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HENRY SAKAIDA

Aviation Historian - Author of WINGED SAMURAI
9555 LA ROSA DR., TEMPLE CITY, CALIFORNIA 91780
(818) 286-5044

March 26, 1988

Dr. Howard Garber
P.O. Box 17099
Anaheim, CA 92817

COPY

Dear Dr. Garber;

I received a copy of your news release from a friend (dated 3-18-88, ENEMY ACE HONORED: WWII HISTORY REVISED).

As an aviation historian, I opposed the honoring of this enemy "ace" for different reasons, and agree with all of the pertinent points in your news release.

Masajiro "Mike" Kawato was actually a traitor, condemned by his own comrades for his traitorous conduct as a prisoner-of-war. When the Japan Zero Fighter Pilots Association found out that Kawato was making a living in the United States by insulting our American legend ("Pappy" Boyington), they immediately released their own press release, discrediting Kawato.

Although I am an American of Japanese heritage (third generation), I am opposed to ANY special interest group trying to put a "guilt trip" on Americans. The ones who made the decisions to intern the Japanese-Americans in relocation camps (not concentration camps!) are long dead and gone. Therefore, an apology can no longer be issued. The push for monetary damages is politically motivated by a small vocal group who don't necessarily speak for all former internees.

These are my own personal views and I do not speak for anyone but myself. However, I do know that the Japanese-Americans, as a class of people, are a very proud group collectively, and a monetary payment would be an insult.

If reparations and apologies must be made, then let us include our WW2 servicemen and their next-of-kin!

Sincerely yours,

Henry Sakaida
HENRY SAKAIDA

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS FIRST AUST ARMY
First Aust Army ATIS Advanced Echelon

A.P.L. 44/11J
FIRST AAAE 222.
28 Mar 45

Prisoner of War Preliminary Interrogation Report

CRS A 2663 File 779/3/37 II

Cleared for access by
Australian Archives

1. PERSONAL DETAILS:

PW Number : JA 161003
Name : KAWATO, Masajiro
Rank : Sup Petty Officer
Duty : Pilot
Unit : SAITO Force (Naval Air Unit)
Place of capture : BAIEN, NEW BRITAIN
Date of capture : 14 Mar 45
Civil occupation : Farmer

2. ASSESSMENT:

19 years of age, 8 years education, 3 years military service. Intelligent, normally observant and answered all questions freely. He was arrogant, and proud to be a pilot. Fellow PsW in hospital consider him mentally unstable. PW claims to know nothing outside his small TOBERA area as movements were restricted to his area, but information obtained is considered reliable as parts which could be checked are consistent with known facts.

Recommend detailed examination at Base ATIS.

3. TACTICAL INFORMATION:

a. Capture:

PW took off from TOBERA airfield in an old model ZEKKE at 1615 hours, 9 Mar 45, with a 60 kg bomb under each wing. It was a routine flight with instructions to bomb and strafe opportunity targets. The course was a circular sweep between RABAU and JACQUINOT BAY. After a strafing attack on an ALLIED PT boat, PW's plane received a MG hit and caught on fire. The airplane crashed into the sea some distance away at approx 1645 hours. PW swam ashore suffering from a broken wrist and slight concussion. Captured 14 Mar 45 by ANGAU, after being ashore nearly 5 days with nothing to eat.

b. Chronology:

- Aug 41 Volunteered for Naval air training.
- 1 May 42 Called up to MAIZURU Naval Barracks.
- 1 Aug 42 Transferred to IWAKUNI Naval air training school for elementary training.
- 2 Oct 42 Transferred to YATABE Naval air training school for flight training.
- 1 Mar 43 Transferred to IZUMI Naval air training school for training in type 96 fighter.
- 1 May 43 Transferred to TOKUSHIMA Naval air training school for training with type 96 fighter.
- 27 Jul 43 Graduated in 28th Class.
- 1 Aug 43 Transferred to ATSUKI Naval air training school for combat training.
- 27 Sep 43 PW and 44 young pilots departed ATSUKI in four Type 1 2E Transport planes for SWPA.
- 28 Sep 43 Refuelled at TINIAN.
- 1 Oct 43 Arrived TRUK.
- 10 Oct 43 Arrived RABAU with 44 other pilots each flying a ZEKKE.

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- 11 Nov 43 Shot down over SIMPSON HARBOUR. Parachuted to sea and swam ashore.
15 Dec 43 Collided in mid-air with P-39. Parachuted into sea and swam ashore.
6 Feb 44 Shot down over SIMPSON HARBOUR. Parachuted to sea and swam ashore.
9 Mar 45 Last mission. Shot down off CAPE ORFORD.
14 Mar 45 Captured at BAIEN.

Enemy Intentions:

Naval airfield construction personnel at TOBERA Airfield are instructed to keep the airfield serviceable as long as any airplanes exist there. There are no offensive air or ground plans by SAITO Force, however, a certain area is allotted for this unit to defend. Occasional night manoeuvres are being carried out to familiarise men with the chain of trenches in the TOBERA area. These trenches are about 4 to 5 feet in width and depth.

Unit or Force:

SAITO Force at 9 Mar 45.

CO: Rear Admiral SAITO
Strength: 2,500
Present duties: Gardening
Units:

Airfield Construction Unit:

CO: Lieut Comdr INARI
Strength: Approx 200 Japanese.
Equipment: 3 tractors, 3 rollers, 10 trucks, 6 staff cars.
Arms: Rifles.

Maintenance Section:

CO: Naval Lieut NAKAO, Torakichi
Strength: Approx 1,000
Arms: Rifles.

Repair Section: Approx 20

Meteteorological Section: Approx 10

Technician Section: Strength unknown

Communication Section: Strength unknown

Guard Section: Strength unknown

Administrative Section: Strength unknown

Localities:

TOBERA Naval Airfield: 9 Mar 45.

CO: Rear Admiral SAITO.

Runway: Used dirt strip made temporarily serviceable west of destroyed concrete strip.

Airplanes: Two serviceable ZEKES in two rubber groves direct east of south end of runway. Three unserviceable planes in revetments east of runway, which probably could be reconstructed into one serviceable one.

Pilots: Eight pilots, but four disabled.

Gasoline:

(1) Airplane 91 Octane. Supply limited. Stored in caves approx 3 miles SE of runway. PW was never in that area so could not give exact location. There were also many very small dumps scattered about in the rain forest about 1 mile to SE of south end of runway.

(2) MT used airplane gasoline mixed with light oil.

Ammunition: AA extremely low, fire held to extreme minimum.

Dumps in unidentified caves.

Bivouac area: All personnel are quartered in caves approx 3 miles from airstrip in direction of KOKOPO, thence about 1,000 meters to right across coconut plantation to a steep sided ravine. Each cave is approx 6 feet by 6 feet and 50 feet deep and 50 men are quartered in each.

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Each side of the ravine is lined with such caves. Force HQ is also here. PW was unable to pinpoint on map.

Airfield installations: See Appendix "A".

3 20mm machine cannon.

Rest hut, approx 4 feet by 6 feet.

Sig hut, approx 4 feet by 6 feet. 5 to 10 Semaphore personnel.

Underground shelter and guard quarters, approx 20 feet by 60 feet and 60 feet underground. Concrete walls and steel braced ceiling with approx 50 feet dirt above.

VUNAKANAU Naval Airfield:

CO: Comdr IKARI

PW saw some ZEKES fighters from there in flight, but could give no further information.

Other airfields:

All other fields are unserviceable. No army planes in RABAU area.

f. Personalities: 9 Mar 45

Vice Admiral KUSAKA

CO 11 Air Wing.

Rear Admiral SAITO

CO SAITO Force.

Rear Admiral OKUMURA

CO Naval Construction Force.

Comdr IKARI

CO VUNAKANAU Airfield.

Lieut Comdr IWARI

CO Airfield construction unit.

Lieut NAKAO, Torakichi

CO Ground units.

Ensign OKUBO, Chuhei

Ground officer.

g. Underground factories:

PW insisted there were no such installations despite broadcast by Radio TOKIO that RABAU was an underground arsenal. PW heard the broadcast which caused everyone to laugh. He thought the statement was for propoganda purposes.

h. Food:

Plentiful in TOBERA area, but could not say how well army troops were faring. Men in SAITO Force still enjoyed rice three times a day, although in smaller quantities than a year ago. Supplementary foods include fish, eggs, poultry, beef, pork and vegetables. Fish is caught by dynamiting, domestic fowls and livestock are raised by units and each man helps to raise all kinds of vegetables. The TAKASAGO labourers (Formosan civilians) work full time in gardens. PW has not heard of rice cultivation in NEW BRITAIN, nor of arrival of submarines with supplies.

i. Morale:

Very good; since food is sufficient and duties few. Being Naval personnel, they have little thought of actual combat.

j. ZEKES:

PW's plane was armed with two 20 mm machine cannon and two 7.7 mm MG, and carried two 60 kg bombs under the wings.

It was not equipped with self-sealing tanks. Carried a type 3 radio (code words and voice), voice mainly used. Wave length set by communication ground staff before flight.

k. Pilot replacements:

Since 10 Aug 43, approx 50 pilots with ZEKES had arrived at TOBERA, but they were returned to JAPAN as their planes became unserviceable or were lost.

