

LIFE IN A RELOCATION CENTER IN ARIZONA - ELSIE INOUYE

It will be a year on Aug. 12 since I came here from Turlock Assembly Center. Much has happened since then. People who were bitter against the government have gradually reconciled to this their fate. This center was all the home during war times.

Even I, am much happier since the first day. I have come to know the administrative caucasians and a few of them have become very good friends to me. They want to help all they can and cheer me and talk to me when I feel blue. We have had parties and dances together. Thus time passed quickly for us and before long the camp took on a happier feeling.

In February or March they (the government) sent in a captain of the army to talk to the people to join the army, volunteers were wanted. This army captain went to camp 2 to speak first and people shouted, jeered and ridiculed. Didn't give him a chance to speak, nor could he be heard above the jeers and leers. It wasn't a success at all. But the people said, what did they expect?

Then when he spoke at our camp 1, it was a little better but still the shouting and jeering was there. So they gave it up. Many mothers spoke to their sons thus: Why would they want sons to volunteer when we were concentrated in a camp such as this. Give up every comfort of a home and their business. Their sons before the war, volunteered and got drafted but just as soon as Pearl Harbor was hit, the were sent home. They weren't to be trusted.

There were many whys and how come.

Many Kibeis when called for questioning and signing of papers opposed to the question 27 & 28. After all the hubbub. There were just about a dozen who volunteered outright. My real opinion of these mothers are that they were deeply hurt and their pride was such that they didn't want their sons to join again after being rejected and sent home. Such is the pride of the Isseis.

But I wonder sometimes why should we be disloyal to American when the majority of us were taught in American schools to respect the star spangled banner, the only flag we Japanese citizens know. Even the Isseis have lived in America longer than in Japan. Why wouldn't they fight for America. I know the government of the U.S. have realized the big mistake they have made. Now if the government had asked for help from the Japanese people, we would have given it wholeheartedly, and why not.

In June rumors started of the segregation of the Kibeis. They have finally started to interview them in July of the second week. Those who wish to be repatriated are being done so. They will be segregated to Tule Lake in October. This move will cost at least 6 million dollars. Unnecessary money spent only because of one mistake. Those left will probably be relocated. Then the government issues taxes on the people, higher and more. No wonder the caucasian people feel the way they do towards the Japanese. Whose fault is it. Not ours by a long shot.

Everyone has heard of the unamerican way the Arizona government has been to the evacuees. The supreme court has declared it undemocratic and so did the constitution if ever it meant anything. The Arizona government refused to sell to the Japanese. It was the most unconstitutional law that any state could make. But still when a Japanese walk into the stores in Phoenix they will ask you if you are Japanese or Chinese. Otherwise they won't sell. Ignorance to know any better. I think we Japanese make better Americans than a lot of these caucasians who have lived and were born in America.

My husband and I feel that we are under such circumstances of war. He feels that it was for our protection that the government put us in a camp, but if that was true why weren't the other foreigners like the Germans and Italians put away. They are just as dangerous from our point of view. The



As a whole our bitterness has gradually ceased although there are times when we feel low in being in this camp.

The people have done their best in camp and have done wonders to the barracks and surroundings. I think they feel too the way I feel. But they never cease to talk of the government. The wrong way. But we are reconciled and we feel positive that this was a wrong which is hard to undo, and the government realizes this.

Now the WRA is doing their darneest to get people to relocate in the various states. There are hundreds who have already gone ahead. Some are doing well and others are not. The WRA looks into a person's standing before they issue this permit which I think is very wise as this relocation will be the makings of the Niseis. To go out to a strange and hostile place, to make friends and shows them, although our color and faces are Japanese, our heart is of loyal Americans.

I for one am quite anxious to relocate. To go out and start life anew and make people like me, that the Japanese people are not what they think we are. Of course, there are the good and the bad in all nationalities.

My aim is New York. A great metropolis. Where people are so many that I would not be noticed as an individual Japanese. This state has every nationality in the world and one more Japanese will make no difference.

If and when I do get to New York, I will go to see Mr. Oscar Julius who finds that we are not at all what the rumors made him think we were. His opinion matters a lot to me as he is a well known artist and a man of society, I've heard say. He has offered me his every cooperation in getting me relocated there. He tells me, he has good connections and that is very important to me.

The WRA has not written me yet referring to my clearance and I am still waiting. If I wait any longer, perhaps I'll change my mind about relocating. Whenever I speak of relocating and tell people of my plans, they tell me of the hardships we will have to endure and public hostility. We do not have too much money and so we must think ahead. But to all this discouraging rumors, I turn a deaf ear and my goal is New York to open a way for others.

Soon segregation will start, September is the month set for it. Many people would rather be segregated and go to Japan later. Some families will be torn apart where a Nisei has Issei parents who wish to be segregated. Nisei, Kibei, and Issei think differently. Half from our camp will be segregated, perhaps more.

Then too the ex.-service men are being called now. "Funny way to do," is the camp's rumors. Most people with two minds would rather be segregated than be drafted. And so, this is what is going on in every evacuee's minds, and rumors drift around.

I will put my pen on paper again when this segregation starts next month.

#### AUGUST

I thought this segregation would be a lot of trouble but it's secondary right now as the mess halls are all having troubles of their own. All the supervisors are quitting and workers too. Mr. Keadle said to cut down on the workers or quit. Take it or leave it attitude. Who wouldn't get mad, I would too. He's not the man to undertake such a job as he's not experienced enough. He doesn't know how to handle people.

In camp two, 7 mess halls have already been closed for a week. In our camp (Canal) none so far but there's plenty of talk going on. I hope nothing



very serious comes out of it. The Japanese people are a proud and sensitive people. If asked to cooperate in a nice way, they will go to any extent. If crossed, it's just too bad. Of course orders have to be obeyed but there's always a good and a bad way to put it. Keadle took the bad

## I AM AN EVACUEE!

The morning of Dec. 7, 1941 came, bright and sunny in Los Angeles. Being a Sunday morning, I had stayed in bed til 8: a.m. My sister's beauty shop opened at 8:30 on Sunday mornings. Harry as usual took me to work in our beautiful new Pearl colored Pontiac bought only 9 months ago.

