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Preface

The Nisei youths from widely scattered West Coast communities, who entered the schools in relocation centers in autumn of 1942, experienced a school environment which, for all the disorder born of haste, was sufficiently similar to the educational environment they had known before to provide them some reassurance and sense of purpose. But there were some striking differences in the relocation center schools. The most significant was that the student bodies of these schools were entirely made up of Japanese-Americans. The Nisei accustomed to being small minorities in schools in their former communities found themselves in the relocation center schools to be not only the majority but virtually the only children in the schools. The teachers and school administrators who came to the relocation centers, most of which were located in desolate parts of the intermontane region, found abundant challenge in providing facilities for educating their pupils at the level of the schools from which the pupils had come. If providing physical necessities for the schools was a problem, the instructional problems were not great. There were, however, special educational needs that arose from a certain measure of cultural marginality and from the circumstances of the evacuation and internment. These were acknowledged and in some measure recognized and understood. The students themselves showed a level of academic interest and ability that generally gratified teachers and further stimulated their interest and concern.

In autumn of 1942 we arrived at the Tule Lake Relocation Center. I was to be employed there as a field research assistant by the

Evacuation and Resettlement Study of the University of California. This Study, initiated by a group of Berkeley scholars, was under the direction of Prof. Dorothy Swaine Thomas. She supervised the group of field research assistants at Tule Lake. The other members were Japanese-Americans who had chosen to come to Tule Lake in order to take part in the Study.

When the esteemed director of the Tule Lake Project, Mr. Elmer Shirrell, became aware that my wife was a teacher, asked that she join the teaching staff of the Project high school. She accepted and became a member of an intensively interacting group of professional teachers; most of them remained highly sensitive to the personal and academic interests of their pupils under what seemed to be the most trying and threatening circumstances a youthful population could suffer.

Living at Tule Lake among the fifteen thousand impounded people of Japanese origin was the kind of experience that remains vivid during the remaining years of one's life. If that experience was less traumatic than for the evacuated population, it was for most other members of the community a period of great trauma. For the teachers and school administrators the travail of creating schools which could provide at least a tolerable education for the interned youths there were the complexities of working out solutions from problems without advantage of models and precedent, there was the omnipresent fear of what the evacuation would do to the Japanese-American population, there was the exhilaration of new challenges and doing something useful, there was also the discovery of one's own reservoir of insight and compassionate interest, and the sharing of efforts and interests with both stu-

dents and fellow teachers.

Attracted by the imaginative interest many teachers were demonstrating for the welfare of their students inside and outside of their classrooms, I learned of the variety of class assignments being given the students in the high schools; of particular interest were the compositions and essays that dealt with the experience of the evacuation and confinement in the Relocation Center. Understanding the nature of my interest, a number of teachers permitted me to keep materials of this kind.

In autumn and winter, 1942-43, several hundred compositions written by Japanese-American high school students at the Tule Lake Relocation Center were gathered so that they might be preserved for later reading and examination. In the years since the collection of these written materials, I have given occasional access to them to advanced students who showed particular interest in the Japanese-American experience in relocation centers. Their urging and the interest of others as well have moved me finally to do what I had originally intended to do, that is, to arrange them in appropriate order and present them for publication. They have been arranged topically because the original assignments were made in these terms. The topical categories, moreover, have been largely arranged in an order that roughly, at least, represents the actual sequence of time and experience. In addition to the mass of materials coming out of the high school class-room activity, several items have been included which were written by students for the high school yearbook and the Tulean Despatch Magazine.

The writings as a collection of individual contributions reveal much about the manner in which high-school Nisei perceived and responded to the circumstances of life in the relocation center. The experience of these Nisei in such communities has had an enduring effect upon them as they have moved through various stages of their adult lives after the end of the war-time internment. The ways in which relocation center experience have been viewed by Issei and Nisei retrospectively has been influenced, of course, by the circumstances and events of their later lives.

The Nisei authors of the compositions and essays here included became the parents of the Sansei, the third generation Japanese-Americans; they are now moving into grandparental roles. The Sansei and their children will find new insights into Nisei perceptions of the complex circumstances they found themselves in during the relocation experience. For all Americans, the Japanese experience in war-time confinement should have an enduring interest and meaning.

Robert H. Billigmeier
Santa Barbara, California
August 29, 1976

TULE LAKE

Out on the desert, storm swept
with wind and dust,
A new town in born.
Here we are forced to smile with
tears, for we must;
This is where we toil for the
duration, with our hearts all torn.

