

5

Assembly Centers

On May 16, 1942, my mother, two sisters, niece, nephew, and I left . . . by train. Father joined us later. Brother left earlier by bus. We took whatever we could carry. So much we left behind, but the most valuable thing I lost was my freedom.¹

On March 31, 1942, the evacuation began. Until August 7, 1942, groups left their homes for assembly centers, directed by one of the 108 "Civilian Exclusion Orders."² About 92,000 people were evacuated to the centers,³ where they remained for an average of about 100 days.⁴ Some 70% were citizens of the United States.⁵

Elaborate preparations had preceded their departure. Once a notice of evacuation had been posted, a representative of each family would visit a control center where the family was registered and issued a number, told when and where to report, and what could be taken along.⁶ The numbering process was particularly offensive:

I lost my identity. At that time, I didn't even have a Social Security number, but the WRA gave me an I.D. number. That was my identification. I lost my privacy and dignity.⁷

Henry went to the Control Station to register the family. He came home with twenty tags, all numbered 10710, tags to be attached to each piece of baggage, and one to hang from our coat lapels. From then on, we were known as Family #10710.⁸

Baggage restrictions posed an immediate problem, for many evacuees did not know where they would be going. They could take only

what they could carry,⁹ a directive that required much anguished sorting of a lifetime's possessions.

On departure day, the evacuees, wearing tags and carrying their baggage, gathered in groups of about 500 at an appointed spot. Although some were allowed to take their cars, traveling in convoys to the centers, most made the trip by bus or train. The Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) had made an effort to foresee problems during the journey. Ideally, each group was to travel with at least one doctor and a nurse, as well as medical supplies and food. One of every four seats was to be vacant to hold hand luggage. The buses were to stop as needed, and those who might need medical care would be clustered in one bus with the nurse.¹⁰

Despite such plans, many evacuees experienced the trips differently. In some cases, there was no food on long trips.¹¹ Sometimes train windows were blacked out, aggravating the evacuee's feelings of uncertainty.¹² The sight of armed guards patrolling the trains and buses was not reassuring.¹³ Grace Nakamura recalled her trip:

On May 16, 1942 at 9:30 a.m., we departed . . . for an unknown destination. To this day, I can remember vividly the plight of the elderly, some on stretchers, orphans herded onto the train by caretakers, and especially a young couple with 4 pre-school children. The mother had two frightened toddlers hanging on to her coat. In her arms, she carried two crying babies. The father had diapers and other baby paraphernalia strapped to his back. In his hands he struggled with duffle bag and suitcase. The shades were drawn on the train for our entire trip. Military police patrolled the aisles.¹⁴

At the end of the trip lay the assembly center. Evacuees often recall two images of their arrival: walking to the camp between a cordon of armed guards, and first seeing the barbed wire and searchlights, the menacing symbols of a prison. Leonard Abrams was with a Field Artillery Battalion that guarded Santa Anita:

We were put on full alert one day, issued full belts of live ammunition, and went to Santa Anita Race Track . . . There we formed part of a cordon of troops leading into the grounds; busses kept on arriving and many people walked along . . . many weeping or simply dazed, or bewildered by our formidable ranks.¹⁵

William Kochiyama recalled his entry into Tanforan:

At the entrance . . . stood two lines of troops with rifles and fixed bayonets pointed at the evacuees as they walked between the soldiers to the prison compound. Overwhelmed with bitterness and blind with rage, I screamed every obscenity I knew at the armed guards daring them to shoot me.¹⁶

For many evacuees, arrival at the assembly center brought the first vivid realization of their condition. They were under guard and considered dangerous.

