CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Japanese American Oral History Project

An Oral History with ROBERT MATSUNAGA

Interviewed

By

Gail Matsunaga

December 27, 1978

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: ROBERT MATSUNAGA

INTERVIEWER: Gail Matsunaga

DATE: December 27, 1978

LOCATION: La Habra, California

PROJECT: Japanese Internment Oral History Project

GM: This is an interview with Richard Matsunaga by Gail Matsunaga for the oral history class at California State University, Fullerton. Today's date is December 27th, 1978. The time is around 7:30 PM. Okay last time we were talking we ended the tape about on World War II and we were talking about martial law and how you thought that it probably helped having people out by seven—was it seven o'clock?

RM: Eight o'clock.

GM: Eight o'clock at night?

RM: Yeah, eight o'clock. Whenever it was dark.

GM: As far as having the women off the street. The girls—

RM: Everybody.

GM: Uh-huh. And how—and I asked you if you thought it was beneficial that since there were so many armed forces people—men there that it was good that the women were off the streets.

RM: Um-hm.

GM: Did you want to—why don't we go on with World War II, what do you remember about it?

RM: Well let's see now, I forgot what we talked about (laughs) let's see, with martial law, with gas rationing, with tire rationing, with food rationing. I guess the ration part wasn't too bad because the navy brought most of the food over. It wasn't free of course but

because the navy and the military were there, um, we didn't have to have food coupons. I don't believe—I'm not so sure about the gasoline coupons, maybe we did have gasoline coupons. I guess being that I was so young I didn't know about it. I wasn't driving so you know, you're not aware of it. As far as tires, well the island was too small anyway. You know, if you drive far enough you fall in to the ocean so you didn't have to worry about that. Meat rations, well most people—well the Oriental people basically weren't meat eaters so we had meat but you know, [it was] not that much of a problem besides a lot of the meat came from Hawaii; the Paca ranch meat—

GM: Mmhm, yeah.

RM: So that part we didn't have problem with. As far as in the evening, well we didn't travel too much. We stayed home; all the homes had blackout windows and all that. As for school we had air drill—air raid drills. I think I told you about that.

GM: Yeah.

RM: And our school—high school was converted to a hospital. I think I told you about that. We went to school half time, you know day time. Morning was the upper half then the afternoon was the lower half of the classes. Oh yeah, and then um course that went through. Of course the beaches—the beaches all had barb wires, you know?

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: In case of an invasion and—of course we had drills and all that stuff. As the war progressed, they lifted the blackout.

GM: When was that?

RM: Gee, I forgot when it was. I think they took the blackout off and by the time the—you know—before the war ended I think we were able to travel without the funny looking headlights. I think after they dropped the bomb, you know the A-bomb?

GM: Mmhm.

RM: Of course, everybody's happy—well first of all the VE-day came. You know the war in Europe had ended so we had a parade. It was a pretty good size parade. But when the war in the Far East ended, VJ day—we had a *huge* parade! The largest parade I think I could remember as a kid anyway. They had—of course the strictly military type parade, you know. They paraded the soldiers, the sailors, the marines, the tanks and everything you could think about. And oh I forgot where—let's see, came down one street and went through downtown, even went clear in to the palace; and I don't know how far the parade went. It was the largest parade in my life I've [ever] seen. So that was that and about I don't know how much later but our school finally was converted back to full time. Oh yeah, senior year we were back in high school, you know full time school session. But along with half time school sessions we had GIs teaching us [along] with instructors. I

had how many GI teachers? Three; one was a corporal, two of them were sergeants and one guy was from Syracuse, New York. One guy was from Cleveland, he was a sergeant, and I forgot the third guy. But we had quite a few GI soldiers—I mean GI teachers in our school because our school was a hospital to start with, you know? When we had that part-time school bit, we couldn't use the main building so we had to use all the bungalows in the back. So they made the boy's restroom and the girl's restroom all on the outside like, wood buildings, you know? They used to have lot of crap games in the boy's toilet.

GM: Oh yeah? (laughs)

RM: That was so funny because you'd have a few guys running crap games. As we [would] come in, the guys would be up in the rafters watching the crap game below. There'd be about ten, fifteen guys in the crap game. You could swear the guys who were flunking math would win the crap game and they knew exactly what they were adding—

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: —they could add, subtract, multiply like that (snaps fingers), you know? But yet they flunk math. But when it comes to crap games where they have to—where money's involved, man they were like calculators, you know? An adding machine, they could really go through it. What they used to do when there was a crap game, the guys used to smoke in there—I guess all high school kids smoke. You could see smoke pouring out of the building. So what the teachers used to do—the men teachers—they would raid the bathroom—the boys bathroom and there's only one way out—once you get in the only way out is the same door. One teacher would be standing in the door way and the other guys would go in there [and] raid it, and if you're caught in there at that time you know (laughs) your about to [go to] the principal's office for you know, participating in the crap game. If you were in there for your own business you still got caught. (laughs) But that's how it used to be in high school. Of course we all worked part time, you know?

GM: Pineapple field?

RM: Pineapple field, but before that when we were going half time session if we went to school in the afternoon, we had to work in the morning. Another thing we had was during the war, [in] 1943 president Roosevelt came to Hawaii and—let's see, what year was that? Forty-four? See I was a sophomore in high school—let's see forty-five, forty-four yeah—1944. Roosevelt—yeah Roosevelt, forty-three or forty-four he came to Hawaii and I saw him—that's the only time I [have] seen the president. He came up, I was working that morning and we knew it was Roosevelt [that] was coming up so by the time—we all left the store, you know? To stand at [the] sidewalk as Roosevelt's convoy came up the street so we got to see him. That was really—really something, you know, to see a president come to Hawaii during the war years.

GM: Yeah.

RM: But that's one thing I remember anyway, but when the war ended [we] went back to full time school and that was it, you know as far as the war was concerned. Everything went back to normal then. I guess the war had changed a lot of things in the world. You know, I think of all the wars that I myself think about, World War II changed more of the world political situation than any other war. Than that was it. Now you want to talk about something else?

GM: What about—besides the war in high school, what else do you remember about high school?

RM: Well, about high school. Well we had—you know, you talk about life here and sports especially in high school. High school sports in Hawaii at that time were big; football, basketball, because all the games were played at the stadium. Remember the old stadium?

GM: Yeah.

RM: Okay. We used to have good football teams and we'd have crowds, you know about fifteen to thirty, twenty five thousand—like that—

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: —At a high school football game. The year that we had the championship team—the one year I was a junior yet, we played Kamehameha and they had a super team, and we had a super team. I think we had about twenty-five thousand people at the game, you know? We won that, of course. We won that year undefeated.

GM: Oh yeah?

[00:10:10.15]

RM: So—we had a banner we beat some schools like forty-five to six. Other schools—and some, some were close you know—when you play the good team. Overall, we finished up pretty good. Our high school had—I guess any high school you go to—certain classes would be the smart—you know so-called, that was the way people looked at it then. So if you're in Ms. Fradey's class or Mr. Ranickan's class—then you're the smart kids. If you're in Mr. so-in-so's room or Ms. So-in-so's room, that's a dumb classroom. That's how it seemed like they had the students bracketed, which was really bad, because the kids that went to Ms. Fradey's class or Mr. Ranickan's class—um not so much the boys—a few were pretty bad, but the girls got snobbish.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Yeah they thought of themselves as being elite, you know and they got a little snobby. I could detect that because when I was one of the upper class and personally I didn't like it, because the girls were very snobbish. You know even when you're in the class, they were snobbish, and some of the guys were snobbish too. I think, if you got any lower, the

middle class you know the kids were better—friendlier, yeah? But the—I don't know what's wrong, when people get like that.

