Chapter 18: SOMETHING POSITIVE FROM STOCKADE IMPRISONMENT

Sunday, January 30, 1944
Breakfast: bread, French fries, coffee
Lunch: two pieces of bread, cheese, milk, Jell-O, nimoto (carrots, cabbages, beef), tea
Dinner: forgotten

Lights go off at 10 p.m., and we get up at 7 a.m. Feeling refreshed after a sound sleep. As a matter of course, stockade life is not enjoyable, but it still feels good to wake up after a good night’s rest.

Maybe my philosophical thinking has gone bad without me recognizing it during my fifteen years in the U.S. This is the perfect time to quietly reflect upon this before I enter a new phase in my life and start instructing the youths.

Life in the stockade has been very meaningful in various ways. It would be a shame if I don’t take advantage of what I learned here.

Prior to this, I was unable to understand “Saikontan,” no matter how many times I had read it. This was due to my restless mind, but now, I am happy to say I can deeply appreciate what the book is trying to teach me. I wrote a letter to Yuriko. I told her to take her vitamin pills, and I asked her to encourage Sayuri to study hard. I wrote to her about the room — right now, the room is quiet and that calms my mind. I also told her that I shared this room with Mr. Nakano.

Mr. Nakano was glad that I had moved. *When I returned to camp, I learned that news of my switching rooms in the stockade had reached them almost immediately. (*This note had been added in 1980 by Inouye.)

No need to worry, seeing the Military Police
Such pretentious security
— Ayabe Kensuke

Monday, January 31, 1944 — Story about the ink stone
Breakfast: toast, mash, coffee
Lunch: bread, boiled cabbage, beets, egg fu young (egg, carrots, peas), tea
Dinner: rice, herring cooked in soy sauce, miso soup, tea

The habit of waking up late in the morning or napping during the daytime is not good, but if I keep up the current pace, I will recover my health. I can also feel the effects of the vitamin pills.

Today was a rare day. I felt physically good so I went to Barrack B and had a great time with Mr. Shimizu, Mr. Kimura, and Mr. Mohri. We talked about something unusual that lifted my spirits. We discussed swords, calligraphy, classic scripts, etc. Mr. Yamanaka engraved my name on an ink stone. The ink stone, which was obtained at Topaz, was a
natural mineral, formed four thousand years ago. At first, they praised me for my gentle posture and attitude, but then, our conversation drifted from one topic to another on our different hobbies. I felt so happy today.

I am not interested in politics, but I cannot ignore the current situation where the Japanese community is fighting against each other in the U.S., while a war is being fought between Japan and the U.S. Today, fifty people were released from the stockade. The room, suddenly, felt spacious. But I was surprised to see two new men brought in.

A total of 140 remain in the stockade.

**Tuesday, February 1, 1944**

Breakfast: coffee, French toast, mash  
Lunch: rice, Korean-style pickled nappa, nimono (nappa, carrots), tea, Jell-O, oiled cooked carrots  
Dinner: rice, steak, tea, mashed potato

Now that I am over thirty, I reflect upon my life, thus far. I wonder what my friends, who are the same age as me, are thinking. I am the type of person who always wonders about how I should conduct myself in the future. If my work ethics and attitude could convince one or two people in the occupied territories that the Japanese are trustworthy and that cooperating with the Japanese would lead to prosperity, it would make me happy. If such people should multiply from five to ten, to even one hundred, that would be a dream come true.

When we think about those fallen Japanese soldiers in the battlefield, who had dedicated their lives to their home country, it would be unforgivable if we sought comfort only for ourselves and thought only of our own selfish interests. Shouldn’t it be a priority of the Japanese in the U.S. to discipline our minds and spirits so as not to embarrass our brothers and sisters in our homeland? We should not be dreaming about brothels in the South Pacific or gambling places in China or of horse racing. We should follow the policies of the home country and devote our blood and sweat to pursuing a righteous path. Those people, who loudly preach about faith but actually have no faith, should die of embarrassment in front of those people, who quietly move forward with their faiths.

Five more men were imprisoned. There are now 145 remaining in the stockade.

