

go for **broke!** battle cry of courage

An Exhibit on **THE JAPANESE - AMERICAN SOLDIER IN WORLD WAR II**

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
6 AUGUST 1982 to 30 JULY 1983

An old American tradition has it that, during wartime, civilians will rise to be transformed into brave and battle-ready soldiers. Japanese-American soldiers built upon this tradition during World War II, as students, clerks, farmers, fishermen, and professionals became the "GO FOR BROKE!" heroes of European and Asiatic battlefields. What makes their story unparalleled and able to inspire films, books, and museum exhibits is that, while these soldiers were demonstrating their fierce loyalty to their country overseas, many of their families were being confined unjustly in detention camps in the United States.

THE 100TH INFANTRY BATTALION, the first Japanese-American unit to serve in Europe, was organized in June 1942 and consisted mainly of Hawaiian volunteers who were already in the Army when the war started. The men of the 100th were trained in Wisconsin and Mississippi and then sent to North Africa in the Autumn of 1943. The 100th then performed admirably in Italy, especially in the fierce fighting at Cassino and Anzio. These soldiers' determination to win against all odds led to their having such high casualties that they earned the name "The Purple Heart Battalion."

In February 1943, a general call went out for Americans of Japanese ancestry to volunteer for a special combat team. More than 11,000 men from Hawaii and thousands more from the mainland responded, and the 442ND REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM was formed with 3,000 men from Hawaii and 1,500 from mainland detention camps. The 442nd first saw action against German forces north of Rome in the summer of 1944. In July of that year, the 100th was attached to the 442nd as one of its three infantry battalions. Additional support units of the 442nd were the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, the 232nd Combat Engineers Company, the 206th Army Band, an anti-tank company, a cannon company, a service company, and a medical detachment.

In October 1944, the 442nd was the key unit in the liberation of the French town of Bruyères. Without rest, the undermanned 442nd was given the assignment of freeing a unit that had become surrounded by German troops—the "Lost Battalion" of the 141st Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, of Texas. The Lost Battalion was rescued, but the toll for the already depleted 442nd was high: more than 800 men killed or wounded.

In their 20 months of combat service before the war's end, the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team successfully fought in seven major military campaigns. Altogether, there were more than 18,000 individual decorations awarded the 10,000 men of the two groups, thus making the 442nd as a whole the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in the history of the United States.

The unusual story of the Japanese Americans who served in the MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (MIS) in the Pacific is little known to the general public even today. The Army had started a Japanese language school at the Presidio of San Francisco in November 1941. Soon after the war broke out, the school was moved to Camp Savage, Minnesota, because of the removal of all Japanese persons from the West Coast. By war's end, more than 6,000 people had passed through the school's language courses, and 95% of the graduates were Japanese Americans.

The language school graduates served in every combat zone in the Pacific. They translated important documents, intercepted and deciphered coded messages, interrogated prisoners, and were pivotal in persuading Japanese military and civilian personnel to surrender. The thousands of Japanese Americans who served in the Pacific and Asia did so quietly without fanfare. Sometimes they were assigned, as individuals, to the front-line units as combat interpreters. Small numbers of them were also attached to headquarters of larger units. Wherever they were assigned, they performed indispensable intelligence work.

Because the Japanese Americans in the Pacific were so scattered and because of the secret nature of their work, there was little publicity about their role in the war. Their knowledge of the complex and difficult Japanese language and their ability to translate it into precise English gave the Allies an extraordinary advantage. These soldiers were credited with saving countless Allied lives and with shortening the war considerably. Widespread recognition of the significance of their contributions is long overdue.

For the fighting men in Europe, though, combat awards and honors were many. General Mark Clark, who headed the Italian campaigns, said: "Never did a Commander have more to be proud of than I, in having you associated with me in that difficult war." On 10 April 1946, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Army Chief of Staff, issued General Order No. 34, which said in part: "The gallantry and esprit de corps displayed by the officers and men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in bitter action against a formidable enemy exemplify the finest traditions of the armed forces of the United States."

