

## James Omura's "Return to the Wars" Diary, 1981-1994\*

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As an early 1980s retiree, James Matsumoto Omura reflected on his journalistic past, including his crusade against the JACL leadership. Plagued by an acute cardiac condition, Omura decided to write his memoirs and emphasize the wartime era. Perhaps, in so doing, he could vindicate the Japanese American community and himself for the damage the U.S. government and the JACL had inflicted on both.

His decision coincided with the Nikkei community's campaign to achieve redress and reparations for its wartime mistreatment. Aware that the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) had scheduled 1981 hearings within ten U.S. cities, Omura resolved to testify at those being held at his birthplace of Seattle, Washington.<sup>1</sup>

During his pre-retirement days, Omura did not ordinarily maintain a day-by-day diary. However, in the crucial interval roughly spanning his CWRIC testimony on Wednesday, September 9, 1981, in Seattle, and his death on Monday, June 20, 1994, in Denver, Omura faithfully compiled a rather meticulous daily journal logging his activities, thoughts, and feelings. The availability of this longitudinal record<sup>2</sup> not only permits readers of his published

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\* On at least two occasions in his journalistic career, Jimmie Omura announced to readers that he was making a "return to the wars." On June 21, 1935, when he debuted his "Drift-Tides" column for the new San Francisco-based *New World-Sun* (which he co-edited with Howard Imazeki), Omura declared that "We never feared to utter the truth. . . . This is our return to the wars." A dozen years later, on May 16, 1947, he editorialized in his "Nisei America: Know the Facts" column for the Denver-based *Rocky Shimpō*—which he then began editing for a second stint—that he considered his editorship to be a "return to the wars." Thus, he promised his readers that he "would pursue a progressive type of journalism [that will] freely criticize wherever occasion demanded." In that I regard Omura's 1981-1994 diary to partake of this same militant spirit, I have titled my edited and annotated version of it as a "return to the wars" document.

memoir—*Nisei Naysayer: The Memoir of Militant Japanese American Journalist* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018)—to obtain helpful information bearing on its intellectual and social construction, but also, and of greater moment, it affords access to still another consequential period in Omura's life beyond his memoir's restricted chronological domain (1912-1945) wherein he mounted a relentless war of words against the U.S. government and the JACL for their egregious World War II disregard of civil and human rights.

In what follows, I will draw strategically upon dated entries from what I have termed in *Nisei Naysayer* as the memoirist's "Redress Diary" (supplemented by other relevant source material) to illuminate how the act of representing his life history to posterity simultaneously provided Omura with a propitious opportunity to redress the wartime wrongs that had been suffered by him, personally, his racial-ethnic community, collectively, and the American ideal and practice of constitutional democracy, globally.

While focusing my attention in this "Return to the Wars" diary on Omura's tripartite mission, I have remained largely silent or cursory about such topics as family and personal relations, financial concerns, political and social affiliations, leisure time activities, and behavioral idiosyncrasies (all of which are covered in his comprehensive "Redress Diary" at Stanford).

One topic that does not fit snugly within my narrowly delineated focus but which nevertheless is treated at some length here is Omura's health condition. This is because it is constitutive to him and not separate from what he is seeking to effect through composing his memoir.

Omura's first 1981 diary entry is for Thursday, June 4. In the three months of entries made prior to his September 9 CWRIC testimony, some twenty-five report health problems.<sup>3</sup> In between are entries signifying Omura's mental (and marital) limbering up for the public task awaiting him in Seattle.<sup>4</sup> But even these entries are interlarded with health issues.<sup>5</sup>

While not telling his wife Karen the precise destination of his forthcoming Pacific Northwest trip, the 68-year-old Omura readied himself for his testimony by following media coverage of the CWRIC hearings, re-reading books in his library about the World War II Japanese American eviction and detention experience, checking his personal archive of scrapbooks and clippings on this subject, and closely scrutinizing the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Upon arriving by Greyhound bus in Seattle early on the morning of September 8, Omura checked into a hotel. Then, to become familiar with the route he would travel the following day, he caught a city bus to the site of the scheduled hearings, Seattle Central Community College. Ironically, it occupied the former campus of Broadway High School where he had graduated a half century earlier in 1932. He afterwards stopped at the office of the *North American Post*, a Nikkei community newspaper for which he had been a contributor, only to find it no longer being published. His next destination was the Baptist Church where he had been a youthful congregant. There he looked through its records to obtain contact information for an old friend. This Nisei toured Omura around Seattle, and the pair capped off their reunion at a Beacon Hill bowling alley coffee shop. There they encountered a onetime acquaintance, who Omura believed had "pretended he didn't remember me."

Around noon the next day, Omura got himself added to the hearings program to testify in a session set to be held just before the dinner recess. This short notice left Omura feeling

“unprepared,” as he had hoped to be among the 150 plus presenters on the last two days of the three-day hearings.<sup>6</sup>

Within a panel addressing “economic loss and harassment,” Omura was granted a five-minute presentation. Chair Hugh Mitchell twice abruptly cut him off. Omura made two points: 1) CWRIC should broaden its inquiry to encompass “voluntary evacuees” like himself; and 2) he was speaking as “one of the chief targets of the JACL,” who he had ‘fought’ . . . from start to finish.” He requested the opportunity to submit a fuller report to the Commission (which he subsequently did on October 16, 1981).<sup>7</sup>

After stepping down from the stage, Omura was greeted by Seattle JACL chapter redress activist Henry Miyatake, “a fountain of information on JACL and [Mike] Masaoka,” who lived in nearby Bellevue and was ticketed to witness the following day.<sup>8</sup> The day after Omura’s presentation (Thursday, September 10), Miyatake introduced him, at his request, to a pair of earlier presenters, Sansei poet Lawson Inada<sup>9</sup> and fifth-generation Chinese American playwright Frank Chin<sup>10</sup> (whose stinging criticism of the JACL Omura had robustly endorsed).<sup>11</sup> Hearing Omura’s name, Chin remarked, “Not the James Omura,” to which Omura responded, “the very same.” Chin and Inada then joined Miyatake and Omura for pizza and conversed, on tape, with this “long lost uncle” about his remembrance of things past (particularly the draft resistance movement at the Heart Mountain concentration camp) before rushing out of Seattle.

That afternoon Omura met fleetingly with another witness, curfew, exclusion, and draft resister Gordon Hirabayashi. Then a University of Alberta professor, he told Omura that the “Seattle chapter [of JACL was] at odds with [the] national [organization] and JACL [was] not dominant in Pacific Northwest.”<sup>12</sup> After that evening’s dinner, Omura had one-on-one conversations with two CWRIC commissioners, Judge William M. Marutani<sup>13</sup> and Hugh B.

Mitchell,<sup>14</sup> “but couldn’t get much of a direct response.” All in all, this was a “difficult day” for Omura: “. . . after the pizza lunch [I] felt dizzy and had to slow up . . . [and] when I got to the hotel was just resting when I fell asleep . . . [with] the lights on.”

On Friday, September 11, Omura attended panel sessions and toured Seattle on foot. On Saturday morning, he ferried over to Bainbridge Island, where he had lived as a youth. Upon landing in the island’s main town of Winslow, he was surprised by its dramatically transformed downtown area. Aided by a Bainbridge Nisei resident, Omura then stopped by the homes of long-ago Nikkei family acquaintances, only to find nobody at home. Finally, a stop was made at the home of fellow Nisei Art Kawa. “This,” later concluded Omura, “was a mistake.”

Art was hostile. He said not true we have social problems in U.S. He said those critical of JACL just want the spotlight. JACL did just fine. Wasn’t sure if he volunteered [into the army] or was drafted. He accused me of having axe to grind. “Absolutely, I responded.” He turned away and [kept his] arms crossed during conversation. His body was stiff and tense. What an amazing reception!

That afternoon, back in Seattle, he met with Jim Akutsu (who had also been a September 9 CWRIC witness)<sup>15</sup> and his brother Gene at the former’s Beacon Hill home. Both Akutusus were WWII detainees at the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho who resisted the draft and were thereafter convicted and confined at McNeil Island federal penitentiary off the Washington coast.<sup>16</sup> An Omura correspondent in 1944, Jim Akutsu had been the model for the protagonist in John Okada’s 1957 novel, *No-No Boy*.<sup>17</sup>

After spending Sunday in a manner typical of Seattle sightseers, Omura boarded a Greyhound bus on late Monday afternoon to Pocatello, Idaho, with a three and one-half hour

layover in Portland, where he “felt dizzy and almost blacked out.” Once in Pocatello on Tuesday, Omura spent the night at the home of Nisei Paul Okumura, whose Issei parents had employed him during his junior high school days in that city. Early Wednesday morning Omura visited Okumura’s widowed mother and then re-boarded the Greyhound bus to Salt Lake City, Utah, where he literally blacked out while eating dinner at a restaurant. On the morning of Thursday, September 17, Omura took a Trailways bus to the family home of his oldest son, Dr. Gregg Omura, in Grand Junction, Colorado, remaining there until catching the train on Tuesday, September 22, to Denver.

Omura devoted himself over the next few weeks to doing more research on the wartime confinement of Nikkei and to writing his CWRIC report. He was now anxious to start work on his own manuscript—the precise nature of which was still undetermined—though he could not get in the mood to write. Between his Seattle return and his sixty-ninth birthday on November 17, he was plagued by a procession of health issues.<sup>18</sup>

On the evening following his birthday, Omura received a telephone call from Frank Chin saying that he wanted to know about the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee leaders and draft resisters. He also informed Omura of his need for copies of his *Current Life* editorials<sup>19</sup> and his *Rocky Shimo* Fair Play Committee articles.<sup>20</sup> Chin further told him of a recent testy exchange he had with Min Yasui within the *Rafu Shimo*.<sup>21</sup>

Omura dutifully passed the next night organizing his newspaper clippings, and then most of the succeeding day searching for his *Current Life* file. But still he was unable for a full week to get down to working on meeting Chin’s request for material. Feeling “out of sorts,” Omura then spent another entire night looking for the documentation Chin desired, which he at long last tracked down. But this activity left him “simply blown out” and in severe need of “rest.” It took a

Lawson Inada note—"Saw your name in *To Serve the Devil*, Vol. II. . . . You certainly deserve the recognition as a 'historical figure.'"<sup>22</sup>—to put Omura in the proper mood to fulfill and then forward Chin's request and thereby end 1981 on a positive note.

## 1982

For the opening three weeks of 1982, Omura busied himself with organizing his archives. On January 19, however, his health disorders returned when doing some routine house chores.<sup>23</sup>

During the next three months, Omura persevered on research for his manuscript, albeit in a haphazard fashion. He did check out from a branch library two books, *Japanese Americans* by Harry H. L. Kitano<sup>24</sup> and the second volume of *To Serve the Devil*, which he proudly felt gave him a "fine introduction."<sup>25</sup> He also attempted to run down pertinent information on how to secure Freedom of Information documentation from the federal government impinging upon his prewar, wartime, and postwar past. But his diary entries for this period are pockmarked with a plethora of new and persisting health woes.<sup>26</sup>

Four days after an entry declaring he was "feeling better," Omura became tingled with excitement when Frank Chin telephoned him on April 20th with the news that he planned on flying him out to California for a couple of late May get-togethers and tapings in Los Angeles and Mountain View involving wartime Nisei draft resisters, their familial and comradely supporters, and their younger Asian American champions.

In preparation for this projected trip, Omura purchased a cassette tape-recorder and a supply of magnetic tapes. When he received a letter from Chin on May 3 setting forth the proposed itinerary in California, Omura responded affirmatively to it with alacrity, even though

his wife Karen adamantly sought to discourage him from this course of action. Five days later, Chin confirmed that Omura would fly out of Denver's Stapleton Airport on Saturday morning, May 15, and be picked up by a driver upon arriving at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

On that same day, Omura received a call from a woman at Stapleton identifying herself as Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga,<sup>27</sup> who said that she was flying back to Washington, D.C., where she was a researcher at the National Archives in the employment of the CWRIC Commission. She told Omura that she had met Chin in New York where he was producing a self-written play, and explained that the reason for her call was that she wanted more information on the Fair Play Committee.

When Omura landed at LAX, he was met by Frank Chin and Lawson Inada, and soon they were in a car driven by Glenn Hayashi, a videographer. After a "greasy and bad-tasting" lunch at a Vietnamese restaurant in downtown Los Angeles, the party drove to Chin's home where Inada tape-recorded an interview with Omura while Chin departed elsewhere with Hayashi.

What occurred that evening when the four of them arrived at the dinner party held at the Hamayoshi Japanese restaurant has been vividly captured for posterity by Omura.

Frank Emi [Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee leader] and Dwight Chuman [English section editor of the *Rafu Shimpo*] were already there. Later Art Emi [Frank Emi's brother and Fair Play Committee backer] and someone else [Toru Ino, Heart Mountain draft resister] came in. Had white wine while listening to [Ino] and began to feel dizzy and expected an attack. Leaned over to Lawson and told him if anything



happened that I had a heart problem. The walls were getting dark and going round in circles. Had chest pain and took a Nitro [nitroglycerin] which subsided [the pain] momentarily. Then a second shot of pain. Took a second Nitro. Very dizzy! Felt sick in stomach. I was encouraged to lie down beside the table (this was a Japanese-style dining) which I did. Waitress brought cool towel for my forehead. I suddenly had an urge for [a] bowel movement. Went to bathroom with Lawson tagging along despite my protest. I was getting weaker. After discharge, which was like diarrhea, felt so weak and sick couldn't get off the commode. Took additional Nitro—can't remember how many—hopeful it would help. Urged Lawson to go back to the table but he wouldn't. Then Frank Emi followed. I was in cold sweat and he wiped off my brow. He later said I was real pale. Felt need to lie down and Lawson and Frank were helping me to the store room where they were preparing cardboard boxes for the floor when the paramedics arrived. They took over. . . . I was in a cold sweat. BP was 88/40. Slowly it rose to 110/88. They monitored it repeatedly. When they sat me up, I was still dizzy and sick in the stomach. I was taken to Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. Lawson, Frank Chin, and Frank Emi were in Emergency waiting room when I asked the doctor to check for [on] me. It was already past midnight. Doctors were taking a series of tests. The fellows came into Emergency and then left. I was moved to Critical Care Unit on the second floor. One doctor didn't think wine was a factor as did another doctor and confirmed later by the cardiologist. It was 2:30 a.m. when the cardiologist came to see me. He came back later at 10 a.m. His diagnosis was "overexcitement."

By the next day, Tuesday, April 17, Omura believed he was well enough to leave the hospital, but his departure was postponed to the following day contingent upon his tests being

negative. In the meantime, he spent his time in bed critiquing, at Inada's request, an advance copy of Bill Hosokawa's soon-to-be-released *JACL in Quest of Justice*.<sup>28</sup>

Dismissed from the hospital on Wednesday, Omura stayed the next few days at Frank Emi's San Gabriel home. During the days, he spent time being interviewed by Inada, strolling around Little Tokyo (where at the Amerasia Bookstore he purchased books on the WWII Japanese American experience), and browsing both a scrapbook and back copies of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* newspaper<sup>29</sup> belonging to George Nozawa, a Heart Mountain draft resister and the Fair Play Committee's unofficial historian.<sup>30</sup>

Omura also made contact with a past Nisei friend, Joe Kinoshita, who treated him to dinner at a Japanese restaurant in Little Tokyo. A partner in a Beverly Hills-based consulting structural engineering firm, Kinoshita brought along his portfolio and proudly disclosed that his firm had just been awarded a third portion of a 1.2-billion dollar development in downtown Los Angeles. While Omura judged his dinner "good," he found Kinoshita's congenial interactions with Bill Hosokawa and his negative take on Frank Chin and Frank Emi not to his taste. In sum, Omura evaluated his relationship with Kinoshita that evening of Thursday, May 20, as "strained."<sup>31</sup>

The next day Omura and Frank Emi flew from Burbank Airport to San Jose, where at that city's airport they were met by another Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee member, Kozie Sakai. Sakai took them to a motel in nearby Mountain View. He told them that Chin was driving up from Los Angeles and Lawson Inada was flying back from Washington D.C., but that both would be present for the next day's gathering.

On the ensuing morning, after George Nozawa collected Omura, Emi, and Sakai, in his car, the foursome skirted the San Francisco Bay while conversing and snapping photographs. By mid-afternoon, Chin and Inada arrived at the designated meeting place and tape-recorded the Heart Mountain draft resistance recollections of Sakai and Dave Kawamoto, who had driven over to the gathering from neighboring Cupertino. That evening at a Chinese restaurant, Emi and Omura continued photo-taking while Chin and Inada resumed interviewing. Aside from Emi, Omura, Chin, and Inada, there were eight resistance community members at the dinner.<sup>32</sup>

The next morning, May 23, Sakai drove Emi and Omura to the San Jose airport, where Emi caught a flight to Los Angeles and Omura flew to San Francisco. There he called up a very close prewar friend from Alameda, Joe Yoshino. Although Omura found him “cordial enough in conversation,” he could sense a reluctant welcome. “He [Yoshino] said he would be tied up [that night as well as] all week. Interesting.” After walking around Japantown and buying some “Evacuation” books, Omura had a tempura dinner at the Japan Center. But upon leaving the restaurant on this warm night, he “felt dizzy . . . and had to lean against [the] hall wall for support. Blacking out.”

The next day Omura made the rounds of the vernacular newspapers in Japantown, visiting the editorial offices of both the *Nichibei Times* and the *Hokubei Mainichi*. In the first he found a former staff member for one of the two San Francisco vernaculars whose English-language sections he had edited in the mid-1930s, the *New World Daily News*, and in the second he encountered Howard Imazeki, who had served with him as co-editor for the English-language section of the other Depression vernacular, the *New World-Sun*. Five decades earlier Omura’s relationship with Imazeki had been uneasy because of the opposing ways they viewed the JACL,

and he could not have been surprised when Imazeki allowed that “he became a member of the JACL not many years ago.” That evening Omura boarded a Greyhound bus to Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, Omura was interviewed for the better part of the next day by Chin and Inada. He did make time, though, for a stopover at the Amerasia Bookstore, where he purchased the second volume of *To Serve the Devil*<sup>33</sup> and where Chin promised to get him a copy of *Concentration Camps USA*, by Roger Daniels,<sup>34</sup> in Seattle. Omura spent the evening in his hotel room near the Los Angeles Public Library reading Mike Masaoka’s *Final Report*.<sup>35</sup>

After breakfast on the following day, May 26, Chin, Inada, and Omura visited the *Pacific Citizen* office. There they ran into Harry Honda,<sup>36</sup> the paper’s editor since Larry Tajiri stepped down from that post in 1952. Honda told Omura that he recognized him from the 1930s when employed by the *Nichi Bei* in San Francisco. Omura did not recall Honda from those days. But he was “griped” that very morning by something Honda said—“The government sure burned your ass.”—believing it to betray “a lack of sensitivity.” Departing the *PC* office, the trio devoted the remainder of the day to Chin and Inada interviewing Omura, this time about Bill Hosokawa’s *JACL in Quest of Justice*.<sup>37</sup>

Omura remained in Los Angeles for another week before returning to Colorado. During this interval, he reviewed a tape-recorded interview that Chin had conducted with Nobu Kawai.<sup>38</sup> A JACL leader from Pasadena, California, Kawai had been confined during the war within two WRA camps, the Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona<sup>39</sup> and the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming. At Gila, Kawai was a prime mover both within its JACL chapter, the sole one among the ten WRA detention facilities, and in its inmate-staffed newspaper, the *Gila News-Courier*.<sup>40</sup> Upon transferring to Heart Mountain, Kawai became an associate editor for the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, and in that position mounted an editorial campaign against the camp’s Fair

Play Committee-led draft resistance movement. In the course of this same week, Omura not only tape-recorded an interview with the *Rafu Shimpo*'s outspoken Sansei editor, Dwight Chuman, but also arranged with him to contribute a series of columns for future *Rafu* publication.

In the period between his arrival in Colorado on June 3 to the end of the first week of July, an energized Omura plunged into his research project and related activities with redoubled enthusiasm. Apart from a one-day earache, he was untroubled during this stretch with health issues. He purchased a better tape recorder to use for his future interviewing; he wrote and mailed off two columns to Chuman at the *Rafu Shimpo*; he read three books (Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*,<sup>41</sup> Lillian Baker, *The Concentration Camp Conspiracy*,<sup>42</sup> and Roger Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate Japanese Americans*<sup>43</sup>) and skimmed still another one (Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa, *East Across the Pacific*<sup>44</sup>); he corresponded with Chin and Inada about their research analysis; he prepared a Freedom of Information request and readied it for notarization; he mailed a request to the FBI for selected information; arranged with William Hohri, the head of the National Coalition for Japanese American Redress, to receive back issues of the group's newsletter so that he could become oriented to its judicial redress campaign; and, employing the nom de plume of Robert Higashi, subscribed to the *Pacific Citizen*.

Now on a research roll and feeling comparatively chipper, he noted in his diary entry for Wednesday, June 30, that "[I] walked to [the] mailbox and back and felt good. This was the strongest stroll recently." Omura's healthier status proved short-lived. By July 17, after performing the same errand, this time to mail a letter to Frank Chin, he observed ruefully: "It was tough going. Probably shouldn't have attempted it." His physical condition was in all probability strained by a surprise recent visit to Denver by his ex-wife Caryl, who presumably he had not seen since their 1947 divorce.

During their first dinner together on July 11, she must have seemed much like the person he had married in 1940: his conjugal comrade-in-arms on *Current Life*;<sup>45</sup> his unflinching co-testifier at the Tolan Committee hearings; his hard-working and self-sacrificing partner during both the early humanitarian days of their 1942-1943 Denver resettlement and, most especially, in the gloomy later days in 1944 when, after his being run out of his *Rocky Shimpō* editorial post, indicted and jailed, and faced with a federal charge of conspiracy to aid military draft violations, she had worked multiple jobs to scrape together his bail and legal fees while simultaneously consoling him and coordinating his defense.

Such ruminations provided a backdrop to her narration. She was now married to a Jewish American man named Gertler, with whom she had two daughters and a son, and they had lived for seventeen years in Las Vegas, but now made their home outside of Portland. Her primary reason for coming to Denver was “to research the records and file a truer account in the National Archives [of the World War II Japanese American experience] for her family.” She had read Roger Daniels’ *Concentration Camps USA* and had an appointment the next day with Bill Hosokawa at the *Denver Post* because she was “angered over his avoiding this phase [draft resistance] of the Evacuation [story covered in Daniels’ book].”

Two days later, Omura and Gertler dined again so that she could tell him about her interview with Hosokawa.<sup>46</sup> Amidst a pervading coquettish interaction, Gertler confessed to having been unable to “get much out of him [Hosokawa],” and Omura felt that “there were a lot of blanks . . . in the interview,” though “I didn’t tell her that.”

During the remaining time before Gertler flew out of Denver on July 20, she took a series of actions that undoubtedly brought to Omura’s mind the materialistic and status-seeking side of his attractive ex-wife that he found “not my cup of tea.” She switched her hotel from the three-

star Hilton to the luxurious Fairmont; their lunch on July 15 was at the upscale Brown Palace Hotel; when shopping that afternoon at Denver's premier commercial mall, the Cherry Creek Shopping Center, she sought out Gucci products and purchased a \$215 handbag at the Joseph Magnin department store; and on July 20, she rented a Cadillac.

Meanwhile, Omura was frustrated that, even after mailing a third column to the *Rafu Shimpo*, he heard nothing back from Dwight Chuman; nor did he receive any reply from his Freedom of Information requests. Books he ordered from Amerasia Bookstore were mostly out of print. He did get research underway, particularly by repeatedly staying up all night to compile notes on his reading of primary and secondary sources. But his health issues still loomed large.<sup>47</sup>

For the final four months of 1982, however, Omura experienced very few and then mostly momentary health disorders.<sup>48</sup> This situation permitted him to concentrate on his research and writing. Omura arranged to receive a tape of Mike Masaoka's comments to JACL critics at the organization's twenty-seventh Biennial JACL National Convention;<sup>49</sup> mailed off ten letters seeking Freedom of information documents; and had a letter of his "critical of the JACL" published in *Asian Week*.<sup>50</sup> He also read thirteen volumes<sup>51</sup> and viewed one historical film.<sup>52</sup> Still, accomplishing something concrete on his manuscript eluded him. "Difficult time getting a beginning on the JACL story," he fretted on September 3. "Just lacking something." Not to be deterred, he followed up this entry with another one on October 15 reporting he had "made a new start on the JACL story."

In the course of 1983 Omura continued to contend with health matters. However, only three of the fifty-seven diary entries dealing with this subject entailed problems of a semi-serious nature.<sup>53</sup> Within this year, Omura's reading of pertinent secondary sources waned,<sup>54</sup> his progress on his manuscript was mainly limited to mechanical preparative tasks,<sup>55</sup> and the genre of the book he was proposing to produce remained hazy.<sup>56</sup>

In many significant ways, though, 1983 was a banner year for Omura. It was a time when he became in demand for a variety of public appearances and intellectual endeavors, most of which were somehow connected to the Japanese American movement for redress and reparations. Each brought him collateral opportunities for strategic and emotional alliance with a support community of compatible friends and associates. In addition, these undertakings paid him dividends in formal and informal access to essential research material as well as offering funding sources to defray the cost of exploiting it.

Thus, during the last two weeks in February, Omura accepted the National Council for Japanese American Redress<sup>57</sup> board's invitation for an all-expenses-paid trip to Chicago to speak at a NCJAR-sponsored event and conduct research in the NCJAR archives. While in Chicago, he became acquainted not only with NCJAR's mercurial leader William Hohri<sup>58</sup> (and his steadfast wife Yuriko),<sup>59</sup> but also with two other eminent redress activists, Ellen Godbey Carson,<sup>60</sup> lead attorney for NCJAR's class-action suit of \$27 billion against the U.S. government for World War II injuries to excluded/incarcerated Nikkei, and Joy Kagawa,<sup>61</sup> a Canadian novelist whose fictional works influenced her co-ethnics' perception of their harsh World War II experience and stimulated their postwar demands for proper governmental measures to redress it. During his time in the Windy City, too, he forged ties with stalwart NCJAR couples like John and Merry



Omori,<sup>62</sup> Nelson and Taka Kitsuse, and Bob and Yae Imon, and benefitted as well from their hospitality.

Then, acting on Roger Daniels' encouragement, Omura attended the International Conference on Relocation to Redress at the University of Utah that Daniels, Harry H. L. Kitano,<sup>63</sup> and Sandra Taylor<sup>64</sup> coordinated. There, apart from meeting this accomplished trio of scholars for the first time, Omura renewed his pre-World War II friendship with notable Nikkei poet Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami<sup>65</sup> and ripened his relationship with poet Lawson Inada. He also fortified his rapport with William Hohri, and through him was introduced to John Liu, book review editor for UCLA Asian American Studies Center-sponsored *Amerasia Journal*. Liu asked Omura to review Bill Hosokawa's *JACL In Quest of Justice*, and Omura readily consented. Among others who Omura met at this conference for the first time were historians Gary Okihiro of Santa Clara University,<sup>66</sup> Bob Sims of Boise State University, and Art Hansen of California State University, Fullerton, plus University of California, San Diego, political scientist, constitutional scholar, and civil rights attorney Peter Irons.<sup>67</sup>

The two conference events that most ensnared Omura's attention were a panel session on the JACL's World War II role and a plenary session on redress pitting Minoru Yasui, then the JACL National Committee on Redress' director, who promoted the legislative route to achieve redress, and William Hohri, NCJAR's leader, who upheld the cause of judicial redress.<sup>68</sup> Surprisingly, no fireworks occurred at the JACL-stacked (Bill Hosokawa, John Tateishi,<sup>69</sup> and Raymond Uno<sup>70</sup>) panel session, even though the sparse audience included numerous critics of the JACL's wartime actions (e.g., Omura, Daniels, Okihiro, and Hansen).<sup>71</sup> At the well-attended redress session, Yasui took "a strong position" against judicial redress, which Peter Irons then

“diffused on three points of law.”<sup>72</sup> There was apparently no interaction between Yasui and Omura on this formal occasion or throughout the conference.

Less than a week later Omura flew from Salt Lake City to Seattle. Greeted at the airport by Chizu Omori, a teenage Poston camp inmate and currently a redress activist,<sup>73</sup> she invited Omura to stay with her and her then husband during his week in Seattle. Within this interval, Omura joined with Frank Chin, Lawson Inada, Frank Emi, and Frank Abe<sup>74</sup> to interview and/or chat with an array of Seattle area people about either wartime draft resistance (Uhachi Tamesa, the 100-year-old Issei father of the late Heart Mountain Nisei draft resister, Minola Tamesa),<sup>75</sup> and Minidoka resister Jim Akutsu<sup>76</sup>) or the postwar redress movement in Seattle (Issei Shosuke Sasaki<sup>77</sup> and Nisei Henry Miyatake<sup>78</sup>). Omura also spent several days doing research for his manuscript at both the Special Collections Department in the Suzzello Library at the University of Washington and the Seattle-based David Ishii Books shop.<sup>79</sup>

Returning to Denver, Omura received the latest NCJAR newsletter containing “lavish credit” to him. He also got a letter from John Liu requesting him that he critique an *Amerasia Journal* manuscript submission by Jere Takahashi<sup>80</sup> on the pre-World War II development of Nisei political perspectives. In writing this critique, Omura was encouraged that he was “getting the old writing touch back.”<sup>81</sup>

By early May, Omura was flying off to San Francisco, where he was to be filmed by Loni Ding.<sup>82</sup> She and Yoichi Shimatsu<sup>83</sup> met him at the airport. Shimatsu and a friend of his who he had introduced to Omura, Miya Okawara,<sup>84</sup> would provide lodging for Omura during his three-week Bay Area stay. Among those who he visited were Harry Ueno<sup>85</sup> in San Jose and Dale Minami<sup>86</sup> in Oakland. Minami told Omura that he had “a great deal of admiration” for his World War II stand and offered him some pro bono legal assistance.

On April 6, Omura guided Loni Ding and her film crew to the War Memorial Building for shooting of his 1942 Tolan Committee testimony,<sup>87</sup> but it was too dark and so the filming was postponed to a later time.<sup>88</sup> That same day Omura met numerous Japanese Americans of note, including Franklin Odo<sup>89</sup> and Clifford Uyeda.<sup>90</sup> The next day Omura undertook research at the Bancroft Library on the University of California, Berkeley, campus, and repeated this routine for several more days, on one of which he met and befriended educational historian Thomas James, a Stanford University doctoral student.<sup>91</sup> In addition, before flying to southern California, Omura squeezed in research trips to the Stanford University archives in Palo Alto and, in San Francisco, at the Japanese American National Library and the California Historical Society Library.

In Los Angeles, Omura purchased books at the Kinokuniya and Amerasia bookstores in Little Tokyo. Although he contemplated research trips to both UCLA and the Huntington Library in San Marino, his sapped condition caused him to cancel these plans and to return home to Denver.

Once in Colorado Omura found in his mail an invitation to speak, for an honorarium, at UCLA's Asian American Studies Center. A few weeks later, on June 21, he received an uplifting letter from William Hohri saying: "I believe quite firmly that you deserve all the royal treatment you can manage to get." This letter reverberated what Hohri had written to him months earlier, on January 26: "You're something of a wonder to us. You've gone through a hell we have nightmares about but can only imagine, and survival with your integrity and vision intact. At what cost? And are you still whole?" Omura's spirits soared even higher when, on September 9, Michi Weglyn sent him a complimentary copy of her *Years of Infamy* book replete with a rousing inscription: "For years I have harbored a sense of gratitude and esteem for your most incredible courage in speaking out and persisting in the face of overwhelming odds. This I send

as a token of appreciation for what you represent—for your martyrdom.” Such heartfelt praise<sup>92</sup> moved Omura to turn to his writing with renewed vigor, beginning with completing his *Amerasia Journal* review of Hosokawa’s *JACL: In Quest of Justice*.<sup>93</sup>

## 1984

The year 1984,<sup>94</sup> like the one preceding it, was punctuated for Omura with assorted health complications.<sup>95</sup> Not until late October, however, did he face a disorder that caused him alarm.<sup>96</sup> One other such scare arrived in the end of October/beginning of November.<sup>97</sup> On several days, though, Omura remarked on his enhanced health.<sup>98</sup>

This year witnessed a further reduction in Omura’s reading and viewing of supplementary material. He did, though, manage to peruse five books thoroughly, and four others selectively,<sup>99</sup> while also watching one historical documentary film.<sup>100</sup>

As to work on his manuscript per se, Omura wrote only eight pages on what he still styled as his “JACL book,”<sup>101</sup> while compiling fifty pages of notes in relation to it. He no doubt was incited to future action on his text by an end-of-the-year message that William Hohri sent him in conjunction with a draft of his own redress manuscript (for Omura’s critical appraisal): “How is your book coming? The more I read of your articles in the *Hokubei Mainichi*, the more I realize how important it is for you to write your book. There’s a big gap there that is filled only by [Bill] Hosokawa and the JACL. Write!”<sup>102</sup>

Omura’s lack of progress on his manuscript was not the result of procrastination, but rather a consequence of tackling a variety of other daunting and time-consuming chores. This year brought Omura a large supply of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) material that he

had requested from U.S. government organizations, and it required extensive time for him to read, annotate, and file for efficient retrieval.<sup>103</sup> Then, too, Omura continued his transcription of interviews done for Frank Chin's book project on the Heart Mountain draft resistance movement.<sup>104</sup>

Omura's calendar was also cluttered with activities that took him to the Pacific Coast. These were all bunched between mid-August and mid-September. First was Omura's participation in a workshop in Los Angeles sponsored by the East West Players and entitled "Asian American History Theater." This three-day (August 17-19) project, led by Frank Chin, was designed to bring together World War II concentration camp resisters with actors, writers, and artists to create a theater piece through writing and theater games. It was an event that Omura felt "both important and historically significant."<sup>105</sup> In addition to intensifying his rapport with Chin, Frank Emi, William Hohri, and Lawson Inada, it strengthened Omura's connection with Heart Mountain draft resisters Yosh Kuromiya and Mits Koshiyama,<sup>106</sup> and it also bonded him with still other notable dissenting Nisei (e.g. the poet-playwright-actor-memoirist Hiroshi Kashiwagi) and Sansei (e.g. the artist Roger Shimomura).<sup>107</sup> Omura even forged a friendship with the actor Robert Ito,<sup>108</sup> an audience member who at one point assumed a role as a performance reader. Altogether, this experience was an affecting one for Omura. Granted the closing word by Chin, he had difficulty retaining his composure. "I just am an emotional person," he later reflected, "perhaps [because] of the years of hard experience with Japanese racial people. Just can't be hard-boiled."<sup>109</sup>

The day after the East West Players workshop Omura, along with Chin and Inada, stopped by the *Pacific Citizen* office to see its editor, Harry Honda, after which the threesome ran into the actor George Takei,<sup>110</sup> who Omura's companions introduced to him. Omura then

confirmed final plans to go south to the Orange County home of Art Hansen in Yorba Linda to be interviewed by Hansen for the Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program (OHP) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

Upon his August 21 arrival in Orange County, a drained Omura spent a few hours researching material in the CSUF-OHP archives related to his manuscript. Thereafter, he put in several more hours researching Hansen's personal archives and library.<sup>111</sup> Over the next four days, the interview was enacted, greatly aided both by Omura's zeal to narrate his life story and his meticulous advance preparation for doing so in a thorough and accurate fashion.<sup>112</sup> Even after the interview concluded and Hansen drove Omura back to his Hollywood motel, he mailed his interviewer an addendum to the response he had given to a closing query on those whom he exceptionally admired.<sup>113</sup>

Omura then spent the following four days researching material within the Japanese American Research Project (JARP) housed in UCLA's University Research Library, particularly the oral history interviews. He thereafter packed for his September 1 flight to San Francisco, where he planned more archival research.

In San Francisco Omura was met at the airport by Yoichi Shimatsu. He drove him to his Fort Mason home (north of the North Beach district) where Omura was to lodge during his Bay Area stay. After a couple of days of spirited conversation and touring of San Francisco sites, Omura spent a research day at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. Next, he turned his attention to the University of California, Berkeley, campus. At the Ethnic Studies Department—where he went to see Professor Jere Takahashi (who was unavailable)—he encountered Takahashi's colleague Elaine Kim. An Asian American literature specialist,<sup>114</sup> Kim indicated that she felt no respect for JACL and rhetorically asked Omura, "Don't you feel vindicated?"<sup>115</sup>

During the next week, Omura met with Jere Takahashi, Joe Oyama, Richard Oyama, Raymond Okamura, and Yasuo Sasaki;<sup>116</sup> additionally, Omura tape-recorded interviews with Okamura (September 8, 11) and Sasaki (September 13).<sup>117</sup> He also logged four days of research at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library prior to flying back to Denver on September 15.

