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Spencer, Robert J.

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1577 Vincent Street  
St. Paul, MN 55108

May 4, 1990

Dr. Rosalie Hankey Wax  
7106 Westmoreland  
University City, Missouri  
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Dear Rosalie:

It is curious how the pendulum swings back. I never again thought to become involved with the experiences of the Gila days but I have been drawn into them quite by chance. You and I were the only absentees at the conference organized in Berkeley by Yuji Ichioka some three years ago. I understand that you remained away for health reasons - a matter which I earnestly hope is no longer true. On the other hand, I stayed away for several reasons, not the least being the baleful presence of one Peter Suzuki. If I were litigious - I am not - and if the problem of suits across state lines were not so complicated, I should really have taken action in a case of slander. But let it be; I simply wanted to avoid unpleasantness so I stayed apart. Aside from that, however, the Ichioka conference caught me at a bad time - I was in Washington for a bit and then to Europe from there. Now comes Art Hansen to raise all the Gila memories again.

Art and I have become very good friends and I have followed his reconstructions of Gila history with great interest. He visited here just before the Berkeley meeting, we have carried on an active correspondence since and then, having visited you, he came here for a few days to stay with me. I did write a short paper for Ichioka's VIEWS FROM WITHIN, an uneven collection, true, but with some good papers. Perhaps Art's urgings will get me to write some more on those days of now a half century ago.

You are in the somewhat the same situation vis-a-vis Dor othy Thomas as I. Why didn't DST make more use of my data? Why do you get only a brief mention and minor credit in the JERS trilogy? I worked my tail off at Gila, becoming at times, like you, quite depressed. None of my data was ever reproduced and as I, at Art's urging, review my reports, I find they weren't really too bad. DST, I guess, got carried away by the events of registration and segregation, the result being a work of, in my view, questionable merit. Memories begin to intrude, names and personalities reappear, suddenly, it seems like yesterday that one suffered the dust and the ethos of Gila. Art keeps urging me to write some of my reports up. I guess I could but there is so much I don't know or missed.

In any case, I simply wanted to touch base with you and tell you of my interest revived. Art has located all our reports at the Bancroft Library and painstakingly duplicated them. Your own feelings came out so pointedly in your fieldwork book. I can share them.



I have wondered if you have any information on the whereabouts of various of those associated with JERS. Ichioka found out that Nishimoto, Tsuchiyama, Virginia Galbraith Taucher, and some others are dead. Morton had the hassle with Dorothy over the book he produced. DST called me to ask what recollections I had on the rights of those associated with the project - the last contact I had with her. I remembered nothing, simply assuming that the data we collected would somehow be used. Morton died rather early on, having begun what appears to be a brilliant career. Suzuki takes JERS and Thomas vigorously to task. As Charlie Kikuchi wrote me after the Berkeley meetings, Suzuki got his innards into a uproar. Charlie, too, is lamentably gone. When you were at Gila, did you have any contact with another of the DST assistants, Earle Yusa? I should really like to run him down. As an assistant, he was a bust. For a time I kept in touch with Okuno, teaching language at Michigan, and with the redoubtable Mr. Miura. They are gone, of course.

I recall your telling me that I had a dreadful reputation among the Gila WRA people, what with my participation in sumo and so on. I found this amusing - still do, in fact. But I wish I could find some of these same WRA persons. Frederick, for example, not known to you I think, but many others as well. I wrote the Mormons to try to locate John Landward, learning that he died in 1979. And so it is with others. I wonder if Tuttle, Lieberman, Wolter, Gaba, et al. are still with us.

For my part, I resent getting older. I wish I were still teaching but retirement has its compensations. I hope that you are finding them as well and that your health remains good.

With sincere good wishes,

Cordially,

Robert F. Spencer  
Professor of Anthropology (Emeritus)  
University of Minnesota





Department of Anthropology

May 31, 1990

Robert F. Spencer  
1577 Vincent St.  
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Dear Robert:

Thank you for your heartwarming letter. My health has been quite good, but at age 78 one often prefers to watch a good baseball game, rather than ponder a complex academic problem.

I agree that Peter Suzuki is a truly baleful person. His disgusting accusations against me made me very angry, I'm sorry to hear that he has also been abusing you. But perhaps we can get some comfort from a statement by Albert Einstein: "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

I'm sorry to hear that DST made no use of your data. I remember asking to see your notes, but she refused. I also wrote a very fine paper for Ichioka's VIEW FROM WITHIN, but he did not publish it. But I think I understand why many Japanese Americans want to wipe out or destroy the history of what went on at Tule Lake.

I'm sorry that I cannot help you locate any of the WRA personnel. When I first arrived at Gila I was housed in the staff barracks. But Dr. Thomas instructed me never to talk freely with any staff members. After a few weeks I was moved to the larger camp into the evacuee barracks. This made it even more difficult to become acquainted with staff members. The only people I became really close to were Gordon Brown and his wife. Alas, Gordon died a few years after the camps closed. If I can be of help to you in any other way, please let me know.

With sincere good wishes,

Rosalie H. Wax  
Emerita

RWH:sc

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