

March 2, 1986

Dear Vince:

Hope I'll be able to provide some useful suggestions.

First, re your own manuscript: page 4, bottom line: ~~Are~~ Molly and Mary Oyama one and the same? ^{Aren't} Page 7: SAD to say I never did graduate from the University of Missouri. I just went there one semester. (Didn't get my degree until I graduated from the University of Colorado in 1967! Attended a number of ^u institutions by that time.) Page 8: I don't recall a job offer from the ~~War~~ Office of War Information. Page 9: The first couple of issues of the PC were indeed full of typos, but this ~~error~~ improved swiftly. Page 10: Larry's resignation was ^a touchy matter. He was really forced into it. My own belief is that Saburo Kido wanted to reclaim it (he had been its editor before and put out rather a typically inept job) and take it ^b back to Los Angeles. Larry was even asked to agree that he would not put out a competing newspaper for at least another year! It was a very unpleasant situation. As you imply, Larry was never part of the old boy network in the JACL. Page 10: Larry was with the Free Press for half a year; ~~then~~ the Free Press was in a very shaky financial situation, and ~~several~~ staffers were being given notice. Larry sort of bounced around from one ~~position~~ to another - assistant managing editor, city editor, sports editor -- until one day a close friend ~~of mine~~ and fellow staffer was given his dismissal notice. Larry went to management and offered to go in his place, since the friend had a wife and ^{would} two or three children. Larry was told he ~~had been selected to go~~ ^{have} next, it was just that they needed him at the moment and ^{couldn't} ~~couldn't~~ be ~~replaced~~ ^{for} for a week or two. Seems to me there were a few weeks before Larry was hired on at the Denver Post - ~~Bill~~ Bill Hosokawa was instrumental in getting the Post to move on this, after having Larry under consideration for some time. On the Post he started at the rewrite desk, then went onto the weekly magazine which Bill ~~Hosokawa~~ edited at the time. Larry couldn't get ^{his} his teeth into this job. He was really bored and uninterested. I don't know who profited more when he went into the drama section - Larry or the paper. Larry took over the job as if he had been born to do it. His first film review was an absolute gem (I think it ^{was} "The Seven Year Itch.") Every body commented on it, even the publisher. Page 13: Larry and I were at ~~my~~ the home of friends for dinner. They had a lovely collie, and we had taken our dog Happy (also a collie, ~~my~~ which I had given to Larry as a birthday present a couple of years earlier). We spent ^{the} ~~time~~ watching the dogs cavort - our own dog was so nervous ~~in~~ in the presence of a female he kept urinating constantly. The children thought this was crazy, and they kept counting the number of times Happy lifted his leg. We had dinner, but the minute it was over, Larry said he wanted to go home. This was so surprising, because it was unlike him to leave friends in this abrupt manner, but also because he never insisted upon having his way in such matters. But when he said he wanted me to drive, it was clear he didn't feel quite well, though he didn't seem ill, and we didn't think it was anything more serious than perhaps a stomach ache. Once in the car it ~~was~~ clear he wasn't well, We stopped the car once ~~because~~ because he was nauseated. He kept apologizing. ~~But~~ Once we were home, he found he couldn't walk on his own. I called the

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doctor, who ^{said} ~~directed us~~ to go to the hospital immediately, when he met us there. ~~On xxxxxxxx~~ There was no outer evidence of paralysis (that is, none evident in his face), but his speech was slightly slurred, and he complained he couldn't get his words out right. On the fourth day, his doctors called in a specialist, who looked him over briefly and said he was doing so well that he would postpone the examination till the following day. We were elated at the news, ~~sure that the~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ signs were hopeful. I told Larry that on the following day I would ~~not~~ come in until ~~xxx~~ early afternoon, instead of early morning as I had been doing, for there were things to be done at home. While at home the hospital called, telling me to come right in. The doctors were in his room, and there was an oxygen mask on his face. As we stood there, I remember, Barry Morrison, ~~xxxxxxx~~ who did film reviews and restaurant criticism for Larry, came bounding happily into the room, a copy of the New York Times under his arm. He took one horrified look, and turned around and left. Larry was moved to the intensive care unit. He passed away a few hours later. Just before he died, there was a great flow of blood from his mouth. I called the doctor, who was a few feet away. He administered some first aid -- ~~apressing~~ pressing in on the chest, releasing, pressing in again - the way it used to be done then. ~~I'm sure it was for my benefit,~~ but for it was clearly over. When I went out the door of the ICU a number of friends had already gathered, Carl and Bea Iwasaki, Barron Beshoar and his wife (Sally, I think it is), Bill and Velma Andrews, Dr. and Dr. Kobayashi's wife Haruko. Outside of the doors to ICU were pots and vases of flowers which had followed Larry down from his hospital room.

