

A conference of Japanese America Actors, Artists, Activists and Interested Critics.

Scripted introductions to panel discussions to be read by actors .. Mako, George Takei, Keone Young, Robert Ito, Rodney Kageyama, Momo Yashima, Jim Hirabayashi, and Lawson Inada.

Read only the bold faced parts of the editorials, articles and stories.

Scripts to be printed and distributed to people attending the conference.

PANELS AT THE MUSEUM

ACTORS, ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS & INTERESTED CRITICS-

Harry Honda, former editor JACL PACIFIC CITIZEN; Kenji Taguma, editor SF NICHU BEI TIMES; Lawson Inada-"Drawing the Line" Wayne Maeda, Sacto State University; James D. Wakatsuki and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston-"Farewell to Manzanar"; Janice Mirikitani- poet. Moderated by: Lane Hirabayashi

NO-NO BOY

Frank Chin, writer; Frank Emi, Leader FPC; Yosh Kuromiya, Ht, Mt. Resister; Albert Saijo-poet"Outspeaks A Rhapsody," Ht, Mt, volunteer to the 442nd; Mako-Actor; Keone Young, actor. Moderated by: Lawson Inada

OMURA VS, MASAOKA

Frank Abe, "Conscience and the Constitution"; Emiko Omori. "Rabbit in the Moon;" Wendy Hanamura, (HONOR BOUND; 442nd Hawaii doc) Link TV; Harry Kitano, JACL Pacific Citizen, Lane Nishikwa-actor. Moderated by: Wayne Maeda.

OMURA, THE FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE, AND YASUI

Frank Abe (Conscience and the Constitution) Emiko Omori (Rabbit in the Moon); Jim Houston & Jeanne Wakatsuki (FAREWELL TO MANZANAR); Frank Emi-Ht. Mt. Fair Play Committee; Yosh Kuromiya -resister Ht, Mt. ; Albert Saijo-Ht. Mt. 442nd, "OUTSPEAKS A RHAPSODY" Moderated by: James and Lane Hirabayashi

EXHIBITIONS

Roger Shimomura- Painter-born in Seattle. Toku Shimomura, a certified midwife delivered Roger from the womb of her daughter in law. Roger was raised in Minidoka. His paintings, sculptures, performance pieces have largely focused on his family's life in Minidoka. He teaches art at the University of Kansas. I propose that the Museum commission Shimomura to do a painting based on his interpretation of NO NO BOY, that includes a portrait of the model for Ichiro, the No-No boy of the novel, Hajime "Jim" Akutsu.

Masumi Hayashi- Photographic artist. The University of Ohio. had an exhibit of photo-montages at the Museum last year. She took pictures of a site at different times and different days and composed a panoramic view of the site. Her photo montage of Heart Mountain is a stunner. I propose the museum commission her to do a version of the 63 resisters from Heart Mountain awaiting trial from photos of the men she collects or photographs.

I propose the two artworks be unveiled at the conference, in a ceremony hosted by Wakako Yamauchi-writer-playwright -"And the Soul Shall Dance"

Why not celebrate Omura in a work of art? Omura is a newsman, an editor, an editorialist, a news critic, not news. That's the difference between Omura and the other Nisei journalists. He was the only one that was not the news he wrote about. (Though he would not object to others writing about him.) The only camp novel to touch on the No-No boys and the resistance is news. The only organized camp resistance is news. He would not appreciate intruding his name into John Okada's novel or the accomplishments of Fujii et al vs. USA and Okamoto vs. USA. He'd want to be free to observe the events, to write, and criticize the goings on.

CONVERSATIONS & COFFEE AT THE VIA DOLCE

NO ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS
EMPLOYED BY VANITY ASIAN AMERICAN MAGAZINES,
OR VANITY ASIAN AMERICAN
NEWSPAPERS,
NO ASIAN AMERICAN CRITICS:

WHERE IS THE ASIAN AMERICA FOR THE ASIAN AMERICAN WRITER?

HOST: David Ishii-Bookseller, Seattle, with: Lawson Inada,"DRAWING THE LINE" Albert Saijo, "OUTSPEAKS A RHAPSODY" Ken Mochizuki- author illustrator of childrens books on camp, 442nd and baseball (Lee& Lowe) Allan Kornblum, editor publisher Coffee House Press. (Someone from Lee & Lowe 'no Asian culture. Socio-Anthro reality only.)

