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9 of 23

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NARRATIVE REPORT  
COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

Minidoka Relocation Center  
Hint, Idaho

Section Heads

George L. Townsend - June 1942 - August 1943  
Richard A. Pomeroy - August 1943 - June 1944  
Edward Huberman - August 1944 - March 1945  
Bert Weston - Detailed March 1, 1945 - August 1945  
Assigned August 1945 - January 1946

Compiled by  
Bert Weston

Acting Assistant Project Director  
Senior Administrative Assistant 10-15-43 to 7-1-45  
Hospital Administrator 7-1-45 to 8-13-45  
On March 1, 1945, detailed by Project Director  
to position of Acting Assistant Project Director,  
but carried on duties of Hospital Administrator  
Acting Assistant Project Director 3-1-45 to 1-31-46



## Narrative Report

### COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

By

Bert Weston

August 1945 - January 1946

The Community Management Division includes the Education, Community Activities, Community Government, Health, Welfare, Internal Security, Community Enterprise, and Analyst Sections.

For the first year of the project, Mr. George L. Townsend acted as director of this division, then called the Community Service Division. After Mr. Townsend left the project, Mr. Richard A. Pomeroy, Superintendent of Project Schools, was made Assistant Project Director in Charge of Community Management. He was appointed to this position in August 1943, and acted in that capacity until June 1944 when he was transferred to the Immigration Service. Mr. Edward Huberman came from the Washington office in August 1944, as Assistant Project Director, and held the position until March 1945, when he was detailed by the Washington office to the Oswego New York Refugee Project. On March 1, 1945, the present Acting Assistant Project Director was detailed by the Project Director to the position in addition to his duties as Hospital Administrator. In May 1945, Mr. Townsend, who had returned to W. R. A., was detailed to the position as Assistant Project Director in Charge of Community Management, for a period of two months in order to work with the Seattle group of evacuees, before he was to report to Seattle as Assistant Area Relocation Supervisor. In August 1945, the present Acting Assistant Director was assigned to the position by the Washington office.

In this report an attempt will be made to give a general review of activities and problems in the several sections of the division taking into consideration the short time that the present Acting Assistant Project Director has been assigned to the position. The comments in this report for the period covering the first year of the project were reported by Mr. Townsend and give a picture of the conditions as he saw them. No report was received from Mr. Pomeroy or Mr. Huberman for the period of their assignments.

#### EDUCATION

The Education Section had a Superintendent, High School Principal, and Elementary School Principal, under whom were teachers and certain over-all staff employees. Since the schools were to be operating under the State of Idaho Education Department it was believed wise to select



a Superintendent from the State of Idaho. From the many applicants Richard A. Pomeroy, then Principal of the Boise Junior High School, was selected. Mr. Pomeroy was at that time President of the Idaho Education Association. He was employed the latter part of July 1942, and immediately set about to recruit his staff.

The policies of the schools, standards for employment of teachers, salary and similar matters usually determined by a school board in a local community were all established by the central office of the War Relocation Authority. This streamlined the selection and appointment of teachers. Another thing which made it easy to recruit teachers, even when other school systems were experiencing a teacher shortage, was the better salaries being paid by W.R.A. over those of the average school system in Idaho and surrounding states.

Although there were many college graduates among the evacuees, none had prepared for the teaching profession since there was little opportunity for teaching in the Pacific Coast states for persons of Japanese ancestry. Provision was made to utilize the skills, education and experience of the Nisei college graduates by making them teacher aides and where qualified, to accept a full teaching load. When this announcement was made individual protests were received from parents who seemed to want only Caucasians to teach their children. Whether it was jealousy or a genuine conviction that the Nisei were unprepared to teach, nevertheless considerable persuasion had to be used with parents that Nisei had a contribution to make and that the instruction of their children would be in good hands. Nisei evacuees contributed much to the overcrowded high school classes and under the direction of Caucasian teachers performed meritorious service. A teacher training program was carried on and recognized for credit by the State University of Idaho.

