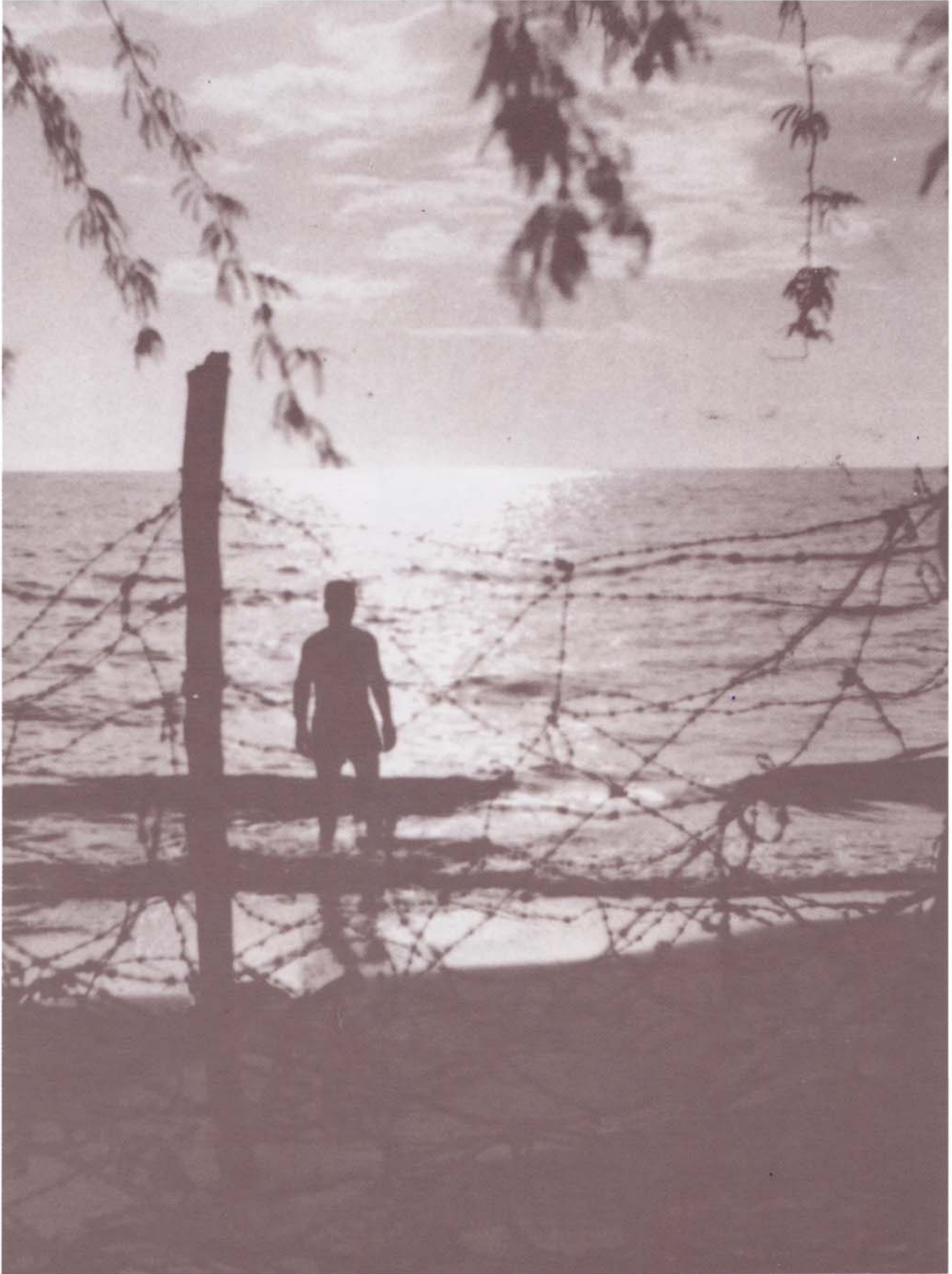
