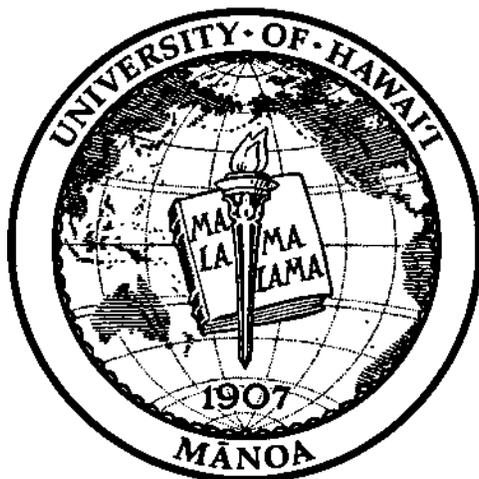


UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA

# Hiro Higuchi Papers

## Finding Aid



AJA 001

Archives & Manuscripts Department  
University of Hawaii at Manoa Library

March 2005

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## Introductory Information

<b>Collection Name:</b>	Hiro Higuchi Papers
<b>Collection Number:</b>	AJA 001
<b>Inclusive / Bulk Dates:</b>	1934-1947 (bulk 1943-1945)
<b>Size of Collection:</b>	3.0 linear feet
<b>Creator of Papers (Individual):</b>	Hiro Higuchi

### Abstract:

Hiro Higuchi (1907-1981), a clergyman for the United Church of Christ, served as a chaplain in the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team during World War II. As a chaplain, he provided comfort and solace to the troops, held religious services on the front lines, transported the wounded and dead from the battlefield, comforted injured soldiers at first aid stations, wrote letters to the families of those killed in action, held memorial services, and performed various administrative duties. By the war's end, Higuchi had two battlefield commissions, and he retired at the rank of colonel. Following the war, Higuchi was actively involved in building and repairing churches on Oahu and Kauai, and he participated in numerous community organizations. He married Hisako Watanabe in 1935, and had two children.

The collection consists primarily of materials relating to Higuchi's service in the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. during World War II. The materials are arranged into three series: Correspondence, Official Papers, and Other Papers. The "Correspondence" series contains Higuchi's personal correspondence and consists chiefly of letters exchanged between Higuchi and his wife Hisako from August 1943 through November 1945. The "Official Papers" series dates from 1943 through 1967, and contains official military correspondence, correspondence with families regarding casualties, letters from various civilians concerning issues related to the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T., Higuchi's enlistment papers and service record, and lists documenting casualties and burials. The "Other Papers" series includes postwar sermons and memorial services delivered by Higuchi, a speech given at a 442<sup>nd</sup> Veterans banquet, biographical materials, clippings related to Higuchi and the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T, as well as other miscellaneous items.

## **Administrative Information**

- Repository Information:** Archives & Manuscripts Department  
University of Hawaii at Manoa Library  
2550 McCarthy Mall  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822  
Phone: (808) 956-6047  
Fax: (808) 956-5968  
Email: [archives@hawaii.edu](mailto:archives@hawaii.edu)  
URL: <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/libdept/archives/>
- Processing Archivist:** Laura Capell, February 2005
- Restrictions:** Select correspondence has been restricted due to its sensitive nature. Photocopies of restricted correspondence where the sensitive information has been blacked out have been substituted.
- Provenance:** Donated by Hiro Higuchi's daughter, Jane Fukunaga, of Honolulu, HI, in January 2005
- Preferred Citation:** [Identification of item], Hiro Higuchi Papers, Archives & Manuscripts Department, University of Hawaii at Manoa Library.
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## Biographical Sketch

Hiro Higuchi (1907-1981) was born in Hilo, Hawaii, on 31 January 1907, to Kwan and Tsuya Higuchi. He was the fourth of five children. His father Kwan Higuchi converted to Christianity while attending Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, and became a Congregational clergyman. In the 1890s, Kwan came to Hawaii as a Christian missionary to the plantation workers, and his first church was in Paia, Maui. He later moved with his family to Hilo.

