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Interview: Parents Press

1991 July

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A Conversation

with *Yoshiko Uchida*



"Rinko, don't ever be ashamed of who you are. Just be the best person you can. Believe in your own worth. And someday I know you'll be able to feel proud of yourself, even the part of you that's different... the part that's Japanese."

A Jar of Dreams

Like all classics, memorable children's fiction has both immediacy and staying power: whatever wisdom it has to impart speaks to the reader whether she's 6 or 60 and whether the work itself is newly published or decades—even centuries—old.

One classic Bay Area writer, Yoshiko Uchida, has been writing for children for more than 40 years, drawing on Japanese folktales, contemporary Japanese village

BY MELANIE LAWRENCE

and urban life, and on her own East Bay childhood in a household where Japanese and American cultures met and blended. Adept as she is with all three genres, it's her autobiographical work that stays with you, detailed and deeply felt, strongly moral without being preachy, avoiding "exoticism" by its matter-of-fact tone. These days, parents can find books for their children covering every possible—and formerly taboo—theme, such as divorce, teenage sexuality, racism, and

death. Uchida is one of the founders of this liberation movement in children's literature, and moreover, she was educating children about civil and social injustice before it became fashionable.

Uchida's young heroines are basically healthy, grounded little girls, but sometimes plagued by the self-doubt that comes from being "different." As 11-year-old Rinko puts it in *A Jar of Dreams*: "There are a few white girls in my class at school who make me feel that way too. They never call me 'Ching Chong Chinaman' or 'Jap' the way some of the boys do, but they have others ways of being mean. They talk to each other, but they talk over and around and right through me like I was a pane of glass. And that makes me feel like a big nothing. Some days I feel so left out, I hate my black hair and my Japanese face. I hate having a name like Rinko Tsujimura that nobody can pronounce or remember. And more than anything, I wish I could just be like everybody else."

Fortunately for these girls, their nuclear families are loving, their extended families equally close-knit. They embody the traditional Japanese virtues of hard work, ingenuity and respect for kin, but feel strongly attached to the United States and to their role as citizens. Like Uchida herself, her protagonists come from tough

stock and not only survive, but survive with grace, because they learn how to see behind image and facade to the truth of an issue.

Yoshiko Uchida was born in Alameda but grew up in Berkeley, where she still lives. A writer from the age of 10, when she recorded her first short stories in a book made of brown wrapping paper, she went to local schools and graduated with honors from the University of California at Berkeley with a B.A. in English, philosophy and history.

She did not graduate with her class, however, but received her diploma in a horse stall at the Tanforan race track in San Bruno. The horse stall was her family's temporary residence, for this was 1942, and 120,000 United States citizens of Japanese ancestry had been ordered interned "for their own protection" by the federal government. Uchida and her family spent part of the war years at an internment camp in Utah, an experience that was later distilled into two of her finest children's books, *Journey to Topaz* and *Journey Home*.

After earning her master's degree in education from Smith College, Uchida taught elementary school, worked as a secretary in New York City, and was later

awarded a Ford Foundation fellowship to travel in Japan, where she studied two of her passions: Japanese folktales and crafts. She has been writing professionally since 1949.

Her first children's novel was a seemingly simple little book called *New Friends for Susan* ("seemingly" because Uchida smuggles across a rather complex message of cultural diversity in this straightforward and gentle tale about an 8-year-old's changing schools).

Since then, she has written 28 more books for children: the nonfiction *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*; an adult novel, *Picture Bride*; and dozens of articles about Japanese crafts and artists and about the Japanese-American internment. Any bibliography of her work is difficult to read, it is so annotated with awards and foreign editions, and some of her manuscripts have been collected by U.C. Berkeley's Bancroft Library.

Children's Author Draws on Memories of Her Berkeley Childhood and World War II Internment

Due to a long illness, Uchida took a four-year hiatus from her craft and has only recently been able to write again. Appropriately, she was one of the distinguished children's authors asked to contribute a story to E.P. Dutton's 1990 anthology *The Big Book for Peace*.

Our interview took place on a spring morning in Uchida's tranquil North Berkeley apartment. She had recently been celebrating the Festival of Dolls, so several table tops and shelves were alive with the color of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of dolls and folk carvings, some of them antique, all of them charming. A small, solemn-faced Yoshiko and her equally serious older sister gazed out from a photograph by Sidney Webb. Appropriately, they are holding a book.

Now in her late 60's, Uchida is a slender woman with springing, pewter-colored hair. Her air of gentle self-possession is notable, and so is her speaking voice, low, soft, and full of quiet conviction, the voice of one who has something to say and knows how to say it. I realized later that she reminded me of Rinko's Aunt Waka, who comes over from Japan to visit one summer and helps transform the family's life, thanks to her blend of common sense and vision.

Melanie Lawrence: How much of your work is autobiographical? I notice that the same themes reappear: the small, devoted nuclear family, the ambitious older brother who wants to go to college, and the kind neighbor who's always there for you.

