

[REDACTED]
May 25, 1991.

Mr. Mits Koshiyama
[REDACTED]

Dear Mits:

It has been some time since I last wrote you. I thought I should touch base with you again and see what gives in fair California. In your last letter you asked whether I met Jim Akutsu while in Seattle. I did have a session with Jim at his home on Beacon Hill with Frank Abe. He brought out a number of books and documents of interest but I may have missed some relevant points, immersed in reading and taking notes from books I had never seen while he was conversing. I wished that I had taken the tape recorder which I had left at Frank's. Frank did write to me that Akutsu was gathering documents for me but I will believe that when any materials arrive. Jim has been speaking and issuing interviews and does have a nemesis in a Nisei vet leader. For whatever it is worth, he gave my name as one of a handful who influenced his action. It was also Jim who reached me in a snowstorm and drove me to Sea-Tac Airport in Renton to catch a plane home. Traffic was tied up for miles and Frank couldn't get out of the downtown grid.

On another subject, the Making Waves Committee, an activist group, brought in William Hohri to speak at a north suburban church in Arvada. I was there because of a personal invitation and a dinner to follow. Hohri recited the NCJAR story and in the course of his speech recognized me in the audience and asked me to stand. I stood up to applause. It was the first time I had been seen among a Japanese American group in four decades. A Nisei woman in the same row turned out to be a doctor's wife for whom I had landscaped her property way back in time. I was approached in the reception room by two young Sansei girls with extended hands and a retired accountant for the State whom I believe is a strong JAFL leader. The first woman said: "Keep writing." I did not pursue that as a CSMC leader was standing ready to greet me. Some sixty people attended the lecture. Five of us went down to Akebono's in Sakura Square in downtown Denver for dinner.

The following week I was requested to attend the Professor King Kwok Cheung lecture at the University of Colorado, Denver Branch. Prior to its beginning I was asked to meet the speaker after the lecture by the chairwoman, who is also a Making Waves leader. Professor Cheung greeted me with: "Jimmie Omura, you're a legend!" I had not considered myself in that frame and it came as a surprise. I think of legend as something in the distant past, a sense of age, a myth. Perhaps there will be some gracious souls who may think of me as a legend when I have gone to wherever I may be going.

"I owe you a lot for.....providing me with a history I can point to with some pride. I only wish I had known about you when I was trying to learn about Japanese America by reading Hosokawa's first book, and not being able to find myself in it. I felt like saying 'those people aren't me.' No wonder so many of my generation turned away from Japanese America; there was nothing there to be proud of."

That's beautiful! It was in a letter I received not long ago. I have taken the liberty to edit it to keep this Sansei's identity concealed for this person is no ordinary Sansei. His statements touched my heart for it was exactly what I had hoped to accomplish, to reclaim our dignity and pride that I saw being lost in submissive abnegation to the dictum of the Western Defense Command. It was very nice to hear it said after these long years of silence. For many decades, I had felt Japanese Americans might be incapable of appreciating or even understanding what the stakes were in this crisis. It bothers me today to be described as having supported the draft resisters, which though true, merely tell only a partial story and not the basic principle which motivated that support. One needs only to read the Tolson Report, my tenure in directing a free

employment agency, and my journalistic expositions, both prior to and after assuming the editorship of the Rocky Shimpō, to understand that the stakes were higher than what is made to appear. But the ball has been bouncing the other way so very long.

Last week I received a long-distance phone call at which I was asked whether I would consider talking to a college audience in Japan. This question also came from a Sansei. I was informed that he had been offered a job in Japan and was mulling in his mind to organize just such an event. That would be nice, a feather in my cap. Will it happen? It is nice to fantasize that it might happen. Of course I'm dreaming but forgive this old geezer for a moment of fantasy.

I was also asked last week when I will next be in Northern California. There is a Literature Conference in the planning stage at UCLA. If it happens, it is to be held next October or so I am told. It has yet to be announced. Prospects did receive a suggested curricula for the conference requesting comments. I am one of those who have not responded, except to criticize lack of pertinent informations for intelligent decision-making. I was told someone slipped up at the university in failing to provide us with the necessary list and it would be in the mail to me. A week has slipped by. It would be nice to see you folks again. I did not get a good look at San Jose and never got a feel for it. Are the birds still there for wake-up call? Imagine your daughter getting married! I thought she was just a young kid when I was there.

From what you write, the resisters seemed not to have benefited in any way from JAACL recognition last June. I did not think that they would. Not in anyway material but only in self-gratification and the fact the Fair Play Committee members are no longer fair game by JAACL-bashing. It is ironic that the action begun for the "No-No" boys failed to achieve the intended purpose. Part of that is due to the confusion in the "No-No" terminology which is negative in connotation and is overshadowed by the "No-No's" of the squirrely Loyalty Questionnaires. "No-No" group in this context refers to the Minidoka dissidents whose attempt to renounce their citizenship in protests was disallowed by the government. Their stand otherwise was identical to the Fair Play Committee. Under the highly charged climate of the time and the circumstances under which they suffered, we should be bighearted enough to overlook technicalities and in the name of compassion provide the same recognition as that given the FPC resisters. We should consider the fact that the government of the United States has acknowledged that it inflicted wrongs upon the Japanese Americans and had not this wrongdoing occurred, none of the events that followed would have existed. Are we still begging for white approbation and still fearful our accepting the "No-No" group would jeopardise our image? If that is so, we have not yet come far enough in the universality of humankind.

Will Frank Abe's documentary fly? I do not know. I believe he is opting for a PBS funding and looking into other avenues. He did fail to get the NAATA grant; just as Loni Ding failed on producing a resistor documentary, not once but twice. Is there a prejudice against a resistor documentary? There is another interment docu-drama out in the wings. It is by the Omori sisters, Emiko and Chizu. This, too, missed a shot at a N.E.H. grant but did receive a \$10,000 award for further research and development. I know Chiz personally and in fact in 1983 I was a guest at her home in Seattle. You've no doubt heard of Emiko Omori. Her latest documentary, Hot Summer Winds, was to have appeared in American Playhouse on May 24th. I missed it! The Omori's are working on an interment project. I am told there is a bias among east coast officials who feel interment has been overplayed and besides Asian lack the clout where it counts. That might be the problem with the FPC docu-drama as well.

Wherever did you get the notion that this is paradise in Denver. Nothing of the sort. I just try to get along the best I can. The recognition I have received are a solace but they have very little intrinsic or material value. It is gratifying to be recognized in at least some quarters. I am told Frank Chin's Big Aieeeee is set for July release. I understand I am given a good build up by someone who has seen the galley proof.

Cordially,

Jimmie
James M. Omura