RIKKA

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COALDALE:
Gem of the West

FOR some of us it was just a place to get away from. Far far away. If people would ask, "Where are you from?" we might reply, "Southern Alberta," or even, "Around Lethbridge." But Coaldale? Who'd ever heard of Coaldale?

The train doesn't even stop here anymore — which is odd because Coaldale is bigger than it used to be.

"But not better," one old-timer said.

It's been twenty-four years since I've had more than a passing look at my home town. Over the years I've been flitting in and out — faster out than in — to see my parents. But this year I'm staying longer than usual.

Gets complicated if you ask why. Something to do with a growing skepticism about the world 'out there' — a suspicion that the old adage referring to treasures in your own backyard is true.

I've spotted at least one saint hiding out in the nighbourhood. Sinners of course are easier to see and are thriving here as elsewhere. But like unicorns, saints tend to disappear if looked at directly, so can only be glimpsed briefly in passing — the way a tourist might look. It's not hard to be disguised as a tourist. You just have to pretend you're blind behind your eyes seeing everything and registering nothing.

There used to be a billboard out on the highway announcing "Coaldale, The Gem of the West." To the naked eye of the speeding summer traveller there's little glitter to make one want to slow down for a better look. It's just as well. Some secretive treasure hunters swear that drab and ordinary looking places are where precious things are hidden, skillfully camouflaged.

In many ways I'm not just disguised as a tourist, but am a genuine card holding member of the tribe. It's always been easier for me to understand people who leave better than people who stay. I shared the chronic discomfort of those who don't belong — who itch to get going, it doesn't matter where so long as it's somewhere else. But the ones who for some reason were able to stay year after year in the same spot were a puzzle.

The other day, Dad, who is a semi-retired Anglican clergyman, and I went to visit an eighty-six-year old woman and her three daughters who have lived in the same house since they first came to Coaldale in 1926 from Russia, via Saskatchewan.

"Fifty-one years in one house?" I echoed. "No plumbing? No electricity?"

The air had the dry prairie smell of grain and cow manure as we drove out of town a few miles to their house. The brown and white dog that greeted us was overly friendly, as were the grasshoppers. It was a hot evening and all the sisters were wearing light cotton housecoats. Each one looked like a Walter Evans photograph.

"Come see all the wood I sawed," the oldest sister said.

We followed her past the outhouse to the barn in which the winter's supply of wood planks and logs were stacked along one wall to the rafters.

"You did all this by hand?" I asked as the introductions were going around and I was welcomed with hand grips and shoulder hugs.

"Yuh, About two weeks."

Do some people not change their ways at all?

Inside the neat house, I could now see where all the plastic flowers in Woolworths go. Lace tablecloths and candles, portraits on the sideboard, oil lamps, wood stove, bright flowers everywhere — a touch of fairy tale. If Hansel and Gretel were alive today, would their house look like this?

I sat on the sofa between two sisters with their photo albums on my lap and listened to all their "remember whens."

"Here, that's me," the oldest sister said, laughing and pointing to a picture of a child beside a white picket fence in front of a large white house. "That's our house in Russia."

"If I could paint," she added, "I could make everything like it was. The tree over there —" Her eyes were closed and she was pointing out the details of the yard she knew as a nine-year-old.

"Why did you leave?"

"The Communists," she said.

"They wanted your house?"

"Everything, everything."

She would have been just three years older than I was at the time of our uprooting. I too have a picture of myself as a child standing in front of a large white house. If she had asked why we left, I would have had to reply, "The Canadians."

"They wanted your house?" she might ask.

"Everything, everything," I would reply.

There are reasons, of course, that people decide to leave a place. Quilts can be smothering — even strangling in their weight. Some of my friends couldn't wait to get out and have never come back even for a visit. Is it a question of choice with this family? Do some people stay because they can't leave?

Certainly many people in Coaldale know what it was to leave because they were not permitted to stay. We too knew first hand about treachery, loss of property, wholesale disruption of life, sudden poverty, the bewilderment of strange new places.

Driving home from the Rogolskys' we passed the former Mennonite Brethren Church building.

"Do you remember," Dad said pointing it out as he drove. He still drives about thirty or forty miles an hour on country roads which is definitely not tourist speed.

"The Regehrs," I said nodding. Mr. Regehr was the janitor who lived behind the church with his stout kind hearted wife. She was round faced with thick legs and as generous as Mrs. Katzenjammer. There was nothing false in her generosity that I could fathom — no fleeting curiosity or meddlesome business arising out of boredom. Her hands were warm, her arms ample.

She brought us buns — Mennonite buns — round and fist size with a smaller bump of a bun, like a nose or a pregnancy, connected on top. Mrs. Regehr herself was lumpy like her buns, soft but not airy, full and filling.

And cheese! Like the kind Heidi and her grandfather must have eaten in the Alps. Cheese conceived in Europe and made in the Coaldale Cheese Factory — which they tell me has changed hands and is another one of those things that isn't the way it used to be.

Mrs. Regehr also brought me hand made Mennonite dresses which, as a worldly ten-year-old, I hated. No flare, no waste of material, clumpy, straight up and down, just wide enough for walking no nonsense dresses. But I wore them and I played with the Mennonite kids who were shocked at my lying and deceitfulness. I turned from my wicked ways and copied theirs. I said "ya that's for sure" instead of "yes" and I learned the proper use of the word "already." I experimented with being truthful. Just a little already.

"You remember," Dad continued, "the pump organ we have in the church?"

The church. Ours. That brings back a whole flood of associations. But what about that little old pump your legs off Berlin Ont. Berlin Organ. It seemed to me it has always simply existed with its warbly vox angelica and violetta and bass and treble couplers. A few other stops worked but one — I think it was 'echo' — worked so well that when you pulled it out and pumped, a high squeal came on even before you touched the keys.

"They gave it to us."

"Who? The Regehrs?"

The Mennonites, Dad told me, had a new organ and gave their old one to the janitor who passed it on to us. And Tim, my fourteen year old brother, then worked all summer, made ten dollars and gave that to the Regehrs. The ecumenical movement and economics a la Coaldale, 1946. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love —" For years its brave reedy music has been accompanying German, then Japanese and English hymns. These days, the English accent of Mrs. Lloyd the organist mixes with Dad's Japanese accent and the blend is distinctly grassroots Canada.

The car turned in to the garage and we were back again in our own familiar backyard. Here things definitely are better than when we first came in 1945. What a treeless waterless abomination of desolation those first years were.

After the internment camps in the ghost towns of B.C. and the end of World War II, we were still prevented from returning to our homes on the B.C. Coast. All this is difficult to write about. There's something rancid about Canadian bigotry. The American Japanese at least were given back their land and property and were granted the right to return to the coast, but here in the true north strong, we at least, weren't free. Citizens of this country by

Joy Kogawa

right of birth, Canadian veterans of World War I, pioneers who had cleared miles of wilderness — these loyal, law-abiding people — these exceedingly decent people — were to be dispersed further. Having robbed us to the bone, the next thing was to make us invisible. The pipers were playing a different tune those days and the promotion of minority ethnic consciousness was definitely out.

What was wrong with us? My Dad has a letter saying that the reason Japanese were undesirable is that we don't integrate well. On the other hand, the "Keep B.C. White" man said that unless action was taken there was a danger that some Japanese might try moving into the better neighbourhoods. The comic books gave us buck teeth and squinty cross eyes and we were cowards and fiends who screamed AIIEEE. We looked like monkeys. I dreamt of plastic surgery. Snow Whitey was the fairest in the land, the never lying mirror said and the rest of us dwarfs existed to serve. That's why we were sent to this dread place. What else could it be? Life was obviously going to be one long downhill from the paradise of our house in Marpole, Vancouver, to the shack in Slocan — which at least was in a beautiful valley — but now this.

Dad was simply following his flock. We tried to get into Lethbridge but the quota of Japanese for Lethbridge was already filled. We couldn't get into Taber either. But by now we were used to being squeezed out.

"Come here blackhead, and let me squeeze you," I used to say to my brother.

Well, so we went to Coaldale, which was in between Lethbridge and Taber. And the waiting sugar beet fields opened up their great welcoming arms and we went in down row after row, acre after acre, hoeing, thinning, topping, irrigating, harvesting. I knew there was a purpose to it all. In summer we were being roasted alive by the solar oven, dehydrated by wind, and our pores clogged by dust so that we'd be indiscernible from the soil. Next ploughing we'd be ground in as fertilizer.

A senator who was a guest speaker in Toronto at the Japanese Canadian Centennial dinner last year said that there are

two kinds of people in the world — those who work and those who don't. And the Japanese, he said, have always been among those who work. I closed my eyes at these high words of praise. Yes sir, I said, we will never be aristocrats, we will never be among the rich who don't have to work, we will always — isn't that your word? always? — we will always be in the sugar beet fields. Heigh ho, heigh ho, it's off to work we go, trudging off to road camps whether we like it or not, trudging into the beet fields.

Some of us, as I said, left and haven't bothered coming back.

