

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN, EPISODE 8 TRANSCRIPT

ROB BUSCHER: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain: Stories from Heart Mountain Incarceration Camp*, a podcast 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 eighth episode titled "Crime and Punishment" will explore how the 10,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated at Heart Mountain established their own system of self-governance, complete with elected officials, a legal system, and police force to maintain the law and order within the prison camp.

INTRO THEME

ROB BUSCHER: At Heart Mountain and the other 9 Japanese American incarceration camps, the government sought to convey a thin veneer of civilian control over a decidedly military led project. The War Relocation Authority and their employees who administered the camps were working as a civilian agency, yet it was the military police who stood guard at sentry towers and conducted armed patrols through camp.

ROB BUSCHER: To combat allegations that the camps were mere prisons established on the basis of racial prejudice and run by white Americans, the WRA

encouraged Japanese Americans to establish their own self governing bodies in each camp, called community councils.

ROB BUSCHER: But the ultimate authority lay with the white camp administrators, who despite their best intentions in providing for their Japanese American wards, were complicit in unjustly imprisoning them.

ROB BUSCHER: Incarcerates who worked with the camp administration helped to humanize the system for their Japanese American neighbors. The Nisei employed by the WRA acted as go-betweens for prisoners to deal with the camp administration, putting a friendly community face on the various camp projects and interpreting for the Issei who lacked English proficiency to communicate directly to the white administrators.

ROB BUSCHER: But they also faced resentment or suspicion from their fellow prisoners, who sometimes labeled them collaborators or spies. Tensions grew and in several extreme cases, even led to violence. As with any community, there were also isolated incidents involving crimes of passion.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the shared experience of living behind barbed wire largely brought people together, internal divisions within the Japanese American community necessitated a formal system of conflict resolution, a purpose which the community council also fulfilled.

ROB BUSCHER: As we explored in episode 6 of this series, Issei and Nisei alike had significant organizing experiences prior to the war. While the Issei organizations tended to favor seniority in their leadership, Nisei organizers democratically elected their leaders. In both cases, their organizations relied heavily on consensus-based decision making to function.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the WRA held the final say on all matters at Heart Mountain, they did attempt to foster a system of self-governance among the incarcerated. Heart Mountain residents were asked to form a campwide community council made up of individual block councils that offered a margin of control over low level decisions related to daily camp life. Practicing the most basic of democratic traditions, incarcerated elected leaders from each block to oversee block operations and represent their interests in discussions related to overall camp matters.

ROB BUSCHER: Although many of the Issei leaders of established Japanese immigrant organizations were being held at Justice Department camps, the Issei who were at Heart Mountain felt they were the natural choice to lead the community because of their seniority. Many Nisei felt they would make better leaders, given their ease in communicating to camp administrators with whom they shared English as their native language. Nisei were also generally thought to be more tolerant of the government's aims, and initially the WRA sought to limit block council participation to this younger generation.

ROB BUSCHER: This would have effectively robbed the Issei of even more of their standing, to be told what to do by their children's generation. These internal divisions between the first and second generations of Japanese Americans threatened to cripple the councils before they even started. Eventually the WRA relented and allowed the Issei to run in block captain elections.

ROB BUSCHER: Kunisaku Mineta, an Issei leader from San Jose, won a seat on his block council. He was part of the council's committee on housing and clothing. Mineta's youngest son, Norman who followed in his father's political footsteps, would go on to become the first Asian American mayor of a major US city in San Jose, before serving as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and a cabinet member to both a Democratic and Republican President.

ROB BUSCHER: Thomas Sashihara was another member of that first council and served as one of the secretaries. He was also on the board of the community enterprises organization.

ROB BUSCHER: Seiichiro Nagamori had sold insurance in Los Angeles before the war. He was placed on the welfare and health committee. His daughter, Toshi, would later marry the head of the camp's farming operation, James Ito. Like the younger Mineta, the value of public service was also impressed upon their son Lance, who would go on to become a Los Angeles County superior court judge.

ROB BUSCHER: Satoru Tsuneishi was on the health and education committee. Although he had four sons in the military, Tsuneishi supported the anti-draft Fair Play Committee.

ROB BUSCHER: Participation in the community council often inspired suspicion by some incarcerated, as Ike Hatchimonji told oral historian Martha Nakagawa about his father, Kumezo.

IKE HATCHIMONJI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Certain people step forward in each block and they want to represent the block. And it's a popularity contest, but all of the blocks had representatives, and they formed the camp council, and they worked directly with the administration in the camp, and the WRA, you might say. Because it was very important for the community to be able to express their grievances and so forth and iron out any problems and so he did that and he enjoyed it. He worked together with the WRA social scientist that sort of kept track of the level of... what shall we say... feelings of the residents of the camp. So he worked together with him very closely and they got along very well.

MARTHA NAKAGAWA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Now it would seem to me that if you worked too closely with the WRA people, you might be considered an inu [dog].

IKE HATCHIMONJI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Yeah, I think from some points of view, that would be the case. But I think if you could resolve problems and express the feelings of the people toward the higher headquarters of WRA, it's a good thing.

