

# the Dumas Clarion

## editorials

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### A lesson for the future

Time gives a perspective.

As relatives of Desha Countians were being killed in the war in the Pacific in 1942, some 8,500 Japanese Americans were moved into a hastily constructed relocation center at Rohwer.

The frame barracks-type buildings were poor protection from the Arkansas cold and heat, and there was the added discomfort of mosquitoes and mud. Most of those interned had come from the West Coast where more pleasant weather prevailed. They had been moved from their homes and businesses in a kind of war hysteria which said

"every Japanese face is an enemy."

Adding to the distrust was the fact that the federal government considered the Japanese-Americans dangerous enough to intern them.

They were Americans, of course. Their sons proved their loyalty by fighting valiantly in both the European and Pacific Theatres of War. Although the internment lasted over three years, Japanese-Americans endured to see that their loyalty would be vindicated.

But in those early days when our own were being killed by Japanese in the Pacific, it was hard for local

citizens to accept 8,500 Japanese in our midst. We didn't have instant communication. We knew little of the internees' backgrounds. We did not have access to talk with them often. We thought Japanese-Americans suspect because our government thought them suspect enough to move them. Desha Countians were not outwardly mean to the Japanese-Americans. They were distrustful.

But gradually as we came to know some of the splendid people interned, we came to question why they were there. It was not easy. There were sometimes impolite confrontations between the internees and local people in area stores when the Japanese-Americans had "passes to town."

The brilliant record of bravery of the 442nd Battalion, made up of Japanese-Americans who volunteered for service, probably was the catalyst which turned people's attention to the loyalty of the people who had been so unjustly placed behind barbed wire fences.

It was a dark period in American history, one which we hope is never repeated.

We who lived during that era have learned a great lesson, and we can only hope those who follow will profit from the lesson that a person's loyalty must not be judged by ancestry.

We hope that the Japanese-Americans who came to Rohwer Sunday and saw the outpouring of friendship of Arkansans know we came because we are sorry for that black period and we don't want others to forget what can happen.

### Statement of conscience

Bucking public sentiment requires courage.

Six churchmen of Arkansas measured up last week when they asked the gubernatorial candidates to stop using capital punishment as a political issue.

Since Governor Frank White made known his determinations to execute those on death row, all Democratic candidates have taken a similar stance.

In a prepared statement released to the press, the church leaders last week said the gubernatorial candidates "have taken an appearance of sometimes trying to

outdo each other in a push toward executing someone."

United Methodist, Jewish, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Catholic and Disciples of Christ leaders joined in the statement.

At the same time they spoke out for better prisons and efforts to combat recidivism.

It is so easy to join the mob psychology and proclaim, "burn 'em." That's why it is remarkable, and applaudable, to have men of conscience speak out. If only the political leaders had the courage to say that executions may not be the solution to deterring violent crime.

### Register by parties

They are laughing in the coffee shops about how they voted in the first primary. At least some people of this area say they have voted for

The fact that Republicans are voting in Democratic primaries, however, is a matter which ought to



# Memorial Day focus comes to Rohwer

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In a day of multiple speeches, it was the quiet emotion of Marshall M. Sumida which touched hearts attending Memorial Day ceremonies at Rohwer Relocation Center Sunday.

Admitting he had come from California with anxiety over what to expect at the place where he was interned behind barbed wire 40 years ago, Sumida declared, "I am overwhelmed. I am really overwhelmed. To each and everyone who helped, we owe a thanks and especially to Sam Yada."

It was a dream come true for Sam Yada, a North Little Rock businessman who was interned with Japanese-Americans at the Rohwer Center for three years during the hysteria of World War II. Yada dreamed of placing a new marble monument there because the two existing concrete monuments at the cemetery are crumbling. He led the drive to raise \$12,000 for the new monument.

"These past 40 years are water under the bridge," declared Sumida, who is now business development officer of the Mitsubishi Bank of California. He proceeded to tell the story of a rain drop as related to him by his mother. "H-2-O is the soul of the people," he said. "When placed in a square vessel, it will adapt, and it will adapt to a round vessel. In its journey to the sea, the raindrop is comparable to life itself...it seeks the path of least resistance. When it meets a block it goes around it. My mother often said the water could be muddy, but the water will clear."

"At finding this overwhelming reception, you have made the waters clear," he declared. Sumida left the Rohwer Center to volunteer for armed forces service in the Pacific and subsequently resettled in California.

Sumida was not the main speaker for the occasion, but his quiet talk summed the feeling of the Memorial Day obser-

vance. The Japanese-Americans hold no bitterness now about their years of internment; they want only for the people to remember and determine there will be no more concentration camps for Americans of any ancestry.

Equally eloquent was the talk of Richard Yada of Fort Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Yada.

"When President Roosevelt signed Order 9066 establishing the War Relocation Authority, my parents left their home in Stockton, Calif., and after a few days at the race track in Santa Anita, boarded a train to make a long journey to the heart of the south. Here they lived for 3½ years and here I was born," said Yada. "Welcome to my hometown."

Expressing thanks "for helping make this dream come true," Yada noted that his sister had brought fresh antheriums from Hawaii to decorate the monuments. "I thank my mother and father for being great people, and saying we must start over, he added."

Saluting the sacrifice of the men of the 442nd Battalion, the Japanese-american unit which was the most decorated of World War II, Yada continued, "We owe a great deal to those who made life easier for all of us. They left part of their lives and spirit on these hallowed grounds. These monuments in years will crumble and fall, but may the people of Arkansas keep in beauty and reverence the ground where our spirits sleep."

The first from Rohwer to volunteer for the 442nd Battalion, and one of five Masaoka sons in combat during World War, Mike Masaoka of Washington, D. C., saluted Arkansas as the only state to commemorate the Nisei War dead.

"Many of us had enough faith in America that we volunteered to prove our loyalty as if that had to be proven,"

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