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A thesis prepared by: Colin D. Smith
(Student's Name)

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Dr. Frank Novotny
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Richard D. Loosbrock
Chairperson of Thesis Committee

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Date

Thesis Committee Members:

Edward R. Crowther, Ph.D.

Richard D. Loosbrock, Ph.D.

Charles Nicholas Saenz, Ph.D.

SURVIVAL OF SPIRIT: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE INCARCERATED JAPANESE AMERICANS OF WORLD WAR II

By

Colin D. Smith

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

SURVIVAL OF SPIRIT: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE INCARCERATED JAPANESE AMERICANS OF WORLD WAR II

By

Colin D. Smith

The study of World War II Japanese American removal and incarceration remains fresh and interesting, even though it happened decades ago[1] Despite the best efforts of those who had been uprooted, deprived of unalienable rights, and held captive against their will for over three years, little redress was to be found for more than a generation. A partial and belated governmental recognition and rectification finally came, but its insufficiency further fueled a smoldering fire that had been burning for some time. The smolder became a literary conflagration as an increasing number of scholarly works and firsthand accounts were published, decrying the abuses of incarceration, criticizing euphemisms like "relocation," and working to create a public sympathy and awareness of the injustices done to these American citizens. Prejudice and rectification are still the major themes of the most recent scholarly work, but a close reading of primary sources, from the imprisonment experience through the present day, reveals that those afflicted by this heinous ordeal and their descendents want the world to understand something else. The story of what happened to this victimized yet amazing people has been told. The sufferers want us to comprehend not just what happened to them, but what they did about it, how they survived in these camps, and what this perseverance says about their indomitable spirit. They want to be seen as transcendent survivors who displayed dignity and patience, and not as aggrieved victims.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?"

-Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854)

Reflection

A dozen miles northeast of Twin Falls, Idaho, on the windswept and sagebrush dotted desert of the Snake River Plain, lies an empty expanse of land not unlike the thousands of desert acres that surround it. Part of this 946-acre area, which for millennia has been remote wilderness, has been reclaimed from the wilds for the purpose of agriculture. Farm fields here are irrigated by a canal that runs nearby. Little indication remains that this particular area was briefly a large community, actually the third largest city in Idaho at one point.[1] A few concrete pads and building foundations that proved too much work to tear up have been allowed to litter the surrounding wasteland. Little else from that original ghost town remains. What hasn't been converted to farm fields has once again been reclaimed by the wilderness. Now home to sagebrush, jackrabbits, and rattlesnakes, but once home to some ten thousand residents, the Japanese internment camp at Minidoka, or "Hunt Camp," was at the time of my first visit an area almost indistinguishable from the farms and deserts nearby.

I grew up less than ten miles from this site, the location of one of the greatest civil liberties atrocities in post-Civil War American history. However, like so many Magic

Valley residents, for years I had no knowledge of this place or what transpired here. I was not alone. There were not and still are no signs from the nearby freeway that declare a historic site is in close proximity. The highway that takes travelers to Minidoka makes little attempt to advertise what special destination might await a driver on the road. A beat up road sign advertises simply that "Hunt" is 2 ½ miles to the north on a backcountry road that intersects the highway, and an historic marker tersely describing the camp sits inconspicuously next to another marker describing prehistoric tools found in the area. Farm equipment and dented pick-up trucks comprise the bulk of traffic on this thoroughfare.

My first arrival at the site of this once thriving community thickened the mystery further. There was no sign of the housing units, 600-bed hospital, the schools, library, theaters, saloons, or ball fields that once occupied the land there. Aside from the farm fields and wilderness, one can find only the skeletal remains of the stone entrance gate and a tiny placard inside the structure naming it a National Historic Site. Minidoka's disappearance, upon inspection, was almost as mysterious as its existence in the first place.

Image 1: National Park Service, "Minidoka entrance gate ruins" from http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/ cultural_diversity/Minidoka_Internment_National_Historic_ Site.html (accessed September 24, 2015).

I first traveled here almost two decades ago, after learning about the internment camp from a high school history teacher who told the students about the camp as an aside on the World War II section. The discussion of these camps and the associated atrocities had not made it into mass circulation textbooks yet. I remember being fascinated by the knowledge, with emotion something akin to how I felt when first learning about the Donner Party or the People's Temple in Jonestown. The question in my mind was, *how could this happen to Americans*? Unfortunately, my trip to Minidoka left me with more questions than answers. All I realized upon my inspection of the Hunt Camp, in connection with the scant information forthcoming from our survey American History textbooks, was that whatever happened at Minidoka was a story left untold. It was not something (or did not seem like something at that time) that people wanted to remember.

It was from the empty expanse of this barren landscape that I felt the burning desire to uncover the truth about this greatest of Idaho's ghost towns. Why was

Minidoka so erased from existence and memory, and why was it even there to begin with? Most importantly, what was life like there, who were the residents, and what does their experience there tell us about their lives and character? These were the mysteries I sought to uncover, and this decades-long quest is what has now brought me to this important study.

Historiography

Prior to the creation of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) under the Jimmy Carter Administration in 1980, a comparatively scant amount of scholarly work existed relating to the domestic injustices of the United States government toward their own citizens during World War II.[3] This is in comparison to the wealth of information available on Japanese American incarceration now, a topic which has become the most studied aspect of Asian-American history. Considered a tragedy of conscience, and a blemish on the mostly otherwise sparkling record of U.S. conduct during the Second World War, the misled contrivances of the American public that demanded forced relocation of – and separation from – an industrious but long-despised minority, and the government's decision to acquiesce to these demands, remained a taboo subject for decades. Only the bravest of Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans or those born here as citizens) dared to either tell their tales of wartime imprisonment, or sought to organize and fight for acknowledgement and redress. It wasn't until the end of the greater Civil Rights Movement that a noticeable amount of histories began being produced.

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), which had been formed in 1930 as an assimilation-over-confrontation group of Nisei, was the first to sponsor a history of internment.[4] The 1969 book *Nisei, The Quiet Americans* unfortunately did more to perpetuate the submissive Nisei stereotype that JACL had always represented than to address any grievances.[5] This comes as little surprise to anyone then or now familiar with JACL, an organization whose mission statement created in 1940, (less than two years before incarceration) but still in the same form today, reads:

> *I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today.*[6]

These were the words of an ethnic immigrant demographic trying to set itself apart from other ethnic groups, each fighting for self-identity and their own shot at the American Dream. This is also the statement of the Nisei distancing themselves from their Issei (immigrant generation) parents. The Issei had endured racial prejudice, which included measures to prevent them from ever being able to become American citizens, and, after 1924, measures that ended immigration from Japan altogether. The Nisei, understandably, hoped that their citizen status and their (in most cases) absence of ties to Japan itself would count for something more than their ethnicity. This desire led to a submissiveness that helped them to peacefully endure through the hardships of the incarceration experience, a wonderful quality that deserves much praise. However, it

also hindered them from speaking out powerfully against the wartime injustices after they had endured.

The 1960s also brought about the first works from non-Japanese scholars willing to approach the subject. Roger Daniels, who is often considered the foremost expert on not just the Japanese American experience, but also the experiences of all immigrants in America throughout American history, published his book *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* in 1962.[7] This book spoke more to the history of racial prejudice that led up to Nisei incarceration than on the imprisonment experience itself. At the time, however, even this modest look at America's "worst wartime mistake" (a term Daniels loathes, saying "this was neither a mistake nor an error in judgment nor an inadvertence") was a bold and controversial exploration of a topic the country was not ready to confront yet.[8]

Coming quickly in the wake of *Nisei, The Quiet Americans*, however, was a sprinkling of revisionist and firsthand accounts. Having seen the gains made by other minority demographics throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Japanese Americans who had been forced from their homes during the war, and especially their children the Sansei, or third generation Japanese Americans – like their newer generation African American contemporaries – were less docile and more demanding of equal treatment in the changing American society.

The Civil Rights Movement opened the way for more direct and less forgiving approaches. The 1970s brought academic work with provocative titles, including

verbiage that even today is tiptoed around because of its offensive connotations. Reaction was certainly half the point, when Roger Daniels (now pulling no punches) published *Concentration Camps U.S.A.: Japanese Americans and World War II* in 1971, and when Michi Nishiura Weglyn told of her personal experiences of removal and captivity in her 1976 book *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps.*

These books and authors were instrumental in increasing public awareness and in sparking the movement for recognition that resulted in the creation of the CWRIC. However, when Congress decided to launch an investigation that would later create this commission, they did so from the softly worded JACL supported "commission bill" of 1979. The declared purpose was:

> *to determine whether a wrong was committed against those American citizens and permanent residents relocated and/or interned as a result of Executive Order Number 9066 and other associated acts of the Federal Government, and to recommend appropriate remedies.*[9]

Within a year of its creation, the CWRIC had found that indeed many injustices had been done, and a full report with suggested remedies was issued at that time. Roger Daniels himself was a consultant to this commission.[10] However, it would be another eight years, near the end of President Reagan's second term, that the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 would be signed. It would not be until 1990 that President George H. W. Bush would issue the official apology to all the Japanese Americans whose lives had been torn asunder by the wartime hysteria of an earlier generation.

Since this time of official recognition the floodgates have been opened to the rush of firsthand accounts and academic studies that have attempted to recapture this over forty-year-old historical event. *Personal Justice Denied*, the 467-page report from the official and unanimous findings of the CWRIC, was issued in 1982 and gave the recommendations for the future apology and the $20,000 one-time payoff to the internment survivors.[11] In it, the statement of summation has been a guiding philosophy on how Japanese-American incarceration would come to be seen and studied by the next generation of historians. It reads in part:

> *In sum, Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions which followed it – detention, ending detention and ending exclusion – were not founded upon military considerations. The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. Widespread ignorance about Americans of Japanese descent contributed to a policy conceived in haste and executed in an atmosphere of fear and anger at Japan. A grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without any individual review or any probative evidence against them were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II.*[12]

Representative here is a taste for what has become the overarching theme of Nisei imprisonment scholarship: what was done was wrong. It was not fair. It should be seen in its true light, and its causes need to be understood. History needs to be corrected to show the truth. The Japanese Americans, regardless of citizenship status, were victims. If you or one of your ancestors were one of these victims, you would deserve to be upset. Your personal story of affliction should be told. Let us share the emotion of losing property and freedom. Let us make sure this never happens again.

Certainly these are all important objectives, and a brief review of the finest studies that convey these themes is requisite in defense of these assertions. As always in the grieving process, after anger comes acceptance. This turn in scholarship and reflection is beginning to come about. Finally, after scores of years, after civil rights movements and national redress, and after exorcising the demons of this era in the form of comprehensive books and essays that have captured all of the warts and scars and repressed memories of this brave and patriotic group of Americans, scholarship is now beginning to round another important corner. In a way, secondary study is only now beginning to catch up with what the Japanese Americans associated with this tragedy have been focusing on for years. The world knows what happened to Issei and Nisei during World War II. What they need to know now is how those brave people mastered the art of *gaman,* a Japanese word that means enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity.[13] It is through this understanding that true respect, honor, and compassion are returned to those victimized so long ago.

It is important to note that a foray into this most important of topics would not be possible if not for the work of scholars like Roger Daniels and others who braved forward against the fear of harming the public's perception of the past. These historians were willing to peel off the scars of history and uncover the festering truth. Daniels's 9-volume history *American Concentration Camps: A Documentary History of the Relocation and Incarceration of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945* (1989) is the definitive historical study of this event, although not aimed at general readership. His more terse study *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (first published in

1993 and revised in 2004 to account for how lessons from Japanese incarceration could relate to a post-September 11 America) is an exemplar of redress-era study.[14] *Prisoners Without Trial* sets the model for many of the other incarceration histories of the past 25 years, although many of the other studies focus on one specific aspect, or sometimes one specific person or camp, rather than giving the overview Daniels gives. In this book he focuses on the fact that the Japanese in America (as well as all Asian minority groups) had been racially discriminated against since their arrival in the country, and that wartime politics based on this discrimination were specifically contrived to punish Japanese Americans despite a lack of evidence about any fifth-column activity.[15] Daniels describes how life was hard, tedious, and unjust while the Japanese were unfairly incarcerated and held behind barbed wire and under the watch of armed guards with guns pointed in – not out. He further details that when they were granted their freedom back after the war, most had a hard time readjusting, in part because they had irretrievably lost their land and property.[16] Daniels then conducts a study of the era of rehabilitation and redress, finishing with universal questions about whether or not the lessons have been learned and if this type of thing could happen again. He additionally describes the modest victories of compensation, apology, and recognition that came in the 1980s and 1990s.[17] All of these details are of extreme importance, and the wealth of scholarly work dedicated to unearthing all of them is justified in the lessons on tolerance and civil rights that certainly can be learned. However, in focusing so singly on what was done to the Japanese Americans, the component about what these patriotic Americans

and permanent resident aliens did about their circumstances has not been told, and is what is now in order.

Some of the best survey and monographic scholarly works from the 1980s forward demonstrate their Daniels-esque approach to incarceration history, and befitting Daniels' style, some of their themes can be derived from the sharpness of their titles. Many of the best of these have come quite recently. Greg Jackson's 2009 comprehensive study *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* follows Daniels' pattern, but Jackson extends his study to Canada and Latin America. Russell Tremayne and Todd Shallat's *Surviving Minidoka: The Legacy of WWII Japanese American Incarceration,* which tells the story of Japanese imprisonment through ten scholarly essays and over 200 pictures from the event, won the Idaho Book of the Year award from the Idaho Library association in 2014.[18] The selection of photographs in this volume is especially effective in stirring up emotions of sympathy and outrage. It shows things like a group of little Japanese-American girls saying the Pledge of Allegiance at their California elementary school on the eve of their captivity and sentries standing armed guard with rifles over their shoulders at the Tule Lake center.[19] Many of the photos used were taken by Dorthea Lange, of Great Depression "Migrant Mother" fame, but they were censored and unavailable for decades.[20] Just this year, bestselling author Richard Reeves published the very readable *Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese-American Internment in World War II*, in which he borrowed Michi Weglyn's adjective of choice for his new retelling. Each of these books, although employing different techniques and addressing different audiences, does an outstanding job of relating what

happened to the Issei and Nisei and making the reader feel strongly for these victimized innocents.

Other works with less scathing titles have done an equally commendable job of describing some aspect of incarceration history and in filling in some niche to help complete the scholarship. Robert Harvey's 2003 work, *Amache: The Story of Japanese Internment in Colorado During World War II,* tells a familiar story of internment, but it focuses distinctly on the camp in Colorado and specific residents there who were able to relate their experiences. Journalist Adam Schrager focused his work *The Principled Politician: Governor Ralph Carr and the Fight against Japanese American Internment*, on the Colorado governor who was actually sympathetic to this group's peril, very much unlike his California and Idaho colleagues. *Japanese Americans and World War II*, by Donald and Nadine Hata, has been published and updated in multiple editions, and it is a terse work compact enough to introduce the subject to high school students. Each of these studies, much like their more emotionally charged contemporaries, does an exemplary job of describing how unjust was the experience of Japanese Americans during World War II. However, each of them, no matter the level of their reliance on primary documents, fails to fully capture the important steps the incarcerated themselves took to cope with these injustices. Perhaps the best of these scholarly works, *Surviving Minidoka,* comes the closest in understanding and addressing this aspect. In two of its ten essays, rather than being devoted to racial prejudice and poor government decision making, the book focuses instead on different aspects of Japanese culture in the camps: one on the Japanese Gardens in Minidoka and the other on the

woodworker Nakashima and his beautiful wartime wood creations.[21] These essays are the ones that demonstrate *gaman*, and examples like these are largely what has been missing from every work not published by a Japanese American author.

This distinction, more than any other aspect of Japanese-American scholarship, is what separates the post-redress secondary studies from the primary source collections from the war, and the original documents that have been collected and published throughout this same time. The secondary scholarship focuses on the injustices and hardships endured by the Issei and Nisei. The primary documents, the Japanese-American recollections since that time, and the surviving artifacts from the camps all demonstrate that the message that the camp survivors and their descendants most emphatically want to get across is that they did incredible things to deal with impossible situations. They want to make it known that their patriotism and heroism and creativeness and spirit are the things that define their people. This is what they want their children and grandchildren to understand, and this is what they want other Americans to know. The story of what happened to the Japanese Americans, in almost every horrible detail imaginable, has been told sufficiently. The survival of spirit, the things that the Issei and Nisei did about their forced removal from their homes and their incarceration experience, is what deserves historical focus now.

Luckily, an impressive amount of resources from the camp era still exist. Photographs that had been censored for years are now available. Each camp had its own newspaper, and most of these have copies that have been preserved and are now

scanned and available online. Many of the survivors wrote firsthand accounts of their own experiences. The more intimate and personal details available in these recollections go a great distance in creating a vivid picture of what every day camp life was like and the amazing ways in which the interned dealt with their deplorable circumstances. From these sources we can gather and reflect on the true social history of the camp survivors and understand that through their childhood experiences, sports, poetry, artwork, woodwork, gardens, songs, newspapers, and community spirit, that the Issei and Nisei of World War II were not just Americans, but that they were some of the most exceptional Americans of what many consider to be an incomparable generation.

CHAPTER 2

Childhood in the Camps

"If you're a teenager, you live like a teenager. You don't spend your time moping around wondering why you're there, or saying, 'This is terrible injustice.' But you don't dwell on it. You make the best of it."[1]

-Jerry Enomoto

The 1997 Italian film *Life is Beautiful* is one of the most sensitive and touching films ever created. In it, an Italian-Jewish family is sent to a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust. The father, played brilliantly by Roberto Benigni, devotes himself to keeping his son safe while in the camp. He also convinces his young boy that the whole thing, with the hard labor and disappearing people, is just a contest. The film ends with the father being gunned down after sending a reassuring wink at his son, who is hiding from the Nazis as they prepared to flee the camp before the arrival of the American heroes who had come to liberate it. The son, who is none the wiser, runs into the arms of his mother as they are reunited, and yells excitedly that "We won! We won!"

