

ARMY JAPANESE LINGUISTS IN TRAINING

For most army organizations, VJ-Day meant the beginning of curtailment of activities and a slackening to a peace time tempo. For the Military Intelligence Service Language School, it spelled just the opposite--heavier loads and a faster gait. The Military Intelligence Service Language School under the direct jurisdiction of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department, better known in military circles as "MISLS" is located at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. The MISLS has been the only "language factory" which has turned out Japanese language specialists on mass production basis for the various allied military, air, marine, and naval units engaged in fighting the Japs. Practically every army officer or army non-commissioned officer engaged in Japanese language work today has been at one time or another a student at the MISLS.

During the Japanese war, the graduates of the MISLS were vital cogs in the combat intelligence and psychological warfare work. Today, they are in Japan serving as equally important links in communication between General MacArthur's occupation army and the Japanese people. Most of these linguists are Japanese-Americans holding non-commissioned officer status. Most of them have been overseas long enough to be eligible for return home under the army point and age system. Initially these linguists were declared "critical" and hence debarred from release under the point system. Now they are being discharged on the same basis as any other GI.

The occupation of Japan from the linguistic standpoint presents many problems. With many of the NCO linguists being returned to the United States, the problem of their replacements is a very serious one for the Army. That is why the MISLS is operating today under a peak load with around 3,000 students under instruction and hundreds of others still to be trained to replace veterans who will be returned.

While the Commandant and administrative staff of the school is composed largely of Caucasian personnel, both the language training staff and the student body are predominantly Nisei. The school originally was housed in temporary barracks at Camp Savage, Minnesota, but for the last year has been located at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

The Army Japanese language neophyte comes from varying backgrounds. Most are Nisei whose homes are in Hawaii or the Pacific Coast. However, there are enrolled at MISLS a few Nisei born in Connecticut, or Texas, or Michigan and elsewhere. Some of the officer students were Reserve Officers called up to active duty who had studied the Japanese language at some one of our very few universities--California, Washington, Columbia, or Harvard--that taught the Japanese language before Pearl Harbor. Others are AUS officers who had lived in Japan and who possessed varying degrees of ability in the Japanese language. Still others are Caucasian officer candidates who are graduates of the preparatory course of one year given at the Army Intensive Japanese Language School, University of Michigan, which also is under the direct supervision of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff.

Upon arriving at the MISLS, the new student is assigned to one of the student companies which make up the "School Regiment" of 10 companies. He is attached to a company merely for housing, messing, administration, and minimum basic military training. All language training is done under the jurisdiction of the Academic and Military Training Sections.

The typical daily routine for students at the MISLS starts at 6:00 with School Call at 7:30. Except for a lunch period from 11:45 to 1:30 the student is engaged in language instruction from 7:30 to 4:20 in the afternoon. There is a period for exercise and dinner, after which "Joe Language Student" marches back for supervised evening study from 7:00 until 9:00 P.M. Voluntary study is permitted only until 10:30. Most of the students must prepare intensively for the recitations and quizzes of the day school sessions. At 11:00, all lights are out, and "Joe Language Student" has well earned a good night's rest. He has put in a long, hard day's work. Necessity forces a heavy work load and a fast tempo. The student may not have been able to complete all of his preparations for the next day. He may not have had time to write to his family or his girl friend at home. Like all GI Joes he complains that his instructors and officers are most inhumane.....but he is tired and he dozes off dreaming of weird distortions of the 50 to 200 new "Kanji" (Chinese characters employed in Japanese) he has tried to learn that day.

This with the usual inspections and fatigue is the routine, except for Wednesdays and Saturdays when school work terminates at 11:45. On Wednesday

afternoons "Joe Language Student" is not at liberty. He is given "military training"--quite often a good long stiff cross-country march of from five to ten miles.

Practically all of the classroom hours are spent in Japanese language or Japanese intelligence training involving the usage of Japanese language such as prisoner of war interrogation, the translation of captured documents, Japanese radio and wireless messages clear text interception and monitoring. Two hours of the week are scheduled for theoretical military science and tactics courses.

On the language training side, the student is given an examination of four hours' length upon arrival at school to determine his proficiency in Japanese. This is necessary for grouping the students into sections of equal ability.

Many of the Nisei at Fort Snelling have had to teach or study with anxious hearts. Many had relatives in Relocation Camps in the Western States. After the Japanese were permitted to return from the Relocation Camps to the West Coast, incidents that caused much anxiety occurred. The following article from the Minneapolis Morning Tribune reports one of these incidents:

"Three Japanese-American soldiers stationed at Fort Snelling, Wednesday, expressed dismay at treatment their parents, recently returned to their homes in California, are receiving.