My mother, a genuinely gentle person, had another version of new found hardship in our two room, unserviced, porous shack. To get water, we carried buckets to and from a reservoir which was full of little multi-legged swimming creatures. We killed these by boiling and then drank their carcasses. The more outrageous the physical conditions, the more it seemed my mother's delicacy was translated into dignity.

One of her wars was against dirt and anyone who knows about prairie gumbo and prairie dust storms knows the hopelessness of that battle. I would come home from school to find her packing rags in the window cracks to try to keep out the dust. Dust from the coal we used, dust from the road, dust from the fields. The wind was constant and the wind was dust.

This stopped when the snow fell. But the wind never quit and the house was a cotton dress. Ice inches thick on the inside of the windows, feet perpetually so cold that below my calves, the nerves stopped registering.

We took baths to get warm. This meant several trips out to the reservoir. My parents' idea of a bath is to be boiled alive.

"Atsui," I would yell, "hot, hot," as she poured the steaming water into the round galvanized tub where I sat getting redder and redder. After this we'd be glad to cool off in our freezing beds. Another trick to get warm was to eat whole cloves of garlic that were roasted almost black.

Dad had his mind at least partly elsewhere, that being the nature of his job. He pedalled his bike for hundreds of miles around, going from shack to shack, working out in the fields, visiting, preaching, praying over the sick, translating documents, interceding, interpreting, ministering for all he was worth and in general bringing in the sheaves. He's always had a phenomenal amount of energy and even today at seventy-seven, his schedules are hair-raising. One 1973 article written by David Carter, entitled "Nakayama, Profile of a Whirlwind," records that in that summer, my father travelled "5 continents, 18 countries, 37,013 miles over a period of 5 months — and preached 144 times."

Back in 1946, the whirlwind was gathering more than tumbleweeds and required a church building. From somewhere in the centre of the storm came the memory of one of the public buildings in the evacuation camp. The 24 x 40 structure, built as a kindergarten in 1943 by Japanese Canadians, was in 1946 sitting in Slocan unused. Some of the people still in the area, Mr. Matsumoto, master carpenter and shipbuilder and some 30 other men set to work dismantling the building and loaded it onto flatcars. Several hundred miles and $130 transportation costs later, the Tamagi boys were loading the sections onto a truck in Coaldale. That winter, the lumber sat under snow and in the spring of '47, Mr. Mototsune from Taber, another shipbuilder, began the reconstruction. (Question: Why is a shipbuilder from New Westminster sitting in a sugar beet field in Taber?)

What a character Mr. Mototsune was. He clowned about with his hammer and a song and with a little help from some Japanese Canadian friends from the Buddhist and United Church as well as the Anglican camps, the only public building that survives today from the Slocan internment camp was re-erected in Coaldale, Alberta.

When it was ready, in came the organ from the Mennonites. In trooped whatever friends my brother and I could proselytize. Dad showed movies — Abbott and Costello, Puss-in-Boots — mixed in with pictures of parishioners jerkily walking towards the camera. Dad was a thorough believer in communicating and he enlisted every gadget he could find in the

cause — a machine for making 78 records, a wire recorder purchased at the time of the Chicago World's Fair, slide and movie cameras and projectors, duplicating machines — a paradise for my brother who was a nut for things mechanical. "This is AJMA, The Anglican Japanese Mission in Alberta's Recording Department," he would announce at the end of every recording. The first Christmas concert held in the church is on wire in the Archives in Ottawa and Global TV made a one hour documentary called "Tides of War" using some of Dad's old films which are also in the Archives.

Life for us kids was more than our church and home. Apart from school, there were all the other churches. What a religious village. With the desperation of the damned, I clung to every word of every one-night stand evangelist who hit town. "You know what it feels like when you burn your little finger with a match?" I remember one saying. "Just think what your whole body will feel, burning, forever and ever."

I divided the village into those who danced, (wore lipstick, went to movies, had boyfriends) and those who didn't. The godly and the ungodly. With all my heathen heart I aspired to the light footed elite, but never made it past the fear barrier.

There were other ways of dividing up the town. By 1955 according to a pamphlet written primarily by my grade 12 teacher, Mr. D.R. Baldwin, the pupils in Coaldale represented 22 racial backgrounds. "The task confronting the teachers and the community of welding a group of such varied backgrounds into a united Canadian citizenship is not to be taken lightly," he wrote.

It wasn't taken lightly. Food fairs, pageants, parades, concerts — we were, as our banner declared, "Canadians All." Intermittently, I ransacked our house for things Japanese: dolls, tea sets, kimonos, to bring to our school for community displays. Whatever the flavour, garlic, soya sauce, chili, we could find it somewhere in the multi-cultural mish mash. Did we develop chronic indigestion as a way of life? Should our banner have been "Confusion All?" Last Sunday, pot luck lunch at church included potato

salad, beans, sandwiches, osushi, chow mein, tsukemono, fried chicken, omanju, banana cake, takuwan, and seaweed rolls.

When I think back on it, I don't know where the truth lies. There's no doubt that Coaldale had a large number of caring people and that the spirit of ecumenicism, multiculturalism, equality and unity was a healing force. There also were those who were scornful and condescending.

Was Kipling right when he decided that East is East and West is West forever and ever separate? Would he have felt the same had he come from Coaldale? Surely he would have been at least confused to see my father who was raised a Buddhist in Japan, now priest in charge of an Anglican church where the congregation is largely white. And not many miles away he would have seen a white man and former Methodist, the Rev. Mr. Burkey, in charge of a congregation of Japanese Canadian Buddhists. Today the new minister for the Buddhist flock is the Rev. Mrs. June King.

Who knows what statistics mean, but today, we know that 70 percent of the Japanese Canadians in the area who are marrying, are doing so outside our ethnic group. Perhaps this indicates we hate ourselves so much we're trying to wipe ourselves out for keeps. Or that we love ourselves so much we incite the dominant society into loving us as well. Perhaps we've come to a new place altogether which is neither East nor West, or both East and West. A place called Coaldale?

I do know there was a time when I hated this town. Looking at the "Gem of

(L to R) *Tom Shoyama*, the late *George Tanaka*, *Roger Obata* at S.20 Army Language School, Vancouver. Summer 1945

the West," all I could see were its flaws. Were my eyes so cracked that I would have thrown out the crown jewels as worthless? Once a polite friend inquired, "What do you think of Coaldale as a hole?" and that's the way I heard the question. To the eyes of this beholder, Coaldale was a hole into which Mennonites, Hutterites, D.P.'s (displaced persons), Japs — all of us misfits — had been flung because we didn't have decent names. Like Smith.

Today, I can look at Coaldale and have some idea why so many have stayed. The sinners stayed because the opportunities for sinning are as good here as elsewhere. Recently, Dad told me, a local barber murdered his wife. Shades of Sweeney Todd. Greater and lesser criminals move everywhere underfoot. Some misfits stayed because somehow with so many other misfits around requiring encouragement, they were too busy to leave. The saint that I sighted calls the place his Walden.

The longer I stay, the more I learn about the ways of saints and unicorns. I suspect they may not be nearly as extinct as was once supposed. Their mode of travel has a great deal to do with their eyes — which is definitely not to say they appear furtive. If anything, they have disarmingly open faces. The space in which they move surrounds and precedes their light almost invisible feet. How can I describe them? They smell of health. In a world of smog and pollution, they move as silently and sacrificially as clean air. Sometimes the effect of their presence is not felt for many years. A town like Coaldale is definitely the sort of place they might choose.

It could be that those who came here a long time ago — as things in Canada are reckoned — left a special scent which is still detectable and is especially fragrant to saints. In 1904, when Harry Suggitt arrived, it was a "... treeless, homeless, fenceless, ditchless stretch of level prairie. One could stand where the Coaldale of today is (he wrote this in 1920) and look miles and miles in any direction and not see anything but virgin prairie and herds of cattle ... The future of Coaldale will look better, but to me, the first impression I had of the virgin prairie with its miles and miles of waving grass will ever remain the most pleasing scene of all."

"It is a great experience to have been there at the start," Suggitt wrote, "to take part in turning the first sod, to set the first fence post, to build the first home and to dream of what the future will bring. And whatever the future will bring it can never improve on the quality of the make-up of the original Coaldale Colony. As one after another came (here Suggitt lists 15 names, 3 of which are familiar to me) they made the foundation for the most congenial, contented, best natured colony of folks that has ever gathered under one roof, and believe me, they all gathered under one roof and that not a very large one, many times. Church service was held in our house in Coaldale for a number of years and everybody came to Church. We were united in everything and the present spirit of solidified community interest owes its existence to the steadfast, loyal bunch of pioneers who cast their lot together for weal or for woe and who have gradually built up the Coaldale of today. There will be many changes in the future and they will come fast. But it is going to take many changes before the impressions that were made upon the moral life of Coaldale by the first band of pioneers, are effaced."