Dust clouds, like brown smoke,
rise and blow,
From distant hills, towering high.
Out yonder, Castle Rock stands
high and bold,
And stretches her arms to touch
the sky.

The thirsty hills are choked,
with the sun's hot rays.
The scent of sage, the wild rose
perfume rare.
Out to the distant horizon we gaze,
Wondering if our Caucasian friends
still care.

Hatsuye Miyamoto

from Scatterbrain Pieces: Year-Book
Carnival, Tri-State High School
Spring, 1943

When the Japanese air and naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the population of Japanese origin in the United States was filled with a profound apprehension about the days immediately before them and an anguished fear for their future in America. Despite the long years of political crises in the Pacific and continual rumors of impending war between the United States and Japan, the hope and even the expectation that open conflict would somehow be averted still prevailed among the Japanese-Americans. The War had begun with a spectacular, hostile act of the Japanese forces against American territory, and the Japanese-Americans were immediately aware of the likelihood that the nature of the War's beginning would have direct consequences for their position in American society during the period of conflict and, perhaps, for long years afterward.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, immediately following the declaration of the existence of the state of War, issued proclamations which made enemy aliens subject to arrest and internment; their travel was immediately restricted and they were prohibited from possessing an extensive list of contraband goods. The Treasury Department promptly acted to freeze the assets and credits of enemy aliens and forced them to close down their enterprises and businesses. Although these war-time proclamations were directed against all enemy aliens, German, Italian, and Japanese, they fell with particular force upon the Japanese immigrants who by law were ineligible to become American citizens. With but extremely few exceptions, then, all persons born in Japan, the Issei, had not been allowed to become citizens and hence with the outbreak of hostilities all members of the Issei population were classified

as "enemy aliens." Their children, the Nisei or second generation, were American citizens by birth and their citizenship remained intact despite the sporadic efforts of various groups at the height of war-time hysteria to wrest their citizenship from them. The anger and hostility that had widely been manifest against people of German ancestry in the United States after its entry into the First World War, again appeared again in exaggerated form this time focused upon the Japanese. The distinction between Japanese enemy aliens and Japanese-American citizens, that is between Issei and Nisei, was often lost not only to people in the communities in which they lived but also to public authorities at various levels of government; this was particularly widespread in California, Washington, and Oregon. This gross indifference to the distinction between citizen and non-citizen or "enemy alien" led to numerous infringements of the constitutional guarantees of a vulnerable segment of America's citizenry.

From the beginning of the War, proclamations were more strenuously applied to the Japanese than to the German or Italian enemy aliens. Arrests for suspected--or anticipated--subversion multiplied in the weeks and months immediately following. The Japanese were more often placed under surveillance, stopped, searched, apprehended, questioned, and interned.

A number of strategic zones were defined and all enemy aliens were excluded. Japanese-Americans were allowed to move to other parts of the country. In the first months of the War, the Justice and War Departments had planned to resettle the Japanese population according to individual preference. Strong public opposition developed in the Rocky Mountain states and the decision was

made to intern the Japanese for the duration of the conflict. No distinction was made in defining policies or carrying them out between the Nisei, who were American citizens, and the Issei who were now regarded as "enemy aliens." Nisei suffered exclusion and internment along with the Issei. One rationale offered was that the Nisei were preponderantly composed of minors and that it would not be feasible to separate them from the parents on whom they were dependent. An atmosphere of hostility to the resident Japanese and suspicion of their loyalty to the United States pervaded the West Coast. The successes of the Japanese army and naval forces in Asia heightened the sense of fear and outrage against Japan and, by extension, against the people of Japanese origin in the United States. The persistence of old-world language, culture, and institutions especially among the immigrant generation persuaded many that the Japanese in America were disloyal and hence potentially dangerous. Where the general population had only limited knowledge of the Japanese in America and were instructed only by impressions, distortions, and rumors the conviction of their disloyalty and danger grew. The activities of groups who saw their economic interests conflict with those of the Japanese-Americans and the recrudescence of anti-Oriental sentiments on the West Coast gave impetus to movements to institute further restrictions on them.

