

Atsushi Kiuchi

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Question: The first thing I'd like to do is just get your first and last name and correct spelling so I have that on tape.

Answer: My name is Atsushi Kiuchi, spelled Atsushi A-T-S-U-S-H-I, the last name is Kiuchi, K-I-U-C-H-I.

Question: Great. Now you were born --

Answer: In Sacramento, California

Question: In Sacramento. So you were born in Sacramento, then?

Answer: Yes, I was born in Sacramento, California on January 29th 1930. I consider myself one of -- I'm just a little bit after Tom Brockaw's Depression, the Greatest Generation, because I come -- I come in that era where I grew up, I think considered like a depression era kid because we grew up in the depression era, my folks raised us during the deepest part of the depression. But our depression -- we also had our war which was the Korean War, as you go through, and so everybody had a turn at it -- some sort of a world conflict. But like I say, it was my dad went through all this, my dad and my mother. My mother -- Dad was born in America, unusually, July 4, 1906. And the reason he was born in America, unusual circumstances cause actually the big migration of Japanese -- people of Japanese ancestry started -- we came in the late -- in the '30's -- '28 and '30. But my dad -- my grandfather, was one of the first ones in 1886 if you'll recall your history, the Chinese Exclusionary Act. And they decided Chinese as taking all the businesses and all the, you know, so forth and cutting the labor down and so they had the Exclusionary Act and all their infinite wisdom they discovered that they got rid of all the cheap labor. So they had the Gentlemen's Agreement going back to Admiral Perry -- with Japan. They would open up Japan, you know, civilize -- make them civil -- civilize them. And so -- and about right before the turn of the century my grandfather came with his wife -- his wife and they raised, had five children that was born in the United States. Which is very unusual. So my dad was actually a Nisei, a second generation, already and he had his citizenship. My mother came from a different -- she was one of the original -- not the original, but the last of the picture postcard. She was born and she took her prefecture in Japan in the little town of -- a little village called Shimizu, and that's where my father's folks also came from, from that general area

Answer: And she came here, she was born in 1908. And she came here, there were five Takahashi girls -- they were a bane to the family. The outcome for my mother was very very -- not very promising because after the five girls, the Takahashi finally had one son. And of course the son took over all the family properties and run them, to this day still runs the family business -- the properties back in Shizuoka prefecture. But anyway, so my mother had to find something to do so they made an arranged marriage -- arranged marriage with a photograph of my mother; it was sent to my dad, he was here in the United States. My dad did go back to Japan for a short time but he basically came back and they lived in San Francisco. My mother came over to -- not Ellis Island -- no, it wasn't Ellis Island, the equivalent of Ellis Island in San Francisco, and met my father there and first time they met. We have a photograph of my mother all dressed up in her finery. She was 18 years old so this would be about 19 -- about 1927, '28, somewhere, and it shows her in her cloche hat, you know those -- and then kind of this imitation velvet coat, heavy fur coat and carrying a bag of oranges in her hand and she looks very, you know, with a little shy smile, the way a new bride can be, and it was taken at Golden Gate Park. And of course this came during the depression. My mother -- my sister -- I'm one of nine children were born to the family, and two of them died, and so there were seven of us for the family. We came -- my folks came up into the Puyallup Valley area working on the farms, farm laborers what they basically were, they were

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in the depression, and I think we lived there from about 1933 to 1936, we lived in the Auburn, Puyallup, Fife area, working on the farms. I still drive Highway 167 occasionally, well, quite a bit to go see my daughter in Bellevue, and we pass the farm. You know there's a freeway going -- you know, Highway 61 -- the West Valley Highway goes through that area now but I look back and wonder now which one of these farms -- no longer -- which one of these warehouses are on the site of the farms that, you know, I grew up in when I was a kid. So we moved to Seattle in 1936.

Question: Did you realize as a kid that the depression was going on or were you just a kid and that's the way life was.

Answer: I remember that Japanese are somewhat like, I would say Catholics or some -- Vietnamese, but we take care of ourselves, the families help out. We all had jobs and I know we lived in lot of little shacks and barns and little sheds and stuff along the farms, too, while we lived -- cause the families -- the Japanese families will look after each other. And that -- but yeah, I remember my dad was too proud to take -- of course we had social programs and food baskets and that type of thing and welfare and stuff like that but my dad was too proud to do that. That wasn't one of the ways we lived. That was part of our culture. So my dad was frequently gone. My mother basically raised us, cause my dad, during those years -- era -- was always looking for jobs and going around and matter of fact we lived in Auburn in 19 -- that was August 10th, 1936 -- '35 -- '35 we moved to Seattle. And remember I'm -- I remember that is my dad had already gone to Seattle looking for a job, and my sister Lillian was born that next day. And so the first stop we made was to a midwife in Seattle down there between 12th and Jackson and 12th -- let's just call it International -- on the outskirts of the International District. And we lived there from 1935 to 1942.

Question: So what was your dad -- when he went to Seattle, what was he doing?

Answer: Well at that time he was driving a -- a wooden -- wood and coal fuel truck and making deliveries off of a big truck and he came to get us in this great big truck. And remember, my dad was smaller than I am, he was about 5'2 or 3 and he used to carry these big -- and sometime when they would at the end of the day he would make his deliveries, so he'd bring the big coal truck with either slab wood or coal and he'd carry these 50 pound bags -- cans of coal, up the stairs up to the apartment houses and so forth like that. And that's what he did. And then he also went to the can -- he went to the canneries in Alaska

Answer: For two summers he spent with the canneries working with Filipinos and we had -- we had quite a collection of friends that lived -- came to visit us and stayed with us during that time. But my mother worked all the time. She worked. And one of my jobs was when -- in the summertime my mother would go work out on the farms around -- out where Boeing Field is actually, out where Sternhoff Metals place is down there on 4th Avenue, or 1st Avenue South, 4th Avenue South, back in there and she -- we would work. And we'd actually go the summertime, so I was always the next one. My sister, older sister, Sonoya had to take care of the household, and so Mom would go work and actually live there. And we would live in Puyallup and then Fife and around the -- what you call South Park and in that are

Answer: And I would go and take care of the little one -- the littlest baby -- cause there was always another baby coming along. And so we spend our summers were actually living out on these farms and doing the farm work.

Question: Was it fun or was it hard as a child?

