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REPORT OF ALYCJ A. OHAMA

Upon leaving Amache Center on September 21, 1944 until my return on the 17th of October, I can frankly say that the period spent on the outside, however short, convinced me thoroughly to the advisability of the oft-repeated phrase: "Relocation is the only solution".

It was my first experience in re-entering society, except for a few trips to Lamar, in the past almost two and a half years since evacuation. In spite of the long months in camp, I found that life on the outside can be easily entered into, that it does not take much time to be completely absorbed into the daily routine of present-day standards. It must be admitted, however, that woman's natural instinct toward shopping will undoubtedly command much of her first days to the various shops—she will be drawn to the displays, fascinated by the merchandise, and she will want to get the "feel" of being in a large store again. She may be tempted at first to purchase everything that meets her fancy, but soon realizes that she must resume her role as a money-wise shopper.

Such was my reaction during those "first days" that I spent in Chicago. From the Windy City, I entrained for Rochester, the city of my assignment, arriving there at noon of September 26. Mr. Cornwall of the WRA office met me at the station and drove me directly to the YWCA dormitory where I registered after reservations were previously made by Miss Yamamoto, office secretary. Mr. Cornwall called for me later, at 2 o'clock, that afternoon with Mr. McAllister who was on assignment in that area from the Washington office. We drove south through the small town of Webster, an impressive residential section.

Mr. Barrett, a prominent lawyer residing in Webster, made extensive plans to welcome two Nisei girls from Poston who were contacted to work in his home. In his anxiety to make these sisters feel at home, he informed many of the leaders in the town and paved the way for the evacuees to be well received upon their arrival. He did such an excellent publicity job that the residents were more than prepared to greet these girls. It was indeed an unfortunate turn of events when the two girls declined at the last hour to accept Mr. Barrett's employment. I mention this incident to show the cordial attitude of the people in this district.

We drove further south to Ontario where we stopped at the Glenn Rugg Farm. They were in the midst of apple harvesting. The apple trees grow to such heights that step ladders must be used to pick the fruit. A young Nisei boy, Tats Nakano, formerly of Central California and Heart Mountain, was among the workers on this farm. Itinerant negroes are used during the busy season. Mr. Nakano is well liked by the Ruggs; they treat him as a member of the family, giving him room and board. It was an interesting experience for me to pick apples, the Courtland variety, good for cooking and eating. The present apple crop will be taken to the town of Ontario and stored there in anticipation of better prices. Mr. Rugg is desirous of having a Japanese family work for him. A comfortable two-story house is available a short distance from the Rugg residence. I went in and looked through the house. On the second floor were three bedrooms with another bedroom on the first floor. The walls were newly papered, ready for a family to move in at any time. A cistern (for rain water) and furnace were located in the basement. With the house come certain privileges—a good size garden plot, products of the farm, poultry and eggs, etc. This set-up seems inviting especially to a family with a large number of children. The school bus calls for students.
The children could pitch in and grow vegetables and flowers or raise poultry on the large garden space. This was only one of the many such opportunities offered to Japanese families, a splendid chance for resettlement of people interested in farming who have heretofore been hesitant about going out because of their dependent children.

We returned to the TRA office at 5 o'clock to meet with the resettlement committee which was to convene at that hour. This group is interested in helping evacuees to resettle in Rochester and vicinity; the members are prominent civic and church leaders, business people and educational authorities. They meet about twice a month and discuss plans whereby they can be of some assistance to the relocatees. I felt fortunate in being able to sit in on this particular meeting. Those present unanimously agreed that each church would be called upon to sponsor and "adopt" one evacuee family—assist them in every way when (and if) they should come to Rochester—see to it that they will have some place in which to stay (in a member's home, if necessary) until living quarters could be found. Every help in securing employment would also be given. I could not help but feel the sincerity of those present, their cordial attitude was so evident.

The next morning, Wednesday, Sept. 27, was spent in visiting and contacting business firms. At the Powers Hotel I met Mr. Rohde, Chief-Steward, who is anxious to secure Japanese help in both the kitchen and cafeteria. Men and women are needed here. For cooks, a salary of $50 and up per week is offered, with meals, for an eight-hour day. Dishwashers and counter girls (in the cafeteria) may earn $25 and up per week plus meals; likewise, salad girls. The Sunday dinners, ranging in price around $2.50, are noted features of the Powers Hotel. Mr. Rohde also mentioned that work is available in the hotel itself, although he was not in a position to quote wages.

