To the unforgettable Nisei students
we came to know at Tri-State High School
in Tule Lake, and to the teachers and administrators with whom we shared the anguish
and gratification of working together, and
to that extraordinary man, Elmer Shirrell,
the first director of the Tule Lake Relocation
Center.

citizens based upon racial considerations. So the questions seemed naturally to arise: "What can we as their teachers do to preserve their faith in American institutions?" "How can we strengthen their willingness to return to general American society after their release and there to work out the problems they must inevitably face as a minority?" "How can we prepare them for eventual re-absorption into American communities?" The teachers and school administrators were aware that for the Nisei in their classes, they represented, more than any other group in the community, the American people generally. With their practical idealism, and some measure of self-righteousness, they were determined to represent the worthier traditions of American society. The problems seemed so tangible, so terrible, and so real, as well as obvious. With all the frustrations afforded by circumstances came a pervasive sense of common purpose and a determination to act constructively. The school directors provided a kind of atmosphere where teachers and administrators could work together without the impediments created by inherited bureaucratic structures. As one high school teacher later wrote, "there was the dreamed-of opportunity for teachers to sit down in a relaxed atmosphere, coffee pot on the pot-bellied stove and express every hope they had of teaching their specialty as they wanted to teach it. Together plans were drawn up, debated, changed but finally worked out to everyone's satsifaction. To a teacher this was not the customary procedure and yet all the basic requirements were met in ways worthy of the best preparatory schools in the nation."[1]

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[1] From collected notes and correspondence.

That some of the students were aware of the caring and responded to it is reflected in the personal associations that developed between individual students, student groups, and teachers; there is also the evidence of warm personal and professional associations from voluminous correspondence among them after either or both had left Tule Lake. "Informality and companionship between teachers and pupils is one of the greatest assets of which the school can justly boast."[1]

In the face of the obvious lack of many of the facilities and equipment considered standard in American schools, students and teachers were constantly reminded that they were pioneers and should respond to the challenges abundantly present with both fortitude and imagination. "In the informal setting, scattered chairs and tables," wrote William Marutani, "classes are conducted with the day's lesson scrawled out on wrapping paper and tacked upon the 2 x 4 wall supports. Over the plasterboard wall in the POD (Problems of Democracy) class drifts the singing of the Espanol class hailing with 'AY, AY, AY, AY, CANTA Y NO LLORES: PORQUE CANTANDO SE ALEGRAN, CIELITO LINDO, DOS CORAZONES.'"[2]

The beginning of the school year was hectic; there was no basic structure inherited from past administors and teachers, no accumulation of supplies and facilties to draw from; there were no well-established routines or conventionalized ways of doing things. Several Nisei social scientists recorded the criticisms of parents and students at what seemed to at least some of them

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[1] William Marutani, "School in the Barracks," Tulean Dispatch, Magazine Section, Vol. 1, No. 4, November 1942, 18.

[2] Ibid.

to be gross inefficiency and stupidity. Given the conditions of Relocation Center life, this perception was heightened by the existing feelings of frustration and bitterness and, indeed, further contributed to them. As long as the lack of facilities was only a temporary condition arising out of the existence of war-time shortages and the newness of the schools, many colonists perceived the situation more in terms of challenge than failure.

> Although the task of harvesting vegetables was a tremendous one, when the pupils returned to school a still bigger job faced them. For attending school without books, without desks and blackboards, with noise and confusion which come from classrooms without walls is like attending a western movie thriller without cowboys, cattle-rustlers, and gunplay. The advanced Typing III class is the extreme case: it has no typewriters, not one. Undaunted, the class is studying hyphenation, principal parts of letters, word study, and tabulation.[1]

The stoves, blackboards, wallboard, materials, the Rugg textbooks arrived and the school increasingly resembled the insitutions back home. Each step was duly noted and accepted as at least a minor triumph. The austerity of the beginnings provided the raw materials for a sense of shared hardships as reflected in the common expression, "remember when. . ?"

