SPECIAL VETERANS ISSUE

PACIFIC CITIZEN

The National Publication of the Japanese American Citizens League

{ IN DEPTH }

A WARRIOR OF VETERANS

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Journey Into History

Jimmie Kanaya, 89, a former WWII 442nd RCT medic, shares his war stories in a new History Channel special.

Duckworth in VA

L. Tammy Duckworth talks to the P.C. about her new job fighting for the rights of U.S. veterans like herself.

WWII Crusaders

A group of young Nisei women called the Crusaders sought to raise the spirits of Nisei soldiers fighting overseas.

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Iraq Veteran Brings Firsthand Knowledge to VA Department

L. Tammy Duckworth hopes to expand VA programs to meet the growing needs of U.S. veterans.

By Nalea J. Ko

Reporters

L. Tammy Duckworth, assistant secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, has a personal understanding of United States veterans’ needs. She is a decorated veteran herself having earned a Purple Heart, Air Medal and Combat Action Badge.

About five years before being confirmed as assistant secretary, her life was dramatically changed while deployed in Baghdad. Duckworth was co-piloting a Black Hawk helicopter when insurgents struck it with a rocket-propelled grenade. Before she fainted from loss of blood, Duckworth was still attempting to pilot the helicopter. She lost both her legs and damaged her arm in the accident.

“Day to day on a personal level it’s tough,” Duckworth said during a phone interview with the Pacific Citizen. “It’s not easy being an amputee.” She now walks with the help of two artificial legs and a cane. There are days, Duckworth said, when she does not want to get up because her body hurts. But all of the other veterans’ sacrifices serve as inspiration.

“We have folks who come home from war and I owe it to them to get up,” she said.

The major in the Illinois Army National Guard recovered for about 11 months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center’s Fisher House, following the helicopter wreck. She left with her full medical records given to her, which were also available online. However, these records were not transferable to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, or VA. Upon accepting her new job, Duckworth said she wanted to improve the transferability of records, among other things.

When she returned to Illinois, Duckworth had to wait months to see a doctor at her local VA hospital to apply for pension benefits. She had to undergo an examination that gave her a Purple Heart, Air Medal and Combat Action Badge.

Duckworth's experiences gave her a unique understanding on how to serve the U.S. veterans' changing needs. Never again, Duckworth said, should another veteran have to go through what she did after leaving Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

A Reinvigorated VA’s Office

Duckworth was born Thailand, but lived all over the world because of her father’s position with the United Nations. She is fluent in Thai and Indonesian. As a teenager she moved to Hawaii where she graduated from McKinley High School and later the University of Hawaii. Duckworth also received her master’s degree from George Washington University.

Her mother still lives in Pearl City on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. Whenever Duckworth is in the islands she heads to a popular local eatery called, “Zippy’s,” known for its spam, chili and saimin meals. In 2007 she returned to her alma mater to speak with students. She has continued to use her combat experiences as a platform, bringing attention to veterans’ issues.

“I just am really, really grateful to be working where I am with this boss,” said Duckworth about VA Sec. Eric Shinseki (left) and President Barack Obama.

Duckworth went into public service after recovering from her injuries. She became an advocate for veterans’ rights, testifying before Congress numerous times and calling for improved veterans health care. From 2006 to 2008 Duckworth served as the director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. Duckworth’s work in Illinois made her a leading contender for her current position.

“We’re going through a transformation right now,” Duckworth said of the VA officials’ plans to improve veterans’ programs. Now there will be more accountability and responsibility in the VA, said Duckworth.

Duckworth said the VA also needs to expand women’s services since there is a growing number of women who have served in combat.

“I’m really excited to see where we’ll be in a year or two from now,” Duckworth said of the changing environment at the VA.

The VA received an infusion of money, which will provide funding to expand programs. President Barack Obama proposed a $112.8 billion VA budget, the largest increase in 30 years.

Some of the planned program expansion projects include working to end homelessness, expanding services to veterans in rural areas and tailoring care for women’s specific needs.

The increased funding will enable VA officials to get resources to veterans in remote areas. Having lived in places like Hawaii, Duckworth said she understands how difficult it can be for veterans to get access to medical resources. She said some veterans in remote regions have to drive three to four hours to get to the nearest facility.

“That simply is not acceptable,” she explained. Duckworth said she and others at the VA are also working to make operations transparent.

Getting Her Wings Back

Despite her disability, Duckworth has not shirked from challenges.

Earlier this year the Chicago Tribune chronicled Duckworth’s return to the skies in an Aug. 30 article.

“Leave my wheelchair behind up in the air,” she was quoted in the article as saying as photographers snapped shots of the veteran hoisting herself into the plane. “It doesn’t matter that I’m disabled. It’s a joy. It’s relaxation. It’s also a challenge.”

On Oct. 11 she completed her second Chicago Marathon, participating in the handcycle division. She said she was about 10 minutes slower this year than last.

“It was so cold,” Duckworth said, adding that it was a lot of fun. Duckworth said she would never done the marathon before she lost her legs.

To commemorate Veterans Day this year, Duckworth plans to visit her father’s grave at Arlington National Cemetery. The day after Veterans Day is also Duckworth’s “Alive Day,” the anniversary of when her helicopter was shot down.

For now Duckworth is simply taking in the responsibilities of her new position.

