

# **Kenje Ogata collection**

**AFC 2001/001/76800**

**Guides to the Collections in the Veterans History Project**



**Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.**

**May 2011**

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2015655445>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadvhp.vh016006>

Prepared by Rachel Telford

Finding aid encoded by Rachel Telford, April 2016

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Kenje Ogata collection: Veterans History Project (U.S.)

**Inclusive Dates:** 1924-2011

**Call No.:** AFC 2001/001/76800

**Creator:** Kenje Ogata, 1919-2012

**Extent (items):** 54 items.

**Extent (folders):** 24 folders.

**Extent (moving images):** moving images: 1 videodisc (DVD-R) : digital, sound, color ; 4 3/4 in.

**Extent (sound recordings):** sound recordings: 2 sound cassettes : analog.

**Extent (graphic images):** graphic images: 29 photographic prints : black and white, color ; various sizes.

**Extent (artifacts):** artifacts: 5 items.

**Extent (manuscripts):** manuscripts: 13 items.

**Language:** In English.

**Location:** Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/2015655445>

**Summary:** The Kenje Ogata collection consists of artifacts, audio recordings, biographical material, civilian papers, clippings, correspondence, a journal, maps, military papers, photographs, and a video recording relating to Ogata's service in the United States Army and Army Air Forces during World War II.

**Online Content:** Selected items from the Kenje Ogata collection are available on the Library of Congress web site at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vh016006.76800>.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Calkins, Jeanette I.  
Calkins, Lawrence W.  
Ogata, Kenjalin  
Ogata, Kenje, 1919-2012.  
Ogata, Kenje--Interviews.

### Organizations

American Folklife Center.  
United States. Army Air Forces.  
United States. Army Air Forces. Bombardment Group (H), 451st.  
Veterans History Project (U.S.)

### Subjects

World War, 1939-1945--Japanese Americans--Interviews.  
World War, 1939-1945--Participation, Japanese American.  
World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives, American.  
World War, 1939-1945--Veterans--Illinois--Interviews.

### Form/Genre

Clippings.  
Correspondence.  
Filmed interviews.  
Interviews (Sound recordings)  
Manuscripts.  
Oral histories.  
Photographs.

## Arrangement

Arranged in four series: Recordings, Manuscripts, Artifacts, and Photographs.

Manuscripts are arranged alphabetically by type of material. Correspondence is divided into three parts: Letters from Ogata to his wife (MS07); Correspondence from the War Department to Wilma Ogata (MS08); Correspondence to and from Ogata regarding his request to enlist in the Army Air Forces (MS09).

## Acquisition

Accessioned, 2011.

## Related Material

Kenje Ogata Collection (AFC/2001/001/30983), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vh016006.30983>

## Copyright Status

Duplication of collection materials may be restricted.

## Access and Restrictions

Collection is open for research; access restrictions apply. To request collection materials, please contact the Veterans History Project at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

## Online Content

Selected items from the Kenje Ogata collection are available on the Library of Congress web site at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vh016006.76800>.

## Preferred Citation

Kenje Ogata Collection (AFC/2001/001/76800), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

## Biographical Note

Kenje Ogata was born on June 1, 1919, in Gary, Indiana, to Clay (Kamezo) Ogata and Wai (Owari) Mitsuda Ogata. He was reared in Sterling, Illinois, where his family ran a cafeteria at the local YMCA. After graduating from Sterling High School in 1936, Ogata went to work in the plating room at the National Manufacturing Company, and trained as a pilot with the Civilian Pilot Training Program.

On December 8, 1941, Ogata enlisted in the United States Army, with the intention of serving in the Army Air Forces. However, due to his Japanese ancestry, he was instead assigned to the Medical Corps, serving first with the 32nd Medical Training Battalion at Camp Grant, Illinois, and later as company clerk with the Replacement Depot at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. On March 5, 1943, he married Wilma Reiff, whom he met while working at the National Manufacturing Company.

From 1942-1944, Ogata repeatedly requested a transfer to the Army Air Forces, and in April 1944, his transfer was approved. He trained in Las Vegas, Nevada, Lincoln, Nebraska, and at Davis-Monthan Airfield, Arizona, before being deployed to Foggia, Italy, with the 726th Bomb Squadron, 451st Bomb Group, 49th Wing, 15th Air Force. Ogata flew 35

missions as a ball turret gunner in a B-24 bomber. He was shot down twice, but avoided capture or serious injury on both occasions.