Hiro Higuchi attended Oberlin College from 1925-1929, and graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1930. He earned a Master's degree from the University of Southern California in 1934. Higuchi then returned to Hawaii, where he served as a pastor at the Waipahu Community Church until 1952.

While attending USC, Higuchi met Hisako Watanabe of Los Angeles, and the couple married on 15 August 1935. Hisako was a social worker, and later became a teacher and then a public school principal. The couple had two children, Peter Kwan and Jane.

During World War II, Higuchi volunteered to serve as one of two chaplains attached to the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, a volunteer unit comprised of Japanese Americans that was formed in January 1943. Following his enlistment, he attended the U.S. Army Chaplain School at Harvard University in the fall of 1943. In November 1943, he joined the soldiers of the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. for intensive training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. In June 1944, the 442<sup>nd</sup> arrived in Italy, where it joined with the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, a Japanese American unit that had been fighting in Italy since September 1943. The 100<sup>th</sup>/442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. participated in fierce fighting in Italy and France, and at the war's end it was the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its length of service and size.

As chaplain of the Second Battalion, Higuchi did not engage in battle, though his duties enabled him to experience firsthand the nature of war. He provided comfort and solace to the troops, held religious services on the front lines, transported the wounded and dead from the battlefield, comforted injured soldiers at first aid stations, wrote letters to the families of those killed in action, held memorial services, and performed various administrative duties.

By the time he was relieved from active duty following the end of the war, Higuchi had two battlefield commissions, and had attained the rank of captain. In December 1945, Higuchi returned to his family on Oahu, where he continued his work with the United Church of Christ. He then returned to Oberlin College where he received a Master's in Divinity in 1952. Higuchi served as a chaplain in the Army Reserve, retiring at the rank of colonel in 1967.

Throughout his career, Higuchi was actively involved in building and repairing churches, and engaging with the community. In 1952, he became the pastor of the Waimea Christian Church on Kauai, where he also helped the community construct a swimming pool. Upon returning to Oahu, Higuchi served as the chaplain at the Oahu Prison in 1955. He also helped to build churches in Pearl City, Manoa Valley, Lanai City, Waialua, and at the Waimano Home.

In addition to his work as a minister, Higuchi was also active in the community. He served on the State Health Insurance Board, the Easter Seal Society of Hawaii Board of Directors, the Mayor's

Ethics Committee, the White House Conference on Aging, and he was a member of the University of Hawaii Alumni Board. He was active in the Lions Club, holding numerous leadership positions. Higuchi also maintained close contact with his fellow veterans as a member of the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. Veterans Club, Disabled American Veterans, and an honorary membership in the 100<sup>th</sup> Veterans Club.

Higuchi earned recognition for his service in the community, including being named State Father of the Year in Religion in 1961, and Alumni of the Year by the University of Hawaii in 1967. He received an Award of Recognition from the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ in 1967, and was recognized by the Hawaii State Legislature and the Honolulu City Council.

Hiro Higuchi died on 7 November 1981 at the age of 74. He is buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu.

For additional biographical information, please consult *Men and Women of Hawaii, 1972: A Biographical Directory of Noteworthy Men and Women of Hawaii*, Betty Finley Buker, ed., (Honolulu: Star Bulletin Printing Co.): 244-245.

## Scope & Content Note

The Hiro Higuchi Papers have been organized into three series: Correspondence, Official Papers, and Other Papers. The “Correspondence” series contains the personal correspondence of Hiro Higuchi and consists chiefly of letters exchanged between Higuchi and his wife Hisako from August 1943 through November 1945. While serving as a chaplain in the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T., Higuchi wrote detailed letters documenting his activities at the U.S. Army Chaplain School at Harvard University, Camp Shelby, Miss., and the European Front in Italy and France. His letters document his duties, activities and experiences, as well as his impressions of the war and the people and places he encountered. These descriptive letters provide insight into the mindset and experiences of the soldiers of the 442<sup>nd</sup> and the nature of military life in World War II. During Higuchi’s absence, Hisako wrote him numerous letters describing activities and happenings at home. Her detailed accounts of daily life provide insight into life on the homefront in Hawaii during World War II.