The reason I made it fiction based on my family was that actually I had an older sister, not an older brother. But in order to tell the story of the 442nd Battalion and the young men who volunteered for the army from camps—which was really quite a remarkable thing for them to do—I introduced a brother instead of my sister.

The nice part of working with fiction is that you can emphasize certain things that wouldn't be totally true. I did have friends who were good neighbors, but I didn't necessarily have that specific woman who appears in *Journey to Topaz*. I guess most writers do draw on people that they've known and form composites to create an interesting character.

The Rinko trilogy, my most recent books about a young Berkeley Japanese-American child growing up in the Depression, is not at all autobiographical, in the sense that my parents didn't have a laundry or a store, and my parents' friends were not exactly as I write about them.

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A Yoshiko Uchida Sampler

New Friends for Susan. Illustrations by Henry Sugimoto; Charles Scribner's, 1951. An earthquake has damaged 8-year-old Susan's Berkeley grammar school, and she must go to another one. Some typical Uchida themes (cultural diversity and the positive value of the unknown and unexpected) are at work here in this gentle story for younger children.

Rokubei and the 1000 Rice Bowls. Illustrations by Kazue Mizumura; Scribner's, 1962. A

quietly humorous and charming study of old Japan and a poor rice farmer who becomes a distinguished potter.

Sumi's Prize (1964); Sumi's Special Happening (1966); Sumi and the Goat and the Tokyo Express (1969). Illustrations by Kazue Mizumura; Scribner's. The resourceful, warm-hearted Sumi learns lessons about ambition, courage, generosity and community spirit in a series of picture books for children ages 6 to 10.

Hisako's Mysteries. Illustrations by Susan Bennett; Scribner's, 1969. Thirteen-year-old Hisako is one of Uchida's contemporary Japanese heroines. Restless under the loving but staid protection of her grandparents, she longs to see the world—and to solve the mystery of her parentage.

Journey to Topaz. Illustrations by Donald Carrick; Scribner's, 1971; Creative Arts Book Co. trade paperback edition, 1985. **Journey Home.** Illustrations by Charles

Robinson; Atheneum/Margaret K. McDerry Books, 1978. These lovely, award-winning books chronicle the internment—and emotional survival—of 11-year-old Yuki and her family during and after World War II.

Samurai of Gold Hill. Illustrations by Ati Forberg; Scribner's, 1972; Creative Arts Book Co. trade paperback edition, 1985. In 1869, Koichi and his samurai father immigrate from Japan to become farmers in California's

But I did draw on my own feelings as a child, some of the feelings of rejection and the sense of family. We had such a very warm, caring family that I felt I was very fortunate, and I wanted to evoke in these books a sense of caring, a sense of purpose and affirmation of life, and the strength that I felt in a lot of first-generation Japanese and that I learned from my parents.

ML: What struck me the most about the books was the closeness of the family, and also the sense you convey of your heroine's wanting to fit in and yet wanting to be herself and be proud of what she came from.

YU: Well, when I was growing up in the thirties, it was very difficult for me to have a sense of self-worth. In those days, we were trying so hard to be assimilated into mainstream society and into white American society, which we thought was the best kind.

We were trying so hard to be American that we were rejecting our Japaneseness, and we weren't able to feel proud of ourselves as Japanese. And that stems primarily from society's attitudes toward us: there was a great deal of discrimination in California which was based on 100 years of racism, racism that was legitimized by laws that were anti-Asian. There were certain restaurants or hotels or stores where we just knew we weren't welcome, so we would avoid going to places like that.

When you grow up in a society like that, you feel safe and secure when you're with your family, but you do grow up with very low self-esteem. I write about this in my new memoir, which is going to be out this fall, called *The Invisible Thread*.

It wasn't until after the whole wartime trauma and my going to Japan and seeing where my roots were that I finally blossomed out. So it took me longer than the child in my books to achieve my sense of self-worth.

ML: So when you started writing, it was with the conscious idea of explaining the Japanese-American experience to Anglo-American children?

YU: Well, that came a little bit later. I was writing when I was 10 years old, but those were not Japanese-American stories at all. In those days there were not any books written by or about Asians, so I had no role models. I used to write about chipmunks and squirrels and little white girls named Mary Jane!

When I first became interested in really becoming a writer, I rewrote Japanese folktales, which I had heard from my mother as a child. Their universality was so appealing to me, and I wanted to share these stories with American children. I felt that if they could get to know Japanese people through stories, then maybe eventually they would learn to share ideas as adults.

In those days, we were not even familiar with the word "ethnic." Whenever they had units in schools to study Japan, it was "Japan the foreign country," with parols and dolls festivals and so forth.

ML: And cherry blossoms.

YU: Yes. I wanted to try to dispel those stereotypic notions. I spent two years in Japan looking for material for folktales. I lived in a Japanese home and I got to know how the Japanese lived, and then I wrote several books about children in Japan.

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Mother Lode country. A coming-of-age novel based on the true story of the Wakamatsu Colony of Gold Hill, who were among the first Japanese settlers in California.

