

Chronological: The Significance of the 442nd RCT

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
Speeches, Chronological, Box SP14, Folder 50
<https://hdl.handle.net/10524/72814>

Items in eVols are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

UHM Library Digital Collections Disclaimer and Copyright Information

April 2006?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 442nd REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

ADDRESS BY U.S. SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE

THE CITADEL, THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Speech - 2006
442nd Reg. Combat Team,
the Citadel, SC

ATE///

T
D

regimental Combat Team trace back to
r nation's history.

I

Pearl Harbor. Since...

rs ago, when I witnessed Japan's attack on
raining, I rushed into service as the head of

a Red Cross first-aid team. In the chaos of that Sunday morning, as I helped the
injured and the dying, I quickly realized that my country, the United States of
America, had been thrust into World War II.

The men in multiethnic Hawaii, then a U.S. territory, were no different from the
men on the U.S. mainland. We were outraged by the attack – perhaps even more
because it had happened so close to our homes and loved ones. We wanted to serve,
and we wanted to defend our nation and its democratic ideals. But shortly after
Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government declared that all Japanese Americans were
“enemy aliens.” That meant Japanese Americans could not serve in the uniform of
our nation. We could not volunteer or be drafted, and ~~the Japanese Americans~~
~~already in the U.S. military were summarily discharged.~~ We were just “4-C,” the
category for “enemy aliens.” As American citizens, it was painful to be branded as
“4-C” because it meant we were not trusted by our own country simply because we
had the same physical features as the men who had attacked us on that Day of
Infamy.

Also in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, an executive order – Executive Order No.
9066 – was issued. It established 10 internment camps in desolate parts of the
country, and 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were rounded
up and herded into these camps. In government documents, these facilities were
described as concentration camps. The round-up and internment of Japanese
Americans were done without the filing of any charges, nor were there any trials.
The internment was unconstitutional, and in the end not one Japanese American
was ever found guilty of espionage or of any treasonous act.

April 2006?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 442nd REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

ADDRESS BY U.S. SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE

**THE CITADEL, THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA**

///DATE///

The forces that gave birth to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team trace back to December 7, 1941, that pivotal day in our nation's history.

I was 17 years old that day nearly 65 years ago, when I witnessed Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Since I had medical-aid training, I rushed into service as the head of a Red Cross first-aid team. In the chaos of that Sunday morning, as I helped the injured and the dying, I quickly realized that my country, the United States of America, had been thrust into World War II.

The men in multiethnic Hawaii, then a U.S. territory, were no different from the men on the U.S. mainland. We were outraged by the attack – perhaps even more because it had happened so close to our homes and loved ones. We wanted to serve, and we wanted to defend our nation and its democratic ideals. But shortly after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government declared that all Japanese Americans were “enemy aliens.” That meant Japanese Americans could not serve in the uniform of our nation. We could not volunteer or be drafted, ~~and the Japanese Americans already in the U.S. military were summarily discharged.~~ We were just “4-C,” the category for “enemy aliens.” As American citizens, it was painful to be branded as “4-C” because it meant we were not trusted by our own country simply because we had the same physical features as the men who had attacked us on that Day of Infamy.

Also in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, an executive order – Executive Order No. 9066 – was issued. It established 10 internment camps in desolate parts of the country, and 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were rounded up and herded into these camps. In government documents, these facilities were described as concentration camps. The round-up and internment of Japanese Americans were done without the filing of any charges, nor were there any trials. The internment was unconstitutional, and in the end not one Japanese American was ever found guilty of espionage or of any treasonous act.

In Hawaii, Japanese Americans petitioned the government of the United States to offer us the opportunity to serve because we wanted to demonstrate that we were just as good as any other U.S. citizen. "We know but one loyalty, and that is to the Stars and Stripes," the petition declared. "We wish to do our part as loyal Americans in every way possible, and we hereby offer ourselves for whatever service you may see fit to use us." Indeed, many Japanese Americans at first supported the war effort by simply digging ditches and building barracks because that was all we were allowed to do.

Finally, on February 1, 1943, the President of the United States issued an executive order that authorized the formation of an infantry regimental combat team with the number 442. In activating the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, President Roosevelt declared: "No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of mind and heart; Americanism is not and, and never was, a matter of race or color."

In Hawaii, the response to the call to arms was dramatic. The original plan called for 1,500 Nisei – second-generation Americans of Japanese ancestry – to serve in the 442nd. But nearly 10,000 volunteered, roughly 80 percent of the eligible men, and I was among the more than 2,600 who were accepted. Later, we would train and serve alongside mainland Japanese Americans who had also volunteered for service in the 442nd.

The day I was to report for my induction, my father escorted me to the recruiting station where trucks were waiting to take us to Schofield Barracks. He didn't say a word in the streetcar until we finally got to the recruiting station. He looked at me and said: "This country has been good to us. Whatever you do, do not dishonor this country, and do not dishonor the family. If you must die, die with honor." Those were profound words. I have always thought to myself, "Would I be able to say that – die with honor – to my son?" For my father, it was very important, and his words have always been with me.

Honor was also very important to the men with whom I served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. After our first battle, I asked the men in my squad what were their thoughts the night before we attacked. All of them voiced the same concern: "I pray I do not dishonor my family or our country." "I hope I don't become a coward." None of them said, "I hope I will come out of this alive." What they said made me fiercely proud of them.

When the Hawaii contingent of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team departed from

Honolulu, something strange happened. We were hoping that we could proudly march down the boulevard to the ship, as we held our heads up high while we marched past our parents who were lined up along the street to say goodbye to us. However, for some reason, the military insisted that we had to carry our bags. And for some other reason a line of military police stood between us and our parents. In the distance, you could hear parents calling out to their sons. "Masao." "Takashi." Every so often, an old lady or an old man would try to dash across the street to say goodbye, but the MPs would push them away. I always thought of that scene. It was demeaning, and somehow not right because we looked like a bunch of POWs when we should have left Hawaii in grand style. We knew – and our parents knew – some of us were not coming back alive.