The film is magical in that it makes a viewer believe that with enough love, will, and courage an innocent childhood could be possible in even the darkest of places. The concentration camps of America, although similarly manned by armed soldiers who may have viewed their prisoners with suspicion or contempt, were in few other ways comparable to the slaughterhouses of Nazi controlled Europe. The most noticeable

difference may have been that in Minidoka, Amache, Topaz, Jerome, Manzanar, and the other incarceration centers, life was allowed to go on as normally as possible.

For adults, those who had a greater understanding of what had been lost and what was being denied them, this fact was often harder to appreciate. After all, they and all of their loved ones had been unjustly stripped of home and property, and forced into a cheap, ugly, lonely, and inhospitable land (these descriptors fit the hastily built tarpaper barracks of all of the remotely located centers). However, much like Benigni's loveable character, these parents too wanted their children to be immune to the harshness of their realities. This is probably part of the reason why so many Nisei were quiet about these experiences for so long. This was also why every effort was made to make the camps appear like normal, functioning communities. The children of these camps have been the ones that have been the main contributors to the primary documentation of these communities since the closing of the camps, and that is why it is so important to first look at things from their perspectives.

The camps were equipped with elementary schools and high schools. They had sports fields, mess halls, and social events like dances that young and old alike were engaged in. It would be insensitive and inaccurate to assume that the camp experience was positive for all youth, as the memories that are still slow in coming for some prove. For many of the children there, however, it had certain elements that made parts of camp experience enjoyable. Nisei youth had often lived under the strict supervision of conservative parents while out in the world, often working long hours on the family

farm or shop.[2] In the camps, with the thin walls and crowded conditions, parents had a harder time disciplining their children for fear of disturbing their neighbors. Thereby, children often obtained more freedoms than they actually had when they were free.[3] According to historian David Kennedy, "The detention experience cracked the thick cake of custom that had encrusted the prewar Japanese community. It undermined the cultural authority of the elderly Issei, liberated their children from hidebound tradition and cultural isolation, and dramatically catalyzed the Nisei's assimilation into the larger society."[4] Youth carried on in age-based cliques, often learning, eating, and socializing together. Also, the average age of the detained Nisei was 17, and with a population of around 10,000 occupants at each camp, dating options for both sexes were usually easily available.[5] "It was only natural for many of these Nisei to associate the constant round of dances and other social events which were quickly organized with a 'good time.'"[6] However, more than fond memories were formed from some aspects of camp life. The opportunities afforded to this generation of young Japanese Americans prepared them for adult life in incredible ways. Understanding how and why Japanese Americans came to become some of the best educated Americans within three decades of the war's end, and how they came to be the second highest earning ethnic group in the nation (behind only Jews) with incomes a third above the national average by 1975, involves a study of how they prepared to succeed at life while living in the forced conditions of the camps.[7] Something happened to and for the youth of the relocation centers. What it was and how it affected them deserves to be explored.

From Our Side of the Fence: Growing up in America's Concentration Camps is a collection of memoirs in the form of essays, poems, and anecdotes, written by former child internees who were all college students at the time of writing. Although published in 2001, it is very much a collection of bitter, redress-style writings (notice the "concentration camps" in the title?). These writings take the first of two writing forms common in the firsthand social history of the camps, in which writers recall what happened to them and how they felt about it. This is a "what happened to us" style of writing. This type of writing is what is primarily drawn upon to create all of the secondary scholarship heretofore described: the "what happened to them" type of study. However, even in this powerful collection of reflection and testimony which is aimed at themes of sorrow and injustice, certain samples of childhood resilience can be derived.

Toru Saito was born on December 11, 1937, and at the age of five was interned at the Topaz incarceration center in central Utah.[8] In his brief essay "Hidden Testimony," he recalls how as an adult he took a trip to Topaz. It was almost impossible to find, (described similarly by Saito as I described my trip to Minidoka), and it had next to nothing left to mark its existence upon his arrival. However, Saito describes how from the hospital grounds which he knew to have been along the northern boundary, he was able to recall where each of the housing blocks 1 through 7 had been located. He walked to the middle of these and found exactly where his home in Block 4, Building 10 used to be.[9] A monument of stones, hastily erected during the family's exit from camp still stood near where the porch had been. Upon seeing them, Saito recalled an old

secret hiding place that had been under the front corner of the porch.[10] Digging through the crust of earth and through a few inches of accumulated dirt, Saito found his childhood treasure – twenty-six sparkling marbles![11] The discovery transported him back to marble games of his youth, with his pals Arthur and Bobby and his brother Jiro, all gathered around a four foot circle on the ground playing as boys play, all the while letting the "lucky shooter" fly and hoping not to "fudge."[12]

Saito's story is a simple one, and the buried marbles can certainly be considered symbolic of the buried memories of so many of the Nisei of the camps. But it also illustrates how in some particulars, especially for the young, memories can parallel those of any American children, anywhere. Whether Toru, Bobby, Arthur, and Jiro realized it or not, just like their parents, they were finding distinct ways to deal with the impossibility of their situations. Their solution, probably the best that could be proscribed, was to live as best and as normally as they could.

Another recollection from the same work recalls a childhood memory in a lighter fashion. Daisy Uyeda Satoda was of high school age when she and her family were sent to Topaz.[13] Before being sent there, she like most other detainees, were first processed through assembly centers while the permanent camps were being erected. The summer of 1942 for her was spent at the assembly center built at the Tanforan Racetrack in San Bruno, California.[14] Satoda describes how she made quick friendships with a group of girls her age. Despite the poor condition of the bathroom facilities, which were lacking privacy because there were no curtains or doors, and shower partitions were only

shoulder high, Daisy and her friends Katy, May, Esther, Ruth, and Nellie all delighted in taking showers together in the afternoon. This was when there was a better chance of getting hot water (you never knew if you would get hot or cold when you pulled the shower strings at Tanforan).[15] "We soon lost all modesty. We pranced around the shower room, singing and dancing in the nude."[16] Described as "bathroom revelry," this innocent attempt at teenage life was certainly a coping mechanism that these girls applied to deal with their extreme situation. This again demonstrates the amazing Japanese spirit. It shows that *gaman* can be every bit as silly as it is serious, and that it transcends generations.

Satoda elaborates further on the positive experiences of relocation. "Camp life was the beginning of my independence," she proclaims, citing that kids could eat together in the mess hall since eating with one's parents wasn't cool.[17] She describes how life there was not about hard work and discipline, but rather it was about free time in the recreation hall, hanging out in the "Junior Miss" club that she and her friends (all juniors in high school) created, or learning how to jitterbug and teaching other girls and even adults how to dance.[18] Clubs, dancing, and co-ed socials were the norm at Tanforan, and although the circumstances that put them there were unjustifiably cruel, the incarcerated children of Tanforan and Topaz certainly made the most of their situations.

From Our Side of the Fence serves as a good example of a narrowly focused collection, and there are certainly many more like it, all of which can help to shed some

light on the emotion associated with relocation. A much more comprehensive collection of primary documents is *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* (2000). It includes pieces of writing from not only Japanese Americans but also many others somehow involved with the incarceration experience, including government leaders, newspapers, and teachers at the camps. In further contrast, unlike *From Our Side of the Fence*, most of the documents collected for this impressive anthology were written before, during, or just after the war, as opposed to being recollected years later. Edited by Lawson Fusao Inada, *Only What We Could Carry* exposes the reader to practically every angle of incarceration history, and it allows them to draw their own conclusions. None of the original wording of documents is changed to show concentration camps instead of internment camps or the like, but a thorough reading of this collection still leaves the reader with as strong a feeling of indignation as any of the other collections or secondary studies. However, in not filtering for one specific aspect, it is also a better source for understanding about things like childhood in the camps and the perseverance of spirit.

One thing that *Only What We Could Carry* illustrates is that there were many adults who helped the children to persevere against their confinements and try to live a normal life. One of those adults was Eleanor Gerard Sekerak, a native Californian and one of several hundreds of Caucasian professionals who entered the camps to help those incarcerated there.[19] Sekerak's profession was that of educator, and she volunteered to work at the Topaz center in Utah as a high school teacher after one of her UC Berkeley colleagues, Hiro Katayama, was forced from his home and school.[20] A

study of fine people like Sekerak would be an impressive topic of its own. From her personal account we can see that her focus was entirely on the youth of Topaz, and what she and others could do to make their lives meaningful, and to help them find success in the unlikeliest of places. Sekerak recalls how determined she was to make sure that the standards of education and behavior were not compromised because of their situation.[21] Based on her description, it becomes obvious that the students in Topaz received a first rate education from her, even if that education was wrought with the hypocrisy of citizen confinement without trial. To describe her feelings as she first began her work, Sekerak writes, "As I faced my first day I wondered how I could teach American government and democratic principles while we sat in classrooms behind barbed wire! I never ceased to have a lump in my throat when classes recited the Pledge of Allegiance, especially the phrase, 'liberty and justice for all.'"[22]

 [23]

Image 2: Dorthea Lange, "Pledge of Allegiance," April 20, 1942, gelatin silver print, in Collection of Oakland Museum of California.

Despite the complications of the situation, Sekerak made it a first point to ensure that neither she nor the students would dwell upon the incarceration experience and

they "agreed that the whole evacuation process had been traumatic but could not last forever – and we could not permit academic achievement to be interrupted."[24] From this driving philosophy, goals of behavior and achievement were established, and teacher and students became equally invested partners in those goals. The way Sekerak describes it makes it sound like the best of secondary school educational situations. "So they arrived at class on time, with home work completed, worked diligently, took their exams, and otherwise observed normal classroom standards."[25] Providing example of the students' scholastic accomplishments, Sekerak recalls that, "Borrowing caps and gowns graciously loaned by the University of Utah, 218 seniors marched across the dusty windswept plaza to outdoor graduation exercises on June 25 (1942), services complete with an invocation and a begowned faculty."[26] The graduation ceremony she describes could be like one conducted in any decent sized 1940s American town, and this realistic feel was certainly one of the goals of the educators and organizers.

Further illustrating that the students were given every opportunity to feel normality within their insane reality, Sekerak explains that the Topaz schools, like the schools in the other nine camps, mimicked a typical high school as closely as possible. The curriculum and extracurriculars included a school choir, school newspaper, yearbook, student government, drama, athletics, dances, and senior week activities.[27] Through the hard work of teachers like Sekerak, her colleagues in Topaz and other camps, and the deans of thirty some colleges who met together in the summer of 1942, many of the internee students were able to attend college after graduating from high school in the camps.[28] Despite a list of stipulations, the families of these graduates and

the students themselves were often able to find a way to make it work out. This made students – along with Nisei who volunteered for military service – some of the first detainees who were able to permanently leave the camps. These students are a perfect example of the entire Japanese-American community in the camps during the time. They did all they could to make the most of their dire situation. They overcame.

Sekerak also shares one last detail about her experience. A couple of years in, after a school auditorium, adequate library, and serviceable athletic fields had been built and well utilized, there began to be an understandable "stagnation of spirit."[29] Years of confinement wore away at the idea of a bright future and a democratic solution. To combat this malaise, Sekerak and others set up a student relocation office to personally guide students on a course to accomplish their goals.[30] A scholarship fund was set up, contributed to by both residents and outsiders alike, and by 1945 at least 3,000 students had been placed in post-secondary education of some type, including students from all ten camps.[31] Topaz was certainly not an ideal community, and the situation there and in all of the camps was anything but idyllic, but the care shown to the youth of all camps was palpable. The youth themselves were incredible. It would have been very simple for them to sit and lick the wounds of their injustices, but most chose to make lemonade from life's lemons. Their persecution was different from the prejudice shown their ancestors in America, but like all generations of Japanese Americans they overcame their adversities through a steadfast diligence and refusal to submit.

Younger children too were able to overcome the adversity of camp life and even draw some happy memories from it. Few realize that the actor George Takei, famous for his role as Mr. Sulu in the television series *Star Trek*, was actually a child of the camps. Writing about his experience in Tule Lake in his autobiography *To the Stars: The Autobiography of George Takei*, and excerpted in *Only What We Could Carry*, Takei's childhood experiences in the camp show that things that happened there put him on the road to becoming a great actor and representative of the Asian-American community.

Takei's family was placed in the barracks opposite the Block 80 mess hall at Tule Lake, a fact that did not sit well with his parents who disliked the noise of the constantly operating facility (and the increased distance to the bathroom), but that was immensely pleasing to George and his brother Henry because they were only a short dash away from the comfort of food.[32] George also liked that particular barrack because the mess halls were the center of social activity in the block. Anytime any sort of activity like a dance or a movie night would take place, it would be there. His home was the perfect spot for breaking up the monotony of camp life. Takei recounts a list of the movies that he saw in that mess hall. They were projected from a bulky, black projection machine onto a white sheet hung in the hall directly across from his door; thus he and his family had the best spot.[33] "I saw Paul Muni in *Scarface,* Bette Davis in a movie where she suffered a lot, and the *Gangbusters* serials.[34] Of all of the movie watching experiences, which must have seemed magical for the power they had to momentarily transport the viewers away from their harsher realities, Takei recalls that the ones that did not work

right were the ones he liked best. On some of the old Japanese samurai movies the families would watch, the audio tracks would sometimes be missing.

> *When this happened, a man from another block who specialized in these things would come and sit at the bottom of the screen. He had a dimly lit script in front of him, and he would narrate in Japanese what we were seeing on the screen. Not only did he narrate, but he played all of the speaking roles as well. He would do the deep voice of the gruff samurai, then immediately become the crystalline voiced princess, then the cackling old crone – all matching the fast-moving drama on the screen.*[35]

The acting talents of this man, who Takei found completely mesmerizing (he also did sound effects and had an assistant with instruments who heightened the fight scenes), made the young prodigy first want to be an actor. The man was a *benshi,* and in the old days *benshi* had brought silent movies to life with their entire aural dramatic accompaniment.[36] After first witnessing the work of one of these *benshi*, Takei remarked to his father that, "I think the man we saw tonight is an artist."[37] Like so many other children of the camps, George never let go of the dream inspired by his experiences in the camps. Also, like many he went on to be extremely successful, and in his case, even iconic.

Only What We Could Carry abounds with similar testimony and anecdotal stories that show how life went on despite the intentional halt that had been put on normal living. In one riveting recollection, a young Yoshiko Uchida perfectly blends the injustice and misery of the assembly center at Tanforan with the tiny bits of childish humor that made it all bearable. The sleeping arrangements there were little more than converted horse stalls, and while higher walls and locking doors were added, little of the stench of

the former occupants was taken away. Fitting families of four or more sometimes into stalls once built for a single horse, this camp demonstrated the inhumanity of the whole rushed and wretched ordeal. However, Uchida contrasts these heart-wrenching descriptions with anecdotes that cannot help but make one chuckle. At first, families from different places were so crammed together that they felt uncomfortable with one another and their complete lack of privacy, not to mention the theft of their self-respect. However, Uchida got to really know her neighbors in a funny way. The neighbors had a teenage son who would spend all day running around with his friends, and would often not come "home" until late at night.[38] One Sunday, while his parents were out, this boy took advantage of the quiet quarters to catch up on his sleeping, but when his parents arrived back at their dormitory they realized that they were locked out and the boy could not be roused.[39] In their desperation, they called on Uchida's help stating, "Our stupid son has locked us out."[40] Young Yoshiko was able to climb on her cot and look over the partition that separated their stalls. After contemplating pouring water on the teenage boy, she instead decided to poke and prod him with a broom, all the while shouting, "Wake up! Wake up!"[41] Through her valiant efforts, the boy was finally awoken and able to let his parents in. Uchida reports that, "We became good friends with our neighbors after that."[42]

What collections like *Only What We Could Carry* and *From Our Side of the Fence* offer in brief glimpses, memoirs like Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* deliver in full and startling detail. Having been compared to *The Diary of Anne Frank* for its detail and humanity, her story of wartime imprisonment, first published in 1973, has

won many awards and was a pioneer in wartime relocation literature. Houston's work shows the paradox that existed within the camps. There were barbed wire fences and armed guards surrounding Manzanar without, and kids within practicing cheerleading, going to sock hops, attending Boy Scouts, and twirling batons. Jeanne Wakatsuki was only seven years old when her family was interned in Manzanar in 1942, so each recollection is from the point of view of a child living with it all and trying to put it together. One of her many remembrances included mess hall games she or her siblings would play. These games ranged from the simple to the elaborate. As the youngest children, she and her next older brother Kiyo were often forced to eat with their parents. Meanwhile the rest of the older siblings exercised a greater freedom that allowed them to roam, and they often tried out many different mess halls to try to decide which had the best food.[43] At the table, Jeanne and Kiyo made up a race game. Neither could begin eating until their father gave them permission, but after such had been granted, chopsticks raced and scraped to get all of the rice out of the rice bowls as quickly as possible.[44] Father even got in on this fun sometimes, giving a subtle acknowledgement to whomever he was able to determine finished their food first.[45] The games the older kids played were much more elaborate. Her brother Ray made a game of seeing how many mess halls he could hit in one eating period. "[B]e the first in line at Block 16, gobble down your food, run to 17 by the middle of the dinner hour, gulp another helping, and hurry to 18 to make the end of that chow line and stuff in the third meal of the evening."[46] Mealtime became one of the favorite times of day in the camp for the kids. Writes Houston, "I confess I enjoyed this part of it at the time. We all did."[47]

Stories like these seem quaint and fun, but it is important to realize that authors like Houston included them in their memoirs for a reason. The games children played and the fun they found to occupy themselves were every bit as much of the experience for them as any of the intimidation or discrimination they faced. These anecdotes are as touching as Anne Frank's homemade Hanukkah gifts. When seen in that light, the connection between those two stories goes beyond a connection of just wartime injustice. They are both stories of youth, trying to live like kids, and finding incredible and inspiring ways to be successful.

