

FRANK HACHIYA: He Was American at Birth—And at Death

Japanese Youth of Hood River Groped for Understanding
Of Democracy; He Found What He Sought Before His Name
Was Added to the List of Hallowed Dead of This Nation

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MCKEOWN

HOOD RIVER

THIS is the story of an Oregon boy, one of the heroes who died in the battle of Leyte. A Japanese, he was born in the Hood River valley. I saw him soon after his birth, just about the tiniest baby I ever looked upon. He grew up near my home, for his father worked for Henry Rodamar, the well-known orchardist. I can still see him, an eager, bright, little figure, making his way among the valley's fruit-burdened strawberry vines.

Last February, his exploits at Leyte made the headlines of America.

His name was Frank Hachiya. His name was never removed from the Hood River honor roll; it had never been placed there.

Selective service headquarters in Portland show that Frank Hachiya joined the army January 1, 1942. He volunteered when he heard of the Pearl Harbor attack, and spent the intervening three weeks completing his enlistment.

What was in the mind of this Nisei who by supreme sacrifice, fighting, until death, the soldiers of his own ancestral background, demonstrated his loyalty to his love of America?

Long before the war began, long before Pearl Harbor, while he was a student in one of my classes at Multnomah college in Portland, he wrote this autobiography.

FRANK:

Found Life Different
In Nippon's Country

"My parents," he began his life's story, "immigrated into this country in the later part of the first decade. I do not remember exactly when, for I was not born then and didn't care nothing of it. It was to my estimation a tiresome journey in those days when it took nearly four weeks to come across the vast expanse of water. They made their home in Hood River and I was born there in 1920. The place was located in a remote section, far west of the great metropolis of Oregon, Portland. Here was my home until I attained the age of 16, when my parents thought it best for my future to have a little knowledge of Japanese. So that year we moved to Japan.

"My father had inherited land from his parents and here near the city of Okayama we made our home. Most of the land we rented to others.

"After three months of traveling here and there, we started school in the following year. My brother in the public grade school and I in a private high school. Everything was different and furthermore, the Japanese which we could not understand very well, hindered our progress. I remember many a time when we would come home completely discouraged, wishing to return to the United States. I guess my parents could not stand to see us any longer and they hired a tutor, to whom I am very grateful, for it was he who made us know the Japanese as I do now. Unfortunately, about a year after, he was drafted into the army and is now fighting in southern China as an infantry captain. But by the time he was drafted, we were becoming accustomed to the school, and my progress began to show it.

YOUTH:

Remembered Courtesy
Of U. S. Government

"That summer I was allowed to travel, Osaka, Kobe and other places of beauty. Never in all my life did I enjoy such a wonderful time, for in my younger days in America I was brought up in a humble way and did not enjoy very much of the brighter side of life. The following winter and summer were passed nearly the same way.

"I really now think and believe that living in Japan four years has done me one great good. The appreciation of America or the love of one's country. Now, I don't mean I don't like Japan, but will never get so that I like her as well as America. As I was born and reared here, I am an American, though I was born of Japanese parents.

"I did not think of America then as much as I do at the present. I read where some people stated that they did not fully appreciate their country until they traveled abroad. And I, too, after living across the sea, realize it now.

"I'm not very handy with words. Maybe if it were Byron, or other writers will be able to express their thoughts and feeling, but with my humble vocabulary it is impossible. The love of one's country, America! It's queer and mystifying, is all I can say. Every good news we heard of America brightened our face up, but to the contrary every bad news seemed to make things more dark.

"That which is imbedded most in my memory is last summer when the United States, in honor of late Ambassador Saito, brought his body to rest in Japan aboard a United States man-of-war. That is courtesy in any man's language. I can still visualize the headlines which crowded the pages of the newspapers of Japan, praising the deed of the Americans. I don't doubt a moment that every Japanese appreciated this sincerity and were thankful from the bottom of their hearts.

"The diplomatic affairs were not going so well and the relation was quite tense. But the act of the United States government was that of a great, honorable nation. If I were to state it in Japanese, I should say 'the Bushido spirit,' a spirit which the Japanese highly esteem. A spirit in which, always, courtesy and sincerity come first.

