



HISTORY

>> Historical Information

ANZIO TO ROME

In March 1944, the [100th Infantry Battalion](#), along with 200 [Nisei](#) replacements, arrived in Anzio, Italy. For the next two months, the [Allies](#) in the Fifth Army tried to keep this 10-mile square of beachfront, while the Germans tried to blast them back to the sea. The Germans hit them with aerial bombs, artillery, rockets and mortar barrages, including rounds from a massive railway artillery gun. During the day, German gunners hid in the hills above the beachhead and fired on any Allied soldier who moved in the plain below.

At night, the Allies sent out patrols to capture German prisoners. They even sent out a company, but all their efforts failed. By the middle of May, the Allies planned to break out to Rome. But with no prisoners to interrogate, the Fifth Army still didn't know where the enemy divisions were.

A captain in the 100th offered to capture a prisoner. Young Oak Kim, a well-respected officer of Korean ancestry, carefully studied the German movements and planned the daring mission. At midnight, on May 16, Kim and four [Nisei](#) volunteers crept along a drainage ditch, past enemy outposts. At 2 a.m. they heard some Germans digging. Knowing the Germans were extremely cautious at night, Kim and his party decided to wait at the ditch until dawn. At dawn, Kim posted three riflemen as cover. Then Kim and Private First Class Irving Akahoshi crawled through heavy briar. They continued crawling on their stomachs 250 yards through an open wheat field. As they wriggled through the 18-inch wheat stalks, they could hear talking and the metal clink of someone cleaning a gun. They saw a slit trench with two German guards. Suddenly the Germans saw the barrel of a Thompson sub-machine gun. Kim and Akahoshi quickly disarmed the surprised Germans. As the prisoners and their captors crawled stealthily away, they could hear the talk and laughter of other Germans just a few yards away.

The Allies got the information they needed. General Mark Clark, commander of the Fifth Army, was so pleased that he personally awarded [Distinguished Service Crosses](#) to Kim and Akahoshi.

At the end of May, the Allies burst out of Anzio and pushed toward Rome. But at Lanuvio, the Germans stopped them with an intricate roadblock of overlapping machine gun positions. Two battalions from the 135th Regiment tried to crack the German defenses, but failed. On June 2, a single [Nisei](#) battalion was ordered to do it. In only 36 hours, the 100th knocked out almost a dozen machine guns, cleared minefields and smashed the German defenses. Unfortunately, the Allies underestimated the speed of the 100th's drive, and shot artillery fire at the [Nisei](#) soldiers who were already at the German position. Several [Nisei](#) soldiers were wounded or killed before the 100th could tell the Allies to stop firing. The 100th had wiped out the last major enemy stronghold on the road to Rome.

One Caucasian Lieutenant summed up the Anzio campaign like this: "We had been sitting and living in [foxholes](#) at Anzio some 63 days. Then the big push out and the capture of Rome. They [the 100th Battalion] wiped out the last heavy German resistance we met some 12 miles

south of Rome. And then it was practically a walk into the city. . . The liaison officers from my battalion say that this Japanese American infantry outfit is the best damn infantry they have ever worked with. . . "

For nine months, the *Nisei* had fought up the boot of Italy, spearheading many of the attacks. The 100th's 1,400-man battalion had suffered 900 casualties. It was less than half its original strength. Though saddened by the loss of their buddies, the men looked forward to entering Rome. They wanted to hear the cheers of the grateful Romans, and be recognized as a key part of the liberating Fifth Army. But that didn't happen.

Instead, on June 4, just 10 kilometers from Rome, the 100th was ordered to wait at the roadside. They watched hundreds of troops and military vehicles rush past for the triumphant entrance.

The next night, the men boarded trucks and rode 40 miles northwest of Rome to the seacoast town of Cittavecchia. There they joined with the *Nisei* soldiers of the [442nd Regimental Combat Team](#), who had just arrived from the states.

Though the battle-hardened *Nisei* soldiers became part of the new 442, they still retained the "100th Battalion" distinction in recognition of their unparalleled combat record. The newcomers in the 442nd were eager to show that they could fight harder and better than the 100th.