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Final Report--  
Mass Operation Unit

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FINAL REPORT

MESS OPERATIONS UNIT

By

William Wells, Chief Project Steward

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

GRANADA PROJECT

Amache, Colorado

### MESS OPERATIONS UNIT

On the morning of August 27, 1942, an advance crew of 220 evacuees arrived from the Merced Assembly Center. A great deal of praise is due the personnel in the Merced Center in selecting this advance crew as they proved to be some of the most capable, from Mess standpoint, of any evacuees received in this center. The evacuee that headed the Mess crew served as Chief Evacuee Steward for the ensuing eighteen months and proved to be a powerful factor in the early days of this center.

On August 27, 1942, two mess halls were completed sufficiently for occupancy---6E was in use by a private catering concern feeding the contractors' men. The other mess hall, 6G, was furnished with tables, stoves, sinks, and work tables. Dishes, pots, pans and other mess gear was very incomplete and was scattered around in various barracks for temporary storage. The appointed personnel, from mechanics to office workers, lent a helping hand in unpacking and washing dishes and other work preparatory to feeding the first group, who arrived around 10:30 A.M. and immediately started to work preparing their first meal. There were some fifty to sixty appointed personnel plus the evacuees. This arrangement of feeding the evacuees and appointed personnel together lasted several days, and almost from the first difficulties arose, due to the food requirements of evacuees differing from the likes of

the appointed personnel. Therefore, just as soon as the 6E mess hall could be taken over from the private catering concern, a staff mess was established. The many complex difficulties in operation of this mess will be brought out in detail in another part of this report.

An advance crew was organized to open up other mess halls as completed, to make ready for the next contingent of evacuees. Their duties were to get the available pots, pans, dishes, etc., as well as food stuff all ready and prepare the first meal for the new residents that moved in the block. An evacuee member of the mess section office stationed himself at the point of induction and selected the best qualified persons that were willing to work in the mess halls, telling them when and where to report to work. Many times they would be in the kitchen within one hour after their arrival in camp, leaving their baggage to be placed in their room by a friend or relative or just piled in one end of the mess hall. This system of recruiting naturally ran into a snag with the personnel office who were endeavoring to set up records, write assignment slips, classify workers according to past experiences and skills. However, this procedure was far too cumbersome and slow for our pressing needs. As a result there were a great deal of confusion and delay in getting all the workers assignment slips signed up. Also, we found we had far

too many working in some mess halls.

This over-staffing of the mess halls caused the evacuees to become highly specialized in their work. As a result, when it became necessary to cut down the number working in a mess hall, the waitresses did not want to help with the dishes or janitors to help with other work, other than what they considered was janitor work, etc. All of this necessitated various changes in procedure and even in assignment titles.

It was unfortunate at the beginning, that time did not permit better planning on the number of persons to be used in a mess hall as all cuts met with violent protest and although the cuts were usually made as planned, over the protests, it established a policy of "volunteer" workers which affected the whole center as follows:

The mess workers would complain to the block manager and residents as a whole, that the cut in personnel would make more work and hours for them and a committee would be formed to call on the Project Steward, Assistant Project Director of the Project Director himself (many times on all three). After being informed that the cut had to be made, the evacuees would then designate certain ones in the block to work as volunteers on certain days to maintain the same quota. These volunteers would, in many cases, be secretaries, typists, or other key workers in various offices and shops. As a

result, the sections affected were not pleased with loss of help and many times blamed the Project Steward or Mess Section as a whole. Written instructions were sent out to evacuee stewards not to recruit workers, and in most every case investiaged, it was found that the block manager, or other persons not on the mess payroll, were causing the persons involved to volunteer. At first the volunteers thought they were being paid on the job they were assigned to when they volunteered to work in the mess halls; however, even after they were docked by the section head for absence from their job, this did not stop the practice. They seemed to be more willing to lose the pay than to resist the pressure on them in the block.

When the first evacuees arrived, there were no screen doors on the mess halls and the water system only functioned at brief intervals, when pumped by a farm tractor, necessitating the hauling of water. This was accomplished by the use of new garbage cans in a pick-up. The lack of screen doors and screens over the windows made sanitary conditions very bad. The flies came in great swarms. Almost immediately a pop concession was opened in one end of the mess hall, which caused a constant stream of people to mill through the place. This, with the spilling of water as it was being hauled in G. I. cans, mingled with the loose sand from nearby con-

struction floating in, and the debris from unpacking supplies--all added up to a very untidy and unsanitary condition. It was at this point some high ranking Army Officers made an inspection---as a result, the Chief Project Steward resigned, after being reprimanded for conditions that were beyond his control. The Assistant Steward was made Acting Chief Steward.

