

Footprints

Impressions from where we were to where we will be

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Fall Issue 1994

Volume 3, Number 3

The theme is *Kazoku* (Family)

The annual meeting of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego was held on October 1, 1994 at Southwestern College. Featured this year was a gourmet o-bento lunch historic photos, displays and items from our 1991 Poston III Reunion. Professor Don Estes presented a program on ways to record your family history.



Hank Wada, Robert "Bat" Madrid, & Bob Wada in Korea. Story, pg. 5

In the cause of democracy



German soldiers surrendering to nisei soldiers of the 442ND, Italy, 1945.

Over fifty years have now passed since those momentous days that followed December 7, 1941.

This year, as our nation honors the men and women who participated in the invasion of Europe, it is an appropriate time to feature the experiences of just a few of the local Nikkei who contributed to the Allied victory. The following summary is offered to set the scene of the stories that appear in this issue.

For a number of reasons, not the least of which was the fact that the United States' first peacetime conscription came into force in 1940, there were already Nikkei in the armed forces prior to the outbreak of World War II. Not only were they serving on active duty, but also in the Reserve and National Guard as well. Paraphrasing one author, the epic of the phoenix-like emergence of these men, and later women, from the ashes of suspicion and fear to an almost unparalleled position of admiration and honor, is without equal in the military history of our nation.

In June of 1942, 1300 men, drawn largely from the 298th and 299th Infantry Regiments of the Hawaiian National Guard arrived at Camp

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Donations Welcome

The JAHSSD would like to thank all the families and individuals who have generously contributed items to our organization. In particular, thanks go to Lloyd Ito for donating the uniform he wore in World War II as part of the 442nd Regiment (see page 4 for a special story about Lloyd's military service).

Our gratitude likewise goes to Mrs. Alfred Y. Obayashi for writing some of her recollections of Joe Obayashi, and the temporary loan of menus and photos of the former Sun Cafe.

Such donations help the society preserve our history. If you would like to contribute any items that represent the history of Japanese Americans in San Diego, please contact any board member.

Chula Vista Gakkuen

The San Diego chapter of the JACL and the JAHSSD are earnestly seeking pre-War photos of the Chula Vista Gakkuen. We urge our members and friends to search your old photo albums to see if you have anything that shows people, the building, or both. The photos, which can be copied and returned, are needed for a historical project in which the two groups are involved. If you can help, please call Ben Segawa at 482-1736 or Don Estes at 280-9418.

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A Japanese Soldier in the U.S. Army

A Japanese soldier in the U.S. Army? Yes, that was me, Hideo Ochi. During World War II, 15 of us nisei were in the U.S. Army Intelligence unit that played the role of Japanese soldiers to familiarize overseas-bound GIs with the enemy. I also participated in making two army training films. This is the story of my part in the big war.

I was a "kibei" nisei, working in San Diego when I was drafted on July 8, 1941. I was the fourth Japanese American to be drafted from San Diego. First was Hank Tani, then Shig Moriyama, Takenori Ohara, and me. I always thought I was the third one, but I heard that Takenori was drafted ahead of me. Before we left, the JACL threw a farewell party for us in the place the Nihonjin Kai had across the street from Haruki Koba's store on Island Avenue.

I got my basic training in Camp Walters, Texas. After basic, I was sent to the 8th Infantry Division at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina, the capitol of that state. I was in the 13th Infantry Regiment, Company G, with a guy from Bakersfield named Sid Kinoshita. World War II broke out while I was with that division.

Most of the guys in the outfit were from the South and were familiar with Chinese people. Once, when we were in Key West, some guy came up to me and said, "Hey, Ochi, there's a Japanese girl in town," So I went to check her out—right away you could tell she wasn't Japanese, she was Chinese. The Southerners, they don't know the difference. Another time, we went to North Carolina on maneuvers and the first day there, me and Kinoshita went through the chow line and one of the cooks serving the chow says, "Here comes the C---ks (derogatory for Chinese), the C---ks."

Later on, we were on maneuvers in Tennessee and this caucasian friend and I went to a restaurant. The waitress asked my friend what nationality I was and he said, "You guess." She named every nationality but Japanese. After my friend told her I was Japanese, she called all the other waitresses and cooks to our table to look at me. They had never seen a Japanese before.

