

Transcribed and Condensed Excerpt provided by the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project from Interview with Merrill's Marauders Commando Grant Jiro Hirabayashi, June 29, 2005

Excerpt Begins at 29:50

Terry Shima: This is an oral history on the life of Grant Hirabayashi of Silver Spring, Maryland. It is conducted on June 29, 2005 by the Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA), which is a partner of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. The interviewer is Terry Shima and the camera man is Robert Nakamura.

About 10 years ago Grant provided a very thorough oral history to the Go For Broke Education Foundation, also a partner of the Library of Congress. It covered all aspects of his life including his pre military and post military periods. Therefore, this interview will treat the non military portion of his life only generally and concentrate on Grant's military life thereby complementing the Foundation's life history.

Grant, one of the 14 Nisei Marauders, served in Burma with the elite 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), popularly known as the Merrill's Marauders—the first American military unit to fight on the Asian continent since the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.

It is important to know the genesis of Merrill's Maruders. Prime Minister Winston Churchill asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt to have 3,000 volunteer infantrymen, trained in jungle warfare and in superb physical condition, to drive the enemy out of Burma, then a member of the British Commonwealth.. The Joint Chiefs of Staff expected the Marauders would sustain 85% casualties and would not be fit for combat in three months. The JCS was right on both estimates.

The Marauders achieved its mission: it defeated the Japanese 18th Division, the conquerors of Malaya and Singapore, in five battles that resulted in the capture of the town of Myitkyina, a strategic location that had the all weather airfield and the land route to China. Control of this town ensured the free flow by air and surface of war material to Chinese Nationalist forces.

Their mission completed, the Merrill's Marauders disbanded and Grant was subsequently assigned to India and then to China, where he saw the end of war.

On July 8, 2004 Grant was the third Japanese American Marauder to be inducted into the Ranger's Hall of Fame in Fort Benning, Georgia.

Let us hear it from Grant.

Grant, would you please state your name, your date and place of birth.

Grant Hirabayashi: My name is Grant Jiro Hirabayashi. I was born in Kent, Washington on the 9th of November, 1919.

TS: What was your motivation to go to Japan during your youth, how long were you there, what year did you return to U.S. why did you return when you did?

GH: In my youth I had two close friends, Tom Horiuchi and Kenji Nomura. We lived within a bicycle ride distance to each other and we spent much time together. One summer when fish were not biting, the conversation focused on Japan. Tom and Kenji both visited Japan during a summer vacation and they were exchanging their experiences. When I heard the Japanese drove on the wrong side of the street, slept on futon on the floor, use soroban (abacus) for calculations, etc., it aroused my curiosity. I finally prevailed upon my father to send me to Japan with the understanding that I would study the language for two years. When I entered chugakko, I was told by my father that the return ticket will be forthcoming after I finished school. Upon graduation, my brother who was attending Kyoto Imperial University on a grant, advised me that because of the deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Japan, I should return to the U.S. After eight years of education in Japan, I graduated from chugakko in 1940. I had a diploma in one hand and a ticket home in the other.

TS: During your stay in Japan, Japan was already on a war footing. Did the Japanese try to brainwash you?

GH: Japanese war effort was concentrated on China at the time and although my fellow students were brainwashed or did not know better than to accept the official line, I had mixed feelings and was skeptical at times because we were under censorship and denied all access to outside news.

TS: Did you have any inkling or did you have any gut feeling, that Japan was preparing to attack the United States?

GH: In mid-1930's, I read an article in Shonen-kurabu (Youth Magazine) that mentioned that if Japan were to go to war with the United States, Japan would launch an air attack on the Philippines, Hawaii, Panama Canal and Singapore. My response was "Nonsense ". However by late 1941, I began to feel quite uneasy about our relationship with Japan.

TS: Describe your most memorable experience in Japan.

GH: Just prior to my graduation from chugakko, middle school, I was informed by the military officer attached to our school that I was recommended for military cadet. I replied, "Thank you, but no thank you. I am an American citizen." The officer was taken aback to learn that I was not a Japanese citizen. If I had dual citizenship like many Nisei were, I could very well have been a Japanese soldier!