This system of using the mess halls for various activities other than feeding was to last throughout the life of the camp. While recreation halls were built in every block, they were converted into churches, U.S.O., Boy Scout and other activities. It is assumed that this was due, largely, to the fact that the head of Community Activities appeared to be more interested in this type of work than in picture shows and dances. At any rate, the picture shows and dances were held in the mess halls over the protest of the Chief Steward. As a result, the table tops were constantly being scratched and marred and the dust would settle over the dishes and food. Also, there was many cases of pilfering as it was impossible to lock everything up during dances and parties. The Block Steward was usually an elderly man and did not want to stay up late to watch the place. Allowing the mess halls to be used for these activities also brought about much pressure for food to be used as refreshments, and since the food and equipment was there, any control was not only difficult but almost impossible.

On the opening date refrigeration had been rented in Lamar, 17 miles away, for the storage of meats, vegetables and other perishables. The original rations were furnished by the Army from their "A" rations which are computed as the needs for one person for a 10 day period per ration. These rations contained many delicacies that our limited budget of 45¢ daily were never again able to afford; however, as the older Issei group came in, their food requirements differed greatly from the components of Army rations.

On August 31, 1942, a local, experienced butcher and meat packer was employed and immediately set up a make-shift butcher shop at the storage plant. A group of evacuees were selected to be trained as meat cutters.

A few had worked in the assembly center butcher shop but none of them were really experienced. The Japanese way of preparing meat seemed to be to bone and trim every ounce of fat from the meat. They regarded the fat and bone as unusable. It took a great deal of effort on the part of the Steward's office to get the proper usage for soup stock, etc. The idea being with most evacuees that synthetic flavoring for vegetables and gravies, such as Ajianamoto and other flavor concentrates was more desirable than stock from the meat. This probably was due to the scarcity of meat in their homeland. Very stringent measures had to be taken to enforce economical usage of meat.

We found from the very start that the evacuees did not like mutton in any form. Also, they would not eat hearts, livers, kidneys or brains except in rare cases. Most of the afore-mentioned items we used in the hospital and staff mess, or ground up in hamburger in the butcher shop. Upon completion of our refrigerated warehouses, the butcher shop was moved out from Lamar and all meat was prepared, ready to cook, into roasts, steaks, chops, hamburger, etc., according to the menu. The establishment of a butcher shop served to an advantage in many ways-- such as;

a. A uniform menu in all mess halls. (This was important, otherwise one mess hall would have steak while the other would be serving stew if left to cut up their own meat. This condition would tend to have people try to eat in mess halls other than their own, if the menu happened to be more attractive for any given time.)

b. Trim excess fat for lard.

c. Utilize trimmings in hamburger preventing waste.

d. Made salt pork for seasoning, also cured hams and bacon.

While we were never able to get regular rendering or curing equipment, various make-shift equipment was used to a good advantage for long periods of time during critical market shortages of cured meats. We were totally dependent on our own production for supply.

Corned beef was also very unpopular with the center residents, particularly after an unfounded rumor was spread that it was made from horse meat.

The appointed personnel in the Mess section was greatly handicapped, being unfamiliar with dietary habits of Orientals, therefore, the first requisitions placed were found to be out of proportion of our needs--a good example was bread--due to the large amounts of rice consumed, the requirements were only a fraction of the amount of bread used in feeding a like number of Caucasians, while the requirement of rice and fish were many times the amount that would be used. Also, there was an early demand for various Oriental foods (the problem of procurement of these items will be covered later in this report.

#### FOOD USE: STATISTICS

Statistics reveal that, on the average, rice was consumed at the rate of 20lbs. per person per month, eggs at the rate of 1 dozen per person per week. Eggs assumed even greater proportions as rationing necessitated the use of substitutes for meat, fats, and oils.

Tsukimono (Japanese pickles) appeared at noon and again on the supper menus, daily. Ingredients used in the preparation were most generally Daikon (a Japanese white radish), salt, raisins and

rice bran which were placed in a barrel, water added, and left to soak 2 or 3 months in the brine solution derived.

Japanese menus required more extensive use of pork than beef even during the summer months. Average for a year period was approximately 45% beef and 55% pork.

#### RATIONING

From the time rationing was first publicized and until the program was well under way, it threw a scare into the evacuee residents so great that it was difficult for Caucasian personnel to handle.

A great deal of pressure was brought on Caucasian representatives of the mess section to stock the warehouses with food before the institution of rationing, the thinking being that, regardless of rationing procedure, this food could be used indiscriminately and without regard to OPA regulations.

As it happened, this center was caught with an enormous processed food inventory, the point value of which exceeded our normal 45 days requirements by 5 times. Through regulating requisitions and management on issues, this inventory was shortly reduced to normal.