A conference was planned and carried out early in October before the opening of school for all new teachers and teacher aides. This was a one week conference which had been planned by the Superintendent, his Principals, Supervisor of Curriculum, Supervisor of Teacher Training, and a representative from the Education Division of the Regional office in San Francisco. Having secured teachers from many different school systems and from widely separated parts of the country, it seemed that such a conference was essential to acquaint teachers with some of the unique problems that would likely be encountered in such an abnormal situation. Also, the conference sought to get teacher participation in the planning of curriculum, selection of textbooks, and over-all planning of the school program because of its uniqueness.

It was believed that because of the inadequate equipment and the temporary nature of the center, a different type of school and curriculum would have to be planned. Classes did not meet until early in November. Recreation halls and barrack buildings were converted into classrooms. There were no laboratories and nothing but the bare necessities of a classroom provided. While waiting for the arrival of school furniture, which was built at the Tule Lake Center, chairs which had been moved



to the center from churches in Seattle and Portland were used. Surplus mess tables were placed into service for use as desks. These tables had benches attached and consisted of a board as a seat but without backs. It was, indeed, a crude beginning. Although a careful selection was made of teacher personnel a few were not equipped emotionally for the task ahead. Some were so steeped in tradition and so inflexible that they did not remain long in the school system and replacement had to be made. On the other hand, some very excellent teachers were recruited and made a distinct contribution to the education program.

When Mr. Richard A. Pomeroy resigned as Superintendent of Schools in June 1944, Mr. Arthur Kleinkopf, Supervisor of Student Teachers, was promoted to Superintendent of Schools, and continued in that capacity until the final closure of the project. The schools closed in June, 1945, and from that date until December 15, 1945, the skeleton crew was employed to keep records, make transcripts, complete final reports and account for property. In view of the final closing of the center and the relocation of all evacuees, a tremendous amount of work was required in making of transcripts, both for high school and elementary school students, which had to be sent to the various schools to which these students were transferred, and a complete record of these transcripts was sent to the Washington office. As was stated above, the schools were operated under the State of Idaho Education Department which necessitated working very closely with the State Superintendent of Schools and the State Board of Education. The Hunt schools made a very enviable record and all credits earned by the students were accepted by other institutions and transferred without question. It was necessary for the Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Kleinkopf, to do a considerable amount of public relation work with the University of Idaho at Moscow, and the University Southern Branch at Pocatello. This work was very ably handled and a very pleasant and fine working agreement was developed.

#### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

From the beginning of the center no provision was made for a full time worker in charge of Community Activities. Fortunately there were among the evacuees some experienced and highly qualified persons. An organization was established from among the more mature Nisei which consisted of a director of Community Activities, Supervisors for each of the following activities: music, socials and entertainments, children's activities, arts and crafts, athletics. These supervisors had over-all responsibility for their respective activity in the seven districts in which the center was divided. Each district had a supervisor who was responsible for promotion, organization, and supervision of the activity under the center wide supervisor. About the only equipment available was an initial supply of athletic goods purchased by W.R.A. but which was totally inadequate to meet the needs of the community, the bare recreation halls and some chairs moved into the Center from the Japanese churches in Seattle and Portland. Although the Community Activities staff was quite willing and wanted to construct benches and tables for



use in the recreation halls, lumber was simply not available for this purpose. About half of the recreation halls were assigned for center and community use other than Community Activities for which they were originally planned and constructed. This meant that instead of the residents of each block having a recreation hall, two blocks and sometimes three blocks had to share one recreation hall. There was no cleared ground for outdoor recreational activities and the few pieces of power equipment on the center were deemed by the Project Director to be more necessary in other activities of center administration than clearing sagebrush for recreation purposes. Although several playgrounds were cleared by hand through voluntary labor the task of leveling the ground over extended areas was too great to be done by hand. It was not until the summer of 1943 that equipment was available to an extent.

The Community Activities staff did not wish to become involved in business activities so the Consumers Cooperative on the center was asked to take over the motion picture program as a business enterprise.

Despite all the handicaps, lack of equipment and facilities, an outstanding program of recreation and community activities was carried on in 1942 and 1943 due largely to the resourcefulness of the leadership. The program was well established by December of 1942 when a full time employee was secured to head this phase of center operations.

