

9.10.22

ALICE SAKURA KONO

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." With this Bible verse in mind, we willingly went to Minidoka.

My husband told our family and friends not to sell their homes, cars and personal things because as he put it -- WE WILL BE BACK! He also said, "It will be a small matter to obey our country's orders as soldiers are drafted to face war and death and ours would be a temporary act of duty to our nation."

My husband's faith in our country was well rewarded as we were given permission by the Western Defense Command to return to Seattle as first class citizens and be able to carry weapons, camera etc., many month before the ban was lifted.

Rumors were that the "Japs planted spies near Boeing Plant 1 before the war." Little did they know that my father Samuel Toyozo Sakura was a Christian and came in 1894 to America to seek religious freedom. He bought two lots and built houses on them in 1904.

As each son became of age, Papa paid huge sums of money (\$50.00) to have their name and citizenship written off the Japanese registry. To show their allegiance to America, my parents took out their first citizenship papers.

A day of decision came when the young men could show thir loyalty by volunteering. At our block meeting Mama stood up and although she was cursed, ridiculed and many fists were shaken at her, she said all that was on her heart.

In fulfillment of Papa's dying wish, my four brothers, Kenneth, Ted, Chester and Howard -- unbeknown to each other volunteered to honor and serve the country of their birth. Mother was sent a letter of commendation by Secretary of War Stinson.

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Tragedy struck our family members as Mrs. Funai committed suicide by hanging herself to the rafters of the barrack. My father-in-law Hanjiro Kono lost his mind due to his illness and circumstances. We had to take him to Blackfoot, Idaho. He was later transferred in a straight jacket to Western States Mental Hospital where he died without his family or friends. Frank Masao Shigemura, our nephew was killed in action during the successful rescue attempt of the Texas Paratroopers "Lost Battalion."

Redress, I would say yes, for all those who had to leave the coast and their heirs. My husband and I feel we should receive some monetary compensation, although money really doesn't make up for the loss of our loved ones and suffering. However, it would be a symbolic and historical gesture of goodwill in making amends for what was unjustly done to us.

I would like to make a request to the Commission that Congress would find means to help the children who were in the concentration camp and the delayed reaction today has brought them nervous frustration, divorces, and suicidal tendencies. Sixty percent of third generations of mixed marriages end in divorce. Some have committed suicide.

To show you what some of them had to endure by voices they heard saying:

"Don't eat the food on the train, it's poisoned."

"Don't get near the fence or I'll kill you, the soldiers yelled with guns pointing at them."

"When we get to Idaho, they will dig a big hole, shoot you and bury you in the sand."

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"Don't go barefoot because some scorpion will bite you."

"Be sure and bang the toilet seat many times because there might be a black widow spider on it."

Must I say anymore?

In closing as a matter of record, I would like to name three men, Floyd Schmoer, Albert D. Bonus and Rev. Emery E. Andrews then Pastor of the Japanese Baptist Church. They were just men, pillars of strength and help and held high the torch of justice.

Amen

Thank you.