

Okay, can we call you Major? Is that. . .

JL: If you wish, call me Jim, that's fine.

TT: All right. Tell us when and where you were born.

JL: I was born in Hastings, Nebraska, which is a small town, about 20,000 in south central Nebraska, and I was born on February 6th, 1907. I went to the public schools through high school at Hastings, and then finally after three years of working with my Dad I decided to move on to school and I went one semester to Hastings College, a Presbyterian school, and then I went nine, no 12 quarters, over at <sup>Kearney</sup> ~~Carney~~(sp.), Nebraska, and <sup>Kearney</sup> ~~Carney~~ is now the University of Nebraska at <sup>Kearney</sup> ~~Carney~~, a branch. And that takes me up to my education except when I moved out. While in my final year at <sup>Kearney</sup> ~~Carney~~ I needed almost a year again to graduate but I majored in Industrial Arts, Industrial and Manual Arts, and a former gentleman who used to visit our school became the head of the Manual Arts Program in the State of Hawaii, and he had visited our school quite frequently and knew our program

well. And he asked five of us if we would like to come to Hawaii, and three of us finally came and the other two took jobs somewhere else. I was assigned to Washington Intermediate School down on King Street, and the other two were at Kaimuki and also at Washington, and I stayed there three years. When I was at Chicago I met a boy at the World's Fair, another gentleman who was a teacher, and he asked if I had the good news, and I said, "What is the good news?" He said, "You're going to Roosevelt next year." Well, he was correct and I went to Roosevelt.

TT: What year was that?

JL: That would be 1933, and stayed there 'till I was called in to. . .no, I transferred to McKinley, and I stayed at McKinley a year and two months, three months. That's about my teaching program, except I did have some University classes, mechanical drawing, students from the University working with me on sort of a limited basis. That's about the term of my teaching career.

TT: Around 1934 when you were teaching mechanical drawing

at Roosevelt, you remember a kid in there named Ted Tsukiyama?

JL: Yeah, a little kid who had tried to make the baseball team. I remember he was a shortstop but he can hardly reach first base with the ball. I know him going quite well, huh? I think he had a mitt that was little big for him, was more like a first baseman's mitt. But he was trying.

TT: Well, I think we better move on to your days at McKinley?

JL: I thought you were going to ask me about my athletic career while teaching because I wasn't exactly a champ athlete but I did play six years of college basketball, three at Hastings and three years at *Kaunoy* Carney and two years at University of Hawaii, so I should. . .hell, I don't know how many letters I have, nine I think. Gave all my jackets and sweaters away.

TT: So you were coaching basketball and baseball while you were also teaching?

JL: Yeah, and I'd like to point out that my full career at the three schools, I taught full loads, all my athletics were extra. Doesn't happen that way every place now. They've got pretty good programs for coaches, and they have some free periods so they can do some of this work.

TT: So through your teaching and coaching you must've met some of the boys that later were going to serve under you in the 100th.

JL: Oh, yes, I met, especially at Washington, which is predominantly Japanese boys from around Moiliili and. . .

TT: You remember some of their names?

JL: Oh, let me see.

TT: "Turtle" would be one of them?

JL: Yeah, "Turtle" was one, and there's another very prominent one, baseball player, Tsuneco Omiya, that's

"Turtle's" brother. . .

TT: Oh, yeah, uh huh.

JL: . . .and there were three of those boys, and then Ikehara was another one. I remember him because he get badly hurt, McKinley, and he didn't. . .I got him in the hospital for treatment. I thought that the coach wasn't treating him properly and he was pretty ill. I guess if I went down the roster of the 100th here I can pick out all the boys.

ST: What about Takeba, Masaru Takeba?

JL: He was a McKinley boy and he turned out for football at Washington, and he played there for me and then he played on the 298th team, and he was a real tough one for the soldier teams, tackle, he was a real broken-field runner, and he held the ball for place kicks, too.

TT: During this time you were in the <sup>National Guard</sup> Reserve?

JL: When I came to Washington Intermediate I had served

four years in the National Guard in Nebraska, so I really transferred to the National Guard here, but they went through the process of discharging me and then re-enlisting here. And I stayed in the Guard until I was called in to Federal service in October, 1940, and I had gone to the three courses that you take to study to get you to improve your rank, and I passed it for 2nd lieutenant, 1st lieutenant, and captain's and after I passed that I was transferred to the Adjutant of the 298th Infantry.

TT: You go into active service? 1940s, huh?

JL: October 15, 1940. I went from McKinley, I think we had only two boys, two men from McKinley, but we had 15 boys. I have there somewhere the number of boys, 15 from McKinley, I think.

