

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

EVACUATION AND RESETTLEMENT STUDY
207 GIANNINI HALL
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Gila River Relocation Center
WRA
Rivers, Pinal County
Arizona

August 26, 1942

Dear Dr. Lowie:-

After long last I am able to send to you my promised report. I include in it only a suggestion of some of the doings at Gila which I have observed. After you have read this report, I shall be interested in knowing which items you think I ought particularly to emphasize. While I realize that all the information that I can get is important, it may be that I shall be in a position to stress one trait more than another, as, for example, the matter of gardens and shrines connected with religious worship as against the internal political development.

In a short while I should be joined by our Japanese observers whom Mrs. Thomas has arranged to send to Gila. I have no doubt that they will make the problems confronting me a bit easier. There is a rather definite reluctance on the part of the Japanese here to answer questions. An air of tension is pervading the camp; I have an idea that things will not always proceed as peacefully as now. The general mood is one of marked dissatisfaction over the lack of preparations. I hope that the opening of Camp II will somewhat relieve the situation. I shall try to keep in as close touch with such situations as I can.

With regard to this report: I have tried to include in it a summary of the things I have seen at Gila without going into too much specific detail. I should be grateful to you for suggestions as to how you like these reports. Would you desire more detail and a different type of presentation? The case history follows, I know, a pretty stable biographical pattern. I realize that I should get more detail on Sam's daily life. I do think that Sam is quite typical as a type of rural Nisei.

I shall appreciate your giving the enclosed copies to Mrs. Thomas for her files. I shall be glad to hear from you regarding this report.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Spencer

Gila WRA Relocation Center
Rivers, Arizona

September 13, 1942

Dr. R. H. Lowie
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley, California

Dear Dr. Lowie :

I have completed a rather lengthy letter to Mrs. Thomas in which I outlined a number of the rather startling changes which have suddenly taken place here at Gila. Fortunately, my work here at Gila has been progressing rather well and I have been able to observe a good deal of the Japanese ways of life even under these rather adverse and overcrowded circumstances. Up until now, as you remarked in your recent letter, I have met with the heartiest cooperation from Mr. and Mrs. Smith and the rest of their staff.

Unfortunately however, Mr. Smith has seen fit to resign his position as director of the Gila project. The failure of a politically minded central office to cooperate with the practical needs of the staff here as well as increased military control have combined to make Mr. Smith a bitterly disappointed man. These factors, plus his own ill health, have necessitated his resignation and his return to Albuquerque. Mr. Smith has been replaced temporarily by Mr. Fryer, his superior from the regional office. Unfortunately, Mr. Fryer has for reasons of his own, opposed our study from the beginning and has objected to observers being placed in the various relocation centers. Mrs. Smith informs me that the changed situation may cause me to have to leave my work here for at least as long as Mr. Fryer is in charge. I hope that this will not be so but I am told that Mr. Fryer has been most outspoken in his disapproval of our project. The change which is about to occur will have rather far reaching effects on administrative policy. I doubt very much if another administrator will have Mr. and Mrs. Smith's benevolence and understanding. I regret very much losing so pleasant an association. In the main, Mr. Smith has been popular with the evacuees. A changed administrative staff, coupled with stricter military control may arouse a state of riot in a community which up until now has been peaceful and cooperative however hard the life may have been to bear.

Naturally, I shall keep you and Mrs. Thomas informed as to my prospects here. I hope that they will be favorable.

Today, at the dedication of the Buddhist church in Camp I, I was asked to drive a number of priests from the second camp. With them, and acting as interpreter, was a young man who turned out to be your former houseboy, George Matsura. We were both delighted to see each other. I look forward to a number of pleasant conversations with George in the near future. I urged him to communicate with you, knowing of your interest in him.

I am in the midst of preparing a second report which should be in your hands shortly. I shall hold it, however, if my temporary return to Berkeley may become necessary. I hope that I can iron out the difficulties with Mr. Fryer.

In the last few days we have had several visitors. Dr. John F. Embree visited us for a few days last week. I was most interested in hearing of his experiences with the Japanese in his own field work. He is now a member of the WRA staff and was on his way to San Francisco when he stopped by here. He said that he would pay you a visit; perhaps he has already done so. Mr. Blaisdell of the International House was here yesterday. He is, as you perhaps know, temporarily employed by the WRA as one of the coordinators of the student relocation program. He hoped to make available to students here some of the university extension work. Unfortunately, conditions are not yet ripe for this kind of work. Every student of college age and training is busily at work to make the camps habitable. Mr. Fryer asked Mr. Blaisdell to return at a later time.

