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MISCELLANEOUS

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No 110

HONORABLE TOM C. CLARK

Attorney General of the United States
Department of Justice Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

On February 1945, I signed an application for renunciation of U. S. nationality form at the W.R.A. Segregation Center situated at Tule Lake, Modoc, County, California, at a perfunctory appearance before a government official. (and I have received a letter dated March 12, 1945, from Mr. Herbert Wechsler, Assistant Attorney General, approving the same.)

I hereby repudiate, withdraw, retract, and revoke the said renunciation upon the following grounds and for the following reasons:

(1) The circumstances under which said renunciation form was signed by me did not constitute a fair and impartial hearing and was a denial of my constitutional guaranty of due process of law and of the equal protection of the laws;

(2) I was not a free agent at the time when and the place where said renunciation form was signed but was then and there held in duress and was the victim of fraud, menace and undue influence and mistake of law;

(3) I then and there was and continuously from May 14, 1942, had been detained in the said W.R.A. Segregation Center by official authority and was deprived of substantially all my constitutional rights, liberties, privileges and immunities as an American citizen by birth and by choice and was thusly discriminated against solely by reason of the Japanese nationality of my ancestors;

(4) I was intimidated and compelled to sign the said renunciation form by threat of physical violence to myself (and members of my family) made by a pressure group in said camp, and by members thereof, and I was in constant fear, that said threats would be carried into execution if I refused to sign it. I was acting under the menace and fraud of said group and its members and the undue influence exerted by them upon me and I signed said renunciation form under duress.

Because of the foregoing reasons the said renunciation (and approval thereof) were, and each of them is, invalid, null and void.

I am not a citizen or subject of Japan and I do not and never have owed or given that country or nation any allegiance. I am not an alien enemy. I am a native American by birth and also by choice. I recognize as my sovereign the United States of America and I give and ever have given the United States my undivided loyalty and allegiance. I have no dual citizenship through any act or acceptance upon my individual part.

Therefore I demand that you withdraw and set aside the said renunciation form which is repudiated, withdrawn and revoked by me, and recall, withdraw, cancel, and revoke your approval of said renunciation form.

I am ready and willing to have this matter re-opened and a hearing be granted to me in order to prove that said renunciation form was signed when I was not a free agent in any sense of the words but was acting under duress and under menace fraud and undue influence and mistake of fact and law.

I respectfully request your immediate consideration of this urgent matter.

Yours very truly,

Yuriko Lily Fukuwa
Yuriko Lily Fukuwa
2606 B
Newell, California

BERNIE NORIMASA TAMURA

Confidential

Tule Lake Center
Newell, California
September 25, 1945

Mr. Edward J. Ennis
Director
Enemy Alien Control Unit
Department of Justice
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Ennis:

I have received your notice of April 17, 1945 that my renunciation of my United States citizenship has been accepted. I feel that I am asking for something almost impossible, but I would like to have all such forms cancelled. If this is impossible may I request for a parole out of this center in order to return to San Fernando, California where I resided prior to evacuation. It is regarding this matter that I am now writing to you. I do not deny that I have applied for renunciation of my citizenship and that you have accepted, but I can truthfully say that I did not fully realize the drastic step I was taking. I realize now the worthless step I have taken and if I were in the position where I was able to think and decide for myself, I would never have permitted myself to be involved in such a stupid act as to renounce my rights as a citizen of the United States, the only country I know. I say this because I was coerced and driven into that direction by actual threats of violence so that I was unable to act as a free agent and express myself freely as I am able to do so by this personal letter.

Mr. Ennis, I shudder to think what drastic action I have been coerced to take by no fault of mine. Prior to evacuation I was living a life like any American citizen regardless of my physical features of a Japanese. I never placed any thought to my ancestry and never dreamed that the time would ever come when I would be punished as a person of wrong ancestry. I had the greatest faith in the principles upon which this country was established and was fully Americanized as anyone else whose ancestry can be traced back to the group who came to America on the Mayflower. What is bothering me the most now is the fact that I cannot go back to my former friends with whom I have been reared, with whom I attended school and with whom I enjoyed common interest in sports, and model airplane events even though in the event you may make it possible for me to be paroled out of this center. The gap that will exist between our friendship which was caused by that sudden evacuation of Japanese only regardless of being a citizen or of my devoted loyalty to America, makes me feel that there is no hope for me to ever regain my former position if I cannot be permitted to leave this center or to be deported without a clarification of the underlying reasons behind my renunciation which I am attempting to do by this letter. Whatever your records may indicate me to be, I have greatest confidence in your judgment of the predicament I found myself at the time of renunciation conducted by the Justice Department in this center.

