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## Finding aid for the Susumu Ito Collection

### Collection number: 94.306

Japanese American National Museum  
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:

Lauren Zuchowski

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Susumu Ito collection

**Dates:** 1940-1984

**Bulk Dates:** 1942-1945

**Collection number:** 94.306

**Creator:** Ito, Susumu, 1919-

**Collection Size:** 1.0 linear feet, 10 artifacts

**Repository:** Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**Abstract:** The Susumu Ito collection consists primarily of photographs and negatives from Ito's service as a part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team's 522nd Field Artillery Battalion. Throughout the war Ito carried a small camera with him at all times, capturing extremely rare images. Notable subjects include the Los Battalion, the liberation of a Dachau sub-camp, and the daily lives of U.S. soldiers. The collection also includes a Dachau gate pass addressed to Sus Ito as well as a thank you letter from an ex-Dachau prisoner. There are also a number of Ito's personal belongings and uniform items in the collection.

**Physical location:** Japanese American National Museum 100 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90012

### Access

By appointment only. Please Contact the Collections Management and Access Unit by email ([collections@janm.org](mailto:collections@janm.org)) or telephone (213-830-5615). Please Note: Negatives require conservation work and are currently unavailable to researchers.

### 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](mailto:collections@janm.org)).

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Susumu Ito collection. 94.306, Japanese American National Museum. Los Angeles, CA.

### Biography / Administrative History

Susumu (Sus) Ito was born on July 27, 1919 in Stockton, California to Sohei and Hisayo Ito. His father worked as a tenant farmer and his mother was a housewife. Ito was drafted in 1940 and inducted in February 1941 while he was attending auto mechanic school along with five others from his community. From Stockton, Ito took the train to Sacramento, California for his physical, where he was cleared for duty despite having flat feet. Ito was sent to quartermaster school at Camp Haan near Riverside, California where he repaired trucks.

Ito served in a non-segregated Quartermaster Corps, Heavy Maintenance Unit located in Camp Haan. Ito's duties were switched to civilian and his rifle taken away after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The army wanted him to join the Military Intelligence Service and learn Japanese. He refused and ended up in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, bored with civilian duties. Ito's family was incarcerated at Rohwer War Relocation Center in Arkansas and his entire community sent to concentration camps. Ito and his mother wrote letters weekly and she was very proud of her son although he never told her what he did for the army until he returned in 1945. Ito was able to visit his family in Rohwer once before deploying to Europe.

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In the early spring of 1943, Ito was selected to join the 442nd Regimental Combat Team's 522nd Field Artillery Battalion. Ito was sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi and assigned to artillery, eventually working as a motor sergeant in charge of trucks. Ito, looking for a more active position, kept his eyes open for new assignments and volunteered for a gun battery that focused on direct artillery fire and reconnaissance. Ito served as an artillery spotter, rising to the rank of lieutenant during the war. He went on to serve in all of the 442nd's campaigns in Italy, France, and Germany, including the rescue of the Lost Battalion of the 36th Division. In April 1945, his unit helped liberate a Dachau sub-camp.

Ito carried with him three things while serving in Europe: a small bible, a senninbari, and a 35mm Argus camera. A senninbari is a thousand stitch belt made of muslin and a traditional Japanese piece worn in battle. Ito never told anybody about his senninbari and secretly carried it with him during his tour of duty in a waterproof packet. Ito took over a thousand photographs while serving in Europe, many of which are now at the Japanese American National Museum along with his senninbari.

After the war, Ito used the GI Bill to go to college, earning a PhD in biology and cell biology from Cornell University. He eventually taught at Harvard Medical School, becoming a tenured professor in 1967. Ito officially retired in 1990 but still continues his work at his Harvard lab.

### **Scope and Content of Collection**

This collection provides insight into the daily lives of Japanese American soldiers serving in Italy, France, and Germany. Photographs capture extremely rare moments of wartime, ranging from captured German soldiers, images of the Lost Battalion, and the liberation of Dachau. Ito also photographed Rohwer during his one family visit before deployment. Artifacts in the collection highlight Ito's experience in a high risk position and work with the photographs to tell his story as a Japanese American soldier during World War II. They include his uniform, binoculars, the hand-made senninbari made in Rohwer, two ashtrays, a dagger, boots, and a plaque. The bulk of this collection consists of photographs and negatives taken by Ito on his small 35mm Argus camera. These images are particularly important in telling the story of the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion.

### **Arrangement**

The collection has been broken down into the following series:

Series 1: Artifacts Series 2: Photographs Series 3: Documents

### **Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Japanese Americans

World War, 1939-1945

United States. Army. Infantry Regiment, 442nd

United States. Army. Field Artillery Battalion, 522nd

Dachau (Concentration camp).

Germany

Italy

France

Rohwer Relocation Center (Ark.)

Ito, Susumu, 1919-

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