# RETIREMENT SPEECH

By Dr. John Sadanaga February 1, 1985

Permit me to begin my story with these words by Dr. Roger Kennedy so that my presentation will be more meaningful. Dr. Kennedy, a constitutional law scholar and a Smithsonian curator stated, "The American Constitution and the wartime exclusion and incarceration of civilians of Japanese ancestry by the government of the United States stands as the greatest failure of that remarkable document."

The Japanese-American story has been on a merry-go-round. Over five and a half decades ago, our first generation parents and the niseis, who are second generation Americans of Japanese ancestry, were accused of being disloyal, dangerous, and untrustworthy on the basis of our ethnic ancestry. Today, I am honored and pleased to be asked as your guest speaker, and to briefly describe my experiences in an American internment camp and the Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team. To give you a mental picture, the average Nisei G.I. was five feet, four inches tall and weighed 125 pounds with muddy boots, a loaded M-1, and three hand grenades. The average shirt was a 12 and a half neck with a 27-inch sleeve. Our pants were 26 inch waist with a 25 inch inseam. Boot size was usually a two and a half EEE. We were truly the quartermaster's nightmare.

My brief history will begin from December 7, 1941, the day that affected so many Americans. My third year of high school was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II and Executive Order 9066. This order authorized the mass exclusion of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. Approximately 120,000 persons of which nearly 80,000 were American-born citizens of the United States were forced to leave their homes.

Our family of five was ordered to the assembly center in Portland, Oregon. The center was previously used as a livestock exposition building, and as the weather grew warmer, it became so apparent that farm animals had been former tenants. Each family was assigned compartment stalls. The size was dependent upon the number in the family; our family of five occupied a stall measuring ten by twenty feet. Our belongings consisted of only what we could carry. The stalls were open with no ceilings, walls were thin plywood, the front entrance was open with no closure, except for a bed sheet or a blanket. The common latrines were open rows of commodes, with no individual closures of any type. The shower area was the same. Privacy became a lost entity. We lost not only our freedom as Americans, but our dignity as human beings. This was to be our family home for the next three months. While in this assembly center, barren and isolated acreage in the United States was selected for more permanent types of internment camps. Ten of these camps were built in the uninhabited areas of the United States. Our family was relocated from the assembly center stable in Portland, Oregon to the Minidoka internment camp in the desert of Idaho.

The Minidoka living quarters were depressing: the barracks were made of tar paper and plaster board, with an obvious absence of insulation. Our family compartment was furnished only with a coal burning stove, five metal cots, and a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling. The quarters assigned to our family was 12 by 20 feet, the room remained bare without furniture throughout our detention with the exception of articles made from any materials that might become available, such as wooden crates and boxes. This was my home from May 12, 1942 to March 23, 1944.

From January 1942, all draft-age Americans of Japanese ancestry were given a Selective Service classification of 4C which meant "enemy aliens not desired for the Armed Service." We were not acceptable for training because of our ethnic descent. Then and now our hearts are American. Then, our faces looked like the enemy. The myopic eyes of the community and country could not see less than a millimeter beneath our skin to see the patriotism in our body and soul.

The War Department in January 1943 announced plans to create an all Japanese-American combat unit with volunteers from the Hawaiian Islands and the internment camps in the United States. This was the birth of the Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

I was still in the internment high school when the Nisei regiment was created, and shortly after the unconventional ceremony of graduation, I told my mother that I was going to enlist. Her eyes filled with tears; she knew we would be front-line combat infantrymen—no other military branch or service was open to us. Tearfully, she said, "Your country has done a great wrong to you, but this does not change your obligation or duty to your country. *Gambaru* (do your best), don't give up, and persevere." I was sworn into the United States Army at Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City, Utah, then to basic training at Camp Blanding, Florida, the home of chiggers and ringworms. After the conclusion of my basic training and before going overseas, I was given leave to visit my mother in the internment camp. After the leave was over, I joined other members at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the birthplace of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

I departed from the port of embarkation in New York on the troop ship *Queen Mary*. I immediately became seasick while the ship was still in the harbor and was unable to retain any nourishment during the entire voyage. There's a hypothesis that states, "What goes up must come down." On this voyage I learned the reverse to be the fact: what goes down will come up. Fortunately, it took only six days to reach Glasgow, Scotland, the home port of the *Queen Mary*. After this ordeal, I was weak but ready to face the enemy. Combat seemed the lesser of the two evils at that time. I joined my unit, F Company, near Epinal, France on November 18, which is my birthday. My service was an unforgettable gift, and from that day I learned that hardship and suffering are lessons in life.

Time does not permit me to give you the complete story of our regiment, so I hope this condensed version will suffice. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, with our motto of "Go For Broke," received 9,486 Purple Hearts and won 18,142 individual decorations with seven Presidential Distinguished Unit citations. This made the Nisei regiment, for its size and length of service, the most decorated unit in American military history. And the Nisei regiment is the only unit ever summoned by the president and presented the Distinguished Unit citation personally by the president of the United States. The niseis of the regiment were Americans who loved and believed in America when others did not believe in them. Many praises have been bestowed upon the Nisei veterans of World War II and this statement by General Joe Stillwell best describes their valor and accomplishments. He said, "The Niseis bought an awfully big hunk of America with their blood."

