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THE “YELLOW PERIL” IN TAMPA 1941-1945

By SCOTT ROHRER



-Tampa Morning Tribune, July 11, 1945

In the preface to his thought provoking book *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, John Dower advised that "we can never hope to understand the nature of World War II in Asia, or international and interracial conflict in general, if we fail to work constantly at correcting and recreating the historical memory."¹ While Dower's excellent work provides an important starting point, his study was, by design, a general survey of attitudes toward the Japanese during World War II and the Allied occupation of Japan which followed.² Focusing on the most vitriolic race rhetoric of the war years, Dower made no room for a number of variables, including the very plausible argument that racial hatreds associated with the Asian-Axis enemy were more or less important, depending on such

factors as the timing vis-à-vis key developments of the war, or whether one lived in the West (with its significant Japanese-American population), or elsewhere, or whether one resided in an urban or rural area. The essay that follows is an attempt to flesh out those nuances with regard to one relatively small geographic area--West Central Florida.

In December 1941, Webb's Cafeteria in St. Petersburg was serving complete turkey dinners for forty-five cents. Area merchants advertised holiday gifts starting at under one dollar. Local theaters offered such titles as *A Dispatch from Reuters*, and *Spawn of the North*, and one of the most significant safety concerns for Tampa Bay area residents involved "cows at large" on the highways.³

Of the ninety first generation Japanese (Issei) and sixty four second or third generation Japanese Americans (Nisei and Sansei) living in the state, barely ten made their homes in the Bay area. Statewide, most of this small number lived along the southeast Atlantic coast, between Palm Beach and southern Dade County. This placed them in close proximity to the small Yamato Agricultural Colony, which, though nearly forty years old, had never become a destination of choice for expatriate Japanese in the way that Hawaii or California had. The populations of Japanese (and other) immigrants and their progeny were both so infinitesimal and so concentrated, in fact, that of sixty seven counties in the state of Florida, fifty two registered ten or fewer members of "other races" (all of those not

considered either white or black) in their 1940 census reports.⁴

This dearth of Japanese neighbors may partially explain why the Japanese were not consistently perceived and portrayed in the local press with a greater degree of animus. Unlike Americans in combat in the Pacific Theater, and those residing west of the Rocky Mountains, it was very unlikely that a resident of West Central Florida would ever see a Japanese person. This may have served to stunt development of more hardened anti-Japanese attitudes.

In the days immediately after Pearl Harbor, South Florida (where the majority of the state's small Japanese population resided) and some of the more rural areas of the state reacted with vicious enmity. In Cocoa, for example, placards imploring the reader to "Slap the Jap" were tacked up all over town. In Boca Raton, a group of Bahamian Blacks (aliens themselves!) had to be dissuaded from destroying crops at the Yamato Colony by local law enforcement officers. In Ft. Lauderdale and Winter Haven, newspaper editors spewed exterminationist rhetoric, while in Panama City, a "noted expert" explained to her audience that "Nips are not human." Gadsden County businessmen went so far as to offer a \$100 bounty to the first local lad to "kill a Jap soldier." However, in nearby Tallahassee, editorials in the wake of the bombing referred to the attack as "cowardly," but focused much more attention on the way that it "united the nation as nothing else could have done."⁵ This was much closer to the paradigm for contemporary journalistic content in the Tampa Bay region.

Often, though not always, local editors criticized the behavior of the Japanese, without criticizing the Japanese people or culture collectively. According to recent

scholarship, the universal contemporary perception held that the "Japanese people were uncommonly treacherous and savage."⁶ The Japanese were so portrayed in the local media at times, but this was far from universal. On many occasions, not only in 1941 but on the annual commemorations of the beginning of the war for the United States, the *act* of attacking Pearl Harbor was referred to as "treacherous," "savage," or "barbaric," but these labels were not attached to the Japanese people themselves, or to their culture.⁷

This might seem like so much semantic hair-splitting, were it not for the existence of direct cultural criticisms elsewhere-or at other times-in the same newspapers. For example, shortly after Pearl Harbor, a sports columnist for the *Tampa Tribune*, characterized the Japanese as exemplifying "treachery," "cruelty," and "brutality," and readers were warned that they "must realize now that they must wage an all-out effort to crush the foul monsters who are directing the Axis forces in this battle."⁸ Whether this signifies the greater martial fervor of sports fans, or simply a more animated opinion held by a specific writer is difficult to discern, but the above quote is also noteworthy because it contains one of the few references to the Japanese as "monsters," and because for all of its vitriol, in the end it separates the Axis leaders from those that they led.

Other references to the Japanese as treacherous, barbaric, savage, or fanatic can be found, albeit with some effort. These are most noteworthy for their tendency to be concentrated after January 28, 1944-the date on which the American government released news of the "Bataan Death March."⁹ It may or may not be true that residents of the Tampa Bay Area were more willing to separate actors from acts, and leaders from

followers, when they thought about the Japanese. It is almost certainly true that they did not think about the Japanese obsessively.¹⁰

Throughout the war, mention of America's Asian enemy in editorials, letters to the editor, or other public forums was quite rare, and these infrequent appearances generally appeared in the wake of news of significant developments on the battlefield. For example, on December 14, 1941, the op-ed pages of area newspapers dealt extensively with the newly declared war, but carried only one letter which mentioned the Japanese.¹¹ On other occasions upon which one might expect the Japanese enemy to be at center stage, such as annual or semi-annual editorial commemorations of the attack on Pearl Harbor, he often played the classical role of a supporting character: creating a change in circumstance which facilitated character development in the protagonist.¹² The six essays which won prizes in a 1942 high school essay contest also illustrate the secondary position that the Japanese held for area residents. While the subject of the essays was the nascent war, three do not mention the Japanese at all, two mention them only indirectly, none mention them more than once, and none mention them any earlier than the third paragraph.¹³

