

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Hiroshi Sakahara

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Interview in progress.

Mike Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano. Today is May the 22nd, 2007. I'm interviewing Mr. Hiroshi Sakahara. This interview is taking place in Georgetown, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Good morning, sir, how are you?

Mr. Sakahara: (Unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: I'll give you that right there. Let's see, let us set...you have your questions here I like to start out with as if...uhm, can you tell me where and when you were born?

Mr. Sakahara: I was born in Tacoma, Washington in 1923...April 15th that is...in Tacoma, Washington. I always think of it as being...(unintelligible) Washington...or Puyallup Valley...Tacoma, Washington that is. Went to a small...farm...farm...city; I mean...farm school from the...uh, community, so I happened to one of many...about a hundred and twenty thousand...this Americans. Both...citizens and non-citizens were...was...President Roosevelt...he signed into Executive Order 9066 which effectively put a hundred and ten thousand...citizens and non-citizens...beyond...barbed wire

with machine guns pointing inside. Some of our young adults didn't like it, and so they affectively answered the questionnaire in such a way that they were called "No-No Boys," and effectively they were put in prison for that. And of course, as...as it turns out, some of them were given grace. The rest of us were finally allowed to volunteer for 442nd Infantry Combat Team which...had a pretty good record in the war. We fought in England, I mean in...in Belgium and Italy.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, how did...how did you come to be in...in Tacoma, Washington; did your parents immigrate from Japan?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, they were both...both sides of my...both grandparents...both sides of our family were here.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Sakahara: And they...they came here, I suppose, to seek...seek a fortune or something; I don't know, and it usually ended up with large...my grand...uh, well, they farmed or whatever they were able to do.

Mike Zambrano: So they...they did...they did come over from Japan? They...

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah. Well, when...whenever that was...about a hundred years ago.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what...what were your parents' names?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, let's see. Well, my mother's side Hatori (sp?) and, of course, my dad was Sakahara.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Uhm, so you pretty much grew up during the Depression then; can you tell me what life was like for you; growing up as a child and all the way through to...like high school?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I...I don't think that...being on a farm...well, we didn't think of it as being the Depression, but I suppose it was. I suppose that a "pop" was our idea of a...drinking pop was to put a nail through the cap and...and make it last longer (chuckles), I suppose that's a...that was an indication the fact that there was a...probably a...Depression time; we didn't think of it that way because we worked...worked hard and farmed and it's a (unintelligible words). There were vegetables so, we spent...we...we basically grew for the marketplace. We all...grew things like...oh, onions and radishes and peas, beans, things like that. We had (unintelligible words), so...

Mike Zambrano: Did you have a large family; did you have a lot of brothers and sisters?

Mr. Sakahara: We had seven in our family; one died...early of acute appendicitis when it was very serious back in those days, so essentially we had...six surviving of three girls and four boys.

Mike Zambrano: And where are you in that order; oldest, youngest, middle?

Mr. Sakahara: I was towards...towards the bottom. There's...actually there was...in fact, there were three boy...uh, boys just like...my family, so I forgot about that when I had my children. So consequently I tried for a...the last one to be a girl and it turned out...three boys and I forgot that we did have three in our...in our...in my own family. Consequently, I guess, statis...statistics said that...I could have three boys, too, so consequently I had...the oldest is a girl and I...I have three boys.

Mike Zambrano: How many children do you have?

Mr. Sakahara: I have four...four children; one...one girl and...and three boys.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Uhm, so you...I guess you graduated from high school in Tacoma?

Mr. Sakahara: I graduated high school...(unintelligible) school in...in 1941...just before the war and...of course, in that time I tried to...volunteer for...for the Coast Guard; they...they wouldn't even talk to me.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yes, but...it's a lot different now, of course, but...you just didn't have a chance to get into the military...like...

Mike Zambrano: So was there a lot of Japanese discrimination back then?

Mr. Sakahara: Uhm, there probably was, but we didn't know that much about discrimination. We had a community of...basically, farmers, so...and of course, if you had a farm or if you had, oh, something like a store or...or a hotel or something like that, why, you didn't really worry about it because you...you were able to...do something concrete.

Mike Zambrano: Kind of...self-sustaining and (unintelligible)?

Mr. Sakahara: Self-sustaining, a business of some kind.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: So everybody worked hard and...we...worked together and supported each other and...in our case we happened to go to a small high school; graduation...class was...had...sixty students...in our farm community, so consequently if you wanted to...be a...you try out for something...you had...you had a chance (chuckles)...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sakahara: ...so, we enjoyed that...our lives. Discrimination didn't mean too much I suppose. I think we probably ran into it because we had...our Japanese community was fairly small...that is to say...I mean, you weren't...we didn't know anything about...all these different...all we knew about was...Christians and Buddhists. If you were another...if you were...if you were not a Buddhist, well then...you...you're a Christian (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: And Buddhists had more fun because they had the most money, and...their...their restrictions were fairly minimal as far as we were concerned, so we thought they were...uh, we...we helped one another. We (chuckle)...

Mike Zambrano: Worked together?

Mr. Sakahara: ...well, we worked together; we knew each other and...and in fact, we...were...we donated to each others...financial campaigns (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), well, that's helpful!

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, and then...well, we had to; well, we were all in one community...I mean...so, again, as I said, Christians...you were either Christian or a Buddhist so...(chuckle), we...we knew each other.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, where...do you recall where you were when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I...I...actually, I was in a kitchen and we haven't...we hadn't gotten to the point that...that my...my oldest sister decided to take over the kitchen, but that was just be...before that happened, so we would...get our breakfast before we went out to work. And I was sitting there and I...I heard some, you know,

some things on the radio and I didn't really realize there was a war, but I found out soon after that when...the announcements were made and...and we...we ended up...taking everything of the Japanese or whatever, and then we...we buried everything because we were concerned about getting our...the repercussions of having anything Japanese.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Sakahara: So...and, in fact, as it turned out my father was a...a manager of a...a founder's co-op...(unintelligible)...when he would travel to California sometimes and he was in California when the...he was picked up as a...an enemy alien because the war happened, and so he...he was taken out...in jail (unintelligible words) couple of weeks, and then he was put into a...a in Montana. Finally he was released after it...it...he had that hearing.

