Blind, But With Vision

By BILL HOSOKAWA

Jimmie Sakamoto, one of the colorful of Nisei personalities, was the national JACL president from 1936 to 1938. As Nisei history goes, that was the golden era of Nisei. His name may be unfamiliar to many of today's Nisei, but he was one of the founders of the National Committee for French Indochina, which later became the Committee for the Liberation of Indochina. He was a leader in the movement to help the Vietnamese people. Sakamoto was assassinated in 1945, but his legacy lives on through his work and his dedication to the cause of freedom and justice.

In the privacy of his sparse furnished newspaper office, Jimmie talked over his doubts with his wife, Masa, and a few close friends. Sakamoto, who was 5 feet 9 inches tall, was not a physically imposing figure, but his personality was. In reality, Jimmie Sakamoto was the only person who understood the least about his fitness to lead the Japanese American Citizens League. His decision to lead it was universally considered as an overreach of power. He was not expected to do so. He was overwhelmed by the office, the platitude of the needy, and the courage of the people who had the opportunity to meet the responsibilities of the presidency.

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old mannerism of raising his sightless eyes and looking ta-

tles whenever he mentioned dates. He continued reading until he

could see.

He was so independent, so

independent that many people who usually frightened

him lived in darkness.

One of the blind persons who

knew Jimmie as a boy, used to say that he liked to go
to the movies. To him, it was a way of getting a new

view of the world. He had always admired his 

father, and the sightless man who lived in his house.

It was true that Jimmie had a very clear mind. 

His memory was so good that even when he was

blind, he could still remember the names of the

people who had taught him

In the summer of 1935 Jimmie

Sakamoto took a train to the head of the line, but

he had to run at the signal. The train was a

bit slow at first, but once he

caught rhythm, he was going as fast as any

sighted man.

Sakamoto took the train, and

Jimmie Sakamoto was a

Japanese American who

lived in the heart of San Francisco.

The first time Jimmie

Sakamoto met President

Franklin D. Roosevelt, it was

in the time of the Great

Depression. Roosevelt was

trying to find a way to help

the unemployed.

Jimmie became a

member of the Progressive

Citizen's League and worked

for a higher minimum wage.

Jimmie Sakamoto was

a strong-minded and

determined man. He

had been a labor

leader for many

years, and he knew

that he was in the right.

President Roosevelt was

pleased with his efforts, and he

asked him to come to Washington.

Jimmie was a spokesman for the

National Citizens League, and he

was dedicated to the cause of the

unemployed.

Jimmie was concerned that the

President was not doing enough

for the poor people, and he

decided to take a stand.

Jimmie was a strong

spokesman for the cause of

the unemployed, and he

was not afraid to speak

out.

Jimmie Sakamoto was

a fighter, and he

would not

back down.

Jimmie Sakamoto was a

man of principle, and he

would not

be swayed by threats.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be discouraged.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be silenced.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be stopped.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be threatened.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be bullied.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be intimidated.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

would not

be silenced.

Jimmie was a

fighter, and he

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be stopped.
Blind But With Vision—

(Questioned from preceding Page)

of war, interpret bewitching government red tape, and otherwise
near the horrors of the commun-
ity. Under his direction the com-
nittee collected a mass of informa-
tion about the economic con-
sequences Japanese Americans were making in the Northwest.

This information, which surprised
the Nisei themselves, was printed
and widely circulated after it had
been submitted to the Public
Relations Committee in an effort to
reform the evacuation order.

Appointees to the committee
Sakamoto spoke eloquently about indiscriminate mass evac-
uation. He concluded his testi-
mony by saying: "!’Drivers cooperation
if the government had that
and you people must be
uprooted.

But once the urgency of the dark days immediately after Pearl
Harbor had been replaced by the
pessimisms and frustrations of re-
location center life, Sakamoto suddenly found himself being
run down in the scrapbooks.