The series “Official Papers” documents the various administrative tasks performed by Higuchi as a chaplain of the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T., including documenting casualties and burials, writing to the families of soldiers killed in battle, and communicating with civilians and military officials concerning various matters related to the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. The official papers, the bulk of which date from 1943 through 1946, contain official military correspondence, replies from families that Higuchi had written regarding casualties, letters from various civilians concerning issues related to the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T., papers concerning Higuchi’s enlistment, and casualty lists and burial reports. Also included are service records documenting Higuchi’s activity with the Army Reserve until his retirement in 1967.

The series “Other Papers” includes numerous postwar sermons and memorial services delivered by Higuchi. Some sermons are grouped into subjects assigned by Higuchi, although most are not. Also included are church service programs and other church materials, a speech given at a 442<sup>nd</sup> Veterans banquet, biographical materials, newspaper clippings related to Higuchi and the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T., World War II-related booklets, as well as other miscellaneous items.

The material is largely in good condition. Letters were removed from their envelopes and flattened. Old paper clips, staples, and rubber bands were removed and replaced with archival quality paper clips. Newspaper clippings were highly acidic; many were photocopied for retention and the originals discarded.

## Series Descriptions

### Series 1: Correspondence

**Dates:** 1934-1947 (bulk 1943-1945)

**Size of Series:** 1.25 linear feet

**Physical Format:** Correspondence

**Arrangement:** Chronologically

### Description of Contents:

Personal correspondence of Hiro Higuchi, the bulk of which dates from August 1943 through November 1945, when Higuchi was serving as a chaplain for the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team. The majority of the correspondence consists of letters exchanged between Higuchi and his wife Hisako, whom he refers to as “Mom.” Also included are letters from his son Peter, and several letters from family and friends.

From the time he left Hawaii in August 1943, Higuchi wrote detailed letters documenting his activities at the U.S. Army Chaplain School at Harvard University, Camp Shelby, Miss., and the European Front in Italy and France. He wrote frequent letters back home detailing his duties, activities and experiences, as well as his impressions of the war and the people and places he encountered. His descriptive letters provide insight into the mindset and experiences of the soldiers of the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. and the nature of military life in World War II. He describes the rigors of training at Chaplain School and Camp Shelby; the relations of Japanese American soldiers from Hawaii and the Mainland; the reputation of the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. and the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion; living conditions in camp and on the front lines; and his physical and spiritual health. He also describes his duties as a chaplain, including ministering to the needs of the soldiers, conducting services on the front lines, retrieving casualties from the battlefield, providing comfort to the wounded, writing home to the families of soldiers killed in battle, and conducting memorial services. He speculates on the course of the war, and expresses his feelings concerning the horrors of war. He provides detailed accounts of his impressions of the places he visits, especially in Italy and France and of his interactions with Italian and French civilians, as well as his relationships with American and even German soldiers.

Hisako wrote numerous letters to her husband describing life at home in Pearl City, Oahu. Her detailed accounts of daily life provide insight into the nature of life on the homefront during World War II. She writes at length about the activities of their school-age son Peter, as well as their daughter Jane, who was born in December 1943, and whom Higuchi did not meet until he returned home after the war. Hisako also describes household concerns, daily routines, meals, shopping, her interactions with family and friends, church happenings, and local news and events.

