

Go in World War II US Internment Camps

by

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Adapted from a GO SPOTTING article by Chris Garlock
in the *American Go E-Journal* (6/7/11)

An article by Janice Kim 3P about go stones that were found in a Japanese internment camp (*American Go E-Journal* GO SPOTTING: 'The Archaeology of Internment' on 5/9/11) prompted roving contributor Peter Shotwell to send along an introduction and some excerpts from Holly Uyemoto's *Go: A Novel* (Plume; 1995). Her book focuses on generational differences among Japanese-Americans that he is familiar with because he went to high school in West Los Angeles with many who were born or raised in the camps.

A search of the George Hoshida Collection on the Japanese American National Museum website yielded some of some of his drawings to add to some photos collected by Peter that were also not in the book.

The sad story of Hoshida's multi-incarcerations and links to websites that are mentioned and photos that are used conclude this article.

From the *Journal*

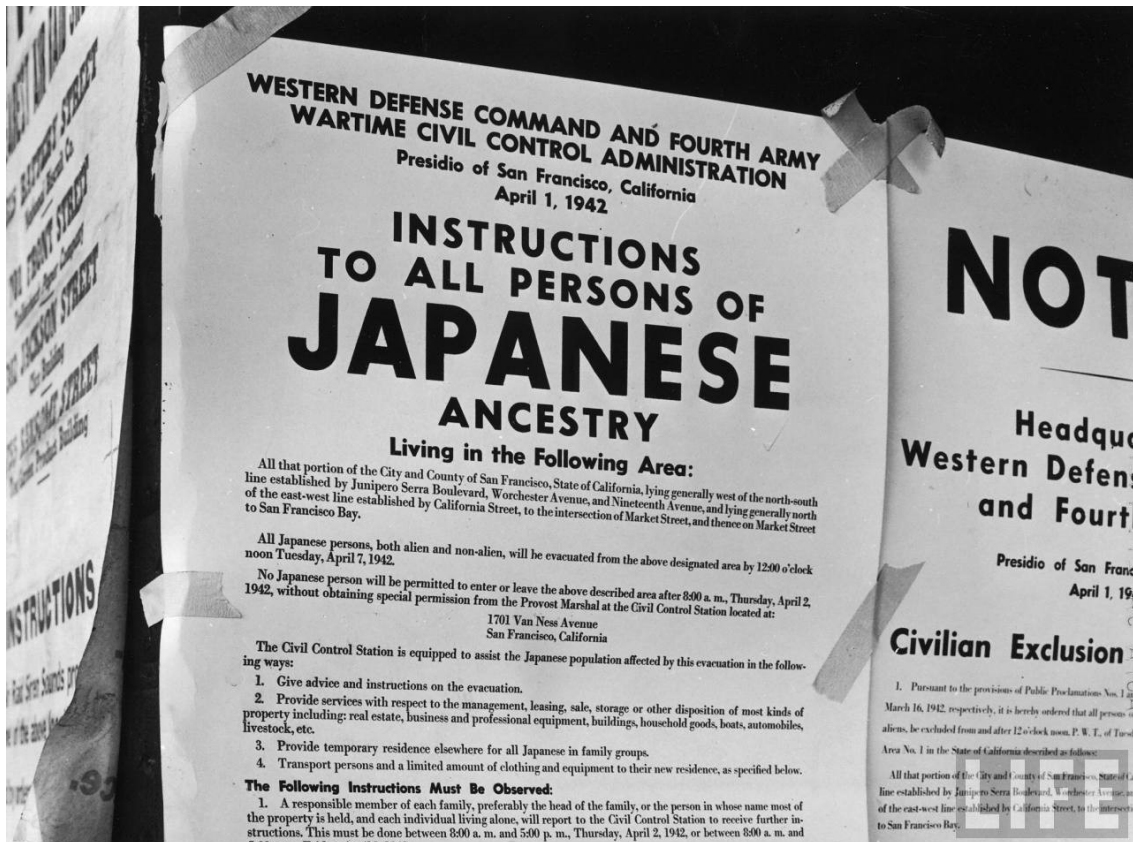
"Readers may be interested in the May/June 2011 issue of Archaeology magazine," reports Janice Kim. "There is an article "Archaeology of World War II" that includes a section "The Archaeology of Internment" that describes some findings at the Kooskia camp in Idaho, where American citizens of Japanese ancestry were interned during World War II. It notes that archaeologists "... are uncovering evidence [such as the go stones pictured below] that people not only survived, but also struggled to maintain their identity and dignity even in the most restrictive and dehumanizing environments."



From Go: A Novel by Holly Uyemoto

Wil, a young, not-quite-21 Japanese-American student is depressed after breaking up with her boy friend. It is 1978 and her lithium cure has failed. She is visiting her mother in Southern California and feeling out of place among a collection of silent and semi-crazy uncles, selfish cousins, compulsive aunts, and oblivious parents. But a path to her liberation begins as she hears the stories of the World War II camps where 120,000 were rounded up and interned. She starts to see that the problems she and they share are the result of the various attractions and repulsions of Western guilt and Eastern shame . . .

I used to not like Uncle Mas very much. He bored me... I always found Uncle Mas drab, a frog on a log. It requires no stretch of the imagination to picture his tongue popping out suddenly, catching a fly or a raindrop. But one day, my grandmother told me a story about Uncle Mas that changed the way I saw him for good...



