



September 2019

# Heart Mountain [Wyoming] Reports

Shig Masunaga

Clarence I. Nishizu

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## Recommended Citation

Masunaga, Shig and Nishizu, Clarence I., "Heart Mountain [Wyoming] Reports" (2019). *Harold S. Jacoby Nisei Collection*. 36.  
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HEART MOUNTAIN..  
WYOMING

# Reports

The following brief speeches, which were delivered at the first informal get-together of Block Administrators and Administrative Personnel, are issued by the Reports Division for the purpose of creating better understanding between the two groups.

In these first five papers will be found some of the background material long sought by administrative personnel and others in pursuing the true attitude of the evacuees.

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## SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EVACUATION

I want to go a little into the background of the Japanese in America. We are a relatively new addition in the melting pot of democracy. Where the other nationalities have immigrated into America since its discovery by Columbus and they are, in almost every case, many generations away from their parent country, we are only in the nisei or second generation stage, whose average age is only 21. Through no fault of their own, our parents have been, because their physical characteristics marked them apart, discriminated against them through the Exclusion Act and land laws of the states where we resided and have been called unassimilable. Despite these reverses which faced them, we, as a group, have made a remarkable record of self-support, literacy, freedom from juvenile delinquency and generosity to all community causes.

As to the cross section of our people, approximately two-thirds of us are American citizens and one-third are aliens, whose average age is about 60. We have, as nisei Americans, retained those characteristics of thrift, pride, and civic mindedness that is the basic background of a better American citizen. As a group we have managed to stay off the relief rolls better than any other second generation immigrant group in this country. We have demonstrated an extraordinary desire to learn and our parents have sacrificed much in order that we might be better equipped to compete in the American way of life. Furthermore, we, as a group, have been more American than Oriental. Our parents have spent more than 80% of their lives in the United States. We may say that most of them are more loyal to this country in their quiet way than most of those who were demanding that we be put into concentration camps because we are allegedly disloyal and dangerous. As for the nisei, we can only say that, as a group, we know no other allegiance than the United States. We were born, educated, made friends, established homes and businesses here and were gradually being assimilated to the status of our neighbors. At all times we have wanted to assume, with every other American, our share in the winning of this war. We had achieved a fairly comfortable standard of living and our association as members of the American community was particularly dear. The American way has been and will be the only way we know.

The fact is that most of us have never lived in a community which was preponderantly Japanese, and our internment in these camps for several years will naturally tend to perpetrate the very things we have been striving to eliminate, that is those mannerisms and thoughts, which, aside from our physical characteristics, tended to mark us apart. Among the younger group, the curtailing of the general freedom and the denial of their former pursuits such as extra curricular school activities, movies, American contacts and some of the simple luxuries of life with which they were brought up will cause idle hands, idles minds, and will lead to a dangerous breakdown in morale which will have a bad effect in the present and future.

Now our life in internment, living a more or less community life, standing in line three times a day for meals, living together in crowded quarters, using all our other facilities together, suffering from lack of privacy, a direct contradiction of these principles that we have been brought up to believe as our understanding of the American way is going to disrupt the Americanization of the great majority of these younger evacuees who are just at the impressionable age. No wonder we have actual happenings like this case which has been related so often but which illustrates the point. It's about a young child who was taken away from his home in an everyday American community and put with his family into an assembly center. After several days he got up one morning and said to his Mother: "Mama, I don't want to stay here in Japan. Let's go back home to America."

We realize that the Administrative staff has a tough assignment to maintain a high morale and train these internees to the difficult problems of adjustment and rehabilitation after the war. We, therefore, offer our heartiest cooperation to this end and we sincerely hope that you can help us face our problems by always keeping before you our American background and our fervent hope for an early return to the "American way of life."

