Interview

Subject: John M. Maki
Place: Amherst, Massachusetts
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By: Marlene Mayo

Q: Professor Maki, I would like to start out this morning by learning more about you, where you were born and where you grew up and something about your early schooling.

JMM: Oh, fine. Well, it's a rather complicated story. I was born in Tacoma, Washington on April 19, 1909, and of course my parents were both fairly recent migrants from Japan and they were both working. And so apparently they decided, particularly my mother, that she had to continue work. So she advertised for a family to take care of this little baby. There was at least one response to the ad, and the McGilvrey family responded to the ad. And so I grew up with that family and I was eventually adopted by the McGilvrey family. So for some years I was known as Jack McGilvrey, much to the consternation of the teachers and other people that I came into contact with. But I eventually went to the University of Washington in Seattle.

Q: Could I just backtrack a little bit? What part of Japan were your parents from?

JMM: Let's see, my father was from Aomoriken and my mother was from Fukuiken.
Well, I should add perhaps that of course my parents paid for my keep, and then I really don't know at what age, my age that is, they decided to get divorced. And the agreement apparently was that my father was to take me back to Japan, and I have a very vague recollection and I was told that in effect the McGilvreys kidnapped me because they didn't want to give me up. So obviously I did not go back to Japan.

So as I started to say, I went to the University of Washington. I majored in English literature and, oh, I must add this. I hadn't thought about this before. It so turned out at that time the English Department gave, selected the outstanding major each year. And so I was selected in 1932 and of course the story appeared in the local paper. And it turned out that a friend of my parents saw this story, and he had kept in some contact with my mother. So he sent this story to my mother and as a result of that, I finally met her again many years later.

Well, to get back to the main thread of the story, as I said, I got a B.A. in English literature at Washington.

Q: Did you have any problems in Washington in your high school or in your college years with racial discrimination by comparison with those who lived in California?

JMM: I was never really conscious of it and I've thought about this and it's my guess that it was probably because I was brought up in an American family.

Q: Did the McGilvreys have other children?
JMM: Oh, yes, but they were all grown, so I was really the little baby in the family. And so I think that that might have done it, primarily because it may have changed my own attitudes in the sense that I identified more with my adoptive family obviously than I did with my natural family.

I was about to tell about one of the major bits of discrimination that I almost said "suffered," but this I'll point out it really turned out to be a very fortunate thing and didn't involve any, well discrimination in the real sense of the term. I also got a Master of Arts in English at Washington, and somehow, some way, I had decided while I was still an undergraduate that I wanted to get into teaching. And when I was taking my master's, some friends of mine in the English Department—and they were really friends as things turned out—said that my chances really of getting a job and teaching English literature were virtually nothing and so why shouldn't I get involved somehow, some way, in the study of Japan.

Oh, incidentally, I had—for some reason—I had taken some Japanese when I was an undergraduate because obviously I knew nothing about the language, growing up as I did. And so I talked to these people, and they were really very kind and understanding. I didn't have a feeling that I was really suffering anything because they suggested that I talk to the people at what was called the Department of Oriental Studies there. So I did and decided to shift over into the study of Japanese literature because obviously I had the background of literature but knew nothing about Japanese literature. So if I was going to do that, obviously I would have to learn how to read Japanese.
By a coincidence, the Japanese Government began to offer fellowships for study in Japan. This was back in 1935 and also in 1935 I was given a teaching fellowship in Oriental Studies. So that's when I first really began to get interested in Japan and Asia in general.

Q: Does this mean that the University of Washington was getting quite serious about Asian Studies and quite interested?

JMM: Well, they had had--I checked once and I can't remember the date. I think that the Oriental Studies Department was established back about 1905 or 1906 primarily because of Dr. Herbert H. Gowan. You may have run across his name. He was, I think the word is a "polymath" in respect to Asian Studies anyway, and he had written many books on history of Japan, history of China, history of India, and some others. He was in effect the department for a number of years, but the University was interested to the extent that it did support the department. And it began to expand a little bit in the late 1920's and was a very small department in the mid-1930's. So I was fortunate enough to get one of these fellowships. It was the . It was affiliated with the Foreign Ministry, but it was a separate agency. And they had a small headquarters in Tokyo, and there was, I think, one other American student, non-Japanese, who had been in Japan and had gotten a fellowship. And I think I was the first American from America to receive one. The other students were from other parts of Asia. I've never gone into this, but it was rather interesting to see that the Japanese were interested in that in the mid-1930's.

So if I can inject another personal note, because of my involvement in Oriental Studies, I met Mary, my wife. We seemed to hit it off
fairly well, so we were married in 1936 and about two weeks after that we left for Japan. So that really began my intensive involvement in Japanese studies. And my first concern, as I said, was to learn to read Japanese, and since she spoke Japanese very well, unfortunately I really didn't concentrate on my spoken Japanese. So I've never become really fluent, although I can get along without too much difficulty. But I was there, as you well know being a Modern Japanese historian, at a very interesting time.

We arrived, well, as a matter of fact, we were, 43 years ago we were on the Pacific en route to Japan. And so we landed there about mid-November of 1936, which of course was just nine months after the famous 226 Incident. So we were there from the fall of 1936 until the spring of 1939, and I concentrated on the language and also the study of literature after some false starts. But we finally did. My tutors from what was then Tokyo Imperial University would write out little exercises which would deal with various aspects of Japanese literature. And so I was learning about Japanese literature as well as learning the language.

But we did a fair amount of traveling, that is for those days a fair amount of traveling. And I was of course very much interested in what was going on. For example, one of my tutors—they were both the equivalent of graduate students, and both liberal. And one made me very much aware of the fact that he was aware of what was going on. He would, for example, warn us if we were going out to certain places not to speak English because he knew there were enough people floating around who might take offense at that. And of course the war with China
broke out less than a year after we arrived. There were air-raid drills, that sort of thing. And of course the papers were full of things that made us very much aware of the fact that we were living in a society that was not a very happy one. And in addition to that, we were not very happy because of the obvious constraints that we were under.

For example, we had a policeman who followed us around, but he was a very pleasant sort. We never thought of him as a policeman. He made no secret of the fact that he was on our trail all the time. But when we left in the spring of 1939, things were just beginning to get tough, that is economically speaking. So as a matter of fact I was called back to the University of Washington to take over the teaching duties of Robert Pollard, who was the head of the Oriental Studies Department and who had suffered a heart attack. So we immediately returned only and as a matter of fact, Dr. Pollard died, I think it was a few weeks after our return. So we were very pleased to get back, primarily because of the atmosphere that I referred to a moment ago. And that really began my, well, academic career. Of course I was still primarily concerned with Japanese literature. I taught courses in, well, Japanese literature.

Well, I should point out that I was very fortunate in coming back because I was paid what was then a very considerable sum of approximately $300 a month because I was a replacement for Professor Pollard. But that lasted only for one quarter of 10 weeks, and I went back then to the status of a, let's see, I think it was called an "associate," which was one step above a teaching assistant. So things were a little tough
financially. But on the other hand, there was no inflation in those days.

So from 1939 then until the spring of 1942 I was teaching at the University of Washington and of course becoming more and more concerned because on the basis of what I was able to observe in Japan, the chances were very good that a war between the United States and Japan was going to break out. That was one of the few occasions where I was a very good prophet. So we were in Seattle at the University of Washington on December 7, 1941. And very shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, I think it was a matter of perhaps only a few weeks, some friends of ours, who had formerly been in Seattle but who had gone to Washington, called me and asked me if I would be willing to go to work for the Government because they knew that I had been in Japan and of course in those days the number of people who had been in Japan, and particularly who had stayed in Japan, was very small indeed. I don't know what it was but it couldn't have been more than a few thousand in all categories. So in a sense I was a very useful commodity, and I indicated that I would be interested in going to Washington.

The wife of our friend was then with the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service of the Federal Communications Commission, and that was the job that I was recruited for. And of course there was a very long investigation, FBI /Federal Bureau of Investigation/ for obvious reasons. But meanwhile, the problem of the evacuation of the Japanese came up. So on May 15, 1942, which by coincidence was my wife's birthday, we were evacuated from Seattle. I had left the University of Washington, naturally. And we were taken to a so-called relocation center. No,
assembly center, pardon me, assembly center, which was to be the first step before going on to the permanent camps. And that was at the Western Washington State Fairgrounds in the town of Puyallup, an Indian name. I don't know what it means. And we were there for exactly one month, and on June 15th we were taken to get on the train, and we went directly to Washington, D.C. And I was there for the remainder of the war. Is this enough general background information?

Q: Yes. So you were spared the actual relocation camp?

JMM: Yes, that's right.

Q: I had just a couple of questions in mind, going back to your Tokyo experience in the late 1930's. How did you go about systematically learning the Japanese language, learning to read the Japanese language? in Japan?

JMM: As I said, I had studied some at the University of Washington, and so I knew what a character was. For example, I knew katakana and hiragana.

Q: Did Washington have a Japanese--

JMM: Yes, that was Henry Katsumi, who was later at the Navy Language School in Boulder. That is, by later I mean during the war. And he was one of the very few teachers. There couldn't have been more than two or university level, three teachers of Japanese in the whole country at that time, on the/

Q: He was Japanese, not nisei?