In short order, the post brought him his published *Amerasia Journal* review of Peter Irons' *Justice at War*, which upon re-reading he found "better than I expected,"<sup>118</sup> followed by the September 21 issue of the *Hokubei Mainichi* carrying a complimentary four-column front page interview-article on him entitled "James Omura: Outspoken Nisei Journalist: Opposed Internment, Criticized JACL Wartime Policy."<sup>119</sup>

In October, Omura was invited to be a *Hokubei Mainichi* special commentator. Before year's end he had written two columns in his "Plain Speaking" series, the first of which was published on December 4, "Early Japanese American Activism," and the second of which, "The Lost Age of the Nisei," was mailed into the *Hokubei*'s office on December 17 (though not published until early 1985).

The publication of the *Hokubei* interview-article stimulated commendation for Omura. In late September, he received a copy of it from his Bay Area friend Miya Okawara accompanied by an uplifting note: "It's a wonderful feeling to read that such a Nisei did exist 40 years ago!"<sup>120</sup> Omura also reaped praise for his *Amerasia Journal* review of *Justice at War*. Michael Yasutake, a World War II conscientious objector, wrote Omura from Chicago in mid-November to endorse his perception that "JACLers need to face up to their past as much as we want the government to do the same."<sup>121</sup> In a Christmas card to Omura, a young admirer who he had met during the East West Players workshop, Warren Sato, effused: "Slowly but surely I am coming to respect and

honor my ancestral heritage. Your influence in the summer played a great part in opening an otherwise stagnant area of my mind, soul and spirit.”<sup>122</sup>

Throughout 1984, others paid Omura homage. In early January, Frank Chin, writing Omura about a rift in the Fair Play Committee leadership he had detected during their 1944 conspiracy trial, remarked: “Not to flatter you, but I see from [Kiyoshi] Okamoto’s development of his argument, that your influence in shaping and organizing the thinking behind the Fair Play Committee was great.” Later that same month Michi Weglyn declared Omura to be “legendary” and “last of the ‘ronins.’” In May she again heaped praise on Omura: “You are a Nisei of the highest moral caliber, and you carry the best of the Meiji sensitivities which our fathers brought over [to the U.S. from Japan]. I hope someday I can shake your hand.” In a single day in July, Omura received applause-laden letters from Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami and Merry Omori. “I am especially pleased you are being recognized for your stand, courage and forthrightness,” wrote the former. “Your presentation will add depth to Japanese American history.” From the latter came these words: “It is true that people like you who protested the events during those [wartime] years [should] become known—not only to the JA community but also to the public at large. I hope that your participation in the Oral History Project at Cal State [Fullerton] will prove fruitful and records once and for all your contributions toward bringing the injustice to public attention. It’s easy to do it now but in those days the consequences [for those who dared to speak out] were much more severe.” Following that oral history experience, Art Hansen informed Omura that “it is a privilege knowing you! . . . What makes you have heroic stature in my mind . . . is that you place truth above race, gender, or political affiliation.”<sup>123</sup>



The 1985 year matched the preceding two for Omura in the matter of bodily maladies. Most complications fell within the “bearable pain” classification,<sup>124</sup> although there were several exceptions to this rule.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, as the year closed, Omura could revel in a sound health report: “Took my BP at Walgreens . . . and found it in good shape. 123/72 and 64 pulse” (December 23).

For the most part, Omura’s mental acuity was manifest all the way through 1985. “The old think tank,” he rejoiced in late February, “is beginning to click again. It’s never been more sharp in ages.” This situation permitted him to devote more time to reading and viewing research material. Accordingly, he began perusing and taking notes on William Hohri’s redress manuscript<sup>126</sup> and doing likewise with Karl Bendetsen’s 1972 oral history interview at the Truman Presidential Library. Throughout 1985 Omura also read a diversity of mostly daunting studies.<sup>127</sup>

But what, it may be asked, of Omura’s magnum opus? While the nature and shape of this work were still forming in his mind, Omura’s diary entries offer a window through which to glean aspects of their materialization. That he was contemplating including some sort of background on Japanese history and culture in his manuscript is apparent in his February 17 entry recording that he not only read two-thirds of *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, which covered Japan’s ancient and medieval periods, but also in the process compiled forty pages of correlated research notes. Ten days later, Omura confided that he had finished reading this “most helpful in many ways” 906-page book and taken seventy-three pages of notes for reference purposes.<sup>128</sup>

The productivity of his perceived intellectual peers and partners, like Frank Chin and William Hohri, boosted Omura’s spirits while reminding him that he also needed to convert his authorial intentions into published reality. Upon receiving a March 4 letter from Chin, Omura

reflected: “Obviously, he [Chin] is working on two books. . . . He says the first, “The Big Aiiieeeee!,” will be out this year. Hohri’s book [“Repairing America”] probably out next year and his [Chin’s] oral history novel [“Born in the USA”] thereafter.”<sup>129</sup>

Nonetheless, it appears that during 1985 Omura was less concerned with working on his manuscript per se than undertaking the requisite background research in preparation for producing a volume that, while basically autobiographical, would be solidly grounded in historical documentation. He also seems during this year to be interested in being an activist scholar, a public intellectual, and an engaged, if rather idiosyncratic, player in the Japanese American community-based redress movement.

Some of his research was of an informal nature, such as that exemplified by his surprise telephone contact from Art Iwasaki<sup>130</sup> on March 9 and their resulting conversation. They had a lot to talk about since Iwasaki, a Kibei, had written for the *Kashu Mainichi* in 1936, had been a *Rocky Shimpō* Japanese editorial staff member during Omura’s employment on that paper’s English section, and was still writing articles for the Japanese sections of the *Rafu Shimpō*, the *Nichibei Times*, and the *Hokubei Mainichi*. This call led to a long and informative follow-up call with Iwasaki on March 16 in which Iwasaki brought Omura up to date on the state of Japanese American journalism. Then the very next day the two veteran journalists met at Iwasaki’s house, where they conversed for two and one-half hours, which was taped by Omura, before the two enjoyed a meal together at a Japanese restaurant.<sup>131</sup>

A great deal of Omura’s research activity occurred as a consequence of receiving choice documents from close friends within his circle of like-minded inquirers and activists, such as Michi Weglyn, Jack Herzig, Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga, William Hohri, and Frank Chin, but embracing a steadily growing number of others. For instance, on April 4 Omura received a

summary report of the 1944 Fair Play Committee leaders' Cheyenne trial from Chin.<sup>132</sup> But then, on June 17, Omura notes in his diary that Kiku Funabiki had included enclosures with her recent three-page letter to him, in which she stated: "The reason for writing you in the first place is that I felt you are the one who must write the story of JA dissenters and fighters. Our souls will never rest leaving the sansei to believe that we [Japanese Americans] were a bunch of wimps."<sup>133</sup>

Sometimes leads from Omura's allies and admirers led to research opportunities for Omura. As his diary entries for July 21 and July 29 document, both Art Hansen and Michi Weglyn encouraged historian Richard Drinnon, author of an in-progress biographical study of WRA director Dillon Myer,<sup>134</sup> to contact Omura. This encouragement led to a visit by Drinnon, accompanied by his wife Anna, to Omura's Denver home on August 27 and involved a conversation between the two men that Omura tape-recorded.<sup>135</sup>

At other times, Omura's research interviews occurred at his behest, which was the case for the taped-interview he conducted on August 18 with a World War II and postwar friend and supporter in Denver, George Matsumonji. He confirmed that in Denver Omura "was considered a 'troublemaker' and related that his brother-in-law had told him that Omura did not circulate with local Nikkei and had no use for them (a point Omura felt "fairly accurate" although he "wasn't aware that such sentiment existed").<sup>136</sup> Omura also set up and conducted interviews in 1985 with other informants for his manuscript such as Yoshio Okimoto (undated, but probably December 2), George Fujii (September 23), Richard Kenmatsu (September 16), Iva Toguri d'Aquino (December 5), and James Purcell (October 22).<sup>137</sup> He also sought but did not obtain interviews with Ernest Iiyama (October 20), Karl Yoneda (October 21), and Ernest Besig (November 2).<sup>138</sup> Moreover, on June 27, Omura proofed the 466-page transcript of his interview

done the previous August with Art Hansen, after which he unpretentiously mused “I didn’t do too badly.”<sup>139</sup>

Omura did not refrain from doing archival research during 1985, though he did it primarily in the last third of the year and linked it with more urgent priorities (to be discussed below). In late September, while in Los Angeles, Omura reviewed documentation at the Franklin D. Murphy Library within the Little Tokyo-located Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. The next month, during an extended stay in the San Francisco Bay Area, he did over a week’s worth of archival research at UC Berkeley’s Bancroft Library.<sup>140</sup>

What took center stage for Omura in 1985 were his overlapping exertions as an activist scholar and a public intellectual. In early January he spotted a call in the *Asian Journal* of Barnard College/Columbia University for submissions on Asian American topics, and duly hammered out an article on “sub-censorship of Japanese American literature.”<sup>141</sup> Even before posting this article to New York in mid-January, Omura received a preliminary inquiry on January 12 to participate in a projected two-day symposium at UCLA on the immigrant Japanese press. A week later he received word that the second article in his “Plain Speaking” column for the *Hokubei Mainichi*, “The Lost Age of the Nisei,” had been published.<sup>142</sup> A letter Omura received from UCLA’s Yuji Ichioka on January 30 tied these last two developments together. “I include publications like Rodo Shimbun, Doho, and Current Life as part of the immigrant press,” explained Ichioka. “I would like people like you to participate in order to assure that dissenting voices are present. . . . I have read your ‘Plain Speaking’ pieces in the Hokubei Mainichi with great interest.” If prior to receiving Ichioka’s letter Omura harbored any reservations about participating in the UCLA symposium, they were now dispelled.<sup>143</sup>

Of utmost importance to Omura at this juncture was his *Hokubei Mainichi* column. As he explained to San Francisco confidante Miya Okawara, “The primary purpose of the column is to repair the false myths created by the JACL and to offer little-known facts for consideration of historical researchers.”<sup>144</sup> A few months earlier, he had informed Okawara that his connection with the *Hokubei Mainichi*, which had been instigated by Raymond Okamura, represented a breakthrough for him in terms of the Pacific Coast Asian American press. Omura attributed this upturn of fortune to the editorial office of the English section of the *Hokubei Mainichi* being now controlled by Sansei instead of Nisei.<sup>145</sup>

Still, Omura was wary of how his second column would be received by the JACL, especially since Sansei staffer Richard Oyama had told him that he expected some “kickback” on it.<sup>146</sup> Predictably, when Omura received a pertinent story in the January 18, 1985, *Pacific Citizen*, he assessed the damage it sought to inflict upon him via his latest *Hokubei Mainichi* series installment.<sup>147</sup>

Within 1985 Omura published at least six columns in his “Plain Speaking” series, of which four were issued in a two-part format.<sup>148</sup> To some of these he received feedback. For instance, in response to the “Lost Age of the Nisei” column that appeared on January 8, 1985, William Hohri wrote by post that he was “impressed” by it, particularly what Omura said about how Issei characterized the Nisei as *Nisei wa dame* [Nisei are no good]. “I have a limited understanding of the Issei-Nisei relationship, observed Hohri. “There isn’t a whole lot of truth available on the topic. But it is a relationship that needs to be understood if we are to understand ourselves. And it would best be explained, written about, by older Nisei [like you].”<sup>149</sup>

Omura also received, indirectly, reactions to his *Hokubei* columns from that paper’s staff members. From Richard Oyama he heard that his columns had generally received favorable

reports. Karl Yoneda, for one, informed Oyama that he not only had praise for Omura's 1942 testimony at the Tolan Committee hearings, but also approved of his current *Hokubei* writings. Added Oyama: "The only negative comment we've gotten was from Frank T. Tamura whom you might know in Denver. He said that we would lose readers if we continued to publish your column."<sup>150</sup>

Six days after Omura mailed off his seventh "Plain Speaking" column, "The Flight to Freedom," to the *Hokubei Mainichi*, on June 5, he recorded in his daily diary a mixed reception to his series.<sup>151</sup> A telephone call that morning from Richard Oyama entailed his reading aloud a note from his editor, Julia Matisoo, in which she wondered as to whether Omura in his most recent submission was implying that the JACL was behind his harassment, to which he replied, "that's correct." Then Oyama weighed in, saying that Omura's piece was too long, repetitious (especially about the JACL), and covered too much ground. Assuming pressure emanating from the JACL and even higher authorities, Omura asked Oyama: "Getting too hot?" To which Oyama responded, "We don't have any problems of what you write. We want it more concise."

Omura's afternoon mail that same day included a letter from Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga in which, as an afterthought, she wrote: "Oh, yes, kudos from William Hohri: 'I think the articles you wrote in the *Hokubei* are great.'" This message brought Omura a measure of relief: "It takes the sting out of Richard Oyama's discussion . . . a bit. Makes me feel somewhat better. I wondered about the *Hokubei*'s diagnosis as prompted by pressure [other] than reader complaint as stated [by Oyama]. William Hohri reads all the articles. There was no complaint [from him] of repetition."<sup>152</sup> However, the sting returned to Omura when he learned that Richard Oyama had "cut out important material . . . and any reference to JACL" in the printed version of his disputed *Hokubei Mainichi* column.<sup>153</sup>

But Omura's wounded ego was salved somewhat a month later when, after he stopped sending in column copy to the *Hokubei*, Oyama wrote him a conciliatory note saying that the paper had received "a number of positive comments about your column" and closing with an imploring message: "We want to continue to encourage you to write for the *Hokubei*."<sup>154</sup> Shortly thereafter Omura replied to Oyama, diplomatically commenting on "abuse" and "editorial interference," and then got fortified for whatever reaction would be forthcoming.<sup>155</sup>

The reaction did not come until Omura, on a fall trip to the Bay Area, met with Julia Matisoo, Richard Oyama, and one other *Hokubei Mainichi* staffer, Patti Wada, at the paper's San Francisco office. The trio explained their rationale for cutting Omura's last "Plain Speaking" column, and then solicited suggestions from Omura on how to better the *Hokubei*. He told them that they should have an editorial, improve the format presentation, and reduce the quotient of Japan news. Omura was pleased to see that Matisoo and Oyama showed him far more respect for his journalistic knowledge than that previously exhibited.<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, in late November, he finished a draft of his next "Plain Speaking" column for the *Hokubei Mainichi*.<sup>157</sup>

Omura also sought other public platforms for his writings. For example, in early June he mailed off his entry in the James Clavell literary contest.<sup>158</sup> Also, in fall 1985, there appeared, belatedly, Omura's review of Bill Hosokawa's *JACL in Quest of Justice* in the *Amerasia Journal*.<sup>159</sup> In September Jack Herzig phoned Omura to tell him that he and his wife Aiko had just received their copy of *Amerasia Journal* and "were up at midnight discussing my article."<sup>160</sup> Then in October Yoichi Shimatsu informed Omura that he read his review essay on the Hosokawa's volume and declared it excellent, adding that "he can't wait to see my [Omura's] book."<sup>161</sup>

In the three months between mid-September and early December Omura was busy with public presentations and archival and field work research in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. His main reason for going to Los Angeles on September 13 was to participate in the two-day conference “Coming of Age in the Thirties: The Nisei and the Japanese Immigrant Press,” jointly sponsored by UCLA’s Asian American Studies Center and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center.<sup>162</sup>

Omura’s public role in the Los Angeles conference’s opening day proceedings was to be a discussant, along with Vince Tajiri,<sup>163</sup> for a morning session chaired by Togo Tanaka and featuring a paper presented by Harry Honda: “The Nisei Beat: The Day-to-Day Grind.”<sup>164</sup> That afternoon Omura was a panelist on a panel, “Nisei Writers and the Immigrant Press,” chaired by Yasuo Sasaki and including Mary Korenaga Sutow, Hisaye Yamamoto, Mollie Oyama Mittwer, and Joe Oyama as additional panelists.<sup>165</sup> On the next day, Omura served as a panelist on “The Nisei and the Thirties” panel, chaired by Yuji Ichioka, with Masao Yamashiro, Jiro Kobashigawa, Kazu Iijima, Togo Tanaka, and John Fujii as the other panelists.<sup>166</sup>

Following his September 14 morning panel, Omura, accompanied by Frank Emi, attended a subsequent morning paper session, chaired by Dyke Miyagawa,<sup>167</sup> and spotlighting Togo Tanaka’s paper, “The Rafu Shimpō and the Nisei, 1936-1942: Coping with Racism and the Threat of War,” with responses from discussants Joe Oyama and Jerrold Takahashi.<sup>168</sup>

That afternoon Omura attended a paper session, chaired by Kats Kunitsugu,<sup>169</sup> and centered on Vince Tajiri’s presentation, “Larry Tajiri: The Vagaries of a Spectator,” for which the discussants were Harry Honda and Art Hansen. According to Omura, Hansen “did remark in a scholarly way that Vince’s presentation was washed.”<sup>170</sup> For his part as an audience member, noted Omura, “[I rose to state that] though difficult to be contentious in a ‘brother’s eulogy,’ . . .



I felt the position he [Larry Tajiri] took to suppress expressions of opponents and becoming a ‘stalking horse’ for the JACL [after World War II began] have tainted his record despite all of his talent as [a] writer and abilities as a newspaper [editor].”<sup>171</sup>

Later that same afternoon, Omura discharged his duty as a panelist for the “Nisei Writers and the Immigrant Press” panel. He was displeased that the pro-JACL chair, Yasuo Sasaki, directed the proceedings in a “tight-rope fashion,” “kept switching thing back and forth,” and “prohibited audience participation.”<sup>172</sup>

Then, on the second day of the conference, in company with Frank Emi, Omura ran into, and in some cases interacted with, a few of the notable conferees: Vince Tajiri, who “looked glum”; Harry Kitano, Jim Hirabayashi, Harry Honda, and Fred Hoshiyama. He then settled into the Yuji Ichioka-chaired “The Nisei and the Thirties” panel. Speaking second, the 72-year-old Omura, stated: “Whether to fight or succumb was a matter of controversy . . . but I am proud that I stood against the government.” As to what the Nisei left as a legacy to Sansei, Omura cited “the shame and guilt and their effort to turn their back on their culture and roots by wanting to divorce themselves from the mother country.” After the panel ended, Kazu Iijima queried Omura about Togo Tanaka’s criticism of his wartime actions and wondered if it made him angry? Responded Omura: “It was something to be expected. That Togo and I had exchanges in Denver and [we would have to] let the Nisei public decide.”<sup>173</sup>

Following the conference, Frank Chin, en route to a teaching post in Portland, drove Omura up to San Francisco. Before Chin and Omura parted, they stopped in North Beach, where they ran into the beatnik poet Gregory Corso,<sup>174</sup> who “was chewing out people lined up at a Catholic Church mission for free supper,” hollering at them that “it was degrading their soul.” That evening Omura’s host, Yoichi Shimatsu, briefed him on Karl Yoneda and Yuji Ichioka,

saying that while he lumped Ichioka in the same category with Yoneda as “violently anti-Japanese and Marxist,” he rated his writings high. As for Yoneda, Shimatsu viewed him as “an ambitious person who [at Manzanar had] attacked Harry Ueno and Joe Kurihara.”<sup>175</sup>

On October 2, Omura traveled across the city to the San Francisco State campus where he and Chin were to make a public presentation that night. Prior to the event Omura encountered Lane Hirabayashi, an Asian American Studies professor at the university, and shortly thereafter met with Lane’s father, Jim Hirabayashi.<sup>176</sup> He mentioned the contrast between Omura and Tanaka during their panel at the recent Los Angeles conference, noting how “Togo thinks that since he has made it, everyone [in the Japanese American community] should be like him.” Jim Hirabayashi impressed Omura as someone for whom the JACL “is not his bag,” a person who “agrees with Clifford Uyeda, the so-called liberal.” Later, at the event, as recounted by Omura, Chin gave me “a tremendous build-up as a genuine ‘hero’ to a resounding applause.”<sup>177</sup>

Following several days of dedicated research at the Bancroft Library, Omura enjoyed being taken by Shimatsu on a tour of Angel Island, which naturally reminded him of his native Bainbridge Island. Shimatsu then drove him across the Richmond Bridge to El Cerrito where he was to be put up for a spell at the comfortable home of the well-known political and social progressives Ernie and Chizu Iiyama. That evening Omura learned that Ernie Iiyama, a seventy-three-year-old retiree, had been critical of Mike Masaoka and dissatisfied with the JACL’s wartime collaboration policy, which he did not endorse. However, said Iiyama, “no one would back a challenge.” Currently the Iiyamas were active in the Contra Costa chapter of JACL, which Omura understood was “not a rebel group.”<sup>178</sup>

At breakfast the next morning Omura and Ernie Iiyama discussed the Oakland Nisei Young Democrats. Iiyama informed Omura that while Larry Tajiri had provided publicity for the

group, he did not, as he claimed, help form it. This group, which met in the basement of Taro Katayama's Oakland home, had a membership "composed of diverse Nisei from U.C. [Berkeley] students, gardeners, people working for cleaners, florists, etc." The organization started in Los Angeles, but its most active chapter was in Oakland. Iiyama told Omura he was now on the executive board for the JACL's Northern District Council, which held views more tolerant than the organization as a whole. Asked by Omura about Raymond Okamura, Iiyama opined that although his views were sometimes too narrow and unbending, he championed issues that were significant, such as redress and women's rights.<sup>179</sup>

On October 16, Omura met with Jere Takahashi in the Student Union at UC Berkeley. They first compared perspectives on some movers and shakers in Japanese American/Asian American studies, such as Yuji Ichioka and Frank Chin. Omura then shared with Takahashi his betrayal theory as to how on the eve of World War II "people of Japanese ancestry had been manipulated to further JACL power." While Takahashi did not comment on this theory, he did indicate that he believed the "[JACL] leadership was elite and indifferent to the average laborers."<sup>180</sup>

Omura spent the late evening of October 19 at the moderate working-class Berkeley home of lawyer Wayne Merrill Collins.<sup>181</sup> There Omura looked over and took notes on documents in Collins' possession. When Omura finished his work after midnight, he was driven back to the Iiyama residence by Collins, who made a tentative agreement with Omura that he would have more documents sorted for him to peruse the following week.<sup>182</sup>

In the several days separating his two days of research in the Collins' family archives, Omura failed in his attempt to tape an interview with Ernie Iiyama on October 20,<sup>183</sup> conducted an important interview with James Purcell on October 22,<sup>184</sup> undertook further research for his

manuscript at the Bancroft Library, and had a long informal talk with his San Francisco host, Yoichi Shimatsu.<sup>185</sup>

Upon his November 3 return to Denver, Omura found among his letters one from Fred Hoshiyama telling him that Lincoln Kanai had died in 1982, and another one from George Yamada, editor of the Canadian publication *Rikka*, stating “your [Omura’s] writing is [full of] . . . political savvy and social maturity” . . . [and] your [*Hokubei Mainichi*] columns are remarkable for their clarity and vision.”<sup>186</sup>

Then, on December 1, Omura flew to Chicago, where he was the house guest of Nelson and Taka Kitsuse. The next evening he attended the NCJAR Board meeting, at which he informally reported on the UCLA press symposium and reflected on his 1944 conspiracy trial experience and its aftermath. The next day, he stopped by Iva Toguri’s store and was pleasantly surprised when “Tokyo Rose”<sup>187</sup> agreed, however reluctantly, to be interviewed by him the following day. In that brief interview Toguri “spoke freely.”<sup>188</sup>

On December 6, Omura visited Professor Shirley Castelnovo at Northeastern University to discuss their overlapping research activity on Japanese American resisters in the military during World War II.<sup>189</sup> The next day he was picked up at the Kitsuses’ residence by John and Merry Omori, who before taking Omura to their home in the Chicago suburb of Grandview, past Skokie, showed him around the Northwestern University campus in Evanston. That night Omura reviewed documents in the personal library of the Omoris and then joined them to watch a video dealing with the Tokyo War Crimes Trial.<sup>190</sup>

On December 8, Omura flew back to Denver, where he celebrated the holiday season with his family. Rounding out 1985, he received on New Year's Eve a highly significant piece of mail from Richard Drinnon.

I am truly excited by the prospect of your autobiography. The lean early years and work in salmon canneries, sawmills, on railroads; the rise of Japanese American literature and work in the English sections of vernaculars; the open road, tramping, hitch-hiking, riding boxcars, panhandling, getting to know this turtle continent during the Great Depression; launching *Current Life*; the War, Tolan Committee, uprooting, Denver, the *Rocky Shimpo*; Heart Mountain resistance and the [conspiracy] trial, the Fifty Years War with the JACL and reemergence—you have a great story to tell and you can write it. Do it, do it! I expect you to come up with a book at least the equal of Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*.<sup>191</sup> This will be much more than another “evacuation” book or clubby, JACL-inspired scrapbook. You will give voice to your racial generation. Dandy! Don't let it slide and do get down to the serious writing. We'll all be indebted to you. . . . And you've already had more impact on your generation than you imagine. I know George Yamada was enthused to be in touch with you. . . . And there are many others and will be still more, many more, once you get that book out of your system.<sup>192</sup>

## 1986

In terms of both the diminished total days of medical problems and the overall lessened nature of them, 1986 was a comparatively healthy year for Omura. According to his daily diary, he did experience a variety of disorders throughout the year.<sup>193</sup> On the other hand, in mid-year, on May

20, Omura had an appointment with his family doctor, who firmly declared that “all signs look good.”

Omura’s collateral reading and viewing schedule in 1986 was sharply downsized compared to previous years.<sup>194</sup> Probably because Omura was moved into action mode on his memoir by Drinnon’s clarion call to “do it, do it,” he devoted a lot of 1986 time converting his research into rough manuscript form. In mid-May, this very point was communicated to his San Francisco friend Miya Okawara: “Regarding my own book, got a lot written . . . perhaps 600 pages, but it’s in sections and not put together. . . . Plenty more subject to work on. . . . [I am] still receiving vital information from individual resisters, only recently making contact [with them]. The pace is restrained by effort to make the book an enduring piece of literature, not just another evacuation book. Perhaps I’ll succeed; perhaps not.”<sup>195</sup>

There were, of course, interruptions in the flow of Omura putting words on paper. Thus, a bit later the same month, we find this diary entry: “Nothing accomplished during the day [on the memoir] except a little organizing of shelves around the vital typewriter area and the stand by the west window. The change is a little more practical. Got back to labeling and organizing editorials and commentaries to be sent to UCLA. Much more labeling to be done.”<sup>196</sup> Sometimes Omura’s manuscript stoppage was occasioned by enacting research as opposed to attending to organizational mechanics, such as was the case in early February: “I went back to taking notes from [Kazuo] Ito’s *Issei [A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America]*. [I] thought [I] had progressed about a third and surprised [I] completed only 130 pages. Time really slipped by and [I] stopped when [Mom] reminded me it was 4.a.m.”<sup>197</sup>

Then, too, work on the manuscript proceeded slowly, as on the late April evening when Omura reported in his diary that “[I] wrote just three pages tonight.”<sup>198</sup> But most evening

research and writing sessions were productive and typically extended to the next day's dawning, as revealed in two successive early June diary entries: "Went to bed around 6 this morning." "I did not get up until after 10 o'clock [a.m.] having been working on my research material until after 4 a.m. when Mom called attention to the time."<sup>199</sup>

Yet, the manuscript progressed in fits and starts. "Worked on the book," recorded Omura in an early July diary entry, "and have finally found an opening start that seems to be more satisfactory than in [the] past. Perhaps I could go with it."<sup>200</sup> Within a week he logged a diary statement that accented this state of affairs: "Been laboring with opening chapter of the book and decided to just move ahead and leave correction and refinement to final draft. Haven't made satisfactory progress."<sup>201</sup>

Frequently Omura had to set aside writing on his manuscript until he carried out further research. Two late July diary notations make this fact clear. "Working on book *Issei* by Kazuo Ito. It is a goldmine . . . Gives clearer perspective of the time." "[I am] past page 650 in *Issei* note-taking. This is encouraging. Before I thought I'd never be able to do this."<sup>202</sup> Additionally, as revealed by two August diary entries, sometimes his memoir had to give way to pressing organizational demands.<sup>203</sup>

When Omura was able to return to his manuscript, he found the writing harder to accomplish than he had earlier anticipated. His Halloween diary entry drove home this point graphically: "Struggling with Bainbridge beginning. It's been rewritten many times but just haven't found the right slant. Got to put a little zest and zip in it to hold attention of readers."<sup>204</sup> This entry was the final one Omura registered in his 1986 diary about progress on his memoir.

Omura did spend a great deal of 1986 researching and conducting fieldwork on a topic—Japanese American resistance *within* the military during World War II—that he had not initially planned to include in his memoir.<sup>205</sup>

Another “new” subject related to his memoir that Omura explored earnestly in 1986 was Matsumoto family history. This pursuit got a fortuitous boost after Omura heard from Kiku Funabiki that one of the “most informed [individuals] about military resisters,” Hugh Nozawa (himself a former resister), now lived in Tokyo. When, in a November 1985 letter to Omura, Nozawa not only detailed his World War II resistance activity, but mentioned as well his presidency of a general merchandise export company,<sup>206</sup> Omura sensed the possibility to gain information through him about the Matsumoto family.

In mid-February of 1986, Nozawa replied to a letter from Omura asking for family history assistance in relation to five posed questions about his two sisters and one brother in Japan by telling him that to begin an inquiry he would first need to have their names and an old address for them.<sup>207</sup> Then, in late May, Omura received a follow-up letter from Nozawa providing him with some vital family history. First, he told Omura that the Matsumoto family koseki was located at Minami Takaki-gun, Katsusa-machi, Nagasaki-ken, Japan. Second, he explained that information from this source could only be obtained on a direct request from a family member. Third, Nozawa told Omura that his mother and younger brother, Chikara, were deceased, and possibly also his younger sister, Taeko, as well, but that his other sister, Hanako, appeared to be still alive and married, though her whereabouts were unknown.<sup>208</sup>

A flurry of letters between Omura and Nozawa in June revolved around some questionable information about Taeko’s birth date and the time of arrival of Omura’s father in the United States, the determination of the year of death for Omura’s mother (around 1934), the



name of Taeko's husband (Masao Nakao), a mailing address for Hanako, which was obtained through Taeko, the fact that Hanako and Taeko were in regular contact with one another, and the year and cause of Chikara's death (1920, cholera). Late this same month, Hanako replied to Omura's earlier letter with one of her own, which was translated from Japanese into English by Nozawa. It mainly related that she had experienced a hard life, but had found comfort in religion. Finally, in a letter sent by Nozawa to Omura several days later, it was revealed that Nozawa had received the Matsumoto koseki, though it would take a couple of weeks for him to translate it into English. He also told Omura that Hanako was said to have suffered during World War II and intimated to him that Taeko was less affectionate than Hanako of the Matsumoto family relationship.<sup>209</sup>

The following month, July, Omura received the translated copy of the koseki from Nozawa, but "learned nothing more than I already knew." A few days later Omura heard from Takeo, via another translated letter, which informed him that during and after the war the family had endured trying circumstances. In August, Omura learned from Nozawa that, owing to Omura's father having reported belatedly the births of the Matsumoto children to the Japanese consulate in Seattle (a very common occurrence among Issei), mistakes were made in the family koseki. Nozawa told Omura that he could request corrections in the family koseki from the town head in Katsusa, but he doubted that at this late date any action would be taken.<sup>210</sup>

Finally, in late December, after consulting with Reverend Eijun Kujo, senior minister at Denver's Tri-State Buddhist Church, Omura was able to understand that his father, on October 28, 1934, had established an independent household in Japan for his daughters Hanako and Teiko. Apparently he took this action upon discovering that the monies he had been sending for years to support them had been siphoned off by their guardian and put to personal use instead of

applied for the intended purpose of supporting his wife and two daughters. Omura also discovered that at about this same time his sisters had been sold as geishas, which confirmed what he had been told many years earlier.<sup>211</sup>

This year also saw Omura involved in assorted professional activities. In late January he received a request from William Hohri to critique a reader's report of his "Repairing America" manuscript. After completing his critique, Omura sent it off to Hohri in early February.<sup>212</sup> Shortly thereafter, Omura received a "brusque reminder" from Yuji Ichioka of his earlier promise to provide the UCLA Asian American Studies Program with copies of his *Rocky Shimo* editorials. These editorials, 179 in number amounting to 117 pages, he sent off to Ichioka in early March.<sup>213</sup>

The day after receiving Ichioka's letter, Omura participated in a program, "Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast," aired by Denver radio station KOA. Several of the callers into this broadcasted "talkfest" (one "obviously . . . a redneck") raised points that Omura rejected, but he did not challenge them for fear of a "controversy." Omura thought moderator Mike Rosen handled the program well, but felt that Rosen's uneasiness about the term "concentration camp" due to the image it conjured up was precisely the sort of rationalization that "minimizes reality and [what] the so-called relocation camps actually were."<sup>214</sup>

Then in late May, Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga, researcher for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History's proposed Japanese American exhibits, requested from Omura (as well as others such as Michi and Walter Weglyn, Raymond Okamura, Kiku Funabiki, and Phil Tajitsu Nash<sup>215</sup>) opinions and suggestions before June 13, when the exhibits advisory committee would hold its first meeting in Washington D.C. Within a week, Omura prepared and mailed to Herzig Yoshinaga a two and one-half page critique.

Following the advisory committee meeting, Omura received from Project Manager Tom Crouch copies of the comments he had gotten from the others whom Herzig Yoshinaga had solicited for input. Having read these comments, Omura was impressed by their “penetrating insight and profound analysis,” and felt that they made his contribution seem meager by comparison. “I suppose,” he mused in his diary, “I have been in isolation too long.”<sup>216</sup>

Still, by the first week of August, Omura completed a comprehensive proposal on the military resisters exhibit for the Smithsonian Institution and mailed it to Crouch, with a copy to Herzig Yoshinaga.<sup>217</sup> A month later, Omura received a reply from Herzig Yoshinaga: “What a wonderful letter you wrote to Tom Crouch! . . . . With all those constructive suggestions you and Frank Chin have made, there is no excuse for the NMAH not to include those vital experiences [relative to Japanese American draft resistance and resistance within the military] which are part and parcel of the whole JA history.” Thereafter, Herzig Yoshinaga advised Omura to request from Crouch the latest version of the label script for the Japanese American exhibit, and also urged him to “drum up letter-writing activity” among selected knowledgeable and influential spokespeople.<sup>218</sup>

Omura’s 1986 diary is punctuated with entries about noteworthy individuals, groups, and occasions. In late January, for example, he reported his shock upon hearing on the radio the news of the space craft *Challenger* exploding over the south Atlantic, which occurred only one minute and a half in flight after a satisfactory takeoff. Among the seven killed and lost at sea was a Japanese American research engineer, United States Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Ellison Onizuka, who was on his second space flight.<sup>219</sup>

In 1986, Omura was again showered by compliments. Those in his “cheering section,” such as Michi Weglyn and Frank Chin continued to fulsomely praise him.<sup>220</sup> Apart from this duo

of ardent supporters, Omura's praises were sung in 1986 by others. In early March, an acclamation for him was tendered by George Yamada, editor of the Canadian journal *Rikka*, in its winter issue, in which a tribute to Omura heralded him as the "North American Nisei Tom Paine."<sup>221</sup> Then, in late March, Gaye Kouyoumjian, a graduate English student at California State University, Fullerton of Armenian-Jewish heritage, after transcribing his CSUF Oral History Program interview, informed Omura that he reminded her of "a John Stuart Mill type."<sup>222</sup> In late August, Mits Koshiyama, a World War II draft resister at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center and a member of that concentration camp's Fair Play Committee, concluded his two-page homage to Omura by saying: "I think that the real heroes [of the World War II Japanese American Exclusion and Detention experience] were Wayne Collins and James Omura."<sup>223</sup> The succeeding month, Omura heard from one of his Bainbridge Island classmates, Fumiko Hayashida (the subject of an iconic Japanese American Incarceration photograph): "Your interesting review [of Bill Hosokawa's *JACL in Quest of Justice*[in] *Amerasia Journal*. My, oh my—[it] is well written. I am very proud of you, Jim! Keep it up."<sup>224</sup> Finally, in late December, on a Christmas card sent to Omura from Nelson Kitsuse there was this message: "I think of you often [Jim] and wonder what you are doing, especially the book you are writing. Taka [Kitsuse] and I have read a couple of articles you wrote . . . We were both impressed with your writings, your courage, your insight, etc."<sup>225</sup>

## 1987

The year 1987 health-wise was a kind one for Jimmie Omura. Indeed, on only fourteen occasions did he mention medical ailments in his diary.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, none of them were of a critical

variety or even a cause for serious concern. As for Omura's 1987 reading of books and viewing of documentary films impinging on his memoir, such activity was fairly limited.<sup>227</sup>

Did Omura's clean bill of health translate into substantive progress for him as to the refinement of his memoir's form and narrative development? If judged by the number and nature of his 1987 diary entries, the answer to this question is guardedly affirmative.<sup>228</sup>

Omura did not lack encouragement from friends. A prime case in point is the letter he received in early March from Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami. "You must write your book," she declaims. "You have a lot more objective view, I am sure, and a broader historical perspective. You will add substantially to the body of documents and histories about the Japanese Americans and our ordeal during the war. Your book will be your 'letter to the world.'"<sup>229</sup>

Sometimes Omura's friends prevailed upon him to turn his attention away from his memoir to respond to pressing business that, while related to that document, demanded his immediate attention. In mid-June, for instance, Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga, acting on Michi Weglyn's urging, sent Omura a pre-publication copy of Mike Masaoka's forthcoming autobiography, written with Bill Hosokawa: "They Call Me Moses Masaoka." According to Herzig Yoshinaga, Omura was the only person to whom Weglyn wanted this uncorrected bound galley forwarded, and accorded confidential treatment. This request for Omura's considered judgment about the Masaoka-Hosokawa treatise came at a time when he was "trying to get down to serious progress" on his memoir, but he knew he needed to interrupt that progress until after he had taken the new manuscript's measure.<sup>230</sup>

Notwithstanding such intrusions, Omura plugged away at his memoir, albeit fitfully. In late July, to cite two pertinent diary entries in this regard, Omura declared: "Believe making best

progress on the manuscript past two days and should gradually establish a working copy” (July 19); and “While I was watching the TV after dinner, had a new thought on start of the manuscript and wrote it down as an insertion to be later incorporated. It worked in nicely and blended naturally in the accounting.” (July 20).<sup>231</sup>

In August, as his diary entries bear out, Omura did indeed return to his memoir. After finishing the typing of his diary-journal, he stayed up until 4 a.m. working on his manuscript. “Had lost all track of time,” he ruminated, “not unusual when I get absorbed.” But it was a cause of concern for him that he still hadn’t “got out of the bottleneck” in his memoir of his Bainbridge Island childhood and his separation from his family household.<sup>232</sup>

The three manuscript-connected research concerns that had occupied so much of Omura’s time and attention in 1986—the story of the military resisters, his Matsumoto family history, and the Smithsonian exhibition—continued to do the same in 1987. The last of these first imposed its demand within the first weeks of January.<sup>233</sup>

In February, Omura further dedicated his efforts to promoting what he (and others) perceived as the Smithsonian exhibition’s label script inattention to the military and draft resisters’ stories.<sup>234</sup> During this month, too, Omura received three reactions to his critique of the label script. The most substantial of these came to Omura, via Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga, from Clifford Uyeda.