The Birthday Visitor. Illustrations by Charles Robinson; Scribner's,

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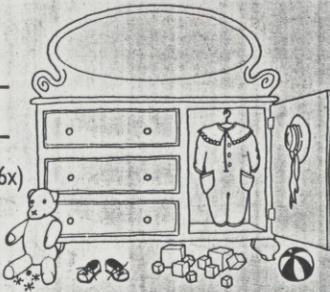


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Author

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My hope then was to write about them just as human beings, so that American children could relate to the children of Japan just as another child with the same kinds of feelings and hopes and fears.

Then, as the third-generation Japanese grew up, the whole climate of the world began to change, and the minority groups were beginning to want to have a sense of self-identity. These *Sansei* wanted to know about their own history and to have themselves defined, I felt, by an Asian-American who knew what they were all about.

That was when I began consciously writing about the Japanese-American experience in California. I started with *Samurai of Gold Hill*, which is the story of the first settlers from Japan. Then I did my *Journey* books, and that was because I wanted third-generation Japanese to know about their past. I think young people need to have a sense of kinship with the past and a sense of continuity with it. I needed to share my cultural memory and my historic memory with them, but also I wanted them to feel a great deal of self-pride by getting to know what their parents and their grandparents were like.

I thought that the wartime experience, especially, was such a terrible thing for Japanese-Americans to go through. And still, in spite of the terrible trauma and injustice of the event, the first-generation Japanese, my parents' generation, survived with such dignity. They didn't lose the essence of themselves.

There were some people who were broken by the event, naturally, but the Japanese *Issei* that I was familiar with survived with so much grace. They didn't instill a bitterness in us, their children, which would have really destroyed us. They helped us to get on with our lives. I wanted the third generation to hear about this and to realize that it was really a triumph of the human spirit.

ML: Of course, I've wondered, as all of

your readers must have, how on earth one did avoid bitterness.

YU: I think you have to remember that the world was such a different place then. It was before Martin Luther King, it was before Vietnam. I think any sense of wanting to confront the government and say "you're wrong" was just totally nonexistent. We were brought up to be good citizens, to be good Americans.

The first-generation Japanese respected authority, and if the government told you that this was what you must do, then to be good citizens, that's what you did. The climate of the times was such that there would have been no support from the public if we had rebelled or resisted in any way. We might even have been shot, because it was wartime and it was a popular war. Wartime hysteria was so strong.

You got the sense of it with the hate against Saddam Hussein. Arab-Americans face the same situation, only it was a lot worse then, because people weren't so aware of civil rights.

Besides, they told us that it was a military necessity. But since the war and since we've had access to all the government papers, we've realized what a terrible betrayal it was by the government. They knew very well it was not a military necessity. We learned that, in fact, the president had received a report saying that the Japanese-Americans were totally loyal to the United States and posed no threat at all.

It was such a terrible betrayal, not only of the Japanese-Americans, but of all Americans, because they betrayed everything that this country stood for, all our democratic ideals.

I get much more angry now than I was then, because we were all so naive then.

ML: What do you think of Berkeley now, compared to when you were growing up here?

YU: Oh, it's a different place! It was such a nice, peaceful, quiet little town when I was growing up.

I've lived in Philadelphia; Northampton, Massachusetts; and New York, but I

Sampler

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in 1930s Berkeley, Uchida's trilogy about young Rinko Tsujimura deals with the prejudice faced by Japanese-Americans and the way Rinko's ambitious, close-knit family overcomes such barriers and realize their dreams.

Picture Bride. Northland Press, 1987; Simon-Schuster/Fireside Books edition, 1988. Uchida's one adult novel is also suitable for mature young people. Her tribute to the courage of first-generation Japanese-American women, *Picture Bride* is about Hana Omiya, who leaves Japan in the early part of the century to marry a man she has never met.

"Letter from a Concentration Camp," The Big Book for Peace.

Illustration by Allen Say; *E.P. Dutton, 1990*. It's 1942, and young Jimbo Kurasaki is writing a letter to his Caucasian friend "on the outside," expressing the pain and frustration of being uprooted from his home.

Works in Progress

In *My Own Words* series autobiography, Silver Burdett Press/Julian Messner, to be published fall 1991.

The *Silver Bracelet*, a picture book based on a short story Uchida wrote 15 years ago that originally appeared in the *Scribner Anthology for Young People*.

Adaptation of a Japanese folktale (title not available), Atheneum/Margaret K. McElderry Books, publication date unknown.

—Melanie Lawrence

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always felt happiest when I came back to California. If I ever go down toward Stuart Street, I always drive by my old house. My grammar school, Longfellow School, dedicated their library to me last year.

ML: So you grew up on Stuart Street? Around the Berkeley Bowl or farther west?

YU: Farther west, just above Grove. Most Japanese lived below Grove Street. I don't know how we managed to get four houses up. We were just renting, because there was an unspoken real estate code that houses were not to be rented or sold to Asians above certain streets.

ML: Do you have any advice for parents about dealing with prejudice, whether it's prejudice directed against their children or against their children's friends?