One of the outstanding features of the program was the massed choir of ninety voices consisting of Nisei seventeen to thirty years of age. The choir was under the direction of Mrs. Iwao Hara, a talented and experienced choir director from Seattle. This organization gained considerable reputation in south central Idaho, appearing in concerts in several of the larger communities and performing before overflow houses. A voluntary contribution was taken at each performance and this money was used to purchase supplies and equipment for the Community Activities program.

The resourcefulness and artistic talent of the evacuees themselves manifest itself in the many arts and crafts exhibits held during the first year of the center. Many unique and artistic items were made and exhibited frequently using sagebrush and bitterbrush which grew locally. These exhibits were for the most part the activities of the Issei.

Center sectional as well as center wide dances and socials were promoted by the Community Activities staff. These affairs proved to be about the only resemblance to life previously lived on the outside.

One recreation hall in each of the seven sections was set aside as a "social" hall and equipped with furniture which had been sent to the center by the Regional Office in San Francisco. This furniture was formerly used in the Empire Hotel in San Francisco and consisted of overstuffed furniture, coffee tables, straight chairs, pictures, drapes, etc. Since this type of equipment was lacking elsewhere on the center,



the "social" halls were established where the residents, both young and old, could hold teas, social affairs, and weddings in as respectable an atmosphere as possible under the circumstances. These "social" halls had an exceptional esthetic and psychological effect and served as a morale builder.

Perhaps the one thing on the center which gave the residents the biggest boost in morale, however, was the first Christmas when thousands of articles were received from churches and other organizations, principally from the Middle West and East. These small gifts particularly for children and consisting of toys, books, dolls, etc., proved to be the only bright spot in an otherwise drab existence.

The difficulty in carrying out a successful social and recreational program was due largely to the lack of money for equipment, decorations, refreshments, etc. Even though money had been available there was, of course, the strict rationing program and individual ration books were not issued. Such items as sugar could be secured only through the Project Steward's office and this was not practical.

Some of the more enterprising of the evacuees who had taught music, dancing, etc., before evacuation attempted to set up business on the center. This was a constant source of irritation for the Community Activities staff as well as the center administration. Many of these teachers had taught various forms of Japanese dancing. In the first year of the project, there was fear on the part of some members of the administration that to actively promote, or for that matter approve these Japanese dances, would be misunderstood by the public outside the center who might think an attempt was being made to "Japanize" the residents.

The Community Activities program finally developed into a well-rounded out activity. However, it was somewhat handicapped by turnover in appointed personnel supervisors. A full time supervisor was employed early in the spring of 1943. However, at the end of a year this supervisor was inducted into the military service and a new supervisor was hired. There seemed to be some question as to just what activities were to be carried on, with some criticism that the activity was curtailed to include athletics almost entirely. In August 1944, the Community Activities program was completely closed and Mr. Huberman, Assistant Project Director, with the new Community Activities Director, Mr. Wesley Johnson, were directed by the Project Director to work out a new Community Activities program covering all phases of activities involving a larger percentage of the evacuees. This program was worked out and carried out very successfully from that time until shortly before the closing of the project.

#### RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

From the very beginning of the center the Protestant groups cooperated in inter-denominational services. There were eight ordained Protestant



ministers among evacuees on the center and a number of Caucasian missionaries who took up residence in nearby communities, to render service to evacuees as they could. Several attempts were made by Caucasian ministers from nearby communities or of national organizations who had had little or no previous contact with evacuees to engage in religious activities on the center. These were denied admittance to the center and only those nationally recognized religious groups who had constituent members living in the center or who were invited or requested by the evacuees themselves to work among them were admitted on the premises.

