

BEYOND THE HORIZON

BY

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Graduated, University of California at Berkeley, 1940



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Above are shown "bushes that bite", mechanized anti-aircraft guns with members of the unit at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, practicing sighting from the camouflaged truck on which the gun is mounted.

This is the story of a loyal American of Japanese descent. Yori Wada, who is pictured in the inset above, was graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in June, 1940. During his four years, Yori became Associate editor of the "Daily Californian", the student newspaper, was elected to the Junior and Senior Men's Honor Societies, Winged Helmet and Golden Bear, was a member of the Cabinet of the campus Young Men's Christian Association, and a member of Pi Delta Epsilon and the University of California Student Cooperative Association. Inducted into the United States Army, July 21, 1941, he gained a sergeant's rating in the medical unit. After December, 1941, Yori gave up his sergeant's stripes in order to transfer as a buck private to the 442nd Combat Team at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, composed entirely of Americans of Japanese descent who volunteered for service in the armed forces. On January 22, 1944, Yori married Miss Chiyo Nao, in Denver, Colorado. At present, he is undergoing special training for a hazardous and highly important branch of the services.

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FAR FROM THE BELLS of the Campanile I return gratefully in dreams to "my California life." It may be true, as Thomas Wolfe put it in "You Can't Go Home Again," but I shall go back again. I must go back, for my home is in California. Its vineyards and orchards, its mountains and its shores, the flowing rivers and wooded hills, the schools and churches, the friends I left behind — all this is my California in jig-saw.

That graduation day of the Class of '40 still lives inside me. Max Thelen, Jr., and his youthful oratory, the caps and gowns, the gay banners and Memorial Stadium. Three years have passed, and though it be in Denver, Little Rock or Minneapolis, this Cal alumnus still "gets a bang out of it" when he sees the saucy Cal bear sticker on a passing automobile window.

But the years have not been spent only in dreams. Graduation meant a hard, hopeful *hasta la vista* to friends. Sherman March, my roommate for two years at Barrington Hall, helped me pack. All set for the trip home, and goodbye to Sherm, perhaps forever. We had lots of fun, he and I. A happy-go-lucky fella with a generous heart to go with his brown hair and eyes, he later volunteered for the American Friends' Unit as ambulance driver over the perilous Burma Road in Asia. He couldn't wait for the war to come to him: he was just that kind of guy.

Back home for a brief interlude with the family, I found that things were just about the same. Mother was, well, just Mother. For my first home-cooked meal she fixed up my favorite, a huge steak smothered with onions. It was good to be home again.

But for a sheepskin holder, after an A. B. comes the C for cash and carry. The fabulous, pre-Roosevelt promise of "two cars in every garage" to the contrary, we didn't have

a car. So, borrowing a friend's Chevie, I scoured the towns of the San Joaquin Valley for a newspaper job. The editors were cordial but that was about all. "There's no opening just now, but you might try in a few months." No job. One of the Walnut Creek papers had an opening, but the editor wasn't sure how well a dark-haired Japanese would digest with the subscribers; so I was still on the road.

To say that I was discouraged and disheartened speaks too lightly of my mental outlook during these days. No man can deny that "youth takes a helluva beating, but you can't keep him down."

The financial chart nearing the red mark, I decided to go home, yes, you can go home again. So with thumb as ticket, I went back to Hanford. Mother didn't say much, but it's surprising what a good dinner will do! Mothers do understand, don't they? She's not the kind of woman to cry, but I think Mother cried that night after we kids had gone to bed.

A friendship of undergraduate days brought a much-needed transfusion to a system grown thin on canned goods and yes ma'ams. Elton Brombacher, of Cal track fame, casually suggested that I write two columns for the weekly **Pinole Times** which he published. If he only knew what that chance meant to me; I have a hunch he did! So with a typewriter hastily bought on the installment plan I launched forth on my career. "At the Crossroads" of **Daily Californian** days was resurrected together with a brand-new "Uncle Ezra Says," a common-folk column with a leaning toward Will Rogers. Later, human interest stories on Hanford's Chinatown began appearing in the Hanford **Sentinel** published by two Stanford graduates, Stanley Beaubaire and Keith Topping of the Vow Boys eleven.

