

*Willie O'hara*  
LIFE HISTORY - HIROSHI SUGASAWARA  
by James Sakoda

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I guess actually my so-called beginning of my environment of life began in Santa Barbara. At that time I was about 7 or 8 and just getting the influence of other people. Before that I was under the influence of my folks. Since I was the first born my mother had more time to spend with me. So in Santa Barbara we lived in a neighborhood of Mexicans, <sup>I</sup>talians, Greeks and a sordid mix of various people. I ran around with that bunch.

This environment was not exactly conducive to so-called "good" way of living. We used to go around in small gangs and swipe candies, fruits and tobaccos from counters through devious methods. We used to have gang fights in the neighborhood from people from other block.

On Halloween evening we used to raise Cain, break windows, lift gates. One time we jammed up the traffic by parading around and changing the signals. The cops came and we ran like hell.

I didn't care for school very much. We used to cut school--for instance, when the circus came around. We helped to get a pass to see the big show. I went to the Japanese school because of pressure from parents. I didn't learn very much because I ditched school a lot of time and went to movies, sometimes. In order to get money we used to sell things like gunny sacks and liquor bottles and anything that had refund value. Usually we used to lift them off of people's porches and backyards. Of course, we used to go fishing and all that.

My association with Japanese was just a few that were of my age, about 3 or 4 of them. But they were never in on our gang--they weren't accepted. They were apart, and I used to see them in our Japanese school. They were considered "good" children and didn't do some of the things that we did. I



got my dad in a few jams. We did things on a dare, and breaking a windshield got me, and dad had to pay \$20, and was he mad.

When I left Santa Barbara I was about 11. Dad was busy as a third partner in a laundry. Mother was working in the laundry, too. I was left on my own. There were many Japanese living in Santa Barbara, but they were scattered. At home I spoke a mixture of Japanese and English.

When we hit L.A. I didn't mingle so much with the Caucasian-Mexican elements. In fact, I became very interested in several Japanese boys in my class. It might have been because I was in a strange place. They were nice to me, and I liked it. These Japanese weren't under the influence of a gang, and I didn't feel so bad among these people. In Santa Barbara I had to do a lot of things, but still I liked it. In Los Angeles there was no one I could act big to. After a while I began to run around with hakujin friends, but I still retained some of these Japanese friends.

I didn't get along too well with Nisei girls because I didn't bother to find out much about them. I shied away from them. They were so clustered together, and I hated that. They were never independent, but always kept together. They always sat around the area near the bicycle rack--about 20 or 30 girls, and a bunch of fellows would be on the opposite side of the bicycle rack--about 15 of them. I didn't like that at all.

I ran around with hakujin boys. I met them in class. We liked to fool around with "hop-ups". I didn't have one of my own, but I went along with them. In a sense I got along with Hakujin fellows and girls, too, because I was the chairman of the English class for a year. The fellows would all take the same class that I would because they knew that I would be able to help them. If they forgot to do a thing it was an easy matter to contact



me and not be called upon. So I got along with the teachers and the fellows knew that, and they always voted me up there. There were very few Japanese in my English class, only about 4 of them. There were about 30 Japanese graduating with me.

I had 2 Japanese friends. We used to go to shows together, to parties, to the beach, mountain. The first two years I went to a lot of Japanese socials, but the last two years I gradually drifted away. When I graduated I was entirely cut off from my Japanese friends, even with my best Japanese friend. We used to go out to buy the same kind of clothes in Los Angeles, but we split up--I don't know why. It was a gradual break. This friend kept on his contact with the Japanese group. He was popular among them. The first two years I tagged along with a group of boys and girls, but didn't have any particular date. To class parties I took Caucasian girls several times, and also to movies. In the class parties I was accepted. On a private party people watched us, and I felt a little self-conscious. At times I felt very self-conscious, especially when they start talking about me. I couldn't hear them, but I knew they were talking about me. For instance, when we went into a drive-way to get a hamburger. When the traffic signal stops people are likely to look around, and I always wanted the signal to be on the "go." The girl, however, didn't seem to mind at all.

The high school period was a screwy period in my life. I was more of a lone wolf. I used to go into town by myself all of the time. I can't figure it out. I used to go once a week by myself, because I didn't want to be around Japanese. I was moodish as hell, especially the last year of high school. I had great satisfaction in seeing and doing things by myself. In



a way I broke away from my Hakujiin friends because they went on personal dates and didn't go around in small groups. They had their own girls and they all had an idea of what they wanted to do. Consequently, I was left out in a way. I didn't have any particular girl to go around with. This was mainly in my senior year. I walked to school together with my friend, but we didn't say anything to each other. I do not know how he felt about it. We didn't have friends in common, for one thing. I met him in sixth grade and he lived only a half a block away from me. We were like twins. We went all through high school together. At the end of the ninth grade he became interested in a vocational course, and I continued my academic course. There was a break there, and we didn't have classes together.

I could have been accepted by the Japanese. I talked to girls later and they said that they thought I was a queer duck. I didn't go to any of the Japanese socials when my friend was there. They figured that I was terrifically shy of the Japanese girls. A lot of them were interested in knowing what I was like. My friend never did bother to explain or say anything about me. They thought that I was a snoot too. I got a great deal of satisfaction of running around by myself during that last year in high school. I got most satisfaction of going to town by myself. No one would know that I went on a street car, go into a pool hall, not being intimate with anyone. We used to go to chop-suey together and then perhaps to a burlesque show. I think I could have joined up in the Japanese group and could have been very happy. In the last year in high school I didn't try to be too conventional with Caucasians either. I just wanted to be left alone. I wanted to go where I wasn't known.

I didn't know why I went to college. My folks thought that it was a



good idea. College was interesting in that I was left alone for once. I was not pushed or told to do things, and left alone. This was terrifically different from high school. The Hakujiin fellows were telling me about running for position and being their manager, etc. -- about what I should be doing. In college they didn't care whether I was there or not. It was so big and huge that no one bothered about me. I felt free and enjoyed it. Toward the end of the year I began to be interested in photography. I was taking a night course in high school in photography. One night the instructor took us to the Art Center School to see the United States Camera exhibition. I went because the whole night school class went. There were no Japanese. All Caucasians--20 to 60 years of age. I got along, although I never took a picture during the whole course. I became quite intimate with the school janitor because he was interested in photography. He was working his way through college. It was his duty to lock up the place after hours, and consequently he used to drive me home after we closed up the place. We had long bull sessions sitting in his car. We talked about a lot of things from history, philosophy, down to what made what. In a month or two we were quite intimate. He invited me to his house, and used to have dinner with his family and used to use his dark room. On Sundays we used to go on photographic trips.

(I started out with a liberal arts course at UCLA).

After seeing the camera exhibition I couldn't seem to get it out of my head. I marveled at the prints and techniques. Consequently even while studying at the university, I became intrigued by photography even though I didn't even have a camera.



I went to school on a bus or sometimes with a Japanese friend I met at UCLA. I didn't join the Japanese Student Club. I met several Nisei fellow in the ROTC. Roy Hirano, for one. In school it was all very casual, and didn't have any other contacts outside of school. I never went to any of the Japanese parties. Later, I learned that other Japanese thought that I had come from the Middle West or someplace because I didn't mix in with the others. At UCLA they sat on one side of the library. There're two table which are taboo to Caucasians. I sat at the other extreme--the southeast end of the library. In between classes they stuck on west side of Royce Hall.

About a third of my friends went to college. I met them occasionally. They took a different course, and in a large university you don't see people very often. I used to have lunch and things together, to football games, and to movies. It was like high school. I went to a non-fraternity social club. I was all Caucasian. A friend I met and I used to go there. Afterward they left town. It's funny but I never did get very intimate--close enough. The only guy that I got to know pretty well was this janitor in high school.. He was a totally different kind of guy. He was smart as a whip. Not very exclusive, very easy-going, soft-spoken, well-mannered.

I stayed out of the university for a year and worked. I didn't feel that I was ready for a course in photography. So I decided to stay out a year and work on my own and make a little money and find out a little more about photography. I wanted to go to Art Center. I helped my dad in the laundry, worked in the fruit stand, and also as a gardener. The guy I worked was an Issei gardener. Working in a market you meet Nisei kids, play



pinball, and go to a chop-suey on Saturday night, but that's all.

So I went to Art Center. There's where I met people that were interesting. I think that was the beginning of my life. I finally got out of this feeling, foggy atmosphere. I began to see things more in perspective. I finally found something I wanted to do. Before that I must have been hunting for this thing I wanted to do. Here at the Art Center I met people from all over the world. At least, I had a well-rounded type of interest where I could meet all kinds of people. I really got along. Those were the happy days of my life. We all had one main interest in our life. There were hardly no Japanese, and I didn't associate with them. The other Japanese didn't want to associate with Japanese, either. One fellow from Imperial Valley was hard to approach because he would be cool and aloof. I was that way myself. There were only 6 or 7 Nisei. There was one Nisei girl, but I never became intimate with her. At that time I vowed myself that I would eat, dream, and sleep photography. I cut my relation with all other people that I knew at other places, except one or two--Fred, my pal in high school. It's funny, we got together again. He was gardening. He's a totally different type from me. He's conservative and practical, not much of a dreamer. He figures on getting married, and dates. He loves his mother and father, and wants them to live with him. He feels that his limits are bound. He's something like my brother. The worst period was the last year in high school. I do not know when it was that we got together again. It was a slow process. We never broke off, and we were back together again as friends. Maybe he didn't notice this. But I felt as though we had broken off. Sometimes it would get my goat just to see him.



There were approximately 110 students at the Art Center in the first year photography class. The first time the instructor made us give out name and where we came from and why we took photography up. There were about three of them I especially liked. One was an Irishman who said that he was from Huntington Beach, who traveled to Japan as a cabin boy. He was interested in photography because he wanted to do this on his travels. Another fellow from India wanted to do it on a great commercial business. A Canadian wanted to do publicity work. I made an effort to meet them. The Irishman became a very good friend of mine. Within three months I was moving around with about 6 people. One was an Arizona kid. Another was a German from Long Beach and another fellow of Campbell Soup Company, and another kid who ran away from home. We were quite an intimate group. Whenever we went on a field trip we'd go as a little gang. During the evenings when we were free, we'd go out together. We used to go bowling, pool hall, poker, drinking excursions, rowdy parties with some of the artist girls, night night club (East-Side Central Avenue). At the beginning I felt kind of funny because I didn't know them very well. Consequently, I was very cautious. After a year I became intimate because we were still together. We shook off several who quit school. I was never kicked out of any place, and I felt good wherever I went. We used to go to Earl Carroll's Palladium. I didn't feel out of place at all taking girls to shows, dinners, hot-dog stands. I guess I became more and more free in my thoughts and the way I did things. I wasn't bothered any more.

Sometime in 1940 I met Joe and those guys because I wanted to do a documentary movie of Japanese and Japanese truck farmers. I heard that



there was a group called the writer's league and that I would be able to get some ideas from those people. I went to one of their meetings. I found the meeting interesting. I never saw so many screw-balls in my life. Tsuneishi, Joe, Molly, George Watanabe and the whole bunch were there. I met Togo at his office when I wanted to do a photographic shot of him for an assignment. I didn't see much of them for a while because I was too busy. I went to the first two meetings and dropped out for a long time. Before Pearl Harbor we were chinning up a little more. I was trying to get on with my work when Pearl Harbor came along. I wasn't too intimate with them. I intended to go to New York to go into commercial work. I was going to graduate in June and we were evacuated in March.

Pearl Harbor didn't cause any difference with my friends. I had become indignant when they started to say "Japs," although my friends were pretty careful not to say it when I was around. At one local bar the saloon keeper told me not to come because he didn't want any trouble. He was always nice to me and so I only went occasionally early in the evening. Our relationship, however, was not changed. At one restaurant the waitresses and the Filipino dishwasher making remarks at Japs didn't please me and I quit going there. But there were no changes with my personal friends.

I felt bitter, resented, all the time about being evacuated. I continually thought of the enjoyable times I used to have back home. I was very resentful toward the American Government. I was slated to enter the Army, and it griped me because I was going to be drafted and wasn't. I worked thinning peaches in Loomis, and it certainly griped me. Five people lived in a 18 x 20 room. Even the food griped me. My mother had to cook on the outside. I was resentful toward the United States Government for



all of this. My folks wanted to move up to Loomis to avoid going to Manzanar. Just before evacuation I really felt like I wanted to go to assembly center because I had to work.