JMM: No, he was American-born but quite early. Well, as a matter of fact, he had served, and I don't know in what capacity, during the First World War. And so I did have a kind of a basic knowledge and since Henry Katsumi's primary interest was in grammar, I had some idea of grammar. So I didn't come in cold. I'm laughing for reasons that
will appear in a moment. I was introduced to my tutor who was obtained from the university. And so after some talk, well, preliminary talk, we decided that an obvious way to do this was to start with the old government readers and go through from the beginning but do it as rapidly as possible.

Q: These would be readers?

JMM: Yes, that's right, the old government readers. So he would come and I would read through these for pronunciation and that sort of thing. You know, there were no tapes or anything like that back in those days.

Q: No in my time either.

JMM: No. And so a very amusing thing happened. We were living in a small apartment and of course in Tokyo then buildings were very close together and there was a very narrow street between our apartment house and a residence, I think it was a doctor's residence. And this doctor had some small children, and one day it was a rather pleasant day and we had our sliding windows open, and I was reading from this reader. And we happened to notice--I think it was my wife who really first noticed this--this little boy across the street happened to hear us, and she could see run and get his own reader and come back and follow the lesson while laughing, obviously at my pronunciation of these Japanese words.

But at any rate, after several months we soon, my tutor and I both got pretty bored with this sort of thing. And so then we sat down, as I think I mentioned earlier, and decided that what he would do would be to write out his own lessons, which would be something
in Japanese history or Japanese literature that somehow, some way, I had gotten some kind of an interest in, and those would be our lessons. And that worked out very well because it was something that we were both interested in, and it was adult Japanese and there was some substance to it, too.

Q: Was the study of Japanese literature quite a revelation, to you? You had previously been interested in English literature, and now you were learning something about the great masterpieces of Japan.

JMM: Oh, yes. But of course also I had done a little reading before, so I knew, had a vague idea of what a hiku was and what a tanko was and that sort of thing. So everything was not crashingly new, but on the other hand, all the details were obviously new.

Q: When you came back to teach at the University of Washington, it must have been difficult because there was so little that had been translated into English for the students to read, those who were studying the language.

JMM: Well, the was available. I remember that I used for the literature course, let's see, I think I used Asten. Did you ever come across his name?

Q: Oh, yes.

JMM: It wasn't a very good book, but at least it was in English and it did describe something about the literary forms and a broad outline of the history of Japanese literature. And there were translations of both. Niamori's very thick volumes of translations of Hiku and Tanko were available, too. So there were things, but obviously nothing comparable to what is available today.
Q: I wondered if you would mind telling me a little bit, too, about your observations of Depression America, New Deal America. You didn't go to Japan until 1936, so you were well aware of how the Depression hit the West Coast. I wondered what your political convictions or feelings were at the time and whether or not you thought that/New Dealers were coming up with some good solutions for getting the country out of its problems.

JMM: Well, I think my first real awareness of American politics came in, it must have been late 1929, just almost exactly 50 years ago, or in the early 1930's when President /Herbert/ Hoover began to make some of his optimistic statements about both the present and the future state of the American economy and the difference between what he was saying and in what I was able to observe/our own circumstances, because Mr. McGilvrey was a small businessman and I kind of worked with him and we were able to get along. We didn't suffer or anything like that, but we certainly didn't have a lot of money for a lot of extras. So we were very close to the Depression. I felt that the President didn't have any better grasp of what seemed to be the realities, then he probably wasn't a very good president. And the contrast between what he was saying and doing and /Franklin D./ Roosevelt, F.D.R., was very striking indeed, well, not only in terms of what they said but personalities and everything else. So I think that I was a New Dealer by conviction, at least for many years and certainly beyond that a committed Democrat.

Q: How would you, I suppose define is too abstract a term, but if you called yourself a New Dealer for those days, what did that mean politically or socially or economically? Just a general support for what
Roosevelt was trying to do?

JMM: Yes.

Q: Or convictions beyond that having to do with distribution of wealth or civil rights?

JMM: Well, I would say that I shared what used to be called "a liberal view," namely that more attention should be paid to those broken farmers--remember now I'm talking about the early 1930's. I'm not talking about agribusiness--to farmers and to workers, unemployment insurance, well, the whole thing, various kinds of social welfare benefits, the importance of civil liberties in general. But I never became really interested, committed is a better word, I guess, to the idea of the civil rights. Obviously the world was back in the thirties that the people really were beginning to become aware of the situation of the blacks. Of course, I've always been very much interested in that but as a kind of an abstraction, the sense that here was obviously a very considerable chunk of the American population that wasn't getting a fair deal. But I was never committed to the cause and of course never really became involved in Japanese-American or Asian-American, the Japanese-American movement as represented by the old Japanese American Citizens' League or the Asian American Group, which is of course more recent. And I think on the basis of what I've been telling you about my general background, it's not surprising that I didn't find that commitment. But oh, I should go back...
But oh, I should go back to this business of not becoming interested in English literature, which is what I wanted to become interested in. That was obviously a case of discrimination because I was told, as I mentioned, that my chances of getting a job in the field were virtually nothing.

Q: Not because jobs were scarce, but because you had a Japanese background?

JMM: Yes.

Q: Japanese background?

JMM: Yes, and I've often thought how fortunate I have been in having been the victim, in quotation marks, of that kind of discrimination because when I try to guess what my career would have been in the field of English literature, even if I had made it, it is pale indeed by comparison with what I've got involved in, both in terms of content and perhaps more importantly in terms of the experiences that I've had as the result of/become interested in Japan.

Q: Just one other question pertaining to the 1930's in the United States and the New Deal, you mentioned that Mr. McGilvrey was a small businessman. I've been trying to understand as I reconstruct the era to what extent New Dealism carried with it a hostility or suspicion or an anger, big business in the United States or business generally. Was that in any way part of your sense of the New Deal?

JMM: Well, of course I think that it very definitely was and it obviously goes back to the whole business of trust-busting and even before as a stream in American history. But certainly that was an element in the New Deal, and you may recall also that the business of the so-called merchants of death in the 1930's too where big business or big
industry/in this country and Europe was known to be the primary reason for wars, wars in general.

Q: Coming back then to your arrival in Washington in 1942, you came to work with the F.B.I.S.?

JMM: Right.

Q: Could you tell me what it was like coming into wartime Washington and about the nature of your job?

JMM: Oh, yes. Well, very briefly, for many months we lived with the friends that were responsible for getting my job there. They had a house and so we were able to stay with them, but there were really no problems at all. To show the illogic that was behind this whole business of the evacuation, here I was out of this assembly center and I think it was about two weeks after my arrival the FBIS group had one of their usual weekly luncheons. And they would invite people from the outside. And at this luncheon the invited guests were, let's see, the Ambassador from New Zealand, the British Commander of the, I think it was the Bismarck, you know, the famous battle of the River Plate in South America, and /Igor/ Sikorsky, the helicopter man. So I've never gotten over this very small thing, but I think again it shows something about the nature of this business of the evacuation.

But to go back to the operation, I was very fortunate in working with a remarkable group of people. They were obviously all very intelligent people, but what transpired later showed how intelligent they were. Of course, the person who became best known was John Gardner, a former HEW /Health, Education and Welfare/ Secretary. But included in that--let's see, I think there were only between 15 or
around 16, if I recall correctly, people in this unit. At least two became presidents of the American Sociological Association, at least two became presidents of the American Psychological Association. I mentioned John Gardner. Well, that just shows you the caliber of the people that were involved in this. And I felt myself very fortunate to be able to associate with people like that because they were not all only very intelligent but they were/also very pleasant human beings.

Now basically, the job of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service was to, well, the job was a double one. One was to monitor foreign broadcasts, which meant to pick them up and get out a daily report on these. This was a more or less mechanical operation and was carried on--I can't remember whether that monitoring operation was a part of FBIS or whether--I think it was, but I'm not absolutely certain. But that was more or less mechanical. What our unit was responsible for was to try to analyze these broadcasts. Oh, I just happened to remember, there was at least one president of the American Political Science Association and at least one person who/became president of a university.

But we were interested in enemy broadcasts, meaning primarily of course Germany and at that time Italian and Japanese but also Hawaii broadcasts, Russian, British and French. And we were basically to do two things: one was simply to keep a kind of a running account of what these government radio broadcasts were putting out. And that meant making weekly reports which were distributed to interested agencies within the Government. And this monitoring operation involved simply reporting of, well, outstanding events or perhaps more precisely,
how the radio broadcasts dealt with outstanding events and analysis, meaning a quantitative analysis, which was to demonstrate the amount of attention these broadcasts paid to military and political events. And we were also supposed to keep a kind of a long, or middle range might be a better term, carry out middle-range analysis, which meant to see over a period of time, a month or two months, what changes there might be in the way that the government radios were handling certain—well, the war in general, for example, and dealing with certain associated political events and that sort of thing. And then periodically we came out with certain special reports, and they were called "special reports." And they might be an analysis of how the enemy radio dealt with, for example, the campaign in North Africa or how the Japanese radio was dealing with the campaign in the Solomons. In that way we would bring together things over a kind of a period of time so that again interested people would be able to, well, would be able to know what the enemy was, what enemy psychological warfare was doing about these developments.

