DORMITORY LIFE IN SEABROOK

Robert Yutaka Hasuike
Seabrook Resident 1945-1957
May 15, 1994

I remember growing up as a youngster in Seabrook. I remember my natural curiosity taking me to all sections of the village--Hoover Village and Hoover Annex (which we knew as the "gray shacks"), the apartments, the "new Houses" across Highway 77, the "Italian Village" next to the plant, the migrant worker village near the Inspection Station, but, most of all, I remember my life around the dormitories, the area where Deerfield Drive made a left turn facing Dormitories 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

I remember the dormitory where our family lived, a long, narrow one-story cinder-block structure which we called "Dorm #11." I remember the dormitory had a corridor through the center--a common passageway--which met at the lobby in the center of the structure. Behind the lobby were a public toilet, shower, and laundry room. I remember our dorm had family units on one side and single-room apartments for single women on the other side. I remember other dorms had units for single men. I remember the family units, unlike the single units, had their own kitchen and toilet. I remember the dorms had central heating--a large coal-burning furnace would provide heat for the units during winter and provide hot water. I remember each dorm had a cleaning lady for the common areas, and she had a small office next to the lobby. I remember the lobby was convenient in many ways. We often played there when we had inclement weather; parties were held there; it was the residents' family room.

I remember each fall storm windows would be installed and removed in the spring. I remember most Issei had a flower garden wherever they could find space. I remember during heavy winds from hurricanes roofing material and antennas would be blown off. I remember large areas of grass around the dormitory buildings. I remember that the sound of lawn mowers would indicate spring had come. I remember there were no garages for autos, but each dorm had a parking lot. I remember that, as far apart as some dorms were, the corridors of the dorms enabled us to be mobile and not confined to the small apartment units. I remember, because of the corridors, we could walk through all eleven dorms, exposing ourselves to inclement weather only for a few seconds when visiting friends in other dorms.

I remember having neighborhood friends from many countries in war-torn Europe--Estonians, Latvians, Germans, a Pole, Hungarians from the '1956 Revolution. I remember we would play around the dorms and in the nearby woods and lakes. I remember many spoke no English, but that did not deter us from playing together. They would teach us a few basic words from their language and we, in turn, would do the same with our language--English.

I still remember many people living in the dormitory area. I remember residents of Dormitory #7. I remember the Ito boys, Tokio, Ronnie, and Bobbie. I remember the three generations of the Nishimoto family, the grandparents, parents, and daughters Jeanne and Noriko. I remember Henry Kanemoto, who won the grand prize at the Grand Opening of Chiari's Hardware Store--a freezer full of frozen foods. I remember Kiyoaki Furuta and his sister Kimiko.
because Kiyoki spoke fluent Japanese, unlike most of us. I remember the Kadoda family in Dormitory #8, who had kids both older or younger than us. I remember my scoutmaster Vernon Ichisaka and his wife living in Dormitory #9 and also Juri Tamm, his sister Helve, and his mother Louise, and also my classmate Erik Vaeli and a kid name Yosh Hanzawa. I remember the Simpson family of Dormitory #10, with three boys, the twins Peter and Tomas and Ants. I remember they were preceded by the Shinsako family, parents Frank and Misao, sons Joe and Koji, and daughter Eiko. I remember they moved back to Los Angeles in the early 1950's.

I remember the people who lived in our wing of Dormitory #11. I remember Mr. and Mrs. Forren from West Virginia. I remember Mrs. Forren because, as a fore lady at the plant, she wore that blue headpiece. I remember next door was the family of Reverend Sasaki of the Seabrook Presbyterian Church. I remember his wife, daughters Dorothy, Mildred, June, and son Robert. I remember living across the hallway from us for a short time was an Estonian minister and another Estonian family who had a son my age, Ants Sade.

Our family consisted of parents Itaru and Shizuko, sons Mas, Nobu, and Yutaka and cousin Ben. Life in and around the dormitories was my small world. Going to nearby Bridgeton was a big event and a real adventure.