

NEW NEIGHBORS AMONG US

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

DEPT. OF INTERIOR

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Since early 1942, when the mass evacuation of 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast was begun as a military necessity, the business of finding new homes for the loyal citizens and law-abiding aliens among them had been steadily proceeding. Even before the last ones had been uprooted and sent to the ten relocation centers, provided for their temporary refuge, some of the first ones had already moved into new homes in communities outside the exclusion zones.

Early in the relocation movement, Illinois became the principal Mecca for the homeseekers. About 5,000 had resettled there, chiefly in the Chicago area, by the early summer of 1944. Approximately half as many were living unobtrusively in Colorado, and considerable numbers had sought homes in Utah, Idaho, Ohio and Michigan. Some states had drawn less than 100, and a few of those evacuated had found jobs as far east as Boston, Massachusetts.

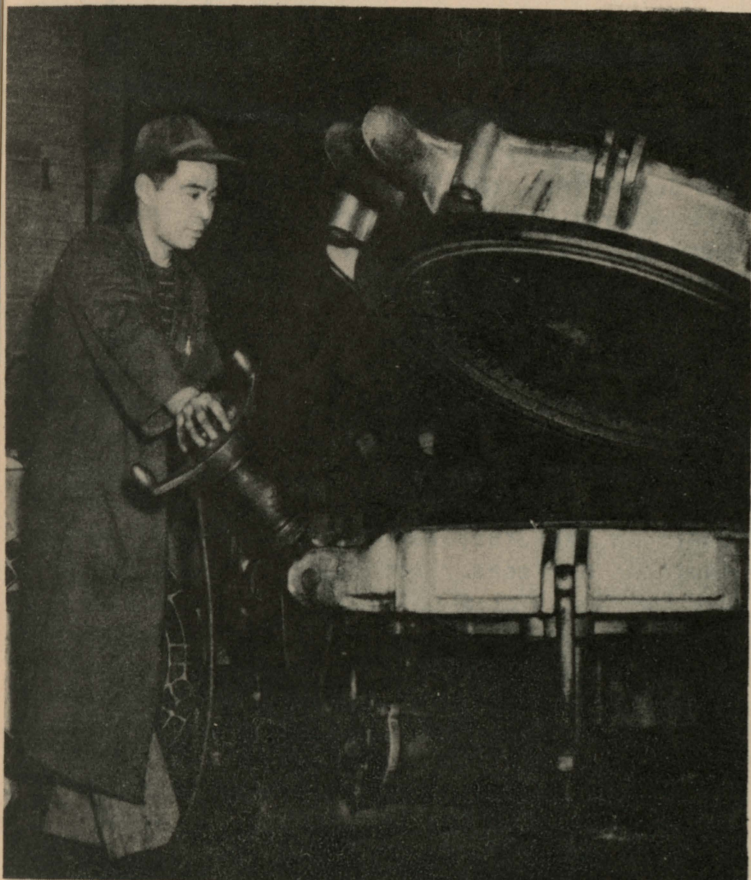
Of the thousands who have dropped into widely scattered communities without causing an economic or social ripple, the case of Frank

Shiba is typical. Shiba and his wife, Caroline, had made their home in Fresno, California, where he ran a recreation hall before the war. After the evacuation they found themselves in the Jerome relocation center in Arkansas. Like the majority of the evacuated people, Frank and his wife and their baby daughter, Diane, are American citizens.

Frank and Caroline, along with all other evacuee residents of relocation centers, filled out questionnaires prepared by WRA in cooperation with experienced intelligence officers. Their names were submitted to the federal intelligence agencies and nothing was shown to indicate that they were anything but loyal American citizens. Accordingly, they were granted "leave clearance" by the Director of the War Relocation Authority. They were free to go to any community, outside the excluded West Coast area, where sentiment was not unfavorable and where jobs were available.

Frank decided to try Cleveland, where a few dozen evacuees had preceded him. Caroline

Pvt. Ross Hiraoka, home on furlough from Camp Shelby, Mississippi, shares the hospitality of his family in Moorestown, N. J., with a soldier friend.