At this time, I would like to give a brief account of our last major campaign in Italy, because this is the one I vividly remember. The regiment was returned to Italy from France in March, 1945, at the personal request of General Mark Clark to General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. Our assignment was to create a diversionary action on the western anchor of the Gothic Line [last important defense of the German units in Italy], which turned into a full-scale offensive engagement. This sector had defied an Allied assault of up to three divisions for over five months. Our mission was to conduct a surprise attack by going up and over the militarily unbelievable side of a nearly vertical mountain. The steep climb took all night. The forward unit reached the top of the mountain and quietly moved into position. The enemy was not aware of our presence. At dawn the regiment attacked, and in the next 32 minutes two essential positions were taken. With this break in the Gothic Line, the other positions fell one by one. In four days the attack destroyed positions which had withstood efforts for five months. I survived the first day, but on the evening of the second, I was seriously wounded by German machine-gun fire and could not get medical treatment until late the following day due to the rugged terrain. My body was numb, my wounds were bleeding, and my survival had been questionable. After five operations and nearly five months in Army hospitals, I was well enough to be discharged from the United States Army on August 31, 1945, with a 50 percent disability from the Veterans Administration.

As I was preparing to leave the hospital, my ward nurse bid me goodbye and asked me where I would be going. I replied, "Back to the internment camp. I have no other place to go, and my mother is still there behind barbed wires." Her smile disappeared; she became silent and bewildered and left the room. I returned "home" to the internment camp and as I approached the guarded gate to receive permission to enter, the young military guard looked at me in my uniform with the overseas ribbons, the Purple Heart, and the combat infantryman's badge, and simply said, "I am sorry." I questioned my future in that isolated and dismal camp. After several weeks of secluded meditation, my decision was to continue my education and give service to my native land, the United States of America.

I enrolled at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. Upon graduation, I requested and was granted a waiver of my disability and joined the United States Air Force. On February 1, 1985, after nearly 32 years of military service, I retired from the Air Force. This has culminated the best years of my life in the service of my country. Today, I became the last person who served with the Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team to retire from active duty. I was just one of many who answered this country's call, and I was privileged to have been a member of a unit who was composed of many heroes.

I would like to conclude this segment of my life with the hope that this great nation will never forget that those who sacrificed their lives for the welfare of all the people were not of one color. Exceptions to race, creed, or culture have no place in our nation.

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# SHIG DOI'S STORY

## Interned in Tule Lake Incarceration Camp
## Soldier in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team

(reprinted from John Tateishi, *And Justice for All*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999, with permission)

I was born in Auburn, a little town about thirty miles northeast of Sacramento, on March 30, 1920.

The whole family worked on an eighty-five-acre orchard, with grapes, peaches, and pears. We bought it a couple of years before the war broke out. My folks were aliens. They weren't allowed to become citizens, and aliens in California couldn't own land. This is what most of the Issei did: when my oldest brother got to be twenty-one, they used his name to purchase the land. It was a good opportunity, eighty-five acres. We were all just coming out of the Depression, but the land that we wanted was just perfect for us, and it came with the horses and a tractor and some other things. It was really a good deal.

So in 1939 and 1940, we worked it within our family. I guess all the *Nihonjin* [Japanese], that's how they did it—a family deal, so a lot of the money didn't go out of the family. Even if the fruit didn't sell for a good price, we were able to pay the taxes and keep going.

In the meantime, around 1940 or so, we had this Sino-Japanese war going on in Manchuria, and things were getting rough. But we still decided to keep on adding farming equipment; we bought a tractor, a disc, and a truck—all the things that you want to farm. So we were getting self-sufficient with all the money we were making.

But, at the time, Placer County, where we lived, was a hotbed of prejudice and discrimination. It was really a hotbed. Many rednecks, I guess they call them. Even when we were in elementary school we would always have fights. If somebody said, "Why, you dirty Jap ..." those were fighting words. We used to get even with the whites when it snowed. Once in awhile, it snows up there. Then we had these snowball fights, and we would really give it to them. We'd soak up the snowball with cold water and really make it hard.

But during the high school, we didn't have that kind of fight except during the forty-niners celebration. I remember one time this kid had come from Japan. And this *Hakujin* [white] kid didn't know he was a good judo man. So the Hakujins decided that anybody who wasn't dressed in a forty-niners costume, they were going to throw in the fishpond in front of the high school. They found out different after they picked on him. He took on about seven of them—bang, bang, bang. So after that, they left him alone.

But the hostility and prejudice...even the teachers were that way in the high school. There was a certain feeling—the white kids used to kind of keep to themselves, and we used to keep to ourselves. At certain times, some of us would mix with the whites, but as a whole, we kept to ourself. Our friends were always Nihonjin.

It's always been a prejudice country. You could feel it. You could feel it even more so during the war. And my folks felt the brunt of it when they came back from camp after the war. You see, some of the white kids that went to the school never made it back, because they went to the Pacific and they died there. So that explains the hostility. So during and after the war, in 1944 when my folks came back, they hit a brick wall.