The following year, 1943, the whole division moved to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. I didn't stay there too long. The division was supposed to go on desert maneuvers in California, but before it happened, all of us nisei soldiers were

See "Soldier" on page 6

Memories of World War II

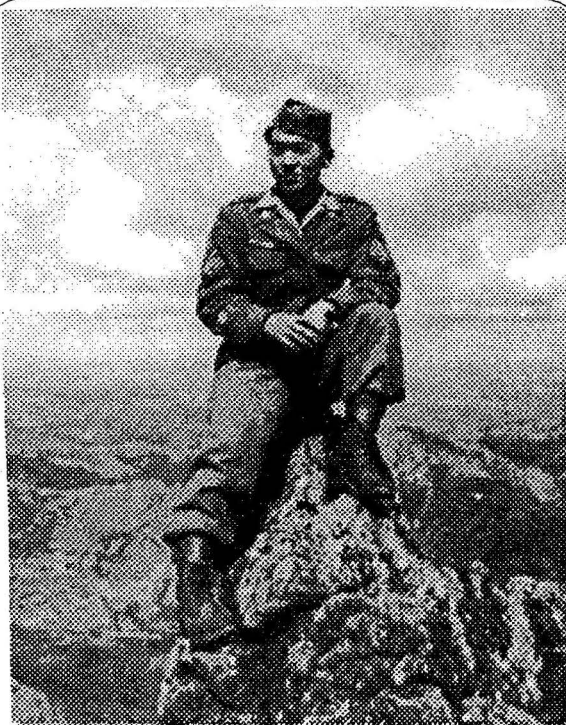
I recently returned from Cincinnati after attending the 50TH Anniversary Reunion of my outfit, the 71ST Infantry Regiment of the 44TH Infantry Division.

I met buddies whom I had not seen for 50 years. We parted in Europe after the war ended, early in May of 1945. We had been in combat together for 204 days, from eastern Europe through Germany and into Austria to the Italian border. It was memorable and tearful to meet my buddies, many of whom were wounded, some who had been prisoners of war. We also mourned for those who were KIAs (killed in action).

There were only three Japanese American GIs in the entire 44TH Division (15,000 men). Our caucasian buddies were very upset then, when they heard our parents and families were uprooted and sent to camps to live. At the Reunion, they expressed their unhappiness that our nation could allow such a thing to happen.

Many positive incidents stand out in my four years of army service, inspite of the misery and horrors of warfare.

I was called into service on December 1, 1941 and seven days later, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. What a shock, but



James Yamate on a mountain top in the French Pyrenees, September, 1945.

my caucasian buddies gave me tremendous moral support that day.

During my basic training at Camp Grant in Illinois, my fellow trainees were good and fair with me. Even the civilians outside of the post would invite me to lunch on the weekends. Many had not seen an American of Japanese descent ever before in their lives.

My first station after basic training was Camp McCoy in Wisconsin. There was a prisoner of war camp for German, Italian and Japanese soldiers, so after a short stay I was transferred to Fort Custer, Michigan. As I was ready to enter the large post mess hall for my first meal, I saw all the black soldiers sitting on one side. My caucasian buddies told me to sit with the white soldiers. That was my first experience with segregation in the army.

My first furlough to see my parents was very unusual. I entered Amache Relocation Center in southern Colorado around November 10, 1942, in my Army uniform. I passed through the gates guarded by soldiers in uniform to visit

See "Memories" on page 4

Democracy (continued from page 1)

McCoy, Wisconsin, and were officially designated the 100th Infantry Battalion. Shortly thereafter, approximately 100 of these men were detached and assigned to the newly established Military Intelligence School (MIS) at Camp Savage, Minnesota. This initial group would eventually increase to some 6000 strong and become the core of what has been called, "America's superb secret human weapon." These were men who fought and died in secret as intelligence specialists in actions ranging from China and India through the Central and South Pacific to Alaska and finally, Japan. These were also the Nikkei who General "Vinegar" Joe Stilwell was describing when he said, "The Nisei bought an awfully big hunk of America with their blood."

Later, because of the superb training record established by the 100TH Battalion, the Army, on February 1, 1943, authorized the creation of a new reinforced regimental combat team whose numerical designation, the 442ND, was to become synonymous with the nisei. In its final form, the 442ND RTC consisted of the 100TH Infantry Battalion, the Second and Third Tank Battalion, the 552ND Field Artillery, the 232ND Engineer Company, the 206TH Army Band, an anti-tank company, a cannon company, and a service company.

See "Democracy" on page 7

my family behind barbed wire fences. My American buddies could not believe it.