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Answer: I don't think -- you know, you look back and say well, was it tough times? Everybody said it was a tough time. It was a tough time for my parents, I'm sure, because my dad, you know, all these things. And then things started getting better about 1940, my dad started, got two lawn mowers and a clipping and such and started going around collecting, getting jobs as a gardener. And so about 1941 -- and remember, our family was not unusual. Everybody in the United States somewhere -- we're coming out of the depression and things were tough, jobs were hard to find. And yet, you know, we survived it. As kids we were survivors of the depression era, basically. And things were starting to look good for us, you know. Like I said he bought a 1929 Chevrolet pickup truck and -- van -- small Chevrolet delivery truck is what it was. And we would go all over Seattle, up and down the hills and you know, my job, I was only what, about six years old, no, not six, seven or eight -- eight years old or so. My job, was we'd go these big fancy houses -- homes along West Seattle and Queen Anne Hill and all -- Highlands and so forth, and my job was to usually -- I was a big -- I would go down and pack down all the molehills so that my dad could -- and we didn't have power mowers. And so you know, he did that by hand. And all the trimming. And I got so I could do the trimming around the -- around the gardens -- the big estates that we worked in. But things were starting to look good for us and Mom and Dad. And Mom had a full steady job as a chambermaid in one of the hotels making beds and so forth. And there was -- she would get us off to school and then she'd be back before 3, 4, 3 o'clock. So things were starting to look real good for -- and I think all of us -- all of us in America, 1940, '41, things were starting to look better for all of us, of course, but then came Pearl Harbor and that was a different story altogether.

Question: Now you talk about living in what's now the International District. Did you find yourself living in a Japanese community where you went, was that a close-knit community, or was that -- when you moved different places.

Answer: No, in our area it was basically I think there were -- Weller -- we lived on Weller Street for about four years -- four of the years that we lived there before the war. And there was a native American family, that followed the crops and so they would come in after October, November, his name was Percy. And Percy would come and he lived a couple houses up from us. And we had a black family and she -- she lived with a longshoreman and he'd come in and -- I mean with a seaman. He was actually a seaman. You would see him coming off the ship coming down, so I see the Skinners have their father there now and so forth. And we had Japanese, Chinese -- we had -- the only guy we used to pick on, and I hate to admit this -- was we had one white family. (laughs) He was different, see, and he was different. And so we made him the butt of all our jokes, and she was quite a lady, though, I'll give her credit. Every 4th of July and Memorial Day, she was a World War I nurse and so she'd put on her nurse's cape, you know, her black and her uniform -- an Army nurse, whatever it was, and we'd see her going off to join -- going to the parade downtown, you know. But as we used -- I forget what his name was. We used to call him Lucifer, for some reason or other, I don't know why we called him Lucifer. But he was usually the butt of all our jokes and stuff. And we had -- like I say -- we had quite a collection -- this was between 12th and 14th on Weller Street -- that's where we lived -- spent most of the time there. That's where we lived. And like I say, things were starting to look better for us then.

Question: And then Pearl Harbor happened. Do you remember where you were --

Answer: Sure.

Question: Well, how old were you when Pearl Harbor --

Answer: Pearl Harbor happened when I was 12 years old.

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Question: Twelve years old -- about 6th, 7th grade.

Answer: Yeah, no, I was in the 6th grade.

Question: Sixth grade.

Answer: Hm-hmm. And Pearl Harbor was on December 7th, of course on a Sunday, and we -- every Sunday we went down to the Atlas Theatre and it's located on Maynard between Jackson and King and it's right across -- right close to the Wing Luke Memorial -- Museum downtown, International District. And the Atlas Theatre was right across the street and they had a double feature every time and about two hours of cartoons. So every Sunday that was the tradition, we'd get our -- cost us I think a nickle and we would spend the whole afternoon -- whole Sunday afternoon going to see the double feature and all the coming events and the cartoons and the news reels and, you know, it was almost a three hour deal there. And rain or shine on Sunday, that was standard, my sister would take us, and George and I, my kid brother and I and our little sister if she was good. So -- and it gave my folks some time off, too, so we would go -- walk down there. And we came out of the theatre on December 7th, and things were real funny. And walked up Jackson Street, you know which is the main now in Seattle -- it goes right down to the Kingdome and like that, Jackson. And we were walking up from -- oh, it would be about 7th Avenue, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and we lived on 14th Street. And I think the first inclination we heard was somebody said "You God-damn Japs -- look what you did." And we didn't know what was happening, of course, we're kids -- you know I'm 12 years old, 13 years old, and we saw a couple guys throwing windows -- rocks through the windows of the Japanese stores that Mr. -- Mr. Murikami store and a bunch of other stores up there, along the way. Little restaurants were all along the way up on Jackson. And oh, you know, there was a lot of hostility, we didn't know. And the streets were basically -- and the Japanese stores -- the stores that usually were open on Sunday were closed. Which was unusual cause it was open when we walked out -- see we always walked. And I think finally we got home and my dad was saying I can't believe it, I can't believe it. And he had his -- he had the radio on. No TV. And there's telephone calls, can you believe what happened and so forth. And that's our first thing we knew of Pearl Harbor. That was December 7th. The next morning I remember, our school was Bailey Gatzert School. I wrote an article for the Seattle PI about our graduation day -- it was at the Times. Anyway, the next day -- we went to Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, which was at that time the first -- it was second -- actually in Seattle the second Bailey Gatzert School. There's a third Bailey Gatzert School now. But the Bailey Gatzert was located on 12th -- 12th and Weller, right on the corner. It's an Indian Center now for the City of Seattle right there. But that whole building has been remodeled -- they saved the doors -- the front doors -- the facade of the. And Miss Mann was an Irish, was an Irish matron, not old, but I thought she was old, white haired Irish matron, spinster, I called her, a spinster. And she ran that school with an iron fist. And everybody knew -- the Asians, and the school was 99 and 9/10% percent not white. Chinese, Japanese, predominantly Chinese -- when Chinatown came up and we -- and maybe a few blacks, not very many, some blacks, but it was mostly Asians. And she called us all in and she made an assembly right there. I remember she brought us together -- she was in the assembly room. And she talked about -- says we don't care what's happening in the world. We should care, but says when you're in my school, you're my children. We always were her children. And she was like a mother. I mean she was -- she was the link between -- she was, for most of us, she was the link between the white world and the Asian world. Because you got to remember see, we're all second generation. And so we were still -- like ESL -- English as second language. For most of us, English was a second language. And so we had to make that transition, and Miss Mann helped. And she was known as Mann Sansei, and if you fouled up, if something happened, you were bad, she would come down and talk to you. To your

