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From Radio Broadcast over
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File

Many of the evacuees —

P. 8 seven hundred miles.

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"REPORT TO THE NATION"

(PARTIAL ORIGINATION)

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 1942

SWITCH

HUNTLEY: This is Chet Huntley speaking from Poston, Arizona! You won't find it on your map, for this town of some six thousand is only seven weeks old, and was named in memory of Charles Poston, an early pioneer and first Arizona delegate to the National Congress.

Hundreds of miles in all directions the desert undulates across the Great Southwest, broken here and there by the jagged escarpment of mountain ranges that are gradually burying themselves in their own sand and erosion. Down through the very middle of this barren wasteland, from the Grand Canyon to the Gulf of California, the Colorado River carries its snow-fed supply of life-giving water. The river bottom, ten and fifteen miles wide in places, is a long and green oasis winding through the blistering desert...mile after mile of it, piled upon and against itself.

Here in this river bottom the Federal Government selected a townsite on which to place Japanese evacuated from the strategic areas along the Pacific Shoreline. That this location approaches inaccessability is borne out but the fact that the nearby town of Parker, Arizona, sixteen miles distant, has one telephone. The next nearest town is Blythe, California; seventy-five miles out across the desert. And going toward Los Angeles, the first service station is some eighty miles away.

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HUNTLEY:
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The first indication of this project was brought home to the citizens of Parker, Arizona, about eight weeks ago when one hundred trucks of the Army Engineers rolled into town. Eight weeks ago, this townsite was river silt sparsely covered with mesquite, willows, and bunch grass. Today, the land is cleared, telephone lines are being put in, the streets are laid out, electric power is here, and hundreds of frame dwellings are in all stages of construction...ranging all the way from blue print to completion. It's a testimonial to the work of the Army Engineers. You can perhaps hear the engines, shovels, caterpillars, and equipment in the background -- equipment which never rests around here. The administration of Poston is headed by Mr. Wade Head, of the War Relocation Authority. He is standing right here beside me in the Administration Building.

Mr. Head, I most certainly do not want to convey the idea that everything here is smooth sailing. I would prefer to face the facts. I see here wonderful potentialities and the promise of great things to come. But what are some of the unpleasant aspects?

HEAD:

Well, we're new and young here. Construction is always difficult, especially when the residents are living on the premises. Any housewife will tell you that. Also, without lawns, gardens, and trees still only in the plans, the heat is making everyone uncomfortable. And with the streets still unpaved and being constructed, the dust is terrible. Aside from the terrific pace we must maintain in order to provide for the Japanese people, the rest is only a matter of patience and hard work.

HUNTLEY: How are the Japanese people taking it?

HEAD: They are splendid about it. They are pitching in with enthusiasm to start this area blooming into a real garden spot.

HUNTLEY: Will there be plenty of water to irrigate these acres, Mr. Head?

HEAD: Yes. A ditch is now being dug from the river and it will carry plenty of water.

HUNTLEY: All right, Sir. Thank you.

Now here is one of the new residents of Poston...

Mr. K. Nishmura, formerly identified with some of the biggest agricultural projects in California, and Executive Secretary of the Imperial County Citizens Welfare Committee. Mr. Nishmura, just how are conditions here?

NISHMURA: Not as comfortable as the homes we left, of course, that is to be expected. But we are all overlooking any temporary inconvenience because we see the promise of great things here.

HUNTLEY: Does the soil appear to be fertile?

NISHMURA: Very fertile. The river has deposited silt here to a depth of 25 feet or more, and as soon as we get water we will start growing the crops.

HUNTLEY: How about your freedom here on the project, Mr. Nishmura?

NISHMURA: Well, we are not allowed to leave the project, but who would want to walk out into the desert.

HUNTLEY: Now do you plan to have your own self-government here?

NISHMURA: Yes. We will soon have our own Major and Police Chief, but we are going to wait until everyone is here and then hold an election.

HUNTLEY: How many Japanese people are there here now?

NISHMURA: About six thousand. By June first there will be ten thousand and by the last of July our new city of Poston will have about twenty thousand residents.

HUNTLEY: How many acres of land will you ultimately farm, Mr. Nishmura?

NISHMURA: Present plans, I am told, call for placing twenty-five thousand acres under irrigation.

HUNTLEY: Then you are very optimistic about the prospects here?

NISHMURA: Absolutely!

HUNTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Nishmura.

Now, here is a Japanese lady I want to talk to for a minute.
Your name is Mrs. Lyeu Kursaki, is that right?

LADY: Yes.

HUNTLEY: How many children have you, Mrs. Kursaki?

LADY: Two.

HUNTLEY: How old are they?

LADY: _____.

HUNTLEY: Tell me, is everything all right?

LADY: Not all right. Some of the children are so cross and upset. You see, it's hot and dusty and they have had their shots.

HUNTLEY: Oh, yes! Their inoculations.

LADY: But it will be better.

HUNTLEY: Has there been any illness in camp?

LADY: A few have gone to the hospital from the heat but so have the workmen and people from the administrative staff.

