

## THE ENEMY'S OUR COUSIN

Pacific Northwest Nisei in the United States Military Intelligence Service

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They were homegrown farm kids, the sons of hard-working immigrants who set down roots in the Columbia River Gorge. Neither aspired to become a war hero. When Uncle Sam solicited recruits at the onset of World War II, each answered the call of his country, one by registering for the draft, the other by volunteering. Along the way, both served this nation with distinction and earned military citations. They were among the 3,700 credited with saving more than one million American lives and shortening the war by two years. Yet, one of the two went home to a community that discouraged his return. The other did not return at all; his name was headlined in newspapers across the country to counter unseemly acts in his hometown. Steeped in the cruel ironies of war, the circumstances of World War II pitted these young GIs against their parents' homeland while also positioning them at the center of a hometown controversy that stirred hearts and consciences nationwide. This is their story.

The fathers of Mamoru (Mam) Noji and Frank Hachiya were young bachelors from Japan, first-generation Issei who had arrived on the West Coast around 1900. A small number made their way to the fertile, forested valley of Hood River, Oregon, between majestic Mount Hood and the waters of the Columbia. First lured by temporary work on labor gangs for the Mount Hood Railroad, they were soon employed to clear heavy stands of fir and pine for private landowners and as migrant fruit laborers for Caucasian orchardists.

Since wages were much higher than those in Japan, many Issei chose to remain in this country. By 1910 Hood River County had the largest population of Japanese in the state outside Portland. Ten years later the majority of Issei in Hood River had become vegetable and berry farmers who cultivated three-quarters of the valley's strawberries. Eventually the fathers of Noji and Hachiya married and raised children who became the second generation of Japanese in this country, the Nisei.

As American citizens with family roots in Japan, the Nisei seemed to straddle the Pacific Ocean—one foot planted in Japan and the other entrenched in American soil. It is not surprising, then, that issues of language became significant in their early lives. At home, Nisei conversed in their parents' native tongue, ate Japanese food, and celebrated holidays their parents remembered from their own youth across the ocean. At the same time, they attended American public schools, where they learned English and became familiar with the food, celebrations, and mannerisms of other American citizens. Their parents noticed that their habits tended toward the everyday ways of their Caucasian peers. Recognizing the widening cultural gap between their own generation and that of their children, Issei set up Japanese language schools, determined to instill a sense of heritage in Nisei while teaching them traditional language and values.

Mam Noji remembered attending Japanese school three days a week after public school and on Saturdays: "The parents didn't want us to lose Japanese tradition and knowledge and culture altogether," he explained. But, he admitted, "Most of us Nisei went to Japanese school to please our parents. So we didn't accomplish a great deal there." Studious and responsible, the eldest of four children, Noji thrived at both schools and was popular among his peers. The only Japanese American among his 13 classmates, he was elected student body president at Parkdale High School. His proud parents hoped to send him to college once their orchard became established.

Frank Hachiya was smart, outspoken, and often bold, especially when he got into scrapes with his playmates. At school, where he sat in the last seat in the last row, young "Hatch" entertained his classmates by crawling on the floor and clowning during class. In 1936, when he was 16, the Hachiya family moved to Okayama, Japan, where Mr. Hachiya had inherited property. Unhappy living on foreign soil and discouraged with the deterioration of his English skills, young Frank gained new appreciation for the country of his birth and longed to return to Oregon: "The love of one's country. America! It's queer and mystifying is all I can say." Four years later, when his father returned to America to earn money by following the fruit harvest in California and Oregon, Hachiya convinced his parents to let him return, too. Living with a former neighbor, he attended school and played catcher on the baseball team. After he graduated from Odell High School in 1941, Hachiya enrolled in classes at several colleges before beginning his first term at the University of Oregon.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor threatened the ambitions of both young men. Noji, 23, had begun basic training at Camp Roberts, California, after being drafted into military service the previous month. For him and other Nisei, the repercussions were immediate: "There were guys patrolling the area with guns on their shoulders, on guard," recalled Noji. "We were in the middle of training but they cut us off right away. No more basic. No more training. They took us off KP (kitchen patrol), which suggested maybe they thought we'd be poisoning the food. We were not trusted anymore."

Officers reassigned most Nisei to detail work: cleaning barracks and latrines, picking up cigarette butts, scraping paint off windows, and doing yard work. Noji was among the more fortunate, designated to drive jeeps and trucks in the motor pool. Yet stories circulated about other inequities, including Nisei officers stripped of their ranks and inductees discharged from active duty. These were violations of the Selective Training and Service Act, which barred discrimination due to one's "race, creed, or color."