Life that I enjoyed since the time of my birth was like any that any Japanese American in California experienced except that my father passed away in 1933 when I was 17 years old, my sister Kimi was 13 years old; brother Jimmy, 10; and George, 7, so mother was the sole supporter of our family of 5 with all of us minors yet of school age. I remember I helped mother by working as a farm laborer during week ends. She worked for a florist in order to support the family. Prior to his death, Father was a truck farmer having come to America in 1905 from Japan. I graduated in 1935 from San Fernando High. There were very few Japanese in our graduating class so I had all the opportunity to become acquainted with Caucasian fellows and learned to think, act and believe that there wasn't such a thing as racial discrimination. I chummed around with William Lawrence Jones whose dad was an engineer for the Southern Pacific Railroad. I was unable to continue my education although I wished so much to graduate from college in mechanical drafting. I remember Bill enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles and became a metal shop teacher.

After graduation from high school, I helped mother by working as farm laborer for a large nursery and prior to evacuation mother and I were the sole supporter of our family. During July of 1940, one year prior to the outbreak of this war, my mother and sister went to Japan for a visit. It is a Japanese custom to take the ashes of the deceased to the homeland for a formal burial. Upon completing this mission, my mother returned to America despite the urging of her relatives to remain in Japan. Mother was determined to make her living with the rest of us in America. My sister wished to remain there for about a year or two so Mother returned alone. The following year around November, there were signs of possible Pacific conflict so I attempted to get my sister to return but the Pearl Harbor attack occurred before I was able to get my sister back to America. Now my sister is still stranded there. Since my sister was the only daughter of the family, my mother naturally was constantly worrying about her. Mother's worries were partly responsible for the fact the family had to come to this unwholesome Tule Lake Concentration camp.

During my mother and sister's absence, on October 16, 1940, I registered for Selective Service just as any loyal American fellow would have done with no feeling that I was of Japanese ancestry. At that time, I was 24 years old but was deferred and reclassified as 3-A because I was the sole supporter of 2 minors, my brother George who was 14 and my brother Jimmy who was 17. As soon as Jimmy graduated from high school and my mother returned from Japan, I was no longer 3-A for Mother and Jimmy were able to work for the rest of the family. Thus, in March of 1942 I was reclassified as 1-A. I did not mind this at all even though since Pacific War had begun, eventual combat assignment was inevitable. I had my pre-induction physical examination which I passed and I waited for the day to receive my induction notice. Then, in April, a month later, evacuation notice was announced and I found myself under orders to move into the Manzanar center so I immediately went to my local draft board and explained my predicament. On April 28, 1942, I, like many others because of wrong ancestry, was evacuated with the family to Manzanar center. I recall at the time of our evacuation, my Caucasian friends whom I've known since I was a kid knee-high to a grasshopper; friends who knew the family even before I was born, came to our help. They were sorry to see us go and sincerely expressed their warm wishes

to see us back soon. My Caucasian friends who knew how I was awaiting the call to serve for this country thought I was being inducted into the Army and were unaware of the fact that I was being evacuated as a Jap by a Presidential Proclamation formulated by the President of the United States and executed by the United States Army. I shall never forget that heartache we all suffered at that parting which if it never had occurred would never have placed us in a group to be classified at the end of the war as a "bunch of sad Japs".

After our bewildered trip up into Owens Valley, we came to the improvised concentration camp surrounded by barbed-wire fences and desert. We made the best of the confusion and unrest one can expect when thousands of people are suddenly moved from their homes to face a new type of life shrouded with the atmosphere of a close confinement. Here in the Manzanar center I waited for my induction papers but instead of such forms, I received a reclassification notice late that year of 1942 stating that I was now "4-C"--the same classification as an alien. This was the second blow to me for I believed myself as a loyal American citizen in spite of the implication of distrust voiced in the evacuation order.

Soon after internment in the Manzanar center, I applied for work as fireman, a job I never dreamed I would ever be doing, and started to work immediately to keep my morale up. I liked this job very well because there was a fire college in connection with the work which enabled me to learn all about fighting fires just as is done in the Los Angeles Fire Department. Since there were so many interesting things to learn and so much to do, I did not place much thought to relocation plans the first year. I was thoroughly wrapped up in my work and so even in the December 6, 1942 riot, known as the Manzanar Riot, I did not witness the incident because I was captain on duty that day and was responsible for all of the men on duty. I kept all of them in the station so none of them received any injuries or became involved in that riot.

