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Bill and Naoko Ito
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Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Dear Bill & Naoko,

The other night while I was in bed, somewhere between wakefulness and fitful dreaming, my mind drifted back to the old days in Denver—how it was in school at DU; the many friends and acquaintances that we made, particularly among the Nise students. Then suddenly I popped up, completely awake, because I realized that I had never answered the letter that you wrote, what—over a year ago?

Bill, I'm real sorry about that. Maybe this long, detailed letter will make up for my negligence.

It won't be in any particular chronological order, and it will probably take several days to complete. But today it's been doing nothing but rain, so it's a good time to get started, before we start babysitting our youngest grand-daughter in a couple of days. That should be a good starting point.

Well, now.

After Miki and I got back to the States, way back in October, 1956, I resumed my interrupted surgical residency at a local hospital. My father made the down payment on a little house in Portland, and would you believe it, Miki and I still live in it 41 years later!!! Back then, it cost just a little over $13,000—which was an enormous sum of money to me—for the whole house. Since then, we've made several improvements, additions and remodelings, so of course the market value now is very different from when we first moved in.

You probably don't recall that when I was stationed at the Iwakuni Naval Air Station, 1954-56, that we had two kids. Two girls—Barbara and Meredith. Maybe you might have met them when they were just little kids, because it seems to me that you took our family to Suehiro's for a sukiyaki dinner one night in Tokyo. Do I remember right? I don't think that you were married at the time, but I'm not sure.

Anyway, back to Portland in 1957. We had a boy who was born two months premature. Earlier that year, my father had committed suicide, and maybe partly because of the associated grief and sorrow, Miki developed what was/is called a toxemia of pregnancy. Our little son, Allen Masuo, lived only three days. Several months after that, in late 1957, we adopted a infant boy, whom we named John Michael Yasui. The adoption agency said that John's mother was a Nisei nurse somewhere in the Bay area, and that his father was a Nisei college student. That's all we know about his natural parent's background. John has had opportunities to look into his background, but he has never exercised that option. He doesn't want to know.

Almost 40 years later, our family has grown considerably.

Barbara, our first child, is married to Robert Hayman, who comes from the Pacific Heights area in San Fransico. His father is/was the president of Hayman Homes, which is a building/ development company there, but now he has withdrawn from the active management of the business, leaving that up to a couple of sons. Bob and Barbara have 2 kids—a 14 year old girl named Mari Rebecca, and a 11 year old son, called Daniel Akira. Of course those two grand-children are *hapa*; and yes, you can tell that they aren't 100% Japanese. Even knowing their bloodlines however, it's still hard to decide exactly what they do look like. Mari definitely looks Eurasian, but Danny looks more like maybe a Latino, or maybe a Pilipino. Anyway, they are two very nice kids, and of course I say that Mari is beautiful and that Danny is handsome. They live in a town of around 15,000, in a place called Marysville. It's about 200 miles north of here.

Bob, Barbara's husband, is a fish biologist, and he's worked for one Indian tribe or another for almost 20 years now. First he started work with the Quileute (kwill-a-yoot) Nation, which is a small tribe of around 1000 members who live on the coast in the Olympic National Forest. Then he changed jobs to work with the Confederated Lower Skagit (skaj-it) Nation, but this also includes the Swinomish (Swin-o-mish) tribe. Bob is a very interesting fellow. When he was growing up in San Francisco, his best friends were Chinese American boys who attended Lowell High School with him. Later, when he attended Stanford, which is where he met Barbara, he chose to live in an Asian-theme dormitory. Just recently, I asked his whole Marysville family to take a "Japaneseness" questionnaire. As you might have guessed, he scored the closest to the Issei self-perceptions. But, neither Barbara nor I am sure exactly how accurate and dependable his responses are. He can't really be more "Japanese" than my daughter!!! But then he says—with considerable justification—"Don't tell me what to think or what to believe!!!!"

We see/visit them several times a year. They always make it a point to come back to Portland for either Thanksgiving, Christmas or *Oshogatsu*. This year it was New Years. Miki and our daughters spent a good part of the day before New Year, making a lot of the traditional Japanese foods. We have always felt that it was important that our kids, and their kids, understand and appreciate the Japanese part of their heritage, and I'm satisfied that they have. All of our in-laws are/have been (because of a couple of divorces) *hakujin*, so of course all of our 7 grandchildren are *hapa*. Every single one of them are beautiful children in the white American perception of beauty, and I happen to agree with that view because I was brought up that way.

