

Interviewer's code

Ken Morioka

Ben Matsuoka (psued.)

Cross Ref.: CH-42

Evacuation and Resettlement Study,
February, 1944 (Revised)

SCHEDULE FOR INDIVIDUAL RESETTLERS

Date of interview July 28, 1944 Interviewer C. Kikuchi

1. Case number CH-43 2. Sex, M F 3. Marital stat. M S D W O

4. Present address 1930 N. Bissell Entered July '44 Left

5. Later addresses _____ Date _____
" " _____
" " _____
" " _____
" " _____

6. Birthplace Berkeley, Calif. 7. Birthdate 1929

8. Alien or Citizen Citizen 9. Nisei, Kibei or Issei Nisei

10. Addresses between Dec. 1, 1941 and evacuation

	Date	Entered	Left
(a) <u>Berkeley, Calif.</u>	"	<u>Aug. '40</u>	<u>Mar. '42</u>
(b) <u>Los Angeles, Calif.</u>	"	<u>Mar. '42</u>	<u>5-5-42</u>
(c) _____	"	_____	_____
(d) _____	"	_____	_____
(e) _____	"	_____	_____

11. Assembly Center Tulare Date 5-5-42 9-'42

12. Relocation Center Gila Date 9-'42 6-'43

13. Addresses since leaving Relocation Center
(prior to "present address")

	Entered	Left
(a) <u>Edgewater Beach Hotel</u>		
(b) <u>3300 Lake Shore</u>	<u>7-'43</u>	<u>6-30-44</u>
(c) _____	_____	_____
(d) _____	_____	_____
(e) _____	_____	_____
(f) _____	_____	_____
(g) _____	_____	_____

14. Family members living together on December 1, 1941.

Relationship to

Resettler	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Occupation	Religion
(a) <u>Ken</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>Berkeley</u>	<u>Ice Plant Asst.</u>	<u>Buddhist</u>
(b) <u>Midori</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>F</u>			<u>Christian</u>
(c) _____					
(d) _____					
(e) _____					
(f) _____					
(g) _____					
(h) _____					
(i) _____					
(j) _____					

CH-43

15. What members of family listed in 14 evacuated together to Assembly Center?

Give symbols

See CH-42

What other related persons?

Relationship to Resettler	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Occupation (as of Dec. 1, 1941)
(a)				
(b)				
(c)				
(d)				
(e)				
(f)				

16. What members listed in 14 or 15 above went together to Relocation Project?

Give symbols

What other related persons?

Relationship to Resettler	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Occupation (as of Dec. 1, 1941)
(a)				
(b)				
(c)				
(d)				
(e)				
(f)				

17. Family members living together in Chicago

Address

symbol

(see 13)

Entered	Left	Relationship to Resettler	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Occupation (at date of interview)
(a)						
(b)						
(c)						
(d)						
(e)						
(f)						
(g)						
(h)						

18. Educational history of resettler

Grammar schools (name and location)

Dates

Grade completed

High schools (name and location)

Dates

Grade completed

Berkeley High School

Colleges, universities and vocational
schools, (name and location)

Dates

Grade
completed

Degree

Attendance at Japanese language
school, location

Dates

Gakuen in Berkeley

19. Occupational history (begin with first job). Note periods of unemployment by entering dates continuously and writing "unemp" in Job column to cover such periods. Include employment in Assembly Center and Relocation Project and continue with employment since resettling. Reason

and continue with employment since resettling.					Reason
Dates					for ter-
From	To	Nature of job	Type of industry	Location	Av. mo. wages
7-44	--	Plumber		Chicago	
7-43	7-44	Houseman	Domestic	"	\$160 cpl quit
6-43	8-44	Houseman	Edgewater Bch Hotel		
		Plumber	WCCA	Tulare	
		Plumber	WRA center	Gila	
11-41	3-42	Ice Plant Asst.	Mark Hopkins	Hotel SF	evacua.
1940	1941	Gardener & brick layer		Berkeley	
		spent 3 years in Japan after high school			
May 42	44	At	Atlas Box factory		

20. Political activities

Dates	Voted in what elections	For what party

CH. 43 Kenneth Seiji Morioka

2. Gila River 9/4/42
3. Tulare 5/6/42
4. 8410 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, Calif.
5. Morioka, T. (dec.) Japan
Morikawa, Aki Japan
- 5a. U.S. Cook
7. Grammar school, Berkeley, Whittier, Calif. 1926-1928
High school, Calif. 1933 to 1938
- 7a. Special Honor: typing, speed
8. Japan 1928-1930
12. 66 140 lbs.
- 13 No major defects
18. Married
19. Head
20. 8/20/20
23. No
24. H1.4
25. Speaks Japanese and Spanish
27. Contractor
- 27a. ---
28. 10/5/42 WRA Gila River Foreman-Plumber \$19 mo.
5/9 to 9/42 Tulare WCCA, Tulare, Calif. Foreman-plumber \$16 mo.
4/42 to 5/42 Los Angeles Nursery, Sales Clerk Nursery (helper) none
10/41 to 3/42 Mark Hopkins Hotel, S.F., Hotel engineer, Iceplant,
upkeep and gen. maintenance \$300 mo.
1939 to 1941 Self--contractor, concrete. Contractor for various
Berkeley, Calif. construction jobbers. \$150 mo.
1938 to 1939 Various employers Truck driver; route work between
Sacramento-San Francisco \$5 day
El Amego Delivered flowers to market
12/37 to 1/38 Santa Maria, Calif. Sales Clerk-store electrical
appliance such as radio,
toaster, and refrigerators.
29. Skills: bricklaying, tile setting, Civil Service rating.
Plumbing, concrete work, and cement finishing
Hobbies: Reading, fishing, hunting.
O.P. Construction work.
30. Buddhist
31. #7 Hills Electrical Engineering School for short period.