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folks. And God, that was, you know -- I had that happen more than once. But, I mean, when Miss Mann Sansei came to your house, she was the king, the police, the enforcer, the social worker, the everything for the whole community. And I'll tell you -- I always -- she's left a heritage to many of the Nisei in the community. And she was a remarkable person. And the Chinese started working -- there's a lot of confusion between Japanese and Chinese because we all look alike, you know we all look alike. And so the Chinese started coming -- the Chamber of Commerce or something came out with little buttons said China on it. Cause we had a curfew. Japanese could not be out on the street after -- after sunset. And we had to turn in our radios and our guns and any weapons we had and any -- the whole thing. Anyway, and so Miss Mann, when they first showed up, Miss Mann said no, take it off. Said you're in my house. We're all one family, we're all the same. And she would not let the kids wear the China button -- Chinese buttons. And I remember, we -- the Chinese -- our Chinese friends would loan us the China button and we'd go down and see a show and so forth in the evening. But, anyway, yeah, it was quite a -- quite a time. I was going to say something.

Question: Did she -- Miss Mann -- did she talk about kind of what was happening in the outside world -- and when I say outside world, I mean outside your classroom, to say, you know, talk about the issues. The prejudice that you were facing -- or she just protected you.

Answer: No, she didn't.. she just kind of protected us and made.. help.. helped made it easier for us, I remember. And we -- were were all one family -- we were treated like family, so that, you know, if anybody got in trouble or anything like that, she would intervene for us. And she -- she used to have -- and she always represented the better things. We always kind of looked up to her. And our teachers did the same thing. And I remember one time when I was in the third, no it was about the second grade. Miss Eide. Miss Eide. This is 1940, '41. Miss Eide took us -- we got permission from our mothers, and she took the whole class, there must have been about 20 of us and we walked from Bailey Gatzert School, it was on 12th and Weller, walked up to what is Capital Hill now, you know Capital Hill area -- the apartments -- to her apartment that she lived in. It was high-rise apartment. And it's -- the building is still there -- I can still. And you go up Capital Hill and then you go off and level off and it's oh, it's about somewhere on Madison and what is that, Boren. It was on Boren Avenue and there was a bunch of beautiful old steel high-rise apartments. And we got -- and we went to her house. And she sat us down and we all had hot chocolate. What the heck is? And then we all held hands and she listened, and we, you know, all for us? We were there, you know, the blacks and whites and Asians and everything -- it was just a revelation that people lived like this. You know, that these things -- and I think the whole thing was the idea that we could do better. You know, and we could rise up above this, and we could also, and she took us all back down. And I remember those little things that they -- and she used to have a collie dog -- a collie dog, you know. And the collie would come down -- and she also had a chicken, Miss Mann did -- and she would bring it to school. And you know, we all had dogs, right! At home!, But a collie dog, and this even before Lassie, you know. Before Lassie. And we said jee-ma-nee -- what a beautiful animal -- we just. And she would -- and he was well trained and he'd come in and sleep, lie down in the classroom, and everybody.. so oh yeah, the dog was over visiting our room. And she got a chicken and the she used to bring the chicken in the cage and bring it and visit the classrooms and stuff, as a reward. It was really a system of rewards for us. And yeah, she's -- I can't say enough about her.

Question: She sounds like a teacher that -- I think of the movie with Robin Williams but there's this amazing teacher that really touches kids --

Answer: Oh, yeah, The Lost Poet Society.

Question: Yes, you got it.

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Answer: Part of that.

Question: And this sounds like one of those teachers that had this life effect on you.

Question: When you were coming back from the theatre and people were saying "Those God-damn Japs" -- was that the first time that you had experienced prejudice that you can remember or had you faced that prior to --

Answer: No, yes. The answer is yes. We lived, you know, the Japanese -- we lived in -- not an enclave or anything like that, but we basically lived in that area and we all -- it was cut out.. if you went to Bailey or central school -- there were several schools that served that area, and then you either went to Garfield High School or you went to Broadway High School, which is the -- vocational -tech - central.. south central.. Central Seattle Washington Community College now. But there -- so it was pretty well -- that's where most of them lived. A few lived on the outskirts around Queen Anne Hill or up on Beacon Hill and then went to Cleveland High School or something like that, but most of us were basically in that area

Answer: But we never saw it as being a ghetto or such -- that was just the way things were. And kids were starting -- in that era too, see, there were kids like -- kids going to school now and kids going to -- starting to college at the University of Washington and, you know, better than South Hill, the older kids, and there was always someone wondered why did we bother spend the money sending a kid to college. But that's a true thing. My mother -- my parents -- the Japanese culture, I can speak, I think. The couple things that were guiding principles in our family and one of them was number one was don't disgrace the family name. Don't disgrace the family name. And that was, you know, you think about it today. You know the standards. That was really a strong, strong. And I think all of us lived by that, very strongly. The second one was get a good education. To do better -- to do better for ourselves and get a good education. I never -- I didn't finish college till 1980 -- '98 -- I was the oldest graduate from Evergreen State College this year. Two years ago, 1998. And so where was I - - I was 68 years old and it was something that I remembered and I'd retired by then, and I was not comfortable but I was all right. I don't know. But it stuck in my mind. And I always tried to -- I took part-time courses and then finally went up and I walked across graduation, received my diploma with my granddaughter.

Question: Oh my.

Answer: Yeah, I walked --

Question: So I'm looking at a man like -- you're over 70?

Answer: I'm 71 years old.

Question: You're kidding me. You're lying to me.

Answer: No, I'm 71. I was born January 9, 1930.

Question: Man.

