

In My Parents' Words

Issei Voices from Department of Justice Camps



**Letters, Photos and Documents
of the Ichikawa Family during WWII**

By Satoru Ichikawa

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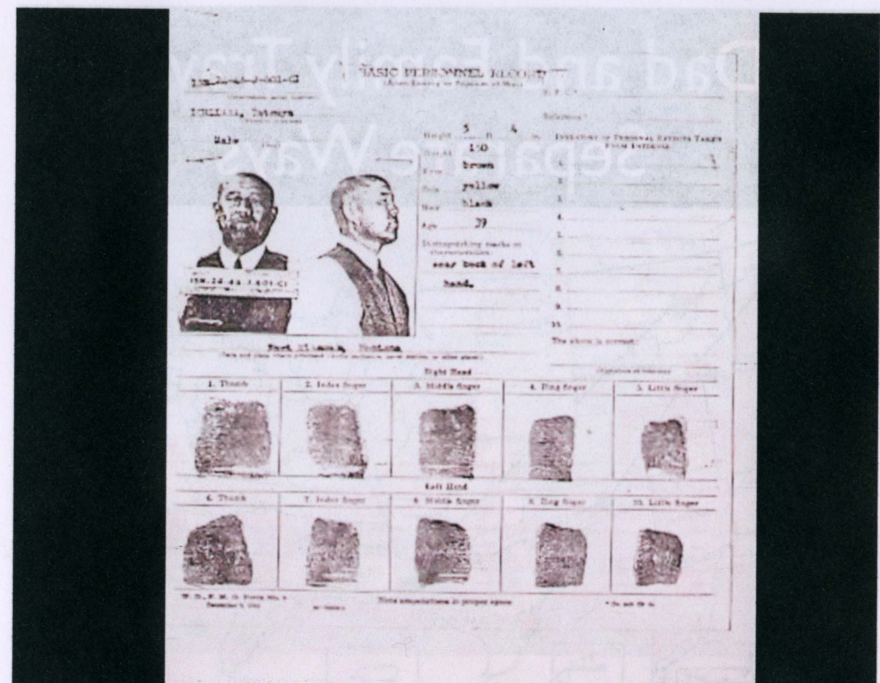


Letters, Photos and Documents of the Ichikawa Family during WWII

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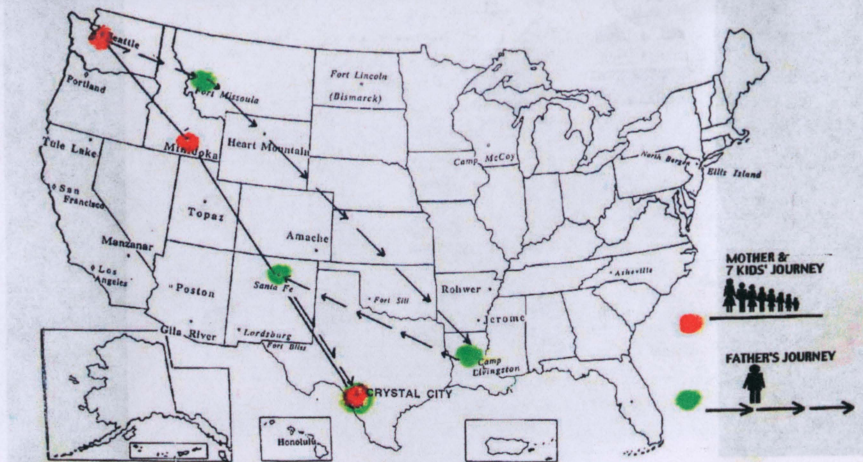


My father was the resident minister of the Seattle Buddhist Church. The construction of the temple on 14th Avenue & Main Street was nearing completion. It carried a heavy mortgage and payments had to be made. A corner stone laying ceremony was held on March 16, 1941. These jubilant members had no idea that WWII would start later that year to disrupt their lives.



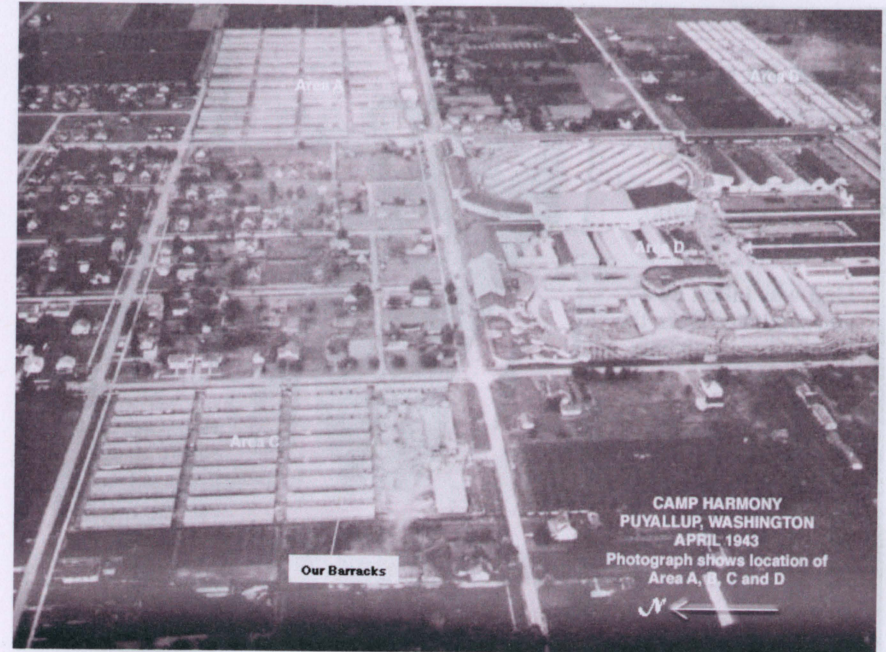
War broke out between Japan and the U.S. with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, HI on Dec. 7, 1941. Dad was arrested by the F.B.I. in the Spring of 1942. Here's his mug shot. With all the church leaders and members evacuated due to Executive Order 9066, the temple was leased to the U.S. Maritime Service and used as its district headquarters to shelter staff and trainees.