OMURA, THE FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE, AND YASUI: THE DAUGHTERS

Kathy Ito - daughter of Frank Emi, Ht. Mt. FPC; Grace Kubota Ybarra, attorney, daughter of Kubota, of FPC, Holly Yasui-daughter of JAACL's Min Yasui

WHERE ARE THE AA JOURNALISTS?

Sam Chu Lin, May Chow, (Asianweek) William Wong, Tritia Toyota, Wendy Tokuda; Wendy Hanamura, Frank Abe, Emiko Omori. More?

WHERE ARE THE WRITERS?

David Mura, Garrett Hongo, David Mas Masumoto,.

ACTORS, ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS& INTERESTED CRITICS

NARRATOR

One thing that held Japanese American actors, artists, activists and their critics together, before the War, was CURRENT LIFE magazine, and its editor publisher, James Matsumoto Omura. Today, those who know his name, know him only as a wartime enemy of Mike Masaoka and the JACL. His magazine published pieces on and by Masaoka, including his much storied Nisei Creed:

MASAOKA

THE NISEI CREED

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. She has given me an education befitting kings. she has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak and act as I please...as a free man equal to every other man.

Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True, I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way; aboveboard, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics.

Because I believe in "America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her

against all enemies, foreign and domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as citizen, cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.

NARRATOR

Omura published the Creed with this note:

MASAOKA

The Nisei Creed written by Mike M. Masaoka of Salt Lake City, Utah, an outstandingly prominent youth leader of the Rocky Mountain districts and an instructor of debating at Utah University. The Creed is believed to have been first recorded in the Calexico, California Chronicle. The San Diego Sun later reprinted it. It has since then received wide attention.

NARRATOR

The JACL's Pacific Citizen never printed a complete quote much less a piece by Omura verbatim. Omura might have been opinionated and hard to take, in person, but as an editor, and the editor of CURRENT LIFE, "The Magazine for the American Born Japanese" he was complete, and covered the whole universe of Japanese America from boxing, to fashion, to opera, to politics, to art and literature. Not his just his ideas of Japanese American politics but everyone's. Not his just his ideas of Japanese American literature but everyone's. He was fair. He commissioned an article from Kenny Murase after hearing a vision of Japanese American writing in Murase's talk of hitch hiking from writer to writer around California.

KENNY MURASE

WHO'S WHO IN THE NISEI LITERARY WORLD

By Kenny Murase

Scanning the nisei literary horizon, we see a galaxy of literary lights--many of them we know. A short stay in the South, while attending school and a hitch-hike trip up North have etched impressions sharply into our mind. With some of these writers it was just a "Hello" and a "Glad to have met you." But with most of them we've come to know as real friends--the kind of friends what would augment your dreams and your

hopes of a brighter tomorrow--the kind of friends that gives you a bit of confidence, a dash of optimism, and something of a reassurance that perhaps humanity is good, and that life might not be so bad after all.

CARL KONDO--pioneer nisei journalist; edited **Sangyo Nippo**; columned in **Rafu Shimpo**; wrote for pulps; now has a typewriter shop in Li'l Tokyo; writes a swift, sure prose and a sort of cold hard brilliancy; his probing pen explores mental recesses of mind with keen analytical, calculating thoroughness.

LUCILLE MORIMOTO--considered one of leading nisei poetess; extremely introspective, profoundly contemplative; very delicately poised emotionally; and intriguing esoteric personality; appears the classic Grecian type--stately, elegant, patrician.

BOB OKAZAKAI--veteran nisei scribe and soldier of fortune--"I worked every damnsheet on the Coast"; managed publicity for Nisei Festival; voluble, suave, debonair; has barbed, pointed sense of humor.

MOLLY OYAMA--(Mrs. Frederick Mittwer) frequent contributor to vernaculars; earnestly interested in promoting better race understanding; active in civic bodies; an affectionate young matron--poised, neat with a tranquil informal charm all her own.

JOE OYAMA--travelogues, descriptive sketches, personal briefs; writes with a sustained style--lean, lithe, powerful; has tremendous perspective and a far-sighted clairvoyance; substance of writings indicative of a profound wisdom, an understanding of and a sympathy for the Common Herd of simple people; bids fair to rise forth with that Great Nisei Novel before being scooted off into those ultimate realms of some astral limbo--and shuffled from this mortal coil; has his hands full: one hand jammed down into Gabriel's Horn; with the other he goes about interjecting social consciousness into Ivory Towers of mentally bankrupt nisei; peripatetic, iconoclastic, intelligent with a good sense of self-proportion.

