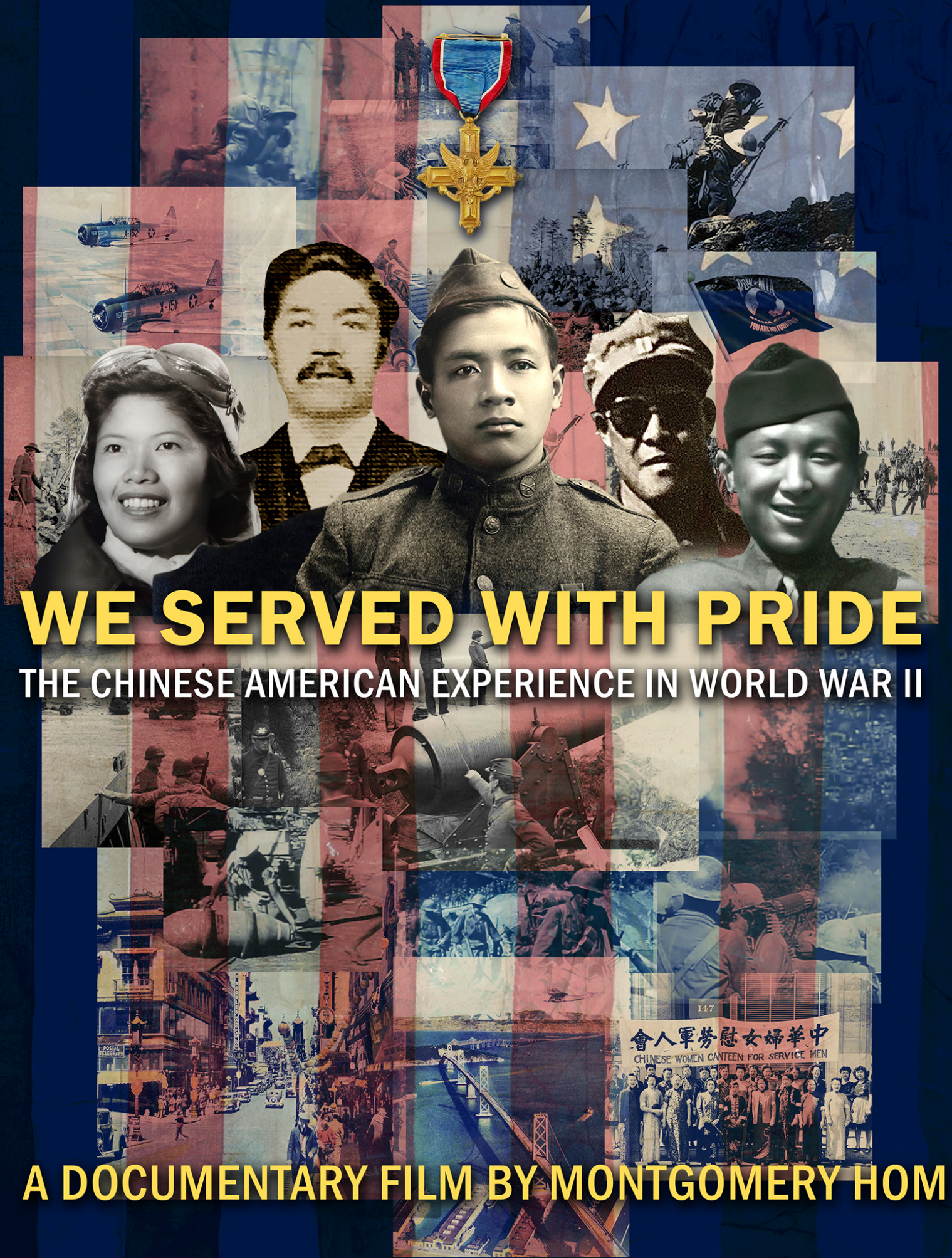




# WE SERVED WITH PRIDE

THE CHINESE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN WORLD WAR II

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY MONTGOMERY HOM



TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR  
"WE SERVED WITH PRIDE: THE CHINESE AMERICAN  
EXPERIENCE IN WORLD WAR II"  
A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY MONTGOMERY HOM

Written for high schools and community colleges by  
Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE)  
Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI), Stanford University

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For further information contact:  
Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE)  
Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI)

Stanford University  
<http://spice.stanford.edu>  
E-mail: [SPICE-sales@stanford.edu](mailto:SPICE-sales@stanford.edu)

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# WE SERVED WITH PRIDE: THE CHINESE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN WORLD WAR II

## Organizing Questions

- How did Chinese Americans contribute to the U.S. war effort in World War II?
- What motivated Chinese Americans to join the U.S. military and support the war effort?
- What barriers did Chinese Americans face to joining the military and how did they surmount them?
- In what ways did Chinese Americans' ancestry make it easier or harder for them to contribute to the war effort?
- How did the contributions of Chinese Americans in World War II affect perceptions of the greater Chinese American community?

## Summary

*We Served with Pride* is an award-winning film by Montgomery Hom about how Chinese Americans contributed to the war effort in World War II. Five years in the making, the film provides a powerful and insightful first-hand look into the lives of Chinese American veterans who participated in major battles overseas, as well as Chinese American civilians who worked on the home front, with service organizations, and in defense work. In this teacher's guide, students gain context for the film before watching it and taking detailed notes. Students then research some of the key veterans highlighted in the film and share their insights with classmates before concluding with a full-class discussion on how the contributions of Chinese Americans in World War II affected perceptions of and opportunities for the wider Chinese American community.

## Objectives

Through the course of this teacher's guide, students will

- gain appreciation for Chinese American contributions to the U.S. military, especially in World War II;
- learn the individual histories of several Chinese Americans who fought in the U.S. military; and
- understand what motivated Chinese Americans to join the World War II fighting effort and how they overcame barriers related to their ethnicity to serve.

## Materials

Handout 1, *Letter from the Director*

Handout 2, *Overview of the Chinese American Experience in the United States*

Handout 3, *Video Notes and Key Terms*

Handout 4, *Instructions for Research on Veterans*

Handout 5, *Biographies of Select Chinese American Veterans*

Handout 6, *Notes on Veteran Presentations*

Display, *Concluding Discussion*

Answer Key 1, *Video Notes*

Answer Key 2, *Notes on Veteran Presentations*

Video, “We Served with Pride (remastered),” on the Center for Asian American Media website at [www.caamedia.org](http://www.caamedia.org)

**Equipment**

- Computer with Internet access and an HTML5-supported web browser
- Computer projector and screen

**Teacher Preparation**

Instructions and materials are based on a class size of 30 students. Adjust accordingly for different class sizes.

1. Make the appropriate number of copies of handouts.
2. Preview Video, “We Served with Pride (remastered)” (running time: 47 minutes).
3. Become familiar with the content of the handouts, display, and answer keys.
4. Set up and test your class computer and projector before starting the lesson.

**Time**

Three 50-minute class periods, plus homework before each class period

**Procedures Before Day One**

1. Inform students that they will be learning about the contributions of Chinese Americans to the U.S. military, especially in World War II, for the next several class periods.
2. Distribute one copy of Handout 1, *Letter from the Director*, and Handout 2, *Overview of the Chinese American Experience in the United States*, to each student. Instruct students to read the two handouts closely and complete the activity listed at the end of the first handout before the next class period.

**Day One**

1. Organize the class into groups of four students each. Allow 20–30 minutes for students to share in their groups the results of their interviews as well as any artifacts they brought.
2. Bring the class back together. Lead a full-class discussion on the following two questions. Ask students to refer to what they read in Handout 2, *Overview of the Chinese American Experience in the United States*, as they answer these questions.
  - What are some reasons Chinese Americans may have been reluctant to fight for the United States during World War II?
    - *Potential responses include:*
      - *Many Chinese Americans were not citizens*

- *Chinese Americans were prohibited from serving in some branches of the military*
- *The Chinese Exclusion Act had prevented immigration from China for more than 60 years*
- What are some reasons Chinese Americans may have been motivated to fight for the United States during World War II?
  - *Potential responses include:*
    - *Many Chinese Americans strongly identified as American, even if they could not officially become citizens*
    - *Chinese Americans wanted to prove their allegiance to the United States*
    - *The United States was fighting Japan, which had invaded China in 1937 and was thus a common enemy*
- 3. Distribute one copy of Handout 3, *Video Notes and Key Terms*, to each student. Instruct students to watch the video, “We Served with Pride (remastered)” and complete Handout 3 before the next class period. Tell students to reserve 90 minutes to complete both tasks.

