June & George

SAM: Hello, Ghost Family. Welcome to *Family Ghosts.*

[music in - FG Theme]

When we tell stories on this show, a lot of times they're unique to the families that experienced them - your grandmothers who turned out to be jewel smugglers, your fathers who died young and left their sons only shaving kits to navigate the world, your moms who may or may not have committed arson.

But sometimes we encounter families that are part of much bigger stories - families that get caught in one of those intense historical riptides, where large swaths of society are swept up and re-ordered without warning, leaving generations of ghosts in their wake.

Sometimes this happens to a few hundred people in one particular region - like the members of the Love Family from earlier this season. Other times, the tide crashes into an entire ethnic group, like Micaela's story about her grandmother and the Holocaust last season, or Meara's story from earlier this season, about her great-uncle navigating a culture of religious stratification in India.

And this week, we bring you another one of those stories, about a family searching for answers in the wake of one of the most shameful episodes in American history - the Japanese American prison camps, where over 100,000 people were held in the 1940's.

Recently, our producers Jennifer and Jacob placed a call to the World War II Japanese American Internment Museum, in Arkansas.

> *SUSAN: I can just barely hear either one of yall. And I've got people in here and I'm not gonna try to holler.*

SAM: The conversation quickly took a surprising turn.

SUSAN: Now what is this pertaining to?
JENNIFER: Well, we're hoping to have like a little bit of a conversation with you about what's left of Jerome.
SUSAN: Hah. Nothing.
JACOB: Nothing at all?
SUSAN: Well, when your government does something stupid they cover it up — I- I mean, excuse me. Uh, but they did a real good job of covering this one up.

Today on the show, a political cover-up leads to a personal one. Producer Jennifer Lai has the story.

JENNIFER: So last year, we got this email from a Family Ghosts listener named Kimberly. Kimberly's in her 30s and is a life coach living in Detroit with her husband and toddler. Her father's parents - Kimberly's grandparents - were Japanese Americans, imprisoned in Jerome, Arkansas. And Kimberly told us the U.S. isn't alone in not wanting to talk about the camps.

KIMBERLY: What I've been trying to digest is that my father did not know his parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and all of his parents' friends were in the camps. He was in his 20s and married to my mother when they told him.

And *that*'s the thing that Kimberly's always had trouble understanding. Why was her grandparents' time in the Japanese American prison camps kept secret from their son for much of his life - especially since Kimberly remembers them talking almost casually about it when *she* was a kid?

KIMBERLY: Yeah! My grandma would about it to me. Oh yeah. Wha- And that's what's crazy. Like, it was hidden for 20 years, and now we just talk about it like it's nothing. I remember it being very matter of fact. And so it goes from being this huge secret, and then it's just public knowledge.

Kimberly doesn't remember them talking about the camps in much detail - but at least they weren't hiding it anymore.

All of this has left Kimberly with questions. Why did her grandparents keep it a secret from her dad for so long? What changed when she and her siblings were born? Does she really know the whole story?

These are all questions she'd ask her grandparents, except they're no longer here. And that's hard for Kimberly, whose mother is white, and whose father is Japanese American.

> *KIMBERLY: Like I think I look Asian. But I have sisters who don't at all. And I have a son with blond hair and blue eyes. And so I feel like it's a part of my history. And I feel like when people look at me, they know that I'm Japanese, or know I'm Asian. So when I say, like "My grandparents were in the concentration camps in Arkansas," they're like, "Oh, Okay." A lot of them don't know about it, but I feel like I- I wear that as who I am.*

Because while this *is* a story about Kimberly's grandparents, and why they acted the way they did, it's more than that. It's Kimberly's story, too and her family's story of what being Japanese American meant to them.

SAM: From Spoke Media, and WALT, you're listening to *Family Ghosts*. I'm Sam Dingman, and this is episode thirteen - *June and George*. After the break, Jennifer tries to help Kimberly understand what really happened in the camps.

SAM: Welcome back to *Family Ghosts*. This week, producer Jennifer Lai brings us the story of Kimberly, who's trying to understand why her grandparents were so secretive about their experiences in the Japanese American prison camps. Now that they've passed away, Kimberly spent a few months last summer with Jennifer, looking for clues.