GM: Yeah.

RM: I think you'll notice that in other high schools too, even here. Do you guys have that? Was there certain sorts of class the smart class, or?

GM: What—is this—you don't—you only say one class?

RM: No-no-no we shift, but they call like the social studies class—see social studies class, we had English, we had history, we had, uh, anything, anything that's not—hist—no anything that's not science, math, or the arts. You know like music, okay social studies would also include literature, you see. In other word(s) those were the classes that supposedly round you out.

GM: Oh I see.

RM: So that's how they would say okay—the math class, you didn't have that situation where you had dumb ones and smart ones. If you took algebra, you had to be that good already. Or if you took algebra two or geometry you had to be that good. Now if you took college preparatory chemistry you have to be that good. Whereas they had another chemistry just plain old high school chemistry which wasn't as good as that class. And then they had plain old math, you know? Same things or you have a class in biology the dumb kids—the so called dumb kids—you know who weren't prepared for college never took it—they never took chemistry either, right? I guess you find often (in) high schools here the kids who aren't planning on going to college never take these other subjects. So in that case you cannot—there's no way of categorizing the sciences with the dumb science classes, smart science class, you know? Because all the kids that go to college took the lower things.

GM: Hm.

RM: So (pause) aside from that, I don't know. High school wasn't that great for me you know, I never—I never prepared for college let's say. I just went to high school. See until after I got out then I decided well maybe I should go to college, you know? So I stayed out of school for one year anyway before I went to the University of Hawaii. Even when I went to the University of Hawaii I just took general courses. A class in Japanese—we had to take remedial speech—

GM: (Inaudible) _____.

RM: Yeah we had to take remedial speech, we took world history, American history—what else? A lot of junkie classes you know? Then after that I figured well, second year I decided, I would take some math. Then I took chemistry—I took freshman chemistry. That was one of the classes I really enjoyed because we had a chemistry professor from

Princeton University who worked—was a doctor—gee I forgot what his name was but he had a chemistry class that was so good, you know? That we enjoyed it—I enjoyed it anyway. I would never miss his class no matter what; I would never miss his class because he made it so interesting. You know you can go to chemistry class and go to sleep but this guy's class you would never go to sleep because he put on demonstrations during his lectures. He'd get liquid oxygen or something like that. He'd dip grapefruit in there or he'd dip different kinds of vegetables a lot of vegetables and fruits. He'd throw it around the room and watch it pop.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Oh yeah and there were explosions in the class. And in the chemistry lecture we had about two hundred students, like a hall, an auditorium. Even the world history class was held in an auditorium of four hundred students. The professor would be up front with a microphone and he'd talk and lecture. We'd take notes during the time he was lecturing. Chemistry class was like that, I also took a class in anthropology that was like that. American history was like that. When it was time for the semester finals we would all go to the gymnasium they would have a seat here; and about that far away would be another seat. You're all standing and you had proctors going around the gym, you know? There'd be all the students in the huge gym taking test; [that's what the] big classes were like. The small classes were held in the rooms. But even in there, they staggered the seats around. And you had remedial speech, which was really funny because when you come out of high school (clears throat) they gave you a test to see how well you [spoke] English.

GM: Oral or written—?

RM: Oral. The way they did it was that if you didn't pass, you take a semester of remedial speech. If you didn't pass the first semester, you took another semester. If you didn't pass that, you took a third semester. If you didn't pass that, you took a fourth semester. If you didn't pass the fourth semester, you flunked out, which was not fair. It was not fair because if you look today and listen to some of the kids speak even at Cal State Fullerton, you find foreigners right?

GM: Yeah.

RM: That you cannot understand, okay? We spoke Pidgin English. It's not that they cannot understand Pidgin English; they wanted you to speak good English. Because of the fact that our parents were from foreign countries and because of our background they made it difficult for us. A kid could be smart and everything else (but) could flunk out of college because of remedial speech! You know, I think in today's world they would have cried discrimination; they really would. Let's suppose that somebody takes up engineering, okay? And he has to take a class in psychology. Suppose he doesn't pass psychology, does it mean that he flunks engineering? That's the same thing; or a person takes English and then he flunks something else. That doesn't mean that the person's a poor English major—that's not true, you know, because in this working world anyway you find even in engineering people who don't speak good English; they're good engineers! They find

politicians that don't speak very well, but they are good politicians. Some teachers don't speak well—I had an instructor in thermodynamics in college and he was a foreigner, and you couldn't understand the guy; but he pronounced water like fah-ter. He was actually German or something like that and they have a funny accent. This guy had a heavy German accent—you couldn't understand him. Now if he had gone to the University of Hawaii at that time, he would have flunked right out, see? Most of the kids in remedial speech were Orientals or people born in Hawaii of Oriental heritage or Hawaiian heritage or Portuguese or Mexican or Spanish ancestry. Most kids flunk they stood no chance because we all spoke Pidgin English.

[00:20:08.21]

GM: Everyone did?

RM: Most of us did. Only the Whites were the people with parents from the states because they spoke English at home. We [also] spoke English at home, [but] it was Pidgin. (laughs) so in that respect you know, I thought it was unfair because we had to take other things. We had to take physical education [for] four semesters if you were going there for four years. You took the first two years of physical education and for all the guys; we had to take R. O. T. C, which were the requirements. English composition was a requirement [for] everybody and world history was a requirement for everybody. So you've got all this crap the first two years that you had to take, which was very unfair really because now I see you kids going to school here, you don't have all this stuff to take, right?

GM: Well we have requirements.

RM: Yeah, but you have a—not all this junk? I took a lot of more junk. I really think so, I think a lot of requirements they had were language. That's why I took Japanese, which was to me at that time—I looked at it (as) a waste of time. (Laughs) But another thing I took was zoology—that's right, I took zoology. So as I look back now, I took so much junk. I guess after that I just decided to get out of U of H you know, which wasn't a bad school, but it was small at that time. I think the student body in 1947 or 48 or whatever period was about seven thousand. Understand they have a student body of forty thousand now; it's really huge, too big anyway. So I just got up and went to Denver. That's where I started my engineering. Then after that I left Denver, I went to Iowa I never told you that. And then from there I went to the army and from the army I got out, went back to Denver and finished, you know graduated. But some of my best and worst memories were I guess in the army, you know?

GM: Um-hm.

RM: They were the funniest—some of some funny incidents and then some really sad moments. I think of the time I was in the army and then went back to Denver to school before graduation, you know. To me anyway it seems like my best and worst years, you know? Sad years too but you know like when I was in the army when I first went in, I got drafted, I went to Chicago and I got inducted at a place called Fort Sheraton, Illinois.