I was taken to a Wegman's Market and met Mr. Frankenstein the manager. There are nine Wegman stores in and around Rochester, all good sized markets containing well-equipped departments in fruits and vegetables, meats, bakery, grocery, candy, hardware and variety. The operator is anxious to get Japanese to manage his produce departments at a salary of from $50-60 with a bonus set-up for capable workers. Department heads also are wanted in the meat departments. The worker would be given a free hand in managing his particular section; the jobs offered are on a permanent basis. No union membership is required. Mr. Frankenstein expressed his awareness that eastern stores know very little about displays, stating that the aggressive evacuees should enter the field immediately, not only in his stores but in other markets as well. He felt that the time to begin in such a line is the immediate present, with great possibilities for expansion and post-war development.

I met and talked with Mr. George B. Hart of the wholesale florist firm bearing his name. Incidentally, he is a member of the resettlement committee and although usually too busy to attend the meetings, he takes an active interest. He would like to hire a good all-around nursery man, one who is especially qualified in rose culture and field work. His green houses, by the way, are immense. Upon approaching them, driving up an incline, they seemed at first to appear as a lake (I was lake-conscious as I saw so many), for the glass roofs extended over a vast acreage. The area south of Rochester is often referred to as the "Finger Lake" section with the most beautiful lakes to add to the picturesque scenery.
We visited the Monroe County Farm Bureau and talked with the officer in charge. He stated that farm lands should not be purchased at the present time as prices have skyrocketed to an impossible level. He predicted a general breakdown after the war. It was interesting to see his surveyed relief map of the county—showing the soil report which was carefully checked by Cornell University and marked on the map under Types I, II, III, IV, and V, the latter being choicest. Type II would be suitable for grazing land. Potential purchasers of farm lands inevitably turn to the map before buying, much to the dread of real estate agents.

A good hour was spent at the Rochester Smelting and Refining Company. The firm does a vast business in reclaiming metals. We were shown the various processes in which the metals go through before being made into ingots and moulds. The refining of metals, from the bulk stage through the water-cooling process to the finished phase was indeed an interesting sight. Each step was explained so that I could get some idea of what kind of work was being done. Laborers are paid at the rate of 70¢ an hour for a 40-hour week with time and a half for overtime and double time on a consecutive seventh day (Sunday). Many of the men put in over 50 hours of work a week. Membership in the CIO Union is required; one applies after working a month in the plant. The men heartily approved the hiring of Japanese-Americans. The firm also owns houses nearby the place of business.

We drove to the two Goldstein farms. Here again is an opportunity for a family to work on a share basis or at a salary plus privileges agreement. Large two-story houses are available for the tenant with a large gardening plot on the side. We picked grapes, pears, and tomatoes, all excellent tasting. It should be noted here that because of the abundant rainfall, no irrigating is necessary, thus accounting for the superb taste in the products raised. Many of the farms conduct small roadside stands where the produce is sold. The fruit and vegetables displayed were of the choicest—so surprising to one who heretofore considered California "tours" in farm products. Again, it should be remembered that the taste of the products grown in the Rochester area is superior to that of the much irrigated Pacific Coast yield.

At Avon, New York, we called at the Avon Inn, an exclusive cafe-hotel noted for its cuisine. A superior-type chef is needed here, one who is able to take full charge and prepare the foods for which the Avon is famous. The salary offered is $50 up per week with room and board. A job for a couple is also listed, the husband to work as maintenance man, gardener and porter; the wife as housekeeper. Salary: $60 per month for each with room and board. Numerous domestic jobs in private homes with salaries in the higher brackets are available everywhere in and around Rochester.

Out towards the Finger Lake area we passed Lake Canondagea and the town by that name. The scenery is indescribably beautiful; the trees with their colorful changing leaves are sure reminders of the autumnal presence. The maple and fir trees grow tall and straight. Flowers grow in profusion. Even the wildflower, a purple aster-like blossom, adds to the general beauty. Fields of cabbages, carrots, beets, corn, melon, beans, and pumpkin were sighted from the highway.
At Geneva, the Switzerland of America, on the Seneca Lake (one of the Finger Lakes), a naval training station is located near by. Overlooking this lake is the town, made popular and congested due to the naval program. Driving around the lake to the opposite side, we came to the Teall place. Mr. Teall formerly operated a book publishing firm in Shanghai and as a result of the war, lost his business, returning to Geneva to the family homestead. He now runs the Teall Beach Guest House (facing the lake) and a dairy farm and apple orchard. He is interested in securing a family to help run the farm on a share basis. Description: land covers about a mile square, head of fifty cows—should produce from $8,000 to $10,000 a year. They sell to Sheffield Dairy in New York. Pigs also raised.

