

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN, EPISODE 5 TRANSCRIPT

ROB BUSCHER: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain: Stories from Heart Mountain Incarceration Camp*, a series about life inside the Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center in northwestern Wyoming during World War II. I'm your host, Rob Buscher. This podcast is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ROB BUSCHER: The fifth episode titled "Commerce in the Camp" will explore how the 10,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated at Heart Mountain developed their own prison economy, with incarcerated-run businesses that helped make life inside camp into something that resembled their past lives on the West Coast.

INTRO THEME

ROB BUSCHER: The average American adult works 2,080 hours every year. Over the lifespan that amounts to nearly a third of our waking lives. Aside from the time spent with family, engaging in community activities, and hobbies, most people define themselves through the time they spend at their jobs. Although there were many changes wrought by the evacuation orders, the sudden mass unemployment of the Japanese American community was especially jarring.

ROB BUSCHER: The work culture in camp helped normalize the environment by establishing routines to fill the long days. While the majority of adults volunteered to work, there was an expectation by the WRA that a number of Heart Mountain's

daily operations would be fulfilled through incarcerated labor. Growing numbers of historians and community activists have begun to criticize this aspect of the wartime incarceration as forced prison labor. Even in 1942 there was criticism over the labor conditions in the temporary assembly centers, where initially incarcerated were not compensated for their work.

ROB BUSCHER: To combat these allegations, camp workers began earning wages on a military payscale that ranged from \$12 for unskilled labor to \$19 a month for doctors and other specialists - far lower than the market rate compensation for these jobs, but kept low to appease the anti-Japanese sentiments.

ROB BUSCHER: Some found jobs that directly correlated to their skill sets from before the war and worked as store operators, farmers, teachers, journalists, barbers, beauticians, and mess hall chefs in camp. Others sought employment outside the camp as local farm hands or domestic workers. Although they were earning far less than what they had prior to the war, most incarcerated found themselves with a modest disposable income. It was only natural that they would find something to spend it on.

ROB BUSCHER: Japanese Americans had become accustomed to a certain standard of living prior to the incarceration, and many sought to use their limited resources to purchase material goods to make their lives behind barbed wire slightly more bearable. But Heart Mountain, like the other nine War Relocation Authority camps, was located in a remote area with few local amenities.

ROB BUSCHER: The camp barely possessed the basic infrastructure to house and feed their incarcerated residents, let alone retail businesses to satisfy their consumer needs. Shopping in nearby Cody or Powell was initially forbidden, with the exception of incarcerated workers who were given day-pass leave from camp to purchase essential medical supplies and other specialty goods.

ROB BUSCHER: As travel restrictions were lifted, camp administration began granting shopping passes more liberally to a set number of incarcerated residents each day. With shopping passes in hand, Japanese Americans contributed as much as \$50,000 a year to the economy of Powell. The Wyoming state and local government also benefited financially from the increased sales tax revenue of the camp residents. In 1943 alone, an estimated \$12,000 in sales tax revenues were paid on retail purchases from day-leave shopping trips.

ROB BUSCHER: Nevertheless, it remained difficult for incarcerated residents to get all they wanted from local merchants, even when they had money to spend. Some merchants in the two towns outright refused to do business with Japanese Americans. Although relations with the Powell community were somewhat better, many stores in Cody openly displayed signs that proclaimed “No Japs Allowed.” Bacon Sakatani remembers a trip to Cody he took with his schoolmates.

BACON SAKATANI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: They allowed us to go shopping at a couple of nearby towns. So we had an advisor to our group and he said, “oh you guys should go outside to know what the outside looked like.” And so one day we got a pass and we got on this bus and went to this town. And we looked around

and boy, at this, well many stores had “No Jap” signs. I believe that’s the first time I saw the word Japs. And it really scared me. So maybe that was about the first instance where I felt I’m a minority, or I’m the enemy.

ROB BUSCHER: Sam Mihara also remembers the shock of seeing these signs on a shopping trip with his parents.

SAM MIHARA INTERVIEW: After a while the government allowed us to, a few at a time to go into the town to Cody. And I don’t recall the exact date, but it was at least 1943, it was at least a year after we got there. And they allowed us to have leave using these approved passes for the day and we were allowed to go into town and do our shopping. But we had to return to camp by the end of the day. So I remember going into downtown on Sheridan Avenue, along the street. By this time my father was almost completely blind, so I was escorting him, describing what's inside each store. The shocker was seeing a sign about every third store, not every store, but about every third store. Saying “No Japs Allowed” or “No Japs.” And I'll never forget that. They didn't want us and - some of the stores did not want us in their stores buying. That's one of my memories of the worst experience, seeing the hatred that existed among some of the people there in Cody.