Some went back as early as two weeks after their arrival. PW was due for rotation, but was in hospital with wounded leg when rotation took place and transportation has not since been available. Among the original 45 pilots who came with PW, he and another were the only ones left.

J. PW's experiences:

He claims 18 kills in 200 hours combat flying, including a B-24. P-38s are easy to out-maneuver at low altitude, but difficult beyond 5,000 meters. Most of his kills were SIKORSKYS (Note - PW probably confused with CORSAIRS) from GREEN IS. On 15 Dec 43 collided in mid air with P-39 from TOROKINA or MONO IS over CAPE ST GEORGE. Both pilots rescued. (See section "m").

m. Allied PsW:

American Captain or Major captured 15 Dec 43 at CAPE ST GEORGE after PW's ZEKE and P-39 collided in mid-air, and both bailed out. The American airman was subsequently sent to JAPAN. Approx one month ago two ALLIED SIKORSKYS (sic.) were shot down over SIMPSON HARBOUR. The pilots were a Captain and 1st Lieut. They were downed about one week apart, the Captain in the morning by engine trouble and the 1st Lieut about noon by MG fire. The Lieut is known as 1st Lieut ZANGA and is now living at TOBERA with the JAP officers, receiving same treatment. The whereabouts of the Captain is unknown. Both pilots were wearing khaki coloured uniforms.

NO 14 #16
SQUADRON
RNZAF
1-15-45

F40 1st Lt. Massek Zanger VMF-222 12-5-44 MISSING

n. Tanks:

PW saw 3 or 4 Tankettes travelling west on the KOKOPO -- TOBERA road in Aug 44; presumably going to KERAVAT. Approx 2 or 3 months ago, 3 or 4 more were seen along the same road headed in the same direction.

o. General:

Due to shortage of AA ammunition firing is limited to suitable targets. The conservation of ammunition is a precaution also against anticipated ground action.

PW professed complete ignorance of organization and strength of JAP ground forces in NEW BRITAIN as his unit area was naval and they had no contact with the army. The navy asked the army for nothing, and the army was as independent. Airplanes have not served as support to ground troops, nor have they dropped supplies. Thought supplies were sent by mountain route to forward areas by MT as there were a fair number of vehicles available. The coastal road was unserviceable because of bombing.

- END -

R.E.M. Cameron.

R.E.M. CAMERON,
Major A.I.F.,
Executive Officer,
First Aust Army
ATIS Advanced Echelon.

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Telephone: (714) 738-6311

March 21, 1988

Howard D. Garber
Exec. Director Citizens A.C.T.
P. O. Box 17099
Anaheim, CA 92817

Dear Mr. Garber:

Thank you for your letter of March 18, 1988. Our Airport Director, Rod Murphy, had indicated that he had received phone calls relating to Mr. Kawato's appearance at our Airport Day. It is my understanding that Mr. Kawato is an American citizen and has been active in many other such airport celebrations. The presence of our fighter pilots and Japanese pilots at such an event, in my opinion, seems to be appropriate.

Your characterization of Mr. Kawato as an honored guest is not correct. The honored guests were Mike Nolan, R.T. Smith, Bruce Porter, Bill Ballance and Tony Aliengena and they were introduced at the opening ceremonies. The other people, like Mr. Kawato, participated in Airport Day. I hope that this letter and your discussions with our Airport Director will help to explain to you the city's position in this particular matter.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Ackerman
Mayor

RCA:mp

RICHARD C. ACKERMAN
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COUNCILMEMBER

March 25, 1988

The Fullerton Tribune
Attn: Editor
701 West Commonwealth
Fullerton, California 92632

Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to your article re: "Airshow '88." By means of a true story, I wish to remind you and others that the Japanese were the enemy in World War II and were dedicated to the destruction of the United States. It blasphemes our dead, our wounded and our families to honor a Japanese War Hero.

One day over Okinawa, during the battle, there was a "dog fight" between a Marine fighter and a Japanese Zero. The Zero won the fight, shot the Marine fighter plane to pieces. We saw the Marine pilot bail out. As his parachute opened, we on the ground breathed a sigh of relief.

Suddenly the Zero turned and headed for the parachute. The Marine was swinging and swaying to avoid the machine guns of the Zero. Finally, the Marine slumped and was motionless as he made the rest of his descent. He landed some distance away so I'll never know whether he lived or died.

Was this "heroic deed" done by the Japanese pilot that was recently honored at Fullerton?

To this day, the sight of the senseless and cowardly killing is still vivid in my memory. The Japanese pilot had won the battle —what was the point? If the Japanese "Air Ace" is still in town, will someone please ask him?

Sure, war requires killing. No one knows that any better than I. But once the enemy is defeated or surrenders, the killing stops. At least that's the honorable way.

The war was a deadly serious matter. To trivialize it by means of an "Airshow" and honor the enemy is absolutely ridiculous.

The question arises: How did this Japanese war hero get invited?

Sincerely,

Mark Brahe
23799 Monterey Highway
Salinas, California 93908
(408) 484-2505

OVER
↓

Re: Japanese air "ace".

3-26-88

DR G:

I WANTED TO put some other thoughts in my "Air Show" letters but didn't because it would distract from the subject - "Jap Air Ace".

The Flying Tiger pilots mentioned in the Air Show, most bomber pilots and even Jim Wright were "observers" of the war from 5,000 ft to 25,000 ft altitude.

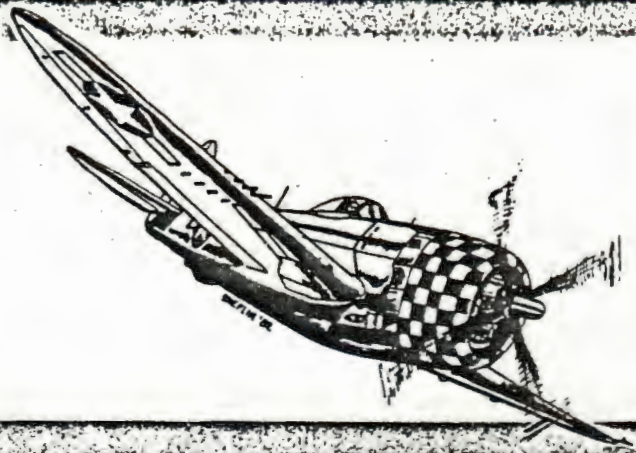
Very few of them ever saw the cruelty and horrors of war. TAKE OFF, drop your bombs, return to base.

How many of them ever saw a Marine with his gut ripped open by a bayonet and his intestines spilling out down to his legs. Or, a Marine who had taken a machine gun burst in the face - no identity. Or, the result of an artillery shell landing in a foxhole? Or, for that matter, the writhing and agony of a Jap who is set afire by a flamethrower in an attempt to rout him from his cave.

Well, you can do whatever you want with these observations.

I don't mean to imply that Air Corps etc weren't a part of the war. But it just might be that a lot of them thought it was just a big game. An impersonal, technical sort of job. I did not find it so.

M. BUREAU



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MASAJIRO "MIKE" KAWATO, Japanese Ace?

BY HENRY SAKAIDA

"I rammed enemy aircraft three times, was shot down twice and parachuted four times," says former Zero pilot Masajiro "Mike" Kawato. He claims 18 or 19 victories in WWII, his 13th supposedly being the reknowned USMC ace "Pappy" Boyington, of "Blacksheep Squadron" fame.

In 1978, Kawato published his memoirs under the title FLIGHT INTO CONQUEST - later retitled BYE BYE BLACKSHEEP. A detailed analysis of his book by several American aviation historians uncovered many historical inaccuracies and evident fabrications. Thus, a detailed investigation of Kawato's WWII combat career was launched.

FPAC has succeeded in uncovering many interesting details of Kawato's actual war record. Much of this is due to the efforts of Australian historian Lex McAulay, who located Kawato's preliminary prisoner of war interrogation report after an exhaustive search at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The Australian Archives forwarded copies of Kawato's POW dossier. These documents, together with various Japanese and U.S. military records and interviews with former squadron-mates of Kawato, serve as the basis for our analysis.

Kawato was born on September 19, 1925 in the small farming village of Takeno, in Kyoto



Masajiro Kawato, 1943

Prefecture, the eldest child of Hisaharu and Yaeko Kawato. After completing eight years of public education, he volunteered for flight training in the Imperial Navy in August, 1941.

Kawato's flight training commenced when he was called up to the Maizuru Naval Barracks on May 1, 1942. On August 1, he was sent to Iwakuni Naval Air Training School for elementary training, which consisted of classroom studies, basic piloting and military drills. He soon progressed to Yatabe Naval Air Base on October 2, and between March and May, 1943 trained on the Type 96 fighter ("Claude") at Izumi and Tokoshima Air Bases.

Enlisted pilot Kawato graduated from flight training on July 27, 1943. In final preparation for front line duty, he received additional combat training at Atsugi Air Base.

His orders arrived on September 27, when he and 44 other newly graduated pilots embarked on four transport planes. Refuelling at Tinian the next day, they arrived at Truk on October 1, where they were each assigned a Zero

fighter. These they flew to their ultimate destination - Rabaul, New Britain. At Rabaul on October 10 Kawato became a member of the 253rd Kokutai, based at Tobera Airfield. This unit was commanded by Lt. Cdr. Harutoshi Okamoto and had in its midst such veteran fighter pilots as Warrant Officers Hiro-yoshi Nishizawa and Tetsuzo Iwamoto, Japan's two top aces.

