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Letter by Claire D. Sprague about evacuated students and theirs families, April 1942

Claire D. Sprague

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Apr. 1942

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44
We will have to move away
To the Japanese camp they all say,
Still I will always do my part
By buying defense stamps with
all my heart " " by Fugino Yoshida

Here Fugino Yoshida
symbolizes the spirit of the California
Japanese child as his final
assignment before leaving French
Camp Isammur School, which is
located in the heart of the fertile
San Joaquin Valley.

12 yr. old Fugino Yoshida is but
one of 80 young Japanese from this
school who have been ^{were} evacuated from
their homes and sent to Assembly
Centers during the ^{W. W. II Period.} ~~past~~ few weeks.

Lonesome for their school mates
and friends at French Camp, these
young Nisei have poured out letters
after letters telling of happy moments
and sad ones.

As their teacher for several
years I have ^{had} come to know and
understand them. Though these letters
may seem a little strange to others,
to me they represented all the emotions

of the American^{II} born Japanese child.

"We had a nice trip up here to Manjinar," writes Dorothy Sakurai, "We came right by Turlock camp and all our Japanese friends from French Camp were standing on the fence ^{waving} with their hats, hands, and flags as we went by." She continues,

"Over here we are surrounded by hills. The hills are all desert and on one side of the top of the hill there is snow. The mountains are very pretty."

Haru Tanaka who went to the Turlock Assembly Center with her parents and 9 brothers and sisters ^{wrote} "I am is ^{wrote} "lonesome without those puppies yet" and "if you know where our place is you can go see our puppies." She ^{wrote} again, "We had three little kittens too - I wonder how big they are now - maybe the little ducks are hatched by now."

However, Haru isn't too lonesome because she ^{wrote} "The Watanabes, Yamasaki,

and Yonemotos and many other French Camp families are here for our neighbors at Turlock.

In a later letter Dorothy Sakurai describes the camp at Manzanar.

"It is very sandy here, and there are no gates, but there is a certain line that you cannot go by. Outside that line is the desert. The weather here is very hot, but the wind blows. The houses are very good. We have a little stove in ours. I think there is a little stove in every house. The stove is to keep warm."

California's entire Japanese population is ~~now~~^{was} housed in these Assembly Centers, constructed on Fair grounds and Race Tracks and other places through out the state.

These places provided temporary homes for the Japanese until arrangements ^{could} be made to move them to other central and western states.

Camps ~~are~~^{were} operated on a summer camp basis - canteens ~~are~~^{were} in operation. They used coupon books to buy make their purchases.

They lived in barracks ^{II} and ^{eat} ate
in a giant mess hall. After the
first few days they amended the
meal time check off system so that
each family had its own number
number. This assured the family
group that they ~~would~~ ^{would} not be separated
and ~~is~~ ^{was} much easier on the tongues
of those in charge.

Each person had an individual
bed [somewhat of a novelty to the
children of the large Japanese families]
The beds and equipment caused en-
thusiastic response from the Japanese
boys who wrote repeatedly that they
~~are~~ ^{were} sleeping on army cots with army
blankets just like the soldiers !!

Harvener, the biggest hit of
the camp ~~is~~ ^{was} the shower. Marjorie
sheepishly reported that she spent
most of the first afternoon under the
shower and left no hot water for
the rest of the camp. A few had difficulty
getting accustomed to the shower bath
but all ~~were~~ ^{were} impressed by it. Family

oriental style of bathing in the large tub had been the vogue for these farm families.

Upon my visit to the Stockton Assembly Center, Mrs. Harry Itaya requested that I send her some shower bath caps. She related that her 5 small children had their hair continuously wet from going back and back and back to the showers.

The Itaya family is a representative group of evacuees. Harry, about 35 was a moderately prosperous truck gardener. His vegetable route, with deliveries starting when some of ~~the~~ ^{people} were on ~~our~~ ^{their} way to bed, covered many of Stockton's major stores. Harry, ^{who} was progressive, ^{and} used latest farming methods ~~and~~ brought his children up in American traditions. Mrs. Itaya, although shy, was a member of the Parent Teacher Group ^{at French Camp Sect.} ^{1.} Through her efforts enough wool was purchased by the Japanese people to knit some 180 squares for afghans for the Jr. Red Cross. This was done as a school project which was almost halted when the war knitting craze caused a shortage of knitting needles.

Creative Japanese, however converted chop sticks into knitting needles and the project continued. 12 yr. old Ray Itaya had been my pupil for 2 yrs. He too might be taken as representative of the Japanese child in the community, clean, honest and industrious

^{during war time} The American children in French Camp school deserved the highest praise for their ^{love} tolerance ~~during war~~ time - ^{for} their Japanese class mates.

Today they are ^{spent} spending all their spare time in the fields, doing their part in an attempt to salvage this year's ^{the} crops.

Oddly enough, they have been ^{used} using a small part of their earnings to send candy and gum etc to their Japanese class mates at Assembly Centers -

Yes! all this ~~could only~~ happen ⁱⁿ America!

(Mrs.) Claire Sprague
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This is a letter written by
Mrs. Claire Sprague - a
teacher at French Camp School.

1942



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