

REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE
ON THE
SHOICHI OKAMOTO INCIDENT

July 3, 1944

Upon the request of the Spanish Embassy through its Consul in San Francisco to make complete report on the Okamoto Incident which occurred on May 24, 1944 in Tule Lake Center, Newell, California, the delegations of the colonists held a meeting on June 12, 1944, and selected one committee from each ward. The committee was named the INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE ON SHOICHI OKAMOTO INCIDENT.

The following are the names of the members on the above-mentioned Committee, which was officially recognized by the WRA.

<u>WARD</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
I	Jisaburo Fujino	1719-A
II	Suehiko Yoshida	3006-A
III	Rikitaro Sato	2218-A
IV	Shiro Kawamura	1117-D
V	Hatsunobu Makao	4713-D
VI	Zenshiro Okubo	5815-D
VII	Chodo Okutake	7316-E
VIII	Koiji Aratake	8308-I
	Executive Secretary Toshio Tomishige	3819-F

GATE-PASS PROCEDURE

Immediately after the incident of November 4, 1943, the Army, with the aid of the WRA, constructed fence, segregating the Colony and the Administrative area. Four gates were constructed and Army sentries were assigned to examine the workers who passed through the gate from the Colony area into the restricted zone. Recently, evacuee workers were issued work buttons and blue cards. There have been complaints about the gate-pass procedure, which required different type of buttons, about two inches in diameter--white, green, and red.

On May 8, 1944, the following statement was issued by the Administrative Police Chief, Willard E. Schmidt:

"To: All Section Heads
From: Willard E. Schmidt, Chief of Administrative Police
Subject: Buttons Worn by Evacuees

"The Army has completed issuance of work buttons of the types to all evacuee employed by the WRA. These badges are to be worn at all times when outside of the Colony. They must be displayed in plain sight and not covered by clothing of any type.

"A check by the Police Department this morning indicates that the rules and regulations about the wearing of these badges are not being complied with insofar as keeping them in plain sight at all times.

"We ask your cooperation in insisting that the employees of your section wear these badges in compliance with the rules and regulations in connection therewith.

/s/ Willard E. Schmidt, Chief
Administrative Police"

Few days later, the evacuee workers were told to show the work buttons, which was to be worn on the upper left part of the clothing, and blue passes, which were 3" x 5". Despite inconveniences of the gate-pass procedure, there was no evidence of generalized center hatred for the sentries.

INCIDENT

On the morning of May 24, the Center was calm and undisturbed. Then, at approximately 2:20 p.m., May 24, 1944, the shooting occurred. The victim, Shoichi James Okamoto, was 30 years old, had been born in Garden Grove, California and had never been abroad. In the Center, he was a truck driver, properly licensed and assigned to the construction crew.

A- Okamoto was driving Truck #100-41 at the order of the construction supervisor Yamane to get lumber piled across the highway from the old main gate, which is called gate #4. He carried all necessary identification papers and badges and was qualified as a truck driver permitted to pass into the restricted area. In his truck, a swamper named Henry Shiohama of 1219-r accompanied Okamoto on this assignment; he likewise was provided with all necessary identification to go outside the perimeter gate. The witnesses, besides Shiohama who rode next to Okamoto, included eleven boys from the heavy equipment crew who were waiting for an Army escort to go out to the cinder pit. This crew had three trucks parked in a semi-circular form, close the Gate #4 (see diagram). Okamoto and Shiohama, on Truck #100-41, were permitted to pass out the gate and the fatal shooting occurred when they were returning via the same gate.

According to Shiohama, the new sentry had just come on duty. Word has it that the new sentry was in a disagreeable mood and was known as one of the tougher sentries. The two on the truck went over the line a bit. The sentry, on Okamoto's side of the truck, could see Shiohama's badge, but could not at first see Okamoto's because of the high side-door of the truck, and because of the sentry's short stature. It is claimed that the badge was on Okamoto's jacket, as was necessary. The sentry asked to see the badge in a disagreeable fashion. Okamoto showed the pass, was allowed through, and returned with his truck and swamper in a few minutes. On the way back, his truck drove up close to the heavy equipment crew's trucks. There were 11 boys on the equipment crew, the trucks in a semi-circle form, standing near the gate with fellows on the running boards, fenders, and around the vehicles. It is said that the sentry made remarks to them. The most usual phrase which was repeated in the center was, "What the hell are you Japs doing--waiting to climb the hill?" At this juncture, Okamoto was driving in towards the gate and the sentry's attention was focused back upon him. While he had been waved through the gate a few minutes before, he was now ceremoniously halted. It is claimed Okamoto said words to the effect of, "Well, here's the pass." Perhaps this sounded cocky to the already irritated guard. The sentry ordered him off the truck and commanded Shiohama to drive. Without a driver's license the latter explained, he could not drive a truck. The sentry, it is said, was infuriated at this delay. From then on, commands were well peppered with curses. This took time and raised tension all around. To Shiohama's answer the guard is said to have replied, "You Japs and your WRA friends are trying to run the whole camp." He then turned back to Okamoto, who, it is said, if he had contemplated any attack on the guard would have had plenty of time during the exchange with Shiohama, (here versions dwell on the fact that Shiohama was a swamper and could not, therefore, drive the truck, along with explanations that Okamoto would never have been fool enough to attack an armed sentry, and was not further, that sort of a person). Heavy equipment boys, not many feet away, were talking among themselves of the sentry's aggressive and insulting manner, and some despite the tension--were saying, "They're not all like that", "This one has it in for 'Japs", etc." Okamoto was apparently apprehensive by this time. When ordered out of the truck he had done so reluctantly and had left the truck door opened. At this juncture a Ford V-8, driven by Roy S. Campbell, a caucasian WRA staff, arrived from the highway and stopped with engine running, about 7 feet from the end of Okamoto's truck.

