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Title: Susumu Mukushina Interview
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Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 00:43:07 What was, so you were, I mean, of course you were very young in camp. How did you, was that experience something that your family talked about? How, like where did you, how would you describe your own um like, development of those family memories?
- SM: 00:43:33 Well, the Japanese families community never talked about the camp. Oh, they'll say, but the only mention of camp was: Where were you at? I was at this camp. Or I was at Heart Mountain. That was about the extent of it. I never heard a bad thing about America, you know, even though that we were forced into the camps and I never heard about that FDR was a rotten guy or anything, nothing like that. And people, people who fought in the 442nd regiment, you know, they talk about, they talk about their loss of their friends. They, a lot of people died in 442. But it was never out of bitterness, it was out of sadness, but it was out of duty and obligation. They were great Americans. They, I try to imagine a soldier being drafted out, internment camp and, and, um, the mother and her father and her siblings are behind camp, they said, what are we fighting for? You know, and yet they fought for the country. And, and the 442nd was the most decorated unit in history, uh, uh, of warfare. More people died. And, and, uh, I think that's the tribute to the Japanese, uh, thinking I think, you know, um. Going back to Japanese history, you know, um, people in Japan were not angry at the 442 because in feudal Japan, you fought for daimyo. For various warlords, you know, and you were loyal to that uh, lord. If you're not loyal, you were considered a spy, you were considered a lower, a lower person. So they, so the Japanese mentality is that you're, you're Japanese face, speak Japanese, if you're in America, if that's your home, you fight for your home. So there was never a backlash from the Japanese people I knew who lived in Japan about a Japanese serving in the US army in America. And these are some of the things that, uh, that seeped into my, uh, my soul, you know, as the years go by, you know.

People I never heard of, I talked to relatives, never said, how could you fight for America when you in camp and all, you know, we can do this kind of stuff, I never heard that. And I'm being very sincere about that. It was just the, uh, the Japanese culture. Uh, my father says, war is crazy. Crazy things happen. Let's go, just move on. Craziness happened on both sides. So I learned a lot from my father. To this day, I don't like to look back, you know, I like to look forward. Life is not perfect, you know, so I just like to move forward and I'd like, I don't like to dwell on the past too much even though they may be very hurtful.

AT: 00:46:49 How would you, how would you describe your experience in learning about what happened to your family? You know, piecing together these stories of, hearing about the FBI coming to your house, for example, or you know, your mother getting to leave to go to LA to have you. Um, how, how would you describe the journey of, of piecing those stories together?

SM: 00:47:26 I was a little surprised because it didn't come at once. It came over the years, you know? And um, if you, as my mother and father, they weren't just give you a direct answer. They'll say, oh, that's ah, I don't think about it. But as I grew older, like my mother, uh, telling me six months before her death, how we stayed in America. She just said she just stated out of nowhere, we were just having coffee and just talking: Oh, by the way, we're lucky to be in America. I said oh? You know. And then she started speaking and that was news to that, that was news to me. She'd never stated that before. And I was in my sixties at the time, you know, fifties I think, I was pretty old guy. A lot older than you are, you know. And so, uh, it came out in bits and pieces. But, uh, my mother and father never said that in bitterness. I can seriously say that. And even my father's parents' friends, you know, they were uh, they were frustrated. But then are they never, um, uh, they were extremely kind people, you know.

AT: 00:48:41 When did you learn about the camps?

SM: 00:48:45 Well, I was brought up in one, so I still had memories of it, you know. Uh, so, uh, so it is, like it was revealed to me, but my father always pressed forward. And so he never talked about the camp, he'd talk about good things in camp, you know? Um, okay. Here are some things that, I don't remember this, but he said that, uh, I think that public best, at Heart Mountain, you know, were people just, it'd be Japanese style. And he said that when I was about one year old, he'd put me on his shoulders and I would be squealing like a pig. He says, you know, so there

were some of the friendly, um fond memories. Again, the memories of my stay in camp were very positive, very positive. And it came to the surface years afterwards when it was becoming and became an adult.

AT: 00:49:49 What was coming to the surface?

SM: 00:49:51 Our experiences, experience, uh, of, of camp. I think you speak to a lot of Japanese people who were from the gener, they would not, I, it'd be very rare for someone to just speak about the camp, you know, you have to kind of draw them out of it.

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