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COMMITTEE RECORDS

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER MEMOS

1945

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MEMO

July 18, 1945

In conversation with Mrs. Gracia D. Booth this morning, we discussed the probable division of work and time here in the office.

We agreed that it is undesirable to lay down any hard and fast divisions between the Congregational Committee work and the Fair Play Committee work, but that both Mrs. Booth and I would fit into the work of the other in such ways as might seem desirable as we go along.

At the same time, it seemed best that we should have some basis for planning work to be done and expenses involved. The Fair Play Committee is to contribute \$50.00 a month towards the office expenses continuing on from May; that is, paying for June, July, etc. at least until September. It was pointed out that the room rent for this office is \$30.00 a month and it was suggested that perhaps one-third of this might be a fair share of the Fair Play Committee. The telephone bills run \$20.00 a month or more and that perhaps one-half of this would be the minimum which was used by the Fair Play Committee. Also, it was suggested that on this basis, that perhaps one-fourth the Secretary's time for direct Fair Play Committee business would be as much as would be fair. Of course, it is expected that there will be some things which are both Fair Play and Congregational Committee responsibilities which would not be counted in this one-fourth.

Nothing was specifically agreed upon as to the use of mimeograph and paper. Presumably, small amounts of mimeographing might be done as part of the office work and on the time of the Secretary. Larger amounts involving 100 or more copies would presumably be made at the expense of the committee concerned. As before, postage would be paid by the committee involved and stationery provided as heretofore or as may be agreed upon for any specific mailing.

As in the past, each committee will have its own supplies of literature and any considerable use or distribution will be handled in accordance with the policy of each committee as to what is paid for and what is distributed free of charge.

October 24, 1945

Memorandum to G. Raymond Booth,
Council for Civic Unity of Los Angeles;

Re: Visit to Lomita Air Strip, PHA Housing
Project for Returning Evacuees.

Yoshino Seiicho - age 62
Mrs. Yoshino Seiicho - age 48.

10 children in family, ages 4 to 23. The eldest child, a girl, 23, is a semi-invalid. There are 3 children outside, who are self-supporting. Of the 7 left in Camp, 5 are in school in Lomita, walking back and forth every day.

At 35¢ a meal the food for this family averages a daily cost of \$9.45. The rent for two small barrack rooms is \$25.00 a month (\$15.00 per month for a single barrack). Each family must make a deposit of \$10.00 for breakage in addition to the rent.

Average Monthly Expense - Food	\$283.50
- Rent	<u>25.00</u>

Total Monthly Expense for Room and Board only -	\$308.50
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As yet no clothing allowance has been made.

Before evacuation Mr. Seiicho ran his own nursery in Los Angeles, at the corner of West Jefferson and Kenwood, and was completely self-supporting. This nursery, valued at \$3,000.00, was sold for \$75.00 cash, to an Armenian. They gave their furniture to the Catholic Wrecking Department.

With no capital, and no furniture, Mr. Seiicho feels that he cannot soon find a job which will pay him enough to get this large family of dependent young children out of a camp set-up. Even if a house could be found he feels that he could not earn enough to pay rent, and feed and clothe them all.

Mr. Fujii - age 64.
Mrs. Fujii - age 55.

No children. Miscarriage in early marriage has been followed by ill health on the part of Mrs. Fujii. She is now so crippled with arthritis that she is bed-ridden and must be cared for constantly by her husband. Sometimes she hobbles slowly on her crutches to the latrines (about one-half block away) but must be assisted in sitting and rising by her husband. She needs shoes, size 5EE badly, and was pathetically eager for a hot water bottle for the chilly nights, and fruit and vegetable juices. The small gas stove

heats the room adequately enough, but when she has it on all night or for any great length of time during the day, the fumes produce a severe headache. Before evacuation Mrs. Fujii could wait on herself and help a bit in the store which they operated in Los Angeles, living in the back part.

The arthritis quickly grew worse in the colder, damper climate of Granada, until she became quite helpless. The WRA had made no arrangements for ambulance transportation from the Union Station in Los Angeles to Lomita. The nurse on the train, who was very kind all the way, arranged for an ambulance, and the driver asked for a \$20.00 fee when he left them off at Lomita. They told him that they had been given no money for this purpose and said he must collect it from WRA, who were supposed to deliver them to their new home.

This couple have absolutely no funds, no furniture, having sold their merchandise in a forced sale during the 3-day period before evacuation. They had expected to come to a small family unit apartment where there would be cooking and bathing facilities so that they could care for themselves privately.

Mr. Buichi Watanabe - age 82 (Married more than 60 years)
Mrs. Miyo Watanabe - age 84.

