

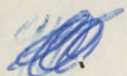
55:11

Interview Notes : KGO-TV, Perspectives (Mike Lee)

1977 Jan. 12/Jan. 15

ALSO AVAILABLE ON MICROFILM

86/97
c



12:30 - 2:00

Channel 7
"Perspectives"
Sat - 1/15/77

Y. U. is a JA writer
begin in 10
Berk U of C
deg Ph, Engl History
- family debut in -
- "The Korater"

crashy - art. work.
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writing falls into several periods
fall tales - - J. H. H. tales
University.
J. Y. P. - displ stereotyping
idea & -
grant.
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Young J. ch. - The person.
J. ch (see 1)
friend. 22

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by fudjo anian -

J. H. Topos -

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more.

Just above = 1st.
sun Issei.

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mudis.

list, elhni.

• My latest bk - called -
yonger ch.

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fun I read - fun I read.

Rooster -

As a writer & Ch's dad,

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emerging

convey sense & hope &
purpose

diff adults - & ch
any topic -
involving.

is only 14 p.

Relig & Com

hope + sense

not leave base +
front.

of dir & J. ch.

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by 1

for all ch -

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— some sense

~ v J. as human

well ^{being} common humanity.

15 min.

KGO-TV - Mike Lee

"Perspectives" Segment

1/12/74

ROOSTER : ~~WHY~~ How come to write?

There are so few picture books for young children about J-As, I wanted to do a book for them that would convey a sense of a Japanese home in Calif, and ~~xxxx~~ at at the same time, be fun to read.

SevkuhneaksahdohIhmesthannihintegestihngxIss

As I thought about the characters for the book, I remembered an Issei woman I met sev'l years ago. When I went to see her I saw that her front yard didn't have the neat lawn and flowers that most of her neighbors had, but instead there were potatoes and onions and strang beans straggling around in it. And I thought how wonderful it was that she could be such a free and independent spirit, who was willing to be different.

So I thought of her as I created Mrs. K. in the book. And Mrs. K. not only planted vegetables in her front yard, she talked to them in Jpnse. And soon, I ~~discovered~~ had given her a howeful of assorted pets, with dignified names, to whom she also spoke in Jpnse. And then there was Little Miyo.

And I wanted to write of ~~xxxxxx~~ friendship and understanding and affection between the young child and the old woman. Their feelings and problems were universal, but I also wanted to write of feelings and surroundings that are uniquely Jpnse.

QUESTIONS for KGO-TV

- ROOSTER... How did I come to write?

= Very few pic books re J-A's for young children. Wanted to do one to follow Birthday Visitor....

Sev'l years ago, when interviewing Issei, I met an interesting woman. When I went to see her, noticed that instead of planting a neat lawn and flowers in her front yard, as her neighbors had done - she was growing a rather messy ~~field~~ yard full of onions and potatoes. But I rather liked her independence and free spirit, her willingness to be different.

When I started my book, I patterned Mrs. Kitamura after this woman. She not only planted onions and potatoes, she also talked to them in Jpnse. And before I knew it, she also had a household of assorted pets and she talked to them in Jpnse too. Then I added the child Miyo.

~~I wanted to write about~~
~~Her friendship with xxxxxxxx Miyo, xxxxxxxx~~ understanding, affection and mutual respect between the young and old. *+ of feelings that are universal - but also to bring I sense of being a Jpnse home*

Re J-Am Literature. Very little available? Why?

- I think one reason there has been so little written by the Nisei is they're the product of bi-lingual homes. Whatever reading matter was available in their homes were usually in Jpnse, ~~which xxxxxxxx~~ in a lang. in which they had no fluency.

- Also, ~~xxxxxxx~~ most of the Issei were overwhelmed with the burdens of eking out a living, trying to raise a family inspite of terrible econ. pressures and ~~discrimination~~ hostility, so they had little if no time at all to be reading books. As a result, I think the Nisei, on the whole are not very book-oriented. And if you don't read, I don't think you have the urge to write.

What prompted me to ~~writex~~ start writing? when there were so few Jpnse writers. What kind of rol models did I have? ~~xxxxxxx~~ What did parents think?

