







YOSHITO SHIBATA

I was born in December 1917 in Mt. Eden, a small village in Alameda County where my parents had purchased acreage to farm. I attended the Mt. Eden Elementary School where the student body was mostly composed of children from the surrounding farms. After the regular school hours I went to the Japanese school across the street with other Niseis for a few hours for lessons in the language and culture of my Issei parents. At Hayward Union High School I took college preparatory courses and upon graduation was accepted by the University of California in Berkeley for the class of 1939. However, my educational plans were severely impacted on September 1, 1939. World War II started with Adolf Hitler's forces attacking Poland. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later. On September 16, 1940 the United States adopted the Selective Service and all men between age 21 and 26 had to register for military training. Eleven days later on September 27, 1940 Germany, Italy and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact for joint action if United States enters war. I opted for the one year service and was inducted on June 5, 1941 into the U.S. Army.

MILITARY RECORD

June 1941 I became a private in Co. "C" 85th Inf. Tng. Bn. at Camp Roberts, California.

Sept 1941 I was transferred to Fort Lewis, Washington to be a clerk in the Post Finance. I became Tec 4 grade in finance on Feb 1, 1942 and Tech Sgt on May 18, 1942.

June 1942 I was transferred to a finance position at Camp Crowder, Missouri. While there I was recruited for the Military Intelligence Service Language School in Savage, Minnesota.

Oct 1942 I was selected for one of several teams for the single purpose of recruiting volunteers for the MISLS from the ten War Relocation Centers.

May 1943 I departed Camp Savage, Minnesota with a contingent of forty Nisei MISLS graduates for Pacific assignments.

July 1943 I was attached to the 6th Army Headquarters in Brisbane Australia. I worked with ATIS in Indooroopilly while waiting for assignment for combat duty.

December 1943 TDY with the First Marine Division landing at Cape Gloucester, New Britain on December 26, 1943.

September 1944 I was with the 31st Infantry Division landing at Morotai, Halmaheras.

April 1945 I was with the 31st Infantry Division landing at Mindanao, Philippines.

October 1945 31st Infantry Division Language Detachment's personnel were transferred to the newly activated 179th Language Detachment. I was appointed 2nd Lt. as per T/O.

January 1946 I was discharged from active duty and placed in the reserves. I re-entered the University of California as a senior with the help of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, (G.I. Bill).

My reserve appointment expired in April 1953.

MILITARY RECOLLECTIONS

FORT LEWIS - 1941. The office staff of the Post Finance was having a birthday party for me when a soldier rushed in yelling "Pearl Harbor is being attacked!". Radios were turned on and every station was broadcasting the same horrible and unbelievable news. The Warrant Officer on duty that day must have seen my shocked face. He ordered me to call my family in California. While talking to my brother who was not aware of the bombing of Hawaii, the phone went dead. Before the party broke up, the sensitive staff (mostly Irish), seeing the stunned face of a Nisei soldier, sang "Happy Birthday" and announced from that day on I would be known as Gerald O'Shibata, (Jerry).

CAMP SAVAGE - 1942. It was some time in the fall of 1942 when I was summoned to the Camp Savage office. To my complete surprise I was informed that I had been selected for a special assignment. Teams were being formed for the single purpose of recruiting volunteers for the Military Intelligence Service Language School from the ten War Relocation Authority camps. I did not know how or when I was selected. For that matter I was not told who else had been chosen. We were to leave immediately since more candidates were urgently needed for the next class. They became aware that the anticipated demand for MIS trained linguists exceeded by far the available supply. Tremendous pressure fell on the commandant and staff to step up the tempo of training in order to "crank out" more linguists. This was more easily said than done. As students we could not help but feel the intense push. All we can remember was the long hours of cram, cram, cram -----.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RECRUITERS. From its inception the formation of the MISLS at the San Francisco Presidio was kept highly classified. It became more so after moving to Minnesota. Our orders were to maintain absolute secrecy about our training and mission. The primary reason was to keep the Japanese military from learning as long as possible that we were rapidly

overcoming any language barrier to critical information whether written or spoken. Also of concern was that the safety of the MIS linguists' families and relatives might be compromised by unwarranted publicity. We tried to maintain a low profile on our recruiting tour but it was difficult. The trio in Army uniform, a tall white Major and two short Asian NCO's traveling together couldn't help but raise curiosity. Hence, we were warned about having our photos taken, giving interviews, attracting any publicity or talking about the secret school at Camp Savage.