Early the next year the army moved Noji and other Nisei soldiers from California to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, where they would be assigned to perform more noncombatant-type tasks. The long train ride brought bitter recriminations from Noji: "We were wearing uniforms but they put a guard on us!... Boy, what a comedown.... It's pretty hard to put into words, but when you're in uniform and you're treated like a prisoner, you wonder what you're doing in the service."

After four years of living and studying in Japan, Frank Hachiya had strengthened his faith in American ideals and the integrity of individuals. At the University of Oregon, where he enrolled in political science classes, he was intent on studying principles of democracy. "Some despair because they think an individual can do nothing, but history has taught us that an individual can change the map of the world," he wrote a former teacher. After Pearl Harbor was bombed, Hachiya volunteered for military service so that he could offer his skills as a language translator. "When you know the language of one people, you know the people and understand their

problems," he explained. Though his mother and brother still lived in Japan, Hachiya posited, "The only way I can help them is to aid in freeing Japan of the military party."

As the war waged on, however, the Selective Service became more averse to accepting Nisei into their ranks. Draft boards began reclassifying them as IV-F (unsuitable for military service), then as IV-C ("aliens not acceptable to the armed forces, or any group of persons not acceptable") by September 1942. They also banned further Nisei inductees.

But the government recanted by February 1943 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt pronounced the formation of a Nisei combat team. "No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry....Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry." Contrary to the president's statement, however, 120,000 people of Japanese descent were incarcerated behind barbed wire in concentration camps on American soil. Hachiya's father (as well as Noji's) resided in those camps. Still, Hachiya was undaunted. "We are all determined to do our utmost to prove this new rule is right."

Meanwhile, language obstacles loomed over the United States military; and the Nisei would become unexpected saviors. The native tongue of the enemy Japanese was "almost beyond occidental comprehension," according to Brigadier General John Weckerling, an intelligence officer in the South Pacific. The written language was composed of two separate alphabets, in addition to thousands of Chinese characters, each requiring four distinct steps to write. The spoken words were almost as complex, characterized by different forms of speech based on the rank or class of the person addressed. Because overconfident Japanese military commanders viewed their language as incomprehensible to outsiders, they neglected to code their wartime communications. Japanese entered the war speaking freely, labeling minefields, carrying personal diaries, and even disregarding security when handling military documents. Now the Nisei, even with minimal backgrounds in Japanese language and culture, were in demand as wartime linguists. They would be recruited for the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), lauded as the "eyes and ears" of the Allied Forces. "The military were desperately scraping the bottom of the barrel to find some of us," admitted Noji. "They were so desperate to find people who understood some Japanese (and I put myself at the lower level), they had to have us!"

The Nisei were more acculturated than anyone anticipated. Army officials had first envisioned that a few weeks of language study would suffice before sending Nisei overseas. Instead, they found it necessary to develop a six-month curriculum composed of Japanese vocabulary, military terminology, and combat intelligence. Studies were so intense, in fact, that overwhelmed Nisei crammed for tests late at night in the latrines, instigating officer patrols to turn out lights and send the harried men to bed. Still, one-fourth of the GIs in the first class failed to graduate.

Noji enrolled with the second class, which became the first class of linguists at the new Military Intelligence Service Language School at Camp Savage, Minnesota. (The school was transplanted from the Presidio in San Francisco because Executive Order 9066 excluded Japanese Americans from the West Coast, removing them to inland camps.) When he graduated in December 1942, however, Noji had one major misgiving. "We were given a few stripes and ordered for duties. There were three *hakujin* (Caucasians) in my own class. They all got commissions. That was a big difference that kind of bothers you, you know?" Indeed, while their Caucasian classmates gained commissions as second lieutenants, most Nisei earned promotions of just one or two levels and remained in the enlisted ranks.

Within days of their graduation, MIS personnel headed for the combat theater in the South Pacific. Japanese forces had seized territory in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and Indonesia and threatened Australia by building a strategic airstrip on Guadalcanal, in the midst of the Central Pacific. After three months of fierce naval and air battles, the Allies finally secured Guadalcanal and advanced northwest up the Solomon Islands.