Once inside the gates, some evacuees were searched, fingerprinted, interrogated, and inoculated;¹⁷ then they were assigned to quarters. Red Cross representatives who visited the centers described some evacuees' reactions soon after arrival:

Many families with sons in the United States Army and married daughters living in Japan are said to feel terrific conflict. Many who consider themselves good Americans now feel they have been classed with the Japanese. . . . There is a great financial insecurity. Many families have lost heavily in the sale of property. . . . Savings are dipped into for the purchase of coupon books to be used at the center store, and with the depletion of savings comes a mounting sense of insecurity and anxiety as to what will be done when the money is gone. . . . Doubtless the greatest insecurity is that about post-war conditions. Many wonder if they will ever be accepted in Caucasian communities.¹⁸

HOUSING AND FACILITIES

All sixteen assembly centers were in California, except Puyallup in Washington, Portland in Oregon and Mayer in Arizona. The WCCA had tried, not always successfully, to place people in centers close to their homes.¹⁹ Table 1 (page 138) summarizes basic information about the centers.²⁰

Design and construction of the centers varied; most were located at fairgrounds or racetracks. In Portland's Pacific International Livestock Exposition Pavilion, all of the evacuees could be housed under one roof because the pavilion covered eleven acres. Puyallup had four areas; the first three were originally parking lots, the fourth was the fairground itself.²¹ Existing facilities usually housed everything except living quarters, and the WCCA sometimes added new buildings.²²

The WCCA reported that generally it had constructed living quarters for the evacuees, although in a few places existing facilities were used. The basic community unit was usually a "block," a group of units housing 600 to 800 people. Each block had showers, lavatories and toilets. Where possible each block had its own messhall, though some larger groups were fed at a single place.²³

WCCA policy was to allot a space of 200 square feet per couple.

TABLE 1: Assembly Centers, 1942

Assembly Center	Maximum Population		Dates Occupied	
	Number	Date 1942	From 1942	To 1942
Puyallup	7,390	July 25	April 28	Sept. 12
Portland	3,676	June 6	May 2	Sept. 10
Marysville	2,451	June 2	May 8	June 29
Sacramento	4,739	May 30	May 6	June 26
Tanforan	7,816	July 25	April 28	Oct. 13
Stockton	4,271	May 21	May 10	Oct. 17
Turlock	3,661	June 2	April 30	Aug. 12
Salinas	3,586	June 23	April 27	July 4
Merced	4,508	June 3	May 6	Sept. 15
Pinedale	4,792	June 29	May 7	July 23
Fresno	5,120	Sept. 4	May 6	Oct. 30
Tulare	4,978	Aug. 11	April 20	Sept. 4
Santa Anita	18,719	Aug. 23	March 27	Oct. 27
Pomona	5,434	July 20	May 7	Aug. 24
Mayer	245	May 25	May 7	June 2
Manzanar ¹	9,837		March 21	June 2

¹ Transferred to WRA for use as a relocation camp.

Family groups inside the centers were to be kept together and families would share space with others only if it were unavoidable. To meet these needs, units would be remodeled if necessary, and each was to be furnished with cots, mattresses, blankets and pillows. Each was to have electrical outlets.²⁴ But the speed of evacuation and the shortages of labor and lumber²⁵ meant that living arrangements did not always conform to WCCA policy. At Tanforan, for example, a single dormitory housed 400 bachelors.²⁶

During the Commission's hearings, evacuees described typical living arrangements that were far below the WCCA's Spartan standards:

Pinedale. The hastily built camp consisted of tar paper roofed barracks with gaping cracks that let in insects, dirt from the . . . dust storms . . . no toilet facilities except smelly outhouses, and community bathrooms with overhead pipes with holes punched in to serve as showers. The furniture was camp cots with dirty straw mattresses.²⁷

Manzanar. [The barracks were] nothing but a 20 by 25 foot of barrack with roof, sides of pine wood and covered with thin tar

paper . . . no attic, no insulation. But the July heat separated the pine floor and exposed cracks to a quarter of an inch. Through this a cold wind would blow in or during the heat of the day dusty sand would come in through the cracks. To heat, one pot bellied wood stove in the center of the barracks.²⁸

Puyallup (Camp Harmony). This was temporary housing, and the room in which I was confined was a makeshift barracks from a horse stable. Between the floorboards we saw weeds coming up. The room had only one bed and no other furniture. We were given a sack to fill up with hay from a stack outside the barracks to make our mattresses.²⁹

