HEART MOUNTAIN REUNION

REFLECTIONS

Hyatt Regency

April 2-3, 1982

Los Angeles, California

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Poetry and Art from "Tempo 1944"

Poetry composed by Saburo "Beep" Nagumo

Art by Stanley Hayami

Special thanks to:

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Grace Shiba, Sales Representative, Hyatt Regency Los Angeles
Carol Sarra, Systems Coordinator, Western Airlines

SLIDE SHOW PRESENTATION PREPARED BY: BACON SAKATANI

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HEART MOUNTAIN REUNION COMMITTEE

244 South San Pedro Street ● Room 505 ● Los Angeles, California 90012

GREETINGS:

ON BEHALF OF THE REUNION COMMITTEE, MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WELCOME ALL HEART MOUNTAINEERS AND FRIENDS TO OUR FIRST ALL CAMP REUNION IN FORTY YEARS.

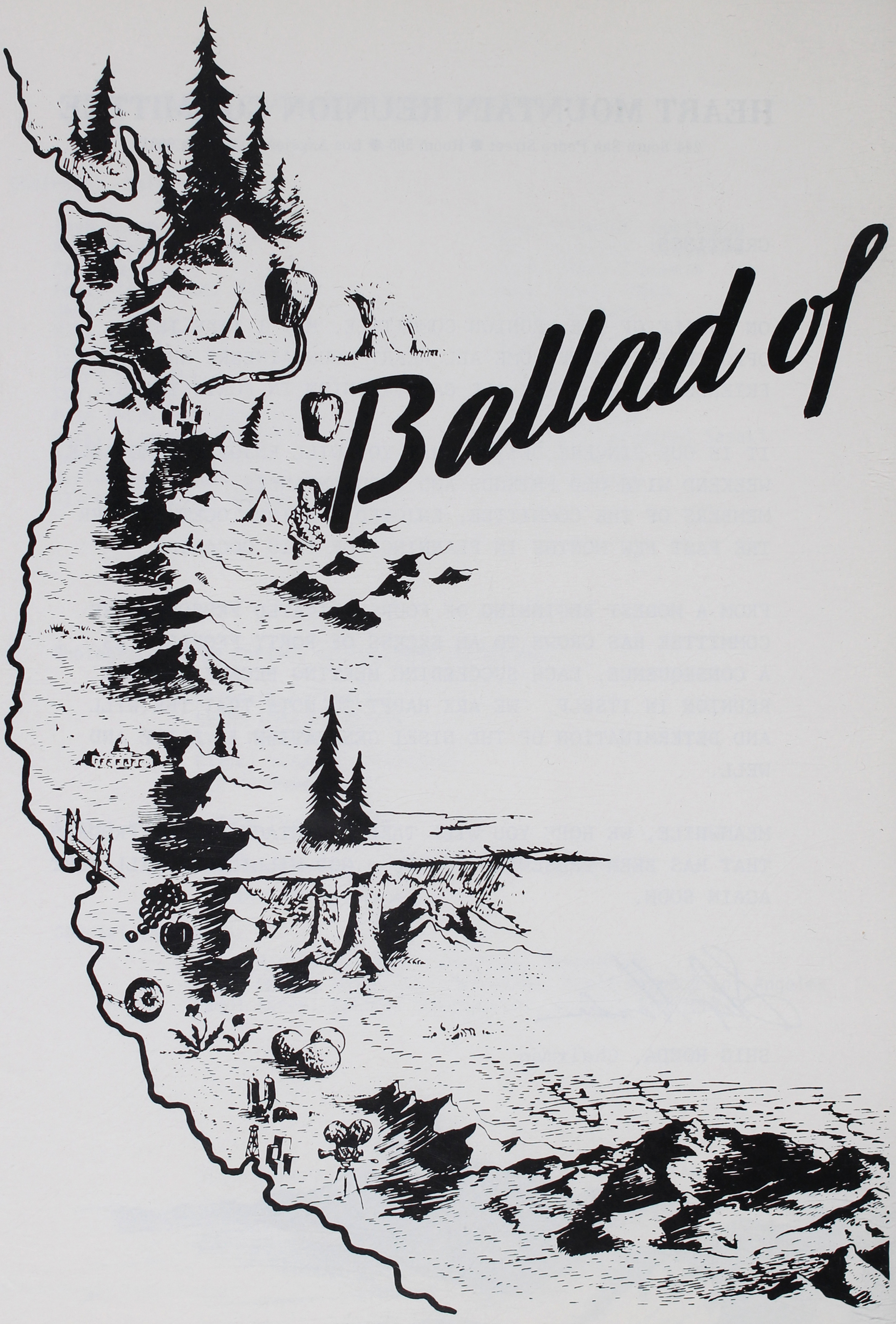
IT IS OUR SINCERE DESIRE THAT YOU WILL ENJOY A MEMORABLE WEEKEND WITH OLD FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES. WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, ENJOYED MEETING TOGETHER OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS IN PLANNING FOR THIS OCCASION.

FROM A MODEST BEGINNING OF FOUR DEDICATED PERSONS, THE COMMITTEE HAS GROWN TO AN EXCESS OF FORTY PEOPLE. AS A CONSEQUENCE, EACH SUCCEEDING MEETING BECAME A SMALL REUNION IN ITSELF. WE ARE HAPPY TO NOTE THAT THE WILL AND DETERMINATION OF THE NISEI GENERATION IS ALIVE AND WELL.

MEANWHILE, WE HOPE YOU WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PROGRAM THAT HAS BEEN PRESENTED TO YOU. GOD WILLING WE WILL MEET AGAIN SOON.

Shig Honda

SHIG HONDA, Chairman



Ballad of

Americans

TORN

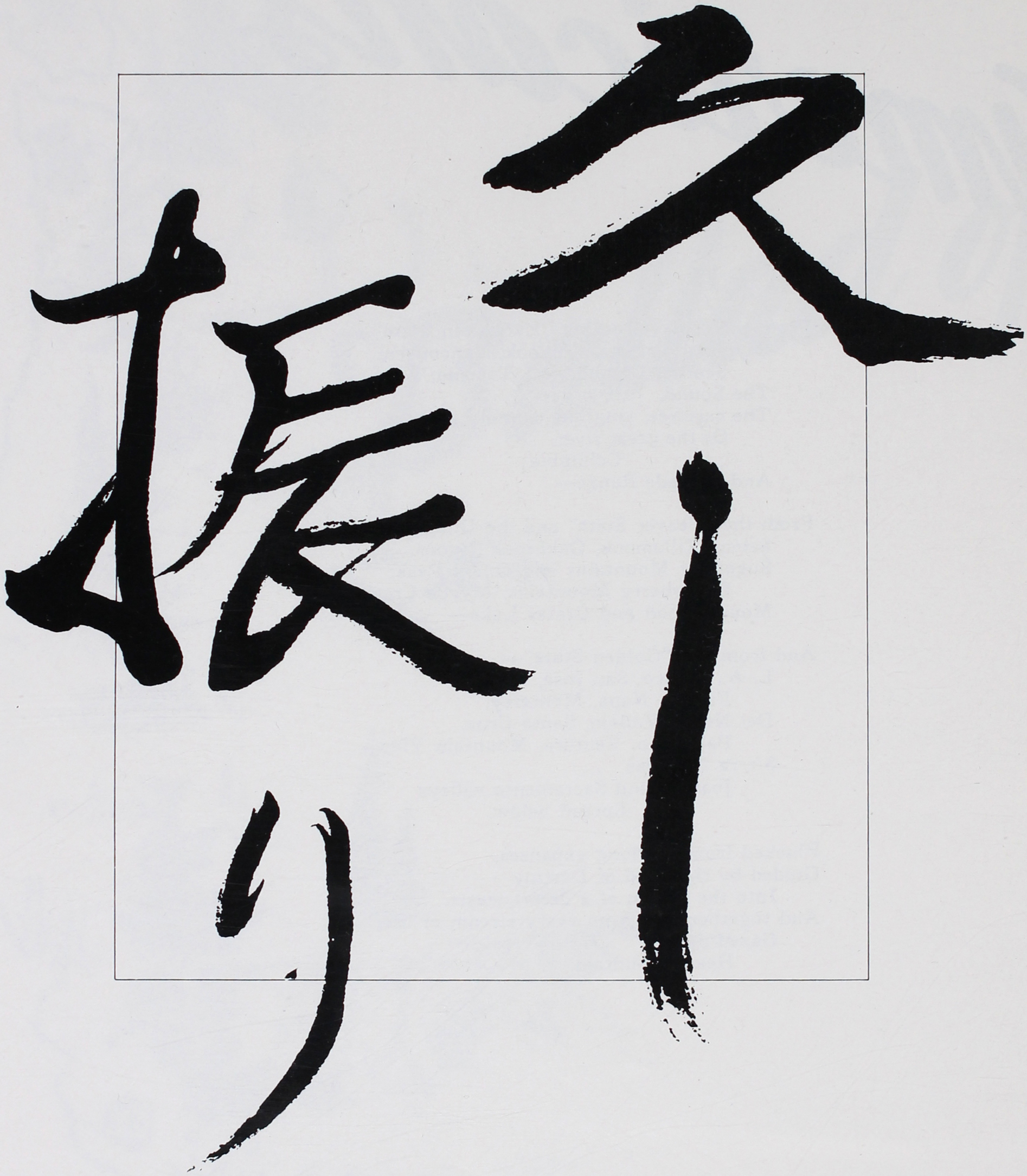
From the cool, refreshing "Evergreen State"—
Olympia, Yakima, Chinook, Vancouver,
Seattle, Cumberland, Tacoma, Kent,
The Sound,
The carefree, laughing, tumbling waters
Of the great river
Columbia;
And Cascade Range—

From the "Beaver State" and the Douglas Fir—
Salem, Tillamook, Oakbrook, Lyons,
Sugarloaf Mountains and Onion Peak,
Strawberry Mountains, Myrtle Creek . . .
Mount Hood and Crater Lake—

And from the "Golden State"—
L. A., 'Frisco, San Jose,
Fresno, Napa, Monterey,
Del Norte, Vallejo, Santa Cruz,
Palo Alto, Ventura, Mountain View,
Sierra Nevadas . . .
Joaquin and Sacramento valleys
Spread below.

