

SPECIAL
ANNIVERSARY EDITION

MANZANAR
Free Press

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Manzanar, California



Photo by Francis L. Stewart, official WRA photographer

Out of the desert's bosom, storm swept with wind and dust;
Out of smiles and curses, of tears and cries, forlorn;
Mixed with broken laughter, forced because they must;
Toil, sweat and bleeding wounds, red and raw and torn.
Out on the desert's bosom—a new town is born.

Summer with long, parched nights and days;
And heaven's bowl a shimmering blue of heat;
The thirsty hills are choked. The sun's hot blaze
Before encroaching autumn, once more retreats.
King Winter reigns upon his icy seat.

Dust clouds, like brown smoke, rise and swirl and blow
From hidden lairs in icy crags, towering high,
Like hungry pack of wolves, the gale sweeps low,
Fangs sharp and bared, shrieking to the sky.
The guardian peaks emerge, serene and high.

A year is gone. A quickening in the air.
The desert stirs beneath the freshening rain.
The scent of sage, the wild rose perfume rare,
The tumbling brooks break forth in glad refrain.
Another spring—perhaps new hope, new life again.

FROM THE NATION'S PRESS

AS ONE of the biggest news events of 1942 the Japanese evacuation was thoroughly covered by all the press news gathering agencies as well as by special writers from newspapers and magazines. Manzanar, as the first of the relocation centers, was especially thrown into the limelight as attested by over a dozen thick volumes of clippings collected from nationwide sources. Following are some of the pertinent extracts from newspapers in all the various sections of the U. S. which followed the establishment and growth of the center.

... Evacuation Work Well Done ...

Sacramento—Ten inch editorial commended the Army on its quick and efficient handling of the Japanese evacuation also the "cheerful acceptance" of their fate by the Japanese themselves.—Sacramento Bee, June 9, p. 26.

"Japanese Girls Still Play Ball ..."

Sacramento—Three column picture by AP photo showed members of the Chick-a-Dee team at practice in Manzanar Relocation Center.—Sacramento Bee, June 25, p. 23.

"Japanese at Work for the U. S."

San Francisco—Fifty-two inch feature story by Lawrence E. Davies with six photographic illustrations of Japanese evacuee life at Manzanar. The proposed work to be done at other War Relocation projects where the evacuees "will be the instruments through which a reclamation program planned for completion in two decades may be well on the way to realization in two or three years, or less." Location and description of sites given. Personal history of some of the evacuees cited.—N. Y. Times, June 21, p. 14, Mag. Sec.

Summary of the News at Manzanar

Work speeded on camouflage nets. Two hundred workers active on projects. Shipments made regularly. Classes in junior and senior high school English, science, foreign languages and other courses begun June 22. Two supplements in Japanese characters now appear in each issue of the Manzanar Free Press.—Inyo Independent (Independence), June 26, p. 1.

Guayule

Guayule plantings now in bloom. Dr. Emerson of Cal-Tech anxious to have additional plants set out.—Inyo Independent (Independence), July 3, p. 1.

"Seeks Japanese Crop Aid"

San Francisco—"Olson to ask Army to suspend evacuation pending harvest."—New York Times, July 7, p. 21.

"Manzanar Free Press Makes Debut"

Independence—Written and edited entirely by Japanese, the Manzanar Free Press, previously mimeographed, became a full-fledged, thrice weekly printed newspaper on July 22. Printing costs will be financed by national advertising and the Manzanar Community Enterprises will manage its business department. It is printed in English.—Inyo Independent, July 24, p. 1.

Victory Garden Results

Three thousand crates of vegetables are expected to be produced within the next month from the three-acre Victory Garden.—Inyo Independent, Sept. 11, p. 6.

Manzanar News

Feature story. "1,000 laborers leave Manzanar to save sugar beets." Distribution of workers given.—Inyo Independent, Sept. 25.

Director Appointed

"Appointment of Ralph P. Merritt as director of Manzanar Relocation Project was announced yesterday by the WRA. Merritt's appointment was disclosed by Dillon S. Myer, national director of the WRA, who is in San Francisco for conferences with local WRA officials."—S. F. Chronicle, Nov. 27.

Soldiers Halt Disorder

"Authorities enforced martial law at Manzanar."—Chicago, Ill. News, Dec. 7.

Riot ... One Killed

"The Japanese relocation center (Manzanar) here was under martial law today."—Boston, Mass. Herald, Dec. 8.