This car was his pride and joy and he took care of it as though it was a baby. Custom built and 8 cylinder, it was the only one left at Savage and Haldeman Motors.

The morning passed quickly as the shop was always. Customers coming and going. Then right after lunch one of our operators came in saying War was declared between Japan and America. We said it couldn't be so, as Kuruso was in Washington negotiating friendly terms with the president. This caused quite a commotion.

Then radio flashed broadcasts throughout the country and the world over heard the grim news. War declared. Pearl Harbor had been bombed while Kuruso was in Washington. Japan had attacked the U.S. while her back was turned.

That night we went home and listened to radio news. All about the attack of Pearl Harbor and realized grimly that this was really and truly war. The feelings of many Japanese in America cannot be described.

The next day we opened our shop which was located in the heart of lil Tokyo of Los Angeles. But there wasn't a soul around. Lil Tokyo was empty. The Japanese people stayed at home. Did not dare come out for fear of racial hatred created more so by this war between Japan and the U.S.

I, being an American born Japanese, have never seen Japan. Raised by a family of part Caucasian and Hawaiian and reared by these people could not speak Japanese til I came to Los Angeles in the year of 1934. Coming



to Los Angeles, I learned many things. Learned to speak Japanese after a fashion. I disliked the mainland very much. Realized that the little coral island in the Pacific was the loveliest and friendliest spot in the whole world. Paradise of the Pacific! No name suited it more. An Island kingdom -- Hawaiian hospitality. No where on earth can you find such a place.

In Los Angeles, I lived for 9 years. It was two years before I made friends with my neighbors. Everyone was too busy to have time to know your neighbors and to make friends. All doors closed and locked. Blinds drawn. No wonder, this feeling of all alone--

A week after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Lil Tokyo was a deserted place. Our shop catered to Caucasians as well as Japanese. These Caucasians were well educated and held white collar jobs. They understood our people, their customs and ways.

They would drift in for a shampoo and fingerwave and inquire why there wasn't any people in Lil Tokyo. These Japanese people were afraid. Afraid of the Caucasians who did not know the Japanese people. Who refused to understand them. Our customers would say there was nothing to fear. But there was everything to fear. Violence by ignorant whites, insults after insults.

Some Japanese were told that the department stores on Broadway did not sell to Japanese. Of course this was untrue. The Caucasians that I knew were sympathetic and very helpful. I would not change these friends ever for new.

There were several instances and many more that I had not heard of where the Japanese Americans were insulted by the whites. I feel sorry for these ignorant whites. Going to the same schools, learning to read and write and to honor and respect the American flag. Learning to be good



American citizens; that which took years to learn undone overnight. We learned the constitution of the U.S. that all men are created equal. That we have freedom of speech and that a citizen loyal and true has every American right. Where is it? When does the constitutional right come in where the American born Japanese is concerned.

Remember Lincoln's Gettysburg address. The greatest emancipator ever born in our world. We need another Lincoln--we the Japanese people.

About a month later I ventured out to shop. Suspensions of everyone after all the things that happened to the Japanese. All Isseis that were connected with the Japanese consulate and schools and churches were seized and locked up. Any Japanese alien connected with the Japanese government were seized. Without question--a large donator to the Japanese societies was seized. These people, seized were given just time to take a pair of sleeping pajamas. Some were most unfortunate. Dragged out of their warm bed and given no time even to get their change of clothes.

If you said even a little of the Japanese government you were seized and locked up. Without question, thousands were seized in this manner. Torn from their families and sent away; inland to an internment camp. No time to settle their business if they were engaged in one. Isseis or Niseis it made no difference. Japanese with citizens, no different.

Of course the American government had to act quickly in order to keep America citizen is still in a war relocation center.

Then the talk of moving all Japanese from coastal areas and all of California was heard. We Niseis insisted this was not so. We thought all citizens would be left alone and would maintain our homes, but no, everyone was to be evacuated.



First to be evacuated was the San Pedro area. Most of them engaged in fishing and canneries. Canned fishes were not to be so plentiful after this. All Japanese in the San Pedro area were not allowed to come out of the little Island unless permit was gotten. Guards surrounded the place. Check ups during night and day. Many seized and interned. They had to evacuate by a certain day. They had no time to dispose of their belongings.

Furniture and electrical appliances such as washing machines and refrigerators were practically given away--sold for 5 or 10 dollars. Unfortunate ones had to leave everything in their homes and take whatever they could. They left everything and so the Mexicans crashed in and took their furniture away. Someone had benefited by our loss.

It was in March that I too began to feel that California will no longer be my home. I too would have to be sent into a camp along with thousands of others, Isseis and Niseis alike.

My furniture was sold piece by piece at less than half the price I paid for. My furniture was all new. Not even a year old. I had just changed my old furniture for new. If I could have looked into the future, I would have left well enough alone. Things that I had worked for all my life. Gone in just a few hours. Everyone was doing the same. Caucasians and Mexicans were going to the homes of the Japanese, buying buying everything so very cheap. Every single Japanese in America evacuated into the relocation centers at a loss that can never be regained. Will the government ever compensate these losses? That remains to be seen.

Before the government wished the Niseis into war relocation centers, many Niseis bought the business of Isseis thinking, we would never have to be



evacuated. This was short lived. Soon we all had to evacuate.

While all this was going on many tragic things happened. Filipinos were very much prejudiced against the Japanese. Poor ignorant beings. Uneducated, goaded on by evil no doubt. Killings in the country, where peace loving Issei families, innocent as they were murdered in cold blood. Many little ones left orphans. Killings in town restaurants. Cold, cruel, bloody murders. Knifed in the back. How can we express our feelings.

