

Pfc. Nobuo Kajiwara

September 5, 1914 - July 12, 1944



Pfc. Nobuo Kajiwara

Nobuo Kajiwara, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Yujiro Kajiwara, was born on September 5, 1914. He had three sisters—Amy, Michi, and Sachi. Nobuo and his family were members of the Japanese Methodist Church in Oakland, California. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley campus in 1936. With his father he operated the Oriental Shop in Oakland until his family was ordered to enter the Tanforan Assembly Center on May 6, 1942. They were transferred to the Topaz Relocation Center on September 20, 1942.

When the call came for volunteers for the newly formed all Japanese Americans segregated army unit, Nobuo asked his parents to allow him to volunteer. However, his parents pleaded with him not to do so, but to wait for the draft. Nobuo's reply was, "...several friends of mine decided to volunteer recently.

I talked with them heart to heart, and I came to realize that some of them are going to sacrifice everything for the future happiness of their fellow Japanese Americans, and some are willing to sacrifice their lives for their beloved U.S.A. None of them has any egocentric idea at all; all of them started from the spirit of self-sacrifice. It seemed to me that it is not good to wait until I'm drafted; it would be cowardly. I've never sacrificed myself for a noble cause. Now is the chance for me to be born again as a man. To me there is a difference between volunteering and being drafted. So I can't wait. I'll volunteer..."

When asked, "You are an American-born. You are an American. You have American citizenship. Yet you have been put into this barbed-wire camp, and your freedom as a citizen has been denied in the camp. In other words, you have not been treated as an American by your government. Do you still want to volunteer for America?" Nobuo replied, "When I was forced to enter the Assembly Center, I felt as though I were being persecuted by my own government...when I saw the stars and stripes (of the American flag), my heart burned with patriotism even in this Relocation Center. I realized strongly that, after all, I am an American, and I came to the conclusion that I must not be bothered by a little thing like this segregation. I've been benefited by my country more than words can express. I should be a faithful American even though my government is not just to me. I will volunteer not for the government, but for the beautiful and ideal America which I have been visualizing in my heart."

Nobuo volunteered (Serial No. 39 919 482) out of Topaz on August 11, 1943 at Ft. Douglas, Utah. He trained at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and in April 1944 he joined Co. B, 100th Battalion as a replacement in the Anzio to Rome Campaign. From June 26, 1944 the 100th Battalion fought together with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team as one unit. It was during the Rome to Arno Campaign in Italy that Pfc. Nobuo Kajiwara was killed in action on July 12, 1944.

Pfc. Nobuo Kajiwara was awarded the Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star, and the American and European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medals and is now interred at the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, California.

**EULOGY AT MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR
PFC NOBUO KAJIWARA**

The following address was given by the Rev. Shigeo Shimada at the memorial service of the late Private Nobuo Kajiwara, who was killed in action in Italy on July 11, 1944. The service was held at the the Topaz United Protestant Church in Central Utah Relocation Center on September 11, 1944.

The late Private Nobuo Kajiwara was 29 years old when he was killed in action. Nobuo and his family were members of the Japanese Methodist Church in Oakland, California. He graduated from the University of California in 1936. With his father he operated the Oriental Shop in Oakland, California until he was ordered to enter the Tanforan Assembly Center on May 6, 1942. He was transferred to the Topaz Relocation Center on September 20, 1942. From this Relocation Center he volunteered and joined the United States Army on August 11, 1943. He was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Y. Kajiwara, who recently relocated to Cleveland, Ohio to join their three daughters.

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When an army officer visited the Topaz Relocation Center and urged the Japanese-Americans to volunteer to join the United States Army, more than 100 young boys made up their minds to volunteer. Nobuo Kajiwara was one of them. When Nobuo asked his parents to allow him to volunteer, they pleaded with him not to do so, but to wait until he was drafted. Nobuo's decision, however was so strong that his parents were unable to change his mind.