As I say, I shall keep you informed by letter or report, of the events of the next few days.

My best wishes to everyone in the department.

Very truly yours,

Robert Spencer

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BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Gila River Relocation Center
Rivers, Pinal County
Arizona
c/o Mr. Eastbourne Smith

August 22, 1942

Dear Dr. Lowie:-

Undoubtedly you are wondering why I have not written you sooner. Gila has given rise to a number of problems, the settling of which was necessary before any observations as to the life at the center could be begun. The trip down here is difficult, numerous delays being met with along the route. Because of army traffic I was obliged to stop over a day in Los Angeles and another in Phoenix. You will recall that I left Berkeley on Monday, August 10. I did not arrive in Gila until the following Thursday. I should more correctly say that I arrived in Coolidge, Arizona, which is a town some twenty odd miles from the center itself. By that evening, Mrs. Smith (Dr. Nan Cook, your former Yale pupil) had met me and introduced me to the rest of the administrative staff. Mr. Smith, the project director, was at that time in San Francisco, having been called there on WRA business. The staff at present consists of aides whose duties entail the various administrative tasks of management, welfare, housing, recreation, policing, and the like. In addition, of course, there is a medical staff, a labor representative from Farm Security Administration, and the various members of the army corps. The former group is the only one under the direction of Mr. Smith and the only one with which I shall have any direct contact. In my reports to you I shall mention in more detail the various duties and functions of the staff. I mention Mrs. Smith and her aides now because from the very moment of my arrival I was made aware of some of the difficulties confronting the field worker at this project. In fact, the first hitch in my planned observations arose from the administration here. Although very kind and considerate, it was apparent that ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ the staff viewed my arrival with some alarm, unquestionably fearing that I would merely offer them another problem. The difficulties of work here were explained to me immediately upon my arrival.

The Gila center is some six miles from the town of Sacaton where the Pima Indian Agency is located. Most of the staff, including the Smiths, have to live in either Coolidge, twenty miles from Sacaton, or in Casa Grande, which is fifteen miles away in another direction. No accommodations are available in either town except at prohibitive rates. It is impossible to live at Sacaton, since this is merely a post office, with perhaps one or two adobe houses in addition to the Indian Agency and School. The difficulty is that the center at Gila is not yet finished. Built to house 15,000 people in two adjoining camps, it is to be noted that only one of these camps is as yet ready to hold any evacuees. The army began moving people in before adequate quarters were prepared. The camp which is prepared to house evacuees is the smaller one, designed for 5,000 people. This is the so-called

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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207 GIANNINI HALL
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-2-

Camp I. Apparently those who are in charge of resettlement on the coast and in the San Francisco offices are having to face political pressures which demand the emptying of the assembly centers as soon as possible. When I arrived, there were 6,700 people in unfinished quarters designed for 5,000. Evacuation and resettlement in the center here began July 20, hardly a month ago. The administration has been hard put to it to house the incoming people. At this writing there are 8,200 people in a space provided for 5,000 and that not completed. Every available space must be devoted to housing the evacuees with the result that there is no space to house the administration. The staff offices are located temporarily at the Indian Agency offices but these must be vacated by the beginning of the Fall semester in a few days. The staff has no quarters outside of the two towns I mentioned and no provision is made for feeding the staff while at the center. Unfortunately, the same restrictions will apply to me.

On the day after my arrival I visited the center. The crowded conditions are rather appalling. No possibility of any social or political developments could as yet arise. I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Korn, the assistant project director on the subject of my remaining here. Both Dr. Korn and Mrs. Smith advised me to begin my work at some other center and to return to Gila at some other time when conditions were more favorable for such work as we contemplate. Although I said at the time that I preferred to remain and that I would cooperate in every way with the staff in charge, Dr. Korn definitely stated that he ~~NEVER~~ believed that I would be better off elsewhere. I accordingly telephoned Mrs. Thomas in Berkeley asking for her advice. Fortunately, she managed to clear with Mr. Coverley of the WRA with the result that I was given a virtual carte blanche so far as remaining at the Gila center was concerned. The work to be done in these early stages will undoubtedly be important inasmuch as the beginnings of the community will affect so markedly its later development. The first church services were held here during the first weekend I was here. Unfortunately, I was ill at the time, the result probably of change of water and climate, and was awaiting Dr. Thomas' reply to my telephone message. By the 17th I was well established, however, and had begun some observations and research. In accordance with our policy of cooperating with the WRA administration I was asked last Tuesday to take a boy back to Fresno, California for services at the funeral of his mother who had died in the hospital there. I returned to Gila last night after obtaining some excellent information regarding camp life and a case history of a representative rural Nisei. My first report on life at Gila will be in your hands shortly. I would suggest that you criticize it and I shall appreciate suggestions as to points which require fuller investigation in these preliminary matters.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

