

IA Soldier
Research
Film Ideas

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CPB PROGRAM FUND

442nd/MIS PROJECT
AMERICAN SAMURAI

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Approach and film treatment

APPROACH:

This documentary explores the clash of values and extreme moral choices which accompanied the formation of the famed 100th Battalion and the 442nd Japanese American Regimental Combat Team of World War II. The documentary will show how these members of a racially segregated unit, in spite of their averaging only 5'4" and size 5 shoes (they had to get their shoes from the WACs) nevertheless, became "the most decorated unit in the history of the U.S. Army". The documentary also examines the experiences of the Nisei soldiers in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), who served as translators, interpreters, and liaison officers in the South Pacific, China/Burma/India theaters and later in occupied Japan. These MIS, Nisei soldiers were considered so invaluable as to be provided with two body guards each, and went on to be credited by General Douglas MacArthur's office as "probably saving a million lives, and shortening the war by two years".

The courage and fighting skill of the 442nd made them the spearhead unit for seven major European campaigns, as they battled from Naples to the Rhineland, cracking open along the way, Hitler's last Western defense, the impregnable Gothic Line, which had defied Allied assault for over five months, but which the 442nd took in 32 incredible minutes. How was this possible? The answer in part, lies in looking at their origin.

Many, approximately 50%, of these young men came from America's ten wartime mass internment camps. Nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans--men, women and children, all American citizens and legal alien residents--had been ruinously uprooted from their West Coast communities, dispossessed of all belongings, herded into crowded communal tarpaper barracks as far away as Arkansas, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming...sitting out the war surrounded by electrified barbed wire, watched over by armed sentries.

This calamity befell them because the government, the public media and 100 years of anti-Asian exclusionary laws and practices culminated in decreeing a whole people to be disloyal, subversive, possible saboteurs and espionage agents; a presumption of guilt based solely on their ancestry. The racial formula of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) called for the internment of persons who were 1/16 or more Japanese (in other words, if you had one Japanese great-great-great grand parent, going back five generations or about 150 years). The day following Dec. 7, 1941--Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech--FBI agents stormed into Japanese communities, rounding up and arresting people they considered most suspicious: Buddhist priests, teachers of Japanese language, teachers of Martial Arts, newspaper editors, leaders of community organizations, some heads of households. It was an extraordinary episode in American history in which subversion was essentially defined as a matter of a population's race and culture.

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In this atmosphere of distrust and fear, what was the right response to the critical moral choices posed?

- * For Americans, watching their Japanese classmates, fellow workers, business associates, neighbors, being moved out of their homes, stores, farms, leaving behind crops, livestock, pets, and marched off to waiting buses, guarded by soldiers with rifles--what did they perceive was happening, how did they feel? What was being said in the headlines, by the commanding general, the city mayor, the state governor?
- * For Issei, first generation parents who had tried for over a lifetime to maintain in their American born sons, a traditional Japanese sense of duty and honor ("giri"), should they then urge their sons to enlist in the U.S. Army, to repay the moral debt to the "country that has been good to us"?
- * For Nisei, American born youth raised to love baseball and apple pie, feeling themselves wholly American, and knowing nothing of Japan or the Emperor, should they, like other loyal American males of draft age--their peers--answer to the "call of their country"? And how are they to do this if that country rejects them, questions their loyalty and holds their families hostage?
- * For those Nisei who saw the evacuation and internment as a massive violation of their people and a betrayal of their birthright, should they now refuse enlistment, and refuse submission to what they regarded as unfounded and unjust tests of their loyalty? And if their sense of honor required them to answer "no" to the loyalty oath (over 40% of evacuees over 17 years of age answered "no"), how would they live and spiritually survive the consequences: continued imprisonment, absence of useful work, and ignominious exile?

This documentary will describe the process by which opposing choices were made, and trace the development of the unique and remarkable collective ethos of the 442nd--the product of their dual legacy, Japanese and American--which took them through harrowing battles, and gave them transcending will and spirit.