According to Shiohama and other witness, the sentry at that time cocked his gun and went around via front to the other side of the truck where Okamoto was standing. The sentry then ordered Okamoto to the back of the truck. This would have been just outside the gate. Okamoto started but hesitated for an instant. At this point, speculate on the guards motives, with

A true concentration-camp psychology, the suspicion is that the guard wished to shoot him outside the gate. (Shot while trying to escape). Okamoto's hesitation is explained by this point. In the moment of hesitation, in which most say no pipes were lit and no words said, the sentry struck Okamoto sideways on the right shoulder with a rifle-butt. Okamoto raised his right arm and moved his body slightly back to ward off any further blows. While in this defensive position, the guard stepped back one pace and from a distance of four or five feet fired without warning. In all accounts stemming from eye-witness testimony, the act was looked upon as an unprovoked attack, Okamoto fell with what seemed to have been a close-range stomach wound. Residents speculated on the possibility of the sentry having been overseas, having been shell-shocked, or being mentally below par. It is said, in the center, that Shiohama certainly must have been cool-headed about the affair since he summoned an ambulance in less than one minute. At any rate, the account which he and his co-workers gave as signed testimony to the Police Department in interviews with all eye-witnesses on the scene shortly thereafter is said to be factual and logical. The story of all eye-witnesses, despite already distorted newspaper versions, such as in the S. F. Examiner that the one Caucasian, Roy Campbell, eye-witness account, probably fits the picture drawn for them.

The heavy equipment crew was thunderstruck. The sentry cursed, seemed nervous, and it is said, swung the rifle in their general direction. More cursing - "You people get the hell out of here" - and they fled, Shiohama trying to get the hospital on the phone. Another crew of five stumbling on the scene were ordered back by the sentry. The ambulance arrived. The Police Department interviewed the evacuee eye-witnesses and the member of the WRA staff who had driven up behind Truck #100-41 and who had seen most of the altercation from his car.

BOARD OF INVESTIGATION APPOINTED BY COMMANDING OFFICER

The sentry, name unknown, was placed under arrest and an Investigation Board was appointed by Lt. Col. Verne Austin, Commanding.

HOSPITALIZATION OF OKAMOTO

Okamoto was immediately hospitalized. How long a time elapsed before he was hospitalized is not known; some say 20 minutes. According to the attending physician and surgeon, every possible means of treatment was administered (since the hospital and autopsy records are not available, we hereto report you the versions from the testimony given by the doctors at the Coroner's Inquest).

"The examination showed a small penetrating wound in the right side of the man's body which was in the region of the eighth rib, which would be about in the region of the nipple, and there was another wound on the left-hand side of the body about at the same level and perhaps a little bit lower. This wound was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and it was located a little bit outside the area of the other wound, that is outside the nipple, and from this wound abdominal contents were protruding. There was a small laceration on the left arm in the region of the elbow. The man was in a condition which we recognized to be shock, and which we interpreted to be traumatic shock arising from internal injuries. The initial treatment was directed toward attempting to get the patient out of shock. The patient made a very poor response to this treatment, in spite of the fact that the treatment given was quite extensive and was given to the best of our ability to utilize all known methods. The drugs administered were: morphine sulphate; blood plasma; external heat application; blood transfusion; adrenalin injections; tetanus anti-toxin; oxygen; ephdrin sulphate; peraldehyde; calcium gluconate; artificial respiration."

DEATH OF OKAMOTO

There were six doctors, including the Army, four evacuees, one Caucasian Chief of Medical Staff. In spite of the doctors' effort, Okamoto died at 12:10 a.m., May 25, 1944. The autopsy was performed and the following are the statement made by the doctor as to the damage done on Okamoto.

"The damage was found in the region of the scene. In the right chest area was this hole which was about one centimeter in diameter and this was a flesh wound that connected to the man's insides. There were some large rents that had been torn through the man's liver and his stomach had been shattered so that when it was first seen at the operation, it was not possible to recognize the pieces as a stomach. The portion of his liver on the left-hand side of the body as I stated before had had his internal contents pushed out through the cavity so it was sticking out and draped on the outside of his body, and this particular material was covered with sticky contents, a portion of which we recognized as spaghetti."