And then also occasionally when something would appear in these broadcasts, we would get involved in what I suppose you could call "political intelligence." For example, we were involved, our small Japanese group, and I was the only, well, it would be more precise to call it the small Asian group, and I was the only Japan person in that group. We made a very interesting report in the fall of 1942 on the establishment of the Greater East Asia Ministry about which you have heard because the Japanese Government began to announce this, and we began to follow these reports. It was very interesting
because they would announce that something was going to be announced and then it wasn't announced. And so quite clearly there was something going on, and after following this for a few days, we took a very careful look at this and had to come to the conclusion that there was quite an internal controversy raging around the establishment of this Greater East Asia Ministry because the Japanese Government announced what it was going to be responsible for. And among other things, it was going to be responsible for a lot of things that formerly had been under the Foreign Ministry. So we wrote a report on this that indicated what we thought this controversy was about and the reasons why we had concluded that there must be a controversy about it.

And one interesting short-term thing was that some newspaper--and these reports were all classified confidential. And a newspaper reporter somehow, some way, got hold of this report and published it, not as coming from our unit, but using all the information in it. And I think he referred to sources in Washington and that sort of thing. And of course that created a minor flap because somebody had violated security. But I think the final conclusion was that this wasn't very important. But interestingly enough, after the war it turned out that that controversy had developed and more or less over the issues that our report had indicated that it was over.

Q: I was wondering, were recordings brought to you of the broadcasts, or did somebody somewhere in the country write out these broadcasts for you?

JMM: No because they had monitoring stations. There was one in Oregon near Portland which picked up the Asian stuff. There was one in Texas at Brownsville, if I remember correctly, and right at the moment I
can't remember where the German one was. And the stuff was recorded and translated, that is where translation was required, and put on the old teletype. And yards and yards and yards of that stuff came into our office every day. And of course one of our immediate responsibilities was to read all that stuff as it came in.

Q: And who was the boss of the unit that you served in?

JMM: Let's see--

Q: I'm curious about all these people.

JMM: I was there for almost exactly a year from June 1942 to June 1943, and I think that Goodwin Watson was the immediate head of the operation during all that period. He was a psychologist and was one of the men who later became president of the American Psychological Association.

Q: Did this FBIS get started even before Pearl Harbor or was it something put together immediately after?

JMM: No, it got started before. I think it was called the Office of Facts and Figures, which I think was the predecessor of the OWI /Office of War Information/ but I don't know when it got started.

Q: Do you know to which agencies your analyses were sent?

JMM: I know that they went obviously to the Pentagon. Well, I don't think the Pentagon was yet open, but War, Navy, State and I don't know how many others. Oh, there was a daily publication mimeographed which contained virtually all the stuff that came in over the teletype, and it gave a report of the FBIS. And I think it is still coming out under the CIA /Central Intelligence Agency/ because I think that this unit eventually ended up under the CIA.
Q: After all this time, what remains most vividly in your mind from those monitored broadcasts of Japan? Was it primarily military news? Was there much home front domestic news that was getting into these broadcasts?

JMM: We were able to monitor the Japanese domestic broadcasts and that was very important in those days because it was virtually the only immediate source of information that we had about what was going on inside Japan. Now I don't know anything about the technology of that, but the Japanese of course were obviously very secretive. Well, they had been for many, many years before the war, but they had to talk to their own people. And so we were able to pick up those, and of course obviously all their overseas broadcasts. Well, they were short wave and they were designed to be overseas and so we were able to pick up those. And of course one thing that we were always interested in doing was to see if there were any discrepancies between what they were beaming overseas and what they were telling what they referred to as "the home audience."

To go back to your question, this business of the Greater East Asian Ministry was about the most dramatic thing that I was involved in, on that analysis. But the interesting thing was to see how the Japanese Government changed its handling of war news, for example, because it was very clear that they began to take what was going on in the Solomons more and more seriously. Now the thing was that of course the Japanese naturally never admitted any kind of a setback in their information. But you could tell by the way that they were, well, the emphasis that they placed on certain things, the way they handled it, sometimes they would admit certain losses to see whether or not there was any kind of
even a small change in the admission of losses, and then also begin to go back to see whether there was any difference in the way they handled military news in their domestic broadcasts as distinct from their overseas broadcasts.

Q: So when you were in the FBIS, they would have suffered the reverses in Midway?

JMM: No, that was just before.

Q: Just before Midway? Oh, June, you were the end of June?

JMM: That's right. You see, that was early June and I joined the FBIS, I guess it must have been around June 20th.

Q: Do you know if any effort was ever made to get some units into China and pick up Japanese broadcasts over there? Or were we primarily concerned with what came out of Japan itself?

Q: Let's see. I think there was some kind of an operation going on there, but if there was it couldn't have been very effective because that would have meant that they would have had to have been picked up, processed in some way, and then gotten back to this country. And since the only real outlet was Ch'ungch'ing in western China, just in terms of pure mechanical terms, it would be a difficult job.

I'm trying to remember now because we used to get a fair amount of stuff about what was going on militarily, the Japanese were saying about military developments in China. And I can't remember right now whether that was from domestic news or whether that came in much later from some source in China.

Q: It just occurred to me to think about that recently and perhaps Chiang Kai-shek or the Chinese were doing some form of intelligence
also in monitoring Japanese broadcasts. I really don't know how advanced they were.

JMM: They could have been, but when you think about all the problems that they were having at that time, it would have been highly unlikely. And of course they would have had to have gotten in some fairly sophisticated stuff from this/ because they were in no position to turn out their own equipment.

Q: Well, this is something I'll have to pursue further and find out about that. Well, as you say, it's a mechanical operation to record or to monitor the broadcasts. It wouldn't be necessary to get nisei or Japanese into China to listen to that.

JMM: Oh, you're talking about an American operation?

Q: Yes. I was talking about both actually, wondering how the Chinese could have done it and how we could have done it or even the British could have done it if they were interested.

JMM: Oh, I think that will come along. I'll be able to say just a little bit about that in the next section.

Q: This then is when you went to work for the OWI?

JMM: Yes.

Q: How did that come about?

JMM: Well, as I said, I was with FBIS for about a year. Now as far as the OWI is concerned, what happened there was that after Robert Pollard died, as the head of Oriental Studies, they got a new head. Well, there was an acting head and the new head turned out to be George Taylor at Washington. And sometime in 1942, I think it was in the summer
of 1942, he went to Washington. And of course I knew him at the University of Washington, worked under him for, let's see, I think about a year and a half before the war started. I think he arrived in Washington in 1940. So George went to Washington to head up the Asian Psychological Warfare within OWI, and it was that connection that eventually got me over into OWI. If I recall correctly, FBIS didn't want to let me go, again the scarcity factor. But George was able to claim this was a higher priority. So I went over there in June of 1943 and remained with OWI until after the end of the war.

Now the primary job that we had to do with OWI was to, well, let's see, to write policy for psychological warfare against Japan. And the main element of that was getting simply weekly directives which went, I think, in two directions, as it were. The main object of these weekly directives was to cover the operations of the San Francisco office. Now the San Francisco office was a short wave radio operation. Of course that was as close as we could get to Japan until sometime in 1944. And the short wave operation was of course directed at Japan. Now we knew that we had a very select audience in Japan, that it was highly likely that the only audience we had in Japan was the counterpart of the FBIS and the OWI because they presumably were the only ones that really had the facilities to listen. But there might have been a very small number of individual Japanese with short wave sets. But we also knew that the Japanese Government was very nervous about this and that any individual listeners had to be doing it secretly. But even though we did have that restricted audience, it was a matter of considerable
importance because in effect, even if we did have this restricted audience, what would be happening would be one government talking to another government. And so it was recognized that there should be some pretty carefully developed guidelines, both for immediate operations, day to day and week to week, and over the longer range. And so that was the main part of our operation, but directly growing out of that were directives to other theatres, particularly Europe, but not necessarily confined to Europe, which would presumably be at least guidance, if not control, because San Francisco was supposed to operate pretty closely under our directives, guidance as to how to handle news in Asia, the Pacific. Because obviously they would have to report the battles, if there was some kind of a political development in Japan or if there should be some kind of direction as to how to handle this in talking to any of the many audiences that OWI had all over the world.

Q: I was just wondering if you could clarify for me the organization and the administrative setup in addition to the work of the OWI? You mentioned that Professor Taylor was in charge of the Asian Psychological Warfare. As I understand it, there were three areas: Area 1, Area 2, Area 3?

JMM: That's right.

Q: And you came under Area 3, which was the Pacific?

JMM: Right. They called it the Far East.

Q: The Far East? But you were headquartered in Washington?

JMM: Right.

Q: And was there a Japan Section?
JMM: Let's see.

Q: In Far East?

JMM: Yes, yes, that's right. It was a small section. Let's see if I can remember who was in it. There was a man by the name of Charles Hepner who had been a missionary in Japan for some minor religion—I can't remember what it was—for many years. He was not a very effective member. I can't remember the name of this other man who was also church affiliated. The last name was Jorgenson. We always called him Jorgie. That's probably why I can't remember his first name.

Q: Oh, I think I've heard of him. He may have been involved with the YMCA - Young Mens Christian Association/ in Japan.

JMM: Yes, that's right. And a third one was a former businessman who was almost completely ineffective, primarily because all of the evidence was that he was an alcoholic. And perhaps fortunately I can't remember his name, but I can remember his face very clearly indeed. And I think that was the Japan contingent of the Asian Section. Harold Benack was in our section, and he was a kind of an all-purpose Asia man. But we worked. . . .