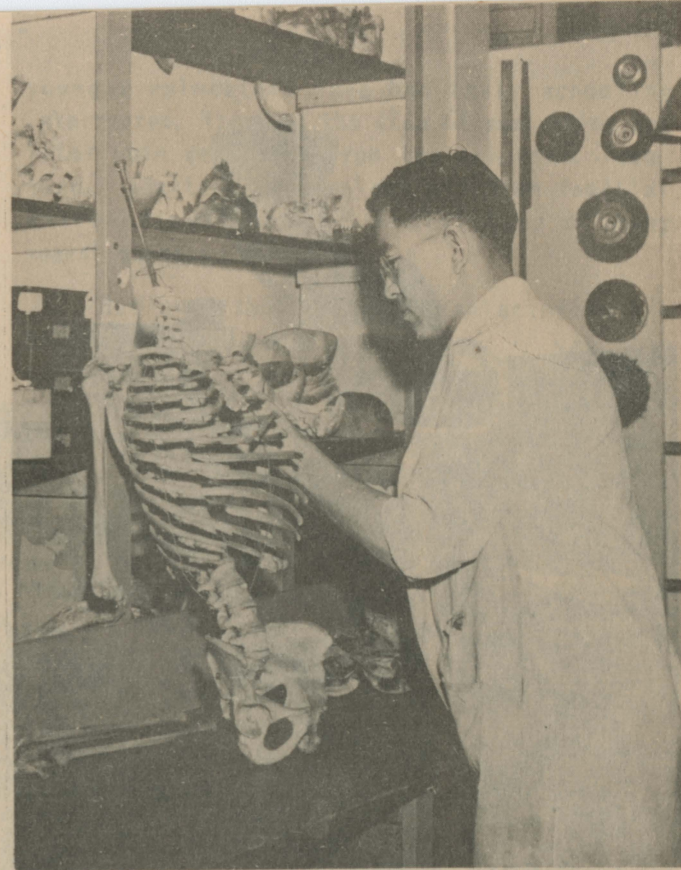
Frank Teraoka is one of three Nisei doing essential work in a Cleveland tire-recapping company.

and little Diane stayed in the relocation center until Frank could find a job and a place for them to live. He wanted a job where he could feel that he was helping in some direct way to win the war. He found it, as an apprentice on a grinding machine at the National Tool Company. Several months later he became a fully qualified operator, receiving the full scale wage. His wife and baby were content in their new home. They made friends and with every week the family's roots were more firmly set in the new community.