Plucked from far-flung expanses,
Guided by the hand of Destiny
Into the bosom of a desert waste.
And together, we, from every stream of life,
Gazed upon
Heart Mountain.

WE ARE HAPPY TO HELP SUPPORT THIS GATHERING



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City of Los Angeles

G R E E T I N G S

1982 HEART MOUNTAIN REUNION

As Mayor, on behalf of the City of Los Angeles, may I extend my heartiest welcome to the first camp-wide reunion of former internees at Heart Mountain Relocation Center, Wyoming, during World War II.

As you gather to renew old acquaintances and to trade reminiscences, we hope the harsh memories will have faded with time, and that only the good memories remain.

This, of course, does not mean that any of us should forget the bigotry and greed which brought on one of the worst miscarriages of justice our American democracy has experienced in its history; however, just as you determined to put all that behind you and strike out with optimism in the future in 1945, let us all learn from the past and determine not to repeat its errors.

With particular tribute to those former internees who are no longer with us, including those brave young men who volunteered from the camps to fight for their country, we wish you a happy and fulfilling reunion.

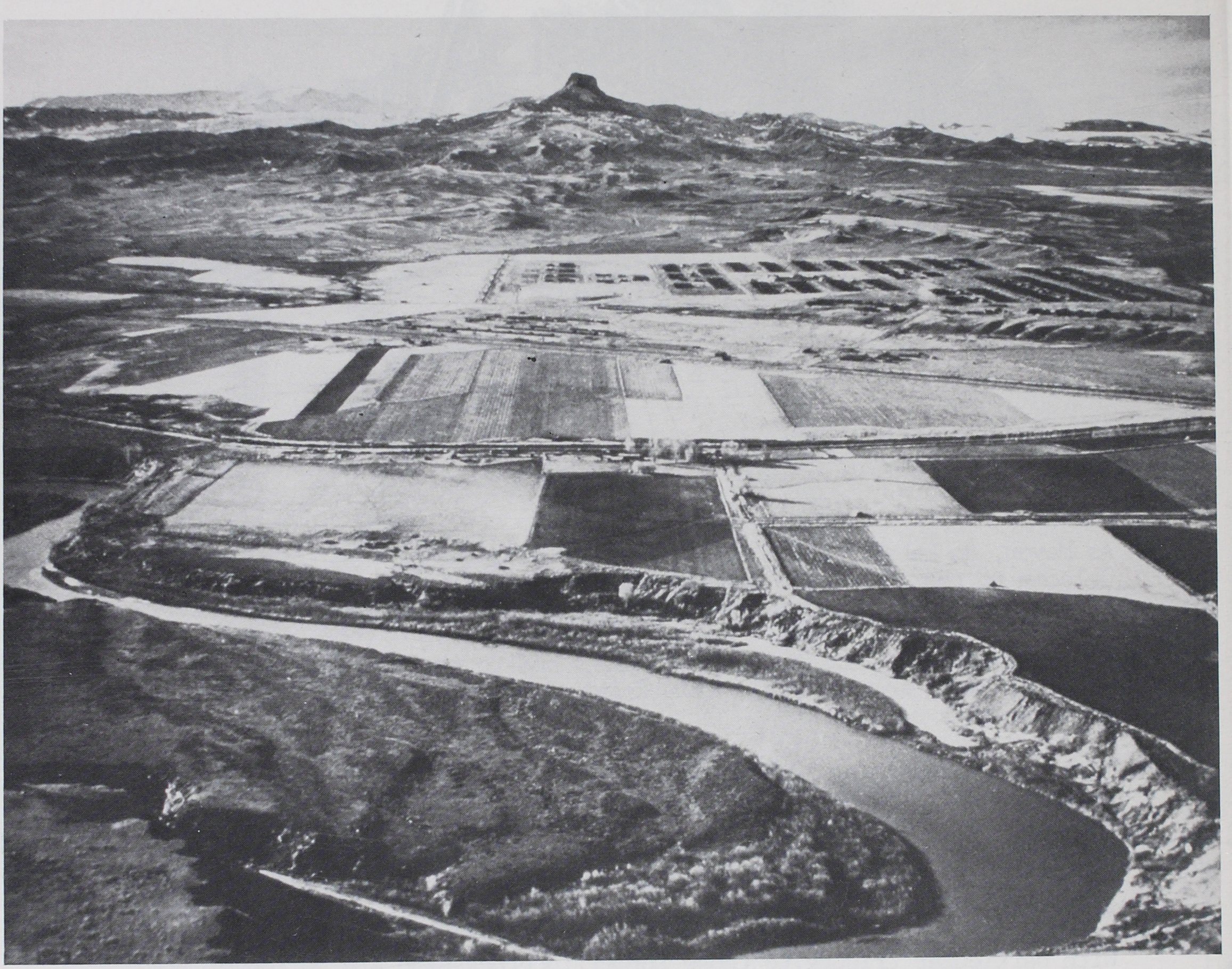
Sincerely,

Tom Bradley

TOM BRADLEY
Mayor

April 2, 1982

HEART MOUNTAIN IRRIGATION DIVISION
SHOSHONI IRRIGATION PROJECT



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HEART MOUNTAIN HISTORY

By Bill Hosokawa

In June of 1942 a call went out for construction workers in the sparsely settled Bighorn Valley of north-central Wyoming. Rumor had it that a "Jap" prisoner of war camp was to be built on the benchlands of the Heart Mountain irrigation project above Highway 14 midway between Powell and Cody.

A rude, grim barracks city, laid out in an orderly mile-square grid pattern, quickly began to take shape on land where there had been only sagebrush and buffalo grass. The camp was far from ready when the first train-load of inmates arrived on August 12. It was an advance party of 292 men, women and children from the Assembly Center in Southern California. They were not "Jap" prisoners, but Japanese Americans removed from their West Coast homes by their own government as a wartime "military necessity."

Desolate as the scene was, it had the rudimentary necessities of what was to become Wyoming's third largest city. There was a water and sewage system, power, a hospital, messhalls and warehouses for food storage, and row on row of barracks equipped with heating stoves and iron cots.

While carpenters hurried to erect more barracks, trainload lots of approximately 500 evacuees arrived every few days from Pomona, Santa Anita and Portland assembly centers. (Later, some evacuees from Tule Lake arrived in exchange for Heart Mountain residents who had answered "no-no" in the so-called loyalty segregation program.)

Everyone pitched in to accomodate the travel-weary newcomers. Rooms were assigned, blankets distributed, mess hall crews organized. Individual families swept out the dust, set up cots, hung sheets over the windows, built furniture from scrap lumber and tried to make homes out of cheerless cubicles.

Gradually a community emerged under the direction of WRA personnel who were mostly civil service workers assigned from other federal agencies. Police and fire departments were trained. Schools opened. Self-government was organized. Work and recreation programs got under way. Oddly enough, many of the evacuees working for $16 and $19 a month were more competent than their Caucasian bosses.

With remarkable fortitude and good humor, the Issei, Nisei and Sansei went about their task of making their lives as comfortable as possible under unnatural and oppressive circumstances. Heart Mountaineers, 11,000 souls at their peak, nursed heartbreak, built dreams and created bittersweet memories of love, life, frustration and hope that have mellowed with the years.

Wind, dust and cold - - the temperature dropped to 29-below one night - - made the first winter an ordeal. But the courage with which the evacuees faced their travail won the respect of all who came to know them.

Heart Mountain, like the nine other WRA camps, was never designed for permanence. Even before it reached capacity WRA began its program or relocating the evacuees back into the American lifestream. The first to go walked out through the barbed wire gate to help farmers in the region to harvest sugarbeets. Later, restless young people with marketable skills were relocated to places like Chicago, Denver and Detroit wher jobs awaited them.