YU: I think parents have to say what's in their hearts. The important thing is to live it, to live the life you want your children to lead. I'm a fine one to speak, not having been a parent, but I think it's easy to say one thing to children and expect them to do as you say, but then you might be doing something else yourself.

It seems to me that children learn most by observing what their parents actually do, not what they say. So by the way you lead your own life, by the way you treat your neighbors, I think you reveal your own feelings, and that's what children pick up. It has to start from your own self: you have to free yourself of prejudice.

Since I'm a writer, I think providing children with the right kinds of books helps, too.

ML: I especially wanted to know what books you liked as a child.

YU: I used to like Louisa May Alcott's *Little Men* and *Little Women*. I used to like mystery stories, too. There was a mystery writer, Augusta Seaman, whose books I loved. I used to go the South Berkeley library and look for all the little books that had stars on their spines, which meant they were mysteries. I reread one of her books recently and it held up very well. I used to read Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Doolittle* books, too.

ML: And who do you read now?

YU: I like Wallace Stegner. And a very poignant book by Tracy Kidder called *Among Schoolchildren*. It's so revealing of what teachers are up against these days.

Right now I'm trying to catch up on some of the new Asian-American writers who seem to be coming to the fore. I've been reading Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. There is a new writer, Cynthia Kadohata, who just did a first novel. It's nice to see Asian writers coming up, but unfortunately there aren't many in the children's field.

ML: Are you satisfied with the way *The Big Book for Peace* turned out?

YU: I thought they did a very nice job. And the wonderful thing is, they've given almost \$300,000 now to five organizations supporting peace and environmental projects. It seems to have a life of its own; it's being translated in some foreign countries.

It's a very good feeling to be able to do something concrete for peace. Because of my health problems and the kind of person I am, I'm not the sort of person who can

go out and march in the streets, but this is something I can do in a very small, quiet way. We all have to speak in our own ways.

ML: Do you have any particular favorites among your own books?

YU: That's like asking a mother which is her favorite child!

I think *Journey to Topaz* is one of the books. I was pleased about its outreach because it seems to have touched so many people and taught children who may not otherwise even have known about the uprooting.

But I'm also very fond of the whole Rinko trilogy because I put a lot of myself into Rinko, and it was something that happened right here in Berkeley. I got very attached to that family I created, and they just seemed like real people.

If I get to the point where I have a little more energy, I was thinking of doing another about that family, focusing now on the younger brother. With the trilogy, I've sort of completed what I could say about Rinko. She's 13 in the last book, so I can't go too much further with her.

ML: Rinko falls in love...

YU: Rinko goes to college...

ML: I do get very tired of books for girls in which they always come of age by falling in love, as if women did nothing else, as if they didn't have intellectual and spiritual struggles.

I like Sumi as well, she's such a resourceful little girl.

YU: Oh, the picture books? I'm glad you found them, because they're so old. But they've reappeared in a lot of school readers.

ML: I liked the way she turned out for the kite-flying festival in her pants and sneakers. She's a tough little thing.

YU: Yeah, she was a nice character. I think I tend to give my female characters the gumption and the toughness I lacked as a child. Although maybe it was there and I didn't know it.

ML: I've heard that you sometimes give talks in schools.

YU: Yes, I used to. I'd give a 20-minute talk, and show them my little brown wrapping paper book that I did when I was 10. They loved to see that. After I gave my little talk, then I'd ask if they had any questions. That's the part that's fun.

I miss doing that, but I just had to learn to cut back on my life's activities and not try to do everything.

ML: What sorts of questions did kids ask? I imagine it could have been upsetting for them, hearing that something like the internment happened to children their age.

YU: They're often surprised. One boy said: "I didn't know we had concentration camps. I thought that was just in places like Russia and Germany."

One question I always ask them is, "Why do you think I wrote those books?" And they'll say, "To tell about the camps," or "To tell how you felt." And I say, "Yes, but what else?"

And I just keep after them until finally someone usually says, "You wrote those books so it won't ever happen again." And if no one is able to come up with that answer, then I always make sure they un-

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Kinder Schuh

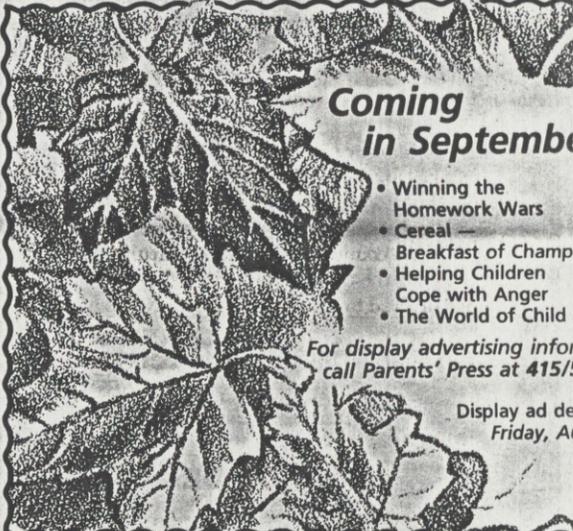
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able. (415) 228-3743.