Even on the ship, we did not know our destination. But when we arrived in Oakland, California, word began filtering back to us that we were headed for Mississippi. To reach Mississippi, we were put on trains. And because some senior military officials thought we might be mistaken for POWs, the train never stopped during the day. The stops were at night, and, in the darkness, we got out to stretch our legs. We arrived in Mississippi in ~~June~~ ^{April} 1943, for training at Camp Shelby.

While at Camp Shelby, I learned of the internment camps and that the 442nd's mainland Nisei – who comprised one-third of the regimental combat team – had volunteered while confined in the camps. To this day, I ask myself: Would I have volunteered if I were behind barbed wire with my family members? It didn't take much courage for us from Hawaii to enlist because we believed it was the right thing to do. For the mainland Nisei, they were willing to fight for – and die for – their country, even though it had unjustly spurned them as it abandoned its democratic ideals.

After nine months of combat training, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team shipped out for Europe. Already in Europe was the 100th Infantry Battalion, another segregated unit comprised of Japanese Americans from Hawaii. The soldiers of the 100th had been discharged from Hawaii Territorial Guard and the National Guard of Hawaii. But the Commanding General of the U.S. Army in Hawaii later reversed his decision, and successfully recommended to the War Department that they be allowed to serve in what later became the 100th Battalion.

The 100th entered combat in Italy on September 26, 1943, and suffered heavy casualties. Less than a year later it had lost nearly 65 percent of the men originally assigned to the unit, and it had to draw replacements from men who had finished training with the 442nd at Camp Shelby. The high casualty rate for the 100th, which reflected the uncommon courage of its men, resulted in the 100th Battalion becoming known as "the Purple Heart Battalion."

On June 2, 1944, the 442nd landed at Naples, Italy, and two weeks later, in Civitavecchia, northwest of Rome, the 442nd absorbed the 100th Battalion. For the next three months, the 442nd fought the German army in mountainous terrain, and forced the enemy to retreat north across of the Arno River after heavy fighting at Belvedere, Luciana, and Livorno. The Rome-Arno campaign cost the 442nd nearly 1,300 casualties – ~~that's dead, wounded, and missing in action~~ – nearly 25 percent of its manpower.

In September 1944, the 442nd landed at Marseille in southeastern France, and began advancing toward the Vosages mountains on the French-German border. Three French towns in the Vosages – Belmont, Biffontaine, and Bruyeres – were liberated. During the battle to capture Bruyeres, the 442nd waged bitter house to house firefights, and captured more than 200 German soldiers.

The 442nd's bloodiest battle occurred during the rescue of the "Lost Battalion." The Lost Battalion was the First Battalion of the 36th Division's 141st Infantry Regiment. It was assigned to clear a ridge deep in the Vosages, but since October 24, 1944, it had been cut off by the Germans. The two other battalions of the 141st were unable to break through. Then the 442nd was ordered to rescue the Lost Battalion.

The 442nd succeeded in breaking through on the afternoon of October 30, 1944, but paid a heavy price in doing so. During the five days and nights of continuous combat, more than 300 men from the 442nd Regimental Combat Team were killed and more than 500 were wounded. In comparison, the rescued Lost Battalion had only 61 men who were killed or injured. That's 8 percent of the 442nd's casualties. So more than 800 Japanese American soldiers were killed or wounded to rescue the Lost Battalion's 214 ~~German~~ soldiers.

We knew we were expendable. But we also knew our orders to rescue the Lost battalion was a test; it was a test of our loyalty. And we knew failure was not an option. Military historians consider the 442nd's rescue of the Lost Battalion to be one of the most extraordinary events that occurred in warfare. It did not change the course of the war, but it showed what a handful of men, who, if they decide to do something, can perform miracles, bloody miracles.

In April 1945, the 442nd was sent back to Italy, and its battlefield triumphs continued: Carrara was captured, as was Mount Belvedere, and the Serreta Ridge was secured, which meant control of the town of Massa. Most importantly, we broke the German's Gothic Line, which had prevented the Allies from advancing for six months. In less than a day, the 442nd, accompanied by other Army units, slashed through the German defenses. By May 2, 1945, a month after the return of

the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the war in Italy was over.

For me, the war ended 11 days earlier on a ridge near the ~~coast~~ village of San Terenzo. On April 21, I led my platoon on an attack of the fortified ridge, which overlooked an important junction. We wiped out an artillery and mortar post, and came within 40 ~~yards~~ of the enemy's main line of resistance. We could either continue moving up or retreat quickly.

We advanced, hunching slowly up that slope that was so painfully devoid of cover. Almost all at once three machine guns opened fire on us. I can still smell that piece of unyielding ground under my face, and hear the w-hiss of the bullets slicing the air above my helmet. I laid there for a second, thinking how neatly the German soldiers had pinned us, and wondering how long it would take them to get us all if we just continued to hug the ground.

I decided to pull a grenade and get up, but I took a slug to the gut that pushed me backward. I managed to get up, charge, and throw the grenade, which took out the nearest machine-gun nest. With my tommy gun, I cut down the members of the gun nest who were not immediately killed by the grenade blast.

As I heard my men pounding up the hill behind me, I waved them toward the left where the other two nests were adjusting their field of fire to cover the entire slope. While I wanted to move on, we were pinned down. I knew that if we did not do something quickly, they would pick us off one at a time. Bleeding, I lurched up the hill, and lobbed two grenades into the second emplacement.

