

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series
Jimmy Doi interview
Conducted by James Newberry
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Transcribed by Erin Pirkle

Full Transcript

Interviewer: This is James Newberry and I'm here with Jimmy Doi on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And Mr. Doi, do you agree to this interview?

Doi: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. So we'll just start at the beginning. Could you please state your full name?

Doi: Jimmy Doi.

Interviewer: No middle name?

Doi: No.

Interviewer: And where were you born?

Doi: In Oxnard, California, 1925.

Interviewer: Alright, so tell me about-

Doi: April 5, 1925

Interviewer: Okay. So tell me about your parents.

Doi: My parents, well, they were from Hiroshima, Japan and they eloped. The day that my mother was supposed to get married to someone else, my father-the sister took my father to a woodshed and had all my mother's Japanese clothes, you know. Instead of going into the house where she was supposed to get married, they went on the side and went to the shed and they hid until that night and they eloped to Yokohama, Japan. Then they got on a ship that they thought was going to come to the United States, but they got on a slave ship that went to Mexico. Then, they were there for a little while and then they escaped and walked all the way from Veracruz, Mexico to El Paso, Texas. About a thousand miles or better. Then from there, they walked all the way to California from El Paso.

Interviewer: What sort of slavery was it? What work were they being forced to do?

Doi: Well, just, it was a plantation and working there...my mother was working in the house and my father was working on the farm.

Interviewer: How did they escape and who did they escape with?

Doi: Well, they were on an island and there were crocodiles or alligators around the island. But one day my dad put a string on the rowboat and that night it was raining and so he started pulling and the boat came to them so they escaped.

Interviewer: So you said they first came to Texas-

Doi: No, Mexico.

Interviewer: Right, and from there they escaped to Texas.

Doi: Yeah, El Paso.

Interviewer: And why did they then go on to California?

Doi: Because they had friends in California that they knew there. So that's the only place...all they knew was Oxnard, California. And from El Paso they went all the way to Los Angeles to Oxnard. Walked all the way.

Interviewer: Wow...When they got to Oxnard, California, your parents became farmers?

Doi: Yeah. My dad went to work for a, uh, not a plantation but the owner of a farm and he started working there.

Interviewer: How many children did your parents have?

Doi: Four. No, four brothers and one daughter-five of them.

Interviewer: What were their names?

Doi: Sam, Dick, and Mike, and Jim, and Alice.

Interviewer: So those are American names.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why did they choose those names?

Doi: Well, ha, I don't know. Well, Dick was *Rikio*, but it sounded like Dick.

Interviewer: Tell me about your life on the farm in Oxnard, California.

Doi: I wasn't on a farm there. We moved into the town of Oxnard and ,uh, that's all I know.

Interviewer: Did they still keep a farm out in the country?

Doi: Yes.

Interviewer: And that was their solution-

Doi: We were leasing eighty acres of farm. My brother was in charge of it. My father...they made pretty good on tomatoes so he moved to Japan in 1939.

Interviewer: So your parents made the decision to return to Japan?

Doi: Yeah, because they had a house, a home, there. All the kids couldn't speak Japanese and, you know, they kind of adopted two Japanese girls over there and so they were happy.

Interviewer: And how did you feel about them going back to Japan and you staying in the States?

Doi: Well, they tried to take me but I said no, I'll just run away. And I couldn't read Japanese anyway.

Interviewer: So you stayed behind in California?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And who did you live with?

Doi: My brother. He took care of me.

Interviewer: Where did you do to school?

Doi: Oxnard, uh, grammar school, oh I forgot the name of it. But in Oxnard for grammar school.

Interviewer: And where did you go to high school?

Doi: Oxnard High School when I was fifteen, and then we had to evacuate.

Interviewer: Okay, so what are your memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Doi: We were in Sunday school class and someone came in and said someone attacked Pearl Harbor and I thought, I don't know Pearl Harbor. It was a Caucasian Sunday school teacher and we were supposed to go to have a basketball outing, you know,

and so we were going to cancel it but Mrs. White, the Sunday school teacher, said 'Oh, you need to go over there and go play basketball.' So we went, and I swear that the whole block right around the high school had their radios outside blasting that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The next day I went to school and no one said anything. I used to eat with all the B-team football players, and I went there and no one else came. After that, I went into the stadium and was eating by myself so they could have the outing over there, you know.

Interviewer: How did you feel about the attack when your parents were living in Japan and you were living in the United States?

Doi: Well, we're Americans, you know, so I felt kind of bad about it but I couldn't do anything about it.

Interviewer: When did you learn of President Roosevelt's order to intern Japanese-Americans?

Doi: We lived in town and they had telephone poles all around in the town, you know, and they said we had to evacuate in a couple of weeks. So my brother, he tried to go to his farm but there was a guard there-an army guard- and he wouldn't let him go onto the farm. He had about twenty Mexican laborers, and so he had to go get a Caucasian man to take all of his equipment into the town city limits. He gave the Caucasian all of the...we had cabbage and cauliflower, you know, in the fall, and he had to give that up and get all his farming equipment out. After he got out of the army he went to see about all the farming equipment but it was all stolen. It was just wiped clean. So he moved to Chicago.

