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Some Thoughts of a Santa Anita on Reading

"MOVING THE WEST-COAST JAPANESE"
By Carey McWilliams*

One making several visits to Santa Anita, talking to the Caucasian administrators and making a hurried survey of the grounds during the latter part of May and the month of June would probably write as Mr. McWilliams has written. Camp life is continually changing with orders being made and rescinded overnight, so that what seems to be the condition and trend at one time may be suddenly changed. Mr. McWilliams traces the history of the evacuation, gives his impressions of the assembly centers using Santa Anita and Pomona as typical assembly centers, and discusses the background of and reasons for evacuation, the consequences of the evacuation and the future of Japanese in America.

In describing Santa Anita Mr. McWilliams says, "Santa Anita has almost everything that any California city of comparable size would have " True, what might be called a hospital, fire dept., a canteen, workshops, library, a school and etc., are at Santa Anita, but he doesn't describe their limitations nor does he tell how they are managed with Caucasian administrators at the head of each dept. with authority from the S. F. office and who are not dependent on center residents for making of administrative policy. Nor can the author tell, if he knew, about the provisions being carried home by administrators. The latter practice has, however, very recently been stopped with the forbidding of cars of workers on the camp grounds.

The food was good toward the end of my stay but the first two months before the camouflage workers staged a strike the food was very poor. No milk except for children, not much vegetables and entirely too much starch. It was not uncommon to have lima beans, mashed potatoes, a small piece of meat, and bread all at one meal. Contrary to the statement in the article each unit does not have running water. At Santa Anita in the stable area there were four outside faucets for each barrack, an average of one faucet for six units, and in the new barrack area not even each barrack had an outside faucet. The statement " Every adult in Santa Anita has a job" should have the qualification that there were job openings (though very limited, and much of the time only camouflage work) for all who wanted to work. One difficulty was that every capable and qualified adult was not gainfully employed. It is not known just where the blame should be placed, but for some time individuals were intimidated into accepting camouflage work with talk of black-listing and disqualification from all other types of camp work.

"..... a measure of self-government has been provided; and the utmost good feeling prevails between camp residents and the management." This and other parts of the article give the impression that we have true representation of center residents. It is far from the truth. Articles which appeared in the Baconaker

* Hapers Magazine for September 1942, P.359 - 369.

(the camp newspaper, which is completely censored by the authorities) and the reports to residents prior to July tended to create the impression that self-government was being worked out. But how could democracy be practiced where assemblage is denied and the only camp paper is completely controlled? At Santa Anita the election of 49 sectional representatives and the formation of a council all came to nought when the council was dissolved just as soon as they met unofficially with residents in a discussion of camp problems. Administrative order no. 13 made it practically impossible to have any meeting for any purpose whatever and camp administrators wanted to interpret a meeting as even two people getting together for any purpose whatever. The mounting feeling, caused by restrictive measures as the banning of all Japanese phonograph records and Japanese literature, excepting certain religious books, came to a head in a riot on August 4th. The immediate cause of the riot was a general search of all barracks. The search was conducted very poorly and indiscreetly and ostensibly, as it later developed, for liquor smuggled in by Caucasian camp workers and sold to residents at a high price.

As a consequence or aftermath of the riot the status of self-government was clarified with the announcement that no self-government was to be allowed in assembly centers, but that the center manager can appoint a body to serve at his pleasure in a purely advisory capacity. To date, Sept. 3rd, no such body was even being formed at Santa Anita, which may indicate that the administrators want no such assistance from center residents, or that ~~they~~ they think it inadvisable to organize such a body because of the relocation of center residents. Usually a person with any grievance or suggestion for improving conditions was given a run around among different dept. heads or else stalled off with "..... orders from San Francisco" or "San Francisco hasn't replied."

"Good feeling" does not prevail between adm. and residents at Santa Anita, if by "good feeling" is meant real understanding and cooperation in the solving of camp problems, rather than just toleration of each other. In my opinion this lack of harmony is the reason for such outbreaks as the sit-down strikes of various camp labor crews, including the camouflage workers, and the riot. Administrators at Santa Anita seemed almost to fear to let the residents have even a tiny bit of say in forming administrative policy.

