

55:16

Interview Notes: KUED-TV (Public Television, Utah) : Topaz interviews

1986-87

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KUED-TV
SIC, Utah 84102



Yoshiko Uchida

1685 Solano Ave., #102

Berkeley, CA. 94707

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Yoshiko -

6/24/87

You may share the program
with your friends and associates.

No restrictions - but no admission
can be charged (even as a fundraiser).

Los Angeles will air the program soon -
but KQED in S.F. is very slow in
responding. My best,
Ken Kedar

GENERAL QUESTIONS: TOPAZ INTERVIEWS

Background

-January, 1942 produced increased demands from some circles for the relocation of Japanese-Americans from the West Coast. Where were you in January of '42? Where were you living? Occupation? Your family?

- Had incarcerated in Dec. Sr. at UC Berkeley.

-Did you notice a dramatic swing in the way you were treated as emotions flamed in the early days of World War Two?

we were identified as enemy - papers full of anti-J. writing -

-What was your reaction to the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan?

Total disbelief - tho I finished went off to school study -

Relocation

-What was your initial reaction when the formal notice came of the intention to relocate all Japanese-Americans from the West Coast?

There were months of rumors before the fact - feeling of tremendous apprehension - could it really happen - got things ready at home

-Were there hardships associated with such a rapid move?

occupied 15 yrs, store & furniture, books, seed corn - seed corn - (not done) - dog.

-How were you treated by the people handling the relocation?

kindly

- It's been noted that there was little overt protest to the relocation order...which stands out when compared to recent times when any infringement on civil liberties can produce active and pointed protest. Why was the order so quietly accepted?

- diff world, diff time

-The vast majority of people relocated to Topaz were first assembled and held at the Tanforan Race Track in the San Francisco Bay Area. Can you recall your initial reaction to Tanforan?

apparently - lack of sanitation, crude, - winter, cold, -

-What was it like settling in to such an assembly point? Any lasting images of arrival, assignment of quarters, what the grounds or conditions were like?

again isolation

-Did you ever have any visitors? Was it a good or bad experience to have "outsiders" come to Tanforan to visit?

on only tangible link to outside world, practically - good -

-Was it a prison environment?

but different to a cell - prison & spirit - bars wire, watch towers, head counts.

-How did you fill your days?

Tanforan School, Rec. Centers, laundry, lines, etc. - made best of bad situation

-Any time people are held in an area in large numbers, rumors are sure to start. Was there a "rumor mill" at Tanforan? Do you recall what some of the wildest rumors might have been?

781 Search.

-The relocation obviously had an impact on everyone, men and women, old and young...Who was affected the most?

- diff way - but I'm hardest of all.

Move to Utah

-When notice came that you were to be relocated to a "permanent" location...namely, Utah...what was your reaction? Were you simply relieved to be moved? Or was the announcement further bad news, since you were to be moved even farther from your home?

*Reporting
with what
anxiety, re
and on*

-The train rides from Tanforan to Utah have been described in very stark terms. What do you recall of that trip? The cars...the passengers. How long did it take? What did you see? How were you treated by the personnel handling the transportation of the Japanese-Americans?

*car seats
were sparsely*

-When you finally arrived in Delta, Utah...how were you greeted? What was the scene like when you and hundreds of others stepped off the train?

TOPAZ

-When you rolled into Topaz for the first time, what did you find?

-Can you recall be "processed" at the camp? *no*

-Faced with the prospect of spending an indefinite amount of time in that rather bleak location, how did you respond?

*July 4
dependency
disputes with
US Army
social work
jobs in our
camp
recreation*

-Consider the climate. What are your memories of the winters in the desert at Topaz? (You probably arrive some time late in the fall of the 1942.) What were the summers like?

-Much of the camp was not finished when the first relocated people began to arrive. What were the conditions like? Housing? Food?

PHI

-Would it be possible to describe camp life at Topaz in one sentence or paragraph?

-If you were asked by someone with no familiarity with the relocation program, "What do you remember most about Topaz?"...how would you respond?