Before Day Two Students watch Video, “We Served with Pride (remastered),” and complete Handout 3, *Video Notes and Key Terms*. Remind students to reserve 90 minutes to watch the video and complete the handout.

Day Two

1. Collect Handout 3 from each student for assessment.
2. Organize the class into groups of five students each. Distribute one copy of Handout 4, *Instructions for Research on Veterans*, and Handout 5, *Biographies of Select Chinese American Veterans*, to each student.
3. Assign each student to one of the five veterans profiled in Handout 5.
4. Allow students the rest of the class period to research their assigned veteran and complete the assignment. Students should complete Handout 4 as homework if needed.

Before Day Three If needed, students continue working on Handout 4, *Instructions for Research on Veterans*.

Day Three

1. Ask students to reconvene in their groups. Distribute one copy of Handout 6, *Notes on Veteran Presentations*, to each student.
2. Inform students that they have up to five minutes each to share their research with the other members of their group. Each student should take notes on what they learn on Handout 6.
3. After 30 minutes, collect Handout 6, *Notes on Veteran Presentations*, from each student for assessment.

4. Project Display, *Concluding Discussion*, on the projector. Use these two questions to lead the class in a concluding discussion.

**Extension**

1. Replace the activity on Handout 4 with the following, more advanced activity:
  - a. Divide students into groups of five students each. Assign one of the veterans profiled in Handout 5 to each group.
  - b. Instruct each group to create a digital exhibit about their veteran that includes:
    - i. A [customized Google Map](#) that shows where the veteran lived throughout their life, including where they fought during their time in service
    - ii. An exploration of the unique challenges they confronted as someone of Chinese ancestry joining the military
    - iii. A description of how their military experience changed them
    - iv. An explanation of the significance of the quote on their profile page
2. Write an essay in response to this prompt:

Japanese Americans fought for the United States in World War II even though their country of origin was the enemy. Compare and contrast the treatment of Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans in the United States during World War II, including how their ancestry affected their ability to contribute to the U.S. war effort and their feelings of affinity with the United States.
3. Create an “In Memoriam” digital exhibit for Harold Lee (KIA) based on his biography (included in Handout 5, *Biographies of Select Chinese American Veterans*).

**Assessment**

- The following are suggestions for assessing student work in this lesson:
1. Evaluate student responses to Handout 3, *Video Notes and Key Terms*, based on Answer Key 1, *Video Notes*.
  2. Use Answer Key 2, *Notes on Veteran Presentations*, to evaluate the quality and accuracy of students’ responses on Handout 6, *Notes on Veteran Presentations*.
  3. Assess student participation in group and class discussions, evaluating their ability to
    - clearly state their opinions, questions, and /or answers;
    - provide thoughtful answers;
    - exhibit sensitivity toward different cultures and ideas;
    - respect and acknowledge other students’ comments; and
    - ask relevant and insightful questions.

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**By Montgomery “Monty” Hom, director of the documentary**

My film *We Served with Pride: The Chinese American Experience in World War II* was a milestone achievement in many ways.

I became interested in military history by the age of 10 and began deep research by 13. I interviewed veterans for over five years and filmed as time and finances permitted. The documentary film was finally completed in early 1999.

Later that year, I received an invitation to the White House on behalf of President Clinton. Every Chinese American veteran in the film and their family members were invited to this historic gathering. President Clinton spent nearly 45 minutes with us and spoke to every single veteran. He was deeply moved as he listened to the Chinese American experiences during WWII.

A White House statement was released the next day to the nation. It was the first time an American president acknowledged the presence of Chinese Americans serving in World War II. The following day, we premiered our film at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum.

In the year 2000, we toured the country for nearly seven months premiering the film in every major city on behalf of the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA). The film was finally released on national television through PBS in 2001.

The greatest experience I had as I look back at this time was getting to know these Chinese American veterans and their families so well, we all became very close.

I am deeply honored to share their stories with the world. I had made a promise that I would tell their experiences to a mainstream audience and we did it. Now over 20 years later, we are about to embark on this journey once again and showcase their sacrifices to a whole new generation, on a much higher and broader level.

**Activity**

This unit delves deeply into the experience of war veterans. To better understand the veteran experience, complete the following before the next class period:

1. Identify someone you know (in your family or otherwise) who has served in a war. Ask them the following questions and record their response:
  - a. Where and when did you serve?
  - b. Why did you decide to fight?
  - c. In what ways, if at all, does your service continue to impact your identity?
  - d. Is there a special non-weapon artifact from your time fighting that means a lot to you? Would you be willing to lend this so I could share it with my classmates?
2. Bring the list of responses and any non-weapon artifact from the war (helmet, identity tag, badge, etc.) to the next class period.

## OVERVIEW OF THE CHINESE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

The earliest Chinese immigrants to the United States came from the coast of southern China in the mid-1800s, first to work in the gold mines and then to help build the railroads. Historians estimate that by 1867 between 10,000 and 15,000 Chinese laborers were employed as railroad workers, comprising 90 percent of the railroads' labor force. Their work was arduous and dangerous and was instrumental to the construction of the nation's first Transcontinental Railroad and the subsequent development of the American West.

By 1880, there were roughly 100,000 Chinese in the United States, but a deep national recession fueled anti-Chinese sentiment in California, where the Chinese were blamed for decreased wages and unwanted competition in the labor force. A series of laws in the 1870s and 1880s restricted Chinese immigration, culminating in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This legislation essentially excluded anyone from China from immigrating to the United States. It was unlike any U.S. law enacted since the founding of the country because it singled out a specific race and nationality for exclusion. For 60 years, the Chinese Exclusion Act not only banned Chinese workers from coming to the United States, but also prohibited Chinese nationals already in the United States from becoming U.S. citizens and thus from being able to vote. Many Chinese left the United States due to the Act as well as the hostility and racism they experienced.

The Geary Act in 1892 renewed the Chinese Exclusion Act for ten more years and included a provision that every Chinese person had to carry a photo identity card. Over 100,000 Chinese refused to carry this card, the largest act of civil disobedience seen in the United States until that time. Chinese Americans challenged the constitutionality of the Geary Act but lost.

By 1920, the Chinese American population had dwindled down to approximately 60,000. Attitudes finally changed when the United States entered World War II and fought alongside China against Japan. The Magnuson Act, signed into law in 1943, repealed the original Chinese Exclusion Act. Chinese immigration was now legal but limited to only 105 new entries per year, and some Chinese Americans were allowed to become U.S. citizens.

Large-scale Chinese immigration did not return until the Immigration Act of 1965. The new group of immigrants contained a high percentage of skilled employees and students and came from all regions of China as well as from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore.

By the 2020 Census, about 5.2 million people in the United States identified as having at least some Chinese ancestry. No longer just an immigrant population, Chinese Americans are a diverse and ever-changing demographic that includes many generations of native-born Chinese Americans and growing numbers of Chinese Americans of mixed descent. Chinese immigrants today come from all over the world and bring varied cultural practices, languages, and experiences. They arrive legally and illegally; they are wealthy and poor; they are professionals and wage laborers; they are highly educated and illiterate. Some immigrants become naturalized citizens, while others do not. Some are refugees, and some are adopted by American parents.

With such diversity, the Chinese American community is in a state of constant evolution. Each generation and successive wave of immigration adds a new dimension, a new layer of complexity, and a new twist on the already diverse composition of the group.