Further evidence of the relative place of the Pacific war in the local psyche is the order in which area newspapers presented daily capsule summaries of developments on the various fronts. These front page encapsulations were alternately headlined, "War in Brief," "World War Situation at a Glance," or "War Summary," but prior to the end of the war in Europe, they almost universally listed news from China or the Pacific last.¹⁴ Rare exceptions to this were again clustered around seminal and

emotion-laden events, such as the release of news regarding the Bataan Death March.¹⁵

Yet another means of measuring what was important to their readership is found in the regular syndicated columns that area newspapers ran. Three that showed up in virtually every local paper were those by DeWitt MacKenzie, Raymond Clapper, and Ernie Pyle. Of these, only Clapper visited and reported from the Pacific theater before the outcome of the European war was a foregone conclusion. Though he died in the Pacific Theater, Pyle served in Europe for most of the conflict. MacKenzie, the only one of the three to survive the war, was representative in that his columns only rarely focused upon the Japanese. Once again, this focus usually came in the wake of news of watershed events in the Pacific Theater, and often, just as quickly as the Japanese became the columnist's principle subject, they completely disappeared again.¹⁶

Dower made great use of Pyle's observations. Pyle's sincere, homey, humanist style had helped him attain folk hero status by the time he began covering the Pacific Theater in February of 1945. That month, Pyle wrote, "In Europe ... our enemies ... were still people," while in the Pacific, "Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice."¹⁷ Dower used this quote to support points regarding common perceptions of the Japanese as subhuman, and regarding the media's contribution to the creation and maintenance of this attitude.¹⁸

However, later the same month, the columnist "humanized" the Asian enemy, describing him as prone to questionable decisions when subjected to the extended stresses of combat, and as being terribly

interested in self-preservation (as Americans were).¹⁹ Then, on February 26, 1945, Pyle wrote that:

As far as I can see, our men are no more afraid of the Japs than they are of the Germans. They are afraid of them as a modern soldier is afraid of his foe, but not because they are slippery or ratlike, but simply because they have weapons and fire them like good tough soldiers. And the Japs are human enough to be afraid of us in exactly the same way.²⁰

On some days, Pyle's column could be used as evidence that the Japanese were perceived by contemporary opinion makers as subhuman, on others, it could be used to support the thesis that they were human, just like us. It was not consistent enough in its animus to be cited as a sure source of negative attitudes about the Japanese-in Tampa Bay or elsewhere. This very inconsistency may have actually done more to reinforce the relatively ambivalent outlook toward America's Asian enemy seemingly held by many Bay Area residents.

Perhaps the most telling evidence regarding the blasé manner in which some Bay Area residents viewed the Pacific War is the record of the "Avenge Pearl Harbor" naval recruitment campaign. This took place on the first weekend in June 1942, just six months after America's war began, and (coincidentally) on the same weekend as this country's first significant naval victory, at Midway Island. Nationwide, 12,326 "avengers" were sworn in to naval service on June 7, 1942, but only sixty three took the oath locally. Of these, in turn, thirty seven came from relatively distant Ft. Myers, with the remainder making up the entire complement of "avengers" from the

Bay area proper. Barely a dozen hailed from the region's three major metropolitan areas.²¹

Also telling is the manner in which judicial procedures against Japanese living in the area were carried out. In 1991, another academic described, "a forgotten case against two Japanese men that tells of the fearful, crazed atmosphere that existed in the Bay area" after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The same case, viewed more broadly, tells a different story. At a time when it would have been politic to do otherwise, the judge in the case behaved fairly, ruling in favor of the prosecution on some important issues, in favor of the defense on others, and spending considerable time charging the jury to negate the influence of prejudice. Likewise, the defense attorney could have rolled over," allowing the case to be dispensed with quickly and quietly. He would not have been the first attorney to give less than enthusiastic representation in a matter in which he found the client repugnant on racial grounds. He did not, however. Like the judge, and like the aforementioned law enforcement officers in Boca Raton, he did his job. Including appeals, attorney William C. Pierce worked assiduously on this case from December 1941 until April 1945.²² Other incidents which brought members of the small local population of Japanese into the legal system during this period offer similar evidence of surprisingly fair play.²³

In subtle contrast to this, it seemed that (prior to release of news regarding the Bataan Death March) whenever local newspapers picked up stories of civil liberties transgressions elsewhere, the tone was one of slight, ironic amusement at the folly of another. For example, a Filipino in Watertown, New York was mistakenly arrested after a store manager reported him as a "suspicious Japanese." The twin ironies

highlighted by the report were that the person in question happened to be the house servant of the commander of the local army camp, and that he had been in the police station thirty minutes prior to his arrest for the purpose of turning in scrap metal.²⁴

The item cited above is also noteworthy because the headline referred to the subject being mistaken for a "Japanese," as opposed to a "Jap" or a "Nip." With regard to wire service stories, the influence of the local journalistic community could be exercised in two ways: by editing or choosing not to run a story-in other words by what was left out; and by the headline written to accompany a story. For obvious reasons, astute analysis of decisions of the former type is virtually impossible at this late date, and will not be attempted here. Regarding the latter, however, ample evidence exists.

