

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
CENTRAL UTAH PROJECY

Topaz, Utah

WAR DEPARTMENT ORDERING BOT. BEN KUROKI TO CENTRAL
UTAH FOR PERIOD MAY 19 TO 23. WE HAVE TAKEN LIBERTY OF
SUGGESTING DATES RATHER THAN DELAY PLANS FOR KUROKI'S
TRIP. KUROKI WILL NOTIFY YOU OF TIME OF ARRIVAL.

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TOPAZ WELCOMES KUROKI

By

Toshio Mori

PREFACE

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upon the key leaders of the community for an elaborate
welcome program befitting a war hero. On Friday, May 13th,
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tions and divisions congregated at Mr. Sanford's Community
Management office to formulate a working plan for Kuroki's
welcome. At the initial planning board were Miss Toshiko Koba
and Misso Nishio of CAS, Vernon Ishikawa and his wife
of Community Council, Mr. Perkins of Education, Russell A.
Bankson, Reports Officer, Toshio Mori, Project Reports
Historical and Service Officer.

PROJECT REPORTS DIVISION
HISTORICAL SECTION
R. A. Bankson

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This teletype reached Topaz on May 11th from Dillon S. Myer, National Director of WRA, to Project Director Charles F. Ernst:

WAR DEPARTMENT ORDERING SGT. BEN KUROKI TO CENTRAL UTAH FOR PERIOD MAY 19 TO 23. WE HAVE TAKEN LIBERTY OF SUGGESTING DATES RATHER THAN DELAY PLANS FOR KUROKI'S TRIP. KUROKI WILL NOTIFY YOU OF TIME OF ARRIVAL.

The news stirred the center as it spread quickly from person to person. Ben Kuroki coming to Topaz! Immediately the residents recalled his publicized exploits in the European Theater of war. Sgt. Kuroki was till then just the name of a famous person in a faraway world. To Topaz people he was known as the first nisei hero of the present war. He had been presented to the King and Queen of England. He was the wearer of Distinguished Flying Cross and various other medals. Sgt. Kuroki was the worthy nisei representative who had addressed the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco and received an unprecedented ovation in the famed organization's history. He was the renowned nisei gunner of the famous Timberlake's Flying Circus that had become the terror of Hitler forces.

PRELUDE

In the absence of the Project Director Ernst, the Reports Officer, Russell A. Banksen, immediately called upon the key leaders of the community for an elaborate welcome program befitting a war hero. On Friday, May 13th, the first meeting of representatives from various organizations and divisions congregated at Mr. Sanford's Community Management office to formulate a working plan for Kuroki's welcome. At the initial planning board were Miss Toshi Koba and Mitsuo Nishio of CAS, Vernon Ichisaka and Mas Narahara of Community Council, Mr. Perkins of Education, Russell A. Banksen, Reports Officer, Toshio Mori, Project Reports Historical and Corlies Carter, Selective Service officer, who presided at the gathering.

It was the opinion of those present that the Community

Council should be designated as the coordinating organization in preparing the Kuroki Welcome. As representatives of the Council, Messrs. Ichisaka and Harahara accepted the responsibility with the understanding that various groups in the city contribute their efforts. The following organizations were listed as likely groups to assist in the program: CAS, USO, Boy Scouts, Citizens' Committee, Selective Service Committee, Topaz Times, Inter-Faith, High School, Girl Reserves, Hi-Y, Red Cross and the families of nisei soldiers.

Various suggestions were offered as to the general program at this time. The following were listed on the tentative schedule: Community-wide reception, banquet, entrance gate ceremonies, appearance at the high school assembly, ball, picnic, draft age boys' meeting, and camp tour. Ichisaka was designated as Sgt. Kuroki's guide throughout his stay. Specific program was to be created at the next meeting when all the participating groups were to be present for the final preparation. Also, it was deemed helpful to check up on the Heart Mountain and Sinaloka's Kuroki schedules.

The Monday meeting was held at the Council chamber on May 15th at 9 a.m. More than a dozen representatives of various organizations attended this all-important conference. Among those present were Vernon Ichisaka, chairman, Mas Harahara, Council; Harumi Kawahara, Girl Reserves; Mr. Miho, Red Cross; Drayton Nuttall, Education; Tad Fujita, Inductees' Committee; Mrs. Arimoto and Isono, USO; Mike Kudo, Agriculture; Keigo Inouye, Boy Scouts; Corlies Carter, Selective Service; Nobuo Tabata, Block Managers; Art Takemoto, Inter-Faith; Russell A. Bankson, Reports Officer and Toshio Mori, Project Reports Historian. At this gathering the final preparations were clarified and each group was given specific assignment in the schedule. The final program was formed as follows:

- KUROKI SCHEDULE**
- Friday, May 19....
- 11 a.m. Delta--Welcoming Party meet Sgt. Kuroki at station.
 - Gate Ceremonies
 - Boy Scouts in charge.
 - Co-honorary hosts, Project Director Ernst
 - Dr. George Ochikubo, Council

Guests:
 Council, Block Mgr., USO, Red
 Cross, Citizens' Committee, Inter-
 Faith, Adm. Staff, Boy Scouts,
 Delta community leaders.
 Assistants to banquet comm.
 USO, CAS

Sunday, May 21....

Noon
 12 m. USO Luncheon
 Sponsor-USO
 Place-Dining Hall 32

Program:

Mrs. M. Arimoto-Chairman
 Rev. Shimada-Prayer
 Mrs. T. Kawamoto-Greetings
 Corlies Carter-Selective Service
 Entertainment:
 Tachibana, dance, song,
 odori, and piano recital.

4 p.m. Field Picnic
 Place-Field Kitchen, Section 11.
 Sponsor-CAS

Monday, May 22....

9 a.m. Topaz grade school meeting
 Place-auditorium
 10 a.m. High School Assembly
 Place-auditorium
 12 m. Luncheon with Girl Reserves

Afternoon: Delta Tour

Address--
 Delta High
 Hinkley High

Dinner

At Lions' Club in Delta
 Guest of Honor

8:30 p.m.

Ball Inductee Ball in honor of Sgt. Kuroki

Host-Inductee Committee
Place-auditorium

Committee:

Sam and Yosh Isono, Sam
Yamamoto, Frank Yamazaki
and Jiro Makaso.

Bids: 35¢ per couple

Master of Ceremonies: Yosh Isono
Refreshments

Tuesday, May 23....

