

## CLOSING REMARKS

Sunday, July 4, 1982

By BEN TAMASHIRO



As we come to the close of our 40th Anniversary, another milestone in the history of the 100th, may I take this opportunity to thank all of you, to the many friends who helped us, through their donations of time, goods, and talent, and for your participation in the festivities of the occasion. The anniversary could not have been possible without you. In behalf of your club, a great big Mahalo!

After a long series of injustices, the American colonists went to war against the British. And on this day 206 years ago — July 4, 1776 — the Second Continental Congress officially declared the independence of the United States of America. But the path to independence is strewn with the lives of patriots. Our time was 40 years ago.

Most of the boys killed in the war are buried in cemeteries near home but a few still lie overseas. One of them is S/Sgt. Tomosu Hirahara, Company B. He lies in France, in the Epinal National Memorial Cemetery, just outside Bruyeres. He was killed October 15, 1944, the first day of the battle for Bruyeres.

That was a little over two years after the 100th had left the states for overseas duty. Just before leaving, Tomosu had a chance to call his elder brother, Tom, who was in one of the military camps in the East. Tom caught a bus and arrived at Camp Kilmer as the men of the 100th were loading aboard trains for the ride to Brooklyn. Tomosu was at the head of his section going aboard when Tom came running up the station platform. Tomosu broke stride for just an instant. There was no time even for an embrace; just a handclasp. And as the hands let go, Tomosu called out, "I think this is the last time we'll see each other alive."

How is it that Tomosu still lies in Epinal? I asked the question when I visited the Epinal cemetery many years ago. But it was only recently that I came to understand the reason why.

Bruyeres is a small town in the northeast corner of France, just this side of the German border. When France fell to the

German onslaught in June 1940, it fell under the absolute control of the invaders for it was a strategic communications and transportation center. Four years later, another military force came to fight over the town — the 100/442.

In the forest above Bruyeres is an impressive memorial to the Nisei soldier. A modest one is set in the woods above Biffontaine where the "Lost Battalion" lay entrapped for a week until rescued by the 100/442. The memorials were erected by an appreciative people, in memory of the men who gave their lives fighting there.

But the memorials also stand for something else. After being under stern military control for years, here came a bunch of loose and easy-going Americans, Nisei GIs, total strangers to the French, who carried no airs of being liberators or conquerors or rescuers. Their modest manners and their attitude toward the people restored the people's faith in humanity. They were, once again, masters of their own free will. That is the other side of those memorials.

And when they looked about them, they saw, in Tomosu Hirahara's grave, another symbol of that transformation, a representation of all that was beautiful in the Nisei who had helped them to regain their sense of dignity.

So they asked Tomosu's family if they would kindly leave him there with them; they would take good care of him. That request, however, nearly wrenched the Hirahara family in two — one group wanted to bring him home, the other wanted to accede to the wishes of the French people.

It was a time when the KIAs were being brought home to Hawaii. The side of the family arguing for Tomosu's return was rightfully concerned that if he did not return with the rest, friends and others would think that there was something wrong about him. But within the family group, Tom had been closest to Tomosu. He had adored his kid brother.

But now, that last handshake at the train station, and Tomosu's parting words, were all that were left. And when he came upon Tomosu's grave in Epinal, somehow, his heart told him that this is where Tomosu himself would have chosen to be.

So there he lies . . . one grave, among the thousands of beautiful marble crosses, row after row, in Epinal cemetery . . . serving as a kind of bridge between people halfway around the world from each other.

Tomosu was the youngest in a large family of 10. His eldest sister, Mrs. Shizue Masutani, is here with us today. So is his brother, Ronald; and another sister, Mrs. Helen Morita, and her daughters, Mrs. Dale Evans, and Mrs. Momie Bradley and her husband.

I bring you this account of Tomosu, just one of hundreds of such personal narratives, because in time, the greater glory of the 100th may come to be — not the circumstances under which it was formed, or the heroisms and sacrifices of its members, or even the test of Americanism — but the fact that they were out to do a job the best way they knew how . . . and in the doing, reaffirmed a truth about independence, about themselves, about all of us: that under our skin, we are brothers all.

That is the significance of this 40th Anniversary.