END TAPE I, BEGIN TAPE II

Well, I think I was saying that Harold Benack was a kind of a general Asia person, even though he was more experienced. He was more experienced in China, but he was extremely useful as a kind of a general consultant and voice of sanity as far as our Japan section was concerned.

Q: Then as I understand it, you people in Washington were writing the policies. You were deciding guidance for the operations out of San
Francisco. I don't know whether you would have been involved in any correspondence between Washington and San Francisco, say, to George Taylor and would it be Owen Lattimore, who was heading up the San Francisco operation in 1943/1944?

JMM: No, I just don't recall it. Oh, no. Actually I think it was Claude Buss.

Q: Oh, yes.

JMM: I think he's still at Stanford.

Q: Yes, he is.

JMM: That reminds me, we very rapidly discovered that a very critical problem was how to communicate between Washington and San Francisco. And by communicate, I don't mean just picking up the telephone but to make directives understandable and therefore useful and therefore some kind of a control over operations. And we think that we finally worked out a working relationship and ultimately it came down to something as simple as words, not only arriving at a common understanding of what words meant, but to make sure, particularly on our end, to get through a message that could be easily used for some kind of a general guide as far as turning out the actual programs were concerned. I'll see if I can think of an example. Oh, they did not appreciate expressions appearing in directives such as "play down" or "don't give very much attention to" or things like that. The intent was perfectly clear, but they didn't know whether that meant "give it one sentence at the end of a broadcast" or just what. And so eventually we, meaning the Washington office, got to the point where apparently we were wording things so that the people on the other end didn't immediately have to
pick up a telephone and say, "What the hell do you mean by this?"

If you think about it for a moment, it really is quite an important thing because after all, we were a government operation and so we were speaking in effect—we weren't speaking, but we were laying down general rules about how, well, the United States as a government should be handling certain items of news.

Q: Did they ever send you transcripts of their broadcasts—

JMM: Oh, yes.

Q: --so that you could see how they were implementing the directives?

JMM: And of course from our point of view some of these early ones were pretty horrifying.

Q: And did you call then simply for say changes in the personnel or did you just try to converse with them or communicate with them more precisely?

JMM: No, we communicated, and people would go out from our office, I mean from the Asian operation. I made one trip out but that was very late in the war in April of 1945. But people from that office came back. So eventually we worked out what seemed to be a useful system.

And that reminds me, this hasn't anything to do with this topic that we were just talking about, but it is related to communication between San Francisco and Washington. In the fall of 1944, one of the men in the San Francisco office—I can't remember his name right at the moment—came to visit us in Washington. And he walked into the office and with a small stiff cardboard container in his hand with a record in it. There were several of us standing around and he said, "Here's this record that the Army told me to deliver to Washington." So there was nothing on the outside, plain brown wrapper, to use the
old phrase. So naturally we were curious and we got the record out and there was still no indication as to what it was about. So we put it on a record player and lo and behold, it was General Douglas MacArthur announcing his landing in the Philippines, which had not yet come off. So we immediately knew that this was absolutely top secret, so we snatched it off the player and speedily put it into the safe because there had been hints that this was about to come off. So the one thing that the Army liaison had convinced OWI of very early in the war is that you say absolutely nothing that tips off any impending military operation. But that was apparently the security people overstepped themselves in being secure. Certainly nobody would have thought that that message would have been delivered in that particular way.

Q: What were some of the issues that came up when you were with the OWI and Psychological Warfare? For example, I am somewhat aware of the question of how to treat the Emperor broadcasts. I wondered if you'd care to talk about that?

JMM: Oh, yes. This was one question that was pretty much under discussion for most of the war. Well, I should say, let's see when was it? I think it was either late in 1944 or 1945 we finally established a firm policy. Now the reason that this was a very delicate issue was a double one because in the first place, many Americans, including Americans in pretty high places, were convinced that the Emperor was ultimately responsible for everything, and that he was a war criminal, should be charged with being a war criminal, tried, and with the automatic implication that he would be found guilty and executed. On the other hand, all the Japan people throughout the Government and again there
weren't too many of us, knew what the position of the Emperor was in the eyes of the Japanese. So we were very much against saying anything in our propaganda that looked as if it were any kind of an attack on the Emperor. But there were these pressures going on all the time because obviously from the outside, well, it looked as if if we weren't saying very much, well then we must be either sympathetic—by "we" I mean OWI, either being sympathetic towards the Emperor or appeasing the Japanese. But by and large, we followed that line.

Now on the other hand, there did come down to us in OWI the draft of a directive, a general directive, top secret, which was supposed to govern the way that the Emperor should be handled. Now I never knew precisely where that came from. As I think back about it, I think it might have come from the War Department, possibly even from the Joint Chiefs, but I'm not sure. It's barely conceivable that it came from State, but I don't think that it came directly from State. And this laid out a policy and it came to us just for our comments, as it were, as interested parties. And my assumption was that it circulated through the Government, leading to all those agencies that were specifically concerned with Japan. And that in effect laid down the line that "go light and in effect say nothing that indicates any kind of a policy about the Emperor one way or another." And we in OWI were pleased to see that because in effect that simply underlined the policy that we had been following.

Q: Do you know anything about the personal inclinations as apart from the orders of the head of the OWI, Elmer Davis? And was it Sherwood who was in charge of the overseas branch when you were with OWI?
JMM: Let's see. I can't remember now. I have a vague recollection that Davis succeeded Sherwood, but I'm not sure. Didn't Sherwood--

Q: There was the Domestic Branch and the Overseas Branch and then there was whoever was in charge of the overall operation.

JMM: Well, Davis was the head of the agency. I recall only one incident about Davis on the Emperor business. A small group of us were talking or having a conference about something in the small office in the Social Security Building. That's where the OWI was based. And Elmer Davis, who was the head of the agency, stuck his head in the door and he said, "What's the family name of the Emperor?" I think I was the only Japan person in this controversy.

And I said, "Well, he doesn't have one."

Davis said, "What's the matter, too goddamned good to have one?"
Which I think, if you have read or can remember anything about Davis, was a typical Davis comment, too.

Q: Was he a fairly acerbic personality?

JMM: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: Was he a popular boss of the OWI?

JMM: Yes.

Q: Or just a figure you had to deal with?

JMM: One thing that's always made me wonder about both OWI and Elmer Davis is that all during the war, that is the main part, from 1942 onward, OWI never became a target of criticism. It was about the only, that is the overseas operations, about the only war agency that did not become the target of criticism. And I've always thought that it was, that Davis was probably responsible for that because he was basically
well, fundamentally, simply an honest, open man. And I think that that had probably a great deal to do with keeping the heat off the can agency. That might be naive, but I think of no other explanation for it.

Q: In your conferences, did you get involved with people in OSS /Office of Strategic Services/, Japan specialists for example and the Far Eastern Division of OSS?

JMM: Of course there was liaison between all of the wartime agencies and people that were liaison officers and things like that. But these were mainly to keep the agencies informed of what the other agencies were more or less doing, that is above and beyond the business of the distribution. Well, our directives, for example, were also distributed to the Government, to say nothing of covering our own operations. But apart from that, occasionally, and I can't think of any examples right now, something would come up when there would be some kind of an inter-agency conference on matters. And then people would be designated from each agency to attend those conferences.

Now that reminds me of one that I attended at State and for the life of me I can't remember what the general topic of this conference was. But one of the principal figures was Eugene Dumon, and the one thing that really sticks out after all these years of my memory was Dumon at one point holding forth on presenting his theory of the war, which was very simple. There would be no war between the United States and Japan if it hadn't been for the peasants in Japan, because they were ignorant and simply followed what the military said. Now one, I thought that that was a fairly naive statement and the other thought
that I had was that this is coming from a man who is supposed to be the expert in State on Japan and who has been the closest advisor of Joseph Clark Grew.

But to go back to your question, on occasion I was called in to consult with OSS on certain OSS projects, and this was rather interesting. I still remember one about a psychological warfare scheme that somebody in OSS dreamed up. And one day, there was some preliminary conversation, and one day this young captain I think he was showed up in the office with a huge sheaf of documents, which turned out to be all of the blueprints and so forth for this psychological warfare operation which in essence was quite simple. What it was was a scroll, a long scroll, very large scroll with fluorescent characters on it that was to be dropped over the Japanese lines from a plane. And this would unfurl and floating down would be this scroll, which was supposed to have on it some kind of a slogan which would inspire fear in the Japanese. And this sheaf of blueprints were designed to show how this scroll, the canister in which it was to be contained, the fuse and everything else were to be arranged. Well, I don't know whether it was ever used or not, but I tried to convince this young man that it wouldn't be very effective psychological warfare because the idea was that this was to be mysterious. Not only was the slogan to be alarming, but the mysterious appearance of this thing from the sky was to inspire fear in the Japanese. As a matter of fact, I've used it many times since as an example of what can be done when you have an agency of almost any kind with unlimited funds and no accountability, the
things that they can come up with. I think I've read of other things that the OSS did in other theatres of a similar nature. But I hope I was able to convince them not to use that one in any way.

Q: I'm sorry to keep going back and dwelling on this Emperor issue, but it is so fascinating because it's part of our attempts to understand the Japanese culture and psychology and history. Did you have discussions, for example, with Alexander Layton's unit? The Foreign Morale and Analysis Division was set up sometime in 1944. It got into the Emperor issue and Ruth Benedict was working with OWI and certainly was involved with FMAD. There's always a lot of question about what influence Ruth Benedict may have had in shaping our ultimate policy, occupation policy, toward the Emperor and the institution of the Emperor.