Perhaps in the end it is the moral stance that determines how we perceive the world around us. The person who lives for friendship sees potential friends even in the enemy camp. Those who practise to deceive, live in the wicked webs they weave. The kids in Coaldale taught me that lying was a heinous crime. Thirty years later they're still teaching me, sometimes accusing me of being sentimental or hypocritical in my remembering. I learned that tolerance is easy to talk about but so difficult to get to, one never really quite knows whether one has arrived even in the secret of one's own fearful heart. The saint teaches me, among other things, that self-aggrandizement is a serious flaw in a gem. The pioneers, "who cast their lot together for weal or for woe" are telling us something across time about Canada and cooperation, and, as we would say these days — getting it together.

As for perceptions of past injustices — are we who have been victims able more clearly to see the injustices still being perpetrated in our society? Or by attending to our own old scars, are we guilty of being blind to the open wounds now in others' lives? Do the victims of yesterday move on to become the unconscious victimizers of today?

The answers, as the song says, are blowing in the wind — the constant southern Alberta wind.

From off in the distance comes the wavering hoot of the train that doesn't stop here anymore. The sound mixes with the hammering of some volunteers from the church who are making an addition to the church hall. It is as if the by-passing of the train doesn't matter since another transportation system is continuously being built across time and space, connecting people to each other, strangers to strangers, Slocan to Coaldale, Asia and Europe to Canada. In this other timeless network, none of us needs to fear getting lost or being left behind since each is part of the moving landscape. Whether we go or stay, the places from which we come remain with us. And we are free to choose how we remember those places.

When the pioneers dubbed this place the "Gem of the West," they knew that a treasure had been unearthed. The jewel is on display every day and night, all year round for anyone who chooses to see. Admission to the town is still free.

— Joy Kogawa

JOY KOGAWA is active in the redress movement in Toronto. Her highly lauded first novel *Obasan* follows two works of poetry published by McClelland & Stewart.

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The Anxiety of Being

JAPANESE AMERICAN

My base camp was the Hyatt Regency Hotel, an imposing fortress-like structure towering above downtown Phoenix. My room on the twelfth floor, looked south over the desert dotted with flat-topped buttes that looked like bombed-out Mount Fujil's. Somewhere out there was the Gila River Relocation Center, the concentration camp in which I spent an important part of my childhood during World War II.

As I looked out over the desert from my well-appointed hotel room, I could feel traces of some nagging fear and I began to sense why it had taken me nearly 40 years to revisit the scene of my wartime internment.

It was in April of this year that I made the trip to Arizona ostensibly to complete my research for an article on Japanese Americans. Actually, I went there in the hope of overcoming a writer's block.

The year before, in the Spring of 1983, I had traveled to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and Honolulu and interviewed well over a hundred Japanese of all ages and in a wide variety of occupations. The interviews were open-ended and far ranging even though I already had a fairly good idea of what the story would be.

My first interview was with a Japanese multimillionaire. After that, I sought out Japanese doctors, dentists, lawyers in white law firms, college professors, a television anchorperson, politicians, bankers, top-level bureaucrats, a school principal and a rock bandleader. My plan was to flesh out what social scientists have been saying for the past two decades: namely, that Japanese Americans are an extraordinarily successful ethnic group. As a group (there are about 700,000 Japanese in the U.S.), they are prosperous, well-educated, exhibit few social pathologies and are rapidly joining the mainstream of American, middle-class life.

In 1966, the *New York Times Magazine* published a piece by William Petersen entitled, "Success Story: Japanese American Style." Since then, other major publications have picked up this "model minority" theme, but in the course of my interviews I began to notice in myself as well as in those I interviewed an intense discomfort with this theme.

It was Chris Iijima, a teacher and political folksinger in New York, who first articulated this discomfort in a rational way. Every stereotype, he said, has a "flip side." Hard-working, he said, could become ruthless. Resourceful and ingenious can become diabolical. Friendly can become sneaky. Dedicated can become fanatical. What Iijima said struck a chord in me, for within my own lifetime I have seen the Japanese stereotype turn from negative to positive and there are signs that it might flip again as more Americans view Japan as a threat to their livelihood.

I began to suspect that our discomfort with stereotypes, even positive ones, was rooted in fear. It was in Arizona, at the scene of my wartime internment, that I discovered this fear in myself, though in a way I had not anticipated.

I was surprised by the ease with which I found the old camp site located in the Gila River Indian Reservation about 30 miles south of Phoenix. The barracks were gone, but the concrete foundation blocks with twisted and rusted steel flanges clinging to them were still there, as were the large slabs of concrete that once were the floors of the mess halls. From the top of a butte I had often climbed as a child, I could see a cattle farm and greening fields of wheat in the distance. None of this had existed when I first was here. At that time, there was nothing but desert wilderness as far as the eye could see. I felt high indignation. They were ruining my desert, encroaching on that precious isolation that provided a measure of safety for me as a child. I realized then that I had not wanted to leave the camp. The desert with its primitive desolation and extreme of weather can be frightening at times, but it was not as frightening to me as the uncertainties and ambiguities of the world from which I had been ejected.

For the first nine years of my life, my home had been Guadalupe, a small farming community in California's Santa Maria Valley. My father, who was a prominent farmer and civic leader in the Japanese community, was arrested in the early morning hours of December 8, 1941, within hours after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Though he was never charged with any crime, he thought he was going to be executed and wrote a letter of farewell to his family from a cell in the Santa Barbara County Jail.

My father and other community leaders arrested with him were not killed, but as the general "evacuation" began on the West Coast several months later, many of the older Japanese feared they were being sent to extermination camps. These fears I learned of much later, but I got a hint of them at the time from my mother's perpetually furrowed brow, the sounds of her crying at night and her hair which seemed to turn gray overnight.

Fear of death, if it was there, was not something I was fully conscious of. The pain I felt and recognized at the time was that of being unwanted, distrusted and despised. "A good Jap is a dead Jap," was a phrase we heard. One assumed it applied to the Japanese enemy, but white people made little distinction between the Japanese of Japan and those of us in the U.S. "A Jap is a Jap," they said.

The first camp we were sent to was an "assembly center," which was built at the county fairgrounds in Tulare, California. My first memories are of heat, dust and a pervasive, sickening smell of tarpaper with which the barracks were covered. There were two barbed-wire fences surrounding the camp. This was not simply an "assembly center," it was a prison. Soldiers with fixed bayonets patrolled the area between the two fences, and if you had any further doubts about what this camp was, there were guard towers along the perimeter, each equipped with a machine gun and search light.

Tulare was a hateful place, and I suppose anyone who spent time there would find his or her own reasons for finding it so. Mine never had any coherent pattern. First of all, my mother got sick and I had the feeling that she had deserted me. The food tasted tinny, maybe because it was served on metal trays. Juices from the canned vegetables, canned wieners and melting jello flowed together to form a tepid, mildly sweet soup. The latrines were dirty, smelled and swarmed with flies. A psychiatrist no doubt would be able to make something out of this but I still have unpleasant dreams about dirty toilets filled and smeared with human feces. The barracks were crowded and noisy. Our family of six was assigned one small compartment that was barely large enough to hold our cots. The couple in the next compartment was always quarreling and you

photo by TOYO MIYATAKE

Manzanar Free Press 1943

could hear every word they said, even those they whispered.

During the day, I roamed with a band of children who resembled a pack of domestic dogs gone wild. We tried to make friends with the soldiers patrolling the camp, but they were sullen, even a little hostile, so we gave up on that effort. I don't know about the other children, but I never held it against the soldiers. Instead, I began to resent the Japanese they were guarding.

One night, at the end of a talent show, a friend and I began throwing pebbles into the crowd filing out of the grandstand. Since both of us were normally well-behaved children, I find it difficult to explain the terrific sense of release I got from this wanton act except as an expression of blind hatred.

The camp in Arizona had no fence. None was needed, situated as we were in the middle of the wilderness. I recall being inordinately afraid of rattlesnakes. I was afraid to go out of the barracks at night for fear that one would come slithering out of the crawlspace. It is only in recent years that I have begun to realize that this state of panic in which I lived during the first few months in Arizona was in some way connected with being a Japanese, a member of a despicable and despised race.

After the first year, life in camp settled down as our lives receded deeper into the imposed isolation of our desert surroundings. Younger people began leaving for jobs on the outside, for college and for the Army. Those who were left were mainly children and older folk, who knitted, sculptured from wood, grew morning glories, built rock gardens, or sat in the shade, fanning themselves and squinting against the heat. Life remained pretty much that way until the war ended and we were told to leave.

I recall the first words spoken to me when I met a former schoolmate upon our return to Guadalupe. He had been a friend before the war. I had gone to his house to play. "Hi, Norman," I said. "Remember me? I'm Gene." Norman stared for some time. I waited for a smile of recognition that never came. Instead, he tilted his head back a little and asked with a sniff, "*All* you Japs coming back?"

I eventually got over Norman's rude welcome. I graduated high school, spent time in the Army, went to college, got married, moved to the East Coast and began a career as a newspaper reporter. I lived in a white neighborhood, had white friends and for long stretches of time would forget I was Japanese. I would feel extremely uncomfortable when inevitably I would be reminded of it.

For years I thought I was unusual, but as I interviewed Japanese around the country, I discovered I was more typical than not of the so-called nisei generation who grew up in the 1930's and 1940's and who were interned with their immigrant parents.