Then from there we went to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, which is the military training camp at that time. Everybody knew about all the basic training camps throughout the nation. And we knew about Fort Ord, California, Schofield Barracks, Fort Lee and all these other places so when they put up a huge map, and they said all the guys (are) going to Indiantown Gap. No one knew where Indiantown Gap was, everybody started looking on the map and somebody said, "Here it is in Pennsylvania!" you know between Pittsburg and Philadelphia. We went to training over there; started in September and ended in the last week of January. I like to talk about that mainly because we had some characters—I mean, these guys were characters. How they got drafted into the army, I don't know. I don't think I ever told you but we had two guys with [an] IQ, I think were down about fifty, in the mud. I mean this guy's mind was so slow I think it was very unfair that he even got drafted into the army. One guy was from Wisconsin and the other guy was from the Midwest too. Because they were two characters, at that time training was funny and it was sad; sad in that these guys—well the way they were treated, you know?

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Like a mockery, really. One guy happened to be in my squad I became a squad leader and this guy came to my squad. The other guy was in the other platoon (inaudible) _____ in the rifle company basic training there's four platoons so I was in second platoon and this kid from, I think he's from Wisconsin; he wasn't a big guy he was about five feet-three. Small guy and he had clothes inspection, you know. Well we go out in the fields training and we all stood out there and we fall out in the morning for inspection. Every morning we fell out for inspection. One day we fell out for inspection and the foot Sergeant Mitalla, "Hill, where's your rifle?" and the kid couldn't remember his rifle, were he left his rifle. So the whole company falls out looking for his rifle and its cold, below zero. Really cold; were out there—and were up in the mountains among all the trees looking for a rifle. We couldn't find it, we fell back again, you see. "Hill did you bring the rifle up here?" The kid looks at the side and he says, "Oh yeah, I forgot the rifle back at the camp." (laughs) We laughed because it was so funny; it's sad but it's funny you know because where out there just freezing, you know? That was one time I remember. The same kid—when we got there, two guys would share a tent. Nobody wanted to sleep with him. In the army when you go out there each guy carries a shelter half—we call it a shelter half. So with one guys half and the other guys half you make a tent, you see. So since I was the squad leader, I was given him. (laughs) That evening, just about sunset we started making camp, way out in the hills again. And I tell him, "Okay Hill I—I'll give you instructions [on] how to put the tent together." You see I said, "This is the way you put the tent together on this half". I tell him, "Okay so you start from that half, that end, I start from this end. As we progressed—we came to the middle he'd done it all wrong. So I had to do his half and my half and I had to take my gloves off, you know to do it because you can't work with gloves on. It's so cold, so I'm putting the tent all together, put up the tent and I go out and chop branches off a tree to put on the ground to keep warm in the tent. Time to go to bed, I get a sleeping bag out, put it down for him in the tent, put mine out and then practically put the guy into bed.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Yeah, he was that helpless. It was really bad. One time we had a clothes inspection in the barracks and what they do is they have a bunk made out, and have all the clothing on it; all the clothing that you were issued. You know your short[s] your t-shirt, your woolen sweater and everything else. You put it all in the bed, your rifles and your boots, your extra boots, your socks, and everything else; your coat and everything's all hung up there. So on this particular day this guy is standing there and the sergeant comes through, supply sergeant comes through and he starts checking off; okay here we got this, we got that, now where is your woolen sweater? So we started looking around and checked the bed, looked under the sheet, no woolen sweater. So the sergeant says, he looks ahead and he says, "Hill, are you sure you don't have it on?" Oh yeah! (laughs) He had his thing on, you see. It was so funny but sad, because Christmas time came and it was nineteen what? Fifty—fifty-one yeah, Christmas 1951. Time to go and people got leave, everybody had leave. He's from the Wisconsin area; there were quite a few kids from Wisconsin. So we made sure or the sergeant and the lieutenant made sure that he went home with those guys and he came back with those guys because he didn't know how to travel. A whole bunch of them went back you see and he came back with the same guys, otherwise he'd get lost.
[00:30:40.09]

And then another kid in the next platoon—he was a bigger guy—he was about five feet ten. Now here's a guy that was little sharper than this "Hill" but he couldn't kick in step. In the parade you see the company going like that and one hit the other, you know, out of step all the time and he was a guy who couldn't keep step, at all. But, you know, the selected service should [have] made the guy 4-F[1] and never [should] have taken him. But that's what they've done. And of course we had—like in the organization we had rules [and] regulations and when we got out to Didwack you know—Didwack is the time we go out for two weeks up in the mountains, you know and train, see? You sleep in a sleeping bag and your tent for two weeks. You never come back. We had a Didwack and the first two weeks of January when it snowed, and it snowed, and it snowed. Of course the one thing he said is, "there will be no liquor, no liquor at all to be taken up at Didwack," he said. So we were up there at Didwack and one day we got up about 4:30 each morning when it [was] pitch black. [When] we get up you are supposed to shave, you know? There's no hot water to shave with though so we just get cold water and shave, you see? And, um, and then after that we get our breakfast, we fell out for formation again and it [was] still black. Then we fell out for policing the area and we looked for trash or whatever you can find. This is all in the dark now. (laughs) So we come back and after that about six o'clock we go off to whatever you've got to do for the day; artillery training, or crawling around on your stomach into fox hole, or whatever you have to do, you see? Mortar training or whatever, that day we came back about 4 o'clock and we fell back in formation and the company commander during the day had gone from tent to tent and he found *liquor*!

GM: Oh.

[1] **4-F** - Registrant not qualified for military service

RM: So he called everybody out and he says, "I told you guys before you left camp there would be no liquor" So he pulls out this bottle of liquor and spills it out, you see. And these two guys were caught. We had outhouses out there and being that it was so muddy, when people go in the outhouse [they] track all this mud in there. So what happened? Those two guys were given a toothpick and a toothbrush. Every time somebody came to the outhouse they snapped to attention, saluted the guys and when the guy walked out, cleaned the entire place with toothbrush.

GM: Oh boy!

RM: Twenty-four hours now. That was the punishment to teach somebody that [when] you have rules, you follow rules. Because if you don't have it there would be chaos, right?

GM: (Laughs)

RM: Those two guys finally broke down and cried because the punishment was so severe. But you know it is a part of training. You have got to have an army, an army has to go by the rules, you know? So those were things that were really something. Another thing that—when I was a squad leader—I guess I was the shortest guy in my squad. In fact, I was about the shortest guy in the *platoon*! (laughs) I think there were just a few guys about my height in the whole company, which is about two hundred and forty guys. So—what I did is I appointed a guy [who] was about six feet' one as my assistant squad leader. You know, a tough guy (laughs) anything that's dirty comes up I tell him, you see? You tell so-and-so that this [has] got to be done you see. That's the way to do it. And then I remember one time we were out in the mountains and it was so cold that other squads had fire going on. So I told the guys in my squad go out and chop firewood. This one big Black guy, he must have been over six feet' two, *huge* guy! He tells me, "I ain't gonna chop firewood!" and I said, "Nathan, you don't have to chop a single piece of wood at all," you know? "You don't have to do a thing, but when our fire starts going, you aint gonna come around the fire." (laughs) "You can stay out there and freeze!" So the next minute he's out there chopping wood. (laughs) So I figured wow that was good psychology because he was cold, I was cold and—everybody was feeling cold. You can't tell him that he [has to] chop wood. But if you realize what's [going to] happen if he don't, you know for his own sake you know he[']s [going to] chop wood. I found that at that time, I guess there weren't too many Oriental's out there—very few. So I remember those guys—they look at me not knowing what I was or who I was. That was very interesting. Although we had one guy in our platoon who was a full-blooded Sioux Indian, we had another guy who was French Indian, I forgot the guy's name though. But the Sioux Indian he was really funny and he turned out to be a middle weight boxer for our company. He turned out boxing, he was really good. I only regret that I didn't keep up, you know? Writing to these guys, you know? After a while, you know you never think about the future, you see at that time. But you figure that someday you can go and visit—especially these guys that are Sioux Indian because they have rich heritage. But I used to talk with him and he'd come around, he'd punch because he's *good*, you know! And nobody bossed him around. (laughs) But he wasn't a cocky guy either. He was more easy going—easier. And the, the other guy was he was a friendly guy too. Another guy

we had in our company our platoon was—his name was Jokerst J-o-k-e-r-s-t and what he used to do was uh—what was funny with him is that his bunk was next to a guy named Jones. See Jones and Jokerst, see?

