

**MILITARY INTELLIGENCE  
SERVICE LANGUAGE SCHOOL**



**CAMP SAVAGE, MINNESOTA  
1942-44**

*AMSLS 1942-1944*

**MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE  
LANGUAGE SCHOOL**

**CAMP SAVAGE, MINNESOTA  
1942-44**



## PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Military Intelligence Service Language School and to document the records of wartime episodes of Japanese-American Nisei soldiers in the Pacific Theater of Operation and to compile a collection of treasured remembrances of Camp Savage, some in words, some in photographs, during a unique time in American history in circumstance that cannot (hopefully will not) ever be repeated. It is hope of all involved to preserve the Camp Savage experience for posterity as a tribute to the brave men who were there, and for Americans in general so that they will never forget the tragic circumstances that brought these men together, and I wish to thank many of the MISLS veterans and wives for their contribution to this book, namely, photographs from their personal albums: Frank and Stella Kishi, George and Toy Kanegai, Mits Usui, Mas Okumura, Susumu Toyoda, Richard and Molly Hirata, and Don Oka, and from Henry Kuwabara and Michael S. Benjamin for their written contributions. Also, I wish to thank the Minneapolis MIS Reunion Committee, Twin Cities MIS, and Twin Cities JACL who made it possible to publish this historical booklet. Finally, excerpts from the books John Aiso And The MIS, and Military Intelligence Service Language School, U. S. Army, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

Stone S. Ishimaru  
February 29, 1992



## DEDICATION

First and foremost, with the highest esteem and honor, this book is dedicated to those graduates of the United States Army Military Intelligence Service Language School who made the supreme sacrifice on a distant battlefield. Our nation is forever grateful for their valor and love of country that helped to ensure that those they left behind would live in freedom and peace.

We also, wish to dedicate this booklet to those good citizens of Minneapolis and St. Paul who went out of their way to offer comfort and friendship to our little band of soldiers at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling.

## MILITARY INTELLIGENCE LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Since 1982, more and more information has been written about the Military Intelligence Service Language School, and the courageous men known as "Yankee Samurai" who attended and graduated. One of the school's locations was Camp Savage, Minnesota. Each of the men who passed through Camp Savage went on to write his own story of bravery and accomplishment under adverse conditions, but time spent at Camp Savage was unique and special, and it engendered a special closeness and comradeship for all who experienced it.

In June 1941, Colonel Carlisle C. Dusenbury (then Major), a former Japanese language student on duty in the Intelligence Division, proposed the utilization of Japanese of American birth (Nisei) and with Lieutenant Colonel Wallace Moore, of missionary parentage in Japan, planned the organization of a language school. Colonel Rufus S. Bratton, also a former language student and Military Attache in Tokyo, then Chief of the Far Eastern Branch, Intelligence Division,





approved the plan and took steps to obtain the support of the Training and Operations Division (G-3), which had general supervision over the Army's school system. (A former Deputy Commander in Europe, Lt. General Clarence R. Huebner, then a colonel, was the officer who collaborated with Colonel Bratton in the final plans for the school). Because the mass of the Nisei was on the West Coast, the Presidio of San Francisco was selected as the logical location for the school. By the fall of 1941 a directive had gone to the Fourth Army to implement the plan. The author, a former language student and Assistant Military Attache in Japan, was recalled from duty in Panama to organize and direct the school and to procure both Faculty and student personnel.

The school opened 1 November 1941, with a course as intensive as could be devised. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, there was general approval of the school. However, commanders of units under order to the Southwest Pacific in early 1942 were not entirely convinced that the value of Nisei were worth the risk of possible disloyalty.





The selection of Nisei of unquestioned loyalty reasonably qualified in the Japanese language became the primary task. The screening of all of the Nisei personnel processed through the Selective Service stationed at the various army units on the Pacific Coast was accomplished. Colonel Kai E. Rasmussen, who commanded the Military Intelligence Service Language School from May 1942 until 1946 and who was largely responsible for its efficient management, personally interviews each Nisei soldier in service. It was on one of these screening tours that the future Director of Academic Training at Fort Snelling, Major John F. Aiso, a Nisei, was found in a motor maintenance battalion as a PFC. On the same screening trip PFC Arthur Kaneko, a then rare "Sansei" (third generation Japanese-American) who had had extensive Japanese language training in Japan, was discovered. Both were ear-marked as potential instructors, Kaneko eventually becoming a lieutenant. Two other Nisei civilian instructors, Mr. Akira Oshida of Berkely and Mr. Shigeya Kihara of Oakland, were soon added to the staff and with these four Japanese-American G. I work preparing the text book and classroom exercises for the Japanese language courses was begun.