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Researcher needs parents with 3 or 4-year-old only child for doctoral study. Confidential. Contact: Merry Thomas Byrne, RN, MA. (415) 584-5363.

Author

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

derstand that was one of the main reasons I had written the books.

And I tell them: "It's up to you people. You're going to be the grownups of the world pretty soon. I want you to cherish your freedom and know that it's one of the most precious things you have — and know how easily you can lose it — and to be very vigilant so that it doesn't happen again to any other group of people."

Melanie Lawrence is a Portland, Ore. journalist who reviews books for the San Francisco

Chronicle and has also written feature articles on stepfamilies, miscarriage, pregnancy and parenting after infertility, and mothers' support groups for Parents' Press. ■

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

Martinez Library, 740 Court, 646-2989. *Pajama Story Time*, Tuesday, July 16, 7 p.m. *Oakland A's highlights video*, Thursday, July 18, 3 p.m.

Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga, 376-6852. *Toddler Time*, Mondays, 10:15 a.m. Ages 2-3 with parent present. *Oakland A's video program*, Tuesday, July 23, 1 p.m. Highlights of the 1990 season.

Orinda Library, 2 Irwin Way, 254-2184. *Celebrate Peace Day*, Thursday, July 25, 3 p.m. The

story of *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*; make a crane for peace.

Pinole Library, 2935 Pinole Valley Rd., 758-2741. *Toddler Time*, Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m. Ages 1-2 with parent present. Video for ages 4-11, Thursday, July 18, 3 p.m., *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.

San Ramon Library, 100 Montgomery St., 866-8467. *Toddler Time*, Session A, Mondays, 10:15 a.m.; Session B, Mondays, 11:15 a.m.; Session C, Thursdays, 10:15 a.m. Ages 2 1/2-3 1/2. *Family Story Time*, Thursdays, 7 p.m. *Oakland A's baseball program*, Monday, July 8, 3 p.m. 1990 highlights video. *Ranger Bob*, Thursday, July 25, 3:30 p.m. Stories about the drought and wildlife of the area.

RICHMOND

West Side Branch Library, 135 Washington Ave., Pt. Richmond, 620-6567. *Preschool Storytime*, ages 3-5, Thursdays, 10 a.m. Tuesdays, 11 a.m.: July

2, *Caterpillar Puppets*; July 9 and 23, *arts and crafts*; July 16, *Fun Films*; July 30, *Tilden naturalist with animals*. ■

NO. ALAMEDA COUNTY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

July 17, 3:30 p.m. *Terrific T-Shirts*, Monday, July 29, 3:30 p.m. Bring a T-shirt to decorate.

West Berkeley Library, 1125 University Ave., 644-6870. *Bob Bales and the Oakland A's movie*, Tuesday, July 16, 1:30 p.m. *Terrific T-Shirts*, Tuesday, July 30, 11 a.m. Bring a T-shirt to decorate.

South Branch, 1901 Russell, 644-6860. *Jimbo the Clown*, Thursday, June 27, 3:30 p.m. *Bob Bales and the Oakland A's movie*, Tuesday, July 16, 11 a.m. *Terrific T-Shirts*, Thursday, Aug. 1, 3:30 p.m. Bring a T-shirt to decorate. ■

424 S.E. 31st Avenue, #1
Portland, Oregon 97214
503/239-8178

July 19, 1991

Dear Yoshiko,

Thanks so much for the kind letter, which cheered me in the midst of my transitional gloom. I'm glad you liked the article--I certainly enjoyed writing it, and it makes a nice addition to my portfolio. Parents' Press added the "Works in Progress" section. I thought it a good idea, but am not sure where "The Silver Bracelet" came from, as that adjective certainly did not appear in my manuscript!

Life here still feels very unsettled to me. We are both job hunting, an activity that is not exactly good for the ego. There is not a lot of publishing here, certainly nothing that pays decently, so I might end up in a public-sector job. I'm also trying to get in at Planned Parenthood, where the director of development needs an assistant. I work a bit at making friends and just started a small mothers' support group, but as I grow older, I find urban life rather unsettling. Native Portlanders tend to stick to their old friends and families, so the people I meet are always from somewhere else. There seem to be plenty of people around who, like me, are looking for some sense of community, but it does take a real effort to break through my shell and seek them out. Interesting, isn't it, how much more spontaneous friendships feel when one is younger? Being homesick for Berkeley doesn't help.

Oh, well. We have found part-time child care for Margaret at a pleasant little nursery school where they treat the kids with some respect and imagination, so I'm finally getting some writing time again. It's also a relief to know that she has some other kids to carouse with.

Enclosed is a clipping from Portland's main alternative paper about a spot that I know will interest you. I've seen the memorial and it's more beautiful than this piece would suggest. The stones were placed right by the river, and the whole area has a timeless, elegiac feel that is very moving. You would also probably enjoy the Japanese gardens, which are exquisite, and far less touristy than San Francisco's, to the point that refreshments are not dispensed in the tea house to the public! The strolling pond is especially wonderful. (At least Margaret thought so; we couldn't drag her away from those beautiful little wooden walkways.)