Answer: So -- so I was -- you know I hate to say -- whatever you get out of this interview you've got to remember now I was 12, 13, 14 and 15 when they -- when the war came and we were interned. So for me, it wasn't too bad. You know there was a lot of things. But don't forget when you're 15 years old, about that age, you just think about girls,

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sex, smoking and becoming socially adjusted to -- to the world that you live in. So your memory's -- so my memories are very strong about camp. And I reflect back about things I've read and on. I read a lot, scholar of things that have happened to us during that time. It's been a -- not a hobby -- it's more than a hobby. I go out and talk to people about it. Cause the main thing I want to stress that while I was only at that age, a very, very young, impressionable age, but my father was 36 years old and he's got five kids. And one day they say sell your business, you know, which was not much of a business. I mean, you know, there are other people, businessmen, that had, you know, had a lot of money tied up and stuff like that. But the one day they tell you, you got three months to get rid of everything you've got. Theoretically you had three months. Executive Order 9066 was signed in February 1942 by President Roosevelt and that gave the military authority in the region, the senior military authority in the region to decide what is best for security reasons. And General DeWitt in San Francisco, 5th Army, decided that the best course to protect the United States was to move all the people with Japanese-American ancestors -- Japanese ancestry -- off the West Coast. Proved to be a lie. It was an illegal decision made, and it took until 19 -- he did it in 1942 and I think it was 1984 that the federal courts found that -- they found what was known as a Writ of Discovery or called, I'm going to mispronounce it -- it's a Latin word for called corum nobis. That when they made the decision the court was not given the full package of information they were supposed to have and it was actually withheld by the United States Army. That the Japanese-Americans did not pose a threat to the national security. And that was the result of the -- in 1986 that they filed the Civil Rights Act of 1986. That was the redress for the.

Question: And DeWitt was the one -- didn't he change it. Cause wasn't it originally, didn't it say something like -- it didn't just narrow it down to Japanese population --

Answer: No.

Question: And DeWitt was the one that came in and put --

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Yeah.

Answer: But see, it was his call as a senior Army commander. But they -- there was Congressional hearings plus the court. And that's an interesting story because a group of young -- in California -- law students -- Japanese. And one of the things they said -- why didn't -- and by then they're Sansei, you know, third generation -- why didn't you tell me about this Dad, Mom and Dad? And that was -- it was kind of a shameful thing, really it was, and then I didn't go public until 1984 when the redress movement was moving and the courts were holding -- the Congress was holding Congressional hearings throughout the United States. I had the Olympian reporter I knew from my connections working with the State asked me about it. He said weren't you one of those guys that were in the camps? I said sure, what do you want to know. And it -- but you got to remember my dad was 36 years old and he's got five kids, and his business is just starting. I don't know how old you are, Karl --

Question: Forty-two. So six years older than your dad was.

Answer: Yeah. And then one day they say you got three months to sell your business and get the hell out of here -- and get out. And you don't know where you're going to go, you don't know what you got to do, you don't know what's going to happen to you. Three prevailing rumors -- the first rumor was they're going to round us up and put us on a boat and take -- send us to Japan. Don't forget, there's 120,000 people involved here. Hundred and

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twenty thousand people. I looked it up just today, just before I came to see you. Hundred and twenty thousand -- that's about the same population of Whatcom County. Bellingham. And there were 7000 -- approximately 7000 people in the camp came out of Seattle. Seven thousand is just a little bit under the total population of Tumwater. That's a lot of people. And we're talking about all kinds of people. Beggermen, lawyers, Indian chiefs -- not Indian -- lawyers, thieves, merchants, doctors, so they just picked up and moved us. The Army did.

Question: And it's interesting because I liked your juxtaposition. I liked, you talk about, you know, okay, you're a 12-year-old kid. Girls, smoking, things like that. And here's your dad, 36, family started, business started. Can you remember -- did your dad talk about it or, I mean, do you know what your dad was thinking?

Answer: My dad was 36 and like I said, he was a Nisei, so you know he super.., he was kinda -- he was very prominent in JCL -- Japanese-American Citizens League. And there's been a lot of talk about that since then that they were the Enus (?) of the dogs that caused all this. Cause we demanded -- we said that since -- the Japanese are not great for organization, somebody taking hold and running things, you know. Like, you know. So we were really loosely knit society of community. And the Japanese-Americans Citizen League where they -- the English - kind of more English -- the older people, Issei and Nisei, older Issei which are the original which are still non citizens but they came -- were born in Japan. And then some of the senior Nisei like my dad. And they were told -- we were told to show our loyalty, that we should cooperate. And do what the government -- the government would not do anything to you that's bad. Rumor number one was they're going to round us up and send us to Japan. Rumor number two as they're going to round us up and put us in camp and then after the war we're going to Japan. And the third one was they're going to round us up and shoot us. I mean that was, it was that wild. Nobody knew, see how rumors start. They just knew we had to register, get signed up, take our shots, we didn't know where we were going to go, they just knew that we had 30 days to -- and the funny -- the ironic part of it. In the State of Washington the Columbia and the Snake River was the dividing line, between those that had to be interned and those that didn't have to be interned. So Spokane was a safe haven. I have a friend of mine that lived in the Twin Cities. His cousins stayed, he had to go.

Question: That's right -- Richland and Kennewick, yes or no, and I forget which way.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Friend of mine, Clarence Muriwaki (?) maybe you know him. He used to -- he's public information I think now for the -- the rapid transit, I think that's what he's doing now. Friend of mine. But anyway, and we talked about it. But anyway, here he you got these young guys. So do you talk to my dad and my family, okay. Then you got 17 and 18-year old kids that's going to college or got a job, just starting, got girlfriends, want to get married, have a family, (gestures). That drastic a change in their lifestyle. And so, you know, even if you were a college graduate, if you're Asian, you know your chances of getting in a professional engineer becomes maybe -- works for a survey crew or something like that, so those biases were still built in. So all of a sudden, one day, bingo, it's over. I mean, you know, so you don't know what's going to happen to you. So -- so we took our shots, we got family number, we were registered family number 11518, and the poster brought it to you. We read it very carefully. It says, it's a notice to all Jap people, people of Japanese ancestry, aliens and non-aliens. You know what a non-alien is?