Many Nisei boys were drafted into the army only to be sent back as unfit since Japan and the U.S. were at war. Many volunteers too were sent home. They were perhaps more loyal to America than many Caucasians and Eurasians. Who knows.

Many Isseis too are loyal. Thousands and thousands of dollars were spent in buying U.S. bonds but these Japanese who helped were not recognized as a fitting American. In their hearts, they knew that America was their home. Many of them lived longer in America than in the old country. They did everything to help out but were not recognized as such. We were always under suspicion.

But I have to this day, have not heard of one Japanese who has sabotaged or spied in any way. Of course there are good and bad in any race. But the Japanese are a hardy, proud and hard working people.

All the years spent in America, the percentage under government obligation is so small that you can count them.

And so, Little Tokyo was no more. All stores were closed. Bought by the shrewd and cunning Jews at a drastically low price. We had dealt with them in disposing of our equipment and shop furniture. I'd much rather give away my things than let these Jews have them at their price. Most of the business houses were sold to the Jews as they were the only people who seemed to have the cash. Cash it had to be for the Japanese were not wanted back in



California and had to evacuate.

There were several Chinese chop suey houses in Little Tokyo who were sincere and very understandable. They signified their feelings in many ways and we knew they were true friends. I have corresponded with many while in the relocation centers.

But now that the Japanese have gone out of little Tokyo these chop suey houses have closed or have gone out of business. Now perhaps it is a Jewish town.

For a while, first street was just as crowded as Broadway. People going in and out buying everything in the Japanese stores. Every item had to be sold.

While all this hubbub was going on, the curfew for us was 8 in the house. Any Japanese caught after eight was arrested, so everyone was hurrying home at 7:30 p.m. so as not to be late--

Cameras were disposed of. Alien and citizens alike. Radio with short wave had to be taken out. This just ruined radios but it had to be done.

When all of my furniture was sold, we ate at restaurants as I didn't have a stove. My landlady Miss Powers, a kindly soul, let me use her stove. She did everything in her power to help me during this time. We slept on floors with a mattress in a vast empty house that echoed. Miss Powers just cried, as she hated to have us go. She said we should be the one who should cry and not she. I'll never forget her as she was there when we needed her.

We stayed in the empty house for a week and then Jake and Rose Fang insisted we move into her house til the day of evacuation came. This couple was both American born Chinese, educated in the Universities of America. A finer friend, I would not find.



But then our friends the Fukuzawas insisted we should stay with them if we were to be together in camp and so it was there that we moved into. All in all 6 families crowded in this house, children included, 25 persons. It was lucky that the house was a sturdy 2 story building with a lot of room. We got along fine.

Every week end was spent enjoying the shows in the neighboring theatre. Days were spent shopping, to get ready for camp life as we didn't know what to expect. Good clothes were sent to the storage co. for storage. Nothing but heavy denims and old things were kept. Many of us spent more money than if we were just left alone.

Evenings were spent in card games. Adults and children alike all got together and played. Soon even this was boring. At this time, our section was just missed by a block, to sign for evacuation to Santa Anita.

My sister happened to be in this affected area and she asked me to sign with her but I had wanted to go to Manzanar, so she went to Santa Anita with her husband's relatives. I helped her pack for this trip. It was awful. So many restrictions on what to take and what not to take. Things were stored, given away or sold. She sold even bed linens which I thought was most foolish. But I couldn't make her understand. She thought it was added burden to take. I am glad that I kept mine.

The morning came for her to go to the meeting place. That morning we took her with her husband and two children to the station. Rumors went around so much as to say how much cash was to be taken. You see all cash in banks was frozen for the Isseis and my sister's husband was an Issei.

When we got there, there were hundreds of Japanese waiting for the time to board the busses. People were sent in this manner every day - 60 to 75



busses were used. There were just as many people who went to see friends off as there were that was leaving. Many tears were shed and good byes said. They all boarded the busses and off they went.

The gathering place was empty. They had all gone. Those seeing friends go away started for their respective homes with that awful empty feeling. War did this. Security was gone. Friends gone. What was there left. But the Japanese people were a proud race. They could not be beaten.

So we went home to one usual game of cards and the discussion of what was to be taken and what not to be taken. My Chinese friends came often to see us. Miss Powers called me frequently over the telephone.

Sundays and evenings were spent at the Hollenbeck park which was just across from this home. We took bread and fed the fishes, ate popcorn and went for boatrides. All of our husbands had given up their work.

Harry had invested a \$1,000 in the American Produce Co. Mr. Nagamine, an Issei had owned it but he was taken as one of the first because his wife was in Japan and his daughter was married to a baron. He did not have time to sell this wholesale business before he was taken. He was sent to Montana for the duration. His business was left to his manager Mr. Takaki and to his bookkeeper Fumi who was in his employ for many years. She was given the power of attorney since his internment.

When it was known that all business of Isseis had to be disposed of a meeting was called. They wanted to give the Niseis a chance. This was the opportunity the Niseis waited for--but it was not for long.

A Mr. Roberts, an attorney and a Mexican millionaire Druthers, bought this business and let the ten Nisei boys that worked there buy a thousand dollar share. At the end of the year, the profits were to be given according to the share. But if the shares were to be given up on account of evacuation,



every penny invested were to be given back. Mr. Roberts was a very good business man as well as a good attorney.

When the issue came that even Niseis had to evacuate Harry and the rest of the boys were given their money back. At this time even the Niseis lost a fortune by buying these businesses from the Isseis.

The majority of Japanese were in the wholesale produce business, retail vegetables, nurseries both wholesale and retail, restaurants, veg. and flower farms.

Then by this time most of our friends had gone to camps and we thought we would volunteer to go to Manzanar. So we went to register at Spring street together with the Fukugawas. Then more days were spent waiting to sign up to go to Manzanar. Then the time came when all wishing to go to Manzanar was to sign at the old post office at 5th and Central Ave.

We went there early and signed up. Many friends of ours had thought of the same thing. They told us that this group was for Manzanar and to come back two days later for an examination by the doctor. This we did and were told that we were physically fit but that our group will go to Turlock. They had changed their minds about the matter. We did everything to get to go to Manzanar as we had good reports from there. It won't do, we said.

