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James M. McCaffrey, *Going for Broke: Japanese American Soldiers in the War against Nazi Germany*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2013. Pp. xv, 408. ISBN 978-0-8061-4337-8.

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“Go for Broke!” is a World War II-era Hawaiian pidgin-English phrase<sup>1</sup> that is occasionally, and surprisingly, reappearing in today’s American vocabulary. This gambler’s saying was adopted as the motto of the US Army’s 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team (hereinafter “the 100/442nd”) by its Nisei—second-generation Japanese American—members. Historian James McCaffrey<sup>2</sup> (Univ. of Houston–Downtown) now uses it as the title of his history of both Issei (immigrant, first-generation) and Issei (American-born, second-generation) Japanese from the panic following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor through the 100/442nd’s formation, training, overseas deployment, and combat in Italy and France, to its eventual return home. His account is detailed and readable but not without shortcomings.

*Going for Broke* is, like McCaffrey’s previous books, firmly based on memoirs, letters, and remembrances. It loosely follows the story of Pvt. (later S. Sgt.) Carl K. Morita, a Colorado Nisei, who enlisted in the Army before Pearl Harbor and served in Europe through V-E Day. McCaffrey repeatedly quotes Morita’s personal letters to friends and family; we follow the story of the 100/442nd via this artilleryist’s journey through enlistment, initial training, and assignment to the Nisei regiment’s 522nd Field Artillery Battalion.

McCaffrey “seeks to provide a more comprehensive look at the entire story [and] to build upon ... previous works [on the 100/442nd] to present a more complete story. But it is more than a synthesis of earlier books. It is the story of the fight these men waged against this nation’s enemies and also their battle for acceptance by the people of the United States. It is told, as much as possible, from the perspective of the common soldier, often relying on their [*sic*] own words” (xiii). The author’s chronological approach and plain, direct prose style will appeal both to the general public and to those with a particular interest in the Nisei unit or the Second World War generally.

To begin with a basic matter of culturally (in)appropriate terminology, McCaffrey writes that his subjects “considered themselves to be Americans of Japanese descent. They do not, nor therefore do I, use the hyphenated term Japanese-Americans. They are Japanese Americans” (351). However, the period-specific term “Americans of Japanese Ancestry” (AJA) was preferred among the Nisei who grew up in Hawaii, listening to the stories of uncles, cousins, and “Hawaiian uncles” (older family friends). Better yet to think of them as “just Americans.”<sup>3</sup> McCaffrey also attempts to defuse the slur “buddhahead” by claiming it simply designated mainland-born AJA. But a more plausible interpretation is that the word derived from “buta-head,” *buta* being Japanese for “pig,” meaning not “pigheaded,” that is, stubborn, but “piggish,” that is, crude and lacking manners; this was likely used in reference to the country folk on the plantations of Hawaii, especially by the more “refined” *kotonks* (mainland AJA) in the 1930s and 40s.

McCaffrey astutely taps a variety of sources in telling the history of the 100/442nd. He begins by introducing Morita and sketching the events that led to America’s entry into World War II. He then turns to the activation of the 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate) and its journey to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin. He even describes in some detail the little-known Cat Island experiment, in which selected Nisei soldiers were sent to the Mississippi coast to test the ability of war dogs to sniff out Japanese soldiers (they could not). McCaffrey also discusses the rampant racism behind President Franklin Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 (19 Feb-

1. More literally, “I going Go for Broke!”

2. He has written several previous works on the Mexican-America War and the US Civil War; he is also the coauthor, with John F. Kinney, of *Wake Island Pilot: A World War II Memoir* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1995).

3. See Robert Asahina, *Just Americans: How Japanese Americans Won a War at Home and Abroad* (NY: Gotham, 2006).

ruary 1942), authorizing the imprisonment of over 120,000 Issei and Nisei<sup>4</sup> from the West Coast. Laudably, he also mentions the overlooked courage of Colorado Governor Ralph Carr, who, at a time of racist hysteria, sacrificed his own political career in 1943 to open his state to AJA who might wish to move there. We also learn of the contributions of Earl Finch, the Mississippi merchant who befriended the Nisei of the 100/442nd and became their local sponsor and benefactor.

A special virtue of the book is its richly detailed and vivid description of the formation and initial training of the 100/442nd in 1943–44.

