

1945 January 8-14

La Crosse War Bride

6 THE LA CROSSE TRIBUNE, SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 14, 1945

La Crosse War Bride To Make Honolulu Trip With Husband

A wartime romance that began in a bowling alley in La Crosse soon will reach the sun-swept beaches or romantic Honolulu, Hawaii.

When Pfc. Wallace Hisamoto, of Honolulu, was training with the 100th Infantry Battalion at Camp McCoy from June, 1942, to January, 1943, he met brown-haired, pretty Velma Danielson, 1620 Wood street, at the Pla-Mor bowling alley.

"We were introduced on Oct. 11, 1942," she said with feminine exactness for such important dates.

Plan Trip To Islands

And they were married last Nov. 4 in La Crosse. At the end of this month Pfc. and Mrs. Hisamoto will return to his native Honolulu where they will make their permanent residence. Hisamoto, who has not been home for two and one-half years, will receive his medical discharge from the army after he reaches Hawaii.

Mrs. Hisamoto, who has spent all her life in the northern land of Wisconsin, declared she is very excited about her forthcoming trip to warm Hawaii.

However, between the time Hi-

samoto left La Crosse with the 100th Battalion of Japanese Americans and his return here, he experienced some exciting adventures and some of the roughest fighting of the war.

He went to Italy in September, 1943, going through the tough battles there in which his gallant outfit suffered so many casualties.

After crossing the Volturno river, Hisamoto was seriously wounded in a night attack on Venafro by machine-gun fire in his legs. He now has one artificial leg.

City Is Second Home

"I was very happy to be back in La Crosse for Christmas," he said. "You know, we spent our first white Christmas here in 1942. And La Crosse is my second home."

Hisamoto wears the purple heart, the Mediterranean theater ribbon with one star for the Italian campaign, the Asiatic-Pacific ribbon with a star designating pre-Pearl Harbor service, the combat infantryman's badge and the good conduct ribbon. He was stationed in Honolulu at the time the Pearl Harbor naval base was bombed by the Japs.



La Crosse's First War Bride To Leave The Continent in all probability will be Mrs. Wallace Hisamoto. She is shown with her husband, right, a private, first class, who is shaking hands with Oscar Palmquist of the Pla-Mor bowling alleys, where the couple met. Pfc. Hisamoto and his wife hope to leave for Honolulu within a few days.

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 January 14, page 8

When we hear the term "war brides," we usually think of foreign women who marry American servicemen.

The story in this article is notable for several reasons. A La Crosse woman, Velma Danielson, married a Japanese-American soldier, Wallace Hisamoto, she met at the Pla-Mor bowling alley in La Crosse in 1942. Interracial marriages were not common at this time, and her husband's ancestral home was at war with the United States.

During World War II, 120,000 Japanese-American citizens were relocated from the West Coast and interned in camps far from the coast because of racism and fear of sabotage after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.¹ Despite their treatment at the hands of the United States government, thousands of Japanese-American men volunteered to serve in the United States Armed Forces. Their loyalty may have been questioned, but their courage never was by those who fought beside them.

Wallace Hisamoto trained with the 100th Battalion, 1,400 Japanese-Americans from Hawaii, at Camp McCoy, near Sparta, Wisconsin in 1942 and early 1943.² They were training at Camp McCoy at the same time Japanese prisoners of war were being held there.

After shipping to the European Theater, the 100th Battalion took part in heavy combat in Italy and France. It was attached to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which was also comprised of Japanese-Americans.

When asked by a *Stars and Stripes* reporter about how he felt fighting for a country that regarded him with suspicion, Wallace Hisamoto invoked a quote from boxing great Joe Louis stating that whatever was going on in the United States for people of color was nothing that would improve if Adolf Hitler were in charge.³