Shig Masunaga

#### ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE EVACUEES

Some 40 years ago, our fathers and mothers crossed the blue Pacific to the western shores of America. These isseis, like the immigrants from Europe, came to this promised land for the sake of American freedom. From their penniless early days as laborers storms of barriers in the form of anti-legislation deprived them of their former rights on the ground of racial discrimination. Racial differences has accentuated their problems, narrowing their occupational opportunity, fundamentally, to agriculture. Today, after forty years of hardship, we the second generation American citizens are the only fruits of their toil and the only ones they find refuge for their future.

In spite of the continuous oppression, the economic foothold, the Japanese in general, held previous to evacuation amounted to the sum of agricultural output of 100 million dollars in California, 3 million dollars in Oregon, and 4 million dollars in Washington. Of the total population, 45% were engaged in agriculture, 24% in wholesale and retail, 17% in personal services, 4% in manufacturing, almost 3% in professional, 1.6% in forestry and fishing, and the rest in minor occupation. In California, the approximate average per farm output in 1940 was about \$13,000, Oregon \$9,000, and Washington \$7,000. In California 22,000 Japanese produced 35% of the total agricultural output of the state; and the State of California produced 25% of the nation's total output. In other words, these 22,000 or 1/6000 of the Japanese population of 130,000 produced 8.75% of the total nation's agricultural commodities which was no negligible amount in the food value for the defense program.

In city of Seattle, out of 325 hotels, 206 were operated by the Japanese and about one quarter of the city's dry cleaning establishments were operated by the Japanese. In San Francisco, 48% of male and 69% of female who registered for evacuation were employed in service industries. In the whole state of California there were 4,101 dairy product stores and 1,572 eating and drinking places operated by the Japanese. Aside from these Japanese were proficient cooks, butlers, gardeners, nursery-man, florists, clerks, and many others. This indicates although limited in fields, that they are not all

farmers. These people were enjoying average net incomes of \$1,200 to \$2,000 annually while some enjoyed net incomes of \$10,000 or over. Among the Japanese, like all other races, some were poor and earned enough to live from day to day, while others, successful in their lines, have purchased real estates, and built beautiful modern, furnished homes with plethora of greenery and chrysanthemums about them. With a family car of Buick Century and a Ford or two for the uncommon scene which characterized the economic life of the wealthier class. Others with lesser incomes at least had a family car, refrigerator, and other luxuries, bought perhaps, on installment. Thus, the American ways of life have been nurtured in the thoughts of these people through the Niseis and the long years they have lived here in America. At least these people were free to spend their earnings and the long years they have lived here in America. At least these people were free to spend their earnings and spare moments in whatever way they desired. All in all, the free American pattern of life was enjoyed by all.

We niseis were grateful to the untiring struggle of our fathers and mothers in face of the oppression brought against them. We were happy of the foothold they attained which we solemnly resolved to carry on as our duty of good Americans. Unlike the isseis, with citizenship, devoid of fear that our citizenship status will be usurped, we had ambitions to buy lands, build homes, and live freely and permanently as an integral part of American family life. We built dream castles for our lives of our future.

On December 7, the fatal day came. Isseis were picked up everywhere and separated from their beloved homes and their families. Finally when the curfew laws, military zoning, and evacuation orders were instigated to include the American citizens of Japanese ancestry, the whole life of the Japanese community became a turmoil. Accounts were frozen, payments neglected, cars and furnitures repossessed--we were helpless victims of the money grabbers who came to buy furnitures and other belongings at ridiculous prices. Through the eagerness of everyone to sell, prices became next to nothing and many realized nothing from the sale of their life's earning. We were in a position to question the citizenship status which we held sacred and trusted to be safeguarded by our American Democracy. We niseis defined ourselves as being close to the border as men without a country.

