

May 30, 1992

Dear boys of the mission to San Jose.

Frank Abe, relax. Relax. You did very well. You found the right people to get the things done we had to get done. And you found people who took to the story as more than just another gig. You sold Wendy Ng on it and she got us the black box theatre. Kenji Taguma and his dad Noboru were real finds. Phil was in full concentration and working the whole time. Ian was on the case and deeply affected. Jim the stage manager was a life saver.

Phil Sturholm was a rock from the moment he arrived, he ran. We all ran.

And Ian arrived just in time to work his ass off with Jim staving off a sound disaster with mikes and mixers that wouldn't work. Ian's girlfriend ran. Jim ran.

I propose preparing the script for publication. I propose the title read:

THE HEART MOUNTAIN DRAFT RESISTANCE:
THE BOYS OF MOUNTAINVIEW- SAN JOSE

by

FRANK ABE

LAWSON FUSAO INADA

and

FRANK CHIN

PHOTOGRAPHS

by

I propose we run it with a introduction by Michi Weglyn; a Foreword by Frank Abe and an Afterword by Lawson Inada. We'll use end notes, instead of footnotes. I'll do the end notes.

Here's the latest version of the script with a few notes. Frank, you are responsible for incorporating the transcript of what was actually said into the script. Also, you are responsible for hawking and pitching the book. Make it easy on yourself, first try University of Washington Press. Pitch for a two grand advance. Use that money toward the documentary and permission fees to Lawson, Mits Koshiyama, Frank Emi, James

Omura, Grace Ybarra, George Ishikawa, Kozi Sakai, Dave Kawamoto and George Nozawa, photo rights.

Copy this script for people who ask for it. Get yourself the use of a Mac and I'll send you the script on a disk and you can get it translated into MS-DOS or just work on the Mac.

As you read through the script this time, think of Lawson's narration as voice over. We need pictures of young Hirabayashi, headlines of his arrest, a picture of Yasui, I have the Tolan Committee Hearings--you see what I mean. Visuals to beef and counterpoint the narration.

Also think of cutting some of the narration and putting it in front, that is setting up the beginning of WWII and camp history before we see the start of the evening with Wendy Ng. For the TV audience we have to acknowledge the stereotype and set up the resisters and the social ostracism a little before going to the program. Here, at the head, we can use the stuff from the movies .

The three of us should get together and talk about what we want to put into the book in terms of photographs, reproductions of documents, and the script/transcript of the evening. And what we want to say and where in terms of where to be objective and descriptive and where to feel and comment and let go. The book, like the evening, should be a family ceremony, hard factual and documentary info, and give a taste of the emotion of the event.

They might say a lot of nasty about us, but beyond the level of rumor, in the world of what's happening, we brought generations of Nikkei together to celebrate history. Father's and sons. Fathers and daughters. Mothers and daughters. We brokered the reunion of generations the JACL had split. We brought the community of San Jose and the intellectual community of Asian American Studies out to pay their respects and attention to the resisters. Nobody expected we could do either, much less both. So who feels the pulse of the community with the greater sensitivity?

Yeah, the Days of Remembrance in 78 and 79, and the Boys of Mountainview San Jose in 92. Yessir, I do believe, we have moved Japanese America closer to home.

It was interesting to see Ruth Sasaki and David Mura in the audience. I wonder if this encounter with the Nisei guts that JACL history says never was will wake them up to Japanese American content. Odd to see Akemi Kikemura looking glamorous and forlorn and unconvinced of her beauty, in her black off the shoulder thing, beautiful makeup and Hollywood hair. Wing Tek Lum paid attention.

Frank, I would solicit reactions from Sasaki and Mura and others, especially Kenji Taguma and Grace Ybarra. Also the two people who had questions--what did they think of

what they saw and heard? And just for fun get written reactions from Phil and Ian too. This is one of those projects that struck everyone working on it as so personal, it was worth working for free or next to free. And Jim the stage manager too. Ask what he thought.

Michi called me within an hour or so of my walking into the house. She says she and Walter are ready to kick in something for finishing up the documentary up right, and you should get Bill Hohri to raise money for us.

She's giving the commencement address after she gets her honorary degree. Shirley Hyun asked her to talk about the L.A. riots.

The book we can get done as we're getting the footage we shot carved into an hour for San Jose PBS. Let's talk about August. I'll be up for Bumbershoot. I'd like to be up before that getting some more of Ruby Chow on tape.

Bring Lawson, Omura and me up to Seattle in August. Lawson and Omura to record voice over stuff, including the stuff we cut from the script to save time, that evening. If Mits is up for the Heart Mountain reunion, I'd like to get him on tape talking about Yasui's visit. Better, if Ike Matsumoto is up for the reunion- Yasui talked to Ike.

There's a mess of photos and artifacts, I think we want Phil to video. You know what this stuff is as well as I do, Frank. Tell a story. Snaps of the young Omura. Current Life. (I have xerox copies)

We can cut to visuals of Yasui's turncoat editorials in the PC, from Emi's speech, and go to Omura's comment.

As tightly scripted and tightly teched as it was, within seconds it crumbled into chaos. "Lawson didn't tear off the paper," I said out loud. Jim the stage Manager was clearly not comfortable running the sound. He was worried about the different mikes and whether or not they were really numbered correctly on the dials he hoped controlled them.

