

“The Problem” of Student Nurses of Japanese Ancestry During World War II

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Consider the problem of the American girl of Japanese ancestry, evacuated from the West Coast to a relocation center after war came [with Japan], and denied the right to enroll in a school of nursing, or not permitted to return to complete the course which was at schools that claimed they accepted relocated Japanese American students.¹

When this 1943 *American Journal of Nursing (AJN)* editorial was written, 20 schools of nursing claimed to accept relocated Japanese American students. However, of 371 young Japanese American women wanting to enroll in nursing school that year, only 84 were admitted. The irony of the *AJN* position was that, although it agreed that Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) nursing students should be allowed to continue their educations, the editorial did not acknowledge the denial of these students' rights as citizens or recommend that nursing professionals and organizations advocate on their behalf.²

In this paper I examine the life trajectories of four Nisei student nurses who were forced to leave their nursing schools in California, evacuate with their families to assembly centers at either Pomona or Santa Anita in California, and then relocate to Heart Mountain, Wyoming, a permanent internment camp. The stories of these four women, third- and fourth-year nursing students at the time of their evacuation, are part of a larger study of 24 young women who lived at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.³ Their experiences provide insights about how Nisei nursing students were affected by internment. These women, because of their persistence and courage, found ways to continue their nursing educations.

Many Nisei women students did not continue their educations because of daunting challenges in locating new school placements, surmounting family objections, and finding financial assistance. Others were fearful of independent lives away from their families. For women who overcame these barriers, a positive

consequence of evacuation and relocation was having new and unexpected life experiences that deviated from traditional gender roles for Japanese Americans. Historian Valerie Matsumoto notes that changes fostered in young Nisei women's lives included opportunities for travel, work, and education.⁴ Further, their developing sense of independence and growing awareness of their abilities as workers fostered self-confidence.

Evacuation and Internment of Japanese Americans

Military necessity was the official reason given for evacuation and relocation, but that necessity was never proven. The actual historical causes that drove relocation decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and failure of political leadership.⁵ The decision to remove Nikkei (ethnic Japanese) from the West Coast became official when President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on 14 February 1942.⁶ Altogether, 113,000 Nikkei resided in the Pacific states. Only three other states (Colorado, New York, and Utah) had as many as a thousand ethnic Japanese.⁷ Two-thirds of those evacuated were U.S. citizens, English was their primary language, and they attended U.S. schools. By 1940, the oldest of the Nisei were young adults with children of their own.⁸

Edna Gerken, Supervisor of Health Education for the U.S. Indian Service in Denver, Colorado, reported in the *American Journal of Public Health*, "As a wartime necessity the War Department has evacuated some 100,000 persons from the West Coast which was designated a military zone."⁹ Gerken characterized this exodus as follows: "[They] abandoned their homes and business enterprises and went to temporary assembly centers to await the preparation of permanent relocation projects."¹⁰ Gerken's depiction conceals the truth, that Nikkei were forced by the U.S. government to abandon these homes and businesses and take only what they could carry. Many never recovered what they had lost.

Families were evacuated together to one of 16 assembly centers, suffering great emotional and physical stress in the process. Most evacuees who eventually relocated to Wyoming's Heart Mountain internment camp initially evacuated to an assembly center at either Santa Anita or Pomona. Santa Anita was the site of a racetrack, and families were assigned to horse stalls or barrack apartments for living quarters. At both Pomona and Santa Anita, internees used central latrines and mess-hall eating facilities. Barbed wire surrounded the assembly centers and, as at the permanent relocation camps, military guards patrolled and kept watch from

guard towers. The centers, intended to be temporary accommodations until the Army-barrack construction relocation camps could be built, were crowded, unhealthy, unsanitary, and demoralizing, far outlived their intended use, and posed strong threats of public health disaster.¹¹

Perhaps the one advantage of the assembly centers was that some were located near family homes, and friends could bring food and gifts of kindness. By late summer and fall of 1942, Nikkei were moved to one of 10 permanent camps that the U.S. government euphemistically called "relocation camps." These were located in desolate and remote areas from inland California to as far away as Oklahoma.