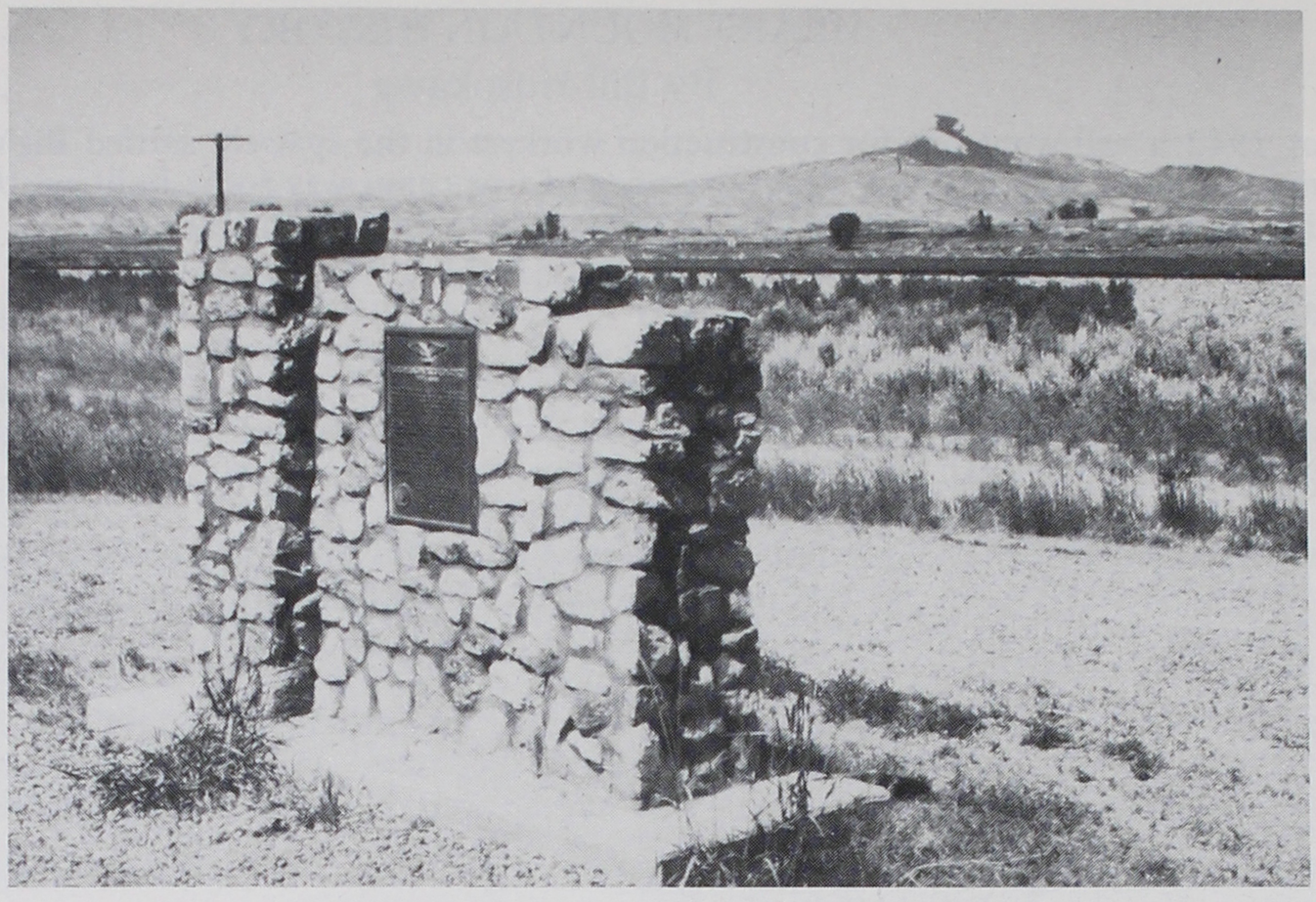
The West Coast was reopened to Japanese Americans by the Supreme Court's ruling in the Mitsue Endow case in December, 1944. By that time nearly one-third of Heart Mountain's residents had relocated voluntarily. Within weeks after the end of the war in September, 1945, Heart Mountain was a ghost town. A year and a half later the land made arable by irrigation ditches completed by the evacuees was opened up to homesteading by war veterans. They drew lots for some 200 farms. Winners received in addition to land several barracks which they converted into homes, sheds and barns.

Today the Heart Mountain area grows rich crops of grain, hay, sugarbeets and beans. Of the camp, only the tall brick stack of the hospital power plant remains. That, and a small memorial park built around the weathered frame of the honor roll where the names of servicemen and women from Heart Mountain were proudly displayed.

The memorial was the idea of a group of homesteaders as a Bicentennial project and it was dedicated in the summer of 1978. Chester and Mary Ruth Blackburn, who were among the original homesteaders, spearheaded the project. During the difficult early years they gained respect for the hardships the evacuees had experienced, and they felt something ought to be done to memorialize the wartime sacrifice of the Japanese Americans.

A plaque on a larger boulder in the park reads: "This Memorial is dedicated to those people interned here during World War II, to their sons and daughters who served our country and to those who gave their lives in that service."

At the dedication Mary Ruth said: "We have created something that we hope will show the Japanese Americans who were interned here and return to visit that we care."



The American Legion Memorial

THE TEXT READS:

HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CENTER
1942-1945

"DURING THE WORLDWAR II YEARS, HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CENTER WAS LOCATED ON A 740-ACRE TRACT OF LAND ACROSS THE BURLINGTON RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY WESTWARD FROM WHERE YOU STAND FACING THE MONUMENT, AND HEART MOUNTAIN ITSELF, ON THE HEART MOUNTAIN DIVISION OF THE SHOSHONI IRRIGATION PROJECT.

ELEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY FROM THE THREE WEST COAST STATES WERE LOOSELY CONFINED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN THE CENTER FOR ABOUT THREE YEARS. THEY LIVED IN BARRACKS AS SINGLES, OR AS FAMILIES, ACCORDING TO MARITAL STATUS.

THE CAMP WAS EQUIPPED WITH MODERN WATERWORKS AND SEWER SYSTEM AND A MODERN HOSPITAL AND DENTAL CLINIC, STAFFED WITH PEOPLE FROM THE RANKS OF THE EVACUEES. FIRST RATE SCHOOLING WAS PROVIDED FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE EVACUEES THROUGH THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADES.

THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED, 1963, BY THE AMERICAN LEGION POSTS OF HEART MOUNTAIN AND POWELL, WYOMING, AND THEIR AUXILIARIES IN THE INTEREST OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING, AND AS A MEMORIAL TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE DIED IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRY."

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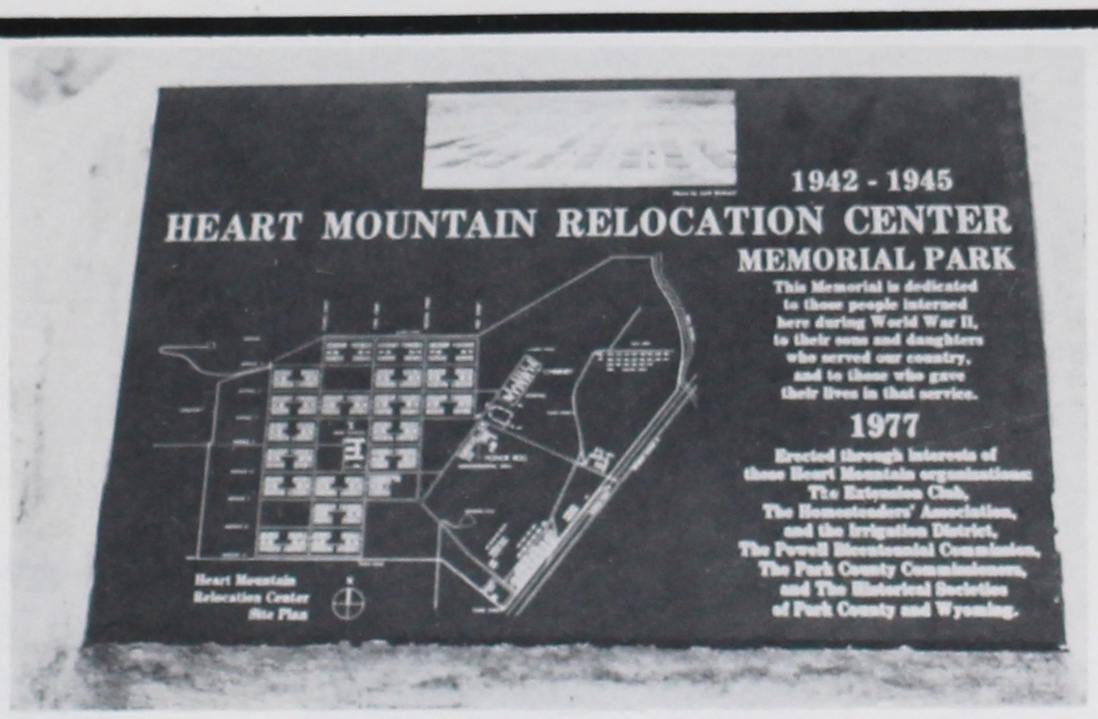
MARY RUTH AND CHESTER BLACKBURN

FOLLOWING THE CLOSING OF THE HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CENTER, THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, IN 1947, MADE THE LAND AVAILABLE FOR HOMESTEADING BY VETERANS. AMONG THOSE WINNING IN THE LOTTERY WERE CHESTER AND MARY RUTH BLACKBURN. THEY MOVED FROM COTTONWOOD FALLS, KANSAS TO PROVE UP THEIR HOMESTEAD. AS WITH THE EVACUEES, THEY LIVED IN THE BARRACKS, USED THE CENTRAL LAUNDRY ROOM, LATRINE AND SHOWER. THEY NOW RESIDE IN RALSTON, WYOMING.

