

My name is Tadao Sasaki. I am 70 years old. My wife, Kinuko, is 68 years old. Our home and truck farm is located at: [REDACTED] Orting, WA 98360

We have four children: Ronald (40 years old)
Marilyn Hinds (38 years old)
Carol Fujioka (36 years old)
Mark (34 years old)

My family has lived on this farm since the early 1920's. We all struggled and worked hard to clear the land of standing timbers, tons of rocks, and unwanted weeds in order to get the land into tillable condition. When we had finally worked the land to where we were able to plant and harvest a decent truck garden crop, along came the word from the War Relocation Authority - any and all people of Japanese descent must evacuate their homes and be placed in internment camps. We were notified approximately one month prior to the relocation date of May 14, 1941, that we were to report to the relocation center at the Puyallup Fair Grounds.

This demand from our own government was a most shocking and traumatic experience - especially since we had spent hundreds of dollars to work, fertilize, and seed the land for the first crop of the 1941 season. The crop was at its prime growth and ready for harvest when we heard from the War Relocation Authority. To be torn away from our home and farm was a heartbreaking experience - especially when we were looking forward to a good crop, harvest, and return.

We had a family friend move into our house while we were away. Since our friends were not truck farmers, they were unable to harvest the crop

as it should have been done. The family stayed on the farm mainly to watch the house and farm equipment for us.

Friends took us to the camp on May 14, 1941. When we arrived at the camp - the Puyallup Fair Grounds - we were assigned "rooms" under the Grandstand. Each room was simply ply board partitions, and had just enough room to hold three or four single army cots. Mattresses for our beds were thin unbleached muslin bags which we filled with straw tick from a barn. This was a degrading and humiliating experience - to be treated like animals in a barn.

The floors in our rooms were bare cement. There was no heat, toilet, or bath facility. The rest room was located about two city blocks away. For the first ten days in camp, there was not a bathing facility available for our use. Our meals were terrible to say the least. They were unbalanced and poorly prepared. Our days were spent with nothing constructive to do in the terribly overcrowded camp. We were made to feel like prisoners while in the camp. Army guards stood on the rooftops of the buildings - rifles in hand.

After a few weeks of internment, a notice was passed around that the U & I Sugar Company was recruiting for laborers on the sugar beet farms in the Chinook, Montana area. My family decided to move to Chinook to work rather than to sit idle in the camp. We traveled by train to Montana where we were housed in sub-standard farm laborers' dwellings. The wages we received for our work were minimal and barely met our family needs.

Our life in Montana was not exactly freedom. We were restricted as to how far away we could travel. A curfew was also imposed upon us.

At times we even encountered discrimination.

After the war, we returned to our home in Orting. We were glad to be able to do that. Because the land had been improperly harvested and taken care of while we were away, weeds had overtaken most of the area we had previously planted. It took us approximately five years to get the land back into the shape it had been in prior to our May 14, 1941 departure.

In spite of the ordeal that we all went through, our loyalty to America did not diminish.

The most difficult problem we faced upon our return home was trying to be accepted back into the community. Our true friends remained friends and welcomed us back, but many others discriminated against us and other Japanese people.

No amount of money could make up for the emotionally trying times we experienced during the war. But a monetary value can be placed on the loss we incurred on our farm while we were interned. I estimate that the loss was approximately \$18,000 - due to improper harvesting, care of the land, etc. An excess of \$100,000 could not repair the pain and suffering and loss of personal pride my family experienced during this ordeal.

Tadas Sasaki
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