They were the first ones released from the camp. They were in Amache, and they decided since we had the land they wanted to come home. They wanted to run the orchard and to come home. Since our land was debt free, not like others who had mortgages foreclosed, my dad had leased it out before we left for camp.

All this happened when I was overseas. I didn't know about it until I got back home. First, they were going to dynamite our packing shed, but somehow the fuse didn't go off. So second, they were going to burn it down. Well, there's always good in some people, and one of the fruit managers told my brother, "Watch out, they're going to burn your shed down tonight." So my brother had the firehose ready, and the minute he saw some flame he was able to put it out. Then the following night they fired a shotgun through our house. When I got home, my mother showed me where all these pellet marks were.

This was around November of 1944. That's just when we rescued the Lost Battalion and we were cut down to nothing. In fact, out of my company of 230 men, I was one of the 23 men to walk out, and I only had 6 riflemen left. See, I was getting shot at from the enemy, and then at home in my own country, people were shooting at my dad. I was risking my life for this country, and my government was not protecting my folks. And they came home from camp with nothing.

When my company got to southern France we were at a point where we just had to wait for the replacements. We just didn't have any fighting strength. This was a quiet front between France and Italy. So I had my platoon up the hills, and we used to go patrol every day. Some guys would talk about how people were shooting at my family, and then one would say, "Hey, why are you here risking your life? Why don't you go over the hill to Nice and enjoy yourself?" Well, God, you can't just take off. After all, you've got your whole platoon up there with you, and you can't say, "I'm gonna quit and take off." They would have probably court-martialed me anyway. So that's how the thing was.

All three of us boys were in the service. My youngest brother went in the service in Japan. He went late, which made things hard for my family. This shows you how harsh those Placer County guys were—the white guys up there on the draft board. And they drafted my oldest brother after the war was over. They didn't need to draft him when two of us were already in the service. One of us was deferred, and that's how we used to eat. So they made it hard for my dad who couldn't drive and my mom couldn't drive. In Placer County the lawyers' sons got deferred, but us peons got sent.

All the way through, they wouldn't even sell my parents anything. They wouldn't sell them boxes to pack fruit. So my oldest brother had to go all the way to Sacramento to buy boxes. Then they wouldn't handle my family's fruit, so the family had to take it up to Sacramento to ship it out. By then, the three of us were in the service.

In 1942, I went to the Monterey induction center and was sent to Camp Grant in Illinois as a basic trainee. After basic, I worked in the dental lab through part of 1944, and then all the Nisei got shipped out to Camp Blanding in Florida. Almost a thousand went down there. Later on we found out why we were there. The 442nd and the 100th were fighting in Italy. They needed replacements, so they scrounged the whole United States Army, and whoever had a Japanese surname ended up in Alabama or in Camp Blanding for combat training.

While we were at Blanding, we were due for furloughs, and they threw the loyalty questionnaire at us. We were supposed to answer those questions, Will you serve your country? and If you were asked to go overseas, will you go? So naturally, I said, if necessary, I'll go overseas. They gave me a twenty-one-day furlough to go home, but I couldn't come home to the West Coast. And by then, my folks had transferred from Tule Lake to Amache in Colorado.

But before that, when I was in Camp Grant, my first sergeant asked me once why I never went home on furlough. I said to him, "Where would I go? I have no home." He didn't believe me and said that everybody had a home, a family to go home to. So I told him, "Okay, if you don't believe me go ahead and look it up in my files. You'll find out I can't go back to the West Coast." So a couple of days later he calls me and says, "Yeah, goddammit, Shig, you're right, you can't go home."

So when I took that twenty-one-day furlough from Blanding, I didn't go home to the West Coast but went to see my folks at the Amache Relocation Center. I think I only spent two or three days at Amache because it was so depressing that I couldn't stay anymore. I told my mom that I was going back to the army camp, but I stopped in Omaha on the way to visit an army buddy. That was a lot better, you see, because my mom was trying to do her best to keep me happy. The day that I was supposed to leave she wanted to make me something, but she couldn't fix anything for me. There wasn't anything. She felt really bad about not having anything for me. So I took the bus from there to Omaha, and when I got on the train one Caucasian guy asked me, "What kind of camp is that? What kind of army camp is that?" And Jesus, I just couldn't tell him what the hell it was. So I kept my mouth shut.

At the end of my furlough, I had to report to Camp Shelby. It was at Shelby that the headquarters of the 442nd had some kind of idea that some of the Blanding group were no-noes [no-no boys] and weren't willing to go overseas. So every night we had a bloody fight. They would come down from headquarters but they didn't know who to pick on, they didn't know who the no-noes were. But after we shipped out to Ford Meade, I found out who the guys were that refused to go, who became no-noes. Some of those guys were back here enjoying life. That's what hurts me, you know, because some of us went into the service together.

