

American residents with Japanese faces, and their need of protection from uncontrolled outbursts of racial hatred they were now exposed to.

I was finding it difficult to categorize my own feelings about the Japanese living in the United States. With the exception of a few fruit and vegetable stand operators in the Bakersfield area, I realized to my surprise, that I did not know or have any regular contacts with Japanese adults. My off-hand impression was that they were quiet, ultra courteous, hardworking, friendly people that spoke a different language, lived in a different way and ate a different kind of food without the use of knives, forks or spoons. Altho I had known so few adult Japanese, I had been involved, through the recreation programs, with a number of the children of Japanese parents. My feeling about them was one of admiration for their devotion to study and determination to do their very best in any endeavor. To my knowledge I had never known a Japanese boy or girl that was a low achiever.

Waiting for a lull in the passing traffic, I opened the car door and stepped out onto the paved surface of the street. Without rolling up the window I locked the door and walked behind the car and up over the curb to the sidewalk.

The early day atmosphere of the San Joaquin valley morning was clean and exhilarating this pre-pollution year of 1942. Birds in the citrus trees on an adjacent lot were cheering up the morning while they tuned up for the day. The lingering scent of fruit blossoms enhanced the early May morning freshness giving promise for the usual and abundant early summer harvest of fruit in that part of California. I noticed a car with three occupants pulling into a parking space several car lengths in front of the place where I was parked, as I proceeded to the restaurant entry. I opened the door and stepped inside finding the temperature to be slightly cooler and the light subdued. After an instant of hesitation, to let my eyes adjust from sunlight to shadow, I moved across the tiled floor and seated myself in a booth on the window side of the room. The seats in the booth were high-backed and leather upholstered. As I sat down I noticed that the booths on both sides of mine were unoccupied. I was facing away from the entrance to the restaurant but I could tell, by sight and sound, that a goodly number of tables and booths were in use. This was my favored eating place because it was clean and neat and the food was always good and never greasy.

The waitress approached my table with a container of coffee which she extended in a questioning manner and then filled my cup when I indicated my wish with a nod of the head.