Kenneth's wife, Midori Morioka, see CH.42

Charles Kikuchi
Evacuation and Resettlement Study
Chicago, Illinois
July 31, 1944

Ch-43 Ben Masuoka (pseud.)

Ben Masuoka, 25, is the husband of Masako Masuoka (Ch-42) and cross references should be made to this case.

Ben during his year and a half in Chicago has been seeking various ways to make a profit out of organizing some group among the Nisei. He is interested in creating a Nisei society for this purpose. During the period that he was working as a domestic he was able to find time to organize the Nisei orchestra, which went out of existence several months ago due to lack of cooperation, personality differences, and other factors.

Ben has a difficult problem in resettlement because of his two children. A greater part of this story was related by his wife. (Ch-42.)

Ben has recently been employed as a plumber and he does a number of jobs on his own during the evening hours so that the formal interview with him was indefinitely postponed. However there are a number of comments scattered through his diary on this individual so that they will be brought together at this time.

Please excuse bad typing. Louise is very busy these days.

Notes on Ben Masuoka from Ck. diary.

Nov 15, 1943 (quoting Bob (ch-13): "I don't care what Mr. Shirrell says about the formation of Nisei groups. I think that Nisei social are absolutely necessary and we have to get together for our social life. You know yourself that kakujins won't completely accept us. That is why we have to have our own dances and parties. We (Ben M. and Bob.) hope to get this band ready in a short time so that we can give some dances for the Nisei. We don't hope to make too much money out of this, since it costs about \$200 to put on a dance. I am going to be the vocalist for the outfit. We had our first work-out this afternoon but some friction has developed. Some lady (Ben's employer) gave us a subsidy as she was interested in helping the Nisei get a normal social life. However, there is a difference of opinion among the band members. They don't know whether to emphasize sweet or swing music. I thought that if we had too much of the jitterbug stuff, the dances would be a failure because too many yagores would show up. I'd rather have a little more of the sweet since that is my style of singing. I like jitterbug a lot, but we have to think about drawing the nice group of Nisei to the dances."

.....

Nov. 22, 1944

(Met Ben at Ch-25's home.)

While we were eating, Ben Masuoka dropped in and I had a very interesting conversation with him, although we certainly differed in opinion. Ben is working for a Mr. Walker who is a very successful seed and fertilizer dealer. He lives on Lake

Shore Drive in a building occupied by the society people. Ben and his wife work in the home and they also have two children there. There is only Mr. Walker and his wife that they have to do work for. Evidently Ben has a very good relationship with his employer. We started to talk about the Nisei groups and Ben said that he believed the only solution of the problem was to get all the Nisei together. He had a very interesting approach to the whole thing, and since he is the one who is organizing the Nisei orchestra, I will attempt to give a rough verbatim account of what he said during the evening.

"I'm trying to organize the Nisei orchestra here, but I have kept my name out of it. I feel that a dance orchestra here is a very good possibility. It will do much to further the Nisei welfare. Here is the way I look at the problem; if I can get a dance orchestra here, I know that I can get bookings for them because musicians are so rare these days. If a Nisei dance band can make a name for itself, it will give a lot of publicity to the Japanese Americans and people will accept them more. It's just like the Nisei combat team, after all, let's not fool ourselves-- We have Japanese faces and we are Japanese, but at the same time we also have American rights. No other group has been split up like they are trying to do to us. It just won't work.

"I would like to see assimilation work out, but I don't think that it is possible in our lifetime. I feel that America owes the Nisei more than the Nisei owes America. It is up to the Nisei to have guts and go out and take what belongs to them. They don't have to crawl and ask for anything. I feel that a dance band will help the Nisei cause. I don't intend to have many large dances given just for Nisei. We had a big fight in the

orchestra last week about this very thing. Tad Yamamoto led an orchestra at Gila and he sided with the Los Angeles yagores who wanted this dance orchestra just for social purposes.

I laid the law down to them and I told them that this was entirely a business proposition and we would not waste time with Nisei groups, although we may sponsor a couple of dances just for the money of it. I feel that instead of having little Nisei groups all around the city making friends with the lowtype people, and getting a bad name for all the Nisei, the best thing to do is to get all the Nisei together in big dances and show the public that they are nice people, just like them. I intend to make these dances strictly invitational and I won't allow those yahoos to come in stag. I'll have policemen at the door to see that they don't come in. I won't have anything like that dance on Saturday night. That was a rat race. There were about 50 girls and 150 fellows there. It was pretty sad. Some of the fellows were drunk but they did not make a disturbance because there were three cops at the door. If I sponsor any dances for my orchestra, I'm going to see to it that only nice couples come. My dance orchestra is composed of about 13 pieces and the fellows are from all over, Seattle down to Los Angeles.