Mike Zambrano: Was this...uhm, the rest of your family...because we know that...well, after the part where you enlisted in a minute here, but...the rest of your family...what happened to their properties; what happened to them during the war?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, most...most people who had some...support of the...(unintelligible) community...we happened to have Mr. Hulette (sp?) Downs (sp?); we called him Hoblinai (sp?) because it's a...it's the way that the Japanese end up, you know, describing his name. Anyway, so well, he kept some of our things like...he kept our pick-up and...and some of our things, and we...we didn't own the land, so that meant that...uh, whatever we had...that the...Mr. Baron (sp?) Hoblinai kept...kept some of these things. So we...we had...we..it was...lot better for us. Some people who had, for example, a founder's fee (?)

or whatever, lost their businesses because they had to sell out at some ridiculous price. And...and we didn't own our land, so we don't...wasn't concerned. We kept...we had a friend that kept our properties for us, so...and made a big...big difference. We happened to be so-called Christian; we...we went to the Methodist church, and so...I...I'm reminded of the fact that my...wife...who became my wife was...I suppose classified as Buddhist because her...that they found it somewhat convenient because they thought...if they became Methodist Christian (chuckles) they could be in better position but, it...of course, it didn't make any difference.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Sakahara: We were in one boat (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so...you mentioned earlier that you wanted to go into Coast Guard. How did you end up...getting in the Army, and...well, I guess that was your second choice, right?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, getting into the Coast Guard...of course, I...I graduated in 1941 which is, of course, in (unintelligible words); anyway, since then, the war came along...after that. So, for whatever reason, I decided to try to get into the Coast Guard, well, I found out that they wouldn't even talk to me. And the war happened and...we had some...when...when the war happened, and...and I heard a lot of these things on the radio...and the...the immediate result was we had...FBI coming and going through our homes and...checking us out. It turned out that the FBI and Air Force security people had everything well in hand...well, they...well in hand...for decades or...way...way back...for a long

time, and so I found out different things. And then...consequently we were...we were put in a concentration camp...first the Sunday Center (sp?) and then a...a...relocation center, a euphemism for a concentration center camp. Everybody says, "Well, you know, (chuckles)...you...it wasn't the same as...it wasn't like...wasn't like the Jews, and of course, it wasn't, but we were in this great America, you know, with this...liberties and constitution and everything else, but...it didn't mean anything when...when it came to the...the...President Roosevelt signed that piece of paper that took away my citizenship, well, nobody...nobody said anything about it.

Mike Zambrano: And that was Executive Order 9066?

Mr. Sakahara: I think something (chuckle) like that...9...9066 or whatever it was.

Mike Zambrano: So you actually did go to one of these...(unintelligible) camps?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, in fact, we...we went into the (unintelligible) Fairgrounds and some...some of us went into brand new barracks, but some of us were put into a horse...horse stall somewhere...cleaned out and remodeled to...as...as barracks for the...people...

Mike Zambrano: Uh...

Mr. Sakahara: ...as a...a eighteen-year-old graduate, I didn't care much for the environment, so I was...taking my tennis racquet and my tennis ball and hitting against the wall of the barracks. And...and, of course, we had some minimal social life and I didn't care for the environment. The first chance I had...I...I volunteered for a...work crew to go to Montana, so that's...that's the first thing that I did; I man...I managed to get out of there as quickly as...as I could.

Mike Zambrano: What was the camp you were in; what state?

Mr. Sakahara: Puyallup, Washington in...in...well, actually, right outside of Tacoma. Puyallup Valley was that...farm community...it's just...very close to Tacoma, Washington.

Mike Zambrano: How do you spell that?

Mr. Sakahara: Puyallup...P-u-y-a-l-l-u-p, I think.

Mike Zambrano: Puyallup? I'll find it on the internet.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, it's...it's become a suburb of Tacoma now.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, if that's really changed.

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yes, and myself.

Mike Zambrano: So you...you pretty much wanted to get out of the camp then?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, I was...I was...eighteen and I...my father was fairly...he was a fairly good...education in terms of...of political rights and things like that. I, I guess I...intended to be somewhat...conservative...like you say, proud of the...got...retained that from my...father. So when he talked to his Japanese friends, well, he would...we would...he would...be in favor of the, you know, our country and then...well, anyway, so it was rather interesting to hear...my father talk about general political rights...and their political condition and everything. But anyway, so we...we were...tended to be more...community minded as opposed to...politically...like the blacks have at the present time. We...

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Uhm, so how did you get in the Army?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, most...a lot of us have...some of us lived in Hawaii. Of course, they didn't have the same impact because in Hawaii, they were about sixty percent Japanese, so...consequently, if they tried to take everybody out of there and put in concentration camps...uh, then there would be a big problem because they were in the police and everything else. I think some of their leaders were put in relocation centers someplace, but anyway, most of them were...did not...they were not restricted. Uh, so half...basically, half of our...reg...regiment came from the Hawaiian (unintelligible) from the mainland...and, as it turned out, we had friends that we...helped us by making it so that we were allowed...allowed us to volunteer for (unintelligible). So we had ten...about ten thousand of us...joined the 442nd. The reason for the ten thousand figure is because...depending...was...the loss of life.

Mike Zambrano: You...do you recall where you...first trained?

Mr. Sakahara: Pardon?

Mike Zambrano: Do you recall where you first trained?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, well, we were...actually trained in ...in Mississippi at Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: And apparently, there was some sort of ground rule that we would be trained for a year. Well I...I was sitting up in the...the mountains of Montana and I would...I decided, "Well," I said, "and everybody else is going, so who am I?" I said, "Join too." So by the time I joined it was September, and I...I think I

was classified as a...original 442nd, but by the time they went over, it was...obviously less than a year for me; I trained in Camp Shelby.

Mike Zambrano: And you said...September of '42?

Mr. Sakahara: '42, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay. What kind of training; what did you...what'd (unintelligible)?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, the training was...essentially...nominal, basic training that all GIs went through and, of course, we were all Japanese. Our officers happened to be Caucasian, so...lot of times we would have...six foot Lieutenant leading...leading our group and some of us are not that tall which meant (chuckle) we were running at the end...we were the...because the lead...I guess the Lieutenant sort of lead everybody and...(unintelligible words)...small guys in the back, well, (chuckles)...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles). So when you were...well, did you stay in the same training group for...let me put it this way...the...the training groups or platoons or companies that...that were established then...did they stay...did they ship overseas as...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, we...we were...uh, part of this 442nd Combat Team which is essentially...it had many facets like...5...532nd Artillery...(unintelligible) Company; Service Company...essentially, there wasn't just an ordinary regiment; it was...it was a combat team.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Sakahara: So that Engineering...27...232nd Engineering, so that...and because of that so-called commitment, it was a special arrangement. Therefore, upon...so called

graduation when...when there was about one year, we...we were sent overseas...and the...then the...oh, and in fact, (chuckle)...I wanted to wanted mention...of course the fight...our 32nd Artillery had made some few mistakes, but anyway we learned fast.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm...

Mr. Sakahara: There was...this...and we stayed as one integral group...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...and that's why...so...

Mike Zambrano: Uh, do you recall what company you were in?