We will now examine each of Kawato's combat claims, in the light of the above-mentioned Japanese and American records.

October 2, 1943: Claims to have rammed a B-25 - eight days before he reached Rabaul!

October 11, 1943: Claims to have shot down a Corsair in the vicinity of Kokopo, near Rabaul. The F4U didn't make its combat debut over Rabaul until December 17.

October 15, 1943: Claims a P-38 near Buna, New Guinea. It has been confirmed that Kawato did fly this mission. Although he claims that 24 P-38s and P-40s were shot down, there were, in fact, no U.S. losses.

On November 2 the 5th AF bombed Rabaul in support of the landings on Bougainville Island. Kawato was one of 112 Zero pilots sent up to oppose 78 B-25s and escorting P-38s of the 39th and 80th Fighter Squadrons and 475th Fighter Group. Kawato's statement that aerial burst bombs were used is confirmed by American records; no planes were lost to these, however. Kawato claims two P-38s on this date; nine Lightnings were lost on this raid, of which at least four were shot down by Japanese fighters. He also claims that he was attacked by an F4U which damaged his Zero extensively. Again, there were no Corsairs, even though Kawato states that he saw the plane with its bearded pilot blasting away at him just 30 meters behind. The 5th AF claimed 40 enemy fighters shot down by P-38s and 26 more by bomber gunners, for the loss of nine B-25s and nine P-38s. Probably incomplete Japanese records indicate that 18 Zeros were destroyed or damaged.

November 6, 1943: Claimed one B-24 while attacking a formation of sixteen attempting to bomb a Japanese convoy heading toward Kavieng. One 5th AF B-24 was lost over the SW Pacific on this date, but the circumstances are unknown. Although Kawato claims in the forward to his memoirs that, "I never aimed especially at the cockpit to destroy the pilot of the craft", he contradicts himself by writing that in trying to shoot down this B-

24, "I attacked him from the front and above, aiming at the cockpit".

Between November 6 and 10 Kawato claims two TBFs, but there were no TBFs lost during this period.

On November 11 the US Navy, in conjunction with the 5th AF, launched a massive raid against Rabaul. Twenty-three B-24s took off from New Guinea at 0700 to bomb Rabaul's Lakunai Airfield. Carrier Task Groups 50.3 and 50.4 (ESSEX, BUNKER HILL, INDEPENDENCE, SARATOGA and PRINCETON) launched planes at 0645. The 125 SBDs, TBFs and SB2Cs were escorted by 127 F6Fs. Their target: shipping in Rabaul's Simpson Harbor.

According to Kawato's book - and his POW interrogation - he did see action that day. Although he states that he was one of about 120 Zero pilots opposing the enemy, there were in fact only 68. He estimates enemy strength at around 700 planes - 100 each F4Us, P-38s and P-39s and 200 each B-24s and TBFs. Kawato claims a P-38 shot down

Lt. W. F. "Red" Krantz of VT-17, flanked by crewmen O. L. Miller on his right and V. J. Case on his left. (Krantz photo)



that morning, but there were no P-38s. He also recalls that Zeros releasing aerial burst bombs brought down some 50 (!) B-25s. "It was a spectacular sight seeing gasoline on the sea continue to burn well past noon." Once more, there were no B-25s on this strike.

Piloting a TBF that day was Lt. William F. "Red" Krantz of VT-17 from the BUNKER HILL, which launched 27 F6Fs and 23 SB2Cs in addition to the Avenger squadron. As the strike force approached Rabaul through the St. George Channel, Krantz saw fighters taking off from a dirt strip, kicking up dust.

"We encountered numerous thunderheads at 12,000'. Some enemy cruisers, light and small, were dodging in and out of the shadows. At this time, the dive bombers reported aerial burst bombs, along with numerous Zeros, who were looking over their first action against the new SB2C. At 0900, Cmdr. Bagdonovich, the Air Group Commander, ordered the dive bombers to attack the cruisers, followed by torpedo planes."

As the torpedo planes were making their runs on the cruisers, Kawato claims that he quit chasing a Corsair to thwart the Avengers. After flaming one TBF, he was then allegedly shot down himself by two F4Us, but managed to bail out at about 500'. Although there were no Corsairs over Rabaul itself that day, Kawato states that he was strafed in the water by one of the two which nailed him. According to his POW report, this was the first time he was shot down, parachuting into Simpson Harbor and swimming ashore.

Lt. Krantz, by now with two Zeros in hot pursuit, made a steep approach to attack a heavy cruiser. He released his torpedo and made a left turn, but was enveloped in a hail of intense AA fire from a cruiser and a destroyer. "One burst almost blew me upside down; as I passed near the destroyer, a heavy plume of smoke poured out of the right side of my engine. I next fired my machine guns at the small enemy ship and headed for St. George Channel."

Krantz' TBF was almost immediately attacked by what he thought were Oscars. "I dropped to the top of the waves to prevent them from flying underneath me. My gunner, V. S. Case, accounted for two and an F6F picked off one as he pulled away from my aircraft."

The burning Avenger made a beeline for Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville Island, but their luck ran out and Krantz was forced to

ditch within sight of Buka Island. The three men drifted for twelve miserable days in a life raft, finally landing at Cape Orford on New Britain Island, where, after some close calls, they were finally rescued on March 26, 1944. Coincidentally, this was near where Kawato landed later after being shot down on his last mission.

"Red" Krantz (now Captain, USN, Ret.) comments on Kawato's account of the November 11 action: "In reading Kawato's book dealing with the November 11 raid, his imagination ran away from him. No B-25s, no F4Us, no P-39s, no P-38s, no 700 aircraft on that raid. He was right about the use of aerial burst bombs that day. Also, our attack was terminated by 9:30 AM and his remark about gasoline from downed aircraft burning in the sea well past noon is baloney."

The USN carrier planes claimed 38 kills, 10 probables and 5 damaged over Rabaul that morning. Later that afternoon, while defending their carriers against Japanese bombers escorted by fighters, the USN pilots and gunners claimed another 99 kills and 9 damaged. The enemy planes in this latter action were evidently mostly carrier aircraft from the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKU. The Japanese claimed that their Rabaul-based fighters shot down 71 e/a that day for the loss of only 11 of their own planes. The total USN losses for November 11 were six TBFs and eight F6Fs.

Kawato claims a P-38 on December 15, while still recovering from wounds suffered on November 11. He states that he was severely scolded by the air group commander for disobeying orders by flying that day. No P-38s saw any action on that date.

Kawato reportedly collided with a P-39 off Cape St. George about this time. In his interrogation report he gives the date as Dec. 15, while in his memoirs it is ten days later. It is interesting to note that while the pilot is described as an American captain or major in his interrogation report, in Kawato's book he is referred to as an Australian or New Zealander. In both versions, the two pilots parachuted into the sea and the enemy flyer was captured and shipped to Japan.

There were no P-39s over Rabaul in December, 1943 - or ever. There is, however, a possibility that Kawato did collide with an enemy fighter about that time. On December 17, 31 F4Us, 22 F6Fs and 23 RNZAF Kittyhawks, all led by Major "Pappy" Boyington,

flew over Rabaul - the first time for single-engined, land-based fighters. Two Zeros fell to a Hellcat and a Corsair and the New Zealanders claimed five kills and lost two pilots, one of whom was Wing Commander T. Freeman, DSO, DFC and Bar. Freeman was last seen trying to land his smoking plane on New Ireland after shooting down a Zero; he was never heard from again. Flight Lieutenant J. O. MacFarlane was also MIA, circumstances unknown.

Kawato claims an F4U on or about December 20, 1943, but fails to elaborate.



Masajiro "Mike" Kawato at an air show, 1979

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FPAC subscriber Jack Cook has informed us that the P-47 in the foreground of the photo appearing on the back cover of our Winter issue was the personal aircraft of 1st Lt. (now Brig. Gen., Ret.) Staryl Austin. Jack is personally acquainted with Gen. Austin, who lives in the same city, and has obtained from him this black and white photo of the same aircraft, showing the left side of its cowling. The name which appears there is "GAL-O-MY-DREAMS". This 410th Fighter Squadron P-47D-30-RE, serial #44-33288, was coded R3-A. The nose art on the right side of the cowling, which appears in the color photo, depicts Donald Duck holding a hand-cranked telephone and yelling "FLAKI". General Austin, now an FPAC subscriber himself, was quite surprised to see the color photo of his Thunderbolt, as he had no idea it even existed!

MASAJIRO "MIKE" KAWATO

CONCLUSION

By HENRY SAKAIDA

It is the "I shot down Pappy Boyington" claim that has catapulted Mike Kawato into the media spotlight. We shall now examine the details of this combat, which occurred on January 3, 1944.

Boyington, C.O. of VMF-214, was shot down on January 3; the U.S. and Japanese dates coincide. Yet, Kawato claims that he shot down Boyington on January 4, Japanese date. The 253rd Kokutai records show that Kawato did not fly on January 4. Kawato insists - incorrectly - that January 4 was actually January 3, U.S. date.



Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington

The War History Office of the Japan Defense Agency has provided proof that Kawato did fly on the January 3 mission. Thirty-seven Zeros of the 253rd Group, led by Lt. Kenji Nakagawa, took off at 0610 and engaged in combat against an estimated 30 F4Us from 0615 to 0650. The 204th Kokutai joined in with 33 Zeros. The 253rd claimed five destroyed and two probables and the 204th two and one probable. Three F4Us were actually lost - those flown by Boyington and his wingman and another flown by Capt. N. S. Blount of VMF-321.

In issue #2 of "Fighter Pilots in Aerial Combat" it was stated that Kawato was in the air from 0610 to 0700, and since Boyington was shot down at 0745, Kawato could not have been responsible since he wasn't even in the air. However, we have since learned that Japanese time was one hour earlier than American time. Thus, we know now that Kawato was in the air when Boyington was downed.

According to information contained in the 253rd Kokutai flight log, Kawato flew in the second squadron of 22 Zeros. He was flying in the number three position of a four-plane flight led by Petty Officer Takamori Yamana and also consisting of Petty Officers Nakaya (#2) and Osada (#4).

According to Dr. Masamichi Inoki, L.L.D., former President of the Japan National Defense Agency, and his assistant Mr. Masahiro Yoshimatsu, Chief Researcher for the Agency (War College, WWII Research Section):

"Kawato Masajiro piloted the third aircraft in a formation of four, and his assigned duty was to fly protective cover for the Japanese fighters actually engaged in the aerial combat in which Major G. Boyington was downed. Kawato Masajiro had a reputation among his fellow pilots as having plenty of guts. His courage in combat is not in question, but, in so far as the battle of January 3, 1944 is concerned, his claim for credit is groundless and without a basis in fact."

In June, 1943 the Imperial Navy high command issued an order discontinuing the practice of



Japanese Ace?

This plane supposedly burst into flame, the pilot bailing out. Kawato told a Wisconsin State Journal newspaper reporter at the annual Oshkosh Air Show on August 7, 1983 that "he knew Boyington's plane by its markings and that his squadron leader backs his claim". Actually, both his squadron leader (Nakagawa) and his flight leader (Yamanaka) that day have been dead for many years, the latter having been killed during the war. His old group commander (Okamoto) refuses to discuss his WWII experiences at all.

Colonel Gregory Boyington (USMC, Ret.), in a recent phone interview: "I was never anywhere near Duke of York Island or Rabaul on the day I was shot down. To begin with, we used the term 'Rabaul' to mean the Rabaul area, not necessarily the town of Rabaul nor the harbor. Kawato took the term literally from my book.

"I ended up in the water almost abreast of Cape St. George, New Ireland, about five miles from shore. I knew we had a coast watcher at this point and had high hopes of having him rescue me. The main reason the fight took place fifty miles away from their base is elementary: they picked us up on radar and were coming out to intercept us. The Japanese had no way of knowing that we were fighters, not bombers.

"As for the plane I was flying, I had taken Marion Carl's plane at Vella La Vella, our home base, on the afternoon of January 2. I led the fighters that were to go on the early morning mission to the Rabaul area to Bougainville, where we stayed the night. My original plane that I referred to was actually the plane I had borrowed from Marion Carl the day before." (Major Carl was at that time C.O. of VMF-223 and, with 18½ kills, is the seventh ranked USMC ace.)

There are two illustrations in Kawato's book, as well as several paintings and prints, showing Kawato's Zero shooting down Boyington's F4U #86 - which he was not flying that day - over Rabaul proper, far from the actual scene of his downing.

Boyington and his wingman, Capt. George

recording individual aerial victories. All victories achieved henceforth were to be credited to the unit as a whole. Kawato states that his downing of Boyington "was the thirteenth kill credited to me". Actually, there is no record of his having scored a single aerial victory in the official documents of the 253rd Kokutai.

In any "who shot down whom" matchup, the details must coincide with those recorded or remembered by the opposition. Kawato's own recollections of this particular combat simply don't meet the necessary criteria.

Kawato claims that he spotted Boyington's fighter over Duke of York Island, as it was being pursued by other Zeros, describing how he gave chase and pumped 15 or 16 rounds of 20mm shells into the F4U as he "was going on over Rabaul, where our base was located".

Ashmun, were shot down by a group of Zero pilots whose identities will never be known. It has been printed elsewhere that Warrant Officer Takeo Tanimizu, who flew that day in the 253rd Group's lower squadron - which did fight against F4Us - may have been one of the pilots responsible for shooting down Boyington. However, Mr. Tanimizu has made it clear to this writer that he cannot recall the precise details of this combat after over 40 years and that it is not important who shot down Pappy Boyington. "No true Japanese, in keeping with tradition, would ever step forward to proudly proclaim such a deed."

Boyington later claimed three kills and his wingman, Ashmun, is credited with one on that day. Other land-based USN and USMC fighters claimed five more kills and five probables. The 253rd Kokutai suffered just one Zero damaged, while the 204th lost two pilots - Petty Officers Hideshi Tanimoto and Yoshige Kitade. (A third Zero unit, the 201st Kokutai, served at Rabaul during this period, but no record of its losses and/or victories is available.)

How did the "I shot down Pappy Boyington" claim originate? We put the question to Col. Boyington, and he was most co-operative in supplying the following information.

Boyington first met Kawato in 1976, while working as technical adviser to the TV series "Baa Baa Blacksheep" - later called "Black-sheep Squadron". In their first meeting, Mike was asked through an interpreter if he had ever heard of Pappy Boyington or the Black-sheep Squadron. Kawato replied that he had not. Nevertheless, the two old pilots had a great time together and Boyington later gave Kawato an autographed copy of his book.

"After a few episodes of the TV show aired, I got a call from Kawato. He told me that he had just finished reading my book and said he was very sorry to say this, but believed that he was the Zero pilot who shot me down. He was very apologetic about it." Boyington at first took Kawato's word for this, but later, when he started checking out the details given by Kawato, came to the realization that "this wasn't the guy who got me".

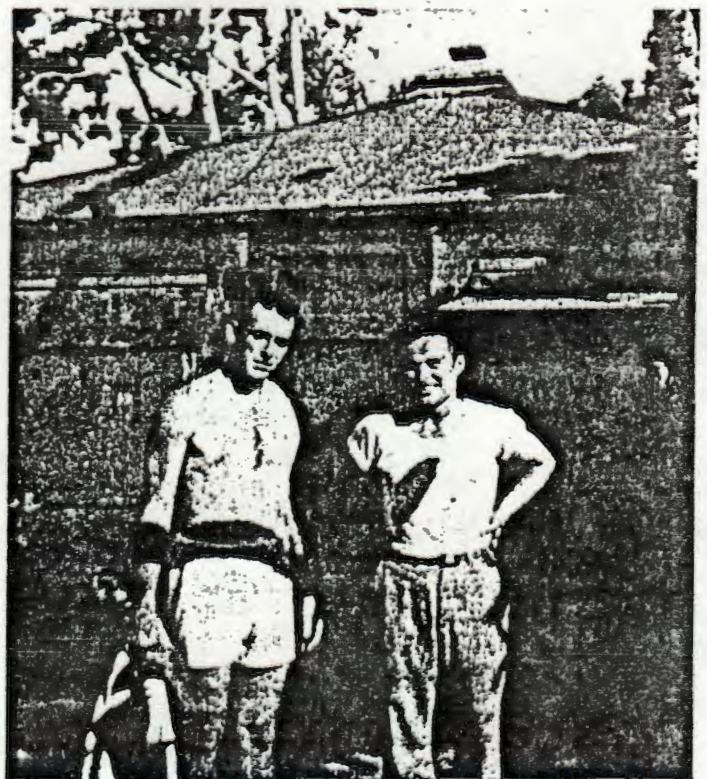
On February 6, 1944 Kawato claims a P-38 over Rabaul and supposedly rammed a B-24, parachuting into the sea off Cape St. George and being rescued by soldiers. Although 19 Liberators of the 5th Bomb Group did bomb Rabaul that day, there was no fighter oppo-