"I have some bookings listed already for night clubs and M_rs. Walker said that she would hire the orchestra for some of her private parties. Maybe I'll skip the Nisei groups all together if we can get a good break. I feel that it is either make or break for us. If we make good, then all of the Nisei groups will follow us and they will start going to nice places like Edgewater Beach Hotel and the Palmer room to dance. That will show the public that we are not low class like the Negroes. "

I asked Ben if he really believed that this would prevent

segregation or whether it would give an impetus towards it and his answer was, "I don't know, but if the rest of the Nisei don't follow us, it is their tough luck. I might as well be frank about it and tell you that I am in this solely for money reasons. It is a business proposition for me. I have the same general goals as you do, but I admit I am selfish about it. If any other Nisei dance orchestras start to form here, I will do everything in my power to stamp it out or buy it off. I don't think that it is possible to weave the Nisei into the caucasian society. No other group has every done that. It is a good idealistic program which I agree with, but I think it is impractical. I figure that I might as well be practical and make what money I can out of it.

"After all, my life has been pretty well mixed up since evacuation. I was making a pretty good go of it before then and I had 10 Nisei working under me in my gardening work in Berkeley. In camp I ran the whole plumbing department and I had about 15 or 20 plumbers working under me. I'm used to having people work for me. Now, I am in a domestic job and although it is pretty good, it is not my way of settling down, even though my boss lends me his car freely. I had big business plans out here but I don't know how far they will go. I'm starting out with this dance orchestra because I think it is a good bet. Even if we have Nisei dances here, we won't have any of that California stuff. We'll make the other Nisei spread out to other places once we get them together, and try to prevent complete segregation."

Den apparently is a little confused in his thinking because he speaks for segregation in one breath and then turns and says that his purpose is to prevent it. It is this

same conflicting thinking which exists in the minds of the majority of the Nisei out here. Ben was able to see that it was a step towards segregation when the Nisei were identified as a group and not as individuals. He could also see it in the economic and political field, but when it came to the social field, he just couldn't get the point as he had a blind spot there. Here he is trying to capitalize the racial factor by having an all-Nisei segregated band in the hope that they will be accepted because of this novelty and not because the band players are good musicians as individuals. The desire for integration is honestly felt by most Nisei, I suppose, but when it comes to the practical application of working toward this goal, then there is utter confusion in methods as well as in goal.

Ben is about 25 years old and naturally he is thinking in terms of his future family security. The following statements he made will indicate that his reasoning for an economic solution of the Nisei problem is not the same as for the social problem. He said, "That damn WRA; they are making things very hard for us. You know what they are doing? They are taking all the job offers from the Jews who want to exploit us and pay us cheap wages just because we are Nisei. The Jews are always out for money and they go around cut-throating. That's no good for the Nisei. The Nisei shouldn't take these jobs the WRA offers. Hell, you can walk down the street and get all kinds of offers for jobs which pay 80 cents an hour or more.

"The WRA doesn't even try to get these jobs for the Nisei and they shove them all down to a Jew place like Cuneo's. Those Nisei working there won't have a chance after the war. They've got to be accepted as individuals now and be taken

on the basis of their skill and individual personality. It's going to hurt them if they work for some Jew who hires them just because they are Japs. When I first came out here, I had that experience. I worked at Edgewater Beach Hotel and they offered me a \$175 month job finally as the chief steward of the Colonial Room. They said that I could have a lot of Japanese working under me but I did not like the idea of working for some Jews who paid the cheapest wages they could just because we were Japanese. That's why I quit that job. Mr. Walker has a fertilizor plant and I have some ideas about that. I think it is this kind of jobs that the Nisei will have the best chance of keeping after the war. They shouldn't sniff at jobs like these. I also have some plans about organizing Nisei gardeners out here like I had in Berkeley.

"I think there is a lot of money in it. I won't let them go out and work for two bits an hour and cut throat each other like they did on the coast. They have to stand up like the next fellow and ask for the same wages; otherwise they will be in a rut. The Nisei don't have guts now and ask what they have coming to them. That's why I don't want to waste too much time with the Nisei. I'm selfish and I'm looking out for myself first of all. I feel that if this country doesn't give us a break I may go to Singapore or even Nihon after the war.

"But I don't know how far the Nisei will get. They are making a good name for themselves in many places now and the employers realize that they are more steady workers than Negroes. That means that the employers ~~realize that they~~ prefer us to Negroes who are usually lazy and shiftless. The Chicago Negroes aren't too bad. I was surprised when I

came here and found so many of them kept themselves clean. In Oakland they were all filthy and they never worked hard. I think the Nisei can take the jobs away from the Negro but they won't work for such cheap wages. When it comes to the social adjustments, they I am stumped. I don't know how it is going to turn out. I don't want to see a Japanese community here, but I can also see how there are certain advantages in it. However, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages and I don't want it any more. It is the old timers here who want a Japanese society. They are starved for it because they have longed for it for many years and they feel that it is their chance to be society leaders. I don't have that objective at all. I am only in this thing for the business part and the money. If the rest of the Nisei can make the break and follow us, then I will be very glad too. But that is not my chief purpose."

~~Yuri(Ch-25)~~

December 3, 1943.