Mr. Sakahara: Company K with the Third Battalion.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, do you remember your Company Commander?

Mr. Sakahara: No, all I...no, at this point...I remember he...one of...artillery barrages he got killed...one of...early ones, so...

Mike Zambrano: And you were, I guess, a Private at this point, right?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, by then.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Sakahara: I ended up being a Pfc because of my...I was...I was a...BAR gun...I wasn't a Gunner I was...I was his Assistant, so...

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Sakahara: ...we had an artillery barrage and he got hurt and I didn't; consequently I had inherited (chuckle) a Browning Automatic Rifle.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, that's pretty heavy; it's what...like talking about...fifteen...

Mr. Sakahara: About twenty pounds, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Twenty? Okay, that is heavy.

Mr. Sakahara: And then...so that's why you had to have a Gunner...uh, Ammunitions Carrier.

Mike Zambrano: You can't do it all yourself.

Mr. Sakahara: All you...all you can...do is carry the...uh, rifle itself.

Mike Zambrano: So, from...were you shipped from Camp Shelby directly overseas?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, well we went to Naples, Italy and then we...we started our battles there in...right over near Rome...Rome, Italy.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, so you didn't have any...any part in the North African landings or anything like that?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, uh, it turns out that we had a...there was a group...about...100th Battalion...it was...from Hawaii and they got into some of the...earlier battles. And then that same...100th Battalion from Hawaii became our First Battalion, so some of us...some of our people were in the...Africa and...and Anzio...or places like that.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. I assume you must have taken a...a ship over to...Italy?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, well, we went to Naples, Italy.

Mike Zambrano: I guess...probably a convoy?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, a liberty ships...over to...to...uh, to Naples and then from Naples we went up, you know, we were taken up...up the line to...our...our port where we actually started.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, how long did it take...I...I mean the ship...the ship passage to Naples?

Mr. Sakahara: I...I think in terms about...about twenty-eight days is what it was.

Mike Zambrano: That's a long time (unintelligible).

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, because...we took the long way. I think it has to do with trying to dodge the submarines, German submarines, whatever...so our convoys took a long...long...whatever time it took to go overseas.

Mike Zambrano: I assume that your...your convoy didn't run into any U-boats?

Mr. Sakahara: As far as I know, we didn't...we didn't have any...problems; I guess some people must have.

Mike Zambrano: Well what did you do to pass the time; I mean twenty-eight days...is a long time.

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I guess...uh, I suppose that...people, if they had any money, they gambled and...the funny thing is...I remember on the way home...most people didn't gamble on the way home because they wanted to keep their money (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sakahara: Going over, of course, why...well, it's...our...our out...outlook was...essentially going into a combat zone, so...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Sakahara: ...it was pretty...pretty...I guess...money didn't mean much; didn't have to worry about keeping the money.

Mike Zambrano: So what did you think of Naples when you first disembarked there?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, it was...as much as possible, we...possible...we would try to set up a relationship with the Italians. I remember...our squad had...we were kind of adopted by some Italians so we...we would donate...some of our...supplies and we would trade essentially, and so...it was...kind of convenient. I think that

kind of...sort of happened as time went by especially we tried...we tried to...use our...cigarettes and supplies as...to...because money didn't go very far. In fact, we were given...uh, I can't remember the...exact term, but it was some sort of a...mon...money that was...put out by the American Army.

Mike Zambrano: To use in Italy?

Mr. Sakahara: It was...it was...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...it wasn't so called American money; it was...can't remember the term.

Mike Zambrano: Script?

Mr. Sakahara: Script or whatever it was.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. So, what'd you think of the Italians?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, we enjoyed them. Of course the Italians in Naples are a lot different from the Italians in...northern Italy, so...this...fairly common as was even now. If you went to southern Italy, well, you find out that you had to watch...your wallet (chuckles) a little bit more than...northern Italy.

Mike Zambrano: So, you start moving up the...the Italian mainland from...Naples and...

Mr. Sakahara: Well, essentially yes, Civitavecchia is, first of all, first city that I could remember.

Mike Zambrano: Which one?

Mr. Sakahara: Civitavecchia. Civ...Civ.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay.

Mr. Sakahara: S-e-i-b-a...vegi...vegia...V...V-c-h-i-a or something [s/b Civitavecchia].

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I think I know which one you mean. Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: I remember that we...went through the whole...whole town and we retreated and we had to...take...take the place inch by inch.

Mike Zambrano: So was that your first...?

Mr. Sakahara: That...that's the first one I remember.

Mike Zambrano: And what...what were you thinking? I mean...bullets start flying...people shooting at you.

Mr. Sakahara: Well, you don't know what that means until you get shot at, you know, a few times; you know...people get shot. You...you quickly get used to it because you live day by day; you don't worry about tomorrow.

Mike Zambrano: And were these German troops or are these Italian troops at this point?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, at that point, I...I think we were...if I recall, they were...were...the Germans were...were fighting the Germans because...that...they were in a retreat and then we would, you know, going after them. I don't (unintelligible) too much about the Italians.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, you said you had to take the town inch by inch?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, depends...depends on...on the situation. Basically, most...most of the time, we would travel on...on the roads so we (unintelligible words). So...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm...

Mr. Sakahara: ...or we would, you know, we would be going down the roads and if the shel...German idiots throws in on us...tried to find some cover wherever we could find it.

Mike Zambrano: So you would...you...would you use a lot of trucks...sounds like...or...transportation or...?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, most of the time, we didn't...we didn't have any trucks to...we...we just walked wherever we went. I know...intermittently, you...if you're going back...going into the rear area for...whatever...(unintelligible words) then you could...like...get a ride, but most of the time you went up, you know, up and down the mountain roads or, you know, up the hills or whatever, so that...that's the kind of terrain we went through.

Mike Zambrano: So...from...Cir...Cir...

Mr. Sakahara: Civitavecchia.

Mike Zambrano: ...where...where to from there?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, unfortunately I don't have this...this document. See, if I had that, why, you...you know, I...I couldn't understand it because it was on top of the table and I can't find it.

Mike Zambrano: Did...(unintelligible).

Mr. Sakahara: Oh no, it's a...it's a...document about...like this. (Unintelligible words). This is some of the early...in my...beyond here, but I could make a copy of whatever you want.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Actually, in thinking of this...this over here...reminds me of, I guess, what they refer to as the Lost Battalion?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Do you recall any (unintelligible)?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, for some reason, I...I think was...either had stomach problems or something and...whatever reason they stuck me in a...in a...hospital as walking wounded or something. Anyway, so...I finally got back to my company...my

K Company had about forty-five men and I Company had only about half a dozen men and I...two...two companies were sent on that patrol...I Company or whatever; I remember they got busted up because they ran into some resistance, so they...they either had to, you know, like...(unintelligible) in a forest, so they...that meant...you either got trench feet and...and you had some problems there or...or you had shells coming in in trees and you get hurt by that so you tried to cover...cover yourself. So for different reasons there were...lot of...lot of...casualties...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...and sick (unintelligible). But we were...passed through...through the Lost Battalion (unintelligible), so that...that...I can't remember the...famous actor that played that Lieutenant. Anyway, we had...men in charge and stuff like that, you know, they...ended okay, you know, you just...pretty...pretty accurate, but it...you know, they had some liberties that...