OUR SPECIAL GUESTS



THE HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CENTER MEMORIAL PARK WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1977 THROUGH EFFORTS OF MARY RUTH BLACKBURN AND THE HEART MOUNTAIN EXTENSION CLUB. FEELING A KINSHIP WITH THE EVACUEES BECAUSE OF THE HARDSHIPS THAT BOTH THE EVACUEES AND THE HOMESTEADERS SHARED, THE BLACKBURNS FELT SOMETHING POSITIVE SHOULD BE DONE TO PRESERVE THE MEMORY OF THE W.R.A. CENTER. IN 1975, THEY ENLISTED THE AID OF THE HEART MOUNTAIN EXTENSION CLUB AND INITIATED A DRIVE TO RESTORE THE CAMP HONOR ROLL AND TO BUILD A SMALL MEMORIAL PARK. THE DRIVE GAINED THE SUPPORT OF THE HOMESTEADER'S ASSOCIATION, THE IRRIGATION DISTRICT, AND OTHER COMMISSIONS AND SOCIETIES.

CAMP RESIDENTS WHO VISIT THE FORMER W.R.A. WILL FIND VIRTUALLY NOTHING RECOGNIZABLE; INSTEAD, THERE ARE ACRES OF RICH FARM LAND. THE MEMORIAL PARK AND THIS PLAQUE PROVIDE A FOCUS FOR TODAY'S VISITOR.

WE CAME

To a bleak
Solitary
Square-shouldered peak;
Barren wastelands,
Barbed wire fence;

Then . . . a terraced slope . . .
A wide expanse of tar-papered
Barracks
Looms into view
In patterned monotony,
As if mocking
Memories
Of shady orchards
And flourishing fields.

An empty, hopeless feeling . . .
No grass . . .
No trees . . .
Only withered sagebrush;
Sharp-spined cactus;
Sharp-barbed fence,
Sharp-edged dust—

"Can anything live here?"
No grass . . .
No trees . . .
Only wind and dust.

"And what did you see the first winter?"

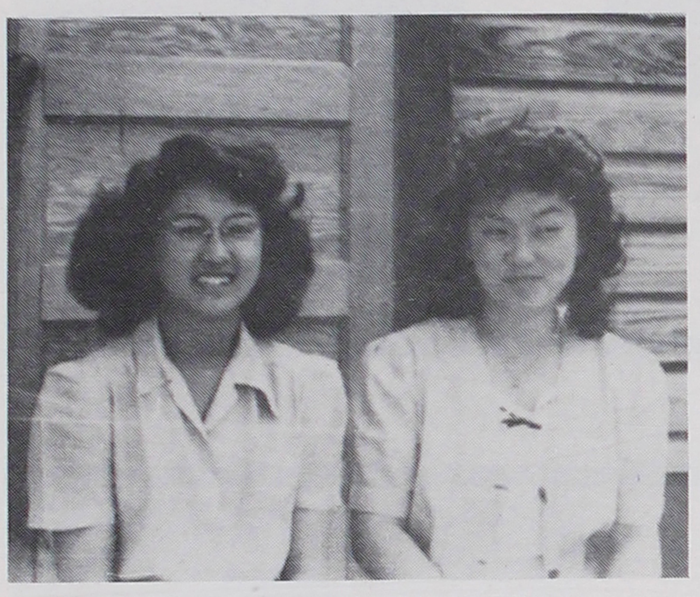
I saw sparsely scattered grass
wither and die—
The hardy sage gave up the struggle
for life.
I saw days shorten,
Nights lengthen,
And the cold light of distant stars
Flash in a chilly, crystal-clear night.
I saw hoary frost in the morning,
And gutters iced.
I saw birds fly to warmer climes.

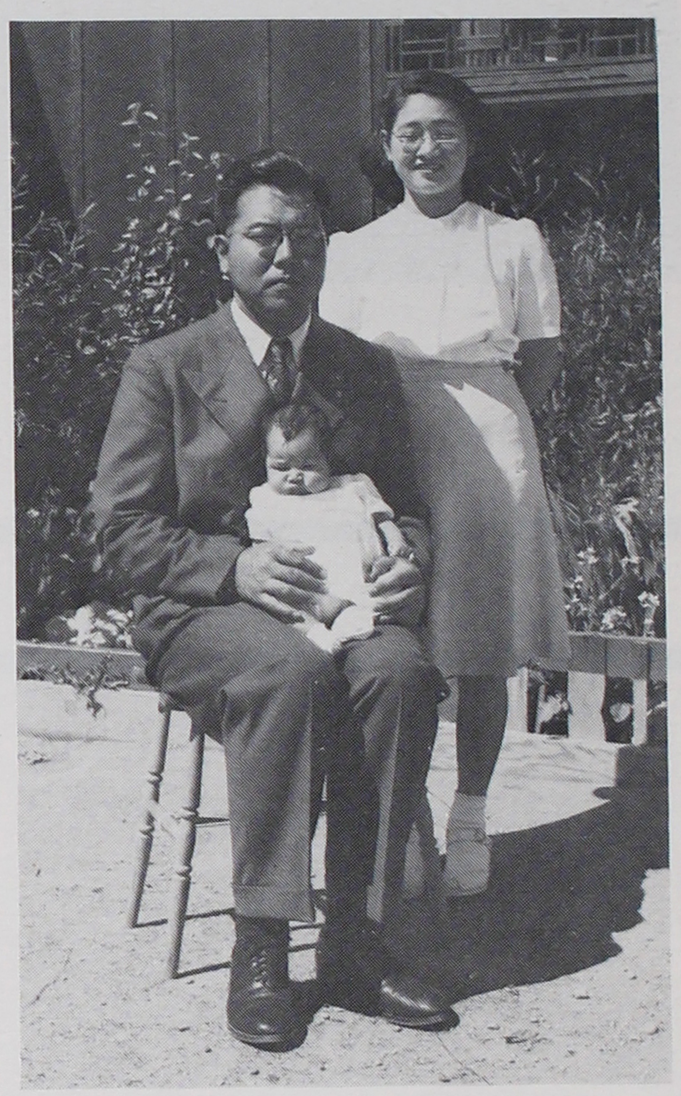
I saw sun-tanned evacuees prepare for a
long, hard winter—
Yarn-embroidered P-coats,
"Engine" boots and scarfs,
"Long Johns" and earmuffs,
A change from skirts to slacks—
I saw the dust and scorching heat of Autumn
Turn to sleet and sub-zero weather.
I saw people draw their coats tight
And plow through mud and sleet.

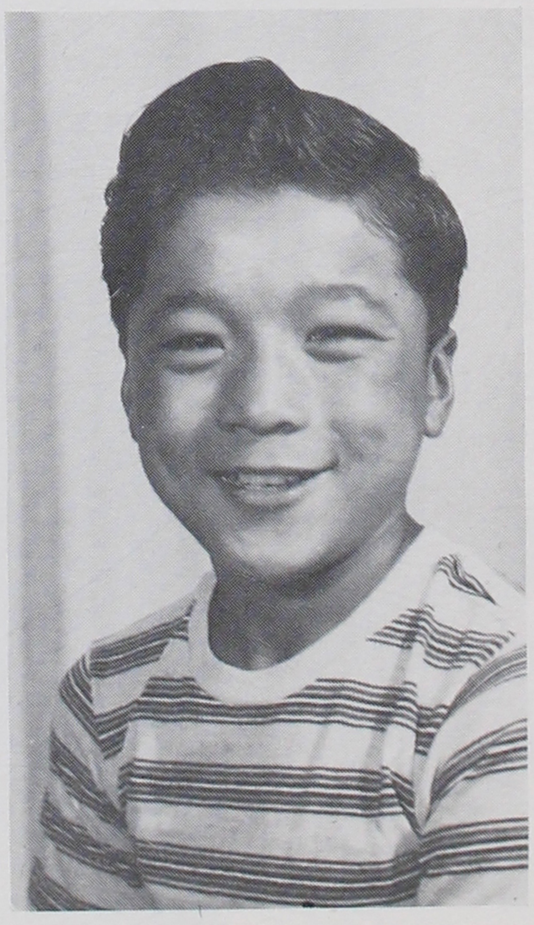
October, '42, saw students

Three to a seat, sharing the same book,
In tar-papered barracks;
Huddling around temperamental
G. I. stoves;
Confused by the adjoining room's recitation
Heard through the thin partition;
Stamping their feet for warmth
As they attended aud-calls
Held in the great out of doors;
Establish a school newspaper;
Student government became a reality—
Campaign speeches, and promises—
The "Echoes" made its debut—
And on that chilly morn in March
The Stars and Stripes proudly climbed
The newly erected staff
While the Scouts played
"To the Colors."

