

# PROVING OUR LOYALTY

## CHAPTER 1

### WORLD WAR II STARTS

#### \*\*\* LIFE IN MOUNTAIN VIEW \*\*\*

I am a Nisei born in Mountain View, on the "Big Island" of Hawaii. If you don't know what a Nisei is, it is an American born in the United States or its possessions whose parents were born in Japan. When I was born on January 28, 1925, Hawaii was still a territory and there was a lot of different nationalities living there as there still is.

When the Japanese naval air force attacked Pearl Harbor, Oahu on December 7, 1941 I was home with my family. We learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu from Stella, my older sister. She had gone on a picnic up to the volcano with some school teacher friends, and they had heard the news so everyone hurried home and told us. We were kind of shocked at the news!

My father died in 1937, and I had quit high school after the 9th Grade and was working in the sugar cane fields when America entered World War II. My mother worked there too but in a different group. Well after the Pearl Harbor attack, things got pretty hectic in Hawaii. There was lots of prejudice against the Japanese people, and it got worse and worse! The home town people of different nationalities turned against us and started calling us *Japs* and things got pretty bad.

It was so bad where I worked that they had to segregate the people working in the sugar cane fields, and they made the Filipinos work with their own people while the Japanese had their own group. The Filipinos, as well as the Portuguese, Puerto Ricans and other nationalities we knew, turned against us. It was a bad situation! The head of the Filipino group went to Mr. Hinton who was the top boss of the plantation workers in Mountain View. This Filipino man wanted permission to start shooting all the Japanese people in Mountain View. Well, Mr. Hinton was an Army captain in World War I, and he told this Filipino that if anyone touched any Japanese, he would be the first one to get killed. That straightened this situation out for awhile.

As it turned out, the Filipinos worked on one side of the field and we Japanese worked on another section of the field.

During lunch, we all sat down on our side of the fields, and while we were eating our food the Filipinos would bring out their long knives that they had made from the steel of old automobile springs. While we ate, they'd be out there practicing fighting with their long sword-like knives. We wouldn't laugh out loud, but we'd sit back and laugh at them among ourselves. They really looked crazy! As time went by, we started to get along better because we all knew each other from the days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

By mid-1942, there were thousands of GIs on Hawaii. They were living in temporary camps in the forests before they were shipped out into the Pacific area. Many of the privates gave us trouble. I remember that the plantation hospital was in Olaa and that a lot of the Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, and Portuguese lived in that area. Lots of GIs also hung around down there. One day I had to walk to the hospital to get my eye treated. While I was walking down the street, some loudmouthed GI yelled at me, "Get off the sidewalk you damn Jap!" All the people around laughed as they thought it was a big joke. It was no joke to us! It was only some of the lower class GIs and people that did things like that. The sergeants and officers were better educated and a better class of people, and they associated with the respected people on the island so we never had any trouble from them.

Later in the war as our Nisei units got publicity in the newspapers, things changed and people went out of their way to be nice. After I was in Army, people were really nice to my mother!

### **\*\*\* JOINING THE ARMY \*\*\***

In January 1943, Governor Poindexter of the Territory of Hawaii asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt to start a guinea pig group to see if the Japanese boys were patriotic to the United States and Hawaii. President Roosevelt finally OK'd it.

The Army decided to activate the 100th Infantry Battalion from Hawaii. Actually it was formed from the Nisei of two Hawaiian National Guard units, the 298th and 299th Infantry. The boys in the units were told that if they wanted to get out, get out now as the unit was going to become a combat group. So all the Filipinos, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans got out; the only boys that remained were the Japanese. The Nisei battalion was ac-

tivated as the 100th Infantry Battalion and sent to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin for training. It was later shipped to Camp Shelby, Mississippi when the Army started training the 442nd Regimental Combat Team there. The 100th was finally sent to fight in North Africa in August of 1943.

The War Department had decided to form an all Nisei regiment so the government asked for 3,000 volunteers but more than 5,000 wanted to volunteer. I had just had my 18th birthday so I barely made the deadline for volunteering, and luckily I got into the Army in March 1943. Sometimes people ask me why I enlisted. Well many of us enlisted to show those people, and particularly those in military uniforms who verbally yelled at us, that we were as good or better than they were, and that we could prove our loyalty to our country and all the Japanese in America. After all, just being in a uniform doesn't prove anything.

My older brother, Roy, worked for Mr. Fisher on his poultry farm. Mr. Fisher had a lot of clout with the local draft board so he kept my brother from being drafted because he wanted him to run things on the farm. If Roy had wanted to go, Mr. Fisher would have let him. My little brother, Bruce, was way too young for World War II, but years later he became a career soldier and fought in Vietnam. When I enlisted, I told Roy that he should stay home as long as I was OK and one soldier from a family was enough. But in case I was killed, he could enlist if he really wanted too, but it would be better if he stayed home and took care of Mother since our father had died several years before.