Then came "greetings from the President of the United States. Chosen by my friends and neighbors," I was to report for induction into the Army. July 21, 1941, I was taken to the local embarkation point. Climbing aboard the train, I took a last look at the bon-voyage crowd. I saw Mother standing in the hot, noonday sun, her gentle, care-worn face



Left, Sergeant Miyamoto instructs Private Sano in the proper stance for tossing a hand grenade. At right is pictured mailtime for members of the Japanese-American combat team. (Photos by C. E. Mace.)

unsmiling, her brown eyes dry but threatening to fill. I was to remember that precious face for many months hence; it is still clear and wonderful.

Along with hundreds of other young men from the cities and farms of California, I entrained for the Monterey Presidio in "quick time." From then on I saw my America through the train window as a sailor sees the world through a port-hole. Rolling halfway across the continent to Camp Grant, Illinois, I was a medical corps rookie at \$21 a day, once a month, with young men from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Most of them had never seen a Japanese-American before, but we got along swell. It's a great feeling to be accepted for what kind of man you are with nationality and creed tossed into the G. I. can!

October 28, 1941, brought goodbye to Illinois and hello to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, With time heavy on my hands in the supply room. I fashioned a weekly station hospital newspaper. It was named "Tatler" for a purpose.

It was a quiet Sunday in December when Gerald Mahler,

Dewey Bryan, and I went into a Little Rock theatre, but excitement, newsboy's shouts, and knots of people greeted us as we came out. Hurriedly buying a paper, we scanned the headlines: "Pearl Harbor Bombed by Japs!" We looked at each other. America and Japan were at war! I felt strangely hollow inside, not that I doubted my loyalty to America but something made me feel crushingly miserable. It must have been so with Americans of German ancestry when the **Lusitania** was sunk as a flare-up to United States entry into War War I.

We went back to camp. I sat dejectedly on my bunk while a hundred disjointed thoughts pounded in my whirling mind. Is the family all right? Will they give me a chance to fight for America? Will my friends understand that being an American of Japanese ancestry makes me even more unflinching in duty to those United States.

Understanding my dilemma, Dewey left me alone to thrash through the kaleidoscopic mess. Jack Sweet put his hand on my shoulder and spoke firmly, "Come on, Wada, buck up; you're one of us." Through the midnight hours of that December 7 and the hectic days to follow, I was to see gratefully that young Americans in uniform judged me by what I was and had done and not by my nationality. Never in my two years of Army life have I been disappointed in my buddies in service. Were they from Vermont or Washington, Alabama or Minnesota, these young men showed by action that liberal outlook of a Greater America. "Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry." And they were the Americans who were dedicated to serve this country even unto death!

Throughout December letters came from other friends all over the country. As always Stiles Hall came through, and whenever I look at the stars in the sky, I can see Harry Kingman, Jim Fowle, John Duffy, Bob Stone, Charles Fender, Don Eichner, Bill Davis, and scores of others.

A few days later came a letter in my sister's handwriting, postmarked Hanford, California. (My Mother speaks and understands a little English, but can't write it. I speak

and understand a little Japanese, but can't write it. My sister is the go-between.)

"Dear Ni-san (brother):

"We were terribly shocked by the Pearl Harbor treachery. We haven't gotten over it yet. But Mom wants me to tell you that you have a greater responsibility now. She says that for your America, do not hesitate to give your life. We'll make out somehow at home, but her concern is that you do not fail your country in her hour of need. She's awfully proud that you're in the Army." This from the heart of an alien mother to the heart of a young American soldier.

I was not with the family to share the hardships and tears that followed. I was taking care of sick and injured American soldiers at Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado.

May 10 was Mothers' Day, and one day before my Mother was to leave our Hanford home for a room in an assembly center barrack: an American soldier's mother behind barbed wires. What the late Heywood Broun once wrote rankled in my mind: "Let us be alert to realize that whoever raises the knife of prejudice against any group whatsoever stabs with his dagger the flesh and honor and, indeed, the heart of America."

Raking the embers of our family past, I knew that there was nothing un-American in our lives. It has always been true that Mother kept our eyes focussed on the American scene. She was an alien Mother who was proud that her children were learning to be of America. She was a foreigner who could never become an American except in spirit and faith, which she did nobly. As an American son in uniform, I am grateful to my Japanese Mother. She deserves much more.