TS: Your brother was also in Japan. When did he return and what prompted him to do so? At the time my brother urged me to return to the United States, he informed me that he was in close contact with the U.S. Consulate in Japan and that he would leave at first notice from the Consulate. He returned in April, 1941. After you returned, what did you do?

GH: I enrolled at Kent High School (Kent, Washington) that had a precedent where they accepted all credits from chugakko in Japan. I earned my diploma in one year and while debating my future course

of action, Uncle Sam solved my question with a draft notice. While waiting for my induction, I worked as a garage attendant.

TS: What military career did you wish to pursue?

GH: Upon being drafted, I enlisted in the Army Air Corps. My desire was to become an aircraft mechanic.

TS: Where were you when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941? When you heard the news what came to your mind? Did you think that war with the US was inevitable? How did it affect your military career?

GH: I was stationed at Ft. Lewis, Washington. I was on my way back from church when I heard about the attack from the public speaker. When I heard about the attack, I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was, but I was shocked and angered and deeply concerned what may happen to my parents who were enemy aliens. (December 7th was the day I was looking forward to. It was the day my parents were scheduled to visit me. When I heard that all passes were canceled and that the Fort was closed to all visitors, I immediately went to the public telephone to advise my parents to cancel their visit. When I picked up the receiver, there was no dial tone. The phone had been disconnected. I then went to the main gate and awaited their arrival. Fortunately, we were able to make eye contact at a distance. We waved at each other and parted.) I was aware that the negotiation between the two countries was at a breaking point, but I didn't think that war was inevitable. Shortly after the war broke out, I was transferred to Jefferson Barracks, MO for basic training. When I arrived, I was immediately placed in protective custody along with twenty - two other Nisei. After 40 days of confinement, we were released and assigned to our respective Flights. While waiting for assignment to an Aircraft Mechanical School, I served as a Flight Clerk and Plans and Training Clerk. In or about June of 1942, all Nisei at Jefferson Barracks were relieved from the Air Corp and reassigned.

TS: Were your parents and family affected by the Evacuation Order? In which internment camp did they go?

GH: Yes, initially they were sent to an internment camp in Tule Lake, CA followed by a transfer to Heart Mountain, WY.

TS: How did you get your Camp Savage assignment? What went through your mind as you considered this assignment? Psychologically. Would you have preferred to serve in Europe with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team?

GH: After being relieved from the Air Corp, I was reassigned to Fort Leavenworth Station Hospital, KS. While serving as a sick and wounded clerk, I received a letter from Col. Kai Rasmussen, Commandant of the Military Intelligence Service Language School, Camp Savage, MN. His letter asked for my resume with emphasis on language training. Upon my response, I was assigned to the Military Intelligence School. My new assignment took place in October of 1942 when duties and assignments of the MIS graduate were censored and the 100th Battalion from Hawaii was training in Camp McCoy, WL The fact that the MISers' duties or assignments were classified and prior to the formation of the 442 Combat Team, I admit that I was curious as to what the future may hold, but had no reservation in accepting the new assignment.

TS: What was your classroom regimen? What was the curriculum? What did you do on your non duty hours? Were students all Japanese Americans or did you have other nationalities? What was the caliber of the teachers?

GH: It was a total immersion in the Japanese language. The classes were held from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during daytime and from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. during the evening. On Saturdays, examinations were held in the morning. In preparation for the examinations, there were many students, after lights out at 10:00 p.m., who continued their studies in the latrine. At one time, they had to post a guard at the latrine to accommodate those who were there for legitimate reason! The curriculum consisted of translation of text book from Japanese to English; reading cursive style writings; learning military terminology; interrogating POW; translating intercepted radio messages and captured documents and learning Japanese culture, customs and national characteristics. The composition of the student body was primarily Nisei, but there were non-Nikkei (non-Japanese American) students such as several Americans of Chinese ancestry as well as number of Caucasian officers who came to Camp Savage from the University of Michigan and other institutions where they learned their basic Japanese. We were one of the early classes and the teachers were still on the job training. Under the circumstances, they performed very well. Off duty hours were spent reading, playing cards and having a treat to a good Chinese dinner on payday.

