

# Japanese-American Oral History Project

## David Toyama

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Interviewer: Elizabeth Uhlig

### Interview with David Toyama – Part 3

Part 3 - 36:19 minutes

00:00

EU: You mentioned going golfing, could you talk a little bit about the work you did? You said you were a liaison?

DT: Yeah, you want me to lay out the job as a liaison?

EU: You were a liaison between the American military and the Japanese –

DT: The Japanese agencies, yes. Because in those days, the Tokyo office was very busy, because, uh, this was during the Vietnam War. So, communist China was also a big US enemy too. And the Soviet Union was, of course, the biggest US enemy. And all three surrounded us, and the Tokyo office had the coverage of all of those places, and we had to, you know, cover those areas so it was-- So the liaison was the overt function like we do, but the main was, of course, collecting intelligence. But we do that a lot through the Japanese agencies, because they're after the same thing too. That's why you cooperate with them to work together. I suppose that I can't discuss the specific thing with you.

EU: You actually did go over to Vietnam then? You said—

01:31

DT: Yes, I went for one year, because, what they needed was, they sent me back to Fort Benning, Georgia, we had a unit there, because, at that time it was hush-hush, you know, but the, I can't even think of it, 25<sup>th</sup> division, the Lightning Division, I don't know military, but it was stationed down there and they were going to be sent over to Vietnam. But, it was supposed to have been a real hush-hush thing; because they don't want the public to know which units are coming and leaving. They were building up the US forces in Vietnam and so they needed experienced people to go along with them, and especially because the intelligence detachment that were assigned to these units that were going over to Vietnam, every single one of them were just out of that R.O.T.C and wanted to take the training in intelligence, but had no experience whatsoever. So, my assignment was, we had to go by boat, I couldn't go by plane, although some of them could, by boat because then, I think that is was only about 15 or 20 day trip, long trip, because from South Carolina, you go around Panama Canal, and up through California, across-- So it equals a lot. But, we had to have daily training sessions in our cabins, so we used to get in them and train them down there and whatnot. So, I ended up there for one year. The tour was one year.

EU: This was in the 1960s? In there?

DT: It was in the 1960s. I think about 1965, 66. The date is about then. That's why I have this thing. See, I'm not going to pull them out here anyway. I have many, many of this kind of award because of what I did.

04:00

EU: What kind of awards?

DT: Well, the folders are all in there. I don't know which one this is, because if I did it would say here.

EU: David is looking at photocopies of awards and citations and papers that list what he did.

DT: This one would be like Korea. When that one year I had to go to Korea when I was first serving with intelligence.

EU: The Meritorious Service medal.

DT: The Meritorious Service medal, umm hmm.

EU: In the Republic of Korea during the period following July, 1971 through July, 1972.

DT: Yes, and I was they called the Special Operations Section Chief there. Kind of like this special military operation that means it's an intelligence operation. Because, I guess, the long experience, you know, just the need for this and the need for that for that particular project. And this is how I came to Eugene, Oregon. I was the Commander, or Special Agent in Charge, in the Eugene office.

EU: When you were –

DT: When I was at the Tokyo Field Office –

EU: The Tokyo Field Office.

DT: The citation says Special Agent in Charge.

EU: So, this was in 1966-1969.

05:59

DT: Uh-huh, and that's how I got out here. Because, my daughter and son were already in high school and they didn't want to move no more in case I got out.

EU: When you went to, um, like, this training in Fort Benning or when you went to Vietnam, where was Jean then? Was she still in Tokyo or in –

DT: No, when I was in Vietnam, they were in Los Angeles.

06:28

EU: Oh, Los Angeles, so when did you leave Japan then?

DT: '69, I thought. This is the '69 award. Yeah, '69, it says July '66- '69. I was the Special Agent in Charge of the Tokyo Field Office when we left. Since we were there about seventeen year, they asked me, I had a friend who was in the Pentagon, and he asked me, 'Where would you like to be

assigned? Since you have been there that long and we didn't send you home, we'll give you the field office of your choice.' And I told him.

