

Mr. Frank Chin;

Your proposed one-on-one "interview" never did take place; that has vexed me no end, inasmuch as I had so much to say, to get off my chest.

Poorly typed, improperly composed, but please accept this report as my interview.

Sincerely,

(1)

PHASE I
"Encounter"

Phase I of the FPC was the beating of the drums by Okamoto, and the blowing of the trumpets of Nakadate. Okamoto, the fiery gung-ho man who spoke with full-blast fury of a flame-thrower, and wrote with the brilliance of Clarence Darrow. Nakadate the polished orator who gained the confidence of the listeners with his convincing manner of presentation. Emi, handsome, muscular, whose deliberate manner of speaking instilled fearlessness.

My original contact with the above trio was my first attendance in one of the mess-hall meetings publicized through hastily mimeographed leaflets posted at various places. With full house crowds, the early meetings were as lively as pre-rodeo dance halls. The speeches by the trio, and then the rebuttals and questions from the audiences; this would go on for hours....after all, the issue was a grave one. For every doubts and apprehensions brought up, the trio had an undeniably sound and power-laden reply....just requiring strong minds to back-it-up. But it still remained a haunting issue to the vast majority, "yes, but...."

My personal position from the very first was simply, "The hell with this noise !" The FPC was more tactful and thorough. The term, "without due process of law" would precede or follow statement after statements. I was totally impressed by the knowledgeable leaders. Who were they ? Where did they learn all this stuff ? Were they attorneys ? Being a citizen, not being totally aware of all my rights, I felt ashamed.

On a few occasion that I talked with Okamoto, I soon gained his confidence and my offers to help him with his typing was taken up. (I worked in the Administration Office amongst abundant supply of typing papers, carbon papers, typewriters, etc.) A few of his works that I kept, I shall cherish forever. Viewed by the vast majority as a little "tetched in the head", as overly aggressive, too dominant, a big dreamer. The Heart Mtn. Sentinel had judged him a latrine-house philosopher, a big black blot for the rest of the residents. The WRA administration pegged him as simply an incorrigible trouble-maker. Shortly thereafter he was quietly and swiftly plucked off to Tule Lake.

With the demise of Okamoto and Horino from the FPC scene, soon Nakadate withdrew himself from all activities. True reason, I never learned. At about this time great many of the boys were picked-up and were placed in various jails in and around Cheyenne. No more public meetings were held. No nothing, the hopes for eventual victory, moral or otherwise, ebbed. The FPC has put its tail between its leg and as the Sentinel has stated all along - - "deserted the poor, ignorant, and misinformed boys awaiting their trial "

PHASE II

2

"Precious Few"

I wish I can do full justice in my report at this junction, as the true spirit and brute determination of the FPC emerged. Frank Emi, unquestionably the great source of inspiration.

The immediate issue at stake was to deliver what we had proclaimed all along: an attorney for their defense, and on with the show. Now, all the meetings were held in private; usually at Franks, Arts or at Mr. Kubota's barrack room.

My camp duties included being a messenger-driver for the administration, so it was no problem to notify the handful of such meetings. Talk about being down to a "precious few", this was it. Imagine the scene - - half-dozen or so fellows gathered about trying to rig the ship and get it on its way..... while the wife of one is busy changing the diaper of an infant in another corner while trying to iron the days wash - - all at the same time ! in the same little room ! Believe me, such was the "office scene."

Letters were usually composed by Frank and then we would re-read, rehash, add, delete, edit and finally nod approval and sent them on their way. Replies were given the same close scrutiny; each sentence interpreted one way or another, often trying to read between the lines. With possible mail censorship the project was tedious.

A typical scene - - - Art who would be sitting on the floor in the corner of the room would say something like this, " I think the second sentence in the last paragraph is too strong, we don't want to appear as if we're begging for his services, etc...and so on and so on.." Then we'd agree, the sentence would be re-phrased.....that's how the letters were written...that's how decisions were made, with everyone pitching in.

As I recall, at this stage the active participants were Frank, Art, Kozie, Mr. Kubota, and Min Tamesa. All those who were scheduled to be "picked-up" were always encouraged to attend so that they would be kept abreast of the current events.

The communique with the outside world with no private telephones, done mostly by mail was a slow and deliberate process.

PHASE II
(continued)

Now in the meantime, the internal pot begins to boil over. Can you imagine the turmoil and anxiety of the parents of the boys and their wives when their loved ones are actually jailed? Placed upon Frank Emi's shoulders at this time was a staggering tonnage of burden. Mr. Kubota (former Japanese school teacher, and Judo instructor) with his excellent command of the Japanese language, backed by his powerful personality was most influential in keeping the Issei parents well informed of the developments, and of the necessity of keeping faith in the eventual outcome. I do not recall ever, when he was not present at these meetings. I believe it was his deep admiration for the gutsy efforts of Frank and Art, his love for all the young fellows who were picked-up. . . . and also his knowledge that he can quell any fears or panics that may and did arise from the parents. In this area of service we cannot overlook the great contribution made by two of the issei parents: Mr. K. Kawahara and Mr. Uhachi Tamesa. There were several others whose name slips me at this time.

