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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SCENARIO

SIGNING CEREMONY FOR JAPANESE-AMERICAN

INTERNMENT COMPENSATION BILL

Wednesday, August 10, 1988

450 OEOB

- 1:30 p.m. Press pre-set.
- 1:45 p.m. Guests arrive Pennsylvania Avenue Entrance and are escorted to 450 OEOB.
- 2:25 p.m. Press set-up.
- 2:25 p.m. THE PRESIDENT departs The Oval Office en route 450 OEOB anteroom.
- THE PRESIDENT arrives 450 OEOB anteroom.
- Announcement (off-stage)
- 2:30 p.m. THE PRESIDENT proceeds to podium and makes remarks.
- OPEN PHOTO/WRITING POOL
- 2:40 p.m. THE PRESIDENT concludes remarks, proceeds to signing table and signs Japanese-American Internment Compensation Bill.
- OPEN PHOTO/WRITING POOL
- THE PRESIDENT departs 450 OEOB en route The Oval Office.
- 2:45 p.m. THE PRESIDENT arrives The Oval Office.

08/10/88 12:30 p.m.

(ROBINSON)

8/10/88 - 10 A.M.

SIGNING CEREMONY FOR JAPANESE
INTERNMENT LEGISLATION

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 1988

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, DISTINGUISHED
GUESTS, MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

WE GATHER HERE TODAY TO RIGHT A GRAVE
WRONG.

MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO, SHORTLY AFTER
THE BOMBING OF PEARL HARBOR, 120,000 PERSONS
OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY LIVING IN THE U.S. WERE
FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES AND PLACED
IN MAKESHIFT INTERNMENT CAMPS. THIS ACTION
WAS TAKEN WITHOUT TRIAL, WITHOUT JURY.
IT WAS BASED SOLELY ON RACE -- FOR THESE
120,000 WERE AMERICANS OF JAPANESE DESCENT.

YES, THE NATION WAS THEN AT WAR,
STRUGGLING FOR ITS SURVIVAL -- AND IT IS NOT
FOR US TODAY TO PASS JUDGMENT UPON THOSE WHO
MAY HAVE MADE MISTAKES WHILE ENGAGED IN THAT
GREAT STRUGGLE.

YET WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE
INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS WAS JUST
THAT -- A MISTAKE. FOR THROUGHOUT THE WAR,
JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN THE TENS OF THOUSANDS
REMAINED UTTERLY LOYAL TO THE UNITED STATES.

INDEED, SCORES OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS
VOLUNTEERED FOR OUR ARMED FORCES --
MANY STEPPING FORWARD IN THE INTERNMENT
CAMPS THEMSELVES. THE 442ND REGIMENTAL
COMBAT TEAM, MADE UP ENTIRELY OF
JAPANESE-AMERICANS, SERVED WITH IMMENSE
DISTINCTION -- TO DEFEND THIS NATION,
THEIR NATION.

YET BACK AT HOME, THE SOLDIERS'
FAMILIES WERE BEING DENIED THE VERY FREEDOM
FOR WHICH SO MANY OF THE SOLDIERS THEMSELVES
WERE LAYING DOWN THEIR LIVES.

CONGRESSMAN NORMAN MINETA, WITH US TODAY, WAS 10 YEARS OLD WHEN HIS FAMILY WAS INTERNED. IN THE CONGRESSMAN'S WORDS: "MY OWN FAMILY WAS SENT FIRST TO SANTA ANITA RACETRACK. WE SHOWERED IN THE HORSE PADDOCKS. SOME FAMILIES LIVED IN CONVERTED STABLES, OTHERS IN HASTILY THROWN TOGETHER BARRACKS. WE WERE THEN MOVED TO HEART MOUNTAIN, WYOMING, WHERE OUR ENTIRE FAMILY LIVED IN ONE SMALL ROOM OF A RUDE TARPAPER BARRACK."

LIKE SO MANY TENS OF THOUSANDS OF OTHERS, THE MEMBERS OF THE MINETA FAMILY LIVED IN THOSE CONDITIONS NOT FOR A MATTER OF WEEKS OR MONTHS, BUT FOR 3 LONG YEARS.

THE LEGISLATION THAT I AM ABOUT TO SIGN PROVIDES FOR A RESTITUTION PAYMENT TO EACH OF THE 60,000 SURVIVING JAPANESE-AMERICANS, OF THE 120,000 WHO WERE RELOCATED OR DETAINED. YET NO PAYMENT CAN MAKE UP FOR THOSE LOST YEARS.

