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PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

The editors of this book and the publisher and staff of Heyday extend our gratitude to the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program (CCLPEP) for making available the funds to complete *Only What We Could Carry*.

The California Civil Liberties Public Education Program was created through legislation known as the California Civil Liberties Public Education Act, or AB 1915 (Chapter 570 Statutes of 1998). The legislation was introduced in the California State Assembly in 1998 by Assemblymember Mike Honda of San Jose.

In one of the most public and far-reaching of the reparation activities, the CCLPEP provides grants for the development of public educational materials and activities to ensure that the forced removal and incarceration of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry will be remembered. CCLPEP is administered by the California State Library under the leadership of State Librarian Susan Hildreth.

With this program, California has taken the initiative in recognizing the need for further education and materials on this important chapter in our nation's history. Besides being home to more Japanese Americans than any other state prior to this tragic incident, California was also the site of two incarceration camps and thirteen temporary detention centers.

For more information on the CCLPEP, contact Library Development Services, California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, 916.653.5217, cclpep@library.ca.gov.

For additional resources on the Japanese American internment experience, please visit the Heyday website at www.heydaybooks.com.

only what we **could carry**

The Japanese American Internment Experience

Edited with an Introduction
by Lawson Fusao Inada

Preface by Patricia Wakida

Afterword by William Hohri

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Dedicated to Michi Nishinra Weglyn

"... I hope this uniquely American story will serve as a reminder to all those who cherish their liberties of the very fragility of their rights against the exploding passions of their more numerous fellow citizens, and as a warning that they who say that it can never happen again are probably wrong."

from YEARS OF INFAMY

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Preface	xi
A Note to the Reader	xv
Introduction	xvii

I

Ben Iijima, <i>The Day We Left</i>	3
Editorials in the Wake of Pearl Harbor	11
Clay H. Musick, <i>Eyewitness to Pearl Harbor</i>	27
Kay Uno, <i>Pearl Harbor Remembered</i>	31
Ron Dellums, <i>The Total Community</i>	33
Eleanor Breed, <i>War Comes to the Church Door</i>	35
Nellie Wong, <i>Can't Tell</i>	51
Maya Angelou, from <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	53
Photo Essay: <i>An Uncertain Future</i>	57

II

Yoshiko Uchida, from <i>Desert Exile</i>	69
Isohei Hatashita, <i>Letters from a Justice Department Camp</i>	82
Miné Okubo, from <i>Citizen 13660</i>	87
Toyo Kazato, from <i>Stray Clouds</i>	97
Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, from <i>Farewell to Manzanar</i>	104
Photo Essay: <i>How I Spent the War</i>	108
<i>A Far Country</i> : Poems from the Arkansas Camps	119
George Takei, from <i>To the Stars</i>	121
Eleanor Gerard Sekerak, <i>A Teacher at Topaz</i>	126
Stanley Hayami, <i>A Young Nisei's Diary</i>	138
Peter Simpson, <i>Recollections of Heart Mountain</i>	142

III

Elaine Black Yoneda, <i>Statement to the Commission</i>	153
Mabel Ota, <i>Insufficient Care</i>	173
<i>Winter Night Sentry</i> : Poems from the Justice Department Camps	178
Kazuo Miyamoto, from <i>Hawaii End of the Rainbow</i>	180

<i>A WRA Center Lexicon of Japanese American Terms</i>	220
Globularius Schraubi, <i>Yule Greetings, Friends!</i>	228
Hisaye Yamamoto, <i>The Legend of Miss Sasagawara</i>	237
Toshio Mori, <i>One Happy Family</i>	252
Henry Sugimoto, <i>A Thousand Stitches</i>	255

IV

Eleanor Roosevelt, <i>A Challenge to American Sportsmanship</i>	263
Hiroshi Kashiwagi, from <i>The Betrayed</i>	270
Lillian Ota, <i>Campus Report</i>	279
John Okada, Preface to <i>No-No Boy</i>	287
Minoru Kiyota, from <i>Beyond Loyalty</i>	292
Frank Seishi Emi, <i>Draft Resisters at Heart Mountain</i>	313
Violet de Cristoforo, <i>Poetic Reflections of the Tule Lake Internment Camp</i>	325
<i>No Flower in Vase: Poems from Tule Lake</i>	330
<i>A Nisei Requests Repatriation</i>	333

V

Franklin D. Roosevelt, <i>Presidential Statement</i>	341
Daniel Inouye, from <i>Journey to Washington</i>	343
Min Hara, <i>Action from a Sergeant's Diary</i>	348
Stanley Izumigawa, <i>One Replacement's Story</i>	363
George Saito, <i>Letter to Father</i>	374
Solly Ganor, from <i>Light One Candle</i>	377
<i>What Flower Worth the Pain</i>	388
Afterword	393
Appendix A: Historical Documents	400
Appendix B: Chronology	413
Appendix C: Assembly Centers and Internment Camps	418
Glossary	422
Permissions	425
Suggested Reading List	431
About the Editors	437

Acknowledgments

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This book is rooted in the thoughts and ideas shared by an advisory board assembled especially for this project. Members gave freely of their time, support, knowledge, and contacts. We wish to thank Karin Higa, Chizu Iiyama, David Mas Masumoto, Jim Houston, and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston for the paths they cleared along the way.

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I



Arrest

The time has come
For my arrest
This rainy night
I calm myself and listen
To the sound of shoes.

Sojin Takei

The Day We Left

Ben Iijima

Soon after its entry into World War II, the U.S. government issued orders to forcibly remove over 110,000 American citizens and resident aliens from their homes and communities. Those evacuated were instructed to meet at civil control stations that had been quickly set up throughout the West Coast. From there they were taken to hastily constructed assembly centers where they were temporarily detained—often for months—until the more long-term internment camps could be built.

Ben Iijima was a nineteen-year-old student at UC Berkeley when war broke out. "The Day We Left" is an essay written in 1942 at Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, the racetrack home that would temporarily house evacuees from the San Francisco Bay Area. Iijima wrote an extensive diary of his incarceration experience, which is now housed in the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records at the Bancroft Library. In most cases evacuees had only a few weeks to discard all possessions, sell or lease businesses, secure their property or homes, pack, and register. They had no idea what awaited them, how long they would be gone, or where they were headed.

*

One of the things in all this evacuation process which I believe will remain indelible to my personal memories is the day we left for Tanforan.

The evening before I left home, I had just come back from the WCCA [Wartime Civil Control Administration] offices in San Mateo after conferring with the people there. I brought there a list of items concerning the furniture, our personal belongings and all such matters, and had them checked. We went to sleep on the floor, as we had all our mattresses packed and made ready for the storage man who was to come the next day. The front room was littered with our baggage, a huge trunk, the beds which had been taken apart, the rolled up carpet, and small cardboard boxes filled with things we had repacked over and over again. "Let's leave these things here; no let's take them." How very confusing, how utterly hesitant we were.

We had been doing our daily shopping each day, someone going to town on the bus to buy odds and ends. I remember spending a whole day in Palo Alto picking up clothing in one store after another; and they weren't luxury wears either, in fact, they consisted of basic clothing, shirts for dad and myself, jeans, sweaters, and jackets. I went to the Montgomery Ward to buy some trunks, good lord we had seven trunks of varied sizes, besides our small hand grips and luggage bags. I recall how insistent Mother was about getting boots for when the rains come, the ground will be soggy with black molasses. Warm things—woolen underwear, heavy stockings. We need everything like that she said. Both our radios had been checked in at the police department, but sis wanted to get something to listen to so I went down to Poly to get a radio with the required frequency, and also a small tool chest in a drug store. Most of the wooden items, such as ironing boards and old attic furniture I broke with an iron pipe and burned them to a crisp. All the garden tools and heavy equipment—such as an old oil drum used as an incinerator, our garbage can, the mail box, the garden hose—went to our neighbors.