The guys in Shelby—some died, some got crippled. This redress thing should be for the people like that. But surely the people who deserve it are not going to benefit. Like my dad. They're gone. Like my wife's father. He was interned as an enemy alien for four years and separated from his own children. They're all gone. That's why I say it hurts, it hurts me a lot. Because we fought like this for the benefit of... Those who deserve it are not going to get it.

One of my friends and I were the only ones in ROTC in school. The other guys ridiculed us before the war. But it was really hard on my friend. When he volunteered from Tule Lake in 1942, they said you know, the Japanese line, "*Inu ga koko de taberu*" ("Dogs eat here"). They put a bone on a separate table. The people who gave everybody a hard time at Tule Lake today act as though nothing happened.

I have no regrets about what I did. I can look at everybody in the eye and I have no shame. I'm glad I served. I did what I had to do. And I have no regrets. I don't mind people calling me names as long as they don't do me body harm. That's their prerogative. And they said no-no. Well, how many who went back to Japan came back here? All of them. The 442nd wrote the history for the Japanese. It was a good stepping-stone for the Buddha-heads [a term for Japanese Americans from Hawaii], and we paid dearly for it. It's something we left that the future generations can be proud of.

But I don't think that settles everything. Just think of all those people—of the 990 that went over, not more than 200 of them came back without getting hit. If you look at the 442nd boys, don't look at their faces, look at their bodies. Then you'll find out how much they've suffered. They got hit hard, some lost their limbs.

I could tell you all this, but actually, to feel it, you had to be there. You would know the agony, the frustration, everything, while you were there. All this, and then, you'll wonder why you get kicked around.

I had the 36th Division general hit me on the head. Twice in a row he wanted me to push on. He wasn't worried about the 442nd and us guys; he was worried about his own men, the 36th Lost Battalion. So he committed all three of our battalions. I remember the first day he came up. He hits me on the head and says, "Soldier, you can't do anything here." Well, if you ever see the forest in the Vosges Mountains—my God, your enemy is ten or twenty feet away from you. The only reason I could fire at them is because the German has a white face, compared to the Nihonjin. So when he peeks out at us between the bushes and the tree, I fired. You hop from one tree to the next tree. We had them scattered so much, they might be in the back of us. The 36th Division took off and left a lot of their machine guns behind. So the Germans were firing our machine guns, and you couldn't tell the difference. It was really a mixed-up deal. I don't know why we went. I guess it's just something we had to do.

There's a guy in Oakland, Akiyama, who I met years after the war. I was working for the county, and he was working over here in a factory. I was looking at his head, and he had a scar right up here. "Jesus," I said, "Goddammit, I know where you got hit. You got hit in that Banzai Hill going after that Lost Battalion." He said, "How'd you know?" I said, "You went after that guy with a tommy gun and the other guy was already shot and you got shot by that sniper. I went after you, and I don't know why to this day that sniper didn't shoot me."

You see, the sniper took two guys right off. The first guy was dead. He got shot going after the guy with the tommy gun. We were using a lot of tommy guns then, because in a close-quarters fight, tommy guns are better—a tank can't move. But the only time you get .45 ammo is from the guys in the tank: You knock on them and say, "Hey, we need more ammo," and they'll just put their hand down and drop it out for you. And then they'll say, "Can't you see that machine gun right in front of you?" Well, they got a periscope, they could see really good. They could take their time and see, while us guys, we got to scan, you know, from here, and next, and next to see if the Germans are there. So if they're camouflaged really good, you're going to miss them. Well, tank guns say, "Right in front of you." This is how we fought in Vosges. That's why we lost so many men.

I also climbed that cliff at the Gothic Line. I was mad because we had a 10th Mountain Division out there trained for mountain fighting. And we were climbing just like goats. If you fall, you'll roll down, way down. We were lucky that day. Our company was the assaulting company. I was in the 3rd Battalion, so we got companies L, K, I, and M. The four companies are the rifle companies.

We assaulted that hill. We went into this little village there. We got there about two or three in the morning. They had a cobblestone street. And why the Germans never knew we were coming, I don't know, because when our guys said, ten minute break, everybody took his helmet off, and clonk, clonk, clonk, clonk. It hit the cobblestone and God, you could hear the thing go way down the valley.

Our guys said, "All right, nobody goes out in the daytime." I wasn't going to just sit. The whole company was in one small room. And everybody was saying, "God, I can't sleep." So I got my platoon and said, "Hey, I found a good place." I didn't know in the south part of Italy they sleep upstairs; and downstairs in a barn I found some nice corn stacked up, and it was really like a mattress. Hey, this is going to be a good idea. I got all my men down there. And Jesus, during the night something started crawling, and everybody said, "Hey did you guys feel any crawling last night?" and God, next morning, you're full of fleas. Man, I have everybody outside slapping themselves, and we're not supposed to get out there in the daytime, because the Germans were way up there and they could see us. The hell with the Germans, I said.

So I had fleas, and by the end of the campaign they were nice and fat. They chewed on me all the way through. We ordered a DDT powder and finally got rid of them. But we assaulted that night. L Company led. I Company followed. And we got on top of the ledge way up there and we caught them napping. And it's a good thing because they would have mowed us down like nothing. Because, yeah, the hill that we went up, a machine gun had the whole side covered. We caught that guy napping.

