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The heroes among us | This Army unit's toughest enemies were prejudice and mistreatment

Lillian Cox

Cox is a free-lance writer living in Encinitas.

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'Pearl Harbor' (the movie) is currently in production and scheduled for release next Memorial Day. With a budget of \$145 million, it promises to be the loudest and most costly film ever made. It has an all-star cast, including Ben Affleck, Alec Baldwin, Cuba Gooding Jr., and Gene Hackman as President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

We Americans enjoy these big-budget, guts-'n-glory movies that masterfully fuse special effects with fast action and Hollywood actors uttering clever one-liners to pit good against evil. This formula may sell popcorn, it usually conflicts with reality.

No stronger evidence is there than the 120,000 U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry who became the forgotten victims of Pearl Harbor through a propagandea campaign launched against them by their own government. Executive Order 9066, signed by President Roosevelt in 1942 called for their imprisonment. Most remarkable is that in spite of this degradation, the men who were recruited from internment camps to serve in the Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team distinguished themselves as the most decorated unit, not just in World War II, but in all of U.S. military history.

Here in San Diego, most Japanese-Americans had never heard of Pearl Harbor before the Dec. 7, 1941 attack. Nevertheless, they stood accused with radios blasting warnings: "Japanese farmers have infiltrated every strategic spot including dams supplying water to San Diego, the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Oakland Airport. The very fact that no sabotage has taken place is an indication that it will."

Local Japanese-American families learned of the government's plans to relocate them to internment camps from the radio and posters that blanketed the city. Many old-timers can still vividly recall the FBI raiding their homes and confiscating short-wave radios, guns and cameras after obtaining their names and addresses from the U.S. Census Bureau.

"Evacuation Sale" signs appeared everywhere as these U.S. citizens were pressured to liquidate their assets before reporting to the Santa Fe Train Depot in April 1942, taking only what they could carry. Entire families were transferred to the Santa Anita Racetrack for processing and then