Later this summer, in August I think, Miki and I will take Barbara and Mari on a three week trip to Europe, to visit Germany, Austria and Switzerland. I suppose that I have an unfair appreciation and understanding of our *Chojo*, Barbara—she was our firstborn—because we see alike on so many things, and we think alike in so many other ways. But I try hard not to let that influence my particular affection for her, in all fairness to my other kids. That's a tough walk to walk, isn't it, Bill?

Meredith, our second daughter, is married to a lawyer, and they live on a picturesque island called Vashon Island, which is located in the Puget Sound. At the age of 40, she had her first (and almost surely her only) child, named Tazue Yasui Flory. Now ain't that a very different name for a Yonsei kid, and a *hapa* one at that? Erin, her husband, works for a rather well-known law firm in Seattle, and I think that he makes pretty big bucks, even though he's only 40 years old. In many ways, I'm very pleased that our daughter Meredith, has thought so much of her Japanese ancestry and of her Yasui family name, that she named her kid in our honor. But while Miki and I are pleased, what should one make of the ridicule that our youngest grand-daughter, Toz, will surely get from her Caucasian friends, classmates and teachers as she grows up? I think: "poor Toz—hang tough. It's going to be a hard row to hoe, but hang in there."

Because I'm reminded of something that happened maybe 15 years ago, when I was still in the practice of General Surgery and I still attended meetings devoted to this subject. It was at a meeting of the American College of Surgeons in San Francisco. One of the guest lecturers was a

doctor named Jokichi Takamine. It ran a bell with me, because Jokichi Takamine has been a great name in American medicine. The original Takamine was a Japanese national and a graduate of a medical school there, who came to the United States and worked for, I think, Wyeth Laboratories. While in America, Takamine was the first person to isolate and purify epinephrine, which later came to be called adrenalin, under Wyeth's proprietary name. He then went on to isolate and purify an enzyme called Taka-Diastase, which is occasionally still being used after over 100 years. So that's the setting.

Well, this Jokichi Takamine to my very great surprise, turned out to be the original Jokichi Takamine's grandson. But this Jokichi was well over six feet tall, and had blue eyes and very light colored hair. I would never have guessed that he had any Japanese blood in him. But here he was, and he proudly carried his grandfather's first and last names—Jokichi Takamine. His appearance was all Caucasian, yet this guy bore his Japanese grandfather's name proudly. So, I think, Tazue Yasui Flory should be able to bear her name proudly too.

Our last child John has been something of a problem to us. As in so many other families all over the world, there usually is at least one child who doesn't conform to the family values or ideas. John is that one in our family. He's been married twice and divorced twice, and has fathered 4 children, none of whom he supports. He's also been in trouble with the law. He's the only one of our children who lives in Portland, yet we see him only briefly once or twice a year. His two former families have long ago moved away—one lives in a place called Kingston, which is across the Puget Sound from Seattle; the other has moved to Providence, RI. So we never see those grandchildren at all. It's been quite a continuing problem, and of course a great worry.

As for Miki and me, I've been retired from the practice of General Surgery for 10 years come this July. My office was located in a suburb of Portland, a place called Milwaukie, which is about 8 miles south of where we live. I practiced there for close to 30 years. It was an interesting and rewarding part of our lives, but I have never regretted retiring at the age of 62.

A couple of years after my discharge from the Navy, I joined a Naval Reserve unit in Portland, and spent the next 19+ years in one military outfit or another. The group which I enjoyed the most was a Marine Corps Reserve outfit, with whom I spent 12 years. A reserve unit is much like the National Guards in terms of time and type of service. We drilled one weekend a month, usually in the field but sometimes at the Reserve Center; and we spent two weeks at a summer camp every year. Most of the summer camps I spent were with the Marine Corps, either at Camp Pendleton or at a place called 29 Palms, which is in the Mohave desert.

I really enjoyed being in the reserve service, partly because it was so very different from what I did in my daily life otherwise; and partly because in those days our units consisted almost entirely of men—it was a very macho thing then. I retired from the service quite awhile back with a permanent rank of Navy Captain. I/we are entitled to a pension, which I've been drawing for some years; commissary and exchange priviliges; some types of medical care; free medicines; military flights on a space available basis; and low cost life insurance. So altogether, the Navy has been very good to us, and I have never regretted spending my time there, particularly the great life we had for nearly 20 months in Iwakuni.