Before rationing, we were fortunate in having set up a system for handling rationing that was not changed during the life of the project. At a later date and several months after rationing was instigated, the Washington office adopted our plan for use at all center.

Quota allowances were adjusted weekly in accordance with the population of the center and OPA allotments. As relocation advanced by rapid stages in September of 1945, quota allowances were adjusted semi-weekly or more often as it became necessary.

The fact that we produced our own hogs and beef cattle on the farm never made supply of meat a problem for us as it did many civilians in the immediate vicinity. We used as much pork and beef as we had points to use.

The allotment ledger on points and checking account was handled in the Stewards office under the property and supply officer. Checks for the points involved were mailed to vendors within 24 hours after receipt of the merchandise.

Prior to November 17, 1942, there were no available records by which we could ascertain the amount of food stuff held in warehouses. Subsequent to this date and through November 30th, 1942, a Mess Section Property Staff was organized, a plan for the receipt and disbursement of food formulated, and accountability records set up.

As far as the procurement of food was concerned we operated much in the same manner as if we were an Army field station. Procurement through our local office was limited to purchase of \$500.00 or less and then only by justification to the effect that procurement of the item or items could not be made thru the Q.M.C. Requisitions were prepared at the center, then forwarded

to the QM for procurement or delivery out of depot stock.

For the better part of the first two years of operations, procurement personnel of the WRA and QM were at a disadvantage in the purchasing of Oriental foods for the center. Partially because ceiling prices had not been established and because of the monopoly on the items being carried by one or two contractors, WRA was forced to pay exorbitant prices for this type of food. Federal specifications on this type of food were not set up during this period; therefore, we were dependent on the recommendation of the evacuee personnel; purchasing by brand names on the basis of samples submitted. Experience taught us that tastes and recommendations of the evacuee personnel changed as regularly as favorable Japanese-American representatives of contractors made periodic visits to the center and also made contacts with the chief evacuee steward and mess committee.

#### MEAL COST

From the beginning and through June, 1944, the basis for figuring the cost per ration was the total cost of the food issued divided into the number of meals served. Reports on the number of meals served were submitted by mess hall timekeepers.

Under this system it was impossible to correlate budget estimates with the amount of food used since budgeting was on the basis of the number of persons in the center and padded meal counts.

for the purpose of acquiring more rationed food and more rations, presented on erroneous report. Evidence of inconsistency in the number of meals reported and how it affected meal cost is shown on the monthly August food cost of one ration chart from May, 1943, through June, 1944, where cost during this period had a high of 14¢ in June, 1944, and a low of 34¢ in March, 1945.

(See Attached Chart)

#### ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF MESS

The operation of a mess for the appointed personnel and visitors presented one of our most difficult problems. The reasons were many and varied. In the beginning it was difficult to find cooks who were experienced in American cooking - who were willing to work in the staff mess, as it was more convenient to work in the mess hall in their own block. Also, if they were experienced, the residents of the block argued that they should be use their talents to serve their own people. Some of the more rabid even called them a Japanese term meaning "the white man's dog". This pressure definitely had an influence on some of the workers. We finally secured the services of a middle aged evacuee who was a World War I veteran, to act as steward. He was able to organize a crew from his friends and acquaintences. However, his ability in mess matters was very limited and he proved to be a better politician than a steward and the favors he granted to his friends and workers may have been a factor in the meal

costs which at one time had to be raised to 60¢ per meal.

Almost from the beginning there was resentment on the part of the evacuee office and warehouse help against the staff mess and as a result many cases of petty sabotage were uncovered. For example, when a requisition was made for supplies such as meat, vegetables, etc., there was a tendency to give the least desirable of the same to the staff mess. Also, small stock shortages were charged to this mess and since almost half of the employed center population was working for the mess section it presented a difficult problem for a staff of 3 or 4 appointed personnel to cope with.

When the mess was first opened, we used waitresses to serve the guests, and while for the most part the relations between the guests and the employees were good, there were some of the appointed personnel who took the attitude that the evacuees were their personal body servants and would demand special service and be very critical of the food and service. In some cases the evacuee employees would quit their jobs rather than be subjected to such abuse. In all fairness, I would say that the afore mentioned incidents were more of an exception than a rule.

