

By Pete and Janette Andrews, Publishers of the Sumner News-Index

When thinking about writing about the War Years at the request of Dr. John Kanda, we thought about looking back in our files to refresh our memory. However when going to the Ryan House Museum, we decided it would be better to read what Corydon "Nifty" Garrett wrote in his Sumner Standard. For it was he who stirred up the people of Sumner and surrounding area.

From those two years of files I am going to copy brief highlights that will be self explanatory. Starting with February 11, 1943 a back page editorial states:

BANISH THE JAPS

Henceforth the Standard stands committed to the proposal of banishing the Japs from this valley, state and nation forever. It will be the most humane thing we can do for them and the most sensible thing possible to do for our children.

We do not propose concentration camps nor privations, neither do we seek to rob them of their earnings, large or small, on the contrary, we would reimburse them justly, then banish them to the last mother son of their race. We do not need them and our feelings toward them extends to their companions in arms who now seek to enslave us. The ~~xxxx~~ Japs were eased out in the most sane and safe way. They should get no return ticket ever.

With this declaration having been printed in February, it was surprising to see in the April 8 issue a picture of a World War I Japanese veteran and his wife and their son pictured in the Standard with the father "shamed by the Jap attack upon Pearl Harbor" gratified when the U.S. Army permitted their son to join our forces. They were residents of Hawaii. Our only explanation was that Nifty was running weekly a full page war spread of "boiler plate" and didn't know what the pictures were until after the paper was printed - if he ever knew

On April 29 Mr. Garrett wrote a condemnation of President Roosevelt's wife for advocating the release of the American born "Japs" from the concentration camps.

June 3, 1943 Rev. L. A. Garrison, local Baptist church minister wrote a letter to the editor in which he quoted the Bible "God hath made of our blood all the nations of the earth and hath appointed them the bounds of their habitation."

In the same issue Mr. Garrett printed below his "Our Japanese Attitude" editorial his credo as follows:

Our Credo: Hate all, trust none.

WE URGE THESE THINGS:

- A- Write race into the constitution
- B- Revoke the citizenship of those who hold it.
- C- Intern every Jap until the war is over.
- D- Deport all who were born or ever studied in Japan.
- E- Forbid any new Japanese to set foot on American soil.
- F- This and more as a reward for their Pearl Harbor perfidy.

The Sumner Standard

C. Nifty Garrett.

Another editorial item on that same page as above (June 3) apparently Nifty influenced the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary to answer a questionnaire by probably Nifty. The item says President Cain had the questionnaire types so all could read and reason etc. The program was well presented and there is no doubt as to the consensus of opinion, as revealed by the questionnaire, being anti-Japanese.

In the June 10 issue Nifty's editorial stated in an editorial after the Conquest of Attu that if any of Sumner's boys were among the 1,535 casualties our readers will begin to see the light and understand that we are within reason when we urge that the Japs never be allowed to return to the valley.

Then in the July 22 issue the names of four local fellows were published that gave Nifty what he wanted to push his campaign.

August 12 Nifty reported a U.S. serviceman of Japanese descent being in town and how Police Chief Nort Wynn picked him up and called the FBI in San Francisco and Washington D.C. and found the young man was clear. He had come to town to finalize papers on 20 acres he owned in Algona that had been taken over by the Federal Government. Nifty's closing remark was that did not end the close watch established over him by the Sumner force. He came to town on Wednesday and left that day.

Oct. 7 editorial is interesting and can be taken more than one way, depending on the thoughts of the reader. I quote: "Japanese people will stop at nothing to let their government win the war. There is no meat, no sugar, no coffee, no tea, but above all no complaints. A Japanese family gets two eggs a month, fish once a week, and subsists mainly on poor quality rice.

"If we allow this land to be populated with low-livers like this, we will have reached our zenith in the scheme of human progress. We cannot lift them, but they can pull us down and we do not like that prospect."