### handout 3

5. Name one Chinese American who fought in the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) during World War II and their role in the war. What is one interesting point about their experience?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Name one Chinese American woman who supported the U.S. war effort and their role. What is one interesting point about their experience?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What unique barriers did Chinese Americans face in joining the U.S. military effort in World War II?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How did the contributions of Chinese Americans in World War II affect perceptions about the wider Chinese American community?

KEY TERMS (in order of mention)

**commercial aviation**—part of civil aviation that involves operating aircraft for hire to transport passengers or multiple loads of cargo

**home front**—the civilian population and activities of a nation whose armed forces are engaged in war abroad

**armed forces**—a country’s military forces, usually an army, navy, and air force

**mustard gas**—a deadly chemical warfare agent used during World War I

**Union Army**—army that fought for the Union (or North) during the American Civil War

**Confederate Army**—army of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War

**Union Navy**—United States Navy during the American Civil War, when it fought the Confederate Navy

**[New Mexico] Indian Wars**—series of conflicts in New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas between 1861 and 1900 in which numerous Apache bands rejected reservation life and, under Geronimo, Cochise, and others, staged hundreds of attacks on outposts. Geronimo finally surrendered in 1886; others fought on until 1900.

**Battle of Manila Bay**—battle on 1 May 1898 that resulted in the defeat of the Spanish Pacific fleet by the United States Navy, leading to the fall of the Philippines and contributing to U.S. victory in the Spanish–American War

**Admiral Dewey**—George Dewey, Admiral of the U.S. Navy; known for his victory at the Battle of Manila Bay during the Spanish–American War

**doughboy**—a nickname for American soldiers in World War I, particularly the infantrymen in General John Pershing’s American Expeditionary Force

**commission**—an official document issued by a government and conferring on the recipient the rank of an officer in the armed forces

**Manchuria**—region in Northeast Asia encompassing the entirety of present-day Northeast China and historically parts of the modern-day Russian Far East

**ROTC**—Reserve Officers’ Training Corp; group of college- and university-based officer-training programs for preparing commissioned officers of the U.S. Armed Forces

**Sino–Japanese War**—the 2nd Sino–Japanese War was a conflict from 1937 to 1945 that began with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July 1937 and ended with Japan’s surrender on 2 September 1945. It marked the culmination of growing Japanese aggression toward China that had started with the earlier Sino–Japanese War (1894–1895).

**dual allegiance**—voluntarily owing loyalty to two countries

**transport pilot**—professional pilot licensed to operate aircraft that transport passengers or cargo

**fighter pilot**—a person who flies a small, fast military aircraft designed for aerial combat against the enemy

**Chinese American Composite Wing**—a joint organization of pilots and crewmen from the United States Army Air Forces and Chinese Air Force, formed during World War II to support Chinese ground forces against Japan

**United States Army Air Corps**—aerial warfare service component of the United States Army, established in 1926. During World War II, it became the United States Army Air Forces, predecessor to the United States Air Force.

**dive bombing**—an aerial bombing technique where an aircraft dives directly at its target to increase bombing accuracy

**seaman**—naval enlisted person with a rank below those of petty officers

**kamikaze**—means “Divine Wind.” Later in World War II, as a desperate tactic, Japanese pilots conducted suicide attacks by crashing their aircraft into enemy ships.

**bow**—front part of a ship or boat

**Marine Corps**—a branch of the United States Armed Forces trained for land, sea, and air combat, typically in conjunction with an amphibious landing

**squadron**—a unit of military aircraft and their aircrews, often part of a larger group, that conducts missions such as bombing, reconnaissance, and combat

**defense industry**—sector of the economy that produces military equipment and supplies, including weapons, vehicles, ammunition, and other war materials

**welder**—a skilled worker who joins metal parts together using heat. Welders play a crucial role in the production of ships, aircraft, and tanks.

**air raid warden**—civilian volunteer responsible for assisting in air raid precautions, ensuring blackouts were maintained, and helping civilians find shelter during bombing raids in WWII

**Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)**—civilian women pilots’ organization whose members were U.S. federal civil service employees. The pilots tested aircraft, ferried aircraft, and trained other pilots.

**Chinese Christian Youth Conference**—a gathering of Chinese American youth from East Bay high schools to post-college age that began in 1933 at Lake Tahoe

**USO**—United Service Organizations; an organization created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941 to provide morale and recreation services to U.S. military personnel during World War II

**canteen**—as part of the USO, canteens were established to offer a welcoming space for soldiers, featuring food, entertainment, and social activities. The first overseas canteen was established in 1943 after the liberation of Rome.

**reconnaissance officer**—military position responsible for gathering vital information on enemy positions to help with tactical decision making

**Battle of the Bulge**—the last German offensive on the Western Front, an unsuccessful attempt to divide the Allied forces and prevent an invasion of Germany (December 1944–January 1945)

**infantry**—troops who fight as the primary ground forces. The infantry usually spearheads the attack.

**steward**—during WWII, an enlisted naval person who served in the officers’ mess and maintained the officers’ quarters on ships

**intelligence specialist**—enlisted military member who collected, analyzed, and produced intelligence information to help military leaders plan operations during WWII

**combat engineer**—a type of soldier who performs military engineering tasks (building bridges, roads, etc.) in support of land forces combat operations

**runner (messenger)**—a foot soldier responsible for carrying messages between the front lines and headquarters during combat operations

**commanding officer**—an officer who oversees a group of people in the military or of a military camp or base

**OSS**—Office of Strategic Services; forerunner to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

**paratrooper**—member of a military infantry unit trained to attack or land in combat areas by parachuting from airplanes

**West Point**—formally the United States Military Academy; prepares cadets for service as commissioned officers in the U.S. Army

**G.I. Bill**—a law that provided a range of benefits for some returning World War II veterans. The original G.I. Bill expired in 1956, but the term “G.I. Bill” is still used to refer to programs created to assist American military veterans.

**“paper sons” or “paper daughters”**—Chinese people who were born in China and illegally immigrated to the United States by obtaining fraudulent documents that indicated they were the blood relatives of Chinese people who had already received U.S. citizenship. Some members of the Chinese American community used these documents after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed all prior immigration records related to the Chinese community.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESEARCH ON VETERANS

To better understand the breadth and depth of Chinese American veterans' contributions to the U.S. military throughout the years, you will research five prominent Chinese American veterans in your small group.

**Step 1: Choose one veteran from the list**

Assign one of the five veterans listed below to someone in your group. Enter the name of the corresponding student in the table.

Veteran	Name of Assigned Student
<b>Edward Day Cohota:</b> first known Chinese American to fight for the United States; later advocated for Chinese American veterans to be given citizenship	
<b>Lau Sing Kee:</b> highest-decorated Chinese American soldier during World War I	
<b>Won Loy Chan:</b> worked as an immigration officer before World War II, then served as intelligence officer for the U.S. Army in the Burma theater	
<b>Maggie Gee:</b> female pilot during World War II who served with the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASP	
<b>Edward Fung:</b> captured by Japanese forces in Indonesia and held as prisoner of war; the only Chinese American soldier captured by the Japanese in World War II	

**Step 2: Conduct research and prepare to share your response**

Read the bio of your assigned veteran and conduct your own research to answer the questions below. Document your responses and complete your research as homework if needed.

Come to the next class period prepared to share what you learned with your groupmates. Your teacher will collect and evaluate your groupmates' notes on your veteran, so make sure to answer these questions accurately and completely.

1. What motivated this veteran to fight for the United States?
2. How did this veteran contribute to the U.S. war effort?
3. What was this person's core memory from their experience fighting?
4. What challenges did this veteran encounter related to their Chinese American ancestry during their time with the military?
5. How did this veteran's life change because of their service?

BIOGRAPHIES OF SELECT CHINESE AMERICAN VETERANS



**Edward Day Cohota, Private, 23rd Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, Company I**

*“It’s almost like a Disney movie: a young Chinese orphan makes his way to America, gets adopted, volunteers to fight in the Civil War of his new country, and serves in the U.S. Army for 30 years.”*

Edward Day Cohota was born in Shanghai, China, around 1843 during the turmoil of the Taiping Rebellion. This conflict tore families apart, leaving many children orphaned and forced to survive on their own. When Edward was about six years old, he became a stowaway on an American trading vessel, the *Cohota*, captained by Sargent S. Day. He was later taken in as a cabin boy.