I remember I had to stand on the curb and pass it to our neighbors, for technically we were not to leave our residence after [8:00] in the evening. "Someday when you folks come back we'll return all these things," they said. A few days before we left, we received a letter from one of the earlier evacuees to Tanforan that it was advisable to come stocked with a plenitude of canned goods. So I rode down to the grocery store and purchased some \$10.00 worth of fruit juices, canned soups, crackers, canned sardines, canned tobacco for father. Mother assembled a whole baggage grip full of medicine including iodine, bandages, aspirin, Murine, corn healers, Cuticula, plaster, Ungentine. Besides this were facial and washing soap, tooth-pastes and face towels.

I had an old bike in the back shed which I was going to sell, but I decided instead to bring it through the government warehouses and have it sent when we were relocated to the permanent centers. In order to create the box a friend came over and together we cut a box, banged boards over it, and had it ready before the leaving day.

Mother heard that the easiest luggage holder was a sailor's pack, and so going to Montgomery Ward's, purchased a very strong material, somewhat like corduroy, and made five such sacks, one for each member of the family, plus a miscellaneous bag.

Before we left the house, we all spent a day cleaning it. With heavy soap and water, I washed the kitchen, repainted the heater and sink, and cut the front hedges. Mother and sis cleaned the parlor and dining room, while

dad went mopping and washing windows. I spaded the front garden and cut as much of the weeds in the back as I could.

We called the junk man over and had him appraise the furniture which he rated at such ridiculous prices we refused the first time, but at the end finally agreed. Despite our anticipation that our packing would be through before 5:00 in the evening of the evacuation eve, we actually stayed up until 12:00. We spread the blankets on the floor, put the alarm on for 4:00 in the morning and slept but three hours. As soon as the alarm rang we rolled up the blankets into the jeans material cover, and bound them firmly with the clothesline. Then, latching each grip I took them out to the front, checking to see that each was labeled with our family number and identification. The neighbors drove Mother and sis to the New Ranch where all the people from Redwood were to leave, while Dad and I waited for the moving man to come.

Not having a car or truck available, we wondered how we could arrange to have the baggage taken to our leaving point in San Mateo. There were two alternatives: The evening before a neighbor came and said that he was hoping to arrange for one of the moving vans to get all the material from a central point in New Ranch, hence all the individual baggage would have to be brought there by small trucks; the second, was to phone for a van directly and have our baggage brought to San Mateo. We choose the latter because, if we brought our baggage to the central point they would have to be left there overnight in a shed, and while a bolt would be put on the door, there was no absolute assurance that things would not disappear. So sis phoned up the van man, and the next day when I went, there were two men waiting for the mover. He was away from the office for lunch so we waited, and I learned they were representatives of the group who desired to have their baggage taken from one central point, namely New Ranch. Finally, the owner returned and he told us all that they were exceptionally busy tomorrow and pondering through his schedule replied laconically, "Just can't do it." I insisted that my sis had called up the evening before and received assurance from him that a reservation had been made and accepted. On second thought, he asked my name, and then added, "Oh, yes." He assured me he would have the small truck at the house tomorrow morning at 7:00, since we had to be in San Mateo by 9:00. He asked me how many baggages I had and while actually there were some twenty-five I put the estimate very conservatively and said fifteen. The two men who were seeking one of the giant vans to accommodate the majority of the baggages from this town were finally able to obtain a van for 7:00 as well.

As dad and I waited for the moving truck to appear, we saw three cars pass by—one after another in fifteen minute intervals, laden with trunks, baggage, and families. One had a trailer attached to the truck, and turning laboriously around the curve by the bridge, headed slowly towards New Ranch.

When the truck came I don't exactly remember, but I found out soon enough as he blew the horn and backed into our driveway. The truck—a small panel type—looked diminutive beside our baggage piled on the sidewalk. The driver jumped off and his first ejaculation was, "Holy Christ, Whatta pile." Somehow he managed to pile everything at the head of the

Military orders showed four separate and distinct groups divided by the railroad tracks and Florin Road. Each group had a different destination. New fears were suddenly thrust into our hearts. Was it by design that families and friends faced never seeing one another again—an elaborate scheme to keep us separate? Or was it the first of what were to be many decisions from high authorities that were irrational, illogical, or lacking of common sense?

MARY TSUKAMOTO

Salinas, California, March 31, 1942. Photograph by Clem Albers.



loading space, contiguous to the cab and as the wheels sagged he exclaimed, "I still have to go to New Ranch to pick up some more!" We got on, the door slammed, the truck pattered and we started down the road. When we turned into the road leading into New Ranch, the people, attired in suits and neat apparel, were waiting for the Greyhound bus which had been especially chartered to drive the people to San Mateo. As we passed the crowd, we saw a huge van—one of those giant busses—lumbering up the road obviously packed as tightly as a can of sardines. The driver waved at us, and our driver returned the salutation, as he was owner of this moving company and one of his "boys" was driving the "big baby" today.

When the baggage from the shed had been loaded, our truck looked like an overloaded wagon, but the driver—knowing his trade—managed to utilize every bit of space without drastically upsetting the balance.

When we began to pick up speed along Woodside Road and began to swing into stride along El Camino, I thought how for the last time I was looking at my home town. Redwood wasn't a big city; but I thought it was big in the sense that people were liberal and not rabble-rousers despite the feverish clamor of the papers—the residents had not a feeling of hatred toward me. The town was still inactive early in the morning, and it wasn't long before we passed the town line and descended down the long bend approaching San Carlos.

The driver was, I learned, a former Stanford graduate, and he began to talk of the big things they used to do at the big games, how they upset street cars, had really big bonfires, and we didn't talk a bit of evacuation or the war.

Soon the green hedges and eucalyptus trees, sign posts of San Mateo along the El Camino appeared and then the truck suddenly wheeled into a main thoroughfare of the city, and in fifteen minutes I saw the Masonic Temple—our depot for Tanforan bustling with vans, Greyhounds, soldiers, cars, spectators, and bewildered evacuees.

**Headquarters
Western Defense Command
and Fourth Army**

Presidio of San Francisco, California

May 17, 1942

Civilian Exclusion Order No. 82

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Public Proclamations Nos. 1 and 2, this Headquarters, dated March 2, 1942, and March 16, 1942, respectively, it is hereby ordered that from and after 12 o'clock noon, P.W.T., of Saturday, May 23, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, be excluded from that portion of Military Area No. 1 described as follows:

All the Counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, and Lake, State of California.

2. A responsible member of each family, and each individual living alone, in the above described area will report between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Tuesday, May 19, 1942, to the Civil Control Station located at:

Palace Hotel Building,
181 Smith Street,
Corner, Main and Smith Streets,
Ukiah, California.

3. Any person subject to this order who fails to comply with any of its provisions or with the provisions of published instructions pertaining hereto or who is found in the above area after 12 o'clock noon, P.W.T., of Saturday, May 23, 1942, will be liable to the criminal penalties provided by Public Law No. 503, 77th Congress, approved March 21, 1942, entitled "An Act to Provide a Penalty for Violation of Restrictions or Orders with Respect to Persons Entering, Remaining in, Leaving or Committing any Act in Military Areas or Zones," and alien Japanese will be subject to immediate apprehension and internment.

4. All persons within the bounds of an established Assembly Center pursuant to instructions from this Headquarters are excepted from the provisions of this order while those persons are in such Assembly Center.

J. L. DeWitt
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE OBSERVED:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Tuesday, May 19, 1942. Should such individual reside over 30 miles from the Civil Control Station and be unable to provide transportation to such Civil Control Station, he will telegraph or telephone on Monday, May 18, 1942, to the Manager of the Civil Control Station for instructions.

2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:

- (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
- (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
- (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
- (d) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.

3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.

4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.

5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.

6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center. Private means of transportation will not be utilized. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Tuesday, May 19, 1942, to receive further instructions.