Morn Hospital visit
Host-Red Cross

Noon Luncheon at the Hospital

Afternoon Send-off
1:15 p.m. USO, Boy Scouts

The final check up was made on Thursday morning at 9 a.m. at the Council Chamber with Mrs. Arimoto and Isono of USO, Mas Karahara and Vernon Ichisaka of Council, Miss. Toshi Koba of CAS, Toshio Mori of Project Reports, and Delgo Inouye of Boy Scouts in attendance. With the receipt of Sgt. Kuroki's personal wire stating his arrival on Friday 18th at Delta at 11 a.m., an elaborate welcome ceremonies was in the offing. A delegation from Topaz was chosen to meet Sgt. Kuroki's train at Delta station. The Council representatives were Mas Karahara and George Shimamoto. Among the party were Russell A. Bankson, Corlies Carter, Mrs. Isono and Arimoto, Misses Joan Ihara and Tama Yoshizura, Project Reports; and Miss Hisako Karahara.

On the same day at 3 p.m. a last minute consultation was held in Mr. Gilbert Niesse's office with Messrs Niesse, Bankson, Carter, Honderich, Ichisaka, Karahara, Mori and Inouye present. Siren signal was approved to signify Sgt. Kuroki's arrival at Delta station so as to give residents time to assemble to welcome him at the gate. The following dining hall announcement was released to the thirty-four blocks:

Sergeant Ben Kuroki will arrive in Delta forenoon tomorrow (Friday, May 19th).

The two siren signals at three-minute intervals will

be sounded half an hour before his arrival at the Center. Tentatively the reception at the Main Gate is expected to be at 2:00 p.m.

Community wide reception will be at the Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.

The final preparations were given the "once over", particularly the appointed personnel participation in the Kuroki Welcome.

With special attention given to the gate reception Keigo Inouye was asked to be present at the meeting. With Mr. Inouye in charge, an elaborate program was prepared. Gate ceremonies included the Boy Scouts Bugle Corps and Girls High Drill team. Project Director Ernst and Mr. George Chikubo of the Council were to officially receive Sgt. Kuroki at the gate. The Queen of Topaz and her attendants were to present the key to the city.

In Sgt. Kuroki's honor, luncheon was to follow immediately at the Administration Dining Hall.

Throughout the day the Topaz Times worked feverishly to prepare a special Kuroki edition. Due to the many last minute changes the edition was left pending till the late afternoon for further clarification. The special four-page issue, however, was released on schedule--Friday morning. It is attached to the narrative as Exhibit A.

In its Thursday edition of May 18th, the Millard County Chronicle of Delta publicized the coming of Sgt. Sen Kuroki to Delta and Topaz as follows:

SGT. KUROKI WILL SPEAK AT DELTA HIGH MONDAY

**Holder of Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Medal with
4 Oak Leafs**

Sgt. Sen Kuroki, Japanese-American hero of 30 bombing missions over Europe, will speak at the Delta High School Monday to the students. A native of Nebraska, he joined the Army a few hours after Pearl Harbor, and was one of the few Japanese-Americans taken into the Army Air Corps at that time.

He will arrive at Topaz May 19, after a visit to the Heart Mountain and Minidoka centers. A large celebration is planned for him at Topaz where he will be the guest of the community council. A parade, ball, meetings with various organizations there, and talks will feature his five-day visit in Topaz.

For his missions as a turret gunner in the raid over the Ploesti oil field in Rumania, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. (It was in this same raid that Capt. Hugh Roper, of Oak City, was reported missing.) Upon completion of his bombing missions over Europe, Kuroki was awarded another Distinguished Flying Cross. He is also the holder of the coveted Air Medal, with four oak leaf clusters.

In Sgt. Kuroki's honor, luncheon was to follow immediately at the Administration Building.

Throughout the day the Topaz Times worked feverishly to prepare a special Kuroki edition. Due to the very late minute changes the edition was left pending till the late afternoon for further clarification. The special four-page issue, however, was released on schedule--Friday morning. It is attached to the narrative as Exhibit A.

In its Thursday edition of May 18th, the Millard County Chronicle of Delta published the coming of Sgt. Dan Kuroki to Delta and Topaz as follows:

SGT. KUROKI WILL SPEAK AT DELTA HIGH MONDAY

Holder of distinguished flying cross, and Air Medal with 4 oak leaf clusters.

Sgt. Dan Kuroki, Japanese-American hero of 30 bombing missions over Europe, will speak at the Delta High School Monday to the students. A native of Iwafusa, he joined the Army a few hours after Pearl Harbor, and was one of the few Japanese-Americans taken into the Army Air Corps at that time.

THE DAY

Early in the morning of May 19th a delegation left Topaz to greet Sgt. Kuroki at the station. Ten persons representing the personnel and various groups, including the previously mentioned people, assembled at Delta for the eleven a.m. train. Meanwhile, in Topaz various organizations were in readiness according to schedule. Scoutmaster Keigo Inouye, in charge of the gate ceremonies, called out his charges long before the scheduled arrival of Kuroki in Delta. Though the weather seemed unsettled with overhanging clouds, Topaz welcomed the day in a cheerful atmosphere.

Not many hours before the nisei flier's scheduled appearance in the city, however, there was an unusual heavy downpour. The weatherman had not been consulted. The rain let up shortly, and though the grounds were wet, the spirits of the welcoming residents were high. Almost at half hour intervals, Topaz was drenched with sudden outbursts of rain. And each time the participants of the gate welcoming event were caught in the storm. Soon their spirits were dampened. The girls, dressed in white for the occasion, scurried for shelter. When the word reached the city that Sgt. Kuroki was not on the scheduled train, disappointment possessed the youngsters. After lunch they appeared once more at the gate for news reached Topaz that Sgt. Kuroki may be on the early afternoon train. Showers came at intermittent periods throughout the afternoon. By four-thirty in the afternoon the rain became persistent, and no sign of the war hero. Disappointed after their long vigil, the welcoming party went home for supper. With the weather as it was, there was scarcely a chance of gate ceremonies being held after mealtime.

Finally, Topaz was notified that Sgt. Ben Kuroki would reach Delta at 5:00 p.m. The siren blew, signifying his arrival, but it was also suppertime for the residents. When Sgt. Ben Kuroki and the party reached the gatehouse at five-thirty the administration area was desolated. Only Charles F. Ernst, Project Director, and Vernon Ichisaka were present to officially welcome him to Topaz. When told of the "quiet" reception at the gate, Sgt. Kuroki grimly explained that he deliberately missed the scheduled train in order to avoid the elaborate fanfare that had greeted him on previous camp visits. "I want to come in unnoticed--like any other soldier."