The transition from the normal free life outside to the regimented, socialistic life of this center has brought depressive changes in our minds and attitudes of us niseis. When we hear of Senator Burton K. Wheeler, of Montana, state that our standard of living is so low that we can live in a shack that no one care to live in and that we can live on a bowl of rice, it behooves us to presuppose and doubt, although I am sure that you all understand us, whether some of you people in the administrative staff might hold similar views and that we are now here living in Utopia. If so, it is our duty to bring to your survey the truth of the matter that our standard of living is just as high as any average American, and that especially, we niseis cannot survive on a bowl of rice and soy soup. Such misunderstanding and attitude of condescension upon us, without a broad and warm feeling of sympathy and understanding, would cause the rift between the administration and the people which Mr. Rechford so detests.

We were promised that the designs of our life in the camp would be to allow us to live as normal American life as the outside. We have no intention to undermine nor obstruct the duties of the administration. Yet, you must agree with me, we are denied the right to have a camera to take our baby's picture, we are denied the right to go out of the camp to look for new areas for permanent relocation, and we are denied the right to go to the surrounding towns for shopping and to see the surrounding habitation of Wyoming other than the evacuees confined on the unbecoming and uninviting cactus of this desert sage. Most of us have not had the chance to fish in the Shoshone River, nor have we the least idea of the picture or shape of the river only a mile away. Now to cause more rift between the people and the administration, barbed wire fence is being erected, supposedly to keep

the famed buffaloes of Wyoming from stepping on our poor children's toes, but at the same time, the sharp point of the barbed wire is pricking at the heart of the people with unhappy result of indignation and insult until some day, explosion or grave consequences will result.

The possession of the evacuees here in camp is limited to what they now have in most instances. After what little cash they may have now is gone, they must look toward the rescue and aid of the government, or other sources, since they involuntarily came here. Present wage standard is insufficient to pay for the necessities of their living in spite of the food and board granted, especially those with many children. With the wage allowance of \$16.00 per month, please imagine how far this will go when they must pay prices with the profit margin of perhaps 30% to 40% plus the sales tax. Many have obligations and annuities, such as life insurances to pay, yet they are unable to continue payments when they are powerless in here to earn more. Furthermore at the time of the evacuation, many sold their only personal property at deplorable prices, thus, profiting nothing therefrom, and as all of you are aware, we are in midst of a wartime inflation. Picture, if you please, how far their valuable money earned from the pre-inflation period will go, if they are to go out to invest for their permanent relocation with the depreciated dollar and the inflated commodity prices.

Thus, we here from all walks of life left what was our happy family homes; we lost our jobs, business and farms which paid well; and our dream castle of our hopeful future became a nightmare of grim despair. By the virtue and reason of military necessity, we cooperated in the evacuation to show our loyalty to this country. The past struggle of the Isseis have been with discrimination and oppression, and the more recent past of the innocent nisei have been no less of discrimination and disappointment. Our present pitiful predicament is in your hand, and our future destiny is guided by your kindly and fatherly direction of understanding our problems toward the restoration of our morale. May our problem be your problem and may you sell yourself to us, not as a dictator from the due sense of authority, but as sympathetic friend so that our responsive chord of cooperation and inspiration may be restored in face of the dark future in store for us.

Clarence I. Nishizu

#### OUR W.C.C.A. CENTER

To all of the Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry it was a terrible blow when the actual internment orders were issued by the Western Defense Command. We were then forced to practically give away our investments and property because the public announcement, painted so beautifully by the Federal Reserve Bank, did not cut out to be as intimated. Nevertheless we cooperated, the first step to be corraled into the W.C.C.A. centers began.

May I briefly sketch the new life we had in store for us in the center. We did not know the feeling of confinement, because as you well know, as citizens and as a race we have not had the experience of being in confinement or the so-called prison. We arrived at Portland, Oregon, at 6 o'clock in the morning, which center was to be our home for a few months. It was fortunate that although the Caucasian administrative staff of the center not knowing or not having had direct contact with the Japanese in their every day life, until we had arrived in the center, took into consideration every humane and social interest. I was fortunate to be one of the members of the governing board working as a counselor to the center manager, Mr. Emo Sandquist, who at a later date was promoted chief of all the assembly centers

on the Pacific coast. The W.C.C.A. center in Portland was considered as being one of the best organized and smoothest running of all the centers. This reason, I believe, was due to the real understanding and cooperation of the administrative staff with the Japanese council governing board within the center. Every question, inconvenience and hardship was directly brought before us. Our center manager took great faith in us in thrashing out our own problems.