For nearly a year the family endured the harsh pangs and anguish of the assembly center, and I felt part of their sadness in the letters coming eastward and was spurred to greater effort as a soldier. They were depending on me to vindicate their innocence, to prove that nationality makes

one appreciate the Four Freedoms even more. We had discovered the hard way that American citizenship cannot be taken for granted. Evacuation had made us see more clearly the barricaded road to full citizenship.

I have seen 'teen-aged Yanks bravely waiting major operations, going alone into the test of pain and nausea "because they didn't want to worry the folks too much." I've sat near their beds at night listening to longing, lonely tales of back home, and have rubbed their bodies when pain became too great. I have heard heart-rending sobs in the deep of night I have wiped their vomitus from my white uniform; with great joy I have seen them get better and healthy and go back to training. To them, it didn't matter that the soldier in white was a young American with a Japanese face. "You're an American, aren't you?" Many times I have wished that the older generation were as understanding and honest as the generation which must go out to fight for a free America.

I was to meet the family for the first time in two years when they were sent to the Jerome Relocation Center in Arkansas. Arriving about midnight I sloshed around in the rain and red mud among black tar-papered barracks searching for 22-11-D. Half an hour later I found it. My knock, a light turned on, my sister's face in the half-opened doorway, and I was home.

"**Tadima kaeri mashita,**" (I have just come home) has been my customary greeting whenever I came home from Cal. Now it came unconsciously from my lips.

"**Oh, kaite kitaka,**" (Oh, so you've come home) was Mother's greeting as she got up from the Army cot. It struck me suddenly and without warning that she had aged, aged ten years in two. Her face was covered with countless wrinkles, her former jet-black hair was streaked with grey, those deep brown eyes were tired and old, her body thinner. Oh, Mother, I wish I could have spared you this. Surely Americans couldn't approve of this. But Mother smiled for me, and I answered.

Even a community dining hall couldn't stop the Wadas

from having tea as a family group. Immediately Mother was busy putting the battered kettle on. Then quickly she dug into a box-trunk and proudly took out a quart of home-canned peaches; carefully she had brought it 2000 miles so her soldier son could taste a bit of her own cooking. My throat was tight with love and gratitude.

Over cups of hot tea and store-bought cookies, we looked back to happier days, touching also on the uncertain yet hopeful future that relocation would bring. Glancing about the tiny room, I noticed that bright window curtains were already up, that salvaged lumber had been sawed and hammered into tables, chairs, shelves and crude bureaus. Paper flowers carefully fashioned by hand adorned wooden vases carved and sandpapered from roots of trees.

Gradually I learned the painful story of evacuation: the curfew, the storing and selling of family goods, how the family had to sleep on the floor during the final days in Hanford, how they ate canned food or sent a Caucasian friend to a restaurant so they would not go hungry. The sale of our ice cream store which had been ours for 25 years had also to be borne in bitter shame and silence since the United States Government had wanted it so. We had committed no crime; it was only that Japan, our enemy, was the land of our ancestors.

That night as I lay on the fourth cot in the room, sleep would not come. This was the home of an American soldier on furlough. My thoughts returned sadly to that place in Hanford which was no longer home: a store in front, a crowded kitchen, a large bedroom for Mother, sister and brother, and a smaller one for me. The family meals eaten with chopsticks, the Thanksgiving and Christmases we've had just like other American families, the table covered with Japanese delicacies to welcome the New Year. Yes, the Wadas weren't rich except in happiness and laughter. Their home, together with the schools and churches and people, had nourished our dreams in this America. Never again will I take American freedom for granted!