Three houses are available for the workers’ use—all good looking, substantial buildings. One is at present rented to a naval officer. A couple is needed to assist at the inn, the man to do general maintenance work and the wife to assist with the housework and cooking. Two men are needed the year round to work on the dairy farm. Here is a splendid group-family opportunity. An energetic elderly man (suggestion: father-in-law) can raise and sell flowers on the highway which is heavy with traffic as it is the only road leading to the naval base. This location is about fifty miles south of Rochester. The day ended with a hearty dinner at the Hotel Rochester as a guest of Mr. Cornwall.

Thursday morning, Sept. 28: I spoke before a group of Red Cross volunteers (sewing unit) at the Brick Institute upon the request of Mr. Edna Acheson (PH A) who heads the educational department. She was introduced to me at the resettlement committee meeting; she is an ardent worker for the interest of relocatees. I was impressed by the kind response given me by my listeners who were so interested in our cause. Many came to me for a personal chat later.

Rev. Horton of the Methodist Church called at the YWCA and gave me some of his busy time. He is anxious to make the evacuees feel more at home in Rochester and asked for suggestions as to what more he could do for them. As so many of the newcomers are young girls, I thought it might be beneficial to sponsor a "big-sister" affair at church—one girl to invite an evacuee as her personal guest.

Good weather favored me on my entire trip. Because Rochester is located so far north, one might hesitate in considering the city for possible resettlement. To the Isseis, I would say that there are many reminders of Old Japan—the scenery, the climate (altho the temperature seldom goes below zero in winter), the abundant foliage because of the rainfall, the lakes. The people are cordial and are willing to go out of their way to help. The town is not too large (325,000), and above all, it is a cultural center. Two of our young men, Mr. Sato, formerly of Oregon, and Mr. Fukushima of Montebello, California, are studying for their PH. degrees in Chemistry. Their wives work at the library of the University of Rochester where the men matriculate. Miss Ruth Watanabé has earned a good name for herself; recently, she was highly recommended to and given the job of dormitory head at the University. A number of young girls are training as cadet nurses in the hospitals hereabouts. Five girls of various professions (one a student at the business college) came up to my room at the "Y" for a general discussion the evening before I left. They all expressed satisfaction in coming to Rochester, but I fear they are not permanent residents simply because their parents continue to remain in a relocation center. Again, I felt the need for the parents to come out and be with the children. With employment opportunities limitless, and outside conditions favorable, it is urgent that we impress upon the parents that the family unit be kept intact.
I left Rochester at 12:45 p.m. for New York City and arrived at 9:30 at night, September 28. My sister met me at the huge Grand Central Station; we rode the subway to her apartment which is located a block from Columbia University. Union Theological Seminary and Barnard College are close by with the famous Riverside Church in the background. My first reaction was: "how huge the city is." And that describes the town in general.

I called at the WRA offices, both the city and area divisions. I enjoyed a lengthy chat with Mr. Eistere of the area office. I talked with Mr. Steidings of the New York City office and discussed mutual problems with him. I found that he is doing a splendid job in helping evacuees become adjusted to their new environment. He asked that I relay back the message that evacuees, upon leaving the Center, be particularly careful about carrying money and jewelry. There have been several cases where cash and personal belongings have been stolen en route to their destination. It is suggested that only sufficient money be carried as is needed on the trip, the rest to be converted into traveler's checks.

Five days were spent in New York City. A great deal of time was spent in the various stores, the names of which are known by practically all women. We dined at quaint eating places—Armenian Shish Kebab (lamb, tomatoes, and green peppers strung on a wire and broiled), Swedish delicacies, French pastries, Chinese food and Italian spaghetti in Greenwich Village. It was at Suyehiro's that I met Mr. and Mrs. Adachi (the former Helen Osaka) both from this Center. At the Village artists' exhibit, I saw Alice Suzuki (ex-Amache WCA secretary) and her sister, Margaret, Tryon Park, at the end of the Riverside Drive bus line, and The Cloister were visited. The latter is built on the same order as the original in Rome; it houses the priceless medieval art donated by Rockefeller, Jr. I attended Sunday church services at the Riverside Church and heard the first sermon of Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick since his return from a summer's trip. Central Park, the museums—all are interesting features of New York City.

I found that many Isseis have settled in the great city. Mr. Yuzawa is happy in his work at a flower shop. Surprisingly, the Isseis make a faster and more satisfactory adjustment than the Nisei. I found that many of our young folks are immature in spite of their years; some are quite lost and need careful guidance. Again—the need for the parents to go out and be with their children, to make a home for them even though they be retired from active life in the field of work.