JENNIFER: But clues weren't easy to come by. Kimberly told us that our two best bets for learning more about her grandparents' time in the camps were a tape

containing an interview with them, from a school project Kimberly's sister did thirty years ago, and Kimberly's auntie Rosie, who was actually imprisoned with Kimberly's grandparents at Jerome. But as we began our search for the truth, we encountered a couple problems. First, nobody knew where the tape was. And as for Rosie...

> *KIMBERLY: So, I got a message from my mom saying um that my Auntie Rosie doesn't want to do the interview.*

Auntie Rosie doesn't want to be interviewed.

> *KIMBERLY: ... she just said like lots of people have this story. Why do they want to hear mine? Um... No, I can't do it.*
>
> *DONNA: There was clearly an avoidance about talking about camps.*

That's Donna Nagata. She's a professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. Donna has devoted a lot of her research to studying why the Nisei generation, the second generation of Japanese-Americans, had so much difficulty talking about being incarcerated during the war.

She's surveyed over 900 Japanese Americans — both the generation that was imprisoned in the camps, and the generation born after the war whose parents had been incarcerated.

And Donna's interviews suggest that Kimberly's grandparents weren't alone in keeping this secret.

> *DONNA: For many, you know, people you don't want to revisit something that's traumatic and, and unpleasant so...They were trying to protect their children basically and shield them from this negative experience that they still themselves hadn't processed, right?*

Donna says the experience of the camps left many Japanese Americans feeling like they weren't even sure of who they were anymore.

DONNA: It really has to do with kind of a mixture of something bad has been done to me, how do I understand it? I've been put in camps because I wasn't deemed American. The country that I saw myself as being a part of, um, has rejected me. So, you know, you’re, you're left with- with what?

So maybe we shouldn’t have been surprised that Rosie didn’t want to talk about the camps. But Rosie, the younger sister of Kimberly’s grandma, is the last living link to this murky chapter in the family’s past.

So Kimberly sat down one night and wrote her a letter. She read us an excerpt before she sent it.

KIMBERLY: I know that this is a lot of other people's stories, but I want to hear what your story is because it's my grandmother's story and our family story and there’s so many things I would have loved to ask my Grandma, but she had dementia by the time I at the end of high school. And I just didn't get to ask.

But without Rosie’s perspective, Kimberly’s not left with much- just some old photos and a handful of stories.

KIMBERLY: This is how I remember grandma. She's got a blouse on, she's got her big glasses, her hair's done. She always had her hair ... She had like a wash, so she always had black hair. She's like super tiny. That’s how I remember...
AMY: She always had her glasses, her big-
KIMBERLY: They were tinted, they were rose tinted at the time.
AMY: Tinted brown on top, yeah..

JENNIFER: The word Kimberly uses to describe her grandmother is “firecracker.”

Last summer, I went to Michigan with my fellow producer Jacob to meet Kimberly’s family, including her sister Amy.

AMY: My grandmother I would describe as being very opinionated. You know, in her

mind, fair was fair. If your store was supposed to open at 9 o'clock and the hours said 9 o'clock and it was dark, she was banging on that window. "Your sign says 9 o'clock."

Fair was fair. Grandma June always stuck to that.

In the photos we found of her, Grandma June is often wearing velvet, and of course, lipstick. Kimberly's grandpa, George, was just as dapper. He was 6 feet tall, and always got a brand new car every two years. June and George met when they were just kids - growing up in sunny southern California in the 1930's. They were first generation Americans, whose parents had immigrated to the U.S. from Japan. Before they were prisoners in their own country, they were just two kids in California who fell in love - and that's one story they didn't mind sharing. Kimberly's family knows it well.

[music in]

June grew up in a little fishing village on Terminal Island, near Los Angeles. There was a large, tight-knit Japanese community there. In fact, the rumor was that you had to speak a little Japanese to do business on the island.

June's dad was a fisherman, and her mom was a seamstress — so she'd help out with the fishing boat or with the sewing sometimes. And like any American teenager living in LA, June was a big fan of fashion, music, and movie stars. Her parents didn't speak much English, so June - who was also the eldest - was tasked with giving her younger siblings their English names. There was Francis — named after Francis Farmer, a movie star — Edna, Rose, and Albert. (After Prince Albert, obviously.)

George grew up in mainland California, and he worked on his dad's farm. He met June in high school, and after they started dating, he'd cross the bridge to Terminal Island on weekends to bring her and her siblings donuts. He'd often take them for rides in his car, and he'd always stop and buy them ice cream cones.

