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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Japanese Relocation Papers  
Bancroft Library

Tule Lake Center  
Newell, Cal.  
March 22, 1946

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AIR MAIL

Dillon S. Myer, Director  
War Relocation Authority  
Barr Building  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Myer,

Enclosed is my story of Joe Kurihara as requested by you and Mr. Tozier. The letters which I previously mentioned as a part of my knowledge of Kurihara are incorporated in the body of this story.

Also enclosed is a companion story by W. E. Dimon on his knowledge of parts of the life of Lt. Moe Yone-mura, a Japanese-American, who took a course opposite to that of Kurihara and died in Italy while fighting for the United States.

Mr. Glick is familiar with the contents of both of these stories, he having read them during his visit here of Wednesday and Thursday.

Sincerely,

R. R. Best  
Project Director



JOE KURIHARA, "REPATRIATE"

His Story As Told To

R. R. BEST, PROJECT DIRECTOR  
Tule Lake Center  
Newell, California

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Joe Kurihara, American of Japanese ancestry, United States Army veteran of World War I, long-time member of the American Legion, has "repatriated" to the land of his forebears to be a Japanese.

Joe never has been in Japan before. He was born in Hawaii. He came to the mainland as a young man in time to offer his services to the country of his birth in 1916. He was accepted and served honorably for 26 months.

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Joe, then a fishing fleet navigator, resigned and again offered himself in any capacity to aid the war effort of his native land, America. He was rejected and evacuated from the West Coast by order of the same Army of which he was an honorably discharged veteran.

So Joe Kurihara has become a Japanese.

What can go on in the heart and mind of a man under these circumstances is depicted in the story of Joe Kurihara as he told it to me, first while I was director of the isolation center at Moab, Utah, while I was director of a similar center at Leupp, Arizona, and lastly while I was director of the Tule Lake Center at Newell, California.

First Joe's own story in his own words, as related to me in numerous conversations:

"I was born Joseph Yoshisuke Kurihara at Hanamaulu, Kapai, Territory of Hawaii, January 1, 1895. All of my family, with the exception of my aged mother, remained and still reside in Hawaii. My mother returned many, many years ago to her native Japan, and I now presume her to be dead.

"I moved from Hawaii to the U. S. mainland as a young man. There was no reason for this move I am sure, other than the same reason that causes so many young men to seek new places and new adventures. In 1916, at the age of twenty-one, I enlisted in the United States Army. A year later war against Germany was declared and for 26 months I served as an enlisted man in the Army Medical Corps, in England, France and Germany.

"Following my return to the States and my honorable discharge from the service, I decided that I would continue an education that my enlistment in the army had interrupted. I enrolled at the University of California, and at the same time I joined the newly formed American Legion, an organization that I remained an active member of right up to the time of the present war, January of 1942.

"At the University I majored in the electrical sciences and was graduated an Electrical Engineer. There followed many attempts on my part to establish myself successfully in the profession of my degree. These attempts were all more or less failures, at least by my standards, and as to whether the fault was mine or another's makes very little difference now. They were failures, and so I decided to return to the University and take up some other course that might better enable me to make what I would consider a good living.

"I did return, and in due course mastered Radio Engineering and Navigation. This knowledge, by natural steps, led me to the job which I was holding at the outbreak of this war, that of Mate and Navigator on a ship of the Portuguese Fishing Fleet operating off of the Pacific Coast and out of Terminal Island, California.

"Immediately following the declaration of war on Japan, December 7, 1941, I resigned my navigation post at the company's offices in Los Angeles, California. I did not know at the time that, resignation or not, I would have been removed from my job by the Government.

"My sole reason for resigning was very clear and important to me at the time. I knew what I wanted to do and that was to again help my government in any way that my services could be utilized to aid the war effort. And, remember, these were services that had proven themselves honorable ones in a previous

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war. At least "honorable" is what the government called them at that time.

"I thought that my qualifications might stand me in good stead as a navigator for planes and their pilots ferrying cargoes across the Atlantic to England and Russia. At that early date I had had no indication, as yet, that my Japanese features and Japanese ancestry were going to work hard against every enlistment effort I was to make. I was still thinking, naturally, in terms of an American and as an American.

