

Robert F. Spencer
Gila

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RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE GILA COMMUNITY

The organization known as the Community Activities Department cares for the formal recreational needs of the center. This division, formerly under the directorship of Mr. Morton Gaba, was turned over to Mr. Robert K. Yeaton after Mr. Gaba became Assistant Director of Community Services. Mr. Yeaton's recent resignation has made it necessary that Mr. Gaba act again as recreation advisor. The Community Activities Division is directly under the Community Services Division, the department which deals directly with all matters which pertain to the evacuees themselves. After the resignation of Mr. Yeaton, Camp I recreation has been handled by Mr. Gaba while Mr. Lew Hoffman, the Community Services chief, has taken care of the formal recreation in Camp II. The division in the matter of recreation in the community should be understood to fall into two categories: the formal aspects of recreation in which the group or various groups participate, and the informal, which concern individual recreation and the use of leisure time. Throughout the discussion which is to follow, evidences of Japanese customs in the matters of handling leisure time and of formal and spontaneous recreational activity will be mentioned.

The formally organized recreational activity is under the sponsorship of the administration and subject to guidance by members of the Caucasian staff. As the result of changes in staff personnel, the Community Activities Department has suffered somewhat and not presented the formal program which many of the Japanese would like to see. Gaba at first directed the organization of recreation in Camp I. As Camp II opened he turned his attention to Camp II, leaving in charge of the recreation department and organization in Camp I a rather unfortunate choice in the person of one Takeo Tada, a Kibei who would naturally be unpopular with the majority of the Nisei. Tada is undoubtedly capable although

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he attempts to favor the Issei and Kibei in his judgments, deploring the bad manners of the Nisei, their poor and slovenly speech habits, and their desire for continual amusement. Tada is an organizer of some capabilities, a former secretary of the Los Angeles Japanese Chamber of Commerce, and it is perhaps for this reason that Gaba chose him. Tada does not know American games and is found to have difficulties in organizing outdoor sports. Gaba, likewise, is not one to organize outdoor games and sports, being rather unfamiliar with the rules and procedures. This fact, coupled with Tada's unpopularity, has somewhat hurt the formal recreational organization and contributed to Gaba's failure to find cooperation among the Japanese, particularly the Nisei. Many of the Issei objected to Gaba's administration of the recreational division, saying that the younger people did not have enough to keep them organized, amused, and out of trouble. Yeaton held the position of recreational leader for so short a time that no startling changes were effected by him. Gaba and Hoffman will probably not have changed the recreational set-up or the attitudes toward it which the community as a whole at present holds. The position of a recreation chief is open in both camps.

Gaba's department, however, has sanctioned the formation of numerous organizations depending on the will of the community. The department is handicapped in that it lacks adequate funds with which to carry on a full scale program of recreation. Books, magazines, games, athletic equipment, lumber for various clubs, and the thousand other items needed to carry on a full program must be solicited through such organizations on the outside as schools and colleges, church groups, Y.M.C.A.'s charities, and from other benevolent institutions. It is difficult to obtain materials of this sort now inasmuch as the army is also looking for similar equipment. The only equipment available to Gaba at the time he took the post he now holds was the small amount of material supplied by the W.R.A., the scrap-lumber pile, and the willingness of the evacuees to help

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organize a fitting program. True, the recreation halls, one to each block, provided some meeting place for those interested in activities of various sorts.

I do not wish to devote too much space to the description of the formal activities of the community but would rather turn to the group division and the attitudes manifested by the various groups with regard to recreational activities. The administration turned its attention first to the matter of Nisei recreation, perhaps because this group clamored for games, dances, and related activities. Thus organized games, athletic activities, dances and institutions such as clubs, etc., were the first items to be considered by the administrative staff. Gaba urged that spontaneous group activities such as block talent shows, group picnics, etc., be allowed full freedom. It was thus hoped that the evacuees could exercise a certain amount of control of their own in the matters pertaining to their own entertainment.