Then on December 7 1941…

[ARCHIVAL CLIP: NBC News announces attack on Pearl Harbor]

When the Japanese navy air service attacked Pearl Harbor, June and George were in their early 20s, and probably sensed the gravity of the situation.

They weren't sure exactly what was going to happen to them in the future, but they *did* know that they wanted to be together. So June and George drove to Vegas and got married. For decades before the war, there had been a lot of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian sentiment growing on the west coast. They didn't know it at the time, but they would soon be bound for what the government would call "relocation centers."

And that's the part of their story they never wanted to tell.

One thing before we go further. You've probably heard abou what happened to Japanese and Japanese Americans during WWII referred to as "Japanese internment." But you may have noticed Kimberly use the phrase "concentration camp" earlier, and throughout our story, you'll hear us use the phrase "prison camp."

You also might have heard that they were "evacuated" to "relocation centers." But we won't be using the term evacuation — because they weren't being evacuated.

BRIAN: Whether consciously or not at the time, the terms that the U.S. government used to refer to this whole process were very euphemistic. Uh, and rather than, you know, detention camp, concentration camp, prison camp - they used the term assembly center, as if it were some place people just gathered.

We wanted to learn more about the history of what happened to Kimberly's family. So we talked to Brian Niiya. He's the content director of the educational non-profit Densho. Densho's core mission is to document the Japanese-American forced removal and incarceration in a database online.

BRIAN: An evacuation is normally a term you use when people are being moved for their own protection. You evacuate in anticipation of a hurricane or after an earthquake.

And as for calling them "concentration camps…"

BRIAN: I mean, they were surrounded by barbed wire, there were guard towers with armed guards guarding the population, um, so yeah, I mean they were, they were prison camps. Um, the term concentration camps is controversial.

Brian told us some Japanese-Americans aren't comfortable calling them "concentration camps," because they don't want to seem like they're drawing parallels with the Nazi death camps.

BRIAN But, you know, whatever you call it, I mean, I think prison camps, detention camps etc are all, you know, accurate descriptions of what was going on.

The reason the government gave for forcibly relocating an entire group of people was to protect the West Coast, after Pearl Harbor.

But in fact, for nearly a decade before Pearl Harbor even happened, various federal agencies had been conducting surveillance of Japanese American communities. That surveillance yielded no credible evidence of a conspiracy against the U.S. But key figures in the war department, as well a variety of special interest groups did their best to make it seem like the threat was legitimate. And their plan worked.

We asked Brian to explain why

BRIAN: I mean, fundamentally, it's, it was racism. Right? I mean, it was the equating of race with loyalty. ...They didn't mass incarcerate people of German descent, or Italian descent. Um… People of Japanese descent were just treated differently.

There were ten prison camps within the United States, often located in remote and desolate locations - like Jerome, Arkansas, the place I called at the beginning of this story.

> *JENNIFER: Well, we're hoping to have like a little bit of a conversation with you about what's left of Jerome.*
> *SUSAN: Hah. Nothing.*
> *JACOB: Nothing at all?*
> *SUSAN: There is a smokestack from the hospital boiler room and that is all.*

There's practically nothing left of Jerome - so much of it has been literally erased. Even if Kimberly wanted to go back to see the prison camp where June and George were held, there wouldn't be much to see.

No matter where we looked, it seemed like the story of what really happened to Kimberly's grandparents was being hidden.

SAM: *Family Ghosts* will continue in a moment.

JENNIFER: By the time Kimberly was born, her grandparents, June and George, had started to open up more about their time in the prison camps. They still wouldn't say much, but it was better than nothing - which is what Gary, Kimberly's dad, was used to.

> *GARY: The whole war thing, they, they never really wanted to talk about. If we brought it up, the, the people we were talking to would always change the subject. They wouldn't- All of a sudden they would stop smiling. They would just not talk about that at all.*

Gary was kind enough to let us crash his Father's Day barbecue during our visit to Detroit last summer. Gary, a recently retired doctor, immediately welcomed us into the house with a warm smile. He's charming and thoughtful about his parents legacy. He told us their silence about the prison camps was confusing. Because obviously, something *had* happened. Gary knew that the camps existed — he'd heard about them, NOT from his parents, but from other people in the Japanese community, at gatherings.

But when he tried to ask his family about their experiences, the answer was always the same.