Dad and Family Travel Separate Ways



The family was separated from Dad during the first two years of the War. The map shows our family's travels. He was sent to Fort Missoula, MT, Camp Livingston, LA, and Santa Fe, NM.

He was considered a Dangerous Enemy Alien along with many other Issei community leaders. We, in turn, were taken to the Puyallup Assembly Center and later to Minidoka, ID.



My mother and seven children from the youngest at 4 months to me at 12 years, were bused to Camp Harmony, Puyallup, WA. We brought only what we could carry. We spent three months in Area C by the Fairgrounds - a large parking lot hastily converted into a camp with barbed wire fence and armed guards in watch towers, 24-7.

After 3 months in Puyallup we were moved by train to a WRA prison camp in a dusty, lonely sagebrush country of Minidoka, ID.

LIFE IN CAMP...

Mom with her seven children, ages six months to 12 years old at Minidoka, Idaho, Block 13-1-E.

Dad was taken away and separated from the family for two years during WWII.

Pictured here are family friends, Mr. Yahachi Suzuki in the front and Mr. Hino in the back.

Picture courtesy of Minidoka photographer: Jack Yamaguchi



“IN MY PARENTS’ WORDS”

Voiced through Censored Mail...

- **85 Letters from Dad**
- **19 Letters from Mom**

Since Dad was miles apart from us letters were the only means of communication. These were all censored. Some 85 letters were from Dad. 19 were saved from Mom's collection. Obviously, Dad had more time to write than Mom, who was busy taking care of 7 kids.

The family gathered in front of the Minidoka barracks at Block 13-1-E with two friends, Mr. Y. Suzuki and Mr. R. Hino. My mother carries the youngest son. I'm the boy standing to the left by the door. An official camp photographer snapped this photo. We were not allowed to bring cameras into camp.

Dad's First Letter



He receives
One from
Selective
Service...

#15 7/2/42
Missoula.

Dear wife and children: July 2, 1942

I thank you very much for sending a copy of your letter which was published in your camp. I received your letter late here at yesterday evening. I am very glad to have known you all very well. I hope things will be getting well very soon. Was I got the letter from Selective Service which was forwarded by you. It's very good that Mrs. Jones handles everything about the sales of Earl Mrs. J. date.

We have here so many duties - duty of cleaning up our own dormitory, cooking in the kitchen, dish-wash and tea service in the dining room, laundry, cleaning up the stable and other works. Yesterday I worked for cleaning up the stable here for the first time of my life. It is very hot here in the daytime here. Today we got 102 degrees but you know here is very dry place, same as Fresno, so we don't feel here so much. It has been lasted fine day here. I am very sorry that you have had bad weather there. Please take care about your health, study well at school and help your mother. My best regards to all who I know. I think Mrs. K. will be there very soon. I intend to let her know about the stress which I published to you.

U.S.I. & N.S.

Censored Alien Enemy Mail

Fort Missoula, Mont.
July 31, 1942

Dear children:

How are you getting along? I am very well now. I will start here coming [redacted] as a internel, but I don't know where we go. This time over [redacted] persons will leave here and maybe all Japanese will get out of here by the [redacted] of August.

Are you studying hard? It's very bad for your mother that any Japanese books except Buddhist Bible can be read in your camp, but for you lots of English books in the camp library, so you can read enough. Please study hard and take care about your health in the mercy of the Buddha.

I am very anxious when you all move to the Relocation Center. If you know about your move when and where, please report to me at once, as [redacted] part the address of my Internment Camp as [redacted] as I can. Please help mother. I will write again.

With Goodbye
Father

DETAINED ALIEN ENEMY MAIL EXAMINED BY U.S. I. & N. S.

The first letter Dad sent was written on July 2, 1942 from Ft. Missoula, MT. Note red underline, He received a notice from the Selective Service forwarded to him from Mom. I'm sorry, I don't have a copy of that one. It may have notified him of his draft status.

This one is from Ft. Missoula, Montana, dated July 31, 1942. Note that the censor cut out 3 words in the letter. There's a censor's stamp in the lower left corner with the words "Detained Alien Enemy Mail examined by the U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service. Censorship was eased when the tides of war turned to the Allies' favor.