Historian Ronald Takaki observed that "the term 'Jap' was so commonplace it was even used unwittingly" in the first half of the twentieth century. He went on to describe the experience of a west coast Japanese, who would periodically encounter a Caucasian acquaintance who happened to be an attorney. This educated, presumably worldly individual would regularly, (but in an unmistakably "friendly way") greet the Japanese e"migre" by saying "Hello, Jap!," or "Hello, Mr. Jap!" because he did not view it as an epithet.²⁵ The same presumption that the term carried no derogatory connotations is well illustrated by a *Tampa Tribune* headline from August of 1942 which read, "Marines Look For Name To Call the Japs."²⁶ This was not unlike the custom of southern whites addressing blacks as "boy," or the universal contemporary practice by area newspapers of referring to blacks as "Negroes."²⁷ There was no doubt a class or caste undertone, but there was not (necessarily) an intent to insult the

individual at which the remark was directed. Across cultures, perceptions and intentions rarely correlate, but that ranges beyond the scope of this study.

Contemporary newspapers are replete with examples of Japanese being referred to as "Japs." This was not a sobriquet reserved for a war-time enemy, however. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, they were also commonly referred to as "Japs" in the regional press.²⁸ Furthermore, persons of Japanese lineage were likely to be called "Japs" whether they were "theirs" (citizens of the Empire of Japan), or "ours" (Japanese resident aliens or Japanese Americans).²⁹

It is also worth noting that the terms "Jap" and "Japanese" were both in common use by the local headline writers of the period. In fact, throughout the war, it was not unusual to see both labels utilized on the same page, over different stories.³⁰ On December 6, 1942, the *St. Petersburg Times* listed selected front page headlines from the first year of America's involvement in the war. "Japanese" appeared in these headlines with nearly the exact same frequency as "Japs."³¹ It was much less common for area journalists to use the term "Nips" in their headlines. When this designation appeared, however, it was often virtually side by side with other headlines employing the designations "Japs" or "Japanese." Moreover, while it was unusual, it was not unheard of to see all three appellations grace headlines on the same page.³²

What was truly unusual was to see the words "Jap" or "Nip" within the body of a newspaper story. This occurred most often either with syndicated columns, with stories written by local reporters, or in wire stories which included quoted references to the Japanese by American military personnel. For example, if a Marine home on furlough

recounted his experiences in the Pacific to an area reporter, the enemy almost invariably became "Japs," not only in quotes from the subject of the story, but in the journalist's contextual narrative, as well.³³

In wire stories, on the other hand, the Asian enemy was almost invariably referred to as "Japanese" or (much less often) "Nipponese" -unless a source was being quoted. Nearly all of the exceptions to this rule were found between the end of January, 1944 and the end of the war. The former marked the date when Americans learned of atrocities committed against American soldiers on Bataan, and this may account for the marginal increase in the number of references to the Japanese as "Japs" within the body of wire service items.³⁴ Whether use of this term was or was not intended as slur, the marked change in frequency does imply a lessened concern for linguistic courtesies on the part of the local and national media, after Bataan.

The more clearly pejorative terms "Nip" or "Nips" virtually never appeared within the body of a newspaper story. Extensive (though not quite comprehensive) scouring of the Bay area's newspaper record revealed only a few such instances. The earliest, a locally written caption accompanying an official government photo of a sinking Japanese submarine, appeared in April 1943, and labeled the wreckage as "a warning to other Nips." The second came on February 2, 1944, less than a week after publication of Japanese atrocities, written by a reporter for the *Bradenton Herald*. The third came ten months later, in a published letter that a local Army private had written to a friend. At the time he wrote, this soldier had been actively engaged in combat against the Japanese, and the reference was to an enemy in the act of attacking. Possibly coincidental, but nonetheless significant, was the letter's publication date: December 7, 1944 - the

third anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.³⁵ The pendulum of vitriol tended to shift to the uglier extreme on these anniversaries.

Yet another measure of local values during this period of strife can be found by chronicling the tactics of the ongoing War Bond campaign. If an advertising campaign achieves success, the advertiser will probably not "change course in mid-stream," or resort to secondary appeals. As with most advertising, then and now, campaign organizers used emotional entreaties to solicit War Bond purchases. However, America's enemies were only prominent players in War Bond advertisements for about the first eighteen months of the conflict.³⁶ Thereafter, there was a discernible shift in tactics. Virtually all War Bond advertisements after the summer of 1943 focused on appeals to buy bonds as a means of getting America's fighters home sooner (a theme throughout the period), and toward bonds as an investment in post-war prosperity.³⁷ During the latter half of the conflict, War Bond appeals centering on the defeat of the Japanese enemy tended to be clustered around the anniversary of the beginning of hostilities, or to follow significant battle news, such as the Bataan announcements in late January, 1944, or VE day in May of 1945. In the first two cases, these latent returns to previously common tactics sought to press an emotional "hot button." In the third, readers were reminded that the end of the war in Europe did not mean the end of the war altogether.³⁸

Scholars have argued that, whereas America's European enemies might be perceived as "good" (German or Italian), or "bad" (Nazi or Fascist), there were only "bad" Japanese, (except, of course, those Japanese that were already dead).³⁹ This has been called a propensity to view the

Japanese as being of a "singular mind," or being "photographic prints off the same negative," lacking independent identities, decision-making skills, and individual initiative. This kind attitude appeared in Bay area journalism on occasion, but it was far from the rule.⁴⁰

Enemy soldiers and American citizens of Japanese extraction (Nisei and Sansei) were both likely to be branded as "Japs" in headlines.⁴¹ Also, while Japan's Axis partners were often identified with their ruling political party or with that party's leader, it was not uncommon to identify the Japanese collectively.⁴² However, it was much more common to portray Japan's general population separately from its military or political leaders. Enough incidents are documented in the record of the Japanese public being identified with interests distinctly different from those of their leaders-or being credited with the capability of disagreeing with or even being disappointed by their leaders-to ably undermine the argument made by Dower and others that the Japanese people were believed to possess no ability for individual action or thought.⁴³