A 1943 *AJN* article referred to the internment camps as "pioneer communities," reflecting War Relocation Authority (WRA) rhetoric,^{12,13} and asserted that "these are not concentration camps, the residents are not prisoners of war. Their movements are restricted, it is true, but it is now possible for evacuees to apply for permission to leave the project to live and work in areas approved by the Army."¹⁴ The article claimed that the WRA's aim was "to establish the evacuated people in productive American life," and ignored any mention of the massive injustice that had occurred.¹⁵ The entire editorial assumed a tone of largesse as evacuees' living and working conditions were described: "Life in a relocation center is almost completely communal. Evacuees live in small barrack apartments, but they share community mess halls, showers, lavatories, and laundries. Stores and other enterprises are consumer cooperatives. Government is by councils elected according to democratic principles"¹⁶ Not mentioned was that relocation camps were standard Army structures, inadequate and ill-equipped for family life, built without consideration of culture, class, and gender in the organization and construction of the camps, let alone of basic human rights. Further, as expressed in the article, the *AJN*'s view that these were not concentration camps defied the obvious: enemy status had been the reason cited by the U.S. government for Nikkei incarceration.

Internees were classified as to whether or not they were "loyal" to the United States. Those judged to be loyal became eligible to leave the camps to relocate elsewhere than on the West Coast. Young people between the ages of 17 and 35 were most likely to take advantage of the opportunity to resettle in the Midwest and the East.¹⁷ College students were the first to be approved for release, with 4,300 students eventually going to inland colleges.¹⁸ Some left almost immediately in the fall of 1942, even as the camps were still filling.¹⁹ Although no travel allowance was provided when relocation began, eventually the WRA gave a travel allowance of \$25.²⁰

The Heart Mountain Nisei Nursing Students

Among the evacuees were four young women, all student nurses, who went first to either Santa Anita or Pomona and then were relocated to Heart Mountain in 1942: Fumiye Morita Furuya, Mary H. Takagi, Mary Hidaki Kawakami, and Alice Okamoto Uriu. All grew up in California, came from Issei (first-generation) families with fathers who worked in agriculture or horticulture, and were born between 1918 and 1921. Each worked in the Heart Mountain Hospital prior to resettlement outside of camp. The Heart Mountain internment camp was situated in the north central part of Wyoming near Yellowstone National Park. At its peak in the fall of 1942, Heart Mountain's population exceeded 11,000 people.

Restricted to living behind barbed wire fences in a desolate setting, these young women wanted to move their lives forward. Fumiye Morita Furuya recalled, "We were all ambitious. We were young, and by hook or crook we finished [nurses'] training, and it has been positive for most of us."²¹ I will briefly sketch each of these four women's lives up to the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese military. Each had completed two years of pre-nursing collegiate course work and was enrolled in a three-year nursing education program in California.

FUMIYE MORITA FURUYA

Fumiye was born in 1921 in Milpitas, California. Fumiye's parents were teenagers when they immigrated to the United States, met, and married. The oldest of five brothers and sisters, Fumiye assumed considerable responsibility for the care of her siblings. When she was in grammar school, her family moved to Gilroy, California, where her father managed an orchard. Her longtime dream of becoming an aviatrix was out of the question in 1939, her high-school graduation year. Nursing was also an interest, so Fumiye enrolled at San Jose State for her first two years of pre-professional courses. In August 1941, she began a 3-year program in nursing education at the University of California in San Francisco (UCSF). She was among approximately eight Nisei students in her class, and her roommate was Japanese American. Fumiye remembered nursing school as an adventure because "in those days Japanese women, especially my mother, wouldn't let me out of sight."²²

MARY H. TAKAGI

Mary, hereafter called Mary T., grew up in the desert of the Imperial Valley, California. One of five children, she was born in 1920. Her family was part of a larger community of about 500 Nikkei families who engaged in small-crop farming. After high-school graduation, she worked as a domestic for a French

family. By 1938, Mary had earned enough money to begin 2 years of pre-nursing courses at Pasadena Junior College. She lived with her family in Baldwin Hills, commuted to school in a Model A Ford, and worked to pay her expenses. In 1940, Mary T. began her nursing studies at Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena.

ALICE OKAMOTO URIU

Alice was born in 1921 and lived in the small town of Elmira, California, where her father worked in a fruit orchard. The second of four children, Alice and her family moved to Mountain View when she was 4, and she grew up there. Her father was a nurseryman who raised chrysanthemums. Her mother, a former school teacher in Japan, worked on the family's 5-acre farm. Because her father wanted his children Americanized, Alice joined the Girl Scouts, which sparked her interest in nursing. She attended San Jose State for 2 years after high-school graduation in 1939, and began her nursing education at Santa Clara County Hospital in San Jose in 1941.

