

Special Edition

Henry IKEMOTO
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Ted
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INSIDE VIEW JAPANESE

AMERICAN EVACUEE CENTER

At Rohwer, Arkansas

1941 - 1945



Compiled By

Colburn Cox Stuart, Superintendent of Schools
at McGehee, Desha County, Arkansas, at that time
1941 - 1945



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Growing up at the Japanese - American Relocation Center Rohwer, Arkansas

1941 - 45

PROLOGUE

The day we came we stood bewildered
By the rawness of the camp,
The muddy road, the common mess,
Tar-papered walls and rough, new boards,
Our friends were strangers,
And the man across the road, a foreigner from another world.
You left Seattle and the shipyards on the Sound;
He came from fertile fields beside the Sacramento, where his sons, wet with sweat, had grown
potatoes, peas and corn;
My home had been above my little tea shop where my San Francisco neighbors came to buy
their tea and rice.
I didn't know you and turned away.
Each stood and gazed before him,
And then walked in and shut his door.
That was the day we came.

Today we live together here a new life
Returning to those elemental ways
Which made man know his neighbor and his needs.

My work today is more than food and clothing for my sons.
It is food and clothes for yours, and learning, too.
It is friendly neighborliness.
It is community living.
Your son's problems are my problems, too.
Your daughter's tears fall on both our breasts.
For the days we know when freedom bound us in by the right to fight for our own selfish ends
Have lost themselves in the will that binds us to one common cause,
One way of life, democracy in living.

DESCRIPTION OF A RELOCATION CENTER

When a person first arrives, he is met by the army guard, who protects the Relocation Center. One must have a properly authorized pass to be admitted to or leave the confines of the center. The army is a sort of buffer between the world at large and the life in the center. It maintains a guard around the boundaries of the camp, but otherwise it only slightly affects the life of the people in the Relocation Center. Within the center the War Relocation Authority has the responsibility for the smooth functioning of all phases of community life.

The first thing one sees as he approaches the Relocation Center will be squat rows of army barracks stretching in endless rows, and looking like toy houses that some one forgot and left

out all night. By waling down wide lanes, and observing closely one discovers there is a scheme to the arrangement of the barracks. Each block consists of 14 resident barracks. These are made to the standard army measurements, 24 feet wide and 96 feet long, and have been partitioned into five or six large rooms. Each room is the home of one family, unless the family happens to be large enough to require two rooms. Each family can divide the space or arrange the furniture in any way they like, for this is their home for the time that they must live in the Relocation Center.

A block consists of 14 barracks or apartment houses which are arranged in two rows with an alley between. In the alley are the community showers, community lavatories, and community laundry facilities. There is no running water in any of the homes.

At the end of each block there is a building twice the size of the others. It is the common dining room. Over 250 people eat here three times a day.

Behind the mess hall is a recreation hall, built just like the apartment barracks, but without partitions. It is used for dances, classes in all kinds of hobbies and crafts, library space, nursery schools, or cooperative stores. Some of these buildings are used for classrooms for the regular school. All the schools make use of the recreation halls.

All around the block is a wide street, but there are few cars driving up and down. None of the Japanese-Americans are allowed to have cars of their own, and the only automobiles you will see belong to the administrative staff, or are used to carry on the business of the Relocation Center. The space around the blocks is really a firebreak. It is 200 feet wide, and nothing that might help a fire jump from one block to another is allowed to remain in this space. There are actually 40 feet between each barracks and this makes lots of space for gardens and for family groups to relax or play together.

No matter in which direction one goes, by following the fire break for three blocks, one will arrive at a space twice as wide as the ordinary street. This too was planned to prevent the spread of fire, but everyone in the center has some other use for it. Here are two teams playing soft ball. Over yonder is a pit for Sumo or Japanese wrestling. Farther down one will find a raised stage for speakers and performances. Teachers organize classes in physical education on these double fire breaks, since they are the right dimensions for football gridirons.

A ward is enclosed by one of those oversized fire breaks, and it includes nine blocks of 14 buildings, a mess hall and a recreation hall. The families in each ward elect their own leaders to represent them on the governing council, and to perform the necessary tasks about the community.

The fire breaks are roads which lead to the various community facilities and enterprises. One leads to the hospital which offers its services as a clinic and cares for all illnesses and accidents. Other well traveled roads lead to the fire stations with their noisy red trucks. There is a motor pool where all the trucks and cars are stored when not in use, and where they are serviced and repaired. The system for supplying and distributing water is most important even though it may be a little more remote from the village. An adequate sewage disposal plant is an equally necessary part of the Relocation Center. At the edge, or even away from the center proper, is the farm, which is the source of income for most of the Relocation Centers, as well as their immediate source of fresh vegetables for the tables. The farm will employ a great many of the Japanese-American workers.

The four main types of Japanese people to be found in the Relocation Centers may be classified according to their nativity and education in the following way:

ISSEI

This group is composed of the Japanese born in Japan who came to America before the Japanese Exclusion Act. They are old. There are many more men than women. Many of them speak only the Japanese language. While it is to be expected that a percentage of this group will feel an allegiance to their mother country, Japan, it must be remembered that many of these Japanese chose to leave the mother country to gain opportunities here.

KIBEI

These are the American-born Japanese who have been educated in Japan. It is difficult to determine which culture they favor. It should be remembered that before the War advocates of democracy were numerous in Japan and this group will be divided in allegiance.

NISEI

This is the largest group. It is made up of American-born children of the Issei. Therefore, all are citizens of the United States. These were all educated in America, although many have attended Japanese schools in the United States. This group has had less contact with Oriental Japanese culture and generally is considered as a group to be loyal to the American way of life.

~~SANSEI~~ SANSEI

The Sansei are the second generation born in America. They are the children of the Kibei and Nisei, and grandchildren of the Issei. For the most part they are young. They have had little contact with foreign culture except that gained in Japanese schools in this country.

There is a project director for each camp appointed by the War Relocation Authority. He is responsible for all functions within the camp. He is served by one assistant project director and the heads of the following sub-divisions. The Rohwer director was E. B. Whitaker.

1. The Community Service Division is divided into four sections; namely, community activities, welfare, education, and health. There is one division head as well as a head for section.
2. The Community Enterprise Division is directly responsible for the cooperative activities such as the stores, beauty parlors, barber shops, etc.
3. The Public Works Division has four sections - design, construction, highway, and irrigation and conservation.
4. The War Works Division is responsible for the agricultural production, manufacturing, and processing and marketing sections. This division has charge of the activities which will, in time, make the projects self-supporting.
5. The Transportation and Supply Division is composed of mess management, motor pool, and warehousing sections.

WHY THE EVACUATION OF THE JAPANESE FROM CALIFORNIA WAS CONSIDERED NECESSARY

The full story behind the West Coast evacuation has never been adequately told and probably will not be for many years. It is a complex story with many chapters that must necessarily remain hazy in time of total war. Certain basic facts, however, are widely known and should be understood.

In the first place, there were a number of hard, practical considerations of a strictly military nature. The United States was engaged in a total war against a powerful, ruthless, and highly resourceful foe. The Pacific Coast, teeming with vital industries and lying closer to Japan than any other part of the country, was obviously a potential arena of combat in that war. Although the majority of American Japanese on the coast were recognized by competent authorities as loyal, their behavior in the event of a bombing raid or an invasion attempt by Japanese forces was unpredictable. Under such circumstances, would all American Japanese cooperate loyally in the defense? It was conceivable at least that even some of those who had always considered themselves pro-American might react unfavorably when faced with such a powerful and unprecedented test of loyalty. And in time of desperate struggle for national survival, the risk was very great.