Historians have also noted a slightly different manifestation of this collective view of the Japanese: use of labels such as "the Jap" (a singular pronoun); "Jap horde"; or "Jap flood."⁴⁴ References such as these can be found in the west central Florida record, with some effort, but they were much more infrequent than most current students of the subject would expect. Only one allusion to a "Jap flood" was found. This was an editorial cartoon picked up from a northern newspaper (the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) in February 1942. It portrayed Douglas MacArthur and another American serviceman sitting astride a sign which said

"Bus Stop-Reinforcements" while all around them was water, labeled "JAP FLOOD."⁴⁵

Barely a handful of references to the Japanese using singular pronouns exist in the local press. One of these was in a "commemorative" editorial cartoon which appeared in the *St. Petersburg Times* on December 6, 1942, and two were in the *Bradenton Herald's* 1943 war anniversary supplement, (again demonstrating the propensity for war hates to peak on such anniversaries). In a rare letter to the editor which made mention of the Japanese, the writer collectivized both "the nazi and the Jap," again contrary to what modern historians might expect. Another case may have actually been a typographical error: a headline which read "Jap's Siberian Attack Delayed." It is reasonable to assume that the apostrophe should have been placed behind the "s," as was normally the case.⁴⁶

The local chroniclers made even fewer references to "Jap Hordes." While there may have been more, the only such instances uncovered happened to be in editorials that appeared in the *Tampa Daily Times*. The first actually called Japanese troops in China "hordes of Japs." Close, but not quite the same singularization that Dower spoke of. The second was a commemorative editorial on December 7, 1943.⁴⁷

Recent scholarship has also discussed a common tendency to portray the Japanese as animals (generally dogs, vermin, or simians, and often accompanied by the adjective "yellow," which had its own negative connotations), reptiles, or insects. The natural extension of this dehumanization was the "metaphor of the hunt," which acted as a "linguistic softening of the killing process."⁴⁸

Throughout the majority of the Bay area's historical record, animal references are

almost non-existent. When and where they are found, the circumstances follow established patterns. The *Bradenton Herald's* 1943 war anniversary supplement (perhaps the most singularly venomous local publication of the war) described one stage of the enemy's metamorphosis during the first two years of the conflict as the period when "Tokyo became the head of an octopus," but then went on to describe Japanese soldiers in flawed, but very human terms. Another story, written about a local man by a *Tampa Tribune* reporter during the first summer of war, referred to the Japanese getting "their tentacles" on two Aleutian Islands. In a third instance, a series of quotes appearing in area newspapers the day after the nation was told about atrocities on Bataan included one mention of Japanese military leadership as rats, and another as "uncivilized pigs in the form of men." Several months later, an editorial cartoon appearing in several area papers depicted the "Jap Fleet" as a huge fish being reeled in by two American sailors in a row boat. (The bait that the fishermen were using was called "Philippine Invasion.")⁴⁹

Portrayals of the Japanese as vermin appeared more often than other animal references, but only slightly so. A letter to the editor of the *Bradenton Herald* early in the war called Japanese soldiers exercising authority over white people in the Philippines "yellow rats," who thought they were "supermen." A few months later, an "Orkin" advertisement stated that, "Maybe killing rats (four legged) will not win the war, but it can help...." On at least two occasions, local newspapers used the term "Jap-rat": once on the six month anniversary of the war's beginning; and once in the wake of news about Bataan. In the spring of 1944, an editorial cartoon depicted the US Fleet as a bulldog guarding several holes in the ground, with the caption "That Rat of a Jap

Fleet Isn't So Dumb," and upon Japan's acceptance of American surrender terms, another cartoon showed a rodent yelping as a huge foot stepped upon its tail, accompanied by the caption "And Thus ends the Tale of the Rapacious Rat."⁵⁰

As for hunting metaphors, they were exceedingly rare. In one example, a headline appearing in the spring of 1945 stated that "Tiger, Python, Elephants, and Japs are Flier's [sic] Prey." In another, an Associated Press story emanating from Chicago early in 1942 featured the headline "Jap Hunting License Idea is Spreading," but the secondary headline, "Bradenton Negroes Have Counterparts In Nippon Certificates" probably said as much or more about the state of local racial attitudes toward blacks.⁵¹

Yet another series of stereotypes which help compose the "dehumanization model" were perceptions of the Japanese as supermen, monsters (powerful but subhuman), or "lesser men" (diminutive or deficient humans).⁵² In the local record, examples of the two former varieties were extremely unusual. Examples of the latter type were legion.

Depictions of the Japanese as supermen disappeared from Bay area newspapers after Allied forces halted the Japanese military advance in the Pacific. One of the few uncovered was an April, 1942 editorial cartoon showing a behemoth Japanese batter being struck out by "relief pitcher" "Skinny" Wainwright. Another was also a cartoon, with a gargantuan Japanese soldier holding an equally oversize rolling pin (labeled "Jap Steam Roller") and bearing down on an East Indian engaged in passive resistance.⁵³

Monstrous Japanese were almost as rare, and almost as likely to be extinct after 1942. Like the Japanese supermen, the monsters

appeared most frequently in editorial cartoons, and tended to prey on East Indians or fellow Asians.⁵⁴ They did make a brief reappearance, however, in a cartoon published five days after the news of Bataan which depicted a drooling man-beast in Japanese army fatigues holding a club labeled "Prison Camp Horrors" under the caption "A Throwback."⁵⁵

Presentation of the Japanese as "lesser men" began almost with the outbreak of hostilities, not only in editorial cartoons, but in headlines which reapplied such extant phrases as "little brown men," and in advertisements which told would-be purchasers who was to blame for shortages.⁵⁶ As the war progressed and American prospects for victory blossomed, the Japanese represented in this manner became more beleaguered, more comical, and ever smaller.⁵⁷

