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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

CENTRAL UTAH PROJECT

Topaz, Utah

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PROJECT DIRECTOR AT TOPAZ

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WELCOME RECEPTION FOR L. T. HOFFMAN, NEW  
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Combining their memberships, the Block Managers and the Community Council at Topaz sponsored a welcome reception for L. T. Hoffman, the new Project Director, on the evening of Friday, June 16, 1944.

The affair was held in the new civic auditorium and invitations went out to all blocks to send a quota of representatives to the reception as well as representatives of the various groups and organizations within the center. Between 700 and 800 invitations were issued and practically all were accepted. A small number of appointive staff members were also included in the invitation.

Even though leaders for the most part were Issei, the program was conducted entirely in English. Beginning at 7:30 PM, it lasted until after 11:00 PM.

Talks were made by different resident representatives as well as Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Roscoe Bell, Assistant Project Director in charge of operations. Interspersed between the talks were program numbers of music and dancing. Light refreshments were served.

Mr. George Shimamoto, Vice-Chairman of the Community Council served as chairman. He confined his remarks chiefly to the reading of a letter from the Director, Mr.



Dillon S. Myer, introducing and recommending Mr. Hoffman to the residents of Topaz.

The program for the evening was as follows:

Chairman.....	Mr. George Shimamoto
Prayer.....	Rev. W. Carl Nugent Inter-Faith
Chairman's Remark.....	Mr. George Shimamoto
Piano Solo.....	Miss Kei Hasegawa Clair de Lune - Debussy From Music School
Welcome Address.....	Mr. James Hirano Block Manager
Piano Solo.....	Miss Aiko Takita Polichinelle - Rachmaninoff From Music School
Welcome Address and Introduction of new Project Director....	Dr. George Ochikubo Council
Response.....	Mr. L. T. Hoffman Project Director

The first speaker called upon was James S. Hirano, Chairman of the Block Managers. In part, he said:

"Some 26 months ago, the Japanese on the West Coast were suddenly awakened to the fact that war had come which necessitated their evacuation from their homes, farms, and businesses. Shortly after, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans were shocked to find themselves in the Assembly Centers. It was natural for them to think and brood over their past---their happy memories of life in the villages of



the rolling foothills and in the large Metropolitan Areas on the Pacific slope. At that time, we all felt a common bondage brought by the impact of our strange social life in these Assembly Centers. One cannot ever forget the fellowship and the thoughts that prevailed during the first five months of our enforced internment.

"Immediately following, we were moved to a more permanent interior relocation center under the War Relocation Authority. Many did not have the slightest idea where we were going until we were already on our way. This second phase of life in the relocation center was a busy one. Everyone strove to make their humble barrack homes as livable as possible. Scraps of lumber were collected to build simple furnitures to fill the bare rooms.

The community spirit prevailed to put the finishing touches on the quickly built desert city which became our temporary homes. We can all remember the rigor of our first winter here. Various emergencies demanded the best from everyone, such as the shortage of coal which necessitated hauling by convoy from the distant snow-covered Utah mines. Gradually, under the direction of the predecessor director, Mr. Charles F. Ernst, our community settled down into a more normal everyday living.

"I believe it is particularly significant that we are gathered here to welcome the new project director, Mr.



L. T. Hoffman. Most of us are aware of the fact that we are entering the third and distinct phase of the evacuee history. The composition of our community is gradually changing and we are faced with the prospect of a population composed principally of elderly isseis, large families with school-aged children, wives and families of enlisted men in the armed forces.

"Because of family circumstances, large groups of residents are unable to relocate at this time although they would like to resettle. There are others who are aged and sick. Young children in the formative stages present a great problem to all of us. The older issei parents, although not vocal, are heartbroken in seeing their sons taken into the armed services. Many of the young people have left the family folds to resettle in the four corners of the United States. Also, the unexpected length of the present conflict is a depressing factor which adds to the present situation in which we find ourselves.

"Large portions of the residents have been seriously thinking lately of their post relocation and war plans. With increasing talk of the West Coast relocation and accelerated speed towards an early peace, no thinking evacuee can help but seriously consider his future and his families' future. Indications are that the residents will be faced with many complex problems in the near future which will



necessitate an honest and sincere appraisal. In order that we may avail ourselves of the best results, there is a distinct need for the closest kind of cooperation and thinking between the various resident organizations and the project administration representing the War Relocation Authority.

"Therefore, it is important that we resolve at this time to clearly consider our mutual problems. The residents at large can do very little regarding the fundamental functions of the War Relocation Authority. However, much can be accomplished by a sincere, personalized understanding, and approach by both the residents and the staff members. After these months of project living, the people will understand the basic policies of the agency.

