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Considerations for Conducting and Using Oral Histories in Japanese American Studies: A Case Study of Interviews of Nisei Soldiers in the Korean War

*Miyuki Daimaruya**

This paper investigates the methodological significance of oral history in Japanese American studies through a case study of Nisei who served in the Korean War (1950–1953). While individual voices have long played a critical role in illuminating the history of marginalized populations in society, including Japanese Americans, methodologies for conducting research interviews and the position of interviewers to interviewees remains underexplored. This article first discusses essential methodological concerns, including interviewer preparation, transparency in data collection, and contextual interpretation of interview content. It then presents a case study of Nisei Korean War veterans in the context of the methodological framework laid out in the paper. The case study focuses on semi-structured interviews I conducted with five Nisei veterans (four men, and one woman) from the American West Coast, living in California. It describes Nisei soldiers' unique experiences both on and off the battlefield, some of which were individual, and others shared. They include Nisei soldiers' formal or informal roles as military interpreters, their personal interactions with Korean locals, and their constructive reconfiguration of their views of Asia and their self-identification as Nisei, based on their military service in East Asia. Finally, the article reflects on challenges to conducting and preserving interview-based research, and, as future issues, refers to the implications of interviewees' periodic silence in response to interviewer questions, archival use of interview data, and the construction of collective memory. The article reaffirms oral history as an invaluable and irreplaceable method for documenting lived experiences, otherwise absent from the official historical record.

*Associate Professor, National Fisheries University, The Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency (FRA)

1. Introduction

This paper examines both the significant value of oral history interviews in the study of Japanese American history, as well as important considerations for conducting such interviews and limitations of the resulting interview data, by presenting a case study of interview research I conducted of Japanese American veterans of the Korean War (1950–1953) who were based in California.[1] Most of these service people were second-generation Japanese Americans or Nisei, whose parents were first generation immigrants from Japan or Issei. Over forty years ago, Gary Okihiro pointed out a "methodological problem of oral history as a tool of recovering history," and noted that few historians had addressed the problem.[2] However, even today, after numerous historical studies have been written in both the United States and Japan based on data from oral history interviews, the methodology of conducting interviews themselves as part of ethnic studies research remains largely unexamined, especially in Japan.[3]

This paper first summarizes both the benefits and the problems of using the interview method in researching Japanese American history. Then the paper examines how personal interviews can highlight underexposed elements of an event by demonstrating how they did so in my research on the military service of Nisei in the Korean War. The paper illuminates how the personal voices of ordinary people can become primary sources for historical study. The paper does not address the use of archival interview data that has already been published as primary sources in which authors did not participate in conducting the interviews. Rather, this paper examines how historical researchers themselves become interviewers and auditors of interview data, as I did in my study of Nisei veterans. The paper discusses considerations a researcher should attend to when acting as an interviewer and how the interviewer can ensure the validity of the resulting interview data. It also discusses practical limitations and difficulties of conducting interviews.

In the United States, the Korean War has long been known as the "forgotten war" and Nisei soldiers' service in the Korean War has been largely invisible in Japanese American history. However, the Korean War was a watershed for all racial minorities and women in uniform because their positions in the military changed drastically as the result of reforms to promote racial and gender equality. Accordingly, examining the so far underexplored subject of the military service of ethnic minorities, including Nisei, during the Korean War is of great importance.

The case study presented in this paper responds to two significant reasons for studying these Nisei servicemembers. The first reason is that previous studies of Nisei soldiers have focused primarily on segregated units of Japanese American soldiers, such as the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which was formed during World War II.[4] Almost no research investigates the situation of Japanese American soldiers in the US military after the disbandment of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in 1946. A few studies have mentioned Nisei military service in the Korean War; however, that research treated Nisei service as a continuation of the World War II period and did not examine the meaning of Nisei service in the context of the Cold War.[5]

The second reason is that research pertaining to the experiences of Nisei soldiers in the Korean War contributes significantly to collecting the voices of "ordinary" Japanese Americans of the time and to evaluating how they lived their daily lives as American citizens after the mass incarceration of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast of the US during World War II. Many studies of this era have focused on matters concerning the incarceration camps and gross violations of Japanese Americans' civil rights, such as internees were asked to demonstrate loyalty to the United States despite being incarcerated. But even after the end of the Pacific War and the closure of the camps, many Japanese Americans found themselves in very difficult situations, with the incarceration continuing to have a massive impact on their lives. Research into Nisei soldiers in the Korean War contributes significantly to our understanding us how ordinary Japanese Americans, particularly the younger generation of Nisei, coped with these challenges and participated in American society immediately after the incarceration.

This paper is composed of five sections. Section two discusses the significance and challenges of using personal interviews to research historical events and sets forth a methodological framework for conducting interviews. Sections three and four examine the case study of Nisei in the Korean War, applying the framework argued for in section two. Nisei soldiers' experiences in the Korean War reveal aspects of Nisei life among the younger generation of the 1950s. The paper discusses how the social context of the time facilitated their military service in the early Cold War era. In this sense, this study can also contribute to exploring a new perspective on Nisei history in the 1950s.

2. Methodology for Conducting Oral History Interviews in Japanese American Studies

Let us start with a fundamental question: Why should researchers interview people who lived during the historical period that is the subject of their research?[6] Conducting interviews is not a new method of historical research. Rather, historians have dealt with people's voices as primary source material for a long time.[7] Utilizing information learned from personal voices in oral history interviews is of significant value to historical study as long as researchers obtain the interview data using appropriate methods and employ it properly. It can provide them with awareness of previously unknown facts and incidents or documentation of otherwise unsubstantiated information and events.

For historians, the most definitive reason for conducting interviews may be the lack of other primary sources. In particular, the experiences of minorities who have been marginalized based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, and social or economic class are often invisible in official documents.[8] This under-representation in official records gives added importance to interviewing such people to include their voices in the historical record. Historians should make particular efforts to collect minority voices in specific studies of minorities themselves, although the inclusion of minorities in general overall histories of a subject is also very important. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the development of minority history has long relied on listening to and understanding the voices of ordinary people from a variety of sources, including accounts they have written, legal testimony and other documents in legal cases, and interactive interviews between interviewers (auditors) and interviewees (narrators), upon which this paper focuses.