After services at Fort Custer, Michigan, University of Illinois and University of Denver, I was sent to the 71st Regiment 44th Division in Louisiana. After a period of combat preparation we sailed in a large convoy from Boston and landed in Normandy, France. We entered combat in September of 1944, in eastern France.

When we crossed into Germany some of the German people asked me what nationality I was. When I told them I was American of Japanese descent, they said I was fighting on the wrong side! German and Austrian people were very nice and were extremely happy that the Americans came there first rather than the Russians.

When the German Army surrendered to us in May of 1945, everyone was overjoyed to know finally that they were safe and going HOME. I had mixed emotions, happy, but I really didn't have a home in California to go back to.

However everything turned out well. I settled in Chula Vista with my parents, met my wife Yuri, had a family and retired. We've lived in Chula Vista for 46 years.

I'm proud to be an American and to have served in World War II.

By James Yamate

Gift Memberships

With the holiday season just around the corner, why not consider giving a gift membership for 1995 to your former San Diego relatives and friends who live out of town? With the membership, they will receive a copy of each issue of **Footprints**, which will help them keep in touch with their San Diego roots. We're sure they will enjoy every issue. See the insert in this issue for a membership order form.



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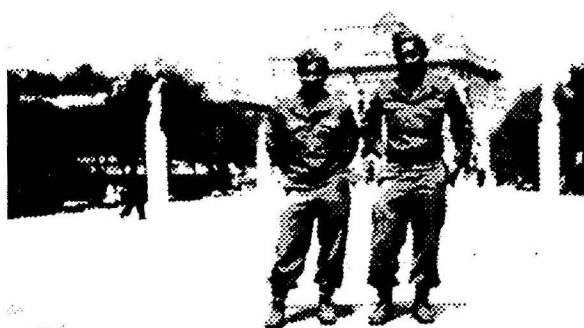
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My dad the war hero



Lloyd Ito (left) and Frank Wada (right) on the town in Europe, 1945.

I guess I am the designated historian of my family (the Ito and Horiye families).

I unofficially accepted this role after asking so many questions about my maternal and paternal grandparents. I plan on doing more research and writing about my grandfather, Yenichi Ito, whose past is of interest. As I've been told he set out to America at an early age, leaving his parents, brothers and sister in Japan to accomplish what I am sure was his dream of riches.

However, this article is not about my grandfather, but my father, Martin L. Ito, and his experiences in the 442nd. This interview was conducted by actually giving him some written questions and then having him respond by writing his answers. His responses are contained below in my summary.

See "Hero" on page 9

My life as a Marine

I have been asked to write about my experiences while in the Marines. I first tried to join the Corps in 1946, after the end of World War II, after my 18th birthday. I wanted to join the Marines because one of my friends from Redlands was in the Marines at the El Toro Marine Air Station.

I went to the Marine Recruiting office in San Bernardino to fill out my application. The Recruiting sergeant read my application and saw that my nationality was Japanese. He got on the phone and called L.A. and was told that I could not enlist at the time because they were not accepting anyone of Japanese descent.

I waited for a while and when the Marines opened up a one year enlistment program for either the Infantry or Marine Aviation I tried again. I took my boot camp training at the MCRD in San Diego and was not treated any differently than the other recruits because of my race. We were all disciplined and yelled at together. I finished my recruit training and then got my first airplane ride from the Miramar Air Station to the El Toro Air Station. I was a mechanic on the Grumman F-6-F fighter plane that was used a lot in World War II against the Japanese. My job was to start up the plane in the morning and go over a check list prior to the pilot taking it up for a flight. My whole year while on duty there was to maintain the aircraft and keep it in flying order. After my discharge, I returned to my home in Redlands.

My second tour of duty started when the

Korean War started. I decided to volunteer and rejoin the Marines. I thought I would go back to El Toro since I had experience with aircraft. I remember talking to my brother Frank from Camp Pendleton and telling him I was going to El Toro, when I found out I was staying at Camp Pendleton to undergo Infantry training. After going through a lot of tough training, taking cold showers and eating lousy Marine chow, I was sent to Korea with the 4th Replacement Draft.

I was assigned to H&S Co., 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and placed in S-2 which Bn. Intelligence. I spent all my time with George Co. as a scout-observer during all combat operations. My job was to go on patrols and interrogate prisoners we captured. During war you hardly have any happy moments but I had two. The first was when I saw my brother Bob who was in

See "Marines" on page 6

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the Marines 4th Tank Battalion and had come to Korea. We spent as many hours together as we could. The second happy moment was when I saw my friend Robert Madrid from Redlands. It was really nice to see some familiar faces. Robert, Bob and I spent as much time together as we could.