JMM: Now, unfortunately, I know very little about that and the basic reason is that--what was it called? Foreign Morale and--

Q: Analysis Division.

JMM: --Analysis Division. That was set up in the Pentagon and so, as I said, we were in the Social Security Building. And the very fact of geographical separation meant that there was very little real, shall I call it working interchange between us. Now we knew or we met all of the people that were involved in that of course. Alexander Layton, who was the head of the group, spent quite a bit of time in our office. I spent a lot of time talking to him, and we got the reports when they came out, but that's just about all. Now what influence we or any other agency might have had on this specific question of the handling of the Emperor by the Foreign Morale and Analysis Division actually was,
I just don't know. Layton for example, and that meant of course the whole unit, was very much aware of the OWI directives on the question of the Emperor.

Q: I seem to recall that John Fairbank came into the OWI office in Washington sometime perhaps late in 1944. As Taylor moved up, John Fairbank took his position? Was he involved in your discussions?

JMM: Well, I think that came later. Now I don't know what the dates were, but John was out in Ch'ungch'ing at least for the early, I think, into late 1943 or early 1944. And he came in in 1944 for some months to serve as the acting director of Area 3 when George went out to China on some kind of a mission. And I think George was gone for most of the summer.

Q: Were you involved in discussions with Fairbank, too, about the treatment of the Emperor or other issues in psychological warfare against Japan? Or his was more an administrative position?

JMM: Well, it's difficult to disentangle this because the whole operation, that is, Area 3 operation, was a fairly small operation. As I look back at it, I think that there probably weren't more than about a dozen operating people, and so many of our discussions, for example, the drafting/directives, were kind of joint operations. And so everybody had a chance to contribute something. I mean, just the normal business of tossing things back and forth. But obviously each particular group, Japan and China, was regarded as being expert in its field and normally people from the other groups would raise questions only if it seemed as if what was going to be done was fairly stupid, in general terms, or if it might raise certain questions about how certain problems as to
how we handled, we on the Japan Section, might handle a Chinese event or vice versa.

Q: So there was some interchange then--

JMM: Oh, yes.

Q: --between China and Japan and other parts of

JMM: And we were all, that is, the working people were all in a kind of a bull pen sort of thing, a large office.

Q: Did you ever evaluate or look at Japanese films as part of your psychological warfare?

JMM: There were very few of them and the only thing of that sort that I remember was that the IPR up in New York had a showing of, what was it, one or two films, and I attended that. I think I was invited because although this was private and non-governmental, it obviously dealt with the enemy. I think this was in 1943. I recall that Margaret Mead was there. I don't recall what the film was, but the idea was to--it was basically a kind of, let's see, I think the thrust was basically anthropological. Now I think the reason I was there was not simply that I was directed, but we would quite often visit the New York operation as well because the New York operation was basically a European operation. And on the other hand, it had to have the Far East Section, too, because as I mentioned earlier, we also handled--well, the European Desk had to handle Far Eastern news, too.

Q: Was there a Japan or China specialist handling that out of the New York office or simply someone who took your information and instructions?

JMM: I think it was the latter, at least I can't recall anyone--no, there wasn't a Japan desk in the strict sense of the word.
Q: Before we leave the subject of the OWI, I wonder if there are some other issues or problems that come to your mind? I've been dwelling on the Emperor, but were there other interesting problems that you had?

JMM: Oh, of course, one basic problem that everybody involved in the war against Japan was interested in was trying to encourage the surrender of Japanese troops. And we were obviously not a tactical operation, but we were obviously also concerned with the problem. So on the other hand OWI was involved in a tactical operation out in Burma, and this was basically an Army operation. But we were concerned in it, and I can't remember exactly how, but I can tell you who can tell you. That's Marshall Shulman, who was in charge. He was a captain at that time and he was in charge of this tactical unit. He came back to Washington at least once, and we talked to him. And he was also responsible for a report on the operation which was just/absolutely first-rate report. I often regretted that it was never published because it would be an extremely valuable, well, handbook for tactical psychological warfare.

So we frequently got involved, on the other hand, in, well, I suppose the best way to put it is just kicking around the problem with other people to try to see if we could come up with something. But basically, it was regarded as a tactical operation, and the reason for that is very simple. And that is not only against the Japanese but against the Germans and the Italians and apparently against allied troops as well. It developed that a cardinal principle of tactical psychological warfare was good intelligence, meaning that if you are using psychological warfare, you could get through if you could gain credibility by talking about problems that were the concern of the
targets of the psychological warfare. In other words, that it was much more important to talk about food or the lack thereof in this specific tactical situation than it was to talk about Tojo and the zaibatsu and things like that.

One very interesting thing developed, and again we come back to this problem of speaking for the Government. We got a communication from the field, and this was from the Southwest Pacific---I can't remember the year; it must have been probably late in 1943 or early in 1944---saying in effect, "Can we promise any Japanese who might surrender that they will be settled on..."

END SIDE I, BEGIN SIDE II

... any Japanese who might surrender that they will be settled on an island in the Pacific and will not have to return home and be disgraced?"

And the answer to that, and this was from State, was that this cannot be done because on the surface it looks like a useful ploy because it was---we knew that the Japanese felt that surrender was a disgraceful act. Because after all, it would be betraying the Emperor. So therefore, the solution to this would be to promise the Japanese that they would not really have to be disgraced by having to go back to Japan. And if you think about it for a moment, you will see why that promise could not be made. Because whose island, in the first place, would be used for this purpose. Obviously the United States did not have available, as I recall, any island. And I think even if it did have, it wouldn't be really too popular to have it become known that this island was going to be settled by Japanese prisoners of war. And then
again of course what was involved was that nobody knew how the war was going to come out and how the outcome might possibly affect the situation of any Japanese prisoners of war.

Q: Were you involved in any discussions about how to interpret unconditional surrender or talk about unconditional surrender in these broadcasts? Or did you have any input into the ultimate Potsdam Proclamation or Declaration?

JMM: Well, this is a very interesting question because it immediately raises the problem of Captain Zacharias, with which you are familiar. Now Zacharias has reported in his book, Secret Missions, on what he did. And I've never been sure as to how accurate this report was. But Zacharias became convinced, again late in 1944 or early 1945, that he could persuade the Japanese to surrender. That isn't as silly as it sounds because he had spent some time in Japan as a naval attache. I don't remember how many years. He thought—well, it was probably true—that he had met some influential Japanese or Japanese who became influential. So he felt that he could get a message through to these people. And again, to go back to the short wave business, some of them might be in government and some might be, because of their positions, might have their own short wave sets. And apparently he tried to sell this idea to the Navy and apparently—it's my guess and it's only a guess that he wasn't entirely successful. So eventually it turned out that he was more or less assigned to OWI but with the understanding that his operation would be a Zacharias operation and not an OWI operation. And he was to have his own—I can't remember now whether he was confident enough of his own Japanese to speak Japanese or whether
they were also going to have to be translated. But this raised
the question—remember this was fairly late in the war—of what he
could say to the Japanese that would be credible. Well, credible in
two senses: one, that it would be listened to fairly seriously by his
listeners, if any, in Japan, and secondly, not commit the American
government to anything in a situation which was still fluid. And I
know that there were frequent discussions about what he was doing be-
cause, as I recall, we had his scripts but before or after the fact, I
can't recall at the moment. And occasionally he would come in to— it's
rather hard to describe how this was because they weren't really confer-
ences because he was Zacharias and nobody much else counted. But at any
rate we did know about these broadcasts, about what he was trying to do,
and about what was going into them. But we did not take this very
seriously in the sense that we felt that, one, it would be extremely
unlikely that the message was getting through, and secondly, if it
did get through, it was extremely unlikely that anybody could do any-
thing about it.

But again, going back to the original point of view of OWI, we knew
people who were listening to everything and presumably taking it down
just as we were on our side and possibly talking about it. But I think
that what seemed to me to be the very factual accounts of how the de-
eventually
cision was made to bring the war to an end was simply the indication
that nothing like the Zacharias operation had stood any chance of being
successful. I wish I could remember some of the content of these
broadcasts, but I can't. Have you ever run across any discussion of
Zacharias's--

Q: Yes, I've run across a little bit and, if I do have a chance to take a leave, I will be working more systematically in trying to dig up the information because what I have seen is so fascinating and I still have unanswered questions in my mind about the Potsdam Declaration and why the phrase about the Emperor institution was left out.

JMM: Now by the way, a person—I don't know whether he's living; I haven't heard anything about him for years—that could tell you something probably about this—is Dennis McElroy. Have you run across that name?

Q: Reader's Digest?

JMM: Yes. He was the son of the—was he the editor?

Q: Yes.

JMM: He was a very young guy, very bright guy. He was in the Marines, and I think that he—and he was in Combat Intelligence. And I think, if I recall correctly, he was also a part of the Zacharias operation, meaning that he was assigned to Zacharias.

Q: Did your group, in addition to talking about how to refer to the Emperor in the broadcasts, did your group ever also discuss this issue of whether or not it would be helpful for President Truman or for someone to make a statement about unconditional surrender, not meaning destruction of the Imperial institution? Or did that go on much higher than your office?