Portland. The assembly center was the Portland stockyard. It was filthy, smelly, and dirty. There was roughly two thousand people packed in one large building. No beds were provided, so they gave us gunny sacks to fill with straw, that was our bed.³⁰

Santa Anita. We were confined to horse stables. The horse stables were whitewashed. In the hot summers, the legs of the cots were sinking through the asphalt. We were given mattress covers and told to stuff straw in them. The toilet facilities were terrible. They were communal. There were no partitions. Toilet paper was rationed by family members. We had to, to bathe, go to the horse showers. The horses all took showers in there, regardless of sex, but with human beings, they built a partition . . . The women complained that the men were climbing over the top to view the women taking showers. [When the women complained] one of the officials said, are you sure you women are not climbing the walls to look at the men. . . .³¹

It had extra guard towers with a searchlight panoraming the camp, and it was very difficult to sleep because the light kept coming into our window . . . I wasn't in a stable area, . . . [but] everyone who was in a stable area claimed that they were housed in the stall that housed the great Sea Biscuit.³²

Despite these problems, the Red Cross representative who visited the centers at the Army's request concluded, taking into account his own experience in housing large numbers of refugees, that as a whole the evacuees were "comfortably and adequately sheltered:"

Generally, the sites selected were satisfactory with the possible exception of Puyallup, where lack of adequate drainage and sewage disposal facilities created a serious problem. . . . In studying the housing facilities in these centers, it is necessary to keep in mind that the job was without precedent, and that the sites were selected and buildings completed in record-breaking time in the face of such handicaps as material and labor shortages and transportation difficulties.³³

Evacuees immediately began to improve their quarters. One man salvaged two crates that he redesigned into an armchair with a reclining

back. For a hammer he used a rock.³⁴ Scrap lumber piles left over from construction provided some wood, and government carpenters still at work lost building materials regularly.³⁵ Victory gardens were planted beside the barracks, and Tanforan evacuees even built a miniature aquatic park with bridge, promenade and islands.³⁶

One of the most severe discomforts of the assembly centers was the lack of privacy. Overcrowding continued despite WCCA planning. Eight-person families were placed in 20 by 20 foot rooms, six persons in 12 by 20 foot rooms, and four persons in 8 by 20 foot rooms. Peggy Mitchell described seven of her family in one compartment,³⁷ Kazuko Ige told of nine to a room.³⁸ Many smaller families had to share a single room.³⁹ James Goto and his wife lived with three other married couples; they were separated by sheets hung on wires across the room.⁴⁰ Nor did the partitions between apartments provide much privacy, for many did not extend up to the roof, and conversations on the other side were necessarily overheard.⁴¹ Nor were latrines properly partitioned. Elaine Yoneda finally approached the Service Division Director to get toilet partitions and shower curtains and was told that existing arrangements conformed to Army specifications. Six weeks later, after much protest, partitions and curtains were installed.⁴²

The weather often made conditions more oppressive. On hot days, overcrowding and sewage problems made the heat seem unbearable.⁴³ At Pinedale Center, temperatures soared to 110°⁴⁴ and evacuees were given salt tablets.⁴⁵ Puyallup had its own problem:

We fought a daily battle with the carnivorous Puyallup mud. The ground was a vast ocean of mud, and whenever it threatened to dry and cake up, the rains came and softened it into slippery ooze.⁴⁶

FAMILY SEPARATION

Many families arrived at the assembly centers incomplete. In some cases, family members, usually the father, had earlier been taken into custody by the FBI.⁴⁷ Peter Ota, 16, and his 13-year-old sister travelled without either parent. His father had been detained and his mother was in a tuberculosis sanatorium, where he was allowed to visit her only once in four and a half months.⁴⁸ The Kurima family was forced to institutionalize a mentally retarded son who had always been able to live at home.⁴⁹ The Shio family was separated from their father who,

because he had cancer, was not interned although he was directed to move out of the evacuated area.⁵⁰