> *GARY: "Why do you want to talk about that?" And then that was the end of the discussion.*

The one thing Gary was able to gather was that his parents seemed to feel this sense of shame about their time in the prison camps - like maybe *they'd* messed up somehow.

> *KIMBERLY: That association of people thinking you were sent away because you could have been a traitor, because you were a threat to the government. That had to be so hurtful.*
> *GARY: Well, you have to remember that, that they were like the second generation here. So they were the first ones born in the US, and so they had this sense that, that they had the ties to the older country but they were really United States citizens, and so they felt very much bound to, you know, that this was their country.*
> *And so when all this was happening, they, they I think didn't understand it to begin with. Uh maybe felt hurt. Maybe ashamed, whatever it might be, but they just didn't want to talk about it because they, again, thought that something was wrong and that they might have done something wrong.*

June and George were just as American as anybody else. But they knew that's not how their country saw them, which led to feelings of shame and guilt - even though they hadn't done anything wrong.

And all of these complicated feelings influenced how they raised Gary.

> *GARY: As I got older I would say to my mom or my dad, "Will you teach me to speak Japanese?" And they would say a couple words and things like this, but they really didn't want me to do that because um, by the time the, the war had ended they didn't want to have a little kid running around talking Japanese in the area. And so what they encouraged was they really encouraged me to speak English instead.*

Not teaching him Japanese was a means of protecting him. In this case, the decision to assimilate — and encourage their kids to become as quote unquote American as possible — was just safer.

But in spite of June's attempts to shield Gary from discrimination, he still knew that the world saw him differently.

> *GARY: I was growing up immediately after World War II. And so the big things we saw on TV a lot were the things that were honoring the troops that came back. So the big hero was John Wayne and so you saw all these movies that they had with John Wayne starring in it. And so of course, I'm living in this neighborhood, there are Caucasian and African American people there and myself.*
> *And there was one Chinese boy in the area, but everybody else was, was, you know, I just fit in with them. We all played the same games and so we would always have this discussion at the beginning of the game, who was going to be John Wayne because he was the hero. So we would do this and we would play. And, and then one day my mom asked me to get a box of Kleenex for her. And it was in this room and uh I went to get the room to get the Kleenex and I was coming out and there was a mirror that I had to walk by.*
> *And I look in the mirror and I realized just by looking in the mirror that time that I wasn't ever going to be John Wayne. I mean, I looked in there and I said, "I can't be John Wayne. I'm the other guys here." And it, it never dawned on me before that, that I was different.*

Ironically, Gary turned out about as "All-American" as a kid could be - he played football, made honor society, went to an Ivy League school — and eventually became a doctor.

But throughout it all, Gary was grappling with these confusing feelings about what might've happened to his parents. The scope of Japanese American imprisonment didn't hit him until he was older.

> *GARY: I didn't fully understand the breadth of this, I just understood that there was like moving some people off of California's coast, and I didn't realize how widespread it was. And then as I got into college, I would have times when, when I would get really, really upset, just the whole process of, of um, I guess it's inhumanity.*

Talking to Gary helped us understand what it was like for him to grow up as a Japanese American kid in 1950s Detroit — the child of parents who had been completely uprooted from their lives — and who talked very little about that uprooting. We learned that he had known about the camps to some degree, but that most often he was left to interpret his parents' silence.

We still had a lot of questions about June and George. What were they keeping from Gary? And what was their life like before he was born?

We needed Auntie Rosie, June's younger sister who was with them in the camps. It had been weeks since Kimberly sent Rosie that letter, asking her to share these experiences Kimberly never got to ask her grandparents about.

But then, finally...

> *JENNIFER: Hello, can you hear me?*
> *KIMBERLY: Yeah!*
> *JENNIFER: Hey, how are you?*
> *KIMBERLY: Good, sorry to call you on a Friday night.*
> *JENNIFER: No, it's totally fine, um. How are you?*
> *KIMBERLY: I'm doing well, actually I just got a call from my mom and my Auntie Rosie got my letter, and said that she'd be happy to talk to me.*
> *JENNIFER: Oh my gosh.*

> *JENNIFER: Okay, can you hear me okay?*
> *ROSIE: Okay.*
> *JENNIFER: Okay, how are you?*
> *ROSIE: Oh, I'm fine. Uh, we can get this over with.*
> *JENNIFER: Haha, we were…*

Rosie told us some sweet stories - she *also* remembered those rides with George in his car to get ice cream cones and donuts.

