

'CAMP'

By Alan Mikuni
(continued)

centration camp inmates would be difficult. The "We Don't Want Any Japs Back Here - Ever" sign in the attached photo was typical of the reception awaiting returning, formerly-imprisoned Japanese-Americans. Notable exceptions to the hostile population were, of course, Mr. Neufeld and Mr. Bergin, as well as, another gentleman named Clay Comer, a close family friend of the Takeuchi family. Clay remained loyal to his Japanese-American friends, regardless of what was occurring around him and in his own family, and was considered to be an honorary member of the Takeuchi family.

Anti-Japanese sentiment among the citizens of California was still running high, so the environment for a smooth transition back into non-camp life for all former concentration camp inmates would be difficult. The "We Don't Want Any Japs Back Here - Ever" sign in the attached photo was typical of the reception awaiting returning, formerly-imprisoned Japanese-Americans.

I was born in Reedley in 1947. Mom and Dad then moved to two additional rental homes and farms in Fresno, and my two brothers, Ron and Dennis, were born in 1949 and 1953, respectively. In 1961, 9 years after the 1952 invalidation of the California Alien Land Laws that prohibited my grandparents from owning land, my parents purchased a grape ranch west of Sanger California, about 10 miles east of Fresno. In 1980, they paid off the mortgage. In the aftermath of a very trying personal ordeal for both my parents, they managed to demonstrate that their personal strength, besides those exemplified by shikatanai and gaman, could get them through virtually anything. All three of us Mikuni sons graduated from college and, with our respective families, have developed lives of our own... in a United States that has shown its own strength through its recognition of, and reparation for, this mistake and woeful breach in civil rights.

On February 19, 1976, 34 years to-the-day after President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, President Gerald Ford rescinded it.

On August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan enacted into law the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This law acknowledged that Japanese-Americans were unlawfully incarcerated during World War II, not as a military necessity, but based upon "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."

On November 21, 1989, President George H.W. Bush signed the Appropriations Bill into Law that funded reparations of \$20,000 plus a formal letter of apology to each of the 82,219 surviving Japanese-American detainees. John and Amy were both so recognized.

On December 22, 2003, my Dad John passed away at the age of 83. My Mom, Amy, died on September 14, 2013, at the age of 91.

The Takeuchi family still stays in touch with the Neufeld family.

Regarding the use of the term "concentration camp" in depicting this particular chapter in America's history, comparisons to events in Europe also occurring during World War II cannot be avoided and provide perspective. The historic record and each annual remembrance of The Holocaust remind us about the atrocities perpetrated by Germany, the Third Reich, and Nazi SS in their attempt to achieve "The Final Solution." Over six million Jewish and other peoples disfavored by the Nazis were murdered by the SS in concentration camps such as Dachau, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, and the other infamous Nazi facilities in German-occupied Europe. Japanese-Americans were also imprisoned in concentration camps, but in Topaz, Jerome, Tule Lake, and the other WRA camps in the United States. There is no parallel with respect to the extremes in how the inmates were treated by their respective captors. What is common to both the Jewish and the Japanese-American experiences is the systematic and state-sanctioned violation of human and civil rights and the use of facilities to "concentrate" the subjects of those actions. I think it is interesting to note a comment made in 1998 by American Jewish Council Executive Director David A. Harris. "We have not claimed Jewish exclusivity for the term 'concentration camps'." Also in 1998, Jonathan Mark, a columnist for The Jewish Week, wrote: "Can no one else speak of slavery, gas, trains, camps? It's Jewish malpractice to monopolize pain and minimize victims."

The US National Park Service has undertaken a program, "Preserving and Interpreting World War II Japanese American Confinement Sites" to recognize the historical significance of the ten War Relocation Authority concentration camps, as well as numerous related sites, then called, assembly, relocation, or isolation centers. In 2014, Federal funding was made available, by way of the grant approval process, to undertake projects to preserve and protect these National historic sites. Several former camp facilities are in the process of being restored, and formal designation have been granted to the Manzanar National Historic Site, and the Tule Lake Unit of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument. Topaz has been nominated for National Historic Landmark designation, and the World War II Japanese-American Internment Museum, located in McGehee, Arkansas, pays tribute to those imprisoned at nearby Jerome and Rohwer.

Alan M. Mikuni
June, 2015

The Mikuni Family over the years.



TO READ PART 1 OF ALAN MIKUNI'S ACCOUNT:

<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/2015/10/02/camp-the-japanese-internment-1941-45-part-1-by-alan-mikuni/>



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source: <http://theatln.tc/1SW4iCJ>

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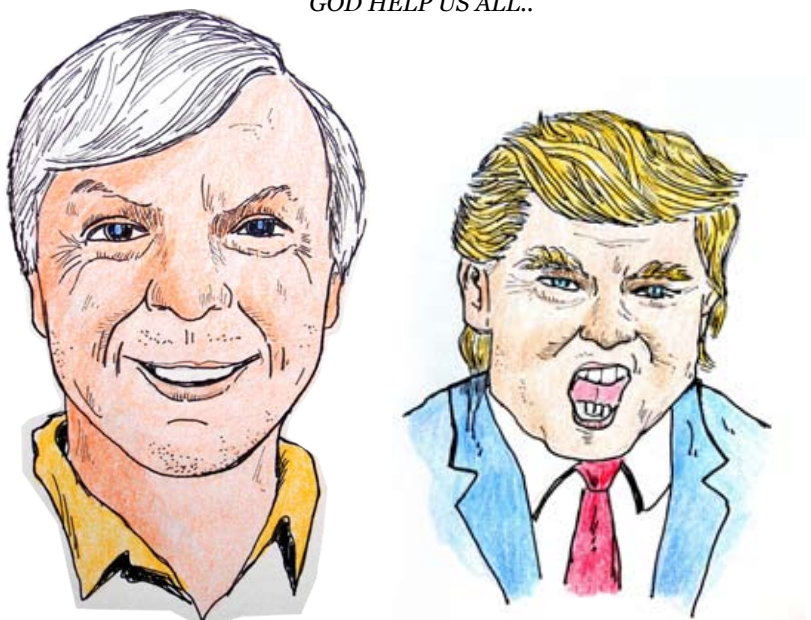
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