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Dear Ms Haglund,

Enclosed is a paper I wrote concerning evacuation for talks at W.S. Univ. and several high schools. It is not according to your precise wishes but it does cover part of your request. I do not have the time to rewrite but I hope that this plus my second paper can be dovetailed together to form a composite to satisfy your original request.

Please feel free to use them as well as my name etc. If you need more please let me know.

Sincerely,
James M Watanabe

P.S. I was very interested to hear those involved with our evacuation now stating that it was for our safety. That was not mentioned while it was happening and the newspaper clipping which I eventually published make no such reference.

Sunday, December 7, 1941 was a day which I cannot forget. It was a quiet, overcast day. It was cool but vegetations were still green. That morning a Nisei came over and told me that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. I ran into the house and turned on the radio. Much to my chagrin, it was true. My first reaction was one of self pity. Things had deteriorated so far as the attitudes of the majority whites were concerned, but not one of overt hostility. What will happen to me now? How will we be treated the following day in school? What would happen if I had to go to Tacoma? There was no untoward incidence at school the next day, except that some of the students seemed to be cool towards us, but did not voice any comment. Things were fairly stable for the entire month at school. The newspapers were another matter.

Our first day at the Assembly center was an adventure of sort. We were virtually the last Nikkeis to be incarcerated. There had otherd who had been interned several weeks before, so our entry did not elicit much curiosity among the Puyallup residents. We had been resigned to the fact that we would be interned. One thing that I did resent was the "rubbernecking" of "tourists on weekends as they slowly drove around the camps. One side nearm the north perimeter was dry and dusty since the street was not paved. One soldier did stop some of the cars to ask them to drive slowly if they had to drive on that road because of the dust which blew into camp.

Our trip to Minidoka was as previously noted. There had been a 10 day hiatus apparently because all the buildings had not been built. I had therefore received a letter from someone who had gone to Minidoka several weeks before. He had told us of the train trip and the dust at the center.

After the war was over, things did not automatically get back to normal.I recall one particular incident. I had just returned to Ft. Lewis after a tour of duty in Japan. The car that my friend was driving stopped. It was cold and at night. A state patrol car stopped/ The state patrol man looked at us and promptly drove off. The papers had

mentioned that the state patrol would usually stop and render aid to motorists because many of the cars were fairly old by then. This man did not help us, even though I was wearing the uniform of the United States army.

After my discharge I worked for about a year to earn enough money to go to college. I had the GI bill, but I still had the dream of being a physician. The only way I could do this was to save my GI bills for medical school, because I felt that I could not work and go to medical school at the same time. I, therefore, gambled and worked my way through premedicine. Luckily I was accepted to the University of Washington School of Medicine. My GI bill was a life-saver as it paid my way through most of four years. When I was accepted, it was certainly a lift to my spirit. I had resigned myself to second class citizenship in the United States because of all that had happened to me up to that time. When I was accepted, I thought to myself:"Say, perhaps I can be a first class citizen." Not only that there were a number of Nikkeis attending the U of Wash. Also many were in medical, dental, graduate schools; and others who received their Ph.D. Each accomplishment by a fellow Nikkei was a lift to the rest---that perhaps we will be judged by our ability and not by race. I believe this had to be so since I WAS sure that the university would NOT give us ANY thing because of our race.

The future of the Japanese American appears quite ~~dim~~ HAZY in that so many of the third generation are marrying outside of the race. In a few generation I believe there will be only a few "pure" Japanese Americans. Up to this generation many of the Sanseis have been super achievers with more going to college than the average, and the grade points being askewed to the upper end of the bell shaped curve. I somehow think that this trend would moderate. Perhaps the old saying that equality is the ability of getting a "C" average might be true to some extent.

Growing up in America was not exact;y carefree, but this was not unique to us but shared by many other nonwhite citizens. In 1941 however things deteriorated markedly. War clouds were covering the world. We were like pawns in a giant chess match. In July or August of 1941 (about 4 months before the war) the United States Government froze all the assets of aliens of Japanese ancestry. These people were aliens not by choice but due to a law which prohibited citizenship to all Orientals not born in the United States. I remember my brother-in-law who was an alien sent us a check. Before the check cleared,the government froze his assets and we were unable to cash the check. In October or November I recall headlines stating that the last ship from Japan docked in Seattle. When that ship left it seemed that war was inevitable and that only a spark like Fort Sumpter was needed to trigger it.