Nov. 25 I quote a portion of an item: "Since Oct. 1942 the Standard has constantly advocated banishing the Japs from the nation." The Tyle Lake uprising gave Nifty fuel as he quoted the Auburn Globe-News as stating "the smouldering sentiment in this valley against the return of the Japanese." Then Nifty goes on to say "we have had fine letters from Ortin on the subject of 'washing them out'"

From the Dec. 2 editorial Nifty starts out In our endeavor to restrain the Japs from returning to this valley we desire it understood that we are only seeking to salvage the land for native Americans of more than one generation. etc.

From the time Mr. Garrett started his "We Want No Japs Here" (wording on his posters) he ran in his masthead: Our Objective: Banish Japs forever from U.S.A. It ran from Feb. 11, 1943 to June 1946 when Mr. Garrett sold his newspaper to J.D. Stack who removed it from the masthead immediately. He had vowed it would be there for as long as he had the newspaper.

June 22, 1944 the Standard carried a front page story reporting "Federal Agents Check on Local Jap Activities." The report starts out by saying Dr. J. H. Corliss took time out Tuesday to aid..... The article said searching for the former nests of Japanese war activities in this area. The report says the search took them to Pacific City where they located the house used by the Japs for their military information drills. The club room operated under a name comparable to 'Fencing Society'

They also searched their location of activity at the corner of Wood and Washington, now the Free Methodist Church. There the article says they found text books and a supply of mottos used in inculcating the Japanese ideals of war, which were used to prepare their youths in the strife now upon the nation.....The inspectors picked up the trail from this office."

August 3, 1944 Standard suggested a target date of Nov. 10 for a meeting to organize for a fight to keep the Japanese from returning here. However in my search of following issues I did not find where the actually met. Auburn organized and Nifty reports their meeting and about a Pearl Harbor League, but no story about a Sumner meeting. However I do know that Sumner did have a meeting down in the high school auditorium and we heard Dr. Corliss got up and claimed his reason for holding the Title papers to their center on Wood and Washington was to spy on them.

Sept. 21 Nifty wrote an editorial reporting Teamster President Dave Beck's stand against the Japanese, as given by Beck at the Western Conference of Teamsters in Seattle. He concluded with his own emphasis on Beck's comments and if the Teamster members "harken on this problem, as they have listened to him on others, well it will be just too bad when the Japs return.

Nov. 30, 1944 Mr. Garrett editorial announces a new service a 2 letters to the editor on the Japanese issue" however I could find no such column except a very long letter from former Senator Reuben Knoblauch that was on the front page.

Dec. 21 issue carried a plea by Mr. Garrett "We appeal to all fair minded patriotic men and women of this valley to aid the Remember Pearl Harbor League, Inc. expand their efforts to avert this insult and the potential harm that will follow. The league is intent on stopping the return of the Japs in their tracks. YOU can help, will you?"

Dec. 28, 1944 Nifty closed out his faithful campaign against not eliminating the "Japs" from the nation but now from our valley with by using his front page Bee Lines feature column all with Happy New Year and then follows with slurs at the "Japs." Such as is your war job going to be sabotaged by Sons of Nippon hell bent on committing hari-kari. 22 such items in the page-long column.

The items I had been watching for in the Standard that had eluded me came into being in the January 1945 issue of the 4th. That was the beginning of Nifty's list of those opposed to the return of the Japanese. 21 in all signed the list printed in Jan. 11 issue. Jan. 4 reported on the Sumner meeting with 65 present and all applying for membership in the league and paying an unspecified sum of money. Leo Knoblauch was chairman and called on the president of the league to speak who in turn presented petitions to Congress for signing. Among speakers all against the Japanese were Dr. Corliss, Harold Foster, school board president; who read a letter from Co. Pros. Thor Tollefson, the letter not printed as no room, Nifty stated; also Mayor Callaway and School Supt. Wade Calavan.

Jan. 11 - 21; Jan. 18 - 36 listed; Jan. 25 - 51 and Febr. 1 - 54. I looked thru several issues after Feb. 1 and found no more lists, but many stories of all kinds on the subject. Listed were some Ortting names which I did not count. The Merchant's list read "Opposed to Japs' Return" and at the conclusion of the list "Favors Japs' Return" no names followed on any of the lists.

