



CONGRESSIONAL
MEDAL OF HONOR
FOUNDATION



Prisoner of War –

Near the Imjin River, North Korea, 1951

Hiroshi Miyamura grew up in Gallup, New Mexico, one of only a handful of Japanese Americans in the town. A teacher, unable to pronounce his first name, called him Hershey, and his friends adopted this nickname.

Early in 1944, eighteen-year-old Miyamura was drafted and assigned to the Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which would gain fame as the most decorated American unit of World War II. When the 442nd shipped out, Miyamura had to stay behind because he hadn't reached the minimum age for overseas duty. He finally got to Europe just after the war ended and did occupation duty in Italy, then came home to pick up his life as an auto mechanic and joined the Army Reserve.

In 1950, at the start of the Korean War, Miyamura was called to active duty. In command of a machine-gun squad in Company H of the 7th Infantry Regiment, he was part of the American retreat from the Chosin Reservoir after Chinese Communist forces surprised General Douglas MacArthur by crossing over the Yalu River into North Korea. His unit, evacuated from the port of Hungnam, immediately headed back to the front lines to guard Seoul against a Chinese assault. Then it moved farther north.

On the morning of April 24, 1951, Miyamura was ordered to set up his machine-gun squad on a pockmarked hill near the Imjin River and hold it as long as possible. He had fifteen men, five of them riflemen and the rest machine-gunners; some of them were South Korean conscripts who disappeared after darkness fell.

That night, the men in Miyamura's diminished unit crouched in their foxholes listening to Chinese troops banging on pots and pans and blowing on whistles. The racket was followed by a brief silence during which the enemy sent up flares. Then came the attack. The Americans opened fire with their two .30-caliber machine guns. As the enemy threatened to overwhelm his position, Miyamura rose from his machine gun and charged them, killing ten with his bayonet and rifle. He returned to his gun; when it jammed, he bayoneted his way to the second one and resumed firing, telling his men he would cover their retreat.

Hiroshi H. Miyamura

*Corporal, U.S. Army
Company H, 7th Infantry Regiment
3rd Infantry Division*

BORN: October 6, 1925
Gallup, New Mexico

ENTERED SERVICE:
Gallup, New Mexico

DUTY: Korean War





CONGRESSIONAL
MEDAL OF HONOR
FOUNDATION



Not realizing that Miyamura was still fighting, American forces began lobbing phosphorus bombs at his position. As he started to make his way down the hill to the U.S. fallback position, he ran into a Chinese soldier and bayoneted him. The dying soldier dropped a grenade, and the explosion filled Miyamura's legs with shrapnel. He stumbled toward what he thought were the American lines until he was too weak to go any farther. He crawled into a ditch, where he lost consciousness. When he came to the next morning, a Chinese officer standing over him was saying, "Don't worry, we have a lenient policy." He was taken on a forced march to a Communist prison camp.

In the late summer of 1953, emaciated from two years of captivity, Miyamura was finally repatriated. After being turned over to U.S. authorities at "Freedom Village" in Panmunjom, he was informed that he had been awarded the Medal of Honor shortly after his capture, when he was still listed as missing in action; the award had been kept secret to keep his Chinese captors from killing him. President Harry Truman had signed his citation, but it was President Dwight Eisenhower who presented the medal to him on October 27, 1953.