

Report #1

Sierra Madre, California
May 6, 1942Rowdies at dances in Santa Anita

April 27, George brought home the news that Bobbie said that girls were refusing to attend dances at the centers because the boys were acting too rowdy. On May 1 I asked Bobby about it and she said that she had heard it from some friends, she didn't know whom. On May 3 Rose Shoda was at the gate at Santa Anita and Yaye got a chance to speak to her. She is said to have remarked that the socials weren't so bad because they were for couples only. They had police stationed at entrances to keep out others. This was confirmed by the Santa Anita Pacemaker, which stated: "...Terpsichoreans will frolic in front of the Grandstand. While admission to the dance floor will be to couples only, parents are invited to enjoy the festivities. Hi, neighbor!!" (Vol. I, No. 4, May 1, 1942.)

Rowdy activity at Santa Anita

This I heard from a Pasadena fellow as I hoed weeds in a berry patch on May 1. He said that he went to Santa Anita to see some friends, and that it was mentioned that a girl left a show alone and five boys pounced upon her.

Prejudice against Rowdies

I don't like to use the word Rowdy, but it crops up so often as a prejudice among "respectable" people that I can't help employing it. Some Pasadena kids came around to the farm in Monrovia on a hopped-up car. Bobby asked us if we liked them, and I asked why she didn't. She said that they were too "nonki," (easy-going), but actually I think she believes that they are good for nothing. (May 4.) Kingo also thinks that the Pasadena kids "are mostly no good." He believes that most Niseis go around in gangs. (May 1.) Tonight we were discussing whether we should go to Pomona with the Monrovia and valley group or stay with the Sierra Madre and Pasadena people. Kingo wanted to stick with the Sierra Madre people and insisted that he would merely tolerate the Pasadena kids.

Prejudice against Jews

I'm surprised at the amount of prejudice existing among some Japanese against Jews. I believe that this is quite general. My brother and Pete both seemed to agree that it was mostly the Jews who succeeded in bringing about the evacuation of the Japanese. They have pointed to the Jews who took over most of the market in L. A. and many of the retail produce stores. They seemed to think that Hakujins wouldn't be quite that bad. Duke, a wholesale produce merchant, also mentioned the Jews as the source of much of the plight of the Japanese at present. He even said that Roosevelt is really a Jew and that his name was originally Rosenfelt.

Food at Santa Anita

On May 1 I was at the gate at Santa Anita. I could see the party that I wanted to because she had just entered the camp and she didn't have time enough to get a permit. But I met another girl I knew who told me briefly about the condition inside. She said at the outset that all they talked about inside was about food. She said that they didn't get Japanese food very often. She said that she had had okoko just once. She also said that the sauce they made didn't fit their taste. At the beginning they had to eat canned fish which was open for three days, and everybody had tommaine poison. It was terrible, she said.

Yaye quoted Rose as saying that all she had to complain about was the food and that she wanted to stay there permanently. (May 1.)

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Someone at home remarked that they're probably starving the people so that they could make money at the canteen, selling milk and things.

Frisco girls at Santa Anita

Bobby said sometime last week that the Frisco girls were always dressed up, while the local girls wore slacks during the week and dressed up only for Sunday. She said that they "primp up."

On the day that Yaye went to see someone at Santa Anita, (May 1), she said that the Frisco girls were really "fast," and hinted that they went in for illicit sexual affairs. I couldn't pin her down as to where she had heard this.

Japanese government support in Java for Isseis

On May 3 I had occasion to speak to three different Isseis, and they all mentioned that after the war there might be a good chance for them in Java. One of them hinted that the government might furnish the land the capital for them to become settled. He also explained that there had been a broadcast from Japan that the Japanese government had assured the first-generations that all would be well for them if only they kept their body and soul together.

Evacuation for Pasadena and Monrovia

Last week Bobbie brought home the news that an official of the WCCA at Pasadena had told someone else that this area would be evacuated to Pomona, meaning the valley. George M. brought home the news that the boundary was Santa Anita Rd. Today the evacuation orders came out. Monrovia is going to Pomona, while Sierra Madre and Pasadena are to be evacuated, but there has been no notice as to the location of the assembly center.

