

To: The National Committee for Redress
Japanese American Citizens League
National Headquarters
1765 Sutter Street
San Francisco, California 94115.

From: Robert Shizuo Kinoshita, M.D.
Brightwood, Oregon 97011-0001.

Subject: Executive Order 9066
Wartime Exclusion & Internment of Japanese-Americans.

The Portland Chapter of the J.A.C.L. has asked me to present my views, opinions and convictions concerning Executive Order 9066, including the question of Congressional Indemnity Payment. Furthermore, I have been asked to provide an expression of the extent to which Executive Order 9066 affected not only myself, but my family.

Let me begin by stating that it is my belief that the issuance of Executive Order 9066 was the result of a "WAR HYSTERIA", compounded as a result of Misunderstandings and Discrimination of Japanese-Americans, especially in California, and even in Washington, D.C. itself.

It is impossible to simplistically discuss all the facets of Wartime Exclusion and Internment of Japanese-Americans. Probably the best way is to relate the events as I lived them. I was born in, then, the Territory of Hawaii of Japanese parents from Hiroshima, Japan, who came to Hawaii, as laborers and succeeded in "raising" a family of eleven children, and succeeded to improve themselves to finally become merchants and real estate owners. I was born on February 20, 1906 with "Dual-Citizenship", as was the rule of that time. I was expatriated from Japan, when the U.S. Department of Labor came to Hawaii to allow those who desired to do so, to become 100% Americans. I enrolled in the U.S. Reserve Officer's Training Corp and after graduating from the Advanced R.O.T.C. of the University of Hawaii and the University of Nebraska, I was commissioned 2nd Lt. Infantry Reserve in 1929. I was commissioned 1st Lt. Med-Res., in 1934. My first experience of Discrimination occurred when I wanted to be married to a White student nurse. I found that in Oregon, a Japanese-American was not allowed to marry a Caucasian woman, by Law. I had to go to Washington State to obtain our marriage certificate.

In 1936, I was called to Active Duty with the Civilian Conservation Corp of Medford, Oregon District as a camp surgeon. Surprisingly, I did not meet with any discrimination or disrespect from more than 40,000 men from the South in our District. The officers, and Forest Service Personnels were all friendly, cooperative, courteous and respectful. We had difficulty, however, in renting or buying a home through a real-estate firm, in Oregon.

When the possibility of War with Japan became evident, I was placed on Detached Service with the Presidio of San Francisco, California, just about the time the World Fair was in San Francisco in 1939. I learned that I was being sent there, so that the Army Intelligence Officers could determine what kind of American I was, and to ask me "what I would do, if the United States and Japan entered into War with each other?". Later, they told me that they were satisfied that I would serve my Country-the United States of America, to the best of my ability.

A short time after I returned to Medford, Oregon, from San Francisco, I was promoted District Surgeon in charge of over 42 CCC Camps in the Medford CCC District, a part of the Vancouver Barracks Greater CCC District. I was fortunate to receive a "Letter of Appreciation" from President D. Roosevelt about that time, before the War. In 1941, War with Japan was declared and in 1942 a restrictive Curfew was declared, which prohibited any person of Japanese Ancestry to be on the streets after 8 P.M. each night, so I called the F.B.I. Office and asked them, what I should do, since I was teaching the First Aid Class for Medford, Oregon nurses at 9 P.M. They told me that I was "exempted" and that I should continue to pursue whatever ^{time} I had been doing prior to that Order, since they "knew all about me". A short ^{time} later, due to my excellent to Superior performance of duty with the CCC, I was ordered by the War Department to report to Fort Omaha, Nebraska for Active Duty with the Army of the United States of America.

My family and I sold some of our belongings at a great loss, and we left cameras, fishing and athletic equipments, and guns with our white friends (these were declared lost or misplaced when we returned after the War) and departed for Portland, Oregon, where my wife's relatives lived, -to store the rest of our belongings, which we would not use in our wartime Army life. I, without much thought, visited the Center in Portland, where future Evacuees were being processed. Then a short time later, my Army orders to report to Fort Omaha was cancelled and I was ordered with my son, who was 6 years of age, to report for confinement in the Portland Relocation Center at the Old Exposition Center on May 18, 1942. This shocked me and my family, and this meant additional planning, since my wife was about six-months in her pregnancy status, and suffering cardiac problems due to Rheumatic Heart Disease with Mitral Valve Stenosis. She was told that she could not accompany our son and myself to the Relocation Center, unless she signed a legal release form which stated that "she will not sue the U.S. Government, if confined with our son and myself in these camps because she was of the White Race." This was indeed a psychologic, psychiatric and emotional shocking situation and I believe that this contributed to her future mental and physical impairment. She was on a strict low sodium diet and unaccustomed to the Life as was, in the camp of confinement. We entered Portland Relocation Center while I was still on the active roster of Vancouver, Barracks. I do not know whether or not I was paid for any accumulated leave-time due ~~to~~ me, for past services rendered. Of course, with this sudden evacuation efforts, the Administration was not prepared to supply adequate, sanitary quarters, and the food supplied was not of the type my wife with a serious heart condition was accustomed to. However, I was able to send out, at personal expenses, for food and medicinals, as needed. This factor helped to deplete our monetary reserve, gradually. We were amazed to see that the camp was inclosed by barbed-wire fence and heavily guarded by Armed soldiers, who stated that anyone getting outside the confined area would be ^{one} shot. My son and ^{my} wife, were much depressed and emotionally disturbed and ^{one} psychiatric damaged inflicted upon them were tremendous. The civilian administrators of the Camp were sympathetic and very helpful.

