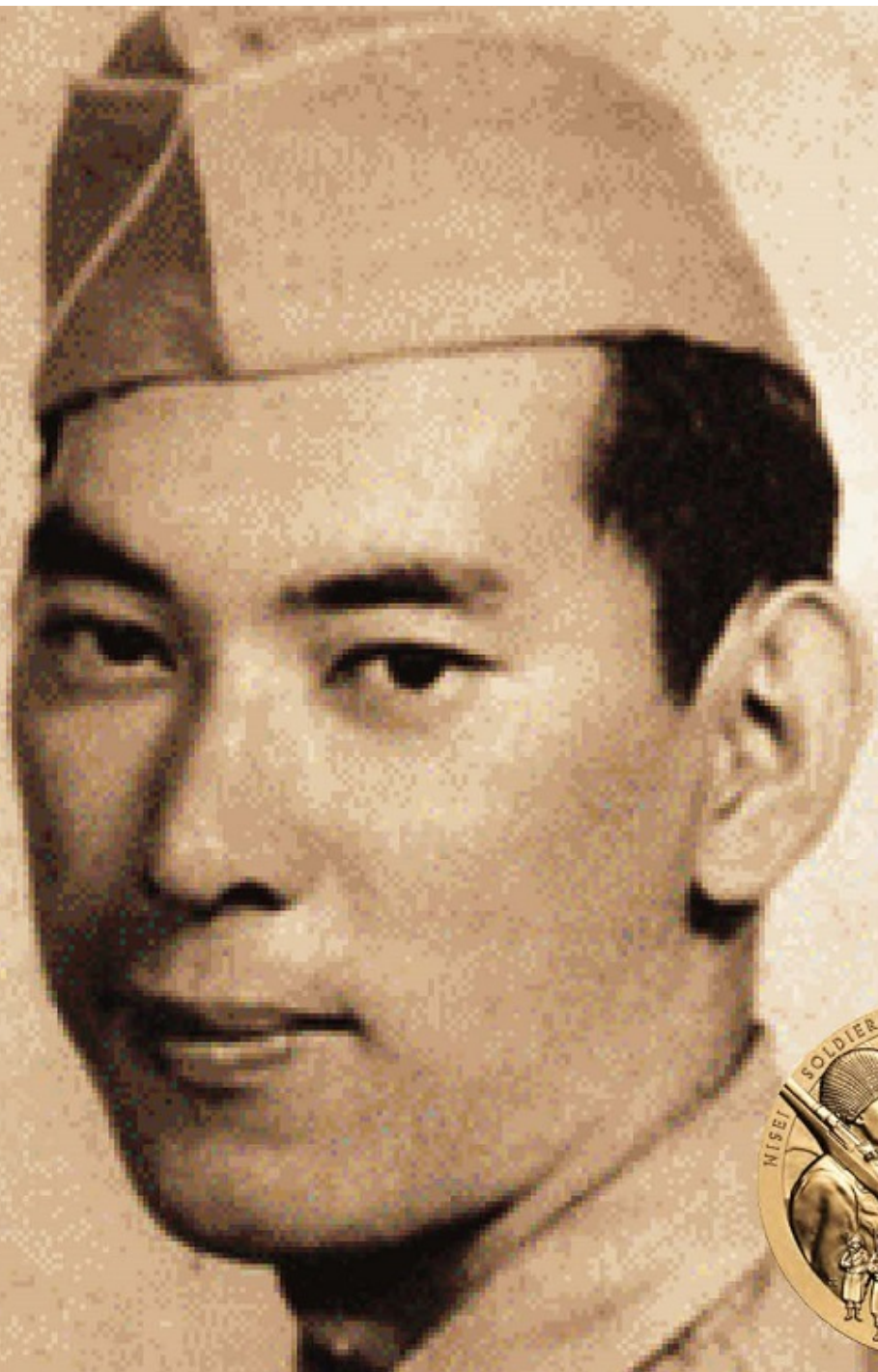


Robert Toshi Kuroda

Sgt. Robert Toshi Kuroda

And The 442nd Infantry

By James G. Fausone, Esq.



SGT. ROBERT T. KURODA AND THE 442ND INFANTRY

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In 1944, the world was engulfed in the flames of war as nations clashed in a struggle for supremacy. In the midst of this chaos, a group of brave men emerged from the shadows to make history. Among them was [Sergeant Robert Toshi Kuroda](#), a name etched

forever in the annals of heroism, whose journey with the 442nd Infantry Regiment would leave an indelible mark on the pages of World War II history.

