Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Jim Tsugawa
At Washington County Museum Library
October 3, 2011

Informant: Jim Tsugawa
Interviewer: Beth Dehn
Transcriber: Lauren Goss

J= Jim
B= Beth

B: ....first of all.

J: My name is James M. Tsugawa.

B: Ok, and this is Beth Dehn recording with Jim on October 3, 2011 at the Washington County Museum in our library. So we'll get started here.

J: Ok.

B: Can you tell us about when your family came here, memories you have?

J: My family, as far as I can remember, Beth, 1919 they hit the port of Seattle and they made their home up in the Seattle area—farmed—and as I understand Dad really hit it big in potatoes and against the advice of all the other farmers, they said don't put it back into potatoes, but he did and then he lost his shares. So, from then on I don't know anymore about them, except they did migrate down to the Hillsboro area. The families that came down from the Seattle area, many went to the east side of the river, my family went to the west side of the river and I think the east side did better than the west side...

B: Oh no.

J:...as far as financially.

B: Do you have memories of growing up here as a child?

J: I was born in Hillsboro and went to David Douglas, no, David Hill Grade School till about the third grade. And I remember that school vividly because it had a big, I think it was a fire escape, but I think you walked down this fire escape, it was a big tunnel, and you walked down there. And I always remember Dave Hill because cause of first grade. We had a Christmas program, Beth, and we all had to have white shirts. Well, my mother always made me wear long underwear, you know with the long sleeves, and all I had was a short sleeve shirt. So I took all that long underwear, and I had big muscles. I could remember because I was embarrassed to have people see my long underwear.

B: That's funny. Was it cold at that time?

J: Must have been. Well, Christmas time and it was cold but she always made me wear long underwear. Hated it.

B: Good. So, were you born here?

J:I was born in Hillsboro. It was Jones Hospital and it was a funny occurrence, if it was true, but I think it was because I would keep in contact with that other fellow. But, when we were born there was another Caucasian baby born at the same time I was born and at that time I'm sure that things were lax and the nurse took me in to the Caucasian mother and she screams, she says, "That's not my baby!" And that other kid that was born, I kept in contact with him through Hillsboro High School and then we lost contact. Jones Hospital, I think now is Tuality Hospital, they've changed over.

B: Ok. And so your mother told you this story?

J: Yeah, I believe so.

B: ...someone passed it to you. What customs do you remember from that time? Or what sort of family traditions did you have?

J: I think, like, at New Year's time there would be a big gathering of making different Japanese type foods and people gathering together, and that's about it there.

B: Did you, what languages did you speak at home and in public?

J: Well, I think, mom spoke broken English and we spoke English around the house. I never did learn Japanese until mom took me and my sister Helen to Japan in 1939 to see her father before he passed away, and we were fortunate that she got to see her Dad. And at that time we stayed seven months over there and so I lost English completely, Beth, and I spoke nothing but Japanese and went to Japanese school. And when we came home from Japan, somewhere along the line I got a case of measles and a head full of lice, so they shaved all my hair off and I had some pock marks, and when I hit the Port of Seattle and my brothers picked us up, they didn't recognize who this little Japanese speaking kid was.

B: So, how old were you at the time?

J: I was seven.

B: Seven, ok, you said that.

J: It was always curious to me that, if I lost English, you know, and so it must be just playing with your playmates at that age, you must pick the language up quickly, because I don't ever remember going to special schools to learn English.

B: Have you retained Japanese, or has it?

J: No, that's what is sad because if you are not around it a lot you don't, if you don't use it, you lose it, especially at a young age. Like my brothers and sisters were older when they learned, although he went to Japanese school in Hillsboro, and they spoke it and understood it quite, you know, but me, I didn't go to Japanese school and I learned it in Japan and then, gone.

B: Can you describe the Japanese school, I didn't hear about that from, was that George or was that other brothers?

J: The brothers: George, Henry, Ike and I don't think my sister, but they had one I think it was in Banks that a Japanese school teacher would come out once a week on Sunday, I think, or Saturday, and have…teach them Japanese language.

B: Ok, so it was one day a week and it was special.

J: I believe it was one day a week.

B: Do you remember possessions that your family had, or special stories, or something from that time?