EVACUATION AND RESETTLEMENT STUDY
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-3-

Because I expect to outline more fully the situation at Gila in this report I shall not duplicate the information here. I have made a satisfactory settlement of my living problem and Dr. Thomas has agreed to send me adequate food. I am most grateful to her for her help in arranging the political details of my stay here. Fortunately, I can go and come as I please in the camp even though the work of all Caucasians here is done under rather adverse circumstances. Fortunately, ~~XXXXXX~~ I am able to live at the center and I am thankful to Mrs. Smith for providing me with an army cot. I shall describe in some detail all of Gila that this early stage and few days will allow. I hope that you will bear with me until I can write up the rather good case history I obtained from the lad I escorted.

This has been a most hurried letter written with the hope that it will explain to you some of the problems here. I am sorry not to have written sooner but I hope that the following report will justify my silence.

Mrs. Smith wishes to be most kindly remembered to you. She and her husband have been most helpful and cooperative and are very interested in the proposed plans of our study. As I said, it was Mrs. Smith's honest belief that more could be accomplished by my visiting Manzanar or Tule Lake. I am however, so glad that I am able to remain here.

Sincerely,

Robert Spencer

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EVACUATION AND RESETTLEMENT STUDY
207 GIANNINI HALL
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

February 18, 1943

Dr. Robert H. Lowie
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley, California

Dear Dr. Lowie:

I should like to drop you a line or two to say how much all of us here enjoyed having you and Mrs. Lowie with us during the past week. I realize that the experience was worthwhile for you, and I hope that you were as comfortable as could be under the circumstances. I went to the Kawamoto wedding and reception after I left you last Thursday and found it quite enlightening inasmuch as it was the first Buddhist wedding that I had attended. Our friend, Reverend Ochi, officiated. I hope that you and Mrs. Lowie were comfortable in Casa Grande and that you had no difficulty in arranging your transportation. By this time, you have probably become adjusted to a new semester once more. Again, may I say that I am glad that you found time and opportunity to be able to visit here. Since your departure, I have found my relations with such people as Le Barron much improved.

Since your departure, the top has really blown off of things down here. The meetings which were held during the week regarding Army enlistment did not seem to produce any satisfactory result, and the Kibei Club continued to be active. On Tuesday, the FBI moved in and apprehended twenty-eight of the subversive Issei and Kibei leaders and took them off of the project to be placed in internment camps. George Yamashiro, whom you will remember, was among those taken. Tuesday afternoon here, there was a great deal of excitement, and I was very much afraid that a general riot or uprising would take place. Since then, however, the community has taken another turn and the situation is very, very quiet indeed.

The answers to questions 27 and 28, which you will remember as being discussed in the meeting we attended, are still being answered in the negative. The fact that agitators and leaders of the opposition were removed from the community has seemingly had little effect. It is my own opinion that the real leadership has not as yet been touched. I have just completed a lengthy and detailed account of the situation and have forwarded it to Dr. Thomas. I include a carbon copy of this letter with your own, giving the details of the situation.

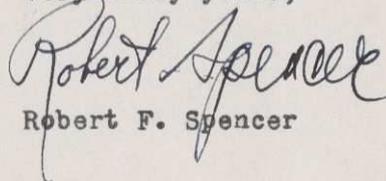
On the day following your departure, our streak of delightful Spring weather began, and we have had pleasant, sunny, cloudless

- 2 -

days ever since. I am sorry that you had to be involved in the cold spell and in the dust storms. It is really much more pleasant here now.

I shall look forward to hearing from you regarding any questions or comments you may wish to bring up regarding this situation. I hope to see you in Berkeley within a few weeks. Please give my best regards to Mrs. Lowie.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert F. Spencer". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Robert F. Spencer

Enclosure

Gila Relocation Center
Rivers, Arizona

April 19, 1943

Dr. Robert H. Lowie
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley, California

Dear Dr. Lowie:-

As Dr. Thomas may have told you, Kikuchi left last week for Chicago to work for us there on the problems of resettlement. Of course, I feel his departure keenly; not only was he a highly valued source of information but also a very good friend. Prior to his going Kikuchi and I worked together on a report entitled "Evacuee and Administrative Interrelationships". This is just about ready to be sent to Berkeley but unfortunately, it contains references to so many bulletins, reports, etc. of which we could only obtain one copy, that only one copy is available. I shall send this to Dr. Thomas and shall ask her to pass it on to you for your perusal when she has seen it. I hope that this will be satisfactory to you.

