TESTIMONY STATEMENTS

(Taken from "Hearing of U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians" September 10, 1981 in Seattle, Washington)

MASAO TAKAHASHI

My name is MASAO TAKAHASHI. I am presently 87 years old. Forty years ago, I held a job as a cannery foreman for an Alaska fishery company. My earnings were considered high wages among my fellow immigrants. I had many friends and a good standing in the community. I lived in a comfortable house with my wife and four daughters. After twenty years of struggling to subsist in this country as a waiter, logger, maintenance man, etc., I considered my job just prior to the war to be very fortunate.

On the very day of my eldest daughter's eleventh birthday, February 21, 1942, I was roused from my sleep very early in the morning. The FBI, along with four Seattle policemen, searched my house, ransacking closets. I was allowed to dress, but under observation, even in my morning toiletry. I was placed in the Immigration Detention Center. Apparently, I was part of the second group of men to be taken by the authorities. I am a perennial optimist and the anxiety of my fellow inmates had little effect on me. I recall feeling confident that I would be released in time to eat birthday cake with my family that evening. However, when we were stripped naked and thoroughly inspected, my optimism was shaken by the very humiliation of the process. I assumed that cooperation would lead to an early release and resolved to accept the inevitable. But that was not to be. The days were added on to days. Tense boredom, terrible food, and wild rumors were our daily preoccupation. I remember breakfast consisting of coffee, toast and jam. From the window of the Detention Center, I could see our house. Many thoughts would enter my mind as I looked out the window. My family came to visit with regularity. I remember a friendly guard teased my visiting five-year-old daughter by slamming the barred gates closed and telling her she was now a captive. She flew into my arms joyfully, saying, "Oh boy, now I can stay with Papa." Mama had tears in her eyes and I wished I could cry, too.

After approximately a month and a half, my family came to the train station when a group of us were transferred to Missoula, Montana. I was allowed a few minutes to walk to the fence to say goodbye to them. I was at a loss to find comforting words. Boarding the train, I heard my daughters crying out, "Papa, Papa." I cannot describe how I felt at that time. I can still hear the ring of their crying in my ears today. This was the first time it occurred to me that I might not see them again.

I remember being given an egg with breakfast at Missoula. This was our first egg since being incarcerated and it caused quite a stir. I never thought I could appreciate an egg so much. From the camp in Missoula, I was shunted from place to place for two years. I remember one camp guard spoke Japanese and greeted us with, "Yoo koso, oide kudasai mashita." The irony of that gracious welcome had a very depressing affect on us.

From somewhere in Louisiana, I wound up in a camp in New Mexico. It seems I was kept constantly on the move with little rhyme or reason. It was from this camp in Santa Fe that I was able to make arrangements to go to Crystal City, Texas where I would be reunited with my family. My numb feelings were revitalized. I had tried to imagine what their lives were like since their incarceration in about April of 1942. My wife was never a

physically healthy person and with four small children of 11, 9, 5, and 1, I often wondered how she was really faring. My anticipation of seeing my family again, became an obsession. My two-year forced separation became more acutely painful just prior to our reunion. I feared the cruel punishment of possible cancellation.

The reunion was the most joyful affair of my life. The girls had grown so much I mistook my second daughter for my eldest. My wife had aged. The baby was not walking. Her prepared speech was, "Otoo san watakushi was Midori, desu. Ookiku natta deshyo?" ("Father, I am Midori. Haven't I grown up?") She managed to make her speech well for me, but it was months before she stopped hiding from me. What a strange feeling--my own daughter afraid of me. The second two years of camp life were a thousand times better than the first two, lonely and hard years. The administration of the camp was infinitely more humane than the previous ones, but more important, I was with my family. Here in Crystal City, we were addressed with the titles of Mr. and Mrs. Meals were cooked and served in individual families and a much greater degree of privacy was maintained. I participated in the operation of the camp by volunteering for the job of meat butcher. Even under the parameters of these conditions, we had a healthy sense of community in this camp.

