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Personal Narrative - Special Division
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THE LAST SPECIAL TRAIN OUT OF HEART MOUNTAIN

SHIRLEY BARSBY

(Ruth McKee said once that the WRA history ought to contain something about the effects of center life on appointed personnel. I wasn't at Heart Mountain long enough to absorb much more than shock, Heart Mountain having been my first center experience. But I did get permission to ride the last special train as an observer. Some of the evacuee passengers I knew, since they were on my case load while I was a member of the relocation staff. Consequently I didn't feel like just a stranger. And I believe they accepted me as someone who was glad to see them leave behind the isolation of center life, all the accompanying restrictive details of its unique institutionalism, and get back into the habit of living as individuals.)

At about 6:45 in the evening of November 10, a Saturday, the familiar wail of the Heart Mountain siren careened through the center to signal the fact that the special train was in the depot and ready for the loading to start. As had been true of a good many special trains in the past, this last one too was leaving on a delayed departure schedule, by one day. But unlike the first of the special trains, this last one had its setting in the quick coming darkness of late fall evenings and in the early beginning of the familiar cold of Heart Mountain.

The depot lies at the bottom of the incline that sprawls up into the center, and in a very few minutes the headlights of the taxis, trucks and private cars formed a swaying chain of lights down to the depot. There were a little less than two hundred men, women and children to be ferried down, and it took about an hour and a half to get them and their "baggages" onto the train. I arrived in time to watch most of the process.

The people were dressed the way you'd expect any people to be dressed for a long and tiresome trip: in the most comfortable clothes they owned. Slacks, blue jeans, leather jackets, sweaters. But no description of the "baggages" would be complete without the note that almost every family carried a gallon jug of water. It seems that on an earlier train the water coolers ran dry, and the story got back to the center. Since then the jug of water was as necessary as the great quantities of food packed in all manner of cartons. And at least six times during the journey, whenever we changed conductors, I found myself explaining that the jugs didn't contain sake.

All in all things went smoothly. There were enough hands to help the old folks up the steps and swing the youngsters up where they belonged. Some of the kids looked like the one who was photographed with a lei around his neck while he was trying to make his legs reach the steps of the coach that was going to carry him away from Jerome when it was being closed. Even the two pullman porters assigned to the train had the traditionally advertised kindness of pullman porters. And they generally chucked the youngsters under the chin or patted them on the head.

The only unpleasant fact, which I learned about later, was that some of the evacuees seemed to think it necessary to tip the Caucasians who loaded their "baggages", and a number of those helpers accepted as much as fifteen or twenty dollars apiece. Or maybe my sense of irony is a little too radical.

So far as the evacuees were concerned, only two of them presented any last minute problems. One, a woman and a fanatic Seventh Day Adventist, had to be fetched by internal security. But she was calm enough by the time they got her to the train. The other, Koko Serasawa, a fragile little creature with great black braids wrapped around her head, gave us some minutes of anxiety. Koko had aroused the concern of a number of people: the chief medical officer, the head of welfare, the community analyst and some others who had had occasion

to visit her the last few days before closing. Koko, about forty years old and Issei, comes from a San Francisco family of pre-evacuation affluence. She was the only one of the family in Heart Mountain. Koko has sufficient intellectual capacity to have gotten a Master's degree in psychology at UCLA, to have earned the respect of the psychology department and to almost complete her doctorate. She had apparently lived most of her mature life with intellectual sophisticates, and evacuation proved to be an experience in mass living that, I imagine, unbalanced her tenseness. And during her center residence she relied even more constantly on the various opiates she had been in the habit of using.

The center had come to be her own peculiar brand of pseudo-security, as it had for so many others, and in the last few days of Heart Mountain's life she worked herself into some prolonged periods of panic. It all resulted in the fact that she couldn't bring herself to finish packing. And consequently she couldn't bring herself to accepting the fact that she had to get on the train. She finally had to be escorted down by internal security, the chief medical officer and the head of welfare. She arrived in a state of complete hysteria, and, instead of being put into the rather public upper in the pullman to which she had been assigned, she was set down in an empty compartment.

The things that seemed to be bothering her most were the state in which she had left her apartment and the fact that she hadn't finished packing some valuable possessions. The various people surrounding her assured her that everything would be packed and sent on to her. But I don't suppose that she heard much of what was said.

