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RECEPTION OF THE AMERICAN JAPANESE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

(BY H.L. WALKER)

Was it because California's history contains some juicy chapters on the persecution of minority races -- from the days of '49 when a "Chinaman's chance" was an expression meaning no chance at all, to the Grapes of Wrath years not so long ago when even old American stock in the person of Oklahoma and Arkansas "white Aryans" were pushed around and stopped at the state border, because they were an economic minority?

Or was it because the Japanese were just unpopular?

Or was it because when the Japanese were ousted in that spring of 1942, when invasion by the militarists of Japan seemed imminent (strange as it seems now!) it was easy for some people to grab their property and businesses for ten cents on the dollar -- and didn't want to disgorge?

Perhaps all three reasons contributed. The Japanese were unpopular because they were hard workers and there are a lot of folks who don't like to see a minority race succeed.

True, the Japanese had stayed off relief -- in Los Angeles the average number on Los Angeles County Relief (entire county) was only 25 before the evacuation. They were almost never drunk or disorderly by the police records. They did well in school -- not because of high Iq's but because

they were assiduous in their studies. They were painstaking about such things as hand craftsmanship, penmanship and repetitive details -- things the average American feels beneath him. In short, they had taken a leaf from Horatio Alger....

But another school of thought will tell you that the Issei (born in Japan and unable to become citizens under our alien exclusion law) bought Japanese bonds and sympathized with the Emperor....Granted; many of them did; all first-generation folks feel a bond of loyalty to their home country; they would be ungrateful otherwise. The Nisei, or second-generation, born in America and therefore citizens of the U. S., had a knack for acquiring American customs quickly; many of them were more American than the average of Americans....and those who had gone back to Japan had contempt for the cheap-jack mode of living that Shig Yamamoto and his fellow Joe Doakes of Tokyo were obliged to suffer under the emperor.

True it is that no American Japanese were guilty of sabotage either before, during or after Pearl Harbor -- that was true both on the mainland and in Hawaii. Some will tell you that the dangerous Issei were picked up by the FBI right after Pearl Harbor, so they had no chance to do anything. That, of course, is mere surmise. It is a matter of record that they did not, before the war, cluster around military and naval installations such as the big naval base at Terminal Island, with malice aforethought; for they moved to such localities to work for industries that sought them, long before any military or naval connections were brought in by the government.

They will tell you that Japanese breed like rabbits -- but the U. S. Census shows that actually the American Japanese birth rate is less than that of the nation as a whole.

But there were some professional Jap-baiters, ostensibly bearers of unbiased facts, actually paid trouble-makers representing certain groups such as produce merchants, who reiterated these basic untruths, paying no attention to refutations, thereby using the same tactics as Hitler used in Germany -- repetition of half a dozen vicious but simple lies about a racial minority.

The unthinking picked these up and passed them on. Yet the great majority of Californians were unwilling to go along with them. Most people especially in southern California sympathized with the underdog, believed in fair play, resented seeing others pushed around.

Enough were inoculated with the poison, however, to create a series of incidents that cropped up from time to time. These incidents were intended to intimidate the would-be returnees. They did not have that effect, however. And actually they accomplished their return -- by raising up, as an antidote, many groups of public-spirited people who went to bat for the American Japanese for the same reason that they believed in democracy and the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

What were these incidents?

On the following pages are some of the highlights -- by selecting a typical few are indicated the effect as a whole.

Here is an incident that occurred when the Japanese Americans first began to reappear in this community -- South Pasadena. Up to that time unthinking folks may have believed that all people of Japanese ancestry were some sort of banished criminals.

In any event, two customers of Japanese ancestry came into Pete Kermode's Diamond Grocery at 1019 Mission St., South Pasadena, early in June, 1945. Here was a social problem presented suddenly to Kermode's clerks. One of them, Doug Spires, apprentice butcher, apparently classed all Japanese as enemies, for he refused to wait upon them and enlisted two women clerks into the same state of mind. There was an argument between Kermode and his employees. Kermode is a first generation American of a naturalized father born on the Island of Man, and a naturalized mother born in England. Kermode at that time had three brothers serving in the U. S. Army and Navy overseas.