Repatriation
Intent



Need "Geta"



#22 8/16/42
Camp Livingston, LA

Aug 16, 1942

Dear Yasuko:

I received your letter written by Satomi yesterday, so need no hurry to answer about repatriation, as I have intention to repatriate. I reported my intention to you but now I am thinking over my responsibility. I have known Rev & Mrs. Nomura in row in Bryan Relocation Center. Please send their address in detail next time. I have become tame in the climate here so I am very well now.

Can you get a pair of clogs (Japanese geta)? If so, please send to me as it must walk to the shower hall in this camp.

I think you are very busy for the preparation of moving to Idaho Relocation Center. We dislike to move often, but that is no help for it, as that is the order of U. S. Army.

If you want to write to me in Japanese, try it as soon as you can. It takes so long time to send a letter here, but ~~it may arrive~~ so fast unexpectedly. Please take care of yourself and your children. My best regards to Mrs. Uchiyama, Mr. & Mrs. Sugano and all those whom I know.

With Goodbye
Tetsuya
Takahara Tetsuya

But Dad feels
Heavy
Responsibility
to Temple



#23
Aug 30, 1942

Dear wife:

I received your letter dated Aug 16 to-day. I am very glad to have known you all are very well. I am very fine also to be set at ease for me. As for repatriation, I have not filled up an application paper yet.

If we were to go to Japan, I will make arrangement and do everything for you, but you know that I have too much responsibility to go back to Japan though I have intention to go back. Anyway I want to talk with Mr. Ito and other directors of our church who are now interned at the Internment Camp in .

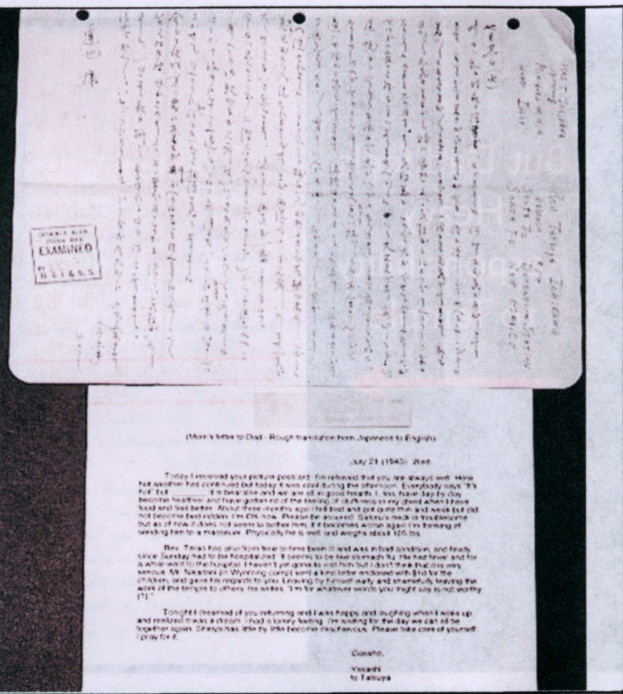
I am very much anxious about your moving and also how good the Relocation Center is. I hope the camp in Idaho is better than that in Puyallup. Take care about your health. My best regards to Rev & Mrs. Terano and all those whom I know.

With Goodbye
Tetsuya Takahara

Here's one from Camp Livingston, LA., an Army camp. He had some initial thoughts about repatriating to Japan. He asks for a pair of "geta". Must be very muddy there.

He writes about repatriation, again, but feels he owes a heavy responsibility to the Seattle temple. He must complete the job he had set out to do. The church carries a large mortgage that must be paid off. He will contact Mr. Ito, president, and other directors of the temple.

Mom's Letter in Japanese Translated



Mom's letter to Dad written in script Japanese. It's difficult for me to translate. I did the best I could, so that my siblings could learn what Mom wrote. The censor had to know the Japanese language and what to cut out. I took some liberties in the translation.

(Mom's letter to Dad - Rough translation from Japanese to English)

July 21 (1943) Wed.

Today I received your picture postcard. I'm relieved that you are always well. Here hot weather has continued but today it was cool during the afternoon. Everybody says "It's hot" but _____ it is bearable and we are all in good health. I, too, have day by day become healthier and have gotten rid of the feeling of stuffiness in my chest when I have food and feel better. About three months ago I felt bad and got quite thin and weak but did not become bed-ridden. I'm OK now. Please be assured. Satoru's neck is troublesome but as of now it does not seem to bother him; if it becomes worse again I'm thinking of sending him to a masseur. Physically he is well and weighs about 105 lbs.

Rev. Terao has also from time to time been ill and was in bad condition, and finally since Sunday had to be hospitalized. It seems to be like stomach flu. He had fever and for a while went to the hospital. I haven't yet gone to visit him but I don't think that it is very serious. Mr. Nikaitani (in Wyoming camp) sent a kind letter enclosed with \$10 for the children, and gave his regards to you. Leaving by himself early and shamefully leaving the work of the temple to others, he writes, "I'm for whatever words you might say is not worthy (?)."

→ Tonight I dreamed of you returning and I was happy and laughing when I woke up and realized it was a dream. I had a lonely feeling. I'm waiting for the day we can all be together again. Shinya has little by little become mischievous. Please take care of yourself. I pray for it.

Gassho,

Yasashi
to Tatsuya

Here's a blowup of that letter. Mom expresses her private feelings and hopes for the family to reunite.

