

WELCOME, SGT. KUROKI

TOPAZ TIMES

E X T R A

Special Edition

TOPAZ, UTAH

Friday, May 19, 1944

NISEI HERO ARRIVES TODAY

Public Reception Set for Tonight

Opening the program for the visiting war hero, Sgt. Ben Kuroki, a public reception will be sponsored by the community council tonight from 7:30 in the auditorium. George Shimamoto will be chairman.

Speakers for the evening are Charles F. Ernst, project director; Dr. George Ochikubo, council chairman; and a representative of the Citizens' Committee. The main address will be given by Sgt. Kuroki.

An entertainment program will be presented following the ceremonies.

DRAFT-AGE BOYS

Draft-age boys are invited to attend a special meeting tomorrow afternoon from 2 o'clock in the gym. Sgt. Kuroki will be the featured speaker.

RESIDENT DELEGATION TO MEET KUROKI AT DELTA

National nisei war hero, T/Sgt. Ben Kuroki will arrive in Delta 10:10 AM according to a teletype received here from Peterson Field, Colorado, where he is stationed. A delegation of councilmen, block managers, representatives of the Citizens' Committee, USO, and the project reports division, Corlies Carter, and Russell Bankson will meet Sgt. Kuroki at Delta.

COUNCILMEN PLAN SPECIAL BANQUET

A banquet to fete Sgt. Ben Kuroki will be given on Saturday evening at 6:30 in DH 25 under the sponsorship of the community council and block managers.

Speaking at the dinner will be representatives from the Citizens' Committee and block managers, S. Shimotori of the parents' group, Project Director Charles F. Ernst, and Dr. George Ochikubo of the community council.

The visiting hero will be welcomed at the main gate to Topaz by the residents at 11 AM. Boy Scouts will participate in the welcoming ceremonies when the Topaz queen, Katherine Miho and her attendants will present Kuroki with the key to the city.

(Arrangements have been made for sounding the siren twice at 3-minute intervals when Sgt. Kuroki reaches Delta, so that residents may assemble at the gate to welcome him.)

Following the welcome at the gate, Sgt. Kuroki will be guest of honor at a luncheon to be given in the administration dining hall. A public reception will be held tonight with Kuroki as the main speaker.

Meetings with various organizations in the center climaxed by a banquet to be given the community council and block managers will complete the second day of the hero's visit.

INDUCTEES' BALL TO HONOR HERO

The inductees committee will give a Inductees' Ball with Sgt. Ben Kuroki as guest of honor Monday night at the auditorium from 8:30. The affair which will be 35¢ a couple will be open to the public.

Master of ceremonies will be Yoshio Isono. Ham Hama-saki will be in charge of the decorations.

PROGRAM FOR KUROKI'S VISIT

EVENT	PLACE	TIME
FRIDAY, May 19		
Welcome at gate	Gate	11 AM
Luncheon	Ad.	12 M
Public reception	Aud.	7:30 PM
SATURDAY, May 20		
Address Council and Block Mgrs.	1-10-3D	10 AM
Adm. staff meeting	Ad. rec	1:15 PM
Draft-age boys meeting	Aud.	2 PM
Banquet	DH 23	6:30 PM
SUNDAY, May 21		
USO luncheon	DH 32	12 M
Field picnic	Sec. 11	4:30 PM
MONDAY, May 22		
Topaz grade school meeting	Aud.	9 AM
High school assembly	Aud.	10 AM
Luncheon with Civil Reserves	DH 32	12 M
Address Delta and Hinckley High Schools	Afternoon	
Dinner with Lions' Club	Delta	Evening
Inductees' Ball	Aud.	8:30 PM
TUESDAY, May 23		
Hospital visit	Hosp.	Morning
Luncheon	Hosp.	12 M
Send-off	Gate	1:15 PM

W E L C O M E

Welcome to Topaz, Sergeant Ben Kuroki! We know that coming here to meet with us and to get acquainted with us is not your main business. We appreciate the fact that you are using your time to come to us, when your real job is to continue to help win this war. We are honored that you have come. We want your stay here to be pleasant and we hope that you will find new friends here and when you have gone, we want to remember you as our friend. Your steadfast adherence to duty is an example to every American. We are proud of you, Sergeant Kuroki.

Charles F. Ernst, Project Director
George Ochikubo, Council Chairman

SGT KUROKI

Foremost An American

Hail to Sergeant Ben Kuroki, our nisei hero. He is the living example of what a nisei should be---an American first, a nisei second.

He belongs to all America. After many struggles he attained his deserved and rightful role. This is the stuff which heroes are made from. In a Liberator bomber, as one of its members, he was able to lose his own identity for the greater identity of the crew; he was just a cog in a working organization. He was an American. In his own words, Sgt. Kuroki describes what an American crew is: "The tail gunner was Jewish; I'm a Japanese American; the bombardier of our crew was a German; the left waist gunner was an Irishman. Later I flew with an American Indian pilot and a Polish turret gunner."

Yes, he is our hero; but more important, he belongs to the America for which our nation stands and fights for.

We can learn a lot from Ben Kuroki. We nisei of the relocation centers are too prone to tag ourselves as nisei first and only secondly as American. Undoubtedly our trials and circumstances have magnified our nisei status. But it is up to us to emerge from our shells of self-pity into full-fledged Americans.