TS: What was the most memorable experience during your language training?

GH: Meeting new friends. I made friends with many people who I still communicate with and among them was a friend who became my brother in law and life time friend, Taro Yoshihashi.

TS: You answered President Franklin D. Roosevelt's call for volunteer for a "dangerous and hazardous mission." How did that notice come to you? Did you have any idea what the mission was? How many volunteered and how many were selected? What were the criteria for selection? How many (Roy Matsumoto, Hank Goshu, Ben Sugeta, Akiji Yoshimura) were in internment camps.

GH: I first noticed that something was brewing when some high ranking officers appeared at Ft. Snelling, MN where the MIS graduates were stationed and awaiting overseas assignment. There were numerous rumors about a call for volunteers for a secret, dangerous and hazardous mission such as to be attached to a marine unit (The War Department projected a casualty rate of 85 percent for the operation.) I was first approached by Sgt. Eddie Mitsukado, our future Team Leader, who asked about my marital status, health, language proficiency, etc. They selected 14 from more than 200 volunteers, a mixture of Nisei from Hawaii and from the mainland. And what is most admirable is that Roy Matsumoto, Hank Goshu, Ben Sugeta and Akiji Yoshimura volunteered from behind barbed wire to serve their country. The selection criteria called for "of high rate of physical ruggedness and stamina" and good command of the Japanese language.

TS: At what point were you given some inkling of your mission and where in India did you get your training? How did you get from Camp Savage, MN to India? [USE MAP]

GH: I can't recall the exact time frame, but it was during our training period that we became aware of our general mission, but our true mission was very hard to come by. We left Camp Savage, MN late in the evening by train, with shades down, for Angel Island, CA where we joined the unit code name Galahad. We sailed from San Francisco to New Caledonia and on to Brisbane, Australia where we picked up a third battalion, all veterans of New Guinea, Guadalcanal, and other Pacific islands who had first hand experience in jungle warfare. From Brisbane we sailed to Perth, Australia where we

disembarked to stretch our legs for about an hour and then returned back to the ship. We arrived in Bombay, India on October 31, 1943 after 40 days on the high seas.

TS: Where in India were you trained?

GH: From Bombay we traveled 125 miles by rail to Deolali where we began our initial training. We then went to a British camp near Deogarh, by train and by foot, where it was more suitable for jungle training.

TS: Who were the instructors, American, British? How long was the training?

GH: There were both American and British instructors. The duration of the training was about four months.

TS: How large a complement was the 5307 Composite Unit (Provisional) and why was it called the Merrill's Marauder?

GH: The unit consisted of 2,997 officers and men and was divided into three battalions; each battalion was divided into two columns/Combat Teams and each column were identified by colors: First Battalion consisted of Red and White columns, Second Battalion consisted of Green and Blue and the Third Battalion consisted of Orange and Khaki. Two Nisei were assigned to each column/Combat Team. James Shepley of Time and Life thought that the name 5307 Composite Unit (Provisional) wouldn't arouse reader interest, so he suggested Merrill's Marauders. And the name stuck.

TS: When you completed training what were you told about your mission?

GH: First let me explain the military situation facing the Merrill's Marauders. The Japanese famed 18th Division, "Kurume Shidan", which played the vital role in the fall of Singapore and the capture of Burma, was positioned in the Hukawn and Mogaung Valleys through which the proposed Ledo Road was to be built to link with the Burma Road to provide a land route to China. In order to complete the Ledo Road, it was necessary to clear the valleys of Japanese troops and to capture the all-weather airstrip in Myitkyina. The capture of the airstrip would not only provide additional landing place for our cargo aircrafts, but deny the Japanese use of the airstrip to re-supply their troops. To accomplish this mission, it was necessary for the Marauders to make swift raids behind enemy lines, disrupting enemy communication and supply lines, and destroying enemy strongholds, while the American trained Chinese troops made the frontal attack.

TS: Why did you need to hike 700 miles to reach your destination? Was there no railroad or vehicle road?