ROB BUSCHER: Former incarcerated Shig Yabu remembers some of the other merchants who were not overly friendly, but tolerated the Japanese American shoppers as long as they spent money in their stores.

SHIG YABU RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Alberta Cassein who was my 8th grade teacher in camp, she took a group of kids to Cody. And she was so embarrassed to see a sign that says, "No Dogs or Japs Allowed." But, it didn't take long before the people - the business people of Cody or Powell or any other city. Because that little green paper, money, they welcomed that. At first they were afraid of us, they welcomed us with open hands and says, "come on, buy whatever you like." And that's typical of any business.

ROB BUSCHER: Still, supplies were limited in rural Wyoming and often merchants reserved their highest quality goods for the non-Japanese locals. This made it essential that the camp have some retail shops that sold products and services, and also provided an opportunity to entrepreneurially minded incarceratedees who ran these businesses. These included canteens, dry goods stores, shoe stores, a fish market, a rationed goods store, a radio repair shop, dry cleaners, barber shops, and beauty shops - most of which were run by the community enterprises department at Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: This was not done without controversy, as many prisoners viewed the business leaders as collaborators to the federal government who had imprisoned them. Some incarceratedees also felt they were being gouged by the community enterprises, which were charging far higher prices for goods than what they had paid before the war. WRA officials often favored Nisei incarceratedees for leadership positions within community enterprises, which caused resentment among the Issei, who often had far more experience in running businesses before the war. The relative inexperience of many Nisei business operators resulted in

some of the businesses being poorly run at first, which increased tensions between Issei, the enterprises leadership, and camp authorities. In one extreme case, the general manager of the Tule Lake camp community enterprises department was murdered in 1944 by his fellow incarcerated.

ROB BUSCHER: George Ishiyama was a Nisei from Los Angeles who had an economics degree from UCLA. He was one of the first community enterprises officials in Heart Mountain and would later relocate from camp to work for the WRA in New York and the Midwest. Ishiyama helped write a 1946 report for the WRA that detailed the community enterprises.

GEORGE ISHIYAMA VOICE OVER FROM WRA REPORT: In some centers progress was retarded due to complete ignorance of cooperative organization on the part of WRA enterprises advisers who were equipped with only private business experience. The evacuees in such cases were left to shift pretty much for themselves. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the centers were made up of people from various West Coast communities and the typically individualistic business trustees eyed with suspicion the efforts of others than people from their own communities. They did not want to let others in on the management of the business sometimes, undoubtedly, for purely selfish reasons motivated by hope of private gain. Provincial tendencies in general were further aggravated by political factions that were forming in addition to the traditional Issei-Nisei conflict.

ROB BUSCHER: One solution to overcoming the distrust that many incarcerated people felt towards government sponsored enterprises was to establish the stores as cooperatives. Consumer cooperatives are businesses that belong to the people who use them. The central principle of consumer cooperatives is member control and participation. After paying membership dues, patrons receive a dividend of the year-end profits relative to the amount they spend throughout the year. Member/owners also meet periodically to establish policy and elect directors. Directors, in turn, hire managers to administer the cooperative on a day-to-day basis.

ROB BUSCHER: Prior to the incarceration many Issei were familiar with the co-op concept, having previously participated in cooperative farm associations that helped Japanese American growers purchase supplies and market their crops to packer-shippers. The Japanese American packer-shippers in turn sold their goods to fruit-stand operators within the community.

ROB BUSCHER: First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a long-time champion of cooperatives and is thought to have suggested that if the camp stores were co-ops owned by the incarcerated people there would be more participation. Nine of the ten WRA camps established cooperative agreements for their community enterprises stores. Heart Mountain was the sole exception. There, the divide between Issei and Nisei proved too difficult to overcome as they could not agree on how to set up a cooperative.

ROB BUSCHER: One of the teachers at Heart Mountain high school conducted a study on the best way to set up their cooperative. Members of the community council met to examine the study, and elections were scheduled to approve the plans based on the study's recommendations. But things ran aground, as the WRA report on community enterprises detailed.

