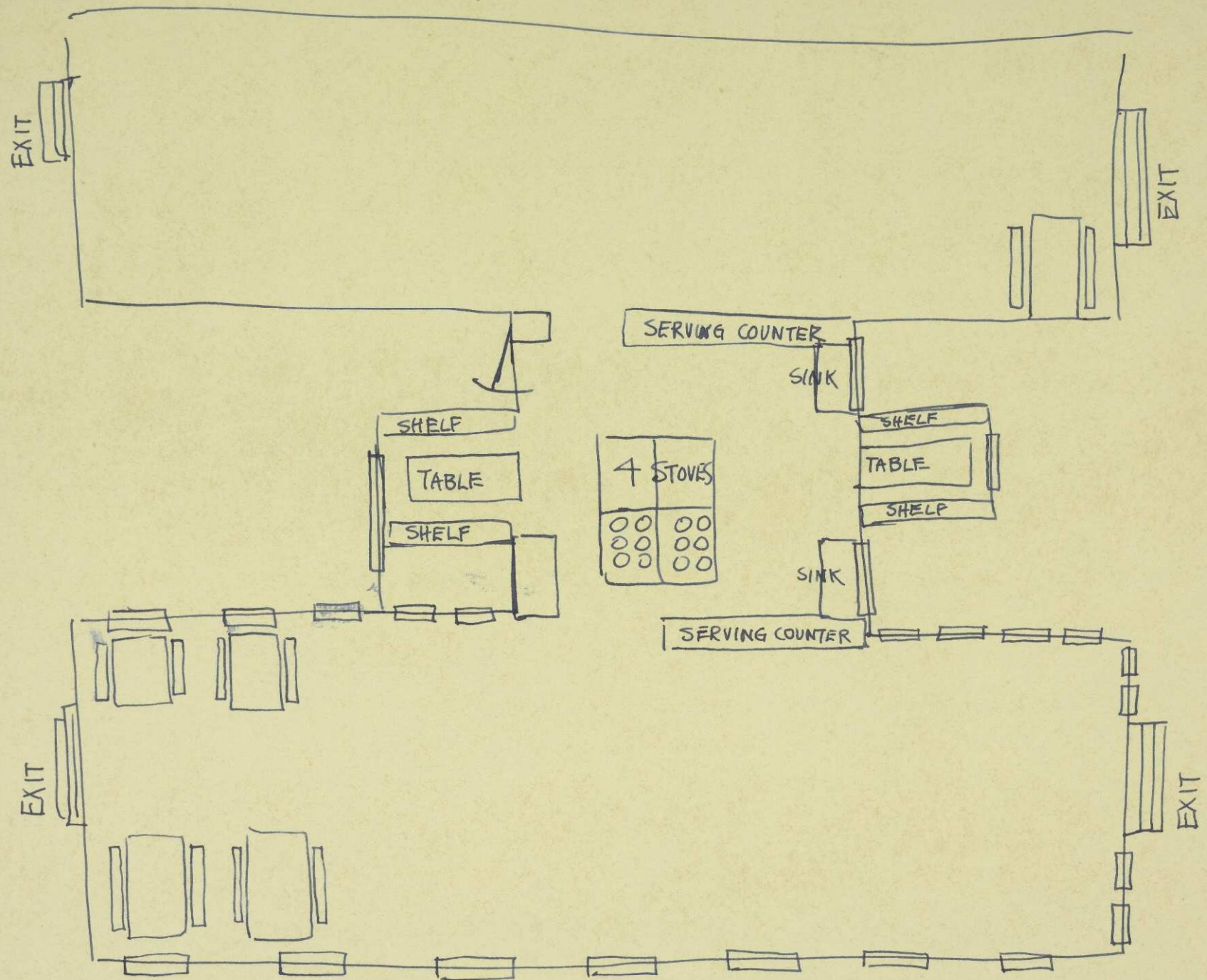


Jim

12 p.

THE MESS HALL

- I. MATERIAL SET UP
- II. SIGNIFICANCE
- III. ORGANIZATION
- IV. FOOD SERVICE
- V. A ROUTINE



ROUGH DIAGRAM OF THE MESS HALL

After having worked in the mess hall, for nearly one month, I have chosen it as the subject for a short paper. I have divided the paper into three main sections: Firstly, the material construction, and physical set up; secondly, the organization of its personnel; and thirdly, the human relationships within the Kitchen group and also of those who come to eat.

Not having taken any courses in sociology, I am afraid I shall miss much in my first attempt, but I shall take care to emphasize the section on human relationships. The reason why I am writing on the first two topics is because I feel there is much that is unique in the setup that I can't help observe them.

In my very brief survey I shall write on only one mess hall. While there are some 15 mess halls within the center, they are so much alike both as to the material set up, as well as the food that is provided, that a cross section of one of them may be able to give a glimpse of into all the messhall activities.

Material Construction

The mess hall, similar to the barracks, is constructed of pine, tar paper, and linoleum. It measures one hundred feet long, and seventy-five feet wide.

