

Half Moon Bay Review

AND PESCADERO PEBBLE



2015 SPECIAL INSIDE: THE TOP STORIES & THE BUSINESS TIMELINE
THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2016 LOOKING FOR A PARTY?
CHECK OUT THE LIST OF COASTSIDE HOT SPOTS TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR! **1B**

VOLUME 117 NUMBER 37 | 75 CENTS

SERVING THE ENTIRE SAN MATEO COASTSIDE SINCE 1898

WWW.HMBREVIEW.COM

[EDITORIAL]

An apology, much too late

Seventy-four years ago this week, the California Legislature's Joint Immigration Committee sent a manifesto to the state's newspapers warning the population to keep a close eye on "ethnic Japanese." Californians were told they were "totally unassimilable" and undoubtedly loyal to the Emperor of Japan. Those were strong words less than a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

They were strong words that this newspaper did not challenge, and this is our apology 74 years too late.

We were silent even as 1,218 Japanese-Americans and resident aliens in San Mateo County were rounded up, held in barracks and ultimately sent against their will to camps carved into the desert dust of Godforsaken places. The Review did not question the wisdom of incarcerating upstanding Americans who were singled out solely on the basis of their race. The newspaper did not comfort the afflicted in that instance. It failed to live up to the standards journalists shared then as now.

We apologize particularly to the hundreds of loyal Japanese-Americans who worked the land in Pescadero and together formed the backbone of the South Coast agricultural community. The Review should have made headlines of the fact that these good citizens, many of whom had been here for decades, were among our very best, hardest working neighbors. Because we said nothing, our community suffered profoundly.

It's true that it was a different time. Few of us remember the fear that gripped the United States as we entered World War II. It was the first time our sovereignty had been attacked. For all we knew, the California coast was in the sights of aggressors across the sea — aggressors who bore a resemblance to hundreds of local farmers.

Review headlines from the time speak to blackouts and air raids. In fact, air raid sirens blew over the coast seven times in the days before the Joint Immigration Committee released its racist screed. Americans were told to watch the skies for enemy aircraft, to spy on their neighbors, to buy war bonds. Leading Coastside citizens who would be household names for generations to come leaned on their neighbors with bigoted slogans. Alvin S. Hatch, who lent his name to a local elementary school, was among those who led the war bond effort for the local chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West. The local campaign's motto was, "No quarters for the Japs: Put 'em in bonds."

If this feels like ancient history, it's likely that your family wasn't carted away in 1942 solely on the basis of race and heritage. The past is always with us.

Former Half Moon Bay Mayor Naomi Patridge, who herself was forced into horse stalls and internment camps right here in the United States, told a gathering earlier this fall that she worried our country would once again let bigotry and ignorance get the better of us. Fear does things to people, she said. It's not hard to imagine what she thinks today when she hears politicians say that Muslims should be denied entry into the one country that once accepted immigrants with open arms.

The reason the Review is apologizing today — all these years on — is that the past tends to repeat. El Granada journalist Marie Baca's extraordinary report in today's newspaper does what all good journalism does: It shines a light into dark corners. We are privileged to present it here and online at hmbreview.com as a permanent record of an atrocity we failed to adequately report 74 years ago.

Let this unusual front-page editorial serve as a pledge that we will not fall for the clammy, cold comfort of bigotry and racism the next time fear comes to town.

— Clay Lambert

[SPECIAL REPORT]



CAT CUTILLO / REVIEW

Isamu Kuwahara holds a photo of his late father earlier this month at his home in Pescadero. Like other Japanese families on the coast, the Kuwaharas were expelled from their Pescadero land in the wake of attacks on Pearl Harbor. But patriarch Tsunematsu Kuwahara was treated especially harshly. Newly unearthed government documents reveal why.

DOCUMENTS REVEAL 73-YEAR-OLD INJUSTICE

INVESTIGATION SHEDS LIGHT ON ONE OF COMMUNITY'S DARKEST CHAPTERS

Tsunematsu Kuwahara was 44, a farmer, and — like most individuals detained in the months after the attacks on Pearl Harbor — Japanese. On March 28, 1942, a deputy sheriff and an FBI agent appeared on his doorstep in Pescadero and took him into custody under suspicion of being a "dangerous enemy alien." He would not be released until 1946, a year after the end of World War II.

Charges were never filed against Kuwahara. He received no trial by jury. He was not permitted a lawyer. In the absence of due process of law, Kuwahara spent years separated from his family in special internment camps run by the Department of Justice and the Army, treated as a prisoner of war.

