

NISEI IN UNIFORM



PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

"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 heart.

"Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry.

"Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution—whether it be in the ranks of our armed forces, war production, agriculture, Government service, or other work essential to the war effort."

President FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
February 3, 1943

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NISEI IN THE ARMY

BEFORE Pearl Harbor, Americans of Japanese descent, commonly called Nisei, (pronounced "nee-say") were eligible to volunteer and were subject to induction into the Army through the Selective Service System. Consequently, many young Japanese Americans were already in the Army when the United States went to war with the Axis nations.

After war was declared, however, many Selective Service boards were reluctant to accept the Nisei, while some others continued to induct them. This condition prevailed throughout the spring of 1942 while all persons whose forebears came from Japan were being evacuated from the Pacific Coast and transferred to relocation centers under jurisdiction of the War Relocation Authority. On June 17, 1942—with the evacuation virtually completed—the War Department advised the Selective Service System to discontinue Nisei inductions until further notice. Soon afterward, all Nisei were ordered reclassified to IV-C, not acceptable for service because of ancestry.

The first modification of this policy came in the late fall of 1942, when about 160 Nisei volunteers were recruited from relocation centers. The response to the call for volunteers revealed that many young men at WRA centers were eager to prove their loyalty to the United States.

Meanwhile, in June 1942, a unit composed almost entirely of Nisei from Hawaii, including many men who had served in the Hawaiian National Guard, had been transferred to the mainland for training. This unit—the 100th Infantry Battalion, at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin—was attracting much favorable attention. The evidence was mounting that many Nisei had the spirit and ability to make good soldiers.

On January 28, 1943, the Secretary of War announced that the Army had decided to form a special Nisei combat team, and that volunteers would be accepted both from the continental United States and from the Hawaiian Islands. In February and March, a recruitment program was conducted under Army supervision at all relocation centers. The result of this Nisei recruitment at the WRA centers and elsewhere was the formation of the 442nd Combat Team which began training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in April, 1943.

Representatives of the War Department, who were assigned to the relocation centers to conduct the recruitment program, explained the reasons for the formation of a distinctively Japanese American unit in the Army. "If your strength were diffused through the Army of the United States—as has al-

ready been done with many other Americans of your blood," they told the young men in the relocation centers, "relatively little account would be taken of your action. You would be important only as manpower—nothing more. But united, and working together, you would become a symbol of something greater than your individual selves, and the effect would be felt both in the United States and abroad. All other Americans would long remember what you had done for the country, and you would be a living reproach to those who have been prejudiced against you because of your Japanese blood."

On December 18, 1943, the War Department, impressed by the "excellent showing" made by the 442nd Combat Team in training and by the "outstanding record" of the 100th Battalion which had been transferred to the Italian battle front, revised its policies so as to provide for the induction of Nisei through regular Selective Service procedures. This action, which was publicly announced by the Secretary of War on January 20, 1944, had the effect of calling upon the Nisei to assume one of the highest obligations of American citizenship. Since that time, Japanese Americans at relocation centers and elsewhere, like other young Americans, have been subject to involuntary induction for Army Service.

By the end of 1943 many families had left the relocation centers, and many more were preparing to leave. Dispersing across the country from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the Atlantic seaboard, they found new homes and productive employment outside the West Coast exclusion area. These were people who had been carefully screened by the War Relocation Authority. Many of them had husbands, sons, and brothers in the Service. Mainly, they were American citizens by birth, but the aliens who were granted leave, no less than the citizens, had been respectable and law-abiding residents of the communities where they lived before the evacuation. They looked upon the United States as home, and they wanted to continue to live here. Many had remained aliens only because, as Orientals, they could not be naturalized under our laws.

It has been a common comment of Nisei in the Army that they are fighting two battles: one to smash the Axis dictators; the other to prove that Japanese Americans are basically no different in attitude or loyalty from the majority of our citizens whose forebears came from other lands.

442nd COMBAT TEAM

ON JANUARY 28, 1943, the War Department issued a call for 4,500 volunteers to form the 442nd Combat Team which was to be composed, according to the announcement, of men of Japanese descent who qualified for military service. In April, the full complement had been achieved by enlistments from Hawaii and the mainland, and the unit began training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. It included the 442nd Infantry, the 522nd Artillery Battalion, and the 232nd Engineers Company.