Mike Zambrano: Was it...the movie?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, (unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: That was a black and white movie, right?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Quite awhile...okay...

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, I actually saw that.

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, I can't remember...

Mike Zambrano: The...this battle in the...how do you pronounce this...vo...

Mr. Sakahara: Vossier (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: Vossier?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, you can keep that.

Mike Zambrano: Thank you. So then...you...you didn't actually take part in...in that action?

Mr. Sakahara: Well actually I didn't...I didn't because I got there after it was over...because I was in the hospital, you know. As...as I said, when I...got back to my company, why, it was...it was pretty well (unintelligible) because (unintelligible) was pretty well busted up.

Mike Zambrano: So when...

Mr. Sakahara: And then...because of the...the casualty...casualty level and...and essentially they got to a point where they had to...uh, do something about it, so they pulled us back and put...spent time in the Mediterranean...(unintelligible) campaign.

Mike Zambrano: I heard that the...the 442nd took...like over three hundred percent in casualties.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, pretty heavy, yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: And was it always replenished with Japanese Americans?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, because it was...all Japanese. Because of that, it got to a point where they had to...uh, pull us back to...southern France to wait for...for...

Mike Zambrano: Reinforcements?

Mr. Sakahara: ...reinforcements.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. What'd you think of southern France?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, we had a good time; it was warm...even December, you know? You could walk around in short sleeves. Anyway...tried to

have...arrange...even...informal leaves...and...by...sort of a select...sort of informal selected process. Anyway, we would take our rations and try to save it up and so they would help us when we went on leave...with chocolates, cigarettes or whatever. Mo...a lot of us...even if we didn't...weren't smokers, we saved up our...we saved up our...well, cigarettes were very valuable so we would try to get rid of our (unintelligible) chocolates and stuff like that.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did you have any good friends that...that you want (unintelligible)?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah well, I...for awhile I kept up with a lot of...lot of people. My Gunner...Gunner was from Hawaii as a...Sakamoto (sp?)...Su...Su...Sakamoto...but he's...of course, he got hurt and then he...I took over his...BAR, but I sort of lost track of him.

Mike Zambrano: So he made it alright? I mean...he was jut wounded at...that particular time?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes. In the early...early days, my...Asheville...Asheville neighbor across the creek from me was looking for me...(unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Do you recall his name?

Mr. Sakahara: (Chuckles), I can't remember...right now I can't remember anything! He...his name is...I can't believe I can't remember his name. (Chuckle)...I don't know; sorry.

Mike Zambrano: That's okay. So...anyone else that...you recall...that you made good friends...might have kept up with over the years?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, you know, when I went to Hawaii, Henry Shigata (sp?) was a young, sharp kid. You know, Garvey (sp?) is one of the younger ones in our...company. In fact, there were...his buddy was going to educate him

because he educated everybody else because he was pretty sharp and pretty lucky...in gambling, so he...of course, it kind of proved out...because he became a doctor and retired to Hawaii.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, nice.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, so...

Mike Zambrano: So, let's see, so we talked a little bit about Italy and a little bit about France. Uh, the equipment and weapons and everything you had at the time, did you feel that you were adequately supplied?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, most of the time, we...we did, you know. One...that first battle, we...they tended to...ration out the...the ammunition because it was...we were in short supplies because we were moving so fast, so that's...mostly the case of...that...that was a problem; we would travel so fast that sometimes our supplies didn't keep up with us.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Sakahara: And we also, being Japanese, we...tended not to care much for cheese and things like that, and some came in the K-rations. Well (chuckles) we throw away our cheese, cans of cheese, but...sometimes the supplies wouldn't catch up to us so we got...we were out there scrounging in...in the dark for (chuckles) for cheese, you know; we would eat anything if...you know, you couldn't get it, so...K-rations, I guess, is the daily rations. We had another set of rations that was more elaborate; we didn't get much of that...so...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. Do you remember anything about your Squad Leader or your Platoon Leader; any of your immediate superiors?

Mr. Sakahara: Uhm, (pause) Lefty Kunioshi (sp?) was Assistant Squad Leader, you know, and he became a Squad Leader. It happened that...Lefty Kunioshi had some college background...because I remember that (beep sound)...(chuckle)...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, it will beep a couple of more times.

Mr. Sakahara: So, anyway, he...he was...look...looking around for...for cameos, and (unintelligible), “What are you doing that for?”...’cause I had no idea what the cameos meant, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Sakahara: But he had some background to understand...the value of cameos.

Mike Zambrano: He was looking for cameos?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, look...cameos...would be quite valuable because they...it takes a long time to make the cameos.

Mike Zambrano: So did he actually find any?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes he...he knew what they were...the value of them, so he would...but...(unintelligible) cameos and send them home.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Anybody else that comes to mind?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, not at this point. I can’t remember my neighbor’s name (chuckle)...(beep sound)...so anyway...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did you write home pretty frequently?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, as it turned out my kid sister was the only one that really kept up correspondence with me, so...yeah, they...I guess they depended on each family...anybody...correspondence or not.

Mike Zambrano: I guess she kept you up to date what was going on back home and...?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I guess...women...girls, females, communicate better than some of the males, you know? I think that's probably the case. I...I think I have some idea why, you know, because I learned over the years that people...call themselves Christians don't necessarily...uh, (beep sound) it means something a little bit more concrete if they...they have this experience called "born again," you know?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Sakahara: You must be born again...it's...that's the only way that we...that you makes...any difference; if you have the doctrine, it doesn't mean anything.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let's see, uh, oh what...what did your parents or family think about you going into the Army?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, I guess I must have told them or asked to...I didn't ask them so much as I made a decision and my dad was...raised us to be...make up our own mind, so of course, I was...seventeen, eighteen...when I went in the Army. My...brother was a (beep sound)...oldest brother was a college student, and my other brother was in Chicago until he' ...so he was...he was planning to (chuckle) to volunteer, too, but...fortunately he stopped to see his cousin in Montana and he got deferred.

Mike Zambrano: So, were you the only one that served during World War II?

Mr. Sakahara: In my family.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, my cousin...served...in World War II...

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...first cousin.