Between two long wings which contain twenty-three tables each, is the Kitchen where the food is prepared. The Kitchen itself consists of three sections: the central portion, where the stove, sinks, icebox, and the serving counters are located, and two adjacent wings directly opposite the central section which contain the shelves, the butcher's tables, and the utensils tables.

Adjoining the wings are two small washing rooms where the people wash their utensils and plates after each meal. All the tables are covered with a synthetic material called masonite. The ventilating system is very good in that there are twenty-four windows in the eating rooms and a wooden sky window in each dining wing.

Located at the northern end of the first wing is a sodium fire extinguisher, and a similar one on the outside wall of the Kitchen. Near the four main stoves located in the Kitchen is a pyrene fire extinguisher.

In general, the kitchen and the dining rooms resemble a summer resort kitchen with its pine construction and the unpainted tables.

Significance of the Messhalls.

The mess halls in the assembly center are important since they provide a fulcrum to the vast majority of the people around which they base their daily activity. Hardly a day passes without someone commenting upon the food. During the first two weeks, while the different mess halls were being set up, the universal topic was food: What our mess halls served today; how the food is improving; how fine ^{is} the new method of serving. Even after nearly a month's stay the type of food that is served in camp has much to do with the morale of the people. When the meals are poor, the people grumble and complain. When we have a nice piece of meat, everyone walks out of the mess halls with zeal and anticipation ~~of~~ ^{for} the next meal.

That food is of vital concern to many people is shown by the quantity of canned goods stored by the people before coming to camp. My family, for example, brought along six dollars, $\$6.00$, worth of can goods, such as pineapple juice, chicken soup, can peaches, pears, and pineapple, as well as packages of cookies, and Ritz crackers.

Although they are not held as frequently as they were formerly, I still hear of families going to the laundries with their electric stoves to cook the food that has been brought to them by their friends.

Besides providing the food, the mess hall has become the center of other functions as well. Bulletins pertaining to camp interests, such as the town hall forum, coming socials, and sign up for teams are posted near the mess hall entrance. During the meals an announcer sometimes shouts out kitchen announcements, describes articles which have been found, and information concerning the opening of school.

In short, the kitchen is where the people assemble together three times a day.

The Organization

The Kitchen personnel consists of three main divisions: The administrative, the cooks, and the maintenance group. In the administrative division there is the Kitchen manager who attends to the general welfare of the Kitchen.

I noticed our Kitchen manager with a book on Personnel Administration.

There is also an assistant Kitchen manager who helps the Kitchen manager but who actually does minor chores, such as opening can milks, and bringing out the bread. There are two time keepers who check the workers as they come in each morning and as they leave. These three men report to the Administration each day, turning in reports and time schedules to the main office. The requisition man who goes to the commissary would also come under this classification. His duty is to send in orders, and check the list of supplies as they are delivered to the mess halls.

The cooking department consists of eight cooks, and six junior cooks. The senior cooks who are classified as skilled workers, were formerly cooks in restaurants or workers in family group. Three men on our working staff were restaurant cooks, the remaining worked in American families. The junior cooks are those without any previous occupational experience who have signed up to learn the trade. There are three girl junior cooks and five men workers. Junior cooks do most of the cutting and cleaning of the vegetables, sweep and mop the kitchen. There are four missei, four kibui, and one issei on the junior cook staff in our kitchen.

There are two firemen working on two shifts. Their hours are from 4-7, 7-10, 10-12, 12-3, 3-7. Their duties are to keep the fire going to clean ^{out} the stoves, and to keep care of the fuel pile. The final category includes the general workers, such as the servers and waiter. The servers, serve the food from the pots into plates, and also wait upon the workers and waiters while they are eating. There are four such servers,

two mixi boys and girls.

The waiters are mostly girls, juniors or seniors in high school. Their job is to bring the pitcher of milk, etc and plates to the tables.

The Method ^{the food is} ~~to~~ Served

When the mess hall first opened, the system of passing out the food was by the cafeteria style. All the plates were put on the counter, and as the people filed in the servers scooped a spoonful from each pot into a plate held out by the residents. The difficulty of this method ~~is~~ obvious. First, it took a great deal of time, and kept the people in line which stretched beyond the doors of the mess halls. Thus on windy days there ~~was~~ ^{were} many complaints of the coldness of waiting in line. Secondly, because of the inaccurate judgment in making sufficient food, the amount of food did not often go around.

Before the ^{end of} first week a new system was devised. The people were all told to file in ^{immediately} as soon as the doors were opened, sit themselves at the tables until there were eight persons seated at each table.

Only when eight persons had been assembled, did the waiters bring the food from the counters. This plan had many advantages over the first one.

The people did not have to stand in long lines, waiting for those ~~at~~ in front of them to get their share. It also speeded up the eating hours. Also, it is apparent the waiters had to do a great deal of work, for they were the ones who supplied the tables with plates of food.

A week later, this form was modified. The tables were set aside for family groups. Since the barracks around our mess halls contain four people in a family, two families sat together to make the required eight. The object of this method was to retain the family table as it existed back home, and also eliminate the rowdy bunch of boys who ate together.

where
did
the
rowdy
boys
eat?