ART TASHIRO--of the well known Tashiro clan; lives with brother Aiji (an instructor in creative writing) while going to Appalachian State Teachers College (Tennessee); spends

summer vagabonding around--has covered most all of Atlantic Coast states, deep South and was in California last summer; very interesting conversationalist; has an active; expressive face that becomes a swift-changing scene of fluid and kaleidoscopic activity.

BEAN TAKEDA--editor-publisher of all -nisei Japanese - American Mirror; writes column "Typetown Talk"--personal heart-to-heart, E.V. Durling-ish; has penetrating sense of humor and pertinent observations; Man-About-Town--claims he has all desirable girls of Lil' Tokyo catalogued in his mind but can't decide who is most desirable; dapper, energetic, genial, and a hard-working hustler.

WARREN TSUNEISHI--writes crisp caustic, incisive satire; brilliant UCLA student in political-science; political tendencies; an ultra-reactionary and rugged individualist (weak emphasis on "rugged") adores girls with "exquisite lips," Westbrook Pegler, the L.A. Times and James Thurber, but mostly girls with "exquisite lips"; admires Hitler, looks like Hitler (without the mustache), and employs Hitleristic tactics in subduing unwitting, unsuspecting victims; a short-stocky peasant-like fellow--entirely innocuous, though fearsome spectacle.

HISAO HATA--writes intense short stories--powerful, sweeping, panoramic; scholarly student at UCLA, and an embryonic writer who promises to blossom out into an author of note--shows occasional spurts of dazzling, inspired writing which rockets to magnificent heights; writes Thomas Wolf-ish, acts Thomas Wolf-ish, looks Thomas Wolf-ish--huge physique (shade under six feet) strong, able, but repudiates, rejects America's past and present gospel of work--general locomotion akin to that of Model T Ford, 1912 vintage (but with little more finances and a little less noise).

TOGO TANAKA--English Editor of the Rafu Shimpo -- handsome, hard hitting, dynamic; acknowledged outstanding spokesman for nisei; vitally concerned with leading nisei out of the darkness and chaos of confusion and pessimism; a UCLA Phi Beta Kappa grad at 20--extremely cordial, gracious.

HELEN AOKI--columns 'Printer's Ink' for Rafu --brief personal essays, political commentaries, lyric prose; has

polished, mature, craftsman-like style; observes human foibles and frailties with startling clarity; endowed with sensitive poetic soul, and temperament that runs entire vicissitude of emotions--subject to varying moods and whims; intensely social and political conscious--pensive, free thinking, ratiocinative; has faith only in interrelationship of science, philosophy and religion; quiet, restrained and courteous.

BOB HIRANO-- sport editor the Rafu has colorful, graphic style--fluent precise, compact; modest, retiring sort, and despite being dubbed "Mrs. Hirano's tragedy," Bob is a regular fellow. (But he is a sports writer.)

ROY TAKENO--English editor of the Kashu Mainichi; has a clear insight and an understanding of nisei problems; a soft-spoken, affable, and conscientious gentlemen--clean cut, manly, and with an inevitable grin.

TOMOMASA YAMASAKI--once hell bent, obstreperous, irresponsible--now considerably pragmatic and docile through marriage, job (assistant editor on Kashu) and arrival of baby girl to Mrs. few weeks ago; one of so-called "lost generation"--led by vanguard force of Oyama, Furiya, Iki--whose emergence from adolescenese was met by the impact of economic chaos; to escape from from the frustration of his depression era, frequently indulged in unrepressed, uncontrolled rampages; went to college on poker earnings; worked in Alaska, the Northwest, and the Coast in general, now lives comfortably in cozy little home where friends wander in and out at all hours of the night to drink beer and talk.

RUTH KURATA--(Mrs. Yamasaki formerly assistant editor the Kashu before hubby took over; leader in organizing Young Democrats; active in JACL was wise-cracking, tom-boyish hoyden--now sweet, doting Mama; bouyant convivial, Emily-Post-be-damned-and-make-yourself-at-home-ish

CHICO SAKAGUCHI--writes "Fuges" (Kashu)--sprightly, pungent, and not without verve; UCLA English honorary society grad this year--belligerent, independent intensely individualistic; scorns idealist puritan conscience and priggish indecisions of great nisei mediocrity; defies conventions, despises cant and dogma and people who kow-tow to them; his insatiable intellectual

curiosity about people, ideas and things; trying to discover distinguishing points between a philosophical and political liberal; has rich earthy humor, and a common-sense approach; insists, **"Hell, I'm no lady." (But we insist otherwise.)**

LILY YANAI--"Telephooie" (Kashu) chatty, light, spontaneous; a veteran columnist--"I write on and off--mostly off." bonnie belle of Orange County--youthful, abounding vitality; tsk, tsk, tskable--loves motorcycle riding, sweet innocent little boys, and candied yam--and the city of Bakersfield (ask her why--and run); dainty, pretty...nice.

