

Richard Oguro

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Loni!

Received a copy of your "PROCRASTINATIONS" for proposed trip to Japan with George Kanegai, from Hank Hayashi. Also got a call from your Hawaii Rep - Naomi Sodetani. Meeting with her on the 18th.

If I may, would like to give you my thoughts on that matter. But, before that, I would like to give you a SCOOP! The FIRST Nisei AJA to enlist in the US Army and the first to see combat in WW II - FRANK FUJITA!

Now a 100% Disabled Veteran living in Abilene, TX, Frank enlisted into the Texas National Guard's Fd Arty Regt of Bowie, Tx., in 1938 at the tender age of 17. He was born Oct 20, 1921 in Lawton, Oklahoma.

The unit trained at Brownwood, Tx., then moved on to the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers which theoretically pitted the 1st Army versus the 3rd Army. The highest scoring artillery bn from the two Armies were to be sent to the PI to form a new combat group. The 2nd bn of the 131st Field Arty Regt, 36th Inf Div was selected with a complementary Hqtrs Btry from the 26th Fd Arty Brigade to be sent to the PI. Frank, who was with the 1st Bn at that time, managed a transfer into the 2nd Bn - Machine Gun Sgt E Btry, the only Sgt vacancy that was available. (He was a Survey & Instrument Sgt in the 1st Bn).

On Nov 21st, 1941, the newly comprised Group left San Francisco on the USAT REPUBLIC. Arrived at Pearl Harbor Nov 30th and left Pearl after an overnight stay, on the 29th. The Republic was plying the High Seas between Hawaii and the PI when news of Dec. 7 1941 was received, immediately West of the 180th meridian!

The Republic's course was immediately diverted to Australia. This <sup>is</sup> troops on the Republic were the first U.S. troops to land in Australia, or in any other battle area? Christmas was spent in Australia. Then on to Java, Dutch East Indies, with arrival in Soerabaja January 11, 1942. Upon arrival in Java,  $\frac{1}{2}$  the Bn was sent to defend the East sector, and the other  $\frac{1}{2}$  Bn to the West sector. Frank's E Btry defended in the East Sector.

In early March, the Battle of Java began in earnest - the USS Houston was sunk off the coast of Java, and the Imperial Japanese Military got the Dutch Commander to surrender all troops in Java.

Accounted by Benjamin Dunn in his: BAMBOO EXPRESS: "Battery E had seen action against the Japanese when they invaded eastern Java and must have put up quite a battle. Frank Fujita, an American of Japanese descent, reportedly distinguished himself with a Jeep and a mounted machine gun in the final action around Soerabaja before they were finally captured and interned." This is the part that got me intrigued and on the trail of Frank Fujita!

All the troops in Java alive during the last day of battle for Java were captured, and began 42 months of internment in POW Camps in Singapore, Burma, Thailand, Japan.

Frank Fujita ended up in "Bunker Hill" -Bunka Gakuen Kanda POW Camp in Tokyo for almost two years. And Ensign George "Bucky" Henshaw, now of Honolulu was in this Camp with him for two years too. There was a brief meeting with the other  $\frac{1}{2}$  Bn when the entire Bn was in Singapore prior to being shipped to Japan and to Burma. Then, Frank was transferred to Fukuoka #2 Camp in Nagasaki.

Only after he had been at this Camp for about a year, did Camp authorities find out that Frank was Japanese! Well, sez Frank, he was "hambun and hambun" meaning he was half and half.

The irony of it all, the ignomy? Franks's father had immigrated to Oklahoma in 1914 from this very Nagasaki via San Francisco where he settled, married a white girl by the name of Elliot of English, Irish, Scot and American-Indian descent!

After the discovery that he was Japanese, he was brought in from the dock yards, interrogated at great length, offered a Captaincy in their Army, Women, Money and Property to turncoat and join up with them.

But, he had only laughed at his "tormentors" telling them they were losing the war. Why should he quit a winner, besides, they were on opposite sides of the fence.

Frank's experiences were many after that - they tried to force him to learn Japanese. He was exhibit #1 to any and all visitors to the Camp. He nearly got killed.

