



STATE SENATE
DISTRICT 25

Testimony for SCR 14

March 2, 2017

SCR 14 brings back many memories of my childhood. Those memories convinced me that we must treat everyone justly, fairly, and without discrimination. I was friends with Nancy Ouchida, whose family was sent to an internment camp in 1942. Her family members were citizens of this country of ours. The Ouchida family was given 6 days to vacate their home and business, and report at the Portland Assembly Center, which was the stockyards, where cattle was sold for slaughter.

Tom Ouchida was attending Oregon State College, studying chemistry had just five days' notice to leave College and report to the Assembly Center. Everyone on all levels of school/education was now excluded.

They were allowed to take whatever they could carry – including bedding, clothes, books, etc. But NOT cameras, radios, or weapons. They left most all their possessions, horses, livestock, farming tools and equipment, planted crops. And stored their furniture in a locked shed, but it was looted.

Roy Ouchida sent me his memories : Giving them 6 days to pack up and leave our homes is probably the worst thing a government could do to any American citizen. The Ouchida family had just got electric power so the house was wired for electric lights and power outlets. They changed their wood kitchen stove for an electric range, tossed out their icebox for a refrigerator, put an electric motor on their gas engine Maytag washer, installed an electric motor pump to replace their rope and bucket water system, all at great expense, only to be taken away at a stroke of a pen. They could not sell their new International Harvester tractor and the implements so it was consigned to the dealer where they bought it new. Hessel's implement company did sell it a few months later, after their hefty consignment fee. Their nearly new Chrysler sedan luckily was bought by their great Norwegian neighbor, the Nyberg's. They also drove the Ouchidas to the Assembly Center rather than having the Army pick them up in a truck. They also stored their truck and many boxes of stuff in their barn. Unfortunately, mice and mold got into almost everything, but they are forever grateful to the Nybergs.

The Assembly Center, the stockyards, was a smelly place of horse stuff since they were in the "horse barn." Room dividers were plywood on a wood floor with no ceiling or doors. Beds were made of straw. There was one small restroom for each sex for hygiene, etc. There were picnic tables for meals, if you can stand staying in line for "food." The Ouchidas were in the stockyards from April '42 to August '42, with August being one of the hottest on records.

Then came the train ride to Minidoka, ID, near Twin Falls, ID. It was hot and dusty in the summer, very cold in the winter with single wall construction barracks covered with black tarpaper to seal out the weather, but it could not keep out the dust in the summer nor the cold in winter because of the ½" space between the floor boards. 7 of them survived in a 20x25 room with 7 folding canvas cots and a

coal-fired pot-bellied stove. They lost their freedom to soldiers with guns, guard towers, barbed wire and German Shephard dogs.

Strange European type food was served in a common dining hall after waiting in line. To shower, there was a line for one of six shower heads in one room. To wash or shave, one had to wait for one of the six or eight basins in the other room. Need to go to the bathroom? Wait for one of the six commodes lined-up on one wall, all without dividers or doors.

Need to wash your clothes? Concrete twin tubs and your newly purchased scrub board were available. Oh, Soap? The "canteen" was 3 blocks away. Problem is, whose got any money unless you have a job working for the Camp, making \$16 a month. Maybe you are an MD or a dentist, why you'll be paid \$20 a month! Picking spuds for one week, on the "outside," paid \$100!

The Ochidas are happy and thankful for all those teachers that accepted government jobs to teach those interned and were brave enough to live in the camp, without fences. Only the Military Police that pointed their guns towards us had a fenced guarded compound.

While basic necessities were provided for survival, believe me when I say it was miserable.

They are forever thankful for all the persons of Japanese ancestry that were in the Internment Camp that were Doctors, Dentists, Nurses, Teachers, caregivers, Policemen, Firefighters, mechanics, chefs, janitors, farmers, florists, artists, and everyone else that had a skill that make the Internment Camp feel like a true community, with or without government intervention.

Then they came home.

The Ouchida family left the "restricted area" in February 1947, to return to Gresham, where they were greeted with signs in stores saying "No Japs here." After nearly five years of being interned, friends helped them start over again. Zimmerman's 12-mile store allowed them to buy food and merchandise. Mitzi Fahner's dad bought strawberry plants for Roy's father so he could start farming again. There were many more kindnesses. They had to start over again.

Roy attended Gresham Union High School all four years and graduated in 1952. There was still discrimination. That's where he met a great man named Bud Monnes. It was unbelievable how his words and manners thwarted much of the prejudice that was an everyday event for him while he walked the halls and tried to have a sack lunch.

Both the brothers on Roy's Father's side and Mother's side enlisted into the US Army to prove their loyalty to America. They returned to college and became engineers.

These people were resilient and they survived. These people are true Americans. I urge an aye vote.