Oral histories have already played an important role in the study of Japanese American history, particularly the incarceration.[9] One example of the power and importance of collecting interview data of the incarceration and post-incarceration era is the use of former internees' narratives and testimonies in the 1980s movement for redress. With the rise of the redress movement, the voices of Issei and Nisei who endured great suffering during World War II resulted in public hearings by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1981.[10] The power of those collected voices ultimately came to fruition when Congress passed and President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, a defining moment in Japanese American history that resulted in the US government paying

reparations to former internees and issuing an official apology for their unlawful incarceration.[11]

However, there are several important conditions that researchers must observe and several significant issues with which they must contend in conducting research interviews to ensure that they collect valid interview data. First, as a threshold matter, conducting interviews on the research subject requires being able to interview people while they are still alive and able to recall relevant events they experienced directly or indirectly. As discussed in detail below, this need is particularly challenging in interviewing military veterans. This practical consideration requires researchers to think ahead about the future value of preserving individuals' narratives in their voices and sometimes acting with urgency when the lifespan of research subjects may be short. Thus, limitations are part of the very nature of interviews, just as different limitations pertain to other types of primary source evidence.

Second, interviewers must possess at least essential minimum interviewing skills. Interviewers must fully prepare for interviews and study the topic or event in advance in order to be good listeners. They must avoid intentionally leading narratives of interviewees so that narratives in fact express interviewees' core experiences of historical events on the interviewees' own terms. If interviewees are not provided enough space to tell their descriptions of the experiences freely, the very details and insights interviewers seek may not come to the surface. At the same time, the interviewers' prior study of the particular historical event must prepare them to ask appropriate questions if they sense that interviewees have important information that is not making its way into the conversation. Interviewers always should make maximum effort to create comfortable spaces physically, mentally, and emotionally for interviewees to speak freely. Yet if interviewees' narratives or responses to particular questions stray too far from the subject matter of the research, interviewers may need to intervene to get interviewees back on track.

Third, using raw data from interviews often requires additional historical inquiry to assess the credibility of narratives related in the interviews, which in turn could shape how particular narratives can be used in specific research. As Donald Ritchie advises in his "classic" book, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, researchers should "[t]reat oral evidence as cautiously as any other form of evidence."[12] Thus, historians must understand the special characteristics of interview data and convey the circumstances under which interviews were conducted to readers, just as they must put traditional documentary evidence in context as to its creation.

Credibility and potential bias in raw interview data are both huge issues with which historians must contend. However, these concerns do not mean that interviewees' narratives must be accurate factually for them to be useful. Therefore, it is more important that researchers accurately report the particular characteristics of raw interview data before using it as a primary source than that they question or evaluate whether the interviewees' statements are strictly true or accurate. If interviewees' narrated stories are inaccurate, researchers must explain the pertinent historical background of the factual issues involved and the circumstances of the interview so that readers can understand it correctly in context. In this sense, researchers "interpret" the data, recognizing both its value and its limitations, without trying to alter it. Sometimes, using raw interview data may entail more ancillary research than documentary sources, but it should not be held to a different standard than any other primary source. As Ritchie correctly observes, a "statement is not necessarily truer if written down at the time than if recalled later in testimony. Whether written or oral, evidence must be convincing and verifiable."

Lastly, as with other archived primary sources, whether oral or documentary, which are handled by specialists in archiving and preserving, raw interview data obtained by researchers themselves must undergo step-by-step processing before it can be used as a primary source. Conducting interview research involves the following steps: selecting the research topics and subjects and studying them before conducting interviews; identifying the best research subjects and communicating and negotiating with them about the terms of their interviews; and finally conducting the interviews and recording them, making notes, and taking photographs. After collecting the interview data, additional processing steps are necessary: transcribing the interview, classifying the data, and preserving the data. Once the researcher has completed all of these steps properly, the interview data finally becomes a usable primary source.

In short, historical studies using interview data collected by the authors themselves face different challenges compared to studies that use only documentary resources. This paper sets forth particular conditions that must be met in conducting interviews: contending with potential time constraints for the interviews; obtaining background knowledge; possessing interviewing skills, including the ability to keep an interview focused on the subject matter, ensuring credibility, handling bias, and keeping transparency; and the appropriate handling of collected interview data before its use as a primary source.

When historians conducting research meet people who have experienced relevant historical events firsthand and they agree to share their story, historians have extremely valuable opportunities to learn previously unknown aspects of events, just as traditional researchers do when they discover never before noticed documents lying hidden in archives. However, just as with any other primary source, conducting interviews and using the unique voices collected in them to perform academic research requires proper treatment of the raw data. In the following two sections, I will demonstrate how I used these principles in conducting interviews of Nisei soldiers who served in the Korean War as part of my own research.

3. Interview Research Involving Nisei Veterans of the Korean War

Narratives of veterans of any war are of extraordinary value to historians because veterans can provide new facts about a subject or disclose events that were previously unknown based on their unique perspectives gained from personally participating in the very events that are a subject of research. However, conducting interviews with military veterans involves particular considerations that researchers must be aware of. The most important of these is that the vast majority of veterans begin to speak about their military experiences only in their later years of life. Their reasons for talking only long after events occurred may include their commitment to maintaining military confidentiality and the lasting effects of trauma they may have experienced during harsh battlefield combat and endured thereafter. And because veterans tend not to speak about their military experiences until later in life, the time frame to record their narratives is often limited and sometimes researchers must undertake their work expeditiously.

In the following two subsections, I outline the steps I followed in my research on Nisei soldiers in the Korean War. In the first subsection, I provide an example of the importance of researchers learning the background history of the research subject before actually conducting interviews. I provide an overview of the position of Nisei soldiers in the broader context of the Japanese American community and the Korean War and set forth the historical importance of mapping them into Japanese American history from the 1940s through the 1950s and Korean War history. In the next subsection, I explain the methodology I employed in gathering these personal voices that led to the revelation of previously unknown aspects of Japanese American history. In addition,

I discuss the importance of incorporating other primary sources into research when neither those primary sources nor the interviews are sufficient alone. This need does not indicate the limitations of first-person interviews as a research method; rather, it shows the importance of accurately understanding the conditions for conducting interviews and the characteristics of interview data and of integrating it with other primary sources as needed.

3.1 The Historical Context of Nisei Military Service in the Korean War

The inclusion of Nisei soldiers in integrated military units during the Korean War marked an important moment in both US racial history and Japanese American history. Unlike World War II, Nisei in the Korean War served as members of regular, multiracial units in the US military. For historians, this means that there is no official record of the number of Japanese Americans who served during the war. The U.S. Department of Defense and the Japanese American Korean War Veterans Association have estimated that about five to six thousand Japanese American men served during the Korean War, with two to three thousand dispatched to the Korean Peninsula as combat soldiers. A few Nisei women also volunteered in the military.

