



PERSONAL NARRATIVE

**J. Wesley Johnston
Community Activities Supervisor
Minidoka Relocation Center
Hunt, Idaho.**

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**The Bancroft Library
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The organization and the program of the leisure time hours in a center such as was developed in the relocation centers is difficult to analyze in the light of past experiences or when measured by existing programs found in most of our normal communities. The effect of the program on the individuals participating will be determined in the months and year to come rather than while participation was taking place. To a certain extent it may have been much like candy given to a child when he should have had a substantial meal. A leisure time program should be interested in developing the whole individual and its interests should include tomorrow as well as today; its scope should be broad enough to attract the participant to fields beyond his present environment.

As has been reported in the summary of the section a great many things were accomplished within this department that were undoubtedly a contribution to those going back into a metropolitan area. The excellent cooperation received from such organizations as the YMCA, YWCA, Girl Scouts and other national organizations that assumed the responsibility of keeping in touch with the youth, and more important, keeping the youth of the center in touch with other young people in the United States, can not be underestimated.

On the other hand, there were many factors that hindered the development of a full program. First and primary was the physical existence of a "locked" gate with all the psychological effects that accompanied it. The center, though large, grew smaller every day. The feeling of being held in confinement against their wishes made all resentful. It is true that Relocation was possible for most of the evacuees. A closer look into the situation reveals that a large majority of those eligible were dependent upon parents decisions or unable to leave because others dependent upon them. The children in teen age group were the ones who suffered the most in this respect. Born citizens of the United States, with all the freedom that such a birth entitles one, they were barred from all of citizenship privileges and responsibilities.

The second factor that hindered the development of a true community program was attitude within the center. This was not uncommon to many other communities. Isolation is its cause. People develop a pattern of their own. It is accepted by everyone. New ideas are seldom introduced because following a path of least

resistance is the easiest and the safest. Adjustments are made by the individual or he leaves. As one reads the reports covering the three years of operation in this center it is plain to see such a situation developing. In the beginning of community activities the leadership was progressive. There was an earnest desire to develop a community that would keep pace with the outside. The challenge to move outside took most of these people. The older folks took over and a new pattern developed. The Japanese language became the language of both Eissi and Neisi. Forums and discussion groups were abandoned for Japanese parting clubs, craft and dramatics. The attention was directed toward the adults rather than the children. The attitude can be best described by a common statement of most of the youth when referring to an activity as "passing time".

The picture already painted should not be misconstrued as a failure on the part of a community program to function. It developed daily and ended logically. Isolation, and the dependence of each upon the other made the program what it was. Disillusionment, heartache, fear of what the future had in store for them heaped its burden upon the other pressures.

My appearance on the center came two months before the lifting of the West Coast ban. By this time program was breaking down rather than developing. Relocation and preparation for return to homes was the primary interest among the majority of the evacuees. Leadership was at a premium. Those who had contributed to the richness of the program were gone and replacements had to be accepted as the basis of specific skills rather than a broad knowledge or interest in the full program.

At this point I believe a great many difficulties could have been avoided had the program provided attractive jobs for the train youth rather than relocate them to new communities. It was important to the individual that the relocation program be pushed but on the other hand their contribution to the future of the group was lost. Such persons, with the skills of community leadership plus the ability to make people want to look ahead would have encouraged relocation more than management accomplished.

The program was interested in the morale of the evacuees. Did it accomplish this? Measured by participation and good times it did. Friendship made in activities during leisure hours will long be remembered by everyone. Planning for the next event was a real anticipation of the majority. However, morale is not just having a momentary good time nor is it measured in terms of number of friends. It is something bigger. I believe confidence in one's ability to meet what the future has in store is very important. The program fell short in this respect. One of the greatest fears on the part of young people was how they would be able to fit into - cosmopolitan setting. Questions such as regarding dress, table etiquette, manners at dances or parties, were common and seldom did a conversation end without at least one of these questions coming up. Most of these boys and girls were entering a world they left while still in grade school, now ready to find a job. Others having finished schooling shortly before entering the center had never had an opportunity to compete with other workers in the business world.

The organization and administration of the program should have been more clearly defined. At one time the burden rested completely upon the evacuees, later it became the full responsibility of management. At the time of my arrival the community activity section had been abolished pending reorganization. The evacuee staff, having failed to develop a complete program was laid off and the Supervisor transferred to another section. Evidence definitely shows that such a move was necessary at that time but it is a pity that the program was permitted to reach that stage before something was done about it. It is my firm belief that had there been a definite understanding on the part of management and evacuees as to their respective responsibilities such a shake-up would have been unnecessary.

The responsibility for the development and promotion of a community program must always be in the hands of the people it is to serve. The responsibility of management in this case should have been one of guidance and assistance to the community. With management stepping in such as was the case in this instance the community rebelled for two reasons. First, because members of their own group were removed from

leadership and secondly, because they felt that they, rather than management, should have determined the values of the program.

The final result was difficult and embarrassing to me. To create a new program and recruit leadership was unthinkable at the time. There was a definite distrust in anything that I might suggest. Two months elapsed before anyone was put on the staff and it was four months before a staff of six persons was obtained. The policy used was to assume no responsibility for setting up a program for the community but to assist all groups or individuals interested in developing their own programs. Although there was a great deal of suspicion things did develop and before too many months past organizations began calling for assistance and had secured volunteer leadership. This policy was continued to the end and worked. The program in most cases was weak but it was created by the people themselves. Responsibilities rested upon a dozen people rather than upon an individual in the office or upon myself.

Our greatest failure was a recreation program to the children of the center. Plans for playgrounds took into consideration young people and adults. Two small childrens play grounds located at extreme ends of the project would not accomodate more than fifty children at one time. In a community laid out such as ours, at least eight should have been built. Leadership should have been provided for each of these lots adequate enough to provide supervised play at all hours.

The experience of the past twelve months has contributed much to me as an individual and as a supervisor of community recreation. In the past I have worked in cosmopolitan centers that could rely upon contacts with larger communities. Here in an isolated community, forced upon an unwilling population new problems had to be met and in someway the barrier set up by a fence and gate had to be broken down. To what extent the community activities section accomplished this will be known only when measured by the readjustment of the individuals in their new homes.

Signed: J. Wesley Johnston