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Tacoma, Washington 98409
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Dr. Tom Taketa, Chairman (202) 395--7390
Commission on Wartime Relocation & Internment of Civilians
726 Jackson Place N. W.
Suite 2020
Washington, D. C. 20506

Dr. Taketa:

Toro Hirose phoned me on August 21, 1981 regarding my inquiry requesting to be heard at your hearings in Seattle, Washington, on the above subject.

I tried to quickly cover my thoughts and reasons with Mr Hirose, who then instructed me on your requirements of this letter of request and enclosed statement for staff research.

Please excuse the typing and mistakes--I have to do this alone on a new type typewriter. Time does not allow otherwise. This will be done on the weekend, in a very hurried manner.

Please accept this letter of request to be heard by your committee, preferably on Sept. 9, 1981. Mr. Hirose informed me that the meetings would be at Seattle Central College, 1701 Broadway, Seattle, Wash.

Please notify me of time to appear. C.F.S.

With Sincerity of Purpose & Intent,

C. F. "Chet." Straw
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Statements of facts as I have lived and known to be true regarding the events prior to, during and after, the internment of civilians by the U. S. Government in the 1940's.

In 1935 I graduated from Centralia High School at the age of 17. I joined the Washington State National Guard 41st Tank Co., at age 16 due to my birthday being in February. We needed the money and I wanted the experience.

I was one of about seventeen truck drivers chosen to go to camp early and work with the transport outfit from Seattle, who were undermanned. Our job was to haul in troops prior to camp and then return them after camp was over.

Sgt. Lilburn Stevens (a veteran Marine Officer from WW1) was our non-com in charge. He eventually took over the whole unit under a Capt. from the Seattle unit.

While National Guard summer camp was in progress, the Sawmill & Timberworkers went on strike. We were held over and put on duty to protect the Tacoma, Aberdeen-Hoquam areas.

As a young fella, I had repeatedly told Sgt. Stevens this nation was headed for a war soon. He couldn't see it at the time. My evaluation of history, true aquarian nature of projecting out forces me to project ahead of each time span and event.

In transporting troops I was very aware of the many Japanese fruit & vegetable stands in the areas covered. I knew of the very close family ties and respect for elders. This bothered me for tension was building in this area.

Being a student of history in school I knew of the danger of pressure tactics by foreign nations upon nationals in this nation. Tension was starting to build concerning the American fishing fleet in Alaska.

I went to work in a sawmill in Centralia, then to Long-Bell in Longview. Times were rough, jobs were hard to get and hold.

I was the youngest lumber carrier driver to hit the dock at the time. The first thing that I noticed was the CIO with speaker trucks trying to organize the mill. Secondly there was an area inside the property fence, full of Japanese national, who were working the Green Chain in both mills. They were not allowed outside the area and were under guard ~~for~~ their own protection.

I distinctly remember on paydays, they would line up at the post office branch set up within their area and send all their money back to Japan. The ill will and feelings, the undertow of building hatred could be sensed and felt.

Later on about 1939 I located my father whom I had not seen since the age of five. He came up and I returned with him to Salinas California where he was working in a lettuce shed as general superintendent. The owners were one Japanese man and one white man. If my memory is correct the name of the firm was The Salinas Valley Vegetable Exchange. (Tom & Yvonne?)

The owners and my dad were going to work me thru the plant and eventually wanted me to be able to take over dad's work. I had other plans, however.

While there I did work on the lettuce trimming line with nearly all Japanese people being the crew. Most were young men around my age. I remember well one young man by the name of "Pepper". He and I became good friends for the time I was there.

Here again I could see and feel the tension of trouble brewing. A remark here or there etc. The jealousy of the white Americans was growing. The inferences about the "Oakies" & "Japs" were hard for a young outsider to understand and take. These people all treated me equally, worked hard, helped fellow workers and showed respect for the work and employer.

I returned to Centralia then to Tacoma in 1940. Went thru the "Pearl Harbor" era with many misgivings and thoughts, trying to find factual evidence of why all this happened etc.

