

Frank Abe:

You asked for a 2-3 page bio..Here 'tis.

I was born and grew up in the San Gabriel Valley east of Los Angeles, and graduated in 1940 from the same Monrovia High School that my Issei father had graduated immediately prior to World War I.

On December 7, 1941, I was a student at Pasadena Junior College, and 1A in the draft. Some of my classmates were being drafted, and I hoped to join them when my draft number came up. Our internment changed that, and I went with my family to the Heart Mountain Concentration Camp.

I wanted to volunteer for the Army, but my Issei mother was opposed, and so I deferred to her wishes, and spent most of my time on work leave out of Heart Mountain until I was drafted in 1944 when I became the fourth member of our family to be with the Military Intelligence Service, serving in the Pacific Theater. At the time I was totally unaware of the organized resistance to the draft led by Frank Emi and others. Unknown to me, my Issei father supported them, and chaired a community meeting for them in the Block Two mess hall building. He also volunteered to be a witness for them in their trial in Cheyenne, but was not called.

In the early 1960s, while living in the San Fernando Valley in Sunland, and a very active member of the local American Baptist Church in which my family was the only non-white family, I became involved in the Pacoima area of the San Fernando Valley in civil rights and justice issues, believing that these were faith issues in which my church should be involved. I became a board member of the San Fernando Valley NAACP. When a fair housing law was passed by the California legislature, I disagreed with my pastor, who spoke against the law in a church meeting. Additionally, my sister and her husband, who worked at Jet Propulsion Laboratory in nearby La Canada, were turned down when they attempted to buy a home in a housing tract in my neighborhood. I went to my church Board of Deacons in protest, and they refused to act, saying that our pastor was on vacation. When he returned, they did nothing. I left the church, taking my family over this issue, and it was several years before I joined a Japanese American church.

At that time, Sunland-Tujunga was known as the bedroom community of some sixty thousand residents for Lockheed and other commercial businesses in the San Fernando Valley, with not one black person living in Sunland-Tujunga.

I enlisted some other persons and we created the Sunland Tujunga Human Relations Council in 1965, as a new entity under the Los Angeles County Human Relations Council, to encourage and facilitate blacks who might want to live in Sunland Tujunga. It was during this period that a few blacks came to establish residence in

Sunland Tujunga, and we were able to support one of the first such families.

When I joined the Japanese American Holiness Church in Pacoima, several members were also members of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Citizens League, so I joined in the early seventies. Our chapter became impatient with JACL resolutions of 1970, 1972, and 1974 which supported the concept of redress for our internment during World War II in ten camps, but did not move beyond biennial resolutions.

Our San Fernando Valley JACL Chapter rightly believed that many Japanese Americans were distrustful of JACL because of its stand during World War II when JACL supported our government's position that we should be interned for national security reasons. We believed that many Japanese Americans would not support a JACL initiative. Our San Fernando Valley Chapter thereupon decided to create a 501C3 non profit educational entity* to raise the issue of redress within the Japanese American community and to educate the larger community about the Constitutional issues of our internment. A legal firm in West Los Angeles incorporated our entity in early 1975, and I was named President of this entity. One of our first educational forums was at the San Fernando Valley Community Center and I wrote to Edison Uno, who was possibly the first redress advocate within the Japanese American community, and he headed a panel which included representatives of local and national Congressional offices.

Phil Shigekuni and I of our Chapter also went on late nite talk radio, where we found out about the late Lillian Baker, a vitriolic opponent of redress.

I became Governor of the Pacific Southwest District Council of JACL, and was also on the first national JACL committee in the late 1970s to move beyond biennial resolutions, and with the election of Dr. Clifford Uyeda as JACL national President in 1978, a successful national drive was finally under way.

In 1980, when Congress, with major input from our Nikkei Congressional legislators, decided to hold hearings in different parts of our country on this issue, a commission was created, and a hearing was to be held in Los Angeles in 1981.

My Issei father was then in his early nineties, living in east Los Angeles, engaged full time with his haiku poetry, as he headed two haiku groups, one in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and the other in San Diego. He had taught himself to type on a manual typewriter, and had an extensive correspondence with haiku students in this country.

I informed my father that the Congressional Commission was coming to Los Angeles, and that I wanted him to write or perhaps even make a presentation before the Commission hearing.

* named E.O.9066 INC.

When I next visited him he gave me a draft of a prepared speech, and I was astonished when I read his draft as I had not known that he was completely supportive of the draft resistance at Heart Mountain, and indeed, had offered to testify in their defense at their trial in Cheyenne, Wyoming, though this did not happen. I have a copy of archival records wherein my older sister Florence reports that she believed that our father was prepared to be a witness for the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee.

I have read the JACL Charter wherein it states that it is a civil rights organization, but after I joined the organization, I came to understand why its leadership did the same thing that the national leadership of the ACLU did in violating its charter under pressure from the government and all major institutions across our country during World War II.

And yet, probably because I am my father's son, I came to a new understanding of and profound respect for those few of us who stood on Constitutional grounds and refused to be drafted out of the camps in violation of due process, wartime or no...and paid the price of rejection and vilification of being called traitors by the JACL leaders of that time.....

