

せんぱい組

senpai gumi

By RICHARD S. OGURO

FOREWORD!!!

THIS IS THE FINAL REVISION and final up-date of the SENPAI GUMI STORY started in November 1971, following our annual Kanraku Teahouse bash!

Sempai means fore-runner (Numba #1). We considered ourselves the fore-runners, the first group of Hawaii AJAs, to enter into the ranks of translator-interpreter-interrogator fields in the Asiatic-Pacific, Alaskan, CBI war fronts. And this was the first class into which the Mainland Kotonks volunteered from barbed wire Relocation Camps—Concentration Camps!? Though, we were the 2nd cycle CAMP SAVAGE, MISLS, Minnesota, November 1942-June 1943 graduates!

Our SEMPAIS were two Hawaii Niseis—ARTHUR KOMORI and RICHARD SAKAKIDA. (We were to find out later, though). Call it intrigue, espionage. PRIOR to December 7, 1941 they had been planted as "spies" in the Philippines, around June 1940 it was, by the War Department! Just like in the movies—disguised as Seamen, dumped overboard in Manila Harbor, "rescued" by the Japs and being hired into prominent Japanese Government controlled and operated (as a front—a cover) establishments. RICHARD SAKAKIDA's story too could be a book by itself!

Another HAWAIIAN, a transplanted Kamaaina, DR ALFRED J. BURDEN, of Maui was among those in the 1st class in Crissy Field hangar, Presidio, San Francisco, in November 1941. His alone is a fascinating story. A reserve officer in intelligence at that time, he was ordered to report to Presidio, because of his knowledge of the Japanese people. He had been born and raised in Japan long before WW II. He had left Japan to come back stateside, because he wanted to become a doctor.

YANKEE SAMURAI by Joseph D. Harrington, published in 1979, rather interpreted SENPAI GUMI—as the "Yellow Peril," but, also gave credit to the Sempai Gumi story as the birth—beginning of his book, *YANKEE SAMURAI—“The Secret Role of the Nisei in America's Pacific Victory.”*

We do not wish to capitalize on it, nor wish to hang on to the coat-tail of this very successful book. But, we merely want to call SENPAI GUMI, after this final revision—COMPLETE! AND KAPUT!” (PAU)—WITH TWO REGRETS: 1) We

INTRIGUE IN THE PHILIPPINES

ARTHUR S. KOMORI, now a practicing attorney in Lihue, Kauai, is only one of the six agents out of an original group of 30 who lived through the Philippines campaign. The other is Richard M. Sakakida, Office of Strategic Investigation, US Air Force, Tokyo.

On April 7, 1941, these two Nisei GI's from Hawaii, dressed in civilian clothes, boarded an Army transport in Honolulu harbor bound for the Philippines. These two had volunteered without the faintest knowledge of the mission, destination or Army duties, but the lure of adventure and travel were incentive enough, Komori reflects.

Within a month, the two were bound for Manila, signed as crewmen on the ship for security reasons. When they met Captain Raymond who gave them cash in pesos and told them to find lodging at the Toyo Hotel, only then did they realized the immensity of their task, that of investigating the Japanese community of Manila.

Komori got into the good graces of the Japanese Consul-General, the Chief of the Japan Tourist Bureau, the Domei News and of the Japan Cultural Hall. He secured a job as English instructor for Japanese civilians and also as interpreter for the consulate and the news Komoei was so entrusted by the Japanese that on one occasion he was caught by the Filipino Constabulary drinking a toast to the Emperor. Within a week, of course, he was rescued from prison by an American agent.

When Manila was declared an open city by Douglas MacArthur on December 26, 1941, Komori sailed for Corregidor on a tiny transport, then that night left for Bataan where he translated captured enemy documents at the front lines for General Jonathan Wainwright's unit. This is where he met General MacArthur. Komori recalls that the General said, "Hello," warmly shook his hands and walked out.

When Bataan fell on April 3, 1943, General Wainwright sent word for Colonel Irwin, his aide, and Komori to return to Corregidor. The bombardment was heavy, but they made it safely to Corregidor.