GM: Oh yeah.

RM: So Jokerst [would] go out [and] wash his clothes you know. And when he came back he put a newspaper on Jones's bed and all his newspapers are lying about real good, then he hung the wet laundry over Jones's bed (laughs) and Jones comes back he says, "how come you put the paper on my bunk" he says, "well because the water might come down to the bed you see". "That's to prevent your bed from getting wet" (laughs) "why don't you hang it over your bunk?" he said, "my bunk is gonna get wet!" (laughs) "So I hung it over your bunk, and put newspaper on *your* bunk!" That was real logic you know? And of course Jones was a guy that liked to drink beer.

GM: Uh-huh?

RM: And I remember one time, the time that we did go out we went to have beer once and the first thing he did—he always did one thing—and that is, let's go to the bar, you know? Wherever we'd go, let's go to the bar. So one year we went to (inaudible) _____ the weekend, you know. We had a four day pass so we went to New York City.

GM: Oh.

RM: The four of us, this guy Jones I forgot the [other] two guys name, and myself. We went to the Pennsylvania station. You know, we got off, and we went to the hotel, we checked in at the hotel and we were going—I forgot where we were going but anyway the first thing [when] we got down to the lobby, let's go to the bar. So we went to the bar and then we walked around town and went up [the] Empire State Building and everywhere we went we walked. We could see the Empire State building was at least two miles away and we walked it anyway because—we were in tip-top condition. And then one day we went to Madison Square Garden to watch a hockey game, and we got off, before we got to Madison Square Garden, let's go to the bar. So we ended up in the bar and from there we went to see the hockey game. We got up—to the bar! You know. We check back in the hotel, to the bar! So everywhere we went, it was always the bar because he liked to drink. Even back at camp we had a regimental bar, you know? (car driving by) So every time he got a chance, to the bar; we all parade to the bar. But that's why I can remember these guys, the guys who were funny. They did things differently; you'll always remember. Like him I remember, um, another guy he called himself a "homo", he got beat up by these uh—the cadre and some other guys. He was a homo—he said he was—in so many words and they beat him up. (laughs)

[00:41:14.19]

GM: Oh boy!

RM: Because at that time I guess people just didn't buy it. But today I don't know, the attitudes have changed over the years, so I remember that guy. Several guys—well one guy we had from southern Illinois he had a radio and he played hillbilly music, *always*! So that's another guy I can remember because they always told (him) to shut the darn thing *off*! And he always said, "You come here, you turn'em off!" Then of course the other thing they always used to do is the short bed—short shift, you know in the army. And I remember one time this one kid they picked on he was not a strong kid. He was kind of a sissy type, they always picked on him and one night they picked him up, packed him tight in the bed, [and] carried the whole bed into the bathroom. (laughs) But you know if you tend to be weak, that's what they do. Another kid—he was one of those guys that never took a shower. I remember once we had an all-night session and the training was in the evening you'd crawl like about fifty, sixty feet. You just crawl in the evening—you'd crawl to the fox-hole, you'd crawl in the fox hole, you stay there until you're relieved, the next guy crawls up and you crawl back. We did that three times in a day, which went up until midnight by the time we got all done. So when we got back, you know, a lot of our platoon, which consisted of about (counts to himself) fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty—about fifty-five guys roughly, maybe more. There were only six guys that took a shower every day. Myself, this Indian kid next to me, Jones, around this guy here—there was about six, seven guys who took a shower every day. There were others that took a shower every other day. This one kid hardly took a shower! (laughs) We all had long johns all the time. This guy's long johns turned yellowish, yellowish-brown. So one day they dragged him—the three or four biggest guys dragged him to the shower. Long johns and all, they got this stiff brush and they scrubbed him.

GM: Oh!

RM: They scrubbed him and the long johns, you know.

GM: Wow.

RM: And of course we always had—we had—what do you call it—inspection in shorts. The sergeant wanted to make sure that everybody had clean shorts so everybody took a shower.

GM: Uh-huh?

RM: So (laughs) stood up in the back, at attention and the sergeant and the first lieutenant would come through there and everybody would be in shorts. They'd come and they'd just inspect everybody that had clean shorts and that they [had] taken a shower. (laughs)

GM: Oh boy.

RM: But, you have to have that because you know when you're sleeping in close quarters, you know, you can't have these smelly guys around.

GM: Yeah (laughs) that's true.

RM: But after that I remember one of the things is that since we're in eastern United States you know near Philadelphia when the training got over. We were wondering where we were [going to] be assigned. At that time the Korean War was going on and there was a Cold war in Europe so all of us were hoping that since we were in the east, we'd fly to Europe. Naturally, because we're nearer to Europe; go to Germany or France get assigned to one of those countries. You know in the N. A. T. O. Force. When we got the orders the following day that almost everybody from our company was going to Korea—you know we had snow on the ground already outside—and guys were running around with shorts on outside. They were so mad—so angry and so frustrated. The guys were running around *all* over the place! Even in the cold weather, they just didn't care already that's how bad it got. Of course during the times in basic they used to have newscasts from Korea about the American army falling back and there getting kicked around and all that and how cold—and you see pictures in Korea of the guys fighting in the snow. It wasn't very encouraging for most of us. Once we got assigned a very few of us got to go to Europe. So from Indiantown Gap, I came to Pittsburg, then California—northern California—a place called Camp Stoneman. So we stopped at Camp Stoneman. Now I had a delayed route to Hawaii then [went] to Korea. So when I was at Camp Stoneman, there were trainees from Hawaii coming across to Camp Stoneman. So I talked to this guy who had trained in Schofield Barracks and a lot of these trainees at Schofield Barracks were from the mainland and were sent to Hawaii for training. They were coming back and they were going to Europe. I told these guys, "How is it that you're training in Hawaii [and] get sent to Europe when you're so close to Korea? Here you were about five thousand miles from Hawaii, closer to Europe and you're getting sent to Korea!" It just didn't make sense. We got to go to Korea, and I got there about a month later than most guys from my training company. A lot of them had been—because I stopped by in Hawaii, I stayed in Camp Stoneman a little longer and that's probably why—and then flew to Korea. But when I got to Korea some of the guys I had trained with had already died—