JMM: As I recall, this came as much of a surprise to us as it did to other people. But needless to say, we were very happy to see it because it meant that at long last there could be some content in our broadcasts, the question of that is in relation to unconditional surrender, because we were very
much aware of the degree to which the Japanese Government was using this in their own domestic propaganda.

Q: That's very interesting, too. One or two other questions about the OWI operations. Were you ever involved with the people who interpreted the American war effort in the Pacific to the American public?

JMM: Not really, no.

Q: Yours was primarily the psychological warfare against Japan?

JMM: Yes, that's right, because—and again to go back to the point you made earlier, there was this division between the domestic operation and the overseas operation. But we did try not to get in each other's way in the sense that we, on this Emperor issue, to the best of my knowledge, the domestic operation was also aware of the way that we were handling the Emperor overseas.

Q: You mentioned that you were aware of how the Japanese broadcasters were handling this unconditional surrender problem, and yet there wasn't much that you could do about it in Washington because you didn't really know the content either.

JMM: That's right.

Q: So it would be rather difficult to carry out psychological warfare.

JMM: Because the /President Harry S./ Truman statement of VE Day was the first spill-out, I'm quite sure. Yes, it was the first spill-out.

Q: So when the war ended, the OWI was rather quickly disbanded, wasn't it? What happened to you?

JMM: Oh, very rapidly OWI was assigned to State and so technically we became employees of the Department of State. Now sometime late in the fall of 1945—and at the moment I can't recall how it came about—the
word went out that people, civilians with some knowledge of Japan, were needed in the occupation. So I just don't recall any of the details at the moment as to who and how I was recruited. But at any rate, I did leave Washington. It was either on the 30th or the 31st of January 1946, and I knew at the time that I was assigned to something called Government Section. As I said, I left right at the end of January of 1946 by plane and flew into Atsugi Field on February 22nd 1946, which was at least a week slower than it would have been if I had gone by train and ship across the Pacific. And the reason why it took 22 days to fly from Washington to Tokyo or Atsugi, as we discovered along the way, was very simple because you may recall that shortly after the end of the Second World War the American Armed Forces entered into the period of demobilization. And the effect of that was that there were numbers of planes sitting at Hamilton Field, north of San Francisco, and at Hickam Field in Honolulu, with more than enough pilots to fly them but no ground crews to maintain them. And so this is why we had to spend I think it was a week at Hamilton Field and 10 days at Hickam Field. And the stay at Hickam Field would have been very enjoyable indeed except for two very important facts. We left Washington in the middle of winter and expected to arrive in Tokyo in the middle of winter. And the consequence was that we had only winter clothes with us. And the second fact was that nobody was supposed to have any dollars with them because we were going into an occupied zone where military script but not American currency was to circulate. So I think only two people in our party—I guess there must have been around 25 or 30 in the entire party—were adventurous enough to defy the ban
on currency and so they had enough money to buy some summer clothes in Honolulu. But I didn't know what to expect. As I said, all I knew was that I was going to be assigned to Government Section.

Q: You weren't briefed by anyone in Washington or given any papers to read or anything like that?

JMM: I was just a civilian expert assigned to Government Section GHQ SCAP /General Headquarters Supreme Commander Allied Powers/. And so I remember that since I had heard many stories, well-founded stories about the way the military operated, I took along a Russian grammar because I thought, well, if I don't have anything to do, well, at least I might try to start to learn a language that might conceivably turn out to be useful. When we arrived—shortly after we arrived in Tokyo and had reported to duty at Government Section, we were—let's see, how many. I think Alfred Oppler was the only person in the group that flew from Washington who ended up in Government Section. At least he's the only one that I can think of at the moment. There might have been one or two others, but I rather doubt it.

Well, as I started to say, we were called in to be briefed, and I discovered what has turned out to be one of the few disappointments in my life because we had been recruited to be a part of the team that was going to draft the new constitution of Japan which had been completed, as you will recall, while we were en route from Washington to Tokyo. But at any rate, after having been warned about the very tight security surrounding this whole operation, we were asked our opinions of this. And I was both pleased and surprised to see that it was, even the first draft, what I had no reason to expect it to be, namely, a
genuinely democratic document.

Q: Who did the briefing?

JMM: I can't recall at the moment. It conceivably could have been General /Courtney A./ Whitney, who was the head, as you know, of the Government Section. It might have been Colonel /C.L./ Kades, who was really the second in command. Or it could possibly have been Rod Hussey, who was a commander then, who was the head of Government Section.

Q: So you got there after the first draft was written but before the public announcement was made in March?

JMM: Yes. And we were assured that this was a matter of the highest security, and I remember one very small incident. Shortly after the announcement was made, a day or two after, I was writing a letter to Mary, my wife. I tried to write every day. So on this day I came back to the office after dinner--I was billeted in the Dai-Ichi Hotel--and was sitting there typing the letter. And Colonel Kades, Chuck Kades, came in, and he was obviously dying to know what it was I was writing but didn't want to pull the paper out of the typewriter to see whether or not I was saying, "I've been involved in this business of the constitution." We were obviously verbally sparring for a few moments and apparently I was--I knew what he was trying to get at, but neither one of us mentioned it. Apparently I was able to say something that seemed to reassure him.

Q: Did you have any input at all in this constitutional drafting process, even though you arrived after the initial work had been done? Were you able to praise or confirm or make some recommendations?

JMM: At the moment I just can't recall because we were, as I said, asked to
comment on the draft, and I know that I did comment. But what it was I said, I just don't know. I'm quite certain that I must have said what I just indicated, that I was pleased with the content. But if I did, I can't recall any details that I might have mentioned.

Q: What were your first impressions, coming back to Japan in 1946, not having been there since before the war, since 1939?

JMM: Well, one was trivial and the other turned out not to be trivial. The trivial one was that I was amazed to find out how close together places were in Tokyo because when we were there first, of course we had to travel around by streetcar or by toshin, as it was then called, and taxi. So you wound through the streets and what-not. When I got back, of course, as the result of the bombing, well, everything was flat. And so I could stand at a certain place and see that, well, from, let's see, Koishikawa, which was the ward where we lived, was not as far from as I thought it was, but that was the trivial one.

Before I left, of course, I had been reading about the occupation and of course I knew what had been happening to Japan by the bombing. So I didn't know what to expect because here you had a people who had been defeated, people who had been going through, for a number of years, very considerable and finally extreme economic conditions, shortage of food, clothing, everything. So I think—well, I know that what I expected to see was the stereotype of a defeated people, that is, people sitting around, not doing very much, obviously depressed, tired, worn out, and that sort of thing. But from the very first, the thing
that impressed me was the amount of energy that people were displaying, going about, doing what they had to do. Now what they had to do basically was simply to survive, but they were going out and trying to do something to survive. For example, everybody who was there at that time will recall what the trains were like, just absolutely jam-packed and by people who were going off into the country to try to find food or coming back with whatever it was that they could find. In Tokyo, in a number of places, there were, well, what could be described, I guess, as kind of soup kitchens except that they were open-air eating places run by the Japanese. Now what they were selling was not very appetizing. I didn't sample anything. In the first place, occupation personnel were not supposed to do that sort of thing. In the second place, well, obviously the conditions under which the food was being prepared were not, well, sanitary. But people were doing things and I remember writing home that as long as the Japanese act like this, they don't have to worry about their future even though they might be worried about it a great deal. And I think it is very obvious that what has transpired since—well, a very considerable reason why what has transpired since was this feeling of energy that was so visible at that particular time.

Q: What were you assigned to do then under Government Section, since you had arrived too late for the constitution?

JMM: This was very interesting because as I said, I didn't know what to expect. I was expecting the worst, namely, just having to sit around and do nothing. Well, the first thing, of course, was this exciting—not as exciting as it might have been—business of at least getting involved on the edges of the constitution drafting. The second main
job that we were involved in was the purge. And what we were supposed
to do was to--what we were assigned to do was to go through the appeals
that were submitted by people who fell under the purge. And these were
questionnaires that were filled out and basically they were factual,
indicating what the people had done during the war and of course on
that basis asking for a--what's the word--I guess exclusion from the
purge. And we were supposed to subject these to a preliminary screening.
In other words just on the basis of this one document, did we feel
that these people should be purged or should they be excluded? And
then, if I recall correctly, on the basis of the--and some cases were
open and shut. By that I mean obviously because of their positions
they should have been purged or obviously they fell outside of the
limits set by the purge directive. And as I recall, these then were
transmitted, along with our very general recommendations, to some
other group. Now I don't know whether that was military intelligence
or whether--I can't recall whether there was some kind of a special
purge group inside the occupation, but I don't think that there was.

Q: Who was coordinating this effort in Government Section?

JMM: I just don't recall at the moment. Now on the other hand, this was
obviously just a short-term thing as was the constitution job. And so
I don't know how it came about, but I decided and I'm sure that it was
my decision that this was not--yes, I know it was my decision. I'll
tell you why in a moment. I decided that it would be very interesting
to try to find out something about the way that the Japanese, certain
Japanese Government ministries, were organized and what they were doing
at the present time, and going beyond that possibly recommending
what could be done to those ministries as a part of the reorganization of the Japanese Government which, after all, was one of the principal missions of the Government Section. And so I remember that I drafted a memorandum to go to General Whitney outlining what it was I had in mind. And much to my pleased surprise, it came back very shortly saying in effect "Go ahead and do this." And so this turned out to be my principal job with Government Section. And what I did was to visit various ministries, talk to interested people, get documents from them, get organization charts and write up official, well, reports, military style, which were to be bucked up the line to General Whitney eventually. That I regret at the moment I just can't recall, but I think I did about eight of these reports. I know that one of the reports dealt with the old Home Ministry because that was the key to the general program of the centralized authority.