“I just am really, really grateful to be working where I am with this boss,” she explained.
A Nisei World War II Veteran’s Journey Into History

By Naleza J. Ko Reporter

Jimmie Kanaya, 89, said he dreamed of being a soldier in elementary school in the 1930s when he watched the Oregon National Guard in his hometown. They were called to active duty after a strike.

Every night he would observe the guardsmen in their orderly formation for their retreat parade. Their discipline impressed young Kanaya. “I was destined to be a professional soldier,” Kanaya said over the phone from his home in Washington state. “When I first joined, I would have been happy just to have a couple of stripes on my sleeve when I retired.”

Kanaya retired as a colonel after 30 years and five months in the military. He served in World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The Nisei soldier amassed a lifetime of accolades for his service: a Silver Star, Legion of Merit and Purple Heart, among other awards.

At 20, Kanaya volunteered for the U.S. Army prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. In combat during WWII, he was captured by the Germans and held as a prisoner of war for six months. After the war he was sometimes reluctant to share his experiences with others.

“As a medic we didn’t talk too much about the friends that were killed or who got killed,” he said. “To me it just doesn’t make sense because I really can’t express the real feelings that came with experiencing a combat situation: the fear, the anxiety the emotions.”

These were some the experiences that Kanaya retold for the History Channel’s 10-hour WWII special that will be airing Nov. 15.

His stories along with those of 11 other WWII veterans are coupled with historic combat footage in this five-day series. Kanaya’s story is also partly narrated by actor James Kyson Lee. The intended effect is to make viewers feel like they are alongside decorated veterans like Kanaya on the battlefield, viewing firsthand the carnage, courage and patriotism.

**Experiencing the War in HD**

He was a “loner” as a medic with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during WWII. That was necessary to perform effectively, said Kanaya.

“I couldn’t really get too close to anybody. I felt that if I did and he gets killed then I’m going to be lamenting about it, and I wouldn’t be able to do my job,” Kanaya explained.

More than 30,000 Japanese Americans served in WWII, which broke out in 1939. Nearly every nation joined the war that initially started as a European conflict. It was known as the deadliest war in history.

Kanaya was there. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was assigned to Camp Crowder in Missouri. The Nisei was part of what became known as the most highly decorated unit in American history. Kanaya recalled that his 442nd RCT was comprised of JAs from Hawaii and mainlanders, who were teased as “Katonks.”

“Then I had some boys from Hawaii. They were pretty brush and forward and outspoken and they would cause problems when we were not in combat,” Kanaya explained. “But in combat they were just all out, and you could depend on them to do their job.”

Despite some skirmishes, the Nisei soldiers fought as cohesive unit as many of their relatives were interned behind barbed wire in the U.S. Kanaya’s parents, brother and sister were interned in a “friendly country” while he was a POW.

Kanaya’s training prepared him for what was to come when he went overseas in 1944 with about 3,000 others, he said. A month later his battalion landed in Naples and headed north.

“So when I went overseas I had everything under control,” Kanaya recalled. “It was something that kind of surprised me, too because I had never seen any deceased bodies in my life — never saw a dead body. Except I went to a funeral once and saw one of my cousins, but no real gory scenes.”

Kanaya and his battalion were reassigned to the Vosges Mountains where the 100th Battalion was cut off, located on the other side of the mountain. Then the order came for the Kanaya’s battalion to help evacuate the wounded from the 100th Battalion.

“So, I said, ‘OK I’ll help them.’” Kanaya explained. “We followed this patrol and they were dodging German patrols in the mountains. They eventually made it to the other battle in Biffontaine, but they could not carry the wounded over the jagged mountains alone, so German prisoners were used.

“Woof,” Kanaya said, “I couldn’t do anything with it. They already made up their minds to the way it was going to go.” He told the other three medics to hang back.

“If we ever get stopped there’s going to be a fire fight,” He told them. “I said ‘Boy, something is going to happen here.’” Halfway back over the mountains they were stopped by German soldiers.

Kanaya and others were taken back to Poland and held prisoner. He considered escaping at first, but decided against it.

“I looked down into this wood cellar in the first house we came to. There were steps going down to it. I looked down there and I could’ve went down there and hid out,” he explained. “I didn’t know what would happen to them if I abandoned them. So, I decided to stay with them.”

When the Germans relocated to Hammelburg, Germany because of pressure from the Russian Army, Kanaya marched 380 miles in the winter to the other camp.

“Fourteen hundred of us left camp. And only 400 of us made it to the destination in Hammelburg, which was almost two months later,” Kanaya explained.

Kanaya barely ate enough to survive while held prisoner. One day towards the end of April his frustration mounted. The weather was warming up and Kanaya took off his clothes to find lice crawling all over his body.

“They were full of blood,” he explained. “I just kind of shivered and thought, how can these lice be taking this blood from me when I need it. I just kind of stomped on them and killed them.”

**A Soldier’s Return**

Kanaya was liberated and returned to Chicago, Ill. where his parents had purchased a modest hotel in a “redzone” part of Clark Street. His recovery from combat was peaceful, he said. Although it took time to shake some memories of the war.

Kanaya went on to receive a bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Nebraska and a master’s degree in education from the University of Alaska.

These days Kanaya said he enjoys spending time on his computer, among other leisure activities. The self-proclaimed loner now enjoys playing solitaire on his computer. He lives with his wife, Lynn. Kanaya inherited a daughter and three grandchildren. Far from the battlegrounds of WWII, he now looks forward to the simple things in life. On Oct. 3 he celebrated his 89th birthday.