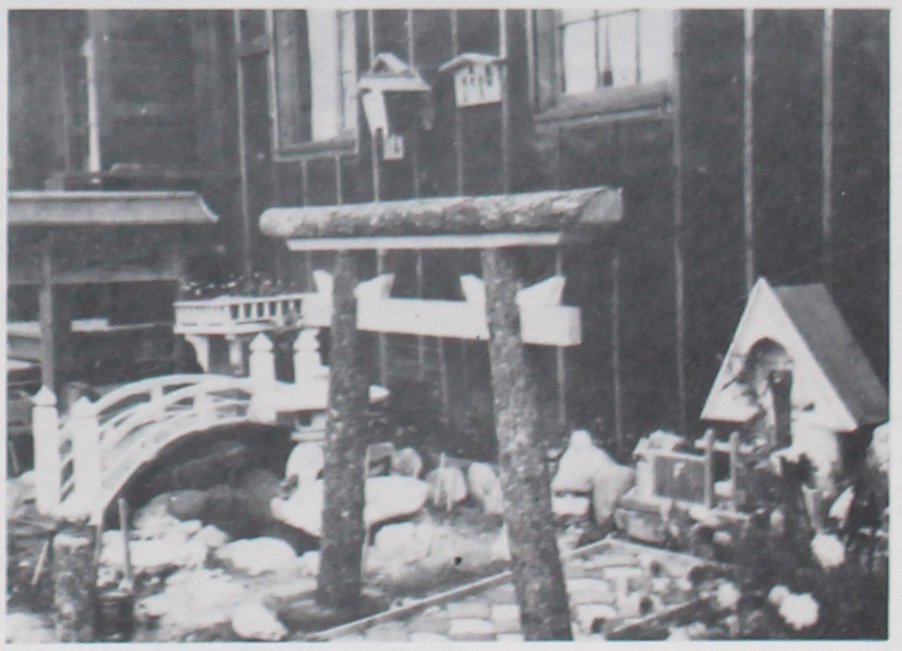
THE PEOPLE







THE HOME



HAPPY REUNION

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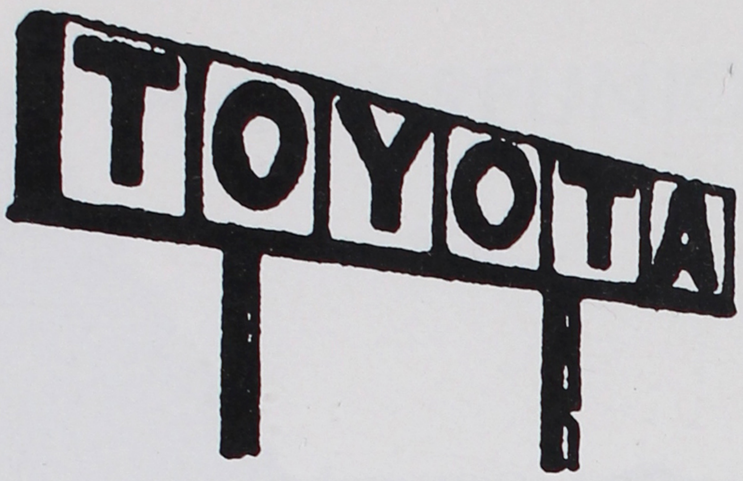

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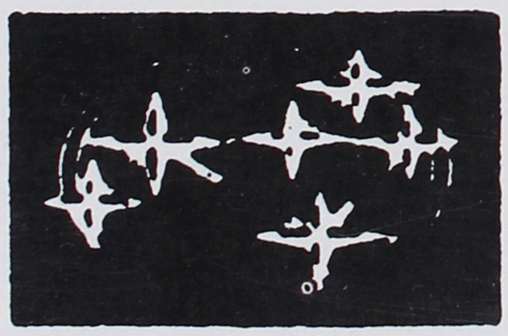

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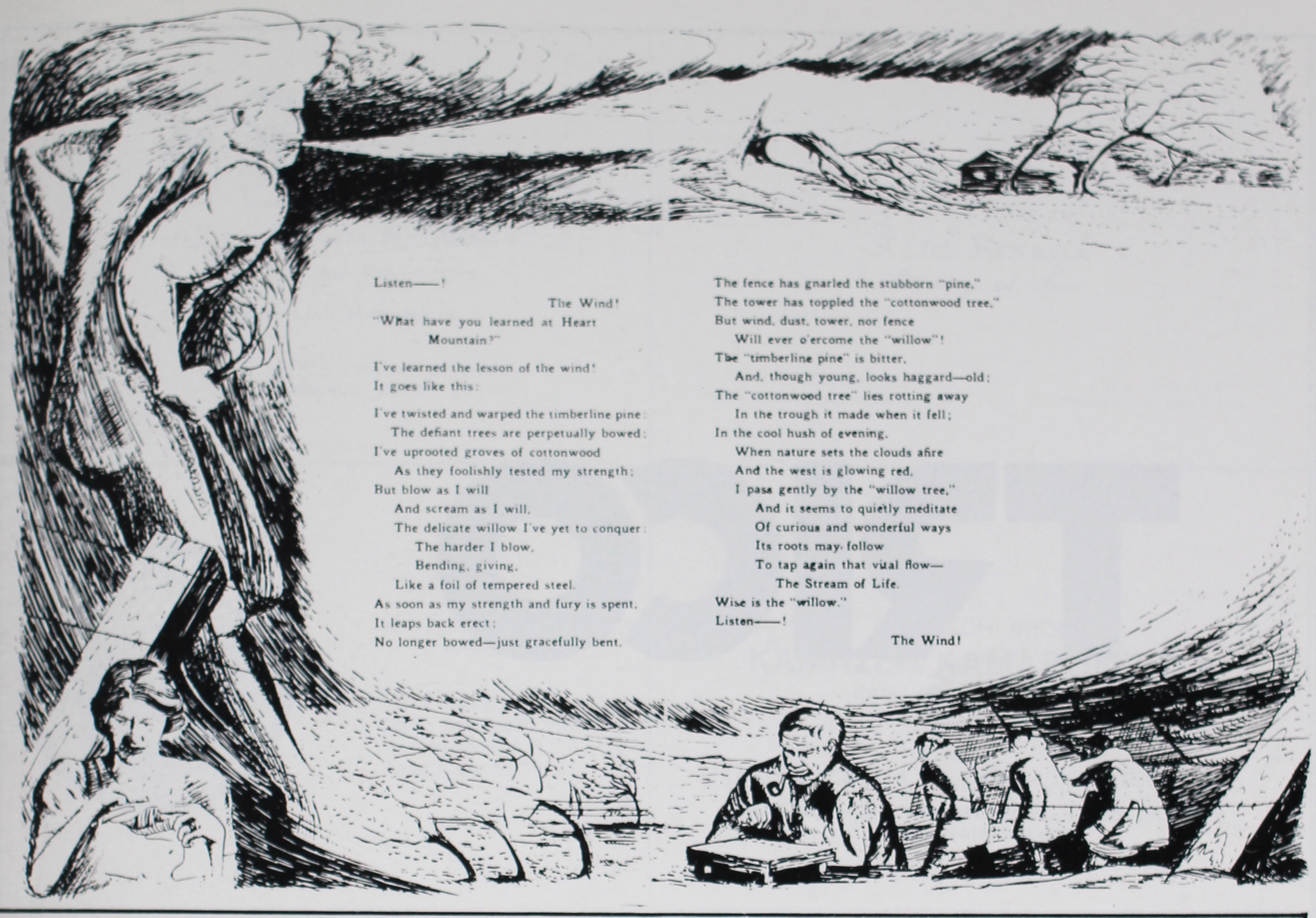

Listen——!

The Wind!

"What have you learned at Heart
Mountain?"

I've learned the lesson of the wind!
It goes like this:

I've twisted and warped the timberline pine:
The defiant trees are perpetually bowed:
I've uprooted groves of cottonwood
As they foolishly tested my strength;
But blow as I will
And scream as I will,
The delicate willow I've yet to conquer:
The harder I blow,
Bending, giving,
Like a foil of tempered steel.
As soon as my strength and fury is spent,
It leaps back erect:
No longer bowed—just gracefully bent.

The fence has gnarled the stubborn "pine,"
The tower has toppled the "cottonwood tree,"
But wind, dust, tower, nor fence
Will ever o'ercome the "willow"!
The "timberline pine" is bitter,
And, though young, looks haggard—old;
The "cottonwood tree" lies rotting away
In the trough it made when it fell;
In the cool hush of evening,
When nature sets the clouds afire
And the west is glowing red,
I pass gently by the "willow tree,"
And it seems to quietly meditate
Of curious and wonderful ways
Its roots may follow
To tap again that vital flow—
The Stream of Life.
Wise is the "willow."
Listen——!

