

WAR

1941 clouds
NINA KUO



EXILE

exile is

when your brothers
and friends
are not there any longer
because they died in the war

exile is

when home
is not home any longer
when you know if you go back
you'll die in the war

JOHN HAYAKAWA TOROK
1994

HUMANHOOD

They descended from the forests of the High Vosges,
Where fell the rain for forty nights and forty days
Where the dead by morning light were frozen corpses,
These boys born to the sight and scent of Hawaiian leis.

Village homes and farms became first aid stations
Blood despoiled immaculate sheet and mattress

Women became surrogate mothers to crying boys
Frightened by descending darkness.

Strangers from opposite ends of a world at war
Who never thought to see pain in each other's eyes
Heart responded to heart as should the world.
Before death's door was born the bond of humanhood.

Whyfore do men who raise the outward palm of peace
Clutch horrid weapons to still each other's hearts
A billion stars look askance at unbalanced men
Leading other millions who have lost their minds.

Will men never learn, or ever, stewing in their juices,
Ever depart from the low road to the purgatory of war
When the high road leads up through sunlit meadows
Rise to the sun that is our life, our humanhood.

TOORU JOE KANAZAWA

At Bruyeres, France.

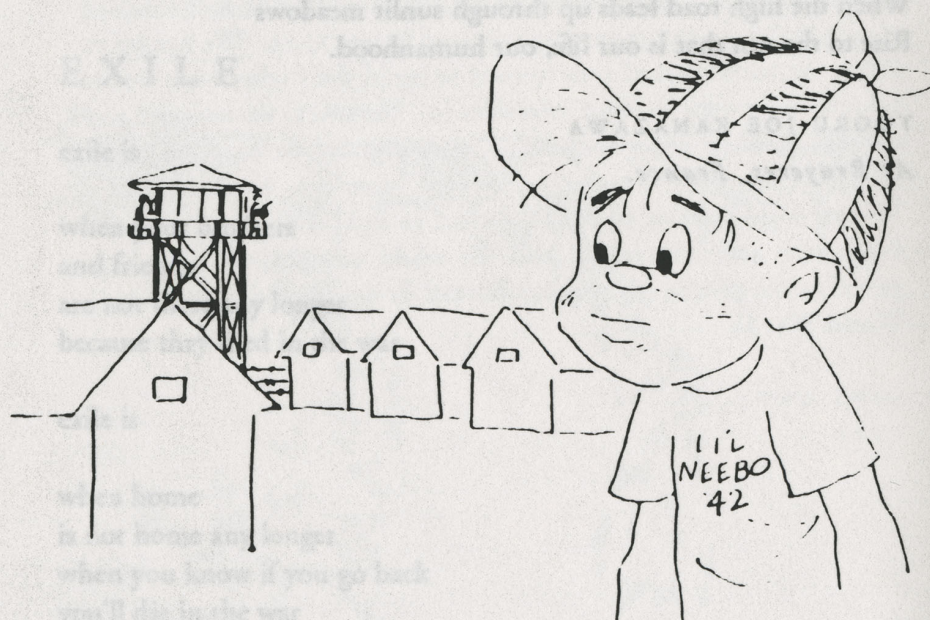
war

LIFE IN CAMP

LI'L NEEBO

LI'L NEEBO was created by Chris Ishii, and first appeared in the Santa Anita Pacemaker, the newsletter for the internees at the Santa Anita Assembly Center. LI'L NEEBO professed to be a friend of everybody at Santa Anita. "Where he came from before isn't important, . . . because whether you were rich or poor, farmer or businessman, you are all the same here."

His name was given to him by an internee, Mrs. Mary (Oyama) Mittwer, as a phonetic contraction of two words, "Nisei Boy".



REMEMBERING

I was a 26-year old professional social worker, employed by Alameda County when war was declared. Relocated to Granada R.C. in Colorado, as Senior Evacuee Supervisor, involved with social services indigenous to a community of 8000 involuntarily displaced persons.

The Caucasian staff was knowledgeable, diligent, and friendly (except one!). I selected the evacuee staff.

People with Problems Exacerbated by Incarceration:

Elderly man and wife, recent post-op nasal cancer patient. With self-care instructions, they managed. Now, medical follow-up overdue; sand prohibitive to sterile dressing/water; public appearance stressful to patient/evacuees.

Mothers searching for their toddlers; school children already "flown the roost". The traditional Japanese family eroded.

Pregnant adolescents no longer shielded. In Camp, no place to hide. Vicious gossip. Victim, non-verbal for days; parents so ashamed, "imprisoned" themselves.