Interviewer: So he gave up farming?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Where did you have to go, where did you have to report, to be interned?

Doi: They told us to go to the railroad station with one suitcase each and we waited for the train and the train came and there were a lot of people there from Los Angeles. You know, the train was full so we ended up in Tulare, California, and right by the camp was barbed wire fence. We went and we were lucky we got a mattress for our cot, but some people, they had to get hay and put it in a sack for a mattress.

Interviewer: And this was in?

Doi: Tulare, California.

Interviewer: Tell me about that train trip, that train ride.

Doi: We had to keep all the blinds down. But the train operator was mad at the place so he jerked the train and, you know, people had to stay in their seats otherwise they would-one girl broke her arm because she was on the aisle and the train just jerked so she broke her arm. That's all I know.

Interviewer: Why did you have to keep the blinds down?

Doi: So the people can't see inside. Caucasians.

Interviewer: And what would their reactions have been, do you think?

Doi: I don't know. They might have shot us, I don't know.

Interviewer: How did you feel about this order to be interned? How did you feel about this?

Doi: Just can't help it. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and we were Japanese-Americans, but still. They're sending us to camp.

Interviewer: Did you have any communication with your parents?

Doi: No, my parents were in Japan.

Interviewer: In Tulare, how long were you in that camp?

Doi: Three, four months. And I volunteered to go to the next camp. I didn't know where it was and when we left ____, we thought we were going to go to a real cold area so I had boots, long johns, wool socks and everything. When we volunteered, we went to Gila, Arizona and it was about 115 degrees. It was kind of rough for a while until they started giving us a little money to buy shorts and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Why did you volunteer to go to the other camp?

Doi: I was living with my brother. My brother decided to volunteer with me! He left his family and we went just the two of us. We got a job in the kitchen in Gila, about half a block from the school. I was getting paid eight dollars a month and my brother was getting twelve dollars a month because he was out of school. I was a school kid yet. We worked six days a week in the kitchen.

Interviewer: What kind of work did you do?

Doi: Washing dishes.

Interviewer: Was that a lot of money or not a lot of money, eight dollars?

Doi: Eight dollars, for me, was a lot because no one else was making money. I used to play baseball for the school so we used to go from one school to the other. I'd tell

the bus driver to stop and go to Sears Roebuck and I'd run in and get a record, one or two records every time. Glenn Miller¹. So I'd loan them to the school to have dances, you know, in the mess hall. And then when I left, I left the whole record with them.

Interviewer: So that was the school in the camp?

Doi: Yes.

Interviewer: So I want to talk a little more about the camps. The Gila River, you said that was in Arizona?

Doi: Yes, Arizona.

Interviewer: And it was very hot?

Doi: Yes, hot.

Interviewer: Tell me about the organization of the camp. About how many people were there?

Doi: There were 10,000 in our camp. It was so hot and no air conditioning. So everybody used to dig a hole underneath the pier and stay there during the day. Sometimes they would have company, Gila monsters and rattlesnakes. So, when they went down to the cellar, they used to look all over and see if there were any scorpions before they go back.

Interviewer: How was the camp arranged?

Doi: As a whole, it was one mile each, you know, all the way. We were on one side of the camp and then there was the side for baseball fields. At first, kids used to go underneath the fence and clean up the field with a sage brush and all that, and cut the sage brushes to play baseball. Finally, the camp director decided to let them cut the fence to play baseball.

Interviewer: You said that it was very dusty?

Doi: Oh yeah, at first, until people started growing gardens and stuff. When I first went there, we went to clean up and we had to use shovels to take the sand out and sweep.

Interviewer: And that was through the floorboards?

Doi: Yeah because they scratched it all in and when the sand storms came in, people had to put in old clothes and paper so that the sand wouldn't come in.

¹ Alton Glenn Miller was a big band musician, composer, bandleader, and arranger. He was a best-selling recording artist from 1939-1943 in the swing era.

Interviewer: So was it arranged into blocks?

Doi: Yes, into blocks. About 46, 47, 48. And each one had a mess hall.

Interviewer: And how big was the mess hall?

Doi: I don't know, just a regular. Pretty big mess halls.

Interviewer: How often did you go to the mess hall in a single day?

Doi: Well, I had to work there so I'd go there three times.

Interviewer: How many meals did they serve?

Doi: Three meals. Powdered milk, powdered eggs. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: Did you like the food?

Doi: Well, we had to. Otherwise we'd starve.

Interviewer: Did you attend school in the camp?

Doi: Yeah, but the school at first, when we went, our group-about sixteen, seventeen-we didn't. We just went over there and sat on the floor. The girls sat on the bench and the guys had to sit on the floor in the back.

Interviewer: Who was the teacher?

Doi: They hired some teachers who were Japanese-Americans in college.

Interviewer: What sort of subjects were you learning?