END TAPE I, BEGIN TAPE II

I think I was saying that the program of centralized authoritarian control of the old Imperial Government, and this was extremely interesting because all the work was done out in the field for very obvious reasons. I met a number of people and talked to them. They assigned usually English-speaking people to me, particularly on technical points. My Japanese wasn't good enough on certain technical points particularly. I don't know what effect these things had, if any, but I do know that they survived because by coincidence years after this I met one person out in Seattle who had seen some of these in some documents repository out in the Northwest. And someone very recently told me that they had seen them on file some place else.
Q: I think I was the one who told you that.

JMM: Oh, were you?

Q: Yes. Many of your memoranda anyway are in the Hussey Collection, which they have at the University of Michigan. And then the University of Maryland is one of 10 universities which bought that whole collection of microfilm. And then I'm sure there are also in the Government Section materials which have been declassified a few months ago. That means going through about 3,000 boxes and the chance of finding it is very poor. One of my students in fact used two of your memoranda when she was writing about what happened to the... So they were very, very helpful.

It just occurs to me, you were talking about your pre-World War II experience in Japan when you were watched by Japanese policemen. So I forgot to ask you how extensive your acquaintance was with Japanese people other than your tutor and the ones that you had to deal with in learning about the Japanese language and literature. So that when you went back to Japan in 1946, were you reestablishing contact with old Japanese friends? Or in essence you were meeting many, many new Japanese bureaucrats or civil servants for the first time?

JMM: Well, when we were there between 1936 and 1939, we of course lived in a Japanese apartment house and met people there. Of course we met Mary's relatives, particularly her cousin who lived in Tokyo. And also I was able to reestablish contact with my father's family. And he was then still alive but to my surprise, he met us at the boat when we arrived because I had gotten some publicity because I was, as I
said, I think the first American to receive one of these fellowships
to study in Japan, and there was a story in the paper. And I've always
suspected that somebody made it a point to look up my father and to
make the arrangements.

So when I came back in 1946, I was able to locate one of my tutors
whom I had for language and literature, as I said, much earlier. But
the other tutor I did not locate because he came from Hokkaido. When
he was still my tutor he had been conscripted and had been sent to
Manchuria. And we exchanged some letters or letter postcards because
that's all he could write in the army, and he served in China all during
the war. I've never asked him--fortunately, I was able to reestablish
again
contact with him/just a few years ago. But I never knew whether he had
yet been repatriated when I was in Japan.

Let's see, was I able to--I wasn't able to find any of your relatives
or mine, was I at that time /speaking to wife/, but we did later on.

Q: So you were in essence starting making new contacts when you were doing
this work for the Government Section?

JMM: Yes, that's right.

Q: How did you find the morale of these civil servants you were talking
to? Were they cooperative and helpful?

JMM: Oh, yes.

Q: Resentful?

JMM: No, they were cooperative.

Q: Did you have much dealing with the Central Liaison Office in making
your arrangements to interview--

JMM: Well, I think, as I recall, they made all the arrangements. But it
was just a mechanical sort of thing. I'm glad you mentioned that because it became very obvious, if you were there and noticing things at all, that the Central Liaison Office was absolutely central to the operation. Do you know of anybody who has really studied that operation?

Q: No. My student did a little bit but just at the master's level, so I'm sure that there's a great deal more documentation for someone interested in that subject. We were interested in what happened to the Foreign Ministry, what happened to the conduct of foreign relations, and how did Japan reestablish, how did its Diplomatic Corps come back into being and fluidly functioning at the end of the occupation. I'm under the impression that a lot of those career foreign service officers were in fact in control in the Central Liaison Office.

JMM: Well, that reminds me, one person I did meet again was the young man who was my contact, who was I suppose, to use the usual lingo, was the officer responsible for me when I had this fellowship because he was in the Central Liaison Office when I went back in 1946. And I did meet him briefly that time.

Q: Was the caliber of people, of Japanese, in the Central Liaison Office quite high?

JMM: I just don't know. I would guess so because I think— wasn't that in effect the

Q: Yes, insofar as Japan was handling foreign relations with SCAP.

JMM: That reminds me of another person that I met. Have you ever run across the name He was a translator of the poetry of early And this was a book that came out sometime, I think, in the 1930's. And I forget how it was, but we met him in 1936-1939, and he was also
the Central Liaison Office. And I always thought that he was really a secret agent, but I had nothing to go on. It's just a feeling, but he was clearly not a career diplomat in the usual sense, although he was affiliated somehow with the Foreign Office. And my recollection of him in 1946 was that if he was not an alcoholic, he was very close to it. But he was obviously a very intelligent person, a very able person. But also I felt that he was a man of mystery, too.

Q: Would you care to make some observations about the, oh, average person involved in SCAP? Did you sense that there was a great deal of idealism or zealousness to reform Japan, or people were just out there to do a job? And do you have any observations of how the ordinary GI, occupation soldier, was interacting with the Japanese people?

JMM: Not on the latter point at all because we were in GHQ SCAP and in Tokyo, and that was a very different world from the one in the field with the Civil Affairs teams. Have you had much biographical data on the people in Government Section SCAP?

Q: A little bit.

JMM: Because it was really a very interesting group. I would say that the majority of them were very intelligent people. On the other hand, there were some people who very obviously weren't all that intelligent. I would say basically they were all interested in doing a job, and they were all doing a job, and that they felt that what they were doing was important. I did not really detect anything that could be described as a crusading spirit. On the other hand, it was clear that people like myself, for example, were interested in seeing that somehow, some way, things were different in Japan from what they had been before. Well,
for example, T.A. Bisson was in the office, and he had written his, what was it, Japan in China. It was an obvious indication that he was very unhappy with what Japan in China was doing and consequently with what Japan in Japan was like. Harry Emerson Wildes, a very interesting character of course, had been out--his first book on Japan came out around 1925, I think. Oh, yes, Cy Peake was also another one whom I would describe as being a liberal.

Q: Did you have a feeling that they were much listened to, their comments, their observations, their written papers? Were these influential in, say, shaping the thinking of Kades or Kades in relation to Whitney?

JMM: Oh, yes. I would say yes because I would say that the working relationships, laterally and vertically, were really very good. I didn't like Whitney. I mean, he just, to me he just looked like a not very pleasant sort of person. But as I've indicated already, I think he was an excellent commanding officer for that group because he didn't act like a commanding officer. And there was good interplay between Hussey and those of us under him. Hussey and Kades were obviously working very closely together. Kades was somebody who was very easy to get along with.

Well, I would say that the military atmosphere was at a minimum in Government Section. Bureaucratic yes in the sense that here was an office that was doing something in the field of government. Now what relations we had with the Japanese, official and social, which were also official, if you know what I mean, were I would say very good, which was what you might expect. Because we obviously were the people who were in authority and they had nothing to lose by working with us.
Q: Did you meet many of the people in the other sections, say CI&E /Civil Information and Education/ or ESS /Economic and Scientific Section/? Or were you pretty much in your own world in Government Section?

JMM: Very much in our own world. The only real point of contact came in the billets. As I said, I was in the Dai-Ichi Hotel, which made me luckier than I realized at first, because I had my own room. I discovered that that was a very precious commodity among Americans in Tokyo at the time.

Q: What impressions were you forming of the great man himself, MacArthur?

JMM: Well, it's very simple. I would see him quite often, but the only time I saw him he was walking along towards his office and looking at the ground. And I thought that anybody that remote obviously not someone that I would be interested in cultivating even if I could.

Q: Did you in your position actually see a copy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directive that was sent to him in early November?

JMM: No.

Q: That was privileged information?

JMM: Oh, yes.

Q: But you did see the Presidential Policy Statement in September?

JMM: Oh, that was released.

Q: Yes, that was publicly released.

In your efforts to describe the various ministries, did you develop any point of view or any strong feeling, say, that the Home Ministry should be abolished or that there had to be bureaucratic or Civil Service reform?
JMM: On that point, not on the point of the Home Ministry, I think I did recommend that certain functions be removed. I must apologize because I had planned to look at those memoranda and also all the letters that I wrote home before, but life has been rather complicated since you asked me for this interview, so I didn't get around to it.

Q: What about your impressions of other things that were happening at that time? I think the Corwin Edwards Zaibatsu Mission came out, well, in January. It would have been around just about the time that you arrived. I don't know whether you had any occasion to talk to anybody about these things, but I assume Bisson might have been talking about zaibatsu dissolution.

JMM: No. We didn't get involved in that. On the other hand, Eleanor Hadley, whom I had known in Washington, came out, I think, either just before or just after I did. And I can't remember now whether she was billeted in the Dai-Ichi or whether she frequently visited there. I would see her, but as I recall, we really didn't get involved with any discussion.

By the way, you asked about Civil Service. The person in Government Section who was primarily responsible for that was Milton Ezeman, as I recall. I don't know whether he's still at Pitt/University of Pittsburgh/ or not. I know that he was for many years. Have you ever run across that name?