RECEPTION AT THE WRA CENTERS. The directors of the WRA Centers were cooperative and helpful but were not involved in our team's recruiting mission. Most of the time they spoke only to the Major so we relied on the internees to keep us posted on various camp happenings, good or bad. The internees on the whole were warm and friendly towards us in uniform in spite of their trying circumstance. Many families with sons already in the service wished us well. Those who came to hear our low key and matter-of-fact presentation were orderly and attentive. The war was only ten months old since Pearl Harbor and one could only surmise the tremendous hardship endured both mentally and and physically by these evacuated people. Many questions were asked but we were not aware of any cynicism or sarcasm in their choice of words. On a one-to-one basis the young Nisei who wanted to join were more talkative and open. We felt great empathy for those who did not pass the language tests as they were eager to join. In fact we did lower the requirements for some individuals on the borderline until we were instructed to stop by headquarter. For me it was shocking to see thousands and thousands of innocent people imprisoned behind barbed wire fences with armed guards watching. We had received very little news at Camp Savage of the evacuation details and absolutely no pictures at all of the WRA camps. We were most concerned then of the after effects on the minds of the young as well

as on the old from the trauma of being forcibly uprooted from their homes on the west coast. How most of the evacuees were able to adjust their lives and carry on without freedom was beyond our comprehension. We can only attribute it to the strong family structure built by the pioneer Isseis.

HUMAN INTEREST. There are many stories to be told but two scenes are still vivid in my mind. The first is the barrack scene where the new recruit tells his family of his decision and is leaving immediately. We were extremely tense not knowing beforehand what their reaction would be. It was with great relief when the entire family gave their son tremendous support and blessing. The combination of the son's determination to prove loyalty to his country of birth and the expression of the alien parents' continued faith in America was truly inspiring. One often wished at times like this there were English equivalents for the feelings raised by the Japanese words such as Giri, On, Dokyo, Haji, Kuro, Shinbo, Gambare, Arigatai, or the Issei ladies gentle voice saying as we were leaving, "Karada wo daiji ni". You couldn't help but return the bow.

Another scene is of the new recruits having left camp and waiting at the train station for transport to Camp Savage. I saw a myriad of changes in their faces, bodies, voices, thinking, actions, moods, smile, and eyes in particular when they suddenly realize they are "free". It was one of the few times on our recruiting trip we couldn't help but smile and laugh. However, it was more than a caged animal or bird being set free. They were grateful as well as happy to finally have the chance to serve their country, to prove loyalty, to bring honor to the family, and to somehow hope for some changes in the thinking of many misguided people back home. They were going to give all, come "Hell or high water". The slogan "GO FOR BROKE" says it best.

While waiting for the train to arrive, the new recruits

sat at the soda fountain counter and gorged themselves. But overhearing their conversations, you knew their main thoughts and concerns were with the families they were leaving behind. We saw them buy postcards, scribble a message and post them right there and then. We saw them looking at the pay phone and regretting that they couldn't call. We heard them talking about the many things they were going to do to make camp life bearable.

We did not know how successful our recruiting was since no quotas were set. But the experience gave us a first hand look at the end result of hysteria and racism out of control. It was beyond our comprehension why the mass evacuations of one ethnic group was necessary. How was it possible for a limited number of people in influential areas of activity to fan up such a hurricane of fear and hysteria that finally brought about Executive Order 9066? For the record the WRA camps we visited to recruit were Jerome, Rohwer, Gila River and Poston. My parents, brothers and sister were in Tule Lake.

U.S. MARINES - 1943. The island of New Britain is crescent shaped about 375 miles long and 50 miles wide with the heavily fortified Rabaul on the east and the targeted air field on the west. The landing commenced the day after Christmas with Nisei MIS team members assigned to different units of the corps which had already experienced combat on Guadalcanal. By the end of "D" day we had participated and felt the fury and horror of combat. We were bombed and strafed by the enemy planes from Rabaul and saw death and destruction as we worked to gather needed MIS information. Diaries and field dispatches found on the dead and rapidly translated on the spot provided key information for the battle plans being made. The often quoted saying "Dead men don't talk" is false because time after time the documents we scrutinized revealed critical information sought by intelligence. We were fortunate to have within our language team talented members who were able to decipher the most

difficult form of writing - the Kibei members will be long remembered for their language skill and culture knowledge.

MOROTAI - 1944 The final step to providing air support for the invasion of the Philippines 300 miles away was the seizure and expansion of the airfield on this island in the Moluccas. Prisoners watching from the barbed wire stockade, were amazed with the speed the runways were being built, and would often remark to us "No wonder we're losing the war". Another comment made was the realization that Americans were also willing to fight and die for their country. They had been indoctrinated otherwise. For the Nisei MIS team it was becoming more and more apparent that besides language there was an equal ignorance on both sides of each other's culture. For example, on one occasion two of us from MIS accompanied a small force whose mission was to capture and stop radio transmissions of U.S. ship and air movement. After the normal shelling by the destroyer of this little island, we landed without a single shot being fired. We discovered the reason. The dozen or so soldiers squatted in the trench had all taken their lives. Many of our men asked "Why didn't they just surrender?" The MIS Nisei explained to them that the Japanese soldiers believed that the souls of military men who died defending their country would be enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. In all probability they may have already sent a lock of their hair or clipping of their finger nail to their family. Is that a cultural difference? Or is it analogous to the solemn feeling we experience whenever we visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington?

