

July 4, 1981

To: The Commission on Wartime Relocation
and Internment of Civilians

From: Paul J Sakai
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1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA INFORMATION.

- a. Place of Birth: Seattle, Washington
- b. Date of Birth: August 4, 1917
- c. Nisei
- d. Education: 1940 graduate of the University of Washington - BA in Economics & Business; 1959-60 attended graduate school at the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus - studied towards a master's degree in education - military assignments world-wide precluded me from completing my graduate work in the prescribed time; In 1978, I successfully completed six courses in paralegal studies at the University of Maryland and was certified as a paralegal.
- e. Work Experience:
 - (1) 1940 - 1941: Shipping Clerk, Japan Institute, Inc. 630 5th Avenue, New York City.
 - (2) 1941 - 1969 Command and staff responsibilities with intelligence and security units of the United States Army.
 - (3) 1969 - 1981 Civilian Supervisor with the US Army Intelligence Command and the Defense Investigative Service.
 - (4) April 1981 to date: Volunteer worker for the Legal Resources Division, Department of Social Services, Baltimore City.

f. I was inducted into military service on January 23, 1941 in New York City and assigned to the 9th Infantry Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina for basic training.

2. I shall be happy to testify under oath and make the following statement regarding Executive Order 9066 signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942 and relate briefly to The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians sorrowful and emotional experiences of my family as a result of their incarceration at the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho. I am the sole survivor of the Sakai family of six who is competent to testify before the Commission.

3. STATEMENT:

As I look back to that memorable period of my youth in Seattle during the 1930s, it is remarkable how well our parents instilled in us the significant and meaningful thoughts on the ideals of "Duty - Honor - Country" so powerfully expressed on many occasions by General Douglas MacArthur. Despite deep hatred and racism practiced by the militant minority on the West Coast prior to Pearl Harbor, we were taught by our parents to uphold the honor of America; that it is a family responsibility to participate actively in civic, church, and community life and above all - never to bring shame to the family. They learned to love America. My mother was proud of her samurai heritage and I found later in life that virtues of the warrior class was compatible with the three-fold ideal of "Duty-Honor-Country" which is an integral part of the American military tradition. I find it difficult to testify in depth the many incidents and adverse

actions involving my family that merit serious consideration, therefore, I shall limit my statement to the impact of evacuation on each member of the family which haunt me today.

My father died on April 9, 1942 - approximately three weeks before the movement of alien Japanese and American citizens of Japanese origin from Seattle to the Puyallup Assembly Center. Cause of death was crebral hemorrhage. I am convinced that his concern, worries, and apprehension of the family's future contributed to his untimely death at age 54. Soon after the Army announced its proclamation of exclusion in March 1942, my father wrote me an emotional letter in English. This unexpected letter caught me by surprise. He had never written me a letter although I had been away from home on many occasions. I was in Japan for four months after our barnstorming baseball tour in 1936 and I had left Seattle in 1940 to seek employment in New York City. His letter sounded desperate. He wanted me to contact an old family friend from Nagasaki, Japan who was a successful florist in Columbia, South Carolina and to seek his help in finding a place for the family to relocate. His fear of incarceration and restlessness were clearly expressed in his letter. Before I could contact his friend, Mr. Tokunaga, and reply to his urgent request, I received a telegram at Ft. Bragg, N. C. informing me of his death. He escaped incarceration by death.

My two sisters, Esther Hagiwara and Ruth Matsuo who are both deceased, were active members of the Japanese American Citizens League and I am sure both would be participating actively in JACL's redress campaign. To them, who had faith in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights, the very

thought of incarceration behind barbed-wire enclosure in the sage-brush country of Idaho was shocking and repulsive. In their V-mail letters to me, they could not believe that I was fighting in North Africa while other elements of the US Army was busy guarding them and denying them freedom of movement and the pursuit of happiness. However, they cooperated with the military authorities and actively supported the war effort - praying and hoping for war's end and a happy future.

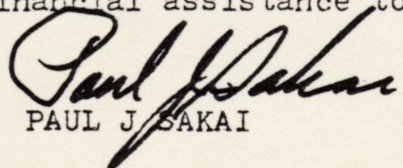
My brother, Sam Sakai, left the Center in 1943 to volunteer for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He saw action in Italy and France as a machine-gunner and was discharged from the service in December, 1945. His adjustment to civilian life in Seattle was extremely difficult. Signs of depression first appeared in early 1960. Today, he is a recluse completely withdrawn from society. He lives in his own world refusing any help from friends. My wife and I visit him at least once a year to take care of his basic needs.

Although my mother, Sakiko Sakai, was incarcerated for more than three years, she quietly accepted her fate and made the most of her Camp life - with a "shikata ga nai" (can't be helped) outlook. In camp, she wrote a number of poems, some of which were published in church periodicals. This verse translated by Rosamond Gary was mailed to me in North Africa. "Where man sets out to make a home, though desert be the scene, before his eyes there rises, Oh blessed sight! a Town." I would like to bring to your attention an indelible memory of my visit to the Minidoka Relocation Center in August, 1943. After six months of hospitalization which started in Tunisia and terminating at Bushnell General Hospital in Brigham

City, Utah, I was allowed to visit my mother. After being declared fit for limited service by a medical board, I received re-assignment orders for the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Camp Savage, Minnesota. Enroute to my new station, I visited my mother for two days. When I arrived at the gate of the Minidoka Relocation Center in uniform with properly documented furlough paper, I was halted by a Military Police on guard. He challenged me by raising his rifle to port arms and requested that I state my business. I informed him that I was on furlough and came to visit my mother, who is a resident of Barrack 6-A, Block 7 of the Camp. Apparently, no one in uniform had visited Minidoka Relocation Center and the guard called his superiors for instruction. I was permitted to enter the Camp and visit with my mother for two days. She assured me that she had adjusted herself to this barren life and was looking forward to that day when the war would end and she would return to her home in Seattle.

Fortunately, for the Sakai family, the damages to our home in Seattle caused by transient defense workers who rented the 3-bedroom home for \$35.00 a month, was comparatively small. However, many of our friends suffered great losses in business and property.

In conclusion, I pray that this Commission established by Congress will carefully review our statement and testimony and recognize the arbitrary abuse of constitutional rights by our wartime leaders; that the Supreme Court's decision legalizing evacuation and incarceration on racial grounds be reversed and some form of monetary compensation be made to victims of evacuation who are in need of medical and financial assistance today.


PAUL J. SAKAI