

## On This Day, 24-JUN 1944 We Honor a Fallen Hero



Nicholas Frederick Kruse was born 25-OCT 1911. He lived at 233 North Kingshighway in St. Charles MO. His father was Henry J. Kruse. His mother was Rosalie Philomena Reddinger. When Nicholas Fredrick Kruse was born on 25-OCT 1911, in St Charles, his father Henry, was 36 and his mother, Rosalie, was 32. He had five brothers; Frank, Henry, Lawrence, Joseph and Edward and two sisters; Emma and Catherine. He had enlisted in the Army 16-OCT 1940. He had the rank of Private First Class.

Nicholas served with the 20th Infantry Regiment. During World War II, as part of the 6th Division, the 20th Infantry was engaged in bitter jungle and mountain fighting throughout the campaigns of New Guinea and again in the Philippines, their fourth assignment there.

Elements of the Japanese 223rd and 224th Infantry Regiments, were concentrated at Lone Tree Hill, overlooking Maffin Bay, and were blocking any further advance by the Army. The Japanese were in well-prepared positions, which included fortified caves. Meanwhile, the main body of the Japanese 223rd Infantry Regiment had outflanked the U.S. units, and a battalion of the Japanese 224th Infantry Regiment, was retreating from Hollandia, towards the Toem-Wakde-Sarmi area.

Lone Tree Hill rose from a flat, coastal plain about 6,000 feet west of the main jetty in Maffin Bay. The hill was named for a single tree depicted on its crest by U.S. maps; it was a coral formation, covered with dense tropical rain forest and undergrowth. It was about 175 feet high, 3,600 feet long north to south, and 3,300 feet wide east to west. The north side was characterized by a steep slope. The eastern slope was fronted by a short, twisting stream which the Americans named Snaky River.

On 14 JUN, the US commander, General Walter Krueger, sent the U.S. 6th Infantry Division, to relieve the 158th Infantry Regiment. After ten days of hard fighting, the US forces took Lone Tree Hill. The Japanese suffered more than 1,000 dead, including some trapped in collapsed caves. The U.S. Army suffered about 700 battle and 500 non-battle casualties. Most likely Private Kruse was killed engaged with the Japanese troops in and around Lone Tree Hill. With Lone Tree Hill in American possession, Maffin Bay became a major staging base for six subsequent battles: Biak, Noemfoor, Sansapor, Leyte and Luzon.



Nicholas Frederick Kruse was killed in action 24-JUN 1944 in Papua New Guinea at the age of 32. He is buried at Plot G Row 10 Grave 44, in Fort William McKinley, Philippine Manila American Cemetery and Memorial. This is an American Battle Monuments Commission location.

The museum is looking for more information about Nicholas including a picture. If you have more information or a picture, please contact the museum.

Nicholas Frederick Kruse is honored and remembered at the St. Charles County Veterans Museum.