Ogata was discharged on June 7, 1945. Following his service, he returned to work at the National Manufacturing Company, and attended the University of Illinois on the GI Bill. He graduated from the University of Illinois Dental School in 1953, and practiced dentistry in Sterling, Illinois, for 41 years. He died on January 18, 2012.

## **Scope and Content**

The Kenje Ogata collection consists of artifacts, audio recordings, biographical material, civilian papers, clippings, correspondence, a journal, maps, military papers, photographs, and a video recording relating to Ogata's military service during World War II. The bulk of the collection consists of letters written by Ogata to his wife, Wilma, while he served with the United States Army and Army Air Forces. He detailed his work assignments, finances, experiences with racial discrimination, efforts to transfer to the Army Air Forces, news of family and friends, and his experiences being shot down. Photographs include a portrait of Ogata in uniform, family photos, wedding photos, B-24 crew, fellow airmen, reunions. The collection also includes two oral history interviews detailing the veteran's early life, experiences in the military, and his post-war life.

## Description of Series

Container

Series

Series I: Recordings

Subseries I: Audio Recordings

Subseries II: Video Recordings

Series II: Manuscripts

Series III: Photographs

Series IV: Artifacts

# Container List

## Container

## Contents

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### Series I: Recordings

#### Subseries I: Audio Recordings

Interview with Kenje Ogata, November 2001 , conducted by Jeanette I. Calkins and Lawrence W. Calkins.

2 audio cassettes

**ID:** AFC2001/001/76800 SR01-SR02

[Digital content available](#)

Topics covered include: Father comes to America with grandfather and uncle, family stories; Mother comes to America from Japan, parents marry; father's experiences in the American west, foreman of a copper mine; family goes east to Gary, Indiana, father becomes a cook; family moves to Sterling, Illinois; parents have a cafeteria in YMCA; Kenje born in 1919, as a boy spends time at city hall, fire and police stations; brother, Kent; meets future wife, Wilma, while working at National Manufacturing Company; helps support parents and brother; marries; learns to fly; enlists the day after Pearl Harbor; encounters racism, Japanese-Americans set apart, declines offer to go home; basic training; tries to apply for language school; after 2 years becomes company clerk of replacement depot; transferred to Air Corps; aerial gunnery school in Las Vegas; Camp Grant Hospital; German prisoners of war (POWs); profiled by police as a spy; animosity to Japanese-Americans; teaching Wilma to shoot, ricochet hits Kenje, Army questions Wilma; Ogata family not harassed during war, did not know what was happening to other Japanese-Americans in the western states, did not tell parents of internment camps; married, living off base in Rockford, Illinois; Davis Monthan Air Field, Tucson, Arizona, final bomber training with crew; goes overseas; Arrival in Italy; practice missions along the Adriatic; first bombing mission right away; missions, briefings, procedures; ground crew unhappy about lost bombers; 35 missions; making friends; shot down for the first time, 12/26/1944, longest mission to date for 15th Air Force, bombed rail yards; Oswiecim, Poland; misses briefing, has no idea what country he's in, 2 engines shot out over target, bailout, finds others 24 hours later; instructions for parachuting; in clouds, hears beautiful choir, compelled to pull rip chord too early; on ground, hears artillery fire, emergency kit contents; fog, dogs, evasive maneuvers, heads south, meets man, taken to village of Magyarkeszi, Hungary; in 1985, Ogatas revisit Magyarkeszi, given a piece of the bomber; racism, school days; father; tactics in air combat, 600 bombers, targets, flak, formations, bombing; injured in target shooting accident while on furlough; shot down a second time in Yugoslavia; shortage of ball turret gunners, fills in with other crews, gets home first; heated flight suits.

#### Subseries II: Video Recordings

BOX CDDVD221

Interview with Kenje Ogata, August 18, 2008 , conducted by Kenjalyn Ogata.

1 DVD

**ID:** AFC2001/001/76800 MV01

[Digital content available](#)

Topics covered include: Boardwalks in San Francisco; parents from Japan, arranged marriage; childhood memories; leaves for the Army in January 1942; initial army experience with racism; sent to Medical Corps at Camp Grant with other Japanese-American GIs; Earns Pilot's license before the war; wanted to be in Air Corps but

## Series II: Manuscripts

Container	Contents
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was not permitted; two years in Medical Corps; efforts to get into Air Corps; attempts to get Japanese language assignment; detained near Camp Grant for being Japanese American; other Japanese American GIs at Camp Grant; injured in target shooting accident; Gunnery school, meet crew, goes overseas via Newfoundland and Algeria, sealed orders; based in Foggia, Italy, 35 missions, shot down twice; missions to Germany; Oswiecim, Poland, after being shot down, return from mission to Russia over Hungary; bailing out, unusual experience saves his life; return to Hungary in 1985, given a piece of the fuselage of the plane he was shot down in; shot down a second time in Yugoslavia; return to the States; attends college on the GI bill; moves to Chicago, graduates from University of Illinois Dental School; Dental Clinic; birth of daughter; American citizenship; dangers of flying; ball turret and how it worked; wife discusses meat rationing; 6 weeks MIA; about veteran and his parents; keeping in touch with crew mates; veterans organizations.