This exhibit was conceived and organized by the United States Army and was first shown at the U.S. Army Museum, Presidio of San Francisco, 7 March 1981 to 30 May 1982.

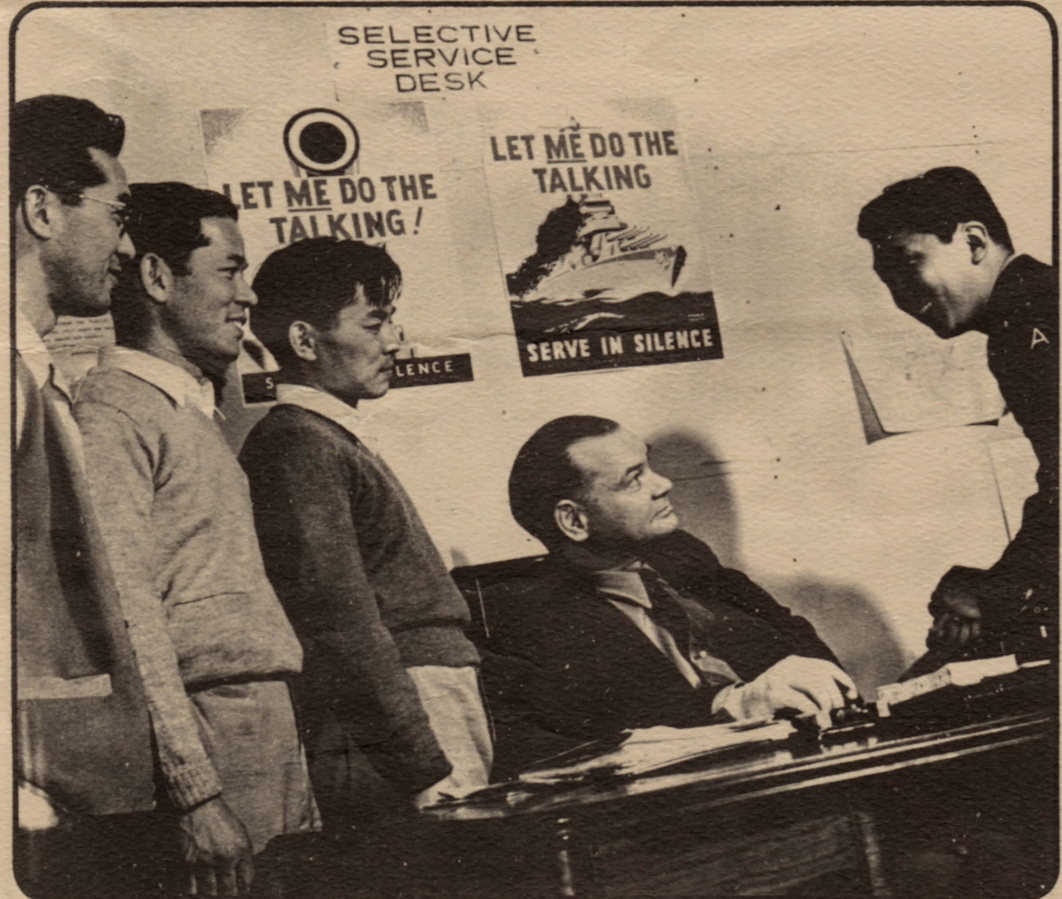
Only months after the outbreak of war, all people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast—most of them U.S. citizens—were forced from their homes and put into detention camps in the central and western United States.



In the summer of 1944, the fighting on the northern Italian front was bitter, and Japanese Americans were at the forefront of the action.



Some of the heaviest fighting of the war for the 442nd came after being assigned to France in late 1944.



In the first year of the war, Japanese Americans serving in the Armed Forces were put under surveillance and assigned menial duties, and volunteers of Japanese ancestry were rejected. When calls for volunteers were later issued, thousands responded.



In the ruins of Leghorn, Italy, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark and Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal inspect troops from the 100th Battalion, who were present as an honor guard for the Secretary.



