[ Mid-tempo orchestral music plays ]

-They are hero stories because

each laid down their life

for a righteous cause,

laid down their life for people

they did not know and never met.

The fallen are made

holy by their sacrifice.

And the Earth in which they lay

cannot be dedicated

to be more sacred,

and we cannot erase

the debt we owe

to these men and women

of uncommon statue.

[ Music continues ]

-In 1924, Frank Nishimura

was born in Seattle, Washington,

to Ritoji and Kiku Nishimura.

Frank was the youngest

of six children

and the only one

with an American name.

His other siblings

were Toshimi, Shizuko,

Hiromi, Yukie, and Toyo.

Both his mother and father

were good businesspeople

and bought and sold hotels.

Since Japanese nationals were

not permitted to purchase land

in Washington State by law,

a trusted Jewish attorney

purchased the property

in his name,

but when Toshimi came of age,

the title

was transferred to him.

The family acquired

the Puget Sound Hotel

on Sixth and Dearborn Street

and lived on the fifth floor.

It was the second largest

hotel in town, with 444 rooms.

Frank attended Cascade

and then Bailey Gatzert School.

He was in the last

8th-grade class

that graduated

from Bailey Gatzert in 1938.

In the fall,

he started classes

at Broadway High School,

which is now

Seattle Central College.

In the summer, Frank

drove his friends to the beach

and parks

for climbing and picnicking.

In the winter, they skied

Snoqualmie and Mount Rainier.

Frank's teen years

were carefree and fun.

-100th Battalion and the Military Intelligence Service,

if you're here today,

please raise your hand or stand.

[ Applause ]

-All that changed

on December 7, 1941.

-On December 7, 1941,

Shorty, a couple of friends,

and I

went up to Mount Rainier

for winter skiing.

Shorty turned on the radio.

When the static cleared,

we heard that the Japanese

had bombed Pearl Harbor.

[ Radio tuning ]

-From the NBC newsroom

in New York,

President Roosevelt said

in a statement today

that the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii,

from the air.

I'll repeat that.

President Roosevelt says...

-Shortly hollered...

-Holy cow, this is war!

-From the NBC newsroom

in New York...

-I was angry because

they attacked my country.

I remembered what Miss Mahon,

principal of Bailey Gatzert,

had always told us

about being proud Americans.

It felt like 1,000 eyes

were watching us

on the way home.

Everyone was relieved to return

to the security of Japantown.

I ran up five floors

to our family room.

Mother said...

-Did you hear the news?

-There was a look of shock

on the faces of my mother,

father, and older brother

as they huddled

around the Motorola radio.

Dad said...

-There is going to be war

with Japan.

-In grade school

Miss Mahon always reminded us

that we were American citizens,

but I worried because my parents

were Japanese citizens

and could not become naturalized

U.S. citizens by law.

-Remember, Frank,

you are an American

-Right after Pearl Harbor, Japanese community leaders

were taken by the FBI.

The community did not know

where the people were detained

or how long they would be gone.

Rimban Suzuki,

the Buddhist priest,

leaders

of the Japanese Gold Club,

and others were taken.

Japanese families lived in fear

about what would happen next.

A tension in the community rolls

when all Japanese

and Japanese-Americans

were ordered to turn

in shortwave radios, cameras,

and weapons to

the Seattle Police Department.

Many burned their Japanese

books, family photographs,

and anything that showed

a connection to Japan.

Shorty was afraid

they would keep his ham radio,

so he asked if I could hide it.

I said, "Okay."

We buried it under a canvas tarp

and piles of old suitcases

in the basement.

We were sure

no one would find it.

FBI men

drove up in the black sedan.

They wore fedora hats, suits,

and shiny shoes.

I thought they were going

to take my father away,

but instead

they wanted to talk to me.

I felt the blood drain

from my face and gulped

when they said...

-Ham radio.

-I was shaking as I walked them to the basement.

All that time,

I was hoping

I wouldn't go to prison.

Toshimi, my older brother,

yelled at me

for being so careless.

He said that we should lay low

and not draw attention

to ourselves.

Anxiously,

we waited every day for a week

to see if the FBI would return.

Luckily, they didn't.

After this incident,

Dad knew things would get worse.

Dad and Toshimi

talked after dinner

about what might happen next.

-Will they take

Japanese citizens?

What would become

of the children?

-Who would run the hotel,

and how much cash should we set

aside if our assets are frozen?

