
The Rice of Strangers

A One-Act Play

By George Loukides

In 1980 Public Law 96-317 established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to review the facts and circumstances surrounding Executive Order No. 9066 issued by President Franklin Roosevelt on February 19, 1942. This executive order forced the evacuation of twenty thousand persons of Japanese ancestry from their West Coast homes. The commission held hearings in selected cities in the United States to determine the impact that order had on the affected American citizens and permanent resident aliens and to recommend to Congress and to the President appropriate remedies.

The dialogue in "The Rice of Strangers" is derived entirely from oral testimony, letters, and documents presented during those hearings and on documents and photographs found primarily in Record Group 210, Records of the War Relocation Authority, in the National Archives. Approximately 12,500 photographs made in connection with the evacuation, internment, and resettlement of Japanese Americans are housed in the Still Picture Branch of the Archives. From these photographs, taken by such distinguished photographers as Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee, the author chose 178 to supplement the oral testimony. These pictures together with the dialogue of those who experienced internment, vividly illustrate the circumstances under which a group of American citizens was forced to live during a time of great national crisis.

The Cast: The cast consists of five actors and actresses of Asian ancestry designated JA-1 (Male), JA-2 (Female), JA-3 (Female), JA-4 (Male), and JA-5 (Male). There are also two non-Asian Americans in the cast: Other-1 (Male) and Other-2 (Female). The role of Dillon S. Myer is played by a Caucasian male of forty years or older.

The Set: The set consists of a projection screen surrounded by a black backdrop and set in the rear of the stage. Each actor is furnished with a lectern or music stand, each of which has its own light.

Costumes: Modern dress, preferably each actor in black.

Staging: There are 178 slides, which are projected as the actors speak.

As originally staged at the National Archives, the actors read from their scripts standing behind lighted music stands until JA-5, in his speech "Assimilate and integrate . . .," stepped forward, followed by the other actors as it came to be their turn to speak.

PROLOGUE

The Rice of Strangers

[Each actor stands behind a lectern or music stand and turns on the stand light with first line that he or she speaks.]

JA-2: I am a native-born American. I was born in Fresno, California, and was raised on a farm. I was seven years old when the United States government decided to lock me up.

Myer: Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Dillon S. Myer, director of the War Relocation Authority. Today I want to examine with you the program for handling our people of Japanese descent who formerly lived along the Pacific coast. Just before the attack at Pearl Harbor, there were approximately 112,000 people of Japanese extraction living in the three coastal states of Washington, Oregon, and California.

JA-4: My father came to the United States in 1905 at the age of nineteen. With luck and hard work he saved enough to lease a small piece of land and start a nursery of his own. That nursery grew and prospered until in 1942 it had become one of the largest and most reputable nurseries in the L.A. area.

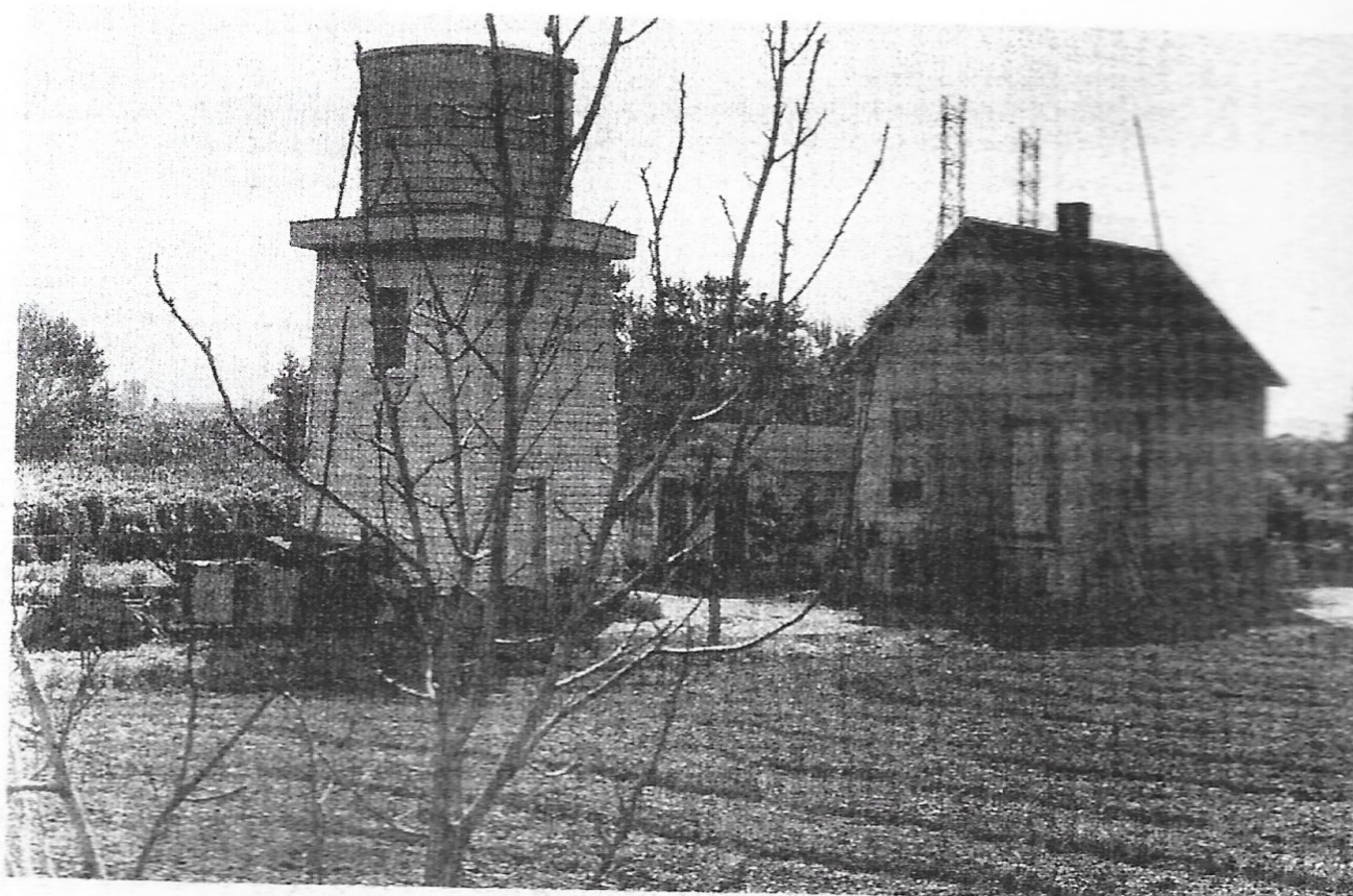
Myer: The *issei*, natives of Japan, came to this country twenty-five, thirty, and even forty years ago in search of greater economic opportunity. Under our laws they were never able to gain American citizenship—except for a few hundred who served with the American army in the First World War—but many acquired properties, built up businesses, and established families on American soil.

JA-3: I was born in Montana, the first daughter of a man who, all his life, dreamed of coming to the United States to live. My father had taught himself English and at seventeen years of age found a job on a ship leaving for Seattle. He told me that when he landed on the docks of that city, he felt he had come home for the first time in his life.

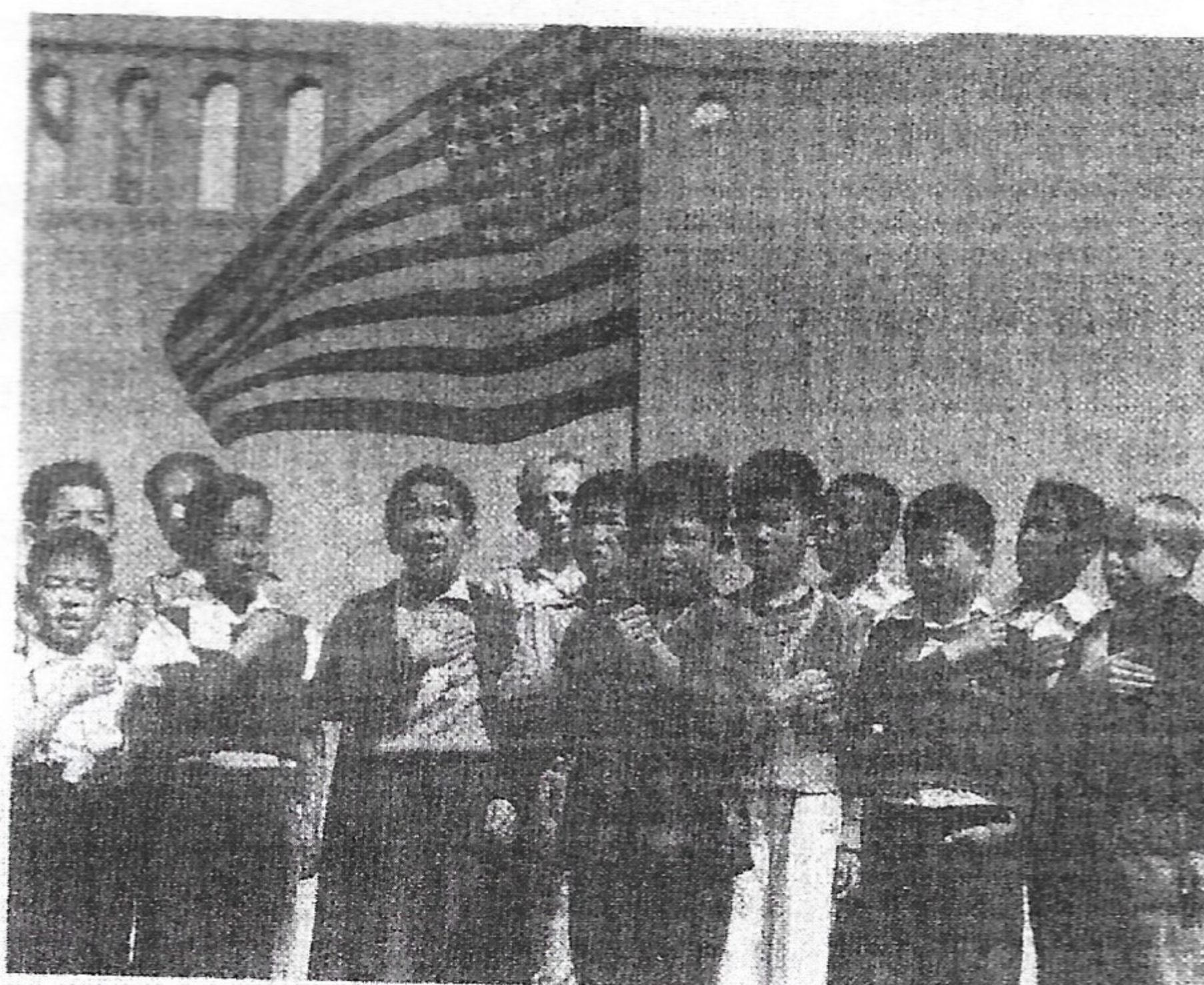
JA-5: My father came to the United States from Japan in 1906 to attend school in San Jose, California. He was just seventeen years old. He suffered harassment at the hands of his classmates because of his race and had to quit school. He became a prospector. In 1910 he stopped looking for gold and moved to the Imperial Valley and was one of the pioneers who opened up the valley for growing cantaloupes and vegetables.