Question: Well, we --

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Answer: It's American citizen, right. That's how the government talked. So all people of Japanese ancestry, aliens and non-aliens will report to blah, blah, blah. And we could take only what we could carry in our two hands. And today I think of -- I always tell this to the high school kids when I give a talk. I said if you're going to have -- if you are told to bring two things take with you, two things, what would you bring -- that you could carry on. That's all you could take. Your boombox? No pets are allowed. You can't take any pets. So all this material world today -- you wonder what kids -- what would the kids take? And so anything, you could take. And so my, my sister was - my oldest sister was three years older. She kind of took hold of everything and we went and got registered. Because, see, my mother didn't speak English. My dad was busy helping others, families, to make that smooth transition or whatever you want to call it, to -- to people down there with the JACL. And so, on May -- we left on May 8th out of Seattle and went to -- went to -- reported at 10th -- 10th -- on Dearborn and 10th -- the street is now blocked off but that's the same place where I was a school boy patrolman at. Bailey Gatzert is right up on the hill. And that's where -- that was the same place where I was a schoolboy patrolman. On May 8th. We loaded on the buses there and we went -- came to Puyallup. Which was called Camp Harmony. Camp Harmony housed approximately 7000 -- 7000 people from the Northwest, including some -- quite a few people from Alaska

Answer: See and the rule was, if you look up Schindler's List -- the rule was Nazi Germany, if you had 1/16th Jewish blood, (gestures). If you were a Japanese American, if you had 1/8th Japanese blood, you went to camp. And so we looked at some of these Alaskan guys, you know, and they're just -- look whiter than you. And great big guys that worked in the woods, in the minings, mines, and fishermen and so forth. They were also, there at this camp we lived in. That was the time -- like I said that housed about 7000 which is about the equivalent of -- area -- we were in Area A which is the main -- excuse me, this is the Puyallup Fairgrounds. Are you familiar with Puyallup Fairgrounds? Kitty-corner from the main exposition area where the main office is -- there was a huge parking lot. That was Area A -- that's where we were in. Area B was right down further, down from the road. That was a smaller parking lot. And Area C is where -- if you were high school kid, that's where the school buses and exhibitors park, back on the other side of the exposition -- and Area D was the main exhibition area where they took the horse stalls and underneath the bleachers and everything, they made rooms for -- and put up barracks up there, overnight. Well, not overnight, but on a quick order. They're ship lap. Very crude, had a stove. And people say well what was Area A like? I say Area A, and Area B and Area C, which was (inaudible) was everything like you see in Stalag 17 or Hogan's Hero. We had the whole bit. We had the search lights, we had the 12 to 14-foot barbed wire fences. We had armed guards, soldiers walking patrol, patrolling the perimeter are

Answer: And mess halls. We ate in mess halls. And it was -- it was -- the thing that -- it was a cultural thing too. We always, you know, we had -- the father was the dominant figure in our house. And no matter what time, we didn't eat till he came home. And this wasn't like, you know the Nelson family, or they -- we didn't do the -- what did you do in school today Beaver. I don't know... It wasn't one of those things. We waited till he came home, when he came home, he'd grab the newspaper, read the paper, eat, and we'd eat in silence, but we waited for him. And there were a lot of family things that we did that way and that was part of the culture. But the camp resulted in an absolute breakdown. Cause then we had to go into mess halls, and dada, dad

Answer: And you had no privacy. And we were there from May 8th to August -- we were there three months.

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Question: Did the government know they were breaking the family unit down, or was it just ignorance and non caring of --

Answer: Oh, I think you've got to -- I don't think it was non caring or ignorance. I think -- how do you handle mass groups of people like that? The only experience the government ever had was the CCC camps and the Army camps. And so they went -- run -- absolutely Army style.

Question: So among this A, B, C, and D, are the fairgrounds still kind of in there too? I mean cause it was the fairgrounds.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So are there still some of the -- I don't know how old the roller coaster is but I mean --

Answer: Yeah, they were still there, yeah.

Question: So there's this kind of surreal, weird --

Answer: Yeah. I don't know if they had the Puyallup Fair -- cause we didn't leave there till August, and maybe -- I doubt if there was cause there's a wartime. I think the thing that really got to me, I think, when they first realized. It was like there was a lot of fun, I mean for a kid 12 and 13, 12 years old. But I think the thing that really got me, is that on Sundays, you know, oh, two things, first of all, gas rationing and tires were hard to get during World War II, as you're aware. But some of our friends, Chinese friends and white friends, would bring us stuff, come in from Seattle. And they'd meet at the main gate and they would talk to us through the gate and they would pass over diapers, things that we did -- we couldn't bring, towels, you know, and tell us what's going on with -- how's the business going on, and you know, and how's things going on and how's school and so forth. And they would pass it and the guards would look at it, they'd check it over and then hand it over to us. And so this -- it was like visiting day at the prison. Let's be honest, that's what it was. And -- but the thing that got -- our Area A, one side of it was open right to the main drag of Puyallup, you know if you go downtown Puyallup and you go to the fairgrounds, that's the main drag. And it goes up on the hill and then goes to South Hill. And -- but the people used to come around -- the white people used to come around, on Sundays, weekends, and say, oohh hoo, look at those Japs in there. Can you imagine what -- how you would have felt? Especially when you were a kid. And so we were an attraction, like going to the zoo. We were an attraction. And yeah, we had quite a few and people used to come by and every night the block manager would come by and say -- knock at night and say everybody there? Where the hell could we go, for crying out loud? I mean we were there. And the thing that I remember mostly -- and like I said, it was like taking the whole town of Tumwater, okay. And put them in this one place. And so you got all kinds of people. You a lot of got college kids, you got high school kids, you got kids like this, you got babies, infants, pregnant mothers, so it was all -- just like -- just putting (gestures), you know, if you can get.

I remember on the 4th of July, 1942, the young people -- the college kids and the younger -- older - younger kids. And don't forget, our - the parents -- the older people were basically devastated. They were just devastated. They didn't know where we were going to go, what's going on, what's going to happen to us, tada, dad

Answer: Here we gave up everything, we're sitting here in this barracks and this -- and so the young people kind of kept things going. And on 4th of July we had a -- we had a community gathering in the widest part, in between the section area, and they gathered there

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just for -- and the kids put it on, like a pep rally and you know, all this stuff, and music. And we had our band, orchestra, we had formed -- they had formed their own orchestra

Answer: And, you know, it wasn't that hard cause we all came from the same area and we knew, tada, dada, and we knew, and so, yeah, he plays the clarinet, yeah, I remember he was in our band, we used to have a little -- Nisei band, a real good to play Glenn Miller orchestra -- orchestrations, yeah. And so they built a stage, big high stage and they had this program for the 4th of July program. And we closed that program by singing God Bless America

Answer:

Question: I mean the irony that's there is ... I don't understand. I mean,

Answer: Yeah.