VOICE OVER FROM WRA STUDY: When it became known in the committee that the cooperative would be required to pay rental on buildings occupied by them and pay salaries of employees, a bitter debate developed of an anti-WRA nature.

ROB BUSCHER: One faction said the government should handle everything for the cooperative. After all, everyone at Heart Mountain was a prisoner. Why should they have to pay rent on buildings they were forced to use?

VOICE OVER FROM WRA STUDY: Proponents of the cooperative were maligned and discredited. Both factions became involved in machinations and bitter personal attacks. As there was practically no Nisei representation on the committee, the Nisei began to lose interest in the cooperative.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the failure to create a cooperative, the stores opened and served incarcerated customers. They soon became a fundamental part of camp life. Bill Shishima remembers his father working for community enterprises and the low pay he received.

BILL SHISHIMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: He worked for Community Enterprise. They, I guess, took charge of the PXs. So, he went around, maybe, he collected the money or something, but he worked in Community Enterprise there. So, he probably got sixteen dollars a month. But the professionals like the doctors and the teachers got nineteen dollars a month, and the pure laborers got twelve dollars a month. Just to let you know what the pay was during, way back in the 1940s, the army private, the lowest rank in the army, got twenty-one dollars a month. So, it gives you an idea of what the camp life was.

ROB BUSCHER: Also included under the umbrella of the community enterprises were various services, such as shoe and radio repair, barbers, and beauty shops. Some services such as dry-cleaning required specific machinery that would have been too costly to procure for the temporary camp population. On Oct. 24, 1942, the *Sentinel* reported that Powell Laundry Company was contracted by community enterprises to handle laundry and dry-cleaning services. The increased demand on their business also necessitated hiring incarcerated workers who were paid full wages for their time.

ROB BUSCHER: The leaders of the community enterprises were thought of as some of the most important people at Heart Mountain. Because of their business successes in camp many would be given the opportunity to resettle in cities outside of camp during the war, often taking jobs affiliated with the WRA. One was George Ishiyama, the Nisei who helped write the WRA's study of community enterprises after the war. Ishiyama was incarcerated at both Topaz and Heart Mountain where he helped establish the enterprises before he was eventually allowed to relocate to New York in 1943.

ROB BUSCHER: As an incarcerated, Ishiyama held an inordinate amount of influence, demonstrated by his ability to contact federal government leaders directly. In 1942, Ishiyama sent a letter to Paul McNutt, the chairman of the War Manpower Commission, urging him to consider incarcerated as workers outside the camps.

GEORGE ISHIYAMA VOICE OVER: I do not know if you are aware of the tremendous manpower that lies dormant within these projects. This terrible waste of human energy, to my way of thinking, especially in the time of war, is as much an act of sabotage as any direct act to 'throw a monkey wrench' into the mechanization set up for the effective prosecution of this war. It is indeed a deplorable situation when industry and agriculture are so sorely in need of efficient labor that more constructive use is not being made of this vast source of human energy.

ROB BUSCHER: McNutt had previously served as governor of Indiana and past Democratic presidential candidate hopeful. Ishiyama's ability to reach out to him directly reflects the additional privileges granted to community enterprises leadership.

ROB BUSCHER: Thomas Sashihara was another community enterprises trustee. Sashihara was a pharmacist in Los Angeles who in 1935 sued the state of California when they attempted to deny his license to practice. Sashihara ran a series of businesses in Los Angeles before he was incarcerated. Soon after the Pearl Harbor bombing, Sashihara was arrested by the FBI and detained at the Justice Department camp in Tuna Canyon, California.

ROB BUSCHER: Normally being held in a Justice Department camp condemned an incarcerated to being a permanent outsider in Heart Mountain. But Sashihara became one of the leaders of the community enterprises, as well as an official at the Heart Mountain Golf Club. He was a Christian, which usually gave prisoners an advantage with the camp authorities. By the time he was released in 1944, Sashihara was considered one of the most well connected people in Heart Mountain. He relocated to Cleveland where he spent the rest of the war years working with the WRA to help evacuees find jobs outside the camps.

ROB BUSCHER: Genichiro Iwasaki and his brothers owned a chain of grocery stores in Los Angeles before the war. Like Sashihara, Iwasaki was arrested by the FBI after Pearl Harbor and sent to Tuna Canyon with other community leaders before he eventually arrived in Heart Mountain. Together Ishiyama, Iwasaki, and Sashihara helped make the Heart Mountain stores successful in providing most of the essential goods needed by the incarcerated. But acquiring some specialty items required outside assistance. Sam Mihara remembers the store's limited selection as a reason why incarcerated would look elsewhere for their shopping.

