

The Japyanks on maneuvers at Camp Shelby

By CORPORAL MIKE MASAOKA

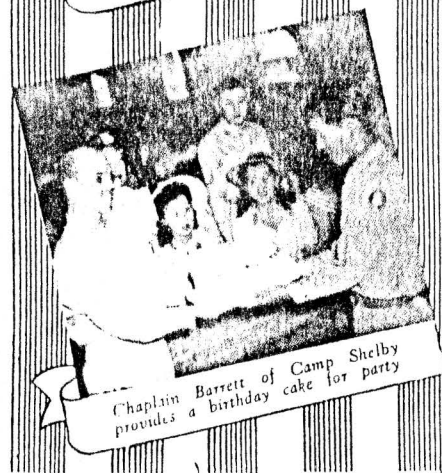
IF any group of American soldiers is imbued with the Crusader spirit of old it is the 442d Combat Team, that unique military organization of Japanese-American volunteers now in training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

Because they resemble the Japanese enemy in physical characteristics, their preponderant American traits often have been either deliberately by-passed or maliciously misconstrued by those who question their loyalty and allegiance. Born, bred and educated in America, they know no other country; their very lives and fortunes are inextricably bound up in the destiny of America.

But there are those who are determined to make them pay for the crimes of the enemy by playing upon their unasked-for kinship with the Japanese race. So, like the Christian knights of a feudal age, these "Japyanks" (as the *New York World-Telegram* referred to them in a recent article) are willing to give of their all to prove their faith in their America—and to win for themselves and their posterity the privilege of being accepted as the true-blue and loyal Americans they are.

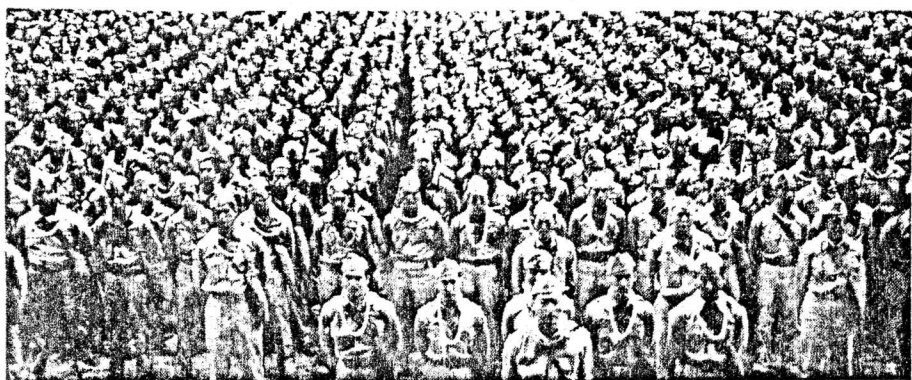


They proved their high efficiency as fighters on Italy's bloody sands



Chaplain Barrett of Camp Shelby provides a birthday cake for party

THESE ARE THE JAPYANKS



When the chance to enlist was opened to Japanese-Americans, they flocked eagerly to the colors.

This, then, is the story of the Japyanks, 442d Combat Team, Army of the United States.

Before December 7, 1941, the Japanese-American society was living a normal American life comparable in most respects to those of other second-generation immigrant groups.

In 1940, according to the federal census, there were 157,900 Japanese in Hawaii and 127,000 in the United States proper, two-thirds of whom were, and are, American citizens. In Hawaii, the Japanese are scattered through the entire Territory and constitute a vital and significant segment in the economic and social structure of the Islands. On the mainland, though 97 per cent were "concentrated" in three Pacific Coast states, they were too few in numbers to materially influence community life.

As a racial group, however, both in the Territory and on the continent, they were often singled out for their exemplary Americanism and for exhibiting some of the finer attributes of citizenship. For example: They could boast of the lowest delinquency and crime rate of any nationality; they were thrifty and industrious, and remained off public relief rolls better than almost any other minority; they responded to civic, charitable and patriotic

appeals with more enthusiasm and zeal than most; they had more volunteers and inductees in the armed forces of the United States per capita than any other racial stock.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, still prevalent rumors notwithstanding, "Americans with Japanese faces" shared in the defense of American soil. In Hawaii, the "AJAs," as Americans of Japanese ancestry are called, volunteered for every and all kinds of work, often begging for even the most menial of tasks to demonstrate their desire to serve their country. Many joined the Territorial Guards, only to be inactivated because of their physical likeness to the very enemy who had butchered members of their families and their friends in that infamous attack. Students at the University of Hawaii organized the Varsity Victory Volunteers and did yeoman service in building up Island defenses.

On the mainland, Japanese-Americans co-operated wholeheartedly with local, state and federal agencies interested in the war effort. They embarked upon a gigantic "Food for Freedom" program, since most of them were engaged in agricultural pursuits; they spearheaded a national "Buy a Bomber to Bomb Tokyo" campaign; they bought and sold War Bonds, gave their blood to

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blood banks, and engaged in any and every effort designed to help their country prepare to beat the common enemy.

In the spring of 1942, Selective Service began to reclassify persons with Japanese names into 4-C, a designation reserved for aliens and others not desired by the armed forces. That same spring, rightly or wrongly, "military necessity" dictated the wholesale and arbitrary evacuation from the West Coast of all persons with Japanese blood and their relocation in government centers in the interior.