The doctor's statement continued,

"The gunshot wounds would be interpreted as the small hole on the right-hand side of the body to be the point of entrance, and the large hole on the left-hand side of the body to be the point of exit."

As to the cause of death, gained from the knowledge of autopsy, Dr. Sleath definitely stated that the cause was due to shock resulting from originally internal damage which he received, which was the primary factor in the production of the shock and from which he never recovered. To this diagnosis, Dr. Sleath added that all other doctors arrived at the same conclusion.

MODOC COUNTY CORONER'S INQUEST

On May 25, 1944, from 7:30 p.m., Modoc County Coroner's Inquest was held at the Base Hospital Operating Room.

The jurors present were:

Charles Calednine
Phil J. Fish
John O'Shea
Mrs. M. C. Cox

Mrs. Anne Jamison
R. R. Baker
Daniel M. Crawford

District Attorney of Modoc County, California, Charles Lederer, conducted the hearing at the request of the Coroner. District Attorney by request of the Jurors opened the hearing with the purpose of investigating the cause of death and the persons responsible, if anyone concerned, questioned the witnesses.

Witnesses and Doctors

Henry Shiohama
Charles Antoku
Gen Hitomi
Tom Kadowaki
Roy S. Campbell
Tsugio Soga
Giro Snow (Shinomoto)
Frank Amemiya
Ben Watanabe

Joe J. Nishizaki
George Yamashita
Kanpo Ogawa
Kazuto Matsumoto
Sadao Yamane
Masao Tokuyoshi
Masaki Nakamoto
Dr. Jack Sleath
Dr. George Hashiba

The copy of the Coroner's Inquest record is hereto appended.

Charles Lederer made the following statement: For the purpose of record, I would like to state that as District Attorney of Modoc County, State of California, I have asked the name of the guard at the gate who actually shot the decedent, but due to Army Regulations I cannot produce it.

Verdict of Jurors

After some deliberation the Jury returned the following verdict:

ls. { "In the matter of inquest upon the body of Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, before John C. Sharp, Coroner, we, the undersigned jury summoned to appear before John C. Sharp, Coroner of the County of Modoc, in the State of California at Newell, California, on the 25th day of May, 1944, to inquire into the death of Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, have been sworn and charged according to the law and have made such inquisition as regards the decedent, and have adduced upon our authority, and for all to see, that we find that the decedent was named Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, and that he came to his death on the 25th day of May, 1944, at Newell, California, by a member of the United States Armed Forces while in the line of duty.

Signed this 26th day of May, 1944.

W. Loudon, Foreman
Charles Callendine
R. R. Baker

Phil J. Fish
John O'Shea
Daniel M. Crawford

Mrs. E. C. Cox
Mrs. Anne Jamison

Upon completion of the Investigating Board named by the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Verne Austin, a court martial of the Army Sentry who shot and killed James Shoichi Okamoto, will be held. As far as known to this Committee, the proceeding officer at the court martial with the entire new members of the Armed Forces will be transported here for the purpose. Up to date, definite date of the opening of the court martial is pending.

Immediately following the incident two bulletins were issued by the Administration for the purpose of informing the colonists of the incident. Bulletin issued from Newell, California on May 24, was as follows:

"Shoichi James Okamoto, 30, Japanese resident of the Tule Lake Segregation Center, was shot by a military police sentry on duty at the old main gate of the project late this afternoon. He was removed to the project hospital for surgical treatment. The victim of the shooting is a citizen of the United States, born at Garden Grove, California. A Board of Investigation has been named by Lt. Colonel Austin."

The follow-up bulletin the same day read:

"Shoichi James Okamoto, victim of the shooting by a military police sentry at the Tule Lake Segregation Center was given two blood transfusions at the center hospital before the operation could be performed. The second transfusion was given by Jack Okamoto, his brother. The operation

was performed by Dr. Hashiba, evacuee doctor at the project, assisted by Dr. Jack Sleath, Chief medical officer of the WRA staff. Captain Edwards, Army medical officer and two other evacuee doctors were present."

On May 25, press and radio distortions were kept at a minimum by the following bulletin:

"Shoichi James Okamoto, 30, of 3003-A, died at the Base Hospital early this morning as a result of a gunshot wound. He had been shot by a military police sentry at the old main entrance to the project. Lt. Col. Verne Austin ordered the sentry placed under arrest and appointed a Board of Investigation. These steps are taken by the military who are solely responsible for the investigation of the facts in the case. The victim of the shooting was employed in the construction section and had been driving a truck. He drove out through this gate to get lumber which was to be delivered to the construction job and was returning to the Center at the time. On the truck with him was one worker, a witness to the shooting, and others were near who have cooperated with the police in giving full statements of the circumstances. Mr. Best made a statement this morning which were read at all of the mess halls in the center. The statement follows:

"I regret very much that one of the center residents was shot yesterday afternoon by a military police sentry and that he died at the center hospital early this morning. Everything was done by the medical staff at the hospital to save his life and a great many people stood ready to give their blood. An investigation is being made by the military and proper disciplinary action will follow. The WRA was in no way responsible for the shooting, and I want you all to know that we regret that it happened. No further statement can be made at this time pending investigation by the Board, but as soon as facts are available they will be given to the residents in full detail."