General John L. DeWitt, commander of the Western Defense Command, recommended that the evacuation of enemy aliens be carried out immediately rather than in successive stages. Acting upon this recommendation, President Roosevelt on February 19, issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the Secretary of War directly or through designated military commanders to define military areas "from which

any or all persons may be excluded." The following day the discretionary right was given General DeWitt to proscribe such an area. On March 2, General DeWitt issued Public Proclamation No. 1 defining western Washington, Oredon, and California and southern Arizona as Military Area 1 from which enemy aliens were to be excluded. Area 2 embraced the rest of the four states and a number of specific areas within this territory were disegnated but movement was otherwise not restricted. In a rapid succession of moves, General DeWitt provided for the evacuation of all Japanese from restricted areas; their free movement out of their place of residence to other parts of the United States was no longer permitted. Provisions were made to remove the Japanese from their homes and to house them temporarily in hastily modified quarters in race tracks and fairground structures in various parts of the Pacific coast states, until the completion of Relocation Centers. These Centers were constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers. The mass evacuation of a population including a large proportion of citizens was without precedent and presented grave logistical problems as well as moral and constitutional issues.¹ The evacuation and internment were effected not without protests by individuals and by church and other groups.

The population to be evacuated was large and, although the Japanese in the continental United States were highly concentrated in the Pacific coastal area of the country, they were widely scattered within that region. According to the census of 1940

¹ See Morton Grodzins, Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) and Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson, Prejudice, War and the Constitution: Causes and Consequences of the Evacuation of the Japanese Americans in World War II (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

there were more than 127,000 people of Japanese origin in the continental United States; 113,000 lived in the four western states; some 94,000 lived in California where the greatest concentration lay. A far larger number lived in Hawaii where they represented more than forty per cent of the total population; here, despite the numbers and the proportion as well as the strategic vulnerability of the Islands, the Japanese population was not evacuated or interned. The immigrant generation on the Mainland, the Issei, more than half of whom had arrived before the end of the first decade of the century, were by this time numerically inferior to their American-born children. There were in 1940, 47,000 Issei, half of whom were 50 years old or more; of the 80,000 Nisei, two-thirds were under 20 years of age. Although the Japanese had been introduced to the American economy largely as unskilled labor, they had made substantial progress in farming enterprises over the decades by the applications of the skills in intensive, specialized agriculture which they had learned in farming communities of Hiroshima, Fukuoka, Yamaguchi and other rural prefectures. By 1940 more than half of the Japanese were engaged in non-agricultural occupations. The remaining force of anti-Oriental feeling in the West Coast was still impeding the upward mobility of the Japanese including the second generation. Yet the vanguard of Nisei population now entering into the labor force in significant numbers was intent upon piercing the occupation ceiling that had thus far limited their advance.

By the end of the 1930s, the Nisei were acculturating into American society in ways not radically different from those of other

second generation groups. The Nisei were attending public schools in proportions much like those of the Caucasian population; their attendance at colleges and universities was proportionately almost identical with that of the Caucasian population and exceeding those of most other minorities. There was nevertheless a considerable variation in the progress of acculturation among Japanese-American young people. There were important variations in the extent of their acculturation according to the density of their settlement in the communities of residence, the extent of Japanese community organization, the breadth of educational opportunities, and the dimensions of contact with the general American population. Despite common cultural characteristics there were significant regional, class, occupational and urban-rural differences among the Japanese population of the western states.

The Nisei in most communities lived in a hybrid cultural environment which combined linguistic, cultural, and institutional patterns representing both Japan and the United States. Some Issei parents had sent one or more of their American-born children to live with relatives in Japan where they spent the formative years of their lives before returning to the United States to rejoin their parents and siblings. These Nisei who were given the special appellation Kibei, had lived in a Japan much changed from that in which their Issei parents had been raised. Thus although their Japanese language skills were better than those of the Nisei and although they shared more of the Japanese culture with their parents than did other Nisei, the Kibei were nonetheless set apart from both.

They were not an intermediate category; they were not generally able to act as a bridge across the gap between Issei and Nisei. Their return to their families in America after years of absence often brought difficult adjustment for them and for other members of the family as well. Some Kibei as young adults came more and more to associate with Nisei, others with Issei, but in many instances the Kibei found most ease in association with other Kibei. The Japanese-American population, which the surrounding Caucasians thought of as a homogeneous "they," was in truth characterized by internal contrasts and sharp divisions.