J: The only thing really special to me that I remember, and it was Dad, my Dad, who was in the military, not during World War II but early, say 1918, that era, but he was on a white horse and he was an officer and he was in uniform and he had a sword and he was mounted on that steed. And it was a magnificent picture and then when the war broke out, Beth, anything pertaining to Japan was destroyed, which is a shame because that was a magnificent photograph of Dad.

B: I think George talked about that as well.

J: Oh, did he?

B: Yeah. So, do you remember how old were you when World War II started?

J: I was…nine.

B: What do you remember from that time?

J: You know, not much of anything as war, war, I, as a child, I don't know what war was, you know. In fact, when I was in Japan I kept asking Mom, because I think Japan was at war with Manchuria, and I said, "Where's the war?" I want to see war. But, when the war broke out it meant nothing to me as far as Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and that was.

B: Do you have memories of, I know George had told me that one of your brothers went into the military.

J: Yeah.

B: Do you remember that occurring?

J: No, I don't remember Henry in the service, but he was there before we were interned in the Portland Livestock Pavilion. So I think he was drafted and so, anyway.

B: How…can you describe what happened or what you remember from when you were asked to leave?

J: Ok, you know I don't remember much about what they told us to get or anything like that. But, you became a number, I don't remember our number, and you were assigned a cubicle,

which it really was a cubicle. There were no ceilings, it was plywood, canvas door, and if you had four people in the family, you had four cots, you know. No tables or chairs, just, and if you were fortunate enough to have gotten there early, you had a mattress. But I think some of the later people had a mattress with straw. It was, I believe, the number of people that were interned in the Portland Livestock Pavilion, that what I believe it was called then, was 35 to 4,000 people in a 13 acre enclosure with barbed wire, entire surrounding the camp. There were guard towers, you know, weapons were pointed not out, but in, cause we were dangerous.

B: Do you remember the emotions as a child trying to understand that?

J: You know, I had no, nothing, I don't remember being inquisitive, just that I met lots of good little friends, you know, we played a lot. And I remember it was the hottest, probably one of the hottest summers that year and if you can imagine, you know, they probably cleaned up as much of the manure and then built over it. But I remember being really hot. We had departments: police department, fire department, athletic department. Fire Department thought it would really be neat to cool everything off so they hosed all the hallways down and of course the water seeped down into the manure and then the seeping and so there was that smell. And speaking of smell, there is the good friend that I play tennis with about twice a week- his dad was in charge in a lumber yard and he was in charge of quite a few Japanese nationals and of course they were interned, but he said that Dad every now and then would take them food, you know, and go to the camp and give them food, and he said, Sam said, that his memory of that was the smell. He said it was horrendous. And I don't remember that smell that much.

B: And this was still in Portland?

J: It's where, you know where the Portland, I mean, the Portland Expo Center.

B:...the Expo Center, ok.

J: And that's where that was.

B: And how long were you there?

J: We were there from May, June, July, August, and then mid-September they put us on trains, blinds down, we didn't know where we were going, and we landed in a place called Minidoka, close to Twin Falls, Idaho. And they had a camp of 44 blocks, a block contained 6 barracks, 6 barracks, and then down the middle was the washing facilities. Each barrack had six, I'll call them apartments, and each family took one apartment. And again, if you had five members, you had five cots. No, you know, tables or chairs. You had a light bulb that came down here. The buildings were not insulated, they were tar paper and slats and that was it. It was built hastily because when we were in the Portland Livestock Pavilion, all these camps were being built across California, Wyoming, Arizona, Utah.

B: Do you recall the possessions that your family took with you?

J: We didn't have much of anything. I don't remember much of anything, Beth. We were not the most affluent family.

B: Yeah, ok, so then you arrived in Minidoka.

J: Yes.

B: And how long were you there? How many years?

J: Ok, in Minidoka, we arrived in September, and then the following September my mother became very, very ill and needed more expertise in the field of medicine and there was a Reverend Johnson in Boise, Idaho, who sponsored our family, and he rented us a house and kind of overlooked, took care of us. Very nice gentleman. It was a…it was a one bedroom home—no, two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen, and it was kind of tight quarters. What else? In Minidoka, we went to school, we had regular school, and…so we were there the fifth grade. And I remember…there was this fellow named Tomo Watanabe(?), he came from Seattle, and the Seattle people were more down in the lower teens in the numbers blocks. And I guess I was a football fanatic because I remember challenging Tomo. I said "Tomo, you get 11 guys and I'll get 11 guys and we'll have a football game." Ok, so, I can't remember who won, we played tackle ball. And years later when I played tennis with this fellow, we played tennis for years, singles, and he came from Seattle. And so one day I thought, Ian Laurie, you were in Seattle, do you remember a kid named Tomo Watanabe? He says, "Do I remember Tomo Watanabe?" He was, Toby, he called him. He said, "He became an all running— all city running back at Seattle." And I said, "You have got to be kidding." He said, "He was small." He said, "You didn't see him until he got around him."

