

TAKESONO, SEIKAKU (REVEREND) 3/11/82 Part 1

Take: I brought these things. I showed these things to Mr. Kosaka. These are photos of internees. These are memories from the relocation. There were about 13 locations. The places where I went are here -- New Mexico's Santa Fe and Lordsburg and Louisiana; they had 2 locations there. Most of us went there and assembled later at Santa Fe. After that the ones with families were sent there (Crystal City). There they lived with their families. The bad ones were sent to Tule Lake. They had quite a few things happening there.

To: That's where Mr. Kosaka was sent. Did you meet him there?

Take: I didn't know he was there. I went later. We had an incident there and were sent back to Santa Fe. I was on temporary parole but got into a demonstration and was re-sent to Santa Fe. Tule Lake is here, Santa Fe is here and families (Crystal City) is here. We all returned separately. In terms of my family, one of my children was born over there. Born at Tule Lake. That's my quick history. You can ask me anything that you want to. This is a photo taken about the time I went into the camps. This is the kind of clothes that we wore. We all had numbers. Those numbers were assigned over there. Hawaii had its own numbers. This is a place that we had over there. These are all the reverends. Hongwanji ministers from the mainland and Hawaii. There were 50 of us there. There were 100 religious leaders if you include Shinto and Buddhist. This is only the Hongwanji ministers. The single man's group. Later, their families joined them and they were transferred. These are the ministers who were married. These are the mainland ministers. They didn't limit religion inside the camps. This is a barrack, my barrack. There's a young person there. This is a photo of the ministers from various states. There's about 120 of them. This is different; it's the Big Island people. I was out on the Big Island for a while.

To: Then you must know Mr. Hosida?

Take: Yes, I know him. Take a look here. He doesn't come out too often (to the church). I thought he was sick. I know him well from my days in Hilo. This is Barracks III. No, this is Maui. During the outbreak at war, I was on Maui. This is a picture of the Maui group. I don't think any of them are still alive. They left or died. This is money.

To: Money used at the camp?

Take: Its' paper. The office held the cash and exchanged those tokens for it. So this became our allowance. These are letters that were exchanged. Later on, letters that were cut up will be coming up.

To: You didn't have to pay postage?

Take: That's right. We didn't have to use any stamps. This is Barracks III that I mentioned earlier. These are the "waru-bozo." They gave up their citizenship and came to the camps. That is something that you might look into. They had a citizenship law that if it was still in existence today they would have "senso komon." Right after the war, the repealed the law. It was during the war when they passed the law, especially for Japanese. America did some pretty terrible things. This is my "Kenjinkai." All people from Nara. I'm from Nara Prefecture. This person was from Sumitomo Bank. These are the "wild boys" from Tule Lake. They're all nisei.

To: The "washu-sumi"?

Take: I was one of the leaders, so that's why I got caught and

sent to Santa Fe. They had a lot of kibe in the group. This is from the old Barracks III. These are the bunch that went to Tule Lake.

To: These photos are of Tule Lake?

Take: There are no pictures of Tule Lake. These are Santa Fe. I only have barracks pictures. They didn't allow pictures if they included the fence. So we could only take pictures that were taken in the yard. These are the tags that were placed on my wife's luggage when she left for the camps. This is the Relocation Center's Denson when we're celebrating hana matsuri. I was returned to Santa Fe at that time. What was this? This is the place that they closed... This is Tule Lake when we reached there from the camp in Arkansas.

To: Arkansas--Jerome?

Take: Jerome! They closed Jerome and they sent us to Tule Lake. There were 30,000 there.

To: Is that your wife?

Take: Yeah, this is my wife and children. This one is a dentist in Kaneohe. This is my neighbor. They only allow us to take pictures up to this extent. This is also Tule Lake. This is Montana. It comes up quite often in the internees' stories (Heart Mountain). This is the Tule Lake kindergarten. My daughter went there. This is the newspaper that they had there. It's only a single page. It's all translated from approved English articles. Unless the headquarters approved, we couldn't put out the paper.