Aboard the *Cohota*, Captain Day and his wife, son, and daughter treated Edward kindly and taught him English. They decided to raise him and named him Edward Day Cohota. When the ship returned to Gloucester, Massachusetts, Cohota became part of the Day household and attended school alongside Captain Day’s children. He trained to be a sailor.

When the U.S. Civil War erupted in 1861, many of Cohota’s classmates enlisted in the Union Army. Though eager to join them, he was initially denied permission by his adoptive family. However, after some of his classmates returned as veterans in 1862, Cohota became even more insistent on serving his adopted country. This time, Captain Day granted his consent. Cohota enlisted in the 23rd Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry under Colonel Andrew Elwell and was assigned to Companies C and E. Cohota later recalled, “no one in the company objected to me because I was a Chinaman.”

Over the next two years, Cohota fought in several major battles against Confederate forces. During the Battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864, he was in the second line of skirmishers when a bullet grazed his scalp, leaving a permanent part in his hair. During the same battle, he saved the life of Private William E. Low, who had been severely wounded in the face. Cohota carried Low from the battlefield to an aid station, ensuring his survival. He continued fighting in North Carolina until he was physically exhausted, finally mustering out of service in June 1865 at New Bern, North Carolina.

After the Civil War, Cohota returned to Gloucester. Like many veterans, he struggled to find steady employment, so re-enlisted in the U.S. Army—doing so 15 more times. He was assigned to Company H, 15th Infantry, where he served for 24 years, stationed at various military outposts across the Midwest and the Western frontier, including New Mexico. During this time, he married a Norwegian woman, had six children, and witnessed the dramatic transformation of the American West from the late 1860s to the late 1890s.

After more than 30 years of service, Cohota retired from the Army in 1895. However, he was denied U.S. citizenship due to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Though he had volunteered to fight for the United States and had lived as an American for decades, he was refused full military benefits and stripped of the right to vote—something he had done illegally for years. Infuriated, Cohota often declared that he was a “proud Republican and a Chinaman!”

Cohota settled in Valentine, Nebraska, where he became a successful businessman, running a general store, restaurant, and hotel. Every day without fail, he proudly raised and lowered the American flag at his establishment until he was physically unable to do so.

Around 1905, Cohota began a new battle—this time against the U.S. government for his right to citizenship. He pursued this fight for decades, not for financial gain but as a matter of principle. Though he finally received the Civil War pension owed him in the 1920s, what he truly wanted

was official recognition as an American citizen. After all, he had served the country since 1862. Edward Day Cohota passed away peacefully in 1935 without being recognized as a U.S. citizen.

**Sgt. Lau Sing Kee, Company G**  
**306th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division**  
**U.S. Army Allied Expeditionary Forces 1918**



**Lau Sing Kee, Sergeant, Company G, 306th Infantry Regiment, 77th Division, A.E.F.**

*"He was not only a war hero, but he was really a guy who was larger than life ... he always went out of his way to help many of the folks in Chinatown."*

Sergeant Lau Sing Kee was decorated for extraordinary heroism during combat for his actions at Mont-Notre-Dame, west of Fismes, France, on 14–15 August 1918. Despite being seriously affected by gas poisoning from intense German shelling, he refused evacuation and practically single-handedly continued to operate the regimental message center relay station. Throughout this critical period, he demonstrated remarkable bravery, persistence, and an unwavering devotion to duty, completely disregarding personal danger. His determination significantly aided his regimental commander in maintaining communication with the front lines.

Lau Sing Kee was born between 1894 and 1896 in Saratoga, California, though his exact birth date remains unclear. His parents, Low Chung Kee and Mary Low, came from a family where some members used the surname Lau while others used Low. Traditionally, Chinese names list the family name first, but American immigration officials recorded his surname as Kee rather than Lau. He adopted this name and passed it down to future generations. During his childhood, Kee and his family moved to the outskirts of San Jose's Chinatown, where his father owned a cigar and candy store and contracted labor for Chinese workers.

In 1917, Kee moved to New York City's Chinatown. That same year, as the United States entered World War I, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. His unit, the 77th Infantry Division, became known as the Cosmopolitan Division due to its large number of first-generation immigrants. Shortly after, Kee was deployed to the Western Front.

In August 1918, Kee was stationed in Mont-Notre-Dame, northern France, when German artillery began an intense bombardment, firing 30 shells per minute. At the time, Kee was one of 20 runners responsible for carrying vital messages between command posts and the front lines a mile away. These messengers were the only means of communication between commanders and soldiers engaged in battle. As German forces launched the offensive, these runners faced machine-gun fire, gas attacks, and flamethrowers. One by one, they were wounded, killed, or rendered unconscious until Kee was the only one left standing.

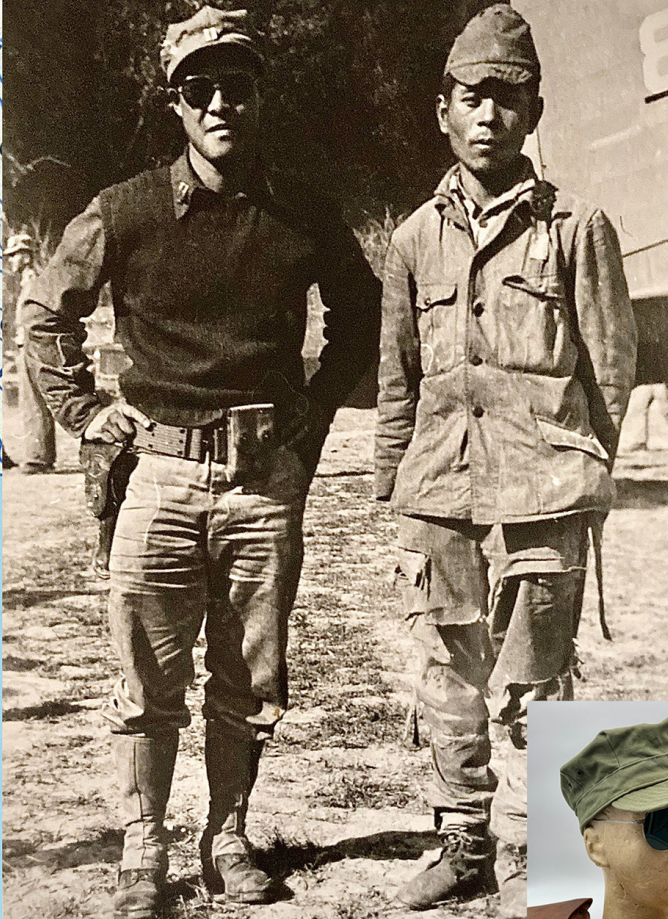
Determined to fulfill his duty, Kee ran approximately eight miles through a deadly barrage of machine-gun fire, shrapnel, and exploding shells to relay critical intelligence. Finally, after completing his mission, he collapsed from exhaustion.

For his extraordinary courage in combat, Sergeant Lau Sing Kee was awarded the French Croix de Guerre and the Distinguished Service Cross, one of the highest military honors in the United States.

After the war, Kee returned to New York City's Chinatown, where he built a successful career as an entrepreneur. He also played a crucial role in helping many "paper sons" from China immigrate to New York City. These were individuals who sought to enter the United States using falsified documents to circumvent discriminatory immigration laws. At one point he was imprisoned for these activities. Despite this, he remained a respected and enigmatic figure in New York City's Chinatown community.

# Captain Won Loy Chan

G-2, Combat Intelligence Unit  
Burma, U.S. Army



## Won Loy Chan, Captain, G-2 Intelligence Officer, Burma, U.S. Army

*"The fighting on the front was no fun when you started to meet the enemy."*

Won Loy Chan was born in 1914 in Bend, Oregon. He was the second oldest of six siblings. In the late 1920s, his father sent him to San Francisco for school to ensure he would not forget his Chinese heritage. There, he attended Chinese school after his regular English classes. He later returned to North Bend High School, where he graduated in 1931. He went to college at Stanford University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1936 and a master's degree in 1938.