As new inhabitants were introduced into the community in the summer months (before the schools were established), a department of the Project administration was formed to plan for and develop social activities for Issei and Nisei, for males and females, for adults adolescents, and children as well as for groups with special needs and interests. From the beginning, the administration

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[1] Ibid.

acknowledged that the removal of people from home and accustomed patterns of daily existence would create a pervasive sense of emptiness and disorganization. It was also anticipated at least in some measure (and abundantly confirmed in actual experience) that a sense of community would not emerge quickly simply because the inhabitants of the Relocation Center shared the same national origins. The residents came from different regions; occupational and class backgrounds varied; there remained pronounced generational contrasts in interests and activities. The anticipation on the part of Project authorities of the need for diverse activities and their enlistment of colonists to help in planning was salutary but the actual development of programs was difficult. A considerable measure of confusion, friction, and group competitiveness characterized the early period. Nevertheless, during the summer months various areas of activity were developed by the people of the community in concert with employees of the community activities section. Various kinds of entertainment were provided: sports and games, arts and crafts (including dance, drama, music, creative writing, folk arts, sewing, crocheting, and others) as well as social activities and nursery programs. An extensive program of competitive team sports was organized. These and other activities absorbed time and provided for the release of sheer physical energy as well as for diversion. The widespread sense of disorganization and emptiness as well as uncertainly about the future was clearly not dispelled by the activities, but at least they served to reduce the consciousness of emptiness and pain; it is likely that they prevented in substantial measure the resort to other less desirable activities.

(later a distinguished social scientist)

As one Nisei university student wrote:

> One of the most undermining habits to one's peace of mind is the constant preoccupation with oneself. If we could see our problem, not as being unique, but as a part of the greater American problem, it would help to shift the attention centered on ourselves. Better still, if we could lose ourselves in a movement or interest that absorbed all of our energies, we would have little time for self-pity. . . . It is important that those of us who are lonesome and bewildered seek the protection of some sympathetic group. We should find a group well-suited to our nature, possessing ideals and attitudes similar to ours.[1]

What was doubtlessly most important about the variety of activities provided during the summer was the contact they provided for youths with their peers from other regions of the west coast. Some progress was made in breaking down the barriers to friendly communication in this period, but the differences in regional subcultures and acculturation patterns remained clearly evident. To the Nisei from the northwest, the Sacramento Nisei with their jitterbugging, strange haircuts, and informal ways (and also their dark skin color) seemed strange; to the Sacramento youth the northwestern Nisei often seemed strange and inhibited. But at least the the process of making friendships began and many expressions may be found of the excitement and thrill that many youths experienced in discovering shared interests and ideas.

When the school term began in autumn, most of the social and recreational activities designed for school-aged children were absorbed by the schools.

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[1] James Sakoda, "Nisei Personality Adjustment," Tulean Dispatch Magazine, No. 11, July, 1943.

The sketch of "School History" in the yearbook Aquila begins, "Out in a desolate sand plateau in Northern California stands a row of 20 tar-papered barracks, our Tri-State High School, which opened its doors to 2400 students on September 14, 1942." These included about 400 seniors and similar numbers each of juniors, sophomores, freshmen, eighth graders and seventh graders. The whole structure of student organization and activities had to be organized quickly and this was done very much according to the models students and teachers were familiar with from their experience "on the outside." Classes were organized, class officers elected and activities planned with class advisers. Student body officers were elected and ceremoniously installed in January, 1943; student government began to function. The school administrators and faculty set about to provide as wide a variety of activities as possible, building upon the activities developed during the summer by the Project administration. Students saw in such activities the means of identifying peers with similar interests and cooperating with them to their individual and collective advantage. Among the organizations were the Student Forum (with 89 members listed in Aquila), Knights of Honor (23), Rally Committee (38), Tri-State Angels (31), Photography Club (43), Aquila Staff and Advisory Board (62), Tri-Stater school newspaper staff (46), Thespians (32), Red Cross (40), Speakers' Bureau (22), Art Club (15), Commercial Club (41), Music Club (29) Home Economics Club (28), Scholarship Society, the various glee clubs, band and orchestra were also large organizations. Smaller groups were the Tri-State Strutters, Senior Speech Club, Needle Art Club, Zoology Club, Chemistry Club, Horizon Girls, Junior Hi-Y, Junior Campfire Girls, Tri-State Slammers, Cosmetology Club, Ex-

calibur Club, Nature Guides, O$_r$calington, Senior Girls Reserves. League of football teams and later basketball teams were formed and became active. In the Spring, track activities began. There were the class days, dances, and a variety of school activities familiar in schools generally, but the event of the school year was the Kanaka Carnival held on April 30 to raise money for the school yearbook.