HARMONY:

Believed Possible
Between Countries

"I believe that if every nation followed the rules (including Japan), we would have a more peaceful world. But by seeing these things, I firmly believe, in fact I'm positive that when the dark clouds of war clear away, that we will realize that the grave situation existing now was just caused by misunderstanding and in reality there is friendship.

"The four years in Japan has greatly increased my knowledge of Japanese, in fact I believe I can understand and speak it better than English. By knowing the two tongues I can indulge in both literatures and pick out the good parts of both races and eliminate the poorer. I found that English is a very valuable asset in the business world, but so



This photo of Frank Hachiya was taken on the parsonage steps of a Methodist church in Honolulu. He posed for the picture just a short time before he was fatally hit by a Jap bullet.

the same time I found it necessary for all 'Nisei' to have a knowledge of Japanese. When you know the language of one people you know the people and understand their problems.

"So the first step to promote better understanding between the nations is to have as many people as possible who have the knowledge of both. In schools of Japan, English is a major subject. You start from high school and on up it is a required subject. Therefore, I can safely say quite a large proportion of the population have a little knowledge of English. This I believe is already a step nearer understanding.

ENGLISH:

Proved Difficult
For Young Student

"Last fall when I was still there I became worried over my English. I was getting so that it was hard for me to keep up a conversation. The words just didn't seem to come out, although I could understand what was spoken to me. I could not express my thoughts. So this January I suddenly decided to return to the United States and continue my school work here. I arrived at Hawaii, at San Francisco and returned to my native valley in the latter part of February. It was awfully nice to see my old stamping ground again, and all my friends. I started school immediately and, with the aid from teachers, I was fortunate to graduate from high school in August of this year.

"Now I'm attending college, and, looking back on my past, I've found a great many mistakes which I will not let happen again and diligently endeavor to make the best use of college so as to get the most benefit. After all we are the ones that gain."



Hood River infant.

Thus, Frank returned to this country. His mother wrote the Rodamars, explaining that the boy wanted to improve his English and to make his permanent home in the land of his birth. She asked Mrs. Rodamar to take him into her home "and

sold him as if he were your own" while he finished his high school work.

From February until June, 1940, he was with Mr. and Mrs. Rodamar attending the Odell high school. Mr. Rodamar recently stated that while Frank read widely, his two favorite books were about the lives of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

In June of 1940, Frank entered Oregon Institute of Technology summer school, where Dale Worthington helped him complete his high school work in time to enroll for the fall term at Multnomah college. During the year he spent attending school in Portland, Frank operated the elevator at the Central Y. M. C. A. The following summer he wrote me about his school program:

"I've been attending Oregon university summer school and am planning to continue on in the post-season in Eugene."

At the University of Oregon, Frank enrolled in courses that would increase his understanding of democratic principles. He believed in America, in its ideals, and in its respect for the integrity of the individual regardless of race, color or creed. He chose to major in political science because in a democracy each citizen must be intelligent in order to be worthy of citizenship. "Some despair," he once wrote, "because they think an individual can do nothing, but history has taught us that an individual can change the map of the world."

One day, when discussing Japan and the blind obedience of the people to the emperor, Frank quietly said, "but there is a higher power."

Nothing could be more indicative of Frank Hachiya, the University of Oregon student who was trying to interpret America to himself, than the books he left with Mr. Worthington for safe keeping. Among them are: Mumford's "Faith for Living," Lambert's "One Hundred Years With the Second Cavalry," Browder's "Victory and After," Wilkie's "One World," Dickens' "Digest," and Plato's "Republic."

SOLDIERS:

Anxious to Meet Battle Front Test

Then came Pearl Harbor. Frank enlisted, stating that he could serve best as an interpreter. Of his mother and brother still in Japan, he said, "The only way I can help them is to aid in freeing Japan of the military party."

After entering service he was just as homesick as any other boy. His letters reveal him reliving familiar scenes.

"This time I'm writing from cold, cold Minnesota. For weeks we were living under sub-zero conditions, but lately it has become more bearable. Mrs. Rodamar tells me that you had considerable snow. It makes the atmosphere congenial; especially sitting by the fireplace and looking out into the white world. Home is what we all in the armed forces are looking for. Here at camp our prayers are answered partly. We have a lovely day room with a fireplace. I go there after school to study."

Like any other boy who has had no personal experience with hell, he wondered how he would behave under fire.