ROB BUSCHER: Kumezo Hatchimonji served as block representative for Block 27 to the camp council. He also worked informally as an advisor to Asael Hansen, the WRA Community Analyst who lived and worked in the camp to gather information about the incarcerated. In his study Hanson made the following observations on the way that incarcerated organized themselves in camp.

ASAEL HANSEN VOICE OVER: The whole situation was new, not only the mess hall system and the other communal institutions of the blocks, but also the dependence on an as yet. unknown administration, and the uncertainty of objectives to work toward in the relocation centers. What might a block be? No one knew the pattern in advance and inevitably there were differences of opinion as the more dominant personalities sought to influence the block life.

ASAEL HANSEN VOICE OVER: The adjustment took place in different ways in different blocks. Here it went smoothly as people leaned on a few like-minded men and women. There personalities clashed, or divergent views resulted in persistent cleavages that were reflected in mess halls, block councils, and the whole spirit of a block. Nevertheless, out of the initial disorganization and uncertainty, a way of life steadily took form.

ASAEL HANSEN VOICE OVER: It was a distinctive way of life molded out of the crisis of evacuation and the peculiar artificiality of the relocation center communities, as well as out of deep-rooted traditions reaching back to Japan and up through the 30 or 40 years of experience in the United States. What took place as people adjusted to one another in the blocks ultimately determined the nature

of the communities which WRA staff and evacuees, in their different ways, had talked of building as the centers opened.

ROB BUSCHER: In the midst of the mostly accommodationist community council, was a member with a deeper secret. Joe Koide was a Communist. An Issei who immigrated to the United States in 1919, Koide was surrounded by mystery, including his real name. Some records show that it was originally Nobumichi Ukai. Whatever his real name was, Koide found work in Los Angeles, where he worked with labor unions and wrote for the Japanese American leftist newspaper DOHO that was based out of Little Tokyo.

ROB BUSCHER: After the evacuation orders went into effect, the bachelor Koide was sent to Santa Anita assembly center, where he quickly gained a following among the prisoners, particularly his fellow Issei. There he worked with young Setsuko Matsunaga, who would later become a leading scholar of the Japanese American incarceration. Matsunaga remembered Koide's passion for politics.

SETSUKO MATSUNAGA VOICE OVER: Fujii and Joe Koide, we got to be quite good friends with them and they, so we decided that we would give... you know people volunteered to teach classes. So Masamori and I and Joe and Bob decided that we would have - we also gave these euphemistic kind of names for our activities, so we called them citizenship education classes. So Joe and Bob used to give their classes, and they would get all these issei coming to listen to them, they would discuss current events, and of course they would, their perspective was very anti-militaristic, so, at any rate, nobody stopped them but they had a huge

following. But they were, they actually many years later, we found, we learned and he told us, is that they had been members of the Communist Party, see.

ROB BUSCHER: During his time at Heart Mountain, Koide helped arrange the elections for the community council and became one of its most popular elected officials. He would leave Heart Mountain in 1943 for work in Chicago before serving a stint with the wartime Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner to the Central Intelligence Agency.

ROB BUSCHER: The community council was responsible for organizing many things including mess hall food service, refuse collection, public health, community enterprises, and education. The council was also responsible for operating Heart Mountain's prisoner-led police force and legal system, in addition to a social service department in which incarcerated played a leading role.

ROB BUSCHER: From a cynical perspective, staffing the Heart Mountain police force with inmates could be viewed as an attempt by the government to further divide their Japanese American prisoner population - preying on the sentiments of incarcerated seeking to prove their loyalty through any means necessary, like informing on their neighbors.

ROB BUSCHER: While this may have been the case to an extent, particularly during the conflict surrounding the Fair Play Committee's organized draft resistance, an incarcerated-staffed police force was also a practical necessity for the military police who were already stretched too thin in a time of war.

ROB BUSCHER: To furnish the WRA camps with perimeter security, the Army established a dedicated unit called the Military Police Escort Guard or MPEG, created for the express purpose of guarding prisoners of war or “enemy aliens.”

ROB BUSCHER: On September 17, 1942 Western Defense Command, the military entity responsible for overseeing the forced removal and mass incarceration issued a briefing titled Circular 19, that specified the responsibilities of MPEG companies assigned to guard the Japanese Americans.

CIRCULAR 19 VOICE OVER: They shall control the traffic on and the passage of all persons at arteries leading into the area. They shall allow no person to pass the center gates without proper authority. They will maintain periodic day and night motor patrols around the boundaries of the center. They shall apprehend and arrest evacuees who do leave without authority, using such force as is necessary to make the arrest. They shall not be called upon for service in apprehending evacuees who have affected a departure unobserved. They shall be available, upon call by the project director or by the project police, in case of emergencies such as fire or riot. They shall inspect parcels and packages consigned to evacuees at those centers.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite their mandate, MPEG was critically understaffed at Heart Mountain and most of the other WRA camps. The 331st MPEG Company assigned to guard Heart Mountain was only equipped to handle a prisoner detail of 1,000 -

considerably less than the nearly 11,000 incarceratedees housed there at the camp's peak population.