Japanese Americans were the last group of Asian Americans to be fully racially integrated into the US military. Other Asian Americans, whose ancestry was from US allies such as China or the Philippines, had already been integrated into the regular US military units before or during World War II. Because Japanese Americans were treated as "hostile enemies" when the Pacific War broke out in 1941, they were immediately excluded from military service, and later when they did serve were separated into racially segregated units. When the Korean War began in 1950, a small number of Nisei soldiers served in regular US military units just like members of other ethnic groups, marking an important milestone in the history of the American military integrating ethnic minorities into its ranks.

The Korean War period was a watershed for all ethnic minorities in the US military as part of the larger African American civil rights movement which was rising in the country at the time. In July 1948, two years before the outbreak of the Korean War, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981, declaring "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin" because "it is essential that there be maintained in the

armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense."[13] One month before issuing Order 9981, the US Congress passed, and Truman also signed, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.[14] During the Second World War, the number of servicewomen in the US had increased, leading to women in uniform becoming part of the regular military. Their roles and duties diversified during the Korean War.

These integration policies were primarily intended to integrate African Americans, who were the overall largest US racial minority group in the military at that time.[15] The US government was receiving widespread criticism for its segregation of African Americans in many aspects of life, and officials wanted to be seen as promoting racial integration and racial equality within the military. However, members of the white majority in power throughout American history have continuously imposed hierarchies among racial minorities to suit their own needs, and African Americans nearly always have been placed at the bottom of that hierarchy. The military during the Korean War period was no exception.

Although African Americans' integration into the military improved in some ways during the Korean War, in other ways, it got worse. For example, despite Executive Order 9981, enlisting in the Navy was particularly difficult for all racial minorities, and the Navy continued to overtly discriminate against African Americans, including reducing their total number, confining them to subservient positions, and excluding them from combat duties. Thus, during the Korean War period: "In sharp contrast to the other services, the proportion of blacks in the Navy decreased during the Korean War, falling from 4.5% of the enlisted force in 1949 (almost the same level as in 1945) to 3.6% in 1954. The percentage of black enlisted personnel in the Army and Air Force during the same period rose from 9.6% to 12.3% and from 5.1% to 8.6%, respectively."[16]

As part of Executive Order 9981, the US military also welcomed Nisei into its membership, and Japanese Americans were able to benefit from policies to further racial equality in ways that most African Americans did not. The military embraced Japanese American soldiers because their inclusion would project a positive image of the US as a liberal, anti-communist nation. After the end of World War II, the US and Japan had once again become allies. In addition, Japanese Americans were not a threat in numbers to the US government because they were a much smaller percentage of the US population than African Americans. Asian American

soldiers overall comprised less than one percent of US military personnel.[17]

The military service of Nisei in the Korean War was also a significant event in their overall social participation during the Japanese American resettlement era following World War II. The term "resettlement" in this context describes the process by which Japanese American former internees returning to the West Coast from incarceration camps or relocated elsewhere in the U.S., restarted their lives in American society. Several previous studies have defined the resettlement era as from June 1942 to 1952 or as late as 1955.[18] The incarceration forced removal of approximately 120,000 West Coast Japanese Americans to ten incarceration camps in 1942 strongly affected them even after the war.[19] The Korean War started only five years after World War II ended. For Nisei from the West Coast, serving in the Korean War was an event that happened while their resettlement from the incarceration camps into the larger American society was still ongoing.

3.2 Basic Background Information and Methodology for My Interviews of Nisei Veterans

I conducted semi-structured interviews with about thirty Nisei veterans who lived in California from November 2008 to April 2024 and continue to conduct interviews today. During the over 15 years from 2008 to 2024, the average age of interviewees has risen from the late seventies to the nineties, with one interviewee now over one hundred years old. When I started conducting interviews in 2008, most interviewees were already around 80 years old, yet they remained very active as veterans at that time. By 2024, except for a few cases, such as the female veteran identified below as K.S., they are no longer active as veterans because of their age. Unfortunately, most interviewees have now passed away. The frequency of my being able to conduct interviews has been limited to a couple of times per year because I have been living in Japan since the start of this interviewing project.[20]

Maintaining transparency and credibility of the interview data requires me as an interviewer to inform readers of the conditions under which these interviews were conducted. My interviews were generally face-to-face meetings on trips to the US, though several telephone interviews also took place. I have tried to interview people multiple times, although some could only be interviewed once. In each interview, I asked the interviewee to sign a consent agreement that I prepared.

During interviews, I usually took handwritten notes and used an audio

recorder for all interviewees who agreed to be recorded. I also took photos of interviewees at the time of their interviews. Most interviews were conducted either in the Los Angeles area, the San Francisco Bay Area, including San Jose, or Sacramento. The interview locations varied from time to time. There was no strict time limit for each interview; they lasted from one hour to nearly half a day in some cases. The entire process, from arranging to conducting interviews, was carried out in English, except for the small talk in Japanese before and after the interview. During discussions to set up interviews, I explained the purpose of the interview as part of my research. If interviewees requested, I provided sample questions, generally related to their military career and background, in advance. I prepared for and conducted the process carefully to facilitate interviewees' feeling comfortable to speak freely.

For this paper, I have identified interviewees by the initials of their first and last names. Whether or not to publish the actual names of interviewees is a significant and controversial issue for researchers. I use initials in my research because I believe using initials instead of actual names helps maintain the objectivity of the interview data as a primary source.[21]

4. How They Served: Nisei Soldiers' Experiences in the Korean War

I now turn to analyzing representative interview data in terms of what it tells us about Nisei soldiers' experiences during the Korean War. In a previous paper, I explored the Nisei veterans' motivations for serving in the US military during the Korean War as young Nisei. I argued that volunteering for the military or joining upon conscription was a way for Nisei to show their loyalty to the US and demonstrate their patriotism. I also discussed how Nisei's military service provided them a pathway for increasing their social participation in American society more broadly and strengthened the public's perception of them as fully American citizens, as well as fortifying their own sense of personal security as Americans in the early 1950s.[22]

This study follows up on my previous study by exploring the experiences of Nisei soldiers on and off the battlefield and the impact their military service had on their lives. In this section of the article, I first provide a brief overview of the five Nisei interviewees discussed in the paper and the character of their interviews. I then discuss my research findings as to three issues: 1) barriers, as well as the increased opportunities, Nisei had in becoming members of the military during the Korean War period; 2)

distinctive battlefield experiences Nisei had because they were Japanese Americans; 3) how their experiences on and off the battlefield during the Korean War affect their personal identities and lives upon return to the US at the end of the war.

