

Shigeo Yoshida #63  
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Q: Mr. Yoshida, would you tell me a little bit about how the Emergency Service Committee came to be formed?

A: To do that I'll have to go back a little to even before the War, when there were some citizens who were interested in what might happen during the War should it come and who quite convinced that war was more or less inevitable. And in this group, more recently were such men as Hung Wai Ching, Miles Carrie(?) (principal of McKinley High School), I believe Dr. Lin(?) was a member of it too, and then a couple of three business men. And they met frequently, uh... They assumed the name of The Committee to Preserve Racial Unity; and that was his goal, to work ahead of time to see what could be done in preparation for that should the War come. And when Bob Shivers head of the FBI came along, (he arrived here about a good half year before the War started) we invited him in and he took quite an active part in it.

So there was this Committee that I know of active before the War... well before the War, preparing for the day when the War might come along. Then as the war clouds threatened...

Q: Excuse me, can I ask what were you doing in those years?

A: You mean my job? I was a school teacher.

Q: What were you teaching?

A: Let's see, this is about 1940...when did the War start, 1941?

Q: Yes.

A: About 1940, I was at Liliuokalani School... Liliuokalani Junior High School. I was a teacher there.

(voice in background)\*\* It was after. You were there in the 30's. So you were at Central Intermediate after that and then you became principal at Ala Moana.

Yeah, I was intern supervisor at Central Intermediate School.

Q: I see.

A: Teachers in those days were required to take five years of training, and during the last semester of training, they came to the public schools for that whole semester. And I had about five or six each semester and supervise them in their training.

Then when the War came along, I was appointed principal of Ala Wai School and that was the first principalship that I had, and by that time the War had started you see.

Q: I see.

A: So I went directly to Ala Moana School from Central Intermediate School.

Q: When the Emergency Service Committee, or the Committee to Preserve Racial Unity was first formed, was there any kind of official sponsorship?

A: The Committee to Preserve the Unity had no official sponsorship. However the Committee that grew out of it, The Morale Committee of the Office of Civilian Defense, had of course the Office of Civilian Defense as its, what you might call it's supervisor. Then when the War came along and Hawaii was placed under Military Governor, then we were attached to the Military Governor's Office.

Q: I see. And who was your immediate liaison in the Military Governor's Office.

A: Well, officially it was supposed to be General Green who was the Civilian Military Governor. He had charge of Civilian Affairs. But the more immediate contact that we had was a man that had charge of military intelligence. He was in charge of civil intelligence also, and that was [*Lieutenant*] Colonel Fielder.

Q: Could you describe [*Lieutenant*] Colonel Fielder for me a little bit; his attitudes and his personality?

A: Well, "Witch"(??) as we called him (that was his nickname), "Witch" came from Georgia. He was a star quarterback at Georgia Tech. or University of Georgia, and he arrived about the same time as Shivers arrived; maybe a month or so later. And coming from the South, it was amazing to see how they had not brought with them those racial attitudes that were common in the South. And they were... he was one of those along with Shivers, who was out to learn all they could by themselves; learn for themselves what the real situation was here, and what might develop out of this war should it come.

So he was, first of all, a very friendly, approachable, and open minded person, and I think it was to greater of all of us that he was in charge of military intelligence. Because later on when the War came along and people had to be interned, he was the Chief Military Officer in charge of that whole thing.

Q: How did he handle that?

A: Well, we worked very closely. By we, I mean the Morale Committee and the Emergency Service Committee, worked very closely with [*Lieutenant*] Colonel Fielder. We had frequent informal meetings before the War and after the War started. Uh... meetings in which they were naturally more interested in our concept or our evaluation of the situation, as far as the Japanese population is concerned.

Because at that time, the thing that the military was afraid of most from the Japanese population was the possibility of sabotage. That was their main concern. As it turned out that was the least of the things they could have been concerned about, because during the War, there was not a single case of confirmed

sabotage concerning the Japanese population. But before the War and soon after the War started, that was their main concern. And to have people like Fielder and Shivers as our main contact, open-minded as they were, it was a blessing I think. I don't think things could have been handled as well as they were handled without these two people in their positions.

Q: It must have been a very difficult time for the Japanese community in Hawaii.

A: Yes, it was. It was a very difficult time; especially for the aliens, but also for the civilians. Just the fact that we were by blood, affiliated with the alien country. That in itself was enough to make people look at us, as if we were the enemy too. So it was the most difficult part. And when the Military Governor's Office came into being, they had uh...(I don't know what they called them... officially), but they had official pronouncements which restricted the people with Japanese ancestry in their civilian activities far more than they restricted the rest of the population. And that in itself was very difficult to deal with.

Q: In terms of... you spoke of the work of your Committee as a liaison between the military government and the community, and I was wondering could you tell me a little bit about the work that you did with the community? Did you have programs established? What sort of messages and information did you carry back and forth between the community and the...

A: These meetings were carried on primarily by the Emergency Service Committee since the Morale Committee was a bit more detached from the population itself and essentially it was to clarify misunderstandings arising from the directives of the Office of the Military Governor, restricting the Japanese in their activities. It was to build confidence in the school(??) in the fairness of the military authorities. We pointed out to them that this is unfortunately a war situation and some kind of restrictions will have to be made on the civilian population and especially the civilian population that was directly affiliated with by blood... directly affiliated with the real enemy, and that sort of thing. We held meetings in different communities, and then the Morale Committee also organized similar committees on Kauai and Maui. We couldn't get one organized on Hawaii because the military office there was not very pleased with having us organize a group like the Emergency Service Committee that was organized here. So those people out there had some help needed so we went to their meetings too; more or less to do what I have already have described to you.

