

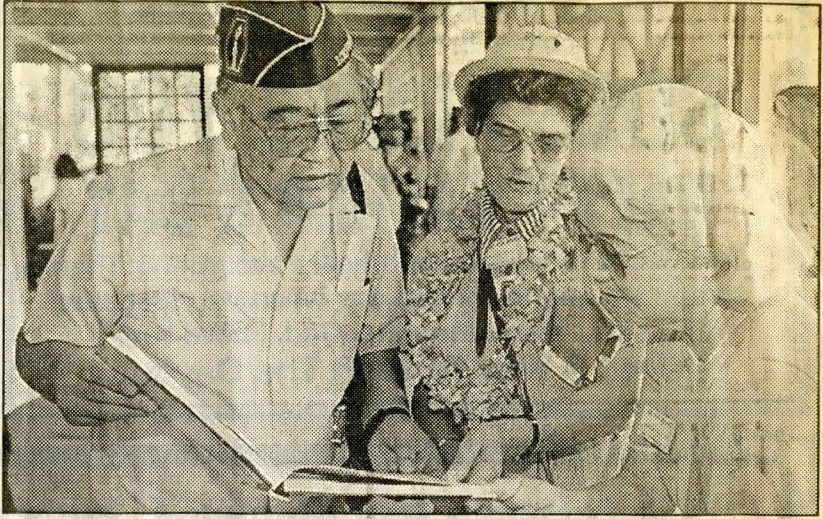


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AP photo

Sens. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, and Thad Cochran, R-Miss., look at a monument dedicated to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.



AP photo

Veteran Henry Ikemoto of Downey, Calif., left, Monique Carlesso of France and Matsu Oshiro of Huntington Beach, Calif., look through a 442nd scrapbook.

A memorable bivouac for 442nd

Return to training camp brings back 'the happiest days'

Advertiser News Services

HATTIESBURG, Miss. — Memories of Camp Shelby revolve around snakes, chiggers, heat and endless training.

Despite the hardships, it was still home for the Japanese-Americans who left internment camps to train there for some of the heaviest fighting of World War II.

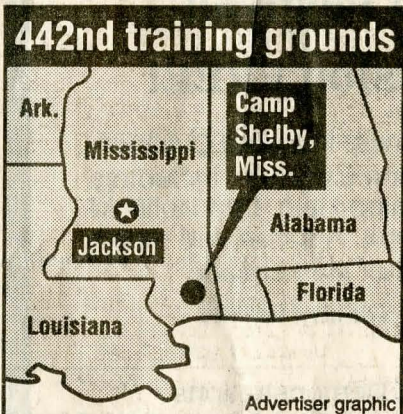
Training didn't go smoothly at first, Ron Oba of Honolulu said.

"Our first bivouac was a disaster," he said. "We rested against trees and the chiggers swarmed all over us. We learned to live together, fight together and be friends forever."

It was good, solid training. But it couldn't prepare them for what was to come.

Soldiers of the 442nd, and the 100th Infantry Battalion it was attached to, received 18,000 Purple Hearts while fighting in seven major campaigns in Europe. Of 4,500 soldiers, the unit suffered 800 casualties in France in October 1944, fighting to rescue the "Lost Battalion" of the Texas 36th Infantry Division.

"It was hell," Hiroshi Arisumi of Maui said. "We lost our lieutenant, these two people



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who always went with the lieutenant. We lost them all."

One member of the Texas 36th Infantry, Sam Jesse Nelson, was unable to leave his Monroe, La., home. So he sent his twin sister, Ruth Byrd.

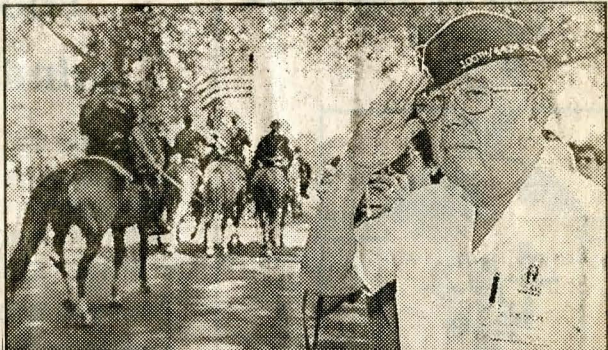
"He told me to come out and thank the men because they saved his life," Byrd said.

"He just could not honor the 442nd enough for saving his life," Byrd said. "He almost cried because he couldn't come today."

U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawaii, a 442nd veteran who lost an arm in combat, arrived in a vintage armored command truck accompanied by troops in World War II uniforms.

"It's good to be back," Inouye said. "I remembered how hospitable the people were down here and I'm happy to say they are still very friendly people. That's just the same."

At a monument dedication



AP photo

Veteran Hiro Takusagawa salutes as a military parade passes during yesterday's ceremonies.

ceremony, he said that hospitality had special meaning for the young Japanese-Americans who left their families behind in crowded prison camps set up by a country still smarting from Pearl Harbor.

Ask most any 442nd veteran what he remembers most about Camp Shelby and the answer is the same: chiggers, snakes and the weather, either hot or cold.

"It was so cold for us from Hawaii," Tom Haga, now of Pueblo, Colo., said. "We had that potbellied stove glowing red. The cadre came in and chewed us out, said we were going to burn down the whole barracks."

Haga remembers liking a restaurant about two blocks from the courthouse but gets sidetracked by another memory.

"I remember the courthouse because there was a bootlegger

there," he said. "I remember him, with the long coat and the bottles inside."

Retired Lt. Gen. Allen Ono of Hawaii was only a boy during World War II, but he felt compelled to attend.

"These guys are my heroes. Look around

you at these veterans being received as American patriots," Ono said. "It wasn't always this way. These people paved the way for people like me."

"Everybody's got a story and I think being here brings a lot of those old memories back," said Herb Sasaki, a member of the 442nd and organizer of the reunion.

"Everybody wants to go see something. This takes them back to when they were 18, 19 or 20 and of course, even with the terrible time of war, those were the happiest days of our lives."

The most moving moment for the veterans came as they stood in a crowded base auditorium as a military band played the National Anthem.

Some placed hands over hearts, others saluted, and most sang along.

6/20/95 from Miyo Sato of Honolulu, HI.

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