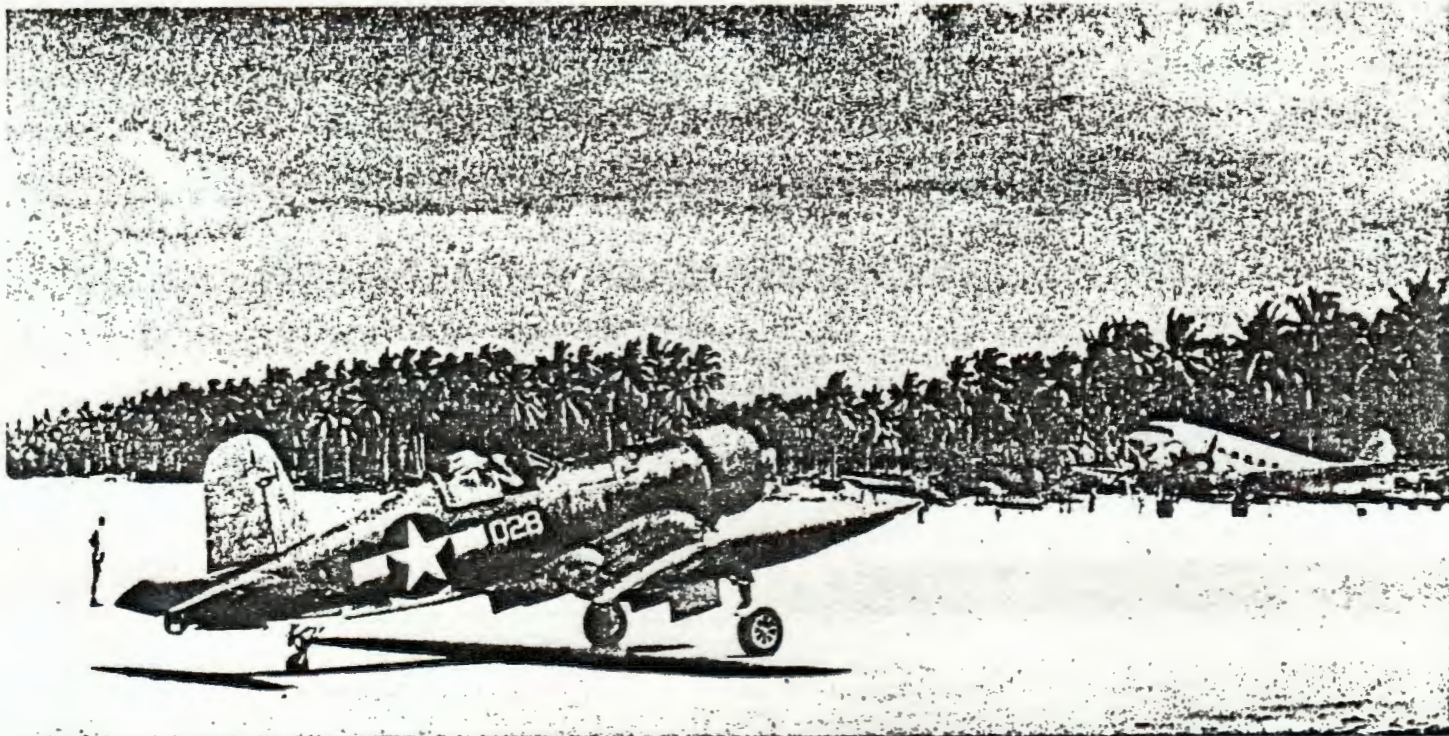
sition and all returned to base safely. There were no P-38s on this mission. Kawato makes no mention of ramming a B-24 on this date in his interrogation report, stating simply that he was "shot down over Simpson Harbor, parachuted into the sea and swam ashore". Most likely he was shot down by fighters. Between 1115 and 1145, F4Us of VF-17 claimed nine kills plus four probables over Rabaul, three pilots of VMF-217 claimed a destroyed, a probable and a damaged, and a VMF-218 pilot claimed yet another kill.

On February 20, 1944 the badly mauled remnants of the once powerful Japanese fighter force at Rabaul withdrew to Truk. A few pilots, Petty Officer 2nd Class Kawato included, were ordered to remain behind as part of the 105th Naval Air Unit of the Saito Force. It could hardly be called a formidable unit, as there were only nine serviceable Zeros left, under the command of Warrant Officer Shigeo Fukumoto. Kawato was at this time grounded, recovering from the wounds suffered two weeks before.

Within two weeks, however, Kawato was back in action, tangling with USMC Corsairs. On March 3, Major Robert P. Keller, C.O. of

Major Robert P. Keller of VMF-223 (on right) at Efate, New Hebrides in January, 1944. Keller took over command of the squadron from Major Carl on February 4. Photo courtesy of Maj. Gen. Alan J. Armstrong (USMC, Ret.)





An F4U-1A Corsair of VMF-223 on Green Island, March 11, 1944. On March 3, pilots of this squadron fought against Masajiro Kawato and other pilots of the 105th Naval Air Unit at Rabaul. (Tailhook photo)

VMF-223, and Lts. Archie D. Hunter, Jr., Michael G. Chilton and Joseph Angyal, Jr. took off from their base at Torokina, Bougainville, at 1500 hrs. Their mission was to lead some F6Fs to Rabaul on a special reconnaissance mission to determine whether the enemy plane strength there was being increased. Lt. Chilton was forced to abort en route due to mechanical problems. VMF-223 had seen little air-to-air combat since early January, but its dry spell was about to end.

Kawato and six other Zero pilots took off from Tobera around 1620 and were circling their field at about 6000' when they were spotted by Keller and his flight. Now Lt. Gen. Keller recalls:

"Joe Angyal and Archie Hunter flew my wings - the Navy F6Fs followed. We arrived near Simpson Harbor somewhere close to 4 PM, spotted perhaps eight Japanese fighters well below, and dove to the attack. I fired my six .50 caliber guns into their leader; he burst into flames and I pulled up and away. I then discovered that both Angyal and Hunter had disappeared. I turned back toward the area of engagement and spotted a parachute, which I assumed to be covering the pilot of my aircraft kill.

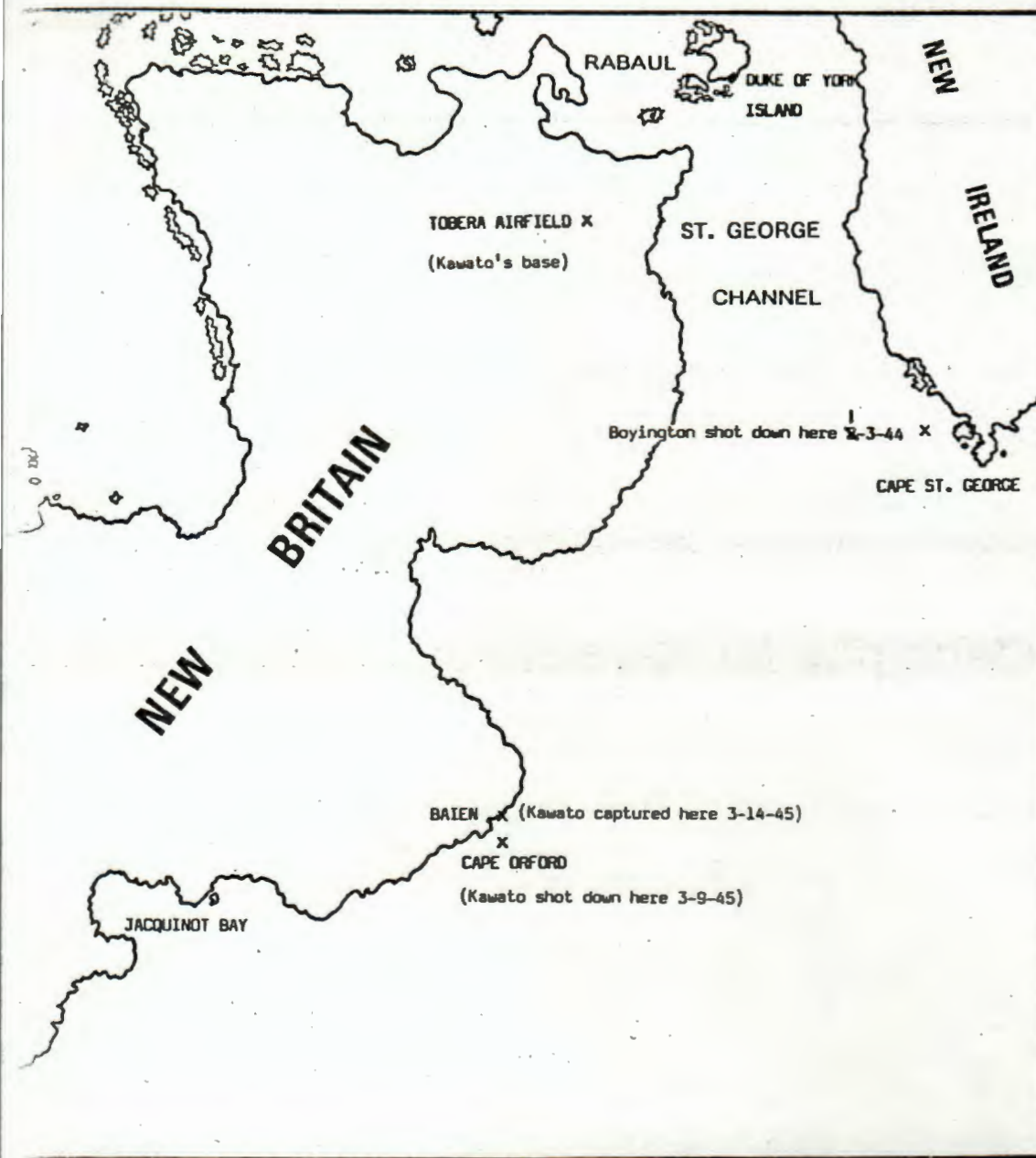
"I then spotted the other Japanese below me

and dove to attack them. They split and I followed one, firing at but not seriously damaging him before I broke off the attack. The reason I broke off from him was that I heard an American pilot say something to the effect that, 'There's a whole bunch of them here'. I reasoned that my tail was vulnerable without a wingman, and since there were apparently quite a number of enemy aircraft in the vicinity, I had best try to reform my three-man flight, which I was able to do through radio communication. We returned to Torokina without further action. We had no losses, nor am I aware of any other U.S. losses that day."

Major Keller was credited with one Hamp destroyed and a Zeke damaged and Lt. Angyal with a probable Hamp. They returned to their base at 1900 hours. As General Keller states, there were no American losses. Japanese sources tell quite a different story. According to Kawato, both he and "Shimpo" (actually Petty Officer Yutaka Jinbo) each claimed one kill. Official Japanese records indicate five victories for the Zero pilots with no losses!