~~Taking out the last nest was extremely difficult, and a number of my men were killed trying to do so. As I was shuffling my painful way up the flank of the emplacement, I got close enough to pull the pin on my last grenade. As I drew my right arm back, I suddenly saw an enemy soldier just 10 yards away from me. He fired his rifle grenade. It smashed into my right elbow, exploded, and all but tore my right arm off. I was stunned, but quickly realized that if I did not use my left hand to pry the grenade loose from my dead fist, I and my buddies rushing up to help me would be dead. Somehow, I managed to hurl my grenade, and it got the German who had fired the rifle grenade at me.~~

~~It was almost over. But some last German, in his terminal instant of life, squeezed off a final burst from the machine gun; a bullet caught me in the right leg and threw me to the ground, and I rolled over and over down the hill. Somehow, I managed to survive.~~

On July 2, 1946, after ~~two years~~ ^{a year} of combat on Italian and French battlefields, the

442nd Regimental Combat Team was back on U.S. soil. Because of the rehabilitation I underwent for my combat injuries, I was not discharged until May 1947. But my real homecoming came a year earlier when I received a 30-day pass from the Army hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, where I was rehabilitating, and wrangled my way across the continental United States back home to Hawaii.

On the night I got home, my mother was the first to hug me, and I could feel her tears. I also hugged my dad, my sister, and my two brothers. The joy of seeing each other dispelled the long years I had been away. As I looked around the house – my home – it suddenly appeared smaller yet just the same. There was the picture of President Roosevelt on the wall, with one of me next to it. A blue star hung in the window. As I rediscovered my home, my parents, my sister and brothers saw the hook on the end of the prosthesis that had replaced my right arm.

Suddenly, there was an awkward silence. I lit a cigarette to break the tension. Then my mother called out my name in that certain way of hers that conveyed her displeasure. I looked sheepishly at the cigarette, then at her, then at the rest of them. And then we all began to laugh, my mother, too, and I knew that I was home.

Sadly, there were many Japanese American families in Hawaii and on the West Coast that did not have homecomings with sons and brothers who went off to fight for their country. The 442nd numbered 4,500 soldiers. But it would take more than 12,000 Japanese Americans to sustain that number throughout the war because of the unit's unusually high casualty rate.

We put ourselves in harm's way because we were unlike most other soldiers. We bore the responsibility of bringing honor to our families' names, and proving that Americanism was not a matter of skin color, but a matter of heart and mind. We hoped to not only protect our country's freedoms, but to also free Japanese Americans from the ugly prejudices of the time. We, indeed, did "Go for Broke." That's the 442nd's motto, which means risking everything on one great effort to win big.

Today the 442nd is recognized as the most decorated regimental combat team of its size in the history of our country. Its soldiers received more than 18,000 individual decorations, including 21 Medals of Honor, our nation's highest award for military valor. Many of the decorations were awarded posthumously for acts of extraordinary bravery and courage shown on the battlefield. The 442nd also earned eight Presidential Unit Citations, for its service in eight major campaigns in Italy and France.

More importantly, the record of the 442nd influenced President Truman to issue the

order that desegregated our nation's armed forces. The President's order left no doubt that, in addition to our triumph in Europe, we won a second battle that was just as significant – the battle against prejudice in the United States of America.

Speech

March 31, 2006

To: Senator

Fr: Mike

Re: Draft speech / 442nd RCT

Attached is the draft for your speech on the 442nd Regimental Combat Team that you will deliver at the Citadel.

After you make your edits, the speech will be reformatted into speech format.


[Education](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Salary Center](#)
[Travel](#)
[Autos](#)
[Gifts](#)
[Home](#) :: [Military](#) :: [Agencies](#) :: [Army](#) :: [I Corps](#) :: [29th Infantry Brigade](#) ::

Military

[Introduction](#)
[Systems](#)
[Facilities](#)
[Agencies](#)
[Industry](#)
[Operations](#)
[Countries](#)
[Hot Documents](#)
[News](#)
[Reports](#)
[Policy](#)
[Budget](#)
[Congress](#)
[Links](#)

WMD

Intelligence

Homeland Security

Space

Public Eye

100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry



The 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry, is the only remaining Infantry unit in the Army Reserve force structure. Its headquarters is located at Fort

Shafter, Hawaii, and its units are located in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and Saipan. Under the command and control of the 9th Regional Support Command, the 100th/442nd's wartime mission is to be one of the maneuver battalion's of the 29th Separate Infantry Brigade, Hawaii Army National Guard.

It is important to recognize the contributions of the Japanese Americans who served in the U.S. Army's 100th Battalion and 442nd Combat Infantry group. History speaks for itself in documenting that none have shared their blood more valiantly for America than the Japanese Americans who served in these units while fighting enemy forces in Europe during World War II. The records of the 100th Battalion and 442nd Infantry are without equal.

Because young Japanese men of the second generation [nisei] were often eager to fight against the Axis Powers Japanese-American units were created in the Army. In order to eliminate the confusion that might arise in the Pacific, the nisei units were to be employed only in the Mediterranean and European theaters of operation. The 442nd Infantry Regiment was the largest nisei unit. Fighting in Italy and southern France, the unit was known for its bravery and determination, as reflected by the unit motto, "Go for broke!"

The first all-Japanese American Nisei military unit was the 100th Battalion, which was the designation for the unit which was formed from the Japanese Americans who comprised a large part of the Hawaiian National Guard. These Nisei were sent to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin for combat training and later were moved to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for additional training. They adopted the phrase "Remember Pearl Harbor" as their motto.