TT: They followed you all the way into the 100th eventually?

JL: No, no because these boys were. . .

TT: Not only "nisei" but other races?

JL: These were just run-of-the-mill, quite a few  
Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian boys.

TT: When did they start drafting the boys?

JL: October 15.

TT: That was the start?

JL: That was the start.

TT: At least three drafts before Pearl Harbor?

JL: Yeah, there was one there about January, there was  
three, there was three, right.

TT: These draftees were all fed into the National Guard  
which became the 298th and the 299th Infantry?

JL: They were already the 298th and 299th.

TT: Oh, I see.

JL: Yeah, they had been there for. . .I was in there in 1930, National Guard. When they went on duty for October 15 in the National Guard, they took whatever was with them which included about five AJA boys in there, and there were radio boys and there were also couple in the 3rd Engineers, so they went one way, all the AJAs they went to the 1st Reception Center as trainees. Then when they finished their three months they took that whole group and graduated, so to speak, and they went to Maui, Kauai, and the other islands, 299th, 298th all came to Honolulu. There was two more went through the same thing two more times. They brought in whoever they were. I estimate there was about a total of 150 went into both, both regiments. The National Guard was averaging about 90, 90 men a company at that time, very small. And, as a matter of fact, they couldn't fill out the full <sup>complement.</sup> . . .they only had nine companies in both of them.

TT: What is the relationship between the National Guard and the 298th/299th?

JL: At the time that they went in there was no



relationship yet. Relationship came at the end of the first three months when the first group graduated, so to speak. They went to the 298th and 299th. I was in a company with. . .

ST: I was in Company "I" but I was not a draftee.

JL: No, no, you went in through the University on account of your. . .

ST: That's right, on account of my Reserve commission.

JL: You and Sparky and Kuramoto and. . .all those boys were graduates of the the ROTC at the University with Mits.

ST: Tsubota, Sam Sakamoto--some of them had joined the 298th and 299th prior to the war.

JL: Oh, yeah, Kuramoto was.

ST: Yeah, Ernest Tanaka, Sam Sakamoto.

JL: Suzuki.

ST: Taro Suzuki.

JL: Quite a few of them were <sup>officers</sup> \_\_\_ already.

TT: Where were you on December 7 during the attack?

JL: During the attack we had. . .we had gone home over the weekend some of us and at about 7:00 o'clock on Sunday morning I was on my way back to Schofield and had three other officers with me, and at Schofield we found out what was happening, and we had half of the 299th was already on duty. They had been called on a Class A alert which took place on a week prior to that Sunday and they were all, as a matter of fact half of the men were--being this was a Class A alert which calls for you to man your positions at half strength--so we had one battalion was out in the field, clear from Makapuu Point to Laie which is down by Hauula. That was covered at half strength; the other half back at Schofield. Then we take that half and move it to out positions and that left only a brief corps of housekeepers, so most of them were back on duty sometime that day. Some of them didn't

get back 'til quite late at night. Surprising, lot of people didn't know that anything happened that day. It was hard to believe. We had crews out all night going to houses to make them turn off lights. People sat there with radio going and house all lit up and what for, want to know what for you want to turn off the lights, and I think probably all works because they probably had didn't get unless they had a radio.

TT: You can remember what percentage of the 298th/299th was made up of "nisei" boys? You know, roughly.

JL: At what time?

TT: Say December 7.

JL: Around December 7? Would be about. . .

TT: Half or more?

JL: More than half, at least 60 percent, close to two-thirds.

TT: We hear stories that on December 7 or shortly thereafter, up at Schofield, that they took the guns away from the "nisei" boys?

JL: I don't know. We heard a lot of stories about that too, that they put machineguns out in the tent openings so that they couldn't come out, and none of that happened that day, unless the Reception Center. That's what they're talking about. There was a group in there going through their paces at the basic training and, doing some checking back, I found that through pretty good authority that they did take 'em away from them during the day, that first day, but they got 'em back the next day I'm sure of too.

ST: Did they take away any weapons, rifles, and machineguns from those who were in the 298th and 299th? So actually if anything had happened, that is taking away of weapons, that happened at the Reception Center.

JL: That's the only place that I know that guns were ever surrendered.

TT: For the next several months after the Pearl Harbor attack, what was the 298th doing?