Before he became a naturalized citizen, [Ojiichan, another uncle] carried a copy of the Constitution in his wallet and took it with him everywhere he went. He quoted from it freely. After Pearl Harbor... Ojiichan brought out his Constitution and cited the Fourth Amendment rights [but they] took him away, the Constitution neatly folded again and put back in his wallet.



Heart Mountain Relocation Center, Wyoming

Ojiichan was a great go player . . . [but] deemed a Japanese cultural item, the government barred Ojiichan from taking his old go table with him into camp, so he made one... He learned to shape and polish quartz veined with orange borax, and obsidian black and bright, with edges that cut metal and skin. Uncle Mas was fascinated with the go board. He begged Ojiichan to let him play with it. Ojiichan told him not to go near the board...



Later, he brought down the go board and the stones, smooth quartz and biting obsidian, and asked my grandmother, 'Where is he?' He then set about teaching Uncle Mas how to play—not the five-in-a-row kind of go that children and Westerners play, but the real thing. Uncle Mas learned quickly. He had an aptitude for strategy: in the end, both too much so, and not enough. Ojiichan's friends would gather around, joke, give Uncle Mas hints, and make friendly wagers about how many moves it would take Ojiichan to win. The nightly face-off between Ojiichan and Uncle Mas became community entertainment.





Uncle Mas winning was never a question, but one day it happened. About six months after he started playing, he beat Ojiichan. And Ojiichan made him swallow one of his own stones. This was Uncle Mas's victory, and his punishment. Uncle Mas thought Ojiichan was joking, but he wasn't. He insisted Uncle Mas swallow the stone. Uncle Mas reasoned that as the winner, he should choose whether or not he had to swallow the stone.

Ojiichan said it was his tadaï 'no gisei o haratte eta shyori,' his conquest, having exceeded his master, and his punishment for the same reason—the Japanese equivalent of Pyrrhic victory.

Uncle Mas swallowed the stone, and he stopped playing go...after his big win, he made himself scarce...The next time my grandmother saw him was when she was called to the infirmary after Uncle Mas had been found in the latrine trying to pass a huge fecal boulder. He was rushed to the hospital and operated on. The doctor said he would be fine. There were no fresh fruits and vegetables to speak of in camp. Most meals consisted of mutton and either rice or potatoes. The camp doctor assured Ojiichan and my grandmother that constipation was entirely normal in camp, but it seemed that there had been an inorganic stoppage of Uncle Mas's bowels: during his operation, the doctor extracted one perfectly round, flat, knife-edged obsidian stone.

'Remember that story about Uncle Mas?' I asked my mother one day. 'The go stone Ochiijan made him swallow?' 'Nobody made anybody swallow anything,' my mother said. 'Then why does Uncle Mas have a bad stomach?' 'Because he can't express himself.' 'You mean, talk?'

When he was released from the camp infirmary, Uncle Mas was whole again, except that he stopped talking... A week later, he suddenly slumped over. He was rushed back to the infirmary. There were lots of cuts in Uncle Mas's large intestine; they had ruptured and were bleeding. The doctor removed four feet of Uncle Mas's large intestine and sewed him up again. 'Don't you remember?' I prodded my mother. 'Grandma told me.' 'I was a baby then. Besides, sometimes she just liked to tell you stories.'

But Uncle Mas still has terrible troubles with his stomach, and he still refuses to play go. I saw him studying Ochiijan's fancy table once. Uncle Mas ran his hand over the top, touched the carvings, and, pulling back in order to see, squinted at the inlaid grid. He opened the drawers and studied the stones. He held one of the smooth black onyx in his palm, rolling it back and forth. And then he walked away.

The Artist

George Hoshida (1907-1985) was born in Japan and at the age of five, his family settled in Hilo, Hawaii. As an active practitioner of Judo, Hoshida was active at the local *dojo*. This led directly to his arrest by FBI agents on the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor as a potential saboteur. Unlike most Japanese-Americans living in Hawaii, Hoshida was incarcerated for the duration of the war, first at Kilauea Military Camp and

Sand Island in Hawaii and later in mainland Justice Department internment camps at Lordsburg and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Eventually, he was able to rejoin his wife and young daughters, but only when they agreed to leave Hawaii to be incarcerated with him in a War Relocation Authority camp on the mainland. Hoshida began a visual diary of his incarceration from his earliest days in prison. The two notebooks in the collection of the Japanese American Museum in Los Angeles are an extremely rare visual document of the special Justice Department camps and chart his frequent movement from one facility to the next.

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Links and Photo Credits

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AGA E-Journal Article

<http://www.usgo.org/news/2011/05/go-spotting-%E2%80%98the-archaeology-of-internment%E2%80%99/>

Archaeology Article

http://www.archaeology.org/1105/features/world_war_II_internment.html

The George Hoshida Collection

<http://www.janm.org/collections/george-hoshida-collection/>

Photos on Pages 2 and 3

http://www.anglonauts.com/hist_us_20_ww2_jap_am/hist_us_20_w2_jap_am.htm

Photo of Go Players on Page 5

<http://www.bookmice.net/darkchilde/japan/heart.html>