The Wind!

50年

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Heart Mountain, Wyoming
Engineer Staff

Like any other city of 10,000 people, Heart Mountain Relocation Center, Wyoming, had its Department of Public Works and its engineering staff to serve the needs of its internees.

Headed by a chief from outside of camp, the public words and engineering staff of internees helped run the water pumping and treatment plant, the sewage plant, the power distribution system, the road system, and worked on new capital design and construction projects. The first chief was Mr. Loomis, civil engigeer, from Cheyenne, Wyoming, followed by Mr. Leon C. Goodrich, architect, from Casper, Wyoming.

The survey gang, consisting of senior surveyor Shikamura, University of Tokyo graduate, Takeo "Chuck" Taiyoshi, Art Okuno, "Sugar" Suzuki and Lloyd Kinoshita, staked out the boundaries of camp in min-winter, 1942, pounding wood stakes into the frozen ground. The following spring and summer, they surveyed grades for the irrigation canals that were being completed throughout the area. Meanwhile, aeronautical engineer, Hal Kadota, working as a surveyor, was laying out baseball diamonds and football fields throughout camp and setting roadway and construction stakes. The spring of 1944 found Ralph Yanari and Fred Oda helping surveyor Taiyoshi lay out the dirt bottom, rock lined, canal fed, community swimming pool.

At its peak in 1942-43, the design staff consisted of Cal graduate Harold Kimura, "Sonny" Kitazono, Frank Hayami, Henry Suzuki, Mr. Shishima, Tets Iko, George Iwanaga, artist-painter Paul Mukaeda and others. Under the direction of architect Goodrich, this group designed warehouses, garages and accessory buildings.

A major project of the group was the design of the wood frame high school gymnasium with its hardwood floor basketball court and the steam boiler for heating the classrooms. With Harold Kimura designing the reinforced concrete foundation beams, Frank Hayami, the electric power system and Goodrich the timber gymnasium roof trusses, an extraordinary wartime school was designed by the camp staff. With the assistance of the department secretaries, the contract plans and specifications were packaged for outside contract.

The contract was let to a private contractor from the nearby town of Powell. Construction inspection for the project was conducted by George Iwanaga and Aki Murakami.

The school gym became the social center of the younger generation and within it were held dances, basketball games, the class play, movies and meetings. During the long, cold winter this was one warm place where youngsters could gather and enjoy themselves.

Assisting in the daily operations of the department were the very capable secretaries, Florence Masuto, Rose Sasaki, and Asa Tono, followed by Alice Hioki, as the first girls left for outside opportunities.

Within a short time the engineering staff became depleted with Kimura, Hayami, and Kitazono going to New York, Suzuki to Cleveland, Iko, Murakami, Tono, Masuto and Sasaki to Chicago, Iwanga to Minneapolis and Goodrich back to his practice in Casper. All left internment to enter civilian life or the military and eventually went on to successful careers in all parts of the country.

Although Chief Leon Goodrich made many friends, few really knew of his dedication to true American ideals. In Casper, before the coming of Heart Mountain, he defended the rights of and befriended the only two old Japanese families in town. After returning to private practice, he was an example of American ideals at its best when he would walk beside a young ex-internee down the streets of Casper, introduce him to his friends and Lion's Club members, find lodging for him, and defend him when some would question the rights of a person looking like "the enemy" to walk the streets of Casper. His idealism extended to all, including his native Indian friends. No one who truly knew him will ever forget.

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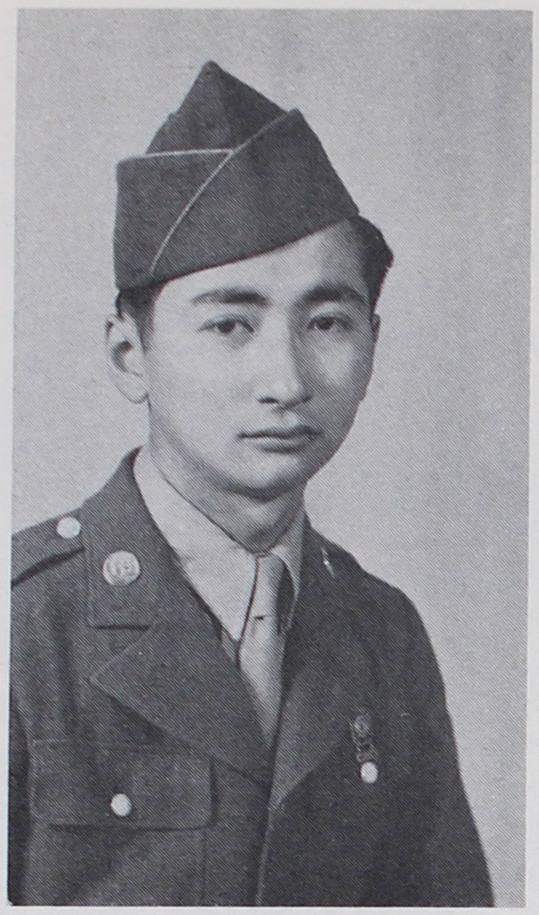

