



Master Sergeant Roy H. Matsumoto

Master Sergeant Roy Matsumoto was born in California on May 1, 1913. Like many early Issei immigrants, his father and mother were sharecroppers. Their livelihood required an “all hands on deck” work code including the children. As expected of them, Roy, his four brothers, and two sisters attended school, completed house chores, and helped out on the farm.

It was not uncommon in those days to send Nisei children, usually the eldest son, to their ancestral homeland to receive a formal education. Many Issei parents desired for their children to not only receive a Japanese education but also be indoctrinated by Japanese society and culture. After some time, these Nisei returned to the U.S. well versed in Japanese and re-assimilated in a country where they were born. As a result, a new subset of Nisei was formed—the Kibei. Conflicts of loyalty and belonging between Japan and the United States surely began to brew. Such is the immigrant paradigm.

Roy was a Kibei. In 1921, his parents sent him and his brother Takeshi to Japan near Hiroshima. After spending nearly a decade in Japan, Roy returned to the U.S. and graduated from Long Beach Polytechnic High School in 1933. During those years, Roy worked at a Japanese grocery store in Los Angeles. While delivering groceries, Roy picked up various dialects from interacting with the customers who came from all over Japan. This knowledge would serve Roy well in unexpected ways.

Pearl Harbor was attacked on the morning of December 7, 1941. About two and a half months later, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the military to remove 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans from their homes. The Jerome War Relocation Center in Arkansas became Roy’s new home.

With Japan’s entry into World War II and the throes of proving loyalty to the United States, opportunities arose for Japanese American men to step outside of the barbed wires and into military service. Roy found himself serving in the U.S. Army’s MIS.

Roy, handpicked as 1 of 14 Nisei linguists, joined a special guerrilla unit to reopen the Burma Road and secure a supply route to China. This unit became popularly known as Merrill’s Marauders, named after Brigadier General Frank Merrill. As the “eyes and ears” for the United States Army, this group of Nisei

men proved instrumental in the fight against Japan. They translated enemy documents, battle plans, intercepted enemy communications, and even interrogated Japanese prisoners of war. They were America's "secret weapons" and indispensable in the war against Japan.

After spending 20 years as a Military Intelligence linguist and specialist, Master Sergeant Roy Hiroshi Matsumoto retired from his military career in 1963. It was a career showered with numerous military honors, including the Congressional Gold Medal.

Matsumoto passed away in April of 2014. [He was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 1993 and into the MIS Hall of Fame in 1997.]

- By [Cathy Haruka Uechi](#)
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Staff Sergeant Henry Gosho

Staff Sergeant Henry Gosho was a member of the I & R Platoon, 3rd Bn, 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), during World War II (the famous Merrill's Marauders), and was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia on June 19, 1997. Staff Sergeant Gosho repeatedly exposed himself to extreme danger by infiltrating the Japanese perimeter and listening to the Japanese officers giving their orders. He was able to return to his platoon and inform his commanding officer of what was going to happen, so they were well prepared for any attack. He was fired on so many times by machine guns that he was nicknamed "Horizontal Hank" for the number of times he had hit the ground.

Prior to his enlistment, Staff Sergeant Gosho and his family, including his pregnant wife, were forcibly relocated from their home in Seattle, Washington, to the Japanese Internment Camp in Idaho called Minidoka. Even under these circumstances, he volunteered to fight for his country.

The intelligence that he repeatedly received was largely responsible for the success of his unit. He was seriously wounded, lost a kidney, and suffered innumerable attacks of malaria, typhus, and jungle rot, and was medically discharged from the Army. Staff Sergeant Gosho is the recipient of the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Infantryman's Badge and numerous campaign ribbons.

After the war, he was the first Japanese American to be selected by the State Department and he served brilliantly for 17 years until retirement. In 1954, he entered the U.S. Foreign Service and was assigned to the Public Affairs Office at the American Embassy in Tokyo, Japan. In this position he was very instrumental in cementing relations between the United States and Japan during a crucial period in their diplomatic history.

Staff Sergeant Gosho passed away in 1992.



Grant Hirabayashi

Grant Hirabayashi, a World War II veteran of the famous Merrill's Marauders, the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia on July 8, 2004. Hirabayashi, one of the seventeen 2004 inductees who served during WW II, Korean War and/or the Vietnam War, is a resident of Silver Spring, Maryland.