While most historians made short work of this, on occasions the Japanese were portrayed as human, while Americans were not. Certain examples also point to other belligerents-both friend and foe-being depicted as animals. Representations of the United States via an eagle appeared more than once, as did portrayals of America's might and men as bulldogs or "war dogs."⁵⁸ Nearly as common, however, were presentations of other parties to the conflict as animals, such as the leaders of the Vichy French government as "three blind mice," swastika wearing wolves, or growling Russian bears.⁵⁹

Although representations of the Japanese may never have attained the intense, universal hatefulness in the Tampa Bay area that Dower found in his research (which, again, looked more at the national picture and the attitudes held by those in the military), at certain times, places, and

situations they came closer than others. Some of these have already been addressed in part. One such situation was locally written news items. Sometimes these pieces told of the combat experiences of military personnel from the region who were home on furlough. Others, in a similar vein, were built around letters from the front which the recipients then presented for publication. The *Clearwater Sun*, which served a rather small town constituency at the time, was most likely to run this type of story.⁶⁰ On occasion, however, editorials, columns, or surveys of servicemen and local residents regarding breaking war news reflected more intensely hateful attitudes.⁶¹ In each of these cases, the military angle probably predisposed the writer of the story to show increased martial fervor.

Similarly, War Bond advertisements-particularly those sponsored by local merchants and appearing in the more "small town" oriented dailies such as the *Clearwater Sun* and *Bradenton Herald*-could be extremely vitriolic.⁶² Also, on occasion, other advertisements used the ready-made emotional appeal of a nation thrust into an unwanted war with good effect.⁶³

The *Plant City Courier* represents an interesting case study. Serving by far the most rural constituency, it was also the only area newspaper surveyed which was not being published daily, during the period in question.⁶⁴ As a byproduct of this, the *Courier* was a partial exception to the normal rules governing what one might find in Bay area newspapers. Coming out only twice a week until mid-1944, and only weekly thereafter, the *Courier's* editors probably felt that their readers could get more recent war news from other sources, such as radio, and so they rarely printed any of their own. With rare exceptions, the war

only appeared in the *Courier's* pages when there was a local angle to the story. A December 12, 1941 story about a "patriotic meeting" of 500 people made no mention of either Japan or other Axis nations, for example. Also, the first reference to the Bataan Death March was a single column-inch on February 1, 1944, naming a local man who was missing and thought to be among the victims. When other newspapers were carrying banner headlines trumpeting Doolittle's raid on Tokyo, or American naval success at Midway, the *Courier* gave top billing to the recent success of local baseball teams. When the *Courier* finally gave space on the front page to the biggest news of the war-peace-it got equal billing with the news that mole cricket bait would be available ten days hence.⁶⁵ One of the few things that the *Courier's* "war coverage" held in common with other area newspapers was an eagerness to highlight the fates of local men in combat. Thus, on those cases when the Japanese appeared, they were there simply as jailers or victims--antagonists in somebody else's story, a story in which their nationality was largely irrelevant.⁶⁶

To be successful, a newspaper must be responsive to the interests of its constituency. It must reflect what is important and significant to the community it serves. By this measure, what mattered to the residents of such "big cities" as Tampa and St. Petersburg may have been very different from what mattered in rural Plant City. An example of this is the way in which the *Courier's* coverage of one discrete local event varied from coverage of the same event in the more metropolitan *Tampa Tribune*.

In August of 1942, director Howard Hawks was filming a scene for the movie *Air Force* at a local military installation, Drew Field.

Coverage in the *Tribune* focused on the technical aspects of creating a Hollywood-style illusion. Reporters made no mention of locals used as extras, other than to say that they were all men. When the *Courier* picked up this story a few days later, it focused entirely on these extras. Under the headline "Japs and Filipinos Quickly [sic] Supplied For Tampa Movie," it told of a resourceful Tampa civic leader who trucked in 200 Cubans from Ybor City in response to a late-night telephone call from Hawks, and how make-up artists turned these men into "the best synthetic Nips" Hawks had ever seen.⁶⁷

Another general and area-wide pattern which became apparent was the tendency for increased animus toward the Japanese on and around the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, this also showed changes over time. In 1942 and 1943, the tone of editorials and editorial cartoons in early December was almost universally punitive, with reference to the Japanese. By 1944, when Japan's fortunes were decidedly dimmer, the desire for punishment was still present, but there was sometimes an element of pity about the pending fate of the Japanese people, as well.

As examples of the former, a December 7, 1942 editorial cartoon appearing in the *Tampa Daily Times* and elsewhere depicted several bombers dropping their loads on a pile of rubble topped by a flag which had a swastika depicted inside a rising sun, all under the caption, "Many happy returns of the day." Another cartoon on the same occasion showed a close-up of two hands under the heading, "Our progress in Ju-Jitsu": the first hand, labeled "one year since Pearl Harbor" was grasping the wrist of the other, which represented "the Jap." The second hand was in the process of dropping a bloody knife, in response to

painful prompting. Surprisingly, however, the Japanese could also be a total non-presence on such anniversaries. The *Clearwater Sun's* 1943 war anniversary supplement contained nine large War Bond advertisements. Not one of them mentioned the Japanese. Instead, the themes involved general patriotism, getting the GIs home, and easing their hardships. In a similarly surprising disappearing act, four *Tampa Tribune* editorials dealing with the war's anniversary, all published on December 6, 1942, name the Japanese a total of only two times-once indirectly as "the enemy," and once as "Japs."⁶⁸