*We have guts to answer,*  
*Following our true hearts,*  
*While many people hesitate in their answers*  
—Kirita Shizu

A letter from Yuriko:

*I asked Masako that what she want to say to daddy. She say “Hurry up and come home.” She wondered why Toshiko’s daddy came home and you don’t. I told them you coming*
home soon. So every morning when she gets up, she asks if you come home and every night when she goes to bed she say “when daddy comes home I am going to sleep with him.” I guess she miss you very much. Tell the truth and you’ll be released. Hope it will be soon. After all you haven’t done anything. Well, now that Sayuri going to American school in the afternoon way up to the new high school building I have to take Masako with me to school, she follow me everywhere goes to the latrine. So I asked her what she is going to do if I went in the hospital like Toshiko chan’s mother, she says she is going to stay with Setchan and make Sayuri sleep between ojisan & obasan. I doubt if she will stay cause when I have a little business at the front she wouldn’t stay with Setchan. So I have to send her to school with Sayuri. Now that the food is much better and we have more of it, I don’t have to buy so much at the Canteen. All though I am continuing to give Cod liver oil to Masako (略) well we’ll be seeing each other soon.

Yuriko

Wednesday, February 2, 1944
Breakfast: coffee, French toast, puffed wheat, orange
Lunch: rice, bread, beans, tea, soup (carrots, corn, nappa)
Dinner: rice, sardine, beets, tea, stewed nappa

I heard that soy sauce, miso, and medicine had arrived with the second hostage exchange ship from Japan as comfort goods. Most were sent to the Department of Justice internment camps and the rest came to Tule Lake. However, half of the items are to remain here and the remainder are to be allocated to the nine WRA camps. This was so touching that it made me cry.

Today, the sergeant came instead of the corporal, who has been conducting roll calls every day.

I heard eight Japanese had been killed in Denver and that martial law has been instituted. Currently, the fourth sales of war bonds are going on.

Today, two people, including Mr. Komiya, were brought in. I heard from these people about the rumors that are circulating in camp about the stockade.

There are a total of 147 inmates.

In the evening, Lieutenant Schaner came on patrol. (He was here to monitor me.) He kept smirking. I was surprised to hear that the camp people knew about my being moved to Barrack C.

*For themselves, they tell excuses
And they criticize others, embarrassing themselves*  —Kirit Shizu

Thursday, February 3, 1944
Breakfast: coffee, pancakes, apple
Lunch: rice, two pieces of bread, beets, tea, nimono (nappa, weenie)
Dinner: rice, bread, tea, raw beets, stew (carrots, beef, onions)

Today, our barrack was on chore duty. This time, I cleaned the latrine. The elderly Mr. Tsuchiya was happy to see me working.

I got a letter from Yuriko:

*This afternoon Masako and I were going past the warden’s office. We saw many men with their suitcases. I guess they came out from the stockade. Masako said “Let’s go home and see if daddy came home,” so we didn’t go to our destination and came back home. But you ought to see her discouraged face. I will not forget that face long as I live. Later she said “How come daddy doesn’t come home?” I told her I guess his work isn’t finished yet. As you know she still thinks you working.*

*Sayuri know better she ask me “What did daddy do that he can’t come home fast.” Gee I really don’t know what to say to that, only waiting and waiting for your release. I was glad to hear that you moved out of Barrack F, but tell me is it true? As usual we are going to Hayashi san for dinner about 2 times a week. Masako often want to go over there and eat with them as she loves to play with Masami san. Ojisan, Obasan and Setchan is very nice to her. She loves Setchan very dearly.*

I wrote back to her:

*My records are good.
In the near future, we can be together so please do not worry. Do not forget that I am not the only person suffering in this situation but there are many.*

- You should beware of what you say. Misinformation always comes from bad or inaccurate rumors.
- Do not forget other people’s kindness.
- Take good care of children.
- Please remember that you have pride in yourself.
- I moved to a new room and it’s quiet and clean.

*I am hoping to take advantage of this situation and study and strengthen my health. When I return to you, we might feel like a newlywed couple, and it might be a good thing.*

A roommate, Mr. Narumiya, is suffering from gallstones. I feel so sorry for him as he suffers so much pain. Looks like he feels better when I rub his body.