*Don't stress
materialism
but
spiritualism*

-Did you ever have the opportunity to leave the camp (aside from when you finally took leave of the camp)?

-What were the camp workers and administrators like? How did area residents treat the people of Topaz?

*Some good kind thoughtful
of officers, interactive, unobtrusive*

- Did you ever ask...why am I here? Did you ever get a response from administrators or relocation officials?
- (If you were in school at Topaz)...Was the education provided at Topaz adequate for your needs?
- Did the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem take on any different meaning when you were in Topaz?
- Do you remember the shooting of the Topaz resident in April of 1943? (James Wakasa) What explanation was offered to the other residents of the camp? Did the shooting prompt a reaction from the camp residents? How did you react? *answer*
- How did the military guards at Topaz treat the camp residents? We have information indicating that shots were fired at camp residents in almost a dozen instances...as warnings. Was it an intimidating situation? *don't recall*
- The "loyalty questions" prompted a great deal of discussion and, in some cases, consternation in the relocation camps. Do you recall the reaction to "Questions 27 and 28"? How did you react to loyalty being called into question?
- Did you see people's attitudes change? For example, people refusing to proclaim loyalty after the U.S. Government had stripped the Japanese-Americans of their rights. Did you ever wonder about your own loyalty after the events surrounding relocation had taken place?
- Nearly two dozen Topaz residents were transferred to a higher security camp elsewhere in Utah when they were identified as "troublemakers". Do you recall "troublemakers" in Topaz? What did they do to cause trouble?
- Several legal cases were brought during the war, including one by Mitsuye Endo in Topaz, challenging the legality of holding the Japanese-Americans. Any recollections of camp reactions to such legal efforts?
- Almost 2,000 Topaz residents ultimately decided to leave the United States and return to Japan. They were first transferred to Tule Lake, then shipped to Japan...some during the war. Do you recall anybody making that decision? Do you recall the reasons for their leaving the United States? Could (can you) understand their decision to leave?
- Many young men at Topaz entered the military service during the war. Some have said that such service was complete proof of their loyalty to the United States. (If you yourself did not serve) Did you have friends or relations serve?

mid
11/24

Rec'd
11/26/86



PUBLIC TELEVISION

101 Gardner Hall
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112-1107
(801) 581-7777

November 19, 1986

Dear Mrs. Uchida:

KUED-TV, the Public Broadcasting affiliate in Salt Lake City, is undertaking an ambitious broadcast project which could greatly benefit from your participation. Our goal is to produce an hour-long documentary tracing the existence of the Central Utah War Relocation Center, better known as Topaz.

Having completed four months of preliminary research on our project, including acquisition of hundreds of archival photographs and thousands of feet of film, we are now in the process of contacting dozens of people who were a part of Topaz during World War II. Relocated internees, camp workers, and government officials throughout the nation are being contacted for possible interviews as part of this project.

Such a process necessitates that we cover the parameters of the project in this form letter.

Those of you receiving this letter have been recommended by various sources. The second sheet of this communication will detail our specific reasons for contacting each individual, and hopefully will clarify the very important contribution you could make to our efforts.

The documentary will be in production from December, 1986 through February, 1987. Our tentative air date is for March of 1987, timed to coincide with the 45th anniversary of the commencement of the relocation process during World War II.

We are aware that some of you receiving this letter may be wary of participating in an interview that could touch on extremely sensitive, painful moments from many years ago. If that should preclude your involvement, we, of course, will understand. If, on the other hand, you can see the merit in making a contribution to a project that seeks to provide a durable record of the Topaz experience, we look forward to meeting you.

With best regards,

Ken Verdoia
Senior Producer

Dear Mrs. Uchida:

Your moving book, Desert Exile, was a critical factor in my decision to undertake this project to document the Topaz relocation center. You write with an eloquence and sense of humanity that is truly remarkable. I would greatly prize an opportunity to speak with you about your recollections and observations of the relocation process, and life in the Topaz camp.

