

December 13, 2004

100th. Infantry Battalion Veterans
520 Kamoku Street
Honolulu, HI 96826-5120

As a former replacement for B Company, 100th Bn. from stateside, I was saddened to hear that Masami Hamakado has passed away, along with Hajime Yamane earlier this year. Those of us, especially from the Relocation Camps, that joined B Co and were assigned to the 1st Platoon are deeply indebted to Sgts Hamakado and Yamane for looking out for our welfare in every way, in training, physically, mentally and emotionally, to prepare us for the final months of the war. Bill Mauldin depicted his war heroes as "Willie and Joe". Ours were Hajime and Masa.

Enclosed are checks to be donated to:

100th. Infantry Battalion Scholarship Fund
\$100 In memory of Masami Hamakado
\$100 In memory of Hajime Yamane

Puka Puka Parade
\$100 For many years of pleasurable and faithful reporting



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Tribute to Hajime Yamane and Masami Hamakado

At the outbreak of war Nisei men from the mainland were reclassified 4-C, ineligible for draft into the services. In 1943, alarmed by the tremendous casualties incurred by the fighting men of the 100th Bn and the 442nd RCT in Europe and needing replacements, those languishing in the ten concentration camps away from the west coast were reclassified to 1-A and made eligible for draft. Preceding them had been mainlanders already in the service at the beginning of the war, followed by the initial group of volunteers from the camps who joined the army under opposition by a vigorous and vocal minority that ridiculed those that would fight for a country that had displaced 110,000 Japanese Americans and placed them into isolation. Draftees, the majority between the ages of 18 to 20, were hastily processed and rushed through basic training at Camp Shelby, for some as short as 11 weeks, sent back to their families in camp for furlough and rushed overseas to join the 442nd.

On being assigned to B Co of the 100th, those of us that joined 1st Platoon at Bruyeres, France, were shocked to see that only three were left standing after the rescue of the Lost Battalion. Those three were Hajime Yamane, Masami "Fat" Hamakado of Hawaii and Albert Takahashi of Utah. We were transported south to Menton on the French Riviera, the beginning of "champagne campaign", allowing time to build up strength through those returning from aid stations and hospitals and more replacements. Pfc's. Hajime and Masa must have been surprised to assume leadership over raw recruits from such places as Fowler, Selma, Stockton, Gilroy, Arroyo Grande, Chino, Suisun, Watsonville, San Francisco, and LA in California, those from Oregon, Washington, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona and with Texas and Oklahoma drawls to ad-mix with the dominant Hawaiian "da-kine" talk they were so used to hearing.

Assessing our lack of experience, Hajime and Masa set us recruits into their personalized training program to impart some of their battle-worn experience through combat tactics of cover, fire, advance and taking advantage of terrain. We, then, took to the hills of the French Maritime Alps to occupy defensive positions overlooking the French border towards the town of Ventimiglia, Italy, where the Germans were. A poor physical specimen at 109 lbs, I had a difficult time keeping up during the first climb up the hill, when Hajime called me to the front, took my pack while Masa carried my rifle, neither saying a word of criticism or ridicule. I was able to build up stamina and strength and to take my turn going down for rations and 5-gallon cans of drinking water and going on patrol. Hajime and Masa always looked out for our welfare, never pulled rank, put us at ease and led by example more than by words.

When we finally were up to full strength and were sent to Italy to spearhead the breakout in the Gothic line in the Italian Alps after a six month stalemate, we were alarmed to see Masa and Hajime leave us to go home on points, but grateful for their having left us their positive examples of leadership. Decades later, when I got the opportunity to supervise as manager of my own division for the City of Los Angeles, I tried to exercise the same qualities of quiet leadership by example, trust and concern for others that I once saw demonstrated by my lifelong war heroes, Masa Hamakado and Hajime Yamane.