

Ronald Reagan and June Masuda Goto

Ronald Reagan and June Masuda Goto at the August 10, 1988, signing ceremony, in which June Masuda Goto was present, President Reagan recounted the Masuda story, placing special emphasis on the events in Talbert and Santa Ana on December 8, 1945.

He then repeated the words that day of someone who he referred to as “a young actor,” after which he said: “The name of that actor, and I hope I pronounce it right, 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, the redress bill for Japanese Americans, so fittingly named in honor of the 442nd. Thank you all again, and God bless you all. I think this is a fine day.”

The late Clarence Iwao Nishizu, the person most responsible for the construction of the Orange County Agricultural and Nikkei Heritage Museum, was at the signing of the Civil Liberties Act. According to his oral history in the archives of the CSUF Center for Oral and Public History, this is the memory that Clarence Nishizu took away from this event: “The President then signed the bill. I noticed that the first person whose hand the president shook after that was June Masuda Goto’s. He used both of his hands, holding his left hand over her hand to indicate sincerity.

It was a very special moment for me.” It was also a very special moment for American democracy and fair play.

-By Art Hansen