The result of the argument with his employees was that Kermode advised them to quit if they didn't see the situation in the democratic light. Kermode felt rather deeply about the meaning of Americanism, and said later that "the government and the army have told these people they can come home and they have the same right to buy groceries as anybody else."

The employees quit, and a few days later there appeared on Kermode's store, during the night, two "rising suns" painted in red on the side portals of the market entrance, and the words "Jap trade wanted" in white across the front doors.

Who had painted these was a mystery, but not too much of a mystery. Kermode did not make any accusations, however; he simply asked the police to investigate.

Keenly aware of the underlying issues, he said he would prefer to go broke rather than submit to intolerant treatment of any customers.

Of course he had the rising suns and the words removed. A few days later he answered his phone and heard a voice imitating a Japanese accent, asking for him. This inquirer described himself as a returned Japanese American and pretended to thank Kermode for the stand he had taken. Kermode answered that he did not see how he could take any other stand than one of equal service to customers regardless of race. At that the caller suddenly broke into his normal American voice, apparently, and using profanity said "I'm going to shoot you on sight. If I ever come across you driving a car I'm going to run you into the ditch and finish you off." Kermode mentioned this call to the police, but was not intimidated by it.

It was obvious that Kermode's threateners were not students of sociological matters. Their prejudices were not based on any deep-reasoned ratiocinations.... Usually it has been that way; the unthinking, the uninformed, or the simply ignorant are easily touched off by inflammatory emotional appeals from paid agents of those who have some economic reason for discriminating against racial minorities. Certainly there is seldom any evidence of a desire to get at the truth, nor even of an ability to reason it out.

Fashions come and go in Southern California. Styles in public attitudes likewise change. Like a contagious epidemic, a mood may grip the public -- and pass out a short time after, having run its course. Such was the case shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Everyone knew California would be invaded. If so, wouldn't the Japanese Americans be on the side of the invaders? "A Jap is a Jap." A poisonous statement, that; ignoring utterly the fact that these people were Americans, not Japs; they were no more disciples of the Emperor than Americans of German descent were taking orders from Hitler.

But no one took time for thought. A wave of mass hysteria swept California, and as a result the American Japanese were ousted in an unprecedented -- and undemocratic -- demonstration of prejudice that declared a man a villain because of his race. Constitutional? No one pretended that it was. To clear out a few possible dangerous people (even though the FBI had already known the dangerous ones, and picked them up the day after Pearl Harbor) the whole structure of democracy was attacked -- for this eviction of the Japanese would serve in future years as a precedent to be used against others.....

It was popular to condemn the Japanese Americans then. Soon it became popular to discriminate against them by snatching their goods and property that they had left behind. And then, as they began to return, the fad was to create small incidents of some sort -- for people read in some papers accounts of how these returnees were being treated, and felt it would be

remiss if they, the general public, did not indicate their dislike by some sort of snub, passive or active. Thus was set a fashion in public attitude. But, in time --

The pendulum swung back, and people saw that the Japanese Americans were the victims of unfounded resentment. Then it became popular to regard them as the underdogs, and go out of one's way to show a spirit of democracy toward them.

But, meantime, incidents occurred.

In the same month as the Kermode incident, Mary Yamamura of 1022 South Fedora St., Los Angeles, found a paper on the porch of her family's house on which was written:

"Get out of town or we will burn your house....."

It was signed, "The Web." On the paper was drawn the picture of a spider in a web.

But the house was not burned....Nor did the Yamamuras get out of town. Was the threat the work of children who had read too many funny papers? Probably no one will ever know. To the Yamamuras there was no comic aspect to it, at least.

When Mary Yamamura's husband was leaving his house one June morning (1945), a woman honked her automobile horn at him. He went over to find what she wanted. She asked pointedly: "You're a Jap, aren't you?" and she told him: "You'd better get out of town at once."

Little matters, weren't they? No one killed, no one shot at, no one beaten up. But imagine yourself one of an unpopular minority -- perhaps as a Jew in Germany in the early days of the Nazis -- and consider how these small events would have affected you. Would you have slept well?

Houses were burned in Southern California....property pillaged and stolen and ransacked and pilfered and "appropriated" -- all without compensation. A house here today, another there tomorrow -- they did not make headlines, to be sure.