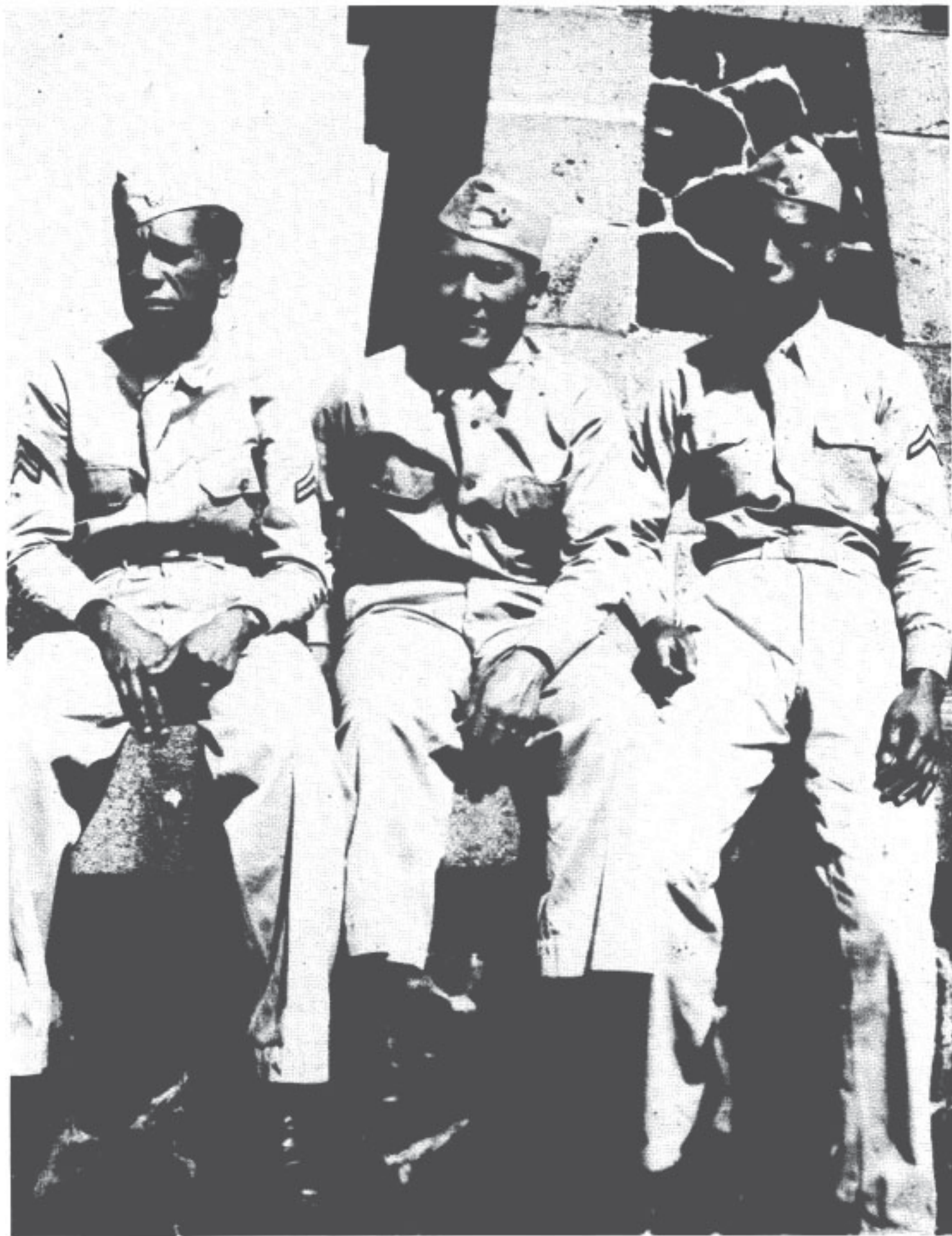


