

In early 1942 I was studying dressmaking in Gardena, a suburb of Los Angeles when I was asked to return home to Holtville, California, a small town in the County of Imperial, because of problems and father's illness. In spite of discrimination, my parents and other Japanese farmers settled in this area to grow vegetables. Before the war, my father told us that he went into a drug store and asked for a sandwich. The owner was happy to serve him the sandwich but asked him to eat it in the backroom where customers cannot see him. Merchants feared for their business. In the many years association with the residents we made some very good friends and there were less prejudice. But, when EO 9066 was posted throughout the area, we were looked upon as enemies, dangerous aliens and living became difficult for us. When we went into stores we would be ignored until everyone had been served. Then they would reluctantly wait upon us. I don't think it was because they did not want to wait on us but they were afraid of the reaction of their non-Japanese customers. Chinese residents wore badges, "I am Chinese" so that they would not be treated as we were. It was disheartening to experience such a sudden change for us who lived in this area since childhood.

One afternoon I was downtown Holtville shopping, a man came walking up to my car and asked if I had any horses to sell. I answered, "No". Then he shook his cane at me and said, "Why not, do you know your country and my country is at war?" Before he could use the cane on me, I released my brakes and drove off. I spoke to my friends about this incident, and they wanted to talk to this person and set him straight, but I requested that we leave things alone because we did not want to cause more trouble for fear that other Japanese might suffer because of our action. Friends who knew us whether they were Caucasians or Chinese were very helpful and sympathetic. They could not understand why we, American citizens, had to evacuate.

One night about 11 p.m. there was a shrill siren outside our home. Such sounds are unusual miles out in the country. My sister and I, very frightened, went outdoors. Two officers in a government car were searching for the home of a prisoner (a Japanese farmer) they arrested downtown earlier that day. This man was not given a chance to say good-bye to his wife and children before he was taken away to an internment camp. The officers wanted to pick up his suitcase, and asked us to direct them to the prisoner's home. During the ride they told us about another prisoner they had arrested at his home leaving only his wife to strive for herself. Their two sons were serving in the US Army. They said it was sad but they were only following orders. My father had been ill for years so he did not participate in any of the Japanese clubs, therefore he was spared internment.

In preparation for the evacuation, I visited the WRA office to make arrangements to sell my crop. I was told that I could not sell my crop because my landlady had placed a mortgage on it. I did not understand this procedure, but I knew that I owed her nothing, and she had no reason for this action. I was very upset, and said, "She can't do this." he replied, "I know she can't but she did." The WRA officer noticed I was very upset and told me that he would freeze the property so that I could not sell it. I protested freezing because I had so little time to settle everything. An elderly Japanese man noticed I was having problems and came up to me and asked me not to antagonize the WRA officer because we might run into more persecution. I had to fight for my rights because this was the major portion of our property.

Fortunately, in my case, the landlady and her lawyer came to the WRA office to make things right and I was able to complete my sale that afternoon. All farm equipments, a truck, and the house was included in this sale of \$3000. Few household appliances were left in care of my friends. One truck was left with a friend who ran a service station and after he made the sale, he was going to bank the money in my account which he did. All other items such as bedroom furniture, linens, extra clothing, bedding and kitchen dishes, pots and pans were given to our faithful farm hand. Fancy plates we valued were given to friends who offered to take care of our appliances.

Prior to making our decision to go to the relocation center, I wrote letters to Gallup, New Mexico, to Colorado, and to Idaho to inquire about working conditions and the possibility of moving to those areas but only received a response from Gallup. We were told that there was very little employment there.

There were rumors that if we could take our truck with us, we could take more things to the center, therefore we packed most of our necessities and drove to the meeting place. We were told that no other vehicle was permitted and that we would have to reload our belongings onto the transfer truck.

A Caucasian friend who was a medical doctor offered to go along with the bus as our doctor. We had an MP with a rifle riding with us (to protect us?), but it was a comfort for me to have a doctor nearby. My father was not well and an elderly man who was ill was dependent upon me to help him when he had problems because he could not speak English.

Our family was assigned two rooms, the three brothers and my parents in one room, and the three girls in the other sharing it with three other sisters from another family. We had straw filled mattresses, community latrines, community bathhouses, and a mess hall where all members of that block ate.

A temporary hospital was set up and this is where I chose to work from the first day after my arrival in Poston. While working there I saw a young man hemorrhaging-- he had tuberculosis. In the next room a baby was born. They named him Poston. The first baby born in Poston did not have a crib. I spotted a lettuce crate just outside the hospital window, washed it, and lined it with sheets as his crib. One of the doctors was sick with diarrhea. When a patient needed him, he would crawl out of bed and attend to his needs.

As I was walking to work one morning, a Caucasian government employee gave me a ride to the hospital. He asked me what I thought of this project. I told him that they could have had the hospital completed before bringing in new mothers and contagious cases.

Eventually a nice hospital was opened and patients were separated into respective wards. In the TB ward, and the surgical wards men and women were in the same ward. The women were closer to the front of the ward and the men were placed in the back. They had a separate maternity ward with a nursery. There was no facility made for the mentally disturbed cases--they were placed in the surgical or TB ward but usually in the front private rooms. The nurses aides worked by the rotation system, therefore we were assigned to different wards. Because of mentally disturbed patients in the same area with others we had some exciting times and any happening news would travel rapidly through the wards.

The hospital had a good training program for the nurses aides. The chief nurse and her assistant were outstanding professional people.

My two friends and I left the relocation center when Chicago sent a blanket invitation for employment. We were hired to do hospital work. After six months one of the friends and I decided to join the Cadet Nurses Corp. We were accepted in the Swedish Covenant Hospital. We were the first Japanese to train in this hospital. This was a Christian institution and all students must be recommended by their church pastor. We had an enjoyable time there. My nursing career came to a halt when I finished my probation period because of pleurisy with effusion. The WRA arranged to have me hospitalized in Chicago. They told me that I would not get the care I needed if I returned to Poston and that I would get better care in Chicago.

While I was in Chicago, my older brother was inducted into the US Army while in the center. When he was stationed in Minnesota (MIS), he visited me, I was still a patient in the hospital. My family moved out of the center in August, 1945. They rented an apartment in a housing project in Long Beach and started a new life. My father was hospitalized so he did not return to California with the family but was relocated to a nearby hospital later.

This relocation destroyed everything my parents strived for through many years of hardship through discrimination, adverse weather, and poverty. So all they can say is "Shi kata ga nai". But for us niseis, it gave us a chance to break away from our parents and venture into new areas. We were made stronger because we had to strive for ourselves. Example of hard work was shown to us by our parents, therefore we worked hard and pushed onward in whatever we did. As for myself, I would rather not think back to those days of 1942. I would be happier to forget about it. I hope and pray future generations will not have to experience what we did because reaction of the public will be stronger the second time.