Thanks [Aiko], for sending me a copy of James Omura’s comments on the Smithsonian script. It is a type of comments which, I believe, is extremely valuable to the Smithsonian. It contributes tremendously toward honing the exhibit to its sharpest

historical accuracy. Perception and interpretation are based on experience, and we must listen to these sensitively expressed comments.<sup>235</sup>

As the days of February dwindled, Omura extended his campaign to infuse the story of resisters into the Smithsonian exhibition.<sup>236</sup> That Omura's stalwart efforts in this theater of combat brought the apparent results he sought was communicated to him in early June by Michi Weglyn.

I haven't yet got around to thanking you for the heroic job you did on the critique of the Smithsonian script, which at last seems to have done the trick. The latest P.C. [*Pacific Citizen*] carries a story on [Tom] Crouch's address to a Nikkei group in which he states that the resisters and their stories are important and will be integrated.<sup>237</sup>

A few days later, confirmation of Weglyn's message to Omura came in a telephone call from Crouch.<sup>238</sup>

Crouch's telephone call sparked Omura into further promotional activity toward June's end, as two of his diary entries illustrate. "Copies of documents from Smithsonian prepared for mailing with cover letter to selected people." (June 25). [I] mailed out documents to ten people; except for any special requests that'll be it." (June 26).<sup>239</sup>

On a Friday in late August Omura was contacted by Herzig Yoshinaga, who told him that while perusing the revised script she found that it was missing any mention of the Camp Riley incident,<sup>240</sup> an aspect of military resistance that she judged to be "very significant." She then requested of Omura to write a 300-word account of this incident over the weekend and then read it over the telephone to her so that on Monday morning she can urge its inclusion in the script.

This mission was straightaway accomplished.<sup>241</sup>

With respect to the story of the military resisters, Omura was pleased to discover during his early October visit to the National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. that in the “We the People, Japanese Americans and the Constitution” exhibition it was nicely interwoven with the stories of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee and the Military Intelligence Service [MIS].<sup>242</sup> But Omura was disappointed that the Fort Riley incident, though included in Loni Ding’s *The Color of Honor* documentary film, was not incorporated into the exhibition proper.<sup>243</sup>

Concerning the Matsumoto family history story, Omura also devoted some time to it in 1987. In July he tried to send a letter to his sister Hanako, but it was repeatedly returned to him by the postal service.<sup>244</sup> The following month, he received a return letter from Hanako and sought to get it translated by the Reverend Kiyo at the Denver Buddhist Church.<sup>245</sup> Then, in early September, Omura also received a letter from his sister Taeko and thereupon arranged an interpretation session the following morning with the Buddhist reverend. At the appointment Reverend Kiyo informed Omura that he was very busy and normally did not do translations and, furthermore, disliked such work, especially when it involved “personal matters.” Hearing this, Omura realized that he would need to find another interpreter. Still, Reverend Kiyo did provide Omura with a translation of Hanako’s letter.<sup>246</sup>

Thereafter Omura turned to another translator/interpreter for his family correspondence, Reverend Joseph Sakakihara of the Simpson Methodist Church in Arvada. When they had their meeting on September 18, Reverend Sakakihara had his Japan-born wife do the requisite translation, while he did the interpretation. Omura noticed the variation of Mrs. Sakakihara’s translation as against that provided by Kiyo (most specifically, that the former provided “essential facts” and “much details” that the latter had omitted).<sup>247</sup>



As for Omura's archival and field research focused on his memoir in 1987, it was rather limited. While in Washington D.C. in October, he did spend one day of research at the Museum of American History probing Tom Clark's 1941-1946 Department of Justice-based activities.<sup>248</sup> A few days later, in New York, he undertook some further research at the New York Public Library.<sup>249</sup> Returning to Washington D.C., Omura tackled several days of research in the WRA records at the Suitland branch of the National Archives.<sup>250</sup> Then it was off to Chicago, where he researched the NCJAR archives at the Holy Covenant United Methodist Church as well as the family archives maintained by Tom Okawara at his Chicago-area home.<sup>251</sup> In 1987, there is no record of oral history research interviews transacted by Omura.

Over and beyond his extensive work on the script for the Smithsonian exhibition on Japanese Americans and the Constitution, 1987 saw Omura busied with other types of intellectual endeavors. In late February/early March he edited the draft of an article for publication in the *Amerasia Journal* based upon his 1984 oral history interview with Art Hansen.<sup>252</sup> Another piece of writing he labored on in 1987 was a review of Richard Drinnon's *Keeper of Concentration Camps*.<sup>253</sup> In mid-May Omura had a letter-to-the-editor appear in the *Denver Post*.<sup>254</sup> Beginning in mid-June Omura invested time and energy in reading, compiling notes on, and drafting a review of a pre-publication copy of *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*.<sup>255</sup> In early September, the *Hokubei Mainichi* and *Asian Week* simultaneously published an editorial by Omura related to a contentious aspect of Japanese American redress (extinguishment of claims clause).<sup>256</sup> Later that same month, he was invited by Vox Production and the director of the National Museum of American History to preview Loni Ding's documentary film, *Color of Honor*, at its forthcoming Smithsonian Institution presentation.<sup>257</sup> In November, Omura read Violet de Cristoforo's personal affidavit on a controversial incident that had occurred during

World War II at the Tule Lake Segregation Center and provided her with critical comments per her request.<sup>258</sup> Wrapping up the 1987 year, Omura fielded a request from a UCLA doctoral student, Chris Friday, writing a dissertation on labor conditions for Asians in the Pacific Coast salmon canneries, and began assembling relevant information to send to him, giving special attention to Nisei lawyer Clarence Arai's relationship to the Alaska cannery work situation.<sup>259</sup>

As to complimentary and critical feedback given to Omura in 1987 there was virtually none of the second kind and comparatively little of the first type. What criticism that was forthcoming was mild and involved two of Omura's closest allies and boosters: Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga ("Received slightly acid letter from Aiko in which she seems to have taken umbrage at my last letter."); and Frank Chin ("I respect your distaste for raunchy language [Jimmie] . . . but you're missing a wondrous explosion of our obscene inventions on the character, physiognomy, physique, bodily organs, organic matter, [and] animals matters.")<sup>260</sup>

One kudo came from Chin: "And you [and] John Okada are the only Nisei who have faced their responsibility to simple fact squarely without a lot of fog, fudge and goo."<sup>261</sup> More applause was generated by George Nozawa: I am thrilled that the author [Richard Drinnon] has dedicated the book [*Keeper of Concentration Camps*] to you, Mr. [Kiyoshi] Okamoto and the other select few."<sup>262</sup> When Omura was in Chicago in October words of praise also flowed from NCJAR partisan Merry Omori in the form of a book inscription: "To Jim Omura—with my greatest respect and admiration for your contribution to Japanese America."<sup>263</sup> Then at the year's close, Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami infused her letter to Omura with this laudation: "I say it is high time you were recognized and honored for having been in the forefront of resisters who opposed the internment. You are part of history, a gallant part."<sup>264</sup>

## 1988

Health-wise 1988 was inordinately kind to Omura. While there were several days in which he experienced one or another problem of some consequence, none lingered or placed him at perilous risk. When at the end of April he had his semi-annual doctor's visit, he penned this entry in his diary: "Pronounced in peak shape in eight years—the length of time I have been under his [Dr. McDonald's] care. Not having any problem I know of and tests fine."

Within this year Omura did not record viewing any documentary films. As for the books Omura read in 1988, while few in number, they were impressive, varied, and useful.<sup>265</sup>

Progress during the year on Omura's memoir largely consisted of filing, collating, categorizing, and coordinating research data. Only two entries in his diary reveal activity beyond these functions.<sup>266</sup>

Omura's lack of substantive development on his memoir in 1988 resulted not from any disinclination on his part but instead was due once again to his consuming involvement with competing demands for his discretionary time and attention. The main need was his painstaking preparation, peer vetting, circulation to allies, and publication placement of his critical review essay on the Masaoka/Hosokawa book *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*. Indeed, news in relation to this essay—the subject of which is pivotal to Omura's rationale for writing his memoir—surfaces in some sixty-five entries of Omura's 1988 diary.

Omura began writing the essay on January 12 and on February 16 mailed draft copies of it for assessment to Michi Weglyn, Frank Chin, and Art Hansen.<sup>267</sup> Having taken their comments under advisement, he sent them a revised version of the essay on February 16. Acting upon their suggestions on his second draft, Omura combined his two drafts into a final version, which on

February 29 he mailed copies for publication consideration to some fifty newspapers, magazines, and journals.

The first response Omura received to his review essay reached him on March 7; it was sent by Historical Times, Inc., the publisher of the magazine *American History Illustrated*. It rejected the piece on the grounds that the magazine's reviews were staff-written.<sup>268</sup> The next day Omura got a rejection notice from *East West Magazine*, which explained that it was much too long and that it preferred Chinese American topics to Japanese American ones.<sup>269</sup> On March 9 came two more rejections: the *Los Angeles Times* nixed it as "not usable," while *Mother Jones Magazine*, although finding it "fascinating reading," declared it "of a more historical nature than we indulge."<sup>270</sup> One hopeful response, which Omura received on March 10, came from Patrick Anderson, *Asian Week's* managing editor: "This is a well-informed piece, but it is four times the length we ordinarily use. If you can give me a condensed version. . . , I can probably print it."<sup>271</sup> The following day, a rejection letter arrived in Denver from Chicago's *Sun-Times* informing Omura that it only used submissions from regional writers.<sup>272</sup>

On Michi Weglyn's advice, Omura (on March 8) submitted his *Moses* review to the *Pacific Citizen*. Three days hence he got a late evening telephone call from George Johnston, a Happa journalism graduate of the University of Colorado and the *PC's* associate editor. According to Omura's diary summarization of their March 11 conversation, Johnston advised him that he would not be able to run his review essay "due to conditions presently at P.C." He confided to Omura that he had been "faced with flaps for running a [related] piece by Frank Chin." Johnston allowed that "for himself [he] would like to run it, but said it might be his job." He added that he "liked the piece and believed someone would be publishing it as a serial [and] named Rafu Shimpo and Hokubei Mainichi as possibilities . . . [and] further would like to see

any other writing I [Omura] do even though unpublishable in P.C. [It] will be read [by him] for knowledge enhancement.”<sup>273</sup>

On March 12 Omura received back, without comment, his submitted *Moses* review from the *International Examiner*, a Seattle Asian American community newspaper. Mused Omura in his diary: “Do not know what this portends.”<sup>274</sup> Then, two days later, he got rejections from the *Seattle Times* (“without comment”) and *The Nation* (“manuscript does not meet our need”).<sup>275</sup> On March 14, Omura posted to *Asian Week* a condensed version of his review essay, and on the succeeding day, he took stock of his situation:

What we have is two leading publications—the New York Times and the Washington Post—and two mid-level papers—the Oakland Tribune and the San Jose Mercury News—still to be heard from. . . . Regarding the Asian Press, the Rafu Shimpo, Hokubei Mainichi, San Francisco Nichi Bei, and the Hawaii Herald have shown no indication. Sort of a stalemate.<sup>276</sup>

On March 19, Omura noted in his diary that none of the above press possibilities had yet responded, which was also the case for the San Francisco-based *Chronicle* and *Examiner*, a Japanese American monthly paper out of Los Angeles, the *Tozai Times*, and two West Coast historical journals, the *Pacific Historical Review* and the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*.<sup>277</sup>

However, just four days thereafter Omura heard back from Lewis O. Saum, the editor of the second of the journals: “I regret that I must return your essay ‘Debunking the JACL Fallacies.’ I have read it with interest but it seems to me that the polemic and adversarial tone is not appropriate to a publication such as Pacific Northwest Quarterly. By saying that, I do not

imply that such a stance would not be appropriate for other periodicals. It was kind of you to think of us and we hope that the merits of your essay will reap the rewards they deserve.”<sup>278</sup>

On March 30, the *Rocky Mountain News* spurned publication of the *Moses* commentary. This rejection did not surprise Omura, since “[Bill] Hosokawa writes for the newspaper.”<sup>279</sup> Ironically, the very next day William Hohri forwarded Omura a copy of the *Nikkei Voice* national newspaper out of Ontario, Canada, which featured an interview with Mike Masaoka. The introduction to the interview so incensed Omura that he was prompted to submit his *Moses* review essay to the *Nikkei Voice*.<sup>280</sup>

On April 4 Omura garnered a thumbs-down verdict from the *Des Moines Register*, which advised him to seek Colorado or California publication.<sup>281</sup> Three days later the *New Republic* magazine joined the rejection parade.<sup>282</sup> Then on April 18 there were two more rejections, both without comment, from the *Pacific Historical Review* journal and the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper.<sup>283</sup> On April 22, another paper, the *Los Angeles Herald*, sent its rejection to Omura.<sup>284</sup> The *Washington Post* belatedly followed suit on July 5.<sup>285</sup>

Two positive developments regarding the *Moses* review essay’s publication were communicated to Omura by George Yamada, the editor of the Japanese Canadian journal *Rikka*,<sup>286</sup> and various spokespersons for the Association of Asian American Studies who contemplated the essay being published in that organization’s Occasional Papers series.<sup>287</sup> But both of these imminent possibilities eventually fizzled, which only exacerbated Omura’s frustration.

Some relief, though, was provided Omura by the reaction from those individuals in his support community to whom he had sent draft copies of his *Moses* treatise. Michi Weglyn

phoned him that she was “thrilled” by her reading of it.<sup>288</sup> Richard Drinnon said that another person had earlier forwarded him a copy of the review with the characterization that it was “merciless.” Added Drinnon, “It is and properly so.”<sup>289</sup> From Chizu Omori came this message: “What went through my mind as I read the review was ‘bull’s eye!’ You seem to be the only person around who has gone to the trouble of research and documentation on the activities of those guys, Hosokawa & Masaoka, in those early critical days, and we are all the better informed. . . . Is there something I can do to help you get your critique published? I have run off some copies and it is getting circulated around a bit.”<sup>290</sup> A letter from Mits Koshiyama alerted Omura to the fact that he was “making copies [of *Moses* critique] for distribution to other [draft] resisters and hopefully some will come out of their shell.”<sup>291</sup> Paul Minerich, the activist attorney son-in-law of prominent Nikkei military resister Tim Nomiyama, proffered this judicious reaction: “Your criticism of Masaoka’s book is very powerful and persuasive, coming from someone who lived through the event with a different perspective.”<sup>292</sup>

Still another matter of crucial importance to Omura’s memoir commanded his concentration in 1988—preparation for, participation in, and follow-up work on an Association for Asian American Studies conference held on March 24-27, 1988, at the Washington State University campus in Pullman, Washington, and organized by Gail Nomura, Stephen Sumida, and Gary Okihiro. Omura got wind of this conference and his role in it from Frank Chin in late January. According to Chin, the conference would include a “resister confab” to be attended by himself, Omura, Frank Emi, Violet de Cristoforo, William Hohri, and possibly Clifford Uyeda. Omura would be responsible for giving a twenty- minute speech at the conference along with a “prepared statement for publication of twenty-five pages, on [the topics of] Nisei wartime journalism, the role of JACL writing and controlling its concept of history, the extent of

resistance in camp” and his [Omura’s] role during wartime.” All in all, reflected Omura, this was “quite a tall order.”<sup>293</sup>

A telephone chat with Gail Nomura in mid-February informed Omura that the Pullman conference was to be a national event. She also told him that his panel would be chaired by Chin, with Hohri as the discussant for the papers delivered by Emi and him.<sup>294</sup>

Within three days, Omura began working in earnest on his conference speech.<sup>295</sup> Early the next month, he received the official conference program, which assigned him one and one-half hours for his presentation on the scaled-down topic of “Japanese American Journalism during World War II.”<sup>296</sup> Browsing through the program, he recognized the names of a number of other participants: Frank Miyamoto, Harry Kitano, Lawson Inada, Gary Okihiro, John Liu, Phil Tajitsu Nash, and Franklin Odo. (Two other conference participants, Frank Abe and Russell Endo, would later play a significant part in Omura’s life and quest for redress and redemption.) He also noted that Hohri would be presiding at a lamp dedication in honor of Michi Weglyn, who was unable to attend the conference in person.<sup>297</sup>

At the conference’s reception buffet the first evening, Thursday, Omura became acquainted with a number of youthful and promising Asian Americanists: Brian Niiya, an *Amerasia Journal* affiliate who had read quite a few of Omura’s editorials on file at UCLA; Dean Toji of the Japanese American National Museum; Gary Kawaguchi, who was working with Yoichi Shimatsu on the *Nikkei Review*, and Chris Friday, who Omura was assisting on his UCLA dissertation on Alaskan salmon cannery workers of Asian ancestry. Omura talked at length with Santa Clara University historian Gary Okihiro, who told him of his hope to have Omura be an invited speaker at his institution’s next Day of Remembrance program.<sup>298</sup>



The following day, Friday, Omura attended a pair of panel sessions, including one featuring a Violet de Cristoforo presentation relative to her World War II victimization at the Tule Lake Segregation Center.<sup>299</sup> Omura also participated that day in an interview conducted by Chris Friday. At dinner that evening in nearby Moscow, Idaho, Omura met Jeffrey Chan, San Francisco State University professor of English and Asian American Studies, who told him that in his classes “he teaches me and Sakamoto” . . . “[with] Sakamoto as the bad guy and me as the good guy.”<sup>300</sup> He also encountered Frank Abe, who “reintroduced himself and said [he] had been assigned to cover our panel for P.C. [*Pacific Citizen*]. [It] seems he drove across the Cascade [from Seattle] in his car.”<sup>301</sup>

On the conference’s third day, Saturday, Omura attended a panel session on Asian American literature, and prompted by Gary Kawaguchi, corrected a statement by University of Washington Asian American literature specialist Sam Solberg, that Frank Chin and Lawson Inada were “old guards” in that field. Omura detailed past Nisei writers “and described Chin and Lawson as the new level of literary figures and the present crop as infants.” Solberg nodded in agreement and later assured Omura that he “did not mean to slight the pioneer Nisei generation.” After the panel, Omura was introduced to the poet Mitsuye Yamada, sister of Michael Yasutake, an Episcopal priest and a prominent human rights activist.<sup>302</sup>

Following lunch Omura attended Nisei Congressman Norm Mineta’s plenary talk on Japanese American redress, for which this brother-in-law of Mike Masaoka was rewarded with a standing ovation.<sup>303</sup> Then it was time for Omura’s panel, which was well received by the audience after the discussant William Hohri deferred to it for questions and comments.<sup>304</sup>

On Sunday, the conference’s wrap-up day, Omura had a parting chat with Jeffrey Chan. When told by Chan that he had read the “badly-written” *Moses* book and now felt that “Masaoka

had gone too far” and that this publication would result in “loss of stature” for him, Omura viewed this opinion as “more hopeful optimism . . . than reality.”

In early May, Omura got a long-distance call from Frank Abe in Seattle in which he brought up the possibility of a debate between Bill Hosokawa and him in San Francisco at the annual conference of the Asian American Journalists Association to be held in April 1989. Omura declared that he would “be glad to confront Bill.” As for Hosokawa, Abe reported that he had asked him about such an event and that he had nixed it stating “Jimmie Omura and I don’t see eye to eye.” Abe explained that when he pressed Hosokawa, he finally said that “he would think about it.”

Still other future possibilities for public appearances were offered to Omura in 1988.<sup>305</sup> While such public appearances were being contemplated, Omura was deluged with an array of honors. Most of these materialized as invitations to be included in national and international honorific societies’ directories (e.g., Who’s Who volumes).<sup>306</sup>

Of much greater value to Omura than his ego-boosting biographical inclusion in reference books were the plaudits extended him by peers. Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami, for example, provided him with an appreciative response to his *Moses* critique and the paper he presented at the AAAS conference in Pullman. She felt that both carried “a forceful punch,” and agreed with Omura that “most Nisei writers did not take a stand against internment.” In the case of his conference paper, Suyemoto declared that its contents “revealed to me how little I had heard, or knew, of the Resisters . . . I was not a strong ‘voice crying in the wilderness’ as you have been.”<sup>307</sup> From William Hohri came a complimentary copy of his new *Repairing America* book, replete with this flyleaf inscription: “To James Omura who spoke out for repairing a massive injury and was himself injured in return.”<sup>308</sup> Three days later, Omura received a

response from a letter he had sent to Sue Kunitomi Embrey, the chair of the Manzanar Committee, a Los Angeles-based community civil and human rights activist group: “Your name has long been familiar to me. I am honored to receive a letter from you.”<sup>309</sup> Early in June, Franklin Odo favored Omura by post with still another flattering comment: “Be assured that there are ‘younger’ folks, like myself, who appreciate what you did.”<sup>310</sup> Other staunch supporters of Omura also sent along their kudos to Omura.<sup>311</sup>

The best news for Omura in 1988 arrived four days before year’s end when Frank Abe called him from in Seattle to inform him in April 1989 he was to appear on a panel during the annual conference of the Asian American Journalists Association at San Francisco’s Plaza Hotel. During that conference, Abe disclosed to Omura, the AAJA also would host a cocktail party in his honor.<sup>312</sup>

## 1989

Based on the evidence in Omura’s diary, it would certainly seem that the honors that had come his way in 1988, plus the special one awaiting him in the wings at San Francisco’s Plaza Hotel in April, served as a tonic to his 1989 health condition. On only seven occasions throughout the entire year did he discuss matters of health in his diary entries.<sup>313</sup> Judging himself fit, in late October the seventy-seven-year-old Omura shinnied up a tree in his yard to cut back broken branches. He afterwards admitted, though, that “tree pruning really takes a lot out of me and it was tiring.”<sup>314</sup>

Omura’s collateral reading and viewing in 1989 got launched in early January when he received a complimentary copy of Frank Chin’s anthology of short stories, *The Chinaman*

*Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co.*,<sup>315</sup> and also watched anew Loni Ding's *The Color of Honor*<sup>316</sup> on public television. Then, in mid-April, Omura attended a performance of Warren Sumio Kubota's play *Webster Street Blues* at the East West Theater in the Little Tokyo district of Los Angeles.<sup>317</sup> The following month he read John Okada's novel *No-No Boy*.<sup>318</sup> In June, Omura read Monica Sone's classic memoir *Nisei Daughter*.<sup>319</sup> Two months later, he consumed another memoir, Gwen Terasaki's *Bridge to the Sun*.<sup>320</sup> Lastly, in September Omura read a significant academic journal article by University of Oregon media scholar Lauren Kessler, "Fettered Freedom," which assessed journalism in the WRA detention camps."<sup>321</sup>

In 1989 Omura undertook a lot of background work for the writing of his memoir. This fact is captured by entries like these successive two logged in mid-May: "Worked a bit on the manuscript and introduced a new lead format. The next step is to bring all the previous starts together and combine them into a coordinated story not requiring modifications." [and] "Began setting up manuscript for a rough continuous draft to conserve preparation time."<sup>322</sup> But in spite of these positive steps, substantive progress on the manuscript per se continued to elude him. Thus, diary entries such as the one made by Omura at the beginning of September—"Made some progress on work on the manuscript and became so engrossed forgot to check [the train schedule]."<sup>323</sup>—are the exceptions rather than the rule.

As for archival research for his memoir, it was also quite circumscribed. While in Los Angeles in mid-to-late April Omura logged several days at the UCLA's University Research Library,<sup>324</sup> but that was about it for 1989. Instead of doing research in far-flung metropolitan centers like San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, and Washington D.C., this was a year spent mostly at home in Denver.

What Omura's 1989 calendar reveals is that his time was well invested in important activities related to redressing the Japanese American historical narrative. On the evening of February 15, in an event billed as an Education Opportunity Program held at the University of Colorado-Denver campus, Omura gave a talk about his World War II experiences before an audience of thirty-five to forty people. After the program, he fielded requests from two professors, one in sociology and the other in political science, to speak in their classes.<sup>325</sup> Then in late April, while in Los Angeles, he gave a speech of a similar nature to the Nikkei Student Union at UCLA.<sup>326</sup>

Among his significant activities was landing a periodical to publish his review essay "Debunking JACL Fallacies" on *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*. Another and related one was defending this review upon its publication from rebuttals by combative JACL spokesperson Barry Saiki.<sup>327</sup> At long last, the *Rafu Shimpo* decided to publish Omura's *Moses* piece in serialized form. Not until after the first installment appeared on April 11, 1989, did Omura find out from *Rafu* reporter Takeshi Nakayama that the paper's editor, Chris Komai, had made the decision to have the review essay published to coincide with Mike Masaoka's Los Angeles book-signing parties.<sup>328</sup>

But what of the reaction of readers other than Barry Saiki to Omura's review essay, which opened with an incendiary sentence that presaged its overall message: "History indeed is infinitely the poorer and literature thereby greatly diminished by publication of this fabricated account of the historic Japanese American episode of World War II." There was, for example, the mixed response given to Omura in early May by his oldest son, Dr. Gregg Omura, a Grand Junction, Colorado, family doctor: "It's good but you sure use strong words!"<sup>329</sup> Then, in mid-June, Michi Weglyn telephoned Omura to inform him that the Washington correspondent for the

*Osaka Mainichi* desired to check references supporting the review essay's strongest charges against Masaoka. She also told Omura that *Moses* was "very favorably reviewed in Japan" where Masaoka has "influential friends and is regarded . . . as a sort of Nisei savior."<sup>330</sup>

Another significant item on Omura's plate during this year was the Lim Report. That was the name given to the investigative study that in 1989 the National JACL commissioned Deborah Lim, an attorney and San Francisco State University Asian American Studies instructor, to prepare about the JACL's World War II actions.<sup>331</sup> Lim made contact by phone with Omura in early August, telling him that several people, particularly Michi Weglyn, had recommended she speak to him. Lim wondered what Omura felt was important for her to review in the UCLA archives, and he mentioned the oral histories in the Japanese American Research Project (JARP) files, specifically those bearing on Masaoka's pre-WWII speech at Fort Lupton, Colorado, where "he warned in event of war [that] all persons of Japanese descent would be put into concentration camps."<sup>332</sup> Omura thought it "strange" that Lim "did not ask anything about my own situation . . . although she asked if she could call back."<sup>333</sup>

In late September, Omura got a letter from Frank Abe telling him that he "had talked to Deborah [Lim] and . . . found her leaning towards our view of things."<sup>334</sup> A month later, Lim requested that Omura join others whom she was asking to send her written submissions on charges against the JACL's wartime policies. She added that one month would be provided to complete the submission. "This is going to take up a lot of time and delay manuscript writing," pondered Omura, "[but] it is . . . real important [and] it will be worth the effort."<sup>335</sup> In keeping with Lim's deadline, before the end of the following month, Omura sent her his seventeen-page submission, accompanied by a two-page letter.<sup>336</sup>

Omura was likely thrilled to hear from Michi Weglyn in a mid-December post that Lim had spent the better part of a day at her New York Park Avenue apartment. “[Lim] . . . is bright, personable, and I feel she won’t be disappointing. Has a good grasp of facts and has acumen befitting a fine lawyer. Can’t see how facts can be denied or ‘watered down’ to ‘lessen shock.’” Although Omura felt Weglyn’s report “encouraging,” he regarded it cautiously: “Still, there’s the [JACL] presidential committee to whom her report will be made.”<sup>337</sup>

Yet another consequential activity for Omura in 1989 was attending to the proofing and revising of his “Japanese American Journalism during World War II” article prior to publication in the 1989 Association for Asian American Studies-sponsored volume *Frontiers in Asian American Studies*.<sup>338</sup> Then, in mid-July, he wrote a response letter to Alan Parker, director at Telico Pictures, regarding a forthcoming film entitled “Come See the Paradise.”<sup>339</sup> Moreover, throughout the year Omura dealt with an avalanche of details impinging upon the publication of his varying biographical entries within directories, most especially the International Biographical Centre’s *Book of Dedications*.<sup>340</sup> He also cooperated with George Nozawa’s June request for information to permit him to nominate Omura for an award from the Emperor of Japan.<sup>341</sup>

As earlier foreshadowed, the peak experience for Omura in 1989 was achieved in April in connection with the Asian American Journalists Association’s annual meeting in San Francisco, to which he was chaperoned by Frank Abe. On the morning of April 6, a general session was held at which Omura was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award, the first given by the AAJA. Abe conferred the honor upon Omura, who upon receipt of it “was too choked up to say more than a few words.” He considered that such an honor “from your own peers and profession . . . [was] certainly to be cherished.” Later, at the Ferry Plaza Building, a reception was held in his honor, at which Abe stated that Omura “undertook [the] fight for civil rights [for Japanese

Americans] long before the Fair Play Committee had waged the draft resistance movement at the Heart Mountain detention camp in 1944.”

In 1989 Omura made further progress on documenting the Matsumoto family history. Late in the previous year he had gained the services of a new translator, a graduate theological student named Atsuko living at the Oakland, California, home of Miya Okawara’s friend Mary Tomita.<sup>342</sup> Through this contact Omura obtained information in mid-January about his family’s Nagasaki Prefecture home village, Katsusa. According to the marked-up map sent to him by his sister Hanako, this village appeared to be “on the south end of Shimubara Island . . . approximately 100 kilometers distant from the port of Nakasaka, towards the southeast” (instead of the north as Omura had formerly imagined it to be located).<sup>343</sup>

Interspersed within Omura’s other 1989 diary entries are a few seemingly possessing special significance for him. On January 17, he noted Martin Luther King Day, “a national and state holiday”; on June 4, he logged both the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, “the patriarch of Iran” and “the massacre of students at Tiananmen Square by Army troops in Beijing, China”; and on October 4, he recorded that “Art Shell became the first black coach in the NFL [National Football League], displacing Mike Shanahan for the Los Angeles Raiders.”

This year, too, brought Omura a sprinkling of compliments, but likely the one that touched him the deepest came from Frank Chin in the form of an inscription within his gift copy of *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co.*: “Jimmie, Confucius’ achievement was he recovered what was lost and restored what was abandoned. You are such a man—who matters the difference between the real and the false.”<sup>344</sup> Closer to home, his family doctor, upon hearing of Omura’s achievements, “shook my hand . . . and said he is honored to be my doctor.”<sup>345</sup> Then there was a surprise telephone call from Omura’s comrade-in-arms from those trying years of



World War II, his ex-wife Caryl Gertler. While Omura assuredly did not regard her over-the-top tribute of him seriously, it must have been nonetheless satisfying for him to hear her ask if he would object to her nominating him for a Nobel Prize.<sup>346</sup>

## 1990

In 1990 Omura was hampered by several health setbacks,<sup>347</sup> but these ailments were of short duration and lesser significance. Offsetting them was the positive news he received in early August following an EKG and a blood test: “Dr. McDonald said examination shows I am in better shape than I have ever been.”<sup>348</sup> During this year Omura curbed his reading of books, articles, and other literary genres, while his viewing of feature and documentary films was ostensibly naught.<sup>349</sup>

Fortified by a firm determination to move his autobiographical manuscript rapidly toward completion in 1990, Omura dedicated himself to that goal in the first half of the year. In January, he entered this earnest declaration into his diary: “Made an effort to write a preliminary final version of my memoir but, as usual, encountered difficulty. Must get this manuscript in shape without continual false starts. But that start is all-important to focus attention of the audience.”<sup>350</sup> Later that month, another diary entry captured his persisting grit. “I was working on my manuscript last night and lost all track of time. Mom’s wake-up radio alerted me. The time was 5:45 [a.m.]. I knew I should go to sleep and did just that. Awoke little after 11:00 [a.m.]. I considered the day shot and cancelled whatever plans I had. Worked on my manuscript instead.”<sup>351</sup> Unfortunately, other mounting demands obliged him to set aside his manuscript until late in February, when he then returned to its composition.<sup>352</sup>

Progress on the memoir was accelerated by Omura in early April, but the writing occurred in bursts of activity, and often gave way to clerical tasks like filing and note-taking.<sup>353</sup> However, progress was detectible and it inspired elation. Wrote Omura in mid-July: “Have been embarked on a new beginning to make the manuscript more arresting and chronologically unified in subject material.”<sup>354</sup> Breakthroughs of one or another sort typically served as catalysts.

With 1990 two-thirds expended, Omura was conscious that his progress on his memoir was lagging. “This is now September,” he gloomily reflected. “Days are slipping fast. I am not where I want to be.”<sup>355</sup> In 1990, as in earlier years, pressing developments occurring in other areas of Omura’s life retarded his memoir writing.