Sergeant Kuroki was immediately whisked to the Administration Dining Hall where he dined with the administration personnel and his party. Upon his choice, Sgt. Kuroki was given an apartment in the staff housing quarters.

To the residents the belated appearance of Sgt. Kuroki in the city raised keen anticipation of the big five-day program. To the nisei war hero it meant rounds of activities and speechmaking duties of which he commented, "I'd much rather be on bombing missions than go through this. I've lost fifteen pounds already."

PUBLIC RECEPTION:

A capacity crowd was patiently waiting for the long-awaited appearance of Sgt. Kuroki at the Auditorium. At the community-wide reception young and old, men, women and children, issei, kibei and nisei congregated to pay honors to the nisei hero. It was quarter to eight when Sgt. Kuroki walked down the hall to the platform. Every pair of eyes was glued on him, noting his ribbons, medals and the tall, trim figure he presented. There was a hush in the audience and then the buzzing of voices stirred the air. The nisei war hero had arrived in Topaz.

As the residents waited for the opening of the evening's program, considerable news spread about the Auditorium on Sgt. Kuroki's belated arrival in Topaz. In order to avoid the elaborate welcome ceremonies as were presented in Minidoka and Heart Mountain, Sgt. Kuroki had willfully missed the scheduled train for Topaz. Though the Topaz welcome program at the gate was nullified by both the modest sergeant's late arrival and the rainstorm, the evening's attendance could not have been better for the welcome committee who had worked hard at the last minute's notice to make the Kuroki visit a success.

An air of expectancy became evident as the evening's speakers took their seats on the stage and chairman came forward to open the ceremonies. On the platform were the familiar local figures, Project Director Ernst, George Shinamoto of Community Council, Tad Fujita of Citizens' Committee, Mas Karahara, chairman of Selective Service Committee of the Council, Miss Margaret Kitashima, talented singer, and Queen Katherine Niho and attendants, Doris Matsunami and Tak Dsi. In the center sat Sgt. Kuroki, modest,

quiet and crowd-shy.

The chairman for the evening, Vernon Ichisaka, without an elaborate delivery, briefly and directly initiated the welcome program with the Boy Scouts of Topaz participating in flag ceremonies. Led by the Scoutmaster Keigo Inouye, the audience saluted Old Glory. Then Miss Margaret Kitashima rendered God Bless America, and the community joined in singing the last stanza.

The Queen of the May Festival, Miss Katherine Miho, presented Sgt. Kuroki the key to the city. In his unassuming manner, T/Sgt. Kuroki graciously accepted it, grinning from ear to ear as he fingered the key with red, white and blue ribbon. The audience greeted him with an ovation while he returned to his seat.

Representing the Citizens' Committee, Tad Fujita first greeted Sgt. Kuroki, welcoming him with inquiry as to how he enjoyed the scenery coming down from Salt Lake City. Smiling humorously Kuroki joined in laughter with the audience. By talking with him, Mr. Fujita had soon learned that the wearer of Distinguished Flying Cross was human too. Like an average nisei or American Ben likes steaks, has a hobby of collecting foreign currency, and possesses a good luck charm, the speaker stated. And like all young men, Mr. Fujita said, Sgt. Kuroki has an ideal nisei girl. "She is a girl who is a combination of youthful, refreshing and intelligent character with a good personality."

In the center of the stage Ben waved his hand in protest as the audience chuckled over the familiar opinion. "And the girls too have an ideal person," Mr. Fujita declared with a twinkle in his eyes. "The ideal man is five feet nine, weighs one hundred and forty-five, is 25 years of age and wears a Distinguished Flying Cross."

The people roared with laughter, and a moment later Fujita closed his address by welcoming Sgt. Kuroki.

Briefly, Mr. George Shimamoto spoke in behalf of the Community Council, hoping Sgt. Kuroki's stay in Topaz be pleasant. He stated that the deeds of the nisei war hero was well known to the residents in the city and that no amount of praises and adulation is too great for Ben Kuroki.

Mr. Ernst, was the next speaker, greeting Kuroki with welcome representative of the residents and appointive staff.

Recalling his recent trip, the Project Director commented on the lack of knowledge of the Americans on the Japanese and their present problems. "People know very little about the Japanese" he asserted. "Amazingly, some of them have not heard of the evacuation concerning; many have not seen a Japanese. But they knew Sergeant Kuroki. At Commonwealth Club and in San Francisco and the West Coast, they knew the Sergeant. Through the Sergeant they know the Japanese."

In the two battles that Sgt. Kuroki was fighting, Mr. Ernst believed that Ben has become an inspiration to the Loyal Japanese. He stated that the Sergeant's trip to Topaz will further this end tremendously, and that his stay in Topaz will be pleasant in a congenial atmosphere. Attesting that Sgt. Kuroki's deeds were one with the universal aim of his country, Ernst pointed out to the audience that he and many millions of American boys were all fighting to end the war quickly and have them come back.

Immediately after the Project Director's greetings, Miss Margaret Kitashima sang Dear Mom. When the chairman finally introduced the pilot here to the audience, an unprecedented ovation greeted the renowned visitor.

Sgt. Kuroki slowly came forward, opened his papers and laid them on the speaker's stand and never looked at them throughout his address. Without the flourish of a professional orator, the sergeant held his audience spellbound with genuineness, sincerity, understatement and clarity of his purpose and duty. The speech lasted about an hour.

Sgt. Kuroki opened his main address of his stay by thanking the people of Topaz for the cordial welcome accorded him. Some of the highlights of his stirring speech were as follows:

"I hate to make a speech but if Frank Sinatra can sing I can at least talk." Ben mentioned his recent visit to his hometown, Hershey, Nebraska, and would wish to go back once more on a furlough. He reminded the audience that his hometown was not the producer of Hershey bars. Immediately after the Pearl Harbor, he recounted, a family conference was held. "Dad, my kid brother Fred and I sat at the table and talked about volunteering into the army."

North Platte, Nebraska was the first camp he was assigned to, and there he found his uniform to big. For his basic training Ben was sent to Sheppard Field, Texas, where he came face to face with prejudice for the first time. "I was downhearted."

From there he was transferred to the clerical school at Fort Logan, Colorado. He was then permanently assigned to Barksdale Field in Louisiana. As far as he was concerned Barksdale was the worst camp due to discrimination. He did a lot of K.P. duty from six in the morning to eight in the evening. "They called me "Keep 'Em Flying" Kuroki in those days."

