

The 100th Infantry Battalion was the first of the Japanese-Hawaiian combat teams to be organized. Trained at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, they left there late in the summer of 1943, and embarked for North Africa. Transferred to Italy, they are there now on active service.

Much publicity has followed the movements of this colorful battalion. Their eagerness to meet the enemy, heroism in battle, pride in the United States army and in themselves as soldiers—these have been often reported by the press. However, in the interval since their departure from Shelby there has been no opportunity at CPHO to study their mail to determine their personal reactions to the long-awaited overseas duty.

On January 17-18, 56 letters were received from the 100th Infantry in Italy to friends and relatives in Hawaii. One letter in Japanese was transferred to San Francisco. Careful notes taken on each of the 55 remaining have been compiled into a brief report of 100th Infantry morale. This outfit, it will be remembered, has been regarded even by the Japs (they often term themselves "guinea pigs") as a test group. Their conduct and morale under battle conditions might serve as a criterion for behavior of similar units now in training at Shelby.

This correspondence was written between December 28-30 when the 100th Infantry, celebrating Christmas, was temporarily behind the front line. The soldiers give graphic accounts of Christmas (for many the second away from home)—an unparalleled feast of turkey, a real Christmas tree, and, unexpectedly, sunshine to brighten the drab Italian winter. One says: "Christmas day for us couldn't be any better than it's been so far. We really had a grand time thanks to our Lt. Today we for the first time closed for business and taking things easy." They feel themselves lucky "in spending a very peaceful Christmas behind the front lines," and are unstinting in their praise of the Red Cross, "who made it (Christmas dinner) possible and they deserve all the credit for their work to make things merry & happy for every soldier over here." As a final touch to the festivities, the soldiers were entertained by a U. S. G. show featuring Humphrey Bogart. Most letters mention the event. One soldier writes to a friend: "Wish you were here to see a movie actor come all the way from Hollywood to Italy to meet the fighting men."

The 100th men have a healthy respect for their adversaries, the Germans, whom they consider not unconquerable, but tough. Yet they are fully confident of victory. A sergeant says: "Although we have talked with the best of Herman Goering's and Rommel's boys—I don't think Jerry is invincible. I wouldn't say Jerry is a pushover either. We have been held up by Jerry & the rotten, cold, damp, muggy weather for days and weeks till it seems like years. This is not an easy war—it is a battle of the artillery and yet the Doughboy is the one who takes a lot of punishment." Another: "Jerry is a tough old scoundrel but somehow we will find a way to put an end to all this mass murder. If it won't be us it will be those coming after us."

The strong self-pride, always characteristic, has increased since the 100th Infantry, tried in battle, proved worthy. They represent those of Japanese ancestry in Hawaii and fight to vindicate their people. "They are going wonderful," a sergeant says, "Plenty of guts and I'm telling you I'm proud of them." Another, of a soldier killed in battle: "He died valiantly—all the

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Infantry  
100th  
Bn.

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- AAF GP
- AGF EB
- ASF VLB
- BFR IG
- CAD WAF
- CHF FNY
- CGO FGR
- CWS EB
- DRG SB
- ERS SSB
- FIN VF
- JAG ADC
- MFD ANY
- OPD CDC
- ORD EDC
- PNG ED
- QN AGW
- SGO NSC
- SDD POD
- TAG SC
- TRN SDC
- USW WDC

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boys who have been taken away by the hand of fate died valiantly." There is some bragging: "I imagine you folks saw the newsreel picture about us fighting in the Waikiki theatre. How was it? Also in the Star Bulletin which we receive nowadays we read quite a lot about us. I see some people are even squawking saying that we are receiving too much publicity. Some people are jealous!!

In contrast, some feel that they have been made a publicity instrument: "You have probably been reading about the glorious 100th--well, don't believe all you read in the papers--we are a very much overpublicized bunch of guinea pigs." There is evidence, too, that the 100th dislikes being lumped with the A.J.A.'s and prefers to maintain its separate identity. "I have very little respect for anyone who keeps calling us AJA's instead of the 100th Inf. Bn."

The impulsive Japanese-Hawaiians have struck up a ready friendship with the Italian people. Language is no obstacle to them. They combine a few easily learned Italian words with proficient use of sign language. The intercepts comment on exorbitant prices--25¢ for a fried egg, \$12 (after much haggling) for a fish. A few, more serious than the rest, express concern over Italy's wretched economic plight. "There is very little grain around here. I often wonder what the peasants live on. I don't see any livestock that amounts to anything." "The people use very little fuel-oil and practically no coal. Most of the towns & villages are wrecked. Jerry blows up almost every bridge. The reconstruction of Italy will take centuries. Italy is a lost empire."

