Kenjiro Akune Personal Collection

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Kenjiro Akune Personal Collection

Dates: ca. 1940-2000

Collection Number: 2016.001

Creator/Collector: Akune, Kenjiro

Extent: 4.34 linear feet

Repository: Go For Broke National Education Center
Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: The collection consists of manuscripts, military publications, correspondence, and audio/visual materials of Kenjiro Akune. This collection focuses on the military service of Akune and other Nisei soldiers during World War II. The collection also touches on Akune’s post-World War II activities, Go For Broke National Education Center events taking place between the 1990s-2000s, and Nisei veteran reunions and interviews.

Language of Material: English

Access

This collection is available for research upon request.

Preferred Citation

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Biography/Administrative History

Kenjiro Akune was born in Turlock, California on July 3, 1923. He grew up on a farm with his eight brothers and sisters. When he was 10 years old his mother died, so his father moved him and his family to Japan for a few years. He continued his schooling in Japan until the age of 15, then he and his older brother, Harry, moved back to the states. He worked as a schoolboy, and was later taken in by a Japanese farming family, the Saisho’s, whom he was staying with when the war broke out. After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the enactment of Executive Order 9066, he and the Saisho family were forcibly removed to the Merced Temporary Detention Facility and later, to the Granada (Amache) Concentration Camp. While at Granada Concentration Camp, Ken volunteered to join the service and was recruited into the Military Intelligence Service due to his knowledge of the Japanese language. Ken underwent basic training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi, and was also sent to military language training in Minneapolis, Minnesota at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling. In January 1944, he was sent to the China-India-Burma Theater and was assigned to the Office of War Information. He interrogated Japanese prisoners of war to retrieve information about the Japanese Imperial Army, which was used in propaganda pamphlets that were given to Japanese soldiers during the war. The war in the Pacific ended in July 1945, and Ken was discharged home. However, he wanted to return to Japan to spend time with his family (his sister, younger brother, and father were living in Japan during the war). He decided to sign up through civilian services to work as a linguist with the occupation forces, where he was assigned as a translator to the war crimes trials -- among these was the Tojo Trial. While in Japan, he met and married his wife. They moved back to the states in 1949, and settled in Gardena, California to raise a family. Ken Akune has been an integral part to the Go For Broke National Education Center organization since it first began in 1989. He is one of the founding members and among the most active Nisei veterans within the organization. He has contributed to the creation and construction of the organization’s monument in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists of manuscripts, military publications, correspondence, and audio/visual materials of Kenjiro Akune. There are personal materials of Kenjiro’s as well as other materials that he has collected. Most of the materials are in English but some materials are in Japanese. There are materials from Japanese American service in World War II as well as materials from post World War II activity relating to veteran reunions, events, and the monument creation.

Indexing Terms

World War 2
Military Intelligence Service
Japanese Americans
Nisei Veterans
Akune, Kenjiro
Go For Broke National Education Center
Military Intelligence Service