As the months turned to years in Manzanar, Houston shares how each of the children in her family found ways to make life there as normal and worthwhile as possible. Her old rice racing partner Kiyo, 13 by the time they left camp, liked it when the heavy winds would blow because they moved the sands around and exposed the hidden obsidian arrowheads that he could sell to the old men for an impressive fifty-cents each.[48] He had the ability to turn a miserable day into a treasure hunt. Older brother Ray, who was a few years the elder of Kiyo, played football in a six-man touch league, and their team got so good that sometimes Caucasian teams from the nearby towns of Lone Pine or Independence would come to the camp just to play against them.[49] Her two oldest siblings, Lillian and Bill, were each part of a band. Lillian was in a hillbilly band – The Sierra Stars – wearing jeans and cowboys hats while playing guitars and a tub bass.[50] Bill led a dance band called The Jive Bombers, and he played for dances every weekend in one of the recreation halls.[51] His rendition of *Don't Fence Me In* was not sung to mock the authorities or make any sort of political statement, but rather it

made the band's playlist because it was a hit song that year, and because the kids wanted to have fun and feel normal.[52] The power of this statement, from a pre-redress memoir, cannot be understated. Despite all they and their families had gone through and were still going through, the Nisei children of the camps were not consumed with bitter feelings. They were happy in what lives they were able to create, and they lived them to the fullest. Life wasn't about complaining or placing blame. It was about friendships, fun, and accomplishment.

Another priceless primary resource collection, which is kept securely protected within the archives of the College of Southern Idaho Library, is the letters of Harry L. Stafford. Stafford was the Project Director at the Minidoka Relocation Center for its entire duration, and he donated his entire collection of writing and correspondence to the library for study by future generations. While wearing white gloves and sitting in a special room, one has the opportunity to view these documents that are not available online or anywhere else. From them, a sense of real life at one of the camps can be gained, by looking at things through the eyes of a sympathetic administrator.

In a letter to Dillon Myer, director of the War Relocation Authority (with no date but presumably from 1942 because of its content about shaping self-government within the camp), Stafford wrote, "We have at all times sought to develop such community interests as would benefit the population as a whole."[53] These community interests are seen in the opportunities afforded children in the camps.

A list of concerns, written by the camp councils and presented for Stafford for a trip to Washington in early 1943, show the ways in which he and the community were concerned for the children there. In this list, which was probably not unique to just Minidoka, the council pleaded that Stafford would please find out from Washington how to address problems like how the high school would obtain the necessary equipment for industrial arts work, how they would obtain lumber for benches, cupboards, and tables for these types of classes, when they could expect the typewriters and adding machines requested for the commercial classes, and when they could expect a gymnasium with showers so that physical education programs could continue year round.[54] Also included in this memorandum was a request for more teachers, to decrease all class sizes to less than a 30:1 student to teacher ratio, so the schools would all meet accreditation standards for the state of Idaho.[55]

While an outcome of the Washington visit is absent from these records, it can be assumed that educational matters met with progress there. Two months later the Teacher Training Department, under the direction of Superintendent of Education R.A. Pomeroy, presented the document "Teacher Training: Hunt Idaho, 1943." In this guidebook, standards of excellence for providing a first rate education at the camp are outlined. Evidence of this is present in the introduction section, where it is explained that, "A secondary purpose in organizing a teacher training department (the first was to get certified Japanese-American teachers) was to make it possible for Japanese college students to earn accepted college credit from some accredited institution of higher learning...The State Board of Education of the State of Idaho at its regular meeting in

February voted to accept the teacher training work done at the Relocation Center and requested the University (of Idaho) to proceed with plans for approving the professional courses and recording credit."[56] From this document, an inference can be made that Stafford did indeed present the concerns of the camp to Washington, and got quick action in improving the educational experience and opportunities of his students at Minidoka.

The words of Stafford himself best speak for his attitude toward relocation and the plight of his community members. In "A Message," published in October 1943 in a camp publication called *The Minidoka Interlude*, Stafford says, "War clouds have cast their shadows on innocent people throughout the world. Deprivation of liberty has been the accomplishment of the War Lords. The ill fortunes of war struck deep in the case of Japanese-Americans and their elders."[57] He goes on to speak of how these innocents were robbed of home and property, and how "Strong folks are they who smile through adversity."[58] Certainly it was not just the children, but the entire population of the camps that were fortunate to have a friend in their corner in Project Director Stafford.

Also available in the Stafford collection is a copy of *Memoirs*, the 1943 high school year book. To look through its pages is to see the past through the eyes of the students of Minidoka. The pictures are barren, but beautiful in a harsh way. They capture the camp from a distance, surrounded by sand and sagebrush. The inmates were each trying to make the most of this desert home. An article on pages 28-29 describes the work experience program at Minidoka, and the pride the students took in

being involved in making their community function smoothly and in planning for their own futures. In part it reads:

> *The students of Hunt High School are definitely contributing in solving the labor situation of the Minidoka Relocation Project. The part-time workers of this school have gone into various fields of employment here in camp, and are getting valuable training in every field of labor.*
>
> *The population of Hunt is slowly decreasing in number, consequently resulting in a lack of full-time laborers. This creates a problem which only the high school students can solve for a smoother working community. Studying diligently four hours and putting four hours into some kind of labor, the student can average a 24 hour week.*
>
> *The various forms of employment taken by students give them valuable and worthwhile training for the future. Some have gone into part-time training in order to follow a profession dealing with that type of work; others are doing skilled labor work which requires a different type of training. At any rate, all classifications of employment will assist the students by their training and instruction.*[59]

Note the pride evident in the students voices as they proclaim that the work and the smooth functioning of the community would be impossible without their help. Instead of feeling bitter at being forced into such a complicated and dreary situation, these students are grateful for the opportunities they have to help, to learn, and to develop new skills.

A poignant statement from the students expresses simply how they felt at the end of their first year in camp. From the annual's "Dear Diary," section comes this final entry: "And so, dear Diary, we say 'Goodby [sic].' Years later, when we thumb through your yellowed pages to reminisce may we remember that at the end of this school year

'42-'43, we, the first graduating class of Hunt High School, faced the future with our heads held high."[60]

Many collections have been created from the recollections of ex-detainees, but a wealth of written material composed within the camps still exists. Not all of them are confined to college library archives, and many are actually available online for all to research. These primary documents are little used in collections and secondary summaries, even though they are the captured feelings and events of the time and are not altered by the feelings that came after an era without recognition. Perhaps the least utilized resource, absent without much justification, has been the camp newspapers. Each camp was in itself a fairly large city, some like Minidoka in Idaho, Heart Mountain in Wyoming, and Amache in Colorado were among the most populous in their respective states. As such, these cities had the services of similar large communities, such as the aforementioned hospitals and schools, as well as newspapers. These papers were unique in the same ways the camps were unique, and to read through them is to catch a glimpse of what every day camp life was really like. Indeed, it may be because of their lack of indignation and emotion that the camp newspapers are typically left off the bibliography and notes pages of so many studies and collections. However, the real qualities of these documents, being representative of the communities that published them at the time of their conceptions, are what make them so important for this kind of social study.

All ten camps had their own newspaper, some with names unique to their geographic location or particular situation, and others with monikers similar to what you would find on any community paper. *The Minidoka Irrigator*, *The Manzanar Free Press*, *The Heart Mountain Sentinel*, *The Granada Pioneer*, *The Gila-News Courier*, *The Poston Chronicle*, *The Rohwer Outpost*, *The Topaz Times*, *The Denson Tribute* (Jerome), and *The Tulean Dispatch* are a list of these camp papers. Thanks to the work of the nonprofit organization Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project, thousands of documents, interviews, and recollections have been collected and made available for all to access online. According to the site they are, "A grassroots organization dedicated to preserving, educating, and sharing the story of World War II era incarceration of Japanese Americans in order to deepen understandings of American history and inspire action for equity."[61] Part of this massive primary source collection includes copies of almost all of the newspapers published at the different camps, donated from newspaper staff workers, and now scanned from the originals and made available digitally online. A perusal of any of these papers, most of which were published from 1942 to 1945 in the camps, can illustrate how every effort was made to give the children of the camps a normal childhood and a wonderful shot at a bright future beyond the camps. In some cases, they also show how youth made more of their time in camp than almost any other social group.

An example of the opportunities afforded youth and the vision associated with it comes from the twelfth issue of the Minidoka Irrigator, dated October 24, 1942. A page 3 article titled "High School Plans Class in Cooking" hardly sounds like news, but the

details and tone of the article illustrate the effort that went into education and post-camp, post-graduation planning. In full the article reads:

> *Plans for institutional cooking as a subject for the high school curriculum are being completed by the Education Department, according to latest reports.*
>
> *"A fine opportunity for future restaurant and hotel owners is waiting for them," Jerome T. Light, high school principal, said.*
>
> *The course is designed to cover the entire field, from hotel management to professional waiting.*
>
> *If plans work out as scheduled, students working under well-qualified home economics teachers with the possible help of chefs will serve noon lunches to the school.*
>
> *Pupils wishing to enroll should go to their respective counselors in Rec. 23, Light added.*[62]

Even at this early stage of internment, the hope for youth, as potential future hotel owners and restaurant managers, comes shining through the terse account of the opportunities afforded to them. The same page of this issue of *The Irrigator* also has an article about a clinic day for children, and also the birth notice of baby Hirota, son of Mr. and Mrs. Shingoru Joe Hirota, on October 19. Keeping children and life moving on as normal as possible is a goal evident in the writings of *The Irrigator*.

[63]

Image 3: "Volume I, number 1 of the Minidoka Irrigator, Sept. 10, 1942, Minidoka camp, Idaho.," *Densho Encyclopedia* http://encyclopedia.densho.org /sources/en-denshopd-i119-00001-1/ (accessed Oct 4, 2015).

The second issue of *The Granada Pioneer*, also published in October of 1942, shows that care for, respect for, and input from youth of all age groups was important. Within the pages of this issue, three separate articles illustrate these points. The first, "Baby Food Stations are in Operation," explains that eight different formula stations located throughout the camp were now in operation, and offered Gerber's Strained Baby Food, Gerber's Junior Foods, powdered and evaporated milk, eggs, and oranges.[64]

Articles found two pages later in the same document demonstrate more of what we have seen with regard to the importance of camp society maintaining normal conditions for all school aged students. They also display that the input of the young demographic was significant for the functioning of the community. In "School Parties,"

Halloween parties and socials held throughout the center are described, citing that "The elementary, Kindergarten, and pre-school nursery pupils enjoyed Halloween parties in their classrooms in the afternoon. The teachers of junior high school sponsored a social for their students yesterday afternoon from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m."[65] The article "YP in Forum" on the same page explains that forums were put together to get input from everyone on what they believed were the best ways to deal with camp life. In part it reads, "A forum on the topic of 'My Ideas on Making the Most of Relocation,' will feature the young people's meeting at 7 p.m. tomorrow in 8H mess hall." Clearly, from the very beginning of internment at Grenada, the youth were an important factor in decision making and a careful consideration in decisions made. It also becomes obvious from reading these and many similar articles that the youth of the camps were a great source of pride to the communities.

Care for children was not just endemic to the intermountain West, as camps farther east, like Rohwer Camp in Arkansas, hit the ground running with the same enthusiasm for making sure that their youth had ample opportunities to experience all young life had to offer. The front page story of the very first issue of *The Rohwer Outpost* proclaimed in triumph block type, "ACTIVITIES CHARTED: Community Program Includes Clubs, Entertainment, Arts & Crafts."[66] For the detainees of Rohwer, the most important piece of information they had to share with their new community was nothing about being politically and morally wronged, but rather it was that their children would be able to choose from programs and activities like Girl Scouts, YWCA, looming and weaving classes, and talent shows.[67] The only other front page story that

uses a bigger and bolder print to grab immediate attention is a piece titled, "SCHOOLS: Thrice Explains Delay in Opening of Classes."[68] Schools, education, and youth engagement proved to be at the forefront of internment center prioritizing again and again. It is little wonder, after a researching of these newspapers, that the Nisei generation of the camps went on to be so successful and driven among American minority groups. When left almost completely to their own devices, the repeated priority for the communities was a focus on those in their formative years.

Even Tule Lake, the relocation camp for those "disloyal" detainees that answered "No" to questions #27 and #28 of the loyalty tests administered to the camps in 1943 (again a topic of injustice that has accounted for plenty of space in other internment studies), was a community that resembled the others in youth encouragement. "Return School Text Books" demands one article from *The Tulean Dispatch* of September 3, 1942, after the "disloyals" had been relocated there. The article suggests that those students who had not returned their books to the high school do so as soon as possible so as not to interrupt the education process.[69] Another article from the same page of the same issue describes how the scholarship fund for the graduating students continues to grow from donations. Many donations were made by detainees inside the camp, and many were made by sympathetic people from outside of the camp.[70]

From this brief sample it can be evidenced that education, social life, and opportunity for youth were at the forefront of camp priorities. No matter what camp you were in, or how long you had been there, much was done to enhance what would

have been an otherwise drab existence. Adults within the camps and adult volunteers, many of them professionals in their respective fields, were generous with their time and talents. These efforts fostered an atmosphere that, despite all of the incongruity around the forced dreariness, helped to create successful and driven American citizens.

Analyzing childhood within the camps exposes a social aspect that is little more than hinted at in most academic studies. The reasons for this are simple, for the most part they contradict the mood and tone that the writers of injustice and concentration camp mentality promote. Despite a harshness of living conditions in cheap houses, placed upon barren windswept landscapes, surrounded by barbed wire and machine-gun manned guard towers, the children who lived for three-plus years of their lives in these conditions had good experiences during their times there, and many were made successful because of their experiences there.

The camps certainly were not all fun and games. However, for youth and adults alike, some fun and games were able to be had in the camps. Much like the schooling and social opportunities afforded to the children, sporting and gaming opportunities were provided for inmates of all ages.

Chapter 3

Sports and Games

"Without baseball, camp life would have been miserable."[1]

-George Omachi

Like their children, adults of the camps were in desperate need of distractions from the unsympathetic realities of camp life. Existence in camp put a forced halt to regular living, and little opportunity was given the inmates to carry on in any way they had before. As has been demonstrated, Japanese Americans were an industrious and successful American minority group, both before and after internment. Their prewar success was partially responsible for their forced removal at the hands of a jealous and greedy class of citizens that had not gotten so far as the Issei and Nisei in their economic endeavors. For adults, there were few opportunities to feel the achievement they had felt outside of the camps. This was a reason why they invested so much of their time and energy in preparing their children for postwar success. However, in one particular activity that was an important part of camp life in all of the relocation centers, detainees were to able to find more than just distraction. They were able to compete and find victory, often times against white competitors. This achievement and competition was accomplished through the sporting activities that became an instrumental part of surviving the camps.

In the 1920s and 1930s, photographer Ansel Adams created a name for himself with his iconic black and white images of the western wilderness. His photographs of Yellowstone and Yosemite were adored by all. His eye for detail, whether at close range or displaying a vast landscape, became renowned. Like his contemporary Dorthea Lange, Adams used his skills behind the camera to inspire reform. At first, most of his energy was centered on environmental change. His images of Yosemite demonstrated how fragile the treasured beauty of the national park was. He initially used his talent in preservation efforts for beautiful and wild places like this.

It wasn't until the 1940s that he decided to apply his skills to inspire social change, in addition to the environmental change for which he had become famous. His first attempt at this was inside the Manzanar Relocation Center where he was invited to come and take photographs of the camp and to show how the inmates were living. Unfortunately, his admission was restricted by certain conditions. He was not allowed to show barbed wire, guard towers, search lights, or any soldiers with guns.[2] Michael Beschloss of the New York Times described what happened by using many quotes from Ansel himself. He reports, "Adams was determined to discover, in this 'nightmare situation,' how these human beings, 'suffering under a great injustice,' had 'overcome the sense of defeat and despair.'" He soon realized that the one key to the puzzle was baseball, which moved him to make this photograph:

Image 4: Ansel Adams, "Baseball at Manzanar," 1943, gelatin silver print, part of Ansel Adams- Manzanar War Relocation Photographs.

It depicts one of the baseball games that were common to Manzanar, and while little about the hardships of camp life can be concluded from studying it, one can quickly grasp that baseball played a prominent role. The crowd in the foreground shows spectators 3 rows deep, all standing and crowding for room to watch the game. With a close look at the background of the picture, behind the players occupying the central focus, one can also make out the form of hundreds of more fans forming a human barrier around the perimeter of the field. All are clearly excited to be able to watch the competition. It appears almost as if the whole community was packed in to watch the game. This assumption may not be far off. Baseball in the camps was certainly a highlight, and the excitement for it permeated to spectators, competitors, and sometimes even faculty alike.

Not to be outdone, the ladies of Manzanar were caught by Adams in the midst of a competitive volleyball game as well. While these images were not censored like

Dorthea Lange's, they seldom make it into any study of wartime incarceration. The main reason for this is, as this photograph demonstrates, is that at times people in the camps had fun. They got together and enjoyed sporting events, competition, and socializing. They were surrounded by people their own age, with similar interests, and opportunities to play together. Without discounting what anyone went through, or questioning any of the cruelties of camp life, one cannot look at this photo and think that it captures an unhappy moment. It runs counter to the victimization angle propagated by most postwar scholarship.

[4]

Image 5: Ansel Adams, "Volleyball at Manzanar," 1943, gelatin silver print, part of Ansel Adams- Manzanar War Relocation Photographs.

To say that these images contradict what is known about camp life would be incorrect. They show barren landscapes and military buildings. They also show an attempt at normal living amidst chaotic and unfair conditions. They bring to the study another layer of camp society that is absent from most of the secondary studies. To

focus on fun things that happened in camp is not to question the fact that being incarcerated there was terrible. However, researching these truths is necessary in revealing the whole picture of the social history of the camps. This history affirms the character and dignity of a strong people, and for that reason the topic should not be ignored.