All problems pertaining to the functions of the center were referred directly to this board. They, in turn thrashed over the various complaints and suggestions that were then brought to the center manager, in a meeting. There, the various problems were delegated to the proper departments, all new rules and regulations were discussed and their adaptability was taken up with the center manager. Special assignments were first presented to the board and the center manager was very careful in giving the board an opportunity to meet every Army, W.R.A., or W.C.C.A. official who came to the center. In this way we were able to foresee the goal the Army officials in San Francisco were trying to achieve. All new bulletins and regulations were read to us and explained by the center manager and a copy was given to each member of the board. The Caucasian personnel approached us as an equal and problems of the center, no matter how great or small, were discussed first with the members of the board. The advisory board and the Caucasian personnel worked as a team, each man keeping in mind, always, the best for the welfare of the center. The attitude and understanding of the administration resulted and led to a more cooperative spirit from every resident. No stone was left unturned to promote the friendly atmosphere evolved from the very beginning. Even prior to evacuation the J.A.C.L. was invited to help set up the government of the center and to help iron out the problems. All suggestions, criticisms were given consideration and every effort made to comply with their requests.

We, as residents of the W.R.A., are very fortunate in having one of the most capable administrative staffs with Mr. Rachford at its head, and I am speaking with confidence that problems of relocation, problems of finance and others requiring every attention will be carried out by you to the satisfaction of each and every resident of this center. We, as internees, have not the answer as to what we are going to do after this terrible war has been settled. We do not know or cannot answer what is going to become of us, but eventually we hope these problems will clear themselves through the capable assistance of the present administrative staff; and I trust that every problem no matter how complicated or how small, this staff will take the residents into consideration and present the problems directly to us and let us help solve these problems. I am sure that we as residents and ourselves, as the administrative staff will be able to solve these unanswerable questions of what, how, and where our one hundred thousand evacuated population of these great United States of America are headed.

Harry Yamamoto

#### EVACUATION AND OUR MORALE

Evacuation! What meaning that word has for us now after several months in the assembly centers first and now in relocation camps hundreds of miles from our homes. The homes we have known since our earliest recollection. Every corner, school, church and store is dear to us as one's home should be. Our homes built through years of toil and heartache are all the more dear to us for that toil. Our friends, the men and women with whom we went to kindergarden, shared our ideas to contribute in some small way in the progress of our nation. We left that behind. To meet the demand of the army, we left all our life's effort without protest to remove all possibility of hindrances in our war effort.

We are now here at Heart Mountain far removed from these scenes. We have met every demand made upon us, but now we ask, what is to become of us and our children? What promise is there in our future? Can we look upon history for a clue? No, this, our predicament is unprecedented in all of mankind's experiences. For a group of citizens to be removed from civil life without proof of crime or without even indication of such is something undreamed of in our democratic conception of government. No wonder we are at loss to understand and our hopes of future dark. This you will agree is not a healthy outlook. Our morale which has kept our heads high, which made our accomplishments in the past as enumerated by other speakers possible, is being trampled upon. The one important possession which we all still retain over all our losses is being suppressed rather than being nurtured. Can you not visualize the effect upon our morale that a barbed wire fence around us, enclosing us within a small area will be? We who have always been free! We who have been proud that our diligent efforts have made this freedom possible. We who have been taught that this freedom of action and thought and speech was the democracy for which our government stood. What effect on the impressionable minds of our children who are being taught at this moment, these principles of democracy when they are hauled into the guard house for sliding down a hill? Certainly these actions are not a concrete example of democratic principles.

Let us digress a moment and study the thoughts of these youngsters. They don't fully understand why they are in camp, confined to a small area and denied the simple luxuries of life they have been brought up to expect and cherish. They know not and care less that they are victims of circumstances as pitiful as any experienced by any child before.