For practically all through my one month in the assembly center, I felt resentment. I couldn't get along with the people and I didn't try very much. One thing that helped me was the friendliness of the people in Loomis. To me that friendliness was really something. They tried to make me a part of them. So I figured that these Placer County People were really nice. But in camp I never grew intimate with any particular group of Niseis--only enough to gripe to them. I was engineered into the newspaper job because I talked to a few people. I wasn't very interested in it. It only filled up a gap because I had nothing to do. I was looking forward to the day we would move out of Walerga. It was too small and crowded. To see the field and the dirtiness of the Japanese people was really disgusting. Eating sloppily in the messhall, and girls dressed so sloppily. I just didn't like the whole atmosphere. The climate wasn't so good either--swamp, mosquitoes, bugs, hot sweltering humid heat.

When I first saw Tule Lake I felt something release inside of myself. It was big enough to be unnoticed. I was more eager to wallow in this environment. I felt ten times better than I did in Arboga, and 100 times than I did in Marysville. The accommodations were much better. The biggest factor was the idea of being in a huge crowd where I could be lost, where I could stay up late or sleep late, where I could do as I pleased. I wanted to do a photographic story of this camp life. I made a brief outline of what I wanted to shoot, and I approached Tom and Frank. I wanted them to



be in on it because they were in a position to help me in the social aspect. They thought that it was a brilliant idea. I approached the right party. After about a month they said that it couldn't be done because we were in the Western Defense Command. I wrote to Lange in San Francisco, and she answered that it was out of her hands. So that left me cold. At that time I became interested in organizing an art club, which could do sketches. There were 30 to 40 people interested. I gave them the outline of what was to be done. That was squelched because you couldn't get any supplies. I learned that the Community Activities didn't have any funds. Hayes said that he wanted a mural drawn for the Personnel dining room, but he never made any efforts to help us in the ways of supplies, etc. I decided that it wasn't wise for me to tell them that they'd have to buy their own supplies (the artists). So I gave up the art club.

There were more variety in here so I got along better here. They were all rural people in Arboaga, and not too imaginative. Here you could meet people from different places. I thought that I would be able to find out about the Japanese people--this was a gold mine for observations on the Japanese people. I gradually came to realize that the Japanese as a whole were human just like any other people. There were things that I had never known about the people gradually came into focus, that they had difficulties, fantasies, etc. which any people has. Towards the end of the year I became more and more quite habituated to this place. With the registration, however, put a bombshell under me and made me think that I should get busy and do something. Nothing was working out very well--the museum, for instance--I felt that I should go out. The place was losing its value photographically. I wanted to go out and do a story on resettlement, because that was the



next story. Since I missed the life of the Japanese, and the relocation, I felt that the only alternative was to shoot a documentary on the outside. Consequently, that was more or less of a reason to go out in a hurry. So I made plans to go out. I was disgusted with a year of this place. I didn't write any more after a while. As long as you're uneasy about a lot of things you can write, but as soon as you have a slight satisfaction with the rest of the people you don't care any more.

I have been more or less in a quandry about the relationship between myself and the Caucasian and the Japanese. Being in a place like this you are influenced by the Isseis and the other Niseis, and their arguments hold still. "You try to talk and act American, but just look at us." If you get away from that sort of thing, you still feel that there's an opportunity to be accepted by Caucasians. You write letters to your Caucasian friends to see how they write back. When you receive an answer you are satisfied because you feel that you are part of them. This helps to balance the pressure from the other side. I still feel that I can get places even though I'm a Japanese because I haven't actually felt any discrimination. Maybe, if I go out, I might. I feel that I myself can get along with Caucasians.



Second Interview  
Document CH-101  
October 25, 1943  
Shibutani

Willie Ohara

We left L.A. for Loomis primarily to escape the evacuation. That is, we thought we would escape evacuation. That was the only reason why we went to a hell hole like Loomis. We had a family friend there. We conjured in our mind the possibility that Loomis might not be evacuated. It was a fruit country and nothing of vital defense work within miles of the town. We thought it would be the last place to be evacuated. The move started when the family took everything out of the house and took it to the business establishment that we had. It serves as a sort of warehouse. My father, mother, and two brothers took as much personal belongings as they could and went up on the car. They took things like the 100 pound sacks of rice, 10 gallon jugs of soyu, and other staple foods that we had in the pantry. We had bedding for each member of the family. There was no furniture of any kind. We left our real estate in the hands of an agent. We gave him power-of-attorney and let me worry about everything.

As for myself, I sold my car and took my own personal belongings. That's all. We were supposed to turn in all cameras, guns, and other such items, but I'd be damned if I'd turn in my camera. It cost me a lot of money. My state of mind was such that they'd have to catch me and toss me in jail first. But with intrigue I sold my camera nominally to a friend. It values about \$500. but I sold it technically for \$1. According to law a sale is made when there is an exchange for money. We made out a bill of sale for \$1, but my friend agreed to take care of it until such time as I could redeem it again. It was just an agreement between us. For all technical purposes, the camera was sold.



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When the day of evacuation from Loomis began we had to purchase immediately necessities such as, rugs, medical supplies, and electrical appliances because we heard there was a shortage of appliances in camp. I think that was about all we bought. On the whole, our family was rather conservative and didn't cross bridges before they came to them.

Most of us were apprehensive about the whole set-up. We heard all kinds of things about living conditions and food but we didn't overload ourselves like the other families did who didn't want to take a chance. Primarily I think it was because they didn't trust the government. We had moved once already and of course we had a slightly different viewpoint on the whole evacuation. We didn't have much to take in the first place and in the second place we realized that we could buy things in camp if we needed it. So we didn't burden ourselves. Rumors said we could buy things. Others said we couldn't and we took a chance. Hell, I knew we wouldn't starve in there.

We first thought we were going to Tule Lake. We hear rumors that Placer was divided into two or three sections and we were in a section to go to Tule Lake direct from what we'd heard. We heard Arboga was just a mudhole that General DeWitt had gone through and had declared unlivable. Rumor of whether to go to Arboga or Walerga were current. We heard that mosquitoes were bad. We anticipated swamplike atmospheres. I was so god damn glad to get out of Loomis that I wasn't thinking of anything like that, but the people were pretty excited about the whole thing. I didn't think of anything disagreeable--not more disagreeable than what was in Loomis. I think we have to make a distinction between the people



of Loomis and the refugges who escaped, primarily because we had moved once whereas these people were moving for the first time. We were more hardened to the idea of accepting evacuation. I think that was the prominent difference in the reaction.

I don't think the place was too bad. I was indifferent. I was living in an area one-twenty-fifth of that in the camp in Loomis. The Arboga room was pretty big in comparison.

The thing that shocked me in Arboga and and I still can't get over it was the anticipation of going to church on Stunday night. That was one of the most anxious and funniest things that happened to me. I guess I was anxious to go. Ordinarily I didn't care but this time I wanted to be there. Why I don't know whether the feeling of loneliness or bitterness at the time had anything to do with it. At anyrate, I thought I would be comfortable in church and as a matter of fact I was. I never felt so rested and absorbed in what a minister was saying. I didn't have to force myself to listen. I just sat and couldn't help but absorb it all. It gave me a staisfying feeling. It was really a shot in the arm. No kidding. It was the funniest god damn thing that happened to me. I was so completely relaxed. Of course, the second, third and fourth time I didn't have the same feeling again. A Caucasian minister spoke. He came from Chico or Marsyville or somewhere. It was the first meeting of the church for Young poeple. There weren't any Issei around. The church had held services before but this meeting on about the second or third week was the first meeting for the young people.

I don't know that anything preoccupied my mind other than the



regret in leaving my friends in S.C. and coming among a bunch of strangers who were entirely different, that is, I was more a city guy and all these were country folks.

I didn't think about work. I had about \$60. saved from the work out on the ranch. I worked in the camp but for gratis. I was the feature editor of the newspaper. I didn't want to be on the payroll because I would have to be there at 8 in the morning and stay there until five at night and I didn't anticipate being tied down for such a nominal wage. As long as I was on my own hook I know I could do as I damn pleased as long as I met deadlines.

In the last two weeks, Mr. Randall, who was the head of the rec. department ~~also~~ and also head of the newspaper staff wanted us to put out an extra edition during the last week in Arboga. All the editors had already agreed a week before that it was time to call it quits. When he tried to persuade us, I said I wouldn't have anything to do with it. He told me to turn in my badge and that I was fired. I told him I never had one and left. Randall was chagrined. He had thought he had the upper hand, but found out that he didn't. I told the rest of the gang to do as they wanted; they stuck by the original agreement. The Arbogram was the first paper to fold up in all the centers. We got a write-up in the California Pelican or something. They said they had the complete files. The Walerga Wasp missed it by one week. I can still see Randall. God damn, the guy used to burn me up. Yeah, we used to have censorship. The assistant project director was the censor. We couldn't state any hospital figures or mess management figures or anything. We couldn't present any controversial subjects whatsoever. It was just a tabloid full of hot air. It was a god



damn gossip column and a voice of the administration. It wasn't a newspaper by a long shot.

The food was lousy. Oh, Christ, it was lousy. It was hot as hell in there in May and June. We were in camp for about five weeks which were in the hottest period. Gnats were flying all over the place. The girls were ugly because their legs and arms were bitten by them. There were millions of mosquitoes. Food was lousy. No one knew how to cook. They put every god damn thing in one dish. Stew and potato salad was thrown in together. We had a combination of hot and cold on one dish. Jello never hardened because it was too damn hot. I don't think anyone enjoyed the mess food. Quite a few never ate in the mess hall. They just had their friends bring them stuff on visitors' day. Everyone devised methods to get edibles from the outside. They confidentially had the bakery man unload several hundred dollars of bakery privately. Others had Caucasian workers purchase staple goods from the outside and sometimes paid twice and three times the actual cost. In other words food was that lousy. Very few people enjoyed eating.

The latrines were nothing but eight or ten foot pits and 3/4 or 1/2 inch third grade pine with knot holes and knots dividing the men and women's latrines. We were just back to back. God, that was awful. After the first few days all the latrines began to smell. After about four weeks they were practically overflowing. The administration began digging new latrines ten feet away from the existing latrines. They were so crudely constructed and so strategically placed that with every shift of wind the stench could be smelled at all times. I think those were most disgusting things in the center. Iss31 women barged in to our cans but that



did both<sup>er</sup> me too much. I heard some rumors of passing the meat in the blanket warehouses, but never got curious enough to check up on it for myself. I guess I would have been embarrassed if some young Nisei girl came walking in, but Issei women don't phase me. I don't know if there were any problems about peeping Toms or not, but I heard that the gals were passing it out so that the guys had their problems solved. They were pretty conservative people, though. I imagine they had some troubles though.

All I can say is that it was one of the lousiest god damn places I've ever been. I got up at about a quarter to eight and got to the mess hall at eight. I knew some girls working there and got a new batch of scrambled eggs. I got all the breakfast which I couldn't get from the regular mob. I knew that if I went in with the regular mob I couldn't get these things. About nine I went to the Arbogram office and started chinning there. I figured out the assignments for the day and about 10:30 and then we went over to the canteen. We generally went. We had some fruit juice or coke or ice cream or whatever they had in stock and we usually walked around camp. Since I was feature writer, I engaged all kinds of people in conversation. I watched them work on their gardens. I watched the kids playing ball. In the afternoon I went to the mess about 11:30. We ate in shifts. The place would accommodate about 150 and there were about 500 in the block. We went through the god damn place in about ten minutes. We were privileged characters because we worked. It was an advantage in that we could eat when we pleased. We usually went back to the press office and lounged around. We listened to the radio and



played poker. I wrote to my friends. I wrote my assignments. Then I generally went to the canteen. It was hot as hell. I went to the rec hall and looked around. We played ball for a while. We played horsehoe. We loafed around about an hour and a half and sat in the shade of some barrack to about four or five. Then we usually hiked back to our own barracks and took our showers. I changed and waited for the dinner gong. And then we reluctantly ate. In the evenings after the mess, there were always soft-ball games going on. Sometimes we watched the games, and usually we moved around in a mob. The press gang went around together all over the camp. It was a small place and we covered the place in about ten minutes. We generally winded up in someone's barrack. We had our bull sessions. We had poker games. We had a party if someone had some bakery. This was the initial period and we were getting acquainted. I navigated from one locale to another. About 11:30 or 12 I turned in. The next day it was the same god damn thing all over again. The day after that, it was the same god damn thing all over again.