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: —In battle. Because for my training company I met two guys I trained with. They told me that, Oh you remember so and so? I said, "Yeah." Guy's dead already. I said, "You have got to be kidding me, we just got here!" In a months' time, they're dead. One month. But being in Korea—any place you go to you learn something. Traveling you know—because some people say no you wasted two years of your life, one year of your life, or whatever. But—then go to Japan, you know? I learned things about the country you know? As little as I've seen, you can see pictures, you can see movies, but it's nothing like being there. From there I went to Korea and then I got assigned. I took infantry basic, and when I went to Japan I had a chance to go to a language school in Japan and be an interpreter. I met up in camp in Japan. There were other people from Hawaii. So I told them, "Hey"—you got a chance—they were asking for volunteers to go language school. I said, "Hey why not all of us go to language school." We knew basics of Japanese already. The guy say no, so I decided well we all go to Hawaii, no I mean to Korea. Of course, when I got to Korea, I got assigned to another infantry company, by that time there's no turning back, you can't go to language school any more. They've got

it all fixed up for you so that's when I learned about these guys that [had] died already. All wasn't lost—I guess really when I got there, the war wasn't too bad. That was 1952 because the war started in forty-nine and ended in fifty-three; that's four years. So we got the tail end of the battle you might say, the last—what—one year. Some of the things I remember [are] the sad things. I remember one time we were up on a hill [for] lunch time. Each guy had a good lunch. For our lunch we had one scoop of mashed potatoes, one piece of pork chop, some vegetables, and some bread and butter. That was our lunch, and I guess what the sergeant did—I think he gets this like supply but the mess sergeant he gets jam or jelly. What he does with that, he makes that into a drink. He pours water into a big bag and makes that a strawberry drink, or whatever kind of drink, you see? But he makes that into a drink and we get that to drink, for lunch. And we're eating you know on the top of the hill, and way down there in the valley is a Korean village so we could see one or two Korean kids come up the hill. They came up with an empty gallon can for food and so while were eating, just think, right in front of you, I mean there standing right in front of you with a gallon can, waiting for food, you know—we'd be eating but we can't eat very well (laughs), you know? There's a kid with a gallon can ready for food. So I hardly ate my food, the other guys ate their food and after while you eat some of the pork chop, I throw the bones in the can with a little meat on it; because you have to eat too, you know? You can't give them all your food.
[00:52:29.19]

But I remember that. Another time I remember was [we] had come back from the front line, we got to a weird area nearby the Korean village and near the river—flowing right next to our camp. You [could] see this barbwire going up like that, you know the barb wire fence with two strands of those next to the river. On the other side [of the river] would be the Korean people walking down the street, they're washing their clothes and all that stuff. And it had an opening about so much so that we can go to the river too, you see. So one day I was standing guard there with my rifle, and this old Korean lady comes. She's babbling off and about fifty feet from where this opening is in the barbed wire area is my tent there—squad tent—another squad tent coming, you know, and all this guy's sitting there watching what I'm doing over there; my buddies—so called buddies. This Korean lady comes, and she wants to come through there and she has a gallon can for food; she must have been about seventy years old. Old, old women and all wrinkled on her face and she had a blouse and her skirt and she starts babbling off in Korean to me. She's pointing toward the mess hall, she wants some food. So I told her "Mama San, you can't come in, you can't come in, stay out." So she starts pushing me, and I had my rifle you see. I said, "Mama San you can't come in here" and I had my rifle like this here and she keeps pointing at food. I say, "You can't come in Mama San so the Korean people start gathering on the other side; there's a lot of Korean people. So I talk in Japanese so somebody can tell her in Japanese to Korean that she cannot come in you see? And the guys are back there screaming at me, "Max, Max what are you going to do? What are you going to do?" And the Korean lady she keeps pushing me, but I can't hit her.

GM: Yeah.

[0:54:48.9]

RM: So I just move a little back. And nobody—if they knew how to speak Japanese they didn't say anything. So finally, one of the guys in the back says something like turn around and the old lady just snuck right by me. She took off for the mess hall. The mess hall is just a tin shack you might say. We had just eaten lunch so there was a fifty-five gallon drum of garbage that the people just—you know GIs—had thrown their garbage away. So she just took off back there, she got a gallon can, she scooped the garbage you know? She scooped it up and she reached in there and she started eating. I said, "Mama San you can't do that." By that time the sergeant, the mess sergeant he comes down. He takes off with the old lady, runs out—[saying] you can't do that. He grabs her and he runs back to the mess hall and takes out the boxes of crackers and stuff like that for her. He runs out there and he says, "Mama San you take this" [and] he takes the garbage can away. So Mama San, she gets the crackers and she's happy now. She got food so she takes off right back through the opening. (laughs)

That was quite an experience that I could never forget, you know? And the other one I can distinctly remember is that there were three of us one time—we were at some railroad station or something—one Black guy, myself and a White guy all in G. I. uniform.

GM: Uh-huh.

RM: We came across a little Korean kid. I forgot what he wanted really and so we told them who we were and the kid looks at us and he said, you're a GI. The kid looks at the three of us, he looks the White kid, he says, "You a GI." he looks at the Black guy he says, "You a GI." He looks at me, and says, "You no GI" (laughs) You're same old same old (??) I said, "No, I'm a GI." He says, "you and me are same old, same old (??). You're no GI." You see and that message is telling me is that he recognized the American soldiers as being Black or White, but not as an Oriental. And the other thing is that to me, what he was saying was that no matter what I did or who I say I am—like I say I'm an American—but in my lifetime, I have to always realize that I'm still an Oriental. No matter what, I cannot hide my face, you see. So if a little kid could tell me that, (laughs) it's pretty hard to hide.

GM: Yeah.

RM: And then there were other—you know Korea had been occupied by Japan since 1904 up to the time of World War II until Japan got defeated. So the Korean people really have no love for the Japanese. But the irony of it is that when I was over there, we had Korean soldiers who were attached to our company because when our company went down to half strength they got Korean soldiers [to] come in to our company. We had some of these Korean soldiers who were at one time in the Japanese Imperial Army—they had served in the imperial army and they were good soldiers, very good. These guys would not take any crap off of others. Then we had others who were young kids who were drafted into the Korean army—South Korean army who were in our company. So when they first came in, these guys did not speak any English nor did they speak any Japanese and we had one in our squad, he was an eighteen year old kid. So when he first came in, we spoke to him in English, he didn't speak English, he didn't understand English. So I

spoke to him in Japanese, he didn't speak English, he didn't understand English. So luckily we were not on the frontlines yet. We had come back to—fill up the squads and the company because we were down in strength. So when we were back, we got all these Koreans to train with us and in a short time they learned English—*fast*! This one kid I remember—this eighteen year old kid, every day he'd be in his bunk and he'd be singing Korean songs like he was really sad or lonely. He'd be singing them every day and of course we'd all have training every day. By the time we went back to the frontlines they were all okay. They missed their rice, you know. They never liked potatoes and I can see why being that they were brought up on rice so we had those kinds of guys.

Then, of course, when we had some guys from Hawaii in the company and they would get food from Hawaii. You know packages from their parents and one guy got I think—five or ten pounds of rice from Hawaii. So he went to the mess hall and he told our sergeant to cook the rice. So when the rice was cooked he called all the Korean soldiers. He told the Korean soldiers we have rice. The Korean soldiers were so happy they go to eat rice. One guy [he] got kimchi from Hawaii. When he was half done with it, he gave some to the Koreans ooh they were so happy! And then, this guy picked up the—after all the cabbage is gone—he drank all the juice like water! You know how hot it is, he drank it all like water; -they love it.

