

**MIDNIGHT
IN
BROAD
DAYLIGHT**



MIDNIGHT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

*A JAPANESE AMERICAN FAMILY
CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS*

Pamela Rotner Sakamoto



HARPER

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FOR MY PARENTS,
SANDRA AND HOWARD ROTNER



Day of spacious dreams!
I sailed for America,
Overblown with hope.

—HAIKU BY ICHIYO,
from *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants*
in *North America* by Kazuo Ito,
translated by Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard

War forced us from California
No ripples this day on desert lake

Cactus field
local train
huffing and puffing

At daybreak
stars disappear
where do I discard my dreams?

—THREE HAIKU BY NEIJI OZAWA, a poet interned at Gila River,
from *May Sky: There Is Always Tomorrow*,
compiled by Violet Kazue de Cristoforo

August 6, 1945
midnight in broad daylight
people inflicted on God
a punishment of fire
this one evening
the fires of Hiroshima
are reflected in the beds of humankind
and, before long, history
will lie in ambush
for all those who imitate God.

—EXCERPT FROM SANKICHI TŌGE'S poem "Flames"
in *Poems of the Atomic Bomb*,
translation by Karen Thornber



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The true story of a Japanese American family engulfed by war on both sides of the Pacific came to me by serendipity one summer day in 1994. I had recently moved to Tokyo and was attending a press conference for former Jewish refugees who had survived the Holocaust thanks to a Japanese diplomat. The diplomat was the subject of my dissertation. Harry Fukuhara, a retired American colonel with decades of experience in Japan, was accompanying the group as a favor for his travel agent friend. I saw Harry navigate the crowd at the Miyako Hotel, managing American journalists and Japanese diplomats with crystalline Japanese and English. When I remarked to a filmmaker that the refugees had amazing stories, she replied, “If you think their stories are incredible, you should talk to Harry.”

Harry and I introduced ourselves but didn't talk further. But when he came back to Tokyo from his home in California a few months later, he invited me to lunch. An extrovert and frequent mentor, Harry met with many on his trips. Over the next few years on his occasional visits, we chatted over cheeseburgers and iced tea. Harry confided his family's story. I realized that there was far more to his account than what the odd newspaper feature had captured.

In late 1998, I asked Harry whether he had ever considered a book as a legacy of U.S.-Japan relations, the Japanese experience in America, and the *nisei* second-generation Japanese American

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story. His story was remarkable, rare, and unknown. Harry soon arrived in Tokyo and introduced me to his brothers. So began my journey of research and interviews in two countries.

I would comb archives, museums, and libraries across Japan and the United States and interview more than seventy-five people in Japanese or English in both countries. In Tokyo, I discovered Harry's parents' passport applications for the United States and evidence that his father had attended college, an uncommon feat for a poor immigrant. Harry, his younger brother Frank, and I talked over the course of a decade—in coffee shops, restaurants, ferries, and taxis. Most interviews were formal, with my notebook and tape recorder on hand. Others were impromptu conversations. Frank, who was based in Japan, became my travel partner. Harry never wanted to go to Hiroshima, but Frank did not hesitate. When the bullet train from Tokyo whooshed into Nagoya Station, he hopped on, sat beside me, and handed me a homemade lunch. We met relatives on the sacred island of Miyajima, attended his elementary school reunion, and spoke with the man who had once bullied Harry. One autumn afternoon in Hiroshima, we were walking to the family's former home when a woman came running. "*Fu-ra-n-ku*," she called in her singsong voice. It was Masako, a neighbor who had been with Harry and Frank's mother on the day that the atomic bomb exploded; Frank had not seen her for more than half a century. She was bursting with memories.

The home in Hiroshima that Frank and I entered with Masako by our side? The present owners had bought it with its American furniture and fixtures from Harry and Frank's mother; it was a preserved time capsule of the 1930s and 1940s. I was stunned that there were also shards of glass embedded in the stairwell, debris from the atomic bomb blast. Harry and I flew to Los Angeles, where he had lived before he was interned

in 1942. At the house where he had worked and been treated as a surrogate son, the subsequent owner still displayed the service flag that Harry's employers had hung in their window when Harry enlisted in the U.S. Army and went to war in 1943. I could not be more grateful that Harry was a packrat. From his disorderly den in San Jose emerged his teenage Japanese diaries, ribbon-tied packets of 1930s letters from friends in the United States, and his Japanese military-training text. He also had a small trove of American and Japanese propaganda and captured letters.