There was Paul Yokota's chicken ranch at 1167 Stewart-Gray Road, Downey, near Los Angeles. When he was evacuated in 1942 he leased his ranch to a caucasian. The rent was never paid. Brooders were removed from the ranch by the tenant, without Yokota's permission, and never accounted for. On January 8, 1944, ~~the Yokota residence~~ the Yokota residence burned to the ground. Very little of the household goods was saved. There was no insurance. Later in the year there was theft and vandalism at the property. Considerable equipment was missing. Nothing was ever accounted for by the tenant.

Did the tenant go on the theory that one of Japanese descent had no rights? So some Germans of the Nazi party reasoned against the Jews.

The fact that there were shootings, but mostly into houses either above the heads of occupants or when they were absent; that there were house burnings, but at times when the residents managed to get away with their lives or else were not present; that there were bottles thrown through windows, but apparently as warnings without intending to hit anyone -- all add up to a well-substantiated theory that the prejudice against the return of the American Japanese was economic, not truly racial.

For when they did return -- being above intimidation -- there was not one single instance of mass resentment. On the contrary, there were mass acclamations on their behalf!

In Northern California conditions were rougher. Sec. Ickes declared in the spring of 1945 that "gangs of terrorists and hoodlums" were operating unmolested after the fashion of Nazi stormtroopers. He was referring to Northern California. He continued: "In the absence of vigorous local law enforcement, a pattern of planned terrorism by hoodlums has developed. It is a matter of national concern because this lawless minority seems determined to employ its Nazi stormtrooper tactics against loyal Japanese Americans and law-abiding Japanese aliens in spite of State laws and constitutional safeguards." California officials, he said bluntly, are to blame for not prosecuting the terrorists.

Nor was there any confused patriotic excuse for the attacks, Ickes declared. The motive "is the desire to set up an economic beachhead on the property of the evacuees they vainly hoped would sell out or run out."

These incidents were world wide news, and in the Orient where our prestige largely depended on our reputation in the matter of the democratic treatment of people of darker skins, they were not unknown. In fact Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, commander of the U. S. 10th Army, was quoted in the CBI Roundup, the GI newspaper in the India theater of war, from New Delhi, India, in October, 1945, as follows:

"The Nisei bought an awful big hunk of America with their blood. You're damn right those Nisei boys have a place in the American heart, now and forever. And I say we soldiers ought to form a pickaxe club to protect Japanese Americans who fought

the war with us. Any time we see a barfly commando picking on these kids or discriminating against them, we ought to bang them over the head with a pickaxe. I'm willing to be a charter member. We cannot allow a single injustice to be done to the Nisei without defeating the purposes for which we fought."

The metropolitan areas were tolerant; in the smaller communities there was a less noble spirit toward the returning Nisei and Issei. Frank Murata, an Issei who had lived in Montebello for 32 years prior to evacuation in 1942, returning in the spring of 1945, went into the restaurant where he had eaten in the old days. Half way through the meal, he was asked abruptly by the proprietor whether or not he was a Jap. He was then seized by the arm and physically ejected. Feeling this was not legal treatment, he went to the police station, but there he was apparently regarded in a similar vein, for the officer told him Montebello was not a good place for Japs and he had better leave.

The matter didn't drop there. The WRA looked into it and found that Dan Marshall, well known for his fair attitude and executive board chairman of the Los Angeles Catholic Inter-Racial Council, also happened to be city attorney at Montebello. Marshall suggested that a WRA relocation officer talk with the Montebello chief of police. The chief of police, it was found, knowing Murata for twenty years, was not in accord with his officer's attitude, and felt that the California laws against discrimination in eating places must be upheld.

It turned out too that the officer who had admonished Murata about Montebello's inhospitality toward people of his race, had not intended to convey a personal dislike, but merely felt that in view of the "public attitude" Murata would do well to move elsewhere.

And who was responsible for this display of venom toward this elderly Issei? The restaurant proprietor, who, it turned out, was an immigrant from Greece, and had lived in Montebello only one year! Where had he found his ideas of democracy? Since coming to America, he said, he had learned "never to have any dealings with Japs and niggers." The WRA officer had a heart-to-heart chat with him and at its conclusion the Greek admitted his education in America was not yet completed....