The head of welfare entertained some gruesome notions that Koko might try to commit suicide, and I was commissioned to watch over her. At that point we ran into the arm of railroad regulations. The pullman conductor agreed that Koko was in no condition to be confined to an upper, but on the other hand he

couldn't agree to her occupying compartment 6, which had to be reserved for deadhead crews and conductors picked up along the way. However, he did agree to let Koko use an empty drawingroom in the tourist pullman. But that was easier said than done. Koko had stiffened into immobility, and she couldn't be convinced that she had to go into the next car. So one of the relocation staff members, who had arranged for her use of the drawingroom, lifted her from the seat, flung an arm under each of her arm pits, and trundled her into the next car as though she were some sort of rag doll. There she collapsed into a limp, sobbing condition. Fortunately the incident escaped the notice of most of the other passengers.

Many of the berths in the two pullmans had been made up before the train pulled into the depot, so the evacuees, as they got on board, immediately began stowing their possessions in the space allotted them. And in no time the narrow, dimly lighted aisles were crowded with figures trying to climb into an upper or reaching into a lower. Pretty soon the odor of food replaced the familiar smell of a freshly tidied train, as kids started to peel oranges. Those whose berths were not ready for them sat quietly and a little stiffly, on the section seats, as though they had been told to. Many of them were old Issei, and I guess they were quieted by the realization that they were finally leaving the center.

In a way the loading was a simple, mechanical procedure. Everyone had space assured him. Everyone's baggage was marked with name and destination. Yet it wasn't simple at all. Up the hill were the barracks, darkened and surrounded by piles of discarded "junks", the closed school buildings, the closed churches, U.S.O.s, Ys, fish markets, canteens, barber shops, movie houses, most of them with broken windows. Gardens were full of weeds and unpicked vegetables that had frozen in the first cold. That was Heart Mountain in its demise, and the people sitting quietly in the train were those who had stayed through to the end.

The kids were almost the only ones who didn't stay in the train once they had gotten on board, and somehow they provided the only sense of adventure in "going out". Even though there was no one behind the fence, that marked the boundary of the project, to shout goodbye to, as there had been in the early days of special trains.

As the time for the train's departure drew near, the project director and various remaining members of the relocation, welfare, hospital and other sections came down to watch and say goodbye. To some, I suppose, it was a job finally finished, and to be forgotten after a while, when the isolation of the center was replaced by the less primitive existence of the "outside". To others it was the official end of their participation in a program of peculiar challenge and filled perhaps with realizations of WRA's inadequacies as a government agency to make up for two or three years of distorted living.

The train finally emitted numerous steamy warnings of departure, and in a few minutes everyone who belonged on board was on board. The appointed staff stood bravely in the cold wind, waiting not so patiently. At the point, probably, when they thought they couldn't stand it any more, the train jerked into motion, and we slowly pulled away from the depot, leaving Heart Mountain to the wolves and the fate of surplus property disposal.

Before turning in for the night I went back into the next pullman to see how Koko was doing. Some voices greeted me by name as I stumbled along, and I felt like a combination of a grey lady and a counselor on a summer camp train. Koko, by this time, had recovered some of her composure. She was unpacking one of her bags, and at the same time glancing into the full-length mirror on the wall of her drawingroom.

I asked her how she felt, and she said, very kindly, that she was a little better. Then she looked up at me, sucked in all the air her lungs could take and let it out slowly with whispered horror: but my eyes, they are so swollen. And they were.

The next source of worry was her portable typewriter, which seemed to be neither in the drawingroom nor anywhere else on the train. With the persistency of one-track thinking Koko kept repeating that she must have her typewriter, that she couldn't get another one. After I had assured her for the fourth time that when we reached Butte, Montana, the following morning I would wire back to Heart Mountain to have the typewriter sent on to her in Los Angeles, she seemed somewhat calmed. And that having been taken care of, I guessed that she was about exhausted, so I left her to whatever sleep she could salvage. On the way back to my berth I met the pullman porter who had made up Koko's drawingroom. He seemed to need a little reassurance that she would do nothing drastic with her life on this earth. So I gave it to him, and he shook his black head saying, poor folks, treated this way.

