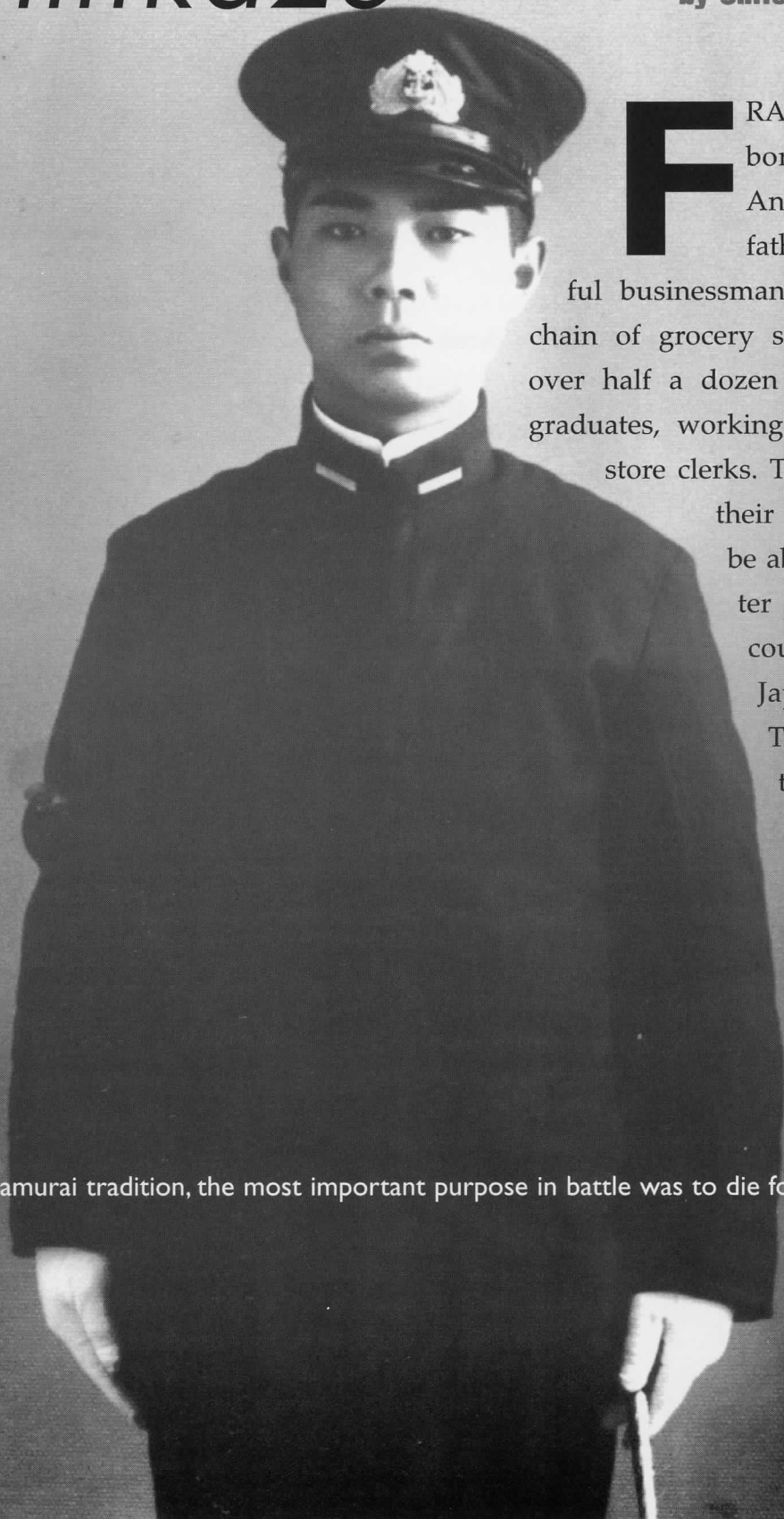


Kamikaze

by Clifford Uyeda



FRANK KASAMA was born (1922) in Los Angeles, CA. His father was a successful businessman who operated a chain of grocery stores. There were over half a dozen Nisei, all college graduates, working for his father as store clerks. The family felt that their son, Frank, might be able to obtain a better job in Japan if he could obtain some Japanese education. Thus, in his early teens, Frank was sent to Japan.

In the old samurai tradition, the most important purpose in battle was to die for one's master

Frank recalled that he was not accepted nor trusted as just another Japanese student. He was a foreigner in Japan, and they laughed at his spoken Japanese. After high school in Japan he entered pre-law studies at Chuo University in Tokyo.

He was at Chuo University when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Immediately, two Japanese military police arrived at the university and arrested Frank as an enemy spy. The president of the Chuo University was also a Justice Minister. He showed up at the jail and had Frank released in his custody. Upon release from the jail, Frank learned that his bank account had been frozen as an enemy asset. He stated that had it not been for the kind professor he could not have survived in Japan.

In 1943, the Tojo Cabinet issued an Order that all university students, except medical and engineering majors, were to be drafted for military service. According to the Japanese Nationality Act, all children born to Japanese nationals (Issei) outside of Japan before April 1, 1924, were automatically Japanese citizens. Therefore in October 1943 Frank learned for the first time that he was a Japanese citizen as well as an American citizen. However, at the recruitment office, a Japanese officer told him that the Imperial Army did not want an enemy national, and released him. Frank was happy and gratified.

Two months later, Frank received a telegram to report to the Navy base in Yokosuka. He was recruited into the Japanese Imperial Navy and sent to an avi-

ation school. He was trained as a torpedo plane pilot. In March 1945 he was ordered into a Naval Air Fleet in Kagoshima (Kyushu). Upon his arrival there, he realized that he was a member of the *Kamikaze* suicide squadron.

The Kamikaze pilots were not all volunteers. They were ordered into battle. Only the early Kamikaze pilots in the Philippines were volunteers. However, Frank realized how

important it was for Japanese soldiers to live up to the honor and glory of their family names. In the old samurai tradition, the most important purpose in battle was to die for one's master. Frank thought every day of how he was to die. All he knew was that he must not bring shame to his family name. He thought of how his memorial day would be observed by his family.

On August 15, 1945, the war suddenly ended. He had survived the war. The immediate postwar months were difficult time for Frank. For months he had been thinking only of how to die. "It was not easy to live again," he said. He thought of his comrades who perished in their *Kamikaze* planes. Now, he realized that he must live. He said he was "confused and puzzled."

He returned to the Chuo University Law School in September 1945, from where he graduated. During the post-war

period in Japan, Frank's bilingual ability was utilized by the American Occupation Force. He was consulted on the War Crime Trials. In 1950 he was requested by the Japanese Foreign Ministry to draft the new Japanese Nationality Act. Mainly, he took care of citizenship problems for the Nisei who had been stranded in Japan during the war.

In December 1953, he returned to the U.S. and attended

the University of Utah Law School. He received his law degree in San Francisco in 1958. In June 1962 he was admitted to the California Bar.

Frank stated frequently to his friends that most Nisei residing in Japan during World War II were treated with suspicion as enemies, and were harassed by the Japanese special police called *Tokko Keisatsu*, similar to the KGB. Frank said that he told Toyoko Yamasaki after her three volume novel, *Futatsu no Sokoku* (Two Fatherlands), was published in 1984 that, if she had researched into how the Nisei were treated in Japan during wartime, she could not say that "Futatsu no Sokoku" was a relevant concept.

From his home in Fremont, California, Frank had a successful practice in international business transactions. He passed away in 1993 and is survived by his wife, Mary, and three children.

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