Finishing his three months training he was transferred again, this time to a squadron in General Timberlake's bomber group. "About this time the group was ready to go overseas. I wanted to go overseas more than anything else."

With the danger of being left behind he was finally taken along and his reaction was "I was about the happiest guy in the world just then." Sgt. Kuroki left New York on the last day of August 1942. He saw the Statue of Liberty as he sailed out of the New York Harbor. He thought he'd never come back alive. On the way to England he lost 15 pounds, had sea legs. "The chow line was two miles long," he informed the audience.

His stay in England, he recalled, was pleasant and a new experience. He couldn't understand the English speech at first and had a difficult time in conversations with the natives. Everything there had been unusual such as traffic moving on the wrong side. At the home base in England he applied for combat duty and was sent to gunnery school. "It wasn't much schooling--about five days. I was different from the way it is now, when every crew member goes to school for months in this country. I really learned to shoot the hard way, in combat."

Sgt. Kuroki then recounted his experiences of the first mission. He told of his nuptial encounter with concussion, how he fell down several times as the terrific explosions tore him away from the gun. One of the planes on that first mission had 500 holes in its body upon return, and everytime he thought of it he would quake with apprehension. In the raids over Italy he used to have fun kidding the Italian-Americans. "I'd say, 'We're really going to make the spaghetti fly today.' And they'd retort that they couldn't wait to knock the rice out of my dishonorable ancestors."

In details Ben went over his adventure of being lost in the air while flying to England from Tobruk. "We were lost. The navigator could do nothing, and the radio operator, though he was working like mad, couldn't get his messages through because of the weather. Finally he got a message,

but by that time we didn't have enough gas to get to the air field that had answered us. We'd already been up eleven hours and twenty minutes with a ten-hours' supply of gas. We expected to go down any minute.

"The pilot called back that anyone who wanted to bail out do so. Nobody did; I know I had so much faith in Major Epting's flying ability that I wouldn't leave until he did. All of a sudden, and it seemed like a miracle to us who were tensely waiting for the crash, there was a tiny rift in the clouds. Epting didn't wait one second; he just dove right into it, and made a perfect landing in a valley that wasn't big enough to land a cub in safety.

"We had just gotten out of the plane when a swarm of Arabs surrounded us. There must have been a hundred of them, and they were armed with rifles, spears, and some with clubs. When we saw them coming we debated whether we should shoot at them or try to talk to them. We decided to talk to them, but we couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand us.

"They didn't hurt us, but they certainly weren't friendly. They took everything away from us---guns, wallets and everything we had in our pockets---and they wouldn't let us near the plane.

"We had no idea where we were, but in a few minutes a Spanish officer came up and arrested us, and we found out that we had landed in Spanish Morocco. The officer marched all of us, our crew and the Arabs, into a native village about two miles away. The procession we made caused more excitement, I guess, than that village had had in its entire history.

"The natives all thought I was Chinese, but Hettering, our radio operator, explained to the Spanish soldiers that I was Japanese American. That created quite a stir when it got around. Most of the people, both Spanish and Arabs, flatly refused to believe it, and later it took the American embassy to prove it to them.

"In a few days we were flown to Spain in a German plane and interned in a mountain village. We thought we'd be there for the duration, but within two months, through methods I can't reveal, we were in England."

Once more Ben spoke of his furlough at home at which time he spent fifteen days in Hershey, Nebraska. His home-

town friends wouldn't let him alone, and he had only two meals with his folks at home. He also spent five days in Chicago.

Mentioning in the same breath, Sgt. Kuroki judged Santa Monica and Hollywood as the best places to spend his furlough. Far more than any other place he has visited, Ben preferred these California cities. In the Golden State he had expected prejudices but never ran into discriminations and difficulties. He briefly mentioned the Ginny Simms' program incident, indicating that the "affair" occurred simply because some official in the broadcasting company was "paid off" by certain factions. Miss Simms, he added, more than made up for the unpleasant event. He lauded the good work and organization of Committee on American Principles and Fair Play.

Ben sympathized with the evacuees for their hardship during the evacuation and relocation program. The struggles must have been heartbreaking, he admitted, but the country too had been undergoing constant changes and challenge. As his message to the Topaz residents, he pled for his fellow nisei soldiers on the Lattlefront:

"Many of you don't know war. You don't know what has happened outside. War has changed the familiar normal life you had been accustomed to, and everything on the outside is geared to the war effort. and tonight I am addressing you for the boys who are unable to be here. I mean the nisei soldiers who are fighting for you---the 100th Infantry and the 442nd Infantry. For them I speak tonight."

When Sgt. Kuroki finished there was an ovation seldom heard in Topaz. Throughout the evening, the nisei hero's low monotone held the audience's attention. Ben's main address was judged as one of the smoothest and most impressive deliveries ever heard in Topaz.

HAMBURGER FEED AT THE TOPAZ TIMES:

Immediately after the public reception, Sgt. Kuroki was entertained at the Topaz Times' party. It was almost ten in the evening when Ben was finally able to get away from the auto-graph seekers and appear at the Times Building. There the party was in progress with various parlor games receiving a whole-hearted attention. "This is what I like," commented Kuroki, grinning at the crowd of more than forty young people. No sooner than he spoke, Ben was ushered into the game.

In a buffet style, hamburger sandwiches, potato salad, pickles, olives, potato chips, and orangeade were served during the intermission of games. Ben heartily joined in the activities. As the group bunched around the long table munching their hamburger sandwiches, Chiau Ishida, well known singer, rendered several songs. Others contributed additional pieces, and everyone present participated in the community singing. For Kuroki a young talented couple danced the jitterbug.

For one, Sgt. Kuroki was not asked to give account of his accomplishments. He simply belonged to a bunch of young folks out for a good time. Instead of being called to describe his Floesti raid, and the members pleaded for an army or air corps song from Ben. Ben grinned and refused to sing. He could not sing, he defended himself. When the party closed at midnight Sgt. Kuroki was escorted back to the staff housing area.

SATURDAY DOINGS

Sgt. Kuroki was invited to speak before the Community Council and Block Managers' joint meeting at the Council Chamber on Saturday at 10 a.m. In an informal procedure Ben and the group discussed on various matters, with the floor open for queries and topics of interest. Mas Narahara, chairman of the Council Selective Service Committee, presided.

