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MEMORIES THAT WILL SUBSIST IN MY MIND

"The Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, Japanese Ambassador Nomura, and Special Envoy Kurusu had their first conference in Washington, D. C. today-- They will resume their conference tomorrow also." So read the millions of Americans who thought that that conference in Washington would be of no avail, since the war crisis had come to an extent where war was inevitable.

Then came December seventh that memorial day for all American People. The expression, "I told you war would come," was written on nearly every face as I walked down the streets. Hundreds of Niseis thought, now that war actually has started that would happen to us? Are we to be evacuated soon? Would we be able to graduate in June? These questions were answered partly for us when we read that we were to be evacuated soon in the near future.

On December eight when war was declared by the Congress the first question that reflected on my mind was, "how would the Caucasian people act towards us?" To us who have made America our home, who have taken the American principles, the habits, education and styles." Yes, some have given us inclement looks, many of the store clerks would not wait on us, the governor of California even said, "I would like to see every Japanese in this state evacuated as soon as possible."

When the House of Representatives and the Senate were discussing the evacuation problem Christmas soon appeared. Many of the fathers of the Japanese families were interned as prisoners of war. For that reason many homes did not even celebrate Christmas. But I believe that as we celebrated that joyous white Christmas we knew deep in our minds that that Christmas would be the last one we would have at home for the war duration.

The war problem was rather vague in my mind until the Curfew Law came into effect in March. Perhaps to many of us it seemed to be an unjust law for fact that we, of the Japanese ancestry were the only ones to which it referred to. But as we think why the children of German and Italian ancestry were not effected by it we cannot blame the government entirely.

One day returning from one of our regular school classes, I was the first to read the evening papers. As I glanced at the headline the word "evacuation", caught my attention. Reading that article suddenly dawned upon me that evacuation was serious, and that Portland was the first city in Oregon to be free of all Japanese.

The day, May 5, will live in my mind as one of the most memorable days in all my life. The neighbors helping us to pack, the dogs barking as the neighbors pulled them to their new homes, everyone nervous as they thought about their new temporary home was all part of an exciting adventure.

Arriving at the center and seeing many familiar faces outlined against the barbed wires made me realize that we would never be able to get out until we would be relocated to our permanent home.

The first things I did when I got to our new home was to explore, for curiosity got the best of me. It seemed that I was in a daze when I saw all the Japanese eating in the mess hall because I had never seen so many persons of one nationality assembled together.

One of the most active department in the center was our Recreation Department. They organized baseball leagues for boys and girls, fixed the arena into a regular gym, and fixed ping pong tables for everybody's use. Many of us have gotten healthier since we were evacuated and we can thank the Recreation Department for their efforts.

Entertainment was one thing that everyone enjoys and for that reason we had movies every Tuesday nights, and dances every week. For entertainment from the outside we had a circus, different baseball teams coming in to play our teams, and various other entertainments.

Then came news that the Yakima Valley People would join us at the center. That was really a joyous news for me since Yakima was my native city. With these people we began to build a little community of our own.

Later when we were to be relocated we learned that we could be sent to different camps. Indeed that was sad news to us for we had come in close contact with the Valley People in those brief two months.

Then came the task of packing again. Until eight-thirty, all day we could hear the hammering of boxes. I almost came to the conclusion that I would go insane if I heard any more hammering.

We were in the first trip out here and it was rather fun waving good-bye because we knew that we would see each other again in a few days. "See you in Idaho," seemed to be the favorite farewell words for everyone.

Sitting in the train and watching the farmhouses and barns, seeing the beautiful green grass and trees growing on the hillsides go by, made me utter a silent prayer to God, thanking Him for the wonderful things and opportunities he had given us, and also, I felt secure and safe for I knew God was watching every move we made.

The fertile lands, the snow capped mountains, flowers that grew in the gardens, all reminded me of Portland and I never knew we were in Idaho until I was told so. But as we stayed a day or two in Minidoka I began to get an idea how Idaho weather was in summer. Of course the dusty weather would probably not be as bad as in Hunt but how the Idaho people endure such weather was beyond me.

Of course this center was much bigger and we lived in barracks instead of all living under one roof like the assembly center, but otherwise I felt very much like I was in Portland.

Many of us feel that we have suffered much, but we really are as bad off as the Caucasians. I believe that from January everything is going to be rationed accordingly, and already, gas, coffee and various other articles are being rationed.

Just because we're in a camp is no reason that we should be feeling sorry for ourselves. Let's try to get as much education as we can, and along with millions of other Americans, let's help build up a better democratic country in which the future generation will live in peace and contentment.