- I think I was very fortunate in that I grew up in a home that was book-oriented. My mother used to read all kinds of Jpnse stories to my sister and me when we were growing up. She bought books for us. Encouraged us to read ... and was herself a poet. ~~I often saw her working on her Jpnse poems. (tanka?) xxxxxx My uncle in Jpn also writes.~~ so maybe I was lucky to inherit some right genes.

I think I always had the urge to write. I can't remember when I didn't. I wrote my first ~~xxxxxxx~~ story when I was about 10, and made a little book out of brown wrapping paper. I guess that's the easiest ~~xxxxx~~ way to get a book produced - to make it yourself. I used to keep diaries, and ~~xxx~~ journals... and as long as I can remember, feel almost impelled to put any deeply felt experience down on paper. ~~xxxxx~~ prof'l

- I really had no role models, for becoming a/writer because I ~~xxxxx~~ didn't know any Jpnse writers. But, I suppose the closest to that was my mother - whom I saw working on her own poetry, and she also kept journals and diaries. wrote many letters. In fact, my father too ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ had a voluminous correspondence with enormous number of friends. I suppose ~~xxxxx~~ if anyone, they were ~~xx~~ my role models. The more you write, the more fluent you become in expressing self thru the written word. - They were extremely supportive of my writing efforts. I always sent them copies of anything I wrote, and they ~~xxxxx~~ always expressed their pride and happiness for me whenever I got anything published.

Any Difficulty in getting ethnically oriented books published?

-No. My early books were about Japan and the Jpnse children, and there has always been interest in schools and libraries in Japan.. there are study units on that country. It's always been a country that fascinated children.... And now the publishers are extremely anxious to have material about all the ethnic groups in America. In fact, they're bedning over backwards to include such books in their lists. ~~xxxxx~~ Anthologies are are anxious for stories... ~~xxxxx~~ Readers are including stories re ethnic gps. It's a wonderful time now for an Asian to writer about Asian American.s *with we had more ~~xxx~~ writers coming 2 within ca. ethnic gp.*

Stereotyping.

felt I could make Jpnse which as a writer - a area.
why - c Jpnse - Bles & Jpnse - clear best he written by someone who knows how I feel to be J.A. a writer write but

For one thing, was trying to fill a vacuum, so few bks re Jpnse

didn't
use

WHY ALL BOOKS ABOUT JPNSE? / I think a writer writes best about the things he and she is most familiar with. And I ~~think~~ felt ~~this was the~~ writing about the Jpnse was the strongest statement I could make as a writer. I think books about the Jpnse can best be written by someone who knows how it feels to be Jpnse. *contribute what I can to*

the understanding of Jpnse people.

Stereotyping: I've always been fighting stereotypes in most of my writing. In my early books about the Jpnse... I wanted to dispel the stereotypic image of ~~the~~ Japan as a quaint, picturesque, exotic country... with emphasis only on its festivals... and of the inscrutable oriental. I wanted to write about Jpnse young people as human beings with hopes and aspirations that are universal. ~~I wanted to write about~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~their daily lives~~ ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~in their homes~~... and, but also include values and traditions that are important to them and uniquely Jpnse.

The same is true of the Japanese-Americans. I want them to be perceived first as human beings, and then as J-As, but without distortions.

I've also tried to dispel the stereotype of older people - as being bland, quiet, retiring and uninteresting. I write of older people who are independent and strong and free.

(Earlier books, when fathers were usually white collar workers, my fathers were potters, nursery men, priests, all kinds of life styles).

Issei: I have great admiration and respect for the Issei. I've known many of them, and they are strong and courageous and enduring. I'd like somehow to convey something of their spirit, and their strength of purpose and of the values that sustained them, to the young people I'm writing for.

But I want to write for all Y.P. -

to open up worlds that are valid & enriching for them.
to give them a sense of purpose,
to write a common humanity -

- *Talked re Illustrating -*

- *Oblig. as writer for children -*

to not leave - give sense & hope & purpose
not leave - & despair & rage -

1. producer/director - Rufus?

2. Mike Lee - acts ?'s off camera

3. Camera man -

4. Sound ?

} 4 men
come

2 - in 4:00p.

Mike Lee 1st call Nov. 23, 1976

asked to call back

2nd call Dec 27 - set up for 1/5

proposed to 1/12