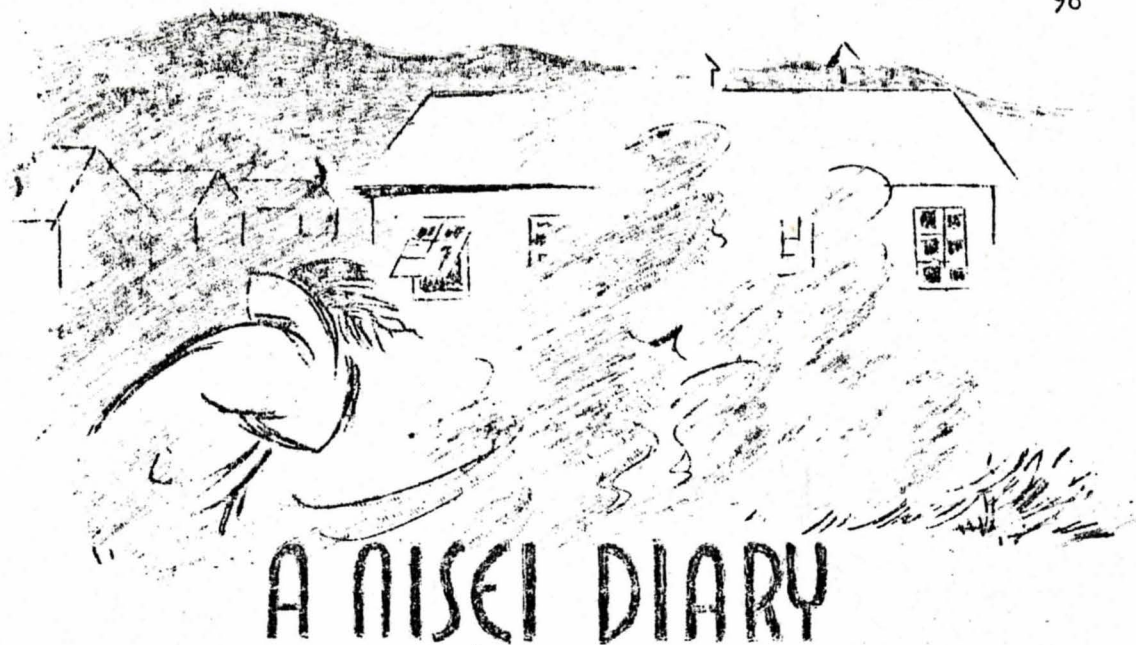


CHAPTER VII

NOVEMBER DAYS: DIARY NOTES



A NISEI DIARY

This is a year's retrospect of my life in this relocation center. It may be a narration common to typical nisei-off-the-street; a brief sketch of how hereacted to the incredible new environment on the barren, dust-caked enclosure with thousands of slant-eyed Americans like himself.

I was born in Sacramento, California 23 years ago. My father is a Japanese immigrant who worked in the fruit orchards as a farm laborer. I was sent to school with Chinese kids, Negro kids, Portuguese kids, blonde kids and kids of all colors and nationalities. As I grew older I became conscious of my race and my social contact became more and more confined with people of my own race.

My father scraped enough money to send me to University of California. There, my future outlook was a dilemma. I changed my course frequently to fit the narrow pattern of nisei's economic status.

Evacuation came as a relief to my post-graduate worries, but its effect was a death-blow to any aspiration I may have had. I'm looking ahead to resettlement with a mixed feeling of hope and doubt.

curately answer.
ity of the nisei
ably loyal to
ts so much. You
no are disloyal?
is, undeniably,
e does exist in
of nisei have
be wrong to as-
ecause they were
nquest; or that
nd of their an-
h. It would be
ecesses of the
were seeds of
of war for the
s which prompt-
permanently, at
of living, and
the change of
No, the stim-

the nisei into
mpted many to
ly democracy in
technique that
vacation was a
n its wake of
dastardly crime
thetic, bitter,
nember that the
not the innate
ch predilection
ation.
ron of America
that you can do
DISILLUSIONED,
ation. It can
ial discrimina-
real democracy
-Frank Hijikata

