

Murata, Kiyoaki

CH - 206

"Kiyo Mori"

2122 S. Prairie, Chicago, Ill.

Remarks:

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MURATA, KIYOAKI

Tanaka 7/17/43

\* Kiyo Mori is an exchange student from Japan. He is 20, single, a Japanese subject. He is in Chicago, out on relocation from the Poston Relocation Center, Arizona.

\* (Fictitious name)

Kiyo Mori was born in Japan. He spent his first 18 years there. He came to the United States in 1940, he says, to secure an American education. He is about five feet four inches in height, weighs around 125 pounds. He wears rimless glasses, is good looking by Japanese standards, has pleasant manners. He is more poised than the average Nisei young man of 20 years. He looks you straight in the eye when he talks to you. His English speech is superior, despite a slight trace of accent. He says he studied English in high school in Japan "for five years." He says it was required of all students, but "of course, you can't really talk English after such a course. You've got to come to America and talk it all the time," he says.

He has an average sense of humor, but he inclines to be serious in the things he discusses. He has neither the mannerisms of grinning or of making the hissing "s" sound in his pronunciation of English more or less characteristic of Japan-educated persons.

Kiyo Mori's manners are almost typically American collegiate, without, however, the easy-going, casual air. There is still that which clings to him reminding you he is of foreign Japanese birth and rearing. He is of tanned complexion, but his skin is smooth. He talks readily when spoken



to, but he is not voluble. As one converses with him, he is left with a favorable impression. He is a likeable young man. An office secretary of the American Red Cross in Chicago appears to have been similarly impressed by Kiyo to the extent of calling several agencies to see what advice and aid could be given him in solving his personal problem.

Mori is attending the Central Y.M.C.A. College in Chicago. He relocated to Chicago earlier this year from Poston, Arizona. He has an aunt there; she is an elderly woman who is in the relocation center and who, it appears, sponsors him financially. He is working part-time as an attendant at a sanitarium.

On July 15, he says he received a letter from the United States State Department in Washington, D. C. It informed him that the Japanese government had designated him among a new list of nationals eligible to be repatriated to Japan on the next possible sailing of the exchange ship S.S. Gripsholm. In this letter he was instructed to reply at once, within 10 days, indicating whether or not he desired to return to Japan. This letter was dated July 1, 1943, and was mailed to Mori's address on the west coast in California. Because it stated definitely that if he did not reply within 10 days, the State Department would assume that he preferred to be repatriated, and because he received the letter 15 days after it was mailed, he expressed added concern.

Mori evidently cannot bring himself to make a clear-cut decision, yes or no, replying to the letter.

He says he is out on a War Relocation Authority leave clearance. The State Department letter was sent to his pre-evacuation address in San Francisco. It was forwarded to him by a Caucasian friend. He apparently has remained in contact with Caucasian friends or acquaintances on the West Coast.

Kiyo Mori is not a Nisei, nor is he a Kibei, although he could quite readily pass for the latter. He is a Japan-born & Japan-educated Japanese.

"Don't you want to go back to Japan?" he was asked.

"I want to accomplish what I came to do, and I haven't yet," he replied.

"What is that?"

"I came to accomplish finishing my education in America. That's still not accomplished."

"How much more do you have to study?"

"Oh, three or four more years actually," he replied smiling.

"What are you studying now?"

"I'm just taking a liberal arts course, as much as I can find time for."

"Won't you have to go back to Japan some day?"

"Yes."

"Have you liked it here in America?"

"Yes."

(He pointed out here that he had spent the first 18 years of his life in Japan, only the last two in the United States.)

"Have you ever had any unpleasant experiences in the United States?"

"You mean after the war started?"



"Well yes, both before and after."

"No, I can't remember, except one. It was on December 8. I remarked to my teacher something not so good. It was my fault though."

"What was that?"

"Well, I remarked about a democracy. I guess I made fun at it. I said, how inconvenient it was that on December 8, after what already happened at Hawaii, that Congress should even be talking about whether to declare war. I said how inconvenient it must be that the President should have to ask Congress to declare war."

"Your teacher didn't like that?"

"No. I think the students didn't either."

"Were you attending a college in San Francisco?"

"No, I was going to a private school."

"What did your teacher say then?"

"She said that was the way a democracy worked; she said that in the long run it worked out better that way than in totalitarian countries. I don't think she liked the way I said it."

"Have you run into many cases of prejudice or discrimination?"

"Very little."

"Do you think that American people as a rule are fair-minded?"

"Yes, I do. I think most people in all countries are fair."

"Am I right in assuming that you would naturally feel

the Japanese way of doing things is better than the American?"

"No, not necessarily. I think that some ways are better adapted to certain peoples because of their environment and history. Democracy may be good for America because it grew up naturally here. It didn't in Japan. Who can really say which is better or worse?"

Kiyo Mori is interested in political science, reads as much as he can on American history and political theory. He appears to be deliberately non-committal in his opinions of Japanese government. His primary interest appears to be his desire to advance his education. He does not know what lies ahead, he feels the uncertainties of the time, and particularly of his own personal circumstances, but he finds a sense of security in increasing his knowledge of things. He was asked:

"Do you find it hard to answer yes or no to the State Department letter?"