I had first been drawn to this story because I knew little about the internment. When Harry and I visited Seattle and Los Angeles, fellow Japanese Americans at coffee shops would casually ask him, "Which camp were you in?" This was an immediate, indelible bond that few outside this group were aware of. I had wondered how Harry could enlist in a military that had imprisoned him and would then send him into possible combat against his brothers. I had never learned about the tremendous Japanese American contribution to the American war effort. These were compelling reasons to delve into research, but, over time, the story revealed new significance. Above all, it was a tale of tragedy luminous with hope and resilience, a story of abiding love for family. My belief in the power and dimensions of this project sustained me on the lengthy, uncertain path to publication.

As amazing as many of the events may seem, please note that this is a work of nonfiction. No names have been altered, characters created, or events distorted. If a comment appears in quotation marks, it is verbatim from an interview, oral history, letter, or other primary source. I corroborated each vignette with repeat interviews with the source, multiple interviews with others, and historical research. In re-creating scenes of those

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who were not alive at the time of writing this book, I used a combination of primary and secondary sources. In recollections that have been told before, I went back to the original source, whether in Japanese or English.

Please note that Japanese names are written with the first name followed by the surname. Although the convention is to record Japanese names with the last name preceding the first name, there are so many Japanese American names in this book that I chose consistency to avoid confusion.

There are stories we stumble upon in life that are so rich with delicious details, imbued with meaning, and resonant with epic events that they can consume a writer. I have been entranced by this looking glass into the past. I wish the same for intrigued readers.

Pamela Rotner Sakamoto

Honolulu

**MIDNIGHT
IN
BROAD
DAYLIGHT**



PROLOGUE: SHOCKWAVE

山雨きたらんと欲して風楼に満つ

San-u kitaran to hosshite kaze rō ni mitsu

When strong winds begin to blow, showers cannot be far behind.

Nothing seemed amiss that first Sunday in December 1941. Ponytailed beauties strolled the boardwalk, bodybuilders paraded for show at Muscle Beach, and children shrieked aboard the Whirling Dipper coaster as it clattered over the metal track at the Santa Monica Pier. The day was young, the nation placid, and Christmas was just a few weeks away. No one could have guessed that at that moment, 2,500 miles across the Pacific, Japanese planes were zeroing in on military installations throughout the island of Oahu.

So it was that sometime before noon, a twenty-one-year-old gardener working in the scorching sun had no cause for alarm when his employer emerged from the shade of her house. He stopped the mower to catch her words. “Harry,” she said, “Japan has attacked Pearl Harbor.”

“Oh, is that so?” The news meant little to him. He nodded and the woman returned inside.

When she reappeared a short time later, he was puzzled. She said, “Japan has invaded Pearl Harbor.”

“That’s terrible.” Harry didn’t know what else to say. He had never heard of Pearl Harbor. Was it a bay fed by the Pearl River in China, where Japan had long been at war? He vaguely

remembered a headline about an American ship sunk by the Japanese there a few years earlier.

The woman paused. "I think maybe you should go home."

"Why?" Harry asked and added without thinking, "I had nothing to do with it."

She stiffened. "Japan has invaded the United States." When Harry hesitated because he hadn't finished the job, she fired him. Stunned, he loaded his mower into his Model A Ford and drove home to Glendale fourteen miles away.

Harry had been let go before—at the end of a harvest picking peas and strawberries in Washington State. But this departure, from a normally friendly employer for whom he worked regularly, had struck out of the blue. Much later, he would recall feeling "wounded," as if a knife had drawn beads of blood without warning.

ON THAT SAME MORNING, FOUR THOUSAND MILES from Pearl Harbor, a seventeen-year-old high school student named Katsutoshi walked from his house to the local train station in Takasu, an affluent district of country homes in greater Hiroshima. He passed wooden and ceramic-roof-tiled homes set back from the street, the post office staffed by a newlywed woman who loved to gossip, and the police kiosk manned by officers intent on prowling the neighborhood. In the haze of sunrise, Katsutoshi, blurry with sleep, saw the station platform awash in khaki and indigo. Soldiers, shouldering rucksacks, paced back and forth, and housewives, dressed in bloomers, huddled, clutching empty duffels.

Katsutoshi did not blink at the scene. Soldiers were always coming and going in Hiroshima, a major port of departure for the war in China. Women, too, were on the move daily, but they were traveling to black markets in rural areas, where they

hoped to scabble up radishes, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes for dinner. His mother often made this trek as well.

Nothing seemed amiss. The day was young, the nation long at war, and New Year's a few weeks away. Katsutoshi was conscious only of his extravagance. He wasn't supposed to take the train to school, but he had a track meet that morning and didn't want to tire himself out before his twelve-mile race. He patted his calves, stretched his hamstrings, and stood on his tiptoes to limber up.