Late in January, 1943, the War Department announced the formation of a special Japanese-American Combat Team and invited volunteers to enlist. "The action was taken," Secretary of War Stimson said, "following study by the War Department of many earnest requests by loyal American citizens of Japanese extraction for the organization of a special unit of the Army in which they could have their share in the fight against the nation's enemies." The response was spectacular.

In Hawaii, where a quota of 1,500 was set, more than 10,000 young Americans of Japanese ancestry swamped their local draft boards. More than 2,700 of them were finally accepted and sailed from Honolulu last April.

Volunteers from Behind Barbed Wire

The response on the mainland, too, was most gratifying, especially when it is considered that these volunteers marched from behind barbed-wire fences and watchtowers, leaving their families and friends behind them to exist in barrack cities, to fight, and perhaps die, for a country which many have said had failed them.

Such is the composition of the Combat Team: eager young Americans who volunteered to prove President Roosevelt's classic definition that "Americanism is a matter of the mind and the heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

Their language is English; their slang American. Most of them can't even read or write Japanese. As one of them said: "Our only handicap is having Japanese faces." They play at American games—and play them well. They won the post baseball championship with a typically "Yankee" flourish: a home run in the last of the ninth with two men out. They competed in the Southern A.A.U. Swimming Meet and swam off with individual and team honors. They have the only barefoot golfers of championship caliber in the Army, and their barefoot football players can punt a football as far as the all-Americans. Their boxers include several A.A.U. titleholders.

A Typical American Army Outfit

Though they are not fanatically religious, they do manage to fill the chapel for Sunday services. Courts-martial are rare, and the medical reports attest to their physical fitness and cleanliness.

They are a typical American Army outfit.

But, mindful of the reasons which prompted them to volunteer, they have an attitude which marks them apart from most units. They feel that they have more at stake—not only victory in the war, but also vindication of the inherent Americanism of the Japanese-American population. They are "all-out" to make a name for themselves and for all others of their nationality. By conducting themselves well, they are convinced that they are assuring the future of all Japanese-Americans in this country. They believe that they are engaged in a great cause—a cause to disprove those who have doubted and persecuted them and to justify the faith that others have in them.

As one Japyank summed it up, "We fight to win the war not only against the enemies of America abroad but also the enemies of democracy at home who use race and ancestry to confuse the issues and retard the war effort. In a word, we fight for our own survival as Americans as well as for the survival of the American way."

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This spirit is manifest in everything they do. Their eagerness to learn and their stick-to-itiveness are legend around Camp Shelby. Out of their own pockets they have bought over \$3,000 worth of military texts and manuals; they study them assiduously and sometimes catch up their instructors on technical points. On forced marches, they walk their legs off before falling out.

This contagious, "fighting" quality which characterizes their marches and maneuvers is typified in their motto: "Go For Broke"—soldier slang, born of the "crap" game, meaning "to shoot the works" or risk all. They believe that their conduct in battle will determine the fate of all Japanese-Americans in this country, and they are determined not to fail their responsibility.

Symbolism in the Shoulder Patch

Their Combat Team shoulder patch, the flaming Torch of Liberty, symbolizes their goal: liberty for all, regardless of race or ancestry—liberty from persecution, from discrimination, from unjustified doubts; liberty to live and to be considered a worthy American. And, to a man, they are pledged to "Go For Broke" to achieve that liberty.

These volunteers have proved themselves in training. Recently, when the War Department announced the reclassification of Japanese-Americans for military service, the outstanding training record of the 442d was mentioned as one of the principal reasons for this change in policy.

The exploits of the 100th Infantry AJA Battalion in Italy, where they spearheaded the attack of the famed 34th Division, are an inspiration to the men. Many of them have brothers and friends in that activated National Guard unit from Hawaii which is proving its mettle in the blood of battle.

Many of those from the Islands and mainland have other brothers and friends serving with the U. S. military intelligence in the Pacific theater of operations.

"Judge Us on Our Record Alone"

Though their comrades-in-arms are performing their duties admirably and winning the plaudits of all with whom they come into contact, the Japyanks of the 442d know that the eyes of America will be on them when they are finally privileged to go into battle, for they are the first and only 100 per cent volunteer organization of Japanese-Americans to be given the opportunity in combat with the enemy to prove that their blood can mingle with that spilled at Bunker Hill, at Gettysburg, at the Marne, on Bataan.

These young Americans with Japanese faces do not ask for sympathy, or for special favors. They ask only that they and their kind be judged by their valor on the battlefields. They don't expect the enemy "Over There" to give them aid and comfort. But they do expect—as they feel they have the right to expect—that, when the war is won, Americans everywhere will welcome them home as fellow Americans, and not as those questionable "Japs."

That is their faith. That is their hope. And that is why these Americans of Japanese ancestry have taken this vow: "Mindful of the high purpose for which we volunteered, we pledge ourselves to so live our lives and give our lives that neither our country, America, nor our fellow Japanese-Americans will ever be ashamed of our conduct—to the end that all loyal Americans, of whatever nationality, will be privileged to share in the common lot and life of all Americans without favor or prejudice."

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JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH