

## Pre-WSC Life

Toll Seike was born 8 October 1923<sup>1</sup>, the middle son out of 5 children borne to Shinichi and Kameno Seike.

Shinichi had immigrated to the King County area in 1919 from the Ehime Prefecture in Japan<sup>2</sup> and had an import/export business at the time of Toll's birth. His father had also been preparing a nursery meant to honor Japanese gardening styles and horticulture<sup>3</sup>. Toll graduated from Highline High School in Burien, WA<sup>4</sup>.



Toll Seike (Source: Washington State University Libraries)

## WSC Experience

Toll was 20 at the time of his enlistment, having been enrolled at Washington State College for two years. He was studying Business Administration<sup>5</sup>, a departure from his older and younger brothers Ben and Harold, who studied Horticulture<sup>6</sup>. Toll was on work-study in the greenhouses with his brother and, unlike Ben who was part of WSC's

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<sup>1</sup> Heart Mountain Relocation Center Roster, 31 December 1944, record group 210, National Archives and Records Administration. [http://www.heartmountain.org/archives\\_2\\_897753642.pdf](http://www.heartmountain.org/archives_2_897753642.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> James Tabafunda, "After turbulent past, Seike garden debuts on the big screen," *Northwest Asian Weekly*, published 10 June 2010, <http://nwasianweekly.com/2010/06/after-turbulent-past-seike-garden-debuts-on-the-big-screen/>

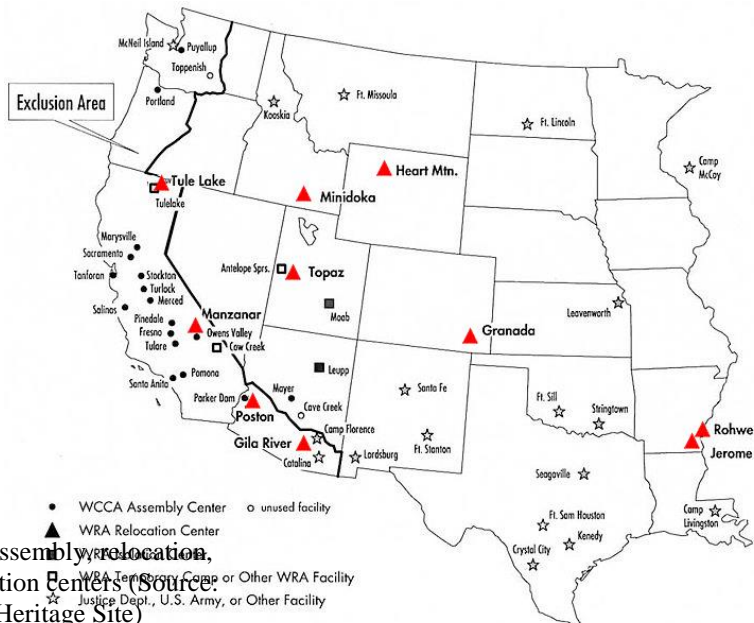
<sup>3</sup> Erik Lacitis, "A Nisei garden of memories in SeaTac, and a soldier's blood spilled in WWII," *The Seattle Times*, updated 14 November 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/a-nisei-garden-of-memories-in-seatac-and-a-soldiers-blood-spilled-in-wwii/>

<sup>4</sup> C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Veterans* (Spokane: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 101

<sup>5</sup> Students and Alumni in WWII, n.d., box 1, folder 1, War Records 1918-1950, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries

<sup>6</sup> Erik Lacitis, "A Nisei garden of memories in SeaTac, and a soldier's blood spilled in WWII," *The Seattle Times*, updated 14 November 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/a-nisei-garden-of-memories-in-seatac-and-a-soldiers-blood-spilled-in-wwii/>

wrestling team and an active member of the Horticulture Club before becoming president himself, tended to keep to himself and as a result practically impossible to find in archived *Chinook* yearbooks<sup>7</sup>. Seike's time at WSC would be cut short, however, as his family would be arrested under Executive Order 9066. The order, signed on February 19, 1942, allowed the War Department to create "military exclusion areas" to create internment camps along the West Coast<sup>8</sup>. Post-Pearl Harbor attitudes created an atmosphere of racially charged paranoia towards Japanese Americans, resulting in their exclusive arrest and internment in these exclusive military prisons with no actual charges.



The Seike family would find themselves moved between Minidoka, Heart Mountain, and the Tule Lake Relocation Center.

### Military Service

While in Heart Mountain, Toll decided to enlist at Ft. Douglas on 3

March 1944 in the reserves/medical administration corps<sup>9</sup>. He would be placed in the

<sup>7</sup> C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Veterans* (Spokane: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 102

<sup>8</sup> "FDR and Japanese American Internment," *FDR Library*, Accessed 11 December 2017, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/pdfs/internment.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Toll Seike enlistment record, 3 March 1944, record group 64, World War II Army Enlistment Records, National Archives, [https://aad.archives.gov/aad/display-partial-records.jsp?dt=893&sc=24994%2C24995%2C24996%2C24998%2C24997%2C24993%2C24981%2C24983&cat=all&bc=s1%2Cfd&q=&as\\_alq=&as\\_anq=&as\\_epq=&as\\_wq=&nfo\\_24994=V%2C8%2C1900&op\\_24994=0&txt\\_24994=&nfo\\_24995=V%2C24%2C1900&op\\_24995=0&txt\\_24995=Toll+Seike&nfo\\_24996=V%2C2%2C1900&cl\\_24996=&nfo\\_24998=V%2C3%2C1900&cl\\_24998=&nfo\\_24997=V%2C4%2C](https://aad.archives.gov/aad/display-partial-records.jsp?dt=893&sc=24994%2C24995%2C24996%2C24998%2C24997%2C24993%2C24981%2C24983&cat=all&bc=s1%2Cfd&q=&as_alq=&as_anq=&as_epq=&as_wq=&nfo_24994=V%2C8%2C1900&op_24994=0&txt_24994=&nfo_24995=V%2C24%2C1900&op_24995=0&txt_24995=Toll+Seike&nfo_24996=V%2C2%2C1900&cl_24996=&nfo_24998=V%2C3%2C1900&cl_24998=&nfo_24997=V%2C4%2C)

100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion and do his basic training at Camp Shelby<sup>10</sup> and Camp Blanding<sup>11</sup>. He would serve with the 100<sup>th</sup> until they eventually merged with the renowned 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, an all-Japanese American regiment that would become the most decorated unit in US military history during the war<sup>12</sup>. His brother Ben would also enlist, becoming members of the Military Intelligence Service<sup>13</sup>. Toll's final mission would be in the Vosges Mountains to rescue the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 141<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment after they failed to receive a withdrawal order and had been cut off and surrounded by German forces<sup>14</sup>. The campaign would last from 24 October to 30 October 1944<sup>15</sup>. Toll Seike would die in action on 29 October 1944<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Veterans* (Spokane: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 102

<sup>11</sup> Ben Seike to Frank Barnard, 26 December 1944, box 1, folder 31, War Records 1918 – 1950, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries.

<sup>12</sup> "Hall of Honor." *Go For Broke National Education Center*. Accessed 11 December 2017. [http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/history/hall\\_of\\_honor/index.php](http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/history/hall_of_honor/index.php)

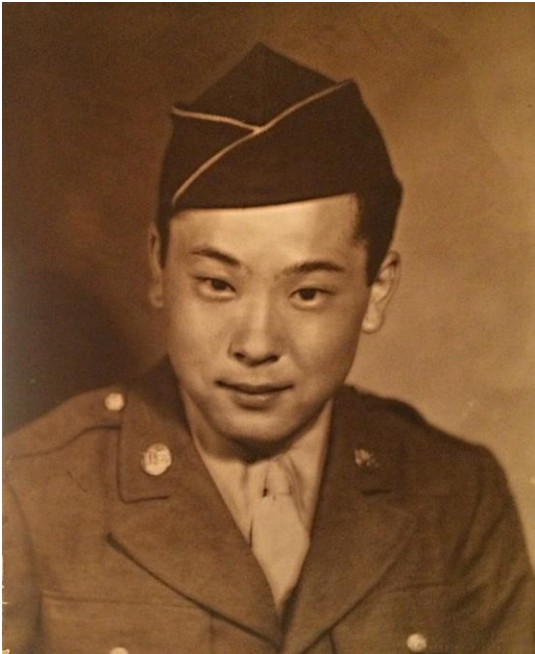
<sup>13</sup> Erik Lacitis, "A Nisei garden of memories in SeaTac, and a soldier's blood spilled in WWII," *The Seattle Times*, updated 14 November 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/a-nisei-garden-of-memories-in-seatac-and-a-soldiers-blood-spilled-in-wwii/>

<sup>14</sup> "Lost Battalion", *Texas Military Forces Museum*. Accessed 11 December 2017, <http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/36division/archives/lostbat/lostbat.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Veterans* (Spokane: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 102

Toll Seike, in  
uniform (Source:  
Seattle Times)



There were few reports of his death. The government did not repossess the Seike family's home after the war, having been rented out to a German-American couple, and that money going to the mortgage of the home<sup>17</sup>. The nursery that Shinichi had wanted to

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<sup>17</sup> Erik Lacitis, "A Nisei garden of memories in SeaTac, and a soldier's blood spilled in WWII," *The Seattle Times*, updated 14 November 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/a-nisei-garden-of-memories-in-seatac-and-a-soldiers-blood-spilled-in-wwii/>

make could finally come to fruition, but with a new purpose. In 1947, the Des Moines Way Nursery would be opened, and later moved and renamed to the Seike Family Garden as part of the Highline Botanical Gardens in SeaTac, WA, meant to honor the memory of Toll Seike<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, Toll's name can be found as part of the Heart Mountain Honor Roll, Minidoka Honor Roll, NVC Foundation Japanese American Memorial Wall in Seattle, the Go For Broke Monument found in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, and the WSU Veterans Memorial on the Pullman campus. Toll Seike would receive a Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Victory Medal posthumously<sup>19</sup>.

For Japanese Americans, the World War II experience was a vastly different one from the romanticized, primarily white story of the war. Toll, alongside hundreds of other Japanese Americans fought and died for a country that viewed them as enemies of the state. It is an experience conveniently edited out of teachings and the collective American memory, with little consideration for how these events affected the choices these soldiers made. How can someone fight for a country that does not want them? How do these soldiers deal with their identity as first generation Americans, when the very entity they fight for sees them as other? They are complex questions, with no neat answers. Questions that Toll and the other fallen Japanese American soldiers had to face and struggle with, possibly never concluding on any answers themselves. And they are questions applicable throughout the American military history into our modern era. For

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Veterans* (Spokane: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 102

some, it seemed like the only option they had, others they had real nationalistic intent and care for the country despite the pain it caused them. Toll's feelings about this will never be known, but his story and the story of his family in the aftermath is reflective of the many who died for a country at odds with its own people.

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