

The spirit of the country is solely the reflection of individual attitudes.
You can help to leaven the whole

The War Isn't Over at Home

Condensed from an address at the New York Herald Tribune Forum

Sergeant Ben Kuroki *First Japanese-American to win the Distinguished Flying Cross fighting against Japan*

JAPAN is the land of my ancestors, but I never had any desire to go there. The town I came from is called Hershey, Nebraska. It's near the Platte River, about 12 miles down the road from North Platte. We've got a farm there — my father and mother and my brother George and I. We raise sugar beets and seed potatoes.

I never traveled much. I'd go fishing in the mountains over in Colorado, or to Chicago to see my sister. I figured some day I'd get to New York, but I didn't plan on visiting Tokyo.

The day after Pearl Harbor my kid brother and I drove 150 miles down to Grand Island and enlisted. On the train to camp some people stared at me and said, so I'd hear, "What's that Jap doing in the Army?" It just knocked me off my feet. After coming from a town where I knew everybody, I suddenly realized that no matter where I was born or what was in my heart to these people I was an alien. All the way to camp people kept staring at me. I'll never forget that train ride.

I went into the Air Force and ap-

plied for flying. Somehow my papers got lost; they always seemed to be lost, or held up somewhere. When I finally got overseas it was as a clerk with the 93rd Bomb Group.

Those were the early days in England and things weren't going so good. Liberators were getting knocked off like flies, and there was a shortage of gunners. One day I read about an organization called the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West. They had a plan to isolate all Japanese-Americans in some swampland somewhere. I kind of blew my stack when I read the article. I volunteered for gunner. I had five days of training, and then the outfit pulled out for Africa.

I flew my first bombing mission over Bizerte. Our tail gunner got it on that mission and I moved back to the tail turret to take his place. We tagged some rough missions those days — Naples, Wiener-Neustadt, Rome. We had a saying, "On the way to the target, you're flying for Uncle Sam. On the way back, you're flying for yourself."

My 24th mission was to Ploesti — the first low-level raid on that tar-

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We haven't seen them for quite a spell but from the looks of their paper the Kurokis are doing fine. The weekly Republican is newsy and chock full of ads. Its editorials are pithy and its columns are full of names and activities. On page

The story of Earl Finch, who led a combat team of American soldiers in the Christ the King Paratrooper Regiment, is told in the Christ the King Paratrooper.

Finch first met the Nisei soldiers

Americans who fail to understand the principles of freedom and equality upon which this country was founded.

I'm no authority; I don't know anything that any boy from Nebraska couldn't tell you. But I know this: I fought with a lot of men in this war, all kinds — a Polish gunner, a Jewish engineer, a German bombardier and a full-blooded Dakota Indian. I saw men wounded, and whatever land their grandfathers came from, their blood was always the same color. And whatever church they went to, the screams of pain sounded the same.

I've had 58 bombing missions now, and I'm still tired enough so my hands shake, and plenty of nights I don't sleep so good. I'd like to go home to Nebraska and forget the war, and just lie under a tree somewhere and take it easy. It's hard to

"The measure of a democracy is the measure of the freedom of its humblest citizens."

—John Galsworthy

realize that the war is not over for me. Not for a lot of us, Jewish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Negro-Americans, Japanese-Americans. While there is still hatred and prejudice, our fight goes on.

Back in high school in Nebraska, one of the things they taught me was that America is a land where it isn't race or religion that makes free men. That's why I went to Tokyo. I went to fight for my country, where freedom isn't color but a way of life, and all men are created equal until they prove otherwise. That's an old idea we have in Hershey, Nebraska, just down the highway from North Platte.

