

Returning Home - Sidney Byrd - OSEU #6

After three long, lonely years, the disciplinarian called me to the office, a dreaded office. Going to the disciplinarian's office was never a happy experience. It only meant one thing, it meant punishment. He was a disciplinarian. Called me in. He said, Sid, how would you like to go home? It never occurred to me. Yes, sir. Go take a shower, change into your uniform, bring whatever you wanted to bring, take home with you. So I took my shower, changed into my Army uniform, and came in a little bag of a few things that I wanted to take home with me.

He took me down to the railroad station, bought me a train ticket, gave me some money to buy my lunch, and I left. Long trip home, arrived at Gordon, Nebraska. I looked out the window and I saw my grandparents. I practically leaped from the train and I ran and I grabbed my grandmother. Tears were down my cheeks, tears were down. And that was the happiest day of my life, just to be with my grandmother. My grandfather said, Trakosha, you've made some improvements in your life. You look like you're going to go to war. And I had an Army uniform.

And that was the beginning of my—however harsh it was, we were beaten for speaking our own language at the school. So I had a hard time, but at home, no one spoke English, so I was able to relearn my language. He said, oh, the old man tells you, the heart and soul of any culture is the language. Once the language is gone, you're no longer a people.