Report #2

JS
Tulare Assembly Center
May 18, 1942Evacuation

We registered for evacuation at Pasadena. The Sierra Madre group went down there early in the morning and were about the first ones in line. The whole group decided to leave together on the following Thursday, rather than Tuesday or Wednesday. They told us that we were destined for Pomona, and the official in charge seemed to be quite confident about it. We were glad because we had some relations (Pete and Tomoye and Pete's family) who were going to Pomona because they lived in Monrovia. But the same morning about nine or ten the order was changed, and we were told that we were to go to Tulare. Everyone in the family was dejected. On top of that, George received a letter from a friend already in Tulare saying that it was a "dump," and that the food came from cans.

George and I worked till the day before actual evacuation at Pete's farm. There was much doubt in the mind of Mr. Mimaki, Pete's father, whether the Hakujin that took over his farm and a few others, a hundred acres in all, would be able to carry on the work properly. We agreed that the Mexicans would be able to take it much easier now.

George and I came home early in the afternoon to help clean up our yard. When we were through the place looked as clean as it never did probably in the 17 years that the family lived in Sierra Madre. Even on the morning of the evacuation Mrs. T. was working away, trying to leave the house in spick and span order. It is a curious habit of Japanese to leave things in order and cleanliness, even when they don't have to and they know they may never come back again.

On the day before evacuation George, Ruby and I went to a show and enjoyed ourselves, although we didn't see any other Japanese in the theater.

Part of our baggage we sent to load on a van that had been rented by the Sierra Madre group and the rest was loaded on before five. We took everything that we wanted to, except for two card tables which were thrown out because they were "household goods."

We awoke at three in the morning to prepare for evacuation. Caucasian neighbors had offered us breakfast, lunches, and transportation down to the station, but this was all arranged for us by members of the Friends Service Committee, a family of whom we knew. They came after us in the morning and served us breakfast in their home. Then they took us down to the station and saw us off. Several churches in Pasadena had gotten together and were serving a breakfast of rolls, coffee, milk, and oranges.

We were feeling fine because there were people to see us off. Others seemed bored. There was very little crying going on. There were some Negroes seeing off some of their neighbors. As the train pulled out several of us were waving to people on the wayside. Most of them were glad to wave back at us. Only one lady screwed up her face and thumbed her nose at us.

We took the Sante Fe line, went out to Barstow, and then switched back to Bakersfield. For lunch we were served box lunches containing a jam sandwich, ham sandwich, cake, and apple, and also milk. A few card games were started on the train and there were some visiting back and forth, but on the whole things were quiet.

It was not till 8:30 P.M. that we arrived in Tulare. The train stopped in front of the fair grounds, and we lined up and walked a little ways to the barracks. There were soldiers with rifles and tommy guns and a few curious Caucasians, silently looking on. Ruby, May and Yaye didn't approve because it gave the impression that we were being herded into a concentration camp.

It seemed as though the whole camp was out to welcome us. There was no shouting except for one or two individuals who had found friends. Slowly we filed down the road, as curious inmates of the camp kept staring at us. I joked and said that this is the way a celebrity must feel when parading down the street.

As we were the last group to come in to Tulare from Pasadena, the set-up to welcome and get us settled seemed to work quite smoothly. There were seven of us, and we were assigned to a room for eight. There were grasses growing up through the asphalt floor. We were given a blanket, metal CCC cots, and straw mattresses. Our baggage was transported from the train on trucks, and they were unloaded by Japanese boys and identified by the various owners. These were opened and inspected by inspectors, mostly Caucasians. They asked whether we had flashlights, cameras, or any sharp tool. We tried to carry our baggage out to the room at the farthest end of the campground on wheelbarrows, but after an initial trial we decided to let the trucks take it out there for us. It was one at night before we were able to have our baggage transported.

The First Day

The first morning we dwaddled in bed, but got up in time for breakfast. They had grapefruit, boiled eggs, cold meat, toast, jam, butter, coffee, and milk.

First Complaint

Mrs. T. brought in the first complaint. She said that the toilet was impossible. There was no partitions and the seats were not always clean. It was built too high and large for Japanese, which increased the difficulty of keeping the seats clean.