Sports were more than just a little part of camp life. At Manzanar, sporting competition was an activity in which almost everyone of the right age was involved. Beschloss reports that Manzanar had almost 100 baseball teams, including 14 female ones.[5] These games drew large crowds, as can be seen in the baseball photo, which gave reprieve to not just the players but to entire communities. Perhaps even more importantly, the players, engaged in "the great American pastime," felt that baseball sometimes meant even more than just an escape from the doldrums of incarceration. Beschloss writes, "Perhaps the most moving characteristic of the games in those World War II camps is that many of the inmates considered playing baseball a weapon with which, amid their hourly humiliations, they could assert their own Americanism."[6] Quoting one Japanese-American ballplayer, Takeo Suo, "Putting on a baseball uniform was like wearing the American flag."[7] Anything that not only helped the inmates, but also defined them and helped them exemplify their patriotism, deserves study and attention.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, there are hardly any books that study this topic academically. If they do even approach it, they only do so from some specific

narrowed angle. Samuel O. Regalado's monograph *Nikkei Baseball: Japanese American Players from Immigration and Internment to the Major Leagues*, is an example of a scholarly work that actually discusses baseball in the camps and how important it was to the inmates there. However, Regalado's primary focus is not on baseball within the camps, but rather on the evolution of baseball and Japanese players. He shows that they loved playing baseball before they were locked up, so they continued to play throughout their incarceration, and found ways to keep competing after gaining their freedom. This was all done despite anti-Japanese laws and policy that still kept them from becoming first-class citizens after the war. Regalado's overall thesis is that we should not be surprised to see Japanese-American players who have excelled in the major leagues, like Lenn Sakata and Kurt Suzuki. Regalado broaches the subject of Japanese-American incarceration camp baseball, but mostly because it fit into his larger book on Japanese-American baseball. Nevertheless, his attempt to describe the period still does more to depict what happened with baseball in the camps than any other erudite study.

The work that perhaps best captured the importance of baseball in the camps was not a scholarly work, but rather a children's book by Ken Mochizuki called *Baseball Saved Us.* Mochizuki, son of Nisei parents who were confined at Minidoka, wrote this book to preserve the family history of his parents and grandparents in the camp. The most powerful passage in the book comes after the Issei father and teenage Nisei son get into a frustrated argument. At this point, Mochizuki writes,

That's when Dad knew we needed baseball. We got shovels and started digging up the sagebrush in a big empty space near our barracks. The man in the tower watched us the whole time. Pretty soon, other grown-ups and their kids started to help.

We didn't have anything we needed for baseball, but the grown-ups were pretty smart. They funneled water from irrigation ditches to flood what would become our baseball field. The water packed down the dust and made it hard. There weren't any trees, but they found wood to build the bleachers. Bats, balls, and gloves arrived from friends back home. My mom and other moms took the covers off mattresses and used them to make uniforms. They looked almost like the real thing.[8]

In a way, it is sad that one of the best literary descriptions available on the importance of baseball in the camps comes to us from a book aimed at anything but an academic audience. Mochizuki's anecdotal recount of his family's dependence on baseball to help them "survive" camp is a powerful statement about exactly how much the ability to play this game meant to the detainees. His description of the hard work that was put into the field, bleachers, and uniforms by the whole community also speaks volumes to the powerful role that this sport had on camp life. Again, much like trying to capture a vivid picture of what childhood was like in the camps, a journey through the primary sources is essential.

Again from the Harry Stafford collection certain documents prove invaluable. The Hunt High School yearbook shows pictures of the baseball and basketball teams. The basket-ballers, affectionately called the "sharpshooters," have a brief article accompanying their picture that describes how, "Despite handicaps of terrible weather conditions plus illness among its squad and a temporarily erected one-basket court, Hunt High's 10-man sharpshooters entered the Inter-Relocation Center's free throw

competition sponsored by Heart Mountain and walked off with third place honors."[9] Certainly sporting events were every bit as important to the youth as to the adults, and they went on in the camps as they did for young people around the country.

Even better than the accomplishments of the high school teams were those of Hunt's semi-pro baseball team. *The Minidoka Interlude* details a record of their accomplishments through October of 1943, as they played against other baseball teams from around Southern Idaho. The 1943 team boasted a stellar 10-2 record. They lost only to the team from Idaho Falls twice, undoubtedly the biggest team they would have competed against, and in separate games against teams from Rupert and Nampa they scored 23 and 24 points respectively![10] A one or two sentence recap is shared as a game highlight with each score. Cleverly written about their team, the "Niseis," (also called the Wolverines but given that name in *The Interlude*) the blurbs show with what delight the team achieved its victories. Perhaps the funniest write-up was on the game that the Niseis played against the military police from Hunt, a 14-1 victory that must have defined satisfaction to the players who were so used to the M.P.'s looking down on them from their guard towers. "Being neighbors meant nothing to the Niseis who trampled all over the hapless soldiers, while Joe Asahara played scotchman on the mound."[11] One writer for the National Park Service had suggested that the semi-pro baseball team at Hunt was so good that people used to sneak *into* the camp to play against them![12] Their skill even got them invited to a state tournament, and they were allowed to travel outside of the camp to participate.

Softball was also popular in Hunt, and the camp was able to throw together fourteen separate teams which were divided into two classes: the "Majors" and the "Old Timers."[13] These details of the '43 season were captured in *The Minidoka Interlude* with the same pithy wit that abounded in the baseball write-ups. "Tome Takayoshi and his Block 12 nugget-pounders annexed the first Old Timers' project-wide softball tournament by pulverizing Block 36's 'ojisans,' 18 to 8 in the finals."[14] The recaps make the games seem not just like a diversion, but like something in which the participants and camp population were all involved. And, they make the games seem fun. It is important to know that the inmates dedicated time to something that was fun, that they could take pride in, and that they really excelled at.

The Heart Mountain Sentinel, arguably the most professional looking of all of the camp newspapers, had its own sports section, usually comprising two sports pages on a weekly basis. The second issue of the paper had articles on open softball play with ten teams ready to go, boxing lessons each Tuesday open to all, the girls volleyball league set to compete, Boy Scouts, six-man football league openings, and even a blurb on sumo wrestling practice being called off because of cold weather.[15] A cartoon by John Watanabe on the same page does more than any amount of words to explain how important sports were in this remote outpost. It depicts a young, keyed-up boy, holding a baseball bat and wearing a baseball helmet high on his head. He is also wearing a coat, and scarf, and gloves, as huge drops of rain project diagonally out of the sky all around him. Instead of being disheartened by the weather, from his facial expression and the

cartoon's caption of "Come On, Play Ball," we can tell that this spirited youth is ready to make the most of even this most dismal looking situation.

[16]

Image 6: John Watanabe, "Cartoon from the Heart Mountain Sentinel, Vol. I No. 2, October 31, 1942, Heart Mountain camp, Wyoming.," *Densho Encyclopedia* http://encyclopedia. densho .org/sources/en-ddr-densho-97-100-1/(accessed Oct 10 2015).

This simple cartoon is more than just an example of how important sports were to the inmates of Heart Mountain and the other camps. It fully displays the unconquerable character of the Japanese Americans of World War II. Harsh conditions, bleak surroundings, and forced confinement are not enough to challenge this boy's fortitude. It was not enough to destroy the resolve of this people either.

Much like childhood activities, sports were a part of the relocation experience from the beginning. They were first played in the assembly centers before many detainees ever made it to the incarceration camps. At Tanforan, 1,170 of the inmates, out of 7,816, played softball and baseball on one of 177 teams.[17] Golf was also played at the assembly centers. Tanforan and Puyallup both had a nine-hole par three golf course,

and at the Santa Anita Center, a driving range was constructed, all created by the internees.[18]

A lot of different sports were played in the camps, but as Mochizuki alluded, baseball was the most popular. Unfortunately, as he also demonstrates, the effort needed just to be able to get to where a camp could play baseball was a labor of love. The desert conditions of many camps made the creation of a field, which was done completely through the manual labor of volunteers, sometimes near impossible. In many places, sagebrush and plenty of rock had to be dug up, broken down, and moved away. In almost all of the locations, since barren desert was the preferred landscape of camp location, sand had to be watered down to become firm enough to run on and to eliminate the terrible dust that could choke or blind the players under the wrong conditions. Eventually nice fields were made in all locations. However, they were not as nice as you would find at a city park or high school yard, because most did not have grass outfields or painted baselines.

These limitations did not stop the players from playing baseball and softball all the time, and as the Minidoka team illustrated, it did not stop them from becoming good at it too. Some teams were so good, in fact, that by 1944 they were granted leave not just to compete against other local or regional teams, but instead they traveled to the other camps where the real competition was at. In the summer of 1944, the All-Star team from Poston was given a War Relocation Authority provided bus and was allowed to travel 200 miles to Gila River to play against the Gila River champions.[19] The

competition was perhaps the most intense either team had ever had, and, in the end, the six game series between them split evenly at three games apiece.[20] More impressive, although less competitive, was a subsequent visit from the Grenada All-Stars, who travelled 900 miles from Colorado to compete against the Gila River team. The Grenada team was swept by the Gila River team in all eight games they played, but their epic journey of 1800 roundtrip miles was a distance traveled by camp inmates that was matched or exceeded only by the heroes who volunteered for military service and were shipped overseas.[21] Many of these American soldiers were, not surprisingly, also baseball players while they were in camp.

Japanese-American baseball players were not the ones to break the color barrier in professional baseball. That distinction is held by Jackie Robinson, ambassador for the African-American community, who joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 after serving in the army until 1945. A little known fact, evidenced from a reading of *The Rohwer Outpost* of July 24, 1943 and *The Topaz Times* of July 29, 1943, is that Dodgers manager Branch Rickey Jr., the man most responsible for Robinson's recruitment, actually tried to recruit some of the camps' stellar Japanese-American players years before he courted Robinson. In a letter to the camps he wrote in July of 1943, reprinted in full in these two newspapers, he let known his intentions to defy the racial prejudice of the big leagues. In part his letter reads:

> *We will be most happy to have any boys that you might recommend in our baseball camps this summer if any of these boys have sufficient ability to play professional baseball, we will, of course, recommend them just as we would any other young*

> *man. The fact that these boys are American boys is good enough for the Brooklyn Club. Whether they are of Japanese, English, or of Polish ancestry makes no difference to us and I know that these boys would be treated with the greatest courtesy and respect.*[22]

While none of the three Nisei players that were able to try out for the Dodgers made the team, it is amazing to think that the white dominated playing fields of professional baseball could have been first integrated by players who were being detained as potential war criminals! The Nisei players of the camps were very good at baseball, and baseball was very good for the camps. Within these confined spheres, these athletes were some of the most exceptional people in their worlds. We should not lose focus on their accomplishments just because these run perpendicular to the more negatively charged stories of injustice that have been told.

Of course, internees played other sports besides baseball, and each of these sports says something about the people who played them. Most followed the schedule of their collegiate or professional versions, so when baseball would wind down in the fall, many of those athletes would move into a winter sport, like football. Football was also played in every camp, with teams ranging from the six-man size described by Houston in *Farewell to Manzanar* to collegiate sized eleven-man teams. Some of these teams, like the baseball teams, were comprised of incredible athletes. For example, Jack Yoshihara played for Oregon State in 1941, but was unable to play in the 1942 Rose Bowl (which Oregon State won) because of the travel restrictions put on the inmates.[23] The game was moved to Durham, North Carolina, and was played there instead of in its traditional Pasadena, California, location because of fears of a West Coast attack. By

1943, some incarcerated players were actually able to transfer to colleges outside of the containment zone in order to play college football. This included Sam Kiguchi and Min Sano, who had both played college ball before being removed from their homes in California.[24] One player, Chester "Chet" Maeda, who played both football and basketball, was actually drafted by the Detroit Lions to play professional football in 1943![25] In some regards, these football players were even more successful than the baseball players of the camps in using their talents to explore very exciting options and to actually obtain their freedom during the war.

Football appeared to be a different experience from camp to camp. According to the front page article of the December 4th, 1944 issue of *The Poston Chronicle*, a camp physician, Dr. Powell, tried to ban sandlot football because of the number of injuries for which the sport was responsible.[26] In Gila River, the sport found less restriction. After being unanimously voted upon by the athletes there, six and eleven man leagues were organized, and by September of 1942 two different fields had been laid out, an eighty yard one for the six-man league, and a one hundred yard field for the eleven-man league.[27] Further north in Minidoka, football kicked off not with a game or jamboree, but rather with a ball passing and kicking contest. Competing in three groups: 12-15 year olds, 16-18 year olds, and 19 and ups, the residents of Hunt had a three day tournament to determine who could kick and pass the furthest as a festive start to their 1942 football season.[28]

The athletes who played football in the camps did not have the traditional cultural draw and interest as their baseball playing campmates. Rather, they were often driven by the desire to not only compete, but to do so in a sport that was both intense and dangerous. No one can describe an apt football player as a submissive type, and often the players who excelled at the game were leaders in the camps as well. In their silent defiance and their physical and mental skills, all football players were cut from a mold that counters the popular image of the "passive type" of forcibly removed Japanese Americans of the camps. Each player worked within his compact world to prove what he was made of, despite what the outside world may assume.

In contrast to baseball, basketball, and football, some sports that campmates participated in were distinctly Japanese. Most notable and popular of these were disciplines of the martial arts. "Judo, arguably Japan's national pastime and still among the most popular sports in the world, had many adherents," according to Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, a volunteer writer for Densho.[29] Judo classes and competitions became popular across the centers, with both men and women signing-up to learn under the direction of masters like Seigoro Murakami and Shigeo Tashima of Manzanar, who taught classes of between 400 and 600 participants daily.[30] According to *The Tulean Dispatch* of May 5, 1943, Judo was a big sport in multiple centers.[31] Describing the 600 some "Judoists" in Manzanar, attending the daily instructions because they are "bent on the physical training and mental culture," the article emphasizes the importance of the sport in the camps.[32] The summation sentence reads, "This sport has created such an enthusiasm among the residents that it immediately took a decided significance, over-

shadowing all other organized sports within the center."[33] Considering the passion for which the detainees of all camps felt for baseball, this is a very powerful statement coming from one of their own. In terms of actual participants, it is possible judo may have actually been undertaken by more people than baseball or softball. Part of this is attributable to its individual character. No one need worry about trying out for a team or adjusting to a rigorous team schedule. Likely the draw of Japanese culture is what attracted more "judoists" than any other aspect of the sport. In judo, Issei and Nisei, both men and women, were able to connect with a physically challenging and personally rewarding aspect of their culture. This is another impressive feat of accomplishment and transcendence against the backdrop of forced isolation and denied ambition.

One last martial art also unique to Japan and practiced in some of the camps was sumo wrestling. Unlike judo, sumo did have some prerequisites of its athletes, but those who were good at sumo were uniquely good at it and took pride in being able to use their bodies and skills in a way no one else could. The sport seemed to have the biggest draw in the two Arkansas camps, Rohwer and Jerome, with each being equipped with sumo pits where combatants would train for cross camp competitions.[34] These camps were in close enough proximity to make these competitions possible; additionally, some form of sumo was practiced in each camp. This was true even for Lordsburg, a little known prisoner-of-war camp located in New Mexico, which housed some Japanese-American detainees until 1943 when Italian prisoners arrived.[35] In 1942, a man who had been separated from his family, Mr. Genji Mihara, wrote to his wife in Manzanar from Lordsburg. In his letter, which is a congenial reply to one he received from her, he sends

along his love, acknowledges his gratitude that his family is doing well, and mentions some camp doings. At one point, he mentions how he is glad that his friend Roy, a fellow inmate at Lordsburg, was able to win the sumo tournament held there, saying that it was a good sport for Roy because it was "nice to culture his body, but not too hard to practice."[36] Evidence exists that sumo was a part of life in each camp, but evidence from Lordsburg, which was smaller and without the newspapers and other document producing faculties of the other camps, proves that this activity was something important everywhere, regardless of the circumstances.

In addition to competitive sports, other forms of recreation were also played in the camps. Some of these were distinctly Japanese, and much like their other traditions and sources of pride, they were engaged in with an almost religious fervor. The best example of this is the board game Go.

Trevanian's novel *Shibumi*, while a work of fiction, is a book that best illustrates how important the game of Go is to Japanese culture. In it, Nicholai Hel, the world's highest paid assassin, fights against a corrupt American secret government agency. But, that is just one of the many conflicts in his complicated story. Hel, born in China to a German soldier father he never met and a Russian aristocrat mother, is taken in by a Japanese general after the invasion of Manchuria. Unable to raise the teenage boy himself because of the war, the general instead sends the brilliant and ambitious young Nicholai to a place in Japan where he can develop intelligence, honor, and practical and strategic decision making skills. All of this is summed up in the idea of *shibumi,* an idea

of true manhood in the Japanese father's culture. To accomplish this, Hel is sent to live with father's friend Otake-san, a Go master of the "Seventh *Dan*" who has the abilities to teach Hel how to dominate the seemingly simple game of black and white stones. Through Hel's journey, we can learn much about this game, which strategically surpasses the complexity of even chess and becomes the metaphor for Hel's journey throughout his future life as an assassin. From the game he learns intelligence, patience, strategy, violence, honor, and all of the other characteristics that make his adopted father proud of his representation of Japanese culture above all others. A short passage from the book describes the qualities of *shibumi* that are so important to the Japanese Go player, and with which Nicholai is blessed.

> *None of Otakesan's children had more than average gifts in the art of Go. And of his pupils, only Nicholai possessed that ineffable constellation of talents that makes the player of rank: a gift for conceiving abstract schematic possibilities; a sense of mathematical poetry in the light of which the infinite chaos of probability and permutation is crystallized under the pressure of intense concentration into geometric blossoms; the ruthless focus of force on the subtlest weakness of an opponent.*[37]

Not surprisingly, it was not just the Japanese of WWII Asia that engaged in the game with such passion. In the camps, Go was played with the same intensity, and much like Hel, the players of it felt a connection to its Japanese roots, and used its lessons to cope with their complex situations of internment.