The war broke out on Sunday, December 7, 1941. In early 1942 all Japanese-Americans, alien and citizens alike, were forcibly evacuated from the Pacific Coast areas and forced into so-called Relocation Centers away from the coast. So in May 1942, classes started at Presidio of San Francisco in November of 1941, was moved to Camp Savage located in the suburbs of Minneapolis in the southeastern part of Minnesota. There, many German and Scandinavian residents in that part of Minnesota had not heard of Japanese-American and therefore did not entertain racist prejudices against them. At the time of this relocation to Camp Savage, the school was officially renamed, "The Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS)," and placed under direct jurisdiction of Department of Army, Military Intelligence Division, in Washington, D. C.

John Aiso, the Head Instructor with Akira Oshida and Shigeya Kihara and several civilian instructors were retained from the Presidio class as instructors. Camp Savage had been used as facilities for





homeless unemployed men prior to its conversion as a military camp. The number of students and faculty members continued to grow from original sixty at Presidio. Subjects taught were expanded to include Japanese history, Japanese geography, military language, as well as general Japanese conversation, translation, and reading of "sosho" (grass writing).

On November 1, 1941, about six weeks before Pearl Harbor, the school started operations as the Fourth Army Intelligence School in an abandoned airplane hangar on old Crissey Field adjoining San Francisco Bay at the Presidio of San Francisco. The first course at the school was opened with eight instructors and 60 students.

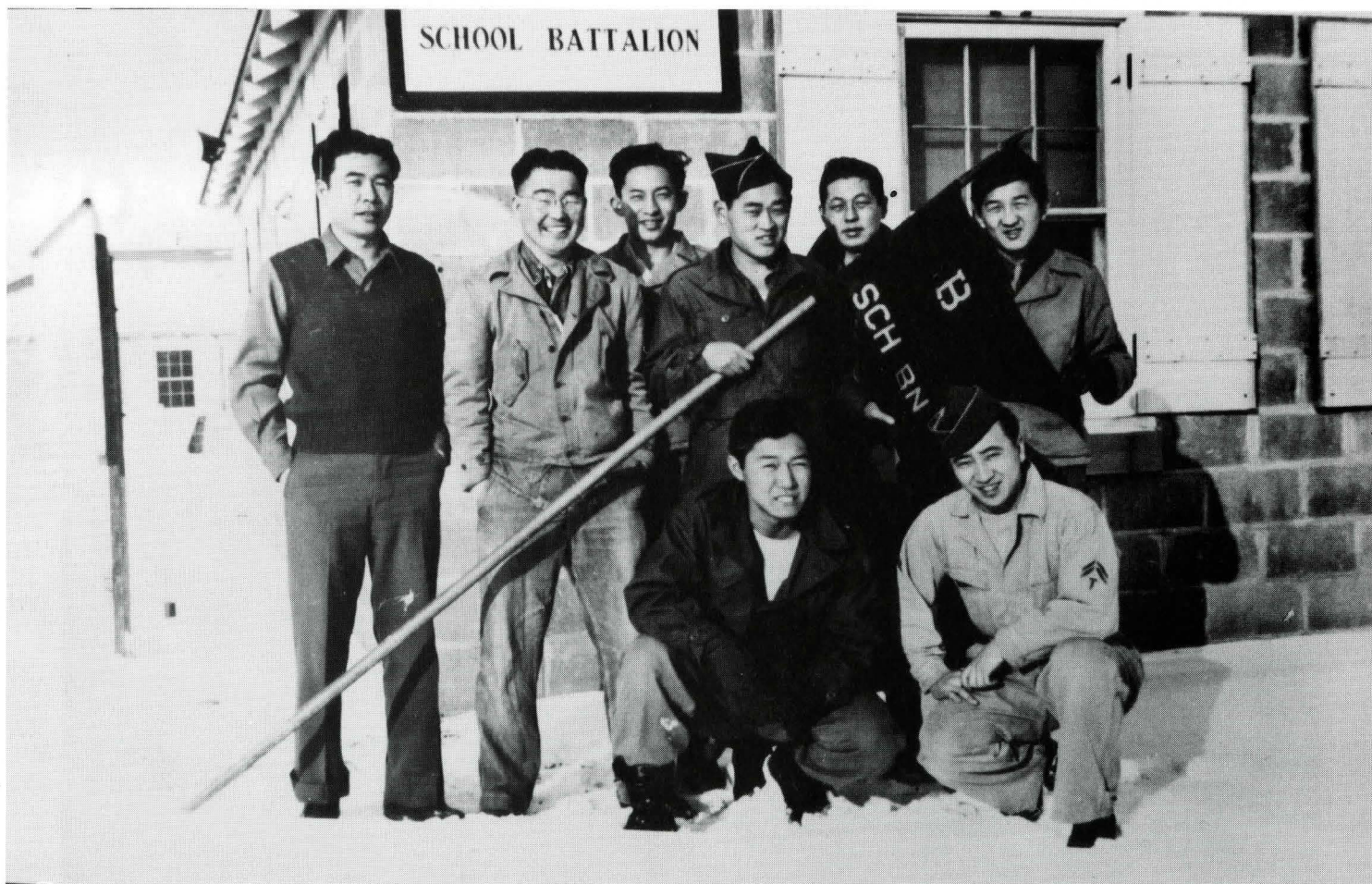
The greatest problem which faced the Military Intelligence Service Language School was the recruitment of personnel for the program. Most of the army personnel of Japanese ancestry, not members of the school, were discharge or furloughed to enlisted reserve and relieved from active duty. The evacuation had already begun. The War Department then wisely adopted recruiting of volunteer Nisei language personnel. But the school's quota were met with difficulty at first. However, volunteers soon exceeded the school's requirements. Many of the first groups of students were well over