Those Nisei who became the 442nd and MIS did not need to be told what a commanding officer, Colonel Charles Pence, felt necessary to officially declare before a body of assembled recruits: "You are emissaries of your people".

The isolation and denigration of a people had to be rescued and redeemed by an ancestral knowledge of the language of the "enemy", and the conspicuous heroism and sacrifice in blood of sons and brothers playing out on an epic scale in the great conflict of World War II, their response to the anguishing issues of personal honor, family loyalty, and love of country.

Live interviews, extensive National Archive footage of 1940's war and home fronts, 12,000 internment camp stills by Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams, as well as documents and mementoes of 442nd/MIS veterans, friends and families, covering a period from before Pearl Harbor to the present, will be used to create (working title):

AMERICAN SAMURAI, STANDARD BEARERS FOR AN EXILED PEOPLE.

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OUTLINE OF FILM TREATMENT

This documentary as a whole will be woven around the experiences of two featured veterans who represent the separate experiences of the Japanese American dual legacy: on the one hand, the Americanization ideal, & on the other, the maintenance of pride in ancestral culture.

ST. LOUIS, 442nd VET

The documentary will feature a 442nd veteran who served from beginning to end in the infantry, as Technical Sergeant, surviving five major European campaigns, and at one point, being one of the "lucky" 17 survivors of a company of 200. *"I wore out a pencil writing down the names of the dead".*

Born and raised "All American" in St. Louis, Missouri, a town with only four other Japanese families, and a law student at the time of Pearl Harbor, he did not identify strongly with the Japanese American community; and his family being on the East Coast did not suffer evacuation or internment. He immediately volunteered for the army and was initially offended by the idea of a segregated unit, suffering a kind of ethnic shock when confronted in basic training with so many other Asians. *"It was like looking in a mirror and seeing 4000 me's".*

An articulate, thoughtful, and emotionally expressive member of the 442nd, he provides a unique journey into an insider's understanding of his fellow Japanese Americans, and the way these men collectively developed their distinctive 442nd ethos. He also gives us an intimate, human understanding of the response of the 442nd soldier to his relentless combat experiences and the call to extraordinary missions.

SEATTLE, KIBEI, MIS VET

The second featured veteran will be a former member of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) who served as a translator/interpreter in the Pacific theater and in occupied Japan as Liaison Officer between the U.S. Military Authority and the Imperial Palace. On returning home he served in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Born and raised in Seattle, Washington (one of the western states evacuated), he was one of those Japanese American youth whose parents sent him back to Japan for part of his education (Kibei). He spent ten years of his life there, Jr. high, high school and part of college, including experience with the Japanese ROTC. His father, sensing trouble ahead, recalled him back to the U.S. just months before Pearl Harbor.

This MIS veteran is a warm and articulate spokesman, whose peaceful face and diplomacy belie the years of cultural and moral turmoil that the war brought about in his life, and the lives of his Issei parents: FBI arrest of his father immediately following Dec. 7; disposal of the family pharmacy business and other possessions of a lifetime because of evacuation; packing up whatever he and his mother could carry for the move to an internment camp, separated from his father; dealing with the divided loyalty of having two brothers in Japan serving in the Japanese Army and Navy; deciding personally to serve in the U.S. Army; getting his father's blessing; getting his mother's blessing and her physical help in the dead of night, to "sneak over the fence" to join, because U.S. Army service was so unpopular in their internment camp.

FILM TREATMENT, Cont.

This veteran's experiences represent one individual's response to the series of cultural contradictions and moral dilemmas posed by the war and internment.

I. OPENER

(news footage) veterans of 442nd, White House, 1946: Parade down Pennsylvania Ave. President Harry Truman reviews the troops, pinning Presidential Unit Citation on their 442nd Regimental flag.