That afternoon Harry, Leo, Ben, Mabel, Henry, Lillian Kikkawa, drove all the way to Pasadena where the Colonel had his office. The day was very hot.

But when they finally reached there, the colonel was very sorry but he couldn't help them at all. That was not under him but at another office. Poor, tired, and disappointed, they all came back hungry. Mary and I stayed back to fix lunch for the remaining folks and we shot question after question when they came home and the answer was Turlock.



We discussed Turlock til we were blue in the face and we didn't like the idea at all but what could we do. I called Miss Powers, and the Fangs and told them of our coming departure.

Rose and Jake invited us over for a last dinner together. She was a wonderful cook. Many delicious Chinese foods were served.

Just before we moved in with the Fukuzawa family, Rose and Jake had taken us to China town and showed us many of the nicer places where we could dine. We dined mostly at the Soo-Chow restaurant where the food was tastiest. Also tried our luck at the pool of the wishing pennies. We wished for many things.

We planned our days thereon. Last Minute shopping was to be done. Mattresses and old furniture and rugs had to be sold or given away.

The day before we were to leave, we cooked enough rice and chicken to last us on the way to Turlock. Then the people who bought the stove came for it and once again we were in a large empty house.

That night was our farewell chop suey dinner. We all chipped in about \$3.50 and had a grand and glorious dinner at the Far East cafe. Curfew or no curfew. We has our last fling in Los Angeles. It lasted til 10 p.m. Came home and played cards. I slept for at least 4 to 5 hours. Others stayed up all night. We were supposed to be at the old Santa Fe Station on Central Ave. by 7 a.m. We got there on time and got our families together and saw to it that every family number was hung in a conspicuous place on the person like you would on a baggage.

We were assigned to our cars but fortunately, we had a very kind soldier who let us board the train as Mrs. Fukuzawa Sr. was a totally blind person and her legs were not too sturdy. Her daughter Mrs. Kilkawa was an invalid. So we were seated in our respective seats ready to go to Turlock.



For most of us, it was the first train ride and some were thrilled but the older folks were heavy hearted. The seats were plush and towards noon it was hot. They served us lunch of milk and sandwiches of jelly and minced ham. Bread was very dry. I could not eat it. For desert an apple. This I ate. Lucky that we brought our lunch on the train.

We went through many towns that I had never seen before or heard of. Mostly farms and cattle ranches. Children cried and fidgeted around. It was too hot to nap. Some of the boys got together and improvised a sort of table and they played cards.

I tried to keep cool and work on my needlepoint tapestry but it was no use. It was just too hot for words. We passed many grape orchards and peaches and plums. The country side was quiet and peaceful looking.

Towards six o'clock, the same sandwiches served at noon were given us for dinner. I didn't even touch it. I couldn't stand the dry bread and the tasteless apples. Just had water and hardboiled eggs that we had brought along.

For three more hours, we rode and at 9 p.m. reached our destination. We were dusty, tired, worn and sleepy. This was Turlock. We waited a half hour for our instructions and then we gathered our belongings and got off. Soldiers were out there to escort us to our assembly center. I felt like many a prisoner in jail must have felt when taken to prison.

We had to walk one mile to our camp. We started our walk to camp. A jeep took blind Mrs. Fukuzawa and crippled Mrs. Kikkawa to camp way ahead of us. We finally reached our camp that had soldiers stationed around with guns.

We marched in and were examined. Then we were searched from head



to toe and even our purses opened and looked into. After this examination we waited around til all of the families in our group got together and finally were assigned to barracks which was to be our temporary homes.

They had formed guides out of the evacuees that had gone there before us, who were sympathetic and kind. Gave us nice cold ice water and hot coffee with rice and canned vienna sausages. This tasted good although it wasn't or wouldn't be delicious otherwise.

Our belongings of suitcases and trunks (traveling) and boxes of canned foods were sent on ahead by a private transfer co. We were to get this the next day as it was dark and all had to be inspected and O.K. before given to us.

I was given 8 blankets and 4 iron cot beds with straw mattresses to the C block and room B at 49 barrack.

These barracks were made very poorly. Paper walls and tarred roofs. Floors of wood with large cracks that the grass had grown in wildly at least 4 to 8 feet. It was midnight when we finally got our bags with our night clothes. We changed into them and plopped into bed. We were told to eat at Mess 4 the following morning.

The mess bell rang at 6 a.m. We got up and washed up and went to the mess hall only to come out without touching our food. It was slop. Coffee tasted worse than muddy water. We were certainly discouraged.

After coming back, we got our trunks and boxes but no canned food was to be had in our units. Ours were stored in the warehouse there til moved out of Turlock. But they had used our canned food without permission or so we thought.

Three doz. cans of tuna, three doz. cans of salmon, 10 lbs of sugar



mazola oil (Gal). Ajinomoto, syrup and many, many other Japanese canned foods. I have to this day not heard of it.

Shelves had to be built in, grass pulled out, we all had to make this room just as livable as we can. The days were hot. I had never been to a place that hot. Over a hundred degrees. California you know is lovely and does not get above a hundred.

The men folks went after scrap lumber to make crude benches and tables. Mostly apple boxes and orange boxes were used for shelves and little tables. Sheets torn into a sizable square to cover the windows.

We were finally settled and we had sworn that we would not work at anything. The days were too hot. Food wasn't fit to eat. Everybody started to lose weight.

Showers were taken 2 and 3 times a day to keep cool. But towards evening the cool northern breeze would blow the hot air away. That was the best part of the day.

The shower was a community bath house. Everyone took showers with everyone else. At first I didn't like that all so I waited til there was hardly anyone around. Then I would go in. They had crickets everywhere.

And then, the toilet. It was a hole in the ground with a little house above it. It had to be moved every so often. The odor was just terrific. I thought it was most unsanitary but I guess it was the best that could be had there.