3 married children - all with families of their own - and endeavoring to find housing and jobs for themselves. One son and his family are living in the barn of a Japanese family at Marysville. This family has a 22-year old son in uniform in the Philippines, acting as an interpreter for the U. S. Army.

Mrs. Watanabe is blind, deaf and almost completely helpless. Her powers of locomotion are completely uncoordinated. She lies in bed all of the time, never speaking a word. Her mind seems completely vacant, although she responds quickly to affection. Mr. Watanabe carries her on his back to the men's latrine, where he lifts her up to a wash-tub, which is rather high on the wall, and bathes her like a baby. In fact, she has so little control of herself that he must care for in every way like a baby. They very much want a wheel chair for her.

Before evacuation this couple had a small shop where they sold "jewelry" which they themselves made of shells, macaroni, et cetera. They lost everything in the process of evacuation, so that they have absolutely no funds, no furniture, and no plans for the future. They long for a small family unit place, with toilet and bath facilities, and a little stove where he can cook for them both.

General Comments:

In every case of the dozen or more interviewed these people said that before leaving the re-location center they were assured of individual family units with rooms and furniture and cook stove where they could once more live in more normal family style.

They were told that they would only need to provide for themselves cooking utensils, and were assured that the living quarters here would be far nicer than they were in the centers, and that they would never have to worry anymore.

Their faith in WRA is gone....they are utterly discouraged and hopeless in many cases. The majority (there are over 200, representing 77 families) are old, crippled, blind, getting around on canes or crutches, and several are bed-ridden and completely helpless.

There are no hospital facilities in the camp, no resident Doctor or nurses, and as yet no telephone on the project, which is 2 miles out of Lomita.

For awhile a Caucasian was hired by FRA to plan the meals, and buy the supplies, which were cooked by the Japanese themselves. They said that the food was so meagre and so poor in quality that they asked to handle the mess hall themselves. For three days a committee of Japanese have been in charge, buying, cooking and serving cooperatively, but they find the \$1.00 a day allowance is not sufficient for a balanced diet, and sufficient food for the ill and babies, school lunches, and for those on very special diets. Their luncheon today consisted of bowls of rice and a thin soup of some kind.

The barracks rooms were not ready when they came, being dirty and containing only an army cot each, with a pad and extremely dusty, dirty Army blankets.

The huge oil-burning ranges in the mess hall were not operating properly, and the Project Director told us that he rigged up a stove of sorts for them to heat babies' bottles on and cook their rice. Consequently, they were forced to eat much cold food and sandwiches. This afternoon before we left some men came to work on the ranges in an effort to put them into proper shape. The County Welfare Workers with whom we talked were exceedingly kind and sympathetic, but were appalled at the magnitude of this responsibility placed upon their shoulders by the WRA, and felt that it was extremely regrettable that old people, infirm, crippled and blind, and young children, were being sent here to live before the place could be made humanely habitable. We were told that another 550 odd were arriving in Los Angeles this week-end and that they would be expected to take care of more than half of these.

Respectfully submitted,

Gracia D. Booth, Executive Secretary
So. Calif. Fair Play Committee

Mr Crotty

PACIFIC COAST COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN PRINCIPLES AND FAIR PLAY
Southern California Branch
875 So. Manhattan Place
Los Angeles 5

Nov 28, 1945

MEMORANDUM TO HOMER D. CROTTY

On Wednesday, November 28th, Mrs. Thayer, Mrs. Scotty Tsuchiya and I spent the day visiting the F.P.H.A. projects for returning Japanese at the Lomita Air Strip and at ElSegundo.

In Lomita, a city of 811, we found the women eager to share their worries with us. At that time this one particular unit of about 200 people had been without hot water for many days, and with no water at all in that unit for the last three or four days. Seeing the lines of snow white clean clothes we found upon inquiry that these women had carried them to another laundry room in another unit several blocks away, had washed there and carried them back to hang on their own clothes lines. When in complete repair there are at best, in this unit, only three sets of laundry tubs to accommodate 200 people. All water for drinking, bathing babies, scrubbing floors, etc., must be carried from this central washroom to each of their barracks, often quite a long distance.

In the washroom there is only one stationary ironing board for the use of all these women and there are no facilities for ironing in their barracks rooms. And there are approximately 300 children in school whose clothing must be kept washed and ironed.

One of the women's latrines had three toilet seats, one of which had been constantly out of repair, leaving only two which were usable. There were also five wash basins and five shower jets in a small unpartitioned corner room. On one side of the men's latrine next door the women have access to three more toilet seats and approximately the same number of shower jets.

Those mothers who must make up baby formulas daily and ~~the~~ sterilize ~~the~~ baby bottles must all walk over to the kitchen of the big mess hall which is centrally located to get this task done. They try to heat water to warm the baby bottles on the small smelly oil heaters in their barrack rooms, but it is a slow process at best. Another problem with which they are trying to cope is the making up of school lunches for the children early each morning. As the children must walk approximately two miles to school which necessitates an early start.