thirty, generally qualified in the Japanese language and anxious to prove themselves loyal to the United States. So eager were they to finish training as early as possible that it became necessary for the duty officers at Camp Savage to patrol the school area to prevent extra study after lights were extinguished at 11 p.m. Many succeeded in extra hours study in spite of a long school day of seven hours instruction plus two hours study in the evening in the classroom.

James Oda, who had volunteered for military service out of Manzanar Relocation Center, became a student and later an enlisted instructor at the MISLS. He has commented that it was fortunate that Aiso became the actual teaching head of the Military Intelligence Service Language Schools at the Presidio of San Francisco, Camp Savage, and Fort Snelling. The school had assembled about 175 instructors from various localities and backgrounds. Many of these instructors were not only experts in their own rights, but some were idiosyncratic personalities as well. It was major task not only to control the students but the instructors as well, which Aiso competently did as "kocho-sensei" (Director of Academic Training)





In August 1944 when it became apparent that Camp Savage was entirely too small for greatly expanded field requirements, the school was removed to nearby Fort Snelling. As of June 8, 1946, approximately 6,000 men had graduated from the Presidio, Savage and Snelling schools.

The 1836 students then in residence were divided into six main divisions, with many sub-divisions, for purpose of training. The reason for different divisions was the necessity of a wide and varied training necessary for the collection of information. In order to facilitate the understanding of military terms, officers of the army, navy, and air force came Snelling to give detailed explanations concerning tanks, warships, and aircraft of both the American and Japanese forces. The course in POW interrogation was beefed up. Up to that time, 6,000 students had been graduated from MISLS.

President Harry S. Truman said, "They are our human secret weapons. The role that 6,000 Japanese-American soldiers played in the Pacific battlefield has been a well kept secret until now."





An article from *Los Angeles Times* regarding the activities of the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) graduates who became the eyes and ears of the Allied Forces which fought the Japanese forces in the Pacific battles. "The Niseis translated the documents, maps, battle plans, diaries, letters, printed matters, etc. from captured articles. They also conducted interrogation of the prisoners."

Joe Milanoski, Section 40, July 1943 Term, MISLS Camp Savage, Minnesota: "A typical day in the life of a student at Camp Savage included Reveille formation every morning, breakfast at the only mess hall, march to classes, march to lunch, march back to classes; march back to barracks, stand Retreat formation, evening meal, march back to classroom for evening study, march back to barracks, and collapse. Sandwiched in between these activities were some very brief moments of respite which did not give one time for a quick trip to the latrine, Post exchange, or Post Office. Free time was on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Every weekend students were allowed a pass to go into town--town meaning Minneapolis or St. Paul. Almost every aspect of life at Camp Savage was unlike life at nay other camp in the Army, and I suppose it is safe to say, unlike life in any other camp in the world, whether in the past, present,or





future. What I shall tell you about this little "lost world" are those things which had the most poignant, unforgettable effect on the eyes, ears, nose and throat of a lonely "hakuji" who found himself thrust into the midst of a barrack of little yellow brown cousins. There were about thirty of them, roughly divided into three minority groups, namely Kibei, Koh-tonk, and Buddha-Head (and one Chinese-American who was little of each). This proud contingent was officially designated "Barracks 7, Company F, School Battalion, Military Intelligence Language School, United States Army, Camp Savage, Minnesota."

