



100th BATTALION

THE first Nisei unit to engage in active combat was the 100th Infantry Battalion which had been organized around a cadre of national guardsmen from two Hawaiian infantry regiments. Many of the men in the 100th Battalion had gone through the attack of December 7, 1941, in the Honolulu area. One Nisei soldier had been killed by the attackers. Two others assisted in capturing the operator of a one-man submarine* which had grounded on a reef off the island of Oahu—the first Japanese prisoner to be taken by the United States in World War II. Still another led a detachment of soldiers that took into custody a Japanese aviator who landed on the island of Niihau and terrorized the natives there before his capture.

In June, 1942, the 100th Battalion was transferred from Hawaii to the mainland for training, first at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, and later at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. It embarked for Africa in early August, 1943, and joined the invasion army at Salerno, Italy, in late September.

About one month later, on October 21, the War Department issued a release stating that the battalion had come through its "first test under Nazi fire with colors flying." An Army officer, reporting on a visit to the unit, observed that "these soldiers are as far away from the stereotyped picture of the evil-doing sons of Japan as the all-American boy is from a headhunter. It's in their faces. They obviously believe in what they're doing, and look calmly secure because of it."

The 100th Battalion participated in the landing at Salerno and in every major action in Italy after the landing. It made four drives across the Volturno River, and aided in the capture of Cassino. It took an active part in the march on Rome, and spearheaded the American attack on Livorno, in the campaign to expel the Nazis from the upper ranges of the Italian Peninsula.

On July 27, 1944, for its "outstanding performance of duty in action" at Belvedere and Sasseta in breaking up the enemy's defenses, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Commander of the Fifth Army, conferred on it the War Department's Distinguished Unit Citation. At that time, individual members of the

battalion had received 11 Distinguished Service Crosses, 44 Silver Stars, 31 Bronze Stars, and 3 Legion of Merit decorations. Fifteen battlefield commissions had been conferred for superior leadership in combat.

In addition to these citations and promotions for valor and military proficiency, more than 1,000 Purple Hearts had been awarded as a result of the casualties suffered by the Unit. Not all of the men for whom the medals were authorized were able to receive them in person; many had died on the battlefield.

In Honolulu, on March 11, 1944, Col. Kendall J. Fielder, Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence in the Central Pacific, presented Purple Hearts to the nearest of kin of 60 of these Nisei soldiers who had fallen on Italian soil. "This is not a happy occasion for you or for me, but it is a proud one," he said. "You are the mothers and fathers, the wives, the sisters and brothers of American soldiers who gave their lives for our country . . . Your boy was an American and he fought and died as hosts of good Americans have always done and always will do when the cause of freedom is threatened . . . He knew the sweetness of liberty and he knew the foulness of the totalitarian system for he had seen both of them at first-hand.

"He knew also, as you must know, that there are some good Americans who, out of righteous anger, were slow to accept the fact of his whole-hearted Americanism. He didn't need to die to prove it to himself, or to you, or to other Americans that he was fine and loyal and brave. His willingness to serve America by fighting for her proved that."

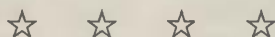
The officers directly associated with the 100th Battalion have been unanimously enthusiastic about the quality and spirit of the men. Lt. Col. Farrant L. Turner, who commanded them before he was invalided home, stated that he had "never had more whole-hearted, serious-minded cooperation from any troops." War correspondents have reported extensively and in highly complimentary terms on many exploits of the unit in combat with the enemy. These fighting Americans have given proof, far beyond the argument of words, that they are good Americans.

← On a map of Italy, Lt. Shigeru Tsubota points to the spot, near Salerno, where the 100th Infantry landed with the Allied invasion army. Tsubota, a graduate of the University of Hawaii, received a severe leg wound, on September 30, 1943, while directing the placement of machine guns to secure the flank of his unit. He hopes to be able to rejoin his unit when he recovers from his wound.



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A patrol from the 100th Infantry advancing across a small bridge in Italy with rifles ready. For its performance in action, this battalion was awarded the War Department's Distinguished Unit Citation.



These 11 men were the sole survivors of a Nisei platoon (normally about 50 men) that captured an important road junction from the Germans in Italy. When the platoon leader was killed by an enemy tank, a sergeant took command. A bazooka gunner disabled the tank, and other members of the platoon shot the escaping crew. Then they stormed the enemy machine-gun nest at the road junction, and overwhelmed it.



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On a battlefield in Italy, a Caucasian captain and two Nisei soldiers pause for a meal of "K" rations.



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Christmas packages from home are distributed to these members of the 100th Battalion in Italy.



On the road to Rome, after the fall of Cassino, which they helped to wrest from the Nazis, a group of Nisei infantrymen from the 100th Battalion move up to a new line of battle in the vicinity of Velletri, Italy.



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