This was not to be Masajiro Kawato's last encounter with American fighter pilots.

Kawato's last air combat occurred on March



This map shows the locations of the main events of Mike Kawato's WWII combat career. It is interesting to note that although Kawato claims to have spotted Maj. Boyington over Duke of York Island, the latter never made it anywhere near that island nor Rabaul itself on 1-3-44. Rather, he was shot down many miles to the south, not very far from Cape St. George.

12, 1944. His account of this action tallies with USMC records. Once again, he and six mates were flying over their field when they spotted a flight of Corsairs. The F4Us, led by Capt. Henry M. Turner of VMF-222, were skipping over Tobera at tree-top level after strafing a couple of 100-foot boats and a building at Ataliklikian Bay. Another flight of F4Us, led by Major Donald H. Sapp, the squadron executive officer, was coming in over the St. George Channel.

Turner's flight was bounced by three Zeros which came down on them from several hundred feet above. The enemy's shooting ability was poor, however, and the Corsairs used full power to outrun the Zekes, climb to about 6000' into a convenient cumulous cloud, turn around, and go after their attackers. The Zekes went down to about 300', circling Tobera to entice the Marines into a crossfire from AA batteries there and at nearby Rapopo and Vunapope Fields. Accord-

ing to the VMF-222 war diary:

"Sapp observed four Zekes circling Tobera at 300 feet, apparently using a terrific AA barrage ... for protection. Seeing this, he called for someone to accompany him and Wilson acknowledged. The enemy planes were in a group of three, with one 'Tail-end Charlie' lagging behind. Sapp chose this one as his first target. An intense barrage of AA of all calibers was thrown at them. Sapp saw the Zeke burst into flames from his tail-in shot after a two-second burst from 200 feet. Sapp then slid over to the next Zeke and made a similar run on it, but employed a longer burst. This one smoked and fell off in a diving left turn from which, at 250 feet, it would have been almost impossible for the pilot to pull out. The plane was not seen to crash and was consequently scored only as a probable.

'Sapp then slid over to the next Zeke and

made a similar run on it, but shells only poured into the Zeke's starboard wing, from which pieces were observed to fly off. As they reached the end of the runway the Zeke tightened his turn and Sapp had too much speed to lead him sufficiently. In the meantime, Wilson had chosen the inside plane closest to the runway, and sliding from 8 o'clock he gave the Zeke a three-second burst from 150 yards. The Zeke started to burn and hit in the revetment area at the south-east end of the strip.

Sapp and Wilson climbed toward Kabanga Bay and outside the AA when Sapp observed two more Zekes in the traffic circle. This time Wilson could not keep up with the major as he dove through the AA once again after the circling Zekes. He caught one of these very low, about fifty feet off the deck with its wheels down. He made a 6 o'clock run from above, fired a three-second burst from close range and sent the Zeke crashing into the trees northwest of the strip."

When the combat was over, it was two for two according to Kawato. He and Petty Officer Yutaka Jinbo claimed one kill apiece and they lost two pilots, Harada and Kitagawa. Harada was lost when he was shot down on Tobera's runway, while Kitagawa went down in the jungle. If Kawato's account is accurate, it appears that Sapp shot down Kitagawa and Wilson, Harada. The official Japanese records are a day off, reporting this combat as having taken place on March 13. They state that seven Zeros jumped 50 (!) enemy planes, shooting down two

and losing two pilots. As for the Marines, Sapp was credited with two kills, a probable and a damaged; Wilson received credit for one destroyed. There were no F4U losses.

Robert W. Wilson (now Col., USMC, Ret.) recalls this combat forty years later: "We had been going to Rabaul for some time without being challenged, so on that day it came as a surprise to see enemy fighters. My most vivid memory is seeing the bullets hit the airplane, seeing it burn and then actually crash, because the action took place at very low altitude right over the field. At the time those actions seemed very impersonal - it was man (me) against a machine (him). But when you put the name of the Japanese as Harada, it makes it so human. Having lived in Japan and met so many fine young men there, it all seems so pointless."

Although no names are written in the daily flight summaries contained in the book RABAU KAIGUN KOKUTAI by Masatake Okumiya (published in Japan), there are listings for about a dozen reconnaissance missions to the Admiralty Islands by remaining Zeros from Rabaul, and it is certain that Kawato flew some of these. According to him, he and Jinbo flew to the Admiraltys on September 15, 1944. Okumiya's war diary listings confirm that two Zeros did fly a recon mission there that day. However, Kawato claims in his book that on the way back he made a strafing attack on an enemy air base at Emirau Island, destroying about 10 e/a on the ground. A check of Allied records has failed to substantiate this claim,

An F4U-1a of VMF-222 at Bougainville, April, 1944. (Tailhook photo)





Major Don Sapp of VMF-222. His victories on March 12, 1944 were his last, bringing his total to 10 destroyed, 4 probably destroyed and 2 damaged. VMF-222's score in the South Pacific was 50-20-11 from September, 1943 through June, 1944. It added three more kills to its score over Okinawa in June, 1945.

(Photo credit: Col. Ray Toliver)

nor is this attack mentioned in any available Japanese records.

We can also verify Kawato's recon mission to the Admiralties on October 15. Okumiya reports that two fighters discovered a large assembly of U.S. carriers at anchor, in preparation for the assault on the Philippines later that month.

On November 9, Kawato and three other pilots bombed and strafed Hain Airfield on Los Negros Island in the Admiralties. Ensign Chuhei Okubo, a ground officer, was riding behind Kawato as an observer in a two-seat Zero. Over 30 e/a were reported destroyed or damaged, and this account is confirmed by Okumiya's war diary. Kawato and his comrades received a personal commendation from the commanding officer of the 11th Air Wing, Vice-Admiral Jinichi Kusaka.

Lex McAulay: "I checked the AAF Intsums (intelligence summaries) for November 1944, and they did so little damage at Los Negros it was not deemed worthy of report."

The diary of 79 Sq. (RAAF), at Los Negros, records the following raid on November 9, 1944: "Three enemy aeroplanes dropped 6 anti-personnel bombs in Hyane Harbour near north end of Momote Strip and strafed the general area superficially wounding five American personnel and one RAAF member. Flight Lieutenant O'Dea in Spitfire A58-165 and Flying Officer Kennane (A58-35) were scrambled but were too late to intercept bandits."

The period between this mission and his last, on March 9, 1945, is not accounted for in Kawato's book. There were only four recorded missions by Zeros to the Admiralty Islands during this time, the last three by a single aircraft.

By March 9 the 105th Naval Air Unit was down to two serviceable Zeros and four pilots. Two planes were ordered to make a circular sweep between Rabaul and Jacquinot Bay, to attack targets of opportunity. Kawato took off in a two-seat Zero with Petty Officer 2nd Class Shimizu as observer. The other fighter was flown by Jinbo. Carrying one 60 kg bomb under each wing, they took off from Tobera at 1615.

According to Kawato's POW report - confirmed by Allied records - he spotted an Australian PT boat in the vicinity of Cape Orford around 1630 (1730 Australian time). This was the motor launch ML-825, commanded by Lt. Harold Venables. It was at that moment limping along at 12 knots with a cracked exhaust manifold on the starboard engine, trying to reach Jacquinot.

Kawato dived from a cloudbank ahead of the motor launch and dropped his bombs, which landed about 30 yards off the port bow. He flew on for about a mile, turned and came back on a strafing run. His plane was hit in the wing tanks and caught fire as he passed over ML-825, losing altitude gradually and then ditching into the sea about a mile away. Kawato got out and swam toward shore; Shimizu, who was either dead or badly wounded in the rear seat, went down with the plane. A search was made of the area, but the crew of the motor launch could find neither wreckage nor bodies.

The reader will be interested in Kawato's ac-

count of this combat. In his book, the enemy PT boat becomes a "destroyer". He dropped his first bomb from about 500', hitting the ship and stopping it dead in its tracks. As it lay smoking, Kawato supposedly scored a perfect "bullseye" with his second bomb from 900'. His plane was hit by return fire and the right wing exploded into flames. Realizing that his chance of survival was nil, Kawato dove on the "destroyer" in kamikaze fashion, missing it by 150' and plowing his burning plane right into the sea. He reports that he regained consciousness two days later, floating in his life jacket.

Kawato claims that he sustained severe injuries from his ordeal - dislocated left shoulder, fractured left thigh and wrist, left arm swollen to the size of his leg and turning purple, plus numerous cuts and bruises. As he took personal inventory, he discovered that he couldn't move his right leg, either.

Not wanting to be captured, Kawato decided to commit suicide by shooting himself in the head with his pistol. He told this writer that he grasped his German automatic in his right hand, cocked it with his teeth and pulled the trigger, but the weapon failed to fire. He then pulled the slide back with his teeth to rechamber the bullet. (A few skeptics have tried to duplicate this maneuver, but failed.) He pulled the trigger and the gun discharged. However, Kawato says that he awoke a day later, still floating in his life-jacket, with a superficial gunshot wound on his right temple! Kawato does, indeed, have a scar there.

