

ADDENDUM A

UNIQUE INTEREST OF NISEI WAR VETERANS

"Go For Broke, Inc." Statement

Endorsing H. R. 4110

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"Recognition Well Earned"

The Final Reports of the Selective Service System, Special Groups, issued in 1953, includes a section on "Japanese Americans".

After explaining the actions and steps taken by Selective Service in relation to those of Japanese ancestry in the United States up to January 2, 1945, when the Exclusion Orders were lifted, Special Monograph No. 10, Volume 1 Text, goes on to state that:

...But public sentiment was still strong in places, and some protest meetings, "anti-Jap resolutions", "Move along, Tojo"--and unfriendly editorials in newspapers displayed community antagonism. Government regulations continued to debar evacuees from fishing in coastal waters or from waterfront work. One important labor union (Teamsters) "drew the color" line on all men of Japanese descent except veterans and numbers of union members threatened to strike if returning Japanese were employed on the same job. With more and more evacuees going back to their old localities, resentment continued to increase, and by the end of June 1944, some 34 acts of violence had been recorded. These resulted in no loss of life but in considerable property damage.

In many communities of California, Oregon, and Washington, there was rather manifest hostility toward all persons of Japanese extraction regardless of who they were. Organized efforts were made (by the War Relocation Authority and others) to combat this unreasonable prejudice, but what did more than anything else to check discrimination and ill treatment were reports given publicity concerning the operations of two Japanese American units in the Army--the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Infantry.

The unparalleled records of these two units and reputation for being two of the most decorated organizations in the Army made sound impressions. They brought home to the neighbors of Japanese Americans the fact that these families were Americans also....

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There was the case of Sergeant Ben Kuroki, a 25-year-old Nisei (from North Platte, Nebraska) who was a qualified turret gunner with (50) heavy bombing missions against the (German and Japanese) enemy. He had survived the disastrous raid on the Ploesti oil fields of Rumania. The winner of two Distinguished Flying Crosses and wearer of the coveted Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, this hero was said to have been prevented from appearing on a West Coast radio program "for being a Jap"...

A veterans' organization in (Hood River) Oregon removed from the Honor Roll on the county house the names of Japanese American citizens and neighbors who were "sweating it out" at Cassino, Italy...

There were the five Masaoka boys--Ben, Mike, Henry, Tad, and Ike--who took part in the liberation of Italy (and France. Ben was killed in action, Ike is 100% disabled, and Tad is 20% disabled). Sergeant Henry Goshu was back from Burma wearing the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and the Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation. Likewise, Kazuo Komoto whose Purple Heart among other ribbons was awarded for wounds received in the South Pacific. Frank Hachiya, another whose name had been deemed at one time unworthy of the Honor Roll, was one of many who did not return, but a Distinguished Service Cross posthumously awarded attested to his gallantry in action at Leyte (where, dropped behind enemy lines, he was killed by United States troops invading that Island in the Philippines as he tried to crawl back to American lines with the detailed maps of the Japanese defenses).

Of the 29 Congressional Medals of Honor awarded for gallantry during World War II, one was earned by a Nisei soldier. He was Private First Class Sadao S. Munemori who received the medal posthumously on January 9, 1946, for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty" near Seravezza, Italy on April 5, 1945. His action of knocking out two German machine gun emplacements saved two of his men at the cost of his own life and did much to clear the path for his company's victorious advance. On October 13, 1947, the United States Army renamed its cargo vessel, "Wilson Victory", to "Private Sadao S. Munemori" and made it an Army transport, the first and only United States vessel to be named for a Nisei.

In the concluding paragraphs entitled "Recognition Well Earned", the Selective Service declared that:

Over 25,500 registrants of Japanese extraction were processed by Selective Service during World War II. More than 21,000 were inducted. In the light of the total

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number who served in the Army, even considering the size of the Japanese American population group, these figures are impressive. Nor can statistics measure the quality of patriotic service rendered by Nisei citizens, only one generation removed from the rice paddies and temples of an oriental island empire.

On July 15, 1946, President Harry S. Truman reviewed elements of the 442nd Infantry Regiment, known as the "Christmas Tree Regiment" because of its many decorations. This unit (which included as its First Battalion the original 100th Infantry Battalion) had participated (in two and a half years) in seven major campaigns in Italy and France (including two beachhead assaults), received seven Presidential Distinguished Unit Citations (plus 36 Army Commendations, 87 Divisional Commendations, and Meritorious Service Plaques for its Service Company and its Medical Detachments), and earned 18,143 individual decorations....