As the train rumbled into the station, Katsutoshi moved toward the edge of the platform, peering for a spot inside the crammed coach. Above the din of the screeching wheels, he heard someone yell from behind. Before he could look for the source, the train doors opened. He jumped on, and the train rattled toward the city. The coach was quiet. All the way to school and during his race, lap after lap, he kept turning over in his mind the phrase that he had caught in passing. It had to have been garbled, or had he really heard "our victorious assault on Hawaii"?

A FEW HOURS LATER, HARRY AND KATSUTOSHI returned to their respective homes, in Glendale and Hiroshima, still thinking about how little they understood about the day's events. Harry, in a grass-stained T-shirt and jeans, joined his employers, Clyde and Flossie Mount, for whom he worked as a live-in houseboy. The sun poured through a leaded glass window in the living room. Outside billowed an American flag.

Katsutoshi, in his sweat-stained uniform, folded his legs beneath him at the low table in his mother's *tatami*-matted sitting room, where a hibachi brazier offered scant heat and the paper window screens flattened the pallid sunlight. Kinu had left a few panels open, through which he caught a glimpse of

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the garden with its spinney of persimmon, loquat, pomegranate, and fig trees. A crimson camellia blossom hugged the side of a weathered stone basin.

ON THIS DAY THE RADIOS, CRACKLING WITH static, consumed each household's attention.

After Katsutoshi had left the house early that morning, Kinu had been puttering in the kitchen when a naval hymn blared forth from loudspeakers positioned throughout the neighborhood. "Defend and attack for our country," roared a soldier. Kinu, chills coursing down her back, had turned on her radio.

The Mounts, too, had their first heart-clenching moment when they heard Stephen Early, the White House press secretary, step to the microphone for a live broadcast. In a clinical tone, he had said, "A Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor naturally would mean war. Such an attack would naturally bring a counterattack, and hostilities of this kind would naturally mean that the President would ask Congress for a declaration of war."

By the time Harry took a seat at their table, they had begun digesting the news and considering the consequences. The white-haired, middle-aged couple, longtime teachers, looked at Harry, whom they regarded as a son. "This is going to bring up all kinds of problems," Mrs. Mount said even before Harry shared the news of his abrupt job dismissal.

A LOW-GRADE SENSE OF DREAD DESCENDED OVER Kinu and Katsutoshi in their corner of Hiroshima. Nothing unsettling had yet occurred, but the future held little promise. There would be more fresh-faced recruits marching to the port to be dispatched to the front, greater rationing of essentials, and more mass funerals for the soldiers who would return in a year's time

as cremated bone and ashes. Kinu thought of her four sons, who were draft age, and Katsutoshi of his brothers.

The next morning, Kinu opened her local *Chūgoku Shimbun* newspaper to a stream of jubilant headlines from official Japanese news sources throughout the Pacific. “Surprise attacks” had stunned “every direction,” including the “first air raids on Honolulu”; Singapore was “under bombardment,” as well as foreign military bases at Davao, Wake, and Guam. In Shanghai, the British fleet had been “sunk,” while the American one had “surrendered.” Japanese raids were pummeling Hong Kong and the Malay Peninsula. Kinu, trembling, put the newspaper down and waited to confide in her son.

The Japanese headlines were accurate; Allied forces were struggling to repel Japan’s lightning attacks and stunning advances. In Washington, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was wheeled into Congress, where he invoked in his inimitable baritone, “a day which will live in infamy.” His entire speech lasted little more than seven minutes. Within an hour, Congress passed a declaration of war, with all but one dissenting vote. On Oahu, where the battleships moored at Pearl Harbor listed, smoldered, and burned, the tally of sailors, soldiers, and civilian deaths would soon surpass 2,400.

IN THE AFTERMATH OF PEARL HARBOR, A location of which he now had no doubt, Harry took a fountain pen to paper. Back in Hiroshima, Kinu dipped her horsehair brush in *sumi* (ink). Both wrote urgent letters to the other in vertical lines of intricate, cursive Japanese characters. Harry rushed to the post office en route to his part-time job and college courses. Kinu handed her envelope with its tissue-thin contents to Katsutoshi, who had, at an earlier age in a world apart, gone by the name of Frank. He ran to the Japan Red Cross, a concrete monolith

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near the copper-domed Industrial Promotion Hall close to the T-shaped Aioi Bridge downtown and the only place now accepting enemy-nation mail. Kinu prayed that her instructions to Harry, the only one of her sons still in America and Katsutoshi's dearest brother, would be delivered.

PART ONE

AMERICAN BORN, BICULTURAL BRED

昔の剣今の菜刀

Mukashi no tsurugi ima no na-gatana

Fortune is made of glass.