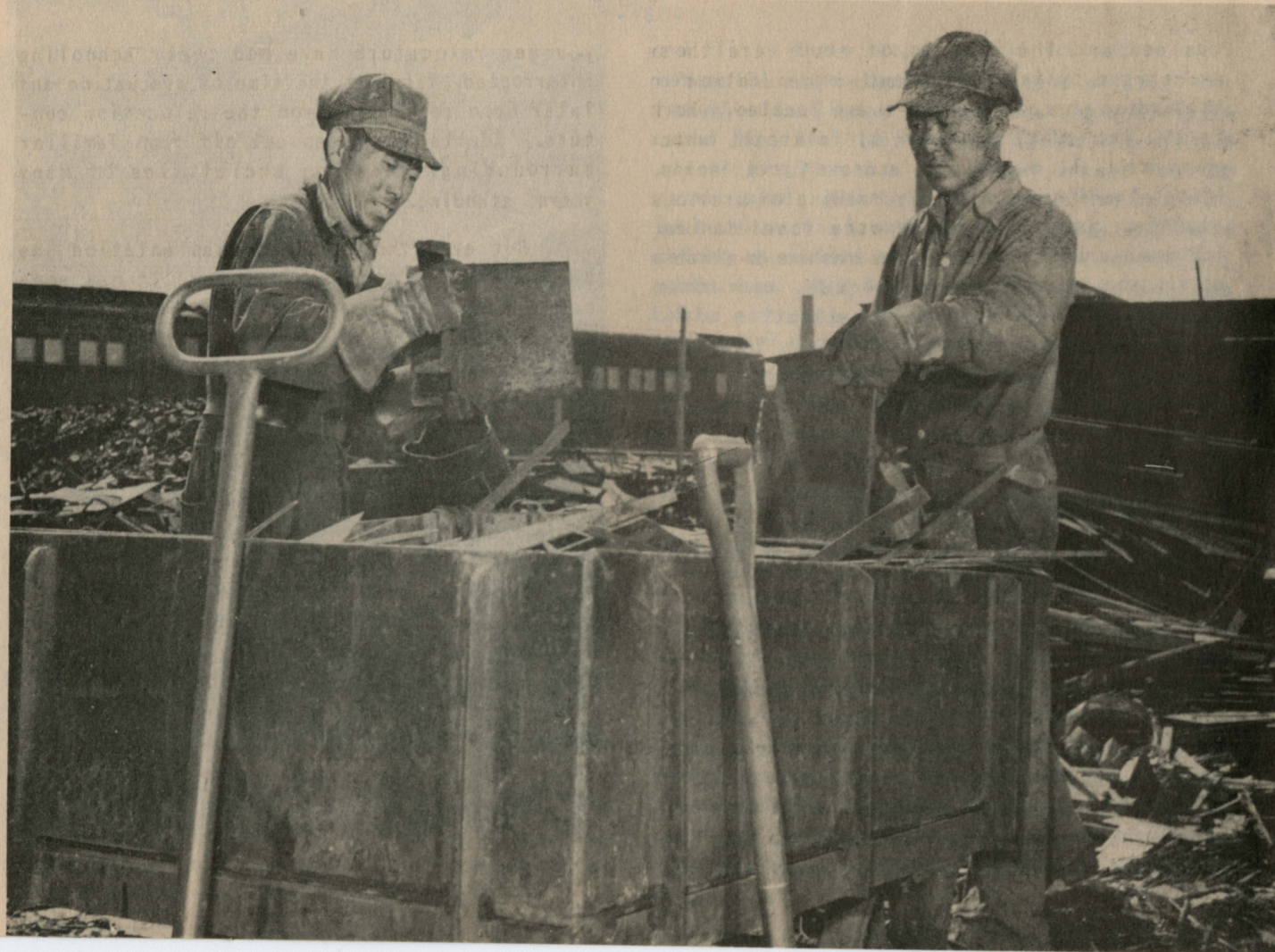
Multiply Frank Shiba's experience by the total number who have left the centers, make allowance for geographic variations extending from Spokane to Boston, and for hundreds of occupations, and you have the story of the people of Japanese descent who formerly lived in the Pacific Coast area and who have relocated to new homes and new communities farther east. Most of them are American citizens. On the average, they represent the young, able-bodied adults, educated in American schools, speaking English well and Japanese poorly if at all, thinking and acting like other Americans.

Life in a relocation center was tolerable after they got used to it, these people found, but it wasn't what they wanted. A single room, 20 feet square, served as a home for a family of three or four. A wood-burning stove, cots, blankets and a light bulb were furnished by the Government. The evacuees fashioned tables and chairs out of crates, boxes, and scrap lumber left over from the construction work. Eventually they got some of their own furniture which had followed them. The community bath house was a couple of hundred feet away and it served all the 250 or so residents of the block. Three times a day, all the residents of the block passed down the cafeteria line to the mess hall. Housewives couldn't prepare meals in their own home, because no cooking facilities were provided.

Many of the relocated families have babies born in the center hospitals, which, by wartime standards, are well equipped and adequately staffed. Special formulae and baby foods are available, and both mother and child receive competent medical attention. Children of school age attend classes in the barrack-type buildings. The equipment in many instances is meager, but the teachers are well



In the Nebraska Medical School, Yoshiaka Sugita prepares specimens to be used in the training of future doctors and surgeons.



trained and the courses of study are those prescribed by the departments of education in the states where the centers are located. Work is available, at wages of \$16 a month, which some families manage to spread over their needs, while others are constantly drawing on previous savings. Church, movies, occasional dances, and home-produced entertainment are available at all the centers.

Leaving the relocation centers, the people of Japanese descent have scattered to most of the states outside the excluded Pacific Coast area. Some regions have seemed more favorable and have drawn greater numbers, but at no point do they approach the concentrations which were found in the "Little Tokyos" of Los Angeles and other West Coast cities, or in the irrigated valleys of inland California before evacuation.

In moving eastward, many of the evacuees have left behind farms and business properties laboriously built up on the Pacific slope over a period of years. Some have lost all their equities in these properties and have been compelled to start life almost wholly afresh. The

younger relocators have had their schooling interrupted, first at the time of evacuation and later upon departure from the relocation centers. Adults have been cut off from familiar surroundings and from social ties of many years' standing.