Over a few material items, some take a wrong path in life. They seem rather pitiful.

**Friday, February 4, 1944**
Breakfast: mash, coffee, bread, scrambled egg (with carrots)
Lunch: bread, navy beans, beets, boiled cabbage
Dinner: rice, sardine, pickled nappa, tea

Recently, I was feeling better about my health, but last night, I woke up in the middle of the night from a nightmare. I was drenched in sweat. I don’t remember the nightmare very well, but it had to do with something that happened right after I was placed in here, sleeping in Barrack A. What I do remember about the dream was that I was moaning, with my arms around my stomach, so my roommates (perhaps it was bald Mr. Katayama or the pale Mr. Shimizu) handed a paper to the guard to send for a doctor. A man with a stupid expression (Mr. Yamamoto) was grinning at me. (He was a spy.) I was still tired when I woke up this morning. People say we do not dream about our loved ones. Maybe that is the reason I do not dream about my family. Something doesn’t feel right.

Mr. Hayashi came over. He is a pious Christian and devotes himself to his faith in his daily life. Christianity or Buddhism — whatever people believe in is fine with me, as long as they walk on the right path (the essence of human existence) (in the end, sincerity is most important.). But defining the “right” path is hard. Still reading “Byron.”

Two were released; one was hospitalized; and thirteen newly imprisoned. The total now is 157 inmates.

It was good that Mr. Nakano was released. Mr. Shimizu met with Lieutenant Schaner, who wanted to meet with the Sekininsha-kai (Managing Committee - eight members).

Saturday, February 5, 1944
Breakfast: coffee, biscuits, scrambled eggs, grapefruit
Lunch: three pieces of bread, boiled nappa, tea, corned beef, carrots, soup
Dinner: rice, curry, tea, pickles

Mr. Shimizu and Mr. Kuratomi were talking in the kitchen. (Mr. Tsuda was led away, accompanied by soldiers with bayonets.)

I spent the entire day listening to differing opinions about how peace could be restored in camp (Mr. Tsuda). I sat silently contemplating. We discussed the issue from different perspectives and considered the situation of the Japanese in the U.S. I had exchanged opinions about this same topic with Mr. Shimizu this morning. We had agreed that it was best to start from the beginning if we hoped to bring peace to the camp. I read “A Road to Rebuilding World Peace.” I was deeply touched by this writing because of my imprisonment.

In the afternoon, Mr. Shimizu and Mr. Agatsuma gathered responsible members from each section and discussed ways to rebuild peace in camp. In the evening, I talked with Mr. Shimizu on this issue until 2:30 in the morning. There are those who understand that we are sincerely trying to solve this problem and not acting out of a desire to obtain fame or other selfish gains. We must be aware of world events and limit indulging in selfish pleasures. In order to restore honor to the Japanese men, we must strive to restore peace to a camp that is in turmoil. This is a huge responsibility.
One man was released (because his wife was hospitalized). One was brought in.

Total of 157 inmates remaining.

I silently paced back and forth in the prison garden. Yuriko had sent me newspapers.

The whole world is fighting a bloody war. Anyone can say may peace prevail.

**Sunday, February 6, 1944**

Breakfast: coffee, mash, bread, orange  
Lunch: soup, bread, rice, beets, tea, nimono (beef, potatoes, carrots, onions)  
Dinner: rice, nimono (onions, cabbage, beef), tea, Jell-O

I was quite surprised to read the minutes from our last meeting. Mr. Shimizu had obtained the document. The conversations we had in Japanese had been translated into English. I do not remember anyone recording our conversation. Since I did not think our meeting was being recorded, I said many incomprehensible things and pointed out their shortcomings. In general, my opinion about restoring peace in camp was stressed, but today, I became more cautious about that point. I discussed with Mr. Shimizu about the issue in greater detail.