MINDANAO -1945. One of the benefits as well as burdens the Nisei MIS had was the overall knowledge of the divisions' battle activities. We became the eyes, ears, and voices of our forces closing the gap created by language and cultural differences. Integrity of the information passed on by the Nisei MIS team

was an absolute must whether it came from prisoner interrogation, captured documents and maps, radio transmission, aerial photos, etc. Many problems arose when the names for landmark used in our battle map were not the same as theirs.

August 15, 1945. It was the day that every soldier, friend or foe, had been secretly waiting for. Emperor Hirohito stopped the war and broadcasted the defeat to the people. President Harry Truman announced the cease fire and ordered General Douglas MacArthur to accept the surrender for the allied forces. The Nisei linguists played key roles in the transition. The highest priority was to make sure that all units of the enemy forces were aware of the Emperor's order. On Mindanao we were unable to make contact by radio so the Nisei linguists hastily cranked out leaflets which were dropped by air. Still no contact. MIS then surmised that the enemy forces in their retreat into the mountain had somehow lost contact with their superiors on Luzon. The decision was made to parachute a radio so that communication could be opened to start the surrender. The Nisei linguists wrote the appropriate instructions. "Bingo!" We received the following message -----

TO: Commander of the 31st Division

FR: Division Commander Morozumi

August 19th, 1945

1. Thank you for the radio dropped yesterday.
2. Preparations have already been made for the immediate surrender of my subordinates to you, and I am only waiting for orders from Field Marshal Terauchi or General Yamashita. However due to disrupted communication have not yet received orders to surrender.
3. If you have received instructions pertaining to surrender from either Field Marshal Terauchi or General Yamashita, please

notify us as to its content.

4. I have also made preparations for as many envoys as necessary to proceed to Sagunto to discuss surrender

End

To: Our Honorable Major General F.C. Saibert,
Commandant of American Army,
Mindanao, P.I.

Vow of Surrender

1. I vow, with integrity, to you, Our Honorable Major General F.C. Saibert, to surrender with my commanding all of officers and soldiers.

2. I have already ordered to my commanding officers and soldiers, to suspend to fight for you and your army, at 11 O'clock 16th of this month.

3. I, with my commanding officers and solders, beg to you to deal with us at generous measures on your high virtue.

18th of August, 1945

/s/ Major Nobuchika Yamashita
Commandant of Japanese
Information Regiment
Minadanao, P.I.

HEADQUARTERS 31ST INFANTRY DIVISION
Office of the Division Commander

21 Aug 1945

To: Major Nobuchika Yamashita
Commandant of Japanese Information Regiment

1. Receipt is acknowledged of your Vow of Surrender dated 18 Aug 45.
2. Your unconditional surrender is accepted and all troops of your command will immediately be brought to the Valencia area. You will be met there by representatives of this headquarters. You and your troops will be treated in strict accordance with the rules of the Geneva Convention.
3. Following specific instructions are directed:
 - a. All sick will be brought in where proper care will be administered.
 - b. All ammunition will be destroyed prior to departure from your present area by dumping in water with cases opened and exposed.
 - c. Weapons will be brought to the vicinity of the Pulangi River at Valencia and stacked 1 kilometer therefrom. Under no conditions will any weapons be brought closer than a point 1 kilometer east of the Pulangi River except upon order of American Forces.
 - d. Authority is granted to destroy any equipment you are unable to transport in the initial movement. There will be no return to the area.
 - e. You will contact any other known groups of Japanese Forces in your area and advise them of these instructions to facilitate their surrender.
 - f. The main body of your troops will be halted at a point 1 kilometer east of the Pulangi River and you or your representative will approach the river with a white flag to receive necessary instructions for your movement thereafter. Under no conditions will the Pulangi River be approached except between the hours 0800 to 1700.
 - g. This headquarters may be contacted by radio between the hours of 0800 and 1700 daily on frequency 3276 kilocycles. The call sign for this Headquarters will be TIGER and the call sign for your Headquarters will be BEAR. Contacts will be made by voice either in English or Japanese.

If Japanese is used there will be a slight delay in answering. Every effort will be made by you to contact this headquarters by radio advising your date of departure and expected date and time of arrival at Valencia.