"At the same time, Mr. Best expressed sympathy to the bereaved members of the family and offered to make available to them any facilities of the WRA. The shooting happened at approximately 2:20 on Wednesday, according to the official reports of the Internal Security office. As soon as the first report was received an ambulance was ordered to the scene, and Mr. Okamoto removed to the center hospital. Every effort was made to save his life and no one was permitted to question him about the circumstances because of the danger of sapping his strength. Two blood transfusions were necessary before the operation could be performed. The operation was

done by Dr. Mashiba, who was assisted by Dr. Jack Sleath, Chief Medical Officer of the WRA. Captain Edwards of the military staff was also present as were three other evacuee doctors at the hospital.

FUNERAL OF SHOICHI OKAMOTO

Sympathetic attitude was displayed by the Administration and the Army toward the bereaved family such as Project Director, R. R. Best, his staff, and Colonel Austin personally visiting the family and offering sympathy and condolence; placing two cars at the disposal of the Okamoto family for the purpose of visiting relatives and friends.

On May 26, 1944, the public funeral to be held on May 31st was planned by the funeral committee, composed of Block Managers, construction and motor pool department workers.

The funeral expenses and appropriations, and money gift to the bereaved family were borne by the entire center. Many floral offerings were also made by various staffs, as the Social Welfare, Construction, Motor Pool, Community Analysis, etc.

The wake service was held on May 30, the evening preceding the funeral. Reverend Sasaki, a Buddhist priest of high standing, officiated. Some 1200 attended.

Some 6,000 people congregated at the funeral in spite of cold and drizzling weather. It was held at the out-door stage. Plan to hold it in the High School Auditorium were abandoned because of the realization that the crowd would be too great to accommodate the entire crowd. The funeral service lasted for two hours and was an impressive one to everyone.

LIFE HISTORY OF SHOICHI OKAMOTO

Parent's Address in Japan	1035 Koshima Shinkai, Otakemachi; Saiki County; Hiroshima, Japan.
Present Address	Tule Lake Segregation Center; 3003-A, Newell, California, U. S. A.
Family Head	Koichi Okamoto (First Son) Shoichi Okamoto (Second Son) registered Japanese citizen; Born June 12, 1914

Name of Father	Tokuichiro Okamoto (deceased)
Name of Mother	Sekiyo Okamoto
Physical Description of Decedent	Height, 5'9" Weight, 200 lbs.
Birthplace	Garden Grove, Orange County U. S. A.
September 1920	Entered Harbor City Elementary School. Graduated in June 1927.
September 1927	Entered Lomita High School of Los Angeles County; Graduated June 1931. Attended Japanese Language School for five years.
June 1931 - 1939	Assisted Father on his farm besides operating a transfer business of his own.
1939-December 1941	Up to the time of the outbreak of the present war, was employed by S. K. Market in Los Angeles.
May 15, 1942	Entered Pomona Assembly Center, California
August 23, 1942	Transferred to Heart Mountain Relocation Center. There, he applied for expatriation.
September 24, 1943	Transferred to Tule Lake Segregation Center, Newell, California.
October 1943-to date of incident	Was employed as truck driver in the Motor Pool and was assigned to the Construction Department.
May 24, 1944	At 2:20 p.m. was shot by M. P. of the U. S. Armed Forces without provocation and died at 12:10 a.m., May 25, 1944.

Character of Shoichi Okamoto

Okamoto as Family Member:

Quiet, gentle, and very considerate. Regarded as obedient son by his parents. Co-operative and kind brother to his six other brothers and sisters. When his father, Tokuichiro, died at Heart Mountain Relocation Center last year, since his family is Buddhist, he worshipped his father's tablet every night and made offerings of flowers and other things his father liked most. Good advisor to his younger brothers and sisters. He always respected and obeyed the law and he, at no time, provoked the Ad-

ministration of the Center.

Okamoto as a Member of the Society:

From his early childhood, he was well-liked by fellow students and was respected as a model student. After graduating from High School, his association was always with confidence and integrity. As a member, he was quiet, gently, and industrious, that he was at once recognized by his employer which won him the promotion. Such recommendation has been made by the owner of the S. K. Market of Los Angeles, where he was employed. All those who associated with him unanimously acclaim his noble character as a gentlemanly person.

Okamoto's Hobby:

Shoichi Okamoto as a boy liked athletic activities such as football, basketball, and hurdle. He was a member of the 'A' class football team. He never touched intoxicant and only started to smoke after confinement in the relocation center to pass away his monotonous life.

The following persons recommended his noble character and their statements are hereto appended:

Masaru Hata: Block Manager of Block 17, Heart Mountain Relocation Center in which block, Okamoto lived and decedent had close association with the recommendee.

Kazumi Kawaoka: Block Manager of Block 30, Tule Lake Segregation Center in which block deceased Okamoto lived and in which the family live at present.

