

First
Draft

1916

by Tama Tokuda

1/19/84

(George was about 4 years old when Mr. Abe of Seattle brought a pair of long-tailed cocks to the Japanese section of Mukilteo. He said he could no longer take care of them in Seattle. They were very beautiful white and black Japanese birds with tail feathers ~~as long~~ ^{long} as 10 feet and were seated on a high perch so that the feathers would not get tangled. Every second day they would be taken down for a walk and someone would have to hold the tail feathers so that they would not get tangled or torn. At first George's mother and neighbors thought it was fun to take care of the birds but before long, no one seemed to be taking responsibility for taking them for walks or for combing or bathing the tail feathers. George's father took them to Clara Kane's home because she had a yard full of chickens. Before long the long tails had broken off and they looked very much at home with Clara's other chickens. Soon there were many little black and white banties running around, and one day a little chick was given to George for a pet. "^{CHUBBO}Chickie" he called him. George took care of his little banty rooster, feeding and watching it and they became quite inseparable. When he went to visit his friends, he would take him. As George grew a little older and ventured farther from home, the banty would often perch on his head or shoulder as he went visiting.

One day when he was about 7, George went to Seattle on a train by himself. It was an exciting adventure to go on a train with money in his pocket, a satchel full of his clothes, and a big suitcase stuffed with rockcod for the family friends who lived in the city. His father lifted the heavy suitcase onto the train for him. ^When he arrived in the city, a family friend, Mr. Edamura, met him at the station and helped him carry the suitcase off the train. Then they walked to the St. Nicholas Hotel, a wooden building in the skidroad section of Seattle. They climbed the steep stairs up to the rooms that ^{were} home to the Edamuras.

The first thing George did was to change \$2.00 into a roll of nickels. The hotel was close to 3 movie theatres. Everyday, starting at 9 o'clock in the morning, he would make a tour of the theaters, spending a nickel at each theatre. The Atlas Theater had aⁿ organist

who played 2 different tunes, Beautiful Ohio and some army march at appropriate times. The Jackson Theater had a rope the cashier would pull whenever someone entered the door so that George always listened for the ring. Sometimes the cashier would ask him to go around the corner to the grocery to pick up a bottle of pop for her and she would let him in free. Last of the tour was the Bison Theater after which he would shop at the 2 dime stores that were on the same block. He looked for gifts to take home to his mother, dad and friends. Everyday there would be a whole new set of movies. ^{to see.} By the end of the week he ^{had} a shopping bag full of presents from the dime stores. He was ready to take the train home. |

When he ^{returned to} ~~arrived in~~ Mukilto, his dad and friends were waiting for him at the station, all excited. There had been a fire in the village but George's home hadn't been touched. Some of his friends had lost their homes, and Yoshio's family were all moved into George's home. At home, he discovered ^{Chubb} Chickie was missing. He looked for him in all the familiar places but the little banty ~~seemed to have~~ disappeared.

*How
long
later*

Months later some distance from his home, he was walking by a yard when George saw a familiar banty strutting around in a yard full of hens. It was Chickie. alright and George went to the family, the Youngs, and explained about the chicken he had lost during the confusion of the fire. The family understood and allowed him to take it home. However, the next day it was gone, and running back to the Young's home, George discovered him. After watching him for a while he decided to leave him there and came home without him.

1/28/84

Dear Tama:

I don't have a lot to add to what was said in class, but I enjoyed your story. I feel, as did many others, that it would probably be better as two stories - one about "Chickie", and one about the trip to Seattle. All the little details you've included make the story very real and give your readers a feel for life in 1916 in Seattle & Mukilteo. I think there are a lot of people who would enjoy reading about life for a Japanese American and in a Japanese American community in the early part of this century.

Perhaps if you had a whole series of stories - sketches of events and recollections from George's boyhood - it would make an interesting book. After reading your story, I thought of Little Britches* by Ralph Moody, in which the author describes his boyhood growing up on a ranch in Colorado. A lot of little incidents make for very interesting reading and as a child growing up in Colorado, I loved it. I also loved reading about children of many nationalities, and children in the U.S. of many different backgrounds. I think a lot of children have a similar interest and, as I'm sure you are well aware, there is very little ^{literature} available on or for Japanese American children, at the present time.

Certainly you could fill a real need and give joy to many people - you have unique material to work with -

Colleen Ozora

* The Bells on Finland Street is about a little girl growing up in a Finnish American community in the U.S. Perhaps either or both of these books might be helpful to you in approaching your information...