Till we meet again, then, hopefully at the Golden Anniversary, God bless you all. ☆



## BATTLEGROUND: Faith and Bullets

The campaign map on this page portrays some of the places where the 100th fought units of the German 10th Army in Italy; also, its sojourn into France, up to the NE corner where the 100/442 rescued the beleaguered "Lost Battalion" of the Texas 36th Division, then to a well-deserved Riviera holiday interlude in the South. After that, it was pulled back into Italy where it helped crack the Ligurian end of the German Gothic Line which had held fast despite six months of Allied efforts to breach it. The war ended there in the Po Valley. In the course of the battles, the 100th earned three Presidential Unit Citations and one with the 442nd.

The day after the 100th was constituted in the Army of the United States on 4 June 1942 at Schofield Barracks, it was headed out to sea on the S.S. Maui. There was no fanfare, no word of its departure; one conjecture for this being that the authorities wanted the boys out of the way, in case the advancing Japanese Navy should overrun Midway and head for Hawaii. Of this hasty departure: "By some reckoning, 40 years ago today marks the beginning of one of the most remarkable sagas of World War II." (Star-Bulletin, June 5, 1982.) The points on the map are benchmarks to that history. But combat is only one aspect of its record.

In their two-volume history of the American Revolution, "The Spirit of Seventy-Six," historians Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris write that "needless to say, the Revolution was not all fighting; indeed, the fighting, though essential, was perhaps not the most important part of it." They quote John Adams who saw "the real American Revolution" as being, above all, a change "in the minds and hearts of the people."

The saga of the 100th: 1,432 men brought together in the aftermath of the debacle of Pearl Harbor; saddled with feelings of understandable distrust by a significant segment of the civil populace and military planners; then rushed off into an uncertain future . . . to emerge as the heroes of their generation . . . is more than the record of Presidential Unit Citations, a Congressional Medal of Honor, and thousands of medals won.

"If dey come, who you shoot? Dem or me?" Men of lesser faith are forever demanding to know. To still such voices; to change hearts and mind . . . but the greater meaning of the 100th's devotion to duty and country was that their performance measured up to the faith of those who stood by them in the times of stress.



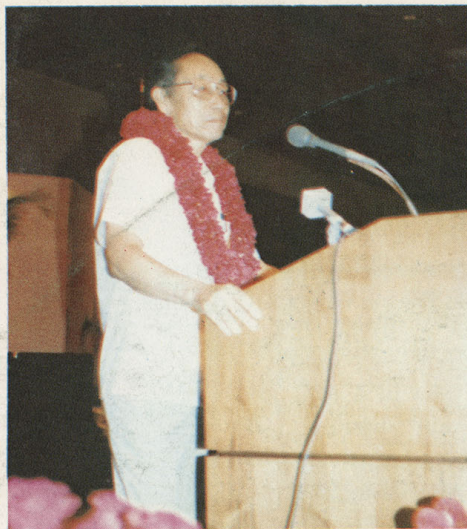




STANLEY NAKAMOTO

"... overwhelmed by the response of the club members and wives in supporting the 40th anniversary reunion. . . . The photography team took excellent photos of each function and an extensive album is now being prepared. Members who want prints will have an opportunity to order them."

— See inside cover.



YOUNG O. KIM

"... I share the opinion of others — General Charles Ryder, 34th Division Commander, and General Mark Clark, 5th Army Commander. . . the 100th became established as the best offensive battalion in World War II."

— See page 20.



MISS IRENE ANZAI

"... For the proud history and self-dignity that you have bestowed upon us, we are deeply grateful. It is upon this foundation that we have the opportunity to build. . . ."

— See page 24.



MRS. KIKUYO FUJIMOTO

"... Because of your faithful service to the country, and great accomplishments in all activities after the war, we, the Issei, are able to live with pride as Japanese Americans. . . ."

— See page 24.



MITSUYOSHI FUKUDA

"... There are many years ahead of us to do the things we had promised to our buddies. Let's get on with the job. Let us make a vow once again that we will care for the loved ones left behind by 374 men who were killed in combat overseas. . . ."

— See page 40.



BEN TAMASHIRO

"... they were out to do a job the best way they knew how . . . and in the doing, reaffirmed a truth about independence, about themselves, about all of us: that under our skin, we are brothers all."

— See page 44.