B: So he became famous, that's great.

J: Tomo Watanabe. I looked him up in Seattle, oh many years ago, I think he passed away. I was sad, you know, I would have liked to talk to him and say who won that game.

B: Right, right, right, remember it correctly. Were there other, I mean, as a child, it sounds like you had freedom to be a child.

J: Yeah, as a child, you roamed. In Minidoka, well, even in the Portland Assembly Center, or the Livestock, you had freedom within the area. And I always remember following the athletes, I was kind of like their mascot, everything they did, I followed them around. Followed them to softball field, followed them here, followed to basketball. And I met many nice kids my age and we played. Played, that's the thing. In that Minidoka, I mean in that, I think we ate in shifts of a thousand, I think, a thousand would sit down and then next thousand. And I do remember, Beth, you know what fly paper is?

B: Yeah, those sticky..

J: And those were just black, black with flies. You know, they had them hanging along the mess hall area.

B: Well, is eastern Idaho then is, well, it's not eastern, is it sort of desert like, or very dry?

J: It was, I think they picked the most desolate area because it was all sage brush. And then Minidoka was where we stayed, it was sage brush, lot of sage brush and…on the edge of ours a canal ran, a pretty good size canal and then in the summer time they would release the water to irrigate for the farmers to irrigate their crops. And as a child, 10 years old I guess it was, we would use that to swim in. It was dangerous, you know, really dangerous, I didn't realize that, and there were several drownings that took place because if you started here, you might have ended down here when you swam across. And we did that quite a few times and we would go

to farmer Brown's potato field, stuff potatoes in our swim suit, swim back, make a fire, and have baked potatoes.

B: Wow.

J: Wow is right!

B: Yeah.

J: What a treat.

B: But, what age people were expected to work, I know George told me that he had...

J: Well, I think, let's see...they were around 19, 20, 18, late teens and early twenties.

B: Ok, but it wasn't really for younger children.

J: No, no, no.

B: And did you attend school there?

J: Yes, we did. I attended fifth grade, I believe.

B: Who taught the school?

J: There were teachers that came from outside and also from inside that were teaching prior to the internment.

B: And you said when you arrived that it was very sparse, obviously, you had beds and if you were lucky a mattress. How did you acquire things? Or, do you remember objects that you...

J: I don't remember much objects in our apartment in Minidoka, I just remember just that it was very sparse, just beds and a light bulb and...

B: Yeah.

J: ...and if, as a child you kind of found out who had the best food, you know, so you could kind of go between mess halls.

B: Do you have any other stories or memories from the time that you were in Minidoka?

J: Umm... just that we played a lot, swam a lot, played football a lot, and then in the winter time, some of the areas that were isolated water would freeze over, so my brother Henry who was in the service sent me a pair of ice skates so that I could ice skate on there. But that's about it.

B: And when, when did you, when were you allowed to leave, do you remember that time when things?

J: Ok, so, when mom became ill...

B: That's right.

J: We left in '43, and we moved to Boise, Idaho.

B: And who, everyone in your family?

J: Let's see now, there was, George became our guardian because Ike, he, our other brother, he was drafted into the service, so I had two brothers who were in the service, so that left myself, Helen, mom, three of us. And then mom became ill and Reverend Johnson, and...that was a wonderful experience of living there, although the war was going hot and heavy, you know, World War II. And those, in a radius of maybe four blocks, Beth, there were maybe 8 to 10 of us, my age, kids, 10 to 13 and we became very good friends, no prejudice, except for one kid, Lefty Reynolds, he said, "Jim, don't come around the house, Dad doesn't like Japanese." So, of course, I'd hate to go over to his house. But, we did many things together: we'd go down to the greens and play football, baseball, and I can remember in the summertime, late August, a bunch of us would lay on the junior high school lawn and look up and see the shooting stars in August, I can remember that. In Boise...I went to Longfellow Grade School, fifth and sixth grade, and you are looking at the marble champion.