High school students were engaged in the universally recognized and approved task of completing their basic education. What they were doing at Tri-State High School had to be done in any case, wherever they might be living. Not so with many of the Nisei who had passed that mark and were, unless they had been assigned suitable employment by the WRA in the Project, simply marking time. The university careers of many Nisei had been interrupted by the evacuation; similarly other young men and women had to abandon the employment they had secured or the careers they had just started. For some, especially, the interruption of the kind of employment they had at that time, was not in itself much lamented. It was not just the frustrating consequences of interruption that was most disturbing, but the uncertainty about what was to come next. The wait, the uncertainty about what things would be like on the outside when they left and after the war, was the crucial matter.

High-school Nisei lived in a more familiar milieu. Students teachers, and administrators were bound into some kind of symbiotic relationship by pedagogical traditions. The schools, for all the problems school life presented, inevitably represented an island of familiar, conventional, and important activity.

Students, teachers, and administrators all well acquainted with their institutional roles, fell into established routines and that provided stability; of course, the lack of supplies and equipment as well as all the quick improvisations remained frustrating but these were recognized to be temporary.

The Nisei in the schools were not unaware or unaffected by the general climate of the Center community, but they were not as fully involved in the specific issues as were the Nisei and Issei adults. School children are not generally as aware as adults of the community problems which are removed from their direct personal involvement. The issues that stirred the Issei seemed in general to stir the Nisei young adults somewhat less and move the Nisei school population even less than that. One does not find in the writings of the students nor in their recitations an image in balanced proportions of general community concerns or perspectives or meanings attached to experience. The Nisei school children had a different set of activities in which they necessarily had to engage themselves; and upon their success in these tasks, much of their future as individuals seemed to depend.

On the one hand it is clear that as part of family units, high school youths were affected by the attitudes and behavior of older members of the family with whom they shared the vicissitudes of internment. On the other hand, attending school engaged them in milieux that brought other interests and activities into prominence in their lives as well as contacts with teachers and school administrators that represented the American world beyond the barbed-wire fences.

To the teachers and administrators, generally, what mattered most at Tule Lake was what happened to the Nisei in their care. The rest of community life they saw largely as a somewhat vague projection of what they learned from their communication with students and their teaching aids. Although the teachers had social relationships with Caucasian administrative personnel who were sympathetic to the interests of the evacuees, their perspectives and interests remained centered upon the Nisei in school. In some measure this resulted in some simplistic notions about life in the Japanese-American community and particularly about issues between the adults and the WRA administration and about internal divisions among the various groups of Issei, Nisei, and Kibei in their pursuit of interests and power. These limitations on the part of teachers, however, proved to be harmless; they produced no grave weakness in this period. The talents and energies they possessed were focused upon the Nisei needs as they understood them. There were indeed no serious issues created by teachers or administrators in the schools of the magnitude of those created by certain of the Caucasian and Japanese personnel in other parts of the Project administration. The teachers on the whole proved not only competent and effective but "morally committed" as well.

