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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
CENTRAL UTAH PROJECT
TOPAZ, UTAH

PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY BALL AT TOPAZ

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With the new civic auditorium in Topaz completed in December the administration began to look around for ways in which to make use of it for better center-wide and regional public relations services.

In early January, the President's Birthday Ball and March of Dimes committee representing Millard County, in which Topaz is located, through Mrs. Clara Bliss of the neighboring Abraham community, county chairman, asked Topaz to participate in a ball to raise funds for the infantile paralysis fight. The Administration responded by inviting the county committee to assist in staging a ball in the new auditorium.

This invitation was immediately accepted and plans were laid to make this one of those regional affairs about which the Administration had been thinking.

Since the infantile paralysis campaign has a close relationship to hospital work, the Topaz Hospital accepted the responsibility of sponsoring the Ball, with the cooperation of the county committee. Miss Margaret McCaffery, superintendent of nurses at the hospital was named chairman of the committee for Topaz. Working closely with Mrs. Bliss and her committee, Miss McCaffery and the Topaz committee developed a program that turned the affair into more than just a dance. The aim of the committee was that it should serve as a medium for acquainting as many of our neighbors from adjacent communities with the people of Topaz as possible.

Through the Community Council, residents of Topaz became a part of the over-all committee to develop plans. The community council named a sub-committee that joined with the hospital committee, which included doctors, nurses, and other employees of the hospital.

The objective of 1100 people in attendance at the Ball was established as it was felt that this size crowd would fill the auditorium to capacity for pleasant dancing. Mrs. Bliss assumed responsibility for the sale of 50 tickets which would mean 100 persons among the residents of the neighboring communities, while the Topaz committee assumed responsibility of the sale of 500 tickets, each good for one couple. So that plans might be developed into a smoother working machine the combined committees representing the residents, the appointive staff and the county at large held a number of meetings at which details were worked out. Numerous sub-committees were named to take charge of various details. The evening of Friday, January 28, was chosen as the date for the affair and it became the major activity of the center for the period of a week or so before this date.

Since the principal purpose of the gathering, over and beyond the aim to raise as much money as possible for the cause, was to promote district good will and friendly public relations, a great deal of stress was placed on the matter of acquainting our neighbors from district communities with the staff and residents of Topaz.

Reports from Mrs. Bliss indicated that there was also a

great desire on the part of the population at large to acquaint itself with Topaz.

The response in the purchasing of tickets was more than gratifying. Several days before the Ball, Mrs. Bliss reported that all of her allotment of 50 tickets had been exhausted and there was still a demand which was quickly supplied.

In the organization plans as the result of numerous meetings, committees assumed charge of such features as the decorating of the hall in gay red, white, and blue colors, the planning of an entertainment program to be presented during the course of the dance and the serving of a simple punch with cookies.

Since the desire was to give a real welcome to our guests from the outside the first greeting was given at the main gate, where a troop of uniformed Boy Scouts met the guests. A scout boarded each car to guide it down through the center to the auditorium, where another detail of scouts assumed charge of orderly parking of the cars. The guests then were received at the main door of the auditorium by the joint committee of appointive staff and residents, who made them welcome to the affair and turned them over to the hosts and hostesses who ushered them to the cloak room in the rear of the auditorium.

As soon as their wraps were checked they were escorted to tables where name cards were printed and pinned to their clothing. Another group of hosts and hostesses then took them to designated corners of the auditorium where they were introduced

around and met the staff members and their wives and the residents with their wives.

Despite the fact that several days prior to the affair the weather turned bitter cold and dropped to sub-zero temperature and on the night of the Ball the thermometer hung well below the zero point, dozens of carloads of guests from the outside streamed through the main gate from 8 o'clock on. It was estimated that when the last outside guests had arrived between 150 and 200 persons were present from the neighboring communities. Some of these guests drove as far as 60 and 70 miles from the County Seat of Fillmore, through the intense cold and over slippery road to be present.

Another occurrence is of significant interest in connection with the affair should be mentioned here.

On January 27, Charles F. Ernst, Project Director, received a telephone call relayed from the Washington offices, appraising him of some tragic war news that was about to be released, and suggesting that precautions should be taken to close the center.

The staff was not aware of the nature of the news until that night, when radio news report told of the terrible atrocities perpetrated against captured American soldiers on Bataan, by Japanese soldiers, and the "March of Death".

The next day, that is, January 28, the day of the Ball, the newspapers of Salt Lake City called Mr. Ernst to get news of the reactions to these reports at the center, and to find out what measures were being taken to close the center.

Mr. Ernst wastold that at least two centers, Gila and Post-on, had been closed, so that no one could enter from the outside, or leave from the inside.

Since there had been no reactions whatever, Mr. Ernst told the newspapers:

"No, we are not closing the center. In fact interest is stirred up over the President's Birthday Ball scheduled for to-night. Instead of closing the gates, we are throwing them wide open and inviting our neighbors from the surrounding communities to come and get better acquainted with us."

The people came, enjoyed themselves, nor was there the slightest incident to mar a perfect evening.

Attendance on the part of staff and residents was also up to the greatest expectations. It was estimated that no less than 1200 persons were present before the evening concluded. The music for the affair was contributed by the town band at Delta, composed of five pieces with the vocalist.

Mr. George Lafabregue, acting as master of ceremonies, opened the evening's festivities by introducing Mrs. Clara Bliss, the Millard County chairman, and Director Ernst, who welcomed the guests to the affair. This was followed by a vocal selection by Mrs. Claude Pratt, "The Flag Without a Stain", accompanied by Mrs. Claude C. Cornwall, after which a grand march under the direction of Claude C. Cornwall was lead by Mr. Ernst and Mrs. Bliss.

The pleasing thing about the grand march was that practical-

ly everyone of the 1200 persons present joined in, which was a quick and easy way of breaking the ice and getting residents of Topaz and their guests mixed together. At the conclusion of the march Mr. Cornwall sang "Hi Neighbor", during which all of the guests turned and shook hands with their neighbors before going into the first dance.

The entertainment intermission came at 11 o'clock and included a number of features presented on the auditorium stage, with lighting effects.

The outstanding feature of this was a tableaux representing the work in combating infantile paralysis, presented by nurses and nurses' aides of the hospital, with a victim of the dread disease the center of the tableaux in a wheel chair.

The program presented follows:

Stage presentation	- Stage Manager Mitsuru Nishio
Tumbling Team	- Joker Hada and Clem Nakai
Accordianist	- Dale Johnson
Readers	- Mr. David Evans, Seiko Akahoshi, and Chigeki Sugiyama
Nurses' Aides	- Suga Ineuye and Sumi Matsuhara
Patient	- Teruko Kaneko
Reader	- Lydia Mochizuki

As a result of the complete success of this Ball, it is felt that the broader way of creating continually growing good relations between Topaz and the surrounding communities has been found. The auditorium has opened a way of bringing these

neighbors into the center for contact with the residents in a normal and natural manner. Already a number of future events are in the offing. To just what extent they will be developed cannot be said but it is possible that some social gathering can be arranged for one of the coming holidays of February.

More and more as people of the region begin to know our residents it is felt that better relations will develop, so that it will become more of a normal community with unrestricted associations back and forth.

Of equal importance in this instance is the fact that there was a generous response to the cause of the fight against infantile paralysis.