Then, too, there were a number of factors that might be classed under the heading of "public moral". In the weeks immediately following Pearl Harbor there was a marked heightening of popular feeling against the American Japanese all up and down the Pacific Coast. Rumors of sabotage by resident Japanese at Honolulu on the morning of December 7, 1941 -- later proved wholly false -- were spread and exaggerated. The time-worn and fallacious credo that "all Japanese are sly and treacherous" was fortified and strengthened in the minds of many by the

very nature of the Pearl Harbor attack. The presence of Chinese and Filipinos in large number near the Pacific Coast added to the general confusion and the fear of violence between racial and national groups.

By the latter part of February, 1942, it had become very clear that the American Japanese people – quite apart from their individual intentions – were complicating the problems of western defense in numberless ways simply by living in vital areas. As long as they continued to reside in these areas, the military authorities could never be wholly free to concentrate on the primary job of defending our western frontier. Mass removal of the American Japanese was admittedly a drastic step, but it was deemed the only effective way to clear up a situation that was becoming more critical and chaotic with every passing week of the war. Congress established what was known as the War Relocation Authority, later known as the W.R.A. This authority was given the job of relocating the evacuees in various parts of the nation. The head of this organization in Arkansas was Mr. E. B. Whitaker.

These are some of the outstanding reasons given that made evacuation a military necessity.

ASSEMBLY CENTER PERIOD

A hundred thousand people cannot suddenly move from one part of the country to another without arousing all sorts of social and economic dislocation problems. After about 8,000 people had moved inland voluntarily, the situation became critical because of violent resistance to the migrants on the part of people in Utah, Arizona and elsewhere. As a result, it became necessary for the government to provide some sort of protection and support for the people evacuated from the restricted areas. Thus came into existence the relocation centers, not as a part of any preconceived plan, but as an expedient to meet a special emergency situation. Since no such centers had been planned, and so were not in existence, it became necessary to locate sites and to construct buildings. In the meantime, temporary assembly centers were created on the West Coast. These assembly centers were extremely temporary in nature, being simply reconstructed race tracks and fairgrounds. However, it took longer to construct the relocation centers than was originally expected, and as a result, thousands of people lived in these temporary centers for periods of months instead of periods of weeks.

All of this, shocking as it was to the people involved, would not have been so bad if it had been only for a few days; but due to the length of time required to locate sites for relocation centers and to construct the necessary facilities, this assembly center waiting period lasted from March to September and October. The experiences of assembly center life color the thinking of every evacuee. The minds of young Americans as they lay in bed before going to sleep, went over the bitter experience of induction to the assembly centers over and over again. The disorganizing effects of this period, the long lapse without any regular school system, the affronts to self-respect, form part of the personality structure of every pupil and parent with whom relocation center teachers came in contact.

The following poems express the mental disturbance of those herded into the temporary centers:

A Lover's Lament - By Kiyoshi Hamanaka

Dark looms the future, yet when you are near
The beauty of the present I but feel;
For you convey the truth that now and here
Avail wherein man's destiny reveal.

What matters if the future be not sure
If I may love you with a love sincere?
What matters, dear, if we can but ensure
The value of the Now for future years?

For love you, that I do, with all my heart
Yet only now, for now alone exists;
So do not fear in future years we'll part
Lest future years be here while you desist.

Assay of the Soul - By Kiyoshi Hamanaka

Conviction's stern command has stirred my soul
TO struggle with the infamies of life;
And though success is posted as goal,
I realize my fate implies much strife.

Yet irony's sad wisdom speaks his say
And states that all my struggles be in vain;
While love's irrationality holds sway
Over my conscious reasons proud disdain.

I do not know if I am wrong or right
But I must act for life demands I do;
And if my actions end in failure's plight,
I yet can say, "I to myself was true".

For acting thus, life will not be in vain -
If this be false, morality's inane!

LIFE IN THE ASSEMBLY CENTERS AFFECTED THE CHILDREN

The evacuation of thousands of American-born children of Japanese ancestry had caused problems which would affect to a marked degree their present and future attitudes, ideals, and modes of behavior as they attempted to make satisfactory adjustments to life in relocation centers.

For most of the children of one center, home had meant residence in the Bay Region of California. Living for the major part of them had been relatively secure. Family unity and the sanctity of the home had been protected. Respect for parental control had been a dominant characteristic of family and social life for them. Education had been a cherished ideal for all, and a realization for large numbers of college students. Schools were respected as centers of learning.

Life in the relocation center was different. The compactness of the community, concentrated as it was in a square mile of tar-paper covered barracks, surrounded by a wire fence presented problems and limitations which were difficult at times to accept. Communal dining halls made it difficult for families to eat together. Crowded conditions in barracks denied the privacy and closely knit family life which they valued so highly. Homes which were equipped with army cots and handmade furniture from scrap lumber failed to offer sufficient attraction to serve as centers for normal family gatherings had space permitted. In other words, home was merely a place to sleep for many children. Then too, most of these boys and girls were living for the first time in their lives with large numbers of their own race, both old and young.

Children's stories and autobiographies have revealed in many cases how much they missed their schoolmates and Caucasian friends. Stories of their farewells are often touching. Accounts of life in the assembly centers before coming to the relocation projects are enlightening.

"Before evacuation, I was the only Japanese in the whole school for about two years. I had been going to that school since kindergarten. When the attack was made on Pear Harbor, the people, especially the boys, called me bad names. Even though the boys called me names, the girls tried to help me. When evacuation time came, somehow, I did not want to go, but I had to. I didn't want to leave even if the people called me names. I had two dogs named Mike and Kiltie. They were Scotties. I did not want to leave them, but everything else that I liked besides my parents was left behind.

When we left, I kept my eyes open to look at the city where I had always lived, and which I might never see again. Living with Japanese around is strange to me, for all I knew about were Americans. I do not want to go to Japan for all the money in the world because I like the United States."

Another Child Wrote:

"When the war started, I felt funny! We first moved to the assembly center where we lived in stables. Do you know what stables are? They are places where horses and cows live.

I hope the Allies win this war soon, otherwise we will be under a dictator power, and then we will have to obey Hitler, Hirohito, and Benito, so I hope the Allies win this war!"

But all children were not so sure of their loyalties. The rapid change had upset their ways of living too completely to have gained their proper balance. In many cases, the most perplexing problem they faced was an improved understanding of their relationship to the country they had always known and to which they had formerly pledged their allegiance. Some children, few in number, were easily swayed by disillusioned adults who were facing uncertainty in their own minds as a result of circumstances experienced in the evacuation. Conflicting ideologies of different cultural groups presented problems of grave import, particularly since people were concentrated in large numbers within a small space.

To these children who had learned to know and love the ocean, the hum and bustle of cities, and the thrill and beauty of farms, parks, and gardens, the delta presented a strong contrast.

The rosy hues of early morning, the exquisite sunsets, the cool of summer evenings, the fantastic cloud formations, and even the night skies filled with myriads of stars reaching down to touch the tops of barracks held little understanding or charm for them, and could not compensate for what they had left.

The sudden deafening thunder and vivid streaks of lightning, so new to them, which accompanied rains, which in themselves came too seldom, were frightening. The heat of summer and the newly-discovered snow of winter brought first hand experiences of weather changes. Flowers and green plants in profusion were different to the ones they were used to in California.

Loss of pets caused other difficult adjustment problems for certain children. An excerpt from the diary of a ten year old girl voices the feelings of many boys and girls:

"We left our pets who gave us so much happiness; dogs, cats, canaries, goldfish - which I wish were here. The pet I liked best was our dog. She was so faithful and smart, and never forgot us. She ate whatever we had. She didn't want dog food, but ate ice cream, cakes, pies, rice, and many other foods fit for human beings. We gave her to a man but she cut the rope and came home. When we finally left, she cried like anything. We did too!"