Under the auspices of the administration attention was paid to the organization of many different activities. The Nisei were allowed to form a dance band, a dance committee, a drama group, young people's clubs, intramural athletic leagues, such as ping-pong, softball, football, a model airplane club, singing groups, etc. These were brought underway almost as soon as a number of interested people could be assembled in the new community. Full as this program was, it did not succeed in reaching all the people in the community. The items mentioned above are of interest for the most part only to the Nisei and a limited group of Nisei at that. The smaller children and the older Nisei and Issei were left out. Gaba had much else to consider in his organization of the community activities department. Under this department the problems of the newspaper, of church groups, libraries, and the few features of adult education as yet organized must be solved. With such a burden it is little wonder that the aspects of problems which dealt

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primarily with recreation had to suffer. The older people became quite worried over the idleness of many of the Nisei, particularly those of high school age, who, in the early stages of the community development, were merely waiting until the schools opened. Thus the Issei did much to keep the young people entertained and arranged impromptu entertainments along Japanese lines.

Many of the Issei were opposed to the dances which were arranged for every Saturday night in both camps. Some regarded the dances as events which tended to undermine the morals of the younger people. The family objections to the dances have already been mentioned. The mess hall personnel objected to having dances held in the dining halls over which they had jurisdiction on the ground that the young people made too much mess with their empty popbottles and cigarette butts. They refused to clean up after the dances. People living near the mess halls to be used for dances objected because of the noise and music. For a few weeks no dances could be held. The Issei who were opposed to the dances believed that they had won their point and that dances were no longer to be held. When some of the blocks were isolated for the schools and community services departments, the mess halls in these empty blocks were made into dance halls. The hue and cry that arose over the dances in these empty blocks was remarkable. The number of protests was great. Smith issued a statement that if the young people could not have dances, the playing of go-shogi would have to stop. It was said that there was sufficient enthusiasm on the part of the young people to warrant the continuation of dances. Weekly dances are now held in the school block mess-halls in both camps.

The dances are rather typical of those held in a high school or small college. There is a certain amount of shyness on the part of the boys at first which gradually wears down. Even though couples come to the dances it is quite usual for the boys to gang together on one side of the hall and the girls on the other. The dances in Camp II are accompanied by record music but a dance

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orchestra has been organized in Camp I. There is no piano available to the orchestra, pianos limited to churches as yet, and there is no bass drum. The result is that the beat of the music played is often off. Many Nisei go in for "jitterbugging" and perform elaborate acts on the dance floor. In the main the dancing is conservative. One remarkable thing is noticed as one watches the dancers. The sense of rhythm is very poor among the Japanese. Many dancers, although they know the dance steps well, have difficulty in keeping the tempo with any degree of accuracy. Naturally, the lack of proper tempo in the dance band is a cause for this. Even when records are played the evacuee young people seem to lack for the most part an innate sense of rhythm comparable to that of a similar group of young Caucasian people. One amusing statement was made over the public address system by the master of ceremonies. Pretending that he was leading a radio broadcast, he said: "This is station J-A-P, Rivers, Arizona." Many of the young people go to the dances alone or with groups of their own sex. Couples sometimes appear. With Issei objection to the dances however, it is not often that a young man will call for a "date" at her home. The dances last from 8:00 p.m. till 11:00 p.m., soda pop is served. Most of the young people go straight home after the dance but many linger on the ditch bank, the "lovers' lane" of the community.

The Issei are divided among themselves about the dances. Some say that dancing is a sin, that it promotes sexual and immoral activity, and that it is generally bad for the young people. These people/^{say} that western dances are banned in modern Japan. Other Issei more reasonably state that dancing provides a release for the young people and that dancing should be permitted. The objection that dances too frequently take up all the attention of young people, some girls especially, is not without foundation. The matter was brought up to the com-

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munity council which had been only recently organized. The members agreed that dancing should be permitted until its effect on the morals of the young people could be observed.