When the Japanese American National Museum sponsored a camp exhibit at the Los Angeles Convention Center in 1994, I manned a Heart Mountain booth. Ruth Mizobe, then the JACL Pacific Southwest District Council Governor came by with Tritia Murakawa, a board member, both Sansei whom I had not met before. I suggested that given JACL's track record of denigrating the resisters of conscience during World War II, then having passed a resolution at their national meeting in 1990 in San Diego acknowledging that the resisters stood on Constitutional grounds, and stating that they would educate the larger public on this issue...but failed to do so.. that perhaps the District Board might issue an apology to the draft resisters. Ruth Mizobe and Tritia Murakawa indicated that it would not be a problem, but went further, and took it to the next District Council meeting in Gardena, where a public apology was voted by the District.

I followed this up with a letter to the other seven JACL national districts, requesting similar action, with supporting letters from Ruth Mizobe, Dr. Clifford Uyeda, former national JACL President, and Dr. Eji Suyama a WWII 442nd veteran. None of the seven District Councils acted on this request at that time.

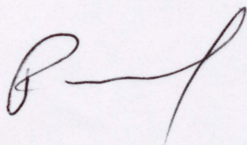
This year, some six years later, the JACL National Council, at its meeting in Monterey, California, finally passed a resolution apologizing for its actions against the resisters of conscience during World War II.

I have never called for a reconciliation between JACL and the draft resisters of conscience...but for an apology from JACL, which could be a precursor to reconciliation.

In retrospect, I believe that my active involvement in justice issues have evolved out of my life experience as a child of Japanese immigrant parents, whose core values came from their newly accepted Protestant faith, once they had arrived in America. My father was a friend and supporter of Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, an internationally famous Christian, a pacifist, who believed in transforming Japan's militaristic culture thru democratic institutions unknown in Japan at the turn of the century such as trade unions and farm cooperatives.

My Issei father believed in living out his faith, as he did at Heart Mountain in supporting the Fair Play Committee* in 1943. I believe that my involvement in justice issues has its genesis in my following as best I can, the same path in my life.

*see attached draft of his statement for the 1981 Commission hearing in Los Angeles, California.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Paul', written in a cursive style.

9/16/00

C:\wp51\paultbio

TESTIMONY PREPARED FOR THE COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND
INTERMENT OF CIVILIANS....LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
July, 1981

When World War II started, I was engaging in farming, mostly raising strawberries. In April, 1942, it became clear that all Japanese will be forced to evacuate from the Pacific coast. Selling my strawberry crop at \$700, and on 15th of May, I went to Pomona Assembly with my wife and seven of my children; the eldest boy had already been in the army.

We stayed in Pomona Assembly Center exactly for 3 months, and then we were sent to Heart Mountain Relocation Center, Wyoming by a train, arriving there on 18th of August, 1942.

As soon as we settled down in Block Two of the Center, the Administration told ^{us} to select Block Head from each block. I was chosen as the Block Head of our block, and I served in that position for one year. After serving for one year as the Block Head, I retired and I took care of a Japanese Language Library.

In 1943, there was so-called Loyalty Registration. We were subjected to answer many questions. It aroused a great dispute, particularly among Nisei. For me, as I was an alien enemy, there was no choice but to submit to the war policy of the U.S. But to Nisei, it was different, because they were American citizens. There were many super patriots who volunteered to serve the army, in spite of their rights of citizenship had been ignored and confined within the barbed wire fences. However, there were some Niseis who argued that they could not be loyal to the U.S. and serve the army, since the rights of citizenship have been actually taken ^{away} from ^{us}. They formed a group called "Fair Play Committee", and started to have meetings at various Mess Halls, explaining their point of view. One day some of their leaders came to our block and asked me to serve as the emcee at the meeting they had planned to have at the Mess Hall in my block.

I told them why don't you go to the present block head ^{about} it? The leader answered " We did but he refused to take it. There is no one to ask, and so we came to see you." I hesitated a little, but finally I accepted it, for I have been sympathetic toward them.

The gist of my talk at that Fair Play Committee meeting was as follows:

Since I am an alien enemy, I am not in position to express my opinions on the policy of the war of the U.S., but when I was young I went to the American schools for several years and learned about American history, as well as Constitution of U.S. I know why the colonists revolted against England. The Nisei also knows about them. I can understand why some of them refuse to be loyal to U.S. and refuse to serve American army, while the rights of citizenship have been denied to them and put into the concentration camp without doing anything wrong.

Tonight, you people are going to speak what they have in their minds. I wish all of you please listen to what they say.

At that time when I spoke at the meeting, three of my sons were already serving ⁱⁿ American army. I was proud of it. At the same time, I justified some of the Niseis who refused to serve the army at that circumstance.

After almost 40 years, I firmly believe that the total evacuation of Japanese during World War II was wrong, and the U.S. government made a great mistake. It is proper U.S. to recognize about it, and do something to compensate about it to show her sincerity. By so doing, I believe, U.S. will not lose anything; on the contrary, her reputation as a true democratic country will be greatly enhanced.

Satoru Tsunetsuki
Satoru Tsunetsuki

7/30/81

FRANK: MY DAD WAS 93 YEARS OLD
WHEN HE TYPED THIS
DRAFT