A Maryknoll priest who had a Japanese congregation in Seattle prior to evacuation took up residence in a neighboring community and administered to the communicants of the Catholic faith. The Buddhist ministers in the center, representing three sects, in the beginning, worked together for all Buddhists but later divided their efforts to working with individual sects. All religious workers engaging in religious work, whether evacuee or Caucasian, met with the Chief of Community Services, first weekly, then bi-weekly, and later once a month. At these meetings problems relating to religious activities were discussed such as the exchange of equipment, use of recreation halls in which services were held by various faiths, and center policies affecting religious matters. In many ways this group performed a valuable service to the religious life of the residents and working closely as it did with the administration there were few conflicts or difficulties encountered. The policy of the national office that religious workers could not live on the center proved to be a distinct handicap. Although recognizing some of the reasons why this policy was promulgated, it was difficult to explain satisfactorily to the evacuees who yearned for the frequent and intimate contacts with Caucasian religious workers. The feeling of isolation was thus further intensified.

#### COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

As the first evacuees arrived at the center there was need for a representative in each block to administer to the needs of the residents. There was the need for supplies of various kinds and rather than having individuals going to the administration building to make their needs known the plan of having a block manager seemed to be most feasible. In addition to handing out light bulbs, reporting broken windows, locks that would not work, and numerous other details pertaining to the living quarters, the Block Manager handled distribution of mail, calling of the ambulance for sick persons, handing out notices from the administration and interpreting to the administration the needs and thinking of the residents of his block. The latter was done through the weekly meeting of the block managers with the Chief of Community Services. Because of the nature of the services rendered the block managers soon began to be known as "arms" of the administration. This was inevitable because much of the work they performed was for the administration rather than the evacuees. Then, too, the block managers were selected and appointed by the administration and not selected by the residents they



served. About half were Issei and half Nisei. They were selected for the most part because of their ability to speak both languages and because they had shown leadership in the communities from which they had been evacuated. As months went by they gradually became an effective instrument or liaison between residents and the administration but some were in disfavor with the residents. When an attempt was made to organize a community government from among elected representatives, there was considerable opposition but to a greater extent apathy on the part of the residents. One heard frequently such remarks as, "The government put us here against our will and the Project Director has the final say so on all matters affecting our lives anyway, so what can a community government do?" or, "The block managers carry to the administration our gripes so we feel no reason to elect some politician to gum up the works." After much discussion, the holding of public meetings and pressure on the part of the administration, the residents did elect a Congress consisting of two persons from each block who met and discussed the formation of a community government. At the meetings of the Congress there was much opposition to the formation of a community government. However, there was appointed from the Congress a committee of five to draft a constitution. This constitution provided for an advisory committee which would be elected from the Congress. It was a rather cumbersome organization but the thing the residents insisted upon was that there be no governing body in the true sense of the word, but rather "advisors" only to the administration. Up until the spring of 1943 politicians or political organizations among the residents had not yet developed. Advisory members elected by the Congress seemed to have been carefully selected because of their wisdom, impartiality, and standing in the community. The Congress representatives insisted on not drawing up rules and regulations or ordinances for governing themselves since they had no legal right or power to impose penalties. This matter they felt rested entirely with the administration and the courts. They insisted over and over again that the administration and residents could work better together if the so called community government could consist only of an advisory board to the Project Director; a board which could interpret to the Project Director the feelings and convictions of the residents. There can be no doubt that much of the dissension between residents and administration which developed during the later days of the project was due to the insistence of the Washington office that there be set up on the center, a form of community government along the pattern conceived by some persons in the Washington office not altogether familiar with the local center situation. The residents generally did not want the type of government outlined by the Washington office, and the residents in favor of it were self seeking professional politicians who saw in it an opportunity for power. The discarding of the advisory committee type of organization for the one in which some elected leaders secured control brought out the worst in community leadership instead of the best.

In the early days on the Center those project administrative officers responsible for community government conscientiously tried to avoid the conflict between Issei and Nisei ideologies which had caused so much trouble at the Puyallup Assembly Center. In that experience the Nisei for



the first time became complete masters of the community life and its activities with the Issei being placed in a position which they had never before taken. The Nisei political group organized at Puyallup were never permitted to secure a strangle hold on the community at Minidoka. It was largely due to the knowledge of the Puyallup experience that the administration seemed to "go along" with or "favor" the Issei in matters pertaining to community life. There was little friction among residents of the center at that time nor between residents and the administration, largely because the Issei were in the usual dominating role as they have been for generations both in the mother country and here in the United States. The administration was simply taking over a well established cultural pattern and working within the frame work of this pattern rather than establishing something quite new and foreign to this ethnical group.