"I first went to the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation in Los Angeles to present my idea and to present my qualifications. I was told to "come back and see us later", and there followed many days of going back and seeing them, and there was much stalling and still I had not even been able to get myself granted an initial interview.

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"I did not know at the time--I learned all of this later--but everyone of those days, and 24 hours of each one of those days I was being tailed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I was being tailed not because they wanted me, but because I was Japanese and being Japanese "he" must be disloyal. Had they wanted me, or had they anything against me, or had they uncovered anything against me they would have picked me up and I would have been in internment immediately.

"As I have said, I knew nothing of all of this and so kept returning to the offices of the Consolidated. Finally I was granted the initial interview, and that interview gave me my first hint that my facial features and ancestry were all against me. It gave me my first hint that discrimination was going to far out-balance my own proven, honorable record in this country; and I should say my country. In spite, however, of the trend of this interview, I was told to come back again in a week or so, and in spite of the trend of that interview I did go back in a week or so. That one, however, was my last interview with Consolidated. They told me in no uncertain terms that my chances of being connected, even remotely, with their's or any other of the war efforts were very slim.

"In spite of all of this I still felt that I should and must keep on trying, and so I went to the Los Angeles Shipyards and offered my services as a laborer. I didn't know a thing

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about shipbuilding, but in those days that wasn't so necessary. They needed manpower, and if I was accepted I would still be doing some little thing constructive. The swollen war wages weren't attracting me to this government work, because, as you know, even now I am counted fairly well off. The result of this shipyard interview, however, was even worse and more discouraging than were the interviews at Consolidated. They told me bluntly that they didn't want me and further, they didn't want anyone of Japanese ancestry. I felt like saying--and maybe I did, I don't remember--"But I am not a Japanese. I am an American and an American citizen and I'm a veteran of 26 months overseas duty in the last war". It was no use, however, and they further told me that it would be no use for me to return.

"It was an awful feeling, this first realization that my own government did not even consider me an American. It considered me a Japanese and, further a Japanese ready and willing to sell it out. I knew, too, by this time, that I had been and still was being watched, every hour of every day by the Bureau of Investigation--the "police" of the only government I ever had, or served or claimed. You must remember, I have never been to Japan in my life. I barely speak the language at all, only as I remember it from early childhood.

"I just didn't know what to do. I still wanted to be the only thing that I was and am--an American--but it certainly was being made hard for me.

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"I decided that I would leave Los Angeles and go up to Berkeley and enlist some of my former professors and teachers in my cause--have them testify to those who were demanding the testimony: "This man's an American and a citizen with an honorable record to his credit. He's no Japanese and, certainly, not one of our enemies".

"You just can't imagine my astonishment and utter dismay when I went to the railroad ticket office and found that they could not sell a ticket to anyone of Japanese ancestry to leave Los Angeles! That was the final effort. I went back to my room and stayed there and seldom went out on the streets again. I didn't want to face the people, and I didn't want to face the feeling that everywhere I went there would be a government agent following after me. Me!--who had offered his life once to this country so that these same agents might have a chance to keep on

living in a democracy, and a chance to suspect and track me down in that democracy 25 years later.

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"Time passed rapidly and the Japanese evacuation order came. All people of Japanese ancestry, whether citizens of this country or not, were to be removed from their homes and interned. Shortly after that I learned that the Wartime Civil Control Administration, the agency that was to handle the initial internment, wanted a group of volunteers to go to one of the camps, the one to be located at Manzanar, California, and prepare that camp for the main body of the evacuees who would follow later. I was one of the first to volunteer for this work and, also, one of the first to arrive on the grounds at Manzanar. In spite, it seemed, of my experiences in Los Angeles, I was still optimistic enough to think and believe that, soon, the citizens amongst us would be given some kind of consideration, and not just herded about like prisoners of war.

"Unfortunately, from the very beginning, conditions were not good at Manzanar. It no doubt was partly the fault of the evacuees and partly the fault of the Administration. The Administration had had no experience with such a group of people and such a situation before, and certainly the evacuees had never been in such a situation before.