Thus were displays of dislike focused through the weakest members of society....and on reading about them in the press, others were led to believe they were representative of the public as a whole. But when run down, investigated, it would invariably turn out that the persecutors of minorities were themselves the rankest kind of minorities -- and, once someone with a little courage spoke up on behalf of democracy, a thousand others showed their approbation of real Americanism by letters to the press and activity through fair play committees of one sort or another.

That was the story in southern California. It was amazing not that there were incidents, but that there were so many committees taking a stand on behalf of the Japanese Americans

for no reason except good-will and belief in democracy. Serving on these committees were people in important walks of life to whom the Japanese Americans were strangers. They had no axe to grind, no desire for publicity, no way of turning a penny from the unselfish hours they contributed toward the practical furthering of anti-racist ideals. They simply felt that, as has been said by the late Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart. Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

A motor car dealer in Los Angeles, in April, 1945, wanted to hire some Nisei mechanics available through WRA, for there was a great shortage of good mechanics then. The shop foreman, however, said there was no place for them in the shop. An automotive trades bureau was called by the U. S. Employment Service about it. The bureau told the USES representative over the phone: "Sure, send them over, I want to personally insult them and tell other members of the bureau to do the same."

Perhaps it was because the uninformed public did not realize these returning Americans of Japanese ancestry had all been approved for loyalty by the Army, or FBI, or Dept. of Justice, or else they would not have been allowed to come back. The Army was responsible for this loyalty OK; not the WRA. Perhaps the public reasoned this way: "If these people were not guilty of something, why were they thrown out of California by the government?"

It was not easy for the government to explain that, for

it was wrapped up in the question of whether the military authorities were right when they reasoned that in case of invasion, the California Japanese might be mistaken for the enemy, and so for their own protection should be excluded until the danger of invasion was over.

Then there was a business college in Los Angeles that had had many Nisei students prior to evacuation, and, in 1945, when the Japanese began to return, said that they did not think it advisable to accept them at that time. Questioned why, they said that the returned veterans studying at their college would object. But it was found generally that the returned veterans not only had no prejudice against the Nisei, but went out of their way to say a good word for them -- they knew of the famous 100th Battalion.

The state universities accepted the returnees without question; they resumed their places in scholastic life without any indication one way or the other that there was anything unusual about it all.

William Katsuki, a sixty-year-old Issei, on short-term leave from Manzanar, dropped into West Los Angeles in March, 1945, where he had been well known for many years as a very devout Christian man. He called to see a blacksmith there whom he had patronized for over twenty years, thinking to say hello again to a trusted and true friend. But the blacksmith grabbed a hammer, raised it threateningly over his head and ordered him out, stating at the time that he hated all Japs.

Not all "Japs" were unmistakably "Japs". It is not easy to tell the difference between some Japanese, some Chinese, some

Filipinos, some Koreans.... A good many returnees have been mistaken for Chinese by the Chinese themselves -- or, we should say, by Americans of Chinese ancestry! For that reason the returnees would pass unnoticed by the general public, for even if they had time to bother about them, they could not be sure they were Japanese. And, it turned out, the general public did not care one way or the other. Pearl Harbor was long past; the "Jap danger" in California had skyrocketed and plummeted to earth. People no longer thought of moving east to escape the invasion danger; no longer looked under their beds of nights, as they did shortly after Pearl Harbor, figuratively at least, lest agents of the Black Dragon society, sent by the emperor, be waiting to pounce upon them.

People began to remember that in their dealings with the Japanese, despite all propaganda to the contrary, they had been treated satisfactorily. The American Japanese had been fairly courteous, kindly, considerate, and had refrained from gypping them. True, as the Native Sons said, they did not assimilate. The American Legion condemned the Nisei for this unassimilability -- and in another breath condemned the thought that they might assimilate and inter-marry! And the Native Sons later retracted "unassimilability" as their main objection, and admitted that loyalty was the important thing. Then they found that loyalty of the returnees had been OK'd by the Army; and their objections subsided, except that, when nearly all the WRA centers were closed and most of the evacuated Japanese who intended to return to California were already back, they urged Congress to keep the

centers open lest the returnees take housing away from the veterans who were also coming back!