Fixing up Our Room

We spent the morning fixing up our room. We put up shelves and arranged our things on them. We made closets and hung our clothes in them. Curtains were put up. By the second day our room was cleaned and arranged enough to look quite livable.

Haircut

We had brought along a clipper, and we had Ruby cut our hair for us. It really didn't look so bad. As yet there are no barbers, cleaners, or beauty parlors.

Showers

The showers for the boys were good enough, but the girls complained that there weren't enough privacy. Some of them did not use the showers for a day or two, afraid of the lack of privacy.

Dinner

For dinner there were stew, hominy, cole slaw, and canned fruits. As I went too late, I missed out on the stew and was served cold meat instead.

Peace

In the evening Geo., Ruby, and I walked around the camp. It was cool and pleasant. We came upon two games of volleyball being played in an open space. All around there were young people just standing or sprawled on the dry grass. In spite of the game in progress there seemed to be hardly any movement in the air. I felt as though I had gone on a vacation in Japan to an uneventful resort. I thought that probably these people had never felt so unrestrained and relaxed before. Outside they had always been face to face with racial discrimination or keeping up of pretenses and petty barriers. Here all of that had been wiped out almost completely. Most of the people here were from rural districts -- Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, Ventura County, Gardena-Compton -- and there seemed to be a minimum of actually anti-social youths.

Rowdism

I have heard from a fellow working in the office that so far there has been only several cases of goods being stolen. In one case three girls tried to climb over the partition between the rooms. Four boys also were caught trying to climb into a room occupied by girls. They were reported by a man who was sleeping behind a curtain. My informant says that the police are now drawing up regulations to take care of criminal offenses through the local police department. On May 16 three colored bulbs were reported missing from the recreation room where the weekend dance was to be held. There were threats that there would be no dance unless they were returned, but they never turned up. They had the dance just the same. One other incident broke out Saturday. There was a volleyball game, and an Oxnard kid tried to shove a Santa Maria fellow off the Oxnard team. There was some argument, it seems, and this was continued at the dance when the two groups met. I think the whole thing was settled without any actual blows.

Weather

The weather is as warm as we had expected. In the morning it is cool,

but about ten or eleven it starts to get hot. In the evening it is cool again. We have been taking naps in the afternoon when it is the hottest. They say that it gets much hotter than this at the peak of the summer weather.

Saltpeter in Food

One fellow told us that they put saltpeter in food and drinks that are served in the mess halls. This is done in order to relieve the strain between the sexes, he said. It is done in the Army and in the CCC camps. I had never heard of this before.

Dinner

Roast portk, mashed potato, corn, applesauce. It was good but not sufficient, so I went to another mess hall and ate again. They will give you second helpings if you asked for it.

Dance

On Saturday night we attended a dance for the first time. There was only one dance, but it was announced that from next week they would try to put on two on the same night to accommodate more people. The recreation hall was just another barrack with wood floors. The cracks between the floor board was often large enough to catch our shoes, but on the whole it did not bother the dancing much. Music was furnished by a record player and two radios used as loud speakers. The room was filled with people of ages ranging between 15 and 30, including even married people. Most of them were dressed plainly, and some even sloppily. There was practically no appearance of having dressed up for a social function. Ruby, Yaye, Geo., and I danced among ourselves mostly and enjoyed ourselves well enough. (It would be interesting to compare this with Santa Anita, where people from the urban districts have gathered. Here there is no sign of having to restrict the dances to couples only.)

Church

Both Christian and Buddhist services were announced for Sunday. Ruby, George, and Yaye and I wanted to go to both, but because of the conflict in time we went only to the Buddhist service. The Christians from Pasadena had already organized their choir of about 75 people, and an outside Caucasian minister was slated to speak. The Buddhists from Guadalupe reorganized their choir, but could get together only about 25. There was only one Buddhist priest here. The feeling of competition between the two religious groups is evident already. The Buddhists, however, do not seem to be so enthusiastic about their cause. While the Christians met on the bleachers, the Buddhists held their meeting in a recreation hall. The routine of songs and readings and sermon was followed. Rev. Imamura spoke on the darker aspect of religion, the unhappiness and misery faced by human beings. He said that it was necessary to understand this darker side in order to appreciate the brighter side of salvation. The elders are having a service of their own on Tuesday nights. The Christians had both on Sunday, the elders having theirs after the young people had finished with theirs.