-The piers were off-limits

to Japanese,

and on December 8th,

I lost my delivery job

with a P.I. newspaper.

A policeman saw us

at the waterfront

and told us to leave

and not come back.

We were unable to say goodbye

to our customers

or even get paid.

-The larger problem --

the uncertainty of what would

happen among these people

in case of a Japanese invasion

still remained.

That is why

the commanding general

of the Western Defense Command

determined that all Japanese

within the coastal area

should move inland.

-In April 1942,

the government issued the orders

for all Japanese aliens

and non-aliens within 150 miles

from the coast

to be forcibly incarcerated

within a week.

Flyers were posted on telephone poles all over Japantown.

Many Japanese were selling

or storing their possessions

as they packed

what they could carry.

Dad leased the hotel to Mr. Wu,

a Chinese business friend.

Then he rented a large Mayflower moving trailer and truck.

Our destination was

Mead, Washington, near Spokane,

where Toshimi had leased

100 acres of land.

Two other families joined us,

and we headed east

over the mountains beyond

the 150-mile exclusion zone.

The three families

pitched a tent,

and we began building a house,

stringing electrical wire,

and constructing an outhouse.

We pumped water up

from the river for bathing

and irrigating our garden.

After a few months,

the rest of my siblings

relocated elsewhere,

away from Mead, leaving me alone

with Mom and Dad.

Dad insisted

that we could live near Spokane,

away from potentially

unfriendly neighbors.

Japantown was empty,

and all the Japanese

were in the temporary incarceration center

on the Puyallup Fairgrounds

under the guard of the army.

The soldiers took everyone --

the very old, orphans,

healthy adults, and children.

[ Horse neighs ]

We bought two horses

to haul wood, plow fields,

and harvest hay.

But it turned out they were

racehorses and ran away.

Hey! Come back here!

We spent the whole day

rounding them up

and returning them to the farmer, their former owner.

I was used to the city life,

with friends, picnics,

dances, churches,

Chinese restaurants,

and Japanese furo bathhouses.

I knew that the Japantown life

was gone,

but I felt isolated

and missed my friends.

My cousin in Spokane said that

the U.S. Army is was accepting

Japanese-American volunteers.

I had images of going to Europe

and seeing the places

I had only imagined.

I was afraid

of what my parents will say,

but I volunteered

for the Army anyway

and just needed to pass

the physical.

Dad worried I might be sent

to fight against Japan.

Also, he was concerned

about losing the son

who drove them to town

for groceries.

Eventually, after I left,

both of my parents

moved into a proper house

with running water and indoor

plumbing in Post Falls, Idaho.

[ Train whistle blows ]

Because the train to Mississippi

was full

and all the seats were taken,

I sat on the train stairwell

for the whole trip...

[ Train whistle blows,

bell clangs ]

...and watched the countryside go by.

[ Mid-tempo orchestral music continues ]

Because the 100th Infantry

Battalion from Hawaii

was suffering heavy casualties

at Monte Cassino,

the sergeant asked if anyone

would volunteer

to be a replacement.

I raised my hand,

as did about five others.

The Hawaiian boys

knew we volunteered,

so they treated us well.

Because I was youngest,

they called me "Junior,"

which came out to be "Jun-yah"

in pidgin English.

[ Mid-tempo ukulele music

plays ]

Private Mutts,

a dark and wiry fellow,

became my buddy and protector.

He wore his cap crooked

on purpose

and always wore shorts

in the barracks.

Mutts would say...

-Hey, Jun-yah, I teach you

play pool today.

-Over the weeks,

I learned about

rifles, grenades,

basic first aid, poker, craps,

ukuleles, fish, hula, and poi.

[ Somber orchestral music

plays ]

After basic training,

we shipped out and zigzagged

across the Atlantic

to avoid the German Subs.

There were 400 of us

on a Liberty ship,

which is really an old

rust-bucket freighter.

We were assigned

to the cargo hold,

stacked with bunks

five to six high.

I'll take the top one.

At first, the troops were eager,

but their enthusiasm didn't last

as we began to rock and roll

in the Atlantic for weeks.

Most got seasick.

This went on for about a month,

until we reached Italy.

Even though the Hawaii boys

were tanned,

many of them looked pale

or green the entire trip.

When we landed,

I was assigned as a radio man.

The radio was a large pack

with an antenna

that weighed

almost as much as I did,

plus I had my rifle

plus ammo, canteen, and gear.

Usually, the biggest guy

carried the radio.

