

T/Sgt. Victor Akimoto

November 9, 1918 - December 14, 1944



T/Sgt. Victor Akimoto

Victor “Vic” Akimoto, son of Masanori and Miki Mary Shiratori Akimoto, was born on November 9, 1918 in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He was one of four girls and four boys. The eldest was Ruth Kodani, followed by Ned, Martha Hamlett, Margaret Kajikawa, Victor, Ted, John, and Jane Sato. Victor’s family moved to Los Angeles in 1928. He attended 36th Street Elementary School and graduated from Foshay Junior High School and Jacob Riis High School in Los Angeles with a goal of going to college in the future. Before induction in the Army he worked at a wholesale market in Los Angeles.

Victor volunteered for the Army (Serial No. 19 078 557) from Los Angeles on December 8, 1941 and received his basic training at Ft. Warren, Wyoming and later stationed at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Victor served with the 100th Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team,

Company A in Italy in the Rome to Arno Campaign, including areas Anzio, Pian Merano, Hill 415, Belvedere, Sasseta, Cecina, Castellina, Postina, Orciano, Livorno, Pisa, and Lucca. T/Sgt. Victor Akimoto also served in France in the Battle of Bruyeres, followed by action in Belmont, Biffontaine, and the Lost Battalion Rescue. T/Sgt. Victor Akimoto died on December 14, 1944 from wounds suffered in the battle to rescue the Lost Battalion, 1st Battalion of the 141st Regiment, 36th Division, a Texas unit, surrounded by the enemy and isolated for almost a week with very little food and ammunition. This four-day battle was one of the bloodiest and fiercest fighting every undertaken by the 442nd. T/Sgt. Victor Akimoto was captured by the Germans and died in a German hospital.

Victor’s brother Ted Akimoto writes:

“ . . .When the 442nd received orders to go overseas, Victor and his brother Ted were not on the list, as specified non-coms were to remain behind and train the replacements. Knowing the influence of the Chaplains, Victor went to his and said that he had promised their mother that he would look after John and should accompany the outfit. When the Chaplain went to the Regimental commander, he was told that non-coms would remain. When informed of this, Victor asked the Chaplain what if he were a private, would that permit him to go? When the chaplain went back to the C.O., he was so impressed with Victor’s determination that he said that he could go but he would have to give up his T/Sgt stripes to qualify. . . .”

T/Sgt. Victor Akimoto was awarded the Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman’s Badge, Bronze Star, and Distinguished Unit Badge and is buried next to his brother John (100th/442nd RCT/Company C) in the Lorraine Military Cemetery in St. Avold, France in a special section where 26 brothers are buried next to each other.

THEY TOO DIE FOR THEIR COUNTRY

The other day, in the tabulation of Utahns killed in action in this war, three of the eight names listed were those of Japanese-Americans. It serves to call to the attention of Utahns the service so many of these Americans of Japanese ancestry are giving in this war.

These three boys were killed in Italy where, presumably, they were fighting with the 442nd regiment, a unit composed entirely of Japanese-Americans. One of them, Sgt. Tom Sagimori, had been wounded twice previously. Another, Pfc. Noburu Miyoko, is the second member of his family to die in combat and he has two more brothers in the army, one of whom is now hospitalized in Italy. The third, Pfc. Roy Y. Ikeda, had been in the service three years and was wounded last fall while serving in France. He has a brother who is also in the army.

The case of a fourth Japanese-American, Pvt. Victor Akimoto, listed as dead two days later, was quite unusual. First of all, Akimoto voluntarily gave up his technical sergeant's rating here in the United States to join the Japanese-American 100th Infantry battalion as a private in order to get into combat. He was cited in Italy for capturing four Germans while unarmed. He was wounded while fighting in France and died later in a German hospital. Victor Akimoto is the second son of this Japanese-American family to die in combat service. Another brother is in officer candidate school in Ft. Benning, Ga.

A good many of these Japanese-American boys have already given their lives in combat both in Europe and in the Pacific. Many more have been wounded, a number have earned awards for heroism.

It is a simple fact that these thousands of young men of Japanese ancestry are proving to America the hard way that they are entitled to call themselves Americans. The courage they have shown in action, their patriotic willingness to shed their blood in defense of the country of their birth, has earned for them and for their love ones here at home America's respect and praise