There was a guy who took basic with me named Hanamura in L Company, and he lives in Alameda. When we got up there, he was laying on a stretcher and I said, "Hey, what happened to you?" "Well, they shot me right through the ..." They couldn't carry him down, it was so steep, so they left him there overnight.

The 92nd Division was sitting for a whole winter on the Gothic Line until we came in. It was the same with the 36th Division. They were sitting there until we made a breakthrough. Then they took off and went too fast and got trapped. That's why we were always, I think, expendable to the army. I don't know, all those stories—What the hell, they say, they're just Japs anyway.

That's the way I felt in the service. Because we always seemed to get the hard part of it. We'd get pushed out of towns we would take. We couldn't be there to enjoy it; we were always in the outskirts. We're always doing the flanking protection for somebody's division. The rear echelon guys always enjoyed the benefit of the whole thing. So you can't help but wonder, because we always seemed to get the hard part. Okay, you take the Lost Battalion. You attack with two battalions. You never commit three. Why couldn't the 36th Division do their own rescue?

Why was the 442nd so good? It's not that we had to prove anything. We were reckless because we were young, you know. I will never do the things now that I did at that time. I would think twice. But if I had to do this thing over again and if I were to hit a front line, I'd rather be with the 442nd. I guess, it's upbringing, the family, the closeness of the family ties. When you're like that, you and your buddy are close. You have to figure also that the life of infantry is minutes. You count it in the minutes and seconds. If you're unlucky, boom, the first bullet has got you. So if you're a replacement, the saddest part is that you say, "What happened to that guy?" They say, "Oh, he *ma-ke up*," Hawaiian pidgin for "he got killed." They say nobody knows his name.

Like I was telling my wife, the last patrol I went on, I had a sergeant in communications who was a really good friend of mine. And he said, "Look, Shig, don't do anything reckless, I think the war's going to end." He kept telling me that. He said, "A and B tried to take that town. You're only taking one platoon, you're not going to do it." Then he said, "It took C Company to bring ‘em out." So, I didn't get halfway in before I had a new communications sergeant. We had mail call and I said, "Go ahead and read your mail." We got mail a few more times, yet. He said, "Nah, I'll come back and read it." It was from his wife, I think; he was married. He didn't get back, he got killed. And to this day, I don't know where he got killed. So that's the sad part, one part of the life in the infantry. To this day, I don't know how I got through all those campaigns.

I was fighting almost by myself, and I was the twelfth man to hit the Lost Battalion. We were talking about Tak Senzaki, a real hotshot guy from Seattle. He never would stay quiet; he wanted to fight all the time. Golly, we got lost because we had a lieutenant who couldn't read a map worth a damn. He took us down the wrong hill, and we ended up in no-man's-land. I only had an M1 and eight cartridges, just eight rounds. The rest of them had the same rounds. So God, you looked down and somebody says, "Those guys are Germans." Holy cow!

Then we saw this yellow communication line going up to them and this guy said, "Shall we cut?" "Hell no, don't cut it, they're going to come looking for it." So we go up there and pretty quick we see a guy digging. We could hear the shovel. Then you peek over there, and those guys are setting up a machine gun. So then they heard us and they started chasing us, and that's where I got my ear blasted. Because, God, they had a flanking movement to catch us. We had about ten guys. We had a rookie and this guy from Seattle had a tommy gun, so he says, "Hey, let ‘em come close, let ‘em come close." We were waiting for them, letting them come close, but the rookie guy gets all scared, so he gets up and bam.... They missed him the first time but they got him the second time. Then all hell broke loose. The big guy lobbed a hand grenade at us. Then they took off and we took off.

So we were going around this corner, around a bend, and God, here we meet again, ran right into each other. God, they started running, and everywhere, bang, bang. You know, it's hard to hit a running guy. I never have. We were lost the whole day. I had a hole right through my... somebody took a potshot out of my hide. Somebody said, "Shig's got a hole in his pants." I looked, and that's the closest one ever got to me. I came through all that.

The Lost Battalion was the worst because I had never seen men get cut down so fast, so furiously, caught in machine-gun crossfire. They were crafty fighters, too, you know. That's the reason, I think, they wanted people who were young—eighteen, nineteen, twenty—and reckless. In the infantry if you're married and you play it too cautiously, it seems like you get hit. They're too cautious on the line. I'd think they'd be worrying about lots of things, you know. But I was on top of Banzai Hill and somebody hollered, "Tank," and boy, I ran the other way because I wasn't going to tackle a tank by myself.

But this is the whole Lost Battalion thing. If we advanced a hundred yards, that was a good day's job. We'd dig in again, move up another hundred yards, and dig in. That's how we went. It took us a whole week to get to the Lost Battalion. It was just a tree-to-tree fight, and a tank couldn't go there.