Doi: Everything. They had math and everything. But later on, I heard that they built a bigger school. And boy, those people became doctors. But our group... we were told that-there were rumors that we were going to be traded for American soldiers or Americans and we were supposed to go to Japan. They were going to deport us. So no one wanted to learn anything. We didn't know Japanese so we would have died over there if we went.

Interviewer: What do you mean that no one wanted to learn anything?

Doi: We were told that we were going to go to Japan, you know. And trade with the American people. We all just played in the back.

Interviewer: Who told you that?

Doi: Oh, just rumors. I don't know who said it, just rumors.

Interviewer: Did you have any news from the outside world? How were you informed?

Doi: No, we didn't have radios.

Interviewer: Did they not allow radios in the camps?

Doi: No.

Interviewer: Was there a newspaper?

Doi: No, no newspaper.

Interviewer: Did people going in and out of the camp bring you-

Doi: News? Yeah, but that's about it.

Interviewer: Did you know any news of the war?

Doi: Not much. Hardly any.

Interviewer: What were your interactions with the guards like?

Doi: Well, they're doing their job. But when we used to play-we were fifteen-we used to go out by the fence. That's the only place they had lights at night. When we leaned against the fence, the machine guns would be right there. After a while, it became a game. We'd go against the fence just for the heck of it.

Interviewer: Did anybody try to escape?

Doi: No.

Interviewer: What would have been the punishment if you had escaped through the fence?

Doi: I don't know. I don't know that.

Interviewer: Do you think that they would have shot the person?

Doi: I don't know. In Gila, about thirty miles before Phoenix, it's all desert. And he can't live through it anyway.

Interviewer: So it would have been hard for you to escape anyway once you got out there.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me again about the bed you slept on at Gila?

Doi: Oh, in Gila we had mattresses, but some people had hay and filled it up to have a mattress.

Interviewer: Did you have your own room?

Doi: No, but I stayed with my brother and his family. There were five of us in a barrack.

Interviewer: Five people?

Doi: Yeah, but I had to fold up my bed every morning because we needed to have space to move around.

Interviewer: And what about the bathrooms?

Doi: The bathrooms in Tulare...we just wooden holes and the water would come down, splash down. Everyone stood up and wiped then and sat down again.

Interviewer: Did you have soap?

Doi: Soap? No.

Interviewer: So your shower was just some water?

Doi: You would pull a string and water would come out. You had to buy the soap. We bought soap in the commissary.

Interviewer: What else could you buy in the commissary?

Doi: Uh, Kool-Aid for a nickel. I don't know what they had. All I had was Kool-Aid.

Interviewer: Could you buy cigarettes?

Doi: No, no.

Interviewer: What was the mood of the people there?

Doi: We just couldn't help it. What they call a *Shikata ga nai*.² You just can't help it.

Interviewer: Was there boredom at all?

² Japanese language phrase meaning "it cannot be helped," or "nothing can be done about it."

Doi: I guess you would call it that. We sat around. There was nothing to do. But I had my work so it was okay. But a lot of kids were just bored stiff because there was nothing to do. When they had a silver quarter, they used to pound it all day with a spoon to make a ring. You know, dig a hole and make a ring. That's all they did. Just nothing to do over there. But then they started having baseball or men's basketball. Basketball in the daytime was so hot- 115, 120 degrees.

Interviewer: Were there any other social activities in the camp besides sports?

Doi: No, not that I know of.

Interviewer: Were there dances?

Doi: Oh, that's what I said. I had Glenn miller music and I loaned it to the school and they'd have the dances at night, you know, once a week. But that's about it.

Interviewer: Okay, so tell me about your brother who was interned at Tulare and he was ill.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me about him.

Doi: Once he got to Gila with the hot sun, it helped him finally before they told him to get out of the camp because they were closing the camp. Then, he barely started walking. Until then, he was in bed all that time.

Interviewer: What was this brother's name?

Doi: Dick. Dick Doi.

Interviewer: And he had had a fever?

Doi: Yeah, San Joaquin Valley fever. I had that too and I have a scar the size of a half dollar in my left lung. And my friend had the same thing. We used to hang out together and we both had it. That's why this doctor in Atlanta says, 'you don't get it around here. Were you in the San Joaquin Valley?' And I said, 'Where's that?' and he says, 'Around Tulare, you know, Fresno.' And they had that dust they call it San Joaquin Valley fever.

Interviewer: How does it affect you?

Doi: Well, my brother was in bed for the whole time he was there. I was sick for a while, a couple weeks, and after that I was okay.

Interviewer: Tell us about Eleanor Roosevelt's visit to your camp.

Doi: Well, she came to the school and after that people started going out to work outside the camp. Until then, no one could go out. But then, in the U.S., all the guys that go in the army...there's short labor. When we started going out, where I worked, I was worked so hard the managers told me 'take it easy! Take it easy! Don't work so hard, it makes it look bad for the rest of us.'

Interviewer: And that was in the kitchen?

Doi: No, this was in a defense plant. I was working in a defense plant and when I got my order to go into the army, I went there for a day and they told me, you're Japanese, you have Japanese blood. I said yeah and they said 'go on home.' So I went and started working for this defense plant and I worked there for about three months and they called me again and I said well, they're going to send me back. I went right to Camp Blanding, Florida.