EVACUEES CENTER RISE AND FALL

"Forced evacuation, unbounded sacrifices and heartaches, shattered dreams of the future - we have had no easy road. Yet with the assistance of people who still have faith in us and by our own will and faith in ourselves, our souls can remain unconquered."

Denson High School Yearbook "Victoria" 1943

In 1942 the Japanese of the west coast were evacuated from their regular domiciles and relocated in colonies in the interior of the United States. Two such relocation centers were established in Arkansas - one at Rohwer on Highway #1 in Desha County and one at Jerome on Highway #65 in Chicot County. There were approximately ten thousand Japanese and Nationals of Japanese ancestry domiciled at each of the two born-over-night cities.

Both centers were organized into wards with a regular city government, working restrictions set up by a civilian federal administrator, Mr. E. B. Whitaker. A military police post was established to maintain discipline and for the protection of evacuees from depredation on the part of some misguided super-patriot.

Modern schools were established in each center, providing a very modern curriculum with superior teachers. "Teacher Aides" were employed from the Japanese evacuees, as most regular teachers were Caucasian. Mr. John Trice of Springdale was selected as superintendent of schools at Rohwer and Mr. A. G. Thompson of Lake Village was chosen to direct the school at Jerome. After the Jerome camp was closed, Mr. Thompson was transferred to Rohwer to replace Mr. John Trice, who had joined the Armed Forces.

Many of the Japanese boys served in the armed forces. Today there is a memorial at the Japanese cemetery in Rohwer depicting the heroic sacrifice of boys of Japanese ancestry who lost their lives for their country.

In 1946, after the conclusion of the war, the camps were gradually closed and the evacuees were absorbed back into the economy of the U.S.A. The cities of the two centers were dismantled and the land reverted to the agrarian pattern of the surrounding environs.

120 acres of the campsite was given by the Federal Government to a new consolidated school district, Desha Central, where a modern consolidated high school was established. They utilized one of the old lunch rooms and hospital building for school purposes. The remainder of the land was sold to individual buyers.

FIRST ARRIVALS — BY MABEL ROSE JAMISON — DECEMBER 1, 1944

"The evacuees who first came to Rohwer Center were from Stockton and Santa Anita Assembly Centers. The first train arrived September 23, 1942. Later evacuees came from other centers. Since no regular schools were built, two blocks of residence barracks were used in different sections. School opened November 9 - elementary enrollment 879 and 1131 in secondary school. John Trice was superintendent. There was a local advisory school board. The chairman was appointed - four members were elected.

The Rohwer Center had 33 blocks. Each block was divided into two rows of barracks, six buildings to a row; and a communal bath house, laundry room, and mess hall. Each block accommodated about 250 people.

Every barrack had six rooms, two each of three different sizes. These rooms were called units. The two at the ends house 5 to 6 people. They have 5 windows and one door. Opening onto the same porch 2 smaller rooms or units adjoin the end ones. These are for 2 and 3 people. In these were 3 windows and a door. The two middle units opened with one porch. They were the same size, with 4 windows and a door, and were for 4 people.

The furnishings in every unit consisted of a stove, an army cot, and 3 blankets for each person. Other articles of furniture have been made from apple boxes, cardboard boxes, and scraps of lumber. It is amazing what attractive homes many of the people made of these bare units. Clever partitions and curtains converted them almost into apartments, and offered the only privacy they had. Units were decorated in the interior with flower arrangements, wood carvings from "koku" or cypress knees, and plaques from apple box ends. Many of the people had creditable water color and oil sketches on their walls which they had done since evacuation."

However the "before and after" pictures of barrack homes was quite different. This Hakujuin first came into the center on the first January Sunday of its existence - a cold, gray, raw, rainy day. She was dumped into a D unit in block 42 in which she found a cot, 3 blankets, a cot pad with mud all over it, and an army stove with no fuel. Cakes of mud 1/2 to 6 inches high covered the floor. It took weeks of effort to get the mud up. As far as fire in the stove, everyone shrugged when asked where to find wood or coal. There wasn't any. Finally a next door neighbor, an old-timer of 24 hours, came over, donated kindling and some coal and gave the first demonstration lesson in fire building. From then on through the cold weather, it was nip and tuck, who-could-be-the-best grabber or "stealer" - to find enough fuel to keep fairly comfortable during our hours "at home".

The following are some quotations from letters, high school themes, and conversations overheard from different evacuees about their first impressions of evacuation and of camp life, especially housing conditions.

"As the train came to a sudden stop, I jumped out and looked into the distance at the rows of black, uninviting barracks. This was Rohwer! It was bare and lonesome. We dumped our junk into the unit and hurried to the mess hall. There I received a steaming dish of stinky fish and rice which made me lose my appetite. The first thing I noticed was that the table was built so small that I couldn't get in. I think that the contractors thought we Japanese were midgets."

"Then we got to the dump which we called thereafter our home. Does God blame my bitterness toward America, the land of so-called Democracy? Time did not erase the bitterness toward this injustice to my race. Did America put the Germans and Italians in camp like this? - I remember well the nights so hot that sleep was next to impossible; pestered by mosquitoes, chiggers, and cockroaches. One night my family killed 34 roaches in our unit only."

"I'm sick of seeing black hair and dark faces."

"Since I'm in Arkansas and the people in California don't want us Japanese nisei (American born Japanese), I would never, never go back to California as long as I live. Where will I go after the war? I don't know."

"My first impression of center life was of being shut out of the simple pleasures we have always known, and have been used to. Around the time of evacuation I have heard so many Issei tossing the word democracy to and fro that I almost believed as they did."

"Again when boys are taken into the army from centers and not from their rightful homes the thought aroused over and over in my mind: America! As we believe in a nation of high standards of living, humanity, equality, and justice; but where was it? Not in our homes and not in evacuation."

Impression of one student of her new high school: "The rough board-made benches in the new Rohwer High School made me feel as if I was in the early days of history when the students had to sit on rugged benches and with little reference books to study on. You'll never know how I lost interest in school, but knowing I was too young to quit and work; and referring to the stories I read on how famous men came from little rugged schools gave me new hope of being able to be an average person of an average knowledge. I am proud of our Rohwer High School's accomplishments since the first time we stepped foot in our school rooms."

Note these heart throbs of the dislocated:

*"I don't know how long we'll have to stay in this bleak camp, but we're here to sacrifice for what the governments wants us to do. We left our home in the combat area for the security of the Caucasians who don't trust us." - - - - -

*Note: About a year after this statement this high school boy committed suicide.

"I had never before lived among the Japanese but in Santa Anita Assembly Center. I felt lost among them."

"I believe we have been cheated from our rights - I am hoping now that the war will be over soon so that I can start a better life out-side than rot in this camp."

"My dislikes are many."

"This trip of coming to Arkansas was most exciting thing that happened to me."

"Rumors ran around like jeeps. It was just wait, listen, then wait again."

"Fear was gnawing at our hearts."

"I put quotations marks about the word "home" because every time I mention home, I never feel sure-footed about it."

"In camp we are back in the middle ages except for electric lights."

"When I first arrived at the Rohwer Center it was hard to understand the way they talked, but it's pretty easy now. These people out here aren't bad once you get used to them."

"We Americans were put into a camp and not treated as American citizens - The people thought that we were just animals in a box! - But I'm grateful to all the teachers who are teaching us in a camp."

LIFE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT - BY SAM NAKAMO

Life in the assembly centers or relocation areas is what we make it. To me, this one sentence deserves a second reading. Just how does it affect us?

When we entered these centers, we were forced to leave our homes, our businesses, our friends--all that had been dear to us in the years gone by. Those were big sacrifices for anyone to make, let alone a whole race living on the Pacific Coast. American citizens of Japanese ancestry, with their parents, "aliens" through the misfortunes of war, willingly cooperated with the authorities because of military necessity. The right or wrong of this mass evacuation is not for us to decide. Other individuals and groups are doing their part. Yes, those were big sacrifices - sacrifices which I hope no other group or race will ever know again.