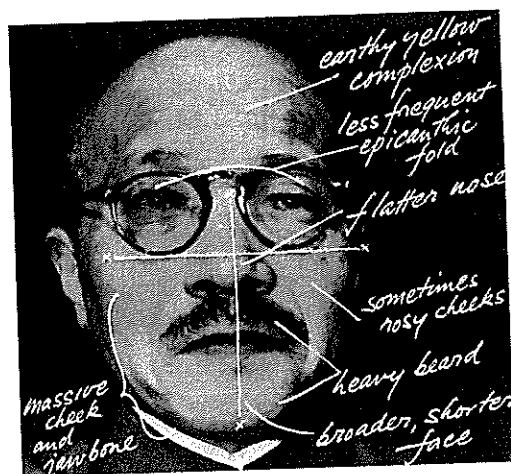
J. L. DeWitt
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

May 17, 1942

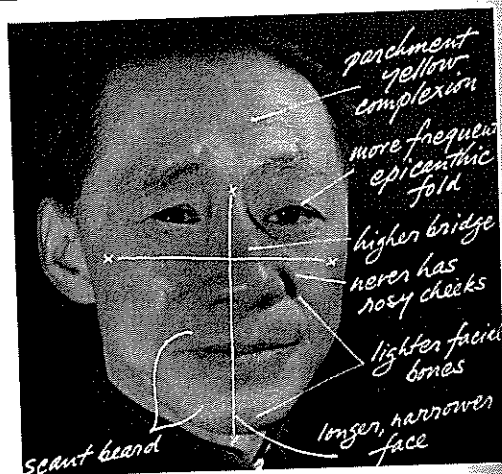
See Civilian Exclusion Order No. 82.

Shortly our Japanese neighbors vanished
and my parents continued to whisper:
We are Chinese, we are Chinese.

We wore black arm bands,
put up a sign
in bold letters.



"How to tell Japs
from the Chinese,"
December 22, 1941.
LIFE magazine.
The top photo is
of Japanese Army
General Hideki Tojo.



Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou is an internationally acclaimed poet, historian, author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer, and director. She is the author of ten best-selling books, including the renowned autobiographical account of her youth, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. In the following excerpt from that book, Angelou describes the San Francisco's Fillmore District as the Japanese were being evacuated and many Southern Blacks, enticed by a war economy, began moving in.

*

In the early months of World War II, San Francisco's Fillmore district, or the Western Addition, experienced a visible revolution. On the surface it appeared to be totally peaceful and almost a refutation of the term "revolution." The Yakamoto Sea Food Market quietly became Sammy's Shoe Shine Parlor and Smoke Shop. Yashigira's Hardware metamorphosed into La Salon de Beauté owned by Miss Clorinda Jackson. The Japanese shops which sold products to Nisei customers were taken over by enterprising Negro businessmen, and in less than a year became permanent homes away from home for the newly arrived Southern Blacks. Where the odors of tempura, raw fish, and cha had dominated, the aroma of chitlings, greens, and ham hocks now prevailed.

The Asian population dwindled before my eyes. I was unable to tell the Japanese from the Chinese and as yet found no real difference in the national origin of such sounds as Ching and Chan or Moto and Kano.

As the Japanese disappeared, soundlessly and without protest, the Negroes entered with their loud jukeboxes, their just-released animosities, and the relief of escape from Southern bonds. The Japanese area became San Francisco's Harlem in a matter of months.

A person unaware of all the factors that make up oppression might have expected sympathy or even support from the Negro newcomers for the dislodged Japanese. Especially in view of the fact that they (the Blacks) had themselves undergone concentration camp living for centuries in slavery's

plantations and later in sharecroppers' cabins. But the sensations of common relationship were missing.

The Black newcomer had been recruited on the desiccated farm lands of Georgia and Mississippi by war-plant labor scouts. The chance to live in two- or three-story apartment buildings (which became instant slums), and to earn two- and even three-figured weekly checks, was blinding. For the first time he could think of himself as a Boss, a Spender. He was able to pay other people to work for him, i.e. the dry cleaners, taxi drivers, waitresses, etc. The shipyards and ammunition plants brought to booming life by the war let him know that he was needed and even appreciated. A completely alien yet very pleasant position for him to experience. Who could expect this man to share his new and dizzying importance with concern for a race that he had never known to exist?

Another reason for his indifference to the Japanese removal was more subtle but was more profoundly felt. The Japanese were not whitefolks. Their eyes, language, and customs belied the white skin and proved to their dark successors that since they didn't have to be feared, neither did they have to be considered. All this was decided unconsciously.

No member of my family and none of the family friends ever mentioned the absent Japanese. It was as if they had never owned or lived in the houses we inhabited. On Post Street, where our house was, the hill skidded slowly down to Fillmore, the market heart of our district. In the two short blocks before it reached its destination, the street housed two day-and-night restaurants, two pool halls, four Chinese restaurants, two gambling houses, plus diners, shoe-shine shops, beauty salons, barber shops, and at least four churches. To fully grasp the never-ending activity in San Francisco's Negro neighborhood during the war, one need only know that the two blocks described were side streets that were duplicated many times over in the eight- to ten-square-block area.

The air of collective displacement, the impermanence of life in wartime and the gauche personalities of the more recent arrivals tended to dissipate my own sense of not belonging. In San Francisco, for the first time, I perceived myself as part of something. Not that I identified with the newcomers, nor with the rare Black descendants of native San Franciscans, nor with the whites or even the Asians, but rather with the times and the city. I understood the arrogance of the young sailors who marched the streets in marauding gangs, approaching every girl as if she were at best a prostitute and at worst an Axis agent bent on making the U.S.A. lose the war. The undertone of fear that San Francisco would be bombed which was abetted by weekly air raid warnings, and civil defense drills in school, heightened

my sense of belonging. Hadn't I, always, but ever and ever, thought that life was just one great risk for the living?

Then the city acted in wartime like an intelligent woman under siege. She gave what she couldn't with safety withhold, and secured those things which lay in her reach. The city became for me the ideal of what I wanted to be as a grownup. Friendly but never gushing, cool but not frigid or distant, distinguished without the awful stiffness.

To San Franciscans "the City That Knows How" was the bay, the fog, Sir Francis Drake Hotel, Top o' the Mark, Chinatown, the Sunset District and so on and so forth and so white. To me, a thirteen-year-old Black girl, stalled by the South and Southern Black life style, the city was a state of beauty and a state of freedom. The fog wasn't simply the steamy vapors off the bay caught and penned in by hills, but a soft breath of anonymity and shrouded and cushioned the bashful traveler. I became dauntless and free of fears, intoxicated by the physical fact of San Francisco. Safe in my protecting arrogance, I was certain that no one loved her as impartially as I. I walked around the Mark Hopkins and gazed at the Top o' the Mark, but (maybe sour grapes) was more impressed by the view of Oakland from the hill than by the tiered building or its fur-draped visitors. For weeks, after the city and I came to terms about my belonging, I haunted the points of interest and found them empty and un-San Francisco. The naval officers with their well-dressed wives and clean white babies inhabited another time-space dimension than I. The well-kept old women in chauffeured cars and blond girls in buckskin shoes and cashmere sweaters might have been San Franciscans, but they were at most gilt on the frame of my portrait of the city.

Pride and Prejudice stalked in tandem the beautiful hills. Native San Franciscans, possessive of the city, had to cope with an influx, not of awed respectful tourists but of raucous unsophisticated provincials. They were also forced to live with skin-deep guilt brought on by the treatment of their former Nisei schoolmates.

Southern white illiterates brought their biases intact to the West from the hills of Arkansas and the swamps of Georgia. The Black ex-farmers had not left their distrust and fear of whites which history had taught them in distressful lessons. These two groups were obliged to work side by side in the war plants, and their animosities festered and opened like boils on the face of the city.

San Franciscans would have sworn on the Golden Gate Bridge that racism was missing from the heart of their air-conditioned city. But they would have been sadly mistaken.