“J just look forward to the next day. I look forward to the mail every day for example. I get a lot of junk mail,” he said. “I don’t expect much. Trying to stay healthy that’s the main thing. Trying to get these creepy bones unshingled and back in shape.”

On The Web

www.history.com

**On This Veterans Day 2009, The Japanese American Veterans Association Salutes All Veterans For A Job Well Done And Says Thank You To Members Of The Armed Forces For All That You Do.**

Robert Nakamoto, President

www.javadc.org
Meet the Crusaders

A group of Nisei women, including civil rights activist Yuri Kochiyama, led a little known war effort from behind barbed wire.

By Nalea J. Ko

Reporter

A coalition of Japanese American girls and young women found a way to boost the morale of Nisei soldiers from behind the barbed wire fences of internment camps during World War II. It began as a letter writing campaign at the beginning of the war and by the war's end it mobilized the JA community.

These young girls were aptly called the Crusaders.

Mary Nakahara, later known as Yuri Kochiyama, is credited for forming the Crusaders while incarcerated at the Santa Anita Assembly Center in California. Later, she said, interest in the Crusaders increased with more high and elementary school students wanting to join in the camp to do various jobs such as filling in as camp waitresses.

The word got out about the Crusaders' work after articles were featured in newspapers in camps, high schools and other areas. They thought it was fun to do things that brought everyone together, said Kochiyama. Internees began to wonder how the Crusaders could afford to send so many letters. Soon the soldiers helped to fund the campaign.

"Well, then soldiers got interested and wanted to help. They would send $1, $2, $3, $4, $5 right from where they were fighting — from the frontlines!" This money enabled the Crusaders to buy envelopes and stamps. The correspondences continued throughout the war.

Kochiyama was about 20 when the Crusaders formed. She went on to become a well-known civil rights activist, joining forces with historical figures like Malcolm X. In 2005, she was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize.

Warren's play highlighted Kochiyama's personal letters to her then-fiancé William Kochiyama, who served in WWII. Her twin brother, Pete, also served in the U.S. Army.

For those like Kochiyama who had lived ones fighting in WWII, the Crusaders represented more than just penury postcards and inspiring messages. Decades after she wrote her first letter, Kochiyama said she is still just as proud of the work her Crusaders did. She hopes their legacy will live on.

"I'm glad you're interested," Kochiyama said. "So many years have passed that I don't even think people remember the Crusaders."

Warren hopes to preserve the memory of the Crusaders' work in her documentary. If she secures funding for the film it could be available in 2010. But whatever happens, Warren said her life will never be the same after meeting a real life Crusader.

"Yuri said, 'We've learned that it's not our position that matters most, it's our disposition.' Warren said, quoting Kochiyama's philosophy about the JA interment.

"The message that the letters convey ... is as current today as it is any day. What it does is it takes a situation that appears to be hopeless and gives hope to it and gives faith to it." }

"To read some of the letters that the boys wrote and to see how they appreciated to hear from the Crusaders, I think it was a real morale booster for a lot of the young men," Yamaichi said.

"During her research for the play, Warren photocopied some of the original letters. Some were Christmas and Valentine's Day cards. Others were inspiring messages to Nisei soldiers, penned by the Crusaders' founder.

"Although you may not know us girls, we want you all to know that we are wishing you the best wherever you go," read one letter from Kochiyama with a flag hand drawn at the bottom. "You're representing those of us who still remain back here. Please show America our love. Go out and pioneer."

The Crusaders started with five young women sending penny postcards.

"In a year maybe we had 60," Kochiyama explained. "But at the end we had several hundred Crusaders." They also volunteered in the camps to do various jobs such as filling in as camp waitresses.

After articles were featured in newspapers in camps, high schools and other areas. They thought it was fun to do things that brought everyone together, said Kochiyama. Internees began to wonder how the Crusaders could afford to send so many letters. Soon the soldiers helped to fund the campaign.

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"The message that the letters convey ... is as current today as it is any day. What it does is it takes a situation that appears to be hopeless and gives hope to it and gives faith to it."

For more information about Warren's film on the Crusaders: http://sites.google.com/site/bitsofparadisemovie.

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Univ. of Washington to Dedicate Memorial in Honor of its Bravest

A 442nd foot-soldier killed defending his platoon will be among the honorees.

The memorial honors the university's Medal of Honor alumni, including William Kenzo Nakamura.

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

Before William Kenzo Nakamura became a war hero, he was a university student likely studying for a medical career that was never realized because of World War II.

Because of his Japanese ancestry, Nakamura — a Seattle native — was incarcerated behind barbed wire fences after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Because of his bravery, he fought to prove his patriotism as a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Nakamura was only 22 when he fell to a sniper's bullet July 4, 1944, on the outskirts of Castellina, Italy. His life cut short has since been celebrated in many ways, including a posthumous Medal of Honor and a seven other former students' honor.

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NAKAMURA

"It's a big honor," said June Oshima, Nakamura's only surviving sister. "I never expected all this. I thought that the trip to Washington (for the Medal of Honor ceremony) was plenty."

A Powerful Reminder

The $152,000 monument, which was entirely funded by private contributions, is located at the end of Memorial Way. In 2000, Nakamura was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for military valor. Oshima accepted the award for the family.

Nakamura was born and raised in what is now Seattle's International District. He was four years older than Oshima, the youngest.

"He was always very good to me," she said by phone to the Pacific Citizen. "He bought me my first ice cream soda."