MARY HIDAKI

Hereafter called Mary H., she was born in 1918, the oldest of four children. Her family lived near San Jose in the rural town of Coyote, where her father farmed on leased land. Growing up, she had limited contact with other Nikkei families. After high-school graduation, Mary H. enrolled at San Jose State for a 2-year pre-nursing course. Upon its completion, she entered the nursing program at Santa Clara County Hospital, now called Valley Medical, where she lived in the nurses' residence.

Pearl Harbor and Evacuation. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, the four young women were in the midst of assigned clinical rotations. Their immediate responses varied, but all felt unsettling effects from the news, either immediately or within a few months. Although they left school at different times, all were required to evacuate with their families to an assembly center and, subsequently, to Heart Mountain.

Mary H. was halfway through her second year of nursing when the U.S. entered the war. The morning Pearl Harbor was bombed, she had gone to Sunday breakfast without listening to the radio.

We were living in the nursing home, and I went to breakfast. This woman [RN] said, "Would you please move?" I really didn't know why. After that, I found out what happened. She didn't want me to sit there with her. I think it might have been a week or two later that the director told us we had to leave. She told us because of the directive that came through that we had to leave.²³

Fumiye had been in school 6 to 7 months when she left school because of Pearl Harbor's bombing, which occurred on her birthday. She remembered thinking that "the island of Japan was pretty stupid for attacking a big country like the United States."²⁴ Being forced to leave UCSF resulted in lifelong feelings of bitterness about her nursing school. Back in her family home, Fumiye remained within a 5-mile limit of her home, as was required of all Nikkei.

After completing one and one-half years of school, Mary T. left in March 1943 to evacuate with her family. "I thought that I had really studied and worked to get myself established. So it was rather sad to think it was going to abruptly end. It was such a traumatic time. Everyone was in turmoil."²⁵ She was in the middle of a clinical affiliation in communicable disease at Orange County Hospital. Before returning home, she went to Huntington Hospital to explain why she suddenly had to leave school. She was treated kindly by the school's director:

I'll never forget her. She said [that] during World War I she was just a child. Her folks were German citizens. Her father made them [children] stand out in the snow to sell war bonds so she was much more sympathetic and realized what was happening in our lives. I really appreciated her telling me this. I think she was the only person I really went to see and told her why I was leaving.²⁶

Alice Okamoto Uriu began her nursing studies in September 1941 and left school on 26 May 1942, later than the other three women. She had been living in the nursing residence with other student nurses.

I remember being called, packing, and just leaving. My roommate was also a Japanese American, and there was another Japanese American. We didn't have time to say good-bye to anybody. I was ashamed and hurt that the government would do this to citizens. Yet, if my parents who were immigrants had to go, we would have gone too. We wouldn't have let them go by themselves.²⁷

In April 1942, Fumiye's family was evacuated to Santa Anita Assembly Center, the largest of the 16 assembly centers. Alice's family of six was also at Santa Anita, and they lived in a horse stall for 3 months. Alice initially worked weaving camouflage nets. The two students' professional education soon led to jobs at the Center's hospital. Fumiye worked with Nikkei evacuee nurses and was supervised by them. She called the work "a lot of fun" and spent most of her time at the hospital. "When you work at a hospital, you have a clique. You spend all your days off, everything, in the hospital helping out when and where needed."²⁸ She bathed patients, gave enemas, and did routine bedside care.

Mary H. and her family were evacuated to Pomona Assembly Center, traveling from their home by overnight train. Before boarding the train, family members were examined by doctors. Her brother had tuberculosis, so was required to stay behind and was sent to a sanitarium.²⁹ Mary H. was struck by what she saw upon arrival:

All these Japanese were lined up. I guess they were anxious to see if they had any friends coming in as we came through. We all had gunny sacks to fill with straw for our mattress, and I think I was allergic to that hay because I coughed all the time I was there. As soon as I left on the train [to Heart Mountain], my cough was gone.³⁰

Mary H. worked under a Nikkei nurse in the assembly center hospital, which she characterized as fairly primitive. Mary T. also went to the Pomona Assembly Center, traveling there in early May to help prepare the Center's hospital. She recalled that the hospital "was not a special building but it was at the fairgrounds, and soon I did help with one delivery."