While at Stanford, Chan enrolled in ROTC and became a Second Lieutenant of Field Artillery in the Army Reserve. He was an outspoken critic of the Japanese invasion of China during the Sino-Japanese War, giving speeches to various organizations and volunteering for China War Relief. In early 1942, Chan was assigned to the newly formed Fourth Army Intelligence School in the Presidio of San Francisco, making him one of the first Asian Americans in this post.

Chan became a Japanese intelligence specialist and was later transferred to Savage, Minnesota, where he graduated from the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) in November 1942. This made him one of the first Chinese American intelligence officers in the U.S. Army. During this period, his fellow officers affectionately nicknamed him "Charlie," a name that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

In January 1943, Chan was deployed to India. He was assigned to work as a Japanese intelligence specialist in Burma under Deputy Commander General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. Although Stilwell was theoretically in command of all Chinese Nationalist troops in the Burma-India theater, these forces only followed his orders if they were also approved through Chinese military channels. The Allied forces in Burma included Chinese regulars, British troops, and American soldiers preparing for the second Burma campaign against Japanese forces.

Chan was on the front lines for 26 months without leave, interrogating captured Japanese prisoners. This proved particularly challenging for two reasons. First, Chinese soldiers often executed Japanese prisoners soon after capture. Second, while conducting intelligence-gathering missions near the front lines, Chan and his two main colleagues, who were Japanese American, were frequently mistaken for Japanese operatives. As a result, they were shot at multiple times by Allied soldiers in adverse weather. Capturing and keeping Japanese prisoners alive for interrogation proved to be a difficult and dangerous task. In addition to interrogating captured Japanese prisoners, Chan was the first American officer to encounter Korean "comfort women," who had been taken as sex slaves by the Japanese military.

In January 1945, Chan returned to the United States and was transferred to the War Department General Staff's Military Intelligence Division. There, he led a new intelligence unit called the Pacific Military Intelligence and Research Section (PACMIRS) at the secret Camp Ritchie base in Maryland. After the war, Chan served with the Office of Naval Intelligence before being recruited into the Central Intelligence Group (which later became the CIA) in 1948, making him the first Chinese American to join the agency. He remained with the CIA for 40 years and retired from the Army Reserve in 1975 with the rank of Colonel.

**Postscript**

I remember meeting Colonel Chan during the mid-1990s and he was still sharp as a tack, especially with dates and places during World War II. He was always vocal about the discrimination Chinese Americans faced. Before joining the Army, he had aspired to become a lawyer, but law firms in the late 1930s didn't hire Chinese Americans.

As one of the first Asian American officers assigned to intelligence work in 1942, Colonel Chan was instrumental in establishing the presence of Asian Americans in military intelligence. His postwar career with the CIA placed him at the center of major historical events, including the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961. I am deeply honored that Colonel Chan shared his experiences with me. Since he and his wife had no children, he wanted a way to preserve his story for future generations. I'm grateful to have been his conduit to do so.

# MARGARET "MAGGIE" GEE

## WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS 1944



**Margaret “Maggie” Gee, Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)**

*“I never thought what I did in World War II was really a big deal. I just wanted to fly.”*

Margaret “Maggie” Gee was born in Berkeley, California, in 1923. She was a middle child of six. After her father passed away in 1930, her mother raised all six children on her own. Maggie developed a passion for aviation from a young age, inspired by the celebrity aviators Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart. She dreamed of someday flying and later recalled, “We would go with my family ... my father would take us down to the Oakland Airport on Saturdays and Sundays when there was something going on. We would watch the planes take off and land, and it was really very, very exciting.”

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Maggie’s mother decided to contribute to the war effort and took a job as an apprentice welder at the Richmond Naval Shipyard. Maggie was 19 and had just started college but put her studies on hold to follow her mother. She found a job as a drafting assistant at the shipyard but found the work boring and hated her job. One day, a female co-worker who had been taking flying lessons suggested, “Let’s all go flying! Let’s cash our war bonds and go and take flying lessons!”

Maggie was thrilled! She and two other female friends cashed in their war bonds, took a leave of absence from work, and bought a used Ford convertible. They painted it red and then drove to Minden, Nevada to learn to fly. They enrolled in a private flight school, completed the necessary hours, and earned their private pilot licenses.

Maggie went back to work at the Naval Shipyard, unsure if her dreams of flying and her pilot license would amount to anything. She then saw an ad in a magazine asking women with private pilot licenses to apply for the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. Maggie applied, passed the entrance exam and physical, and in the summer of 1944 heard that she was accepted to the WASP program and had to report to Sweetwater, Texas for training.

Maggie later recalled, “To get to Sweetwater, Texas, you had to pay your own way. It was a civilian job; we were not a part of the military. I honestly didn’t even know what on Earth I was doing. Girls did not go out and do things of the sort at the time! I was worried when I told my mother, but she was very progressive and thought it was great! She told me, ‘If I were your age, I’d do the same!’ Some of our friends and family really frowned upon her allowing me to leave and join the service, they thought I should be home.”

Maggie completed her training in Sweetwater, Texas, and began flying missions as a WASP pilot in late 1944. She was stationed at Las Vegas Army Air Force Base. One of her most dangerous assignments was towing aerial targets for live-fire training exercises. As she flew, ground-based gunners practiced their aim, firing live ammunition at the targets she pulled behind her aircraft. After flying for just a few months, Maggie was sent home in January 1945 when the WASP program was disbanded.

The first Chinese American woman to fly for the WASP was Hazel Ying Lee, who had been flying missions two years before Maggie’s arrival. Tragically, Hazel died in a flying accident in November 1944. Maggie deeply admired Hazel and later credited her as the trailblazer who paved the way for her.

After the war ended, Maggie returned to college. She graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in physics and became a nuclear physicist at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. She was one of the first Asian American nuclear physicists to work on classified government programs.

In addition to her career in science, Maggie was deeply involved in politics, serving for many years as an elected member of the Alameda County (California) Democratic Central Committee. The WASP pilots were finally recognized by the U.S. military and granted status as U.S. Air Force veterans in 1977. In 2010, President Barack Obama awarded Maggie, Hazel Ying Lee, and the other WASP pilots the Congressional Gold Medal for their service during World War II. This made Maggie the first Chinese American WWII veteran to receive the Congressional Gold Medal.

Maggie passed away in 2014, leaving behind a legacy of pioneering achievements in both aviation and science. In 2023, she was inducted into the California Hall of Fame in recognition of her outstanding contributions to her country and community.

# Private Edward "Eddie" Fung

2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery  
36th Infantry Division, U.S. Army



レノゴウグンホリョヘ  
ALLIED PRISONERS

The CAPTURED prisoners have approximately 100,000 and will be transported to SHAN TOUNG Province as soon as possible.

They will have their personal effects with them and will be supplied with food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. The first group of about 10,000 will arrive within one to two days.

They will be transported to SHAN TOUNG Province as soon as possible.

They will be transported to SHAN TOUNG Province as soon as possible.

NAME	REGIMENT	COMPANY	GRADE	ADDRESS
1. [Name]	1. [Regiment]	1. [Company]	1. [Grade]	1. [Address]
2. [Name]	2. [Regiment]	2. [Company]	2. [Grade]	2. [Address]
3. [Name]	3. [Regiment]	3. [Company]	3. [Grade]	3. [Address]
4. [Name]	4. [Regiment]	4. [Company]	4. [Grade]	4. [Address]
5. [Name]	5. [Regiment]	5. [Company]	5. [Grade]	5. [Address]
6. [Name]	6. [Regiment]	6. [Company]	6. [Grade]	6. [Address]
7. [Name]	7. [Regiment]	7. [Company]	7. [Grade]	7. [Address]
8. [Name]	8. [Regiment]	8. [Company]	8. [Grade]	8. [Address]
9. [Name]	9. [Regiment]	9. [Company]	9. [Grade]	9. [Address]
10. [Name]	10. [Regiment]	10. [Company]	10. [Grade]	10. [Address]



AMERICAN RED CROSS  
PRISONER OF WAR  
FOOD PACKAGE  
NO. 10  
FOR DISTRIBUTION THROUGH  
INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS COMMITTEE

## Edward “Eddie” Fung, Private, U.S. Army, 131st Field Artillery, 2nd Battalion, Battery F Japanese Prisoner of War, March 1942–1945

*“As a POW ... dying was the easy thing. It was the living part that was tough. I just figured I did not want to die because I wanted to see what the next day would bring.”*

Edward “Eddie” Fung was born in San Francisco’s Chinatown in 1922. His father Fung Chong Poo and mother Ng Shee were from Guangdong Province. His father immigrated to Canada in the late 1890s and later snuck into California. His mother arrived in San Francisco in 1914. The Fung family was large, with two older adopted brothers from China and four sisters and two additional brothers born in San Francisco.

