



Name in English: Captain Francis B. Wai
Name in Chinese: (NIF)
Name in Pinyin:
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1917-1944
Birth Place: Honolulu, Hawaii
Philanthropy:

Profession (s): Military Officer, (Captain, US Army, 34th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division)

Education: B.A., Banking, 1939, University of California, Los Angeles; B. A., Finance, 1939, University of California, Los Angeles.

Award(s): 1944, Philippine Liberation Medal; 1944, Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumous); 1998, Medal of Honor (Posthumous); Purple Heart; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; Combat Infantryman Badge.

Contribution(s): Captain Francis B. Wai, as of 2008, has been the only Chinese American to receive the Medal of Honor, the highest military honor awarded for "Gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty". At UCLA, Wai was a four sport athlete who was supposed to work with his father in real estate and banking after college. However, he signed up for the Hawaii National Guard and was called to duty just before the United States entered World War II. He was commissioned as an officer through Officer Candidate School in 1941, a rare occurrence at the time, as few Asian Americans were commissioned into leadership roles due to the prevailing discrimination against minority officers.

The US Army officially documents Wai's heroism in his Medal of Honor citation:

"Captain Francis B. Wai distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action, on 20 October 1944, in Leyte, Philippine Islands. Captain Wai landed at Red Beach, Leyete, in the face of accurate, concentrated enemy fire from gun positions advantageously located in a palm grove bounded by submerged rice paddies. Finding the first four waves of American soldiers leaderless, disorganized, and pinned down on the open beach, he immediately assumed command. Issuing clear and concise orders, and disregarding heavy enemy machine gun and rifle fire, he began to move inland through the rice paddies without cover. The men, inspired by his cool demeanor and heroic example, rose from their positions and followed him. During the advance, Captain Wai repeatedly determined the locations of enemy strong points by deliberately exposing himself to draw their fire. In leading an assault upon the last remaining Japanese pillbox in the area, he was killed by its occupants. Captain Wai's courageous, aggressive leadership inspired the men, even after his death, to advance and destroy the enemy. His intrepid and determined efforts were largely responsible for the rapidity with which the initial beachhead was secured.

Captain Wai's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the United States Army."

Captain Wai was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in 1944. In 1996, Congress had the Secretary of the Army reviewed military records on the suspicion that Asian Americans during World War II had been treated unfairly. According to the report, 22 Asian Americans, along with Wai, were not given full consideration for the Medal of Honor. In 1998, his Distinguished Service Cross was upgraded to the Medal of Honor. His remains are buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

External Links:

<http://www.goldsea.com/Personalities/Heroes/heroes.html>