But there were other stories too.

Like how the FBI raided her family's home before the war.

> *ROSIE: I came home from school and Mom said "FBI was here, they went through the whole house, you know, see what we got," but we had burned all the Japanese literature already. So, yeah. I'm glad we did that.*

And the FBI didn't only raid their home. They also took June and Rosie's dad away, in the middle of the night.

> *ROSIE: And so uh he was gone and we didn't know where he was for about couple months I guess, and then the FBI told us that he was in Bismarck, North Dakota. And they took people that were educated, or the Buddhist Monks, or teachers, you know, to, to cripple the community; that's what you do, you take the leaders.*

"You take the leaders." And eventually, Rosie herself was taken into the prison camp. And as we listened to her talk about life behind the prison camp walls, an image began to emerge. An image of Japanese Americans trying to make the best of things. Trying to live a somewhat normal life. And trying to maintain a sense of community — even though they were prisoners.

And there was something else Rosie said that we couldn't stop thinking about...

> *ROSIE: Boy, that was quite a journey though, you know, for us, but I tell you Kim, this is the best country to live in, I love this country!*

That caught me off guard. She loves this country? The same country that kidnapped her father in the middle of the night?

It was hard for Kimberly to hear, too, especially in the aftermath of what her father had said about June and George's silence coming from a sense of shame.

> *KIMBERLY: It kind of puts it in different light for me because you, you hear other stories and hear about other families that have...an affair, or things that are very shameful and*

they don't talk about. Yet, this thing that my family was so ashamed of, like shouldn't have been shameful. It wasn't anything that they did.
And it is so ironic because I remember my grandparents being fiercely proud of being Japanese so to have something where they were made to feel shameful about that, I think it's more heartbreaking than anything.

It would all be easier for Kimberly to process if there was some way to know how June and George really felt about their experiences.

And in theory, there was - that missing tape.

Way back when Kimberly was just a kid, her older brother and sister did one of those high school projects — the kind where you interview your grandparents about their lives for history class. And for the project, they asked Grandma June and Grandpa George what happened to them during the war, on tape.

But Kimberly was too young to understand what her brother and sister were doing at the time. And when she told them that she was working on this story, she realized – she wanted to know what her grandparents had said.

Throughout our visit to Michigan, Kimberly's sister Amy was trying to find this missing tape from thirty years ago.

And then, finally...

KIMBERLY: Amy has the tape.
JJACOB: Wow.
JENNIFER: Really?
KIMBERLY: Yeah.

SAM: After the break, June and George tell the story.

JUNE: We never realized it until we were in camp and had time to think about it: "Why us?"

Amy: Okay, um where were you when you heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed? What was your reaction?
Grandpa George: Well, we weren't married yet, but we were on a date, see. We were out for a drive.
Amy: You and Grandma?
Grandpa George: Uh-huh.

The tape of June and George had been sitting in Amy's house for thirty years. No one really knew where it was because until Kimberly wanted to do this project, no one was really looking for it.

So we sat with Kimberly in her dining room, and listened to this tape, which she'd never heard before. George starts by telling the story of a fateful day, when he and June were out for a drive...

GRANDPA GEORGE: We were out for drive, and then on the radio, the announcer: "Pearl Harbor Bombed". And uh, there's a drawbridge there, see, to go to into the island. They had that blocked off, so she couldn't get back home.

Grandma June remembered the day after Pearl Harbor vividly. She worked at a supermarket on Terminal Island, and she remembers being worried that customers wouldn't shop there anymore, because the store had Japanese-American employees.

JUNE: We had to write a big sign saying "Japanese-American U.S. Citizen." We had to put that sign all over the place.

Kimberly had never heard this story before. Neither had her dad.

JUNE: Then, before you know it, we all lost our jobs. We never realized it until we were in camp and had time to think about it: "Why us?"

"Why us". This was the first time that Kimberly heard her grandmother say anything like that.

There were *lots* of stories Kimberly hadn't heard before - like what happened after that day when the FBI came to take June and Rosie's father away at five in the morning.

> *JUNE: Five o'clock in the morning. They took my dad out of the bed, and my mother panicked. And they didn't tell where they were going to take him. And they don't have a chance for him to get dressed up. They don't even give him a chance to put a shoe on, they just took him out. All the Japanese was round off. Aliens.*

There were stories about shame.