From Portland, we were placed on a train, and shipped to Heart Mountain WRA Camp in the desert area of Wyoming just 12 miles north of Cody, Wyoming. This camp was also inclosed by barbed-wired fence and heavily guarded by armed soldiers. We lived in a one-room-no-ceiling cubicle in a barrack type of building, with walls of plyboard through which sound penetrated, and we were allowed to sleep and sit on Army steel cots with mattress. There were no air-conditioning as rumored by outsiders. No table or chair were furnished, and the place was dusty, cold, and drafty. The common bath, and latrine (toilet) were clean but with no privacy and was drafty also. The rooms were about 16x 20 feet. Each barrack had six rooms, and was "below poverty level of the 1960's". Wall boards were later added to keep out the cold. In addition to my duty as a doctor, I participated in the main activities of the Camp.

At first, we had considerable episodes of "diarrhea" from foodstuffs, but later, this was eliminated by the capable supervision of our "chef," Mr Mits Aiso of California. The food were not up to the standard and quality, to which most of families were accustomed to, in their homes outside of the guarded camp. The Administrator, Mr Irwin, was very cooperative, sympathetic and helpful. Due to the work schedules, I did not see much of my family. We workers all received \$19.00 per month to buy incidentals, as needed. Every family had to their laundry and this meant considerable handicap to my wife. Some of the kind ladies did help my wife, at times. She refused to have her baby "delivered" at what she called a "Concentration Camp", and the Administrator was kind enough to allow her to go to a hospital and to a doctor in Cody, Wyoming, at our expenses. This factor helped lessend the "blow" to her already damaged "PSYCHE".

After writing to various men in Congress and to many Army Friends, I was ordered back to Active Duty with the Army and I reported to Fort Warren, in Wyoming, for physical examination and instructions, March 1, 1943. After the Examination, I was asked to see the Commander, who told me he had two barracks full of Japanese-American Soldiers confined to quarters, and he requested that "I speak to them in Japanese, explaining the reasons why they were confined to the barracks, and to assure them that everything will be done in their behalf with the passage of time". This was indeed a great surprise to me, and I told the Commander that my suggestion was that he ^{should} talk to them in English. I conveyed to him my belief that such a talk in Japanese, would add to the "insult" these Japanese-American soldiers were being exposed to. He looked surprised, and he agreed that my suggestion will be given due consideration. I reported back to Heart Mountain Relocation Center in uniform of the U.S. Army (Captain) and prepared to leave the Camp, without my family, to report to Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania to attend various Army Refresher Courses. The Administrator and friends gave us a "fare-well dinner" and this helped the morale of the family.

I went through the courses at Carlisle Barracks but somehow, I was kept there because they felt that they had a special job for me in the very near future. However, I became restless and wrote to my friends in Washington, and ask that I be allowed to join the 442nd Combat Team in Shelby, Mississippi, since I felt that I should be allowed to participate in the actual war for the United States of America. I was sent to join the 442nd Combat Team as "Executive Officer" but due to change in the "Table of Organization" of that Unit, a short time later, my assignment was changed to Medical Detachment-Plans and Training Officer and Sanitary Inspector. So, I can say, that I helped trained the Medics of that Unit, who did wonderful and efficient service when they were used in Combat in Europe, later.

My family was getting very depressed at Heart Mountain, so after a while I was able to find a small house in Shelby, Mississippi, and my family was released from Heart Mountain Camp, and my wife and children joined me by train at Camp Shelby, lugging all the valises, and with heavy load of canned Soy Bean Milk for my younger son, who was very allergic to cow's milk. I do not know how she managed, with her heart condition to transport the family and valises. However, the strain, exertion, and worry added to her heart being further damaged. If she could have stayed in Portland with the children (I cant see how a child could sabotage any Army installations), where her relatives lived, and did not have to evacuate, she may have had help there, and thus should have spared herself from damaging her heart.