Myer: The first-generation children born here, the *nisei* and the second generation, the *sansei*, made up the other two-thirds of the Japanese-American population in the coastal states. Unlike their elders, these youngsters were American citizens by right of birth.

JA-2: English was spoken at home, and the menu at my father's cafe was definitely American, with rice



"Japanese-owned loganberry farm. Family preparing to evacuate." Centerville, California, April 18, 1942.



Children of Japanese ancestry who attended this San Francisco school were evacuated with their parents.

along with bread. I listened to the radio, which was filled with Americana, such as Jack Armstrong, "The Hit Parade," and Jack Benny. Comic books depicted the good guys winning over the bad guys. Occasionally there was an Oriental stereotype of the bad guy, but it did not register upon me.

JA-1: My father helped me become a Boy Scout by teaching me how to pledge allegiance to our American flag. My father always displayed a large American flag on our storefront during such national holidays as the Fourth of July and Veterans Day. I always felt proud to put up our flag.

JA-4: I am the youngest of ten children. I thought of myself as American as my Italian, Irish, English, Polish, and Mexican neighbors and friends. We played the same games, sang the same songs, and

laughed at the same jokes. I booed at the slant-eyed villains in movies and totally identified with my neighbors and friends until 1941. I was just as much against those crazy Japs as the next person until my friends and neighbors pointed at me as a Jap.

JA-5: I loved the green hills of home and believed that this magnificent land was my land and my country. I was brought up to be an American.

Myer: When war broke out between the United States and Japan, our Japanese population was badly shaken and confused.

JA-2: I was a simple, nonpolitical *nisei* woman of twenty-eight with a nice *nisei* husband and a bright son and baby daughter, dreaming American dreams on December 7, 1941.

JA-4: On that fateful day in December of '41, I was up early as usual and listening to the radio. After I heard the news I woke my older brother and tried to explain.

JA-1: You're listening to the "War of the Worlds" again?

JA-4: But I heard the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor over three different stations.

JA-3: The day after my twelfth birthday, my younger brother and I were in a theater when suddenly it was announced that all military personnel were to report to their bases. It seemed as though all eyes were watching us. That was Sunday, December 7, 1941.

JA-5: Sunday, December 7, 1941, started for me like any other warm and sunny morning in L.A. I was opening the doors of the store where I worked when a total stranger rushed in and threatened me by saying that his brother had just volunteered for military service, and if the Japs killed him, then he himself would kill every Jap he saw. Later I learned that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor.

Other-2: Japan is ready to hit us hard from the inside. They have assembled detailed data on our vital Pacific defenses. They have the bases, the equipment, and the disciplined personnel with which to strike either through sabotage or open acts of war. Pressure to serve the emperor is too strong for any Jap in this country to resist.

JA-2: Pearl Harbor Day plus one. I was a freshman then. The high school principal walked into our homeroom and said . . .

Other-2: There will be no talk of war in this school.

JA-2: Later some of the Japanese Americans were invited to a room, and the teacher said . . .

Other-2: You dirty Japs.

JA-2: No one said anything.

JA-3: When World War II broke out we became an

enemy overnight. We were classified as dangerous enemy aliens. Newspapers and radios were blasting out, calling us dirty names and saying that all Japs were no good. We were restricted from traveling other than to buy groceries within a two-mile limit. There was an 8 P.M. curfew, and we had to stay inside. I didn't understand.

JA-4: My mother told me to throw away my chemistry set because she heard the FBI had called in a *nisei* boy who also had one.

JA-1: I was in church when I heard our preacher say . . .

Other-1: We should do something to the Japanese in this country. They should put them away or put them on a ship and sink them all.

JA-5: On December 8, 1941, FBI agents, the local sheriff, and a deputy came and searched our house for contraband. They harassed my father. He told them that they should give him a medal for being a pioneer in the Imperial Valley and for having created many jobs for the people in the valley instead of arresting him. He was arrested sometime in December. He was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Other-1: The very act of a treacherous, unprovoked attack upon a nonbelligerent nation such as that upon Pearl Harbor shows the wisdom of locking up all Japanese whether American citizens or not. They are not to be trusted.

JA-2: Signs appeared on business establishments: "No Japs allowed." My first inclination was to inflict damage, but my upbringing prohibited it.

JA-1: While playing basketball, opponents called me slant eyes, yellow belly, Jap, or other obscenities. I fought sometimes, walked away sometimes, went to the locker room and shouted sometimes, or at times sat down and cried.

JA-3: Within me burned a glimmer of hope that things would work out. I met a Chinese acquaintance who wore a button which said "I am Chinese." I walked away with ambivalent feelings of love and hate.

Other-2: In the fearful and sad days following Pearl Harbor, an invasion of our West Coast by Japanese forces was expected. This fear of invasion was real. It was fed by rumors and incidents such as the discovery of clandestine short-wave radio transmitters and signal fires that could lead enemy planes to Boeing plants and to the defense forces of this nation.

Other-1: The internment of the Japanese Americans living on the West Coast was a natural and necessary act—not only as a precaution defense-wise but to protect those people—the Japanese Americans—

from harm. To do otherwise at that time in history, considering the mood of the nation, would have been considered an act of treason.

Myer: Although the majority of Japanese Americans on the coast were recognized as being loyal, their behavior in the event of a bombing raid or an invasion attempt by Japanese forces was unpredictable. Would all Japanese Americans cooperate loyally, or would some of them respond to years of discrimination suffered in this country and aid the attackers?

JA-5: We were as shocked as any other Americans about the attack. We considered ourselves as "American as apple pie." We were horrified by the intensive propaganda campaign through the press and radio that cited false reports of sabotage and by the resolutions called for by farming interests and so-called patriotic societies that agitated for the removal of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast.

JA-1: There was nothing sinister or cunning or mysterious or inscrutable about my father. The only hitch for him was that he had a Japanese face.

Myer: In the weeks immediately following Pearl Harbor, there was a marked heightening of popular feeling against the Japanese Americans all up and down the Pacific coast. By the latter part of February, it had become abundantly clear that the Japanese-American people were complicating the problems of western defense simply by *living* in vital areas. As long as they continued to reside in those areas, the military authorities could never be wholly free to concentrate on the primary job of defending our western frontier. Mass removal of the Japanese Americans was deemed the only effective way to clear up a situation that was becoming more critical and chaotic with every passing week of the war.

Other-1: February 19, 1942. Executive Order 9066. Any and all persons may be removed from military designated areas. Five-thousand-dollar fine and a year in jail or both for anyone who shall enter, remain, or leave a military area contrary to restriction.

Myer: All the Japanese-American residents, citizens and aliens alike, had to be moved from an area about two hundred miles wide running the entire length of the Pacific coast and into southern Arizona. It was a tremendous job. And it was done by a branch of the government that knows how to tackle big jobs—the United States Army. Evacuation was put on an orderly basis—the people were being moved to temporary assembly centers from different areas on specified dates. Fifteen centers were established, stretching from Palyallup, Washington, to the small town of Mayer in central Arizona.

Other-1: March 2 proclamation. All persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and nonalien, will be evacuated from the above designated area by twelve o'clock noon.

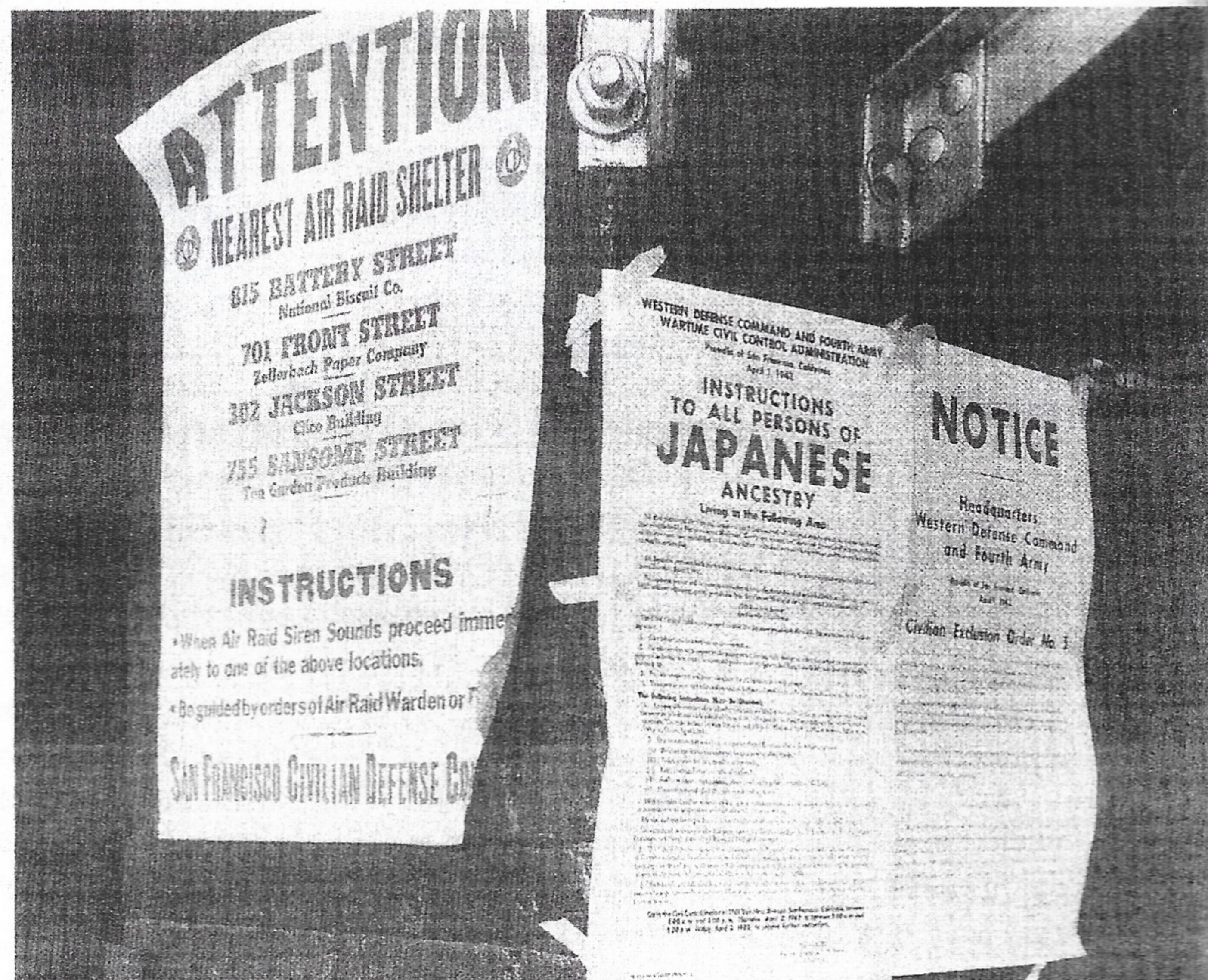
JA-2: Everywhere along the way, there were placards stating Gen. John L. DeWitt's curt orders.