In affixing the Presidential Unit Banner to the colors of the 442nd Infantry Regiment, President Truman said, "I think Americanism is not a matter of race or creed, but of the heart. You fought, not only the enemy, but prejudice --and you won".

Altogether 33,300 Nisei, more than half from the continental United States, served in World War II, almost equally divided between Europe and the Pacific. Among the Divisions to which the 442nd was attached were the Thirty-Fourth (Red Bull) (in the Fifth Army in Italy), the Thirty-Sixth (Texas Arrowhead) (in the Seventh Army in France), and the Ninety-Second (Buffalo) (in the Fifth Army in Italy). Selective Service may take pride in the part it played in the making of such soldiery.

The Fight To Serve

While practically all of the government and private books and papers on Nisei World War II military service extoll the heroic battle record of these same troops, none that I am familiar with begins to reveal the difficult and hard fight that we American Japanese GI volunteers had to wage in order to gain the opportunity to serve our country in war against the common enemies.

As one who was the National Secretary and Field Executive of the JACL from August 1941 to the time of my induction into the 442nd in June 1943, I can personally attest to much of what had to be overcome before we were accepted for military service in the Army of the United States. Thereafter, until my honorable discharge in December 1945, I served as the noncom in charge of public relations for the 442nd. Accordingly, I feel I am qualified to speak out on the military aspects of our wartime experience, especially as it relates to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

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And, I am both pleased and proud that I now can tell my story of the long, hard battle against this special type of military discrimination without bitterness and acrimony, for I continue to remain surprised that so few who endured so much are today not an embittered, resentful lot. After all, of the millions who served in World War II, we Americans of Japanese ancestry are among the relatively few who really knew and understood what we were fighting for and whose heroic dead did not die entirely in vain.

Prior to December 7, 1941, Americans of Japanese ancestry were registered, classified, and inducted as were all other qualified citizens. In fact, during the first year of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, from November 1, 1940, to November 1, 1941, 3,188 Nisei had been inducted into the Army by Selective Service.

Soon, thereafter, Army commanders in the field were granted discretionary authority to release, reassign, or retain the Nisei then in their respective commands. As I remember it, about half of those then in the military were discharged "for the convenience of the government", while most of the other half were assigned to noncombatant duty, including menial tasks and responsibilities. It was under this discretionary authority that the Japanese Americans then in the two National Guard Regiments in the then Territory of Hawaii were discharged "for the convenience of the government", even though many of them had performed in the most exemplary manner before, during, and immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Also, about this same time, the War Department advised Selective Service that it should no longer induct any more Nisei into the military.

Early in 1942, Selective Service decided to reclassify all qualified Japanese Americans into Class IV-C, which was originally established for declarant and nondeclarant aliens but soon became known as the classification for "enemy aliens". Of course, we Nisei loudly decried and denounced that classification which denied our citizenship and strongly requested that we be classified and treated as was our due as native-born Americans. By coincidence, the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command about this time was posting his various "evacuation" orders in which he too tried to deprive us our then nominal citizenship by describing us as "nonaliens".

As evacuation became imminent, largely because the Army insisted that it was impossible to segregate the loyal from the disloyal and that there was something in the blood of the Japanese race that made it also impossible to assimilate into the American culture, democracy, and way of life, many of us, especially in the JACL leadership at that time, began to believe that the only means left to us to refute those unscientific and racist charges was to demonstrate on the battlefields of that war that Americanism is truly a matter of the mind and the heart, and not one of race or ancestry. Simultaneously many in Hawaii also arrived at the same conclusion. So, demands from the mainland

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and from Hawaii reached Washington that we of Japanese extraction be given the opportunity to prove that our loyalty and allegiance were absolute and unequivocal.

At an emergency meeting of the National JACL over Thanksgiving week-end in 1942 in Salt Lake City, Utah, to which the War Relocation Authority allowed two organization members from each of the ten Relocation Centers to attend, it was decided that this demand be articulated and "lobbied" in Washington. So, George Inagaki and I were dispatched to the nation's capital to do our best to secure the necessary "permission" to serve in our military.