After admitting searchlights, barbed wire, armed guards, roll call daily and "at least at the Pomona camp I was able to verify the fact that there is a military censorship on outgoing and incoming mail," Mr. McWilliams says "this description may sound perilously like a concentration camp. But the internal policing is all provided by the Japanese themselves." Policing, in actual fact, was never provided by the Japanese themselves in Santa Anita. The so-called auxiliary policemen composed of Nisei took all their orders from the Interior Security Police, which was composed entirely of Caucasians. About the first week in July the Japanese auxiliary policemen quit as a body because as some of them have said they were ~~ix~~ tired of being just shoved around, always given the dirty work and were not satisfied with the \$8 salary in comparison to the \$12 received by even 16 year old girls on the camouflage project. (This was the salary camouflage workers received after their strike)

Mr. McWilliams summarizes the attitude of the evacuees in the words, "There is discouragement, bafflement, and cynicism; but one can note also high spirits, gaiety and much admirable fortitude." To these adjectives one might add the plain "what's-the-use attitude" that seems to be so prevalent among Issei and Nisei alike.

"There is undeniably a serious morale problem; there is also an undercurrent of resentment." Right. Because most of us are undisciplined individuals, we are incapable of always acting intelligently and with high ideals when the established economic system to which we have accustomed ourselves is knocked out from under us and we are uprooted and made to face a totally different life in the relatively densely populated barrack existence in the centers. One clearly noticeable trend is the decrease in the importance of family life. With the decrease in the control by the family head delinquency increases. Parents notice the difference yet feel helpless to do very much about it. Some parents have noticed a change in their own attitude toward indifference to others and a feeling of helplessness in the face of the uncertain times.

Some people at times openly express their unfriendly feelings toward Caucasian administrators or this country. There are some who admittedly want to see the Axis win this war and many others who are like the Legionnaires in their expressions of the desire that the Allies win. It seems to me that the great majority of the people see this as a tragedy and cannot truthfully wish for either side to win a military victory. This great majority only wish for peace but perhaps can't visualize how their wish would be attained.

After more study Mr. McWilliams says with more perspective than I could that regarding the economic consequences of the evacuation that the removal of Japanese does not have as large a consequence as might be at first expected. Nevertheless, even if the crops raised by the Japanese could just as well be raised without them it must be admitted that the evacuation is a drain on the manpower, while at the same time increasing greatly the number of individuals who are only food consumers and not producers of food.

What of the future? To me as to the author, "It is difficult to imagine the Japanese drifting back after the war to their former points of concentration". "California is rapidly locking the doors behind the departing Japanese". The relocation projects are permanent in character and once settled down the evacuees will probably not want to pull up stakes again to return to former places of residence. After the war the dispersion of the Japanese from relocation areas among the general population will probably be a very slow process.

"In the long run the Japanese will probably profit by the painful and distressing experience." Evidence at Santa Anita seemed to point toward degeneration rather than improvement in the character and attitude of the people. First of all they came without their own choosing and there is something a bit demoralizing about having food and shelter provided without actually having to struggle to earn them. Mr. McWilliams does not try to tell just how the Japanese will profit "in the long run". But to me it seems rather senseless to say that the imposed upsetting of the social structure and relocation to a new place to start from scratch is beneficial unless

it be admitted that the environment from which evacuees came was so poor that nothing would do but to start completely over again.

"They had not made a satisfactory adjustment to American life prior to December 7th; and through the unforeseen exigencies of the war it is possible that they can win for themselves a far more satisfactory position in American life than they have enjoyed in the past." It is not impossible but it is far less probable that the Japanese shall make a better adjustment to American life when completely segregated than in their former relationship with the American communities. Mr. McWilliams here says that something favorable just might happen as a result of the illogical step.

Part of the success of the undertaking depends upon the degree of freedom of action granted the WRA in meeting this unique situation and "Provided the majority of the American people will insist upon fair-treatment of the Japanese and not succumb to demagogues and race-baiters." But we have gone perilously in that direction already by the wholesale removal of people without any accusation than of their lineage and without hearing of individual cases.

If, as a consequence of evacuation, the Japanese people can become more keenly conscious of the necessity of putting aside petty feelings and working together to the building of a more creative community, some good may come. Situations and environments may help or tend to prevent the attainment of desired ends but in the last analysis much of the responsibility rests upon the people involved to live toward the attainment of the ideal community.

