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My husband and I with our two small children spent more than two years in the Japanese-American concentration camps. They were the most traumatic and psychologically upsetting years of my life.

When I first heard the rumors that we, American citizens, might be taken from our homes and placed in concentration camps the concept seemed too ridiculous to be true. But as most of you know, within three months President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order, #9066, ordering the evacuation of all Japanese from the two hundred mile strip along the Pacific Coast. The order concerned all Japanese, alien and citizen alike. There was hysteria, confusion, and racism everywhere.

My husband and I were married before World War II, and like all newly married people we were looking forward to many things. Suddenly even our small savings seemed like nothing. Many questions went through my mind, and I'm sure this was true for all who were being evacuated. What will happen to us when we leave our home? Will we ever see it again? How can we make a living and raise our children like we had planned? So many questions and no one to answer them. It was a day of complete infamy.

We lived in Portland, Oregon, at that time and we were taken to the Livestock Exposition Center in north Portland. In Puyallup, Washington, the Western Washington Fairgrounds

were used as the assembly center, and barrack-like buildings were built in the parking lots with fence and guards posted all around. One day we were free citizens, residents of communities, law abiding, protective of our families, and proud. The next day we were inmates of cramped, crowded American style concentration camps, under armed guards, fed like prisoners in mess hall lines, deprived of privacy and dignity, and shorn of all our rights. In the Portland Exposition Center there were 3,600 people under one roof. The horses' stalls were made into living quarters, and in the exhibition area plywood sheets made up the four walls of the family units. We were allowed to take with us what we could carry, so we stuffed as much as we could in our suitcases, duffel bags, and foot lockers. An Army truck came to pick up our bags and deliver them to the Assembly Center. There they were dumped, mountains of suitcases and bags. It was a terrible chore going through the mess looking for your own belongings.

At last we were assigned to our little room which was about 20' X 20'. In the corner were four folded army cots. We were told that mattresses would be provided for us. The "mattresses" turned out to be a bag made of ticking which was to be filled with hay. It was the most depressing period of my life. I never expected that this country, where I was born, would treat me in this manner.

We had a child nine months old and I was pregnant with my second, so my immediate concern was for my baby and my unborn child. We wanted to be sure that she was comfort-

able, and that she would have her meals on time. The laundry was another problem. The laundry itself was several blocks away and all of the clothes had to be washed on a wash board. We were told that all of our meals would be prepared and served to us in the mess hall, so we did not have to prepare our own meals, but what we had to eat was unchanging day after day. There was never any consideration for the oriental diet. Since the food was not refrigerated, or even prepared properly, most of the people in the Assembly Center were affected with ptomaine poisoning at one time or another. The latrines were very inadequate so those with vomiting and diarrhea had a very severe problem. Those of us with babies and elderly invalids probably had the most difficult time, and we had both in our family. My father-in-law was bedridden after suffering a stroke a year before the internment.

After spending four months at the Portland Assembly Center, we were transferred to Tulelake, California. The trip on the train was a nightmare that lasted about fifteen hours. We traveled at night and even when daylight came, all of the shades were drawn so we couldn't look out of the windows. It is truly hard to believe that two-thirds of us in those trains were citizens of the United States, and not one of us had been charged with a disloyal act. We transferred from the train to buses after we arrived in Klamath Falls, Oregon. After a while we could see before us a cloud of dust in a desolate flat area. There hundreds of low, black barracks covered with tar paper were lined

up, row after row. Dust and wind were with all of the Japanese-American evacuees at all of the camps, I am told, except those in Arkansas where the problem was mud.

Surely we all felt like people without a country, and believe me, it is a very depressing feeling not to belong to the land in which you live. But this was a time when we all needed to help each other. As a registered nurse, I felt that I had a special job to do. I signed up to work at the base hospital. There were patients in every ward, but fortunately there were doctors, nurses, ward clerks, cooks, maintenance people and others in our group who were also willing to help.