After the Tennessee Manuevers, the 442nd Combat Team was decorated by General Eisenhower and ordered to overseas duty. This meant that I had to arrange for my family to find a "home" elsewhere for the duration of World War II. Captain T.H. Ebbert and wife who were stationed at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, invited my family to come up to their place in Wisconsin (We were friends while in the CCC work in Oregon). My wife and children were sent by bus to Bangor, Wisconsin. The people of Bangor were all very kind and patriotic and helpful, possibly because the 100th Battalion from Hawaii, trained there, and left a favorable record before going to Camp Shelby. My family-stay in Bangor, Wisconsin helped their morale a great deal.

Since we had about 33 Medical Officers over the requirement, I was given a chance for promotion by being transferred to a new unit next door at Camp Shelby. But because several days later, General Patton requested "all available field-trained officers to be transferred to the 7th Armored Infantry Division," I was also sent to the 7th Armored Infantry Division to become Battalion Surgeon of one of the Combat Teams. We were to join Patton's Army in England later after going through reorganization at Fort Benning, Georgia, first.

During my services in the European Theatre of War, the non-commissioned officers and soldiers were very cooperative, obedient to commands, and very helpful and loyal and efficient, but when it came to promotions, I learned not to look for any, since each Unit to which I was transferred to for promotion, the Commanders kept me as adviser to their battalion surgeons and stated that their policy was to promote their own officers. I thought this was discriminatory but perhaps, If I was a Commander, I would have done the same. As the War in Europe was about to be won by our side, German soldiers (300 at a time) began to surrender even to us Medics, in the front lines. About that time, we had been informed that we could be going home, if we accumulated enough "points" in combat. The Commander of the Unit to which I was attached called me to his Post, and told me that I was to go and take over a 350 beds German Field Hospital behind German Lines, in a jeep driven by a carbine-carrying U.S. Military Police Sergeant, to take over the hospital and to make a report to the Commander, as to the general condition of the hospital, the number of seriously wounded men, the number of walking wounded, Ambulance cases, and the number of men who could be transferred to a Prisoner of War Stockade, and also how much food was on hand, and the number of medical and other supplies needed; also the sanitary condition of the Hospital. I took over the Hospital in the name of our Commander from the German Hospital Commander. I was surprised when the German Commander asked me what Nationality I was from. He stated that he thought that the Japanese were their allies. I explained to him, that I was an American Citizen of Japanese Ancestry, in the service of our country-the United States of America. He was surprised and very much impressed, and interested. He then asked me how many sons I had at home, and he presented me with two German Ceremonial Swords, as war trophies, to be given to my sons, and he also gave one other to the MP Sergeant when he learned that the Sergeant had one son at home. I made my report to my Commander. He then told me that the Commander of the 442nd Combat Team had sent a request that I be transferred back to that Unit to take over the command of Medical Detachment of the Combat Team. On advice of my recent Commander, I was told to go back to the United States to see my family on the basis of hard earned "points" while in the European Theatre of War. So I requested permission of my former Commander to allow me to return to the United States, after thanking the 442nd Commander for his offer, and I recommended that he promote my former assistant, who had served with me while I was in the 442nd Combat Team at Shelby, Mississippi. My recommendations were approved and soon later, I was sent by truck to Le Harve, France-Port of departure with other G.I.'s for the United States and later landed in New York, after a relaxing sea trip.

We were processed at Camp Shank in New York State and then transferred to the Billings General Hospital, near Indianapolis, Indiana. There, I was assigned as Assistant Chief of Medical Services including the care of nurses and WACS. Then, one evening, Washington, D.C. called by phone to influence me to become a Liason Officer in the Asiatic Theatre of War. The Commanding Officer of Billings General Hospital thought that I should visit my family and he thought that I had enough front line duties, and should request for transfer to the Chicago Area Command, where I could easily visit my family in Wisconsin each week-end. The Pentagon allowed me to be transferred to the Fort Custer Rehabilitation Area Command, near Battle Creek, Michigan where I was assigned to about 500 war injured men to rehabilitate by careful evaluation and treatment. This was very time consuming service and very interesting and a great challenge to try to do everything possible with all the facility and know-how and monetary aid of our great Nation for seriously injured war veterans. The Government did not spare anything for the welfare of these men. I enjoyed this service very much and made many friends. Apparently everyone respected each other regardless of race, color or religion in that area.

