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Honda, ed./Family Torn Apart

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INTRODUCTION

MARIE DOLORES STRAZAR

“You had better take some heavy clothes with you. You may not be coming back for three or four days,” said a policeman I had known, when he came to take me into custody at midnight on December 7. He did not tell me where I would be taken. Not knowing that three or four days would turn into three or four years, I stepped out of my house with just a jacket and a sweater . . . We were turned over to the custody of the military authorities [at Kilauea Military Camp]. That night I could not sleep at all, wrapped in a blanket and shivering with cold, listening to the sound of the falling rain. I wrote some *tanka* that night.

Scattered among us
Many a Nikkei
Taken prisoner.
Why?¹

So began the tenure of Otokichi as an internee, a prisoner of war in America’s concentration camps—in eight of them, in fact: Kilauea Military Camp and Sand Island in Hawai‘i, Angel Island in California, Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Camp Livingston in Louisiana, Santa Fe in New Mexico, Jerome in Arkansas, and Tule Lake in California.

Ozaki, who came to Hawai‘i at the age of twelve, attended an English-language boarding school in Hilo, and completed his Japanese education at Hilo Dokuritsu Nihonjin Gakkō. He became the youngest charter member of Gin-u Shisha at the age of nineteen, taught at Dokuritsu Gakkō, married a *kibei*,* Hideko Kobara, and fathered four children. He also grew beautiful flowers, among them an anthurium that became known as “Ozaki Red.”

* A person of Japanese ancestry born in the U.S., who goes to Japan to be educated, and then returns to the U.S.

Like others who were literate and educated, Ozaki became one of several individuals who functioned as agents for the Japanese Consulate in Hilo to service Japanese friends and neighbors. When war broke out on December 7, 1941, this made him a target for suspicion, and as indicated earlier, he was promptly picked up by the military authorities.

The Otokichi Muin Ozaki papers, a newly processed collection in the archives of the Resource Center of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i, is one of the first sizable collections of papers of a Hawai'i internee to be processed, much of it translated into English, and made available for research. A splendid amalgam of literary materials and historic records, this collection opens up many new possibilities for historical, sociological, literary, and other research into and education on Hawai'i's Japanese American community, and specifically, Hawai'i internees in the wartime camps.

The collection includes a wide range of materials either written or collected by Mr. Ozaki: correspondence, poetry, diary notes, radio broadcast scripts, newspaper articles, play scripts, song lyrics, photographs, as well as Mrs. Ozaki's letters from 1941 to 1943 and some family records and memorabilia. The predominant subject matter of the collection is Mr. Ozaki's internment experience; the collection represents various materials related to that experience, including some records of internment camp organization and operations, instructions, and lists of internees as well as what can be called internment camp news media. Mr. Ozaki appears to have written his radio scripts from notes he made during his incarceration.

With seven linear feet of materials that are primarily focused on the internment experience, there is an extensive range of topics that can be researched: specific details of internment operations, relationships among family members, treatment of Hawai'i's Japanese families during World War II, the details of separation of families, conditions in various camps, activities during internment, communication between camps, communication with "the outside world," gender roles, and gender-based differentiation of treatment.

Beyond strictly internment history, this collection also lends itself to an even wider range of topics for research; for example, general social and cultural history of America and Hawai'i in the 1940s and that history as it relates to a particular immigrant group in America and its territories. Aspects of lifestyle can be researched, e.g., what kind of clothing was worn, what personal items were desired or needed, what kind of food was eaten or desired to be eaten, what holidays were celebrated and how.

A quick perusal of some of the translated materials indicated some

general characteristics of the 1940s lifestyle. For example, hair pomade or hair oil appeared to be important to the men. (And we are talking almost exclusively about men when we refer to early Hawai'i internees.) For uniquely Hawai'i touches in apparel, one will find aloha shirts in the lists of personal items that some Hawai'i internees chose to bring with them.

Since the collection also includes Ozaki's broadcast scripts and other materials that he produced or collected after his internment and return to Hawai'i, it can be researched for further details of Hawai'i history including the receptivity of Hawai'i Japanese to information about internment.

From a sociological point of view, a researcher can use data in this collection to estimate degrees of acculturation and/or assimilation by studying some of the lifestyle information that can be found. Lifestyle references can also possibly give some indication of the impact of the camp experience on further acculturation or assimilation that might have occurred. Because the experience of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in Hawai'i was significantly different from the experience of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans on the Mainland, the internment camp experience could be studied for the impact it had in connecting two similar sets of people who had had different experiences. This may even yield some potential for comparison and contrast studies on that general topic of immigrant and ethnic sociology.

