

Portland Legion Blocks Jap Cemetery Beautifying

By United Press.

PORTLAND, Or., Aug. 14.—Plans of the Portland Fellowship of Reconciliation to beautify the Japanese Buddhist Cemetery here met a nonviolent death today as Sheriff Martin T. Pratt ordered the graveyard "closed for the duration" to any group or individual.

Sheriff's deputies and city police patrolled the area all afternoon. Together with American Legionnaires, wearing overseas caps, they completely outnumbered the handful of Fellowship members who showed up for the announced afternoon of grass cutting and shrubbery trimming.

Sheriff's Order Obeyed

It was only after they had heard the order of the sheriff himself that the members, headed by Howard D. Willits (an employe of the national, but not local, Y. M. C. A.), decided to retire. For nearly three hours he and his straggling group of supporters argued with the irate veterans, vehemently denying their project (or their organization) was

pro-Japanese, pro-Buddhist, or pro-appeasement.

Though tempers often flared and voices rose, only once did violence materialize—when a Legionnaire seized Willits by the arm and ordered him to "Get on down the road!" He was stopped by deputies and fellow veterans.

Error in Timing Admitted

Willits and his associates finally conceded that, while their project was meant only as "a gesture of good will and fellowship to fellow Americans of Japanese ancestry"—it might have been better carried out by them as individuals and on some day other than a Japanese Buddhist holiday.

The group's Sunday plans to place "bon matsuri" wreaths (bought by interned Japanese) on graves in the cemetery appeared to be effectively stopped by the sheriff's order.

Joseph Deboest, commander of Portland Post No. 1, said: "The American Legion is not going to stand for this. It's a bunch of monkey business."