For recreation we had Volley ball courts, baseball and dancing every Saturday night which we participated. Music from the Juke box. Talent shows every Thursday. I enjoyed these whenever I went.

Schools were formed for the elementary grades and kindergarten. This helped a lot as there were many, many children taken away from schools to come to camp taught by older evacuees.



For three weeks we didn't work. Then Mr. Kikkawa who was a cook at mess 2 asked Mabel, Lillian and me to work as a dish out girl for 8 dollars a month. By this time, we were bored doing nothing so we took it. We reported for work at 6 a.m. every other morning. My but it was hot in the mess halls. Terribly so.

There were many excitements and arguments at this time about the food and ways. Someone was always complaining.

Our mess hall which was no. 5 served everything just slo pped in, that you didn't know what you were eating. They fed us bacon that was not cooked. This was their specialty. Uncooked bacon and cold meats and canned vienna sausages. Before long I hated to even look at these foods.

Then after I started to work at mess 2, I cooked over what was served. That was the beauty of working in the mess halls. Although mess 2 served meals cooked rather nicely. Better than most mess halls. Mr. Eddie Yamada was our supervisor and he was one swell guy. He treated us 3 girls so very nice as we came from quite a ways. All the way from Block C.

He was a man that lost his temper when we had hot cakes as the heat was hard to adjust. An old coal stove. Sometimes it got too hot and other times not at all. Even rice was hard to cook but these cooks working 12 and 13 hrs. a day did their very best. This, all Japanese in c mp appreciate.

Of course accidents happen anywhere and Mr. Uyeno, a cook threw oil into the fire by mistake, thinking it was coal, and caused quite a commotion. He had third degree burn and had to be treated. Took weeks and weeks before it healed. We all felt very badly as he was a very nice person.

Then sargent Neff, called Harry and asked him to be an interpreter and help at the Internal Security. So he told the Sargent that if he was to stool on his fellow people he didn't want it. Mr. Neff says it wasn't.



You see there were quite many Japanese who thought to stool to get on the good side of the Caucasians. But that was the lowest thing any human can ever stoop to do. Even the Caucasians didn't trust them. The truth is, they never trusted us even at start. Why would we be trusted after we were in the assembly center.

But finally Harry gave in and worked for the Internal Security. He was on the afternoon shift. From 4 to 12 p.m. First week he walked the grounds with Neff and poor fellow. Got such an awfully big blister, he went to work in a slipper. He was not used to walking. But he got along.

He made many friends and found out who was stooling on whom. He made friends with Mr. Stanley Yoshimura of Alameda who was the night cook for the workers. They had wonderful meals at midnight as the caucasians were fed there.

Then soon the canteen opened in the camp. Ice cream, soda pops, candies and immediate things were sold. Everyday it was packed with people. Then \$2.50 books were issued to grown ups from 16 and \$1.50 books for under age. These books were spent in no time so we bought books from people who didn't spend theirs. So the days were spent in this manner.

When we took naps in the afternoon, we had to be careful and pick a spot on the bed where the tar did not drip. At first, we didn't know and when we got up from our naps hot tar dripping on our face. Spotted. Then we'd have to change our beds so as to save the bed linens if any of us used any. What with fighting off crickets, pulling the grass every so often so it'll look like an inside of a house instead of a field, and dodging tar drippings, it's a wonder. I admire the Japanese for enduring and taking it on the chin as it came. I think the Caucasians did too who worked with the Japanese.

To keep the thousands of Japanese from getting typhoid and small



pox, we had to be injected. Even little ones and old women. I got terribly sick when I got mine and had to stay in bed the three times. I took it. There were many people that were affected in this manner.

The hospital had been built and offices were made. Crudely but nice with what they had.

Diane had her eyes treated and I had my wisdom tooth pulled and a molar filled. An awful experience for me.

A Dr. Baba, a young Dr. did the best he could to get things done for the Japanese people. They sort of looked to him for everything. Just a graduate Dr. but a good leader then.

When I had my wisdom tooth pulled I was quite nervous as I didn't know what to expect - sat in the chair for 2 horrible hours. I would never like to go through it again. They hammered, chiseled, cut and pounded away and still Dr. Sugihawa couldn't get it out- so he called Dr. Minami and he got the hammer and chisel and broke the tooth in two. Then pulled it out. Of course, I had my gums frozen for this extraction. When I finally came out, my lips were cut as they stretched my mouth to the full extent. They sewed the gums together and sent me home. The next day, my cheeks were swollen and bruised down to my neck and I had to have an ice pack for several days. People thought that I had been in a fight.

Yes, we had to do our best not to get sick as the Drs. were few and didn't get around to you. All this time, we knew that someday, we'd have to move out into a permanent camp. We were most unsettled. Drs. and white collar jobs were paid "12.00 a month. All professionals and plain laborer received \$8 per month. All worked for the benefit of each other.

In the meantime, there were strikes and disagreements and many misunderstanding. People talked to Pinella and tol him what they thought



about him. But that didn't stir him in the least. He was only afraid of bodily harm.

Camp life was dull and many girls at the age of 16 to 28 went astray. They carried on so with the boys. They were a mess. But that was how it was. I could never write here how they carried on.

Many clubs were formed and socials held but it didn't help to curb this very much. They dressed better than if they were living in their former homes. Even farmer's wives. They were always dressed nice and powdered, which they wouldn't do ordinarily.

We from Los Angeles came with all old things and were planted in the midst of people who came from the white zone. They came with nothing but the best. Just the opposite of what we did. So we were told that we didn't have anything nice. And city folks too at thought.

That started us going. We sent for materials and started sewing a few presentable dresses.

Those farmers wives that worked from dawn to dark in the fields changed completely their way of living. Do you think they could ever go back to their old lives again. Camp life was a luxury but for us who came from Los Angeles, and San Francisco, it was horrible. But we made the best of it.