B: Congratulations.

J: Fifth grade, sixth grade marble champion, and they gave me an agate, I think, each year. A funny thing to remember, but that was a big thing, marbles, big ole brown spot on my knee all the time.

B: So you're just shooting them, or was it to knock the other marbles?

J: Yeah, you had a big circle and you'd say well, lets everybody put in ten marbles and then you lagged to see who got to shoot first and many times I would get in there and knock out all the marbles that stayed in. If you stayed in, you get to shoot again as long as you knocked a marble out. So, you are looking at a marble champ.

B: Awesome.

J: Awesome.

B: That is awesome.

J: It was...to me a really fond memories of Boise because, you know, there was no animosity shown toward me, and the parents were very nice. In fact, a kid named J? Coomner came through the airport here and he looked up, I guess, I don't know how he remembered my name, but he called up and my wife, Amy, answered the phone and said I'm J? Coomner, and is this Jim Tsugawa from Boise, and she said yes. He said "I'll call back later," and so he did, and it seemed like we hadn't even left each other...talk, talk, talk, talk, you know. And they had a vacation home, I can't remember the name of it, above Spokane, Washington, and so one summer Amy and I went up there and spent time with him, and just like we had left each other yesterday, you know, talk, talk. And we've kept in touch until his wife passed away and then we've kind of lost contact, I call, but he never calls, and so.

B: When did he contact you first? Do you remember the year? That was many years later then, if you were married...

J: Oh yeah, you know, it was, I asked him, how did you remember that we came to Portland? And he said, "In the back of my mind, I remembered that you guys disappeared, you know, when you left, you disappeared." And then I said, "How did you remember my name?" And he said, "I kind of remembered," and then he said that he looked in the phone book and got my nephew, and nephew gave us our phone number. And so it was nice to see him.

B: That's nice. So, and he said you sort of disappeared, what happened then when you left Boise, or how did that transition occur?

J: I can't remember ever saying goodbye to anybody, you know, just, we picked up in a big truck, threw whatever we had in a truck and we left for Portland, Oregon. Then my brothers had come out of the service and they had no real skills: my brother Henry had farmed about 5 acres of strawberries prior to going into the army. So they rented a, I think it was 32 acres, from a man named Bill Hammell, and the Hammell family owned all the land in that Bethany area, my gosh. They had no money, so they did all their ground work with horse, you know, plowing, disking, harrowing, planting with hand, you know, strawberries, and that's how the boys got started cause they had no skills.

B: Wow.

J: And then, let's see, when I got there, I was eighth grader, went to a two room schoolhouse, Beth, do you know where on 143rd there is a graveyard there…

B: Yeah.

J: Yeah, on this side, one of the, this side of the graveyard we had a school there, Union Grade School, and there was a gym. And the outhouse was about 30 yards out there, two-holer.

B: Ok.

J: And 1 through 4 was in one room and fifth through eighth was in the other room. And at graduation, in eighth grade, there were four of us.

B: Four.

J: And we combined with four from Bethany Grade School, so there were 8 graduates.

B: Now, did you leave Boise when the war ended, or when your mother was well?

J: When the war ended.

B: Ok.

J: It was about 1946, I think, they decided to, and then that's when my sister Helen attended Beaverton High School.

B: And you reunited with the rest of, with George and?

J: Well, George was with Helen…

B: And he was with you and, ok, your family and then your other brother was overseas.

J: So Henry served in New Guinea, Philippines, and then Japan. He was an interpreter.

B: Ok. So how was life when you returned? You talked about graduating eighth grade, what was the feeling like when you returned?

J: You know, again, I must have been a lucky guy, Beth, I really, I, there was never any, you know the war ended in '45 and I attended Beaverton High School in '47 and I'm sure that was still that feeling of animosity toward the Japanese, but when I attended Beaverton High School, there was no animosity shown toward me. And if you can believe it now, I was the only ethnic person there in Beaverton High School of about, I think, 650 kids in the high school at the time. So I was the only off breed, no Blacks, no Chinese, no Indian, no nothing. And I was probably very fortunate, I was, I participated in all the sports: football, basketball, baseball, even though I was, well of course at that time no one was really big, so, the little guy could play, you know, now I would get killed. But I played all three sports all through high school and I think that helped so that I was recognizable and being the only off breed in there I was very recognizable.