Though not poor, the Fung family lived modestly. They had the basics: shelter, clean clothes, and most importantly, decent food. Life in Chinatown during the 1920s was tough. The Fung family lived in a crowded building at 842 Washington Street with five other families on the third floor. Their two-room home housed nine people: four girls in one room, the boys in the front room, and the parents in a hall closet. The floor had two toilets, a communal kitchen, and a single bathtub that could only be used once a week since the only way to get hot water was to boil it and pour it into the tub. The Fung family lived this way for nine years.

Eddie remembers that his father always supported his daughters but was very strict with his sons, sometimes lashing them with the end of a bamboo duster. Eddie’s mother was the heart of the household, ensuring food was always on the table and making or patching clothes for the entire family. Even during the Great Depression, Ng Shee managed to provide meat for special occasions, such as birthdays, Thanksgiving, or even Chinese New Year. During the 1920s Eddie and his younger brother Bill earned extra money shining shoes at Chinatown’s Portsmouth Square Park. By 1931 the family had saved enough to buy a two-story house at 130 Trenton Street in Chinatown. This house had four bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom with hot running water, and a backyard that Eddie’s father made into a garden.

However, the family remained very frugal and self-reliant. By this time, Eddie had grown to hate staying within the 12 square blocks of Chinatown. While not legally restricted to Chinatown’s confines, Chinese residents often faced hostility beyond those boundaries. Italian kids at Grant and Broadway would rough up lone Chinese boys who tried to go past the majority-Italian North Beach neighborhood, though groups were generally left alone. Eddie occasionally went past the boundaries of Chinatown alone to pick fights and prove that he could hold his own.

During his early high school years, Eddie became fascinated by horses and the tales of the Old West. He dreamed of becoming a cowboy. He learned that 16-year-olds could not be considered truant, so on his 16th birthday, he told his brother Bill to blindfold him. He then randomly placed a pin on a map, landing on Midland, Texas. Eddie told his brother that he was leaving for Midland to find a cattle ranch and work as a cowboy. Without telling his parents, he left home. Due to his small stature, he was able to buy a half-price bus fare meant for children under 12. Chinatown could not contain Eddie’s curiosity; his great adventure had begun.

In Midland, word spread about a Chinese boy from California looking for a job. He was hired along with several other young ranch hands at the Scarborough Ranch, where he endured grueling labor, waking at 4:00 a.m. and working until sundown. Despite the hardships, he learned to handle livestock and was living his dream of working on a ranch. After living in the crowded conditions of Chinatown, Eddie enjoyed the isolation of the ranch, where there was no electricity, phone, radio, or newspapers. Only occasionally would he receive a letter from home.

Eddie lost his father in 1940. Early that same year, some Army officers visited the ranch. Their stories intrigued Eddie, and the military sounded like it could be his next adventure. By June 1940, he joined the Texas National Guard in Lubbock, Texas. That October, the United States began military mobilization. Despite wanting to join a cavalry unit, Eddie was assigned to field artillery after his basic training at Camp Bowie in central Texas.

Eddie faced some racism from fellow soldiers and locals, enduring taunts like “Ching Chong Chinaman” and “little runt.” However, he could still hold his own, especially when it came to eating. He could down more food than a six-foot soldier in his company even though he was only 5 feet, 2 inches. Eddie was assigned to be a machine gunner, carrying a large and heavy Browning Automatic Rifle.

Private Eddie Fung of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, 36th Infantry Division sailed from San Francisco on 21 November 1941 en route to the Philippines with his battalion. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, they were diverted to Brisbane, Australia. After spending Christmas in Brisbane, they sailed again on a Dutch freighter, arriving on the island of Java on 11 January 1942, with 558 men. The 2nd Battalion was the only U.S. ground force to arrive in the Dutch East Indies. Their mission was to help defend the Dutch against a possible Japanese invasion, which came on 27 February 1942.

The campaign in Java and the Dutch East Indies in early 1942 was a lost cause for the Allies. The Allied command, named ABDA for its American, British, Dutch, and Australian components, was a weak military force. By contrast, the Japanese forces were finely honed and supported by vastly superior airpower. The 2nd Battalion distinguished itself during the Battle of Java, supporting the Australian defense of Leuwiliang and fighting alongside the Dutch at Porong. On 8 March 1942, the Allies in the Dutch East Indies surrendered to the Japanese, who took 32,500 Allied soldiers prisoner, mostly Dutch, British, and Australian. The 534 members in Eddie’s U.S. 2nd Battalion taken prisoners of war would be known forever as “The Lost Battalion.”

In October 1942, the POWs were transported under horrific conditions aboard the Japanese ship *King Kong Maru* to Singapore. They were then transferred on board the *Mayebashi Maru* to Rangoon, Burma. These Japanese transport ships often earned the name “hellships” because the Japanese tried to cram as many prisoners on board as possible, without regard for food, water, health conditions, or temperatures.

After reaching Rangoon, the Allied POWs were moved to a new camp in Burma to build the new 262-mile Burma-Siam Railroad through the jungle to Thailand, later depicted in the film “The Bridge on the River Kwai.” Sixty-one thousand Allied POWs and 250,000 civilian slave laborers from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Burma were expected to build the railroad through jungle, solid rock, and soaring gorges and canyons in 12 months. The brutal project took 16 months, costing the lives of 12,500 Allied POWs and 70,000 Asian civilian laborers.

Eddie endured 16 months of brutality, malnutrition, and disease in Burma. At one point, he weighed under 80 pounds. Beatings, starvation, malaria, and other tropical diseases left him near death several times. An Australian doctor saved his life. His ordeal did not end until August 1945 when he and the other POWs were finally liberated when they were in a camp in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand. This feeling became bittersweet when he learned of the death of his mother back in Chinatown. World War II ended a few months later. Eddie had somehow survived the war out of sheer will.

After the war, Eddie attended Stanford University on the G.I. Bill, earning a degree in chemistry. He built a successful career as a researcher at Lawrence Livermore Labs. Eddie would go on to

suffer many bouts of what is known today as PTSD. He stayed in touch with many of his fellow POW survivors and helped form a POW brotherhood reunion group that met for decades. He later learned he was the only U.S. Army member of Chinese descent captured by the Japanese in World War II.

### **Postscript**

I first met Eddie in the early 1980s at St. Mary's Square Park in San Francisco's Chinatown, where he taught Tai Chi. Walking my grandfather to the park, I struck up a conversation with Eddie, who casually mentioned his World War II service. A decade later, he shared his harrowing POW experiences with me in detail.

Although he suffered great abuse during his years as a POW, he did not have the typical animosity against the Japanese after the war. Instead, he wanted to ensure that younger generations understood what it means to be a prisoner of war and survive the experience.

I vividly remember our special invitation to meet President Clinton at the White House on behalf of my film that was premiering at the Smithsonian. After meeting the President, our group of veterans and families returned to our hotel. Eddie chose to walk the two miles alone in the evening air rather than riding with everyone else. He walked as fast as a 20-year-old despite his age and retained his independent, strong-willed, indomitable spirit.