A story went the rounds about a San Franciscan white matron who refused to sit beside a Negro civilian on the streetcar, even after he made room for her on the seat. Her explanation was that she would not sit beside a draft dodger who was a Negro as well. She added that the least he could do was fight for his country the way her son was fighting on Iwo Jima. The story said that the man pulled his body away from the window to show an armless sleeve. He said quietly and with great dignity, "Then ask your son to look around for my arm which I left over there."

Photo Essay:

An Uncertain Future

Overnight, the evacuation reduced individual and family names to numbers on tags. Instructions by the Army explicitly ordered the Japanese to assemble voluntarily for mass evacuation on a given date and time, with no more than what could be carried by hand. In the few days that the evacuees had to prepare for evacuation, bargain hunters descended onto the evicted, taking what they could for a pittance. In some instances, trustworthy neighbors stored and cared for the belongings, homes, and properties of the evicted Japanese, but the pilfering and vandalism often began before the evacuees had left their homes. With it, nearly a lifetime of perseverance and struggle disappeared overnight.

*



Hiro Niwa's evacuation tag #13664.



FBI agent searching personal belongings of a Japanese American family. December 1941. Photographer unknown.

They slit all the couches to see if anything was hidden.

MARION KANEMOTO

When internment came down, as I recall, it was a very terrifying experience, especially for a lot of Chicano-American people. And this I could speak on for my own family and the impact it had on them.

For example, one night after Pearl Harbor, as our family was asleep, in the middle of the night we heard a loud banging on the door and I remember my father getting up to answer it. Before he had a chance to approach the door, the door was broken down. It was the FBI or INS or what have you.... Then they proceeded to go down the street doing the same thing to all the houses.

What happened was...that they were after the Japanese. They took the neighbors that we did have, in the middle of the night.

GILBERT SANCHEZ



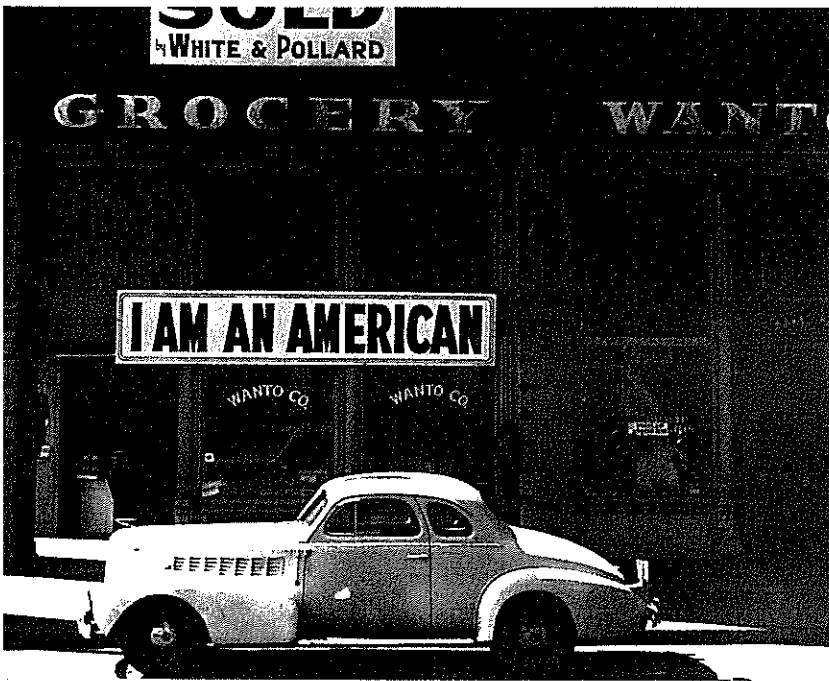
Issei and Nisei turning in radios, cameras and other articles considered "contraband" to the local police station. Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, California, 1942. Photographer unknown.

Someone was pulling a hoax. The news over the radio had the unreal quality of Orson Welles' Martian broadcast, of something out of the pulps.

On the subway going home, the gateman mistook me for a Chinese. "Now we are going to give them hell," he said. "I hope we do it quick," I replied. He opened the door and closed it again at a station. The train roared on its way. He leaned toward me. "The Mayor has ordered them all to stay home," he said, looking at me from the corner of his eye. "Yeah," I said.

I felt self-conscious; every eye was upon me, and I was glad to reach my apartment. A detective and two FBI men stopped me in the lobby but okayed me after looking at my Class 1B draft registration card. They went upstairs and apparently arrested someone from their list.

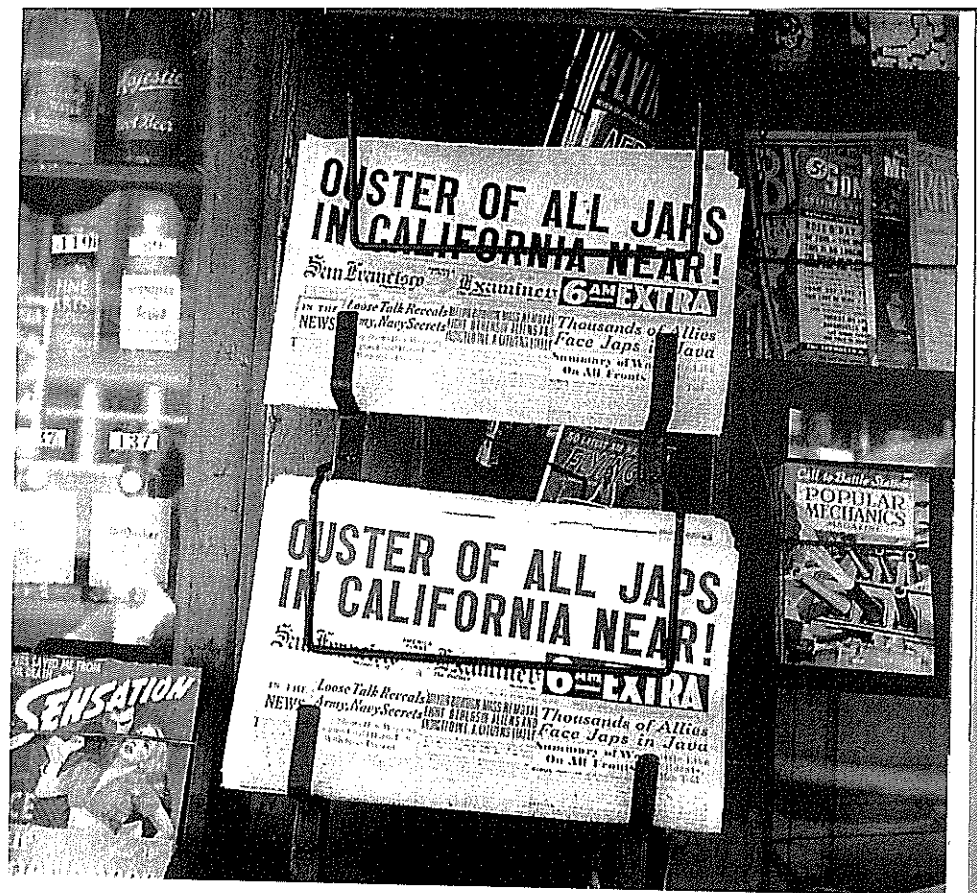
TOORU KANAZAWA



Oakland, California, March 13, 1942. Photograph by Dorothea Lange.

I think the thing that we felt the most was that the people who stopped in at our store thought maybe we should close it up. For our safety. But my husband said, "No there's no need to do that. We're American citizens." But as things came out in the newspaper and on the radio as days went by, it really got worse. So then I felt too, that we had to stay inside, and then we had a curfew. We had to have our lights out at eight... When April came along, we knew that we had to go. So my husband started selling things in the store.