The first of these areas cropped up at the end of January when Omura read in the January 23, 1990, issue of the Rafu Shimpo that the late Minoru Yasui was to have an honorary statue of him installed in Denver’s Sakura Square,<sup>356</sup> and that this action was being jointly sponsored by the JACL’s Mile Hi chapter in Denver,<sup>357</sup> Nisei Post 185 of the American Legion,<sup>358</sup> and the “organized Japanese American Community.” Even though Yasui “made an impact in civil rights,” reasoned an irritated Omura, it would be stretching one’s credulity to consider Yasui as a true civil libertarian. In his trial, he had indicated his endorsement of [summary?] violations of constitutional rights were he in DeWitt’s shoes. He was an active informer attached to the FBI, the U.S. Marshall’s office, and the WRA. He condemned the draft resisters and, of course, took [irrational?] stand to my editorial support of the Fair Play Committee of Heart Mountain. It is a mockery to erect a statue in his honor.”<sup>359</sup>

Then, in late May, Omura became so perplexed by the news that Yasui and Oski Taniwaki<sup>360</sup> were being proposed to be depicted on the walls of Denver’s new convention center that he wrote a protest letter to Denver’s mayor Frederico Peña.<sup>361</sup> Early the next month Omura

composed an essay for publication in the *Rafu Shimpō* denouncing the Yasui statue being proposed for placement at Sakura Square,<sup>362</sup> and three days afterward he mailed a passel of letters to assorted parties opposing plans for the Yasui and Taniwaki images to grace the convention center's mural.<sup>363</sup>

The day after Omura's screed appeared in the *Rafu Shimpō*, he got a response from Mayor Peña about the convention center mural. "The mural," explained Peña, "is the creation of Boulder [Colorado] artist Barbara Jo Revelle and includes archival photographs from the nineteenth century to contemporary times. The mural is a work of art and is not intended as a 'Hall of Fame' of Colorado notables. Rather it is a highly selective, personal view of individuals and situations from the state's both distant and more recent past. The mural is not a scholarly assessment of historical figures and their contributions to this area. In fact, most of the images contained in the mural are of everyday, uncelebrated citizens." However, viewed from Omura's perspective, "the choice by the artist of Minoru Yasui and Oski Taniwaki . . . would offend the [aesthetic?] sense of majority [of] Americans of Japanese descent. Inclusion on a public mural is a high honor, more so when the mural is placed on a significant public building such as the new Denver Convention Center."<sup>364</sup>

Toward the end of June Omura heard back from a letter he had sent to William Armstrong, a U.S. Senator for Colorado, on the mural. Omura dismissed it as "not an especially heartening response," as it indicated no action and was signed by a staffer in Armstrong's name. For Omura the letter was "a standard form response to a constituent."<sup>365</sup> He next heard, two days later, from Colorado Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder on this same item. He regarded her response as being as passive as Armstrong's, since while conceding his objections as "valid," she advised Omura to

direct his efforts toward the person who would make the final mural decision, Mayor Frederico Peña.<sup>366</sup>

Two days later Omura got an encouraging letter from Yoichi Shimatsu, editor of the *Nikkei Review*. “I read appreciatively your [*Rafu Shimpō*] item on the Yasui ‘memorial,’” he began. “Indeed, we should remember him as a scoundrel. The Yasui family should have the sense to bear their shame with humility.”<sup>367</sup>

In early July there came a surprise phone call from muralist Barbara Revelle who, in a lengthy conversation, told Omura that she did not want “to honor a stool pigeon.” Because of Oski Tanawaki’s tie to Amache, she could not delete him from the mural, but was amenable to removing Yasui. No one had brought up complaints about his inclusion previously, and her paid consultants had pictured him as having won redress for Japanese Americans and playing an important role in civil rights. Omura naturally suspected her “consultants” had been JACL Denverites such as Bill Hosokawa.<sup>368</sup> Revelle indicated that her plan was to take Omura’s complaint letter to her paid consultants and on the basis of her discussion would then decide on her action. She asked Omura if Yasui had become an informer to purge himself, to which Omura replied that such a charge had been made by the Thirteenth District Naval Intelligence officer. He then cited his own case that had resulted in a federal conspiracy charge as evidence.<sup>369</sup>

A week thereafter Omura read in the *Rafu Shimpō* a long response—Yasui on Yasui (I)” and “Yasui on Yasui (II)” —to his accusations against Minoru Yasui from his daughter Holly Yasui. “I do not expect to spar with the daughter despite her errant remarks,” reasoned Omura. “She is only acting in a daughterly fashion which is only natural. She does allege some ill-conceived motive on my part which is also the JACL tour de force.”<sup>370</sup>

Two days later, in a telephone conversation with Russell Endo, the topic of the convention center mural arose and provoked Endo into divulging that “Min Yasui was not locally as highly-regarded as he appears to be nationally.” According to Endo, African Americans had wanted him out as the chair of Denver’s Commission on Human Rights, and Yasui also had experienced problems concerning the establishment of Asian American Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, as well as funding for Nikkei education.”<sup>371</sup>

At the end of July Omura was “shocked” by something told to him by Russell Endo and humbled by something authored by Frank Chin, both items of which involved the controversy over the inclusion of Minoru Yasui in the convention center mural. Endo told Omura that Marge Taniwaki had proposed his name to mural artist Barbara Revelle as a mural subject, which Endo thought a good choice and one that the JACL would not oppose even though it would not like it. Omura, however, did not think that Taniwaki’s proposal would go anywhere. As for Chin, he had written an extended piece for the July 27, 1990, *Rafu Shimpo*, “Rebuttal to Holly Yasui’s Reaction to James Omura,” which amounted almost to a tribute to Omura.<sup>372</sup>

During August, the Omura-Yasui flap continued unabated. At the dawning of that month Omura was notified by mail that Mayor Frederico Peña was “definitely set on his opinion [about including Yasui on the mural].”<sup>373</sup> A week later, in a telephone call from Marge Taniwaki, Omura learned that “she did not get the impression from Barbara Revelle that the mural was for ordinary commonplace people as Mayor Pena attested.”<sup>374</sup> Also, two days hence the statue for Minoru Yasui in Sakura Square was dedicated with television fanfare.<sup>375</sup>

Another issue that absorbed a great deal of Omura’s attention in 1990 was one that carried over from the preceding year: Deborah Lim and the Lim Report. At the beginning of February, Michi Weglyn informed Omura that the National JACL asked Lim to go once more to Washington

D.C. to attempt anew to interview Mike Masaoka. Lim, said Weglyn, had also been requested to interview Bill Hosokawa. “I sense,” observed Weglyn, “that . . . [the JACL Presidential Commission] are giving Deborah a hard time.”<sup>376</sup> In mid-March Omura heard from Mits Koshiyama on this subject: “JACL will try to whitewash it (Deborah Lim’s report).”<sup>377</sup> The next month Omura got a letter from George Nozawa in which he reported having been shown by Frank Abe “what appeared to be about a 300 pp. manuscript written by Deborah Lim of Daly City [and although] I only had time to flip through the pages, . . . she must have done a great deal of homework.”<sup>378</sup>

Two days after receiving Nozawa’s message, Omura read in the April 4, 1990, *Rafu Shimpo*’s lead article, written by Frank Abe, the following information: Deborah Lim declares “she found wartime JACL collaborated with intelligence agencies to identify community leaders prior to Pearl Harbor; collaborated in segregation of those opposing its policies; urged the prosecution of those who resisted the draft; and later suppressed mention of them in postwar histories.” According to Abe, the most significant part of Lim’s declaration was her quotation that after the JACL removed information from her report, she would feel free in September 1990 to make that information available to the public.”<sup>379</sup>

In mid-June, Omura heard from George Nozawa, who told him that Frank Abe has cast doubt on Deborah Lim’s report “being fully disclosed.” Abe also indicated that the JACL report “is planned for release a week before the [JACL] convention and apparently is expected to be sanitized.”<sup>380</sup> Two days thereafter Abe told Omura by letter that Deborah Lim would talk to him if he can “sit tight for just a little longer.” Added Abe: “She also sends her apologies for not meeting with you when she was in Denver. DON’T REPEAT THIS, but she says interviewing Bill

Hosokawa put her in a bad mood—you can sympathize with that—and all she wanted to do was get out of town. In her words, there was ‘no slight’ intended.”<sup>381</sup>

In July Omura was apprised by Mits Koshiyama that “he obtained a copy of Deborah Lim’s report from JACL moderates by ‘twisting a few arms.’” Omura was obviously disappointed that he had yet to be sent a copy for his review.<sup>382</sup> That same month Frank Emi told Omura in a telephone call that apparently “Deborah Lim was employed [by JACL] to investigate [WWII activities of JACL] but that the [JACL] was not required to use it [Lim’s findings] as a basis [for its report].” Omura thus wondered why the JACL had used an outside investigator.<sup>383</sup>

In the first week of August, Omura was surprised to find a package from George Nozawa that contained a copy of the Lim Report.<sup>384</sup> Within a couple of weeks Omura had finished reading and taking notes on the Lim Report. “It is quite thorough in most respects and not thorough in others. . . . Needless to say the wartime JACL does come off quite poorly which probably accounts for its suppression and the asinine defense it makes [for it]. . . . Much of the information is old hat but she has coordinated the attitude and actions of the wartime JACL into a capable study as not heretofore ever done. It is of great help to me [even though] her research showed some glaring lack of comprehensiveness.”<sup>385</sup>

Matsumoto family news was of a fatal nature in 1990. On the evening of November 25, Omura received a telephone call from a man in Seattle identifying himself as an investigator for the King County Medical Examiner’s Office. He stated that the body of Omura’s brother, Kazuo “Casey” Matsumoto, who apparently died on Veterans Day, November 11, had been found only three days earlier, on Thanksgiving Day, November 22, at his apartment within the International District’s Imperial House. Having not seen Casey for thirty years, following a parting of the ways in Denver, Omura “had no notion of whether he was alive.” But he was now informed that Casey’s

rent was paid up and that he left a \$12,000 bank account. Omura then called Frank Abe in Seattle to notify him of his coming arrival. Abe, in turn, told Omura that he could put him up at his home for a week, after which he and his wife expected a scheduled house guest.<sup>386</sup>

On the following day, Omura heard indirectly from Casey's landlord, Gordon Chiang, asking for permission to disinfect his room to remove the odor of death and explaining that no rent would be charged if Casey's room was cleaned and his personal effects removed by the end of the month. Frank Abe informed a pleasantly surprised and greatly relieved Omura that he would take care of all the impending end-of-life details: orchestrating arrangements with the medical examiner, making plans for Casey's cremation, and selecting a lawyer to handle legal matters. Abe also asked Omura if he might be able during his time in Seattle to permit a videotaped interview with him for one of his proposed Resisters plays, thus saving him a trip to Denver. Omura was game for this idea, but said that he also had some personal matters to attend to in Seattle: checking on the birth dates and places of his siblings at the Bureau of Vital Statistics, looking up the Port Blakely Millworks payroll records for his father, and running down information at the Seattle Public Library about Bainbridge Island trees.<sup>387</sup>

Upon arriving in Seattle on the evening of November 27, Omura called Gordon Chiang and made an appointment with him for two days later. Chiang told him that Casey's room had been de-sanitized and informed him also that Casey's total estate amounted to \$43,000. Abe, who had by this time obtained a case number with the medical examiner, arranged for cremation, and obtained a lawyer, Martha Louie, for an initial consultation, speculated that \$20,000 of Casey's account had been accrued through his redress payment.<sup>388</sup>

Over the next few days, Abe arranged to have Chizu Omori, who he described as "a marvelous cook," come over to the Abe household on the night of Friday, November 30, to cook



dinner for Omura and him. Omura also met with Martha Louie and signed documents listing him as special executor of Casey's estate. While consuming the delectable Chizu Omori-prepared Friday dinner, Abe directed the diners' discussion to Omura: "The Tolan Committee, the Bay Region Council for Unity, your helping people get out of camp, the redress effort, your fight for restoration of constitutional rights—you grow more and more as a figure in Evacuation. Why did you do it?" Responded Omura: "There was a great wrong. I also felt betrayed by the JACL. There was a need for integrity of the ethnic society to repair the shame of passive acceptance." After dinner, Omura looked through Casey's personal effects and found an address for their older brother Yoshito, but he was unable to make telephone contact with him.<sup>389</sup>

On the following day, Abe and Omura drove to Monroe, Washington, where they learned from Yoshito's widow Matsue Ohmura that her husband had passed away in 1982. Omura thought that she "did not look Nihonjin," but he gained from her "considerable basic information [about Yoshito], except as a person." On the drive back to Seattle, Abe remarked to Omura that he had noticed his not shaking hands with Matsue or her son, to which Omura retorted that "I did not feel [the] desire . . . [even though] she did part with a wedding photo on my request."<sup>390</sup>

On Wednesday, December 5, Omura and Abe met at a Chinese restaurant with Bob Sakoda, a Kibei friendly with, but not close to, Casey (who he called Matie). Sakoda said that Matie was "lonely" and "very bitter about [his] father, [who had] mistreated him." Matie told Sakoda that he had a brother, Jimmie Omura, but said that they did not write to one another. He made no mention of his older brother, James Yoshito Ohmura, and said nothing about having siblings in Japan. He focused on horse racing, but quit when he became "sick and weak" and lost a lot of weight. Sakoda related that he took Matie around where he wanted to go and did other favors for him. That evening

Omura sifted through Casey's papers and collated them. He also telephoned Matsue Ohmura in Monroe and obtained addresses from her for all but one of her children.<sup>391</sup>

The next day, Omura and Abe met with KIRO-TV photographer/videographer Bob Sturgill, whose services Abe employed in his capacity as an independent filmmaker. Sturgill videotaped Omura entering Casey's hotel room and finding and reading letters that he had written to Casey many years earlier. Then the trio went to Sturgill's home on Queen Anne Hill where he shot about three hours (eight tapes) focused on Omura's life and wartime activities.<sup>392</sup>

On December 8-9, Omura worked all day sifting through Casey's journals and letters. "[I] found letters I had written Casey as far back as [when I was living in] Pocatello [Idaho]. Great. I can now retrace my past to 1926 when leaving home [on Bainbridge Island]."<sup>393</sup>

The five days remaining for Omura in Seattle before flying back home to Denver were crowded with activities. There were visits to Chizu Omori's shop in Pike Place Market, where she gave him a gift of four cans of smoked salmon, and David Ishii's Pioneer Square bookstore for browsing and purchasing of his stock. Abe had told Omura that Bob Shimabukuro was still trying to arrange a meeting between him and Holly Yasui, but this get-together never came about. Omura also looked up places in Seattle where he had once lived, including two places that were still intact, the St. Clair Apartments near Broadway High School, his alma mater, and the Beacon Hill home of the Yamamoto family where Omura once lived with his close friend Franny Yamamoto. One day was spent on an outing to Bainbridge Island, where Omura went mushroom hunting with childhood classmate Fumi Hayashida, and then, with her, dropped by the family residences of old-time islanders like the Nakatas, Kitamotos, Moritanis, and Nakaos. Both Tets Moritani and Sam Nakao recognized Omura, which was gratifying for him. Then it was back to Seattle by ferry and over to Frank Abe's place for his final night. The next day, after Abe got tied up in a traffic jam

downtown, Omura called Jim Akutsu, who braved the traffic and treacherous road conditions, as well as inaccurate highway patrol directions, and drove him to the Sea-Tac Airport.<sup>394</sup>

Overall, 1990 was a busy but quite satisfying one for Omura. The accolades continued to come his way, though they were less profuse and more unorthodox than in previous years. In February, for example, when he went to the drugstore to pick up his medicine, the druggist asked him, “Mr. Omura, are you an author?” When Omura affirmed that he was, the druggist told him that he had read his name in the Denver newspapers about a year ago. It touched Omura that the druggist had shared this memory with him.<sup>395</sup> Then, in early March, he got a letter from anthropologist Peter Suzuki, who ended it by writing “best wishes from someone who has admired you from afar.”<sup>396</sup> In July, the *Rafu Shimpo*, in noting Omura’s election for the International Order of Merit, included the wording of his citation: “For services to his solitary wartime role of dedication and fidelity to constitutional liberties amidst ethnic persecution during World War II.”<sup>397</sup> Midway through October Yoichi Shimatsu wrote to Omura telling him that his wartime editorials were to be included in a reader to be used for a University of California, Berkeley, undergraduate journalism course entitled “The Press and the Underdog.”<sup>398</sup> Three days later, Shimatsu again contacted Omura to inform him that a university in Japan would be featuring Omura’s *Current Life* magazine.<sup>399</sup> In the space of four days in November, Omura received praise from two different sources. The first message came from George Nozawa, who had been laboring tirelessly to secure a Medal of Honor from the Imperial Japanese government for Omura. Instead, that honor was conferred upon Frank Ogawa, an Oakland, California, city councilman. “It breaks my heart,” grieved Nozawa, “to send this news clipping. How a mere city councilman can possibly get a nod over you is ‘beyond me.’ But that’s how the cookie crumbles!”<sup>400 401</sup>

## 1991

For the 1991 year health issues only surface five times in Omura's diary.<sup>402</sup> As a rule, such a health record for someone marking his seventy-ninth birthday during the year is quite impressive. Omura's list of reading and viewing sources for 1991 was again short, with only four books and no documentary films. Two of the books were authored or co-authored by Frank Chin: *Donald Duk* and *The Big Aiiieeeeeee!*<sup>403</sup> The other two volumes were Sanford Unger's *FBI* and James Oda's *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans*.<sup>404</sup>

In 1991 Omura ramped up his effort on completing his memoir, both indirectly and directly, as numerous of his diary entries document. In late January, he typed up the notes he compiled while in Seattle back in December.<sup>405</sup> Then in mid-February, he worked on the section of the manuscript treating the Nikkei resisters.<sup>406</sup> About this same time, he logged this information in his diary: "Decided to complete each phase of manuscript to cut down on repetition. That means thoroughly researching each particular phase. This is going to be slower but quicker in the long run."<sup>407</sup> Still in the same month, he noted that he was "nearing [the] end of scrapbook note-taking," and in early March typed up notes from Francis Biddle's memoir *In Brief Authority*.<sup>408</sup> In mid-March, Omura typed up the notes he had garnered from examining Casey's correspondence with him, which he found both "very helpful" and "very interesting." Such work, he felt, returned slow progress because of "the need to read every word . . . and [also] because these matters are important."<sup>409</sup>

The end of March found Omura consumed with "starting a new beginning . . . for the manuscript." As he put it: "I like it better and thence is what I want." He also indicated at this juncture that he "took notes on Roger Daniels, 'The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans.'"<sup>410</sup> In April he elatedly reported that he was "making progress, and a few days

afterward that he had “worked most of the day on manuscript writing but [that] progress is slow at this stage.” The reason was simple and the results were satisfying to him: “I am trying to get the new beginning down into acceptable shape. This is a much better beginning than I previously had and I think it will fly!”<sup>411</sup>

Toward the closing of July, Omura announced that he had begun “tightening up the manuscript” and that all notes are in correlation.”<sup>412</sup> After a two-month respite from working on the manuscript, he observed that he had been “thinking of getting back to writing the manuscript” but had not yet resumed writing. “The past few days,” he explained, “I’ve been wrestling with the start [of the manuscript]. Believe I’ve found the key. It is to begin with the Fair Play Committee.”<sup>413</sup> Then, in mid-October Omura experienced a revelation. “[I] began collating documents to facilitate reference in writing the manuscript which has been the most time-consuming factor in the delay. Documents have been filed in so many different binders and not readily available on need. This is where a computer would be of great help.”<sup>414</sup> By November, he dug in and “got back to the manuscript.”<sup>415</sup>

For a change, this year was free of research trips to faraway archives for Omura. Nor did he conduct any fieldwork interviews, write any published articles, or give any public talks in 1991. Although he had been invited by Yuji Ichioka to be a participant in a fall conference at UCLA on Nikkei journalists of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, Ichioka contacted him in late June to inform him that the conference, while not cancelled, had been postponed.<sup>416</sup> Omura did attend a March talk by William Hohri, “History’s Effect on History,” held at the Simpson Methodist Church in Arvada, Colorado, and at the speaker’s request Omura was presented to the audience and afterwards approached by numerous people with congenial greetings and comments.

Matsumoto family matters did occupy a fair amount of Omura's time and attention during the year. For one thing, he finished up his duties as the executor of his late brother Kazushi's (Casey's) estate.<sup>417</sup> In this connection, he made contact with Ko Asano, who at one time had been Casey's roommate at the Firland Sanitorium. He told Omura that Casey was very bitter against his father, who had forced him to quit school after three years, and also beat him and restricted his food. Omura tempered this report, telling Asano that Casey had quit school in his seventh year, and that Casey and he had never gone hungry, although the food provided them was "frugal." Asano, too, allowed that at Firland, he had written three letters for Casey and addressed them to Kumamoto City in a futile search for the whereabouts of his sisters. Moreover, Asano told Omura that Casey, who he called Matsi, was "very intelligent, a scholar, and [a] compassionate person." Repeated Asano several times, "I will miss Matsi."<sup>418</sup> In early February Omura got a letter from Marilyn McMongle, a friend of Kazushi. She stated that "he was a 'private person' and said very little about himself except his problems, including distrust of doctors."<sup>419</sup>

Omura also continued his pursuit of information bearing on the lives of his sisters in Japan and his older brother Yoshito in the state of Washington. From a friend, Ike Matsumonji, he sought the services of a Japanese translator, which materialized in January in the person of Eiichi Tsukyi, the son of the former proprietor of the Asia Cafe. He translated one letter for Omura, but "he did not indicate future commitment."<sup>420</sup>

A couple of days thereafter Omura received a letter from Patricia Randall "Randy" Pleasant, the oldest daughter of his oldest brother, the late James Yoshito Ohmura. Pleasant asked Omura numerous questions about her father's background, of which she declared "the family was totally ignorant."<sup>421</sup> In early February, Randy Pleasant sent another letter to Omura, telling him of her father, Yoshito Ohmura, and the unhappiness of her mother, who had left home at age sixteen.

Pleasant maintained that her mother did not know Casey's name, "only the letter 'K.'"<sup>422</sup> At the end of the same month Pleasant mailed still one more letter to Omura telling him that his request to place Kazushi's ashes beside J.Y. [James Yoshito Ohmura] had been refused by her mother on the grounds that "she does not consider either myself [James Omura] or Kazushi . . . 'really family' and [besides] J.Y. would not have wanted it."<sup>423</sup> Finally, during the end-of-the year holiday period Omura received a Christmas card from Pleasant that included photographs of her two children.<sup>424</sup>

Throughout the year Omura made entries in his diary denoting items having special meaning for him.<sup>425</sup> Also, in 1991 two notable tributes were bestowed upon Omura. At a talk by distinguished UCLA Asian American literature professor King-Kok Cheung in March, she greeted him by saying "Jimmie Omura, you're quite a legend."<sup>426</sup> Then, in mid-April, Frank Abe wrote to Omura with this message: "I don't want you to feel like you owe me for any past benefaction. On the contrary, I feel I owe you a lot for befriending me and sharing your story with me, and in a greater sense providing me with a history I can point [to] with some pride. I only wish I had known about you when I was trying to learn about Japanese America by reading [Bill] Hosokawa's first book [*Nisei: The Quiet Americans*], and not being able to find myself in it. I felt like saying, 'those people aren't me.' No wonder so many of my generation turned away from Japanese America; there was nothing to be proud of."<sup>427</sup>

## 1992

Health problems did not afflict Omura in 1992, the year he turned eighty, until the end of April when he tangled with a chain saw while doing routine yardwork.<sup>428</sup> Then, in mid-June, Omura suffered a moderate leg problem that strained his walking somewhat.<sup>429</sup> At the end of August he

“felt a bit out of sorts and laid down and started to shake.”<sup>430</sup> In mid-to-late October, Omura suffered prolonged exhaustion.<sup>431</sup> Lastly, in November he was overcome first by dizziness, and soon afterwards by fatigue.<sup>432</sup>

Omura’s reading of books and viewing of documentary films was minimal in 1992. Among the former there were three: James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*<sup>433</sup>; Dorothy Stroup, *In the Autumn Wind*,<sup>434</sup> and Togo Tanaka, “History of the JACL” (unpublished manuscript).<sup>435</sup> Omura also read a journal article relating to Heart Mountain: Eric Bittner, “‘Loyalty . . . is a Covenant.’”<sup>436</sup> Within the year, he watched one very affecting Heart Mountain-based documentary film, Steven Okazaki’s *Days of Waiting*.<sup>437</sup>

There is little question that in 1992 Omura accomplished more actual writing on his memoir than he had in all the prior accumulated years that he had labored on this task. After some false starts and preliminary steps in January,<sup>438</sup> in mid-March he plunged into the writing of the manuscript in earnest. “Today,” announced Omura, “[I] began writing the manuscript and hopefully things will move reasonably in a straight line without due interruption.”<sup>439</sup> In early-to-mid April he was still struggling a bit with his “straight line” objective, but incrementally he was getting on-track.<sup>440</sup> Over the next few months he was occupied by other matters (to be discussed below), but by mid-June he could proclaim: “Got back to the manuscript this afternoon and got five pages completed.” The following day he “got only two pages done,” but he was now in gear. Four days later he gave this report: “Got back to the manuscript and worked until 2:30 a.m. Knocked off five pages.”<sup>441</sup> Even holidays became work days for him. “[I] spent the Fourth [of July] in quiet fashion. Turned down Mom’s suggestion for eating out. Watched television and then worked on manuscript until 6 a.m. The night before it was 4 a.m.”<sup>442</sup>



Even apparent stumbling blocks did not discourage or deter his memoir's development. As he explained in a mid-July diary entry: "Progress is restricted by the splint on the injured finger but in a sense it acts as a godsend. Typing slower allows for deeper thought and a bit more accuracy."<sup>443</sup> The passage of time sometimes weighed heavily upon him, as an entry three days hence communicates: "[I] reached page 20 and running into add-on notes. The need to incorporate such notes will be time-consuming."<sup>444</sup> Frustration and fatigue were no strangers in this process, as two successive entries in late July document: "Zero day," said the first, followed up by this still more beaten message: "Past two days made no progress on the manuscript. Not in the mood. Trouble sleeping."<sup>445</sup> Notwithstanding such breaks in his memoir writing, Omura kept "plugging along on [the] manuscript," as attested in a diary entry at July's end.<sup>446</sup>

By the middle of August Omura could correctly measure his progress on the memoir while anticipating the challenge awaiting him in its next stage of development. "[I] moved into Pre-Eviction Period and began preliminary coordination," he proudly recorded. But then he cautiously added, "Considerable work needed here as this sets the stage in which the plan was hatched in November [1941] with CB [Curtis B.] Munson [report], the Imperial Valley fiasco, the informing [by JACL leaders] to weaken Issei control. Very important of JACL assumption of power."<sup>447</sup> He then moved past this section and turned the spotlight of his memoir directly upon the JACL's early wartime actions, particularly its San Francisco emergency meeting of March 8-10, 1942, in San Francisco.<sup>448</sup>

In mid-September, Omura pronounced that he was "ready to begin [the] final run through [of the manuscript]."<sup>449</sup> Three days later, however, he reported a "sort of troubling letter" from Michi Weglyn, which he observed had "upset me sufficiently [so] that nothing was accomplished today." One part of her letter that disturbed Omura had to do with his manuscript: "Certainly, we

are breathlessly awaiting the Omura codification of Nikkei history through its completion and publication. I think you should begin submitting now a summary overview and a sample chapter or two to prospective publishers. It takes years for them to decide—at least in my case [with *Years of Infamy*], it did.”<sup>450</sup> Not until ten days later did Omura indicate that he had returned to working on his manuscript.<sup>451</sup> He could remark in early October, though, that he was back on course, however trying it was proving to be. “[I] got back to the manuscript after several days of tending to other matters and personal business. It’s not easy to weave versions into coordinated style. But even though, slow progress is being made.”<sup>452</sup> This progress continued through the remainder of the calendar year, albeit in a spasmodic way.<sup>453</sup>

Of course, Omura’s time during this year (like every year since 1981) was choked with a variety of command performances that undercut the writing of his memoir, a burden which always weighed powerfully upon his mind and conscience. His time was also severely compromised by his precarious health condition. These considerations no doubt explain in part why Omura passed up the opportunity to be present in person at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center Building in San Francisco on the evening of February 15, 1992. That marked the occasion when the Northern California Division of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCR/R) sponsored a candle-lighting ceremony at which he and a select few other people were being saluted and paid special tribute for being benefactors to the Japanese American people during their World War II ordeal. This ceremony was scheduled to be included in a Day of Remembrance fiftieth anniversary observance of Executive Order 9066. Omura felt extremely “honored” to be feted along with such legendary individuals and groups as ACLU director Ernest Besig, ACLU Attorney Wayne Collins, journalists Walt and Mildred Woodward of Bainbridge Island, and the American Friends Service Committee.”<sup>454</sup>

Nonetheless, it meant almost as much to Omura to be invited by Marge Taniwaki, a former Mile-Hi JACL chapter president and current stalwart in the activist progressive Making Waves group, to participate on February 19, 1992, in the Day of Remembrance anniversary ceremony held at Denver's Sakura Square. At this evening event, in which he was one of three speakers, Omura took as his topic the Great Sedition Trial and its influence on the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee and his own role as the *Rocky Shimpō*'s editor in 1944 that led to his being tried for conspiracy with the FPC leaders in a Cheyenne federal court. At the dinner that followed in a Japanese restaurant Omura was very gratified to have several Nikkei Denverites approach him and inquire as to whether he remembered them.<sup>455</sup>

At the closing of March, Omura got a telephone call from Frank Abe stating that plans were underway to stage a videocast of the draft resisters at San José State University, which would serve as a basis for winning a grant proposal to use it as educational source material. Frank Chin, reported Abe, was projected to be the cameraman for this media event. A month later Abe called Omura again and told him to reserve May 29, 1992, on his calendar.<sup>456</sup> According to the scheduled program, Frank Emi would be reading the presentation he gave at the 1988 Association for Asian American Studies conference held at Pullman, Washington; Mits Koshiyama would present the article he wrote about his World War II experiences that was published in the newspaper of the public school where he had been formerly employed; and Omura would read a couple of his wartime *Rocky Shimpō* editorials.<sup>457</sup>

Upon his arrival in San José on May 27, Omura ate dinner with Mits Koshiyama and his wife, Mizue, as well as his fellow Heart Mountain draft resister, Tom Kawahara, and Frank Abe. Lawson Inada and Frank Chin were due to arrive in San José the following day. On that day, Omura placed a call to Nebo Okazaki of nearby Cupertino, who told him that he remembered

Omura's father repairing and wiring his family's Bainbridge Island home at Winslow. Later in the day at a hotel room in San José's Fairmont Hotel, Omura joined with Lawson Inada, Frank Chin, Frank Abe, Frank Emi, Kenji Taguma (the son of a WWII draft resister at the Amache camp in Colorado), Kenji's father Noboru Taguma), Mits Koshiyama, Dave Kawamoto, George Nozawa, Gloria Kubota (the widow of Issei Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee steering committee member Guntaro Kubota), and her attorney daughter Grace Kubota Ybarra, to run through the script for the next day's event. At this rehearsal, Omura pointed out some discrepancies in the script and called attention to them. He also met Noboru Taguma for the first time. A very tired Omura then accompanied Mits Koshiyama, his host for this visit, back to his San José family home and there went immediately to bed.<sup>458</sup>

The next day Omura spent the middle hours on a light rail tour of the Silicon Valley. Before and after the evening event at San José's Fairmont Hotel—which drew an audience of some 200 people—Omura encountered old friends, like Violet de Cristoforo, and new acquaintances like Heart Mountain draft resister George Ishikawa. Following the event there was a potluck, at which Omura renewed friendships with individuals such as UC Berkeley and University of Hawai'i professors Jere Takahashi and Franklin Odo, *Hokubei Mainichi* editor J. K. Yamamoto, Chizu Omori, and first-time associates like Chizu's filmmaker sister Emiko Omori and Oregon historian Barbara Upp.

On the next day, Sunday, Mits Koshiyama drove Omura over to Berkeley, where he was a guest of Vera Matsumura, one of his few surviving friends from his pre-World War II San Francisco journalistic days, at her "large two-story house [located] in a somewhat semi-exclusive neighborhood." On Monday, he was induced by Yasuo Sasaki to attend a meeting of the *Nikkei Review* staff, including Gary Kawaguchi. Tuesday found Omura at UC Berkeley's Bancroft

Library, where he checked, without satisfaction, for an early 1942 JACL letter to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, which he had been told by National JACL President Cressey Nakagawa was archived there. On Wednesday, he was back at the Bancroft for more research, though he found getting around the U.C. Berkeley campus “difficult . . . to negotiate . . . because of its sloping topography.”<sup>459</sup>

On Thursday, en route to the Japanese American National Library in Japantown, Omura found himself in front of the National JACL Headquarters. There he was given the brush-off by the office’s head clerk and side-stepped by two national JACL officers.<sup>460</sup> In marked contrast was Omura’s experience at the JANL, where he was welcomed by its director Karl Matsushita, who informed him that he didn’t believe that the JACL had “an archive or any documents of value.” Matsushita, on the other hand, was “a fountain of information.” He told Omura that he was “a hero to the Sanseis.” He recommended to him that he donate his records to the Japanese American National Library instead of UCLA, which he had heard rumored might be closing research to the general public.<sup>461</sup>

On Friday, Omura passed on his intention of going to Stanford University to look for desired information there at the Hoover Institution because of time constraints. On that day he met Vera Matsumura’s next-door neighbor, Dorothy Stroup, author of the 1987 historical novel *In the Autumn Wind*, which he then began to read. On Monday, Omura accepted an invitation from Stroup to view Steven Okazaki’s 1991 documentary film *Days of Waiting*, for which she was the narrator.<sup>462</sup> Stroup also shared with Omura her 1960 UC Berkeley master’s thesis on the prewar Japanese American Nisei press in San Francisco. He criticized it as being a “biased account,” to which she put the blame on her principal sources, Howard Imazeki and Yasuo Abiko (both of whom Omura regarded as pro-JACL). Omura then noted that it was inadequate

for someone to write about Stroup's subject without mentioning either Larry Tajiri or him, but her reply to this contention was that her goal had not been to write "a comprehensive study."<sup>463</sup> Two days later, on June 10, Omura returned home to Denver and resumed work on his memoir.

Omura, in 1992, also continued to make progress on his quest for a better understanding of Matsumoto family history. Thanks to a letter from Mary Tomita, Omura's friend in Oakland, Omura learned that her grandniece, who visited her during a recess from her college in Durango, Colorado, had made a partial translation of some communication sent to him from his sister Hanako in Japan. This is what he learned from this effort: "The person who attempted to kill Hanako was her husband who opposed her conversion to Buddhism. It seems he also opposed education for her but after his death, nine years ago, studied Japanese. Her husband was a carpenter and was a drinker and a gambler. She wanted a divorce but thought of her children abated her desire. Four of her children have now passed on." Tomita, who told Omura that she had not had any news about the disposition of Casey's ashes, but assured him that the translation of Hanako's letter would be completed upon the return to California of another Japanese friend of hers.<sup>464</sup>

In mid-January, Omura again heard from Tomita, whose letter was accompanied by a very long and detailed translation of Hanako's letter. Its contents differed from the translation that had been provided earlier by Mits Koshiyama's Japan-born wife, Mizue. "[According to the Koshiyama translation] 'although she [Hanako] does write that her husband wanted to kill her and the children four times, there is no indication that it was because of her becoming Buddhist. In fact, he tried Buddhism briefly. She [Hanako] notes [that] he [her husband] resisted killing her and the children because of her sincere devotion to Buddhism. He could not carry out his intent.'" Hanako's letter also took up the subject of Casey's ashes. They were to be sent to Sago-Ken, in

northern Kyushu Island,<sup>465</sup> and Taeko's son, who like Hanako resides in this ken, would see to their interment. Hanako went on to explain that because Taeko was sick with an inoperative heart tumor, she was the one who has been taking care of the family grave. Hanako divulged also that she visits Taeko twice a year for two month-stays in Nagoya, located in southern Honshu Island, about 425 miles from her Sago-Ken home.<sup>466</sup>

Omura's next letter from Hanako was interpreted by Mits Koshiyama's wife Mizue and read to Omura at the end of May. Although mostly a repetition of previously relayed information, two new items stood out prominently: first, the death back in February of Taeko, Omura's younger sister; and the news that her son, when asked by Hanako to obtain a map to send to Omura, had refused to honor this request, explaining that he would obtain the map when Casey's ashes were interred at the family sepulcher in Katsusa.<sup>467</sup> In late August, Omura received a translated copy of a letter Mary Tomita had sent to Hanako, which was accompanied by a district map of the Katsusa area to permit Hanako to pinpoint relevant sites for Omura.<sup>468</sup> Two months afterwards, Omura received the promised map, with sites marked in English, but lacking any designation for where Hanako had lived. In her letter, Hanako stated that it was all so long ago, but she did the best that she could.<sup>469</sup>

In the Christmas season Omura received a letter from his oldest brother Yoshito's daughter, Randy Pleasant, which included photos of her and her daughter.<sup>470</sup>

As was the case in the preceding year, Omura punctuated his 1992 diary with entries of a particularly telling nature.<sup>471</sup> Regarding plaudits for Omura, they were sparser than in previous years, but meaningful and welcome nonetheless. For example, in August Violet de Cristoforo sent him a copy of an article on him from the August 4, 1992, *Hokubei Mainichi*, which stated

that “Omura’s [story] is different because his is an account of resistance, isolation, and triumph.”<sup>472</sup>

### 1993

In 1993 Omura confronted a few worrying health complications and weathered a bad automobile accident, but in general he fared reasonably well.<sup>473</sup> The traffic mishap occurred in the first week of March. Driving home in his 1976 Toyota sedan from the Englewood Library, Omura was broadsided in an intersection by an unseen vehicle “traveling well above the speed limit.”<sup>474</sup> The driver of a small truck tended to Omura and told him that he had sent for an ambulance and the police. Woozy, he blacked out momentarily. Placed on a stretcher and rushed to Denver General Hospital, he wound up in intensive care and was subjected to chest scans, which were repeated in the late evening. Omura was told that the doctors were concerned about “a lump in my lower esophagus as it entered the stomach.” Remaining at the hospital until 6 p.m. the following day, he then was permitted to go home. Through the next day he continued to endure head tensions and rib pains and had difficulty walking.<sup>475</sup>

Later that month Omura was plagued by a cold that for five days had him coughing, nursing a sore throat, and feeling very weak.<sup>476</sup> In early April, Omura was felled for a day with pronounced fatigue.<sup>477</sup> For the next four months he was free of health reverses, but toward the end of August he responded to extreme heat with a dizzy spell, a tired body, and “small aches and pain.”<sup>478</sup> In mid-October, on a day when Omura was inflicted with shortness of breath and enervation, his evening left him utterly “knocked out.”<sup>479</sup> Early the succeeding month, Omura bore flu symptoms, including light-headedness, chills, and a gnawing pit in his stomach.<sup>480</sup> His



final health problem in 1993 ensued at the end of November when in undertaking some light washing of dinner dishes he “felt physically and mentally exhausted” and thus “decided to take things easy the rest of the evening.”<sup>481</sup>

Because of Omura’s preoccupation with finishing his memoir and his involvement with a variety of public presentations and performances, he did negligible collateral reading in 1993 and apparently no viewing whatsoever of historical documentary films. One of the books he read was a 1992 volume of poetry by Lawson Inada entitled *Legends from Camp*.<sup>482</sup> Omura also read two 1993 volumes of oral history interviews co-edited by Art Hansen and Nora Jesch, in Arthur A. Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project*.<sup>483</sup> Finally, he read a 1993 volume by Andrew Nahm titled *Introduction to Korean History and Culture*.<sup>484</sup>

As far back as late November of 1988, there was talk of Omura’s oldest son Gregg purchasing him a computer to ease the burden of writing his memoir and to facilitate the organization and re-organization of its textual content and correlated footnotes.<sup>485</sup> But it was not until New Year’s 1993 that the computer became part of Omura’s office equipment. This step proved to be both a blessing and a curse, and profuse evidence for each characterization abounds in his 1993 diary entries.<sup>486</sup>

Though he was plagued throughout the year with one or another computer difficulty, often costing him a loss of time and manuscript text, occasioning him great worry, and requiring the good offices of family members and friends—mostly Russell Endo, who was summoned for and provided help at all hours of the day and night<sup>487</sup>)—Omura miraculously brought his memoir near to conclusion by year’s end.

