

February 2, 2022

Letter in support of Oregon SB 1509 -- Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Historic Highway

To the Legislators:

I am writing this letter in strong support of the proposed State Bill 1509 creating the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Historic Highway. As the daughter of one of those Oregon Nisei Veterans that this route would honor, I believe that this recognition is long overdue.

My father was a veteran of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) during World War II and participated in the peaceful occupation of Japan after the war. Nisei members of the MIS served an essential function in providing language and cultural translation services – for a nation that still had relatives incarcerated behind barbed wire in what our country called “internment camps.” Loyal citizens like my father overcame their hesitancy in supporting this nation and gave their all to help move us toward the peace that everyone so fervently craved.

Many of those Nisei came back to a country which still did not want them here. My father returned to his birth state of Utah and quickly decided to move somewhere more welcoming. His family found that in Eastern Oregon. Starting with a very small group of Japanese Americans there before the war, after 1945 the population quickly ballooned when the Japanese Americans realized that they at least weren’t shunned or pushed away as many had been in other places, especially in Oregon.

This meant that this group of 2nd generation Japanese Americans (the Nisei) built a strong community for us to grow up and thrive in. We had several JA grocery stores and restaurants and a thriving all-JA Methodist church and, for our family, a bulging-at-the-seams Buddhist Temple, one of only two in Oregon. I had the chance to grow up among elders who were in the 442nd and MIS. While they rarely shared their stories, when they did, they were riveting and the basis of America – evidence of courage beyond belief and the willingness to step in where no one else could or would.

I believe that honoring this group of Americans is long overdue for our state and strongly support the designation of his highway in honor of Oregon’s Nisei Veterans.

Sincerely,



Janet S. Nishihara

Born and raised in Malheur County

2 degrees from Oregon State University and 1 from the University of Oregon

Lifelong Oregon resident