What should be the government's part in this program? Certainly as it is now doing it must provide the skeleton physical environment. But what of formation of camp policy and of camp management? Here as Mr. McWilliams says "The success or failure of the undertaking largely depends upon how thoroughly, in the words of the Tolan Committee report, the whole problem can be interpreted to the American people so as to win for the War Relocation Authority the indispensable freedom of action which it must have in dealing with the problem." The need is not that the government should take over much of the responsibility, but that the people might be helped or guided to help themselves.*

A serious criticism of Japanese, in general is that they are inclined to be jealous and quarrelsome amongst themselves - inclined to be destructive rather than constructive. There is no generally recognized leadership provided by any one body. The JAIC has a poor reputation amongst many and the church includes but a small portion of the population. If the Japanese can put aside pettiness and work for the common good of their own community and all the larger aggregates of peoples, then this evacuation might be affording a unique opportunity in cooperative effort.

ON TO WYOMING!

Sept. 3, 1942

After a good night's sleep in spite of the fact that bedding had to be shipped the day before, we awakened at 4:30 this morning to the sound of people rushing about preparing for the trip to Wyoming. A line of people were already waiting to be admitted to the enclosure surrounding Visitor's House and the Green Mess Hall when we (the Okas, Mas, Mr. Hashimoto and I) went there at 6AM. (Since the beginning of evacuation of SAAC the Green Mess Hall had been reserved for evacuees from the enter. We were admitted single file and Interior Security Police merely asked us if we had any government property in the luggage. Nearly every one answered "No", at which the luggage was piled up by car number to which each was assigned and trucked to the proper car. We had a very exceptional breakfast of fried potatoes, two pieces of bacon with two fried eggs, two biscuits, two teaspoons of sugar, half a grape-fruit and on the table were butter, jam, bread, milk and coffee. Monitors lined us up single file after breakfast according to numbers assigned to each family at the time of the original evacuation. A check of numbers and names of people boarding each car, a recheck by the MP's of the actual number on the train and about 8:30 we were waving our good byes to friends. Mr. Yoshida, the would be evangelist to save men's souls, (see Pacemaker for about the end of July or first weeks of Aug.) blared forth with his trumpet as the train started to move. The crowd of friends who had come to say good-bye roared as Mr. Yoshida stood at the window of the car in his soiled Salvation Army suit and projected his trumpet. An unappreciative person in the crowd threw a soft boiled egg in the general direction of Mr. Yoshida, but only smeared an innocent man in an adjacent window. People separated from friends with far fewer tears than at the original evacuation. They must be more accustomed to moving and besides there was nothing but newly-made friends being left behind in houses having no sentimental value.

Shuttling and waiting in the yards at Los Angeles consumed three hours, and our train grew longer by 2 diners and a coach car that was to serve as a diner. As we left L. A. for dinner we had a large meat ball, a piece of boiled potato, butter bread, canned corn, spaghetti, milk or tea, fruit cocktail and two cookies. There was no silver ware or china--all plates, cups, spoons and forks were of paper.

Good-bye beautiful orange and lemon groves, farm houses with hedges and rambling rose bushes, rows of truck crops, and fields being irrigated. It's beginning to get warmer Fullerton, Covina, Riverside and a half hour's stop at San Bernardino made it 3:45 PM. An army encampment had signs about every 30 yards intervals along the wire fence - "Life in Danger, Keep Out".

A list of rules to govern our conduct during our train ride was given to us car monitors by the train monitor: "1. Windows up to individual 2. No drinking 3. No gambling 4. Keep clean 5. No throwing from windows 6. No standing on platforms 7. No getting off train 8. Purchase may be made by monitors accompanied by MP 9. No telegrams 10. No visitors 11. Rest stops will be made 12. 9 o'clock lights out 13. Moves may be made between cars but be back at night."

Cajon Pass was made with 2 engines and we rolled into Barstow as dinner was being served. We car monitors were to actually have the privilege of getting off to buy things for the passengers in our car. Magazines, candy, towels, soap, and crayolas were hopefully ordered but the MP's accompanying us monitors gave us only about 10 minutes at the candy counter in the depot. There were many disappointments - we had expected too much. Lights out at nine... we roll along a stretch of track that seems almost bumpy as most of us try to sleep in the coaches (There are two pullmans in the train for invalids and others arranged for by the SAAC doctors. A squabble arises among those in the pullmans as to who would get to sleep in the lower berth. The train commander settles the trouble by threatening to make the "dissatisfieds" sleep in the coach sitting up."

Midnight at Needles with the two story hotel.... time for watering up the train. Most people only doze. Desert contry and we must have crossed the Colorado River unaware. Breakfast of tasty pineapple juice, scrambled eggs, milkless mush, fried potatoes, and toast as rolling hills of sagebrush and scrawny trees are framed by the window.