From New York City, I went directly to Cleveland, Ohio, arriving in the latter town on Wednesday, October 4. Mrs. Ikoma, at whose home I stayed, met me at the station. Mr. and Mrs. Ikoma are formerly of Long Beach, California. He was interned at the start of war, released three months later in Santa Anita. From Jerome, they relocated to Ann Arbor, Michigan and worked at the University until their permanent resettlement in Cleveland in April of this year. They have recently purchased the two-story home in which they now reside. My two days' stay there was like picking up the threads where I left off from my own home prior to evacuation. The happy home life and housekeeping itself made me realize all that is being missed by being in camp. I thoroughly enjoyed living "in a house" again. The home is situated in a lovely residential section of Cleveland; the neighbors are exceedingly hospitable, and knowing that the Ikomas are permanent settlers, they have readily accepted them into the community.
Cleveland, Oct. 1: I was a dinner guest of Mr. and Mrs. Hoshide and the latter’s mother, Mrs. Aiso who, by the way, is an aunt of Major John Aiso of Camp Snelling. The Hoshide both work for the U. S. Map Service. Mr. Iwata, a supervisor in the Map Service, chanced to drop by and stayed for dinner. I talked so enthusiastically about the city of Rochester that Mr. Iwata was seriously considering going there with his family after his present commitments are finished. Mrs. Aiso, an Issei from Heart Mountain, has made a very satisfactory adjustment; she keeps house for her daughter and son-in-law, the latter’s sister and her son. She does the family marketing and is well up on her understanding of red and blue points. They live in a one-bedroom apartment, secured through government housing priority, for which they pay $47.50 a month, unfurnished. Housing is particularly acute in Cleveland. The influx of people to the better paying jobs offered in the city has caused a definite shortage of living quarters. From my conversations, I gathered that there is some discrimination against the Japanese when it comes to housing. The Cleveland Baptist Hostel has a worker helping the Nisei to meet their housing needs, work which should be more extensively done in some of the other cities.

In speaking with a prominent Nisei social and religious worker, I was informed that, in his opinion, Cleveland had enough Japanese resettlers. He considered that, those who were already there needed assistance and encouragement in making an adjustment in the general community, without adding more to the problem. One of the factors hindering the absorption of Issei and Nisei into society is the feeling of impermanence for those who are planning to eventually return to the West Coast or who consider their present relocation to Eastern cities as a means to enhance their wealth. Another factor holding back the adjustment has been the lack of adequate housing which contributes to the evacuees’ feeling of insecurity and their lack of interest in the community. A third factor, I believe, is the absence of parents where children have relocated—there is no family life; consequently, the young folks seem to "wander" not only from job to job, but from city to city. Wherever they go, they carry that temporary feeling with them.

In some of the cities weekly or semi-monthly meetings are carried on for the benefit of the Nisei. Unfortunately only a small percentage respond, others are too self-centered or simply not interested, which accounts for the social, political, and economic ignorance of the average Nisei. Many want to be left alone, by fellow Japanese as well as Caucasians; they expect help in housing and employment but refuse to contribute of themselves. They do not care to improve their thinking, do not cooperate in creative and worthwhile results. Many tend to seek the company of fellow Nisei only; their interests are confined solely within themselves, paying no attention toward achieving higher intellectual levels.

There is a definite need for good leadership in helping to overcome this kind of attitude among our former evacuees. It is necessary to broaden the outlook of the Nisei, to urge him to take up his position as an intelligent member of the community in which he has resettled. Regrettable though it is, it must be understood that various problems have arisen, as a result of relocation itself. A majority of those who have gone out are not skilled in a profession or trade, many are inexperienced; the result is that they must accept jobs in the lower wage brackets, necessitating a lower standard of living. The immature are unbalanced socially, creating another type of problem.
I left Cleveland at midnight, Friday, October 6 for Chicago on the last lap of my trip. As more evacuees have settled in Chicago than in any other city, there are proportionately more problems created. Again, the housing situation is a matter of concern. There is a tendency for the Japanese to congregate in certain districts; discrimination is evident here and there. Because of the shortage of adequate living quarters, too many people tend to bunch up together, as many as four and five in a small apartment.

Since such a large percentage of relocated Nisei in Chicago is in the youth and early-twenty group, there is every indication of a social problem. North Clark Street (near Division) is a regular "hang-out" for the young boys. One evening, at eleven o'clock, we were driven there to see for ourselves what the situation actually is. One pool parlor, heavy with tobacco smoke, was teeming with enthusiastic patrons. Youth was seen making merry on the streets. "That a pity that there is no home life for these boys; what a need for a well-supervised social center and gymnasium for our energetic young people." Some place where they can get together is absolutely needed.

