

Planning Ahead by Helen Kusuda

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When we were very young, even before entering a grammar school, a very common question, was asked of us. This question was, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" Most of the girls said nurse, doctor, singer, pianist, artist, etc., of which I was no exception. My answer was, "I am going to be a nurse and help prevent and cure illnesses." I wanted very much to be a nurse, but as fate would have it, I could not stand the sight of blood. What use was a nurse who could not stand the sight of blood? So, my mind was changed. I would never choose nursing as a career.

So, upon entering High School, Junior High, I mean, I took the subject of typing. I thought I would take that subject since I enjoyed seeing others type. Besides, I knew that it would help me greatly even though I decided against typing as a career. With that subject, I had a course in every day business. I completed that subject and typing I, that is half a term of typing and the other half by helping the Counciler's office by typing, and then entered High School. Bookkeeping was to be my major. I enjoyed that subject, yet, upon completing the term, I discovered that I learned very little because I took no special interest in it. I tried to re-enter Bookkeeping I, but because I received a good grade, I was denied my wish. So, Home Economics became my course, with a clothing major. Soon, I discovered that I had no wish of having clothing as a career. My major was then changed to a Cosmetology major. I had ten weeks of personal grooming, but since the school I transferred to had no course as that, I had no major. Then again I transferred. It was the school that had the course, but because I worked as a schoolgirl, I was unable to have an extra period of that subject after school, which was required.

My course, this time, became commercial with a shorthand major. I completed a term of shorthand and part of the next term. The reason I was unable to complete my second term was the war, for I was evacuated before the end of the term. I tried to make it up by studying here in the summer but because I was so unfamiliar with Manzanar and partly because I was too lazy to study in the summer, I was unable to finish that subject. I had planned to finish my third term of shorthand in the city by attending summer school, but as you no doubt realize, I was unable due to the circumstances. I needed to complete four semesters of shorthand in order to graduate with a shorthand major. So in Manzanar High School, my major was put into my records as a commercial course with a clerical major. I had two terms of shorthand and four terms of typing.

Now, I am asked to answer the age-old question of "What are your plans for the future?" Yes, what are my future plans? What is anyone's plans of the future? Especially we in Manzanar? Many of us say, "What can we hope for we have no chance or ever will." I also had that answer in mind whenever anyone asked that question. As I think it over, I believe we do have futures if we try hard enough and have enough confidence in our world. We may not have nearly as many opportunities as others of other nationalities, yet, we have chances if we have the ability to have our career. If we work hard enough towards our goals, we can amount to something and have our careers.

I hope that I have the ability to become a good stenographer. I do not wish to have such a career unless I am positive that I can be a good stenographer.

Upon graduation, I will continue working in the mess hall. Many people embarrass me by saying among themselves that she would never be seen working in a mess hall, because they hate to be looked upon as a servant. Although I did not wish, or do wish, to work in the mess hall, I did so because this is the only way I can earn money now. I would much rather work in a mess hall than be a dependent although I can work.

I hope to find an office job here, as soon as possible. I do not know how to tabulate, thus I am unable to guess the centering of a letter, so I have little chance to find a position as a typist.

Since I do enjoy typing and filing, I will continue my schooling by attending night classes of our Junior College here in Manzanar. The two main subjects I plan to take are typing and shorthand. Then for my personal enjoyment, I will have a period of A Capella although I do have a very poor voice.

Then, if I am able to transcribe and take shorthand dictation well enough, I hope to save enough money to go to college outside of California, because I will be restricted from the coastal states. But before leaving Manzanar, I want to be sure that I do have the ability to become a good stenographer, for if I do not have the ability, it would be a waste of time and effort, also money, on the part of our family.

Will I be able to become a good stenographer? Do I have the personality to get along well with people? Am I worth sending to college? Am I making a grave mistake to have a career in mind? These and many other doubts run through my mind whenever I dream of my future. I am a coward when it comes to the subject of my future.

What will I do if I am unable to follow the career because of lack of ability or money? This is another question asked of millions of people. I will just have to think of my great hopes as a dream—a dream off in the far horizon. My dreams, of course will be shattered, but I hope I shall have the courage to face failure. It will, of course humiliate me greatly, but I may be able to start a career of Cosmetology, my second choice of a career.

If I am able, I hope to save enough money so that I can relocate to another state. I will work in a home part time and attend a school of Cosmetology the rest of the day. In that way I can live on my own income and have my parents' worries lifted. Of course my parents are eager and willing to work harder in order to help me with my plans. But, they have suffered and sacrificed so much already that I hope to

relieve them of that task. They did all that in order to create a happy and well cared for family. They have been successful in that respect although not in the terms of money.

No doubt you are wondering why I did not include marriage in my plans for the future. That is a very simple question to answer. It so happens that I have no place for a marriage in my future plans. Ever since I was very young, my answer to questions of marriage was that I would not marry, but would become an old maid, or else as you would say a spinster. I have no intention to be married. It may seem a bit unusual to see marriage in a plan for the future, but, since you asked for truth, I wrote as truthfully as possible about my plans for my future.