Mike Zambrano: And what...what...what company was he in; was he...?

Mr. Sakahara: I don't know; he was in the Second Battalion.

Mike Zambrano: Did you ever run into him?

Mr. Sakahara: No, not really. I didn't even know that he was in the Army.

Mike Zambrano: So, you didn't know he was in until later?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, because when I came back we had that...some (beep sound), you know, memorials in California where you could...

(end of tape 1, side A)

Mr. Sakahara: Several books have been written on one of these (pause), and a lot of these books have been...they are able to get...because of the Freedom of Information Act...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Sakahara: ...they are able to get a lot...a lot of good information.

Mike Zambrano: So looking at the trees...looking at some of the pictures in here, they pretty...I guess, telling of...of how things were?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yes. That's what happened at the...the evacuation and things like that, yeah. But can't imagine living in...in...living in...

Mike Zambrano: Camps?

Mr. Sakahara: ...camps; a place like that...inside of the (unintelligible words) or...Arizona where it gets up to one hundred and twenty degrees.

Mike Zambrano: What...okay, so your parents or your family were in a...a camp in Washington, right?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, well they...then we...we were put into (unintelligible); ten per centers, and then we were sent to relocations there; there's...essentially there were ten of them. There's...(chuckle), I'm not sure whether I could read that.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so each one of the names on the certificate here is the name of the centers?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, but...uh, from Nizinar (sp?)...Niatoka (sp?)...oh, I guess this is English...Possen (sp?)...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible words), okay.

Mr. Sakahara: You could...I could get a...a copy of that, if you wanted.

Mike Zambrano: Uh where...where did...sure; that'd be great! Well, where did this come from though; how did you get it?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, I can't remember who...who made that. (Unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I was getting my...(unintelligible words)...Yama...Yamabe (sp?); is that Yamabe? (Pause) I...I just wanted to get the pronunciation.

Mr. Sakahara: It's Nobe Yanabe...N-o-b-e Y-a-m-a-b-e; it's in California.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, nice piece of art; they did a good job of it.

Mr. Sakahara: I can...you know, I can get a copy of that.

Mike Zambrano: I just want to write...the book down here...(unintelligible words).

Mr. Sakahara: (Unintelligible) he was...he was a newspaper man; quite a man.

Mike Zambrano: Quite a man.

Mr. Sakahara: We...we had...some disagreements in the early stages because we...us mainlanders pretended to speak pretty good English, and they thought we were being uppity, you know?

Mike Zambrano: The...Hawaiians?

Mr. Sakahara: Hawaiians were more...more, oh, you know, they were more...I think that...whatever...you know, they...anyway, Hawaiians are a good friend; good friends and bad enemies.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Sakahara: So, and then they tended to speak Pigeon English because they thought that was...the, you know, the thing to do.

Mike Zambrano: I had read a little bit that...there was some tension between the mainlanders and the (unintelligible).

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yeah, we would have fights and stuff, you know? We eventually...learned to get along, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Just through training and sharing (unintelligible) and so forth?

Mr. Sakahara: No, yeah...we...we weren't really uppity...uppity guys; we just...like we were (unintelligible words) spoke better English, that's all...because that...that's our training, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Sakahara: So anyway...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, you know, looking in the internet at some of the different websites...uh, I...I came across one that listed some...manifests for different companies and...and it showed some of the...a picture of some of the officers and I couldn't help but notice that...that there were one or two Japanese officers; Japanese American officers.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, well...in...in the early stages, of course, we started with just American...Caucasian officers because there...there weren't, you know,...you just couldn't even get...close to the...volunteering for the Army; they wouldn't...they wouldn't take you.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Sakahara: But eventually we started getting some combat...combat...

Mike Zambrano: Experience?

Mr. Sakahara: ...no, combat...not the experience, but the combat...(unintelligible) bat...battle...battle...

Mike Zambrano: Battlefield commissions?

Mr. Sakahara: ...battle promotions.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: And there was...regardless of whether you're a...you would make an officer out of you. Eventually they...and later on, I guess, there were actually...had people taken into...the officers training.

Mike Zambrano: Right, okay.

Mr. Sakahara: Because...and later, you know, we...when I went to...I...I didn't go to too many...uh, of these, you know, veteran's things. I went to one big one and...at...at Nevada and it was...we had people from...some of...had some from...Navy and things like that, you know; of course we were younger then, so...which is...it was sort of unusual for us.

Mike Zambrano: (Cough), excuse me. Uhm, okay, so you're in...you're in southern France; where did you go from there?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, we went from southern France to...to...Bruyères, which is the...eastern Fr...eastern France?

Mike Zambrano: Eastern France?

Mr. Sakahara: Br...(pause)...something like that.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay. And that was...combat again?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, we...we established a good relationship with the French there because we liberated their towns.

Mike Zambrano: And what was that like going to one of those liberated towns?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, usually we were there, you know, with Italians and the French...they were pretty friendly to us.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, sometimes you've seen these movies with American troops walking in...and the town's people are...

Mr. Sakahara: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: ...throwing flowers and so forth...

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...did you ever experience any of that?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yeah, they...they were happy to see us...and...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I forgot what I was going to ask you.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, we...our...our regiment was the of the first elements to...to free the...Jews.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Uh, yeah I had read something about that.

Mr. Sakahara: Uh hum, (unintelligible words), but anyway...

Mike Zambrano: Well, which...which camp was it; do you recall?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, I don't know; where these...where these...I forget.

Mike Zambrano: And...and you were there; you saw it?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, I wasn't there, but...some of our company (unintelligible)...we liberated...

Mike Zambrano: And I guess you...stories that...passed down about...about...part of the 442nd liberating a camp?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, they didn't...we didn't get...there wasn't too much (unintelligible) about that.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Sakahara: We...we tended to move pretty fast though.

Mike Zambrano: Well, what else? Uh, well moving so fast and seeing so much action, I guess you must have seen your share of German prisoners?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yeah. Yeah, they were conditioned for...we had...we were eliminating prisoners because they were eliminating us.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Maybe (unintelligible) because he was Japanese or...just...

Mr. Sakahara: And...SS troops and, you know, we had...it...it was pretty...not so much...(unintelligible words) policy there to eliminate prisoners sometimes depending on the situation. They had some...I guess they are relating to...you hear a lot about the atrocity in Vietnam, but it wasn't like...like that; we didn't go out killing civ...civilians or stuff like that.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, like I said, I...I'd seen that movie that you mentioned years ago.

Mr. Sakahara: (Unintelligible)...old...it's way back...almost...almost I remembered that guy, that Lieutenant that I...(chuckle)...I can't remember.

Mike Zambrano: I...I'd seen it, and I remember...