He said, 'Do you want to go to Los Angeles?' No, because there is a lot of Japanese there. 'San Francisco?' No. 'Seattle?' No. I said, 'Send me to some small, out of the way office.' Then he said, 'How about Eugene, Oregon?' I said, 'Where is that?' So they sent me to the Eugene office because of that. [Unintelligible mumbling].

But this, this one is something. This thing is-- I have, it says 'Tokyo Office,' from when I was there.

EU: It's in, its dedication is written in Tanji, in Japanese.

DT: Yes. This is from the Superintendent gentleman from the police agency. This was something happening, real funny then. This is my office. The Tokyo office, when I was getting one of these awards and things. This is some of my office staff, not all of them.

EU: These are photographs taken in the --

DT: This is the Superintendents office when he awarded me this scroll.

EU: With a bottle of Sake on the shelf --

DT: This isn't my office. This is a different thing. This one here is when he gave this Japanese thing. This is, uh, the Superintendent General there. Yeah, this guy here, this is the Superintendent. He gave me this. This is a copy of a scroll, and with this I got -- I have a sake cup, a gold one, with the emperor's seal in there. And it says, 'if you win this award, you got this cup.' And then they give you this cup with a gold seal on it; the emperor's seal.

What is still funnier is his administrative assistant came into my office and said, 'Superintendent Johns (??) wants to see you at ten o'clock tomorrow, can you make it?'

09:14

I said, 'The Superintendent wants to see me, can I make it? Of course I can make it.' I said, 'I'll be over there a quarter to ten.' He said 'No, no, no.' He said, 'You stay in the office, because I'll come over and we'll go together.' I said, 'Okay.'

So he came about a quarter to ten, he came and said -- And from our office, the Tokyo Field Office we had, it was about a block and a half, two blocks. We got a small house, a couple houses, and the agents live there. So, we took one of the houses there as an office. So, we walked to the agency, it was real close by, about two blocks down, but he said, 'No, let's drive.' Then he said, 'Come, come.' And we went to the parking lot by my office, it's a house in there, but otherwise (??). And we go there, and there is a sedan there, two motorcycle cops in the front, two motorcycle cops in the back. I said, 'What is this?' He said, 'Never mind, this is the Superintendent's car. He told me I got to pick you up, so you got to go in there. It's not me, you're going to upset him if you don't go in there.' So I go in the back, and he was in the front, and the cops go with the siren on. They start going out of the camp, and right outside of the camp, these two motorcycles stop right in the middle of traffic, they zoomed down there, and then there was a huge intersection. They had four cops posted, stopping all traffic, and these cops just go right through. Then we go to the Headquarters building. It was a five, six story building there. The front has a big patio, a lawn, almost like that moss plaza, or whatever it is, in front of the Carnegie building, around the corner, but it's a bigger one. It's huge.

So, the cop pulled up there, and then we got out of the car. Then he said, 'You got to go troop de line.' 'What do you mean troop de line,' I said. He said, 'They got all the police line up. They say you have to walk on in. It's a fashion type thing.' I say, 'You must be kidding me.' He said, 'No, you have to, that's why they are there.' So, I have to go troop de line, and I did that. But I don't

have a single, like I kept telling the guy and his assistant, you know, I don't have a single photo over the greatest honor I've ever had in my life, because they told me an ambassador and higher rank would get that, the motorcycle escort and would get to stop all traffic. Ambassador, he said, was only when they go to present their credentials, when they first come in. The rest, you have to be Head-of-State to get that.

EU: Yeah, and they gave you that. When did you realize that you were getting an award, then? Or did you know that with this motorcade?

11:49

DT: Yeah, when I had that figured, some kind of award. They gave me this thing here. And this one does state, in Japanese, uh, 'Zianichi Nihung is, in Japan, in Tokyo, the 74th military intelligence unit commander.' I got my name there. So, they gave me a nice send-off

EU: What a nice send-off. So, uh –

DT: That's how I got to Eugene, Oregon.

Elizabeth: That's how you got to Eugene, okay. How many children did you have then?

DT: Two.

EU: Two?