There were several sad incidents that took place while we were here, but I would like to relate one in particular. My father-in-law was critically ill at an internment center in Minidoka, Idaho. We wanted very much to be with him. We received permission from the administrator and left Tulelake on a Greyhound bus. It was not the easiest trip to make due to the crowded bus and our two small children. When we arrived at Burns, Oregon, I discovered that we were out of baby formula. This situation really put us on the spot but I felt that there was nothing I could do but go to the local market. I could see a Safeway store a block from the bus terminal where I was sure that I could buy a can of special morning milk which was the only milk my son could drink due to an allergy. I also knew that I would need a ration stamp in order to buy the food, but, being from an internment camp we were not issued food stamps. At any rate,

I went to the store and picked up a can of milk and went to the cashier. I tried to explain to the cashier that I had desperate need for the milk and that I could pay but that I did not have a food stamp. I am sure the cashier was wondering what to do when a lady directly behind me offered me one of her red tokens. I was most grateful to this lady, but I will always regret the fact that I did not stop long enough to get her name. I am sure that I was in such a hurry to get back to the bus depot to prepare the milk for my child that I was distracted. We did not encounter any other misfortune on the way. We spent several days in Minidoka but soon had to return to Tulelake again. Again we took the Greyhound bus, arriving at Boise, Idaho, at approximately 11:30 at night. We were told that we would have to change buses there at midnight, arriving at Klamath Falls in the morning. Unfortunately, the schedule had been changed. The next bus would not be leaving Boise until 6:00 AM. This left us in a terrible situation since we did not have any place to even take a nap, especially with our two small children. While we were wondering where we could go with our children, we saw a Japanese fellow out in the street. My husband told him of our dilemma. Our new-made friend told us that he and his wife had just arrived in Boise the day before and that none of their belongings had caught up with them as yet. He said they were renting a house up the street and that if we didn't mind having nothing but a roof over our heads we would be welcome to stay in their upstairs room. We went to his home and

the bare bedroom upstairs where we huddled close to each other and got as much rest as possible before we had to leave to catch the 6 o'clock bus. No sooner had we seated ourselves than a very unkempt man got on the bus and stared at us for a few seconds. Then he told us that we did not have any right to ride the bus because we were "Japs." Then he went to the bus driver to tell him that he wanted us removed from the bus. Fortunately, the bus driver was on our side and he told the man that we had as much right to be on the bus as he did. He reminded him that we were American citizens too. He told the man further that we probably had an even greater right to be on the bus than the one complaining because we were not drunk. He told the man that he should go home and sober up a bit before he could ride the bus. The drunk became furious and he kept yelling at us and calling us "so-and-so Japs." He finally got off the bus and stood in front of it. He said he wouldn't let the bus leave the terminal until we had got off. Fortunately, the police arrived and dragged the man away. This incident was very frightening and embarrassing, even sad to us. We wondered how many people in that bus were sympathetic to inebriated man, or how many of them felt sorry for us. At any rate, without any further problems, we were able to return to Tulelake that evening.

During the latter part of 1943 we were transferred to Minidoka, Idaho, to a so called "loyal camp" on account of Tulelake being used for those Japanese who wanted to be repatriated to Japan. Again we were assigned to a room,

but this time we had to live with my parents, so there were six beds lined up side by side, and only a blanket as a partition. Absolutely no privacy whatsoever. Each day we would get up and see these four blank walls which gave us no incentive to do anything. It was another day of uncertainty and despair. We wondered what our future would be even if the war ended that very day for we did not have anything or any place to go. My husband was even more concerned for all of us. One day he heard that the farmers in the area needed help with their harvest, and the WRA was allowing fellows to go out on a leave so he signed up with that group. This was a great boost for his morale.

Eventually we got a clearance to work at the Army Sioux Ordnance Depot in Sidney, Nebraska. Finally we were able to get away from the fence and the guard towers before the war ended in 1945.

In October of 1945 we decided to return to our former home in Portland which had been rented out during the period we were in concentration camp. I could only remember my home as it was when we left it--newly decorated with paint, wall paper, and new rugs. To my disappointment, our home was not what I had expected. The windows were broken and the hardwood floors had holes large enough to see into the basement below. Fleas were throughout the house. We had to stay in a hotel for a month before we could move into our house because of so much repair that had to be done. This, in itself, was a hardship since we had two small child-

ren, now 3 and 4 years old. Living in a hotel, cooking and eating in a small room was a problem. We certainly did not have any money to spend on a hotel room for a month, but we had no choice. Finally, when we did move into our house, there remained a feeling that maybe some of our neighbors would not accept us and this emotional condition caused me to have hives for six months. Finally I had to see a physician who advised me to go through a series of skin tests to determine the cause of my hives. The result of this test was that I was allergic to about 80% of the food on the market and the non-allergy foods were mostly out of season and very expensive. After about three months of a very strict diet I recuperated from my uncomfortable condition, but I have felt that this incarceration has brought about these physical and emotional changes in me. Physically I have developed an allergy to many things, not only foods but to certain drugs and clothing. Psychologically, it has become very difficult for me to relax, rest or sleep without thinking of those years which we spent behind barbed wires.