JA-5: The uncertainty, the not knowing what was going to happen, not knowing where we would be shipped or what would be there when we got there, not knowing when we would be moved, not knowing for how long we would be confined, or indeed not knowing whether any of us would get out alive.

JA-4: I was eighteen at the time of the evacuation. I couldn't believe that the placards were telling us to get out in ten days no matter what the circumstances. I couldn't believe that our Constitution would allow this to happen. I nevertheless went looking for old suitcases in second-hand stores . . . just in case. We were allowed only hand luggage and one bedroll each.

Myer: The plan of evacuation was simple. The heads of all affected families were ordered to report to a control station, where a team of employees from federal agencies helped the evacuees with the manifold problems that inevitably resulted.

JA-2: On that morning of evacuation, the last thing I remembered was looking at the hot beds of tomato plant seedlings that I wasn't able to dispose of be-



"Exclusion orders were posted . . . directing removal of persons of Japanese ancestry."



A bus takes evacuees to the Tanforan Assembly Center. The onlookers followed a few days later.

cause of the short notice for the evacuation. I wondered if these seedlings would ever produce luscious red tomatoes. They were facing a future as bleak as ours.

JA-1: The selling of some of our personal belongings was especially trying when it came to letting my bicycle go for three dollars—a bicycle that I had bought on my own from earnings made by making boxes. To see an unknown kid loading it on his father's truck with our other stuff really was depressing. The car and other belongings were also sold, but the sale of my bicycle overshadowed everything else for me.

JA-2: For two weeks we couldn't cross the highway to get groceries from the city of Davis, which was a restricted zone. We had to depend on my neighbors to get food for us.

Myer: Representatives of the Federal Reserve Bank and the Farm Security Administration lent a hand and provided aid and guidance in connection with the sale or leasing of business establishments and agricultural holdings. In spite of the valuable assistance provided by these agencies, many of the evacuees suffered serious losses in disposing of their properties. In the haste and confusion of evacuation, such losses were doubtless inevitable.

JA-4: When the order for our imprisonment came in May 1942, my father was farming 270 acres of leased land. The government offered a total of \$10,000 for the crops, lease, tractors, irrigation equip-

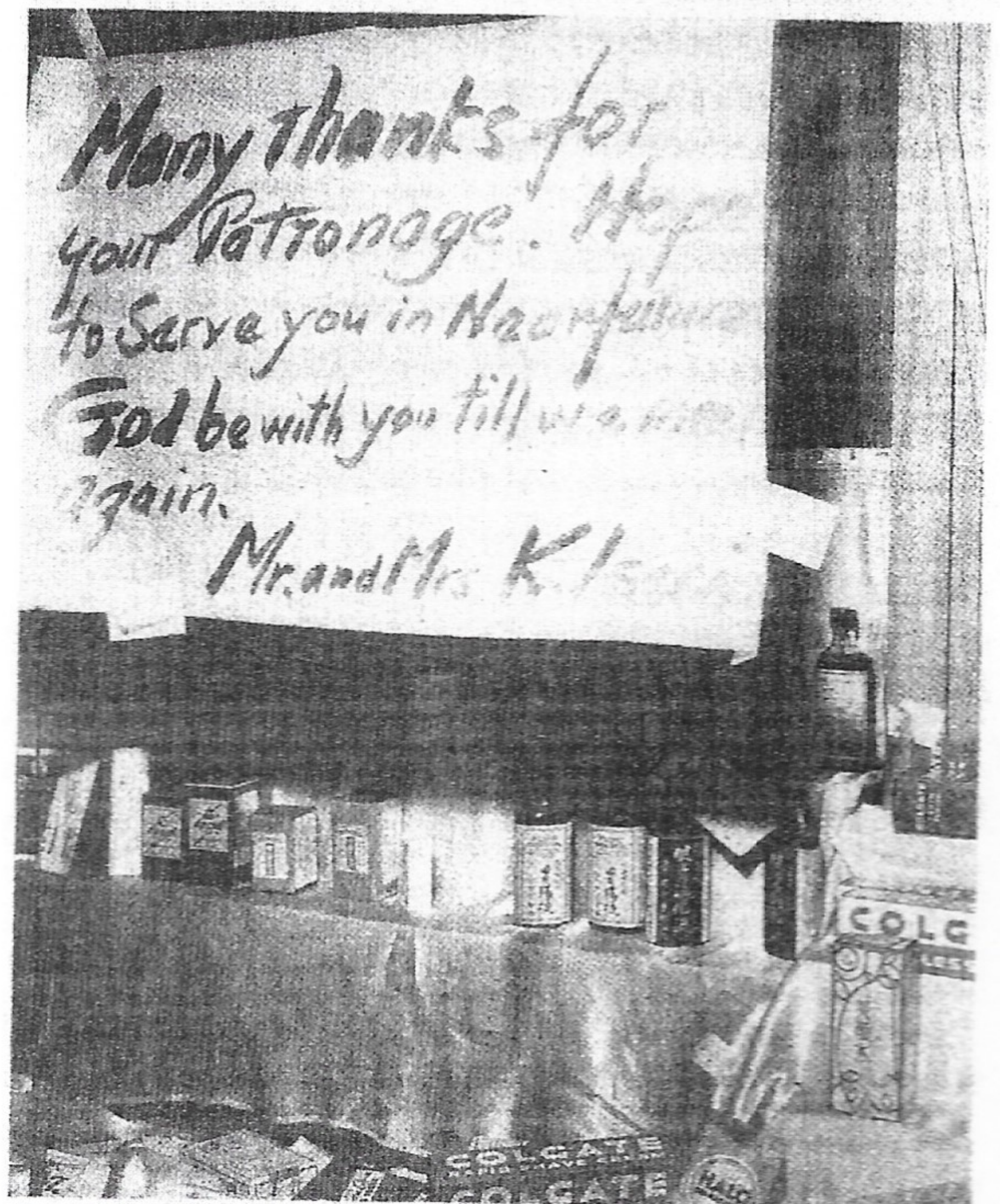
ment, and trucks plus forty dollars for all the household furnishings. This amount was only a tiny fraction of the total value, but due to the lack of time we had to accept the offer.

JA-3: Nobody came to buy or lease. I spent the last day moving everything from the first floor to the second floor storeroom and boarded and padlocked the door. I knew what I was doing was useless. Anyone could break in, but what else was there for me to do?

JA-5: I fiercely clung to the belief that we would be treated as citizens with all the rights of free Americans—just as the Italian Americans and the German Americans were being treated. I remember walking around in stunned disbelief that turned into agonizing despair and anger when we were given only six days' notice to dispose of all our possessions: a three-bedroom house, furniture, personal belongings, a truck, a brand-new car, and the business filled with merchandise.

Other-1: I was ten years old and really mad that those Japs had pulled a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, but I just couldn't figure out what that had to do with those nice people who owned the dime store in my town and why they had to be taken away. It didn't seem fair.

JA-3: We were totally unprepared. Everything we stored was stolen or destroyed. We went through the motions unbelievably. Through it all, my mother



"Mr. and Mrs. K. Iseri have closed their doors in preparation for . . . evacuation." Los Angeles, 1942.

kept saying "I'm glad your father is dead."

Other-2: "A patriotic native-born Japanese, if he wants to make his contribution, will submit himself to a concentration camp." Leland Ford, U.S. Representative from California, 1942.

JA-2: In our Japanese Tea Garden in the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco we had an aviary. We didn't know what to do with the birds. We couldn't just leave them there, not knowing whether they would be cared for, so we let them fly away, hoping that they would find their own way. We had to give our kittens away too.



This group of Japanese Americans waits for the train that will take them to the Merced Assembly Center.

JA-4: People began to gather. Infants, children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly. Anyone who was able carried luggage, for we were not allowed to ship any of our belongings. We all were quiet and somber waiting to board the trains taking us to a wartime concentration camp.

JA-3: The blurry images of the actual evacuation from home seem like looking at some pictures through teary eyes, some things are remembered, others are vague. The remembrances are more like shadows behind a screen.

JA-2: I was a twenty-year-old mother with a six-month-old baby when we entered Salinas Assembly Center in April 1942.

Myer: Most of the assembly centers were set up at race tracks.

JA-3: I was interned at Tanforan Race Track in a horse race stall with Seabiscuit written on top. Our bedroom was a horse stall with doors that were split

where the horses would stick their heads out—I don't know what you call them—Dutch doors, or whatever. When we were assigned to this area, I sat down with tears in my eyes because, here I was, an American citizen, being held a prisoner in my own native land.

JA-4: There was manure on the floor and hair from the horse's tail stuck on the rough walls. Because stalls have no ceilings, you could hear babies crying, family arguments, and the sick coughing throughout the night.

JA-3: We washed down the dirty floor but we soon found the stench of the manure under the stable unbearable. We stayed outside during the day and went in to sleep at night.

Other-2: Inasmuch as the quarters were intended to be only temporary, some mangers were still in place, and many a baby of Japanese ancestry—deemed by the commanding general to pose a potential threat to the security of the United States—slept in such mangers, which remind one of another babe who similarly slept in a manger almost two thousand years ago.

Myer: At the assembly centers, facilities such as water and electric power were readily available.

JA-2: There were no partitions in the toilets and no toilet seats. I was shocked to find that we modest women had to pull down our pants over a row of six holes exposing ourselves! I could see the people passing by! Surely they could see me through the screen



"Bird's eye view of quarters and barracks at Salinas, California, Assembly Center," 1942.



This grandfather, who came to the United States at age nineteen, will soon be evacuated.

wall. My face was red. The smell unbearable.

Other-1: "Valley Forge" is four doors over from "Grand Central Station." This is Santa Anita Assembly Center. Here thousands of Americans with Japanese faces are taking internment in stride and managing to maintain their "Yankee" fortitude.

JA-3: My first meal consisted of two slices of discolored cold cuts, overcooked Swiss chard, and a slice of moldy bread. This humiliation was too much, and I broke down and cried openly.

Other-1: Along with their parents, who have been technically classified as "enemy aliens," these Americans of Japanese ancestry comprise a good-sized town of Oriental-faced inhabitants who speak English, sling American slang, jitterbug according to the most streamlined 1942 tradition, and prefer to sing "Deep in the Heart of Texas" to some minor-keyed Japanese folksong.