At Home in Auburn

Once Harry made a decision, he rarely looked back. The injustice was minor, but it scratched the eight-year-old boy's pride that afternoon in 1928. Dashing from his house in Auburn, Washington, he pedaled his bicycle over the backyard grass, crunching onto the gravel lane. He raced to West Main Street and, three blocks later, clattered over the Interurban railroad tracks, avoiding the live third rail. When he reached the West Valley Freeway, he sped toward Seattle. The metropolis lay a formidable twenty-two miles away.

Harry bumped over the two-lane highway, where dense evergreens cast shadows over his path. Occasionally, a roadster rumbled by, splattering mud. Harry pedaled harder.

The road, offset by a leaden sky, rose and fell before him. When the waning sun broke through the White River Valley's cumulus clouds, shafts of light lightened his journey. As he coasted down inclines, he caught the scent of cedar and a whiff of rain, never more than a cloudburst away.

The farther he traveled, the more convinced he became that his impromptu plan would succeed. He was certain he could hide out at his friends' house. After that, he didn't know what would happen. When he began to recognize the rolling farmland outside Seattle, his spirits soared.

By the time Harry reached the Bitows' house, it was long after dark. As soon as he ground to a dirt-spewing halt, Mr. and Mrs. Bitow ushered him inside and dialed his father, their close friend. Harry had an inkling that they had been alerted in advance and were waiting by the window all along.

A short time later, Katsuji Fukuhara stood holding his bowler hat and bowing before the Bitows, apologizing for Harry's insolence in showing up uninvited. His father's humility was practiced etiquette but Harry couldn't dismiss how grim his father looked. He roped his bicycle to his dad's Buick and slumped into the backseat. The rush of adrenaline was long gone; his legs and shoulders were beginning to throb. Yet he felt buoyed by his daring jaunt. His parents now understood the strength of his resolve.

Secretly, he was relieved to return home. His mother wouldn't greet him with open arms and tears of relief; Japanese parents were not demonstrative. But the corners of her mouth might crinkle when she filled his rice bowl, set his favorite *takuan* pickled radishes on the table, and ladled him a generous helping of *miso* soup. His kid brother Frank would sit wide-eyed by his side, while Harry sank his chopsticks into his dinner.

Katsuji did not lecture or punish Harry that night. Perhaps, he concluded, miles of bumping over brick pavement was agony enough. Surely he breathed easily that Harry, who had once walked in circles for hours until he found his way home from school after dark, had not become lost on unfamiliar roads. But if Katsuji reckoned that Harry would regret his impulsive behavior, he was underestimating his son's optimism, resilience, and penchant for adventure. Harry's bicycle sprint to imagined freedom would not be the last time that he escaped in order to come home.

. . .

HOME WAS AUBURN, A TOWN LATTICED WITH railroad tracks and berry and vegetable farms, a pocket of the White River Valley at the foot of glacial, snow-capped Mount Rainier. Japanese farmers were drawn to the valley, in part because it reminded them of the landscape of Japan, and cloud-swathed, volcanic Rainier of Japan's most sacred peak, Mount Fuji. The immigrants called Rainier "Tacoma's Fuji" and lovingly translated the valley's name into Japanese. *Shirakawa*. The soft syllables rolled off their tongues, like a whisper with a finger to the lips, for someplace intimate and empyreal.

Auburn itself, population five thousand, was a young town, born the same month and year as Katsuji, in February 1886. It soon shed its original name Slaughter, in memory of a Lieutenant William Slaughter killed in an Indian uprising, when the unwelcoming moniker became the butt of local jokes. The name Auburn, a nod to a stately New York cousin, gave a gloss of worldliness. As the western frontier was settled at a furious pace, Auburn hitched itself to progress, vying for railroad routes. By 1920 steam whistles punctuated the air as up to 180 trains—from the Seattle-Tacoma Interurban Railway, the Northern Pacific Railway, and the Milwaukee Road—hustled through town each day.

Katsuji, who had been at one point Katsuji Fukumoto, had also shed his name. By the time he reached Auburn, he was, to Americans, Harry K. Fukuhara—Harry because it was accessible and easy to pronounce, K for Katsuji, and Fukuhara his rightful surname. Katsuji's father in Japan had loaned out the once-noble name in return for funds to defray a debt. When the duration of the loan was up, the name reverted to the family. Both Katsuji and Auburn aspired to a prosperous future.

Yet, in 1926, the same year that the Fukuharas moved to town, the Northern Pacific pulled out of its Auburn terminus.

Meanwhile, Japanese dairy farmers, with whom Katsuji had recently opened a creamery, were abandoning their plots due to plunging milk prices. Katsuji held his ground as the local economy slowly soured.

