

NISEI SERVICEMEN, WORLD WAR II

The all-Nisei 100th Infantry Battalion preceded the 442nd Regimental Combat Team into action. Dubbed the "Purple Heart Battalion," the 100th participated in the bloody Italian battles of Salerno, Volturno River, Cassino, Rapido River, and Anzio. After the Anzio beachhead was secured, the 100th Infantry Battalion was incorporated into the larger 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Together they went through ^{seven} ~~five~~ major campaigns in Italy and France, earning more decorations than any other unit of its size--18,143 decorations for valor, including one Congressional Medal of Honor, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, some 4,000 Bronze Stars, and seven Presidential Distinguished Unit Citations. In addition, the "Go for Broke" unit suffered 308 percent casualties--which translates into 9,500 Purple Hearts. Two U.S. senators from Hawaii are veterans of this unique outfit: Daniel K. Inouye, who lost his right arm in combat and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross; and Spark M. Matsunaga, who won ~~the~~ the Silver Star.

That is only half the story of Nisei in uniform. Much less known to the general public were the heroic exploits of approximately 6,000 Japanese Americans assigned to the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). Unlike the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd RCT, these men served individually or in small groups throughout the Pacific Theatre of Operation. They engaged in intelligence gathering, translated captured Japanese documents, interpreted enemy communications, interrogated prisoners of war, deciphered codes, and flushed out caves and dugouts filled with frightened civilians and soldiers. Attached to every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, many of the MIS-men were loaned to Allied units--the British, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and the Chinese. Nisei served with the Merrill Marauders in ~~the~~ the China-Burma-

India theatre and participated in every major invasion, including going in with the first wave of assault troops at such places as: Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Leyte, Solomon Islands, Saipan, Iwo Jima, New Caledonia, Bougainville, the Phillipines, Okinawa, etc. MIS-ers were killed and wounded in action and the decorations won was far out of proportion to their number. Later, hundreds more served in the occupation of Japan. High military sources claim that the work of Nisei helped to shorten the war against Japan by at least two years--thereby saving over an estimated one million lives, both American and Japanese.

Altogether--about 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II, including women in the WAC's and Army Nurse Corps. *This represents nearly 12% of all*

-30- *Japanese Americans -- a figure 50% higher than the national average.*