ROB BUSCHER: This has led some to speculate that the guard detachment was meant largely to appease the hardliners like Wyoming Governor Nels Smith and other local residents who saw the Japanese Americans as a threat. Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation Advisory Council member Jim Murphy suggests:

JIM MURPHY VOICE OVER: The military didn't fear residents escaping into sparsely settled northwestern Wyoming—they feared the knowledge that these reductions in Heart Mountain's security operations would become publicly known, igniting a racially inspired political backlash from the Western Governors and/or members of Congress representing the Western states. From the beginning of the site's life, the military police, the guard towers and the fence served a political purpose, not a security one.

ROB BUSCHER: Nevertheless, MPs did have the occasional run-in with Heart Mountain residents.

ROB BUSCHER: On December 2, 1942, a group of 32 children were spotted sledding down a hill west of the site, just outside of the recently completed perimeter fence. The military police responded by arresting these "escapees" for being outside of the fence without passes. They were released to the custody of their bewildered parents the same day. Donald Yamamoto remembers that day.

DONALD YAMAMOTO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: There was a lot of scrap lumber around and we made sleds. There was no hills right in the camp area, so one time there was a place not far from our block where we went, and it wasn't, the hill was not covered completely with snow. But with what snow there was and the gravel and the dirt, we were able to go down the hill. And after a couple of runs, my sled caught some rocks underneath where I had the steel runners, and while we were there, these military police vehicles came by and they, we had to get on the things, leave our sleds there, and they took us away somewhere, I don't know where. But eventually we were told that we were out of bounds. And I thought, "Out of bounds? Where's the out of bounds?"

DONALD YAMAMOTO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Anyway, the next day when we were released... we were released that same day, but the next day I walked along by the road by our barrack which was on the northern edge. There was a dirt road, and I looked on the other side of the dirt road and there were little stakes with piece of red cloth on it, and I guess we weren't supposed to pass that. But then we left our sleds there, and we wanted them back, so we kind of walked through another block, and then all of a sudden we looked around and we went running out there, ran down the hill, grabbed our sleds, and we came back with our sleds again.

ROB BUSCHER: The MPs were also mobilized during the hospital workers strike of June 1943 to maintain order and protect the white administrators, although the strike ended without violence.

ROB BUSCHER: Another practical factor leading to the creation of an incarcerated police force was the fact that prisoners were forbidden from speaking to the military police. One of the first General Information Bulletins issued on September 4, 1942 listed the following directive in its section stating General Regulations.

ROBERT GRIFFIN VOICE OVER: Do not speak to the military police guards except in case of necessity or on official business.

ROB BUSCHER: Effective policing requires open communication between law enforcement and the communities they are sworn to protect. The military police were ostensibly there to protect the American public from their Japanese American prisoners, not the Japanese Americans in camp themselves, thus necessitating a different solution to the internal police practices.

ROB BUSCHER: There were few Japanese Americans on police forces on the West Coast prior to the war, and the Heart Mountain volunteers had little or no police experience. That included Ryozo "Rosie" Matsui, who was instated as the first Heart Mountain police chief in August 1942.

ROB BUSCHER: An Issei immigrant, Matsui arrived in the United States in 1916. He then worked as a household domestic for the chief cinematographer at MGM studios. Despite his lack of law enforcement background, Matsui became the assistant police chief during his time at the Pomona Assembly Center. His brief stint of service at Pomona made Matsui the community council's top choice to lead the Heart Mountain police force.

ROB BUSCHER: In order for the police rookies to become effective at their jobs, they would require professional training. This came in the form of a police school, taught by internal security officers from other WRA camps, which all incoming police recruits were given the opportunity to participate in. There the rookies learned the basics of police work, since most had no previous experience in law enforcement. The police school professionalized the fledgling Heart Mountain squad and enabled some of its officers to pursue a career in law enforcement after the war.

ROB BUSCHER: Although he was technically in charge of policing activities at Heart Mountain, Chief Matsui reported to Robert Griffin, the camp's director of internal security. They immediately butted heads.

ROB BUSCHER: A military man, Griffin was a stickler for rules, and made no exceptions for the Japanese Americans forced from the West Coast because of their alleged danger to national security.

ROB BUSCHER: Amid the current national discourse surrounding police reform, community policing has become a popular topic. While unlikely that this concept was discussed contemporarily in the 1940s Japanese American context, it can be applied to better understand the different approaches to policing between Matsui and Griffin.

ROB BUSCHER: Community Policing is a law enforcement philosophy that allows officers to continuously operate in the same area in order to create a stronger

bond with the citizens living and working in that area. This allows public safety officers to engage with local residents and prevent crime from happening instead of responding to incidents after they occur.

ROB BUSCHER: By implementing an effective community policing strategy, residents have a more favorable view of their local police department, improving trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve while also better understanding the needs of citizens and their expectations of the police.