HISAYE YAMAMOTO --"Napoleon's Last Stand" (Kashu)--naive, cute niceties; an intellectual giant weighting 89 pounds--graduated with top honors from Compton JC this year; deceiving, enigmatic, fascinating personality--tries to look at the world through pair of rosecolored pinze-nez; toddles about in size 12 rompers, hop-skotches on the Primrose Path, studies "Superman Comics" for intellectual stimulation; ambitions: go to Wichita, Kansas next year, entering convent at 24, jump off the Olive "Blvd Bridge in to the L.A. River at 26. (Pardon while we chuckle.)

MARY KITANO--"Pulse of the Southland Beats" (Sangyro Nippo)-- frothy frivolous pleasantries a-la Walter Winchell; desk-edited Compton JC. sheet last term, now slated to take over editor's un-easy chair; pert, petite and piquant, with a trim jaunty figure; disconcertingly charming manners--abrupt, aggressive, spontaneous; twirls a mean baton--would make a high-stepping, fancy struttin' drum majorette, but tragedy: no bands.

AYAKO NOGUCHI--'Merry-Go-Round' (Rafu) --lively, spirited, efferevescent; veterean columnist of 3 years; special corresponent of Rafu and Nichi-Bei; refreshing, vivacious, winsome little country lassie; a whirlwind of activity; helps Mother with cooking and house-cleaning; packs melons and vegetables; acts as Amicable Relations Department for family; cabinet member of CYBL; vice-president of Cen. Calif.. div.; reads couple books a week; writes feature stores; keeps all her notorious cats feeling find and dandy; designs and sews all her sartorial needs; does credit to "Emily Post as charming hostess to huge number of company; and

the rest of the time, squanders on eating and sleeping.

YORI WADA-- Cal graduate this year; worked his way up to post of Associate Editor on Daily California; was active in campus "y", member Race Relations Board; now has article under consideration by Louis Adamic for publication Common Grounds; extremely alert and conscious--has electric quickness of ideas; critical, restless, energetic--handsome, husky, likable.

BOB IKI--once edited Sangyo Nippo (I.A.) with George Furiya; now Public Relations Director for government agency in Oakland; has option to write article on nisei in asparagus camps for Scribner's Magazine; went to Cal with Yamazaki; roomed with Eddie Shimano and William Saroyan at time of Saroyan's writing of "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze"; bar-tendered in Havana; rode the rods with Oyama and Furiya; happily married to sweet charming Fumi Katsu; intellectually bent, intransigent, unconventional; active member Oakland Young Democrats; if-you-don't-like-me-may it-please-yourself-to-go-to-hell-and-give-my-regards-to-everyone-down-there-ish.

YAS ABIKO-English editor Nichi-Bei; capably filling after Larry Tajiri's departure for New York; considerate personable, and industrious.

VINCE TAJIRI--"Rigamraole" (Nichi-Bei) --pleasant, whimsical absurdities; talented short story-writer--suggestive of stream-of-conscious medium; handles subjective states of feeling with deft skillful adroitness; has clean, forceful, vigorous prose; is yet to clamber out of diapers, now teething on "Sir Walter Raleigh; stayed over at Murase Mansion with Joe Oyama one night--for breakfast, had buttered toast (grated), coffee (two teaspoonful in a cup of sugar) and asked for a hatchet to break the yolk of his egg (slight exaggerations but you get the general idea); sly, waggish, droll-a swell fellow. (But he's a sports writer).

Well, that's about it. And thirty.

NARRATOR

Toyo Suyemoto was one of Omura favorite poets. And he published her regularly. He was working on a paper edited by Iwao Kawakami, and reviewing a book of Iwao Kawakami's poetry. He noted that Kawakami had plagiarized several poems by Toyo, who was married to Kawakami

at the time.

TOYO SUYEMOTO

YELLOW

The other children pointed
 fingers at me
 And cried, "Yellow, yellow in-
 side and out!"
 Because my skin was a shade
 different from theirs.
 They ringed me in a circle of
 distrust
 And mocked me with repeated
 taunts
 I held my hands fisted against
 my ears
 And shouted, "No...no...no!"
 And still the words crashed
 heavily
 And thundered in the brain:
 Yellow...yellow...inside
 and out.
 See, my skin has not changed
 color,
 But it may be that I am stain-
 ed inside.

