

817 Paani Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
December 12, 1945

War Department  
Adjutant General's Office  
Washington

Subject: Casualty Information No. 4936

Dear Sirs:

This letter is in answer to your inquiry regarding the fate or possible whereabouts of one, S/Sgt. Itsumu Sasaoka, 30101548, who was a prisoner of war with me at Stalag III C near Kuestrin, Germany.

Sgt. Sasaoka lived with me in the same barracks and on the morning of Jan. 31st, moved out together under German orders, to be evacuated further inland, away from Russian rescue. Approximately,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 miles out of the camp, we were suddenly fired upon by Russians who had mistaken the identity of the marching column. At that particular moment, the column had stopped for a short rest. Sgt. Sasaoka was alive at this moment. The first shots that the Russians fired were small arms fire. I crossed the road and lay down behind a tree. After that I did not see Sgt. Sasaoka for after small arms fire, the Russians followed up with mortar and tank fire which caused chaos and bedlam to the column of American men and German guards. We were in a flat field, covered with snow and were an easy target for the Russians because of the shortness of the distance and the large number of men. At the start of the heavy arms fire, the men spread in all directions and judging from the cries of agony and pain from men wounded, I take it that some died, some wounded mortally or some received various degrees of wounds. The closeness of a shell burst felled me to the ground and I had extreme difficulty in hearing for some time. I made my way back to the camp with the aid of two friends. I was separated from another Japanese-American boy, Sgt. Harry Kamikawa, the only one in this camp besides Sgt. Sasaoka and myself. This boy went with a group of approximately 300 to be immediately rescued by the Russians. We each thought that Sgt. Sasaoka was with the other. About two weeks later, I met Sgt Kamikawa in a small Polish town near the German border and was surprised to find that Sgt. Sasaoka was not with him. I did not personally see the wounded or dead, the result of Jan. 31st. I inquired but could not locate Sgt. Sasaoka or learn of his fate. I do know that some bodies became unidentifiable due to the shell fire and the result of Russian tanks crushing bodies.

I have spoken with Sgt. Kamikawa upon numerous occasions and basing our opinion on the difficulty we encountered in our travels without a leader or Russian guide; traveling as best we could in all sizes of groups; being scrutinized by Russians, seeing friends have their valuables or overcoats stolen by Russians (both sober and intoxicated); listening to criticisms of American tactics (often unfriendly); being quizzed often on my racial ancestry by jeering, inquisitive and trigger-happy Russians; impossibility of traveling at night; and the all-around hardships we had to endure before finally reaching a small town near Warsaw, Poland, where we finally received definite Russian orders for our care and shipment into American hands, we believe that Sgt. Sasaoka cannot now be alive if not as yet heard from. When Sgt. Kamikawa and I left this Polish town with some 108 other Americans, to join others waiting at Warsaw for the trip to Odessa, it is true that by that time Americans were scattered in all parts of Poland.

If Sgt. Sasaoka was among those killed when fired upon by the Russians, there is every reason to believe that the Russians could have identified him by means of his dog tags other than a German prisoner identification tag, both of which I definitely know he had on his person. I understand that there was a party of American medical men who went to evacuate wounded and to identify those killed but their list may possibly be incomplete. I believe that 1st Sgt. Coleman, I do not know his address but I know that he lives near or in Boston, Mass., who was confidence man of Stalag III C, had a list of the men wounded or killed. I believe he served with the 26th Inf. Division. Other than that, I think the Russians and possibly German people living near the vicinity of the incident are the only possible sources of identifying overlooked dead. It would be very difficult to identify bodies crushed by tanks made more difficult by the snow on the ground at that time.

I cannot say that I saw the body of Sgt. Sasaoka or saw him wounded but basing my opinion on the reasons I have set forth in this letter, I believe that he is now dead and that someone is responsible for an incomplete report. I was in the camp for three days following the incident in question and the vicinity of the incident was a battleground of much activity during that time. The American detail could not have completed a more thorough search and therefore it would have been up to the Russians to supplement any previously acquired information.

I hope the above information will be of some help in determining the status of Sgt. Itsumu Sasaoka. He has a brother here who is very anxious to receive official word. I will be very glad to be of any further assistance if necessary.

Sincerely,

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