At the outbreak of war, the Nakamura family was first taken to the Puyallup Fairgrounds and then onto Minidoka near Hunt, Idaho. From there, Nakamura followed his older brother, George, into the Army as a volunteer.

He was a private first-class, a foot soldier in the 442nd RCT. In July 1944, the regiment was sweeping north along Italy's coastline toward Livorno. Along the way, the soldier hit what was known on military maps as Hill 140, where one of the war's bloodiest battles took place. As Nakamura's platoon approached the crest of the hill, a concealed nest of German machine guns 35 yards away opened fire.

Twice, Nakamura single-handedly attacked German machine guns so his platoon could be freed from pinned-down positions. He was killed during his second effort. For his bravery, Nakamura received the Distinguished Service Cross, the military's second-highest award, for his bravery.

Almost 50 years later, it was upgraded to the military's highest honor.

That same year, a bill was signed into law naming the Seattle courthouse located at 1015 Fifth Avenue the "William Kenzo Nakamura Federal Courthouse."

"I thought he should never be forgotten and something should be named after him," said Steve Finley, of Seattle's Nisei Veterans Committee, who helped lobby the bill through Congress. "Since the U.S. courthouse was not named after anyone I thought it would be perfect — he was denied justice and gave his life for his country."

Memorial Dedication

Nov. 11, 10:30 a.m. end of Memorial Way

Info: http://depts.washington.edu/memorial

To all Asian veterans of foreign wars:
Our deepest gratitude and appreciation for sacrifices and service made for our country.

FROM THE SPOKANE CHAPTER JACL
Following in the Footsteps of Hershey Miyamura

By Lynda Lin
Assistant Editor

Marisa Miyamura, 22, always knew she had a special grandfather. In his hometown of Gallup, New Mexico a park, school and overpass have been named in his honor. And whether it’s a veterans function or a Nisei Week parade in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo, her grandfather Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura always seems to receive royal treatment.

“I’m here because of him,” said 2nd Lt. Marisa Miyamura about her famous grandfather.

That’s just what happens when your grandfather is Korean War hero and a Medal of Honor recipient.

“It’s surreal sometimes,” Marisa, a Yonsei originally from Ontario, Calif. She’s always heard people talk about his heroism like a legend from days past, but the stories were all really abstract until she put on a uniform herself.

“I wanted to fly,” said Marisa, a second lieutenant with the U.S. Air Force.

Her journey to the Air Force, she says, is a direct result of her grandfather.

“He’s this loving man … and I always associated the military with making him that person,” said Marisa.

According to the Medal of Honor citation, Hershey, who was a corporal in the U.S. Army’s Company H, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, showed “indomitable heroism and consummate devotion to duty” in a April 24, 1951 battle.

That night in South Korea, Company H came under enemy attack. Hershey, a machine gun squad leader, saved his troop members through hand-to-hand combat and machine-gun fire before being severely wounded and taken prisoner. Because of his heroism, his company was able to fall back to safety.

Hershey spent over 27 months in a Chinese prisoner of war camp near the Yalu River. When he was released, he found out that he had been awarded the Medal of Honor.

Ask Hershey, 84, about his heroics and he’ll say, “I did what I was supposed to do.”

In an Oct. 27, 1953 ceremony, President Dwight D. Eisenhower conferred the honor to young Hershey in uniform. In a black-and-white photo, the two war heroes smile at each other and firmly shake hands.

Receiving the medal from Eisenhower, a five-star general and famed World War II commander, was a great honor, he said.

Hershey was drafted in 1944 and assigned to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He was sent overseas to Naples, Italy, but after five days the war ended and Hershey returned to the U.S. with the 442nd to march in review for President Harry S. Truman.

“I got in at the tail-end of the glory,” said Hershey about the 442nd. “I’ve been very fortunate.”

These days, Hershey spends much of his time traveling to veterans’ events with his wife Terry. It’s the least he can do, he said. Terry agrees. “They [the veterans] made our life better. They opened the doors.”

This Veterans Day, the couple are heading to the University of Washington to attend the dedication of a memorial in honor of another Nisei Medal of Honor recipient, William Kenzo Nakamura.

“It’s for my fellow veterans,” said Hershey.

And for Marisa, this Veterans Day will be spent working with the Air Force in Mississippi with her grandfather not far from her mind.

“I’m here because of him,” she said. “I’m carrying on the legacy.”

A MEMORIAL TO HONOR
JAPANESE AMERICAN WWII VETERANS
Placer County Japanese American Citizens League

The Placer County Japanese American Citizens League has partnered with the County of Placer to remember those Americans of Japanese ancestry who served in the Second World War with a memorial at the new Justice Center. Central to the memorial will be a life-size bronze sculpture depicting a Japanese American soldier of the 100th Battalion/442nd RCT helping a wounded soldier of the “Lost Battalion” off the battlefield.

We ask for your support for this memorial project by making a tax-deductible donation to the monument fund at the Placer County JACL. Our goal is to raise $120,000 by June 2010, and to have the memorial completed as soon as Veterans Day, November 11, 2010.

The 442nd RCT was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service, in the entire history of the U.S. Military.

This project honors our parents and friends who fought to defend our Country, were interned in relocation camps, and endured the racism of the war. Their loyalty and bravery in battle defending America, is an inspiration to the all Japanese-Americans everywhere.

By creating this memorial we honor all those who served from Northern California in the 100th Battalion, the 442nd and the Military Intelligence Service.