Question: I see what the -- especially -- especially when you go up and down the older generation, the younger generation -- here your father is -- you're second generation born over here, right? Your dad was born over here and here's this kind of to hell with you, we don't trust you, we're putting you in this cage, for your protection, right. And yet there's still a faithfulness, a patriotism, it sounds like.

Answer: that's all we knew. We were born and raised that way. Yeah, we had -- don't forget. Don't get me wrong. We had always what we call -- we used to call them, you know, I'm 12, 14, anyway, but we used to have what we call the cat house commentators. And I can't... hope you get this on tape. But, you know, it was like an Army base, right. You know, and the latrines were all community, everybody, you know, and the mess hall, and so you had these stools, you know commodes, toilet bowls. And so, in the morning, early morning, all the older people, we kind of set it aside for them, you know... for their constitution they'd sit there. And one of them -- (whispering) did you hear -- I says, over here, what's that -- he says I just heard that they're took over Attu and Sitka and they're moving down the peninsula and it won't be long before they be hitting Washington state, coming down through Canada

Answer: They, meaning of course, the Japanese Imperial Forces, see. And these rumors, oh, yeah, and they were usually the older people, you know. And don't forget, these are old people that are, you know, 70's and 80's and the sons have taken over the business and they're semi-retired after years and years of hard, hard, hard work and stuff. And all of a sudden, here they are. You know the senior citizens. And we can't send them to a Panorama City.. Senior Citizens Day, there's nothing for them other than maybe they play checkers or Go or Han

Answer: . (Hanafuda?) -- play Japanese games. So they say, (whispering) yeah, is that right, yeah, this right, they were attacking, and there's, you know, half the fleet's gone now -- the American fleet -- and so we used to call them the cat house commentators. To get the latest dope on what's happening in this world today. But then there, there was the next group that, and they were more or less semi-retired, they were senior citizens, you know, Mom, their kids had taken over the farm or the business or so forth and so on. And so it was real cruel -- they don't know who -- they didn't -- you know, I'm sure they just wanted ... Well, maybe I'll go back to Japan. And so there were loyal people, too, you know. I mean they are people who were loyal to America

Answer:

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And then we came -- we left there in August went by troop train that they -- an old smelly old troop train, and two - I think it took us -- and then we went to Idaho. Minidoka War Relocation Project. We were under the -- we were under the protection -- we were under the Wartime Civilian Control Adminis... -- WCCA -- while we were in Puyallup. And then the federal government formed the War Relocation Authority. That was exactly relocation. See they brought everybody off the West Coast then. I forget how many assembly centers there were like Puyallup, Tanforan, some of the race tracks and fairgrounds through California and everything were all used for this purpose. The first group to leave -- leave Washington State was the people from Bainbridge Island, and they went to Pinedale, California

Answer: Which, I, at this time, maybe I can put a plug in -- one of the best, and I've read a lot of history and stories about that. And the best probably thing that's out right now is Snow Falling on Cedars. If you ever get a chance to see it, and also read the book.

Question: Yeah, cause the book has a lot more in it.

Answer: Yeah, it has a lot more. But it doe touch upon -- David Gooderson did a tremendous job on research about how the Japanese. And these -- these are the strawberry farmers on Bainbridge Island that's over there, he's talking about. And he's talking about the -- the editor of the paper is the Bainbridge -- is the editor of the Bainbridge Review was the guy, Walt Woodward, I had the fortune to meet after the war. And, and the son, of course, in the story, the book, the son takes over. But they did a tremendous job and I always recommend that to the kids to read. Maybe some of the parts are a little sophisticated for them, but

Question: And I understand from that the government came and documented that because that was now the propaganda to come and say look at how well they behaved, and that's what we want you to do too.

Answer: Yeah. But then -- but then -- so we went to Minidoka War Relocation Center, and there were ten such relocation centers throughout -- throughout the United States, all the way from Arkansas to most of them are -- California, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and California

Answer: And Yosemite National Park.

Question: When you say relocation, was that another center or was that to now quote put you back into society.

Answer: Assimilate us -- relocate us -- relocate us anywhere except the West Coast. And the Department of Interior -- I think it was the Department of Interior -- they ran. And there was a cadre of white people who ran the camp. It was like a big city. We were the second largest city in the State of Idaho. But 9000 people, we were the second largest city. And it was near Twin Falls, south, north of Twin Falls. An interesting thing happened - I don't know, this is taking much too long, I don't know.

Question: That's fine.

Answer: Interesting thing happened to me. I went to -- I like to go back. When I go on vacation, when I travel, I always stop by every one of the camps. And I went to Tulle Lake, Washington, -- Tulle Lake, California, which is on the northern border -- it's the garlic capital of the world, I think, at least that's what they say. But Tulle Lake was the name of the camp which housed the die-hards, they finally decide to segregate the loyal, so-called loyal, and the

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people who say, no, I won't be loyal to that. Anyway, and I went to Tulle Lake. And so I went to the Chamber of Commerce. They said oh, yeah, we, yeah, go talk to the lady at the library. She's an old-timer here, she can tell you all about the camps. So I went and seen the lady and I said do you know anything about the camp -- I want to see some buildings or remnants of buildings, of what the camp was. And she looked at me and she said I'll have you know that the camp was in Newell, California, not here in Tulle, Lake. And I said, oh, where's Newell. Down the highway, about a mile and a half. Just utter denial.

Question: Really.