ROB BUSCHER: Some proponents of community policing might extend that definition to include law enforcement members who come from the community they are responsible for policing, which in theory allows them to build upon existing relationships to achieve their goals. A member of the community they are policing might be more effective in implementing strategies to prevent crime, versus an outsider who is inclined to punish crimes after they happen.

ROB BUSCHER: For Matsui and his fellow incarcerated police officers, they preferred the former, often turning a blind eye to some of the lesser offenses. This became a sticking point between Griffin and Matsui regarding the regulations about drinking alcohol and gambling, both of which were forbidden at Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: Griffin thought Matsui lacked the nerve to enforce these regulations, which the prisoners routinely violated. In October 1942 Griffin fired Matsui, citing,

ROBERT GRIFFIN VOICE OVER: A failure to cooperate on a case under investigation.

ROB BUSCHER: ...as reason for termination. In October 1942, the Heart Mountain Sentinel reported:

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: R.O. Griffin, internal security, will devote his full time to the police department due to the resignation of “Rosie” Matsui, police chief. Since the arrival of Miss Virgil Payne to lead the social welfare group and the organization of the fire department under capable leaders, Griffin will be able to spend all his time as chief of the police department.

ROB BUSCHER: This move caused a rebellion among the Japanese American force, who staged a mass resignation in protest of Matsui’s dismissal. The resulting turmoil directly affected the highest-ranking member of the Heart Mountain staff.

ROB BUSCHER: Camp Director C.E. Rachford was ready to retire, but could not leave with the police force in such disarray. Rachford fired Griffin and reinstated Chief Matsui. With Griffin out, Rachford established a clearer set of rules for the Heart Mountain police force to adhere to, set forth in the following directive,

C.E. RACHFORD VOICE OVER: **i.** We maintain law-abiding citizens and will support reasonable regulations. **ii.** Policemen will take all necessary means to maintain law and order at all times and in all places. **iii.** Policemen are fully authorized to

arrest individuals who commit any act contrary to the best interest of the general public.

iv. Persons caught in the commission of crime can be arrested immediately and incarcerated in either the county jail or the military police barracks. **v.** The Police Department will hereafter be in the charge of Mr. Phillip W. Barber of the Division of Community Services. He will have full authority to organize the Police Department. **vi.** Barber will submit at the earliest opportunity to the Project Director a complete report on all suspensions and his recommendations for final action. **vii.** In case of suspensions, the suspended officer will have the right to present evidence in his behalf before final decision is reached by the Project Director. **viii.** The authority granted to Barber as head of the Police Department may be delegated by him to such officers and subordinates as he, in his judgment, may determine to be necessary. **ix.** Crimes within the meaning of the above rules include theft, damage to property, drunkenness, assault and battery, illegal possession of weapons or contraband, general disturbance of the peace, the incitement to mob violence. **x.** In order that all members of the Police force may have full opportunity to present their ideas for the betterment of the department, they will be privileged to present such recommendations in writing to Barber, and when approved by him & Project Director, will have full force and effect. Those that are disapproved will have written reasons for such disapproval.

ROB BUSCHER: The Heart Mountain police department served in the same capacity as any other force around the country, charged with protecting residents and their property, and otherwise preventing crime. The responsibility to

prosecute criminal activities was entrusted to a separate entity that functioned like a court of law.

ROB BUSCHER: The War Relocation Authority established the following guidelines for prosecution:

WRA GUIDELINES VOICE OVER: Misdemeanors and other similar offenses are ordinarily handled by the Project Director or by a judicial commission made up of evacuee residents. The maximum penalty for such offenses is imprisonment or suspension of work and compensation privileges for a period of three months. Major criminal cases are turned over to the outside courts having appropriate jurisdiction.

ROB BUSCHER: The Heart Mountain Judicial Commission was established in September 1942. Seven commissioners and two alternates were selected by the block chairmen, and approved by the residents of their respective blocks before they could be confirmed by the camp director. Recommendations for judgement were given to the camp director, who held the final say on sentencing. He would also act as a court of appeals, reviewing verdicts if defendants or prosecutors were dissatisfied with the commission's ruling.

ROB BUSCHER: Two of the commission's first cases are described in the October 24, 1942 issue of the Sentinel.

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: The first center court case, Heart Mountain versus Kenny Kanroku Takeda, went on trial Oct 12. Takeda pleaded not guilty to a charge of assault against George Kumagai, a steward, on Sept 6. A written statement signed by Kumagai stating that he did not wish to prosecute this case was presented by Susumu Umemoto, deputy prosecutor, together with a motion that the case be dismissed because of lack of evidence and witnesses. The commission dismissed the case in accordance with the motion of the prosecution.

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: The second court case against William Ryohei Seiki, was dismissed Oct 19 after a 3-hour closed session. Seiki was charged with assault against Seiji Shimizu on Sept 9. He pleaded not guilty and asked for dismissal. The commission returned a verdict of dismissal on the condition that Seiki be under the care of the social welfare department and obey all regulations, rules and requests made by that department. The social department assumed custody of Seiki.