.....Yuri(Ch-25) also mentioned something about Bob (Ch-13) and the crisis which now faces the Nisei orchestra. She said that Ben M. was getting fed up with the orchestra due to unexpected difficulties and because of personality problems among the band members. She thought that the Nisei orchestra idea would fold up very soon. It seems that the orchestra was in the habit of practicing each Sunday at the Turner Social Hall. It is unavailable now because there is a bar and club room downstairs. The patrons of the downstairs rooms objected to seeing so many Japs walking through the bar on the way upstairs to practice.

Another thing was that Ben's employer, Mr. Walker,

pointed out to Ben that the idea of a Nisei orchestra was not very practical at the present time because of the public sentiment against things Japanese. Yuri said that Ben was willing to listen to Mrs. Walker as she was an older person, and he is almost convinced that she is right. It seems that Bob (ch-12) was supposed to be the music manager of the orchestra but he did not get along with some of the people in the group because of his independent airs. He was supposed to split the profits of the orchestra with Ben, but this combination has been broken up. Bob might carry on the orchestra himself, altho Ben has the stronger interest in it.

..... About 10:30 Ben M. and his wife dropped over (to Yuri's). I asked him about the Nisei orchestra and he had the following statement to make:

"I'm getting sick and tired of nursing the Nisei orchestra along. The fellows are just like babies. There is a conflict between the chief trumpeter and chief drummer. I don't think it will be solved until one or the other is dropped from the orchestra. There is also a great deal of jealousy as to who should be the leader of the group. I don't know anything about music and I went into this in the hopes that it would be a good business proposition. Now I am not so sure. I have sunk enough money into the orchestra to buy two new suits already. I put Bob in as the music director because I thought he had a strong interest in music, but he fizzled out. He talks big, but when it comes time to act, he comes running to me and he wants me to do it. Bob is too conceited for his own good and his head is way up in the clouds. He figures that he will get a night club job singing pretty soon and then his brother can be his manager. He got \$10 for sing at

Mrs. Walkers party last week and he figures that he is on the way to the top right now...I don't know what I am going to do about the orchestra. It is at the crisis point right now. I am going to look out for myself only after this. That is why I am looking around for some Nisei with a business head to take the band off of my hand."

We got to talking on general points and Ben told me a little of his background experiences. He is getting very fed up with doing a domestic job right now and he wants to quit. He figures that he does not have the temperament to be a houseman all of his life. He said that no ambitious person would ever remain in a job like this permanently. The reason he took the job was because it was easiest for him to resettle his wife and babies. Now he is thinking of going back into brick laying work. He feels that the Union will let him become a member since there are very few Nise who are bricklayers. Ben said that he picked up this trade by himself. He had a lot of experiences doing it in Berkeley during the three years prior to the outbreak of war. He said that he is making his own contracts and he would hire a bunch of Nisei fellows at 50 cents an hour to do the work for him. He said that there were always unemployed Nisei around and he took advantage of this fact. Ben feels that it was due to his more opportunistic mentality which contributed to what he considered a great occupational success until the outbreak of the war.

Ben feels that he would be able to make about \$14 a day as a bricklayer out here if he can get into the Union. He said that he would work for a contractor at first and later on he would do his own contracting and hire some Nisei to

work for him. He feels that there is quite a future in this work because many houses in the Midwest are built of bricks. It was rather evident that Ben is becoming extremely restless and he has not made complete adjustments to life out here. He is an ambitious person and he is greatly misplaced in his present work. He does seem to have a great deal of initiative and imagination from the business point of view. He is restricted in some of his other attitudes although that is probably due to his lack of background. Ben said that he had absolutely no use for a college education because it did not do the Nisei any good. He said that it only made them more dissatisfied with life, especially the girls who expected too much out of life after getting out of college and most Nisei fellows could not meet these expectations. He feels that the economic salvation of the Nisei lies in going back into more of the skilled trades, such as brick laying, plumbing, carpenter work, and mechanics. He said that the trouble up to now was that most Nisei tried to jump from domestic work up into the professional field like doctors, dentistry, engineers, etc. He said that each of these fields in turn became popular with the Nisei and they rushed into it but after graduation they became frustrated and they had to go into the Los Angeles fruit and vegetable stands and Grant Avenue jobs in San Francisco. He said that this was the very reason why so many of the Nisei are doing manual unskilled jobs right now. Ben said there was no chance at all for Nisei to have many professional openings, except for a few exceptional ones. The rest of the Nisei, not having any definite skilled training, have had to fall into the lower brackets of work. He feels that the Nisei are learning the

hard way, but they will eventually wake up to the true facts.

Ben had a very interesting attitude to express about the Tule Lake riot. He feels that the government made all of the Japanese disloyal and they forced them to riot because they were pushing the Japanese people down. He said that most of the Japanese evacuated were really Americans because they knew about sanitary conditions and they used cars and radios before the war. Ben interpreted the use of modern conveniences as the determining factor in creating Americanism. He feels that if the people in camp are denied an adequate standard of living, this will be the factor which will cause them to become more Japanese. He said that the WRA forced the Japanese to be disloyal during the registration issue in order to justify the government action of evacuation. In the next breath he made the statement that evacuation was caused by powerful economic interests in California and the Nisei might have been able to prevent it had they been an older group with more of a financial backing.

