Chapter 8: JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY DIVIDED

Sunday, December 19, 1943
Morning: coffee, toast
Noon: rice, vinegared beets, corned beef and cabbage, tea
Evening: rice, nimono (corned beef, potato), salted squid

Corned beef sounds delicious, but what they served was like shoe leather. It was only skin and was of very inferior quality.

There was a goh (board game) player. He was extremely proud that he was an exceptional goh player, who used 2,000 stones (standard goh set has 181 black stones and 180 white stones for a total of 361 stones). We did not discuss whether it was necessary to use 2,000 stones. Since this was wartime, even the experts stopped deriding him about whether this was appropriate or not.

One day, he played against an opponent, who used many unexpected moves. Soon, there were about 2,000 stones filling up the board. The arrogant player started getting worried and placed his hand on his forehead. To the opponent’s surprise, the man forced the issue and placed both black and white stones down at the same time.

“Isn’t that against the rules?” the opponent said.

The man replied, “I am the best goh player in the world. The way I play is legal, so you should not complain.”

The disgusted opponent almost flipped the board over, but 2,000 stones on the board were much too heavy. In addition, such a movement would alarm the armed soldiers, holding bayonets. This story got circulated, and soon, everyone was talking about it.

Although it was evident who was correct, the relatives and supporters of the so-called expert goh player claimed that he was correct. The opponent was discredited but he did not worry because he knew those who knew the game, knew he was correct. He calmly stayed seated on his side of the board, which irritated the so-called expert goh player. He started making bad moves and finally, tossed the stones into the air in frustration. Those around him laughed over his loss of composure.

I received one package from Yuriko that included some Milk of Magnesia and Mentholatum. People from Hawaii sent us a gift package, where we received a pack of cigarettes for each of us. We also received two care packages from camp.

The snow started to fall. I bet the children are very happy about this. Yesterday, Hoshiko, from the next block, visited the stockade and informed me that my family was doing well.
I heard that the commander advised his soldiers not to confront the Japanese alone because the Japanese know judo and that it was best for the soldiers to go together as a team.

We learned what was going on in camp. Two groups are pitted against each other, and both sides have young followers. The established group supports those imprisoned in the stockade. The inu group does not.

Of course, there should never be inu, but there are men, who seek popularity or protection or have feelings of envy. Some do this subconsciously (while others do it consciously), but either way, they conduct themselves in a disgraceful manner or betray the Japanese. I am sure there are men like that. How can the Japanese, during wartime, fight against each other? It’s like washing out blood with more bloodshed (chi de chi o arau). What is the matter with us? I feel like crying but can’t.

How can the Japanese go to Japan with such disgraceful behavior in their background? It is inexcusable that they manipulate the hot-blooded youths for their own means. Someone said they are fighting against each other, using 2 x 4’s (plywood) as weapons. This is a disgrace. I suppose this probably delights the authorities to see the Japanese divided. Some of the Japanese are not aware of what is going on. These surprise ambushes are bringing shame to our race.

One of the block’s kitchen cooks lent his wife to an officer, and in return, got more food. He made sake and made money. People complained about this cook since he used the rice to make sake, resulting in insufficient rice for the people living in the block. Five of the people, who protested against the cook, were brought to the stockade last night at 11 p.m. These men were really upset since those, who were unethical and corrupt, were putting those, who were honest, into the stockade. It appears someone is pulling strings behind the scenes. Of course, we can only guess at what is going on.