Another source of family separation was the WCCA policy defining who was "Japanese." Many individuals of mixed parentage had some Japanese ancestors; others were Caucasian but married to someone of Japanese ancestry. Many of these people went to the assembly centers but had a particularly difficult time because they were not fully accepted into the community. Those who were allowed to leave often did so.⁵¹

Some families were separated after they reached the centers. A seventeen-year-old who sneaked away from Santa Anita to go to the movies one night was apprehended. He was sent to a different camp and did not see his family again for three years.⁵²

Family separation probably occurred most often among those who lived in different homes. Grown children were sent to centers different from their parents if they lived in another community. There were, of course, no visiting privileges save for exceptional circumstances.

FOOD, SANITATION, CLOTHING AND MEDICAL CARE

[W]e stood two hours three times a day with pails in our hands like beggars to receive our meals. There was no hot water, no washing or bathing. It took about two months before we lived half way civilized.⁵³

The assembly centers had been organized to feed the evacuees in large messhalls.⁵⁴ At Santa Anita, for example, one evacuee recalls three large messhalls where meals were served in three shifts of 2,000 each.⁵⁵ Where shift feeding was instituted, a system of regulatory badges prevented evacuees from attending the same meal at various messhalls.⁵⁶ Lining up and waiting to eat is a memory shared by many:

We stood in line with a tin cup and plate to be fed. I can still vividly recall my 85-year-old grandmother gravely standing in line with her tin cup and plate.⁵⁷

The community feeding weakened family ties. At first families tried to stay together,⁵⁸ some even obtained food from the messhall and brought it back to their quarters in order to eat together. In time, however, children began to eat with their friends.⁵⁹

All who testified agreed that their food left much to be desired. One remembered his first meal at Tanforan: two slices of discolored

cold cuts, overcooked Swiss chard and a slice of moldy bread.⁶⁰ Another recalls: "breakfast consisted of toast, coffee, occasionally eggs or bacon. Then it was an ice cream scoop of rice, a cold sardine, a weeny, or sauerkraut."⁶¹ A third recollected: "For the first few months our diet . . . consisted of brined liver—salted liver. Huge liver. Brown and bluish in color ..[that].. would bounce if dropped. . . . Then there was rice and for dessert, maybe half a can of peach or a pear, tea and coffee. Mornings were better with one egg, oatmeal, tea or coffee."⁶² In time the kitchens were taken over by evacuees,⁶³ and culinary style improved, but basic problems of quality remained.

The Red Cross reported that, given the inherent limitations of mass feeding, menus "showed no serious shortages in nutritive values,"⁶⁴ although several evacuees testified that food was a problem. Many evacuees testified that there was enough milk only for babies and the elderly, which contradicts the WCCA report that "per capita consumption of milk by the population was higher than before evacuation and that it was also higher than that of the American population as a whole."⁶⁵ At some centers, the problem was aggravated by a prohibition on importing food into the center.⁶⁶

The WCCA had the same food allowance prescribed for the Army—50 cents per person per day. The assembly centers actually spent less than that—an average of 39 cents per person per day.⁶⁷ The outside community pressed the government to cut expenses even more.

Food became controversial at Santa Anita, where a camp staff member was apparently stealing food. A letterwriting campaign began⁶⁸ and, at one point, a confrontation with the guards was narrowly avoided when evacuees tried to halt the car of a Caucasian mess steward whom they believed was purloining food. Following an investigation, the guilty staff member was dismissed.⁶⁹

Primitive sanitation arrangements are vividly remembered. Shower, washroom, toilet and laundry facilities were overcrowded. "We lined up for mail, for checks, for meals, for showers, for washrooms, for laundry tubs, for toilets, for clinic service, for movies. We lined up for everything."⁷⁰ The distance to the lavatories, more than 100 yards in some parts of Puyallup, posed a problem for the elderly and families with small children. Chamber pots became a highly valued commodity.⁷¹ At some centers sewage disposal was a problem as well.⁷² "The plumbing was temporary and the kids played in the shower water that overflowed from the plumbing."⁷³ To minimize health risks, WCCA established a system of block monitors to inspect evacuee quarters⁷⁴

and each barrack was inspected often by the assembly center housing supervisor.⁷⁵

