



Charles Farnum, Jr. lost his life leading Japanese-American Soldiers against Nazi Germany.

Charles Farnum, Jr. was working in Charleston as an engineer with the Hara Electrical Engineering Company when America was plunged into World War II. With his ROTC background from Clemson College, the Orangeburg native entered Army service in January 1942, only weeks after the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

The outcry against Americans of Japanese descent was fierce in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. Beginning in early 1942, Japanese-Americans living on the west coast were forcibly resettled in internment camps. Originally excluded from military service, Japanese-Americans serving in the Hawaii National Guard petitioned General Delos Emmons, commander of the US Army in Hawaii, to allow them to assist in the war effort. The petition was granted and this group was sent stateside for training. The unit was initially withheld from the battlefield as senior commanders doubted the loyalty of the Nisei troops, but their performance in training so impressed their officers that by February 1943, these men were organized into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Charles Farnum's first contact with the 442nd likely occurred at Camp Shelby, MS where the unit was sent to prepare for overseas deployment. The 442nd landed at Anzio, Italy on May 28, 1944 and quickly went into action. Farnum's heavy weapons company suffered severe casualties in vicious fighting near Leghorn. Farnum was wounded twice—on successive days in July—one of more than 970 442nd men wounded in the Italian Campaign of General Mark Clark's Fifth Army. On September 11, Farnum and the 442nd were detached from Fifth Army and assigned to Seventh Army in preparation for a landing in southern France.

Landing in Marseille on September 30, the 442nd traveled some 500 miles through France's Rhone Valley. During the late afternoon of October 14, with 1LT Farnum now commanding Headquarters Company of the 2nd Battalion, the 442nd moved into positions in the vicinity of Bruyeres, at the base of Vosges Mountains. From here, the 442nd would launch assaults on four key hill tops in order to take and secure the city. The 442nd had experienced mainly prairie in Italy, but the Vosges Mountains provided very different conditions: dense fog, mud, heavy rain, large trees and hills. On October 15, the 442nd began its attack.

By noon of the 17th, the 2d Battalion had driven back two determined German counterattacks and was launching an attack on the second of the four hills. Hard fighting continued over the next three days. Large pockets of Germans, who had been by-passed during the attacks, opened fire on reserve companies and command posts. On the 20th, 1LT Farnum sent a carrying party to move rations forward to front line troops. The party was quickly ambushed by

camouflaged Germans. Farnum immediately summoned reinforcements to come to the aid of his ambushed troops. Without waiting for the reinforcements to arrive, he hurried to the area and began working his way toward the enemy forces in a desperate effort to draw the enemy fire away from his men. Determined to save his men, even at the risk of his life, Lieutenant Farnum continued to advance toward the enemy position until he was cut down by German fire. As a result of his daring, the carrying party was able to escape and the rescuing party which Farnum had summoned surrounded and destroyed the enemy force.

The 442nd earned a reputation as a crack infantry unit and the regiment and its men received considerable battle honors and individual medals of valor. 1LT Farnum's bravery and dedication to his men was exemplary of the 442nd's motto, 'Go for Broke!' General of the Army George Marshall called the 442nd "... superb! That word correctly describes it: superb! They took terrific casualties. They showed rare courage and tremendous fighting spirit. Not too much can be said of the performance of those battalions in Europe...." The 442nd was the largest Nisei unit in World War II earning the nickname 'Purple Heart Battalion' through its tenacious fighting and heavy casualties—one of whom was Charles Farnum, Jr., Class of 1940.