VETERAN'S V/O: *"There we were marching down Pennsylvania Ave. None of us believed that President Truman himself would decorate us."*

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: *"I cannot tell you how much the U.S. thinks of what you have done..."*

CUT TO

Fast Montage of: Dec. 7 bombing of Pearl Harbor; Roosevelt's speech before congress declaring war:

HEADLINES: "JAPS BOMB PEARL HARBOR": "WAR DECLARED".

CUT BACK TO

Images of: mass evacuation, relocation, internment.

TRUMAN V/O: *"You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice."*

DISSOLVE TO

Images of: pan of 1940's portraits, candid snapshots of 442nd/MIS soldiers and their families.

TRUMAN V/O: *"and you won..."*

DISSOLVE TO

Scenes from V-J Day, V-E Day celebrations; Americana 1945, sounds of popular songs and Glenn Miller Big Band Music.

VETERANS V/O: *Continued comments about his V-J Day experiences; bridges to live interview which follows.*

DISSOLVE TO

II. DUAL LEGACY CHILDHOODS: ST. LOUIS ALL AMERICAN, AND SEATTLE KIBEI.

Present day interviews with St. Louis 442nd vet and Seattle MIS vet talking about how they happened to join the army. Why did they join when others chose not to? Each recounts his immediate reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

ST. LOUIS 442nd VET: How he felt himself to be All American; his Americanization ideal; how his neighbors, classmates reacted; how his reaction is related to his American style childhood in St. Louis.

ACCOMPANIED BY IMAGES OF: School yearbook activities; baseball; the family soul food restaurant in the Black suburbs of St. Louis; driving the family car, etc.

SOUND MIX: *Americana music of the period.*

FILM TREATMENT, Cont.

SEATTLE, MIS VET: He talks about his Issei parents; Japanese culture by osmosis at the dinnertable; the training into the traditional codes of behavior ("On"; "Giri"); the prevention of his parents from owning land because of the alien land law; the prevention of his parents from becoming citizens; why they wanted him to have a Japanese education, and how he felt about it.

ACCOMPANIED BY IMAGES OF: early historical pictures.

SOUND MIX: *Japanese music and tonal effects.*

III. EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066: Evacuation and Internment

Montage of images and V/O narration of key events and personalities surrounding evacuation/internment.

General DeWitt's "A Jap's a Jap."; racist public media fanning of hysteria; city mayors' statements; failed promises of state governors to offer refuge to evacuees; the primal anxiety and guilt feelings of the Isséi community; non-intervention and resignation cultural ethos; Japanese American Citizen's League telegram of reassurance of loyalty to President Roosevelt; attempted Constitutional challenge in the Supreme Court of the evacuation/internment by four Nisei appellants; loyalty oath tests in the internment camps; family splits on loyalty oaths.

DISSOLVE TO

Personal description by each vet of his own and his family's experience and perception of the evacuation/internment; decision to join the army; reactions of friends and families.

IMAGES: Stills of Hawaiian recruits still wearing their leis; 442nd uniformed protrait of five brothers of famed Masaoka family; disillusioned Japanese aliens repatriating to Japan on board Red Cross ship "Gripsholm".

CUT TO

IV. BASIC TRAINING

Footage of 442nd CAMP SHELBY, HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI.
Stills of MIS CAMP SAVAGE, MINNESOTA.

SOUND MIX: *Military music, effects; sound of classroom Japanese language training.*

442nd VET recounts: boisterous Hawaiian Nisei meet reticent mainland Nisei.

SOUND MIX: *Imitation of Hawaiian Nisei "Pidgin" English, later used as code in battle.*

The experiences of Nisei recruits as "Honorary Whites" with townspeople of 1940's Jim Crow Mississippi; the building of the "Go for Broke" spirit and the new community of the 442nd Ethos; relationships with their volunteer white officers.

MIS VET recounts: intelligence and language training experiences in Minnesota.

IMAGE: Military propaganda film; "Know Your Enemy: The Japanese".

FILM TREATMENT, Cont.

INTERCUT BETWEEN

Home Front images outside the camp and Internment camp life

Home Front Images: Bob Hope Troop show; victory gardens, war production.