To Participate or Donate:
Please help us erect this memorial to the heroic Japanese Americans who sacrificed so much in World War II. Your contribution to Placer County JACL is tax-deductible.

Mail to: Placer JACL Memorial Project
11850 Kemper Road, Suite D
Auburn, CA 95603

FBIN # 94-6102630

... or contact Ken Tokutomi, Placer County JACL Fundraising Chair, at (530) 888-1303 or email to kentokcar@sbcglobal.net

For Information: Visit www.placerjacl.org
(you can sign up to receive email updates)

Thank you for your support!
Remembering the Vets

When the war ended, my family returned to West Los Angeles and moved into the West LA Methodist Church social hall, which had been converted into a hostel with partial walls built of plywood, creating numerous living quarters. If our units were small at Manzanar, these were even smaller and much more cramped. But we didn’t mind because we were free and no longer prisoners in our own land.

One of my distinct memories in those months after our return was seeing, one by one, Nisei vets returning from the war. I remember the Go For Broke shoulder patches, their brown uniforms, the Ike jackets that many of them wore, the cocky slant of their hats, and the uneasiness they seemed to feel being back.

Those of us kids who didn’t have older brothers who went off to war stood back when we were around any of the vets, staring at their shoulders and imagining what they had done to earn them. I remember their reluctance to talk about any of that. Some were grim, some moody. Older girls hung back but clung to them with their eyes, and I remember thinking about what great heroes these guys were.

Where I lived we had plenty of vets returning from the war because there was a large Japanese American community clustered in West LA. There was something so glorious and movie-like seeing these guys rejoicing their families and hearing all the screaming, shouts, tears and laughter. I think we all shared in the happiness of those families. It was a good time.

But I also remember the families whose sons didn’t return, their Issei mothers always dressed in black. Their silent tears were just as loud, and you could see the pain in their eyes even as they smiled and shared in the happiness of other families whose sons returned safely.

Growing up in the JA community, I used to hear stories about the 442nd. Many of my friends had older brothers who served, some who lost brothers in the war, and all of it touched us in some way or another. To me, these returning soldiers were all heroes. I didn’t know what they did, but we kids knew they were soldiers who saw awful combat in Europe. You could see it in their eyes.

Some 30 years later, in 1978, I remember returning to the JACL headquarters after doing a call-in talk show and running into Wally Nunnatori and a few of his cronies sitting on a bench in the J-Town mall. We chatted and I said to them that before this (Redress) was over, others were going to see them for the heroes they were. And I told them about a call that had come in and that my response focused on the 442nd and their incredible achievements. I knew then that this was one of the most powerful weapons I had in facing public audiences because really, who could possibly question the loyalty and bravery of the Nisei? Their achievements spoke for themselves.

Over the years of my involvement with Redress, I often thought about the vets and their guts and strong sense of honor. “Do not bring shame on the family,” each of them had heard as an admonition from their fathers as they said goodbye to their families and departed for the war. And none did, to an extraordinary degree.

Eric Saul and I used to sit around and talk about the vets and the remarkable things they did. Eric is the most informed historian of the Nisei vets. The one constant, he would point out, was their extraordinary sense of honor.

I remember sitting with Helen Kawagoe, then JACL president, on the White House lawn in June 2000 as President Bill Clinton awarded retroactive and posthumous Medals of Honor to 21 soldiers, all but one being Nisei vets. As I listened to a seemingly incisive narrative voice read each individual citation describing the achievement of the recipient, I was absolutely amazed how these men, so small in contrast to Clinton towering over them, could do these remarkable things being described. Maybe small in stature but enormously big of heart and courage.

The vets are still very much on my mind these days, but when I think about them, it’s often as I remember them when I was a kid. They were heroes to me then, and they still are.

John Tateishi is the immediate past JACL national director.

I am the unofficial aunt of a 7-month-old Japanese American girl.

Having no JA children of my own, I find myself wondering how this girl will grow up to learn everything she wants to know about her own JA heritage. How will she learn about the legacy of what veterans who served the country during World War II?

I imagine that she will not learn about it directly from the classroom, as I and countless other JA youths did not. There is no time allocated in U.S. history class to learn in great length about Executive Order 9066, the collective shame that came from having to live in barracks in the middle of the desert, or how many young JA men were forced to answer loyalty questionnaires and still chose to fight in the war.

Someone will have to make the conscious effort to tell her what these JA war veterans have done for our community and for our country, many decades before she was even born.

Looking back at my college career, I realize that in terms of learning more about my JA heritage and history, I truly had the best opportunities one could possibly ask for. I did the Nikkei Community Internship (NCI) through the Little Tokyo Service Center, which meant that I had the chance to visit the Go For Broke Foundation in Torrance, Calif. with my peers and listen to war veterans tell their stories. I also had the opportunity to participate in the annual Manzanar pilgrimage with the UCLA Nikkei Student Union, where I saw with my own eyes the bleak and desolate desert landscape ordinary citizens were forced to live in.

What opportunities will exist two decades from now when my JA niece reaches college and wants to learn more about her culture as we did?

By the time my JA niece reaches her 20s, her opportunities may not be the same as mine. Her chances of speaking directly to a war veteran will have greatly diminished. As the JA population is shrinking compared to other Asian Pacific American communities, she may not have as many JA peers to connect with when she is growing up.

Choosing to return to LA after serving in the war, the vets wanted to return to their homes, their families, their community and earn a living in the land of their birth. To me, these returning soldiers were all heroes.