Do let me know if you ever plan to be in this part of the Northwest. I hope the CFS is easing up and that life is treating you well.

Best regards,

Melanie

BEST OF PORTLAND

Continued from page 23

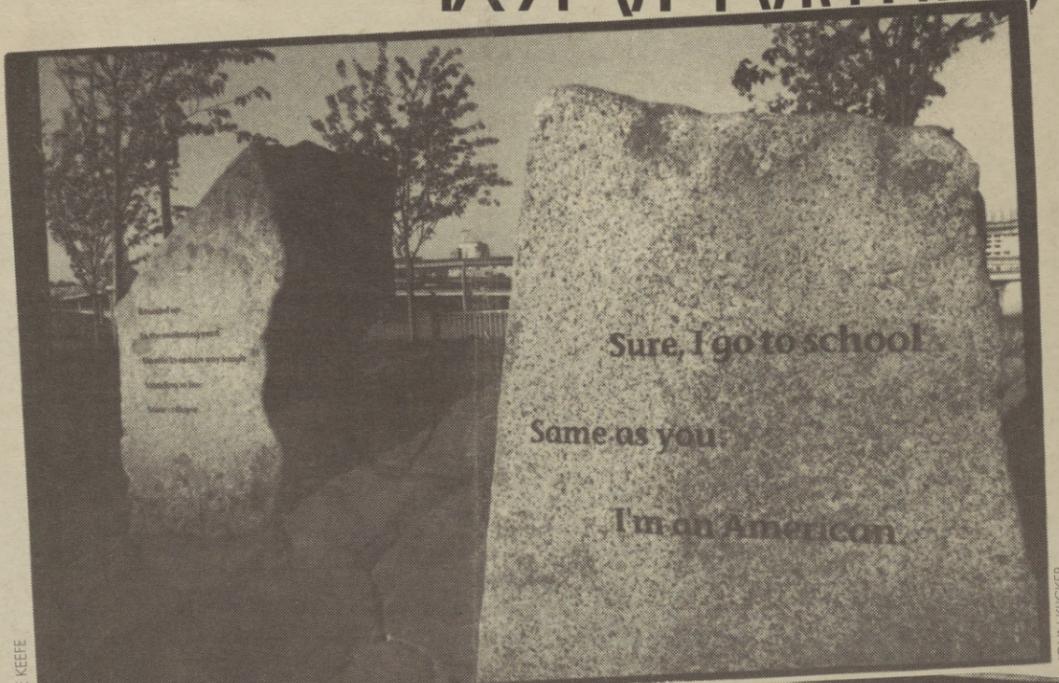
day in their indoor-outdoor pool, especially around the 1:30 pm feeding time—the raw fish makes them crazy. The friendly keepers carefully give them special claw- and teeth-proof toys to toss back and forth. Get there early for the best spot—this sideshow really draws the crowd. •

Best Name for a Menu Item

For most of this past year, the unofficial leader in this category was a holiday treat at Room for Dessert, 11705 SW Pacific Highway. Proud of their "authentic" French pastries, the folks out Tigard way advertised a version of *bûche de Noël*, a traditional yule log made of Genoese sponge cake, butter cream, almond paste and meringue mushrooms. Except that it came out "bouche de Noël": "Christmas mouth." Pretty good, but when we found out about the menu at the Tea House, 6716 SE Milwaukie Blvd., we had to give up faux-French dessert for an Oriental entree. We don't know how much more we want to know about it, but among the attractions of Combination Dinner No. 1 is Fried Boy. •

Best New Memorial

The hands-down winner is the Japanese Internment Camp Memorial just north of West Burnside Street between Old Town and the river, a serene collection of 40 granite boulders arranged between Northwest Front Avenue and the riverside footpath. Approaching from the north, one encounters bronze plaques bearing the official congressional apology of 1989 and Ronald Reagan's letter describing the "sad history" the way America treated its citizens of Japanese descent during World War II. Walking from the south, one comes upon a bronze Bill of Rights. Between are 15 other stones inscribed with poetic reflections on the internment experience: *Sure, I go to school/Same as you./I'm an American*, for example, or, most moving, *Through the car window/A glimpse of pines./Oregon mountains./My heart beats faster./Returning home*. But most eloquent of all is the simple marker at the western entrance to the memorial's curve of boulders, which lists only shame's monikers, the names of the camps themselves: *Gila, Grenada, Heart Mountain, Jerome, Manzanar, Minidoka, Poston, Rohwer*. •



JULIE KEEFE

JOHN KICKER



JOHN KICKER

Best Reason to Stock up on Raid

If your spouse comes home to you some evening and says, "Honey, I swear I just saw a 6-foot praying mantis on top of somebody's garage," don't reach for the substance-abuse center phone number. Reach for the car keys and go see the artwork yourself at Northeast 55th Avenue and Thompson Street. Ralph Welker, a set builder for Oregon Shakespeare