Health Care During Evacuation and Relocation

Although each camp was equipped with a hospital, clinics, and public health care, historical accounts of internment give minimal information about hospital and public health care in the camps. There were notable variations between camps in terms of organization, delivery, and quality of health services and health personnel.³¹ Inadequate medical facilities and supplies, scarcity of trained personnel, insufficient procedures for handling health and medical problems, and problems with the public health infrastructure—such as securing clean water and uncontaminated food—existed within the camps. Evacuee student nurses were part of the medical team at assembly centers and relocation camps. Louis Fiset³² described an evacuee staff in March 1943 at Heart Mountain Hospital that consisted of two RNs, two graduate nurses, six student nurses, six Nikkei doctors, and 83 resident nurses' aides, clinic aides, and dental aides. A nursing student was part of the medical team to greet the first arrivals at Heart Mountain on 12 August 1942.³³ At both assembly centers and relocation camps, continued problems maintaining adequate nurse staffing were initially eased by student nurses.

The Heart Mountain Hospital opened on 12 August 1942. The hospital, located in a converted recreation hall, was bleakly supplied with sheetless army cots

covered only with pillows and blankets. Water was unfit for use, some equipment came from physicians' personal kits, sterilization of instruments was by the heat of Sterno cans, and baths were given from fire buckets. There were no towels, washcloths, or soap.³⁴

Evacuee medical and nursing staffs from Pomona Assembly Center were among an advance group who prepared for arrivals at Heart Mountain from the Pomona and Santa Anita assembly centers. In August 1943, Mary H. and Dr. Hanaoka, a physician from Los Angeles who practiced at Pomona Assembly Center, were among the first arrivals and were assigned to set up the temporary Heart Mountain hospital.

Dr. Hanaoka was, I think, the top doctor there [Pomona]. When we first went to Heart Mountain, they took a few from each department in the hospital. I went with Dr. Hanaoka as the first contingent at the hospital. I think there were two of us students. And my brother went, too, because he was in transportation. I remember that we had our hospital in the barracks, the army barracks. It was quite primitive. We had latrines outside, and we had to get our food from the mess hall. I don't know how we nursed the patients there. We couldn't have had too many sick ones. The patients were not that ill, the ones we got, so we really didn't do that much nursing there.³⁵

Evacuees traveled by train from California. Mary T. also arrived early in the relocation of evacuees to Heart Mountain. Her train traveled from California to the corner of Texas, then up to Colorado Springs and on to Wyoming. She recalled a rainstorm and hail in Colorado. At Heart Mountain, she and Mary H. became good friends. Mary T. recalled:

There were quite a lot of students, but kind of green. We hadn't really gone out and worked. It was entirely new to us. Everyone was so busy, got to get through this ordeal. I don't remember anyone really instructing us. I gave a lot of medicine. Some of the patients were cancer patients so it was mostly pain meds. We didn't have much of a treatment unless they had surgery, so it was more or less routine.³⁶

Mary T. sometimes worked nights when the Heart Mountain ambulance (actually a truck) would come to her barrack to pick her up. The Nikkei doctors told the nurses what to do. The students tried to help oversee the aides, to make sure that they were doing the right thing and that patient care was done, but the aides, like the students, were pretty much on their own.³⁷ Mary T. concluded that people at Heart Mountain were well cared for, as much as possible. "I didn't think that it was any poorer than anyplace else at that time because during wartime, you just do the best you can. Even on the outside . . . you just did the best you could."³⁸

Mary H. worked on a ward with general patients. She and the other students earned \$12 a month (\$144/year) for her work. Although contentious relationships between Nikkei health care workers and Caucasians have been documented, Mary wasn't aware of these problems at the Heart Mountain Hospital.³⁹ She had, however, experienced racist comments after Pearl Harbor from nurses at the California hospital where she was a student. They told her she shouldn't be working at the hospital. About living at Heart Mountain, she recalled:

It didn't bother me that much that I was there. I guess it was later that it struck me. Except for the food, my mother took care of the washing and things around the barrack. I didn't have anything to do because we had that one room so I could do everything I wanted to on my own. There were so many crafts I could take. There were a lot of people who knew how to teach . . . and I enjoyed crafts. I was running all over the place to go to those crafts that I never did before, and so I really enjoyed that.⁴⁰

Fumiye felt safer inside camp because of the animosity outside. She didn't remember seeing Caucasians at the hospital, and there was plenty of help. As at the assembly center hospital, her time at the Heart Mountain Hospital was positive.