Yutaka Jinbo, who flew with Kawato on this mission, survived the war and was contacted recently by Dr. Ikuhiko Hata, one of Japan's leading aviation historians. In their telephone conversation Mr. Jinbo politely declined to discuss the events of March 9, 1945 or to say much about Masajiro Kawato. He did mention that he had learned through a wireless report that Kawato had been captured. This writer's efforts to elicit information from Mr. Jinbo have also been unsuccessful.

Kawato, in a conversation with this writer on January 1, 1981: "For the next two months I crawled around in the jungle, looking for food and places to rest. I tied my swollen leg with potato vine and survived off the land." By his own reckoning he was captured by natives on May 27, 1945. According to Kawato's POW report he was, "Captured 14 March 1945 by ANGAU, after being ashore

nearly five days with nothing to eat."

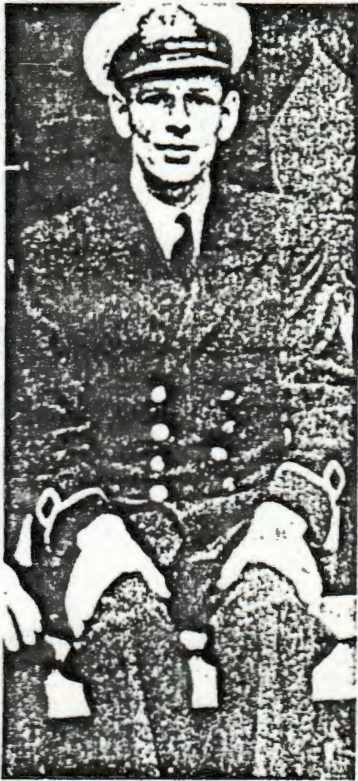
The Australian War Memorial: "From official documentation, we can now confirm that HI 3387 - Petty Officer Masajiro Kawato, Saito Force - was captured by some natives from the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit on 14 March 1945 in the vicinity of Baien, which is about 40 miles northeast of Jacquinot Bay. After passing through the hands of 6 Infantry Brigade and 5 Division Provost Company, he subsequently arrived in Australia on 2 April 1945 and was interned at the Gaythorne Prisoner of War Camp in Queensland." A medical examination showed that Kawato's only wound was a "fractured left wrist". It also mentioned "multiple healed small gunshot wounds".

Kawato was assigned POW #161003. On 24 March, 1945 he underwent preliminary interrogation by Major R. E. M. Cameron, executive officer of the First Australian Army's Allied Translation and Interrogation Service.

A detailed examination of Kawato's interrogation report proved fascinating. Crammed into four long pages were his personal biographical record, a chronology of his military career, details of his final mission and subsequent capture and his account of conditions at his base at that time.

It is noted that Kawato was well treated as a POW, which he confirms in his memoirs. In return, he divulged valuable military information, giving his interrogators a detailed rundown on Tobera Air Base and the Saito Force as a whole (the latter receiving its name from the officer commanding, Rear Admiral Saito). He identified by name and position at least seven Japanese officers - from ensign to admiral - and shared his knowledge of the makeup, strength and equipment of the various sections of the Saito Force.

As to his air unit, Kawato related that there were only two serviceable Zeros at Tobera by March 9 - those flown by him and Jinbo. Three other unserviceable planes in revetments east of the runway were described as potentially reconstructable into one flyable Zero. He also stated that of the eight remaining pilots at Tobera four were disabled. Kawato spotted the location of the temporary dirt strip to the west of the destroyed concrete runway and also revealed the locations of three 20mm anti-aircraft batteries and gave an estimation of available fuel and ammunition. He likewise gave away the loca-



The Australian motor launch ML-825 and its commanding officer, Lt. Harold Venables.



tions of fuel dumps, bivouac areas, headquarters, shelters and the rest and signals huts. He also described the morale at Rabaul as being "very high". The accuracy of Kawato's statements was confirmed at the time - and more recently by this writer's independent research.

Major Cameron stated in his report that "..... information obtained is considered reliable as parts which could be checked are consistent with known facts". Dr. Hata has claimed that Kawato tried to mislead his captors, but this contention is not confirmed by his interrogation report.

This was Cameron's over-all assessment of Masajiro Kawato: "Nineteen years of age, eight years public education, three years military service. Intelligent, normally observant and answered all questions freely. He was arrogant and proud to be a pilot. Fellow PsW in hospital consider him mentally

unstable."

Kawato stated during his interrogation that he was shot down a total of three times, parachuted three times and collided once. It is interesting that, although boastful by nature, he made no claims at that time for intentionally ramming enemy aircraft. Forty years later, Kawato claims to have been shot down twice, parachuted four times and rammed enemy aircraft three times.

In his book Kawato states that he flew a total of over 1200 hours in WWII - about 900 in combat. This total contradicts the figure of 200 combat hours which he gave to his interrogators. The 900 hour claim would appear to exceed considerably the amount of time he COULD have flown in combat. He served with the 253rd Kokutai from October 10, 1943 until the unit pulled out to Truk on February 20, 1944. His last flight with the 253rd took place on February 6, when he was shot down and wounded. He had previously been grounded for about a month due to other wounds, which means that his actual time in combat was no more than three months. Kawato reportedly flew 35 missions from December 1, 1943 until February 6, 1944. Most of the missions flown were defensive and thus it is unlikely that his actual combat hours could have exceeded a quarter of his alleged 900 hour total. (As has been noted, very few missions were flown after February 20.) Mr. Gensaku Aoki, who was a classmate of Kawato's in flight training, stated in an interview that they flew about 200 hours in training and that Kawato had between 400 and 500 hours at Rabaul - still only half the 900 hours he claims.

"I shot down 19 planes during the war", proclaims "Mike" Kawato today. His interrogation report states that, "He claims 18 kills in 200 hours combat flying, including a B-24. Most of his kills were 'Sikorskys' (F4U Corsairs) from Green Island". In his memoirs Kawato claims two B-24s plus one shared, one B-25 (rammed), eight P-38s, one P-39 (by collision), three TBFs (two by aerial burst bombs), three F4Us, two unidentified twin-engined bombers (one shared) and one more unidentified type. Could he really have shot down that many enemy planes, considering his extremely limited flying experience and the overwhelming numerical and technical superiority of the enemy? This question was put to Takeo Tanimizu, one of the genuine aces of the 253rd Kokutai. His response? "How can a novice pilot such as Kawato, with less than 200 combat hours,

possibly shoot down 18 American planes? His kill claim is just absurd!"

Sadamu Komachi, another experienced 253rd Kokutai pilot: "Kawato can say whatever he wants and so can historians who were never there. But I was there and I know - his kill claim is utter nonsense!"

In 1956, Kawato wrote about his combat experiences in the Japanese magazine "Konichi No-Wadai" ("Today's Topic"), in which he failed to make any claims for F4Us, although in his interrogation report he states that the majority of his kills were Corsairs from Green Island. Green Island, about 100 miles east of Rabaul, wasn't captured until February 15, 1944, and F4Us didn't fly a mission from there until March 13 - one day after Kawato's last air battle.

Former Lt. Chuhei Okubo, one of Kawato's last squadron-mates, survived the war and was also contacted by Dr. Hata. Okubo stated to Hata that Kawato was a brave pilot and was very popular with the ground crews for ramming enemy planes and surviving. While Okubo is generally supportive of Kawato, he would undoubtedly be surprised to learn of his old friend's conduct as a POW - and to learn that Kawato had mentioned him by name in his interrogation statements!

It is this writer's contention that Kawato

exaggerated his combat claims in order to impress his interrogator. He had good reason to try to impress others. As a baby-faced 18-year-old novice fresh from Japan, he was ridiculed on at least one occasion by officers at Rabaul. One of them pointed to Kawato during a squadron lineup (in the presence of the air group commander) and said, "We wonder if a child like you can actually fight in this war." This remark infuriated Kawato, filling him with an understandable anger - and a burning desire to "prove" himself at any cost.

On July 31, 1945, Masajiro Kawato was transferred to the custody of the U.S. Army Provost Marshal Department in Manila for further interrogation. From the Philippines, he was finally repatriated back to Japan later that year. His many postwar adventures are not within the scope of this article.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Jiro Yoshida, Sadamu Komachi and Takeo Tanimizu of the Japan Zero Fighter Pilots Association, Dr. Yasuho Izawa, Japan National Defense Agency (WWII Research Section), Capt. Robert A. G. Strickland (USNR, Ret.), Capt. William F. Krantz (USN, Ret.), Lt. Gen. Robert P. Keller (USMC, Ret.), Maj. Gen. Alan J. Armstrong (USMC, Ret.), Col. Robert W. Wilson (USMC, Ret.), Col. Gregory Boyington (USMC, Ret.), U.S. Marine Corps, Alexander H. D. McAulay, RAAF Historical Section, Australian Archives and Australian War Memorial.

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File

9 Greenridge Drive
Chappaqua, NY 10514
January 12, 1988
(212) 702-6806

Gary Bauer
Domestic Policy Advisor
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Gary:

On behalf of the Japanese American community, I want to thank you for seeing me, and thank you again as effusively as I can for your support of redress legislation.

Both the merits and the politics of the issue, it seems to me, line up nicely, as I tried to say in a letter to Carol Crawford at OMB. I've enclosed a copy of the letter.