SOUND MIX: Song, "For This We Fight". Carries over to internment images.

Internment Camp Life: Letters from camp; images of attempted rebuilding of traditional cultural symbols; American lifestyle (jitterbugging, etc.) continues among internment camp youth; bleakness and hardship of camp life.

CUT TO

V. THE WAR in EuropeTHE WAR in South Pacific Islands

IMAGES: Combat footage, battle maps of major European campaigns; Nisei soldier capture of German POW's; highlights of military achievements: rescue of "Lost Battalion" of Texas Rangers; victory at the Gothic Line; experiences with the townspeople of liberated French and Italian villages; footage of General Mark Clark decorating 442nd soldiers in Italy.

442nd VET recounts: The soldier's experience of combat--physical, psychological and moral; why they fought so hard; the unity of the men; the ultimate difference between the 442nd's "Go for Broke" and Japanese Kamikaze.

MIS VET recounts: telling incidents of interrogation of Japanese POW; persuading soldiers and civilians to surrender; his reaction to being in occupied Japan, a former home.

IMAGES: South Pacific combat; Japanese POW's.

INTERCUT WITH

Internment camp scenes.

IMAGES: Honor Roll Sign at internment camp's gate of sons serving in U.S. Army; War bonds activities in the camp; letters from soldiers; wounded and home-on-leave Nisei soldier's visit to families in camp; army chaplain's visit to camp parents to deliver medal of hero son killed in battle.

SOUND MIX: Song; "Deed Without Words".

CUT TO

VI. ATOM BOMBING OF JAPAN

SOUND MIX: Eerie Japanese music and tonal effects.

CUT TO

FILM TREATMENT, Cont.VII. GOING HOME

Newsfootage of Truman announcing surrender of Japan; Surrender Ceremonies, USS Missouri, 1945.

Montage images: post war political activity of a group of 442nd veterans, eg. Mike Masaoka, and later-to-be Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga of Hawaii, etc., to help bring about legislative changes that enabled Japanese aliens for the first time to own land and become citizens; activity to bring about the 1975 rescinding of Executive Order 9066 by President Gerald Ford; and Japanese American organizational efforts that brought about the instigation by President Carter in 1980 of a Presidential Commission to conduct public hearings investigating the relocation and internment experiences of Japanese Americans, with the goal of formulating recommendations to Congress regarding redress and reparations.

442nd VET and MIS VET on: how they feel now; what has changed; what are the lasting effects.

IMAGES: Redress hearing testimonies, images of a community that has found it's voice.

C L O S E

Why has a serious film treatment not been done on the story of the 442nd before? Consultant, Eric Saul, military historian and confidante of 442nd vets explains:

To begin with, they themselves regarded their experiences as being merely ordinary, what any American soldier was undergoing. They had no idea that their 300% casualties or their hardships were anything other than ordinary. They were relentlessly sent into the breach to do the most difficult jobs, when 15% casualties would be reason to pull troops out for R and R before the next battle.

More importantly: The key value projected from their first generation parents to these Nisei vets was that one does not talk about one's triumphs; one does not brag about one's bravery; one does not elaborate on one's heroism. One's actions should and must stand alone. And that, actions always speak louder than words.

They have a deep and abiding sense of modesty, and this is first and foremost a part of the virtue system of the 442nd veterans. Perhaps the 442nd vets had the most to say as combat soldiers, but that one value system prevents them from passing it on, prevents them from articulating strongly what they felt, on their own.

With this documentary we tell a true story from American history to the general public, and begin to bridge the intellectual, emotional, and historical gap that exists between Nisei husbands and wives; between parents and sons and daughters; between families and yet unborn generations, to whom these veterans leave the legacy of having bought with their wit and their blood the proof of an ethnic minority's "real" Americanness, and, as loyal sons and brothers, the redeemed ancestral honor of their families and their people. The story told by those men and women who endured it and created it will break a silence and a reticence of 35 years.

