



Red Bull insignia of the 34th Division



Statue of Liberty insignia of the 442nd



Insignia of the 100th Infantry veterans

Reflections: 100th Infantry Battalion 1942 . . . 1992

The 100th Infantry Battalion was organized in Hawaii six months following Japan's attack upon Pearl Harbor, the first combat unit in the history of the United States Army to be composed primarily of Americans of Japanese ancestry. Most of the young men were Nisei, second generation Japanese, some Sansei or third generation. Shipped to the mainland for combat training, they spent more than a year in camps in Wisconsin and Mississippi, and in early September 1943 set sail for Oran, North Africa. There, after some hesitation as to its place in the war, the 100th was attached to the 34th Infantry Division.

The 34th, an Iowa National Guard unit has the distinction of being the first American division to land in Europe following America's declaration of war against the Axis powers. It was in the vanguard of the American invasion of North Africa in November 1942, where the British and French had been fighting for two years. When Rommel's armies were at last beaten and driven out of the North African continent, the victory opened up the Mediterranean for incursions into Fortress Europe from that direction. Such was the setting when the 100th arrived in Oran. After receiving invaluable combat indoctrinations from the veterans of the 34th, the 100th sailed with them later that month for Salerno Bay, Italy, and its appointment with history, fifteen months after it had emerged from the devastation at Pearl Harbor.

Nine long months of bitter fighting followed, from Salerno to Cassino to Anzio to the outskirts of Rome. It was there that the 442nd Regimental Combat Team arrived in the theater, the second combat unit to be composed of Americans of Japanese ancestry, many of whom volunteered from internment camps. However, the majority were from Hawaii.

In the reorganization that followed, the 100th became the 1st Battalion of the 442nd as the 442nd itself was attached to the 34th. Thereafter, except for brief periods when either would be attached to other units for tactical reasons, the two remained as one through the fighting in northern Italy and France, to the end of the war.

On the facing page, the top emblem is the "Red Bull" of the 34th Infantry Division. It depicts a buffalo skull against a black jar-shaped background. General Ryder, the division commander, was so impressed with the 100th's conduct and capabilities that within a month of its entry into the front lines, he authorized the men to wear the divisional shoulder patch, signifying that they had passed its baptism of fire with distinction. The patch is one of its most treasured mementos of the war. The insignia in the middle is that of the 442nd RCT. The torch is the symbol of the Statue of Liberty. The emblem at the bottom is that of the Club 100, the organization of the veterans of the 100th. The inner shield is the shield which is depicted on the battle flag of the 100th. The outer circle represents a concept, the desire of the veterans to continue to play an active role in the community it so strikingly represented in wartime. Hence, its motto, "For Continuing Service." This publication is a part of that effort, to tell a story of what it was like fifty years ago as they embarked into history.

But men who have been in combat are often less than enthusiastic in opening up and talking about themselves, about the force of battle when the bullets start flying: the sense of fear, anxiety,



cold, courage and elation, or even honor. Take these representative entries from the battalion daily journals, for instance.

18 casualties, 2 killed for the day. Booby traps giving us bad time. Tanks reported at 025185. Good possibility of counterattack. White 6 to Co C: You must take Hill 920 tonight or at dawn. Artillery can give you any amount of supporting fire you need. F Co moving up to 905 now. Call on them for help as long as they leave enough to hold their own hill. 168th on your left. Three 81mm mortars in rear of 801 to help you. Left flank exposed; intense enemy fire from that direction. Encounter mine field, lieutenant's foot blown up. First call for litter crews. Captured ammo and ration dumps, enough to supply company for one week.

The cryptic notes can only hint at actions taking place or about to come. What, then, might the face of battle be like? Many things. To rekindle such fires through words and pictures; to punch some pukas in our seasoned memory boxes and open up for fresh viewing some of the smoldering fervors capped in there – this is our expectation for the 50th reunion.

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