

Arkansas State Archives

Arkansas Digital Archives

Japanese American internment in Arkansas

Online exhibits

Newspaper article, "From the Frying Pan"

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalheritage.arkansas.gov/exhibits-online-japanese-american-internment>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Newspaper article, "From the Frying Pan", Joseph Boone Hunter collection, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Use and reproduction of images held by the Arkansas State Archives without prior written permission is prohibited. For information on reproducing images held by the Arkansas State Archives, please call 501-682-6900 or email at state.archives@arkansas.gov.

Return to J.B.H.



Bill Hosokawa

From the Frying Pan

Denver, Colo.

WEEK OF THE TUBE—The hours habitually set aside for moonlighting chores have been a total loss this week. First, there were two professional football games on TV Sunday. After that came the Olympic games from Munich. It was impossible to turn away from the demonstrations of grace and power, skill and strength, endurance and determination by the world's most superbly trained athletes. Teenagers, no more than children, broke one world's record after another. Incredible and wonderful.

Yet there are obligations to be met, and I was reminded of one of them in a letter from Masako Agari of Stockton, Calif. She urged me to mention in this column a book titled "Along the Way," the memoirs of Joseph Boone Hunter of Little Rock, Ark., who will be remembered by many as the assistant director of the WRA camp at Rohwer in the Mississippi bottomlands.

Dr. Hunter's publisher, Branch-Smith Inc., of Fort Worth, Texas, had sent me a copy some time ago, but always there were too many pressing chores that took precedence over the book. But now at Mrs. Agari's urging, I opened it and read. In the strict sense, this is more a series of disjointed recollection in vignette form rather than a book with the customary beginning, middle and end. Yet it is obvious that here is a man who has lived a full and exciting life, most of it spent in looking out for and aiding his fellow man. And though he met his share of rebuffs and disappointments, he managed always to find good in others.

Dr. Hunter went to Japan after World War I as a young bachelor missionary. He met Mary Cleary in Japan and married her in Nagasaki. The bride-to-be was suffering from a cranky appendix but the local physician recommended surgery only in an American style hospital. Faced with the choice of a long train trip to Tokyo, or a boat and train trip to Seoul, she chose Korea. So they were married and the honeymoon was a frantic journey on which the groom nursed a bride in imminent danger of a ruptured appendix.

Dr. Hunter was asked to go to Japan again in 1941 and there he found his movements hampered at almost every step by overzealous police. That fall, when all shipping between the United States and Japan was suspended, he made his way to Shanghai and caught an American liner for home.

This is where a remarkable coincidence enters the story. While he does not name the ship, he writes that from Shanghai it sailed to Hongkong and picked up some Chinese pilots who were to be trained in the United States. The ship must have been the President Cleveland. I know, because I also was among the 500 or 600 Americans aboard the Cleveland hurrying homeward, and to while away the hours I played volleyball with those Chinese air cadets.

* * *

With this kind of background, it was almost inevitable that Dr. Hunter should go to work for the War Relocation Authority, not so much as a means of livelihood but because, in his words, he and his wife sought to be "personal friends of the Americans of Japanese descent and not mere civil service administrators."

Mrs. Agari says Dr. Hunter "was the center official who prevailed upon the WRA to change the wording of question No. 28 in the loyalty screening questionnaire from 'foreswear allegiance to any other country' to 'not to take up arms against the U.S.' This rewording allowed the Issei to swear allegiance to the U.S. without jeopardizing their Japanese citizenship, which was the only legal status they had."

Of course there were many others who were aware of the unfairness of this question and had a role in the rewording, but there is no doubt about Dr. Hunter's compassion for all people. Copies of Dr. Hunter's book may be ordered from him (\$3.95) at 68 Berkshire Drive, Little Rock, Ark. 72204. But even if you don't buy the book, he would be delighted to hear from those who remember him, no doubt with respect and warm affection.