

WAR - TIME EXPERIENCES

My name is Hatsuye Nakamura and I am nearing 90 years of age. The greatest part of my younger years was spent in Biggs, CA and graduated high school there. I married to live in Marysville. One month later, December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese!!! President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared war against Japan!

My husband Frank was born in Marysville and graduated schools here. While attending Yuba College, which was newly built across the street from the high school, he coached the high school basketball D team and took championship that year. Before graduating Yuba College, he was accepted to University of California Pharmacy School. He graduated in 1938, worked at an established pharmacy on D street, and later purchased the business. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack Frank, an active-charter member of the Japanese American Citizens League, was informed that it was possible that the Isseis, our parents who are the immigrant-generation from Japan and who were never allowed US citizenship, might be arrested.....Our immediate concern was how would our aging parents be able to accept this.....But soon, Pres. Roosevelt signed Executive Order #9066 which prohibited all Isseis and American citizens of Japanese descent from living, working, or travelling on the West Coast of the United States, which resulted in their forced relocation. It was a shock.....beyond belief!!! "How could they do this to us? Where are my rights of citizenship?!"

Hwy 99E which runs north and south in the Central Valley was designated a demarcation line.... All persons of Japanese descent living on the west side of this highway were to prepare themselves for removal first. D street is the main street of Marysville and, at that time, and it was also Hwy 99E. Frank's drugstore was located on the west side of D Street. He was forced to terminate his business. Bodily we were safe, as our home was located on the east side.

We were notified of our moving date, July 11, 1942, with rules and regulations of our preparedness. For the duration of the waiting period, we were restricted to stay within a six-mile radius. If it was necessary to travel beyond, a permit from the police department was required, with a curfew to be home by 8:00 p.m. that day.....We were ordered to voluntarily turn in our weapons, firearms, shortwave radios, and cameras.....Too soon we received orders of our procedures of departure.....It was then that I wondered how other nationalities would react in this situation.....Two of my brothers were drafted into the US Army before Pearl Harbor bombing. What were their thoughts?.....

We had no prior notice of our destination.....On the day of our departure, a line of passenger trains were in readiness within the city of Marysville. Armed military guards escorted us as we boarded the trains and would accompany us to our destination. My last thought as the train slowly moved out of the city in a northerly direction, taking us

farther and farther away from our homes....."There is one consolation..... We are the final contingent to be removed from California.....At least, we were able to enjoy being in our home a little longer than those who preceded us." The train continued moving slowly out of the city. When night came, we were not allowed to put up our window-shades to look out. Was this for our protection or.....was it to hide the shame of our government?.....The train continued on, ever so slowly, as it wound its way through the Feather River Canyon Mountains. When dawn arrived I couldn't resist the temptation to lift up a corner of the window shade to see Mt. Shasta. It was truly most breath-taking to see the snow-capped peak against the morning sun!.....It was a sight that I shall never forget!

Our arrival at the camp was very somber, at the first sight of rows and rows of long barracks , built on dry sand, once a lake-bed, with no growing vegetation in sight. I hid my tears from my husband when a desolate feeling consumed me, as the trains moved slowly into the camp. We were driven by Army trucks to our designated home.....a barren, dusty, unfinished barrack, partitioned into small rooms. One room would be "home". It contained two cot-beds and mattresses. In the center of the room stood a pop-bellied stove.....Before winter set in, sheet-rock was put on to hide the tar-papered walls.

We learned that this is called "Tulelake Relocation Center" situated in Newell, CA and located almost on the border of California and Oregon. We were provided army-blankets. We brought our own sheets, though we were allowed to bring only what we could carry.

My husband wasted no time to go to the Administration Office to seek employment. He accepted the job of manager of the Camp Records Office for the top-salary of \$19 a month. Not knowing what the future held for us, after our First Anniversary we wanted to start a family. A few months before the arrival of our first-born, we heard rumors of Segregation within the camp. Wishing to show support to my two brothers serving in the Army we signed to leave Tulelake and move to an inland camp. When we announced our decision my husband's father surprised us when he asked that we take him and his mother with us! We had hesitations of moving them because of their ages.....But Father explained, "I left Japan with no intentions of returning. I expect to live the rest of my life in this country and be buried in American soil. So please take us with you.".....With our baby merely a month old, we boarded another slow, long train and departed for Camp Amache in Colorado.....We travelled for three very exhausting days.....