David: My one daughter, Kathy, she's, you mustn't document Kensu Adonai (??), she's married to Tim Cunningham. Kathy works for Springfield, and she's the court supervisor there, in Springfield. And her two daughters -- The one that just called from New York, she's finishing her graduate schooling there. She's married. She got married to a person in New York. They met at Pacific University together.

EU: And what's her name?

13:11

DT: Trisha, uh, Trisha Koslaff. K-O-S-L-A-F-F. And her twin sister, Jennifer, is still here. She's been working as a veterinary technician for one of the veterinary hospitals and going to school at night at, uh, what's the on there, is that Willamette, the Christian college?

EU: The Northwest Christian College?

DT: The Northwest, the Northwest Christian College, right?

EU: Yeah, by the University.

DT: Oh yeah, yeah. Northwest Christian College. And she is not pursuing the – She wanted to be a veterinary technician, but, I guess, she is not. She switched to hotel administration. But the hotel administration, from what I understand, it's just that, it can be either veterinary hospital, hospital, medical hospital, or regular hospital-hospital administration. This administration is the same thing.

That's the two of them—

EU: So, you had two twin—

DT: Grandchildren? Granddaughters, yes.

EU: And then you said Katherine was your daughter?

DT: One daughter. And my son is in Salem. He's been with Sears for almost thirty years, I think.

EU: And what is his name?

14:35

DT: His name? Mark Toyama, and his wife is Sue. She's Caucasian, like you. Anyway, she's-- He's been with them for just about thirty years, I think, a long time. And he's the, last I know this, Assistant General Manager of that shop over there, that store. They very seldom come down here too, because, he says, in that kind of retail trade, you know, for example, Thanksgiving is one busy day where people search for everything for Christmas, their decorations and everything. And Christmas, of course, there is no way you can take that off. So when they come down for Christmas, like they usually do, its late January or February or whatever it is, when it's still down a little bit.

15:40

EU: So, you have been in Eugene ever since then?

DT: Us? Yeah, since '69. So, that would be [mumbles numbers] thirty-seven years or something like that.

EU: How long did you continue working in M.I.S. then, here in Eugene?

DT: In military intelligence, in Eugene? Let me see, I came here in '69, and I think 1970, that started the Korea one (??). Then in '70, '71, they needed somebody to be the Operations Officer for this special operations, they called that, intelligence, kind of a side operation they called it, but anyway, so, they tell me I'm going to have to go to Korea. So, this is only one year, from '69 to '70, I went back to Korea, and that was a one year tour. After that, this, he didn't made captain yet, but this lieutenant replace me, and he was here only one year, because I stayed a one year tour there. So, they didn't need two over here, so they said, 'Sorry, now you're going have to— You can't come back to Eugene now, because this guy who replaced you is there.'

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I think that he just made captain, but anyway they gave me Missoula, Montana, this little office. But I tried to get my son to come over there, but they didn't want to go. And I told them, 'You ought to see the housing that I got,' because they had Camp Missoula there, an old camp, but there was no units over there. So, in the military rules, you know how the generals rule, and there is about five or six big houses there, and there is field grade officers in all like them, that kind of housing. But since there were no agencies, if you were the head of any kind of agency, you get one of the houses. So I got one of the houses. It was one of the benefits of the commander there. And it's one of those colonial houses, with a big, what do you call there, a veranda, right, railing around the house. And it's two-stories, a basement, and in the back, the front is a garage back by the stable—

EU: For the horses?

DT: Back where the cabin used to be, the stable. But, can you believe I would commute from Missoula, Montana to over here. But, you know, our agency was, maybe I shouldn't say that,

make an excuse to go to the Spokane Field Office, and one of the guys in the office would drop me off in Spokane. In Spokane, I would call them in advance, and they would say, 'Yeah, we got this one going down to Yemaquilla (??),' or what is it across the river? Like a Pony Express, because the Yemaquilla (??) office had business in Portland. Then I would catch a bus, and come down to Eugene.