He replied:

"I wired to my parents in Japan through the Red Cross yesterday, asking them if they were responsible for the letter and telling them that I am all right and no longer in a camp. It may take several months to reach them."

"Did you tell them you were returning?"

"No, I didn't. Do you know whether the Japanese government is making the request, or is it just my parents?"

"Why do you ask that? Does it make any difference?"

"Yes, it does, to me."



"This is just a personal opinion and is probably nothing new to you. But I believe that there is really no way of determining for a certainty whether the request came from your parents or from the Government of Japan. It all depends on how you choose to interpret the letter. After all, it comes in the name of the Japanese government."

"Yes, but that doesn't mean the Government wants me."

"I would say it does."

"No, it could mean that my parents are concerned about me because they think I'm in a camp. I sent them a Red Cross message once before."

"I don't quite follow why you should have a different decision to make depending on whether your parents or the Government is the original sender of the message. You don't really want to go back to Japan yet, do you?"

"No, I haven't accomplished my education yet."

"Well, if it were just your parents, and not the Government of Japan, what will you do about the letter?"

"I think if it were my parents, I want them to know that I am all right, that I am no longer in a camp. But they should know I want to accomplish what they sent me to America to do, to get my education. I sent the wire through the Red Cross to let them know I am all right."

"Now, if you knew it was the Japanese Government that was calling you back, would you go right away?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

The question seemed to surprise him a little, as if it were unnecessary. He replied deliberately:

"I would be considered a traitor if I didn't answer at once. If I didn't go back, I would never be able to go back."

"What's the matter with this country? You like it don't you?"

"Yes, but my parents are in Japan. I am a Japanese subject. I am a Japanese. I'd have to go back."

There was no doubt that he placed an order from his Government above any request from his parents to return. One was a command to be obeyed without question. The other was a request, the compliance to which could be postponed, modified, or discussed after being leisurely relayed through the Red Cross channels. It was also evident that fear of becoming an outcast and a man without a country lay behind his desire to not do anything that might offend the Government of Japan. He was asked:

"You'll be drafted and taken into the army if you return to Japan, won't you?"

"No. The rules of exchanging civilians during war are that no one exchanged can become a soldier in the army. Otherwise, they would be just like exchanging soldiers, to harm the enemy again."

He laughed mildly at this.

He was then asked:

"You don't want to be a soldier in the Imperial Japanese



Army?"

He nodded his head. It could have meant either yes or no, but he showed no great enthusiasm either. He did not seem too greatly concerned about the war, showed little interest in talking about it. He looked across the table and said:

"Some things are clear cut. I am a Japanese subject. You are an American citizen. We are on different sides. There is a war. But we don't hate each other as individuals, do we?"

"No, of course not. I've just met you. You don't hate all the good people who you say have been so kind to you; they're Americans, you know."

"No, certainly I don't hate them. I am grateful for their kindness, and I shall not forget little acts of kindness as long as I live. I don't think there will be war all the time. But another thing is also clear cut. There is a war now. If we were out on the Pacific battle front, we would have to be treating each other as enemies and killing each other."

"Yes, that's war. Tell me, how do the Japanese on the average regard the American Japanese? What do they think of the Nisei soldiers serving in the United States Army on the South Pacific battle fronts?"

"Just as enemies--same as American soldiers--no different, I am sure," he replied.

"Do they look upon them as traitors to the Japanese race, as this would be a logical conclusion to the line of Japanese propaganda?"

"Some do. Maybe the lower class of people. Respons-

ible  
leaders do not, though. They say Nisei belong to America, so must fight for America. They expect Nisei to act that way as Americans; they expect to treat Nisei as Americans and shoot them down, I guess. Anyway, Japanese history is full of precedents for brother shooting or fighting brother, even father and son. Once you pledge loyalty to one side, you keep that loyalty to death. They expect Nisei to be loyal to American side."

"But is that necessarily true of all Japanese."

"No, there are all kinds of Japanese."

Mori was interested in his interviewer's Citizenship status. He was informed that the interviewer had expatriated from Japanese citizenship seven years ago, that he held only United States citizenship. He then asked if the interviewer had ever been to Japan. The reply was No. He then asked if the interviewer had parents in Japan. The reply was again No. The interviewer then resumed the questioning.

"Why do you ask those questions?"

"Because they show why your attitude on some things are different from mine. By the way, are you familiar with international law?"

"No, not very much. I took political science and had a course in international relations, however."

"Do you know the difference between Jus soli and Jus sanguinis?"

"Yes. They are two principles governing the basis for citizenship. Jus soli denotes citizenship by virtue of place of birth; that's like the United States. I was born here,



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that makes me an American citizen. Jus sanguinis is the principle of conferring citizenship by race or blood.

That's what Japan does."

"That's right; I find most Nisei don't know about this."

"Well, I disagree with you there; I feel most of them do know of this."

"Anyway, even if you are an American citizen, you could go to Japan and become a Japanese citizen. Japan will accept you because she is governed by Jus sanguinis."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes."

"Did you also know that if my wife and I went to Japan, as American citizens, and we had a child born there, our child could become a United States citizen?"

