

1/20/00

Dear Bill,

Super Bowl Sunday. The picture you don't remember til you see it. You are sitting next to the guy I'm looking for. John H. Yamamoto. The newspaper article is about John T. Yamamoto both third platoon H Co. Article is written by Hisayo, his sister. J. K. Yamamoto may be a nephew. Hisayo appears in Rabbit in the Moon.

John H. does not appear in the grave registration book. Every one recalls both and that both died approximately the same time. KIA July 15, direct hit by a shell, Hill 104. Ridge S. of Rio S. Biagro.

Picture of john is the guy next to you with the streamer right down his face. In front is Tachibana, Wm. Mizukami and Yon Hamada. Next to you Bob Kubo and Ronald Kaya. You can see Kaichi, Raymond Tanaka , Albert Doi, Walter Nakashima, head of Nakasone. Frank Saito Sus Satow, head of Frank Shigemura and the head of Shig Ogawa, Nishie.

Will this war ever end. Happy New Year and thanks for your support.

Mits Kojimoto

- Ft Shelby, MISS ?
- Camp Robinson,
Ark ?
- So. France ?

← BILL IINO

DRINK
JAX





Life and Death of a Nisei GI: AFTER JOHNNY DIED

(Hisaye Yamamoto is a member of the editorial staff of the Los Angeles Tribune. She is the author of a weekly editorial page column, "Small Talk." "After Johnny Died" was published in the Tribune on Nov. 26.)

By HISAYE YAMAMOTO

After Johnny died, one kind soul insisted that now I had experienced all a Japanese in America could and that I must put it all down in a book for all the world to read. She even had a title picked out for my chef-d'oeuvre: "Johnny Got a Zero," from the now-obscure song of the same name. For weeks after our conversation, I would come in to work and find a little pink slip of paper on my desk. "Have you started Johnny Got a Zero?" "How's Johnny Got a Zero coming?" I tucked the notes in my drawer until they grew into a nice pile and chucked them all in the wastebasket. They made a hauntingly lovely thud.

I will tell the story of Johnny now, though I doubt that it is the kind patriotic Americans will want to read in the middle of an exciting Victory Loan campaign.

Johnny was born 21 years ago this week in a small southern California coastal town. His full given name was Tsuyoshi John, Tsuyoshi meaning strength and John because his parents knew no American names and the doctor attending his birth thought it as good as any. He spent his first years on a strawberry farm tucked in among oil derricks, and when he was five, he began kindergarten.

When he was in the first grade, his family moved inland to another small town and strawberry farm, and he transferred to Alameda grammar school. There he made friends like Mike Nakashima and Joe Chikami, who are alive and in the Army of the United States. One day in 1933, just before Spring, there was an earthquake. His mother told the story often of how she had grabbed him and pulled him out the door, thinking him to be Kaname, his youngest brother.

Kaname died soon after he learned to walk and talk and sing and dance a little. Johnny always spoke of him with tenderness—although usually he did not give a fig for sentiment—because he had looked so much like Johnny that he was always called Little Johnny. They looked alike, but not like anyone else in the family and visitors always commented about it.

Just before that, Johnny was in an automobile accident. His father, with whom he was riding up in the front seat, crashed into a lamp post to avoid another car. Nobody was hurt badly but Johnny got cut around the eye and the police took him somewhere and brought him back with a bandage on his head. But it was his left cheekbone that must have been hit because after that when he smiled, the skin there grew taut and his smile was always crooked.

When his family moved again to a larger farm—this time with cabbages, blackberries, and tomatoes besides strawberries—Johnny transferred to the fourth grade at Geo. Washington grammar school. It was temporary, since he turned out to be with a bunch of kids who were only attending Washington until their own school got its earthquake damages repaired. So he went to Las Flores grammar school. That was passing, too. Somebody found out he was attending school in the wrong district and the same year, he had to transfer to the Artesia grammar school.

The next year, the family moved again, to a strawberry farm surrounded on its four sides by a walnut grove, orange grove, cornfield, and alfalfa patch. He got to know boys like Willie Wong (who has just been discharged from the Army), Nick Megugorac (who killed a gasoline station owner and was sent up for life), Tommy Ratliffe, and Tommy Stringham. His father bought him his first and only bicycle the next year and he was very proud of it. It was blue. One day he came home and said he hated one of his teachers. He said she had mistakenly accused him of whispering and shaken him in front of the class. Even after he grew older, he remembered the intense humiliation and sometimes he would say, "I'm gonna go back and kill her."

His friends were Henry Sheller (now in the Navy), Tim Nabara (now in the Army) and Jack Burt, after the family moved next door to a dairy and he went to Clearwater junior high school. He liked football, basketball, baseball, and track, and he made quite a few letters. One football season, though, he collided with a boy named Harold Pignon and got his front tooth knocked out. His family

made him quit playing and he never quite forgave them. He was chosen hall guard that year and sometimes would come home wearing the blue satin ribbon that said, "Hall Guard," reading diagonally from waist to shoulder.