We were in the camp in Turlock for three months. Then rumors started that we were to be sent to Arizona, to either Poston or Gila. We didn't want to come to Arizona as we'd heard how hot Poston was. What with rattle snakes and desert atrocities. This went on for quite a while. Then it finally materialized.

Volunteers were asked. Several Drs. nurses and other heads of the various departments were asked to go to Arizona. You see this camp in the



desert was a new place and needed volunteers to organize it for the rest of us who would be sent later.

Many who had relatives in other relocation centers, got transfers to go other than the desert. Many got refused. Those who were fortunate enough got to go.

Then once again everyone got busy packing their belongings and getting boxes from mess halls to put their things in. This made everyone else get busy. So the first volunteers went off on the train. Many people went to see them off. Parties and dances were given in their honor.

Then the next group to go was 2 weeks later. We had letters from those who volunteered. Told us that there was anything that was completely finished. No much water and the camp was still being constructed. Gas pipes being put in and the heat was terrible.

The people were being sent by the blocks and alphabetically. Since we were in the C block we prepared accordingly. Had everything sent and kept only our immediate clothes. July 27 was set for the people of block C. But 2 days before the departing date we were told that everyone whose name started with an "I" will remain til the next week since there were too many and the train could not accomodate all.

We did everything we knew how to get to go with the rest of our block but it was no use. Couldn't be done. We were sure in a fix. All our clothes and iron and wash boards even were gone. The Fukugawas all went with the earlier group.

We went to see them off and I had tears in my eyes as I bid them all good bye. It was just for a while but still that awful empty feeling, I could not shake off. The Nakatai and even Mitsunergason was leaving. So we said goodbyes and I watched around til they went out of the gate.



Went home to a deserted block. It was very quiet and lonesome. Luckily my next door neighbor was still here and I borrowed her wash board to do my washing. There wasn't anything to do but eat sleep and read what I could get hold of. I had my needlepoint tapestry to do so that helped a lot. I was planning to do it on the train but I finished it in 3 days as there was nothing else to do.

Then they wanted everyone to assemble together in the block that was still filled and where there were vacancies so we packed what little we had and took our beds and off to Block G we went. Stayed here for 3 weeks before the actual date of departure was given us. In the meantime many dances and parties were given for this group and that so as far as social life was concerned, it was all there.

Harry bought a cooler and one I had never bought or have ever seen. Paid \$35 for it and I was really glad we got one. Harry bought several others for some other families.

The first real Hollywood movies came a week before I left Turlock. I guess it was worth staying behind as everything happened then. More coupons were given us too.

The internal Security and the administrative offices gave the workers and their wives a farewell buffet dinner and dance party. The dinner was ordered from an outside restaurant. Salads, baked ham, roast turkey, pickles, olives, chips, cookies, ice cream, punch, cheese, and crackers. Everything was just delicious. After the dinner we were entertained by the director himself, Mr. Pinelli, who was a marvelous pianist. We took the piano out to the dance pavilion and danced til midnight to Pinelli's playing. The evening was enjoyed by all.



To top things off, we had an orchestra from the outside for the farewell dance and I enjoyed the dances more than any other dance I've gone to. I think everyone did for that matter.

We were to leave on Aug. 10, 1942 and when the day came, I went to the old mess hall I worked for and made rice cakes to eat on the train.

We gathered at the entrance at 5 o'clock and didn't get on the train til nine. We were glad to get on the train as we'd been standing around all the while and we had to walk quite a ways to get to the train.

Before this, the Fukuzawas had written what to expect when we got there. They wrote us about the tarantulas, lizards and snakes and many other things that are dangerous. Even about the Gila monster.

We were finally settled in our seats on the train and no lights were turned on in our train. That was the rule. I don't know why, but we finally settled into our seats and went to sleep sitting up. My, but that was tiresome. It rained hard that night. I don't think that I ever had such an uncomfortable bed in all my life. Just cat napped all night. Was up at 5:30. Breakfast was served in the dining room.

Negro waiters waited on us. Delicious coffee and bread with omelet. First decent breakfast in 3 months. All the food was served in paper plates cups and saucers. It was a beautiful dining car. Air conditioned and the waiters were pleasant.

We reached Los Angeles at 9 a.m. I felt that I had come home. City hall where I thought I could touch. We were not allowed to get off. So we just looked from our train windows. We were near Elysian Park. We stopped for just a half hour. Then we went on. On and on, til it was lurch and still in California. Had lunch of roast beef, coffee, bread, coffee and ice cream.



for desert. By this time it had gotten very hot. So we just stayed in the dining room. Played cards and read magazines. We stayed there til dinner time. We reached Reno at 5 p.m. and made another stop. It wasn't a very large town from where we viewed it.

There was a Mexican man who loaded the train with ice. He gave us all quite a large piece to keep. But this coolness was short lived. All the while we were on the train we had salt pills to take and my little lunch I had made had all been eaten by then. They gave us oranges to eat and so that kept us busy. I didn't nap at all for fear of missing something.

We passed the ocean near Imperial valley. For miles and miles we could see the ocean although the heat was terrific. For miles around the dry barren desert. No houses in this section. Now and then we'd pass a shack or two.

The second night, the chairs were pulled down into a sort of bed but it wasn't comfortable. I sat up for quite a while letting the hot desert wind hit my face. I made conversation with the M.P. on the train and he pointed out the various points of interest. By this time the moon was up and shone on the sands of the desert.

Soon we could see the sand dunes, just like the deserts in Arabia. Smooth and white in the moonlight. Very beautiful. He told me that was where they made the picture "Beau Jeste." I enjoyed the scenery in the moonlight. Towards 11 o'clock, I went to sleep and they all couldn't believe I was the mother of two children sleeping alongside. They'd come and flash their lights on my face to see.

So the night was spent in this terrible heat. Everyone got up at 5 to 5:30 a.m. to get ready as we'd almost reached Casa Grande. The end of our ride. Had breakfast after 2 hrs. of waiting. We were allowed to get off



and stretch as this was where we were to get off. We got our belongings together and got off and waited around for hrs. Everyone was getting tired.