Answer: Yeah. There's -- Tulle Lake, Welcome to Tulle Lake. There's a big water tower there. But, yeah, she was correct, because it was at Newell which was a half mile or mile down the road from Tulle Lake, and so she didn't want to be known that Tulle Lake be known as where the camp was. The same thing happened to me in Twin Falls, Idaho. I went up there and I wasn't quite sure where the camp was, Minidoka where we were. And I asked the guy at the gas station, never heard of the Minidoka War Relocation Center, never heard of it. He says go see the Chamber of Commerce lady. So I went to see the Chamber of Commerce lady, and they guided me to this lady. Most of them said they'd never heard of it. And this lady, I don't know if you remember in the old days, I don't know, maybe you want to cut this out. In the old days, if you want to buy condoms, you walked into the -- and so they kinda (gestures) and reach under the counter, (gestures). Now they're all displayed all over, right. But she -- she said -- I want to know, she said oh, just a minute. So she reach under the counter, and pulled out this map -- was a government map, (inaudible) and it showed the camp lay out. And she says here it is. Here's how to go. Said go up there, take exit number such and such and go north. And she drug out this little map and then she quickly put it away. That was the end of our conversation. And you know, this is -- well, this was 1988 -- it was my 40th, 50th, class, no it was my 40th class reunion. I graduated out of the old town and before relocated, but anyway, yeah, and so I went up and took a look at it, what there was, and saw what was left of the camp. But it was kind of interesting, in those two places, you know, I had -- I had the same thing happen when I was in the service. I went to -- I was stationed in - in Austria

Answer: And I wanted to see one of the concentration camps -- Dachau. And one of my best buddies spoke flawless German -- he was -- that's another story, but he came from Ohio. Sandusky, Ohio. So he and I used to travel around, we used to go see, he was real handy, so he and I went to Dachau and we asked a guy -- we had lunch there and we asked the waiter, I said where's Dachau. Next first day, don't understand what you said. And, well, Schmidt -- yeah. Well, anyway, he says next first day, I don't understand. And so Karl spoke high German, and he said where is this camp? He said oh, he says why you go down the road, but you know, we don't -- we don't -- but they didn't want to tell you about it, talk about it. And hell, it's big, you know, it was a national museum even then -- it's as big as --

Question: Still didn't --

Answer: (gestures) absolutely.

Question: See, and that's what I was going to say. The experience you had was no different than, than what the Germans were ... never happened, never... So is this just a -- just --

Answer: Oh, I think it's just denial.

Question: Denial.

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Question: Denial, yeah, and but camp at Minidoka was a little different. That was run by the federal -- by bureaucrats and --

Question: So was that gun-protected like --

Answer: No, that's another story. We're out of the middle of, you know, the ten relocation camps the government established were in the worst places -- it was the.. terrible places.. the worst places they could pick for -- for -- for, and that's where they had it. My mother, I remember she looked, she grew up in -- you know, she lived in the Northwest, and she doesn't, she didn't speak English -- she didn't speak -- she died in '94, just a year ago, but she didn't speak English very well and never did. But she understood, but she could not speak. And I remembered we pulled up at this God-awful place in the middle of the desert down by Twin Falls, Idaho. And it was the end of the siding of the railroad stop, right in the middle of no place, nothing. Except a bunch of buses were waiting for us. And they took us on. And my mother said this - TyHo-NotAh-OhDisKa (Phonetic) -- it means this is a terrible place. And -- sage brush and tumbleweeds, oh, this God-awful place they created this camp. And all the other ones were just about the same -- same, but then we started. Then we lived in camp for three years and we had our own government, we had our own farms, we did everything. And every so often you could go get a pass to go to Twin Falls, Idaho. And so, day pass. And it was all part of the scheme to get people to assimilate themselves, get more acquainted. Going back, and my dad went to -- left camp. My dad had a very important job, see, in camp, and see, if you were -- I worked one, two summers out on the farm, the camp farm, and I got paid \$8 a day, \$8 a month, excuse me, \$8 a month as a juvenile -- as kids working. And we worked on a McCormick-Deering Combine, and if you know anything about combines, we used to jig and sew -- sew both wheat and we jigged and sewed soybeans. We use a lot of soybeans and so the farm -- we had this huge farm and so we jigged and sewed and we learned how to sew the bags -- throw them off the old combine. And then common laborers got paid \$16 a month. And my mother worked as a waitress in one of the community -- or the mess hall. And she got \$16 a month. And my dad, he was head of the sewage treatment plant. As you know, as I maybe should mention, I worked most of my career in -- with the Department of Ecology. So that must have been -- have to do with the fact that -- he became the foreman -- the sewage -- he didn't know beans about sewage treatment plants, but he ran the sewage treatment plant that serviced almost 9000 people in this camp. And he was -- he got -- I think he got \$19 bucks. The same level as doctors and lawyers and all the professional people got \$19 -- that was the highest wage that was paid. And not only that, he got to drive a pickup truck. And they, you know, that was about a 1941 or '93 Chevrolet pickup truck. And so we used the equipment -- the trucks and so forth were all from CC days and war surplus trucks and vehicles and everything.

Question: That's amazing. So basically they set up little cities.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: And then the government still funded it?

Answer: Yes.

Question: But you developed your own governing body?

Answer: Yes. To a certain point.

Question: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Answer: Yeah, we had block managers and so forth. And we had schools and we had schools and we walked five miles to school every day cause there was no transportation system -- we learned how -- the main transportation were these old war surplus CCC trucks like the old Army Deuce and a half, the old ones, and they had the canvas top. And us kids weren't not allowed to ride it to school so we had to walk, but we learned how to catch -- I learned, I was five tall, about 5'3 or something at the time. And we all learned, the boys did, we all learned to jump on the tailgate and hang on to the side the canvas of the truck. Really. And we learned, and did you know how to jump off a moving vehicle? You jump off facing -- facing the direction you're going. Never turn around and jump off sideways. You always turn yourself around and jump off. And that way you just keep -- keep just running and so. Some of the truck drivers knew we did that so they'd slow down as we went by the school. And the school was located right in the middle -- middle -- right in the middle of the camp. And it was five miles. So we had to go back to our own mess halls to eat lunch and supper and breakfast. So we had to make that five mile trip down, back, twice a day, three times a day. So we had to go back. So by the time you got to your mess hall -- and we lived in Block 42, which was -- and the latrine was way out in the -- and so it was -- I didn't like to be out in Block 42. But we -- you know you talk about when I was a kid, you know, when I was your age, I was walking through snow drifts and storms and stuff to get to school, I don't know what you're complaining about cause I'm going to be five minutes late cause something happened to the car or something like that to get you to school, I can tell you the story about walking five miles to school. But, yeah.

Question: Do you remember hearing that the war was over?