Sergeant Kuroki is the kind of citizen we in the relocation centers can prepare to become in the world outside.

TIME WRITES ABOUT A HERO

Ben Kuroki is a technical sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Forces, a qualified turret gunner in B-24 Liberator bombers, veteran of 30 heavy bombing missions against the enemy, survivor of the ruthless, costly raid on the Ploesti oilfields of Rumania, winner of two Distinguished Flying Crosses, wearer of the coveted Air Medal with four oak-leaf clusters.

Ben Kuroki's father was a seed-potato grower in Hershey, Neb., a town of about 500 people. Ben and his kid brother Fred (now overseas with an engineer outfit) volunteered for the army two days after Pearl Harbor, were accepted a month later.

Ben earned one D.F.C. for 25 combat missions, another for the Ploesti raid. Yet when his prescribed 25 missions had been fulfilled, he turned down a chance to fly home, volunteered instead for an extra five. After that, Ben got his orders for home. Time Magazine, Feb. 7, 1944

KUROKI RELATES HIS ARMY LIFE BEFORE S.F. GROUP

Last February, Sgt. Ben Kuroki spoke before the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, relating some of his experiences in the army. We present excerpts from his speech.

"Under fire, a man's ancestry, what he did before the war, or even his present rank, don't matter at all. You're fighting as a team---that's the only way a bomber crew can fight---you're fighting for each other's life and for your country, and whether you realize it at the time or not, you're living and proving democracy.

"It was a funny thing---I'd just been assigned to a crew the day before we left England although the group had been based there for about four months. I'd finished gunnery school more than a month before, and ever since I'd been trying to get assigned to a crew. It wasn't easy; I'd talk to the pilot whenever I knew there was going to be an opening in a crew, and each pilot would assign me temporarily and then replace me when the time came for permanent assignment.

"I understand well enough how they felt; and they knew I was as good as any man they did assign, but still they were uneasy. But I wanted to get into combat more than anything in the world, so I kept after it.

"I began to realize right then that I had a couple of strikes on me to begin with, and that I was going to be fighting two battles instead of one---against the Axis and against intolerance among my fellow-Americans.

"In my own case, I have almost won the battle against intolerance; I have many close friends in the army now where two years ago I had none. But I have by no means completely won that battle. Especially now, after the widespread publicity given the recent atrocity stories, I find prejudice once again directed against me, and neither my uniform nor the medals which are visible proof of what I have been through, have been able to stop it, I don't know for sure that it is safe for me to walk the streets of my own country."

HE'S HUMAN TOO; HE KEEPS A CHARM, LIKES STEAK, PLAYED CENTER FIELD

Sgt. Ben Kuroki, the hero, and "Keep 'em Peeling" Kuroki, the regular fellow---he's one and the same. Before an audience he is our finest example of nisei manhood. In the midst of a throng of admirers, he is an excellent sport with a contagious grin.

Back in the days when Ben was only a buck private and spent more of his days in the kitchen than as a top turret gunner, his fellow soldiers nicknamed him "Keep 'em Peeling" Kuroki.

25 YEARS OLD

Tall, dark and rugged, Ben was born in Gothenburg, Nebraska, 25 years ago. He is one of a family of five

boys and five girls. He is 5' 9" tall and weighs 145 pounds.

His most treasured possession is a silver Egyptian ring, a good luck charm, which carried him through 29 of his 30 missions. Like other men of the armed forces, Ben collects foreign currency, now ten feet long.

HIS FAVORITE DISH

He likes gashimi and tempura but frowns at other Japanese dishes. His favorite dish, however, is still the good old American one of a huge thick steak, medium well.

And what does Ben consider the ideal nisei girl? He thinks that the girl who can combine a youthful,

refreshing and intelligent character with a good personality is tops, as do a million other boys.

SPORTS-MINDED

Like many American boys Ben is sports-minded. During his high school days in Hershey, Nebraska, he was a three-letter man. In baseball he was a star center fielder and a relief pitcher. He also played ball with an all-nisei nine against the town and legion ball teams.

In his sophomore year Sgt. Kuroki became a varsity regular in basketball as a guard. His team twice reached the semi-finals in state tournaments. He was also a half-miler on the high school track squad.

Kuroki Tells Story Of Raid On Ploesti

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 ships, but this time they had gone overboard to get them in perfect condition. They shared our excitement and anxiety, too.

FLYING AT 50 FEET

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 head 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 ten feet off the ground, and some of the planes returned to base with tree tops and even cornstalks in their bomb-bays.

HEAVY ACK-ACK FIRE

We came into the oil fields at about 80 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.

Red tracers from small ground guns had been zig-zagging all around us for half a mile or more, and

the guns themselves were sending up terrific barrages. Just as we hit the target, gas tanks started exploding. One 10,000 gallon tank blew up right in front of us, shooting pillars of flaming gas 500 feet in the air. It was like a nightmare. We couldn't believe our eyes when we saw that blazing tank high above us. The pilot had to swerve sharply to the right to avoid what was really a cloud of fire. It was so hot it felt as though we were flying through a furnace.

PLOESTI IN RUINS

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.