I might add that one of your greatest admirers, Dr. Edna Mitchell of the Mills College Dept. of Education, is an acquaintance from my time working with Congressman Tom Lantos in Washington. She has recently completed Desert Exile, and was as moved as I was with the work.

I hope you can spare a few hours for myself and a camera crew when we work in the Bay Area in January. In addition to the interview, perhaps we might record you reading a few selected passages (of your choice) from Desert Exile. Naturally, our scheduling will be based on convenience to you.

My associate, Colleen Casto, will contact you in the next few days to discuss our request. Thank you for your consideration.

Ken Verdoia
Senior Producer

*Have a few problems I make me hesitate
(Belin) ... doctor didn't last yr 1/2 -
Name was in 5 spots but as. different names
so I'm neurotized up - memory -
Ben Syndrome*

*also I feel I'm comfortable
- Emma. I'm not
a foreigner -
not exposed -
- if I do all that - in how 7 & happy?
- I like it v. reading
- 98 like to v. 75 I had,
- 50 for 500 - 1100
- How many?*

How many?

Rec'd 1/6/87



PUBLIC TELEVISION

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University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112-1107
(801) 581-7777

December 29, 1986

Ms. Yoshiko Uchida
1685 Solano Ave. #102
Berkeley, California 94707

Dear Ms. Uchida:

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in our project on Topaz. My associate, Colleen Casto, has discussed with me your very reasonable requests for additional information. I hope this letter and the enclosed material will help clarify our interest in speaking with you.

First, let me emphasize the importance of your health to those of us at KUED. Rest assured that we are most interested in meeting with you at a time and place that will be of greatest convenience and comfort to you. Don't hesitate to let us know if we are requesting too much time, or are being too taxing.

Second, I am enclosing a list of the general questions we are posing to each of the former Topaz residents we are interviewing. As you will note, some questions may not be particularly relevant to your experiences, while other questions only touch the surface of your involvement. Each interview will be tailored to the individual.

In addition to those questions listed, we would like to discuss with you your involvement in educating and caring for the children in Tanforan and Topaz. The relocation process must have been somewhat convulsive for young minds, and your recollections will add greatly to the character of our program. Also, I am excited about discussing the observations contained in Desert Exile.

Colleen Casto will contact you once again as we near the time for our trip to California. In the interim, if you have any further questions that I can answer, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best regards,

Ken Verdoia
Senior Producer

The Quality Inn - SF
(415) 928-5000
Rm 712

Dec 7 - (7131) - told Dad - & all family & elders
JA Comin'g - decriminalizing JA communities. Reviews
for 1/25/87
Interview

2 police - M+D "enemy aliens"
no word of Dad 1st day - Jimmy Deaton Court
sent to Montz. POW Camp

2nd
beardment

He had taken care of all bus. matters - we had to learn to do -
Bank of ^{blocked} frozen - Long arrears for.
Key to S-D Box taken, all important documents.
What to do about filing tax returns

- friend - Bruce - parents died to death
terrorism - record copies -
restaurant street.

- Calif had complex, anti-Asian security
laws restricting mining & land ownership
Racist & pressure sps - whose own econ
self-int & derived, by removal of
intense campaign - validation of JA

Inflammatory statements press & radio
JA's calls Japs - Cubes to Whitelands - Apr.
unfounded rumors.

- 5 mile travel limit +
8:00pm curfew
Registration of "enemy aliens"

Customs case - hand - it's / as Am colony?

- April 21. we were ordered to leave.
felt numb, seeking - shock.
Registered - sit family #
10 day police

Reiter's caused
at cavalier manner -
civil rights were
approved, but no were
brought up to respect & trust
your authority

- Sold to his only & we I carry'
Objects 15 yrs of J's life
Sold work indiscriminately.

frank

Red P
677

- army guards - bargains

Create stalls, broken, dirt, dirt. white bulb
 smell & manure, insects white walls / floor
 windy, cold, — lenses, mud,
 crowds - no privacy - hear every thump other side
 no place to hide.
 army
 melt latrines - toilets - no doors.
 slum - no ...
 trash) waste, feces. feet degraded
humiliated
verminous & disgusting home
 laundry - up at 3:00) Wt water
 wash sheets every by hand.