B: That's interesting that, so, and you don't recall any problems or any...

J: Not a bit.

B: And on your end did you feel uncomfortable?

J: Not ever.

B: Huh, that's nice.

J: If I dated, Beth, there was a couple girls that the guys would have to go the door and pick her up and then bring her out to the car, then we'd go, but otherwise, no. I'm sure the parents didn't approve of their daughters dating a Japanese-American. I was, in freshman year, because I played football, I must, I was elected Freshman Class President, and then, because probably football and basketball, baseball, I was elected Student Body President of Beaverton High School, and so I was very fortunate. But, had it been not for popularity vote and you had to, you know, to, what do you call it, gather votes, I would have never...

B: Or campaign, yeah.

J: I would never ever did that, so, anyway. And then, to me, the high school days were the most glorious days, they were fun days, you know, people were nice, everybody was nice. And then I attended Lewis and Clark College on a football scholarship. And I played two years there, and, I was not a student, ok, not a student, like everything was fun. So before my sophomore year, after I played my sophomore year in football, I withdrew because I was not doing well. I, in fact, you could I say I was flunking every subject, so I didn't want to be left school with flunks in my resume. And then there were four of us guys in the same way, you know, all goofing off, and we all joined the army, and yeah, let's see, all four of us went to Fort Lewis to do our basic training.

B: And what year was that?

J: 1953.

B: 53, ok.

J: I graduated in '51 from high school. And then '53, even that was fun, basic training, Beth, cause I had trained with two of the fellows that I had been in high school with, and then came time to get our orders after basic training, and I was very fortunate. Those that flew around and got in trouble during basic went to Korea, and the rest of us went to Europe, and I was stationed in Germany, in a place called Zweibrucken, which was a replacement depot which we took care of all of the records of those troops that came into Europe. I would say 85% of the troops had to come through our depot, and then we interviewed them and then we sent the records with them to Kaiserslautern, Bermesen, and Stuttgart, you know, all over. Am I getting off track?

B: No, no, it's fascinating.

J: Ok, I don't want to be...

B: No, no no, I think that's fine. So, how many years did you serve then?

J: I served two years because I was, I volunteered in '53, the summer, the winter, and the December of '52 and before I knew it, I was in the army. They took us right away because we put our name on the draft list, so all four of us went just like that. And that was another good experience, you know, I am a lucky guy because here I am stationed in Germany, and as many, as much money I could gather up and time off, I was off traveling. So I got to see the countries like France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Denmark, and the rest of Germany, southern Germany, like Berlin, which was split into four countries, and we got to go there. And we got a special pass to go into East Germany, in East Berlin, and that was held by the Russians. Berlin was pretty much getting built up when we were there, it was things, you know, we built. The Russian side was still rubble, you know, torn down buildings, and bombed out buildings. In Berlin, there was a funny thing that happened. We were at a, I guess you would call it a night club, and each table had phones. Ok, and I think there were three of us guys and the phone rings, I said "Yes, yes." A sweet voice says, "How would you guys like to have a good time tonight?" I said, "Oh, yes." And she says, the nice voice said, or whoever was answering, "Where are you?" She says, "Look behind the table behind you." And here were three old ladies. They were laughing. I can still remember that. So that was good, a good experience there, cause I was very fortunate to be able travel.

B: Yeah, it sounds like an international education, really, in a sense.

J: Yeah, it was. And again on post I played all three sports.

B: Oh, ok.

J: Ok, it had been a very, very small level, battalion level. And so, we traveled to Stuttgart to play in a tournament, some big tournament, and then played softball, and then played flag football, or touch football for the, our battalion.

B: And after, so then this would have been '57, no?

J: No, '54, I spent 18 months there and I was released in '55.

B: '55, ok, I'm ahead of it.

J: Came back, not knowing what to do — no I had mind set, but whether I could do or not, I don't know, so I enrolled at Oregon State, in pre-med, pre-dent, ok. And the more I studied and studied; I decided I'd rather go to dental rather than medicine and have a beeper on me and deal with life and death. And I studied hard, Beth, because I didn't know if I had it or not. I studied morning, noon and night and every now and then I would have a break and then study, study, but I was accepted to dental school in 1958. And finished in dental school in '62 and settled in Beaverton, my home town, and had a practice there for 32 years. And enjoyed my patients very much, nice people, but when the time came to quit, I quit, when the door hit my fanny I was out of there.