JA-4: I never dreamed I would see my children

behind barbed wire. This is a terrible place to raise the children. We are not cattle, but three times a day, in the morning, noon, and evening, you hear the gong, gong, gong of the bell. Then you see men, women, and children come out of stable-like shelters. Every time I saw this sight, my heart ached.

JA-5: Our room was in a barrack-type of building with tar paper on the outside and wallboard between the rooms. We had about as much privacy as a fish in a goldfish bowl.

JA-3: The fence next to the guarded gate bordered the street. Right across the road was a grocery store. It was frustrating to not be able to run across the street to pick out your own candy or ice cream. We handed our coins through the fence to kids our own age who ran to the store for us. After a few times, I stopped going near that place.

JA-4: Physical inconveniences can be tolerated, but what they do to the mind and soul of an incarcerated person without criminal charges, with watchtowers and guns pointed in one's direction, is something else.

Other-1: Most of the talk about "armed guards," barbed-wire fences, and machine guns comes from persons who were not in the camps or were too young to know much about them. Yes, there were camp perimeters, and these were perfunctorily controlled by MPs in Jeeps. And they carried side arms.

JA-5: The camp had a high fence around it with guard towers occupied by soldiers with spotlights and guns.

JA-3: A sign that said: "STOP! SENTRY ON DUTY"

JA-1: Now I knew how the animals at the zoo feel, having someone peeking at you through barbed wire, making faces, laughing, jeering. I was convinced that everybody on the outside really hated us.

JA-5: One consolation for us kids was that there were no schools at Pinedale.

JA-4: In October 1942, we were told that we were being relocated somewhere inland. We had no knowledge of where we were going, but we boarded a train and left California.

JA-2: From the moment I stepped aboard that train, I was miserable. I will never forget that terrifying ride to an unknown fate. The window shades were kept tightly closed, and the dark compartment was like a dungeon.

JA-1: No one wanted to look out anyway because they were scared. Armed guards everywhere.

JA-2: I asked the MP if we could just lift the shade for a moment when we passed our hometown of San Mateo. We were given a flat NO. I wanted so much to

see our hometown for the last time but could not.

Myer: By early November all of the relocation centers were in operation, and the last of the evacuees had been transferred from the army-operated assembly centers where they had temporarily been maintained.

JA-1: We were advised that our destination was Poston, Arizona. None of us knew where that was.

JA-4: After an all-day trip we disembarked in the middle of the desert, and many an evacuee sat on his belongings dumped along the side of the railroad tracks and wept. It was a desolate feeling, no trees or greenness about—only sagebrush, rocks, and the shimmering heat of the desert.

JA-2: We were transported by army trucks to yet uncompleted barracks, over raw dirt roads, choking in the dust kicked up by trucks in front of us. The dust got into our nostrils, our eyes, our clothes, our bedding, our foods, our shoes. This was our contribution to the war effort? Nothing made much sense.

JA-3: Why did you send me to a concentration camp without a fair consideration for my feelings, at gunpoint, without any federal charges against me? I was treated like a common criminal. The humiliation! The smells! People standing outside the barbed-wire fence throwing rotten tomatoes and calling us names. Sickening. Military police interrogating us whenever they saw us. Propositioning us girls, bribing us with candies and other things. It was disgusting.

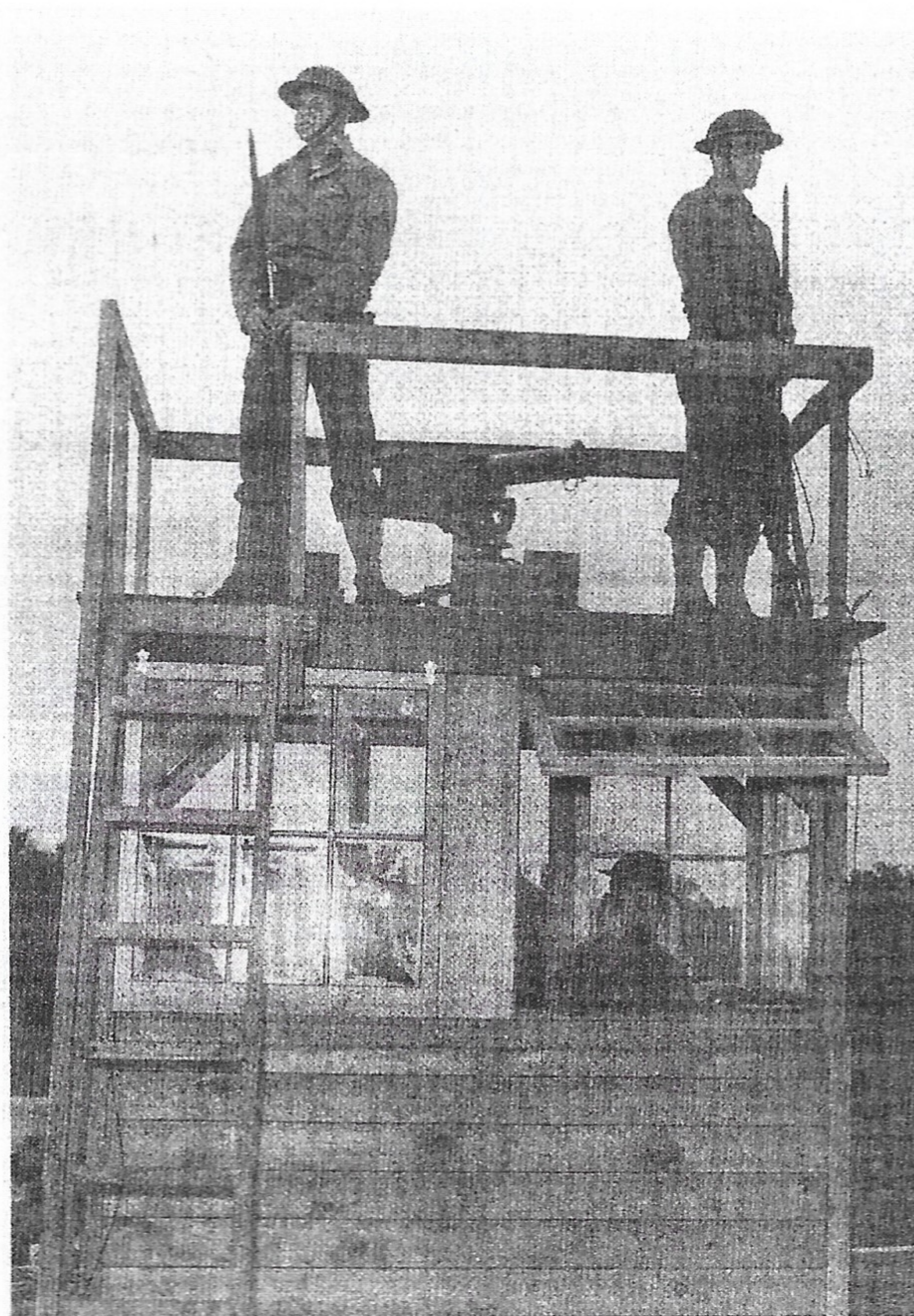
Other-2: Webster's dictionary defines "concentration camp" as a "camp where persons as prisoners of war, political prisoners or refugees are detained or confined." This definition does not apply to the relocation centers because persons of Japanese ancestry in the centers WERE FREE TO RELOCATE elsewhere in the U.S.A. . . . they were urged and assisted in doing so, so they were hardly "detained or confined" in the true sense of the word.

JA-5: They had barbed wire, they had towers, machine guns, and searchlights. That's a concentration camp. I call that a concentration camp.

Myer: I do not want to go down in history as a "Director of Concentration Camps." It's offensive to me and to the dedicated members of my staff.

JA-2: What has left an indelible memory was the huge Poston Indian Reservation sign in the desert. I was grateful to the Indians for sharing their reservation but became angry when I found that it was not trees and fishing streams as I'd been led to believe from our U.S. history books.

JA-1: From the sound of the name we thought Heart Mountain would be like a mountain resort. It was nothing like that. It was actually a desert, a flat



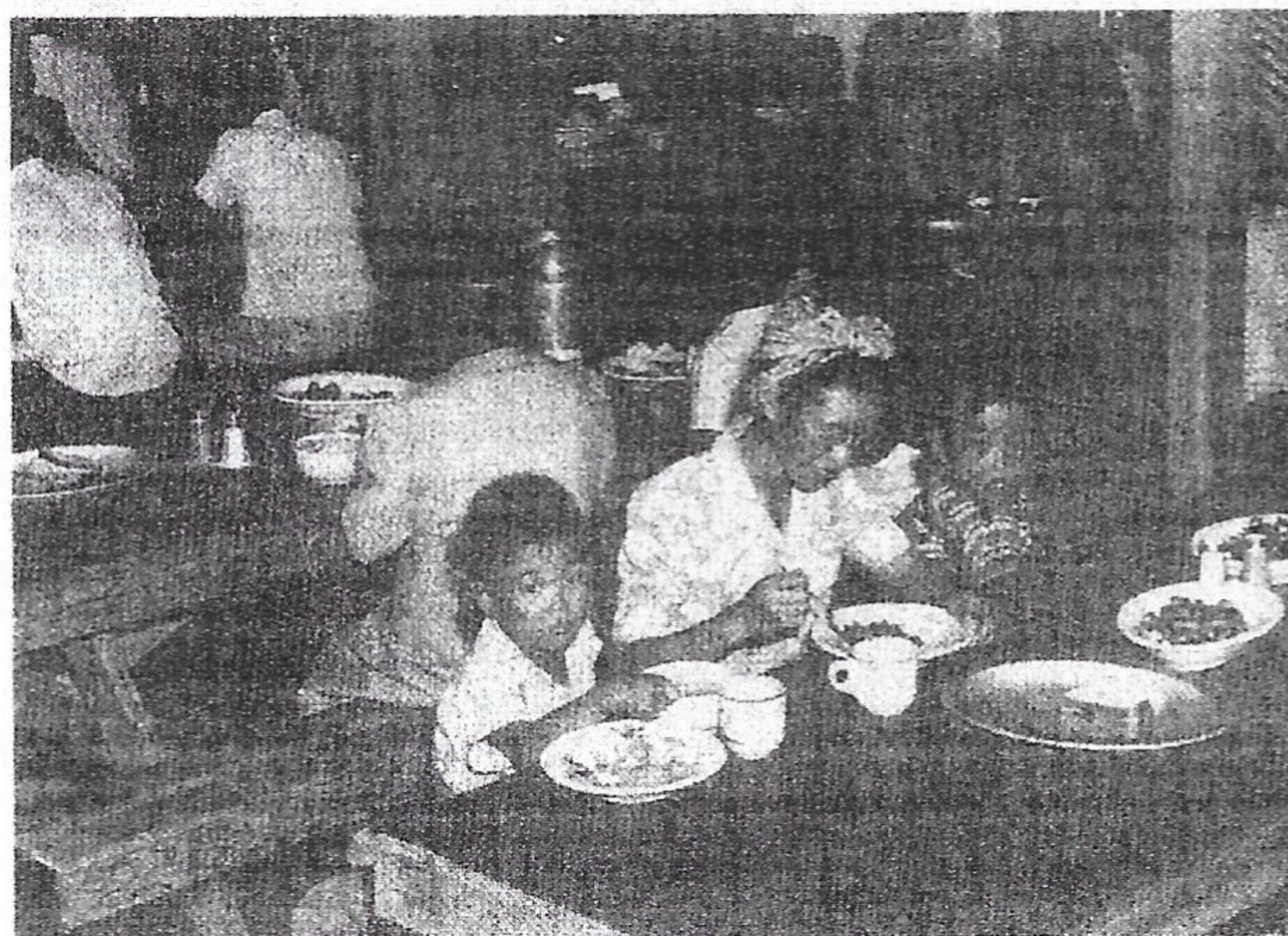
"Military police on duty in watch-towers at the Santa Anita Park assembly center," April 1942.

plain in Wyoming. The camp was barbed-wire fenced with guards, guard towers, and machine guns. I remember the machine guns.