From yet another point of view, a literary one, this collection is important for the *tanka* poetry it contains and for the biodata, thought processes, and experiences of the poet, Muin Ozaki (Ozaki's pen name), himself. Scholars of literature should find this collection rich in resources. Furthermore, since Ozaki wrote drama scripts and prose pieces as well, the collection reflects an even wider range of literary materials. Linguists studying the Japanese language and immigration impacts on the language will also find these materials a rich trove, especially since the collection represents Ozaki's writing over a long span of time.

For researchers interested in the role of religion and philosophy in the internment experience, there is some information in Ozaki's internment notes, though it is not extensive. There is an occasional mention of the visit of a Buddhist functionary to a camp and references to the memorial services for those who died in camp. Nonetheless, the collection can be analyzed from the point of view of religion, philosophy, and psychology, especially if one focuses on the materials from the internment period. Both Ozaki's notes and his wife's letters can be analyzed for this purpose.

Standing out the most in a perusal of the entire collection is the overall

impact of the internment experience on Mr. Ozaki and his thoughts about it. The materials reveal some of the contradictions that he felt internment represented and the inconsistencies of policies, the latter especially in the first months of America's being at war. (Patsy Sumie Saiki summarizes this very well in her 1982 book, *Ganbare! An Example of Japanese Spirit*.²)

Hawai'i Japanese families had to endure the hardship of a far-flung separation of families as fathers were taken away to the Mainland. This was something that Mainland Japanese Americans did not have to endure quite as much since, in most cases, entire families were relocated. These differences in the impact of the internment pose another potential for research utilizing these Ozaki papers.

Humor is interspersed throughout the collection, lending the researcher a special view into the reality of POW and internment experience. Only with at least a little bit of humor could anyone endure life in an internment camp, especially without one's family. So, occasionally in Ozaki's portrayal of the experience, one will read a tongue-in-cheek rendition of an event that will include a reference like making sure to get enough to eat so that you can live until you are, perhaps, executed on the following day. Thus, just as one is reading through a piece of tongue-in-cheek humor, the reader is also faced with the fact that those incarcerated believed in the possibility that they could be facing execution. The reality of the experience for earlier POWs, such as Ozaki, was the almost unimaginable: not knowing whether they were facing death or not.

Bitterness, too, comes through to the reader. The bitterness seems to be balanced, however, in reference to the first months of America at war as Ozaki excuses the behavior of the American military as inexperienced and not having procedures and guidelines in place. Nonetheless, Ozaki does point out that some of the treatment he and his fellow internees received, especially at Sand Island, simply did not conform to the conventions for Prisoners of War.

Mrs. Ozaki's letters, written during the period when the family was separated from Ozaki, both in Hawai'i and on the Mainland in different camps, are also included in this collection. The completeness of this portion of the collection is noteworthy and useful as such to the researcher. The letters give the details of everyday life at home in Hawai'i and later, in camp, with the children and amidst a painful separation. The letters are laden with comments about the children's performance in school, their behavior, and their health. In the letters originating in Hawai'i, much is also said about the grandparents and their opinions in regard to Ozaki's family's

possible repatriation to Japan (to which they were opposed) and what the family should do.

Mrs. Ozaki and the children had left Hawai‘i in the hopes of reuniting with Ozaki in January of 1943. They were sent to Jerome, Arkansas, however, and Ozaki was in Livingston, Louisiana. The family was not reunited until fourteen or fifteen months later. The pain of separation is clearly conveyed in Mrs. Ozaki’s letters; so, too, the dilemma of possible repatriation to Japan.

In conclusion, this newly available Otokichi Muin Ozaki Collection addresses the paucity of primary research materials, i.e., diaries, correspondence, and other firsthand written materials of Hawai‘i internees who were incarcerated on the U.S. Mainland during World War II. It, therefore, represents a noteworthy addition of a wide range of historical materials for research and study of yet another aspect of the Japanese internment as well as the Japanese experience in Hawai‘i and general local history.

The collection comprises a unique rendition of history by a literary man, Otokichi (Muin) Ozaki, described by Patsy Sumie Saiki as a “poet-philosopher-teacher.”³ It also includes Hideko Kobara Ozaki’s record of her life and thoughts during the separation imposed by internment. The collection is, therefore, a uniquely rich and balanced one, a welcome addition to Hawai‘i’s archival resources.