Sunday morning came clear and sunshiny as we were crawling slowly across the continental divide, with two engines pulling us cautiously around the skinny, hairpin turns. We were due in at Butte about 8:30, and there was a good chance that we would be delayed approximately ten hours. As I lay in my berth watching the changing sweeps of great snow-covered mountains peppered with deep green pines, the rest of the pullman began to stir. Across the aisle a baby cried, and some youngsters chattered. Then I heard Mrs. Yamaguchi hush them with, shshsh, you'll wake Mrs. Barshay.

We rumbled into Butte a little late, and I guess the unaccustomed lateness of the breakfast hour had hit many of the returnees, because they were swarming toward the station restaurant in no time. I checked with the pullman conductor and learned that the ten hour delay was certain. We had to wait for a train due in Butte about 7:30 in the evening, because the railroad didn't want a special train preceding a regular one. Then I looked in on Koko. She appeared to be sleeping peacefully, so I felt free to go off to breakfast, after wiring Heart Mountain about Koko's typewriter.

Butte, I was told, had "signs", so I was a bit apprehensive about the reception evacuees might get either in the restaurant or up in town. But breakfast passed without incident, and the little Issei climbed up on the counter stools and ate their hot cakes contentedly. While I was drinking my coffee the Yanagis came in. Keen is a tall, lean Hawaiian Nisei, who had done Heart Mountain much service by acting as Red Cross representative. He and his wisp of a wife were going back to Hawaii, and they were happy about it. We decided to meet later for an early afternoon movie.

Back in the train the older people and the very small children had started to consume some of the food they had brought with them. Berths were not turned back into daytime seats, so the people sat cross-legged on the beds and used them for tables. In the three coaches breakfast was under way too, with the water jugs in evidence, despite the fullness of the train's water coolers. Since we didn't pick up a diner until we reached Salt Lake City, on Monday afternoon, the entire train soon showed the results of a picnic three times a day. But the porters were very considerate: they made periodic tours through the entire train and disposed of excess debris.

Before keeping my movie date with the Yanagis I visited Koko. She was up and about and getting ready to brave the public eye. She was quite relieved when I told her that I had wired Heart Mountain about her typewriter, but she still was expressing horror over her swollen eyes. I suspect she had been crying part of the night. I asked her to come with us to the movies, but she still couldn't bear the thought of so many people looking at her.

It turned out that there weren't any "signs" in the business section of Butte, though a few natives stared as we walked along the streets. For me it was good to see two people enjoy the simple pleasure of suddenly deciding to wander into a store and buy a dozen oranges. We ran into a few other passengers on the loose, and they looked a little like summer campers on a shopping trip.

The only significant note about the movie was the newsreel that accompanied it. One of the sequences showed a trainload of German evacuees going home. People were crammed even to the outside of the compartments, which, on the older European trains, are entered directly from the station platforms. They hung on as though they were hitching a ride, which they probably were. Apparently the contrast to our comparatively luxurious journey occurred to the Yanagis too, because I heard Keen say to his wife, look how they're going home.

Upon our return to the train I was confronted with one of the inevitable problems. Someone had lost the portion of his ticket that would take him from Butte to Los Angeles, and, unfortunately, it had been issued to cover passage for his whole family: two full-fare children and one half-fare. In cold cash that amounted to about a hundred dollars, coach travel, which he didn't have. The Union Pacific ticket agent was very sympathetic, but she couldn't, without written or telegraphed authorization from WRA, carry the family on faith. And it was too late to get it. We finally hit on a compromise: I gave her one of my transportation requests for a new set of tickets. [Finance please note!]

By this time it was almost dark, both outside and inside the train. After being motionless most of the day the train's batteries had run down from over-use, and they wouldn't re-charge until we picked up speed. Consequently the picnic suppers were very atmospheric, but that didn't change the excellent quality of the Japanese food which the Yanagis invited me to share.

Even the most tedious delay has to end some time, and our stay in Butte did. When we finally got under way, it was with the profound hope that everyone had returned to home base and was on board. The welcome sway of our progress in the darkness sent almost everyone to sleep early.

Monday proved to be a day for a minor contingency. When we pulled into Ogden, Utah, about ten in the morning, the railroad officials were in for a surprise. It seems that they had thought all along, before our arrival, that we were bound for San Francisco, and they had plans to hitch us onto a train

going there. But when it turned out that we were destined for Los Angeles, they had to give us to a section of the Challenger as far as Salt Lake City, where we would pick up our own engine.