Nothing struck Harry as amiss. He loved Auburn. Chilled bottles of fresh milk topped with cream left outside the front door before dawn. The crunch of a tart Gravenstein apple plucked from the Fergusons' tree next door. Salmon flopping on the front lawn when the White River flooded. An inner-tube ride down Easy Canyon Stream, the sockeyes' coral scales shimmering in the sunlight. The perfume of ripe strawberries wafting from the loamy soil on Japanese farms. The gentle touch and steady beat of cool drizzle. Harry's images were as collectible as snapshots from the new, pocket-sized Kodak Vanity camera taking the nation by storm.

Harry was an American citizen by birth, born in Seattle on January 1, 1920. His mother, Kinu, had left the pristine island of Miyajima, outside Hiroshima, at eighteen to wed Katsuji in 1911. For a picture bride—her marriage was arranged in Japan, her knowledge of her husband limited to a photograph—learning English was an afterthought and never came easy. She could not quite master her *r*'s, rolling them in her mouth like marbles. "Harry" sounded a lot like "Hurry."

"*Hu-ri!*" Kinu called from her kitchen perch, glimpsing her son, as skinny as a *somen* noodle, loop out the front door to meet his friends waiting outside. Catching her voice before the door banged shut, he replied, "*Itte kimasu.*" "I'm going but will come back," a proper goodbye before leaving Japanese courtesy behind.

As tall as his Caucasian friends, Harry had straight bangs, a direct gaze, and oversize ears with elongated lobes. In Japan, this size and shape were esteemed: *fukumimi* (ears of happiness)

augured prosperity and good fortune. At least, Harry's parents assumed that he would be able to hear well, and, maybe, when he was older, would listen. Harry disregarded the lore but his mighty ears did come in handy when he twitched them to his friends.

The boys took a hard right on to Main Street, with its packed-dirt thoroughfare, brick and shingled storefronts, open lots, and the guarantee—not necessarily available elsewhere—of the glories of electricity. They were headed to the Mission Theater, the local nickelodeon. Harry, who had a penchant for serial westerns with the lone cowboy pulling the trigger on Indians in a saguaro-spiked desert, didn't care what was playing. What mattered was that he was with friends. Neither he nor his pals jingled much change, but, even if they had, they would have pulled their regular stunt.

One boy purchased a ticket and entered the theater legally, walking upstairs to the men's room and opening the window, ostensibly for fresh air. The rest of the group headed to the back of the building, where a metal pole rose from the ground to the roof. One at a time, they shinnied up, crossed the roof, and dropped to the men's room via the open window. There was one hitch: the roof turned slick in the rain. One slip and a boy would crash to the solid earth two stories down.

The risk, Harry had decided, was worth the reward. He sank into a plush seat, the warmth of the dark theater washed over him, and he surrendered to a double feature. Sometimes Charlie Chaplin bumbled across the screen in loose shoes, baggy pants, cane, and derby hat. In Hollywood, the actor was tearing up the Great White Way, cofounding United Artists, and producing and directing popular films in which he starred. But what Harry savored most was the idea that Charlie Chaplin was his father's friend.

Katsuji had first met Chaplin through the actor's longtime Japanese aide, Totaichi Kono, who hailed from the same rural Hiroshima district. Every time he visited Los Angeles, Katsuji saw the actor, who, he told his rapt children, kept his iconic costume in a glass case. In a photograph, Katsuji and Charlie, roughly the same age and height, in their early forties and about five feet five inches, stood wearing wool blazers accented by silk handkerchiefs, and knife-creased, light trousers. In front of the camera they appeared as equals. But they were not remotely equal before the law.

Though they were both immigrants, Katsuji—who had a head start on Chaplin, having arrived in the States a decade before, in 1900—didn't land far from the bottom of the immigrant heap, inflating to more than 14 million between 1850 and 1930. America was changing rapidly, xenophobia flared, and the issue of citizenship turned on color. It always had.

In 1790, Congress had restricted naturalization to an alien who was a "free white person," thereby excluding slaves. Almost a century later, in 1870, five years after the Civil War, former slaves became eligible for citizenship. But Japanese nationals, who had first legally immigrated to Hawaii in 1868, were, like the Chinese, excluded. By the early 1920s, more than twenty-five thousand legal immigrants from Hiroshima lived in the United States, more than from any other area in Japan. Yamaguchi and Kumamoto prefectures sent many immigrants, too. They were all aliens in a foreign land.

Although *nisei* (second-generation) children like Harry and his siblings were citizens because they were born in the United States, their immigrant *issei* (first-generation) parents continued to be rebuffed. In 1922, the Supreme Court, in *Ozawa v. U.S.*, stated that *issei* were "aliens ineligible to citizenship."

Harry sat entranced by the comedian on the silver screen.

Just as his dad and the dashing Chaplin shared a friendship, so did he with his buddy Elgin, a rugged blond football player. When it came to best friends, nothing, he figured, would ever come between them.