Dwight Chuman, a Los Angeles journalist and third-generation Japanese, called nisei "confused young men who succeeded by selling their self-hatred and disappearing into the mainstream mentality." It is difficult to be lectured by a member of the younger generation, but I found myself agreeing with Chuman and with most of the sansei (third generation) activists I interviewed. The self-hatred Chuman spoke of and the inexplicable feeling of shame that nisei let slip from time to time, are matters that I have long struggled with, I thought, alone.

Three incidents have remained stuck in my mind from my camp experience. The first — my throwing pebbles into the crowd — I have already mentioned. The second occurred in Arizona at the weekly movie. On this night, an American war film played which ended with the sinking of a Japanese battleship. As American bombs began exploding on the deck of the ship,

Japanese sailors began to panic and leap into the sea. The children and young adults in the audience began to giggle and as the battleship sank they broke into cheers and applause. I cheered and applauded, too, knowing full well that our parents in the crowd were appalled and deeply pained that their children were turning against Japan and perhaps even against them.

The third incident involved a teen-aged boy, whom I did not know. For no apparent reason he heaved a rock through a mess hall window. It did not appear that he was aiming at anybody in particular, though he did hit a little girl. I saw blood streaming down her face as two men rushed out of the mess hall and chased the boy across a firebreak. Midway across the open space, one of the men managed to kick the boy's feet from under him and sent him sprawling to the ground. As the men led the boy back to the mess hall, one of them cuffed him on the head. I never found out why the boy did what he did, but I thought I knew and felt ashamed, as if it were I who had thrown the rock.

Japanese never talked much about the camp experience after the war and even today many are reluctant to do so. So it is only within the past few years that I have begun to discover that I am not alone in the struggle to come to terms with our past. The first conclusive evidence I saw of this was at the hearings held in 1981 by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. The commission was created by Congress to reexamine the internment of Japanese during World War II in the wake of renewed demands for reparations. Hundreds of Japanese came forth to testify before the commission and many feel that those hearings constituted the most significant event that has occurred in the Japanese community since the internment itself.

The commission concluded its work in the summer of 1983 with a list of five recommendations, including one that calls for a $1.5 billion fund to be used to provide a one-time compensatory payment of $20,000 to each of the approximately 60,000 remaining survivors of the internment. There is a bill currently in Congress that would implement the commission's recommendations, but regardless of the fate of that bill the commission hearings had a permanent impact on the Japanese community.

Observers, particularly the third-generation sansei, were astonished by the massive outpouring of emotion from the usually reticent and undemonstrative nisei, who choked back tears or let them flow as they told their individual stories. Many in the audience wept, too, as they listened and it seemed as if a dam had burst and the community was at long last truly mourning its past. "I was amazed," said one sansei afterwards, "I never saw nisei act that way before."

It was not what the witness said that was so remarkable, for most of them simply described the economic and physical hardships they endured. What was remarkable was they spoke at all. I, too, spoke to the commission at a pre-hearing briefing seminar in June of 1981. My throat and chest suddenly felt constricted so that I had the impression I was coming down with an attack of bronchitis. It took all the strength I had to get through my talk and to keep myself from breaking down in tears. The violence of my reaction was a mystery to me for some time, but I have since concluded that it was due primarily to fear. I was speaking to a congressional commission, which in my mind represented the same type of officialdom that in 1942 could not see past the color of our skin and hair and the shape of our eyes and noses and concluded that we were actual or potential enemies.

The roots of the fear go back to the late nineteenth century when Japanese first

started coming to this country in any numbers. Just as the Chinese who had come before them, Japanese were subjected to intense racial hatred and vilification. Every effort was made to keep these yellow races from becoming imbedded in the social and economic fabric. They were not allowed naturalization privileges. Most western states passed laws forbidding Asians from owning land. Anti-miscegenation and other racially discriminating laws were enacted. There was pressure put on Congress to stop further immigration from the East. In 1882, immigration from China was stopped and in 1942 the ban was extended to Japan.

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, racial animosity flared with renewed ferocity. The buck-toothed, slant-eyed stereotype of a treacherous, cunning, cruel and subhuman people became common currency. At a time when racism was not universally condemned as it is today, members of Congress and newspaper columnists and editors openly expressed racial hatred for the Japanese. Ultimately, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the government to remove 110,000 Japanese — 71,000 of them U.S. citizens — from the West Coast and to place them in ten concentration camps located in the interior of the country.

Bebe Toshiko Reschke, a psychiatric caseworker at the Hollywood Mental Health Service in California, was a child during the internment. She recalled that while in camp three military policemen came into their compartment to search for contraband.

"I had such a feeling of being violated," she said. "I still have a problem with that, of trusting authority . . . That anyone can have such control over you and it can happen so fast. When I read these stories dealing with Japan, I still get that emotional reaction. I think, 'Oh my God, the American public is turning against us again.' This time I'm not going. That's my line. This time I'm going to fight. I've joined the American Civil Liberties Union. That's my way of coping with my fears about what happened."

Minoru Yasui, a Japanese American lawyer and retired executive director of the Denver Community Relations Commission, quoted a friend as saying: "You know, now realizing what the evacuation involved — the degradation of the human spirit — if it happened again . . . I'd get a rifle, lay in plenty of supplies and ammunition, see that my family members are safe elsewhere, and then I'd barricade myself in my home, and tell them to come and get me . . . I'd kill anyone who tried to put me into one of those camps."

(A full version of this anonymous quote is found in *And Justice for All*, an oral history compiled by John Tateishi and published by Random House. At the time I interviewed Yasui, he had just completed his contribution to this project.)

The man Yasui quoted is a prominent and distinguished member of the Japanese community and he is not known for inflammatory statements. His comment is an indication of the anger that is only now beginning to bubble to the surface. The more furtunate ones, in my view, are those who in one way or another expressed their anger at the time. Yasui is one of them.

A trim, elegant man with a lively twinkle in his eyes, Yasui does not strike one as a stubborn fighter. In fact, as a young lawyer in Portland, Oregon, in 1942, he had no intention of turning himself into a test case. "But we couldn't find anyone else to do it," he said. "You were laying your career, your life, your record on the line . . . it was scary. If you were convicted, you didn't know whether you were going to come out of prison alive."

Despite his fear, Yasui refused to obey a curfew imposed on Japanese after the outbreak of World War II and refused voluntarily to leave his home when ordered to evacuate. He was arrested and served nine months in the Multnomah County Jail in Portland. Yasui appealed his conviction all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld his conviction.

Yasui and others who fought for their constitutional rights in court were the exceptions. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), which assumed leadership within the Japanese community in 1942, discouraged even legal challenges and urged cooperation with the authorities. After an initial protest, JACL leaders accepted the position of the authorities that the "evacuation" of all Japanese from the West Coast was a military necessity. They cooperated with authorities in getting Japanese into camps. Once they were there, the League lobbied Washington successfully to allow Japanese to volunteer for the Armed Forces and be subjected to the draft. At one point, Mike Masaoka, a JACL leader, urged the formation of an all-Japanese "suicide battalion." Masaoka today says he does not recall using the words "suicide battalion," and goes on to say that even if he had he did not have in mind anything like the kamikaze units formed later in the war by the Japanese enemy.

Passions were whipped raw during the first months of internment. In some camps JACL leaders were attacked and beaten. But, on the whole, the JACL position was supported. About 75 percent of Japanese American males responded "yes" to the loyalty questionnaire that made them subject to the draft. Ultimately, more than 33,000 Japanese Americans, including women, volunteered or were drafted into the Armed Forces. In the Pacific, they served as interpreters and translators, and in Europe the all-Japanese 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team were two of the most decorated and bloodied units of the war.

Thus, the Japanese in the United States paid with blood the price of acceptance as Americans. But there are many of us who feel that we are continuing to pay a price.

Amy Iwasaki Mass, a nisei clinical social worker and lecturer at Whittier College in Whittier, California, has worked with many nisei as a therapist and concludes that the internment experience continues to be "a real attack on our sense of well being and our self esteem."

The reaction of many nisei, she said, was much like that of some hostages who start to identify with their captors. "Identification with the aggressor makes us feel safer and stronger," she said.

She observed, as others have, that many nisei have shed their ethnic identity and have merged into the white mainstream. "What is sacrificed is the individual's own self-acceptance," she said. "It places an exaggerated emphasis on surface qualities like a pleasant, non-offensive manner, neat grooming and appearance, nice homes, nice cars and well-behaved children."

A further misfortune, she said, is that many nisei have passed on their basic insecurity to their sansei children. "We put on our children our need to excel and be accepted . . . And because we are uncomfortable with our own feelings, we don't allow our children to express their feelings either. It is not typical for a Japanese family to discuss causes of conflict. They avoid it."

Some sansei, however, have managed to break out of the nisei mold. Warren Furutani is one of them. He recoils at the "quiet American" image of the Japanese. "Quiet," he said, "we found out that's a way of surviving, and is likely to succeed. Don't rock the boat. Don't complain."

Furutani, staff coordinator for student community projects at UCLA's Asian American Studies Department, grew up in Gardena, a community in Los Angeles County with a large concentration of Japanese. He said he did all the right things in hight school. "I smiled a lot, I was quiet and was everybody's friend," but he finally concluded, "the quiet American wasn't me."