ROB BUSCHER: While Chief Matsui largely turned a blind eye to vice crime, he did lead one raid on a suspected gambling den at Heart Mountain, in which police arrested seven gamblers in a barracks apartment. The police confiscated \$300, an amount worth \$4,500 today.

ROB BUSCHER: Two of the gamblers fled the scene and were later apprehended. One was arrested in a nearby mess hall and the other was captured in his apartment the next morning. Together, all nine of the gamblers were sent to the Cody jail to await trial.

ROB BUSCHER: Another vice crime that Chief Matsui pursued was the arrest of two mess hall workers caught stealing sugar rations, kitchen utensils, and raisins to make “home brew.” Unlike the gamblers, these men were tried by the Judicial Commission and sentences were suspended.

ROB BUSCHER: In addition to crime prevention, the Heart Mountain Police Department worked closely with the fire department to make the camp a safer place for incarceratedees to live.

ROB BUSCHER: Each apartment within the barracks was equipped with a coal-burning potbelly stove. The potbelly stoves posed a considerable risk of fire damage to the wooden barracks. Residents of each apartment had to make sure the ashes from the stoves were thoroughly extinguished before dumping them. They sometimes failed to do so, causing fires in the combustible barracks, particularly in the early days of camp as the incarceratedees adjusted to coal-burning stoves, which few among them had used prior to the incarceration.

ROB BUSCHER: One of the Heart Mountain firemen, John Hayakawa, remembered a couple of fires that his company got called in to deal with.

JOHN HAYAKAWA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We had two of 'em. One was in what they used to call a recreation hall, in other words, it's a multipurpose building. And the report came quite late, so the inside was all full of flame and fire was coming out of the window. We put it out. The only thing is we had to put new

outside and inside. The woodwork was still good. Maybe a few places where it was hot had to be replaced, but the building was steady.

JOHN HAYAKAWA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: And the other one that hit, the desk sergeant -- says, "Hayakawa-san, there's a fire in the military police officers' barracks." So away we went, and the Caucasian fire protection officer was already there, and he says, "Tell your fellows to make a deluge gun," which is a two source of supply onto a fitting, and then it's fitted onto a, what they call a hard suction. It's a ten foot solid tube, and on the other end there's a two and a half inch nozzle. "Once the water comes out," he said, "tell 'em to hit the floor. Nevermind the fire. Hit the floor." So from both sides, just waterfall cascades. Pretty soon water started running out of the door. And I guess as things went along the fire protection officer says, "Okay, now tell your men to use," what they call a mystery nozzle. In other words, we're still flooding the floor, but there's a hundred fifty gallon reservoir in the truck. He said, "Use that to put the flames out."

JOHN HAYAKAWA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So we put the flames out, and then next thing - this is twenty degrees below zero - next thing we have to do is disconnect all the hoses, roll it up and take it in, have to wash it. Wash it and dry it. So some of the off-duty guys and they all ran to help roll up the hose. Next morning he got all the officers together and we rode in one truck - not a fire truck, auxiliary truck - and you know what? It was so hot, the rifles bent, some of 'em. And underneath the officers' bunk, live ammo, boxes and boxes of live ammo.

JOHN HAYAKAWA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: And I thought, oh man, we could've really loused it up if we weren't trained right. But boy, those guys worked like robots. I said, "Hey guys, assemble a deluge gun." "What's that, John?" I said, "I told ya." "Oh yeah, yeah." Boy, that, they got it going right, like right now. Dang, I was so... man, if that box of ammo took off...

ROB BUSCHER: Although Hayakawa and his men were able to put out their fires, he remembered another company who wasn't so lucky.

John Hayakawa from Densho: Another company hit a fire in the mess hall, and I don't know what happened, but they thought it was out so they went back to the firehouse, and by golly, they got another call, the same mess hall was on fire. Well, they put that out and the next morning the fire protection officer called all of us and he says, "See here, fellows, this is where the fire started." And somebody put a cigarette butt and the butt, hot, full length, and it just kept crawling, crawling, and it then went up this celotex. One cigarette.

ROB BUSCHER: Incidents like these caused the police to warn incarceratedees that they would be punished for repeatedly violating the fire prevention rules.

ROB BUSCHER: Heart Mountain police force also saw to some of the more mundane tasks related to maintaining order in camp. One example is the lost and found department that was located in the police barracks. A WRA bulletin issued during the first weeks at Heart Mountain set forth the following guidelines.

WRA BULLETIN VOICE OVER: All lost and found items are to be turned in to the police station and a list of the articles will be printed in the Sentinel supplement and be posted on a bulletin board at the police station. Lost and found articles will be held for a period of 30 days during which time proper notification will be given to the residents. At the expiration of this time, unclaimed articles will be returned to the finder and receipt given to the police department for the article.

ROB BUSCHER: Articles turned into the police lost and found department varied from valuable possessions like gold watches and government checks to more ordinary objects such as gloves, pins, and scarves. The following excerpt from an article in the September 19, 1942 issue of the Sentinel, demonstrates the effectiveness of the lost and found program.

