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With my daughter and her husband, I am happy to greet, this evening here, and thank Colonel Hanley, one of your brilliant officers who is doing us the honor of presiding over <sup>this</sup> friendly evening between three representatives from Bruyeres and a few courageous veterans of the 100th and the 442 R.T.T. ●

I also thank Mr. Hiraoka specially because he was the organizer and coordinator of this magnificent trip to California. So much work for him, but also so much understanding and warmth of heart, from him and all of those veterans who said yes to him to make our trip easier and more pleasant. ●

→ The mayor of Bruyères, before our departure, gave me this short letter intended for you. He concludes with these words:

"In the name of the City Council of Bruyères, in the name of our whole population, and in my own name, I am asking ~~Mr~~ Collin to transmit to you, in this fortieth anniversary, our deep and never-to-be-forgotten memory and the expression of our solid friendship." (It is now done) (which I have now done) ●

I have wanted to come visit you ever since I learned that Bruyères was not liberated solely by soldiers of the 442nd and the 100th who came from the Islands (Hawaiian) but from the continent as well. Most of the inhabitants of Bruyères believed for a long time that they had been liberated by Hawaiians of Japanese descent. It was not until much later, after you showed up, that we learned that many soldiers from these two battalions also came from mainland U.S. and especially <sup>442nd & 100th</sup> from California. ●

I can assure you that from that moment forward we no longer distinguished between people from the Islands and those from the mainland: we have wrapped them all in the same feeling of affection and gratitude. ●

Now, here are two personal remembrances of our liberation.

On an October afternoon in 1944, on my way back from a visit to a wounded person, on Church Street, where a German soldier was striking heavy hammer blows on the sheet metal of a broken-down half-track, I was on my way home to check on the calls which had come in during my absence. The bombings which had been continuing for several days suddenly stopped. Only a few bursts of automatic weapons gunfire could be heard, here and there, now and then, getting closer and closer. ●

In the hallway of my home, through the front door which had been torn off by the shooting, I glimpsed, all of a sudden, the outlines of two short soldiers, armed to the teeth but with slanted eyes. Even though I was taken aback at first, I soon was hugging them with warmth and great vigor. The two soldiers who kept repeating "Hawaiians, Hawaiians," were offering us cigarettes. I was crying with happiness on the threshold of my demolished house with members of my family and neighbors who had run over to us. ● I accompanied the two soldiers who were trying to flush out some enemy soldiers hiding out in some cellars. After a brief call which usually went unanswered, they would pull the pins on their grenades and lob them through the gaping door of the cellars. It was October 18, 1944 around 17:00 hours. Bruyeres was completely liberated by the 19th. ● <sup>5:00 pm</sup>

Towards the end of October or the beginning of November 1944, I can't quite recall, two Japanese-American soldiers in a jeep came to pick me up to take me to a dying ~~old~~ lady (a grandmother) who needed my care in Biffontaine. ● The usual route to get there was still <sup>under</sup> German gun-fire. The jeep going by way of the Belmont road and the backwoods roadways, reached Biffontaine on the edge of the Forest, at the leading edge of the American advance. ● There, an American officer said to me: "There are land-mines where you are going (approximately 300 meters from their post); a soldier is going to accompany you as soon as <sup>he has</sup> they have put on some civilian clothes: they are not firing on civilians." In fact, I made the round-trip across open ground with the soldier, going to the home of my patient without any problems. ●

I wanted very much to tell this little story because the family who <sup>was</sup> were watching over the dying old lady had heard the echoes of the terrible battle in the Biffontaine woods. They told me of white corollas which were draped over the tops <sup>of the trees</sup> in the direction of Houssier. The battle was terrible because the roar of the guns could be heard for several days. ● Much later, I learned of the heroic deeds of your soldiers who had volunteered to free a battalion of Texans surrounded on all sides, doomed to total annihilation. You rescued them but paid a terrible toll in lives from your troops. ●

Why have we adopted you? It is an oft-asked question and I believe I am expressing the feelings of the inhabitants of Bruyères when I say that because we had been expecting you for a long time after we had suffered a great deal. ~~██████████~~

You were liberating soldiers who were above reproach, of a correctness of behavior and kindness which were exemplary.

X You suffered much and lost many of your people to liberate us, you who came from so far. ●

You will always remain our beloved liberators for whom our gratitude will be unending and our observance of your departed comrades eternal. ●

In concluding, I have only one regret, that of not being accompanied today by my dear wife who passed away prematurely. She had made with her own hands an American flag with which to greet your long-awaited arrival.

She would have been so happy to thank you along with my daughter and me for all that you have done to liberate us.