"Evacuation Center Disturbances"

"Some news analysts believe it is most unfortunate that it was necessary to invoke martial law at the Japanese evacuation center at Manzanar ... in order to quell a riot." The reason these news analysts believe the occurrence is unfortunate is that it will be used by the Japs in Japan or Japanese-held territory as an excuse to inflict added punishment on American prisoners.—Ariz. Republic (Phoenix), Dec. 8.

Letters from the People

Seattle—Harry M. Myers refers to an editorial printed previously, saying that it was unfair to the "loyal American citizens of Japanese ancestry." The fact that we are at war does not justify abandonment of democratic processes.—Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Dec. 14.

Let the Public Speak—

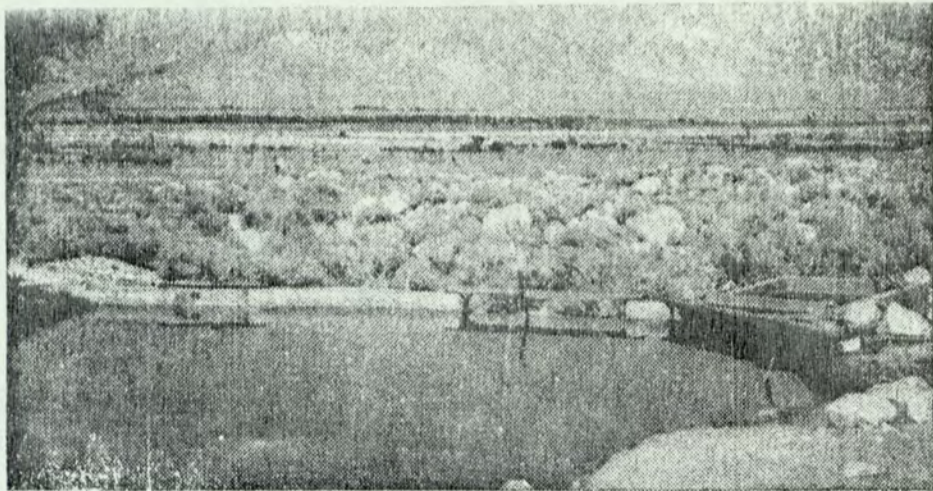
Editor: "... When I am convinced that Japanese children were responsible for Pearl Harbor, then I'll quickly change my views ..." stated Chet Merritt in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat against the tempest which rose over suggestion that Christmas gifts be sent to Japanese children in camp.

"Some Japanese Loyal"

"Dillon Myer, head of the WRA, who has charge of 110,000 persons of Japanese blood, says he believes most of the ones born in the U. S. are loyal to this country, and applauds the Army's decision to accept some of them for military service. He says the FBI has checked up on those who are 'potentially dangerous' and that they have been removed to internment camps operated by the Army. Myer dismisses the pro-Axis riots at Manzanar and some other centers as demonstrations of 'emotionalism.'—Eureka, Calif. Times, Jan. 31.

MANZANAR FREE PRESS

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DESERT SCENE: Looking down on the bleak site of future Manzanar before construction began. Reservoir pictured in foreground is source of water supply for the center.—Cut courtesy L. A. Daily News.

A MANZANAR INTERLUDE ... One Year of Hardships and Heartaches

A SHORT SKETCH DEPICTING THE BEGINNING AND THE EVENTS OCCURRING DURING THE INCREDIBLE FIRST YEAR

by HELEN AOKI

THE ONCE-LIVELY voices that had swept the streets of the Japanese communities were practically nil. The dark streets were darker, and the ancient architecture of the local business houses was distinctly moribund. Only ghost towns remained, standing out in the sudden quiet that pervaded their loss of occupants. Clearance sale signs, closing out signs, and large bulletins on the Japanese exodus glared into the empty streets. In San Francisco, a Japanese book store on the corner of Buchanan and Post was stripped of all signs of activity, except for the fateful farewell inscription painted on the windows by the owner: "Closing out all goods. Nuts. Closing. See you in Owens Valley, Fooyey!"

With relative outward calm thousands of Japanese families on the entire Pacific Coast had prepared for the mass departure to the various reception and relocation centers. and the Federal agencies within the administration of the Manzanar Center which was then in process of construction. Although Merritt was not directly connected with the center until his recent appointment as Project Director, the federal authorities had kept him in touch with conditions here and later had appointed him to his present post. On March 18, 16 men from the Bureau of Water and Power stood on the lonely and barren waste of sagebrush land on the outskirts of Owens Valley, faced with the task of installing power and light for the first hundred evacuees and for the thousands to follow.