To: That meant news was slow in reaching the readers?

Take: Right. The news was slow in coming. Everyone was looking forward to it coming out. These are the letters that I exchanged with my wife. They cut out the censored portions. We needed this stamp of approval to get our mail. They were quick to cut out information about Japan. They had two Japanese translators. Mr. Kino and Mr. Uetake. It was pretty harsh. These are all clippings. This is a telegram that was sent after the war when we requested to return to Hawaii.

To: Originally you were thinking about returning to Japan?

Take: During the war, I wanted to go back. There was no sense after the war was finished, so we decided to return to Hawaii. It was interesting how it was decided. One by one, the internees went in to see this guy named Williams. I went with a translator since I didn't know English. He told me to answer honestly. Are you going to Hawaii or Japan? I told him Hawaii. Then he would ask why I was returning to Hawaii. And if someone picked Japan, he would ask why that option was made. In that respect, I thought it represented the US. Then they made arrangements with the Navy. When we were at Santa Fe, the family was not there. It was only for singles. The government would allow us to exchange telegrams without charge. So my wife returned to Hawaii before me.

This is a diary written during those days at camp. There's a lot of news in there from Japan. We were allowed to listen to short wave radio. There was a guy who specialized in magnetics and he made a receiver. He made the antenna from empty cans. We took turns manning the radio. This is something (ticket) we got when we were leaving the camp. We came home on the Lurline. This photo must have been taken in Oregon. See the mountain slopes? It was a large empty area.

These people are the ones who went to Tule Lake. This is what life was like over there.

To: It must have been pretty big.

Take: Population was larger than Hilo's. This is outside the fence and this is the inside.

To: What about this building?

Take: It was an office building. They had a lot of Caucasians working there. We were living here. This area here was controlled by the Army. We lived on the very edge over here. The area with fewer buildings was the old relocation center. They expanded the area later. I was at this camp that they had a big disturbance... Well, that's about it. This is material from our Sunday school. We had about 3000 Sunday school students. We also had a Japanese school with 5000 students. I was involved with the Japanese school activities. Do you know Mr. Kimura?

To: Yes, I do.

Take: We worked together on the Japanese school at Tule Lake. He lost the textbooks for the classes. That's about it. Have you seen this book? Soga from the Hawaii Times wrote it.

To: Behind Barbed Wire or something like that.

Take: Right. It is well-written and covered in the book. I think that Mr. Kosaka has read this book. As far as memorabilia is concerned, that's about it.

To: First of all, what is your age?

Take: I was 29 when I left Hawaii. I was 28 when I went to Maui in 1940. So I was among the young men. The average age at the camp was 70 years. We checked the ages of all the people and calculated it. Of course we omitted the Americans who oversaw the place. I was surprised when we saw the results. There was such an age difference. We were just young boys compared to the others. I think I was 33 or 34 when I got out.

To: You said you were from Nara Prefecture. When did you come to Hawaii?

Take: 1934. In 1935, I went to Hilo. I think it was Dec of 1934 that I went there until 1940. Then I went to Maui and that's when the war broke out. I've written about it for Mr. Kosaka and the Hochi. At that time they were saying "Remember Pearl Harbor", the sneak attack. One week before it happened, they declared martial law.

To: One week before Pearl Harbor?

Take: I can't remember the exact date, but I think it was about a week before. I heard that over the Japanese short wave broadcast. They said that they (the Americans) have enforced a special martial law on the Islands. I couldn't believe it. I was in Wailuku then. The following morning, I went to check if some kind of announcement or notice was made. There was a notice. There was no military but they used the police with pistols. I thought it was real. So they were prepared for war. When they say it was a sneak attack, that's a lie.

To: What were you doing on that Dec. 7?