Kuwahara died in 1968 without knowing why he had been singled out by the government. At a time when 120,000 Japanese-Americans were forced to live behind barbed wire in "relocation centers" — including Kuwahara's wife and three of his five children — his family assumed it had something to do with being Japanese. At least one of his children was not satisfied by that explanation.

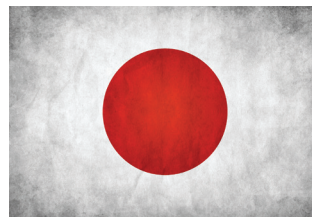
"He came here to Pescadero (from Japan) when he was 16 years old," said Isamu Kuwahara, 89, one of Tsunematsu Kuwahara's two surviving children. (His daughter Michiye Kuwahara declined to speak for this article.) "I don't see how he could have been so dangerous."

The details of the elder Kuwahara's case remained a secret for 73 years. But documents recently acquired by the Half Moon Bay Review tell the story of a popular farmer brought down by a phone call from a local businessman during one of the darkest times in this community's history. Kuwahara's journey also sheds light

on the operations of the Enemy Alien Control Program, a secretive Department of Justice program that ran independently from the War Relocation Authority, which handled most internments during World War II.

Kuwahara's story was uncovered during an investigation into the internment of more than 100 Coastside residents. The project was conducted over the course of a year and involved combing through thousands of government documents; consulting census records, historical maps and newspaper microfilm; and conducting interviews with scholars and former internees.

Though the events in question

SEE **INJUSTICE** ➤ 8A

A dark chapter

The story of the Kuwahara family — and the larger experience of Japanese-Americans on the coast in the wake of World War II — continues online. See reproductions of buried federal documents and 70-year-old Review headlines with the story at hmbreview.com. And Review Editor Clay Lambert has started a conversation on Talkabout and Facebook devoted to Marie C. Baca's story. Join the conversation.

KUWAHARA'S STORY WAS UNCOVERED DURING AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INTERNMENT OF MORE THAN 100 COASTSIDERS.

[EROSION]

Harbor trail awaits repair

HARBOR UP AGAINST JANUARY DEADLINE

By **CARINA WOUDENBERG**
[carina@hmbreview.com]

A long-eroding pathway that leads to Mavericks beach is due to get some attention as the San Mateo County Harbor District races toward a Jan. 28 deadline set by the California Coastal Commission.

"We're on a fast track so we're going to crank hard on doing that due diligence," said Harbor District General Manager Steve McGrath.

Since stepping into his position last month, McGrath has been filled in on a variety of projects vying for the district's attention and has made the West Trail culvert repair a priority.

At the latest Harbor Commission meeting on Dec. 16, commissioners unanimously approved allowing McGrath to

SEE **EROSION** ➤ 6A

[COMMUNITY]

Academy open to some

HMB SUGGESTS SESSIONS IN SPANISH, ENGLISH

By **CARINA WOUDENBERG**
[carina@hmbreview.com]

The city of Half Moon Bay is allowing its residents a peek inside the inner workings of local government.

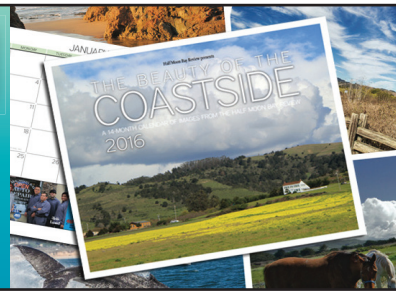
The opportunity will come in late February for up to 25 Half Moon Bay residents who will be drawn from a pool of interested applicants.

"It would be an opportunity for the community to understand the challenges the city faces," said Danielle Sander, Half Moon Bay senior management analyst, at the Dec. 15 City Council meeting. "Sometimes it's not exactly clear to the community why we can't move on certain projects

SEE **ACADEMY** ➤ 6A

14-MONTH CALENDAR BEAUTY OF THE COASTSIDE
OUR ANNUAL CALENDAR IS NOW FOR SALE! COME IN AND PICK SOME UP TODAY!

GET THEM BEFORE THEY ARE GONE! JUST \$5.95 EACH





Isamu Kuwahara holds a photo of his late father, a man branded an enemy alien during World War II. He says his father was not working for the Japanese during the war and that his family actually helped in the American war effort.