We were the last residents of Arboga to move and consequently for the week we stood by the gate and waved goodbye to the people who were going ahead. There was no sorrow in parting. We knew we'd see our friends again since we were all going to the same place. The mood was one of festivity. There was no anxiety. It was not like going to Arboga. People were jubilant, humorous, and people were happy. We heard that lumber was hard to get in Tule Lake so in building boxes we used two by fours for everything. We broke tables and used two by fours for everything we could in crates.



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We used the best wood and the longest piece of lumber to construct coffin like carriers for everything. One family went so far as to fake a box and put a lot of wood within a wooden box and covered it up with fibre board. They were trying to deceive the loader but we heard later that the loaders were not as dumb as they thought and chucked the box out into an empty lot. It never arrived in Tule Lake.

We were the last 300 to leave Arboga and 20 of us fellows and gals anticipated a terrific going away party for ourselves. We raided all the other blocks and stole what food we found in the empty mess halls. We even swiped about five dozen eggs, five pounds of bacon and five pounds of roast park from our own mess hall. We fired up our own stove and had a rollicking feast. We listened to the radio and had orange juice, ham and bacon. We danced, sang and had a generally noisy affair. About 12 we marched en masse throughout the deserted camp singing, telling jokes and laughing. Then the gals said that they had to turn in so the fellows started an all night poker session. About 3 all of us were kind of tired so we quit and went back to our own beds. That was my last night in Arboga. Sunday, the day we moved, was a helluva day.

It was the hottest goddam day in Arboga. We all knew we were leaving about one, but it was so damn hot we all stretched out in the shade of the barracks and just sat around. We just gabbed and waited for lunch. The place was lonely, quiet and deserted. The guard towers were empty. There were a few soldiers walking around in the soldiers' area. About 1:30 in the afternoon, we left Arboga. As we drove through the gate there were no goodbyes and nobody saying 'We'll see you soon'. We were the last ones to leave and all of us were happy to get out of there. A few of the people had regrets. Not about



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Arboga itself but because they were going farther away from home. The majority were happy to leave the cramped quarters of the concentration camp. It was a relief like being released from a civilian jail. We all felt that as we rode along the highway toward the railroad station.

I was just living in Arboga but was sort of in my own shell. I was dreaming of all my friends at home in L.A. I felt like a stranger although the people were friendly and were perhaps more sincere in their affection than most of the people at home. They were naive, simple people. Their tastes were simple and if they liked you, that was all there was to it. You didn't have to ~~am~~ camouflage your feelings. I guess the other big points in Arboga was making new acquaintances. I kept remembering the past but was slowly and surely making new friends.

I anticipated going to glorious God's country. Tule Lake sounded something like Lake Tahoe with blue water, fir trees and cool country. It sounded rather like a resort. From what I had heard about the region, it sounded good and we were all anxious to go to Tule Lake. None of us were frightened or saddened about the announcement of going there. I remember that we started a rumor that Arboga was to be split in two with the first half going to Tule Lake and the second half to Manzanar. The rumor went like wild fire and it raised quite a bit of tension. The people became anxious. They had heard of Manzanar and heard that it was rather desolate and unlivable. It was just a rumor but within a day an announcement had to come from the director's office spiking it. Then everyone's mind were at ease. I'll never forget it. We just wanted to see how powerful rumor could be. There was hysteria. There was a terrific commotion after it got around. Of course, none of the administration ever found out who started the rumor.



The thing that made it easy for people to believe it was that Alaska had been bombed just before that and they expected train traffic going north to be pretty full. They figured that evacuee traffice would be slow and that since a lot of empty trains were going south chances are they would go south too. I guess rumors are powerful things. Some people were so damn confused. One nisei approached a councillor and was just crying. I guess he was sad in general and saw no way out. All his aspirations had crowned like a thorn. It sort of made me laugh but I guess it was a pretty serious thing if he was crying.

From the firstday in Tule Lake to August, I didn't do a damn thing. We were on the train about 7 in the morning and passed this huge camp. I thought we were passing an Army camp. It was huge. I never saw anything like it. It was just huge, that's all. There was barrack after barrack. Then I thought it couldn't be Tule Lake. It must be an Army camp. But goddamit, the train started to slow down and I asked the guard. 'Is this Tule Lake?' and he nodded. The enormous area was beyond all anticipation. I didn't realize a Jap camp could be so large. When we boarded the trucks and rode through the administration area to the receiving barrack, we were all confused. We thought God, we'll never see all of Tule Lake. We would get lost. That's all I can remember about the first day. The place was huge. The place was so big in comparison to Arboga. It was a similar structure but built by the ton instead of pounds.

We were all eager to find accommodations among people that we knew in Arboga. We felt strange in a big place and I suppose its customary, and maybe natural to seek familiar faces. Ther was a very compatible feeling in finding outselves with Arbogans. We all identified ourselves as Arbogans and not as separate families. We lived



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together for one month and that seemed to give us the right to seek accommodations right next door to each other. I had a vague feeling of loneliness in a strange place.

My daily routine for the first couple of months didn't amount to much. I spent all my time going to the canteen and looking up Arboga friends. I was curious about the Oregonians and Washingtonians and the whole thing was like a picnic. Every day was a day of anticipation. We didn't know who we would bump into or what the next day had in store for us. It really wasn't a routine. It wasn't monotonous but exciting. But within two months most of us felt that we had made enough acquaintances and began to circulate among ourselves. I didn't seek employment primarily because I had hard up \$60 I made in Loomis. I played poker hoping to multiply the remains and kept going until August. Until the middle of August I had enough money to buy what I wanted. About that time poker didn't go so well and I found my pockets empty and decided to get a job.

I had the idea of doing a photographic study in Arboga but the goddam red tape held it up. I really wanted to do this and wrote a lot of letters and looked up a lot of people. In the first or second week in Tule Lake I heard of some sociologists around Tule. I guess I heard it from Mrs. Halle, that old nervous basan who had a cigarette hanging out of the corner of her mouth all the time. I looked up these guys and they agreed my project was worthwhile. So I wrote up why I wanted to do the study. Oh hell, I talked to Francis, Shirrell, Waller, I don't know. I went to see everyone. I even went to see that dumb bastard Hayes. I even wrote to Dorothea Lange. I wanted to do a photographic documentation of evacuation in Tule Lake both in stills and in movies. I anticipated collaboration in statistical and other



factual material from the sociologists, psychologists and statistician. I thought I would get help and ideas on presentations from the artists and writers in Tule Lake. I wanted to get the very simple every day routine of camp life and also pictures of some specific activities. Take the nursery school, for example. I wanted to get a picture of what the children do, who administers to them, and to show simply and in simple form precisely what goes on in Tule Lake. It was intended primarily for educational and social studies. I thought that it might be useful in the post-war period and for future reference. It might even be useful for propaganda in the future.

None of the crises or strikes in Tule Lake really struck me personally. I didn't know what it was all about and what's more I didn't give a damn. I wasn't in any of the work crews that were striking and wasn't interested. The radio broadcast mess didn't phase me at all, because I didn't see any value in those programs anyway.

Well, they finally told me I couldn't do my photographic study so I gave it up. This was about the middle of August and I didn't know what I wanted to do. I went to the employment office and asked for a night job in the construction crew. It was hot as hell during the day and I didn't care to work. A few hours of work in the evenings wasn't bad so I went on the construction crew to work with the pick and shovel gang. We filled up ponds and did jobs like that but for some odd reason my assignment never came through. About August 15 I inquired and they checked up on the employment record and found out my name slipped the regular channels. The foreman decided that since I was assigned that I should receive the benefit of the period that I worked. About that time the night job was disbanded so I was out of work.

For the second time I went over the placement office and got a



job as a junior clerk in the mess management. I went to work a week later at \$16.00 per. It was easy work and very boring. It was about this time that J.B. Cook approached me about a fine proposition and a \$19.00 job as, oh hell, what did he call that damn job? Junior administrative assistant. I still remember that fucking title. I went to work for him. Oh, I didn't mind the reports job. I started going around asking questions but the people clamped up like clams when they saw me with a notebook. I had to reverse my tactics. I had a notebook in my hand, God, you can imagine me in my fluent Japanese. I guess I must have looked like a cub reporter. I guess I took the job because I knew that if I didn't have anything prompting me I would never write about evacuee life. I thought I would find material for my own use and possibly for photographic documentation. I never did give up that idea. Another thing that was good about the job, was that the hours were my own. That was good. And of course the three bucks extra. While it didn't mean a helluva a lot, but something. Actually I was doing 1 1/2 hours work per week for the mess management and I knew that I really ought to do more.

I learned a great deal about the psychology about the Japanese people that I had never known before. This is kind of naive for me to say, but it's true. I found out that the Japanese were human. I always looked the issei folks with respect regardless of their humble existence. I'd always called them ojisan or obasan and regarded them as nice people. But in camp I learned differently. Now I know that every issei is not that way. He's like the ordinary common people with prejudices, grudges, intrigues and disappointments. Hate and greed came out in the open. I started to look upon them with contempt when I found out that they were not unlike any other people I had known.



I began to accept them, not en masse, but individually. In my own mind I classified people in various categories. I think that was the most revealing thing I learned in camp. Along with the things that I learned in my studies in classes and as a reports man.

Do you want me to tell you about my love life? You don't want to miss that do you? Sure, I'm willing to tell you. I may as well. The whole thing started in Tule Lake. Prior to evacuation I never anticipated marriage for quite some time to come. I was still getting an education in a field in which I intended to make myself an expert. I was serious about my work and I had intended to go to India with the aid of a friend to start what we thought would be a photo magazine, somewhat similar to Life, in the Orient. I had anticipated travel and that left no room in my plans for a wife. However, in Tule Lake there were personal disappointments primarily from the frustration in the documentation business and from the fact that I was confined to a limited area. I found myself seeking companionship of the opposite sex and as time dragged on I got more and more involved, and began to reminisce with girls. There were about four of them that I liked particularly, one from Washington, one from Marysville, one from L.A. and one from Loomis. It was a sort of gradual thing. Anyway, gradually I found myself seeking one girl and disregarding all the others. I guess I found comfort, affection, understanding and love with one girl. She had everything I thought anyone could ask for. She was a dreamer at heart, just like myself. And we used to go to Castle Rock on Sunday or Abalone Hill and stay all day, nights we walked around. Everything I did and said seemed to please her and everything she did and said seemed to please me. On December 25, we both realized we were in love with each other. From that time on until the time I left camp,



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every evening and every day was heaven to me. We kept on dreaming of the future and in all my plans I found that she was included. When I was away from her I found slowly but surely I was drifting away from her or from the ideas I originally had for my career. It seemed that it was either her or my career but at that time it didn't matter.

But then came the registration. In this period I found myself rebelling against the comparative ease and contentment of camp life. It was saturating me. I realized that as I stayed in camp it was becoming more and more difficult to leave although at first I had rebelled against this confinement. I must have been intoxicated with love but the registration cleared my mind and I found myself eager to leave Tule Lake. It wasn't difficult as I anticipated to tell her. I knew that she couldn't leave at the same time under the circumstances and I made up my mind that she wouldn't stop me. She said that some day soon we'd meet in the outside world. After I left Tule Lake I was lonely for her and when I was here in Chicago I realized after several disappointing interviews about photography position that my Japanese face didn't help me any. At those times I almost telling all the whole world to go to hell and I thought of going to other fields and other places. And so I left Chicago to go to New York. All this time she wrote at least twice a week but I realized and she did too towards the end of July that we were slowly drifting apart. About the first of August I realized that if I didn't assert myself I would lose her. It wasn't until then that I realized my whole being was actually encased in my own ambitions and dreams. I realized that I wasn't as practical as I should be for a husband. I'm careless about money, I'm reckless with time and she realized that I was drifting away from her. Because I didn't feel that I had the right and I was confused, she abruptly ended



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all communication with me. I lost her. Right now I feel I was a sucker but on the other hand, I feel confident that I know myself well enough to realize perhaps she was right in breaking off our unspoken engagement. God, I'm afraid to think what would happen if she came here to Chicago. She anticipated this, you know. She told me not to stay away too long. Between Christmas and May 11, no two people could have been happier than we were. She's from Loomis and a college grad. She has two younger brothers and sisters. She lost her mother a long time ago and her father is a Goddam pro-Jap. I think that people have asked for her hand twice but she did not accept. Dammit, I got to be more practical.