The story of Robert Toshi Kuroda came full circle, like a ring, in November 2021 when in the dirt around the forest near Bruyeres, France, a Kuroda keepsake was found. But that tale only makes sense when the entire story is understood.

The Kuroda family immigrated to the United States from Hiroshima, Japan. This was over two decades before that city became infamous for atomic destruction. The real day that lives in infamy is August 6, 1945, when an American B-29 bomber dropped the world's first deployed atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The explosion immediately killed an estimated 80,000 people; tens of thousands more would later die of radiation exposure. Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced his country's unconditional surrender in World War II in a radio address on August 15, 1945, citing the devastating power of "a new and most cruel bomb."

The American branch of the Kuroda family was living in the United States, fighting in WWII and safe from nuclear destruction. One must assume that Kuroda's family members and friends perished as a result of the atomic attack. The family also lost a son to Nazi aggression in France. [World War II](#) was devastating to the Kuroda family.

But the world was at peace, and atomic bombs were unknown when Robert Toshi Kuroda was born on November 8, 1922, in Aiea, Hawaii. Though the family settled in Hawaii, they still faced discrimination, adversity, and racism. He was a Nisei, a second-generation Japanese-American. Kuroda was trained as an electrician. While many American men joined up within days or months of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, it took the U.S. Military a while to determine what to do with the Nisei who wanted to serve. The question of the day: "Was their loyalty to the U.S. or Japan?"

In February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, stripping Japanese descendants of their civil rights. That order and the subsequent actions carried out by the Federal Government represent one of the most shameful chapters in our Nation's history. In the next six months, approximately 122,000 men, women, and children were forcibly moved to "assembly centers." They were then evacuated to and confined in isolated, fenced, and guarded "relocation centers," also known as "internment camps." The 10 sites were in remote areas in six western states and Arkansas: Heart Mountain in Wyoming, Tule Lake & Manzanar in California, Topaz in Utah, Poston & Gila River in Arizona, Granada in Colorado, Minidoka in Idaho, and Jerome & Rowher in Arkansas.

Nearly 70,000 of the evacuees were American citizens. The government made no charges against them, nor could they appeal their incarceration. All lost personal liberties;

most lost homes and property as well. Although several Japanese-Americans challenged the government's actions in court cases, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the legality of the Evacuation Order. This action is recognized today as a black stain on American history.



Nisei nevertheless wanted to serve in the armed forces.

Altogether, more than 30,000 Japanese-Americans served with distinction during World War II in segregated units. More history of Nisei serving in WWII can be found on the [Japanese-American Veterans Association website](#).

Young Robert was determined to prove his loyalty and worth. His indomitable spirit and dedication to his homeland led him to enlist when allowed, in the U.S. Army. Robert Toshi Kuroda enlisted in the U.S. Army in March 1943, at the age of 20. After basic training, the war sent him to France and he would not see his beloved family, Hawaii, or even his 22nd birthday.

The 442nd Infantry Regiment

Kuroda became part of the 442nd. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was organized on March 23, 1943, in response to the War Department's call for volunteers to form the segregated Japanese-American army combat unit. More than 12,000 Nisei volunteers answered the initial call to serve. The 442nd ultimately had 2,686 from Hawaii and 1,500 from mainland U.S. internment camps that assembled at Camp Shelby, Mississippi in April 1943 for a year of infantry training. The unit's motto was ["Go For Broke."](#)

The 442nd Infantry Regiment, comprised primarily of Japanese-American soldiers, was a unique unit formed during a time when the loyalty of Japanese-Americans was questioned. Despite facing skepticism and prejudice, these men were determined to prove their loyalty through their actions on the battlefield. The regiment's motto, "Go For Broke," encapsulated their unwavering determination to give everything for victory. They were destined for their European theater of war.

Sgt. Robert Toshi Kuroda found himself amidst this brotherhood of warriors, each with

a story of sacrifice and resilience. The training was grueling, but their shared experiences forged an unbreakable bond among the soldiers. Kuroda's courage, leadership, and dedication to his comrades soon caught the attention of his superiors.

The Battle of Bruyères



In the fall of 1944, the 442nd Infantry Regiment was

deployed to the Vosges Mountain in Northeast France. Their mission was to liberate the town of Bruyères from German occupation. The rugged terrain and well-entrenched enemy forces made the battle arduous and costly, but the soldiers of the 442nd were undeterred. As a result, the 442nd was the most decorated unit in US Military history.

