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The Newell Star Supplement - Extra, "Okamoto Dies from Gunshot Wound Inflicted by Sentry" (5-25-44) [Shoichi James Okamoto]

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EXTRA

The NEWELL STAR ★

Supplement

Newell, California

May 25, 1944

OKAMOTO DIES FROM GUNSHOT WOUND INFLICTED BY SENTRY RETURNING WORKER SHOT AT MAIN GATE

Shoichi James Okamoto, 30, of 3002-A died at the base hospital early this morning as a result of a gunshot wound. He had been shot by a military police sentry at the old main entrance to the project.

Lieutenant Colonel Verne Austin ordered the sentry placed under arrest and appointed a Board of Investigation. These steps were taken by the military who are solely responsible for the investigation of the facts in the case.

The victim of the shooting was employed in the construction section and had been driving a truck. He drove out through this gate to get lumber which was to be delivered to the construction job, and was returning to the center at the time. On the truck with him was one worker, a witness to the shooting, and others were near who have cooperated with the police in giving full statements of the circumstances.

BEST'S STATEMENT

Mr. Best made a statement this morning which was read at all of the mess halls in the center. The statement follows:

"I regret very much that one of the center residents was shot yesterday afternoon by a military police sentry and that he died at the center hospital early this morning. Everything was done by the medical staff at the hospital to save his life and a great many people stood ready to give their blood.

Investigation is being conducted by the military and proper disciplinary action will follow. The WRA was in no way responsible for the shooting, and I want you all to know that we regret that it happened. No further statement can be made at this time pending the investigation by the board, but as soon as facts are available they will be given to the residents in full detail."

At the same time Mr. Best expressed sympathy to the bereaved members of

(Cont'd on next page)

SHOOTING OCCURS AT 2:20 P.M.

(cont'd from front page)

the family and offered to make available to them any facilities of the WRA.

The shooting happened at approximately 2:20 p.m. on Wednesday, according to the official reports at the Internal Security office. As soon as the first report was received an ambulance was ordered to the scene and Mr. Okamoto removed to the center hospital. Every effort was made to save his life, and no one was permitted to question him about the circumstances because of the danger of sapping his strength.

Two blood transfusions were necessary before the operation could be performed. The operation was done by Dr. G. Hashiba, who was assisted by Dr. Jack Sleath, chief medical officer of the WRA. Captain Edwards of the military medical staff was also present as were two other evacuee doctors at the hospital.

BROTHER ASKS UNBIASED INVESTIGATION, JUSTICE; NO UNDUE DISTURBANCE IN CENTER

The victim of the shooting is survived by his grief-stricken mother, Sekiyo, an older brother, Koichi, and two younger brothers and two sisters who were at his bedside at the time of death shortly after midnight at 12:10 a.m. Another brother and sister are still in the Heart Mountain center and a sister is in the Gila center.

The older brother stated that he wanted a complete and unbiased investigation of the circumstances surrounding the shooting and full justice meted, although he hoped that there would be no undue disturbance within the center over the affair.

All staff members wish to extend their deepest sympathy to the bereaved family of Shoichi Okamoto.

--NEWELL STAR