*[a]

Diary notes by a high

first at Puahiup Assembly order

and then at Minidoka WRA

camp in Idaho, "Beautiful me, beautiful me, for everything from the evacuation

Hug the sorrowing, hug the

clad girls for Jinniso. It was a period of discipline. He

quickly found the evacuation

of the. He made one gallant, fu-

but the great evacuation of

military service. The army had

no idea of a blind man.

Several friends of the Saka-

family remained in the summer of

1941. Miseo took her two elder

children, Nafter and Mavis, to

Mary’s College in South Bond.

In May, just before the Pali-

hul camp opened, they came to

the island of Oahu to see their

one-year-old child. Joe was

born in Minidoka.

When the west coast was

opened, Jinniso returned alone to

Seattle in July 1945. Some of the

friends who had visited him in

the camp asked his wife, Miseo,

Jinniso to come to the camp. She

helped Jinniso open a store. Two

months after Jinniso’s parents

came to see their son in Seattle in

June 1946, Miseo, with the

children, went on a trip to see

other children who were

from home.

Many friends urged Jinniso to

start his own business. In the

years since then, Jinniso pondered his sense of re-

sponsibility towards the people

then returning to the Northwest. He remembered the keen years as

a publisher, considered his obli-

gations to his growing family.

Other friends offered to set

him up in business. One proposal was to take over a dress manufactur-

ing business. Jinniso was un-

interested when his good friend

Father Leopold Thomas dropped

by and invited him. In 1946, Father

Thomas was the Maryknoll pri-

cipal who had converted the

Sakamoto to Catholicism.

Jinniso remembers the day

Father called. It was the last,

erratic visit. Father called August 25, 1946. Father said he was

visiting from the General manager

of the Nihon Buyu Bank.

When Jinniso saw him, he

thought about the business

propositions he had, but after

another half hour of discussion

they finally got to the point of

doing some on Monday and try-

ing again. Jinniso had to go to

the city for six months now.

Emi had been skeptical about

employing a blind man when

Father Thomas first talked to

Jinniso. "Jinniso Sakamoto can do anything," Father

Thomas assured him. Give him

a desk, a telephone and two

weeks to show what he could

do. Jinniso started a telephone

installation campaign. All day

long, when he was called from a list of numbers that had been

prepared for him, he would go

to each number and explain

the steps he would use to

install a telephone.

A year ago, Jinniso Powers of

the New York "Daily News" had

written a column about him

in his daily "The Powershouse

Shower" column. "Quoting a cor-

respondent, Powers wrote for his

millions of readers: "Jinniso is

the pickup and phone solicitation depart-

ment of the Nihon Buyu Bank.

Since the evacuation the services

of Lake Union in the center of Seattle . . . .

It is one of the most important

savings operations in the country and

you owe it to me to go to work from

6 a.m. to 4 p.m. sparkling the

operations of the bureau, soli-
Sakamoto--
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Sakamoto--(Continued from Page 6)

"With what this generation has gone through, it seems such a pity that we could be divided from our background which should prove to be of benefit to this nation, and in particular toward the advancement of human understanding."

(As a finale to this Yokohama's plan story, which was submitted to us about a month before Jimmie Sakamoto met death while crossing a street in New York. The reporting part of this story made two weeks ago in his regular PC volume. Village.)

DENVER—Late in a wintry Saturday afternoon the telephone rang. It was Johnny, at the other end. "Ferguson just came to see you. Tell him I sent him."

In my business, telegrams are routine things. They come, they go.

"Are you going to read it to me?" Johnny asked. I knew it had to be business, but I felt it was better to tell him it was unimportant. "Johnny had taken the time to see me."

"Excuse me."

"What was I doing?"

"Hear it."

"I'm afraid I'm going to have to give you a short answer."

"As a matter of fact, I have been asking myself the same question."

"Johnny was a young friend of mine."

"What was his name?"

"He was a young man."

"Now what was his name?"

"I'm thinking it was a short answer."

"Yes, it was."

"But now it's time for me to clean up."

"I'll see you later."

"I hope you'll find it useful."

"I hope so."

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