Realizing their inability to keep their son from volunteering, Mr. and Mrs. Kajiwara came to me for help. I personally believed that it was not good to keep him from volunteering, yet on the other hand I fully understood their feelings as Japanese parents. So I said to them. "I cannot tell whether I would try to make him stop or not, but give me the chance to talk with your son heart to heart. If he is volunteering because he wants to get away from the monotonous camp life and to have a mild freedom, then I will stop him; but if it is from a pure spirit of self-sacrifice, I cannot stop him."

Late that night, Nobuo came to my home. He said, "Rev. Shimada, I came to you not because I want to hear your opinion about volunteering; not because I want to consult you about this matter. I have made up my mind already. No one can stop me. I came to you because I want to tell you what is in my heart, and I want you to understand me and tell my parents about it. I can't stand it any longer to see their faces all wet with tears."

When he spoke thus, his eyes were full of tears, and his hands were trembling. For a few minutes I could not say even a word. I felt my heart beating fast. When I calmed myself, I asked him four questions.

First: "As a son, it is your duty to be obedient to your parents. Now your parents are asking you not to volunteer, but you are going to do so, rejecting yours parents' plea. Don't you feel sorry for your parents?"

He answered, "Yes, I am very unhappy when I consider my parents' feelings. I have heard that some parents in America, as well as in Japan, are urging their sons to volunteer. But we Americans of Japanese

ancestry are in a very difficult situation. Our parents are subject of Japan, ineligible to become American citizens, and we, their sons, are Americans whose loyalty is purely American. So our parents are put in a great dilemma. My heart has been completely broken. After a hard struggle, I decided to volunteer. I know my parents will suffer very much, but I feel I must be loyal to America. I am going against my parents' wishes now, but I am strongly convinced that some day they will appreciate what I am doing."

The second question I asked was this: "Can't you wait until you are drafted? You can serve your country just as well when you are drafted. Your parents are not asking you to go against your country at all. They merely want you to wait until you are drafted. And I am sure that they will want you to do your best for your country when you are drafted. So if you wait until then, you can satisfy your parents and also serve your country. Why can't you wait?"

He answered: "I had been thinking that way, too. But several friends of mine decided to volunteer recently. I talked with them heart to heart, and I came to realize that some of them are going to sacrifice everything for the future happiness of their fellow Japanese-Americans, and some are willing to sacrifice their lives for their beloved U.S.A. None of them has any egocentric ideas at all: all of them started from the spirit of self-sacrifice. When I saw their manly attitude, I felt very much ashamed. It seemed to me that it is not good to wait until I'm drafted: it would be cowardly. I've never sacrificed myself for a noble cause; I'm disgusted with myself. Now this is the chance for me to be born again as a man. To me there is a great difference between volunteering and being drafted. So I can't wait. I'll volunteer."

I asked the third question: "You are American-born. You are an American. You have American citizenship; yet you have been put into this barbed-wire camp, and your freedom as a citizen has been denied in the camp. In other words, you have not been treated as an American by your government. Do you still want to volunteer for America?"

He answered: "When I was forced to enter the Assembly Center, I felt as though I were being persecuted by my own government. I was so mad at the government that I wanted to give up my citizenship and to become a Japanese subject. And I looked at the map of Japan, but I simply couldn't feel that it was my country. I saw the flag of Japan, but I didn't feel any enthusiasm for it. On the contrary, when I saw the stars and stripes, my heart burned with patriotism even in this Relocation Center. I realized strongly that, after all, I am an American, and I came to the conclusion that I must not be bothered by a little thing like this segregation. I've been benefited by my country more than words can express, I should be a faithful American even though my government is not just to me. I will volunteer not for the government but for the beautiful and ideal America which I have been visualizing in my heart."

I asked my last question emphatically: "Then you are determined to die for America, aren't you?"

He answered "Just a minute, Reverend. Volunteering does not seem to join the suicide squad. My point is not to die, but to dedicate myself to win the victory. And if it's impossible, I really want to come back alive when we win the war. But if it's necessary for me to die on the battle front, I dare say I'm quite ready."