It was a happy time again in the hospital clique. It became the center of our lives. We just went home to sleep. We ate at the hospital, showered at the hospital. So I don't know much about camp life. You learn from the RNs, you learn from senior student nurses. You had to be in charge in the evenings and nights. We were left explicit orders, and we didn't do anymore than we knew how. It was just taking temperatures and knowing when to call the doctor.⁴¹

Alice responded differently. Because women and children had no reason to go out of camp like some of the young men did [to work], she felt confined. She thought she was numb throughout internment. "I just took it, worked and slept, and that was it. No anger. No happiness."⁴² She retained few memories, either good or bad, of Heart Mountain. Alice assumed everyone was happy to be working. She remembered that the food at the Heart Mountain Hospital was much better than at the mess halls. She spent time in the operating room as a surgical nurse and also in medical ward eight. Although she saw several Caucasian nurses, she never talked with them except for Mrs. Harvey, who was in charge of the operating room. However, she was used to working with Caucasians, so associating with them wasn't unusual. Alice's time was spent working or sleeping, not within the larger Heart Mountain community participating in its activities. She remembered an ambulance driver coming to pick her up one evening, probably because of a surgical emergency when she was working in the operating room. Later, in the medical

ward, with a division for men and one for women, she was in charge. Nurse aides did patient care, whereas Alice gave medications and treatments, made rounds with the Nikkei doctors, supervised nurse aides, and followed doctors' orders.

Resuming nursing education at the request of Milton Eisenhower, WRA director, the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) was organized in May 1942 by the Philadelphia-based American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)⁴³ and cooperated with the WRA to facilitate nursing student admissions. Under the original leadership of Quaker leader Clarence E. Pickett, the NJASRC was headed by eminent West and East Coast educators and churchmen who intended to pry open academic doors to Nisei students⁴⁴ and establish scholarship funds. The Council worked closely with Katharine Faville of the National Nursing Council for War Service and Joy Stuart of the WRA, but placement was difficult until November 1943.⁴⁵ One reason was that many nursing schools in the Midwest and the eastern United States resisted admitting Nisei students.

In 1942, the National Nursing Council, the National League of Nursing Education, and the NJASRC approached a number of nursing schools to find out whether they would accept these students. Schools gave multiple reasons for refusing admission, including: not having clearance by federal departments; concern for difficulties that might arise when students of Japanese ancestry worked with the public; crowded facilities due to an abundance of local applicants; and preference for admitting refugee students instead of students of Japanese ancestry.⁴⁶ Also, local and state resistance and racial distrust frequently interfered with Nisei student admissions. Notably, willing schools were not free to admit students until they obtained clearance from the War and Navy Departments, and those restrictions prevented many schools from accepting Nisei students.⁴⁷ By late 1942 and early 1943, Nisei nursing students started to leave the camps to continue their educations. WRA files indicate that students who would have graduated in a few weeks or months had they not been evacuated could, through special arrangements made by the state board of nurse examiners and the school of nursing concerned, graduate from their own schools by affiliation with the project hospitals.⁴⁸

All four Nisei students eventually completed their nursing studies, three during World War II and one afterwards. Although Mary T. made inquiries early in internment about continuing her education, she waited until after the war. At Pomona she wrote to several dozen schools and applied to schools of nursing at Methodist hospitals. Many told her it was not a good time to take Japanese students. Ultimately, she was accepted at several, including at Marquette University in Milwaukee. The school was willing to give a year's credit for her nursing course work (which totaled one and a half years), something many schools would

not do. However, Mary T. decided to defer her schooling, and left Heart Mountain for Chicago in May 1943. With her sister, she worked as an aide at a children's convalescent hospital. She remembered cute and innocent children. "One kid said 'Bang, bang, bang, bang—there goes another Jap'—he didn't know who I was or anything."⁴⁹ When she left Chicago, Mary T. went to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where she worked for three or four months before traveling to Colorado to marry. When she returned to California after the war, she completed her nursing education at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital, taking a year and a half plus 45 days to finish. She graduated in 1949. In the days of strict behavioral rules for nursing students, she was the first student at Hollywood Presbyterian to be married, have a child, and commute from home. After graduation she worked part-time for several years at the city health department, raised four children, and later worked part-time in a hospital. She and her husband now live in San Luis Obispo, California.

