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HEADQUARTERS WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

291.2 - CAD

20 July 1943

My dear Mr. McCloy:

This is in reply to your letter dated 14 July 1943 (copy attached) with reference to three persons of Japanese ancestry apprehended in the Seattle area for attempting to recover a camera which was buried prior to the evacuation of the Japanese from the West Coast, in which letter you request a report of the incident as a basis for reply to Congressman Costello, and as a basis for considering appropriate action against Japanese-American soldiers who may have been involved in connection therewith.

FRANK S. NOMURA, 39916441, WILLIAM MIZUKAMI, 39916442, and KENJI YAGUCHI, 39916436, were inducted on 12 June 1943 at the Reception Center, Service Command Unit 1968, Fort Douglas, Utah. By paragraphs 28, 29 and 30, Special Orders No. 143, dated 14 June 1943, Headquarters Reception Center, Service Command Unit 1968, Fort Douglas, Utah (copy attached), the three men were relieved from active duty, transferred to the Enlisted Reserve Corps and ordered to Puyallup, Washington, to report on active duty 30 June 1943 at the Reception Center, Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

The three soldiers were first seen in uniform in Sumner, Washington (in Puyallup Valley, near Seattle), on 17 June 1943. At about 1800 on 18 June 1943 the trio appeared at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Burival at Sumner, which home was formerly owned by the Nomura family. According to Mrs. Burival, one of the soldiers stated that he had left a good camera in the shed and wanted to dig it up. The three soldiers entered the shed and one of them commenced to dig in the ground, and after about ten minutes Nomura came out of the shed and showed Mrs. Burival the camera, which had been buried in a one-gallon tin can with a cover, wrapped in heavy waxed paper. This incident was reported to Norton Wynn, Chief of Police of Sumner, on 19 June 1943 by Harry Allen, a neighbor of Mrs. Burival.

On 19 June 1943 M. V. Black, another farmer in the area, reported to Chief of Police Wynn that the three soldiers had come to his house "to look at some stuff they had stored there," that his wife noticed that one of them had a camera and asked

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DOD Dir. E.O. 12958, 27, 1958
- 1 - NNM by ERC Date 3-30-71

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Sub: "Processing of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry"
32. Pvt Ray M. Nomura 39916442, inducted into the United States June 12 1943 is being transferred to Cleveland, Ohio. For June 30 1943 transfer from WP of Cleveland, Ohio to Camp Shelby, Mississippi at for dy. TO will furnish the necessary travel and land, Ohio thence fr Cleveland, Ohio to Camp Shelby

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Letter to Assistant Secretary of War from Commanding General,
Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, 20 July 1943.

if he realized that it was against the law for him to have the camera; the soldier requested her to take it and mail it to him later.

Upon being advised that the three men were at the Black farm, Chief of Police Wynn notified agents of the Seattle branch office, G-2, this headquarters. Wynn and the agents proceeded to the Black farm, arriving at 1230, 19 June 1943; they were informed that Black had driven two of the soldiers to Fife, a neighboring community, to recover some of their property. Later in the day, the agents and Chief Wynn met and questioned the Japanese soldiers, and although the soldiers first denied that they had recovered a buried camera, when finally confronted with incontrovertible evidence they confessed that they not only had exhumed one buried camera, but had intended to recover still another. A piece of paper, found on one of the Japanese, entitled "Things to Do," listed among other things, "Get Shigo's Camera." The second camera soon after was recovered. At no time were the three soldiers under arrest, either by the police or agents of this headquarters.

The incident was reported to this headquarters at approximately 1530, 19 June 1943, by the Seattle branch office, G-2, which office was advised that the three soldiers, if on furlough and under competent orders, were entitled to the possession of the camera in Western Defense Command area, being entirely within the provisions of Public Proclamation No. 17, this headquarters, dated 19 April 1943, which provides in part:

"All terms and conditions of Public Proclamations, Civilian Exclusion Orders and Civilian Restrictive Orders, this headquarters, heretofore issued, governing the presence, entry and movement of persons of Japanese ancestry within said military areas of Western Defense Command are suspended in said military areas as to persons of Japanese ancestry who are members of the Army of the United States on active duty or who have been inducted and are in uniform while on furlough or leave."

The soldiers were not detained longer for questioning. It is understood that they immediately left Western Defense Command area for Camp Shelby.

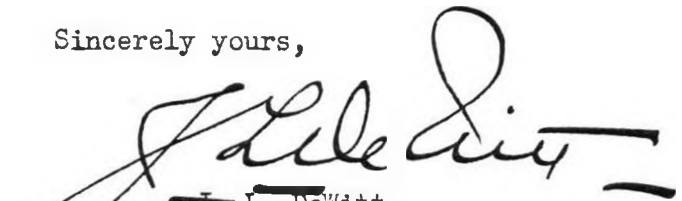
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MOORE NARS, Date 7-15-93~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Letter to Assistant Secretary of War from Commanding General,
Western Defense Command and Fourth Army 20 July 1943.

Obviously, the possession of the camera by the Japanese prior to the issuance of Public Proclamation No. 17 was a violation of Public Law No. 503, as provided by Public Proclamation No. 3, this headquarters, dated 24 March 1942. However, it would have been futile, under the stated circumstances, to have attempted to obtain the consent of the Department of Justice for the prosecution of the Japanese for such violation, and no steps in that direction were taken.

Sincerely yours,



J. L. DeWitt,
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

Honorable John J. McCloy,
Assistant Secretary of War,
War Department,
Washington, D. C.

2 Incls.:
No. 1 - Copy, letter, 14 July 1943
No. 2 - Copy, S.O. No. 143

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