The sad part of my life was soon to be as our rest period was almost over, and our units were going back into combat. Bob returned to his tank battalion and Robert and I were to have one last get together the evening before our units were to push off in the morning. We recalled the many good times we shared together—playing ball on the same team, going hunting and going over to his house for olives and burritos his mother made. Unknown to us at that time, Robert was to see the sunrise only one more time in his short life, as he was killed in action the next day.

In closing, I remember seeing the children and old people suffering from the war. I saw women breaking ice in the river and washing their clothes by pounding them with a stick. Old men would come to our mess tents and go through our garbage cans where we had dumped the leftover food we had not eaten. I thanked God I was in Korea and none of this was happening to all my relatives and friends back home.

By Hank Wada

Footnotes

As you enjoy the personal experiences in this issue, please do more than just *think* about starting to write and record your own memories... *communicate* them to others. If you need assistance in recording and documenting your history and memories, please contact the JAHSSD.

I know that writing down your thoughts about the past can be difficult. My heartfelt thanks to all the people who contributed articles for this issue of **Footprints**.

When James Yamate brought over his article, I mentioned Robert Ito's article about his father Lloyd and the Bronze Star he earned. James very casually said that Lloyd actually has two Bronze Stars. Hopefully Lloyd will share the fuller story with us in a future issue.

Our next issue will be less focused and offer a collection of articles on a variety of topics. If you have a story you would like to share, especially about something that happened around the holidays, please contact me (690-1151 home or 482-6354 work).

By Jeanne Marumoto Elyea

"shanghaied" out. We had to turn in all our rifles and everything except for our personal belongings and we stayed in Missouri. That's when I joined the rest of the "Budda-heads" in a non-combat unit. There were only 16 niseis in the whole division and there were two who were "happa." They both had Japanese fathers but they didn't look oriental at all. Nevertheless, they had Japanese names so they had to stay with us.

Since I was in the regular infantry, I was assigned guard duty in the stockade. I was a corporal then so I was in charge of the guard detail. I did that for a while, then the War Department gathered all the niseis into Fort McClellan, Alabama, and Camp Blanding, Florida, as replacement for the 442. I took basic training at Fort McClellan and after eight weeks we all went home on leave, which for me was the Poston Relocation Center in Arizona, not San Diego.

After we got back, most everyone was shipped overseas; I don't know why, but they didn't send me overseas. Instead, I was sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, for more training. I was fed up with training and not only that, Camp Shelby was not a good place to me. The weather was really bad. Some volunteer unit came up, so I volunteered just to get out of there. At the time, I didn't know what I was volunteering for, but fortunately, I was one of the 15 selected.

We ended up in Camp Richie, Maryland; 15 nisei soldiers and 2 caucasian officers. Camp Richie was a small camp and there was nothing but foreigners—Chinese, Germans, Italians. Caucasian officers who spoke perfect Japanese told us we were going to learn how to fire Japanese weapons captured in Kiska, Alaska. So we learned how to fire the Japanese weapons, then they told us we had to go to a port of embarkation in California. We got on a troop train and ended up in Fort Ord, near Monterey.

At Fort Ord, it was our job to familiarize troops going overseas with Japanese soldiers. We had a different group each day, sometimes up to 500 GIs. Each one of us specialized in a certain type of weapon, small arms, machine guns, etc. We demonstrated the weapons on the firing range. The War Department issued a pamphlet on Japanese language and everyone in the group being trained had it. I happened to be the only bilingual nisei in the unit, so I went through the pamphlet and explained how to pronounce the Japanese words. All the guys in our unit would

See "Soldier" on page 8

These units fought through five major campaigns in Italy and were then transferred to France where they assisted in pushing Nazi forces out of the Rhone Valley. After one particularly bitter campaign, the 442ND liberated the French town of Bruyeres on October 18, 1944. Once the high ground outside of the town had been secured, the unit was brought out of the line for "R and R" on October 23. Four days later, the 442ND was ordered into the Vosges Mountains to relieve a battalion of the 141st Regiment of the 36TH (Texas) Division; a unit that was to become known as the "Lost Battalion." Fighting the *Wehrmacht* from tree to tree and rock to rock for four long, tough days, the surrounded battalion of Texans was finally relieved, but in the process, the 442ND suffered the loss of 200 killed men and an additional 600 wounded. These casualties ultimately exceeded the number of Texans who were saved.