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Now, as to memories from the Salt Lake years. Lordy, that's forty years ago. I'll try to dredge up a few things.

Mrs. Aiko (Hito) Okada, who was secretary and everything else for the PC, could probably give you lots of information, if you have time to contact her. She is at 4274 Park St., Salt Lake City, 84007. Her help would be especially useful in providing names (of the printshop, for example) and other facts.

I think I wrote you earlier about going to Salt Lake City with Teiko Ishida in her car (a brown Studebaker, as I recall it, but don't use that info unless you can verify it). Teiko was to set up the JACL office. She was ~~an~~ extraordinarily competent ~~and patient~~ woman, meticulous and able, and tenacious. (Her mother died during the evacuation years, and Teiko got permission to take the ashes back to California. She was certainly one of the first Nisei to go into that area at that time.) We rented a house ~~am~~ on East 17th South Street. Larry got \$100 a month, as I recall, and I got \$25. The JACL paid for our rent and the telephone during those first years.

Since you mention baseball: One of Larry's great pleasures during those days was to go the ballpark, where the Salt Lake Bees (I hope I ~~gxxxxxxx~~ remember the name of the team correctly) a triple A(?) team played. It was a ~~part of the~~ New York Yankee ~~organization~~. Ralph Houk was manager ~~xxxxxxx~~ for a while, and many of the players became part of the Yankee team in later years. Of course Larry was in his element. One of the great pleasures, for him, was watching Wally Yonamine

farm club

play. Wally came from Hawaii, and may have been the first Nisei to play pro ball in the states. (You will notice how much of this information I qualify with "may have been," and so forth.)

You probably know as well as I do the names of Nisei who worked on the PC in Salt Lake City - Dyke Miyagawa, Bob Tsuda, and you. None of these persons worked for a long time, but it was always a temporary alliance that helped the PC more than themselves. I have no idea how much salary was paid (perhaps almost none?).

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The offices of the PC in the Beeson Building (Beason?) in Salt Lake City, but Larry's was notorious. (Did I tell you about this before?) Newspapers were stacked high on his desk and on the floor. In those days we subscribed to a large number of papers from across the country, since the ~~PC's~~ PC's function, as far as Larry was concerned, was to tell the whole story of the Nisei and Issei. He felt it necessary to be the paper of record, so every day the columns of major newspapers were perused for every item regarding the Japanese. It was said of Larry then (as it was later in Denver when he worked on the Post) that though his desk was so piled with papers no one could tell where anything was, Larry could put his hand into that mess and deftly extract exactly the sheet of paper or the news item he required. But in Salt Lake City the papers were so dense that the fire department at one point warned him to clean it up as a fire hazard.

Of course Larry's filing cabinet was really in his head. He had the most remarkable memory for details, for batting averages, for dates, for names, for movies, for minutiae of every kind. The label "walking encyclopedia" was attached ~~to~~ a hundred times, but I remember our friend Dick Squires once noting that with all this information Larry had stored up in his head, ~~he~~ was also the most gentle person in his use of it. ~~Or, he never used it to show off his knowledge.~~ When Larry was with the Post, he would get calls from strangers to settle bets about film information - who starred in what film -- and there ~~was~~ was a ~~late night call~~ ^{late} call from a bar, when a slightly inebriated voice wanted Larry to settle a bet. He did store a ~~lot~~ lot of what he called useless information in his head. Once a slightly obnoxious PR man from New York tried to impress Larry and gave ~~him~~ an inflated figure on the number of seats in the New York theater he was supposedly familiar with. ~~z~~ Larry gently told him the actual figure. He really did hate frauds. But for Heaven's sake who would expect a Denver ~~film~~ drama critic to know the number of seats in every theater in New York?