When the war ended, my family returned to West LA, moving into the West LA Methodist Church social hall, which had been converted into a hostel with partial walls built of plywood, creating numerous living quarters.

Yumi Sakugawa writes from Los Angeles.

One cannot even imagine the radical transformations Little Tokyo will go through in the next five years, let alone the next 20. Will the NCI program still be available for future JA youth? Will the Go For Broke Foundation remain open to the public for everyone to see?

These are all the questions that ran through my head when for the first time, I discovered the extensive oral histories of the JA war veterans available online for everyone to see on the Go For Broke Foundation Web site (www.goforbroke.org). You can literally lose yourself for hours going through the extensive interview material of different JA veterans telling different stories relating to their wartime experience.

Through these videos and interview transcripts, these veterans are no longer mythological figureheads of a bygone past, but real living people who may as well be sitting in your living room telling their stories. One veteran remembered his first terrifying parachute jump. Another veteran remembered reading a letter from his mother urging him not to be a coward and to make the family proud. Another veteran muses on the strangeness of war — the absurd tragedy of human beings forced under historical circumstances to kill each other in violent ways.

One cannot listen to these stories without wanting to do something about them.

As the number of living veterans slowly dwindles from the community, I cannot help but feel a palpable sense of urgency in making sure that our generation properly embraces the responsibility of educating the incoming generation who will soon replace us as the new JA youth. As we graduate from college and start forming families of our own, these JA youth will be looking up to us to follow in our footsteps.

Will they see that we care? Will they see that we understand? Will they see that we truly want to remember?
A FITTING TRIBUTE

Two generations of Japanese American veterans recently visited the National Japanese American Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Min Hamada (pictured above), a World War II soldier in Company G of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and his son Lynard Hamada, who served in the Vietnam War were in Washington representing the Wasatch Front North JACL at the third annual JACL Gala.

The memorial was dedicated to JA patriotism, military service, heroism and perseverance during WWII. Last year, Min and Lynard visited the Go For Broke Monument in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo.

“At the monument, I saw my name engraved in the wall along with the other Japanese American soldiers who served during World War II,” said Min. “To see my name engraved in the wall and to know that I did something for the next generations was very gratifying.”

Vice Adm. Harris Meets Seattle Nisei Veterans

During an Oct. 16 visit to Seattle’s Nisei Veterans Committee (NVC), Navy Vice Adm. Harry B. Harris (pictured above, seated at right) praised the valor and loyalty of World War II Nisei soldiers for paving the way for succeeding generations of Asian Pacific Americans.

Harris, who was born in Yokosuka, Japan, said he personally seen the progress made in diversifying the U.S. Navy, according to a release from the Japanese American Veterans Association.

Harris was recently nominated for a promotion to commander, sixth fleet and also commander, striking and support forces, NATO, with headquarters in Naples, Italy. He is currently serving as deputy chief of Naval Operations for Communication Networks in Washington, D.C.

NVC members who attended the event were: Art and Kay Abe, Sam and Matsue Watanabe, Dale and Shizue Kaku, Art Yorozu, Steve Finley, Tom Ohnami, Takahei Matsui, Tengo Yotita, Tosh Okamoto, Keith Yamaguchi, Frank Shinoda and May Suzuki.

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United States Army
Fort Sam Houston
San Antonio, Texas
Years of service: 1939-1945

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TO OUR VETERANS IN ALL WARS

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EDEN TOWNSHIP JACL
Over 60 years after the end of the war, the Pacific Citizen takes a look back at the events that defined generations.

1941

March
Arthur Komori, Richard Sakakida, and Clarence Yamagata are recruited by Corps of Intelligence to serve as U.S. Army undercover agents and spy on the Japanese community in the Philippines.

November 1
The War Department opens a secret language school at Crissy Field at the Presidio of San Francisco, with four Nisei instructors and 60 students. This was the first class of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) Language School.

December 7
Japan bombs the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. FBI agents and police begin arresting Japanese American community leaders in Hawaii and the mainland.

1942

February 19
President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, setting the stage for the incarceration of more than 110,000 JAs throughout the U.S.

March 30
A War Department order discontinues the induction of JAs in the armed services on the West Coast.

June 12
100th Infantry Battalion (Separate) is officially activated on the Oakland docks.

June 15
The War Department announces that it will not "accept for service with the armed forces, Japanese or persons of Japanese extraction, regardless of citizenship status or other factors."

October 2
Elmer Davis, Office of War information director, recommends to President Roosevelt that JAs be allowed to enlist for military service.

1943

January 6
The 100th Infantry Battalion leaves Camp McCoy for Camp Shelby, Miss.

February 1
The 442nd Regimental Combat Team is activated by President Roosevelt: "Americanism is not and never was, a matter of race and ancestry."

March 28
The Honolulu Chamber of Commerce sponsors a farewell ceremony at the Iolani Palace for 1,686 Nisei volunteers of the 442nd RCT.

April 16
Harold Fudenna, a Nisei MIS soldier, with 138th Signal Corps, interprets an intercepted radio message that reveals the air route that Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto will take. His bomber is shot down and he perishes with it. Fudenna is awarded a Bronze Star.