Kikuchi and I have been quite busily occupied on this report and have come out with a voluminous, if nothing else, production. This, I think, will explain my silence for these past few weeks. In the report we have made an attempt to analyze each of the administrative departments and the relation of these departments to the evacuee population. We have outlined the formal structure, the brief history, the personnel, and the evacuee attitudes toward the respective division. In the report on Mess Operations I had a copy of one section made for you relative to some of the mess hall habits. With this one exception we have digressed pretty far from the field of anthropology. I know however, that you will be interested in our report in view of the role played by the administration in the development of the community. The brief section I mention is included with this letter.

Thank you for your recent letter. I was surprised that Wallace was taken in the draft. He has an eye condition far worse than mine. Naturally, I am a bit concerned over my chances for remaining on the study and I refer again to the matter of my acceptance into the Army Japanese Language School where Elmendorf is. I have been accepted into the school and am unable to make a decision as yet. I hate to leave you and Dr. Thomas in a hole, so to speak and I know that it would be difficult for anyone else to pick up immediately where I leave off. At the same time, I dislike the possibility of being drafted into some branch of the service in which I have no interest and the opportunity of really learning Japanese is to me at least, quite attractive. Dr. Thomas is convinced that I can avoid the army during the year at any rate, although I am not so hopeful. The program now under way seems so intensive and I think it doubtful that I could remain with the study beyond July. I am, as you see, somewhat in a quandary, although I do not as yet have to make a decision. I shall receive formal notice from the language school of my acceptance soon. Until then, I can consider the possibilities. My acceptance is as yet informal, although the commandant of the school assured me that I would be admitted.

In the meantime I shall go on here until I have to decide. With Charlie gone, I plan to work out a few items alone. I want to do a sampling of several residence blocks and to write a history of them which will involve family relationships and adjustments, professional and occupational background, relation of the families to the community, etc. This will be an ~~XXXX~~ apartment to apartment survey which I can do through my good friends, Hikida and Okuno and through several block manager friends I have. Hikida and Okuno, by the way, send their regards. In part, this study will entail case analyses of the kind I still work on and never seem to be able to finish. There are urban and rural blocks with different backgrounds, interests, and organization. I think that a study of this kind will be most helpful to an understanding of the community in general.

I have not forgotten your book at Ochi's. I haven't seen the bishop for several weeks but shall call on him tomorrow. I will see that you receive the book when he finishes it, as he probably has by this time.

We have had an interesting Buddhist festival in which George and his family played a prominent part. Of this, together with an elaborate funeral, I have full notes.

This is about all the news I have. Please remember me to Mrs. Lowie and to what remains of the department.

Yours,

R. F. Spencer

Robert F. Spencer
Gila River Relocation Center
Rivers, Arizona

April 22, 1943

Dr. Robert H. Lowie
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley, California

Dear Dr. Lowie:-

I wish to write this brief note to inform you of my decision relative to my entrance into the Military Intelligence Language School. After some deliberation, the gist of which I mentioned in a letter to you earlier this week, I decided against entering the language school. Accordingly, I wired to the commanding officer at Fort Savage yesterday and requested that my application for admission be withdrawn.

The opportunity to do work here is, I believe, of greater advantage not only to me but to the war effort as a whole. I hear from Elmendorf, currently enrolled in the same school, that the study of Japanese is subordinated to military regimen and that the time spent is not altogether, in his opinion, worth while. In considering all these factors I have decided to remain with the Evacuation and Resettlement study. Too little time was allowed me to sever my connection with you and Dr. Thomas and I feel too, now that Charles Kikuchi has left for Chicago, the study would suffer considerable if Gila were to remain unsupervised. I believe that my decision was a wise one and that I shall not regret it. Of course, I shall have to take my chances with the draft in July but I know that you and Dr. Thomas will lend support in my appeal for deferment.

Dr. Kroeber has written me outlining plans for the development of an army program at the University. I have written back expressing my interest. As you know, these plans are in a most nebulous state, but I hope that something can be made of them. Dr. Kroeber, too, mentions that he may be able to exert some pressure on my draft board.

The staff here joins with me in extending regards to Mrs. Lowie and to you.

Very truly yours,

R. F. Spencer