There are a couple of other things you should ^{know} ~~you~~. Tom Kean, governor of New Jersey, talked to the President about redress last October. According to Kean, the President recalled events and anecdotes for 35 minutes, but though he was personally sympathetic, he could not at that point commit the Administration. The President had also followed the legislation in Congress. My feeling is that on this one if you let Reagan be Reagan, he will sign the bill. You know that the President is gratefully remembered in our community when, as Captain Reagan and a Hollywood celebrity, he took a clear public stand with us as we tried to return to California.

I talked to John Bolton at Justice who said that he would call an interagency meeting to review the position taken. This might be a breakthrough. Finally, Paul Weyrich is on our side. My guess is that he feels that Asians demonstrate in the real world why certain personal, family and social values work, and why others don't.

I've enclosed a photo book that might help you present the Japanese American war record. The way I feel is that the guys of the 442 walked into the mouth of hell to give me, Grant, a better chance in life. I owe them. I am also very proud that when they fought, they were very, very good at it.

Also here is a copy of the Almanac, along with several books I brought, edited and published last year.

Thank you yet again, Gary.

Sincerely,

Grant

9 Greenridge Drive
Chappaqua, NY 10514
December 4, 1987

Carol Crawford
Associate Director
Office of Management and Budget
345 Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Carol:

On behalf of the Japanese American community, I want to thank you and your staff, Ken, Jim, and Tara, for being so gracious and attentive. It meant a lot to me.

I would like to say again that the redress issue is not one of statutory civil liberties, but of gross federal violation of the Constitutional liberties of specific, living individuals. That this crime against the Constitution has never really been punished should worry conservatives. I am among them. Richard Willard at Justice will, I think, tell you privately that the 1948 Claims Act is not a good place to rest the Department's public case. In fact, the Act was a three-cents-on-the-dollar-red-tape horror that added insult to a profound sense of injury: administrative costs exceeded what the victims got. And to use the Claims Act, as the White House and OMB has, to oppose the bill in letters sent to the Asian community shows politically damaging insensitivity.

In fact, that community's personal and social values are quite conservative, and I have in part worked hard in the redress movement to tap that reality for an Asian conservative political future. I strongly feel that if you vote the way you live, you are a healthier person than if you don't. The fact is that I have been battling the campus radicals and suburban liberals in our community, pitting myself against what I consider a less than health-bestowing line of horse manure. With some success. I got the national Japanese American Citizens League to take no position on Judge Bork, which has made me a very bad guy among the dingbat element.

Nevertheless, I would like to say again that because the legitimate passion on internment and redress run so deep, a veto by a California President will gravely damage Asian prospects for the party on the West Coast. We are talking about the potential balance of power in one big electoral state. As I said to your staff, Ed Zschau told us to drop dead, and he didn't lose by much. Ed was probably worried about southern California, but we had Dannemeyer, Badham, Lagomarsino, and even Dornan with us. Dornan has a seat drawn by Burton for a Democrat, but the Vietnamese community swung it Republican.

So while I try to advance both the merits and the politics of the case, I know you and the Director must worry about the deficit. The timing is not good, but that good time may be a long time coming and I am looking at potential beneficiaries dying daily. The question is, is there a line in the budget for an assertion of basic American values? Given our nation's commitment to human rights throughout the world, I think there should be, and feel that that line would sit well with all good Americans, most of whom now know that we were never Japanese or Japanese spies and traitors, but fellow citizens who were expropriated and imprisoned by their own government. The criterion used was race, and race alone. My reading of American history shows that our people have consistently supported expressions of simple justice, which is what redress legislation is.

In the House bill, we are talking about \$1.25 billion stretched out over ten years, not to begin until fiscal year 1989.

I have enclosed some books. Two Almanacs inscribed for the Director and you, and three other books I have published during the year. As you may see, in my other work I also try to send out into the world the way I feel about it.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,



Grant Ujifusa

Washington Post
April 7, 1986

THE WASHINGTON POST



Rev. Shozo Honda performs Buddhist ceremony at Arlington Cemetery as Haruye Nagano, below, pays last respects. PHOTOS BY DARREL ELLIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

A Final Sayonara to a Soldier Son

41 Years Later, Japanese American Mother Pays Respects in Va.

By Eugene L. Meyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

Haruye Nagano paid her last respects yesterday to her son, Hiroshi, who died fighting for his country on April 6, 1945.

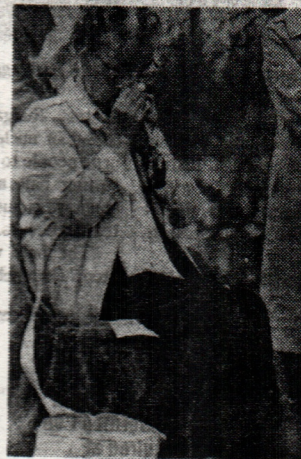
Pvt. Nagano, 20, was killed in action in Italy, in the final assault of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the all Japanese American unit that suffered more casualties and won more medals than any U.S. outfit of its size during World War II. Its motto became "Go for Broke."

Nagano's mother, now 86 and living in the Los Angeles suburb of Gardena, visited her son's grave in Arlington National Cemetery, where 21 members of his unit are buried. She said it was her seventh and her final visit to the grave site since his remains were moved there from Italy in 1948.

"I'm very proud my son died in defense of his country," she said.

She was joined at the grave by 25 Japanese Americans from the Washington area, including three other veterans of the 442nd. Also present were several veterans of the Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific.

The event, which included a brief Buddhist service, recalled a time when Japanese Americans led the final assault on the German positions in Italy. Their attack was to be a diversion, but after six days of fighting, they broke through enemy lines and spearheaded what became the main offensive leading to the



Axis surrender before V-E Day. Nagano died on the second day of the attack.

For the Japanese Americans, speakers said yesterday, military service was especially meaningful. Suspected of enemy sympathies, 110,000 of them, including 70,000 who were American citizens, were imprisoned in dusty desert camps. Those who did not volunteer for service early were classified 4-C, as enemy aliens, and were barred from entering the armed forces.

That restriction was lifted by the time Nagano, who was about to enter pharmacology school, was drafted into the Army in 1944. The family lived in Idaho, far enough east of the Pacific coast to escape wartime internment.

Nagano's mother, born in Japan, had come to this country in 1921. From a family of six children, two other sons survive. They also live in Gardena. They did not accompany their mother here for the graveside service.

Despite 65 years in this country, Haruye Nagano speaks little English. Through a friend acting as an interpreter, she recalled the last letter she received from her son, thanking her for a pen she had sent him.

A small photograph of Hiroshi Nagano was placed in front of the tombstone, which was framed with garlands of flowers. Planes zoomed overhead and a light drizzle began to fall as the Rev. Shozo Honda, a Buddhist priest who works at the Library of Congress, chanted a prayer. Nagano was a Buddhist, but his grave site contains a cross. It was not until 1952 that the Army allowed the Buddhist "wheel of righteousness" to be displayed on gravestones.

"When we pay tribute to Mrs. Nagano, we pay tribute to our Issei [Japanese-born] mothers," said Mike Masaoka, 70, a veteran of the 442nd. "They gave us the strength to understand and the courage to fight for our country. Of all the minorities in U.S. history, none had to undergo the same kind of bias and hardship and be suspect by our own government. We proved Americanism is a matter of mind and heart and not of ancestry."

Hiroshi Nagano's mother wept quietly as a bugler played taps.

May 7, 1987
9 Greenridge Drive
Chappaqua, New York 10514
212-702-6806

Richard K. Willard
Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division
Department of Justice
Constitution Avenue and 10th Street NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Willard:

It was a pleasure to chat with you at the recent House hearings on Japanese American redress. I would like to take you up on your offer, and hope that we can get together to talk at your earliest convenience. Through some friends of mine at AEI, I have also chatted by phone with Terry Eastland.

I want to assure you that I am neither by temperament nor behavior a civil rights activist. If anything, I am a Constitutional conservative. Accordingly, some of the language of the current bill and a couple of its provisions bother me. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the clear original intent of the Founders were grossly violated in 1942. And that should incur principled and meaningful sanction; so far, by any equitable measure, it has not. This should worry conservatives; an admitted crime against the Constitution, but no real punishment.

In the Japanese American community, I am the leader of the redress effort. And I tell Japanese Americans and other Asians, emerging natural Republican constituencies for all the obvious reasons, that Herbert Hoover would have never expropriated us. Why? Because instrumental New Deal government, well before Pearl Harbor, was closely allied with West Coast labor unions and small farmers with whom Japanese Americans competed -- unfairly, of course. And so the war came, and what happened, happened; and nobody would listen to J. Edgar Hoover who had the facts.

So my plea to you is: Stop shooting. Many of us are your friends. Values, principles, and the way we live from one day to the next show congruence.

If you would need, I can offer you some references on my character. Among them, I would like to list Edward Teller, Lew Lehrman, Stuart Butler, Dick Wirthlin, Danny Boggs, Angelo Codevilla, Les Lenkowsky, Wally Olson, Charles Kessler, John Buckley in Jack Kemp's office, Dick Cheney, and Al Simpson.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please call or write me.

Sincerely,
Grant Ujifusa
Grant Ujifusa

5. Enclosed are two books. I'll be publishing
in June and July. Hope you find them provocative
Ujifusa







The camps were surrounded by high barbed wire fences. Guards were placed at strategic intervals around the camp. No person was allowed to leave the camp without permission.