CAT CUTILLO / REVIEW

CALL TO FBI SENT COASTSIDER AWAY

[INJUSTICE]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A
took place in the 1940s, the specter of internment lives on in public discourse. In November, David Bowers, the mayor of Roanoke, Va., sparked a national debate when he suspended local assistance for Syrian refugees and favorably compared his efforts to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's actions toward Japanese-Americans. (Bowers later apologized for his remarks.) Earlier this month, after calling for the United States to ban all Muslims from entering the country, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump told Time Magazine that he does not know whether he would have supported or opposed internment during World War II.

Yet most Americans remain unfamiliar with the largest forced migration in U.S. history. And few Coastsideers are aware it occurred in their own backyard.

FROM HAVEN TO HORNET'S NEST

In 1940, San Mateo County had a population of 131,782, according to U.S. Census records. There were 1,218 Japanese-Americans, 418 of whom were resident aliens. On the Coastside, 132 individuals, both citizens and non-citizens, self-identified as being of Japanese descent.

They were farmers, grocers, housekeepers and clerks. The youngest were infants, the oldest approaching 70. They mostly lived on leased farmland in Pescadero, tending the fields as a primary or supplementary source of income. Though small, the Japanese community was active enough to sustain an Asian market, a judo school, a Buddhist temple, and a Japanese language and cultural center in Pescadero.

Tsunematsu Kuwahara and his family lived in a small house on Level Lea Farm. He was, according to newspapers at the time, the largest producer of vegetables in San Mateo County, though he later told the FBI that he hadn't realized a profit in several years. His son Isamu said that while his father was a quiet man, he was well-liked by both the Japanese and white residents of Pescadero.

"He had lots of friends," said Isamu Kuwahara.

But the Pearl Harbor attacks on Dec. 7, 1941, created deep rifts on the Coastside across ethnic lines. Cartoons by Dr. Seuss and others appeared in the Half Moon Bay Review depicting Japanese people as bug-eyed insects in need of swatting. Japanese, Italian and German immigrants were forced to surrender their guns and radios, keep to a strict evening curfew, and were for-

bidden from crossing to the west side of what is now Highway 1. Gripped by fear of another attack, Americans were told to report anything that seemed remotely suspicious to the authorities.

On Feb. 18, 1942, one citizen did. FBI documents show that on that day Charles J. Contini, the president of the Half Moon Bay Chamber of Commerce and manager of the Bank of America of Half Moon Bay, called the San Francisco office of the FBI. He told an agent that Tsunematsu Kuwahara was a reserve officer in the Japanese army, that Kuwahara had a son and daughter currently living in Japan, and that the son was also enlisted in the Japanese military.

Contini stated that he hadn't heard that Kuwahara was engaged in subversive activities but thought Kuwahara should be included in the files of the San Francisco Field Division.

The special agent who composed the memo then added the following disclaimer: "In view of the non-specific nature of this information, it is not recommended that further action be taken."

Further action was taken, however. Despite no indication that the Bureau attempted to verify Contini's information, the FBI file shows that the tip gained momentum as it traveled through official channels. By March 9, 1942, memos sent between the FBI and the War Department described Kuwahara's military affiliation and that of his son as though they were facts.

A few weeks later, the deputy sheriff and FBI agent appeared at the elder Kuwahara's home with a search warrant signed by the U.S. attorney general. They seized a tabletop radio and a medal from the Japanese Red Cross. They also seized Kuwahara, booking him in the San Mateo County jail before delivering him to Immigration and Naturalization Services in San Francisco.

A PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY

Many Japanese military records were destroyed at the end of World War II. Of those that remain and are digitized by the National Archives of Ja-

pan, the Review found no reference to either Tsunematsu Kuwahara or his son Takeshi. Isamu Kuwahara called the idea that his father might have been a reserve officer "completely false."

As for his brother Takeshi, Isamu said part of the story was true. Takeshi and his sister Hisaye were studying in Japan and the two were stranded there during the war. But Isamu said Takeshi wasn't helping the Imperial military — he was helping the American military.

"I remember when we lived in San Mateo after the war, and some servicemen came to visit and thank him," said Isamu Kuwahara. "He was doing translating for them."

It was impossible to confirm Takeshi's role. Takeshi Kuwahara died in 2003.

Where Contini obtained his information on the Kuwaharas and why he chose to contact the FBI remains unclear. Isamu Kuwahara says he does not remember Contini, and that his family patronized the Bank of America in Pescadero, not Half Moon Bay, where Contini was employed. Newspapers from that time depict Contini as a highly visible member of the community, a man who hosted charity events, organized a local softball league and often appeared in the society pages.