Sunday Dinner

Swiss steak, stewed tomato, mashed potato, bread, jam, cocoa, pudding, canned peaches. It was really very good.

Cleaning Assignment

A girl came around to assign each barrack to clean the toilet, shower room, and laundry room. The girls in our room have to do it on the 29th. Only one girl from each room is required to do it once every three weeks.

Toilet Trouble

There are still complaints of the toilet condition. For one thing, the facilities are much too high for young kids. Even the ladies complain that it was not made for Japanese. I've seen one little boy brought in by his father because he wasn't tall enough to urinate. The fact that the flushing system is inadequate and makes the place attractive to flies and causes an awful smell make the toilet still open to complaints. The first shock of using such facilities seems to be over. The girls are still grumbling that there ought to be partitions put in.

Canteen and Store

At the canteen they sell only ice cream, soda water, and tobacco. Scrips must now be used, and these are purchased at \$2.50 per book.

Necessary things are being ordered through the mail from Sears and Montgomery Wards. I understand that the post office does not accept anything else but p.o. money-orders. They have asked that no articles be bought c.o.d.

Gardens

Most of the rooms have been well-tidied up with curtains. Little gardens on the south side of the barracks have already been begun. George made our vegetable garden this morning. Mrs. T. cut some of the weed around the barrack and made a door mat out of them.

Work

The work inside of the camp seems to be well organized. In the main office there are Caucasians at the head of various units, but the actual work is done wholly by Japanese. Most of the positions were filled by persons who arrived here early. Some of those who came with us are working in the mess hall. There are calls yet for policemen. Otherwise there seems to be a long waiting list of people trying to get into some sort of attractive work. I have as yet not applied for any work because I have been kept busy with my study, but I might sign up for a teaching position if it does not take up too much time.

Government

A temporary Tulare Center Council, a self-appointed body, is handling the government now. There should be an election soon to elect representatives from various units to work out the problems that come up.

Tulare News

We have received the third issue of the Tulare Center organ, the Tulare News. It's not anywhere nearly as good as the Santa Anita Pacemaker. The paper is of poorer grade, and the page make-up and general printing is not as good. There is yet no paper out in Japanese.

Report #3

Tulare Assembly Center
May 24, 1942Description of the Tulare Assembly Center

During the first week the general set-up here in the assembly center was rather vague to the observer. Since I came in without much preconceived plans, except to keep a record of whatever was socially significant, my work so far has been rather sketchy. My second report is a good testimony of that. At this time I shall try to clarify the more obvious aspect of the Center.

Identification

This is an assembly center. In The War Relocation Work Corps, a circular put out by the War Relocation Authority, an assembly center is defined as follows: "A convenient gathering point, within the military area, where evacuees live temporarily while awaiting the opportunity for orderly, planned movement to a Relocation Center outside of the military area."

Location

Tulare Assembly Center is situated on the edge of the city of Tulare, California, on a former fairground. Located in Kings County in San Joaquin Valley, the climate during the summer is hot. In the middle of the day the heat has hovered close to 100 degrees, but it is reported to become as hot as 110.

Facilities

The facilities of the Center well fill the 60 acres of the fairground. Most of the space is taken up by 171 barracks. Most of them are newly-built and are 24 by 100 feet. They are partitioned into five rooms of varying sizes, holding from four to nine persons. The floors are of wood, concrete, or asphalt, depending on the barrack. The stables that were on the fairgrounds were converted into living barracks. They do not differ greatly from the new barracks, except that they are wider, making some of the rooms longer and consequently darker.

There are 21 shower rooms. The water is regulated so that hot and cold water comes out alternately. But when many people use the showers, there is no hot water at all, and when very few use them, it is too hot. A footbath has recently been installed in each shower room.

There are 11 messhalls, with seating capacities for 180 persons.