After working uptown as a plumber-fitter, I finally went to work at Tacoma Boat working on minesweepers for the navy. I was ~~deferred~~^F, yet as time went on I wanted to get into the "C. B.'s" and serve my share of time. I could have stayed out by deferment.

After at least three trips to Seattle and going thru the full route of physicals etc., then getting turned down for the branch I requested due to previous national guard service, I went to Portland, Oregon and got into the "C. B. 's".

After the usual boot camp in Virginia and the series of confusion as to future destination, we ended up in the South Pacific. Our unit did not see active ^{COMBAT} duty but were fairly close to the action for awhile. We had no direct contact with any Japanese prisoners, etc.

Seeing the young fellas coming back from action all shot up was developing a deep hatred for the Japanese nationals, that with the Pearl Harbor fiasco which set off the whole deal.

In summary let the record show: My opinion after much research & soul searching as an American who cherishes his country.

1. The entry into WW2 by the United States was made contrary to Constitutional Law in many areas.

Failure of intelligence and the armed forces to properly warn all overseas troops of impending attack and see that they were fully prepared, equipped and ready, was gross errors & omissions.

Failure of the President to find another method to get us in the war, which history shows he was committed to so do, was a direct violation of his authority and oath.

Failure of the U. S. Attorney General to see that constitutional law was fully followed and adhered to in all areas, was a fatal and gross error, in violation of every American's oath, not only those interned.

The U. S. Constitution as originally written covers every area of this and other problems this nation could face. It is more binding & applicable today if fully applied and adhered to by every citizen, per oath and obligation.

The fact that Martial Law Was Not Declared, plainly shows the misuse of authority in all areas of government and the armed forces.

The intent to protect the West Coast and industries vital to the war effort was clear and justifiable. The very clear status of those of Japanese ancestry who were not American Citizens, thus liable to pressure from the home land, is clear today with other nationals who reside in the U. S. but are not citizens thereto. We are facing similar situations as a nation today, which are a direct repeat of history, situations and facts. Unless we shape up and clean up our act, we will again be in a similar position again.

The reason for U. S. Navy Secretary Forrestal's suicide has never been fully publicized to my knowledge. I have my own beliefs which are very plain. This man could not bear to carry the responsibility for the gross errors and omissions, which he was a party to and in direct authority to prevent. The full impact of the many lives lost unnecessarily was greater than he could bear.

I consider the issue as I do present day "Victims of Crime" who are treated as second class citizens, compared to the criminal element of our society. I have been one and fully understand the double standards of our legal and judicial system. This area is the crux of most of the problems of this nation and its law-abiding citizens.

This nation has been on the brink of a Dictatorship three times to my knowledge. Each time the U. S. Supreme Court was packed by the party in power, in my opinion.

2. Every citizen is sworn to uphold our Republic form of government. Checks & balances thruout the system are in place, some highly misrepresented and misused by those in office at all levels.

No nation is stronger than it's weakest citizens. This includes those who would sell out to the highest bidder for personal gain and material things.

While the separation of religion and government is binding, in law UNIVERSAL LAW SUPERCEDES ALL MAN MADE LAWS. This is being overlooked and disregarded by those in the legal business and the judiciary, in most instances. THIS IS THE KEY: FOR WITHOUT LAW, ORDER AND RESPECT WE AS A NATION WILL GO THE WAY OF PREVIOUS LEADING NATIONS. HISTORY PROVES THIS.

In closing I would request that your committee fully bring out the full story of the basis for the problem you are investigating. The usual practice of "Treating The Surface & Not The Source" is not only the done in the medical business, but also in the legal, political and judicial.

There is no way except by an act of Congress that "Terms" can be granted to the victims of internment this late in the game. Under law, the statutes of limitations govern. We all must take our lumps once that is past.

Let the record also show the full breakdown of each ethnic area and the percentages of those in each; who are in crime, dope, other illegal areas, including selling out to our enemies. This will bring out where the future problems lie and will very clearly verify what Most citizens know---close knit families are usually those who do do commit criminal activities or condone same, this includes the American Japanese. I have deep respect for these people, which they have earned over the years.

This report is copyrighted due to its contents, and the serious statements therein, which I believe to be true without malice.

C.F. "Chet" Straw