# Private Harold Lee

Co. A, 60th Infantry Regiment  
9th Infantry Division, U.S. Army



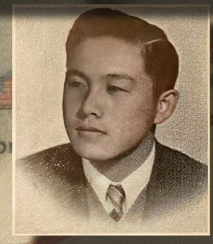
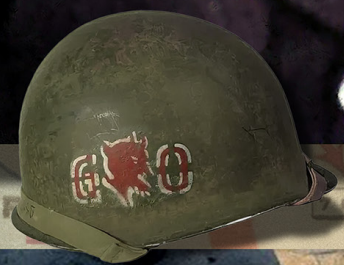
**SENTINEL**  
HANFORD, THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1944

### Pvt. Harold K. Lee Dies of Wounds In France

The first "died of wounds" casualty among 1943 graduates of the local high school was announced here Thursday in a War Department telegram informing Mr. and Mrs. Harry Qong Lee, of 308 N. White street, that their son, Private Harold K. Lee, had "died of wounds" received June 30 in France.

The parents received a V-Mail letter from their son written on June 26, just four days before his death, indicating that he most likely had been quite seriously wounded, since his hospitalization was of short duration. He visited here on a holiday furlough in April.

Surviving, besides the parents, are four brothers and four sisters. An older brother, Pfc. Gilbes Lee, is with the Medical Corps with the American forces fighting in China. Raymond, Stanford and Franklin Lee are other brothers, Raymond being just about ready to join the service. The sisters are Mrs. Lillie Lee Lew of Fresno, Bernice Lee Huey, whose husband and Fort Meade, then sent with an infantry contingent to England to eventually take part in the invasion of the French coast.



**Harold Lee, Private, A Company, 60th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army  
KIA: Normandy, France, June 1944**

Harold Lee was an 18-year-old infantryman in the U.S. Army during World War II. He was born and raised in Hanford in the Central Valley of California. Harold was one of three brothers who served in World War II. His oldest brother served in the Navy, and two younger brothers served in the Korean War.

Harold was attached to the 60th Infantry Regiment, Company A of the 9th Infantry Division. He saw action on 10 June 1944, the fourth day of the Normandy landings in northwestern France, coming ashore on Utah Beach and moving inland.

The 60th Infantry Regiment's mission was to cut off the Germans at France's Cotentin Peninsula and capture the city of Cherbourg and its vital port. After intense fighting across five key landing zones, the Allies officially established a beachhead and ultimately held against countering German forces. However, the landings only marked the beginning of the massive Allied drive through northern Europe.

The excitement at the success of the Normandy landings on 6 June (D-Day) was quickly replaced with doubt when the Allied advancement into the French interior stalled. Harold Lee and the infantry elements had to battle a force of determined and well-prepared German defenders on French territory some 30 miles inland. The fighting was intense, and the U.S. forces suffered many casualties.

On 29 June 1944, Harold was killed in action. His younger brother Stanford was the first to receive the tragic news. "I was home that day and received the War Department telegram from Western Union. We were a very close family, all of us were devastated." Harold was the first American soldier from the town of Hanford to be killed in World War II. The Lee family had to wait four years for the return of their son's remains. Their father, under distress, died before his son's return. The U.S. Army lost Harold's official death report in processing, and the family did not see it until decades later.

NOTES ON VETERAN PRESENTATIONS

Take notes on your groupmates' presentations in the following table. Your teacher will collect your responses for assessment.

<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Edward Day Cohota</b>
<b>Presenting Student:</b>	
<b>Notes:</b>	
<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Lau Sing Kee</b>
<b>Presenting Student:</b>	
<b>Notes:</b>	

<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Won Loy Chan</b>
<b>Presenting Student:</b>	
<b>Notes:</b>	
<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Maggie Gee</b>
<b>Presenting Student:</b>	
<b>Notes:</b>	

<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Edward Fung</b>
<b>Presenting Student:</b>	
<b>Notes:</b>	

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

1. How did the stories of Chinese Americans fighting for the United States and supporting the U.S. war effort in World War II affect perceptions about Chinese Americans in wider American society?
2. Retired Major General William S. Chen stated that *“The major impact made by Chinese American World War II veterans was that they opened up opportunities for all Chinese Americans to join mainstream America after the war and live the American dream.”*

Based upon what you have learned, how would you assess this claim?

VIDEO NOTES

Student responses should broadly reflect elements of the sample responses below.

1. What made Edward Day Cohota a pioneer?

*Cohota was the first known person of Chinese descent to fight for a U.S. military unit. There are records of him fighting in the Civil War for the Union Army in 1862.*

*He later became perhaps the first Asian American to fight for civil rights when he began to campaign for his military benefits and U.S. citizenship in 1905.*

2. Name one Chinese American who fought for China before the United States entered World War II and their role in the war.

*Students should have mentioned one of these two veterans of the Chinese military from World War II:*

- *John “Angel” Chu: Captain, 5th Fighter Group, Chinese Air Force*
- *Archie Lee: 2nd Lieutenant, Chinese American Composite Wing, Chinese Air Force*

3. Name one Chinese American who fought in the U.S. Army during World War II and their role in the war. What is one interesting point about their experience?

*Students should have mentioned one of these U.S. Army veterans covered in the film:*

Name	Rank	Service
Won Loy Chan	Captain	Intelligence Officer, G-2 Burma
Kenneth Gong	Sergeant	501st PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment), 101st Airborne Division
John B. Wong	Captain	238th Combat Engineer Battalion
Ernest K.H. Eng	Captain	Division Commander, Chinese Language Group, Fort Snelling
David F. Lee	Corporal	7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division
Dale Yee	Corporal	B Co. 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11th Airborne Division
Kenneth Mar	Corporal	Office of Strategic Services, China Theatre, Team Elephant
Edward “Eddie” Fung	Private	2nd Battalion, Battery F, 131st FA

4. Name one Chinese American who fought in the U.S. Navy during World War II and their role in the war. What is one interesting point about their experience?

*Students should have mentioned one of these U.S. Navy veterans covered in the film:*

Name	Rank	Service
Jim Lay Fown	PO 2nd Class	Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 15
Daniel J. Kim	Seaman Sc3C	8th Naval Construction Battalion
Ly H. Leong	Electrician’s Assistant	Alameda Naval Air Station

5. Name one Chinese American who fought in the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) during World War II and their role in the war. What is one interesting point about their experience?  
*Students should have mentioned one of these U.S. Army Air Force veterans covered in the film:*

Name	Rank	Service
Harold T. Chinn	Captain	Chinese National Aviation Corporation
Roger W.C. Dip	1st Lieutenant	760th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force
James G. Jay	Sergeant	407th Air Service Squadron, 14th Air Service Group
David Lem	2nd Lieutenant	499th Bomb Squadron, 5th Air Force

6. Name one Chinese American woman who supported the U.S. war effort and their role. What is one interesting point about their experience?  
*Students should have mentioned one of these women covered in the film:*

Name	Rank	Service
Nancy Lem	Volunteer	American Red Cross
Maggie Gee	Pilot	Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)
Dorothy Eng	Founder and Director	Chinese Young Women's Society (East Bay USO chapter)
Mary Wong	Organizer	San Francisco Chinatown USO
Jessie M. Lee	Corporal	Women Army Corps, U.S. Army

7. What unique barriers did Chinese Americans face in joining the U.S. military effort in World War II?

*Several branches of the armed services had not allowed Chinese Americans to serve before World War II. The Army and the Navy allowed Asian Americans but usually relegated them to non-combat roles. The Marine Corps did not allow Asian Americans, while the Army Air Corps (which later become the Air Force) prohibited Asian Americans from serving as pilots or officers.*

*As mentioned in the film, John Henry Wong wanted to join the Marine Corps but was told that they didn't accept Asians. When he was accepted, he became the first Marine Corps member of Asian descent.*

8. How did the contributions of Chinese Americans in World War II affect perceptions about the wider Chinese American community?

