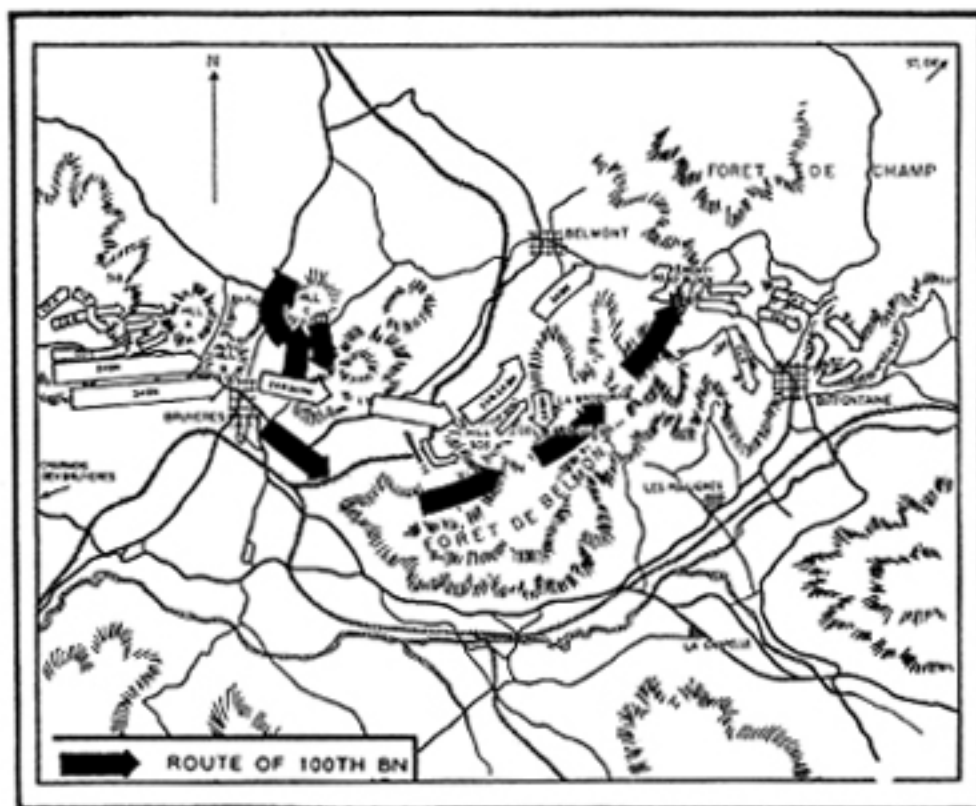




A break during the Champagne Campaign, February 1945



Brueyres to Biffontaine Battles: Hill A, Biffontaine

The 100th's Triumph at Bruyeres and Biffontaine

By noon, September 29, the U.S.S. *Samuel Chase* was anchored off Marseille, the major French port on the Mediterranean coast. The 442nd moved ashore in landing crafts and left for Septemes late that afternoon on a cattle train that took eight hours to negotiate the eight miles. The men settled into their bivouac outside Septemes around midnight. Next morning, one company found itself in the middle of a melon patch with ripe Spanish melons. For the fancy breakfast of melons, the men easily appeased the woman owner of the farm with cans of sliced Hawaiian pineapple found in the company kitchen.

After 10 days of training and testing new equipment, plus rest and recreation, the 442nd left Septemes on October 9 on a 430-mile truck ride north through the Rhone Valley. It was cold and rainy when they reached the Vosges Mountains near Bruyeres, a town of about 4,000.

On October 14, the regiment moved out toward Bruyeres. In order to secure the town, the Nisei outfit had to neutralize four hills strung in an arc from the northwest to the northeast of Bruyeres. Beginning at the northwest, the hills were designated A to D – Hill A being the highest and the most heavily defended by the Germans. The 100th was assigned to take Hill A; the 2nd Battalion's goal was Hill B, directly north of Bruyeres.

The German forces in the Vosges Mountains were expected to fight to keep every inch of ground. Beyond this sector, the Allies would be knocking at the door of the Fatherland. Certainly, the German troops must have been ordered to hold their ground with everything they could muster, or they would be fighting on their own soil.

The night before the major attack on Hill A, a patrol from C Co. was ordered to check two farmhouses, set 20 yards apart, at the base of the hill. Lt. Masanao Otake took S/Sgt. Mike Nobuo

Tokunaga (both of Lahaina) and seven others on the mission. The approach to the houses was across 50 yards of plowed fields.

Covered by three of their men, Sgt. Tokunaga and three others ran across the open field to the first farmhouse while Lt. Otake and his companion dashed for the second. When Tokunaga went to the back of the house to check, a machine gun opened up on him but he miraculously escaped the fire. He and the others took cover behind a nearby stone wall of a well.