Introduction to Chapter VII

In the early days of November, 1942, students in an English III class were asked to keep a diary and to bring several of the daily recorded notations to class. The entries presented by the Nisei students are, for the most part, short and casually written descriptions of ordinary items of daily routines. The categories which appear most extensively in these brief diaries, that is, food, sports, weather, meeting friends, school affairs--are probably very similar to what Caucasian juniors and seniors at that time would have written if the same kind of assignment had been given.

Topics obviously missing in diaries for teachers to read include boy-girl relationships. Such things could be dealt with much more readily in fictional form as is revealed in the excerpt from the Tri-State High junior, Marvin Uratsu, in his "Spring Fever."¹

"Today was Friday. We had extended our date getting until this late. Suddenly Mimmie stopped whittling on his piece of wood and asked when I was going to get my date. 'Well,' I replied, 'as soon as I get enough nerve.' I thought I'd never get enough nerve to do that. I'd felt so uneasy I wouldn't know what to do or say. Besides, I did not care for girls anyway. On top of all that I did not know how to ask a girl for a date. Well, I had to learn sometime, so I asked Jim how it was done. He was the smarter of us two. He knew a little about dating even though he hadn't taken a girl to a dance in his life before. At least he thought he did. Jim quit whittling and made believe he was knocking on the door and said, 'The first thing you do is to knock on the door; wait till she comes and say hello. She'll ask you to come in, but you don't.

¹Scatterbrain Masterpieces (Tri-State High School).

You don't want to meet her mother cause you cant' speak Japanese, you know. Then you talk about the weather; you know, you say 'nice today, ain't it'; or something like that and get a conversation going. The next thing to do is to look around and see if anybody is watching; if the coast is clear, you ask very gentleman-like for a date.'

In this short story all the mutual support the two young men gave each other in their efforts to get a date for an important dance all came to nought and the "bachelors' club of ours got its members back."

In the same mimeographed publication, Helen Kanemasu's "Glamour Ain't Hay!" dealt with the anguish of a self-conscious school girl whose attempts at getting the attention of a young man had failed miserably; in desperation she turned to a friend.

That night Clare flopped down beside Jo Ann and studied her trim figure, neatly curled hair and well-polished nails. 'Okay, Jo Ann, you win!' she muttered. 'Can you make me glamorous in time for the dance Friday night?'

Such interests flourished at Tule Lake as elsewhere and high school youths were able to write about such subjects, but more freely in fiction than in more personal form. What was new at Tule Lake as at all Relocation Centers was the abundance of Nisei of the opposite sex. Previously in their high schools at home, most Nisei represented a small portion of the school population and those considered suitable prospects for romantic interests were generally small in number. Boys and girls whose families knew each other well often grew up in such familiar association that they felt more like relatives than objects of romantic attachment. Over and over in the writings of school-aged children one reads expressions of the

pleasure, and at times excitement, Nisei experienced in meeting new friends of both sexes from widely different communities along the Pacific Coast. This was one of the more positive aspects of Relocation Center life.

If in the November diaries the students avoided references to boy-girl relationships, other sensitive and problematic matters were also avoided. Only rarely in the diary entries does one find indication of the serious concerns which occupied the minds of all of them. In other sections, when writing in different form, they were able to touch upon them more openly. One young man, nevertheless, records his pondering of the important question he faced as to whether he should immediately volunteer for the army or wait until his graduation from high school in Spring.

(Male)
Period VII
English III

Thursday, November 5

I got up at seven o'clock this morning and ate breakfast, I then attended school as usual. I received a letter I had been expecting for many days. I went to dance practice in our block. I danced a few rounds and quit for I wasn't getting much out of it. I went to bed very tired.