DURING THE WEEK, HARRY AND HIS BROTHERS attended the Washington Elementary School, a short walk off East Main Street. Harry, though he preferred play to study, skipped two grades. He developed an enduring crush on Helen Hall, a lithesome blonde who sat in front of him in the back of the room. When he tugged her long, wavy hair, Helen giggled, all the more reason to pull it again.

Harry cast a wide berth around the stern principal, Flora Holt. Mrs. Holt was not receptive toward Japanese American students, who comprised 20 percent of the school's population. Her attitude set the tone at a time when teachers wielded fierce authority, often rapping their charges with rulers. Katsuji, the rare *issei* influential in community affairs, took note.

Generally, Harry blew into the house late, calling out breezily, "*Tadaima!*" "I'm home!" He ran by the formal living room with its Japanese ceramic figurines, the love seat with the kimono-silk pillow, and his mother's mahogany Monarch piano. He had forgotten to remove his metal-soled shoes and, despite Kinu's reproof in Japanese—"Hu-ri!"—he clanged up the stairs.

In the attic bedroom where the bedposts touched, Harry confided to his brothers Pierce and Frank about sneaking into the Mountain View Cemetery at night to gape at Auburn twinkling below. Cautious like his mother, Pierce was awed by Harry's exploits but had no desire to partake. Frank, the baby, four years younger, who looked up to his big brother, couldn't wait to take the exhilarating journey with him. He never wanted to be left out.

Frank couldn't imagine a better brother. He called Harry by his first name in English and switched to the honorific "*Onîsan*" ("elder brother") when he spoke in Japanese. He felt especially fortunate to have Harry as his eldest brother since, in the sibling hierarchy, oldest brothers were generally serious, responsible, and dull. Not Harry, who dragged Frank in a red Radio Flyer wagon up and down the street and balanced him on the edge of his bike seat for heart-thumping rides down steep hills. Harry agreed that Frank and Pierce were lucky to have him. The three boys, it seemed, had forgotten about their other two siblings Mary and Victor who had been absent from family life for their seminal early childhood years, having been sent to live with their wealthy maternal aunt in Hiroshima. Victor, the eldest, was brought to Japan at age five in 1919, before Harry, Pierce, and Frank were born. In 1923, Katsuji deposited a baffled seven-year-old Mary, too.

Kinu believed the time abroad was for the good of their eldest children. She stressed to Katsuji how important it was to start them early so they could attain native fluency in Japanese. Otherwise, it would be impossible to catch up with the three written alphabets, including the two thousand *kanji* (Chinese characters) required to be functionally literate. Kinu was too busy to instruct Victor and Mary herself. Katsuji grudgingly admitted that even paying room and board would be cheaper than providing for the children in the United States—so favorable was the exchange rate and low the cost of living in Japan.

Kinu dreamed of the day Mary, draped in a heavy ivory silk kimono embroidered with golden cranes, would follow her groom with mincing steps. After the ceremony, the young bride would don a lace wedding gown, its gauzy veil trailing on the floor, and stand next to her tuxedoed mate. She would lead a gratifying life as a *yoki tsuma*, *tsuyoi haha*, or good wife and

wise mother, in the United States. A Hiroshima girls' school diploma would bolster her chances of finding a suitable mate—of Japanese descent, of course.

Kinu and Katsuji could not envision Victor's future unless he obtained a proper Japanese education. Racial discrimination toward Americans of Japanese descent was so pervasive that even a *nisei* who graduated summa cum laude from a university could not find a job. At the time a Stanford representative remarked, "Many firms have general regulations against employing them; others object to them on the ground that the other men employed by the firms do not care to work with them." A representative at the University of California, Berkeley agreed: "It seems a tragedy that these intelligent men should spend four years in college to find there is no market for their qualifications. Isn't there some channel through which they could be informed?"

But if Victor were truly bilingual—literate, polite, and adept in calibrated cross-cultural situations—he might secure a post with a Japanese trading company or consulate. Katsuji hoped that all his sons would graduate from college, ascend the professional ranks, and purchase their own homes. He had attained white-collar status and attended some college, but a sheepskin diploma and a land deed remained beyond reach; he had run out of money to complete school, and *issei* were prohibited by law from buying land. When Katsuji and Kinu sent their first-born youngsters five thousand miles from American shores to be immersed in all things Japanese, they were thinking ahead.

Nor were they alone. In 1929, almost four thousand *nisei* Japanese Americans attended elementary and middle schools in Hiroshima prefecture. So common was the practice that the Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) Japan Mail shipping line printed farewell postcards with steamship photographs for passengers to fill in their departures. Unlike a daily trek to school, the

two-week-long Pacific commute involved homestays with relatives that stretched into years.