At the second house, Otake threw a grenade into an open window when he heard voices inside. But while sidling his way to the back of the house to check, he was hit by machine pistol fire from the hillside. Otake's partner ran to the first house to tell the men that the lieutenant had been shot.

Since Otake lay in the open, Tokunaga told Otake's partner to distract the enemy on the hillside – go to the opposite side of the house and fire his rifle. When the firing started, Tokunaga ran out into the open and dragged Otake back to safety. Otake, however, hit in two places, died, never regaining consciousness. He was awarded the DSC posthumously.

Editor's note: A brief account such as this can only provide a sense of the fire and drama that takes place on the battlefield. Nevertheless, it serves to illustrate one of the outstanding characteristics of the men of the 100th – their overriding concern for the welfare and safety of their comrades; an element of battle which distinguishes one unit from another.

Early the next day, B Co. led the way toward Hill A, but was soon met by German machine gun and heavy weapons fire. It became apparent that the enemy was well entrenched at the base of the hill



Nisei Against The Nazi On Western Front



Legion Post Arouses Ire Of 7th's GIs

By RALPH G. MARTIN
Staff Correspondent

WITH THE 7TH ARMY, Jan. 4.—If the Hood River, Ore., American Legion Post hasn't been getting much mail lately, it can stop worrying.

All along the 7th Army front today, American combat troops (particularly in the 36th Division) were bitching loud and long about a recent announcement by the Hood River American Legion Post telling all Americans of Japanese ancestry that they're not wanted in Hood River County, Oregon, that they better quickly sell any property they have there, that all Nisei soldiers in the American Army have already been scratched off the Legion post honor roll.

Saved Our Lives

This is what the boys of Co. C of the 1st Battalion of the 36th Division had to say about these things, after being in combat for 133 consecutive days:

"People back home ought to know that if it wasn't for the Nisei, a lot of their sons would be dead now. They saved our lives.

(Nisei soldiers of the 442nd Combat team punched through a thick ring of Nazis to relieve the 1st "Lost" Battalion which had been cut off for seven days without food or water. In doing so the Nisei suffered heavy casualties, inflicted even heavier casualties on the Germans.)



AMERICAN DOUGHBOYS of Japanese descent are shown above moving out of an old CP to advance to new positions on a snow-covered section of the western front. At right, a Nisei turns his snout against Nazi positions.
—Signal Corps F

"We've been fighting alongside them all through Italy and France. Our boys don't say these Nisei are as good as we are. We say they're a helluva lot better, that they've got more guts. And we ought to know."

"Those Legion people ought to sell their property and give it to these Nisei. They deserve it more. If these Japanese-Americans are good enough to die for their country, they ought to be good enough to live in it."

Legion Disappoints Him

"Why do they keep calling them Japanese-Americans? I'm of German descent and nobody calls me a German-American. Why don't we just call them Americans? Why are some people back home so narrow-minded?"

"We expected more than that from the American Legion. If that's all they can do for us, we don't want to have anything to do with the Legion. I'm just wondering if the Legion Headquarters feels the same way that their Hood River post does."

"I'm ashamed to be fighting for the freedom and liberties of people who say things like that."

and it was going to take some fight to dislodge them. Sniper fire was intense, too. C Co. then entered the fray and with coordinated action, the 100th overwhelmed the enemy troops and captured the hill, reaching the summit by 3 a.m. the next morning.

The 100th was awarded its second Presidential Unit Citation for its extraordinary heroism and determination in taking Hill A and also for its part in the rescue of the Lost Battalion at Biffontaine. It is a long citation from the Headquarters of the Seventh Army and it reads, in part:

"The 100th Battalion, 442nd Regimental Team is cited for outstanding accomplishment in combat during the period 15 October 1944 to 30 October 1944, near Bruyeres, Biffontaine, and in the Foret Domaniale de Champ, France. During a series of actions that played a telling part in the 442nd Regimental Team's operation which spearheaded a divisional attack on the Seventh Army front, this unit displayed extraordinary courage, endurance and soldierly skill.

"Jumping off in the attack on the morning of 15 October 1944, the 100th Battalion fought an almost continuous four-day firefight in freezing and rainy weather, through jungle-like forests, to wrest the strongly fortified Hill A, dominating Bruyeres, from a fanatically resisting enemy. When, during the course of the attack, the progress of an assault company was delayed by a strongpoint consisting of 50 enemy riflemen and an SP gun, a second company of the battalion swept in on the enemy force from the flank and completely routed it.

"To attack Hill A proper, the battalion was forced to cross 50 yards of open terrain covered by seven enemy machine guns and heavy automatic weapon fire. Following an artillery barrage, limited because a draw lay between the two high hills, the battalion, with one company acting as a base of fire, launched a frontal attack.