In 1943, the War Department in need of manpower reverse itself and sent recruiters to the relocation camps asking for volunteers to form a new Japanese American combat unit the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Volunteers

9th Regional Readiness Cmd

Units

- Co A
- Co B - American Samoa
- Co C - American Samoa

Facilities

-

Official Homepage

- 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry

were also accepted from Hawaii where 12,500 men had volunteered. The Nisei volunteers were combined with Japanese Americans still in the military and were sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for combat training.

Ads by Goooooogle

At Camp Shelby, they were formed into the 442nd Infantry Regiment, consisting of three battalions plus support companies, the 522nd Artillery Battalion and the 232nd Combat Engineers. The unit designation was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and most of its officers were Caucasians. The 442nd chose "Go For Broke", a Hawaiian slang term from the dice game craps. "Go For Broke" meant to risk everything, give everything you have—all or nothing!

While the 442nd was being formed and trained, the 1,432 men of the 100th battalion had entered combat in Italy, September 26, 1943. The Italian campaign bloodied the 100th battalion and it suffered heavy casualties earning it the nickname "Purple Heart Battalion" as it was depleted down to 521 men by 1944. Replacements came from men who had finished training with the 442nd at Camp Shelby.

On June 2, 1944 the 442nd had landed at Naples and pushed to the Anzio beaches. On June 15th the 100th Battalion and the 442nd were merged into a single unit. The 100th battalion became the first battalion of the 442nd because the original first battalion of the 442nd had been used for replacements for the 100th. They were attached to the 133rd Regiment in the 34th Division.

After heavy fighting at Belvedere, Luciana, and Livorno, the 442nd was pulled back for a rest and was presented with a Presidential Unit Citation. After fighting at the Arno River in August, 1944, the 442nd moved to France for an attack in the Vosages Mountains. While in France, the 442nd was detached from the 34th Division and attached to the 36th Division of the Seventh Army. Given the assignment to capture the town of Bruyeres, the 442nd fought a bitter house to house battle and captured over 200 German soldiers.

Their bloodiest battle occurred during their rescue of the "Lost Battalion". The First Battalion of the 36th Division had been given the assignment to clear a ridge deep in the Vosages, but had been cut-off by the Germans. The battalion, the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment (a former Texas National Guard unit), had been cut off since October 24, 1944. The other two battalions of the 141st were unable to break through. The 100th /442nd, was ordered to rescue the Lost Battalion in a real-life "Saving Private Ryan" mission (More men were lost in the 100th/442nd in the rescue operation than there were to save in the

Govt Contractor FOIA Svc

We provide the documents and info you need to win govt. contracts. www.FreedomInfoSource.com

Late in the afternoon of October 30, scouts from the Lost Battalion spotted soldiers in olive-drab uniforms and with Japanese faces approaching and knew the 442nd had broken through.

Ads by Google

In five days and nights of continuous combat, the 100th/442nd RCT had suffered more than 800 casualties. In the 3rd Battalion, Company K had 17 riflemen left and Company I had eight riflemen left. Sergeants commanded both companies; all the officers had been killed or wounded. The 2,000 men on the casualty list included 140 killed.

In spring, 1945, the 442nd was sent back to Italy. The 442nd was made part of the U.S. 92nd Infantry Division, which also included the all-African American 370th Infantry and the all-white 473rd Infantry. 1 Mounting a diversionary attack in the Appenine Mountains, the 442nd took their assigned objectives

cracking the German defensive line. By May 2, 1945 the war was over in Italy.

These Japanese American units suffered an unprecedented casualty rate of 314 percent and received over 18,000 individual decorations. Many were awarded after their deaths for bravery and courage in the field of battle. Among the decorations received by the 100th/442nd soldiers were one Medal of Honor, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, 28 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Silver Star, 4,000 Bronze Stars and 1,200 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Bronze Star and, perhaps most telling of the sacrifices made by these gallant soldiers, 9,486 Purple Hearts. The 442nd Combat Infantry group emerged as the most decorated combat unit of its size in the history of the United States Army. For its service in eight major campaigns in Italy and France, the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team earned eight Presidential Unit Citations.

Second Lt. Daniel K. Inouye, who received a battlefield commission in November 1944, was one of those brave men. On April 21, 1945, while leading his platoon in an attack on enemy positions on Mount Musatello in Italy, Lieutenant Inouye was wounded in the right arm by an enemy grenade and in the right leg by another bullet. For his bravery in leading the attack while wounded, Lieutenant Inouye received the Distinguished Service Cross. His arm proved to be more seriously wounded than first realized and required amputation. Inouye was promoted to captain but not released from the hospital until February 1947.

President Truman was so moved by their bravery in the field of battle, as well as that of African American soldiers during World War II, that he issued an American order to desegregate the Armed Forces.

Although their impeccable service earned the 442nd the respect of their fellow soldiers, they were not perceived in the same way by American society when they returned to the West Coast. It is a shameful legacy in the history of the country that when the patriotic survivors of the 100th Battalion 442nd Infantry returned to the United States, many were reunited with their parents, their brothers, and their sisters who were locked up behind barbed wire fences living in concentration camps. Immediately following their return, the 442nd realized that the attitudes of many Americans had not changed. World War II veterans of Japanese ancestry were welcomed home by signs that read, "No Japs Allowed," and "No Japs Wanted." In many cases, veterans were denied service in local shops and restaurants, and their homes and property were often vandalized or set on fire.

Following post-war occupation duty in Italy, the soldiers of the 100th/442nd -- who had once been suspected of disloyalty because of their Japanese ancestry -- came home as heroes in the summer of 1946. President Harry Truman, in a ceremony on the Ellipse in Washington on July 15, 1946, personally pinned the 100th/442nd's seventh Presidential Unit Citation on the unit's colors. A month later, the 100th/442nd was inactivated in Honolulu, Hawaii.