(Mom's letter to Dad - Rough translation from Japanese to English)

August 17 (1943) 11:30 a.m.

Today, too, is a very hot day. Hoping you are in good health. Last night at the mess hall in Block 14 the Obon Service was successfully concluded. For refreshments watermelon was served. Whenever there's a service I think about you. It's unexplainable but I feel that you are somehow present.

When I met Mrs. Toyoji she told me that she, too, is among the group due to go to Tule Lake.

The children are all well. Hiroko is saying "When Daddy comes home, I'm going to have him buy me this, make me this" in a one-person conversation, happily.

I'm hoping that we'd get together again, even one day sooner while we are all well. Well then I'll excuse myself with this today. Please take care.

Gassho,

Yasashi
to Tatsuya

Letter No. 9

Mom writes about the Obon Service in Block 14. "Whenever there's a service, I think about you. It's unexplainable but I feel that you are somehow present."

(Mom's letter to Dad - Rough translation from Japanese to English)

November 12 (1943) 2:00 p.m.

It's been less windy these past 4-5 days and the calm, Autumn days continue. Today is an especially good day and the children are playing football with vigor.

I believe you are well every day. Here all of us are well. These days I dream about you every night. At least I feel fortunate that I can meet you in my dreams.

Mr. and Mrs. Yoshimoto of Bellevue came to visit (They live in Block 17, so it's close).

The night before last, after quite a while, I went to visit the hospital. Mrs. _____ evidently has two stones in her stomach and must have an operation, so said the doctor. But she has for some reasons doesn't want to proceed with it. Yamaguchi-san is due for the third time to have the same operation. I feel badly for her.

Mr. Tashiro has passed away. Sick people are many and the dying increase - it's very sad. There's a story going around that Dr. Hashiba is coming to this camp and everybody says, "He's excellent," and so we are very hopeful! I heard Mrs. Tomota was in the hospital. When I went to visit her she was already out.

School will start from Monday, again, for Satoru and Etsuko, so I'll be very busy. Shinya no longer needs diapers in the afternoon. But the three need them at night, so it is tiring. At Spring Etsuko was taller than Satoru but now Satoru is 1/2 inch taller than Etsuko and Etsuko is 1/2 inch taller than me.)

Akira and Hiroko go to school half day and Shinya wants to go to nursery school but it's about 1/2 year too early for him, I feel. Noriko and Kazuya are both getting good grades in school.

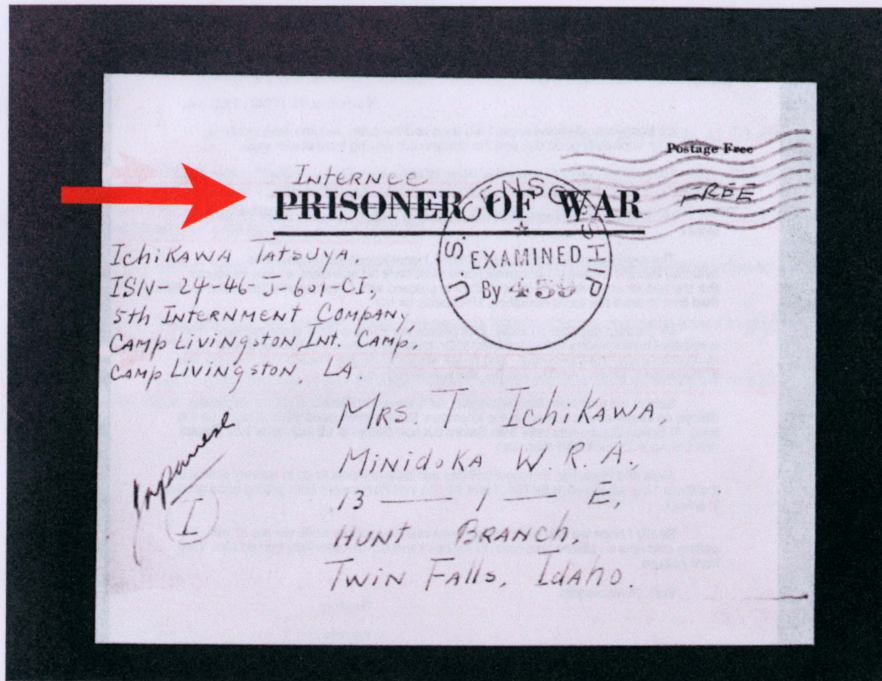
Really I hope we can get together even one day sooner while we are all well. It's getting cold now so please take care. In my block there is an older lady named Mrs. Tsuji from Auburn.

Well, I'll write again.

Gassho,

Yasashi
to Tatsuya

Mom expresses her thoughts. "These days I dream about you every night. At least I feel fortunate that I can meet you in my dreams". Doctors were scarce in camp, and there's a rumor that an excellent doctor, Dr. Hashiba, would arrive soon.