The remaining three students sought ways to continue their schooling during the war years. The process was a complicated one, especially during 1942 and most of 1943 when requirements were strict. Documents of the NJASRC listed application requirements, including clearance through the FBI and/or Army Intelligence, permission from the Army, Navy, FBI, U.S. Office of Education, and WRA to relocate, and evidence that public attitudes in the new community would not create difficulty. The last requirement referred to the potential for racist behavior toward Nisei, although racist attitudes toward people of Japanese ancestry were largely confined to the West Coast. Few people in the Midwest and East had personal experiences with Nikkei, so people there were usually curious, not racist. Students also submitted a statement that they could leave the Relocation Center on 10 days' notice, evidence of acceptance by a college or university in the form of an official letter or telegram, and verification of sufficient financial resources to pay travel costs, college fees, and living expenses for a year.⁵⁰

With the help of the NJASRC, Fumiye searched for a nursing school, but her plans were interrupted because of her mother's illness. On the back of a mimeographed communication from the JANSRC that gave instructions to students wishing to continue their education, Fumiye had handwritten a note, presumably a draft, saying, "I received your most kind letter to help me in being relocated in a nursing school, and I want to thank you for all your sincere helpfulness. I was planning to go to school as soon as possible but due to an emergency operation on my mother, I will not be able to leave for a while. May I write to you when I am able? Thank you again. Most sincerely, Fumi Morita."⁵¹ On 21 December 1942, the NJASRC/ West Coast Committee answered, "We have received your letter in which you tell us that you'll not be able to leave the project at present in order to

attend nursing school. We are sorry to hear of your mother's operation and do hope that she is recovering her strength. We are keeping your records in our active file and hope to hear from you in the near future that you are ready to leave for a nursing school. We shall then attempt to find an opening for you."⁵² On 6 February 1943, Fumiye received another NJASRC/West Coast communication announcing that the West-Coast NJASRC office was moving to join the Philadelphia office. The letter also announced that 487 students had been placed at 122 colleges in 25 states. Another 438 student placements were in process.

Throughout most of 1943, Fumiye searched for a nursing program that would accept her. She wrote to the big schools: Boston Mass, Yale, and Bellevue. She received letters of rejection in response to all her applications.⁵³ From the Philadelphia General Hospital, she received this reply from Loretta Johnson, Director of the Nursing School, written 4 February 1943: "My dear Miss Morita, We have not considered admitting American Citizens of Japanese ancestry at this time since our quota for admission to our school is filled. The Pennsylvania Hospital at Eight and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, is admitting those of Japanese ancestry, and I would suggest that you write to Miss Helen McClelland, Director of Nursing." On 6 February 1943, Bessie A. R. Parker, Director of the Cornell University-New York Hospital School of Nursing, wrote to Fumiye, "I am sorry but we feel that at this time it may be better not to admit Japanese students to our school. We have had them in the past and hope we may again, but we fear that right now it may expose them to unhappy situations in their contacts with so many kinds of people." Pennsylvania Hospital's Director of Nursing, Helen McClelland, wrote on 16 February, "I have received your letter in regard to entering this school of nursing. We have already agreed to take five students recommended by the National Student Relocation Council, and we feel we will be unable to consider your application at this time." Another letter, written 19 February 1943, came from Anna D. Wolf, Director of the Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Nursing. "In reply to your letter of February 11th, may I say that because of a recent ruling by our Board of Trustees, we will not be able to admit students of Japanese ancestry. We trust you will be able to place your application elsewhere and that you will be happy in your work." Yet again, Fumiye's application was turned down—this time by the Massachusetts General Hospital. The rejection, communicated via the NJASRC, explained,

The Massachusetts General Hospital, unfortunately, does not feel free to accept students of Japanese ancestry at this time although many of the staff there have been very anxious to accept them. We have recently had called to our attention by Miss Joy Stuart, whom you probably know as the nursing consultant of the WRA Health

Division, the name of the Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital in New York City which is evidently anxious to take about five student nurses into its training program.

By April 1943, Fumiye had left Heart Mountain to work as a schoolgirl (helping in the house with cooking and cleaning) for an Evanston, Illinois, family. She stayed with them for six months and continued her search for nursing schools. Syracuse University's School of Nursing dean, Edith H. Smith, wrote on 14 June that a class would probably be admitted in January or February of 1944, and Fumiye should write if interested in applying. The NJASRC continued its search for an opening for Fumiye, making inquiries to the Cambridge Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, the Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospital in New York City, Bellevue Hospital in New York City, and the University of Maryland School of Nursing—which was unaccredited. Lack of accreditation had important consequences for applicants because students were ineligible to enroll in the United States Cadet Nurse Corps, which paid school expenses in exchange for service upon graduation.