The strangest thing which Ben said was that the Jews of Hollywood also helped to cause evacuation because they made propaganda pictures which distorted the Nisei personality and presented them as a stereotyped and disloyal element of our population. Ben is very prejudiced against the Jews and he feels that it is a racial trait of this group to go around cheating people in financial dealings. I had quite a discussion with him on this whole matter of racial prejudice and I tried to point out that the environmental factors were probably more important than any racial traits.

For example I pointed out that there were many Aryans who were very dishonest in business dealings but we called

them dirty bastards and did not attribute it to their racial background. But in the case of the Jews, there is a tendency to condemn the shrewd individual in terms of his racial background. Yuri also had an attitude to express regarding the Negroes. She said that she had never been prejudiced against Negroes, but the other day when she came over for dinner, she noticed on the I that the Negroes were really dirty and sloppy in appearance. I did not think that this was any racial trait at all because I told her that these older Negroes probably came up from the South where their environmental surroundings were not conducive to a high standard of living. I also pointed out that sloppy Negro individuals were probably more noticeable than caucasians of similar disposition. It makes me so damn mad when I hear the expressions of racial prejudice, but if I say too much, I will probably lose all of my Nisei friends or else be labelled as some kind of a queer radical.

Monday Feb. 14, 1944 (I decide to talk to Ben again.)

Ben Masuda and his wife came over (to Toshi's) to pick up Albert and Toshi (ch-4 and 54). Ben claims that he goes to these Nisei dances because he is sponsoring another one at the end of this month which he thinks will be different from the others. His idea is that he will find out all the bad faults of all these Nisei dances by studying them and when he has his dance with his orchestra, it will be entirely different. He plans to have entertainment and other features. The dance will be restricted to a certain group which will be issued on invitation. Ben plans to have only couples at this dance. His purpose in sponsoring these dances is chiefly to make money. He has some idea that he can become the great Nisei sponsor in this area for various affairs.

and thus make a lot of money for himself. He is still working in a domestic position with his wife, but he has more or less resigned from this job and he is now looking around for another position. He hopes to get into a CIO bricklaying union so that he will be able to get a good job since he has had experience in this line previously. Ben is rather an opportunistic Nisei and he has a rather strong "employer" view towards the situation. He feels that he is much above the level of the average Nisei who are chiefly unskilled workers.

Ike and his wife came along to go with that party to the dance. (Ch 35, 36, and 37)..... This group of people (8) were brought together through the connections of Albert and Yuri. Ben, etc are all family men with one or more children so that they have this in common. This little clique is getting rather closely knit since they all live in the same general area. Yuri knew Ben at the U. of Calif and she brought him and his wife together with Albert and Toshi.

Ben mentioned that there were two Nisei dances being sponsored by a Denver group and the other by a local group of Nisei who have sponsored other dances at Hotel Midland.

Alberts comment on the dance: see page 4358.

February 25, 1944

(Conversation with Harry Ando, Ch-31)

He was telling me about his gardening experiences in Oakland and Berkeley and it was quite interesting when he began to tell me about Ben M for whom he worked. I didn't let on that I knew Ben. Ando said that Ben was a dirty guy and that he still ~~ow~~ owed \$25 for work that had been done in the past. He said that Ben gave him a lot of promises and

then refused to pay him. Ando had to go to the Labor Commission and make a protest. He said that the whole family was that way and that Ben always thought he was a big shot. He said that if he ever saw him again he was going to beat the hell out of him for running out on his debts. Ben is sponsoring this Nisei dance Saturday at the Midland Hote. The all-nisei band will be introduced at that time. Apparently the American Nisei Athletic Club which is really backing the dance does not trust this nisei band completely because the notice also states that there will be another 10 piece orchestra present.Ben has a complex about being a big shot among the resettlers out here. He is quitting his domestic job soon...
.....

February 26, 1944

M told me that she did not care for Ben M because he had such funny ideas and a complex to be a Nisei big shot. Then she tells A and B today that the reason why she is going to be the MC is to help Ben out and make this the best dance ever. They are bring a lot of single girls in to act as "hostesses." The idea is to make this dance more refined and to chase the zoot suit boys away! Y, Ch-9, will be one of the hostesses.

March 18, 1944

Quoting Ch-4: "Ben M and his wife are also unhappy at their domestic job. He gets to borrow the car a lot, but that is not enough to compensate for the work they are doing. Ben is ambitious and he wants to get on. The boss at his place is quite eccentric and he lives an odd life. He has heart trouble so that he gets quite nasty. Sometimes he goes around and sticks his fingers on the table and tell Masako that it hasn't been dusted. Other times he takes the

bulbs out of the chandeliers and bawls Ben out for not taking care of the matter. He does odd things like that and then he will turn around and be very generous. It got on Ben's nerves and he thought he was going to have a nervous breakdown so he got a one week's vacation early this month and he went to stay in a hotel to rest up. Masako will also get a week off and she will spend a few days with me and she will bring her two youngsters down. Ben and Masako want to quit that domestic job but they can't find a suitable apartment. They are not very practical about apartments available because they think that they can get a super place for \$50 a month. They will have to pay at least \$100 for the kind of place that they want. Allen has been urging Ben to do free lance plumbing work and Ben thinks that maybe he will do this soon.