The first progress report on his memoir came in early July when he noted that he had “knocked off nineteen pages and reached the [1933] Lil Tokio [Los Angeles] arrival [by him]” in his manuscript.<sup>488</sup> By the end of the month he related that he had finished “301 pages but [the] latter pages need reworking.”<sup>489</sup> On two successive days in early September, he noted his completion, respectively, of fifty-seven pages and seventeen pages of his memoir.<sup>490</sup> Then in mid-September, he remarked as to his having finished seven pages and then four more within a short interval.<sup>491</sup> On the final day of the month, his page count was up to 378.<sup>492</sup> A few days into October the figure was up to 426.<sup>493</sup> By the middle of October, his draft had increased to 486 pages, and he then turned to carving out chapters and editing the text of his memoir.<sup>494</sup> At the close of November, on his eighty-first birthday, he reflected that “of the three brothers, I am the last. Still have the manuscript to finish. Given another year, it should be finished. It’s moving forward slow but surely.”<sup>495</sup>

What makes Omura’s progress on his memoir particularly noteworthy was that in 1993 he was on the road on multiple occasions and also engaged in a fair amount of time-consuming public and personal undertakings. The first out-of-Denver trip, which encompassed the period between February 18 and February 24, took him to Los Angeles. The governing reason for this trip was communicated to him in December of 1992 via a telephone call from Frank Abe who told him that there was to be a reprise in Los Angeles on February 21, 1993, of the resisters program that had been presented in San José on April 29, 1992, with Omura responsible for reading one of his 1944 *Rocky Shimpō* editorials.<sup>496</sup>

While in Los Angeles Omura first stayed at the home of Frank Emi and his wife Itsuko in San Gabriel, and afterwards was put up by Yosh and Irene Kuromiya in their home in Alhambra. On his third day in Los Angeles Omura attended a program sponsored by the National Coalition

for Redress and Reparations (NCR/R) that was held at the Japan America Theater in Little Tokyo. There he met Sumi Seko from Long Beach, who had her picture taken with him and stated “This is a historical occasion!” Also, Frank Ego, an alleged “troublemaker” at Manzanar who was removed after the Manzanar Riot, and thereafter imprisoned in the Moab and Leupp isolation centers and the Tule Lake Segregation Center, introduced himself to Omura and remarked “So this is the famous Omura.” Rejoined Omura, “Not famous, infamous.” As he exited the theater, he was greeted by wartime Amache draft resister Noboru Taguma and his journalist son Kenji Taguma.<sup>497</sup>

That evening at an upscale area restaurant Omura attended a dinner hosted by a San José civil engineer, Jack Ybarra, and his attorney wife, Grace Kubota Ybarra. After Omura was warmly greeted by Jack Ybarra, who said that after reading his bio he had wanted to meet him, Omura asked him about the price of the dinner, to which Ybarra said, “Don’t worry about it, especially you.” At the dinner Omura sat immediately to the left from Frank Emi and across the table from Dwight Chuman, the onetime English-section editor of the *Rafu Shimpo*, who caught Omura up on his career after leaving the *Rafu* and provided him with the backstory as to why he had resigned his editorial post.<sup>498</sup>

At the next day’s event held at the Centenary United Methodist Church, which drew an estimated crowd of four hundred people, Omura was interviewed, along with several other participants, by *Los Angeles Times* reporter Susan Moffett. This interview was interrupted by the start of the program.<sup>499</sup> In Omura’s opinion, “the script was much better than the one at San Jose.” After the program, Art Hansen brought Hannah Tomiko Holmes up to the stage to be with Omura. She took his picture beside a ten-foot banner that she had stitched bearing the words “Power to All Nisei Resisters and James Omura,” and then asked a grateful Omura if he would

like to keep the banner. He did. Omura also had his photograph taken with Hannah Holmes and Art Hansen. He was then interviewed by Takeshi Nakayama of the *Rafu Shimpō*, whose current editor, Naomi Hirahara, dropped by to say hello to Omura, as did Marge Taniwaki from Denver's Making Waves group. Jim Akutsu from Seattle also touched bases with him, and was shortly joined in their interaction by Art Hansen and two of his graduate history students at Cal State Fullerton, Alan Koch and Sansei Cynthia Togami. When Hansen introduced Omura to Togami, he whispered to her: "You just shook the hand of a historical figure." About then Omura felt a tap on his shoulder, and upon turning around saw that it was Sue Kunitomi Embrey.<sup>500</sup> William Hohri stopped by as well to greet Omura. "What was surprising," Omura later recollected, "were young kids asking for my autograph."<sup>501</sup>

The next morning, after sleeping late, Omura conversed with his host Yosh Kuromiya and then they viewed together the video of the previous day's event. Mused Omura: "I was surprised how aged I look. I seemed to appear bald on top. My reading wasn't good—too labored." After the video, Kuromiya assured Omura that he could stay at his family home any time he was in the Los Angeles area.<sup>502</sup>

On the following day, Tuesday, Kuromiya took Omura to the Japanese American National Museum in the heart of Little Tokyo. There he noted that Mike Yasutake was recognized within the museum's civil rights section and his name included on a commemorative bronze plaque. "Noticeably absent from [the museum]," observed Omura, "is Mike Masaoka and other leaders of the wartime JACL, except for the Yasui family exhibit of Hood River, Oregon."<sup>503</sup> The next day, after receiving a memorably compassionate goodbye hug from Irene Kuromiya, Omura flew home to Denver.<sup>504</sup>

In mid-June Omura was back in the Los Angeles region to attend back-to-back events at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, honoring Michi Nishiura Weglyn and her husband Walter Weglyn in conjunction with the institution's annual commencement exercises. On the first day, Michi Weglyn was the recipient of a California State University honorary doctorate in humane letters, after which she delivered a stirring acceptance speech, and on the second day, both Weglyns were recognized with a resplendent reception for establishing an endowed chair in their names in the field of multicultural studies. Surprised to see Omura in the reception line, Walter Weglyn took him to see his wife Michi; both of the Weglyns expressed their pleasure at his coming to this event. During the reception, Hannah Holmes brought Omura over to see Art Hansen at another table. Omura also saw Paul Tsuneishi, who was flabbergasted at Omura coming all the way from Denver for the occasion. Omura also had a long talk with Harry Honda, the editor of the *Pacific Citizen*. Additionally, he was greeted by one of Michi Weglyn's friends from World War II days at the Gila detention center, Mary Karasawa, and her husband Babe Karasawa. Omura was touched by Mary Karasawa telling him of reading one of his articles relating to the Supreme Court and being "impressed with my arguments." At day's end, the Kuromiyas drove Omura to Burbank Airport, where he was given a warm farewell, accented by two heartfelt hugs from both Irene Kuromiya and Yosh Kuromiya, who also said to him "We're glad to have you dumped on us anytime."<sup>505</sup>

Two months thereafter Omura was winging off once more to Los Angeles—during the annual Nisei Week Festival—to participate in a marathon of videotaped interviews with those connected to the 1944 Heart Mountain draft resistance movement for a documentary film being jointly done by Frank Abe and Frank Chin.<sup>506</sup> These interviews were shot in Jeanne Nakano and Dick Obayashi's dance studio within the Los Angeles suburb of Hawthorne. On August 15,

interviews were taped with Omura, Ike Matsumoto, Frank Emi, Art Emi and Yosh Kuromiya. The following day, Omura returned to Hawthorne where additional footage was shot of him after interviews were completed with two northern California resisters, Dave Kawamoto and Mits Koshiyama. Having spent four days as a house guest of the Kuromiyas, on August 19 Omura returned to Denver and his memoir.<sup>507</sup>

Aside from the activities he undertook in connection with his three Los Angeles forays, Omura occupied himself with other pursuits in 1993. In late April he attended a talk given by Lawson Inada at the Aurora campus of the University of Colorado. During Inada's talk, which focused on his new book *Legends from Camp*, he referred to Omura a number of times, and later gave him a signed copy of the book.<sup>508</sup> Then in early June, on the invitation of Marge Taniwaki, Omura went to the Simpson Methodist Church in Arvada to hear a presentation by Kay Ochi and others associated with NCR/R about that organization's efforts and current program. Coupled with a potluck, the event drew around eighteen people, including Denver JACL's representatives, Bob and Chiye Horiuchi.<sup>509</sup>

As the year wound down, Omura was contacted about two upcoming events in the coming year in which he was to be featured. The first of these events was scheduled for January, sponsored by the Nikkei Club at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and entailed Omura speaking about his personal experiences plus providing those present with advice based upon these experiences.<sup>510</sup> The second event, which Marge Taniwaki alerted him to in early December, involved him being the recipient of NCR/R's "Fighting Spirit Award" in Los Angeles during that group's February 18, 1994, Day of Remembrance commemoration. According to Taniwaki, NCR/R's president, Kay Ochi, indicated that Omura's transportation cost would be covered by NCR/R and that she would officially notify Omura of his award selection by post.<sup>511</sup>

Respecting those of Omura's 1993 diary entries that were emblematic, several seemingly qualify for this designation and so merit referencing here.<sup>512</sup> In 1993 Omura was elevated by kind words directed toward him by Mike Yasutake. In late February, Yasutake sent him a letter that closed with this salute: "We need to propagate the importance of dissent in democracy (and the building of a truly unified society), and your role in history of dissent in Japanese America is invaluable and should be more widely known and I . . . will do my share in doing so."<sup>513</sup> Then in the ebbing of December, Yasutake reprised his generous sentiment: "The sad fact remains that your singular action had really not received the kind of attention that it deserves, which says a great deal about the inadequate understanding of Japanese American community life in relation to the U.S. government oppression during wartime."<sup>514</sup>

#### 1994

Although the 1994 track record of Omura's health was not strewn with critical setbacks, most of the tribulations he faced were ominous ones. The first difficulty, occurring in mid-February, however, was an exception to this general rule: "Had a tough time walking to Payless. Stopped numerous times to rest, particularly my hip, which pained."<sup>515</sup> The second complication, which occurred in mid-March, was slightly more foreboding. "It was a beautiful, warm day, except for a mild wind that blew rather strongly," recorded Omura in his diary. "The only trouble was my body didn't seem to want to go along. Stopped several times to rest, but was not enjoyable."<sup>516</sup> The next episode, at the dawning of April, was rather threatening: "Walked down to [Payless] to pick up medication and experienced a dizzy spell in the drugstore. Had to rest to let it clear. BP [blood pressure] was 107 [diastolic]; a figure not known in recent months. Rested three to four times and relaxed on bed after coming home. Legs were unsteady."<sup>517</sup> The subsequent incidence,

in mid-May, was still more alarming: “Picked up medication at Payless and surprised to find BP at 177/113. Never had been this high in a long time. Looks bad! All that physical labor spading must be the reason.”<sup>518</sup>

In the first half of June, Omura penned a cluster of diary entries that portended doom. (June 3) “BP at Payless 144/92.” (June 8) “Had rough time this evening. After dinner, laid down for a rest and awoke feeling ill. Turning on fan helped but it was some time when the chest pressure was relieved. Clear sign my arteriosclerosis is worsening. This spring has been a tough year for me.” (June 10) “Did not feel well all day.” (June 14) “Started out to walk to Mar Lee and got a little more than a block and knew I couldn’t make it. My hips and legs were too tired and my chest was thumping. Turned back but noticed Bangerts [next-door neighbors] were back [home] and about an hour later [I] called Mrs. Bangert and asked for a lift. Purchased the stamps and mailed the packets. Mrs. Bangert’s courtesy was a godsaver! Another hot day! Mercury at noon at 90 degrees and another record setter predicted. For second consecutive day the mercury hit 99 degrees. Was very much under the weather after leaving Mrs. Bangert. Heart pains repeatedly. Couldn’t carry bag of trash letters from front of front steps to the sidewalk.”<sup>519</sup> Sadly, this painful diary entry was his very last, and six days later James Matsumoto Omura was dead.

Respecting Omura’s reading behavior within this truncated year, it was comprised of only one book, although that was a newly minted and highly significant reference work, the *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*.<sup>520</sup> As with 1993, Omura viewed no documentary films in 1994.

Because he essentially completed a full draft of his memoir in 1993, most of what Omura concerned himself with during 1994 was rewriting portions of the text plus preparing, coordinating, and computer-inputting the linked notes into the manuscript. His last diary entry in



relation to this matter was composed on June 7: “Finally [done] coordinating the ‘Notes’ by six o’clock this evening—200 pages. Few items in my mind have yet to be found but expect to go and write [them out] plus [do] revisions for publication. Important that framework is completed with filling in later.”<sup>521</sup>

In the meantime, Omura kindly accepted speaking engagements from student groups in Denver. One of these was staged at the University of Colorado, Boulder, on January 19, and was sponsored by the Nikkei Club. Held in the Science Auditorium on campus, the event drew “a thin crowd; mixture of Hakujin, blacks, and Japanese.” In attendance was Lane Hirabayashi, a University of Colorado professor in the Asian American Studies Department, who asked Omura whether he was putting a memoir together.<sup>522</sup>

While Omura did not undertake any substantial research in archival repositories during 1994,<sup>523</sup> he did fit into his schedule a great deal of travel to the West Coast. His first trip took place in mid-February when he went to Los Angeles to be honored by NCR/R at a Day of Remembrance program, attended by an estimated crowd of 550 people, with its “Fighting Spirit Award.” The award was made by NCR/R member Frank Emi, who hung a lei on Omura’s neck. Since he had inadvertently left his written text back in Denver, Omura delivered his short acceptance speech extemporaneously.<sup>524</sup>

While in Los Angeles Omura passed his time in an assortment of productive ways. The day prior to the NCR/R event, he had lunch with Paul Tsuneishi at a Japanese restaurant in Little Tokyo. Other diners were Jimmy Tokeshi, the JACL’s Pacific Southwest Regional director, and Elisa Kamimoto, an education specialist at the Japanese American National Museum. Following lunch Omura went to JANM, where he was led on a tour by Kamimoto and introduced to Kaoru Oguri, a museum curator with whom Omura agreed to have a conference a few days later. At

JANM, too, he purchased a copy of their newly published *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*. Scanning its contents, Omura was pleased to find an entry on him as well as “quite a bit on [the] Fair Play Committee in it.”<sup>525</sup>

The day following the NCR/R event, Omura, who was staying at Frank Emi’s San Gabriel home, sat in on an oral history interview that Alan Koch, a Cal State Fullerton history graduate student, conducted with Emi for the Japanese American Project of Fullerton’s Oral History Program. On occasion, Omura discreetly supplemented Emi’s taped recollections with his own memories and commentaries.<sup>526</sup>

Four days later Omura showed up at the Japanese American National Museum for his pre-arranged meeting with Kaoru Oguri, along with Elisa Kamimoto and another JANM staff member, Nancy Araki. The upshot of the meeting was that Araki would do an oral history interview with Omura on February 28 at JANM for its growing oral history collection. That event, which entailed a three-hour taping, duly occurred as scheduled.<sup>527</sup>

Three days after the JANM meeting Omura, along with Emi, drove over to the West Valley United Methodist Church in San Fernando Valley where they had been invited by Paul Tsuneishi, a congregation member, to make a presentation about their World War II experiences. One woman parishioner thanked Omura for “having the courage to lay out my own money to help wartime refugees.” Omura afterwards was surprised to learn that the San Fernando Valley church’s membership was pro-JACL. “Guess we went into the jaws of the nemesis,” observed Omura puckishly.<sup>528</sup>

With the advent of March, Omura was treated (along with the Emis and Kuromiyas) by Brooks and Sumi Iwakiri to a celebratory outing into the San Bernardino Mountains resort of

Lake Arrowhead. Their time spent there revolved around Blue Jay Village (a colony of millionaire homes, which the Iwakiris owned with three other partners). This was only one of the countless kindnesses that this gracious philanthropic and social justice-oriented Los Angeles couple bestowed upon the community of resisters and their supporters. On this occasion, what stuck in Omura's mind was the "fabulous trout lunch" they had at Woody's Boathouse in Lake Arrowhead Village—"the best trout I ever ate"—and the after-lunch walk they took in Blue Jay Village, where they took in the Ice Castle used by the world-class Chinese American skater Michelle Kwan in preparation for the Winter Olympic Games.<sup>529</sup>

Before flying back to Denver, Omura and Frank Emi were invited by filmmaker Emiko Omori to come to San Francisco to be filmed by her in late March for a video documentary she was getting underway on World War II Japanese American resisters. Since she wanted more information on Omura prior to her interview with him, he promised he would send along a biographical statement.

In advance of going to San Francisco on March 8, however, Omura needed to clear his desk of two assignments: proofreading the transcript of the lengthy interview that Art Hansen had conducted with him in 1984; and writing a critical review of the recently published *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*.<sup>530</sup>

Upon arriving in San Francisco and going to the taping site, where an interview with Frank Emi was in progress, Omura watched the proceedings for a while before being driven to the motel where lodging had been booked for him by Emiko Omori. "I have a larger corner room . . . with a triple-sized bed," chortled Omura. He then joined with Mits Koshiyama, Harry Ueno, and Violet de Cristoforo and her husband to assemble for a Chinese-style dinner. The dinner guest list numbered some forty-odd people, including Jack Herzig, Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga, Karl

Matsushita, Dale and Irene Minami, Kiku Funabiki, Jim Hirabayashi, Noriko Bridges and her fiancée, and J. K. Yamamoto. Arriving after the dinner was the writer Hisaye Yamamoto. Upon her greeting Omura, he was surprised to be told by Chizu Omori that she and Yamamoto were good friends.”<sup>531</sup>

On the next day, Omura was videotaped well after 8 p.m. “At the end,” documented Omura, “[I] nearly broke down, tears rolling into my eyes. Emiko came at conclusion and consoled me until I got a grip on my emotions. The cameraman made a point to shake my hand and declared that he had heard many oral interviews but not one that touched him more. . . . Though less expressive, both Chiz Omori and Hisaye Yamamoto remarked [that] my interview was very moving.”<sup>532</sup>

Two days afterwards Omura was involved in still another interview, this time with San Francisco State social work professor and historical researcher Rita Takahashi. Their interview, which began a few minutes after 7 p.m., lasted for over seven hours and included numerous photo sittings. Takahashi told Omura that she was writing a book and also might produce a documentary film. She stated that she had taken on the post of Legislative Education Committee [LEC] director in the 1980s for the JACL redress effort to push this cause. Additionally, “she noted various acts of falsification and other ills and informed the [JACL] hierarchy in writing [about this situation] and was separated from her position because of it.” The next morning Takahashi drove Omura to the San Francisco Airport, from where he caught a plane home to Denver.<sup>533</sup>

A few days after his return to Colorado Omura got a flyer from Russell Endo announcing a Making Waves Committee of Asians in Action-sponsored, Chinook Fund-financed speaking engagement by Frank Emi at the Tomai Towers on April 16. The event, which drew some thirty-

five attendees, went off very smoothly. After it ended, Omura, Emi, Endo and Marge Taniwaki enjoyed dinner and conversation at a Vietnamese restaurant.

During 1994, Omura published several items, including an Op-ed piece in the *Rafu Shimpo* and a review of the Japanese American National Museum's *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History* for the Los Angeles Nikkei monthly *Tozai Times*. Both of these, typically, were contentious and controversial.<sup>534</sup>

As for defining entries in Omura's diary within 1994, these were few in number. Two of them, however, do stand out, and are even spookily compatible. (April 23) "Richard Milhous Nixon, the 37<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, died Friday in a New York hospital, three days after suffering a stroke." (May 27) "The reporter for the *Rafu Shimpo* writes [that] the Deborah Lim Report [is] to be released at [the] National JACL Convention. . . . To be frank, I don't believe it. This is another JACL hoax. The article speaks of a 44-page report which approximates the Presidential Committee Report. The real Lim Report is 94-pages long."

Among compliments for Omura in the final year of his life, only a solitary one surfaces in his diary. In late January, Alex Kajitani of the University of Colorado, Boulder, Nikkei Club wrote to Omura to thank him for his presentation to his campus organization, and then added respectfully: "Your achievements and aspirations are an extremely important part of the Japanese American experience."<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the summary of the hearings, see Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1982). In the interview Omura transacted on August 16, 1985, with family friend and supporter George Matsumonji, Omura

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Papers, Stanford University, Omura shares the following information: “Now in 1981, I attended the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment in Seattle. At that time, I was feeling pretty bad. I had been feeling pretty bad for six years and had been in and out of hospitals. And doctors and cardiologists couldn’t handle it. I came from Bainbridge Island, close by Seattle, so I thought to myself I’d take that in and go see my island home. It would be probably the last time I’d ever see it. I hadn’t been there for thirty-forty years. Something like that.”

<sup>2</sup> The unedited, unannotated diary maintained by James Omura between 1981 and 1994 is archived within the James Omura Papers in the Green Library at Stanford University under the title of “Redress Diary.” Accordingly, all references to this document will hereafter be noted by this simple designation without additional facts of provenance (i.e., Omura Papers, Stanford University).

<sup>3</sup> These problems cover chest discomfort, heart lesions, sore tongue, tender lip, abdominal pain, head fuzziness, eye pain and swelling, head pressure, weight loss, tightness of cheeks, irregular blood pressure, and hip pain. During this brief interval, Omura underwent two visits to medical doctors, received reports from two cardiologists, and had lip surgery performed on him by still another physician.

<sup>4</sup> A case in point is his July 19, 1981, entry:

Denver Post editorial opposes compensation [for Japanese American WWII detention camp victims] and if granted suggest turning funds over to a new foundation on Human Rights. Charged “overwhelming majority” went to concentration camps “willingly.” On career setbacks and lost savings claimed “But all Americans, particularly those called into military service, were required to make similar sacrifices.”

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“When advised Mom [wife Karen Omura] I plan to respond [to the editorial], she blew her top about creating more trouble.”

<sup>5</sup> Here are three such entries:

I mailed Letter-to-Editor response on Redress to the Denver Post. Felt sudden sick feeling about 4:15 p.m. Lasted 45 minutes. At 10 p.m. had momentary dizziness. BP [blood pressure] was 100/84. (July 22)

Walked to S & L [Savings and Loan] to read Wall St. Journal. . . . Breathing was somewhat hampered. The mercury was in the 90's. Rising from playing with Siggy [family dog] . . . after dinner [and] felt slight dizziness and sick feeling in the stomach. Mom checked the BP at 124/80. . . . What is happening? (July 24)

My response to the Post editorial appeared today. Received two lengthy calls—one from . . . a Jewish [man] who took the editorial position. He was hard to convince though he accepted the danger of evacuation happening to another group at some later date. He also agreed martial law to have been proper approach. Afterward suffered from dizziness and walls going in circles. Sick feeling [in] stomach and laid down on couch. (July 30)

<sup>6</sup> See Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 51.

<sup>7</sup> See transcription of “Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians” (Wednesday, September 9, 1981, Seattle Central Community College, Seattle, Washington) and email correspondence from Aiko Yoshinaga Herzig to Arthur Hansen, 15 May 2001, in Omura Papers, Stanford University. The editor thanks Yoshinaga Herzig, a key CWRIC research

associate, who supplied both the transcription and the explanation for the context of Omura's panel testimony. See also *ibid.*, "Written Submission by James M. Omura, Seattle Hearings, CWRIC, October 16, 1981. In addition, see Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga and Marjorie Lee, ed., *Speaking Out for Personal Justice: Site Summaries of Testimonies and Witnesses Registry from the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation & Internment of Civilians Hearings (CWRIC), 1981* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, 2011), 95, 106.

<sup>8</sup> For a portrait of Henry Miyatake (1929-2014), see Brian Niiya, "Henry Miyatake," *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Henry%20Miyatake/> (accessed on November 22, 2014). See also Bob Shimabukuro, "Remembering Henry Miyatake: 'A Man with THE Plan,'" *International Examiner*, November 4, 2014, and Frank Abe, "Henry Miyatake: Seattle Redress Visionary," *Nichi Bei Weekly*, December 18-31, 2014. For information about Miyatake's testimony at the Seattle CWRIC hearings, see Herzig Yoshinaga and Lee, *Speaking Out for Personal Justice*, 98, 107.

<sup>9</sup> On Lawson Inada (1938- ), see Nancy Matsumoto, "Lawson Fusao Inada," *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Lawson%20Fusao%20Inada/> (accessed on November 22, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the life and literary work of Frank Chin (1940- ), see the entry for him in University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, "Asian American Theater," <http://aatheatre.web.unc.edu/2011/01/31/frank-chin-biography/> (accessed on November 22, 2014); see also Frank Abe's review of Chin's classic work of documentary fiction, *Born in the USA: A Story of Japanese America, 1889-1947* (Latham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), in



*Amerasia Journal* 30, 2 (2004): 107-12, and its digital reproduction on the resisters.com website, <http://www.resisters.com/the-great-japanese-american-novel/> (accessed on November 22, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Chin's Seattle CWRIC testimony, according to William Hohri, *Repairing America: An Account of the Movement for Japanese-American Redress* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1984), 125-29, indicted the JACL for its incriminating role in "the formulation of the infamous loyalty oath" administered at the War Relocation Center camps in early 1943 and for its "intention to use the camps to modify Japanese American society, culture, history, and individual behavior." Concluded Chin: "The greatest damage . . . that the government inflicted on Japanese Americans was the imposition of the Japanese American Citizens League as the leaders of the Japanese Americans inside the camps."

<sup>12</sup> On Gordon Hirabayashi (1918-2012) see Cherstin M. Lyon, "Gordon Hirabayashi," *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gordon%20Hirabayashi/> (accessed on November 23, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> On William M. Marutani (1923-2004), see Brian Niiya, "William Marutani," *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/William%20Marutani/> (accessed on November 23, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> On Hugh Burton Mitchell (1907-1996), see Frank Chesley's entry for him on the *Free Online Encyclopedia for Washington State History*, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=5667](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=5667) (accessed on November 24, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> In addition to Jim Akutsu, Frank Chin, and Lawson Inada, three other witnesses at the Seattle CWRIC hearings (one Nisei, Chizuko Omori, and two Sansei, Frank Abe and Rita Takahashi) were destined to play a significant role in Omura's remaining lifetime.

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<sup>16</sup> See Jim Akutsu (1920-1998), interview by Art Hansen, June 9, 12, 1997, Densho,

<http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx> (accessed on August 20, 2015);

and Gene Akutsu (1925-2011), interviewed by Larry Hashima and Steve Fugita, July 25, 1997,

and by Tom Ikeda, April 17, 2008, Densho, <http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx> (accessed on

August 20, 2015). For the larger context of their WWII-related experience, see Eric L. Muller,

*Free to Die for Their Country: The Story of the Japanese American Draft Resisters in World*

*War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), and Eric L. Muller, “The Minidoka Draft

Resisters in a Federal Kangaroo Court,” Chapter 8 in Fiset and Nomura, *Nikkei in the Pacific*

*Northwest*, 176-83.

<sup>17</sup> Searchers for an Asian American literary and historical tradition, Chin and Inada believed

Okada the most noteworthy Nisei novelist. This belief inspired them to reprise his largely

ignored classic work in a self-published version that spawned a 1978 press introduced by Inada

with an afterword by Chin. See John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington

Press, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> Among these health issues were low blood pressure, physical lethargy, dry throat, and just

plain “feeling a bit down.” Omura even had to cancel his scheduled birthday dinner because of

pressure in his throat and elevated blood pressure. He did squeeze in a Veteran’s Day medical

appointment at which his doctor told him that since he wasn’t experiencing chest pains, surgery

was not warranted.

<sup>19</sup> For extensive information on *Current Life*, see Chapter 4 of Arthur A. Hansen, ed., *Nisei*

*Naysayer: The Memoir of Militant Japanese American Journalist Jimmie Omura* (Stanford, CA:

Stanford University Press, 2018).

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<sup>20</sup> Omura's *Rocky Shimpō* editorials in relation to the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee are discussed at length in Chapter 6 of *Nisei Naysayer*.

<sup>21</sup> Citation for this purported *Rafu Shimpō* exchange between Frank Chin and Minoru Yasui neither located nor recalled by Chin.

<sup>22</sup> Lawson Inada to Jim Omura, 18 December 1981, Omura Papers, Stanford University. For bibliographical data on the second volume of *To Serve the Devil*, see note 25 below.

<sup>23</sup> The exertion "caused chest pains" for Omura and convinced him that he was "obviously not in shape." Then, a week later, upon deciding to walk downtown to do some errands, he "experienced wobbly legs and dizziness on putting on a jacket." "Hoping to avoid dizziness," he walked slowly, yet when crossing a street his "dizziness returned." On getting home, he rested on the couch until dinner time, reflecting that what he had just been through "reminded [him] . . . of a day in Seattle."

<sup>24</sup> Harry H. L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

<sup>25</sup> Paul Jacobs and Saul Landon (with Eve Pell), *To Serve the Devil*, vol. 2, *Colonials and Sojourners* (New York: Random House, 1971).

<sup>26</sup> These ailments entailed a sore throat, trouble sleeping, head pain, dizziness, cold in lung, constant coughing, squeak in bronchial region, unusually low blood pressure, painful groin joint, tender right thigh, stomach pain, right chest and upper arm pain, ear infection, unsteady legs, and a woozy feeling.

<sup>27</sup> See Thomas Y. Fujita-Rony, "Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga [1925- ]," *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Aiko%20Herzig-Yoshinaga/> (accessed on December 26, 2014).

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<sup>28</sup> Bill Hosokawa, *JACL in Quest of Justice: The History of the Japanese American Citizens League* (New York: William Morrow, 1982).

<sup>29</sup> For information on the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, see Patricia Wakida's entry in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Heart%20Mountain%20Sentinel%20\(newspaper\)/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Heart%20Mountain%20Sentinel%20(newspaper)/) (accessed on April 25, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> In addition, Omura placed calls to Alice Nakadate, the widow of Paul Nakadate, who had been the FPC's vice chair; Frank Toshiyuki, a Heart Mountain incarcerated whose Caucasian wife Sylvia resided with him both in camp and afterwards in Denver (where in early 1944 she introduced Omura to FPC founding chair Kiyoshi Okamoto's manifestos against the injustice of the Japanese American concentration camps); and Alpha Zocado Wirin, widow of A. L. Wirin, who was simultaneously the attorney for the JACL and the defense lawyer in the late 1944 Cheyenne, Wyoming, federal conspiracy trial (with Omura) of the FPC leaders, who in 1946 had their convictions reversed. But these calls ended in disappointment: Alice Nakadate never returned Omura's message; Frank Toshiyuki reported that his wife Sylvia had died twenty-five years ago; and Alpha Wirin confessed that she had no idea what had happened to her late husband's papers.

<sup>31</sup> After this dinner get-together, Omura and Kinoshita were in communication two more times, both in 1984. Each time Kinoshita rebuffed suggestions proffered by Omura, first (in January) to write a biographical sketch of him, and then (in July) to conduct an interview with him. See Joseph Kinoshita correspondence file in Omura Papers, Stanford University. In his Redress Diary, August 8, 1984, Omura curtly (and correctly) notes: "Reply from Joe Kinoshita. . . . Brief letters. No indication of desire for meeting."

<sup>32</sup> A sticking point was whether to use resisters' names in future publications. Emi, Omura, Nozawa, and Kawamoto believed this to be the author's call, while others objected that real name use could invite reprisals. Asked Chin rhetorically, "Why did they resist if they are unwilling to be known?"

<sup>33</sup> As referenced previously in note 25.

<sup>34</sup> Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

<sup>35</sup> For Mike Masaoka, "Final Report," his 1944 report to JACL officers on his activities as the organization's World War II representative, see Section VIII (Japanese American Citizens League) of Mike M. Masaoka Papers 1931-1991, Special Collections, Marriot Library, University, per its finding aid, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv25720> (accessed on April 28, 2015), or in the research material in Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>36</sup> For an obituary of Harry Honda, see J. K. Yamamoto, "Veteran Nisei Journalist Harry Honda Dies at 93," *Rafu Shimpo*, July 9, 2013, <http://www.rafu.com/2013/07/veteran-nisei-journalist-harry-honda-dies-at-93/> (accessed on April 25, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> As referenced in note 28.

<sup>38</sup> For this interview with Nobu Kawai, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>39</sup> For relevant information on the Gila River Relocation Center, see the entry by Karen J. Leong in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20River/> (accessed on April 25, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> For information pertaining to the *Gila News-Courier*, see Patricia Wakida's entry in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20News-Courier%20\(newspaper\)/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20News-Courier%20(newspaper)/) (accessed on April 25, 2015).

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<sup>41</sup> Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: William Morrow, 1976).

<sup>42</sup> Lillian Baker, *The Concentration Camp Conspiracy: A Second Pearl Harbor* (Lawndale, CA: Americans for Historical Accuracy, 1981). For an overview of Baker's background and writings, see Daniel Tsang's *Subversities* blog entry for July 21, 2014 ("The Real Lillian Baker: Historical Revision in Our Times"), <http://subversities.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-real-lillian-baker-historical.html> (accessed on April 26, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Roger Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1975).

<sup>44</sup> Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa, eds., *East Across the Pacific: Historical and Sociological Studies of Japanese Immigration and Assimilation* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 1972).

<sup>45</sup> For extensive information on *Current Life*, see Chapter 4 of *Nisei Naysayer*.

<sup>46</sup> This took shape as a forty-five-minute tape-recorded interview conducted by Omura. For this July 13, 1982, interview, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>47</sup> The following diary entries detail Omura's nagging problems:

I'm sort of confined to the house because of my allergies (July 22). I had difficulty sleeping last night and awoke four times (July 28). Have tender upper right tooth. It really pained past few days (August 5). Ear pains again. It's more frequent (August 10).

Diagnosis by [dentist] was for removal of remaining upper teeth and have denture made and cleaning of lower teeth (August 11). Ear ache lasted all day and evening. Worries me! (August 16). Third ear ache in 10 days (August 20). Worried about foot swelling (August 24). It is now two full weeks since the [cold] sore occurred (August 29).

<sup>48</sup> See Omura's entries in his Redress Diary for the following 1982 dates: 9/21, 9/22, 9/29, 10/10, 10/26, 10/29, 11/1, 11/4, 11/13.