That section of the Challenger carried a diner, I found out when we were three-quarters of an hour from Salt Lake City. So I went ahead to ask if some of the evacuees could be served. The steward was a little startled to learn what manner of passengers had been attached to the train, but he seemed willing to serve as many as he thought could be handled, which was four. I told that to Mrs. Yamaguchi, who was leading the spearhead for breakfast, but she backed down at the prospect of going into the diner with just her three oldest children. At least I suspect that might have been the reason for her decision to wait.

I felt a little guilty about taking advantage of the diner, but I ended up feeling a little less guilty. While I was drinking my coffee the steward came over to ask me about "those Japs on the train." Having cringed at the word "Japs", I uncringed and gave him my best brief WRA lecture. Before he had a chance to question me further, he was called to total a bill. Then the people with whom I was sitting took up the discussion, especially one large woman. She was one of those who belong in the category of the ignorant, so I proceeded to give her a kindly lecture. When I finished she said, but those boys in the army aren't like these people who have been released. That called for a quick recitation of how many boys had volunteered from and had been drafted from centers, how many had been killed and wounded, and that these people on the train, and others still in relocation centers, were the families of those boys. Her whole line of questioning made it painfully clear that while the jurisprudence of this country is "innocent until proven guilty", it never occurred to many people that the American Japanese live here under that law, and evacuation aggravated that ignorance.

Salt Lake City was our last major stop, and that dragged on for two hours.

But by this time many of the older Issei had worked up enough courage to get out of the train and wander about the station. They followed the usual tourist habit of buying the postcards with little bags of salt attached. However, their small, slightly hunched and shuffling figures were pretty much lost in the spaciousness of the station. Among the shoppers was Koko, who half decided finally that she could venture into the public eye.

We pulled out of Salt Lake City with our newly acquired diner early in the afternoon. Some three or four hours before dinner stretched ahead, and this gave me the first chance to spend some time in the coaches. Keen Yanagi was quartered there, though his wife had pullman space because of pregnancy. The three of us sat amidst the baggages and the food and talked. Evacuation eventually moved into our ramblings, and I asked the Yanagis how they felt about it now that they were going back. They didn't say it in exactly these words, but they meant that evacuation probably would always remain as a kind of deep, moral hurt. They are young, and Keen has hopes for a successful and happy re-establishment in Hawaii, where much of his family lives. But the memory of Santa Anita assembly center and their subsequent arrival into the barren disorganization of Heart Mountain will never make very pleasant fireside conversation.

As we talked I found myself going into a mood of self-examination, and I wondered if, had I been treated similarly, would I be as calmly retrospective. I felt rather vaguely at the time that I wouldn't be, and consequently I felt that there was something alien in the placidity being expressed. Now that I have been at Tule Lake for a month I begin to understand my own bafflement. It isn't because, since I've been here, I've run into any articulate explanation of renunciation as an act of resentment by a renunciant, though one day someone here will do it skillfully. But somehow the renunciants are a lot more real as individuals reacting in the circumstance of evacuation than the Yanagis, and the irony of it is that the Yanagis are better off for having less rebellious tendencies.

Many of the other coach passengers slept the afternoon away. As I looked around I wished that I were either an artist or cameraman. Just across the aisle was a man sleeping upright. The work-scared thickness of his hands, the square stolidness of his face with its almost brown yellowness told of his long years of hard and intensive farming. Even his sleeping was the habitual sleep of a worker: the rest of sheer weariness, the kind that is motionless. His arms dangled at his sides in a strange, useless manner, symbolizing somehow the accumulated fears of getting started again after three years of idleness.

On another pair of seats facing each other was a group of four youngsters, boys about seven, eight, ten and twelve. They were curled up against each other like new-born puppies and sound asleep, their faces smudged with the dirt of three days of train travel.

And near us on another pair of facing seats was a little old Issei couple I had seen my first night at Heart Mountain. That time they had been standing behind the wire fence at the depot huddled together silently and watching others board a train for northern California and the northwest. This time they sat dozing in the afternoon sun, their feet not quite reaching the floor.

And so the train rumbled on through the khaki colored, sage brush speckled country, stopping every now and then for whatever mysterious reasons a train stops.