Securing everyday necessities was difficult. Most evacuees had brought their own clothing but a few, either because of poverty or because they had not anticipated the climate, did not own appropriate clothes. In these cases, upon application, the WCCA provided a clothing allowance of between \$25 and \$42.19 a year depending on age and sex.⁷⁶ The centers had canteens, though often there was nothing to buy.⁷⁷ Everything else was ordered from mail order houses.⁷⁸

Perhaps the greatest problem in the assembly centers was inadequate medical facilities and care. Usually the medical problems were not life-threatening, but most brought added fear, pain and inconvenience.⁷⁹ Medical care was under the jurisdiction of the Public Health Service, which recruited evacuee doctors and nurses to staff infirmaries.⁸⁰ An evacuee physician in each center was designated as chief medical officer and dealt directly with the management.⁸¹ Upon arrival, these recruits found minimal equipment and supplies.⁸² At Pinedale, dental chairs were made out of crates and the only instruments were forceps and a few syringes.⁸³ At Fresno, the hospital was a large room with cots; the only supplies were mineral oil, iodine, aspirin, Kaopectate, alcohol and sulfa ointment.⁸⁴ Yoshiye Togasaki, a San Francisco doctor, went early to Manzanar to prepare for the incoming evacuees:

The nurse and I had to set up the medical services and program until additional staff arrived. At this time only one barrack was available for medical "clinic" living quarters. Construction was going on, open trenches, gutters, etc. The usual camp structure of bath facilities and kitchen were centralized but still unroofed. Equipment sent in for medical care was the usual packaged unit for a military emergency hospital. To obtain necessary supplies such as vaccines for children, laboratory materials for tests, special medication for pregnant women, I had to depend on the generous contributions of a few friends until the government could set up its usual channels. Problems of formula preparation, since barracks had no water, no stove, only a single electric light in the center of a room, created much hardship for the mothers who had to care for newborn infants and children.

In three weeks time we were faced with children ill with measles, chickenpox, whooping cough, diarrhea. The only place we had for care were barracks without heat, no stove, no water. In due time the Military Emergency Hospital Unit [equipment] arrived as did medical staff among the evacuees. For me, it was a matter of 14-16 hours per day of struggle and frustration.⁸⁵

Some of the doctors who had not brought their instruments were sent

home to retrieve them⁸⁶ and all relied, to some extent, on donated supplies.⁸⁷ There were shortages of personnel as well. At Fresno, two doctors had to care for 2,500 people.⁸⁸ At Manzanar, high school students were trained as technicians and nurses' aides.⁸⁹

With a few exceptions, medical staff treated the normal range of illnesses and injuries. There were, however, some special challenges. At Fresno an outbreak of food poisoning affected over 200 people. At Puyallup, there was a similar incident.⁹⁰ At Santa Anita, hospital records show that about 75% of the illnesses came from occupants of the horse stalls.⁹¹ More serious illnesses were treated at nearby hospitals outside the camps and the Army reported that it paid for these services. Some evacuees, however, recall paying for themselves.⁹²

LIFE IN THE CENTERS

Because the WCCA had planned only short stays in the assembly centers, they paid little attention to how evacuees would spend their time. As the move to permanent centers was further postponed the WCCA and the evacuees together tried to restore a semblance of normal life.