Children requiring specialty treatment transferred to Denver, escorted by Caucasians. Parents excluded from the process. How unconscionable!

Retarded girl and college student, removed from their respective family's environment, unable to understand/readjust to communal living. "Resolution": Placement.

* * * * *

My father, Kanetaro Domoto,
died in Camp, October 1943.

Executive Order No. 9066 deprived him of his last two-and-a-half years of living in California, his home since arrival in America, 1884.

YURIKO DOMOTO TSUKADA

February 8, 1994

*life
in
camp*

AN EMPTY FIELD

life
in
camp

an empty field
in the clear bright air
of mountains and forest

it is still called Popoff

(sounds like a breakfast turnover
or sudden death)

gone
is Mrs. Popoff's house
that over-looked
the field rented to the government
for a legal purpose.

gone
are the rows of shacks
dragged along roads
to imprison their renters
meagre tar paper shacks
meant to stand against snow and ice.

silenced
are the shouts of baseball boys
passing away time
that stood still

the camp(s)
vanished from the landscape
survived in memory and imagination

the field is empty
only mist and a gentle wind
remain
carrying with them
the muffled cries for help
from a 4 year old girl
drowning in a nearby river,
autumn 1942

T. WATADA
Slocan, B.C.

FAREWELL, DESERT MOTHER

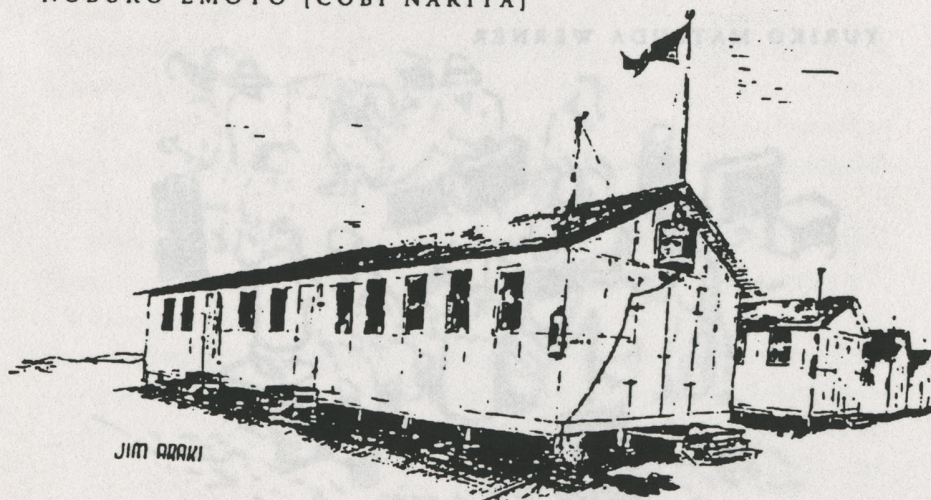
Dedicated to Butte High School -----

I came to you with weary steps
And on my face despair;
I looked upon your sandy grounds.
I could no laughter share;
I entered in your barrack halls
Where no marble statues stood;
I lingered near your wooden walls---You---in young
motherhood.

With patience sweet you cared for me.
 You put my doubts to flight.
You taught me all I'd need to know
 In my forthcoming fight.
You armed me then with truths and skills
 That others through me would know
It's not in the color or shape of a face
 That one's loyalty will show.

Though not a mighty fortress yet
You've many a knight with you.
I know they'll learn the things I did.
 I know they'll all be true.
I leave your dear familiar halls
 But I'll cherish the thoughts of you,
My desert mother, who showed me
 That I'm American, too.

NOBUKO EMOTO [COBI NARITA]



life
in
camp

T R I B U T E S

D O R 1994

This year is 1994. I write in memory of my beloved parents, Sahei & Tsuya Matsuda, and my dear sister, Merry Matsuda. It is always a sorrowful Day of Remembrance for me as they have passed on years ago. I only have warm and deep feelings of our close family life which my Issei parents gave us four children.

Because of the Executive Order 9066 signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on February 19, 1942, Japanese Americans (120,000) were forced to evacuate from our homes and were incarcerated into ten scattered U.S. Concentration Camps. Our family of six was sent to a camp at Gila River, Arizona, until we were provided release from the Government to our freedom.

In conclusion, we are among America's finest citizens and it is indeed remarkable the manner in which we conducted ourselves during that difficult time in evacuation history, in having met our incarceration with deep courage, with dignity, while retaining our resolute spirit which prevails faithfully.