The above comments give a very good picture of the community government during the first year of the project. However, during the last two years of the project, the Community Council and Block Managers took a much more active part in camp management. From the latter part of 1943 until the first part of 1945, the Community Council developed into a more or less of a buffer between the residents and the administration. All policies and communications to the residents were sent through the Community Council by the Project Director rather than dealing directly with the residents, since he felt that the Council was the representative of the residents. The residents took the position that the Community Council was elected to endeavor to get more liberal consideration from the administration and any time the Council seemed to present the administration's views in a favorable light, they were considered as being against the residents. This feeling developed to such an extent that in February 1945, a new Council was elected with the express purpose, as expressed by some of the residents, to "take care of the administration." This was evidenced by the fact that five of the seven newly elected Councilmen had recently been released from internment camps and were considered none too sympathetic with administration policies. This, however, did not work out as the residents expected as, in the opinion of the present Acting Assistant Project Director, this Community Council was more cooperative and worked closer with the administration than any previous Council. Mr. I. Oyama, the Chairman of the Council, was very active in the last few months of the project in assisting in bringing the closing policies and procedures with explanations to the residents, even though he was one of the last evacuees to leave the project, due to the fact that he was one of the residents detained by orders from military authorities.

#### HEALTH

Although the Health Section appeared on the organizational chart as a part of the Community Services, actually it operated as a separate section, with the Chief Medical Officer responsible to the Project Director. This was due largely to the Chief Medical Officer's desire to stand upon his professional prerogatives and not work under or take orders from a



layman. The medical officer from the Washington office seemed to encourage this attitude and his dealings on center matters were exclusively with the Chief Medical Officer rather than with the Chief of Community Services or the Project Director. The hospital soon became known as the "aristocracy," in which no other sections on the center dared interfere. There was not the cooperation or integration of the center program that there should have been or could have been if the type of organization that appeared on the organizational charts had been followed.

During the first year of the project the hospital was, as stated above, known as the "aristocracy" and there seemed to be a feeling of "the W.R.A. and the hospital," rather than the hospital being part of the W.R.A. During the first fourteen months of the project, the hospital was without the services of a Hospital Administrator and all the duties of that position were carried on by the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Nurse. However, in October 1943, a full-time Hospital Administrator was employed which permitted the Chief Medical Officer to spend more time with medical problems, and it gave him a better opportunity to work in closer contact with the project administration and a spirit of harmony soon developed between the hospital and the rest of the project. A very enviable record was made by the Health Section. In the three-year period there were no epidemics of any kind and very few contagious diseases. The death rate also was considerably below the average for a city of the size of the project. One of the problems in closing the hospital was the transferring of bed patients to institutions in the states of legal residence of the patients. This, however, was accomplished and all patients were transferred prior to the final closing of the project.

#### WELFARE

In the early days of the program there were not many welfare cases. The few that came to the attention of the Counsellor were widows with dependent children, senile bachelors, those evacuated from Alaska and an occasional problem resulting from a broken home. There were also a few indigents who required clothing. There were probably more cases who needed and could have benefited from the services of the Counsellor but who did not make their wants known. This attitude towards dependency was something for which evacuees have long been known on the Coast. Many regarded asking for help as a mark of personal weakness. During the first few months the Counsellor's work consisted of handling cases like the above mentioned, organizing a staff among evacuees, setting up records for clothing and other types of allowances, dealing with outside agencies such as Red Cross, State Departments of Welfare who administered old age assistance, social security, etc. Juvenile delinquency during the first year of the center was not known, but as time passed life in the center brought about conflicts and required adjustments under the abnormal living conditions. Social welfare problems increased. The Housing Section was originally separate from Welfare but because so many of the problems arising from housing assignments involved personal and family adjustments, this section was transferred to the Welfare Counsellor's office in the spring of 1943.