"Ben wants to be a big shot and that is why he is behind that Nisei orchestra. It is a sort of a compensation for him since he feels that his pride is hurt in doing domestic work. He had a gardening business in Berkeley and he used to hire a lot of Nisei kids to work for him. He still has that complex of wanting other people to work for him and I guess it sort of ~~halls him~~ calls him to be a domestic. That dance he sponsored recently with his Nisei orchestra was a ~~mediocre~~ mediocre thing. There were still a lot of stags there even though Ben thought that he should make his dance more refined by having hostesses. Financially the dance wasn't so good for him, but that Nisei orchestra is pretty good. At the first dance they had a Caucasian orchestra playing with them but on the 25th of this month the Nisei band will play exclusively and Ben is still behind

this orchestra even though the members are temperamental. The dance is really sponsored by another group since Ben only manages the orchestra."

July 13, 1944

Quoting Ch-4: "I don't know how long Ben and his wife will be staying with us. They were supposed to stay for only a few days, but it has been a week already. I suppose it will be for another week at least. Ben doesn't do anything about house hunting, but Masako buys the papers everyday and she goes out to hunt in the afternoon and leaves the ~~kids~~ kids with me. It's not too much trouble, but it may prove inconvenient in other ways. It's not good for friends to live together because you find out all about their worst faults.

"~~Mia~~ Masako is a nice quiet girl, but Ben can be awfully obnoxious at times. He is always full of big plans. He was making \$165 a month doing that domestic job. It spoiled him ⁱⁿ a lot of ways because he is too fussy about apartments. And the food that they have been used to eating makes it hard for me. They are paying for half of the expenses for food while they are here, but my budget is really running up. The reason for that is Masako is used to cooking with .32 cents cans of mushrooms and all those things.

"It's much too expensive for us to develop tastes like that. Masako does not realize because she has been cooking for rich people for the past year. That's why I do all of the cooking around here now as she will run up our bill. When she has to budget on Ben's income, she will learn from experience. Ben is going into plumbing now. He has some sort of a contract with a non union fellow. It's quite hard

hard for him for him because he hasn't done heavy work like that for a long time. Later on, Ben wants to go on his own. He feels that there will be plenty of money it it because a lot of these places down on North Clark street are in desperate need of plumbing work, and Ben said that his race will not make any difference in getting contracts as long as he can get the work done. He said that some of the pipes down there are so rotten that they fall to pieces as soon as he touches them. He is using Toguri's phone as his business phone now. Toguri has opened up a fish market.

"Ben is full of ambitious plans and he openly admits that he is out for himself. The Nisei orchestra business did not turn out so well. At the last dance they held a couple of months ago, the orchestra folded up. Ben would like to open up a Nihonjin nightclub out here. He feels that it could make plenty of money. The Nisei swarm up to the Aragon on weekends now so that it is almost getting to be a Nihonjin place. Back in California they didn't get such good chances to go to such good places so they are really going to town now. At least it is better than these exclusive Nisei dances, but they might ruin a good thing by going to one place too much.

"Ben knows an Issei out here who is reputedly is worth \$50,000 and he is willing to sponsor Ken in such a venture. This man has a restaurant on Clark Street and in the back room there is a regular gambling place where all the Nihonjin hang out now. He also has a couple of apartment houses full of Japanese. Ben doesn't particularly care what happens to the Nisei as long as he can make money out of it. He

said that if he did not do it, somebody else would. That's all he thinks about--making money. They are my friends, but I am beginning to get fed up with all his big talk. I am beginning to notice that we just don't think the same way. I try to accept people as individuals and I am finding out that I may have misjudged Ben. His wife is nice and I like her a great deal, but I don't like a person who is willing to step over other people just because of greed and selfishness. Ask M what he did to Ella?

M's story: "I just can't stand that Ben anymore because he pulls dirty stunts and you can't trust him as a friend. If he gets the idea in his head that you are against him, he will do everything he can to smear your name. I don't show my dislike of him openly as G has cautioned me against that. He said that Ben could pass rumors around about us and it is not worth it to bother with him. The less I have to do with him now the better I will like it. (Ben gave the party announcing M's engagement a couple of months ago as he was supposed to be her best friend.) I like his wife, but I can't stand the way he brags about what a big shot he is. He sure talks big for a plumber, that all I can say.

"You know what he did to Ella? She was playing the piano in the Nisei orchestra for him. At the last dance they had, they did not make enough money to make expenses so Ben asked her for \$36.00 to pay them off. Then Ella quit the band as she was planning to go home. The bank broke up right after that and Ben blamed Ella for that and he got sore. He refused to pay Ella for the loan he made, as he

said that he was not going to assume all of the band losses by himself. BJ used to phone him and ask him to please pay the money back as Ella needed it for rent and to pay her fare back home. Ella had put the money aside for this purpose, but she loaned it to Ben to help him out.

"Ben said that she did not deserve it for playing such a dirty trick on him, but he would give it to her if she came to him and asked. He just wanted her to be forced to beg for it. I never heard of such a cheap thing--taking a girl's money and refusing to pay her back when she was broke. I was going to tell him off as Ella is my friend but G said that it was no use getting involved in it as I would only be opening up another source of rumors against me. Bob (Ch-13) is spreading the story around about Ben because he doesn't like him on account of the trouble they had about the orchestra before Bob left for New York."