> *JUNE: Couple of doctors committed suicide. They was a disgrace, so they committed sui- hung 'emself in a cell.*

And stories about the transformation of Terminal Island from a tight-knit community where Japanese-Americans could dream about life in Hollywood, to a community consumed by fear.

> *JUNE: And then my girlfriend, my high school classmate girlfriend, her father he um, was out in the Palos Verdes hills looking out the ocean, and you know how Japanese always carry camera - he had a camera on his hip, and he was up on the hill, he got killed by the United State Army.*

Before June and George were imprisoned at Jerome, they were held in a different camp. In Santa Anita.

Santa Anita was a horse racing track near where they lived in Southern California. And after Pearl Harbor the government turned it into a quote "assembly center."

At Santa Anita, many families were assigned a single horse stall to live in. When June and George arrived, they were told to clean out a stall and were given bags to stuff with hay that they would use for mattresses. They lived there for months. Nearly 19,000 people were crammed into hastily-built barracks and converted

horse stalls. No matter how hard you tried, you could never get rid of the smell of the horses, and there was never enough food.

> *Grandma: Scoop of sauerkraut, and hard bread that was moldy. Uh, we had a hunger strike. And some camp had a riot.*

In spite of the conditions at Santa Anita, in spite of the lack of food and horse stalls and straw mattresses, there were small moments of survival and self-preservation that kept coming through. People still made noodles, and planted flowers. Even in the hardest of times, they made the best of things.

But then they were shipped to the next camp — to Jerome, Arkansas.

> *AMY: How were you shipped to-*
> *JUNE: Train. From Santa Anita to Arkansas is train, and you couldn't open the blinds, you had to keep the blinds down all the time, day, night, and we went to Arkansas.*

The conditions at Jerome weren't much better.

The entire prison camp was built on swampy marshland. It was humid, muggy, and sometimes there were even snakes. And like Santa Anita, they were constantly being monitored.

But even when describing the worst of it, June makes sure to mention that she felt comparatively fortunate. She was fortunate because there *was* food, and she was fortunate because she *did* have George.

In the interview, June mentions how a lot of families didn't have a male figure in the household to help with things like chopping wood during freezing winters, and how difficult it was for young women with babies. But George was there — and not only did he do a lot of volunteering… he eventually became kind of a community leader in Jerome.

He played for the baseball team, and worked in the slaughterhouse, which meant they would always have some fresh meat. George also ran and was elected to the councils that were eventually formed within the camps. These councils didn't have any real political power, but it was one of the ways that they were able to maintain some semblance of normalcy.

June and George were incarcerated for six months at Santa Anita and almost two years at Jerome. And then one day, George found out that there was a way to escape - joining the U.S. Army.

> *Amy: What was your first day in the army like?*
> *George: I was sour.*
> *Amy: Sour?*
> *George: Yeah. First they have us locked up in the camp because we were enemy aliens. You know? And then they- as soon as we came out, you're good citizen. We need you in the service.*

"We need you in the service," said the US government. But even though George was out of the prison camp, he found himself in an uncomfortable position.

> *George: They had these German prisoner of war camps.*

Kimberly knew about this, but it was still shocking for her to hear.

> *Kimberly: I mean, there's a certain irony, that he goes from being, essentially, an American prisoner of war, to looking after German Prisoners of War. You know. He's on the inside, and then the government trusts him to be a guard of other people.*

When Japanese Americans were released from the camps, many of them were either prohibited or unwelcome in their old communities on the west coast. When June was finally released and reunited with George after the war, the family ended up in Detroit. Eventually they were able to get a single bedroom apartment, that would come to house the entire family as they got back on their feet. They were only able to sign for the apartment with the help of a white woman they knew from church, back in California. She flew out and helped them get the lease.

June: So there was six of us in a one bedroom apartment, sleeping in the front room, the dining room. One roll away bed in the dining room, you know.

A few years passed and then Gary was born. And as he was growing up, his parents George and June never once told him any of the stories we've been hearing. They hardly talked about the camps at all.

On the day of their release, prisoners received a booklet from the War Relocation Authority. The booklet was called "When You Leave The Relocation Center" and it offered... certain guidelines…

We asked Kimberly to read from it.