But even though the transplantation has been a drastic process for many, it has some compensations from the long range point of view. It has tended to break down the prewar isolation of this Oriental minority in the United States and has brought thousands of these people more completely than ever into the mainstream of American life.

In a few instances, there has been local opposition or discrimination when evacuees have moved in, in spite of efforts of the War Relocation Authority to determine in advance the attitude of the community toward persons of Japanese descent and to steer evacuees away from unfriendly communities. In Great Meadows, New Jersey, neighboring farmers objected strenuously to five evacuees being employed as share croppers on a vegetable farm, and after several

Scrap iron to be used in making weapons of war for America is sorted by Harley Asari and Kenneth Jinbo in a Denver foundry.

days of threats, someone burned down a shed in which fertilizer was stored. To avert further violence, the evacuees left.

More characteristic is the experience of Bill Okazaki and his family. Moving from the Rohwer relocation center, in Arkansas, to the farm of A. J. Kreckler, near McHenry, Illinois, the Okazakis were accepted by adults in the community just as their twin daughters were accepted in the first grade at school. The change from vegetable production in the irrigated valleys of California to crops and livestock of a typical Corn Belt farm was the most radical adjustment the Okazakis had to make.

Another typical farmer who has moved into the Middle West is Fred Doi, 35-year-old American citizen, who operated a 60 acre vineyard at Fowler, California. From the Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona he went to Elkhorn, Nebraska, to work on the Omar poultry and dairy farm. He was given charge of more than 3,000 laying hens, and helped with a dairy herd which supplies milk to one of Omaha's largest hos-

pitals. Mrs. Doi became active in the local Red Cross and other groups in the community. Neighboring farmers were so favorably impressed with Doi's abilities that several of them negotiated for evacuee farm workers.

While farm people greatly outnumbered all other occupational groups among the population of Japanese extraction in the United States, they have been rather reluctant to leave the relocation centers. Only about 19 per cent had relocated by the end of May in 1944, compared with 38 per cent of those experienced in clerical or sales work and 30 per cent of those with professional or managerial experience, and a similar percentage of skilled laborers.

Many, of course, have changed types of work in relocation. Harley Asari, who operated a goldfish hatchery at Huntington Beach, California, before being evacuated to the Colorado River relocation center, at Poston, Arizona, found employment as handler of scrap metal and castings at the U.S. Foundry, in Denver. He was the first Nisei, as Americans of Japanese

Fred Akahoski's greenhouse has already become something of a Lincoln (Neb.) institution as well as a profitable business venture.





Mr. Okazaki as manager of the Krecher farm, handles all the farm machinery as well as several head of stock including these prize draft horses.

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parentage are called, employed by the company. Later about 25 were on the pay roll. Women welders have become the glamour girls of the war effort. Occasionally, the results have been surprising, as in the case of Jeri Tanaka who went through a welding school in Des Moines and got a job with a company making radio condensers. Her production record soon became the talk of the shop.

Another worker in Des Moines is Joe Eto, who came out of Schick General Hospital with a medical discharge from the Army, after 11 months service. He landed a job with a plant making a critical war product, critical enough that publicity concerning it is strictly barred. The officer responsible for security arched his eyebrows and began to question whether or not it was safe to have a man of Japanese ancestry employed in such a vital industry. A local newspaperman inquired "Are you going to kick out a man with a creditable record of service in the Army?" Joe stayed.