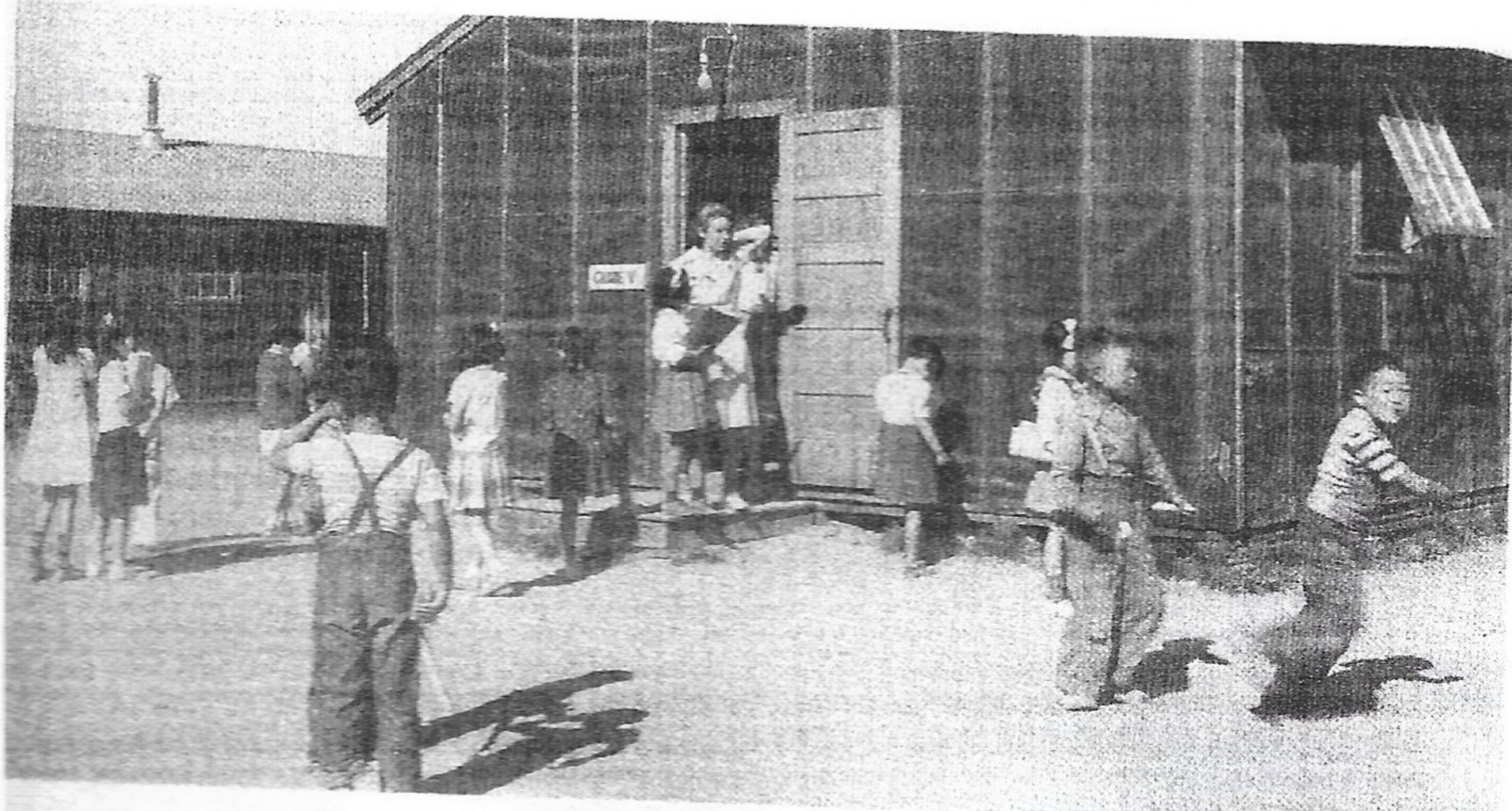
Myer: Let me tell you just a little about a relocation center—the physical setup and how it operates. At a distance it looks like an army camp. The buildings are all one-story frame structures.

JA-4: A cluster of identical barracks surrounded by an ominous fence in the middle of a barren and dusty desert. Gila River Concentration Camp in Arizona.

JA-1: Topaz, Utah. Just a barren wasteland with nothing but scorpions and sagebrush. Barbed-wire fencing all around. High towers set on all four cor-



Residents of the Manzanar Relocation Center ate their meals in this dining hall.



Children in the relocation centers had school in the barracks. These Tule Lake fifth-graders are at recess.

ners of the camp. Military police with rifles.

JA-3: When we got to Manzanar, we found that the barracks were not yet finished—just bare wood with no tar paper around them. Within two or three days the lumber started to dry, and there were gaping spaces on the floor and siding. Some mornings when we woke up, there was sand all over our faces and in our mouths.

JA-2: Sometimes snakes and scorpions would crawl from under the barracks, so I had to watch the children all the time.

Myer: They're lined up in rows and divided into blocks. Twelve or sometimes fourteen barrack buildings to a block. Each of these barracks is divided into family-size compartments—about twenty by twenty-five feet to accommodate a family of five or six or seven people.

JA-3: I remember our small room in which we crowded seven cots, a table and benches made out of packing crates, and a Franklin-style potbellied stove. That was home for over three years.

JA-4: The sandstorms and snowstorms, bitter cold in winter, torrid in the summer. The eternal wind.

Other-2: Do they cook in these compartments?

Myer: No. In each block there's a dining hall, and everyone eats there. Somewhere between 250 and 300 people in the block take their meals three times a day in the mess hall.

JA-2: The large, barren mess halls with rows of wooden tables and benches.

JA-1: Sometimes I've been asked about the food in camp. For over thirty years now I've not been able to eat orange marmalade.

JA-3: Not until you have tasted the rice of strangers will you appreciate your home or your parents, my mother used to tell me.

JA-4: A lot of us started getting smart and bought electric stoves and bought canned goods, and if we didn't like what was on the menu, we'd open up a can of something and have that along with our dinner.

Other-1: Administrative Notice No. 6. Under date of April 15, the use of electrical appliances in the barracks was prohibited. This regulation has not been complied with.

Other-2: What kind of food do they get? I've heard they get lots of ham and bacon and things that the rest of us can't get. And who pays for the food?

Myer: The United States government pays for the food—up to forty-five cents a day per person. And the people in the relocation centers are subject to the same rationing restrictions as anyone else. The diet is adequate and nourishing, but the people there don't get any more food than is available to the general public.

JA-2: A temporary hospital was set up, and this is where I chose to work from the first day after my arrival in Poston. My first day there a baby was born. They named him Poston. He didn't have a crib. I spotted a lettuce crate just outside the hospital window, washed it, and lined it with sheets as his crib.

JA-1: I was the first doctor to go to Manzanar. Two times a week we would do ten to twelve tonsillectomies in the morning. I soon found out that because of the heat during the summer, the ether would evaporate. We had to reschedule surgery to the wee hours of the morning when it was cooler.

JA-2: We had classes in the barracks, no playground, and some of the most inadequate teachers seemed to be assigned to us. The older teachers must have been rejects from other places, and the young ones were only interested in having a good time with the military police.

JA-4: We learned to sneak out of class by blowing up the coal-burning stoves.

JA-5: I must not have learned very much in that camp school because the only thing I can remember from it is our teacher, a tall white woman, announcing the death of President Roosevelt. She came into our barrack classroom in tears and said that the nation had lost its greatest President and that we, the Japanese-American people, had lost the best friend we ever had. I was then ten years old and in the fifth grade, but I knew that Roosevelt was no friend.

Other-2: Where do the teachers, the doctors, and the nurses come from?

Myer: So far as they are available, they are evacuees. And a large number of able-bodied people are engaged in work in the centers. Just think of any

community and all the jobs that have to be done to keep it going—obtain the food, distribute it, prepare three meals a day . . .

Other-2: . . . and wash the dishes . . .

Myer: Yes . . . and haul the garbage, maintain the buildings, run the stores, and operate the water and sewage systems.

JA-4: I worked in the motor pool as a dispatcher and driver. My wife helped in the nursery school.

JA-1: On my first job, I worked for sixteen dollars a month as a lumberjack cutting large trees for firewood for the winter. It helped to take my anger and disgust out on the wood.

JA-5: The important thing was to find something to keep mind and body busy.

JA-1: Later we were able to go outside under controlled conditions. My brother and I and several friends went out to pick potatoes. This was stoop labor. There were many days when it would be snowing, and it wouldn't be snowing gently. The potatoes would be frozen. In the morning my hands would be so stiff I couldn't even tie my shoestrings.

Other-1: Do they have a chance to do anything besides work, eat, and sleep?

Myer: Yes, they've developed a lot of things to do. They have sports of all kinds—like baseball—fashion shows now and then. There are some pretty good orchestras, so I'm told. They work at crafts and hobbies of all kinds.

JA-3: Interminable card games.

JA-1: Checkers.

JA-2: Parades, Boy Scouts, Brownies, kendo, piano.

JA-4: The Topaz Ode Party.

JA-5: The mountaintops are snow covered this morning. The wind is blowing hard through the sagebrush, and I can hear a coyote's voice afar.

JA-1: I wish to blow out my feeling standing proudly on the mountaintops.

JA-2: How pitiful it was when this wild flower was hurt by the first frost. It was a pet of mine until yesterday.

JA-4: I have to shift my heart once in a while by playing piano, for my surroundings are more than bitterness.

JA-1: Going off to the edge of the compound to be by myself and staring off into the woods that surround us; musing for hours on end—finding solace in the peaceful scene of snow in the trees.

JA-3: To be fair, there were times that were enjoyable, particularly the Christmas parties, when the children were given presents donated by the American Friends Society.