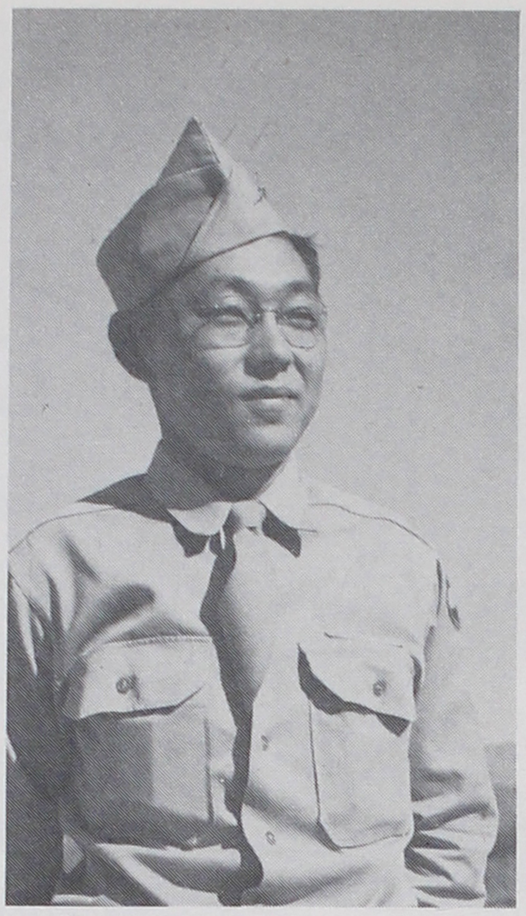

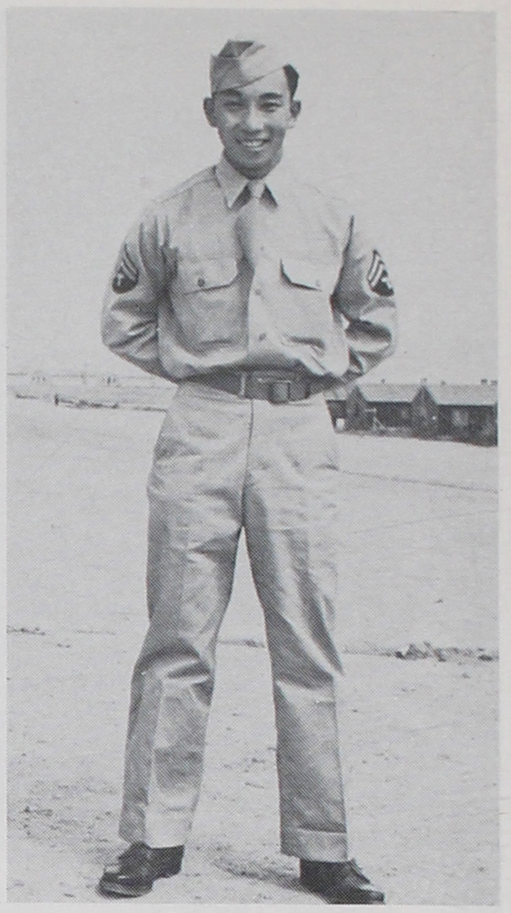

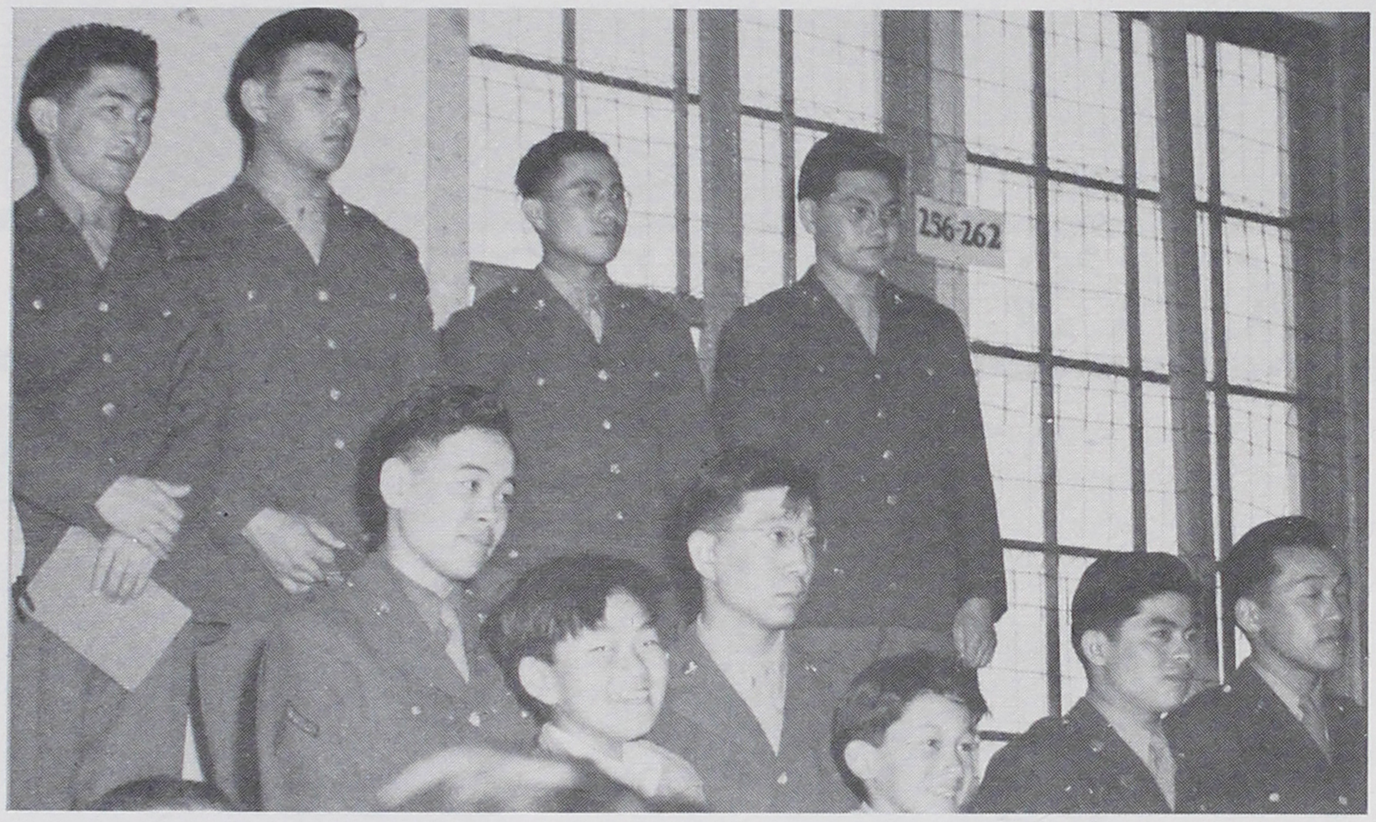

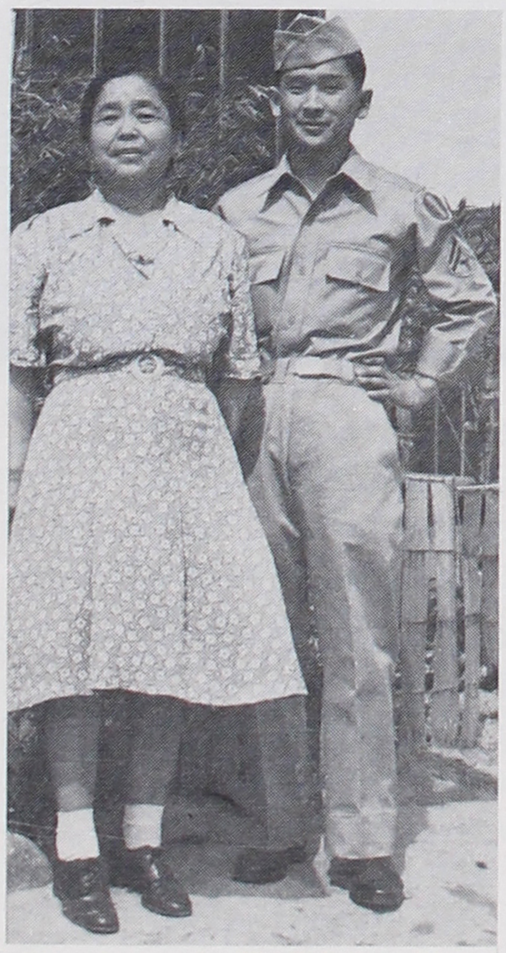

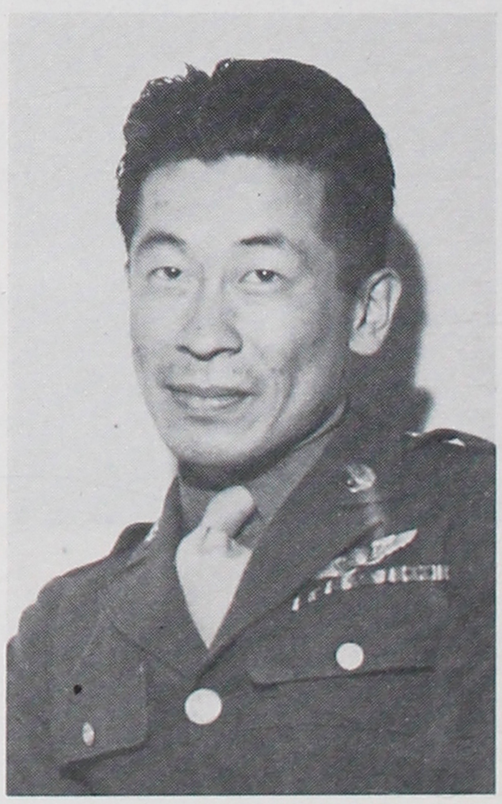

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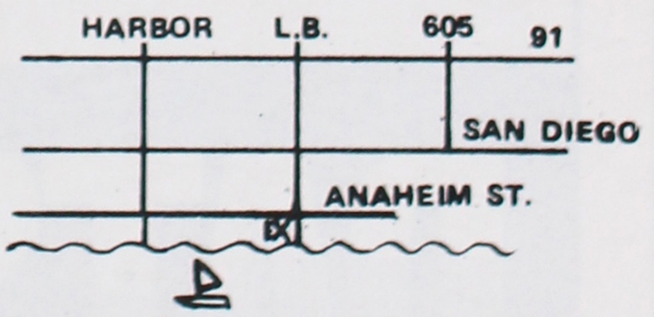

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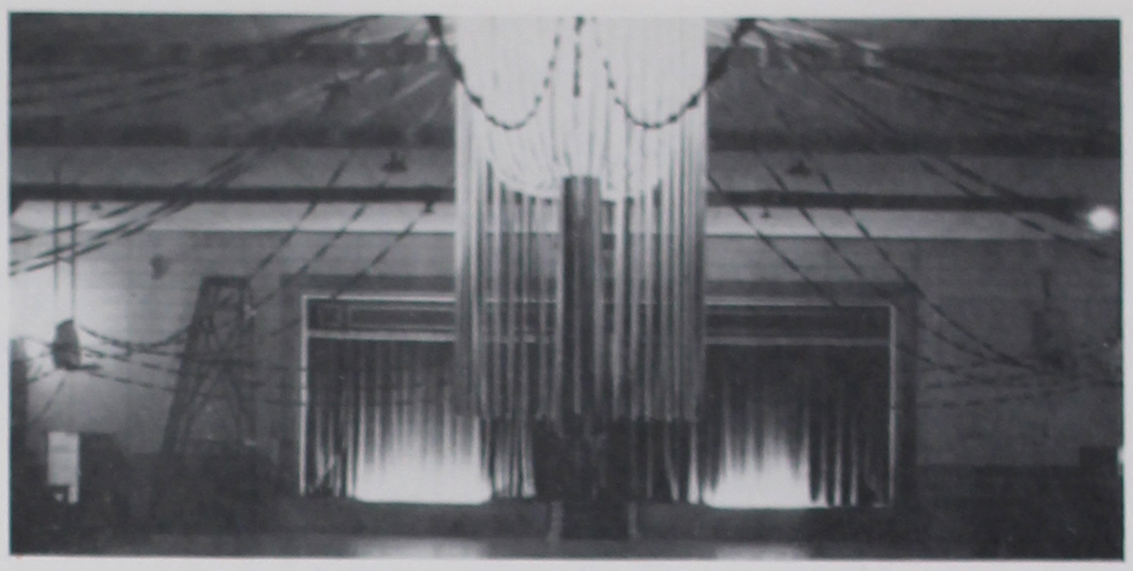

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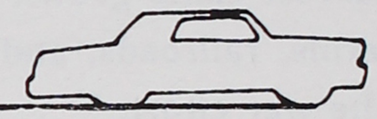