"Covered by friendly tank fire, waves of platoon after platoon zig-zagged across the open field into a hail of hostile fire. So skillfully coordinated was the attack that numerous casualties were in-

flicted on the enemy, and the capture of the town was assured."

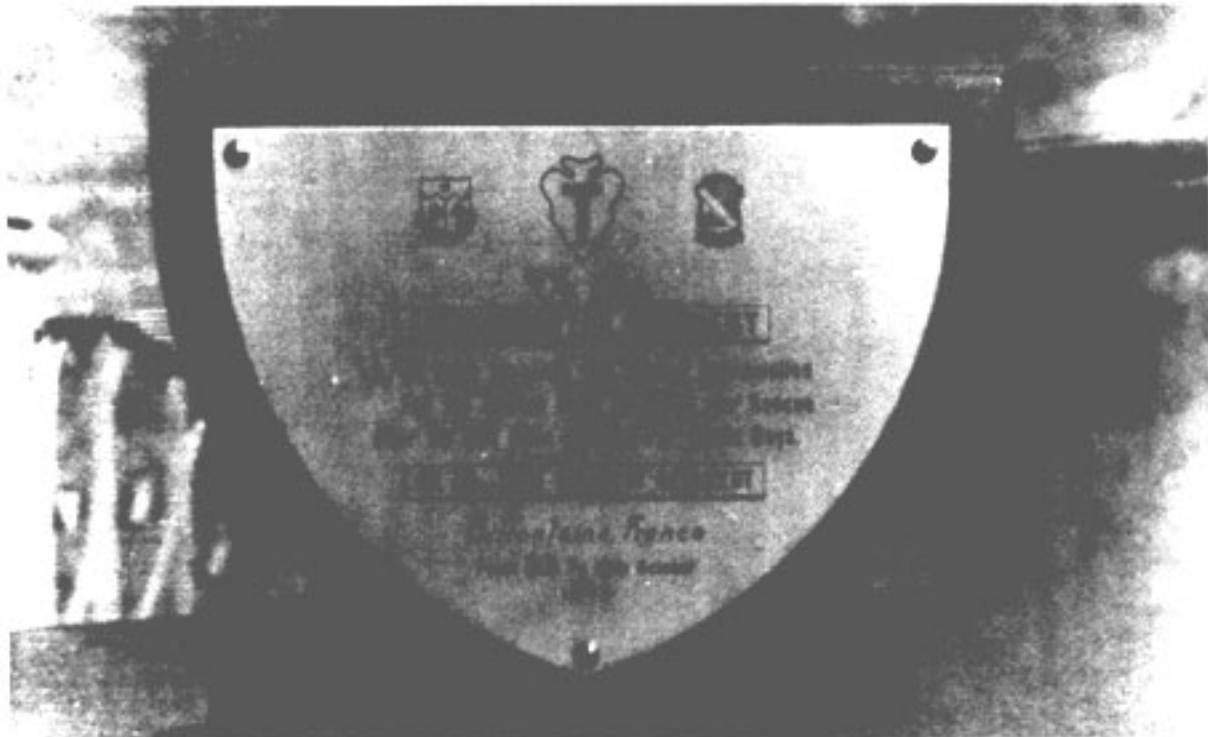
By the time the 100th took Hill A, the 2nd Bn. had also taken Hill B. While the 100th held on to A the next day, the 2nd and 3rd went on to Hills C and D. After that the advance toward Belmont to the northeast by 2nd and 3rd was quite rapid. The 100th swung northeast also through the thick and wet forest to the midway point along the Belmont to Biffontaine road. From here, the 100th, 2nd and 3rd were involved in heavy fighting and finally on October 25 the town of Biffontaine was secured. The 143rd Infantry of the 36th Division then occupied Biffontaine by relieving the 442nd, which was pulled back to Belmont for some needed rest.

But the rest period was cut short. Less than two days later, the regiment was pulled out of reserve to attempt the rescue of the Lost Battalion – the 1st Bn., 141st Infantry, of the 36th "Texas" Division, which had been surrounded in the forest two miles east of Biffontaine.

The 100th and 3rd moved out of Belmont at 4 on the cold wet morning of October 27. At the same time, the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 141st were also moving toward their trapped comrades. It was a tough day for the men of the 100th who lost five killed, including Lt. James Boodry, operations officer from Massachusetts, a highly respected member of the 100th since joining the outfit before Cassino. On October 30, the 100th's 2nd Platoon of B Co. cut through the last German mine field and made contact with an outpost of the Lost Battalion. I Co. of the 3rd Bn. finally broke through to reach the Texans.