In June 1943 the Allies targeted New Georgia Island. Noji took part in the amphibious assault when marine and army forces landed on nearby Rendova Island. "When we got off the landing craft and were wading through the water, I could see bullets landing on both sides of me. Both sides now! I never expected to be shot at, you know. So when we got to this coconut tree, we all started hugging the base of it.... This one kid just cried because he [was] so scared." A photo of the Rendova Island daybreak landing appeared in the *U.S. News & World Report's* special report on June 30, 1943. Kiyoto Nishimoto of Penryn, California, and Noji are barely visible against the dark landscape.

During the Rendova campaign, Noji had his "baptism of fire," when he interrogated his first prisoner of war, a Japanese pilot who had been shot down. Following the Bushido custom of ancient samurai warriors, Japanese soldiers considered it a disgrace to surrender and had been indoctrinated to believe that they would be tortured by Americans. "Here I was trying to talk to him in conversation maybe third or fourth grade school level. I just felt inadequate.... My foremost thought was...[to] talk him out of committing suicide. I told him, 'It would be more helpful to your own country if you would help rebuild your country instead of committing suicide.' I don't know whether I succeeded or not."

Noji and other MIS personnel spent the bulk of their time translating documents captured from the enemy, a tedious and demanding full-time job. "Guys would bring in armloads, buckets. When the enemy's running away, they can't destroy everything. So we got a lot of stuff." In teams of ten with one officer, MIS staff cooperated to translate battle plans and defense maps as well as radio messages, newspapers, diaries, even letters from home intercepted from the enemy.

The value of the Military Intelligence Service linguists became quickly evident. On the warfront, they parachuted with troops into strategic areas, interrogated captives, intercepted and eavesdropped on enemy communications, and negotiated surrenders. In the rear, they monitored radio messages and translated captured documents. On one occasion, when Noji's unit was unable to move past an enemy hill, Allied soldiers were able to retrieve a map of the Japanese defensive position. Once Noji and his MIS team completed their translation, his unit easily bypassed the enemy defense. Other major MIS feats were instrumental to the defeat of the Imperial Military: MIS personnel produced a five-volume, alphabetized catalog of 40,000 Japanese Army officers. In April 1943 they decoded flight plans for Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, enabling United States fighters to shoot his plane down. After Admiral Mineichi Koga's "Z Plan" fell in the hands of Philippine guerillas in May 1944, the translation by an MIS team led to a decisive defeat of the Japanese fleet in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

For the Nisei linguists, however, there were dangers far beyond the armed combat they experienced, especially when they were close to the front lines. "We were all warned about infiltrators coming to our area, Japanese in American uniforms. Gosh, we fit that bill, you know?" Noji explained. "I gotta tell you, one time a fellow came up to me and said, 'I had you in my sights.' (He didn't tell me why he didn't pull the trigger....) The enemy's our cousin. We all

look alike, you know? We were getting shot from ahead of us and behind us." That dilemma would also befall Frank Hachiya.

By the fall of 1944, Allied Forces were leap-frogging across New Guinea, then bombarding the Philippines to free them from three years of Japanese domination. MIS teams joined GI combat troops by parachuting into Leyte Island's remote mountains, gorges, and jungles to negotiate enemy surrenders.

Hachiya was scheduled to fly back to Hawaii the next day, but he volunteered for forward duty with the 32nd Infantry Regiment. Known for seeking assignments in the front and talking the enemy out of holes, he headed through two parallel ridges infiltrated by the enemy. Accounts of his shooting vary.

His commanding officer, Lieutenant Howard M. Moss, told how Hachiya crossed a valley to interrogate a prisoner, with an infantryman as his bodyguard. At the bottom of a valley, Hachiya outran his bodyguards and began hollering to the enemy when a sniper shot him at close range. He emptied his gun into the sniper and walked up the hill, where he was given plasma, then taken to the hospital for blood transfusions and more plasma.

In another report, general orders from Seventh Infantry Division headquarters described how three enemy soldiers ran into a bamboo thicket at the edge of a deep and heavily wooded gorge. Hachiya tried to "talk the enemy out." After requesting permission to pursue and try to capture them, he moved out ahead of a two-man patrol. At the bottom of a gorge, a 12-man enemy patrol opened fire. While lying on the ground, Hachiya fired a complete magazine at the enemy, driving them up the ravine.

Another version, cited by journalists, MIS accounts, and *The New York Times*, ascribed Hachiya's wounds to a different source. Invading GIs mistook Hachiya for an enemy infiltrator and shot him as he was making his way back to American lines. Still, Hachiya delivered maps of the Japanese defenses, an act credited with saving the lives of hundreds of fellow soldiers.

