



They were always very nice.

Takejiro Higa, learning his brother's military experiences in Mississippi, appreciated the fresh food, including milk and eggs. His brother got powdered eggs. In Minnesota, "summer months were nice and green," added Higa. "You can roll around in the grass. Whereas Mississippi, hell, it's sandy, it's a dusty place."

Takejiro Higa remembered what happened next in an article called *Unforgettable Encounters: Battle of Okinawa*. "In late November 1944, I was ordered to report to the 24th Army Corps HO, G-2 Photo Interpreters Section. The minute I entered the tent my heart nearly stopped beating as I saw hung before me a large blown-up map of the southern half of Okinawa. Chills ran up my spine as I realized the next target would be that part of Okinawa where I had lived for 14 years and left merely 6 years before."

A bit later, Takejiro saw two shabbily-uniformed young men who were brought in to be interrogated. They were very hungry and fatigued. "I offered them a D-ration candy bar, which they refused because they feared it was poisoned, I yelled '*bakayaro*' (you idiot!) and nibbled a portion to show it was safe. They gobbled up two candy bars each and gulped down a lot of water before I started my interrogation" said Takejiro Higa at <http://www.javadc.org/Higa.htm>.

"At that moment I yelled at them, "*Bakayaro, dokyusei O mite wakarana no ka?*" (You idiots! Don't you recognize your own old classmate?)" They looked up at me in total disbelief and then started crying. They thought they would be shot when the questioning was over, but they realized that with a classmate as the interrogator, their



lives would now be spared. They cried in happiness and relief. That hit me very hard and I, too, could not help but shed some tears," said Takejiro Higa.

Because the unit's mission was classified until the 1970s, Takejiro could not publicly share his experiences for decades.

The Military Intelligence Service's accomplishments were not a secret to leaders.

According to Major General Charles A. Willoughby, "Six thousand Nisei in the War in the Pacific saved over a million American lives and shorted the war by two years," noted an article at <http://cgm.smithsonianapa.org/stories/takejiro-higa.html>.

Takejiro Higa died at age 94 on October 7, 2017, according to the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* on November 26, 2017. He was buried at the Hawai'i State Veteran Cemetery in Kāne'ohe, Hawai'i.



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Takejiro Higa

Camp Savage

1942-1944



Takejiro Higa was born in Hawai'i, a US territory, on April 22, 1923 in Waipahu on the island of O'ahu. His parents were Takeo and Ushi Higa. He was the youngest of three children.

At age two he was taken to Okinawa, Japan, to visit his grandparents. Because of his young age, he stayed behind in Okinawa with his sick mother while his older siblings returned to the US with their father, according to *The Hawai'i Nisei Story: Americans of Japanese Ancestry During WWII* at http://nisei.hawaii.edu/object/io_1147832113765.html.

Within two years, both his parents and grandparents had died. He stayed with his uncle in Okinawa until he was 16. He reunited with his older brother and sisters in Hawai'i in order to avoid military conscription in Japan. Takejiro Higa could speak Japanese and Okinawan, but he could not speak English well.

in early November 1941 the United States established an intensive Japanese language school on the Presidio military base in San Francisco. It came to be known as the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS). According to an article called *Camp Savage, WW II Asset for Victory in the Pacific* by Charles Pederson on May 24, 2021 at <https://www.scottcountyhistory.org/blog/camp-savage-ww-ii-asset-for-victory-in-the-pacific>. "A scant \$2,000 budget for the school was used to gather 60 students (58 Nisei Americans



On left is Takejiro Higa, his cousins, and his mother in Japan. On the right is a picture of Takejiro at age 94. Photographs courtesy of Takejiro Higa, Densho, the Hawaii State Archive, the National Japanese American Historical Society, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, and the US Army Center of Military History, and at <http://cgm.smithsonianapa.org/stories/takejiro-higa.html>.



and two European Americans), along with 18 instructors in an unused hangar. English was the first language for many, but they volunteered anyway. Clearly, these patriots loved their country."

A month later, on December 7, 1941, Takejiro ran to the roof and saw the bombings by Japanese military plans and the entry of the US into World War II.

A new school was needed in the midwest. While several states refused to host the camp, Minnesota said yes. In the area between Shakopee and Savage was 132 acres that had been part of the NYA camp between Shakopee and Savage. (Later, much of the land later became The Landing in Shakopee.) Just east of this area, at the west part of Savage, the Camp Savage was established in June 1942.

Takejiro was recruited for a secret unit that would use the Japanese language to break codes and collect military intelligence in the Pacific. President Harry Truman later called them "our human secret weapons."

The studies were nothing less than rigorous. Charles Moriyama spent the mornings taking classes, the days studying, the nights taking more classes, and the late nights studying some more. "The study was really intensive," he said. "We not only had to learn the language itself, we had to learn the military part of the Japanese language, which is completely different.

"The dictionaries were so thick," he remembered laughing.

As tough as the studies were, they still had plenty of time for fun. Moriyama bought ice skates since the camp had built their own skating rink.

The troops also made plenty of trips to Minneapolis and St. Paul, as well as other places around the state, including the movies in downtown Shakopee. And while anti-Japanese sentiment may have been prevalent around the country at that time, Moriyama said he encountered none of that in Minnesota.

Betty Dols remembered the Nisei soldiers, who would watch the movies in downtown Shakopee.