In the evening, we talked about conflicting opinions and confusion surrounding the camp residents. We are already living in darkness during this wartime, so we should strive to chase the dark clouds away and move forward. If I reflect upon my position and come to the conclusion that I am on the right path, I should continue on this path, even if I am faced with opposition from hundreds or thousands of people. My three months in the stockade will take on a new meaning if my efforts should lead to peace in the camp. One roommate, Mr. Nakagawa, spoke about progressive ways of loving your fellow compatriots. I was even more impressed when I learned that he was only twenty-two years old. Such a young fellow. He came to the U.S. when he was five.

**Monday, February 7, 1944**

Breakfast: tea, pancake, apples

*Mahjong, hanafuda, goh, shogi* — All these games are popular but I do not play any of them. When I think about it, I guess there is no one else, who has fewer hobbies than me, but I do not feel like learning how to play those games either. Yesterday, Mr. Naito said he would give me an arrowhead. I had been searching for one, as I walked the grounds and finally found a tiny piece. The ink stone that I had gotten from Mr. Yamanaka and now, this arrowhead — these are the few things that bring me pleasure in life.

I asked the group supporting the status quo about the general atmosphere in the camp. Mr. Mohri was released from the stockade. One came in. His name is Mr. Kuwata, a young guy. At night, I talked with Mr. Shimizu. We talked freely, without any
reservation. We both agreed that we needed to resolve the conflict between those who supported the status quo and those who wanted to break it if we hoped to see positive change in camp. We wondered if we, in fact, wielded enough power to achieve these goals. In the end, we concluded that the most important thing was to act upon any action with sincere hearts.

Each barrack takes a turn every six days to serve as cooks, so the waiters change every day, as well. Yesterday, I was impressed by a young fellow (Mr. Kuratomi) who had a humble attitude. He asked me very politely whether I wanted coffee. In contrast, the waiter today was...It is interesting to discover and observe the various types of people.

_When I answered, I was prepared to be sent to the segregation camp_
_I am not complaining about a dusty room_

**Tuesday, February 8, 1944**
Yesterday, I read all day in my room. There was nothing in particular that I had wanted to do, so I read books all day. I did not feel like talking or playing games, and it had been cold in the morning so I did not go for a walk.

But today, I wanted to think, so I took a walk twice in the cold. (Mr. Hayashi and Mr. Kai had gone to a meeting.) I tried to organize my thoughts, but it became pointless after a while since no good ideas came to mind. It might be impossible for my brain to come up with new ideas. I do not like being told what to do because I am stubborn. (And I do not easily obey orders.) But perhaps because I am getting older, I am now willing to listen to other people’s opinions and try to learn from them.

After lunch I read “Saikontan.” I was impressed by the chapter on how to control self-centeredness, arrogance, and an overconfident spirit. (Mr. Kai was indulging in mahjong and had missed a meeting.) I listened to Mr. Shimizu’s raunchy stories. It’s not easy trying to be reserved all the time in a place like this. Oh well...But I was amazed at how horny some of the youths were. One of them bragged that he had paid six dollars to get his venereal disease cured. I’m glad he was able to afford it. Otherwise, it would have been tragic. Some people do not think about the future consequences of their actions.

**Wednesday, February 9, 1944**
From the Rocky Shimpo newspaper, January 24 edition

_You came to visit that evening wearing geta sandals (remembering)_
_We would be soon separated_
_Now I think of you._

By coincidence, I found this poem in the newspaper and I became nostalgic, particularly since I am in this situation.

Probably, Kiie-san knows I am imprisoned. I listened to what had happened in Hawaii from a young man from Hawaii. He had seen a naval ship explode right in front of his
eyes when the war broke out. (In Barrack A, there was a beating involving Mr. Fujiwara and Mr. Agatsuma.)

Today, our barrack was on chore duty. I had not expected to be on duty for another month…We look forward to going on duty since we can eat a little better like pakkai (sweet & sour dish) and fu young hai. Today’s fu young hai was especially good since it had shrimp in it.

In the U.S., there is a saying: “A small man (Fujimoto) has a loud voice,” but last night's commotion really woke me up.

Mr. Nakao moved into our barrack. Mr. Sugimoto, whom I rarely speak to, sat on my bed, and we talked for a very long time before he left. (The embassy issued a warning. I finished reading “Saikontan.”)