What is not in dispute is that the mortally wounded Frank Hachiya died several days later, on January 3, 1945. That month he was memorialized at two services. One was in a downtown Honolulu church when Gold Star Mothers honored Japanese Americans killed in the war. The second was in a tarpaper covered mess hall in Block 37 at Minidoka, the concentration camp in Idaho where his father was incarcerated. Hachiya's actions, however, would be editorialized across the country as an antidote for racist actions in his hometown.

"So Sorry Please! Japs Are Not Wanted in Hood River." (*Hood River News*, January 26, 1945)

"We, the undersigned residents and taxpayers of Hood River, County, are opposed to the Japs returning to this county and favor every lawful means to keep them out." (*Hood River County Sun*, March 23, 1945)

Hundreds of valley residents signed petitions that appeared in five full-page newspaper ads during the first three months of 1945. The ads impugned Issei for their alleged allegiance to the emperor of Japan and aimed to convince them that their neighbors and friends wished to expel them from the valley and the country.

Two months earlier the local American Legion post had resolved not only to prevent those of Japanese ancestry from returning to the valley once they could leave the camps but also to deport all Japanese Americans to Japan. Their solution? They proposed an amendment to the

Constitution that would "deprive all American-born Japanese of their claimed citizenship." The following year, the post vowed to prevent the sale or lease of property to Japanese and to purchase all property they owned. But their strongest mandate was a resolution to remove the names of 16 local Nisei soldiers from the community memorial plaque because they questioned their status as dual citizens of Japan and the United States.

Noji's name was included and, for a long time, it was thought that Hachiya's was inscribed and removed as well. When he read in the *Stars and Stripes* military newspaper about his hometown's actions, Noji was incensed. "What a lowdown thing to have done, I thought.... Nothing less than an insult. Here we were risking our lives, you might say. And it wasn't good enough to be on the board."

Across the country and throughout the ranks of military overseas, the actions of this community of fewer than 12,000 became notorious. Editors of *Colliers* censured Hood River for its "blind hatred...an all-American low in intolerance and bigotry." A reader complained to the *Chicago Sun*, "If I ever buy any apples from a box with the name of Hood River, Oregon, on it, it will be because I'm blind." GI newspapers such as *The Defender* condemned the act. "We cannot forgive them, because they indeed know what they do." More than 300 servicemen in the Pacific wrote letters to the *Hood River News*, all but one critical. After Hachiya's death, a *New York Times* editorial, "Private Hachiya, American," recognized, "To be sure, his eyes slanted, his skin was yellow, his name different. But Hachiya was an American."

The roots of this acrimony were evident as early as 1917. That year a Hood River senator introduced Oregon's first bill to prevent Japanese from purchasing property, the forerunner to Oregon's Alien Land Law of 1923. Two years later, the community formed the Anti-Alien Association, vowing to neither sell nor lease land to valley Japanese and to oppose further immigration of "Asiatics." In 1920 a report on the state's Japanese situation, compiled by state legislator Frank Davey, targeted Hood River: "'The Japanese Question' is more acute in Hood River than in any other place in Oregon." The report cited fears by residents that the Japanese would drive out property owners surrounded by Japanese land, that Japanese orchards were large and in good condition, and that immigrant Japanese had high birthrates and sent their profits to Japan.

In April 1945, five months after its controversial action, the Hood River American Legion post finally restored the names of 15 of the 16 Nisei to its honor roll, noting that one had been dishonorably discharged from the army. Local commander Jess Eddington made it clear, however, that his views had not changed. Mayor Joe Meyer averred, "Ninety percent are against the Japs!"

Not surprisingly, fewer than half of the prewar Hood River Japanese returned to the controversy-ridden valley after the war. Once home, they struggled to purchase goods and services they needed to restore their homes and get on with their lives. Business owners pressured them to leave by cutting off their supplies and boycotting merchants who sold to them. Some Japanese Americans were forced to drive 30 miles to the next town in order to buy goods. Public pressure was so great that one storeowner delivered goods to Nisei customers only after dark.

A few stalwart citizens did emerge to defend the rights of Japanese Americans. In a public letter, Reverend Sherman Burgoyne of the local Asbury Methodist Church derided the "thirty misguided men" for their "nazi principles." He was so outspoken that the first of the full-page

newspaper ads was addressed to him. Local merchant Arline Moore offered Issei a haven at her downtown store and made purchases for Japanese families when businesses denied them service. R. J. McIsaac stocked Japanese goods at his upper valley store despite threats from residents and the moniker of "Jap lover." Members of the League for Liberty and Justice, named after closing words in the Pledge of Allegiance, formed to counteract propaganda with facts and to assist returning Japanese Americans by such acts as meeting them at trains and driving produce trucks when warehouse workers threatened them.

