Memories of Heart Mountain

Sam Mihara

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San Francisco’s Post Street — Our home town
Mihara family, father’s side, c. 1941
“...with liberty and justice for all.”

Photo by Dorothea Lange
Rev. Fukuda and family

- Konko Church
- Dec. 7, FBI took Rev. Fukuda

Michisuke, Nobusuke, Saburo
Media created racial hatred

- American Farmer: Japs or Hindus not wanted.
- Japanese propaganda posters: If you worked as hard and fast as a Jap, we'd smash him a lot quicker.
- Jap Trap.
- Treacherous Japs open war on U.S.
- Poster: Those Japs will soon be slap-happy!
Who supported mass removal?

Sec War Stimson  
Lt Gen DeWitt  
CA AG Warren  
CA Gov Olson  
Asst Sec War McCloy  
Col Bendetsen  
Gen. Allen Gullion  
Congressional Reps  
Local media  
Farmers Associations
Who made the final decision and why?

• On Feb 11, 1942, Sec of War Stimson recommended mass removal.
• On Feb 19, 1942, FDR signed Executive Order 9066 - Exclusion
• Why?
  – Military necessity
Removal Notice, April 1, 1942

WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WAR TIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION
Presidio of San Francisco, California
April 1, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

Living in the Following Area:

All that portion of the City and County of San Francisco, State of California, lying generally west of the north-south line established by Junipero Serra Boulevard, Worcester Avenue, and Nineteenth Avenue, and lying generally north of the east-west line established by California Street, to the intersection of Market Street, and thence on Market Street to San Francisco Bay.

All Japanese persons, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above designated area by 12:00 o'clock noon Tuesday, April 7, 1942.

No Japanese person will be permitted to enter or leave the above described area after 5:00 a.m., Thursday, April 2, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the Provost Marshal at the Civil Control Station located at:

1701 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, California

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property including: real estate, business and professional equipment, buildings, household goods, boats, automobiles, livestock, etc.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence, as specified below.

The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Thursday, April 2, 1942, or between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Friday, March 3, 1942.

Civilian Exclusion

Headquarters
Western Defense Command and Fourth Army
Presidio of San Francisco
April 1, 1942
Military Orders:

Confiscate
Exclusion
Curfew
Registration
Forced Removal
Landmark Cases

Fred Korematsu  Gordon Hirabayashi  Minoru Yasui
Stores boarded up
Household furnishings moved
Buses were loaded, one suitcase per person
“Assembly Centers” were very crowded
Some lived in horse stalls
Boarding train under armed guards
Three types of American Concentration Camps

- WCCA Assembly Center
- Unused facility
- WRA Relocation Center
- WRA Isolation Center
- WRA Temporary Camp or Other WRA Facility
- Justice Dept., U.S. Army, or Other Facility
Where is Heart Mountain?
Camp near complete in 2 months
Heart Mountain Camp opens late summer, 1942

10,767 prisoners, 468 barracks
New arrivals met by camp guards

First train arrived August 11, 1942
Handicapped were carried off on backs
Some passed through windows
Government Assigned Numbers

14-22-C
26737D
Imprisoned

“Warning - do not cross the fence”
Plan view of barrack

BARRACK LAYOUT

- A: 16' X 20
- B: 24' X 20
- C: 20' X 20
- D: 20' X 20
- E: 24' X 20
- F: 16' X 20

Doors

Recessed entry
Inside barrack room
Bill Shishima family, 1943
Our family in front of barrack
Eating in mess hall
Californians were not prepared for Heart Mountain winters.
Toilets had no privacy
Greeted by poisonous critters
Farms created next to camp

Heart Mountain
8,123 ft.

Heart Mountain Relocation Center

highway 14
hospital

Heart Mountain Agricultural Project

Shoshone River
Classrooms at start
33 white teachers hired, lived in camp
Boy and Girl Scout Troops

Senator Alan Simpson and Congressman Norman Mineta met in camp as boy scouts.
Football, baseball and basketball were very popular.
Couples were married
Babies were born – 550 over 3 years
Camp had police force
Three issues during camp

- Loyalty Questionnaire
- Renuncients
- Military Draft
No-No’s sent to Tule Lake California Camp
Some prisoners were beaten
Several prisoners shot by guards

Isomura and Kobata –
July 27, 1942, Lordsburg, NM

Ito and Kanagawa –
Dec. 6, 1942, Manzanar, CA

Okamoto –
May 24, 1944, Tule Lake, CA

Oshima and Shimoda –
May 12 - 13, 1942, Ft. Sill, OK

Takeuchi –
May 16, 1942, Manzanar, CA

Wakasa –
Apr. 11, 1943, Topaz, UT

Total 9 killed by guards
Many drafted were from Heart Mountain

- 758 drafted
- 49 wounded
- 13 killed in action
Draft resisters sentenced

- 83 resisters sentenced
- Pres. Truman granted full pardon Dec 24, 1947
- Many fought in Korean war.
Our family had health problems
Funeral at Heart Mountain
Downtown Cody in early 1940s
James Purcell and Mitsuye Endo Case

- SF Attorney James Purcell
- Endo in camp, had perfect record
- Filed habeas corpus petition
- Sup. Ct. Dec 18, 1944
- Government has no authority to continue detention of loyal citizens
- Release Endo and all prisoners
In late 1945, trains departed to take us home.

Last train left on November 10.
Finacially we were devastated

- Very little money
- Dad had no job
- Mother worked as a domestic
- Damaged and missing property
- Some became slumlords
Heart Mountain Camp closed Nov 15, 1945
Smithsonian exhibit opened October 1, 1987

A More Perfect Union
Civil Liberties Act of 1988

President Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 into law, August 10, 1988
October 1990
Letter of Apology
from President George H.W. Bush with a redress check

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation’s resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

George Bush
President of the United States

October 1990
Sam Mihara, UCB, UCLA, rocket scientist
The Poster Girl Helene grew up
And became Mrs. Mihara
Interpretive Learning Center

A unique facility providing awareness and teaching
Cody today
Storefront signs in August 2011

Welcome
Japanese
Americans

Welcome
Heart Mountain
Interpretive
Learning Center
Visitors!
Reasons why camps existed

- Prejudice
- Hysteria
- Failure of political leadership
- Greed
- Believing imprisonment is the solution
Special Thanks

Buffalo Bill Historical Center staff, Cody, WY
Wayne Collins, Jr., Attorney, Oakland, CA
Densho Organization, Seattle, WA
Raechel Donahue, Big Stagecoach Productions
Evaleen George, Homesteader, Cody, WY
Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation staff
Vicki Hogue, editor
Homesteader Museum staff, Powell, WY
Japanese American National Museum and staff, Los Angeles
Evan Kodani, video
Courtney Lauver, graphics design
And most important are my parents, grandparents and others who suffered so much, many of whom did not live to see the government apologize for the damages.