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: The Police department wishes to join with the person who lost the large sum of money early this week in expressing their gratitude for the person who found and returned the money. The fact that there are people who are so honest is sincerely appreciated by both the Police department and by those to whom lost valuables were returned.

ROB BUSCHER: Compared to some of the other WRA camps where incarcerated had been shot by MPs for getting too close to the perimeter fence, Heart Mountain was largely peaceful, so much so that it was nicknamed “the happy camp” by some in that era. That said, there were still a few violent crimes that exceeded misdemeanor charges and were therefore tried in local Wyoming courts.

ROB BUSCHER: On New Year's Day 1943, police were called to respond to the attack by 67-year-old Gyotoku Tokita on his roommate, 55-year-old Taro Suenaga. The *Sentinel* reported:

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: Tokita will be tried in the court in Cody...The 67-year-old is now in the custody of Sheriff Blackburn in Cody and is accompanied by Joe Tanaka, warden, acting as interpreter.

ROB BUSCHER: The *Sentinel* reported that he could face a maximum penalty of up to a year in prison and \$1,000 fine. Suenaga recovered, and Tokita pled guilty in the case. It took more than two years before Tokita was sentenced in March 1945 to six months in jail by a Park County judge.

ROB BUSCHER: The police responded to another violent attack later in 1943, this time between two women who lived in adjacent apartments in block 29. 42-year-old Tonoye Matsumoto lived in apartment 29-9-F. On June 1, 1943, she attacked her next-door neighbor, 51-year-old Katsuru Ige with a knife, slashing her head, wrist and below the ears. Luckily the wounds weren't life threatening, and Ige recovered.

ROB BUSCHER: The Heart Mountain Judicial Commission recommended that camp director Guy Robertson ask the Park County courts to conduct an insanity hearing for Matsumoto. No further record exists in the *Sentinel* about the

outcome of this case, but Matsumoto and her family were relocated to Tule Lake the next year.

ROB BUSCHER: Sometimes the incarcerated disagreed with the relative leniency shown by the judicial commission, as in the case of Rocky Nakahama and James Nagahama who were charged with assault and battery of a Heart Mountain police officer. Their two month jail sentence was suspended by the commission on the condition that they leave camp immediately for a work opportunity in Illinois.

ROB BUSCHER: In the May 1, 1943 edition of the Sentinel, editor Bill Hosokawa writes,

BILL HOSOKAWA VOICE OVER: While on the subject of stinks, there is one emanating from the center's judicial commission. Last week the commission meted out its first jail sentence to a pair of youths found guilty to a charge of assault and battery. One youth was sentenced to two months in Jail, the other to one month. On Monday this week the commission in an ex parte hearing, meaning one side only, suspended the sentence on the condition that the defendants leave the center for outside employment. They were given a WRA grant and sent on their way.

BILL HOSOKAWA VOICE OVER: We have nothing against the youths. If they can be resettled, that is another step forward in WRA progress, and it serves no good purpose to keep them locked up in jail for a relatively minor offense if it is possible for them to hold a job on the outside. But surely the commission's action

did nothing to gain the community's respect for law and order. Our good friend the Denver Post might headline the story: "Slug Cop and Speed Exit from WRA Camp."

ROB BUSCHER: Another form of violent crime that took place within the WRA camps were that of a sexual nature.

ROB BUSCHER: Before arriving at Heart Mountain, several incidents of groping and other unwanted touching took place at Santa Anita assembly center, where there were rumors spoken in hushed tones about certain men to keep away from.

ROB BUSCHER: James Sakoda, a Nisei fieldworker for the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study wrote in his diary about the issue.

JAMES SAKODA VOICE OVER: George brought home the news that Bobby Mimaki said that girls are refusing to dance at the centers because the boys are acting *too rowdy*. It's a very interesting development, and I wonder how they're going to settle the matter.

ROB BUSCHER: At the Pomona Assembly Center, a white woman named Hazel Roberts described the following scene when visiting her Japanese American neighbors to deliver a care package.

HAZEL ROBERTS VOICE OVER: Sometimes, it was kind of difficult, you know. I hate to say this, but the American soldiers were not very nice to those girls... One

afternoon, I went there and thought, well, I just don't think I can go back again. Because there sat the mother, the family and all. And here was this American soldier pawing over this girl. And her mother sat there, and I think she would just like to have gotten up and snatched him bald or whatever. But she just sat there. She thought he was a soldier. And whether he would have slapped her down or what, I don't know... It was hard for me to take when I went up there and saw those soldiers... I had all the privacy of a goldfish.

ROB BUSCHER: Although there were no documented cases of sexual assault at Heart Mountain, some crimes of this nature may not have been reported. Given the stigma for individuals who were victims of sexual assault in that era, and even today, crimes like these go largely underreported.

ROB BUSCHER: There is however, record of an attempted rape that was documented in a letter from Jerry Housel, Heart Mountain's attorney to WRA Acting Solicitor Lewis Singler in April 1943.