Still, a neighbor tried to convince Noji to sell his property to him and move. "It hurts," Noji claimed. "Your feelings for friends turn upside-down. You could see it in their faces. WE had the wrong kind of face. WE had the wrong names."

Hachiya's father faced a more chilling dilemma. Considering the valley's contemptuous climate, would he ever be able to bury his son at home? In 1946, one year after his death, Hachiya's body was still buried in Grave 4479 at the United States Armed Forces Cemetery outside the town of Palo on the Philippines' Leyte Island. Mr. Hachiya had confided to Monroe Sweetland (a former Red Cross field director who had befriended Frank Hachiya in Eniwetok, Marshall Islands) that he "didn't want any more trouble." Mr. Sweetland, then a newspaper publisher and later a state senator, spoke with Hugh Ball, publisher of the *Hood River News*, who expressed the townspeople's desire to remove the stigma and was eager to "make amends."

On September 11, 1948, three years after his death, an overflow crowd honored Frank Hachiya's memory at Asbury Methodist Church in downtown Hood River. Honorary pallbearers included former Governor Charles Sprague; attorney and future chief of the United States District Court of Oregon, Gus Solomon; Hood River's Reverend Sherman Burgoyne; and national Japanese American Citizens League president Hito Okada. Following the service Hachiya's body was reinterred without incident at the community's Idlewild Cemetery. Since his death at the age of 25, his courageous acts have gained other recognition. In 1945 Hachiya's family received a posthumous Silver Star for his gallantry in action. He also earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the highest honor given to a Nisei in the Pacific theater. Congressman Al Ullman of Oregon called Hachiya "perhaps the greatest Japanese-American war hero of World War II in the Pacific." And in 1980 the Presidio's Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, named Hachiya Hall, the new Asian language complex's central building, in his honor.

After 46 months in the military, Mam Noji returned to Hood River in August 1945 wearing a Bronze Star for his service on behalf of the Philippine liberation. Once home, civilian Noji promptly contracted malaria. "One moment you're sweating and the next moment you were freezing," he remembered of the 10-day episode. Not one to dwell on the noxious past, the positive and practical Noji concentrated on nursing the family orchard back to health and raising his own family in a large home together with his Issei parents. Also committed to rebuilding relationships within the community, Noji was elected the first post-war president of the Mid-Columbia Japanese American Citizens League and served on numerous community boards, including chair of the Hood River Electric Cooperative. In 1969 the prosperous pear and apple grower was named Orchardist of the Year by the Hood River Chamber of Commerce. In 2001 he was honored as grand marshal of Hood River's Independence Day parade. Until his death at age 87 in January 2006, Noji socialized with friends, bowled three times a week, and traveled worldwide, touching every continent and every state but Rhode Island and Connecticut.

There were no parades when veterans of the Military Intelligence Service returned from the war. Unlike Nisei who served in the famed, all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe

(the most decorated unit of its size and length of service in American military history)—deservedly greeted by cheering crowds at New York's harbor, a parade in Washington, D.C., and a welcome and Presidential Unit Citation from President Harry Truman—the MIS veterans were never feted with celebrations or fanfare.

These Japanese American linguists, serving as "the eyes and ears" of the Allied Forces, had served in every major campaign and battle in the South Pacific during World War II. They translated 2 million documents with more than 20 million pages and interrogated 14,000 Japanese prisoners. Commending their unprecedented contributions, Colonel Sidney Forrester Mashbir, commandant of the Allied Translator & Interpreter Section (the intelligence center in Brisbane, Australia), maintained, "No group had so much to lose. Capture would have meant indescribable horrors to them and their relatives in Japan. They are worthy, as individuals and as a group, of the highest praise for their invaluable contribution to the success of Allied arms." Yet, even today many are unfamiliar with the accomplishments and sacrifices of these Nisei. Why does the story of the MIS still remain such an obscure military secret after all these years? The answers are as perplexing and reasonable as they seem inexcusable.