Festival Portland, created the giant creature out of steel, polystyrene foam and concrete and erected it on top of his garage a year and a half ago. The giant beetle about to be devoured by the mantis doubles as a birdbath. And yes, birds do approach—at least a couple of crows have ventured onto the mantis's antennae. Down at the base of the

mantis are bits and pieces of a dozen other bugs. After Welker put up the gruesome garage art, a few of his neighbors promptly started a petition drive to force him to take it down. The petition fizzled, and at least some of the locals grew to like the thing. Welker's neighbor to the north says it's real easy to give directions to their



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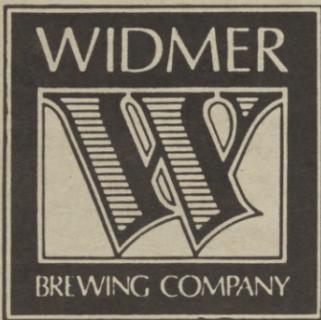
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JULY 11-17

- 11** VICTORIAN DETECTIVE NOVEL, Robert Reyom Thursday, 10:30 a.m. -Noon
CONVERSATIONAL SPANISH, Sonja Ortega Thursday, 10:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. -Noon
NEW TREATMENT FOR MACULAR DEGENERATION, Dr. Dreyer Thursday, 1:30 p.m. -2:30 p.m.
- 12** ORAL INTERPRETATION, Vanna O'Brien & Ted Roisum Friday, 10:30 a.m. -Noon
- 15** COLORED PENCIL DRAWING, Susan Gunderson Monday, 10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.
YOGA FOR SENIORS, David Bersaas 10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m.
WRITING YOUR LIFE STORY, Susan Gunderson Monday, 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- 16** ELEPHANTS & WHALES, Norie Dimeo-Ediger Tuesday, 10:30 a.m. -Noon
NATIVE AMERICAN HEALING Tuesday, 1:30 p.m. -2:30 p.m.
- 17** HISTORY OF THE OPERA, Bruce Chalmers Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m.
OREGON AUTHORS: Molly Gloss Wednesday, 1:30 p.m. -2:30 p.m.
YOGA FOR SENIORS, David Bersaas Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m.



Best Fish Tank

Stuck for conversation with a dreary date who wants to take you to a Chinese restaurant but doesn't like to share the dishes? Drag your companion to **Hunan**, 515 SW Broadway, and topics of conversation will flow right out of the aquariums that bubble and shimmer in full view of most tables. Discuss the palette of fish colors—true yellow, bright orange, electric blue and pure white. Use the miniature pagoda in the main dining room's octagonal tank as an excuse to bring up your Far East travel plans or Asiatic books or movies. Give your date a detailed description of the nitrogen narcosis you suffered on your last scuba dive. And if things get truly dismal, ask the waiter for a rundown of the various fishy names—scientific and common versions. The tanks are maintained by Classic Aquarium Service, which changes the fish once a year but sends someone by every two weeks to check for floaters. Current varieties include blue devil damselfish, royal grammas, yellow long-nosed butterfly fish and coral beauty angelfish.

Best Restaurant Employee Backtalk

You'll run into occasional smart asses at just about any restaurant worth going to—the ones without 'em are too stuffy to patronize. But only one Portland eatery has made an institution of waiterly insolence: Michael Quinn and Rose Marie Barbeau's venerable **Vat and Tonsure**, 822 SW Park Ave. Here, to a man (the waiters—"Rose Marie's boys"—are all male), you can count on the sort of snooty disdain born only of long practice: the calculated hiatus between visits to your table, snort of contempt at your wine selection, the brusque "We're out of that" at your choice of appetizer, main course or

dessert. It's all perfectly good fun so long as you don't expect the deference normally associated with the occupation of food server—these guys have chosen snottiness as their defense against their profession's inherent demoralizing servility. You may even be lucky enough to partake in a dialogue on the order of the following, overheard recently and transcribed verbatim: "Could I have a coffee, please?" "Yep." "Oh, make that decaf." "No decaf." "No decaf? Well then, could I have tea?" "Nope." "No tea?" "Not a drop." •

Best Zoo Animal ▲

The snazzy penguins swim and waddle funny, but they smell fishy. The chimps have cute faces, but they look so human it's creepy. The lazy lion might as well have turned to stone. But the **polar bears** at the Washington Park Zoo are fun and lively and should also make any ethical qualms you harbor about zoos disappear. Their parents never told these bears they should wait 30 minutes after eating before swimming. The mammoth bears splash and splash every

Please turn to page 24

JOHN KUICKER

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Parents' Press

1454 Sixth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710

Dear Ms. Uchida:

Here are the additional copies you asked for.

I looked back to the original manuscript in trying to unearth how I came up with "The Silver Bracelet." Seems that (in my mind) I combined "The Bracelet" with "Silver Burdett Press." It's quite unlike me to make such an error, but at least now I know how ~~it~~ happened.

As for the other titles, it appears that I just didn't have the information, so I improvised so that I would have a Works-In-Progress section to add to Melanie's mini-reviews of your books.