In the meantime, to try to test some of the implications, the War Department decided to recall those "discharged" National Guardsmen in Hawaii. When it was found not possible under the then wartime circumstances to assign these troops as individuals to various organizations, it was decided to form them into a segregated "oversize" battalion of infantrymen, the only "segregated" outfit in the Army except for blacks, then called Negroes.

In the summer of 1942, the 1,300 Hawaiian Japanese Americans were sent to Camp McCloy, Wisconsin, and were designated as the 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate). There, in training, they proved themselves to be superb infantrymen.

After closely monitoring the development of the 100th, and in response to the tens of thousands of demands in the form of letters and resolutions, the Army finally agreed to accept qualified American Japanese, but only on the basis of individual volunteers after special loyalty clearance on February 1, 1943. Then President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a statement, noting that "The proposal of the War Department to organize a combat team consisting of loyal American citizens of Japanese descent has my full approval. The new combat team will add to the nearly 5,000 loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry who are already serving in the armed forces of our country. This is a natural and logical step toward the reinstitution of the Selective Service procedures which...were disrupted by the evacuation. No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and the heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

Thus, we Nisei had to fight the same Army that suspected our loyalty and had incarcerated most of us in virtual prison camps for the chance to serve in that same Army.

Volunteering for that Army, though, was not popular in the camps. Many insisted that, after what the Army had done to us and our families, it was neither right nor appropriate that we should volunteer to fight in that same Army. More, though, declared that if the Army would restore their

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constitutional and other rights and allow their families to return to their former homes and associations on the West Coast, they would gladly volunteer and fight for their country. Some were opposed to the segregated status of the combat team, suspecting that the Army would use Japanese Americans as "suicide" troops, following the suggestions of some politicians that the Army ought to resort to this tactic as a means of "getting rid of the Jap problem". After all, the young Colonel in charge of the evacuation program for the Western Defense Command had decreed that any person with as much as 1/16th "Japanese blood" was Japanese and had to be imprisoned in these Army "Assembly Centers", which happens to be twice the formula used by Adolph Hitler who insisted that only those with up to 1/8th "Jewish blood" should be sent to his death camps. And, there was that Louisiana Congressman who introduced a bill to sterilize young Japanese American youth.

Moreover, unlike the average American, we could not volunteer and choose the branch of service we preferred. The Navy and the Marines, as well as the Coast Guard and the Merchant Marine, would not accept us Nisei. Neither would the air force. And, even the Army would allow us to volunteer for duty only as combat infantrymen, and then in a segregated unit, commanded almost entirely by Caucasian or white officers. Even the cadre for training could not be the trained National Guardsmen of the 100th; the cadre noncoms were selected from various units to which they had been assigned, with few with any combat or infantry training at all.

The great majority of volunteers were, in fact, of the Buddhist faith, even though for personal reasons best known to themselves they identified their religious preference as "None" or "Christian" or "Protestant". The Army, however, would yield to our requests only to the extent of providing us with two Congregational chaplains of Japanese ancestry.

In the so-called Army Ground scores, I believe they were called, a mark of 110 or more made a GI eligible for Officer Candidate Schools. We recruits averaged out at about 116. But, since we had volunteered for combat, the Army selected fewer than five to go on to OCS. This meant that almost all of our officers of Japanese ancestry were combat commissions, especially in the 442nd.

And, even though they volunteered for action specifically against the Nazi enemy Germans, those Nisei who could read, write, and speak Japanese to a limited degree were almost automatically transferred to the Military Intelligence Service, to serve against the Japanese enemy in the Pacific.

This was another of many contradictory policies. More than a month before the outbreak of war in the Pacific, a small, select "secret" school was established at the Presidio in San Francisco for the avowed purpose of training young Nisei who could read, write, and speak some Japanese to serve against the land of their parents and ancestors and in some cases possibly

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against brothers, uncles, and family friends who had not emigrated to the United States, in combat intelligence where the United States military was weakest in its war preparations against the Japanese enemy.

Even as the Western Defense Command was accusing Nisei attending Japanese language schools on the West Coast as being dangerous to the national security and at least pro-Japan in their attitudes, thereby requiring their removal as a measure of military necessity, MIS officers were desperately trying to find Nisei conversant enough in Japanese to enlist in their special training program. In spite of the fears of the Western Defense Command, it was learned that less than five percent of the Nisei on the West Coast were experienced enough in Japanese to qualify for the lowest level of MIS training.