At noon Ichisaka, official guide, and Mas Narahara, acted as hosts to Ben at the Dining Hall 30 where a typical "camp" luncheon was served. On the menu was beans. Sgt. Kuroki's entrance created quite a stir as the block residents had not expected his appearance at their very mess hall. Lining up with the residents, in the mess line, Ben dined and good naturedly chatted with the people who gathered about him.

BEN MEETS THE APPOINTIVE PERSONNEL

As Sgt. Kuroki entered the Administration Recreation Hall at 1:15 p.m. on Saturday, May 20th, a standing ovation from the personnel-audience greeted him. Chagrined as ever, Ben modestly walked down the center aisle to his seat, and after

several minutes of delay Project Director Ernst opened the meeting. The hall was filled to capacity with almost every administrative personnel present.

The hall became hushed as Mr. Ernst introduced the mission here to the audience. As the Sergeant's deeds were well known and the majority of the personnel having already heard his main address at the public reception, Kuroki asked for questions from the floor. Someone in the crowd asked him to elaborate on his bombing mission to Ploesti oilfields.

He narrated his experiences as follows:

"In the afternoon Major General Brereton, commanding general of the Ninth Air Force, came around in a staff car and talked to us for almost an hour. He said we were going on the most important and one of the most dangerous missions in the history of heavy bombardment, that it had been planned in Washington months before. He told us that Ploesti supplied one-third of all Germany's oil and nearly all of Italy's, that was timed, furthermore, to cut Hitler's fuel supply as his divisions pushed to defend it against the coming Allied invasion.

"When he finished, our group commander--not General Timberlake, who had just been promoted from colonel and was now a wing commander, but the new group commander--briefed us again, and went into minute details of the takeoff the next morning. He tried to encourage us as much as possible.

"That afternoon before the raid he emphasized that nobody had to go who didn't want to; it was really a volunteer mission. No one declined, but we were all very tense. Someone had mentioned that even if all planes were lost it would be worth the price, and that started more talk about its being a suicide mission.

"We didn't sleep very much that night, and there was none of the joking that usually went on among our crew. We tried hard to sleep, because we knew it would be a long line on the runway.

"We took off at the crack of dawn. It was a perfect summer day, warm and balmy. The lead plane of the group started out, and the others followed at precise intervals until finally the whole group was in the sky in perfect formation. Our group joined other groups from nearby fields at pre-arranged places. It was all split-second timing.

"We were keyed up. We knew it was going to be the biggest thing we had ever done, and we were determined it would be the best. It was the same with the ground crews; they had always taken great pride in the ship, but this time they had gone overboard to get them in perfect condition. They shared our excitement and anxiety, too.

"From Bengasi we flew straight over the Mediterranean. It was very calm and blue that day. We were going along at about 5,000 feet when suddenly we saw one of the planes ahead take a straight nose-dive. It went down like a bullet, crashed in the water and exploded. For half an hour we could see the smoke from it. It gave us a haunting feeling, as of approaching disaster--we could see that not a man on that plane had a chance to escape.

"Over the Danube valley, in Roumania, we went down to about 300 feet, so low that we could easily see people in the streets of Roumanian towns waving at us as we went over. They must have thought we were friendly bombers because we were flying so low. Or maybe they recognized the white star on our wings and were glad that we were coming.

"About 10 miles from the target, we dropped to 50 feet, following the contours of the land, up over hills and down into valleys. Our pilot would lead straight for those hills, and every time I thought sure we'd crash right into them, but he would pull us up just in time, and just enough to get over the ridge, and then down into the next valley. Coming back we were flying part of the way at five and 10 feet off the ground, and some of the planes returned to base with tree tops and even cornstalks in their bomb-bays.

"We had a very good pilot. He was our squadron leader, Lt. Col. K. O. Dessert, and his copilot was our regular pilot, Major Epting.

"We came into the oil fields at about 50 feet and went up to about 75 to bomb. The plane I was on was leading the last squadron of the second group over. Five miles from the target, heavy anti-aircraft started pounding us. When we saw the red flash of those guns we thought we'd never make it. We really started praying then. We figured that if they started shooting at us with the big guns at that distance, they would surely get us with smaller

and more maneuverable batteries. We remembered the British anti-aircraft men who had said we'd be dead ducks for anything under a 40 millimeter cannon. At our height you could have brought a Liberator down with a shotgun.

"Ploesti was wrapped in a smoke screen which made it very difficult to find the targets. When we got over, the refineries were already blazing from the bombs and guns of the planes ahead of us.

"The worst I saw, though, was the plane to the right of us. Light flak must have hit the gas, because all of a sudden it was burning from one end to the other. It sand right down, as though no power on earth could hold it in the air for even a second. When it hit the ground it exploded.

"Every man on that ship was a friend of mine, and I knew the position each was flying. I'd seen planes go down before, but always from a high altitude, and then you don't see the crash. This way it seemed I could reach out and touch those men.

"The most pitiful thing was that ship's co-pilot. He was an 13-year-old kid who'd lied about his age to get into aviation cadet training. We always called him Junior. When our regular co-pilot, who was firing the right waist gun that day, saw Junior's ship go down, he let loose with his gun like a crazy man. Junior was his best friend.

"Then we saw flak hit our group commander's plane. In a second it was burning from the bomb-bays back. He pulled it up as high as he could get it it was fantastic to see that blazing Liberator climbing straight up. As soon as he started climbing, one man jumped out, and when he could get it no higher, two more came out. Every one of us knew he had pulled it up in order to give those men a chance. Then, knowing he was done for, he deliberately dove it into the highest building in Ploesti. The instant he hit, his ship exploded.

"We left Ploesti a ruin. Huge clouds of smoke and fire billowed from the ground as we pulled away from the target. It was like a war movie, seeing those masses of flames rolling toward you, and white flashes of 20-millimeter cannon-fire bursting alongside of you.

"We got back to camp 13 hours after we had taken off. It was the longest bombing mission ever flown, and that explains why it was necessary to do it at low altitude.

If we had bombed at the usual level, we would never have had enough gas to get back.

"It was also the most dangerous mission in the history of heavy bombardment, ranking as a battle in itself. It is officially regarded not as the Ploesti raid but as "the battle of Ploesti."

"There was no line at the mess hall that night. Even though we were starved, we couldn't eat when we thought of the men that should have been standing in line and weren't.

"And even though we were dead tired, we couldn't sleep. I know I didn't sleep for several night after that. The ground crews kept the runway lights on all night, and many of them stayed up until morning, though they knew the planes they had worked so hard on and their friends, the men who flew them, weren't coming back.