GH: There was no railroad in the dense jungle of northern Burma and roads and trails were under enemy patrol. In order to evade detection and to maximize the use of the element of surprise, the Marauders would swing around the enemy by cutting through jungles, wading through rivers and climbing mountains.

TS: Did you have contact with the enemy during the trek?

GH: The jungle was so dense that the enemy was out of sight but within hearing distance. The enemy I saw was all KI. The first live enemy soldier I saw in Burma was at the Myitkyina airstrip.

TS: Was the travel during day, night? What was the longest distance the troops hiked in one day?

GH: It was quite common for each battalion/column to operate independently, so I can only speak for the First Battalion/Red Combat Team. The travel, in general, was during the day, but I can vividly recall when we marched day and night to rescue the Second Battalion under siege at Nhpum-Ga. I can't recall the longest distance hiked in one day.

TS: How long did it take to walk the 700 miles?

GH: We entered Burma about the 21st of February, 1944 and the Marauders launched their attack on the Myitkyina airstrip on May 17th and that adds up to a total of 86 days.

TS: What was the condition of the troops at the end of the 700 mile hike?

GH: When the Marauders captured the Myitkyina airstrip after fighting through 5 major and 30 minor engagements, their ranks were depleted by disease, physical and mental fatigue and casualties. It is estimated that only 200 Marauders remained of the original outfit of 3,000 men who could, if necessary, carry on for a week or longer.

TS: Did the commanders know in advance you all had to hike 700 miles over such difficult terrain?

GH: What I know now is that according to the "plans and assumption" of the War Department as set forth in a telegram from General Marshall to General Stilwell of September 30, 1943, was "that Galahad (code name for the Marauders) is provided for one major operation of approximately three months duration ..." Although there is no mention of the final objective - the Myitkyina airstrip - I assume the answer is yes, they knew.

TS: You were nearly disqualified from serving in the Marauders because you were allergic to K-Rations and you had a fractured arm. Explain the circumstances. [Discuss each of the 5 battles]

GH: 1) Battle of Walawbum. [SHOW ON MAP] Rice and Shinshu Miso. How long was the battle? Casualties? What did Nisei do? While both the Second and Third Battalion were active in the battle of Walawbum, the First Battalion to which I was assigned guarded the trail and was held in reserve. During this battle, Nisei accompanied reconnaissance patrol dispatched beyond the perimeter of defense to gather information. It was here where Hank Goshu, assigned to the Third Battalion, served as a rifle man and as a linguist. He interpreted enemy oral command on the spot and enabled the platoon to shift the power in the direction of the enemy onslaught. The Second Battalion, consisting of Roy Matsumoto, Ben Sugeta, Roy Nakada and Bob Honda tapped into enemy telephone line and during Matsumoto's watch; he intercepted the communication that disclosed the location of an enemy ammunition dump. Subsequently, a major ammunition dump was destroyed by our bomber. Late that evening they intercepted a message indicating that the enemy was planning an attack at 2300 hours. Because the Battalion had fought continuously for 36 hours without food and was low on ammunition, it was ordered to withdraw, rather than confront a superior force. When the battle was over, there were 800 enemy dead with a cost to the Marauders of 8 KIA and 37 wounded. After the battle, I came across an empty bag with Japanese characters, Shinshu Miso. Soy-bean paste for miso soup. Shinshu is the ancient name for Nagano Prefecture where my parents came from and where I attended school. It reinforced my daily prayer that I would be spared from confronting my cousins and classmates. The Japanese were taken by surprise at Walawbum retreated in a hurry and scattered rice on the ground. I filled a water bag, grain by grain - enough for a meal. Cooking rice in a helmet was a challenge.