Italy's cooking especially interests the Japanese-Hawaiians, but they turn up disdainful noses at famed Italian spaghetti. The natives are termed "specialists in gypping" whose tricks include selling watered wine to the soldiers. The Japanese-Hawaiians confess themselves inferior musically to the Italians. One explains: "I tried my dimes worth of croaking but those Italians put me to shame. It seems that everyone of them is a direct descendent of Caruso or sumpin."

On Christmas passes they excitedly toured Italian cities and were impressed by the magnificent architecture, art, and music. But many treasures have been destroyed, many cities desecrated. It is impossible, even for a few days, to forget the war. One Japanese-Hawaiian says: "This country is so full of history, culture, art, women, wine, music--should say, this country was--most of Italy's glory is past, faded and gone. I have seen some nice paintings. I have heard some good music, I have heard peasant girls sing beautifully, but it isn't all romantic--there is too much of the ugly reality of war all around us."

The 100th Infantry's bitterest enemy, excluding Jerry, is the Italian weather. Life is rugged. A private complains: "the weather here is cold like hell, snow is on the nearby hills. Gee! gosh. The feet is to cold hell." "Chee! The feet is sure cold there's no place to keep it warm but under the blanket." But joyous as children, the soldiers forget inclement weather during brief moments of pleasure. A picture show soon sets them laughing, unmindful of their frozen feet.

Like most men who fight in the front lines, the Japanese-Hawaiians have come to feel a grater need for faith in God. It comforts them to have in possession the tangible symbols of their religious creeds. They say: "We attend every church service we can and you be surprise the attendance that

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By: NNB  
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attend the service we have here; so don't be surprise when the boys return home you find them going to church on Sunday." "I received the rosary, appreciate it very much. Faith is a good thing to have out here, we can see the effects of it out here." "I received a package from James & he sent me a golden cross to hang around my neck. Now I have more confidence in myself." "You know the bible was the best thing anybody could get out here."

Especially at Christmas the soldiers are lonely for home. "As for Italy, its all right" says one, "but no place on earth can touch good old Hawaii." Another: "Give me the states and good old Hawaii and I'll be happy." A third: "I miss the island climate very much. Tho it's quite long since we left, it's still in me. That is, the Hawaiian in me. No matter how long one stays away from the islands you just can't forget the warm Hawaiian weather." But there is little complaining. "Things out here are pretty tough, I'll admit but still we are doing alright I think and I sincerely hope that we'll be back there with victory in our hand by next year." And, "We are sweating out our New Year—and hoping like hell that 1944 will bring about a brighter outlook on everything—everywhere. This war is pretty rugged—there's no denying about it—but we're managing somehow." "We hope that tough though the days may be that we will have the courage to fight through storm and tempest."

The 100th Infantry does not intend to return until war is ended. They are seasoned soldiers soon to go back to front line action. The letters reflect their grave sense of responsibility and determination to finish the business in hand.

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BYRON PRICE, Director.

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ASW 342.18 JA Infantry -100th Bn.

31 December 1943

Dear Colonel:

Many excellent reports have been received from the Field on the battle conduct of the 100th Battalion composed of soldiers of Japanese American ancestry. The Assistant Secretary of War has asked me to send you the following which appeared in the War Review of the Secretary of War of November 25:

"General Clark reports that the 100th Infantry Battalion, composed of Americans of Japanese ancestry, continues to make a highly creditable combat record. These soldiers are well-trained and well-disciplined and fight with confidence and resolution. They are particularly skillful in scouting and patrolling. They are cheerful and uncomplaining, and their rate of illness is practically nil."

Sincerely,

~~SECRET~~

HARRISON A. GERHARDT  
Lt. Colonel, General Staff Corps  
Executive to Ass't Secretary of War

Commanding Officer  
442nd Combat Team  
Camp Shelby, Miss.