While at Manzanar, aside from my work, I took active part in Buddhist church functions. At one party we gave for our parents, we had as our guest, Mr. Galen M. Fisher of the Institute of Pacific Relations. He sat next to me at the head of the table and we chatted and became acquainted. Mr. Fisher later wrote to me from Ogden, Utah thanking me for the pleasant time at the party. I often wonder how he would feel if he ever learned what had happened to that jovial fun-loving group that assembled that night for the special party.

Life at Manzanar had many pleasant memories for I possess that American philosophy of life of enjoying and making the most of what I have. Then suddenly in February of 1943, the question of registration was thrust upon us. The Manzanar Center like the Tule Lake Center, was situated in the excluded area of California where no person of Japanese ancestry can enter. The real purpose of this new issue was not explained clearly. Confusion, suspicion, and distrust came over the whole camp. I was thoroughly taken by surprise when this registration issue came up. Until then I had forgotten all about my reclassification as "4-C" which was not because of my request but registration questions aroused in me that unpleasant 4-C classification. It remained in my mind so when the interviewer approached me the way he did, I was compelled to answer as I did.

The interviewer was Lieutenant Bogard of the United States Army. As soon as I stepped into the room he asked angrily, "Are you loyal?". I said, "No." and also told him I had planned to take Mother to Japan. That was all he asked. He did not ask why I chose to say "no" nor the underlying reason why I had to say Mother wanted to return to Japan. I wanted to tell him my position and feelings but any approach of that sort frightened me to limit my conversation. From then till segregation I was promoted several times from assistant captain to assistant chief then to chief and instructor of the fire college. I must say my stay at Manzanar was a very pleasant one with a feeling that I was acquiring so much in line of education which I was unable to attain on the outside.

Then came February of 1944 when segregation of so-called "disloyals" to Tule Lake Center began. I was classed as "disloyal" merely because I didn't get a fair chance to answer my question a year before. Just before we were leaving Manzanar, our acquaintance of long standing, Mr. Andre, owner of a tireshop back home, came with our belongings which we did not sell at the time of evacuation for we were planning to return soon to our former home. The house in which we lived is still left vacant for our return. We told him we were going to the Tule Lake Segregation Camp. He seemed to lay very little thought to the matter and felt it was our business. If he was surprised of the change two years in camp had made upon us, he did not express it. Mr. Andre was a sincere man who knew us so well. He sponsored our softball team back home. I played catcher on that team for 3 years. It was through him, I learned my friend, Bill Jones, had been promoted to the rank of Captain in the United States Army. A Japanese friend of mine is now back in San Fernando working for Mr. Andre. At our parting then, Mr. Andre asked us to write after we reached the Tule Lake Camp.

We were transferred from Manzanar to Tule Lake in February, 1944, after the November Riot which lasted for two months at the Tule Lake Center. The center was far from what I expected! It was in all sense a concentration camp! Never did I dream that so much was going to happen to me as soon as I was locked in this center which was far from anything I had ever experienced. It was surrounded by 2 high fences with guards in many guardtowers placed at supposedly strategic positions as one finds in penal institutions for incorrigibles. In this camp were many minors who had to be with their parents. There were many who can be proven to be nothing but loyal but merely for one reason or other had remained or drifted into this camp. A fence was built to divide the Caucasian people who worked for the WRA from the residents of the center. When we were transferred, the camp situation after the November Riot was assumed to be back to normal. At least, that was what I expected but I learned later that the situation was quite on the contrary. There seemed to be a certain powerful group ruling the people of the center and whom everyone feared. They were later called the Hoshi Dan and Hokoku Seinen Dan. I was radically against such an organization being permitted to exist in this congested colony where no one was free to act and think for himself. No one in our family was involved in these organizations until that fatal night of October 1944, which was months before renunciation procedure was introduced to the colony by the Justice Department. As my friend, my brother and I were on our way to night school, we came upon a man standing between the messhall and a barrack. His motions caused us to stop and investigate. Before I could call away my friend, he was slashed by a sharp knife on the left side