4.1 Overview of Interviewees

This study focuses on five interviewees. The Korean War was the first war they participated in, as was true for all Nisei veterans I have interviewed. I did not have a chance to interview a Nisei who served in both World War II and the Korean War in my project. As outlined in Figure 1, four of the interviewees were men and one of them was a woman. Two were draftees into the Army (B.S. and M.T.). The other three were volunteers in the Army (R.S.), Marines (R.W.), and Air Force (K.S.). R.S. and R.W. were both combat soldiers; B.S. was an Army draftsman; M.T. was a medic; and K.S. belonged to the female nursing corps. K.S. and R.W. also published autobiographies, both in 2009.[23]

Interviewing K.S. and R.W. presented particular concerns because their having written autobiographies may have caused them to construct fixed, pre-established narratives of their experiences that could inhibit free and flexible interviews with them. I first interviewed R.W. in November 2008, then did so again in November 2009 and in November 2010. The November 2008 interview, from which I quote in this paper, took place before R.W.

Interviewee	Gender	Draftee/ Volunteer	Military Affiliation and Role	Source	Interview Period	Cited Interview in This Paper
K.S.	Female	Volunteer	USAF, Nurse	Interviews and autobiography (2009)	2010–2024 (ongoing)	2010
R.W.	Male	Volunteer	USMC, Combatant	Interviews and autobiography (2009)	2008–2019	2008, 2009, 2010
B.S.	Male	Draftee	USA, Draftsman	Interviews	2024 (ongoing)	2024
R.S.	Male	Volunteer	USA, Combatant	Interviews	2008–2009	2009
M.T.	Male	Draftee	USA, Combat Medic	Interviews	2008–2019	2019

Fig. 1. Interviewees' Information.

had published his autobiography, but at the time of the interview, he was already far along in his writing and had established his core narrative. I began interviewing K.S. in 2010, after her autobiography had already been published, and have continued to interview her to the present. As an interviewer, I naturally had to read both interviewees' autobiographies carefully to prepare for their interviews, even though neither autobiography focused solely on their military service during the Korean War. I also had to do a deep dive into their responses in interviews and follow up on points they made that did not appear in their autobiographies and inquire with care and respect as to any inconsistencies between interview responses and their written accounts.

In earlier interviews with K.S. and R.W., I often based questions on stories contained in their autobiographies, and the interviewees replied based on their works. However, over the years, the interviewees revealed unique episodes concerning events mentioned, but not fully discussed, in their autobiographies, as well as additional events not included in their books. As a result, the background information and context the autobiographies provided ultimately enabled my interviews with K.S. and R.W. to be richer and more in-depth than my interviews with the other three Nisei veterans. In the end, the existence of the autobiographies, far from diminishing the value of the interviews, served to enhance them.

In contrast, conducting the interviews of the veterans who had not written autobiographies generally required me to ask more explicit questions to acquire pertinent information. Sometimes interviewees provided spontaneous answers, exposing details that they had never noticed or talked about before, leading me to ask follow-up questions on the spot that I had not anticipated beforehand. The fact these interviewees did not have pre-established, solid frameworks for their narratives made the interviews freer, but it also required me to exercise constant vigilance to ensure that the conversation remained aligned with the focus of the questions and to inquire with care about any inconsistencies in interviewees' responses. Thus, these interviewees provided their own rich and unique voices of history, through a slightly different process than the interviewees who had previously written autobiographies.

4.2 Nisei's Experience in Becoming Part of the Military: Barriers and Opportunities

As discussed in the previous discussion, the overall number of Nisei

who served in the US military during the Korean War was small, with Asian American soldiers as a whole comprising less than one percent of US military personnel at the time. All five interviewees discussed in this paper reported that they had rarely if ever met other Japanese American members of the military during the Korean War. The fact that Nisei soldiers during the Korean War served in multiracial units also meant that, unlike their predecessors in World War II, they served apart from other Nisei soldiers.

In addition, Nisei were able to serve in more military forces and more diverse assignments than had been permitted in World War II. However, it is estimated that nearly all Nisei served in the Army, with a few exceptions such as R.W. and K.S. One reason for the small number of non-Army Nisei servicemembers was that most Nisei were part of the Army's Military Intelligence Service (MIS), just as Nisei had been in World War II. Another reason was the fact that many were conscripted into the Army rather than enlisting voluntarily even after World War II. During the Korean War, the military conscription system was in operation in the US, and more draftees were assigned to the Army than to the other military forces, resulting in more Nisei serving in the Army than in the other forces.

An additional contributory factor could have been lingering aspects of the military's prior strongly exclusionary practices despite Truman's signing Executive Order 9981. To be sure, the Executive Order and changing military attitudes at the time had many positive effects. For example, R.W. wrote about changes taking place in the Marines in his autobiography. He reported that his elder brother had attempted to enlist in the Marines in 1946 but had been refused. A year later, he tried again and was accepted, and R.W. himself faced no problems enlisting in the Marines in 1948.[24]

The experience of K.S. also reflected a shift in the treatment of Nisei soldiers from "enemy aliens" to "friendly allies" taking place largely because of the beginning of the Cold War. K.S. was born in 1923, making her the oldest person interviewed in my research. While most other male interviewees had been incarcerated in camps as young teenagers with their families, K.S. was already twenty and thus old enough to be able to leave the Poston camp on her own to attend college in Michigan in September 1942.

As revealed in both her interviews and autobiography, K.S. first attempted to volunteer for the Navy in 1944 while she was in college in Michigan but was rejected by the recruiter due to racial discrimination against Japanese Americans during World War II. She was finally able to enlist in the Air Force in 1950, after obtaining a master's degree in nursing

while working at a university hospital, and then completing the Cadet Nurse Corps Program.[25]

Indeed, Executive Order 9981 could not wipe out all discrimination overnight, and prior discrimination that both R.W. and K.S. recounted persisted in various forms during the Korean War period.

4.3 Battlefield Experiences of Nisei Soldiers

Nearly all the Nisei combat soldiers I interviewed, beyond their formal duties, had served as bridges between Americans and Koreans (both military and civilian alike) by acting as informal language interpreters, even though they did not belong to the MIS. Since most Nisei at that time spoke Japanese at home with their Issei parents, they had some command of the language.

Moreover, the Korean peninsula had been under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 until Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945. Accordingly, most Koreans could understand Japanese better than English. Regardless of the Nisei soldiers' Japanese language proficiency and whether language translation was part of their official duties, they reported that they had undertaken roles as Japanese-English interpreters between Koreans and American officers or soldiers. For example, R.W. explained that the Marines had hired a local South Korean interpreter, but "he couldn't speak good English," but he could speak Japanese instead.