In the crucial battles of the Pacific, the Japanese Army was confronted by an enemy who already had much detailed information of the Japanese plans for attack and defense. They were apparently secure in their belief that the difficult Japanese language is which their orders and plans were written and communicated could not be deciphered effectively by Occidentals.

The American-born Japanese language specialists--translators interrogators, radio monitors, and trained order of battle experts--were one of the chief means of obtaining intelligence of the enemy and his plans. The Presidio, Camp Savage and Fort Snelling became

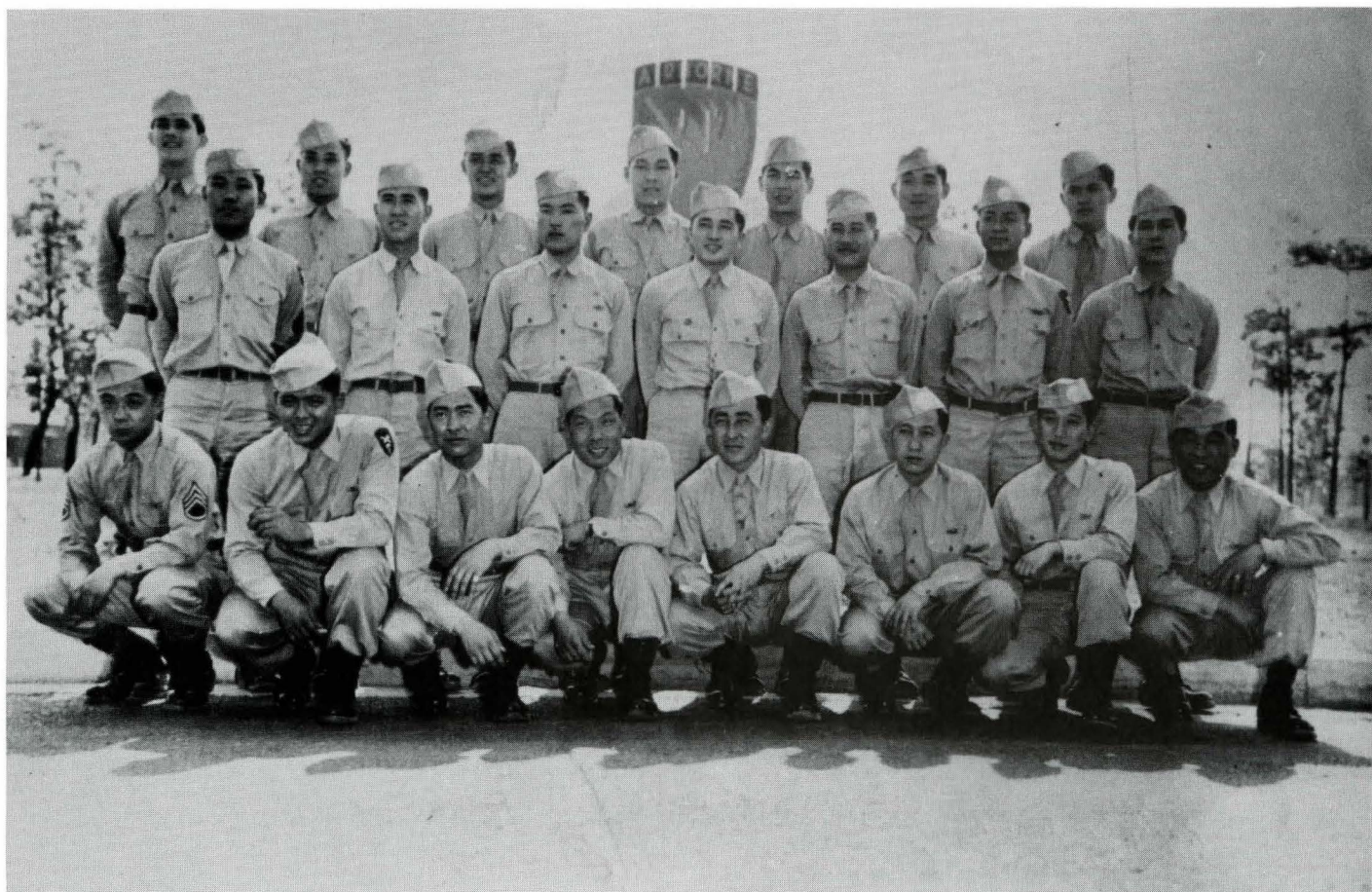




the eyes and ears of not only the American combat forces, but also that of the other allied armies fighting Japan. For many Nisei were "loaned to the British, Canadians and Australians." The U. S. Navy trained Caucasians for intelligence work, although later in the war several hundred Nisei were attached to JICPOA, the Navy's Pacific intelligence center. The Marine Division also used them in combat.