"Evacuee farmers at [Tule Lake] relocation center filling sacks with newly dug potatoes," 1943.

Other-2: We put on a Christmas pageant based on "The Other Wise Man." After the show, a group from the camp went outside the gates to sing carols to the American soldiers guarding the facility. We asked Goro, a popular internee singer, to sing. And he sang what they all wanted. It was brand new that winter—everybody's favorite—

[Group sings a few lines of "White Christmas"]

Other-2: It was eerie, just an eerie feeling out there in the middle of the desert. There wasn't any snow. It was too cold for snow. But everyone had a grand time. We all sang the carols—evacuees, chaperones, and army guards, all singing "Silent Night" together.

[Group sings a few lines of "Silent Night"]

JA-5: No one, I say *no one*, can tell me what a great time we had, or how good it was for us, or what a picnic we had in the concentration camp during World War II.

Myer: It isn't a normal way of life. Family life is seriously disrupted. It's almost impossible for parents to develop the training and discipline that every youngster needs.

JA-2: The children ran around in every direction. The older boys returned home to sleep only. Attempts to eat together as a family at the mess hall gradually deteriorated. My four-year-old brother and his gang were caught building a fire under the barracks.

Myer: It's not easy to raise good Americans behind barbed wire.

JA-1: Hopelessness settles in on you until getting up in the morning appears useless.

JA-4: The most difficult part of those years was living one day after the other without purpose, direction, or even hope.

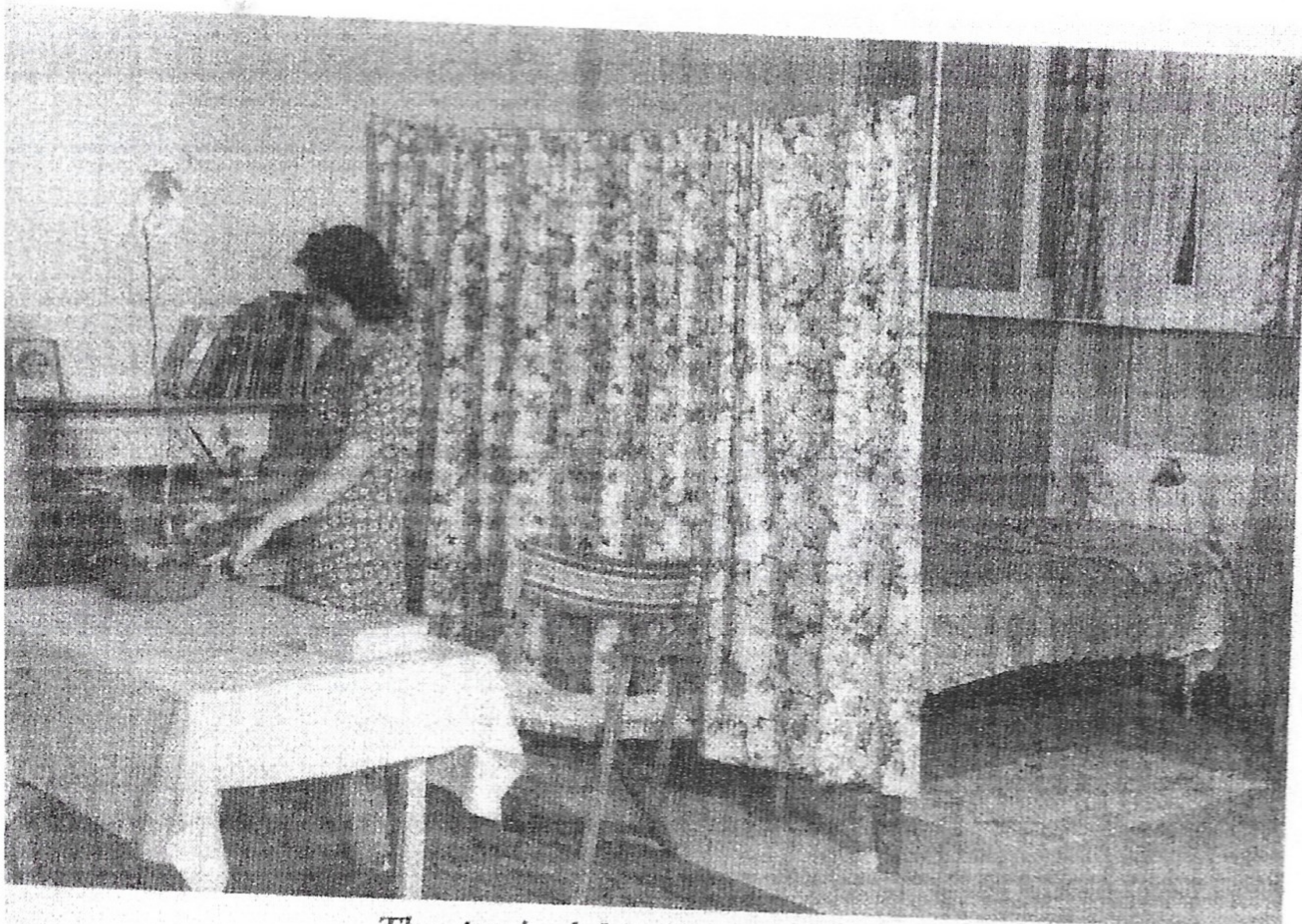
JA-5: Awakened every morning to the sound of a bugle.

JA-5: I told Papa I wanted a horse. I knew Papa wasn't going to be able to get me a horse. It was the first time I can remember that Papa could not provide me with what I wanted. I told Papa it was okay, but I was more disappointed with Papa than I was with the idea of giving up my horse.

JA-3: While reading a story to my little girl, I found myself having to describe to her what was meant by "picnic . . . park . . . zoo"—and I began to think: I can't raise my daughter like this. How is she going to be able to live in the outside world? I must get her out of here, with or without me.

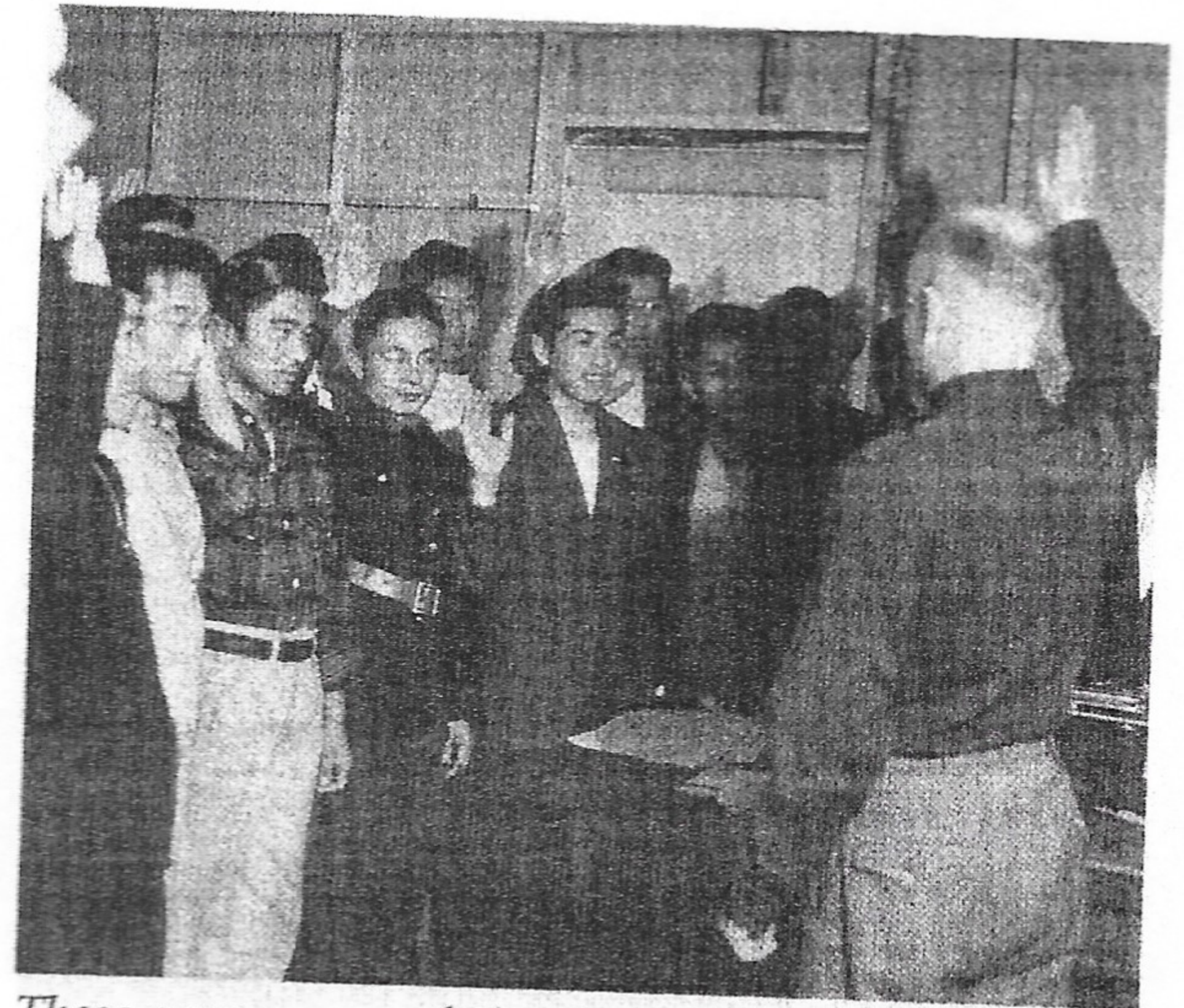
JA-2: During those years of internment, my second child was born. She became a very unfortunate person—born without a birthplace because that place no longer exists.

JA-1: It came to me that by putting me away in a camp like this, my country not only had abandoned me but had sent me away into exile, had condemned me to a life of loneliness.



The typical barracks home was a compartment of about twenty by twenty-five feet.

Other-2: "Administrative Notice No. 11. Residents of the Center wishing to have a visitor must go to the Information Center in his or her District and make a request for an Official Permit, giving the following details: 1) Name and address of visitor. 2) Reason for visit: business, personal or friend. Residents of the seven districts will each have a fixed day of the week



These young men of the Granada Relocation Center volunteered for service in the U.S. Army.

on which they may have visitors. The maximum visiting and traveling time to and from the Inner Gate allowed for each visit will be 30 minutes."

Other-1: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces and foreswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?

JA-4: No and No! When I was going to school, I did pledge allegiance to the flag. And I considered myself to be an American—not just a Japanese American, but an *American*.

Other-1: I see you have always lived in this country.

JA-4: Yes.

Other-1: Are you a dual citizen?

JA-4: No, I am an American citizen only.

Other-1: You said "No" to Question 28 according to our record. If you say "No," you are giving away your American citizenship. Is that what you want to do?