In 1947, the 100th/442nd was reactivated in Hawaii as an Organized Reserve unit.

On June 21, 2000, twenty-two Asian Pacific American U.S. Army World War II veterans (or their surviving family members for those deceased) received the nation's highest decoration for valor, the Medal of Honor. This action corrected their not receiving these decorations in World War II, when the prejudice of the time kept them from receiving their just recognition then. Twenty of the 22 recipients were members of the 100th Infantry Battalion or the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. This unit (The 100th was attached to the 442nd in June 1944 and fought as the 442nd's first battalion for the rest of the war.) was already considered the most highly decorated unit of its size in U.S. military history. The June 21 ceremony added a new statistic to the 100th/442nd's history: it has 21 Medal of Honor recipients on its rolls, the 20 now added to its one earlier recipient.

[Advertise with Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [GlobalSecurity.org In the News](#) | [Internships](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy](#)

Copyright © 2000-2005 GlobalSecurity.org All rights reserved.

Site maintained by: [John Pike](#)

Page last modified: 23-05-2005 15:35:56 ZULU



National Japanese American Historical Society

about us | events | exhibits | education | research | JAconnection | publications | careers | links



Research on 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team



When the United States entered World War II in 1941, there were 5,000 Japanese Americans in the U.S. armed forces. Many were summarily discharged. Those of draft age were classified as 4-C, "enemy aliens," despite being US citizens.

In Hawai'i, however, a battalion of Nisei volunteers was formed in May 1942. As the 100th Infantry Battalion, they were sent to North Africa in June of 1943 where they joined the 34th Division in combat. By September 1943, they were sent to Italy where they saw fierce combat and came to be known as the "Purple Heart Battalion" due to their high casualty rate.

In January 1943, the US War Department announced the formation of the segregated 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) made up of Nisei volunteers from Hawai'i and the mainland. In June of 1944, the 442nd joined forces with the 100th Infantry Battalion in Europe and incorporated the 100th into the 442nd. Due to the stunning success of Nisei in combat, the draft was re-instated in January 1944 for Nisei in the detention camps to bolster the ranks of the 442nd. Eventually, the 442nd RCT consisted of the 2nd, 3rd, and 100th Battalions; the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion; the 232nd Engineering Company; the 206th Army Band; Anti- Tank Company; Cannon Company; and Service Company.

Due to their outstanding bravery and the heavy combat duty they faced, the 100/442nd RCT became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service. There were over 18,000 individual decorations for bravery, 9,500 Purple Hearts, and seven Presidential Distinguished Unit Citations.

[go to the AJA war veterans tribute page](#)

Decorations - 100th Infantry Battalion and The 442nd RCT	
8	Major campaigns in Europe
7	Presidential Unit Citations
9,486	Casualties (Purple Hearts)
18,143	Individual decorations including:
20	Congressional Medals of Honor
52	Distinguished Service Crosses
1	Distinguished Service Medal
560	Silver Stars, with 28 Oak Leaf Clusters in lieu of second
Silver Star Awards	
22	Legion of Merit Medals
4,000	Bronze Stars
1,200	Oak Leaf Clusters representing second
Bronze Stars	
15	Soldier's Medals
12	French Croix de Guerre with two Palms representing second awards
2	Italian Crosses for Military Merit
2	Italian Medals for Military Valor

[Home](#) | [About us](#) | [Events](#) | [Exhibits](#) | [Education](#) | [Research](#) | [JA Connection](#)
[Publications](#) | [Careers](#) | [Links](#) | [Membership](#)

Help Protect our TRUE Heroes
Stolen Valor Act
 New Legislation Introduced



"No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

(President Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 1, 1943 upon activating the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.)

"Go For Broke"



442nd

Regimental Combat Team

When the 100th Infantry Battalion began training at Camp McCoy in June, 1942 its soldiers faced prejudice, suspicion and distrust, not only from other soldiers but from highly placed military and political leaders as well. Even as the unit's training began, the War Department announced it wouldn't "accept for service with the armed forces, Japanese or persons of Japanese extraction, regardless of citizenship status or other factors." (*Jun 17, 1942*) The progress of the 100th led to new dialog about the formation of a Japanese American unit, but on September 14, 1942 it was announced that the call for such a unit had been rejected "because of the universal distrust in which they (the Japanese Americans) are held."

The recruits at Camp McCoy were aware of the prejudice and mis-trust, but most were not aware just how deeply felt it was in the higher echelons of the military command. Some of the all white officers and NCOs assigned to train them were schooled in psychology and were planted among them to test not only their physical and military abilities, but their loyalty. After the war, reports surfaced of daily reports not only on the progress of the unit, but on the loyalty and suitability for service of individual soldiers, surreptitiously sent to higher echelons from clandestine mail drops.

No one could have predicted the wide ranging impact of these ill-conceived reports. Designed to "weed out" the untrustworthy Nisei soldiers and validate resistance to an all Japanese military unit, the patriotism and dedication of the soldiers of the 100th had the opposite effect. During the training phase, 5 recruits of the 100th received the Soldier's Medal for their heroism in rescuing several local civilians who almost drowned on a frozen Wisconsin lake. On October 31st, 1942 twenty-six members of Bravo Company, 100th Infantry Battalion left Camp McCoy under a "secret transfer" to Cat Island where, for 5 months they served as "bait" in training attack dogs for use in "sniffing out" Japanese soldiers in the Pacific theater. This experiment was based upon the supposed assumption that dogs could locate enemy soldiers hidden in the caves and jungles of the Pacific, based on the Japanese' purported "unique scent". During this tenure, another member of the 100th earned a Soldier's Medal, and two received the Legion of Merit.