2) Battle of Shadazup. Shadazup is located 50 miles south of Walawbum where the First Battalion was called upon to establish a road block behind enemy line. The White Combat Team crossed the Irrawady River early in the morning while the Red Combat Team provided cover. Later in the day I received orders to cross the Irrawady River and provide assistance in tapping enemy telephone line. When linguists were called on a mission, they were provided an escort. On this day I had two escorts - one in front and one in back. As we crossed the river the water was shoulder deep. I placed my carbine in my right hand and held it over my head while I lifted the pouch with dictionaries and maps with my left hand and struggled because the pouch was obstructing my view. When we reached mid stream, I heard three shots from a sniper and to this day I don't know how I managed to get across. Fortunately all three of us were able to cross the river safely. I later heard that when the sniper opened up, those who were providing cover for us opened up with all the automatic weapons on hand. And the fire power was so great that it cut down a tree and found the sniper tied to the tree. When I reported to the officer in charge, I was told that the telephone line was dead. I was not able to fulfill my duty but my river crossing was not in vain. The enemy was taken by surprise and they retreated leaving behind their breakfast. I had a feast with rice and a can of sardines!

3) The battle of Inkangawtaung. When the First Battalion moved south to Shadazup, the Second and Third Battalion headed south taking a separate route to establish a road block at Inkangawtaung, ten miles south of Shadazup, on the Kamaing Road. Shortly after the Marauders arrived at their destination they encountered heavy opposition. The enemy reserves came quickly to the rescue and the Marauders were overwhelmed and began their withdrawal to Nhpum-Ga under intensive fire.

4) The battle of Nhpum-Ga Hill. While the First Battalion was engaged in Shadazup, the Second Battalion was called upon to establish a road block on the road leading toward Myitkyina. The Third Battalion that was separated from the Second Battalion was fighting against the Japanese in that vicinity. The Second Battalion was under siege for 15 days and the Hill later became known as "Maggot HUP" because of enemy dead and pack animals decaying in the hot humid weather. Linguists took turn going beyond their perimeter every night to listen to secure information. One night, Sgt. Roy Matsumoto crawled way beyond his perimeter into no-man land and overheard that the enemy was planning an attack at dawn. With this information, the platoon leader, Lt. McLogan withdrew his men from the ridge and booby trapped the fox hole previously occupied and concentrated all his automatic weapons in the direction of the attack. At dawn, the Japanese struck the previously held position. They were startled to find the position vacant and they charged up the hill led by an officer carrying a sword. Lt. McLogan held his fire until they got within 15 yards and opened up with all his automatic weapons and annihilated the enemy. The second wave that followed saw what happened and they hit the ground. Sgt. Matsumoto, thinking that they may withdraw to fight another day, rose from his fox hole and gave command in Japanese, "Charge! Charge!" and they charged only to meet the fate of the first wave. When the battle was over, they counted 54 bodies, including 2 officers. The day was Sunday - Easter Sunday. The First Battalion accomplished its mission with the 8 KIA and 35 wounded, whereas the enemy suffered several hundred men.

5) The battle of Myitkyina. Following the battle of Nhpum-Ga, the Marauders regrouped and drove south to accomplish their final and most difficult mission of making a direct strike against Myitkyina and capture the vital all-weather airstrip. The Marauders caught the Japanese by surprise and occupied the airstrip on the 17th of May. The Japanese quickly reinforced their troops and placed the Marauders and their Allied forces in a precarious position where those who were recuperating in hospitals were returned to defend the airstrip. The battle of Myitkyina went on until August 3 when the commander at Myitkyina, General Mizukami, committed suicide. On August the 10th the Marauders were disbanded and I was back in India in mid-August. Among the five battles we engaged, I did not participate in the battle of Inkangawtaung.

TS: Any of the 14 Nisei KIA?

GH: Fortunately, none.

TS: OSS (Office of Strategic Services) Detachment, consisting of 14 Japanese American officers and men trained secretly and also operated behind enemy lines in Burma. Did the Merrill's Marauders mount operation together with OSS, did you complement each other?

GH: The OSS Detachment 101, in my recollection, played an important supporting role in Burma. After I returned from Burma, I was assigned to Southeast Asia Translation and Interrogation Center (SEATIC) in New Delhi, India and was assigned to the British Royal Air Force as a translator. Subsequently, I was transferred to Kunming, China followed by an assignment to Sino Translation and Interrogation Center (SEVTIC) in Chungking, China as an interrogator in Charge of Japanese Air Force POWs.

I interrogated a Japanese officer who, during the course of interrogation, divulged Japan's program to develop the atomic bomb. In response to my question, he pushed a small Chinese match box in front of me and said, "It is this size of a bomb that could destroy a city." "You've got to be kidding," I said.