Evacuation Proceeds

When the United States Army announced the evacuation order on March 5, 1942, three months after Pearl Harbor, three widely-separated groups were immediately involved in a network of relationships. To the U. S. Army, the order signified a directional move in line with military safety and necessity. To the estimated 110,000 citizen and alien Japanese, the order meant breaking up of home and wholesale transplanting of life to a new soil. To the citizens of Owens Valley, the evacuation purported the establishment of a Japanese camp in their midst, the very sound of which was distasteful to them. However, through the efforts of Geo. W. Savage, co-publisher of the valley paper "Owens Valley Progress-Citizen" at present serving as lieutenant in the Navy, the early antagonism among valley citizens was tempered. Savage, Assistant Project Director Robert L. Brown and Project Director Ralph P. Merritt were the local pioneers in the beehive of official activities that hardened the development of the Manzanar Relocation Center.

Brown, representing Mono and Inyo counties, was called into Los Angeles to attend a conference with Army engineers and the Department of Justice, when the site for the first Japanese camp was disclosed. Then followed a closed session called by the Department of Water and Power Commissioners on March 4, when, on March 5, the first official evacuation order was made. On March 12, the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) in San Francisco was formed as the Western Defense Command agency, with Col. Karl R. Bendetsen in direct supervision of the evacuation program. The control of Manzanar was transferred to the War Relocation Authority on June 1, 1942. Brown, the only appointed personnel member who has been here from the beginning, began work as Public Relations and Reports officer on March 15. Merritt, originally an agricultural engineer who was the Federal Food Administrator for California during World War I, was chairman of the Citizen's Committee, a liaison group for the people and the interests of Owens Valley

ernoon of March 21 when 61 men and 20 women stood on the threshold of their future abode. There was nothing on the vast flat land before them except the groundwork of future homes that was having its inception. Within the first range of rough lumber was the skeleton of the simple, crude abodes which were soon to house 10,000 evacuees.

To Teimatsuichijo and Arthur Hirano, who have since resettled in Ogden, Utah, and their crew of 23 men fell the task of preparing something palatable from the potatoes and canned stew, hash, corned beef, etc., that were piled up heterogeneously where the police station now stands. Perishable foods like milk were stored in two ice trucks at Lone Pine. Joseph R. Winchester, Chief Steward, who has been here from the start, went into Lone Pine daily with a couple of men to get such food until the ice boxes were installed here. Part of the fun at that time, said Winchester, was carrying 400 loaves of bread in his car for three days.

The mid-looking, slight Ichijo-san spoke with a reminiscent smile hovering over his face. "When we first came here, this mess hall had no roof, only three walls propped up, no tables, chairs, electricity, or running water. We cooked on one stove in the middle of the room." "And the water?" I asked. "All the water used was carried in buckets, pans, and what-have-you from a pipe where the administration buildings now stand. The first morning here the water was frozen."

"Do you like to cook?" "Well," he began, laughing at me as if I had made a foolish query. "Well, I don't like to, but it's my business. It's just something I do, it's ... he waved his hand in a lake-it-or-leave-it fashion, still smiling amusedly, and I merely nodded comprehension, although I do not doubt now that he enjoys the culinary trade.

Before living in Los Angeles for the last six years, he had led a sea-faring life, having embarked in the United States Navy as second steward, second class on the Lusitania, bound for Hamburg. With other stewards he planned meals and purchased for 8,000 to 15,000 passengers. Then on a freighter bound for Australia, Java, Indo-China, and neighboring points, he was captain steward. In Los Angeles, he worked in chop suey houses and at the Miyako Hotel.

Facilities Were Crude When asked why he volunteered, Ichijo-san got a distant look on his face again, and his eyes swept over me with an impersonal glance. "I thought it would be no use to stay in Los Angeles. After I talked to the Maryknoll Father—although I am not a Catholic—I decided to volunteer since I could send for my wife later. My wife arrived in the middle of April." "Other evacuees—" "Yes," he interrupted, sensing my question. "They were all of a similar sentiment. We all came expecting no extravagance of outlay, of course." Like other mess halls of those early months, mess hall I served a hungry horde of 800 to 900 persons per meal. The peak was when 1,500 evacuees left their dust-laden tractors across the mess hall floor. Later, six mess halls accommodated 3000 people. But still no running water. By April, sinks and sewers were fixed.