__Toyo Suyemoto

NARRATOR

Omura cultivated a relationship between the writers of his magazine and Fresno writer William Saroyan. In the May 1941 issue Omura published this letter from Saroyan.

SAROYAN

William Saroyan Salutes Current Life

THANKS AGAIN for the nice sukiyaki supper and a very
 delightful evening. I have been wanting to meet Japanese-Americans
 of California for some time.

I LOOK FORWARD with eagerness to the emergence of an outstanding Japanese-American writer. I believe this event cannot be avoided; that sooner or later one of you must write that story--if for no other reason than this: that I, for one, want to read that story. Now, if I want to read it, you may be sure that almost everybody else wants to read it.

I will predict for this writer these things: that his source of material will be his race, the memory of the old country in his parents, his own personal experience, and the experience of his own kind about him--but--at the same time--I will predict also that everything he writes will be as valid for me as for himself; that, while his work will spring from his own inner life, it will be universal.

The emergence of this writer is not going to take place tomorrow, or three months from now; it may be five years, or ten or twenty but my hunch is that now is the time for this writer to begin his work.

I wish you and Current Life and its readers all the best.

Yours truly

William Saroyan

NRRATOR

In the same issue Omura published a story by Toshio Mori of San Leandro.

MORI

The Sweet Potato

It was the last day at Treasure Island. The lights were going out at midnight. Two Nisei youth muse over memories and in the crowded tearoom of the beautiful Japanese Pavilion they hear the story of the sweet potato.

By Toshio Mori

IT WAS THE last day at Treasure Island and Hiro took me around for a fast look. Time after time he shook his head as he fondly gazed at the buildings. The lights were going out at midnight.

"Gee, it gets me," he said, his eyes becoming red. "I don't like it."

All summer we had gone to the Fair together. There were days when I would rather have stayed at home, but Hiro would come and pull me out of the house.

"I'm sick. I want companionship. Please come with me and make me happy," he would beg.

Each time it ended the same way. We would walk for miles, and he would talk. We saw very little of the exhibits. When we became tired we would go up on the Temple Compound and rest. Each time we would look below and watched the crowd coming and going. And each time Hiro would comment, "Gee., look at those people going back and forth. Wandering forever...that's what we're doing. Searching for something, searching for the real thing...everyone of us. Look at them going in circles. That's us when we go below and join them."

I knew what was coming next. All summer we had argued about ourselves...the problem of the second generation of Japanese ancestry. "I tell you. We're not getting anywhere. We haven't a chance," he would tell me. "We'll fall into our parents' routine life and end there. We'll have our own clique and never get out of it."

"You're wrong, Hiro," I would say. "We'll climb and make ourselves heard. We have something in us to express and we will be heard."

Hiro would shake his head. "You write stories and sing in the clouds. You dream too much."

Over and over we would talk and disagree. Whenever the situation became unpleasant we would become silent and walk. After a time the holiday spirit of the Island would take hold of us and we would become lively again.

"It's this friendly spirit around here I like," I would tell him. "I hope it never fades."

"Same here," he would agree. "But the Fair will be over and there'll be no more. Let's go and see the Cavalcade once more."

On the last day at the Fair we walked much and said little. Our legs were aching but we did not rest. Hiro was almost crying. "Here's this wonderful thing called the Fair ending tonight, definitely at midnight. The place where people came to forget awhile and laugh and sing. Tomorrow the Island will be empty and dark." I said nothing.

"What do you think?" he asked me suddenly. "Do you think our people will ever be noticed favorably? What can we Japanese do? Must we accomplish big things here in America?"

"Little things can accomplish big things too, I think," I said.

"That's right," he agreed. "But it's so slow. It takes time."

At three in the afternoon we became hungry. All the eating places were filled and we had to hunt around for a place to eat. "Let's go in the Japanese Tearoom today," Hiro suggested. "We might find a table there." I agreed.

The place was filled and we had to wait for a table but we finally got one. All about us were the white people munching teacakes, sipping Japan tea, and tasting green tea ice cream. Hiro's face reddened a bit. Long secluded in the Japanese community, he looked shy and awkward. But it did not last long.

An old white lady and a young man came over to the table and asked if we would share the table with them. We readily consented. Suddenly the old lady began to speak in Japanese.

"Howe are you?" she said. "Isn't it a wonderful afternoon?"

"You speak Japanese," I said, amazed.

"A little," she explained in Japanese. "I was in Japan for several years. I was in Yokohama during the big earthquake."

