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My Recollections of WW11.

On December 7, I brought a calculator machine to my home to begin the weekly bookkeeping chores for my store. I was really astonished when a friend phoned to tell me that Pearl Harbor was being attacked by the Japanese and that war had started between the US and Japan. I thought that there must be a some explanation why a little country like Japan would fight with a giant like the USA.

Prior to the war, we had experienced much discrimination. Japanese were excluded from good jobs because we were not union members and unions would not let us join them. Traditionally, Nikkei wanted to provide better education for their children. We had saved money for our children's education, the top priority despite our low earnings. Our children knew how hard their parents worked and saved for them. And our children did achieve a good education in the universities and colleges, but there were no suitable jobs for them, even if they had graduated at the tops of their classes. We hired 2 of these college graduates for our store.

Even though the government did not give jobs to these college graduates, they were immediately drafted into the army in 1940 because they were citizens. One of these workers was engaged to be married and he did marry after he was drafted, and the army sent him overseas a week after their honeymoon. I learned later that he was killed in Italy during a landing operation. I felt so sorry for him and his family.

I prayed to Buddha that he has peace and that he was sent to heaven.

Soon after the beginning of the war, our Nikkei had to live under terrible fear. Many issei leaders, our friends, were arrested and taken away to the Seattle Immigration Office by the FBI without having done anything wrong. I was worried to death every time a car stopped in front of the house because it might be time for my husband to be arrested.

We had a store in Pike Place Market for over 12 years in 1942, and we had good customers and a good business. On December 14, 1941, someone burned down the store and we lost all that we had worked so hard to have. The fire department said it was arson, but they never found out who did it. There were rumors that the owner of the market had set fire for insurance and also because there were so many Nikkei tenants in the market. We had to rent a new store and take out merchandize from storage. We also had to clean up the burned store in a hurry. We had heavy investments in merchandize and we had to cash out our life insurance to meet the cash needs because of the fire.

Then, we heard that all Nikkei on the west coast must be moved inland, so we had to sell the new store too.

I will never forget the day my husband was arrested by the FBI and sent to the Seattle Immigration Office. That was January 29, 1942. 3 men came to my home and while one of them watched us, the others searched through everything in my house. All our letters, documents, records, were taken away. As my husband was being taken away, he was allowed to have \$5 for pocket money. Suddenly, I became the responsible person in the family, the sole support for my 2 children and the household. I pledged to myself that I would do my best to meet this crisis.

We had purchased a house in Lane St. in 1936, and there was a balance owed of \$241.18. I paid it off and bought 3 years of fire insurance. I rented the house to a Mr. McMahon who is caucasian. I had to sell our new Dodge car for an unbelievably low price. Finally, I had to prepare to move to camp. It was very sad to see all Nikkei prohibited from the area of 5th Avenue and the waterfront area, put on a telephone pole.

We were required to have typhoid shots before going to camp. I went downtown to get the shots. It was too strong for me and I had a high fever and my body ached all over. I felt I was going to faint at any moment. Since my husband was gone and the car sold, there was no way to get by car. I carried one child and pulled the other, holding his hand, and we began walking slowly up to 12th Ave. Suddenly a car stopped. Rev. Ichikawa from Seattle Buddhist Church gave us a ride. I will never forget his favor. Fortunately, we all got well in a few days.

In the middle of February, 1942, we received a letter from my husband who was interned in Bismarck, N. D. It was a great relief to know where he was and that he was all right. I was allowed to correspond with him only once a week and only in English. Due to my lack of fluency in English, I had to get help from a youth to do the letter writing. So, I could only transmit basic information only.

Fortunately, my husband had taught me how to do the paperwork for our business. I was able to handle things in this emergency situation. I appreciated my husband's foresight in this.

The prohibited area for Nikkei was extended to 7th Ave. by the time we were sent to Puyallup. It deepened my sorrow.

I bought some toys for my children to take to camp. They were of help with other children in the camp.

After 3 months, we were sent to Hunt, Idaho, for our permanent camp. We had one room. Everybody in camp was required to work. I had to think about my children before choosing work. So, I decided to clean latrines which everybody else disliked. But it was all right for me because I could keep my baby with me. I was paid \$6 a month for this.

My husband was paroled from the internment camp and joined us on Nov. 25, 1943. Finally we were together. I felt much more secure and found greater strength to go on living.

Beginning in 1944, the government showed interest in releasing Nikkei from the camps. My husband sent to Seattle to see what the

situation was, so I was in Seattle for 2 days. As we expected, I couldn't locate our tenant, Mr. McMahon. Our furniture, stored in the basement, was badly damaged by water. 15 boxes of canned food were gone. There was 8 months of unpaid rent due us. Anyway, we were able to return to Seattle in April 21, 1944. Because we had a home, many of our friends from the camp were able to use our house for a temporary stay. My husband started a gardening business when we got permission for a business phone. We got calls from a bank president, contractors, doctors, etc., who asked us to do gardening work. Many of these people were worried that Nikkei might be hurt by other Americans. They said to let them know immediately if there was any trouble. They said that the war was not a crime that we committed so don't be ashamed or scared of anybody. Because of this type of support, we were able to resettle fairly smoothly. Overall, most people welcomed our return.

Soon after my husband had joined us in Idaho, I asked him what happened in his camp. He said that there was an unbelievable amount of data on him collected by the FBI and shown to him at his hearing. I asked myself why the US government had to keep us Nikkei under such surveillance and had collected so much personal data. They must have felt that war between Japan and the US was unavoidable. Therefore, I believe that the Pearl Harbor attack had been inevitable. I hope that our country has learned a lesson from all this and be more understanding and can compromise more to avoid war, and establish a permanent peace.

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