Seems like more people are talking about various topics. Nogawa said to Mr. Shimizu, “People are saying bad things (note from translator: about Inouye?), etc.” He said to them, “I don’t think that is true, but Mr. Inouye will not be surprised even if he hears that you guys are saying those kinds of things.”

When this side of Castle Rock gets shadowed we don’t face that way
But fall sunlight spreads brightly on Abalone Mountain

Thursday, February 10, 1944

The bitter cold woke me up. This was the second time the cold woke me up. I think my backbone is hurting because of the cold. Each night, I’ve been crawling into bed with my street clothes on and I’ve rarely taken a shower so I think I’m starting to smell a little. I heard there has been a proposal to turn Barrack F into a recreational space.

It was a beautiful day, so I basked in the sun and soaked up the rays to my heart’s content.

I received a letter from Yuriko (She wrote that she was surprised because my letter was written so well in English — My wife is praising me. She said she felt helpless in camp because she knew so few people):

Last two week I was at daze. Really didn’t know what to do if you didn’t come home. I will try my best to get you out of that place.

I could endure this if there was a reason for you to be imprisoned, but you were taken away without doing anything wrong, and that fact is weakening my spirits, etc.

It is almost three months since you went. I know it has been a heavy strain on you as much as for me. But I could say that it has been a most terrible strain on me that I hope
again in my life I will never face it again. One thing I hate is being sad. Sometimes you make me sad. But when you gone I am sadder and keep thinking about how nice you were to me and lots of nice little thing you have done. I couldn’t sleep or eat. I guess I love you (no guess). Now I am confessing in a letter, but you know when I meet you, I can’t say those things. I have gone to the processing building. Matter of time alone, but I didn’t stop to see if you were out, because it is a very sad to see each other through each fences between us. It really breaks my heart.

My neighbors do not talk to me very much because they consider my feeling. Mr. Hayashi’s daughter, Setsuko has helped us very much. She helps to bathe Sayuri and Masako, etc. When Sayuri and I go to school, poor Masako plays by herself etc.

I have your clothes out and ready, and I am waiting for you. I have told you what I had in mind for long time and it makes me feel better.

Yuriko sent me the homework I gave to Sayuri. Her letter contained some mistakes, which showed that she had written it. I wrote back to Sayuri:

Sayuri, you did a great job. I am happy to know that you wrote this by yourself and did not get Mama’s help. Your mother always tells me how honest and kind you are to your mother and your sister Masako. I will be back as soon as my work is done, so please wait for me to come home. Masako, how are you getting along? Tell Setchan that daddy said “Thank you very much for the taking care of my lovely Masako.”

To Yuriko, I wrote:

I understand now how you feel about this event and how lonely you are feeling. But why don’t we think this way? I found your beautiful quality during our three-month separation, and it renewed my affection for you. When I think of it, it was actually a good thing. When I remember the time we first met, it feels like a beautiful dream in a far, far place. You were only eleven years old and such a tomboy, so cute. When we first met, you had to go to the dentist, so you were going to Yamaguchi’s place. And we went to Lancaster together. I still remember that time like a beautiful dream.

I hope peace and friendship will be restored in camp and that things will settle down. It is unbearable to watch fellow Japanese fighting against each other. It is an embarrassment and brings dishonor, etc.

I think some positive things have come about as a result of my stockade imprisonment. It has been worthwhile that I’ve been able to renew such feelings. It has actually been enjoyable going down memory lane and recalling those happy memories in prison.

I thought there were 157 remaining in prison, but apparently, we have 152 inmates at the moment.

Not suspicious about the metal fences or guard towers
Children of our compatriots cheerfully play with a ball
**Friday, February 11, 1944 — Kigensetsu** *(National Foundation Day – This holiday was to commemorate the enthronement of Emperor Jimmu, the mythological first emperor of Japan. After World War II, this holiday was banned, but in 1966, it was resurrected as Kenkoku Kinenbi.)*

I sat straight and prayed, even meditated.

I listened to Mr. Yamanaka’s sword stories. It was a suitable day to do such things. We have a lot of time in prison. I heard some earnest young men transferred from Barrack F to A and that a few moved from Barrack A to C so that they can turn Barrack F into a recreational space. Barrack F seems to be well known in camp.