SAM MIHARA INTERVIEW: There was a small store at the camp. It was located on top of the hill going up on the main road, Road 19. And it was a very small store and I don't recall the type of goods that were sold. My recollection is, though, that it was very limited. People wanted to buy things and it wasn't available. I do remember my mother buying a number of things on the Sears catalog. Which

made the appearance of the camp look interesting because everyone seemed to be wearing the same kind of clothing, so you know where you got it.

ROB BUSCHER: Toshi Nagamori Ito remembered how her father used mail order catalogs to make the family's life at Santa Anita a little bit easier.

TOSHI NAGAMORI ITO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: They had a long trough at Santa Anita, and spigots, and this was all outside. They had hot and cold running water, but there was nothing to catch the water to do your wash. So my father ordered a galvanized tub from Sears Roebuck, and we would put our dirty wash in there. And he also ordered a Red Flyer wagon, and we would put the washboard and the tub on this little wagon and our clothes, and take it down to the washing shed. And we would do our wash on the scrub board, and my father came down with us and he wrung out the towels and the sheets for us. And my mother and I did the rinsing and the washing. Lots of people couldn't afford to buy a galvanized tub, so our galvanized tub and washboard was borrowed quite often.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the location of Heart Mountain was not known to the incarcerated at Santa Anita, Ito guessed they would be sent somewhere cold next.

TOSHI NAGAMORI ITO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I had a brief job of circling clothing in the Sears Roebuck catalog. And I circled thermal underwear. So I told my dad, and he said, "See? We're gonna be sent to a cold place."

ROB BUSCHER: She was right. As summer in the high desert of northwestern Wyoming turned to fall and then winter, the incarcerated from California were shocked by the harshness of the cold weather and the bitter winds that whipped

in from the west. They lacked proper clothing to make the conditions even remotely tolerable. Although the government did eventually provide military surplus clothing, the coats they supplied were ill-fitting and made of coarse fabric that was uncomfortable to wear.

ROB BUSCHER: Mail-order catalogs from Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and J.C. Penney offered better alternatives to those who could afford them. Suzie Sakai remembered ordering woolen pea coats for her and her family.

SUZIE SAKAI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: These barracks were not insulated, of course, and every time the snow fell, the next morning when you woke up, there were ridges of snow within your unit. The window sills would be piled with snow, and areas around the window and around the doors would all be icy. The problem there in the wintertime was then that you had to run out for the bathroom and go out to the dining room three times. It was pretty rugged living that first winter. I remember they issued us these navy pea coats to wear. At least our family didn't come prepared for that kind of winter. So the busy place was where you could find the Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs, and people were busy ordering especially warm coats and underwear for winter wear because if you came from Southern California, you certainly weren't prepared for the kind of weather that we were facing.

ROB BUSCHER: George Yoshinaga and his family came from San Jose, which rarely had cold weather.

GEORGE YOSHINAGA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: But then that's right after that the weather was hot and then it got cold and we weren't really equipped and if it

wasn't for the mail order catalogs like Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck, we would have froze to death 'cause we were able to order through the mail.

ROB BUSCHER: As Kazuo Shiroyama recalled, the incarcerated had to be a boon for the catalog companies.

KAZUO SHIROYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Everybody started ordering winter clothing from the mail order catalogs, Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward and Spiegel. The mail order companies did tremendous business from all of us in all the ten camps.

ROB BUSCHER: Bill Shishima remembered getting sports equipment from the catalogs.

BILL SHISHIMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We were able to purchase our snow skates from either Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward, or JC Penney's. Those were the catalog companies on those days. So we had to order through the mail, so we looked forward to getting it. After we got it, oh, it was really fun in the snow. Cold, but it's fun.

ROB BUSCHER: Because the barracks had no indoor plumbing, incarcerated had to brave the cold and walk to the nearest latrine. As a result, many of the prisoners found a new way to relieve themselves. Sam Mihara, who's now a board member of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, remembers his mother had a chamber pot for their barrack that she ordered from a catalog.

SAM MIHARA INTERVIEW: Yeah, well, I remember using a device. It was essential because of the weather outside during the winter, you couldn't take that awful

cold and the blowing snow to go potty. And that was a great relief to be able to do that.