JERRY HOUSEL VOICE OVER: At a meeting of the Preliminary Hearing Board last week Rosie Matsui (Police Chief) presented facts indicating a possible attempted rape by a young fellow in his 20s of a little girl - a five year old. The evidence indicated that the boy is affected mentally. Both Rosie and Virgil Payne (Public Welfare) had made preliminary investigations with the parties concerned and it was determined at the Board meeting that some action would probably have to be taken on behalf of the boy, as other residents of the block were fearful of their daughters' safety. We therefore requested the father of the boy to appear before the Board yesterday to see whether he could assume closer supervision of his

son, and if he refused or was unable to do that, to determine if the boy could be committed to an institution.

ROB BUSCHER: Dr. Yoosun Park is a professor at Smith College and author of a book called *Facilitating Injustice: The Complicity of Social Workers in the Forced Removal and Incarceration of Japanese Americans*.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: There's no mental health services. There were absolutely no psychiatrists in any of the camps, so he would not have been able to get any serious treatment. There were medical social workers at the hospitals and doctors, but not one of them had any psychiatric help. So once in a while there was a trained psychiatric social worker, but not usually. They were just sequestered for the most part as treatment, but then sequestering them was a huge problem because as you know housing shortages was a problem at all of the camps.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: And the other thing what they could do is really cart them off to state insane asylums, which is probably what happened to this kid. But then that also got really interesting because state insane asylums didn't want to pay for anybody who got sent from the camps because they didn't have residency in the state. So technically they weren't eligible to be housed in state insane asylums. So then what they would do is deport them back to California, which is, you know, irony upon irony, right.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: If you had money you could send them to a private institution but by the fact of their incarceration, you know, nobody had any money. So then you couldn't do that either. So no choices were left. So mental health services were a serious problem.

ROB BUSCHER: No additional documentation related to this case could be found, but it suggests that there could have been other incidents that went unreported. It is also possible that other such incidents may have been referred instead to the social welfare department.

ROB BUSCHER: In addition to the police force and judicial commission, the camp's social welfare department played a major role in maintaining order within the camp. Dr. Park offers the following commentary on the role of the social welfare department at Heart Mountain.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: I think the work that social workers did in the camps was super problematic. When the camps opened there were no social workers. It wasn't a planned affair to actually have social work departments. What became social welfare departments, eventually got established in all 10 camps. They went through various iterations of names because it wasn't planned, and it wasn't funded, right, to start with. So it was sort of an afterthought.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: There was a shortage of social workers all over the country. It was impossible to get trained social workers to come and work there. Part of it is that it's the worst real estate in the country, right, who wants to go

work in these places? And you either were racist against the Japanese and didn't want to work, or some people hopefully didn't want to actually get involved in something they thought was injustice.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: So then most of the workforce in the welfare departments ended up being young Nisei. From the trained social workers perspective, the evacuee workers were problematic because they were not trained and they were not professional. They were too close to their clients.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: They feel like the social work department, we're not working for the benefit of the people that they were serving. And this is actually I think absolutely correct that the overarching attitude was that this was welfare. Whereas from the Nisei workers perspectives this wasn't welfare, this was compensation. The only reason they needed these services and aid in the first place was because the government had impoverished them by locking them up. So this was well within their rights to actually get, but that's not how the social workers who ran the program saw what they were doing, for the most part.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the inherently problematic nature of social work in camp, evidence suggests that Virgil Payne, Director of Heart Mountain's social welfare department, was a well liked individual who worked with a staff of mostly Japanese Americans to make sure the incarcerated had the support they needed. Although she was educated as a sociologist, Payne's career took her into government.

ROB BUSCHER: Throughout the 1930s, she worked for virtually every federal agency created under President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, including the Federal Transient Program, Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Works Progress Administration.

ROB BUSCHER: When the Heart Mountain camp was created in 1942, Payne was already living in Cheyenne Wyoming, and because of her past work in the New Deal programs, was uniquely qualified to serve the Japanese American community.

ROB BUSCHER: As Social Welfare Director, Payne was one of the few women on the senior staff of the War Relocation Authority. Known for her "democratic and somewhat Bohemian ways," Payne won the incarcerated's respect through her compassion for their plight and her fearlessness in standing up to other members of the administration when they did not seem to have the incarcerated's best interest at heart. A 1942 report from the YWCA called Payne an "exceptionally fine person interested in the whole problem."

ROB BUSCHER: One of Payne's first major accomplishments at Heart Mountain was building a Custodial Care Hostel where incarcerated who had family members in the hospital for long periods could stay nearby during their hospitalizations. Payne had no problem criticizing her fellow administrators, as she wrote to the WRA headquarters complaining that the hostel was delayed because the money was spent to "provide fancy apartments for administrative homes."

ROB BUSCHER: So great was Payne's influence that it led to conspiracy theories among those who opposed whatever services were provided to incarcerated. Earl Best, a disgruntled ex-employee who was fired from his Heart Mountain warehouse job for incompetence went as far as naming her in his testimony to the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, in which he claimed, "she took orders from the Japs."