By Command of Brig Gen Dickey

John C. Duckworth

Lt Col GSC

Chief of Staff

To: His Excellency, Brigadier General Joseph C. Hutchinson
Commanding General of the 31st Infantry Division

SURRENDER PLEDGE

1. I, Colonel Kennosuke Yamano, Commander of the Japanese Central Mindanao Air Force, hereby humbly surrender on this date, September 3rd, approximately 3,500 officers and men of the Botsu Force to his Excellency, Brigadier General Hutchinson, Commanding General of the 31st Infantry Division.
2. It is my desire, as well as that of my officers and men, to respond judiciously to your orders from here on. Please take actions with that in mind.

Colonel Kennosuke Yamano (seal)
Commander of the Central Mindanao
Air Force.

20th Year of Showa
3rd of September

TO: Brigadier General Joseph C. Hutchinson
Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division,
United States Army

C A P I T U L A T I O N

1. I, Lieutenant General Gyosuke Morozumi, Acting Commanding General of the 35th Army and Commanding General of the 30th Division, hereby unconditionally surrender on this day all of the officers and men, and all arms, military equipment, records, and supplies under my command to the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, United States Army.

2. I agree faithfully henceforth to obey the orders of the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, and to direct all members of my command so to do.

3. I will use all means that I possess to secure as early as possible the assembly of all troops under my command within Reception Centers established by the United States Army, and will take action as directed by you to establish liaison with units and individuals who have not yet surrendered.

4. I will report all known locations of explosives and mines, both land and water, whose presence is a hazard to life and property.

(seal)

GYOSAKU MOROZUMI

Lieutenant General, Imperial Japanese Army
Commanding

8 September 1945

A C C E P T E D

JOSEPH C. HUTCHINSON

Brigadier General, United States Army
Commanding

MALAYBALAY, MINDANAO. - Sept 8th, 1945. The signing ceremony had a surprise for our group waiting for the Cub plane to return with General Morozumi. We were trying to guess the attitude of the man surrendering an army from a nation that has never experienced defeat. The General stepped off the plane and saluted. He was exceptionally tall and had the countenance of a man who had accepted defeat without bitterness or rancor. Under General Morozumi and his staff the units surrendered without any serious incident. As they reported in they were tagged, checked medically, given food and placed in a barbed wired stockade. By mid October the 31st Division had over 23,000 Japanese military prisoners and 14,000 Japanese civilians on hand on Mindanao. Only Luzon had more.

The last unit to surrender was composed of seven nurses of the No. 4 Field Hospital. They only came out when a special squad of unarmed Japanese soldiers with food and medical supplies were sent back into the mountains to find them. Instead of facing a "fate worse than death" as they had expected, they experienced the compassion of the Americans. They were a pitiful sight. They were all suffering from malnutrition and looked haggard with their long unkempt hair. One couldn't help but notice the fright in their eyes. The U.S. Army nurses took charge of their womanly needs and also had some soldiers build a separate compound and rig a 50 gallon makeshift shower. Upon questioning the Nisei language team learned that the nurses had been recruited from various Japanese army hospitals and then sent to Rabaul, New Britain in April 1943. After the American forces landed in Cape Gloucester in December 1943 they were moved to Mindanao. There were more in their unit, but because of their weakened state, many had drowned in the swift river while retreating. It was also sad for them because the head nurse in charge died the night they surrendered. She had fulfilled her responsibility.

DAVAO, MINDANAO. With the cessation of the war our 179th Language Team was broken up after being together for three years. Those with enough points to be discharged were kept in the Philippines to complete the process of repatriation of the 14,000 Japanese civilians. It was a tremendous task to load the many ships that came into the harbor to transport them back to Japan. Docks had been destroyed so we had to rely on amphibious trucks to shuttle them. The loading went on day and night with women and children first. The compassion and empathy of the American soldiers toward the repatriates being returned to Japan was truly a sight to behold. I know many Nisei interpreters, as they read the Japanese names off the dangling black and white PW tags and cross checking with the boarding list, thought of their families interned back home.

EPILOGUE

The attack on Pearl Harbor with its resultant death and destruction raised strong feelings of anger, fear, panic, and irrational thinking among many Americans. It ultimately brought about the incarceration of over one hundred thousand innocent people of Japanese ancestry, most of whom were U.S. citizens. In the face of that persecution, Niseis without hesitation donned the U.S. army uniforms. Denied the trust that was their birthright, they set out determined to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt their loyalty to their country. They were fed up with being looked upon and treated as second class citizens. With the blessings and strong moral support of their families, they went to war imbued with a "Will Not Fail" spirit. Much of the credit for the success achieved by Nisei soldiers must go to the pioneer Isseis. For it was they who unselfishly endured years and years of hardship and adversity for the sake of their children, and instilled in them that fighting spirit.