There are 30 latrines. The construction of those for the woman is the same as those for the man. This fact can probably be accounted for by possible plans to use these facilities for Army purposes, since evacuees are to be quartered here only temporarily. There are eight seats in the latrines, four on each side. By a central flushing system, water is run down the central trough periodically from one end. This is not entirely satisfactory as it washes down only the center of the trough and does not catch all of the material that accumulates higher up on the edge. Part of this accumulation is caused by the fact that the occupant does not sit back far enough. This in

turn is made difficult because the seats are built too high and too far back for Japanese in general. For women and children this inconvenience is accentuated. There is a urinary trough in each latrine. Since it is too high for children, stools have been installed at one end for use by youngsters. There are no partitions between the eight seats in the latrine. In the women's latrines, however, the evacuees themselves have put in partitions for at least one of the seats, and curtains hung up in the passageway to afford the privacy desired.

There are three hospital barracks and five laundry rooms.

A playground of about ten acres has been acquired next to the fair-ground, and will be made available soon.

Population

The population of Tulare Assembly Center is composed of first and second generation Japanese from several rural districts. Between April 27 and 30, 1,232 came from Santa Maria Valley, and 1,186 from the Santa Barbara-Ventura areas. Between May 1 and 9, 1,097 people arrived from the Gardena-Compton areas. The latest arrivals were from the Pasadena-San Gabriel areas between May 12 and 14, which numbered 1,318. (Tulare News, May 16, 1942.)

The official population is 4,835. There are about 500 more males than females. For every alien Japanese, there are 2.3 citizens.

Education and Occupation

Although no data have been compiled, as far as the citizens are concerned, there does not seem to be a very great percentage of college graduates. The largest number are probably high school graduates.

Since most of the evacuees were from rural districts, it is reasonable to suppose that the majority of them are either farmers, farm workers, or housewives and students.

Degree of Americanization

The evacuees in Tulare Assembly Center are probably more conservative than those in Manzanar or Santa Anita. Most of the evacuees seem to speak Japanese quite fluently. One does not find any large degree of attempt at seeming American. So far I have seen no flag-waving, and I have heard little emphasis of the practice of democracy inside of the Center. Dancing, weight-lifting, boxing and other American recreations are carried on, but at the same time judo is being practised every night by a few people. There is a definite lack of concentrated interest in swing music, as one finds among young Niseis in urban districts, one also hears Japanese popular music. While the Pasadena area has been almost overwhelmingly Christian, the other rural areas have had a large number of Buddhists.

Organization

The WCCA is still in control of this Assembly Center. Many of the men in the head positions are said to be WPA men, in other words, civilians. The orders, however, come from the Army office in San Francisco, making it possible for a friction between the civilian heads here and the Army authorities.

The Manager, the top man here, is Mr. N. Aanonsen. Below him are the various sections: Supply, Works Maintenance, Fire Protection, Police Dept., Lodging and Mess Division, Finance and Records, Service, Health, Education, Recreation, etc. All of the important head positions are filled by Caucasians, although some of the lesser departments and assistantships are in charge of evacuees. The workers are all evacuees.

Work is organized on a 4 hour week basis. Unskilled workers are paid \$8; skilled workers, \$12; and professional workers, \$18 a month. Those who arrived first have filled most of the desirable positions. It seems that it is the common practice to get friends into jobs.

Leadership

The leadership among the evacuees has^{been} taken up almost wholly by JACL leaders and other leading citizens in the former Japanese communities. A temporary Council has been self-appointed, with the consent of Mr. Aanonsen, to carry on the work of organizing the evacuees. Two representatives have been selected from each section, and there does not seem to have been very much effort made to listen to the choice of the population as a whole. On the other hand, there seems to be little objection to the present set-up. It is of interest to note that the head of the Council is Ken Utsunomiya, former National Executive Secretary of the JACL, and working for the Minami Produce, a large Japanese farmer, and that the rest of the councilmen are former JACL presidents or active members, and that others were connected with influential Japanese firms. This will be clarified more thoroughly later on. The Council is now said to be working on an election to allow the people to select their own representative from each section.

Miscellaneous Reports

Typhoid Shots

On the 18th we took our first typhoid shot. The next day all of us were in bed, feeling miserable. But we were all right after a day. When we took the second shot a few days later I didn't feel so bad and was up and around, but the rest of the family stayed in bed for a day. Ruby and Yaye are now afraid to take the third one.

