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Interview Notes: Richard Ueda, Doug Yamamoto

1975 Jan. 12

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Begin ... Notes for Richard Akada, story Interview [7/2/75] (1)

Began writing - as child - animal stories  
on brown wrapping paper like -

NYC - after eval. <sup>Smith</sup> College - class in S.S.

wrote many sh. stories for adults -  
mostly about Japanese people, some re core -  
NYer, Harper, Atlantic etc ...

1st from Repetition slips → Sorry, try again -  
sold 1 story to W. Day - little & big writer  
Competition (Aphile, Koresy etc.) - small  
marked.

FORD F. Fellowship - JAPAN.

wonderful experiences - got to know folk art movement  
articles for Nippon Times - Namada  
self-consciousness

Craft Horizon - feature articles who cover  
covered exhibits as reviewer

By then had 2-3 Bk. for ch. published -

Teaching in camp led to Smith HEd. +  
decided to concentrate on juv. bks - do 1 a year. teaching

Early Bks: Folk tales - universal, love myself  
good intro to 1 culture.

Early Goals: no folk + ethnic gps, 3rd world  
books + libraries int in Japan  
Japan - not as present + picturesque  
stereotypes  
Wrote of J. Y.P. + whom Am I relate  
think of as fellow human beings.

Today: world is a diff place: tremendous  
int. in ethnic gps.

no longer melting pot → environment in diversity

Sensei - Nisei - achieved of heritage, pos self  
rejected Japanese lineage

Sensei proud of heritage. new ethnic awareness  
redefining role in society. Int in historical roots



Young J.A. today wants books about J.A's <sup>2</sup>  
written by a J.A. who knows what it means  
to be Asian.

We need books coming from within as of  
ethnic exp.

Today's goals are diff. fr. - I want to address  
myself to reinforcing the J.A. child's  
knowledge of himself - share a knowledge of  
history - J. super in a country  
My latest 2 bks: based on J. experience in U.S.  
Journey to Tokyo - & S. of J.A. (1869)

- Re Journey - Fiction based on fact → family.  
not protest or out of bitterness - but

Part of history of J.  
Shameful, disgraceful episode, known  
by all Am. - but don't think we've  
exploit it, + should view it in proper  
historical perspective

Issei - bore burden of loss & grace, & dignity  
kept us from becoming bitter - self-destructive  
soul-decaying.

- ~~I think I think that writing out of anger~~  
~~Issei's character said - it's quite natural for~~  
~~minority writers to~~

- As a writer for books for y.p. I feel an oblig.  
to write with integrity & honesty -

Writer must see the world more intensely  
communicate that reality to readers.  
But don't think we need to equate reality  
or everything sordid & grim.

I & we need to give y.p. some grounds for  
hope & purpose in / lives -

to give them something positive - not just  
anger.

- to convey spirit of Issei - strength & courage



- Read a broadlet compiled by elem'g ③  
School children. <sup>about</sup> the Orleans  
Desecrated pride in being African = good -  
also " feeling of anger + hostility  
at oppression past + present.
- Rebored me - think we have to go  
beyond resentment - ~~to something~~  
give y.p. some ~~good~~ hope.

Chicanos Educator - "minority writers can't spend  
time bewailing fate + adversity. We're all  
marginal people excluded from centers of  
power. The desperation of minorities is  
deep'n of many Am's."

- I don't think we want to dev. a literature  
of denunciation + protest + self pity -

- We shouldn't expect to be published  
because we're J.A. - but  
" we excel at the craft + writing

- think we're young J.A. to strive for  
excellence in creativity -

+ not to be too concerned at writing  
something of social significance.

- of course - need for the historical + journalistic writer  
to present + preserve facts + oppression -  
racism -

- But for the creative writer of fiction -

Writer doesn't always need lofty themes -  
He just needs to be moved by some incident,  
some person, some exper., something + human  
condition. + to put it down + best words at  
his command.

Maybe lack of sensei writers - too burdened by  
desire felt need to make social commentary + exper.



- If a writer is writing from within himself, a deeply felt exper -  
he showed presnt about an Asian theme.  
It will be Asian because being himself  
he is Asian -
- <sup>could all remember</sup> Namata - not he too self-conscious about  
own writing. //

The hisei experienced actual discrim.  
- He write about it; it's really true

Sensei haven't exp'd this or worse -  
but feel they're expressing some  
angst about this.

Perhaps they showed ~~kind of~~ ~~frustration~~

~~as a writer~~ write from their own exper.  
In how - ~~later~~ -

<sup>In many ways</sup> They are much more intensely, mature

y.p. - we were at their age -

~~+ they I all I expect that this is A~~  
I think they strive to excel

Writing takes self-discipline -  
one ~~doesn't~~ <sup>rarely</sup> gets rich -

Put it & sat. off it

Hope bks of future won't be prefaced  
by angry diatribes ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> nat'l such  
statement as "Asian American  
forcibly excluded from creative participation in  
Am. culture."

- In 1950's I got a lot of  
exc't from map of Submitts -  
Personal ltr 2 ed. of At. Monthly  
New Yorker - motivates  
me

- Maybe we were excluding ourselves