"One of the first grievances was that as late as the middle of June--and remember we arrived at Manzanar in early March--not a single one of the workers had received a penny for his work. At first, rumor had led us to believe that we were to receive a union scale of pay. This, naturally, proved completely wrong. Then a second rumor insisted that we were to receive \$50.00 a month and keep. Then, finally, about May 15 of 1942, we were officially advised as to the actual W.R.A. wage scale, but there was still no money, just the advice. It was not until the latter part of June that Director Roy Nash gave us our first pay. Each employee received five dollars and the further advice that the "payrolls are being worked on and will be retroactive to the date of first employment".

"It was about this time that the Kibei, who had been trying to organize themselves since they first arrived at the center, began to exert their pressure on the other colonists as well as

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on the Administration. They used as an excuse for their activities their supposed grievances over lack of wages, and such other matters as lack of promised schools for the children, poorly balanced food and administrative conditions in general.

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"Along in August they began to direct their complaints chiefly against Director Nash, Assistant Director Ned Campbell and the Project Steward, whose name I have forgotten.

"It was very evident during those months that things were boiling themselves up to some kind of a blow-off. I found myself right in the middle of the whole agitation. Because of my record as an American and known sympathies toward America, the Nisei looked to me as their leader and even the Administration considered me a sort of liaison between it and the colonists. At the same time the Kibei were forced to respect my position of leadership within the colony. On every occasion and at each opportunity I had advised the Kibei "hotheads" to keep their feet on the ground and to avoid any acts of violence, because I knew nothing would ever be gained by such actions.

"Finally, the steam of the pressures broke bounds and the now famous or infamous Manzanar Riot occurred. That was December 7 of 1942. I wouldn't doubt that the Kibei had timed the disturbance to coincide with the anniversary of the beginning of the war. Because of my position of leadership I was thrown right in the van of the whole thing.

"Mr. Nash in the meantime had been relieved of his job as Director and Ralph Merritt had succeeded him. Mr. Merritt had been on the scene only six days when the disturbance broke. In front of the whole crowd of rioters I told Mr. Merritt that this thing could be settled peacefully by negotiation if he would only grant the people that right. He told me to tell the "mob" to go on home and not come back that evening as they had intended to do. In my very poor Hawaiian-Japanese I told them just that. Either the people misunderstood my clumsy wording or they intentionally ignored it--I am still not just sure which--but they returned again that evening.

"I was visiting with some friends in Block 22, as I remember it, when a messenger came running to me with the information that

a riot was going on down at the jail. I hustled down that way as fast as I could with the idea of intervening and stopping whatever was going on, but I arrived too late. The crowd was too agitated to listen to any reasoning.

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"I am very sure now, considering all that has happened to me since that day, that Mr. Merritt thought that I had double-crossed him and was one of the advisors of the riot. He had been there such a short time that he had had no opportunity to come to know me very personally. What he knew of me had been told to him by others. I know he thought I had double-crossed him, because immediately after the riot had been put under control, Mr. Merritt had me thrown in jail and after a month in that jail, transferred to Moab, Utah, where an isolation center had been set up to take care of the "trouble makers" from Manzanar and subsequently from the other centers."

That is Joe Kurihara's story as it was related to me personally at Moab and Leupp and Tule Lake, but there is documentary evidence which throws even greater light on Joe's emotional reactions and thinking which somewhere along his isolation route led him to the decision to go to Japan and work for the cause of democracy there.

There is evidence that he made up his mind in Manzanar that he would be Japanese, when full realization came to him that he could not exercise his American citizenship.

At Manzanar on August 8, 1942, a meeting was held at which protests were made regarding hospital, school, food, wages, housing and self-government conditions. At that meeting, as recorded in writing next morning from memory by a fellow evacuee, Joe Kurihara is reported to have said:

"I was born in Hawaii. I have never been in Japan, but in my veins flows a Japanese blood, a blood of Yamato damashii. We citizens have been denied our citizenship rights; we have no U.S. citizenship; we are 100 per cent Japanese."

That was Joe's initial reaction; the evidence shows that his final feelings--although he was a determined man and one not given lightly to change of mind--were considerably different.

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The events which led to his segregation status at Tule Lake Center must be borne in mind: His first attempts to aid the war effort. His willingness to go first to Manzanar to aid the Administration in setting up that center. His leadership which led him straight into a month's jail sentence at Manzanar and nearly a year's internment at Moab and Leupp before his transfer to segregation at Tule Lake.