Read
 p 70-371

I taught, cleaning school - no training earned \$/lb. no. clothes) being sick.

hospital, delivery, schools, Rec. Centers
 city to credit - that they didn't set a board -
 They ^{couldn't} actually have to help themselves to organize
 Comm'y - give structure & day furniture = scrap
 self. go. & . household items lumber
 Roll Call - head count.

Rumors - move to Utah Idaho.
 Army ~~inspector~~ inspection) contraband -
 5 mos Jants

- on Sept 1942 → to Utah
 all baggage checked) contraband

- old trains mt. storage, gas fixtures & lights
hard straight back benches.
- From window → saw every. we'd mind
houses, gardens, stores, cars, ~~Stuffed~~ etc
dogs, white chickens 2 Bay Buda -
realized - isolation 2 life -
- shades down seemed to survive.
- cars were filthy, many 1st train ride. E. Side
no sleep, heat on
- heat day - Nevada desert - allowed to eat out
for 1/2 hr., under surveillance
- could leave - own cars - walk some/day.

2nd into - passed salt Lake - permitted to
 raise shades - sight of lake
 fixed ^{peaceful} ~~aching~~ bodies - was healing + comforting

White staff - lived in special block near C. Bldg - They had a whole half-barrack, not a room, ^{with} furniture - ~~household help~~ \$6/mo incident
Internee help for \$6/mo

- went out 1 Delta 1 day - went 2-30 grade
refused to see which ch
ate del. lunch at Southern hotel
Had ice cream soda.

- tremendous toxic - cheers us briefly
but put me in our laziness for a perm. set to freedom
- Don't recall hostility - rather neutral - spec. ~~food~~
whom we had contact & pleasant, for ex teacher.

There was always a white person & us.

Bright moments: ~~the~~ Thanksgiving Dinner

connected to the sense of community that we dev'd - 7 ex at a Thanksgiving Dinner & entire block sat down ate food, no lines, we entertained each other, sang - Caring, love affection & children & toys. manifestation?

Read P 142?

men - ~~dev'd~~ suppressed dev'd as rep of habits disturb
~~the~~ heavens - gave us space

to emp. strength & courage & love
they kept us 2 being better -

School - gave them some sense of purpose
structure, reliable - in a world of uncertainty & turmoil

They are resilient, adaptable,
adjusted quickly to ~~the~~ new life.

Crutch

1 school - made barracks till 1st snow
Then Bldgs & winterized

Oct-Nov.
Reopened in Dec - no more curtains
had outwies, had better pictures of people & met
Brenevor & nos trees
Open the 2 parents

January 27, 1987

Mr. Ken Verdoia
KUED
101 Gardner Hall
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112-1107

Dear Ken:

It was a pleasure meeting and working with you and your crew, and I appreciated your thoughtful understanding of my low energy problems.

It occurred to me afterwards that we might need permission from the University of Washington Press to use the excerpts from DESERT EXILE, but they have informed me that no permission is necessary as long as you credit the book, which I trust you will do.

I also remembered a former Topaz staff person who taught teacher training classes, and thought you might want to interview her, if you haven't already discovered her. She is Wanda Robertson, and lives right in SLC at 4115 Diana Way. (277-3265). She was a warm, friendly person from whom I learned a great deal. In fact, I visited her briefly when I was in SCC 4 years ago, so she probably remembers me. I don't know why I didn't think of her when you were here!

I hope all is going well with the documentary and that your subsequent interviews were successful. Greetings to Colleen and the others.

¶

All the best,

'Topaz' Available on Video

SANTA FE, N.M. — "Topaz," a documentary about the U.S. internment camp which held Japanese Americans and legal resident aliens during WW2, is now available for preview, rental or purchase on videotape. The video, running 58 minutes, comes in both 3/4" tape and VHS formats.