It was not until January that I first heard anyone advocating evacuation. I believe an obscure Congressman from California named Leland Ford first brought up this possibility. There may have been others who first advocated it I am sot sure. Many jumped on the bandwagon. Organizations such as the California State grange, Sons of the Golden West, American Legions. Newspapers throughoutthe west coast. The Hearst chain was especially virulent on their attack against us..They kept up a steady barragw of anti Japanese American propoganda against us. They would put articles about the enemy next to an article against us. It is no wonder some in the reading public began to think of us interchangeably. Many politiciansalso jumped on the bandwagon including that great civil libertarian, Chief Justice Earl Warren, who was the attorney General of California. He was once asked: Mr. Warren; the FBI, Naval Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and Honolulu Police Dept. have all testified that there was no act of sabotage by any Japanese American before, during, or after Pearl Harbor. Why do you consider them such risk? His answer was an Orwellian Catch 22. That proves it. They are waiting for a signal to rise up all at one time.

In talking among ourselves we thought that there was a possibility that our parents might be incarcerated but not us. Haven't we been taught since grade school what a magnificent document the Constitution was? We were citizens of the United States and were guaranteed the safeguards of the Bill of Rights. How wrong we were. On Feb. 19, 1942 Pres. Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which authorized the Sec. of War and the military commanders to exclude any and all persons who might sabotage or commit espionage against the United States.

On March 23 the Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island were given 6 days to dispose of their worldly goods and then be transported to a concentration camp. Army trucks with GIS with fixed bayonets rounded them up and escorted them to trains in Seattle. The army took over the Western Washington Fair grounds in Puyallup and made living accomodations for 8000 people. In the meantime they slapped a curfew on us from 8PM to ØAm. In addition we could not travel over 10 miles from home. We were ordered to submit ourselves for detention in May 1942. My brother's friend drove us in his truck to Puyallup where a mini Mardi gras parade of cars and trucks were lined up and waiting to be let in. Just preceding this we were given a special graduation exercise at Fife High School because we would not be present for the regular commencement exercise.

The camp we were directed to was a gravelled parking lot whch was about two blocks square. It was ringed by anhigh barbed wire fence with guard towers manned by GIS with machine guns. There were huge searchlights a la Stalag 19. Soldiers with shotguns were patrolling

the perimeter of the camp. We were assigned a room near the northeast corner in a barrack made of 1 by 12 green lumber and having about 8 rooms, each, which was for a family. The partitions only went up to the base of the roof leaving a triangular open space running the entire length of the barrack. I believe the rooms were about 16 x 20 feet. All 8 of our family ranging from my 68 year old father to my niece of 2 were housed in a single room. We were given camp cots and ticking which we filled with straws for mattresses. We tried to make our room as comfortable as possible. We strung partitions of sheets and blankets for at least some privacy. Bathrooms, showers and mess halls were located at the other end of the camp and we had to walk several blocks anytime we needed to use these facilities.

I got a job as laborer digging ditches, hauling gambage and gravel. Others worked as barbers, cooks, dishwashers. For medical and dental care we were given passes to go to one of the other camps where doctors were available. I am not sure how much the doctors and dentists were paid but we were given $8 per month for 40 hr. week.

Others started classes in handicrafts, music appreciation, etiquette etc. My sister and her group collected books and started a small lending library. Periodically we would have community singing, talent shows, dances, and movies. On Sundays we would have church services conducted by Caucasian ministers from the outside.

For food there was frequently a logistic problem and we did have our share of vienna sausages and boiled cabbages. The cooks were Japanese so at least they could concoct food to our liking

There were some organized sports such as judo. Other games such as pingpong, softball, volleyball were played.

The guards were all Caucasians, of course. Some were pretty good and have sympathy or empathy towards us. Others liked to throw their weights around. Others bragged about how big a hole his shotgun could make in a person, or bragged what swill we were eating compared to the things they were eating.

In September we were taken to a train and shipped out to a concentration camp in southwest Idaho. This train ride was one of the low points in my life. We were leaving the only place we had ever known.ad to an area nobody wanted in a barren sage brush country. Near Vancouver Wash.the train went through a switching maneuver. Every stop and start was done in a jarring manner and threw us around like rag dolls. I thought to myself: Do they hate us that much that they would do things like this? I bet they wouldn't do this to cattle. Periodically d guard would come and tell us to pull down the blinds because we were coming to a defence plant. This was particularly galling to me because I had always considered myself an American and they would mistrust me because of my ancestry.

