

5385 Sierra College Boulevard
Rocklin, CA 95677

April 26, 1997

Mrs. Michi Weglyn
957 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10028-0317

Dear Mrs. Weglyn:

When I read your article in the Pacific Citizen regarding railroad workers during World War II, I can't describe the elation that overcame me. Finally--at last, the humiliating and degrading treatment that my father and family was subjected to has been recognized!

My father was a section foreman for the Western Pacific Railroad Company. He was given 24 hours to vacate the premises which we called home. Four of the youngest members of our family were at home at the time, both sons were in military service, a married daughter lived in Tennessee but fortunately was visiting the family, and I was attending school 500 miles away. Typically, we were located in a very small town, remote by hundreds of miles from towns or cities of any size. We thought everyone in town was our friend, but quickly found out that less than a handful were willing to come to our aid. Someone was able to locate a very small trailer which was placed in the middle of a desolate desert area beyond the 2-mile radius which the railroad company deemed out of the "sensitive" zone. My parents and youngest sister were forced to live there, in the middle of a cold winter, without benefit of water, electricity, or toilet facilities--not even an outhouse.

Since there were just a few months left in the school year, my sisters received special permission to remain in town--in a small shack--under strict curfew rules until the end of the school year. One sister, who graduated high school, was able to attend commencement exercises only with escort of the town constable.

After the school year ended, my parents and family relocated to Reno with no assurance of employment or income. But we managed on my father's meager pay from working on a vegetable farm, a couple of us did housework, and my oldest brother sent his full pay check from military service. The military matched this for men with dependent families so the total amounted to about \$38 per month.

Anyway, it's a long, long story of deprivation and hardship.

With the encouragement of Rita Takahashi, who was manning the JACL-LEC office in Washington, D. C., in 1988, we all applied for

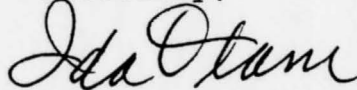
redress. After seven years of corresponding with ORA and conforming to their requests to submit appeals, our final letter from them dated July 11, 1995, said that "there was not sufficient evidence to support our claim for redress," and that "this constitutes the final action of the Department on your administrative appeal."

What a blow!

Of course I was disappointed that we didn't qualify for redress, but my greatest dejection came from knowing that no one has ever acknowledged, or recognized, or ever will, the traumatic, heartbreaking, humiliating experiences that my family endured.

Until now. And now I want to express my heartfelt and grateful thanks to you for bringing the issue up out of the dust.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ida Otani". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Mrs. Ida Otani