After the Vosges campaign, the 442ND was returned to southern France, and shortly thereafter, at the request of General Mark Clark, Commander of the Fifth Army, the regiment was assigned back to northern Italy where the 100TH Battalion and the 442ND broke the Nazi's Gothic Line, which had stubbornly withstood all Allied efforts to breach it for over six months. Later, they would be the first Allied soldiers to liberate the concentration camp at Dachau, a fact that went unpublished for almost 50 years.

In less than two years, the men of the 100TH Battalion and the 442ND Regimental Combat Team fought in seven campaigns, receiving 1 Medal of Honor, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, 1 Distinguished Service Medal, 560 Silver Stars, 22 Legions of Merit, 15 Soldiers Medals, 4000 Bronze Stars, and 9486 Purple Hearts. Altogether, there were 18,143 individual decorations for valor awarded, making the two organizations the most decorated units for their size and length of service in the history of the Republic.

As the exploits of these Nikkei men and women who served in World War II gradually, yet inexorably, begins to slip out of focus and fades into history, it is appropriate that we stop and again thank all those who served in the cause of democracy. Tragically, this happened at a time when democracy had largely failed the Nikkei and their families. This issue features some of their personal stories.

By Don Estes

Board Splinters

Message from the President

JAHSSD will be two years old in October. Much has been accomplished in just 24 short months. I'd like to highlight some of our successes.

- Our membership exceeds 200
- We have over 41 Life Members
- Many members live outside of the San Diego area, including Professor George Shinikichi Tajiri, who lives in Holland and is a strong supporter of JAHSSD
- With a grant from the California Council for the Humanities, we will soon have a Traveling Exhibit available for display at local colleges and libraries. Thanks to the diligent efforts of our Historian Don Estes for creating this exhibit.

Finally, I'd like to welcome new Director Mas Hironaka. He is replacing Aileen Oya on the Board, who is trading positions with Mas and becoming our Advisor. Also, we say farewell and thank you to Tom Ozaki who is leaving our Board of Directors after two years of invaluable service.

Ben Segawa, President

Caught doing something nice

It's time to acknowledge some special people who have helped out the JAHSSD this past quarter. A big thank you to Yuki Kawamoto for lending his manifold talents to the design and building of the framework for one of our two exhibits we are preparing for this fall. John Rojas also deserves thanks for his continuing efforts on our photo related projects. Ben Segawa and Tommy Ozaki are due special appreciation for giving up an afternoon to paint our exhibit, along with Yuki. A pat on the back goes to Toshiye (Carol) Estes and Don Estes for their presentation of the Poston III slide show for the employees of the Metropolitan Correctional Center, which made an honorarium donation to the society.



Aileen Oya

*Sitting in the Sand,
Seasons Passing By
Waiting for Summer.*

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Footprints is a publication of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego. Subscriptions are free with membership. Comments and questions from readers are welcome. Please address your letters to:

Footprints Editor

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JAHSSD in Expo

The JAHSSD will participate in the Family Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center, November 11 through 13. The Expo is being sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. It will feature displays of the internment experience at assembly centers and relocation centers, as well as the experiences of nisei soldiers and other examples of life during internment. Our society will display a photo exhibit which shows the Nikkei San Diego experience during that time.

This should be a fascinating and unique expo and everyone is urged to attend.



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Soldier (continued from page 6)

put on Japanese combat uniforms and the officers explained about the officers and enlisted men's insignias. At the end of the day, the guys in our unit put on the Japanese uniforms and we zigzagged down a hill to show the GIs what Japanese soldiers looked like. At the time we started doing the training at Fort Ord, we were the only unit doing what we were doing, but I understand that later on there were other units doing the same thing.

While the training was going on, we were also involved in making an army training film. We played the part of Japanese soldiers making banzai charges and things like that. I think we were doing the movie thing about once a week, since we still had to do the training. After the movie was completed, me and another guy, Sakamoto, were sent to Hollywood to make another training film. In the movie, I was a captured Japanese soldier and he played the part of an interpreter.

Making a movie in Hollywood was quite an experience. In one scene, I was supposed to be a Japanese soldier infiltrating the American side. They took the Japanese uniform jacket I was to wear and put bullet holes across the back with a machine gun, then they put blank caps on the ground where I was to be shot. In the actual scene, they set off the blanks to simulate machine gun fire as I crawled on the ground and when I was supposedly hit, I turned my back to show the bullet holes across my back. There was a tube underneath me and someone pumped "Hollywood" blood as I lay dead. When the scene ended, I thought I would fool the guys so I just lay there without moving. After about a minute, someone hollered, "Ochi!" I got up laughing and he said, "God damn it Ochi, we thought we really killed you."