"With the coming of the new project director, we are anxiously looking forward to an administration based on understanding and cooperation. The people of Topaz would like to have the director, Mr. Luther F. Hoffman, administer to the needs of the residents, humanely and wisely, within the framework of his authority.

"In retrospect, we would desire to be able to look back to our present experiences and feel that our faith in American justice was not in vain. In the future postwar relocation days the attitudes, hopes, and contributions of the Japanese Americans now living in the relocation centers will largely be determined by the kind of treatment and reactions which we experience in our



present unnatural life. The project director and the residents have a common duty and goal.

"In closing, representing all of the resident workers, may I welcome to the project our new director, Mr. Luther T. Hoffman. Thank You."

In his remarks, Roscoe E. Bell, assistant project director in charge of operations, said in part:

"Mr. Chairman and friends, it is a pleasure for me to be chosen to speak for the Administrative staff at this reception being given in honor of Mr. Hoffman, our new Project Director. It is particularly a pleasure because I have had an opportunity to work very closely with Mr. Hoffman during the past two weeks, an opportunity few of you have had.

"During this time I have had an opportunity to see just how Mr. Hoffman approaches problems and to see what his attitudes are toward problems which arise in Topaz.

"This close association with him has convinced me, as well as other members of the appointed staff, that the things said about him in Mr. Myer's letter are all true, that he is a capable administrator, that he can give leadership to us in the administration of Topaz, that he is a very fair person to work with, that his experiences enable him to see and to understand the situations which arise in a relocation center.

"These qualifications are important and have given the appointed staff full confidence in his ability to lead us, but



what is more important is his attitude toward the job which he has to do. I can say with full conviction that Mr. Hoffman's first aim is to work in such a way that needs of the people in the center are met; that his first consideration is toward the people; and that his solution to problems is the right solution in terms of permanent welfare of the people who are residents in this center.

"I am convinced that as time goes on and you have an opportunity to become acquainted with Mr. Hoffman, you will know that his interest is the common interest of the people in the center and that he merits your full confidence and the co-operation which you have given to the appointed staff in the past, and that by working together cooperatively, successful administration of the center can be accomplished."

In his address of welcome from the Community Council, Dr. George Ochikubo, chairman of the Council, extended a most cordial welcome to the new Director. In opening, he remarked on the fact that the National Director had written a letter to Topaz about Mr. Hoffman in which Mr. Hoffman was spoken of most highly. He said that this letter carried weight with him and many others, and remarked on the fact that all those who have met Mr. Myer hold him in the highest esteem; thus his recommendation of Mr. Hoffman was readily accepted.

He said that in the two weeks he had known Mr. Hoffman since his arrival here, he had developed a strong confidence in



him. Some significance was attached to his remarks, when he said that Mr. Ernst was so tall that he, Dr. Ochikubo, had to turn his face at a 45° angle upward to look into his face, while Mr. Ernst had to stoop over and look downward to see Dr. Ochikubo. But with the new Director, they could face each other and look at each other eye-to-eye.

He injected some humor into his talk by calling attention to the fact that so far none had been able to find out what Mr. Hoffman's initial "T" stands for. He said however, that he has his own system of finding out such things.

All in all, the Council chairman spoke in a humorous vein with a more or less serious undertone, but from his remarks, it was evident that he was sincere in his welcome to the new Project Director.

Mr. Hoffman's response to the addressee of welcome concluded the evening's program. Briefly summarizing, he said:

"I am very proud to be the 'Papa-san' of this community, both because of having such a large family and because of the quality of the people. I have the utmost confidence in the people of this community and in the fine staff that I have to work with. You people all know the need for large families having everyone work together, with each person doing his or her share. So I would like to ask for your help and cooperation in making this a livable community.

"We recognize that differences of opinion will arise



as between the residents and the staff and among the residents themselves. In my position as administrator coordinator I do want to talk with various group leaders in an effort to find out what the problems are in order to help iron out any conflicts, and learn what the major assets are.

"Going through the early days of center life at Gila and having some contact with WRA people and the heads of cooperating national agencies, I feel at home here at Topaz. I hope to bring to all of you something of what conditions are outside and the thinking of the Washington office on matters of important policies.

"I ask for your patience and understanding during the time it will take to get familiar with the problems here. It is my own desire to understand the people here as individuals and do what we can as a staff to meet the needs of this community in terms of the present and the future."

The following day, June 17, at their regular meeting, the Block Managers had the following comment to make on the reception for their minutes:

The joint committee formed to handle the Project Director's reception held last evening, June 16 at the community auditorium was complimented on and thanked by the chairman for the excellent manner in which the program was carried out.

It was noteworthy that there was equal representation from each project block and the response to the community wide



reception was very encouraging.

Block Managers unanimously agreed the plan for the first time brought into active participation many of the individuals and blocks which heretofore had little or no representation on community wide affairs of this nature.