

'CAMP'

By Alan Mikuni
(continued)

complete with hay and manure, and hastily erected tents and barracks constructed in the infield areas of the race tracks. Dad and his sister's family (WRA family #20680), along with other San Francisco Bay Area detainees remained at the Tanforan horse stables from May through September 15, 1942, before being transported by train to the War Relocation Center in Topaz Utah.

Topaz Utah

Dad and the other Tanforan inmates (PKA internees, evacuees) arrived in the War Relocation Authority concentration camp (PKA internment camp, relocation center) in Topaz, Utah, on September 21, 1942, after a 700 mile train trip from Tanforan. Families settled into their barracks, and life in this newly formed community began to take shape with whatever normalcy was possible for uprooted families having to re-establish their lives in a prison camp.

During the time Topaz was in operation, 11,212 people spent time at the camp, with a peak of 8,130 in 1943. Like any community, the entire spectrum of jobs that must be done in order for the community to function properly had to be identified and put into operation. The WRA, the agency charged with operating the camps, provided an important supply and oversight role, in addition to armed guards and patrols, but the residents provided the necessary skills and labor to accomplish the day-to-day operations.



about camp he did discuss freely. A 2007 movie, *American Pastime*, provides a dramatized, fact-based, look at baseball in a WRA concentration camp. Amateur movie footage, taken by a camp resident using a movie camera smuggled into Topaz, is included in *American Pastime*. There was a very brief segment of film taken at a Topaz baseball game, showing a catcher, but I cannot tell if, by chance, it was my Dad.

Soon after accomplishing the forced removal and incarceration orders stipulated by Executive Order 9066, the US Government realized that follow-up actions were needed to determine if there were, indeed, disloyal individuals among those incarcerated (PKA interned). It was also recognized that the "camps" could be a source of draftees and volunteer military personnel for service in the US Army's all-Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Battalion, or the Military Intelligence Service.

Late in 1942, in an attempt to segregate "loyal" inmates, that is, those suitable for military service from the "disloyal," WRA camp inmates over the age of



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seventeen were forced to complete Selective Service Form 304a - "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry", colloquially known as the "Loyalty Questionnaire". Most questionnaire items dealt with the usual general information topics, such as, family members, residences, organizations, education, etc., but responses to two specific questions, numbers 27 and 28, were of particular interest to War Department.

Question 27 asked if the individual would be willing to fight for the US, and Question 28 inquired if the individual would disavow allegiance to the Emperor of Japan. After many years of post-war analysis, both questions were determined to be flawed in their presentation, but 1942 and 1943 respondents had to answer them regardless of how confusing or inflammatory they may have been at the time.

For instance, Question 27 asked individuals if they would fight for the United States, the same United States that stripped them of their rights as citizens, and imprisoned them as criminals without due process. Question 28 asked individuals if they could declare that they no longer held allegiance to the Emperor of Japan. This was a difficult concept because 1) many individuals never held allegiance to the Emperor in the first place; and, 2) because of alien exclusion laws, many Japan-born resident aliens could not become naturalized citizens, so their ONLY allegiance was to the Emperor. Disavowing allegiance to their ONLY Nation would have rendered these inmates as "stateless" individuals.

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Dad was 22 when he arrived at Topaz, and was able to contribute his energy and skills to helping the community function. He participated as he could as a worker, spending time with construction, maintenance, and cooking in the mess hall. Inmates were paid roughly \$12 to \$19 per month for the various jobs they carried out for the camp community. In addition to work, there was leisure time... a lot of leisure time. Like most young American men, Dad loved baseball, and played on the Topaz team. Dad was a catcher, and a foul-tip broke the pinkie finger of his right hand, which he never had treated or reset. He loved to show off his crooked pinkie finger to my brothers, me, and anyone else who asked about it, and to talk about playing baseball in camp, one of the few things

Dad, again being the young man he was, had a rebellious streak. First of all, he didn't appreciate the fact that as an American citizen, he had been imprisoned unjustly, simply because he resembled an enemy of the United States. He answered both questions "no." Reactions at Topaz and the other WRA camps to Questions 27 and 28 were likely rooted in protest and resentment, rather than in disloyalty and allegiance to Japan, but the results remained. Like Dad, approximately 12,000 of the 78,000 who responded to the questionnaire answered "No" to both Questions 27 and 28. Individuals in this group, known as the "No-No Boys," were identified and scheduled for segregation to separate them from the general camp populations. A "Citizen Isolation Center" facility was established in Moab Utah for the No-No Boys and other recalcitrant camp inmates, but the group became too large for Moab. As was described in Lloyd Pierson's article, Moab was used on a limited basis for a select group of detainees.

Of the 11,212 Topaz detainees, 451 joined the US Army, 80 as volunteers and 371 as draftees, to serve with distinction in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Battalion. Fifteen of those Topaz servicemen were killed-in-action.

Incidentally, of the 11,212 Topaz detainees, 451 joined the US Army, 80 as volunteers and 371 as draftees, to serve with distinction in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Battalion. Fifteen of those Topaz servicemen were killed-in-action. Dad and a select group of other Topaz inmates began their 800 mile, 5-day train trip to the newly designated WRA "Segregation Center" in Tule Lake California on September 15, 1943, to join Tule Lake camp residents and the No-No Boys from the other eight WRA Centers.

NEXT ISSUE: A wedding at Tule Lake, and Life after the Camps...

Alan Mikuni lives in Fremont, CA.

From the DESERT RAT COMMANDO



THE QUOTE OF
THE DAY...

HE THAT LIVES
UPON HOPE,
DIES FARTING.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
'POOR RICHARD'S
ALMANACK
1736

WHY READ THE ZEPHYR?

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be...The people cannot be safe without information. Where the press is free and every man able to read, All is safe."

Thomas Jefferson

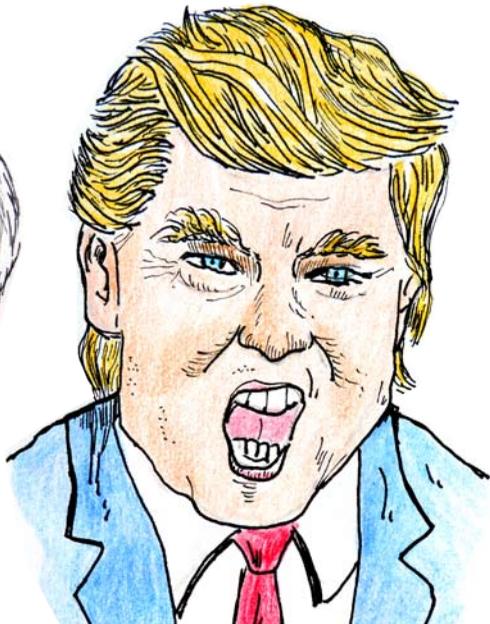


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