Late in the afternoon one of the dining car waiters combed the coaches and pullmans to announce dinner. I had talked to the steward earlier and asked him how many he was preparing for. About a hundred, he said. But the response was slow in coming, and it looked for a while as though the actual number of guests would fall far short of the steward's estimate. He wandered over to the table at which the Yanagis and I sat and said philosophically, oh well, its better to have too much than too little. And he drank a cup of coffee with us. But shortly thereafter a small trickle of diners started. Probably word had

come from the "scouts" that it was all right to use the diner. With a great deal of caution little family groups began to appear at the entrance to the diner, the children leading the way. And the steward and the waiters did an especially courteous job of seating everyone and taking pains to get orders from the shy lips of the children. There was much grave consultation as the kids tried to translate chicken pie into Japanese for the edification of the Issei parents.

All in all it was a pleasant meal, and we drank numerous cups of coffee in order to more casually watch the process. It was good to see these people being served at a table covered with a white cloth, even though most of them probably had never eaten in a diner before evacuation. The steward remarked to me later that the waiters had been given far above the average amount of tips.

By the time dinner was over it had grown dark, and unfortunately the lights in the train were still behaving very erratically. Every time we slowed down they dimmed into a delicate yellow, which was irritatingly often. This prevented any consistent reading, and most people turned in early. I went back into pullman I to say hello to Koko, but she was sleeping. On my return to pullman II I met the pullman porter who tended Koko, and he asked how she was feeling. That question provided a good opening wedge for a conversation, and I learned that the porter had been graduated from Fisk University and was quite aware of evacuation and the subsequent treatment of the evacuees. Curiously enough his attitude was that of sympathy for a minority group given an even more shabby legal brush-off than that traditionally handed his own people. He wanted to know whether the Japanese had any organization like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and I told him about the JACL, though I did point out that it was a lot younger than NAACP and consequently a lot less experienced and effective politically. Then he had to answer a bell call, but before he did he shook his black head as he had earlier and said, well, they sure got a dirty deal.

Breakfast Tuesday morning was a busy session in the diner, as family groups tramped in with much more confidence than they had for dinner last night. The train was cutting through the last of the Sierra Nevada passes before entering the richly productive areas bordering Los Angeles. By the time we returned to our places the berths were being turned back into seats, and people began to take turns in the dressing rooms to change into city clothes. In short order the comfortable traveling outfits had been replaced by suits and dresses never seen at the center except on special occasions. Every kid with braids was being re-braided, and across the aisle little Jimmy Yamaguchi was being laced into his blue serge sailor suit. Then the porters went around collecting cartons and paper bags of left-over food. Marked luggage was carried out to the ends of the cars, and pretty soon everybody settled down in the newly made neatness to watch the next few hours slip by.

The train practically crackled with anticipation. People who had all along looked out of the windows sort of absent-mindedly now literally began to sit up straight to be absolutely ready to pounce on the first familiar piece of scenery. We finally twisted out of the Sierra Nevadas and into the San Joaquin Valley. We swept by the first palm trees, the first orange and lemon groves, the first green fields. Mrs. Yamaguchi apparently was the most botanical minded passenger in pullman II. As soon as she saw the first lemon grove she turned to me and explained excitedly that lemon trees were the only citrus trees that bore blossoms and fruit at the same time. Her obvious delight at these first glimpses of California's fertility caught the imagination of her own youngsters and others sitting nearby. In a few minutes about eight kids had gathered around her to ask what is that and what is that. The only trouble was that we were going by "that" too quickly for her to answer all the questions. To me these youngsters sounded a little like city slum children seeing a cow in pasture for the first time.

As we drew closer to the city limits of Los Angeles, and the various municipal landmarks became clear, even the parents of the children surrounding Mrs. Yamaguchi vied with each other in the identification of city structures. The city hall, the municipal court. As we passed a neat-looking Federal housing project they wondered if that would be one to which they might be assigned. Their reactions were not unlike those I remember hearing on a ship pulling into the New York Harbor. Somehow, in the brief minutes of arrival, "going back" was a genuinely happy sensation, and the fears of adjustment problems were temporarily wiped out.

We finally creaked into the new Los Angeles station and alongside our designated platform. As soon as we stopped one of the WRA medical social workers from the Los Angeles district office came dashing into our pullman, took one look at me and said, are you Miss Scott? Well, where is Miss Scott, she continued? Back in Heart Mountain I imagine, I answered. By that time the medical social was quite agitated, because she wanted to know who the stretcher cases were, and I, not having been considered an official escort, wasn't even told that there were any stretcher cases on board. It seemed that some time after we left Heart Mountain some one had wired from there to the Los Angeles district office that two stretcher cases would be on the train.