Typical issues brought forth from some of the parents: "I thought we were going to win !" (after Cheyenne) Three years ! How come so long ! Are you sure they're getting enough to eat ? Appeal ? Is it worth the trouble ? How much do you think it will cost us ? What, the Supreme Court ? What for ? What good is it ? How much ? Forget my son, it isn't worth the trouble or the money ! What are you guys trying to prove ? And on and on

PHASE III

4

The End, or the Beginning?

As I look back, the FPC deserves the highest praise for keeping the ship of hope steered in the proper direction at all times. At no time was there any thoughts of abandoning any of the boys. It was always everybody together, inability to meet financial obligations made no difference.

The few active participants knew what had happened to Okamoto, any day they could be next. Some of their close friends wouldn't acknowledge their usual casual greetings. Imagine how their wives and loved ones were also being blurred at. Many were sympathetic -- purely because they felt sorry for us being so gullible in blind pursuit of self-destruction.

Take Kozie Sakai for example, obtained a pass from Camp, headed for Cheyenne, kept in close touch with all the boys in jail (candies, cigarettes, clean socks, messages from home, etc.) stayed there all during the trial and kept us informed daily of the trial progress. How reassured the folks were to have someone there! How helpful it was for the rest of us! But what about Kozie? He could easily have been picked up on any crumped-up charges by the FBI or the WRA and been disposed of. His wife knew that. Kozie knew that. We all knew that.

Frank Emi and Sam Horino walking out the gate -- a bullet in the back from the military sentinels perched high above from the gun towers....another possibility.

Having launched the ship that took the case of the 63 all the way to the Supreme Court -- that is what I am most proud of, and to have been there witnessing the lives of Frank, Art, Kozie, etc., getting the frame work done and launching it on its way. It was always stressed, and I firmly believed in it, that we had to go all out all the way to the top. Perhaps the odds in the district court was slim, but higher the court, the better the chances; as was proven in the Conspiracy trial. Like a fighter, you may hit the canvas in the early rounds, but you gather your courage and wisdom and slug it out to the 15th round. True, we "lost" in the Supreme Court.....No, the U.S. lost.... They evaded the issue and avoided embarrassment by simply refusing to hear the case. A.L.Wirin petitioned for Rehearing, but to no avail.

Since the mid-forties when all this took place things have been quiet. Too Quiet. As a self-appointed historian for the FPC, each little news article of interest concerning the resistance I faithfully entered in the scrap-book. It was early this year that I decided it was time to share the scrap-book with Frank Emi. He would be the first to lay eyes on it besides myself. Then I had the pleasure of meeting you and Dwight. That evening at Kozy's, when I saw the voluminous amount of copies of articles, ~~how~~ hearings, etc., that you had in your possession, I was floored. Hey, this guy was really serious in his research!

It seems like a relay, Okamoto passing the baton on to Frank, Art, Kozie, and now into the hands of two willing and competent anchor men heading for the turn towards the tape.

PHASE IV

And in Conclusion -

Your second trip to Mountain View was a dismal failure as far as attendance was concerned. Above all, it turned my stomach (and I'm sure Kozie's too) to realize how the great majority of the boys have become so inconsiderate, so aloof. Realistically speaking, at the mere mention of the names of Frank, Art, and Kozie, they should be trampling over each other to greet them, to shake their hands, expressing long over-due gratitude. Their only concern. . . oh so petty, it was disgusting.

As for myself, as I stated before, I would feel insulted if my name was omitted from the list of those who took the stand.

No report would be complete without the mentioning of what Art Emi must have endured during the trying months when Frank and Kubota were arrested and the period while they were incarcerated. The imminent closure of the camps was approaching, he had his own family, his father, and Frank's young family to worry about, plus all the other related matters. At this stage, I would say Art and Kozie really had the tiger by the tail. Perhaps we were most fortunate that by that time A.L. Wirin of the ACLU was so helpful (bail, etc.) and capable and willing to handle both cases with little or no encouragement. Nevertheless, only someone like Art could have withstood the pressure that was thrust upon him at the time.

How fortunate it was of me to have been allowed within the inner circle and permitted to be an eye-witness. My personal contribution was nil, more in the line of a messenger. Believe me, the least I could do was do my best.

All in all, those days, those years, I wouldn't trade for anything!

Respectfully submitted,

Events at a Glance - -

March	1944	Last public meeting of FPC
Mar. & April		About 50 boys arrested
April		Tamesa, 2nd, Horino walks out gate
April		Okamoto and Horino, Tule Lake
May		More arrests, now 63
June		Cheyenne trial of 63
July		FPC Leaders arrested
Sept.		Released on bail (Wirin)
Oct.		Conspiracy Trial, Cheyenne
Nov.		Leaders convicted
Nov. & Dec.		2nd group of 22 boys arrested
Dec.		2nd group out on bail (Wirin)
March	1945	63 loses in Denver (Appeals Court)
June		Supreme Court turns down "63"
July		2nd group accepts above, sentenced
Sept.		Conspiracy appeal in Denver
Feb.	1946	Appeals Court overturns, released
Feb.	1947	2nd group of boys completes sentence
Xmas	1947	Presidential Pardon