"No, I didn't know that."

Mori seems to spend a good portion of his time in reading. He reads such publications as Atlantic Monthly, Harpers, Free World, Life. He frequents the library quite often.

(Note: The time for the first interview was necessarily limited. There may be some interesting follow-up data on this case, although he is a subject somewhat removed from actual resettlement. --TT)



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Charles Iwasaki, 4332 South Drexel (Ch-207 Carl  
Iwamoto) should be good for a follow-up. --TT

Carl Choemon Iwamoto (fictitious name) is a house painter by trade; he is 39, short (five feet two inches), slender (110 pounds), ~~dark~~-complexioned, and unobtrusive in manners. He is a native of the Hawaiian Islands where he was born at Honolulu on New Years Day, 1904.

From outward appearances, Carl Iwamoto is an Issei. Actually, he is a Hawaiian Nisei. His body, his carriage, his hardened hands--all bear the marks so typical of the first generation. He speaks English with the Hawaiian Japanese accent. For instance, he pronounces "girl" more like "giru". He seems to be slightly deaf. At the same time, he does not always speak loudly or clearly enough to be understood. He speaks a good part of the time, in conversation, with his eyes looking down at the floor. This seems partly due to a shyness that is almost naturally a part of his physical characteristics. He is not ill at ease, however. He does not offend but rather inspires curiosity and interest. He is apparently conscious of his tobacco-stained front teeth; and when he smiles, he has an automatic habit of drawing his right hand in front of his mouth. He has small features, is neither handsome nor particularly unpresentable. He walks with a slight stoop, tending to make him seem smaller than he actually is. He dresses like a laborer, wearing a collarless blue cotton shirt.

By trade, he has been a house painter for over 10 years, and before February 7, 1943, he had lived all his life in Hawaii.

On that day, he says he arrived in "mainland United



States. He had evacuated voluntarily to the Jerome Relocation Center, Arkansas, with his wife, Hatsuko, and their three small children, in order to be with his aged father and mother. His father had been ordered to the mainland by Hawaiian authorities. His father is 70 years old and was still active as a fisherman.

Carl attributes the order to evacuate received by the elder Iwamoto to the fact his father was a fisherman and "all fishermen are considered possibly danger to war effort."

He says with a shrug of his shoulders:

"You know all California fishermen were taken. Just like them."

His mother is 69, and both his parents, as well as his wife Hatsuko, his two daughters, Marjorie, 6, and Ethyl, 4, and his son Roy, 3, are living together at the Jerome Relocation Center. Carl is particularly proud of his son; his face lit up each time mention was made of Roy.

Carl Iwamoto and his own immediate family are evacuees by choice. They did not have to go to Jerome. The evacuation order applied only to the elder Iwamoto. Carl had a good job, was earning an average of \$250 monthly in a defense job working for the Jimmy W. Glove Company in Honolulu, at a rate of \$1.30 per hour, he says. But Carl did not think for a moment of leaving his aged parents without his own presence, to go into a mainland relocation center. He says:

"My parents are pretty old. We were all like one family anyway. We lived together in a big house. My father

had a lease on it. They ordered him evacuate. We all come along."

The Iwamotos, first, second, and third generation, left Honolulu together on January 27, 1943. Less than a fortnight later, they were in the Jerome Relocation Center, Arkansas.

Carl Iwamoto received his education at the Pohu Kaina Grammar school and McKinley high school in Honolulu, graduating from the latter in 1922. He then attended the Honolulu Trade and Commercial school. He worked at odd jobs and assisted his father in fishing off and on. In 1931 he started painting as a trade. Until 1939, he worked under various Japanese contractors, earning from 50 cents to 85 cents an hour. In 1939 he secured a job at the Imperial Paint Shop for one dollar an hour; in 1941 he got a job with the Jimmy W. Glove Company at \$1.30 an hour. He belonged to the C.I.O. Local 519 Painters Union in Honolulu. He is no longer active in this union. He was asked:

"Did you resign from the membership?"

"No, they kicked me out."

"Why?"

"Well, no I guess I actually did resign all right."

He appears to be a fairly active person, although he shies away, for understandable reasons, from heavy or strenuous manual labor. Camp life did not agree to well with him, he says. He decided to come out on relocation himself first, telling his wife that he would find out what the chances of



making a good living were before everyone would come out. He came to Chicago on June 18, 1943 on a War Relocation Authority job offer. He has now been in Chicago about a month. He is now looking for another job.

He was asked:

"Did you take the first job offer secured for you by WRA?"

"No, it was no good."

"Did you report for work at all?"

"I sent in my card to WRA in Washington."

"That's to report your address. But did you report to work at the job which WRA secured for you?"

He gestured and frowned with disapproval:

"Job was no good."

"Did you give it a try?"

"No, job was no good."

"How much did it pay?"

"Five dollars a day."

"But isn't that better than the four dollars a day you told me you are now earning?"

"Yes, but too hard work. I saw it. Also eight hours a day."

"How long do you work now?" (He has a temporary job painting the interior of an apartment; it will last for two or three more weeks).

"Seven hours day."