As balm to my troubled soul came Stephen Benet's

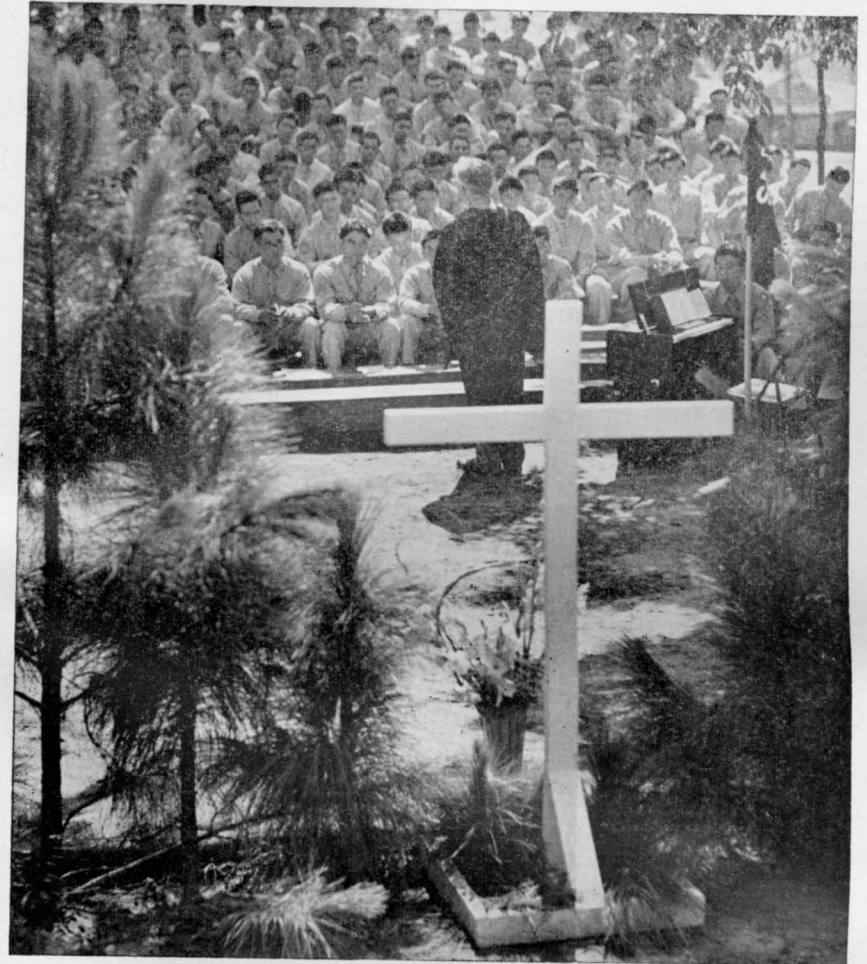
"Prayer"; "God of the free, we pledge our hearts and lives today to the cause of all free mankind. Grant us faith and understanding to cherish all those who fight for freedom as if they were our brothers, undivided by senseless distinctions of race, color, or theory. Grant us the courage and foreseeing to begin this task today that our children and our children's children may be proud of the name of man. Grant us patience with the deluded and pity for the betrayed."

With the tragic dining room scene of Mother's eating alone here and there at wooden tables still burning in my mind, I left my family and friends behind in the camp surrounded by barbed wire and guards. I left with the fervent hope that these young Americans of Japanese ancestry would rekindle that vital faith in a democratic America and grow stronger in the face of distress. They must make the most of relocation, of coming back to their America with pride, without bitterness, without rebellion.

My solemn resolve took me beyond the crossroads to do my best for America, to keep faith with those courageous, fair-minded Americans who have supported us in the name of American justice, fair play, and freedom. To them from the depth of my heart, with words which are woefully inadequate, I say "Thanks." In the face of unceasing attacks upon us, the Niseis, they have let us know that our faith in this American democracy has not been in vain. To our bewildered and cynical eyes, they have lifted up a living vision of our country which is of the heart and the hand-clasp.

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25 copies, \$1.75 100 copies, \$6.00
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Many Christian denominations are represented among the Japanese-Americans in the third battalion amphitheatre. Chaplain Thomas Eugene West conducts services before an altar composed of pine branches and arranged in the Victory "V" sign.

Pacific Coast Committee on
American Principles and Fair Play
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The Committee on American Principles and Fair Play was formed to support and defend the constitutional rights of law-abiding persons of oriental descent in the United States and particularly of the Japanese-American evacuees.

The Committee believes:

1. That attacks upon the rights of any minority tend to undermine the rights of the majority.
2. That attempts to deprive any law-abiding citizen of his citizenship because of racial descent are contrary to fundamental American principles and jeopardize the citizenship of others.
3. That legislation to deprive Americans of Japanese descent of any of their legal rights would set a precedent for depriving other racial groups of their rights, and would weaken the confidence of our Allies, particularly those in Asia and Latin America, in the sincerity of our professions to be fighting for the rights of all peoples.
4. That it is un-American to penalize persons of Japanese descent in the United States solely for the crimes of the Government and military caste of Japan.

Persons desiring to aid the educational program of the Committee either through financial contribution or volunteer service should write to the Executive Secretary at: 465 California Street, San Francisco, California.