On 30 November, Fumiye received a letter from the NJASRC indicating that her search was finally complete. "We are thrilled to hear that you have been officially accepted at Bellevue." The letter ended, "We will look forward to a letter from you when you reach the big city. Meanwhile, although we are a week ahead of time, may we send you many happy returns of the day on your 22nd birthday."⁵⁴ The date was almost exactly 2 years after Pearl Harbor. Because of its fine reputation, she viewed her acceptance at Bellevue as an honor. Her father was happy she was continuing her nursing education, but her mother thought she should get married.

Fumiye resumed her nursing education almost from scratch. "They wanted only Bellevue methods. You know, it is different from school to school as to how you make a bed, which was so important at the time. All the principles and practices of nursing had to be learned all over again." Her training was reduced by 3 months; completing her education took 2 years and 9 months. She joined the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps, which paid for her education and gave her spending money. If the war had not ended, she would have worked in the military after graduation. Two other Nisei students were in Fumiye's class. Her pediatric instructor was Nikkei. She found that people were very nice, and she did not experience racist behavior. She never returned to the University of California, and was determined never to go back. "I said, I'm a Bellevue graduate at NYU. I have my degree from NYU, and I think I was better off."⁵⁵

For Fumiye, the positive side of internment was going to New York, completing her education at an excellent school, meeting her future husband, and

eer throughout her life has been rich and apartment as nurse in charge for 9 years, at the American Museum of Natural History, and in a retired from nursing in 1982 and, now a

Colorado and several others close to Heart Mountain from the latter. She left Heart Mountain in Philadelphia to begin school.

been out. The furthest I had been was to San Francisco afterwards I found out there are two stations in San Francisco. As I was getting off the train, the director of the hospital was going came directly at me and asked me if I was any other Japanese getting off the train so she took me back to the hospital and I often wondered if she took me to the hospital if I was by myself?" She took me on the train to get to the hospital."⁵⁶

On her arrival, the students gathered to see how they were coming there, and were agreeable to her hospital, Mary H. repeated her second year and she worked at the hospital for a year after Los Angeles 3 years later, she had left behind her nursing certificate to practice, Mary H. worked at the hospital during the period when her three children were nursing in 1954 to work in a doctor's office. She lives in San Jose, California.

including Fumiye and Mary H., Quakers accepted Nisei. Quakers' kindness extended far beyond the hospital and provided support for Nisei students in San Francisco. At Pennsylvania Hospital, Nisei nursing students were supervised by a Quaker man who volunteered at the hospital as such a friendly man, and he had us come to the hospital and spend the time with them. That is why we went to Pennsylvania, or Philadelphia anyway, because they had no racial animosity at Pennsylvania Hospital, and we had seen many Japanese Americans and had many

in the summer of 1943 and went to Kahler Hospitals in San Francisco and Mayo Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota. She

applied to two or three nursing schools. At Rochester, she was the first Japanese American student accepted at the school. Her family thought it a good idea that she was continuing her education. Her two younger sisters also left camp to continue their schooling. By leaving, she felt freedom again, which was wonderful. Alice had little money, but had few needs. A good friend in Mountain View, California, sent her \$10 a month. Even so, she did not have enough money for a one-cent post card to write home to request money from her parents. At Minnesota, she felt no discrimination. As had been Mary H.'s experience, few people had previously seen Japanese Americans. She was, nevertheless, startled when one of her patients asked her if she was Finnish.

Alice believes she may be one of the only students to have been capped twice. "I had been capped in San Jose, at Santa Clara County. Until they could get my records from Santa Clara County, I had to be on probation. So after six months, I was capped again. Towards the end of my training they gave me the full nine months that I had worked in Santa Clara County Hospital. That is why I was able to finish in December of 1945 instead of 1946. But it took a long time for them to decide how many months to give credit for."⁵⁸

After she graduated, Alice worked at Kahler Hospitals in the radiology and dental sections and was head nurse in both these departments. She decided to go into anesthesia, and returned to San Francisco to gain additional operating room experience at Stanford University Hospital. After a year, she entered a one-year anesthesia program at University Hospitals in Cleveland, Ohio. Upon its completion, she returned to San Francisco to work as a nurse anesthetist for almost a year at St. Francis Hospital before she married. Next, she was a nurse anesthetist at Mercy Hospital in Sacramento for 4 years until her husband completed his PhD degree. She quit to start a family of four children. While they were growing, she occasionally worked part-time. Her children are grown, and she and her husband live in Davis, California, where he is a retired professor of horticulture.