And now the audience faced to mysteries. What was that thing covered in brown paper hanging behind the panel? And what was that empty chair in the center of the room doing there?

This was my first time in the booth. It was a sauna in there. Three bodies standing on a glorified plywood box built on a 4 x 8 plywood floor. And all this hot gear from WWII crackling and fizzing vacuum tubes to life somewhere plugging into a little microchipped dinky with little dinky dials on it and little teeny numbers, and little teeny knife switches. Jim's thing is set design and building. He likes solving problems with structural illusions. Twisting dials and listening is not his favorite activity. He had long since whooped off into his own night across his own trackless desert.

I had never seen this dark haired girl next to me and didn't ask what she was doing

FRANK
HAND
SLIPS

of Paper," and the mike he wore made him sound like Marvin and the Chipmunks, and Jim said, "Hmmm" and I put myself in the audience's place and wondered what the fuck that big rectangle covered in brown paper, with a seam across the long width, hanging from the ceiling from chains was doing there just behind Lawson and the panelists.

Did the fact that the seam was taped with masking tape like stitching on Frankenstein's neck, and not along the seam like a zipper mean something?

While Mits read Lawson looked down and mopped his brow . Through the audience I picked out little clumps of old Nisei men, some wearing baseball caps and windbreakers, and Nisei women watching intently with these goofy smiles on their faces. From the top, no matter what, the right tone had been struck and the people from the community that came and managed to find the place without a map, listened to secrets and watched like parents at the kid's first school play.

The motion of the panelists and Lawson turning the pages of the script became a ritual motion. Every turn of the page led to the revelation of new secrets, new twists of old memories and sudden discoveries of missing links but always a new look at their old times. It was like rows of Catholic Cardinals turning the pages of the Bible with the Pope. The waves of coincidental page turning generated a wave of power whamming into the audience.

All the people on the panel were real. The resisters , and the resisters sons and daughters, and a scholar of the resistance. Two generations together. Three Sansei in word and yes in deed honoring a group of Nisei, right before your eyes. The combo of the real and the simplicity of the setting, the black music stands for the scripts instead of a long authoritarian table. Lawson the occasional poet, with his occasional book, who knows his occasions, on a stool with a music stand instead of behind a lecturn.--came together to make the occasion and everything said on this occasion special, a form of ceremony. Out of this occasion, someday, the story of an Urashima Taro who grows old in the undersea kingdom before he goes home to live happily ever after with his baseball hat, redress money and pickup truck.

Maybe the chains means something. What does the brown paper mean?

Frank and Lawson were frantically skimming the script for a place to rip the brown paper off the picture. I was too. We all chose the same spot. And though separated by glass, an audience and space, we agreed, and it worked well.

I was sweating it out in the booth and couldn't see the faces of the resisters and the Nisei and was too far away to see what was happening with Dave Kawamoto and Mits Koshiyama when they were signing their names, and George Nozawa when he choked at his big moment.

Frank and Lawson facing the audience, and in the same physical space with the audience felt the emotional charge jittering through the air. In the booth I just felt things were moving very fast and the audience was paying attention and more. The whole evening was a ceremony, a ritual. Every person on the panel, their arrangement next to each other, every move they made, every word they said was shiney, beautiful and dense with meaning and mystery.

When the paper finally came off the picture of the 63 I felt something from the audience--very brief, but very moving--For an instant the 63 resisters sitting in a courtroom in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1944 and the resisters and leaders and children and students of the resistance under the picture, in San Jose, California, in 1992 were one, all the same picture.

Thursday, at the conference on the third floor of the Fairmont Hotel, Jeff Chan told me that Jim Hirabayashi and Lane Hirabayashi had told him "You've gone too far this time..." Which was a mystery to me. I don't know what it meant, or if Jeff wasn't exaggerating what they really said. I think I saw Lane at the evening with the resisters. He was standing up on the second level of bleachers watching everyone mingle on the floor and gobble up the food and look closely at the big photo. I didn't speak to him though. I was tired and looking for a soda and a place to sit and watch awhile before looking for bodies to help me move the risers back to the scene shop.

Emiko and Chizu Omori were there. Laureen Mar and L.A. Chung were there, within three feet of each other at one point. Russell Leong was there and may have left, I'm not sure. Then, who can be sure about Russell. Ishikawa brought his wife. She made some kind of nasty remark about too much recognition of the resisters at me that made me jump back. I never went back to find out exactly what she said. But you can't really honor a man who's overcome social ostracism then turn around and punch out his sixty, or seventy year old wife.

Steve Sumida and Gail Nomura were there. Dr. Cliff showed up and stayed and chatted. Nice man. George Uyeda's kids and grandkid were there. Some of Lawson's family was there. J. K. Yamamoto from the Hokubei Mainichi. Gary Okihiro was there. Shawn was there. Sam Solberg. Good old Sam. I wish I'd brought Sam along. But it would have been grueling for him. But I think he might have dug it. No, it was too vast an unknown for me jump into with Sam. Enough to be able to work with what I had. I didn't need another joker. But it was nice to see young kids, babies in diapers in the audience.

Okay, enough of winding down. Let me know what you hear. Let me know what you saw. I was looking at people's backs.