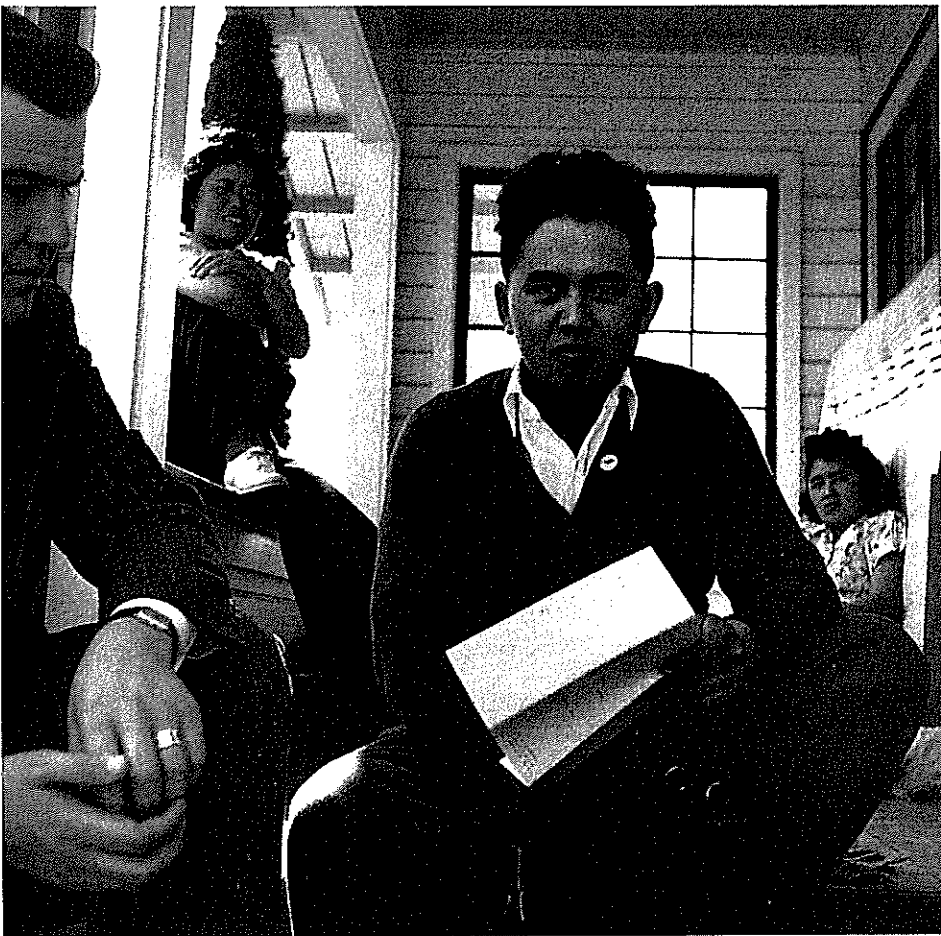
EMI SOMEKAWA



Oakland, California, February 27, 1942. Photograph by Dorothea Lange.

Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the bad-lands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry, and dead up against it [...]. Let us have no patience with the enemy or with anyone whose veins carry his blood [...]. Personally, I hate the Japanese.

HENRY MCLEMORE, THE *San Francisco Examiner*



This farm owner has just completed arrangements for leasing his acreage, buildings, and equipment for the duration of evacuation. San Jose, California, March 27, 1942. Photograph by Dorothea Lange.

You hurt. You give up everything that you worked for that far, and I think everybody was at the point of just having gotten out of the Depression and was just getting on his feet. And then all that happens! You have to throw everything away. You feel you were betrayed.

YURI TATEISHI



Bainbridge Island evacuees escorted to trains taking them to Manzanar. Seattle, Washington, March 26, 1942. Photographer unknown.

Right away, all of these junk dealers came into town, and oh, it was terrible. These poor women whose husbands were rounded up by the FBI; they were all fairly young and they had small children and no one to help them, and they had to somehow make ready to leave [Terminal] island in forty-eight hours. And here come these junk dealers, these opportunists. This was in December, so a lot of the families had already bought their Christmas presents, like new phonographs or radios, refrigerators—and they had no men around the house. These guys would come in and offer ten or fifteen dollars and because they had to leave, they'd sell.

FRED FUJIKAWA



Woodland, California, May 20, 1942. Photograph by Dorothea Lange.

*This morning, the winding train,
Like a big black snake,*

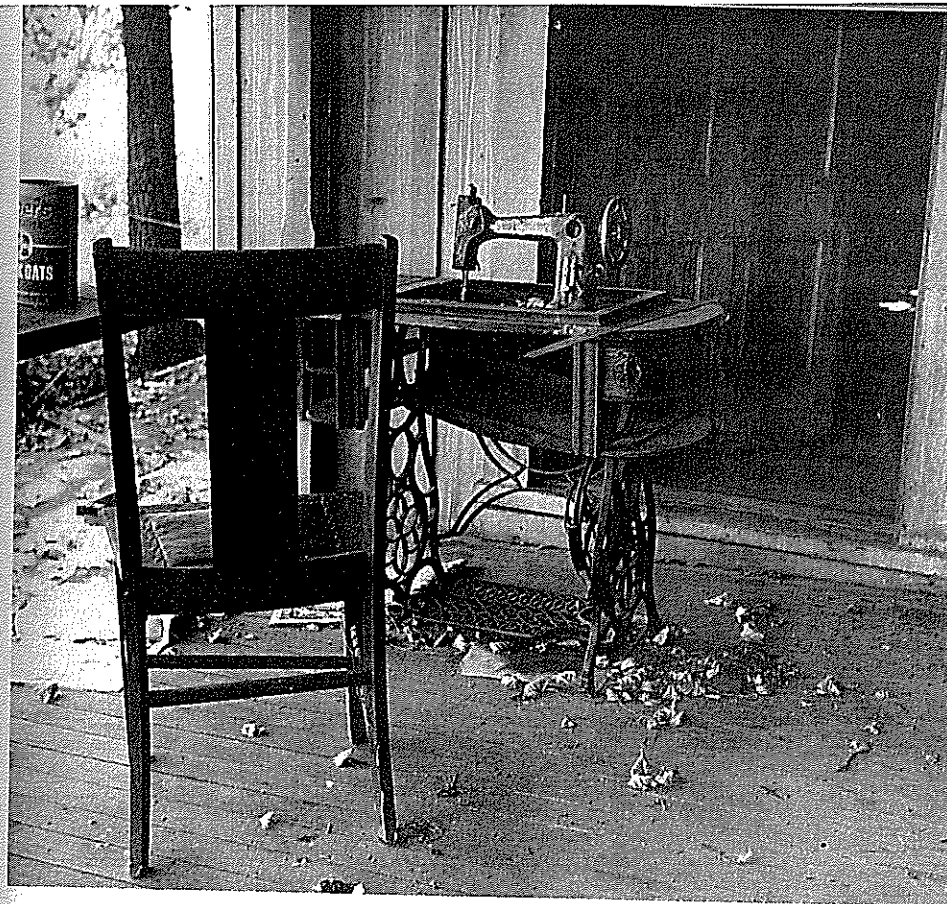
Takes us away as far as Wyoming.

*The current of buddhist thought
always runs eastward.*

*This policy may support the
tenacity of the teaching.*

Who knows?

NYOGEN SENZAKI, ZEN MASTER



A seventy-acre fruit ranch, formerly operated by M. Miyamoto. This ranch, now not being worked, once yielded plums, peaches and pears. Penryn, California, November 10, 1942. Photograph by Francis Stewart.

*Rhododendron blooms
about to leave this house
where my child was born*

YOTENCHI AGARI

II



Rounded up
In the sweltering yard.
Unable to endure any longer
Standing in line
Some collapse.

Shizue Ivatsuki

FROM *Desert Exile**Yoshiko Uchida*

Evacuating the West Coast as quickly as possible meant moving the Japanese into temporary assembly centers until preparations were complete at the more permanent internment camps. Of the sixteen assembly centers that were established for the Japanese American internment, thirteen of them were in California. Most people stayed three to four months before they were ordered to pack again, this time destined for remote camps scattered in interior parts of the United States, where they faced either harsh desert or swamp-land climates at one of ten internment camps: Topaz, Utah; Poston, Arizona; Gila River, Arizona; Amache, Colorado; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Jerome, Arkansas; Manzanar, California; Minidoka, Idaho; Rohwer, Arkansas; and Tule Lake, California. The train journey from the assembly centers to the internment camps usually lasted several stifling days, as the evacuated Japanese were instructed to keep the shades drawn to hide the evacuation from prying eyes.