Q: I wonder if you could tell me a little bit about the organization of the Varsity Victory Volunteers, and I understand that you were the drafter of the petition that was sent to [Lieutenant] General Emmons.

A: Well, you know that as soon as War was declared... uh... what do you call that uh... there was organized the...

Q: The Hawaii Territorial Guard?

A: That's right. The Hawaii Territorial Guard was organized and the boys of the University, they were also invited to join them regardless of their racial ancestry. But soon after the War started, the boys of Japanese ancestry were dismissed without any explanation as to why they were being dismissed, and that of course caused a great outbreak among the Japanese boys who were so dismissed. And uh, I suppose they had their own meetings, informal meetings at the University and elsewhere about it, and what they could do about it now that it was a fact that they had been dismissed. And just about that time a group of University students happened to be in the Office of the YMCA Secretary, and the YMCA Secretary (What was his name?)

(voice in background)\*\* Hung Wai Ching

No. the one that was... the haoli fellow.... Anyway, he phones us (by us I mean the Morale Committee) and told us that there was this group of University students rather heartbroken about the whole affair and asked us if we could help them see some things through and take it from there. So we told him to send the boys down to us and we'll talk to them and see what else we can do. And that's when a group of them (I don't recall whether Ted?? was in that group or not, but anyway) there were four or five of them that came down.

Q: Where did you meet?

A: In the office of the Morale Committee.

Q: Where was that located?

A: That was located in the Central YMCA office.

Q: I see.

A: So, we talked to them and tried to probe their feelings. They were naturally very disappointed. They couldn't understand why they had to be isolated and dismissed whereas nobody else was. And as we talked with them they expressed their desire to do almost anything to do almost anything in order to serve the War effort, and they would like to know whether the Military Governor would uh... the Commanding General would take them in to any effort of that kind that might be offered by the boys. And that's where the idea of a petition came along, and I had helped along with the drafting of the petition. But it was simply of putting down in writing what the boys themselves had expressed, see? You couldn't expect a group of interested kids to tackle a job like that; preparing a petition, that's not too easy thing to do. So that was my part in it, and the part of the Morale Committee, insofar as a relationship with the Triple V, or the VVV was considerate.

Q: Did you during this period ever meet and talk with [Lieutenant] General Emmons... the Military Governor?

A: No. Not during that period. It was later in the War, uh...we may

have had one or two meetings with [*Lieutenant*] General Emmons and one or two with General Richardson who followed him. But our work was primarily through [*Lt.*] Col. Fielder.

Q: Did you ever have any contact with [*Lt.*] Col. Bicknell?

A: Yes, [*Lt.*] Col. Bicknell was part of the Intelligence Office under [*Lieutenant*] Colonel Fielder and he being a civilian, we knew of him and you got to know him quite well. But he was, in everything that he did, an assistant to [*Lt.*] Col. Fielder.

Q: So he took the cue, pretty much, from [*Lt. Col.*] Fielder?

A: Yes.

Q: I was wondering, did you also work with Jack Burns during this period?

A: Yeah. Jack Burns was in the Police Dept. at that time and he had his group of people in different communities uh... picked to report to him, and do essentially the sort of thing that we were doing in the Emergency Service Committee. Well he was our liaison also with the Police Dept. and with the military. You see, right after the War started, people of Japanese ancestry could not have any meetings; any get together more than say a dozen people were involved. The idea of a meeting with the Japanese segment here was far from what they anticipated might happen. So we had to have either a military officer or liaison officer in the person of Jack Burns in order to conduct these meetings. They made it kind of an official thing.

Q: I see.

A: That's how Jack Burns came into the picture. Not only that, he was quite concerned with the situation itself and he had something to do I'm sure with helping Fielder see the situation, evaluate the situation as is and advise him as to what to expect.

Q: You've mentioned different Army Officers and during this period I wonder, did you ever have any contact with people in Navy Intelligence?

A: No, not directly. When we organized the Committee for the... to preserve racial unity, I don't recall whether we sent an invitation to the Navy Intelligence. We might very well have, but they never joined us. They never had an Officer in the Navy comparable to [*Lt.*] Col. Fielder, insofar as the contact with the Japanese population is concerned. The Navy wasn't very interested in what we were doing, except to keep a surveillance I suppose; to see that we didn't get out of hand either. So our contact with the Naval Intelligence was very, very far. I don't think we had any that we might call direct involvement with them.

Q: I see. Well, I think you've given me quite a bit of information here. Is there anything else that you can recall that you think might be of interest to people studying this period and this whole question of loyalty and suspicion?

A: Well, that's a rather involved question and I'll have to repeat some of the things I've already said, but there were some key people besides Shivers and Fielder, who made it possible. Hung Wai Ching was a key person. Being of Chinese ancestry he could do and go places where I couldn't, for instance. So he was very helpful in that respect. Well, I think I've covered about everything that I was involved in.

Q: Well, I very much appreciate your taking the time to help me with this and I hope I haven't been an imposition on you.

A: No, that's O.K.