If we can make such sacrifices as these, surely any that we are asked to make, or make willingly, within these centers is small indeed. No longer are the individual gains, self-satisfying egos, and the "all for me" attitudes prevalent now. If there are, let's forget them now and work for a common cause and community. This life affords us a chance to do the many things we never had time to do before. It shows us how important is the term - doing the most good for the greatest majority.

Now we live in groups of thousands, where a co-operative spirit among the residents of the center is most necessary. Any single sacrifice we are asked to make benefits so many, that in reality, it is not a sacrifice at all -- but just a good turn for the neighbors.

We who have grown up with the outside world must bide our time and take matters in stride, but our children who have been suddenly cut off from the world and thrown together in this "foreign atmosphere" deserve any sacrifices we can make, so that after the duration, life can be made easier and more comfortable for them. Let' teach them that even in a life such as this, our hearts do not despair, that, although we left behind many material things, we did not leave our courage, our fortitude, and our ability to do the best with the least.

It is what we make our life in here that will pave the way for us in a post-war world. We must meet the crises to come also with chins up and hearts filled with those indominatable characteristics, for the era to come when peace will reign once more will be the stiffest test of our people.

CHIN UP! CHERRIO! CARRY ON!

ORIGIN AND ORANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

The superintendent of education of the Rohwer Center Schools was inducted at the regional office in Little Rock, August 18, 1942. As late as October 1, 1942, only five persons had been added to the education personnel. The purpose of adding key people was to assist in the formulation of plans for the organization of the school. These five people and the superintendent worked together at the regional office until the first contingent of evacuees arrived at the center. Soon afterward most of the personnel in the education section were moved to Rohwer to begin their duties.

A school census of each block was taken as the block was filled. This procedure continued until all the evacuees had arrived. During this time the equipment and supply lists for the enrollment of 2500 pupils were being prepared in order that this material might be requisitioned. Until the exact school population was determined, the lists could not be completed.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The schools were planned as community schools, with a program enlisting active student participation in the social and economic development of the centers and incorporating these experiences as a basic part of the school curriculum. The schools would operate on a year round basis with a possible month of summer vacation for teachers and pupils. The school year would be organized to provide 180 days of class room and vocational instruction leading toward high school graduation. A modified summer program was planned to provide work opportunities, recreation, training in arts and crafts, hobbies and leisure time activities, specialized vocational experience, and other similar activities.

The fact that the school system was in a relocation center implied that it must be so organized as to allow pupils to continue their work begun in a previous year and to prepare them to enter other schools or to earn a living when they relocated. The administration attempted to operate this school as any normal public school program in Arkansas would be operated and at the same time to take cognizance of the background of these pupils in California schools. The school was organized with the view to accreditation by both state and national accrediting agencies. The school would meet the state requirements for graduation from high school and provide the courses necessary for entrance to college in combination with their own "Core Curriculum" and requirements for graduation.

ADVISORY SCHOOL BOARD

The policy of the War Relocation Authority provided for the appointment by the project director of an advisory board of education. Since districts within the state were each under the supervision of a board of education, it was thought proper and feasible that a board of education be set up within the center for the benefit of both the administration and the residents. Through this medium the voice of the residents could be heard and the administrator of the school could understand better what the parents were thinking and saying concerning educational matters.

The powers of this board were limited to those of an advisory nature. The actual power of the administration of education in the community did not rest with the board, since officials were appointed by the War Relocation Authority to administer the schools. Primarily, the advisory board was a means toward proper coordination and a unity of purpose between the residents and the administration of the center.

EVACUEE PERSONNEL

Evacuees were used as assistant teachers in high school, elementary school, nursery school, and in adult education. They also worked as secretaries, clerk-stenographers, timekeepers, stock clerks, and janitors. This presented many new problems of administration. Selections had to be made from dozens of untrained young people with a view to their adaptability. These people had to be quickly trained to handle positions entirely foreign to anything they had previously done. Pupils and appointed personnel also had to be conditioned to this change. Supervision had to be close and it had to be linked with a continuous training program. Turnover was high and whenever possible extra help was kept "in training" for all positions. Such periods of excess help were rare. The entire section was generally below its assigned quota of workers. The evacuee teachers were inexperienced in the field of teaching and encountered difficult problems of classroom management which they were frequently unable to meet. The most common weakness was their inability to control the classroom. This failure was perhaps due to lack of the students' confidence in many of them. The students were entirely unaccustomed to teachers of their own racial background. Their lack of confidence and to assume a firm management in both the classroom and student activities. During the third year of the school the few evacuee teachers who remained had acquired enough training and experience to qualify as average in the management of disciplinary problems.

THE SUMMER YOUTH RECREATION PROGRAM IS SUMMED UP IN THE FOLLOWING

The twelve supervised group interests which provided leisure time experiences for the largest number of different boys and girls were the following: guided reading (237); drawing, painting and light handicraft (223); camping, hiking, and nature study (203); sewing (66); moving pictures (123); games and parties (101); softball (100); conferences for relocation (86); social dancing (85); story telling (66); fishing (64); and singing (not including the singing at camp) (52).

The twelve supervised interest groups which had the largest total attendance were camping, hiking, and nature study (878 in camp one day, either in day-camp or long-term camp); drawing, painting, and light handicrafts (534); moving pictures (496); sewing (377); softball (320); reading (287); games and parties (258); knitting (252); social dancing (251); advanced typing (172); dramatics (165); and story telling (164).

TEACHERS CRITICIZED

Most of the Arkansas teachers were criticized at home for taking positions in the center schools. The statement was often made that, because of prejudice against them, the teachers would have difficulty in securing positions after their work with the War Relocation Authority was finished. However, many teachers were offered good jobs elsewhere and left before the camp schools were closed. Others had opportunities to take new jobs.

After the announcement that the centers would be closed and that the education program would end during the summer of 1945, numerous superintendents came to the center to recruit teachers for their schools. Others wrote, telling of vacancies and asking teachers to make application.

CLOSING PROCEDURES

The staff of the education section began work on the procedures of closing the school system in February, 1945. The spring semester of school was scheduled to close on May 25, 1945; so



Action!



12th grade





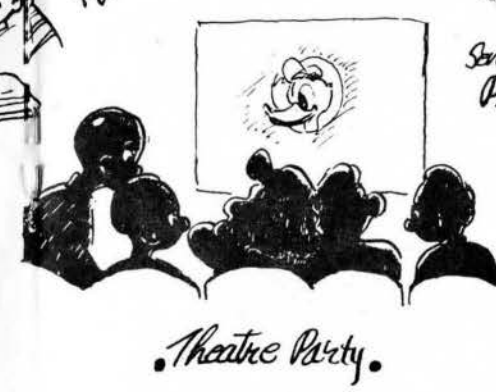
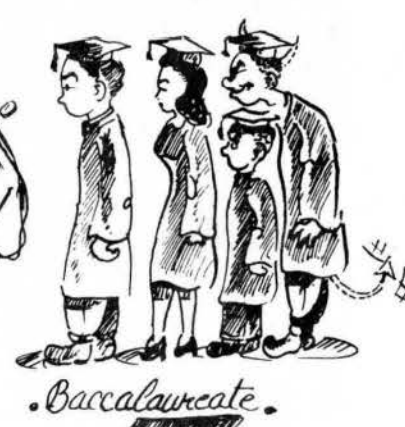
Canteening



Mess Line



SENIOR Résumé





Tule Bound



Tule Bound



The above picture was contributed by Mr. Henry Sugimoto, who is undoubtedly one of the foremost Nisei artists in the United States. His works have been exhibited throughout the nation as well as in France, Italy, Japan, and Mexico. While he was in France, he won the coveted Salon d'Automne.

preparations were begun to insure the proper completion and disposition of student records as soon as possible.

