

Quakers Paint Out Insults, Mow Grass for Japanese



Left to right—FLOYD SCHMOE, ETHEL DUNHAM, MRS. SHIGEO NAGAISHI, HOLDING AMY, AND HARUKO NAGAISHI

'Maybe things will be better now,' said Mrs. Nagaishi

Seven members of the American Friends Service Committee went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Shigeo Nagaisha, 1610 Walker St., yesterday afternoon and painted out the "No Japs Wanted" signs and other crudely painted signs which greeted the Nagaishas when they returned to their home yesterday from a war relocation center.

The group of five Quakers, led by Floyd Schmoë, secretary of the committee, also cut the grass, grown long and neglected during the family's absence.

Practical Friendship

"It's just a practical demonstration of friendship," Schmoë said as he painted. "We've been doing this sort of thing since the first of the year. It helps too," he declared thoughtfully. "Pretty soon other people wander by. Some stop to talk and help. That's what we're aiming for."

Before the Quakers arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Nagaishi were seated quietly in their home looking over the crop of letters, both warning and friendly, they have been receiving since Monday.

Mrs. Nagaishi, visibly nervous about some of the letters, tried to laugh as she looked at them. One, signed "a mother," stated:

"Get out of town because there are too many true Americans that intend to get even with your race for what they have done to our boys."

"I'm a mother with two boys lying wounded in a hospital, and another in China. All I can say is get out of our city. We have too many worries at present to rid the town of Japs—but wait until this war is over. You will see."

Letters Go to W. R. A.

Another, signed "Mrs. J. D.," warned:

"I don't know you and can say

nothing against you personally. I can't feel friendly toward you. People of your country are trying to kill my husband and all the other men out there with him."

"We don't want Japs in the Northwest. I would sign my name except that I wouldn't want my family to suffer. I have learned a Jap is capable of anything."

Letters of this sort, Mrs. Nagaishi explained, are turned over to the War Relocation Authority. Her hands shook as she replaced them in the envelopes. But there were friendly ones, too.

"Do not fear to stay in your home," said one. "You will be protected. This must be a law-abiding nation. If you request protection you will get it."

But with the arrival of the Friends, the faces of the Nagaishi's brightened. They went outside their cold home—with its broken windows—something they haven't done since they arrived back a week ago today.

Holiday for Youngsters

Shigeo Nagaishi smiled at his wife, Chiseko, as they watched the Quakers working unobtrusively. Their two older daughters, Haruko, 6 years old, and Minnie, 2, ran around the yard, comic books trailing from their hands. Mrs. Nagaishi held the baby, Amy.

"I haven't let them out much since all this," she said. "They're having a holiday."

There are still two signs the Quakers couldn't paint out. These are in the front room windows of neighbors' homes. But the Nagaishi family had experienced a sufficient mental lift from the help and friendliness of the Quakers.

"Maybe things will be better now," Mrs. Nagaishi said hopefully, looking down at the sober face of her baby.