There was a barbed wire fence close to the back side of our housing unit. I remember one incident that innocently rose from the mouth of my four-year-old daughter. She excitedly reported to Mama the capture and demise of a rat caught by our neighbor. She finished the story with the carcass of the rat being tossed far "inside" the fence. . . . Again, I saw tears in Mama's eyes and I wished that I was able to cry. Instead, I mumbled to Mama that she was a fool.

The end of the war brought an unexpected dilemma. As a Japanese citizen, it was always my intention to return to Japan. My wife strongly favored the immediate repatriation to Japan upon release from Camp, but I thought the prospects for employment were better if we returned to Seattle. I felt guilty forsaking the country of my birth and education. Mama and I had many arguments regarding our future prospects, but I prevailed. We were delayed in leaving Camp after the war because of reported housing shortages in Seattle. I came home to Seattle in April of 1946, and I came with both feelings of relief as well as fear. My bank account left with Mama was a balance of four thousand dollars before the war. It was reduced to two hundred dollars when we returned to Seattle four years later. I did not receive any money from the government upon release from Camp and I borrowed money from a friend to start a small business of a grocery store in partnership with a fellow-internee. I was never able to regain the financial comfort nor the social standing of my pre-war days.

Today, aside from my old infirmities, I am very comfortable in my late years. Despite the fact that I was unable to give my daughters the support I wanted to in their growing years, they have given so freely of their time and resources to keep me comfortable. My beautiful eight grandchildren are a great comfort to me. I live as a lord in my old age, due to their grace and largely at their grace. I am very happy that the government of America is looking into the past. I think it takes a great country to admit its mistakes and make proper restitution. America has that greatness.

THERESA HOTORU MATSUDAIRA

My name is Hotoru Matsudaira. My baptismal name is Theresa. I was born in 1902 and am now 79 years old. My husband, Thomas Tokuhisha Matsudaira, brought me to America around July 24, 1921. Since the time I was a little girl, I had had a great desire to see America. I breathed the air of the great land of America and had considered my joys and sorrows as blessings.

Before I had children, to learn English I went to work as a waitress at the Matsuba Restaurant on Main Street so I could start to work as a chambermaid at a hotel. After I learned a little English, I worked at the Rose Cafe also on Main Street.

My eldest son, John, was born in 1922. Then Michael, Francis and James were born so I became very busy. Next, my eldest daughter, Paulene, was born. The year after Mary Elizabeth was born, that dreadful Japanese-American War (World War II) began on December 8, 1941, at Pearl Harbor.

Relationships between Japan and America had absolutely no connection between the Japanese and the second generation Japanese in America, but we became like people who fell off a cliff and wandered in the mud. We, with so many children, began our frightful and tearful life.

My husband worked as a foreman for a long time at the Kodiac Company, a salmon cannery, and he was well known as Tommy. He was well loved by the white people of the town. He loved baseball, and as soon as a boat reached Kodiac, he played ball with the people on the boat and the Japanese. When canning season was finished, he took four or five Japanese with him and worked for a Japanese oyster company as an opener on an Indian reservation.

With the beginning of the war, Japanese people were not permitted to leave Seattle, but an Indian chief came down for him. Tommy worked until the middle of March of the next year. One night, however, about seven big men with sticks came and told him to get out of there. Indians would suffer great losses because the oyster-opening season had begun, but Tommy did not want anyone injured, so he came home.

We learned that Japanese people in Alaska, Seattle and Bainbridge Island were to be moved and made to live a community life together in Puyallup, but at first we did not believe it. However, with an order from the United States Army, Japanese quietly took just small amounts of luggage and went into the Puyallup assembly center. My family with nine children departed beloved Seattle on May 18, 1941, and entered Puyallup. After that our happy family life was all broken up. We retired every night with the ten o'clock bugle, but I could not sleep from thinking of the children's future and the deep sorrow in my heart.

In the latter part of August, my husband left with the children for a camp in the desert of Idaho. Mrs. Chiseko Nagaishi and I remained behind in Puyallup to deliver our babies. To deliver the baby fast, according to army orders, I was given two little white tablets and castor oil every

morning. I tried for three days, but there was no sign of the baby coming so the doctor decided to stop the medicine and allowed me to go to Idaho to have the baby.