All this while he attended Downey Japanese school. One Saturday, the teacher scolded him for something and he stalked out of the classroom, yelling in English, "I'm gonna go to Norwalk Japanese school," before he slammed the door. He learned how to write "Tsuyoshi" in the Japanese-borrowed Chinese characters and to read the simpler Japanese characters, but he wasn't very much interested.

While he was going to Clearwater, his mother died. Soon after, the family moved to where he had to enroll in Oceanside-Carlsbad high school. Summers he worked, usually picking strawberries, tomatoes, and he liked it, because he was faster than most of the other workers. In school he majored in commercial subjects and made excellent grades in typing and bookkeeping. He went out for football again but he fumed when talking about the coach because he spent the season on the bench. He felt better later when he became something of a basketball star. The letterman's sweater, green with two white stripes on the left sleeve—which he was able to buy then was precious to him.

One thing that distinguished him from other kids was that although he attended school 13 years, he never had a chance to be in promotion or graduation ceremonies. Every time he thought he was going to be in one—in the 6th, 8th, 10th grades—the family moved. And now, when he was sure that he would graduate from high school, the United States entered the war, and he had to go with his family to live in an Arizona relocation center. In camp he was first a guard, which meant escorting incoming evacuees to their barracks and helping unload their baggage. Later when "intake" stopped, he went to work as a bookkeeper in the warehouses.

Then, among the first to leave camp, he joined a bunch of boys who were recruited to do sugar beet work in Ft. Morgan, Colo. After the season was over, he went to Denver and held various jobs, once candleing eggs and then dishwashing in a Catholic boys' seminary. Part time he went to business school, but he gave it up after a while. When the Army announced that it would take Japanese volunteers, he signed up and went back to Arizona to get his father to sign an okay and to say goodbye, and went to Ft. Logan, Colo., to be inducted. He was assigned to Camp Shelby, Miss., with Japanese volunteers from Hawaii and the mainland. First, he was hospitalized for a hernia operation. And once he got a taste of it, he hated the Army. He toyed with the idea of taking a correspondence course in bookkeeping but put it away with his postwar plans.

In camp and Denver he got to know several girls and he decided they weren't so bad after all, although one gave him a glimpse of what a fickle woman was.

About the time he went back to camp, hating trains and busses forever, to spend a furlough before going overseas, he pinned his affection on a girl who was attending a woman's college in New York, although he had only seen her once.

Abroad, he wrote back in one V-letter that the Italian countryside reminded him of California, that the little Italian children who came begging for candy reminded him of little Larry and Emi who he had often carried on his shoulders.

"I guess I might as well tell you that we're in action now," his last letter home said. A few days later, his mortar company marched day

EDITORIAL DIGEST

Chance to Correct
Mass Injustice
DES MOINES REGISTER

"The wholesale injustice that is frequently done by hysterical national policies in wartime is now at least going to get a thorough exposure in San Francisco Federal court," the Des Moines Register declared on Nov. 24 in an editorial on the two mass petitions filed by more than a thousand evacuees at the Tule Lake center who, the Register said, "were browbeaten into renouncing their American citizenship while imprisoned at relocation camps by the Federal government."

"The brow-beating wasn't all done by Uncle Sam, by any means, but he did condone it," the Register added. "When we began to sort out the 'good' Japanese Americans from the 'bad' in the relocation centers, we shipped the obvious Japanese nationalists to the Tule Lake camp in California. But meanwhile we were forcing all of them, American citizens or not, to choose between the gamble of trying to make a go of it in what seemed to many a hostile America, or renouncing their citizenship so that we could deport them to Japan after the war."

"In most cases, this was asking our distraught Nisei to be clairvoyant," the Register continued. "How could they know whether somewhere in this country they would be given a chance after the war to get a fair start again? How could they look forward hopefully to starting a new business in a nation that had snatched their material possessions from them overnight? How could the younger ones be asked heartlessly to renounce their parents, who, still having intimate family ties in Japan, really preferred to go back?"

"The choice presented all but the elderly and the fanatics with a soul-rending dilemma. Hundreds of young Americans, 18 to 21, chose deportation because they couldn't bear to turn away from their parents. Others were harassed and coerced by a handful of rabid Japanese nationalists, who naturally used every imaginable weapon of propaganda and threat on their associates at Tule Lake.

"In justice and logic, these Nisei present a strong case," the Register concludes. "Now that the war has ended, we should be able to review the tragic buffeting we have given them with a little more sanity."

Nisei Citizenship Suits
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL

"Few fair-minded Americans will begrudge a reexamination of these cases to correct injustice, if there is such, and to spare potentially good Americans from deportation to Japan," the Milwaukee Journal declared in an editorial on Nov. 25 on the Tule Lake citizenship cases now before the Federal court in San Francisco.

The Journal believed, however, that all Americans will probably oppose, and should oppose, "any legal maneuvers to save from deportation persons who gambled on Japan and now wish to change their bet to escape the fate which the Japanese in Japan are suffering."

The Milwaukee paper believed that the Federal court will have a difficult task on its hands in this case.

and night without food or water to catch up with the war on the outskirts of Livorno. After it had dug in below a hill held by the Germans, for some reason Johnny stood up in his foxhole and an 88-millimeter shell exploded full on his chest. He was buried in an American cemetery near the Italian town of Grosseto.