While the Army privately but vigorously solicited the enlistment of qualified Nisei and Kibei for their special knowledge, they would provide at best noncommissioned ranks for these volunteers, while commissioning non-Nisei language officers who were just beginners. Yet, in the field these Nisei intelligence GIs were considered so valuable and important that in most instances several regular soldiers were ordered to guard them against possible mistaken identities on the part of their fellow American troops.

Though the Navy, Marines, and Air Force would not accept Nisei into their ranks, they did welcome for temporary duty these Nisei MIS specialists. George Inagaki, for example, was the personal interpreter for Admiral Chester Nimitz in the battle for Okinawa, the last great engagement of the Pacific War.

Subsequently, because of the high regard he developed for the Nisei in MIS and the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service, when he became the Chief of Naval Operations after the war, he opened up the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, and all branches of the Navy, including the Marines, to qualified Japanese Americans.

At this point, it might be well for us in the 442nd to pay our special respects and tribute to our fellow American Japanese who served our nation so valiantly in World War II in the Pacific Theater and in the China, Burma, India Theater. Since their activities were so important that most still remain classified "secret", they did not receive the publicity or plaudits that they so richly deserved. Still, in my humble opinion and shared by most--if not all--in the 442nd, they contributed far more to the ultimate surrender of the Japanese militarists than we did to Allied Victory in Europe.

Much more important, though, they put to the lie the canard that we in Europe could not, that Americans of Japanese ancestry would, and did, fight as courageously against the Japanese Imperialists as we did against the German Nazis, all to the credit of the American system.

"We're In The Army Now"

Now, let us return to the activation of the 442nd. The volunteers from Hawaii, where those of Japanese descent represented one-third of the territorial population and were never subjected to the legal, social, and

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economic persecution that we on the mainland suffered as an ethnic minority, were shipped over as a group and went into training right away. We on the mainland, though, came in almost individually or in small groups after induction near the concentration camps, United States style, to which our families and we were herded earlier. We represented less than one-half of one percent of the population of the three West Coast States of California, Oregon, and Washington even when counting all of us who resided in the then 48 States. And we had suffered racism, discrimination, and warmongering for more than half a century of our saga in America.

Inevitably there were some real troubles and clashes between the "buthaheads" (pig heads) of the Islands and the "kotonks" (empty heads; when mainland heads were tapped they sounded like coconuts hanging together) of the continental West Coast. Initially, these were terms of derision but they soon developed into descriptions of mutual endearment and brotherly affection as we lived, trained, ate, and played together, suffering the humbling "equality" and vicissitudes that only military training can bring, and as we learned the problems of the other, we confirmed in ourselves the common belief that all of Japanese origin need to prove beyond all shadow of doubt that we are--and were--loyal and dedicated American citizens entitled to all the rights, privileges, and opportunities of such 100% citizenship.

When we "buthaheads" and "kotonks" first arrived at Camp Shelby, in Mississippi, we were given shoulder patch emblems that showed a yellow arm holding high a short sword, with the words "Remember Pearl Harbor" as our team motto. Naturally, we protested loudly, with the Army substituting the shoulder patch that is now a signal of honor: a white arm holding aloft the torch of liberty against a background of red, white, and blue. And we chose our own battlecry: "Go For Broke", now a most honored and recognized slogan in American military annals.

Another major controversy was over the designation 442, for the number four represents in Japanese the sign of death. This "double whammy", as it were, seemed to those who worried that we might be wasted as "suicide troops" an insidious symbol of the Army's true intentions. On the other hand, it was argued that this number that came up was purely coincidental and could be interpreted as meaning "death to our enemies". The consensus was to keep the 442nd identification and demonstrate by our actions in battle that the 442nd would convey the message of death and defeat to the enemy.

There were racial and other tensions with other American GIs who simply could not understand why "Japs" were allowed in the same Army with them. Initially too, the restaurants, stores, theaters, and bowling alleys in nearby Hattiesburg treated us with disdain and often refused us service. Those among us who had wives and children living in close-by suburbs faced a most unusual problem: Mississippi had a strange law requiring whites to go to one set of schools, Negroes to another, and Chinese to still another. A fourth school system had to be set up to take care of the young Sansei and Yonsei students.
