

TESTIMONY

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San Francisco, California

Evacuated: From Los Angeles, California

May 14, 1942 to Pomona Assembly Center

August 21, 1942 to Heart Mountain War Relocation

Center.

Relocated: As a student to Bridgeport, Connecticut

June, 1945

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Briarcliff Manor, New York 10510

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In the year 1909, my father at the age of eighteen left Yokohama, Japan, to come to San Francisco, California as a student. He attended public school for a while and then educated himself while working in laundries, mining, railroads, dishwashing, jobs available to him as a Japanese immigrant. By the late 1920's he was the president of a stock and bonds company.

When the depression set in, he lost everything that he had worked for. He walked miles with no car fare to spare, looking for odd jobs as nailing produce crates. Later he supplemented his income writing newspaper columns for Japanese language papers in San Francisco and Los Angeles, a job that he held through 1941 when the newspapers were closed for the duration of the war. The last job that he had was as a salesman for a fertilizer company, and by 1941 he had a part in getting the Colorado River to flow into Imperial Valley to produce rice crops.

After my family had returned to the Westcoast from Heart Mountain War Relocation Center, I left Bridgeport, Connecticut in February, 1946 to go to San Francisco, California. My first meeting with my father was so shocking that I really did not look at him directly. He had aged so much and looked quite different from the time I had left camp, which was only

about seven to eight months previously.

Father's family had disintegrated and now he and mother were working as a domestic-help couple taking my younger sister along with them to the live-in situation. My brother was now working as a live-in houseboy in another city away from them. This was a man who loved the theatre, Japanese classical, and Western, opera, music. During the depression he saved enough money to take us all to see Charlie Chaplin movies. He had the pioneering spirit upon his arrival to the United States, during the worst of the depression. However the time we were uprooted, torn from our homes because of the Executive Order 9066, the loss of the stability for the duration of four years was too much for him, unsurmountable. My father just withered away and died in 1950 at the age of sixty.

I had psychotherapy for total of five years in the late 1960's. When I spoke about evacuation during a session, my psychiatrist was in tears but I did not cry. Thirty-four years after the evacuation started, - the year 1976- I did a project for a liberal arts course at the State University of New York. The term paper and oral report was on the Japanese immigrants and the World War II incarceration experience. I was delighted to do it at first, thinking that it would be easy. I only had to follow my own family history and write about the Heart Mountain War Relocation experiences. After all I remember it all so well, it should be a snap.

The semester was from February through May. Within a few weeks I was getting deep into reading, research, writing, knowing from personal experience that it was all a horrible reality that had happened. I then discovered through reading that the whole situation was much more than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry being evacuated and incarcerated. The documents and correspondences between government officials were incredible, shocking. Nausea, cramps, headaches started to set in me. I got answers to some of my questions of why and how I was incarcerated with the Executive Order 9066. The whole semester was spent reading, writing, and crying.

Finally I began to cry and say out loud, "It was not my fault. I was only fourteen years old."

In the month of May, I seemed to be losing a little hair. I started to blame my son for clogging the shower drain with his hair. About the last Thursday of that month I went to get my usual haircut, Saturday some of my hair came off like a bird's nest, Sunday more of the same happened. Monday I went to see my doctor. She immediately asked if I had experienced any stress or trauma. Within that one week I was totally bald excepting for a streak of hair that turned white.

(My psychiatrist's friend lost his father on a Friday, Saturday morning when he woke up his hair was completely white.)

All the laboratory tests were negative.

I, the victim am still paying for a punishment that I could not possibly be guilty of. The nightmare will stay with me and will never be forgotten.