You know, we have no real officer watching us do our work. If you take care of the cases, and have nothing to do, you can just take off. Even in the Eugene office, we had about six agents here. They check in the morning, and I look in my mail, and if there's two cases in there, two guys get assigned and the rest of them go home and come back tomorrow. It's a see what's in the mail type thing. I think by now they've reduced the size of the force, I don't know. They didn't need that many people.

19:14

EU: So, your son and daughter, your family, wanted to continue living in Eugene?

DT: Yes. They didn't want to go, so they didn't move to Missoula, Montana. That's when I used all my friends in the Pentagon, and said 'Get me back here!' They worked it so, I was supposed to go to Seattle, they had a spot, an opening, for me, and the person that was in charge of the Portland Field Office wanted to move to Seattle, so they switched us. So, I went to Portland and, but you know two hours commute back and forth, and I had to leave at eight o'clock. You know, it was still a hassle, so I asked them to carve out some of the counties that's close to Eugene, about three of them. Like Marion County and Lane County and Multnomah, I think. So, I got my own field office in one of the National Guard Offices there. When I got out in '74, there was one, finally. It took five years.

EU: So you got out in '74?

DT: 1974. I retired then.

EU: And you went to work for the tax service here in Eugene?

DT: Lane County.

EU: Oh, in Lane County.

DT: Sessman (??) taxation, they, uh-- At first, because I had an office no matter where I went, you know, I was in charge of an office, I wanted to get outside and work. So I found out that you can be an appraiser if you pass, eh, go to the state and take the exam. And I passed the appraisal exam, so I became a certified appraiser.

21:12

And I applied for the Conifer (??) job, and I got that job, but they looked at my résumé and they determined, 'Oh, you got to take over this office and then take over this office section.' And so I got put back in the office again.

I had, first, an appraisal section, then, like I tell people, the nicest guy in Lane County because I was a tax collector. But, honestly, I did, I told them, 'Okay,' because the tax collector quit. She was there for many years, Joyce Lane, but what happened was 4J sued the county two million dollars in lost interest. Because everybody up here pays their property taxes on November fifteenth, right? And you have to distribute all that money that you collect for the schools and whatnot, you know, that have their budgets, and 4J realized that getting the money in late January, that two month's lost interest, and in their budget is hundreds of millions a year. So they made two

million. It wasn't only Lane County, a lot of the assessors got together and went to the legislature, and the legislature excused the counties from bank liability, but they said, 'From here after, you must distribute that money in one month's time. If you don't do that, you pay interest.' You know, the regular way. So this lady, Joyce, said, 'There's no way, I only have twenty-five people in this section. You go to give me about thirty-five people, maybe then I can do it in one month. They said, 'We don't have the money to get that many people more.' So she quite, she resigned. And they asked me whether I would go and try to do that, you know, and since I retired once, I didn't care, I can retire again.

I said, 'Well, I'll go, provided you change the title from tax collector there to taxation section manager.' I said, 'I know English history and I don't want Robin Hood to come shoot me.' Which he did, but the joke was on me, because when I finally went in there, they told me, 'Okay, now you got to go see the Sheriff.' 'What do I have to go see the Sheriff for?' 'You have to be deputized.' A tax collector, in Oregon law, I didn't know, is a Sheriff. So, this is from an old English custom. And so we used to go to these tax collectors conventions, and all these small counties on the east, they're sheriffs.

23:40

EU: They're all sheriffs, huh?

DT: The tax collectors there, he wears two hats. The big counties, of course, you can't do that, you know, the Sheriff is too busy too and so that's it. But I still got that I.D. card now. So, of course, when I finished that section, and we got it to process, I changed the whole system of processing within one month, see. Then they asked me if I wanted to reorganize another section, property records. I said, 'Okay, I will go over there.' And then the -- I had to turn in my badge and credentials to the Sheriff. So, and then, I forget his name, I knew him, and he said, 'I got to take that badge back from you,' that's one of the things that he said. "But the I.D. card," he said 'you can keep that, but don't you ever pull that if you get stopped.' He said, 'I', not going to help you.' 'You keep that as a souvenir,' He said.