of his face! Soon thereafter I learned that the man was influential in the Hoshi Dan and was a resident of the same block as our family! The brutality of the attack placed dreadful fear upon everyone in our block who were not connected with the Hoshi Dan for it was obvious what one may expect if one refused to recognize the organization as my friend, my brother and I had done. Hysteria of terrorism spread to other blocks in the colony and those who were non-members were helplessly driven to submit themselves to the influence of the Hoshi Dan members for fears of physical injuries. The knifer was soon apprehended but the rest of us were helplessly left in the colony with immediate fears of being the next prey of this merciless group in which this knifer was a member. Despite Mother's pleas to stay out of this knifing case, I went to the trials as a witness of the incident because I felt it was my duty to prosecute the violator and to enforce peace in our center. I was placed in a dangerous position by acting as witness for I was eyed as an "enu" or informer of all the activities within this camp by the members of this group. Our whole family was wrapped in fears. Mother, who is forty-nine years old, was so nervous and upset about my safety so in the meantime she registered as a member of the Hoshi Dan to save me from possible beating or knifing. It wasn't long before everyone who had no intention at first, were coerced to become a member of the Hoshi Dan for fear of physical violence. We had no other choice for we had no way of moving out or away from terrorism in this fenced-in concentration camp. There were no other ways out because relocation was not permitted in Tule Lake at that time and also in such frenzy it was impossible to even mention the word "relocation". It was just maddening how much power that group was able to exert upon us against our wishes. Even at the trials, I was inhibited to express myself freely for fear of violence upon my immediate family as well as my innocent friends. After he was sentenced, he later returned to our block which just added more horrifying mental strain upon us all.

The year ended quietly without another incident for we were superficially members of the organization. We complied by clipping our hair and abiding to the regulations of that organization. I was married in February, 1945 to a girl from the same block as ours whose family were members of the organization for the same reason as we were. Then on the 12th of February, my brother George was interned at Bismarck Internment Camp in North Dakota. At the time of his apprehension, he had just become a member but since he was listed on a membership list which was confiscated by WRA, he was taken. I remember he had his renunciation hearing just before mine. He was eighteen years old then having graduated in December, 1944 from Tri-State High on the project. Since he was only a kid, he was afraid to withdraw from the organization since the pressure placed upon him was too great. I regret very much that I sent my brother as a member of the Seinen Dan but that was the only way out at that time, for he had sacrificed himself in order to protect our family. He recently wrote that he will attempt to be released from Bismarck and join the family in Tule Lake.

As I recall now, I appeared at the renunciation hearing the first part of March when the camp was livelier than usual by the activities of radical organizations to make us all renounce our citizenship. Their power was augmented by the fervor aroused by periodic removal of these agitators by the Department of Justice. Once a member of the organization, there was no way of withdrawing from that organization and of feeling safe to roam in this colony.

It was so bad that those who did not renounce stated in public they had renounced in order avoid the consequences of a person who did not renounce. During the time hearings were conducted in this center, these organizations were permitted to display their might and power so ostentatiously as though their selfish aim was the intentions of everyone in this camp. It is just disgusting to believe that the Justice Department and the WRA remained on the sideline to watch us all renounce against our wishes when we couldn't act freely and express our true feelings toward this country. It may seem as though the hearing was conducted in privacy; however, when others within the block kept curious watch to see who did or who did not receive letters from the Justice Department, or who did or did not receive special hearing notices, there was no way out unless one renounced for otherwise one would be faced with the sad predicament of being eyed as a double-crosser. I've never believed that such gangsterism could ever have been tolerated by any law-enforcing body!

Before I appeared at the hearing, I debated about appearing and pondered if there wasn't some way to avoid renunciation. There really was no way out with so much fear harassing me with additional worries over my brother George's apprehension, so I was compelled to appear at that hearing. At my hearing I was unable to express myself thoroughly except to say that I wanted to take mother to Japan so she will be able to join her daughter. I regret that I did not tell you my reasons for renouncing at that time. My hearing was about 2 minutes long. No doubt the Hearing Officer was aggravated by my hair clipped short which was no fault of mine. I avoided wearing regulation sweaters with the rising sun emblem.

You may wonder why I am so freely expressing myself, now, when I wasn't able to do so before. Now there is no pressure and I am sure you are aware of the blow the unconditional surrender of Japan was to these fanatics of those radical organizations who have quieted down now. Mr. Ennis, does it mean that the laws of the United States does not imply justice upon a person like myself who was compelled to renounce against one's wishes? Mr. Ennis, upon what laws of the United States am I compelled to suffer because of being a person of Japanese ancestry which is no fault of mine? Mr. Ennis, by what laws of the United States was I convicted to be evacuated from my home and my friends? Mr. Ennis, upon what laws of the United States was I subjected to ever be doubted as a "loyal American" when I had once been classified as 1-A? Mr. Ennis, does renunciation after the four years of my confinement signify that I am no longer a subject of the United States just because I was forced to renounce my citizenship?

Mr. Ennis, in spite of my predicament that I am now subject to deportation, I do still have the faith in the discretion of those who execute and enforce the law that there is yet some hope to have a rehearing upon my case with some consideration of my past experience which I have hastily covered in this letter. I sincerely hope that my case will be considered as well as my two brothers and my wife. I shall be most glad to abide by any regulations set by you in restoring my former status as American citizen.

Sincerely,

Berry Norimasa Tamura