

Sgt. Ben Kuroki Completes 27 Combat Missions in Superfort Over Japanese Territory

Tech. Sgt. Ben Kuroki of the Army Air Forces, the first Nisei to fly in combat in the Pacific war, has completed 27 missions as a tail gunner in a B-29 Superfortress, radio audiences were advised during a special interview with the Japanese American sergeant at a B-29 base on Tinian in the Marianas on Aug. 5. The interview was broadcast on the Army Air Forces program over the American Broadcasting Company's network.

Sgt. Kuroki, now attached to the 313th Bombardment Wing of the B-29 Command in the Marianas, is a veteran of 30 heavy bomber missions in the European theater of operations.

Sgt. Kuroki, a member of the first B-24 Liberator crews to serve in North Africa in 1942, is a veteran of bombing missions over France, Germany and the Ploesti oil fields of Rumania. He completed his tour of duty in the European and Mediterranean theaters, flying 25 missions, and then volunteered for five additional missions. He narrowly escaped death on his 30th and last mission over Muenster, Germany.

The Japanese American sergeant noted that he was originally turned down when he requested combat action in the Pacific war and that he was not assigned to B-29 training until eight months after he had returned to the United States.

Sgt. Kuroki now has 128 discharge points, or 50 per cent more than the number necessary for a discharge under the Army's redeployment system.

Capt. James R. Jenkins, Sgt. Kuroki's commanding officer, who also was interviewed on the broadcast from the Marianas, admitted that he was a "little apprehensive" when the Japanese American was first assigned to his crew, but added that he had found

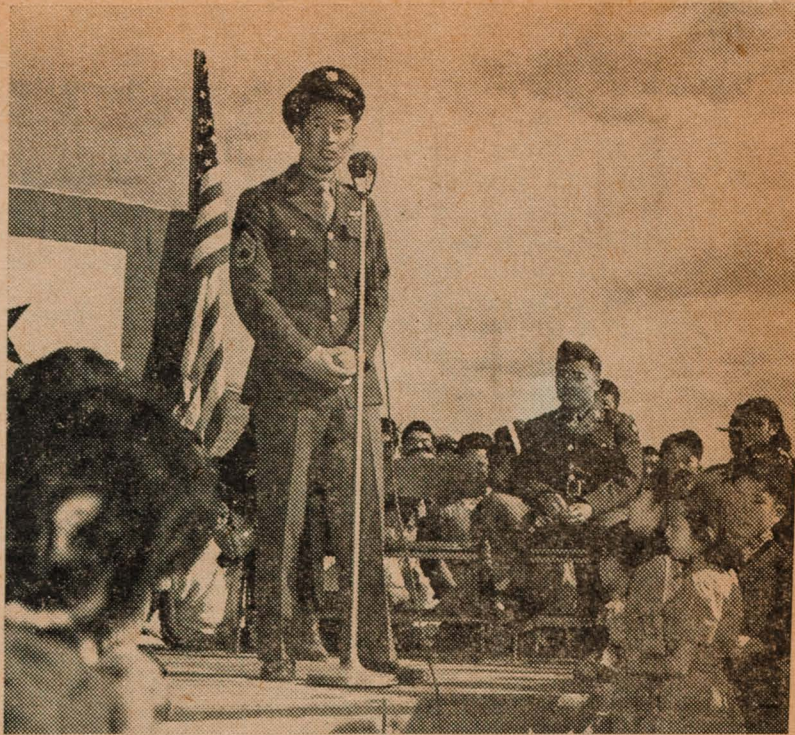
JAP TOKYO RAIDER LIKES BOMBING JOB

WASHINGTON (UP)—Sgt. Ben Kuroki, 29, Hershey, Neb., is the first Japanese-American to help bomb Tokyo, the war relocation authority said Tuesday.

Flying in the Superfort, the "Honorable Sad Saki," piloted by Lt. James Jenkins of Detroit, Kuroki, an aerial gunner, participated in several raids over Tokyo, according to WRA. Recuperating from these raids in a Honolulu hospital, Kuroki was reported "eager to get back to combat to concentrate on dropping more Tokyo roses on Tokyo Rose."

Sgt. Kuroki to be completely American.

Ben Kuroki Fights for the Nisei



"The war is not over for Tech. Sgt. Ben Kuroki," the New York Herald Tribune commented recently. Sgt. Kuroki, shown here as he addressed an audience at the Heart Mountain relocation center in 1944, is now taking a leading part in the fight of Japanese Americans for democratic fair play. An interview with Sgt. Kuroki by John Kitasaki, correspondent in Washington for the Pacific Citizen, appears on this page.