ROB BUSCHER: Unfortunately, not everyone had the resources to order goods from the outside, as John Nakada remembers.

JOHN NAKADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We were able to buy things, through Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward but most of the people didn't have enough money to buy things so we couldn't buy too much.

ROB BUSCHER: Many of the elder Issei incarcerated were physically unable to work, but even the prisoners who were gainfully employed at Heart Mountain had trouble making ends meet sometimes. Camp jobs provided limited wages through government checks that were sometimes paid months late. This necessitated the creation of a social welfare department to help incarcerated purchase the basic necessities that were not provided to them by the WRA.

ROB BUSCHER: Dr. Yoosun Park is a professor at Smith College whose research entails social work in the incarceration camps. Dr. Park shares her perspective on the welfare department's cash assistance program.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: People had to work because from the beginning, the WRA's reigning philosophy was that everyone had to work and earn a living. Even though the pay rate was ridiculous. But nobody got paid for months. But even if you didn't get paid for months, if you were on the books for having a job and being owed money then you weren't eligible for getting welfare aid. You know, they're absolutely impoverished. They have zero money left. They've been

working. They haven't been paid and will not get paid for another three months, let's say. They should be eligible for cash aid, which also comes much later, but they're declared ineligible. Also for things like clothing allowance because technically they're working and they have a salary coming in. Anything that was given was for the most part done begrudgingly. The aid was never enough.

ROB BUSCHER: In addition to the retail businesses operated by community enterprises at Heart Mountain, some enterprising incarcerated used their entrepreneurial skills to establish their own service businesses in camp. Before community enterprises began operating barber and beauty shops in March 1943, barbers and beauticians were left to ply their trade among those willing to pay for their services. The announcement of the beauty shop opening at block 25-28 was such a to-do that the following bulletin was included as a special addition to the Heart Mountain Sentinel published March 11.

VOICE OVER SENTINEL BULLETIN: The beauty shop at 25-28 is now open for business daily except Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Four licensed operators; Toshiko Terry Hayashi, Shizuko Bernice Hinaga, Grace Sakamoto and Kimiko Tani, are ready to receive appointments at the shop which is under the management of Hisako Ohashi. Girls are asked to bring their own towels and combs temporarily.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the added amenities, some incarcerated chose to save money by cutting their own hair, as Sam Mihara remembers.

SAM MIHARA INTERVIEW: I vaguely remember the barbershop. Although I also recall my mother cutting my hair because money wasn't readily available. Whatever money we were able to obtain we had to spend it on clothing. But yea I

recall my mother cutting my hair on occasion. Nothing really professional looking, but I have no choice.

ROB BUSCHER: Not everyone chose to work within the community enterprises shops, which is evident from Project Director Guy Robertson's letter in the March 30 issue of the Sentinel.

GUY ROBERTSON VOICE OVER: Private practice by barbers and beauty operators within the center should now be discontinued. WRA regulations clearly prohibit the conduct of any private enterprises within the center and the laws of Wyoming provide that only those regularly employed under WRA regulations may practice without first obtaining a state license and meeting all other requirements set up by the center. Residents of the center are, therefore, requested to patronize the shops that have been provided for them at considerable cost and to discourage private practice by not supporting it and by reporting any violations to this office.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the WRA regulation prohibiting private enterprise, many continued to operate their own small businesses. Some incarcerated who specialized in food production prior to the war continued manufacturing their goods in camp, like the Kito family's mochi business or the Heart Mountain tofu factory that Frank Emi worked at, which was discussed in the previous episode.

ROB BUSCHER: Brian Kito is the grandson of Fugetsu-do founder Seiichi Kito, and third generation owner of the family mochi business. Although the business records from their time at Heart Mountain have been lost, Brian guesses that his family ran their mochi operation on a barter and trade basis.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: My assumption would be that it was probably free. But, I mean you know the Japanese customs right? Nothing goes for free, right? There's always a payback culturally. So I kind of think that's how it was set up. Because they didn't have money when they came out of camp.