This is an experiment of our government. They too have no experiences or precedent upon which to base their actions. America has always been prone toward experiments. What greater experiment than our Revolutionary War. A complete break with the mother nation, England, to establish a new nation. Through superhuman effort and the conquering of over-whelming hardships they, our forefathers, gave us this land. Today, this nation stands as a glorious monument to the success of that experiment.

Now we are in the midst of a new experiment. To us just as vital. Will we emerge victorious and better or will we perish along the way? May we through our diligent efforts and with your thorough sympathetic cooperation and guidance make it so that we will soon be proudly acclaimed by all as fellow Americans.

Hitoshi Yonemura

#### OUR FUTURE

Time and time again, we are told that our future is entirely dependent upon our own actions and attitude towards our country. It seems to me that, that statement only can be the utterances of the ill informed, devoid of all human honesty, understanding and kindness; and, certainly cannot come from those who honestly believe in the term democracy, especially when we are all here involuntarily.

Frankly speaking, our actions of the recent past have been the actions of the condemned; without knowledge of the crime charged with, without a fair chance of a trial, without proof of innocence or guilt, confined, or more explicitly, corralled into the so-called centers, minus the ordinary liberty enjoyed by the rest of the peoples of our nation, minus the necessary friends to come to our rescue, because, we are unfortunately, a minority group without means of expression, daily fearing that perchance, we may be deprived of more of our constitutional rights, daily fearing that our utterances and our actions may be deliberately misconstrued as inimical to the well-being of our Nation, and hence disloyal. This is the true picture of our pitiful predicament and condition today.

Thank God, however, we come from a basically very obedient and patient race. As, if this unfortunate internment was attempted upon a body of German, Italian, Irish, English, or any other national group, whose children are American Citizens, you certainly can draw your own conclusion.

As to our future actions, the responsibility of rehabilitation is entirely upon our Government; and, directly the responsibility of the Caucasian Administrative Staff in this camp. For, our predicament today is akin to a cornered animal; grooving about without exact clarification as to the present and future status of our citizenship, inequality of pay, unheard of in the history of our nation, poor food, poor living conditions with very little consideration as to sanitation, morale, human feelings, and, many other like problems.

Our future then is very dark. The up-rooting of our economic and social life by our government and the military is an accomplished fact. Our present internment is pitiful enough, but, when we look into the future, when peace is with us again, it becomes a night-mare. Having been interned and deprived of our economic independence, we are now the forced wards of our Government. Pay of twelve, 16, and 19 dollars, a month certainly cannot be expected as sufficient to set aside for future reserve as this pay will just about cover the soap and miscellaneous costs of our daily necessities. Can our Government return us all to our former social and economic status before internment? Are we to be kept in this corral even after the war? What will become of the improvements if we are to be released after working practically for nothing for our government? And, many like questions hover in our minds. Perhaps you can help solve this riddle. For the roots planted so long, whether they be 200 years or, 40 years, or 20 years, these roots when uprooted, cannot forever remain alive unless they are properly and securely planted.

On the other hand, if you, as the Administrative Staff, individually and collectively, after fully understanding our predicament, endeavor to tackle our problems on a 100% responsibility basis, we offer you, our challenge that, with your acceptance of the responsibilities, there will evolve a spirit of cooperation from the residents, and, thenceforth, there is no question in our minds that a harmonious, well-organized center can be attained for the duration.

By now, it sounds as if we are condemning the Administrative Staff, but, please believe us that we do not condemn you as individuals. Our only desire is that you, as representatives of our Government, approach our problems with thorough understanding and sympathy. With this in your minds and also the fact that our Democracy which boasts of no discrimination between race, creed, or color, these major problems could be solved. It will then become our duty in an enlightened and cooperative sensibility to assist in the erasure of at least a portion of the blackest mark in the history of our country!

R. Tomo

Chairman