Contini was also an Italian immigrant. He became an American citizen in 1921, according to government records. (Japanese immigrants were not allowed to become American citizens until race-based requirements for naturalization were removed in 1952.) He died in 1981.

Many Americans reported their immigrant neighbors to the authorities during World War II, said Grant Din, community relations director of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, where many "dangerous enemy aliens" were detained before being sent to internment camps.

"Sometimes there were clearly racist feelings; sometimes it was fear and paranoia," said Din.

Din cited the story of a Japanese man who was picked up by the FBI because his neighbor's radio wasn't working properly. The neighbor had convinced the FBI this was because the Japanese man was sending enemy communications through his own radio.

"It didn't take much," said Din.



Headlines from the Half Moon Bay Review in 1942 reveal the level of fear spawned by the attack on Pearl Harbor as well as the mistrust of Japanese-American residents on the coast.

[SPECIAL REPORT]

Some of these individuals were **held in barracks at Sharp Park in Pacifica**, where the archery range is currently located.

A SECRETIVE PROGRAM

The phone call alone was enough to put Tsunematsu Kuwahara on the radar of the Enemy Alien Control Program. Run by the Department of Justice and accelerated by several presidential proclamations issued by President Roosevelt in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the program was tasked with processing and detaining potentially dangerous citizens of other countries living in the United States.

In contrast to the War Relocation Authority internments, which exclusively targeted Japanese-Americans, the Enemy Alien Control Program interned thousands of German and Italian Americans in addition to Japanese-Americans. Some weren't Americans at all. The National Archives states that, on the basis of "hemispheric security," the United States offered to intern potentially dangerous enemy aliens from Latin American countries. Fifteen nations accepted and sent an estimated 6,600 such individuals to the United States.

The National Archives estimates that the Enemy Alien Control Program interned more than 31,000 suspected enemy aliens and their families — including several Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany — by the end of World War II. While some individuals demonstrated "pro-Axis sympathies," others were incarcerated based on little or no evidence.

Some of these individuals were held in barracks at Sharp Park in Pacifica, where the archery range is currently located. Kuwahara spent two months there awaiting the hearing that would determine whether he would be incarcerated.

He finally appeared before the Alien Enemy Hearing Board in San Francisco on May 28, 1942. The board was comprised of five people: an attorney, a Stanford professor, an assistant U.S. attorney, an FBI agent, and an immigration inspector. An interpreter was also present.

Kuwahara was not permitted an attorney of his own but had with him a man named Stanley Sorensen, whom Isamu Kuwahara identified as one of his father's business contacts. Records show that Sorensen described Kuwahara to the board as the "kingpin of all the Japs" on the Coastside.

The board reviewed a report on Kuwahara prepared by the FBI and asked him several questions. Kuwahara denied he was a member of the Japanese military. He admitted he visited the Japanese consulate yearly to register for draft deferment from the Imperial Army. Kuwahara also admitted he sent money for the schooling of his children to Japan, as well as several Red Cross packages, the latter which resulted in the medal that had been seized from his home. Although documents show Kuwahara twice told authorities he had been a member of a Japanese-American association, Kuwahara denied this to the board.

"His responses were extremely evasive and his attitude while testing forced the board to the conclusion that he was not telling the truth," read the board's report.

Contini's name was not mentioned as the source of the accusations brought against Kuwahara. In the report and at the hearing, Contini was simply referred to as "Informant A."

The board also reviewed several letters of recommendation submitted on Kuwahara's behalf, including one by a woman named Julia McCormick. Isamu Kuwahara said McCormick was the town's telephone operator, and noted that, at that time, telephone operators listened in on telephone conversations to determine when to disable the connection. It's unclear whether McCormick's letter mentioned any overheard conversations — the Review was unable to locate the letters of recommendation.

The letters seemed to matter little in the board's deliberation. Members voted unanimously for his incarceration.

"In view of the subject's past activities in various Japanese organizations and the fact that he presently had a son serving in the Japanese Navy, the Alien Enemy Hearing Board was of the opinion that the subject should be interned

for the duration of the war and so recommended," wrote the FBI agent in a memo for Kuwahara's file.

Kuwahara was taken immediately to Fort McDowell on Angel Island, where he was held in the same building as Japanese prisoners of war. A few weeks later he was sent to his first enemy alien internment camp in Lordsburg, N.M. A year later, he was transferred to one in Santa Fe. Records indicate Kuwahara was also interned at Fort Lincoln in Bismarck, N.D., but it is unclear when he might have been incarcerated there.