During the hectic rescue operation, Maj. Gen. John Dahlquist, commander of the 36th Division, was in the front directing the men, oblivious of the danger to himself. A platoon of the 100th's C Co., led by Lt. Ichiro Okada, had the task of securing the left flank of the battalion. Okada, from Waimea, Kauai,





LAUD JAPANESE-AMERICANS

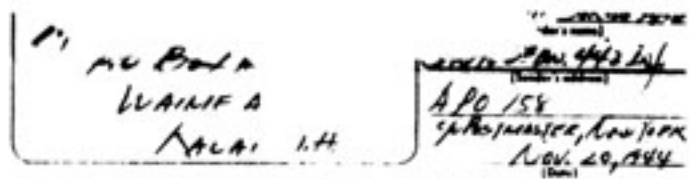
Dear Editor:

We've seen beaucoup combat and feel qualified to pass judgment on combat troops. A short time ago my platoon came in contact with a part of a Jap-American unit. We have seen them in action and we label them the best of our troops. They are very aggressive in attack and have no regard for casualties while attacking. They know their weapons and employ them to the best advantage—they use them all. Their fox-holes are well camouflaged and are constructed for fighting purposes and not for a comfortable night's sleep.

I noticed especially the equipment they carried. Judging them by equipment alone, they would have been called rookies. They carried compasses, field glasses, telephones, bayonets and other items frequently "lost" by our troops. In addition to this equipment, they also carry overcoats and blankets. Yet these Jap-Americans have fought with us around Cassino and Rome and we know that they are not rookies but exceptionally damn good soldiers.

Such soldiers are deserving of citizenship—much more than a lot of blue-blooded Americans who have their citizenship handed down to them for two or three generations. These Jap-Americans are fighting to prove they are worthy and are doing a good job—ask the Jerries.

—Lt. W. I. Siebold



**ONE PUKA PUKA BN.
FRANCE**

was the oldest of four sons. Although all four had volunteered for service with the 442nd, their father insisted at least one son remain behind – the family's No. 2 son, whose wife was pregnant. Eventually, this son, too, served in the military.

Okada was on the ground surveying the area ahead for signs of the enemy. Suddenly, there was Gen. Dahlquist, standing in the open next to him. Okada tugged at the general's pants, asking him to get down because the enemy was up ahead. "I don't see any enemy," the general said. "So go down the road as far as you can until fired upon," he ordered. The men muttered, "Here comes trouble!" Okada and S/Sgt. Takao Kubota of Koloa, following orders, crept forward to a big rock along the road. They spied cigarette smoke rising behind another large rock a short distance ahead. Aware that someone was there, Okada yelled for the person to come out. A German soldier stood up and finding himself covered, surrendered. At about that point, Gen. Dahlquist was hit in the hand by enemy fire and his aide, Sinclair Lewis, Jr., took a slug in his chest and died there. Realizing the danger, the general left the area immediately.

The Presidential Unit Citation describing the 100th's part in the rescue of the Lost Battalion reads as follows:

"On October 27 1944, the 100th Battalion was again committed to the attack. Going to the rescue of the 'lost battalion', 141st Infantry Regt., it fought without respite for four days against a fanatical enemy that was determined to keep the 'lost battalion' isolated and force its surrender.

"Impelled by the urgency of its mission, the battalion fought forward, risking encirclement as slower moving units left its flanks exposed. Fighting yard by yard through a mine field, the battalion

was stopped by an enemy strongpoint on the high ground which he had made the key to his defense.

"As the terrain precluded a flanking movement, the battalion was forced to the only alternative of a frontal attack against a strongly entrenched enemy. Attacking in waves of squads and platoons, and firing from the hip as they closed in to grenade range, the valiant men of the 100th reduced the enemy defense lines within a few hours. Between 50 and 60 enemy dead were found at their automatic weapon emplacements and dugouts.

"On the fourth day, although exhausted and reduced through casualties to about half its normal strength, the battalion fought doggedly forward against strong enemy small arms and mortar fire until it contacted the isolated unit.

"The extraordinary heroism, daring determination and esprit de corps displayed by the men of the 100th Bn. during these actions live as an inspiration and add glory to the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States."

The 100th made contact with the Lost Battalion on October 31. Nine days later it was ordered to the 45th Division's rest camp south of Epinal. Three days thereafter, the unit headed south toward Nice for more R&R. In addition to R&R, elements of the 442nd had the mission of guarding the French-Italian border.

However, the fighting days of the 100th were not over. The 5th Army had petitioned the Allied command for the return of the 442nd to Italy to help crack the Gothic Line guarding the entrance to the Po Valley. Negotiations were conducted under the utmost secrecy.





Relaxing



Note: "One Puka Puka"



*"Radio Shack"
in Astoria Hotel room, Menton, France, November 1944*



*Romeo & Juliet,
back then*



*"Short arm" inspection -
every soldier's
requirement*



*Sweetness & Innocence
Amid the madness*



Guess who?