In the early 1940s, Clara Breed was the childrens librarian at the San Diego Public Library. But she was also friend to dozens of Japanese American children and teens when war broke out in December of 1941. The story of what happened to these American citizens is movingly told through letters that her young friends wrote to Miss Breed during their internment. This remarkable librarian and humanitarian served as a lifeline to these imprisoned young people, and was brave enough to speak out against a shameful chapter in American history.

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My Personal Review:
Can we stand firm for JUSTICE in wartime? HOW CAN WE NOT??

Clara Breed had a passion for children. She could not be silent when witnessing unjust actions taken by our government following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941). In the Foreword for this 2006 book, Elizabeth Kikuchi Yamada wrote "I am appalled I did not realize that I was a prisoner of my own government." (Read her moving poem on page 265).

The first children's librarian in San Diego, Miss Breed had become well-acquainted and friends with many children of first generation immigrants from Japan. As a child I learned from a sermon the Japanese numbers *ichi* - *ni* - *san* - *shi* - *go* ~~~ On page 17 the author explains that "sei" is translated "generation" and is the key to the words *issei* - *nisei* - *sansei* - *yonsei*. ALL persons of Japanese ancestry in America are called "Nikkei" - - *kei* meaning thread or lineage.

When families were forced to leave for internment camps (the U.S. govt. says "internment" is not the correct title), the librarian's compassion was
not 'switched off'. The children must have hung on desperately to their parents' stoic optimism to get them through the shock of being so ill-treated by the nation in which they were born, and other cruel ironies. Joanne Oppenheim's research and story-telling turned up pictures and letters of those young people & gathered them into a book well worth its "heft"!

It is easy to believe that Joanne Oppenheim was *destined* to tell this story. While 'tracking down' members of her own graduating class in upstate New York, she used her detecting skills to locate Ellen Yukawa who had been a classmate in 1945-1946 after release from internment. This is a poignant story in itself. Involvement in the extensive research in finding Miss Breed's other young friends seemed inevitable for Oppenheim.

It is disheartening to read that persons who later gained significant prominence (i.e., Chief Justice Earl Warren & cartoonist-author "Dr. Seuss") allowed their prejudices to surface publicly. (See the cartoon on page 40). Racism dictated laws which fed the greed of many who bought up confiscated land. Politicians who foisted their prejudices on the public deliberately fed the wildfires of Fear. This happened despite the efforts of *First Lady* Eleanor Roosevelt, and many respected clergy & Quakers.

Reviewer mcHAIKU deeply respects Clara Breed for being a positive influence in the lives of children who suffered greatly from the traumas of that war. Readers must ensure that Joanne Oppenheim's work stays visible in libraries and classrooms to remind teachers & students that all of us must be careful to respect the victims of any conflict.

*Believing that JUSTICE must be our standard, we shall act with compassion.*

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