First, the Military Intelligence Service was not organized in a separate unit, as were combat squads. Instead, the MIS was a service with its teams of up to 10 members temporarily attached to 128 separate units. Those units represented United States Army, Navy, and Marine personnel in addition to troops from foreign countries, for these linguists were also in demand and on loan to units from Great Britain, Canada, India, New Zealand, Australia, and China. "We didn't belong to anybody," explained Harry Fukuhara, Seattle native, MIS veteran, and career intelligence officer who was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in 1988. Nor did those early units maintain official records of the MIS team that served with them, according to Roy Inui, former president of the Seattle MIS and the Nisei Veterans Committee. Since MIS interpreters were only temporarily attached to their combat units, they were not listed in morning reports and were therefore ignored or forgotten even by the United States Army. Thus, the merits of MIS interpreters' service were not easily recognizable as a group, and there was little documentation to support their contributions.

Second, the MIS's value lay in its secretive nature: Nisei linguists remained a well-kept secret weapon against Japan. The military concealed MIS operations, techniques, and capabilities from its adversaries, a practice which continued during the Japanese Occupation, the Korean War, and the long Cold War. Besides, veteran Fukuhara claimed, "If an intelligence operation is successful, nobody knows about it. It's only if somebody makes a mistake [that] it comes out." In fact, World War II military intelligence documents were restricted until 1972, when the Freedom of Information Act declassified them. Still, by 1988, official files were "buried, scattered, or scant," according to Don Nakatsu, also an MIS veteran. Since the war, there has been no official publicity about the role of the MIS.

Third, through their training, GIs learned to be discreet and cautious in withholding information about their intelligence operations. "Even among ourselves, we were told not to talk about what we did or how we did it," explained Fukuhara. "As the war ended, that training was still there." Besides, he intoned, "Any war story is [about] a combat unit, not somebody in a quartermaster or signal corps or medical corps.... Intelligence is very mundane work."

Fourth, most Nisei remain reluctant to speak about their accomplishments. The MIS 50th anniversary reunion program, appropriately titled "Secret Valor," attributed this to the "natural reticence of the veterans, conforming to a common Oriental trait of withholding their secrets."



Harry Akune, inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame, called it the "regular Nisei self-deprecatory manner." Nakatsu also noted that Nisei were "neither motivated nor organized to publicize their story."

Since post-war news media were justifiably more inclined to write stories about the heroic 442nd Nisei combat team than about linguists whose service had been blocked from the public by intelligence operations, public awareness has depended on MIS veterans' willingness to "toot their own horns," according to Mercer Island veteran Hiro Nishimura. In recent years, more MIS veterans have demonstrated that willingness to recount their achievements; and their activism has increased. Those efforts led to a Presidential Unit Citation awarded to the MIS in 2000 for "extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy." Harry Fukuhara and the MIS Association of Northern California spent two years researching and collecting documentation with the support of Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera, and Army Chief of Staff general Eric Shinseki. Now, too, the official account of the MIS, highly anticipated and supported by MIS veterans, is finally in the editing process. The forthcoming book, by former Presidio historian James McNaughton, will be published by the United States Army. With the promise of this official recognition, Nishimura confides, "We do not despair over the scarcity of publicity as we have faith in historians who will do the right thing."

Today, the ironies of war—and errors in our own judgment—are all too evident as we finally recognize the contributions of these heroic men:

- In their youth, Nisei were limited in their Japanese language fluency. Yet, in a twist of fate, their literacy helped to win a bitter war.
- Their families, even siblings who were American citizens, were not trusted to live on the West Coast. Forced to give up their homes, their businesses, and their belongings, they were transported to concentration camps in deserted areas of inland America. Still, these Nisei served their country in the selective Intelligence Division of the United States Army.
- After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they faced discrimination at home because they resembled the enemy. Yet, their appearance proved an advantage in gaining the trust of Japanese prisoners of war (and later during the Japanese Occupation). In a twist that may have determined Frank Hachiya's fate, however, their features were also a handicap in battle, for they were threatened from the front and from behind.

The United States military had previously questioned the loyalty of the Nisei to this country. Yet the service of these 3,700 "Yankee Samurai" became indispensable to the Allied victory. "Never in military history did an army know so much about the enemy prior to actual engagement," praised General Douglas MacArthur.

These Nisei linguists fought two battles—one against the enemy from their parents' homeland and the other against the surge of racial prejudice in their communities. "We had a lot of doubts in those days," noted Mam Noji. "But today I think we could say we're proud to have served and come home alive."

Today most MIS veterans are in their eighties. According to author and war historian Patrick K. O'Donnell, more than 1,100 World War II veterans die each day. It is not too late to honor these

wartime heroes. The MIS interpreters were America's secret weapon against Japan, but we must keep their secret no longer.

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