My mother and father were very religious so I went to church from as far back as I can remember. I remember one night I came home very drunk. My mother's the kind of a woman who gets mad as hell and tells everybody off but my father is calm. I admire him for that. He didn't say a damn thing but I knew something was on his mind so I used to leave early and come home late. He got me though. He came in one Sunday because we usually slept late on Sunday and just sat down on a chair and asked if he could have a word with me. God, can he beat around the bush. We talked for three quarters of an hour before he got to the point but thru inferences and analogies he made it understood that he didn't want me to get drunk. After that, if I ever got stowed I stayed uptown with friends to the night. We were always able to talk man to man. When I was a little kid he used to beat me up but now we understand each other. He's out in Denver now and I admire a man of his age for going ahead to earn his own living. He's working as a janitor or gardener or something but he's the kind of a guy who smiles first so everybody likes him. My mother is out there and they're



sending my brother to school. I get a lot of letters from him and he tells me to take care of myself and not waste all my money and all that sort of thing. I really admire him. Can you imagine the guts in a nisei like him. He had always been in the cleaning business but he decided that he wasn't getting anywhere in Tule Lake and when he saw an opening as a shoemaker, he took it and went out to Colorado Springs. Can you imagine a guy doing that? The only experience he had was two or three months in Tule Lake. When he got there they just couldn't use him because he didn't know enough so he went back to Denver and got another job from the WRA.

The thing that burned me up about Tule Lake was that bastard Cook. He kept hounding me all the time for names of agitators and so forth. I couldn't tell him that I didn't know because he knew damn well that I knew. When I rewrote up reports I included some things which made it quite obvious who the agitators were but I'll be goddam if I tell that bastard anything. He really burned me up.

Up to the time of registration I was comparative at ease. Everything I did held some interest for me and I think I was adapting myself to my environment rather well. But when the registration problem came up I realized that it was necessary for me to leave because altho I felt security in the camp, I wasn't honest with myself when I said I like the condition and the attitude of the people. It became a question of whether I should stay and become futile in my attempts because of intolerance or a belligerent and a small-minded populace of Tule Lake, or whether I should leave camp and try to find myself in a situation that wasn't so small and full of personal intrigues. I found myself being morbid in my opinions for various factors. One was a strong pro-Japanese element. They weren't pro-Axis because they



don't give a damn about the Germans. They are constantly trying to persuade you by word of mouth that you are and always will be a goddam Jap. In spite of the fact that my environment, my education and my moral being told me I was an American that I had a right to say what I want and the right to stay in any country if I pleased. Even if I was of Japanese ancestry. However, the persuasive element of the pro-Jap community constantly goaded my emotions as to the wrong the government had imposed upon the nisei as well as the Japanese nationals, for the past 30 or 50 years. Somehow I was in a state of conflicting emotions that left me weary and worn out. I myself was a small part. I was only an individual among 15,000 and I knew I wasn't as resolute and staunch as not to be affected by the pro-Jap faction. The height of the confusion in their mind was suddenly dispersed by one action. In Block 42 I saw ~~100~~ hundreds of nisei and issei hysterically yelling "banzai" and apparently venting all of their pent up antagonistic and embittered anguish against the United States government. They were taunting and belittling the soldiers of the U.A. Army. For a while I was stunned, and couldn't help but think what kind of a bastard place was I in? Would I eventually find myself yelling banzai? Would I find myself boldly happy and being carried off in an Army truck like an enemy of the United States? It was at that time that I realized fully that there was only one outlet for myself and that was to seek a life outside of Tule Lake. Furthermore, on the following days of registration began I found so many nisei cowering and afraid to assert themselves and their desires to stick to the U.S. They were afraid to do what they wanted because of intimidation and coercion. I felt sorry for them. But I realized that I myself was insignificant to the nisei as a whole because I was confused



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at the tactics of the pro-Japanese in Tule Lake. For a while I realized that there were other nisei guys who were willing to uphold their rights to do as they please and I found myself within this small group of rather confident nisei who were not afraid to assert themselves. We did not believe in intimidation and coercion but it seemed inevitable that the pro-Japs thraw force would cower the people into subjecting themselves to them. Altho I believed that the nationals and some of the kibel and even some of the nisei who honestly wanted to fight for and return to Japan had a perfect right to do so, still belligerent coercion and violence against those who wanted to stay and live in America griped the hell out of me. I realize that it was up to the individual at the registration. Each and everyone had the right to make up his own mind. I had no right to try to persuade anyone who wanted to live for Japan to change his mind. On the other hand, I hated the guts of people who molested those who wanted to stay in America. I was in a dilemma. I think I was the first in my block to register on the day we were ordered to register. No other nisei or issei that I know of registered under their own will on that particular day. This griped the hell out of me because I thought there was some nisei in the block who had guts to stand up for what they believed. This disappointed me. I gave up all attempts to tell my nisei friends whom I knew wanted to stay here to register. I knew I was looking out for myself. Therefore when opportunity came I left Tule Lake. God, there was a lot of confusion there, the riot in block 42 and you could feel the coercion. The nisei were scared. It was up to the individual and as an individual I left the goddam place. If a guy's mind is made up for Japan, okay, I'll shake hands with him. If a guy's violent or doesn't know, the hell with him.



Field Notes: Free Association

Document CH-101  
May 16, 1943  
Shibutani

Willie Ohara (pseun.)

Willie called up about 12 and seemed quite lonely. We invited him over, and he said that he would find his way out somehow. He arrived about two hours later.

"I guess I got interested in photography largely because of a couple of accidental things that happened in my life. My interest developed when I was at the San Diego world's fair. I was looking at an exhibition there and one of them really stunned me. I got to talking with the man in charge there and he gave me a pamphlet. I sent for the little booklet that was advertised. I didn't think too much more about it and went to U.C.L.A. but didn't enjoy it so much. I started going to night school to study photography. I was interested then but wasn't too sure that I wanted photography for a career. Then one time I went to an art exhibit at the Art Center in L.A. and that really convinced me that I wanted to spend my life doing that kind of work. I registered at the photography school and really went to work."



Field Notes: Free Association

Document CH-101  
August 1, 1943  
Shibutani

Willie Ohara (pseun.)

Willie had returned from New York where he and Dick Tanabe had gone for about a week and a half. He called up and agreed to come over for lunch.

"God what a place New York is. I spent 10 days there doing nothing but raising hell. We slept all day and stayed drunk all night. The woman used to come in to clean our room about five times and about four in the afternoon she'd throw us out to clean up and make our beds. God, we had a wild time.

"We left Chicago because we weren't doing the kind of work we wanted to do. It's O.K. but most of the work is just mechanical routine, that's all. I talked to my boss and he told me that the best chance to do the kind of work that I want to do was in New York. He told me that during the summer the business in Chicago falls off anyway so we might as well leave to see what's going on in New York.

"We went to all the big places but didn't have much luck. We didn't know anybody, and the guy I studied under was hated by some of the big shots in New York. They disagree on something and that didn't help me at all. They were pretty nice, but when they found out I was of Japanese parentage they just gave me the gate.

"I guess my aim was too high. I want to do some artistic work. I know what I want and I don't want anything else. I guess I'll just do some routine stuff here. Hell, a man's gotta eat. I can do something to earn my living here and hope for the best for a while. I borrowed some money from a friend and I think that'll keep me going for a while. I guess I'll go back to work for my old boss this week or so. I'm going to see him tomorrow about a job.

"December 7 was a hell of a day. I heard about Pearl Harbor first when I turned on the radio. I thought at first that it was some crackpot broadcast.



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I listened to the radio some more and when the same thing came a lot of times I figured that it must be the real McCoy. A gang of us went down to 'lil Tokyo to see what was going on. God, was it gloomy. There were a few people sitting in front of their stores with dejected looks on their faces. Then we went down to Chinatown, and they were having a big celebration. I guess they thought, 'well, we've been telling you about these damn Japs all the time and now what we said has turned out to be true.' Boy, they were happy. I think they were the only people in the country who were so damn happy about being attacked.' They were giving away free all the L.A. papers with the big headlines about the treachery of the Japs. They seemed to have bought up all the papers in town and were just passing them out free. They had them all stacked up and we just helped ourselves. God, were they happy!

"Then we went to eat and has some things to drink. I rolled in pretty late at night and the fellow I was living with a scared as hell. He thought something had happened to me.

"The next day I went to school and everybody there was swell. In spite of that, though, I guess it was the beginning of the end. That was the beginning of the nightmare of the Nisei. I think the Nisei are now going to pot. The girls are emancipated from their parents and they're going wild. They stay out with guys all night and go to sleep with them.

"It used to be that the only gals you could have fun with were the ones that were doing domestic work because they were the only ones that were living away from their parents. We used to take them out and have some fun. About four in the morning they started getting hot and we had some fun. Once we took a gal out and about midnight she wanted to go home. We though she was kidding, but she just broke down and cried. She said her old man was going



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to beat her up. We took her home. That's the way it was. The Nisei were too immature. When I met her old man, I understood what she meant. He was an old bastard. It's different now though. I think the gals are opening up a little more."



Field Notes: Free Association

Document CH-101  
August 6, 1943  
Shibutani

Willie Ohara (pseun.)

"We used to take Nisei gals out and rape 'em all the time. God, but they were naive, though. They didn't know a damn thing. They used to start crying about midnight so we had to take them home. We had fun with the domestics, but the others weren't so hot. We used to go out to raise hell quite a bit, but after I went to school I had to stop.

"I guess there were a lot of reasons why I changed. For one thing I needed all my money to get through photography school. We'd go to a bar and the other fellows could plunk down ten bucks for the kitty, and I wouldn't be able to put up more than two or three bucks. The other guys didn't care, but I felt cheap as hell, so I stopped going around with them. The girls apparently didn't mind, either, but I didn't feel good.

"I guess another thing was that I had something to work for. There was something for me to get occupied in. I liked my work and I felt that there was a lot to work for because I was really set to devote my life to photography. I liked it and I wanted to do it. I didn't miss the fun the other guys were having because I enjoyed my work at school so much. I went around all alone after that. I had something to work for.

"Hell, I came out here from Tule Lake expecting something good. I heard about the shortage of labor and felt that since I had technical training I could get a decent job in the field I really wanted to work in. Shit. Look what happens. There's a scarcity of workers, but there's no chance for a Jap. It's a good chance for everybody but the Japs. That's why I'm in a rut.

"I'm just moving around now with nothing in particular in mind. We've got to eat. I went to New York to try to get a better job, but I found out that those jobs were not for Japs. I got disgusted. They didn't even give me a chance to show them what I could do. I got so disgusted and just drank



and drank. Now I just pick up a wench now and then, especially on Saturday and get as much as possible out of her without getting into trouble. I can't take 'em out more often because I'm short on funds. I can't drink too much either because it costs quite a bit. Some of these gals come through a lot better now than they used to. Hell, if I get stuck I can just skip town and they could never find me. I can just move anywhere. Hell, I never notify the W.R.A. about changing my address. The hell with them.

"You ought to see the wenches that are whoring around the hotel. God, I wouldn't screw them with your prick. They're horrible. I don't know whether they're just hot mamas or whether they're lonely, but they just stand around trying to pick guys up to buy them a meal. They're so damn amateurish that's its pathetic. I didn't have the heart to touch one of them because she was so damn innocent that I was afraid she didn't know how to take care of herself.

"I don't want to get tied down anywhere. That's one reason why we don't want to buy anything. I wanted to buy some pictures to brighten up this room a little, but I figured that when I move again I'll have to take it with me, and that's too much trouble. We had a swell picture of Susan Hayward when we were in New York. Oh, boy, was it a honey! She had her mouth wide open. God, you just look at her mouth and you could ignore the rest of her body. Well, we had to leave that there because it was too heavy to bring back. Dammit, I sure wish we had that here now.

"I guess if I go anywhere, I'll go where I have some friends--you know, the substantial married pals. They're always good for a meal or two when you're out flat.

"These damn Nisei pick-up at the Y. aren't so hot. I don't want to buy them a meal because I don't think I could eat myself just watching them. God, what slops. I don't see how anybody could get hot going around with bags like them.



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"I still haven't seen the guy about a job. I guess I'll go see him tomorrow. I can always go to work when my money runs out. I guess we're about broke now so I guess I'll have to go to work.

"Most of the time we sleep to 12; get up and loaf all afternoon. We sit around bull shitting. We eat and then bull some more. Then we go down and play pool for a while. We take a shower~~me~~ and then sit around some more. There's not much doing around here. I don't write many letters. We can't drink too much because it runs up too high."