He then recomposed himself and said that the research was being conducted at both Imperial Universities in Tokyo and Kyoto and at Osaka University. He then went on to explain the bomb using scientific terminology that was beyond my comprehension.

When I made an oral report to my superiors in the hope of obtaining assistance, they dismissed the report.

World War II came to an end while I was stationed in Chungking, China. Five days prior to the official surrender ceremony that took place on board the USS Missouri on September 13, 1945, I received orders to proceed to Nanking, China to serve as personal interpreter to Brigadier General McClure, the US Observer to the Japanese surrender ceremony.

General Ho Ying-chin, representing Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Lt. Col. John Burden and I boarded a C-46 cargo plane and flew to Nanking. When we arrived, we were taken aback to be surrounded by armed Japanese soldiers interspersed with handful of GIs and Nationalist troops.

We were immediately escorted to a waiting vehicle and taken to a hotel. It was a very tense feeling to be among 78,000 armed Japanese troops supported by 7,500 puppet troops. (I later learned that there were 30 American soldiers and 280 Chinese Commandos deployed in the area.)

As we drove through the city, a strange scene unfolded. There were armed Japanese soldiers in squad strength marching down the streets and Japanese officers walking with sword swinging at their sides. Japanese sentries were walking their posts with rifles with fixed bayonets and strategic intersections were guarded by machineguns. We arrived at our hotel without an incident.

After we settled, Lt. Col. Burden suggested that we go for a walk and as we turned the corner, we were confronted by three soldiers coming down the street. Burden asked, "What do we do?" Without answering, I pushed him off the sidewalk to avoid any confrontation. This encounter occurred the day before the surrender and the Japanese were very cocky. Their attitude was that they were victorious in China and that if it were not for the Emperor's order, they were willing to fight on.

The following morning, the same 1936 Chevrolet arrived for us. When we were driven to the hotel the previous day there were only two passengers, but now there were four passengers...so I sat on Lt. Col. Burden's lap!

When we arrived at the place of surrender, the Supreme Hq. of the Chinese Army (formerly the auditorium of the Central Military Academy) we were escorted to our designated seats that faced the main entrance.

As we sat down, I spotted a black 1940 Buick Roadmaster pull up to the entrance and as I recall, all seven Japanese representatives arrived in a separate Buick Roadmaster. As they entered, the auditorium lit up with flashes from the photographers. The Japanese delegation was headed by General Okamura, Supreme Commander of Japanese Army in China. The Chinese were headed by General Ho Ying-chin.

After the flashes subsided, Lt General Wang Chun escorted the Japanese, who bowed to General Ho Ying-chin, and were seated. There was a moment of silence while General Ho Ying-chin, representing Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, examined General Okamura's credentials. After the documents were exchanged and signed, the auditorium was again lit up by cameras. Upon completion of the exchange of the surrender document, the Japanese representatives retired.

It was a short, simple and dignified ceremony. It ended with General Ho Ying-chin's radio announcement to the Chinese people of a successful conclusion of the surrender ceremony and of a dawn of peace on earth.

TS: How many served?

GH: Among the total number of 30,000 Nisei served in the Armed Forces, 6,000 served with Military Intelligence Service.

TS: To which units were MIS personnel attached?

GH: The graduates of the Military Intelligence School were attached or placed on TDY, Temporary Duty, in teams of five and ten in more than 150 units including Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force, Paratrooper, OWI (Office of War Information), OSS (Office of Strategic Service) and participated in every battle from the Aleutians to Okinawa.

The Nisei not only served the US Forces, but Allied Forces of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China and India. Major intelligence coups: Z Plan The contributions made by MISers are too numerous to cite here, but I would like to mention one major contribution made by MISers.

When Admiral Yamamoto, Commander and Chief of Japan's Combined Fleet and architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor made an inspection tour, his flight schedule radioed to the field headquarters was intercepted and decoded and he became a victim when intercepted by our P-38 fighter planes.