Friday, November 6

I got up at the usual time and breathed the cool, clean, and crisp air. It was dark, but I knew it was morning. I ate breakfast and the daily routine of going to school. We had two tests today. Were they hard! That give me a feeling I was going to get a poor grade. Bedtime was very early for me because there was nothing to do.

Saturday, November 7

I got up unusually late this morning and later found that breakfast was over. The special event for today was our football game with the Blitzkriegers. That game ended in a scoreless deadlock. It was hard fought and both teams were evenly matched. I received a few minor bruises. That night my friends and I watched the dance at our mess hall, then I went to bed.

Sunday, November 8

I rolled out of bed at seven o'clock and ate my breakfast. I played bridge with my friends until nine o'clock, to which I was referring. In the football game one boy was hurt. I had to render first aid treatment to him until he was taken to the hospital. It was something I had never done before. In the afternoon, I watched the Scorpions play the Broncs. This game ended with Scorpions on the long end of a 6-0 score. I went to bed worrying whether the injured boy could play with us next Saturday.

(Male)
English III
Period VII

My Diary

Nov 5, 1942. I guess I'd better study. I have two tests tomorrow, one is on U.S. History and one is on Geometry. Some teachers think every Friday is test day. We were given the results of yesterday's election. I had voted for the Tri-State High School as the school name, the golden eagle for the symbol, and blue and white for the school color. The results followed my ballot except for the school color, which was blue and gold. But I'm satisfied with the results. Study halls were finally installed. I know I would get more done if I studied at home. It's sure noisy and it takes half of the period to even call roll. I wish they would brush the plaster boards. Every time I lean back on the wall, my sweater turns to white because of the powder on it.

Nov 6. The tests were pretty stiff, but I guess I got along. At least, I surely hope so! Dad got his pay check today! Now I might get something out of him. Mr. Juvinal sent some magazines to us. The rest of the day was devoted to reading them. I finally got permission to buy some colored pencils. Joe and I played pinochle with Sumi and Kauchi.

Nov. 7. I returned four library books and checked out 4 more. I chose some football books because I like books about sport, adventure and mystery. I didn't buy the colored pencils as I planned because they were too expensive--95¢ for 8 pencils. In the afternoon I saw Hood River play the Blitzers to a scoreless tie. I was the timekeeper. One of the players had a stop watch which I used. Since I never worked one before, I was at first baffled. I tried to set it, but I couldn't. I tried this and I tried that. No soap. Finally I gave up and went to the referee. I dis-

covered I had been doing the right thing but that I didn't want to pull too hard because I might have been doing the wrong thing, and if I pulled too hard, I would break it.

(Male)

November 1

This morning I was half an hour late for work. Everything was done and all the waitresses were sitting around talking when I walked in. It made me feel funny when one of the girls said, "We thought it was your day off."

I attended the morning class, then in the afternoon I skipped English three and went to see a sick friend in "Alaska" and then to the "Ad" building to get some papers notarized.

November 7

Today is my day off so I'm going to take things easy I said to myself in the bed. After reading yesterday's Tulean Dispatch over I tried to decide whether to try and volunteer for the army now or wait until I graduate from High School which will be in a short while. I finally decided to wait until I graduate.

November 8

After getting through work I played "rummy" with some friends in the morning and afternoon and had a lot of fun. In the evening I read some magazines and went to bed early.

November 9

I debated with myself whether I should continue school or not as if I was going in the Army it wouldn't be much use and if I went out to work next spring I wouldn't be able to graduate anyway. I finally decided to continue a while and see how things turned out. I thought of going just to the "Kibel" class but gave up that idea in the English class. I often try to decide upon one course and stick to it but because so many things come up it seems that I can never make up my mind once and for all.

(Female)
English III
Period VII

Friday, Nov. 6, 1942--I went to school as usual. And when I came home from the school I decided to go to my girl friend's place, who lives near our place in our block to get started on my flower. I stayed there and finished cutting the pattern for the flower until it was time to eat. After eating I did my homework for Monday before forgetting the assignments. Then turned on the radio and listen to some program and went to bed.