HUNTLEY: Are you receiving medical care?

LADY: Yes, we have six doctors here now and will have more. Right across the street is the hospital.

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HUNTLEY: Then you feel that although everything is not as comfortable as it could be right now, still the future looks good?

LADY: Yes. Soon we will have our own ministers, American schools, and everything to make a nice city.

HUNTLEY: Thank you, Mrs. Kursaki. Good luck to you. And here is George Kita, who was captain of last year's San Diego State College football team. How do you feel about it, George?

KITA: Mr. Huntley, we shall work, live and play here as Americans. After we have finished our work each day we shall have American sports to keep us fit and ready for any assignment given us by our leader, President Roosevelt.

HUNTLEY: That's fine, George!

Now, may I have your name?

MOREY: Florence Morey.

HUNTLEY: Where was your home, Florence?

MOREY: I lived in Bakersfield.

HUNTLEY: You went to school there?

MOREY: Oh, yes! I went to Bakersfield Junior College.

HUNTLEY: Oh, fine. Well, Florence, they tell me you are taking an active role in the leadership of the young women here in Poston. What activities do you plan eventually?

MOREY: We have been so busy that our plans are still quite incomplete. However, we plan to eventually have a complete recreational program, and I am urging all the young people to attend church.

HUNTLEY: You said you have been very busy, Florenece. Just what have you been doing?

MOREY: Oh, there's all the work getting straightened out in our new houses, and I have been helping with the registration, too.

HUNTLEY: I see. Some more people came in last night, didn't they?

MOREY: Yes. Six hundred and fifty-nine, came by bus and train. And yesterday morning one came by the stork.

HUNTLEY: By the stork?

MOREY: Yes. The first native of Poston, Arizona was born yesterday morning at nine-fifteen. His name is Frank Poston Kuwahara and he weighed a little over eight pounds.

HUNTLEY: That's wonderful. And thank you, Florence, for the vital statistics. I believe you are Mr. Ellis Georgia, isn't that right?

GEORGIA: That's right!

HUNTLEY: And you are area engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers?

GEORGIA: Yes. I represent Cololen Ben Huntington, 1st District Regional Engineer.

HUNTLEY: When do you think the project here will be completed, Mr. Georgia?

GEORGIA: About the 1st of September! By that time all the utilities will be in and it will have all the appearances of a modern and brand new little city.

HUNTLEY: What about drinking water? Where are you getting that?

GEORGIA: We are drilling wells right now...7 or 8 of them will supply the city.

HUNTLEY: Well, sir, you're to be commended for the manner in which this city is arising out of the desert. And here beside Mr. Georgia is Mr. M. R. Newell, Superintendent of the Del Webb Construction Company. How many workers do you have on the job, sir?

NEWELL: Our peak was 3,200.

HUNTLEY: Have you had any trouble finding skilled labor?

NEWELL: Yes. We had a little difficulty...not enough, however, to make it a major problem. Our labor is fathered from the four corners of the country, though. That may be an indication that it's getting scarce.

HUNTLEY: What's the dimensions of these housing units?

NEWELL: 20 x 100.

HUNTLEY: About how many of them will be constructed here in Poston?

NEWELL: About 1,600 buildings all-together.

HUNTLEY: How long does it take you to construct one of these units?

NEWELL: Well the other day we put up 16 of them in 22 minutes!

HUNTLEY: Sixteen 20 x 100 houses in 22 minutes! The pace out here on the desert is a fast one. Well, thanks, Mr. Newell. I'd like to come back in about 2 months when you are applying the finishing touches.

NEWELL: Do that. I'll guarantee there'll be some changes.

HUNTLEY: These are some of the people of Poston, ladies and gentlemen. There are interesting people here by the score. I am told that the next day or two will see the arrival here of Greta Garbo's former house-boy. And here at the present time is Charlie Chaplain's gardener. We wanted you to meet him but he doesn't speak English. Such is the story of Poston, Arizona, in the stage of its beginning. There is a strong current of the old pioneering spirit here which this Arizona desert has known before. The men, women and children of Japanese descent together with their papa-sans and mama-sans are here, asking only that they be given work and the opportunity to prove of service. They are already giving the promise of a garden to this desert project. This morning I saw the men working on the plots where flower gardens and green
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HUNTLEY:
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lawns will soon appear. I saw the housewives busy tidying up the living quarters. Young boys and girls were scraping putty off the new windows. I visited the community store which, it is expected, will do a 2 million dollar business annually.

Many of the evacuees have paid their own way to come here. After disposing of their businesses and household goods, often at one quarter to one tenth their value, some of the Japanese now here chartered buses and trucks to drive distances of from two to seven hundred miles. That the evacuation has proceeded with smart efficiency with maximum consideration for the rights of the evacuees, and without a single serious incident is largely due to the work of Colonel Karl R. Bendetson, Lt. General DeWitt's Assistant Chief of Staff in charge of civil affairs. We take you now to San Francisco for a report from Colonel Bendetson.