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Biography: "History Makers: Yoshiko Uchida"
Excerpt from United States History

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HISTORY MAKERS

— Yoshiko Uchida —

Member of Family Number 13453

The family was listed as number 13453. They had ten days to pack before they had to report to the Civil Control Station—ten days to decide what to take, what to give away, what to sell, and what to save. Friends took the piano and boxes of books. Some furniture went into storage, and some was sold. Their old collie, Laddie, was given away. On the last morning, neighbors brought breakfast, then drove them to the Civil Control Station at the First Congregational Church. As they entered the church, the family saw armed soldiers guarding the doors.

Family 13453, the Uchidas, lived in Berkeley, California. Dwight and Iku Uchida were Japanese immigrants who, because of their nationality, could not become citizens. Their daughters, Yoshiko and Keiko, were American citizens born in the United States.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, people feared Japanese-Americans might spy for Japan. President Roosevelt ordered the army to evacuate the entire Japanese-American com-



munity on the west coast to camps in the West and Midwest. From the camps, people were to be relocated to areas away from the west coast. Within two months, 110,000 American citizens and their alien parents lost their incomes, their property, and their civil liberties.

Yoshiko Uchida was a college student when her family was sent to Topaz, Utah. Like all the camps, Topaz was isolated. The housing barracks were quickly and badly built. Summers were hot and dry, and winters were cold and snowy. Always the air was full of dust. Yoshiko worked as a secretary and a teacher until 1943, when she left for graduate school at Smith College. Her sister Kay also moved east.

After the war, Yoshiko Uchida became a teacher and a writer. Several of her books are about Japanese-American life before and during the war. She writes for all Americans, she says, "with the hope that through knowledge of the past, they will never allow another group of people in America to be sent into a desert exile again."