Utilizing carefully chosen historical photographs and film footage, including clandestine footage shot by a prisoner, the documentary features contemporary interviews with

former prisoners. Interviews with Edward J. Enis, a member of the Justice Department during WW2; Mine Okubo, a New York artist and former prisoner; and Yoshiko Uchida, author of *Desert Exile* highlight the educational documentary.

The video can be purchased for \$135, rented for \$55 or previewed upon request. Orders should be directed to: Onewest Media, P.O. Box 5766, Santa Fe, NM 87502-5766. For more information, call (505) 983-8685.

PC 2/88

88/5/8

for Redress Efforts

By Laurie Mochidome

LOS ANGELES — According to the two California congressmen, passage of the Japanese American redress bill through the U.S. House of Representatives could hardly have taken place without the help of the Jewish congressman from Massachusetts.

Sharing this observation, some 200 joined Reps. Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui (both D-Calif.) in honoring Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) at a reception, held Jan. 30, at the Yamato Restaurant.

Frank, who chairs the House Judi-



THANKING FRANK—Rep. Barney Frank is being honored by the Southern California Friends for the passage of H.R. 442 in the House. The r

PRESS RELEASE

PUBLIC TELEVISION

101 Gardner Hall
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 (801) 581-6163

RELEASE AT WILL
 April 4, 1987

TOPAZ DOCUMENTS INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE IN AMERICA DURING WORLD WAR II

During World War II 120,000 American residents were sent to concentration camps--not in Europe, Asia, or some other distant place, but here in the United States. Over 8,000 of these men, women, and children were interned in Utah. Their crime was their ancestry; their penalty was their loss of freedom.

They were ethnic Japanese (more than 60% were native-born American citizens) who became victims of the wartime fears of their fellow Americans.

On Wednesday, May 6th at 8:00 p.m. (and again on Saturday, May 9 at 6:00 p.m.), KUED 7 presents TOPAZ, the story of the thousands of San Francisco Bay Area Japanese who were separated from their property, livelihoods, and constitutional rights, removed from their homes, and shipped to a windswept stretch of Utah's roughest rangeland. There, for more than three years, these men, women, and children were forced to call row after row of tarpaper barracks "home." This was Topaz, a War Relocation camp near Delta, Utah, which overnight became the fifth largest

-more-

city in the state.

The internees, surrounded by barbed wire and armed sentries, were never formally charged with a crime, and were never granted a trial. They were simply uprooted from their homes and shipped off in blacked-out trains. It was feared that, though most were American citizens, they would none-the-less be more likely to serve the Emperor of Japan than the cause of freedom in the United States. No evidence was ever presented to sustain the rumors of pending sabotage or disloyalty, but "military necessity" became the foundation for one of the darkest wholesale actions against an ethnic minority in American history. German and Italian Americans faced no similar wartime sanctions.

TOPAZ examines Utah's unique role in the relocation program, and explores the atmosphere in Utah during this period. Through archival film and photographs, many never broadcast before, and through interviews with surviving internees and Utah camp workers, the years of imprisonment are brought to life from Utah's perspective.

TOPAZ also provides deeply personal insights into the ironies of War Relocation: the struggle of camp residents to find normality in their lives in the desert; what it meant to pledge allegiance to the flag of a country that considered you a subversive because of your ancestors; the pain of citizens trying to understand a democracy that apparently didn't apply to them; the loss suffered by parents whose sons died in Nisei battalions

-more-

(American military units made up of Japanese American soldiers), while the parents remained housed behind barbed wire. TOPAZ also examines the individual case of an elderly man gunned down at Topaz while trying to escape from a facility the government refused to identify as a prison.

From the outbreak of the war to the eventual closing of the camp, TOPAZ provides insight into what some observers consider one of the worst American transgressions against constitutionally guaranteed rights in our nation's history. On the 45th anniversary of the opening of the camp, and the 200th anniversary of the Constitution, TOPAZ examines the fragile balance that can exist between "rights" and "national security."