*Yoshiko Uchida, her older sister, and Issei mother were interned at the Tanforan Assembly Center, where they were forced to live in a horse stall before they were moved to cramped barracks at Topaz, Utah. Uchida's father, who had been arrested by the FBI, joined them after his release from the Justice Department camp in Missoula, Montana. Her mother often wrote haiku, both before the war and during the internment period, three of which are included at the end this selection. In her lifetime, Uchida published more than twenty-five books, both fiction and nonfiction. *Desert Exile* is a vivid account of her incarceration written and published after the war.*

*

TANFORAN: A HORSE STALL FOR FOUR

As the bus pulled up to the grandstand, I could see hundreds of Japanese Americans jammed along the fence that lined the track. These people had arrived a few days earlier and were now watching for the arrival of friends or

had come to while away the empty hours that had suddenly been thrust upon them.

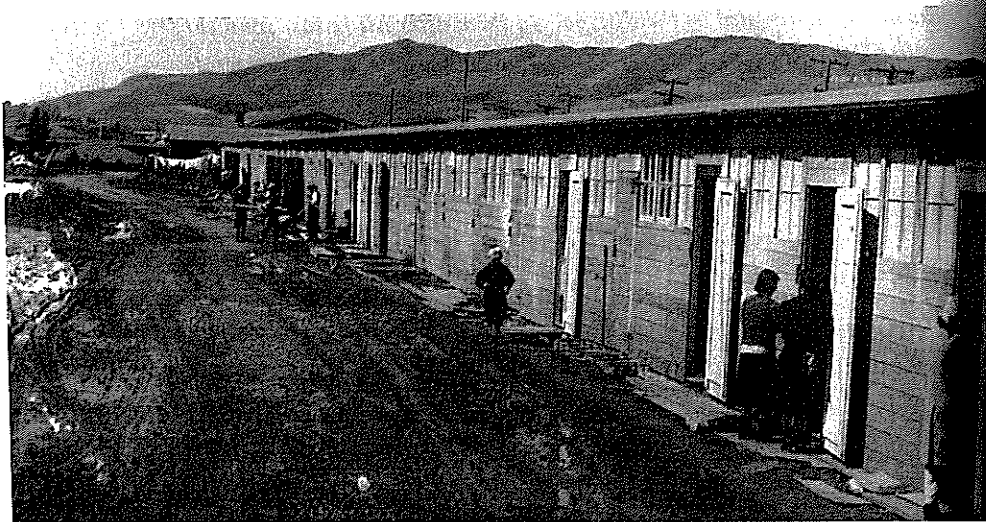
As soon as we got off the bus, we were directed to an area beneath the grandstand where we registered and filled out a series of forms. Our baggage was inspected for contraband, a cursory medical check was made, and our living quarters assigned. We were to be housed in Barrack 16, Apartment 40. Fortunately, some friends who had arrived earlier found us and offered to help us locate our quarters.

It had rained the day before and the hundreds of people who had trampled on the track had turned it into a miserable mass of slippery mud. We made our way on it carefully, helping my mother who was dressed just as she would have been to go to church. She wore a hat, gloves, her good coat, and her Sunday shoes, because she would not have thought of venturing outside our house dressed in any other way.

Those stables just reeked. There was nothing you could do. The amount of lye they threw on it to clear the odor and stuff, it didn't help. It still reeked of urine and horse manure. It was so degrading for people to live in those conditions. It's almost as if you're not talking about the way Americans treated Americans.

ERNEST UNO

Horse stalls at Tanforan racetrack in San Bruno converted to living quarters. San Bruno, California, 1942. Photographer unknown.



Everywhere there were black tar-papered barracks that had been hastily erected to house the 8,000 Japanese Americans of the area who had been uprooted from their homes. Barrack 16, however, was not among them, and we couldn't find it until we had traveled half the length of the track and gone beyond it to the northern rim of the race track compound.

Finally one of our friends called out, "There it is, beyond that row of eucalyptus trees." Barrack 16 was not a barrack at all, but a long stable raised a few feet off the ground with a broad ramp the horses had used to reach their stalls. Each stall was now numbered and ours was number 40. That the stalls should have been called "apartments" was a euphemism so ludicrous it was comical.

When we reached stall number 40, we pushed open the narrow door and looked uneasily into the vacant darkness. The stall was about ten by twenty feet and empty except for three folded Army cots lying on the floor. Dust, dirt, and wood shavings covered the linoleum that had been laid over manure-covered boards, the smell of horses hung in the air, and the whitened corpses of many insects still clung to the hastily white-washed walls.

High on either side of the entrance were two small windows which were our only source of daylight. The stall was divided into two sections by Dutch doors worn down by teeth marks, and each stall in the stable was separated from the adjoining one only by rough partitions that stopped a foot short of the sloping roof. That space, while perhaps a good source of ventilation for the horses, deprived us of all but visual privacy, and we couldn't even be sure of that because of the crevices and knotholes in the dividing walls.

Because our friends had already spent a day as residents of Tanforan, they had become adept at scrounging for necessities. One found a broom and swept the floor for us. Two of the boys went to the barracks where mattresses were being issued, stuffed the ticking with straw themselves, and came back with three for our cots.

Nothing in the camp was ready. Everything was only half-finished. I wondered how much the nation's security would have been threatened had the Army permitted us to remain in our homes a few more days until the camps were adequately prepared for occupancy by families.

By the time we had cleaned out the stall and set up the cots, it was time for supper. Somehow, in all the confusion, we had not had lunch, so I was eager to get to the main mess hall which was located beneath the grandstand.

The sun was going down as we started along the muddy track, and a cold piercing wind swept in from the bay. When we arrived, there were six long weaving lines of people waiting to get into the mess hall. We took our place

at the end of one of them, each of us clutching a plate and silverware borrowed from friends who had already received their baggage.

Shivering in the cold, we pressed close together trying to shield Mama from the wind. As we stood in what seemed a breadline for the destitute, I felt degraded, humiliated, and overwhelmed with a longing for home. And I saw the unutterable sadness on my mother's face.

This was only the first of many lines we were to endure, and we soon discovered that waiting in line was as inevitable a part of Tanforan as the north wind that swept in from the bay stirring up all the dust and litter of the camp.

Once we got inside the gloomy cavernous mess hall, I saw hundreds of people eating at wooden picnic tables, while those who had already eaten were shuffling aimlessly over the wet cement floor. When I reached the serving table and held out my plate, a cook reached into a dishpan full of canned sausages and dropped two onto my plate with his fingers. Another man gave me a boiled potato and a piece of butterless bread.

With 5,000 people to be fed, there were few unoccupied tables, so we separated from our friends and shared a table with an elderly man and a young family with two crying babies. No one at the table spoke to us, and even Mama could seem to find no friendly word to offer as she normally would have done. We tried to eat, but the food wouldn't go down.

"Let's get out of here," my sister suggested.

We decided it would be better to go back to our barrack than to linger in the depressing confusion of the mess hall. It had grown dark by now and since Tanforan had no lights for nighttime occupancy, we had to pick our way carefully down the slippery track.

Once back in our stall, we found it no less depressing, for there was only a single electric light bulb dangling from the ceiling, and a one-inch crevice at the top of the north wall admitted a steady draft of the cold night air. We sat huddled on our cots, bundled in our coats, too cold and miserable even to talk. My sister and I worried about Mama, for she wasn't strong and had recently been troubled with neuralgia which could easily be aggravated by the cold. She in turn was worrying about us, and of course we all worried and wondered about Papa. Suddenly we heard the sound of a truck stopping outside.

"Hey, Uchida! Apartment 40!" a boy shouted.

I rushed to the door and found the baggage boys trying to heave our enormous "camp bundle" over the railing that fronted our stall.