The young man spoke in English. "My mother and I love Japan. Have you ever been there?"

Hiro and I shook our heads. "No. We'd like to some day."

"You should visit Japan. It's a beautiful country," the young man said.

The old lady continued in Japanese. "I taught in the grade school for five years. When the earthquake came we lost everything. Fortunately my family came out alive."

"I was small then," the son said. "One day the houses were all

standing in Yokohama and the next day there was nothing. It happened very quickly."

"It must've been terrible," Hiro said. "I guess there was food shortage."

"Yes, there was food shortage." The old lady nodded her head. "There wasn't enough food to go around. Do you know? There was one experience I'll always remember."

"She likes to tell it to everybody," the son said, smiling. "I remember ."

"We were without food on the first day," she continued. "Nobody had food. A Japanese family whom we did not know, found a single sweet potato. There were four in their family but the father cut the potato in eight parts and gave each of us a cube. The four in our family were never more filled. I cannot forget it. And afterwards a boy came along with a cupful of sterilized water and we shared that too."

"That potato was really sweet," the son said.

We nodded and said nothing. Hiro's eyes twinkled, looking first at the old lady and her son and then me. "Where do you live now?" he asked the young man.

"In Sacramento," replied the young man. "We come to San Francisco often. And whenever we do we feast on Japanese food."

"I like daikon, miso, tofu, tempura, and things cooked with shoyu," the old lady said.

"And mochi," added the young man. The old lady laughed. "My boy likes rice cake best."

"Do you like raw fish?" I asked them.

"Very much, with mustard and shoyu," was the young man's reply.

"There's the octopus," the old lady said. "It's like rubber and there's no taste."

"Say, what's going to happen to the Japanese Pavilion?" The young man suddenly changed the subject. I said it probably would be torn town.

"That's a shame." He shook his head sadly. "A beautiful building like this."

"This is a beautiful day," said the old lady. "Warm and serene. A beautiful setting for the last day."

Hiro beamed and looked gaily about, forgetting time and place. The four of us sat there a long time as if we had known one another a good many years. The people looked curiously at us, wondering what we had in common.

NARRATOR

In the April 1941 issue

OMURA

THE SPLENDID response of Nisei draftees to military training is a fine reflection on resident Japanese, and an opening wedge toward acceptance by Caucasian Americans. In a San Francisco address Frederick Vincent Williams, veteran writer, newspaperman, and author of the novel, "Behind the News in China," declared: "The record that the Nisei have made in the draft has been the first step toward breaking down prejudice." Mayor Claude Crawford of Santa Monica believes that "through the Nisei entering military service will come a better understanding."

NARRATOR

Sometime in 1941, Omura obtained a contract with Caxton publishers for Mori's YOKOHAMA, CALIFORNIA. The contract was not honored until after the war. It is interesting that YOKOHAMA, CALIFORNIA was published with an introduction by William Saroyan. The stories Mori published in CURRENT LIFE don't measure up to the stories in YOKOHAMA, CALIFORNIA, and Mori never finished a work after YOKOHAMA, CALIFORNIA. Omura got Saroyan and Mori together. Did Saroyan vet or advise Mori on his stories?

In February 1942 CURRENT LIFE published its last edition.

OMURA

EVACUATION NUMBER

SPECIAL NOTICE:-With this issue we temporarily suspend publication. Current Life will resume again from

somewhere in the interior. Good luck and God be with
you--

Publisher, James M. Omura

The Passing Show

By Jimmie Omura

The great concern of 63, 000 Nisei Americans living today on the Pacific coast is primarily the threat to their civil liberties. The loss of employments and bankruptcy of businesses as results of the current conflict are secondary in importance to the free exercise of their cherished birthright as American citizens.

The rising clamor for mass evacuation into the interior of all persons with Japanese faces is a cause for alarm. Such a movement would trespass upon fundamental precepts of our constitution and would deprive one segment of the nation's citizenry a just redress of its wrongs. In this respect the troubles of the Nisei are strikingly analogous to the difficulties confronted for centuries by people of Jewish birth.

Every Nisei should be unalterably opposed to mass evacuation. Some Nisei Americans publicly encourage voluntary evacuation as a symbol of loyalty. Voluntary evacuation by the Nisei is a false idea of loyalty and is a betrayal of their inherited rights. We should not be so eager to give ground at the first threat to our civil liberties but should struggle to hold on to those inalienable privileges to which we are entitled.