> So, whenever that captain [of our unit] wanted to do something, we're going to go fighting, or talking, and he [the captain] was going to take the interpreter, he would call me. If we caught a prisoner, the guy [the Korean interpreter] would talk [to me] in … Japanese, and then I would tell the [American military] doctor [in English]. Sometimes I don't think the information [I provided] was right because I don't know numbers in Japanese.[26]

In turn, Koreans who spoke and wrote Japanese also often helped Nisei who could speak but not write Japanese be able to send letters home to their Issei parents who could not read English. Except for those Nisei who had learned Japanese in Japanese schools in the US before World War II or who had lived in Japan, Nisei generally knew spoken Japanese to communicate with their Issei parents, but not the written language. For instance, B.S., an army draftsman whose duty was to draw up blueprints for bridges,

expressed his delight at how a Korean colleague helped him personally.

> And I needed a helper in drawing the bridges because I had too much work to do. And this Korean, he … [had lived] under Japanese rule, and so he had a Japanese name, [and] he knew how to speak, read, and write Japanese. And so, we got along very well. And I went to Japanese school before the war (World War II), so I knew how to write [Japanese], but I've forgotten some. So, he helped me to remember how to write in *hiragana*. He taught and I remembered how to write again. I was able to write to my parents in *hiragana*.[27]

On multiple other occasions, Koreans also helped Nisei by translating letters into Japanese that the Nisei had drafted for their parents in alphabetic script.

R.S., one of the Army combat soldier interviewees also described yet another way Nisei established close relationships with Koreans because of their common East Asian heritage and their connection through the Japanese language.

> I have to talk Japanese all the time.… They [South Korean soldiers] thought I was a Japanese from Japan, and so they would come and ask me, where are you from? I always tell you [them] I'm from America, or I'm from Washington. I'm from Spokane, Washington. I keep telling, and they all keep asking me, until about three days later, one of the Koreans, and I still remember his name, …, he asked me if would I teach him English.… I said to that guy, "Yeah, I'll teach you."[28]

Nisei interviewees tended to recall their experiences connecting with Koreans through shared language with fondness, not only because of the warmth of the experiences themselves, but because this skill stemming from their ethnic background enabled them to contribute to their units in unique ways. The Nisei's Korean War narratives of acting as interpreters and speaking Japanese with local Koreans who had Japanese names, because they had been imposed on Koreans during the many years of Japanese invasion of the Korean peninsula, reflected rapid geopolitical changes that were taking place. Imperial Japan had once dominated the Korean peninsula, causing widespread hardship for Koreans. After Japan's defeat in World War II, the peninsula quickly became the first battleground of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union and its allies, with the U.S.

supported by its new allies Japan and South Korea.

Nisei interviewees also tended to emphasize that they had been treated equally in the US military. However, because of a different way in which it could be said they were treated "equally" on the battleground, Nisei ironically and tragically faced a higher risk of being killed in battle than other American soldiers. The primary reason for the increased risk was that US soldiers sometimes mistook Nisei for the enemy because they and the enemy both had East Asian faces. R.S., who had served as an Army combat soldier, reported in a separate interview in a documentary film, how he had had once been mistakenly shot by the US military, who thought he was an enemy combatant.[29]

Nisei soldiers in the Korean War also experienced something that other US soldiers did not: encountering enemy North Korean and Chinese combat soldiers who in many ways looked like them because they all had East Asian faces and needing to try to kill them as was their duty as members of the US military fighting on the Western bloc side. Nisei needed to fulfill their duties not only to survive but to prove their legitimacy as American citizens. Some Nisei never encountered enemy soldiers, but I asked interviewees who had seen combat, whether they had. R.S., the soldier who had been mistaken for the enemy and shot by the American military because of his East Asian appearance, was one of the relatively few lucky survivors of the deadly battle of the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir.[30] R.S. reported: "I saw many dead bodies (of Chinese troops) because we were surrounded by Chinese. We had to kill them, I didn't die but …." He paused for a brief period, then changed the subject from Chinese casualties of the notorious battle to American casualties.

> At the Chosin reservoir [there were] … so many armies and then how many came back? There are only 385 out of 3200.… only 385 …. When I came back, [and] about 20 years later, [I learned that I was on the] East side of Chosin…. Well, the Marines were on the West side, and the American Army was on the East side. It's called East of Chosin. And that's where I read that thing, and it tells you that only so many came back. And so then, when I read that, I thought, Gee, I was very lucky to come back.[31]

At the time, I did not ask R.S. follow-up questions to try to learn more details of what he had experienced, and he has since died.[32] Nevertheless, the fact that R.S. avoided mentioning details about the Chinese and North

Korean enemy soldiers and recognized he was one of the lucky survivors of the battle of the Chosin Reservoir suggests that his experiences as a soldier had been harsh.

The Marine Corps combat soldier R.W. also described in his autobiography the conflicting emotions he experienced when he killed a North Korean enemy soldier in battle.

> One day, while in my tank, we were on a direct fire support mission from the top of a hill, looking down into a small valley. A solo North Korean soldier was scampering up the side of the hill towards his trench. "High Explosive" orders came through, so we loaded an HE shell, and it was complete devastation for that guy…. [I felt] remorse, yet at the same time. I believed that if we didn't kill him, he would live to continue killing our Marines from his bunker, and it was our job to protect fellow Marines.[33]

In my interview with R.W., he explained that as a member of the tank battalion, he rarely experienced seeing the faces of the enemy.[34]

The striking contrast between how forthcoming R.S. and R.W. were in fondly recalling their connections with Korean locals and fellow soldiers through the Japanese language stands out. They provided little detail about encounters with enemy Chinese and North Korean soldiers. These limited descriptions suggest that the combat encounters were emotionally complex and potentially traumatic for the Nisei veterans. This reticence has posed a challenge to my ability to obtain full accounts of Nisei's encounters with enemy soldiers. However, K.S. in one of my interviews with her spoke of the cruelty of the battlefield she experienced indirectly through her work as an Air Force nurse when she flew between Tokyo, Seoul, and a make-shift military hospital elsewhere in Korea.

> K.S.: We flew there [the make-shift military hospital] and from there flew over to Seoul… We moved in for two days, went over there [to the military hospital], and flew back with the flight nurse. And I tell you that was an experience I will never forget. I wouldn't want to be a flight nurse. She took care of all these wounded soldiers who were being sent to the hospital, and you never know what's going to happen to them. Whether they are going to make it or not.
>
> Interviewer: So, [do] you mean the other time you visited a military

hospital in Korea?[35]

K.S.: Right …. I don't remember that it was really a hospital; they had to be shipped over to Japan for wounded care.