Leonard Scott: 1741 North Santa Anita, Arcadia, California. An American whom the late Okamoto knew since 1937. As the recommendation states, Okamoto was intimate with this person since his childhood.

copy of the letter

Arcadia, California
June 23, 1944

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I had known James Okamoto since 1937. He is an honest, hard-working man with good personal habits. I never knew him to be quarrelsome as a trouble maker. Having worked with him and gone hunting and fishing with him, I knew him well. He was a good neighbor and a trusted friend.

/s/ A. Leonard Scott

1741 No. Santa Anita
Arcadia, California

copy

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN that I, KAZUMI KAWAOKA, of War Relocation Authority, 3007-C, Tule Lake Segregation Center, Newell, County of Modoc, State of California, has been a resident of said block and have been acting in the capacity of a block manager for the past year.

That I am 37 years of age, and a person of Japanese ancestry, and I have been segregated into this center from the Topaz Relocation Center in 1943.

That I have been acquainted with the late James Shoi-chi Okamoto since his entrance into this center from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. That the deceased was a resident of our block, and I can testify on the character reference of said person. He was a very courteous and gentle person, and was never a party to any form of arguments or disputes. Thus, in view of his past conduct I can say that he was truly a gentleman.

/s/ KAZUMI KAWAOKA

Dated this 23rd day of
June, 1944, at Newell,
County of Modoc, State of
California

COPY

v 26

MEMORANDUM

INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE
TULE LAKE CENTER
Newell, California

July 13, 1944

MEMORANDUM TO: ALL Representatives
FROM: Investigation Committee
SUBJECT: Dissolution

In accordance with the decision reached at the previous meetings, this body of block representatives, as well as the Investigation Committee therefrom selected, organized on June 12, 1944, for the purpose of making report on the death of Shoichi Okamoto as requested by the Spanish Consul, have duly dissolved on this 13th day of July, 1944, as we have acknowledged receipt of a telegram, dated July 12, from the Spanish Consul, informing us of the receipt of the report submitted.

/s/ R. Sato
Chairman

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According to Shiohama, the new sentry had just come on duty. Word has it that the new sentry was in a disagreeable mood and was known as one of the tougher sentries. The two on the truck went over the line a bit. The sentry, on Okamoto's side of the truck, could see Shiohama's badge, but could not at first see Okamoto's because of the high side-door of the truck, and because of the sentry's short stature. It is claimed that the badge was on Okamoto's jacket, as was necessary. The sentry asked to see the badge in a disagreeable fashion. Okamoto showed the pass, was allowed through, and returned with his truck and swamper in a few minutes. On the way back, his truck drove up close to the heavy equipment crew's trucks. There were 11 boys on the equipment crew, he trucks in a semi-circle form, standing near the gate with fellows on the running boards, fenders, and around the vehicles. It is said that the sentry made remarks to them. The most usual phrase which was repeated in the center was, "What the hell are you Japs doing--waiting to climb the hill?" At this juncture, Okamoto was driving in towards the gate and the sentry's attention was focused back upon him. While he had been waved through the gate a few minutes before, he was now ceremoniously halted. It is claimed Okamoto said words to the effect of, "Well, here's the pass." Perhaps this sounded cocky to the already irritated guard. The sentry ordered him off the truck and commanded Shiohama to drive. Without a driver's license the latter explained, he could not drive a truck. The sentry, it is said, was infuriated at this delay. From then on, commands were well peppered with curses. This took time and raised tension all around. To Shiohama's answer the guard is said to have replied, "You Japs and your WRA friends are trying to run the whole camp." He then turned back to Okamoto, who, it is said, if he had contemplated any attack on the guard would have had plenty of time during the exchange with Shiohama, (here versions dwell on the fact that Shiohama was a swamper and could not, therefore, drive the truck, along with explanations that Okamoto would never have been fool enough to attack an armed sentry, and was not further, that sort of a person). Heavy equipment boys, not many feet away, were talking among themselves of the sentry's aggressive and insulting manner, and some despite the tension--were saying, "They're not all like that", "This one has it in for 'Japs", etc." Okamoto was apparently apprehensive by this time. When ordered out of the truck he had done so reluctantly and had left the truck door opened. At this juncture a Ford V-8, driven by Roy S. Campbell, a Caucasian WRA staff, arrived from the highway and stopped with engine running, about 7 feet from the end of Okamoto's truck.

