

make copy for T. Sakamoto

Excellent, humorous, & Intellectual

Phil Ishio

Paeller SW

Phil Ishio

Recollections of the New Guinea and Philippines Campaigns

Upon graduation from the Special Class at Camp Savage in September, 1942, I was sent directly to Australia along with Leo Saito, Pat Neishi, Arthur Castle, Ken Omura, Kaz Yamada and Al Tamura. En route, we had received our T/3 stripes and assigned to I Corps HQ. When we arrived at Townsend, Australia, we were addressed by the G-2, a West Point Colonel, who informed us that Mac Arthur's policy was for everyone to work up to their grades. We were all downgraded one stripe. The colonel then asked each of us whether we could read and speak the Japanese language. Needless to say, this was all very discouraging to us who were anxious to demonstrate our loyalty to our country by contributing our unique services to the war effort. This was in sharp contrast to the demand for Nisei language personnel which developed later on after our value became known through the work done by the MIS graduates in the field.

Ignored Army at Australia

George Aurell, Kazuhiko Yamada, Arthur Castle and I were assigned to the 32nd Division HQ and sent to Port Moresby. At the time, the Japanese forces had advanced halfway across the Owen Stanley Mountains running across the middle of New Guinea. The U. S. and Australian forces were striving to drive them back and to take Buna and Gona in the Huon Peninsula. Once the Japanese were forced back, we were flown over the Owen Stanley Mountains, after an aborted attempt because of the proximity of Japanese aircraft. We joined the 32nd Division on its drive to the Buna-Gona objective.

32nd Div BONA-GONA Campaign

who Koreans?

This is where we began to interrogate P/Ws, who were mostly non-Japanese and spoke little Japanese. All were in very poor physical shape due to starvation and exposure, and all had dysentery. Most information of value at this time was taken from captured documents such as diaries and a few operational orders taken from dead soldiers. One of the most useful types of information obtained from these sources was order of battle data. Since this was scattered in the various material picked up, a compilation of OB information prepared for the G2 proved to be so useful that it was done on a regular basis. Diaries and personal papers revealed much about the poor morale and miserable condition of the troops as well as certain other information of operational value.

Intelligence CRP E 20 Battle Data info morale info

At this time, Japanese soldiers were usually taken prisoner and placed in field hospitals near the combat areas. We were informed on one occasion of a prisoner located up along the coast. We boarded a small motor boat loaded with supplies and made our way at night along the shore until we heard a Japanese boat in the vicinity. We hurriedly dumped our supplies and hid near the shore. Eventually we arrived at the field hospital where the P/W was being treated. He was in bad shape and barely conscious, but he perked up when we talked to him in Japanese.

cherry after every prisoner

Good decrypt Prisoner barely w/ food stripes - 1st field hospital did not know

We were able to get valuable information from him about unit movements, strengths and condition of his comrades. Later the hospital attendants offered us some canned fruit. We jumped at the invitation, but couldn't eat much because we were sitting next to a container filled with amputated legs, arms and other body parts.

The Rank of Officers of battle

While working with George Aurell, I had the unnerving experience of being awakened in the middle of the night by someone shouting in Japanese. It turned out that Aurell talked in his sleep in Japanese. This was in the jungle with the perimeter guards ready to fire, any indication of enemy infiltration. I had to be on my toes to wake him up whenever he started to talk in his sleep.

Aurell speaks Jpnz in sleep

The fighting for Buna ended by mid-February 1943. As I recall, I was sent back to ATIS for a while and then returned to New Guinea with a team under Cmdr Sam Bartlett. We were located with I Corps HQ somewhere near Finschhafen and received many captured ~~data~~ documents from I Corps Units where other Nisei linguists were assigned. The volume of material coming in was so heavy at times that we had to virtually work all night to translate, type and disseminate the information to Corps units and to ATIS. Frequently, U. S. PT boat commanders, who raided Japanese positions along the coast, would bring in captured documents and material. We came to know one of them, one of the young ~~Rock~~ Rockefellers, quite well. MacArthur's strategy of bypassing strong points was being put into effect, and the documents which we translated contained, among other information, plans for the Japanese reinforcement of certain areas by the movement of their remnant forces from place to place.

heavy work load

George Aurell
Humorous
does a few jokes
Cmdr. Sam Bartlett

Rockefeller invited me to have a steak dinner on his boat one evening. This was an unexpected treat for me since we were still on bully beef and hard tack. I was looking forward to some real food for once, but when I got to the boat, my stomach was in such bad shape that I became very seasick. I had to be taken ashore without having one bite of the steak dinner. Afterwards, I could only fantasize about how good the steak would have tasted.

Rockefeller
humorous
steak dinner

Subsequently, we were returned to ATIS, and I was promoted to Warrant Officer along with Gary Kadani and Steve Yamamoto. After a brief period of training with a regimental combat team at Fergusson Island with others which included Richard Harada and Kaoru Nishida, I was assigned to 6th Army HQ at Hollandia. Steve Yamamoto had the interrogation team, and I had the translation group. One interesting event took place here which made us feel exhilarated for a short time. A commo man had placed a false message on the machine for the following shift stating that the Japanese had surrendered. The whole area erupted with wild shouting and gunfire until the truth was discovered. I have often wondered what happened to the fellow who left the bogus message as a joke.

Humorous
joke
surrendered

We then embarked for Leyte Island in the Philippines. En route, our convoy was subjected to several Kamikaze attacks. Fortunately, our LST was not hit by any of these attacks, but as we prepared to land at Tacloban, our ship was hit by a bomb ~~hit~~ by one of three Japanese planes. Spady Koyama and Cappy Harada were wounded and evacuated. I was not able to find out where they were evacuated until much later. Units were being sent directly from Japan to the Philippines, and information obtained by the MIS staff assigned to 6th Army HQ and its divisions included dates and places where reinforcements were to be sent. This was of

intelligence

Leyte Is.
Kamikaze
bomb
wounded
Spady Koyama
Cappy Harada

Leyte, Philippines
intelligence
Field Intelligence

Dates & place of reinforcements from Japan arriving in Philippines

inestimable value to the U. S. field commanders.

One night, ^{we} were awakened in the middle of the night and taken to the airfield where Japanese paratroopers had attempted to land. They had jumped at too low an altitude for their parachutes to open and they were splattered all across the field. Our job was to search the bodies for documents and to translate them immediately in a special tent set up for this purpose. It was a very unnerving experience because any slight commotion outside the tent might mean another paratroop attack. Somehow we managed to translate the papers which we had gathered. They were orders giving the opit identification and the operational plan. Fortunately, there were not further paratroop attacks that night. At the time, we were not aware of the ^{naval} battle which was taking place involving the Japanese naval attempt to hit Leyte. This naval engagement, which involved a decoy maneuver by Halsey, spelled the virtual end of the Japanese navy as a threat to the U.S. forces.

* Captains work

Battle of Leyte

* More Field Hours
NCS 706
To search dead bodies

After Leyte, we landed at Lingayen Bay and made our way to Manila.

PHIL ISHIO