

1978

*My New Beautiful Country*

*Arthur Shimeji Yakabi*

Dedicated to

All my teachers, especially  
Filo  
who won't let me quit

## Table of contents

	page
My Early Years	1
Departed	4
Panama	6
Sharp Park, California	7
Montana	9
Idaho	9
New Mexico	10
Terminal Island, California	11
Crystal City, Texas	12
Seabrook, N.J.	12
I return to Perú	14
School and Study	15

## My Early Years

I do not know when my parents immigrated to Peru, South America, from Akisawa, Japan.

They thought that life in Peru would give them a chance to make some money; they knew it would be hard work in a strange land.

After many years of hard working, my parents were able to save some money. With the saving and borrowing some from their friends, my father started in a restaurant, but, the business did not go well and went bankrupt.

Then later on in different place, my parents started in making soya bean cake business.

I was born in Chamay, near Lima, which is the capital of Peru. My mother had five sons and a daughter, I was the oldest of her children.

My mother worked hard, but, she still had time for her children. Our small house was made of adobe, the roof was woven reeds. In a corner was a small pit for burning wood to cook our meals. We had no money for doctor. My mother had midwife or my father to help her when the children were born.

Our daily meals consisted of a pot of soup and rice. I still remember the fish that was wrapped in newspaper and hung above the fire pit to smoked the fish. My mother used a small piece of it to flavor our soup.

I went to school, first grade to fourth grade. I had to quit school because we had no money. My mother needed for work.

My family later moved to Lima the capitol of Peru. Because of the ocean currents and and mountain ranges it does not rain in Lima.

The people of Peru are very rich or very poor, not too many middle class. Life in Lima wasn't all work, I was young and did have time to enjoy my favorite sport, soccer. I also liked to listen to good Spanish music or even go to see movies. I liked Tarzan movies with Spanish title.

I worked for a while in a grocery store, ~~that~~ <sup>very</sup> different from the ones here in the states where most every thing comes in packages.

Later on I moved in with a baker and worked there. Those were the years when Peru was not happy with the way the Japanese began to <sup>open</sup> ~~open~~ shops, start a business, get together clubs, organizations and schools. The Japanese stuck together made it hard for the Peruvian some money was sent to Japan or circulated just among the Japanese.

In the mean time the United States were at war with Japan and having a problem with their Japanese people. The United States had to have some people to exchange with the Americans stuck in Japan. Since the United States could not trust the Japanese people living in the state they made a deal with Peru. Peruvian government told the U.S.A. that they could have the Japanese that were getting to be a problem to the Peruvian

## Deported

In February of 1943 I was asleep at the bakery when the Peruvian agents came to get my employer. My employer being no man gave some money to the agents and pointed to me.

I ended up in jail. I had no money to use as bribe to get me out, nor money for food or to get a message to my family. I did not get a trial.

My mother did find me and brought me some clothes, I tried to be strong and calm for I was a man of 21; when I saw my mother I cried, I found out I was to be sent to the U.S. and then to Japan.

Two days later I was put into a large open truck with many other men. We were treated like a large herd of cattle. We were taken to the seaport of Callao and put aboard a Norwegian ship. I saw my mother but she did. She was among the large crowd all crying and confused at docks. We were at sea for five days. The first morning for breakfast they served us plain white rice, I was surprised because I never had it for breakfast, but it was better than nothing.

When we stopped, we were again loaded into army trucks, this time we could not see where we were going for the trucks was covered over with canvas. Some of us managed to peep out.

We were at Panama near the canal and not in the United States!

### Panama

When I peeked out of the truck I saw a large camp with barbed wire fence all around and each corner with machine gun. We were put six men to a tent. Somebody asked why we were in Panama instead of the United States and was told that the camps in America were full.

I had many injections so that I would not catch disease or bring disease to Panama. I worked for eight hours each day cutting tall grass, the mosquitos seemed as big as B-29.

For the first time in my life I saw lightning, I was not afraid but was amazed at the loud noise and rain.

We all had to work under a guard. The camp ~~had~~ <sup>we</sup> war prisoners German, Italian and Japanese and we men from Peru. We were there for about three months.

One day we heard that a camp in Sharp Park California had some room so we were put on a ship with many soldier once more.

## Sharp Park California

We took about seven days to reach San Francisco on our big transport ship. I wondered what the United States look like. Sharp Park was a large detention camp, our section had about 21 different nationalities. I was the youngest in our group from Peru. For a while I just ate, slept and wandered around, we had no guards but were fenced in. I had no idea what was ahead for myself and the others. Sometimes we had fights among the Chinese men.

