

I am Mrs. Kikuno Kimura

Prior to the Pearl Harbor incident and the beginning of the war with Japan, my husband was employed by the Japanese consul in Seattle.

We were Japanese national at that time because we were denied the previledge to become Unite States citizens. However, we were permanent residents in the United States. My husband was hired here in Seattle and was not a representative from Japan. His duties were secretarial works.

On January first, 1942 we were arrested and taken to the immigration station in Seattle. We were separated and placed in different rooms. He was immediately whisked away and I did not know his whereabouts until he was released and returned to Seattle just before going to the assembly center.

While I was in the immigration station, I felt that I was treated rather harshly. One day my pregnant daughter visited me at the immigration station. We were prohibited to speak in Japanese with each other by the guard standing by. Couldn't even wave good bye from the second story window to my daughter standing across the street.

In December, 1941, my son was a student at the University of Washington. He quit school and had already volunteered to enlist in the arm force of the United States. He had participated in the European campaign and at the end of the war returned as one of the recipients of the Purple Heart.

The available cash I had, I invested in preparation to establish a dry cleaning shop. Expected day to open for business happened to be just a week before evacuation, so the business venture was a total loss.

On May 1, 1942, with the other evacuees was escorted to the Puyallup Assembly Center. It was a miserable place. Weeds were growing up through the cracks in the barrack floor and in the neighbor's room a snake crawled in.

I can never forget the nature's daily calls to the latrine. The latrine was one large room and there were no separate doors and many persons standing in queue watching the ones before you, sitting in rows, and backs to backs, and then be looked upon by others that followed.

In mid August we were transferred to Minedoka Concentration Camp. What a God forsaken place. The government really picked the most desolate place in the country. About four years there, hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and nothing to see but sand and snow in the respective seasons. Miseries that happened were many many and were hard to endure.

When we returned to Seattle there was no home to go and no job available. We were unwelcomed evacuees returning and we were afraid to walk the streets that we were accustomed before. Four years in camp and adding few more years after returning to Seattle, the best years of my life was wasted and to begin a new life was never easy. Starting from scratch was financially very hard and many times had wondered if there will be a tomorrow.

*Yukio Kikuchi*