There was a period during his student activist days, he said, when he was much influenced by Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. "These were some of the people I was learning from, but then I found out I couldn't be black either, because they weren't role models for me."

Like many sansei activists, Furutani's ultimate solution for himself was to work in the Japanese community. In the 1960's

and the early 1970's, he noted, there were few community services for Japanese. "People were saying we take care of our own, but we didn't."

World War II was an economic catastrophe for the issei, as the first generation immigrants are called, and most of them never recovered from it. The war also broke the dominance the issei had in the Japanese community and in their families. Many issei, like my father, were separated from their families during the war. Camp life, with its communal mess halls and the independence it gave children, further undermined parental authority. The dispersal of Japanese to other parts of the country greatly weakened the sense of community. All of these factors, combined with the issei's economic impotence, tended to make issei something akin to displaced persons. Some of the less fortunate — aging bachelors and childless widows and widowers — were left to fend for themselves. Unable through pride or ignorance to seek help from white social agencies, many lived in abysmal poverty in the post-war years.

It is only in relatively recent years, perhaps beginning in the late 1960's, that Japanese in America began slowly to rebuild a sense of community. Among the leaders were sansei, third-generation Japanese Americans, most of whom were born in the 1940's.

One of them is Steve Nakajo, a familiar figure on the streets of San Francisco's Japantown. His generous girth decked out in jeans and sneakers, he walks the streets with a swagger reminiscent of a sumo wrestler.

The son of nisei Episcopalian minister and a Japan-born mother, he spent most of his life in Japantown. During his student days at San Francisco State University in the 1960's, Nakajo, according to his own description, was a bearded, long-haired, loud-mouthed and rebellious student and an indifferent scholar. While he was in tune with the social protest swirling about him, he never got directly involved. "I thought we had to have our own issues," he said.

He found his issues in Japantown. "In those days I knew issei who were out there in the streets, sleeping in doorways,

Children by the Manzanar security fence

photo by TOYO MIYATAKE

urinating on themselves. Some of them were in a bad way. I could not stand the idea that we Japanese would shun our own people . . . The only reason why we're here is because of the racism and hard times they paid for. I wanted to thank that generation while they were still here by servicing them."

Kimochi (feeling) Inc., the organization Nakajo founded, went through several stages. One of the first projects was a movie escort service. Sansei, wearing yellow-with-black-trim happi coats, walked or drove issei to and from Japanese movie theaters. This proved to be a popular service because of the old people's fear of street crime. Later, Kimochi Lounge was opened where issei could congregate, find reading materials, take up handicrafts and receive counselling social services. A nutrition program was started as part of the federally funded Eating Together Program. Kimochi's crowning achievement, so far, is a $1.3 million, 20-bed health facility for elderly Japanese. It was built entirely with private contributions, mostly individual, but with some corporate and foundation grants.

There are those who say that the internment benefited the Japanese by dispersing them throughout the country and making them more acceptable to other Americans. Such persons ignore the damage done to the Japanese sense of family and to generational ties that sansei like Nakajo and Furutani are trying to restore.

Personally illuminating to me were the comments of Grant Ujifusa, a Harvard-educated editor for *The Free Press*. Now a resident of New York, he retains his sense of racial identity. "Being Japanese," he said, "means as much to me as my mother, my father, my grandmother and my grandfather. I got my deepest convictions about life from them. It doesn't

mean anything specific; it means everything . . . because that's what I am."

The Ujifusa family had the good fortune of having settled in Worland, Wyoming, and, as Ujifusa put it, was "spared the expulsion." Ujifusa was born in 1942, so he would have been too young to have personal memories even if he and his family had been interned. But even so, he said, he had an image of the "hypothetical trauma."

"It would have scarred me," he said. "I would have experienced it later, when I was four, when I was ten. It would have been part of my life. It would have flowed in my veins as it has for many Japanese Americans . . . If you cut my family off at the knees, you cut me off at the knees. My sense of manhood comes from my father and grandfather. If you emasculate them, you emasculate me."

I am one of those whose trauma was real and in recent years I have struggled with the thought of my father's humiliation and downfall. After coming to this country in 1903 at the age of 19, he had established himself as a successful farmer in Guadalupe. A flamboyant man, he drove a big Buick, wore tailored suits, smoked cigars and sent two sons to Stanford University. With his arrest by FBI agents and the internment of his family, he lost everything he had worked for and achieved in 40 years.

When he returned to Guadalupe after the war, he and my mother went to work as field laborers. Contrary to the Japanese stereotype, my father was a man who freely vented his feelings. A devotee of the kabuki theater, he would be moved to tears by tales of death, sacrifice and downfall. Yet he never complained about his own economic ruin and loss of status. He carried on as if none of that really mattered. It is only in recent years, long after his death, that I have grown to appreciate his courage and to understand that if the authorities indeed wanted to emasculate him, they did not succeed. When I truly accept that, perhaps my long night of fear will finally come to an end.

— Gene Oishi

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A shortened version of this article first appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*.

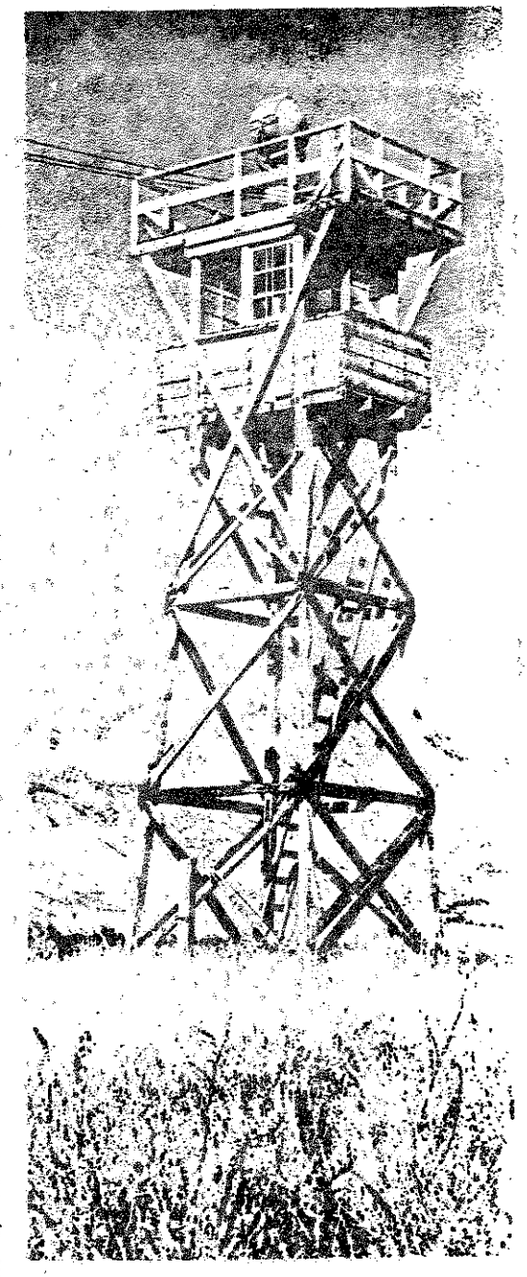


photo by TOYO MIYATAKE

Watch tower, Manzanar

HOSTAGES OF WAR

Inmates of Leupp, Arizona Internment Campnp, 1943
(L to R, top row) *Yangi Kitadani; Koichi Tsuji; Kiyoshi Nakamura* (Front, L to R) *Wataru Makihara; Harry Y. Ueno*

TIME Magazine of March 24, 1980 published an article about American Captivity in World War II by Natalie Crouter which was most interesting to me. War always occasions cruelty toward captives by captors, as well as hatred for each other. In her heart-warming story, Crouter tells of an enemy soldier trying to comfort a captive, under difficult circumstances. Most people don't want to hate or hurt other human beings when suddenly drawn into conflict by forces beyond their control. We are all just fellow space travelers trying to enjoy a short span of life, difficult as it may be.

Most Americans were frustrated by Iran's violation of human rights. It is easy for Americans to forget what they had done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

This is the incredible story of what happened to me as a captive of the United States government. I was born in Hawaii in 1907, the second son of a Japanese immigrant in Hawaii. During World War II, nearly 43 years ago, I was incarcerated for more than a year without due process by the U.S. government. The truth must be told to the American people so that no one may ever again experience what I went through during those years.