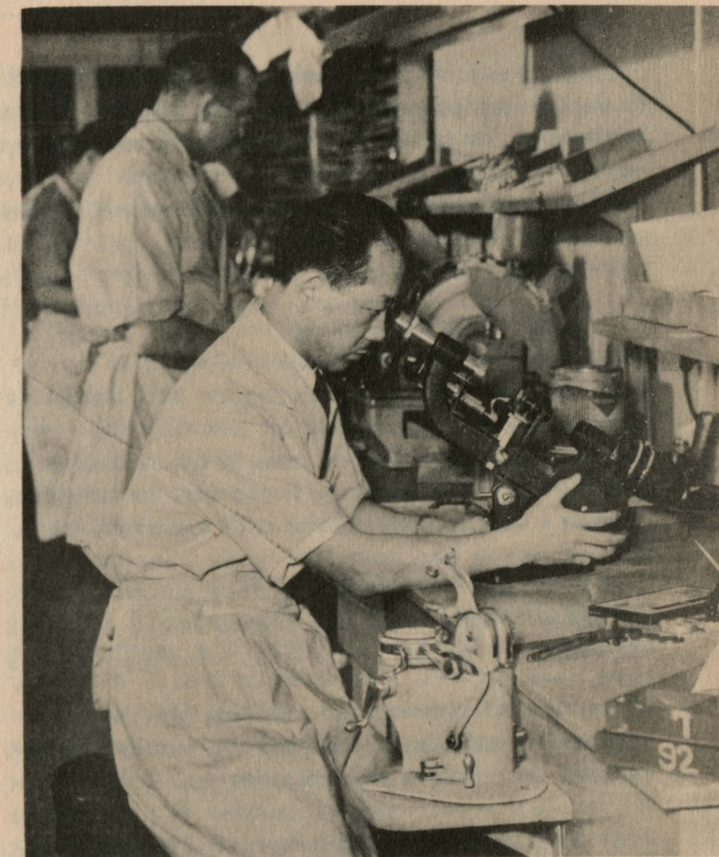
A double shift is the schedule of Yoshiaka Sugita, who was a pre-medical student when evacuation took him to the Granada Relocation Center in Colorado. He worked there as an orderly in the center hospital. He moved to

Omaha and became a laboratory technician at the University of Nebraska Medical College by day, and a pressman for the Paramount Paper Products Company at night.

Kelly Yamada managed three optician shops in Oakland, California, before he and his family were moved to Poston, Arizona. They relocated to Peoria, Illinois, bringing their sons Dexter, 5 years old and Terence, just short of 2 years; and Mrs. Yamada's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Toraji Yemoto. A nurseryman in California, Mr. Yemoto went back to his old trade working for a Peoria nurseryman.

Zealous in pursuit of higher education, the American born Japanese on the West Coast in some instances found use for their professional training only after they relocated. Arthur Takemoto, trained as an engineer, was sales manager for a produce company in West Los Angeles. After a few months in a relocation center, he applied for leave and went to Chicago. His first job was as a die designer, and later he became a draftsman and designer for a plant which makes airplane instruments.

Another characteristic of the West Coast Japanese was the high proportion who were in business for themselves, in rural areas or in



At his optical bench in Peoria, Illinois, Kelly Yamada tests a newly ground lens.

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cities. Many of these men have been reluctant to become employees when they were used to being employers, or at least independent operators, in agriculture, merchandising, etc. A few, however, have managed to find opportunities to go into business for themselves.

Fred Akahoshi, who was a truck farmer at Indio, California, and Frank Kuwahara, a florist from Sacramento, joined forces and bought a small greenhouse business in Lincoln, Nebraska. Besides raising flowers they produced about a quarter million vegetable plants for Lincoln victory gardeners in the Spring of 1944.

One of the biggest vegetable growing enterprises in the state of Utah is the Pacific Farms, with 480 acres of carrots, peas, potatoes, and onions, operated by Henry Mitarai, formerly of San Francisco and the Heart Mountain Relocation center. Mitarai employs fellow evacuees to help him with his work.

Four transcontinental railroads have employed evacuees of Japanese ancestry from the relocation centers as section workers during the last two years, and have been pleased with their work.

Few Japanese were coal miners before evacuation, but several of them found employment in the coal mines of Carbon County, Utah, and became members in good standing of the mine workers union. Sixteen former residents of relocation centers were employed in 1944 by the Utah Lime and Stone Company, which provides lime for the steel industry and for the sugar refineries of the state.

Residents of the western states, especially in sugar beet producing areas, have become well acquainted with the evacuees from the West Coast, for thousands of them worked in the beet fields during the 1942 and 1943 seasons; for many, the seasonal work has been a means of getting acquainted with the interior of the United States. For others, the money earned has helped to finance the family's move from a center to a permanent home in a normal community. While harvesting enough sugar to supply about ten million people in each season, the evacuees have generally established reputations as industrious, law abiding residents of the communities where they are employed.