Again, thank you for taking time to talk with Melanie.

Sincerely,

Deborah H.

Deborah Haeseler
Managing Editor

7/7.

note

→ a 2 extra copies. I'm
exp. grateful 1) — as (July issue is
still not avail. in — area. (I checked
Albany Lib + El Plazo Library's yesterday)
My friend — Lafayette died Feb —, however.
She had article & excellent.
Enclod, my latest Pat was sent
for info any/or use. CB,
4.

Go to p. 16

YU: Are you familiar with Creative Arts Book Company in Berkeley? When Journey to Topaz went out of print, the owner brought it out in paperback. Margaret K. McElderry Books in New York still has the sequel, Journey Home. Don at Creative Arts also did a paperback of Samurai of Gold Hill and of my three folk tale collections, in very nice, colorful editions. And they're all on the California Recommended Reading List, so they do pretty well in the schools.

u

This is where "Silver" came from!

ML: What are you working on now?

YU: I just finished this autobiography for Silver Burdett Press on the Julian Messner imprint. That'll be out this fall. I hadn't written for about four years because I was so sick with this chronic fatigue syndrome that I just couldn't sit at a typewriter long enough to do any writing. Just out of the blue, the editor called me over a year ago and said they were doing a series of children's authors' autobiographies called "In My Own Words." At first, I said, "Oh, no, I'm just not able to do it," but then I thought about it, and I thought, "Well, maybe this is just what I need to give me a little bit of a push."

Then I have a picture book. I had written a short story called "The Bracelet" which appeared in the Scribner Anthology for Young People fifteen years ago. It was about this child who's just about to leave her home to go to one of these internment camps. A white friend comes to give her a little bracelet to remember her by. She says, "I'll never take it off," and they say goodbye. She goes to camp, and then she loses the

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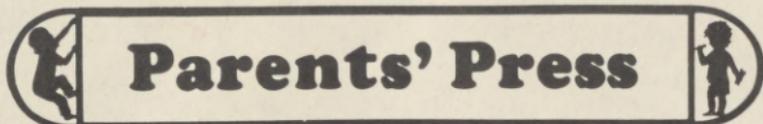
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1454 Sixth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710

June 17, 1991

Dear Ms. Uchida:

Here are two copies of our July issue with Melanie Lawrence's interview with you.

Thank you so very much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to talk with Melanie. The result is an intelligent, thoughtful profile that is a joy to read.

By the way, Dixie's and my favorite part was your memory of Hink's, a section that had to be cut, unfortunately, for lack of space. Berkeley just hasn't been the same since Hink's closed its doors!

Sincerely,

Deborah Haeseler

Deborah Haeseler
Managing Editor

524-1602
Dixie M. Jordan Ed - Pub.

Wks - Prog

The Invisible Thread,

The Braulet (delete Selver)

Philomena Bliss
pub date unknown

The Magic Purse,

delete Athenaeum

Spring '93

- ~~- when out - stands~~
- ~~- would you be interested
in updating - correcting
info re Wks - Progress
in a future issue?~~

Melanie Lawrence
424 SE 31st St.
Portland, OR 97214

June 28, 1991

Dear Melanie:

The July issue of Parents' Press just arrived, and I am absolutely delighted with your fine article - one of the best written about me, I think. You are a perceptive and sensitive writer and captured eloquently the essence of what I am trying to say in my writing. I will send copies to my editors and of course, to my sister.

I appreciated your kind words and was especially delighted to read that I reminded you of Aunt Waka. What a great compliment! She is exactly the kind of person I would like to be.

Incidentally, if you can or want to update the "Works in Progress" paragraphs, the title of my autobiography is THE INVISIBLE THREAD (as mentioned on p.11), THE BRACELET (delete SILVER) will be published by Philomel Books (date not yet set), and THE MAGIC PURSE will be published by Mgt K. McElderry Books (delete Atheneum) in the Spring of 1993.

You'll be interested to know that the hummingbirds finally found my feeder and even built a nest in the tree behind my apartment. I watched two babies grow, one disappear (it probably fell out of the nest), and one fly off to freedom. Now they are all gone - probably feeding in some flower-filled garden somewhere, and I'll have to wait for their return next year.

I do hope you're settled in your new home now and enjoying a more peaceful life in Oregon. Keep writing more of your fine articles. I'll be watching for your by-lines.

All the best,

C 4/29/91
few 's

Camp → to Smith Apr late 60's

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Yasu Noda - 1st / rec.

told re
Macy Kessler Bk.

July issue

Melanie Lawrence → in 3 weeks
to Portland

424 Soast 3/8r

Portland 97214

Saw BA Review in June.

April 19, 1991

Dear Yoshiko,

Thank so much for your time and hospitality last week. I enjoyed talking to you and think the published results will be a successful addition to Parents' Place.

The profile/interview will probably appear in the July issue, and I'll ask the editor to make sure you've sent copies.

If you have any questions, comments or whatever, please call me at 548-0993.

Thanks and
regards,
Melanie
Lawrence