The educational program got off to a slow start but progressed rapidly at most centers. The Red Cross reported that:

Because removal of Japanese families to the assembly centers occurred near the end of the school term and because it was contemplated that the centers would be only temporary, there was no provision in the original plan for schools or educational work.⁹³

The WCCA appointed a director of education at each center. Rudimentary classrooms were staffed by evacuee teachers, mostly college graduates, a number of whom were certified.⁹⁴ They were paid \$16 a month.⁹⁵ At Manzanar, Frances Kitagawa began a preschool and kindergarten in May with 65 children. Three or four months later, it was reorganized and expanded by the WRA.⁹⁶ At Tanforan, schools opened late⁹⁷ but were well attended; of 7,800 evacuees, 3,650 were students and 100 teachers. Merced had 110 students; Tulare 300.⁹⁸ At Santa Anita, there was no organized education.⁹⁹

The curriculum varied, but all the traditional subjects were taught in elementary and high schools, and adult education offered English, knitting and sewing, American history, music and art. Progress reports

were issued and work was exhibited regularly. Lack of textbooks and supplies was a constant problem. Textbooks came principally from the state and county schools the children had attended; supplies arrived from outside, the gifts of interested groups and individuals.¹⁰⁰

Recreation was organized cooperatively between WCCA and the evacuees. Scout troops, musical groups, and arts and crafts classes were formed. Sports teams and leagues for baseball and basketball began. A calisthenics class at Stockton drew 350. Donations helped remedy equipment shortages.¹⁰¹ Movies were shown regularly at many centers. At Tanforan, the mess card served as an entrance pass; different nights were reserved for different messhall groups.¹⁰² Some centers opened libraries to which both evacuees and outside donors contributed.¹⁰³ Virtually all had some playground area and some had more elaborate facilities; one had a pitch-and-putt golf course.

Holidays were cause for elaborate celebrations. Sachi Kajiwara described her preparation for the Fourth of July at Tanforan:

I worked as a recreation leader in our block for a group of 7-10 year old girls. Perhaps one of the highlights was the yards and yards of paper chains we (my 7-10 year old girls) made from cut up strips of newspaper which we colored red, white, and blue for the big Fourth of July dance aboard the ship (recreation hall) dubbed the S.S.-6.

These paper chains were the decoration that festooned the walls of the Recreation Hall. It was our Independence Day celebration, though we were behind barbed wire, military police all around us, and we could see the big sign of "South San Francisco" on the hill just outside of the Tanforan Assembly Center.¹⁰⁴

Some recreation was more *ad hoc*. At Tanforan, the camp police raided several gambling games.¹⁰⁵ *Goh* and *Shogi*, Japanese games akin to chess, were popular among the Issei, who ran frequent tournaments and matches.¹⁰⁶ Knitting was a great pastime among the women.¹⁰⁷

The evacuees were predominantly Buddhist or Protestant. WCCA's policy allowed evacuees to hold religious services within the centers and to request any necessary assistance from outside religious leaders. The center manager arranged for services and designated facilities. Caucasian religious workers were not allowed to live in the centers and could visit only by invitation.¹⁰⁸ The services themselves were monitored for fear they might be used for propaganda or incitement. The use of Japanese was generally prohibited and written publications had to be cleared.¹⁰⁹ The prohibition on speaking Japanese created particular problems for the Buddhists, who had few English-speaking

priests; their services had to be restructured and service books rewritten.¹¹⁰

Control of publications extended to the mimeographed center newspapers as well. There were fifteen of these, written in English under the "guidance" of WCCA public relations representatives, who confined news items to those of "actual interest" to the evacuees.¹¹¹

At some centers, evacuees began to organize a government. At Tanforan, for example, the evacuees elected a Center Advisory Council. In August, however, the Army ended these efforts with an order dissolving all self-government bodies.¹¹²

Even though no evacuee was required to work, the WCCA had planned that assembly center operations should be carried out principally by the evacuees.¹¹³ There was "the standard round of jobs, from doctor to janitor."¹¹⁴ Evacuees also assisted WCCA administrators. For example, Yayoi Ono was a secretary to the public relations officer; her husband was chief of personnel who oversaw movement to the "permanent" relocation centers.¹¹⁵ Over 27,000 evacuees—more than 30% of them—worked in center administration.¹¹⁶

The appropriate payment for these services was a matter of some difficulty. At first there was no pay. Eventually evacuees were nominally compensated for work actually done, and given subsistence, shelter and a small money allowance. General DeWitt established the following wage schedule: unskilled work, \$8.00 per month; skilled, \$12.00 per month; professional and technical, \$16.00 per month. Subsistence, shelter and hospitalization, medical and dental care were to be furnished without cost.¹¹⁷ These low wages and allowances were a source of continuing dissatisfaction among evacuees.