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cy to BPR 4 Jan 44  
(Col. Brown)

x - CG, 442nd  
x - Gerhardt

31 Dec 43

**SECRET**

WAR DEPARTMENT  
CLASSIFIED MESSAGE CENTER WDC

JDJD B24  
Filed 10/1219A  
ecm

10 Oct 1943  
1245Z

**INCOMING MESSAGE**

P R I O R I T Y

DECLASSIFIED  
EO 11652, Sec. 3(b) and 3(c) or (5)  
Authority NNS 740062  
By ERC  
NARS, Date 2/1/74

From: Algiers  
To: War

No. W-2136/5448 10th October 1943

Signed Eisenhower. Action AGWAR information Adv AFHQ CP personal for C in C. Cite FHGCT.

Paraphrase of message from Clark reference AGWAR 9316 October 5th and Adv AFHQ CP 680 October 9th states

"Japanese 100 Separate Battalion now in 34th Division. As part of RCT was used as Advance Guard in advance of 25 kilometers over a mountain road in 24 hours. Definite objectives were secured in the advance which covered 22 kilometers by day and 3 by night. Battalion efficiency considered very good, with prompt reaction to enemy opposition. All available weapons used with complete assurance. Under first fire 12 casualties were suffered by leading company but advance continued undeterred. Sgt (Shigeo Q Takta ?) was recommended for DSC posthumously. All ranks US Troops accept them with confidence and friendliness due to good behavior and high courage. Sickness hospitalization almost nil due to desire to stay with their unit."

no sig

Note: 9316 is CM-OUT-1622 (5 Oct 43) OPD

ACTION: OPD

INFORMATION: LOG

CM-IN-6131 (10 Oct 43) 1746Z ejv

~~SECRET~~

COPY No. 20

THE MAKING OF AN EXACT COPY OF THIS MESSAGE IS FORBIDDEN

(S)

ASW 34218 JF. Infantry  
100 Battalion

EISENHOWER

10 Oct 43  
m. m. m.

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also 392.18 100th Battalion

WAR DEPARTMENT  
OPD 320.2 Africa (10 Jul 43) WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF  
OPERATIONS DIVISION  
WASHINGTON

10 July 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF WAR JOHN J. McCLOY:

Subject: 100th Infantry Battalion.

1. On 19 December 1942 General Eisenhower signified a willingness to accept the 100th Infantry Battalion (Japanese) after it had received its combined training. He had previously been informed that it was to have completed its combined training and be available for shipment in June.

2. The unit is now available, well trained and has completed its training cycle.

3. On the 7th of July a radiogram was dispatched to General Eisenhower informing him that the unit was trained and available and that it was desired that this unit be placed in combat at an early date. He was then questioned as to whether he desired it. To date, no reply has been received to latter radiogram.

J. E. HULL,  
Brigadier General,  
Chief, Theater Group, OPD-WDGS.

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 2.4.9 and 5(D) or (E)  
Auth: MDR/740062  
By: GRC  
MARS, Date 7/1/94

X-Hull



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10 Jul 43

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Authority NND 740062  
By MS NARA Date 4.18.03

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19 October 1943

ASW 342.18 J. A. Infantry  
100th  
ASW 342.18 J. A. Infantry  
442nd

Dear General McNair:

I am returning herewith the report of investigation of conditions affecting members of the 442nd Combat Team at Camp Shelby. This thorough study of present conditions reassures me that the situation is not serious and is improving gradually.

The report of the fine performance of the 100th Battalion in battle will be of great interest to the 442nd and should act as a spur to their efforts to further improve their present very creditable record.

Sincerely,

(SIGNED) JOHN J. MCGLOY

John J. McGloy

Lt. General L. J. McNair  
Commanding General, Army Ground Forces  
Room 25, Army War College  
Washington, D. C.

Enc. Ltr. undated from General Hodges & report.

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By SPC NARS, Date 7/7/74  
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Authority NND 740062  
By MS NARA Date 4.18.03

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9 July 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL HULL:

Would it not be possible to send the 100th Infantry Battalion overseas soon? I understand that General Eisenhower said that he was prepared to take them. I also understand that they are good, have been training for a long time, and every indication from their mail and otherwise that I get is that they are most eager to go.

I think it might tend to improve some of the tension on the West Coast if they did get into combat, and I think also that they would prove to be useful troops.

It might be a solution to enlarge this battalion into a regiment, and with our 442nd Infantry develop a light two regiment division.

(SIGNED) JOHN J. McCLOY

John J. McCloy

Enc:

Report on Mail From the 100th Infantry Battalion

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E.O. 11652  
Authority MS 740062  
By ERC NARS Date 7/1/74

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