JA-4: If I would say "Yes," I'd be expected to say that I'd give up my life for this country. I don't think I could say that because this country has not treated me as a citizen. They were asking us about our loyalty to this country after revoking our rights and privileges, humiliating us, and making us out to be war criminals. Not signing the questions got me put in the Bismarck, North Dakota, alien internment camp.

Other-1: Registrants who are Japanese or of Japanese extraction or parentage, even though they are American citizens, are not considered as acceptable to the armed forces. There is one exception to the above statement. The army has announced the formation of

a combat team that will be composed entirely of United States citizens of Japanese extraction or parentage who have made application for voluntary induction through the Selective Service System and who are found by the armed forces to be physically qualified for general military service. May 7, 1943.

Other-2: More than a thousand of the young men in the relocation centers have recently volunteered for service, and I predict that they will make top-flight soldiers.

JA-2: In December 1943, my mother wrote: "Our son, Lincoln is visiting us now from Camp Shelby. He said perhaps he will be sent over the sea before long. We hope this is not the last time we see him though we are prepared. He is only 19 years of age and has lots of future, but he says he is glad to offer his life to his country. I, too, am glad to offer my son to the country where I have been brought up since a youngster."

JA-5: We were proud to be in the United States Army. As long as we were in uniform, no one bothered to question our rights as Americans.

JA-4: Shortly after the German army surrendered, the 442d was put in charge of guarding the POWs. My thoughts went back to those barbed-wire fences and the guardtowers in the wastelands of Idaho, where my father was interned.

Other-2: Mr. Myer, isn't there some way to get these people out of the relocation centers?

Myer: Yes, there is, and we're working at it just as hard as we know how. We're hoping to get the great majority out of the relocation centers into private employment where they can be self-supporting and self-respecting wherever they are needed and where the public will accept them. Before any evacuee is given a permit for leave from a center, his record is carefully checked. He's investigated much more thoroughly than you or I have ever been. He's not eligible for release if the investigation of his record indicates that he's disloyal or an undesirable member of society.

Other-2: Your card. Citizen's Indefinite Leave Permit Number 3109. It will serve as an identification card and should be carried with you at all times.

JA-3: My mother and I left camp with the meager remains of our family belongings. There was uncertainty and fear of the unknown but also hope and curiosity.

JA-5: I was one of the first out on student leave. I was called to the administration office and cautioned about my behavior. I was told not to speak Japanese and not be conspicuous. I was warned that if I was involved in "incidents," my leave would be canceled. I felt an awesome responsibility as I left camp with

twenty-five dollars and my few belongings.

JA-2: It's a very large and busy city and as yet almost frighteningly strange with its Loop and Els. We've walked miles and miles every day looking for a place to stay. We finally found a place. Not too good. It's five stories up, and the elevator is very old and dangerous, and the stairways are dark all the time.

JA-1: I grabbed a chance to go to the University of Michigan. I arrived with much enthusiasm for a new life, but I couldn't concentrate on anything. One morning I packed up and fled.

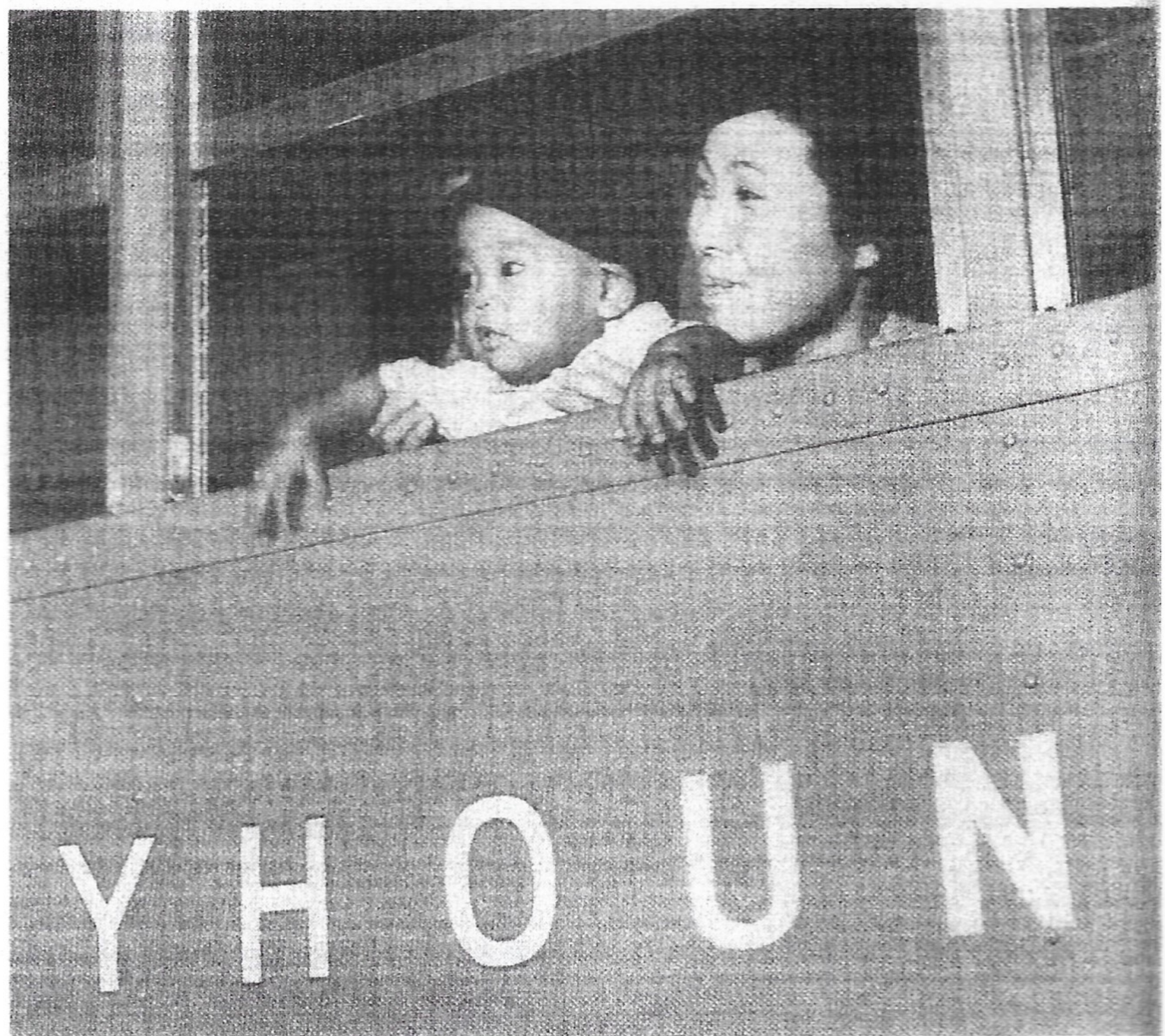
JA-3: I'm appalled at my temerity coming to a large, strange city with small children and only myself to turn to. But I've simply got to manage!

JA-2: I clearly recall hearing of Roosevelt's death. We were released from confinement shortly thereafter. It was just like a fairy tale: the evil king dies, and the people are set free.

JA-4: The implication of my return address, Granada, when I wrote to medical schools, was that I was a potential spy or saboteur.

JA-5: As we returned, we tried to slip back as unobtrusively as possible.

Other-2: Weren't they in one of those prison camps?



September 1945: This mother and child are leaving the Gila River Center in Arizona to return to California.

JA-3: There were stores that wouldn't sell anything to returning families.

JA-4: Dressed in my U.S. Army uniform, I went to get a haircut from a barber who had known me since I was a child. I had grown up with his children. The barber drew all the curtains in his shop and said he didn't want anyone to know he was cutting my hair.

JA-1: I am a citizen of the United States, born and educated here. I am trying very hard to secure a position as a mechanical engineer in the Defense Department. I have always had faith in myself as a loyal citizen of the United States. I don't understand how the security of the nation will be endangered if I am permitted to work at a research corporation.

JA-5: When we go out of the camps, we get the lowest jobs despite our education.

JA-4: The most difficult part of the evacuation from camp was trying to establish a career again and to rebuild a life back home for my family.

Other-2: It is hard to imagine the Japanese drifting back after the war to their former points of concentration. A new set of vested interests has already been created. They will not welcome the Japanese.

JA-2: In July 1945 Grandpa, seventy-eight, and Grandma, sixty-six, returned at last to their home after three years in the camp. Their town had become almost a ghost town. A quarter of the buildings formerly occupied by Japanese had been destroyed by fire.

JA-1: I stopped off in my former hometown to visit friends. I was greeted by a hostile, "What the hell are you doing back here?"

Myer: There have been troubles here and there caused mainly by the rantings of barroom patriots. But on the whole there is something profoundly encouraging and heartwarming about the progress that has been achieved and the adjustments that evacuees have made in hundreds of small and large communities.

JA-5: We finally relocated in Chicago. My father and mother worked hard as laborers, and they managed to send five children through college and graduate schools.

JA-4: After we were released from camp, we had the uneasy feeling that we would either sink or swim. Since we come from a proud stock, we never sank.

JA-3: I was often called a "bitch," but you see, it was necessary for survival.

JA-1: I felt very isolated in America.

JA-4: After the war, my father was sixty years old. He had lost all that he worked for and succeeded in. Once a wealthy and proud businessman, he became a laborer in order to support his family. He never

again regained his drive, enthusiasm, or economic success.

Other-1: It is a pretty general conclusion that it will be generations before Americans of Japanese ancestry will be assimilated into the nation—if ever.

JA-5: Assimilate and integrate into American society. Speak English. No Japanese please.

JA-2: Japanese was spoken only when you didn't want them to know what you were talking about.

JA-4: When I got into high school, I joined the school a capella choir, the school band, the German Club, and even the Spanish Club. I tried hard not to be identified with anything that related to Japanese.

JA-3: I joined PTAs.

JA-1: When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, I decided to enlist into the U.S. Army to prove my loyalty once and for all.

JA-3: I lost my second son in Vietnam. Hearing about his parents being in camp, he went to Vietnam to prove, like the other boys had done in World War II, that he was a good first-class citizen of the United States. He was only twenty years old when he was killed. He went over there trying to prove how good we were.

JA-2: Who remembers their names engraved in bronze on memorial tablets where sparrows perch? I remember their deeds and salute them. And I remember the passionate rage that burned inside us all. It flickers and flames anew when I ask: Did my brothers have to die to gain for us the liberty guaranteed us by the Bill of Rights?

JA-4: We each will continue to deal with the scars left from that experience.

JA-5: The scars don't show, but they are real and they are there.

JA-3: I've told my children about the camps, and they were really shocked and surprised that something like that could have happened.

JA-4: I'm thankful for the opportunity to unburden myself. Fortunately, I have some time left in my life. I'm going to live it as an American. As a free American. Free of my shadowy past.