Initial Interview  
Oct. 20, 1948  
Document CH-101  
Shibutani

Willie Ohara

I stay home a lot these days because my financial condition doesn't allow me to do otherwise. I save a lot of money that way. Vic moved out quite a while ago and now I know that it's so much better to be alone. These damn Japs around here all stick around among themselves. The L.A. gang is always together and the same with all the other guys. I don't go out much so I don't see so many except around here at the hotel. I meet some gals and then forget about them, they move out. The other day I met some guys from Stockton. God, are they shy. All they talk about is women. They make a lot of money and they talk about girls. I know that those guys are earning about 60 bucks a week and they save it all. I asked them why don't you go talk to the girls? But they all gave giggled and said 'no.' They're not young kids either. I didn't know that people could be so shy.

Tule Lake was really Hell. I wouldn't go back there for anything. Those damn bastards asked for it and segregation is giving them what was coming to them. They thought they had the world by the tail when they threatened us, but now they can have some time to think it over. I was reading that book by Marcon, "So Little Time" and there was one passage in there that seem to sum up everything in Tule Lake. In time of confusion people stick together for comfort. I was about half asleep when I read it. But, it struck me as being pretty good. I'll show it to you if I ever find it.

On Dec. 7th I was out shooting pictures from 9 in the morning. I'll never forget that day. I was with a hakujin fellow. It was a nice day so we went up to Palos Verdes and were shooting Catalina



Catalina Island. We were figuring on going to Terminal Island to take some pictures of Jap town. When I flicked on the car radio and heard a blast of the Pearl Harbor attack. It didn't register and I thought it was a gag of some kind and turned to some other stations and see if I could find some music. But goddamit, there was nothing but Pearl Harbor. It didn't phase me for a while, it was just inconceivable- and incredible. After about a half hour, we decided that we had better put away the camera because Verde overlooks a fort and there was supposed to be fortification all over the place. Until that time we had kept right on shooting without realizing what it might mean. Gerry was puzzled, and both of us didn't give the matter a thought. It was a nice day so we decided to go somewhere else. We went to a spot in Venice which was pretty good so later on we started moving toward the North American Aircraft Co. On the way over we saw action for the first time. There were jeeps on the road, trucks, soldiers and we saw machine guns being strapped on to B-19's. The highway police was stopping all traffic heading toward the airport. We kept going toward North American by another route and then had a bite to eat at the factory worker's restaurant. No one appeared excited or anything and it struck me as kind of funny because I thought they would be blasting their mouths off. We ate as usual and there was no discomfort. I noticed that the factory had soldiers coming in every damn minute. We went to Venice and took some pictures. There were no soldiers around there and we shot the landscape and the farms.

That evening we decided to go thru Lil' Tokio in L.A. We heard on the radio that the police surrounded the police so naturally we wanted to see what it was like. All this time I never thought of my family. The whole thing was almost as casual as a divorce is in



in Hollywood. When we hit the area of Lil' Tokyo in downtown I saw more goddam Sunday drivers on the road. They were all curious in a morbid sort of way. They just wanted to see just what was happening to the Japs. The traffic was heavy and we thought maybe there might be a jam so we went down Jackson St. and took a glance up First St. One thing I remember seeing was a total lack of people. Usually on Sunday night all the farmers from the nearby places come in. To me it was like an impersonal thing. I felt as strange and bewildered as some Caucasian person riding around in a car. It was like riding in on a movie set in Hollywood, make-believe. I felt sometimes as if I were on East First St., which I was and it felt sort of like a zoo. People just stare at you and I knew they were staring at me. There was no feeling of violence, no feeling of animosity but it was lonely though. We hadn't had dinner so Gerry and I decided to go to Chinatown for dinner.

Chinatown remains vividly in my memory. It seemed to me the most obvious place for an oriental to go. We went there to eat just as a matter of fact. When we hit Chinatown, I felt more at ease. I must have felt that I was a part of the oriental population there and the Caucasians felt that I was Chinese. Otherwise, why should a Jap be in Chinatown. It was like losing yourself in the obvious place. The first thing I noticed was the terrific number of newspapers stacked up on the benches. There was a big sign, ~~quite~~ "Take one--free". There were big headlines, "Japs Attack Pearl Harbor". The Chinese were really set. They were slobbering in the new situation. That put them in a favorable light. We went in to eat and the conversation around us wasn't very hysterical. There wasn't any war talk that was noticeable. People were just as gay and frivolous as ever. I guess they didn't feel the impact of the war



either. I guess it was about 8:30 and Gerry and I decided we'd go to a movie.

This movie was a small second run place, out of town about half way between Hollywood and L.A. That was the first place where I felt or I thought I felt any deliberate accusation. The incident was this: Gerry and I were being ushered in and when we went to sit down, we had to cross over three or four seats. One old lady didn't budge. I said, 'Pardon me' but she still didn't budge. Ordinarily I would have thought that she was just rude, not wanting to give up her comfort, but at this time it seemed to me to be just as deliberate and personal insult. I just climbed over and sat down. I think Gerry thought the same way altho he didn't say anything.

About 11 or 11:30 I dropped Gerry off at his place in Hollywood and continued home. On the way home it occurred to me for the first time what my parents and brothers must have felt. Up until that time I didn't think about it. But then when I was alone I thought that I should have gone home earlier. I figured, oh well, it's too late anyway. I put the car in the garage and opened the door. I felt nothing usual. All the lights were out and everybody was in bed. I figured they either didn't hear the radio or else they would be up waiting for me. When I came in, no one yelled so I figured they didn't know. I didn't know whether to wake up my mother to tell her of the attack or not. I decided I might as well let it go. I slept okay that night. Hell, I was tired.

The next morning I went up to my Folks' business establishment as usual to pick up my brother to take him to City College on my way to the Art Center. The first thing I said when I got there was, 'Have you heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?' The answer was short and simple, 'Yes'. They seem didn't seem excited



at all. I don't know what they were thinking but they didn't seem to care. There wasn't any difference in visible reaction, or otherwise that denoted anything unusual. My brother and I went to our respective schools. We didn't say anything. We both shied away from the subject and tried to ignore it. It wasn't too tragic at that time. Then, when I was driving alone again I began to think. I wondered how my friends at school would take it. I remembered when Manchuria was invaded in 1931 by the Japanese Army my father cautioned me not to say anything about the war when I was at school. It was funny that he didn't say anything now. I was rather apprehensive when I parked the car. I parked my car at No. 9, that was the photo lab. I just walked in and whatta hell happens, everybody wasn't there. Jack Hagen and a couple of other fellows were sitting around and we greeted each other in the same way we always have. We cussed at each other because that was the typical thing under ordinary circumstances. I didn't mention the war and they didn't mention the war. Later on, they began talking about the war among themselves. I wasn't there. I kept talking as usual but I noticed that they didn't say anything that might hurt me. I noticed that they were careful to say Japanese instead of Japs when I was around.

There was a lot of excitement about the broadcast about the President of the United States declaring war. Practically everyone in the whole school went to Leo's drug store. We had a cup of coffee as usual but everyone was anticipating the broadcast. They were casual and joking remarks about winding up the war in a few months and the general opinion seem to be, 'what the hell do those Japs think anyway'. The attitude was superior and cocky. It was surprisingly quiet when the President of the United States



began to speak over the air. After we heard the broadcast several fellows and gals came up and said, 'Well, Hara, old man, (they used to call me Hara) well, it looks like this is it. But goddam, you're an American and we know you feel the way we do. We're sorry this happened.' I guess that's about the only thing they could say. I don't know of anything else they could have said. But in a way my mind was at ease, altho it was never in turmoil or too upset. It wasn't a jerky apprehension. It was more like taking the first step in the dark and not knowing where you're going to land. Everything seemed to be okay. All I could say was, that I was sorry too. They were, in a sense, ignoring as a Jap Jap from the outside of the sea. So I guess it was understood that everything they said was no reflection on me, altho some of their remarks touched me because of my heridity or Jap-conscious mind. Anyway, I did feel something. It was a ~~resentment-of-mixture and-hurt~~ of resentment and hurt. I knew I was an American but when they made some remarks about the Japs, something in my scalp got pinched and I couldn't help it. By evening the fellows who had said Japanese in the morning figured it was okay with me and talked about the damn Japs right in front of my face. Now that they said they were sorry I guess they figured they could say anything to me. They figured that it was no part of Hara so let's say anything we want. I calmed down but the word Jap hurt a little.

This was really the first time that I had heard it used so often. It knocked me down a little. It was <sup>the</sup> a commentation. It struck me as being slimy. I know that you don't call a Negro nigger just to be saying it. The word is usually used with contempt. I knew that when I said Chink, I meant it with distaste. There was no respect



involved. I realized for the first time how a colored man must feel when he is called a nigger.

The first blackout was a farce. I guess it was the first. I don't remember very well. But I remember the lights were burning very brightly and no one was scared or anything. I remembered some rules and regulations. Some were burlesque and some were real regulations. I remember one that said; 'When there's a blackout, run to the nearest blonde.' My photography was in a continual blackout anyway. I remember the dark and trying to see something in the sky. There is some light around. When I returned home that night my father casually remarked that he had lost three customers. They said to him that they were sorry but they couldn't have any Japs doing their work. He had a cleaning establishment. He had expected that kind of stuff anyway as soon as war was declared. By the end of the week the customers came back. I guess they were just momentarily hysterical.

I guess everybody was kind of mixed up about then. I remember some nisei sabotaging their home and turning in their folks. That was pretty dirty. They were just like some of the stool pigeons in Tule Lake. I figure this way: I didn't like those agitators either, but what the hell, squealing behind the guy's back is a hell of a dirty thing to do. Lot of times guys just turned in their personal enemies who were probably less pro-Japan than themselves. I remember people burning all their literature, anything that had Japanese on it. They were burning books, Bibles and dictionaries. That was a helluva dumb thing to do. But there were a lot of rumors about people being picked up for having Japanese literature around the house. I guess that's why they got scared.



I was in L.A. up to the first part of April. The evacuation of aliëns was no surprise for me. Moving people out of the defense areas was no surprise for me either. For example, the moving of people from Terminal Island was no surprise at all. I expected that fight from the beginning. But I didn't expect any Nisei to be shoved out of anywhere. I didn't realize it until I saw it in the papers. I got so god damn mad that I felt that all America can go to hell. Ever since the time I first saw the news in the papers and saw all kinds of maps I knew the end had come. When they started the regulation of travel and when we had to be in by a certain time, I lost all interest in school. I went threre but spent all my time just talking. I didn't do any work. I then decided to quit school because I wasn't learning a damn thing. I went in to see the head of the school and talked things over with him. I sold my car, and by this time my folks had gone up to live in Sacramento.

My biggest disappointment came with the Army. I was 1-A when the war started and I was supposed to go in the Army in March. I thought I was going in the latter part of March. I had a 10 day option when I got my notice and didn't even think of appealing. I was 99% sure I was slated for the Army. My folks were sure too. I anticipated and looked forwa rd to Army life. Natrually I didn't appeal. I wanted to go in. On the 11th day, when the option was over, I went to the draft board and asked them to induct me. That was about March 30. The bastard there told me I couldn't go in. I asked him why? He told me he was sorry but he had to go by regulations. I was more anxious than ever in my life to go into the Army, and this really got my goat. I went over to the main recruiting office. I called them up by phone twice to ask them if they would take Japs



as volunteers. The bitch that answered the phone said it was O.K. so I high-tailed it up there. The sergeant turned me down. He said, "I'm sorry. I know how you feel." Some of the Nisei told me I should be glad that I couldn't get in. They told me not to try to get in if they didn't want me. I tried the Navy. Naturally I couldn't get through the first door. The Marines had a recruiting office right across the hall, but I figured they were an exclusive bunch of bastards and didn't bother to go in. For a day or two I was morose and morbid. It just made me sick. I talked to a lot of my hakujin friends about it. They were sympathetic, but no solution could be thought of. Then, the statements of my Nisei friends made more sense. Some of the things they said began to make sense. You know how your reaction goes. When you hear these guys spouting off, your first reaction is to oppose them and do just the opposite just to show them that they're wrong. But when I ran into it, I began to see that there was something to what they said. Then I figured, if the god damn Army wants me they can come hunt for me. The hell with them. I gave up the idea. I sold my car and went on a spending spree. I set up the drinks at the bars; had dinners at expensive restaurants; and took out my hakujin friends. I ignored the five mile limit and went all over hell. At the end of the week, I stopped to figure out how much I had spent and figured it up to 100 bucks. I thought that was too much and came to my senses. Since we were slated for evacuation, I stopped to give the matter some thought. I bought some clothes--some engineering boots, sport shirts, a new pair of pants, a suit case and so forth, and then decided I'd better go north to join my family because there was no sense in staying behind and spending the way I was.