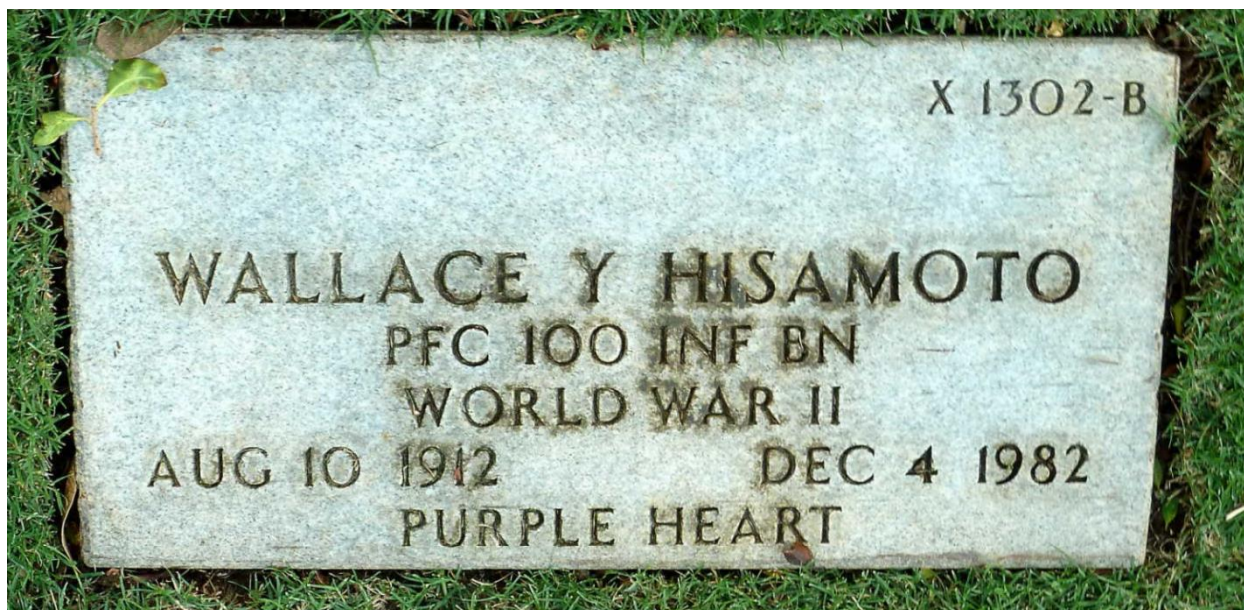
Wallace Hisamoto was wounded so severely in Italy that he lost one of his legs.

Returning to the United States, he married Velma Danielson of La Crosse on November 4, 1944. As the article above states, they were then going to make their home in Hawaii.

Their marriage did not last; Velma Hisamoto was awarded a divorce in 1946. Her parents, Alvin and Myrtle Danielson, “assumed responsibility” as guardians of Wallace and Velma’s two-month-old son.⁴

Velma married James R. Stephans in April 1948.⁵ Stephans, of La Crosse, was a sergeant in the Air Force. They had two daughters and a son together.⁶

Wallace Hisamoto died at the age of 70 in Hyattsville, Maryland.⁷ He is buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of The Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.⁸



(Ancestry.com)

Velma Stephans lived in many states and countries because of her second husband’s career in the Air Force. Later in her life, she became a nurse.⁹

She died in La Crosse on September 21, 2019 at the age of 93. Velma is buried in the Mormon Coulee Memorial Park Cemetery.¹⁰



(Blaschke & Schneider Funeral Homes)

Jeff Rand
Adult Services Librarian
La Crosse Public Library

Sources & Notes:

¹ Franklin Odo, "100th Infantry Battalion," *Densho Encyclopedia*, 2020, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/100th_Infantry_Battalion/.

² Odo, "100th Infantry Battalion."

³ "They Also Serve: Americans of Japanese Descent Shed Blood for Old Glory, But There Are Still Some Folks Who Measure Patriotism With Color." *The Stars and Stripes Magazine*, October 21, 1945, page 11.

⁴ "Marriage Dissolved," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, June 3, 1946, page 2.

⁵ "Velma V. Stephans," *Blaschke & Schneider Funeral Homes*, accessed January 10, 2020, <http://www.blaschkeschneider.com/memorials/velma-v-stephans/683/>.

⁶ "Living in Spain," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, May 23, 1954, page 11.

⁷ Ancestry.com *U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2014.

⁸ National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006.

⁹ "Velma V. Stephans," *Blaschke & Schneider Funeral Homes*.

¹⁰ "Velma V. Stephans," *Blaschke & Schneider Funeral Homes*.

Another Japanese-American soldier with the 100th Battalion also married a La Crosse woman. Harry Miyamoto was wounded in Italy and returned to La Crosse after the war. For his story, see: Chris Hardie, "Dad's Purple Heart," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, December 7, 2001, page A1.

https://lacrossetribune.com/stories/special/dad-s-purple-heart-a-hawaii-born-japanese-american-harry/article_56bba6c1-decd-5f91-be63-5260eac68f05.html.