In December of 1944, local editorials were quite vindictive, focusing mostly on the need to continue the relentless prosecution of the war on all fronts. However, commemorative editorial cartoons portrayed Japan's leadership as a forlorn dunce, or the butt of a joke, or as one about to be consumed by a fire that he had set himself, but which was now burning out of control.⁶⁹

The only variable guaranteed to push the attitudes of Bay area residents toward racist extremes was the release of the news of atrocities committed as part of the Bataan Death March. This news came on January 28, 1944, and was usually presented in an extremely graphic manner.⁷⁰ As indicated above, what followed was a marked shift in perceptions of the Japanese, both locally and nationally. In the aftermath of these announcements, the Japanese were looked upon for a time as being unworthy of mercy, and as being just the kind of subhumans that other scholars have described in their research.⁷¹ The shift was so complete that on February 1, 1944, a story about a west coast arsonist who had set an estimated 200 fires in Japanese flop-houses-and considered himself quite sick-was called "patriotic" in a local headline.⁷²

The only genuine concentration of animalistic, monstrous, or insect-like portrayals of the Japanese came in the late January and early February of 1944 immediately following the news about what had happened on Bataan.⁷³ However, while the sense of hate reflected in the local record remained elevated for the duration the war, it did fade somewhat from its immediate peak. By war's end, local editorial cartoonists once again portrayed the Japanese as pitiful, comical, or helpless.⁷⁴ Moreover, as nuclear fallout descended on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, another type of fallout occurred in the Bay area: in editorials, letters to the editor, and local reaction pieces, there was a marked tendency to separate Japanese leaders from those that they led, reserving war blames solely for the former.⁷⁵ Though it was not universal by any means, this too runs counter to the current historical paradigm for American wartime perceptions of the Japanese.⁷⁶

Throughout the war, attitudes of West Central Floridians toward the Japanese fluctuated. Key aspects of the dehumanization model, such as perceptions of the Japanese as being all of one mind, or as being monsters, animals, vermin, or supermen were rare. Others, such as stereotypes depicting the Japanese as lesser humans, or as comical figures, took hold by the end of 1942 and remained a fairly consistent presence for the duration of hostilities.

It would be too generous to state that this part of the country was somehow egalitarian enough to avoid allowing racism to be a part of the emotional baggage that it took to war. In fact, during World War II, Tampa was "Florida's most racially troubled city."⁷⁷ These troubles almost universally were

between blacks and whites, though. Whereas the Bay area had a comparative plenty of black citizens, there was a downright paucity of Japanese residing in the region.⁷⁸ Also, while Americans on the west coast, or in major metropolitan centers, or in the Pacific Theater might have worried about a direct attack from the Japanese, in the Bay area, German submarines were the only immediate danger, and this danger was only clear and present for the first year of the war.⁷⁹ Most residents of the area had never and would never encounter a Japanese. Without any regular opportunity to focus it, any potential for the kind of all-consuming race-hate that other historians have detailed remained essentially dormant in the Tampa Bay area. America's Asian enemy was certainly not depicted as noble or as worthy of emulation, but when he was present at all, he was usually quite human. Prone to folly, perhaps; flawed, definitely; but by and large, human, just like us.

ENDNOTES

¹ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986), ix.

² *Ibid.*, ix-xi, 3-32.

³ *St. Petersburg Times*, 12/8/41; *Tampa Daily Times*, 12/9/41; *Tampa Tribune*, 12/10/41; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12/7/41.

⁴ *Tampa Daily Times*, 12/8/41; *Tampa Tribune*, 12/9/41; George E. Pozzetta and Harry A. Kersey, Jr., "Yamato Colony: A Japanese Presence in South Florida," *Tequesta* 36 (1976), 66-77; 16th Census of the US, 1940, *Population, Vol II, Characteristics of the Population*, Table 4; Table 6; Table 10; Table 21; Table 25.

⁵ *Cocoa Tribune*, 12/11/41; *Palm Beach Post*, 12/16/41; *Winter Haven Daily Chief*, 12/8/41; *Ft. Lauderdale Daily News*, 12/8/41; *Panama City News Herald*, 12/18/41; *Gadsden County Times*, 6/24/43; *Tallahassee Democrat*, 12/9/41.

⁶ Dower, 33.

⁷ For example, see *Bradenton Herald*, 12/8/41; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12/15/41; *St. Petersburg Times* 6/6/42; *St. Petersburg Times* 12/6/42; *Tampa Tribune*, 12/7/43.

⁸ *Tampa Tribune*, 12/9/41.

⁹ For example, see *Bradenton Herald*, 2/20/45; *Ibid.*, 3/1/45; *St. Petersburg Times*, 1/28-31/44; *Tampa Tribune*, 1/29-31/45. For rare examples of these adjectives being attached directly to the Japanese people before the Bataan news broke, see *Bradenton Herald* 4/19/42; or *Tampa Daily Times*, 12/12/41.

¹⁰ Dower, 9,11,33.

¹¹ *Bradenton Herald*, 12/14/41.

¹² As excellent examples of this, see *Bradenton Herald* editorial, 6/7/42; *St. Petersburg Times* letter to the editor, 6/8/42; *Tampa Tribune* letter to the editor, 2/3/42; *Tampa Tribune* editorial, 12/7/42; *St. Petersburg Times* editorial, 12/7/43; *Tampa Daily Times* editorial, 12/7/44.

¹³ *St. Petersburg Times*, 4/5/42.

¹⁴ As examples, see *Tampa Tribune*, 4/20/43; *Ibid.*, 1/27/44; *Clearwater Sun*, 1/30/44; *Ibid.*, 4/18/44; *Bradenton Herald*, 3/2/45.

