

READERS RESPOND

The following letter references a 1981 article in this magazine about the housing of Japanese diplomats and their families (totaling 180) at the Bedford Springs Hotel near the end of World War II. It can be found online at journals.psu.edu/wph/article/view/3706/58432.

In an article by Arthur E. Barbeau, “The Japanese at Bedford,” published in the April 1981 *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, there is a serious error on the last page.

I was one of the children interned in Bedford Springs in 1945. My mother was French and my father Japanese, I am now an American citizen. I am writing my memoir and my French niece called me about “The Japanese at Bedford” that she had found on the internet. We were all appalled to read the last page where Arthur Barbeau writes: “At Cumberland, the party boarded a special Baltimore and Ohio train.... One sleeper was provided for the two stretcher cases and their mothers. These were a twelve-year-old boy with tuberculosis and a mentally ill ten-year-old girl” [citing the *Bedford Gazette*, Nov. 21, 1945, as his source of information]. Then the author proceeds to write in his footnote, referencing a National Archives document, that “The boy was probably Mituharu Makise and the girl Mitsuko Assada.”

I was Mitsouko (or Mitsuko) Denise Assada and believe me I was never mentally ill nor did I leave Bedford Springs on a stretcher. In fact I have photos of me taken by the Associated Press in Seattle about to board *SS Randall* (one of them has me laughing and playing with other children). I also have numerous other photos of me taken in Bad Gastein [an Austrian resort town where the diplomats and families were first held]. When I left Bedford Springs I was not even aware that there were two sick children, nor that they left on stretchers.

The *Gazette* had cited a 12 year-old boy and it was easy for Barbeau to peruse the State Department list and pick the name of the only 12 year-old boy listed, but the *Gazette* never mentioned a 10 year-old girl, only “a mentally ill girl.” I counted seven girls between the ages of 9-15 on my lists — why did Barbeau pick me?

I intend to finish my memoir this year and I don't want this inaccurate depiction of me to remain uncorrected.

Sincerely,
Denise Liedquist
North Bethesda, Maryland

Mitsouko Denise Assada (far right) with her mother and sister getting ready to board the *SS Randall* for their trip back to Japan on November 23, 1945.

Associated Press/Paul Wagner



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