"What ya got in here anyway?" they shouted good-naturedly as they struggled with the unwieldy bundle. "It's the biggest thing we got on our truck!"

I grinned, embarrassed, but I could hardly wait to get out our belongings. My sister and I fumbled to undo all the knots we had tied into the rope around our bundle that morning and eagerly pulled out the familiar objects from home.

We unpacked our blankets, pillows, sheets, tea kettle, and most welcome of all, our electric hot plate. I ran to the nearest washroom to fill the kettle with water, while Mama and Kay made up the army cots with our bedding. Once we hooked up the hot plate and put the kettle on to boil, we felt better. We sat close to its warmth, holding our hands toward it as though it were our fireplace at home.

Before long some friends came by to see us, bringing with them the only gift they had—a box of dried prunes. Even the day before, we wouldn't have given the prunes a second glance, but now they were as welcome as the boxes of Maskey's chocolates my father used to bring home from San Francisco.

Mama managed to make some tea for our friends, and we sat around our steaming kettle, munching gratefully on our prunes. We spent most of the evening talking about food and the lack of it, a concern that grew obsessive over the next few weeks when we were constantly hungry.

Our stable consisted of twenty-five stalls facing north which were back to back with an equal number facing south, so we were surrounded on three sides. Living in our stable were an assortment of people—mostly small family units—that included an artist, my father's barber and his wife, a dentist and his wife, an elderly retired couple, a group of Kibei bachelors, an insurance salesman and his wife, and a widow with two daughters. To say that we all became intimately acquainted would be an understatement. It was, in fact, communal living, with semi-private cubicles provided only for sleeping.

Our neighbors on one side spent much of their time playing cards, and at all hours of the day we could hear the sound of cards being shuffled and money changing hands. Our other neighbors had a teenage son who spent most of the day with his friends, coming home to his stall at night only after his parents were asleep. Family life began to show signs of strain almost immediately, not only in the next stall but throughout the entire camp.

One Sunday our neighbor's son fell asleep in the rear of his stall with the door bolted from inside. When his parents came home from church, no amount of shouting or banging on the door could awaken the boy.

"Our stupid son has locked us out," they explained, coming to us for help.

I climbed up on my cot and considered pouring water on him over the partition, for I knew he slept just on the other side of it. Instead I dangled a broom over the partition and poked and prodded with it, shouting, "Wake up! Wake up!" until the boy finally bestirred himself and let his parents in. We became good friends with our neighbors after that.

About one hundred feet from our stable were two latrines and two washrooms for our section of camp, one each for men and women. The latrines were crude wooden structures containing eight toilets, separated by partitions, but having no doors. The washrooms were divided into two sections. In the front section was a long tin trough spaced with spigots of hot and cold water where we washed our faces and brushed our teeth. To the rear were eight showers, also separated by partitions, but lacking doors or curtains. The showers were difficult to adjust and we either got scalded by torrents of hot water or shocked by an icy blast of cold. Most of the Issei were unaccustomed to showers, having known the luxury of soaking in deep pine-scented tubs during their years in Japan, and found the showers virtually impossible to use.

Our card-playing neighbor scoured the camp for a container that might serve as a tub, and eventually found a large wooden barrel. She rolled it to the showers, filled it with warm water, and then climbed in for a pleasant and leisurely soak. The greatest compliment she could offer anyone was the use of her private tub.

The lack of privacy in the latrines and showers was an embarrassing hardship especially for the older women, and many would take newspapers to hold over their faces or squares of cloth to tuck up for their own private curtain. The Army, obviously ill-equipped to build living quarters for women and children, had made no attempt to introduce even the most common of life's civilities into these camps for us.

During the first few weeks of camp life everything was erratic and in short supply. Hot water appeared only sporadically, and the minute it was available, everyone ran for the showers or the laundry. We had to be clever and quick just to keep clean, and my sister and I often walked a mile to the other end of camp where hot water was in better supply, in order to boost our morale with a hot shower.

Even toilet paper was at a premium, for new rolls would disappear as soon as they were placed in the latrines. The shock of the evacuation

compounded by the short supply of every necessity brought out the baser instincts of the internees, and there was little inclination for anyone to feel responsible for anyone else. In the early days, at least, it was everyone for himself or herself.

One morning I saw some women emptying bed pans into the troughs where we washed our faces. The sight was enough to turn my stomach, and my mother quickly made several large signs in Japanese cautioning people against such unsanitary practices. We posted them in conspicuous spots in the washroom and hoped for the best.

Across from the latrines was a double barrack, one containing laundry tubs and the other equipped with clotheslines and ironing boards. Because there were so many families with young children, the laundry tubs were in constant use. The hot water was often gone by 9:00 A.M. and many women got up at 3:00 and 4:00 in the morning to do their wash, all of which, including sheets, had to be done entirely by hand.

We found it difficult to get to the laundry before 9:00 A.M., and by then every tub was taken and there were long lines of people with bags of dirty laundry waiting behind each one. When we finally got to a tub, there was no more hot water. Then we would leave my mother to hold the tub while my sister and I rushed to the washroom where there was a better supply and carried back bucketfuls of hot water as everyone else learned to do. By the time we had finally hung our laundry on lines outside our stall, we were too exhausted to do much else for the rest of the day.

For four days after our arrival we continued to go to the main mess hall for all our meals. My sister and I usually missed breakfast because we were assigned to the early shift and we simply couldn't get there by 7:00 A.M. Dinner was at 4:45 P.M., which was a terrible hour, but not a major problem, as we were always hungry. Meals were uniformly bad and skimpy, with an abundance of starches such as beans and bread. I wrote to my non-Japanese friends in Berkeley shamelessly asking them to send us food, and they obliged with large cartons of cookies, nuts, dried fruit, and jams.

We looked forward with much anticipation to the opening of a half dozen smaller mess halls located throughout the camp. But when ours finally opened, we discovered that the preparation of smaller quantities had absolutely no effect on the quality of the food. We went eagerly to our new mess hall only to be confronted at our first meal with chili con carne, corn, and butterless bread. To assuage our disappointment, a friend and I went to the main mess hall which was still in operation, to see if it had anything better. Much to our amazement and delight, we found small lettuce salads, the first fresh vegetables we had seen in many days. We ate raven-

ously and exercised enormous self-control not to go back for second and third helpings.

The food improved gradually, and by the time we left Tanforan five months later, we had fried chicken and ice cream for Sunday dinner. By July tubs of soapy water were installed at the mess hall exits so we could wash our plates and utensils on the way out. Being slow eaters, however, we usually found the dishwater tepid and dirty by the time we reached the tubs, and we often rewashed our dishes in the washroom.

Most internees got into the habit of rushing for everything. They ran to the mess halls to be first in line, they dashed inside for the best tables and then rushed through their meals to get to the washtubs before the suds ran out. The three of us, however, seemed to be at the end of every line that formed and somehow never managed to be first for anything.

One of the first things we all did at Tanforan was to make our living quarters as comfortable as possible. A pile of scrap lumber in one corner of camp melted away like snow on a hot day as residents salvaged whatever they could to make shelves and crude pieces of furniture to supplement the army cots. They also made ingenious containers for carrying their dishes to the mess halls, with handles and lids that grew more and more elaborate in a sort of unspoken competition.

Because of my father's absence, our friends helped us in camp, just as they had in Berkeley, and we relied on them to put up shelves and build a crude table and two benches for us. We put our new camp furniture in the front half of our stall, which was our "living room," and put our three cots in the dark windowless rear section, which we promptly dubbed "the dungeon." We ordered some print fabric by mail and sewed curtains by hand to hang at our windows and to cover our shelves. Each new addition to our stall made it seem a little more like home.

One afternoon about a week after we had arrived at Tanforan, a messenger from the administration building appeared with a telegram for us. It was from my father telling us he had been released on parole from Montana and would be able to join us soon in camp. Papa was coming home. The wonderful news had come like an unexpected gift, but even as we hugged each other in joy, we didn't quite dare believe it until we actually saw him.