Admiral Koga succeeded him and devised a plan for an all-out attack against the allied forces moving westward across the Pacific. Admiral Koga's objectives were to destroy the U.S. 5th Fleet and protect the Japanese held island in the Philippines and the Mariana.

In order to prevent being cut off from his forces, Admiral Koga decided to move his headquarters. In planning his flight to his new headquarters, Koga ordered his Chief of Staff, Admiral Fukudome, to make the flight in a separate aircraft as a precautionary measure.

He then gave Fukudome his copy of the Z Plan, the Combined Fleet Secret Order No. 72, dated March 8, 1944. While Koga's plane was lost in a storm, Fukudome's plane was ditched off the island of Cebu and Admiral Koga was captured by the Filipino fisherman. The briefcase containing the Z Plan, protected in a waterproof container, was salvaged and rushed to the coast by Filipino guerilla.

The document was picked up by an American submarine and taken to New Guinea and then flown to General MacArthur's headquarters in Australia. Under the direction of Colonel Masbir, Chief of the Allied Translation and Interpreter Section known as ATIS, five men were put to work. When the Z Plan was translated, twenty copies were reproduced and flown to Admiral Nimitz Headquarters in Pearl Harbor and distributed to every flag-officer in the Pacific Fleet.

The Z Plan went into effect when the American landed on Saipan on June 15, 1944. I will spare you the description of the battle, but it was one of the greatest naval battles in World War II. Someone described the battle as "Great American Turkey Shoot." According to military historians, the Z Plan was one of the most significant documents captured during the war.

The contributions made by MISers were not limited to the war effort, but they played a vital role in the peaceful occupation and the reconstruction of Japan. Speaking about contribution, suffice it to quote General MacArthur who said, "Never in the military history did an army know so much about the enemy prior to actual engagement."

General MacArthur's Intelligence Officer, Major General Willoughby said, "The Nisei saved million of lives and shortened the war by two years." And President Clinton awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for Extraordinary Heroism to the Military Intelligence Service.

TS: Please discuss your life after your discharge from the US Army.

GH: Upon discharge from the Army at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin on November 8, 1945, I went to Minneapolis, MN where my parents had relocated. I served with the Military Intelligence School at Fort Snelling, MN and subsequently the school was transferred to Monterey, California. I was transferred to SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Power) Legal Section, Tokyo, Japan in November, 1947 and served with the War Crimes Tribunal that was located in Yokohama. I served as an interpreter, translator, interrogator, court interpreter and court monitor. Upon completion of the War Crimes Trial, I served with the War Crimes Parole Board. I came full circle because I had interrogated war crimes suspects, apprehended them and here I was with the Parole Board. And it was time for me to return to the U.S. to take advantage of the GI Bill. After earning my BA and MA in International Relations from University of Southern California, I served with the Department of State, Culture Exchange Program, Library of Congress and retired from the National Security Agency in 1979.

TS: You have won many awards, including the Bronze star with cluster, Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Infantryman's Badge, China War Memorial Medal, and your induction last year into the Ranger Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia. Which award do you covet the most and why? [No answer recorded in transcript] What about your family.

GH: My wife, Ester, deceased in 1989, was a personal nurse to Colonel Canada who was the personal physician to General MacArthur and was also a senior nurse at Washington, D.C. General Hospital. I

have two daughters: Lynn Bettencourt of Pittsburg, PA and Kei Hirabayashi Takata of Sacramento, CA and a grandson, Derek Bettencourt of Monte Sereno, CA.

TS: Grant, before we close this oral history interview, is there anything you wish to say that was not covered in the interview?

GH: Yes, I'm thankful that I had the opportunity to exercise my rights and duty as a citizen to serve my country and fight for freedom and equality. We fought side by side, shoulder to shoulder alongside fellow Americans of many cultures and proved that Americanism has nothing to do with place of origin or color of skin and that it has everything to do with spirit and conviction and love of freedom.

TS: This concludes the oral history interview of Grant Hirabayashi, The Japanese American Veterans Association appreciates the opportunity to interview you Your oral history will be archived at the Library of Congress and will be available to historians, researchers and scholars for many, many generation to come Thank you for the extensive preparations you have done.