He was selected for his distinguished service as a military intelligence specialist with the Merrill's Marauders, which operated stealthily behind enemy lines in Burma to eavesdrop on enemy discussion of battle plans and to disrupt their communications and supply lines. Hirabayashi's citation for induction said: "he repeatedly operated under very adverse and dangerous conditions" to perform his mission

Merrill's Marauders objectives were to neutralize the enemy and to open the Burma Road, a chief supply route to Chinese Nationalist forces. The 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), comprised of 2,997 men, was named after its commander, Brigadier General Frank D. Merrill.

The Ranger Hall of Fame was formed to honor and preserve the spirit and contributions of America's most extraordinary Army Rangers. The history of American Rangers go back to the American colonial period and Rangers have been deployed in every war since then.

Bert Mizusawa, President of the Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA) and an Army Ranger himself, remarked "Grant Hirabayashi's induction into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame is certainly a coveted honor. Grant joins an elite group of Japanese Americans recognized as Rangers possessing uncommon courage. We are very proud to have Grant as a member of JAVA." Two other Japanese Americans preceding Hirabayashi in the Ranger Hall of Fame are Roy Matsumoto, a Legion of Merit recipient from Friday Harbor, WA and the late Henry Goshō from Seattle, WA.

Hirabayashi, a native of Washington state, enlisted before the war to become an aircraft mechanic for the Army Air Corps. When war broke out on December 7, 1941 his family was forcibly evacuated to Tule Lake internment camp. Hirabayashi was relegated to menial jobs. When he learned of the need for Japanese linguists, he volunteered and attended the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Camp Savage, Minnesota.

Hirabayashi was one of the 14 Japanese American volunteer linguists from the mainland U.S. and Hawaii to serve on what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called "a dangerous and hazardous mission". Merrill's Marauders trained in India for six months in jungle warfare and long term penetration behind enemy lines.

Following that they marched on foot with full pack for 700 miles through thick jungle and mountains. They had fought five major battles and 30 minor engagements and cleared north Burma of enemy troops by defeating the Japanese 18th Division, the conquerors of Singapore and Malaya.

Amazingly, Hirabayashi was nearly disqualified from combat duty with Merrill's Marauders because during training he found he was allergic to K-rations, the main combat rations carried by soldiers. He also had fractured his elbow. Contrary to the doctor's recommendation, Hirabayashi

pretended he was well, eating K-rations sparingly supplemented with whatever he could scrounge. Eventually, a lack of nourishment was to catch up with him, along with a high fever and amoebic dysentery, all of which forced him to be evacuated after the battle at Nhpam Ga.

After one month of hospitalization, Hirabayashi rejoined the Marauders for the Myitkyina operation. The Marauders captured the Myitkyina airfield, the only all weather airfield in northern Burma, and subsequently the town of Myitkyina. This paved the way for the reopening of the Burma Road that facilitated shipment of equipment, supplies and ammunitions to the allied Chinese forces.

The Niseis in Merrill's Marauders, like other Nisei soldiers in the Army, faced great physical and mental hardship in the Asia Pacific area. Many had their families in internment camps located in desolate places in the U.S., many had relatives and even family members in the Japanese military. They courageously faced the danger of being captured and tortured by the enemy. They were committed to prove their loyalty to the government that distrusted all Japanese Americans.

Having completed its mission at Myitkyina, Merrill's Marauders disbanded on August 10, 1944. Asked about the value of Nisei Marauders, General Merrill said, simply, "I couldn't have gotten along without them.

Hirabayashi was then assigned to China, where he interrogated Japanese Prisoners of War. One prisoner, a scientist, reported that Japan was developing an atomic bomb and research was being conducted at the two imperial universities, Tokyo and Kyoto. He said that a bomb, the size of a match box, could destroy an entire city. Hirabayashi's superiors dismissed the reports.

When war ended Hirabayashi was ordered to go to Nanking to join the US delegation to observe the Japanese surrender ceremony.

Following his discharge Hirabayashi married, served in the War Crimes Trial in Japan, and subsequently served in the State Department, Library of Congress and the National Security Agency. Hirabayashi's wife, Ester Nakamura Hirabayashi, senior nurse at Georgetown University Hospital, passed away in 1989. He has one daughter in Pittsburg, PA and another daughter and grandson in Sacramento and Monte Sereno, CA.

--2004, Terry Shima