[01:01:33.14]

So (pause) then another experience I had was where that evening it rained I guess three days before, we all got drunk because uh—we didn't know when we were going to the frontline. What we did is the guys from Hawaii, the next company and [those of] us from our company—there were about nine of us from Hawaii, we got together and we got some whisky we bought, and we had beer rations and we would get one or two cans of beer per month. That was the worst beer you could get because the beer that came to us, like anything else it come through the channel. It came through the army headquarters, the co-headquarters, division headquarters, regimental headquarters, through the regiment, through the battalion and then finally to the company. Being that we were a rifle company, we were the last on the list; so we got the worst beer. Because if you were of the higher echelon you could see that those guys got Miller's High Life and they get all the good beers, you know? When we got ours, what did we get? Lucky Lager or some of the crappy ones. So that's what we'd get to drink and then we would pay the Belgian soldiers about eighteen dollars for a fifth of whisky. I don't know how much those guys paid but we paid them eighteen dollars and that's how we got our whisky. I remember that evening the guys from Hawaii we got together in a tent and we sang Hawaiian songs and passed the whisky around and chased it down with beer.

GM: Ew.

RM: We had I think two bottles of whisky being passed around and I got sick. I mean, I really got sick. On the third day, that evening the whole company moved out. It rained and it rained and it rained and we finally moved out. And that evening we finally got to the front and we stopped and there was a big bunker up there. So I was in the bunker and someone yells, "Hey Max come out here" there's a Korean soldier and that he wants information—or the Korean major, I think it was a his doctor, a medical doctor. I guess he was looking for the battalion headquarters. He came up so the guys start [saying] Max come up talk to

this guy. So I went up there and talked to him and that guy spoke fluent Japanese, I mean *fluent*!

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Yeah, he made—I was so embarrassed. But fortunately when he asked, some of the words he used I understood. He asked for battalion headquarters so I told him where he was. Then I finally asked him, I said "Where were you educated?" he said in Keio University in Japan. He got his doctor's degree there, you know [a] medical degree and he was practicing in Japan. Then he came finally back to Korea and he served in the Korean army as a medical doctor, so he was no flunky, you know. Then we had another guy who was a sergeant—Korean sergeant—and he was born and raised in Osaka, Japan. When World War II ended, a lot of the Koreans left Japan for Korea because in Japan the Koreans were never treated right, you see? They were the minority.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: They were always the minority in Japan. So when the war ended there, a lot of them went back to Korea. When the war started—the Korean War started, and South Korea was invaded by North Koreans and the Chinese, things got really bad and a lot of them went back to Japan. They—they knew or somehow—they liked Japan better. The living conditions were better because Korea was bad at that time. So he gave me a sad story about his relatives and living here and Pusan[2] in southern Korea and I think he told me something about Japan and that he didn't have money, because the Korean soldiers were paid like four dollars a month. A private was paid one dollar a month, a sergeant was paid four dollars a month. So he said he wanted to go back [when he was on] his leave and see his relatives but he didn't have the money. So I think I gave him twenty dollars, which was a lot of money for the Koreans. I said, okay here's money have a good time and I will see you back here. He never came back (laughs) but I felt sorry for the guy. He spoke Japanese too, a lot of Koreans did but some of them would not admit [it]. But when they talked to you they would ask you in Japanese where you were born and the way they'll ask you is that (states phrase in Japanese). When I said Hawaiian, they were happy.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: See you're a different kind of Japanese now; you're a good guy now. If you were from Japan you were a bad guy. But the magic of it is Hawaii; somehow Hawaii had a magic tune to them. So when I told them as well as other Koreans I met I would talk to them and say, "I'm from Hawaii even though I'm Japanese" they were so happy.

GM: They're more open?

RM: Yeah, very open then. So that was good enough for me. I don't know why it would be that way, but I guess the Japanese in Japan didn't treat them right. (laughs) But then of course

[2] It can be spelled Pusan but it is commonly known as Busan, South Korea.

we had worse experiences than that. You know what people—I guess people [don't] think that the enemy soldiers have feelings. A lot of times they think that Koreans or Chinese have this mass charge. During the Korean War they would blow bugles and they would come charging over wave after wave. I remember when I was over there, this one Chinese soldier surrendered to our company and he was so happy. He was just all smiles; he came up in his smile. The war was over for him, he surrendered he was happy. Those guys don't want to die; we don't want to die either. Then being that I was in the—we were taking care of the communications. Our battalion had a guy from Maui, a Japanese guy, he spoke Japanese. So they had a Japanese guy who spoke Japanese, they had a Chinese guy that spoke Chinese and Japanese, and they had a Korean guy that spoke Chinese and Korean. No matter what the enemy said, they had somebody that could intercept their messages on the radio. I remember one time this guy said that they intercepted a Korean, no a Chinese patrol—this was about a week now—Christmas? By that time of Christmas or January, you know, it was really cold. Well this Chinese patrol was out there and this guy was calling in—he was telling his company commander, "Hey we want to come back in, its cold out here." The company commander told them no, don't come back in yet. An hour later the same guy calls again—this was a Chinese soldier, a communist Chinese, he called back wanting to come back in—it was cold, you know? The company's commander told them don't come back yet. (laughs) And here we were thinking all that time that the Chinese soldiers can take the cold, but they were just as cold as we were, you know? They didn't like to be out there any more than we did because when we were out there in the cold, we wanted to come back too. Not realizing it's like a man and an animal and they see each other in the forest, two guys take off in the opposite direction. It's the same thing with us, if that guy had his chance, he'd take off one way, and I'd take off the other way. You know nobody wants to die, nobody wants to fight.

GM: Yeah.

[01:11:03]

RM: But everybody—maybe the Western world thinks that the Orientals like to fight, they like to die. That's not true (pause) we're all scared, you know? Every time I went out I was scared. People think that just because a guy is a veteran he's not afraid. Maybe he's not afraid, but he's scared as all hell. (laughs) I remember one time I was out there, my hair—I thought my hair stood up like that.

GM: Right. (laughs)

RM: Yeah, I was really scared. I thought my helmet was going to come off my head, it wasn't but that's how I felt. And you can't help it, you don't like to think about it but that's how scared you get.

GM: Uh-huh.

RM: Or you get tired you know? When you get tired—really tired that's when you feel like saying all heck with everything I wish I was dead. I came across that condition one time.

I was so dead tired and I said well heck I don't care already. That was the night that we went out on a patrol, a five man patrol. The irony of it was that I was the smallest guy in the patrol and everybody else was about six feet tall. And I had the most weight on me because I was carrying a radio that weighed twenty-eight pounds. So you had an armored vest that weighed nine pounds and all your gear. So you go out, you stay out from six o'clock one evening to six o'clock the next morning and it rained all night. I guess the purpose of the patrol was to go out and find if the stream was flooded so the Koreans or Chinese couldn't cross over. Then we got lost so all night long we were wandering around and the radio wasn't working where we were. By early morning just before dawn I guess we were all tired, and I told one of the guys, "Hey you carry my radio now, I'm so tired." This guy carries it about two hundred yards and he gives it back to me. I'm tired, you think you're tired and I'm the smallest guy, I should be really tired, you know? So we finally—all of us decided we're too tired now, we just fall on our backs and go to sleep. It's raining so all of us right on our back go to sleep with the rain pouring and I said to myself, I don't care if the Chinese come right now and shoot me. That's how we felt, we were so tired. That's the only time in my life I felt like that.