In Lomita there are both barracks and trailer type housing units. In the barracks rooms there is only a cot for each person with a pad or thin mattress and two or three army blankets. ~~The~~ light bulb in the ceiling and a small oil heater--that's all--no chair, cupboard or chest for putting away clothing. No table, mirror or floor covering of any kind. In one "home" which we visited the mother was quite concerned about the unusually large holes and cracks in the floor which made it really impossible to heat this room in which there were four cots, a small curtained-off corner for clothing and two old wooden packing boxes upturned for table use. Her thin faced nine or ten-year old daughter who must be kept absolutely ~~time~~ ^{quiet} and off her feet all of the time because of her heart condition, occupied one cot. Bitterly the mother and her next door neighbor reminded us of the homely but comfortable furniture which their husbands had made in the relocation centers but which they were not allowed to bring along to the projects. They said they had been assured that everything they needed would be furnished here and that these quarters would be far more comfortable than their center homes had been. They said they were told that they could have their furniture shipped to them only when they had relocated once again out of these housing projects into permanent homes.

The trailer houses while cramped and close and much smaller are, nevertheless newer, cleaner and have built-in tiny cupboards and ~~the~~ small folding table with two folding chairs to each. However, they are not connected up with water and in neither the barracks ~~nor~~ the trailers can hotplates be used. Wistfully the older folks spoke of their longing to be able to make a cup of tea between meals or a hot drink at bedtime or to heat something once in a while for a sick or ailing person.

In one over-crowded but spotlessly clean trailer home we found a slender young mother with a patient smile but tired eyes who kept saying that if she only had a hotplate she could easily feed her brood of five and their father much better food on less than \$6.00 per day which they are now spending at the mess hall. The average cost, they tell us, is about \$1.00 per day for adults--half price for tiny tots. This little family occupies two trailers for which they must pay \$ a month rent, plus a \$5.00 security deposit on each.

As we were preparing to leave we heard a rumor to the effect that a lone elderly widow of 67 had died the day before without medical attention. Immediately we proceeded to the project office to check this story. The project manager told us that a Mrs. Takahashi who had lived in ~~one~~ barracks room with three other elderly widows had passed away the morning before. She had been under the weather for some time and her three old lady friends wished to call in a doctor from Lomita but she had objected. Finally, however, as her condition rapidly grew worse one of them went to the project manager and asked that a doctor be called. Unable to come immediately, the doctor sent out a nurse who was there in 20 minutes, but Mrs. Takahashi had died before she arrived.

We went to the barracks room and talked with one of the old ladies who told us essentially the same story adding that Mrs. Takahashi had steadfastly insisted that no doctor could help her because she was suffering from a long time bladder condition and knew how to take care of herself and was sure it would "pass off in a few days." Apparently she caught cold and complications set in.

In this case we found no evidence of negligence on the part of the camp director -- there could be no doubt, however, that the cold floors, her feeble efforts to prepare properly the special diet, ^{required} in her case on the little oil heater, and the general lack of comfort, did not help her toward recovery.

Had there been a resident nurse on the project or even a visiting physician coming in occasionally, the seriousness of her illness might have been detected earlier and she might have had a fighting chance to live. After all, she was only 67. Her husband passed away October 13th in the relocation center just before they were to leave for Los Angeles and she was all alone.

At El Segundo we found mostly elderly unattached men and women, most of whom are ill, crippled, blind or bedfast. We stood by one cot where lay 86 year old Mrs. Hindo who had just been brought in from the Los Angeles Union Station where she had arrived all alone and unattended from Rohwer Center with no other Japanese on the train. She lay there sleeping the sleep of complete exhaustion. This was Wednesday and she was bound for her home in Hawaii on a ship supposed to be leaving over the week end. No luggage checks could be found in her purse and she had no change of clothing or night clothes. Since she neither spoke nor understood English, we wondered how she made her wishes known on the train, or if she simply lay in her berth unfed and uncared for on that long train trip.

In this same room a few days before we had stood beside the cot of a man of about 65 who was suffering from cancer of the stomach. In the Center he had been cared for in a hospital, but with the closing of the Center he had been re-evacuated to a

barrack room at ElSegundo and with no one to care for him but his tiny wife who had been under the doctor's care for a nervous condition. She was endeavoring to keep him comfortable and since special food was not prepared in the mess hall for anyone, she was trying to buy the kind of food he ought to have and preparing it on a little oil heater beside the cot. They had been in El Segundo for several days when we first saw him, but today we learned that he had just been removed to a hospital.