The sewer until then had consisted of a ditch, two feet wide and four feet deep extending from Block 1 to Block 6. An amusing incident was told of three evacuees who had become drunk on the



BOOM TOWN: Construction work begins on the new town for Japanese evacuees as trucks and tractors level off the ground and army of carpenters rushes building of barracks. Made simply in army style with rough boards covered with tar-paper an average of 39 barracks per day was built keeping more than 900 workmen busy.—Cut courtesy L. A. Times.

way to Manzanar. They were walking around at dusk, having a happy time sobering up when they lost one member. Almost in vain they searched for him, when they espied him helplessly clutched by the ditch which had drenched him badly by the time five men succeeded in pulling him out.

The latrine for both men and women was an ungainly, "portable" outhouse, hooked up and dragged back and forth between the barracks. When its use was no longer needed, it was dragged up beyond Block 6, carrying a woman occupant who was trying vainly to get out!

The thousands of evacuees who roamed in and out of the mess halls in the early state of confusion soon got the hang of things. Groups of young funsters, and even grown-ups, complaining of beans, or weiners, or hash, made the rounds of several mess halls per meal. To walk a mile or two for a couple or three meals was not unusual, with the usual query, "What did they have at 10?" "Weiners?" "Aw, let's go to 12!" and so forth. The system now required block residents to eat at their own block mess halls.

In the first contingent was Dr. James Goto who immediately set up an emergency hospital station at 1-2-2 through the help of Dr. John Bowden of the U. S. Public Health Service. Assisting Goto were Yemi Chuman as secretary and Frank Chuman as medical office manager. Considered a hard worker by his fellow workers, Goto strove to do what he could for the Japanese here. He left for the Topaz Relocation center, Delta, Utah, on January 20, 1943.

Typical of the early evacuees were those who, having lost jobs or seeking adventure in an unenviable situation, had been eager to see what Manzanar was like. Eighteen-year-old Masumi Kanamori, whose folks ran a hotel in Los Angeles, came with two other school friends, secretly harboring the idea of earning a little money, wanting to take in the new life from the start. How these girls and others took the rugged life is revealed in their early tales of woe. "It was a lot of fun," said Masumi, perhaps summing up the inadequate situation in the most adequate way possible under the freakish circumstances.

The miserable fare on food struck the healthy appetites of the men. Frank Katada, manager of requisition and supplies, who originally volunteered as a water, had almost forgotten about that until he was reminded of it. What also seemed at first to be an acute housing shortage was not so. Katada, watching the early growth, said, "It was surprising to see the houses spring up in no time."

Oku Murata, tall, spindly and span lassie from Los Angeles, who forsook her secretarial job with the State Highway when the Maryknoll Father appealed to her to help with stenographic work, took one look at the primitive, dust-laden view of Manzanar. "I was simply flabbergasted!" she said. "The first night we had to sleep on cots, but it was so cold we couldn't sleep. We just cried, that's all!"

Myo Kikuchi, another feminine evacuee, told how they stuffed their own ticks with hay, bracing the "cool brisk Owens Valley breeze." Owens Valley citizens' own description of our swirl and gale that has done 60 m.p.h. to date. "We waited two hours to have a roof put over our barracks. Still there was a wide crack at the top through which the wind swept in Golly, it was cold!"

Fred Ogura, Block 1 manager, former automotive dealer in Los Angeles, was serving on the evacuee work staff of the Maryknoll School. When asked by the Maryknoll Fathers to come to Manzanar,

ar, his interest in the welfare of young people prompted his voluntary evacuation. Leaving his Caucasian wife in Los Angeles "for the duration," Ogura joined the group headed for Manzanar.

Yoshio Muramatsu, another first evacuee and assistant block manager of Block 1, is symbolic of those who were genuinely interested in helping to build a livable center in this wilderness.

The substantial forces of life that had been at work since the beginning of the evacuation were evident in the Protestant, Catholic, and Buddhist churches that were organized, in the community activities, instigated under the capable guidance of Axel Neilsen, in the improvised grammar schools started through the anxiety of parents and under the instruction of voluntary evacuee "teachers." The threads of normal life that had been broken with the evacuation were slowly mending. Problems of family and human relations were cared for by the Family Relations Council headed by Mrs. Miya Kikuchi.