GM: Oh wow.

RM: But I guess everybody in life would come across situations like that, you know? I don't think I'm the only guy, I suppose guys that fought in Europe or the pacific; I think they felt like that too. I'm almost sure.

GM: The others felt that way too?

RM: Hm?

GM: The others with you felt that same way?

RM: Yeah—Mmhm (pause). It's frustrating at times, you get angry and you get frustrated. You have happy moments and sad moments, moments that you like to recall and moments you would like to forget. Like yourself, you work at Disneyland and somebody makes it a day for you by making you happy you know? So you have had those times too. (pause) Of course the happiest time was when they told me, You're ready to rotate home. (laughs) I remember that day because I said whelp rotation time, you earn your thirty-six points and the truck would come around. I grabbed my duffel bag, my rifle, threw it in the back of the truck and I told the guys from Hawaii I wish you guys all the luck. By that time we were all singing, So long it's been good to know you! (laughs) So you roll off in the truck and of course they never gave us ammunition, they should have really. But you are riding on a truck with empty rifles. Then we got back and what was funny was that all the time [when] I was over there with ammunition for my rifle we never saw any animals, not even a dog or a cow, nothing. So the day we are going back to the battalion or regimental headquarters, what comes out? A silver fox comes running out; a *beautiful* silver fox! Nobodies got ammunition (laughs) Nobody. Another time was—you know of the Samoans?

GM: Um-hm.

RM: Well we hate—when I first went over there we were at Incheon or Seoul, Korea, I forgot where. They call it the repo depot—the replacement depot where all the replacements come in. We had one Samoan guy with us, and there was about eight or nine of us from Hawaii, the Samoan guy was from Hawaii too. Samoan's are known for their temper so that night we were in the tent and all of us from Hawaii were talking. Somehow we had this comradeship you know you might call it, we were always close. We were talking and each tent had a tent commander. He wasn't an officer, but they appointed somebody to be a tent commander. It just so happened that evening they had made a Puerto Rican guy from Puerto Rico a tent commander. We were talking and it must have been about eight or nine o'clock, the guy says, "Will you guys shut up and go to bed?" We didn't say anything, we just kept talking; we were not very loud. The Puerto Rican guy said one more time, "Will you guys shut up and go to bed" and by that time this guy—the Samoan—he walks up to the Puerto Rican guy and I—I forgot exactly what happened that time—all I know is, the Samoan punched the Puerto Rican guy right in the *mouth*! *Pow*! And the Puerto Rican guy went over, and he twitched like that, you see? We got scared because we thought he was going to die. He started twitching, [and] then he was okay so everything was okay after that [and] we went to bed. The following morning at six o'clock we heard a huge commotion. Somebody said, "Samoa you better get the hell out of the tent," and he took off but that night—oh yeah—that night I know what we did one of the guys from Hawaii, uh, got a carbine[3] from somewhere, a fully loaded carbine because he figured the Puerto Ricans were going to retaliate. So that morning Samoa took off when the Puerto Ricans came, about fifty of them came out to get Samoa; we call him Samoa you see. The Samoan guy took off with a first inside tent, you know for protection. They chased him to the tent; they came in our tent and they looked at us. We were feeling like boy this Puerto Rican is going to beat us up. Then the Puerto Ricans say, We don't want you guys, we want that guy that took off. So that day, they took Samoa out of our compound and took him to another compound for safety (laughs) because those Puerto Ricans are really mean, you know. They get awfully mean, but it's there lifestyle you see? They were just like the guys from Hawaii they always unite with [other] Puerto Ricans. The Mexicans do too, they always stick together. The Hawaiians are like that [also]; people from Hawaii they have what Hawaiians call the (Ho-e)—the gathering of people, like a clan. The fact that you [are] from Hawaii regardless of your ethnic background means that when you go out, you stay united. During the war years that's what happened in Hawaii. If you [saw] a fellow Hawaiian in trouble against a mainlander you would help them. The old word, Hawaii kōkua, means help, you kōkua right away. It's good and it's bad because you might help a guy that actually caused trouble.

[01:20:46.03]

GM: Oh, I see.

[3] Carbine – pronounced Car-Bean; is a long gun firearm

RM: That guy might be all wrong, you know! Maybe the guy from the mainland was a good guy and the Hawaiian was a bad guy; you helped the bad guy. But in a lot of respects the ability of the Hawaiians to help each other is good. I think that's going away too though because more and more of the people are leaving. The old natives come to the mainland to work; a whole bunch of them because there is no work in Hawaii. That's how it was in Korea too. Even when the 442 went to Europe when and mainland during the war—World War II, they always helped each other out even when they fought the Japanese here. In the camp the Hawaiians always united; mainlanders didn't. I remember a lot of fights between G. I.s and native Hawaiians.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Yeah always, they would gang up on one or two sailors like ten of them would gang up on him and beat him up.

GM: Oh, this is in Hawaii?

RM: Yeah, um-hm. But that's the way it was. I think there's less and less of that now. (pause) Yeah, by the time I left, the war was almost over in Korea because I left in April or May—April and the war ended—a truce, you know, a cease fire, that's another truce—but there was never a truce signed, even till today. They still attend mahjong and argue about it. (laughs) Armistice, you might call it an armistice has never has been signed because when I left I think about a month later they had the Battle of Pork Chop Hill. I think a movie came out [about it]. They fought over a hill that meant nothing, absolutely nothing to the Americans or the Chinese. It had no strategic or military value at *all*! See the Americans were on top of it already and it was sort of a political thing for the North Koreans and Chinese to attack it and to chase the Americans off, that's all it was. Something they could argue over and attend mahjong, you see, that's all. No value at all and for that, the Chinese lost a lot of people. The Americans held on because when I was over there we weren't too far from it, very near that, and too many times I think the Chinese fought for [a] hill for nothing. You know they could send forty thousand men up there (laughs) and get them all wiped out. You figure China has what, eight hundred million people, almost a billion so they can throw man power in there and not even, flinch at all. If we were to send that many guys we would get wiped out.

GM: (laughs) Yeah.

RM: So (pause) any other questions about the time period? The other thing that was funny on a troopship, you hear stories about guys getting sea sick and the crowded conditions. Um—uh troopship going to Korea was five—the sleeping quarters—had five bunks piled up like that. To get up there—these are the bunks like that, you put your one foot here, one foot here, one foot here. But coming back from Korea and Japan we had three or four high, I forget now. We had them stacked up like that—I think it was four high—I can't remember that. But every day on board—it took eighteen days to travel from Japan to Korea to Hawaii on a troopship, and every day we would either be playing cards or

polishing our boots. Every day you'd be polishing your boots, there's nothing else to do, you know? If you are not playing cards you would be polishing your boots.

GM: No books?