TOPAZ was produced and directed by KUED 7 Senior Producer Ken Verdoia. Verdoia's achievements in documentary production include the American Film Festival's 1985 Blue Ribbon Award; the 1986 PMN Program Award of Excellence; and the 1986 National Iris Award for outstanding Public Affairs documentary. Associate producer is Colleen Casto, and the videographer is Carl Seibert.

-30-

PRESS CONTACT:

Susan Koles
KUED 7 Public Information
1471 Federal Way
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

(801) 581-3263

PUBLIC TELEVISION

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April 7, 1987

Yoshiko —

Greetings!

After 12 months of research and videotaping, and an appropriate amount of time editing and making painful decisions about what to include and exclude, KUED-TV has completed its documentary on War Relocation in Utah.

TOPAZ will debut in Salt Lake City on May 6th. We anticipate a fall distribution date through the Public Broadcasting System to reach the rest of the nation.

I'm including our press release, announcing the airing of the program.

The months of archival research and interviewing produced enough material to fill two full hour-long programs. That, however, was beyond our ability to orchestrate. The resulting one hour documentary is a far-reaching overview of relocation and the personal experiences of the men and women who came together in the rangeland of Western Utah.

Of the 32 interviews completed for the program, we were able to include parts of 31...an achievement in itself.

Since there are so many important people to be kept advised of the program's progress, I am using this generic letter. Hopefully it can reflect the uniform appreciation and respect I have for each of you who brought your own individual light to our efforts. Topaz will survive as one of history's lessons because of you.

If you have any questions or requests, please give myself or Colleen Casto a call. We would love to hear from you again.

With best regards,

Ken

Ken Verdoia
 Senior Producer

Your thoughtful comments have emerged as an important vein throughout the program —

May 14, 1987

Bear Ken:

Congratulations on the completion of TOPAZ! I trust it was well received in its debut, and I wish you much success with it.

I'll look forward to receiving a copy of the tape which you said would be a possibility. It will only be viewed privately on a friend's VCR.

All best,

June 22, 1987

Ken Verdoia
KUED
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Ken:

My very belated thanks for the Topaz tape which I was able to view only two days ago due to continuing health problems.

My two friends and I all thought you did a wonderful job, and we learned some new facts not known before, such as the shocking SLC JACL letter, the Moab Center, and the full story of the Wakasa shooting.

We were ^{most} impressed with the extensive research evident in your presentation and the excellent historic photos and film footage which balanced the contemporary interviews.

I think your tape would be a fine tool for school use. Also, my friend wants to borrow it for her grown sons, to enhance their understanding of the event.

I want to clear with you first, however, as I presume you would not want your audience diluted before it is shown nationally or at least in Calif. Once it is out of my hands, copies might be made, although I could warn against that. Please let me know on the enclosed p.c. whether it can be loaned for wider viewing, or whether you'd prefer that I just hold it for now.

I was a bit horrified at how awful I looked! Now you know why I don't like to appear on TV! But you looked and sounded great. And my congratulations, again, for the excellent production. You've made a most valuable contribution to the education of many. Thank you for allowing me to have a copy.

All the best,

PUBLIC TELEVISION

101 Gardner Hall
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May 26, 1987

Ms. Yoshiko Uchida
 1685 Solano Avenue #102
 Berkeley, California 94707

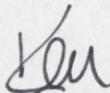
Dear Yoshiko:

Thank you for your note. My apologies for the delay in providing the tape of our program, as promised.

Response to the program has been extraordinarily strong since its airing on May 6th. Some Japanese-Americans have expressed disappointment that the program was not more aggressive in its advocacy. Some caucasians have been critical that the program undermines the purpose of the U.S. war effort, and shows an unacceptable sympathy to "our enemy". But, most importantly, those many men, women, and children who did not even know of War Relocation have been effusive in their praise for the program and the people who participated.

I would greatly appreciate your comments and criticisms. And, again, I offer my most sincere thanks for your support and cooperation in the production of the program.

Best regards,



Ken Verdoia
 Senior Producer

KLV:wp