The great majority of the mainland volunteers enlisted from the ten relocation centers where they had been living since the spring of 1942, when all persons of Japanese ancestry were evacuated from the West Coast by order of the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command. Many of them left fathers and mothers, or wives and children, living in the centers.

At Camp Shelby, the men of the 442nd Combat Team quickly won the unanimous respect of the officers who commanded them. They trained hard and were alert to learn the duties and obligations of an American fighting man. Like all top-notch units in the United States Army, the 442nd was strong both in physical stamina and in intelligence. "Good soldiers" was the term invariably used to describe the Nisei volunteers by the military men who knew the record of their accomplishments.

For a slogan they chose a slang phrase, common in Hawaii, "Go For Broke," meaning that they had pledged themselves to go all out for their country—

the United States. They would withhold nothing. They were "shooting the works." This was the spirit that they carried through a year of training at Camp Shelby; it was the spirit that sent them eagerly, confidently to a port of embarkation, in April, 1944. They were heading for the battlefields of Europe to join the 100th Infantry Battalion, which had already won high praises for valor and fighting ability.

Early in July, reports from Italy began to tell about the exploits of the 442nd Combat Team in action against the enemy. Four days after entering the front lines, these Americans with Japanese faces had advanced some 50 miles. Some of them had fought almost around the clock, averaging as little as 2½ hours of rest each night. Some had got so far ahead of the supply lines that they had been 24 hours without food.

They had paced the thrust, dispatches said, of American troops that "knifed through fiercely defended German lines" in the battle for the important seaport of Livorno. When the city fell on July 19, they were among the first to enter it.

War correspondents reported on the apparently fearless courage and excellent morale of the men. They told of the dismay of German prisoners on learning that they had been captured by Japanese Americans. There could be no doubt, as the fighting record of the unit unfolded, that at last the 442nd Combat Team was showing on the battlefield the real meaning of its slogan — "Go for Broke!"

Three members of the 442nd Combat Team, who are now fighting the Nazis in Italy—Howard Uyehara, Sam Sasaki and David Ito. All native-born Americans, they were evacuated from their West Coast homes in 1942 to relocation centers where they were living when they enlisted during 1943.