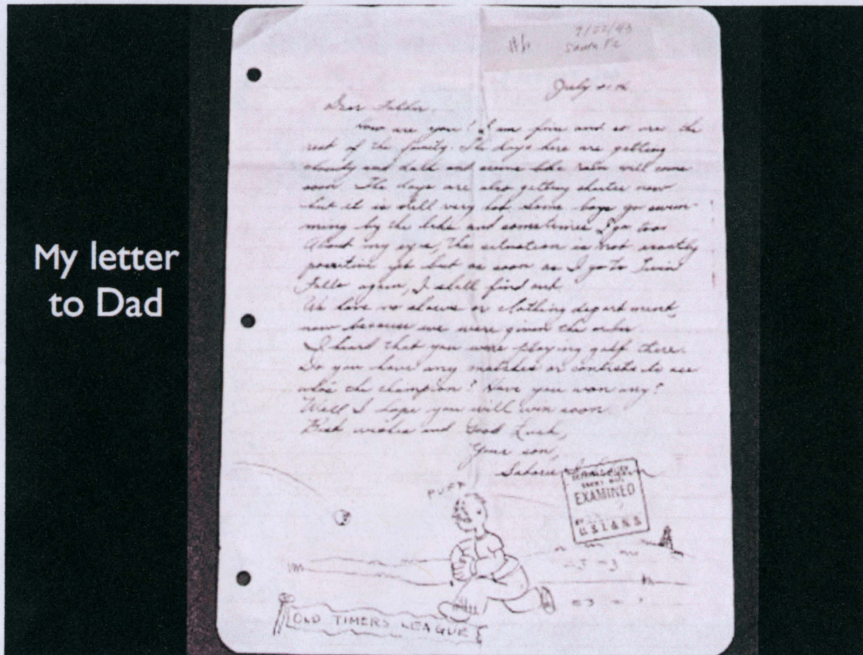


In Camp Livingston, LA, Dad used government issued mailing forms with the words "PRISONER OF WAR" printed on the face. He had to cross out the words "Prisoner of War" and write in "Internee of War". The government went to great lengths to call us "Voluntary Internees or Detainees" rather than "Prisoners of War".

Akira's color pic

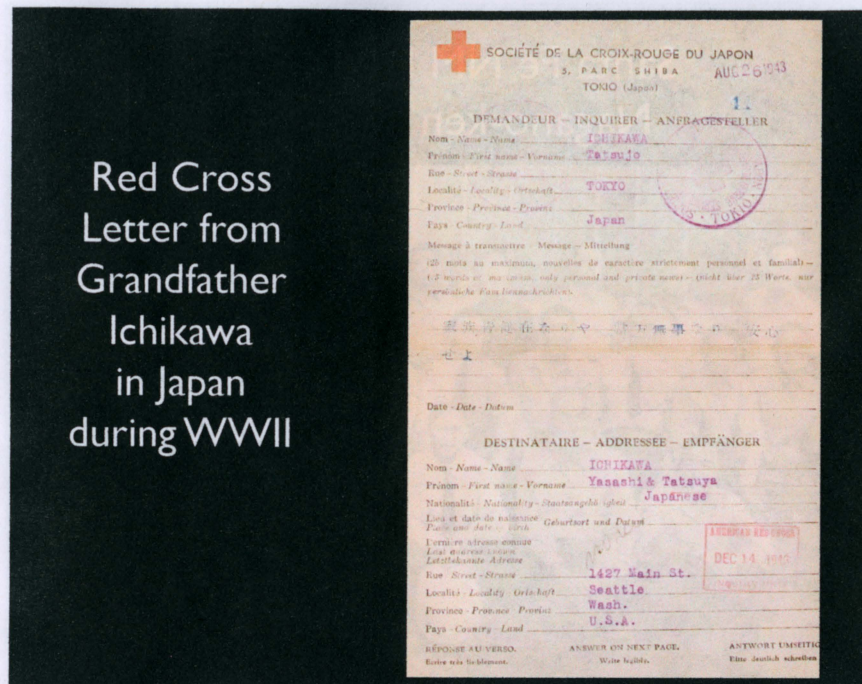


Akira, my younger brother, age 5, colored in the drawing furnished by Rev. H.E. Terao in the camp Sunday School. Note the censor's stamp on a child's picture.



My letter to Dad

I mailed him this one showing the Old Timers' Softball game. I drew in the Minidoka water tower in the distance. I asked him if he enjoys playing golf. Dad wrote he played golf in the Santa Fe camp with other Issei prisoners. Would that make Mom a "golf widow"?



Red Cross Letter from Grandfather Ichikawa in Japan during WWII

A Red Cross letter to Dad from Grandfather in Japan, dated August 23, 1943 during the heat of the war. It reads in Japanese, "Kazoku mina kenzen nari ya. Toho buji nari. Anshin se yo." Roughly translated, "We are all well here...so don't worry".

Santa Fe NM DOJ Camp Nagano-ken Internees



These Issei inmates were all from Nagano-ken Prefecture in Japan. My father is seated in the second row to the extreme right in black jacket and work pants. At front row right, is Hamao Hirabayashi, an uncle of Gordon Hirabayashi, the University of Washington student who challenged the curfew during the early days of the war, and was jailed for breaking it. Gordon was later exonerated in a celebrated case and was awarded the President's Medal of Freedom.

Request for Temporary Parole Was Denied.

Mr. and Mrs. Jensen, Santa Fe, New Mexico, California, Immigration Service, January 25, 1942.