In trying periods, such as the crisis we are now experiencing, false gods will appear to advise us. They will attempt to weaken us and then destroy us by subtle preachments and soothing promises for our submission. Whatever promises are made for us beyond the Sierras should not undermine our stern resolve to fight the good fight here where

destiny has placed us. We ought not to barter our birthright for gold.

NARRATOR

It's not surprising that James Omura considered himself a poet. He might have been an over-reaching writer, but he was an honest editor. He didn't publish his own poetry in CURRENT LIFE. He would not say that he was not a fiction writer, and talks longingly of writing THE GREAT JAPANESE AMERICAN NOVEL.

JAMES OMURA

"Lawrence (Steven Taniyoshi) Tajiri was without exception the finest journalist the Nisei ever produced. He was the most liberal of the Nisei editors, although he pursued no causes. He would not damage his own personal image but recognized those who did. I do not recall any divergence of vision on the Nisei dream. We have have differences on the approach. Tajiri was more of an idealist. I feel I was more impatient and eager to prod the Nisei and the community towards that end. "What we discussed was literature. What we sought out were historic spots-- Telegraph Hill, Nob Hill

"Few Nisei editors had the breadth of knowledge at their mental command as did Larry Tajiri. He was especially well-versed on Hollywood, including of course.

"It was the early Thirties. Sessue Hayakawa, the Japanese screen idol, had returned from France after a long hiatus to recapture his stardom in Hollywood. He teamed with Anna May Wong in the Oriental vehicle DAUGHTER OF THE DRAGON. The film historian W.E. Crane says it flopped at the box office. For some reason, I always thought Toshia Mori won acclaim in this movie.

"Toshia Mori caught Hollywood's attention for her role in FURY OF THE JUNGLE. In 1932, the second year of Wampus' Baby Stars, Toshia Mori was named as one of the thirteen Baby Stars of 1932. She was cast in the role of Mah-Li, a Chinese attendant to Barbara Stanwyck in Frank Capra's Oriental vehicle, THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN, starring Miss Stanwyck and Nils Asther. Miss Stanwyck was Caucasian in this movie. Nils Asther played the Chinese General Yen. Toshia Mori played a

Chinese servant. Frank Capra directed, Larry Tajiri wrote: 'Frank Capra considers BITTER TEA in many respects as the best film he ever made.'

"I have no knowledge whether Larry Tajiri met Toshia Mori (Ichioka) or not. She was not that easy to reach. Toshia Mori married a San Francisco Chinese American--Alan Jung, who piloted her career after her break with Columbia Studios. She played in number of-- but never reached her previous high.

"I do not know if Larry Tajiri aspired to be an actor, but he was interested in drama and once participated in a play, in San Francisco. Larry organized the Li'l Tokyo Players in which he also acted. Tajiri's handicap was diction. He spoke fast, staccato, like Walter Winchell and not always too clearly.

" We would sit in Foster's after a movie and discuss the cinema world. We were literary comrades more or less strangers in a then somewhat strange city. We had developed some kindred friendship in the Los Angeles journalistic world. and Brownie Furutani of the *Kashu Mainichi*, Louise Suski and George Nakamoto co-editors of the *Rafu Shimpo*, Ken Tashiro and all those Nisei journalists of the Deadline Club. Newspaper people always have a club. And if we had a few spare dollars, we'd play poker. Larry Tajiri was a shrewd poker player. Curtis Otani, Iwao Kawakami and a fellow name of Harry Hoshide. Sometimes Hauro Imura joined us. On other occasions, Dixie Koga and his group, a Kibei named Tada, a linotypist named Harry Yasuda, a boxer Joho Shiroma from Honolulu, the Yoshino brothers. None of us were Clark Gables and none of were obsessed with the Casanova virus. Of course, there were girls. Do you know that's how Larry Tajiri found his wife! They met in our group. That's how he met her.

We pal-ed around and walked the streets. Telegraph Hill. Nob Hill. Coit Tower and those sort of places. Landmark areas. , Alcatraz by night, the lights festooning the far shores of the Bay. We would observe the empty, littered streets late at night and relate the scene to Ben Hecht's vignettes.

"I think just he and I had ambitions to write The Great Nisei

Novel. I suppose in his Great Nisei Novel, he would emphasize Nisei who had achieved a niche in their field, advanced in their profession and obtained some worth of status symbol to make their lives worthwhile. We all felt the Nisei weren't getting their proper recognition.

The others discussed it. But they all agreed that somebody else should write it. They didn't have any ambition to author the Great Nisei Novel. (Only) Tajiri and I had the ambition to write it some day. Only Larry Tajiri and myself seriously projected The Great Nisei Novel in our future."