In 1944, seasonal workers among the evacuees were not so numerous, because many of the best workers had found permanent jobs elsewhere.

But where there was a genuine need for labor, and where the local representatives of the War Food Administration offered contracts to do essential agricultural work, the evacuees in the WRA centers were given the privilege of engaging in seasonal agricultural work.

Relatively few indefinite leaves were granted to evacuees before 1943. Screening processes to separate those suitable for relocation from those not suitable, were still in the process of development. By January 1, 1943, about 700 had left the centers to seek new homes outside the exclusion zone. Thereafter, however, the pace of relocation rapidly increased. About 400 indefinite leaves were granted in January, 600 in February, and 1000 in March. During the next six months, more than 11,800 individuals were given indefinite leaves -- an average of nearly 2000 each month. In 1944, the average monthly rate settled down to about 1500.

Still in the centers are thousands of older people, to whom readjustment to outside conditions will be more difficult - farmers who have pioneered in opening up areas of the West Coast States and making them productive, and who no longer have the energy or the capital

to make a fresh start in a new territory; youngsters who are waiting out the war; the normal proportion of people who because of infirmity will be dependent upon public or family support wherever they are. To the War Relocation Authority, intent upon fostering the relocation of as large a number as possible during the war, these represent major problems.

In addition, there is a large group of persons who, for reasons related to the national security, will not be permitted to relocate for the duration of the war. Most of them have been gathered at one point -- the Tule Lake Center in California. The population of this center also includes many children and young people who are there solely because of family ties, and many older people who have simply given up the struggle to make their homes in America.

The segregation, according to Dillon S. Myer, director of the War Relocation Authority, was determined upon in the middle of 1943 as an aid to the relocation program. "Relocation is our main job," says Mr. Myer, "and we felt it could be carried on much more effectively if those who were not eligible to relocate were put in one place, leaving the other centers composed entirely of those who want to make



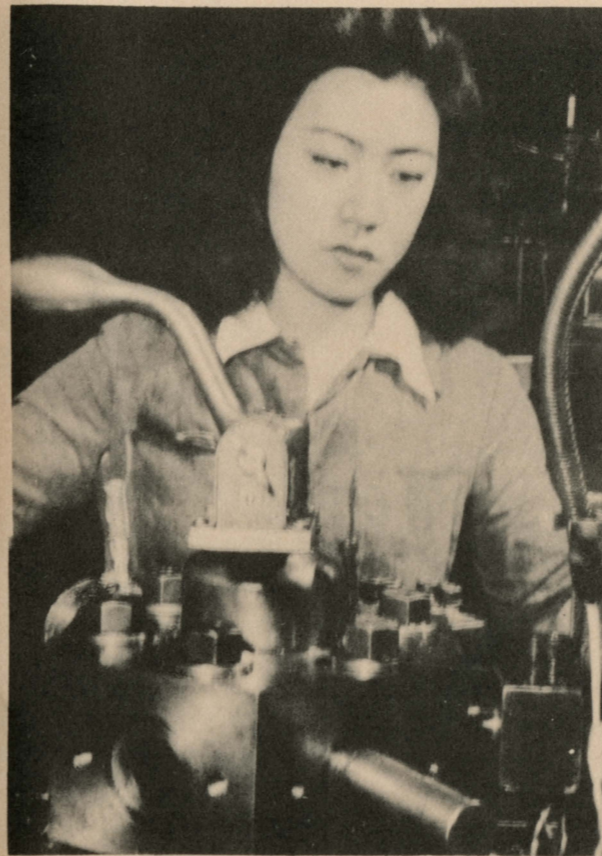
Mary Oyama divides her time between her typewriter and housekeeping in her Denver home.

the United States their home. Our aim is to relocate every person who can be relocated, and work ourselves out of a job as quickly as possible."

To express the feelings of the evacuees, a more articulate spokesman could hardly be found than Mary Oyama Mittwer, successful writer mother of two, whose husband, Fred Mittwer, had an American father and Japanese mother.

