



HISTORY

>> Historical Information

ROME - ARNO CAMPAIGN

LUCIANA - LIVORNO - ARNO

In July 1944, near Livorno, at the "knee" of the boot of Italy, the newly merged [100th Infantry Battalion](#) and [442nd Regimental Combat Team](#) fought for three grueling weeks.

The *Nisei* GIs had to cross the rolling hills, and the already-harvested wheat fields. The Germans could easily see the approaching Americans from their hilltop observation posts. The 100th and 2nd Battalions led the attack. Their objective - Hill 140. The Germans fired their mortars and powerful 88's with devastating accuracy - wounding all the officers in G Company, except for one.

For three days the *Nisei* fought from their vulnerable position. As the casualties mounted, the men renamed Hill 140 "Little Cassino." The rocky terrain made it hard to dig slit trenches for protection from enemy shelling. Six men in L Company were wiped out from a single shell. Other *Nisei* were hit by enemy machine-gun and sniper fire.

Yet every man in the 442nd knew that he was not alone. The medics braved enemy fire to patch up the wounded. The Antitank Company carried the wounded. The [232nd Engineers](#) swept for mines and built bypasses to keep the vital supply lines open. The [522nd Field Artillery Battalion](#) fired quickly and accurately to protect the infantry and prevent enemy penetration. After two more days of heavy artillery shelling, the 442nd finally captured Hill 140.

At the front line, hundreds of infantrymen fought enemy fire and protected each other. On July 4, 1944, [Private First Class Frank Ono's](#) squad was pinned down by machine gun fire. Ono advanced alone, shooting his rifle and then throwing grenades. He deliberately stopped to give first aid to two wounded soldiers. Then in an exposed position he made himself a target until his platoon could withdraw safely. Nearby, [Private First Class William Nakamura's](#) squad was also pinned down. Nakamura crawled within 20 yards of an enemy machine gun. He lobbed four grenades and silenced it. He remained behind, alone, to cover his retreating platoon, but was killed by sniper fire.

Nakamura died on Hill 140, on Independence Day - a sacrifice made even more tragic given that Nakamura volunteered to serve the America that had imprisoned him behind the barbed wire of Minidoka concentration camp. The two privates earned [Distinguished Service Crosses](#) (DSC). In all, more than 11 DSCs were awarded for action in the three-week battle. A half a century later, America upgraded five of these DSCs to [Medals of Honor](#). They were awarded to [Ono](#), [Nakamura](#), [Technical Sergeant Tanouye](#), [Staff Sergeant Otani](#) (a volunteer from Gila River camp) and [Private Moto](#). Moto, an islander, was part of the original 100th Battalion.

Just a few weeks later, another private in the 100th made history. A lone, *Nisei* private adamantly refused to let a colonel and his long truck

convoy enter Livorno without orders. He and the 100th were assigned to guard the highway into Livorno and prevent looting. When word shot back to headquarters, General Mark Clark, Commander of the Fifth Army gathered his staff and a group of newsmen. He put his arm around the five-foot-tall *Nisei* private and said, ". . . I selected the 100th because I knew my orders would be carried out. I can depend on the 100th to successfully carry out any mission. . . This private is an example of that trust."

Meanwhile, from July 18-20, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions took the strategic city of Pisa.

July 25 through August 15 was a time of ceremony and rest for the three Battalions of the 442nd. The 100th was presented with its [Presidential Unit Citation](#) for its action in Belvedere. Some of the men in the 2nd Battalion formed an honor guard for His Majesty King George VI of England.

During the last two weeks of August, the *Nisei* patrolled the Arno River. The 100th was near Pisa, while the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were near Florence. On September 1, the [Allies](#) crossed the Arno. The 2nd and 3rd ran into concentrated opposition and suffered numerous casualties. But the 100th was virtually unopposed. Some speculated that the Germans had already withdrawn to fortify the Gothic Line strung along the Appenine Mountains.

From Rome to Arno, the 100/442 had lost 1,272 men (17 missing, 44 non-combat injuries, 972 wounded, and 239 killed) - more than a quarter of its total strength. This is the price it paid for 40 miles of Italian countryside and for forcing the Germans into retreat.

Many of the Allied generals in Italy believed the time was right to drive the weakened retreating Germans through the Appenines and back to the Alps. But instead, Generals Eisenhower and Marshall, who needed troops for the invasion of Southern France, ordered seven divisions, including the 442nd, to pull back from the Gothic Line.

The *Nisei* would be back.