On December 6, 1942 at Manzanar, California W.R.A. camp, the U.S. Army opened fire without warning on a crowd of 3 to 4 thousand people, hitting 10 victims, two of whom, teenage boys, died. About 9:00 p.m. the Military Police Commander, Captain Martyn L. Hall, was in conference with Chief of Police Gilky and Camp Director Merritt about 100 yards away from the military guards positioned in front of the jail. The night was cold with winds blowing when tear gas cannisters were hurled into the crowd. Smoke covered the area quickly. Some of the nervous soldiers shot before the smoke cleared. Altogether six shots were fired near the police station. I could hear machine guns being fired in the background. When the smoke cleared I saw one man lying face down approximately fifteen feet away from me. I jumped out of the jail window and helped carry him inside to the police station table but he was dead. The bullet penetrated his back at close range. Nine other people were shot and wounded, one of whom, a teenage boy, died days later. All of those shot had been hit by bullets from behind while trying to escape the choking tear gas. When we carried the lifeless teenage boy inside the police station, George Matsumura was sitting on the bench. The minute he saw the bloody body he became hysterical. In rage, he pounded the table and yelled repeatedly, "I made a terrible mistake, I was wrong. I can't believe this could happen in here. I can't believe democracy in this country anymore." He was one of the very influential members of the Japanese American Citizens League and very active in camp politics. Many people feared that he was an FBI informer.

A few minutes after the shots were fired, Captain Hall ran back to the police station. He called the sergeant in charge, who had, minutes before the gun fired, yelled to the soldiers, "Remember Pearl Harbor." Captain Hall asked him who fired the shots. The sergeant answered that he fired two shots and pointed to two young soldiers near the station, stating, 'He fired 3 shots, and one other fired one shot."

On March 3, 1942 Senator A. B. Chandler conducted an inquiry about the incident. Captain Hall and W.R.A. Camp Director Merritt both were present at the inquiry. Senator Chandler questioned Captain Hall, "You used tear gas on the mob but they kept advancing so you had to shoot?" Captain Martyn L. Hall, Commander of the M.P., answered, "Yes sir." Mr. Merritt added that the strong winds blew the gas away. They both knew that none of the injured had been shot in front but in the back. What a shame that the W.R.A. and the Army both conspired to cover up their horrible deed. It is one of the darkest moments in American history.

The army proclaimed martial law and seven of us were taken to Bishop jail, 28 miles north of Manzanar camp at midnight on December 6. On December 9th at 11:00 p.m. we were transferred to Lone Pine Jail, 11 miles south of the camp by an escort of military police. Lone Pine jail measured about 28' x 24' with a 12' cement wall and a heavy steel plated door. There was one small window high on one wall. When we

arrived there were nine others already in the jail. The place was dark and crowded with hardly any room to walk. There was an oil stove there but no fuel. I had a cold and we had not eaten for nearly 24 hours. The night was very cold with only one blanket for each person. My impression of the jail was that it was just like the butcher's icebox in the meat market. The jail had only four bunkbeds with 16 of us packed in like animals.

On December 8, 1942, Merritt released a statement on the Manzanar incident to the Los Angeles papers. The statement stated that the "riots caused by disloyal pro-Axis Japs celebrated the anniversary of Pearl Harbor Day." His irresponsible statement was an attempt to keep the truth from the American people.

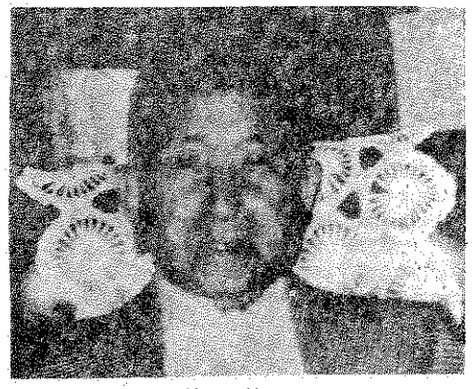
With me was Joseph Y. Kurihara, an American citizen and veteran of the First World War, one of the first to volunteer for the Army and sent overseas to France. His action should have left no doubt about his loyalty. Merritt tried to degrade him by questioning his loyalty. The W.R.A. used any means to cover up their foul deed and tried to shift the blame on helpless innocent people. In war, any pro enemy element has no room for public sympathy, an idea used by the W.R.A. to gain public sentiment and deceive the American public in order to justify their mistake. Inside the camps, the administration acted like tyrants and used a number of stool pigeons to spy on the people who didn't agree with the way that they discharged their orders.

After the horrible incident, 20 people and their families were removed from the camp and transported to the Mojave Desert Army base for protective custody, all of whom were called loyal Americans by the W.R.A. Many in camp called them stool pigeons, informing on their own people to the FBI and WRA.

The FBI from Los Angeles made frequent visits into the camp. Any individual who was against the administration's policy or disagreed with their methods always lived in fear even inside the barbwired fences. There were a number of informers working for the FBI prior to the war who continued their work inside the camp. The W.R.A., FBI and stool pigeons together were responsible for separating husbands and fathers from their families — a cruel and inhumane way to treat innocent people.Time and place may be different but human feelings are always the same everywhere.

The real truth about the Manzanar incident began when we thought that the only way to face the W.R.A. tyrants who abused their authority by skimming food from our tables, was to organize a Mess Hall Union. As a union we could fight back. Most of the people working in the mess halls earned $16 a month for a 40 hour week. However, none of us complained about the cheap wages because they were willing to sacrifice in this way to show their loyalty.

The federal government fixed rations on staple foods for all the people of the United States. Camp was no exception. When W.R.A. officials, however, started to skim the most essential foods from our tables, we couldn't ignore the situation. My year-long ordeal started when I began investigating the situation. Many rumors were circulating around camp that some high officials were taking huge amounts of sugar to sell on the black market outside camp. Main staples such as meat, sugar and other foods were getting short from the month of July. Sugar especially was noticeably short in substantial amounts. People complained loudly. We investigated and questioned the administration. They admitted, in October alone, 6100 pounds of sugar were missing from our tables. The W.R.A. promised in November that they would make up the shortage. They never kept their word. Some fruits and cookies for the children,



Harry Ueno

instead of being sent to the mess halls, were sold in the canteen. The Mess Hall Union strongly protested. Then the W.R.A. admitted that by mistake a truckload was delivered to the canteen and sold. At the Block Manager's meeting, one of the managers questioned the money made in this mistake. He was asked to resign his position.

My job in camp was cook. I would get up around 5:00 a.m. to prepare breakfast for 150 or more people. On December 5, 1942, at 9:00 p.m. I was aroused by loud banging on the door. When I opened the door, several jeeps full of police were there. Assistant Chief of Police William asked me to get dressed and go with them to the police station. I got dressed and accompanied them to the station. Chief of Police Gilky came in and questioned me on my movement between 6:00 p.m. that night. He questioned me about 10 minutes and went out. The Assistant Chief of Police came in and asked the same kinds of questions. I asked him what is all this interrogation about, "I have to get up early so if you're finished, I would like to go back to bed." He said, "Tonight 5 or 6 masked men attacked Fred Tayama and we are searching for the attackers."

I have met Fred Tayama a couple of times. He was the chairman of the JACL in southern California. People in camp knew him as one of the stool pigeons for the FBI and W.R.A. prior to internment and inside the camp. He created many enemies because of his activities in the past and present. He was very close to Ned Campbell, and a very powerful influence on the administration's policies.

Morton Grodzins wrote about the Manzanar incident, "Guilty or not they should not be punished for beating Tayama. Tayama was a public nuisance and his assailants were to be praised, not punished. It was hard to find a single person at Manzanar who expressed sympathy for Tayama. Even the highly Americanized and cooperative Nisei were of the opinion that Tayama deserved the beating."

The Manzanar concentration camp had 4 different directors in less than 6 months. Ned Campbell was there from its opening. He was the real power in the administration of the camp and was Acting Director until the Manzanar incident led to his dismissal.

Assistant Chief of Police William and I sat talking about my family and camp for several hours. Close to midnight, Chief of Police Gilky came in to the room and put handcuffs on me. Together we went out to a waiting car belonging to Ned Campbell, who was in the driver's seat. The Chief of Police and I sat in the back. Without a word I was taken outside the camp, headed north. On the way I turned to Gilky and said, "I don't know where you are going to take me but please let my family know where I'm going to be." Ned Campbell turned and answered instead of Gilky, "No one will know where you are going to be, you will be put away for a long long time." I replied, "You may put me away now but some day you are going to pay for what you have done to the people in camp by ending up in a bigger jail." He was enraged.

Later I awoke with the church bells ringing. It was Sunday morning, 5 or 6 Caucasian inmates were surprised to see me in the cell with them but they were nice to me.

On December 6, about 4:00 p.m. the Sheriff came into the cell and gave me back the articles he had taken the previous night. "A man is waiting outside for you," he said. When I went out I was surprised to see Gilky waiting for me. He said we were going back to camp. He was alone and did not handcuff me. He opened the door to let me sit beside him. I was puzzled about the change from last night. We were met in camp by Military Police Captain Hall and newly appointed W.R.A. Director Ralph Merritt. Gilky introduced me to both of them. Director Merritt said to me, "Right now we are negotiating your release with the committee elected by the people in the camp. While we are negotiating, you will wait in the camp jail.

When I went inside the jail, I learned for the first time why the administration's attitude had changed so drastically in my favor. Several inmates described to me that last night more than 3 or 4 thousand people rushed over to the police station and demanded that I be brought back to camp immediately.

I noticed Campbell was no longer involved. He was 50 feet away at the side of the building and watching when I was brought back from the previous jail.