The WRA wrote in a report of incidents recently submitted to headquarters:

"Incidents had the initial effect of frightening certain Nisei and Issei in the centers, it is true. Exaggerated as were reports of trivial incidents, evacuees imagined dire, drastic mob action upon setting foot again in Southern California. When they discovered practically no one paid much attention to them, they soon felt at home. But it was still not easy for them to convince those still in centers.

"The first relocatee to Los Angeles said six months after his return: 'The good news never reaches the centers; only the bad. Look at my nursery greenhouses -- a whole block of glass on a busy boulevard. Not a pane has been broken.'" (Bob Goka, West Los Angeles, on Wilshire Blvd.)

It was interesting to note the reasons some people had for opposing the return of the evacuees. Harry Schlegal, a rancher, living near Oasis, was reported to be the head of a group opposing their coming back. He was also clerk of the school board there. Investigation indicated that he had borrowed some implements from Nisei who were being evacuated, but when they came back, Schlegal refused to return the implements. It happened that several Nisei children went into a confectionery store operated by a Mexican American, near the local school, and were refused service. The school principal called attention of the store proprietor to this breach of

democracy, and the proprietor, seeing the situation in its true light, immediately stopped discriminating. However, this action by the school principal apparently angered Mr. Schlegal, so that for a time the principal's job was in jeopardy. Fair play won out as others came to her support, and the matter died down.

Then there was the case of the Nichiren Buddhist Church at 2806 East First St., Los Angeles. A woman named Mae Welfelt was the duly appointed custodian of this church during the absence of the Japanese Americans in relocation centers. She occupied the parsonage next door. Her appointment was by power of attorney under the name of Mae White.

In July, 1943, the police arrested two men in the church, with their truck waiting outside the side entrance, but Mrs. White told the authorities that one of the men was acting as her "caretaker" and so had a right to be in the church that night. Nothing had been taken at that time, and the men were subsequently released.

A few days later Mrs. White called the police and asked for the arrest of the "caretaker" on the ground that he had stolen her radio.

WRA investigated at that time, having just received the police report on the "caretaker" phase of the matter. The side door of the church was found broken upon. Inside everything was in chaos. All the trunks were found ransacked with contents scattered on the floor. Most of the crated items had been broken open, and all the refrigerators, stoves, washing machines and radios stored in them had been stolen.

At the same time Mrs. Welfelt, or White, the custodian, disappeared, and was reported to have taken two truckloads of furniture with her, though when she had first moved in she had little or no furniture of her own. Her husband was located, but she had not been living with him and he had no idea of her whereabouts.

As usual photographs were taken of the vandalism. No trace of the guilty was found by police, and the matter apparently died in the hands of the city attorney.

S. Sakaguchi of 3575 South Western Ave., Los Angeles, sold his 4-door Plymouth sedan to one Cornelius Griggs of the same address. Griggs in turn sold the car without authority to another caucasian. In addition to the car, Sakaguchi sold Griggs his flower and nursery business. Unpaid balances of \$85 on the car and \$500 on the nursery were never taken care of by Griggs. WRA investigated, and found Griggs claimed to hold a bill of sale covering the transaction. But he refused to let the WRA representative examine it. "Out of the many hundreds of cases handled," wrote WRA property management specialist Sloan, in his report, "this is one of the most cold blooded examples of arrogant challenge...." The matter was referred to the courts.

Nor did local law enforcement officials take their responsibilities too seriously in some instances. There was the case of Yataro Minami's "Today's Fish Market" in Guadalupe, that town of many races in the salad bowl district near Santa Maria, California. The personal property of Minami and several other evacuees was stored in a building owned by Manuel T. Maderas.

The Sheriff's office in Guadalupe had a report dated February 20, 1943, setting forth that Fred Shaffer had reported to the Sheriff's office that the building had been broken into. Fourteen months later the matter was called to the attention of WRA. The Sheriff's report did not indicate that the Sheriff's office had attempted to communicate with Mr. Maderas or with any governmental agency to the end that further vandalism could be prevented.