Winslow, Arizona at 2 PM finds us monitors buying up all the newspapers, most of the magazines, candies and gum. Not enough stuff to meet our demands nor did the MP's give us enough time to look around. People on the train were allowed to get off the train to stretch but had to remain beside their car and MP's watched. More sagebrush, stony hills and miniature Grand Canyons carved out by water. People in our car are pulling off the cushions from their hooks to rearrange them into fairly respectable improvised beds.

Starting about 4 PM we ran through the canyon carved by the Little Colorado river in Arizona. In different layers up the steep walls of the canyon could be seen vari-colored layers of rock and soil. Most of the boulders and shelf-like projections on the banks are rounded by weathering. The reddish, very muddy river still proceeds to carve its serpentine way through the soil deposited previously between the walls. Some Indian huts made of shrubbery or logs or clay are inhabited. Tiny tots in tattered clothes (seemed to be manufactured cloth) waved their greetings. Gallup, New Mex., a fair sized town, and Albuquerque at about eleven PM., Raton on the northeastern border of New Mexico at breakfast, then up over the continental divide (about 7000 feet) with four engines, and then the rolling hills and plains of Colorado successively were left behind. Everyone in my car ~~to~~ slept well, because of the little sleep on the previous night and the rearrangement of seat cushions permitted a more reclining position.

About noon we reached Pueblo, on the Arkansas River. There seems to be some manufacturing done in this town. Scattered tasseled corn fields, beans, sugar beets and alfalfa fields all with provisions for irrigation robl by. We ran through a rain storm on our way to Colorado Springs and reached Denver before 5 PM. Pikes Peak was not visible because of the clouds. At Denver we monitors must have easily bought an average of \$6 apiece in magazines, candy, picture cards, stamps and newspapers at the

depot candy stand. We changed from the Santa Fe to the Burlington Route which meant change of diner and probably of the engine. There were several Japanese friends in Denver who came to meet friends on this train. After talking with the MP's they were permitted to talk only with the monitors. In my car at least 3 Japanese books (supposedly banned while at Santa Anita by army orders) were being not too openly read. The MP's are regular soldier boys and some play cards or talk with passengers. They don't seem to be so particularly disturbed or worried by the world situation. I guess they would go nuts if they did.

Having passed through Fort Collins, Colorado, right now at 11 PM of the third day we are in Cheyenne Wyoming waiting for the men to fill up the car water tanks for drinking and washing.

Leaving Cheyenne about midnight and passing through Wheatland we arrived in Casper Wyoming at about Breakfast. We buy up all the papers that the news-boys had. Much dry rolling hills, then we pass through the Wind River Canyon with its very muddy river and towering cliffs. Along part of this route it was very dry and dusty. Leaving Thermopolis and Worland along the Big Horn River behind us we roll into Greybull in the early afternoon heat. Everyone was allowed to get off the train, but ~~there~~ there were no purchases and the heat discouraged many from leaving the train. The train took us almost to Lovell and started back along the other arm of the "V" railroad track along the Shoshone River.

The train stopped at Vocation (the name given to our camp) at about 5 PM. We disembarked by cars from the train as 3 different people including an MP carefully counted us to make sure that the proper number arrived. We were assigned to barracks, a nurse looked down our throat and a truck drove us up the hill to camp. There are guard towers but no surrounding barbed wire fence. We found our unit and inquired around to find the mess hall where a generous serving of rice and beef with gravy without vegetables, were served us. A nice shower, and oh how nice to be able to lie down in a bed again !

The trip as a whole was enjoyable for most of us. Some people seem not to be able to get beyond their own immediate interest. In car #6 there were 48 people and 30 places so that everyone could not have two seats. One family of 5 insisted on taking two places apiece. They finally came around to giving up one seat. Also, they had a shopping bag and small grip full of oranges, but when it came to dividing up the box of oranges given to our car, they insisted on taking the same amount as the others. Another family of 15 (less mother and baby assigned to Pullman A) were crowded into 6 double seats. But this large family seemed to get along very well and shared what they had. Passengers on our train took up a collection amounting to \$56.00 to tip the waiters on the diners and each car took up a collection of \$4 - 7 for the monitor, who was one of their number selected to be responsible for car cleanliness, arrangements for meals, etc., etc. By the time we neared the end of the trip there seemed to be a friendlier attitude and people were sharing magazines and other reading material they had.