Miki—a few years back, I/we changed the spelling of this nickname from "Mickey", because she preferred it that way; and secondly because it looked and sounded more "Japanese". Her real name is Miyuki, but almost no one—except her two sisters—ever calls her that. Anyway, Miki spends a lot of her time doing grandmotherly things, such as buying or making presents for the grandkids. But since my retirement, we do some traveling once or twice a year. I like to go to camp reunions and JACL conventions—Nikkei things—but since Miki isn't so hot on that, we don't do that very often anymore. But we did a lot of it in the past.

She's involved with several different Portland Nikkei community activities, and sits on a couple of different boards. One of these boards is now trying to develop an Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, and although the going seems to be rather slow to me, it's making better progress now. I used to be on the board too—in fact, I was the treasurer—but I resigned six months ago when it became apparent to me that this board mostly wanted to just talk about what it wanted to do. That's not my bag, especially not after two years of talking.

Currently we're working on another Nikkei project, which is to teach at a college graduate and undergraduate level, Oregon Nikkei history, and about the evacuation. This is the brainchild of a Nisei educator who was for many years in the Oregon State Department of Education; I'm just one of the lecturers. This will be in cooperation with Portland State University. Whether this will happen or not depends largely on whether or not this project will get funded by the Civil Liberties Educational Fund. Maybe you know that there was supposed to have been $50 million allocated to the fund when the Redress Bill was passed in 1988; but since there were so many more Nikkei eligible for redress than had been originally estimated, the amount of money was cut down to $5 million. So we'll just have to wait and see.

I/we spend a lot of time on our yard when the weather allows it. You may have gotten the idea from the TV that in Oregon it mostly rains, but that's not quite right. We spend a lot of time in the yard, which isn't very big. I'm getting older, slower and weaker, so it's getting harder for me to do some things, such as pruning our trees or spading our postage stamp-size vegetable garden. But since both of us are in very good health—barring some high blood pressure for both of us—we can and still do the work just as well as before, only slower. We enjoy that a lot, even though I may appear to do a lot of grousing about doing some of the no-brainer chores, like mowing the lawn every week.

Now let me switch the mood to nostalgia—we can catch up on the news of our respective families and mutual friends through other letters, and hopefully, at personal meetings one day.

This nostalgia piece isn't in any particular order. It's just what comes off the top of my head, so in that sense, it's just free-flowing, train-of-thought.

Do you remember, Bill, that year—was it in 1944? Or was it in 1945?—that you and I spent the summer working in Eastern Oregon and Western Idaho? Do you remember that we lived with my oldest brother, "Choppy" and his family, which then consisted of his wife, Mikie, and their little daughter, Joan Kay? They lived in Fruitland, Idaho, which was just across the Snake River from Ontario, OR. "Chop" worked for a Major Lewis, in his fruit orchard, which was mostly apple and pears. You and I shipped out from there and worked wherever there was farm labor work to be found.

We once worked for a Nisei guy who was named either Jim Matsuoka or Jim Watanabe at a place called "Whitney Bottom", which, as I remember, was somewhere in Idaho near Fruitland. We thinned sugar beets, or maybe it was onion sets. I remember there that once while you were smoking a cigarette—yes, you smoked then—you remarked that you didn't like smoking when the wind was blowing because it just didn't taste good. And you were right. I still smoke Camel cigarettes, and I don't like smoking when the wind is blowing even now, because, as you long ago said, it "doesn't taste good." Remember?

Another thing that I remember so well about Whitney Bottom, was that one day when were setting out to thin whatever it was that we were supposed to thin, I thought that the row that you were supposed to work was just overgrown with weeds, and so would be a hard effort. So, thoughtlessly, I said to you, in effect, "Here, Bill, you take my row, and I'll take yours". And I remember that you straightened up to your full height and said, "You don't think very much of me, do you?" And again, you were right. Here I had implied that I could do the work better than

you could because I was tougher and better, and that I was an experienced farm boy. Which wasn't the fact at all.

If I remember rightly, you lived and grew up on, a farm in the Sacramento Delta region; whereas I did farm work only on weekends and during the summer months, because I lived in the town of Hood River, not on a farm or orchard. I learned something about people from you then, and I've always remembered that—even some 55 years later.

I remember too, during that summer, that one day we were hired to "buck" spuds—or maybe it was onions. You will recall that the job required that we keep up with a slow, always-moving, high, flatbed truck; and that we were to walk down the rows and heave the sacks of whatever they were, onto the truck. Somehow I seem to remember that we were told that each of those half-filled sacks weighed 50 pounds, and that most "buckers" simply grasped the neck of each sack with one hand, and just threw them aboard. Well, it took me about 15 minutes to realize that I couldn't hack that job. I had to cradle each sack with both hands plus my knees and belly to get it onto that truck; and there was no way that I could keep up. I don't remember how you hacked that work, but I remember that I resigned. Do you remember?

