

THE AMERICAN VETERAN

APRIL 2007 EDITION

SEGMENT TITLE: NISEI LINGUISTS

JENNIFER BRADEN, HOST: “DOMO ARIGATO” MEANS “THANK YOU” IN JAPANESE AND THE AUTHOR OF A NEW BOOK ON JAPANESE AMERICAN LINGUISTS WHO BROKE THE SECRET CODES OF THE IMPERIAL NAVY AND ARMY SAYS “DOMO ARIGATO” IN HIS OWN SPECIAL WAY. THE TIME, 1941; THE US ENTERS THE SECOND WORLD WAR; AMERICAN FORCES IN THE PACIFIC RELENTLESSLY ATTACKING JAPAN’S MILITARY AND STRATEGY.

DR. JAMES MCNAUGHTON, PH.D., AUTHOR: IF WE’RE GOING TO FIGHT A WAR AGAINST THAT ENEMY WE’RE GOING TO NEED SOLDIERS WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE, WHO CAN READ THE DOCUMENTS, WHO CAN INTERROGATE PRISONERS OF WAR.

BRADEN: THE US ARMY TURNED TO A GROUP CALLED THE NISEI, JAPANESE MEN AND WOMEN BORN IN THE US. THEIR SKILLS PROVIDED CRUCIAL MILITARY INTELLIGENCE. THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR PUT THE NEED FOR NISEI LINGUISTS INTO OVERDRIVE. BUT IT ALSO BROUGHT ABOUT AN UNEASY FEELING. MANY JAPANESE AMERICANS FACED EXTREME PREJUDICE HERE AT HOME.

MCNAUGHTON: WHILE PART OF THE ARMY WAS DISCHARGING JAPANESE-AMERICAN DRAFTEES AND IN FACT MOVING THEIR FAMILIES BEHIND BARBED WIRE, THE OTHER PART OF THE ARMY WAS TAKING THESE SELECTED SOLDIERS AND SAYING, “COME WITH US WE’RE GOING TO TRAIN YOU IN MILITARY JAPANESE BECAUSE WE NEED YOU.”

BRADEN: IN A NEW BOOK, COMMAND HISTORIAN AND ARMY VETERAN DR. JAMES MCNAUGHTON SPENT THE LAST TEN YEARS UNCOVERING THE SECRET MISSION.

BRADEN: IN WASHINGTON ON CAPITOL HILL, SOME OF THE NISEI LINGUISTS ARE ON HAND TO SEE THE OFFICIAL UNVEILING OF THE BOOK. SENATOR DANIEL AKAKA WAS A MAJOR FORCE IN GETTING THE BOOK WRITTEN. IN 1994, SENATOR AKAKA AND OTHER CONGRESS MEMBERS CALLED ON THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY TO PUBLISH AN OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE NISEI LINGUISTS.

DANIEL AKAKA, SENATOR FROM HAWAII: I FELT THAT I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE IT RIGHT BY PUBLISHING INFORMATION THAT PEOPLE DIDN’T KNOW.

BRADEN: SECURITY REASONS KEPT A TIGHT LID ON THEIR WORK FOR YEARS. UNTIL NOW. DR. MCNAUGHTON WAS ON A MISSION TO TRACK DOWN

THE SOLDIERS AND THEIR STORIES. STORIES FROM BEING IN COMBAT TO INTERROGATING JAPANESE PRISONERS.

PHIL ISHIO, WORLD WAR II VETERAN, NISEI LINGUIST: THAT WAS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT SORT OF PUZZLED ME, THAT WHEN I QUESTIONED THEM AND TALKED TO THEM, THEY JUST ACCEPTED ME.

HARRY FUKUHARA, WORLD WAR II VETERAN, NISEI LINGUIST: I WANT TO THANK DR. MCNAUGHTON BECAUSE HE HAS PUT OUT A FANTASTIC BOOK.

BRADEN: COLONEL HARRY FUKUHARA TELLS WHAT HAPPENED WHEN HE INTERROGATED A PRISONER OF WAR.

FUKUHARA: I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM BUT I LOOKED AT HIS POW TAG AND I RECOGNIZED HIM AS MY NEIGHBOR THAT LIVED NEXT DOOR TO ME WHEN I LIVED IN JAPAN BEFORE THE WAR.

MCNAUGHTON: ON ONE HAND THEY WERE AFRAID OF FALLING INTO JAPANESE HANDS. THEY KNEW THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MERCY SHOWN TO THEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, BECAUSE THEY LOOKED LIKE THE ENEMY, THEY ALSO HAD TO BE WARY OF THEIR FELLOW AMERICAN SOLDIERS.

BRADEN: NEAR THE END OF THE WAR, MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND NISEI LINGUISTS WERE PART OF THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE. SOME ARGUE THE NEW BOOK MAY FINALLY PUT TO REST ANY DOUBTS OF LOYALTY.

TERRY SHIMA, JAPANESE AMERICAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION: THEY HAVE SETTLED ONCE AND FOR ALL THE QUESTION OF LOYALTY. LOYALTY THAT OTHER AMERICANS HAD NO CONCERN ABOUT.

MCNAUGHTON: IF WE HAD NOT HAD THEM FIGHTING IN THE PACIFIC IN WORLD WAR II, THE WAR CLEARLY WOULD HAVE LASTED MUCH LONGER AND WOULD HAVE CAUSED A LOT MORE AMERICAN CASUALTIES.

BRADEN: YOU CAN FIND THE BOOK, NISEI LINGUISTS AT BOOKSTORES AND ONLINE.

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