"Then you're looking for a better job now because the one you have is only temporary, and you want a permanent

one?"

"Yes. I find job alright, but want good one. Pretty hard out here. Can't get into defense job like Hawaiian Islands."

"Have you tried at all?"

"No. not yet."

"Then why do you say that?"

"That's what they tell me."

"Who?"

"Other Japanese who try already."

Carl Iwamoto isn't too sure that relocation is going to work out for him and his family. He is frankly on the skeptical side. He says that Jerome is more home to him than Chicago right now. He adds:

"It costs a fortune to get a decent place to live in Chicago." He was asked:

"Are you planning to bring your wife and children to Chicago?"

"I don't know yet. It doesn't look like it yet. Pretty hard. You know my apartment not very good. It has bed bugs or something in it."

"How much do you think you will have to earn before you can bring your family out?"

"Eight dollars a day."

He says he had not trouble getting his present apartment, but he feels it will be very difficult to find one for his whole family.

Carl Iwamoto can do maintenance work in addition to



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to painting, but he doesn't want to take any job except painting--interior painting--yet. He was told:

"There is a job for a maintenance man at the McGill Y.W.C.A. It pays \$90 a month to start with, but you also get provided a five-room furnished apartment; and they are willing to have a family with three children. That would solve your housing problem."

He apparently did not understand the statement. He said:

"Ninety dollars a month? Isn't that high for an apartment?"

"No. You get the apartment free. They pay you ninety dollars a month for being in charge of the boiler, doing janitor work around the YWCA."

"Oh, just like a house man?"

"Yes. Does this interest you at all? You see it may cost you as high as \$65 or \$75 a month to get a decent place for a family of your size."

"No, I find paint job."

Carl is an Episcopalian. He met Rev. John M. Yamazaki at the Jerome Relocation Center and visits the Reverend in Chicago. He relies a good deal on Rev. Yamazaki's advice for his personal problems. He is anxious to become a regular church-going member in his community. He has been referred to the St. Mark's Episcopal Church on the southside. He was given an introductory through the Midwest Branch Office of the American Friends Service Committee and the American Baptist Home Mission Society.



Ricky R. Nakada (fictitious name) is a sailor, to put it in his own words, a "merchant marine seaman". He is 25, about five feet four inches tall, weighs around 128 pounds. He is a native of the Hawaiian Islands, of Japanese descent.

Since 1936 Ricky has worked on ships plying both Pacific and Atlantic. Pearl Harbor stranded him high and dry at San Francisco Harbor; he became a landlubber by compulsion. "Yeah, I got caught in de evacuashun," he says.

Ricky is a rough-appearing person. There is no smoothness to either his person or manners. He is totally bereft of social graces. His face is marked almost like that of a prize fighter in the early stages of his career. He has a lantern jaw; his skin is rough. He has a sallow complexion. Although his manners may be crude, he is not rude. He dresses informally, tending to be sloppy. His Hawaiian sport shirt is unbuttoned. (It's a hot day anyway). He slouches in his chair, gazes out of the window, restlessly squirms about, occasionally looking directly at you; he smokes intermittently.

He is an Hawaiian Nisei and speaks English with a definite accent. His pronunciation of "girl" sounds more like "giyoru". He squints now and then as he talks, almost always at a rapid pace, and he uses picturesque gestures. He would probably be quite at home on a waterfront dock with sweating stevedores, or in a smoky tavern drinking a whisky in a booth. He has a touch of the villain in his appearance; as a relocation applicant for work in a city, he does not

make a good first impression. On the contrary, he offers a vulnerable target for the super-suspicious individual who has seen a lot of wartime caricatures of the Japanese enemy.

On the date of interview, Ricky said he was in need of money. He wanted to borrow some.

"For what purpose?" he was asked.

"I'm flat broke. I need dough to pay my rent, get some eats. I'm sick in de stomach--ulcers," he said, pointing to his abdomen.

"What center are you from?"

"Heart Mountain."

"How long have you been out here?"

"About a month and a half. I been working but you know how it is. Sick man can't work. I gotta rest," he said with a shrug of his shoulders.

"How is it you came to this office?"

"WRA sent me. Said you people had money to lend."

"You're not working now?"

"I quit."

"Where were you working?"

"Shotwell candy company?"

"How much were you earning?"

"It was too hard work for a sick man. Paid only 65 cents an hour. Naw, I didn't care for it much."

"Any overtime?"

"Uhhunh, time and a half. But chee, you know how it is, my stomach started to hurt."



"Did you see a doctor about it?"

"Uhhunh, but three or four years ago a good doctor on a ship told me it was stomach ulcers. It comes every once in a while. Den I can't do nuthin' about it. Can't help it or nuthin'. Just gotta rest. That's when I just don't do nutthin'."

Ricky Nakada is ~~a~~ not a dull person. For all his rough appearance, he is a rather bright young man. He has a flair, it seems, for acting. In this case, he wanted sympathy from his immediate listener because he seemed to feel sympathy would produce the objective of his visit--a cash loan. He is colorful but apparently honesty is not particularly a virtue; numerous discrepancies appeared in his statements given in the course of an hour; there were occasional contradictions.