"The next morning was rough, too. We always got up at six o'clock, and there was always a lot of yelling back and forth between the tents--sometimes we'd throw rocks at each other's tents. The only yelling we heard that morning was our co-pilot calling for his friend Junior, although he had seen him go down in flames the day before."

Another member of the audience inquired as to the medals he was wearing, requesting that he explain each award for the benefit of the people present. Sgt. Kuroki, with his inimitable smile, drawled, "Well, I did get a good conduct medal."

The listeners roared with a hearty chuckle and applauded him. In the brief but impressive half-hour Sgt. Kuroki made many admirers, and as he left the assembly to appear at the Draft Age Boys' meeting, he was given even a greater ovation than previously.

DRAFT AGE BOYS' MEETING

On Saturday afternoon Frank Yamasaki, as chairman of the Draft Age Boys' Meeting, promptly opened the session at the auditorium at 2 p.m. The gathering became an informal one as Sgt. Ben insisted on "heart to heart" talk without formality. The purpose of this meeting was to give the draft age boys' an opportunity to hear firsthand what an army life was like and also how to prepare themselves for the grind that was to be expected as soldiers

More than a hundred boys attended the discussion, boys of high school age and their immediates predominating the gathering. Questions of all nature kept the wearer of ISC busy throughout the period. Boys asked about the trying first days in the various basic training centers when Ben had difficulty with prejudice and discrimination. Some asked time and again about the specific bombing missions, such as the one he participated in Sicily and Rome.

Questions were addressed to him as to the possibility of nisei being accepted in the air corps. Sergeant explained that at present the air corps quota was filled at present and even the air cadets are being transferred to the combat duty in the infantry. Flying and gunnery tactics were of much interest to the boys, and Sgt. Kuroki described some of the actual experiences he has had in the air. His gunnery school training in England, he explained, lasted only five days so he had to learn the technique the hard way....in combat.

It was close to four in the afternoon as Yamasaki closed the meeting. One of Sgt. Kuroki's last words of advice was "Take it on the chin, fellows, when you get in the army. Maybe you have to take many on the chin but it's damn lot better than to be in the guardhouse. Anything is better than that. And when you learn to take it on the chin, it isn't so bad."

BANQUET:

A special banquet feting Sgt. Kuroki was one of the most successful events held recently in the city of Topaz. Under the joint sponsorship of the community council and block managers, representative luminaries from various organizations and divisions were invited to the gala affair. Some of the administrative personnel in attendance were Project Director Charles F. Ernst, Assistant Project Director and Mrs. Roscoe E. Bell, Reports Officer and Mrs. Russell A. Hankson, Selective Service Officer and Mrs. Corlies Carter. Dining Hall 23 was filled to capacity with close to two hundred persons present to accord the nisei hero his deserved recognition. Those without the invitational, numbering many scores, stood outside by the doorways and window and raptly watched and listened to the program. Much of the evening's success was attributed to the able assistance of USO and

CAS, as the young ladies served and waited on the guests of the evening.

Vernon Ichisaka, chairman for the banquet, spoke briefly as he officially opened the ceremonies, welcoming Sergeant Kuroki once again to the hospitality of the city. As the waitresses served piping hot soup, the diners needed no urging. Throughout the course, Kuroki, sitting beside Project Director Ernst, chatted with those about him. Perhaps, on Ben's request, informality was the stressing theme of the evening. Ichisaka, thus, conducted the first half of the evening's program without frills and elaborateness. When the majority of the diners had reached the last course of the dinner, he commenced to call upon the speakers for the evening.

Hiro Katayama, representing the Citizens' Committee, was the first speaker. In his humorous address, Hiro vividly outlined the relation between the nisei in centers and outside and Sgt. Kuroki. He stated there is some truth when the oft-repeated phrase of "Once a Jap always a Jap" was flung at the Japanese in America. He remarked that certain characteristics of ours will always remain Japanese, such as our physical features. We are of the same, he opined, "But Sgt. Kuroki is different from the rest of us." In his humor-filled sentences, Hiro Katayama described the difference that is in the aggressive action and passive inaction. He stated, "Sergeant shoots the enemy, makes seven come eleven in games, and win valued air medals. We, of the center, shoot the bull, make seven copies of everything, and sit on the pot."

He demonstrated in his speech that discrimination and prejudice have beginnings in the slightest misunderstanding and gravest misconception. For an example, he told a story of a nisei who relocated in a large eastern city and was approached by a young white woman and an escort. The woman asked him bluntly, "What are you? Japanese or Chinese?" Fearing that he might be molested for being a Japanese, he answered that he was Chinese. Without a moment's hesitation, the lady lunged at him with her nails, crying, "Why, you damn Chink! You started this war!"

In conclusion he addressed to Sgt. Kuroki sympathizing with him on his preference of barrack life in the air corps to that of attending banquets and receptions. But, Hiro Katayama added, "our minority problems are to be solved by such notable acts as you perform. We hope to have but one roof over us all."

Representing the USO and Parents' Group, Mr. S. Shimo-

tori recalled the past of issei pioneers in predicting a bright future of the Japanese Americans. During the Meiji era when the closed gates of Japan was finally opened, he informed, the life of issei commenced. They came to America for opportunity, and here they have settled for their new life was opened and opportunity was for the asking. He predicted that the war will not last long, that it will end sooner or later. In the peace to come, the Japanese American era will flourish. "Issei will perform their duty through their faith in tomorrow."

Speaking in behalf of the Block Managers, James Hirano, chairman of its group, addressed the audience that "all the world loves a hero, and Topaz has one here today." With Sgt. Kuroki fighting two wars, Mr. Hirano felt sorry for him because his obstacles are tremendous. His work involves, he stated, two great problems of the day....one, fascism; two, bigotry.

He recalled the history of the Japanese in America, which is one of many struggles, and he identified Sgt. Kuroki's accomplishments as one of its process in integrity and Americanization. "Taro Issei" had struggled for forty years in establishing their place in America. In spite of the hardship on the way they have been valiant, and that the issei in their process must also be courageous. And, he pointed out Sgt. Kuroki as an excellent example of an ideal issei: "Ben is first a military hero and secondly a man."

