

SECTION II

INTRODUCTION TO PUYALLUP

PUYALLUP

Tama Tokuda

Do you remember the day we left Seattle in May 1942?

It was common knowledge that we would be temporarily housed at the Puyallup Western Washington Fairgrounds but I was totally unprepared for the sight of the barbed wire fence and the machine gun atop a guard tower. I realized then that we were the enemy.

We were directed to our room in Area B (one of the four areas), which turned out to be bare with a single light bulb hanging down from the ceiling. Tufts of grass stuck out between the floor boards and the partitions dividing us from our neighbors did not go completely to the ceiling.

Dad and I went after our mattresses. They were in a room where a pile of hay filled one corner. Some workers helped us stuff some bags and carry them back to our place.

Friends who had preceded us came to show us the way things were done in this new community. They warned us that the toilets were not partitioned, that we must expect lines for all our needs. On our first night, someone knocked on the door at 10 o'clock, "*Lights out!*" he said.

A few minutes later, a circle of light lit the ceiling. There were bachelors in the next space and one of them had lit a cigarette. Shortly, we heard the crackling of paper and then someone started crunching. My sister and I could tell that one of the men had the foresight to bring a bag of potato chips. The sound tickled our funny bone and we couldn't stop giggling.

After an exhausting numbing day, our emotions were released and that's when we started to feel life again. A few weeks later, the bachelors were transferred and a young honeymooning couple became our neighbors. Then the sounds we heard were much more disturbing.

In August, rumors began flying that we would soon be moving to our permanent homes in Idaho. There was a call for volunteers for an advance crew to pioneer our future incarceration site. Many young men answered the call and on the departure date, the Area B residents crowded around the gate to give them a grand send-off.

The advance party volunteers were in a truck following a jeep full of soldiers. The fellows were following with streamers of toilet paper trailing them shouting "*Haba Haba*" It was in sharp contrast to the somber day 3 months ago when we came and I thought, "no matter

what, Youth will have their say." We cheered and waved, wishing them well, promising we would be catching up with them very soon.

We were notified that Area B would start moving on August 21. On our last night, Mom was on her hands and knees scrubbing the floor. She said we should leave it as clean as it had been when we moved in. In a holiday mood, some kids were shouting and dancing in the mess hall. I think we didn't care where we were going, we were just happy to move out.