JL: 298th was covering the field positions from Makapuu to Laie and Hauula, and they had dug in that first week that they were out there before anything had happened. They had dug in their positions, and we continued stringing a lot of barb wire, dug some more better positions, and manned those positions in full strength. They had only been the day of December 7 only half filled those positions, and during that four months and I used to go in the airplane from the Naval Air Station there to man there. Commander Martin who was commander, he used to fly every afternoon so I made a deal with him that he would fly over all of our positions from Makapuu down and give me a chance to see what each one looked like so that we could make improvements on it, so we inspected them by air. Otherwise we had to walk 'em or go by Jeep. So they kept busy all that time 'til they were ready for the Regiment to be taken back to Schofield.

TT: Did you have anything to do with the capture of the midget submarine in Waimanalo?

JL: Yeah, I. . .at about 7:30-8:00 o'clock I got a telephone call.

TT: From where?

JL: Commander. . .Lieutenant Colonel Bledsoe(~~sp-2~~), who was an artillery officer, whose artillery came under the 298th, and he was asking permission to fire on the submarine that was on the reef right off of Bellows Field, and I had strict instructions that there wasn't supposed to be any firing because nobody anticipated there was going to be a sub stuck down anyway, so he called Colonel <sup>Anderson</sup> ~~Henderson~~ and he came back and said there would be no firing. They wanted to save, the Navy wanted to save the sub, so the Navy had already started to send trucks over there to pick it up, and I went down there and the Navy pulled the sub ashore, and they had several sailors and several officers, and they took this one AJA. They captured him coming to shore, and <sup>there</sup> ~~he~~ was the 298th boy got him. He was swimming in and finally he saw our men on the shore and he turned around and swim back to the sub, and the \_\_\_ rifle shot over his head, and

Thomas K. Tsubota ) |

?

he turned around and came in and they captured him and took him to Fort Shafter. One of the most sensitive things to me was that they had to use a 298th boy to get in the sub because, you know, it's a small sub. They finally brought out two cans of fish, two cans of vegetable stew, two cans of rice, so then the question raised was where's the second guy? Because they're not going to open two cans of rice for one man, so they never ever found him. Whatever happened to him nobody knew unless he killed himself somewhere along the line. But from that morning on. . .but when they come out of the sub they brought out a map, and it was just like a scoreboard at a football game or something. Here was every ship, battle on battleship row, exact name, proper name, number this, and everything over, all these places, just perfect, so then maybe this sub was sent in to Pearl Harbor during that day. We got a radio story from outside, and then he had to come clear around Diamond Head and come back into Bellows Field so he had been busy that day, too. They took that ship, that ship took some trips around for selling war bonds and things.

TT: What happened to the prisoner? Was he the one that who was in the stockade at Camp McCoy when we arrived there?

JL: He went. . .the Army took right from Bellows Field and I don't know where they took him, but there was one that he's alive in Japan now because there was an article write-up that he gave one time. We might have a clipping of it, some story of about his. . .but nobody knows about the second guy, whether he drowned, wasn't that far off shore.

TT: Yeah, his name was Lieutenant Sakamaki, and after they captured him there was a Captain ~~Jiro~~<sup>GERO</sup> Iwai who was a "nisei," here and Douglas Wada who was Naval Intelligence, and they were called in to interrogate this guy. They found that map that Major talked about, so apparently this sub was inside Pearl Harbor either during or before the attack, and Kazuo Yamane, who was originally with the 100th and went over to MIS, said that later on when he was in the Pentagon they took him to Camp McCoy to interrogate the guy. But he said this guy could speak English. So he was actually a POW for the rest of the war, yeah?



JL: POW? He was at Camp McCoy?

TT: He was at Camp McCoy. Well, okay, we're getting down to three-four months after Pearl Harbor, and end of May I guess the military was expecting an invasion of Midway or attack on Midway. That's just about the time when orders came to gather up all the "niseis" and the 298th/299th. Could you tell us about that?

JL: Yeah, it was about May 30th. We had been where the 298th had been brought back to Schofield from our field position, and the California regiment had moved in to our old position. We all wondered what we were coming back for, telling us to come back for training. Well, just about trained to death, so on the afternoon of the 30th a messenger handed me a telegram, and which was for Colonel Anderson, and it said that he would assemble all of the AJAs in service in Hawaii. They would assemble them at Schofield at the earliest possible date, so there was a lot of things to do, find out who's going to assemble 'em and what they were going to do with 'em after they assemble 'em, so we had further messages

that they would be formed into five companies, and the ones from the neighbor islands would all be brought to Schofield and just general directions on what to do. So they started to bring them in and five days later we were ready to go wherever we were going, and the men had their assignments but some special assignments were made. Two or three boys stayed with the 3rd Engineers, and also there was one went to veterinary detachment over there at Schofield, so I think about four or five of them, the AJA boys, who had come out to the reception center had been assigned to other places or allowed to stay there. They didn't go with us, and then we learned that we were going some place by boat, so everything was prepared and we left on the morning of June 5th, and as far as the Battle of Midway that had just about taken up that whole week and we could see these planes coming back with big holes in their wings and one motor not running, and we watched these come back all week long and we learned that they had broken the Japanese code and that's how we found out there was going to be an attack.