After these questions and answers, I said to him, "To tell the truth, I was requested by your parents to talk with you about volunteering. Forgive me for asking you such questions. I feel as if you have been preaching to me. Your attitude and your ideas are noble. Everybody who knows your attitude toward your country will respect you. I am a minister, but you have just taught me a great spiritual lesson. I will try to convince your parents of your strong and noble determination."

Early the next morning, while I was still in bed, Mr. and Mrs. Kajiwara called at my barrack. Anxiously they searched my eyes, wondering what my reply would be. I related to them in detail the conversation between their son and myself on the previous night, and I asked them to change their attitude concerning his decision. After a deep and long sigh, they said, “we understand him very well now. We have been wrong. After all he is an American. It is his duty and privilege to sacrifice himself for his country. We will encourage him.” I could not help shedding tears, because I well know how they felt.

Encouraged by his parents, Nobuo then volunteered to join the U.S. Army. When his final training was nearing completion, and he was about to be sent overseas, his parents asked me to write a letter to encourage him. So I wrote.

Dear Nobuo:

You have dedicated yourself to your country. It is a beautiful thing. I am proud of you. Your body and heart must be clean and pure because they have been dedicated to your country. If you spoil your body and heart in some unclean place, it is against the spirit of volunteering; it is throwing yourself away rather than dedicating yourself.

I am sure you can understand the great meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross through your own dedication. He dedicated Himself to the Kingdom of God just as you dedicated yourself to the beautiful America which you have been visualizing in your heart. Jesus Christ kept his heart and body pure and clean to the end and at the end He sacrificed himself on his battle front, the cross.

I want you to keep your heart and your body pure and clean to the very end, and when your time has come, sacrifice your unspoiled body and noble mind for your country just as Jesus Christ did on the cross.

Your friend in Christ,

Shigeo Shimada

I handed the letter to my wife to type. As she read the letter she said to me, “Do you really mean to send such a cold letter to Nobuo, who is about to go overseas?” Can’t you write a warmer and more comforting letter to him?” I replied, “I know the spirit of volunteering. I, myself, volunteered to serve in the Kingdom of God. When one volunteer writes to another volunteer, his letter should be like this; it should not be an ordinary letter. Please type it as it is, and do not change even a word.”

Later, I heard from Mr. and Mrs. Kajiwara that when Nobuo read my letter in the Army camp, he wept over it and that he shared the letter with many Japanese-American volunteers in his unique battalion.

Several weeks before he was killed in action, I received his V-mail letter from Italy. It read in part: “Here I am in Italy now. Thank you for your kind encouragement. I think I can face the future with conviction and quite a bit of courage.”

The report of Nobuo's death brought to me deep sorrow and the beautiful and profound impression that he had left with me was permanently carved in my heart. I found myself strolling to a quiet spot in this desert camp and speaking to his soul, "Nobuo, I respect you. It is written in the bible, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth fruit. I am sure your death will bring much fruit in the land of America, which is beloved and only country, and to which you dedicated your young life. Be in peace in the Heavenly Kingdom."

Friends, we are in deep sorrow at this memorial service of the late Private Nobuo Kajiwara. But let us be proud of him, and let us be thankful that there existed a young man like him among the Nisei.

Let us pray. "Our gracious, Heavenly father, we are in deep sorrow before Thee now because of the death of our beloved friend, Nobuo Kajiwara. Yet we are grateful that Thou hast given us such a friend. He will never come back to us bodily, but he shall live forever in our heart. He is our pride. He is our admiration. Make his death a grain of wheat which will bring forth fruit in the land of American, his beloved country. Accept his soul in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. Comfort and encourage his parents in Cleveland, and keep them in Thy merciful hand forever. Bless this nation to which Nobuo dedicated his life and make it the model of the Kingdom of God. In the Name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ – Amen."

Pvt Nobuo Kajiwara is interred at Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, Calif., 10 miles south of San Francisco.

Sachi Kajiwara