Take: The night before was Bodhi Day, Buddha's birthday. and I gathered the young people and had a celebration. So the following morning, I was still asleep. It must have been around noon when Gen. Matsuda, my immediate supervisor, said that he was going out. He didn't come back. He didn't even return at 3 or 4 o'clock. I thought something was strange. So I cancelled the sermon and told the people to go home. After

that we finally got some news that something drastic had happened in Honolulu. I thought the guy was causing trouble. It wasn't until I listened to the short-wave that night that I found out war had been declared. By that time, they had started the black-out and rumors that food was going to be in short supply started. Everyone went out to buy vegetable seeds and the store shelves were cleared. There seemed to be a sense of panic.

To: How were you arrested?

Take: Like I said before, I was in Hilo until 1940. So, when the FBI started going around, they didn't have any of my records. Or was it the Department of Defense? Speaking of the FBI, they were snooping around the school. I only realized that recently. It was in May (1942) when they finally called me in. Until that time, I heard from some of the church members that some Haole men were asking questions about me. It would happen in different places. One day in Wailuku, another in Kahului, news about their (FBI) investigation kept coming in. I figured that they were investigating me to put me away. Finally on May 5, they came to get me. It was just one week before that Japan had lost the battle of Midway. And the police came to get me. And when I went in for the questioning, they only asked me questions of Hilo, nothing on Maui. In other words, what they did was transfer my Hilo records over here (on Maui.) So they questioned me and then interned me. So, on May 5, I went to jail.

To: So you were being investigated until that time?

Take: But I was free until May 5, until the time I was interned. The FBI would follow me wherever I went. If I had to do a memorial service, they would follow me until I got to the house, and they would follow me as I left for my own home. That kind of stuff continued for two-three months.

To: Where did they put you on Maui?

Take: The jail on the far side of Wailuku. That was the very first place. Then they moved me to a pineapple camp later on--that was in Haiku.

To: When were you at Haiku?

Take: Let's see. I was picked-up in May. It was June, one month later, when I got there. I was there until July, and then I went to Honolulu. Then in November, I was sent to the mainland.

About that time, there was some talk about an exchange ship, so I filled out my papers immediately. Even after filling out my papers, they told us the people who decided to stay in Hawaii would go to Honolulu. Those of us who decided to go to Japan would have to wait. There were two or three of us left. A few minutes hadn't passed and they came to tell us that the exchange ship had been cancelled. So we were told to join the group that was leaving Kahului to go to Honolulu.

To: When you were arrested, how did your wife take it?

Take: She didn't know anything about it. They didn't inform her or anything. The military was pretty tight-lipped about the whole situation. They just ordered us to do this, to go there. Just like I just mentioned, I was thinking that I would be staying behind, then the next minute they were transferring us. That kind of stuff was a source of trouble. All we were able to bring was one bag and we were off to Kahului and then to Honolulu. At Honolulu, that was the first time that we were able to notify our families of our whereabouts.

Part 1

Takesono page 5

Take: When we left for the mainland, no one was notified. Once a month, a convoy would leave Honolulu. Since we were at Sand Island, we could see the ships. We were put in the bottom decks of the ships, in the cargo holds.

To: Before Rev. Yamasato from the Jikoen Temple retired, we talked about his experiences on the ships. Even when they wanted to use the toilet, they had to use a barrel or can.

Take: When they went, it was pretty bad. When we left, it wasn't quite as bad. They let us use the ship's toilets. I volunteered to help clean the toilets that the internees used. They had guards all over the ship; they were watching us from stair wells and other vantage points. Twice a day, they would let us up on the upper deck to get some fresh air. Besides that, they wouldn't let us out. So, we spent our time sleeping or just loafing. The only people that were able to move around were the ones who volunteered to do some work. We were not allowed to wash our faces or brush our teeth. We were just locked up in the holds. Boy, it was a big convoy. In the middle was a battleship with cruisers and destroyers around it. The freighters were fringed around the warships. They zig-zagged their way to San Francisco. Just about when we were to reach San Francisco, the ship's alarm went off. Everyone was thrown in the hold, people were rushing everywhere. We didn't know when the attack was going to take place, so we sat up quietly all night. Everyone had their things ready to leave in a second. Luckily, nothing happened.