I could never figure out why the Germans never attacked us right after we got to the Lost Battalion. They could have run us right off, but they must have been hurt just as bad as we were. We were so tired. The next morning we would have been all dead. But I found out everybody bleeds red, and it doesn't make a difference if he's white or black. And everybody hollers when he's hit. But it's hard to think that young men like that die by the hundreds, you know. You see a corpse lying there and turning wax blue. I guess ours wasn't too bad because at least the stink wasn't there. It was cold so the body didn't decay as much as during the summer.

I don't know, it's just that a lot of funny things go on. The people who's unlucky is just unlucky. You get it, that's all. You could hide underneath the biggest rock and still get it. There's a guy from Chicago; he used to always want to dig a foxhole with me. So he was digging under the great big rock on the other side of the Lost Battalion. All of a sudden he hit something and he said, "I can't dig anymore. Can I get in your foxhole?" "Yeah," I said, "you could stay with me tonight." The next morning the railroad gun hit that thing and knocked the rock to smithers. Wham ... it hit underneath the rock. If he was underneath it, he would have been buried. And my bazooka man, we took him along on a last patrol. Good thing he was out of his foxhole. He came back and saw a mortar shell right inside his foxhole.

Then I had another guy who would never fire at a German. He could spot them though; I couldn't spot them. He could tell me, "Hey, he's right over there, he's right over there." I would say, "Why don't you shoot ‘em?" He couldn't shoot them. He would never shoot them. I think he got hit, and I never did see him after that. Funny, I don't know why he was there; he could have been a conscientious objector. He would have been better off instead of being out there. But he sure could spot them!

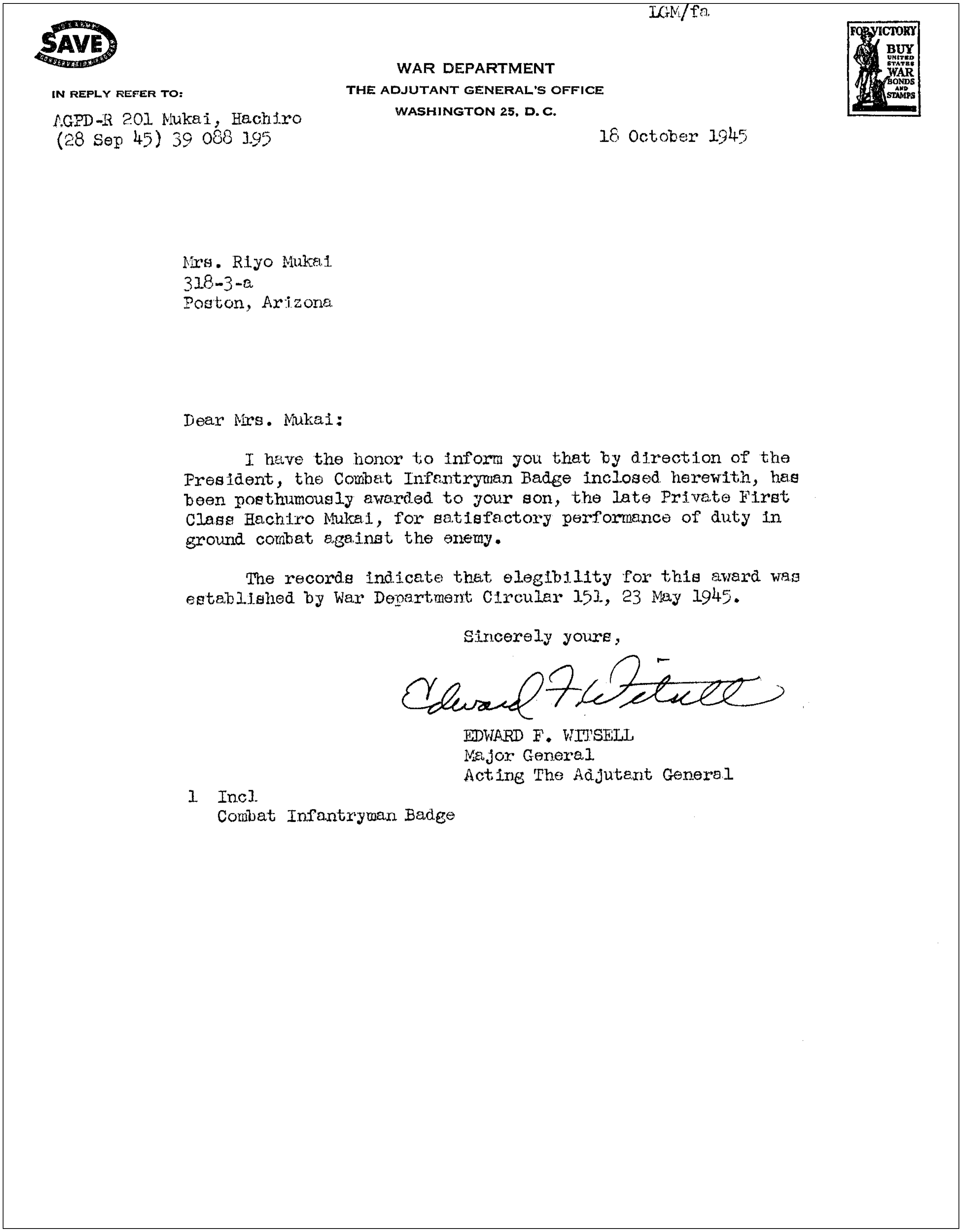
When it was all over for us, the guys who went through all the combat didn't get the glory. We were coming home on points, so we came back earlier to our homes. We didn't take the glory. The guys that came later, the ones that volunteered after awhile got to march down Pennsylvania Avenue.