I heard that they are starting to draft the Nisei. The news report from each camp has been troublesome. This reminded me of the time in Poston. On the second morn of the hearings conducted for the loyalty questionnaire, someone had posted a flyer on the wall, saying that choosing to go to the Tule Lake Segregation Center would not disqualify a person from getting drafted into the army. As a result of this flyer, a large number of people changed their answers to “yes, yes.”

Reading “Seicho no Ie (Truth of Life religion) — Sacred Words, Book of Evidence, 133.”

“Do not scrutinize where the other’s motivation came from. Praise him with words assuming that all deeds are coming from good motivation. If one did something with ill motivation, one would feel restless. If one has acted on good will, one would next feel the happiness of being appreciated. And one will learn the happiness one can feel from holding good will. Finally one will equip oneself with good motives. Then he becomes a virtuous person. Praising words in the end transform him into a good person.”

If this philosophy is correct, it can surely be applied to the Japanese in the U.S. during the war.

**Saturday, February 12, 1944**

I am extremely upset about these particular people, who have lived in the U.S. for a number of years and utilize their familiarity with the American language and culture to take advantage of others. They may not be gamblers or womanizers, but once they were placed into camp, they used their social skills and became obnoxious, self-appointed leaders. Of course, it is impossible to expect everyone to be honest and sincere in such a place but those people should take into consideration how much hardship they have caused the Japanese in the U.S. We should all reflect upon our actions and discipline ourselves.
Seicho no Ie (Truth of Life religion): Mr. Shimizu brought a handwritten copy of excerpts from The Truth of Life. There was a passage — “Improvement of society should be rooted in the circle/harmony between people.”

We all need to strive to improve ourselves. The reason that social reform movements that appear good end up in disaster is because people forget to cut the roots of disharmony (in the true nature of the heart). To paraphrase the Christian biblical proverb of “one who lives by the sword, dies by the sword” — one who lives with hatred will be destroyed by hatred.

Last night, we gathered in Barrack B and entertained ourselves with music. It was good to hold such an event since it brightened up our otherwise drab life in the stockade. People sang songs such as the Naniwabushi or danced the Kiyoshi odori or played the mandolins and guitars.

I wrote to Yuriko about this. I am not at all good at writing a letter in English, but I wrote: “I wanted to go home on New Year’s Day. I wanted to make a snowman for Sayuri and Masako. Good rumors rarely spread but bad ones get propagated fast.”

Today, five were brought into Barrack A. Total 157.

Five were ordered to move to Barrack C from A. Until now, it was spacious but now it feels cramped. I took a shower for the first time in a long time.

Tackling with the issues — Today the Japanese spirit sinks in sorrow
People are talking casually

Sunday, February 13, 1944

It has been three full months since I was imprisoned. Many things have happened during these three months, and I will never forget these experiences for the rest of my life. Even seeing carrots will remind me of the stockade since we are served carrots every single day. We wryly laugh about this.

I read “Life of a Sparrow” by Kitahara Hakushu.

You should forgive others when others make mistakes, but you should not forgive yourself for your mistake. You should endure your own difficulty, but when others are facing difficulty, you should not endure it.
—-from “Saikontan”

I wrote to Yuriko: “The so called demagoguery is always something inaccurate or bad...” and then, I told her not to “listen to rumors,” etc.

I also wrote Yuriko that it was difficult to articulate my thoughts precisely into words and that it was particularly hard when others mock me, so I held my tongue. I told her I was
grateful for having the luxury of remaining silent. I’m not sure if she’ll understand this or not. It doesn’t particularly make me happy or depressed if others understand me or not.

I spent these three months of confinement quietly and calmly. If my heart and mind got restless, I read “Saikontan.” Words from a person consumed by emotion or obsessed by honor do not resonate in people’s hearts. I received The Examiner. An article talked about ringleaders, etc.

(Please interpret some parts of this diary to this date in opposite ways. I used ironies, in case this diary gets confiscated).

There are still 149 remaining in the stockade.

Released: 30