Answer: Yeah, no, we were out of camp by then. I think couple things happened before that. Course like I talked about, these 18 and 19-year-olds. It was very -- when you became legal age, 18, all boys, all young men and women of legal age of 18 were required to sign a loyalty oath. And there were two questions, number 17 and number 18, if I remember right. I'm going to paraphrase, but do you swear allegiance to the government of the United States, yes or no? If so, number 18, of so, will you fight - would you fight or serve in the Armed Forces to defend your country? Yes or no. And many of them signed yes, yes. But there were the no, nos. And recently, just recently, about two months ago, Frank Aba was a cinematographer for KIRO, he used to work for KIRO, he did this Conscious and the Constitution. And he told the unwritten story of the no-no boys who said no, no. And they went to McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary, and served three years there till they were pardoned by Executive Order by President Truman. But then the other half of those that said -- we had 300 people, young men 18, some 18, 19 year old that volunteered out of our camp. And the people said why are you volunteering to give your life possibly to the United States government. And they would say, invariably, I'm an American citizen. I'm an American. And the government -- country needs me, so I'm going to go. And so they volunteered. And a lot of times it was against the wishes of their -- of their Issei -- parents. The Issei say you dumb, dumb kid. If you're an American citizen, then what the hell are you doing in this camp? And so they went. And the 44 -- they became part of the 442nd Infantry Division. And prejudice - - most of the officers were all white people. And then just recent, just about two months ago, three months ago, they up-graded two of the young -- from the State of Washington, I forgot how many they did total, to Congressional Medal of Honors. They wanted their Distinguished Service Cross was the highest combat. But there was never -- there was, I think, during the Korean War there was one or two Congressional Medal Honors, but never during World War II. No, I take that back, I think there was one Congressional of Medal Honor winner during the Korean War. And they named a ship after him. But that -- so they upgraded -- matter of fact they had the ceremony March 25th of this month. To honor two Nisei boys who fought in

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World War II. It was upgraded. But there was prejudice. Just the same thing with blacks. Remember all the blacks they upgraded all of a sudden, yeah, yeah, but yeah, it's like.

Question: Especially being a 12-year-old, formative years, your Dad being so young going through it, I mean, anybody going through what you had to face within that. Here you are, American citizens, you are working American citizens, you're tax-paying American citizens, and yet because your skin was a little different color -- cause I'm German, I mean, Schmidt.

Answer: I didn't see any Schmidts in camp.

Question: Exactly. And that's what I'm saying is there was, you know, we were over fighting the Germans, but yet that was the whole European descent, no big deal, but for some reason they -- when your Dad, when you got out of camp, did your Dad -- did he hold animosity. I mean this is what amazes me. To listen to this pride, these people that say yes, yes, they volunteer at 18, they go and they fight for this country, that's basically just crapped on them. They go over there, they say because I'm an American, I'll fight. How did your dad -- did you ever talk to your dad about how he felt?

Answer: My dad was eligible for the draft although he had five kids. And so they never did call. I should tell you -- you -- I forgot something. Right after Pearl Harbor, December 7th, all over the Japanese community in Seattle and all over the West Coast, people -- the FBI had their lists and they started picking them off. And a lot of them -- my Buddhist church priest never saw his family all during the war and after the war he finally came back and he was placed in another type of higher detention camp like that in Texas City. They also had one in Montana and everybody said well he's in Montana, then we knew then exactly -- and so there was families that went to the relocation, the whole camp process without the head of family cause they were found to be supposedly bent, you know, and there was no trial. Just cause your name was in there -- they had hearings I think and then they sent -- so the middle of the night the knock came on this -- like in the middle of the night, the Gestapo knocks on the door, hauls you out, your Dad or - that happened to us, too. They came, I think it was about two weeks after Pearl Harbor, near the end of December, (whispers) did you hear, you know, everybody -- did you hear Mr. Inui got caught? They picked him up. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it was going all over. And they came to our house, knocked on the door at night, and no papers, no warrant, no subpoenas, Mr. Kiuchi, yeah, they say would you come with us, and we kind of -- so -- we didn't know how long he was going to be gone. Fortunately he came back two days later. And they started, you know, but it was a start my, I think, the -- of my father. He wasn't bitter but I think, you know you're 36 years old and you come out of camp at 39. And I'll tell you something, Karl. Everything -- by then we had -- there were five of us, five, five children, one camp baby, Frank, camp baby -- we always say camp babies are kind of crazy. Well, Frank is now 50, something like that. He was born in 1943 in camp. And so the five of us, the five of us - my dad went on a relocation leave and got a job on a fruit ranch near Boise, Idaho, little town called Emmett which I call my home town because I finished school, high school there. And anyway. And he came to get us. There's five of us, Mom and Dad and the five kids. And everything we owned and the five kids and Mom and Dad, fit in the back of a half-ton pickup -- Chevrolet pickup truck, 1939, '40 -- '39 or '40 pickup truck. Everything he owned including his kids fit in the back -- fit in a Chevrolet pickup truck. And he started all over at age 39 and we worked, all of us worked on the fruit ranch and so forth and so on. Can you do it at 39? Now see, we -- of course we weren't rich. There were other families that were merchants and so forth that did well, and they had -- some had problems getting their business back. Some let the business -- they had entrusted other people to take care of their strawberry farm on Bainbridge Island or the farm in -- and the people that they entrusted couldn't be trusted. Or they failed to meet the taxes. See, alien land law. Aliens can hold it. so those that were smart, the Japanese, would turn the property -- put the

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property in their kids name, American citizens, so we could own land. Right. And a lot of them they trusted, they trusted to some and so the people -- there was examples that some people just let the place go to hell and claim back on taxes. And so they pick up the land. So, you know, those are worst case scenarios, of course. But it -- everybody started the same way. You know, they all -- some had kept them up, but three years, you know. And property values changed. So we got -- everybody says well, -- we got -- after all about this illegality of the Army making this decision, after all the soldiers, I forget how many died in the 442, I have the numbers someplace, but and the heroes, their heroines and some and our determination to come back. We got the civil rights. As you know, Mike Lowrey was the first one to introduce it and the bill didn't go anywhere. But he was the first one to introduce the -- civil rights act of 1986 finally passed and it's a re-dress. You've got to remember there's a difference between compensation and redress. And they said that we did wrong, I have a letter from -- I gave it out, signed by George Bush, and they issued a formal apology. And I think there was approximately 120,000 that were involved in the relocation, and of that 120,000 you have to remember, Karl, about 87,000 were American citizens, American citizens. And I think, I think the redress payments of \$20,000 each, I think the curtain's closed on it now but I think about -- out of the, I think out of the 120,000 that were involved, I think they paid somewhere about 75,000 or something were paid off -- were given -- not paid off -- were given redress payments of \$20,000.