<sup>49</sup> See "Mike Masaoka's Rebuttal to Critics," delivered at the Hyatt Airport Hotel in Los Angeles on August 10, 1982. Available online courtesy of the resister.com website,

<http://resisters.com/learn-more/jacl/mike-masaokas-rebuttal-to-critics/> (accessed on May 2, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> J. M. "Jimmie" Omura, letter to the editor, *Asian Week*, August 26, 1982. In this letter Omura took exception to the cited statement of JACL President Ronald K. Wakabayashi that "the breach had been healed between the Sanseis and the Niseis as an outcome of the redress hearings" (which Omura claimed had been manipulated by the JACL).

<sup>51</sup> Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA* (as cited in note 34 above) and *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II* (Malabar, FL: Krieger, 1981); Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Shawn Wong, eds., *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974); Frank Chin, *Chickencoop Chinaman/Year of the Dragon: Two Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); James McGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: Soldier of Freedom* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970); Leo Katcher, *Earl Warren: A Political Biography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Gerald T. Dunne, *Hugo Black and the Judicial Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977); Budd Fukei, *Japanese American Story* (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1976); J. Edgar Hoover, *The Story of the FBI* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954); William Douglas, *The Court Years, 1939-1975: The Autobiography of William O. Douglas* (New York: Random House, 1980); Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); John Modell, *The Economics and*

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*Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900-1942* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977); and Audrie Gardner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese Americans during World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>52</sup> *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner* (1980), produced by Visual Communications, Los Angeles, and directed by Robert Nakamura.

<sup>53</sup> In early June, Omura suffered a cold bordering on pneumonia and requiring recuperative measures; in late July and early August he experienced severe fatigue and bodily soreness from doing yard work in extreme heat; and then in late December he was diagnosed with angina and, upon doctor's orders, was hospitalized briefly in the critical-care unit. See Redress Diary, June 24 and 7-9; July 16, 26, and August 1-2, 4, 10-11, 15, 17.

<sup>54</sup> Secondary works read by Omura during 1983 included the following: Dorothy Swaine Thomas and Richard Nishimoto, *The Spoilage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946); Garrett Kaoru Hongo, *Yellow Light* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); Leonard J. Arrington, *The Price of Prejudice: The Japanese American Relocation Center in Utah during World War II* (Logan, UT: Utah State University, 1962); Douglas W. Nelson, *Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin; University of Wisconsin, Department of History, 1976; William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896); and Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973). Omura also made headway in two other books: Frank F. Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese Americans* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc., 1976); and James Oda, *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans: Partisan Fighters from America's Concentration Camp* (Los Angeles: Privately published, 1981).



<sup>55</sup> As Omura's 1983 Redress Diary entries for January 21, April 24-25, July 7, September 23, October 9, and December 2 and 5 indicate, his manuscript progress consisted of filing correspondence, tidying up his office space, putting his desk in order, rearranging his office furniture, assessing needs such as bookshelves, clipping out newspaper items for later reference, and taking notes on his reading. In only a single entry, that for September 23, does Omura signify more direct work on his manuscript: "Got a little start on research."

<sup>56</sup> The one time that Omura even alludes in 1983 to the nature of his manuscript is within his diary entry for December 12, when he writes, after staying up all night to compile notes for Kazuo Ito's *Issei*: "This book forms the beginning chapter of historical novel I plan to write of what conditions were in Japan and the various Issei were impelled to cross 4000 miles of unknown seas to seek their fortunes in an alien land. This is good stuff!"

<sup>57</sup> See the *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on the National Council for Japanese American Redress by Martha Nakagawa,

<http://encyclopedia.densho.org/National%20Council%20for%20Japanese%20American%20Redress/> (accessed on May 4, 2015); see also William Hohri, *Repairing America: An Account of the Movement for Japanese-American Redress* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> For information on William Hohri, see Martha Nakagawa's entry in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/William%20Hohri/> (accessed on May 4, 2015). See also, respectively, the September 12, 1997, and the June 12, 1988, interviews with William Hohri by Tom Ikeda and Gary Kawaguchi for Densho, <http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx> (accessed on May 4, 2015), and Mitch Maki and Darcie Iki for the Japanese American National Museum's

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Discover Nikkei website, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews/profiles/137/> (accessed on May 4, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> For a portrait of Yuriko Hohri see the July 18, 2011, interview Martha Nakagawa did with her for Densho, <http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx> (accessed on May 4, 2015).

<sup>60</sup> For a personal and professional biographical overview of Ellen Godbey Carson, see the statement released upon her receipt of the 2006 Margaret Brent Award, <http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/women/bios/carson.authche> (accessed on May 4, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> For pertinent data on Joy Kogawa, see the entry on her in the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/joy-kogawa/> (accessed on May 4, 2015); for a depiction of how Kogawa's novel *Obasan* catalyzed the Japanese Canadian redress movement, see Masumi Izumi's entry on "Japanese Canadian exclusion and incarceration" in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese%20Canadian%20exclusion%20and%20incarceration/> (accessed on May 4, 2015).

<sup>62</sup> See [http://www.eloquent-systems.com/customers/jasc/Merry\\_and\\_John\\_Omori\\_Papers\\_and\\_Photo\\_collection/Merry\\_and\\_John\\_Omori\\_Papers\\_and\\_Photo\\_collection-430.html](http://www.eloquent-systems.com/customers/jasc/Merry_and_John_Omori_Papers_and_Photo_collection/Merry_and_John_Omori_Papers_and_Photo_collection-430.html)

(accessed on May 7, 2015) for data relating to John Omori (1924-1999) and Merry Fujihara Omori (1929-1993) and their named collection of verbal and visual documents. On Merry Fujihara Omori, see also Elaine H. Kim and Janice Otani, *With Silk Wings: Asian American Women at Work* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Women United of California, 1983), 43-49. Both of the Omoris testified at the Chicago public hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and

Internment of Civilians held at Northeastern Illinois University on September 21-22, 1981. See Herzig Yoshinaga and Lee, *Speaking Out for Personal Justice*, 133-34.

<sup>63</sup> For useful information on Kitano (1926-2002), see the following two sources: Dennis Ogawa and Christine Kitano's "Harry Kitano" entry in the *Densho Encyclopedia*,

<http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Harry%20Kitano/> (accessed on May 5, 2015); and "Finding Aid for the Harry H. L. Kitano Papers, ca. 1960-, UCLA, Library, Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Online Archive of California,

<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt9h4nd5h8/> (accessed on May 5, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> On the personal and professional background of Taylor (1936- ), see Encyclopedia.com,

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3417200141/taylor-sandra-c-1936.html> (accessed on May 5, 2015). Sandra C. Taylor is most reputed within Japanese American studies for two books, one she co-edited with Roger Daniels and H. L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986); and the other she authored, *Jewel of the Desert: Japanese Americans at Topaz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>65</sup> On Kawakami, see the following references: Susan Richardson, "Toyo Suyemoto (Kawakami)—1916-2003," *Amerasia Journal* 30 (2004): iii-v,

<http://uclajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.17953/amer.30.2.g77l0uwqm58rl860> (accessed May 5, 2015);

John Streamas' entry on her for the *Densho Encyclopedia*,

[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Toyo\\_Suyemoto/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Toyo_Suyemoto/) (accessed May 5, 2015); and Maureen H.

Donovan and Shelley Bloom, "The Toyo Suyemoto Papers: A Guide," Ohio State University, University Libraries, Rare Books and Manuscripts, 2006, [http://library.osu.edu/finding-](http://library.osu.edu/finding-aids/rarebooks/suyemoto.php)

[aids/rarebooks/suyemoto.php](http://library.osu.edu/finding-aids/rarebooks/suyemoto.php) (accessed on May 5, 2015).

<sup>66</sup> On Okihiro (1945- ), see his home page, <http://www.garyokihiro.com/> (accessed on May 15, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> For relevant data on Irons (1940- ), see “Professor Peter Irons,” The Great Courses, <http://library.osu.edu/finding-aids/rarebooks/suyemoto.php> (accessed on May 5, 2015); *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on him by Stan Yogi, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Peter\\_Irons/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Peter_Irons/) (accessed on May 5, 2015); and Wikipedia entry for “Peter H. Irons,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_H.\\_Irons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_H._Irons) (May 5, 2015).

<sup>68</sup> For a comparison of these two perspectives on redress, see the following two essays in Daniels, Kitano, Taylor, *Japanese Americans*: John Tateishi, “The Japanese American Citizens League and the Struggle for Redress,” 191-95, [http://books.google.com/books?id=txqzmXqo3McC&pg=PA191&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=txqzmXqo3McC&pg=PA191&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false) (accessed on May 5, 2015), and William Hohri, “Redress as a Movement Towards Enfranchisement,” 196-99, [http://books.google.com/books?id=txqzmXqo3McC&pg=PA191&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=txqzmXqo3McC&pg=PA191&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false) (accessed on May 5, 2015). See also, William Hohri, review of *Japanese Americans*, ed. Daniels, Taylor, and Kitano, 219-22, especially the last two pages.

<sup>69</sup> For John Tateishi profile, see Japanese American National Museum, <http://www.janm.org/projects/ec/conference/speakers/91/> (accessed May 14, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> For Raymond Uno biography, see *ibid.*, <http://www.janm.org/projects/ec/conference/speakers/94/> (accessed May 14, 2015).

<sup>71</sup> Daniels told Omura that it was the first time he had heard Hosokawa “even a little give grudging recognition to the resisters,” while also accounting for the JACL critics’ silence by stating that “no one threw the first stone.” See Redress Diary, March 11, 1983.

<sup>72</sup> In speaking later with Gordon Hirabayashi, Omura was told by him that “Min got overheated and shouldn’t have taken [the defensive] position he did.” See *ibid.*, March 12, 1983.

<sup>73</sup> For information on Chizu Omori (1930- ), see “Speakers: Remembering Japanese American Redress,” a forum sponsored by the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest, the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, the Department of American Ethnic Studies and the University of Washington Libraries, and the Japanese American Citizens League, Seattle and Lake Washington chapters, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/History/redress/bio.html> (accessed on May 5, 2015).

<sup>74</sup> On Frank Abe (1951- ), see Japanese American National Museum, “Speaking Up! Democracy, Justice, Dignity :A National Conference Commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988,” <http://www.janm.org/conference2013/conference/speakers/58/> (accessed on May 5, 2015). See also, “Short Biography of Producer/Director Frank Abe” and “Full Biography of Producer/Director Frank Abe,” *Conscience and the Constitution*, <http://resisters.com/about-us/production-crew> (accessed on May 5, 2015).

<sup>75</sup> For a biographical portrait of Minola Tamesa (1908-?), see “Characters,” *Conscience and the Constitution*, [http://Resisters.com/conscience/the\\_story/characters/tamesa\\_min.html](http://Resisters.com/conscience/the_story/characters/tamesa_min.html) (accessed on May 5, 2015). For the interview with Uhachi Tamesa, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>76</sup> On Jim Akutsu, see note 16 above.

<sup>77</sup> On Shosuke Sasaki (1912-2002), see Brian Niiya’s entry in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Shosuke%20Sasaki/> (accessed May 5, 2015). See also, his *Seattle Times* obituary, November 9, 10, 2002,

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/seattletimes/obituary.aspx?n=shosuke-sasaki&pid=585782>

(accessed May 5, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> For information on Henry Miyatake, see note 8 above. For the March 23-25, 1983, interview with Miyatake, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>79</sup> For information on David Ishii (1935-2012) and his Seattle bookstore, see Michael Upchurch, "Longtime Bookseller David Ishii was Quite a Story Himself," *Seattle Times*, March 2, 2012, <http://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/longtime-bookseller-david-ishii-was-quite-a-story-himself/> (accessed on May 5, 2015).

<sup>80</sup> Jere Takahashi (1943- ) a longtime faculty member in the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley, where as a sociologist he has taught courses in Asian American Studies, authored a highly influential volume, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), and served as director of Asian Pacific American Student Development. For more information on Takahashi, see Asian American and Diaspora Studies, UC Berkeley, <http://aaads.berkeley.edu/faculty/jere-takahashi/> (accessed on January 6, 2016).

<sup>81</sup> At this point, too, Omura began transcribing the first batch of many oral history interviews, on a compensated basis, for Frank Chin's in-progress manuscript on the Heart Mountain draft resistance movement. This exacting task, from which Omura learned much, occupied him for numerous all-night stands. With regards to Omura's transcriptionist role in 1983, see the following entries in his Redress Diary: January 1, 18; February 5, 8, 10, 14; March 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 15, 17; April 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18; and November 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

<sup>82</sup> On Loni Ding, see Walter Addiego, "Emmy Award-winning Filmmaker Loni Ding Dies," March 12, 2010, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Emmy-Award-winning-filmmaker-Loni->

[Ding-dies-3196841.php](#) (accessed on May 7, 2015). See also, “About Loni Ding (1931-2010), Center for Educational Telecommunication, n.d., <http://www.cetel.org/ding.html> (accessed on May 7, 2015). On her two major films relating to Japanese Americans, see Brian Niiya’s entries in the *Densho Encyclopedia* on “Nisei Soldier: Standard Bearer for an Exiled People” (1983), [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nisei%20Soldier:%20Standard%20Bearer%20for%20an%20Exiled%20People%20\(film\)](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nisei%20Soldier:%20Standard%20Bearer%20for%20an%20Exiled%20People%20(film)) (accessed on May 7, 2015) and “The Color of Honor: The Japanese American Soldier in WWII” (1987), [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/The%20Color%20of%20Honor:%20The%20Japanese%20American%20Soldier%20in%20WWII%20\(film\)](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/The%20Color%20of%20Honor:%20The%20Japanese%20American%20Soldier%20in%20WWII%20(film)) (accessed on May 7, 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Available evidence suggests that Yoichi Shimatsu (1948-?) was born in Yokohama, Japan, around 1948, but came to San Francisco as an infant. Omura knew him at the time when he was working in the Bay Area with the filmmaker Loni Ding and afterwards when he was spearheading the *Nikkei Review* in association with Gary Kawaguchi. For more information on Shimatsu’s life and his activities, see note 185 below and also the extensive correspondence between him and Omura in the Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>84</sup> Miyako “Miya” Okawara (1921-2003) was introduced to Omura by Yoichi Shimatsu. A resident of San Francisco, Okawara was a member (and likely also an employee) of the Northern California Conference of the United Church of Christ. For additional information on Okawara, see her substantial correspondence with Omura in the Omura Papers, Stanford University. See also, *ibid.*, a spring 1985 postal exchange between Omura and Miya Okawara’s son, Tom Okamura, a resident of Chicago who met Omura while in that city previously in conjunction with National Council for Japanese-American Redress (NCJAR) business and research.

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<sup>85</sup> See Arthur A. Hansen's entry on "Harry Ueno" in *Densho Encyclopedia*,  
[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Harry\\_Ueno/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Harry_Ueno/) (accessed on May 7, 2015).

<sup>86</sup> See Stan Yogi's entry on "Dale Minami" in *ibid.*,  
[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Dale\\_Minami/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Dale_Minami/) (accessed on May 7, 2015).

<sup>87</sup> Omura labored under the erroneous assumption that the Tolan Committee Hearings in February 1942 were held at the War Memorial Building instead of the Post Office Building. For an enlargement and clarification on this situation, see note 75 in Chapter 4 of *Nisei Naysayer*.

<sup>88</sup> Ding decided to switch her film's focus from resistance activity to military service. Writing to Yoichi Shimatsu in December 1985, Omura rehashed this altered situation. "In 1983," he complained, "Loni Ding flubbed the Resistance story which I personally have been convinced should be told and will become a focal chapter in the projected book. . . . Loni obviously sheds no tears on her substitute 'Nisei Soldiers' documentary which has been accorded numerous honors and awards. The 'Nisei Soldiers' is an appeal to popular conventional establishment thinking." See James M. Omura, letter to Yoichi Shimatsu, 30 December 1985, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>89</sup> On Franklin Odo, see entry in *Densho Encyclopedia*,  
[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Franklin\\_Odo/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Franklin_Odo/) (accessed on May 7, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> On Clifford Uyeda, see Greg Robinson's *Densho Encyclopedia* entry,  
<http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Clifford%20Uyeda/> (accessed on May 7, 2015). See also, Clifford Uyeda, *Suspended: Growing Up Asian in America* (San Francisco: National Japanese American Historical Society, 2000).

<sup>91</sup> See the following online item from Teachers College, Columbia University, for Thomas James' professional career: <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/news.htm?articleId=6097> (accessed on



May 7, 2012). See also, Thomas James, *Exile Within: The Schooling of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>92</sup> There are, to be sure, entries in Omura's 1983 diary vividly documenting that the praise he received was dampened somewhat by critical comments, even from close allies: "I think he [Frank Chin] didn't like my New York Nichibei [January 6, 13, 1983] article ["Dissenting View of Masaoka's Account"]. He called me a 'pussy footer.' He also seemed a bit teed off by my saying he [Chin] is 'caustic' and spent a great deal of time explaining why [he] thought it was unnecessary" (February 14); "[Frank Chin told me that] Dwight Chuman worried [that] my article [for the *Rafu Shimpo*] miscast me as [a] JACL bad mouth" (June 6); and "[In William] Hohri's recent response . . . he speculates on my paranoia about JACL coercion of the Asian press. He also raised the question of style—a throwback to the past" (August 30). See Redress Diary entries for dates indicated.

<sup>93</sup> See James Omura, review of *JACL in Quest of Justice*, by Bill Hosokawa, *Amerasia Journal* 11 (1984): 97-102. The bottom line for Omura was this: "He [Hosokawa] is . . . a well-paid hireling subverting his not inconsiderable talents and literary reputation to espouse the questionable virtues of a racially discredited organization. . . . The book is replete with partial and total omissions that color and distort the history of JACL."

<sup>94</sup> This year Omura celebrated his seventy-second birthday and, for one of the only times, voted a straight Republican ticket. See entries for November 6 and November 27 in his Redress Diary.

<sup>95</sup> Indeed, on fifty-nine days his diary mentions one or another concern. His complications consisted of back/neck/shoulder/neck/armpit/chest/hip/leg pains; ear/head/stomach/thigh/crotch aches; influenza; fatigue; dizziness; wooziness; heat exhaustion; and labored breathing).

<sup>96</sup> On that occasion he was “overcome with dizziness.” His blood pressure registered “158/110 on the old sphygmomanometer [blood pressure gauge]” and he was “engulfed” by the “feeling of sickness.” See Redress Diary, October 22, 1984.

<sup>97</sup> This time the problem was canker sores inside his mouth that resisted medication and “hurt tremendously,” which led him to “considering going to emergency” but ended up with his receiving outpatient treatment. See *ibid.*, October 30, November 1-3, 1984.

<sup>98</sup> “I’ve got my stamina back” (January 14); “I’m gradually improving my ability to withstand exertion better” (January 26); and “I woke up this morning with the leg feeling surprisingly well” (October 12). See *ibid* for dates noted.

<sup>99</sup> The books Omura read fully were: Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March* (New York: University Books, 1956); Karl Yoneda, *Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1983); Peter Irons, *Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Hamilton Fish, *Tragic Deception: FDR and America’s Involvement in World War II* (Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1983); and John Tateishi, *And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps* (New York: Random House, 1984). Those he read selectively were: Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Ray Ginger, *Altgeld’s America: The Lincoln Ideal Versus Changing Realities* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1958); Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); and John Frost, *The American Poetry Anthology* (Santa Cruz, CA: American Poetry Association, 1982). In addition to these books, Omura read two very important articles related to his manuscript: Raymond Okamura, “The American Concentration Camps: A Cover-Up through

Euphemistic Terminology,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 10 (1982): 95-109; and Paul R. Spickard, “The Nisei Assume Power: Japanese [American] Citizens League, 1941-1942,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 52 (May 1983) 147-74.

<sup>100</sup> The single documentary film Omura viewed was Loni Ding, director, *Nisei Soldier: Standard Bearer for an Exiled People* (San Francisco: Vox Productions, 1984).

<sup>101</sup> On October 25, Omura notes: “I thought I had settled on a beginning [to my manuscript] but today I got a new idea to—a new opening paragraph—precede it. The previous beginning likely will be worked in with slight variations.” See Redress Diary for date noted.

<sup>102</sup> See 1984 entries in *ibid* for February 4, June 18, and December 28. Hohri’s manuscript was published in 1988 under the title of *Repairing America*.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, the entries in *ibid* for January 9 and June 21, 26.

<sup>104</sup> These interviews, along with others of a related nature, would later form the animating core of Frank Chin’s 2002 documentary novel, *Born in the USA*. For information about these interviews, see Manuscript, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, “Guide to Frank Chin Oral History Collection 1974-1986,” Cage 654, <http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/finders/cg654.htm> (accessed on May 15, 2015). The interviews he transcribed were with Gloria Kubota, the wife of Fair Play Committee (FPC) leader Guntaro Kubota, and the Kubotas’ attorney daughter Grace Kubota Ybarra; Uhachi Tamesa, the father of Minola “Min” Tamesa, a draft resister and an FPC steering committee member; Nobu Kawai and John Kitasako, two staff members of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, which editorially opposed the FPC; and curfew and draft resister Gordon Hirabayashi. To gain an insight as to John Kitasako’s outlook on his Heart Mountain incarceration experience and the military draft, see these three online postings: Harry S. Truman Library and Museum,

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/japanese\\_internment/documents/index.php?documentdate=1943-04-20&documentid=7&pagenumber=1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/japanese_internment/documents/index.php?documentdate=1943-04-20&documentid=7&pagenumber=1) (accessed on May 15,

2015); Calisphere, University of California,

<http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft4m3nb1w8/?layout=metadata> (accessed on May 15, 2015),

and *Conscience and the Constitution*,

[http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/compliance/the\\_draft/06\\_draftees02\\_p.html](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/compliance/the_draft/06_draftees02_p.html)

(accessed on May 15, 2015). All of these interviews transcribed by Omura are available in the Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>105</sup> Jimmie [Omura], letter to Debbie Kubota, September 26, 1984, *ibid.* See also, all of the other documents with this letter in the East West Players correspondence file, *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> On Yosh Kuromiya (1923- ),

[http://Resisters.com/conscience/the\\_story/characters/kuromiya\\_yosh.html](http://Resisters.com/conscience/the_story/characters/kuromiya_yosh.html) (accessed May 15,

2015) and Japanese American National Museum, Discover Nikkei,

<http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2011/6/28/yosh-kuromiya-nisei-during-wwii/>

(accessed on May 15, 2015); on Mits Koshiyama (1924-2009), see History Matters,

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8328/> (accessed on May 15, 2015) and Public Broadcasting

System, “Characters,”

[http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/the\\_story/characters/koshiyama\\_mits.html](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/the_story/characters/koshiyama_mits.html) (accessed on May 15, 2015).

<sup>107</sup> For information on Hiroshi Kashiwagi (1922- ), see Patricia Wakida’s entry on him in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Hiroshi\\_Kashiwagi/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Hiroshi_Kashiwagi/) (accessed on May 15, 2015); on the life and career of Roger Shimomura (1939- ), see the *Densho Encyclopedia* entry

on him by Nancy Matsumoto, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Roger\\_Shimomura/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Roger_Shimomura/) (accessed on May 15, 2015).

<sup>108</sup> On Robert Ito (1931- ), see Fandango,

<http://www.fandango.com/robertito/biography/p34667> (accessed on May 15, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> See entry for August 19 in Redress Diary.

<sup>110</sup> On George Takei (1937- ), see “George Takei Biography: Actor-Activist,”

<http://www.biography.com/people/george-takei-21232151> (accessed on May 16, 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Because Omura’s visit occurred in the midst of a very hot spell of summer weather, Hansen worried how his interviewee would fare given that his family home lacked air conditioning. His concern became acute when he discovered that one piece of Omura’s luggage contained nothing but different types of medication, with much of it pertaining to what Omura ominously described as his “cardiac condition.”

<sup>112</sup> In the very few taping breaks, Omura continued his research pursuits in Hansen’s files, to the point where after dinner each night he remained up until near midnight to skim and take notes on selected material. Then, on the subsequent mornings, when Hansen arose for breakfast, he found Omura seated on the living room couch fervently awaiting the next day’s interviewing session.

<sup>113</sup> See James M. Omura, interview by Arthur A. Hansen, August 22, 23, 24, 25, 1984, interview 1765, tape recording and transcript, Japanese American Project, Oral History Program [Center for Oral and Public History], California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton, CA. For a published edited and annotated version of the Omura/Hansen interview, see Arthur A. Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project, Part IV: Resisters* (Munich: DE: K. G. Saur, 1995), 131-343. For Omura’s post-interview message about whom he admired, see note 92, page 335. This interview is also available online, Calisphere, University of

California, [http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft1f59n61r&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft1f59n61r&doc.view=entire_text) (accessed on May 16, 2015).

<sup>114</sup> On Elaine Kim, see her Ethnic Studies Department, University of California Berkeley, homepage, <http://ethnicstudies.berkeley.edu/faculty/profile.php?person=8> (accessed on May 16, 2015).

<sup>115</sup> As quoted in Redress Diary on September 5 entry.

<sup>116</sup> Yasuo Sasaki (1911-2008), a Nisei, is profiled in Chapter 3, note 41, of *Nisei Naysayer*; on Joseph Tadashi Oyama (1912-2000), a Nisei born in Suisun, California, and died in Berkeley, California, see Greg Robinson's *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on his sister, "Mary Oyama Mittwer," [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Mary\\_Oyama\\_Mittwer/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Mary_Oyama_Mittwer/) (accessed on January 6, 2016); and on Richard Oyama (1950- ), the Sansei son of Joe Oyama, see his biographical information, along with a photo and an artistic statement, the following posting on the Japanese American National Museum's Discover Nikkei website, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/author/oyama-richard/> (accessed on January 6, 2016).

As for Raymond Yukio Okamura (1934- ), this Nisei chemist born in Fresno, California, spent three years of his childhood incarcerated at the World War II Gila River concentration camp in Arizona, graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1950s, and married Babe Taeko Sakai in 1961. He later became a prominent community activist-scholar who demonstrated against the Vietnam War, and (as a progressive and critical JACL member) not only inspired and campaigned for Japanese American redress and reparations, but also authored a series of seminal journal and newspaper articles aimed at repealing the Emergency Detention Act (Title II) of the Internal Security Act of 1950, heralding the significance of Michi Weglyn's 1976 book *Years of Infamy*, decrying the cover-up of the WWII Japanese concentration camp via

euphemistic terminology, validating the pardoning of Iva Toguri (aka “Tokyo Rose”), and challenging the depiction of the heroic role of Japanese American soldiers as against Nikkei resisters in the Smithsonian Institution’s 1987 bicentennial exhibition “A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution.” For an in-depth assessment of Okamura’s activities, see Alice Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), Chapter 6, “America’s ‘Concentration Camps,’” 232-86, particularly 253-65, and Chapter 9, “Representations of Internment in Art and Media, and the Lessons of History,” 382-434, especially 384-96. For additional information on Okamura, see the August 11, 1981, statement he submitted to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, “The Issue of Imprisoning Children,” in Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>117</sup> These two interviews are available in Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>118</sup> J. M. Omura, review of *Justice at War: The Stories of the Japanese American Internment Cases* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), by Peter Irons, *Amerasia Journal* 10 (1983): 127-29. Calling Irons’ book an “epic work,” Omura lauds the author for taking to task such major participants in the World War II eviction and incarceration tragedy of Japanese Americans as Franklin Roosevelt, Roger Baldwin, John J. McCloy, Henry Simpson, Francis Biddle, and Edward Ennis, but regrets that “people such as Saburo Kido and Mike Masaoka . . . who inflicted trauma and personal tragedy in our domestic climate should escape accountability and only be subject to condemnation in the court of history.” See *ibid.*, 129.

<sup>119</sup> Accompanying this news item was a note written by editorial assistant Richard Oyama: “I would personally like to express my respect and admiration for the stand you have taken in your

life.” Given Omura’s strained past relationship with Richard Oyama’s father, Joe Oyama, this message must have been exceptionally welcome.

<sup>120</sup> See entry for September 27 in *Redress Diary*.

<sup>121</sup> See entry for November 19 in *ibid*.

<sup>122</sup> See entry for December 21 in *ibid*.

<sup>123</sup> See respective entries in *Redress Diary* for January 5, January 19, May 21, July 26, and October 10. Arrayed against this landside of acclaim, though, was a “real pessimistic” response in early May from Omura’s ex-wife Caryl Gertler to his request for her assistance [on his manuscript]—“cooperation was unlikely [for she didn’t] believe I would have the energy or information to complete [the] book.” See, May 7, entry, *ibid*.

<sup>124</sup> Among the fifty-six germane entries are ones taking up throat congestion, earache, mental fuzziness, high/low blood pressure, backache, thigh pain, sore toe, logy feeling, leg pain, arthritic hip, stomach aches, exhaustion, respiratory difficulty, swollen wrist, leg muscle pain, jawbone pain, high/low pulse rate, dizziness, blacking out, sleep disorder, weight gain, canker sore, and bleeding.

<sup>125</sup> Take, for example, Omura’s early springtime entries alluding to his being exhausted: “Still overcome by exhaustion. . . . Strange, merely performed supervisory activities, not physical labor, except for limited pruning and chain saw and drill repairs” (April 30); and “I just tried to recover from exhaustion. I’m disappointed with my physical condition. I had thought I was in good health in a relative sense” (May 1). A bit later, Omura’s condition worsened for a different reason: “I was reading when suddenly [I] had a sick feeling in [my] stomach and sight got dark and it seemed the ceiling was trying to rotate. . . . BP surprisingly was on the higher side 120/96. Can’t account for the near-blackout” (May 11). Then, in mid-summer, the problem area shifted



to an enduring earache: “The situation is growing to a critical stage. This is the fifth attack in twelve days and the pain period keeps lengthening” (July 18).

<sup>126</sup> This manuscript would later be published as *Repairing America*, as cited in note 11.

<sup>127</sup> Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941); Ryūsaku Tsunoda, *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958); Morris L. Ernst, *The First Freedom* (New York: Macmillan, 1946); Henry Steele Commager, *Freedom, Loyalty, Dissent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954); Robert B. Downs, ed., *The First Freedom: Liberty and Justice in the World of Books and Reading* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1960); Anthony J. Hilder, *The Warlords of Washington (Secrets of Pearl Harbor): An Interview with Col. Curtis Dall* (Washington D.C.: Liberty Lobby, 1973); Curtis B. Dall, *F.D.R.: My Exploited Father-in-Law* (Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1982); U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, *Japanese-American and Aleutian Wartime Relocation* (H.R. 3387, H.R. 4110, and H.R. 4322). *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Governmental Relations*. 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., June 20, 21, 27 and Sept. 12, 1984 (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985); Mark Howland Rawitsch, *No Other Place: Japanese American Pioneers in a Southern California Neighborhood* (Riverside, CA: University of California, Department of History, 1983); Thomas and Nishimoto, *The Spoilage*, as cited in note 54; manuscript of Richard Drinnon’s biographical study of Dillon S. Myer; Alan Takeo Moriyama, *Imingaisha: Japanese Emigration Companies and Hawaii, 1894-1908* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985); Stefan Aiko Tanaka, “The Nikkei on Bainbridge Island, 1883-1942” (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 1977); Yuzo Murayama, “The Economic History of Japanese Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest, 1890-1920” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1982); Morton Melvin Grodzins, “Political Aspects

of the Japanese Evacuation” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1945); Paul Bailey, *City in the Sun: The Japanese Concentration Camp at Poston, Arizona* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1971); Masayo Duus, *Tokyo Rose: Orphan of the Pacific* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1979); and Eric Frederick Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* (New York: Knopf, 1952). During 1985 Omura also viewed the 1976 film *Bound for Glory* based upon folksinger-social activist Woody Guthrie’s 1943 autobiography by the same title. In addition, Omura watched filmmaker Stephen Okazaki’s 1985 Academy Award-nominated documentary film *Unfinished Business* about three Nisei (Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, and Minoru Yasui) who challenged their World War II convictions for curfew violations.

<sup>128</sup> The manuscript entitled “Shattered Lives” that Omura “completed” before his death in 1994 included an opening chapter that chronicled the history of Japan from prehistoric times to the early modern period, Japanese emigration to the United States, and the origins of the anti-Japanese movement in the United States. For a variety of reasons discussed within the “Note on Editing” section of *Nisei Naysayer* it was decided to delete this chapter from the version of Omura’s memoir prepared for publication. However, it is available in Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>129</sup> This situation no doubt led Omura to ask Art Hansen, and likely others, for an opinion as to what approach he should take in his manuscript so that it would make the most impact and have the most enduring value. In his March 17 Redress Diary entry, Omura quoted at length Hansen’s response to his request.

In your case, I think you should stick with writing an autobiographical study which uses your life experiences as a basis for commenting upon the historical experiences of

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Japanese Americans prior to, during, and after World War II. This will give your book your idiosyncratic point of view while at the same time registering a social comment which will apply to a lesser or greater degree to many others of your ethnic background. Stick to what you have always done so well. Make your book “The Passing Show,” adding of course a more straightforward subtitle that would convey the precise contents of the volume. . . . Naturally, the centerpiece of your ‘autobiography-cum-cultural critique’ would be your situation relative to the evacuation, both as a contemporary and a current issue in American life. The advantage of such an approach would be that an autobiographical account involves an automatic structure, leaving you free to concentrate on substance and style instead of organization. The book would be not history, as generally understood, but fall more properly into that genre called ‘cultural journalism.’ . . . An alternative approach would be to write a polemical expose of the JACL, partly from a personal point of view but also containing what might be considered a counter institutional history to the one produced by . . . Bill Hosokawa.

As quoted from a 13 June 1985 letter sent by Art Hansen to James Omura, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>130</sup> Tatsumi Obelle “Arthur” Iwasaki (1914-2000) was born in Ogden, Utah, and died in Denver, Colorado. During World War II he was incarcerated at the Santa Anita Assembly Center, the Granada Relocation Center, and the Tule Lake Segregation Center.

<sup>131</sup> Omura’s March 17, 1985, three-tape interview with Iwasaki is archived in the Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>132</sup> For this report, see *ibid*.

<sup>133</sup> For a portrait of Kiku Hori Funabiki (1924- ), see Brian Tomei Dempster, *Making Home from War: Stories of Japanese American Resettlement* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2011), 16-29.

See also Kiku Funabiki, letter to James Omura, June 12, 1985, Omura Papers, Stanford University. Funabiki wrote to Omura because of the military resistance of her Kibei cousin Tow Hori. Although Omura included a chapter in his “Shattered Lives” manuscript on military resistance, this chapter, for editorial reasons, was omitted from the present version of Omura’s *Nisei Naysayer* memoir. In addition to this intended chapter, as well as numerous oral history interviews and correspondence that Omura transacted with military resisters, including Tow Hori, and their supporters, see Omura Papers, Stanford University. See also, Shirley Castelnuovo, *Soldiers of Conscience: Japanese American Military Resisters in World War II* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

<sup>134</sup> See note 194 for details about the published version of this manuscript.

<sup>135</sup> For the tape of the Omura/Drinnon interview, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>136</sup> See entry for August 16, 1984, in Omura’s Redress Diary; for the Omura/Matsumonji interview, see *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> The tape-recorded interviews for Okimoto, Kenmatsu, Fujii, and d’Aquino are available in Omura Papers, Stanford University, but not the interview with Purcell. For biographical information on Fujii, see note 86 in Chapter 5 of the present work; on d’Aquino, see note 187 below; and on Purcell, see note 184 below.

<sup>138</sup> For a bio on Ernest Satoshi Iiyama (1912-2011), see Rebecca Rosen Lum, “Ernest Iiyama: Japanese-American Activist,” *El Cerrito Patch*, July 3, 2011,

<http://patch.com/california/elcerrito/ernest-iiyama-japanese-american-activist> (accessed on January 7, 2016). For an interview with Iiyama and his wife Chizu Kitano Iiyama, see the

“Japanese American Archival Collection, California State University, and Sacramento, <http://library.csus.edu/collections/jaac/oralhist.html> (accessed on January 7, 2016). For information on Karl Yoneda, see note 22 in Chapter 3 of *Nisei Naysayer*. Background data on Ernest Besig (1904-1998) is available in Stan Yogi’s *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on him, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Ernest%20Besig/> (accessed on January 7, 2016).

<sup>139</sup> See dated entry in Redress Diary.

<sup>140</sup> Prior to this San Francisco research trip Omura wrote a letter to his prospective host in this city, Yoichi Shimatsu, saying: “This is the last trip to San Francisco before I begin the draft on the book and I feel I should make it as comprehensive as possible.” See James M. Omura, letter to Yoichi Shimatsu, September 1, 1985, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>141</sup> He would later be notified by the editor-in-chief of the *Asian Journal*, that while his submission did not receive an award, it would be published. Moreover, Omura was encouraged to send other pieces for publication consideration in the journal. See Omura’s May 30 entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>142</sup> See note 148 below on this column.

