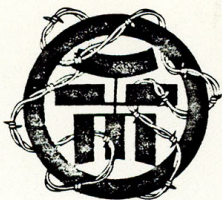


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National Council for Japanese American Redress

3713 S. George Mason Dr., #310-W
Falls Church, VA 22041

January 31, 1985

From: The Herzigs

Dear Friend:

Attached are the missing pages from the interview of Karl R. Bendetsen, which comes from the Truman Library. Nick Chen was kind enough to send you the interview transcript last month, but these pages were missing. This mailing, again, is being sent to you, courtesy of Nick, our ever faithful supporter.

Must read!

An Issue for All Americans

Oral History Interview

with

KARL R. BENDETSSEN

New York, New York
October 24, November 9, and November 21, 1972Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
October, 1981

Oral History Interview

with

KARL R. BENDETSSEN

During World War II during the administrations of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and of President Harry S. Truman, he was an officer of Field Artillery of the United States Army on active duty from August 1940 through December 31, 1945 in the grades of Captain through Colonel. While detailed to the War Department General Staff, he served in various capacities among which were Special Representative of The Secretary of War to General Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines and to Lt. General Short, Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department. In February of 1942, he was assigned to the Western Defense Command and Fourth Army as Assistant Chief of Staff and Commanding Officer of the Wartime Civil Control Administration, an agency of the Fourth Army. In this latter capacity, among other duties, he directed the evacuation and relocation in 1942 of persons of Japanese ancestry who were then resident along the Pacific Sea Frontier of the United States.

During the administration of President Truman, he served as Acting Deputy to the first Secretary of Defense (Mr. Forrestal) during the initial phases of the Berlin crisis. Later that year he established the Office of General Counsel of the Army and served as its first incumbent also in 1948. From 1949 through 1952, he served successively as The Assistant Secretary of the Army and The Under Secretary of the Army. During this period, in addition to his other duties, and he served as Director General of the U.S. Railroads and as the first Chairman of the Panama Canal Company.

New York City, New York
November 9, and November 21, 1972

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DeWitt was Commanding General of the Western Defense Command . . .

BENDETSEN: And Fourth Army.

HESS: . . . and Fourth Army. And he was the military man in charge of carrying out the relocation, correct?

BENDETSEN: No, he was delegated by the President to carry out the evacuation ordered by Executive Order 9066 dated February 19, 1942. The later Executive Order 9102 dated March 18, 1942 covered relocation only. It had nothing to do with evacuation. The War Relocation Authority was a civilian agency. It was not at any time a part of the War Department or the Army. It took over after the evacuation phase. The military phase was usually termed evacuation (from the sea frontiers). General DeWitt delegated the entire evacuation task to me. No one could possibly have been more surprised than I to find myself in this position.

HESS: That's right.

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BENDETSEN: The War Relocation Authority was not established until sometime after Executive Order 9066 was issued. It did not do any relocating either . . .

HESS: This is from the 1942 volume of the Papers of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It is the note to item 37. Item 37 is the "Establishment of the War Relocation Authority, Executive Order 9102, March the 18th of 1942" and the note was by the editor, Samuel I. Rosenman. Just to give some background so that people will know what we are looking at at the present time.

BENDETSEN: Paragraphs 1 and 2 of your citation do not accurately describe the function and role of the War Relocation Authority. It performed no duties whatever until the evacuation phase had been completed and the persons of Japanese ancestry who still then remained in custody had been placed in ten Relocation Centers established by the Army inland to hold the evacuees until they could be absorbed into the economies of inland states. Only when all of them had been placed there, after the Relocation

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Centers had been staffed and manned in all respects, did the War Relocation Authority take over any operating functions of any kind. As I will later add in my account, it seriously mishandled its assignment.

HESS: It was all done by the Army up until that time, right?

BENDETSEN: Yes, by an agency of the Western Defense Command and Fourth Army known as the WCCA, the Wartime Civil Control Administration. I was the Commanding Officer, an assignment I most certainly did not seek. I refer you to a volume on file in the Library of Congress in which General DeWitt reports on the carrying into effect of Executive Order 9066 to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of War in a complete and totally documented factual way.

General DeWitt made a complete delegation to me of the provisions of Executive Order 9066 which had been delegated to him. I had the responsibility for carrying out the entire program which I will

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describe to you in a few moments. The delegation by the President of the United States to the Secretary of War of the provisions of Executive Order 9066 of February 19, 1942 was in turn by the Secretary of War, delegated to the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General Marshall. In turn by Marshall, there was a complete and total delegation to General DeWitt, and finally by General DeWitt there was a complete and final delegation to me with the approval of the Secretary of War. I will describe all this in the course of my narrative.

Starting at the beginning, and viewed in the perspective of the months following December 7, 1941, and especially the winter and spring of 1942, you will recall through other oral histories, and from your general knowledge, that the tides of war in the Pacific were running most adversely to the United States. Our naval forces had been crippled, we had suffered many reverses; the Japanese had successfully shelled the West Coast of the United States with submarine-mounted cannon; had bombed military bases in the Aleutian Islands as far east

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as Cold Harbor and Kodiak; had occupied the Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska.

You will also recall that the preponderance of all persons of Japanese ancestry residing on the West Coast of the United States, west of the Sierra Nevadas, the Cascades, and in the southern halves of Arizona and New Mexico, had largely concentrated themselves into specific and readily identifiable clusters.