Sir:

I, Ichiro Hirabayashi, being respectfully petitioned for temporary parole to visit my wife and children now residing at the Santa Fe National Relocation Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, I requested a release from my present place of confinement and a return to the home of my wife and family in Minidoka, Idaho, as stated in the enclosed letter. My children, especially the youngest two, are very sick and I have no other relatives in the United States.

I would greatly appreciate it if you will do me the honor to request a temporary parole in my circumstances at the earliest possible date. My family awaits me.

Mrs. Hamao Hirabayashi (Sister)
 Mr. Hamao Hirabayashi (Brother)
 Mrs. Hamao Hirabayashi (Sister)
 Mr. Hamao Hirabayashi (Brother)
 Mrs. Hamao Hirabayashi (Sister)
 Mr. Hamao Hirabayashi (Brother)

The contents of my father's telegram is as follows:

URGENT. SANTA FE, N.M., JAN. 25, 1942. IMMIGRATION SERVICE, SANTA FE, N.M. I AM REQUESTING PAROLE TO VISIT MY WIFE AND CHILDREN IN MINIDOKA, IDAHO. MY WIFE AND CHILDREN ARE SERIOUSLY SICK. I HAVE NO OTHER RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES. PLEASE ADVISE ME OF YOUR DECISION. I AM VERY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR KINDNESS. ICHIRO HIRABAYASHI.

Respectfully submitted,
 Ichiro Hirabayashi
 In care of Immigration Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico.


Dad asked the Santa Fe Camp Authorities for a "temporary parole" to visit the family in Minidoka. The children, especially the youngest two, were seriously sick in the hospital. The request was denied. However, the camp authorities must have realized the extreme hardship separation of family creates. It may have helped us to be reunited in the Crystal City TX camp.

(Mom's letter to Dad - Rough translation from Japanese to English)

January 21 (1944)

Satoru, Etsuko and Akira still cough a little but have left the bed to go to the mess hall. Kazuya and Noriko are in bed but are talking (?) a lot. All are absent from school so a nurse (?) took their temperature; just Hiroko is worse and also Shinya rests during the day but when night comes his temperature goes up and is not clear so I've put the two in the hospital. In the room by myself, I cannot tend to them, since I've got a little cold myself, it becomes difficult. They should be coming home in about a week.

In the baby ward is Mrs. Fukutani, and they take very good care of the children. The baby ward is full of children with the cold. Due to these conditions, today a white person of authority came and commented that it would be very difficult to travel to there even if we'd like to go _____ this time there's no way but to cancel the trip. When we are all back to good health we can go. I fell very badly about this for your sake but things don't go the way we would like. People have heard about our predicament and have come visited us to sympathize with us. I, too, while the two young ones are away would like to recover from the cold. It's tough to not be able to eat. At present it is not necessary to _____

I'm sorry to make you worry but these are the conditions presently, so please excuse me. Quick-to-act Satoru has already packed all his baggage to go. 

Please be in good health and await the day that we can all be reunited. We're fine here so don't worry.

Gassho,

Yasashi
To Tatsuya

Last Letter from Dad before Family Reunites in Texas



Mr. Satoru Ichikawa,
13 — 1 — E.
MINIDAKA W. R. A.
HUNT, TEXAS

Tatsuya Ichikawa,
BOARDER 20,
2 F. CANTONMENT STATION,
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO
Feb. 12, 1944.

Dear Satoru:

How are you getting along? I think that you and the rest are all well now. Go for me. I am very fine.

Is it cold there? Your mother said that it snowed and is very cold there.

When do you expect to leave there for Crystal City? I expect that we can reunite soon after two years' separation.

Please take good care of yourself and help your mother. My best regards to you all.