After everything we went through—the evacuation, the war—sure you're bitter. Somewhere in this corner I have a scar that will never be gone. If you hurt a person, you say something and you apologize, but that isn't going to bring anything back. You've been hurt and the scar is there and it'll stay there till the dying day.

But mostly, it's just the people that gave my folks a bad time, that's what hurts me most. I don't know, I guess it's because they were back here enjoying the benefit of my protection, and my dad, my dad must have died with a broken heart. He died young. My mom died young, too.

I did what I had to do, and I have no regrets. But people made it rough for my family. And that's what hurts me most.

# LETTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



LGM/fa

SAVE

FOR VICTORY BUY UNITED STATES WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

IN REPLY REFER TO:
AGPD-R 201 Mukai, Hachiro
(28 Sep 45) 39 088 195

18 October 1945

Mrs. Riyo Mukai
318-3-a
Poston, Arizona

Dear Mrs. Mukai:

I have the honor to inform you that by direction of the President, the Combat Infantryman Badge inclosed herewith, has been posthumously awarded to your son, the late Private First Class Hachiro Mukai, for satisfactory performance of duty in ground combat against the enemy.

The records indicate that elegibility for this award was established by War Department Circular 151, 23 May 1945.

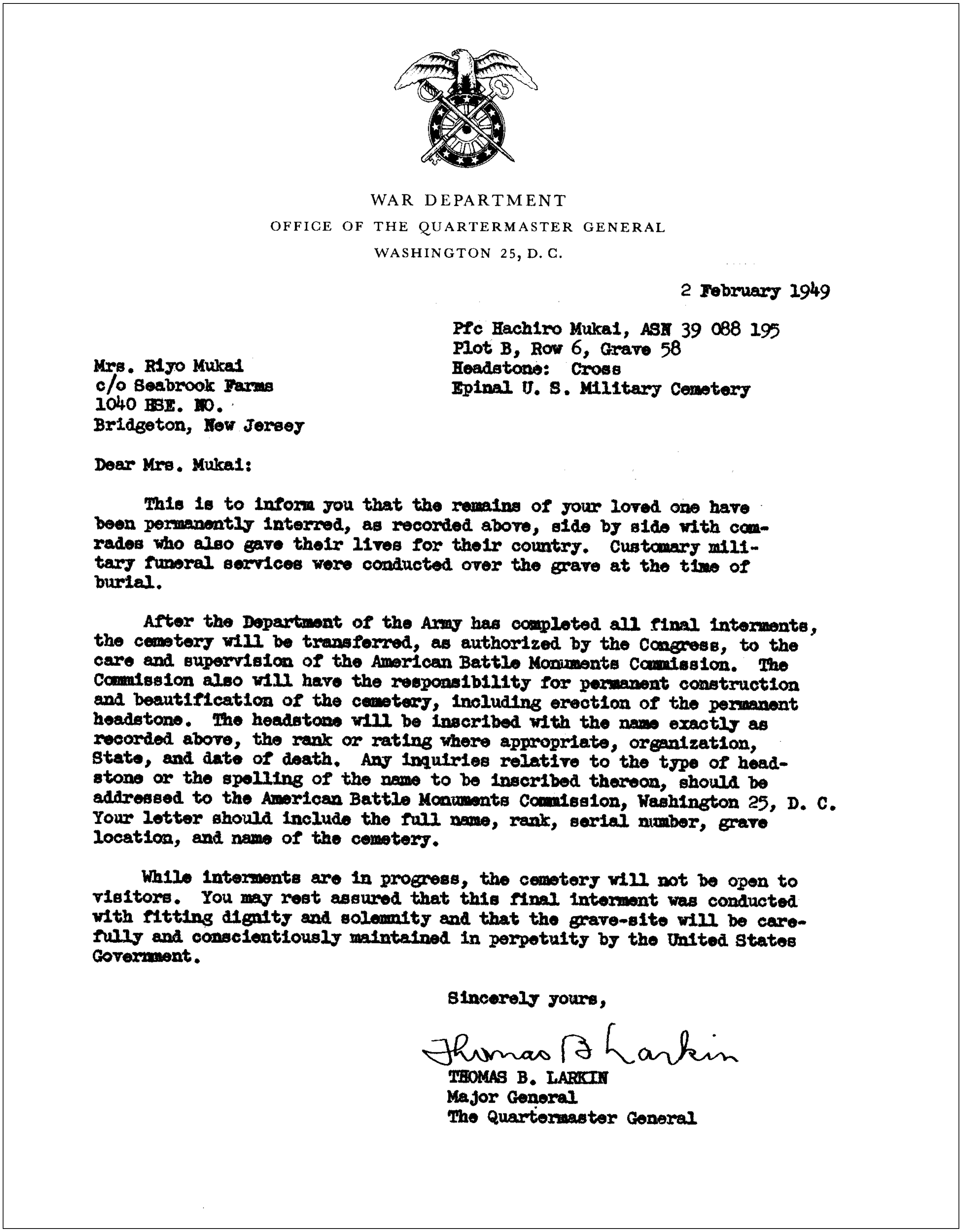
Sincerely yours,

Edward F. Witsell

EDWARD F. WITSELL
Major General
Acting The Adjutant General

1 Incl.
Combat Infantryman Badge

*Photograph courtesy of Jiro Mukai*



WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

2 February 1949

Pfc Hachiro Mukai, ASN 39 088 195
Plot B, Row 6, Grave 58
Headstone: Cross
Epinal U. S. Military Cemetery

Mrs. Riyo Mukai