Interviewer: Let's go back. So you said Eleanor Roosevelt's visit- after that people could start working outside the camps?

Doi: Yeah, they let people go out to work.

Interviewer: Why do you think that was?

Doi: Well, there was shorter labor outside.

Interviewer: Okay, and you said you worked in a defense plant?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And where was this defense plant?

Doi: In Chicago.

Interviewer: Did you leave Gila River altogether?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how did you get the job at the plant in Chicago?

Doi: That was after I worked in Cleveland for a while. My sister and brother-in-law moved to Chicago so I went and I was working in a grocery store and then when they called me up, I quit the grocery store and I went in the army and they told me to go on home. I didn't have a job and I was too ashamed to go to the grocery store to get my job back, so I worked in the defense-a friend started working at the defense plant so he got me the job.

Interviewer: What sort of work were you doing in the plant?

Doi: Flipping uh, I don't know what the radar parts were that they were making, and that's all I know. Just pieces here and there.

Interviewer: What plant was it? Do you remember the name?

Doi: No. It used to be a bicycle shop and they made it into a defense plant.

Interviewer: Okay, and they were producing parts for radar?

Doi: Radar equipment.

Interviewer: Were you part of a group or something-?

Doi: I was just a handyman.

Interviewer: Did you work alone or in a group?

Doi: With a group but then the managers told me 'take it easy! You're making it look bad for the other guys,' so I used to just take it easy.

Interviewer: Were you just a naturally hard worker?

Doi: I guess I would say I was a hard worker.

Interviewer: You're talking about Cleveland and Chicago. When did you get out of the Gila River camp?

Doi: October...no...it was right after school anyway.

Interviewer: Do you remember the year?

Doi: Jesus...I don't know.

Interviewer: 1943?

Doi: 1944, I think.

Interviewer: How did you get out?

Doi: Well, a couple of guys were going to get out and go work in Cleveland and they wanted three guys. So I went with them.

Interviewer: And the guards and the commander of the camp said okay?

Doi: Yeah, I mean we got our pass to go out.

Interviewer: So you had to carry a pass?

Doi: Yeah, well just to get out of camp.

Interviewer: And what did you do in Cleveland?

Doi: Well, I worked at an auto paint shop. In those days they didn't have the grinder, you know. We had the sander-oh, what's it called, the emery cloth, to take the paint off the cars.

Interviewer: The emery? What did you call it?

Doi: Emery. Yeah, emery cloth.

Interviewer: Emery cloth.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And then you went to Chicago?

Doi: Yeah, my sister and brother-in-law went there so I decided to go there.

Interviewer: Where did you live in Chicago?

Doi: Northside of Chicago by the Chicago Cubs stadium, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you live with your sister?

Doi: Uh, no. We were living in a hotel and the hotel was fifty cents a day. I lived there for a while.

Interviewer: How did you hear that the army was calling up Japanese-American men?

Doi: Only when they just drafted me. I didn't volunteer.

Interviewer: How did you get the news that you were being drafted?

Doi: They sent me a notice. They gave me a notice to report to Fort Sheridan. And the first time I went there they told me, 'go on home. You have Japanese blood so we're not taking any Japanese.'

Interviewer: So then you worked at the defense plant?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: So tell me about going back to report.
Doi: They took me right away. I went to Camp Blanding, Florida right away.

Interviewer: Tell me about Camp Blanding.

Doi: It was hot and snakes. One guy put the machine gun down and looked right straight at a seven-foot rattlesnake.

Interviewer: What kind of training did you do there?

Doi: Everything. We had to learn everything because...I think seventeen weeks was the training and it took twenty-one weeks because we had to learn artillery and everything to replace the originals. We were just the replacements so we didn't know what we were going to do. A rifleman, artillery.

Interviewer: How did you get assigned to the army?

Doi: That's the only place they sent Japanese-Americans- into the army. Or intelligence. There were about 6,000 that went to the islands and they took the Japanese into caves and some of them never came out because there were some die-hard Japanese.

Interviewer: Did you have Japanese-American officers in the army?

Doi: Not at that time. Only Caucasian officers.

Interviewer: Why do you think that was?

Doi: I don't know. I really don't know. There wasn't too many Japanese-Americans in the army then, but once after the war, there were plenty that became colonels and generals. But being in-there were about 6,000 Japanese-Americans fighting in the islands against the Japanese.

Interviewer: What group were you a part of? What unit?

Doi: 442nd.³

Interviewer: And the 442nd was composed of only Japanese troops?

Doi: Yeah, with American officers.

Interviewer: How did those officers treat you guys?

Doi: They were okay, but at that time there were no Japanese-American officers.

³ The 442nd Regimental Combat Unit was a segregated battalion during World War Two composed entirely of Japanese-American troops. Beginning in 1944, they served primarily in Italy, southern France, and Germany.

Interviewer: Do you remember, approximately, the time you were shipped out to Europe?