The WRA investigation on April 17, 1944, made right after WRA received word of the incident, showed that a large amount of personal property stored on the second floor of the building had been thoroughly vandalized. Clothing, furniture, boxes, trunks were scattered all over the floor. All trunks and boxes had been broken into and ransacked.

John Takahashi, a nurseryman of Gardena, had his house windows smashed on four different nights in June, 1945, by rocks thrown by unknown persons as he slept. Gardena was noted at that time as a town that had several "No Japs Wanted" signs in store windows, instigated by one of those "citizens committees" that conveyed the impression "everybody" was back of them, although almost no one could be found who would admit belonging to it. Their plan was to pressure stores into displaying the cards on the supposition that not to do so would indicate they were "Jap lovers."

It was in Gardena, too, that the names of Nisei soldiers on the honor roll of the city were being removed as a result of certain agitation which seemed to be traced to the California Nurserymen's Association, which also had a boycott that prevented wholesalers selling to Japanese American nursery retailers. The boycott broke down when the members of the association realized that (as one big seed company manager put it) "if Uncle Sam says it's OK for you to be here, we might as well do business with you." The WRA investigated the matter of the honor roll and engaged in an informal educational program in the community, as a result of which the names were replaced.

The unions were not free from discrimination, although this was not true of them as a whole but merely of two or three locals that had their own ideas of democracy. The teamsters in Los Angeles supported the produce merchants boycott and refused to admit Nisei members. In December, 1945, however, they finally voted to accept them. In Long Beach three Nisei employed at the California Sea Food fish packing plant met with an obstacle in the form of a threat by a number of union employees to walk out if the Japanese Americans remained. WRA was notified and conferred with the company and union officials. A statement of policy was agreed to by management and by the union, and the signed statements were posted on the bulletin board. There was no walkout; two weeks later 50 more Nisei and Issei were employed at

the same plant and all have been admitted to the union, which is an AFofL affiliate. It is interesting to note that CIO "went to bat" for the Nisei almost from the start, and in December, 1945, at San Diego, a CIO fish packing house local (No. 64 of the CIO Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers Union) pledged "never to discriminate against a fellow worker because of creed, color, nationality, religious or political belief."

Local 64 is the only San Diego union that has a clause in its contract forbidding discrimination because of ancestry, nationality, creed or color on the part of either the company or the union; the contract is with the Van Camp Sea Foods Company.

There was much talk about the hostility of the Filipinos toward the Nisei -- based on surmises following the atrocities committed in the Philippines by the Japanese Army. "People" said "they" would make trouble for the returnees -- and pinning them down to a definition of the word "they", it turned out that they referred to the Filipino farm workers who might be egged on by certain agricultural interests that didn't wish competition. Actually, it turned out that the minorities recognized the value of sticking together. Filipinos, Chinese and Japanese might have been blood brothers -- and when the first Nisei returned to hot-spot Guadalupe, where it was rumored there would be knives flashed, the Chinese restaurant proprietor invited them to dinner on the house.

Not that there wasn't some inter-racial hostility,

but it didn't have a racial basis. In West Los Angeles an empty whisky bottle with a warning note was tossed at night into a living room window, just missing a baby. It turned out that either Mexicans or Filipinos, resenting losing a gardening contract to returning Japanese Americans, had taken this way of preventing, as they thought, the upsetting of their economic apple cart. However, the Japanese Americans, while nervous about such happenings, refused to be intimidated.

Then there was a case in Los Angeles when Henry H. Arao was attacked and beaten by two Filipinos in the "Little Tokyo" district of Los Angeles (now "Bronzeville".) A Filipino was arrested for it. The WRA called upon Filipino leaders and asked them to educate their people against race tensions. There was no recurrence.

Once in a while a "professional veteran" burst forth with some misguided patriotism. There was Frank A. Keidel, commander of Lomita Post No. 1622, VFW, who said in the press that he would "lead the fight in Southern California to keep the Japs out." When informed how matters stood, he changed his position. The VFW nationally did not support such actions.

The California State Board of Equalization, early in 1945, apparently placing its action upon the shoulders of William Bonelli, Los Angeles Board member, decided to give the Issei (not the Nisei) a good run-around in the matter of getting sales tax (business license) permits.