He tried to get a line on his family lineage while at this camp and two American Nisei (interpreters for the Japanese Army) tried to help him and succeeded, but couldn't divulge the names of his relatives to him. One day some fruits were sent in from the outside, for the Yankee POW's within only - 100 US POW's among some 3,000 POWs in this camp alone. Frank and the other Yanks could only speculate that it was from some of Frank's relatives in Nagasaki.

He had forgotten his diary when he left the camp. But got it back later. It was used in the Crime & Treason Trials, Tokyo Rose Trial. His group tried to sabotage ship building in the shipyards, Frank's private war in the shipyards and his radio programs - all is written a book that has not yet been published. No publisher has brought his book yet.!

Frank's story and that of Ben Dunn's Bamboo Express is the story of the FIRST Lost Bn of WW II, lost in the Pacific. And the 2nd Lost Bn is the much reknown Rescue of the Lost Battalion in Bruyeres, France. And both lost battalions were units of the 36th Inf Div!

Frank sums it up: "You are right about two lost bns in one war being from the same Division and on opposite sides of the world at that!" The bn was literally lost and it was over a year before U.S. Army authorities knew what had happened. Liberated in Aug-Sept 45, some POWs were in the PI waiting for shipment home, when someone asked that their unit designation. When informed that they were members of the 131st Fd Arty Regt, in disbelief their questioners retorted: "The 36th never fought in the Pacific, it fought in Europe!"

Frank also disclosed that he had a brother who served with the 442nd RCT! According to my local contact, a member of L Company, 442nd RCT told me that there was a Herbert Fujita who became the first sgt of Company L after being in Shelby as a Cadre. He was busted down to a Staff for reason unknown to my source. Herbert changed his name to Herbert Elliot (taking his mother's side) and requesting a transfer to Cannon Company, AND served with the 442nd RCT's Cannon Company in the European Campaign.

Then there is the case of T. FUDENNA, first class at Camp Savage (A-3) who refused to give his account to Joe D. Harrington - YANKEE SAMURAI. Because he was cheated of "Just Recognition." He was in charge of the Language Team in the Advance 5th Air Force base established in Port Moresby, New Guinea. The team had finally devised some means of decoding incoming air-to-ground messages of the enemy Japanese forces. On one particular day, the unit intercepted and decoded a message that stated that General Yamashita (the Tiger of Malaya) would be enroute to the Phillipines by way of Rabaul. The Commander of this squadron? three times asked the unit to re-verify the report. That they would have the planes on the ground ready for intercept upon delivery of the affirmative answer. Sgt Fudenna gave the final verification and the planes took off. He was promised an official recognition/commendation formation upon the return of the planes, and mission accomplished. The mission was a success, Yamashita's plane was shot down over Rabaul, and a formation was held. But, Sgt Fudenna was never called to "Front and Center" The commandant of the group was called forward to get the

the award/recognition/cheers! Told to me by Walter Tanaka, another member of the 1st Class at Camp Savage

POW Camps in California for interrogating Pows - Japanese, Germans, et al. There was one such camp at Byron Hot Springs - near Byron, CA! Ben Yamamoto of Aiea, Hawaii spent 8 months a so there after graduating from Camp Savage, 2nd Savage class, third over-all MISLS classes.

Byron Hot Springs, before WW II was known as the high-jinks spot for Hollywood celebrities! Hot spring shower units as well as mud bathing pools abounded. According to another source, there was another one in Bakersville, CA. He served in this one and can only remember barbed-wires!

From the MIS group from Hawaii, Roy Nakada still resides in Naha, Okinawa, is a prominent lawyer there. Eddie Mitsukado resides somewhere in Tokyo. From Baker, 100th Inf, Takeshi Teshima still lives in Tokyo-Osaka, quite a business man he is. His children have all been educated in Hawaii!

During the period 1937-1941, before WW II, Many high school graduates were sent to Japan for "further schooling" or for Sports in the universities in Japan. Many have not returned to Hawaii, not even for a visit. One 37 McKinley High classmate on mine, Herbert Ishii has resided in Japan since 1937 - Hear tell he has become quite a prominent figure. Many of the boys who served in the 100th and the 442 and the MIS are kibeis still with strong ties in Japan!? You ought to get in contact with these guys before going over to Japan.

Almost forgot - The President of Hawaii Hochi Publishing Co in the brother of Ralph Yempuku, MISer who never met with Joe Harrington either.

MAHALO 'n GOOD LUCK!!

*Mick*