Every evening intramural ball games are being played, these games drawing large crowds of spectators. Now, in the fall, football will be the main attraction. When I left Gila, intramural football teams were being organized. Nearly all the Nisei boys engage in these games. A judo club was organized in the hope of satisfying the recreational needs of some of the more "nipponized" Nisei and Issei. Although the participants in this club are mainly Nisei and Kibei, the Issei watch the daily contests with enjoyment. The more advanced judo enthusiasts, some of the Kibei who hold "black belts," the sign of a master judo artist, have organized a separate and rather exclusive judo club. Kendo, Japanese fencing, is not contemplated because of its Japanese nationalistic character. Many other athletic activities are gradually being organized. Baseball and volley ball for girls, a basket-ball pavilion, a dam in the dyke for swimming, etc. are all newly acquired features of the recreation department.

Outside of the organized Nisei activities which pertain to the formal aspects of recreation, there are those features which are designed to answer the needs of all groups. The library is managed by the recreation division. Its books and periodicals have been contributed by benevolent individuals in the neighborhood. Libraries are now set up in both camps and managed under Japanese librarians, some of whom have had actual library training. Childrens' books are handled by the education department and a separate school library has been organized for them. Books are loaned for one week. At the present writing there are 3,000 volumes available to the settlers but equally divided between the two camps. The recreation department brings in lecturers and speakers on a variety of subjects. Representatives of the National Park Ser-

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vice have been brought to the camp to discuss the flora and fauna, the geology and geography of the Southwest. To the great majority of evacuees Arizona is a new country. They are continually amazed at the strangeness of the desert and at its plant and animal life. The fear of snakes, scorpions and other like vermin is very marked. These lectures, accompanied by slides, have done much to interest the population in the country and to educate them in its peculiarities. The following at such lectures is very large. All groups and ages attend. Particular interest was shown when a ranger naturalist mentioned the archaeological sites of the vicinity. A number of the Nisei turned pothunters. They did not find any sites however, although there is a fairly large HO-HO-Kam site in the vicinity. It should be mentioned here, parenthetically, that the Japanese are extremely interested in the Indians. Not only do the Indians and Japanese both feel that they are persecuted minority groups but the fact that the Mongolian antecedents of both have been so instilled in their minds makes them feel a relationship. There has been much by-play between the Indians and the Japanese settlers. The Japanese have hired Indians to give them rides to various points, even outside of the community into restricted territory and the Indians are glad to help. Some of the Indians have told me "These are my brothers," and shake their heads bitterly when reminded of the evacuation situation. One or two of the Pimas, traders who know other Indian languages, have picked up words and phrases of Japanese and very solemnly greet the evacuees in that language. Indians may be seen around the camp at all times, not only those employed there but also those who come to see new Japanese friends. A group of Japanese, knowing me as an anthropologist, have asked me to give a series of lectures on Indian life when I return to Gila.

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Another feature which has general appeal to the Japanese is the moving picture. Father Clement of the Maryknoll Fathers brought a projector to the camp and showed an outdoor production. Nearly all the settlers attended, young and old alike, and obviously enjoyed the picture, a Western depiction of crime in Arizona. The joke was appreciated by nearly everyone.

More important than the formally organized recreational activities sponsored by the administration are the features of general interest which are sponsored by the settlers themselves. In such cases the help of the administration is usually asked in providing a stage and in making a public announcement through the newspaper. Such productions are spontaneous with the Japanese and demand no administrative supervision. The Japanese seem inordinately fond of talent shows, dramatic productions, and various kinds of vaudeville. Each block has a talent show at frequent intervals, the various blocks rivalling one another in the extent and lavishness of the entertainment/they are able to produce and the amount of talent they have. The talent show is something that is well known to the Japanese way of life, being a common rural form of entertainment in Japan. In order to present these dramatic productions it is necessary to have a stage. Gaba hoped that he could have a large concrete outdoor stage on which he could arrange that dances be held and which could serve as a place for the talent shows and other dramatic performances. Material was not available with the result that groups of carpenters voluntarily collected wood from the scrap-lumber pile and built a large stage in the west firebreak in Camp I. In Camp II no such stage has as yet been built. The individual blocks, when they have need of an outdoor stage, since the recreation halls will not hold the crowds, request the use of two trucks. These are backed together and the flat beds make an adequate stage. A public address system is owned by the community and has been lent out to each block desiring to use it for the talent