<sup>143</sup> See Omura’s January 30, 1985, entry, Redress Diary, *ibid.* For biographical data on Yuji Ichioka (1936-2002), see Brian Niiya’s entry on him in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Yuji%20Ichioka/> (accessed on June 14, 2015). See also, K. Connie Kang’s obituary of Ichioka, “Yuji Ichioka, 66, Led Way in Studying Lives of Asian Americans, in the September 7, 2002, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/sep/07/local/me-yuji7> (accessed on June 14, 2015).

<sup>144</sup> J. M. Omura to Miya Okawara, February 1, 1985, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>145</sup> James M. Omura, letter to Miya Okawara, September 28, 2004, *ibid.*

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<sup>146</sup> See January 19, 1985, entry in Redress Diary.

<sup>147</sup> “It takes note [of the column] under headline ‘WW2 editor renews attack on JACL’ [and] it drums up the Heart Mountain Sentinel charge as [my being] the ‘number one menace to the postwar assimilation of the Nisei’ for support of the [Heart Mountain draft] resisters. The article takes note of some of the charges made but does not respond to any. The headline and reference to the Sentinel is intended as a negative reception.” See January 23, 1985, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> The first of the 1985 *Hokubei Mainichi* “Plain Speaking” columns by Omura was “The Lost Age of the Nisei” (January 8, 1985); the second was “Be True to Yourselves” (February 15, 1985); the third, in two installments, was “On Betrayal” (March 2, 5, 1985); the fourth, another in two parts, was “The Flower of Nisei Journalism” (March 29, 30, 1985); and the fifth, also in two parts, was “A Fresh Wind in Japanese American Literature” (May 10, 11, 1985).

<sup>149</sup> See February 8, 1985 entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>150</sup> See February 16, 1985, *ibid.* According to this entry, Omura was pleasantly surprised by Yoneda’s support. “He gave me a good image in his book *Ganbatte* and now [is] cheering me on with *Hokubei Mainichi*.” With respect to Frank Tamura’s panning, Omura was not surprised that anyone from Denver would be negative, though he felt Frank Tamura to be “the least likely candidate to protest.”

<sup>151</sup> This two-part column, “The Flight to Freedom,” was published in the *Hokubei Mainichi* on June [?], 1985. See June 11, 1985, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>152</sup> See June 11, 1985, *ibid.* Three days later, in a telephone conversation with Frank Chin, Omura told him that he may quit writing for the *Hokubei Mainichi*. This news depressed Chin, who protested such a move: “You have to have somewhere to write.” See June 14, *ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> See June 22, 1985, *ibid.*

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<sup>154</sup> See July 29, 1985, *ibid.* In this entry, Omura makes it clear that he had no objections to the editorial suggestions offered him by Editor Julia Matisoo, only to Oyama's "belligerence" in communicating them.

<sup>155</sup> See August 14, 1985, *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> See October 22, 1985, *ibid.* Omura surmised that the greater respect accorded his journalistic stature by Matisoo and Oyama derived from their having attended the previous month's UCLA-sponsored symposium on the Nisei press in the 1930s in which Omura had figured prominently.

<sup>157</sup> See November 29, 1985, *ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> See June 24, 1985, *ibid.* "My entry," he ruminated, is not a short story so much as it is an actual account of the feud with the JACL. In that, it might be disqualified." Omura was correct in his apprehension, as his submission was disqualified.

<sup>159</sup> See James Omura, review of *JACL in Quest of Justice* (New York: William Morrow, 1982), by Bill Hosokawa, *Amerasia Journal* 11 (Fall/Winter 1984): 97-102.

<sup>160</sup> See September 23, 1985, Redress Diary.

<sup>161</sup> See October 7, 1985, *ibid.* In the following year Omura got reactions to his Hosokawa book review from Michi Weglyn and Art Hansen. Said Weglyn in January: "My husband Walter exclaimed: 'Wow, does he [Omura] write with power!'" In September, Art Hansen wrote Omura asking him how his "big book" was coming along, and then remarked lightheartedly "if your *Amerasia Journal* review of Hosokawa's book is any indication of its nature, it should be something that readers will have to have the fire marshal's approval to read!" See January 30 and September 17, 1986, *ibid.*

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<sup>162</sup> See Omura Papers, Stanford University, for abundant material relative to this conference, including promotional literature, Japanese American community newspaper coverage, and a conference program including a statement of purpose, a listing of individual papers, panel discussions, and a community forum, and short biographies for participating American and Japanese scholars and Japanese American presenters. The conference was held at the Japanese JACCC within Little Tokyo, funded by the Toyota Foundation, California Council for the Humanities, and the Times Mirror Company, and spearheaded by conference director Yuji Ichioka, a research associate at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center.

<sup>163</sup> Vincent Takashige Tajiri (1919-1993) was born and died in the greater Los Angeles, California, area. The Nisei brother of journalist Larry Tajiri and sculptor Shinkichi Tajiri, as well as the father of filmmaker Rea Tajiri, Vince Tajiri was a short story writer and sports reporter for the *Nichi Bei Shimbun* newspaper prior to World War II. During the war he enlisted in the U.S. Army. After the war he enjoyed a successful career in the 1950s-1960s as a photo editor for *Playboy* magazine.

<sup>164</sup> For biographical sketch of Tanaka, see Introduction, note 10, of *Nisei Naysayer*. For a life history of Harry Honda (1919-2013), see Brian Niiya's *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on him, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Harry%20Honda/> (accessed on January 7, 2016).

<sup>165</sup> For biographical material on Sasaki, Mittwer, and Oyama, see, note 116 above. For Hisaye Yamamoto, (1921-2011), see the *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on her by Nancy Matsumoto, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Hisaye%20Yamamoto/> (accessed on January 17, 2016), and for Mary Korenaga Sutow (1914-2002), see Valerie J. Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), passim.



<sup>166</sup> For biographical information on Ichioka, see note 143 above, for Tanaka, see note 164 above, and for John Fujii, see Chapter 3, note 18, of *Nisei Naysayer*. For life history data on Dick Jiro Kobashigawa (1914-2012), see Glenn Omatsu, "Dick Jiro Kobashigawa, 1914-2012, *Amerasia Journal* 38 (2012): 149-51; on Kazu Iijima (1918-2007), see Phil Tajitsu Nash, "Remembering Kazu Iijima," *AsianWeek*, September 14, 2007,

<http://www.asianweek.com/2007/09/14/remembering-kazu-ijima/> (accessed on January 7, 2016), and on Masao Yamashiro (1916- ), see Martha Nakagawa, "A Literary Lion," *Rafu Shimpō*, December 29, 2014.

<sup>167</sup> For biographical data on Dyke Miyagawa, see Chapter 2, note 33 of *Nisei Naysayer*.

<sup>168</sup> While getting ready for lunch, Omura was stopped by John Fujii, who asked him about an item a researcher ran across at the University of Washington Special Collections, noting that the two of them had a fight over the JACL. "We never had a fight, did we?" asked Fujii. "We might have argued but no physical fight." To which Omura cagily granted that "no real blows were struck." See September 14, 1985, entry, Redress Diary. See also, note, Chapter 3 of *Nisei Naysayer*. Joining Omura and Emi for a Japanese lunch that day were John Liu, Gary Okihiro, and Art Hansen, and the group was later joined by Sumi Iwakiri and her husband Brooks, who generously picked up the tab for the entire table. An ardent friend and supporter of Emi, Brooks Iwakiri hereafter extended that relationship to include Omura. In Omura's words "it was a very congenial group and [there were] endless exchanges." See *ibid.* While Liu and Okihiro were previously acquainted with Emi and Omura, this was Hansen's initial meeting with Emi; for all three of them, it was their first acquaintance with the Iwakiris. As regards Brooks Iwakiri (1921-2003); see Frank Abe's "Conscience and the Constitution" News update for January 1, 2004, for

information about Iwakiri and his support of the draft resisters and their portrayals,

[http://www.resisters.com/updates\\_2004.htm](http://www.resisters.com/updates_2004.htm)

(accessed on July 2, 2015). With respect to Sumi Iwakiri (1927-2007), see

[http://www.resisters.com/news/sumi\\_iwakiri.htm](http://www.resisters.com/news/sumi_iwakiri.htm) (accessed on July 2, 2015); and

<http://resisters.com/2007/12/> (accessed on July 2, 2015); and also

[http://www.fukuimortuary.com/home/index.cfm/obituaries/view/fh\\_id/10203/id/173664](http://www.fukuimortuary.com/home/index.cfm/obituaries/view/fh_id/10203/id/173664)

(accessed on July 2, 2015).

<sup>169</sup> For information on Katsumi “Kats” Kunitsugu (1925-2009), see her obituary in the *Rafu Shimpo* on September 9, 2009, <http://www.rafu.com/2009/09/obituary-kunitsugu-84-longtime-j-town-volunteer/comment-page-1/> (accessed on January 16, 2016). See also Kunitsugu’s oral history interview transacted with Leslie Ito on April 22, 1998, for the Regenerations Oral History Project of the Japanese American National Museum, <http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft358003z1;NAAN=13030&chunk.id=d0e10985&toc.id=d0e10902&toc.depth=1&brand=calisphere&anchor.id=p263#X> (accessed on January 7, 2016).

<sup>170</sup> See September 14, 1985, entry in Redress Diary. According to the September 25, 1985, post-conference report in the *Hokubei Mainichi* by Richard Oyama, Hansen’s commentary went as followed: “Vince Tajiri’s paper characterized his brother as ‘precocious, brilliant, and compassionate,’ but because Japanese Americans ‘don’t like to air their dirty linen in public and because of family constraints . . . there is a degree of air-brushing’ in Vince Tajiri’s paper ‘like a *Playboy* centerfold.’” Hansen said that “Japanese American history must move ‘beyond consecration’ and ‘bring experience down to the level of humanity.’”

<sup>171</sup> September 14, 1985 entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>172</sup> Omura did take exception to Hisaye Yamamoto's statement to the effect that she did not know how long *Current Life* would have lasted had not it been for the World War II eviction and detention of Japanese Americans. Replied Omura: "It was 'financially sound,' had distributors in British Columbia, Seattle, Fresno, [and] Los Angeles and was on the stand in San Francisco and Los Angeles book stores. That we had plans to expand to New York and the Intermountain area. It was well-promoted and marketed. It had the support of William Saroyan and Louis Adamic." See *ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> September 15, 1985, *ibid.* When Omura read the account of the conference's closing panel by George "Horse" Yoshinaga in the September 16, 1985, issue of the *Kashu Mainichi*, he referred to it as being "most uncomplimentary and laudatory of JACL." See September 26, 1985, entry, *ibid.* What Yoshinaga wrote was this: "Only the presence of John Fujii, who came in from Tokyo for the conference, and Togo Tanaka saved the panel period from total disaster. I don't know where they dredged up a chap named John [sic] Omura but he was the other member of the panel along with a woman whose name I didn't catch." The panel also got more, and balanced, coverage in a Naomi Hirahara-written piece in the September 16, 1985, *Rafu Shimpo*. Omura was cheered that this article was accompanied by Louise Suski's *Rafu Shimpo* editorial of March 22, 1942, which was critical of Nisei passivity in the face of the U.S. government's rank disregard for their rights as U.S. citizens and the attendant impact that this sorry posture would have on succeeding Nikkei generations. However, since he had introduced this editorial at the conference, Omura was let down that no mention was made of this fact. With respect to the panel dynamics involving Tanaka and Omura, see the 4 April 1986 letter, Omura Papers, Stanford University, from James Omura to George Nozawa, where he remarks: "Regarding the *Hokubei* commentaries [written by me] . . . Togo Tanaka did make a comment on it at the UCLA

symposium [on the Nikkei immigrant press] when he stated: “I read Jimmie Omura’s commentaries but I don’t get anything out of them.”

<sup>174</sup> On the life and career of Corso (1930-2001), see bio., “Gregory Corso Poet (1930-2001), <http://www.biography.com/people/gregory-corso-9258225> (accessed on January 7, 2016).

<sup>175</sup> See entries for September 29-30, 1985, Research Diary.

<sup>176</sup> For information about James Akira “Jim” Hirabayashi (1926-2012), see “Noted Ethnic Studies Scholar Hirabayashi Dies at 85,” *Rafu Shimpo*, May 25, 2012, <http://www.rafu.com/2012/05/noted-ethnic-studies-scholar-hirabayashi-dies-at-85/> (accessed on January 7, 2016). As for his son, Lane Hirabayashi, see his UCLA Department of Asian American Studies homepage, <http://www.asianam.ucla.edu/people/lane-ryo-hirabayashi> (accessed on January 7, 2016).

<sup>177</sup> See entry for October 2, 1985, Redress Diary.

<sup>178</sup> Ernie Iiyama divulged that he had not supported Min Yasui’s unsuccessful bid for the presidency of the national JACL, since he believed him to be on an “ego trip.” Chizu Iiyama, who was still employed as a community college teacher, allowed that she had admired Karl Yoneda’s autobiography. See *ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> See entry for October 11, 1985, *ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> See entry for October 16, 1985, *ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> On Wayne Merrill Collins (1945- ) and the relationship of his efforts on behalf of Japanese Americans in relation to that of his father, Wayne Mortimer Collins (1899-1974), see the article by Sharon Yamato, “Carrying the Torch: Wayne [Merrill] Collins on His Father’s Defense of the Renunciants,” posted on the Japanese American National Museum’s Discover Nikkei website, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2014/10/21/carrying-the-torch/>

(accessed on January 8, 2016). See also Wayne Merrill Collins's San Francisco-Bay Area Day of Remembrance 2014 keynote address on youtube,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9OFt4ddCUI> (accessed on January 8, 2016).

<sup>182</sup> See entry for October 19, 1985, *ibid.* True to his word, on October 26, Collins obtained the help of two African American male students from Berkeley High School to retrieve some of his records from his basement so that Omura could review and copy selected ones for his research. Collins then cooked Omura a spaghetti dinner with ice cream for dessert. See entry for October 26, 1985, *Redress Diary*.

<sup>183</sup> See entry for October 20, 1985, *ibid.* Omura, an avid anti-Communist, devotes this diary entry to his attempt to document for posterity the Communist affiliation of the Iiyamas, including their daughter Patti, a reputed "revolutionary activist." Writes Omura: "They [Ernie and Chizu Iiyama] appear to be rather careful not to disclose their political affiliation or philosophy but now and then a glimpse leaks out such as the obvious admiration they have for Dyke Miyagawa and Karl Yoneda and Joe Oyama—all considered 'aka' in Nisei circles. The Iiyamas attempt to use the term 'socialist' and shy away from the 'Communist' label."

<sup>184</sup> See entry for October 22, 1985, *ibid.* This entry makes clear Purcell's staunch admiration for Wayne Collins, the fact that Purcell, not Collins, wrote and argued the brief for the Mitsuye Endo test case, that he entirely financed that case, with no help from the national JACL, which "regarded 'western lawyers as incompetent' for lack of practicing before the Supreme Court," that he became a close friend of Mike Masaoka's through the Endo brief, and that he had "no quarrel" with the JACL and felt it did all that it could during "the evacuation." For biographical information on James Purcell (1906-1991), see the "James C. Purcell" entry by Stan Yogi in the *Densho Encyclopedia*,

[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/James%20C.%20Purcell/#Ex\\_Parte\\_Endo\\_Case](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/James%20C.%20Purcell/#Ex_Parte_Endo_Case) (accessed on July 5, 2015). See also, Legal.com, “Ex Parte Endo,”

[http://www.leagle.com/decision/1944606323US283\\_1581](http://www.leagle.com/decision/1944606323US283_1581) (accessed on July 5, 2015). As alluded to in note 137 above, there is no record of the interview of James Purcell transacted by Omura on October 22, 1985, in the Omura Papers, Stanford University. It is possible that this interview was either misplaced or not tape-recorded.

<sup>185</sup> See entry for October 25, 1985, Redress Diary. In their conversation, Shimatsu divulged to Omura that he had been born in Los Angeles, that his older brother was killed in the Watts Riot of 1965 while engaged in looting during the turmoil, and that he, Yoichi, a leader of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at Purdue University during the Vietnam War era was arrested and jailed and suspended from Purdue.

<sup>186</sup> See November 3, 1985, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>187</sup> For information on Iva Toguri d’Aquino, see Susan Nakaoka’s entry on her in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Iva\\_Toguri\\_D'Aquino/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Iva_Toguri_D'Aquino/) (accessed on January 7, 2016).

<sup>188</sup> See December 3, 4, 5 entries, *ibid.* For Omura’s December 5, 1985, tape-recorded interview with Toguri, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>189</sup> See December 6, 1985, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>190</sup> See December 7, 1985, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> For information on Carlos Bulosan (1913-1956), see *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, “Carlos Bulosan,” <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404707751.html> (accessed on July 7, 2015); on *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History*, see the reprinted edition of this originally 1943 published autobiography coedited by Marilyn Alquizola and Lane Hirabayashi (Seattle:

University of Washington Press, 2014). Drinnon's message about Bulosan's book being a heuristic "model" for Omura's memoir was apparently communicated by Omura to Frank Chin, who then, according to Omura's diary, offered a rejoinder: "[Chin] reports Carlos Bulosan's *America in the Heart* is fiction and 'sappy' and warns against patterning after it. Ben [Bienvenido] Santos . . . is highly critical of the book." See entry for March 4, 1986, Redress Diary. For information on Santos (1911-1996), see *Literary History*, "Bienvenido Santos," <http://www.literaryhistory.com/20thC/Groups/Santos.htm> (accessed on July 7, 2015).

<sup>192</sup> See December 31, 1985, entry, *ibid*.

<sup>193</sup> These included the following: low and high blood pressure, back pain, neck lumps and rash, tightening of buttocks, mental fuzziness, canker sores, arthritic twinges, itching, sore left leg, bloody stool, upper eye area bloating, stinging and burning around eyes, body stiffness, physical exhaustion, diarrhea, headache, diminished appetite, muscle strain, left thigh pain, left ear pain, upset stomach, wooziness, and dizziness/blacking out.

<sup>194</sup> Books read were limited to these two: Sue Kunitomi Embrey, Arthur A. Hansen, and Betty Kulberg Mitson, *Manzanar Martyr: An Interview with Harry Y. Ueno* (Fullerton, CA: California State University Fullerton, Oral History Program, 1986); and Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987). There is no record in Omura's daily diary of his having viewed a titled documentary film in 1986.

<sup>195</sup> Letter from Jimmie [Omura] on July 11, 1986, to Miya Okawara, Omura Papers, Stanford University. The first indication of Omura's work on his memoir surfaces in a late January diary entry. "[I] began writing the autobiography. Stopped when Mom [Karen Omura] came over and turned off the TV and said the time was 3 a.m. I had lost track of time. This is just a rough draft

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of the early childhood years. Needs a lot of polishing up. Haven't set on a satisfactory beginning." See January 24, 1986, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>196</sup> See January 29, 1986, entry, *ibid.* See also in this same connection Omura's February 26 entry, *ibid.*, where he writes: "Worked until past 3 a.m. in putting together the remainder of the materials for UCLA. Labeled and sorted but needs counting and assorted as to importance. . . .

That took a lot out of me so the day was shot. But getting it done was important."

<sup>197</sup> See February 9, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> See April 30, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> See June 6, 7, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> See July 2, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> See July 7, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> See July 20, 30, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> The first comment was entered in mid-month: "Began organizing research material . . . to ease confusion and quicker reference. The next step is to extract pertinent quotes. It will take approximately a month to complete. Then should be in position to concentrate on writing the book which more than likely could be completed around early spring." The second, and somewhat less sanguine, notation followed at the end of the month: "Coordinating information only way to assemble for writing. Have a long ways to go but it always seem[s] difficult at first." See August 15, 24, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> See October 31, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> This interest led him into both collaboration and conflict with Professor Shirley Castelnovo (1930-2010), a political science professor at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago and the author of *Soldiers of Conscience*, as cited in note 133 above.



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<sup>206</sup> See November 18, 1985, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> See February 13, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> See May 23, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> See June 3, 5, 13, 14, 23, 27, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> See July 14, 18, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> See December 23, 1986, entry, *ibid.* Apparently the Omura brothers were confronted with paying a ransom to prevent their sisters being sold into bondage. However, in spite of James Omura's effort to raise the ransom money, he failed in doing so. This was because "Kazuki [Casey] had just started work in a wood camp and Yoshito showed no interest." See *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> See January 27, 1986, and February 3, 5, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> See February 10, 20, 1986, and March 1, 3, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> See February 11, 17, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> For biographical information on Walter Matthys Weglyn (1926-1995), see the obituary for him by Paul Tsuneishi and Frank Chin, <http://www.michiweglyn.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Walter-obit-pdf.pdf> (accessed on January 8, 2016); on Michi Nishiura Weglyn (1926-199), see Sharon Yamato's entry on her in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Michi\\_Nishiura\\_Weglyn/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Michi_Nishiura_Weglyn/) (accessed on January 8, 2016); on Phil Tajitsu Nash (1956- ), see asianfortunenews posting, May 2, 2010, [http://www.asianfortunenews.com/site/article\\_0610.php?article\\_id=25](http://www.asianfortunenews.com/site/article_0610.php?article_id=25) (accessed on January 8, 2016); on Raymond Okamura, see note 116 above; and on Kiku Funabiki, see note 133 above.

<sup>216</sup> See June 4, 20, 1986, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>217</sup> See August 6, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> See September 19, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> See January 28, 1986, entry, *ibid.* Then, in mid-November, Omura noted that Minoru Yasui had died of cancer. This news provoked a mordant comment from Omura: “Editorial plug in Denver Post. Both Post and Rocky Mountain News publish major obits. Pays to be an informer, translated patriotic. Not deserving!” See November 14, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> In late January, Weglyn closed a letter to Omura by saying: “I commend you for taking on [Secretary of War Henry] Stimson, and history has proven you right. Establishing the segregated 442<sup>nd</sup> [Regimental Combat Team] did not forever lay to rest suspicion.” Then, at the end of October, in a letter Weglyn sent to Omura she first quoted a passage from Frank Chin (“Peter Suzuki and James Omura take on a dangerous and thrilling resemblance to the heroic tradition, fighting with their words and study, for the life of the simple truth of who’s who and what’s what against overwhelming odds.”), and then added her own message: “So my friend, you have wreaked vengeance, you have triumphed, as a man of heroic dimension, an outcast to a man of history. . . . Walter [Weglyn] and I read and reread the essay [by Chin] and we were fairly bursting with pride for the privilege of simply knowing you. We’re proud of Peter too.” See January 30 and October 28, 1986, entries, *ibid.*

As to Frank Chin’s championing of Omura, it was communicated through the draft bibliography to Chin’s co-authored manuscript “The Big Aiiiiieeeee!” In part, this was what Chin had to say about Omura and his career as a journalist.

No one has taken a proper long look at Omura’s move to put his money where his mouth is. *Current Life* covered Nisei action in the arts, in the professions, and sports. He encouraged the growth of Nisei fiction and poetry. If Omura has any biases in Nisei politics and thought, they don’t show up in his magazine. . . . *Current Life* was well written, well edited, the writers all well-read. . . . Omura was no demagogue, heroic

martyr, or messiah in his editorials. He was more like a crabby Mary Worth, a Dutch Uncle wagging his finger at the Nisei, telling them what should be obvious to them, but isn't. . . . Later, in Denver, he edited the *Rocky Shimpō* and reported the resistance inside camp as it occurred and wrote the Nisei argument for the right of petition for redress of Constitutional grief and grievousness that struck more young men in their conscience and produced more immediate result than Thoreau's "Essay on Civil Disobedience" in Thoreau's time. A quick glance at the list of writers contributing to the thirteen issues [of *Current Life*] should arouse the student of Japanese America to wonder if James Omura is not that rarest of rare among Nisei journalists and writers of the thirties and forties, a genuinely fair man. See October 10, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> See March 8, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> See March 26, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> See August 21, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> See September 9, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> See December 19, 1986, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> These ailments included leg joint pains, back muscle pains, fatigue, drowsiness, posterior pains, leg cramps, peaked feelings, stomach pains, stiff and sore thighs, and sore jawbone.

<sup>227</sup> The books Omura read during the 1987 year were these: Mike Masaoka with Bill Hosokawa, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka* (New York: William Morrow, 1987); Roger W. Axford, *Too Long Silent: Japanese Americans Speak Out* (Lincoln, NB: Media Publishing, 1986); Georgia Day Robertson, *The Harvest of Hate* (Fullerton, CA: Oral History Program, California State University, Fullerton, 1986); Daniels, Taylor, and Kitano, *Japanese Americans* (as cited above in note 64); Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman, *Beyond Words: Images from America's*

*Concentration Camps* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988). Documentary films seen were the following: Ken Verdoia, *Topaz*, 1988; Bob Nellis, et al., *Winter in My Soul*, 1986; John deGraff and Cris Anderson, *Visible Target* (on Bainbridge Island), 1988; Ding, *The Color of Honor* (as cited in note 110 above).

<sup>228</sup> In late January, for example, there is an entry that he was turning a corner on his manuscript, leastwise in a preparatory way. Writes Omura: “Began copying notes taken previously in longhand that had been forgotten.” This entry is followed in mid-February by a pair of other ones of a similar stripe. The first said: “More coordinating and labeling of documents. This is what should have been done in the first place. The file system just didn’t work out.” The second entry built upon the first one: “Got a bit fatigued coordinating documents.” See February 17, 18, 1987, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>229</sup> See March 2, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> See June 15, 17, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> See July 19, 20, 1987, entries, *ibid.* Within the next week, he typed his handwritten 1945-1946 diary, the highlights from his previously typed journal notes, and the diary of his ex-wife Fumiko Okuma Caryl Omura, and also began organizing the remainder of his journals. A few days later, in late-July, early-August, he retyped entries from his 1932 journal and then did the same for the 1938 period, after which he moaned, “Seems I still have much to do. [I] would like to get back to the manuscript.” See July 25, 26, 28, and August 1, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> See August 8, 11, 1987, entries, *ibid.* “[I] must forge ahead and build [a] framework on which to [later] refine,” noted Omura. “Once [the] picture emerges fine tuning would be simpler.” See August 12, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> “Began analysis of the 27-page ‘label script’ at the Smithsonian titled ‘With Liberty and Justice for All: Japanese Americans and the United States Constitution.’ (January 7); “Been working on Smithsonian ‘label script.’” (January 9); “More work on text [of label script]. In fact all day and ready for typing, except for several quotes to look up.” (January 10); “Worked typing analysis of ‘label script’ and have a bit more to go.” (January 12); and “Completed ‘label script’ and had copies made . . . and readied for mail out tomorrow.” See January 7, 9, 10, 1987, entries, *ibid.* For an astute and comprehensive treatment centered on the public (particularly Japanese American) response to the Smithsonian exhibition, see Chapter 9 in Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress*, as cited in note 116 above.

<sup>234</sup> “[I] prepared packet on Resisters for photocopying which will be sent out to contacts to blister Smithsonian Institution with letters hopefully. Reproduction and mailing will cost a bit [but] if results are obtained it [will] be worth it.” (February 6); “Prepared seven more packets.” (February 9); and “Last of the thirty packets [mailed] urging letters of protest for snub of Resisters mailed out.” (February 13). See dated entries, *Redress Diary*.

<sup>235</sup> See February 20, 1987, entry, *ibid.* Continued Uyeda: “My concluding comment is to reemphasize James Omura’s comments. They are very relevant, and show the complexity of the Japanese American incarceration experience. We cannot simplify this complex story, but we can clarify and [make certain] the public be made fully aware of the enormity of the incident. And thanks again for the opportunity to see James Omura’s excellent critique.” See *ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> “[I] prepared four mailings encouraging letters of protest to Smithsonian. Have fifteen sets left.” (February 21); “Dozens of packets on Smithsonian prepared for mailing.” (February 22); “[I] prepared copy of ‘Label Script’ requested by historian Roger Daniels, whose request arrived

this afternoon. [He] wrote: ‘To use a Cervantean metaphor, after your letter to [Tom] Crouch [Smithsonian curator], this seems to me an issue in which I ought to tilt a lance. I will need to see a copy of the 274-page ‘Label Script.’” (February 23); “Posted packet to Roger Daniels.” (February 24); and “[I] completed Smithsonian mail out yesterday afternoon, 48 packets sent! Have two remaining.” (February 25). See February 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 1987, entries, *ibid*.

<sup>237</sup> See June 6, 1987, entry, *ibid*. “Thank you for your tremendous effort,” added Weglyn, which probably jolted them like lightening. Sometimes it requires a feisty no-nonsense approach to shock the powers that be out of their apathy. It may not have done the trick at the Tolan [Committee] hearings, but your lone voice of protest, your tremendous charge of “Has Hitler [the Gestapo] come to America?” has become history. It should be engraved in granite one of these days. . . . Crouch was at the Hohri vs. U.S., D.C. reception and I had a chance to talk with him between book signings. That’s the reason I know that your letter had a powerful impact on him. He sounded as though he really appreciated your contribution of penetrating criticisms. I believe that through people like you and Frank Chin, the Resisters and their loved ones can someday stand tall and proud. Vindication for the principle is long overdue.” See *ibid*.

<sup>238</sup> Wrote Omura in his diary: “He [Crouch] stated my analysis made a great impact. . . . Feels I would be satisfied with revision [of script]. . . . In respect to the Resisters, I had written: ‘In the tragedy of the Evacuation, no other group than the war resisters demonstrated greater fidelity to our constitutional doctrines and are as deserving of recognition in this Bicentennial Observance of our Constitution. It would be a disservice to our concept of historical accuracy to ignore or be unmindful of their dedication and devotion to the fundamental tenets of this government.’” See June 11, 1987, entry, *ibid*.

<sup>239</sup> A month later, Omura heard through Michi Weglyn that, according to Aiko HerzigYoshinaga, Crouch was “limiting distribution of the [revised] exhibit script, not wishing to be inundated by letters such as the one I initiated,” but he would be sending a copy to him through her. See July 23, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> For information on the Fort Riley, Kansas, incident that occurred on Easter Sunday 1943 (April 25) when President Franklin Roosevelt visited this base and a group of Nisei soldiers, during this visit, were segregated and held under armed guard, see Brian Niiya’s entry for “military resisters” in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Military\\_resisters/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Military_resisters/) (accessed on July 29, 2015). See also Shirley Castlenuovo, *Soldiers of Conscience*, 24-25; Linda Tamura, *Nisei Soldiers Break Their Silence: Coming Home to Hood River* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 106-11; and Jimmie Omura, tape-recorded interview with Tow Hori, October 30, 1985, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>241</sup> See August 21, 1987, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>242</sup> Confirmation of Omura’s assessment of the Smithsonian exhibition arrived early the following year in a letter he received from Roger Daniels: “I only saw the exhibit—at least in final form—last week. I think that your phrase, ‘reasonably acceptable,’ is just about right for the text. . . . Only those of us who know what the original text was like will realize what it might have been. . . . The military hardware—so much of it—was unfortunate but, in that place, unavoidable. I understand that, at one time, it was going to be all military.” See January 8, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> See October 2-3, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> See July 24-25, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

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<sup>245</sup> See August 19, 1987, entry, *ibid*.

<sup>246</sup> See September 1-2, 1987 entries, *ibid*. The following interpretation of Hanako's letter was provided Omura by the reverend: "Hanako wrote [that she and Taeko] lived with [a] wicked aunt who mistreated them and wouldn't let them go to high school. Father sent money for their upkeep but the aunt kept all the money and used it for her own benefit. Said the aunt was very poor. She went to Osaka and worked in order to send Taeko to high school but the aunt purloined the money. Father did not plan to return to Japan but returned to prevent sale by [the] uncle of the girls in to prostitution, alerted to such intentions by someone who had been kind to the girls. Interesting item [is that] just before his death he [Father] told Hanako he regretted his 'so stubborn' attitude forced his boys to leave home and asked through her to be pardoned for the situation. He spoke in praise and often of Mother, who became ill after Chihara's birth. She said the wicked aunt kept all information of Mother from the girls and thus [they] know nothing of Mom's family and relatives. Mother died in Nagasaki. Both are buried in the family plot in Katsusa Village. Father lost his father when he was eleven and could not go to school. Left home at age 16 and went to [the] United States. We can backtrack and get year of his birth. We still have no information as to his movements in frontier America but it is obvious he must have gone to school to learn English and other skills—oceanography, carpentry, plumbing and electrical knowledge, bakery expertise, and others."

<sup>247</sup> See September 18-19, 1987, entries, *ibid*.

<sup>248</sup> See October 5, 1987, entry, *ibid*. In a follow-up November 2, 1987, entry, *ibid*, Omura reveals an important fact relating to his wartime dealings with Tom Clark:

Surprise! Justice Department release[s] Tom Clark documents after giving me a run-around in Washington. Could this be a coincident? Now have document showing Clark



advocating [that] I be charged. Admits [my 1944 *Rocky Shimpō*] editorials [on draft resistance] not seditious but points to inspiring resistance to draft in camps. Notes “the office of the Alien Property Custodian has indicated, informally, that it feels prosecution of Omura is not necessary in the public interest. . . .” This is not amplified. “Prosecution would meet with the approval of the War Department.” Thus previous report confirmed. Clark states the Feb. 18, 1944 article “Draft-Age Nisei Reported Planning Petition in Camps” as constituting “a bugle call for Nisei in organizing resistance to the draft.” Repeatedly in analyzing articles and editorials, Clark admits is not “objectionable per se” but constantly as “encouraging resistance to the draft.” These are very significant comments by Tom Clark, head of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice.

<sup>249</sup> See October 9, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> See October 7, 9, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> See October 18, 19, 20, 23, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> See February 25, 28, March 2, 4, and also May 11, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> See March 12, 13, April 18, 20, 1987, entries, *ibid.* This review went through multiple drafts, but was never submitted for publication as Omura originally intended. For the typescript of this review, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>254</sup> See May 18, 1987, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>255</sup> See June 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, November 26, 29, December 1, 4, 8, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> See September 1, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> See September 17, 21, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> See November 3, 5, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> See November 27 and December 11, 1987 entries, *ibid.*

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<sup>260</sup> See July 9, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> See May 14, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> See June 3, 1987, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> See October 21, 1987, entry, *ibid.* The inscribed book in question was Daniels, Taylor, and Kitano, eds., *Japanese Americans*.

<sup>264</sup> See December 29, 1987, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>265</sup> Timothy J. Lukes and Gary Y. Okihiro, *Japanese Legacy: Farming and Community Life in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Cupertino, CA: California History Center & Foundation, 1985); Hohri, *Repairing America*; Yuji Ichioka, *Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1990); and Gretel Ehrlich, *Heart Mountain* (New York: Viking, 1988).

<sup>266</sup> In late July, Omura tersely notes: "More work on The Story." Then in mid-October, he ruefully observes: "Got back to the manuscript after the World Series third game. . . . [I] did not get too far on the manuscript. It will take a little while to get back in the groove." See July 25 and October 18, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> A few days before writing his review, Omura received a short letter from Roger Daniels in which he relates that he will also review the Masaoka/Hosokawa book, about which he comments: "Some of it—including the title—is incredible." See January 7, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> See March 7, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> See March 8, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> See March 9, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> See March 10, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> See March 11, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>273</sup> See March 11, 1988, entry, *ibid.* In this entry Omura offers this appraisal of Johnston: “Seems like a decent sort of chap hewed along the ideology of James Gordon Bennett. But on P.C., his fidelity is being tested. Don’t see his tenure to be of long duration.”

<sup>274</sup> See March 12, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> See March 14, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> See March 14, 15, 1988, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> See March 19, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> See March 23, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> See March 30, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Omura’s reaction to the printed statement is vividly captured in his diary entry for that day. In it, Omura first quoted in full the interview’s introduction: “Mike M. Masaoka is considered by many to be one of the truly great contemporary Americans. As the outspoken leader of the Japanese Americans during and after the [Second World] War and a tireless lobbyist for civil rights issues, he has left a lasting imprint upon the legislative history of the American Congress. His recent autobiography, ‘They Call Me Moses Masaoka,’ has been hailed by both writers and politicians as a required reading for all Americans.” Next, Omura conveyed his indignation at the introduction’s content and character: “This copy perhaps requires a proper response. Along with it, might be useful to forward the ‘Moses’ commentary. Done!” See March 31, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> See April 4, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> See April 7, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> See April 18, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> See April 22, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> See July 5, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>286</sup> See May 5, September 4, and October 17, 1988, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> See April 25, August 26, September 4, and October 19, 29, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> See February 1, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> See April 10, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> See April 13, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> See April 25, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> See May 26, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> See January 25, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> See February 18, 1988, entry, *ibid.* Omura was also pleasantly surprised to hear from Nomura that he would be given a \$200 honorarium for his conference participation. See *ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> See February 21, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> This presentation by James Omura was later published under the identical title in Gail M. Nomura, Russel Endo, Stephen H. Sumida, and Russel C. Leong, *Frontiers of Asian American Studies: Writing, Research, and Commentary* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1989), 71-80. See also in this volume, Frank Emi, "Draft Resistance at the Heart Mountain Concentration Camp and the Fair Play Committee, 41-69, and Frank Chin, "Introduction to Frank Emi and James Omura," 39-40.