[The Battle of Bruyères](#) and the quickly followed rescue of the “Lost Texas Battalion” are now considered to be one of the ten major military battles fought by the U.S. Armed Forces. The almost impossible task was described: “When fighting around Bruyères started on September 30, 1944, The Germans had four years to dig in and prepare for the ally’s counterattack. They were battle-toughened and had superior weaponry. Holding the area was of utmost importance to them as the Vosges were at the doorstep of the German homeland. It took 19 days of savage fighting to liberate the town. But without also controlling the surrounding mountains, the area would not be secured from further attack.

After liberating Bruyères, the soldiers were told to take the village of Biffontaine and the mountains. These mountains were heavily forested, very cold, and muddy in October, and in some places particularly steep. The Germans held the high ground on every battlefield and allies’ task was to take on the German army hill by hill. Each night, the men found themselves trying to sleep in puddle-filled fox holes with the rain, or sometimes snow, coming down on them in the pitch-black forest. During the day, a heavy fog would often drop into the mountains’

During the battle, Sgt. Kuroda displayed exceptional bravery and leadership. On a critical mission to capture a strategic hill, he led his men through a hail of enemy fire, rallying them with his unwavering determination. Despite sustaining injuries, Kuroda continued to inspire his fellow soldiers, pushing forward until victory was achieved. His actions not only saved lives but turned the tide of the battle.

The Medal of Honor

Sgt. Robert Kuroda's heroism did not go unnoticed. His selfless actions at the Battle of Bruyères earned him the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration awarded by the United States. The medal presented posthumously to his family, was a bittersweet acknowledgment of his extraordinary courage and sacrifice. Kuroda had given his life to save his comrades, embodying the spirit of the 442nd Infantry Regiment.



The Medal of Honor

Staff Sergeant Kuroda's [official Medal of Honor citation](#) reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Staff Sergeant Robert Toshi Kuroda distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action, on 20 October 1944, near Bruyères, France. Leading his men in an advance to destroy snipers and machine gun nests, Staff Sergeant Kuroda encountered heavy fire from enemy soldiers occupying a heavily wooded slope. Unable to pinpoint the hostile machine gun, he boldly made his way through heavy fire to the crest of the ridge. Once he located the machine gun, Staff Sergeant Kuroda advanced to a point within ten yards of the nest and killed three enemy gunners with grenades. He then fired clip after clip of rifle ammunition, killing or wounding at least three of the enemy. As he expended the last of his ammunition, he observed that an American officer had been struck by a burst of fire from a hostile machine gun located on an adjacent hill. Rushing to the officer's assistance, he found that the officer had been killed. Picking up the officer's submachine gun, Staff Sergeant Kuroda advanced through continuous fire toward a second machine gun emplacement and destroyed the position. As he turned the fire up on additional enemy soldiers, he was killed by a sniper. Staff Sergeant Kuroda's courageous actions and indomitable fighting spirit ensured the destruction of enemy resistance in the sector. Staff Sergeant Kuroda's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the United States Army.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team more than proved the troop's loyalty with their blood and lives. Their awards included seven Presidential Unit Citations, 21 Medals of Honor, and over 4,000 Purple Heart Medals.

Sgt. Robert Toshi Kuroda's legacy extended far beyond the battlefield. His story served as a beacon of inspiration to Japanese-Americans facing discrimination at home. His valor challenged stereotypes and prejudice, illustrating that loyalty and bravery knew no bounds. The 442nd Infantry Regiment, known for its extraordinary achievements, became a symbol of unity and diversity, a testament to the strength of a nation forged in the crucible of war.

The memory of Sgt. Kuroda and his comrades continued to live on, reminding future generations of the sacrifices made for freedom. Monuments, memorials, and remembrance ceremonies ensured that their deeds would never fade into obscurity. Kuroda's family, forever proud of his heroism, shared his story with a world that needed to remember the price of liberty.

In the years following WWII, Sgt. Robert Kuroda's name was etched onto the walls of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., alongside the names of countless others who had given their lives. His sacrifice stood as a reminder of the cost of freedom and the courage of those who had faced adversity with unwavering

resolve.