Harry, Pierce, and Frank saw a few photos of Victor and Mary, but the association did not register. The nearly toothless toddler wearing a jaunty conductor's cap and striped knickers on their Seattle front stoop? The girl with a giant bow in her bobbed hair and a beaded necklace standing with Harry, Pierce, and their parents? Those children must have been distant relatives from Japan. The younger boys' photos multiplied over time, displacing the few photos of their siblings, who slipped unnoticed between the album pages.

The boys continued to stand for formal portraits, Frank always maneuvering to end up next to Harry. To the photographer's consternation, Harry couldn't keep a straight face, the accepted Japanese pose. The older he got, the wider he grinned. When Kinu and Katsuji examined the studio shots—taken at some expense with the intention of sending to relatives in Japan—they winced at the irrefutable proof that their middle son, in particular, was turning one hundred percent American.

They agreed that Harry must embrace not only his American birthright, but also his Japanese heritage. At an age when he could have been boarding a ship for a lengthy stay in Japan, his parents considered his defiant nature and penchant for running away. They sent him to a local Japanese school instead.

After school and on Saturdays, for five years straight, Harry climbed the eighteen steep steps of the Auburn Buddhist Church, a shingled, pitch-roofed box with an ornate lacquered portal. Deaf to the dreams of the *issei* who had scrimped and saved to construct this building, Harry hesitated at the entrance.

At the last minute, he sauntered into the classroom and bowed to the *sensei* (teacher), who nodded perfunctorily and filled the blackboard vertically right to left with rows of multistroke

characters. Harry watched everyone copy the letters in their Japanese composition notebooks, the strike of pencils punctuating the silence. He followed in due time, pausing to stretch his legs, daydream, and stare out the window.

The *sensei* drilled his wards in reading, composition, penmanship, dictation, and, above all, grammar. The children were expected to master three alphabets, including the *kanji* ideographs. The Auburn Buddhist Church, like other schools dotting the West Coast and Hawaii, had undertaken an ambitious program to incorporate American courses under the auspices of the Japanese Education Association of America: “The goal to be attained in our education is to bring up children who will live and die in America, and as such, the whole education system must be founded upon the spirit of the public instruction of America.” To this end, Harry was subject not only to Japanese geography but also American history. Everything, of course, in Japanese, including singing “Auld Lang Syne.”

Harry found the spartan emphasis on Japanese discipline alienating. Monica Sone, who attended Japanese school in Seattle, recalled the rigid expectations. “We must talk and walk and sit and bow in the best Japanese tradition.” Having to address the *sensei* in honorific language, use the humble form of verbs for himself, march in unison, sit straight-backed, and bow at a precise forty-five-degree angle felt stultifying to this buoyant young man.

He rebelled from the start. “With no amount of persuasion did I want to have anything to do with the school or the language.” Harry was not the only student among 150 strong who disliked Japanese school, but he was the most determined to reject it. Allergic to authority, he held his nose and swallowed, despite his distaste. He didn’t play hooky, protest, or disrupt class. He staged a passive rebellion. “I made no attempt to learn.” It

wasn't easy to avoid comprehending what he could intuitively absorb. But, gradually, Harry fulfilled his own exquisitely low expectations. "My Japanese," he said smugly, "was zero."

Harry knew more than he was willing to admit. He spoke Japanese with his mother and her friends, greeted Japanese dignitaries who paid courtesy calls on Katsuji, and jumped between English and Japanese without a glitch. He tripped over some words when reading and skipped some strokes when writing, but he flung spoken Japanese like a native speaker.

Harry's parents did not call attention to his abominable academic performance. The *sensei*, though, placed responsibility for Harry's poor performance squarely on his shoulders and failed him every single year. Harry repeated second grade annually, developing into the biggest, tallest, and most notorious student in the class. He took sheepish pride in this distinction.

Katsuji kept a bemused distance, leaving most family matters to Kinu. In the mornings, Kinu rose in the pitch dark, stoked the wood-burning stove, and cooked by kerosene lamp. The boys awakened to a warm house and the aroma of baking bread. When they stumbled downstairs, their mother called out, "*Ohayō Gozaimasu!*" "Good morning!" She was making peanut butter sandwiches for lunch and planning a Japanese menu—grilled fish, steamed rice, and stewed vegetables—for dinner. On special occasions, the rich scent of roasting Cornish hens and syrupy apple pies with butter crusts perfumed the air. In her spare afternoon hours, Kinu taught *nisei* girls *ikebana* (flower arrangement), the *koto* (zither), and *shamisen* (lute). She took piano lessons on her polished Monarch. In the evening, Kinu set Katsuji's place at the head of the table with a fork and chopsticks, but his seat usually remained empty. Scraping her pots and pans in the dark, Kinu, as vital as oxygen to her household's harmony, was the last to sleep.