At the close of school, there were eight evacuees employed as full-time teacher, six in the secondary schools and two in the elementary schools.

TULE LAKE FOR THOSE NOT GIVING UP ALLEGIANCE TO JAPAN

The removal of the Japanese-Americans who had chosen to go to Tule Lake, California, took away many undesirable elements, but it also took some of the most desirable students. Many who went had not wanted to renounce their American citizenship, but were forced to because of family ties. Very few of the high school students would have chosen to separate themselves from the land of their birth had they been given a free choice. Such statements as "I don't want to go to Japan but I have no choice," and "I don't want know anything about Japan -- I've never been there," were quite common.

SUMMARY OF STUDENT OPINION

The following summary of the ill effects of evacuation and segregation is substantiated by quotations from the students themselves. These attitudes and opinions were expressed in written statements, submitted without signatures at the request of a teacher of social science.

1. Loss of confidence in the United States government, constitution and court system: -- "By taking us away against our will they violated the clause 'All men are created equal.'" . . . "Oh, sure, they gave them trials -- if that's what you call them." -- "It made me wonder if this really were 'the land of the free.'" "When I heard they were planning a mass evacuation, I lost confidence in the flag. This didn't sound like democracy, freedom, and all that we had been taught." -- "I like democracy, freedom, and all that we had been taught." -- "I believe that Roosevelt and this country is just about like Hitler."

2. Loss of educational opportunities: . . . "My brother didn't even get to finish high school." . . . "I planned to go to college, but now we can't afford it." . . . "If it hadn't been for evacuation, I'd have finished high school before the army got me."

3. Separated families: . . . "You don't realize what it means to have your own father taken away from you." . . . "My father and brother were interned and we couldn't go with them."

4. Morals, manners, dress: . . . "Some of the boys have certainly acquired the use of profanity." . . . "Nearly all the young children had a tendency to turn to the bad and I was one of them." . . . "Camp life is very bad because I notice that many people who were my friends back home are now having a bad reputation." . . . "I think that all the rowdy boys have been caused by camp life." . . . "Some boys try to see how bad they can look." . . . "Our boys never went where they weren't wanted nor dressed like this before evacuation."

5. Many people who were loyal have become disloyal because of evacuation: "Another factor which makes me hate evacuation is that many people, because they are associating with some disloyal pro-Japanese, have become very bitter toward the United States. True, they loved Japan, but still they knew which country they owed the most to and were loyal citizens until they were put in camps where they made contact with pro-Japs."

6. Loss of ambition: . . . "I had a great future in my mind, but not any more. I'm not enthusiastic as I used to be. It's pretty hard to be somebody if people look down on you as a dirty Jap." . . . "Most of us have become lazy with an 'I don't care' feeling."

7. Financial Loss: . . . "We had to sell everything we had for about half of what it was worth." . . . "We had just two short weeks to get rid of our farm and wind up our affairs. The traders came and offered ridiculous prices -- We had no choice but to sell." . . . "My father had a store, but we had to sell it for almost nothing. We have had to use up all the money since we have been in camp and now we have nothing to start over with."

Evacuation and segregation caused a great deal of suffering to the people of Japanese ancestry which resulted in much bitterness on their part against those whom they considered responsible. Many came to realize that there were some favorable aspects and, as a result, ceased to regret that they were evacuated. Others still believed that evacuation was unnecessary, but that perhaps in the long run it might benefit them. There is a group who will continue to feel that they have been grossly mistreated.

In many ways the elementary school children were benefitted by their life in camp. The school was a good one and they received all the attention of the teachers, with special note taken of the problems peculiar to Japanese-American students. In the schools they attended before coming to the center, they were a minority group and as such were, in many instances, ignored and allowed to struggle along as best they could. They saw nothing wrong with their life in camp and were happy and content.

Junior high school students reaped the same benefit of special attention for their particular needs and they, too, seemed to be quite content with center life. "Outside" held much the same place in their thinking that the circus holds for the ordinary child. It was something to be seen, experienced and enjoyed; but mixed up with that feeling was a feeling of sadness that before long they would have to give up their present friends and perhaps those on the outside would not be quite as nice.

The high school students, for the most part, came to realize that perhaps evacuation and segregation had some advantages for them. They experienced a complete change of life, learned to adjust themselves to new circumstances, and gained a much broader vision of the problems which they as members of a minority group would be called upon to solve.

The following statements were taken from papers written by high school students; "Evacuation may help us out after all." "I believe it will be better for the Japanese-Americans to be spread out in the United States.".... "Evacuation certainly showed us who was and who wasn't loyal to the United States. Now that the disloyal group is gone, maybe the rest of us will have a chance.".... "I've learned a lot about the rest of the country. Before evacuation, I thought California was the only place."

Evacuation and segregation did injure Japanese-Americans in many respects but the reason of the segregation of the disloyal and the spreading of the loyal over various parts of the United States, the good effects may outweigh the bad, and those who honestly desire to live "the American way" will the sooner be absorbed as a part of the great American family.

STUDENT RELOCATION AND RECEPTION

During the first two school years (1942-43 and 1943-44) student relocation was handled by the vocational adviser. Her job was complicated by the fact that in those early days following evacuation many of the colleges and universities were not considered open to Japanese-Americans. One early rule went so far as to state that no college within twenty-five miles of a railroad was to admit Nisei (American born Japanese). Later this was relaxed but any college or university remotely connected with the war effort (either in research or by reason of having an army or navy training unit on its campus) was on the closed list. This meant that colleges open to Nisei, and in addition, willing to take Nisei, were very scarce.

GOOD STUDENTS

The appointed personnel gained the impression that pupils of Japanese ancestry were probably more interested in grades and credits than Caucasian pupils. These pupils had great pride in their academic achievements. They worked harder for grades and strove more diligently to please their instructors than Caucasian pupils. This, from the stand point of the teachers, was a great advantage. It was a pleasure to teach pupils who tried to master all the assignments. There was some danger in their excessive pride in that pupils might think more of grades and credits and mechanical achievements than in the real benefit to be derived from their class. Parents were ardent in their support of this type of work. It is likely that this is a partial carry over from the traditional ways of living of people of Japanese ancestry.

The confidence of the pupils in the teachers did not develop quickly. Teachers had expected a free and easy acceptance of themselves by the pupils as they would find in public schools. They were rudely awakened by the fact that Caucasian teachers were outsiders and did not belong to the same group with the pupils. There were sufficient reasons for this slow acceptance. Resentment over evacuation, fear of the future, doubt as to the sincerity of the teachers, frequent frustration in the past, and apparent fickleness of some of their Caucasian friends, caused the pupils to be wary of placing their confidence in the teachers. Registration and segregation further retarded their growth of confidence. Over a long period of time, those

teachers who remained, came slowly to acquire the confidence, respect and affection of at least some of the pupils. This confidence grew as time went by. Although acceptance and confidence was slow, it was probably more permanent than in the ordinary situation.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF A CAUCASIAN TEACHER BY LOLA LAUHON

I came to the W.R.A. November 1, 1942, and lived for a week in a make believe world, called a pre-school conference. We were lifted to the heights by lectures, sermons, prayers, and dramatic presentations from the Caucasian and Japanese residents for this evacuation city -- converted from a cotton field in 71 days.

The following Monday, however, life again became real and settled into routine.

I asked for sixth grade work, but two teachers who had had experience in this grade were given this assignment and Monday morning, November 9, 1942, I saw before me a sea of 73 fifth grade stoic faces -- registering nothing! Their world had turned over. It was my responsibility to help right it.