We saw cars drive up and stop. These were caucasians come to us as though we were something other than humans. Then they'd drive on and others would drive up to see. We stood around for the longest time and then the baggage car drove up and took what belongings we had.

Then the Sante Fe Bus and other rural bus came for us. We had to wait til the last. Soon a bus came and we were packed like sardines. There was another bus taking the M.P's and they had so much more room but still they wouldn't take any Japanese in it. It was only for the soldiers.

We drove through Casa Grande or so I thought. Indian signs and dolls of all styles were put in front of stores. I felt I was going through a deserted ghost town. Nothing clean or live looking. We went through and on and were well on our way to the camp which was to be our home for the duration. Nothing but desert and no trees. Cactus and sage surrounded us all the way in. Finally the red roofs of the camp came into view. Rows and rows of it. We cranned our necks to see. We were on Indian reservation for miles and miles around.

Soon we'd see the friends that had come on ahead. I couldn't sit still with excitement of seeing them. Then the camp came into view. Rows and rows of white barracks with red roof in the middle of a dry desert. So this is my home for the duration, I thought.

We drove in and came to a stop to a place which was 13th block. We all piled out and Leo and Mabel, Ben and most of the Fukuzawas were there to greet us. The heat was terrific. We went in and got checked and rechecked and drove home in the bus.



Leo told us that they couldn't get a separate unit and keep one for us too so they were moved into a recreation hall. Once again there were 25 of us in one big barrack without partitions of any kind. People came in and out every day like a public thoroughfare. We were promised a unit in the near future but when we didn't know. So we unpacked what little we had and made it comfortable the best we could.

It was so hot I just drooped around the place. Perspiration just rolled off. Too hot to sleep and it was hot even at night. Couldn't turn the light on for the bugs and beetles would come swarming around inside. 130 degrees is some heat. Many people had dysintery from drinking too much ice water in this heat. I think just about every second person suffered from something or other. Fortunately I was one of the lucky few who didn't get sick at all.

Soon the canteen opened and sold cold soda pops and candies and it was quite a ways from where we lived so I just didn't go. The sold dry goods and canned goods. A general country store.

During my stay in Block 9, I saw tarantulas, lizards scorpions, rattlesnakes, blister bugs and even the kangaroo mice and ground desert squirrels. I haven't seen a Gila monster. We stayed in this recreation hall for a month and a half or so and since the camp adjoining place was finished, they were asking for volunteers to move there.

When we came to camp 1 which is called Canal, the showers would be cold most of the time but I didn't mind that. We had flush toilets and everything was much nicer from what it was in Turlock.

After the many people went to camp two, we decided it was time we asked for a unit for each family so we looked around til we found one in block twenty. We all got what was wanted and prepared to move again.



Before we moved, Mr. Stanley Yoshimura asked Harry if I wouldn't work at the Personnel mess which would open in Sept. So it was decided I would work there and Mabel and Lillian too.

At this time we got notice of our pay checks had come from Turlock so we went after it and all in all I had less than 8 dollars for the three months I worked in Turlock.

Then we moved into block twenty. Our units faced the warehouse and so it was very quiet. We were close to the hospital and post office. Each block had their own showerroom, wash room ironing room and mess halls. Our mess room was rather nice. We made everything out of scrap lumber and apple boxes.

I made curtains out of bleached dish towels and made appliques out of scrap materials and red bias tape. Turned out very pretty. Made matching covers for the closets and little covers for shelves and things.

I had my little scatter rugs and a nice size rug for my living room. That's what I called the section that had this rug. No partitions were used but you can see that one end was a bedroom and one corner a kitchen and the other the livingroom. I must say that my unit looks very comfortable.

We spent more than \$500 buying everything that we have now. Canned goods, soaps, dishes, glasses and the many things that we have now.

I bought a beautiful electric coffee percolator for \$18 and a G.E. toaster which was \$18. An automatic toaster. Bread would be given us by the mess halls. So now that the household was quite settled, soon they would put a sort of linoleum on the floors. A maroon colored covering which showed all the dusts and dirt.

On our first arrival, we witnessed the awfulest dust storms. Couldn't see the barrack next door. Everything turned white with dust at this time.



Then too we had such terrific thunder storms and heat lightening was every night. "ll types too.

Soon everyone was making a fish pool or pond outside their units. So I made one too. It was Buddy's idea and we got cement from the working men and made a pond that was just right. Satoru Yoshimura gave us about 60 minnows to start with.

Poor Satoru, those minnows are a remembrance of him as he has gone on to the other world after a 2 days sickness. Today that pool is surrounded with nasturtiums and shrubs. A very pretty pool and we are proud of it. The fishes are so tame now that they eat out of our hands and whenever we open the door of our unit, it hears us and come swimming up to the edge to get something to eat.

I made a lawn and a garden. With Buddy's help we have a cozy little lawn. Two months ago Harry got some manure and dumped it right on the grass which killed it in spot and so I had to replant devil grass in its place. It has gradually taken root and the lawn is taking shape again. Right now water melon is coming up and has little melons on it.

We opened the personnel mess on Sept. 15 and what mess of<sup>a</sup> mess it was. No gas to cook with. Mr. Harding our head steward of the camp and his assistant Mr. Keadle both pitched in and made shrimp salad and other cold foods. It was a very nice lunch and about 50 people came in.

It was my first job and being a waitress was definitely out of my line. But I've made a good one and am still there. I got acquainted with all of the caucasians that live here in Canal and have become very good friends with Della Taylor, Mary Hughs, Anne Walker, Mrs. Fleming, Lillian Bearos, Mrs. Baus, Hilda Peterson, Mrs. May, Zena Clarson, "Kit" Edna May Leggett, Rutty Petty, Lucille Petty, Warren Higgins, Ben Robison, C roline



Welles, Dr. Young, Mrs. Fox and many others.

Had several of them over to have coffee at our unit. A grand get together, these were. Til this day, they are friends and have a gathering yet.