"At Livingston, California, Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. Shozo Kishi, parents of Cpl. Sherman Kishi and Pfc. Fred Kishi, members of the school battalion at Fort Snelling, were shot at despite the fact a service flag representing their two sons was displayed in the front window of their farm home.

"Late Tuesday at Auburn, California, a jury acquitted three men charged with attempted dynamiting of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sunio Doi. Their son, Pvt. Karl Doi, also is a member of the school battalion. Another son, Cpl. Shigeyuki Doi, fought with American forces who rescued the trapped American battalion at Bastogne during the German's last large scale counter-attack."

The training staff and study body composed of Japanese-Americans are grateful to the citizens of the Twin Cities. Nisei both at the school and in the combat theaters are unanimous in praising the friendly treatment which the people of the Twin Cities accorded them during the troublous war years. The

authorities and people of the Twin Cities greeted and treated them as American citizens. They furnished entertainment that made their load lighter and their life more comfortable. Some of the principal organizations are the Minneapolis and St. Paul USO's, the Minneapolis YMCA and YWCA, the Minneapolis Defense Council, the Red Cross Camp and Hospital Council Service Committees of Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, the St. Paul Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Council of Jewish Women. The Bar Associations of Hennepin and Ramsey Counties donated prizes to honor outstanding students at graduation exercises as did the city newspapers. Many churches and numerous citizens took many of the wise servicemen into their homes as guests on weekends and on holidays. Nowhere has the press been so solidly behind the Nisei, and nowhere has greater fairness and understanding been encountered than in the Twin Cities area.

In appreciation of the attitude of the people of the Twin Cities the students at the MISLS also have shouldered their civic responsibilities. In every War Bond Drive, they have gone over the top. The school has always stood near the top of the units in the Seventh Service Command. Harris L. Romerein, Field Director of the Red Cross War Fund Drive during 1944, wrote:

"In the tabulation of the final results in the recent Red Cross War Fund Drive, we find that on a per capita basis the voluntary contributions of the men and officers at Camp Savage (MISLS) exceeded that of all other stations in our jurisdiction.

"These results, are in fact, so outstanding that we are at a loss as to how to adequately express ourselves concerning the matter."

In their Red Cross Blood Donations, the students of MISLS have set an enviable record over several years. On May 8, 1945, Mrs. William Quist, Special Assistant in Charge of Mobile Unit, wrote Colonel Rasmussen, the Commandant:

"The Red Cross Blood Donor Service, and in particular the Minneapolis Center and its Mobile Unit, are deeply appreciative of the contribution you and the men and officers under your command have made to the Blood Donor Service. Every visit to your group, both at Camp Savage and at Fort Snelling, have resulted in whatever quota we requested, and several emergency visits arranged on short notice to fill in cancellations maintained our quota."

Earlier in January 1945, she had written: "For each of the visits to your group, the production has been limited by our office, and we have only the highest praise for the manner in which your men respond to this service."

When Mayor McDonough of St. Paul appealed for help to Colonel Harry J. Keeley, post commander of Fort Snelling, for aid to the hard-pressed Twin Cities Coal and Coke Companies which were unable to make adequate deliveries to Twin Cities homes because of a cold wave and lack of manpower, many of the Japanese-Americans went to work driving trucks and delivering coal in sub-zero weather. Many of these volunteers had only shortly arrived from the balmy climate of the Hawaiian Islands.

Despite the rigorousness of their training, the students of the MISLS have distinguished themselves as soldiers. Their rate of AWOLs and venereal disease is very much lower than that of the average military garrison. In recognition of their outstanding record, the Chief of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department, awarded the school cadre the "Meritorious Service Unit Plaque". This award is based on achievement and maintenance of a high standard of discipline, superior military courtesy, superior appearance of personnel, installations, and equipment, and enthusiastic execution of orders. Other factors also considered in making the award are the number of AWOLs, venereal disease rates, court martials and other punishments.

This is the sketchy pen picture of the army Japanese linguist as he underwent training before being shipped out to join the combat forces in the Pacific. Necessary changes have been made in the schedules and courses for his successors who are now undergoing training for Japanese language duties with the American Army of Occupation in Japan. The demands for qualified Japanese language personnel are greater than ever and the work load and tempo of instruction remain essentially unchanged. The student must be a good soldier and a good linguist. He is driven hard to prepare him for the heavy tasks ahead in the minimum time allowed. He gripes like all GIs, but he still takes his work in stride, does his duty well, and never fails in his mission.