Doi: It was about close to October. We went to Glasgow, Scotland because the Queen Mary⁴ couldn't go into England. Then from Glasgow we went through London, oh and I forgot the name of the town...Liverpool. Then to Le Havre, France up at the north of France.

Interviewer: Tell me about the trip aboard the Queen Mary.

Doi: Well it was crowded, about 5,000 soldiers. And Mickey Rooney was there.

Interviewer: What was he doing there?

Doi: He was an entertainer.

Interviewer: And what was your job on board the ship?

Doi: Washing dishes from three o'clock in the morning until late at night.

Interviewer: How did you end up with that job?

Doi: Oh no, KP, you know. You, you, you, come on over here. But the Queen Mary was so fast that the time went right away.

Interviewer: Where did you sleep?

Doi: I was on the 6th level bunks. On the bottom of the ship and I was at the top and had to climb over everybody.

Interviewer: Did you have interactions with American soldiers?

Doi: No. On the way to London, I mean England, they had Italian prisoners up there and they were in the state room⁵ and we were wondering, how come they get to go to the state room, you know, on top. And we were on the bottom deck.

Interviewer: So they had the Italian prisoners of war-?

Doi: Yeah, they were going back to Italy.

Interviewer: And they had them up in the state rooms?

⁴ The Queen Mary carries the record for carrying the most passengers in a single crossing. During World War Two, the Queen Mary carried allied troops, and also brought German and Italian prisoners of war to U.S. and Canadian prison camps. They were kept in the lower sections, but late into the war, were allowed on deck.

⁵ A private compartment on a ship, usually a captain's or superior officer's room.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you all were down in the bottom?

Doi: Yeah. They said they had them down there.

Interviewer: So that was something that stood out to you?

Doi: Yeah, to me.

Interviewer: You said you arrived in France through Le Havre.

Doi: Yeah. Uh huh.

Interviewer: And then where did you go from there?

Doi: Straight up to the uh, to northern France where the 442nd was. Bruyeres. Ah, I can't spell it. Bruyeres, France. When we got there, a friend of my brother's came up to me and said, 'hey, your brother died five days ago.' I says, "Wow, I didn't know. I was waiting for my sister to write to me about it.' But she never did. After Bruyeres, I was in...this friend of mine and I went AWOL to Nice, France. We weren't going to go AWOL but our company's offices closed so early in the morning so we hopped on a truck that was going to Nice, France. We went and watched our hands in the Mediterranean just to say we washed our hands in the Mediterranean. And then, we were walking around and we saw a volleyball game going on, all girls in bikinis. I said, whoa, they hadn't had bikinis in the United States yet, you know. So we stayed. We were going to stay a few minutes but we stayed there about an hour. And then, we started walking around and finally the store is open and I said, hey, go get your perfume because we had to climb up two mountains yet. Hitchhike back to our...close to where were stationed. We had to climb up two mountains so I told him, hurry up and get the perfume. So he went in the perfume shop, and then I was waiting outside and four guys start coming towards me from the 442nd. I said that one guy sure looks familiar and it was my brother. I thought he was dead. I told him, hey, I thought you were dead. After that I knew he was alive until we went to Italy.

Interviewer: What did you think of seeing him after thinking he was dead?

Doi: Oh man. I was really happy to see him, yeah. But he said, hey, do you have any money? How about loaning me some money? I didn't have any money.

Interviewer: Why did he need money?

Doi: Well, he was close to town, to Nice. His 100th Battalion was right by town and he suspended whatever he wanted. Like us, we were up in the mountains in the Maritime Alps. We didn't have anything to buy. But then we played poker all

day. We were just garnering, waiting for more replacements. As soon as the replacements came, we went to Italy to attack.

Interviewer: Tell me this brother's name.

Doi: Mike. Mike Doi.

Interviewer: Is this the brother you went to Gila River with?

Doi: No, no, no. He didn't go into camp. He was already in the army in 1942.

Interviewer: Okay. So this is your much older brother?

Doi: Yeah, he's five years older.

Interviewer: Mike Doi, this is the brother you found alive in France?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Dick Doi was ill with the fever.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And which brother did you go into Gila River Camp with?

Doi: Samuel. Sam, we used to call him Sam. I stayed with him. He's the oldest son, um, brother.

Interviewer: Then your sister's name?

Doi: My sister was in camp for a little while, but...

Interviewer: And what was her name?

Doi: Alice Osomoto.

Interviewer: In France, when you were up in the Maritime Alps, tell me about moving into the mountains in the dark.

Doi: We were way up. All we had to worry about were the shells coming in. they couldn't come over the mountains so when they hit one side, the rocks would come flying onto our side. That's the only think we had to worry about.

Interviewer: So you didn't see any combat?

Doi: No, no.

Interviewer: Okay, and as you moved in, you said it was dark?

Doi: It was dark all the time. But then we went to bed early unless you were on guard.

Interviewer: And you had a view of Monte Carlo?

Doi: Oh yeah. In the daytime, on a clear day, you could see Mote Carlo just like this...it was about six inches.

Interviewer: So it was a long way away?

Doi: Yeah. Just nothing but green. That's how far up we were on the Maritime Alps.