¹⁵ For example, see *Tampa Tribune*, 1/29/44-2/2/44; *St. Petersburg Times*, 1/29/44-2/1/44; *Bradenton Herald*, 1/29/44-2/2/44.

¹⁶ For example, Mackenzie and others wrote about the Japanese on 12/9/41 (see *Tampa Tribune*, *Tampa Daily Times*, *Clearwater Sun*, *Bradenton Herald*, or *St. Petersburg Times*); 6/4-6/42; and 1/28-29/44; but in each case, the Japanese had disappeared by the next day. On other days, when one might expect the Japanese to be the focus of a column entitled "The War Today," such as 12/7/43, they were a complete non-presence.

¹⁷ Dower, 78.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

¹⁹ *St. Petersburg Times* and elsewhere, 2/24/45.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2/26/45.

²¹ Tampa Tribune, 6/7/-8/42; Clearwater Sun, 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 6/7-8/42.

²² Tampa Tribune, 6/2/91.

²³ Tampa Daily Times, 7/28/41; Ibid., 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 2/19-20/42; Ibid., 10/6/42.

²⁴ Bradenton Herald, 2/5/42. For other examples, see St. Petersburg Times, 2/19/45; Tampa Daily Times, 2/6/43; Tampa Tribune, 6/4/42; Ibid., 1/29/44.

²⁵ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York, 1989), 181.

²⁶ Tampa Tribune, 8/5/42.

²⁷ Gary Mormino, "Florida Slave Narratives," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 66 (April 1988), 407; for examples of the latter type, see Bradenton Herald, 4/21/42; Ibid., 4/15/45; Ibid., 8/12/45; Tampa Daily Times, 12/9/41; Ibid., 6/6/42; Ibid., 8/8/45; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Ibid., 11/28/43.

²⁸ See Clearwater Sun 11/29-30/41; Tampa Daily Times, 11/30/41; Tampa Tribune, 11/29-30/41; St. Petersburg Times, 11/29-30/41; Bradenton Herald, 11/29/41.

²⁹ As examples, see Bradenton Herald, 12/7/42; Tampa Tribune, 6/4/42; Ibid., 12/7/42; Ibid., 1/29/44; Clearwater Sun, 10/31/44.

³⁰ For example, Bradenton Herald, 10/6/43; Ibid., 4/2/45; St. Petersburg Times, 9/1/42; Ibid., 8/11/42; Tampa Daily Times, 2/19/42; Tampa Tribune, 2/20/42; Clearwater Sun, 12/7/41.

³¹ St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42.

³² For example, Bradenton Herald, 1/31/44; Ibid., 12/7/42; Ibid., 2/3/44; St. Petersburg Times 6/6/42; Tampa Daily Times, 2/2/44; Ibid., 4/5/44; Tampa Tribune, 8/12/45; Clearwater Sun, 10/30/44; Ibid., 5/12/45.

³³ For examples of each type, see Bradenton Herald, 11/1/42; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Tampa Daily Times, 2/20/45.

³⁴ For example, Bradenton Herald, 1/31/44; Ibid., 12/7/44; St. Petersburg Times, 4/26/45; Tampa Daily Times, 9/21/44; Ibid., 2/20/45; Clearwater Sun, 5/8/45.

³⁵ St. Petersburg Times, 4/1/43; Bradenton Herald, 2/24/44; St. Petersburg Times, 12/7/44.

³⁶ These advertisements tended to appear concurrently in most of the area dailies. For examples of the Japanese presence in War Bond ads, see Clearwater Sun, 12/7/42; Ibid., 5/2/43; Bradenton Herald, 11/1/42; Ibid., 1/3/43; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42.

³⁷ For example, Bradenton Herald, 3/1/45; Ibid., 7/23/45; Clearwater Sun, 8/7/43; Ibid., 10/27/43; Ibid., 7/2/44; Ibid., 7/15/45.

³⁸ As examples, see Bradenton Herald, 1/30/44; Ibid., 12/3/44; Clearwater Sun, 11/29/44; Ibid., 12/7/44; Ibid., 5/8/45.

³⁹ Dower, 79.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17-20.

⁴¹ Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/42; Tampa Tribune, 6/4/42; Ibid., 12/9/42; Ibid., 1/29/44; Clearwater Sun, 10/3/44.

⁴² For example, Bradenton Herald, 6/9-10/42; Ibid., 12/1/44; Tampa Tribune, 4/19/42; Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/43.

⁴³ Of the many examples, see especially Bradenton Herald, 2/9/43; Ibid., 8/13/45; St. Petersburg Times, 2/7/43; Ibid., 12/5/43; Ibid., 1/28/44; Tampa Daily Times, 12/12/41; Ibid., 2/19/42; Tampa Tribune, 12/7/42; Ibid., 7/11/45; Clearwater Sun, 3/30/42.

⁴⁴ Dower, 17-20, 79-84, 118-46.

⁴⁵ St. Petersburg Times, 2/15/42.

⁴⁶ St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Bradenton Herald, 12/7/43; Tampa Tribune, 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 10/1/42.

⁴⁷ Tampa Daily Times, 3/31/42; Ibid., 12/7/43.

⁴⁸ Dower, 81-93, 161-62, 312.

⁴⁹ Bradenton Herald, 12/7/43; Tampa Tribune, 8/9/42; St. Petersburg Times and elsewhere, 1/29/44; Clearwater Sun and elsewhere, 10/30/44.

⁵⁰ Bradenton Herald, 2/22/42; Tampa Daily Times, 8/14/42; Plant City Courier 6/9/42; Tampa Tribune,

1/31/44; *Tampa Daily Times* and elsewhere, 4/7/44; *Clearwater Sun* and elsewhere, 8/14/45.

⁵¹ *Bradenton Herald*, 3/1/45; 2/19/42.

