

T/Sgt. Zentaro George Akiyama

May 11, 1919 - July 3, 1944



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Zentaro George Akiyama, son of Ikutaro and Tane Akiyama, was born on May 11, 1919 in Broderick, North Sacramento, California. He was the oldest of eleven children, followed by Hatsuye (Mary), Yukuye (Dorothy), Soji (Tom), Yoshimi (Jack), Yone, Asaye (Betty), Akira, and Kazuo (Harry). Two of his siblings died at childbirth. Zentaro graduated from Woodland High School, Woodland, California. He liked and participated in all sports; his favorite was track, where he received a medal for the 440-yard dash.

Zentaro was inducted into military service on February 3, 1941 (Serial No. 39 076 246) from Sacramento and trained at Fort Ord, Monterey, California. When the War broke out, he was sent to Reno, Nevada for guard duty. With the formation of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in February 1943, Zentaro Akiyama was

sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi where he became a platoon sergeant assigned to Company F, 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The Combat Team trained for a year before going overseas to Oran, Africa in May 1944, prior to their first battle north of Rome, Italy on June 26, 1944. Shortly before going overseas, he was able to visit his family who were truck farmers evacuated and interned at Tule Lake Concentration Camp in Newell, California.

Tech Sergeant Zentaro Akiyama is said to have been the head of a scouting group that was assigned to determine positioning of the enemy. On July 3, 1944 in the Rome-Arno Campaign while serving in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 2nd Battalion, Company F, Tech Sergeant Akiyama was killed in action at the Battle of Hill 140, a major battle of the 442nd RCT, along the Arno River and near Castellina, Italy. He sacrificed his life in defense of his country. The War Relocation Authority believed that the death of Tech Sergeant Zentaro George Akiyama was the first death of a Japanese American soldier whose parents were living at the Tule Lake Concentration Camp.

Tech Sergeant Akiyama was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, Distinguished Unit Badge, Combat Infantryman Badge, and Bronze Star.

Tech Sergeant Akiyama was originally buried at the United States Military Cemetery Follonica in Italy. Later he was brought home and buried with a Buddhist ceremony and full honors, and now rests at East Lawn Cemetery in Sacramento, California.