Interviewer: …Wounded soldiers.

K.S.: Terrible, terrible, terrible.[36]

I also asked K.S. whether she had talked with wounded soldiers, and she reported that they did not say anything about their battle experiences.[37] K.S.'s primary duty was providing care to US military families at a US Air Force base in Japan, and thus she perhaps had no other encounters with wounded soldiers. In subsequent interviews, I asked K.S. several times about any other encounters she might have had with wounded soldiers but learned nothing further, making it seem clear that she had worked at the field hospital only one time. Remarkably, K.S. is now 101 years old and continues to be active as a veteran. K.S.'s narrative of the time she worked in the field hospital suggests that further investigation of the nurse corps could help researchers better understand the battleground experiences of soldiers, medical personnel, and others.

4.4 The Influence of Military Service on Nisei Veterans' Lives upon Their Return to the US

Many Nisei veterans I interviewed conveyed to me that their service in the US military, which took them both to Korea and Japan, enabled them to think more positively about their identities as Japanese American citizens. However, their experiences back in mainstream American society upon their return to the US were much more mixed. They exemplify the complex struggles Nisei faced as they sought social participation as American citizens in the post-incarceration.

Almost all Nisei veterans I have interviewed spent time in Japan on R&R (rest and relaxation), on assignment on a US military base there, or while traveling in Japan during their time in Asia connected to the war. Many interviewees shared fun memories of visiting relatives or the birthplaces of their Issei parents. Those experiences gave the Nisei their first opportunities to identify as Japanese Americans in a positive way, far different from how they and their families had been treated in the US.

The two very different types of experiences Nisei soldiers had in East Asia during the Korean War—terrifying times on Korean battlefields and enriching engagements in the safety of Japan—provided these Nisei the opportunity to break out of the constraints they experienced in the Japanese American resettlement era in the US and to conceive of themselves and be treated in new ways as American citizens. Even though the fact they were of East Asian descent increased the risk to their lives as combat soldiers in the war, their status as American soldiers strengthened their sense of themselves as Japanese Americans and in some ways improved their position in American society upon their return home to the US, which took place less than a decade after the closure of the World War II incarceration camps. But I term their status "militarized citizenship," because these Nisei veterans, similar to their predecessors in the 442nd during World War II, had to put their lives on the line to demonstrate their right to be considered first-class American citizens.

For all young Nisei in the 1950s, pursuing higher education and obtaining decent jobs were central challenges in their lives. When the Nisei soldiers returned home safely after their service, the GI Bill promised equal financial support to all U.S. veterans, making higher education accessible to them. Several of the Nisei veterans I interviewed used their GI benefits to obtain university educations. In this way, they attempted to surmount the difficulties of ongoing racial discrimination against Japanese Americans.

However, Nisei veterans' social status in 1950s America did not quickly and dramatically change. They had served honorably in the military in the Korean War, thereby demonstrating their loyalty to the US by risking their lives for their country, and they dedicated themselves to the hard work required to earn a college degree and realize their full potential as citizens contributing to society. However, this was not enough for them to achieve full social participation in mainstream American society and to be free from discrimination because of their race and ethnicity. For example, the interviewee M.T. who had served as a combat soldier after being drafted into the Army, faced blatant discrimination during his hunt for a job in 1955. After serving in the Korean War, M.T. obtained a bachelor's degree in accounting at a university. When he began looking for a job, one potential employer told him: "We like your grades; we like your extra activities; we like your personality because even our counterparts want outgoing people so they can sell. But we can't hire Orientals."[38]

In sum, the various and sometimes fragmented narratives that the interviewees recounted told a common story. The Nisei's military service

during the Korean War and their encounters with East Asians provided them the opportunity to think positively about their Japanese American identity, and being Nisei enhanced their ability to contribute to the American combat effort. Upon returning home to the US, many earned college degrees and felt more respected in mainstream American society than ever before because they were veterans; however, discrimination against them continued. Nevertheless, Nisei's military service in Korea allowed them to think about their ethnicity as Japanese Americans with pride for the first time in their lives, and over time they secured a better position in American society.

4.5 Discussion: Reflections on Challenges in Conducting Interviews and the Importance of Transparency

This section examines challenges in the use of personal interviews as primary sources in Japanese American and Nisei history based on the results of my case study. As the case study demonstrates, personal interviews can serve as an invaluable primary source for historians by preserving the precious voices of people who are the subject of the research. But conducting interviews to make a record of participants' experiences also presents distinctive challenges to researchers because the researchers themselves are actively involved in creating the source material, rather than just analyzing a paper document, residing on the shelves of an archive.

In my experience, the times when interviewees did not answer questions or sidestepped them, whether intentionally or not, provided perhaps the greatest challenges in collecting interview data. These responses were understandable because as Nisei veterans, the interviewees had potentially survived harsh circumstances or experienced trauma. The most important matter is how interviewers can recognize and react when they get such responses and how they interpret them.

I do not regard receiving such responses from interviewees as simply a limitation on the use of interviews in historical research. Rather, I believe such responses underscore the critical role that research interviewers play in conducting semi-structured interviews of individual interviewees. This contrasts with the usually minimal influence that interviewers' background, skills, and personal traits have in large-scale projects that involve multiple interviewers with pre-determined questions. But even in large-scale projects, potential influences interviewees may have on results must be carefully considered if the format is semi-structured and allows interviewers

some flexibility in how they conduct the interviews and permits them to adjust their approach depending on how individual interviewees respond to questions.

Given the importance of the background and skills of the interviewers themselves as well as the conditions of the interviews, providing detailed information regarding these matters in articles presenting research findings seems critical to preserving the transparency of the interview data. In particular, interviewers' degree of background knowledge of the research topic, level of experience, and proficiency in the interviewees' native language can significantly influence the resulting interview data. Inadequacies in these areas sometimes lead to incomplete or overly constrained interview data.

I have conducted research interviews of Nisei veterans now for more than 15 years, beginning when I was a young doctoral student. I know that I am a much more proficient interviewer today than when I began, and my levels of skill and expertise at the various times interviews were conducted affected the resulting data. The long period in which I conducted the interviews also influenced the results because earlier interviews were conducted when the Nisei veterans, who are roughly the same age, were younger than they are today. Indeed, several of the interviewees have now passed away, making follow-up interviews impossible. However, even in the absence of opportunities for follow-up interviews with the same interviewee, it remains possible to accumulate a meaningful body of interview data by systematically preparing and posing consistent, well-formulated questions to interview subjects who share similar characteristics and by disclosing relevant conditions of interviews whenever necessary to maintain full transparency.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the methodological issues for using research interviews in Japanese American history by discussing the history of Nisei who lived on the West Coast from the 1940s through the 1950s, using a case study of the military service of Nisei in the Korean War. I will summarize each section, offering some final reflections on conducting such interviews and presenting their results, and I will identify three areas for future research.