ROB BUSCHER: Despite her detractors, Payne continued to achieve results with the incarcerated that other WRA colleagues could not.

ROB BUSCHER: Another issue that Payne took interest in was the resettlement, noting that when young men left camp for new jobs, they often left their wives and children behind. Although this made the most sense for families trying to save money, the distance proved ruinous for some. Payne noted in one report,

VIRGIL PAYNE VOICE OVER: Some women have developed *strong* friendships with other men while their husbands are away.

ROB BUSCHER: Of particular concern to Payne was a man at Heart Mountain who had a pregnant girlfriend and three other women he was seeing in camp, plus another woman at Camp Poston in Arizona. To avoid such situations, Payne urged the government to relocate families together.

ROB BUSCHER: While Payne and other social workers in the Japanese American camps worked hard to help the incarcerated, some contemporary scholars are

critical of the role their departments played in the government's efforts to control their wards.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: So Virgil Payne was noted as somebody who wanted to live on site. So I think she definitely was much more benevolent and, you know, I use that word really deliberately because there's no way that she didn't have her own blind spots. They're all people at their time with very racist ideals.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: And overall even among the best social workers, there was this deeply seated idea that to be Japanese was not to be American. And the best thing that you could do for Japanese Americans was to assimilate them, right. Because the explicit goal of relocation - resettlement was to scatter people widely and so that there could be no reformulation of Japantowns and there's all these notices saying not more than five people, Nisei, should get together and you certainly should not speak Japanese, right.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: So even the best of them had this notion that you know, benevolently thinking that this was good for them. That, this way you get to get under the radar and people won't attack you, but you have to actually keep quiet and not be noticed. And we'll get you settled into these neighborhoods, you know, before anyone notices. But I think there is this deep seated belief that you had to bleed the Japanese-ness out of people in order for them to be successfully integrated into society.

YOOSUN PARK INTERVIEW: And so I don't have any evidence for this specifically because there's not that much that I found on her, but there was not a single

person who didn't actually fall under that kind of benevolent umbrella. And then, you know, the non-benevolent ones were the explicitly racist ones right?

ROB BUSCHER: It is difficult to know with certainty the extent of Payne's views on the matter of assimilation. Despite the institutional bias that served as a guiding principle for the social welfare departments in camp, Payne's record of service suggests that she did make a positive impact in the lives of incarcerated at Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: One of Payne's most enduring acts during her tenure at Heart Mountain was the discovery of an abandoned baby found during the winter of 1943. With no clues to who the parents were, the social welfare department decided to find a new home for the baby girl, who became known in the Sentinel as "Baby Virgie."

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: A chubby pink 8-pound baby girl, born February 12, sleeps contentedly in her crib, totally unaware that she needs foster parents who will adopt and provide a home for her. Prospective foster parents are asked to see Virgil Payne, social welfare director, at 24-26. "Come early," advises Miss Payne, "and you might stand a chance with our prize package."

ROB BUSCHER: The search to find a new home for Baby Virgie dragged on for months. One prospective adoptive family dropped out when it turned out they were going to have a child of their own. Other potential matches fizzled for undisclosed reasons. The Sentinel continued to highlight the baby's plight.

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: Childless Nisei couples who have relocated are being urged to consider the adoption of the bright, healthy girl. Virgil Payne, social welfare director, for whom the child has been named, said that pictures would be sent to anyone interested in adopting the baby.

ROB BUSCHER: Finally in 1944, almost a year after her birth, Baby Virgie had found a home. The Sentinel reported the happy news.

SENTINEL VOICE OVER: Little Virgie has a home. After nearly a year of patient waiting at the community hospital during which time she became the pet of nurses and visitors alike, Heart Mountain's tiny orphan has been adopted, the social welfare section announced this week. Several months ago, 'Little Virgie' was 'almost' adopted but her place was usurped when her foster parents-to-be learned that they were to have a child of their own. Names of the baby's parents and their address were withheld by the social welfare section at the request of the benefactors.

ROB BUSCHER: Later in 1944, Payne would also leave Heart Mountain. She became the assistant supervisor of the Great Lakes WRA office. Where she helped hundreds of families who resettled in the Midwest.

ROB BUSCHER: Among the many problematic issues related to the wartime incarceration, the topics we explored in this episode demonstrate the government's attempts at exerting social control over the prisoner population at

Heart Mountain. The modicum of choice given to block council leaders allowed incarcerated to feel some sense of agency amidst circumstances in which they were powerless to control, perhaps mitigating issues of civil unrest like those that occurred at several of the other camps.

ROB BUSCHER: Although an incarcerated led police force was preferable to white military police, in some ways self-policing by the Japanese Americans contributed towards the climate of fear and distrust of potential government spies among their fellow incarcerated. Additional social conditioning wrought by the various programs administered under the social welfare department also encouraged incarcerated to actively assimilate into white American culture as a survival mechanism after the war.

ROB BUSCHER: It is through these seemingly benign programs and services, that the extent of the government's plan to permanently mitigate the Japanese American economic and cultural threat comes fully into view.

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