Graduates of the Military Intelligence Service Language School translated Japanese battle plans for the naval battle of the Philippines. These plans were captured with Admiral Koga, then Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Japanese Fleets, when the plane in which he was hurrying to join his fleet made a forced landing in the Philippines. Japanese plans for the land defense of the Philippines also were disclosed through the work of the language specialists from MISLS.

At home in the U.S., many of their families were in detention camps, behind barbed wire and guarded by army soldiers, since all person of Japanese ancestry had been evacuated from the West Coast in 1942 by the U. S. Government and placed in these camps in isolated locations. Yet, from these camps the Nisei responded to the Army





call for volunteers to serve the MIS and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Like the Nisei who served with the 442nd Regiment in Europe, these MIS Nisei fought two wars--one against the military enemy and the other against racial prejudice and distrust toward their kind at home. By fighting the first, they would overcome the other. The U.S. Army made it possible, despite much misgivings and suspicion at first about their loyalty, for the Nisei to prove themselves against the enemy. The MIS Nisei responded resolutely and convincingly to this opportunity and challenge.

For the Nisei of the MIS, further, there was a certain compassionate dilemma to be resolved in their hearts and minds. Being Japanese by blood, whose parents had come from Japan, they would literally be fighting their kin, but their loyalty to country had to be upheld. They had been taught at home "To thy parents be truly respectful and to thy country be utterly loyal." For the Samurai of Japan, the path of loyalty would have been the only honorable one to take, even at the price of warring on one's own kin. Because they were dedicated and loyal, the MIS Nisei are now appropriately and deservedly called the "Yankee Samurai of World War II."





For most army organizations, V-J Day meant the beginning of curtailment of activities and a slackening to a peace-time tempo. For the Military Intelligence Service Language School, it spelled just the opposite--heavier loads and a faster gait in order to supply the requirements of the occupation forces in Japan.

During the Pacific war, the graduates of the MISLS were vital cogs in the combat intelligence and psychological warfare work. After the war they were equally important links between General MacArthur's occupation and the Japanese people. The US Strategic Bombing Survey, the Atomic Bombing Survey and the War Crimes Trial could not have effectively carried on without Nisei interpreters and translators.

Also, it must be said that while no book about American military heroes may ever show the names of Brig. General John Weckerling and Colonel(ret.) Kai E. Rasmussen, they are rightfully among the finest and greatest unsung heroes of American military history. For it was their foresight, faith and MIS Nisei in World War II--when they gathered at Crissy Field with the first four civilian instructors





and sixty soldiers that momentous November day in 1941. There were many other fine officers who served well with the Nisei in the war against Japan, and they, too, are part of the story. But General Weckerling and Colonel Rasmussen must be given special honor and distinction not only for their magnificent prescience and leadership, but for their steadfast faith in the Nisei--at a time when the Nisei, in their darkest hour, scorned and suspected, really needed such trust.



## IN MEMORY

A check of the available military records resulted in the identity of the following MIS personnel who lost their lives in the Pacific Theater of Operation:

Fukui, Eddie, T/Sgt, KIA, Tacoma, WA, Okinawa  
Hachiya, Frank T/Sgt., KIA, Hood River, OR, Philippines  
Ikeda, George T, PFC, Waianae, Oahu, DNB, Okinawa  
Ikemoto, Haruyuki, T/4, Hamakuapoko, Maui, DNB, Okinawa  
Imoto, William, T/4, KIA . Okinawa  
Inouye, Kazuyoshi, T/4, Lihue, Kauai, DNB, Okinawa  
Ishii, Masayuki, Pvt., Hilo, Hawaii, DNB, Okinawa  
Kinyone, Joseph, Pvt, Wailua, Oahu, KIA, Saipan  
Kurokawa, Ben S, T/4. KIA, Okinawa  
Kuwada, Joseph, S/Sgt, Honolulu, DNB, Okinawa  
Mizutari, Terry Y, T/Sgt, Hilo, Hawaii, KIA, New Guinea  
Muramoto, Masaru, Pfc, Honolulu, DNB (place unknown)  
Nakahara, Shoichi, S/Sgt, Olaa, Hawaii, DNB, Philippines  
Nakamura, George, Sgt. Watsonville, CA KIA, Philippines  
Omura, Kenneth, Sgt, Seattle, WA, KIA, Admiralties  
Motokane, Wilfred M, T/4, Honolulu, DNB, Okinawa  
Shibata, George, (Rank unknown), Chicago, IL, KIA, Okinawa







