

**16. Item # Acc-196 (letter to Mary Ichino):**

**Mary Suzuki Ichino [MI], MANZ 1216A, interviewed by Richard Potashin [RP]**

**Disc 1, Part 2 (DVD), 22:41 – 27:53**

**RP:** *Tell us about what your attitude, where your attitude was at, or your opinions about this based on the rumors and the opinions that you were hearing. Did you—were you able to form your own ideas about, you know, the injustice of this, the unconstitutionality of it? Was that something you were thinking about?*

**MI:** *I think I was a little bit naïve that way. I didn't, I think, understand that depth of the, you know, the situation. You just kind of wonder, and then you follow on. I think as you mature, and I realized as I go—well, I told you about that letter I wrote to General DeWitt. It took me until I got in camp for me to realize, "What was I doing in this place?" And I go, "Why didn't that hit me before this as a question?"*

**RP:** *So your attitude changed—*

**MI:** *My attitude changed because—*

**RP:** *—when you got into camp?*

**MI:** *—I thought, it's sort of like an adventure, you know, for a teenager, when you think about it. You're moving, you're going, you know. But when I started seeing that my dad is losing his business, we're losing all our property, he lost his new car that he worked so darn hard for— What for? We're not from Japan. You know? Then when finally we went to camp is when I realized the injustice of the whole thing. And you're always taught in civics in high school that we're all equal under the law, and I said, "But how can you be equal when you haven't had a hearing as to whether you're guilty or not guilty?" And that's when I wrote that letter to General DeWitt.*

**RP:** *There was another friend that you—*

**MI:** *Yeah, Marie Hisamune. She was my classmate at Sacred Heart. And we decided to put our—well, she and I, in order to keep busy, decided to write—first we started writing a murder mystery. And we came to a point where we couldn't figure out how to end the darn thing. And then, so then the next thing was, "You know what? We ought to write to General DeWitt." Says, "You know what, I don't know what we're doing in here." And so Marie and I put our heads together ad we wrote, and we said, "We haven't gotten our constitutional hearing before we're declared guilty to be put into this place. Why is it? How is it? And how could it be?" And then we wanted an explanation. And then we're getting a little bit smarter, you know, at that age. "Okay, we better send it to General DeWitt." "Oh," somebody says, "They'll throw it out." "No they won't. We're going to make it registered directly to him." And so he must have gotten it because we never got the letter back, anything. No answer—*

**RP:** *No reply?*

**MI:** *No, never got a letter back.*

**RP:** *How long had you been in camp before you decided to take this course of action?*

**MI:** *Not quite six months, I bet. It dawned on us real quick.*

**RP:** *You just looked around and—*

**MI:** *Says, "Oh my God, can't get out of camp, you can't do this, you can't do that. The food is lousy. The physical facility's lousy. What did I do to deserve this?" You know.*

**RP:** *Right.*

**MI:** *And then it turned out to be, at that age we were realizing that it was hysteria. We figured that out.*

**RP:** *Did you have any second thoughts about writing that letter after you'd sent it? You know, like, "Are they going to, you know, are we going to be—*

**MI:** *No.*

**RP:** *—on a blacklist or anything or—*

**MI:** *Nope.*

**RP:** *You felt—*

**MI:** *Fearless.*

**RP:** *Let's—what have you got to lose?*

**MI:** *The reason, we're only sixteen. What are they going to do with us? You know? I mean, 'cause, yeah. Mhmm. I'd been told more that once, "Oh, you're probably on the blacklist." I said, "So?" I a sort of way, it's sort of a complement, you know?*

**RP:** Right. Yeah, it took a lot of courage to do that.

**MI:** It's either your courage, or you're so darned innocent. If you're worried about what's going to happen or what will happen to you, you're not going to do a thing. If you think you're right and you need an explanation, it's as simple as that. That was it. So there was no gaman there. Tell it like it is.