

~~From Behind Barbed wire Fences~~

As I look back upon this past year at Minidoka I realize how much my point of view has changed. The vast expanse of desert---sage brush covered volcanic ash---and the gray laval rocks I expected. I had been through the Snake River valley before. I even had a fair mental image of the row on row of black paper-covered barracks---very bleak and forlorn looking in a dust storm or on a gloomy day. What I had not expected was the friendliness, refinement, and professional training of so many of the Japanese people. ¶ The first week of work shop I was constantly impressed with the discussions of the evacuees, by the evacuees themselves. I knew so little of their background and had so much to learn from them, the people I now realize that I in a very vague sort of way had considered, well---not quite---but almost coolies. At least, I had thought of them as being a group of laborers without much cultural heritage because their heritage differed from ours.

Even now though a full year is past I still thrill at an impromptu speech delivered by the blind ex-president of the Japanese American Citizens League. He stressed the likeness in all races but denounced most of the nisei for negligence in not having cleared themselves of their dual citizenship. He also pleaded with them to live according to the highest American ideals so that when this was all over the record here could be pointed to with pride. That was his plea, though I have since heard it said that many of the colonists are bitter about the JACL's accepting evacuation orders without protest. The Nisei are Americans by birth and resent being treated like enemy aliens. Can you blame them?

I realize that I may have become somewhat sentimental in my feeling toward the Japanese, but as I have studied and as I have worked with people themselves I wonder if they are the demons that they are commonly supposed to be. After all their records are remarkably free of crime; during the depression they cared for their own people, and many, many of them are college bred. According to one article I read there are ten times as many college graduates among the Japanese-Americans as among a similar group in the country, and yet as one of my former assistants remarked what happens after graduation? They follow in the old man's foot steps simply because there is no other course.

It was with youngsters of this up-rooted group that we opened school last November 16. Our school was a regular residence block which was vacated to permit us to hold forth. It consisted of the twelve family barracks arranged in two rows of six buildings each, the central laundry and central mess hall. The science building was the laundry with all its paraphernalia. We had benches attached the full length of the 100 foot room; those served as chairs. In half of the room the ironing boards were well anchored to the concrete floor; we used these as desks. The stationary tube in the other half of the building were harder to utilize until tops were made the second semester. Then they, too, were full-fledged desks. ¶ The first week we did not even have the partition between the two sections of the room and yet classes were held simultaneously in the two parts; neither did we have blackboards nor books. In fact, the books did not arrive for another ten weeks, and yet we kept going for we did have students. There were 320 of them registered in science. Of these I had 250 each day in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and General Science. Had I not had the services of three Japanese-Americans who were well trained but had had no work in Education and thus could not be certified, I never would have survived. This group of assistants included an organic chemist with an M.S., a chemical engineer and a graduate

pharmacist. They had classes of their own and helped me with the chore work. Even so I still had six classes daily. Since we had no materials all I could do was talk and talk. For a long time I seemed to get no where. The oriental masks revealed nothing. Only when there was a lull in the work did the youngsters talk-- buzz with on another in groups of two and three. That is all past now: the reserve is gone, and my students are like any other group of students I have worked with excepting that they, for the most part, are better workers.

In spite of our late start last year we were able to get in our 180 days; obtain our State accreditation and have commencement on July 23--commencement in a dust bowl amphitheater. It meant steady going to be able to finish them: Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day were our only holidays. Of course, since we are Federal employees we put in 48 hours where others can clock on us, and that means Saturday is spent in faculty meetings, making lesson plans, et cetera. Studying I usually did evenings.

On August 23, we began classes again and how wonderful. We had desks, books, and three certified science teachers. At present we are having a harvest vacation to permit the older students to go out to the adjacent counties and assist with the potato and sugar beets. The Junior High students have signed up to help harvest the crows from the Project Farm, and the teachers take turns in supervising these little ones. I think I would as soon teach.

Naturally the school is the important thing to a school person, but other important events, also, have taken place in camp. Among them can be mentioned the registration of all our people followed by the volunteering of 300 of our boys for service: the serration program with the exchanging of about 300 from this camp for approximately 1500 from the Tule Lake Center, and the relocation program. The Dies committee investigation should be mentioned, too, though the investigators did not spend much time in camp. For that reason as well as for others it is hard to see how they arrived at the reported conclusions.

Other events and instances could be recounted but I would have to write a book in order to tell you all of them. That I will not do. It is enough to say that I am glad I have had the experience hard as it has been, for as one WRA official expressed it we are on the "battle front of ideas": and as I see it unless the democratic principles survive on the home front, what are we fighting for?

F.E.H.

(Frances E Haglund)
Hunt, Idaho

Letter Abbaunt Hunt, Ca.
Direct to Beacon, I
Believe

Francis E. Hayward
about 1880

Describes Work In Evacuee Camp

(Miss Frances Haglund, who is engaged as an instructor in a Japanese evacuee camp, describes in this letter some of her experiences and her impressions of the people among whom she is working.)

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Frances E. Haglund,
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