c/o Seabrook Farms
1040 HSE. NO.
Bridgeton, New Jersey

Dear Mrs. Mukai:

This is to inform you that the remains of your loved one have been permanently interred, as recorded above, side by side with comrades who also gave their lives for their country. Customary military funeral services were conducted over the grave at the time of burial.

After the Department of the Army has completed all final interments, the cemetery will be transferred, as authorized by the Congress, to the care and supervision of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Commission also will have the responsibility for permanent construction and beautification of the cemetery, including erection of the permanent headstone. The headstone will be inscribed with the name exactly as recorded above, the rank or rating where appropriate, organization, State, and date of death. Any inquiries relative to the type of headstone or the spelling of the name to be inscribed thereon, should be addressed to the American Battle Monuments Commission, Washington 25, D. C. Your letter should include the full name, rank, serial number, grave location, and name of the cemetery.

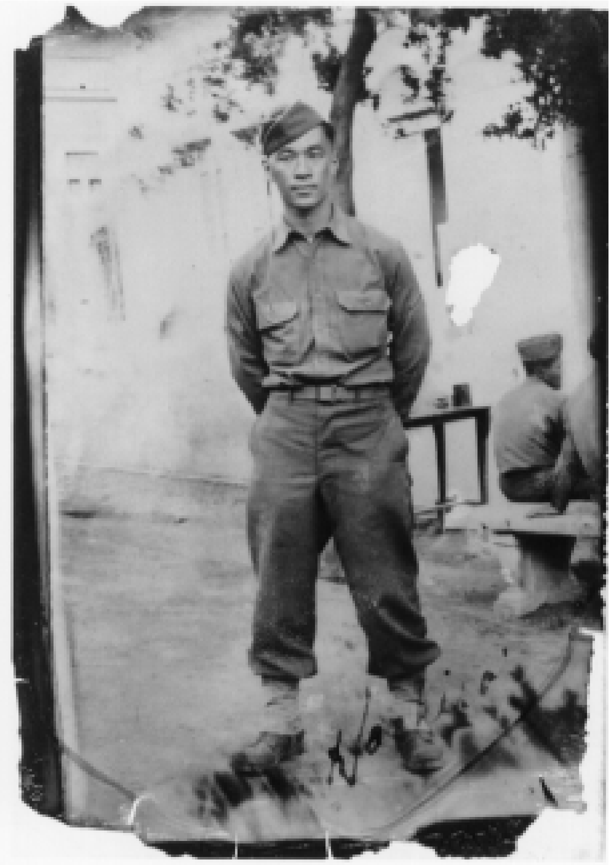
While interments are in progress, the cemetery will not be open to visitors. You may rest assured that this final interment was conducted with fitting dignity and solemnity and that the grave-site will be carefully and conscientiously maintained in perpetuity by the United States Government.

Sincerely yours,

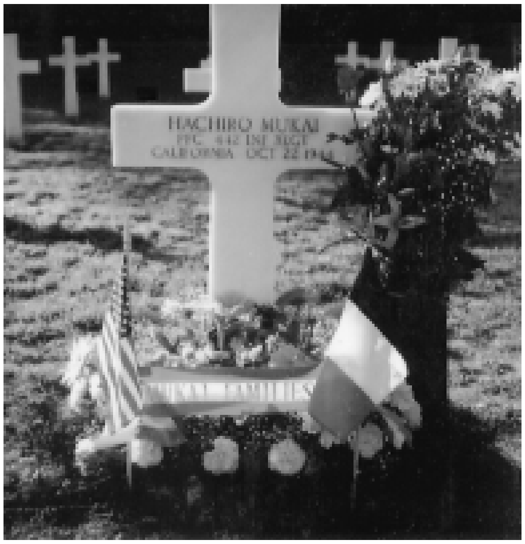
Thomas B Larkin

THOMAS B. LARKIN
Major General
The Quartermaster General

*Photograph courtesy of Jiro Mukai*



Private First Class Hachiro Mukai in Europe


HACHIRO MUKAI
PFC 442 INF REGT
CALIFORNIA OCT 22 1944

Hachiro Mukai's grave in France

*Photographs courtesy of Jiro Mukai*