24:34

EU: So, how long did you work then for the tax service?

DT: Fifteen years.

EU: Fifteen years.

DT: And you know, I think I got a copy of the length of time. Yeah, I retired in 1989, it says. So that's quite some time ago. This, after I retired, well, let me back track. Before I retired, what I did at Lane County is, uh, we were, every section was, way back, about six month behind. So, we used to have a lot of trouble with tax-payers, and you can't blame them because they would call-in and they got their tax statement due November fifteenth and they get it, say, in February or March and they got a penalty on interest attached. And they would come in yelling and screaming when I was a tax-collector there. They come in screaming and I would say sorry and show them the Oregon ORS,

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it says that if you have property you should know that there is taxes and you should inquire if you didn't get the bill. You know, if it's lost in the mail, it's your fault. Of course they would get as mad as heck, everybody would get really mad because you tell them that, but it used to be that way. So, uh, also when I was the manager of one of the sections that was close to the tax assistance counter and I could hear people yelling and screaming that, 'I had to wait forty-five minutes in this line, and now you are going to tell me that I have to wait in this other line down there.' You know with thing, they were right and something was wrong, so I said, 'What we should do is try to correct

all this.' And I said, 'In Japan, they have a system that they call the QC circle, the quality control circle.' And I said, 'I'm not trying to talk about how the system is good or perfect, because the QC circle was made by a guy named Dennon. He's an American. He's a mathematician. -That started that.

I must have that article; I wouldn't throw that kind of article away. Yeah, see. In the article, that guy is this guy. And he went to Japan, because he said that, in Detroit, no one would listen to him. They would say he's crazy. Quality control, a mathematician trying to teach them quality control. And he found out in Japan that all the workers, no matter which factory, in the morning they go half-an-hour early to work and they drink coffee or tea together, they chat and talk to each other. It was a proper situation for them to do that. So he used that circle and called a QC circle. The Japanese, what's a QC circle, they don't know, but he had his quality control. And what he would do is: the workers would decide what was wrong or what could be improved in there particular areas in the production line. And that's why this person is right, the US better watch out. And this is '84.

EU: 1984, yeah.

DT: Look at them now. Here in the auto industry, Toyota is overtaking even General Motors. Ford and Chrysler is in bad shape. It's all this guy that did that.

EU: Edward Stanley.

DT: Yep.

EU: So, you instituted that in the Eugene office?

27:58

DT: Over here at the Lane County, I told them, 'Why don't we try that?' And then I said, 'Well, the QC circle, some might know that as Japanese, you know, if they have been to Japan. They may not like it because we're trying to institute a Japanese system over here.' So, I said, 'Let's just call it the user circle.' And we did it, and I told them, 'Okay, I'll do it, but now you tell each one of the section managers that when we have that meeting, they can't send this guy, the person that's supposed to be in the meeting, representing from each section, to be at the meeting to discuss. And so the assessor dictated at one of the managers' meetings that, you know, that date, no matter what they are doing, you must release them to that meeting, because it is more important to try to fix the whole system. And the system was hurting because there was no communication between the sections. I couldn't believe that, but I used to have one section, this lady, manager come and tell me, 'Could you go and talk to this other--' in the same department and section. And I said, 'Why?' 'Why don't you go through with this,' I said. I called her, she won't answer my phone, and she won't return my calls. I leave a not on her desk, you know, 'Please call me,' and she won't do that. Total disregard of me. The two won't talk to each other. And the truth is, it's a simple thing, and the funniest thing came out there.

29:23

Now when I counted his money and income tax, sometimes I feel like writing some of these things in. There's a lot of money they could save that actually they're not doing. Because there is this one section, where they do the vouchers -- Well, very quickly, if a person has to appraise something, they come down and your house is worth this much or whatever it is. Then this section here will say, 'change this, change this' or whatever changes are needed. They ship this to the, what do you call it, the data entrance section. They also type in all these changes through a



computer, and all this stuff goes through like that. But one of the gals in this section, that was preparing vouchers, and this one was typing in the changes, when I said, we'll just use a fictitious name, Nancy. I said, 'Why are all your boxes different than all the other, you know, legacy (??) in your section?' 'What do you mean it's different,' she said. 'You have marked every single box, but three or four boxes there. Name, address, you have marked every single box; the others only put the changes. So, we just go to the page in the computer and we make the change. On yours, we got to look at every single page and see if it's the same information and see if you're making changes.' And she got mad as heck, and said, 'You mean you had me doing this all these years, extra work and not telling me I did.' I said they are forbidden from talking to each other in all these sections. It's amazing.