As more apartments were completed for the appointed personnel, the actual need for a mess became less, and as a consequence, the patrons became more discriminatory of the menu and would inquire

before meal time what was to be served. If it happened to please them, they would come in for the meal and in many cases bring their families. Therefore, the steward would never know how many to expect and many times would run out of food before all were served or have a great deal of food left over as the case might be. About this time the patronage had dropped and the mess was operating at a loss so it was decided to close it up. A final check showed we were some two hundred dollars in the red. After being closed several months, it was decided that a mess was badly needed again. So on December 4, 1944, we reopened a staff mess in the mess hall formerly used by the Military Police. This time considerable planning was done to lower operation costs and make the mess self supporting. First we secured the services of an evacuee who had formerly operated a delicatessen in Portland, Oregon, to be the chef. The Chief Project Steward personally wrote all menus and closely supervised all operations during the first month of operation. He also changed the style of serving that had been used before to a semi-cafeteria style. The guests bought tickets at the door and picked up their plates at the serving counter. Water, coffee or tea, salad etc., were already on the table. At the completion of the meal, the guests returned their dishes to the counter. At the start the following prices were charged;

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Breakfast      10¢ and 30¢

The 10¢ breakfast was for coffee and do-nuts or rolls, the 30¢ breakfast was for a choice of regular breakfast.

Lunch          25¢ and 45¢

The 25¢ lunch was for sandwich, soup, salad and desert. The 45¢ lunch was the regular plate lunch.

Dinner        50¢ - 65¢ - 75¢

The regular dinner was 50¢ but as points were available, steaks were served for 65¢ and 75¢.

After several months of operations, the prices were dropped to 35¢ per meal for lunch and dinner - breakfast was discontinued because of a lack of patronage.

Children 8 years and under were served  $\frac{1}{2}$  portions for approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the adult price.

During the month of September the evacuees had to be replaced, due to relocation, by temporary civil service appointees:

Two first cooks at \$1.25 per hour

Two second cooks at \$1.00 per hour

Four kitchen helpers at \$.75 per hour

were allowed, however, it was impossible to find competent persons to fill all the jobs. As a result the mess operated short handed, much of the time with only 50% of a crew.

The closing date for Staff Mess at the time this is written has been set for December 28, 1945.

While relations between the evacuee residents and the mess section were for the most part very good, the Chief Project Steward received occasional unsigned letters from evacuees complaining about other evacuees. A copy of one of these letters is attached.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are several facts that the writer feels are worthy of mention.

1. Costs were kept within the 45¢ daily per person limitation.
2. All rationing imposed on other institutional users were strictly adhered to - also, WRA imposed other limitations on fresh milk, poultry and ice cream. Cured meat at times became of public criticism.
3. Not one case of malnutrition was reported by the hospital.
4. Losses through food spoilage were very small.
5. No serious cases of sickness through food poisoning due to improper storage or cooking.
6. Low number of complaints on menus or mess management - there was never any strikes or riots about food.

Items #4 and #5 were indeed remarkable, as we had many power failures and break downs in our refrigeration boxes. Quick icing or moving the food to other refrigerators overcame this.

COPY

Mr. Wells  
Mess Division

Dear Sir;

In behalf and for the good and welfare of the residents of 8E block I'm taking the privilege of dropping this letter to you and your division to see if something cannot be done hastily about the prevailing unfair situation at the block mess. The people are constantly complaining of the unfairness accorded the residents but frankly they do lots of whispering and none have the gall to come out and say it.

A Mr. & Mrs. Nakai are constantly carrying home in average 6 to 7 trips daily to and from Mess I gal. cans of Heaven knows what? Everything from sugar to flour. When we have french toast on the menu, they and their friends and relatives carry home loaves of bread. When other people ask for it, they are denied. If one can? Why not all? Are they such privileged characters? Taking home eggs, anything they need?

Many mornings we have been served boiled rice - for what purpose? To save sugar? To cook or bake delicacies for the residents? NO! For their private use!! Uncanny! If a search was made of their home you'd probably be amazed. They reside at 8E-3A & B. Many a time some people who arrived late in the morning Sunday morn. when we are served grapefruit (one whole one) again probably to save sugar. They were told there aren't enough fruit to go around. Why? Because the Mess Division doesn't send enough fruit to give one to each person just once a week on Sunday. Not The workers especially the partys mentioned help themselves at all times, too freely, of what is right fully ours. This is certainly not a case of personal animosity but somet ing which concerns everyone. Not a simple case of a fun stolen fruit either. We can swear before God that is the solemn truth. The faster such women as Mr. Nakai are fired off the list all we'll probably go well. She's set the example and naturally everyone working takes it for granted - that that is due them all and where do we stand?

I hope you can do something. The people are constantly watching of course. This is a disgrace to our people. They probably think we're totally blind.

Selfishness and greed! Some people ask for fresh eggs and get it whereas other people are denied anything if not relative to the workers.

Hope to see action soon on such people and doings.

Most Concerned,  
(Indignant Resident)

COPY---Letter to Mr. Wells---Continued

After all what are people like Mr. Kawamoto supposed to be doing?  
If not to check Mess activities.

Why don't you search these workers home? I challenge you! The  
Chief of the Mess is a very amiable person but these people - sub-  
ject of criticism daily.