At Camp Amache Frank, being a pharmacist, took employment as a chemistry teacher at the Camp High School. But seeing no future there for our child, Frank relocated to Chicago to seek outside-employment. Soon, however, he received a letter from his local draft-board..... He passed his physical and returned to Camp to receive further orders. Because of his age of 30 years, he was notified that he could be deferred, provided he take an outside of Camp employment that is "essential to the war-effort". Back in Chicago he found a job as a chemist to a pharmaceutical firm that made products for the Army and Navy.....I joined him in Chicago to celebrate our son's first birthday together.....

Government authorities encouraged evacuees to relocate to inland states, and many did. Their reasoning was that we would face less discrimination there, which was somewhat true. But because of the war with Japan we were viewed with much skepticism. Four months pregnant with my second child, I walked the streets for weeks in search for an apartment in Chicago. I followed up a "For Rent" sign, went to the realtor's office in charge, and put in my name. The response later was that one of the renters in the building objected renting to me. I asked for the objector's apartment number and visited her. The lady's reason was that she lost her brother who was fighting in the Pacific, and she promised herself that "If I ever saw a Jap, I would gouge out his eyes for killing my brother!" I deeply sympathized with her and explained to her that I have a brother wearing an American uniform fighting over there for the same cause as your brother. I explained to her that he could be killed by his own ancestors. I briefly explained to her that that brother held "#158" that President Roosevelt withdrew from the glass bowl full of numbers to determine the first draftee of each precinct.....He was inducted in February of 1941, ten months before Pearl Harbor was bombed.....She must have understood because when I arrived home from the hospital with my baby girl, who was the first to come to see me.....and with a gift? She remarked, "She had never before seen a Japanese baby."

As months passed, busy with two babies now, on August 14, 1945, when we were observing our son's 2nd birthday, our attention was averted to loud voices and noises over the clanging sounds of the passing street-cars outside our 2nd story apartment window. The excitement was that the "war had come to an end that day!".....Immediate news was not available to us as we had given up our radios.....

It was not too long after that we learned that restrictions had been lifted for our return to California. It was in December, 1945 that we returned to Marysville.....Incidentally, looking ahead to August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act which eventually entitled a Redress of \$20,000 given to each Evacuee, which my husband and I and our son gratefully accepted. When I left Camp Amache for Chicago I was 3 months pregnant with my second child. Because I had left camp voluntarily back in August of 1944, I felt entitled to ask for redress for my second child (daughter). Now married, her husband, an attorney, wrote many letters with detailed explanations. The final analysis was that she was not entitled to receive redress monies because the cut-off date was midnight of January 20, 1945 and she was born on February 12....three weeks too late. At least, we tried.....

Finding employment was very difficult.....There were some business windows that boldly displayed signs that we were not welcome.....During the time when Frank was unemployed he accompanied a War Relocation Authority representative to many businesses locally, and as far north as Dunsmuir. Frank was to remain in the car while the representative entered the business to try to encourage the owner to remove the sign. Frank would observe from the car to see if a sign was removed.....some were.

For a short while Frank worked at the Beale Air Force Hospital pharmacy. (At that time, it was known as Camp Beale.) We were very grateful to Mr. Gus Kirk, owner of Kirk's Pharmacy on D-street, for his courage to hire Frank.....One incident, upon seeing Frank filling prescriptions, a customer remarked that she would stop trading with them.....After 18 years and having a small part-ownership with Kirk's, Frank left to join a partnership in a pharmacy on North Beale Road. Time heals as one day I looked out of the office window to see the same customer who had threatened to quit trading with Kirk's, placing a prescription order with us. She became a lasting customer..... After 16 more years Frank retired in October of 1980.

We have three sons. All three sons followed their father's profession and became pharmacists. Our daughter is a registered nurse. Frank and I enjoyed 63 and 1/2 years together. He passed away two weeks before his 92nd birthday (April - 2005)

My story is not to "open old-wounds".....We have all been able to put this behind us.....But we must educate those who are unaware of this important event in American history, when 120 thousand of us, mostly American citizens, were uprooted from our homes! We must tell our children, whom we have shielded from knowing, so that they will be able to tell their children. It is with the deepest feelings of emotions that we recall this event in our lives. Though we blame the "histeria of war" that prompted this action by our government, we must not allow this to be forgotten.....and we must remind ourselves so this will never happen again.....to anyone!

I am so very proud of my people for having faced up to this distraction.....so courageously!. Then quietly returning to the place they called home, picking up where they left off, and bravely and conscientiously melded back into their respective communities.....

Hatsuye Nakamura

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