Interviewer: Tell me about being transferred to Italy.

Doi: Well, I heard that 442nd was going to move and I was in a hospital in Chingford⁶ but then was almost well. So when they were going, then I joined our company and we got on the _____ steamboats and went to Italy.

Interviewer: Where did you board the boat?

Doi: Uh, Jesus, I forgot the name of the town.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you arrived in Italy?

Doi: Livorno. Leghorn we called it.

Interviewer: How did you get trench foot?

Doi: Staying up in the mountains in the snow. Our socks were always wet and one day I looked and I saw black spots on my left toe, and so I went...that's pretty good, I stayed and at least we got a hot meal. While we were up there we were eating nothing but K-rations.

Interviewer: In the military hospital, you got better food.

Doi: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And how long were you in that hospital?

Doi: Uh, seventy days.

Interviewer: Were there other guys in there with worse injuries?

⁶ London, England

Doi: Oh yeah. There's a lot of them. At least there was a shower, one shower room where I was every day and every night. Twice a day I'd take a shower.

Interviewer: So once you healed, you went to Italy. What was your mission in Italy?

Doi: Well, what do you mean 'mission?'

Interviewer: What did you have to do?

Doi: Well, we there and trained for about a week and then we started attack in Italy. The 92nd division, the whole division, was on the left flank of us and they couldn't move because the Germans had all that mountain and they were looking down on them so they couldn't move. Every time they moved, artillery shells started coming in. So we went on the other side of the mountain and at night went into a small town, Assiano. We stayed there with the pigs and the chickens and, you know, the Italian farmhouses keep the chickens and pigs and stuff at night. Living with them that night and the next night we got up and started our attack on the farms. The 3rd Battalion went first and they found German soldiers snoring because they knew we weren't going to attack. They figured no one was going to attack at night, so we caught them snoring. We were supposed to just go up the mountain and watch for a counterattack- if they were going to counterattack we would be there waiting for them. But they never showed up. We walked the whole day, then we were supposed to get artillery shell support. Never got it. Motors started 150 yards in front of us, and everybody started attacking Monte Belvedere, and one Caucasian officer yelled 'Bonzai,' so everybody started yelling 'Bonzai.' We attacked and captured about 50 German soldiers and killed some. We only lost four men.

Interviewer: Were these German soldiers just holding out in the mountains?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Or were they in a fort?

Doi: Yeah, they had a fort and everything.

Interviewer: What was the name of that fort?

Doi: A fort? No, I just mean the mountain, Monte Belvedere. That's where we got our first water. I was thirsty. But anyway, after that, after we took Belvedere, it was just chasing the Germans back.

Interviewer: When was this? Do you remember?

Doi: Geez, I don't know. I forgot.

Interviewer: Was it 1944 or 1945?

Doi: '45.

Interviewer: Was it February, March, April?

Doi: Let's see...April. Started on my birthday.

Interviewer: So April of 1945?

Doi: April 5th. We started on that day. I said, please, one more day?

Interviewer: So that it could start on your birthday?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: That would be very memorable, I guess. How did you celebrate your birthday?

Doi: Haha, nothing. I couldn't do nothing. Just prayed that I wouldn't get hit that first day. I said, next day, okay. But after we stopped chasing the Germans, then we came to a town called Castepojille and down in the valley they had a fort crossing from one mountain to the other. The captain called and asked for dive bombers, but three of them came and knocked a hole in the fort. Then as soon as the dive bombers left, the captain wanted, I think he wanted one of the lieutenants, Caucasian lieutenants, to go down with someone to check on how the fort was and no one volunteered, so he went, and I happened to be with him because I was the wireman. We went alongside the fort and got to the main part where the hole was, and then he told me...he stopped and told me to set up the telephone for him. And then he told me to go about 50 yards ahead. Then, he told me to climb and go to the fort. I knew I was going to die, but I went up and my stuck my head out at ground level and no one shot me. Then, I went up there more and my whole body was on ground level and no one shot at me. So I went to the hole in the wall and saw a white flag and seventeen German soldiers there. After I captured them, I put them to a place where it was safe and I called the captain and he came in and went into the fort. I heard later on that he got the Silver Star for that.

Interviewer: Did you get a medal for that?

Doi: Oh no, no.

Interviewer: Did you get any credit for it?

Doi: No. My name's not on it.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Doi: Ah, I don't care. I'm safe. I was alive. That's all I was worried about.

Interviewer: Why do you think those seventeen Germans waved the white flag so quickly?

Doi: Well, I don't know, because only just two of us go in and the rest of the company is about a block away waiting to attack. They didn't have to. They decided that it was better to be alive than dead.

Interviewer: What was the name of the fort?

Doi: Fort Bastoni

Interviewer: Where did you go from there?

Doi: We went up north, chasing the Germans.

Interviewer: Do you remember Victory Day?

Doi: It was in Genoa. We were in Genoa, Italy, and we were in a big hallway and we heard all kinds of firecrackers going off. I went outside and said, 'l'aguerra è finito,' the war is end. I was happy for that. We were going to go to Austria if the war didn't end.