By the time the men of the 100th finished their basic military training in December and prepared to ship out to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for advanced training, the young Nisei had given military and political leaders more than ample reason to see the error of their earlier doubts, suspicion and prejudice. On February 1, 1943 President Roosevelt announced the formation of an all Japanese-American military unit, composed of volunteers from Hawaii and the mainland. The new unit would be designated the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, but would go down in history based upon the unit's motto:

"Go For Broke"

February, 1943
Honolulu, Hawaii

Thousands of young Japanese men milled anxiously about, waiting for their names to be called. On February 1st President Roosevelt had called for the formation of a new military unit, composed entirely of volunteers of Japanese ancestry. A call for enlistees followed in hopes of meeting the quota of 3,000 Japanese-American volunteers from the mainland, and 1,500 from Hawaii. In Hawaii, more than a thousand volunteered the first day of the announcement and now as they gathered for the roll call of those accepted for duty, there were nearly 10,000 volunteers.

From the microphone, a voice began to read the names of those young men selected, in alphabetical order. When the long list had been read, those selected said their *good-bys* and headed for the trucks. One young Japanese-American teen stood for a moment, tears at the corners of his eyes. "Tough luck, Dan," his parents said.

"Sorry," Dan replied as he walked dejectedly away. The 18-year old pre-med student had missed his opportunity to join his Hawaiian brothers in the formation of the all new 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Service to others was nothing new to young Dan. On December 7, 1941, during the first wave of the enemy attack on Pearl Harbor, the 17 year-old had pedaled his bicycle to the first aid station where he had worked all night and into the next day. In the days that followed he had alternated between studies at school and working a 12 hour graveyard shift at aid station. After graduation in the spring, he had enrolled for his first year of college at the University of Hawaii. When the call for volunteers for the new 442nd came out, he signed up the first day.

In the days that followed the announcement of the young men accepted for service, Dan pestered the draft board to learn the reason for his rejection. Finally he was told that because of his continuing work at the aid station, and because he was enrolled in premed studies, he was needed at home. "Give me about an hour," he told the draft board. "Then call the aid station and the university. They'll tell you that I've just given my notice to quit by the end of the week." Two days later Daniel Inouye said goodbye to his family to embark on a war-time military experiment the outcome of which no one could have predicted.

Though the initial call had been for 1,500 volunteers from Hawaii, in all more than 2,600 young men, most of them Nisei (second generation Japanese-Americans) were accepted for service in the 442nd. Back on the mainland, where 110,000 American citizens were being warehoused in concentration camps referred to as "relocation centers", 1,256 volunteered and close to 800 were accepted.



On March 28, 1943 the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce hosted a special farewell for its 2,686 young men leaving for training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The Honolulu

Star-Bulletin reported:

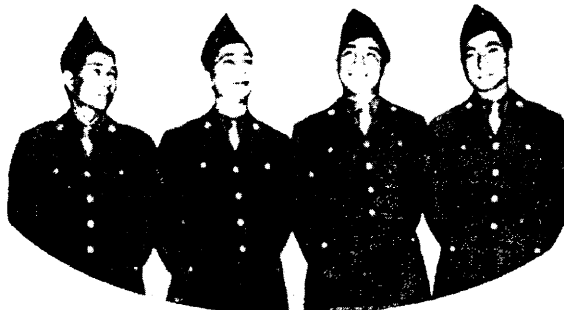
"No scene in Honolulu during World War II has been more striking, more significant, than that at the territorial capitol grounds on Sunday. It was not alone the size of the crowd, somewhere between 15,000 and 17,000, and said by oldtimers to be the largest that ever massed within the gateways to old Iolani Palace...It was, most significantly, the evident pride of the families and friends of these young Americans--their pride that the youths are entrusted with the patriotic mission of fighting for their country and the Allied Nations."

The recruits of the 442nd arrived at Camp Shelby in May and began training on the 10th. The unit had been organized into three battalions with supporting Field Artillery, Combat Engineers, Headquarters and Medical detachments. Training began almost immediately upon arrival. The 100th Infantry Battalion had finished most of their advanced training and been sent to Camp Clairborne, Louisiana for the field exercises that would complete the final phase before combat.

By the time the 442nd had completed its first month of basic military training, the 100th concluded their combat readiness training and, after two weeks of rest, returned to Camp Shelby. For many of the young men from Hawaii, it was the opportunity to be reunited with family and friends who had left home to serve their Nation a year before.

There was no such special reunion for the recruits from the mainland, who had already had more than their share of rivalry with the recruits from Hawaii. They had taken to calling the recruits from Hawaii *buddhaheads*, from a Japanese word meaning "pighead". The Hawaiians responded by calling the mainlanders *kotonks*, a term meaning "stone head" based upon a Japanese word used to signify the sound of an empty coconut hitting the ground.

Such rivalries were not unexpected, and as the trainees continued through long hours of combat preparation, they began to come together as a unit. The men of the 442nd would eventually become very much a family, in fact. In some instances they were indeed family, such as was the case of the four mainland Masaoka brothers (Ben, Mike, Tad, and Ike) who all served with the 442nd. The fifth brother in the Masaoka family also served in uniform...with the 101st Airborne.



The rivalries existed not only between the *buddhaheads* and the *kotonks*, however. The new recruits of the 442nd looked with envy at their "brothers" of the 100th Infantry Battalion who had finished training and were ready for action. In July the 100th received its colors, the unit's motto "Remember Pearl Harbor" emblazoned on it for all to see. Shortly thereafter the 100th shipped out to North Africa and then on to Italy. During the "Purple Heart Battalion's" first combat campaign, the soldiers of the 442nd lived in the shadow of the glowing reports of valor and victory amassed by the 100th, while enduring the often tedious and certainly less notable training process. All were eager to finish training and move to Europe to prove that their unit was no less fierce or courageous in battle.