"I have," he wrote, "been attending school here for a considerable time. I'm afraid I can't discuss it any further, but it certainly keeps us busy. It seems that overseas is quite definite and I can hardly wait for the time to come. Although I hate war more than anyone can, I think it is a very good place to test oneself—one is either a man or a mouse—the saying goes. If I come out I shall know for sure. Furthermore, the sooner the war is over the better, and I would like to know that I had a part in it."

Frank was deeply concerned about the status of the Nisei. On February 8, 1943, while he was still at Camp Savage, Minn., he wrote me:

"I am very happy over the recent news of that recognizing us Nisei as loyal Americans. Heretofore we were more or less considered suspicious and no one of Japanese descent was permitted to work in defense works; for the past year as far as the army was concerned they were classified as 4-F, in other words, as alien. We are all determined to do our utmost to prove this new rule is right."



We were not permitted to enter the western states, even to see the folks, but I understand that the ban may be lifted. I believe we are to have another leave in about two months. I do wish I could come out that way."

HOPE:

Held for Return To Oregon Valley

While Frank was in service he wrote twice a week to his father, who was in a war relocation camp. There was no news of his mother and brother in Japan. Then, too, there was a girl on the west coast whom he could not see. Rough drafts of notes he wrote to her are to be found in the front of his copy of Plato's "Republic." They show his concern for her, his regret for the life that could

not be his, and his discovery of himself.

"Your letters," he assured her, "are always most welcome, for they gratify me much that they contain interesting intelligence. I have known you for a long time. I know you have courage, will and ability. There is a long life ahead and this is only the first milestone."

"Yes," he wrote her, "it may seem hard to realize that democracy can treat us like this, but the fact is obvious enough now. Most of the Nisei lived with the thought that as long as they were citizens they were immune to this treatment, but they have found out the hard way. My cultural background of two widely separated institutions has afforded me many headaching conflicts."

"Our position in this nation is not too agreeable, but I hope that it is nearly at its worst. The source of all this ill treatment being forced upon us is the inconsistency between the theory and the practice of democracy. Life in your camp must be miserable, which I also find in the army. As you know, I wrote you letters expressing my discouragement in 'life' which contains these problems, but now I find that has passed. I have come to the point where I feel that life is everywhere. It is in ourselves, not in what we witness outside. There are men all around us, and to be a man among people and remain so—not to be disheartened nor to fall into whatever misfortune may befall us—is life. Isn't this the task of life? I have realized this. The very idea has entered into my flesh and blood. Of course, there will remain in my memory the treatment received; that cannot be destroyed, except by death."

"He was bleeding badly and had to be given transfusions as well as plasma. He was immediately operated on and lived for a few days, but the bullet had gone through his liver."

They can persecute me in any way, but there will always remain in me my heart, the same flesh and blood which can love, desire, and suffer as well. Perhaps I have not expressed myself clearly, but what I said is all life. So let's not grieve or become disheartened and low-spirited. When I look back over life and think of the time I have wasted in vain, in delusion, idleness, in error, in ignorance of how to live, how I did not value time, it hurts me now. I am aware of the fact that life is a gift. It should be happiness, and each minute shall have a long happiness. I shall be grateful of one thing to the war. That is in making me realize life."

The battle-tested veteran who later volunteered, for that dangerous mission at Leyte is indicated in a letter Frank wrote the Rodamars July 13, 1944.

"Perhaps you have wondered why I have not written. Well, the fact is that I have been down under most of the year. Conditions being not too agreeable to write, I kept putting it off in spite of my good intentions. I do trust that you have been well all this time. At present I am in Hawaii living a very simple life. It's quite a contrast to life out in the Marshalls, and now I have gotten the necessary rest I want to go out again to see action. The sooner the better."

Christmas of 1944 was his last. Frank was wounded December 30. He died January 3, 1945. One of his last letters is about being home for Christmas.

"The war situation is looking quite bright now—the second front well established. The Russians are making gains in the eastern front, and our forces out here are on the very doorstep of Japan. It is indeed remarkable the gains we have made in the past year. It won't surprise me in the least if the war in Europe will come to a sudden end. That day will be the death sentence of Japan. I don't see how she will be able to stand up against the onslaught of the combined allied force when she can't meet all the United States forces now. Perhaps we will be able to spend the Christmas of '45 at home."