"The Problem" of Students Revisited

Fueled by racial injustice and the negation of civil rights and precipitated by the bombing of Pearl Harbor, relocation and internment of Nikkei markedly changed life trajectories. Some Japanese Americans especially young people, used adversity to their own benefit, whereas others never fully recovered from their collective and individual trauma. Although many nursing students did not complete their education because of the formidable barriers, family objections, and fearing to

venture out of prescribed gender roles, these four Nisei women were determined to pursue their chosen careers. Despite hardships and emotional trauma, they coped with relocation and internment by working as student nurses in assembly centers and at the Heart Mountain hospital while actively pursuing ways to continue their educations. Americanized, intelligent, and ambitious, they completed nursing school and became nursing professionals.

When they left the Heart Mountain internment camp, these young women were exposed to new geographic spaces, new people, and a radically altered political climate. They found relatively little racism toward Japanese Americans in the areas where they studied and lived—mostly acceptance, curiosity, and kindness. In the process of completing their educations, they gained new skills and self-confidence as well as a strong sense of professionalism. For these four Nisei women, the problem of being Japanese American student nurses inverted to become a time of new opportunities.

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Notes

1. "The Problem of Student Nurses of Japanese Ancestry," *American Journal of Nursing* (1943): 895 (hereafter cited as *AJN*).

2. *Ibid.*, 895.

3. Susan McKay, *The Courage Our Stories Tell: Women, War, and the Japanese American Internment at Heart Mountain, Wyoming* (unpublished manuscript); Susan McKay, "Maternal Health Care at a Japanese American Relocation Camp, 1942-1944: A Historical Study," *Birth*, 24, no. 3 (September 1997): 188-93.

4. According to historian Valerie Matsumoto, women were one-third of the first 4,000 Nisei students to leave internment camps. A postwar study of 21,000 relocated

students showed 40% to be women. Many chose nursing education; by July 1944, more than 300 Nisei women were enrolled in more than 100 nursing programs in 24 states. Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women During World War II," *Frontiers* 8, no. 1 (1948): 10. 65,000 students were admitted to schools of nursing for the year 1 July 1943 to 1 July 1944, mostly U.S. cadet nurses. "It Happened in 1944," *AJN* 45, no. 1 (January 1945): 45.

5. Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York City: Hill and Wang, 1993), 3.

6. *Ibid.*, 46.

7. *Ibid.*, 16.

8. *Ibid.*, 20.

9. Edna Gerken, "Health Education in a War Relocation Project," *American Journal of Public Health* 33 (April 1943): 367.

10. *Ibid.*, 357.

11. Louis Fiset, "Public Health in World War II Assembly Centers," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 576 (hereafter cited as *Bull. Hist. Med.*)

12. "War Relocation Projects: Nurses Pioneer in Historic Wartime Operation," *AJN* 43, no. 1 (January 1943): 61-63. 13. The War Relocation Authority was the civilian agency responsible for administration of the relocation camps. Assembly centers were administered by the U.S. Army.

14. "War Relocation Projects," 62.

15. *Ibid.*, 61-62.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 82.

18. *Ibid.*, 72-73.

19. Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trials*, 72.

20. *Ibid.*, 77.

21. Fumiye Morita Furuya, telephone interview by author, New York City, 9 January 1998.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Mary Hidaki, taped interview by author, San Jose, Cal., 11 December 1997.

24. Furuya, interview 9 January 1998.

25. Mary H. Takagi, taped interview by author, San Luis Obispo, Cal., 10 December 1997.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Alice Okamoto Uriu, taped interview by author, Davis, Cal., 12 December 1997.

28. Furuya, interview 9 January 1998.

29. Gwenn Jensen observed that tuberculosis (TB) was arguably the single largest public health threat for internees, exacerbated by the crowding at centers. Further, the Japanese culture stigmatized TB, so that people hesitated to seek treatment for fear of social ostracism. Excluding infant mortality (deaths under 1 year of age), TB was the third leading cause of death. Gwenn Jensen, "System Failure, Health Care Deficiencies in the World War II Japanese American Detention Centers," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 73, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 619-21. Elizabeth Vickers stated that, at the Poston hospital, about two-thirds of the slightly more than 100 daily hospital patients had TB. She noted the social stigma of TB among