⁵² Dower, 94-117.

⁵³ *Bradenton Herald*, 4/7/42, *Tampa Tribune* and elsewhere, 8/4/42.

⁵⁴ *Bradenton Herald*, ?/17/42; *Tampa Tribune* and elsewhere, 4/6/42.

⁵⁵ *Tampa Daily Times*, 2/2/44.

⁵⁶ *Tampa Tribune*, 2/19/42; *Ibid.*, 6/6/42; *Tampa Daily Times*, 4/23/42; *Clearwater Sun*, 6/8/42; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12/6/42.

⁵⁷ Unlike the other aspects of Dower's humanization model, there are myriad examples of this. The following are representative: *Bradenton Herald*, 10/6/43; *Ibid.*, 4/30/44; *St. Petersburg Times*, 6/1/43; *Ibid.*, 2/22/45; *Tampa Daily Times*, 12/7/43; *Ibid.*, 1/15/45; *Tampa Tribune*, 7/11/45; *Clearwater Sun*, 10/28/43; *Ibid.*, 7/14/44; *Ibid.*, 7/16/45.

⁵⁸ *St. Petersburg Times*, 3/26/42; *Tampa Tribune*, 6/7/42; *Tampa Daily Times*, 4/7/44; beginning in Spring of 1945, headlines using phrases like "War Dogs," or "Vicious War Dogs" to describe Americans fighting in the Pacific almost daily in *St. Petersburg* and *Tampa* papers.

⁵⁹ As examples, see *St. Petersburg Times*, 8/10/45; *Tampa Daily Times*, 10/27/42; *Ibid.*, 2/9/43; *Tampa Tribune*, 1/2/44; *Ibid.*, 8/6/45.

⁶⁰ For example, *Tampa Daily Times*, 9/23/44; *Ibid.*, 12/7/44; *Clearwater Sun*, 12/8/42; *Ibid.*, 1/3/43; *Ibid.*, 10/28/43; *Ibid.*, 1/30/44.

⁶¹ For example, *Tampa Daily Times*, 1/28/44; *Ibid.*, 2/4/44; *Tampa Tribune*, 1/29/44., *Ibid.*, 4/25/44; *Ibid.*, 8/11/45; *Bradenton Herald*, 2/1/44.

⁶² For example, *Clearwater Sun*, 8/22/42; *Ibid.*, 12/7/44; *Bradenton Herald*, 11/1/42; *Ibid.*, 1/3/45; *Ibid.*, 1/30/44.

⁶³ These were less frequent, but examples are present in the *Tampa Daily Times*, 8/14/42 and *Plant City Courier*, 2/13/42.

⁶⁴ The *Courier* had been published twice weekly until mid-1944 when shortages of paper and other supplies made many newspapers cut back. Some dailies eliminated feature sections, others eliminated Saturday issues. The biweekly *Courier* became a weekly newspaper for the duration of the war.

⁶⁵ *Plant City Courier* 12/12/41; *Ibid.*, 2/1/44; *Ibid.*, 4/22/42., *Ibid.*, 6/9/42; *Ibid.*, 8/17/45.

⁶⁶ For example, *Plant City Courier* 2/1/44; *Ibid.*, 3/2/45; *Ibid.*, 5/4/45; *Ibid.*, 8/10/45.

⁶⁷ *Tampa Tribune*, 8/6/42; *Plant City Courier*, 8/14/42.

⁶⁸ *Tampa Daily Times*, 12/7/42; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12/6/42; *Clearwater Sun*, 12/7/43; *Tampa Tribune*, 12/6/42. For more examples, also see *Bradenton Herald*, 12/7/42; *Clearwater Sun*, 12/7/42.

⁶⁹ *Bradenton Herald*, 12/7/44; *Tampa Daily Times*, 12/7/44; *Tampa Tribune*, 12/7/44; *Clearwater Sun*, 12/7/44.

⁷⁰ For example, *Bradenton Herald*, 1/28/44-2/2/44; *St. Petersburg Times*, 1/28/44-2/2/44; *Tampa Daily Times*, 1/28-29/44, 1/31/44-12/2/44; *Tampa Tribune*, 1/28/44-2/2/44.

⁷¹ See above, and Dower, especially 94-117.

⁷² *Bradenton Herald*, 2/1/44.

⁷³ For example, see *Bradenton Herald*, 1/30/44; *Tampa Tribune*, 1/29/44; *Ibid.*, 1/31/44 (several instances); *Tampa Daily Times*, 1/28/44; *Ibid.*, 2/4/44; *Ibid.*, 2/4/44.

⁷⁴ For example, *Bradenton Herald*, 8/10/45; *Ibid.*, 8/13/45; *Ibid.*, 8/16/45; *St. Petersburg Times*, 8/8-9/45; *Tampa Daily Times*, 8/9/45; *Ibid.*, 8/15/45; *Tampa Tribune*, 8/15-16/45; *Clearwater Sun*, 8/9/45.

⁷⁵ For example, *Bradenton Herald*, 8/9-10/45; *Tampa Daily Times*, 8/9/45; *Tampa Tribune*, 8/9/45; *Ibid.*, 8/11/45; *Ibid.*, 8/15-16/45.

⁷⁶ Dower, 118-46.

⁷⁷ Gary Mormino, "GI Joe Meets Jim Crow: Racial Violence and Reform in World War II Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 74 (July 1994), 31. For a listing of some of the racial incidents during the war, see 26-37.

⁷⁸ 16th US Census. Characteristics of the Population, Table 10; Tampa Daily Times, 12/8/41; Tampa Tribune, 12/9/41.

⁷⁹ James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War II* (New York, 1980), 123-30.