Top all these things off with the fact that immediately upon his arrival at Tule Lake, the Army, which was in complete authority at that time, incarcerated Joe and all others arriving with him from Leupp in a stockade which it had erected on the Tule Lake Center grounds, this action placing the final stamp of "bad man" on Joe.

Examples of Joe's latter-day thinking at Leupp are presented in two letters written shortly after my own transfer from Leupp to Tule Lake:

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Leupp Relocation Center  
Leupp, Arizona  
August 29, 1943

Project Director  
R. Best  
Tule Lake, California

My dear Mr. Best:

Ever since your promotion, I have been wondering as to whether I should write or not. After meditating over it at leisure, I decided to say, "Hello, Mr. Best, how are you this morning?"

Personally I am praying for your success. There is absolutely no doubt about the laurels you will be accumulating without my spiritual help, since you have already proven through the manner in which you have handled the affairs here. Your splendid humanitarian disposition has radiated so magnificently out of that lonely canyon at Moab, and over the endless expanse of this Arizona desert, has justly brought you the promotion you deserve.

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Mr. Myer may be thousands of miles away, but he no doubt must have felt the warmth even at Washington. This no doubt must have prompted Mr. Myer not only to insist but literally commanded you to your present position. Oh! what an honor, an honor which comes but once in a lifetime. Mr. Best, I sincerely rejoice with you, and pray that your success continue to bloom with the splendor and glory unbound.

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Mr. Robertson (Paul Robertson, later to become an Assistant Project Director at Tule Lake) has gone to Washington in behalf of the boys many of whom are unjustly incarcerated here. I do not know to what degree he will succeed, but I am hoping that he does to the extent of liberating those with families.

Miraculously we have been very fortunate to have such men as you and Mr. Robertson to watch, guide, and protect us in the hour of our need. Your actions and his actions, both unquestionably noble have eased the bitter feelings we have been nursing for months. Had your kinds been placed in charge of the Centers at the outset, I am sure this country would have benefited immeasurably.

It is never too late to start. The W.R.A. must have realized the mistake it has made. The sooner it starts to correct the error and replace those mean to the Japanese and detrimental to the welfare of the Nation, better will be the final result.

I am watching to see how soon Mr. Myer will exercise his authority in ousting the domineering officials and replace them with men like you.

We are getting along nicely and wish to thank you most sincerely for the kindness shown us, especially during the trying period in the canyons of Utah. Undoubtedly it must have been very very annoying and discouraging to you also at times, requiring super-human courage and patience to soothe and guide such fanatics as you have seen. It takes one with abundance of stinging experience to understand, caress, and father those harboring bitter resentments against the country.

Your ministration was beyond reproach.

In conclusion, may God continue to give you the strength and help you in your great humanitarian service, meriting it with greater success and happiness to you and to your beloved family.

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Sincerely yours,

/s/ J. Y. Kurihara  
Leupp, Arizona

Leupp, Arizona  
Friday, October 22, 1943

Project Director  
R. R. Best  
Tule Lake Relocation Center  
California

My dear Mr. Best:

The day is fast approaching when many of us again will be under your tender care. Mr. Robertson has really performed a miracle. Although I know I am not included amongst those fortunate individuals, I sincerely rejoice with them and with their beloved ones.

After all there appears a silver lining among the dark cloud that was hovering over us so long. You, Mr. Best, who steered us through the toughest transitional period at Moab must be credited with the softening of the bitter feelings in us, thereby opening the way for the release of so many through the timely efforts of Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Robertson's success has made the boys very happy. This further tends to ease the emotions of the boys to such an extent that I myself feel very much relieved.

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Down in my heart I wanted to make a certain affair clear before you left us in July, but much to my disappointment, the time was so short and sudden I could not very well request for appointment to clear the unpleasant atmosphere prevailing just then. Since time is the best medicine, probably it is better that I let time do the healing. However, I would like to ask you, whenever you have the time, to relieve the mind of Mr. Robertson of any suspicion which he might be entertaining of me through impregnation. Kindly tell Mr. Robertson that I am a man of my word. The promise I made to you at Moab was kept most rigidly, and is being kept today though I have not made any promise to Mr. Robertson. It is my policy to deal with a gentleman like a gentleman.

