

August 17, 1983

To: The Army Discharge Re-hearing Board

Re: Mr. Minoru Takaki

I have known Minoru Takaki ever since the war years when we were members of the 1800 Engineers -- a labor battalion made up of many Americans of Japanese descent who were considered "misfits" -- only because they had the character and courage to express (when asked, and never volunteered) their anger and frustrations.. This frame of mind was caused by the countless incidences of injustice and discrimination faced by the nisei soldiers during the early years of the war. This anger was further inflamed by the Presidential Order which evacuated from the West Coast and placed into one of 10 concentration camps all members of their families. They were part of 100,000 others whose only crime was to have a Japanese name and/or face.

I served as the Acting Company Clerk and Acting Supply Sergeant for Captain Paxton, and was quite familiar with the activities of every member. Minoru Takaki along with every member of this unit never once disobeyed a military order, and served faithfully for over two years in the task of helping repair damages (roads, bridges, etc.) caused by military training maneuvers in the Southern States.

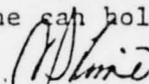
Instead of becoming automatically discharged at the end of the war, every member of our unit was forced to stand trial at a special discharge hearing. All of us Niseis who had never been to Japan were issued honorable discharges. However, those that received some education in Japan and had a Japanese accent, were all given a "blue discharge without honor." I served as the translator at all of these hearings, and was distressed that because of their language handicap, they could not articulate their feelings and explain the reasons for the original action that caused them to be transferred to this special battalion.

The postwar years have shown the greatness of America when it acknowledged the errors of its ways on its wartime treatment of the American Japanese; and allowed us to become an integral part of the American society of which we are extremely proud.

Minoru farmed for almost 20 years near Sacramento before retiring approximately 2 years ago. With most members of our unit now having reached retirement age, many now had the time to take the necessary steps to rectify the one blot on their careers--the blue discharge. This he is now doing.

During the 1946 Discharge Hearings, Captain (?) Hyman Bravin was part of the hearing proceedings, and felt strongly about the unfairness of this original Hearing. Now a practicing attorney, he flew in from New York to represent another one of our members only last year in Los Angeles. Needless to say, he was successful in reversing the original decision. THIS CASE IS NO DIFFERENT. I might even mention here that it is my understanding that even the members of that Fort McLellen uprising who were all given dishonorable discharges were all given a clean slate several years ago.

I do not know how well prepared Minoru is for this particular re-hearing, but I do hope the members of this board will understand the background of his story and will be compassionate and will reverse the original decision so that he can hold his head up high as a true American citizen which he is.


Cedrick M. Shimo

2711 South Genesee Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90017

FROM COLLECTION OF
MICHU NISHIURA WEGLYN