SO WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IN THIS BILL HAS LESS TO DO WITH PROPERTY THAN WITH HONOR. FOR HERE WE ADMIT A WRONG. HERE WE REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT AS A NATION TO EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW.

I'D LIKE TO NOTE THAT THE BILL I AM ABOUT TO SIGN ALSO PROVIDES FUNDS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ALEUT COMMUNITY WHO WERE EVACUATED FROM THE ALUTIAN AND PRIBILOF ISLANDS AFTER A JAPANESE ATTACK IN 1942. THIS ACTION WAS TAKEN FOR THE ALEUTS' OWN PROTECTION, BUT PROPERTY WAS LOST OR DAMAGED THAT HAS NEVER BEEN REPLACED.

AND NOW IN CLOSING, I WONDER WHETHER YOU'D PERMIT ME ONE PERSONAL REMINISCENCE -- ONE PROMPTED BY AN OLD NEWSPAPER REPORT SENT TO ME BY ROSE (OH-CHEE), A FORMER INTERNEE. THE CLIPPING COMES FROM THE PACIFIC CITIZEN AND IS DATED DECEMBER 1945.

"ARRIVING BY PLANE FROM WASHINGTON," THE ARTICLE BEGINS, "GENERAL JOSEPH W. STILWELL PINNED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS ON MARY (MAH-SUE-DAH) IN A SIMPLE CEREMONY ON THE PORCH OF HER SMALL FRAME SHACK NEAR TALBERT, ORANGE COUNTY. SHE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY TO RETURN FROM RELOCATION CENTERS TO CALIFORNIA'S FARMLANDS."

"VINEGAR JOE" STILWELL WAS THERE THAT DAY TO HONOR (CAH-ZOO-OH) (MAH-SUE-DAH), MARY'S BROTHER.

YOU SEE, WHILE MARY AND HER PARENTS WERE IN AN INTERNMENT CAMP, (CAH-zoo-oh) SERVED AS STAFF SERGEANT TO THE 442ND REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM. IN ONE ACTION, (CAH-zoo-oh) ORDERED HIS MEN BACK AND ADVANCED THROUGH HEAVY FIRE, HAULING A MORTAR. FOR 12 HOURS, HE ENGAGED IN A SINGLE-HANDED BARRAGE OF NAZI POSITIONS. SEVERAL WEEKS LATER AT CASSINO, (CAH-zoo-oh) STAGED ANOTHER LONE ADVANCE. THIS TIME, IT COST HIM HIS LIFE.

THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPING NOTES THAT HER TWO SURVIVING BROTHERS WERE WITH MARY AND HER PARENTS ON THE LITTLE PORCH THAT MORNING. THESE TWO BROTHERS -- LIKE THE HEROIC (CAH-zoo-oh) -- HAD SERVED IN THE U.S. ARMY.

AFTER GENERAL STILWELL MADE THE AWARD,
THE MOTION PICTURE ACTRESS LOUISE
ALLBRITTON -- A TEXAS GIRL -- TOLD HOW
A TEXAS BATTALION HAD BEEN SAVED BY THE
442ND. OTHER SHOW BUSINESS PERSONALITIES
PAID TRIBUTE -- ROBERT YOUNG,
WILL ROGERS, JR. AND ONE YOUNG ACTOR SAID
THIS:

"BLOOD THAT HAS SOAKED INTO THE SANDS
OF A BEACH IS ALL OF ONE COLOR.
AMERICA STANDS UNIQUE IN THE WORLD, THE ONLY
COUNTRY NOT FOUNDED ON RACE, BUT ON A WAY --
AN IDEAL. NOT IN SPITE OF, BUT BECAUSE
OF OUR POLYGLOT BACKGROUND, WE HAVE HAD ALL
THE STRENGTH IN THE WORLD. THAT IS THE
AMERICAN WAY."

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THE NAME OF THAT YOUNG ACTOR WAS RONALD
REAGAN.

AND, YES, THE IDEAL OF LIBERTY AND
JUSTICE FOR ALL -- THAT IS STILL THE
AMERICAN WAY.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU.

AND NOW, LET ME SIGN H.R. 442 --
SO FITTINGLY NAMED IN HONOR OF THE 442ND

.