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The tenseness of the atmosphere has noticeably changed to smiles and joy since the miracle performed by Mr. Robertson. I am happy to see the boys all going about smiling.

It is needless for me to repeat how much the boys here do appreciate the kindness you have shown us. Even those who were antagonistic to you at one time have come to realize their mistake and now speak well of you. To have one such as you guiding so many thousands of contrapolitical adherents is a blessing of which both the Japanese and the country should be grateful.

Mr. Best, allow me to thank you in behalf of the boys and at the same time wish you happiness in your great work for humanity. Wherever I may be, and however we may differ in our conviction, I shall always remember you as one whose kindness has brought much hope and courage in the hour of our need. Enemy or no enemy, you are our friend.

Again, repeating my most affectionate expression of gratitude, I shall now close with best regards to you and to your beloved family. Goodnight.

Very sincerely yours,

/s/ J. Y. Kurihara

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When Joe was placed in the stockade at Tule Lake I went, with my knowledge of his background and character, to Lt. Col. Verne Austin and Col. Frank Meek, commanding officers of the Military Police detail then in control at Tule Lake and intervened in his behalf. Upon my recommendation the two officers agreed to release Kurihara from the stockade into the Tule Lake colony.

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After this had been brought about I told Kurihara that I would back him in any position of leadership he might care to assume as a resident of Tule Lake colony.

"Mr. Best," he replied, "I don't care to assume any leadership here. I know now that the country's cards are too much stacked against me, and I'm too old a man to begin anything anew. I have faith in you, Mr. Best, and if I knew you were going to continue to be here I would attempt some kind of leadership, but I'm afraid that just about the time I established a constructive group here you would be reassigned and I would be in the same fix in which I found myself at Manzanar. I would prefer to just retire to my apartment here and read my Bible (he is a life-long and ardent Catholic) and study the Japanese language."

He expressed himself as convinced that he never would be able to act and feel freely as an American, because America was not willing to allow him to act and feel that way. His being placed in the stockade after his transfer from internment had been the straw that broke the camel's back. His study of the Japanese language was part of his decision to attempt something constructive in Japan; he realized he would have to improve his ability to express himself in the language of the land of his ancestry.

But Joe could not stay in complete retirement long.

About this time the pro-Japan organizations in Tule Lake colony began to exert their nationalistic influences. The chief of these, Sokuji Kikoku Hoshi Dan (Return Immediately to Serve the Emperor Organization) and Hokoku Seinen Dan (Young Men's Patriotic Organization), started advocating mass renunciation of United States citizenship.

Joe Kurihara did not take an active part in opposing these groups, but he let it be known in all parts of the colony that if any person being pressured would go to his home he would be glad to offer advice, which was: "Stay out of these trouble-making organizations".

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On February 18, 1945, he wrote to me what he called a "Dissertation":

"It is deplorable to me to see how so many young boys are being misled by these vociferous, glory-seeking, selfish leaders. Nippon Danshi (Sons of Japan) has been blatantly used to glorify their purpose and the organization they were coaxed to join. To me, as I see it, the future of these boys is being ruined. Unfortunately, the time is in favor of these petty politicians at present.

"The majority of the youngsters who have joined are dancing to the radical tune of the agitators without the slightest knowledge of what the consequences will be. Most of them are acting according to the impulse of the moment. The time will come when they will regret in leisure, heaped with disgrace. The decision which they will make after reaching their destination (Department of Justice internment camp) will reflect on their parents, brothers and sisters. Whatever the result may be, the parents must not complain, since it is partly their fault for not having guided their sons on the right path; and in nearly every case they too have taken an active part in the ruination of their beloved sons.

"It is a foregone conclusion that as many as 50 per cent or more will break within six months and will seek freedom regardless of the vow to which they have sworn. The loathsome, uneventful life in an internment camp is more than an ordinary youngster can withstand. It takes tremendous will power to bear the loathsomeness day after day, week after week, and month after month. I have seen many who sold their souls to get out, amongst them the loud mouths who used to wave the flag most vigorously. They have forgotten the heroic words they uttered. They have faded into thin air.