Teachers in the high school frequently made comment upon what they regarded as the extraordinary attentiveness, discipline, and sense of responsibility of Nisei in their classes; some expressed the observation, with respect and amusement, that they could give assingments in class and leave for a faculty meeting with the comforting assurance that when they returned the students

would be seriously engaged in carrying out the assignment. This seemed novel to them. Academic requirements were seen as equally applicable here as in other high schools and students accepted that position without question. Oral recitations and written assignments were a vital part of student activity. Special attention was often provided Nisei and more especially to Kibei when it was perceived that language problems existed. In keeping with the philosophy of the "Community School" efforts were made to address student needs as members of the community. A number of high school teachers believed that the students should be given an opportunity, indeed be encouraged, to express the feelings of tension, frustration, and confinement produced by the evacuation and their internment openly and fra nkly; it was hoped and expected that this would help relieve the intensity of feelings. Students were often instructed to treat subjects that concerned themselves and the community and to "write as you think and feel." Teachers encouraged them to give first thought to the feelings and, as one added, "if you cannot express yourself adequately, I'll even help you find the words to express your feelings."[1] It was not easy for the students to respond as quickly and as fully as the teachers would have desired; the necessary trust had to be engendered and tested before it could be relied upon. The students spoke with increasing frankness and eventually some were able to express resentment and bitterness in the confidence that this would not be made to count against them in any way. Bitterness and resentment of course were not the only kinds of feelings they had to express.

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[1]Personal notes.

After considerable preparation for this practice, some teachers had the students read their compositions and essays to the class as a whole and, according to my field notes, frank discussions of the evacuation and relocation experience often followed. Expressions of deeply rooted feelings were indeed encouraged whether they were critical of the country, the evacuation, the WRA, the schools or whatever; they were encouraged whether they showed balanced judgments or not, whether they seemed subjective or objective in the personal judgment of the instructors. When instructors invited students to write about personal feelings, they generally gave specific topics to help the students achieve direction and form in their writing. Some of the assignments touched upon aspects of their experience that seem of modest importance, even trivial, in terms of what they reveal about any single individual. Even in such cases, the essays may reveal much in terms of what they represent in aggregate, as a group expression. Some of the assignments were obviously designed to provoke more serious essays. The papers, to illustrate this point, that were written on "Family Life in Tule Lake" reveal much serious thought in preparation for the writing.

In some instances the students were not able to write with any apparent depth of feeling or insight. It is easy for a later generation to forget that high-school-aged youths even when they are in the midst of serious, decisive life experiences may not order their perspectives immediately with the profoundity and maturity the nature of the experiences seem to call for. They were not always able to put order to the confusion of conflicting feelings; santiments of excitement with novelty, new circumstances and new friendships seem strangely intermeshed with a depressing

sense of the drabness of the environment and the blandness of life in the "Colony;" in the individual consciousness one senses in their writings a shifting balance between the fears and doubts about the future, especially that longer part which would lie beyond the War, and the hopes and sense of promise they still nurtured.

Sometimes the expectations that teachers had of their students seems excessive. One teacher who had spent a number of years in Japan and who had worked for the cooperative movement led by Kagawa was particularly zealous in her attention to the Nisei and especially the Kibei. She believed that many Japanese-American youths could, with encouragement, respond to the need to bridge of gap between the cultures of the warring nations of the East and West. She sought to provide encouragement to individuals to devote themselves to that purpose. As warmly sympathetic and generally effective as she was in her teaching and personal relationships, she faced the limitations of the youthfulness of her students and the impact of the circumstances which they were then experiencing.

The Nisei who wrote these compositions and essays many years ago may read them and recall their writing. Hopefully they will also recall the trying circumstances under which they were written. Many Nisei having experienced great changes in circumstances and perspectives in the interveing years may well look with both interest and pride at the response of Nisei high school students; they may also look with dismay at what was said or left unsaid.

For the third generation, the Sansei, there will be no remembrance of their own experience, no direct familiarity with the circumstances as they existed. The social climate of a nation in such crises as war and the social mini-climate of a group with its own distinctive crisis are difficult to reconstruct or understand when the critical times have past Because the civil rights movements have so greatly altered national and minority perspectives, it may be tempting to judge the students' response by standards that are not appropriate to their actual time. It is easy to fall victim to the tyranny of the present in viewing past experience--and to make unwarranted judgments for or against.

What is indeed revealed in the collection of compositions and essays is a rich treasure of responses by youths to circumstances of potentially tragic proportions for them individually and collectively. The purpose of publishing the collection is to permit people to learn from them what they can reveal about human response to great crises in their lives.