The San Diego Chapter of the JACL Honors the Nikkei Veterans of the San Diego Japanese American Community

Toshio "Bill" Abe
Yutaka Amano
Roy Arakawa
Steve Arata
Bruce Asakawa
Florencio Asakawa
Masako Asakawa
Takeo Asakawa
Tatsu Osanai
Toru Asoar
Takeo Azuma
Akira Chino
Shoji Date
Tsutomu Tom Date
Minoru Fujita
Sam Fujita
Frank Fujikawa
Aiko Fukuda
Ted Fukumoto
Calvin Furukawa
George Furuya, Jr.
George Furuya, Sr.
Benjamin Hanaike
Sam Hanada
Shigeru Hara, M.D.
George Hasegawa
Fred Hashiguchi
Henry Hashiguchi
John Hashiguchi
Leo Hashiguchi
Tom Hashimoto
Fred M. Hatashita
Alain Hayashi
Arthur Hibi
Gary Himaka
Michi Himaka
Osao Himaka
Tatsuo Hirata
Ben Honda
Tom T. Honda
Tom Toshio Honda
Ben S. Horie
Charlie M. Horie
Shizuo Horie
John T. Hosaka
Paul Hoshi
Iken Iwuchi
Miyoshi Iweda
Yosh Iimoto
Kenzo Ikada
Dale Inahara
Gary N. Ishida
Mike Ishikawa
Bob Ito
Elwood Ito
Martin Ito
Richard Ito
Robert Ito
Ronald Ito
Walter Ito
Masami S. Iwataki
George Kamiya
Chet Kanayuki
Paul "Po" Kaneyuki
Joe K. Karamoto
Tetsuo Kashima
Harry Kawamoto
Harry Kawase
Satoshi Kida
James Kida
Jim Kimura
Allan Koba
Haruki Koba
Hideo Kobayashi
James Kobayashi
Oscar Kodama
Steve Konishi
Harry Kowase
Hiroshi Kubota
Alice Kurashige
Tom Kusaka
Dale Kuramoto
Paul Kusuma
George Masumoto
James Matsumoto
Makoto Matsumoto
Yutaka Matsuoka
Bill Mayeda
Richard Miyao
Shoji Miyasaka
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Shigero Moriyama
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Jack Nakamura
Hide Nakamura
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George Yatsukochi
Yoshiharu Yoneyama
Michael Yonemitsu
Roob Yonemitsu
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July
MIS soldiers become part of Task Force to recapture Kiska Island in the Aleutians.

September 29
On the first day of combat for the 100th, baseball star Shigeo "Joe" Takata is the first to be killed in action and the first to receive the Distinguished Service Cross.

October
JA women are accepted into the Women's Army Corps.

Late 1943
Fourteen Nisei are assigned to Merrill's Marauders in North Burma.

1944
January 24
The Battle of Cassino begins. It takes four major assaults and four months to take Cassino. The 100th fights in the first two assaults.

March 26
The 100th lands at Anzio, the second front between the Gustav Line and Rome.

June 2
The 100th participates in the breakout to Rome by attacking and capturing Lanuvio. The 442nd minus the 100th reaches the Arno coast to Genoa and Turin.

July 7
The 442nd takes Hill 140 in Italy after a bitter battle.

August
Merrill's Marauders captures Myitkyina, the vital junction for opening the Burma Road into China.

Kenny Yasui, an MIS soldier, impersonates a Japanese colonel and captures 15 Japanese soldiers.

August 31
The 442nd drives the enemy up the Italian mountainside positions in Italy, breaking through the Nazi Gothic Line in one day.

April 6-30
The 100th/442nd rescues the "Lost Battalion.

1945
March 12
The 522nd Field Artillery Battalion is sent to assist the 4th Infantry Division's assault on the Siegfried Line between Eastern France and Germany.

March 26
100th/442nd, minus the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, leaves France for Italy to join the all African American 92nd Infantry Division.

April 5-6
The 442nd launches a surprise attack on Nazi mountainside positions in Italy, breaking through the Nazi Gothic Line in one day.

April 6-30
The 100th/442nd drives the enemy up the Italian coast to Genoa and Turin.

April 29
Merrill's Marauders captures Myitkyina.

May 2
The war in Europe is over.

August-September
MIS soldiers participate in the surrender and occupation of Japan including: war crimes, repatriation of Japanese soldiers/civilians from overseas, civil censorship, land reform, government reorganization activities and rewriting of Japan's Constitution.

1946
July 15
Reception held in Washington, D.C. Under a driving summer rain, President Truman pinned the Presidential Unit Citation on the 100th/442nd colors. "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice — and you have won."

* Information courtesy of the Go For Broke National Education Center. This is not a complete timeline.
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Japanese American Citizens League
New York

Olympia, Washington Chapter JACL
Veterans, our sincere thanks for your sacrifice & service.

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JAPAN CHERRY BLOSSOM HOLIDAY TOUR ........... MAR 28-APR 9
Fukui, Hakui, Akashi, Tahara, Misima, Hiroshima, Matsuyama, Kochi, Takamatsu, Fukuoka, Hagi, Akiyoshidai, Iwakuni, Miyajima, Hiroshima, Matsuyama, Kochi, Takamatsu.

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SOUTH AMERICA HOLIDAY TOUR ..................... MAY 13-22

SCANDINAVIA-RUSSIA HOLIDAY CRUISE ............ MAY 28-JUN 9

GRANDPARENTS/GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR ...... JUN 27-JUL 6
Tokyo, Hakone, Atami, Hiroshima, Miyajima, Kyoto, Nara.

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Vancouver, Sawyer Glacier, Juneau, Skagway, Glacier Bay, Sitka, HOLLAND AMERICA Zaandam Ship.

