Finding aid for the Martin Higgins Papers

Collection number: 2001.319

Descriptive Summary
Title: Martin Higgins papers
Dates: 1948-1950
Collection number: 2001.319
Collection Size: 2 folders
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012
Creator: Higgins, Martin

Abstract: The collection includes letters and pamphlets sent to and from Martin J. Higgins between 1948 and 1950. The letters and pamphlets primarily concern H.B. 199 (the Equality in Naturalization and Immigration bill) and House Joint Resolution 238, which aimed to give citizenship to Issei.


Access
By appointment only. Please contact the Collections Management and Access Unit (collections@janm.org). Advanced notice is required.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in this collection must be submitted to the Collections Management and Access Unit at the Japanese American National Museum (collections@janm.org).

Preferred Citation

Acquisition Information
The collection was acquired in 2000 as a gift of Martin J. Higgins.

Processing Information
Items were described initially by R.N. [Ralph Nabeta?] in 2001. A finding aid was created by Keiko Nishimoto in 2011. An online version was created in 2017 by Jamie Henricks.

Biographical Note
Biographical information is taken from the entry on the Texas Military Forces Museum (http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/halloffonor/higginsmj.htm):
Born on 29 January 1916 in Jersey City, New Jersey, Martin J. Higgins received a BA in Economics from St Peter's College in 1939. Immediately after graduating, he enlisted as a Private in Troop B (machine gun troop) of Squadron C, 101st Horse Cavalry Regiment, New York National Guard. In September 1942, after rising to the rank of sergeant, he attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Riley, Kansas, graduating as a 2nd Lieutenant in December 1942. On 29 December 1942 he was assigned to the famed "Buffalo Soldiers," commanding Troop B, 10th Cavalry, 2nd Cavalry Division, serving with the unit until it was disbanded in North Africa during March 1944. Higgins then volunteered for Infantry Training School, upon completion of which he joined the 36th Infantry Division in July 1944. Commanding 1st Platoon, Company A, 141st Infantry Regiment, he took part in Operation Dragoon - the invasion of Southern France, 15 August 1944, landing on the most heavily contested beach of the invasion.

On 24 September 1944, Higgins assumed command of Company A, 141st Infantry Regiment. During Operation Drago, the 7th Army’s offensive into the Vosges Mountains of France, the 1st Battalion, 141st was cut off behind German lines between 24-30 October 1944. Electing acting commander of the battalion by his fellow company commanders, Higgins directed the historic stand of what came to be called the "Lost Battalion," until the 442 RCT, sustaining heavy casualties, managed to fight its way through and relieve the beleaguered unit.

Eight weeks later Company A was struck by a counterattacking German regiment. When their ammunition ran out, Higgins and his command were captured. Two days later, Higgins was promoted to the rank of Captain. Interrogated personally by Heinrich Himmler, head of the Nazi SS, Higgins was initially sent to Oflag 64 in Szubin, Poland and later shifted to STALAG III-A in Luckenwalde, Germany during a 350-mile, six week, forced-march. Higgins was one of only 450 officers out of the original 1400 to survive the ordeal. He escaped from Stalag III-A on April 22, 1945, reaching Allied lines and safety just
before the end of the European War, 8 May 1945. Captain Higgins was discharged 15 August 1945.

His Decorations include: The Silver Star, Bronze Star with "V" for Valor; Bronze Star for Meritorious Achievement in Ground Operations against the enemy; Purple Heart; POW Medal; Combat Infantryman's Badge; Presidential Unit Citation; Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal with three campaign stars and one amphibious arrowhead; American Campaign Medal; American Defense Medal; World War II Victory Medal and the French Croix de Guerre, avec Etoile de Vermiel.

Captain Higgins married Marjorie Ellen Jewkes on 9 October 1943. Together they had two children, Mary Pat and Michael. His post war career encompassed 37 years as a Regional Sales Manager for Diamond International. After retiring in 1979, he earned an MA in Education from the University of South Carolina in 1983. Higgins helped successfully lobby Congress for passage of the Immigration Act of 1952 which allowed Issei to petition for citizenship. Active in community government, the Republican Party, Boy Scouting, and the Church, he died on 26 February 2007 and was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

Scope and Content
The collection includes letters and pamphlets sent to and from Martin J. Higgins between 1948 and 1950. The letters and pamphlets primarily concern H.B. 199 (the Equality in Naturalization and Immigration bill) and House Joint Resolution 238, which aimed to give citizenship to Issei. Most of the letters are from Mike Masaoka and Tats Kushida. The Japanese American Citizens’ League (JACL) appealed to Higgins for support for the bills because of his experiences in World War II, when he was commander of the “Lost Battalion,” which was rescued by the Nisei 442nd Regiment while in France.

Arrangement
The collection is divided into two series, pamphlets and correspondence. Items are arranged chronologically.

Indexing Terms
Higgins, Martin J., Jr.
Naturalization
Japanese American Citizens’ League
Emigration and immigration law --United States

Item list for the Martin Higgins papers.