Can't Tell

Nellie Wong

The strain on relationships between the Japanese and other Asians was especially difficult during the approach and outbreak of America’s involvement in World War II. Socialist feminist poet Nellie Wong was born and raised in Oakland, California, the first daughter of Chinese immigrants. She was eight years old when the war broke out. Her father owned a grocery store in Berkeley next to a Japanese American butcher shop.

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When World War II was declared
on the morning radio,
we glued our ears, widened our eyes.
Our bodies shivered.

A voice said
Japan was the enemy,
Pearl Harbor a shambles
and in our grocery store
in Berkeley, we were suspended

next to the meat market
where voices hummed,
valises, pots and pans packed,
no more hot dogs, baloney,
pork kidneys.

We children huddled on wooden planks
and my parents whispered:
We are Chinese, we are Chinese.
Safety pins anchored,
our loins ached.
Shortly our Japanese neighbors vanished and my parents continued to whisper: We are Chinese, we are Chinese.

We wore black arm bands, put up a sign in bold letters.

The top photo is of Japanese Army General Hideki Tojo.
HOW TO SPOT A JAP

The Chinese and other Asians have fairly normal feet... The Jap wore a wooden sandal ("geta") before he was issued army shoes... He will usually have a wide space between the first and second toes... Often calloped from the leather strap that held the "geta" to his foot...

The Chinese has a smooth face... The Jap runs to hair... Look at their profiles and teeth... C usually has evenly set choppers... J has buck teeth... The Chinese smiles easily... The Jap usually expects to be shot... and is very unhappy about the whole thing... especially if he is an officer!

You may find Japs among any oriental civilian group... that is a favorite infiltration trick... Make your man walk... The Chinese strides... The Jap shuffles (but he may be clever enough to fake the stride)... Make him remove his socks and shoes, if any...

To sum it up, spotting a Jap depends upon three things: 1. Appearance 2. Feet 3. Pronunciation

- Short, squat, fairly heavy build, lemon-yellow skin, slanted eyes
- G-string
- Wide space between first and second toes... Callous on the web
- Almost no waist-line
- Stocky build
- He can't pronounce our liquid "L"... His voice on any "S" sound
- Nip second
- Wooden sandals

"How to Spot a Jap," by Milton Caniff, 1943.