They carried on their own culture; their own educational system. Their Shinto religious beliefs predominated and these beliefs coupled with the isolation which arose out of the legal restrictions of the applicable laws of the U.S. and California, Oregon and Washington states then in force, combined in influence to generate a separate way of life. You will recall also that the Alien Exclusion Acts (which I always felt embodied very bad policy with which I was never in sympathy) nevertheless were in force over many decades. The fact was that under these Acts, people of Japanese ancestry (who migrated to the United States from Japan) were not permitted to intermarry with U.S. citizens, were not permitted

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to own land or to take legal title to land and could not become citizens. And so, over the years there was very little real assimilation either of the migrant or of the first generation Japanese born of the many thousands of native Japanese who had migrated to the United States. The U.S.-born are Nisei; the migrants Kibei.

The Justice Department and the FBI had great concerns about national security on the Pacific Sea Frontier, west of the mountain ranges, and in the southern halves of Arizona and New Mexico where there were extensive but unmonitored boundaries, with Mexico to the south, for traffic into the United States. It is still going on.

HESS: They can't stop it now.

BENDETSEN: General DeWitt, as Commanding General, was responsible for the defense of the Western Sea Frontier, including Alaska. The tides of war there were almost totally adverse, with one disaster after another. Our first victory was the Battle

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BENDETSEN: Well, it varied. However, those who ultimately went through the process were very enthusiastic about the opportunity from the beginning.

HESS: They saw it as an opportunity to prove their citizenship.

BENDETSEN: Yes. Your comment inclines me to introduce another aspect which you may consider pertinent to our discussion.

During my primary and secondary assignments (the first I described in our first interview and during the second one we have now been reviewing), I made a special effort to meet many of the individual Japanese of all ages. It was out of these discussions that I was able to formulate the kind of program of self-discipline for them that made it possible for us to handle the assembly centers and the relocation centers, while we had responsibility, without incident. All aspects--transportation, the collection preceding assembly, the assembly center phase, the transfer to the relocation centers--

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crews, rail cars and locomotives required, he was completely satisfied that the disruption would not be serious.

Before concluding this aspect, it occurs to me that for this record I should supplement those broad aspects of how the Army carried out the evacuation and resettlement efforts which have already been described. It is pertinent in any case but more particularly at this point because Senator Truman questioned me in some depth about both resettlement and transportation arrangements.

On the subject of resettlement, he felt as I did that the evacuees were industrious and able and would make an important contribution not only to the war effort itself but to the general economy if the circumstances were right and conducive. In the case of transportation, he was on the one hand acutely aware that the war effort strained our transportation national resources to the limit and on the other, quite fascinated by what he regarded as unique and innovative measures I had introduced

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for effective train management.

First, allow me to narrate a number of additional aspects about resettlement. What had the Wartime Civil Control Administration done in an intensive effort to assure results?

For the first phase of direct resettlement wherein families and individuals were urged and encouraged to resettle without passing through either an assembly or a relocation center, the highlights of the arrangements were as follows:

Following the initial Salt Lake Conference of Governors and their aids the WCCA placed agents in numerous communities of southern Idaho, northern Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska and Arkansas. These agents organized local citizen reception committees to aid toward finding jobs, housing, schools, farm and other agricultural situations-- and generally to aid in assimilation. The agents continually reported opportunities and these were posted locally on Assembly Center bulletin boards. In addition, in these evacuation zones with pending

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were cleared; the balance were interned. There were special internment facilities which housed husbands, wives and minor children if that was the desire of the internee and his family. A large one of this type was near San Antonio, Texas, for example.

The second subject of then Senator Truman's interest was Alaska Travel Control.

Alaska was a part of the Western Sea Frontier. It was a vital multiple military base area with enormous and unprecedented construction requirements. Alaska was a sensitive region. By Presidential order it became a closed area into which no one could enter without a permit. All travel was strictly controlled.

By delegation, the entire problem was assigned to me. I established Alaska Travel Control and designed the entire permit-granting and monitoring procedures. ATC offices were opened and staffed in New York City, Boston, Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, Salt Lake City, Great Falls, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and also at Vancouver, B.C.

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Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg, Canada. These processed applications and issued travel permits.

It was not a simple exercise. The demand for construction workers was immense. I told Mr. Truman, "You might look upon the problem like this. Twenty-five thousand workers were required on the job. Conditions were rugged. Job 'rotation' was extraordinarily high. We had in effect one crew (of 25,000) on deck, one on the way out and another on the way in. We made it work."

He laughed and said, "You have to be some kind of a magician."

As stated, in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers the major prime contractors, Alaska Travel Control established field employment application offices at places already listed where ATC agents received permit applications concurrently.

The Engineers and major contractors agreed to the list of "gateway cities" recited above.

I set up in ATC what was probably the first mechanical, key punch, electrified information

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storage and retrieval system. We were connected to the FBI and other intelligence sources by teletype over leased lines. The nighttime hours carried the peak traffic. Our teletype system also was connected to major contractors and Army Engineer offices. Permits were issued at the gateway offices. Applicants were directed to the appropriate gateway where their permits were ready by teletype. A photograph of each permittee was taken and printed in five minutes. It was affixed to the permit. Each gateway office had a battery of cameras and fast printout facilities. These offices were large and fully staffed. An applicant would come in, present himself to an attendant at a long counter, have his photograph taken, bring it to the attendant where his permit awaited him and be on his way in less than fifteen minutes in most cases.

I will now resume my account of my overseas duties which began in London.

When I had completed my task, I returned to St. James Square as a member of the C.O.S.S.A.C.