The children would rarely remember their father at home. He was constantly working. Katsuji had risen from hard-bitten railroad worker to houseboy to co-owner of an employment agency to a self-employed entrepreneur with his own shingle, “H. K. Fukuhara Co.,” and offices in Seattle and Auburn. He sold fertilizer, insecticide, and life insurance, largely to Japanese farmers. He also worked with them to decipher the byzantine legalities of real estate and mortgage loans.

Katsuji never ceased to be active in community affairs. He had served for close to two decades on the board of Seattle’s Hiroshima *kenjinkai* (prefectural association), a support group for Hiroshima immigrants to share experiences and advice, and financially support one another to surmount the ever-lurking catastrophes of illness, death, or economic ruin. In his few short years in Auburn, he had galvanized the town’s Japanese Association. He would soon become the first Japanese selected as a trustee of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce, taking a seat alongside his established neighbors J. W. Meade and I. B. Knickerbocker. “When will your father become the mayor of Auburn?” Harry’s friends would tease.

Harry could have interpreted the comment as a cruel joke. An elected position was out of the question for those who could not vote. Forever a legal alien, Katsuji still believed in setting an example for his children: a Japanese could succeed in a white man’s land, and all Japanese should bear their ethnicity with pride. One day when Harry blurted out, “I wanted to get a different name, not Fukuhara,” Katsuji reddened at his son’s shame. In truth, Harry said, “the last thing I wanted to be was a Nisei.” Katsuji stiffened and clenched. Harry thought that his father might strike him. Katsuji stormed from the room instead.

Perhaps the gap between any immigrant and his American children is, at some point, inevitable. Katsuji never spoke of

Harry's affront. He redoubled his focus to provide for his family. Across the West Coast, many an *issei* couple lived by the mantra, "*kodomo no tame ni*," for the sake of the children. This drive to diligence was powered by the hope that the *nisei* second generation, accorded the privileges of citizenship, would succeed where the parents could not.

The summer of 1929 found nine-year-old Harry ebullient, rooted, and happy in Auburn. Under clear skies, the sun sparkled, the salmon spawned, and Mount Rainier's wildflowers bloomed in vivid profusion. In the morning, he played with his friends; in the afternoon, he attended Japanese school, his requisite dose of cod liver oil. In the evening, he bid his parents good night—"Oyasuminasai"—only to form a tipi with blankets and regale his brothers with ghost stories in English about the Muckleshoot Indians who speared salmon from their canoes on the Green River.

Auburn Day, an annual two-day festival, began on August 9 that year. Harry didn't take into account that his father had labored for months after work, coordinating several Japanese groups' efforts to contribute to the state's oldest holiday and the town's most important civic event. Hearing Katsuji cough into the night, Kinu fretted that he was becoming exhausted, but he persisted, telling an *Auburn Globe-Republican* reporter, "There will be many surprises," adding, "The Japanese are anxious to do their bit in making the celebration a success and the parade will be interesting."

The festivities began with fireworks, organized by the Japanese Association of Auburn, followed by a lengthy parade. A float of a majestic ship, with the Stars and Stripes fluttering on its bow and a Rising Sun rippling on its stern, sailed down Main Street. Fourteen Japanese girls dressed in kimonos sat on deck beneath a wisteria-draped arbor; paper lanterns swayed above.

One of many displays sponsored by the local Japanese community, this extravaganza won first prize.

Harry and his brothers, dressed in formal black silk kimonos embossed with the Fukuhara triple-clover crest, marched behind the floats. Katsuji followed, dignified at the wheel of his waxed Buick festooned with ribbons running from roof to radiator. He smiled and waved to the crowd. Harry, clopping down Main Street in *geta* (clogs) with Frank scrambling to keep by his side, relished the audience, even though he would rather have been casting a fishing line in shorts than sweating in a kimono.

The next night, Harry and his brothers gathered at the Interurban train depot, where two thousand paper lanterns, the cost defrayed by Japanese organizations, were distributed to the town's children. As many as ten thousand people, more than double the town's population, waited along Main Street for the spectacle to begin. Holding their candlelit lanterns, Harry, Pierce, and Frank made their way with friends into the velvety night.

The boys, who were thrilled by the crowd's awed hush and the lanterns' flickering lights, didn't recognize how reminiscent the event was of a Japanese military procession or a ceremony paying homage to the emperor.

All Harry knew was that Auburn glittered as his Ptolemaic universe. He was certain that his future held many more Auburn Day celebrations—shining with amusements, chock full of friends, and sustained by his parents and brothers, especially little Frank. His future was American, albeit with a Japanese twist, in the adored town he called home.