On another occasion, I remember that we were hired to thin apples in an orchard in Fruitland. Our white boss, who as I recall, wasn't all that old, thought we were doing a good job, but that we were too slow. I don't remember whether we were canned or not—but I guess that we were. And again, I remember that we once sprayed apple trees, but I don't think that we lasted long on that job, either. I came from apple and pear country, so I knew what spraying was all about; but I had never actually sprayed until then. We were probably canned then too. Ah well.

The final memory of Fruitland, Idaho with you, was when, after we had had supper and had taken our baths in that old "boy house" of Chop and Mik's, we played "*shi go ro*", which the *hakujin* called "Single-O". Do you remember that dice game? I can only vaguely recall it now, because I've never played it since, and it's been over 50 years. I don't even remember who were all the players. But anyway, I remember that you had a spectacular run of luck, and that you were taking all of us to the cleaners. We were playing for real money then—I don't remember for what—dollars, quarters—but real money. You were so far ahead that it was unbelievable; and you just accepted verbal "I owe you's". In the end, I don't think that you ever pressed your legitimate, honorable claims to all the money which you had fairly won. What do you remember about that game Bill?

Now let me switch the nostalgia scene to another area, to Denver. I can't remember the exact year, nor even the exact place, but it was somewhere on Downing Street.

I think that by then Johnny Ishizuka had transferred to a dental school in San Francisco; and that Yoshihisa "Peter" Umekubo had transferred to the Universtiy of Texas, at Waco. But there were still a lot of Nisei around then, some of them attending the University of Denver, some not. Terushi "Dimples" Nakamura was there, and a guy named John Kusakabe, and somebody named Niles Nakajima. There were still a lot of us, and we knew them all.

At this house on Downing Street, I think that mostly it was Nisei girls living there. Do you remember? One of the girls living there was named "Kazzie" Okada, and her family had come from Hayward, California, as I remember; and that they had run a greenhouse or a florist shop. I've often wondered whatever became of her. I also remember a girl named "Halu" Tomita, and her sister, whose name I've forgetten, who lived at that house on Downing. Of course "Halu's" real name was Haru Tomita, but it looked and sounded better—so we all naively thought in those days—to be not so Japanese. Halu and "Dimples" Nakamura got married, and I think that they moved to Hood River, which was where he originated. Unfortunately, their marriage didn't last

very long, because the next thing that I heard, Halu was back in Denver, alone. That didn't surprise me a whole lot, because I knew Dimples' father, Hitoshi "Henry" Nakamura; and old Henry was a stubborn, hard-headed customer. Some of his children and grandchildren still live in Hood River, and I see them now and then.

Sure, naturally our memories have faded over these many years. But I'm sure that you can recall yet how at one time we were so close together; when we were a bunch of scared little "Japs", all hoping to get along, to survive in what seemed to be such a suddenly hostile world. I can and I do remember, even if after all this time. It was a tough world, a tough time, which most of us understood and accepted. It makes me so proud that our people—that is, most of us—endured; we survived; and that most of us have done very well with our lives, and that we are a credit to the human race.

I remember people such as:

Mable Tsumori; Nick Iyoya; Edith Itano; John Kuniomi Ishizuka; Yoshihisa Peter Umekubo; John Kusakabe; Neva Inouye; Tony Takashima; George Mizunoue; Sho Sato; Frank Tsunoda; Kazzie Okada; Halu Tomita; Niles Nakajima; Tosh Ando; Alto Higashiuchi; Terushi "Dimples" Nakamura; Kenneth Sugioka; Edward Ishii; George Yasui; Minnie Yasui; Evelyn Mugishima; Toshihiko Bill Ito; and so many others.

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John and Momoyo Ishizuka have in the past two years come up to Oregon, to hunt for *matsutake*. Last year was a dead bust; but the year before, Miki and I took them up into our mountains, and we were able to send them back home with something like 15 pounds. That was something that pleased us a lot. Because, next to my old hometown Hood River Valley Nisei friends whom I've known all my life—which is now 72 years—John is my oldest wartime friend. We left Tule Lake together in September, 55 years ago.

Bill and Naoko, I hope that our friendship and mutual experiences will also endure.

With all best wishes,