The waitresses who attended each table are assigned certain group of tables. They do not stay at the same table, however, for more than a day, but are shifted about. The reasons for this continual change are

interesting. The managers ^{frequently} receive complaints of favoritism practiced by waitresses assigned to their own families. While the waitresses are not at fault many times, their parent reprimand her after work, for not bringing ^{them} an extra toast, or putting in a little more sugar. Another reason is the fear voiced by the parents, that their girls may become too intimate with the boys if they wait on one set of tables. To prevent making boy friends, the girls are shifted from one wing to another, from one group of tables to another.

There are many hazards attending this job of waiting. When the rush begins the girls are often loaded with two hot plates of meat or stew - these they bring helter-skelter to the tables, weaving among the small children who often dart out from their tables. One waitress was extremely afraid she might accidentally drop one of these hot plates on some child. There is no doubt that this work is hard. Many girls have peeled finger tips, as a result of carrying hot plates and pitchers back and forth from the counter to the tables. Working six hours each day with two hours for each meal is rather hard on teen age girls, particularly when they must stand on their feet, and move continually during their working hours. Most of ^{the} girls are seniors or graduates of high school.

Very often despite all their efforts to bring the food to the tables as quickly as possible, all the food is not assembled on the tables at once. For example, at breakfast, the toast comes very early, and the butter appears near the end of the meal. Again at lunch, the sauce may come when the entree has been consumed. Some people begin to eat regardless of the incompleteness of the meal, while others will not. Will wait even if the lunch become cold until the very last item is placed on the table. The latter are bound to grumble and complain at the slowness and inefficiency of the waitresses.

The Routine

The material set up and the personnel organization of the mess hall are all designed and directed to serve the resident members. I shall discuss now the people who come to eat, their preparations for leaving, waiting in line and eating at the dinner tables. The eating hours for our mess halls are 7: and 7:30 AM for the morning shift, 12 & 12:30 for the afternoon shift, and 5: and 5:30 for the evening shift. When the time to eat comes, everyone begins to collect their utensils and plates. Unlike the large mess halls where we ate when we first arrived, we must bring our own utensils. Most people have bags made of cotton cloth to wrap their dishes up while others bring small cans large enough for utensils to fit in, or a dish pan covered with a dish rag. The people seldom leave at the same time but appear at random. Even among family members, each individual does not walk with the family group. In the morning there are many people who do not get up for breakfast, but stay in bed instead. This is particularly true ~~of~~ on ~~week~~ days. Sundays.

When the people get in line, they stand outside the door about five minutes before the doors are opened, the line often extending as far back as $\frac{1}{2}$ a block. The usual conversation while waiting in line is about the weather. "Gosh, look at that fog blanket beyond the hills, or it looks like rain." The people usually stand in line with close friends, or their relatives. The elders are the most reticent, they just stand around with a cigarette or pipe in their mouths. The little children are the noisiest—many cry and tug at the mother's apron. Hardly anyone runs or walks even briskly to the line, everyone straggles along, some barely move as they slowly trudge to the mess entrance.

When the kitchen door is flung open by the doorman, the people come in. The small children (particularly the boys) are usually the first to enter. They run to their tables to see what there is to eat. The older folks come straggling in, walk to their tables, occasionally giving a salutation

to the waitresses who are lined up along the serving counters, and then sit down.

In case of those who have children three mo. or so, these persons go to the baby food table where strained vegetables and milk are distributed.

The most awkward part of the meal is serving yourself. After the plates have been set down by the waiters, it is up to each individual to take up a scoop of the food. There is a certain decorum which governs the amount of food taken by the individual. When the table is occupied by one family, or a family and relatives, the serving is less difficult, but I have heard that when two different families sit at a table, the feeling among them is tense. Usually, the last person to the plate gets the most, as those proceeding him are cautious in their serving, fearing that the food will not be sufficient. While second servings were a taboo at first, now, people do not think anything of it. The

The conversation at the table is less informal and profuse as it was back home. Nothing intimate or personal is discussed; above all, squabbles have disappeared. What the people talk about, are such impersonal matters, such as how the food tastes, where we might go from here, and when the school will start.

When the meals ^{have been} eaten, the family group seldom leaves together. The eldest member, the men folks invariably leave first. Always the folks remain until the last, putting the left over orange or toast in the pan, and also collecting the plates and utensils. Before leaving the messhall, the women folk dispose ~~of~~ the remainder ~~of~~ the mush or coffee in the garbage cans which are placed at the entrances to the mess halls.

The women folks then take these dishes to the shower room to wash them. Many wait an hour or so to avoid the congestion in the limited shower space. At present, there is a supplement being added to the Kitchen in order that they may wash the dishes as they leave the messhall.

As it is, the residents walk to the shower rooms or laundries, which are of considerable distance for some of the people.

When the dishes have been washed and wiped, they are put back on the shelves, ready to be used again for the following meal.