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...there was a...a point where they captured some German officers, and the German officers...very surprised...Japanese.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, we were...we were telling stories like that...that we were from Japan, and (unintelligible) on their side (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Sakahara: On...on Amer...American side; yeah, we tell them all kinds of stories there.

Mike Zambrano: But they were generally...were...were...I guess I'm asking if they were generally surprised that...that Japanese troops were attacking them or Japanese Americans?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, some...some of them found...found out...some, you know, about us, but then...we would tell them...lot of...lot of lies...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sakahara: ...wanted to keep them confused, too. And most of...a lot of our radio people...used pigeon English, and of course, you know, like the Indians spoke...you know...

Mike Zambrano: Navajo?

Mr. Sakahara: ...Navajo...whatever...we would use...we would use...our Hawaiian would speak pigeon English and...you...you say (unintelligible)...or whatever (laughter), you know, it...it's kind of ours but...

Mike Zambrano: Right, and we use this...

Mr. Sakahara: Pigeon English, yes.

Mike Zambrano: Did they use it as a formal means of communicating on the radios?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, yeah, right.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Sakahara: Because...pigeon English is kind of hard to follow; I mean...even if you had some, yeah, why, you would have a hard time following it.

Mike Zambrano: I'm sure there's no school or it.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, you...back to being in B... Bruyères...

Mr. Sakahara: In Brrr...

Mike Zambrano: ...and how long were you there? I mean how much...was there pretty heavy fighting or...?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes, that was where we...rescued the Lost Battalion.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: So I...I didn't know whether it's...about six months or whatever it was and I...I'm sure (unintelligible words) something like that. Unfortunately, if I had this document...I don't know...I don't think that...we (recorder knocked around) yeah, 34th was...that's Italy, so...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible) this is it?

Mr. Sakahara: No, that's...that means American (unintelligible words). This is (unintelligible words as they look through documents). I don't know what happened.

Their...their support and...wounded. The other document was...about the size of this, but it was very good...

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...so, when you're in battle you don't know what's going on. (Unintelligible words) document like this that has all the good information in it...you...you didn't know about. But...I...I have no idea why it's missing; it was on top of my...my desk. Of course, I was behind on my correspondence, too, so...

Mike Zambrano: I can't help but notice a newspaper article that you have...here.

Mr. Sakahara: What is it?

Mike Zambrano: Had you...did you go back to visit any of the...sites when you were in Europe?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, I haven't, but more...a lot of our...our regiment went to Bruyères, and we had a very close relationship with the people there.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: In fact, they have a...reciprocated; the French came here and (unintelligible words)...so, you know, it's a very close relationship with...with the people there.

Mike Zambrano: So you've never been back then...at all?

Mr. Sakahara: No, I wasn't active that much in...in (unintelligible words). It was...make it a point. It's a good...wished I had done that.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, in regards to...some prisoners you ran across...did you ever...talk to one or have any one on one contact?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I didn't; I...I know that we (unintelligible) German prisoners in...during training in...in...(unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Okay, any impression of them or...?

Mr. Sakahara: No, I didn't (chuckles), I didn't have any personal, you know, feelings (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: So, where did you go after France?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, from...from France we went to...well, basically we...we came back to...uh, we had a cam...campaign in northern Italy, and we were talking about having hills; it was more than hills; it was mountains.

Mike Zambrano: What was the weather like?

Mr. Sakahara: In the...northern Italy? I...I didn't participate in that...northern Italy...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...campaign.

Mike Zambrano: Well, which one...which others...did you participate in?

Mr. Sakahara: Huh? Well, basically Italy and...and just a little bit of France; I guess that's one reason that I'm still alive (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: Were you ever wounded?

Mr. Sakahara: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Were you ever wounded?

Mr. Sakahara: No and...never wound...wounded. I've been in combat. I remember sitting on top of Hill 140; I thought I was on top, but I found...found out that I wasn't...because the bullets came...whizzing over my head! (chuckle)

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh, okay. (chuckle)

Mr. Sakahara: So, and I was (unintelligible) some of my friends in the...(unintelligible) got hurt at...at...mortar fire, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: And some of the officers got killed, too, in...in the very early stages...so...I...I guess I've been in, you know, in...in some battles, but I...I've been very fortunate because...(pause)...I think his name was Hiroshi Hiroi (sp?); anyway, his...when his arms got hurt...he was looking for me and he got hurt himself. Some of the headquarters people got hurt there, too; a couple of officers...Hill 140.

Mike Zambrano: Hill 140, and there was in...where...in France?

Mr. Sakahara: No, Italy.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, in the very early stages.

Mike Zambrano: Well...well, do you remember what the importance of Hill 140 was?

Mr. Sakahara: No, I don't remember. I was a pretty ignorant kid.

Mike Zambrano: So, any stories stand out in your mind...uh, about any time you served; any interesting stories; humorous stories?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, the only thing I...I really remember is...is that they had a service in our cave because we were...we were...I remember that we had...a beer rations and also we had a service in our...our cave, so as...as we were having our rations, and then I remember...I think I sang a song or something; I can't remember exactly, but anyway, we had a service in a cave under...under shelling...like...

Mike Zambrano: Now when you say service, you mean like a...a church service or...?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, (unintelligible), you know, it was pretty in...informal (laughter), so...you do things in...in a situation like that that you would never...mostly do.

But...and I was...I guess I'd been in...in...just peripherals of the...combat
except that I...was (unintelligible) enough to get in the...in the real
bad...situations...because if I was...I...I...I suspect I wouldn't be alive now.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. Where...(pause)...where were you when you had heard that the
Germans had surrendered?

Mr. Sakahara: (Pause), let's see, when...May of '45 or something?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it was the first week of May, '45.

Mr. Sakahara: I don't remember now (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember...when you heard about the...the atomic bomb being
dropped?

Mr. Sakahara: I don't remember much about that either.

Mike Zambrano: What about when...the war...the...the entire war was completely over?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, I guess I was home in the States.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Sakahara: 'Cause I had certain...uhm, reservations about that because every time Pearl
Harbor...the subject of Pearl Harbor comes up, they make a big deal of that.

Mike Zambrano: Who?