The *dan* and *kyu* ratings of Go players in Japan signified the level of proven dominance one could expect to find in any Go player. To be a Go master of a 7^{th}, $8^{th,}$ or 9^{th} *dan* was more than just an honorific. It was a label of prestige in the community.

Because of the importance placed on the game and on the skill level of those who played it, one of the first things that happened in Minidoka as it began to organize in 1942 was to host a "Giant Go Tournament."[38] Unlike the sporting events of the camps, which were played mostly by Nisei of the younger generation, Go was primarily undertaken by the Issei who had stronger cultural ties to Japan, the country of their births. In the Minidoka tournament, the competition was so fierce that after each player had played five games, no one was undefeated.[39] The player considered champion, S. Mihara, lost just one game and was given the ranking of a special *kyu*, a signification also held by H. Hashiguchi, the player ranked number-two in society before entrance into the camp.[40] Go would not receive as much press coverage in the camps as all of the sporting events, but it is noteworthy to mention that the edition of *The Minidoka Irrigator* where the story of the Go tournament was recorded at the top of page 2 is the same edition that described the football passing and kicking competition...on the bottom of the paper's final page.

A number of other activities that were better suited for the older generation were also made available in some of the camps. In her thesis work for Adams State University, Sharla Valdez uncovered a variety of activities that were enjoyed at Amache in Colorado. Among these were "odori, a Japanese traditional dance for the spirits of the dead, shogi, a board game requiring two people to play, and mah jong, a solitaire board game which requires that the player eliminate various tiles on the board."[41] She also discovered that Amache, which was arguably the most accommodating of the camps with its considerate personnel and sympathetic state leadership, was home to a few

inmates who passed their time by rattlesnake hunting![42] One man was reportedly grateful to have a barrack located on the edge of camp where the snakes were plentiful, and even made a side-business catching, drying out, and grounding-up the snakes and selling them for some sort of medicinal purposes.[43] For men like this, their pastime of choice also provided a community service in protecting the camp from harmful creatures. The peculiarity of this recreational choice, and the wide variety of organized opportunities in all the camps, demonstrate that inmates were able to engage in meaningful and enjoyable forms of leisure.

For young and old alike and for members of both sexes, sports, games, and recreation in the incarceration centers provided a much needed reprieve from the monotony of camp life. More importantly, these distractions gave the inmates goals, competition, and sometimes even victory over their jailers. In them, detainees of all ages and preferences were able to find a piece of normal life they could bring in with them, that could grow and develop like there was no barbed wire constricting it, and could flower into wonderful opportunities, recognitions, and triumphs of spirit.

This photograph by Tom Parker shows Issei men at Heart Mountain playing Go together and clearly enjoying their contest of strategy and wits.

 [44]

Image 7: Tom Parker, "Issei Men Playing Go at Heart Mountain," 1943, *History in Photos* http://historyinphotos.blogspot.com/2012/10/japanese-internment-tom-parker.html (accessed Oct 22, 2015).

While these expert players were not nearly as active as their sport playing counterparts, they certainly found as much reprieve and joy in their time spent and accomplishments at the board as the baseballers and footballers did on the field. A haiku from the poet Sasbune, one of the many prolific poets who expressed his feelings about camp life through the expression of his art, wrote this simple poem about the Go players and their method for coping with their detention.

Since the day of his internment
Sitting on his ass
The go player[45]

The fact that he could joke about this aspect of confinement suggests much in terms of importance, comfort, and dedication.

Chapter 4

Camp Art

"Art is the triumph over chaos."

-John Cheever

In searching for a paradigm of passion in art, one needs look no further than the example of Vincent van Gogh. Although he only sold one painting during his lifetime, he produced more than two thousand works, over nine hundred paintings and some eleven hundred sketches. More commonly known is the story of how van Gogh severed off part of his right ear in a fit of artistic lunacy and delivered it to a prostitute for safekeeping. And while van Gogh may occupy a unique spot at the end of the artistically passionate spectrum, many people in a variety of cultures from all over the world, the Japanese very much included, have made artwork and creative production a passion in their lives.

When the detained Japanese American prisoners of World War II were inspired to live life to the fullest in the camps, they were not just driven by success or things associated with leisure. Many of the endeavors people chose to participate in had rather to do with artistic creation. This was true for arts and crafts, a distraction and creative outlet that was undertaken with incredible vigor in all of the camps, and many other forms of art as well. In fact, the ability to artistically create something was the driving motivation for some internees. Historically, the Japanese were a very industrious people, and they always had an eye for the aesthetic. Japanese art is very well regarded historically in the realms of printmaking, architecture, sketching, drawing, origami, and

landscaping. This attitude and culture did not change inside the pedantic confines of the camps. In addition to arts and crafts, other forms of art, from drawing and painting to sculpting and gardening, were undertaken by men and women, young and old, Issei and Nisei alike. In their creations, many of which unfortunately proved to be temporary because of the closing of the camps and the inability to preserve everything within them, one can catch a sense of their emotion, their energy, their anxieties, their pride, and their defiance. A look at these creations is important in understanding not just how numerous people within the camps spent their time, but also in understanding how they did everything they could with the limited resources and freedoms they had.

Some of this has been witnessed already. We know from *Baseball Saved Us* that pillowcases, mattresses, and sheets were used to create baseball uniforms that looked so professional they were difficult to distinguish from the real thing. This little example is a mere tip of a creative iceberg that was absolutely massive, a sprinkling in anticipation of a gushing artistic downpour. The most common form of artistic expression, which took plenty of talent but could also be learned by many and therefore proved very popular and widespread, was in the area of arts and crafts.

An article from *The Minidoka Interlude* of the Harry Stafford collection is particularly instructive in demonstrating the scope of these types of projects, as well as explaining that camp art projects were not just relegated to display in the camps but were sometimes able to be shared with the world. From the article "Art & Handicraft Exhibits," we learn that:

304 general art and handicraft articles, representing hours of tedious work by local residents, were displayed at the Twin Falls Public Library on June 24-25-26, 1943.

Vases, tables, lamps, birds and animal figures and inlaid work fashioned from the twisted, gnarled limbs of the bitter-brush were among the articles. The ingenuity shown by the people was received by the Twin Falls public with astounding praise.

In addition, all types of crocheting, knitting, and embroidery as well as crepe paper flowers were displayed. The affair sponsored by the Union Church Association also had paintings and sketches.

Prior to the "big" exhibit at Twin, three others had been successfully shown within the camp under the sponsorship of the handicraft leaders.[1]

Within the first year of their detainment, the residents of Minidoka had created hundreds of different artistic works to display for the very public that was segregating them! The different types listed are very impressive, especially considering the stark barrenness of the treeless Southern Idaho landscape. One of the recollections from *Our Side of the Fence* details the passion with which some of the artists pursued their craft. In the account "Bitter Brush Story," author Hamuri Serata recalls how:

On our block the Issei men would walk into the desert, searching for bitter brush branches with unusual shapes. They would gleefully compare the branches and imagine what figures they saw. "Those men are acting like children," Mama said. The branches would be polished into a sheen and shaped into cranes, snakes, birds, and other animals. Mr. Konishi, who was particularly enthusiastic about his new hobby, would walk far into the desert looking for just the right branches.[2]

Serata's story of Konishi is not a happy one. He ends up wandering into the desert by himself during the winter, because his group of friends feels that the work of searching for bitterbrush during that time was too cold and fruitless. However, because of his passion and determination, he goes off alone, and he dies by himself in the frozen

desert.[3] In a way, it is another touching reminder of how unfair life and circumstances were within the camps. But in a separate light, it shows how important things like the creation of art were to the prisoners. In this instance, one was willing to risk his life in pursuit of his passion. Fortunately, most inmates did not face this extreme a decision in their quests of imaginative conception.

Woodworking with bitterbrush was not just an activity undertaken by amateurs and hobbyists. In fact, Minidoka was home to one of the world's premier architects, and he would go on to become one of the most accomplished woodworkers in history.[4] His name was George Nakashima, a world traveler who had lived and worked in not only the United States, but also Japan, France, and India.[5] While his very accomplished life was put on hold for a year in the confines of Minidoka, he too like Konishi, passed the time by searching the desert for bitterbrush, and making sometimes beautiful – and sometimes practical – creations from it. He described the bitterbrush as, "a brave shrub of a great character which grows only a few feet in a hundred years," and was quoted as saying that working (as an apprentice!) under and with the traditionally trained Japanese carpenter Gentaro Hikogawa at Minidoka "was a rewarding experience and one that I greatly appreciated."[6] Nakashima left the camp early because he was willing to live outside of the West Coast military zone, but he went on to have a rewarding life of woodworking. After his death in 1990, his daughter told his story in a book called *Nature Form and Spirit* in which she described the importance of artistic creation for her father by saying, "Work for him was a spiritual calling, a linking of his strength to transcendent force, a surrender to the divine, a form of prayer."[7] To think that an

activity not only passed the time, but was also a spiritual and deeply moving experience, is to reveal something about internment history that is not part of the regular discussion.

In the Arkansas camps of Jerome and Rohwer, a style of art similar to Minidoka's bitterbrush workings called *Kobu* was employed using the roots of felled oak, hickory, and elm trees abundant to the region. *Kobu* artists would first strip away decayed pieces of wood and bark by boiling the root pieces they wanted to work with, and then after sculpting they would oil, polish, and varnish to create an end product that would gleam.[8] The creations were sometimes simple or sometimes extravagant, and sometimes useful or sometimes aesthetic. However, they were always inventive. Perhaps the most sought after pieces of wood were the ones that the inmates referred to as "cypress knees" because these ones could be fashioned into hollowed out vases, which were coveted by a different type of artist – the *ikebana* enthusiasts who worked with flower arrangements.[9]

Ikebana itself was a cherished art form, and was practiced by inmates in all ten camps. As one chronicler describes it, "At risk of over simplifying this complex and deeply theoretical art form, *ikebana* is grounded in the belief that the lives of flowers and the lives of humans are inseparable, with the style, size, shape, texture, and color of both arrangements and containers carrying great meaning."[10] Anyone who has ever visited a Japanese garden, a popular attraction in many large U.S. cities, comes to understand the beauty of the intentional placement of plants, rocks, ponds, and streams

to create a scene of ultimate serenity. Few realize that these gardens, in large and small scale, existed in the camps as well. For those who practiced *ikebana,* this devotion was also applied to the cramped and dull interiors of barracks. Some westerners have a basic understanding of the philosophy behind this, as *Feng Shui* (the Chinese philosophy of harmonizing oneself with their surroundings) has become a part of American popular culture, yet few can do little more than grasp at the cultural depth of the practice of *ikebana* or the spirit involved in it.

The introduction section of this study hinted at an essay about Japanese gardens in the camps, "Minidoka Gardens" from the book *Surviving Minidoka* that explains the disconnect between most internment scholarship and the daily activities of detainees in doing things like gardening. Writes the essay's author Anna Hosticka Tamura: "Few discussions of the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans have gone further than describing the camp landscapes as cruel places comprised of tarpaper barracks, surrounded by barbed wire fences and watchtowers, and located in remote and desolate areas."[11] Indeed. To demonstrate this omission in these histories, she brings back to life the Japanese garden at the entrance to Minidoka.

Situated near the front entrance to the camp and surrounding the Minidoka Honor Roll (an artistic creation in its own right, created by artists Kenjiro Nomura and Kamekichi Tokita of Seattle) that listed the names of all of the Nisei from the camp who had volunteered for military service, one could find the camp's garden.[12] The garden was designed by renowned landscaper Fujitaro Kubota of Seattle, was built by a team of

inmates, and was cared for by still more.[13] Traditional Japanese vegetation was grown in the garden, including *daikon* (large white radish), *nappa* (cabbage), *gobo* (burdock root), *azuki* (sweet red beans), and *shungiku* (edible chrysanthemum), and the garden itself was surrounded by rocks specially selected for their particular shape, colors, and textures.[14] Some of these rocks, which were positioned in a "V" shape around the perimeter of the garden with the Honor Roll in the center, are still a part of the site today. To be able to transport oneself back in time, a person would behold a lush and unique vegetation growing against the backdrop of the barren desert landscape, a true oasis of sorts. Understanding the passion that went into its creation, and the labors and desires of those who created and cared for it, is something very vital to understanding what camp life was really like.

It needs to be stated also that these gardens were not just created for aesthetics, nor were they particularly utilitarian. Some food was raised in them, and they were good places for strolling and meditating. However, this description simplifies the truth. As Tamura writes, "The camp gardens (Manzanar was also home to famous ones, the most famous captured below in the photograph by Ansel Adams was nicknamed "Pleasure Park"), however, are cultural fusions of tradition and place-based circumstances, evoking complex sociological interactions and factions, conditions spawned by a community in turmoil."[15] Much like the sport teams that found not only solace in their pastime, but a way to combat their persecutors through their victories and accomplishments, the gardens were also symbolic of the things that could or could not be taken away. To make something beautiful grow in a desolate place is a great

victory, and the camps, being occupied by who they were, demonstrated the power, determination, and the silent pride of those who tended them.

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Image 8: Ansel Adams, "Pleasure Park," 1943, gelatin silver print, part of Ansel Adams-Manzanar War Relocation Photographs.

Gardens also helped to reestablish some of the societal roles that had been hard hit because of life in the camps. As discussed earlier, the older generation found themselves losing authority within their homes and over their families as a result of relocation and camp life. However, traditional Japanese roles said that women typically engaged in growing flowers, ornamental shrubs, and vegetables, but the men were mostly responsible for Japanese gardening and landscaping, including selecting the right rocks and creating the ponds and pathways.[17] Therefore, while Issei men may have not been able to exercise their regular level of authority within their homes, in these communities they could still carry on traditional roles and put to use well developed skills. Some even found a way to take Southern Idaho's most plentiful and least beautiful vegetation – the sagebrush – and work it into a garden scheme, creating a type of "bonsai sagebrush."[18] In these endeavors, much joy was also found, a fact that when realized bears repeating for each situation where it is present. The gardens were

beautiful, and rewarding, and they provided the men who created them and their communities with a source of joy and satisfaction. They are an important part of internment history.

Unlike much of the art and architecture of the camps, another of Minidoka's gardens, the garden of Yasuke Kogita, is not entirely lost to history. Having been described as one of the most spectacular gardens of all the camps, it was revered for its aesthetic beauty and creative sophistication.[19] It was built by Kogita with help from his sons Ted and Paul Kogita and was seen by all throughout the camp as a "cheerful place" that attracted many visitors, and it was also described by Kogita as being "a part of him."[20] In 1945, after the closure of the camp but before the reclamation of the wilderness, Kogita hired a trucking company to transport all of his handpicked boulders and many of his plants to Seattle where he recreated his garden.[21] His son Paul still has these boulders in his own garden on Beacon Hill in Seattle, a legacy to his father and the one thing in camp that brought his family pleasure and fulfillment.[22]

The "Minidoka Gardens" essay by Anna Tamura is one of the few fine examples of recent scholarship that has chosen to focus on the social history in the camps and the joys and accomplishments of the inmates, as opposed to just their victimization. From this one study alone, we are able to learn about social and gender roles within the camp and about ancient and more modern Japanese culture, creativity, power, defiance, and leisure. This essay fits perfectly into this larger study, which has also attempted to present these facets in a more holistic way than is traditionally attempted.

A book that accomplishes a perfect demonstration of what the prisoners did while in the camps and why they did it is *The Art of Gaman* by the Sansei (third generation Japanese American) author Delphine Hirasuna. Her book, which is a photo collection and descriptive resource showing and describing many of the objects that had been artistically made in the camps, was inspired by her experience of finding a tiny wooden bird pin in a box in her parents' attic after her mother's passing in 2000.[23] This object, which she knew had been made in the camps but had been buried away for all time, made her reflect on the other things that must also be stored away someplace, lost to the world despite the importance of their creation at the time of their conception. She reflected back on the words of her Issei grandparents, who worked postwar as tenant farmers and day laborers and who were always struggling to make ends meet. These former camp detainees always said, "*Shikataganai*, it can't be helped," and quickly followed this with words voiced so often they became a mantra, "We have to *gaman* – accept what is with patience and dignity."[24]

Hirasuna asserts that the bird pin and all of the other arts of the camps were a physical manifestation of the art of gaman.[25] "The things they made from scrap and found materials are testaments to their perseverance, their resourcefulness, their spirit and humanity," she justly concludes, and after describing the bleakness of the camps, she uses full color illustrations of many of these objects created in confinement to demonstrate the spirit of their creators.[26] In Topaz, artists like Homei Iseyama carved exquisite teapots from slate slabs found in the desert.[27] The fine detail of these objects, created from recalcitrant rock, is awe inspiring in its complexity, and each must surely

have taken months to complete. A collection of nine walking canes, made from many types of wood including cactus, Manzanita, mesquite, and greasewood, were the products of H. Ezaki while in Gila River.[28] These practical works of art demonstrate that some artists used their talents for the betterment of the community, as these were surely used by the elderly residents and those who may have struggled with the constantly sandy, muddy, and slippery paths within the camp. Paintings of Topaz done in watercolor and pencil by the artist Suiko "Charles" Mikami show what the camp looked like in all four seasons of the year.[29] From them, one gets a sense for not just the desolation of the camps, but also for the beauty that the inmates were able to create therein. Each of the paintings shows a tree, pond, or some other bit of landscaping that would not have otherwise existed if not for those who worked to beautify their homes. Carvings in wood, pipe cleaner arrangements, *geta* shoes (elevated wooden shoes that proved very valuable in the mud paths and community showers), bas-relief panels, wooden game blocks, vases, bird pins, and bonsai trees are all examples of the art of the camps that has been preserved and documented in Hirasuna's book.