"Chee, a guy is really down and out," he said, "I'm flat and gotta pay my room rent. I gotta buy milk for my ulcers. I gotta eat. I'm practically starving. I gotta get clothes, I need money for street car, cigarettes, and a lotta things."

"Cigarettes aren't good for stomach ulcers, are they?"

"Uhhunh..."

He evidently didn't like the question. He assumed a somewhat belligerent attitude as if he resented any questioning of his needs.

"Say, you ain't givin' me no run around? I get that everywhere else."

"No, you aren't getting any run around here. I want to be helpful, but frankly I don't think you'll get a loan here. I'm not in charge of it. But I'll give your story to the man who is; you can be interviewed by him. You see, the amount available is small..."

"How small?"

"How much do you think you need?"

"I dunno. How much yuh got?"

"The total available is about a hundred dollars, but..."

"Hundred dollars is plenty for me."

"But that's the total. It doesn't necessarily mean there's that much available for a loan now. It is loaned out from time to time for various reasons. For instance, a man has a good job offer but needs tools. Recently two young women rented an apartment a little more expensive than they could afford. They ran short of funds, faced eviction. The loan was made to them until pay day."

"Well, does dat mean you can't lend it to me?"

"You will have a chance to see the man in charge. I think you'd better expect a 'no' answer, to be honest with you."

Ricky's Japanese given name (real) is Rioko, a feminine appellation. He volunteered:

"My old man must've been expecting a giyoru (girl) It's a giyoru's name."



He looked a little sheepish.

Ricky says he has two brothers, one older than he is; this brother is at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. His younger brother is in the Army, he says, stationed at Camp Robinson, Arkansas.

"Why don't you write a letter to your older brother at Heart Mountain? He ought to be able to help you?" he was asked.

"Me and my brudder, we don't talk. We don't have nuthin' to do wit each udder. He minds his business. I mind mine. That's fine, you know what I mean?"

Ricky had been broke before.

"Tousands of times, cheesus yeah," he said quickly in reply to a question. He even looked a little boastful.

"How did you manage all these times?" he was asked.

"I manage. Yuh know in 1936 I got stranded in Shanghai. Boy, yuh shulda seen me den. Widout any dough, widout a job, widout friends, I'm high and dry. Wadda I do? Yuh ought to a seen me den. Yuh wooden know me at all at all."

"How did you live?"

"I slept in telephone booths. I crept onto ships. I salvaged old food outta de backs of cafes. Cheez whadda time."

"Don't you ever save money?"

"Naw? What's de use? It don't get a guy nowhere. I like to have a good time. I like a lotta pay."

"How is it you were evacuated to Heart Mountain?"

"I was in San Francisco on December 7."

"On a ship?"

"

"Yeah. A Matson liner. Dey trew us out after tree days. I been bombed fourteen times too."

Questioned further about the alleged bombings, he was a little vague. He said just before Pearl Harbor he had shipped out of New York and gone to San Francisco. He chewed gum furiously at this point, pulled out a large hadnkerchief and began picking at a pimple on his chin.

Ricky Nakada lives with "a dozen or more" g fellows Hawaiian seamen in an old rooming-house apartment at 1219 North Clark Street in Chicago. It is in the near North Side area on a street where every block has half a dozen or more saloons, taverns, cocktail bars. It is definitely not a desirable residential area and one from which evacuees generally are advised to keep away. Four of the "dozen or more" young men living in this apartment house were involved last week in an incident which made headlines news; the four were stabbed and attacked by a group of 10 U.S. Filipino sailors. Various versions had come out in the press, but the one most frequently quoted was to the effect that the four victims had made insulting and disparaging remarks about the sailors' uniform and the Filipinos had retaliated. Ricky had a different version, and he was indignant that the newspapers "told a big lie about it."

Ricky says one of the fellows who got stabbed is a friend of his. "I know de guy real well," he volunteered.

"What's your version of the affair?" he was asked.



Well, dose damned Filipinos came and picked on de wrong guys. Dey had some trouble de night before and were laying for de guy. When dey came back, dey ran across ~~these~~ four, wid my friend among dem, and dey just jumped 'em."

"You mean it was a case of mistaken identity?"

"Yeah yeah, dat's it."

"And you know the fellows who were stabbed and attacked?"

"Sure, sure. One guy dat got stabbed, I tell you he roomed wid us. He's gettin' well now."

"Has there been any trouble out that way since?"

"Uhhunh... no everyt'ing's quiet now."

"Do you frequent the saloons and taverns on North Clark street?"

"Only to get a drink now and den and for some of us guys to get togeder; we gotta go some place."

Asked about the other "dozen or so" Hawaiian seamen from relocation centers who are staying at the same apartment, he said:

"Yeah, I think dey're all unemployed. Nobody's working. Some of 'em were, but dey're quittin'. Dat's why I goota borrow some dough pretty quick. Nobody's got any."

"Are there any more Nisei fellows in the same apartment?"

"Naw, dey're all Hawaiian guys. We help each udder out."

"Are there any families?"

"Naw, dey're all bachelors dere. You know, it's skeedrow."