The first section of this paper discussed the challenges and the value of methodologies that use interviews in the research of Japanese American

history. When carrying out interview research, it is necessary to clarify the methodology the researcher adopted and to examine whether that methodology is appropriate to the historical research being conducted. The second section discussed the significance of reforms promoting racial and gender equality in the US military, and how those changes determined the ways in which Nisei served in the Korean War. Although the number of Nisei soldiers who served was small, their treatment in the military was more favorable than that of African American soldiers. The experience of Nisei servicemembers was shaped both by the actions of the U.S. government and the difficult conditions Nisei faced post-incarceration.

The third section made use of interview data, and used interviewees' autobiographies as appropriate. It analyzed Nisei soldiers' status and experiences on the battlefield and examined how their perceptions of themselves as Japanese Americans and their impressions of Asia were altered through their military service. The interviews of authors of autobiographies provided rich and in-depth information about their military experiences. However, I had to ask them questions based on information that had already been written in their autobiographies or they had provided in earlier interviews. In contrast, I was able to ask questions more flexibly to interviewees who had not previously written autobiographies, yet I still needed to ensure the consistency of their responses. Lastly, the paper discussed challenges I encountered in conducting the interviews of Nisei veterans and the importance of the transparency as to the conditions of the interviews to ensure the integrity of the resulting data. Individual narratives of Nisei interviewees revealed barriers they faced and opportunities they found to became part of the military, their unique experiences on the battleground in Korea, and the impact of military service on their lives as Nisei in the 1950s were highlighted.

Finally, this study illuminates three issues for future research: the best approach to interviewees' silence in interviews, preserving and sharing interview data for future academic use, and the difficulty of constructing a collective war memory. The first two issues pertain to collecting and preserving interview data, the first being how interviewers should respond to and interpret incidences when interviewees do not want to talk about a particular subject, as I described was a challenge in my case study interviews. As discussed in the preceding section, research interviews provide historians directly with rich voices of those who have experienced a given event and enable historians to put interviewees' narratives in historical context with other sources; yet at the same time,

there are sometimes certain topics or personal experiences that interviewees either avoid or refuse to talk about in their interviews. Future research could provide new insights into how researchers can best respond when encountering this type of challenge. I expect such research will find that a systematic approach is required.

Reflecting on the first issue led me to identify a second issue for future work—how interviewers can preserve interview data in archives available to future academics and the public.[39] As discussed in section three above, conducting interviews of people who observed or participated in historical events by its very nature has time limitations. Researchers must preserve such interview data they can collect while the interview subjects are alive in ways that can be accessible to future generations. Archiving may not always be required for a single study that used interview data as just a research method; however, Ritchie's *Doing Oral History* devotes an entire chapter to archives alone.[40] All interviewers should consider and decide whether to open their interview data as a primary source to scholars and the public for future use.[41]

The archiving process generally requires knowledge and support from experts in archiving, and it can be difficult to find collaborators, especially for researchers like me, who have undertaken interview projects alone. Current remarkable developments in digital tools and media may enable archiving interview research in a virtual space easily and inexpensively, even for those working alone. Using technological tools, researchers can create archival interview data to share with the public in perpetuity. Of course, some interviewees might have agreed only to use oral data dealing with personal information for academic purposes and will refuse to make interviews open to the public. Therefore, it is important to make rules for the use of the data clear with the interviewees before beginning to conduct the interview.

Several excellent archives that include interviews of Nisei Korean War veterans already exist in the United States.[42] Of course, it is important to distinguish between my project and other projects as to the research perspective, purpose, and methods. My intention in chronicling the achievements of Nisei veterans is to create a new collection of interview data that provides a valuable primary source for better understanding the massive impact the US military's 1948 racial reform policies had on racial minorities in the US.

The third important issue for future research is investigating whether the individual narratives of Nisei veterans contributed—or failed to

contribute—to the shaping of a collective memory of Japanese American soldiers in the Korean War. This research topic concerns the complex question of whether, and if so, how, to bring together the individual war experiences I recorded in my interviews and those that exist in other sources together in a single overall collective narrative of Nisei servicemembers' experience in the Korean War. Interestingly, most Nisei veterans did not experience a collective identity as Nisei soldiers during their actual service. As discussed above, Nisei soldiers during the Korean War itself served in multiracial units largely apart from other Nisei and not as a segregated unit, as Japanese American soldiers had generally done in the past. Whatever sense of collective identity the Nisei veterans came to have developed through their involvement in veterans' activities extending nearly forty or fifty years after their actual military service. The Nisei veterans tried to put these experiences into the broader historical narrative of the Japanese American community nationwide or in particular locales. In a future paper, I will examine the question of how Nisei veterans after their service strengthened their identity as Nisei soldiers in the Korean War, even though they did not share the memory of their service as a group or in a segregated unit.

This complex issue of collective identity shows how the diverse and multilayered narratives contained in personal interviews serve as invaluable primary sources. An individual voice of experience cannot claim to be the public memory on its own; however, public memory is composed of personal narratives accumulation of individual voices that interviews help to deliver.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] I presented the initial conception of this paper in an oral presentation entitled, "Challenges and Usability of Interview Data in American Studies: Experiences Interviewing Japanese American Korean War Veterans," at a panel session on "Digital Historical Resources and Global History" at the 57th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Association for American Studies, June 4, 2023.

[2] Gary Y. Okihiro, "Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History: A Reconnaissance into Method and Theory," *The Oral History Review* 9 (1981): 27–46.

[3] For the current state of oral history methodologies in Japan, see Naoki Abe, afterword to *Recording Oral History: A Guide for Humanities and Social Sciences*, by Valerie R.

Yow, trans. Kayoko Yoshida, Koji Hirata, Naoki Abe, and Naoko Kato-Nitta (Tokyo: Interbooks, 2011). Although the book was written over 13 years ago, the situation described in the afterward still applies today.

[4] For example, see Michi Nishimura Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976); James C. McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II* (Austin: St. John's Press, 2016).