TROUBLE AT HOME

If Kuwahara's apprehension made waves within the Coastside Japanese community, its members did not have long to contemplate it before facing their own troubles.

In late April 1942, the Army announced that all persons of Japanese ancestry in San Mateo County would be evacuated from their homes to temporary "assembly centers" between May 8 and May 10. Coastsiders were told to pack only what they could carry and meet in front of the general store in Pescadero. There, armed military guards escorted men, women, children, citizens and non-citizens alike, onto Greyhound buses. The windows were covered with brown paper so the passengers could not see out.

Government records indicate that of the 132 Japanese-American Coastsiders listed in the 1940 census, at least 67 were taken to Tanforan Racetrack in San Bruno, now the site of The Shops at Tanforan. Another 14 individuals were taken to the Merced County Fairgrounds. Twenty-three individuals had moved and were sent to other assembly centers. At least one individual, Tsunematsu Kuwahara, was interned through the Enemy Alien Control Program instead of the War Relocation Authority, and at least two — the Kuwahara children in Japan — were abroad during the evacuation.

The Review could not determine what became of 25 individuals listed in

At Tanforan, Japanese-Americans stayed in horse stalls, grandstands or barracks for months, awaiting their assignment to an internment camp.

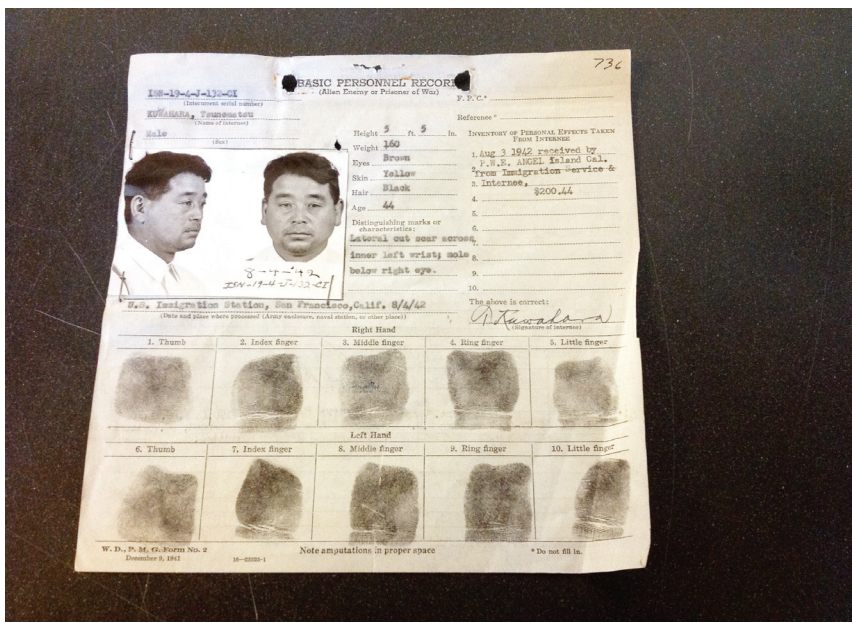
the census but not on internment records, nor is it clear why some Coastsiders were taken to Merced while the majority were sent to Tanforan. Eight individuals not listed on the 1940 census were living on the coast at the time of the evacuation and were also taken to Tanforan.

At Tanforan, Japanese-Americans stayed in horse stalls, grandstands or barracks for months, awaiting their assignment to an internment camp. Among those at Tanforan were Kuwahara's wife and three children who were living in Pescadero, as well as the Imamura family. One of the Imamura children would grow up to be Naomi Patridge, a seven-term mayor of Half Moon Bay.

"We felt very lucky to have been given a clean horse stall because we were a family with children," said Patridge, 75. "Some people had stalls where the manure was just whitewashed over."

Most Coastsiders spent about six months at Tanforan before being sent via train to the Topaz War Relocation Center in Delta, Utah, where they spent the duration of the war. (Those who had been sent to Merced were primarily interned at Granada War Relocation Center, also known as Camp Amache, in Granada, Colo.) The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and supervised by armed guards; internees lived in barracks arranged into blocks.

Records show that during their internment, Kuwahara's wife and children



Tsunematsu Kuwahara's passport and alien enemy record are among the records unearthed from the time of his exclusion from the Coastside.

sent letter after letter to government officials pleading to be reunited with Tsunematsu.