ROB BUSCHER: In fact, when the Kito family left Heart Mountain they slept at the Koyasan Buddhist Temple in Little Tokyo to save money until they had enough to buy back their mochi making equipment. Brian offers another explanation for why the mochi business in camp was unlikely to have been a cash operation.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: I'm sure they worked together as a community. You know, grandpa was making them mochi and he needed help to get enough sugar. They would bring part of their sugar rationing. Of course those families were first in line I would imagine. They're giving up part of your sugar ration, I'm sure grandpa took care of them to make sure they got mochi in return or manju in return. You know, I think that's kind of how it worked, and maybe some families had certain things that they bartered. I'm sure in camp that's how most of it worked in the early days, before they could actually get stuff brought in.

ROB BUSCHER: Others like George Oyama explored new opportunities in camp. George Oyama earned a degree in chemical engineering from the University of California at Berkeley and then moved to Los Angeles, where he and a friend started a successful company called Modern Food Products. Soon after arriving at Heart Mountain, Oyama planned to open a pottery factory that would supply the camp and outside businesses with dishes and other kiln-fired products while also providing employment opportunities to his fellow incarcerated.

ROB BUSCHER: The WRA took interest in Oyama's project, and even promoted it through a propaganda photograph that was widely circulated showing his son at work in the factory. The caption for the photograph reads.

VOICE OVER WRA PHOTO CAPTION: In the ceramics plant at the Heart Mountain Center, a careful analysis of clay from the surrounding hills is being made to determine the best material for use in the Ceramics Plant, where dishes for this and other relocation centers will be made. Chemical analysis of the clay is being made by Clem George Oyama. Clem was formerly a chemist in his father's cosmetics plant in Los Angeles, California.

ROB BUSCHER: Oyama had aspirations to employ 100 or more, but plans for the factory fizzled after the relocation program started in earnest. Instead, Oyama teamed with art instructor Daniel Rhodes to turn the program into one that allowed incarcerated to use the existing kilns for their own projects. Pottery produced using Oyama's kilns are renowned as some of the finest ceramic art made during the incarceration.

ROB BUSCHER: Minnie Negoro was a pottery artist who worked under Oyama and Rhodes' program. She would later teach at multiple universities on the East Coast until she was hired to launch the University of Connecticut's ceramics program. Oyama's daughter, Pat, was also a frequent user of the pottery kilns. After the war, she would study under Rhodes at Alfred University in New York and develop her own pottery career in northern California, where she is still active today.

ROB BUSCHER: The Oyama family eventually moved to Denver in May 1943 where Oyama's sister, the Nisei writer Mary Oyama Mittwer, had moved just a few months earlier. In Denver the entrepreneurial spirit that Oyama brought to the pottery program continued after the war, where he teamed up with a friend from Sacramento to open a grocery store and later developed a patented process for growing sprouts from mung beans.

ROB BUSCHER: In episode 3 of this series we explored how some incarceratedees took jobs harvesting crops outside of camp that were necessary for the war effort. While doing their bit for the country may have been a factor to some, most who sought outside employment did so for financial reasons. The \$12 to \$19 a month that incarceratedees received for working camp jobs was simply not enough to support a family.

ROB BUSCHER: Some Heart Mountain incarceratedees left to work in hotels in rural Michigan, downtown Chicago, and the East Coast. Others worked on farms in Nebraska and New Jersey, or war industry factories in Utah. Work outside camp was appealing for several reasons. George Hanada, who traveled to Montana to participate in the sugar beet harvest remembers.

GEORGE HANADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, I wanted to get away, and also to make some money. They would hire people in camp, I think the low pay was twelve dollars a month, twelve dollars a month! And the next category was fourteen or something like that. That was for semi-skilled, and then the top was eighteen dollars, I think, a month, and that was for professionals like doctors and

dentists and administrative workers and stuff. I mean, that was, that's for a month, now.

ROB BUSCHER: At times, the Japanese American workers faced discrimination from local residents or their employers. Similar to the issues they faced in Cody, some businesses refused to serve them. Hanada remembers a few incidents.

GEORGE HANADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, the guy came down the road, and stopped while we were topping sugar beets, and looked at us, and then pointed his gun and shot at us, but he missed us. Like, like maybe a couple of feet away. I guess it was a double-barrel shotgun, and the second shot, he hit us. And then, of course, he had to reload, so we ran after him, and he jumped in his truck and took off down the road a ways. And then he stopped and loaded his gun again, but I guess he was kind of nervous because he was having a little problem loading it. So we ran after him again and he kind of had some second thoughts about it, I guess, and he took off.