In the adjoining room we found four cot beds, no chairs at all, and four old men all needing nursing care ~~on~~ attention in one way or another. One old fellow had his left leg off at the hip--the result of an accident while working on the railroad here in California. Another was almost helpless from senility and lay quietly on his cot all the time. The third one had absolutely no control of any bodily functions and could only move about as two persons held him up and he shuffled his feet along in short, jerky motions.

On the cot next to him, with not more than two or three feet of space in between, sat a sweet-faced, blue eyed, snowy-haired man of 84 who managed to keep himself neat and clean. He is the son of a Japanese father and a Swedish mother. He was born in New York City and never lived in Japan, and is a veteran of the Spanish-American War. With no chairs (at that time) he, like the others, must either lie down on his cot all day or just sit on the edge with no support for his tired old back. Someone brings him his food. He has no clothing at all other than the thin blue cotton pajama suit which he had on and white cloth bedroom slippers. He was evacuated from Sawtelle Veterans' Home and is hoping to be returned there soon.

In another long barracks building we found twenty some cots on which sat or lay elderly men who each pay \$10.00 per month for a cot and an initial security deposit of \$5.00. This single long one-room barracks brings in \$200.00 or more rent, plus \$100.00 in deposits which will be returned unless an Army blanket is lost or ruined in some way or if some harm comes to one of the cots or mattresses.

All alone in another tiny room a middle-aged blind man sat hour after hour on the edge of his cot before the open door, his sightless eyes lifted toward the sky, his hands quietly folded in his lap.

The camp proper is divided by a paved thoroughfare which each old person, no matter how slow, how bent or helpless, and each child must cross ~~each~~ three times a day if he eats at the mess hall. At the time of our visit there had not yet been put up any stop or slow-up signs to protect them from the speeding cars and trucks, which turn off here to avoid the heavy traffic of the main highway running beside the camp. The mess hall itself, a former roadside inn, is much more cheerful than those in the other projects.

In a stucco house nearby with toilet and bath facilities we found some of our most helpless old people, up in ~~their eight~~ years or bedridden. One couple in their eighties who had first come to Lomita had been transferred over here - the wife is totally blind, completely helpless, and with no control of her bodily functions. She must be cared for ~~like~~ her husband just like a baby.

In another room we found Mrs. Fujii, a very bad arthritis case whom we had also met in Lomita and who must be cared for constantly by her husband, although she moves around a bit on crutches.

In the larger living room we found a number of cots, one occupied by an elderly white haired mother whose ^{lower}limbs seemed paralyzed. She was injured in a fall in Rowher Center and does not walk at all. She and her husband ~~brought her~~, daughter and son-in-law, with three grand-children, are expecting to sail for Hawaii on the boat

leaving over the week-end,--back home in time for Christmas they said! A resident nurse, warm-hearted and sympathetic was just going on the job that day and a small but adequate first-aid room with medical and nursing supplies was being fitted out under the sponsorship of the American Friends Service Committee.

Fifty-eight unattached, elderly men, most of them needing medical attention and nursing care, were due to arrive at ElSegundo on Monday, December 3d--the residue from Rohwer. It is expected that 200 or more will be housed at ElSegundo soon.

We were told that Hillcrest Sanitarium has approved the dismissal of a sizable number of patients who cannot leave because there is no place for them to go. These men cannot do full-time hard work but most of them are able to do some sort of part time work at least and so assist in their own support.

From our careful observations in these two camps it would seem that several things need serious consideration:

1. The question of continued funds for relief after the WRA is out of the picture.
2. Relocation job placement interviewers on the project. The expense of going to and fro between the projects and the WRA offices is prohibitive for many.
3. Chairs - chairs - chairs and more chairs in every housing project.
4. The use of hotplates in barracks and trailer homes, especially for mothers with young babes and for old and bedfast people.
5. Special diets for those who need them, prepared at the mess hall.
6. Slow-down or stop signs to protect those crossing the highway from their barracks to the mess hall at ElSegundo.
7. Last, but perhaps most important, resident nurses in every project and a visiting doctor on regular days - and perhaps a clinic.

Should one school child bring home measles, whooping cough, or scarlet fever, especially to Lomita, the situation could sky-rocket to epidemic proportions in no time, and under the comfortless, almost primitive living conditions into which this final evacuation has forced these people, much unnecessary suffering and many deaths could result. At best, no one, however husky, can be "comfortably ill" in these camping out project quarters.

We sincerely believe that the War Relocation Authority still ~~have~~ has a terrific on-going responsibility for this, their own burden of dislocated humanity, for many months--nay years to come--how can they slide out from under.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Gracia D. Booth

Mrs. Gracia D. Booth, Executive Sec., So. Calif. Branch

Maynard Force Thayer

Mrs. Maynard Force Thayer, Chairman, Pasadena FairPlay Committee