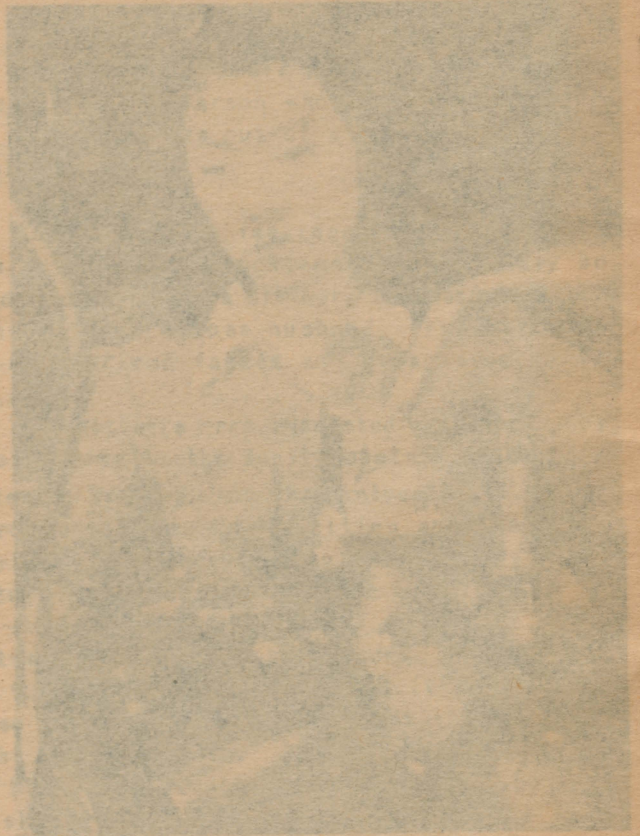
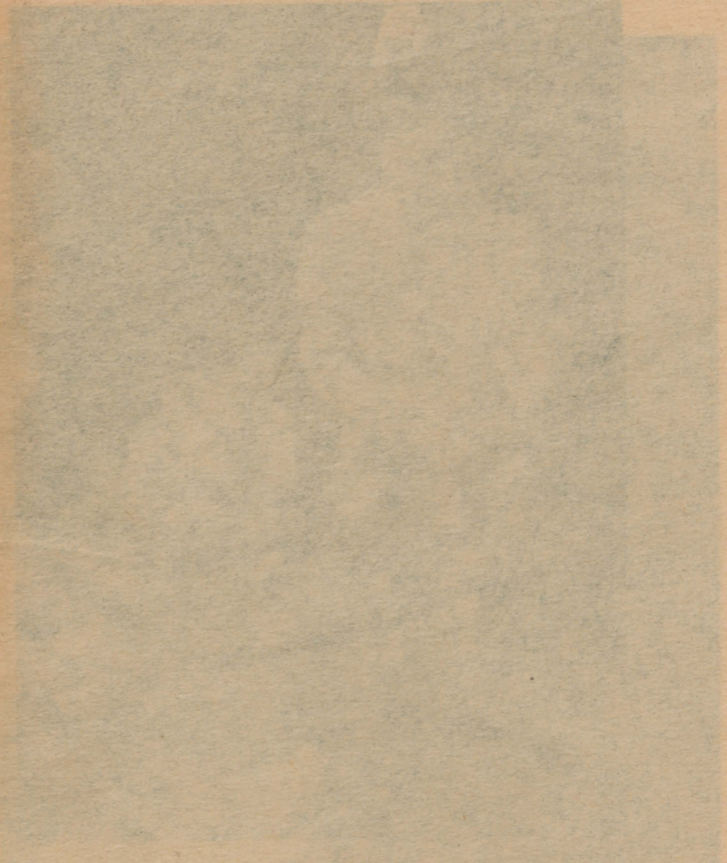
The Mittwers were evacuated from their Los Angeles home to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming, and then relocated to Denver where Mary resumed her writing and Fred went into the food processing business. Mary Oyama Mittwers expresses an attitude to which many of the evacuees subscribe: "Of course it was a bitter experience to be uprooted and hustled off to a relocation center, but it's futile to be so preoccupied with the past that we lose sight of the future. The weak and misguided may blight the remainder of their lives by ill-considered acts. The strong and wise will make the best of their lot and emerge stronger and wiser than before."

August, 1944



Among others working at essential jobs are Ruth Nishi, Turret Lathe Operator at the Bloomfield Mfg., Co., Chicago, and Grace Ohno working with other nurses in preparing surgical injection sets in the Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York City.





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