

T/4 George Katsuya Sawada

February 21, 1915 - July 5, 1944



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George Katsuya Sawada was born on February 21, 1915 in Hawaii to Mr. and Mrs. S. Sawada. He was the eldest of three children followed by Fred Hiroshi and Catherine. He went to Japan in May 1918 and returned to the United States in 1925. From childhood, George was very interested in books and sports, particularly swimming, baseball, and football. When he was a small boy, he won many prizes in swimming contests sponsored by the Seattle Post Intelligencer. In his university days, George was one of the most skillful swimmers and participated in many intercollegiate matches.

After graduating from Franklin High School in Seattle, Washington, George went to the University of Washington, Seattle and assisted professors in the Premedical Department. In May 1936 he was elected a member of the Premedical Honorary Pi Mu Chi and graduated from the University in June 1941. He still held his position as an assistant, when unfortunately the War broke out, and in May 1942 George and his family were sent to the Puyallup Assembly Center in Washington and then moved to the Minidoka Camp in Hunt, Idaho in September of that year. In December 1942 George was asked by the U.S. Government to comply with an exchange of detainees in both America and Japan, but he flatly rejected the request on the grounds of his being a United States citizen. While at Minidoka Camp, George lectured on anatomy and worked as an assistant in the Camp hospital until he volunteered for service in the U.S. Army in February 1943 (Serial No. 39 919 568) with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. In March 1943 he married Yuriko Takahashi. On April 30, 1943 en route to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for his basic training, he wrote a letter to his father in which he states:

“ . . . How clearly I remember your words of consolation now even as I write this letter. Wisely you said: ‘It is for the best. For the good of many, a few must suffer. This is your sacrifice, accept it as such, and you will no longer be bitter.’ I listened to your words and the bitterness left me. A despised alien without a citizenship, you showed me what it means to be a citizen. That I have retained my faith through this trying period and emerged what I am, a loyal American citizen, I owe to your understanding. When the time came for enlistment, I was ready, my faith and loyalty restored, stronger, firmer, unwavering; I volunteered”

George went overseas in May 1944 to serve as a member of the Medical Detachment of the 100th Battalion in the Rome to Arno Campaign in Italy. On July 5, 1944 Sgt. George Sawada volunteered to proceed to the fighting line and was shot and killed by a sniper. Sgt. Sawada is the recipient of the Purple Heart, Victory Medal, American Theatre Service Medal, and European-African-Middle Eastern Theatre Service Medal and is buried at the Evergreen-Washelli Cemetery in Seattle.