Q: Yes. He might be at Cornell. While you were there—you were there until the late summer?

JMM: Until August of 1946.
Q: Until August of 1946?

JMM: Altogether a little over eight months.

Q: And while you were there did you form fairly positive impressions of the way in which things were being done with the Japanese policies? I know that you've written subsequently a great deal about the occupation.

JMM: That does remind me of a very interesting experience in April of 1946 because one of our assignments was for each member of Government Section to go out and to observe the election which was held. And I was very fortunate because I was assigned to Kyushu, and so I went down there. There I ran across an interesting attitude and an interesting problem. And the attitude was that all of the men in the Civil Affairs teams, which I went around with and with which I was billeted, complained bitterly over the fact that they had all been given special training and had never been assigned to any job where they could use their training, completely overlooking the fact that after all, they were in Japan, which is what they had been trained for. But apparently this was, I suppose--well, it reflected the Army attitude that you never do what you're trained to do. But I suspect also that at the time a variation on the theme of homesickness was involved in it, too. But the other problem was that they felt that they were operating in a complete vacuum, that they'd get these things down from Tokyo one way or another, and they didn't know--the same as this OWI phenomenon I was talking about earlier. They didn't know really what was meant. They couldn't see any relation between any press release from GHQ SCAP and any reality
that they were involved in or anything else.

But on the other hand, they were obviously enjoying themselves because they had comfortable quarters. I'll never forget that when I walked into the billet in--what's Saiko's town?

Q: Koshima?

JMM: Kagoshima. The first thing I heard was the Kaufman Ten on the record player in the billet. And also, as far as I could observe, their relations locally were good relations.

Q: Were you surprised at the outcome of the elections or the high turn-out say of women to vote? And the number of women?

JMM: No, because we felt that this was--well, after all, this was kind of to be expected because they had been given the suffrage. So you'd expect them to react to it, which is precisely what they did.

Q: Were there any other responsibilities of this sort during the eight months that you were in Japan and were writing about the ministries and you were observing the elections? Were there any other responsibilities or duties that stand out in your mind? And then how is it that you happened to leave in August 1946?

JMM: I can't recall at the moment any other interesting assignments or projects that I got involved in. I doubt if there were any. Of course one thing that we did was to get out in the countryside on jeeps every weekend. Oh, also I was able to--the had not been destroyed so I was able to pick up a number of books at really very good prices. As a matter of fact, one thing that everybody talked about was the ease with which they could pick up souvenirs of one sort or another. And people in Government Section would regularly come back with
stories such as, "Look at this beautiful piece of lacquer I got. Not only did it cost me only one carton of cigarettes, but I actually got change back," which is a reflection not only of the usual occupation-occupied situation, but also of the dreadful economic state that Japan at was in that time.

The reason I came back is very simple because I had decided that I was--well, I had long ago decided that I was really going back to an academic career, that I could have stayed on with the Government. But I decided that the bureaucratic life was not for me and so if I was going to do that, well then it was quite clear that I should get my doctorate. And Rockefeller had established what they called the "Rockefeller Post-War Fellowships," which were designed either to attract or to get back to an academic life or to get back into academic life people whose careers had been disrupted by the war. So I heard about these and applied for one and was fortunate enough to get one and also applied to Harvard and was accepted there. So I came back to pick up my fellowship. And as I pointed out, I had an M.A. and a B.A. in English literature. And in my undergraduate career I had taken precisely one political science course, but in spite of that handicap, I was admitted to the doctoral program in the Government Department at Harvard. And the reason for that basically, as far as I've been able to determine, was very simple, that in 1943, early in the winter, I had decided to write a book. Certain ideas had been kicking around in my head for a long time. I guess that was the winter of 1943 or 1944. Well, I can't remember at the moment. It's actually not very important. And what I wanted to do was to write a book on what turned out to be the title

Now the reason I became interested in that was two: one was that I had become very interested in the problem of Japanese militarism even before I went to Japan the first time and had been thinking about this off and on. And in addition to that, very little, almost nothing, had appeared that purported even to try to explain why it was that Japan ended up in the position that it was in in the 1930's and of course in the early stages of the war. And so I thought that I could do something to try to provide at least some kind of an explanation.

And the second thing was that this vacuum of policy that we talked about earlier in relation to unconditional surrender because nobody, but nobody, was saying anything in public about what was going to be done about Japan except the usual things that you would expect, "We've got to get rid of all the Japanese" or "We've got to get rid of the Emperor" or this thing and that thing. And so I was able to get, let's see, I think it was a leave. And I actually wrote the first draft of this book in about a month. I can still recall the hours I spent on the typewriter. The book was published, again not coincidentally, on my wife's birthday, May 15, 1945, and it did receive fairly favorable reviews basically because it was one of the very few books on Japan that were not dealing directly with the war and secondly, one of the even smaller number that tried to, well, look at Japan as of then as a kind of an intellectual problem as well as a military problem. And I was invited up to talk to the Civil Affairs Training Program, was that it? That doesn't sound quite right. You know, that was established--

Q: CATS, Civil Affairs Training School.
JMM: --all over the country. Yes, that's right, Training School. That was right, School not Program, at Harvard. And I met Professor Karl Friedrich very briefly, and I think that that was one thing that at least led to my acceptance in the Government Department.

Q: What was your impression of the CATS program at Harvard? You just went up to lecture?

JMM: To me it was just a group of people attending my lecture. But the interesting consequence of this development was that I am probably one of a very small number of people with a Harvard Ph.D. who didn't have to write a dissertation, because I had a dissertation topic all picked out and I had even developed a bibliography for it on the Meiji Constitution when Professor Friedrich suggested to me that I present my book as a dissertation. And I was not going to turn down an invitation like that. So it was referred to Eddie Reischauer for his opinion, and his opinion was, "Well, this is very interesting, but how do we know that Maki ever read any books?" So what I had to do was to prepare a bibliography, which was...

END SIDE I, BEGIN SIDE II

... bibliography in an envelope in the back of it. So I was able to get my doctorate at Harvard in a relatively short period of time.

Q: Does that mean that -- it just occurred to me to ask one other little question about the purge. You were working on it and checking over some of the categories. Were you in approval of this effort of the early stage of the occupation, the purge?

JMM: Well, approval meaning that I thought it was a natural outgrowth of the defeat because if certain men were in positions of influence
and if they had determined policy and implemented policy, then naturally, from the standpoint of the victors, well, they should be gotten out of public life temporarily. It wasn't a question of liquidating them or even of denying them the opportunity to make a living. But it was just—well, to some it was that denial, but it wasn't, well, ostracism.

Q: One of the strongest criticisms of the purge is not necessarily its intent but the fact that people were purged by categories.

JMM: Yes, yes.

Q: So that it was difficult to take account of extenuating circumstances. But you were involved with appeals which would indicate that certain individuals were not openly purged.

JMM: Yes, because as I recall, everybody was given an opportunity to appeal and it was quite clear that many people wouldn't do it because they felt that obviously they were—they couldn't deny the fact that they were in the stated categories and probably some felt, just as a matter of pride, that they didn't want to beg for anything resembling mercy from the victors.

Q: Were the appeals strictly written or did they also have interviews, the Appeals Board?

JMM: I just don't know.

Q: You were just involved with the—

JMM: What we were supposed to do was simply to process these written documents.

Q: I'm curious—this is my last question then. What was the first time you went back to Japan after you left in August 1946?
JMM: That wasn't until 1958. I had a Research Fulbright to go back in 1958. But in case you haven't noticed, I was very, very fortunate in being in Japan in the late 1930's, being in Japan immediately after the war, and then 12 years later when--well, in 1958 people said, "Well, we really began to recover about three years ago," which was 1955. So these were three very, very different Japans.

Q: And so I can assume then that you were quite impressed, perhaps even in some ways amazed by what you found in 1958?

JMM: Oh, yes, absolutely. Interestingly enough, I also happened to run into a friend of mine whom I had known from Washington days, who was also coming back to Japan after some years of absence. And all he could talk about was all of the destruction that he could see in Tokyo in 1958, which means that he had very selective vision because you could, if you were really looking, see the burned-out frame of a building some place or a pile of rubble some place. But I saw only the new things and he saw only the old things. But he kept shaking his head about all this destruction that had taken place.

But that does remind me that one of the most vivid memories from the 1946 visit and that was going through Hiroshima on the train down to Kyushu. And the train stopped for only a few minutes, and I got off. But the memory is all of the burned stumps, rather skeletons of trees that you could see stretching out everywhere.

Q: Since you are a scholar of the occupation and a political scientist and also somebody who was there at the time, do you now feel from the perspective of 1979 that our occupation did make some difference in modern Japanese history?
JMM: Oh, yes. I've been convinced of that for a long, long time and I've been also convinced that the occupation was an event in Japanese history, just as important as the Meiji Restoration or going back many centuries, the Taikan Reform. And I'm quite certain that historians many years from now will be writing in that vein. Now I want to emphasize that what I'm talking about is the impact of the occupation as a generalized occupation and not a lot of the details that were involved in it then. I think that one problem has been that people have tended, for understandable reasons, to concentrate on the details and particularly the unpleasant or the details which seem not to have come off.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very, very, very much. It's been a fascinating time.

JMM: Well, I want to thank you because I'd never had an opportunity to really talk about this and I've never written about it either.

END OF INTERVIEW