With Gassho

Your father,

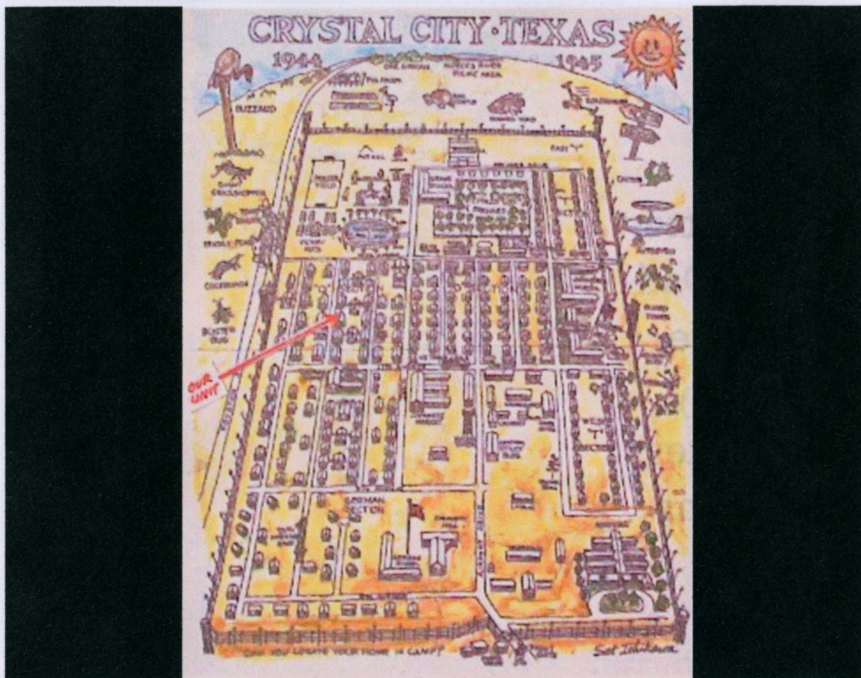
Tatsuya Ichikawa



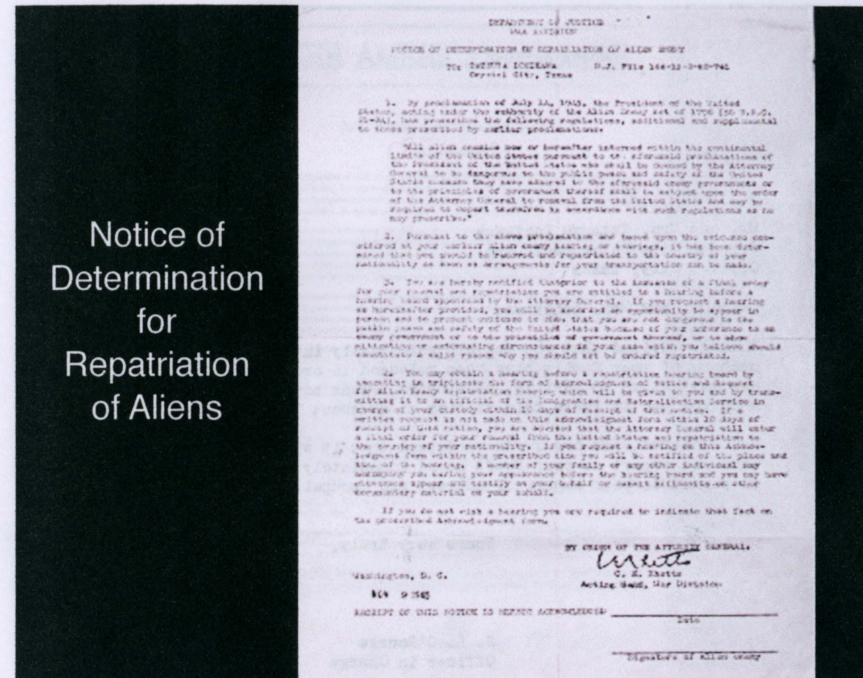
Mom writes to Dad that the two youngest kids were sick in the hospital and the nurse told her they were in no shape to travel. We may have to delay the much awaited reunion.

She adds, "Quick-to-act Satoru has already packed all his baggage to go".

This is the last letter Dad mailed to us from Santa Fe. He writes, "When do you expect to leave there for Crystal City? I expect that we can reunite soon after two years' separation".



I drew this map of the Crystal City Family Reunion Center. It shows the layout of the camp. The red arrow points to the barracks we occupied. This Dept. of Justice camp was also surrounded by barbed wire fence and guard towers. It imprisoned not only Japanese families, but German families and a few Italians. It had American and Japanese schools. I attended both.



This document dated Nov. 7, 1945 instructed Dad to appear for a hearing. It gave him an opportunity to oppose his deportation to Japan. It provided for a family member (namely me) to testify in his behalf. I told the panel that Dad never was disloyal. He always taught us to respect our country. Many of his former Sunday School kids were now fighting for our country. The result of the hearing shaped our lives. I must have given them a favorable impression, since he was released.

March 6, 1946

940/320 ✓
210/021

Mr. and Mrs. Tatsuya Ichikawa
Crystal City Internment Camp
Crystal City, Texas

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Ichikawa:

You are advised that you and all voluntarily interned members of your family have been released in order that you may return to Seattle, Washington. Plans have been made for you to leave this station on or about March 12, 1946.

Mr. Ichikawa, you are further advised that it will be necessary that you report to your Draft Board immediately upon arrival in regard to your change of address and occupation.

Yours very truly,

J. L. O'Rourke
Officer in Charge

This important letter instructed us that we were free to return to Seattle. We were "voluntarily interned".

It tells Dad, "Mr. Ichikawa, you are further advised that it will be necessary that you report to your Draft Board immediately upon arrival in regard to your change of address and occupation."

The Government Apologizes for E.O. 9066

THE AMERICAN PROMISE

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In this Bicentennial Year, we are commemorating the anniversary dates of many of the great events in American history. An honest reckoning, however, must include a recognition of our national mistakes as well as our national achievements. Learning from our mistakes is not pleasant, but as a great philosopher once admonished, we must do so if we want to avoid repeating them.

February 19th is the anniversary of a sad day in American history. It was on that date in 1942, in the midst of the response to the hostilities that began on December 7, 1941, that Executive Order No. 9066 was issued, subsequently enforced by the criminal penalties of a statute enacted March 21, 1942, resulting in the uprooting of loyal Americans. Over one hundred thousand persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from their homes, detained in special camps, and eventually released.

The tremendous effort by the War Relocation Authority and concerned Americans for the welfare of these Japanese-Americans may add perspective to that story, but it does not erase the setback to fundamental American principles. Fortunately, the Japanese-American community in Hawaii was spared the indignities suffered by those on our mainland.

