

Sample Interview Questions

Digital Stories of Our Heroes

Interview Questions for Sam S. Ozaki (442nd Regimental Combat Team – Europe 1944-1946)

1. For the record, please state your name, date of birth, and your current address.
2. What war and branch of service did you serve in?
3. What was your rank and where did you serve?
4. What was your place of birth?
5. Where did you grow up?
6. Would you tell us about your childhood? Your family?
7. Where were you on December 7, 1941 – the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii?
8. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, there followed a number of Japanese victories in the Pacific. Guam, Hong Kong, Manila, and Singapore fell under Japanese rule within 9 weeks of the attack. U.S. military officials expressed their concern of a Japanese invasion of the U.S. mainland (California, Oregon, Washington) and the possible support by Japanese-Americans living in those areas. What impact did the Pearl Harbor attack have on you and your family?
9. Several generations of Japanese-Americans lived on the west coast. The words Issei, Nisei, and Sansei were used to describe these generations. What do these terms mean? Would you refer to yourself and your family by these terms?
10. Following an investigation of the Japanese-American community in January of 1942, the FBI and Federal Communications Commission found no evidence of disloyalty by Japanese-Americans. But on February 13, U.S. Army Lt. General DeWitt recommended the removal of all Japanese-Americans from the west coast due to “military necessity.” Were you and your family affected by Executive Order 9066?

- 11.** Many Japanese-Americans owned homes and businesses prior to Executive Order 9066. When ordered to report to relocation centers, what did one do with his property and personal belongings? How did you feel to leave behind treasured belongings?
- 12.** Many horse racetracks were converted into relocation centers. Were you and your family ordered to report to a relocation center? (Where and when?)
- 13.** How long did you and family stay at this center? How were you treated there?
- 14.** Eventually the U.S. government created internment camps throughout the southern and plains states. Were you and your family interned? (Where and when?)
- 15.** Many internees were young children and teenagers. How old were you at the time?
- 16.** Many of the camps were extremely isolated. What was daily life like? How did you occupy your time?
- 17.** It has been reported that the conditions at many camps were dirty and cramped. What were the conditions like where you were interned?
- 18.** Japanese-American internees were required to complete a questionnaire that asked the following questions: are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States in combat duty wherever ordered; will you swear unqualified allegiance to the U.S.A. and...forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign government power or organization? Did you answer this questionnaire? How did you feel about these "loyalty" questions?
- 19.** How did this questionnaire impact Japanese-American internees?
- 20.** The Tule Lake Internment Camp has been described as a place for difficult internees? Why would someone be sent to Tule Lake?
- 21.** When were Japanese-Americans internees allowed to enlist in the U.S. military service? Why would an internee choose to enlist?

- 22.** Why did you enlist? How did your family feel about your decision?
- 23.** Why did you join the army rather than another branch of armed service?
- 24.** How long did you live in the internment camp before enlisting? When and where did you report for training?
- 25.** Who did you leave behind in the camps? Your family? A sweetheart?
- 26.** How many weeks of training did you have before shipping overseas? Describe the type of training you had.
- 27.** You served in the 442nd Combat Regiment, an all Japanese-American unit. Were all of your officers Caucasian? Did you experience prejudice in the military?
- 28.** Many Japanese-Americans chose to enlist in the military. Did you have other family members or close friends serving?
- 29.** Two-thirds of the 442nd were Japanese-Americans from Hawaii, one-third from the U.S. mainland. Were there differences between the two groups?
- 30.** Have you ever heard the terms, “Buddhahead” and “katonk?” What do they mean?
- 31.** When was the 442nd shipped overseas? Where were you assigned first? Did you see combat immediately?
- 32.** What were some memorable experiences in Italy? What were your most difficult experiences there?
- 33.** The 442nd is called the “Go for Broke” unit. What does this mean?
- 34.** Did the 442nd experience many casualties?

- 35.** In northern Italy, the Nazis set up a defensive line in the mountains named the Gothic Line. No one had successfully breached this line. The 442nd was ordered to mount an attack that involved secretly scaling 120 foot cliffs to surprise the enemy. Many members of the 442nd were wounded or killed; some fell silently from the cliffs. Do you recall this particular battle?
- 36.** Did Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii serve with you in the 442nd? Senator Inouye received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Gothic Line battle and was wounded there. Do you remember any of those events?
- 37.** The 442nd also served in France. Do you recall your most memorable experiences there? Your most difficult experiences there?
- 38.** Most soldiers served in the military for approximately three years. What was the length of your service?
- 39.** The Japanese-American soldier received an average of three injuries. Many soldiers earned the Purple Heart, Distinguished Service Cross, and the Medal of Honor recognizing their valor. Did you sustain any injuries? (When and where?)
- 40.** How did you stay in touch with your family while serving in the military?
- 41.** What was life like in the military? The food? The living conditions?
- 42.** Did you feel pressure or stress? What did you and your comrades do to relieve it?
- 43.** How did you entertain yourself? Did you receive "leave?"
- 44.** What are your most humorous memories of your military service?
- 45.** What did you think of the 442nd officers and your fellow soldiers?
- 46.** Did you keep a diary or journal of your wartime experiences?
- 47.** Do you recall the day your service ended? Where were you?

48. Many Japanese-Americans were not allowed to return to their homes and businesses following their release or discharge. What did you and your family do after your discharge and their release?
49. Many returning veterans had difficulty obtaining jobs. Why?
50. How did the scarcity of jobs affect Japanese-American veterans?
51. Following your discharge, did you enroll in college or seek employment?
52. Was your education supported by the G.I. Bill? What benefits did the G.I. Bill provide for World War II veterans?
53. Did you develop any close friendships in the service? Did you continue these relationships?
54. Prejudices persisted after the end of the war. Did you experience any negative reactions to your Japanese ancestry after your return?
55. Did you experience any difficulties in the transition from combat duty to peacetime daily life?
56. You embarked on a professional career following the war. Tell us about your personal life and career in post-war U.S.
57. Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?
58. How did your wartime experiences affect your life?
59. In 1986, a writ of certiorari was filed naming you as a plaintiff? What was your role in this legal case? What were you seeking and why?
60. There are some similarities between government policies enacted after the Pearl Harbor attack and the 9/11 attack. What are your feelings and insights regarding these government policies?
61. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

Interviewers: Fifth Grade Resource Students, Hough Street Elementary School

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