Ricky Nakada says he was graduated from McKinley high school; he apparently finished at an early age or quit school before graduation, for he seems to have gone to sea quite early. He is different from the typical West Coast Nisei in either speech, mannersism, appearance, or outlook. He says he doesn't like "bein' a landlubber", he wants to get back to sea.

He was asked:

"If the draft is reinstated and you are drafted, would you be glad to go?"

"Sure, I'd go. But I don't t'ink dey'd take me."

"Why? because of your stomach?"

"Yeah. Dey'd probably wash me up as 4-F."

Although he speaks readily of discrimination he has had to undergo because of his race since the war, he does not appear to be bitter about his lot. His concern is over his inability to negotiate a loan, although his need does not appear to be very great. He was suddenly asked/:

"Do you like to gamble, Ricky?"

"Yeah, yeah...uhn no, say, why do you ask that?"

"Never mind, you don't have to answer if you think I'm too personal."

"Yeah, well, you know I sure want to get back on a boat. ~~That~~ Dat's where I can earn de most. But I gotta fix up my stomach first."

"Can't you get a job shipping on the Great Lakes?"



"Ain't no good. Pay ain't so hot. And besides it's only seasonal. In the winter the damned lake freezes up. I wanta ship out of New York. You get good pay, food is good, <sup>d</sup>they even give you cookies, and you have a swell time in port," he smiled at this last.

"You mean women and everything?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Why don't you go to New York?"

"No money. Dat's why I came here for. How can I get to New York widout any money?"

"Go out and earn some in a job that you can work at without hurting your health. Save up some money for a change. I wish we woulc be more helpful to you. I'm sorry that I can't do anything better for you."

"Oh, dat's all right, tanks just de same."

Although Ricky insisted he could a d0 no~~t~~ work, discussion of an evacuee who had earned "fifty-five dollars" last week brought an inquiry from him:

"Where is dis place?"

"It's at Canfield Beverage Company. He put in a lot of overtime."

He began writing down the name of the firm, then looked up, ~~sn~~and asked:

"How much did you say <sup>d</sup>the rate of pay was?"

"I believe it was sixty-five cents an hour."

"Oh cheezus, dat's not so hot. I got dat much at Shotwell. Nuts, too much hard work."

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An appointment was made for Ricky to see the person in charge of the loan later the same afternoon.

"I'll be back in half an hour," he said.

He never returned.

(NOTE: Is this case worth a follow-up?  
His address is 1219 North Clark,  
but he is a transient--TT)



Tanaka 7/20/43

Al S. Kato, (fictitious name) is 20, single, and away from his family for the first time in his life. He is the eldest son in a family of five children; he has an older sister, three younger brothers, all living together at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center with a widowed mother.

He has been in Chicago nearly three months, having come out of the Center on a W.R.A. job offer late in April, 1943, with several friends.

Al was born in Los Angeles where his father was engaged in operating the Oriental Costume Company, supplying costumes and property sets for the motion picture studios. As a child, Al was taught tap dancing and acted in several motion picture comedies. His father, who had nursed acting ambitions himself, was anxious to have Al become a child movie star. It was a source of emotional satisfaction to himself and his wife, Al says. He acted in several comedies in various versions of the "our gang" kids, and once or twice with a freckle-faced boy named Mickey Rooney. Al's mother was over ten years younger than his father; she was a "picture bride" who had never met her husband-to-be until she was met at the dock by him as they both fingered photographs of each other. The marriage seems to have been typical of the "picture bride" period; marital relations were strictly according to the Japanese pattern. However, Al's father was more American in his ideals than the average Issei Japanese, due largely to his contacts with Caucasians in the course of his business.

All his life before evacuation, Al lived in Hollywood. His father rented the houses in which the family lived, although there was frequently talk of buying one in the children's name. In grammar school and junior high school, Al was not particularly outstanding in scholarship, although he was considered above average by his teachers. He made good grades, but he was more active and interested in athletics. His parents were anxious for him to pursue a theatrical career while he was still a youngster, something unusual for the Japanese during that time. He was quite often on dramatic programs and at school entertainment events as well as at picnic shows. During this period Al's family seems to have enjoyed a close-knit harmonious life. His father's business prospered. Al says his father personally knew such men as Cecil B. De Mille and Max Factor in the early days of the Hollywood motion picture industry. As a matter of fact, Al says, his dad passed up several lucrative offers of partnership with these men in their undertakings. The Kato family went on numerous Sunday outings and family picnics on their Dodge sedan, a comparative luxury; and the family albums are full of pictures taken on these happy excursions.

Al entered Hollywood high school in 1937. By this time he had discarded his tap dancing shoes, had little time for earlier theatrical ambitions. He was, however, more an extrovert than his Nisei friends. By nature he tended to be dominating. He went around with a close friend, Spencer, ~~th~~ two years older than Al. It was



always Al, however, who took the initiative, made the decisions, led the way. Al bossed his younger brothers around, generally had his way around the house.

