Finding aid for the Tetsuo Toyama Papers

Collection number: 2000.366

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Tetsuo Toyama papers
Dates: ca. 1941-1945
Collection number: 2000.366
Creator: Toyama, Tetsuo, 1882-1971
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012

Access
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Preferred Citation

Acquisition Information

Biography / Administrative History
Testuo Toyama was born on April 8, 1882 on the island of Ike Jima, one of the islands in the Ryukyu Archipelago. Testuo attended school at the Okinawa Prefecture Normal School and in 1902, while still attending school, he was inducted into the 23rd Regiment of the Sixth Division of the Japanese Army. In 1904, he was sent to Manchuria to fight the Russians and was wounded in battle. In 1905 Tetsuo returned to Manchuria and the armistice was declared while his regiment was pursuing Russian forces.

In 1906 Tetsuo moved to Hawaii, arriving on September 6, 1906. He worked for the Kekaha Plantation in Kauai for $20.00 per month and worked many different jobs during his time at the plantation. Some of the positions held by Tetsuo were laborer, bath-keeper, and head cook. Tetsuo worked at the Kekaha Plantation for two years and then moved to Paahau Plantation, where he worked as a salesman at Miyazaki Store in Pauuilo for about two more years.

Tetsuo moved to Honolulu in 1910, where he started his monthly magazine, Jitsugyo-no-Hawaii. Tetsuo married Sadako Miyashiro, a Japanese language school teacher, on November 30, 1914. They had two children, Sadao and Yoshiko.

On December 7, 1941, the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, Tetsuo was arrested because of his role as a community leader. He was taken to the Honolulu Immigration Station and then detained at the Sand Island Detention Station. On March 1, 1042 Tetsuo was transferred to the Angel Island Detention Station in California. He was transferred to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin on March 9, 1942, Camp Forrest in Tennessee on May 27, 1942, Camp Livingston in Louisiana on June 30, 1942, and Fort Missoula in Montana on June 5, 1943. Tetsuo received an informal parole order on December 24, 1944 and was transferred to the Department of Justice camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico. On April 14, 1944 he was paroled to the Jerome Relocation Center in Arkansas and then later transferred to the Granada Relocation Center (Amache) on June 21, 1944. On
September 2, 1944 he was baptized as a Christian (Seventh Day Adventist) in the Arkansas River by Elder Alfred Okohira. Tetsuo left the camps on September 12, 1944 to attend Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska as a special student. He studied there until 1945, when he returned to his family in Hawaii.

Tetsuo was naturalized on February 26, 1953 under the newly passed Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the Walter-McCarran Act. Following his naturalization, Tetsuo began promoting American citizenship among the Japanese community in Hawaii. He wrote a paper titled The Citizen and through private activities encouraged those in his community to attend adult education courses to further their education and qualify for citizenship. During this time he organized the Hawaii Economic Study Club, the Naturalization Encouragement Association of Honolulu, the Citizens Study Club of Oahu, and the Friends of Children of Okinawa group. He was awarded the Letter of Commendation for the American Legion National Headquarters (1953), the Certificate of Commendation from Seisaku Ohta (1960), the Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award from the Civitan Club of Hawaii (1961), Back-doro Key to the White House from Congressman Spark M. Matsunaga (1965), and the Fifth Order of Merit with the Order of Sacred Treasure (1968).

During his later years Tetsuo was an active member of the Aiea Seventh-Day Adventist Church. He passed away at St. Francis Hospital on May 29, 1971 at the age of 89.

Scope and Content of Collection
This collection, comprised largely of letters between husband and wife while separated during World War II, provides valuable insight into camp life and family life. Letters between Tetsuo and Sadako, are written primarily in Japanese. Letters from his son describe his service with the Army and letters from his daughter are often about her marriage and new husband as well as taking care of her mother and the family dog. There are also letters from the War Relocation Authority pertaining to Tetsuo’s parole, letters regarding his enrollment at Union College, travel applications, various WRA materials, and Tetsuo’s naturalization application. Many of his letters in Japanese contain bible verses in English as his faith began to factor very heavily into his life while interned. These documents are important in portraying the life of a Hawaiian community leader during the war years, especially given his important role in promoting citizenship following World War II.

Arrangement
Items have been arranged chronologically when applicable. The collection has been broken down into the following series:
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 1: Letters from Tetsuo Toyama
Subseries 2: Letters to Tetsuo Toyama
Subseries 3: Government Letters
Subseries 4: Miscellaneous
Series 2: Official Documents
Subseries 1: Licenses
Subseries 2: Receipts
Subseries 3: Applications
Subseries 4: Miscellaneous
Series 3: Personal History
Series 4: Press Clippings

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
Toyama, Tetsuo, 1882-1972
United States. War Relocation Authority.
World War II
Japanese Americans—Evacuation and Relocation, 1942-1945
Angel Island Immigration Station (Calif.)
Jerome Relocation Center (Denson, Ark.)
Granada Relocation Center
Fort McCoy (Wis.)
Camp Forrest (Tenn.)
Camp Livingston (La.)
Fort Missoula (Mont.)
Justice Department Camps, Lordsburg
Justice Department Camps, Santa Fe
Santa Fe (N.M.)
Lordsburg (Tex.)