



Masato Uyeda

[REDACTED]

My name is Masato Uyeda. I was born Jan. 1, 1895, in Hiroshima, Japan, the second son of Masajiro Uyeda. I arrived in Seattle on November 10, 1911 when 16 years old. I moved immediately to a mining camp in frontier Wyoming where my father was working. I worked for the Kemmerer Mining Shaft numbers 1, 3 and 4.

I then worked as a railroad lineman for Oregon Shortline Railway in the Ogden Utah area. I was promoted to section chief for Union Pacific Railroad at Marston in 1917 during World War 1.

I moved to Seattle in 1929 and started to work as a gardener. Then, I started in the Sanitary Market selling malt hops and bottling supplies in Pike Place Market. An unknown arsonist burned my store and warehouse to ashes on December 14, 1941, and our family savings of 12 years and all the hard work were lost. I was also arrested by the FBI as an enemy alien and sent to the Seattle Immigration Office. I felt so sad that I almost went mad at that time. This is a thing I have never been able to forget in my whole life.

The FBI was unable to find any evidence against me after searching my home. I have never committed any hostile acts or participated in any espionage against the USA. Yet they arrested me and forced me into the Immigration office, leaving my wife and children in our home. My group was moved by blind window trains to Fort Lincoln, Bismarck, North Dakota.

Our life in Fort Lincoln was like that of birds in a bird cage. We were surrounded by barbed wire fence and we had no freedom. The food in the camp was no good, but sufficient amounts were provided even under wartime conditions.

The hearings for internees in Bismarck was very one sided. Our opinions and wishes were totally ignored.

After 6 months in Bismarck we were transferred by blind window trains again to Roseburg, New Mexico. Speaking in Japanese or in loud tones was prohibited. Internees were ordered to raise their hands for permission to go to the lavatory and we had to line up and wait our turn. None was able to see outside the train.

The camp in Roseburg, New Mexico, was an internment camp and internees had to wear uniforms similar to prison garb and had numbers on their backs. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire fences and the US army patrolled the fence with machine guns mounted in jeeps.

We, the internees, felt that it was very strange since none of us was trying to escape. The government official said that the soldiers were there to protect us internees. In 6 months, we were again moved to an internment camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

After I was in Santa Fe for 4 months, I was parolled in November, 1943, and I was able to join my family in Camp Minidoka in Idaho. I returned to Seattle in April of 1945. I was prohibited from working outside the Seattle area so I had to work as a gardener from my home. I was also obliged to report once a week to the Immigration office the times and places where I had worked.

4 months after returning to Seattle, the war finally ended. I felt like a bird released from its cage. The Nikkei in America had experienced the tragedies of war in quite a different way. My family had its experiences: my father had served in both the Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese war. My mother and family had suffered from the wars and tasted of the tragedy of wars. My parents used to talk to us children about the sins of war.

Fortunately, we owned a house in Seattle prior to the war and had that to return to, but there was unpaid rent for one year that we did not receive and food stored in the basement of about \$65 was gone. Besides these losses and the losses due to the burning down of the store and warehouse, we figure we lost, in 1941 dollars, about \$25,000. There was an additional loss of \$3,000 due to cancellation of life insurance. In 1957, under the Property Claim Law of 1948, the government gave us \$200.

Even though I was parolled in 1943, I had trouble when I applied for citizenship in 1954. When I appeared in court, the judge questioned my loyalty due to my internment and I had to bring in my attorney to prove my loyalty to the US government. I don't know why only the Nikkei were given such hardship in the United States.

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