None of the changes, because the manager in this section didn't like this manager over here, so I asked the one working over here, 'Why are the vouchers, they claimed to have sent these things in two months ago, and it's still not on the computer, why?'

31:16

She said, 'The vouchers are stacked in her office.' I said, 'You mean the vouchers are stacked in her office, the manager's office?' And I said, 'Why don't you guys go in there and ask her if you can do that to them.' They said, 'If you walked into her office, you've had it.' They couldn't, she was that strict. But it turned out, what it was, is that she was looking for errors, so that she could get at that other manager there. Because when finally I went and talked to her, I said, 'You know, it seems that these vouchers are holding up the whole system, the tax system is going up late and stuff. Joyce, why do you have to do that?' Then she said, 'Well, there's this one box.' And I said, 'You can't change that box anymore.' She continued to do that, so I went back and said, 'Several months ago, we were told that we don't do that anymore. She's checking for that one thing, to see if they're still doing that thing. But once you start adding that one thing, you can't get caught up, and she did that. But that's-- I think that quality control did that.

So after I was rehired, in '89, that's a common one, they said, 'Can you attend our department meetings?' So, I did. Each section would update the other sections on what they're doing and problems on that type of thing. Now after that ended, he said, 'I want the David Toyama Award.' I said, 'What the hell is he talking about?' And they got a plaque there, and it belongs to the Alsinean (??) employee of the year. After the meeting, I went up to his office, and I said, 'What is this thing?' And so he had a big plaque up on the tax payer assistance counter. With the plaque, each year's winner goes on a small one along side. So, I said, 'I'm going to sue you and the county for using my name with without my permission. How can you being giving it away when I don't have it?' He called his secretary and he said-- He whispered, he gave her a note, and the secretary came back. And he told that secretary, the note said, 'Make a photocopy of the plaque.' He said, 'Here's your certificate.'

33:37

EU: So you never actually got the award?

DT: Well, I did.

EU: Oh, you did then.

David: Isn't it nice. After fifteen years, I told him that it's about time that he stopped that. I mean how can he select the outstanding employee because the tax assistance counter has got plywoods, it's all blocked off. It's so much more than 'push number two if you want this or push number three if you want this.' And I said, 'It doesn't make sense.' And he said, 'Are you sure you don't mind?' and I said, 'No.' And he said, 'Okay, this year is the last time. I want the last one here

and then after that--' I made it to the presentation of the 'Employee of the Year Award,' then he called me up and he gave me one.

EU: Well, David has-- I'll read the award here into the –

34:35

DT: Huh?

EU: I'll read it into the -- It say, 'David Toyama Award for excellence in public service: a demonstration of serving the public through positive public image and pride through workmanship, trust, respect, and support of others, active participation in shared leadership with management, responsibility and accountability, open communication, individual development and training, reevaluation of methods and systems' That's David's award in 1989. Oh, and there's the original, huh?

DT: It started then, every year, to the employee of the year. And the one thing that I was stressing to all the sections, when we used to have these meetings, we used to come up with a mission statement. What's the purpose, what do you want? And I told them, 'If you want sand on Laguna Beach, put that. Put whatever you want. If you want long coffee hours, put that.' And do you know what the biggest one that came out is, we selected, is this line here: 'trust and the support of others.' It was amazing. So they said that 204 (??) was the last year, fifteen (??), but after I presented this one to them, the assessor presented this one to me. He changed the wording a little bit, because for management type things too, but it kept all the other things the same. Anyway, that's Lane County.

EU: Okay, let's a break here again.

DT: Okay.