

Wicked Cool Stories

Portraits, Interviews and Oral Histories

Andy Frazer

James Hirata: Portraits of Japanese-American Internment Project

Keywords: Japanese-American Internment, Tanforan, Poston

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Wicked Cool Stories
Oral Histories

Project: Wicked Cool Stories
Interviewee: James Hirata
Interviewer: Andy Frazer,
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Interview Place: San Jose, California
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Editor: Andy Frazer

Editor's Note: This interview is very short. It was an unscheduled meeting with James Hirata. I was meeting James' mother (who was 103 years old) to photograph her portrait. James began telling the story about their evacuation and internment, and he agreed to let me record it.

Biographical Note: During WWII, James Hiras' family was forcibly moved from their home in San Francisco to the Tanforan Assembly Center (San Bruno, CA), then to the Topaz war relocation camp (Millard County, Utah).

James Hirata: For ourselves, furniture and things like that was concerned, we didn't have anything like that. Or mostly, all second-hand or junk. An ice box, the type that you put the ice on top. That was about it. So we really didn't have very much. When the war started this time, they had the - what do you call these - second-hand dealers. They came with a wagon with the horse. And so running with the horse wagon in terms of, at that time. And they used to buy things.

I remember one thing in San Francisco just around the corner from us, there used to be one person that used to own an electric car. That's the only car, electric car, I remember.

So we lived in a horse stable. They built a new house in the infield, those were the new, but the one we slept in was in the horse stable. They added a front part and they white-washed it and some of those stall had the open to the next stall and you see teeth mark right there. And so the top part was open because it was just a regular stable before.

To me, going to camp is a lot of fun. I had no responsibilities.

I didn't lose anything really. And I made new friends in camp. To me it was a lot of fun. I didn't have to worry. No. I'm 17 you know. I think that my parents' generation, they lost a

lot. They had a lot of problem moving and packing things like that. But to me, I had nothing to do with it. To me it's just a blast: made new friends, and *[inaudible]*. I really enjoyed it.