The Department of the Army provided the design for the 442nd's patch with the upraised torch of the Statue of Liberty. Like the 100th Battalion before them however, it was the soldiers themselves that chose the unit's motto.

The dice game of Craps was popular in Hawaii. Those who played knew that in every game of dice there came a point when the game ended and it became time to get serious. In that moment the participant would "Go for broke"...risk everything he had...on the roll of the dice. The creation of the 442nd could have been viewed by some as an experiment, initiated only after a year of calls for an all Japanese-American combat unit. The men of the 442nd bore on their shoulders the hopes of tens of thousands of Japanese Americans who knew their sons, husbands, and brothers were every bit as loyal, tough, and brave as any other young American. The respect rightly due America's Japanese citizens hung in the balance, and the recruits of the 442nd *held the dice*. What they determined to do with those dice became their motto. This was no game, it was serious business that would affect all of them for a life time. They determined to

Go For Broke



NEXT

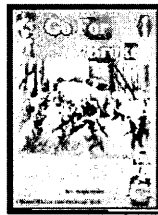


[\[Introduction\]](#) [\[Purple Heart Battalion\]](#) [\[Go For Broke\]](#)
[\[Monte Cassino\]](#) [\[Anzio\]](#) [\[Reunion\]](#) [\[The Vosges Mountains\]](#)
[\[The Lost Battalion\]](#) [\[Champagne Campaign\]](#) [\[Final Victory\]](#)
[\[War in the Pacific\]](#) [\[Retiring The Colors\]](#)
[\[The Medal Of Honor\]](#) [\[Citations\]](#)
[\[Additional Resources & Links\]](#) [\[Guestbook\]](#) [\[Feedback\]](#)



Click on the button at left to reach our 10-page historical series about the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the 15 men who earned Medals of Honor that day.

You can now download and print all the pages from this series of stories in .pdf or WORD2000 format to obtain a FREE, beautiful, 84-page full color book by visiting our bookshelf.



Copyright © 1999-2006 by HomeOfHeroes.com
 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
 Unless otherwise noted, all materials by C. Douglas Sterner



[Click Here to Mail This page to a friend.](#)

BEYOND THE MEDAL



This 5 Disc DVD Education Program has been distributed to over 17,500 Public & Private High Schools and is now available to the public!

[Home Page](#) | [Hall Of Heroes](#) | [MOH Community](#) | [NEWS](#) | [Kidz Page](#)

[Medal Of Honor History/Statistics](#) | [Medal of Honor Recipient Photos](#) | [Living MOH Recipients](#)
[MOH Citations by War](#) | [MOH Recipients By STATE](#) | [MOH Burial Sites By STATE](#) | [Recent Losses](#)

[MOH Grave Site Photos](#) | [Unknown Soldiers](#) | [Purge of 1917](#) | [Double MOH Recipients](#)
[Medal Of Honor Calendar](#) | [Books By MOH Recipients](#) | [Steve Ryan MOH Posters](#)
[FREE MOH Book Publisher](#) | [FREE Printable Books](#) | [War On Terror Awards](#)

PRINTABLE CITATION BOOKS

[Medal of Honor Citations](#)

[Navy Cross Citations](#)

[Distinguished Service Cross](#)

Award Citation Books By Branch of Service (w/Photos of Recipients)

[ARMY Valor](#)

[NAVY Valor](#)

[USMC Valor](#)

[AIR FORCE Valor](#)

Online Awards Databases

[Navy Cross](#)

[Distinguished Service Cross](#)

[Air Force Cross](#)

Home Town Heroes By State

[Military Medals](#) | [How to Request Records/Medals Earned](#)
[US History](#) | [U.S. Flag History](#) | [U.S. Presidents](#) | [Inaugural Addresses](#) | [God and Country](#)
[Gift Shop](#) | [Speaker's Bureau](#) | [Congressional Directory](#) | [4-TEACHERS](#)
[Remembering 911](#) | [Our Citizens Speak Out](#) | [The Binch](#)
[How to Obtain Military Records of a Family Member](#)

INTERACTIVE FEATURES

[Post Messages On Our Bulletin Boards](#) | [Talking Points \(Commentary\)](#) | [MY HERO](#)
[Game Arcade](#) | [Quick Quiz](#) | [Electronic Post Cards](#) | [Our Guestbook](#) | [Writer's Block](#)
CONFERENCE ROOM (Chat)

FEATURE STORIES

[Profiles In Courage](#) | [Wings of Valor](#) | [The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War](#)
[Go For Broke](#) | [Pearl Harbor](#) | [A Splendid Little War](#) | [Shinmiyangyo-Korea 1871](#)
[Quick Links to MOH Stories](#)

[What does a HERO Look Like?](#) [Recent Uploads/Updates](#)

[Meet the Webmaster](#) | [SITE MAP](#) | [SEARCH OUR SITE](#) | [Email Us](#)
[HomeOfHeroes Gift Shop](#)

Official Sponsors

HOME OF HEROES

Colorado State & Veterans Nursing Homes

Please Click on a Banner To Support our Sponsors

Pueblo Medal of Honor Foundation

The Pueblo Chieftain

CAPE CRUISER

Should YOUR Company Be Represented Here? [Click HERE For More Information](#)

HomeOfHeroes.com now has more than 25,000 pages of US History for you to view.