To: When you were taken away, were you able to take anything along? Religious books?

Take: It didn't matter if something was religion related. The things that they really came down hard on was anything that was printed in the Japanese language. They wouldn't allow us to carry anything like that. I tried to bring an amulet, but they told me no because it had the Japanese characters on it. They let me take along a picture of Buddha's statue. Pictures were okay. That's what everyone was praying to. The only thing that was restricted was anything with Japanese writing on it. They weren't saying that the religion was bad. So we didn't have anything in Japanese until we got to Lordsburg. There they had a lot of material written in Japanese. It was pretty strange. I guess things like that happen during wars. So within the camps, anything in Japanese was alright, but everything outside of camp was restricted.

To: That was your first trip to the mainland?

Take: That's right. Mr. Kosaka has the route recorded. From San Francisco to Lordsburg took three days by train. Three days and two nights. The train was something else. It was a special express train. Everything was blacked out with armed guards on the outside. Everytime we wanted to use the toilet, we had to pass the guards and use the toilet in another car...You remember the battle of Midway? The Japanese prisoners captured during that battle were with us. The same ship and the same day. They weren't going to escape, but security was awfully tight. Instead of getting off with us at Lordsburg, they continued on to somewhere else. We were let off at Lordsburg and parted with them there.

To: Then you were with Mr. Hoshida?

Take: No, Hoshida was there before me. He was picked up on the Big Island. He is an issei. So he left one or two boats before me. I was in the seventh shipment. Mr. Soga has these things recorded well in his book. Hoshida is the fifth group, I think...

To: I met Mr. Hoshida a while ago. During our talk, your name came up. I remember him saying "Oh! That rascal man."

Také: I think he was on the third shipment. Mmmm. Here it is...Hoshide, that's a mistake. It should be Hoshida. That's a mistake. That's the third shipment. I was on the seventh shipment.

Part 1

Takesono page 6

To: Rev. Takesono, are you an issei?

Take: Yes, I am. I haven't even become a naturalized citizen. There's no need for that now. So the internment camps, only the issei went there. The kibei that were arrested here went to relocation centers. The guys, who gave up their citizenship to go back to Japan, joined us at Tule Lake. Issei, too. Legally, they couldn't send the nisei to the internment camps. On the mainland, they had the relocation centers, but I suppose they had something special for the nisei...Do you know a person by the name of Tsuchaku?

To: I think so.

Take: He was in Honolulu, so he was picked up early and sent to Sand Island. He was sent to the mainland with the internees. Since he was a nisei, they couldn't hold him on the mainland, so they sent him back to Hawaii. He came back to Hawaii and was resent to the relocation centers on the mainland. A lot of interesting things happened during the war.

To: I suppose the American government had a problem with what to do with the nisei. I suppose they had a hard time trying to figure out what to do with them.

Take: Especially, the guys who came back from Japan--the kibei. At Sand Island, there were no problems, so everyone was together. That's how Dr. Miyamoto was there. Even state senator Sanji Abe was there. Then there was Sakatsuwarã Kame, or was it Tamezo. He was a representative. We were all together.

To: You were interned from May 5, (1942) to the war's end?

Take: I was picked up on May 5, and I think it was November that I was sent to Santa Fe. That was a military connected camp where they put in the P.O.W. The facilities there were good. (Takesono continues his review).

To: When were you released from the camp? You went to Tule Lake and then you were returned to Santa Fe.

Take: I was released from Santa Fe.

To: When was that?

Take: Let's see...Let me check Mr. Soga's records. He wrote everything down in detail. It was 1944. The end of '44.

To: 44. That was still during the war.

Take: That was when the Japanese forces were being pushed back. I think it was close to Guam (Guadacanal?) The end of 1944.