Beginnings



Hawaii sunset, December 7, 1941



Kalcaloha, Taotka and McLores, June 1941

In the Eye of the Storm: Prelude

*"If dey come, who you shoot?
Dem or me?"*

*"Who you t'ink, stupid?
Me as good American as you!"*

The exchange is between two GIs on duty in a machine gun pit guarding a stretch of Oahu beachfront. Following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and other military installations on Oahu by the air arm of the Japanese Imperial Navy on December 7, 1941, the beaches around the Hawaiian Islands are quickly strung with barbed-wire entanglements by troops of the Hawaii National Guard and guarded with machine guns and artillery pieces in anticipation of a follow-on amphibious landing in the wake of the devastating air attacks.

For the moment, however, there is only the sound of the gentle waves rippling ashore on the beach. In the silence, the horizon looms nearer, more menacing. Casting a furtive eye on his Nisei companion, the darker-skinned GI can no longer contain himself. "If dey come . . ."

This bit of real-life drama is sketched in the book, *"Ambassadors In Arms"* which is the story of the 100th Infantry Battalion written by Professor Thomas Murphy of the University of Hawaii (1954, UH Press). The text is enhanced with sketches by Yoshio Takamoto and maps by Tadashi K. Ohta, both of the 100th.

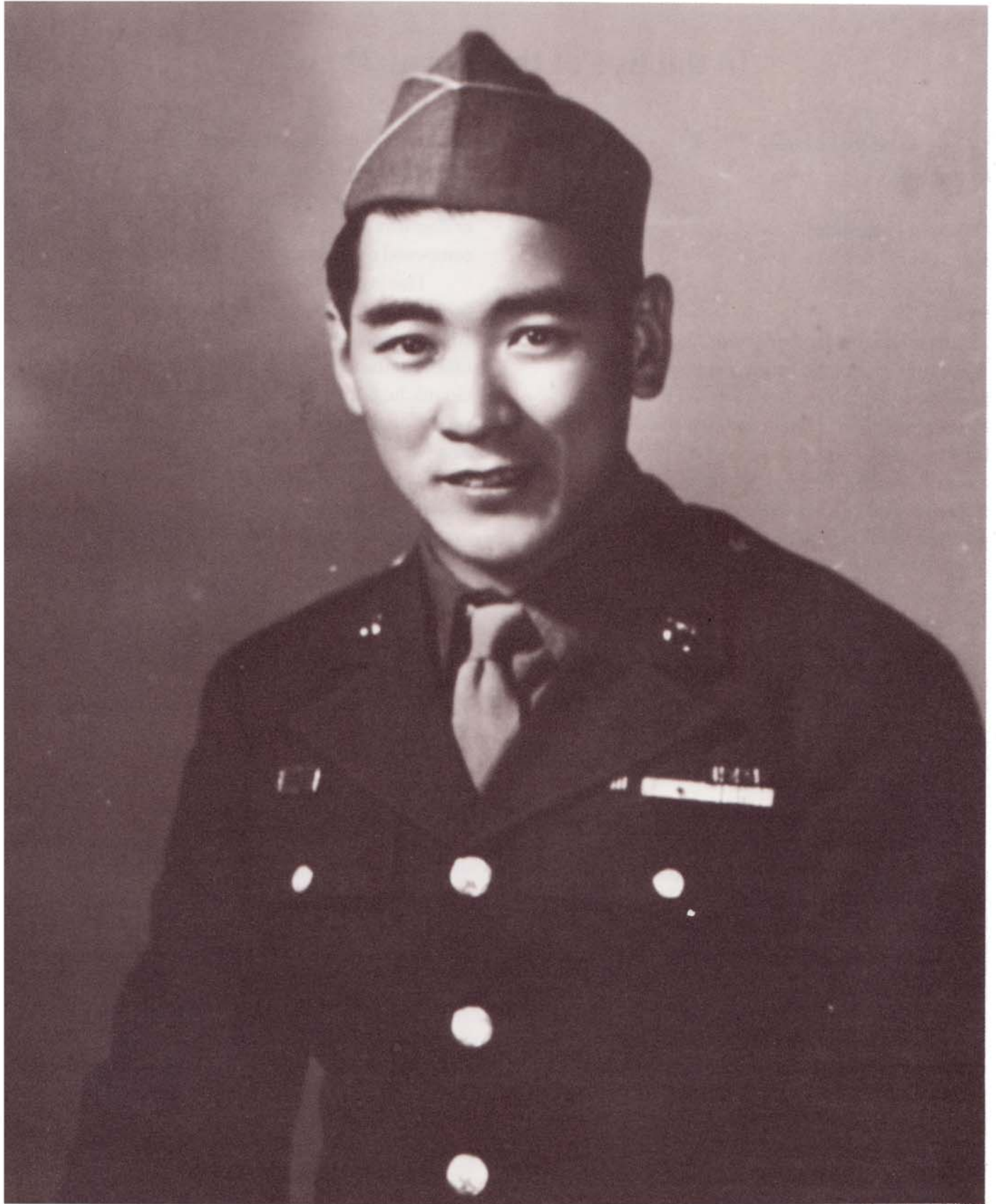
The GI, however, is not alone in his uneasiness. In the panic and hysteria of the blowup at Pearl, many are running scared – wrestling with their consciences, not knowing whether to stand up for their Nisei friends or not. Certain factors emerge. In the absence of any overt disloyalty from the local populace (the Japanese in particular), there is the practical mat-

ter of desperately-needed labor. There are many Nisei already serving in the army. And thus, not out of any kind of high-blown rhetoric about patriotism or flag waving, there arises the idea of a combat unit composed of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Having grown up with the Nisei boys, Hilo-born Farrant Turner has no qualms about their Americanism. A lieutenant colonel and executive officer of the 298th Infantry of the Hawaii National Guard, he puts in his bid to head the proposed unit, provisional as it is. Given the job of leading the fledgling battalion, he chooses Nebraska-born Maj. James Lovell as his executive officer. In contrast to Turner, Lovell's first contact with Japanese comes upon his arrival in Honolulu to teach at Washington Intermediate School. He immerses himself into the life of the community including service with the Guard. The meeting of the two haole leaders and the budding Nisei soldiers turns out to be significant. Together, they define their future.

Constituted as a provisional battalion, the unit leaves Honolulu in June 1942 for an unknown destination. The men become elated at the sight of the Golden Gate Bridge rising above the early morning mist. In Oakland, the provisional unit is activated as the "100th Infantry Battalion, Separate"; still encumbered, though, this time with the word "Separate", meaning that it is alone, without a parent organization to lean upon. No matter. They are on their way to their first stateside training camp, McCoy in Wisconsin. There, and later at Shelby in Mississippi, they go through their training paces and convince all skeptics, sundry inspectors and Army brass that they are for real. After months of stateside training, the new outfit breaks almost every kind of training record for battalion-sized units. And so they find themselves in Oran, North Africa, in September 1943, after their second overseas journey.





Yoro Sumida - Nisei Soldier

At Oran, Turner is offered a chance at light patrol duty for his men but brushes that aside; the 100th is here to do combat and nothing else. Only one final doubt remains to be addressed. "Do you think you can trust them to fight?" the C.G. of the 34th Infantry Division wants to know. "Absolutely!" he replies. With that, the 100th is on its way to making believers of those who have been troubled over the

question of loyalty, of those who have wavered over the question of "who you shoot?" Assigned to the 34th during combat the word "Separate" is dropped from its identity.

The Nisei soldier becomes part of something bigger.

Ben Tamashiro

Camp McCoy