JA-1: We are afraid to speak out. We will not make waves. It makes us uncomfortable to stand out. We want to blend in. We want to be Middle America.

JA-2: Four decades later we are still numb. We tried to forget, as though it never happened, so we could survive.

Other-1: As a white American who never had to live through internment, I cannot begin to imagine what the Japanese Americans went through.

JA-4: Whenever I was asked where I had been during the war, I always felt put on the spot. Sometimes

I lied. I always tried to block out that part of my life.

JA-2: My time for tears and crying are over. My parents would want it that way.

JA-3: We all reacted to the concentration camp experience in different ways—but all of us felt its psychological impact.

Other-2: Anyone referring to internment camps as concentration camps is guilty of anti-Americanism, and if I ever see such a term on any public place, I shall destroy it if possible.

JA-3: Had we been housed in the Mark Hopkins Hotel, this would not have made the entire process one whit less wrong.

Other-2: Why are you Japanese Americans bringing up the issue of your incarceration during World War II again? It's over. Forget about it. You're going to stir up a lot of bad feeling.

JA-4: We cannot forget because the experience is too much a part of us. It is part of our legacy.

Other-2: I have seen two programs on TV about making reparations to the Japanese people. It almost made me ill. Have they paid us back for that very well planned sneak attack? Please don't give the Japanese my address. I wouldn't feel safe. They have changed a lot for the better, however.

JA-5: The evacuation and internment is something the larger American society has not come to terms with. It was a test of the strength of our Constitution, and our Constitution failed that test. It failed to stand up for its most important guarantees when pressure was brought to bear by racism and greed. It affects our self-image as a nation—affects the way we Americans view ourselves.

JA-1: We are Americans, like any other group whose parents came to America seeking a better opportunity. Men like my father who came in 1898 worked hard, saved money, raised families, bought property, and helped make the California desert bloom and produce.

Other-2: I am the most 100 percent American you can imagine. I am a Mayflower descendent. I served as a nurse in the navy during the war with Japan and lost many friends. This attempt to discredit the many honorable Americans who acted with extreme humanity and generosity hacks me off no end. I, for one, am damned proud of my country. The water covering the bodies in Pearl Harbor will freeze solid before I will ever apologize.

JA-1: I don't want to believe that somewhere in our U.S. Constitution there is an invisible amendment that states that American Constitution rights are for the white American majority only.

Other-1: If the Constitution and those who inter-

pret and enforce it cannot protect the rights of an innocent citizen or alien during a period of emotionalism, lynch mob psychology, and hooliganism then, in heaven's name, of what use is it?

JA-5: Tell me why we, the Japanese Americans, have to prove ourselves worthy of being called Americans. We were born here. We were good citizens in the best sense of the word. Why should we have to carry this load of having to prove we are worthy?

JA-3: The trouble with having to prove your worth is that you have to keep on proving it again and again. There is no end to it.

JA-4: How many generations do we have to be here before we are taken as Americans, not Japs?

Other-2: For a group of people who have gained a well-deserved reputation for outstanding citizenship to spoil that reputation by reopening old wounds seems in poor taste and unworthy of those who have been some of our finest people.

JA-2: There is no way that anyone who was not in one of the camps can understand the impact it had on the victims. They cannot understand the extent of our anger, the height of our outrage, the depth of our despair. Who but those who actually experienced it can remember the ominous sound of the tanks patrolling at night? Who but those who were there can know the poignancy of having your brothers or sons fighting and dying on the battlefields to defend the rights of other Americans to be free while their parents and brothers and sisters were being held hostage in barbed-wire compounds by those same Americans they were defending? Who but those who were there can remember the hunger strikes, father pitted against son, brother against brother, the riots, the soldiers with guns, the beatings, the night searches? Who but those who were there can remember the terror, the degradation, the humiliation, the deprivation, and the disintegration of families and lives? The inmates remember and will never forget.

Other-2: World War II was a period of unspeakable atrocities, destruction, and slaughter. Unpleasant as the relocation camps were, the inhabitants were far safer and healthier than GIs in the jungles of New Guinea or on the beach at Iwo Jima. They did not have the security of the people in the camps. The internees were fed, provided with schooling and sports. How dare they whine about the loss of freedom, human dignity, loss of income, and psychological trauma. They should be damned thankful that the thousands of dead and maimed men saved them from the horrors of war.

JA-3: Perhaps we can explain our situation by comparing our experience with that of a rape victim. A



The USO at Heart Mountain is but one image that points out the irony implicit in Japanese-American relocation.

victim of rape is traumatized by the experience. Most rape victims find it extremely difficult to talk about it. We felt we were raped by our own country—raped of our freedom, raped of our human dignity, raped of our civil liberties.

JA-2: A rape victim feels guilt and shame. And so it is with us. We felt that we had somehow helped to bring it on. We, the innocent victims, felt guilt and shame about it all. It takes a long time for the wounds to heal.

Other-1: Whenever anyone is put anywhere against his will, that is to him a prison. Oscar Wilde wrote: "Every prison that men build is built with bricks of shame and bound with bars lest Christ should see how men their brothers maim."

JA-5: My grandsons and granddaughters face the stigma of having had parents or grandparents who were prisoners of war. My grandson aged nine came home from school one day and told his dad that he was not a Japanese American. He was strictly an all-American boy. From now on he wasn't going to eat rice or use soy sauce.

JA-1: We were as much casualties of the war as the dead and wounded, for we lost faith in our country.

JA-4: Imprisoned but not charged.

JA-3: And I still hear the clanging of the gates.

JA-5: I did not leave those barbed wires behind in

Tule Lake on August 14, 1945. I carried them with me, and I carry them with me still. I no longer want to be encumbered and bound by them. I want to be set free!

Other-1: Relocation ironically helped to speed the postwar assimilation of Japanese Americans into the American mainstream. They now are disproportionately represented in such respected professions as medicine and engineering.

JA-4: Yes, we have survived, and by all accounts succeeded beyond anyone's expectations in reestablishing our lives. We have indeed become super-Americans. I, for one, do not want to be a super-American any longer. The burden is too great. I just want to be an American.

JA-5: Americanism is not a matter of one's skin but the belief in the principles set forth in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

JA-2: When this nation placed American citizens and noncitizens of Japanese ancestry into concentration camps without a charge or trial, the whole foundation upon which this nation is based became a farce. We did not do anything wrong! We happened to have the face of the enemy.

JA-3: We lost our childhood, our happiness, our innocence, our trust in people, our self-esteem. We lost our right to a normal nurturing from our parents. We lost their guidance. We lost their protection. We lost the opportunity to grow up and go to school in a free society. We lost our ability to think and act as free men and women. Most important, we lost our faith in the Constitution and the American system of justice.

Other-1: We cannot use the guise of national security to rationalize letting our fear condemn innocent groups of people just because they are different. The color of one's skin, the name of one's God, or the language one speaks cannot be allowed to be justification for poor treatment or imprisonment. If we do not all stand in support of the Bill of Rights, can we honestly say that it will not happen again?

JA-1: All these years I haven't felt really certain about my constitutional rights because my government still hasn't changed the law about detention camps. Racist hysteria could do it again for us or other minorities.

Other-1: "To: Tom C. Clark, Attorney General. July 11, 1946. The statute under which the program of relocating persons of Japanese ancestry could be and should be utilized immediately in the event of serious trouble with Russia. This statute could be used to detain all Russians and Communists, whether or not American citizens. Under sweeping war-time powers, the Federal Government can order the detention

or place other restrictions on ANY citizen. Every citizen still retains the rights guaranteed him by the Bill of Rights—but these rights may be curtailed in time of war to protect the national security.”

JA-2: No matter what the government may have thought of the adults, there was no way we children could have threatened national security.

Other-1: I had a call from a woman who said, “I had a nightmare. I dreamed that the Republicans put me in jail because I was a Democrat and they permitted me one phone call.” I think the point that I’m trying to make is that we should never again permit this kind of broad-scale action of the denial of constitutional rights to take place.

Myer: War brings tragedy to all. Citizenship carries its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and in time of war the burden is always heavier.

Other-2: It is an unfortunate fact of life that the innocent often suffer with the guilty when there is not time to sort out the good from the bad.

JA-4: I am here to demand that my country show the humanity and generosity of spirit it is capable of. While it cannot retroactively provide me the self-esteem I so desperately needed in the past, nor bind my emotional wounds, nor fill the hollow place in my parents’ lives, nor restore them their lost dignity, IT CAN DO SOMETHING!

JA-3: The injustice of our incarceration and all the pain that flowed from it must be acknowledged and remembered and be made a part of American history.

JA-1: An elegant piece of paper with eloquent regrets and apologies does not make an adequate restitution. The one type of restitution that everyone understands is monetary redress and reparation.

Other-2: It is an outrage, a disgrace, and a dishonor to those Americans who gave their lives and limbs in all wars to even consider any payment or apology.

JA-5: We are Americans. We have striven to be good Americans. We are proud of our achievements. We are proud of the contributions we have made and continue to make to this country. In spite of all this, you still think of us as Japanese. You do not include us among your fellow Americans and that hurts. When will you begin to recognize us as your equals and as your fellow Americans? This is the heart of the reparation issue.

JA-4: Give us retribution.

JA-3: Relieve us from distress.

JA-1: Compensate us before we all die.

JA-2: Correct, amend, and pay us now for the damages now.

JA-All: Give us some satisfaction in our lifetime.

JA-3: I feel as though the Statue of Liberty was disfigured by ugly warts. Let us do plastic surgery on her face. Let us wipe our slate clean and thereby cleanse our soul. Let us pledge anew that putting citizens behind barbed-wire fences will never occur again. Unless we rectify our errors, it may happen again. Lest We Forget!

JA-5: There are no barracks left. Cement foundations, broken dishes, and a cemetery are the only physical remains. But the ruins bring forth emotional responses, and those emotions have not lessened by the passage of time.

JA-4: When a bunch of us gets together, sometimes we talk about camp. We look back and think of that as a bad experience in our lives.

JA-2: To be an American is a privilege I appreciate. Take this burden of guilt. It’s no longer mine.

Myer: On August 5, 1988, Congress sent to President Reagan legislation offering cash reparations and the nation’s apologies to Americans of Japanese ancestry who had been interned during World War II. President Reagan signed Public Law 100-383 on August 10, 1988. Under the act, approximately 60,000 surviving Japanese Americans of the 120,000 who were detained would be eligible for cash payments of twenty thousand dollars. The act acknowledged “a grave injustice” in that the relocation and internment program was undertaken without adequate security reasons and without any documented acts of espionage or sabotage. Another purpose of this act is to “discourage the occurrence of similar injustices and violations of civil liberties in the future.” On October 9, 1990, the first payment was made in Washington, D.C., to one of the survivors.

JA-1: The mountaintops of the camp are snow covered this morning. The wind is blowing hard through the sagebrush, and I can hear a coyote’s voice afar.

[Blackout]

THE END

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