

Noboru Taguma's Odyssey

April 1942. Noboru Taguma, the eldest son of seven kids, was uprooted along with his family from Broderick, California, a poor farming community of about 25 Japanese American families. They were evacuated to the Merced Assembly Center, a converted fairgrounds, where the Tagumas lived for the next four months.

Late summer of 1942. The nine Tagumas, along with 4,500 other evacuees at Merced, were relocated to the Amache (Granada) internment camp in Southeastern Colorado. Noboru Taguma received a 4-C ("enemy alien") classification from the government.

February 1943. "Loyalty questionnaire" distributed in camp. The Nisei were faced with two vital questions:

No. 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

No. 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?

The Nisei were then made eligible for the draft. Noboru Taguma answered "no" to question 27, the Army question, and "yes" to question 28, the loyalty question. His intentional failure to report to the Army's physical examination and pre-induction led to his arrest. Upon arrest, he and other resisters were sent to a federal penitentiary near Denver, then to Denver County jail to await trial for four months.

April 3, 1944. On his 21st birthday, Noboru Taguma and 35 other Amachean draft resisters were sentenced in court. Noboru Taguma was sentenced to one year and one day.

April 4, 1944 to September 20, 1947. The 36 former Amacheans were sent to Tucson Prison Camp in Tucson, Arizona. The draft resisters formed the "Tucsonians," and have held periodic reunions since the internment saga ended. After nine months at Tucson, Noboru Taguma was released and relocated to Granada City, near the Amache camp. Almost nightly, he walked three miles to the camp to visit family and friends, although he was barred from the camp. Hoping to relocate himself and his family to Tule Lake, Noboru Taguma renounced his citizenship. He was unexpectedly arrested by FBI agents in Denver. He was sent to the Santa Fe internment camp in New Mexico. During his nine-month stay at Santa Fe, the war ended and the camp was closed. He was relocated to Crystal City, Texas. After nine months at the Crystal City internment camp, he was recruited along with several others to work in Seabrook, New Jersey. There he served his one year of probation before finally being released.

For the majority of the 120,000 internees, freedom arrived in early 1946. For Noboru Taguma, freedom was not a reality until September 20, 1947. The internment saga deprived him of his freedom and his family during precious years of his life.