According to Shiohama and other witness, the sentry at that time cocked his gun and went around via front to the other side of the truck where Okamoto was standing. The sentry then or-

dered Okamoto to the back of the truck. This would have been just outside the gate. Okamoto started but hesitated for an instant. At this point, speculate on the guards motives, with true concentration-camp psychology, the suspicion is that the guard wished to shoot him outside the gate. (Shot while trying to escape). Okamoto's hesitation is explained by this point. In the moment of hesitation, in which most say no pipes were lit and no words said, the sentry struck Okamoto sideways on the right shoulder with a rifle-butt. Okamoto raised his right arm and moved his body slightly back to ward off any further blows. While in this defensive position, the guard stepped back one pace and from a distance of four or five feet fired without warning. In all accounts stemming from eye-witness testimony, the act was looked upon as an unprovoked attack, Okamoto fell with what seemed to have been a close-range stomach wound. Residents speculated on the possibility of the sentry having been overseas, having been shell-shocked, or being mentally below par. It is said, in the center, that Shiohama certainly must have been cool-headed about the affair since he summoned an ambulance in less than one minute. At any rate, the account which he and his co-workers gave as signed testimony to the Police Department in interviews with all eye-witnesses on the scene shortly thereafter is said to be factual and logical. The story of all eye-witnesses, despite already distorted newspaper versions, such as in the S.F. Examiner that the one Caucasian, Roy Campbell, eye-witness account, probably fits the picture drawn for them.

The heavy equipment crew was thunderstruck. The sentry cursed, seemed nervous, and it is said, swung the rifle in their general direction. More cursing - "You people get the hell out of here" - and they fled, Shiohama trying to get the hospital on the phone. Another crew of five stumbling on the scene were ordered back by the sentry. The ambulance arrived. The Police Department interviewed the evacuee eye-witnesses and the member of the WRA staff who had driven up behind Truck #100-41 and who had seen most of the altercation from his car.

BOARD OF INVESTIGATION APPOINTED BY COMMANDING OFFICER

The sentry, name unknown, was placed under arrest and an Investigation Board was appointed by Lt. Col. Verne Austin, Commanding.

HOSPITALIZATION OF OKAMOTO

Okamoto was immediately hospitalized. How long a time elapsed before he was hospitalized is not known; some say 20 minutes. According to the attending physician and surgeon, every possible means of treatment was administered (since the

hospital and autopsy records are not available, we hereto report you the versions from the testimony given by the doctors at the Coroner's Inquest).

"The examination showed a small penetrating wound in the right side of the man's body which was in the region of the eighth rib, which would be about in the region of the nipple, and there was another wound on the left-hand side of the body about at the same level and perhaps a little bit lower. This wound was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and it was located a little bit outside the area of the other wound, that is outside the nipple, and from this wound abdominal contents were protruding. There was a small laceration on the left arm in the region of the elbow. The man was in a condition which we recognized to be shock, and which we interpreted to be traumatic shock arising from internal injuries. The initial treatment was directed toward attempting to get the patient out of shock. The patient made a very poor response to this treatment, in spite of the fact that the treatment given was quite extensive and was given to the best of our ability to utilize all known methods. The drugs administered were: morphine sulphate; blood plasma; external heat application; blood transfusion; adrenalin injections; tetanus anti-toxin; oxygen; ephdrin sulphate; peraldehyde; calcium gluconate; artificial respiration."

DEATH OF OKAMOTO

There were six doctors, including the Army, four evacuees, one Caucasian Chief of Medical Staff. In spite of the doctors' effort, Okamoto died at 12:10 a.m., May 25, 1944. The autopsy was performed and the following are the statement made by the doctor as to the damage done on Okamoto.

"The damage was found in the region of the scene. In the right chest area was this hole which was about one centimeter in diameter and this was a flesh wound that connected to the man's insides. There were some large rents that had been torn through the man's liver and his stomach had been shattered so that when it was first seen at the operation, it was not possible to recognize the pieces as a stomach. The portion of his liver on the left-hand side of the body as I stated before had had his internal contents pushed out through the cavity so it was sticking out and draped on the outside of his body, and this particular material was covered with sticky contents, a portion of which we recognized as spaghetti."

The doctor's statement continued,

"The gunshot wounds would be interpreted as the small

hole on the right-hand side of the body to be the point of entrance, and the large hole on the left-hand side of the body to be the point of exit."

As to the cause of death, gained from the knowledge of autopsy, Dr. Sleath definitely stated that the cause was due to shock resulting from originally internal damage which he received, which was the primary factor in the production of the shock and from which he never recovered. To this diagnosis, Dr. Sleath added that all other doctors arrived at the same conclusion.

MODOC COUNTY CORONER'S INQUEST

On May 25, 1944, from 7:30 p.m., Modoc County Coroner's Inquest was held at the Base Hospital Operating Room.

The jurors present were:

Charles Calednine
Phil J. Fish
John O'Shea
Mrs. R. C. Cox

Mrs. Anne Jamison
R. R. Baker
Daniel M. Crawford

District Attorney of Modoc County, California, Charles Lederer, conducted the hearing at the request of the Coroner. District Attorney by request of the Jurors opened the hearing with the purpose of investigating the cause of death and the persons responsible, if anyone concerned, questioned the witnesses.

Witnesses and Doctors

Henry Shiohama
Charlie Antoku
Gen Hitomi
Tom Kadowaki
Roy S. Campbell
Tsugio Soga
Giro Snow (Shinomoto)
Frank Amemiya
Ben Watanabe

Joe J. Nishizaki
George Yamashita
Kanpo Ogawa
Kazuto Matsumoto
Sadao Yamane
Masao Tokuyoshi
Masaki Nakamoto
Dr. Jack Sleath
Dr. George Hashiba

The copy of the Coroner's Inquest record is hereto appended.