I was given two evacuee assistants. With their help, we divided the group into two sections, one for each assistant - then I spent my day in teaching a little, supervising a little, but mostly dashing out of one of those rooms into the other.

By the end of the first six weeks one of the before mentioned sixth grade teachers resigned and I was given her group with the same two room, two evacuee teacher set up.

We were told repeatedly, "This is 'teachers heaven' - do those many things you've always wanted to do and couldn't. No impediment here. Do this or that. But get results." The outcome for the first year was a junky work shop--barrack room, no wall board, too many children, big turn over in inexperienced evacuee assistants--with good results. Fairly good proof that the children and the teacher are, undoubtedly, the school.

The second year, "Our Uncle" gave permission to cut doors in the partitions thus eliminating the excess sale of boots, umbrellas, and raincoats necessary to do the pedestrian acrobatics between the two classrooms.

Frazzled classification of the first year, caused by lost, destroyed, and missent records, was corrected to an appreciable extent, thus accounting for a large number of failures, social promotions and a general replacement. By this time, too, we were acquainted with the background and the present problems of the student body - their problems now were ours. My second year in the sixth grade was practically unruffled. Each day was a new world.

November 1, 1944, I was changed from elementary to senior elementary classification. My new duties in addition to teaching sixth grade was to work as assistant to the elementary principal. This entailed care of records, and general supervision, under direction of the principal of the Westside elementary school. By this time a workable program was in progress, and keeping this schedule in channel became merely routine.

One of our major problems was establishing better attitudes. The attitudes of the student body from the beginning were wholesome. Although on the defensive side of the major problems of evacuation, these students with a foreign background who had not attended school for several months, were found to reflect, for the most part, desirable qualities of thought. The pledge of allegiance to the American flag was given with enthusiasm; patriotic songs were sung from memory; Junior Red Cross Drives were popular; and American customs and traditions were familiar and appreciated.

Japanese parents were charmed with anything pertaining to education, and even though they looked upon the future with disdain and doubt, they wished for their children the best that the schools could offer - probably for this reason they were cooperative and interested in any phase of the school program. Studious habits were well established. To study was honorable.

Tradition had stamped her imprint. Stoic traits of the forefathers were evident to a pronounced degree. Children were as obedient as you probably have heard they were, but with qualifications. Response was slow, too slow for the Scotch-Irish heritage of the Caucasian at the teacher's desk. One teacher punished a boy because he looked at her too long before answering her question. She thought he glared. He merely looked.

Time to the Orientals was no element. They worked patiently on the smallest details. Once an assignment was made, it was practically impossible to stop them until the task was completed. You were greeted with "I haven't finished already". And be it recess, lunch or school "let out",

the teacher wasn't obeyed until her directions had been carried out to their own satisfaction.

Statements were heard making it obvious that some parents were not sold on the American way of life. There was the third grade boy who wanted to shoot down the American airplane flying overhead; another boy wished he were a man so that he could kill all the Americans; and another who asked, "Do you have to go to the V-Day Program?"

The above picture though depicting the majority of the elementary school body, does not give the entire trend. The Oriental background was sometimes present. Smaller children occasionally revealed that they had been well informed as to the customs and the beliefs of the "Land of the Rising Sun".

Were there to be a "next relocation project", and I were asked for an opinion, it would be -- have a school building -- not the traditional little red one, but one with halls, bells, a library, superintendent and principals' offices, gymnasium, and other things you find in most school buildings lending dignity and security to the purpose of education. It would, too, have had a tendency to intensify our efforts to acquaint center residents with our desires for the establishment of American ideals as they really are.

FACING THE FUTURE BY MRS. ALFRED I. TSUKAMOTO

Already four months within Army Centers, I feel old in this experience of evacuation. Since that fateful March morning when the destiny of 150,000 people was suddenly altered -- we bravely set our hearts then to face whatever may come. We knew our lot would not be easy. There were a thousand fears that gripped the hearts of the mothers--always if had been our paramount interest to feel concerned for the families' comfort. This was a trial that would demand courage and fortitude as our pioneer women of America had launched forth so gloriously in the past -- here was a challenge! The aged would need comfort and cheer. Their well earned peace was robbed from them. In this bewildering movement from place to place, many will become ill, many will die, many will never return to their beloved homes. Our ambitious young men had worked hard to establish themselves, and now, silently, they endure untold disillusionment. Always a mother's role is to be a spiritual and moral guide -- a refreshing hope to a discouraged, tired family. What of our children? What of our precious God-given charges. Each day, means that life is passing. Our characters are being molded. We are evacuating for the duration, but what of our children's training, cultural background, education, spiritual guidance--could they be put away for the duration?

We re overwhelmed by the tremendous responsibility, and frightened as we are, we realize there is no room for tears. No time for confused hesitation. Right now every opportunity must be ingeniously utilized toward the good. Idleness and bitterness will deaden character and make our children worthless citizens. Because there lacks the precious element of useful work, wholesome freedom, the aspiration and enthusiasm for life that marks a healthy being is fading. Greatly handicapped under these circumstances we must still keep our people a hopeful attitude. Attitudes are felt. Children sense it readily. If we nurse a hate or misunderstanding, we are imbedding it in our future generation. Before we condemn we must remember to blame ourselves in part for our miserable lot. Had we been more keenly aware of our responsibility in standing shoulder to shoulder with all Americans fighting to bring peace. Though in a sense, wrong has come our way, we must strive the harder to right the error and from vivid experience, lead the way upward so that never again would America stoop to lose sight of so precious an ideal that was so dearly won for our heritage.

These few months here is only a prelude. The greater part of our adventure is yet to come. Compared with the heroic deeds in the battlefields and in the American home front, our experience lacks the glory that our fellow Americans know. But silently, quietly, unfalteringly must our paths be paved upward. Our duty is to awaken within young hearts and meaning and purpose of life. It is up to us to guide their growth toward a broader outlook -- that unflinchingly, though discriminated, their hearts must sing high so that a worthier, finer citizen may be won for our country. That in spite of all our humiliation and disastrous few years out of our life, we would not make this our failure, but make this experience a tremendous force towards building an enduring generation of finer Americans.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND ATTITUDES

Approximately 70 percent of the evacuees were of Buddhist belief, 25 percent held to the Christian belief and approximately 5 percent were non-affiliated. The Christian religion was a union service cutting across the denominational pattern of the United States.

The Buddhist faith, held by most, deserves a review of origin and tenets in order to understand the thinking of some of the evacuees. The similarities to Christian doctrine are astounding, although Buddhism began six hundred years before the birth of Christ.

Only those of the Christian faith are buried in the Rohwer cemetery. Those of Buddhist Faith who died were cremated in the camp crematorium and sent to a central depository in Chicago.

St. Shinran and His Religion of Pure Faith (Condensed Version)

Published October 5, 1943 by Denson Young Buddhists' Assn.

Origin of Buddhism:

Buddhism, which originated in India in the sixth century B.C., found its way through Central Asia to China in the first century A.D., and it was introduced into Japan by the way of Korea in 552 A.D.

General Buddhism:

A very profound theory is embodied in the Teachings of Gautama Buddha, which is to be understood not merely by the intellect or brain power, but must be personally attained by each individual through his own experience.

One method which usually is studied and practiced by the scholars and monks in every monastery advises one to rectify one's thoughts, words, and actions, and to concentrate one's mind in contemplation, in order to attain spiritual intuition.

Honen's Teaching:

To be born in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha in the next life and therein attain Enlightenment in fullest glory, one must Trust in Amida with all one's mind and call on His Name in unquestioning Faith (The one Father God).

He who does so will at the moment of death be carried by Amida to His Paradise of Bliss. As Salvation comes through Faith alone, it is very easy for anyone – "Whosoever will" – to be thus emancipated from this changeful world.