When I got to Loomis, the first night when I was laying in bed, I felt restless as hell. I just couldn't sleep. I kept thinking of the friends I left behind me in L.A. I kept thinking what an asshole I was to leave them behind to come to this dinky town to live in a little 15 by 20 room with two beds stuck in it. Hell, we had five people eating and sleeping in one room. Son of a bitch, it made me madder than hell. I was sleeping with my brother. It wasn't even a novelty. It was sheer boredom. I felt confined, lonely, disgusted and was very moody. Everything--the family, the stuff I had to eat, the way I had to live--all irritated me. Primarily, because they took it so calmly and resigned themselves to fate, I felt like hell. All the small irritations and small troubles came to a peak right there. It was that one small room. I was in, and couldn't get out. I was stuck. With the god damn travel limit, there wasn't anything I could do. Those god damn regulations. I was just stuck. I felt confined. The first day of the work there just about killed me. I was walking up and down those trees carrying the fucken twine and tied up the branches to keep them from falling. At nights I used to walk around the ranch by myself. It was a very nice ranch. It was probably the best laid out ranch in Loomis, a specimen of fine ranching. Those nights, just walking around in the moonlight, were comforting. I had a comfortable feeling. I thought and thought and decided no human being was meant to die. It was a sbprt of a shot in the arm to walk around by myself. In the evenings and nights when I walked around was the only thing I liked about the whole thing. I was cursing everything I thought I could cuss about. I was really vile. I got pleasure out of cursing things that were supposed to be sacred. No matter how many days I spent there, I just couldn't



get used to it. Time just dragged by. I got so I could tell time by sound. When the bus came by it was 8 o'clock. When the Standard Oil truck came by it was 10 o'clock. When a taxi came by it was twelve, and at 4 o'clock another bus came by. That was too much. I wouldn't go back to that goddam ranch life for a hundred bucks a week. I think I was unlike anyone else in Loomis. I wanted evacuation. I figured anything was better than this. We got that Nichi Bei and I kept looking at the schedule of evacuation for the various areas and when I saw the date for Loomis, I was the happiest guy there. I kept my mouth shut about it but I was happy anyway. I knew that I could get away from this small life, thining plums. I couldn't see how people could get habituated to a thing like th t so they didn't mind. The only day I liked was Sunday. That was our day off. I really looked forward to it with anticipation. For the first time in my life I actually looked forward to going to church. At least I could put on clean trousers and see some nisei. When I did see them, they were so damn crappy that I didn't care. I went the first Sunday and there were no pretty girls there. But I figured it was a bad Sunday and next Sunday, sure enough there were one or two good looking ones. I didn't horse around tho because I heard of the strictness of the parents. I heard that gossip was pregnant in the country. They told me that if a guy was even seen with a girl he was practically engaged to her. My mother hated gossip and I didn't want to do anything to upset her. I just played dumb.

Dad was a religious man so going to church wasn't new to me. He was a Christian when he first came over here when he was 17 years old. I've always had religion. Every Sunday I had to go to Sunday School and I kept on going until I graduated from high school. After that I went to the other churches but it was just to see what was



cooking. I just wanted to meet people.

I worked with about 15 issei on the ranch. They all talked that Japanese lingo so there was no one for me to talk to. The little Napoleon who was the foreman, was a smart guy. He put my brothers and me on the opposite ends of the ranch to keep us apart because he knew that if we were together we wouldn't work as fast. I guess I was kind of lonely listening to lot of stuff I didn't understand, so church was pretty good. That gossip really stopped me tho, I heard it was bad and I didn't want to call their bluff. Small town gossip is always biting.

I had a feeling of contempt for all these b2 guys who were so hysterical about the Japanese. It was beyond my control and I didn't know what to do about it. But I had nothing but sheer contempt for the small thinking of the people. For the first time in my life, I realized what it meant when a Caucasian called a Negro a goddam nigger. I felt for the first time how he must have felt. I felt that I couldn't do anything. There was rebellion in my mind but I pitied the people for being so small. I realize too that I wasn't all I thought I was. It hurt my ego and it hit me in the guts. I had heard about the treatment of the Negroes and got sympathetic when people said "Nigger", but this really hit me for the first time. I pushed myself into that bracket. I wasn't pitying myself. I wasn't condescending, but I looked with contempt upon the others. Any time I read a statement in the newspaper, I heard a comment on the radio, I had the same reaction., I held them in contempt and hated anyone who uttered a word against the Japanese. I guess there was no reason to it, it was just emotion.

I thought that the groups in L.A. like the JACL, the church, any of those like the Buddhist, coming out with their Americanization



program were just babes in the woods. They were vague and broken around with no power, no force and too much like a drowning man grabbing any straw floating by. I thought their efforts were insignificant. They needed something more, something strong like the Legion. I didn't know what, but I knew that they didn't have enough. I myself didn't do anything. I ignored everything. The only group I supported was the Artists and Writers group. I got into the organization three or four months before Pearl Harbor. I don't think I was accepted as a member. At the meetings what I did hear of their plans sounded up and coming. Here was propaganda that could be handled. When Dec. 7 came the organization was small but the contacts they were making were powerful. I think that if they had more time they might have done something. I never joined the JACL because I didn't feel anything. I felt indifferent about the things they were doing. I noticed that there were a few serious guys like Sam Hohri in the organization. Once before the war I went to a JACL meeting and they started going in the usual manner. He got up and tried to say something but he got the usual reactions. The people were all indifferent. He rose in contempt and walked out of the meeting. To me it looked like child's play. It looked kind of silly like a high school meeting. When Hohri tried to put over something, he drew an indifferent look from the audience. It was just a social gathering. It was purely to provide a good time. The nisei were playing the medium for all that it was worth. I went only because my friends want. I went to the steak bakes just to see the girls, and to enjoy the steak. It was just a nice social place to find someone you wanted to see.

The evacuation hasn't changed the nisei very much. They're still the same dumb bastards that they always were. They come up here



to Chicago and talk about mixing with the hakujin but what do they do? They just sit around here and look for Japs. They're still the same. Certainly they didn't get any smarter.

I guess my present job is okay. I'm learning how to do murals. I'm learning how to blow up pictures and there aren't many in the country who can say that they know how to blow up murals. I guess I have a pretty good chance for advancement. I want eventually to open my own shop but I need capital for that. Maybe if discrimination isn't so bad I may try to shoot pictures for magazines like Look. After I came back from New York my boss took me back. I wasn't sure that I should go back there after running out on him and I almost went to work as a bellhop at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. The job was all filled up so I decided that I may as well try again. I'm thinking of going to school in Wisconsin but I quit him once and I don't want to run out on him again.



Third Interview: Willie Ohara  
Document CH-101  
Jan. 26, 1944  
Shibutani

I left camp because I was just tired. I was getting restless and I figured that if I stayed any longer, I would get used to it. I would get used to that lazy life where you don't get anywhere and don't do anything! That would be a helluva thing. I felt myself going more and more to the place where you don't give a damn. I think the other guys were kind of demoralized too. Their friends were leaving and of course that didn't help me neither.

On the way out, everything was okay. We couldn't eat anything on the train because it was crowded. It wasn't as bad as what they told us, though. The kind of picture I had of the outside was that of a big city where you have to stand in line for everything. I heard that there wasn't enough food anywhere and that prices were sky high. I heard it was really hell trying to get anything. But then, I got some letters from friends who said that everything was hunky dory. They said that everything was just like it was before the war. They said that the Caucasians were too busy to bother with the nisei and that they don't care. In other words, the guys who were really there said it was okay. But the damn bastards who didn't want us to leave camp told us a lot of things to scare us from going.

I guess I expected to be mistreated when I came out. I expected to be refused service in some restaurant and I thought I would be bounced out of some hotel. I expected slight discrimination. Nothing drastic though. I thought that they might shun me in that ignoring way they have. I thought then that I might get



into a fight in a bar. I was told that I shouldn't visit bars so I went. I never had any trouble except once, when I went to the Lip's Lower Level. When I walked in, the bar tender walked up to me and said, "You're a Jap, aren't you?" I was with another nisei and I guess neither one of us looked too much like the buck-tooth bastard so another guy walked up who was kind of leery and said, "You're not Japs, are you?" In a low voice I said, "No, Chinese." Generally when somebody asks me if I'm a Jap or not, I say yes. But hell, that time it would have been suicide if I said that. I heard the place was quite a dive and since we were in, I wanted to see it. Chinese was the most reasonable answer. I know that when a lot of nisei get together to talk about that kind of situation, they admit that they tell the people that they are Korean, Chinese and even Eskimos. It's okay, whatta hell, they don't know the difference anyway. Well, anyway, after we told them we were Chinamen we made ourselves at home. We got our drinks and then beat it. I haven't met with any discrimination since. Now and then I thought that someone gave me a hostile look, but you have to remember that all drunks look like that.

What I look forward to most of all in Chicago is getting a decent job in my line. I thought I would work in photography and advertising and then I wanted to go to school. There's a swell one here called "Moholi-Nagy. I had heard about this before and I really dreamed about going there. But when I came out I looked over the joint and I saw nothing there. It looked more like a boy's club, so I decided not to go.

I decided to come to Chicago instead of somewhere else because it was the biggest town open to resettlers at the time. There



was no other big city. At that time, we couldn't go to New York so Chicago was the only well known and big city.

When I first wanted to come out, in November or December, my mom objected. She said I was going to be beat up and killed, and she raised holy hell so I decided to stick around for a couple of months. Then when I decided to come out, she told me to go ahead, and I was really surprised. I guess it was November, 1942, when I wanted to leave, and my mother persuaded to wait until spring. By spring she had softened up to the idea. Maybe she felt that Tule Lake was making me stagnant or maybe she didn't like the idea of my always seeing a certain girl. I think that must have been it. She found out about it the first of the year. Up to that point she was absolutely against my leaving. Then all of a sudden she told me that I needed more education. By now, they are sold on the idea and they even forced my brother to leave then to go to school in Detroit. He was always close to the family. He was like the first son, altho I'm the oldest and so it was really something when they forced him to go. I was really the first born but I act more like the fifth born who is hardly a member of the family.

I arrived in Chicago on May 14. Getting out of the center was really good. Life was sweet. It certainly felt good to see the green trees. I felt exhuberant. Why hell, I even enjoyed the bus ride down to Reno. I had my first coke in Alturas. It only cost me a nickel but I was willing to pay four bits for it any day. Then I had my first good cup of coffee in Reno. It was delicious. And we had a dry Martini and went to a China-meshi. It was a stinking place but I liked it anyway. I had a very en-



joyable trip out here in the company of a couple of very cutegals. I came out on a Pullman. That girl, Ruby, in the social welfare department, fixed everything for me that I got \$112 and 15 cents in cash. I bought a Pullman ticket. I had another 300 bucks in cash that my folks gave me. In a couple of months, it was all gone. Hell, I wanted to buy a suit when I first got out here. I still haven't got anything. I ate filets and lived in bars. We lived in an apartment where we payed 75 bucks for rent. All that dough I brought out went right away. Once in a while I feel blue about spending all that but I guess I would have spent it anyway. First day I got here in Chicago, I went to eat breakfast at Thompson's. I had ham and eggs. Then I got a place at the "Y" hotel and I met Vic Tanaka. It was almost as though he had planned the whole thing. I was paying my bill when I saw him. As I walked out I ran into him. It was kind of embarrassing because I had forgotten his name altho I remembered his face and I didn't know his name until a half a day later. I didn't know my way around town so the two of us went down to the Van Buren hostel. We went to see Ellen Nakagawa but she had a date already, so we went down to see John Shimoda. The three of us went to an Italian restaurant and I had my first filet mignon at 2 bucks and 25 cents. Then I wanted to see the other gal I came with so I called her up. She said that she was going to a movie with some other gal so we all went together. That was a pretty big mob and we realized for the first time that it wouldn't look so good for so many Japs to be together at the same time. So we broke up, four went in one group and three in another. We went to the Oriental Theatre and got out about 12. I was plenty tired so I went to sleep and



I didn't get up until the next night.

I didn't even think of a job. I had about 50 bucks to throw away every week so I figured that I could live for a month or two. And so for a whole week I just went to all the cocktail lounges and restaurants in the Loop. We ate and drank and went to night clubs, and my 50 bucks went in 3 days. The second week it started to rain and I was almost out of dough so I started to look for a job. I guess I started working about the third week. Here I had figured on loafing for two months and sonabitch I didn't have a cent at the end of the second week.