Saturday, Nov. 7--The first thing I did was to go wash the clothes. Then after finishing with the washing I spent the time doing things in the house until noon. In the afternoon I went to my girl friend's place to finish my flower, but I had so much interest in the funny books that I did not finish the flower.

Sunday, Nov. 8--In the morning I went to the church. After coming home from church I ironed the clothes. The girls' baseball started near our block so went to watch it for a while.

(Female)
Nov. 9, 1942
English III
Period IV

7

A Glimpse of Life at Tule Lake

November 6, 1942

This morning was just a pattern of every other school day morning, excepting a few changes here and there. The weather was cold and frosty like the previous mornings. Was unable to have breakfast as usual and went through the general morning routine.

School was a matter of routine. I went through a very sleepy chemistry class, but the other classes seemed to pass by fairly fast, with the exception of the study period. Upon reaching home I received the long awaited letter from the hometown.

Today being Friday, I left my homework worries till later, so went to the Block movie and helped with the refreshments after.

November 7, 1942

Saturday, the day with the one thousand and one thing to do. The day that is most homelike, because the things to be done are similar to the ones at home.

As usual didn't make breakfast, but bribed my younger sister to bring it to me while I stayed in bed.

All the fields were filled with fans and teams of football, but I was not interested in any of the games.

At two o'clock I went to the scheduled majorette practice, but no practice was called because of the rain threatening clouds. The practice, which was usually held at 720 was scheduled to be at 7218. The remainder of the afternoon was spent with "limpy" eating peanuts and popcorns,

playing cards and getting each other "mad."

At nite had company of five, and had a hectic time trying to keep them from going asleep on me.

Saturday ended for me at 10:30 P.M.

Although this is not much of an exciting life, I am beginning to enjoy this life with the many new friends from the three western coast states.

(Female)

Nov. 6 Friday

In English we're to keep a diary, so here goes! Today is Friday and went through the same routine of going to school as many of the students are doing at this time of days. It may be a same routine of going school but I think we are lucky to be able to study with books if I think of the people who have just recently moved from assembly centers to relocation centers. They have yet no school to go. All for that, the routine was broken a little this afternoon. At about 35 minute before my sixth period study hall started I decided to go to the post office on an errand. At the post office it took me so long that I got late for my study hall and got a tardy. I shall never take any more chances at the last minute like that.

Nov. 7 Saturday

Today there is no school so I'm feeling fine as any other would be I think. Since two of my girl friends decided to go to flower arrangements I decided to go too. Mom has been telling me to do so ever since I came to camp. Learning flower arrangement might teach me to be more quiet and settled but I doubt it if things go like my first day. It was terrible. The teacher went so fast it got me disgusted, but the teacher was disgusted, too. I don't blame her. Since I got so disgusted right then and there I didn't want to come back again but as I (had already) started it would be better to finish it to the end. At the end something will become of it.

Nov. 8 Sunday

This morning breakfast is at 8 o'clock which as anyone as sleepy head as me would wish, I did my washing which I just despise and did some ironing. I had just a few but took most of my time in the morning

because my girl friends were ironing too and that's the enjoyment I get from ironing. But that is the only thing I like about ironing. In the afternoon I did not have much to do so I crocheted and did some of my lessons for Monday. Might as well do the studying while I have time, than to rush at the last minute. Maybe my lessons won't be criticized too much.

(Female)

Nov. 6, 1942--6:30 A.M.

Dear Diary

This morning was cold with the north winds blowing softly past me and the stars still shining brightly over the project as usual.

As I passed by the boys' shower room I heard the soft whistling of the Marine's Hymn, and the minute I entered the girls' shower room I was greeted by ladies who were having their morning gossip.

One-fourth of the blocks seemed to be awake for only grown-ups and working girls were there to wash their faces and to shine up for the day.