The Welfare Section had the same difficulty as other sections in turn over of appointed personnel, having had at least four head counsellors in charge during the period of the project, each with somewhat different views as to what the policies of the section should be. Mrs. Constance Kimmerling arrived in March 1945, from the Washington office to take over the Head Counsellor's work when Miss Lidle Fite was transferred to the Washington office. Mrs. Kimmerling occupied this position from March until the final closure, and was responsible for the immense amount of work that was entailed in the closing procedure which included the transmittal of all case histories of dependency and welfare cases to the state to which the evacuees were being relocated.

#### INTERNAL SECURITY

The Internal Security Section was composed of a Chief, Assistant Chief, and two internal security officers, appointed personnel, and approximately fifty evacuee employees. This section was responsible for the maintaining of order, and in the opinion of the present Acting Assistant Project Director, an exceptionally fine piece of work was accomplished by the Internal Security during the three years of this project. It seemed to be the philosophy of the present Chief of the Internal Security to prevent disturbances, to eliminate much adverse publicity regarding the evacuees for any minor disturbances that might occur rather than always endeavoring to arrest and have prosecuted some offender. He seemed to endeavor to carry out the wishes and policy of the Project Director regarding the handling of cases that came to his attention. The Internal Security worked with other federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Army and Navy Intelligence, and with local law enforcement officers. A very friendly working agreement was developed as the present Internal Security Chief was continually interested in public relations.

#### COMMUNITY ANALYST

The Community Analyst of the project was in a position to be the most valuable man on the project to the Project Director, his duty being to interpret the feelings and attitudes of the residents of the project. However there seemed to be some question on the part of the administrative staff as to whether or not the Community Analyst was giving a true picture of the feelings and reactions of the residents. The Analyst seemed to have the attitude, that in all matters where the administration was dealing with the evacuees, that the administration was in the wrong. In his final narrative report he makes several statements that are definitely questionable. He has cast the appointed personnel of the project into four groups: those who were definitely anti-Japanese, and this, he states, was by far the largest group; then those emotional sympathizers with the evacuees such as the missionaries; those who were on the fence and were swayed one way or another, and the fourth group, he states, were those who were entirely fair in considering the Japanese and considered the merit of the Japanese on an individual basis having sympathy for their



problems. He states that the number of appointed personnel on the project who did fall in this group could be counted on the fingers of two hands and have some fingers left over. I am sure that this statement can definitely be denied and I think this indicates that the Analyst was prejudiced in his analysis. In the first year of the project, the Project Director spent much of his time talking to local organizations and service groups, expounding the merits of the evacuees, and he had a genuine sympathy for the plight of the evacuees. There were a good many appointed personnel employees who were invariably taking up the fight for the evacuees whenever some outsider cast a disparaging remark. It is the opinion of the present Acting Assistant Project Director that it is regrettable that the Analyst should have been so biased in making his report.

It is true that many of the Analyst's reports did give a picture as it actually existed and these reports were used to very good advantage by the Project Director and other divisions.

#### CONCLUSION

The type and complexion of Community Services during the first year of center operation grew largely as a result of needs of the residents. Fortunately there was a large number of well trained, educated, and resourceful leaders among the Nisei who quickly perfected recreational and community programs. The first to relocate were the more alert, mature and best equipped among the Nisei leaders. As life in the center settled down into humdrum existence and the leaders departed, conflicts arose and new leadership was not readily available so there appeared a disintegration of some of the better organized community programs. As the Nisei moved out the Issei were called upon to take over leadership in these services. The language difficulty was a considerable barrier for the successful operation of the programs in that the Issei could not always express their feelings to the administration nor could the administration adequately present its point of view. The responsibility for community activities had been placed upon leaders among evacuees. Programs developed largely through efforts and the display of resourcefulness of these leaders. The administration used the technique of assisting evacuees in their program rather than directing them. For health, education, welfare and community government the administration accepted responsibility and directed the programs. Cooperation of the residents was in proportion to the degree they were given a voice and some responsibility in the planning and execution. Some members of the administrative staff wisely enlisted evacuee support while others failed, the failures being due largely to fundamental concepts of the ability of another race to carry on its own affairs.