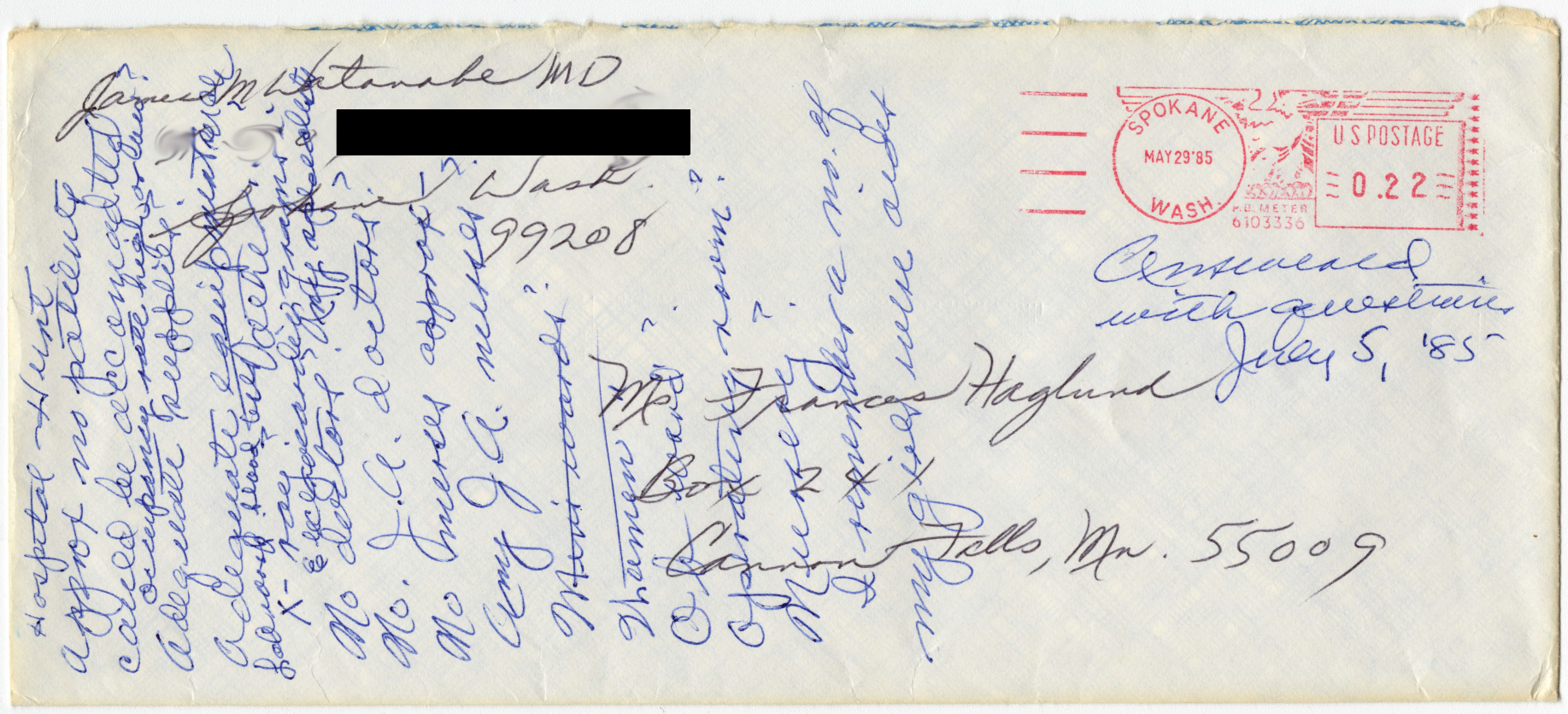
Thr next day we finally reached our destination. We were taken by bus from the siding to the concentration camp which was in the middle of sagebrush and rattlesnake country near Jerome, Idaho. There were 44 blocks, and ancillary buildings such as warehouses, hospital, and administration buildings. Each block consisted of 12 tarpapered barracks each containing 6 to 8 rooms, messhall, restrooms, shower rooms and laundry roo, and rec room.hall

When the wind blew clouds of dust permeated through everything including your room, clothes, and food. When it rained the area was very muddy and large mud puddles were everywhere. Some of us got together and collected discarded lumber to make board sidewalks so that we could get to the bathroom without getting muddied. Winter was very severe there with cold such as we had never experienced before. Tarpapered room with a potbellied stove was all we had. The government gave us some WW 1 vintage clothes so that did help some.

There were activities here similar to what I mentioned before. We just had more space. I worked as a general laborer at first but I

got a job at the camp hospital because I still had a dream of becoming a physician. I remember working 10 to 12 hours day because I liked to take care of these sick patients. I also took seasonal leave to try to earn enough money to go to college. A small Methodist college in Winfield, Kansas accepted me. I was there only a short while when I received my draft notice. I did go and took my basic training at Fr. Sill, Okla in instrument and survey of the field artillery. There were, however, some unpleasant incidences back at the concentration camp. Some refused to serve. Some had aged parents and they reasoned that if they were killed or maimed, who would take care of their parents. A few had lost faith in America and refused until such time that all their civil rights were returned. We could be in uniform and still not allowed to travel to Seattle. I recall one man in sorrow. A federal marshal driving passed armed guards at the gate into the concentration camp. He arrested this man, put him in handcuffs and put him in jail. He wanted to serve but what would happen to his parents?

Yes, much unpleasantness happened to me, but in closing I wish to state that I am not embittered and I hold no grudge against anyone. I hope that the injustices done us will not be forgotten and that high schools and colleges will fully teach all students the tragedies of ~~bigotry~~ racial prejudice. It has happened before, and it can happen again. The seeds of injustice can bear bitter fruit.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