









"When we got to Topaz it was so cold. It was stormy and sandy. The dust storms were just terrible. You could hardly see your way around. I thought I'd go for walk, I couldn't see where I was going. I was by the heater and this man said, 'you're in my apt.' Oh my God, they all looked alike. I finally found where I lived. Our Barrack was 12-6A."

Life inside a relocation camp was an

odd mix of incarceration and attempts at normality. For the Towata's first wedding anniversary, they tried to forget the insanity of their American lives.

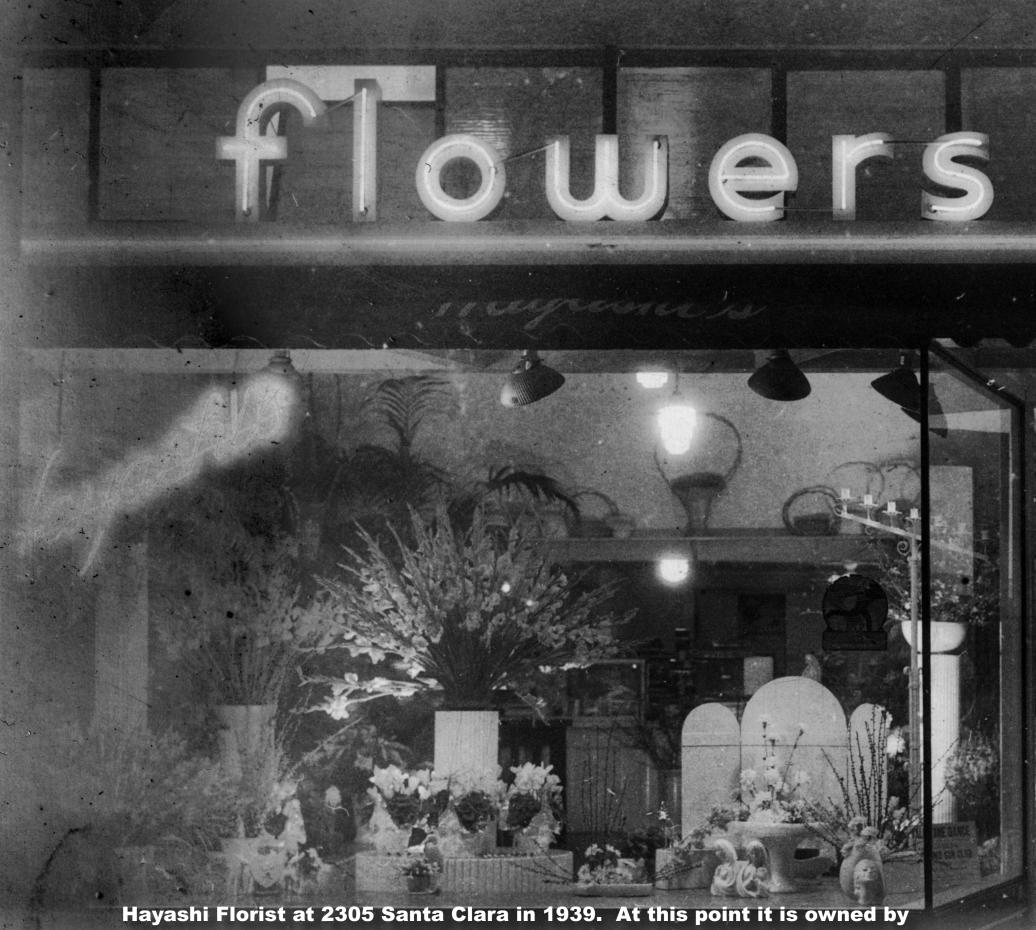
"For our first anniversary we went to the mess hall, and went to a movie, but the show broke down five times. We were so disappointed. But my husband said, if we ever go home, I'll buy you a home, so don't worry."





"When we came back from camp, (1945) the boys couldn't find a job,"

"For four years, he cleaned the place and he made nice arrangements. The boss liked him and the landlord liked my husband so much, he said he was selling the flower shop and would give my husband first option."



Hayashi Florist at 2305 Santa Clara in 1939. At this point it is owned by Harry Kono. Hard to see, but at left is the "Hayashi" name in neon. It can also barely be seen just below the "flowers" neon. In 1948, new owner John Towata remodeled. The "flowers" neon was replaced (see photo previous page) but it appears to be very similar to the original seen here.

"We only had enough to buy a truck to deliver, so my husband went to Ole's restaurant (Ole's Waffle Shop in Alameda) and Ole said he would lend him the money. On the way back from Santa Cruz, the truck jack-knifed and killed Ole and his wife, so we figured we couldn't buy the flower shop."

"But then we went across the street and told Pete and Guy (Casali), who had a grocery. Pete said I'll lend you the money (\$2000), so in 1951* we purchased the flower shop. That is how we got started."

The 2305 Santa Clara Ave location of Towata Flowers was originally known as Hayashi Florist, owned by Hirokichi "Harry" Hayashi. When WWII began, it had been owned by Harry Kono for some time. During the war and just after, it appears to have been owned and operated by Anthony Giosso. John closed Towata Flowers in 2009. As of 2023, the building still exists.

^{*} The date of the purchase and the founding of Towata Flowers is debatable. Various sources state is as 1945 to 1951.