GEORGE HANADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The guy that hired us was a Russian guy, and he was real helpful. I mean, he really did a lot for us, you know. Worked for him for about three weeks, I don't think it was even a month that we were there. That was a hard-working family, too. And even when we came back, when we left there, coming back to camp, we had to make a transfer on the bus. We went to Billings, Montana, from where we were, and we did some shopping there and had a real good meal. And we went to a place called Deaver, that was the changeoff where you change buses to get off, to go to Heart Mountain. And we had a problem with a bunch of young rabble-rousers, you know.

GEORGE HANADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, in this particular case, the biggest guy, he was going to pick a fight with one of the guys, and I was the smallest guy so he wanted to fight me, you know. And I said, "Fine, I'll take you on." And he kind of changed his mind, because I think like I was kind of too willing to. That was the only two bad experiences we had working, working out of camp. I know some guys had some real tough times, you know.

GEORGE HANADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Usually when you went out to work for somebody, they usually treated you pretty good. They didn't give you a hard time or anything. Because we went out to Denver a few times and worked in the hotels or produce market, or even made munitions boxes. And everyone we worked for treated us fairly well you know.

ROB BUSCHER: Mits Koshiyama also left camp to harvest sugar beets. He remembered encountering immigrants from another country that was at war with the United States – Germany – but unlike the Japanese Americans, German immigrants and their American-born descendants remained free to run their businesses. That didn't make sense to him.

MIT'S KOSHIYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: "Well, first we went to Billings, Montana, and did sugar beets. You know the funny thing there, Montana and Wyoming had a lot of German farmers. A lot of German families running the cities. We didn't know that until we got there, and they told me that they were, their parents were immigrants from Germany. And we said, "Gee, these people are free people, and Germany's at war with America, too." And I said, "Isn't that strange? You know, doesn't make sense."

MIT'S KOSHIYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: But the German farmers were good to us. One of the brothers was young enough to be in the army, but he wasn't in the army because he was farming - he deferred. But his sugar beet crop was the poorest crop you ever saw in your life. His sugar beets were like carrots. But we didn't make any money. Work all day and we didn't probably make a dollar. Worked hard, but the sugar beets were so poor. But he says, "You know something? I might have the poorest sugar beets in Montana, but they got the most sugar contents." He said, "That's what counts," he says. We said, "Well, what about us? We're not making any money." I says, "I'd rather have big sugar beets with the less sugar content so we could make a few dollars." Well, you don't argue with those kind of farmers you know. But the older brother, he was a pretty good guy. And he took good care of us.

MIT'S KOSHIYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So later we went to Idaho, and we went to work for another German farmer. I remember his name. His name was Hardin, H-a-r-d-i-n. And he was pretty good. He was very happy to see us come and do his potatoes and sugar beets. We worked hard there. While we were working there, we heard about this Chinese restaurant in Idaho - I think it was in Twin Falls. So we said, "Oh, boy. Let's go have dinner over there at Twin Falls Chinese restaurant when the crops are through." So we worked hard for about a month, and we went over there, and we sat down at this restaurant, and the funniest thing, this waitress kept walking back and forth, serving everybody else. Totally ignored us. So we said, "Gee, something funny. What's going on? Where was this Chinese owner, anyway?" I guess he was hiding in the kitchen someplace.

MITI KOSHIYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Pretty soon the waitress after the longest time, seemed like hours, she came to our place and said, "Sorry, but you know something? Our boss said he doesn't serve Japs." So two of the guys I was with, oh they got mad. Said, "Hey, you know what? Let's tear this place apart." Well, I said, the other guys who were older said, "No. We'll be the losers. Let's not do anything rash." So we left. But it wasn't only the white people, white Americans that discriminated against us. It was Asians, too. So I know it's hard to believe, but that's exactly what happened. So we finished the crop there. We went back to Heart Mountain. We were on a seasonal leave. You know we just had a certain amount of time to harvest the crop. Soon as the crop was over, we were supposed to go back to camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Koshiyama didn't leave camp for work the following year. He was among the 62 Heart Mountain internees who were arrested, tried, and convicted for resisting the draft.

ROB BUSCHER: The appetite for Japanese American workers would continue even after it became known that the camp was going to close and most internees would head back to the West Coast. A notice in the May 22, 1945 edition of the *Sentinel* demonstrated the demand.

VOICE OVER FROM SENTINEL ARTICLE: The Great Western Sugar company has offers in the Lovell and Billings areas for sugar beets. This is an opportunity for family relocation. Rates will be \$13 per acre for blocking and thinning, \$4 for hoeing and \$3 for weeding. Families interested should contact the relocation division.