Some parents presented their sons with traditional Japanese amulets called *omamoris* to protect them while they were away. Other men entered the army under the protection of *senninbaris*<sup>5</sup> or “thousand-stitch belts.” These good luck charms were very popular in the Imperial Japanese Army, and a fair number of Japanese American soldiers also wore them under their uniforms. These sashes were usually white, about six inches wide, with each of a thousand red decorative French knots sewn in by a different woman’s hands. One man remembered the belt his mother sent him from the Rohwer Internment Camp. Made from an unbleached rice sack, it had a picture of a tiger painted on it, along with the thousand knots.... (64)

McCaffrey’s description of artillery training at Fort Sill and Camp Shelby (no doubt, based on Morita’s letters) is comprehensive and includes a discussion of the Nisei learning the nomenclature and operation of the M1903 Springfield, the M1 Garand, and the M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle (60). Unfortunately, once the scene shifts to combat in Europe, his narrative becomes less accurate. For example, he describes the 100/442nd landing at Anzio on “amphibious trucks” (145), omitting to inform readers whether these were 2.5-ton capacity DUKWs or smaller “seeps” (sea-going jeeps). He also misidentifies the enemy units<sup>6</sup> in one of the pivotal battles fought by the 100/442nd—the regiment’s rescue of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Division—the so-called “Lost Battalion”—during the ferocious German attempt to destroy the isolated unit.

In the same vein, McCaffrey too often refers to a given Nisei as “a boy,” “a man,” “a soldier,” or “an officer,” burying his name in an endnote. This is a frustrating habit in a book aiming to tell its story “from the perspective of the common soldier” in his own words. It detracts from the achievements of individual soldiers by eliding their names and faces from the narrative proper.<sup>7</sup> Nor does McCaffrey report the soldiers’ thoughts and feelings about racism or the importance of the 100/442nd’s success in prompting President Harry Truman to issue his Executive Order 9981 (July 1948), mandating desegregation of the military and thus paving the way for integrating the nation at large.

The book suffers from a lack of maps showing, for example, the movements and positions of the 100/442nd and the ten AJA relocation centers in the United States. More illustrations would have painted a clearer picture of the Japanese Americans’ experiences both stateside and in combat; the included fourteen pictures are randomly placed and often unrelated to the subject matter of the surrounding text.

McCaffrey gives too little attention to the upgrading of the Distinguished Service Crosses awarded to regiment members to Medals of Honor in 2000. He misses golden opportunities by not discussing in detail each of the twenty-one Medal of Honor combat episodes or the funding efforts of the AJA that led to the construction of the Club 100 and the 100/442nd Veterans’ Club on some of the choicest properties in Hono-

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4. Without citing any documents, McCaffrey claims “the number of Japanese ‘relocated’ after Pearl Harbor was not 120,000, which was roughly the total number of individuals who passed through the camps during their roughly two and a half years of existence” (246n). A distinction without a difference.

5. Japanese words typically are not pluralized in English by adding an “s”; for example, one eats many sushi, not sushis.

6. Specifically, elements of the 16th and 716th *Volks-Grenadier* Divisions, Grenadiers Regiment 933, *Schnellabteilung* (Mobile Unit) 602, *Heeres Gebirgsjäger Bataillons* (Mountain Battalions) 201 and 202, and Reserve Battalion 285. And, too, McCaffrey disputes the label “Lost Battalion,” claiming it was neither lost (i.e., gone astray) nor a full battalion (260). This misses the point and downplays the desperate plight of the surrounded Texans before their rescue by the 100/442nd. In any case, the moniker was a creation of the press—see Jeffrey J. Clark and Robert Ross Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine* (Washington: US Army Ctr of Mil Hist, 1993) 330.

7. Other books on Japanese Americans in the war scrupulously include their names in the main text. See, e.g., Thomas D. Murphy, *Ambassadors in Arms: The Story of Hawaii’s 100th Battalion* (Honolulu: U Hawaii Pr, 1954), and Lyn Crost, *Honor by Fire: Japanese Americans at War in Europe and the Pacific* (Novato, CA: Presidio Pr, 1994).

lulu, a real testament to the tight social fabric of the Nisei. Some treatment of the veterans' clubs would have provided a natural bridge to the author's abbreviated discussion of the 100/442nd today.

In summary, James McCaffrey tells the story of the US Army's most highly decorated unit<sup>8</sup> in a broad but sometimes superficial work flawed by poor fact-checking.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, he has performed a valuable service by recalling the valiant service to country of a remarkable combat team of Japanese Americans during the Second World War.

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8. McCaffrey suggests that there is controversy over the 100/442nd's designation as "the most highly decorated unit of its size and length of service in the entire U.S. Army in World War II" but does not elaborate (346). Kathryn Shenkle, however, in "Patriots under Fire: Japanese Americans in World War II" (May 2006), has written that "the 'Remember Pearl Harbor' 100th Infantry Battalion, and the 'Go For Broke' 442d Regimental Combat Team is still the most decorated unit in U.S. military history" - [www.miwsr.com/rd/1419.htm](http://www.miwsr.com/rd/1419.htm).

9. E.g., the author states that an infantry company was commanded by a lieutenant colonel (43) and that infantry battalions "were combined" upon the arrival of the 442nd in Italy (187)—in fact, the 100th Battalion replaced the 442nd Regiment's First Battalion in the unit's organization.