



James Ruebsamen/Herald Examiner

Reaction: Sumi Seki speaks out on Senate vote with Bernadette Nishimura, left, and Tim Nabara.

Bittersweet for Japanese in L.A.

Reparation 'would never be enough' for victims of war

By Timothy Carlson
Herald Examiner staff writer

John Saito, who was in the eighth grade when his family gathered under the First Street Bridge in Los Angeles to begin the journey to a Japanese-American internment camp in Arizona, said the reparation money voted for by the U.S. Senate yesterday "would never be enough."

Saito, regional director of the Japanese American Citizens League, which pushed for the bill, said "there was such a stigma attached to being from the camps that it took nearly 40 years before we had the courage to speak. What we went through as a community was like being raped."

Saito and several other internees, eligible to receive \$20,000 apiece as reparation if President Reagan signs the \$1.2 billion bill, spoke at a press conference at the Japanese-American Community Center in Little Tokyo yesterday.

"We are hopeful that the president will sign this bill," said Kathy Masaoka, co-chair of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations. "The vote for the bill in the House last fall (243-141) is close to being enough to override a veto and we believe we could get the votes if needed."

Dorothy Shundo clutched the same suitcase into which she



James Ruebsamen/Herald Examiner

Dorothy Shundo shows suitcase she used to pack belongings.

had hurriedly packed all her belongings 46 years ago to report for processing in the camps. Her family had been yanked from their 20-acre farm in West Covina just after she graduated from high school and she spent the next few years amid the mosquitoes and cold winters in Jerome, Ark.

"The worst for me was that father was sent to Arizona and

one sister was sent to Colorado and my brothers and I were sent elsewhere," said Shundo. "We did not get a chance to say goodbye."

She said this apparent victory was bittersweet.

"I feel mixed emotions this day," she said. "I feel sadness that so many have passed on and

Japanese

► From A-3

won't live to celebrate this vindication."

Tim Nabara, who served in U.S. Army intelligence as a translator in World War II after serving time in an internment camp, said he was not upset that the real dollar losses to the survivors were not awarded.

"Many lost property that was

later compensated at 10 cents on the dollar and many more got nothing," he said. "It's hard to place a monetary value on all that was lost. This award is more symbolic. For me, the apology of the government is enough for me. But if I do get the money, I will put it in a trust fund for my grandchild's education."

In 1983, the Congressional Committee on Wartime Relocation and Internment estimated the actual losses of the 110,000 Japanese and Japanese-Ameri-

cans who were incarcerated during the war were \$2.5 billion to \$6.2 billion. Of those 110,000, it is estimated that 56,000 are still alive. More than half still live in the Southern California area, said Saito.

"It's a little late," said Beverly Narumi, whose parents lost their downtown restaurant when they were hurriedly sent to a camp in Gila, Ariz., in 1942. "My parents have both died. They both suffered and should have had some help."

Narumi was tending her Little Tokyo gift shop with husband George yesterday. He spent the war in a school in Japan, separated from his father, who had been sent to a camp in the United States.

Said Beverly Narumi, "I think the bill will be significant because it is a sign this will never happen again. Now people are more adamant. We accepted what the government told us. Now our children would fight it."