The majority of the letters were written using a typewriter, although several letters were written by hand. This series also contains a folder of "Victory Mail" letters Higuchi wrote to Hisako. "Victory Mail," more commonly known as "V-Mail," was a form of mail used by U.S. forces during World War II in order to lower postage costs and reduce the volume for shipping purposes. Soldiers would write their letters on a specific form, and these were then microfilmed and shipped to the United States, where a small (roughly 4-by-5 inch) photographic positive of the microfilm was produced and delivered to the recipient.

In several instances, select correspondence has been restricted out of concern for privacy. These letters have been substituted with photocopies of the letters with sensitive information blacked out.

## **Series 2: Official Papers**

<b>Dates:</b>	1943-1967 (bulk 1943-1946)
<b>Size of Series:</b>	0.5 linear feet
<b>Physical Format:</b>	Correspondence and papers
<b>Arrangement:</b>	Chronological, then alphabetical by subject

### **Description of Contents:**

Official wartime papers generated and collected by Hiro Higuchi while he was serving as a chaplain for the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. Higuchi performed various administrative tasks, including preparing casualty lists and burial reports, writing to the families of soldiers killed in battle, and communicating with civilians and military officials concerning various matters related to the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T.

This series contains letters addressed to Higuchi dating from July 1943 through 1946, including official military correspondence, replies from families that Higuchi had written regarding casualties, and letters from various civilians concerning issues related to the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. Also found in this series are letters and documents concerning Higuchi's enlistment, including letters of endorsement, as well as various lists and reports documenting casualties, soldiers killed in action, and burials. This series also includes records that document Higuchi's active duty service during World War II and his service with the Army Reserve until his retirement in 1967.

### **Series 3: Other Papers**

<b>Dates:</b>	1940s-1980s, undated
<b>Size of Series:</b>	1.0 linear foot
<b>Physical Format:</b>	Papers, sermons, newspaper clippings, and booklets
<b>Arrangement:</b>	Alphabetical by subject

#### **Description of Contents:**

Sermons, memorial services, newspaper clippings, and other materials related to Hiro Higuchi. This series contains numerous postwar sermons and memorial services delivered by Higuchi. Some sermons are grouped into subjects assigned by Higuchi (such as “Bible” and “Thanksgiving”), although most are not. The wartime and postwar clippings document the activities and history of Higuchi and the 442<sup>nd</sup> R.C.T. This series also contains biographical materials, church service programs and other church materials, World War II-related booklets, a speech Higuchi delivered at a 442<sup>nd</sup> Veterans banquet, and various miscellaneous items. Also included is a photograph of a military burial service dated 1950.

## **Selected Quotes from Wartime Letters of Hiro Higuchi:**

### **8 November 1943:**

“I find that the island boys are very cordial and very easy to make friends with—while the mainland boys seem to be more reticent and very poor mixers. In George’s hut last evening however, I met some very swell fellers—its funny sometimes to hear these mainland boys speaking Pigeon English ala Waipahu. The process has reversed itself—the English of our boys don’t seem to be improving at all while the mainland boys are falling into the easy short cut of Hawaiian English. ... And as usual these Hawaiian fellers have invented a name for the boys from the mainland ‘Ko-tonks’.... At first the two groups did not get along very well—but these Hawaiian fellers as usual are too fast with their fists and kinda slow on the argument so that peace reigns seemingly along this front.”

### **11 November 1943:**

“The problem at the beginning of the encampment was whether the Hawaiian boys would be taken over by the Mainlanders or the mainlanders by the Hawaiians. Well—the boy from Utah was speaking the Hawaiian pigeon like the rest of them—using the slangs so peculiar to Hawaii and the terms we use there.

“Another thing I found out—the men from the mainlanders don’t get along with each other. The men outside of LA dislike the men from Calif. and prefer Hawaiian lads. There must have been quite a misunderstanding at first—between all the different groups until the 100<sup>th</sup> infantry came here. Then they came in with their fists and Hawaiianized the whole bunch.