While the creation of art in the camps was a deeply personal experience, it was also something that was organized and inviting, similar to the sports and education opportunities present in the centers. Beginning at the Tanforan Assembly Center, inmate Chiura Obata, who had been on the art department faculty at the University of California, Berkeley, convinced administrators that much unrest could be avoided if the internees were given something like art to do in the camps – and after gaining approval he set up the first art classes.[30] In Tanforan an art school was soon established, and it

offered instruction in twenty-five artistic disciplines including sculpting, drawing, commercial layout, and fashion design.[31] It is little wonder that similar instructive opportunities sprang up in all of the camps after they were built. Many professional artists like Obata were interned within the camps, and as they dispersed from the assembly centers to the permanent centers, they took their passions and experience with them.

 [32]

Image 9: Tom Parker, "Adult Art Class at Amache, Colorado," Dec 10, 1942, found in the UC Berkeley, California Library. Image available online at http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft0x0n9920/(accessed Oct 22, 2015)

The types of art most common to each camp were quite distinct. While paintings and sketches, flower arranging, and whittling were common in all centers, the ability to make things from surrounding materials depended upon each camp's geography. Each location offered a different assortment of natural resources and artistic opportunities. Hirasuna explains that, "Tule Lake, situated over a dry lake bed, became known for decorative objects made from shells; Gila River and Poston, for their carved and polished ironwood and cactus; Minidoka, for its painted stones and greasewood

carvings; Heart Mountain, for its embroidered pictures; Topaz for its objects carved from slate; Amache; for its miniature landscapes; Jerome and Rohwer, for their hardwood furniture and cypress root forms (*kobu)*; Manzanar, for its carved wooden bird pins."[33] To see these objects now, one is still inspired by the exquisiteness of their craftsmanship, and this appreciation becomes even more pronounced when we consider that many were created with only the most basic of tools – plenty of which were homemade in the camps from things like butter knives.

Amazingly, a few camp inmates were also able to make home movies. This type of art is more abstract and was less practiced than any other creative outlet because of how hard it was to get cameras into the camps. However, in 1995 director Robert A. Nakamura collected many never-before-seen home videos from the camps and put them together in a documentary film called *Something Strong Within.*[34]One of the home movie makers, Dave Tatsuno, was quoted as saying, "Despite the loneliness and despair that enveloped us, we made the best we could with the situation. I hope that when you look at these you see the spirit of the people; people trying to reconstruct a community despite overwhelming obstacles."[35] The movie, in an effort to show that the inmates had been done wrong, but were not done in, shows the irony of what seems like a typical American life with ball games and pep bands and baton twirlers all confined in a concentration camp of barbed wire and armed guard.[36] The movie itself does not have the feel of a regular documentary. There is little narration and no interviews. It is only a compilation of the home movies that exist, with details on where and when they took place. In describing his method, director Nakamura explained that he hoped "to get

across that although victimized by their own government, the inmates were not simply victims."[37] People who have viewed the film have expressed how powerfully this message has come across. Writer Joy Yamauchi had this to say about the film:

> *The true power of this film lies in the fact that it does not apologize for showing scenes of children playing, people laughing and teasing. There is no apology needed. These people made the most of the situation. That they were able to reconstruct a community (or some semblance to one) in these overwhelming circumstances, is a true testimony to their courage. And in watching this film, I am in awe of that strength, and of their beauty.*[38]

Something Strong Within gives a rare glance into the camps, and the artistic talent of those who tried to capture what life was really like within them. The statement they make demonstrates injustice, but it more powerfully demonstrates the will and resolve of its subjects.

Not all art projects were creative or even primarily artistic. Much of the craft work that was done early on in the camps was done simply in an effort to make life more comfortable. From construction of the living barracks and other needed facilities to the creation of different types of furniture that would fill these domiciles, woodworkers in every capacity found ways to stay productive while in camp. Indeed, if not for the handy skills of Japanese woodworkers and carpenters, each camp would have probably been decidedly less comfortable. This says much in a world already characterized by its discomforts. This part of internment history is well documented in scholarly recounts, because it easily demonstrates many of the hardships faced by the

internees. However, these accounts tell little of the artistic value of the construction projects.

For example, the tales of splintered chairs, off balance tables, and unpainted shelves hastily constructed in the assembly centers is a common part of the typical internment history. At the camps, detainees knew that the construction of home furnishing would be left to them, and they were quick to scavenge for and salvage anything that could be of use. Once again, furniture, shelves, hutches, and drawers were put together, but this time done so with the experiences of the past guiding some of the untrained craftsmen. With time to experiment and an ingenuity that defined their demographic, these Japanese Americans were able to produce the variety of necessary items with grace and impressive originality.[39] Beginning at Tanforan and carrying on into the camps, women would often work in sewing groups using yarn and fabric to create a wide range of needed items, including table runners, lampshades, curtains, pillow cases, bedspreads, afghans, and quilts.[40]

As necessity relented and time wore on, most of the art projects ran the course from the vital to the creative. The end result is a wealth of creative construction that is unlike anything from anywhere else and is an absolute reflection of its time and place. Some of the arts and crafts collected by Hirasuna and shared in *The Art of Gaman* are beautiful, some are necessary, and others are quite simple. Each has a story behind it, a story of a need to create, to be productive, to help others, and to keep living life in an attempt to make the world a better and more positive place. All of this thrives against

the backdrop of a world that was momentarily very unbeautiful and quite negative. A flower in a garden or a flower shop looks quite lovely, but a flower blooming in the desert is immaculate in its beauty. So too are these amazing creations of heart and soul.

Chapter 5

Camp Writings

"We should at all times stand firm on our God-given rights. We should let our voices be heard whenever an attempt is made to abridge such endowed privileges. But ours should not be an act of rashness or haste."[1]

-Jimmie Omura (1944)

Drawings, paintings, and arts and crafts projects were not the only forms of art to come from the camps. As prolific was the amount of the furniture, artwork, and handicraft produced in the centers, one other form of creative expression was just as fruitful. In the form of camp newspapers, poetry, letters, and even novels, writing was a common method of persevering against the ailments of camp existence, and of expressing feelings in positive ways. Much like the children who attended school, the children and adults who participated in sports and games, and all of those who expressed themselves through their art, writers in the camps similarly used their unique skills to survive, to maintain a sense of normality and dignity, and to record experiences that might have otherwise been lost to history. This study is most thankful for the work of these amazing citizens, without whom this undertaking would not have been possible.

Much has been said of the camp newspapers already. These documents, which were staffed by paid camp contributors, did more than any other social organization to help the centers maintain a semblance of normal community life. Unlike the schools, hospitals, and mess halls that meant so much to the functioning of the communities, the

newspapers were not necessarily needed services. At the same time, they were just as vital as those other invaluable services. The newspapers tied the camps together and gave everyone an opportunity to stay informed on not only all of the happenings of the members of the camps, but also on all of their accomplishments. Their positive (and sometimes triumphal) tone, which was present in issues that were sometimes published at a daily rate, must also have been instrumental in keeping spirits high. Furthermore, in being able to exercise their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press, the camp newspaper staffers were demonstrating that not all aspects of their American citizenship were being denied them. This is an important thing to remember in their paradoxical situation.

However, that is not to say that the newspapers were completely free to share any expression or opinion they desired. In the ten War Relocation Authority (WRA) controlled camps, most of the civilian leaders encouraged the newspapers to be as expressive as they wanted...with certain restrictions. The WRA asked that nothing be printed that was incompatible with its own policies.[2] This led to some oversight and a general understanding that camp decisions, but not necessarily larger government policy, would not be undermined in the newspapers. This accepted agreement kept the newspapers from becoming a vehicle for anti-internment sentiment, which did indeed put limits on the complete freedom of speech. However, in this stipulation, a positive side effect of a progress-oriented and encouraging feel became prevalent in the papers. This helped them to become the source of pride, information, opinion, and creativity that shined forth in each of the camps. They reported on the goings-on, the births,

deaths, social activities, sporting events, and government decisions that affected everyone's lives. The words of these papers have time and again shone through in this study, and the positivity of them has been denied prominence in almost every other scholarly study of the camps. The tone and content of these documents stands in contrast to the redress era and post-redress suffering and injustice-themed monographs.

Kunio Otani was a reporter for *The Tulean Dispatch*, and in an interview he recorded in 1998 one can see the hectic and rewarding life of the people who worked on the newspapers in the camps. He said,

> *Well, we all had our assignments at the beginning of the day, and we scrambled around to get these stories and come back and type 'em up as fast as we could. But of course, in sports we had an advantage, in that the stories were happening perhaps the day before, so we had a chance to get back and put the story together. And the tough part was that, trying to make all of the stories fit the space you had. So, some of the stories that you had written would get chopped down because of space limitations, and the deadline you had to meet to get the paper out on time.*[3]

If sports were a distraction, and school was a duty, then work on the newspaper was a career calling. The rate at which the newspapers were produced, and the quality of the reporting in them, is remarkable considering the resources available to the internees. Keep in mind, this was well before the days of computers and digital processing. The camps were producing newspapers, sometimes on a daily basis, up to ten and twelve pages in length occasionally, and doing so using typewriters, stencils, and hand drawn art. This kind of dedication is not a reflection of people being forced to produce anything. Nor does it signify any underlying animosity at the camp

administrators. These wonderful documents, which do more to bring to life the social day-to-day aspects of incarceration camp living than any other source, have been discounted far too long as useful sources in the retelling of Japanese-American wartime history.

The newspaper staffers were not the only ones creatively putting pen to paper in the camps, although their work was certainly the most prolific during the time. Creative expression through the written word has been a part of Japanese culture for centuries. Haiku is a form of short poetry, traditionally taking a three line structure in a 5-7-5 syllable count, and was mastered in Japan as early as the seventeenth century by the master Matsuo Basho. Poetry in various forms is an essential characteristic of Japanese history, with monks, samurai, and court poets alike composing works for over a millennium. From this rich cultural history, many of the incarcerated expressed themselves and their feelings about the relocation experience in the form of freestyle or *kaiko* haiku poetry.

The 1997 collection of camp poetry, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow- an Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku,* which was published over fifty years after release from the camps, is particularly instructive in bringing to light the power and importance of this poetry. In the foreword by Makoto Ueda, Professor of Japanese and Comparative Literature at Stanford, we are taught how haiku became the vehicle for presenting the oftentimes painful and always heartfelt emotions that boiled over during wartime relocation.[4] Much of it has to do with haiku's delivery

style of simple elegance and required reader engagement. Ueda explains that, "Haiku is short in length, but it speaks through its silence, through what it does not expressly state. Haiku poets feel they have vented much emotion and, indeed, they have."[5] She explains that haiku is a partnership between the poet and the reader, where the poet often draws a half circle with their words, and the other half is left to be filled in by the reader who is invited to join in and become part of the experience.[6] For this reason, those many inmates who used haiku to express their emotions did so in a unique way that no other medium could express.

Mayumi Nakasuka, whose Issei father Ippekiro Nakasuka founded the Kaiko free-style haiku (a style distinct to the Japanese of America, who perhaps felt that this evolution to freestyle corresponded to their own liberating journeys to the Western world), worked as a content consultant on the book.[7] She expresses how she was amazed that such inspired writing could come from such uninspiring conditions, and was overcome by the "rare poetic sensitiveness" of the selections.[8] What was obvious to her, and what I had expected to find as well, was the importance and comfort that the poets found in completing their work. She writes, "As might be expected, much of the haiku expresses the *Gaman* of the detainees and I felt greatly reassured that their poetry must have been an irreplaceable comfort in such a difficult period and, at the same time, must have provided them an intellectual and spiritual sustenance."[9] From these simple, eloquent, and engaging poems we are able to see how the unjustifiably incarcerated Japanese Americans were able to demonstrate patience, forbearance, and an incomparable ability to endure with dignity. We are also able to learn some of the

lessons they most hoped we would learn. Some of these have to do with justice, as might be imagined, but as Nakasuka asserts, more deal with peacemaking and love, hardly the bitter ingredients of most incarceration studies.[10]

The anthology's editor, Violet Kazue de Cristoforo, perfectly blends the reality of the situation and the importance of the poems written in the camps. Only a fraction of the poems were able to be collected for her book. She says, "I am confident that haiku enthusiasts will be inspired by this poetry to have a better understanding of the anguish and suffering of Japanese Americans detained behind the barbed wire fences of the concentration camps and their ingenious ways of surviving their ordeal."[11] A reader will indeed find both the pain of detainment and the perseverance of heart in the works she selected.

In short, haiku helped the prisoners find "spiritual sustenance," survival of spirit, and an intangible brightness in an otherwise dark situation that helped them to ingeniously survive their ordeal.

Kyotaro Komuro was one of the poets who helped to write, organize, and preserve the poetry of the camps and assembly centers. Starting in May of 1942 and for five months until October of that year, Komuro led a group of haiku writers at the Stockton Assembly Center.[12] There, he and the other writers held twenty haiku meetings, and at each one of them about one hundred haiku were submitted, about 2,000 poems in all![13] Komuro could not possibly keep all of the poems, but as collector and editor he did create a multiple volume collection that he says included verses that

best depicted the individuality of each writer, the living conditions in the camps, and the hopes and disappointments of the internees in captivity.[14] His first collection, *Volume I*, contains work from the Stockton Assembly Center. The other collection, *Volume II*, was compiled between November 1942 and December 1943 in the Rohwer, Arkansas camp. One selection from each of these volumes is shared below as exemplars in expressing all of the theme and emotion of haiku in connection with a determination of spirit and will. The first, written by Komuro himself from Stockton during the initial transient phase, reads thus:

Between ceiling slats
and thick electric wires
dawn comes through unhindered[15]

From these seemingly simple lines, we can pluck forth a slew of emotion. The slats suggest both confinement and hardship, being symbolic of bars on a cage or slats on a crate in which you might keep a wild animal. The use of slats also suggests that the spaces between them do not represent the comfort or security of a home. Thick electric wires, exposed instead of hidden, illustrate the haste at which the living quarters were erected. They also represent dark bands of captivity. But then in the final line shines forth the hope that so characterizes these works. Despite the blackness of the night, or the seeming darkness of their captivity, none of the barriers put up to constrain these brave people can keep the sun from shining through, and neither can they keep their hope from burning bright. In this example poem, from very early on in the ordeal, we can still see the constant themes of hope, patience, and resolve.

Later in the duration of their captivity, some of the poetry of the incarcerated took an even more optimistic turn. Shonan Suzuki, who was interned with Komuro at both Stockton and Rohwer, wrote this haiku while at Rohwer in the summer of 1943:

Living in barracks
front and back
sunflowers blooming[16]

Much like the work of his contemporary, Suzuki's poem illustrates the paradox of the situation at these camps. Liberties were being denied, even the most basic idea of freedom, and that fact is stated in the first line about living in the barracks. Then, a second line hints at either a worsening of or a contradiction to this situation. Something is happening all around those confining barracks both front and back. What do you know? The things that surround Suzuki's prison home are blooming sunflowers all around! This unquestionably speaks to the poet's ability to find beauty in a dreary situation, but it also speaks to the efforts made by the entire camp populace to make the very most of their temporary home and situation. Notice how the sunflowers are not just growing, but rather blooming. This suggests not just a continuation of life, but a brilliance of vibrancy and spirit, as there undoubtedly was.

The poems that comprise these two volumes are scattered with this juxtaposition of ideas. Guards in towers are described along with summer daybreaks.[17] On a darkened wall in a cold wind hang many gourds.[18] Enduring late summer heat is the task, as the day of departure from the camps is set.[19] From day-to-day life, including the hardships and trials, and on into the triumphs of beauty and spirit, these terse and

beautiful poems demonstrate the Isseis' and Niseis' ability to find release and relief in their bleak detainments. To read these poems is to live alongside them. In doing so, one does not get overwhelmed with a sense of despair or indignation. Rather one senses an attitude of gratitude for what blessings they are still endowed. A journey through *May Sky* is absolutely inspiring.

This attitude becomes most evident when the topics dive deeper than the trials of daily life or even the powerful vises of captivity. Youko Shinoda, one of the foremost female haikuists, was an Issei member of the Denson Valley Ginsha.[20] In one of her poems, she discusses the greatest tragedy that each of us must face, the loss of a loved one's life. Death was as common in the camps as it is in any concentration of people, but there is little doubt that the lives lost there must have been comparatively extremely painful, and maybe even harder to endure based on the circumstances. Many of the jailed Japanese Americans already felt that a part of their lives was being stolen from them, but to lose the whole thing, regardless of sickness or any other circumstance, would seem a real injustice. However, when Shinoda writes of this event in her life, she does so with an eye to the sublime and beautiful. To most this must seem a miraculous outlook to keep.

End of friend's life
has come
grass is green and wet

Green grass, whether wet with the dew of an autumn morning or the rainfall of spring thunderstorm, perfectly illustrates the contrast in emotions associated with the

evacuation experience. Clouds, winds, darkness, and rain can come, but vibrant life, i.e. green grass, is still the reality, the goal, and the destination. In fact, one could argue that without the rain the grass cannot grow, and without sorrow we may not be able to truly experience joy. From just a few simple lines of unassuming and gentle words from a people wronged and denied justice come some of life's most poignant lessons.

It is important to acknowledge that plenty of what was freely written in the camps had some undertone of protest. That reality of creative expression should not be omitted, and it does not contradict the idea of *gaman*. If the newspapers had been completely free of oversight, then they may very well have taken on a different overall tone. Regardless of the tone however, and whether poets and journalists were writing for work, pleasure, history, or protest, each was using the medium as an expressive creative outlet to help them survive and make the most of their situation.

