDING TWO WEEKS WITH GEN STILLWELL'S COMBAT HQ AND SEVERAL MORE WEEKS AT A PRISONER OF WAR COMPOUND AT LEDO. STRANGELY, THERE WAS AN AMERICAN PRISONER CAMP FOR GI RECALCITRANTS ADJACENT TO THE POW AREA. BOTH PRISONERS GOT ALONG FAMOUSLY, AND AT NO TIME DID THE JAPANESE OUTNUMBER THE AMERICAN PRISONERS.

IN DECEMBER, 1944, I WAS TRANSFERRED TO KUNMING, CHINA AND ASSIGNED TO THE CHINESE COMBAT COMMAND. WITH THE SHORTAGE OF TRAINED LINGUISTS, I WAS ORDERED TO SPEND MUCH OF MY TIME ON THE ROAD TRAVELING FROM ONE FORWARD HQ TO ANOTHER. I SUPPOSE I COVERED MOST OF THE AREAS BETWEEN CHINGCHIANG TO THE NORTH TO THE THEN FRENCH INDO CHINA BORDER.

I RECALL DURING ONE OF MY TRAVELS, ANOTHER WISEI AND I, BOTH TECH SERGEANTS, STOPPED AT A MILITARY HOSTEL THAT WAS MAINTAINED BY THE ARMY ALONG THE OLD CHINA-BURMA ROAD. SOON AFTER OUR ARRIVAL THERE, WE ENTERED THE MESSHALL FOR DINNER. AS WE WALKED TOWARDS OUR TABLE, I OVERHEARD ONE OF THE GIs MUTTERING TO ANOTHER, "THESE GODDAM SLOPEYS GET ALL THE RANK." "SLOPEYS", AS YOU WILL PROBABLY RECOGNIZE WAS A REFERENCE TO THE CHINESE. I WONDERED AT THE TIME IF I SHOULD TELL THIS IGNORANT SOB, THAT I WAS AN AMERICAN OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY, AND THAT IF I WERE A CAUCASIAN PERFORMING THE SAME DUTIES I WOULD PROBABLY BE AN OFFICER. BUT, AT THE TIME MY GASTRONOMICAL NEEDS SEEMED MORE COMPELLING THAN MY HUNGER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE. ACTUALLY, THE POOR GUY NEED NOT HAVE FRETTERED. SOON THEREAFTER, I WAS COMMISSIONED. AS A 2ND LT, I WAS MORE TO BE PITIED THAN ENVIED.

I SUPPOSE FOR ME, AS WELL AS FOR EVERYONE, THE MOST THRILLING EVENT WAS THE NEWS OF THE END OF THE WAR. A 4Z MESSAGE (TOP PRIORITY) SENT ME WINGING FROM MANNING BACK TO KUNMING TO PICK UP SOME NEW UNIFORMS AND ORDERS TO REPORT TO CHINGCHIANG FOR THE PRELIMINARY NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE SURRENDER OF ALL JAPANESE EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN CHINA TO THE ALLIES. MOST OF THE FORMAL RHETORIC USED BY BRIG GEN IMAI, REPRESENTING GENERAL OKAMURA, SUPREME COMMANDER, WAS WAY OVER MY HEAD, BUT I MANAGED SOMEHOW TO BLUFF AND BLUNDER MY WAY THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE AS I

HAD DONE ON ALL PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS. I WAS AMONG THE FIRST PARTY OF 6 AMERICAN OFFICERS ORDERED TO NANKING TO ARRANGE FOR THE ORDERLY TRANSFER OF POWER FROM THE JAPANESE TO THE CHINESE NATIONALIST TROOPS. IT ALL SEEMED A LITTLE UNREAL. WE FLEW INTO NANKING ON GEN WEDEMEYER'S PLANE, AND WE WERE MET AT THE AIRPORT BY SOME RANKING JAPANESE OFFICERS AND THEIR INTERPRETER. WE WERE DRIVEN TO THE INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, WHICH WAS BEING PATROLLED BY A SQUAD OF JAPANESE SOLDIERS.

EXCEPT FOR A FEW WEEKS SPENT IN SHANGHAI, MY OVERSEAS DUTY WAS PRACTICALLY TERMINATED. MY DISCHARGE AT CAMP BEALE WAS BOTH SWIFT AND MERCIFUL. IT WAS GOOD TO COME HOME.