

DR. MATTHEW M. MASUOKA

5504 E. BURNSIDE STREET
PORTLAND, OREGON 97215
PHONE 236-8623

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Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
Suite 2020, New Executive Building
726 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20506

RE: Testimony at Seattle Hearing to C.W.R.I.C.

My name is Matthew M. Masuoka, married with three children. I have been practicing dentistry in Portland, Oregon for the past thirty years. I am a four year veteran of the Second World War, two years service in the states and two years overseas in France and England.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify in behalf of my parents who have been deceased over twenty years and who in the prime of their lives endured the hardships of the evacuation. There was so much that happened to them during the war that you may have to fill in the composite of experiences common to all evacuees and internees.

The order to evacuate came to my parents when I was taking basic infantry training at Camp Robinson, Arkansas. I received a telegram from my brother informing me of their evacuation. It was shocking news; how contradictory can the government be to have a son serving in the U.S. Army and his family forced out of their home. I took the matter to my company commander hoping to appeal to a higher authority. Little did I know that the order affected not only my family but all those of Japanese ancestry residing along the West Coast; the order coming from the highest military authority and approved by the highest executive office. My company commander promised that the United States would stand good when the war hysteria was over --- just as they have done for the German-Americans after World War I. I wish to state at this time my deep appreciation to General Mark Clark for testifying in behalf of the Nisei veterans at the Washington, D.C. hearings, I like to think his testimony is a partial fulfillment of the promise of my commanding officer made back in 1942.

The news that followed was even grimmer. My father was suddenly taken into federal custody by the F.B.I. The F.B.I. agents rushed him out of our home one evening so quickly that my mother had to chase out after them to give him his coat. That was the last time the family saw him for the duration of the war. All the letters received from him were censored and all the family knew about him was that he was alive and the weather was fine. I visited my father at the internment camp in Santa Fe. I was only allowed to speak with him through the barbed wire fence under the watchful eye of the guard in the tower.

My mother with the two youngest in the family faced yet another setback -- the money in the bank was frozen that she could not maintain the hotel business we were in. She sold the business to the first person with an offer of cash which amounted to only a fraction of the business' actual worth in order to comply with the evacuation orders.

They were allowed only two suitcases apiece to face an unknown future. The personal belongings they could not take were stored in a basement room of the hotel with the permission of the building owner. They were herded to the Pacific International Livestock Exposition Center which was converted into an assembly center with armed guards and a barbed wire fence. That summer, from the assembly center, my family was sent to their final destination the relocation camp at Minedoka. I took a furlough to visit them at the camp and found it was in the desolation of the Idaho Desert. I found them living in black tarp barracks again surrounded by barbed wire fencing and a watch tower with armed guards. My family lived there for two years and I have been told by them that the winters were extremely cold and the summers were intolerably hot.

My family left the camp for Spokane so that my brother could continue his education in a city not under Western jurisdiction. Accordingly, when they left the camp, they were given bus and train fare to reach their destination. In Spokane, they worked at odd jobs waiting for the war to end.

When the war ended the family was reunited, my father came back from the internment camp and I returned from overseas. We moved back to Portland, Oregon to resettle. The personal belongings my family stored prior to the evacuation were gone without a trace and the bank returned our money without interest. Returning to the original business was impossible as it was too expensive to restart. In the years following the war my parents were not able to recoup the personal and financial losses that they suffered. Their loss was not only limited to the United States but due to McArthur's Land Reform, specifically the absentee owner clause, they also lost their farm and ancestral home in Japan. In the last report from Japan only the right of way, the road through the farm, is under the family name.

In presenting this testimony, I do not seek vengeance against the U.S. government nor do I seek to vent my anger and indignation to gain the sympathy of the American people. What I seek is justice for those who have suffered innumerable losses due to evacuation, and the correction of an unconscionable act which stripped people of their civil rights and human dignity. It is shocking that such a violation of civil and human rights could occur in the United States and what is more appalling is that forty years later the laws and the Supreme Court rulings that vindicated the act of evacuation and internment still ~~are~~ are in the law books. I believe that compensation should be granted immediately

to those who have suffered these injustices, especially to the Issei, our older generation who are meeting financial difficulties due to their advanced age; indirect compensation for those who did not survive the harsh ordeal, and individual compensation for those who were wrongfully arrested and not granted the right of due process.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew M. Masuoka,

Matthew M. Masuoka

Portland, Oregon 97233

Ph. (503) [REDACTED]