We now know what we should have known then—not only was that evacuation wrong, but Japanese-Americans were and are loyal Americans. On the battlefield and at home, Japanese-Americans—men like Hamada, Murotori, Matsumoto, Naguchi, Yamashita, Kado, Munemori and Miyamura—have been and continue to be written in our history for the sacrifices and the contributions they have made to the well-being and security of this, our common Nation.

The Executive order that was issued on February 19, 1942, was for the sole purpose of prosecuting the war with the Axis Powers, and ceased to be effective with the end of those hostilities. Because there was no formal statement of its termination, however, there is concern among many Japanese-Americans that there may yet be some life in that obsolete document. I think it appropriate, in this our Bicentennial Year, to remove all doubt on that matter, and to make clear our commitment in the future.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim that all the authority conferred by Executive Order No. 9066 terminated upon the issuance of Proclamation No. 2714, which formally proclaimed the cessation of the hostilities of World War II on December 31, 1946.

I trust the American people to affirm with me this American Promise—that we have learned from the tragedy of that long-ago experience forever to release liberty and justice for each individual American, and resolve that this kind of action shall never again be repeated.

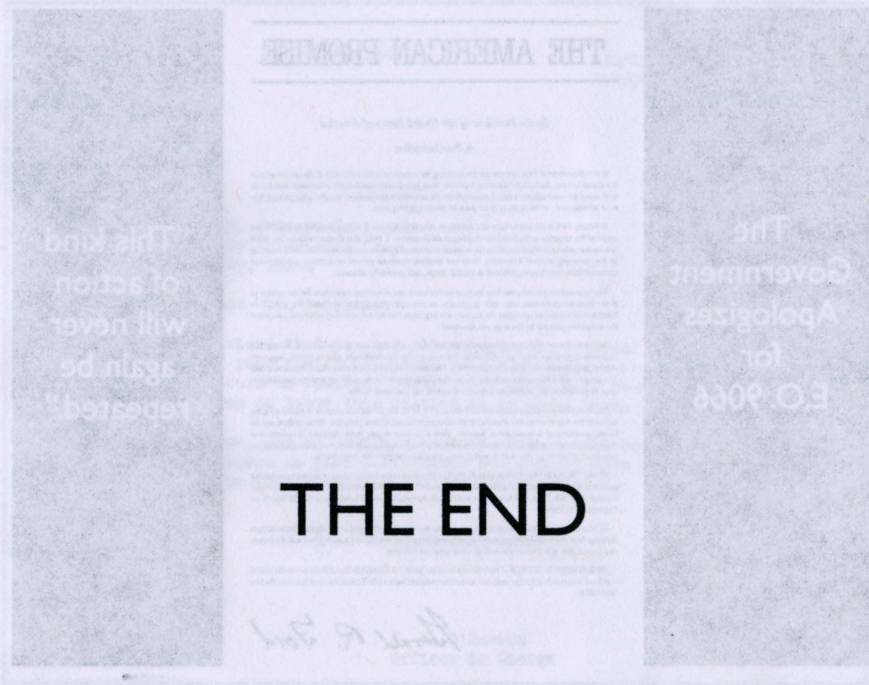
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of February in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundredth.

Gerald R. Ford

"This kind
of action
will never
again be
repeated."

THE AMERICAN PROMISE. This document officially apologizes for the internment of Japanese Americans. Our government made a mistake in doing so. It brings to a close Executive Order 9066 and promises that this type of action will never again be repeated.

Signed by President Gerald R. Ford in the Bicentennial year of our country.



THE AMERICAN PROMISE. This document officially apologizes for the internment of Japanese Americans. Our government made a mistake in doing so. It brings to a close Executive Order 9068 and promises that this type of action will never again be repeated. Signed by President Gerald R. Ford in the Bi-centennial year of our country.

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Presentation made at

SPEAKING UPI

DEMOCRACY JUSTICE DIGNITY

Japanese American National Museum

National Conference

July 4-8, 2013

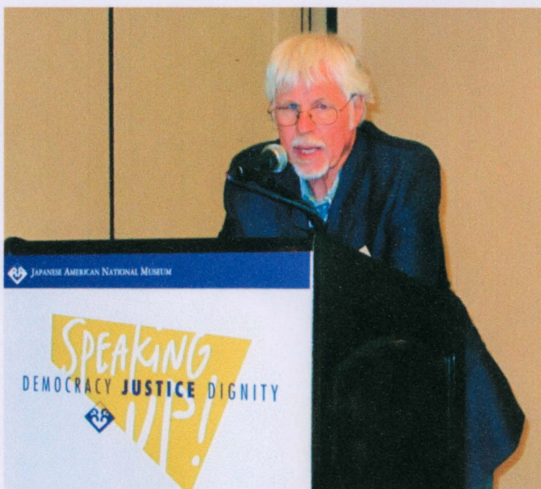
Sheraton Hotel • Seattle, WA

At the JANM National Conference

Saturday, July 6, 2013 • Sheraton Hotel, Seattle, WA

In My Parents' Words: **Voices from the Department of Justice Camps**

presented by three panelists who shared their experiences of WWII.



Moderator: Art Hansen, PhD



Left to Right: Mako Nakagawa, Satsuki Ina and Satoru Ichikawa