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MATERIALS AVAILABLE FOR DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION: 442nd/MIS Project

Public Archival Materials: Vast amounts of public archival visual and audio materials of relevance are available which are striking and comprehensive.

Voluminous 16mm footage, stills and sound recording available in the National Archives for the World War II period cover the home front and the war fronts. These were variously produced by the War Relocation Authority, the Dept. of the Navy, the War Production Board, March of Time, News of the Day, Office of Strategic Services, Italian Newsreel, Japanese Newsreel, Office of War Information, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marines, captured German films, overseas broadcasts to American troops and to Japanese troops, etc., etc.

Japanese American Soldiers in World War II Exhibit: In addition to the National Archive materials, the 100th Battalion/442nd/MIS veterans committee organized an exhibit of the "Japanese American Soldiers in World War II", in collaboration with the Presidio Army Museum of San Francisco in 1980-81. They have solicited from their fellow veterans, relatives and friends, more than 2000 photographs, 40 scrapbooks, albums, maps, documents, diaries, letters, propaganda leaflets, decorations and personal mementoes. As the exhibit (planned for tour) travels to other cities, it will acquire many more contributions and these too will become available for the documentary production.

Presidio Museum Director, Eric Saul and the 442nd/MIS exhibit organizers, Thomas Kawaguchi and Chester Tanaka have been collaborating on this project. Their cooperation and help has made possible interviews, consultations, visual materials, and introductions to the network of former members of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and members of the Military Intelligence Service who served in the Pacific theater.

NATIONAL ARCHIVE MATERIAL: Partial list of 16mm film, stills and sound recordings.

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

4 reels (1942-43) Records of WRA, government agency responsible for handling the evacuation, relocation & internment of Japanese Americans.

12,000 Stills--WRA full documentation including pre-evacuation.

Stills--Japanese internees at Camp Kennedy, Texas.

28 sound recordings--description of the work of WRA and discussions of war records of Nisei soldiers.

NISEI SOLDIERS

4 reels--WRA, training and record of Nisei soldiers.

"Go For Broke"--documentation of Japanese American recruits; Basic training at Camp Shelby, in Mississippi.

"For Valor"--Gen. Mark Clark, decoration of Japanese American soldiers in Italy.

HOME FRONT IMAGES

Promotional drives:

War bonds	streamers
victory gardens	placards promoting conservatism
posters	cartoons
handbills	

Increased production:

War Production Board--incentive films aimed at industrial workers.

wartime renovation of ships; manufacturing of WWII materials, axles, wheels, B-24's, tanks.

"Gripsholm" Swedish Red Cross Ship--Japanese repatriots.

Sound Recordings:

For This We Fight

Sing Along

Deeds Without Words

Fabber McGee & Molly

Including recordings by: Eleanor Roosevelt and actors and actresses of the day.

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Archive Material, Cont.

WARTIME IMAGES

Troopshows: Bob Hope, Glen Miller.

Speeches by Pres. Roosevelt & Truman, King George VI, Hitler.

Newsreels: Japanese Prisoners of War.

"March of Time"--combat footage.

Dept. of Navy: Kamikaze attacks--Battle of Midway & Marianas.

Propaganda films: "Know Your Enemy -The Japanese", Training film by U.S. Marine Corps. used in WWII-South Pacific.

Office of Strategic Services (1942-45) 24 reels
 Films about industry and people of Pearl Harbor prior to Japanese attack.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Inaugurations of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman & Eisenhower.

Newsreel: Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor bombing--actual footage & staged footage,
 Directed by John Ford.

Roosevelt's declaration of War to Congress. "Day of Infamy Speech" Dec. 8.

V-E Day Celebrations and V-J Day Celebrations.

Atom Bomb (Footage & stills) eyewitness account of bombing of Hiroshima.

Truman announcing surrender of Japanese.

Surrender Ceremonies, USS Missouri, 1945.

Occupation of Japan.

Japanese Treaty Conference, 1951.

Post-war swearing in of first Senators from Alaska & first Congressman from Hawaii, 1959.