[5] Edwin Nakasone, *The Nisei Solder: Historical Essays on World War II and the Korean War* (White Bear Lake,MN: J-Press, 1999); Yukiko Yanagida, *Niseiheishi Gekitōno Kiroku: Nikkei Americajinno Dainijisekaitaisen* [The Battle Records of Nisei Soldiers: Japanese American Soldiers during World War II] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2012);and Monika Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[6] This section is mainly based on Yow, *Recording Oral History* and Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). An additional starting point for this section was my presentation, entitled "Can Public History Be Written from a Personal Narrative?: Addressing Japanese American Military Service Experiences and Citizenship," at The 25th Symposium between Pukyong National University and National Fisheries University, Busan, South Korea, September 24, 2019.

[7] See Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 19–23.

[8] Alistair Thomson, "Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History," *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (1998): 581–595.

[9] Examples of contributions of oral history to the development of Japanese American history are too numerous to list even if limited to the 1940s and the 1950s, but the following works are examples. Arthur A. Hansen, *Barbed Voices: Oral History, Resistance, and the World War II Japanese American Social Disaster* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2018); Tetsuden Kashima, foreword to *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

[10] See Chapter 2 "Executive Order 9066" and Chapter 3 "Exclusion and Evacuation" in *Personal Justice Denied*, 47–116.

[11] "Civil Liberties Act of 1988," in *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed, September 9, 2024, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Civil_Liberties_Act_of_1988.

[12] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 117.

[13] See "Executive Order 9981: Desegregation of the Armed Forces (1948)," Milestone Documents, National Archives, accessed September 9, 2024, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9981.

[14] See "Women's Armed Services Integration Act," Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed September 9, 2024, https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/diversity/women-in-the-navy/WASIA.html; Women's Armed Services Integration Act, Pub. L. No. 80-625, 62 Stat. 356, enacted June 12, 1948.

[15] Of the 4.9 million Korean War veterans in the US in 1990, 339,400, or about 7 percent, were African Americans. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Analysis Office of Program and Data Analyses, *Data on Veterans of the Korean War*, (2000), 1–8, accessed September 9, 2024, https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/specialreports/kw2000.pdf.

[16] Frederick S. Harrod, "Integration of the Navy (1941–1978)," *Proceedings*, October 1979, accessed September 9, 2024, https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1979/october/integration-navy-1941–1978.

[17] *Data on Veterans of the Korean War*, 2; Miyuki Daimaruya, "Hiroshi Hāsī Miyamura Wa Naze Gikaimeiyokunshō Jyuyosha To Natta Noka: 1950 Nendai No Chōsensensouki

Nikkeijin Heishizō No Kōsatsu" [Why Was Sergeant Hiroshi 'Hershey' Miyamura Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor?: A Study of Images of Japanese–American Korean War Soldiers in the 1950s], *AALA Journal* 24 (2019): 51–54.

[18] Previous studies have defined the resettlement period from 1946 to 1952. This paper adopts the most widely accepted period, from the start of resettlement policies by the War Relocation Authority for Nisei internees in 1942 to the adoption of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran–Walter Act). See Arthur A. Hansen, "Resettlement: A Neglected Link in Japanese America's Narrative Chain," *REgenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era*, published by the Japanese American National Museum, 2000, accessed September 9, 2024, https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft600006bb&query=1952&brand=oac4.g.

[19] See Chapter 2 "Executive Order 9066" in *Personal Justice Denied*, 47–116.

[20] My interview project is divided into three time periods: November 2008–March 2011; May 2016–October 2019; and April 2024 to the present. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to travel to the US to conduct interviews from 2020 until April 2024.

[21] See Mia Martin Hobbs, "(Un)Naming: Ethics, Agency, and Anonymity in Oral Histories with Veteran-Narrators," *Oral History Review* 48, no. 1 (2021): 59–82.

[22] Miyuki Daimaruya, "The Motivation to Serve in the Korean War and Resettlement: Analyzing Interviews with Japanese American Nisei Veterans," *Journal of National Fisheries University* 70, no. 4 (2022): 185–198.

[23] Robert M. Wada, *From Internment, to Korea, to Solitude: Memoir of Robert M. Wada Nisei Child of a WWII Japanese American Internment Camp and Later a Marine Corps Veteran of the Korean War* (Charleston: BookSurge, 2009); Kiyo Sato, *Kiyo's Story: A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream* (New York: Soho Press, 2009).

[24] R.W., interviews by author, November 11, 2008; November 8, 2009; November 11, 2010; Wada, *From Internment*, *to Korea, to Solitude*, 117.

[25] K.S., interview by author, November 17, 2010; Sato, *Kiyo's Story*, 201–202.

[26] R.W., interview by author, November 11, 2008.

[27] B.S., interview by author, April 17, 2024.

[28] R.S., interview by author, September 27, 2009.

[29] *Looking Like the Enemy*, directed by Robert A. Nakamura, produced by Karen L. Ishizuka (1996), videotape, Japanese American National Museum.

[30] The battle occurred at Chosin (Chanjing) Reservoir near the China–North Korean border from November to December 1950. It is known as the first battle in which the Chinese People's Volunteers fought against UN forces. See "The Battle of the Chosin Reservoir and the Medal of Honor," National Medal of Honor Museum, accessed September 9, 2024, https://mohmuseum.org/chosinreservoir.

[31] R.S., interview by author, September 27, 2009.

[32] When I conducted the interview, I was a PhD student and had less interviewing skills than I have today. I regret that I did not ask R.S. follow up questions to try to deepen my understanding of the topic, even though I obtained very valuable testimony from his interview.

[33] Wada, *From Internment*, *to Korea, to Solitude*, 117.

[34] R.W., interview by author, November 11, 2010.

[35] At that time, K.S. was stationed at the Far East Air Materiel Command (FEAMCOM) US Air Force base in Tachikawa, Tokyo, Japan.

[36] K.S., interview by author, November 17, 2010.

[37] K.S., interview by author, November 17, 2010.

[38] M.T., interview by author, March 12, 2019.

[39] My interest in preserving interview data in archives was spurred by my participation

in the session entitled "Remembering the Korean War a Different Way," organized by the independent researcher Timothy Campbell on April 12, 2024, at the annual meeting of the National Council on Public History, held jointly with the Utah Historical Society. The session provided me a great opportunity to consider this issue. I also made an oral presentation, entitled "Experiences as Japanese Americans and as U.S. Military Personnel in the 1950s: Analyzing Interviews with *Nisei* Veterans in the Korean War."

[40] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, chap. 6.

[41] See Abe, afterword to *Recording Oral History*, 469.

[42] For example, Japanese American Military History Collective (JAMHC), Program, https://ndajams.omeka.net/, and Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/programs/veterans-history-project/about-this-program.