“I found out the meaning of the work ko-tonk—its the hollow sound when something empty falls or is hit. The 100<sup>th</sup> infantry gave these boys the term—guess when they beat up on the mainlanders the resulting sound was quite a kotonk.”

### **12 November 1943:**

“At least the people here are getting friendlier to the Hawaiian boys. Even getting so that the mainland officers and wives claim themselves as Hawaiian ... I guess it is partly due to the fact that Hawaii is always glamorous, and perhaps due to the 100<sup>th</sup> but mostly due to the fact that the mainland fellers in camp have caused the most trouble in trying to get out of the army. In a way you don’t blame them—they go home to the relocation camps on furlough, see their folks behind wired fences and then come back wondering what it is all about. Some even go as far as to take back their army oath. The Hawaiian boys being volunteers and very *kanaka* are anxious, instead, to go overseas with the 100<sup>th</sup>.”

### **18 November 1943:**

“These boys from the islands have lots of morale—the difficulty is that they are placed with the Nisei whose morale is understandably low—which does not help the island boys very much. The island boys work together like a team—sort of the calabash cousin idea—whereas the Nisei do not work together even among themselves.”

**25 November 1943:**

“The haole officer said that these boys are by far the best outfit in the army—and the size notwithstanding have taken to training far better than veterans. These boys, in regular *kanaka* fashion just slop along until the tests and then crash through always with the highest mark the army ever had.”

**8 June 1944:**

“Everywhere we go, the officers and men ask us if we are from the 100<sup>th</sup>. The 100<sup>th</sup> certainly has an enviable reputation here and the people at home certainly should be proud of those boys—they are giving a good account of themselves and are considered a crack outfit. Only hope that our outfit will make the same showing.”

**16 June 1944:**

“The 100<sup>th</sup> here has made such a great reputation for themselves here, their sacrifice is going to be a great factor in a better understanding for the Nisei throughout the country.”

**11 July 1944:**

“Am in the rear area resting today as I need the rest. Was up for three nights and days—and my nerves are completely shaken. Nothing I can say or write will even describe the horror of war and the intense fear that grips one all the time one is on the front lines.

“In battle, I am usually with the battalion aid station and help in whatever manner I can at the station—caring for the sick and wounded. Thus I can be of aid to all the men.”

**15 July 1944:**

“To think that we—in this world made by God—all of us enemy as well as allies—with families at home and loved ones whose pictures we carry around—go rushing in to commit wholesale mayhem, certainly does not speak too well for the human race.”

**20 July 1944:**

“It’s over a year now since that bright morning I took my oath before the colonel and Peter and you. Since then I have seen much and have experienced things I had never hoped to experience. A year ago I had an impression that front line duty was something like we experienced in Hawaii during and after the 7<sup>th</sup>. Now I know different—and yet I would not have gone without this experience for anything. It has been of great value to me personally and have given me greater values which I would not have received as a civilian at home in a nice safe church.

“Remember the letters I used to write from Shelby—I thought the training was hard—the cold bitter—and the marches too long. To us now, Shelby seems like Paradise and not one of us would ever refuse going back to it—we only regret that the training was not harder to prepare us for combat.”

**20 July 1944:**

“I wish the whole thing was over with so that our boys can go back to their normal lives and to normal happiness with their families. I have especially tough time with the mainland boys who had wives and families in relocation camps. There is nothing once could do for them except to advise them, and most of the time advice is so inadequate—our island boys having been free from such experiences do not have problems of that sort...”

**27 August 1944:**

“Sunday, but not such a peaceful Sunday for me. I started out early this morning for the front to have services for the men—in times like this I crawl up to where the men are and conduct a little five minute service. The men are always happy to see the Chaplain but more than often advise me to go back—I held three services in a culvert, one in a ditch, one in a barn and one in a garage.”

**8 September 1944:**

“The 100<sup>th</sup> and the 442<sup>nd</sup> has been given a lot of publicity as I see and know that in the future the fact will carry a lot of weight in the treatment of the AJA’s in the mainland. At least, I hope.”