TT: Was there some connection that you could make between

the Battle of Midway and this sudden formation of an all-"nisei" provisional battalion?

JL: Well, I think the plans were finalized that that would be this battalion assembling all the troops. I think that had been finalized before this all-of-a-sudden breakthrough from Midway. I think that would have taken place anyway. If you know some of those things that you've read before that this ground was compounded every day, because it said in the War Department's draft it says that there'll be no discrimination between any of the boys when it comes to selecting them for the draft. In other words, you go down and you take a colored boy, Negro boy, and then you get a Chinese boy and you get a . . . you don't skip one in between to let him out. . . so General Emmons and everybody clear up to Washington was so concerned of what we were going to do with these boys with them coming in. We got more of them coming in, more of them coming in, what are we going to do with them? And this was a real problem for them, and they had such funny offers. They were going to take them all and put them in labor battalions somewhere up there, and they were going to

put them all on Kahoolawe or Molokai, anything to get them in one place. Then they said can't use that many boats, we can't let them go, we need them to bring supplies back and forth, and so that was a real problem for them, finding what to do with them.

TT: This was a fear or an anticipation in the event that the Japanese took over Midway and would then be headed toward Hawaii next?

JL: This was a real problem, you know. You put the 298th down there and you put the 299th on these three islands over here, and here comes 1500 from Tokyo to shoot these 700 or so, and over here the same thing on Oahu--who's shooting who? You know, how you gonna tell? So it was a best move they could've made, and I think the thing was that they couldn't make up their mind and they should have done it earlier.

TT: What was your rank or position with the 298th?

JL: Mine?

TT: Yeah, after Pearl Harbor.

JL: I was the S-3 Major, a major, operations officer.

TT: And during the five months after Pearl Harbor attack, what was the feeling or attitude of the military starting from say General Emmons on down, as far as this large number of "niseis" in the 298th/299th? You remember there was a whole bunch of "niseis" from the University ROTC who were in the Hawaii Territorial Guard, and on January 19, 1942, they were all discharged. But they didn't discharge the "niseis" in the 298th and 299th. Was there any fear or doubt about the loyalty of these boys?

JL: There was doubt, there was doubt about their loyalty. I don't think you can get anybody to really say on a mass basis though. It was more like there's one over here and one there and not enough to harm, cause any harm. We had some real sincere people as well as military though that really believed in it. General <sup>Herron</sup>~~Heron~~ (sp.?) who had been the commander here for years, he was one of the strongest backers of Nisei and there was a General Fielder. There was another one, and he was largely responsible for the movement

of these boys overseas, and he got it from these people. There were officers and enlisted men that wondered about this thing, but what could we do? I'm in the midst of 1400 of them, so there's nobody there that I could talk to for advice and why tell somebody that I didn't like them. Everybody that I was with their rank I had to \_\_\_\_\_ was already, but generally there was a few, not too many, and I can understand it, go back to when they talked about <sup>Lieutenant</sup> Colonel ~~Schamel~~ <sup>Schemel</sup> (sp.?) coming in. As soon as Turner told him, this new officer, "Do you understand that you're joining a unit of all Japanese?" He said, "What?" And Turner said, Turner said to him, "Schemel, how do you spell that? Schemel, that's German, isn't it?" And he said, "I think I understand." Real soldier, too. That killed 'em early in the game.

TT: Could you tell us about your episode with Maxwell Taylor? He was an officer, what rank was he?

JL: He was a Major General.

TT: Major General? And you encountered him at the 298th headquarters?

JL: He came down \_\_\_\_\_, yeah.

TT: This was a few months after Pearl Harbor?

JL: Yeah. Before \_\_\_\_\_. And he was with several other officers, and he was just making sort of an inspection. I think he wanted to see what that territory looked like around there. He had just arrived, and he saw that the tent was standing down behind the headquarters there and he asked what was there and who used there and Colonel Anderson told him that's where we sleep down there--officers up here and that's where we sleep, and he said, "By God, don't tell me you sleep down there with those boys." Well, we slept there every night and most of us slept there a long time. But there was'nt any question about Anderson and Turner, and I guess, you know, they've been around so long that they figure hell, and it's like the guys like <sup>Professor</sup> Murphy says the two of them in a foxhole, which one you going shoot? Again, hard to tell.

TT: How did you get associated or assigned to the 100th