"My children need their father's guidance very badly," wrote Kuwahara's wife, Yuku, in a letter to the officer in charge of the Department of Justice camp in Santa Fe, N.M., dated July 31, 1944. "Please do all you can to have him here with us."

Tsunematsu Kuwahara was never permitted to travel to Topaz, but officials finally agreed the family could be reunited at what was then known as Crystal City Alien Enemy Detention Facility in Crystal City, Texas. The Kuwaharas were reunited on Jan. 25, 1945.

In the book "The Train to Crystal City: FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II," published early last year, journalist and author Jan Jarboe Russell discovered that hundreds of individuals who had been processed through the Enemy Alien Control Program and held at Crystal City were exchanged for high-profile Americans held behind enemy lines in Japan and Germany. While some individuals volunteered themselves and their families for repatriation, many were deported against their will.

The Kuwaharas were never deported, but like many immigrants who wished to escape internment, they requested repatriation to Japan in August 1945, a month before the end of the war. Although Tsunematsu had been recommended for parole a few months prior, he was prohibited from returning to the coast due to his dangerous enemy alien status. Kuwahara told authorities that if he could not return home, he wanted his whole family to be reunited in Japan.

Documents indicate that the Kuwaharas subsequently received a letter from the commander of the American occupation forces in Japan saying the two Kuwahara children were being well cared for there. The family changed their request in February of 1946 and asked to be able to remain in the United States.

"I wish to pursue the normal life under American democracy ... as I have enjoyed for so many years prior to the global war's outbreak," wrote Tsunematsu Kuwahara to Immigration and Naturalization Service officials in 1946. "I earnestly hope this petition will be granted."

The petition was granted, and the Kuwaharas were permitted to remain in the United States.

Kuwahara received another parole hearing in May of 1946. He and his family were released from Crystal City in August 1946, a year after the end of the war. Tsunematsu and Isamu were instructed to report to the U.S. draft board immediately upon their arrival in San Jose to inform them of their change of address.

FREEDOM

It took the Kuwaharas several years to find their way back to the Coastside. Isamu Kuwahara said his family lived in Hunters Point, then San Mateo, then returned to Pescadero in 1949.

They were one of the few Japanese-American families to do so. Signs had also been erected along the roads in Pescadero stating Japanese-Americans were not welcome. Isamu Kuwahara and Naomi Patridge said they recall only one other Japanese family returning to the Coastside after the war other than the Kuwaharas and the Imamuras: the Morimotos, farmers who had grown strawflowers in Pescadero. Shortly after the Morimotos returned, their house was burned to the ground under suspicious circumstances.

Patridge said she knows of several former Coastsiders who moved to other parts of the Bay Area after leaving Topaz, seeking agricultural jobs and a less hostile environment than the one they were likely to find on the coast.

Eventually, the Kuwaharas began farming again at Level Lea. Tsunematsu became an American citizen in March 1954, his wife, Yuku, also became an American a few months later, in December. Isamu Kuwahara says he remembers his mother teasing his father about it.

"She said, 'How come you get to be a citizen before I do? I thought you were a dangerous enemy alien?'" said Kuwahara.

After years of pressure from the Japanese-American Citizens League, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, offering internment survivors a formal apology and \$20,000. By 1999, when the redress program ended, 82,219 individuals had been compensated for a total payout of more than \$1.6 billion.

But no check was destined to reach Tsunematsu Kuwahara. He had died 20 years prior to the passage of the law, on June 14, 1968. His remains are buried at Skylawn Memorial Park.

Today, Japanese-Americans live on the coast, but Pescadero never regained the reputation it had in the 1940s as an epicenter of the Japanese community. The Asian market, the judo school, the Buddhist temple, the Japanese language and cultural center — none reappeared in town after the trauma of internment.

Still, Isamu Kuwahara lives in a small house down the street from the one he and his family left behind in 1942. He says he enjoys gardening in his spare time, but the tribulations of old age prevent him from doing as much as he'd like.

Kuwahara said he was surprised to learn the details of what happened to his father.

"I never knew somebody reported him," he said. "I never knew." ■



The writer

Marie C. Baca's work has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, San Francisco Chronicle, ProPublica and Salon, among many other publications. In 2011, she contributed to a California Watch investigation that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Local Reporting. Marie is a member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and Investigative Reporters and Editors. She lives in El Granada with her husband, Aaron, and two sons, Milo and Julian.