"Many of the boys who now are being interned are too young. They, in fact, have no definite minds of their own and their wills

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are flexible. Since they either were coaxed by their parents and friends, or have seen their pals join the organization, they too have joined without thought, to relish the thrill which they felt when others were sent away with thrilling "Banzais!" Their decisions having been made either through persuasion or through the chivalrous impulse of the moment, their sense of responsibility to uphold the honor of the Nippon Danshi and their self-respect are trivialities. The Hokoku Dan has cheapened Nippon Danshi, the nationally sanctified title applied to the flowers of the Yamato Race. My heart writhes with wrath to see so many barking patriots defiling the honor and glory of those red-blooded Nippon Danshi who unselfishly gave their lives to our fatherland Nippon. It is a sacrilege! A sacrilege of the most grievous nature. Oh! What a shame! What a shame! I would not blame the heroes if they should turn in their graves.

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"We who have obeyed and are obeying implicitly the wishes of the emperor, requested through the premiers, were branded as non-Japanese because we refused to join the Hokoku Dan and parade the compound with our hair cut short. If to cut our hair short and do a bit of exercise in the morning, and while away the rest of the day in various games of relaxation, is Nippon Danshi, then let me barber my hair as I see fit and disturb me not in my studies.

"The myopic leaders who are responsible for the corruption of the youngsters one of these days will have to account for the crimes they have committed. To what extent will they be able to convince the officials of the Japanese Government that their undertakings to Japanize the Nisei were legitimate and honorable? They will have to have unlimited proofs to justify their claims before they can convince the officials, after a good 50 per cent, if not more, of the Nisei fail to weather the boresome life of the internment camps.

"When the Sokoku Kenkyu Seinen Dan (Fatherland Study Young Men's Group) was brought into life in this camp, I sincerely rejoiced over it, but my joy was short-lived. It was nurtured into an organization of gangsters by the leaders. The leaders, instead of keeping the welfare of the youngsters at heart, were really organizing them into a formidable organization, mainly for the pur-

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pose of using it as a club to further their selfish motives. In this they succeeded. Thereafter they became unbearable, both to the officials and to the majority of the obedient segregees. They have kept the residents under constant fear and unrest.

"I unequivocally condemn the leaders as the most selfish and shameless traitors that ever lived. They blatantly used Nippon Danshi and Nippon as weapons with which to accomplish their ambition. Nearly all of them are in the neighborhood of 50, who should have known better. They have peddled Nippon Danshi so freely, it now seems meaningless to us. What will they have to say when the majority of those who were interned with them under their leadership turn out to be scum? Heavens! I would tremble with fear to be in their shoes today.

"Those damnable traitors must not be forgiven. They must be made to pay for every soul they have led astray and for the shame they have inflicted on the Yamato Race."

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So violently did Kurihara counsel against these organizations---when he was asked for his advice---that word reached me that Ernest Wakayama, acknowledged leader of the pro-Japan groups, had threatened to kill Joe. I sent a messenger to warn Joe of the rumored intention. Back came a message telling me not to worry, that everything was in hand in the colony and that he very well could take care of himself. He did, and did what he could to take care of some others, too. An example of the latter is this letter:

Tule Lake Center  
February 20, 1945

R. R. Best  
Project Director  
Administration Bldg.  
Tule Lake Center

My dear Mr. Best:

I wish to thank you very very much for the favor you have granted me in my request on behalf of Mr.

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Kazuo Sasaki. He was here this morning, asking me to thank you for him for the kindness you have so liberally permitted. In his behalf, I wish to thank you again most sincerely.

This forenoon, Mr. Sadao Ara of Block 83, 4-H, Family No. 23871, age 46, came to see me with regarding his status. Personally I do not see why he should worry and told him so. He is a perfect gentleman, liked by everyone he meets. I will vouch for this man against any numbers of others in your care.

The reason he worries is because he is a member of Hoshi Dan -- into which, like many others was high pressured into joining it. Such disgraceful gangsterism method was and is most openly employed in the Manzanar district, engulfing him too as one of the victims. He wants to get out, sincerely regretting over it. He came to see me for advice which I unhesitatingly gave, and he in turn promised to adhere to it most resolutely.