**17 September 1944:**

“These artillery shells are terrors. They come swooshing down and if you are caught standing up anywheres in the vicinity of one—the fragments would just come swooshing through the air and chop you into mince meat. The idea is to hope that the first one would not land near you for by the time the next one comes—well you ought to be pretty well protected in a nice hole or something. The hard luck story is when one dives in the same hole with you—and the way the Germans toss them around, one wonders why more don’t come diving in with you. Nice bedmates—these shells.”

**11 October 1944:**

“As we come nearer to the front the atmosphere is a little more tense and I know that soon it will be just grim business for us and it will be hell all around.”

**15 October 1944:**

“So we are in action again and my fears have calmed down a bit—your letter helped a lot. We, who come out here with a lot of ideals after one combat or two forget the things we are fighting for and only try to exist the best we could. Thus a letter like yours with its quotation—that what we do with our life is what counts after all and not the length of, it helps a lot.

“The first casualties came in—and it’s beginning all over again for me. I am a little more used to it by now but cannot get absolutely impersonal about it. If I was a chaplain over an outfit that came from all over the country—it would be different but most of these boys I know, or their relatives. It is tough—I can remember the time in the last area when a boy came in without a

face, it's horrible I know—it nearly finished me. That is war—and why people go on killing each other like that I don't know.”

**18 October 1944:**

“This cold drizzly rain gets under my skin—funny how much the human body can stand. The men in their slit trenches half filled with water—with no change of clothing—soaked right through for days on end certainly deserve a lot of credit. That what they go through and the fellers at home certainly need to make some sacrifice not so much for the boys as much as for a better world to come.

“This is decidedly worse than Italy—the terrain we are fighting and the fanaticism of the Germans now that they have their backs against the wall. Progress however is steady and we are gaining ground.

“The boys come in soaked to the skin—and all of them cold. They have to lie in wet slit trenches all the time—and complain of lack of sleep—lack of food—no hot food, but keep doggedly on. The infantry certainly takes the worse licking without the glamour of the other corps. They walk, they fight, they go without any comforts—and still keep on going in weather and life that would make any man cringe.”

**20 October 1944:**

“One of my very good friends—an officer you wouldn't know, was speaking to me not an hour ago—and now I hear that he was killed. That is battle—and we get to look at things the same way—very pessimistic and looking for the worse every time. It's tough—so far I have been lucky—the road I traveled on four times was shelled as many times yesterday claiming many wounded but I just happened to be travelling at the right time.”

**21 October 1944:**

“So I cross off another day in my diary—another day in which I have gone through living in fear and in sorrow—sorrow to see the boys I have worked with in the army and before the army coming in wounded or killed. The Germans however are taking a bigger loss than we are—I talked with one of the wounded Jerries—he was afraid of me at first but after I offered him a cigarette and asked about his home, he pulled out his wallet and showed me pictures of his home and his mother and father and sisters—and for a moment I got to forget the hate that comes over one when he sees his own boys killed and maimed.”

**31 October 1944:**

“Our boys are making out alright—and are regarded as one of the best outfits hereabouts. A few days ago one of our companies made what they jokingly call a ‘banzai’ charge through the German lines. The enemy was also attacking—but our boys were much more ferocious and the net result, when I went over the hill later to pick up some of our dead bodies which were but very few—I counted over 100 dead Germans sprawled all over the place.”

**39 [31] October 1944:**

“We’ve been in the field now for a long time and fighting without rest. When we mean without rest—it means without rest—how the human body stands it I don’t know but they say the human body is a pretty strong machine. Through rain, fog—up a hill down a hill over a mountain down another—fighting all the way and always fearing that the enemy may throw a barrage any minute. That’s how the boys have to fight.”

**22 November 1944:**

“Haven’t had a bath for over a month now and only one change of clothes during that time. Hoping that soon I will have a chance to take one as I feel so dirty.”