B: Ok.

J: I don't think I, well, the only time I really get involved in dentistry is when I, they call me and say Jim, will you come up and call for money for your class, and so I do go up there and call for money. And I always get the "Oh, it's you again, Jim, ok how much do you want?"

B: But you are a good person to do it, I'm sure, if you are friendly that helps, yeah.

J: So that's my life and I don't know if that's what you wanted.

B: That's perfect, absolutely perfect. How, this is sort of an overarching question, the changes that you, cause it sounds like you have been Beaverton, for, that's been your home, so what sort of changes have you seen in Beaverton? I mean, that's a huge question, but impressions that you have.

J: Well, increase in population, increase in crime, which I, back then you didn't hear the violent crimes or maybe I wasn't looking for them, but there weren't the rapes, the murders, you know, the abuse, all that. Maybe I was oblivious to that, or wasn't aware of what took place, but now it's just kind of everyday occurrence that we have that. The traffic, horrendous traffic now. Just the, Beaverton hasn't changed that much, I don't think, Beaverton city hasn't changed that much. But, the surroundings areas, you know, the suburbs, the increase in these malls and that type of things is very fascinating, really.

B: Yeah. Do your brothers still have their farm?

J: No.

B: No.

J: What year was it? About 19...about 51, they moved their operation up to La Center, Washington, farmed strawberries up there. And then I don't remember when they moved their operation down to Woodland, Washington. And that's where George, Henry and Ike farmed strawberries; they raised cucumbers and then raspberries. And then George, of course, now has the Tsugawa Nursery in Woodland.

B: Ok.

J: Yeah, so that's where it is now.

B: That's great. Do you have, I don't know, and I don't know if this is a personal question, but what you tell the next generations about this event that happened in American history, how do you…?

J: Well, just the other day, my granddaughter, Holly, sixteen years old, you know, she and another girl would like to go down to Portland where they have the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center. And I said, anytime you are ready to go, I will take you down there and I will go through my shpeal, you know. But, our grandchildren aren't interested, you know, they don't, have any interest. But now that Holly, I would like for her to kind of understand that we were imprisoned and that it was not just, justice was not served there, it was very much we weren't saboteurs, you know, we were very…but you know the Isseis, or the first generation, they were kind of like sheep, you know, very docile people, they didn't [Japanese phrase] which means can't be helped. But had it happened to my generation, or George's generation, or my generation, I don't think that would have ever stood up, we would have fought like cats and nails. But then you just, you just did what you had to do; you'd follow the leader and go in.

B: Yeah.

J: I have a very dear friend who is 91 now, Arthur Iwasaki, you probably…

B: I've heard his name bouncing around, yeah.

J: But Arthur was a 442nd, which was the most highly decorated fighting unit during World War II. And Arthur would never talk about it until recently. And he said he was drafted into the service for World War II, trained down in the south, down in the Mississippi area, Fort Shelby, I think he said. And all they were allowed to do was to pick up cigarette butts and to stoke the furnace, and that's all they were doing, you know, and they were classified as enemy aliens, even though they were serving in the service. And he said the crowning blow, he said, Jim, was when the commander in chief of the army, which is the president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, came to our camp and they put us in the stockade, took our weapons away, until he left and then we were released. He said that was a very low blow to be treated that way.

B: Yeah.

J: And I think he was awarded, he fought in France, Italy, I think it was, and I think he was awarded one of the, you know, one of those, medal for valor, because I think when his, I think they were being transported back because they were wounded, and I think the ambulance was hit, and under fire he drug out three guys and put them to safety. But he never talked about it. But the most fascinating deal, I can't, I don't know the names of the areas, but the Germans, battalion was on a cliff and they held the command, you know, they could see down and the U.S. sent in various troops to go, finally they called the 442nd and Arthur said in the dead of night all of the 442nd came into the town and stayed under cover. And then that night they, he said, it was pitch black, he said you couldn't see your hand in front of you, they scaled that cliff, you know, and you couldn't make a noise, if you got hurt you just didn't say anything, and I think in 40, 40 minutes or 30 minutes they captured that whole compound cause everybody was asleep.

B: Wow.

J: Wow is right.