Therefore should his name appears on the list presented by the Sokuji Kikoku Hoshi Dan, won't you please cross it out, and likewise inform Mr. Rothstein about it? I would vouch for him as I have never before against any or all of the colonists here, even myself. Frankly this is one time I am going to take advantage of the confidence you have in me, because I sincerely and truly believe in him.

Knowing that you are a very busy man, I have taken this means to reach you to avoid unnecessary interruption. Most earnestly, I again appeal to your generosity, and at the same time, repeat my most sincere expression of gratitude for all past favors.

Respectfully yours,

/s/ J. Y. Kurihara  
706-C T.L.C.

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Finally, the Department of Justice arranged hearings to allow those who desired to do so to renounce their American citizenship. Joe Kurihara went up---without having put any pressure upon anybody and without having allowed any pressure to be put upon himself beyond his own personal convictions-- and renounced his citizenship. By this action he wound up, in effect, a man without a country. He had no Japanese citizenship.

Japanese Relocation Papers  
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Joe departed for Japan on November 24, 1945, from Seattle on the first ship carrying repatriates. He arrived in Japan a week before his enemy, Wakayama, who had been removed from Tule Lake to a Department of Justice internment camp in December of 1944, was able to board a repatriation ship. Joe's way of reaching his goal had been the quickest, after all.

The day before Joe left Tule Lake on the repatriation train he addressed to me a picture post card, yellowed with age and which obviously had been purchased during his service overseas in World War I, on which he had written this message:

Dear Mr. Best and Family:

Let's not say goodbye bon Ami  
'Twas yesterday we just but met  
Let us say au revoir bon Ami  
For tomorrow we again will meet,  
'Tis true the land I've sworn to build  
Is far across the great divide  
However wide it's just a leap  
So far but so near, We'll always be.

/s/ J. Kurihara

That reached me the day Joe left. An earlier-written letter which he had entrusted to a friend of his, with instructions, was delivered to me after Joe safely was aboard the ship and there was no turning back:

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Newell, California  
November 20, 1945

Japanese Relocation Papers  
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Project Director  
R. R. Best  
Tule Lake Center

My dear Mr. Best:

We have at last arrived at the parting of the way. Though I am so enthused and anxious to get across to do my share in rebuilding Japan, I somehow feel as if I am doing a wrong thing. Of course I know I am not. Probably that feeling is due to that inherent love I have for this country since my childhood and it no doubt must be prompting me to feel so.

With true appreciation I am thanking you for all the kindness you have shown me ever since that day we first met at Moab, Utah, during those trying days your paternal understanding had been the true source of our consolation. Had it not been for you probably I too might have gone the ways of many who are apparently regretting today over the course they've taken.

This genuine friendship which I have found amongst the desolate wastes of Utah, in the midst of hatred, jealousy, and war will always be remembered as one of the most cherished memories of my life. May it with the blessing of the Almighty continue to bloom with ever increasing splendor of love and tolerance. I am very very happy that you were the one I have met when bitterness was boiling at its height and I am very very happy that I am going away, though painful as it is, with the genuine thought of an unbroken friendship.

May God grant us the chance of meeting again some day, somewhere with the fruit of our friendship mellowing under the glorious sun of Democratized Nippon.

In conclusion I wish you unending success and happiness throughout your life. Please extend my sincerest good wishes to Mrs. Best and to your dear sons. Thank you very very much.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ J. Y. Kurihara

I feel certain, from the tone of that letter, that had I asked Joe to reconsider his step, he would have done so. I never had felt at liberty to do this. After all of the prejudicial treatment Joe had received since the outbreak of the war, I felt that any remarks from me could be construed only as so many "pretty words" when compared to his actual and very personal experiences.

Joe Kurihara in my experience always was responsive to honest and fair treatment. He never requested or expected any special favor or consideration from me in spite of our intimate acquaintance.

I am looking forward to the next chapter in my relationship with Joe---his letters to me from Japan, letters which I am sure will be filled with comment just as honest in expression as Joe was honest in his habit of expressing himself to me personally.

Whatever Joe Kurihara may become in Japan or whatever Japan may become during his lifetime, it seems inconceivable that he can be anything but an eloquent and determined force for what he believes to be right; and that his concept of what is right will follow the basic principles of the land of his birth--America.

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