It was well known that all returnees, both Issei and Nisei, had been OK'd by the Army or else they would not be back. Yet the Board told Issei applicants that before their application for a sales tax permit could be approved, it would be necessary for them to get special letters of approval from both the Army and Navy! The Army and Navy, having no control over civil affairs, could not issue such letters; which, of course, the Board must have known. The Board had no legal ground for this high-handed ruling, which was clearly a case of racial discrimination (Bonelli was noted for his antipathy toward the Japanese Americans) based on red-tape subterfuge. Finally the matter went to the courts, but the Board, knowing it had no authority under the law for its action, rescinded its attitude and agreed to issue all permits promptly in future, which it did. It is to be noted that the California state attorney general, Robert W. Kenny, had already notified the Board that it had no legal sanction for this holding up of Issei applications.

The U. S. Employment Service, under federal rules, is bound not to discriminate by reason of race, creed or color. Yet there are many ways for individual interviewers to refrain from sending to any job an applicant whom the interviewer does not hold in personal favor.

Reports came trickling back of unwillingness on the part of certain interviewers to show any genuine consideration toward the job problems of Japanese Americans. Contacts

with U.S.E.S. officials plus an educational campaign using speakers and 16-mm. sound films portraying the genuine worth of the Nisei as shown by their part in the war as soldiers of the U. S. 100th Battalion, and in other ways, led to a gradual correction of this situation. The speakers were Army officers who had led the Nisei in battle both in Europe and in the Pacific, and who therefore had first-hand knowledge of their loyalty.

The 442d Infantry, of which the 100th Battalion was a unit, was noted as the most decorated outfit in the Army -- over 4,000 Purple Hearts alone.

Kay Kunisaki was not a veteran -- beyond that age -- just a returnee from Heart Mountain. He went back to his old job selling vegetables in a Hollywood super-market. Soon he received two letters in the mail warning him to leave. It turned out they were written by a crank. Kunisaki not only did not leave, but was welcomed back by many who learned of his presence through the caucasian owner of the super-market, who did not hesitate to speak up for his Nisei employee.

That was the essence of the complaints against the returnees -- they broke out when the Japanese Americans first started to return, before the unreasoning public had a chance to ask itself whether they did not have a perfect legal and ethical right to be back. As it became clear they did have such a

right, and therefore their detractors were definitely not on the bandwagon of public opinion as they superficially imagined, they ceased bothering about the relocatees.

Near Rosamond, north of Lancaster, above Los Angeles in the Antelope Valley country, the Kobayashis returned in March, 1945, to resume life in their farm homes. There were the Teiji Kobayashis and the Fred Kobayashis -- two different families -- living several miles apart in this region. At both homes, on different nights, the residents were awakened by shots which, it turned out, hit no one but penetrated the upper part of one house and went apparently over the house in the other case. The Kobayashis were terrified.

In the case of the Teiji Kobayashis, investigation by WRA disclosed that the caucasian who had rented their farm had left taking with him all of the farm equipment without any authority.

Firing into homes was much more common in Northern California, especially in the upper San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. It seemed to be the commonly accepted warning for a while.

Warning signs placed on property or scrawled on garages and stores, was the Southern California technique. Mostly these signs were illiterate and abusive. But one college professor at Caltech who hired back his old Japanese gardener found a rising sun painted on his garage.

This did not faze him -- he took no action other than to report it to the police and have the sign removed. "Whodunit" was not discovered, but it is believed that in such cases the signs were scrawled by disgruntled former employees.

At Torrance, near Los Angeles, in May, 1945, an old Japanese schoolhouse was damaged by young vandals. The same day in Los Angeles the Native Sons pressured a firm for hiring a Nisei girl. At Venice, not far away, 100 landowners had passed a resolution the previous day against admitting Japanese Americans, and a produce firm refused to accept produce packed by Japanese. Damage to the extent of \$135 was done to farm crops owned by a caucasian who had hired a Japanese worker; and two small signs were tacked on a farm warning the owner who had hired two Japanese. All this in 24 hours. But then for several days there would be a period when nothing happened. "Incidents" would break out like the measles, run their course, and be forgotten until the next rise in temperature.