O World-honored Sakyamuni! With my whole mind I worship and adore and believe in the Tathagata of Eternal Light radiating unobstructedly throughout the Universe! Through this Faith do I expect to be born into His Land of Bliss.

Near to Amida:

That person who has Faith and observes the practice of the Nembutsu is always near to Amida, who sees and listens to Him, and knowing His Noble wishes will use Him in any capacity for the carrying out of His great purpose and plan.

Amida Nyorai (The Father God) receives anyone who turns to Him and confesses his sins.

Spiritual Body:

Amida Nyorai has two kinds of bodies; one is His Spiritual and the other is His Personal embodiment.

Father and Mother:

Amida Nyorai declares Himself to be the Father and Mother of all human beings. Therefore we should believe that we, all of us, are His children.

Two Gifts:

There are two gifts which Amida Nyorai bestows; one which relates to our journey to the land of Bliss, and other which concerns our return to this dense Forest of Birth and Death.

The first gift is bestowed in order to enable us to enter Paradise and be reunited with Him, hence Amida Nyorai endows us with all the merits which He Himself has accumulated to attain Buddhahood.

By the second gift He endows us with a marvelous Power, so that we may aid Him in His own Holy Work by reincarnating ourselves in this world over and over again in order to save our fellow-beings from the suffering of Birth and Death.

Way to Salvation:

Amida, Our Father, leads us unto Salvation by means of Holy Name. So, when we hear it with our ears and repeat it with our lips, its Boundless Merits penetrates our spirit and becomes the seed of Buddhahood.

Embracement:

To us, Gautama Buddha and Amida Nyorai appear like a father and mother, full of compassion. That we may embrace the priceless Faith, they have taken many and varied means to attract and persuade us.

There are two things that are essential to Faith:

First is to be convinced of our own sinfulness; from the bondage of evil deeds we possess no means of emancipation ourselves.

Second is to throw our helpless soul wholly upon the Divine Power of Amida Nyorai in the firm belief that His forty-eight Vows were for the express purpose of saving all beings who should put their trust in Him without the least doubt of fear. Such souls will be born surely into His Pure Land.

No Ranks:

In the Pure Land which Amida Nyorai has founded in fulfillment of His Great Vows, there are no more stages or ranks to be gone through. For those who are born therein attain the full Enlightenment that abounds when their souls are received into that Pure Land.

Ways to Freedom:

Set yourself free from all wrong thoughts so that you may comprehend the Right Teachings of Gautama Buddha.

You will then acquire ten kinds of merits.

First of all, you will become a man of gentle spirit and of good heart.

Second, believing in the Law of Karma, you will not commit any kind of crime or sin, even though you may be threatened with death.

Third place, you will reverence the Three Treasures, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; but you should never believe in other gods.

Fourthly, with your heart and mind possessed by right thoughts, you will take no account of either good or bad fortune with regards to the year, the month or the day.

In the fifth place, you will not migrate through the infernal worlds.

But (sixthly) you will become wise and good and be valued by the people of intelligence.

Seventhly, you will not cling to worldly things, but will pursue the Holy Path.

Eighthly, you will free yourselves from the prejudices both of affirmation and negation as regards to the future life, and will believe that all existence depends upon the Law of Causality.

Ninthly, you will be in company with those who hold the Right Faith and observe the Right Practices.

Tenthly, you will be born in Amida Nyorai's Pure Land of Bliss.

A Psalter: 'Praise to Amida'

.... "Take refuge in Amida, who enlightens all without exception; for His Emancipation Light is boundless. Whomsoever it touches is freed from erring views of affirmation or negation.....

Take refuge in Amida, the One who deserves to be worshipped. His light shines so brilliantly that He is rightly named 'the King of Light'; for he dispels the darkness of the three infernal worlds and delivers the souls therein from suffering."

For, truly, Salvation does not depend on the way in which our earthly life is sustained; it results entirely from our Faith and practice thereon.

Expression of Nembutsu

To Shinran the Nembutsu - that is to say, the repetition of "Namuamida-butsu - is simply an expression of gratitude for the Grace of the All-loving Father, Amida Nyorai. It is not any

service rendered in order to obtain Salvation but an act of praise offered, whenever one feels inclined to do so.

ROHWER MEMORIAL CEMETERY

Many of the Japanese evacuees at death were cremated; however, at Rohwer there is a memorial cemetery of many graves. Especially interesting is the monument erected by the evacuees to honor the Japanese American soldier boys who died in the war fighting for their country. One of the most famous battalions of the European Campaign consisted in the main of Japanese Americans.

POETRY SECTION

The tune of the heart strings of a people can be heard in the poetry of its youth. Most of the following poems are by elementary school students - some by high school students. The meter and poetic form is to be bypassed and only for the sentiments are these selections given.

OUR NATION

By Kimi Fujita, High School
Rohwer Relocation Center

Land of breadth,
Land of cold and warmth,
Desert and bayous.

Land of prairies stretching to the world's rim
Wheat fields growing and tossing burnishing spears,
Vineyards green and orchards in bloom.
Birds in the tree tops and harvest moon.

Land of bridges, spanning rolling waters, Land of great trees vying with the clouds.
Land of vividness, pulsing with life,
Fringed by oceans and groved by valleys.
Watered by rivers and swept by hurricane.

Land of smooth rounded hills
Like green velvet mounds
Mountains of brooding rock
Jagged sentinels.

Nation from Nations,
Edifice built by love and hate,
Tolerance and prejudice,
White and colored.
Filled with wealth
And weighed by luck,
Ideals, disillusionions,
Magic and hope.

Land of gladness,
Land of tears,
Land of the resolute
And those with fear.

Nation from Nations,
Nurtured on heroes' blood,
Sweat and toil.

Strengthened by danger
And love of soil.

Nation of Nations,
God give us the faith,
The strength, to serve you!

SPRING

Suikai Matage - 5th Grade

Spring is here,
Best of the year,
Kites are flying,
The snow is drying.

The birds are coming,
The bees are humming,
The days are long,
For winter has gone.

HUMOR

Durned Female!

She took my hand with loving care;
She took my costly flowers so rare,
She took my candy and my books;
She took my eye with meaning looks.
She took all that I could buy,
And then she took the other guy!

My Dolly

I have a little Dolly,
I call her "Lovely Molly"
For she's very like a rose,
From her head down to her toes.

One thing I like about Molly,
She's different from another dolly,
I never did hear her cry,
Not even a Little sigh.

When I go to school each day,
My dolly is always happy and gay.
She doesn't mind when I'm not home,
She never worries when I roam.

When I get sick or get hurt,
My dolly is very much alert.
She sleeps by me to comfort me.
She knows when I am sick you see.

Mariko Sekiguchi - 6th Grade

Why Study?

The more you study, the more you learn,
The more you learn, the more you know.
The more you know, the more you forget.
The more you forget, the less you know.
So, WHY STUDY?

The less you study, the less you learn,
The less you learn, the less you know.
The less you know, the less you forget.
The less you forget, the more you know!
So, WHY STUDY?

Courtesy of - Smudge Uyeno

Mumps

You have the mumps
And we are chumps
And with your horrid lumps
You look so funny
That I would say,
You're in the dumps
Boy! you better send for Doctor Bumps

Richard Sygiyama - 5th Grade

'Tis Autumn Humi Hanashiro

When the leaves begin to turn
Yellow, red, and brown!
When the cold wind blows and blows
And scatters them around!
'Tis Autumn!

When the spacious deep blue sky
Is designed with clouds of mirth,
The clouds do careless somersaults
And spill rain on the earth.
'Tis Autumn!

When the farmers harvest all their crops
In the fields, so gay.
When asked the reason for their joy
They smile as if to say,
'Tis Autumn!