CANADA-NEW ENGLAND HOLIDAY CRUISE ........ SEPT 15-26

SAN FRANCISCO-NAPA-TAHOE HOLIDAY TOUR ...... SEPT 22-28
JAPAN AUTUMN COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR .......... OCTOBER
Chita, Mito, Aizu, Wakanata, Hagi, Yamana, Onsen, Nagano, Metsumoto, Takayama, Ohno, Hachimantai, Fuji, Kyushu.

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Those who have seen Going for Honor, Going for Broke say:
"Excellent. Great for junior high and high school students."
"The DVD is as great as the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Infantry Regiment."

Bonus Material: This DVD contains a version of the "Echoes of Silence" database compiled by the Americans of Japanese Ancestry WWII Memorial Alliance.
Running time: 16 mins.
Nisei Rescuers Reunite with the 'Lost Battalion'

Sixty-five years after the WWII Japanese American veterans forged a daring rescue, members of both units meet again.

By PC. Staff and Associated Press

Even though it was 65 years ago, Al Tortolano clearly recalls the one thought, the only thought, that ran through his mind as his military unit was surrounded by German soldiers during World War II.

"About the only thing you could think of was family. Will I ever see my family again?" remembered the 88-year-old Tortolano, part of what was dubbed the "Lost Battalion."

It was October 1944 and Tortolano was part of the 1st Battalion, 141st Regiment, 36th Infantry Division — a Texas military unit that was surrounded by German soldiers in northern France's Vosges Mountains.

The prayers of Tortolano and the other members of the 1st Battalion were answered by the Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit made up almost entirely of Japanese Americans. The 442nd broke through the German ranks and was able to free the 1st Battalion.

The epic and bloody rescue, which lasted several days, became one of the most famed battles of WWII. The 442nd suffered 814 casualties as it rescued 217 men.

"I still can't thank my fellow veterans enough for what they did," said Tortolano, who stood next to his wife Alice.

Tortolano was among 40 members from both units who gathered in Houston Nov. 1 to mark the 65th anniversary of the WWII 'Lost Battalion' rescue at a fundraising gala hosted by the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation.

The 442nd became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history, he said.

"Their courage, valor, dedication are values we hold dear as a country — and to do this in what clearly was one of our darkest hours," Mullen said, referencing that many of the 442nd's members had families considering the discrimination they faced.

"They were sent into some battles other [units] wouldn't go to," he said. "In some ways they were treated as second-class citizens. But they proved they were true Americans."

Support the establishment of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) Historic Learning Center at the Presidio of San Francisco to honor the 6,000 MIS soldiers who served during WWII and the Allied Occupation of Japan.

For more info: http://www.njahs.org/mis
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Dec. 2-Dec. 16    Ancient Capitals of Thailand & Laos

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Union Bank - Invest in you
George Katagiri was born in Portland, Ore., to Chiharu and Teruye Katagiri. In 1942 he was interned at Tule Lake, CA. A year later, he relocated to Minneapolis, in 1945. He served in occupied Minnesota before entering the Army to finish high school. He 1948. She died in 1993.

Geoffrey Katagiri graduated from the University in Japan, returned to Minnesota and
Teruye Katagiri. In 1942 he was

TRIBUTE

GEORGE KATAGIRI
September 22, 1926 - June 3, 2009

After teaching in the Portland school system for nine years, in 1959 he was hired by the Oregon State Department of Education to be the first science education specialist for the state.

In 1969, he was honored as "State Employee of the Year." In his retirement, he volunteered to work to preserve the legacy of the Japanese Americans in Oregon. His efforts helped to develop the Bill of Rights Memorial in Tom McCall Riverfront Park and the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, which collects and disseminates information about Japanese Americans in Oregon.

Survivors include his sons, Douglas (Valerie), David, Steve (Claudia); sisters, Rose (Kane) Sanda, Mary (Paul) Uno; four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; and his significant other, Michiko Kohnauser.

A beautiful memorial celebrating his life was held in Portland on July 18, 2009.

'In Memoriam" appears on a limited, space-available basis at no cost.

'Tributes,' which appear in a timely manner at the request of the family or funeral director, are published at the rate of $20 per column inch. Text is reworded as necessary.

His greatest honor was serving with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team 'H' Company.

Col. Christopher Ray Keegan, 1915-2009

Keegan was the World War II commander of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team 'H' Company.

By Pacific Citizen Staff

Col. Christopher Ray Keegan, the World War II commander of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team "H" Company, died Oct 11 at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He was 94.

Keegan had been suffering from congestive heart disease and dementia, according to his daughter Kathy Clare.

The Bronx, New York born retired Army colonel was the last surviving company commander of the legendary 442nd RCT, according to the U.S. Army.

His greatest honor was serving with the 442nd RCT, said Clare. Keegan was drafted in 1941 and retired in 1970. After his retirement, he enjoyed playing golf, gardening and being involved in community affairs.

In a July 2002 letter to Davide del Giudice, an Italian author and historian, Keegan said "there was something special" about the Nisei men he led.

"They had been involved in the most trying experience of their lives — rejection, family and friends placed in relocation camps, loss of homes, businesses, farms and personal belongings, non-recognition as American citizens — but as a group they developed and retained a special bond, like a band of brothers that eventually became a family that has remained strong for almost six decades. They became part of my family — more than friends, we are a family."

A Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at the Old Post Chapel at Fort Myer, Virginia Dec. 29. The burial with full military honors will follow at Arlington National Cemetery.

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