



# Elephant La Mode: An Epicurean Guide to Life

*T. Roy Nakai*

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## "Notes For Leslie: Lessons I Never Told You"

The rare conflict of being born in an American Concentration camp during World War II with all of the associated stigmas and traditions that fact implies, while trying to capture the "Dream" of success is at the heart of this unusual and fascinating truly American Story.

T. Roy Nakai shrugged off the shame that could easily have debilitated other sansei immigrants with similar episodes. His early path was guided by heritage and the collective thoughts of his father's generation who were at the forefront of isolation-"shikata ga nai"-a phrase often repeated in the camps that means "it cannot be helped" justified their historically significant plight, while "gaman", the associated word for "to persevere" did not allow for defeat.

Growing up distinctly Japanese-American in Southern California at the end of the war drove Roy to succeed in high school and college as both a scholar and athlete, allowing him a profession that provided continued success with a home and family and burgeoning dental practice.

At the height of his success, his American Dream was fulfilled until a tragedy struck that ended his 25-year career and drove him to question the nature of success itself. Struggling to re-invent himself proved formidable; but through gaman he began to see a new beginning. But that was short lived when a second, more devastating tragedy created the need for professional help.

Through a series of conversations with his therapist and help from his daughter, he accepted the life of shikata ga nai. In the process, he allows us to feel the life lessons that he imparts through short adages of wisdom - a wisdom that could only be acquired through the blending of a unique heritage and traditions with the tragedy and triumph of a full life.

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