Straightforward journalism and optimistic-themed poetry were both often combined in the newspapers, but assorted poetry and various types of opinion were even more prominent in the camp magazines. Not all camps had magazines, and in fact only three camps had English language magazines that were published with regularity.[21] These magazines, *The Pen* from Rohwer, *Tulean Dispatch Magazine* from Tule Lake, and *Trek* from Topaz often distinguished themselves because of the creative writing they would highlight. They featured poems beyond haiku (haiku was not as popular with the Nisei as it was with the Issei who wrote mainly in Japanese), as well as essays and stories written by inmates and also sometimes by camp faculty, too. Some pieces from *The Pen*

did not shy away from addressing racism and frustration over internment, although the overall tone of the magazine was usually optimistic.[22] The *Tulean Dispatch Magazine*, published at the camp where the "disloyal" were sent, was more heavily edited and supervised by the WRA. As such it often came away presenting an attitude that is uncritical of camp operations, although some articles in the magazine contradicted this feel.[23] The most creative and polished of the magazines was *Trek*, which offered a "broader array of talents and more complex perspectives" than the other two magazines.[24] The writing in *Trek* was sometimes optimistic, and sometimes openly critical. It allowed a broad range of talents and viewpoints to be shared within its pages.

Creative writing in the camps was exemplified by three particular works: a serial story published in *The Poston Chronicle*, a novel written by an inmate while in the camps, and a sketch journal turned into an autobiographic illustrated book written in camp and published in 1946. Each of these works demonstrates what writing could do and the significance behind it.

The serial, a murder mystery called "Death Rides the Rails to Poston," was published over time in many editions of *The Poston Chronicle* by the well respected Nisei writer Hisaye Yamamoto. Yamamoto was asked to contribute her creative talents to the fledgling paper, and she went excitedly about this creative task. When interviewed about the experience in 1994, she made some confessions that run counter to what the redress-minded interviewers were hoping to coax from her. The first interviewer, Emiko Omori, began with the question, "You were asked once to write a series, a serial, a

mystery for the newspaper. And can you just describe it? That wasn't, wasn't it a bit subverting... subversive?"[25] Omori was trying to get Yamamoto to admit that the victim of the story was selected for political reasons, and that an underlying statement was being made by the author. Yamamoto's answer to this first question was, "Well, I don't think so." Not getting the reaction she had hoped for, a second interviewer, Chizu Omori, continued trying to coax the desired response from Yamamoto. The interview continued with this exchange:

> *Omori: Well, I read that story, and I would say that you were talking about a somewhat subversive topic. So, I know that frequently writers will hide their feelings in some other form. How did you come up with this idea of who gets murdered on this train?*
> *Yamamoto: It just sounded plausible, so... it's my first and only murder mystery.*
> *Omori: Okay, well, let's back up. Who, tell us who gets murdered.*
> *Yamamoto: Do I even remember?*
> *Omori: Do you want us to remind you?*
> *Yamamoto: I think it was a man that gets murdered, right? Yeah.*
> *Omori: For what reason?*
> *Yamamoto: Oh, because he had gone around informing on people and getting 'em picked up by the FBI to get in good with the government himself. Not that these people had done anything wrong. So who was guilty? Was it a woman? I think a woman turned out to be the murderer.*
> *Omori: Yes, a woman did turn out to be the murderer. But did you, just recalling, did you have anything else in mind besides it being plausible?*
> *Yamamoto: No, no, it was just pure entertainment. I wasn't -- unless it was unconscious, I wasn't being political at all.*[26]

Yamamoto's denial of any underlying subversive feelings or hurt tone being present in her creative work is important to note because she openly said in a different segment of the same interview that she felt that the Japanese Americans were "prisoners without

trial."[27] Despite this feeling, however, her creative output was a work of plausible fiction, not clever protest, and when she looked back on it, it was done so in fond memory. It was a creative endeavor, and that was how she always wanted it to be remembered and seen. Writing kept her life balanced and rewarding, as it had been before the war, and that was her main purpose for doing it.

The lone novel written in the camps was not ever published during its author's lifetime. It was a work called *Treadmill*, written by a newspaper editor named Hiroshi Nakamura about incarceration experiences at the Salinas Assembly Center, Poston, and Tule Lake.[28] Unfortunately, it wasn't discovered until two years after Nakamura's death by Professor Peter Suzuki, who pushed for its publication in 1974.[29] The timing of the publication made it an important work in the battle for redress, but its absence from the literary world during the life of its author is illustrative of how the event was repressed during the decades following the war. Regardless of the mystery surrounding it and its author, it has the distinction of being the only novel written completely by an inmate of the camps while in camp. This was an experience that must have driven Nakamura on once the writing process got started.

The final work to be discussed is the keystone to this whole study, for in it rest truths about the good and the bad of the entire internment experience. The book is called *Citizen 13660*, and it was written and hand drawn by its author Miné Okubo (who was an artist on the staff of *Trek)*, who created the book from a selection of over 2000 drawings she created while incarcerated at Tanforan and Topaz. Explaining the creative

process behind the book, she said in her preface to the 1983 edition (republished after she testified for the CWRIC hearings) that, "In the camps, first at Tanforan and then at Topaz in Utah, I had the opportunity to study the human race from the cradle to the grave, and to see what happens to people when reduced to one status and condition. Cameras and photographs were not permitted in the camps, so I recorded everything in sketches, drawings, and paintings."[30] For biographical purposes, this is about as close as we can possibly get to a pure source. It does not have the oversight of the WRA publications. It does not have the agenda of the redress writings. It was written in the camps and published as soon as possible after the camps were shut down. It is a perfect example of how writing, art, motion pictures, card-playing, newspapers, schooling, graduations, libraries, fountains, gardens, talent shows, dances, knitting, art and hobby shows, sumo wrestling, baseball, basketball, and "*Goh*" games were the aspects of daily life that kept the inmates of the camps from dwelling upon their miseries and kept them looking toward the future with optimism. The writing is not elaborate, the sketches are very professional yet very simple, and the message is absolutely impactful. This social history of the camps, written in the camps by a completely free spirit, was not only the first history of incarceration published, but it is also the finest example of the communal experience in the camps ever written. It is a forgotten study that needs to be revisited.

Each sketch is accompanied by a one to five sentence explanation of what aspect of camp life was being captured. Okubo's descriptions are not frilly, but they also do not pull punches. Here is a sketch and explanation of the education system at Topaz:

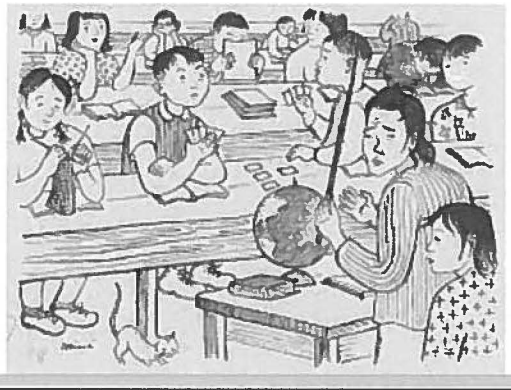


Image 10: Miné Okubo, Citizen 13660 (New York, Columbia University Press, 1946) 166.

School Organization was an improvement over Tanforan. The curriculum followed the requirements of the state of Utah and the school was staffed by Caucasian teachers and by teachers selected from among the evacuees; the latter received only the standard camp wages.[31]

Okubo shows the injustices, but she also shows the attitudes and activities that comprised the bulk of camp activity. Bad things happen in her book, but seldom do her "characters" (which of course are the author herself and the people she was interned with) complain about them. Instead, they find ways to overcome. Although this book has not been referenced up to this point in this study, you can see how valuable a resource it is in understanding and really witnessing all of the things described herein. In describing the graduation ceremony at Topaz, the same one that Eleanor Sekerak recalled in "A Teacher at Topaz," Okubo writes, "There were 150 in the first high-school graduating class. Rented blue caps and gowns added much color to the large outdoor ceremony. The graduates were very serious."[32] When describing the importance of sports in the camps, she shared that, "Recreation halls had for equipment only what the evacuees were able to provide. Ping pong, badminton, and cards were the important indoor games. Basketball, tennis, golf, football, and baseball were the outdoor games –

baseball was the favorite sport. Sumo performances were given for those interested in the old sports of Japan."[33] Go is also included in her study, saying that a recreation hall was set aside for tournaments in this game, which took place frequently, and that Issei men often taught children to play because their interest was so great.[34] Arts and crafts and handiwork likewise have their place in Okubo's sketches and depictions. "Knitting was a great pastime for womenfolk. It was also taken up by some of the young men, who would knit themselves socks, mittens, caps, and sweaters."[35] Moreover, "Art and hobby shows were of great interest. The residents exhibited vases and desk sets of wood, toys, stuffed animals and dolls, garments and knitted ware, carvings of stone and wood, finger rings of cellophane or fashioned from toothbrush handles, peach seeds or beads, tools made from scrap iron, and beautiful hats made of citrus-fruit wrappings woven with potato-sack strings."[36] Okubo also makes mention of the work of the newspapers and magazines. "Our newspapers kept the residents informed about the center and the outside. Originally a mimeographed sheet issued three times a week, it later became a daily, with a Japanese section and a comic section...After two months with the *Topaz Times* a small group of us decided to break away and start a fifty-page art and literary magazine. We called it *Trek*."[37]

In a way, *Citizen 13660* is almost like two different books. The stories of hastily constructed barracks, the bathrooms with no privacy, the problems with harsh weather, and the injustices of forced removal from homes are all told; and this would be the familiar story, the one that has been retold and has stuck so well in the collective memory of the subject. Then there are the passages quoted above, which describe the

school experience, sports, games, arts, and writing of the camps. These seem to tell a different story. It is not as emotionally upsetting as the first. It does not conjure feelings of indignation or grief. It does better illustrate the true character of these brave, proud, and patient souls. It brings to life those years in the camps, and fills in the blanks that have been missing from the historical record. Putting them both together is necessary in telling the entire tale. Okubo did that in 1946. It is time that historians start making these connections in Japanese-American history as well. Historians like Liping Zhu, in his work *A Chinaman's Chance,* have demonstrated how rich the stories of Asian ethnic groups in American history truly are, and how much these people accomplished in spite of racist oppression. We, like Zhu, should not be afraid to contest the classic telling of the history. The entire account of Japanese-American relocation is an unfair ordeal, but the sharing of the whole story helps bring fairness and justice to its memory. In this endeavor, we are not tearing off scabs in an effort to bring repressed pain to the surface. Instead, we are trumpeting the triumph of these people, displaying them as the champions of spirit and dignity they are, instead of just as abused victims.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Partway through my completion of this study, I decided to visit the Hunt Camp again. Reminiscing on my first visit, I thought back on when I had found something much like what Neil Nakadate depicted in his memoir *Looking After Minidoka*, with the description of a 2001 visit where he discovered only, "fragments of a chimney and the stone guard house, some cement slabs, and a few starkly misshapen trees, sitting in the midst of some lushly irrigated land...it was a cathartic conclusion to a bewildered and frustrating search, begun 30 years earlier when nothing was marked and I couldn't find a reliable living memory to tell me for sure what Minidoka was, or where it had been."[1] I knew from my research that some things had recently been done by the National Park Service to preserve the site and to inform visitors about the things that had taken place there. Now, I was twice as old as I had been the last time I came, and what I was to find at the Hunt Camp really was a generational difference. I hoped it would prove to be therapeutic for me as well, as I wished to fill the empty spaces in the history, and to bring some life back to the ghost town.

Traveling with me was my oldest son, Draven, who was at the beginning of his fifth year of elementary school. I wanted to preface our visit with some background information that could hopefully make both of our experiences more meaningful. Our conversation included me asking him what he knew about World War II. He told me that he knew it started when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. After informing him that the Pearl

Harbor attack was the event that got the United States into the war, but not the start of the war, I asked him if he knew what happened to all of the Japanese people who lived in the U.S. after the attack and how white Americans like us feared that some of them may be spies. Not really giving him time to answer, because I was getting my steam going, I told him with my own scholarly pride that "we" took those 100,000 plus Japanese Americans and forced them to live in dusty, windswept, ugly places like the one we were going to visit. We called them camps, but they weren't like any camping we ever did. My indignation became evident, so I paused to look reflectively at my son. Visions of barbed wire, guard towers, and machines guns were effectively painted in my son's mind. Then I went on to explain that the homework I had been working on for so long was a study of these camps, but not of what was done to the people there. What I was trying to figure out was what the prisoners did while they were locked up, how they passed the time, what was most important to them, and how they overcame such sad situations. After giving an explanation not much more detailed than this, Draven looked at me and asked, "You mean, things like dancing?"

Fatherly pride must have shown on my countenance as I looked over at my intuitive son. *How could he know that dancing was so important in the camps?* This question was on the tip of my tongue when the marvelous answer produced on his lips without my having to ask.

"They danced dances like they would have back in Japan, only they didn't wear kimonos because it was too hot." he said.

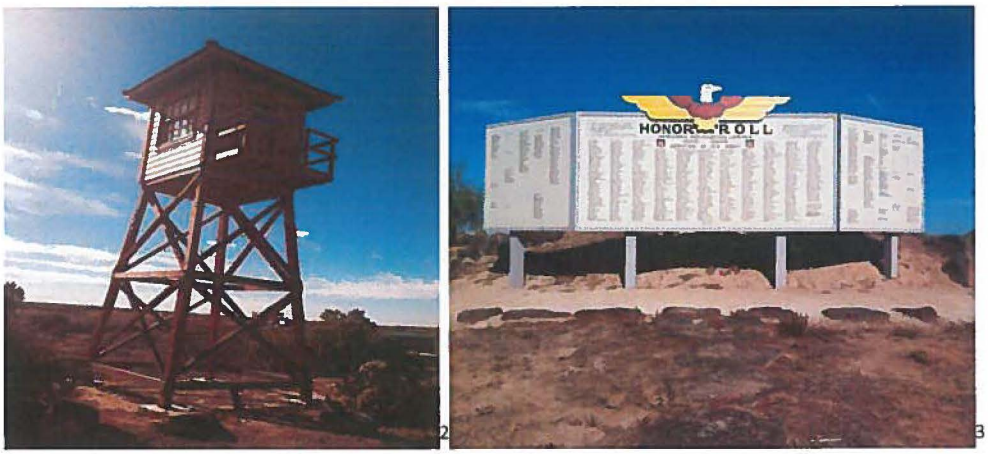
"How do you know that?" I managed, taken aback at this intimate trivia that I had not even come across in my studies.

"Mrs. Anderson taught us about it in class when we were learning about this," he said matter-of-factly.

It was not until that moment, despite the hours, days, and months of study and research, that I really realized a corner had been turned in the study of Japanese-American internment. Not only were the details now in the textbooks, but they were being taught to fifth graders. What is being taught is not just about injustice either; it is about dancing, and kimonos, and culture. The study I thought was going to revolutionize the scholarship will do little to even change the fifth grade class discussions. A few weeks after this conversation, I found out that the fifth grade class had a field trip planned to the site. Amazing.

I grew even more appreciative of the efforts at cultural preservation when I arrived at Minidoka. Although my trip was in the middle of October, it was still very dry and very hot at the camp. Pulling up to the familiar rock structure of the old entry gate, I was surprised to learn that the old gutted building was no longer the only vestige of the history of this area. The National Park Service, along with support from people like Professor Russell Tremayne (a man I am grateful to have learned under) and what he has done with the College of Southern Idaho's Annual Civil Rights Symposium, has managed to recreate some of the distinct features of the Hunt Camp. Fifty feet from the entry building a brand new wooden guard tower, meant to replicate the original at the

same location in every detail, has been erected. Beyond the entry gate, a wooden fence has been constructed, running along the banks of the canal in the style of the original barbed wire fence, but without the menace of that original enclosure device. A walking path has been designed, simple yet elegantly lined with lava rock that had been part of the site's original buildings. Sign posts dot the path, which share history, the location of buildings, and even include a couple of audio recordings from former occupants. Most impressively, an exact replica (as close as could be produced from photographs of the original) of the Minidoka Honor Roll has been erected where the original used to stand in the middle of the old Japanese garden. This was recreated in 2011 as a proud proclamation that hundreds of young men from this location fought for their country during the war. A smaller placard lists the names of the dozens of those soldiers who died for this country. A comparison of original photographs alongside the new recreations shows the passion and detail that went into these constructions. Little by little, the life of Minidoka is being brought back from its buried hiding place.



Images 11-12: Colin Smith, "Guard Tower and Honor Roll at Minidoka," digital photographs by the author, taken Oct, 2015.

Image 13: "Entrance to Minidoka," 1944, Minidoka Idaho, *Densho Archive Image* at http://archive.densho.org/Resource/popupenlarged.aspx?i=denshopd-p15-00044 (accessed Nov, 19, 2015).

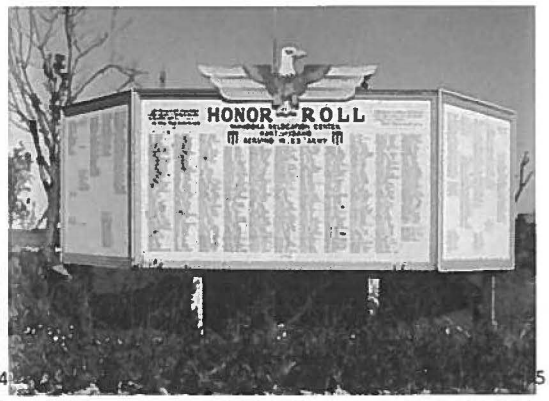


Image 14: National Park Service, "Minidoka Honor Roll," 1943, Minidoka, Idaho, *NPS* at http://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery.htm?id=7D9532B6-155D-4519-3E1ED10F3A811 B60 (accessed Nov, 19, 2015).