Riding Swing
Mariko Akasaki - 6th Grade

I was riding very high,
And I could see the bright blue sky
And then down I came again;
I'm back to where I just began.

Up again into the sky,
To watch the birds go flying by,
And then down again I came,
I always liked to play that game.

Flower
Betty Uyemaru - 6th Grade

Flower, Flower, everywhere
Pretty flowers here and there.
Red, yellow and blue, flowers
On the hill sides, too.
Little ones big ones everywhere,
Let your fragrance fill the air.

Upward Trail
By A. S.

Look upward, Youth! Look upward!
Your trail lies still ahead,
Through roads you traveled thus far
Through triumphs may have led.

Let not your soul grow idle,
Content with what you've done;
Your conquests are but starters,
Your trail has just begun!

Remember, somewhere back there,
A few miles down the way,
Still viewed as goals were achievements
You hoped to reach some day.

So set your eyes far forward,
Mark worthy aims, and hail
Each one you reach, a milestone
Upon your upward trail.

Then upward, Youth, look upward!
Where none before have gone.
With purpose true and courage,
On upward trails, climb on!

I Want to see Everyone Gay
Wilfred Yoshimasu - 5th Grade

I want to see everyone gay
If you don't know how I'll
show you the way
First give a big smile
And hold it for a while
In a day or two
Many friends will be following you.
Now I hope you know the way
To be happy and gay.

Autumn
Tsukiye Yoshimoto

Autumn is a good day,
For fairies to play,
Down by the stream
of beautiful dreams.

Top
Ronald Kawachi - 5th Grade

I wish I had a top
One that will go round and round
O what fun I would have with
such a toy.
Gee, I wish I had a top
Boy, Oh boy!

The Snow and the Spring
Mariko Sekiguchi - 6th Grade

"I wonder why," the snow would sigh,
"The spring comes to melt us,"--
The spring might say, with its face gay,
"We're going to help the farmers.

The snow would talk, and slowly walk.
"Why can't we help the farmers too?"
The spring will explain, how plain
It is about farmers hating snow.

With a sad heart, the snow would part,
From the Spring talking slowly,
"Nobody likes me, everyone hates me,
So I'm going back to the North."

The spring saw him going far away,
He shouted, "Someone loves you still."
"Who can it be that likes me?"
"It is the happy children on the hill."

THE END OR THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER EVANGELINE EPISODE - WHICH?

The policy of "protective custody" was based on the precarious theory that it is the duty of government to lock behind doors those that are in danger, rather than lock those that would perpetrate the outrage. Historians will long look on this episode of American history as a most unique, if not repugnant, act against the spirit of American citizenship.

The resettlement of the evacuees started before the end of the war. The W. R. A. gave per diem and transportation expense to those who wished to resettle if a job could be secured. An organization was set up in Philadelphia to coordinate such activities.

Young people were afraid that they would not be accepted or would even be mistreated. But some braved the tide. Letters from various places in the East and Midwest show that these pioneers were being well received and made more requests for the right to secure jobs. However, those with young children feared that they would not be able to care for their families and did not dare to venture out.

It was announced in February, 1945, that the schools would be closed May 25, 1945. Preparations by school officials to complete student and other personnel records for disposition were begun soon after the February announcement. Grades of pupils were made in triplicate and placed on government form 281 and form 280 for all grades through high school. The staff of the school was all used until after June 1, 1945. After 1945 many teachers left the center and a few were transferred to programs of government property disposal and to the personnel office.

Those that had continued to desire to stay within the center were forced to cooperate with the resettlement agency, since the camp would be completely closed. In Arkansas the Jerome Camp was closed first and those remaining at Jerome were transferred to Rohwer.

The elementary children were probably affected less than the older students. The camp life was practically all they ever had known. These children looked on the resettlement as a great and new adventure. The school program provided was on the whole very good and their academic achievement was average or better.

The junior high student reaction was similar to the elementary children. Curiosity seemed to be the keynote to the attitude of the junior high boys and girls.

The high school students presented an entirely different picture. During the first year they were outspoken against their treatment. This attitude was the result of fear and bewilderment. Just about the time they believed the worst was over, the announcement came that all seventeen years of age or over must register for leave clearance to leave the camp. Many believed that they were going to be deprived of their American citizenship.

Those that would not give up their allegiance to Japan were shipped to Tule Lake, California. They also took their families. The girls and boys of these families frequently voiced objection to going to Tule Lake Concentration Center because they felt they would be shipped back to Japan, and they wanted to live in America and support their government.

When it was announced that all of the camp would be closed January 1, 1946, and that California would be open to resettlement, many Rohwer students expressed no desire to go back to California. One said, "There's nothing there to go back to -- it takes a great deal of money to begin life over again. I don't have anything to start." However, a large group of evacuees were anxious to get back to normal life on the outside of the camps.

Many had fears of molestation, of economic insecurity, that their school credits would not be accepted outside, and of race prejudice. 1942 to 1946 was a gap that would not easily be erased from the life history of these young Americans. Counselors were appointed to handle student transfers into relocation areas. During the year 1944 most colleges and universities were reopened to the Japanese evacuees.

The evacuees as a whole adapted themselves to the hobbled habits that were necessarily imposed upon them by the army. Good schools, a good hospital and cooperative evacuee citizens in the center made life bearable and, in some cases, rather pleasant. Every Saturday several trucks loaded with evacuees came into the town of McGehee and bought out most everything loose, since most consumable articles were scarce. Many citizens of the county did not like to see these articles being sold to the evacuees.

The Rohwer evacuees made a significant contribution to Desha County by teaching the people that fine vegetables could be grown in the Delta and also how to use irrigation in row crops, and especially on the acres of vegetables that they grew by the tons.

The artistic taste of the Americans with Japanese ancestry was inspirational. They saw beauty in roots, stumps, cypress knees, out of which grew lamps, book ends and art designs. These handicrafts, with their painting, were admired by the native population who had an opportunity to visit and observe these industrious and gentle people.

As the war came to end, the evacuees were absorbed back into the nation's stream of life and the center melted back into cotton and rice farms. The memorial cemetery is the only reminder of the 10,000 evacuees that was left in Desha County.

The camp was closed. Vast quantities of school, household and office equipment was stored in warehouses and sold to bidders from all over the United States. Later buildings were sold. These buildings were either torn down or cut in parts and moved on dollies to locations for homes, schools and commercial buildings.

120 acres of land with some buildings was deeded to Desha Central School District of Rohwer. The remaining land holdings of the government were sold to the highest bidders. The Japanese city of Rohwer melted back into its former form and the thousands of Japanese Americans were absorbed back into the American economy.

RESOURCES:

1. Bulletin by The Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans
2. Conference with Rohwer Camp Supt. of Schools, Dr. John Trice and Mr. A. G. Thompson
3. Student news publications
4. High school annuals
5. The McGehee Times
6. Personal visitation in the camp
7. Memphis Commercial Appeal
8. Letter from teachers
9. Calendars with pictures and poems
10. Children's original work - especially elementary children
11. School report including curriculum and schedule
12. Local Young Buddhist Association Publications, St. Shinran and his Religion of Pure Faith
13. Vignett - A pictorial record of life in the Fresno Assembly Center
14. Denison Publication - The Magnet
15. Rohwer Pre-School Publication
16. Personal correspondence with those resettled and Supt. A. G. Thompson
17. School Handbook
18. Personal correspondence with Robert Scott McIntosh II, Attorney for Japanese Consulate General
19. Personal interview with Japanese Consulate General Mr. Chikataro Hoshida
20. Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers

This publication is given to the Desha County Historical Society for the official publication.

C. C. Stuart



The memorial Japanese cemetery remaining poses the question: Was it a mistake our government made? Only history will be able to give us this answer.