The fact that my father had retired from Mitsui two years before the war at the mandatory retirement age of fifty-five (many Japanese firms required early retirement to make room for their younger employees), his record of public and community service, and the affidavits from his friends were probably factors that secured his early release. As a parolee, he would have to account for every move he made until the end of the war and would not

be able to leave government custody without a sponsor to vouch for him. But these restrictions didn't seem important at the time. The main thing was that he was coming home.

We had no idea when he would actually return, but the next day another messenger appeared to tell us that my father had already arrived and was waiting for us at the administration building.

My sister and I couldn't wait for Mama, and we ran ahead down the track to the grandstand. We rushed into the waiting room and saw my father waiting for us, looking thinner, but none the worse for wear.

"Papa!" we screamed, and rushed into his arms.

He had returned with two other men, and their families joined us in a grand and tearful reunion. We all had supper together at the main mess hall, and by the time we returned to our stall, word had spread that my father was home. Almost all of our many friends in camp stopped by that evening to welcome him home. It was pure joy and pandemonium as friends crowded into our tiny stall.

My father, a lively conversationalist as always, was brimming with stories of his five-month internment, and as our friends listened eagerly, the light burned in our stall long after the adjoining stalls had grown quiet and dark. From their own stalls our neighbors were listening, and one of them came the next day to tell us how much she had enjoyed my father's descriptions of life in Montana. She often listened to conversations that took place in our stall, sometimes coming later to ask about a point she had missed, or hurrying out from her stall when our friends left to see the face of a voice that had aroused her curiosity.

The night of my father's return was the first of many evenings spent in conversation with our friends as a reunited family. We may have been in a racetrack "assembly center" with four cots now crowded into a stall that had housed a single horse, but we were together once more, and that was something to be grateful for.

In the days following my father's return, we gradually heard more of what had happened to him after we left him at the Immigration Detention Quarters the day of our last visit. He and the other men transferred to Missoula had boarded buses for Oakland and then entrained for Montana. As the train moved northward, cars from Portland and Seattle were added to those from Los Angeles and Oakland, and my father later found many old friends in each contingent. The oldest man in the group was eighty-two.

It was a long forty-eight-hour ride on stiff straight-backed seats, with the blinds drawn day and night and armed guards at each exit. The men had been designated "dangerous enemy aliens" and every precaution was taken

against their escape. They had been stripped of all their possessions, including handkerchiefs, and most of them traveled in the clothing they were wearing when so abruptly taken into custody. Some of the men had been apprehended on golf courses, others as they worked in their fields or as they came off their fishing boats. One man who had just undergone surgery for cancer of the stomach four days earlier had been taken directly from his hospital bed. During the course of the journey another man suffered a breakdown and his friends had to force a pencil between his teeth to keep him from biting his tongue.

Once they arrived in Missoula, the men were housed thirty to a barrack, with cots lining both sides of the room, army fashion. Here all the men, whatever their station in life, were treated alike as prisoners of war. Each was required to take his turn cleaning the barracks and latrines and working in the kitchen as waiter, cook, or dishwasher. My father, who had often helped my mother with some of her household chores, slipped easily into these new roles, rather enjoying the challenge they presented, but other men, who were more traditional Japanese husbands, found it difficult to perform what seemed to them demeaning tasks.

The men were encouraged to become self-governing, and shortly after their arrival, elected a mayor and various committee chairmen. It was typical of my father that he should be elected chairman of the welfare committee since he had had so much experience caring for the sick, the aged, and those in need. He made arrangements for meetings and speakers, and one of his first acts was to establish a church. He also organized and personally attended classes in English composition, grammar, American history, law, and even ballroom dancing, all of which were held daily and taught by internees versed in these subjects. In one of his letters he wrote, "You will be surprised to find me a good dancer when I come home!"

It was also his task to arrange funeral services for the men who died in Montana. The first was a seventy-four-year-old man who died of pneumonia. The second was the man who had been removed from the hospital following surgery. Because the remains of those who died were shipped home directly from the morgue, the interned men were permitted only to hold memorial services for them. Although many of the internees were strangers to each other, the deaths drew them all closer.

Out of the meager funds they were permitted to keep, they contributed generously to purchase flowers and candles for the services, sending the surplus to the families of the men who had died. Just as he often did at our church at home, my father sang a hymn at each of the services as his own special tribute.

All the internees' incoming and outgoing letters were subject to censorship, and many of my father's letters arrived well-ventilated with the holes left by the censor's scissors. Outgoing mail was restricted to three letters a week and my father, a great letter writer, was one of the first to be reprimanded. "I've been warned," he wrote us, "that I write too much and too long." He soon located an old typewriter which he borrowed for his letter writing to make life easier for the censors, and later had to limit his communications to brief telegrams which included such messages as, "Please give Kay freesia bouquet and hearty greetings on her birthday."

All paper was stripped from incoming packages to prevent the entry of illegal messages. Labels were removed from canned goods, wrapping removed from fruit, and boxes of chocolates were emptied on the counter so the paper cups could be discarded. The only way the men were allowed to retrieve the candy was to scoop it up in their caps, and receiving it in such a manner so diminished the joy of having it that my father soon asked us not to send any more.

It wasn't until the day before Christmas that their personal effects were released and my father could at last write with his pen instead of with a pencil. He was also allowed to have up to \$15 of his cash. The government issued candy and nuts to the men, but our package was the only one that arrived in time for Christmas at my father's barrack, and he told us they saved every tag and string and scrap of wrapping paper to tack up on the walls for Christmas cheer.

Soon after the men arrived in Missoula, the temperature plunged to thirty below zero. Windows were coated with ice and giant icicles hung from the roof to the ground. The men, with their California clothing, were scarcely prepared for this kind of harsh weather and finally after a month the Army issued them some basic winter clothing. We had also spent many of our evenings knitting in order to rush some wool gloves, socks, and caps to Papa and his Mitsui friends, along with books, games, and candy. He thanked us many times for everything, saying they had warmed his heart as well as his person. "The other men envy me," he wrote, "and want me to stay here forever as long as I have such a nice family!"

Early each morning, the men gathered for group calisthenics, then they worked at their assigned tasks, attended classes, and maintained a disciplined, busy life. In the evenings, when there were no meetings, they often gathered around the coal stove in the center of each barrack to socialize.

On January 3, which was my parents' twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, we sent my father a wire with our love and good wishes. He immediately wired back, "Thanks for telegram. Extend my fondest greetings on our

anniversary which almost slipped my mind as I was busy arranging seventeen speakers for tomorrow's services. Everybody well and happy. Regards to church friends. Love to all."

It sounded like Papa. We were glad to know he was keeping busy and well. Our wire, it seemed, had done more than remind him of his anniversary. It had also spread the news among his friends, and that night the men of his barrack gathered around their pot-bellied stove and had a fine party in his honor. They made Japanese broth by boiling water in an old kerosene can and then adding seasoning and squares of toasted rice cakes which had been sent to one of the men. Papa's friends from other barracks came to join in the celebration, and the ensuing festivities with much singing and speech-making touched and cheered my father immensely. He wrote us about the happy evening, and the fifty or more men who were at the party sent their greetings to my mother on the back of an old Christmas card. That card and news of the celebration in Montana gave my mother as much pleasure, I think, as the flowers from my sister and me.

All during the war years my father never forgot his friends who were not as fortunate as he and had to remain in the prisoner of war camps. They were eventually scattered to distant camps in New Mexico, Louisiana, North Dakota, and Ellis Island, and some men were moved so often that letters to them would return covered with forwarding addresses that had failed to locate them. The thought of their lonely lives in internment always saddened us.

Plate in hand,
I stand in line,
Losing my resolve
To hide my tears.

*

I see my mother
In the aged woman who comes,
And I yield to her
My place in line.

*

Four months have passed,
And at last I learn
To call this horse stall
My family's home.

YUKARI