July 18, 1944

The following is Ben's comment on the Aragon incident:

Ben: "The Nisei are drawn to places where other Nisei gather. They don't like to go to a Caucasian ~~place~~ place and be the only ones there. I'm going to put in a fountain for a old time Chicago Issei who is planning to open up a swank Japanese restaurant soon. He said that he doesn't want any Japanese to come there in big numbers because it will hurt his business at the beginning if it becomes known as a place where only the Japanese go. There are ten or twelve large ballrooms in Chicago, but the Nisei seem to go only to the Aragon in large numbers because they known there will be other Nisei there. But when they get there, they don't look at each other much as they keep to their separate bunches."

.....^{Masako}~~Midori~~ is quite relieved now that she has an apartment lined up. They were a little fussy about choosing an apartment because they had been used to living in a rich home for so long. Out of desperation they finally did find a fairly satisfactory place around 3700 N. Halstead.

Ben came home about 4 o'clock because he did not go to work yesterday on account of diarrhea. He is working with a non-union plumbing company, however, he has been busy lining up jobs to do on the side as he wants to make as much money as possible. Ken has a number of contacts among the old time residents and he said that he had more plumbing jobs offered to him than he can do. Ben does not anticipate sticking exclusively to Japanese trade.

"Right now a lot of Japanese businesses are springing up and I am getting in on the ground floor. However, there will

come a time when this will all be over. It will be crazy for me to strick only to Japanese business because I would never get any place. I'm just doing it now because there is quite a bit of money in it due to a shortage of plumbers. A man by the name of Nozawa is opening a swank suki-yaki house on E. Delaware St. pretty soon. He wants to put in a Japanese fountain right in the middle of it and he couldn't find anyone to design it until I came along since the hakujin plumbers didn't know what one looked like. Nozawa really hopes to make a big business out of this venture and he will cater exclusively to Caucasians. I have several other plumbling jobs lined up so that it looks like I will be busy for quite a while yet. I'll probably be working day and night. Maybe later on I'll try to get in on brick laying work as I have had quite a bit of experience in that. I like this kind of work much better than doing that houseman's job because I'm at least my own boss. I have all of my plumbing tools out here now so I don't have to invest a lot of money in that.

"My venture with the Nisei orchestra didn't turn out so well and I lost money on it. Right from the beginning I wanted those fellows to play exclusively for hakujins. However, a few of the band members including Bob (CH-13) wanted to play for Nisei gatherings because they crave the publicity. I was against it but they thought they knew it all and they went against my will even though I was the business manager of the outfit. As a result the band lost money on almost every Nisei dance ~~and~~ that we played for. A lot of arguments developed so that the band finally broke up. It's no use trying to cater to the Nisei because there is no money in it. Personally I don't care if the Nisei get segregated if there is money in it for me. However, I've had

enough business experience to know that it doesn't pay to do this so I'm against it in regards to a business venture. Plumbing right now is proving profitable to me and it doesn't make any difference if it's for a Japanese boarding house as long as I get the gravy out of it. I've been an underdog too long and I know that money talks and I openly admit that this is what I'm after. I have two children to think about and I can't be bothered or concerned with general principles. I'll let the Nisei alone if they leave me alone and I won't cross paths with them much except for my few friends. I don't care what they do because they are too dumb to listen anyway. This is not entirely true because I wouldn't like to see the Nisei get stuck in a rut. But I have to think about working for a living to support my family and I can't think too much of the problems of other Nisei. I think we're all out for ourselves so why should be stick ~~together~~ our necks out? I'd like to open up a night club and I wouldn't object if Nisei came to it in large numbers because there is money in it. I know that it isn't a good thing for the Nisei as a whole but they are going to do it anyway so I might as well make some profit on it if I can. If I don't do it, somebody else will."

July 21, 1944

.....Masako said that her employers tried to treat them as colored servants and they did not like this. Ben wanted to do man's work anyway and he had all sorts of big plans. ~~Ben wanted~~ The sponsorship of the Nisei orchestra was a result. He sunk all of his earnings in it, but the band fizzled out due to personal jealousies and striving for top prestige. Ben will think twice before undertaking another project like sponsoring a night club...

July 22, 1944

.....Ben came in during the time I was finishing up the interview with Masako. He is still getting used to plumbing work so that he was exhausted. In spite of his personal faults, he is a good father to his kids and he works hard for them. He is only interested in making money to give them all the advantages and he is really not too concerned with wider issues facing the Nisei. I suppose that this is normal enough but it goes against my grain. He wants a Republican to get elected "because the Democrats are too radical and they are taking on the communist methods." Ben doesn't realize that he is a working man himself as he has a conception that he is of the middle or upper class. He believes that a certain amount of dictatorship is necessary for all nations as the bulk of the people don't know how to think for themselves. How smug! But this is a dangerous type of thinking and it cannot be dismissed too lightly as it is more prevalent than we think.