I scanned several issue into 1945 of the Standard and found many more articles about the campaign being carried on all up and down the valley, so broad a scope that it was not just Sumner, so I stopped looking and will call this enough on C. Nifty Garrett's campaign of "We Want No Japs Here" poster.

As for our own experiences, we like to think that we were instrumental in keeping Sumner cool during these war years described above. We do know the F.B.I. was keeping watch of Nifty, for they came in to see us and ask questions on what was going on in town. Aside from the Sumner News-Index

^ Only one merchant that we recall stood up to Nifty and refused to place a sign in his window or be a part to Nifty's campaign. That was Mr. Simpson, the radio repair man. He had a businss on Alder, just south of the corner on the west side. When things got rough for him, he would call and talk to Pete and get encouragement to stand by his convictions.

One day two University of Chicago men came in to talk to Pete about what was causing the all of the war turmoil in Sumner against the Japanese. As the two Japanese men talked to Pete I saw Howard Schrengohst standing outside our store front windows peering in at us like looking at monkeyes in a cage. Later he asked me who they were and remarked they (Japanese) all look alike.

The local Japanese people looked upon Dr. J. H. Corliss as their friend I am sure. When they wanted a place for their recreation they apparently bought the old Methodist Church on the corner of Wood and Washington and asked Dr. Corliss to hold the papers for them since they could not own property. I think Dr. Corliss was on good terms with the Japanese and he turned on them under the influence of C. Nifty Garrett. He was not doing it to spy as he declared at that mass meeting Dec. 28, 1944.

I do not know what year this incident took place, but was after Morris C llaway went out as mayor and Jess Stahlhut was mayor. Pete learned a group of Japanese men had come into town to take care of business at the bank (Seattle First located then where Corbin's was. A crowd gathered and began to heckle the fellows. Pete got Nort Wynn, the police chief demanding he protect the men. He either couldn't or wouldn't and Pete called over to Fibreboard where Mr. Stahlhut worked and demanded he come over to the bank and see that these fellows received the protection they needed. Fortunately the men got their accounts closed out and left town without incident as far as injury was concerned.

During the war years Rotary Club met at My Wife's Cafe, now the Caboose down by the railroad track. I do not know what year this was but Nifty came to Rotary with a dozen fresh eggs. (I assume fresh). I do not know now whether he was the speaker that day or just putting on a smart alec act. But he was at the head table and when he got up to talk he showed his carton of eggs and said "You throw eggs at me and I'll throw eggs at you." Then he went on in a tirade against the Japanese. He must have been the speaker, because when we all filed out of the restaurant no one was talking at all. We got out on the street and I remember of leaving at the same time as Lloyd Voiles and Dr. Marmaduke Dodsworth. They were just sick over the incident none of us could talk and I'm sure the whole club felt the same as we did.

Nifty became president of Rotary in 1949. At that time Summer Rotary sponsored Youth Week every Spring - with the high school students electing youth week city officers, mayor etc. The irony that year - who should become mayor of Summer Youth Week but a Japanese boy and Nifty had to recognize that boy in a Rotary meeting etc.

Sometime during the war and we do not remember when, someone came into the News-Index office and brought a large paper colored map that had been found in a desk drawer up in the Puget Sound Vegetable Grower's office on Main St. We do not recall anything much about it, nor why it was brought to us, not Mr. Garrett. The map showed the Japanese Navy ships in number compared to the U.S. (maybe including other countries. We do not remember). Pete says the map also indicated the Army comparison by a soldier representing so many men. I remember spotted all over the water part of the map of Japanese marking of some kind indicating ships and their location. An investigation was started Pete recalls, but nothing ever came of it, and we heard no more about it. If Nifty reported anything on it, I have not found it.

Pete and I had always wanted a greenhouse and bought a lot of cold frame window sash from the Japanese prior to their being interned, while they were trying to salvage as much of their assets as they could.

In regard to Howard Schrengohst peering in the window at us, I failed to comment; Howard was living in the George Ota house during the war years as the one friend Ota's felt they could trust to take care of their house while they were interned.

E. P. "Pete" Anderson