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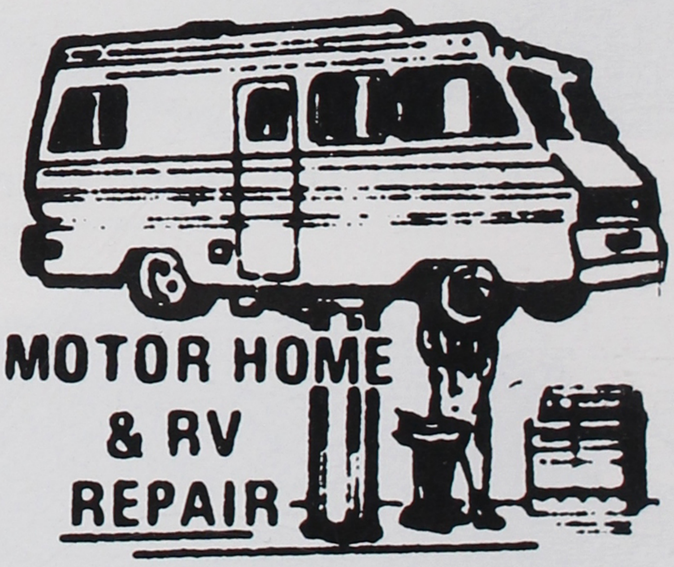

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Deep in my heart there's an urge
To be on the move again.
My soul is as restless as the tumbleweed,
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Precise formations of geese whistle overhead
    Seeking new and better homes.

I feel a tuggling at my heart,
A yearning for the life I led before—

    To stroll leisurely through a leafy park;
    To rock and sway in a rumbling street car;
    Or to stand on a bustling city corner
        And watch the world go by.
    To be lost in the crowd on Dollar Day,
        Or park for a hour with a coke at the corner drug.
    To lean on my hoe for a moment's rest—
        Scan my fields through squinted, sweat-filled eyes—
        And be proud of the work I've done.
    To dash like a madman down the street
        And barely catch the morning bus!

These, and a hundred thousand other things
Bring melancholy—
And I cry out for the good old days!
But what is past and gone
    Cannot be restored by wishful thinking—

As the tide must recede as dawn draws nigh,
    As the sun must rise and set,
    As the Three Sisters must spin the Thread of Life,
    And as the Sands of Time must trickle through the Glass,
I must fulfill my yearnings!
    Else henceforth live in a world of
        Shallows, miseries, and memories.

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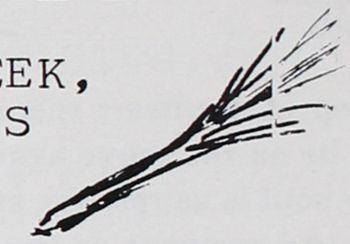

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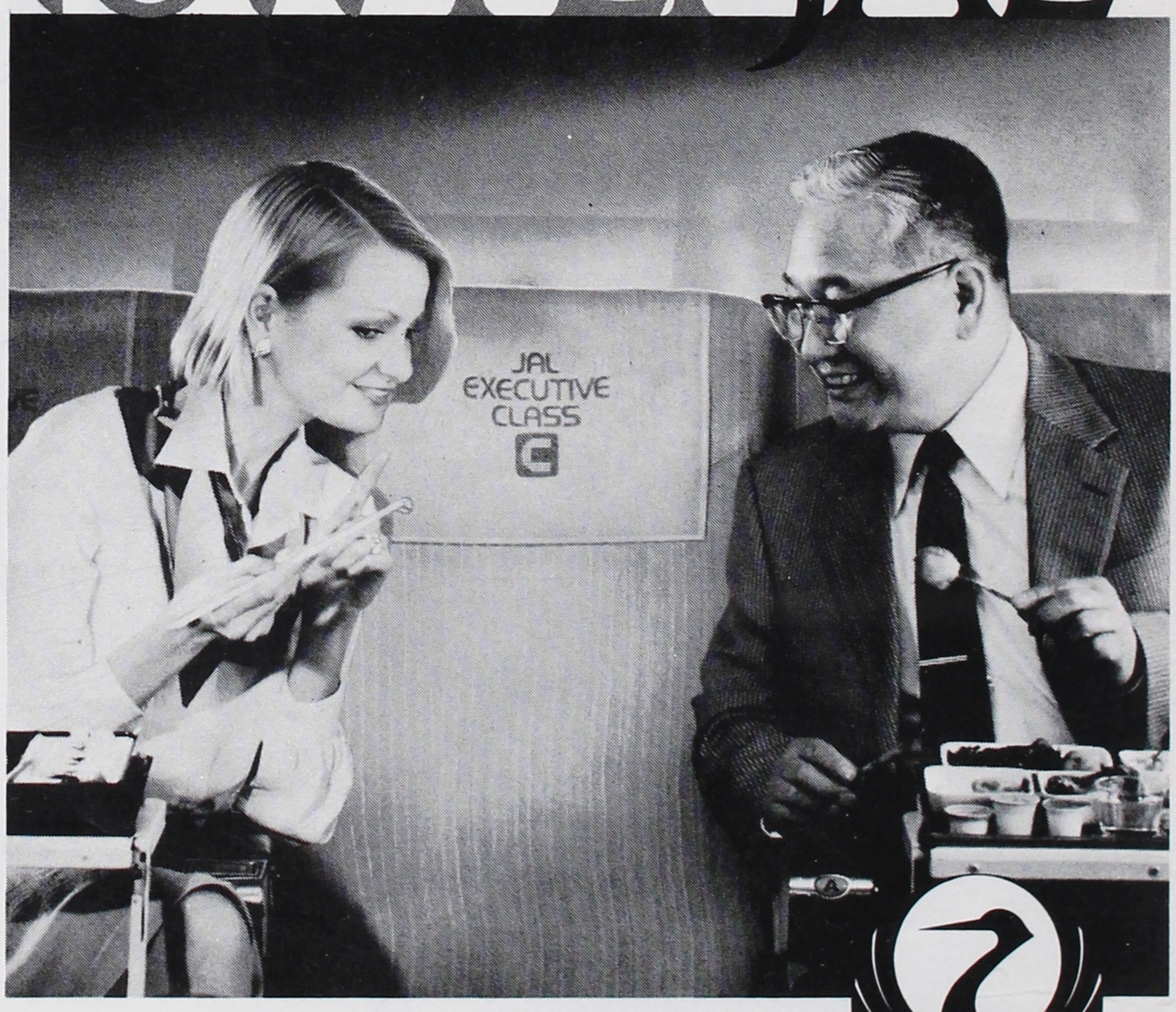

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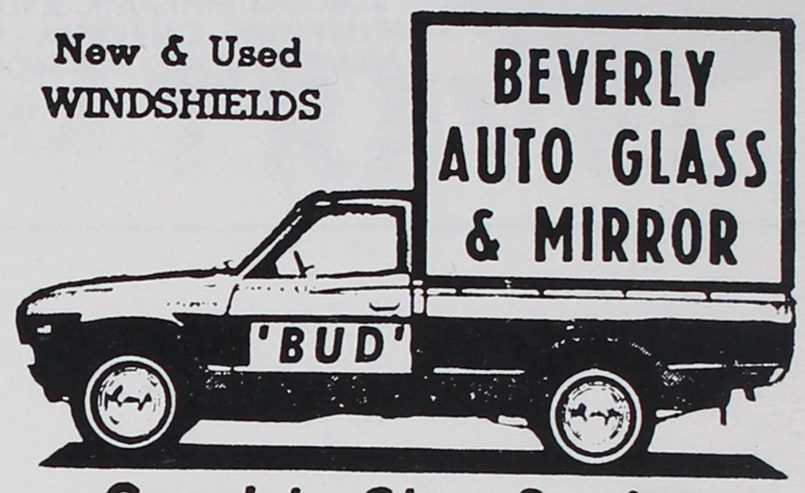

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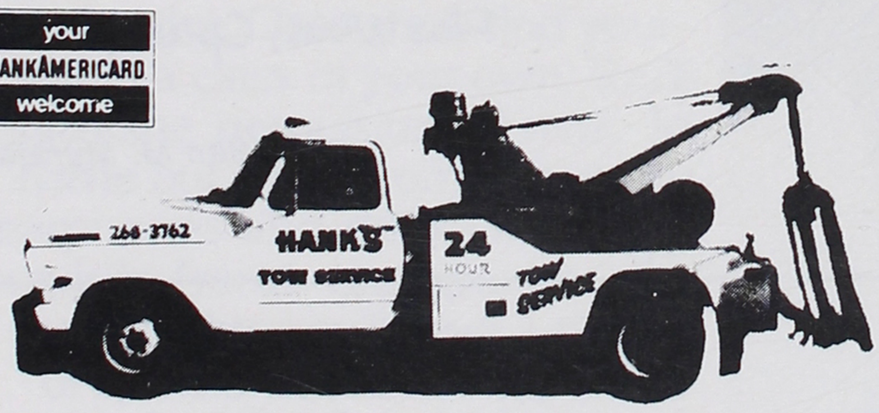

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