Interviewer: That's where you would have been sent next?

Doi: Yes. We went to Lake Como towards the Swiss-Italian border, but then after that, I mean, the war was over.

Interviewer: How much longer did you stay in Europe?

Doi: About a year. A little over a year.

Interviewer: What were you doing at that time?

Doi: Nothing.

Interviewer: I mean, nothing...?

Doi: Yeah, I had German prisoners working in our camp and one day...I treated the German prisoners pretty good. One day, I was taking a nap when I was supposed to be on guard and I saw all these German soldiers right next to me and they found a burp gun and they were going to give it to me, you know. Man, I brought it all the way back to New York harbor. It got so heavy, my back was so heavy, I dropped it in the water. That was going to be my souvenir.

Interviewer: And you just dropped it in the water?

Doi: Yeah. I wish I knew which pier it was.

Interviewer: So, these German prisoners of war that you were just watching over...

Doi: Yeah. Every morning, they would see me coming with a truck and I was always on the outside truck. Every morning they were looking for me and they would run over there. Then, they get on. Every day I had the same guys and one day, another guy went into town- escaped to town. I heard that after they caught him, they took him back to the German camp and beat the heck outta him. He never came back.

Interviewer: Who beat the heck out of him?

Doi: The German prisoners. This one guy, a prisoner, went into town so I couldn't...I couldn't watch everyone.

Interviewer: Where were you at this point?

Doi: Leghorn...Livorno, Italy.

Interviewer: So that's where you were watching these German soldiers?

Doi: Yeah, they were cleaning up the yard and everything. And I treated them pretty good.

Interviewer: When you shipped back to the United States, where did you land?

Doi: New York, I guess. No, I don't know where. And then I had my furlough. I went back to Chicago for three weeks, then went back to San Francisco and went to Japan.

Interviewer: Were you discharged?

Doi: No. I re-enlisted.

Interviewer: Okay, so you say you re-enlisted. Does that mean that you had discharged and then re-enlisted?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so you were discharged by the army?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then how did you re-enlist?

Doi: Nah, I did it that same day.

Interviewer: The very same day?

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And where was that?

Doi: In Italy.

Interviewer: Oh, in Italy?

Doi: [nods].

Interviewer: Okay. Why did you re-enlist?

Doi: To look for my parents. They were in Japan near Hiroshima, and I was the only single one in the family so I said, I decided to re-enlist.

Interviewer: Did your siblings want you to do that?

Doi: They didn't even know about it. I just knew that I was the only one.

Interviewer: Did you board a ship in San Francisco?

Doi: Yeah. Then before I boarded the ship, I had a telephone call from my brother that said that he heard from the Red Cross saying that my parents were in good shape. They were okay. So, I wish I didn't volunteer for another three years.

Interviewer: Did you know that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima?

Doi: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: What did that make you feel or think at that point?

Doi: Well, I was worried about my mom and dad because they were close to Hiroshima. Otherwise, if they hadn't have dropped that bomb, we'd still be fighting, you know.

Interviewer: And you had no contact with them at that point?

Doi: No, no.

Interviewer: Where did you arrive in Japan?

Doi: Yokohama, Japan.

Interviewer: Tell me about making the trip out to see your parents.

Doi: First, I went into quartermaster because...ah, I forgot the division. But about 150 miles away from Hiroshima. I was the closest, so I volunteered for that outfit. Then, after a few weeks in Japan, I asked the lieutenant if I could have a few days off to go look for my parents. He wasn't going to give it to me, but the major sitting right by him said, 'give the man a ten day pass.' So, I got ten days to go look for my mom and dad. And when I got to the town named Kaita, I had my one week supply of food. I had a couple of guys taking my stuff to the house. My sister-in-law told me just about where to go, so I knew about where it was and I looked. When I got there, I looked and my dad was raking the ground, dirt you know. He was facing the other way, so I went up to him and I said, 'hi, pop.' And he about died! Hugged me for the first time, and he called my mother and my mother was sick in bed but she came running out...and that's how I met my mom and dad.

Interviewer: Tell me about your father during the war?

Doi: He was being watched because he was always bragging that four of his sons were in the American army. My mom was afraid for him because the Japanese police were watching him all the time.

Interviewer: How far was their little town from Hiroshima?

Doi: Four miles.

Interviewer: Tell me about the bomb drop in the morning.

Doi: They were in Hiroshima that early morning gathering firewood. When they were coming back home, four miles, he was coming home and all his friends and relatives were going to Hiroshima to get firewood. They were laughing at him, but when he got home, and sat to take off his shoes, in the house, the bomb went off and knocked him to the ground. But all his friends and relatives...they were gone. I mean, they were dead. But my mom and dad were safe.

Interviewer: You said it knocked him to the ground?

Doi: Yeah. Before they got in the house. You know, in Japan, they take off their shoes, then go on what they call *tatami*, you know, floor. Anyway, that saved their lives. But my grandmother was coming to my parents' place. She had an umbrella facing Hiroshima, and when the bomb went off, the umbrella burnt, but saved her life. My uncle had a son and daughter in school in Hiroshima. He lost both of them. They went looking for them and that's why I think my dad, the next day, they went and looked for them and all that fume got in his lungs and he got lung cancer. He died.