Evacuation of Corregidor was already in progress, Komori stayed with the few remaining defenders in the Malinda Tunnel in Corregidor until April 13, 1942 when he was ordered to

EPILOGUE OF EPILOGUES

Thumbnail sketches; hearsay mini-accounts; vague recollections, at best, of "lost" Sempais and others.

HOICHI KUBO—The best known of MISers—as the original and foremost of the cave-flushers of Saipan, or was it somewhere in the China Seas? Recipient of the DSC (Distinguishes Service Cross). Met him at the dedication ceremony of three new buildings of the Defense Language Institute in the Presidio of Monterey, March 1980! One building was named for Yukitaka "Terry" Mizutari, MIZUTARI HALL, in honor of the first Nisei MIS KIA in WW II. Modesty par exemplar—"I was not the only guy—besides, I did what was the 'normal' thing to do!"

RICHARD SAKAKIDA—Our sempai. Not renown at all. Although he operated in the same Philippine Theater with Arthur Komori and one other Nisei, a Yamagata. In the evacuation of Bataan—Sakakida and Yamagata were evacuated on the second to the last plane to lift-off from Corregidor. Arthur Komori was the last to leave and with General MacArthur. Their plane barely cleared after take-off and subsequently landed in Australia. Of course, Gen Wainright was left behind on Corregidor to effect the surrender of Corregidor to the Imperial Japanese! The Niseis had to be evacuated—or else—!

He is said to have been a "double agent" serving both sides! Twice captured, once by the Filipinos and once by the Japanese, he managed to escape both times! But tortured? He was suspect from both sides—a man without a country? His promotion to Major was not through the Army but through the Air Force from which he eventually retired.

RALPH YEMPUKU—Was not really MIS. Trained for OSS! Had quite a "harrowing" time looking around for his parents and brothers, was it near Ise Isle shrine?

KARL YONEDA—A kotonk. An avowed Communist. Was an MISer in a US Military Uniform and in the military service of the United States of America.

TOM YAMADA—Home town—Maui. Was there in the middle of things at the precise moment General Tojo attempted "Harakiri."

TOM IMADA—Long-time Selective Service chief in Hono-

Nisei participation in G-2 service commenced as early as April 1941 as Joe Harrington writes. It continued in some form until only a few years ago, although many of the activities were transferred from G-2 to the CIA. No doubt some who have not yet reached compulsory retirement age are still in the service of CIA.

Linguistic combat intelligence work began on Pearl Harbor Day at Bataan, Corregidor, and Hawaii. Sergeants Arthur S. Komori and Richard Sakakida served as combat linguists to Generals MacArthur and Wainwright. The Nisei member of the beach patrol that captured the first Japanese prisoner of war—the sub-lieutenant that spied on Pearl Harbor from his one-man sub—participated in his interrogation in the evening of December 7th, 1941.

As fast as graduates could be poured out of the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), their activities extended into every major theatre of operation, viz: North American, Asiatic-Pacific, CBI, and ETO. Some stormed the beaches with first, second or third waves of leathernecks and dough boys as they island hopped across the Pacific from Kwajalein and Tarawa to Okinawa as well as active participation in CBI engagements. They volunteered as cave-flushers and often jumped into enemy strongholds by parachutes without previous parachute jumping training.

Although not as large numerically as their compatriots of the 442 Regimental Combat Team, a representative cross-section of the MISers were killed in action, starting with Franch Hachiya of Hood River, Oregon.

One Language team was even attached to GHQ SHAFF, which intercepted and monitored communications to and from the Japanese Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo to General Oshima stationed as Ambassador in Berlin. Others worked out of ATIS, Arlington Hall, the Army Map Service, the OWI, the MISLS and its satellite preparatory school for hakujin (Caucasian) officer candidates on the University of Michigan campus.

But whatever their specific mission and wherever they might happen to be, their common motive was a burning desire to prove to America and to the world that a Nisei's belief in and devotion to the ideals of freedom and to American institutions were stronger than the fortuitous ties of racial ancestry or