Ben is a very aggressive individual in spite of his irritating habit of bragging and big talk. He doesn't do it to me too much but others have commented upon it. He has the drive to get ahead and that type of individual usually does make progress. For the sake of the kids, I hope that he makes a good living out of plumbing. He has a lot of ideas about his work. He feels that he can specialize and combine his interests in brick laying and cement work with it as he is doing for the fountain in the Japanese restaurant. Ben has given up ideas of being a promoter temporarily as he is too busy working. I won't get to interview him for a long time as he does these side jobs at night.

Aug. 7, 1944

.....Albert then began to tell me about Ben and Masako (CH-42 and 43): "Ken is living in a hotel right now. He didn't like the place that Masako found so that he did not sign the lease. They felt that they had to move so that Masako took the two children to visit her folks in Cleveland for a while. I think that they had an argument about house hunting and Masako told Ben to look for himself if he thought it was such an easy job. We are sort of relieved that they are gone because it did make it hard for us. The kids scratched all of my furniture up and they made quite a bit of noise during the day. The landlady objected on account of this. On top of that, it was getting to be an irritating situation. We only have one bathroom and it makes it hard when five adults and three babies all want to use it at the same time in the morning. It was getting to be too much of a strain on Toshie." (CH-44)

Aug. 22, 1944...."Ben is living in a hotel now. He hasn't made a move to look for a new place as he is waiting for Masako to come back from Cleveland and do it. Allen (CH-34) told him to move out because he was always bringing his newly found friends over late at night and it disrupted the household. I have been keeping my eyes open for an apartment as it is pretty hard for a couple with children to get a place. I was walking down Clark St. the other day when a seedy old man told me that he had a place. He took me up there and it was the filthiest place I had ever seen. He wanted \$8.00 a week for it and he said that he was offering it at this price because he wanted to help the Japanese Americans out. I told him that no decent person would think of living in such a dirty place."...

Aug. 30, 1944...."Masako is living at 1349 N. La Salle St. in the back. She has a small 3-room place on top of a garage but it is only temporary. The Japanese boarding house in front of it is run by Mr. Toguri and it is one of the worst slum places that I have ever seen. I think that it is terrible that these Nihonjin are exploiting the people coming out here. That place down on La Salle St. is filthy. There is a girl who lives down in the basement and the room actually stinks. It is so unsanitary that I don't see how she stands it. This girl cooks for all of the fellows who live upstairs. I went to visit Masako and I had to walk through a dark unlighted hallway in order to get to the back and I got almost scared to death when a big rat ran in front of me. Masako hates the place but Ben is so timid that he doesn't

look for another place hard enough. He pays \$9.00 a week for that dirty old place. Ben is so dependent on Masako that he is afraid to go out and look for himself. He is just like an Issei because he is always demanding service and he wants Masako to bring his slipper and wait on him hand and foot. I think Ben should have learned his lesson with that N isei orchestra. The other day he went over to fix a pipe for Motoko (CH-49) and a Caucasian man told him he would give him a job fixing his place but Ben turned it down as he said he was too busy. Ben is making a mistake for sticking strictly to Japanese boarding houses and restaurants because that leads to a life like it was on the coast and he'll never make money that way. There really is a Japanese district ~~pretty well~~ growing up on North Clark St. and every time I pass by on the street car I see a bunch of fellows hanging on the street. Some of these fellows were nice before evacuation but they certainly have changed. Ben knows the district pretty well and he says there are quite a few gambling places growing up. I wish those Nisei fellows would realize how much they are harming themselves and us by doing such things...."

October 25, 1944

Niya Bum -

Well, here I am at last. Now don't go throwing your big head off. I can hear you way out here. God damn it, do you know that I didn't even get to see you while I was in Chicago.

Too bad we didn't get together for a couple of drinks anyway. You would have to be working that Saturday Shit. In fact, when I was in Chicago, I didn't see many people. I did see "Hot Qui" once and saw Joyce & Cuna several times.

Anyway here I am in New York now. Man, this city is a bitch compared to that dirty

Chicago. I sure was disappointed in Chicago. Shit, that city is too damn dirty for me. Here in New York, it's really swell. I'm telling you Hijack, I get to see blue skies here instead of that smoke covered sky there.

Even Amor got disgusted with Chicago, so she came out to New York with me. The only thing that's bad over here is the housing situation. It's just as bad as Chicago.

I've been hustling my ass and looking for an apartment where my sisters and I could live but God damn, I haven't found a single vacancy yet.

Amor is already working in an art company and she has a soft job to. All she has to do is to paint flowers and

other designs on pottery and wooden boxes. To top it off, she's making pretty good money too.

As for myself, I'm still sitting on my ass and taking life easy. Now don't start laughing Hijack because I heard how you did the same thing until you ran out of money. I better start looking for a job too because I'm just about flat now.

Right now, I'm staying with my buddy Kevin Kishi. Perhaps you remember him. He played basketball for the Royal Canadian. Amos is living a block away so I always get to see her.

How are you doing Hijack? Are you really working at the Times Press or are

sitting on your ass too. By the way, how are
you making out with Sonya, my honey? I heard
that you were just about living with her.
I bet you haven't got a piece of ass off
of her because I know that you're chicken
shit when it comes down to it. Or are you
a man now?

Well Hijack, it's getting late as hell
now so I'll be closing. Give sends you
her regards. If you see anybody that I know
tell them hello for me. Till next time
then, be good and don't go under the
table too often. So long man.

your buddy,

Kuji