On January 9, 1943 after more than a month in isolation from my family and outside world, 16 of us were handed a piece of paper signed by W.R.A. Director Dillon S. Myer stating, "You are going to be removed to another center and given a speedy hearing." At 8:00 a.m. all 16 of us were taken by bus to the train depot. Approximately 36 M.P.s guarded us on the way to our destination. Two days later we arrived at Moab, Utah and taken by truck to the new camp, located 28 miles from Moab. The old camp was in the middle of the desert. We were confined in one building and they posted a sentry at the doorway around the clock. Special guards marched us to the mess halls for meals and stood watch over us every minute. No mail was allowed either to or from families. We were in complete isolation from the outside world. The only visitors to the camp were the FBI and Naval Intelligence officers who questioned me. A month had gone by when civilian officers and internal security officers came in. Letters to families were allowed, but all mail was censured. Many of my letters to my family ended up in the library of U.C.L.A. and U.C. Berkeley or FBI files, I was to learn 37 years later.

The promised hearing from Director Dillon Myer was just a ploy to shut us out and keep the truth from the American people.

I had quarreled with Director of the Moab prison Best regarding the censure of letters and Myers' broken promise for a hearing. In early March, in the heat of an argument, Best said to me, "This place is vast open country with nothing but sagebrush. If anything happened to anyone in here no one would find the body in a million years." Soon after his remarks a Lieutenant with two soldiers appeared near my building and used it for target practice. That was the last straw for me. I decided to give up my American citizenship. If I gave up my citizenship and became an alien I would be protected by International Law. On March 10, 1943, I put in a request to renounce my citizenship to the State Department through W.R.A. The request was denied. Nine other people also elected to renounce. More people from different places were being brought to Moab prison. Four buildings were now occupied and more civilian security officers were hired. Newly arrived Head Security Officer F. S. Frederick immediately put out many restrictions and rules to show his authority. People in here did not particularly care for his attitude towards the inmates. No one called him by name. We all called him "See Me" because every time we faced him he would say, "come and see me."

Early in the morning of April 14, Frederick sent one of his men to tell us of the new restrictions on visiting other buildings. First you must go to his office and get permission. If permission is granted you must be accompanied by a security man and speak only in English. (Most of the inmates were Kibei, many of whom found it difficult to communicate in English.) Any person breaking this rule would be sentenced to 3 months in jail. If anyone disagreed with him we were to pack our things and go to his office. At 9:00 a.m., 22 people with suitcases and duffle bags lined up in front of his office. Frederick saw that almost half of the inmates were there. He told us to go back to quarters and wait for his orders. Late in the afternoon he singled out 7 whom he loaded into an Army truck headed for Moab County jail. Sheriff J. B. Skewer of Grand County was in charge. We were put into one room with no chance to clean ourselves. On April 27, at 7:00 a.m. Sheriff Skewer told us to pack our things and come out of the cells. Outside the jail there were Army jeeps, trucks and a busload of people. Must be moving day to a new place. There was one flat bed truck with a newly built 5' x 6' box on the bed. They called five names and told us to get inside the box. A heavy padlock was fastened on the door. There was one small hole in back for air to come in.

It was a long way to Leupp, Arizona — 11 hours of driving. Utah, New Mexico and Arizona roads were pretty dusty with many potholes. The box was narrow, hot and muggy. Dust from the air hole was so thick it was difficult to breathe. We took out our handkerchiefs and covered our mouths and noses in order to breathe. We all took off our shirts to

Mess Hall workers, Manzanar, 1945 *photo by* TOYO MIYATAKE

get some relief from the muggy heat. The truck stopped for lunch but none of us could eat anything. I asked the Leutenant if two of the prisoners could be moved and allowed to ride with the others since they were ill. He had orders from Frederick and could not do so. The 11-hour-long drive never seemed to end. In 36 years of my life this was the first time I had ever experienced such a painful, agonizing and helpless feeling.

At last the truck stopped. The heavy padlock was opened. It was beginning to get dark. They escorted us to the mess hall to eat supper but all of us were so sick and tired, groggy with our heads spinning and sick to our stomachs that we couldn't even think about food.

I never dreamed any civilized man could treat another human so severely. I felt sorry for the man, his hatred turned him so cruel, uncivilized and savage. I wouldn't transport any animal in this manner even if I knew they were going to be slaughtered.

If they were the Nazi Gestapo we could expect nothing less, but from a civilized, educated man in a democratic nation which guarantees human rights it is unforgiveable.

Half an hour later the security guard picked 4 of us to go back into the box. This time we went 30 miles away to Winslow town jail. There were only two bunks for 4 of us. The Sheriff handed one blanket to each of us. Winslow is at quite a high altitude and nights were very cold. We spent 4 days there. Every meal that was served was covered with salt, hot chili or ketchup. Unless we washed the food we wouldn't know what we were eating. Two young men wanted to go on a hunger strike but I disagreed. I told them that we are not going to die like dogs in here. We are going to survive. We are not going to give them the satisfaction of their wish.

On May 5th we were taken back to Leupp jail. While I sat in the cell I had deep thoughts of my past 6 months and the whole situation. Here I am sitting inside the 7th jail, not a single charge against me, or any trial whatsoever. W.R.A. Director Myers' signed promise of a hearing was nothing but a piece of scrap paper to fool me.

Prior to the war I had never been in trouble with the law. Here I am in jail after jail. If I continue to struggle for my rights, they could easily eliminate me. I have a wife and 3 children. My responsibility is heavy. While in jail they cut off all com-

munication with my family. That hurt me the most and the family was suffering with me. By then I knew the W.R.A. was never going to have an open hearing or trial. They were not going to expose their blunders to the world.

In the mess halls many hundred women are working. I saw many of them waiting months for their husbands. Thousands of miles away every minute is too long for them — to wait for their loved one to join them. The mental agony is indescribable. Only the women and children who have experienced such a sad tragedy can tell what the feeling was.

The night of December 6 was cold with winter winds blowing hard. A crowd of 3 or 4 thousand people patiently waited more than 3 hours for Director Merritt to appear to say a few words. Instead, tear gas, bombs exploding, rifle and machine gunfire, leaving dead teenage boys, killed trying to run away from tear gas. Who are those that committed such unforgiveable deeds? They are sons of immigrants who also sought to find a home in America, just like my parents did many years ago.

All those who've unjustly hurt us, accused and imprisoned us, hurt themselves. They destroyed the very foundation upon which this nation was founded. If we continue to allow all these incidents to go by unchallenged, we will sooner or later answer for them. Our credibility as a leader of the free world is eroding now.

Time heals many unpleasant memories. I have no animosity or bitterness to the country or the people who were involved. I am writing this so we may never forget what happened. If we forget it could happen again.

—Harry Y. Ueno

HARRY UENO resides in San Jose, California

photo taken secretly by an internee
Tule Lake, 1945, courtesy Wayne M. Collins

JAP CAMPS

"OH, THE JAP CAMP!" exclaimed the manager of Pfeiffer's Liquor Store in Granada, Colorado, when we asked directions to what had been Camp Amache. Last fall Anna Maria Drinnon and I learned to expect this stale misidentification from local residents as we drove to seven camp sites scattered across the country, from the Mississippi Delta to the Owens Valley in the Sierras. Even a member of the tribal council at Gila River, Arizona — two of the camps were on Indian reservations — suspiciously questioned us about why we were applying for permission to visit "the Jap camp."

Well, why *were* we tramping rhrough cactus and sand looking for the ghost towns that in the 1940s confined 119,803 men, women, and children, two-thirds of them American born? It was surely not because we hoped to find in place those happy faces we'd seen in the War Relocation Authority (WRA) photographs: families in "apartment" cubicles showing off their scrap-lumber furniture, primary-school children pledging allegiance, Boy Scouts of America marching on Memorial Day, drum majorettes prancing on Flag Day, couples jitterbugging at USO dances, Gold Star mothers receiving medals, and the mandatory shots of kids playing marbles and smiling right up into the camera.

The quick of real suffering behind these WRA promotional stills has long since disappeared, along with the prisoners; so have the armed MPs in their lookout towers and the square miles of barracks lined up like tar-papered soldiers. Today Herefords graze around their foundations; the sentry house still stands at Manzanar, California; a few structures remain at Poston, Arizona; camp chimneys still thrust into the sky above what are now rice fields at Jerome, Arkansas; and at three sites cemeteries contain those who never "relocated" again, though at Granada a grave was recently exhumed so the family could take the remains to Chicago. And at Gila River we photographed a strand of barbed wire, coiled and rusting away in the sagebrush.

Our basic finds at the sites were occasions for meditation on those who were there and what became of them. At two of the camps the victims themselves explain what brought them there. A handsome plaque in Delta, Utah, identifies nearby Topaz as "a concentration camp'- that confined "victims of wartime hysteria, racial animosity, and economic opportunism on the West Coast." California Registered Historical Landmark No. 850 is more direct and less geographically limited: Manzanar was "the first of ten such concentration camps. . . . May the injustices and humiliation suffered here as a result of hysteria, racism and economic exploitation never emerge again."

