

To: The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians

Subject: Written Testimony of Richard Akira Hayashi, [REDACTED], Tacoma, WA 98408; occupation: retired from the Washington State Employment Security Department in 1979; age: 63.

Pre-Evacuation

On December 7, 1941, I was in my senior year at the University of Washington. My father was employed as a produce salesman for Pacific Fruit and Produce Wholesale House in Tacoma. The curfew and travel restrictions imposed on all Japanese living on the West Coast made it impossible to continue my education, so I withdrew from the University in January, 1942. My father's job ceased also as produce markets operated by Japanese began closing with the imminence of evacuation.

The responsibility for assisting the government in preparation for evacuation was given to JACL chapters. Months of February, March, April and May were one of uncertainty and confusion but they were also busy months as the local JACL chapter assisted in the registration of all Japanese residents. In retrospect, it was the "obedience to authority" taught us by our parents that made us cooperate quietly and meekly. Reaction to evacuation would set in later when the gates of the "relocation" camp closed behind us.

We were given approximately two months to prepare for evacuation. Since we were renting our home, we did not have the problems faced by those who owned property. We advertised our 1937 Ford for sale and could only get \$75 for it. With that experience, we decided not to sell our furniture but instead gave it to our landlord who had helped us during the depression years. Personal items we could not take with us because of the one suitcase per person restriction, we boxed and stored at the Buddhist Church. In all, I would estimate our material loss between \$2000 and \$3000.

Camp Life

In May, 1942, Tacoma Japanese were taken by train to temporary quarters set up in Pinedale, California just outside of Fresno. We were transported in dirty and old railroad cars which were crowded to capacity. As a young adult I was one of the monitors in charge of the cars, I was soon busy looking after the women and children who became ill from the heat, pressure and crowded conditions. It was a relief we thought when the train finally reached Fresno, but little did we know that the temperature outside was hovering in the 100s. Having just left the moderate spring weather of Puget Sound, the heat outside was unbearable to many and soon we were again ministering the ailing. First impressions? Hot, dusty, bleak - and to top it all the first meal served us in the messhall was raw spinach salad and watery miso-shiru!

My parents and I were assigned one end of a barrack, an area of about 16 by 16 which we shared with another family of three from Auburn. To provide some semblance of privacy we strung a rope across the center of the room and hung sheets on it as a partition.

Again in retrospect, most of us Nisei adjusted to the transition from freedom and relative comfort to spartan existence behind barbed wires without rebellion or bitterness because of our parents and their philosophy of meeting adversity with "gaman" and "shikataganai".

In August, 1942, we were moved to the permanent camp at Tulelake, California. Since we were among the last contingents to be moved, our arrival in Tulelake was cushioned by friends who greeted us and helped us settle into the new environment. While my

parents were busy making the quarters assigned us livable with makeshift furniture, etc. I obtained employment in the administrative office as a senior clerk at \$19 per month.

In October, 1942, word came that the army was recruiting candidates for the Military Language School. While this was not greeted with any enthusiasm especially by former California residents where the anti-Japanese feelings were the strongest, we from Tacoma whose mayor, Harry Cain was one of the few public officials to publicly oppose the evacuation, responded to the call, as American citizens would be expected to in time of war.

We did not realize at the time that when we left the camp to enter military service, our parents would be subjected to harrassment and in some cases threats of bodily harm. I did not learn of this until I returned from three years' service.

I served with the 312th Intelligence team attached to the 77th Infantry Division and saw action in the Guam, Leyte and Okinawa campaigns. When Japan surrendered in 1945, our unit was in Cebu preparing for the invasion of mainland Japan. I applied for and was granted an emergency leave in September, 1945 to return to United States to assist my parents in resettling in Tacoma.

Post-Camp

Housing in Tacoma was limited, especially for Japanese families. Mr. Horike who returned to Tacoma earlier made make shift quarters in the basement of his house for returning families and we were fortunate in having a place to stay until we obtained a place of our own. Others lived in dormitory conditions in the basement of the Buddhist Church.

In 1946, an old house in the downtown area became available and we purchased it with the money my parents had saved from my army allowance.

Due to my veteran status and having a college education, I found employment with the State of Washington Employment Security Department. In 1947, I married my present wife and soon learned that finding suitable housing was difficult due to still existing discrimination against Japanese and the limited finances due to three years in the army. We lived in public housing until we saved enough to move into our own home on McKinley Road.

Since I was in the concentration camp a relatively short time, I was not directly affected as much as it did my parents. My dad lost three years of gainful employment at a time when we were just recovering from the depression, and two more years after returning to Tacoma since his former job was no longer available to persons of Japanese ancestry. He finally opened a barbershop in the skidroad area since the barber union had a "white only" clause. This limited the type of clientele to low income and senior citizens. Although he earned enough to sustain himself and my mother, it was a bare existence. My father passed away in 1963 and my mother in 1971.

Statement

Yes, I feel compensation, whatever amount is due too Japanese who were incarcerated during World War II and it should be direct compensation.

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