RM: No books. Books were hard to come by if there [were] any. So the ship was segregated —the bow of the ship—I don't know how much portion of it was all for guys going to Hawaii and getting off in Hawaii. The center section of the ship was for the mainlanders, and the aft was for the Puerto Ricans who were going back to Puerto Rico. So what happens is that when we went to chow, the guys from Hawaii would make sure they would get there first, ahead of the chow line. And the Puerto Ricans we went as a group. If there was about six of them, later on there'd be more guys from Hawaii and they would all cut in there. (laughs) The Puerto Ricans did the same thing too. Except the mainlanders—they had no unity. The Hawaiian guys always had unity, Puerto Ricans had unity, but the mainlanders didn't have nothing, they were out of luck. But that always happened and if the mainlanders wanted to say something the guys from Hawaii would say, What did you guys say? and there would be one or two guys from the mainland but they had no unity, so those guys would just shut up. The Puerto Ricans were the same—they would be doing the same thing as us you know? The mainlanders wouldn't gang up on them because they were together. But the strange thing about it is that the Hawaii guys and the Puerto Ricans never got to fight each other.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Because somehow we understood because we had Puerto Ricans too in our group from Hawaii. We were a mixed group and we were I think more or less on their level. If you look at it, we were minorities too same as they were. We had Puerto Ricans, we had Filipinos, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, you know, all these different ethnic groups that made up the bunch from Hawaii. So in that sense we were unique and yet we banded together. So we had guys with ukuleles and we would sing the records from Hawaii that we had?

GM: Yeah.

RM: There were one of two songs this guy used to always sing. He'd play the ukulele and we would all sing together, we had a good time really. That guy was a sergeant and he went out for boxing. He was a light heavy weight or heavy weight boxer; pretty good size Hawaiian. He was a very gentle guy, he wasn't like a Samoan. Hawaiians are known to be gentle compared—easy going, casual, that's the basic nature of the Hawaiians. Then you take the Samoans; they're high strung, hot tempered, and very aggressive. Although they are basically Polynesian they are different in that respect. Their language is similar their foods are similar, but their temperament is quite different. Samoan's are bigger, but in I know in Japan when we were coming back we ate their food and their food was no problem for us. We went to a restaurant, and I think I told you one time that the Japanese people don't eat left handed.

GM: Yeah.

RM: So we were at this restaurant and this Hawaiian guy, the same Hawaiian guy was left handed. So he picked up a chopstick eating left handed in the restaurant and the waitresses all came around the table and they spoke in Japanese saying that he's left handed. We didn't think anything of it, but apparently what they were trying to tell us was that you don't eat left handed in Japan, it's not proper etiquette. But we didn't care, Hawaiians eat any way, you know? (laughs) It's the Hawaiian way; you can't be choosy about how you eat. (laughs) (inaudible) _____ your mouth.

Another thing in Japan, when we were coming back they always use to tell the cadre and the replacement companies, Okay you pineapples, fall out. (laughs) All our white guys (laughs) (inaudible) _____ yeah we were called the pineapples, it was funny. I think though like, if you travel you get more things to talk about. Because I know when I took—at university of Hawaii we had English composition class. Those guys who were veterans and had traveled had the most to write about.

GM: Yeah.

RM: Those that didn't do anything had nothing to write about. (laughs) And I know that if I were to go back to a composition class, I think I would have more things to write about today, more interesting things, you know? It's almost like if you haven't gone anywhere all you have is dullsville.

GM: Yeah—that's true.

RM: Is it almost over?

[1:32:31.0]

GM: Okay why don't we just finish this by, um—any other last things you want to say about the war?

RM: Well another thing I've never talked about—you know grandma?

GM: Yeah.

RM: We—we hardly talk about her. We always talk about grandpa and where he came from. Everybody thinks that grandma was born in Japan but she wasn't, she was born in Hawaii—

GM: Yeah.

RM: —Maui and I guess as far as I know, grandma lived with her parents until she was about twelve and she left Maui and went to Oahu to live.

GM: With her parents?

RM: No with her uncle and auntie. Remember Tiwana West?

GM: Yeah.

RM: The place we went? Okay, prior to that—that's where her auntie and uncle lived the last time and we always called her auntie and uncle, *ojīchan* and *o bāchan,* "grandpa and grandma", because to her, they were almost like parents because she lived with them. She went to school until she was in about the eighth grade because, if you don't live with your own parents, it's kind of hard really because when she went to the—her *o bāchan*'s maiden name is Noda and she lived with Takeuchi in Oahu. The Takeiuchi's brought her up until she was about seventeen, which was when she got married. So she lived in Takeiuchi's for about five years at least. So to her, they're sort of like her brothers and sisters. There were let's see, one, two, three, four, five—five or six in the family and she joined them making about seven. So when we were kids we always used to go and visit them. The whole family went to visit them, and we had good times there at the Takeuichi's. It was really fun because—her cousins who we call auntie and uncle in a sense, the younger ones were almost our age so we had a real nice time there. Then I think she married when she was about seventeen I think, to grandpa. She was seventeen or eighteen—I forget.

GM: Pretty young.

RM: Yeah, and of course the law at that time—I think it was before 1923 or sometime there about, I think I told you that if she married an alien she would lose her citizenship, and I don't know when she got married. I think it was um—maybe after that time so she never knew if she had lost her citizenship. So that's why when she went to Japan, she always came back before two years was up.

GM: Oh.

RM: If she stayed over two years she was not sure if she could come back. That's why Uncle Henry had told her, "don't worry you can always come back on one thing only and that is that you have your sons and daughters all living here, either in Hawaii or here. The fact—

(Audio recording stops)

GM: Talking about having the sons and daughters in Hawaii as a guarantee

RM: Yeah um-hm. That where we found out anyway because when they were in Japan we got old immigration law papers stating that even though your visa expires while your overseas you can always come back if all your children are here. Because you know Uncle Shimi's brother, he's a lawyer in Hawaii and he's the one that sent us the paper, but it didn't really matter because now they're living in Hawaii anyway so it's immaterial. But at that time we were trying to tell them at least you don't have to come back, stay there more than two years. Plus the fact that as far as we knew, grandma was an American citizen, but she always thought she had lost her citizenship. I don't know if

it was a good law or if the law was directed only at Asiatics or not. It didn't seem like the—Europeans were affected by it. I guess at that time they had many laws, which were very biased and prejudiced. I think a lot of the laws are being gradually removed because you think of all the Vietnamese and Filipino's and Koreans and Japanese and Chinese coming over here, you know? And one time I know there was an Asian exclusion act that stopped them from coming here, so I think they have removed that too. So I guess, that's why—grandma is a good baker too because she was telling us that when she was young she had worked in a bakery and learned to bake.

GM: Yeah—hm.

RM: I guess living away from home, you get to cook. You're forced to do a lot of things you normally don't do. But I don't know the place that she used to live when she was that age was right around Pearl Harbor all around the Pearl of Aiea—Pearl City, in that general vicinity. But it's strange, despite how small Oahu is the fact that they come from Aiea and Pearl City makes them country jacks. When they come to Honolulu they—they act like country jacks.

GM: Oh yeah?

RM: Oh yeah, really terrible because I have an Uncle Minolo who lives in Aiea and Aiea is not too far from Honolulu, [maybe] four or five miles. When he comes to town, you could swear the guy came out of the hills. His language and the way he dresses, that guy was a real hillbilly, geez.

GM: (laughs)

RM: Even my auntie who is married to him acted like that, so terrible. You can drive from Honolulu to Aiea in about ten minutes [now], it's not that far. But during the old days I guess people just didn't travel or didn't have transportation you know? So when you come from the other side of that little knob you are practically a hillbilly.

GM: Okay well thanks for doing this interview again. And we'll continue some other time.

END OF INTERVIEW