Since so many of the evacuees are not equipped or prepared for the better jobs, many are working as just laborers. Those who are skilled or have the ability are placed, of course, in well paying employment and are earning their just bonuses.

I visited the WRA office and talked at length with Mr. Booth, relocation officer and Miss Prudence Ross of the area office. Every day, I was told, new faces, recently from relocation centers, come into Chicago and to the WRA office. Jobs are limitless, but care must be taken to fit the type of work to the individual seeking employment.

Shameful though it is, it must be admitted that a number of the young boys are members of the "zoot-suit" gang. Recently, a group of them, went to Cleveland to "settle" a quarrel--result: headlines in the papers. It was particularly requested that parents counsel their sons against the adoption of such a brazen style. At the Wisteria House, which serves high-priced Japanese foods, I saw a group of about eight "zoot-suit" boys dining in all their "finery", not mentioning the long hair-cuts.

I spoke with Mrs. Wames, head of personnel at the Associated Distributors, Inc., owners of the Chen Yu nail lacquer and two brands of perfume. They have just recently begun to hire Japanese in their packing and distributing departments. More workers are needed. The girls begin at 55¢ an hour with automatic raises after three months. Some of the boys are earning $1.00 per hour. The firm sponsors a hospitalization plan, furnishes uniforms, and gives 15 minute rest periods in the morning and afternoon, serving coffee at the time.

The drive to Evanston and further on past Fort Sheridan was noteworthy in its autumnal beauty. The trees alongside the highway were clothed in every color. The drive follows the huge Lake Michigan. Northwestern University, Mundelein College for Girls, Loyola College, and the Garrett Biblical Institute were seen. The large Tabernacle House of Worship (Jewish Tabernacle), a one million dollar structure, stands alone in architectural wonder. This is located near Wilmette. The museums and aquarium usually take up some of a visitor's time, and I was no exception.
I consulted with two of the five licensed medical doctors (Nisei) of Chicago. Dr. Tom Watanabe, formerly of Los Angeles, who studied at the University of Chicago, therefore feels very much at home in the city, is not practicing at present, although licensed to do so. He is connected with a laboratory as a Radiologist and does some very interesting research and practice there. His sister is working as a stenographer and command high salaries, being well experienced in their line of work. Dr. Wakatake, one of the two practicing Nisei doctors in the city, gave me some facts concerning the downfall of some of our young relocatees. It is felt that more thorough and careful parental guidance and counseling be given the children before allowing them to fare for themselves on the outside. Also, it would be advisable to follow that up with continued counseling after the evacuee relocates by a well-qualified leader, some one who understands the situation, the evacuees' background in camp, his emotional and social failings. With numerous "fallen" cases coming to our attention, more so should the counseling program be undertaken.

In summary, I believe that the Issei have made a quicker adjustment to their new surroundings; perhaps it is because they do not expect too much, they try to make the best of the situation in which they find themselves. They go their own way, bothering no one and causing little if any trouble. The older Issei, too, likewise have made satisfactory adjustments. The chief problem-makers, the ones with whom we must deal, are the young Nisei. The two years in camp have done nothing to bring up their morale—they have lost in part or whole, some of the factors such as hope, zeal, spirit, confidence right conduct, etc. They have not advanced with the times; therefore, feel rather lost and awed, and must face the outside world with faulty conceptions.

Any program of working with the Nisei is necessarily, and understandably so, a long range task. There is much to be done, needs to be done, and should be done beginning immediately.

The main difficulty in practically all the eastern cities, of good size, is housing. Purchasing a home is almost out of the question as the down payment usually required is quite prohibitive. Therefore, the feeling of impermanence. Another condition so noticeable is the lack of family ties, children separated from parents, husbands from their families who continue to reside in centers. Lonesomeness, concern over parents or families, the continued monotonous grind—all tend to break down the efficiency of the worker, or he may get restless and change from one job to another (the turn-over in jobs is alarmingly high), or give-up entirely and return to the family fold. Family relocation is a suggested solution, for an incentive to work is created here plus the added responsibility. Since so many evacuees are unskilled and not earning as much as the better qualified worker, it should be suggested to them to further themselves by schooling, more practical experience, or to work in a firm where they can learn a trade with post-war possibilities. Those who are still in relocation centers should be urged to learn a trade, if possible, in one of the many departments in the project. Girls should take advantage of the varied courses offered at school which can materialize into good paying jobs on the outside. In order to raise themselves, the evacuees must be able to command salaries in the higher brackets on the outside. They must strive toward ever-advancing goals with aspirations anew.