

= Minoru Yasui =

Minoru " Min " Yasui (Japanese : ??? Yasui Minoru , October 19 , 1916 ? November 12 , 1986) was a Japanese American lawyer from Oregon . Born in Hood River , Oregon , he earned both an undergraduate degree and his law degree at the University of Oregon . He was one of the few Japanese Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor who fought laws that directly targeted Japanese Americans or Japanese immigrants . His case was the first case to test the constitutionality of the curfews targeted at minority groups .

His case would make its way to the United States Supreme Court , where his conviction for breaking curfew was affirmed . After internment during most of World War II , he moved to Denver , Colorado in 1944 . In Denver , Yasui married and became a local leader in civic affairs , including leadership positions in the Japanese American Citizens League . In 1986 , his criminal conviction was overturned by the federal court .

In 2015 , Senator Mazie Hirono nominated Yasui for the Presidential Medal of Freedom , the highest civilian award of the United States . On November 16 , 2015 , President Barack Obama announced that Yasui would receive a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom . The Medal was presented to Lori Yasui in a White House ceremony November 24 , 2015 .

= = Early life = =

Born in Hood River , Oregon , on October 19 , 1916 , Minoru Yasui was the son of Japanese immigrants Shidzuyo and Masuo Yasui . The third son of nine children born to this fruit @-@ farming family , he graduated from the local high school in Hood River in 1933 . At the age of eight he spent a summer in Japan , and later was enrolled in a Japanese language school in Oregon for three years . Yasui went on to college after high school at the University of Oregon in Eugene . At the school Yasui earned a bachelor 's degree from the school in 1937 and a law degree from the University of Oregon Law School in 1939 . He also was a member of the United States Army 's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program at the university , earning a commission after graduation in 1937 . ROTC was a requirement of all male students during this time period for the first two years of the four @-@ year program . Yasui was commissioned on December 8 , 1937 , as a second lieutenant in the Army 's Infantry Reserve .

After law school he passed the bar and began practicing law in Portland , Oregon in 1939 . He found it hard to find work in Portland , but through the connections of his father , he started working for the Japanese government at its consulate in Chicago , Illinois . He was employed as one of several Consular attachés at that office , mainly doing clerical work . Following the attack on Pearl Harbor , which drew the United States into World War II against Japan and Germany , Yasui resigned his position with the consulate on December 8 , 1941 .

= = World War II = =

Yasui returned to Hood River from Chicago after his father , Masuo Yasui , requested that he come home in order to report for military duty . After returning to Hood River , he tried to report for duty with the United States Army at the Vancouver Barracks in neighboring Washington , but was denied from serving on nine occasions . Masuo Yasui was arrested on December 13 , 1941 , by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as an enemy alien , and had his assets frozen . Min Yasui moved to Portland and opened a private law practice in order to help the Japanese Americans put their affairs in order . President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19 , 1942 , that allowed the military to set up exclusion zones , curfews , and ultimately the internment of Japanese Americans during the war .

On March 28 , 1942 , Yasui deliberately broke the military implemented curfew in Portland , by walking around the downtown area and then presenting himself at a police station after 11 : 00 pm in order to test the curfew 's constitutionality . He first asked an officer on the street to arrest him but was told to " Run along home , sonny boy , " and so he walked into the police station . Later , on

bail , he learned that a grand jury had indicted him . After the notice was given for the Japanese to evacuate , Yasui notified the authorities that he had no intentions of complying , and went to his family 's home in Hood River . This violated another law restricting travel of Japanese Americans , and authorities arrested him in Hood River .

Yasui had consulted a friend in the FBI prior to arrest , and consulted with other legal minds to try to test the legality of the orders . At trial he was defended by private attorney Earl Bernard . Gus J. Solomon , later a judge for the same court , had asked the national American Civil Liberties Union to defend Yasui as no local Oregon groups elected to support Yasui . One part of the strategy was to proceed with a non @-@ jury trial , leaving the decision only to the judge . Solomon was asked by Fee to help advise the court on the issues , along with eight other attorneys . At his trial , federal judge James Alger Fee came to the conclusion that laws specifically targeting a race , such as the curfew , were unconstitutional when applied to citizens . However , he also declared in his November 16 , 1942 , decision that Yasui had demonstrated his loyalty to Japan and was therefore no longer a U.S. citizen . Yasui was sentenced to one year in prison and given a \$ 5000 fine .

Yasui waited nine months for his chance in court for appeal . During this time he was incarcerated at the Multnomah County Jail in Portland , and later sent to the Minidoka War Relocation Center in Idaho . When that chance finally came , the case went first to the Ninth Circuit briefly , but was then moved on to the Supreme Court . There the judges came to the conclusion that Yasui was still a U.S. citizen . After a few days on June 21 , 1943 , however , in *Yasui v. United States* , the court ruled unanimously that the government did have the authority to restrict the lives of civilian citizens during wartime , deciding the case as a companion case to *Hirabayashi v. United States* . Yasui was sent back to Fee , who removed the fine and decided that the time already served was enough of a punishment . Yasui was released and moved into the Japanese internment camps .

= = Later years = =

In 1944 , Yasui was allowed to leave the internment camp in the summer and was employed in Chicago before moving to Denver , Colorado , in September 1944 . There he passed the bar in June 1945 , but was only admitted to practice law after an appeal to the Colorado Supreme Court . The following year in November he married former internee True Shibata , and they would have three daughters together , Iris , Holly , and Laurel .

Living in Denver , Yasui became involved with community relations , serving on committee set up by the mayor , and later from 1959 to 1983 on the Commission on Community Relations . This commission dealt with race relations and other social issues , with Yasui as executive director from 1967 to 1983 . In 1954 , he was chairman of the Japanese American Citizens League ? s (JACL) district covering Colorado , Wyoming , Texas , Nebraska , New Mexico , and Montana . The Minoru Yasui Community Service Award was started in 1974 by Denver community leaders , and is awarded annually to Denver area volunteers .

In 1976 , Yasui began working on the JACL ? s committee concerning redress for the internment during World War II . He continued on that committee until 1984 , serving as its chairman in 1981 . He also filed in federal district court in Oregon a *coram nobis* to attempt to overturn his conviction in 1984 . His conviction was overturned by the Oregon federal court in 1986 . Minoru Yasui died on November 12 , 1986 , and is buried in his hometown of Hood River .

= = Minoru Yasui Plaza = =

The City and County of Denver owns an office building named after Yasui . Located at 303 West Colfax Avenue in Denver , the building is called Minoru Yasui Plaza , or the Minoru Yasui Building . A bronze bust of Yasui adorns the building 's foyer .