

Seattle, Washington 98178  
September 9, 1981

Commission on Wartime Relocation  
and Internment of Civilians  
726 Jackson Place N.W.  
Suite 2020  
Washington D.C. 20506

My name is Joseph D. Nakatsu. I am a retired federal government employee and I am currently selling real estate. Today, I would like to express my experiences and views as a veteran of the U.S. Army - not the Japanese Army.

I volunteered for the service on December 16, 1941, and was one of the last persons of Japanese ancestry to be accepted by the Army in this area. From the Federal Building in Seattle, I was sent to Fort Lewis for a few days and was shipped immediately inland to Camp Grant, Illinois, for training in the Medical Corps. After training I was "pigeon-holed" at a Station Hospital at Fort Custer, Michigan. All Japanese-American soldiers were all assigned to non-combatant units and our duties ranged from ward boys, (bedpan jockies), kitchen help (KP's), theater ushers, PX clerks, gardeners to janitors. When I noticed this condition, it appeared we would never be able to serve overseas to prove our loyalty. It would be interesting to see the various directives and orders issued by the Army regarding Nisei soldiers. After some two years at Fort Custer and the subsequent formation of the 442nd Combat Team we were able to volunteer for combat.

All of us at Fort Custer who could not pass the interview for Military Intelligence Service - (that is to speak Japanese) were transferred to Camp Blanding, Florida for our special training in combat infantry. We were the first replacement group for the 442nd Combat Team which was at that time preparing for the invasion of Southern France. I served 3 years and 11 months in the Army and received my discharge at Fort Lewis, Washington on November 14, 1945.

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My service experiences with fellow soldiers of other ethnic background were excellent after they got to know me. The fact that we were treated differently from other soldiers bothered me considerably because many of my Caucasian buddies were continuously receiving orders for other units and we were not. Even my mail to my mother, which was a clipping of my Station Hospital ball team at Fort Custer, was examined as "Detained Enemy Mail". I have a copy for your information.

The main reason for my enlistment was to prove my loyalty to my country and hoping that it would help release my father who was seized by the F.B.I. on the night of December 7, 1941. Even after numerous letters to the Justice Department, it did not do any good as he was interned for approximately three years at Missoula and Santa Fe Internment Camps. The evacuation had a terrific impact on my mother, who was 57 years old and spoke every little English. She was left alone with three underage children - two sisters age 20 and 18 and my brother, age 16, a 20-acre farm with crops planted, and many farm equipment. In a very short notice she had to prepare my family for evacuation by herself because my father was interned and I was in the Army. I could not get an emergency furlough because the Army said the area was restricted to Japanese. Since I owned our property in Des Moines, Washington, I had to give my neighbor, Mrs. Furney, the power of attorney to sell our equipments, automobile and to manage our property. She was very kind and helpful through the entire evacuation period. I cannot give you the details because I was in the Army but it was similar to other evacuees experiences I believe.

The psychological impact of the evacuation and the family separation on my mother and father could be noticed after our return to Seattle in 1945. My mother's health was poor and she was continuously sick from time to time. My father was difficult to get along with as he thought everyone was against him and was not able to work. I believe it affected him mentally not being able to be the head of the household and provide for his family. This was extremely important to the Issei way of life - even though his childrens were all providing support. My father and mother always stated that America was their country because it was our country and they felt that if I came home from the war, <sup>they were</sup> their time in internment was a small contribution to the war effort.



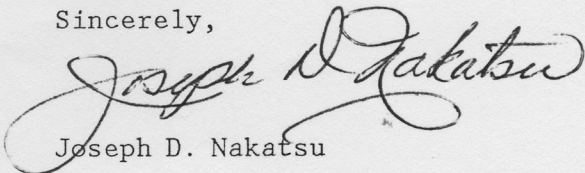
After almost 40 years, why am I here today? First, what is most disturbing to me is that a large part of the American public still do not believe there are American citizens of Japanese ancestry. Because of our looks we are Japanese - granted it is difficult to tell by looks because I have difficulty sometimes - unless, of course, they all carry cameras. Moreover, with the large immigration of "Boat People" and other Asians, we may be faced with more problems of identity in the future. Therefore, we need to continuously educate the public and properly document history and congressional records. All of the monetary reparation cannot change what has happened and will not change the uneducated public views.

Secondly, something should be done about the Supreme Court decisions which are still on record. I was listening to the "Larry King Talk Show" on Tuesday, September 1, 1981 and someone asked the panel, "Was all this constitutional?" And the answer was, "I guess it was at the time". Therefore, I believe Congress should take some kind of action to nullify the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the evacuation of American-Japanese citizens.