One of the chief domestic problems of the early months resulted from inadequate housing. A one-room apartment measuring 20 by 25 feet was shared by two families of eight to ten people, who were in many cases total strangers to each other. Voices carried from one apartment to the next; folks tried in vain to sleep while listening to the heavy snoring of strange bed-fellows. Privacy was non-existent, or was gained sheerly through ingenious methods. The situation in the latrines was primitive, with open toilets lined up against a low wall with no partitions between them. Some of the issei, unaccustomed to the sprays of a shower, resorted to laundry tubs until the practice was stopped.

To many evacuees, accustomed to hard labor, both in the agricultural and professional fields, at first found what work there was to be done totally lacking in purpose or stimulation. What work there was, however, was better than no work, judging from the desire of most people to keep going.

Work, sports, and other recreational activities were soon supplemented with the art center with adult education classes, with the opening of libraries, with the establishment of the music center and Dr. Shunzo Mitani's supervision, and so forth. In a measure, the wide opportunities thus opened up for filling in leisure hours answered the needs of the evacuees. The chief temptation, however, which tinted the direction of life for a while, was to defy the watch towers, barbed wire fences, rules and regulations and to head for the mountains, sagebrush plains, and the freedom that was visible. Even the picnics and other concessions did not remove the essential stigma of confinement in cramped quarters and the connotation of life here for the duration.

The greatest difficulty, however, for the evacuees and the administrative personnel proved to be the formation of an internal government. The early sentiment and realization of the evacuees tended toward the desire to cooperate with each other and with the administration in building what they visualized the safest abode for the Japanese for the duration. To create out of their own personal resources of experience, intelligence, and capabilities a model community replete with government, business, law and order, was a goal which issei and nisei alike stroved for.

Life Has Its Problems

By the middle of April, 1942, the first election was held to select block leaders in the twelve blocks that were occupied at that time. The election followed the usual democratic method and was unique in that for the first time the issei experienced participation in government procedure. The issei and nisei have equal participation in leadership with its attendant responsibilities. When, during the latter part of April, the middle of May, and the latter part of May, the population was brought up to 10,000, block leaders were elected in all succeeding blocks until 36 blocks were represented in the Town Hall Block Leaders' Council.

In the meantime, Manzanar's productive life was growing with various projects—camouflage net project, garment factory, shoyu and bean sprout manufacture, Victory garden, and the guayule project. The net project, started under government war production, was removed from the center after seven months of net manufacture.

Furlough Work In June, the first farm labor group of about 165 men volunteered for beet thinning work in Idaho and Montana. The sentiment prevalent at the time was one mingled with fear and uncertainty of outside conditions and conditions of work. The total result of this first venture proved favorable, and many people expressed the opinion that the experience had been heartening.

In September, when the beet season again called for workers, about a thousand responded. The consensus of reports from various groups showed that hardships and good fortune had greeted the furlough workers indiscriminately. While most reports were filled with stories of inferior living quarters and inadequate natural facilities, some reports were favored with conditions as they had been stated in the contracts. Out of this experience was realized the need for a group to act as liaison between the workers and the employers.

Simultaneously, nisei leaders, sensing the need for an organized citizens' group which would serve as a vital channel for active participation in developing camp life and in strengthening the sense of citizenship, called the first meeting of the Manzanar Citizens' Federation in July, 1942. The response by the citizen residents was overwhelming. The discussion, touching on the nisei's duty to the Manzanar community, his obligation in preparing for the post-war period, and his obligation in the war effort, kindled the flame that started a rapid-fire, point-blank and dogmatic argument among three conflicting factions. The points of view were the ingrained sentiments of two World War I veterans, one standing firm in his belief in democracy and in his citizenship and the other embittered over democracy and the evacuation. The third faction was the average nisei, who, with the desire to retain a semblance of democracy and citizenship in the diverse population, had called the Manzanar Citizens' Federation meeting.

They Want Peace Life in Manzanar continued its usual pace. The surrounding mountains, perspiring snow as the days became warmer, still held the enchantment that distance lends. The canteen, doing an expanded business, in the 3-14 locale, served the horse of softball fans that gathered at the counter after the games. The general store was doing booming

Local Government Forms

Political Conflicts

Facilities Were Crude

First Evacuees Arrive

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