Mr. Sakahara: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Who...who would make a big deal of that?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, everybody; they...they make a big deal about Pearl Harbor and
everything. But you figure that the people that got killed...maybe...in the first
place, they were not one hundred percent ignorant about the
Japanese...coming in. They were warned, but they ignored it. Then, on top of

that, when they came in...Japanese were pushed to the extent of...they...putting...they...backed them up against the wall essentially that...that the...the civilian opposition to the...war lords there were all...were killed because they want...they just eliminated the opposition because of the general opposition in the...in the world among...well, especially the U.S., so...and of course, there was warning about Pearl Harbor. You know you've got to figure that these people that got killed there mostly was eighty percent military, but who got killed in that...two atom bombs that killed...you know? You know I...if you want to talk about people, you know, getting killed, these are civilians; they're not...nine...ninety percent civilians. And everybody makes all kinds of...you know, declarations and statements about it, but nobody...I mean...you have Pearl Harbor here and everybody says, "Oh, little Pearl Harbor (unintelligible)," but nobody says...at the same time, nobody ever says anything about the Pearl Har, uh, you know, the atom bomb...(unintelligible words), but they should at least...making it...I think, but I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: I understand.

Mr. Sakahara: I think there's something wrong with that, but anyway, I don't say anything because...(chuckle)...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, you said you were home when the...well you were back in the States when the war ended. How did you get back to the States before then?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, what happened is that...some...I expected to stay overseas for another six months, but somebody dug up an extra point for me.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so you had the points to go home?!

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I didn't have...think I had it, but they got one more point and they sent me home early. Well, I was thinking maybe I could, you know, look around Europe for...during that six months, but I...I went home..to Fort Douglas (chuckle)...(unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: And then back in the States, you knew the war was over and...uh,...

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, you don't even think about these things, but anyway...so, I...I haven't really been active in the...veterans...reunions and things like that. I went to one big one, and I...minimally active in...in company...company...

Mike Zambrano: A company like...your company?

Mr. Sakahara: Company K, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, alright. Now your reunion, was that the one that you mentioned was in...in Nevada?

Mr. Sakahara: Yes I did; Reno, Nevada I think it was (chuckle). It was...it was a pretty good turnout.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm...

Mr. Sakahara: Very impressive.

Mike Zambrano: Really? How many would you say?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, about three thousand I think.

Mike Zambrano: That's a pretty good size.

Mr. Sakahara: Uh hum, and we had...some pretty high-level people, but...by that time you have your, you know, Navy officers come (chuckle) from the Korean and Vietnamese...so they're some pretty high-level officers, you know? They're...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, do you recall what decorations you received during your...period of service?

Mr. Sakahara: Oh, I think they had...somehow...they had some...probably had too many Bronze Stars, so they sent me one (chuckles). I decided to...Bronze Star to somebody, so...

Mike Zambrano: And no Purple Hearts?

Mr. Sakahara: No (chuckle). I had a friend that really had a lot of Purple Hearts and...he had...I think he's dead now, but anyway...he lived in Seattle. They were not...they were not allowed to join the...VFW and American Legion Service from their own group in Seattle.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! And this was *after* the war?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. I...I did read that there was...

Mr. Sakahara: (Unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: ...discrimination and animosity towards...Japanese Americans even though they did serve.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, I mean...did you experience any of that in...in the following years? I mean...I'm assuming...

Mr. Sakahara: Only thing is...I was in Seattle and I tried to...buy a house in a certain district and they wouldn't let me. It was FHA or something and I was going to make a really big stink (laughter); you know that's coming, but anyway, but...but

then the, you know, made sure that I didn't follow through on that. I was...still pretty young, you know, young and anyway...

Mike Zambrano: So when were you discharged?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, December...11th (?), 1945 I believe.

Mike Zambrano: That's number...11th, 1945?

Mr. Sakahara: Something...around there.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And...what...what were your first thoughts of...what did you want to do once you got out? The war is over.

Mr. Sakahara: Well, actually I wasn't prepared enough, and my family didn't tell me to go to college, so I...sort of back-handedly went into farming, and by...by the time I met my wife and got married, why, I was...(unintelligible words) my wife made me quit farming. (Unintelligible words), you know, my crop isn't growing now and...and consequently I...I'm by myself and I knew I had to do something, so...I ended up...thinking about becoming a...te...a...electronic...technician, and so I signed up for (unintelligible) in Chicago and so I basically ended up, you know, signed up to go...go there. In fact, I went there...to Chicago. I got there too early and so consequently I...looked up my GI buddy (chuckle) and he...he suggested that I should go to college. And, by the time he got through with me, why, he said...I was going to sign up. And I signed up for the University of Illinois and because of my age and...because I was a veteran, they allowed me to, you know, enroll in spite of the fact that I didn't have (unintelligible) and things like that. So I was in time for...to start, and I went to college. (chuckles)

Mike Zambrano: So, did you utilize the GI Bill at that point?

Mr. Sakahara: No, I didn't...I didn't have it yet, so...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible words).

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I used it...in my family...because my family was not very successful, so...

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Sakahara: ...if you didn't make a profit, well you could apply for the...self-exam (unintelligible), you know? But it's...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: ...so between my used equipment and my...GI Bill benefits, well, I had...accumulated three or four thousand dollars and...and I went to college.

Mike Zambrano: And...what did you study in college?

Mr. Sakahara: Electrical Engineering.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I was in Chicago so I went to...University of Illinois there and I was...a resident...for that. After three years, why, you had to transfer downstate. No jobs; no housing, so we took...I transferred to Purdue and I had...I really didn't know what Purdue was, but I...I transferred there anyway. I found out later that Purdue had a pretty good reputation (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so you graduated from Purdue...

Mr. Sakahara: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: ...as an Electrical Engineer?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh hum, and when I got there, they had...eliminated the high-voltage lab, and they were going into solid-state electronics. In fact, they hired somebody from...M.I.T. and he...he brought his...his own crew in; isn't that interesting?

Mike Zambrano: Boy, that's helpful! (Unintelligible) words)...

Mr. Sakahara: At the beginning of the solid-state electronics...we were taught our...our notes, so I was there at the right time...so...

Mike Zambrano: You were lucky!

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, and essentially, they were beginning the concept of system engineering. Well, I...I was in family housing, so I got acquainted with some of my friends that were my age; they were getting their doctorate. They were also married, too. So it was...very interesting.

Mike Zambrano: What year were you married?

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, '53...December...January 11th, '53.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: And my daughter...born on December 11th. The 11th plays a strong role in my life for some reason; I don't know why.

Mike Zambrano: So how come you end up coming to Georgetown?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, in 1984...everything went...down the tubes and I needed a job, so I either go to Saudi Arabia or...someplace else, and someplace else happened to be Utah for Hercules...Hercules that was...in...in...uh, (unintelligible) to start with, but anyway...yeah, I got into (unintelligible) and a few other things and when I got up there they...they basically brought me up there and I...they gave me a choice of two jobs. The job that I chose was...monitoring graphite

systems...get...(unintelligible) systems, so we were there for ten years. That was a very good job (chuckles). My boss was...the same age as myself except he (unintelligible) was a forty-year man at Hercules. I was sixty-one at the time and he...he was about the same age. In fact, I've mentioned something about that and he said, "What...got, you know, what has age got to do with anything?" He was a good boss, you know? One of the best I...I've known. He had a dry sense of humor; you had to kind of watch him closely because...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Sakahara: ...he had...

