

For Continuing Service



LT. MATSUNAGA EXPLAINS WHY AJA SOLDIERS DYING FOR U.S.

An auxiliary driving force which spurred the members of the 100th Infantry Battalion in their fighting in Europe was explained by 1st Lieut. Masayuki Matsunaga of Hanapepe Kauai, Hawaii when he returned from the Italian theater after being wounded twice. The lieutenant left Hawaii with the unit on June 5, 1942, and remained with them until he was wounded the second time near Cassino.

Briefly sketching the highlights of the 100th Battalion, which is made up of Americans of Japanese ancestry, Lieut. Matsunaga explained that the battalion was fighting as an Infantry unit from its own choice.

"Twice we had an opportunity to keep out of active combat," the lieutenant declared. "When we arrived in the United States we were told we could become service troops here but the officers and men all wanted to see active combat as Infantrymen.

"Then we went across to Africa and there we were told we could remain and do guard duty if we desired. Again we chose a chance to fight."

How the battalion went to Italy, spearheaded attacks of the 34th Infantry Division and received two unit citations, Lieut. Matsunaga passed over briefly, hurrying to explain the mental attitude motivating the men with whom he served rather than their exploits in combat.

"Officers of other units have asked me," he continued, "why this battalion is always ready to do any tough fighting without any regard for themselves.

"There are two reasons. First we are moved by the same patriotism and love for America that any



Members of the 100th Battalion, made up of Americans of Japanese ancestry, elected to fight as infantrymen in the European campaign, 1st Lieut. Masayuki Matsunaga of Hanapepe Kauai, Hawaii, declared after returning from the Italian campaign where he was wounded twice. These men, he explained, were proud to be called Americans and wanted to prove to every other American their love and appreciation of this country.

other soldier has. But beyond this there is another force. We know we love America and the opportunities the country has given us but we also know that we, more than other Americans, must prove to our fellow Americans that we have the same love of country, the same ideals and the same loyalty that everyone else living under the American flag should have."

Mention of ideals brought another thought to the lieutenant's mind. He explained:

"People have told me that men under the stress of battle forget all of the ideals for which they are fighting and wage a grim combat with self preservation as the only thought in their minds. I know that is not true. All too often I have seen men die in battle and almost invariably they expressed in their own words the sentiment:

"I hope as a result of my dying, my wife, my children, my family will have a better life—that the people who remain will have a better world in which to live."

One of the five enlisted men of the battalion who returned with the lieutenant was displaying a prayer book. He showed how a piece of

sharpnel had gone through the pages, cutting each one until it came to the center of the book just at the page on which was the soldier's favorite prayer. Here it had stopped. This turned the lieutenant's thought to religion.

"When the battalion went into the service," he recalled, "I believe few of the men had any religion. It was not until Chaplain Yost—I have forgotten his first name—joined us that the men began to take an interest in religion.

"After they saw this chaplain go right into the fighting front with them to aid the wounded and give comfort to the dying, they became interested in the Christian religion as represented by him. They questioned him about it. He gave them prayer books which many of them carry with them, and many attended his services whenever there was an opportunity."

It was at Port Pazzilli, near Cassino, that Lieut. Matsunaga was wounded both times. There was nothing spectacular about either of them. It was just everyday Infantry action.

He was leading his weapons company across mountainous country where the going was so tough nothing but seasoned Infantry could penetrate it. Not only were the enemy looking down on his unit from the hills, as they crawled upward, but every possible approach to their positions was mined. Both of the lieutenant's injuries were caused by mines. The first wound was in the neck. A good Infantryman can keep right on going with a wound in the neck, but later on another explosion injured his leg. That wound put him out of action for the rest of the campaign.

Lieut. Matsunaga planned to spend a short leave in Chicago and then expects to return to Hawaii. There he hopes to be given some kind of work to further the war effort, even though it is not in combat.

The lieutenant is proud of the battalion with which he served. He points to its record and says:

"We wanted to prove our loyalty, to show that we could fight like true Americans. We are proud to be called Americans, and that is what made us fight like we did."