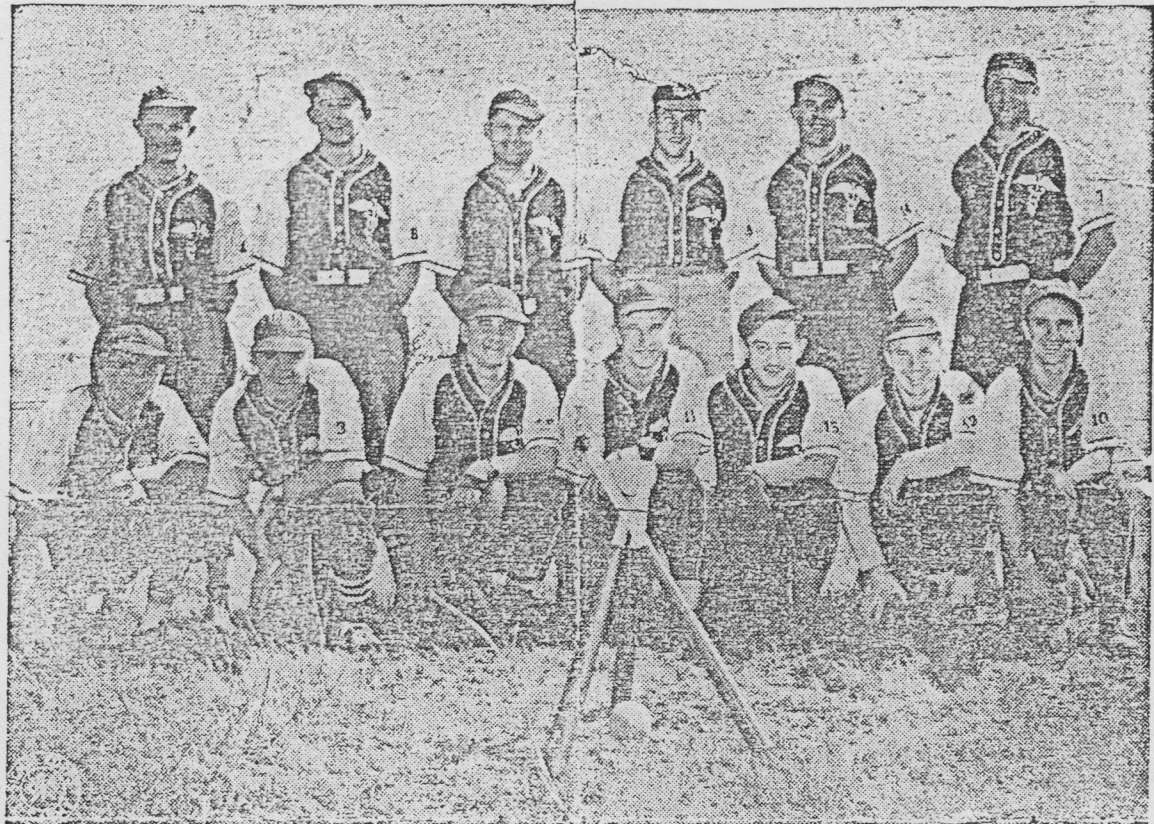
Finally, I do not believe in ~~any~~ <sup>individual</sup> monetary reparation because as a veteran -like millions of other combat veterans who served, gave up material things too and suffered more physically and psychologically to protect our constitutional rights and the principles of democracy. It is because we fought to preserve these rights that we are able to have these hearings to right what was wrong for the future. Money is not the answer, Congressional action is needed to ensure that these errors and mistakes will never happen again.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph D. Nakatsu

## Hospital Post Ball Club Honored by CO



Post Softball League champs by virtue of their win over the 237th MP Co. (ZI) last Friday, the Station Hospital nine was feted by the Station Hospital commanding officer, Col. John G. Slevin, at a dinner last night in Galesburg. The champions, left to right, are front row—Cpl. James Verboian, 2nd base; Pfc. Hiram Tucker, roving center; Cpl. Len Baba, outfield, Pfc. Walter Zuba, pitcher and manager; Cpl. Joe Nahatsu, outfield; Pvt. C. W. Weed, pitcher, and T/4 Ottilio Sabatini, 3rd base. Back row—Cpl. Frank McIntyre, shortstop; Pfc. Raymond Smith, 1st base; Pfc. Al Kocinski, catcher; Cpl. James Mathison, center field; Pfc. Frank Kushuba, outfield, and Sgt. Bill Lera, utility.

BY .....  
U. S. I. & N. S.