Charles Lederer made the following statement: For the purpose of the record, I would like to state that as District Attorney of Modoc County, State of California, I have asked the name of the guard at the gate who actually shot the decedent, but due to Army Regulations I cannot produce it.

Verdict of Jurors

After some deliberation the Jury returned the following verdict:

"In the matter of inquest upon the body of Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, before John C. Sharp, Coroner, we, the undersigned jury summoned to appear before John C. Sharp, Coroner of the County of Modoc, in the State of California at Newell, California, on the 25th day of May, 1944, to inquire into the death of Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, have been sworn and charged according to the law and have made such inquisition as regards the decedent, and have adduced upon our authority, and for all to see, that we find that the decedent was named Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, and that he came to his death on the 25th day of May, 1944, at Newell, California, by a member of the United States Armed Forces while in the line of duty.

Signed this 26th day of May, 1944.

W. Loudon, Foreman
Charles Callendine
R. R. Baker

Phil J. Fish
John O'Shea
Daniel M. Crawford

Mrs. E.C. Cox
Mrs. Anne Jamison

Upon completion of the Investigating Board named by the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Verne Austin, a court martial of the Army Sentry who shot and killed James Shoichi Okamoto, will be held. As far as known to this Committee, the proceeding officer at the court martial with the entire new members of the Armed Forces will be transported here for the purpose. Up to date, definite date of the opening of the court martial is pending.

Immediately following the incident two bulletins were issued by the Administration for the purpose of informing the colonists of the incident. Bulletin issued from Newell, California on May 24, was as follows:

"Shoichi James Okamoto, 30, Japanese resident of the Tule Lake Segregation Center, was shot by a military police sentry on duty at the old main gate of the project late this afternoon. He was removed to the project hospital for surgical treatment. The victim of the shooting is a citizen of the United States, born at Garden Grove, California. A Board of Investigation has been named by Lt. Colonel Austin."

The followup bulletin the same day read:

"Shoichi James Okamoto, victim of the shooting by a military police sentry at the Tule Lake Segregation Center

was given two blood transfusions at the center hospital before the operation could be performed. The second transfusion was given by Jack Okamoto, his brother. The operation was performed by Dr. Hashiba, evacuee doctor at the project, assisted by Dr. Jack Sleath, Chief medical officer of the WRA staff. Captain Edwards, Army medical officer and two other evacuee doctors were present.

On May 25, press and radio distortions were kept at a minimum by the following bulletin:

"Shoichi James Okamoto, 30, of 3003-A, died at the Base Hospital early this morning as a result of a gunshot wound. He had been shot by a military police sentry at the old main entrance to the project. Lt. Col. Verne Austin ordered the sentry placed under arrest and appointed a Board of Investigation. These steps are taken by the military who are solely responsible for the investigation of the facts in the case. The victim of the shooting was employed in the construction section and had been driving a truck. He drove out through this gate to get lumber which was to be delivered to the construction job and was returning to the Center at the time. On the truck with him was one worker, a witness to the shooting, and others were near who have cooperated with the police in giving full statements of the circumstances. Mr. Best made a statement this morning which were read at all of the mess halls in the center. The statement follows:

'I regret very much that one of the center residents was shot yesterday afternoon by a military police sentry and that he died at the center hospital early this morning. Everything was done by the medical staff at the hospital to save his life and a great many people stood ready to give their blood. An investigation is being made by the military and proper disciplinary action will follow. The WRA was in no way responsible for the shooting, and I want you all to know that we regret that it happened. No further statement can be made at this time pending investigation by the Board, but as soon as facts are available they will be given to the residents in full detail.'

"At the same time, Mr. Best expressed sympathy to the bereaved members of the family and offered to make available to them any facilities of the WRA. The shooting hapened at approximately 2:20 on Wednesday, according to the official reports of the internal Security office. As soon as the first report was received an ambulance was ordered to the scene, and Mr. Okamoto removed to the center hospital. Every effort was made to save his life and no one was permitted to question him about the circumstances because of the danger of

sapping his strength. Two blood transfusions were necessary before the operation could be performed. The operation was done by Dr. Hashiba, who was assisted by Dr. Jack Sleath, Chief Medical Officer of the WRA. Captain Edwards of the military staff was also present as were three other evacuee doctors at the hospital.

FUNERAL OF SHOICHI OKAMOTO

Sympathetic attitude was displayed by the Administration and the Army toward the bereaved family such as Project Director, R. R. Best, his staff, and Colonel Austin personally visiting the family and offering sympathy and condolence; placing two cars at the disposal of the Okamoto family for the purpose of visiting relatives and friends.

On May 26, 1944, the public funeral to be held on May 31st was planned by the funeral committee, composed of Block Managers, construction and motor pool department workers.