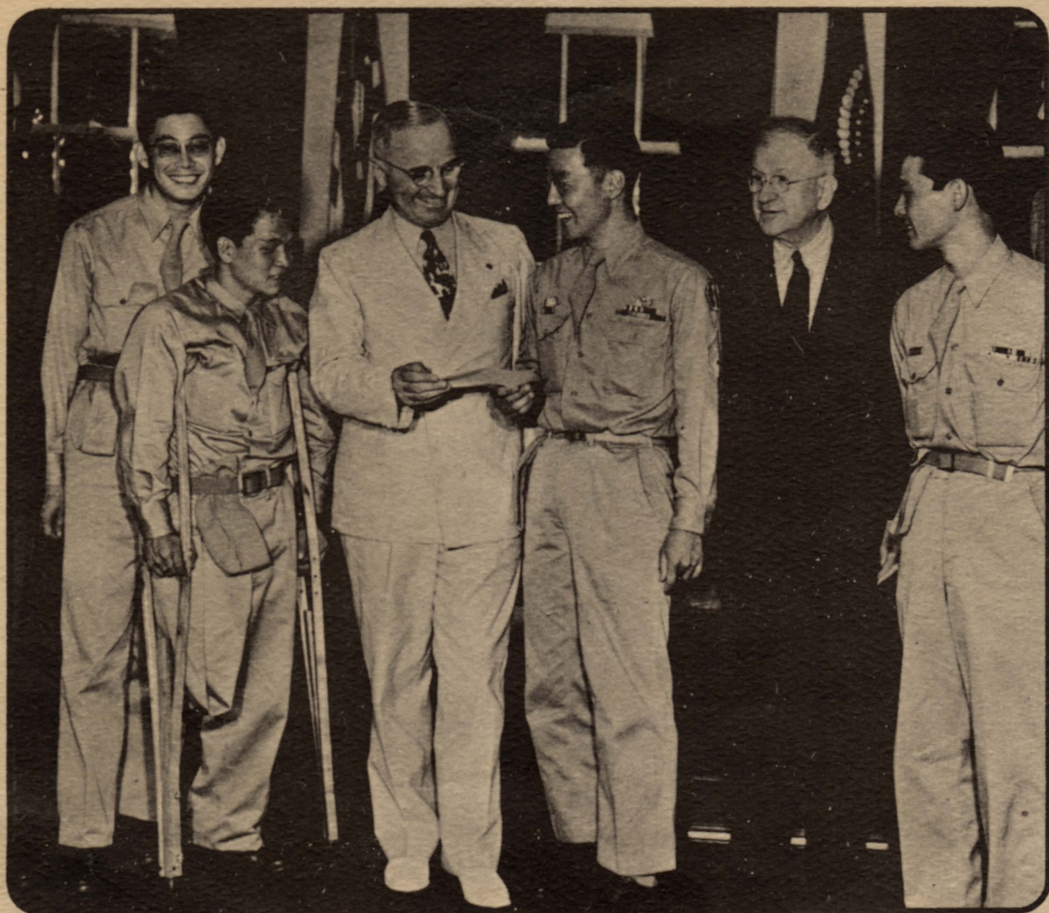
The need for Japanese-American intelligence soldiers had been apparent even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the demand for these soldiers mushroomed as war intensified. The military language school at Camp Savage, Minnesota, was greatly expanded as a result.

Interrogation and translation produced military intelligence that was crucial to the Allied war effort in the Pacific. Here, a Japanese-American soldier interrogates a captured officer of the Japanese Imperial Army.



There were contingents of Japanese-American language specialists at all Allied headquarters in the Pacific and Asia, and small groups were also attached to combat units. The two shown here served in Burma with Gen. Frank Merrill of Merrill's Marauders.

One of the keenest admirers of the 442nd was their Commander-in-Chief, President Harry S Truman. He invited them to the White House, reviewed the unit on parade, and decorated individuals and the Combat Team as a whole.



Honored far more than most combat units, the 442nd also suffered disproportionate losses. While loved ones were victims of prejudice at home, Japanese-American soldiers demonstrated with their lives a determined loyalty to the United States. Their high casualty rate was grim and incontrovertible testimony of that loyalty.