Project Director Ernst then spoke of his experience on the previous night as he listened to Sgt. Kuroki's address to the people in Topaz. Throughout Ben's vivid account of his life and struggles, Mr. Ernst felt a lump in his throat. It was a miracle (mentioned by Sgt. Kuroki in his address about his bombing mission) that he did come through safely, Director Ernst declared. But, he added, it was not an accident. Sgt. Ben was saved miraculously for the work that was waiting back home. Mr. Ernst's opinion was that politicians can make excellent addresses, orators too have fine deliveries, and even he may make a pretty good speech, but a doer such as Ben Kuroki outstrips them all without half trying. Concluding, the Project Director said, "Ben can't do it alone. We have our work too. And, Sgt. Kuroki, the men and women in Topaz will not let you down."

Dr. George Ochikubo, chairman of the Council, spoke briefly as he exemplified Ben Kuroki as being human just like the people in the audience. He admired Ben because he

was a typical nisei with good points...modest, courageous and quiet.

Prior to the presentation of nisei war hero to the audience, the chairman for the evening made a special acknowledgment of the presence of the Topaz enlisted reserves in the hall. As Sgt. Kuroki had previously lauded the 100th Infantry and the 442nd Infantry, Mr. Ichiseka revealed, these reserves will soon be called for active combat duty. He presented Sgt. Kuroki by stating that Ben believes in Japanese American Creed. At the Administrative Staff meeting, Sgt. Kuroki had quoted it:

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak, and act as I please--as a free man equal to every other man.

Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True, I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way: above-board, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics.

Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.

As Sgt. Kuroki rose to respond, a wave of applause greeted him. He faced the mike in his quaint unassuming manner, hardly glancing at his audience, and talked in a low monotone that is characteristic of him. When he was ordered to visit Topaz by the War Department, Kuroki affirmed, he felt bitter about it because he had just returned from the recent tour to Minidoka and Heart Mountain Centers. He felt bitter because he had lost his furlough and was unable to remain at home. He had but one meal at home when he visited his hometown, Hershey, Nebraska. He wanted to stay home by the bedside of his parent who was bedridden for two months. All these personal problems, he maintained, took him by storm and he could not help but become hurt. But, he added, when he did arrive in Topaz he could see himself slowly thawing out and becoming impressed by Topaz. He liked the quietness of the camp, and for being casual in all activities he thought it was nice. Ending his response shortly, he said that he really enjoyed Topaz and did not regret his coming to the center.

After the round of applause, Ichisaka relinquished the second half of the evening's program to Nobu Tabata, the master of ceremonies. In his droll manner Mr. Tabata entertained the gathering by tabbing himself as a good talent scout of Topaz. Miss Margaret Mitashira's vocal solo opened the entertainment, followed by a small girl who exhibited her skill as a drama majorette. From the Army inductee group, Terry Acazawa crooned several songs which captivated the listeners. Miss Rose Ishimoto then scored with her piano recital, and finally Mr. Nobu Tabata's pet "Seven Savoy's" concluded the program. In the latter sketch, which was hilarious and original, the performers included Mrs. Ernst, Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe E. Bell, Miro Katayama, James Hirano, Miss Chizu Ishida and Yosh Isono.

The most successful party of recent months came to a close at ten p.m.

As the people filed out, autograph seekers rushed the wearer of Distinguished Flying Cross. Others shook his hand and parted. In the late evening Sgt. Kuroki was escorted to the USO clubroom at Rec. 4 where refreshments were served, and an informal get-together with late comers became the offing.

USO PROGRAM:

U.S.O., under the co-chairmanship of Mrs. Arimoto and

not yet fully realized. We regret that we are very poor hostess in this honorable welcome luncheon. The nature and climate, which usually act a good part of hospitality, are also very poor and unfavorable here: wild desert, dust storm and no greens in this late spring. But we did our utmost to welcome you. Though the refreshment and program are poor, they were all prepared by the warm hearts of mothers and wives whose beloved ones are at the front at this moment.

"Finally, hoping your health and good luck, I conclude this short address of welcome. Thank you."

In behalf of the Administrative Staff Mr. Carter gave a brief address. Following his greetings, Kuroki responded. He humorously commented that when the chairman had overlooked him and called the next speaker, he thought he had been relieved of speechmaking for one day. But no. It was, he added with a grin, too good to last for long. Rev. Shimada rendered a grace to complete the first half of the day's program.

A delightful lunch was in store for the honored guest and residents at which time Sgt. Kuroki relaxed and enjoyed conversing with the old folks of the city. Topaz's most talented artists entertained the guests. Piano solo, dance, Japanese skit, and vocal solo were among those featured.

The following was the USO program for the day:

- 1. Japanese Skit.....Mrs. Oyamada
- 2. Vocal Solo.....Miss S. Iwashiro
- 3. Dance.....Miss S. Iwashiro
- 4. Acts of Magic.....Mr. J. Iwano
- 5. Opera.....Madam Tachibana
- 6. Vocal Solo.....Miss K. Hoshino

U. S. O. PROGRAM

Sunday, May 21, 1944 12 M. Dining Hall #32

Chairman.....Mrs. M. Arimoto

1. Greetings.....Mrs. C. Kawamoto, USO
2. Greetings.....Mr. C. Carter
Adm. Staff
3. Response.....Sergeant Ben Kuroki
4. Grace.....Reverend Shiada

LUNCH

5. Piano Solo.....Miss K. Iriki
6. Dance.....Miss V. Yoshiyama
7. Vocal Solo.....Mr. P. Yoshida
8. Japanese Skit.....Mrs. Ogawa
Mrs. Nakayama
9. Vocal Solo.....Miss E. Itashiki
10. Dance.....Miss S. Harada
11. Acts of Magic.....Mr. J. Kato
12. Odoris.....Madam Tachibana
13. Vocal Solo.....Miss K. Hoshiga

MORNING WORSHIP

Although the scheduled community-wide picnic for Kuroki was called off on account of wet grounds, Sunday was a busy day for the renowned nisei visitor. At the Young People's morning worship held at the Dining Hall 32, he made a surprise visit, enabling the many churchgoers to meet him. In some quarters, Kuroki, being a Protestant, was expected at the church service, and some two hundred persons expectantly waited and trusted the rumor that the nisei airman would make his appearance. All through the service conducted by Rev. Tsukamoto, the sergeant sat in the audience and listened to the sermon and gave prayer. He had accustomed himself to saying a prayer of thankfulness after each bombing mission, and as he wisely attested, "They say they are no atheists in foxholes; I can tell you for sure there are none in heavy bombers either."

CAMP TOUR AND AN IMPROMPTU GET-TOGETHER

Immediately after the USO luncheon Sgt. Kuroki was shown around the Topaz ground, visiting the farm area that included various projects such as the pig, chicken, turkey, cattle, vegetable farms.