Washington News-Letter

Sgt. Ben Kuroki, Nisei GI Hero, Is Home From the Wars

Japanese American Air Gunner Sees Long Fight Ahead for Nisei, Other Minorities and the War Will Not Be Over Until That Fight Is Won

By JOHN KITASAKO

Washington, D. C.

Sgt. Ben Kuroki is home from the wars. When Ben arrived in San Francisco last week from Tinian, the big B-29 nest in the Marianas where he had been sweating it out with his 120 points, he immediately whisked away to New York's Waldorf-Astoria to appear on the New York Herald-Tribune's fourteenth annual Forum on Current Problems.

Then Ben journeyed down to Washington to talk some things over with air force officials. And then he went up to New York

again to speak on the CBS program, Report to the Nation, on Nov. 3. After that he headed west to Hershey, that little lazy Nebraska town he helped to put on the map. He is to receive his discharge papers in Denver in about a month. Ben hasn't decided yet whether he'll enroll at the University of Nebraska or work on his father's farm.

Ben is a very tired warrior. He should be, for he's been wearing khaki since Dec. 8, 1941, and he has bombing missions under his belt, 30 Liberator raids over Europe, and 28 B-29 forays over Japan, and nearly all of them in the perilous tail gunner spot.

He brought back with him three Distinguished Flying Crosses, and a breast full of ribbons, clusters and stars. But Ben doesn't care to talk about them; he'd rather talk about the long rest he's going to take. His one immediate ambition is to get back to Hershey and stretch himself under a spreading Nebraska tree, and just "unlax."

Ben needs that rest very badly. His nerves are pretty well shot up. His hands tremble, and he doesn't sleep well. His sudden return to metropolitan life—with his speaking engagements, radio broadcasts, and his meetings with brass hats and high government officials—has not helped his nerves one bit. He says he just can't get back to that Nebraska tree too soon.

During the past year and a half we have met hundreds of Nisei servicemen in Washington, but very few have impressed us with the graciousness and modesty that are so characteristic of Ben. Ben wears his honors with remarkable unconcern. The huge volume of publicity he has received has not gone to the head of this simple farmer's son from Nebraska. His self-effacing manner is a rare treat to behold.

The New York Herald-Tribune in seeking some one to represent the Nisei fighting men on its famed radio forum could not have made any other choice. In a way, Ben has become the unofficial spokesman of Nisei. For this difficult role, he is a natural. We heard newsmen and government officials fire questions at him in rapid succession, but he took them all in stride, just as he did the

zooming Zeros over Japan. He knows what to say and how to say it. Somewhere along the line in his Nebraska childhood, Ben learned the art of simple expression, a way of expression which unmistakably and effectively reflect his deep sincerity and his strong devotion to Americanism.

Ben sees a long fight ahead yet for the Nisei and other minorities. To him the war will not be over until the principles of freedom and justice for which he and millions of other Americans fought are brought to a full realization.

When Ben arrived in San Francisco from Tinian, tired though he was, he wired Dillon Myer and offered to help in whatever way he could on the west coast. Mr. Myer was deeply appreciative, but told Ben that the situation on the coast was well under control. It was recalled that Ben delivered a stirring address before the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco in early 1944, at the conclusion of which he received the longest standing ovation in that club's history. Many competent observers of the west coast scene claim that that address was largely responsible in breaking the back of California opposition to Japanese Americans.

Speaking over nationwide hook-ups, talking before various groups, conferring with big government officials, and being interviewed by the press are terrifying ordeals, especially to a plain farm boy from Nebraska. Ben doesn't thrive on attention. He would rather crawl into a quiet corner, munch on an apple, and read a good magazine story. But he has submitted to it all with a remarkable graciousness. As though he has not contributed enough to the cause of the Nisei already, Ben is still continuing his fight for those principles of Americanism which mean so much to him. There is a great lesson in that for all Nisei.

Ben grew up in a Caucasian community. All his close friends are Caucasians. The problems of the Japanese Americans on the west coast have never been his problems. He had never known prejudice as it was known by the Nisei on the coast. But he made

the cause of his fellow Nisei his own cross, and he is willing and eager to battle it out for them. One point which he always makes clear in all his talks and conversation is that he is fighting not only for the Nisei but for all minority groups. Ben Kuroki is a true American.