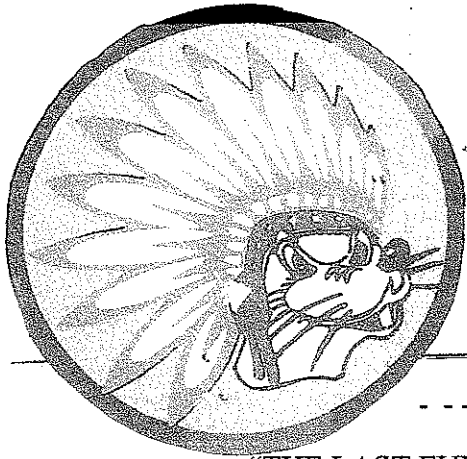


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SANTO GOGAI newsletter

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GREETINGS! SE

"THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION" AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE
100TH INFANTRY BATTALION, 442ND REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM.

Lt. Janelle Kuroda, JAGC, U.S. Navy

Naples, Italy. Forty meters below the streets of Naples, Italy, I turn a corner and stumble upon World War II-era graffiti illustrating an aerial attack and the infamous trio of the day: Adolf Hitler, Emperor Hirohito and Benito Mussolini. I am on an underground tour of Naples, making my way through the narrow passages that betray a secret world unknown to many modern day Neapolitans. During the heavy aerial bombardments of World War II, up to 20,000 Neapolitans fled underground to these ancient caves once used by the Greeks and Romans. In these caves and labyrinths they lived for months at a time, often carving pictures depicting their lives into the walls in an attempt to alleviate the boredom and fear they must have felt. Looking at the graffiti about life in Naples during the War, I can't help but think of my granduncle, Jack Tanaka.

Growing up on a dairy farm in Pahala, Hawaii, my granduncle Jack was a house painter by trade. He enlisted in the U.S. Army when the call came out for Japanese-American volunteers to form the 100th Battalion. Jack was a gunner in Bravo Company, and he was 27 years old when he made the ultimate sacrifice for our country during the Battle of Monte Cassino in Central Italy on January 25, 1944. He was awarded a Purple Heart: one of many that earned his unit the nickname, "Purple Heart Battalion."

As a child, my grandparents instilled in me a sense of pride for what my uncle and other Nisei did during World War II despite challenges at home and abroad. These brave men paved the way for the advancement of all Japanese-Americans. They inspired patriotism in all who followed, including my father, who served in the Army during the Vietnam War and my uncles, who fought in Vietnam and Korea. Growing up, my role model was Senator Daniel Inouye, who served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and continued serving his country in public service. From the early age of seven, I knew that I wanted to serve my country as well. My grandfather, who helped Senator Inouye's early candidacy, helped me craft my first speech during my run for homeroom representative in elementary school. This devotion to public service continued throughout high school and college, and it motivated me to obtain my law degree.

However, I never considered joining the armed forces until my first year of law school at Boston College.

While serving as an intern at the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, I met a Navy Reserve Officer who discussed a career in the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps during a brown-bag lunch session. However, I didn't feel that I could be of much service to the military because of my diminutive stature (4'11"). I certainly could not serve in the infantry like the men in my family. As the discussion continued, I learned that I could serve my country by offering legal assistance to Sailors and Marines, defending sailors in courts-martial and providing legal counsel to Commanding Officers on rules of engagement and military justice. Despite my initial reservations, I was up to the challenge.

After my first year of law school, I flew home to Hawaii to visit my family and to accept a scholarship from the Hawaii Veterans Memorial Fund. This gave me the opportunity to meet these honored Veterans at the Governor's office. While waiting in the reception room, some of the Veterans asked me what I wanted to do after law school. I told them that I had just heard about the JAG Corps and was interested in joining the service. Suddenly, I was bombarded with questions, with the most pressing being, "What service are you going to join?" Honestly, I didn't know. I shared with them my thoughts about the Navy. This ignited a heated debate and barracks room inter-service rivalries emerged. I was taken aback by their passion and enthusiasm. They spoke with great conviction about which service I should join, and their banter alone solidified my desire to join the armed forces. I had never met a group of people who were so passionate about a career before, in part because serving in the military is more than a career or a job, although I didn't understand that at the moment. I wanted to be a part of their world. The following month, I applied for a commission in the Navy JAG Corps.

In the three years since I joined the Navy, I served in three foreign countries and experienced more than I could ever have imagined. My first duty station was in Norfolk, Virginia, where I was a legal assistance attorney. When the call came out asking for volunteers to relieve Army JAGs in Iraq, many of whom were on their second deployment, I was one of the first to raise my hand. I served with Multi-National Force-Iraq Task Force 134 – Detainee Operations in Baghdad. Working with Iraqi attorneys and our JAGs to achieve justice in a budding democracy was a great experience. The camaraderie I experienced there was like no other will forever remain one of the highlights of my Naval career.

Following my tour in Iraq, I returned to Norfolk, Virginia as a defense attorney, but I longed to return to the Middle East. Luckily, I secured a post in Bahrain. My duties as a Staff Judge Advocate allowed me to experience a different side of the Middle East – one of peace and prosperity. It gave me hope of what Iraq could become. It was also during my tour in Bahrain that I had the opportunity to assist our office in Naples, Italy. My time in Italy allowed me to learn more about my granduncle, Jack. Since my arrival, I've been pouring over books and movies that chronicle life in Italy during World War II.

The culmination of my research came during a recent trip to Monte Cassino, Italy. It was here in January 1944 that my granduncle gave his life in hopes of driving out the

Germans entrenched behind the ancient walls of the Abbey of Monte Cassino. Approaching the mountain, I was amazed to see just how steep it was. The thought of scaling the mountain with full battle gear while under fire was incomprehensible. It was a moving experience to walk around the Abbey grounds, knowing that my granduncle never made it this far. I was humbled that I could be at the place where he fought so valiantly and gave his 'last full measure of devotion' for the country that he loved [President Abraham Lincoln Gettysburg address, 1963] I'm proud that six decades later I could carry a Hawaiian flag to the peak of Monte Cassino in his honor.

As I emerge from the darkness of subterranean Naples, I return to the present day, where the streets are teeming with speeding Vespas and people still queue up before the great Neapolitan alter of Café Gambrinus waiting for an espresso just like generations before them. The city is alive and explodes a type of passion that can only be found in Naples. Thanks to the efforts of brave men like my granduncle, Jack, and the countless others who landed ashore in Southern Italy, I am able to experience the paradox that is everyday life in Naples.

I am humbled by the sacrifice of the veterans who have served before me and am proud to be part of their legacy of military service. To quote President Abraham Lincoln, "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." 30