What I actually found in Chicago wasn't at all like the kind of thing I expected while I was in camp. I heard a lot of bull about not getting things and all that. But I didn't have any trouble at all. One thing that struck me funny was that I thought the Caucasians were odd and gangly. I guess it was because I'd been looking at so many shot-legged <sup>r</sup>boochies that I just got used to it and thought all human beings were that way. I wondered about it for a while.

Togo Tanaka was the one who got me out. At that time you couldn't come out unless you had a definite job or unless you were accepted by a hostel. Togo was the one who sent me to the "Y". I was supposed to go to the hostel but there was no room there. I was invited out to Chicago by Togo and his friends. Hell, I was way up on the hostel list but they kept putting others ahead of me. There was a pregnant woman who had to go out or else she wouldn't be able to travel and some others like that and they kept putting them ahead of them so I figured that if I waited for that I could never come out. It was the same kind of trouble that s me



of my other friends were having and they told me that I ought to write a letter to Togo. As soon as I heard that, I wrote the letter and Togo fixed it up for me right away. He sent a teletype to Tule Lake and everything was okay.

When I first came out, I didn't have any patriotic feeling of any kind. I thought the hell with the keto. Somebody asked me to buy war bonds and I told him that charity begins with yourself.

Nowadays I get up between 8 and 9. I'm supposed to be at work at 9 but I never show up until 9:30 or 10. I'm working at Sadler's studio and there's no particular routine there because every day's work is different. Sometimes we're busy as hell, other times we just sit around. Sometimes we go out and shoot a job. I get off about 5:30 or 6 and go eat at a cafeteria which is the only place where you can get a decent food at a reasonable price. My evenings are very irregular and I roll in anywhere between 7 and 4 a.m. On Sundays I sleep to 4 in the afternoon. I used to sleep until 6 and that way I saved two meals. Saturday nights I go on dates sometimes to movies, night club, stage show or bar. On Christmas we had a lot of fun. I was pretty sad though. I was really drunk on Christmas eve and I guess I slept all day Christmas. I think I rode up to 3000 west on the "L" before I woke up. We had an employee's party at the studio and after that I was supposed to go somewhere with Vic. That night Vic came home and took one look at me and he said, "Sonofabitch" and he walked out. We were supposed to go to a gal's place but I couldn't make it. On New Year's Eve I was out with a chick. Vic and I went over to a gal's place on the near north. She told us to drop around so we stayed about an hour and a half and went



to a bar and got some drinks. We got to another gal's place after 12 and she cussed us up and down for being late. The gals there accused us of drinking and to make it up we had to start kissing and necking. They kept yelling about our drinking but I guess pretty soon they didn't mind so we got on a taxi and from 3700 north we went to the Rhumboogie down on Garfield. I only had 10 bucks on New Year's Eve so I wanted to go somewhere by myself, but Vic insisted on going somewhere together and said he would provide 40 bucks. I told him that it was his dough and I would be glad to spend it for him if he wanted me to. He gave me the dough because he was afraid of what he'd do when he got drunk. All the money went away. Goddam, the place was full of kurochan. There were hundreds of them. We had a great time spending money. The gals were really drunk. We were all drunk. On New Year's Day, I got up about 4 o'clock and went to see a friend who came in from Manzanar. He invited me to dinner so I spent a respectable evening. On Sunday night after that I went to a ballet.

I've only worked in one place since I came here. I quite once to go to New York and I was thinking of working as a bellhop in Edgewater Beach hotel but they had enough already. After I came back from New York, I went back and they gave me my job back. I almost left again but I felt that I couldn't quit again. I heard of a good set-up in Wisconsin. Frank Lloyd Wright School is up there. I went to New York because I thought I'd get a crack at the big name. They screwed me up, so I just went out and got drunk. For the first time in my life, I realized that being a Jap was pretty silly. They told me in my face that that's why they couldn't give me a job. I could have gotten a good paying job in



some cheap joint, but I'm not interested in working for a horse manure outfit. I could do that anyway and I figured that opportunities were better in Chicago so I came back. I'm pretty satisfied with the place I'm in now. The name of the establishment is old, 60 years in fact. I'm interested primarily in illustration work and this outfit is putting out a new illustration studio. The new boss has been here only a year and the whole thing is being built now. The crew is just coming together and the kind of work they're planning sounds damn interesting. The boss says that if I stick along with the place now, I'll find a permanent place later when they have a bigger outfit. Commercial photography is old but illustration is new. I figured that if I stick now, I could stick later. I'm interested in artistic photography. I know the whole place may fold up but I'm willing to take a chance. In a way I can't lose, because I'm gaining valuable experience that most photographers haven't got. I don't get very much money but I know that I wouldn't be happy in a slave shop even with more money. I could get a high paying job and live well, but I would be disgusted. My hours are supposed to be from 9 to 5 but I generally put in more, anywhere from 8 to 10 hours a day. That's because the work is interesting and I liked it. I get 30 bucks a week and no over time. I haven't had any trouble there yet and I don't anticipate any.

I've been without a job a couple of times. The main stretch was after I came back from New York. A friend loaned me some money. I used to go see him quite a bit. Come to think of it, I haven't paid him back yet. I guess he doesn't consider me a friend anymore. My folks think I still have the 300 bucks they



gave and I know damn well they wouldn't send me another cent, even if I was starving. I haven't saved a damn cent since I came here. I guess I ought to but I haven't.

Believe it or not, I tried to go to church three times since I came here but I haven't made it once. I've either been too late or too early. I have quite a bit of leisure time, half day ~~Sunday~~ Saturday, all day Sunday and all my evenings. I shoot pool with the boys, go to some gal's place, go to a movie, or sit around some bar. I sometimes wonder what I enjoy doing the most. I don't read a damn thing anymore. My visiting is kind of irregular. I may visit someone every other night for a month and then not see that person for a long time. I go see one gal and then another. If I do any visiting, it's mostly to see some booch gal. I seldom go visit any guys. If they want to see me, they can come here. I write letters to my folks and to my brother about once a month. I have a friend in Manzanar that I write to about twice a month, sometimes two or three times a week if something interesting is going on. I like movies with both photographic and direction excellence. Oh, I see movies for the stories too, but I'm interested in these other things. I thought "Watch on the Rhine" was a damn good picture. Now and then I go see an ice hockey game or a boxing match.

Sometimes I see three or four gals in a week, and sometimes I see none for two weeks. It all depends on my financial status. Some week-ends I actually avoid them because I haven't got any money. For a date I like a pretty girl who is an interesting conversationalist, one that doesn't take offense at hilarity. I like girls that are clean cut, not bitches. I like to go out on dates



alone best of all. Sometimes I go out with Vic and another gal but I hate groups. Every time a bunch of nisei get together there's too much confusion. Their arguments about what to do and where to go. On Thanksgiving I was with six guys and five gals. After dinner they started talking about what they were going to do. I figured that we would look too conspicuous as a group so I took one gal and went out with her by myself. We went to the Loop and went to a couple of bars. I think the others resented it. So you see, even if I am with a group, I end up with myself.

I expect to get married some time in the future but not in the near future. Right now, I don't know any gal that I care to marry. I know one swell gal from San Francisco who is cute and unattached, but I have no compassion towards her. I did have feelings right there in camp, but no more. My ideal for a wife is a gal who is sensitive to a lot of things; a gal who is clean. I don't want a gal who is beautiful, but one with feminine charm who dresses well. I like a girl who is an eager conversationalist, but knows when to keep still. I don't like overbearing, ambitious wenches. Easy going girls are better to get along with. I like a girl who is slenderly built, and one who has dreams and ideals similar to what I feel. Hell yes, I would marry a gal against my parents' wishes. I never did do what they said anyways. They tried to marry me off by baishakunin, but I didn't like the idea. I think nisei ought to marry now, why wait. I personally don't care what my parents think of my wife because my relationship with them is not like my relationship with some of my close friends. I could never be as close to my parents as I was to some of my friends because we could never speak the same language. When I



want to say something to my parents I have to use very simple English and I can't express myself. When they want to say something to me they'd have to use simple Japanese or I wouldn't know what they were talking about. I think that's true of most nisei and if they don't understand each other. I know some guys who understand booch just like a Jap does but I could never stand Jap school.

I think that a nisei gal going around with Caucasian men is okay if the gal knows what she's doing. Some booch gals are sure rough. I know one that'll do anything for a drink. She has a typical dissipated look and character. You know how it is, some gals you know, no matter what they do you want to behave. Some gals just look it and you yearn for. You don't want to take her out because you can't tell what's going to happen. I think that gals like that better watch out in Chicago because there are plenty of guys who are looking for them who are smarter than they are.

I think it's quite possible that there could be a race riot against nisei in Chicago, especially if there is an invasion. It's possible for a race riot against anybody. It's easy here because only a few hotheads can lead the damn mobs around.

I don't look at the Herald American but I hear that it's pretty bad. I notice that the Tribune and the Sun have been playing up the nisei. Not many people pay attention the Herald American anyway. It's circulation is so small that there is no comparison to the Tribune. The Trib is a bastard paper but it has good articles about the nisei. I don't know about this Dies Committee stuff. I get the impression that the normal run of people don't know about Dies and care even less about what he says.

I've seen quite a few movies about the boochies. Those damn



Chinamen look too Chinesy. I heard that "Behind the Rising Sun" was going to be pretty bad. I thought it was going to be terrific. But it wasn't half bad. It wasn't vicious enough to arouse hatred. That boxing-judo match looked like a bunch of bull shit to me. Hell, if that guy was a judo champ of the Japanese Army, he would have killed that guy. How in the hell do they expect to arouse hatred with a picture like that. There wasn't enough raping in it. Americans don't care about the Japs raping the Chinese. Remember the women in Shanghai aroused the Americans, that's the stuff that gets people sore. I think that "So Proudly We Hail" aroused more hatred than "Behind the Rising Sun". I think the news reel about the 100th Infantry helped quite a bit. Anything helps no matter how small it is. There are a lot of people around here who have sons in the Army and they're sympathetic to others in the Army, but goddam it looks like the 100th is going to be wiped out.

I don't think that comic strips like "Little Joe" or "Superman" have any effect on children. People forget that stuff too easy.

The Filipinos here are wising up, I think, and I don't think there's going to be much trouble down on Clark St. Hell, there's more Japs on Clark now than ever before. There's enough of them to put up a good fight. I think the nisei are pretty well accepted here and that's better than the boobies in New York. I think the nisei ought to put on the show about buying war bonds and all that sort of stuff. We may as well put on a show because it's dumb things like that that these Caucasians fall for. Good or bad, we ought to play up to America. Hell, you don't lose anything. We ought to give blood and the gals ought to join the WACs. I think



the less the nisei feel that he's shot to hell, the better off he is. If the nisei act as though he's just as good as the next guy, and goes about his own business he'll get along. Most Americans will clap for a guy who standse up for his own right.

I don't feel any different when I'm walking with anisei soldier than I feel when walking ith some nisei civilian. But I do feel kind of funny when I'm walking with a hakujin girl. I guess it's because I'm wearing civilian clothes. You don't see so many men walking with Caucasian girls. I wouldn't feel so bad if I were in uniform, but somehow I don't feel right.

Goddamit, they've been talking about the draft for the nisei for half a year. I don't give a damn if the Army wants us, there's no use worrying about it because if you have to go, you have to go. If they want me, I'll be a buck private and I'll go to Hollywood for my furlough. I don't like this idea of a segregated unit, but I & can't do anything about it. Some guys who want to squawk, can go to Leavenworth if they want to, but that kind of thing won't do any good to me. To hell with that noise. There's nothing anybody can do about things like that.

I think that if some nisei guy did something rash, it would really hurt the whole group, especially if some nisei raped a Caucasian girl. Christ Almighty, the Herald would run it on the front page for 5 weeks. It won't ever die. I could just see those headlines now, and when that happens, all of us may as well hot-foot it back to camp. I don't think that zoot suit hurt the nisei so much. Some of them are okay. Those extreme guys are comical. But some of those guys look sharp in semi-zoot suits. Hell, they look a lot better than squares on a country boy. What looks like



hell, are these country kids who don't know how to wear suits who go parading around in those gaudy outfits. The booch kids here at the "Y" are as loud as hell and a couple of the bastards are complaining that there's too much noise. Hell, I thought this was a young man's association and those old foggies have no business here anyway. I figured that if they don't like it, they can move.

Some guys are saying that they ought to keep all the kibel in camp. I think if there are any with doubtful loyalty, they ought to lock them up for good. Otherwise I think they should be treated like any other American citizen. It's not their fault that they're kibel and a lot of them are okay. It's just that some of them are dirty bastards, they can't think and it makes it bad for all of us.

