

# A Difficult Decision to Join the Military: Tosh Yasutake

This video clip is an excerpt from Tosh Yasutake's oral history interview, conducted on November 14, 2002, by Densho, an organization dedication to sharing the history of Japanese-American internment during World War II.

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Tier 2 terms

eventually, segregated, unit, volunteer, at least, actually, released, assimilate

Tier 3 terms

government, army, (internment) camp, drafted, hakujuin, troop

Web Version:

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/a-difficult-decision-to-join-the-military-tosh-yasutake>



*This article contains a multimedia feature that is available at the web address above.*

Interviewer: Well, eventually the government decided to form a segregated army unit, the 442. And they went to the camps and they asked for volunteers from the camps. What was your reaction when that happened?

Tosh Yasutake: Well, I thought, that's really great. But then at the time it happened, I thought it was — I was very happy to hear that.

Interviewer: Why were you happy to hear that?

Tosh Yasutake: Well, because we were given — if you wanted to go in the army ... — before, we were not — even if you wanted to go, we couldn't go. So now, at least we were given a chance to go into the army. But then later, the more I thought of it, the more uncertain I was because, because of the fact that actually they were asking volunteers for, to form a segregated Japanese-American unit and the more I thought of it, the more upset I got. And I thought that if they were going to volunteer or even be drafted in the army, they ought to just assimilate us among the hakujuin troops and not have a segregated unit. And so many of

the friends and [colleagues] working in the hospital had already volunteered, but I didn't until the very last day because of that. I was holding out, hoping that they'd say that they would assimilate us to, if we wanted to, we could go to some other units. But they didn't say that. And finally in desperation, the last day, I decided that maybe if I did volunteer that it might help my dad get released a little earlier. So I did volunteer.

## Source

To access the full interview segment visit

<http://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-138-8/>

### **TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS**

1. Question

Re-read the first sentence of the text. "eventually" means finally or in the end. What does this tell us about the government's decision?

2. Question

Describe the change in Tosh's feelings about volunteering for the army. What caused this change?

3. Question

What does it mean that Japanese troops were to be "segregated" from other troops?

4. Question

Hakujin is the Japanese term for Caucasian people. Tosh says, "... they ought just to assimilate us among hakujin troops and not have a segregated unit." Using what you know about what it means to be segregated and why this upset Tosh, what does the word "assimilate" mean?

## TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS & Answers

### 1. Question

Re-read the first sentence of the text. “eventually” means finally or in the end. What does this tell us about the government’s decision?

Answer

It took them a long time to make.)

### 2. Question

Describe the change in Tosh’s feelings about volunteering for the army. What caused this change?

Answer

When he first heard about being able to enlist, he was happy because he would have the opportunity to join the army — something he wasn’t afforded before. The more he thought about having to be in a segregated unit, though, the more upset he became.

### 3. Question

What does it mean that Japanese troops were to be “segregated” from other troops?

Answer

They were kept in a separate unit, away from other troops.

### 4. Question

Hakujin is the Japanese term for Caucasian people. Tosh says, “... they ought just to assimilate us among hakujin troops and not have a segregated unit.” Using what you know about what it means to be segregated and why this upset Tosh, what does the word “assimilate” mean?

Answer

Assimilate means to incorporate.)