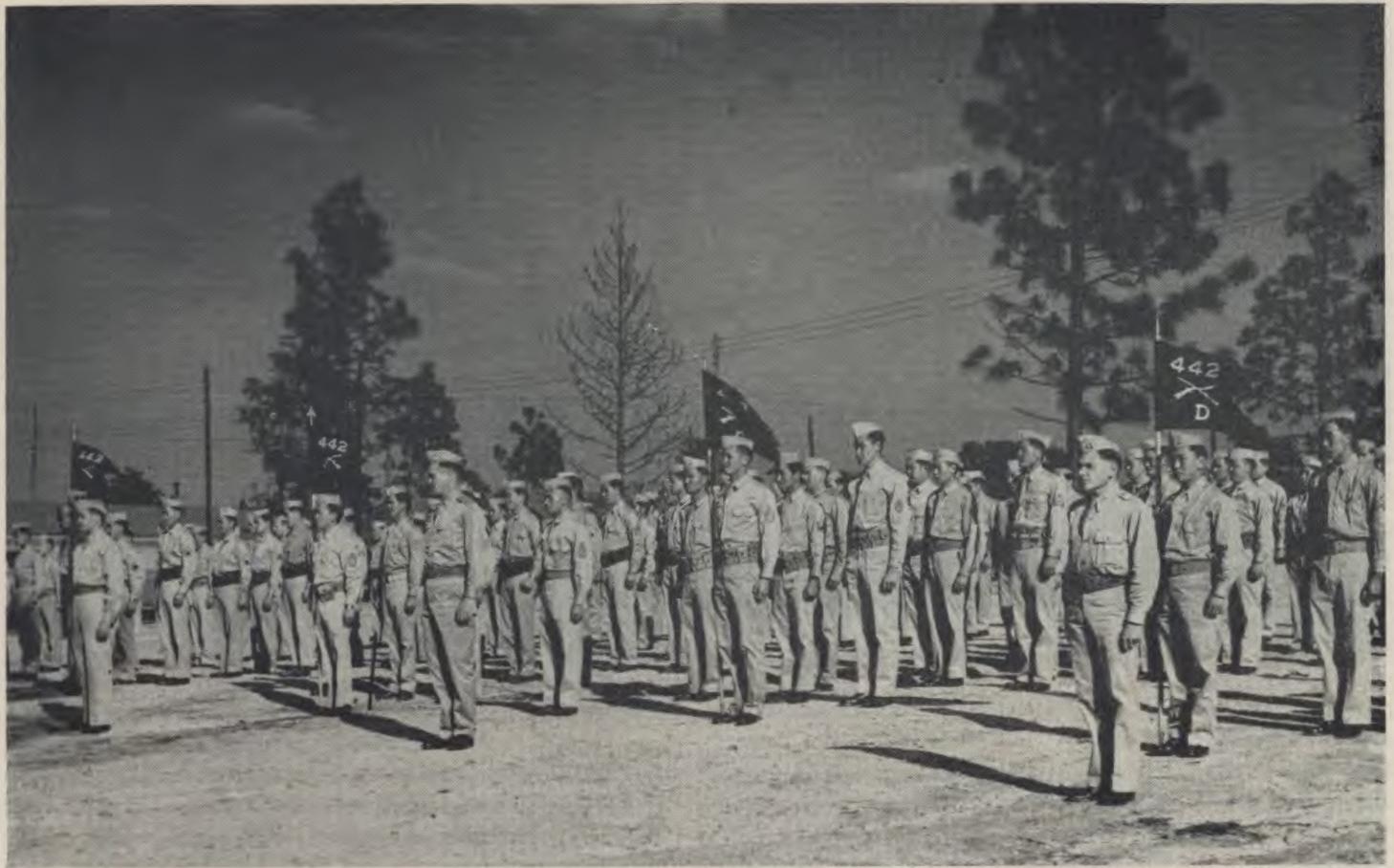
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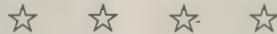


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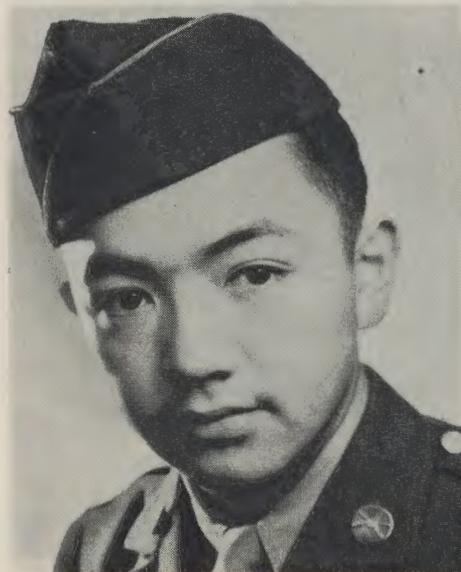


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Shown standing at attention on a parade ground at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, these officers and men are members of the 442nd Combat Team which embarked for combat duty in Italy in April, 1944.



American soldiers with Japanese faces—Edwin Iino, Saburo Ikuta, and Robert Yonemitsu were all born and raised in California where they were educated in American schools. They have never visited Japan. All of them volunteered from relocation centers for service in the United States Army.



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Four Nisei brothers—Ben, Mike, Tad, and Ike Masaoka—participated in the liberation of Italy as members of the 442nd Combat Team. In July 1944, Pfc. Tad (second from the right) and Sgt. Ike (right) were wounded. Before his induction, Corp. Mike (second from left) was national secretary of the Japanese American Citizens League. Another brother, Hank, is also in the U. S. Army.



U. S. Army Signal Corps

Pvt. Kay Kusumi drives a truck christened "Lil' Amache" to advertise the relocation center where he was living when he joined the Army. Amache is the Post Office designation of the Granada Relocation Center, located on the Arkansas River in southeastern Colorado.

Sgt. William Sadatake, former student at City College in Los Angeles and more recently a resident of the Heart Mountain Relocation Center, establishes contact with an operations base on the field telephone system. He is a member of the 552nd Field Artillery.



U. S. Army Signal Corps



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