The funeral expenses and appropriations, and money gift to the bereaved family were borne by the entire center. Many floral offerings were also made by valour (sic) staffs, as the Social Welfare, Construction, Motor Pool, Community Analysis, etc.

The wake service was held on May 30, the evening preceding the funeral. Reverend Sasaki, a Buddhist priest of high standing, officiated. Some 1200 attended.

Some 6,000 people congregated at the funeral in spite of cold and drizzling weather. It was held at the out-door stage. Plan to hold it in the High School Auditorium were abandoned because of the realization that the crowd would be too great to accommodate the entire crowd. The funeral service lasted for two hours and was an impressive one to everyone.

LIFE HISTORY OF SHOICHI OKAMOTO

Parent's Address in Japan	1035 Koshima Shinkai, Otakemachi; Saiki County; Hiroshima, Japan.
Present Address	Tule Lake Segregation Center; 3003 - A, Newell, California, U. S. A.
Family Head	Koichi Okamoto (First Son) Shoichi Okamoto (Second Son) registered Japanese citizen; Born June 12, 1914.

Name of Father	Tokuichiro Okamoto (deceased)
Name of Mother	Sekiyo Okamoto
Physical Description of Decedent	Height, 5'9" Weight, 200 lbs.
Birthplace	Garden Grove, Orange County U. S. A.
September 1920	Entered Harbor City Elementary School. Graduated in June 1927.
September 1927	Entered Lomita High School of Los Angeles County; Graduated June 1931. Attended Japanese Language School for five years.
June 1931 - 1939	Assisted Father on his farm besides operating a transfer business of his own.
1939-December 1941	Up to the time of the outbreak of the war, ^{present} was employed by S. K. Market in Los Angeles
May 15, 1942	Entered Pomona Assembly Center, California
August 23, 1942	Transferred to Heart Mountain Relocation Center. There, he applied for expatriation.
September 24, 1943	Transferred to Tule Lake Segregation Center, Newell, California.
October 1943-to date of incident	Was employed as truck driver in the Motor Pool and was assigned to the Construction Department.
May 24, 1944	At 2:20 p.m. was shot by M.P. of the U.S. Armed Forces without provocation and died at 12:10 a.m., May 25, 1944.

Character of Shoichi Okamoto

Okamoto as Family Member:

Quiet, gentle, and very considerate. Regarded as obedient son by his parents. Co-operative and kind brother to his six other brothers and sisters. When his father, Tokuichiro, died at Heart Mountain Relocation Center last year, since his family is Buddhist, he worshipped his father's tablet every night and made offerings of flowers and other things his father liked most. Good advisor to his younger brothers and sisters. He always respected and obeyed the law and he, at no time, provoked the Ad-

ministration of the Center.

Okamoto as a Member of the Society:

From his early childhood, he was well-liked by fellow students and was respected as a model student. After graduating from High School, his association was always with confidence and integrity. As a member, he was quiet, gently, and industrious, that he was at once recognized by his employer which won him the promotion. Such recommendation has been made by the owner of the S. K. Market of Los Angeles, where he was employed. All those who associated with him unanimously acclaim his noble character as a gentlemanly person.

Okamoto's Hobby:

Shoichi Okamoto as a boy liked athletic activities such as football, basketball, and hurdle. He was a member of the 'A' class football team. He never touched intoxicant and only started to smoke after confinement in the relocation center to pass away his monotonous life.

The following persons recommended his noble character and their statements are hereto appended:

Masaru Hata: Block Manager of Block 17, Heart Mountain Relocation Center in which block, Okamoto lived and decedent had close association with the recommendee.

Kazumi Kawaoka: Block Manager of Block 30, Tule Lake Segregation Center in which block deceased Okamoto lived and in which the family live at present.

Leonard Scott: 1741 North Santa Anita, Arcadia, California. An American whom the late Okamoto knew since 1937. As the recommendation states, Okamoto was intimate with this person since his childhood.

copy of the letter

Arcadia, California
June 23, 1944

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I had known James Okamoto since 1937. He is an honest, hard-working man with good personal habits. I never knew him to be quarrelsome as a trouble maker. Having worked with him and gone hunting and fishing with him, I knew him well. He was a good neighbor and a trusted friend.

/s/ A. Leonard Scott

1741 No. Santa Anita
Arcadia, California

copy

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT I, KAZUMI KAWAOKA, of War Relocation Authority, 3007-C, Tule Lake Segregation Center, Newell, County of Modoc, State of California, has been a resident of said block and have been acting in the capacity of a block manager for the past year.

That I am 37 years of age, and a person of Japanese ancestry, and I have been segregated into this center from the Topaz Relocation Center in 1943.

That I have been acquainted with the late James Shoi-chi Okamoto since his entrance into this center from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. That the deceased was a resident of our block, and I can testify on the character reference of said person. He was a very courteous and gentle person, and was never a party to any form of argument or disputes. Thus, in view of his past conduct I can say that he was truly a gentleman.

/s/ KAZUMI KAWAOKA

Dated this 23rd day of
June, 1944, at Newell,
County of Modoc, State of
California