Then came Leyte, where Frank, a veteran of the Kwajalein and Eniwetok campaigns, was serving as a "prisoner of war interrogator" attached to the Intelligence Section of Pacific Ocean Area headquarters.

Sgt. Hachiya had volunteered for duty in the forward areas and was serving in a detached capacity with the 7th.

The importance of the mission for which he volunteered is described by Lt. Howard M. Moss, who in a letter quoted in the Honolulu Star Bulletin related:

SNIPERS:

Halted the Life Of Oregon Youth

"We got a prisoner of war who gave us a tip as to the units in a certain area. He gave us all he knew, but it wasn't enough. Frank went out with two companies under the command of a lieutenant colonel to clean the area up, and they ran into more than they expected."

"The units on an adjacent ridge got another prisoner, and Frank volunteered to go over



As Portland student.

to interrogate him. He had to cross a valley in which Japs were known to be. It was essential to get the information from the prisoner of war immediately, as some of our units were in a bad spot. Frank was given permission to go by the lieutenant colonel, who sent him with infantrymen as a bodyguard. They started out, and when they got to the bottom of the valley Frank outran his bodyguards. He also started hollering to the Japs in the valley when a sniper shot at him. It at these points

FRANK HACHIYA (CONT'D)

"Frank said he emptied his gun into the sniper. He then got back up the hill, where he was given plasma and started for the hospital. He was bleeding badly and had to be given transfusions as well as plasma. He was immediately operated on and given every possible

care. He lived for a few days, but the bullet had gone through his liver."

Other accounts tell of how, in those last days, "most of the men of his regiment volunteered to give him blood transfusions." Letters indicate that Frank was one of them; that he had talked with them of his hatred of the Japanese military party and of his belief that the Japanese people must be freed of its power.

Monroe Sweetland of Portland, who served with him, wrote: "There were bright tropical nights last spring at Eniwotak when we sat out to talk of Oregon, and I know how much Frank wanted to return to 'the most beautiful valley in the world.' But he also knew what he was fighting for and he knew especially well what he was fighting against—he understood both much better than most of us old-line Americans do. He made his life count and count heavily toward victory."

And the little brown boy who used to crawl along the strawberry rows in the Hood River valley is described by an eyewitness, writing for the New York Times, at work in another valley.

"They lay in a little valley under withering fire of the Japanese. Bullets cut up the ground; men were killed and wounded beside him. The American attack was stopped. Information on the enemy's strength was essential, and the commanding officer asked for a volunteer to reconnoiter the position. Sgt. Hachiya volunteered.

"He crept forward through the grass, now crawling, now running quickly through the open from cover to cover. The men behind watched him descend the slope and work into the valley. Then they saw him drop. A Japanese sniper had got him. But Sgt. Hachiya, mortally wounded though he was, could not lie there. The battalion wanted the information he had gathered. He must get back. So he crawled, bleeding and in agony, out of the valley and up the hill, through the grass and the scrub and around the merciful protection of little hillocks. He was dying when he finally reached the lines. He made his report while they bound his wounds."

Mr. Hachiya, at the war relocation camp at Hunt, Idaho, received the news stoically, stating: "I am proud of my son's supreme sacrifice for his country." And then to the father of this unassuming, brown-skinned American came hundreds of letters of sympathy from those who saw in the death of Frank Hachiya a symbol of true democracy.

I wrote Mr. Hachiya asking for details of his last visit with his son.

"On June 23, 1943," Mr. Hachiya replied, "Frank came to see me at Tule Lake, California center and stayed with me a week. At his departure from the center, we were separated at the gate and I encouraged him and warned him not to be like a coward in the battle field. He smilingly said, 'Do not worry, Dad. I know what my duty is,' and he left the gate. That was the last I saw him.

"I am proud of my Frank who well-heeded my warning and died cheerfully for his country."

The New York Times suggested: "Perhaps someday what is left of him may be brought back to this country for burial among the honored dead."

PO SO

Pvt. tered 2d Lie been in have another Bataan Lieut. night where teilig er, wh furlou Fort overse Geor ing w at Can tering erated Mount Kay, was en enterir at Car Camp to the sent t at Fort mission been a Clellan Alth two co ficultie same t