B: Yeah, I'm sure those were difficult memories to talk about…

J: I'm sure they were.

B:..and that's why he started…

J: And then he said, I was in the foxhole when your cousin was, war was over or very close to war, and he said I was in the foxhole with your cousin who was killed that day. But Arthur never talked about it, he just, he would never talk about what he had done until just recently and those guys are all gone, they are 90s, 89, 90s and they are dying like flies, you know. And I think this coming December, or sometime soon, they are going to honor these fellows back in Washington D.C.

B: Good.

J:…which they deserve.

B: And now at some point in the 80s the government, the American government…

J: Oh yeah.

B:…gave money or something.

J: I believe it was Ronald Reagan…

B: Yes.

J:…that signed this, apologizing to the Japanese Americans for what had taken place, and we were compensated, each and every individual who was imprisoned, born, received $20,000 which was token, but it was something.

B: Did you have a reaction to that, or what do remember?

J: I was happy to get it.

B: Yeah.

J: It was better than nothing. And that letter of apology, I believe, was Ronald Reagan that signed it.

B: I think that's true. And the last sort of, I don't know if this a question, but I'm…you obviously chose to enter the military willingly…

J: Yes.

B:…after all this happened, and I'm wondering if you could speak about that a little bit…that you…

J: Well, mine was come from a selfish standpoint because I was headed for bumsville, you know, because I was not doing anything correctly. I was fooling around, not studying, and just carousing and not getting ahead. So, four of us did join the army just to get out of the

environment that we were in. Then, at the end of it we got out the G.I. Bill, helped me through college and one year of dental school. And then the state had a G.I. Bill which was, paid for a few of the groceries which was very helpful. But that was my, my intent, was to get out of my environment that I was in. And I had a good time. Everything was a good time. I had a very good time: army, education…

B: Yeah, that's great.

J: …high school and college…

B: It worked out.

J:…although college was not good because, well, fun was playing football, but not studies. So anyway, that's my life.

B: Well, I appreciate you sharing that with us, and I think it's, it's especially interesting to see your return to Beaverton, seemed like a positive, like a very positive…

J: Yes, it was.

B:…experience, so that's nice.

J: And my...I had no intentions of setting up practice other than in Beaverton. And I was very fortunate when I was going to dental school, I worked for the Beaverton School District, it wasn't Beaverton School District, it was, I think, four schools and a high school, I think, and Mr. Hassell hired me to custodial work and I remember that was the year that I got married and my in-laws, Grandpa and Grandma Harriet Agneskoura came over for the wedding and they stayed in our apartment and they said, "Well, now, Jim, are you going to go out and look for a job?" I said, "I will, Grandpa, when you leave." Next day, he said, "Aren't you going to go look for a job?"

B: No, the pressure.

J: I did get a job with the school district, and then pretty soon they combined and became school district 48 and then that was when all the schools combined and I became, well, I was on a maintenance crew which I learned many things, you know, how to build a wall…

B: Yeah.

J: …repair windows, and I was fortunate because I met many principals, and school teachers, and office workers, because when the practice started, many of them came to me, you know, so I was very, so I got off to a pretty good start…

B: You had your connections.

J: …had the connections. I can remember I was, before my office was built, it was being built, I still worked for the school district as a doctor of dentistry. And, I was painting the superintendent's office, and I was on a ladder, I can remember this distinctly, and I don't remember who the superintendent was, but Mr. Hassell, Darryl Hassell said, "Doctor such and such, I would like you to me Doctor Tsugawa." Here I am, up on the….

B: Painting the building.

J:...painting.

B: Well.

J: So I was very fortunate that I met all these people, the custodians, and all this, and I had a lot of, a couple of superintendents come, and principals, teachers, and office, a lot of office workers were. And when I was working for the district, I learned who was the best cook, so I could go over there when lunch time came, and I knew all the, knew where all the coffee rooms were at the schools.

B: Funny.

J: So I hope that's what...

B: That's absolutely...

J: you wanted to hear.

B:...perfect.

J: Yeah, that's it.

B: If there is nothing else you like to add.

J: No, I think that's it.

B: Ok, the one thing that I don't do this off...

Key Terms:
Japanese Americans—Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
Minidoka Relocation Center
Detention Facilities—Oregon—Portland, 1940-1950
United States. Army—Foreign Service—Germany
Second World War, 1939-1945
Local History