NARRATOR

In the July 23,1942, issue of the Pacific Citizen, Tajirii presents a portrait of Little Tokyo, Los Angeles after the Japanese have been evacuated. Here we have a hint of why Omura thought Tajiri would author THE GREAT NISEI NOVEL:

TAJIRI
NISEI USA
 BY
 LARRY TAJIRI

Japtown was always on the wrong side of the tracks.

In Los Angeles it was called Little Tokyo, a collection of cafes, drug stores, noodle joints, department stores, barber shops and a store with live eels swimming in a tank in the window. It once had three daily newspapers, each with its page or two of English type for the nisei. Before Roosevelt and 3.2, it had its bootleggers and its speakeasies. Before Mayor Bowron and reform drove the underworld further underground it had its gambling hall and its bookies. The Daily Racing Form was available at the magazine stand alongside the Boston culture of the Atlantic Monthly. And in those days when jobs were scarce the boys from Hawaii would stand on the street corners with their guitars and sing soft island songs. Little Tokyo had its share of love and laughter, births and deaths. It was Middletown with an Oriental accent.

We remember Little Tokyo best the day of the earthquake in '33

when panic hit Los Angeles and the 28-story city hall did a hula. The window of the store with the eels was shattered and the eels went slithering down the walk into the gutter. Most of the people of Little Tokyo gathered in the big parking lot back of the Tomio building and waited for doomsday. We rushed back to the news plant and put out an extra. Looking back now, we wonder why. The earthquake was hardly news to the people of Los Angeles and of Little Tokyo but it seemed the thing to do. Later, past midnight we climbed into a jalopy and went down to Terminal Island where the fishermen lived. That was the other time Terminal Island was evacuated. The fishing village was deserted, except for a few sturdy nisei guards warming themselves over a fire. There had been rumors of a tidal wave and the pole had evacuated to the heights of the Dominguez Hills. We came back in the dawn past soldiers on guard in the debris-cluttered streets of Long Beach and through the fallen store-fronts of Compton. A lot of people had been killed that day and the story had an angle for the vernacular press because several Japanese had been among the dead.

Everything revolved around First and San Pedro streets in those days. Little Tokyo had its share of excitement. The publisher was shot one night by a pair of would-be assassins and for a while we worked behind steel-plates on the windows. They used to change the lock on the door every week, and we were always getting confused about the keys. On New Year's eve, the night of the big flood, somebody tore down the back door of the plant and set fire to the press. The reasons for all this were immersed in Japtown politics. The nisei never cared enough to figure it all out. The world of the issei was an alien world, clouded by the intricacies of the Japanese language.

Little Tokyo was home, Little Tokyo meant America to a lot of nisei but it was just a curiosity to the tourists...Little Tokyo was a place to work and a place to sleep to most nisei. sometimes it was a place to have fun and a place to eat chow mein or "nabeyaki-udon," which are noodles cooked in an earthenware dish with mushrooms, chicken and green onions.

In few months the people of Little Tokyo will be scattered via

wartime urgency to the deserts of Arizona, the bottomlands of the Mississippi or the ranchlands of the Arkansas valley. Little Tokyo today is a ghost town with only the signs of the three Chinese cafes to give it light at night. The Miyako hotel is now the Civic and the "America We Are Ready" sign sign of the JACL's anti-axis committee hangs wanly now over an empty storefront. The mice and the rats in the aging buildings must be having slim pickings.

All the Japtowns are ghost towns now--on the wrong side of the tracks.

NARRATOR

Artists and activists met in CURRENT LIFE and the Denver ROCKY SHIMPO. Omura was the only complete editor, the only honest editor in Japanese America. The only editor that was not a government stooge secretly working against Japanese America. The camp newspapers and the JACL PACIFIC CITIZEN spread fear of civil rights and submission to the government and split the artists and writers from the civil rights activists in camp. Omura's Denver based ROCKY SHIMPO by default became the activists paper. As numbers of subscriptions increased in the ten camps, the more the artists and writers shrunk from it.

By the end of WWII all the artists, poets and writers whose names and work had appeared in CURRENT LIFE, had turned their backs on James Omura, as (shhh) the enemy of the JACL

Larry Tajiri as editor of the JACL PACIFIC CITIZEN, and FBI Confidential Informant T-1, orchestrated the namecalling campaign that drove Omura from Nisei journalism. Friendless among the artists, friendless among the journalists, friendless James Omura spoke of the artists and writers he'd launched in his magazine and his walks with Larry Tajiri around San Francisco and L.A. with warmth and affection.