His encyclopedic memory was certainly one reason why Larry was such a good film critic and interviewer. No matter whom he interviewed, he ~~could~~ ^{special} recount every film that star or director had ever been associated with. He also had a ~~great~~ regard for oldtimers, who were themselves overwhelmed to find an interviewer who knew every film he ~~knew~~ or she had been in.

I think the special quality Larry had that made him so receptive to Nisei ~~dreams of writing poetry or stories~~ was that he shared

writer

the dream. I know that sounds awfully corny. But he ~~had~~ respected each person's image of himself.

It was also that respect he had for everyone that made him angry when he heard some JACL official berate a secretary. Larry felt one should never "pick upon" someone who could not strike back. If you had to pick a fight, he said, you should ~~always~~ do it with ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ your superior or at an equal level. *me*

He absorbed work like a sponge, *late at* because he never considered that what he had to do was work. He loved doing interviews, loved movies and plays. His workday in Denver began early in the morning, and he was often at it ~~at~~ night, when he covered an opening or saw a film. He would have done it anyway. He had a special feeling for little theater and even if a *one* group did not merit a full review, he would still see their productions and encourage their work. It was not unusual for any issue of the Denver Post to include ~~xxxxxxx~~ his daily column, which was lengthy, at least one film review and perhaps a review of a play. This, of course, was in addition to his usual work overseeing a department which included the book reviewer, his TV-radio reviewer, the restaurant guide and at least two additional reviewers. As you indicated in your manuscript, Larry wrote faster than anybody around. He really was proud of the fact that he could get his daily column out in half an hour, when he was pressed for time.

Larry ~~xxxxxxx~~ felt very strongly about a number of things. He hated the Yankees and loved the Dodgers, partly because the Yankees ~~xxxxxxx~~ refused for such a long time to admit blacks to their lineup; he loved the Democrats; he was crazy about folk singers and folksongs. (There was a coffee shop in Denver run by a Hal Neusteter - I hope I have the name right -- which introduced some terrific talents, among them Judy Collins, or very early recognized people like the Smothers Brothers. One night Neusteter was given an award for his contribution to folksinging. When he accepted the award, he turned it into a graceful tribute to Larry for ~~his~~ what he considered Larry's contributions through his writing in the Denver Post.)

Larry's attack, which came at the early age of 50, was certainly no surprise to his doctors, for he'd had high blood pressure most of his adult life. He was on medication for years, but of course there was no way to slow ~~his~~ the pace of his ~~xxxxx~~ life. We seldom had a free evening. If Larry didn't have a play or film to review, we could find a little theater group to watch.

Oh yes, I think you remember Larry's love of puns - he had a special love for them, including visual ones. One day he said to a couple of fellows at the Post, "Do you want to see a Japanese beetle?" Well, the Beatles had just arrived in the States. Larry put his hand on his ~~his~~ head and pulled his hair down over his forehead. (This doesn't work well in the telling. It was sort of funny *to see*.)

Well, I don't know how much of this will be useful to you. I know you wanted more in the way of anecdotes, and especially from the Salt Lake City years, and I don't seem to have provided much in that respect.

I'm not sure how intensively you want to go into this. If you are planning on delving deeper into it, there are still persons who might be helpful. Also there are DC files, which I guess I suggested before. Perhaps you have used them.

am leaving

Just remembered the name of the printshop in Salt Lake City - Century Printing, it was. I don't recall the names of the people we worked with. The offices were downstairs, and the shop including the linotypes were on the second floor, a big draughty place. I think that when ~~we left~~ Salt ~~City~~ Lake City ~~it~~ was a blow to the company, which by that time had few steady accounts. Aiko Okada could probably fill you in on that. In the meantime, hope this helps.

Haven't asked how you are feeling. ARE the cataracts really gone or under control? I hope you are well. TAKE care.

Love,