We were soon getting ourselves together, I learned how to play soft ball and joined a team. I got a job, worked eight hours in a vegetable garden which belong to the camp. I was under guard but not as strict as in Panam.

I even got paid ten cents an hour. I was able to buy coca cola and few other things.

It was such a luxury for me because even in Lima I could not buy coca cola or things like nice soap or candy.

I spent about two months in Sharp Park. We moved again, because Sharp Park was a detention camp for people like merchant marines who jumped ship and etc. --

not for prisoners.

I was sent to Missoula Montana next.

## Montana

Missoula Montana was well fenced in. camp life was about the same as Sharp Park. There were Italian prisoners there. I joined a soccer team and played with them.

I heard that some volunteers were needed to go out and work - I took the chance to get out of that prison camp and with a few others we went out to work in another camp.

## Idaho

I found that Kooskia was a c.c.c. camp and it did not have a fence. I knew we could not go anywhere without papers. I worked on a road along a river. The road went from Kooskia to Missoula. I was working making holes with a jack hammer so that dynamite could be put in. I was paid fifty-five dollars a month.

During my free time I played ball, learned the fun of fishing and tried to learn a few words of English. English became more and more interesting to me, I tried to learn many new words. I even found that Kooskia was not English but was an Indian word meaning clear water.

I can't remember how long I was in Koochin. Our group from Peru was told to move to another camp so I put my few things in my new suitcase. And was on the way again.

Kenedy Texas -

New Mexico.

In Santa Fe New Mexico our group began to get very uneasy; we knew we would soon be to Japan.

There were jobs to do inside the fence but I had to get away so I asked for an outside job and worked on a farm. We had guard but he did not carry gun, I lived in a barrack outside of the fence far out from the main camp.

My world fell apart when I was put on a train on the way to Terminal Island. Immigration detention created California and Japan!

Terminal Island, California

Was in a real jail in California! I looked out of the bars and saw the ships coming and going. I was very sad and scared, but later a good news came! The Japanese Peruvian had hired a lawyer name Wayne Collins - he worked for the American Civil Liberty Union. We won the case in San Francisco court.

Now I was happy and looked forward to going home. Again bad news! Perù did not want us. said American took us so America must take care of us. We were told that we were now labeled as illegal entry people. We were stuck in the U.S.A. I had no country. I had no idea what would become of us. We were then sent to still another camp.

### Crystal City, Texas.

I arrived to Crystal City Texas and found I was with Peruvian Japanese families and from the States. These Japanese were interned because of the war and few people who denounced American citizen and wanted to go to Japan, were interned at Crystal City.

It wasn't very long after that when again I volunteered for an outside job. I was told about Seabrook Farms and jumped at the chance to be free!

### Seabrook, N.J.

arrived in Seabrook, New Jersey and was put to work the next day. The work was hard with long hours. Soon after I met and married my wife Laura. The American Legion started a course in citizenship. When I became citizen I was very happy to be a free man! After all these years, I do not regret coming here; America is a great place!

First worked in production lines then I ~~work~~ joined the Wrapping department and became a Wrapping machine mechanic and worked up to a foreman I was just recently demoted because of seniority.

My supervisor has sent me to the plants in California and Michigan. I might go back to Michigan in August.

All the moving around I did, made me love to travel and see different places. I take many short automobile trips and some long trips, too.

An author, C. Harvey Gardiner, found out about my many strange adventures and looked me up, because he is writing a book. He wrote one already and it mentioned me.

### I return to Perù

I did not make much money during the early days in Seabrook. I worked long hard hours. I wanted to return to Perù to visit my family. I did many things for my family, and I went to Perù taking my wife and two daughters. was so happy to find that the family was doing much better. It was about 1953. I returned again in 1970 and 1975, we will go again this winter. Each time I go my family is doing better. My mother and father two brothers has passed away during these year

## School and Study

While my children were still very young I took a correspondence course for Jr. High School - time and money ran out so I could not finish. I went to adult school here in Seabrook but could not make out too well because of my work load.

My supervisor sent me to Vocational school where I took a course in electronics so that I would be able to handle the electrical parts of the machines without waiting for the electrician.

I started to go to Bank Street school. ~~before~~ I failed many times and almost gave up. The test in Vineland are very hard. I worked slowly and could not finish my test in time. I like mathematics very much. English grammar is slowly getting better. I have a hard time putting my thought on paper. My wife help me a lot. I have learned most of my things from reading newspaper. I spend many hours reading about other countries and places. Television news and specials also help me to learn.

I like Monroe Street school, the teachers all treat the students very well, everyone is friendly and patient; it is a good place to learn.

I have a long way to go, so this is not the end of my story, but it is <sup>only</sup> the beginning.