When I entered my warm apartment, I found my father patiently waiting for the breakfast gong to ring, but being so hungry, he started to eat the famous Tulean potatoes. Then five minutes later he picked up his silverware and was on his way to breakfast.

November 6, 1942--7:00 A.M.

In the quietness of the morning I could hear the different tunes of the gongs ringing their clear, crystal notes throughout the camp, awakening their people and telling them to come to get their breakfast. People are hurrying out from their apartments with their toothbrushes, toothpaste and towels hanging from their arms.

In the mess hall a man was sitting in front of me at the same table. He stood up with a slice of white bread in his hand and went to put it on the stove. Then immediately, taking his proper place at the table, he began hastily eating his hash and the left-over toast from his plate. Suddenly remembering the toast on the stove after a minute or two had elapsed, he again left the table, arousing the curiosity of the people around him. Keen eyes followed him to the stove, as the smoke curled

145

from four corner of the bread. Hurriedly, he turned the bread and found to his disappointment that it was all black. Most people giggled while others grinned and this man said, "Oh, gee's it got all black,"* then he put on another slice of bread in its place, and stood on guard this time.
November 6, 1942--10:15 A.M.

I was worried this morning because we were going to have a big test in my history class but now that it is over, I entered my third period still half dazed. Many confessed it was hard, and I'll admit that it was very hard myself.

November 6, 1942--2:05 P.M.

Yesterday at this time I was at 7008 where I did not belong because I misread. But today I know better so I went to 901 instead. To my amazement I find that there are tables for everybody to study on, and I even had time to start this diary without any disturbance.

November 6, 1942--5:00 P.M.

Like a lonesome soldier in camp I long have been waiting for letters. I see many people are coming out of the block manager's office with letters, so I went to see our mail box and found it empty. Discouragedly I walked home to my apartment, saying one could not expect a letter if it is most wanted, but the letters come when least expected.

*translation

"DEAR DIARY"

Thursday, November 5--I awoke with a shiver, I had dreamed of horrible things. Looking out the window, I saw white roofs which gave me the impression that it had snowed.

I ate breakfast with hundreds of people, some I never knew until evacuation. Most of them are very nice, although I have known them for only a few months.

Starting off to school was no welcome task, especially during these cold mornings. With frozen fingertips and toes we entered classrooms where we "roasted" for an hour.

Everyone is talking about the ouija. It is a spirit which, when you put one leg of a card table up, foretells many things. How it can guess things so accurately is the question of many.

Friday, November 6--Each day grows colder. This morning for example the mop left outdoors was frozen so hard, it took twenty minutes before it would thaw out.

I watched a two-month-old baby today, my niece. How tiny, I thought, for it was about the first time I was allowed to carry one. I marvelled at the way she could place voices. While her mother was away, she began to cry. Although everyone tried to quiet her, she would not stop until she heard her mother's approach.

The weather was favorable during the midday with Ol' Sol peering down and smiling at us.

Saturday, November 7--Today, since there is no school, I planned to wash and iron all my clothes. How far did I get? Other things attracted me so not very far.

The day began as though it would rain, then, it would be a very nice day. Why, everyone had his wash up it rained, the wind blew and all the clothes were black with soot.

Exactly seven months ago, today, I left my home in Bellevue, Washington. It seems much longer, though. About six of these seven months were spent in assembly centers and relocation areas.

Sunday, November 8--The weather man was kind today, giving us the kind of weather we had wished for.

Today being Sunday, the meals are later than usual except for supper at 5:30. Therefore I decided to have a nice long nap after I ate in the afternoon. I overslept and barely made mess, looking like I had come from the jungles.

The ouija has predicted no school for tomorrow so here's hoping.

November 7

Tule Lake Center doesn't seem so large as it used to. Camp life is running more smoothly and is getting to be more like a home.

I spent practically the whole day doing the usual weekend chores, washing and ironing.

Our club is having a Sadie Hawkins Dance tonight, but I'm not planning to go.