ROB BUSCHER: Dillon Myer and the WRA leadership had a larger plan for the incarcerated beyond sending them on temporary jobs. In his own words, Myer intended to “scatter” the Japanese American community across the country in order to “solve a serious racial problem by having them . . . bunched up in three or four states.”

ROB BUSCHER: Although the WRA was successful in dispersing the community elsewhere across the country, few Japanese Americans permanently resettled in Wyoming. The tense relationship between the incarcerated population and the local community had much to do with their inability to do so. Although many locals bought into the anti-Japanese propaganda narrative, the financial benefits of Heart Mountain were impossible to deny. Nearly all of the \$5 million spent on Heart Mountain’s construction remained in the local economy. Between the combined spending of the WRA and incarcerated themselves, the state of Wyoming gained approximately \$500,000 a year in the years it was operated.

ROB BUSCHER: As we explored earlier in this episode, the neighboring towns of Cody and Powell, had complicated relationships with Heart Mountain residents. Cody was a tourist town and the eastern gateway to Yellowstone National Park. It was the least hospitable of the two towns, where signs on local businesses often displayed their hostility to Japanese Americans, barring them from entry.

ROB BUSCHER: Powell was primarily agricultural, and there had even been a few Japanese American farming families who settled the area before the war. Despite alarmist editorials in the Powell Tribune at the announcement of the camp, the town was more welcoming by comparison.

ROB BUSCHER: Some of the first workers to leave Heart Mountain found jobs in both towns. One incarcerated went to work for a local print shop in early 1943, while another worked at a furniture company. The following day, six more prisoners went to work at a Cody bakery or as domestics in local homes. While many businesses in the local communities needed workers, many of the city residents objected to the presence of incarcerated in their town. In May 1943, the councils of Cody and Powell passed a resolution that said.

VOICE OVER COUNCIL RESOLUTION: After careful consideration of the problems arising by virtue of the Japanese in the relocation center at Heart Mountain visiting in the communities of Powell and Cody, and with the principal idea in mind of avoiding any trouble or difficulty in the future, it was unanimously agreed by all members of the town council in each of these communities that the visiting of the Japanese in the towns of Powell and Cody be held to an absolute minimum; that no visitor's passes be issued except when absolutely necessary and that they be accompanied by proper or authorized escorts; that no permanent or so-called indefinite leaves be extended to the Japanese for visiting or working in the communities of Powell or Cody; that this request in no way interfere with or discourage those Japanese on temporary leaves who are engaged in gainful

employment essential to the war effort, and particularly, necessary labor on ranches or farms.

ROB BUSCHER: Eventually, objections to the presence of the Japanese Americans dissipated, and throughout the rest of the war, notices appeared in the Sentinel seeking more workers for local homes and businesses. Hostility only went so far when there was a war to be won and jobs to be filled.

ROB BUSCHER: Although Japanese Americans were given means of economic production in camp, the wartime incarceration was entirely detrimental to the community's long term financial prospects. Wages from both the camp jobs and work outside of Heart Mountain were far lower than what most would have earned in their established careers had they not been imprisoned during the war years.

ROB BUSCHER: The vast majority of Issei business owners and farmers lost everything they worked to build in the decades they resided in the United States. Many of the lucky few who did own their properties were coerced into selling their land and real estate for a fraction of the actual value. If the incarcerated who previously owned farm lands that now span wealthy areas like San Jose and Orange County had waited to sell until the tech boom, they could have easily retired as millionaires.

ROB BUSCHER: For the Nisei incarcerated who were recent college graduates or were otherwise early in their careers, the incarceration stunted their progress for

years to come. By taking jobs with lower starting salaries coming out of camp, this lowered the total expected earnings throughout the span of their careers. While many within the Japanese American community did ultimately succeed in achieving an upper middle class lifestyle in the postwar era, their incarceration experience left another scar in the form of trauma-induced hoarding, which is common among incarceration survivors.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the Japanese phrase “*mottai nai*” meaning waste nothing had long been associated with Issei frugality, some Nisei took this practice to an unhealthy level by refusing to discard even the most useless objects in case it might be used again in the future. For a population who lost all of their personal belongings during the forced removal, bringing only what they could carry, the traumatic memory of loss fueled this unhealthy behavior.

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