In high school, he was more interested in sports than in anything else. Basketball was his favorite sport. He was both a spectator and participant. Hank Luisetti of Stanford was his hero, and Al made it a point to save his allowance to be able to see Luisetti in action whenever the opportunity presented itself. At Hollywood high, Al went out for "class B" basketball in his freshman year. He did "just fair" in his studies, but he made the first team and won his letter. In his junior and senior year he made the Varsity team and received his big 'H'. He was a campus letterman and took considerable pride in his athletic accomplishments. He had acquired, in the meantime, a personal interest in the opposite sex. For an adolescent of sixteen, a term he despised, he likes to describe himself as "quite advanced" in his "ideas about women. They have to be pretty, good figure, as well as intelligent."

His "best friends" at school were Caucasian. He belonged to the regular school clubs, wasn't so very active in the Japanese group there. The club which took most of his time and interest was called Phi Sigma Lambda, which happened to be on the exclusive side for young athletes of the school which had a total student body of about 2300. Several members of the club came from well-to-do families. Al was always invited with "the gang" into their homes. He



"belonged" to the select circle; he spoke the language of the group; he shared its ideals; he had little occasion to be conscious of his race.

During Al's high school years, his father's business had declined. It had suffered during the depression and had failed to make a successful recovery. The family was not in good financial condition. His elder sister went to work; his mother considered doing housework; Al had to find a job working ~~s~~ Saturdays to earn his allowance. He found a week-end job in a fruit stand where he earned three dollars working from eight in the morning until nine at night. At this time Al was finding interest in "dates", though lack of funds "cramped" his style, he says. He learned how to dance and acquired a prodigious appetite for swing music. He was an avid follower of Gene ~~Kurpa~~, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman; he ~~subse~~ regularly read "Downbeat", publication of swing music addicts. Al had no "steady" although he occasionally borrowed the family car, now a Ford sedan, and took a girl out, sometimes to a show, sometimes to a dance, a picnic, beach party, or sometimes just for a ride. He went out with any one of half a dozen girls, changing around frequently. He was turned down, now and then for a date, but this didn't bother him, he says, because he had his hands full "keeping the girls from getting serious over me." Al gives the impression that his conduct with the opposite sex has always been discreet. "Oh, yeah I guess I've necked a girl and kissed her good night, but that's all," he says casually.

At home Al spoke English with his sister and



brothers but Japanese with his mother and father. He attended the Hollywood Japanese language school after regular public school in his elementary and junior high years but dropped it in his high school years; basketball took up all his afternoon hours. At home, however, he mixed English with his Japanese in speaking to his parents who had a better than average command of English for Issei.

Al's English is good. It is without the accent peculiar to most Nisei. He is easily understood and has a good speaking voice. Physically, he is a little taller than the average Nisei, standing five feet eight inches and weighing around 150 pounds. Two of his younger brothers are about six feet tall, he says. Al is well proportioned and athletic and walks with good posture. He is fairly good looking by Nisei standards, although he has a habit of occasionally squinting. He wears rimless glasses, has a dark complexion. Al carries a certain air of sophistication about his person. He is the experienced urbanite who enjoys a laugh at the expense of a clumsy country clod hopper. He is a keen observer and has a ~~penet~~ retentive memory as well as a sharp tongue in good company.

The two years before evacuation were a struggle for Al. About the time of his graduation from high school, Al's father, suffering from Asthma which developed into tuberculosis, died. Before his death, his father had engaged in a bitter quarrel with a business partner of two decades' standing; the business was virtually bankrupt. The family was left virtually penniless. It was Al's job to



assume responsibilities as the man of the household. This was a job for which he was not emotionally prepared. He had been closer to his father than to his mother, although Al is not affectionate by nature. He did not always get along with his older sister. Although the entire family was drawn together for a while by the death of the father, disorganization set in shortly after his mother took a trip to Japan. During the interval until she returned, the children were coming and going pretty much as each pleased.

Al took a job in a fruit stand, working long hours for comparatively meager pay. He had ambitions of attending university, playing basketball. He wanted to enroll at the University of California at Los Angeles. Most of his high school buddies were now in college. He didn't see very much of them, although he had not lost contact altogether.

He enrolled at U.C.L.A. and was attending classes there when war broke out.

(NOTE: In the follow-up interviews which Charley will do, emphasis might be placed in getting his reactions to Pearl Harbor etc. The 1st interviews rather sketchy on details during the period.--TT)

Al's family evacuated with the Hollywood people to the Santa Anita Assembly Center and then to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center.

Al came to Chicago late in April, 1943. He says he had become "restless" in camp. "We had to come out some time. I figured I'd leave right away. Things were



getting a little restless in camp too, what with registration and all. I was quite surprised when I learned some young fellows I knew had said no to the Questions 27 and 28 during registration. I think most of them were either sore about the whole evacuation or were influenced by their parents. As I was leaving, I ran into several who said they were sorry they'd put down 'no' and hoped they'd get a chance to change their answers to yes. There were a number of agitators at Heart Mountain too. You should have seen and heard some of the smart alecks and wise cracks when those poor guys who came to the camp to recruit volunteers for the combat team tried to speak."

Al came to Chicago on a W.R.A. job offer. He went to work for the Laidlaw Publishing Company in the stock room, performing manual tasks. He earned fifty cents an hour for a 48 hour week; his pay check was \$24 a week. This wasn't enough, he said, if he was to continue to live at the Y.M.C.A. hotel, pay for all his meals in the cafeteria there and hope to have something saved.

