

THERESA HOTORU MATSUDAIRA

My name is Hotoru Matsudaira. My baptismal name is Theresa. I was born in 1902 and am now 79 years old. My husband, Thomas Tokuhisha Matsudaira, brought me to America around July 24, 1921. Since the time I was a little girl, I had had a great desire to see America. I breathed the air of the great land of America and had considered my joys and sorrows as blessings.

Before I had children, to learn English I went to work as a waitress at the Matsuba Restaurant on Main Street so I could start to work as a chambermaid at a hotel. After I learned a little English, I worked at the Rose Cafe also on Main Street.

My eldest son, John, was born in 1922. Then Michael, Francis and James were born so I became very busy. Next, my eldest daughter, Paulene, was born. The year after Mary Elizabeth was born, that dreadful Japanese-American War (World War II) began on December 8, 1941, at Pearl Harbor.

Relationships between Japan and America had absolutely no connection between the Japanese and the second generation Japanese in America, but we became like people who fell off a cliff and wandered in the mud. We, with so many children, began our frightful and tearful life.

My husband worked as a foreman for a long time at the Kodiak Company, a salmon cannery, and he was well known as Tommy. He was well loved by the white people of the town. He loved baseball, and as soon as a boat reached Kodiak, he played ball with the people on the boat and the Japanese. When canning season was finished, he took four or five Japanese with him and worked for a Japanese oyster company as an opener on an Indian reservation.

With the beginning of the war, Japanese people were not permitted to leave Seattle, but an Indian chief came down for him. Tommy worked until the middle of March of the next year. One night, however, about seven big men with sticks came and told him to get out of there. Indians would suffer great losses because the oyster-opening season had begun, but Tommy did not want anyone injured, so he came home.

We learned that Japanese people in Alaska, Seattle and Bainbridge Island were to be moved and made to live a community life together in Puyallup, but at first we did not believe it. However, with an order from the United States Army, Japanese quietly took just small amounts of luggage and went into the Puyallup assembly center. My family with nine children departed beloved Seattle on May 18, 1941, and entered Puyallup. After that our happy family life was all broken up. We retired every night with the ten o'clock bugle, but I could not sleep from thinking of the children's future and the deep sorrow in my heart.

In the latter part of August, my husband left with the children for a camp in the desert of Idaho. Mrs. Chiseko Nagaishi and I remained behind in Puyallup to deliver our babies. To deliver the baby fast, according to army orders, I was given two little white tablets and castor oil every

morning. I tried for three days, but there was no sign of the baby coming so the doctor decided to stop the medicine and allowed me to go to Idaho to have the baby.

However, the next morning, which was the day before serious patients and we were to move to Idaho, a nurse came with three pills and castor oil. So I told her the doctor told me to stop taking medicine, but the nurse said, "This is a military order, so you should take it." I explained to the doctor what had happened when he came. He said, "What shall we do?"

I was very much worried. I did not want the baby to be born on the train. I could not do anything - not even eat. So I went to the shower room. the fire was still smoldering so I added three shovelfuls of coal. I waited a while. Then I went into the shower and took a cold shower, then a hot shower. I repeated this three or four times. I went outside and ran for three blocks. When I passed in front of the hospital, everyone was looking at me, frightened.

About half past four, labor started. I ran into the hospital and checked on the frequency of the labor pain myself. I went to the delivery room a little before eight and had a baby girl at 8:15 p.m. I was very happy and thankful.

The next morning at 6:00, I boarded the train on a stretcher and went to Eden, Idaho. I was admitted to the hospital, but there was no bedpan and for that I had to wait for three hours. I wondered if strong Indians did things like this, too.

Three years later we were allowed to leave camp if we wished. We had a house in Seattle, poor as it was, so on March 14, 1945, we came home with our new baby and a 90-year-old man who came from Yamaguchi-ken Japan, whom we had met through our friend.

When we reached home, the house had been burglarized and there was not a thing left. All the beds were gone--the rest of the furniture, the kitchen range, even the electric extension cords were all gone.

Father Clement, who brought us home, said, "This is really war."

Three daughters and I were taken in by Maryknoll Sisters. Mother Superior of Providence Hospital gave us a bed for the old man. My husband and the boys slept on the floor for three months.

There was no range to cook on, so I had to prepare meals on an electric plate burner which was very difficult.

The older boys and my husband searched for jobs only to find signs, "Object to Japs." So they went to the W.R.A. office for assistance.

I shall stop this letter here. If you do not approve of what I have written, please throw it away.

My eldest son volunteered for the 442nd RCT from Minidoka, and he received a serious wound in Italy. He was in the Veteran's Hospital in Chicago at this time. My second son, Michael, was in the occupational army in Japan. He pasted a Star 2 picture in the window and put a badge on his front, and finally started to work at Providence Hospital.

After the war, all nine sons served in the Navy, Army, or Air Force.

We sent all 12 children to Catholic school and taught them to keep their balance and stay on their course in peace as well as in troubled times. We, as parents, watched them carefully and prayed with them.

I am already 79 years old. My husband died 30 years ago.

My fervent wish is that without racial discrimination everyone who was born in this country love and help each other. May young people unite their strength and do their best for this great country.

Please continue the course the first generation took; that is, honesty, diligence, and patience. God will surely bless you.