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Sakahara: ...yeah, he was a great guy! He had...thirty-seven and a half years at Hercules, and he...the R&D people were afraid of him because...he wasn't a guy to throw his weight around, but he had too much power; that's why (unintelligible)...(cough).

Mike Zambrano: Uhm...

Mr. Sakahara: (Cough), excuse me.

Mike Zambrano: That's okay. So, you decided just to retire in Georgetown or...

Mr. Sakahara: (Cough). I investigated all the...opportunities...especially (unintelligible). We went to Arizona because it was hot and...hot and dry; good for seniors. But we were there seven years, we didn't...and the only time my kids showed up was when I got a...a heart attack...Thanks...Thanksgiving; we were there seven years in fact; they only showed up one time. So when I got an invitation to come here, I took that option and then I...put up my house for sale. Also, one

day...because I spent all seven years...I looked...working on my house I know. I never did that all...all the years that I wandered around the...the U.S. But (chuckle), well, you know, the town is important. If they don't show up, why, you...if they don't come to you, you go to them. To me...they grew up in this area...and went to school...that was my choice. I didn't...I...when they get into the teen years, why, they tend to...they're going to (unintelligible) on their peers because (unintelligible), so they kind of think of themselves as Texans.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Sakahara: So they all gravitated back to Texas...so, that's why we...we took...we took that invitation and we came here. Sun City...I knew it...from (unintelligible) City...I called them and said, "Look, I need a house, you know; I...I don't have time to look for one," so I knew they had some houses and this one was almost finished so I came here. My wife never did care for this kitchen. You...you walk in and you...you can see the kitchen here (chuckle). But anyway...

Mike Zambrano: And you've been here ever since.

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, and I...I think terms of owning it...several years, but actually it's five or six or seven years...five years...looking at my paperwork, you know?

Mike Zambrano: For...oh, just owning it outright you mean?

Mr. Sakahara: Yeah, we came here...probably about...about six years ago I think; at least the paperwork says that. You know I have been really fortunate. You know I...I...I've taken the right decisions so...I wouldn't recommend running around the country like we did, but...

Mike Zambrano: Sounds like you did a lot of moving.

Mr. Sakahara: I...I'll show you something; come over here.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, let me just...turn this off for a second (recording stopped momentarily).

Mr. Sakahara: Uh, I...of course, I became an Electrical Engineer and I went to Purdue and then I was working in...Alabama at the time when...three astronauts burned up on the pad, and then NASA was very much concerned about the program, so they brought in Boeing Company as we...Boeing Company brought in eight hundred engineers from all over the country; we set up a national network and we...were...came into...went through Houston to...help NASA with the...whole program, so for several years we were involved with that out...with that project. So, of course, we were also involved in the...the giant Saturn Five booster. We al...also we...involved in integration of...some of the boost shots...in the shuttle.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: Shuttle was...well, essentially the...(unintelligible) shuttle avionics laboratory, so we had a...multi-computer system with...some simulators that were used to check out the...the whole project. And we were...helped...helped...able to help out and making sure that the (unintelligible) as they came in were...were the...in the proper condition to be able to use on a system.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Sakahara: So...and it was very interesting and not...this...you could see the hand of...hand of God, I guess, so...driving the whole process, so we...we enjoyed it very much.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, is there anything else about...your World War II experience that you would like to add?

Mr. Sakahara: The World War II experience...really involved my...it...my...I'm sort of typical in the fact that I spent that time in camps, but also I was able to get out from the camps and then work and eventually end up getting a degree. And many people got degrees through the GI Bill or...whatever...why, in the process of their work they...they were able to...spread out and...through the country and they contributed their skills. And in some...in one sense, they got away, no I wouldn't say got away from...they were liberated from any restrictions parental control. And because of the base...base...foundation that they received from their...in their up...upbringing...they was...it was helpful for them to develop in many different kinds of skills – business and...uh, different disciplines. So...and that...that I think...in one sense we were...we lost, but we also gained something, too, because we were spread out, well, we were liberated; I don't know how to explain that, but...

Mike Zambrano: I guess you could say...I guess you could say World War II changed...some of the goals you had in life?

Mr. Sakahara: Ver...very much so, because if we had stayed in...on the west coast, well, we would have been restricted by...our...general upbringing because we were not...we were being restricted by general...attitude of the...of the country towards...towards Japanese Americans, and we were actually liber...liberated to become what...what...we were...well, we actually became...something *more* because of that; a negative experience became a...positive, so...

Mike Zambrano: Did you feel...uh, I don't know this might sound like an odd question, but did...did that you earned that American status serving during World War II?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, one of the things that was...a foundational truth...what we did...we wanted to prove that we were loyal...Americans, and that...we were not...some are...enemy people; we were...we were part of America and we wanted to prove...and we wanted to take care of our families, and we wanted to do so by fighting overseas and that's why we did. We went...I'm sure that...lot of people who fought in the war (beep sound) (unintelligible) because they wanted to be loyal Americans, but we had something extra because our families were in concentration camps. They...they were saying things about them that weren't true, so we wanted to prove that we were loyal Americans.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, how'd your family feel after they got out of the camps?

Mr. Sakahara: Well most...most people...were...wanted to...uh, make...make a way for their families, so...in fact, if we ever...given no opportunities earlier I think they would have, you know, I...I think it would have been better...better for everybody, but...well, it's...using a negative experience to get a...positive resolve (beep sound). So it...it was a result of...survival, so...

Mike Zambrano: Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Mr. Sakahara: Well, we're...I guess, we were...we were thankful to be...part of this country again, and we (unintelligible) wanted the opportunity to...to...achieve that.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, I...I think...that should...pretty much wrap it up. Well, let me thank you on behalf of the Nimitz and myself by sitting down and...

Mr. Sakahara: Well, thank you.

Mike Zambrano: ...and (unintelligible) interview you.

Mr. Sakahara: Well, I thank you for coming and, you know, interviewing me. I...we made...we made friends with a...granddaughter of one of our senior friends in Arizona, and (beep sound), and essentially, she has married and Naga (sp?) has three children but...he...he was...the husband was trying to race in Marble Falls but they had more children so the end result was they...didn't...didn't participate in racing. But, at least we, you know, as...as retire...retirees we had the opportunity to get to know a young couple, so it's sort of unusual really. Because if we'd stayed in...west coast, we, of course, then we would have...got involved in the community and everything else.

Mike Zambrano: Well.

Mr. Sakahara: But...this is...really a big change.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, definitely. Alright...we can turn it off here.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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