YURIKO MATSUDA WERNER



TO NISEI WOMEN

tributes

My parents were married on February 15, 1944, four days before President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. They spent their honeymoon in a horse stall at the Merced Fair Grounds, and the first years of their married life behind barbed wired at Amache Camp, Colorado.

I was born in camp and grew up in the 50's, the golden age of television, when images of the 'Perfect Mommy', like Donna Reed and Harriet Nelson, invaded our homes. I often wondered why my mother, who seemed always to be out working, wasn't more like them.

In the 70's and 80's, I had the good fortune to meet many Nisei women who shared common experiences. Whether I was collecting materials to teach Asian American Studies, or gathering testimony of the Commission hearings, these women openly shared their stories, candidly and honestly.

I owe a tremendous debt to them . . . to May Kanezawa, Mitsue Kamada, Naoko Ito, and the three Yuri's: Kochiyama, Tsukada, and Werner, just to mention a few to whom I am particularly indebted. Their honesty enabled me to perceive my mother, age 20, having to deal with a horrendously unjust and terrifying situation.

I learned to appreciate my mother's perseverance and respect her strength. I wondered what I would have done in her situation, and was grateful that she wasn't like Donna Reed, for I don't know how well she would have fared had she been in my mother's shoes.

LESLIE INABA WONG



HONOR THY MOTHER

tributes

From Pacific Citizen, 10/14/77

Sachi Seko Wada, long-time resident of NY-JACL, resides in Salt Lake City.

I remember when the Issei mother moved in with her Nisei son. Although she was not quite sixty, being recently widowed, she could not bear to live alone. He and his wife had barely enough room for themselves and their three young daughters. An additional room was made by remodeling the garage.

They accustomed themselves to being a three generational family. Because she lived with them so long, the children could not remember a time when she did not.

All these years, not one word of complaint was publicly uttered by the son and his wife. But we, who were friends, noticed the change in their pattern of living. When they came to visit they no longer lingered. They had to get home to prepare her dinner.

As years passed, almost twenty, our relationship with them assumed an abrupt air. They had to leave to pick her up from wherever she was, a funeral, a church function, a social event. We excused ourselves early from their home, aware that our voices would penetrate the thin walls and bother her sleep.

Sometimes, in recent years, the Nisei couple would go off for a weekend alone. They never failed to appreciate the fact that the mother's availability permitted them interludes without children. Not one word was said about the privacy they must have occasionally needed.

A few weeks ago, the Issei mother died. During the expression of condolences, I mentioned the fact that my friend was now orphaned. I know the term is more appropriately applied to children or young animals.

Before I could rephrase what I said, my friend was quick to answer, "I've been an orphan for almost twenty years."

He is not a young man anymore. He is close to the age his mother was when she came to live with them. His remark about being parentless during that period of her life with them stuck like a burr in my mind.

Other images surfaced. It used to be the custom, and maybe it still is, when Issei had organizations based upon their mutual prefectural origin in Japan. These groups served to maintain a sense of continuity and community between people of a similar past. They were also responsible for making funeral arrangements for their members.

One of their important social activities was the annual picnic. I remember the attendance of my friend and his family, because we often stretched adjoining blankets over the grass. His wife had spent the preceding evening and early morning preparing an elaborate lunch. The hours of labor were told by the contents of the hampers of food and by the fatigue on her face.

It was a memorable day for the children. Between the races and games, they wandered through the botanical gardens of the park. In paper cups they collected tadpoles from the pond.

But the Issei enjoyed it most. It was a time to visit friends whom one saw with increasing infrequency. The men indulged in beer and some boasting. For the women it was an opportunity to preen and compare their finery. As the shadows lengthened, families collected their children and possessions.

Driving off, our friends waved. The son and his wife in the front seat. In back were his mother and children. It was the same arrangement on Sunday drives and excursions. At the dinner table, we noticed that the mother and children were served first together.

* * *

I don't know when the transition happened, maybe no change took place. But even in our detachment, the mother assumed the role of another child. The daughters grew up, went to college, were married and moved away. She was the last to leave.

I have admired my friend and his wife for the quiet acceptance of intrusion in their lives. They have had so little time together. The time of aloneness with each other, with their children.

They said as they were leaving the other night, now they were free to come and go as they pleased, to travel leisurely. But I noticed that the wife gripped the rail as she descended the stairs, carefully taking them one at a time. There was a slowness to his pace, too. And I felt an ache for them, pursuing their summer dreams, when the first frost is already written into the weather.

SACHI SEKO WADA

tributes