<sup>297</sup> For biographical information on Franklin Odo, see note 89 above; for Russell Endo (1943- ), a retired University of Colorado professor in sociology and Asian American Studies, see the website for the Board of Directors, Tuna Canyon Detention Coalition,

<http://www.tunacanyon.org/about-us/tcds-board-of-directors/>

(accessed on January 8, 2016).

<sup>298</sup> See March 24, 1988, entry, Redress Diary. “The only problem to be encountered [at the event],” ruminated Omura, “was Gordon Hirabayashi when he shook my hand and ignored me curtly as if he had something against me. Very rude!” See *ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> For a profile of Violet Kazue de Cristoforo (1917-2007), see the *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on her by Patricia Wakida and Brian Niiya,

[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Violet\\_Kazue\\_de\\_Cristoforo/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Violet_Kazue_de_Cristoforo/)

(accessed on January 8, 2016).

<sup>300</sup> For further data relative to Jeffrey Paul Chan (1942- ), see the *Wikipedia* entry for him,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffery\\_Paul\\_Chan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffery_Paul_Chan) (accessed on October 16, 2015).

<sup>301</sup> See March 25, 1988, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>302</sup> See March 26, 1988, entry, *ibid.* For more information on Sammy Edwards Solberg (1930- ), see “S. E. Solberg Papers, 1943-2000, Archives West, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries,

<http://digital.lib.washington.edu/findingaids/view?docId=SolbergSEUA1679.xml> (accessed on

October 16, 2015). For further information on Mitsuye Yasutake Yamada (1923- ), see the entry for her on *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuye\\_Yamada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuye_Yamada) (accessed on October

16, 2015), and for data pertaining to Seiichi Michael “Mike” Yasutake (1920-2001), see “The

Incremental Voice for Justice: The Ministry of Seiichi Michael Yasutake,” Archives of the Episcopal Church, <http://episcopalarchives.org/yasutake.html> (accessed on October 16, 2015).

<sup>303</sup> For biographical information on Norman Mineta (1931- ), see the *Densho Encyclopedia* entry on him by Sharon Yamato, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Norman%20Mineta/> (accessed on January 8, 2016).

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<sup>304</sup> A few days after the AAAS conference in Pullman, Omura received some feedback from William Hohri about their panel: “I wanted to hear the audience reaction and I was impressed by both Frank Emi and your statement. . . . [However] I was dismayed by Violet de Cristoforo’s long, rambling statement, especially since she had declined to participate on the panel. I wanted to hear reactions. . . . [But] I’m glad Frank Chin’s message got across that the AA Studies Groups invite you and Frank Emi. From my perspective, as a principal in the movement to JA redress, the AA Studies Groups have shown little interest in the movement.” See April 8, 1988, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>305</sup> Early in October, a trio of Denverites (Russell Endo, Marge Taniwaki, and Peggy Lau) met with Omura for an informal two and one-half hour discussion about giving him public exposure. Lau wanted him to speak to her University of Colorado journalism class; Marge Taniwaki, a former president of Denver’s Mile High JACL chapter who was presently involved in the World Peace Movement, suggested that Omura talk before the World Affairs Forum; while Endo, a sociologist and Asian American specialist employed as a faculty research associate in the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder, wanted to set up a panel group consisting of participants like Frank Chin, Frank Emi, and Michi Weglyn. Then in mid-October, Endo told him of plans being afoot to stage a February 15, 1989, program at Denver’s Metropolitan State University in which the showing of a videotape on Heart Mountain would be followed by a twenty-minute presentation by Omura such as of what he had given back in March at the AAAS conference in Pullman, and perhaps also, if funding permitted, a talk by Weglyn. In addition, Omura heard later the same month from Gary Okihiro that his participation was requested in a panel planned to be held in spring 1989 at Santa Clara University.

<sup>306</sup> Typically these invitations were issued by either the American Biographical Institute (ABI), based in Raleigh, North Carolina, or the International Biographical Centre (IBC), centered in Cambridge, England. See the *Wikipedia* entries for these two publishers,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Biographical\\_Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Biographical_Institute) (accessed on July 17, 2015);

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Biographical\\_Centre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Biographical_Centre) (accessed on July 17, 2015).

Although Omura was convinced that the directory entries these publishers crafted were of sound content, after they sent him a flurry of invitations within a short interval, he concluded that the products were “undoubtedly a financing gimmick.” Still, because he thought that they “might be a nice legacy for grandsons and sons as well,” constitute “footprint[s] “in the sands of time,” and signify “a mark of distinction,” Omura purchased copies of the directories for a nominal cost.

See July, 9, 1988, entry, Redress Diary. See also the February 17 and June 13, 1987, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> See April 21, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> See May 24, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> See May 27, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> See June 6, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> At the end of June, Art Hansen shared his thoughts with Omura. “The long overdue honors,” wrote Hansen, “are starting to come your way (though, sad as it seems, you will have your greatest innings for your historical role at a time when both of us are pushing up daisies). Not only are prophets not honored in their home territory, but also they often must await posterity to achieve their just renown. It’s guys like Hosokawa and Masaoka who achieve ‘heroic’ status in their time; as for people like Henry David Thoreau and James M. Omura, honor for ‘civil disobedience’ is something that gets generated by future generations.” See June 29, 1988, entry, *ibid.* Omura collected this postal appreciation from Mits Koshiyama late in October: “It makes

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me very happy to see you receiving much more recognition for your lifelong fight for constitutional rights. After so many years of ridicule from wartime JACL leaders, you are finally being recognized as a champion of human rights.” See October 28, 1988, entry, *ibid.* A few days hence in early November, a letter from Violet de Cristoforo reached Omura, saying, “What an honor, Jimmie! I’m so thrilled that you, at last, are able to enjoy these rewards because usually such honors come much too late in one’s life.” See November 2, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> See December 27, 1988, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> Most entries dealt with low blood pressure, but only in August did this necessitate a medical consultation, since it was compounded by Omura becoming mentally confused. Explaining to Omura that “when blood pressure falls too low the mind becomes disoriented,” Dr. McDonald nonetheless stopped short of recommending an altered dosage of blood pressure medicine for him. See August 30, 1989, *ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> See October 23, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Frank Chin, *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co.* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1988). Omura began reading this book four months later. See April 5, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>316</sup> See note 100 above for details on this documentary film by Loni Ding.

<sup>317</sup> See April 16, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>318</sup> See May 23, 25, 1989, entries, *ibid.* See also note 17 above for bibliographical information on Okada’s novel.

<sup>319</sup> Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (Boston: Little Brown, 1953). See June 2, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.



<sup>320</sup> Gwen Terasaki, *Bridge to the Sun* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1957). See August 10, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>321</sup> Lauren Kessler, "Fettered Freedom: The Journalism of World War II Japanese Internment Camps," *Journalism History* 15 (Summer/Autumn 1988): 60-69. See September 5, 8, 1989, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>322</sup> See May 21, 22, 1989, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> See September 1, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> See, for example, April 17, 21, 26, 1989, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> See February 15, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> See April 27, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> For information on Barry Saiki and the steamy exchange he had with Omura over his review of *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*, see the Redress Diary entries for May 25, 26, 27, 30, June 2, 10, 22, and July 18, 1989.

<sup>328</sup> When told by Nakayama that "the Rafu has a copy of the book [in its office] over which a taped 'Judas' label is attached on the cover," Omura deduced that "it seems the Rafu is not enamored with Masaoka." See April 21, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>329</sup> See May 3, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> See June 15, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> See Brian Niiya's "Lim Report" entry in the *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Lim%20Report/> (accessed on October 27, 2015).

<sup>332</sup> See August 10, 1989, entry, Redress Diary. Lim also asked him about the oral histories at Cal State Fullerton, to which Omura responded that "oral histories had many discrepancies that had to be rechecked and if unable [to do so were] . . . worthless." See *ibid.*

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<sup>333</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> See September 25, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> See October 28, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> See November 28, 29, 1989, entries, *ibid.* See also, James M. Omura letter to Deborah K. Lim, 29 November, 1989, and accompanying untitled seventeen-page critical commentary on Lim's research findings included within her report on the World War II actions of the Japanese American Citizens League, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>337</sup> See December 15, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>338</sup> See, for example, March 17, 1989, entry, *ibid.* For bibliographical information on Omura's article for the AAAS anthology, see note 296 above.

<sup>339</sup> For information on this 1991 feature film starring Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita, see the late Roger Ebert's January 18, 1991, review on RobertEbert.com, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/come-see-the-paradise-1991> (accessed on October 24, 2015). See also July 13, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>340</sup> See February 17, July 30, August 6, 28, and October 16, 1989, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> See June 21, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> See December 5, 15, 1988, entries, *ibid.* For an obituary of Mary Tomita (1918-2009), see Charles Burrell, "Mary Kimoto Tomita Dies: Librarian, Activist," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 3, 2009, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Mary-Kimoto-Tomita-dies-librarian-activist-3165888.php> (accessed October 25, 2015).

<sup>343</sup> See January 13, 1989, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>344</sup> See January 3, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> See May 23, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>346</sup> See November 5, 1989, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> These health problems were: strep throat, low-potassium in blood, hearing problems, fatigue, dizziness, hip pain, and leg cramps.

<sup>348</sup> See August 8, 1990, entry, *Redress Diary*.

<sup>349</sup> In the spring Omura read a 1989 journal article about the poetry of Toyo Suyemoto, written by literary scholar Susan Schweik, "The 'Pre-Poetics' of Internment: The Example of Toyo Suyemoto," *American Literary History*, 1 (Spring 1989): 89-109. In mid-June he read the 1988 word-and-image book on the Manzanar detention center with photographs by Ansel Adams and commentary by John Hersey: John Armor and Peter Wright, *Manzanar* (New York: Times Books, 1988). In late July Omura read Francis Biddle's 1962 memoir *In Brief Authority* (New York: Doubleday, 1962). Then in early November he tackled Tooru Kanazawa's 1989 novel on Japanese Alaska: *Sushi and Sourdough: A Novel* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989). Omura then wound up the year by reading in mid-December UC Berkeley sociologist Dorothy Swaine Thomas's 1952 treatise *The Salvage* and in late December the 1990 case study of Japanese American redress by the Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. See Dorothy Swaine Thomas, with the assistance of Charles Kikuchi and James Sakota, *The Salvage: Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1952); and Esther Scott and Calvin Naito, *Against All Odds: The Japanese Americans' Campaign for Redress* (Cambridge, MA: Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1990).

<sup>350</sup> See January 11, 12, 1990, entries, *Redress Diary*.

<sup>351</sup> See January 31, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> See February 22, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>353</sup> See, for example, April 8 and June 19, 1990, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> “Discovered best approach is to compartmentalize topic,” noted Omura in a late July entry. “Will get me away from the chronology system which kept bothering me as I proceeded.” See July 22, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> See September 1, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> See the *Wikipedia* entry for “Sakura Square,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakura\\_Square](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakura_Square) (accessed on October 27, 2015).

<sup>357</sup> See Mile Hi chapter of JACL homepage, <http://milehighjacl.org/> (accessed on October 27, 2015).

<sup>358</sup> For information about the Nisei Post 185 of the American Legion located in Denver, see the following Internet site, <http://www.directionus.com/co/denver/american-legion-nisei-post-no-185.html> (accessed on October 27, 2015).

<sup>359</sup> See January 29, 1990, entry, *Redress Diary*. In this connection, see also, Jimmie Omura, “Plans to Build Statue to an Informer,” *Rafu Shimpo*, June 9, 1990, particularly the following paragraph: “Yasui’s deliberate curfew violation was substantially diminished when within 48 hours his admission to two agents of the FBI of doubt of the propriety of his action and regret. This brings into question the commitment of his conviction on civil rights and sincerity of purpose. It was further negated by his testimony at the Multnomah [County] District Court [Portland, Oregon] that were he General [John] DeWitt, he would have done exactly what had been done. This was an amazing revelation! Even though couched as a philosophical theorem, it provided an insight into Yasui’s thinking.” Omura also takes up this situation in Chapter 6 of his memoir.

<sup>360</sup> For biographical information on Oski Taniwaki (1907-1986), see the August 15, 1976, interview done by Joseph Manly with him, O.H. 1517, in the Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program [Center for Oral and Public History], California State University, Fullerton. See also Chapter 3, note 44, *Nisei Naysayer*.

<sup>361</sup> See May 22, 1990, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>362</sup> See June 1, 1990, entry, *ibid.* Omura's essay appeared in the "Vox Populi" section of the *Rafu Shimpo* on June 9, 1990, under the title of "Plans to Build Statue to Honor an Informer."

Ironically, according to a 11 January 2018 email message from Wayne Omura, the youngest son of James Omura, to Arthur Hansen, the Omura Landscape Service did most of the landscaping for Sakura Square and its Tamai Tower apartment building.

<sup>363</sup> See June 4, 1990, entry, Redress Diary. A week later Omura heard by telephone from Michi Weglyn that a relative of hers from Los Angeles was forwarding her a *Rafu Shimpo* article in which Omura had written "You know Yasui is a No. 1 Inu." Omura owned up to his writing that piece and making that statement, which he declared was "beginning to shake the public and high time [too]." See June 12, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> See June 14, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> See June 25, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> See June 27, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> See June 29, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> See July 6, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> "This is a subject not normally discussed," Omura later thought, "but on the spur of the moment over the telephone, it was the most convincing element. The danger is that it might be interpreted as personal retaliation." See July 7, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>370</sup> See July 13, 1990, entry, *ibid.* Holly Yasui's extended response appeared also in the *Hokubei Mainichi*, July 10, 11, 1990. See Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>371</sup> See July 18, 1990, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>372</sup> See July 31, 1990, entry, *ibid.* See also Frank Chin's "The Two Yasuis," which was printed in the *Hokubei Mainichi* on August 10, 11, 1990. For this version, see Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>373</sup> See August 1, 1990, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>374</sup> See August 9, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> See August 11, 1990, entry, *ibid.* It should be noted here as well that on November 24, 2015, at the White House, President Barack Obama conferred upon the late Minoru Yasui a Presidential Medal of Freedom, which was received on his behalf by his daughter Holly Yasui. This occurred at a time when an ad hoc group of family members, friends, and supporters had launched the Minoru Yasui Tribute Project to honor his contributions, and when Holly Yasui was raising funding to finance a documentary film provisionally titled "Never Give Up! Minoru Yasui and the Fight for Justice."

<sup>376</sup> See February 1, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> See March 13, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>378</sup> See April 5, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> See April 7, 1990, entry, *ibid.* In the last week of April Art Hansen stopped off in Denver on his way home to southern California from an East Coast research trip and expressed the opinion to Omura that Deborah Lim was "stupid" in not having come to Denver to interview him. "She should have come here," said Hansen, "to spend two or three days exploring the matter [with you on tape.]" See April 24, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>380</sup> See June 16, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> See June 18, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> See July 12, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> See July 29, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> See August 8, 1990, entry, *ibid.* “He said he has had it since two months back. Mits [Koshiyama] got a copy from Frank Abe. Can you feature that! Frank refused to release it to me. George made some copies and had them bound and sent one on to me.” Declared George: “I feel if I am deserving to study it, you are 100 times more so.” See *ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> See August 20, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>386</sup> See November 25, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> See November 26, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> See November 27, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>389</sup> See November 28, 29, 30, and December 1, 1990, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> See December 1, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> See December 5, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> Sturgill opined to Omura that Abe’s documentary was “very powerful” and something he looked forward to seeing when completed.

<sup>393</sup> See December 8, 9, 1990, entries, *ibid.* The next day Omura filed the death certificate for Casey that he had received in the mail. He also checked the Port Blakely Millworks payroll records for the 1890-1902 period, but nothing showed up in them about his father’s employment. See December 11, 1990, *ibid.* Two days later, Abe and Omura stopped in at the *International Examiner* and was introduced by the paper’s editor, Bob Shimabukuro, to Bill Leffler, who Shimabukuro identified as a contributing writer for the *Examiner* and an independent filmmaker.

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Leffler told Omura that he'd read his writings and liked them. "It's a compliment," Omura meditated, "that I seldom get." See December 13, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> See December 15, 16, 17, 18, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> See February 23, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> See March 1, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> See July 2, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> See October 17, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> See October 20, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> See November 14, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> See November 18, 1990, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>402</sup> See March 3, July 1, 2, October 23, 29, 1991, entries, *ibid.* Four of these entries center on fatigue he suffered from doing chores like washing dishes and yardwork. Two episodes occurred back to back in early July, and they strike a frightening note. (July 1) "After hitching an extension hose for watering the far back garden, felt dizzy and then staggered backwards and fell on the ground. Never had that happen before. Dizziness, yes, when I kneel down." (July 2) "Tonight didn't kneel, still felt slightly dizzy [for] which I point to exertion of pulling hose. Sort of worries me. Began taking vitamins to build up strength."

<sup>403</sup> Frank Chin, *Donald Duk* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1991); Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (New York: New American Library, 1991).

<sup>404</sup> Sanford Unger, *FBI* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976); James Oda, *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans: Partisan Fighters from America's Concentration Camps* (Anaheim, CA: Self-published, 1981).



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<sup>405</sup> See January 21, 1991, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>406</sup> See February 11, 12, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> See February 17, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>408</sup> See February 20 and March 2, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> See March 16, 17, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> See March 30, 31, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> See April 9, 13, 1991, entries, *ibid.* The important point, as he stated tersely in diary entries in late June and early July, was that he not only “worked on the manuscript,” but also kept “plugging along on it” and made sure to “get what’s written collated.” Not until that was done, he reasoned, could he “make further progress.” In a word, this was “[a] slow and tedious job.” See June 28 and July 10, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> See July 26, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> See September 27, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> See October 18, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> See November 11, 21, 24, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> See September 24, 1990, and June 28, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>417</sup> See August 15, 1991, entry, *ibid.* Omura did wonder, however, why his sisters in Japan had not cashed their distribution checks, but then discovered that this was due to a postal clerk’s “oversight and ignorance of regulations.” See October 19, 1991, entry, *ibid.* See also December 8, 12, 10, 16, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>418</sup> See January 2, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>419</sup> With her letter to Omura she enclosed two letters that Casey had written to her in 1983-1984, while he was “living day to day,” and which she had kept. He had written that he went to the

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races but could not enjoy them due to his compromised health. Casey liked Marilyn's first husband, Art, with whom he shared a room as heart patients at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. See February 8, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> See January 14, 16, 1991, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> See January 18, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> See February 4, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> See February 26, 1991, entry, *ibid.* This entry also includes the following information supplied by Omura: "Randy states [that] she ran away [from home] at age 10 and [was] brought back after two weeks by authorities. At age 16 she was sent away from home as incorrigible. A preacher took her to Seattle and saw her aboard a Greyhound bus to a Job Corps Center in Moses Lake [Washington]. After our visit [Omura and Frank Abe] to Monroe, I sensed a strong feeling of discord in the Ohmura family. Also the less than warm welcome we received. Randy's personal tale is further evidence. It was also evident in her description of her father."

<sup>424</sup> See December 23, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>425</sup> (January 16) "U.S.-led planes attacked Iraq and the expected war is upon us." (February 19) "This is the day of infamy! The day Executive Order 9066 was announced, uprooting 112,000 Japanese in the West Coast military area." (March 21) "First day of spring!" (July 11) "Read of the passing of Mike Masaoka! He was 75." (September 13) "Rosa Parks, an almost legendary figure in Civil Rights, attended the confirmation hearings [of Judge Clarence Thomas] and distributed a statement in opposition to [his] confirmation." (November 17) "The sports world was shocked to learn of the retirement of [Los Angeles] Lakers' Ervin 'Magic' Johnson from basketball because of contracting the AIDS virus."

<sup>426</sup> See March 29, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>427</sup> See April 15, 1991, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>428</sup> Two fingers on his left hand were badly cut, which necessitated his being driven to the emergency room at a nearby Denver hospital, so as to stop the flow of blood from the wounds, close and cauterize them, and to administer a tetanus shot and antibiotics to prevent infection. This accident forced Omura to use the hunt-and-peck method of typing his memoir manuscript with his undamaged right hand. But his affected fingers ached and pained and use of a pain killer was required. By early May Omura underwent surgery to insert a pin in one of his fingers. But when the novocaine anesthetic wore off, the pain was excruciating and led to loss of nighttime sleep. When he tried to work the next day on the manuscript, he became so exceedingly dizzy as to put a stop to his typing. Within a few days, however, the pin was removed and the finger problem ended. See April 23, 24, 1992, entries, *ibid.*; see also April 24, 26, and May 2, 6, 12, 1992, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>429</sup> See June 15, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> See August 25, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> See October 14, 19, 20, 1992, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>432</sup> See November 5, 17, 1992, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into World War II* (New York: Summit Books, 1991).

<sup>434</sup> Dorothy Stroup, *In the Autumn Wind* (New York: Scribner, 1987).

<sup>435</sup> Togo Tanaka, "History of the JACL," unpublished manuscript prepared for the University of California, Berkeley-administered Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Study, circa 1943.

<sup>436</sup> Eric Bittner, "'Loyalty . . . is a Covenant': Japanese-American Internees and the Selective Service Act," *Prologue* 23 (Fall 1991): 248-52.

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<sup>437</sup> Steven Okazaki, *Days of Waiting* (Berkeley, CA: Farallon Films, 1991). Omura viewed this film with the novelist-historian Dorothy Stroup, who served as the film's narrator.

<sup>438</sup> See January 9, 10, 14, 17, 1992, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>439</sup> See March 19, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> See April 13, 15, 16, 17, 1992, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>441</sup> See June 18, 20, 25, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> See July 4, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>443</sup> See July 18, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>444</sup> See July 21, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> See July 23, 24, 1992, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>446</sup> See July 30, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> See August 18, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> See August 22, 23, 24, 29, 1992, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>449</sup> See September 15, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>450</sup> See September 18, 1992, entry, *ibid.*, and also Michi Weglyn letter to James Omura, 14 September 1992, Omura Papers, Stanford University.

<sup>451</sup> See September 28, 1992, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>452</sup> See October 2, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>453</sup> See, in particular, October 16, 18, 20, November 19, 22, 30, and December 1, 2, 3, 15, 29, *ibid.* The most telling of these entries are those for October 16 ("Past first one hundred pages. Just reached Pearl Harbor period. Need to obtain Charles Kikuchi's description of that day in Sokotown [San Francisco Japantown.], November 22 ("Had estimated finishing the coordination of notes by end of the year. It's been obvious that the time was too optimistic. The

earliest might be end of January. Progress appeared to have slowed down.”), and December 3 (“Began preliminary run on manuscript but held up right near the start to check information.”).

<sup>454</sup> See February 3, 16, 1992, entries, Redress Diary. See also, August 6, 1992, entry, *ibid*, where Omura quotes from a letter he received from Art Hansen on that day. “You had it slightly wrong in your letter when you wrote that you were proud to be honored along with such ‘distinguished personalities’ as Ernest Besig, Wayne Collins, the Woodwards, and the American Friends Service Committee. In my humble opinion, it is these people who should be proud to be included in the same august company as you, since you are arguably the single greatest hero to emerge from the [Japanese American] Evacuation (and this is a prophesy of mine that may take half a century after your passing to be realized).” To which Omura rejoined: “Such exorbitant statements are good for the ego. But ‘hero?’ No. There were no heroes. Wish that I could have been. But, then, why worry of what might have been. At least it is consoling that a historian thinks this way.”

<sup>455</sup> See February 5, 19, 1992, entries, *ibid*.

<sup>456</sup> See March 30, 1992, entry, *ibid*.

<sup>457</sup> See May 14, 15, 16, 1992, entries, *ibid*.

<sup>458</sup> See May 27, 28, 1992, entries, *ibid*.

<sup>459</sup> See June 1, 2, 3, 1992, entries, *ibid*.

<sup>460</sup> See June 4, 1992, entry, *ibid*. See also note 22, Chapter 4, *Nisei Naysayer*, for more specific information about Omura’s experience at the National JACL office in San Francisco.

<sup>461</sup> See June 4, 1992, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>462</sup> See June 5, 8, 1992, entry, *ibid*. For bibliographical information on Stroup’s novel and Okazaki’s film, see above notes 434 and 437.

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<sup>463</sup> See June 8, 1992, entry, *ibid.* See also, Dorothy A. Stroup, "The Role of the Japanese American Press in Its Community" (M.A. thesis, University of California, 1960).

<sup>464</sup> See January 4, 1992, entry, *Redress Diary*.

<sup>465</sup> On February 4, 1992, Casey's ashes were forwarded to Soga-Ken. See February 6, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> See January 16, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> See May 28, 1992, entry, *ibid.* See also July 31, 1992, entry, *ibid.*, in which Omura notes the interring of Casey's ashes in the family sepulcher at Katsusa.

<sup>468</sup> See August 20, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> See October 26, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> See December 26, 1992, entry, *ibid.* See also May 10, entry, *ibid.*, in relation to an earlier letter Randy Pleasant had sent Omura in 1992, about which he reflected: "Just some thoughts!"

<sup>471</sup> (January 20) "Martin Luther King Holiday." (April 29) "The four policemen on trial for brutal beating of Rodney King, a black motorist, videotaped by an amateur camcorder operator and shown on national television, were exonerated." (June 28) "Major quake struck Southern California. The epicenter was . . . Yucca Valley in Mojave Desert about 80 miles east of Los Angeles. It registered 7.4 on the Richter scale and was felt as far away as Denver." (August 9) "What avails a man who has talent if there isn't a man behind the words. I don't have talent but I am conscientious about the truth." (November 3) "Election Day! Voted for Ross Perot. Bill Clinton elected new president." (November 12) "Driver's license renewal. . . . Good until 1997 and probably my last." (November 17) "Draft day to stock the Colorado Rockies, Denver's new major league baseball club."

<sup>472</sup> See August 10, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

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<sup>473</sup> In early February, after spending a night with “not a wink of sleep,” he experienced a three-to-four-minute dizzy spell. It left him perplexed: “First time of late! Can’t account for it.” See February 8, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>474</sup> See March 17, 1993, entry, *ibid.*, where Omura provides the following information: “Mom learned yesterday afternoon that the vehicle that struck me was a Jeep Cherokee which suffered moderate front end damage. The driver was a woman. No injuries. . . . Mom indicated I shouldn’t drive anymore. Said she would take me where I need to go. That’s [a] bad omen. Must think I’m losing my marbles.” See also March 10 and April 15, 1993, entries, *ibid.*, which allude to the accident report filed by Omura and traffic court costs assessed him.

<sup>475</sup> To compound his agony, at 3 a.m. on the subsequent day an intoxicated man pounded on the front door of the Omura home while “cursing and mumbling and yelling at the dogs in the neighborhood.” Omura repeatedly told the intruder that he had the wrong house before this message took and the man departed. A police officer, who saw the man in question, informed Omura that he would apprehend him if Omura pressed charges, which he promptly did. See March 4, 5, 6, 7, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>476</sup> See March 23, 25, 27, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>477</sup> See April 9, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>478</sup> See August 25, 28, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> See October 19, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> See November 2, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> See November 29, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>482</sup> Lawson Fusao Inada, *Legends from Camp* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 1992).

<sup>483</sup> Arthur A. Hansen and Nora M. Jesch, eds., *Guards and Townspeople*, Part V, Volumes 1 and 2, in Arthur A. Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project* (Munich, DE: K. G. Saur, 1991-1995). With respect to the attitude of people living near the War Relocation Authority camps, Omura noted their lack of focus on constitutional violations and extreme deference to the U.S. government. He felt that the disallowance of incarcerated in the Manzanar, Tule Lake, Poston, and Jerome camps going into the communities surrounding them “retarded understanding and the healing process.” He bemoaned further that “even townspeople indicating compassion [for the incarcerated Japanese Americans] deferred to the wisdom of the government,” and that none [of those interviewed] mention government trespass of fundamental rights even as late as the [nineteen] seventies when the interviews occurred.” See June 18, 20, 1993, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>484</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, *Introduction to Korean History and Culture* (Boston: Weatherhill, 1993).

<sup>485</sup> See November 27, 1988, January 1, 4, 1989, October 18, 1991, April 26, July 15, December 15, 19, 1992, entries, Redress Diary. The key entry among these is that dated December 15, 1992: “Working on coordinating manuscript. Will this work be disrupted when computer installed?” Coming into the home stretch on his memoir, Omura’s dilemma was this: Will a computer hasten or retard the manuscript’s progress?

<sup>486</sup> By this point in time Omura had riveted upon the title of “Shattered Lives” for his manuscript, which he then began rewriting on his computer. After two difficult days trying to master how to print a sample of the document, Omura, abetted by long-distance telephone counseling from his son Gregg Omura in Grand Junction, felt up for a “test run.” Accordingly, he entered, exited, and re-entered Word Perfect, but then got “stuck because of [his] ignorance of computer terminology.” A call from Gregg Omura after 7 p.m. resolved his deadlock.



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But disaster soon prevailed:

Typed in start of Memoir until 2 a.m. and tried the Epson printout. Paper was unaligned and creased and jumbled up. Helped by pulling on paper. Must have tripped something for type came out too large. Also unable to get C-prompt in upper left. Gregg [had] said to keep the computer running all night. Went to bed but couldn't sleep. Got up twice to fiddle around; second time finally solved the process. Got C-prompt into left upper [corner]. Shut down computer at 5 a.m. Mom yelled about phone bill and I fired back at her.

The next day brought new causes for frustration and anguish. Fortunately, this state was alleviated somewhat two days following when Omura's wife Karen checked out a computer manual—[Karen L. Aceron, *Word Perfect Series 5*]<sup>487</sup>—from the Denver Public Library and then began taking notes as Omura read aloud from it. The next day he continued to read the manual all day and right up through 2 a.m. of the succeeding morning. Feeling “physically and mentally fatigued,” Omura then elected to rest rather than putting into practice on his computer the “quite explicit” operating information of the manual. See January 2-9, 1993, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>487</sup> With respect to Omura's computer concerns and/or difficulties in 1993, see the following month-by-month entries in *ibid*: January 11, 12, 17, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31; February 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17; March, 11; April 8, 12, 13, 16, 20, 26, 29; May 2, 3, 5, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28; June 2, 4, 10, 15, 16, 18, 22, 27, 28, 30; July 5, 6, 20, 29, 31; August 10, 20, 30; September 2, 8, 14, 24; October 2, 6, 11, 12, 27, 29; November 3, 5, 6; December 8, 29. As for interventions by Russell Endo, see *ibid*, relative to these dates: February 12, 17; March 4, 11; April 8, 12, 13, 20, 21, 29; May 3, 12, 20, 24, 26, 28; June 2, 4, 10, 15, 16, 22, 30; July 6, 14, 20; August 20, 23, 25, 30; September 8, 14, 24; October 6, 11.

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<sup>488</sup> See July 9, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>489</sup> See July 29, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>490</sup> See September 2, 3, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> See September 19, 22, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> See September 30, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>493</sup> See October 2, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>494</sup> See October 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 27, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>495</sup> See November 27, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>496</sup> See December 22, 1992, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> See February 19, 20, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>498</sup> See February 20, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>499</sup> See March 18, 1993, entry, *ibid.*, where Omura writes: Received clippings of Susan Moffet's article in the L.A. Times. . . . Like I thought I was just an adjunct in the story and she totally missed my significance in the Fair Play story. I sensed her disinterest in the interview period."

<sup>500</sup> For biographical data on Sue Kunitomi Embrey (1923-2006), see Martha Nakagawa's entry on her in the *Densho Encyclopedia*,

<http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Sue%20Kunitomi%20Embrey/> (accessed on January 8, 2016).

<sup>501</sup> See February 21, 1993, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>502</sup> See February 22, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>503</sup> See February 23, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> See February 24, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>505</sup> See June 11, 12, 13, 14, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

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<sup>506</sup> See May 6, 1993, entry, *ibid.*, in which Omura writes: “Packet [received in mail] from Frank Chin on documentary. Calling special shooting in August in L.A. Unexpected. Read through latest version.”

<sup>507</sup> See August 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>508</sup> See April 21, 23, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> See June 5, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>510</sup> See November 28, December 19, 1993, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> See December 10, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>512</sup> (January 18) “Martin Luther King holiday.” (January 20) “Bill Clinton was sworn in as president and America bid George Bush farewell. There have been signs of Clinton reneging on some of his campaign promises. One of these is tax cuts for the middle class.” (January 25) “Thurgood Marshall, who retired from the Supreme Court in 1991, died yesterday at the age of 84. He was the first black [Supreme Court] justice. . . . Marshall’s most memorable legal case was in 1954 in *Brown vs. Board of Education* [of Topeka, Kansas], which is a landmark decision striking down the ‘separate but equal doctrine.’” (April 9) “Major league baseball came to Mile High Stadium and 80,227 turnstile count set a major league record.” (September 22) “Stopped [work on memoir] to listen to President [Bill] Clinton unveil his universal health plan before a Joint Session of Congress.”

<sup>513</sup> See February 24, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>514</sup> See December 27, 1993, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> See February 16, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>516</sup> See March 17, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>517</sup> See April 1, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> See May 13, 1994, entry, *ibid.* See also May 11, 12, 1993, entries, *ibid.*, where Omura makes these consecutive entries: “In afternoon continued work in front [yard] and worked to 5:30—two hours. Body very tired. Took three hours to settle down to normal.” “Very difficult to work today. . . . Pain in right knee joint but not until after work.”

<sup>519</sup> See June 2, 8, 10, 14, 1994, entries, *ibid.* See also, the 12 June 1944 letter James Omura sent to Vera Matsumura, Omura Papers, Stanford University, in which he told her: “On June 8<sup>th</sup>, I suffered a heart attack but not of major proportion. I have had to stop work on the manuscript since then, but expect to resume work later this week. Just a bit under the weather.”

<sup>520</sup> Brian Niiya, ed., *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts on File and the Japanese American National Museum, 1993).

<sup>521</sup> See June 7, 1993, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>522</sup> See January 12, 19, 1994, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>523</sup> See March 25, 1994, entry, *ibid.*, where Omura mentions that he had a meeting on that day at the Japanese American National Library with its director, Karl Matsushita. It is likely that this meeting was to talk about the disposition of Omura’s paper after his death at the San Francisco facility.

<sup>524</sup> See February 19, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> See February 18, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>526</sup> See February 20, 1994, entry, *ibid.* The interview transacted by Alan Koch was done in two parts. The first part had been completed on March 11, 1993, and the second part, which is here referenced, occurred on February 20, 1994. For a published version of this interview, see Part IV.

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*Resisters*, in Arthur A. Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project* (Munich, DE: K. G. Saur, 1991-1995), 347-95.

<sup>527</sup> See February 24, 28, 1994, entries, Redress Diary.

<sup>528</sup> See February 27 and March 16, 1994, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>529</sup> See March 1, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>530</sup> On the Omura/Hansen oral history transcript review, see March 3, 5, 7, 1994, entries, *ibid.*; on the review of the Japanese American National Museum encyclopedia, see March 13, 15, 17, and April 3, 1994, entries, *ibid.*

<sup>531</sup> See March 20, 1994, entry, *ibid.*

<sup>532</sup> See March 21, 1994, entry, *ibid.* See also the letter of 1 April 1994 that James Omura sent to Emiko Omori, Omura Papers, Stanford University, in which he explains the extreme emotional reaction he experienced during her interview with him: “You touched a tender spot that had been buried for fifty years and it simply burst open a Pandora box of emotional feelings that had never before occurred. . . . It is my Achilles heel, something beyond my conscious control.”

<sup>533</sup> See March 25, 26, 27, 1994, entry, Redress Diary.

<sup>534</sup> See April 3, 19, 1994, entries, *ibid.* In 1994, Omura had published in the *Rafu Shimpo* two letters, both of which qualified as op-ed pieces. The first of these, which was published on April 12, 1994, and was titled “Jimmie Omura Wants Draft Resister Panel at JACL Convention.” The second appeared in print on June 14, 1994, six days before Omura’s death, and took up the Lim Report under the title “Another JACL Hoax.” For both of these items, see Omura Papers, Stanford University. Although the published version of Omura’s review of the *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History* in the *Tozai Times* is not available within the Omura Papers at

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Stanford University, this collection does contain a typescript of the review entitled “An Insult to Our Intelligence.”

<sup>535</sup> See January 27, 1994, entry, Redress Diary.

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