What I hate to see most of all is a big gang of boochies going around together and blowing their heads off. I never did feel comfortable in a large group anyway and I don't like to see others like that. I think four ought to be the limit to be seen together at one time.

On the whole, I think the nisei are making a pretty good impression on the Caucasians here. There's been some talk about quitting jobs, but in a lot of cases, I think there are a lot of legitimate excuses. Some places just take advantage of them. Some of these guys have good reasons for quitting and others do it on purpose. The guys with good reasons are okay and the other guys will get what's coming to them when the war is over and when they don't need these guys anymore.



Fourth Interview: Willie Ohara  
Document CH-101  
Jan. 31, 1944  
Shibutani

The only effect I could see that the atrocity stories have had was that of scaring the nisei. I've talked to several people who want to go back to the centers because of that announcement. I think that is especially true of those with families, and those who came out later. The people who came out first, came out expecting this sort of thing, and so I think they could take it. So far, all of the guys that I know who want to go back are those who came in the fall of last year.

I don't think that I'd mind passing for Chinese. It doesn't make any difference to me. It all depends on the situation. If they think you're Chinese, let them keep on thinking. If they look intelligent, tell them you're Japanese American. If they're bastards, just ignore them. I'm not particularly proud of the fact that I'm Japanese so I don't care one way or the other.

I figure that if the nisei out here want to have parties and dances of their own, it's their own damn business, and I don't care. I don't go to any of them, but if they want to have them, it's okay with me.

I think the possibilities for the future for the nisei is very uncertain. Everything is very undecided. So far, I don't think the possibilities have been too promising. The nisei are being employed because of the lack of manpower. I don't think there's much future in it. If the nisei can establish themselves in Chicago, okay. If they have something to go back to on the coast, that's okay too. I think the chances are that almost all the people will return to California once but I think they may come back here again. It's like a murderer going back to the scene



of his crime. If a nisei is good in his specialized field and if he has personality and if the boss likes him, then he may be able to hold on after the war. You can't tell about how much discrimination there will be after the war. I guess it will differ according to how the war goes. All I have to say about those who are caught in the centers when the war is over, is that I pity them.

After the war, I'd like to be in a position where I will be economically secure in photographic work. I'd like a home life and in a way I'd like to lead a mundane and unexciting life. I want to lead a kind of life where I can realize my own ambition. I don't know what the chances are for this coming true.

There are some fellows who think that they should go to the orient after the war. I think of the nisei are capable of wrestling with difficulties of speech and culture, they could develop some business possibilities. I'm not particularly concerned about this because it doesn't interest me.

I think the nisei have been treated as fairly as can be expected under the circumstances. People are only human and they all have prejudices. They all have friends ~~wh~~ some of whom were killed in this war. I guess evacuation is partially a military ~~but~~ matter, but the main reason was economic. I don't think it was justified at all because a citizen has certain rights and we were not given any opportunity to say anything.

My philosophy of life always changes. I lean towards fatalism. If something is bound to be, well, that's what'll happen. I think the one thing that I learned as a result of evacuation was that the issei were human beings just like anybody else. I was



impressed with that. I think that individual nisei might profit as a result of evacuation, but the whole thing is still in process. On the whole, I think that they will profit. I remember that before the war, nisei from colleges were just working in fruit stands and hanging in pool halls. I think they will profit because they will see life in greater perspective than ever before. I think that the majority still think of the great times that they had in camps or back home. Maybe, eventually they'll learn something.

I think a negotiated peace with Japan may be okay. Just as soon as we get the war over with the better. Why not? I don't think Japan can be beaten down. The military may be knocked out, but I doubt it. I think there will have to be some kind of negotiation. I don't think this war is for democracy. It was started because of economic pressure. I don't think there will be a truly democratic system after the war. They may have the principles of democracy in the laws, but the system is not practical because there's too much sectional and regional pride in the United States.

I don't think the nisei will lose their citizenship. If they do, we'll be men without country. I think it's hardly possible for a little Tokyo to form here. The boobies are pretty well scattered and I don't anticipate any particular trouble.

Somebody asked me if the government was obligated to look after the nisei after the war. I told him, "Hell no", why should they?" I guess the "RA should go as far as they can to help the nisei up to the time that they are comparatively independent. Until then, they ought to try to work, otherwise what else is it for? But I think that's where it ought to end.



I think I'm well on my way to finding my ambition. I'm working in my own field and it's just a matter of circumstances whether I succeed or not. I'm really sold on photography and I'd like to get into illustration work in New York. I'd like to go back to the coast to see what it's like but I never intend to go into business there.

I think that the Chinese in Chicago are like all the other Chinese. They are living in an obscure, inconspicuous manner and they're just plain Chinamen. The Jews are the same way too. There are a certain number of Jews in powerful set-ups but they are mistreated and cussed out. Negroes are all people to me. I feel the same way about them as any other group. There are a lot of Polaks around here and some of them are plenty dumb. Some of the gals are nice and they love to give it away. I don't know whether or not a nisei girl ought to marry into any of these groups. It all depends. If she's an individualist, okay, otherwise, I don't think it's a wise thing to do.

I think Unions are okay if they are not prejudiced. Nisei cannot get into certain unions and even if they do, some unions won't help them anyway.

I think the Dies Committee is a stinking bunch of bastards. They're just a bunch of gossips. They're degrading the reputation of Congress and they should really be organized to write, weird and fantastic mystery stories. I think they're much more un-American than any of the groups they persecute. I used to be interested in politics but now, I don't give a damn.

I guess I'm satisfied with my life here in Chicago. I don't know what's missing but I know something is. Maybe I ought to get



married. But I'm not in love or anything. I don't know what's the matter with me. A couple of months ago I met one girl that was really sharp. I really thought she was something but now I don't even want to see her. I feel restless. I think I'm like all the other nisei now. With things as they are, you have to be pretty dumb and complacent to be stable. Everybody at the "Y" is the same way. They're all itching to do something but they don't know what it is they want. Sometimes when I'm riding on the "L" I feel like jumping out, I don't know why. I know it's foolish. I don't know, I think I want something but I know that if I get it, the feeling that I wanted won't be there. I find that when I get what I want, it wasn't what I wanted at all. I thought a particular type of photography would satisfy me. Now I have it. I guess I'm happy as I ever will be, but you know how it is, you don't feel content. I think it's a matter of not feeling secure. A lot of nisei say that they are carefree and everything, but you're really treading very carefully. You have a feeling that something has to be done, but it's something like a coma, like amnesia. I know that I could do a lot more before the war. I guess it's my mind now. It's just retarded. It's something that's in the air. Sometimes I go to bed and I just can't sleep. I think of every damn thing under the sun but I can't go to sleep.

Nothing in particular bothers me about staying in Chicago. I don't mind so much. In my spare time I think of what I'd like to be doing after the war. I dream sometimes of going to India or of going to Russia to study certain movie techniques and photography. Esthetically, I've got to do something in photography that will give me recognition. This is all aside from economic return. I



want to accomplish something in the field of expression. That's what I always wanted. After the war -- I think there's a big future in photography. It's all growing now. Everything is going to change. What we call modern now will be like grandma's hat. Travel will be transcontinental. That's when photography is going to replace text as a medium of communication.

The nisei, when they get together, talk about only a couple of things. I think when men get together they talk about women and when women get together they talk about men. When you have a mixed group about 50 per cent of the time they reminisce about the past and the other 50 per cent of the time they talk about how much money they make. Damn it, it's so different from before the war. I never had so much money in all my life. Now I get 50 bucks and toss it off like nothing. The other guys are worse. They moan about salaries and 180 bucks a month. Hell, those guys never saw one-tenth that much before.

I guess I'm not satisfied with the place I'm living, but for the money I can't complain. I really would like to live in the near north. I'd like to have a room of my own. I can't move to a house because they don't have showers. I don't like baths and I want to take a shower every night.

My best friend in Manzanar writes me quite often about camp. He tells me what's going on but I'm not particularly interested anymore.

I went to the YCA dance at the Wabash "Y" way back last year about June. I haven't gone to an all-booch social since. I guess if they had some more I would go once in a while but so far, I have no yearning to see boochies. I know how they used to be



back home. At the Midland Dance last Saturday (Jan. 29) they had a big fight. The happa boys, the Adachi brothers and the Exclusive 20 boys from Los Angeles got all het up. Clyde Goro was the guy they were going to beat up and Jack Kakuuchi who plays football for Great Lakes<sup>1</sup> stopped them. It's the same old gang from Los Angeles. Way back the Olivers used to be the old time tough guys. Now it's the Exclusive 20 boys. The leader's name is Kiichi. They were also known as the Tokyo Grill gang. For about a year before evacuation they used to hang out there. In Poston they called themselves the 20 Square Boys and they wouldn't have anything to do with the Central California boys. Practically all of them are out here now.

I think I feel lonely in a way. Not about home or anything, but I'm always slightly melancholy. I see a lot of people and there are a lot of fellows at the "Y" but I never get too intimate with any of them. I know all the guys here at the "Y" and I cuss at them and go to their rooms and everything but were not intimate. I just have never been that way. It's just that I can't talk the way I feel like talking when I'm with them. They never talk about anything serious or interesting. The conversation is just a lot of kidding or bull. The only real friend I ever had is the fellow at Manzanar. When I get that sort of melancholy feeling I think of intimate things in the past. I have a feeling that something is missing, that I wanted something, but if I had it I'd know that I wouldn't want it. There is somethings that I know I could get if I tried hard. When I do get those things the excitement is not there.

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1.--Kakuuchi plays for Camp Grant football team.



I don't know too much about what going on at the "Y" because I don't get home in time. I eat downtown on my way home. The night bull is exchanged at the "Y" during the evening meal and I'm not there. A lot of those guys come home from work, take a shower, eat, chin the bull, play pool, read, write some letters and go to sleep. That's all those bastards ever do and I don't see whatta hell they get out of life. I get urges to go to Wisconsin, to go skiing, but those guys never get ideas like that. The reason why I never get home is that I enjoy my work so much that I don't particularly care to be at the "Y".

I have one brother in Detroit and my parents and youngest brother are in Colorado. They're somewhere in Colorado, I don't know exactly where. I write to all of them a couple of weeks after I hear from them. I guess I write about once a month or so. I know that if I don't hear from them they're okay, and if they're not all right, there's nothing I can do about it anyway. I can't write to my mother because I can't write Japanese and she can't read English. She tried to write in English but she can't express herself the way she wants to. I always write in English and I always say the same things. They want to know everything. They ask me why I move and so forth and so on. But to me, things like that are irrelevant. I figure that my mother will worry about me until I die or she dies. She keeps telling me that she doesn't want me to do anything unconventional. She wants me to keep the integrity of the family, you know, the same old line.

I never did belong to any booch group, and I don't belong to any here. My best friend is a fellow in Manzanar and in Chicago I guess Vic is. I don't know. I just ran into him. I know a lot



of guys equally well.

When we get together we talk about booch and keto. And we never use the word Japanese. Once in Tule Lake I used the word keto and my mother bawled the hell out of me and said I should never use it because it was bad. She told me that I should always say hakujin. That's the first time I heard the word but since she bawled me out I use it now with misgivings. I never used words like nigger because I figure that Negro- is just as easy.

I guess my best friends back home were a half a dozen guys who graduated with me. We weren't very intimate. Then in camp -- I went around mostly with the Dispatch gang. I don't go around with anybody in particular now.

I don't think that the WRA is doing their best. I guess they must have done something but I don't know what it is. I only went there twice. The first time I thought I had to give them my address. The second time I went there to get a job after I came back from New York. They were the damnest bunch of bastards that I ever saw. They just don't want to help you. Maybe it's tough as rocks to find jobs and in a way I guess I don't blame them. But I don't have anything to do with them. I can shift for myself. They wouldn't help me if I got into a mess ~~any~~ anyway. Those who had any dealings at all with the WRA feel like I do about it. I guess I'll have to keep it thought because some people are dependent on others. They wouldn't come out at all if it weren't for the WRA.

I don't have any particular gripes against any group. Individually I like or dislike certain people. It's like the kibel. Some are good and some are bastards. As a group I'm indifferent to them. My associations with all these groups around here are



very casual and impersonal, and they mean nothing to me. I noticed that the older people and the young people stick together in their own groups at the "Y". They go around with either groups as I see fit. I think the people who were here in Chicago before are okay. I don't know many of them. But the ones I know are all right.