After my duty at Fort Custer Rehabilitation Center, I was discharged since at that time, the actual World War II was ended and won. I had to write to my friends in Portland for financial help so that I could go back to the West Coast with my family. Apparently my friends did not have funds or were in the same situation as myself. So, I had to hurriedly sell my new Buick, stored in Hillsboro, and to sell, at a great loss a valuable property in N.E. Portland,, and thus was able to return to Portland, Oregon by train with my family. My friends were helpful in many ways and I was given a space in the Plummer Drug Store Building at reduced cost, and a friend rented their home to us. However, I found that I was not allowed to "deliver" a patient at the Maternity Section of St. Vincents Hospital, because the Maternity Section Nun in charge had been on the Bataan March in the Orient and hated anyone of the Japanese racial background. Bishop Murnane through the help of Dr. Ted Tsuboi helped solve that problem with the transfer of the Nun. Then many Doctors came to my help and I was able to go on the Staffs of Providence Hospital and Good Samaritan Hospital. The Editor of the Oregonian was very helpful in allowing Miss Sullivan of his staff to interview me and my family at a rented house in Portland, and gave us a family picture and favorable writeup on the front page of the Oregonian. After this, many of the people called us to express their well wishes and we had many invitations to churches and other activities, and my older son was registered by a kind hearted special Nurse of Providence Hospital to the Summer Bible Camp at Troutdale, Oregon by paying for his tuition. (I did not know of this until later).

It was almost impossible to insure my wife (Metropolitan ^{Life} Ins Co,) and for a while, we could not be insured by the Oregon Automobile Association (until Mr Weir later corrected this). Although I had been a long user of the Standard Stations before the War, I could not obtain a credit card because of my racial background. However, the Shell Stations came to our rescue and issued us a card. Long time later, Standard also decided to favor us with their card. Buying a home was almost impossible, until through the good graces of Mr. Gus Solomon (who later became a Federal Judge) we were able to purchase our first home in Portland, Oregon. The Headquarters of Reserve Officer's Command called me to tell me that I had been selected with one other candidate, West of the Mississippi to attend the Command and General Staff College of the Army in Leavenworth, Kansas. I had to refuse this offer, because my wife was ill, and also because I had just open my office, in Portland,

I understand that now, all Japanese Americans are treated very well in the Armed services without any discriminations.

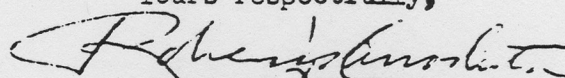
I had accumulated a good sized debt due to the Evacuation and Confinement by Executive Order 9066, and I had to work hard to pay my debts and had to ~~work~~ 16 hours a day, and soon found myself beginning to have gastro-intestinal hemorrhages. I would receive transfusions, treat myself, and go right back to work and Mr Dave Weiner of the Nob Hill Pharmacy certainly helped me with his blood donations and medications. I found the people of Portland to be very kind, generous and helpful and except for one instance, I did not meet with any discriminatory word, or action. I believe the article in the Oregonian helped my family and I am thankful that someone in the Army Service Command was thoughtful enough to notify the Editor of the Oregonian about our return from the Army Service. President Truman also sent a "Certificate of Appreciation" for services rendered by me in the Army.

I wish to express my apology to the Commission for submitting this long letter. However, this was necessary because, otherwise, I could not clearly express what I said in the beginning of this letter—that I feel that the way the President and the Army acted toward the Japanese-Americans, must have been due to "War Hysteria" influenced by years of misunderstanding of the loyalty of the Japanese-Americans and due to some of the people, especially in California, being biased, and perhaps greedy and also envious of the success of the Japanese-American Group in the years prior to World War II.

Now, I can ^{say} that people no longer think of the Japanese -Americans as enemies, and they understand that no matter what a person's background, he or she can be loyal, trustworthy and Good Americans. Time has changed the status of our present understanding, a great deal for the Good.

The ~~only~~ thing I wish to say about the question of whether or not, the Government of the United States should pay a monetary indemnity to those wrongfully confined in the Armed Camps, like prisoners, could be only determined by the Conscience of the Commission. I was granted some repayment for my monetary loss in the Evacuation and Confinement Process, through the efforts of Mr Min Yasui in 1950, through the "Evacuation Claims Act of 1949". Therefore, I believe that if there is going to be any payment by the U.S. Government, I would suggest that this could be through the establishment of a Foundation with Funds Donated by the Government, to help the Japanese-Americans to become more able to attain Education, Better Health, and Better Opportunities to find their right ⁱⁿ places in the various Walks of Life in Future America. However, in the cases of those children, who by the harshness of the Evacuation and Confinement Process became emotionally and psychiatrically afflicted in any way, I believe that they should receive monetary assistance or whatever the Government of the United States feel reasonable and fair.

Yours respectfully,


ROBERT S. KINOSHITA