Ads by Goooooogle
**Japanese Intern
Camps**
 Search our datab
 101,000 Essays f
 Japanese Intern
 Camp
 ExampleEssays.com

World War 2 Vet
 Over 20 Million R
 Free Locator - Re
 Now!
 www.military.com

Peace Corps Alt
 1-12 week progra
 dates year-round.
 online today!
 www.crossculturalisolut

**Japanese Intern
Camps**
 Free information ;
 resources about j
 internment camps
 travel-japan.big.com

**Japanese Intern
Camps**
 100,000 Stores. [
 Reviews. Japane
 Internment Camp
 More!
 Yahoo.com



Search:

Entire Site

Go

ABOUT US

LEARNING CENTER

HISTORY

ORAL HISTORIES

FAQ

CONTACT

HELP

[[Historical Information](#)]

[Go For Broke Resource Center](#)

>> **Veterans**

[Medal of Honor](#)

[Campaigns](#)

[Maps](#)

[Timeline](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

[Resources / Links](#)

[Glossary](#)

Historical Information

442nd REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

The motto of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was go for broke. It's a gambling term that means risking everything on one great effort to win big. The soldiers of the 442nd needed to win big. They were Nisei - American-born sons of Japanese immigrants. They fought two wars: the Germans in Europe and the prejudice in America.



The motto was invented by the high-rolling Nisei soldiers who came from the Hawaiian Islands. The Hawaii-born Nisei, also known as Buddhaheads, made up about two-thirds of the regiment. The remaining third were Nisei from the mainland. In April 1943, the islanders and mainlanders arrived for training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Immediately, they fought with each other because of different perspectives based on where they grew up.



The Buddhaheads represented the largest ethnic group in a small island community. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, the Nisei, like everyone else on the island, responded to the emergency. No one rejected them as they pitched in to aid the wounded, give blood and bury the dead. On the day of the bombing and for six weeks after, the Nisei cadets in the University of Hawaii's ROTC guarded vulnerable areas against enemy attacks.

But on January 19, 1942, the Army discharged all the Japanese Americans in the ROTC - and changed their draft status to 4C - enemy alien. The Nisei cadets felt such despair that the very bottom of their existence fell out. But community leaders convinced the demoralized students to turn the other cheek. One hundred and seventy students petitioned the military governor: Hawaii is our home; the United States our country. We know but one loyalty and that is to the Stars and Stripes. We wish to do our part as loyal Americans in every way possible, and we hereby offer ourselves for whatever service you may see fit to use us.

The students gave up their books, and their chance for the education that would lift them up from their menial plantation jobs. Instead, the Varsity Victory Volunteers picked up shovels and hammers. From January to December 1942, they built barracks, dug ditches, quarried rock and surfaced roads. When Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy visited the islands, military and community leaders made sure he saw the VVV hard at work breaking rocks.

Apparently that made an impression. The Varsity Victory Volunteers finally got their chance to fight. On January 28, 1943 the War Department announced that it was forming an all-Nisei combat team and called for 1,500 volunteers from Hawaii. Ten thousand men volunteered, including men from the Varsity Victory Volunteers.

Meanwhile, on the mainland, the War Department tried to recruit 3,000 soldiers. But only 1,182 enlisted. Given how America had treated the Nisei, it was very admirable that this many men volunteered. More than 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry (including 60

percent who were American citizens) were forcibly relocated from their homes, businesses and farms in the western states. They were incarcerated in crowded, tarpaper barracks, in the desolate wind-swept desert. Even behind the barbed wire of the U.S. concentration camps (President Truman's term), even though their country had failed to protect their rights, these American-born Japanese men wanted to give up their lives to fight for their homeland, America.

Back in Hawaii, the entire Japanese community was not interned (with the exception of about 1,000 suspects that the FBI arrested and incarcerated). So the Buddhaheads couldn't understand the whipped-dog complex that the mainlanders had in relation to Caucasians.

The Buddhaheads thought the mainlanders were sullen and snobby, and not confident and friendly. Soon misunderstandings, fueled by alcohol, turned into fistfights. In fact, that was how mainlanders got the name Katonk. It was the sound their heads made when they hit the floor. The Katonks were fairer skinned, and spoke perfect English. The Buddhaheads were darker skinned and spoke Pidgin - a strange mixture of Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese and broken English.

Money was another big divider between the groups. The Buddhaheads gambled heavily and spent freely using the cash sent by their generous parents who still worked in Hawaii. They thought the Katonks were cheap. They didn't realize that the Katonks sent most of their meager Army pay to their families imprisoned in the camps. The Katonks didn't talk about their painful incarceration.

The friction between the two groups was so bad that the military high command considered disbanding the 442nd. They thought the men could never fight overseas as a unit.

The Army decided to send a group of Buddhaheads to visit the camps in Arkansas. The men thought Camp Jerome and Camp Rowher were little towns with Japanese families. But when the trucks rolled past the barbed wire fence, past the guard towers armed with machine guns pointed at the camp residents, past the rough barracks where whole families crowded in small compartments with no privacy - suddenly the Buddhaheads understood. Word of the camps spread quickly, and the Buddhaheads gained a whole new respect for the Katonks. Immediately the men in the 442nd became united - like a clenched fist.

From May 1943 through February 1944 the men trained for combat. The men excelled at maneuvers and learned to operate as a team. In March, Chief of Staff General George Marshall inspected the regiment. In April the regiment packed up, and on May 1, 1944 the men boarded ships destined for Europe.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team included the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, 232nd Combat Engineer Company, 206th Army Ground Force Band, Antitank Company, Cannon Company, Service Company, medical detachment, headquarters companies, and two infantry battalions. The 1st Infantry Battalion remained in the States to train new recruits. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions would join the legendary 100th Battalion, which was already fighting in Italy.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service, in the entire history of the U.S. Military. The 4,000 men who initially came in April 1943 had to be replaced nearly 3.5 times. In total, about 14,000 men served, ultimately earning 9,486 Purple Hearts, 21 Medals of Honor and an unprecedented eight Presidential Unit Citations.

[Back to Veterans main page.](#)