However, the next morning, which was the day before serious patients and we were to move to Idaho, a nurse came with three pills and castor oil. So I told her the doctor told me to stop taking medicine, but the nurse said, "This is a military order, so you should take it." I explained to the doctor what had happened when he came. He said, "What shall we do?"

I was very much worried. I did not want the baby to be born on the train. I could not do anything - not even eat. So I went to the shower room. the fire was still smoldering so I added three shovelfuls of coal. I waited a while. Then I went into the shower and took a cold shower, then a hot shower. I repeated this three or four times. I went outside and ran for three blocks. When I passed in front of the hospital, everyone was looking at me, frightened.

About half past four, labor started. I ran into the hospital and checked on the frequency of the labor pain myself. I went to the delivery room a little before eight and had a baby girl at 8:15 p.m. I was very happy and thankful.

The next morning at 6:00, I boarded the train on a stretcher and went to Eden, Idaho. I was admitted to the hospital, but there was no bedpan and for that I had to wait for three hours. I wondered if strong Indians did things like this, too.

Three years later we were allowed to leave camp if we wished. We had a house in Seattle, poor as it was, so on March 14, 1945, we came home with our new baby and a 90-year-old man who came from Yamaguchi-ken Japan, whom we had met through our friend.

When we reached home, the house had been burglarized and there was not a thing left. All the beds were gone--the rest of the furniture, the kitchen range, even the electric extension cords were all gone.

Father Clement, who brought us home, said, "This is really war."

Three daughters and I were taken in by Maryknoll Sisters. Mother Superior of Providence Hospital gave us a bed for the old man. My husband and the boys slept on the floor for three months.

There was no range to cook on, so I had to prepare meals on an electric plate burner which was very difficult.

The older boys and my husband searched for jobs only to find signs, "Object to Japs." So they went to the W.R.A. office for assistance.

I shall stop this letter here. If you do not approve of what I have written, please throw it away.

My eldest son volunteered for the 442nd RCT from Minidoka, and he received a serious wound in Italy. He was in the Veteran's Hospital in Chicago at this time. My second son, Michael, was in the occupational army in Japan. He pasted a Star 2 picture in the window and put a badge on his front, and finally started to work at Providence Hospital.

After the war, all nine sons served in the Navy, Army, or Air Force.

We sent all 12 children to Catholic school and taught them to keep their balance and stay on their course in peace as well as in troubled times. We, as parents, watched them carefully and prayed with them.

I am already 79 years old. My husband died 30 years ago.

My fervent wish is that without racial discrimination everyone who was born in this country love and help each other. May young people unite their strength and do their best for this great country.

Please continue the course the first generation took; that is, honesty, diligence, and patience. God will surely bless you.

MASATO UYEDA

My name is Masato Uyeda. I was born January 1, 1895, in Hiroshima, Japan, the second son of Masajiro Uyeda. I arrived in Seattle on November 10, 1911 when I was 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 I.

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 unkown 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 went 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 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 six 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 U.S. army patrolled the fence with machine guns mounted in jeeps.

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

After I was in Santa Fe for four months, I was paroled in November of 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.

Four 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 served in both the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. My mother and family 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 paroled 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 U.S. government. I don't know why only the Nikkei were given such hardship in the United States.

AYAKO UYEDA

My Recollections of WWII.

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 some explanation why a little country like Japan would fight 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 two 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 had 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 merchandise from storage. We also had to clean up the burned store in a hurry. We had heavy investments in merchandise 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. Three 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 two children and the household. I pledged to myself that I would do my best to meet this crisis.

We had purchased a house on Lane St. in 1936, and there was a balance owed of $241.18. I paid it off and bought three 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 (regulations posted).

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 Avenue. Suddenly a car stopped. Rev. Ichikawa from the 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.

Fortunately, my husband 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 Avenue 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 three 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 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 November 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 was sent to Seattle to see what the situation was, so I was in Seattle for two days. As we expected, I couldn't locate our tenant, Mr. McMahon. Our furniture, stored in the basement, was badly

damaged by water. Fifteen boxes of canned food were gone. There was eight 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 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 U.S. 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 U.S. was unavoidable. 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.