The Army constructed ten Relocation Centers with a capacity of 119,000 which were eventually utilized for the internment of the west coast Japanese. Poston (also known as the Colorado River Project) was the largest with a capacity of 20,000. The next largest was Tule Lake in northern California with a capacity of 16,000. Manzanar in California had a capacity of 10,000; Gila River, Arizona, 15,000; Minidoka, Idaho, 10,000; Heart Mountain, Wyoming, 10,000; Granada, Colorado, 8,000; Topaz, (Utah), Rohwer (Arkansas) and Jerome (Arkansas) each had a capacity of 10,000.

In five months in the summer of 1942, the largest city in the northernmost portion of California emerged out of the wind-swept, dusty terrain lying 7 miles south of the small town of Tulelake near the Oregon border. The fifteen thousand Japanese Americans who were brought to the Tule Lake Relocation Center had been evacuated from communities in central California and western Washington and Oregon; a few were evacuated from their homes and moved directly to the Tule Lake Relocation Center or, as it was also called, Project. Most were placed temporarily in what were called Assembly Centers in the three states. Most of the Tule Lake population came

from rural areas in the three states. Some urban groups, however, arrived from Sacramento, Stockton, Seattle and Tacoma. The composition of the population was generally representative of the population of Japanese ancestry in the west coast.

The first group of evacuees arrived at Tule Lake on May 27, 1942. This pioneer group included 447 volunteers from the Puyallup and Portland Assembly Centers in the northwest. On June 1 and 2, three hundred more arrived directly from evacuated areas in rural Oregon; on June 3 and 4 another group arrived from rural areas in western Washington again directly from their homes. These early arrivals, along with almost five hundred persons from the Clarksburg area in California were assigned quarters in Ward 1 of the barracks community. The tempo of the population movement slowed markedly between June 6 and 15. Small groups, perhaps no more than fifty persons in aggregate, arrived from Tulare, Sacramento, Marysville, Puyallup, and Tanforan Assembly Centers. In the last half of June the ingress was heavy. Each day additional groups were brought to the Center principally from the Assembly Centers in Sacramento and Marysville. By the first of July the population behind Tule Lake's barbed-wire fences had reached 9,038--an increase of approximately seven thousand in two weeks. In the first half of July the tempo of movement was much reduced. Groups evacuated directly from Military Area 2 of northern California, largely from Auburn, Lincoln, and Newcastle and from Chico and Gridley, were brought to Tule Lake. In late July, more than four thousand evacuees arrived from the Pinedale Assembly Center. By the first of August the Relocation Center's boom days came to an end. In a few days over two months more than fifteen thousand persons had been impounded in what had

been an uninhabited portion of a dry lake bed lying of a high mountain plateau. The families entering Tule Lake were assigned quarters by the housing officials of the Relocation Center largely according to time of arrival; row after row of barracks were filled, ward by ward. In early September the maximum population of 15,279 was recorded. Shortly thereafter, a change in policy permitted individuals to leave for non-restricted areas of the country initially to aid in agricultural harvesting.

The commanding general of the Western Defence Command retained the exclusive right to regulate the ingress or egress of any Japanese in the evacuated zone. The War Department on August 11 delegated to the War Relocation Authority, a civilian agency, the responsibility of administering the communities established in the various Relocation Centers. The Japanese American people, interned under the care of the War Relocation Authority, faced the task along with the staff of that agency of making an aggregation of uprooted people into something resembling a community. In the monumental task of achieving social reorganization there were limitations imposed by geographical conditions, the lack of needed physical facilities, military restrictions, policies of the federal government and regulations of the War Relocation Authority. The inexperience of most of the staff members with Japanese or Japanese Americans remained a serious problem for all the personnel except those who by immense good will, dedication and perceptiveness were able largely to overcome the limitations of inexperience. No one was more aware than men like Elmer Shirrell, the first director of Tule Lake, of the frightful dilemmas arising from efforts to reconcile professed democratic principles with the internment behind barbed wire of a minority people most of whom were American citizens. Efforts to

establish a broad base for political expression and activity and a substantial measure of participation in decision making were destined to meet only partial success. The heterogeneity of the Japanese-American population, the regional sub-cultural differences and rivalries, contrasts in class and occupational backgrounds, differences of interest and perspective among urban and rural populations, religious divisions, the gap between generational groups, and the conflict of ideologies all were made more divisive by the heightened emotions engendered by the evacuation. The disorganization, humiliation, economic loss, violation of constitutional rights of Nisei, the separation and isolation of people from friends and family, all produced a bitter resentment and pervasive suspicion that made the task of building a community under the conditions of confinement very difficult. Yet a community with some measure of stability did emerge out of the travail.