In the evening Kuroki and his party dined at the Dining Hall 37, and the sergeant hugely enjoyed having dinner at the community mess hall. Here, his admirers gathered about him and an impromptu get-together was immediately planned. At one of the typical resident apartments in block 37 a group of young people, including new faces who had not met the nisei here before, entertained him. The familiar "bull session" tickled the sergeant for he enjoys informal crowd to a "stiff collar" gathering any day. In the course of the evening, an Oriental styled noodle soup was served with was a delicacy for Ben. Another stopover scheduled for the evening was prolonged and then finally cancelled as the evening swiftly passed.

Around ten p.m. when everyone was through with the "chow", Ben humorously suggested a poker game to the boys. Grins and chuckles pervaded the room. A deck of new playing cards promptly appeared on the scene and a card table became the center of attraction. By the way Sgt. Kuroki kept hitting the jackpot, it was evident that his army life had improved

his game. His luckless victims grinningly acknowledged his superiority by stating, "No wonder he's come through thirty bombing missions without a scratch."

The party finally broke up around two a.m., and Ben was escorted to his quarters. To the members of the evening's party Ben proved again that he's a regular guy and as representative American as are ice cream, hot dogs and Hollywood movie.

BEN KUROKI SPEAKS BEFORE THE HIGH SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

At a special high school assembly Sgt. Kuroki addressed the entire student body Monday morning at 10 a.m. Approximately, a thousand students were in attendance that morning to pay homage to their hero. Norman Hirose, president of the Topaz High School student body, was the chairman for the event.

In his stirring speech before the high school assembly for which he was given a round of applause by his youthful admirers, the Nebraska boy, as plain an American as any typical youth in America, spoke simply and straightforwardly. To the students he carried over the spirit of America prevalent throughout the land and in his informal way advised the Japanese Americans in relocation centers to keep in step with the present tempo.

Following his address an unique musical program was presented, including a pageant of local events that had become history.

The assembly closed just before noon. Sgt. Kuroki had a date with the Girl Reserves at luncheon, but before he could leave the hall he was deluged by autograph seekers. Girls, especially, milled about him seeking his signature and for a close glimpse of the visiting hero.

GIRL RESERVES LUNCHEON

Quoted by Sergeant Kuroki as the most enjoyable meal he had in Topaz, the Girl Reserves' Luncheon was one of the spotlights during the war hero's visit. It lasted only an hour and fifteen minutes, but every minute was crammed with excitement. Including the Topaz High School principal,

Drayton Suttall, and the Hi-Y members, a total of eighteen persons gathered at the high school dining room to pay respects to the nisei air hero. Autographs were in demand, and Sgt. Kuroki graciously accommodated the requests.

In this all-infernal luncheon Ben Kuroki made no speeches. He did not have to for his accomplishments and personality had become widely known to the residents since his arrival, if not before. Impromptu queries and replies livened the hour, and Ben lived up to his reputation as a witty conversationalist and a regular fellow. To the younger Topaz group such as the Girl Reserves, he was well-fitted in the role of a model hero, and no wonder the Topaz youngsters immediately become "Kuroki conscious".

Soon the allotted hour was up for the Sargeant. His afternoon schedule was a busy one. In the neighboring vicinity Sgt. Ben made a goodwill tour, addressing the Delta High and Hunkley High Schools. In the evening he was the guest of honor at the Lions' Club dinner at Delta at which time the local luminaries mingled with the well known nisei hero.

INDUCTEES' BALL

Climaxing the busy program for Monday the Inductees' Ball with Ben Kuroki as the honored guest was held at the Auditorium. The hall was gaily decorated by CAS artist-decorator, Sam Hamasaki, with a patriotic theme of red, white and blue. Sponsored by the Citizens' Committee, more than a hundred persons attended the social function which lasted till midnight. Popular Yosh Iseno was master of ceremonies. With recordings furnishing the music, Sgt. Kuroki danced with a number of the girls. Refreshments were prepared jointly by the USO committee and the Girl Reserves.

HOSPITAL TOUR AND LUNCHEON

On the morning of his departure, Sgt. Kuroki made the rounds of the hospital, visiting patients with goodwill and cheer. With the cooperation of the hospital personnel, the Red Cross organization conducted the tour. At noon Sgt. Kuroki was the guest of honor at the hospital dining hall. Doctors, nurses, nurse's aides, dentists, technicians and

other workers were present at the luncheon. They surrounded holder of Distinguished Flying Cross in gay conversation as a number of individuals sought for his attention. Characteristically, Don was informal, refusing to be stiff and impersonal even in large gatherings. He ate heartily bantered with diners, and responded to admirers' inquiries.

SEND-OFF

On Tuesday, May 23rd, Sgt. Kuroki made his final Topaz appearance at the gate. Long before the time of his departure (1:15 p.m.) admirers and now-found friends milled about the administration area for a choice observation spot. He finally appeared in a car filled with hostesses, and immediately the autograph seekers from the young fair sex surrounded the vehicle. Signing paper after paper, he grinned and bantered with the crowd, his genuine modesty captivating the center residents.

Mr. Ernst, taking time out from his hurried packing for his overseas assignment, bid him farewell and "God bless you." The Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corps stirred the air with fitting music. People accompanying Sgt. Kuroki to the Delta station scrambled to their respective cars. Among those represented were the Council, Boy Scouts, USO, Block Managers, Project Reports, Girl Reserves, Citizens' Committee, Agriculture, Education, Red Cross and CAS. A little after the scheduled time, Sergeant Kuroki's car weaved through the crowd and passed the gate and into the open. Sad and weeping faces among the girls stood waving him farewell.

As the escorting vehicles followed the Kuroki car through the gate the Kuroki Welcome program came to a close at the center, climaxing a four-day celebration in honor of the nice air hero.

At the Delta station, Kuroki modestly shunned the ballyhooing coming from the bobby sox group. He quietly stood talking with the various friends he had made in Topaz. The train was on time. Close to hundred persons stood about him chattering about the future in relation to the present circumstances. The hostesses circled him with attention. Finally the train appeared, and the crowd of well-wishers followed him closely at his heels. The high school girls stood by the tracks giving him a yell and then ended with a high pitched lyric, "For he's a jolly good fellow."

From the train steps he protested any sort of exhibition but waved his hand to the crowd. The train was filled with

servicemen, and they peered out curiously to note the commotion.
As the train slowly pulled out, Sgt. Karoki became indistinguish-
able from the rest of the uniformed boys.