Immediately, I thought this was

my punishment for hiding

Shorty's ham radio in Seattle.

[ Gunfire ]

At Anzio, I was assigned

to Company B.

There was a fellow named Curtis

who had a Chinese girlfriend

back home.

His parents objected

because she was not Japanese,

but he wanted to marry her

and asked for our advice.

We told him to follow his heart.

He was happy

and wrote a letter telling her

he wanted to marry her

when he got home.

[ Music continues ]

[ Explosion ]

The next day,

near the Mussolini Canal Battle,

the ground was shaking

from our artillery fire.

Curtis took a peek and caught

a bullet between the eyes.

It was sad to see his life

and dreams disappear so quickly.

Later,

I met Yoshito from Seattle,

and we shared a foxhole.

We talked about good times growing up.

To my surprise,

he had dated my sister.

I was shocked and amazed.

"You dated my sister?" I asked.

After that,

he became like a brother to me.

Yoshito was the best point man,

and everyone followed him

single-file

through the terrain and forest.

Being up front was

the most dangerous assignment.

He was so good at sneaking up

on the enemy

that he earned the nickname

"The Shadow."

Sadly, fate caught up

to Yoshito...

[ Gunshot ]

...when a sniper's bullet

killed him.

I heard...

-Shadow's down!

-By the time I reached him,

someone had already

covered his body with a poncho.

I didn't have a chance

to say a last goodbye.

The captain used me

as an interpreter

since I took German

at Broadway High School.

We came upon a farmhouse,

and my squad leader

told me to tell the Germans

to surrender.

I crawled through

the grape vineyard and hollered,

"Kommen un Hingabe!" --

"Come out and surrender!"

I saw the window open,

and a potato-masher grenade

came flying out.

[ Object clatters ]

I was scared and ran like crazy.

I got hung up

in the grapevine wires,

which held me firm and helpless.

[ Explosion ]

The explosion and concussion

blew me to the terrace below.

I stood dizzy --

couldn't hear a thing

out of both my ears.

My buddies continued to attack,

and we were able

to capture the Germans.

But I lost my hearing.

Gradually, some of it came back,

but I was never the same.

Next we were ordered to rescue

the Texas Lost Battalion.

The trees in the Vosges Forest

were so tall,

it was dark even during the day.

[ Music continues ]

[ Whistling, explosions ]

We took mortar fire,

and a shell exploded

in the trees.

[ Whistling, explosion ]

-Medic, three down!

[ Music continues ]

-Our first man was wounded

in the back,

the second in the head,

and I caught shrapnel

in the shoulder

and ended up in a military

hospital outside of London.

Since I could walk

and get around,

I was able to visit London.

[ Air-raid sirens blaring ]

No one told us that German

V2 missiles were blasting London

and no one knew

where they would land.

I thought, "I better get back

to the hospital,"

where it was safe.

I rejoined my unit

in the Riviera area,

and our next battle would be

the German Gothic Line campaign.

The plan was to climb

Mount Folgorito

and hit the Germans

from two sides.

-Shh! Be quiet on this climb.

-The trail was narrow,

and one of our pack mules

fell off a cliff.

We held our breath as it fell.

It must have broken its neck

instantly

because it didn't cry out

and give away our position.

Quietly, we climbed

and surprised the Germans.

It wasn't long before the

European war was over.

Next, I volunteered to fight

in the Pacific,

against the Japanese.

By the time we organized,

the atom bombs had dropped

and the Japanese surrendered.

[ Music continues ]

After the war,

I returned to Seattle

and worked at the hotel

part-time

and became a full-time postal

letter carrier.

On Memorial Day

some years after the war,

I visited Washelli Cemetery

in Seattle

and discovered Yoshito's grave.

I said my goodbye

and finally had time

to feel the sadness of my loss.

As I stood by his grave,

I thought how thankful I was

to have a life.

I thought about

how many of my buddies

did not have a chance

to marry, have children,

watch the rain fall,

or picnic on Alki Beach

with kids playing tag

or making castles in the sand.

On the beach,

I sip tea from a thermos

and enjoy the rice ball

with a pickled red plum inside.

[ Music continues ]

On Memorial Day,

I think about my army buddies

from Seattle and Hawaii

who fought by my side

and made me a better person.

Thank you, my friends.

I will never forget you.

[ Wind blowing ]

[ Taps playing ]

[ Mid-tempo orchestral music playing ]

[ Music continues ]