### Series II: Manuscripts

**BOX-FOLDER** MSS2125/1 Biography, 2001-2011

1 folder

[Digital content available](#)

[Digital content available](#)

MS01: "Kenje's Story," (11/2001)

MS02: "Supplement to Biographical Data," (02/2011).

**BOX-FOLDER**  
MSS2125/2-3

Civilian Papers, 1944-1949

2 folders

[Digital content available](#)

MS03: Correspondence, printed matter and coursework relating to veteran's undergraduate and graduate studies (1947-1949).

MS04: Veterans Administration correspondence and forms concerning subsistence allowance (1947).

MS05: Last Will and Testament and General Power of Attorney (1944).

**BOX-FOLDER** MSS2125/4 Clippings, 1944-2002

1 folder

MS06: Clippings relating to veteran's service and family, and modern accounts looking back on his service.

**BOX-FOLDER**  
MSS2125/5-6

Correspondence, 1942-1945

2 folders

[Digital content available](#)

MS07: Correspondence from veteran to his Wife, Wilma, who lived in Sterling, Illinois.

Topics covered include: Travel plans; finances; work assignments; mail deliveries; transfer to Air Corps and training; racial discrimination; family and friends; recreation; being shot down.

**BOX-FOLDER**  
MSS2126/1-3

Correspondence, 1942-1945

3 folders

MS07

**BOX-FOLDER** MSS2126/4 Correspondence, 1945

1 folder

[Digital content available](#)

## Series II: Manuscripts

Container	Contents
	MS08: Correspondence from the War Department to Mrs. Wilma Ogata concerning veteran's status as missing in action.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2126/5	Correspondence, 1942-1943 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a>
	MS09: Correspondence to and from veteran regarding his request to enlist in the Air Corps.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2152/1	Correspondence, February 7, 1945 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a>
	MS13: V-mail from veteran to his wife.
BOX-FOLDER OVZ135/1	Creative Works, undated 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a>
	MS15: Sheet music, "Furlough in Paradise. Dedicated to all restcamps of the U.S. Army Air Forces." Words by Lt. Charles W. (Mickey) McGuire, music by S/Sgt. Paul Reif. Enclosed with February 10, 1945, letter from the veteran to his wife.
BOX-FOLDER OVZ105/1	Maps, circa 1944 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a>
	MS11: Silk map of Europe carried by veteran when he was shot down over Hungary on 12/26/1944.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2126/7	Military Papers, 1943-1945 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a>
	MS12: Orders, combat records, medical records, memoranda, discharge, financial documents, statement regarding an air accident, Thanksgiving menu.
BOX-FOLDER OVZ136/1	Military Papers, 1943-1945 1 folder
	MS12: Orders, combat records, medical records, memoranda, discharge, financial documents, statement regarding an air accident, Thanksgiving menu.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2152/2	Military Papers, 1945 1 folder
	MS14: Orders for veteran's third oak leaf cluster (03/29/1945); letter from War Department to veteran's wife with list of veteran's crewmates and their next of kin (02/15/1945).

## Series III: Photographs

BOX-FOLDER MSS2126/8	Original Photographic Prints, 1924-1988 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a>
	PH01-PH02, PH04-PH29: Includes family photographs, Ogata in during his service in the United States and in Italy, images of Ogata's 1985 trip to Hungary, reunions.
BOX-FOLDER OVZ111/1	Original Photographic Prints, January 1942 1 folder
	PH03: Company B, 32nd Medical Training Battalion, Camp Grant, Illinois.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2126/9	Digital Prints, 2008 1 folder



### Series III: Photographs

Container	Contents
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PH30: 451st Bomb Group Reunion, Deerfield, Illinois.

### Series IV: Artifacts

BOX-FOLDER MSS2152/3 Artifact, 1942-1945

1 folder

[Digital content available](#)

AR01: Money from Hungary, Soviet Union, and Romania (1942 - 1945).