Social Welfare Division

I went to the Social Welfare Division for some information, and I was asked to come around to help. I was glad to do this, even though I was not being paid, because it gave me a chance to obtain information. Mr. Miura,

the head, a former insurance salesman, encouraged me to make studies of the camp situation. I helped him gather statistics on the age, sex, and citizenship distribution of the evacuees, and started a survey of the occupational distribution. Different kinds of complaints are being handled in the Welfare Office. People who want to transfer to another assembly center, those who want their barracks changed, those who want their automobiles sold, those with family trouble, mental cases, all bring their complaints to the welfare office.

Collection Plate

Last Sunday the Protestants passed around a collection plate and were reported to have collected \$62. The problem of whether to allow this practice or not was on file at the Welfare Office, and seems to have caused some controversy. Part of the administration office seemed to be against it on the ground that it was "cash transaction," which was forbidden in the camp. On the other hand, free-will offerings were allowed, and Mr. Stump, the head of the Service Dept., thought that the Religious Dept. should decide whether to allow collection plates or not. Rev. Tajima insisted that funds were necessary to carry on church activities and is said to have insisted that offerings were an essential part of the worship. Mr. Miura was against it on the ground that the church had been tied up with Capitalism too closely. At a meeting of the religious committee on the 23rd, however, the Christian representative stated that the Christian group had decided not to take up a collection anymore.

E's Case

In one family the father was a religious fanatic and couldn't get along with his children. One of his sons even registered separately to come here to be able to live away from his family. The son was cited by Rev. T. as a possible mental case, as having "changed." But on investigation the blame was placed on the father, and he was moved to a bachelor's quarter.

Bottleneck in Getting Medical Supplies

There seems to be a bottleneck in getting supplies for the hospital, as well as for other purposes. There's a lack of necessary supplies in the hospital now, in spite of the fact that the camp is now 3 weeks old. The Tulare News office has received no supplies yet. The Welfare Office, too, has been going to the administration office for what supplies they needed and could get. Someone mentioned that there might be a friction between the Army and the civilian elements in the WCCA setup.

Men in Women's Toilets

There has been reports that a man was seen going into the women's toilet at night, and not coming out. The police are said to have warned women not to go into the latrine alone at night.

Athlete's Foot in Shower

Cases of athlete's foot have been reported. George has it now. Footbaths have been installed in the shower rooms now, although May reports

that she has seen none of the women use it.

Office Supplies from Local Store

Since the supplies ordered for the Welfare Office did not seem to be forthcoming, some necessary supplies were bought by one of the staff members. The Police Chief went out on a bicycle to get them. A ream of poor typing paper was tagged at \$1.25. The place where the old tag might have been torn off could be seen. A thousand sheets of yellow copy paper was priced at \$1.50. A pack of mimeograph stencils cost him \$3.50.

Making Wooden Sandals

Made myself a wooden sandal (geta) with a piece of two by four which I sneaked from left-over lumber from a construction work. Lumber is so scarce that you can only get hold of it with difficulty, even when it is a small piece. Many of the others have already made geta for themselves. They are convenient in going to and from the shower room.

Facilities for Church Groups

A meeting of the church groups, the Religious Committee, and Mr. Stump of the Service Division was held Saturday. It was agreed upon that all church groups would use any facility cooperatively. The desirability of a chapel where benches and a piano would be available was discussed. Since there were plans for an open-air amphitheater where services could be held and recreation facilities were limited, it was decided for the present that no barrack would be set aside for a chapel. But recreation halls and schoolrooms were to be made available to the church groups.

Church Groups

The Christians seem to be well organized, and have begun many activities. Beside their Sunday school activities, service for elders, and for young people, they have arranged for other semi-recreational groups.

The Buddhists have been hampered by lack of ministers and outside help, and facilities. They have only one minister here, and hardly any equipment at all. A greater obstacle, however, seems to be the reluctance of former Buddhist leaders to take up the cause for Buddhism enthusiastically. So far there is only one Nisei who is attempting to organize the Buddhists, although many are willing to attend the services.