*Before the war, many saw Chinese Americans as "perpetual foreigners." The bravery and dedication of Chinese Americans during the war showed greater American society that they were just as devoted as any other American.*

*Chinese Americans' willingness to join the war effort contributed to the 1943 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which allowed some Chinese Americans to become U.S. citizens and permitted (limited) immigration from China for the first time since 1882.*

*Most Chinese Americans veterans were able to use the G.I. Bill for higher education and homeownership, which increased their economic and social mobility.*

## NOTES ON VETERAN PRESENTATIONS

Student responses should broadly reflect elements of the sample responses below.

**Edward Day Cohota:**

1. What motivated this veteran to fight for the United States?

*Cohota was eager to fight, perhaps because of the kindness shown by his adoptive American family. While originally denied permission, his insistence grew when several of his classmates returned from fighting in the Union Army.*

2. How did this veteran contribute to the U.S. war effort?

*Cohota fought in several major battles in the Civil War, and later at military outposts for 24 years. In 1864, he saved the life of Private William E. Low by carrying him from the battlefield to an aid station in time for him to receive life-saving medical treatment.*

3. What was this person's core memory from their experience fighting?

*Cohota expressed pride for all his years of service and reenlisted in the U.S. Army 16 times over his career.*

4. What challenges did this veteran encounter related to their Chinese American ancestry during their time with the military?

*Cohota stated that his Chinese ancestry posed no issues when he was enlisting or fighting. However, after he retired from the Army, he could not receive full military benefits because he was not allowed citizenship. He fought for years to receive his Civil War pension and to become a U.S. citizen. In the 1920s, he finally won his pension but was never recognized as a U.S. citizen despite all his years of service.*

5. How did this veteran's life change because of their service?

*Cohota's service was the center of his identity: he served for 24 years all around the country, met his wife while serving, and ended up in Nebraska. His last decades of life were marked by his fight for his pension and U.S. citizenship, which he argued were his due as a veteran.*

**Lau Sing Kee:**

1. What motivated this veteran to fight for the United States?

*The materials provided do not address this question.*

2. How did this veteran contribute to the U.S. war effort?

*Kee was seriously affected by gas poisoning from intense German shelling in World War I. Despite this, he continued to operate his regiment's message center relay station practically single-handedly: he ran approximately eight miles through a deadly barrage of machine-gun fire, shrapnel, and exploding shells to relay critical intelligence, allowing his regimental commander to maintain communication with the front lines. He won military decorations for this display of bravery, persistence, and devotion.*

3. What was this person's core memory from their experience fighting?

*Kee's bravery as a relay runner in August 1918 earned him two high military honors. He is being considered for a posthumous upgrade to the Congressional Medal of Honor, which would make him the first Asian American recipient of the nation's highest military award for valor.*

4. What challenges did this veteran encounter related to their Chinese American ancestry during their time with the military?

*Kee does not appear to have had any issues serving with the military due to his Chinese American ancestry; his division had many first-generation immigrants.*

5. How did this veteran's life change because of their service?

*While the answer to this is not clear from the information we have, Kee's bravery and service seem to have inspired his life of service to other Chinese immigrants in New York City.*

#### Won Loy Chan:

1. What motivated this veteran to fight for the United States?

*Chan had been a vociferous critic of the Japanese invasion of China and had supported the Chinese war effort for several years prior to becoming part of the Army's intelligence service in 1942.*

2. How did this veteran contribute to the U.S. war effort?

*Chan was instrumental in establishing the presence of Asian Americans in military intelligence. Fluent in Japanese, he interrogated captured Japanese prisoners to gain intelligence. Chan was also the first American officer to encounter Korean "comfort women," who had been taken as sex slaves by the Japanese military.*

3. What was this person's core memory from their experience fighting?

*Chan's discovery of the Korean comfort women made this horrific aspect of Japan's conduct during the war known to the world.*

4. What challenges did this veteran encounter related to their Chinese American ancestry during their time with the military?

*Chan joined the military in part due to discrimination. He had originally wanted to be a lawyer, but law firms in the 1930s did not hire Chinese Americans, so he became one of the first Asian American officers assigned to intelligence work.*

5. How did this veteran's life change because of their service?

*Chan dedicated his entire professional life to the military. He continued to serve as an intelligence officer after the war and then became the first Chinese American to join the Central Intelligence Group (which later became the CIA) when it was created in 1948.*

#### Maggie Gee:

1. What motivated this veteran to fight for the United States?

*Gee's dream of flying led her to serve with the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. After attending flight school, she looked for work as a pilot and saw an ad for the WASP program and excitedly applied.*

2. How did this veteran contribute to the U.S. war effort?

*At Las Vegas Army Air Force Base, Gee's was assigned to tow aerial targets for live-fire training exercises. As she flew, ground-based gunners practiced their aim, firing live ammunition at the targets she pulled behind her aircraft. This helped them prepare for live action.*

3. What was this person's core memory from their experience fighting?

*Gee's hero was Hazel Ying Lee, the first Chinese American woman to fly for the WASP. Lee had been flying missions for two years before Maggie's arrival. Tragically, Hazel died in a flying accident in November 1944. Maggie deeply admired Hazel and later credited her as the trailblazer who paved the way for her.*

4. What challenges did this veteran encounter related to their Chinese American ancestry during their time with the military?

*Gee did not encounter any challenges related to her Chinese ancestry, but in her time it was rare for women to fly. Fortunately, her mother was supportive of Gee's dream.*

5. How did this veteran's life change because of their service?

*Gee's military service inspired her to further her career. After the war, she graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in physics and became a nuclear physicist at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. She was one of the first Asian American nuclear physicists to work on classified government programs.*

**Edward Fung:**

1. What motivated this veteran to fight for the United States?

*Fung was an adventurer at heart and had left his home in San Francisco's Chinatown to work as a ranch hand in west Texas on a whim when he was 16. Army officers visited his ranch in 1940. Intrigued by their stories, he joined the Texas National Guard and then the U.S Army.*

2. How did this veteran contribute to the U.S. war effort?

*As a POW of the Japanese, Fung suffered greatly during the war. His will to survive the horrific experiences the Japanese put him through and maintain his optimism inspired others.*

3. What was this person's core memory from their experience fighting?

*Fung's time as a POW gave him a strong will and indomitable spirit.*

4. What challenges did this veteran encounter related to their Chinese American ancestry during their time with the military?

*While Fung had no issues enlisting in the military, he faced some racism from fellow soldiers. They called him "Ching Chong Chinaman" and "little runt." However, he earned their respect with his strength and prolific eating.*

5. How did this veteran's life change because of their service?

*After the war, Fung used the G.I. Bill to attend Stanford University and earned a degree in chemistry. This led to a successful career as a researcher at Lawrence Livermore Labs.*

*Fung stayed in touch with many of his fellow POW survivors and helped form a POW brotherhood reunion group that met for decades. On a less positive note, his experiences as a POW led to what is known today as PTSD.*

## FINAL NOTES

### Credits for the Film

*We Served with Pride: The Chinese American Experience in WWII:*

*Remastering the Emmy Nominated Documentary Film*

Montgomery Hom - Executive Producer, Writer, Director

Ron Chan - Co-Producer

Russell Chong - Art Director, Editor

### Companion Book

*Fighting On All Fronts: Profiles of World War II Chinese Americans from the Golden State* is a retrospective book produced by the Chinese American G.I. Project.

The book is available as a compendium to the documentary film. It is comprised of many untold veterans' stories, highly illustrated with original art, wartime artifacts, maps, and photos to provide the reader with a fascinating journey through the lives of Chinese American Veterans who served in every theater of war during World War II.

This limited edition, softcover book with over 150 curated pages is available for educational sales for schools and libraries. For inquiries, please contact: [Honorourvets.ron@gmail.com](mailto:Honorourvets.ron@gmail.com)

*Fighting On All Fronts: Profiles of World War II Chinese Americans from the Golden State*

Written by Montgomery Hom

Ron Chan - Co-Producer

Russell Chong - Art Director

Evelyn Seto - Graphic Design

Janice Tong - Graphic Design, Layouts

Arthur Yee / Mae Jean Go - Editorial

Gail Chong / Jeannie Young - Continuity

Connie Young Yu - Historical Consultant

Miguel Alson - Publisher, Autumn Press