In another scene, I was supposed to be on a south Pacific island beach by a rock. So I was standing in a shallow pool of water by a fake rock and some guy out of camera range was pushing a 1x6 back and forth to make fake waves.

Guys would ask me if I got regular Hollywood star pay. I'd say, "Heck no, I was just a GI." At the time I was a staff sergeant making all of \$91 a month.

Before filming was finished, the war with Japan ended. The day the war ended, I went into J-town. It was kind of lonesome and scary with people celebrating all over. By this time, there was a hostel in J-town where nisei GIs could stay. I went there and they fed us Japanese food.

We were sent back to Fort Ord and the unit was disbanded. After working at an army post

office in Oakland for a little while, I was sent to Camp Beale, Maryland, where I was discharged on November 15, 1945. I was in the service exactly 4 years, 4 months, 25 days.

All in all, I enjoyed army life. I'm glad I was in the army. Recently, my wife and I went to Las Vegas and saw the Wayne Newton show. He asked all the World War II veterans to stand. It made me feel proud.

By Hideo Ochi, as told to Yuki Kawamoto

EDITOR'S NOTE: Hideo Ochi is a landscape gardener, a master at shaping and pruning pine trees in Japanese style. His artistry can be seen at the Japanese Friendship Garden in Balboa Park, the San Diego Buddhist Temple, VFW Post 4851 in National City, and at Kiku Gardens in Chula Vista.



Hideo Ochi in uniform. . . sort of

In the next issue

Mitch Himaka will share the military experiences of Frank Wada and Abe Takehara in the next **Footprints**. We will also highlight Clara Breed, who passed away September 7, at the age of 88. She was very instrumental in helping us establish the JAHSSD. If you have any stories about Ms. Breed you would like to share with our readers, please contact the **Footprints** Editor (Jeanne Elyea).

Hero (continued from page 4)

One of the questions I asked was how old he was when he volunteered for military service. His answer demonstrates how important it is to start gathering information on your family now. Dad said that he was 21 years old. But I know that he was born in 1917 and 21 years later would have been 1938. Knowing that he wasn't interned until 1942 and that he spent at least a year in Santa Anita and Poston meant that he had to be 26 years old. So, after going over the math with Dad, we agreed that he was indeed 26 when he volunteered. He was in Poston when he volunteered.

Dad further stated that he wanted to volunteer and that he didn't feel pressured. There wasn't any pressure from his family or others not to volunteer, either.

While serving in France, Dad earned a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. He was honored for his heroism in protecting the safety of injured soldiers in his unit, while disregarding his own serious wound.

In *Close Support*, by Tooru Joe Kanazawa, a history of the Cannon Company of the 442ND is offered. I was surprised to see a photo of Dad giving Second Lt. Hitoshi "Moe" Yonemura a haircut. Yonemura was killed on April 21, 1945, while providing artillery support.

When Dad returned to San Diego he experienced discrimination when he went to the barber shop in Encanto to get his haircut. The barber refused to cut his hair. After waiting until everyone had left, Dad talked to the barber. It turned out the barber's son was killed in service by the Japanese. After explaining his service record, the barber finally cut my Dad's hair and they became lasting friends.

As we all get older our memories and recollections become a little hazy, like the example of when my Dad volunteered for service. Twenty-six-years-old, not 21, right? So, if family history is important to you, someone is going to have to start asking questions and writing about them.

As my own sons get older, I want them to know something about our family roots and what their great grandfather (Yenkichi) and grandfather (Martin) have contributed to our country and community. **Footprints** of the JAHSSD provides a great forum for "sharing" information on what we all find out.

By Robert Ito

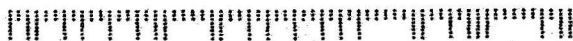
Issue Dedication



Mrs. Sakayo Kawamoto
1899 - 1995

This issue of **Footprints** was underwritten in memory of Mrs. Sakayo Kawamoto, by her children Hiroshi Kubota, Tomiko Kozuma, Fusa Shimizu, Yukio Kawamoto, Kaz Ishida and Ruth Fujimoto. Mrs. Kawamoto passed away this summer at the age of 95.

An article about Mrs. Kawamoto's memories of her life in Fish Camp during her early days in San Diego was published in the Spring 1993 issue of **Footprints**.



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