We had several parties with the caucasians and the personnel crew which was always a great success. Our parties were always the talk of the camp.

Mr. Wilder was a grand person while he was here. He is chief steward at Minedoka in Idaho. I also met his very charming wife and son Noel. A very smart little fellow. Diane and Buddy had some grand time together. They write to me every so often which I appreciate very much.

Our personnel mess gave a new years eve party in 1942 and people talked about it for days and days. It was a grand party and everyone enjoyed it. I hope we are able to give another one just like it this year.

Working at the personnel I met Rosie Imamura and many others. She struck a close friendship with me and confided many things to me. She's a swell girl. Have done many things together.

I also met Yone and Yuri who were such sweet things. A swell bunch to work with. Aki Kanada, Rosie Nojiri, Sue, a comical and enjoyable threesome.

We've had many pleasant picnics in the next camp's mountains and gatherings of all sorts. And today the camp is in full swing. Flowers, shrubs, green lawn, vegetable patches are to be seen. Schools both elementary and high school.

Tonight June 23, is 8th grade graduation and Bobby Tukuzawa is graduating. Tomorrow night June 24 will be the Canal high school. I must say the Japanese people have done an excellent job. Even an annual was made. Everything is in full swing now. Vegetables are so good that we send it out to



other camps. Our Rivers camp is the only camp to produce so much vegetables. They are also raising poultry and cattle and even hog. A swell camp it turned out to be although we commented so much about not wanting to come here.

In Dec. 12, 1942 I was seriously ill with tonsillitis. Called the Dr. but they never came on time and it was freezing cold. No heaters were given us at that time. It's a wonder I didn't die. High fever and no appetite. Spent Xmas in bed and got up just before New Years. I'll never forget how nice Harry was to me. Took excellent care of me and the children behaved wonderfully.

Mary did my washing and ironing although she had loads to do of her own. But good hearted Mary. I'll never forget her kindness. She's a friend indeed.

Weddings in camp have become quite the social thing. From sports outfit for brides, it has come to bridal gowns of satin and veils. Very formal, but spoilt completely by the groom without tuxedo. Bridesmaid and flower girls complete the brides fashion in River's camp.

I fixed 2 brides and this Sunday I am to fix another. She's to be groomed in a bridal gown and veil.

We even have a beauty shop in camp, barber shop. It's quite complete. Why would anyone want to go out to live. Everything is in camp. Many people are relocating in new places. Some have succeeded in making a place amid misunderstandings and others have failed. They are urging us strongly to relocate.

Boys have volunteered for the army from the various camps. Some were rejected, others taken. Harry's brother in Mississippi volunteered from Hawaii. He's very lonesome out there and I do my best to write to him and keep



him cheered. There are thousands and thousands who want to serve their country America if they were only given a chance. But there must be a vague doubt as to the Japanese boy soldiers.

Here it is another summer, 1943, almost a year since we evacuated to this relocation camp. How long must we stay; no one knows. Soon we may relocate. No one knows what the future will bring, so I am still an evacuee.

By Elsie Inouye

June 23, 1943



By Harry Taketa

Gila

*On Relocation  
Omaha*

I was formerly in Confectionery business in San Jose, California. Last one and a half years before evacuation, I was employed as a salesman and solicitor for Ice Cream manufacturer in Los Galos, California.

I evacuated with my family on the free evacuation March 28, 1942 to Fresno, California. After two months the zone was frozen and on August 5, I entrained with my family, consisting of Miyeko, wife, Grayson, 7yr. old son, and Deanna, 4 yr. old daughter, my father and Edna Ogi, former employee. We left Sanger station 10:00 a.m. August 5 and reached Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona on the following day about 1:00 p.m. I was promptly asked to manage Block 23 so from Aug. 6, 1942 to May 1943, I was the block manager of Block 23 of Canal Camp.

Then along about that time, my wife and I decided to relocate, as we realized that the camp life was not doing us any good for the future, and it was no place for our children. We picked the state of Nebraska as the place to relocate.

I left the Camp on June 10 for Hastings, Nebraska. As the employment was not what I expected, the employer advised not to take it. I drove into Lincoln and stayed there two days, and from there I went into Omaha, Nebraska.

The first Japanese I met in Omaha was Mr. and Mrs. Yoden, who operate a gift shop and still doing a fairly good business.

I went to the WRA office in Omaha where I met Mrs. Eier who is the efficient secretary of Mr. Walter Parmeter, the Relocation Officer.



Mrs. Bier with her all white hair may seem like she is old, but she really has the pleasing personality and she wants to help the Japanese.

Mr. Walter Parmeter is also not one of those just-the-surface type. He is really in earnest in helping the Japanese to the best of his ability. Mr. Parmeter once called Dillon Myer in Washington for me.

As I was not adapted to any type of job, I had little difficulty in locating the type of work that I can handle. I was lucky in contacting Gland-O-Lac Company, serum manufacturer for poultry <sup>and</sup> canine. I took a job as a night man, watchman and did janitorial duties.

The bosses, Rice brothers have been splendid. Mr. Novak, the office manager, had a lot to do getting me known to fellow employees. The whole bunch didn't make me feel out of place. They all call me by my first name and cooperate in whatever request I make.

My family, without my father, came here last week to join me. We are now living comfortably, as the neighbors are understanding, and we get along.

There are many opportunities opening up in Omaha and even though the pay may not sound very good, living is cheap and there is no sales tax in the state of Nebraska. The general public is friendly here. A total stranger will say "hello" to you or smile as they go past.

I am making about \$30.00 a week, and 20% of it goes to buy war bonds and we expect to live comfortably with the balance.



I understand that farm offers are coming in and I am sure that farmers wouldn't make any mistake in choosing Omaha district or the midwest. There are really some nice vegetables grown in this part of the country.

My wife and I decided that Omaha will be our duration home; as we have property in California, we feel that we should go back as soon as the war is over.

One thing is sure and that is we will never give up our life in Omaha for a relocation center.