There was the Nitta family of Santa Ana (NOTE: WE HAVE A COMPLETE FILE ON THIS WELL KNOWN CASE) and the Mary Masuda incident at Talbert -- Gen. Stilwell flew from Washington in December, 1945, to hand her the DSC earned by her brother Kazuo, killed at Cassino (NOTE: THIS WELL KNOWN INCIDENT ALSO HAS A COMPLETE FILE). "West Coast Incidents", a leaflet of press clippings, covers many cases of hoodlum terrorism (NOTE: WE HAVE A COPY IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY GOT ONE.)

NOTE: The pamphlet "West Coast Incidents" and the pamphlet "Story of the Nittas" are attached. For the best story of the Mary Masuda case, see the Pacific Citizen (weekly) -- first three weeks of Dec., 1945. We have a file, or you can get it at the L. A. office of the Citizen; phone MICHigan 5820 for the Citizen.

When the WRA proposed that returning Nisei be housed in unused old Army barracks at Burbank in the San Fernando Valley, "war was declared by Burbank on the U. S." according to the Burbank press. Burbank objected because, they claimed, the Nisei had not come from their city and therefore should not be put there now. However, when it came to a showdown, the city attorney found that the U. S. Government took precedence over local building regulations; and the Japanese Americans moved in -- without causing any great distress to the people of Burbank, either!

In the late summer of 1945 the public learned of the balloons sent by the Japanese military forces to float over the Pacific and land in the U. S. A San Luis Obispo County rancher got all excited about such a ballon bomb that he asserted was drifting in north of San Luis Obispo. Deputies were sent to investigate, and watched a little, shining dot high in the sky with apprehension. Then one of them remembered something he had read -- and solved the mystery. That Japanese balloon was the planet Venus, which at certain times of the year is visible as a tiny silvery ball in the daytime sky.

Gerald L. K. Smith came to the West Coast in 1945, and while he maligned the Jews and Negroes, he said almost nothing about the Japanese Americans. Perhaps it was because he sensed that public sympathy was with

them, as underdogs; perhaps he felt they were just small-fry, for after all there were only 126,000 of them in the U. S. (1940 census); or perhaps, as others had found out, money was no longer forthcoming from the interests that wished to keep them out for economic reasons, such as the produce merchants boycott bloc.

The Native Sons raised their gentlemanly though not too intelligent voice from time to time, (Mentioned previously in this account.) A "white California" seemed to be their basic objective; but the trend of the times was against them. To Los Angeles alone over 100,000 Negroes had come during the war; forty different races held forth in this teeming city; it was a city of minorities, whether the Native Sons liked it or not, and despite the early-day Chamber of Commerce aspirations.

As to Dr. John R. Lechner -- he is a story in himself. (See the attached literature on Lechner, which tells all about him quite fully.)

The anti-Japanese Americans have had their say and gone on to new fields. The return of the Nisei and Issei is now a fait accompli. The sound and fury is forgotten. People of California are today not desirous of recalling that at one time, shortly after Pearl Harbor, they could have become so worked up over what turned out to be a matter of no great importance.

And how many returnees are back? Here are the current figures, compared with those of the last census,

i.e., the U. S. Census of 1940: -- for Southern California:

POPULATION, ALL PEOPLE OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

<u>Area</u>	<u>1940 Census</u>	<u>Estimate, Jan. 15, 1946</u>
California	93,717	43,000
Los Angeles County (including city)	36,866	16,000
Los Angeles City	23,321	11,000
Ventura County	672	175
San Luis Obispo County	925	150
Santa Barbara County	2,187	750
San Diego County	2,076	900
Imperial County	1,583	200
Orange County	1,855	600
Riverside County	552	400
San Bernardino County	346	175
TOTAL 9 SO. CALIF. COUNTIES	47,062	19,350

Relocation of course was completed by early Dec., 1945,
except for a few thousand still at Tule Lake.

Those not back on the Coast have relocated in the east,
of course.

AS TO NAMES OF POLICE WHO INVESTIGATED INCIDENTS:

We do not have such names in our file. Suggest trying
FBI, Bureau Naval Intelligence, Office Military Intelligence,
Sheriff's Office, City Police, etc. Not easy to get such
names.