

News release, Forty-five American soldiers..., September 7, 1944.
Papers of Philleo Nash.

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Forty-five American soldiers of Japanese ancestry with parents or other next of kin living in the country's relocation centers, have been killed in action, Dillon S. Myer, Director of the War Relocation Authority, today reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

A WRA compilation of casualty notices received by center families up to August 31 showed a total of 139 War Department telegrams, giving notification of 45 killed, 92 wounded and two missing in action, Mr. Myer said. The 45 were killed in Italy in such hard fought battles as Cassino, Volturno and Belvedere.

The parents of the men killed have expressed the belief that their sons "died for two causes -- for their country and to win acceptance as Americans from all other Americans," Mr. Myer said.

He reported the words of Mrs. Yaye Ohki, a widow living at the Granada Relocation Center, Amache, Colo., who had three sons in the American Army. When she learned that the eldest, Arnold, was killed in action July 7 and that the second, Edwin, was seriously wounded, she said: "This is their country. This is their home, and my sons are working toward the betterment of their motherland and fighting endlessly to win their place in the United States as loyal citizens whose faith in America will not die, but will grow even stronger. My son Arnold proved that by sacrificing his life on the Italian front."

Mrs. Toyosuke Onodera, of the Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho, whose son Satoru was killed fighting with the famed 100th Infantry Battalion in Italy, said: "If the death of my son will contribute toward a greater understanding of the loyalty of Japanese in this country, then I shall be comforted. I am proud that my son should have given up his life in defense of democracy and I am sure that his death will not have been in vain."

Mrs. Onodera has two more sons in the Army, one with the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit in Italy and one still in training at Camp Shelby, Miss.

Most of the casualties so far have been volunteers, Mr. Myer said, explaining that selective service was not applicable to Japanese-Americans between June, 1942 and January 1944. He added that since casualty notices go directly to the families at the centers or to evacuee families who have relocated and do not come through WRA channels, it is believed that some casualty notices were missed and that the total number received by evacuees in the centers up to August 31 may be 10 or 20 per cent higher than the 139 reported.

Relocation centers receive their casualty telegrams in much the same way they are received in thousands of American towns and homes. Not a week passes without a military memorial service at one of the centers, usually sponsored by the Parent-Soldier group of the center's USO organization and by the center Community Council.

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A typical service for the soldier dead may start with a prayer by a Buddhist priest and mass singing of "the Star-Spangled Banner," with the service ending perhaps with a benediction in Japanese, delivered by a Christian minister, and with "Taps" by Boy Scout buglers. The speeches are translated into Japanese or English.

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