Perhaps the institution most like that of communities with which the Japanese-American "colonists" were familiar was the school system; nursery schools were established in various sections of community; elementary schools and a high school were organized. Most of the 4,750 Nisei in Tule Lake from ages 5 to 19 were enrolled in the schools.

On September 12, 1942, as the Japanese-American editors of the Tri-State High School yearbook, the Aquilo, were later to record, 400 seniors and 2,000 other students "answered the call of the imaginary school bells which rang out from the newly organized school at Newell, California." Newell was the post-office address of the Relocation Center.

The superintendents of schools for the Relocation Centers of the Western Region met in San Francisco in the Summer of 1942 to formulate basic educational principles to be used in organizing and conducting schools for Japanese-American children. They adopted the educational philosophy associated with the term, "Community School"; such a school, they affirmed, not only teaches fundamental skills and knowledge of man's historical experience, "but it harnesses these to the present and gives training in the dynamics of social action."¹ To the assembled superintendents this clearly meant a closer and "more creative partnership between students and teachers" than normally existed; it also meant a more intensive and extensive utilization of "environmental resources as power tools to supplement and vitalize the learning that comes through text books, assignments, and recitations."² The Community School, they argued, not only trains the individual but serves community interests more broadly. This suggested an emphasis upon the particular needs of Japanese-American youths not only in terms of their immediate Relocation Center life but also in terms of the later "reabsorption" into general American society. It was agreed, then, that the students were to be given vocational training along with a strenuous presentation of academic subjects and, if possible, assigned work experience that would aid them later in securing productive employment in

¹ San Francisco Regional Office, War Relocation Authority, "The Community School and its Curriculum in Relocation Centers," The Community School Forum, Vol. I, no. 1, November 20, 1942.

² Ibid.

areas where they would later settle. The school superintendents, reminding themselves of war-time obligations, affirmed the responsibility of Relocation Center schools, like schools elsewhere, to help meet the national emergency by training future contributors to the production of needed goods and services.¹

The schools of Tule Lake were directed by Superintendent Kenneth Harkness who was to play an important role in educational reform in Japan in the years immediately following the end of the War. Martin Gunderson was appointed principal of the High School. Both men were vigorous and able people, sensitive to the special problems of the community; they were also aware of the practical problems they had to encounter but were impatient with impediments. Jeanette Smoyer, one of the high school teachers, wrote a humorous skit about the frustrating series of bureaucratic impediments encountered by Mr. Gunderson in getting some simple carpentry done in the school; he resolved the administrative blockages by taking saw and hammer in hand and doing the carpentry himself.

The administrative and teaching staffs were well chosen and carefully oriented. Approximately eighty teachers were chosen. Twenty or so of the high school teachers were young Nisei men and women. In addition there were a number of assistant teachers who received training and direction from Arthur Ramey, Supervisor of Colonist Teachers. The Caucasian teachers included some whose teaching credentials were relatively recently acquired as well as a few teachers nearing retirement age. On the whole, however, they were younger than would have been generally characteristic of schools "on the outside." At least seventeen held Master's degrees;

²Ibid.

several had taught at the college level. At least a few of them had lived and taught in Asia. Many of the teachers had been attracted to the remote and desolate area with the personal and professional hardships associated with it by the nature of the task, most particularly by a genuine caring about the welfare of Japanese-American people. There was a considerable variation in the teaching ability of the members of the high school staff as is true of high schools generally, but a surprisingly large number of particularly talented teachers were drawn to Tule Lake by the need they were convinced existed there. In part, perhaps, because of self-selection of those applying and in part because of the screening done by school officials and their orientation as well as direction, the prevailing climate among high school teachers was one of remarkable dedication and general concern for their students. As the situation was generally defined by the school people, the Nisei school children were in a terrible predicament and the dangers they faced, not physical dangers generally, were grave. Isolation from the general American society and confinement in an almost completely Japanese environment threatened to magnify Japanese linguistic and cultural influences; peer group contacts with assimilated youths at home were completely severed. Teachers dreaded what they believed to be a pervasive potentiality for a reversal of the process of acculturation. Given the definition of the situation faced by their students, the teachers' own professional commitment and sense of challenge, as well as compassion, the need to counter the negative influences and conditions seemed clearly evident. There was also the matter of Nisei "loyalty" under the conditions of the general American antipathy and the impoundment alike of enemy aliens and American citi-