In the intense struggle over the wording of this marker, the Manzanar Committee ran into surprisingly little opposition from the State Parks and Recreation Department to the term *concentration camps*, compromised on *economic exploitation* in lieu of *greed*, but had to fight right down to the wire to retain *racism*. Our bureaucratic surrogates still would like to keep us from seeing so directly what the camps memorialized, and that was by no means limited to any one region.

True, Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West and other regional white-supremacist groups revived their campaign against the "yellow peril" after the attack on Pearl Harbor. General John L. DeWitt and his aide Karl R. Bendetsen believed "a Jap is a Jap" and threw the weight of the Western Defense Command behind their belief. Governor Culbert L. Olson and Attorney General Earl Warren of California agreed that it was impossible to determine which ones could be trusted. Said the governor to a group of Japanese-American editors in February 1942: "You know, when I look out at a group of Americans of German or Italian descent, I can tell whether they are loyal or not. I can tell how they think . . . but it is impossible for me to do this with the inscrutable Orientals, and particularly the Japanese."

This view was fully shared in Washington, D.C., as a number of entries that month in the diary of Henry L. Stimson made clear. On February 10 the secretary of war discussed the matter with his assistant John J. McCloy and then recorded: "The second generation Japanese [i.e., Japanese Americans] can only be evacuated either as part of a total evacuation, giving access to the areas only by permits, or by frankly trying to put them out on the ground that their racial characteristics are such that we cannot understand or trust even the citizen Japanese. This latter is the fact but I am afraid that it will make a tremendous hole in our constitutional system to apply it." On February 11 Stimson took up "the west coast matter" with Franklin Delano Roosevelt "and fortunately found that he was very vigorous about it and told me to go ahead on the line that I had myself thought the best." And on February 18, the day before FDR signed his infamous Executive Order 9066, Stimson wrote that he had no illusions "as to the magnitude of the task that lies before us and the wails that will go up in relation to some of the actions which will be taken under it."

THE TASK WAS STAGGERING. It was nothing less than confinement of the "yellow peril," the concentration in camps of those Japanese hordes already within our borders. In the very diary entry that posited the Japanese Americans as beyond understanding, Stimson went on to invoke the prophecies of Homer Lea. "a

little humpback man who wrote a book on the Japanese peril entitled *The Valor of Ignorance* [1909]." Lea's cumulative, turn-of-the-century racism lived on through Stimson and other members of the administration. Roosevelt himself believed that the less-developed skulls of the Japanese might account for their evil ways and put a renowned scientist at the Smithsonian to work on proving his supposition. From FDR down, through the national to the state level, officials could see Japanese immigrants (issei) and Japanese Americans (nisei) only as inscrutable Orientals, not persons but mysteries to be solved, perils to be guarded against, abstractions, symbols, all subsumed under the epithet "Japs." Whites could not tell them apart, in short, good from bad, because whites had been conditioned not to look at them, see their individuality, but to look through them to their racial essence. And this was what U.S. authorities fenced in: "The Enemy That Never Was," as Ken Adachi aptly titled his study (1976) of the no less horrendous Canadian evacuation.

The confinement of these Oriental shadows in desert camps presented the great opportunity, at long last, to fathom their inscrutability. "We would be missing a very big opportunity if we failed to study the Japanese in these Camps at some length before they are dispersed," John J. McCloy wrote the civil libertarian Alexander Meiklejohn on September 30, 1942. Having them "gathered" there afforded means "of sampling their opinions and studying their customs and habits in a way we have never before had possible. We could find out what they are thinking about and we might very well influence their thinking in the right direction before they are again distributed into communities." Unafraid of the predictable charge "that we have no right to treat these people as 'guinea pigs,'" the assistant secretary of war expressed the wish "that Dillon Myer would take some very long thoughts before committing himself to a principle of immediate and extensive release."

Director Myer thought long and hard and agreeably ran the WRA as a huge detention and investigative machine administered by "Caucasians" who dealt

Manzanar

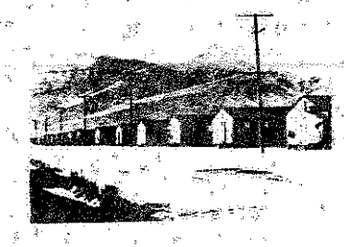


photo by TOYO MIYATAKE

with objects called "evacuees" — counted them, measured them, studied them, and eventually cleared many of them for "leave"; enticed some of them into the all-Nisei combat team; and required all of them aged seventeen or older to answer questionnaires asking whether they were willing to serve in the U.S. armed forces and forswear allegiance to Emperor Hirohito. The WRA modified this inquiry only after issei protested that, denied citizenship in this country, they were being forced into declaring themselves stateless persons.

Data collected from these abortive loyalty tests then led to a second relocation at Tule Lake, California, for the many who refused to cooperate in their further humiliation. Myer and his staff of Caucasians were still searching for enemies and still sorting their charges into bins labeled "loyal" and "disloyal" when the war ended, but could never be certain they had smoked out one veritable enemy. At most they had "skimmed off" only those they pronounced "potentially dangerous" and the embittered Nisei who had, under duress, renounced their citizenship.

Gary Y. Okihiro and other young Japanese-American scholars rightly argue that the docility of their uprooted and impounded forebears has been exaggerated. Like colonized people everywhere, many did identify with their oppressors; some, to their great credit under the circumstances, did not, and these were the ones the WRA called "aggravated troublemakers." Among the issei such resisters were simply shipped off to the Department of Justice internment camps for enemy aliens. But among the Nisei they raised the delicate constitutional question of by what right the WRA held citizens in indeterminate detention and presumed to punish those who protested. The WRA answer was to hide glaring examples first behind the walls of a penal colony at Moab, Utah, and then in an old Indian boarding school at Leupp, Arizona (replaced in turn by the stockade at Tule Lake). This "isolation center," in WRA lingo, was what ran the detention machine over rough spots and in effect put the agency in control not of ten but of eleven concentration camps.

DOCKETS, memoranda, and letters from the outspoken chief of internal security at Leupp provide profiles of the alleged agitators. Many had been sent there "with the promise of a fair trial and have never received it; others had neither a trial nor a promise of one; still others had so-called trials in which they were not advised as to their legal rights nor were they allowed to defend themselves." One "pure case of mistaken identity" was still seeking his release six months after the fact had been admitted. "Got another guy from Gila that called a Caucasian nurse an old maid. Such blasphemy!" Still another had come to Leupp as a "suspected troublemaker" but, "other than the possibility of his being a 'fat person with a beard,' which is hardly a crime unto itself, there is no evidence of just what he is suspected of having done."

From Manzanar came the father of four children, separated from his family by an informer's accusations but denied opportunity to confront his accuser and submit evidence in his own behalf. Despite this and despite the likelihood he was yet another case of mistaken identity, the man "steadfastly believed in the democracy of these United States and is still a loyal American citizen. Such treatment would most certainly be a test of anyone's loyalty." With understandable exasperation, the internal security chief wondered "how in hell can you Americanize the Japs when Gestapo methods are used in sending them to Leupp — no warrants, no trials, no sentence, separated from their families, etc."

The magnitude of the task Dillon S. Myer had taken up did tear "a tremendous hole in our consitutional system," but where were "the wails" Stimson had predicted? It turns out Myer also worried about them and, as he confided to an interviewer in September 1943,

I did one thing before I gave the O.K. sign for Moab. That is, I got Roger Baldwin and Alexander Meiklejohn into this office and told them what we were going to do. . . . I also told them to hold off any action — or at least, if I didn't do it that directly, I indicated that we needed their sympathetic understanding in the whole process. We have always been very cordial in our relations with the Civil Liberties group, and both men showed a fine understanding. This vignette of national leaders of the American Civil Liberties Union giving a penal colony their blessing, however reluctant, outlines the magnitude of the betrayal. Outside the barbed wire the wails did not go up because civil libertarians — with such notable exceptions as Norman Thomas, A.J. Muste, Ernest Besig and Wayne M. Collins — gave the liberals running the camps their "sympathetic understanding."

Our visits to the camp cemeteries raised a question, since the inmates customarily cremated their dead. Did these few graves have anything to say? Why were these burials not in nearby community cemeteries? Later I chanced upon a letter dated October 25, 1945, from the Granada director to Myer urging that the camp cemetery be permanently dedicated to those interred there: eight infants, most of them stillborn, and three adults, two of whom "had no close friends or known relatives." So far no one outside had shown interest in the remains and "our failure previously to secure acceptance of bodies by other cemeteries is an indication of the same problem now." In death as in life these "places of despair," as my companion calls the concentration camps, contained unwanted non-Caucasians.

Of course, "Oriental inscrutability" had not a whit to do with the erection of these national monuments to racism. "The trouble is not with the Japanese mind," foresaw the sociologist Robert E. Park in 1914, "but with the Japanese skin. The Jap is not the right color." Decades later real trouble was still with the mind that filled the "Jap camps" with its own specters. And that mind is still manifestly on the loose, incited by periodic foreign policy flare-ups. Tomorrow it may be all too ready to turn against Iranians, Arabs, Central Americans, or other imaginary enemies in our midst. Then the voices from the Manzanar marker will speak with an even more haunting timeliness.

— Richard Drinnon

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