KIMBERLY: "In general, by establishing yourself in a community, making friends, and developing a normal satisfying life for yourself and your family, you'll help to create a public attitude favorable to yourself and to other Americans of Japanese ancestry...In a very real sense, you are an ambassador for the entire group of evacuated people."

Even this booklet — which was supposed to help prisoners figure out life after being incarcerated so long — served to reinforce feelings of shame. It basically told them to get over it, or they'd look bad.

Kimberly: We created the situation, we made people think you're suspicious, but you need to stay at your job so that people think favorably of you, and you need to tell everyone how wonderful it is on the outside so they want to leave. Like we put you in there, but you're gonna have to be an ambassador to get people to leave. It's like come on!

The U.S. government had imprisoned American citizens based on completely unfounded suspicions that they couldn't be trusted. And now they were asking those same prisoners to demonstrate their gratitude for getting to live in their own country again.

Hearing these stories made Kimberly and her father angry. But alongside the anger, there was something else…

DAD: I feel incredible um, pride in them. And, that they, they chose the honorable way of approaching this, uh, they didn't let the situation dictate who they were. They were able to go ahead and rise above that.
And that uh, that to me, was a greater gift than anything else.

And Kimberly's beginning to understand why Grandma June was so reluctant to tell these stories.

Kimberly: It's very emotional. And it's not a part of U.S. history, it's a part of my family. It's a lot. And at the same time I don't feel like it's a sad story. I don't feel like my grandmother or my grandfather had a sad life. I think it was just this part of their narrative. And I can understand why they didn't talk about it. Because it was such a- like I don't have anything in my narrative like that, that I would edit out. But I think that I can understand why they would.

For years, George and June edited their story. When Kimberly first wrote to us, she didn't get why they would do that. But now, finally having heard the stories, she's starting to understand. She told me the experience makes her think of an idea that comes up from time to time in her life coaching work. And it's a concept she calls "the map of the world."

KIM_MAPOFWORLD —- Prelunch Rosie Reflection
ADD: So we each have our own individual maps of the world. And they're um, oriented by our experiences and our beliefs, and how we're raised. And… And everyone's map is different. And… So if I ask a question, I can't assume the answer because my client's coming from a different map. And I think a mistake I've made in this whole process is assuming my grandparents' feelings are like mine. And their map is completely different than mine.

June and George did have their own map - one they were forced to draw themselves.

Elsewhere in the interview tape, June tells the story of trying to get an apartment for her family after she was released from the prison camp at Jerome. She'd found a listing, and took a cab to the building. She walked up the steps, and knocked on

the door. The landlady opened it, looked at her, and shouted a racial slur. She said, "No Jap."

> *JUNE: ...and she slammed the door on me. I got so mad. I rang that doorbell. When the lady opened the door, I stuck my foot in there. I said, "Lady...this is my country. If you feel that way, you don't belong here."*

[music fades]

SAM: *Family Ghosts* is hosted and produced by me, Sam Dingman, with Odelia Rubin, Jennifer Lai, Lindsey Kratochwill, Jacob Smith, Jenna Hannum, and Janielle Kastner. Our story editor is Micaela Blei. This episode was mixed by Evan Arnett, and featured original music by Ben Levin. Fact checking by Greta Rainbow. Special thanks this week to Misuzu Schexnider and Nako Narter. Executive producers for season two are myself, along with Keith Reynolds and Alia Tavakolian at Spoke Media - find more great podcasts at spoke media dot i o. To see photographs of June and George, and much, much more, please visit our website, family ghosts podcast dot com, where you can also sign up for our email list, the Ghost Post. If you'd like to follow our show on Twitter and Instagram, you can find us at famghoshow - that's f-a-m-g-h-o-show. Stay tuned after the credits for a sneak preview of next week's show - and thank you for listening to *Family Ghosts* - where every house is haunted.

Next time on Family Ghosts - Asher grew up not knowing much about his uncle.

> *ASHER: He went to horse races, and he drove a cab. That's kind of all we really knew about him.*

But when his uncle dies, Asher discovers a trove of love letters in a shoebox in his apartment.

> *ASHER: I think the first one was in 93, 94 and I think they go up to 2006 or seven...I mean she writes that she loves him in the letters.*

So who was the woman who wrote hundreds of letters to Asher’s uncle? And who was the man she seemed to know so much better than anyone in his family ever did? That’s coming up next week - when Season Two of Family Ghosts continues.