Meanwhile the train was unloaded, and the returnees were gathering on the platform, some of them being greeted by friends who had come to meet the train. While the search went on for the two stretcher cases the other evacuees who had been assigned housing were instructed to form groups according to destination. Santa Ana, Winona, Pomona, etc. Buses were waiting. Baggage trucks marked with those destinations started to collect the proper luggage and packages. It was all quite orderly, except that in the bustle I lost sight of the Yanagis and never did have a chance to wish them bon voyage to Hawaii.

Eventually the two stretcher cases did come to light. One was a paralytic

old lady, and the other was a woman with a two weeks old baby. Neither of them actually required a stretcher, however. Both needed only a wheelchair. Mrs. Ozaki sat on a piece of her luggage with her baby in her arms, looking pretty white and weak, and waited for the wheelchair.

In less than an hour the platform was cleared of all evidences of the evacuee train, and everyone was on the way to finding out the realities of being back in a "normal community." I caught one glimpse of Koko as she was being piloted away to the Winona housing project. Her small, slight figure was wrapped in a rather long, loose gold-yellow coat, and she trailed the rest of the group still moving like a rag doll, except that she was walking.

I had only a day and a half in Los Angeles before going on to Tule, but I did manage to spend part of that time at the Winona project. Helen Davis, ex Washington office, was due out there on Wednesday afternoon to see the newly arrived welfare cases, so I drove out with her and someone else from the district office.

We got there just as people were lining up in the building established as the housing office.

Winona is across the street from the Burbank plant of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. Its barracks and trailers, making about two hundred units, had provided simple shelter for Lockheed workers. Evacuees just in from Manzanar, Rohwer and Heart Mountain were streaming into the housing office for space assignments. A Rohwer Issei acted as manager, and his assistant was a pretty Nisei girl from Manzanar. They needed help so badly that the three of us pitched in to write applications, take rent money, write receipts and hand out keys.

Most of the applicants that afternoon and evening were old Issei bachelors. They stood in line quietly, and the naked ceiling light made the deep creases in their faces even deeper. As their turns came to hand over their rent money, they counted with some difficulty the crisp bills obviously given them as grants

when they left the centers. Since they paid a month's rent in advance, as well as a deposit, that tiny nest egg was almost gone immediately. Then they would shuffle away from the receipt desk, bowing ceremoniously to all familiar and unfamiliar faces.

It wasn't until shortly before the office closed that I saw some of the Heart Mountain people whom I had had as cases. One was a woman who had ridden with me in the same pullman car. The last time I had seen her she was in that group of women who were trying to identify Los Angeles municipal buildings from the train window, and her face had been shining with excitement. Only now she was weary, and the excitement had been wiped off her face. This was the reality of being back. She had come into the office to find out about blankets.

The last of the problems that evening was in the person of Koko. Her phobia about living with people had been revived, because she had been assigned space in one of the barracks with a few other women. She wanted a trailer for herself. The housing manager was a little bowled over by her, especially when she turned on her charm and pleaded. He finally gave in, and changed her assignment. Koko then looked over in my direction, smiled in a funny bright sort of way and walked out with a tremendous, if pathetic, dignity to her new-found solitude.

The office shut its doors about 7:30, and the housing manager was due at a meeting called to discuss plans for putting the mess hall into operation. His Nisei secretary said to me, kind of wistfully, this is just like another center.

Meanwhile Helen Davis and the other district office member went out on a hunt for some bread and apple butter for the mess hall. I had decided to stay around. I stood outside of the housing office and looked at the thing we called interim housing.

Kids played and yelled around in the shadows of the barracks. Little old Issei ladies shuffled across the slightly muddy earth to the ladies' latrine or

the laundry. Passing automobiles cast brief searchlight arcs into the project. Lights from the uncurtained windows of the barracks dormitories flowed into the night. Then the "town meeting" gong started, and pretty soon people went by twos and threes into the mess hall. I went in too and stood at the back of the hall. But the meeting was being conducted in Japanese. A woman walked by to go out, and I asked her what the gist of the discussion was. She said they were drawing up a slate for mess hall officials.

Anyway, that was the trip and a small part of the re-absorption of the evacuees into a "normal community", or at least the beginning of it.

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