Two centers experimented with establishing enterprises for the war effort. Manzanar evacuees tried to devise practical methods of rooting guayule rubber cuttings, planting more than 230,000 seedlings. The project was successful in exploring the potential of guayule rubber, but met market resistance. Santa Anita's camouflage net project produced enough to offset the cost of food for the whole camp.¹¹⁸ Limited to American citizens, the project attracted more than 800 evacuees. The camouflage net factory was the site of the only strike in the assembly centers, a sit-down protest over working conditions, including insufficient food.¹¹⁹ At Marysville, in May 1942, a group of evacuees was given leave to thin sugar beets.¹²⁰ This situation was exceptional; from most assembly centers, there was no leave.

SECURITY

Day and night . . . camp police walked their beats within the center. They were on the lookout for contraband and for suspicious actions.¹²¹

Two groups were responsible for security at the centers. Military police patrolled the perimeters and monitored entries and exits. The internal police were responsible for security inside the centers; most were deputized to handle violations of local and state laws. The FBI had jurisdiction over suspected subversive activities and violations of federal laws.¹²²

The Army police guarding the perimeters aroused substantial concern; armed with machine guns, they appeared menacing. In some cases, they propositioned and otherwise harassed female evacuees.¹²³ In general, however, they were rather remote from the life of the centers, entering only at the director's request, but this is not to suggest that they had no effect on the centers. As the Red Cross described it:

The high fences and the presence of the military police definitely signify the loss of freedom and independence. Although there is general group acceptance or rather compliance with evacuation, many individuals reject it.¹²⁴

The internal police caused more hardship. Internal security measures varied among centers, but curfews and rollcalls were common. At Puyallup, curfew was at 10 p.m.¹²⁵ At Tanforan, rollcall was held twice a day, at 6:45 a.m. and 6:45 p.m.¹²⁶

Most centers held inspections as well, designed to search out and seize contraband. The definition of "contraband" changed as time went on. Flashlights and shortwave radios that could be used for signalling were always contraband.¹²⁷ Hot plates and other electrical appliances were usually contraband, although exceptions were sometimes granted.¹²⁸ Alcoholic beverages were forbidden.¹²⁹ "Potentially dangerous" items were also prohibited; in addition to weapons, the "potentially dangerous" category sometimes included knives, scissors, chisels and saws.¹³⁰ At Tulare, inspection sometimes occurred at night.¹³¹ At Tanforan, one was conducted by the Army, which placed each "section" under armed guard while searching.¹³² At Puyallup, evacuees were told to remain in their quarters during the search.¹³³

Santa Anita evacuees vividly recall the "riot" of August 4, 1942. The uproar began with a routine search for contraband, particularly electrical hot plates, which had, in some cases, been authorized. Some

of the searchers became over-zealous and abusive. When the evacuees failed for several hours to reach the chief of internal security, rumors began to spread and crowds formed. The searchers were harassed, although none was injured.¹³⁴ At this point, the military police were called in with tanks and machine guns, ending the "riot."¹³⁵ The "over-zealous" officers were later replaced.

Visits to the centers were tightly controlled. Visitors bringing gifts watched packages being opened; melons, cakes and pies were cut in half to ensure that none contained weapons or contraband.¹³⁶ At some centers, evacuees might talk to visitors only through a wire fence.¹³⁷ Others designated special visiting areas. At Tanforan, a room at the top of the grandstand was reserved for receiving visitors during certain hours.¹³⁸ At Pomona, the arrangement was similar.¹³⁹ At Santa Anita, each family was allowed only one visitor's permit a week, and visits were limited to 30 minutes.¹⁴⁰

Evacuees endured the frustrations and inconveniences of the assembly centers for the most part peacefully and stoically. They believed these centers were temporary and most hoped for better treatment at the next stop on their journey—the relocation center.