He was first interviewed on May 10, 1943.

He was asked: "What is your chief problem?"

He replied: "I don't earn enough to keep out of the red. Boy, am I in a sad pickle. Meals are costing me over a dollar and a half a day, sometimes two bucks if I don't want to go hungry, the room is six dollars a week. Add all that together, with streetcar fare, a shower now and then, laundry, and what do I have left? Nothing. I'm steadily going into the hole."



"How much are you earning?"

"Twenty-four dollars a week."

"Do you have any overtime?"

"None at all. He says there just isn't any."

"You know that you could reduce your living costs if you secured an apartment and cooked your own meals and packed your lunches?"

"Yeah. That's what me and another guy plan to do. You know there are two fellows and two girls who live in separate apartments but in the same building. They share expenses. The girls cook the meals, the fellows chip in on the cost and help with the dishes. It's a swell set-up, and they're saving money. That's what we'd like to do."

"Does your employer know you want to quit?"

"Yes. I've talked it over with him. He's sympathetic but just can't afford to pay more. He says it's all right if I leave him."

Al Kato was assisted in securing a job at the Glider Trailer Company in Chicago, by the interviewer. The rate of pay offered was 670 cents an hour. Al could, by conscientious effort, earn at least thirty dollars a week, probably more, he was told.

He reported for work on May 12, and on the 13th called the interviewer and said that he had been accepted by the local union 369, C.I.O. and was enjoying his job.

Several days later, he brought a young lady to introduce her to members of the office staff. She was



an evacuee from the Poston Relocation Center who had come to Chicago on a Friend Service Committee hostel invitation. Al was a frequent visitor at the hostel, it was noted, during her stay. He indicated a romantic interest in the young lady, four or five years his senior in age.

On May 20, 1943, the personnel manager of the Glider Trailer Company, where Al was now working, called the interviewer and reported that there had been some "agitation" in the plant that morning over the "presence of several Japanese Americans" in the plant. A union steward had objected to their working there, he said. This particular man, according to the personnel manager, had been a "trouble-maker" before and was ~~not~~ now trying to get the local C.I.O. Painters Union to oust the boys. Six Nisei had been employed by Glider Trailer. The total personnel of the firm averaged around 110 persons. A mass meeting had been called that afternoon. The employees were to take a vote on whether the Nisei were to be discharged or to remain. An invitation was extended to the "Japanese Americans" to say something in their own behalf.

Al Kato jumped up and offered his piece.

According to the personnel manager, Mr. Shaw, "he did a wonderful job of public relations. The employees all clapped and cheered; they took a vote and just about unanimously decided to keep the boys. There's no more trouble since."

On July 19, 1943, Al Kato appeared again before the interviewer.



"How have you been making out?" he was asked.

"I'm out of the red. Thanks for the job."

"Have you been able to earn enough?"

"My check for the last eight days was sixty-two dollars."

"Then, you've been able to save some money?"

"Well, I'm out of the red."

"But you haven't saved any?"

"Well, you see, it's this way. When I run in-  
to the red, my roommate Larry helps me out by lending me some.  
Then he goes into the red, and I help him. It's just one  
vicious cycle. It's pretty hard to actually save. But I've  
got some now. I'm in the black."

"You're doing well at the job, then. Inciden-  
tally, what did you tell the employees of Glider Trailer at  
the mass meeting?"

"Not much. I just happened to walk in when  
they were holding the meeting. I didn't know what I was  
walking into. I just told 'em we were Americans like every-  
body else."

"You like the place and your fellow workers?"

"Yes, I do. They've been swell to me, but you  
know I've decided to quit."

"Why?"

"Well, I'm earning enough money all right. But  
I've recently been doing work on the machine. I'm paid very  
well. It's piece work, and I get a dollar an hour. Only  
thing, and it's a big thing, is the fine sawdust. It's wt



wet sawdust, and I breathe into it all day. It seems to get into my lungs. I've lost my appetite. I can't seem to eat right. I always feel as though I have a cold. This sort of thing could lead into more serious complications. So I feel I'd better quit. Do you have any other jobs around?"

While Al did not speak of it openly, he appears to have a fear of any lung ailment. His father died of tuberculosis; he believes in safeguarding his own health. Al was told that the interviewer had been shifted from job placement and was now working on assisting evacuees secure housing. He was asked:

"Have you tried the United States Employment Service? We are turning over all our leads to them and to W.R.A."

"No. U.S.E.S is giving us a run-around these days, it seems. Especially since the Dies Committee reports in the newspapers, and all that unfavorable publicity about those fellows insulting the Filipino sailors and getting stabbed. It seems they don't have many leads, or else they tell you to come back tomorrow. I got one lead at Cuneo Press, though. I could go to work tomorrow. It only pays 62½ cents an hour. You don't have any film studio jobs, do you? I'm interested in that kind of work."

A call was made to the Paramount Pictures Corporation office where jobs for shipping room workers had been listed a month ago. Al was encouraged to call there for an interview.

(NOTE: Al is willing to be interviewed at greater length; he expects Charley. --TT)