The sacrifices of Sgt. Robert Kuroda and his fellow soldiers in the 442nd Infantry Regiment were not fully acknowledged until years later. The lingering shadows of discrimination and prejudice were slowly dispelled by the bright light of recognition and reconciliation. One of the most significant moments came with the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the Japanese-American veterans of World War II.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor bestowed by the United States Congress. For the Japanese-American veterans of World War II, it represented not only a recognition of their bravery and sacrifice but also a long-awaited acknowledgment of the injustices they had endured. These veterans, who had fought valiantly for a country that had once treated them as enemies, were finally being honored as the heroes they truly were.

In 2011, President Barack Obama signed into law a bill that authorized the Congressional Gold Medal to be awarded collectively to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Infantry Battalion, and the Military Intelligence Service. These units, composed primarily of Japanese-American soldiers, had played crucial roles in the war effort, defying prejudice and discrimination to serve their nation with honor.



The ceremony to award the Congressional Gold Medal was a historic event that brought together surviving Japanese-American veterans, their families, and a grateful nation. The Capitol Rotunda was filled with a sense of reverence and gratitude as the

contributions of these heroes were finally acknowledged in the hallowed halls of Congress.

Sgt. Robert Kuroda's family was among the attendees, proudly representing his legacy. The Congressional Gold Medal, adorned with a ribbon that bore the colors of the 442nd Infantry Regiment, was presented to the veterans or their families, as a symbolic gesture of appreciation for their sacrifices.

The Congressional Gold Medal not only recognized the valor of Japanese-American veterans but also carried profound symbolism. It represented a healing of wounds that had been inflicted by prejudice and mistrust. By acknowledging the courage and loyalty of these veterans, the nation was taking a crucial step toward reconciliation, showing that the mistakes of the past should not be forgotten but should also not define the future.

The medal served as a reminder of the power of unity and the resilience of the human spirit. It spoke of a nation's capacity to learn from its mistakes and to grow stronger by embracing its diversity. Sgt. Robert Kuroda's name, engraved alongside the names of his fellow soldiers, stood as a testament to the triumph of valor over adversity.

As time marched forward, the legacy of Sgt. Robert Kuroda and the Japanese-American veterans of World War II continued to inspire. The Congressional Gold Medal displayed proudly in museums, libraries, and homes, served as a touchstone for conversations about courage, sacrifice, and the ongoing pursuit of justice.

Sgt Kuroda's story remained a beacon of hope, illustrating that even in the darkest times, individuals could rise above prejudice and hatred to serve a higher purpose. His memory lives on in the hearts of those who remembered his name, his actions, and his unwavering commitment to freedom.

In a world that still grapples with division and uncertainty, the story of Sgt. Robert Kuroda and the Japanese-American veterans served as a reminder of the strength that could be found in diversity, the power of unity, and the importance of standing up for what was right. Their journey from discrimination to recognition was a testament to the human capacity for resilience and the potential for positive change, a legacy that would inspire generations to come.

A Grateful Nation

Sgt Robert Kuroda's journey from a small town in Japan to the battlefields of Europe embodied the spirit of America – a land of opportunity and diversity. His legacy, interwoven with the stories of his fellow soldiers in the 442nd Infantry Regiment,

continued to inspire generations to come. His Medal of Honor, a symbol of his courage and sacrifice, was a beacon of hope in a world still grappling with the aftermath of the war.



Robert Toshi Kuroda's High School Class Ring.
(Photo Credit Hawaii News)

The full circle of Kuroda's valor came when in November 2021, some 77 years after his death in France, Sebastien Roure found an old mud-caked ring. A good cleaning and internet searching established the ring was Robert Kuroda's high school class ring. His name was inscribed on the inside like many class rings. Robert was the first person in his family to graduate from high school. The small gold ring held great significance to Robert.

The gold ring from Farmington High School with the motto "Earn to Learn – Go Forth to Serve" prominently displayed was a treasured keepsake. Kuroda certainly lived a life of "Go Forth to Serve."

Roure returned the ring to the Kuroda family in 2022. Kuroda family members visited Roure in France to thank him and see where their ancestor died in battle, and Roure went to Hawaii in 2023 to visit the Kuroda family. Roure went to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu, Hawaii, to pay respects to Robert Toshi Kuroda, a man who gave his life for the French liberation. Respect was expressed to the Kuroda family completing the circle of gratitude.

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[Korean War](#)

[World War II](#)

[World War I](#)

[Civil War](#)

[Spanish American War](#)

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[War of 1812](#)

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