Interviewer: That was your uncle?

Doi: No, my dad.

Interviewer: Your father. Okay.

Doi: He went looking for my uncle's two children, boy and girl...I guess that's about it.

Interviewer: So, your parents had gone back to Japan in 1939. When were you going back to see them in Japan?

Doi: I wasn't going to go back.

Interviewer: No, I mean when did you first see them, you know, when you walked up to your Father and he was raking leaves?

Doi: Oh, that was in 19-...when I re-enlisted for the army just to go to Japan so that uh...they told us that we could go wherever we wanted if we volunteered. So I volunteered for Japan.

Interviewer: And was that in 1946, or 1947?

Doi: 1946.

Interviewer: So it had been seven years since you saw your parents.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did you feel to reunite with them?

Doi: Oh, it was really great.

Interviewer: And, you eventually brought your parents back to the United States.

Doi: Yeah. All my brothers...uh...three of us were in the service, so we applied for them to come back to the States. They came back, but they were so lonesome they went back to Japan. You know, we couldn't speak Japanese to them. I mean, I couldn't. Only my oldest brother and sister could talk to them and they were in Chicago. When they came to Georgia to see us, no one could speak to them. Finally, they got lonesome and went back to Japan. They had a house there anyway. So, that's it.

Interviewer: When did your parents pass away?

Doi: Ah, I forgot. I know...let's see, my mother died when I was having a birthday party, but I forgot. I got a call from my brother saying that my mom died. My father died before that because of the lung from Hiroshima. I don't know.

Interviewer: Tell me about meeting your wife?

Doi: See, my father and her father were good friends. So, he told me to go to New Orleans to go see...they had five daughters! I went. Then we went to Florida together with my sister and brother-in-law.

Interviewer: Wait, okay. So your father and your wife's father were good friends.

Doi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they both suggested that you go to New Orleans where they were living to see the family because they had five daughters?

Doi: Well five or six!

Interviewer: Were you just going to meet all of them?

Doi: Um, no. They told me Motoko, that was her Japanese name, was there. I went to see her and we went to Florida with my sister and brother-in-law.

Interviewer: And your wife-

Doi: And I liked her so we got married.

Interviewer: And your wife was in an internment camp as well?

Doi: Oh yeah, she was in for three years. Over three years.

Interviewer: In what camp?

Doi: Arkansas. Rohwer, Arkansas. There were two camps in Arkansas, Jerome and Rohwer. She was in Rohwer.

Interviewer: And she eventually moved to New Orleans with her family.

Doi: Well, they were very poor. They had so many kids that they couldn't go back to California, you know. So they went to New Orleans, the closest big city.

Interviewer: What did her father do there?

Doi: Well, he had all kinds of different stuff. You know, farming over there...you couldn't farm because the dirt was poor. So he, you know what they call shucking oysters for a living.

Interviewer: Where did you move to in Florida?

Doi: Huh?

Interviewer: Where did you live in Florida?

Doi: I didn't move to Florida.

Interviewer: But you went there with your wife, your sister, and your brother-in-law.

Doi: Yeah. We went to Panama City, around that area.

Interviewer: Okay, tell me about moving to Georgia.

Doi: Well, I was in Chicago and I was what they call chick sexing, determine the sex of a baby chicken. And they had, uh, I was going to Iowa, Nebraska and all of the cold country, and when I found out there was a job in Georgia, I didn't know where Georgia was at that time! Warmer country, anyway. I decided to come out here and man, we used to work then. Forty-eight hours sometimes.

Interviewer: And what were you doing?

Doi: Determine the sex of a baby chicken. As soon as they're hatched, we would look at their back-end and tell between a rooster and a hen.

Interviewer: And were you doing this on poultry farms?

Doi: Hatcheries.

Interviewer: Hatcheries.

Doi: All over.

Interviewer: All over Georgia?

Doi: The big ones were in Gainesville at that time.

Interviewer: Where did you live?

Doi: Here, in Decatur. Same place.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about coming to Georgia in the '50s? What did you notice about society in the South?

Doi: Oh, when I first came down here, I wanted to use the bathroom. I looked: 'Colored' and 'White.' I said...I went to the attendant and said, 'hey, which one am I supposed to use?' And he told me, 'use the white one.'

Interviewer: Where was that?

Doi: In Decatur.

Interviewer: Was it, like, a gas station?

Doi: A gas station, yeah.

Interviewer: So, Mr, Doi, I'd like to just ask you here at the end...When you think back to the World War Two period, and the fact that you were interned, but then served as a U.S. soldier, how does that make you feel?

Doi: Well, I was waiting to go any time, you know. As soon as I turned eighteen, I was ready to go even if I had to go fight Japanese. In fact, the whole regiment after Italy volunteered to go fight in the Pacific, but they wouldn't let us go because we looked alike. Well uh, that's it.

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Doi. And we will conclude there.

