

## Interview with Japanese-American Veteran Norman Saburo Ikari, December 2003

*Time 28:58 to 34:15 (approximately 5 minutes)*

**Norman Saburo Ikari:** I got shipped to Camp Grant, Illinois, which was a medical replacement training center. Of course there's not a gun in the camp, which I don't know whether it was intentional from the standpoint of us Japanese guys, cause I don't think no Japanese fellows would be trusted with firearms in those days. But, uh, we began basic training. During my basic training two major developments, first was that, uh, the draft and all enlistments into the military were cut off, the draft was no longer operable for Japanese Americans. The second was I found out an order had been signed that evacuated all Japanese from a certain portion of the west coast. I suddenly found out that my oldest brother had been put into a camp in rural Arkansas and my second oldest brother into a camp in Manzanar, eastern California, and my mother and the rest of the family in the Posten Camp, in the middle of the Arizona desert. So there's my family in three separate camps, behind barbed wire. And I was in a camp, but a different kind of camp.

**Interviewer:** How was it that it happened that your brothers went to different camps from the rest of the family?

**Saburo Ikari:** Simply because they lived in different places. My two older brothers lived in different places. The only part of my family that did not get evacuated was my youngest kid brother. And he didn't because he had a girlfriend in Colorado, so when the evacuation notice either came out or just before he took the car that I had left behind and drove to Colorado to join his girlfriend and her family.

**Interviewer:** So he was never interned and evacuated?

**Saburo Ikari:** The only one in the family

**Interviewer:** Did you have occasion to visit any of your brothers, or your mother or your sister?

**Saburo Ikari:** Yes, I was just coming to that. So I finished my basic training and when I finished I asked for a pass to visit. And there was no way in the world that I could visit three different camps scattered all over the United States, so I thought I better visit my mother in Posten, Arizona. I was granted that pass. I understand that some of the nisei guys in the army at the time were not allowed passes to Manzanar because Manzanar was still in California, although in the eastern part. But I was granted this pass to Posten and it was a very unpleasant trip, even during the time I was in transit to get to Posten. I had a bad experience in Parker, Arizona, at the lunch counter. I had a bad experience trying to get the gates at the Posten Camp. But was able to visit with my mother.

**Interviewer:** You were in uniform at that time?

**Saburo Ikari:** I was in uniform. I got challenged on the bus going to Parker. This MP stuck his head and asked “Do all you Japs got passes?” I thought, I need a pass to visit my mother? I was floored. After we visited for a couple of days my brothers young wife decided they ought to have a celebration for me. So there was another nisei GI’s that was also visiting, so we decided to go into Parker to get some beer, which was a huge mistake. We walked into the nearest saloon and we no sooner got through the door, then the bartender waived us out “No Japs!” and he called for his bouncer and two big bouncers came out from the back. So he and I decided that we were not going to do this and exit as gracefully as possible. Soon as we got out the door we were confronted by this Indian fellow, who was also in an Army uniform, he was in the Timberwolf Division. And he made the remark to us that, you know, “Guys like you and I should never go into a place like this.” And so we essentially got kicked out of the place. I had shouted at the bartender, we just wanted a case of beer, we weren't going to drink it here. He wouldn't even listen to me. So I don't know whether our celebration took place non-alcoholically or not. I don't remember, I don't remember. So the visit ended and I went back to Camp Grant.