The National Park Service is not finished with their efforts to restore Hunt to a vision of its former self. An article in *The Courier News*, a free paper I picked up off the counter of a Napa Auto Parts store in the town where I live, now about thirty-five miles from Minidoka, caught my eye. The headline read, "A Hunt for Hunt Camp Photos."[6] The article, written by Jennifer Hamilton of the National Park Service, asked that if anyone had any photos of the old baseball field from the Hunt Camp, then they please share them with the NPS, which has partnered with some locals and nonprofits in an effort to recreate one of the ball fields from the camp.[7] This work, should it find fruition, is different from a recreation of guard towers and fences, and even from remaking the Honor Roll (although it should not be forgotten that the original was created through the artistic and creative endeavors of the camp mates). This work shows that the social history of the camps, the "what they did" and not just the "what was done to them" is now every bit as important as the other priorities in historical preservation and scholarly agenda.

The activities of detainee daily life were not just distractions to pass the time. They were aspects of being that they brought with them when they were unable to bring property, but they were also intangibles that meant more than mere possession. The Japanese Americans relocated during World War II brought to the camps and to each activity within those camps an indomitability of spirit, a belief that hard times would pass, a philosophy that they should not look down or be ashamed, and an attitude that continuing to live life to the fullest in any situation would be a character trait that would define them. It certainly has, and it continues to.

A poignant sentiment concludes *The Minidoka Interlude*, and I believe it fittingly surmises what has been proven in these pages. As a final note, the residents of Minidoka, a community nearly erased from memory but now burning brightly in the recollection of a country no longer cowardly enough to deny its existence, shared this thought with the world. It is a message that means as much today as it did seventy-two years ago when it was written, and it displays a spirit that could serve as an example to anyone facing an unfair hardship.

> *The "Minidoka Interlude" has come to its end. From the dark, overhanging clouds, the sun – the symbol of hope and opportunity, and God's blessings – is coming out to shine on Minidoka and its people. The end of "Gloomy Days" marks the beginning of "Happy Days."*
>
> *Let us not look mournfully to our past. Let us look cheerfully to our future. Rather, let us GO FORTH to meet the future with faith in America, confidence in her people and belief that right makes might and the truth will triumph.*[8]

A more truthful accounting of America's civil rights atrocities – especially addressing Japanese internment – took a long time to manifest, but finally it did, and the story of what happened to the victims of this prejudice is now a staple in the rich trove of scholarly studies. But now the story is more than one of victimization by a majority blinded by wartime fears and pre-war racism. The truth about how these brave, industrious, creative, caring, and positive people dealt with these cruelest of circumstances with dignity and patience is now finally beginning to be told, again, as well. My hope is that our country will come to know the spirit of these heroes as intimately as I now do, and come to hold them in the same esteem as we do their contemporaries of the World War II era.

Notes

Abstract:

[1] Many terms will be used seemingly interchangeably in this study to describe the Japanese American experience during World War II. While some books have made it their purpose to prefer one term over another, the fact remains that Nisei were removed, relocated, uprooted, interned, incarcerated, imprisoned, concentrated, forced from their homes, and denied civil liberties. Any preference between these descriptors will be made in regards to context within the work, although I would like to note that I agree with those who prefer that words like relocation and internment should not be used to label the camps themselves. This is the remnant of an age that did not want to confront nor admit to these realities. We have obviously passed this point.

Chapter 1:

[1] Neil Nakadate, *Looking After Minidoka: An American Memoir* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2013) 107.
[2] Image courtesy of the Nation Park Service. Located online at http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/cultural_diversity/Minidoka_Internment_National_Historic_Site.html
[3] Donald Teruo Hata and Nadine Ishitani Hata, *Japanese Americans and World War II: Mass Removal, Imprisonment, and Redress* (Wheeling, Harlan Davidson, 2011) 51.
[4] Ibid, 17.
[5] Ibid, 46.
[6] Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York, Hill and Wang, 2004) 20.
[7] University of Cincinati, "Department of History," accessed September, 25, 2015 at http://www.artsci.uc.edu/departments/history/fac_staff/byDeptMembers.html?eid=danielr
[8]. Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial,* 3.
[9] Hata and Hata, *Japanese Americans and World War II,* 51.
[10] Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial,* biography.
[11] Hata and Hata, *Japanese Americans and World War II*, 53.
[12] U. S. Congress, "House Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess," *Personal Justice Denied*. Recommendations, 5.
[13] Delphine Hirasuna, *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942-1946* (Berkeley, Ten Speed Press, 2013) 7.
[14] Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial,* 121.
[15] Ibid, 21, 48.
[16] Ibid, 49-50, 87.
[17] Ibid, 114.

[18] Kathleen Tuck, "Surviving Minidoka Named Idaho Book of the Year," *Update*. Boise State University News. Accessed September 26, 2015, https://news.boisestate.edu/update/2014/10/08/surviving-minidoka-named-idaho-book-year/
[19] Russell M. Tremayne and Todd Shallat, ed. *Surviving Minidoka: The Legacy of WWII Japanese Incarceration*. (Boise, Boise State Publications, 2013) 14, 42.
[20] Ibid, 26.
[21] Ibid, 93, 137.

Chapter 2:

[1] Jerry Enomoto, "Untitled" in *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* Lawson Fusao Inada ed. (Berkeley, Heyday, 2000) 126.
[2] David J. O'Brien and Stephen S. Fugita, *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 76.
[3] Ibid, 62-63.
[4] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999) 759.
[5] David J. O'Brien and Stephen S. Fugita, *The Japanese American Experience*, 76.
[6] Ibid.
[7] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 760.
[8] Toru Saito, "Hidden Testimony," in *From Our Side of the Fence: Growing up in America's Concentration Camps* Brian Komei Dempster ed.(San Francisco, Kearny Street Workshop, 2001) 65.
[9] Ibid, 64.
[10] Ibid, 64-65.
[11] Ibid, 65.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Daisy Uyeda Satoda, "Tanforan Assembly Center," *From Our Side of the Fence,* 77.
[14] Ibid, 69.
[15] Ibid, 70.
[16] Ibid, 70-71.
[17] Ibid, 71.
[18] Ibid.
[19]Eleanor Gerard Sekerak, "A Teacher at Topaz," in *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* Lawson Fusao Inada ed. (Berkeley, Heyday, 2000) 126.
[20] Ibid, 126-127.
[21] Ibid, 132.
[22] Ibid, 132-133.
[23] Image of Dorthea Lange's "Pledge of Allegiance." This, along with many other of Lange's wartime incarceration photographs, was censored and unavailable for years after the war.

[24] Sekerak, "Teacher at Topaz," 133.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid, 135.
[29] Ibid, 136.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] George Takei, from *To the Stars: The Autobiography of George Takei, in Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* Lawson Fusao Inada ed. (Berkeley, Heyday, 2000) 122.
[33] Ibid, 123.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid, 124.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Yoshiko Uchida, from *Desert Exile, in Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* Lawson Fusao Inada ed. (Berkeley, Heyday, 2000) 73.
[39] Ibid, 74.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (New York, Bantam Books, 1973) 26.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid, 73.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Harry L. Stafford, "Personal letter to Dillon Myer," 1942.
[54] Memorandum from Minidoka detainees to Harry L Stafford, May 20, 1943.
[55] Ibid.
[56] R.A. Pomeroy, Teacher Training Department, "Teacher Training: Hunt, Idaho, 1943."
[57] Harry Stafford, "A Message," *The Minidoka Interlude*, October, 1943, 10.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Year Book Staff, "The Work Experience Program," *Memoirs – Hunt high School*, 1943, pg 28.
[60] Year Book Staff, "Dear Diary," *Memoirs – Hunt high School*, 1943, pg 3.
[61] Densho, accessed October 4, 2015 at http://www.densho.org/

[62] Camp contributors, "High School Plans Class in Cooking," *The Minidoka Irrigator*, October 24, 1942, Vol. 1 No. 12, pg 3. Accessed October 4, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.

[63] Front page of the first copy of *The Minidoka Irrigator*, the Idaho camp newspaper that ran from September 1942 to July 1945. Thanks to the efforts of the Densho Project, and contributors who were able to donate well preserved copies like this one, most of these newspapers have been saved for research and future generations.

[64] Camp contributors, "Baby Food Stations are in Operation," *The Granada Pioneer*, October 31, 1942, Vol. 1 No 2, pg 4. Accessed October 5, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.

[65] "School Parties," *The Granada Pioneer*, October 31, 1942, Vol. 1 No 2, pg 6.

[66] Camp contributors, " Activities Charted: Community Program Includes Clubs, Entertainment, Arts & Crafts," *The Rohwer Outpost*, October 24, 1942, Vol. 1 No 1, pg 1. Accessed October 5, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Camp Contributors, "Schools: Thrice Explain Delay in Opening of Classes," *The Rohwer Outpost*, October 24, 1942, Vol. 1 No 1, pg 1. Accessed October 5, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.

[69] Camp Contributors, "Scholarship Fund Grows as More Donations Made," *The Tulean Dispatch*, September 3, 1943, Vol. 6 No 3, pg 1. Accessed October 6, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.

[70] Camp Contributors, "Return School Text Books," *The Tulean Dispatch*, September 3, 1943, Vol. 6 No 3, pg 1. Accessed October 6, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.

Chapter 3:

[1] George Omachi, quoted in Michael Beschloss, "For Incarcerated Japanese Americans, Baseball was 'Wearing the American Flag,'" from *The New York Times*, June 20, 2014. Accessed online at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/21/upshot/for-incarcerated-japanese-americans-baseball-was-wearing-the-american-flag.html?_r=0

[2] Beschloss, "For Incarcerated Japanese Americans, Baseball was 'Wearing the American Flag.'"

[3] Ansel Adams, Baseball at Manzanar, image available at: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/item/2002695992/

[4] Ansel Adams, Volleyball at Manzanar, image available at: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/item/2002695993/

[5] Beschloss, "For Incarcerated Japanese Americans, Baseball was 'Wearing the American Flag.'"

[6] Ibid.

[7] Takeo Suo, quoted in Beschloss, "For Incarcerated Japanese Americans, Baseball was 'Wearing the American Flag.'"
[8] Ken Mochizuki, *Baseball Saved Us* (New York, Lee & Low, 1993) 9.
[9] Year Book Staff, "Sharp Shooters," *Memoirs – Hunt High School*, 1943, pg 52.
[10] Residents of Minidoka Relocation Center, "Semi-Pro Baseball," *The Minidoka Interlude*, October, 1943, 116.
[11] Ibid.
[12]Jennifer Hamilton, "A Hunt for Hunt Camp Photos," *The Courier News*, September 16, 2015, Vol. 39, No 37, pg 1.
[13] Residents of Minidoka Relocation Center, "Section 6 Softballersl," *The Minidoka Interlude*, October, 1943, 118.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Camp Contributors, *The Heart Mountain Sentinel*, October 31, 1942, Vol. 1 No 2, pg 6. Accessed October 10, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[16] John Wantanbe, "Come On, Play Ball," from *The Heart Mountain Sentinel*, October 31, 1942, Vol. 1 No 2, pg 6. Accessed October 10, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[17] Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, "Sports and Recreation in Camp," *Densho Encyclopedia*, Accessed October 10, 2015, at http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Sports%20and%20recreation%20in%20camp/
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Branch Rickey Jr., "Nisei Ballplayers, Attention!," from *The Rohwer Outpost*, July 24, 1943, Vol. 3 No 9, pg 8. Accessed October 20, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[23] Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, "Sports and Recreation in Camp."
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] John Powell, "Dr. Powell Recommends Curb on Unsupervised Sandlot Tackle Football," from *The Poston Chronicle*, December 2, 1944, Vol. XXI No 23, pg 1. Accessed October 21, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[27] Camp Contributors, *The Gila News Courier*, September 30, 1942, Vol. 1 No 6, pg 6. Accessed October 21, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[28] Camp contributors, "Hunt Gridders Loosen Arms, Toes for Football Contests," *The Minidoka Irrigator*, September 29, 1942, Vol. 1 No. 5, pg 4. Accessed October 21, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[29] Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, "Sports and Recreation in Camp."
[30] Ibid.
[31] Camp contributors, "Judo Big Sport in Manzanar," *The Tulean Dispatch*, May 5, 1943, Vol. 5 No. 40, pg 4. Accessed October 21, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx.
[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.
[34] Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, "Sports and Recreation in Camp."
[35] Mille Pressler, "Lordsburg Internment POW Camp," Accessed October 22, 2015 at http://newmexicohistory.org/places/lordsburg-internment-pow-camp
[36] Genji Mihara, Personal letter to Katsu Mihara, August 14, 1942, accessed October 22, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/Resource/popuptext.aspx?&v=t&i=denshopd-p140-00125&t=Letter+from+Issei+man+to+wife+(August+14,+1942)
[37] Trevanian, *Shibumi: A Novel* (New York, Broadway Books, 1979) 78.
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[42] Ibid, 80.
[43] Ibid.
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[1] Residents of Minidoka Relocation Center, "Art & Handicraft Exhibits," *The Minidoka Interlude*, October, 1943, 124.
[2] Harumi Serata, "Bitter Brush Story," *From Our Side of the Fence,* 80.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Russell M Tremayne, "Nakashima Woodworker," from Russell M. Tremayne and Todd Shallat, ed. *Surviving Minidoka: The Legacy of WWII Japanese Incarceration*. (Boise, Boise State Publications, 2013) 132.
[5] Ibid, 133.
[6] As quoted in Russell Tremayne's "Nakashima Woodworker," 137.
[7] As quoted in Russell Tremayne's "Nakashima Woodworker," 141.
[8] Jane Dusselier, "Arts and Crafts in Camp," *Densho Encyclopedia,* accessed October, 28, 2015 at http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Arts%20and%20crafts%20in%20camp/
[9] Ibid.
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[11] Anna Hosticka Tamura, "Minidoka Gardens," from Russell M. Tremayne and Todd Shallat, ed. *Surviving Minidoka: The Legacy of WWII Japanese Incarceration*. (Boise, Boise State Publications, 2013) 95.
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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid, 94-95.
[15] Ibid, 96-97.
[16] Ansel Adams, Japanese Garden at Manzanar, this particular garden was nicknamed "Pleasure Park," image available at: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?sp=2&co=manz&st=grid
[17] Anna Hosticka Tamura, "Minidoka Gardens," 101.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, 102.
[20] Ibid, 102-103.
[21] Ibid, 103.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Delphine Hirasuna, *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942-1946* (Berkeley, Ten Speed Press, 2013) 6.

[24] Ibid, 7.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid, 36-37.
[28] Ibid, 40-41.
[29] Ibid, 66-67.
[30] Ibid, 26.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Tom Parker, Adult art class under the direction of Tokio Ueyama at Granada, Colorado, Dec. 10, 1942, Image available at http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft0x0n9920/
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[34] Karen L. Ishizuka, L*ost and Found: Reclaiming the Japanese American Incarceration* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006) 118.

[35] Dave Tatsuno, as quoted in Karen L. Ishizuka, L*ost and Found,* 118.
[36] Ibid, 118-119.
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[38] Joy Yamauchi, as quoted in Karen L. Ishizuka, L*ost and Found,* 138.
[39] Delphine Hirasuna, *The Art of Gaman*, 24.
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[2] Takeya Mizuno, "Newspapers in Camp," *Densho Encyclopedia,* accessed October 23, 2015 at http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Newspapers%20in%20camp/

[3] "Kunio Otani talks about his role as a writer for the Tulean Dispatch, the newspaper at the Tule Lake concentration camp.," *Densho Encyclopedia* http://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/en-denshovh-okunio-01-0034-1/ (accessed Oct 24 2015).
[4] Makoto Ueda, as quoted in Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 10.
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[6] Ibid.
[7] Mayumi Naksuka, from the introduction to Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 11.
[8] Ibid, 12.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid, 13.
[11] Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 18.
[12] Ibid, 87.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Kyotaro Komuro, Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 103.
[16] Shonan Suzuki, from Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 161.
[17] Kyotaro Komuro, Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 103.
[18] Ibid, 107.
[19] Shonan Suzuki, from Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 161.
[20] Violet Kazue De Cristoforo, *May Sky: There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Japanese American Concentration Camp Kaiko Haiku* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon Press, 1997) 189.
[21] Stan Yogi, "Literature in camp," *Densho Encyclopedia,* accessed October 26, 2015 at http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Literature%20in%20camp/.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

[25] Hisaye Yamamoto interview, March 21, 1994, from the Densho Digital Archive Emiko and Chizuko Omori Collection, accessed October, 26, 2015 at http://archive.densho.org/Resource/popuptext.aspx?v=s&i=denshovh-yhisaye-01-0009&t=Hisaye+Yamamoto+Interview+Segment+9+Transcript.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Stan Yogi, "Literature in camp."
[29] Ibid.
[30] Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1946) ix.

[31] Ibid, 166.
[32] Ibid, 188.
[33] Ibid,170-171.
[34] Ibid, 105.
[35] Ibid, 104.
[36] Ibid, 169.
[37] Ibid, 134.

Chapter 6:

[1] Nakadate, *Looking After Minidoka*, 103, 105.
[2] This newly constructed guard tower is an exact replica of the one that stood at this location at the main entrance to Minidoka from 1942-1945. Photo taken by the author.
[3] This newly constructed billboard is an exact replica of the original Minidoka Honor Roll sign, which was proudly displayed in front of the administrative area of the Hunt Camp. The new sign was constructed in 2011. Photo taken by the author.
[4] Photo showing how the guard tower looked in 1944. Courtesy of Densho Digital Archives. Image available at http://archive.densho.org/Resource/popupenlarged.aspx?i= denshopd-p15-00044.
[5] Photo showing how the Honor Roll looked in 1943. Courtesy of the National Park Service. Image available at http://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery.htm?id=7D9532B6-155D-4519-3E1ED10F3A811B60.
[6] Jennifer Hamilton, "A Hunt for Hunt Camp Photos," *The Courier News*, September 16, 2015, Vol. 39, No 37, pg 1.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Residents of Minidoka Relocation Center, "The End," *The Minidoka Interlude*, October, 1943, 139.

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