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shows. There is one such system in each camp.

The talent show, or engekai, as it is called in Japanese, is very popular. There have been a number of such shows in the camp which were sponsored by various groups. Not only does each block have its own engekai, but also various groups such as the Y.B.A., the Young Christian Club, the Older Men's Club, and many others. There is always a master of ceremonies who introduces the performers and keeps up the interest of the audience with jokes, etc. The shows are almost exclusively conducted in Japanese. A good example of the procedure followed in the engekai which is fairly standard is taken from the show held by combined blocks 8 and 9 on September 12, 1942. This was held out of doors on the truck stage described above. About 2,000 were present, very nearly half of Camp I. The master of ceremonies opened the program with a speech in Japanese in which he welcomed some of the newcomers to Gila and hoped that all would enjoy the show about to be presented. He introduced Mr. Inouye who chanted a naniwabushi for a very long time. Mr. Inouye received quite an ovation on this accomplishment. As an encore after much applause, part of which was urged on by the master of ceremonies, he recited a Japanese heroic ballad. The curtain, festooned with paper flowers, was then drawn over the stage and a new performer came on. In the intermissions between performances, the master of ceremonies told jokes in Japanese or music was played on the Victrola, all such music being in Japanese style. A small group then came on, representing, even to the untutored eye of an Occidental, a Chinese and two Japanese gentlemen. The Japanese were clad in their best western clothes while the man representing the Chinese was rather unkempt, wearing a Mandarin coat, a skull cap, and a pig-tail. A long dialogue followed which was considered simply hilarious. The Chinaman was selling medicines to the Japanese who were doing him out of his wares for very little and then fleecing him of his money.

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The Chinaman spoke Japanese with a terrific Chinese accent, pronouncing his 'r's as 'l's, saying "ollimas" instead of the proper "arimasu", and pretending to swear in Chinese when things did not go his way. The audience was virtually overcome with mirth. When they had finished, they were asked to do the performance over again. The third feature was "Gamblers' Song", sung and acted out by two young men. It was very long and involved and resembled the American "Shooting of Dan McGrew." These two also received encores and sang solos. A girl then sang Japanese songs accompanied by herself on the samisen. She sang the plaintive love songs of Japan in the classical manner with much throaty ululation and no perceptible rhythm. From the Japanese point of view the songs of this girl were extremely well rendered, being quite true to the Japanese style of singing. She was highly complimented by the master of ceremonies for her performance. Another man played for a long while on the shakohachi, Japanese flute, and was well received. Five acts of this kind just about consume a whole evening. The engekai performances do not vary much from one show to another. The songs, naniwabushi, and acts are pretty similar. The audience always enjoys the show and for the most part remains until the show is over, even though it may mean standing for two hours or more. The engekai is the principal entertainment feature for all groups in the Gila community. In the enjoyment of this kind of entertainment the community is well unified. There are, of course, Nisei who deplore the survival^{of} the Japanese language and customs in the presentations of this kind but they are in the minority.

Nisei entertainments on the strictly American plan are sometimes arranged through the recreation department. The Christian young people have taken special interest in these shows which are more typically American. A social get-together was held in Camp I as soon as it filled up. This was a show to which the whole camp was invited. A young Methodist man was master of ceremonies.

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Contrary to the engekai, this performance was held in English, the master of ceremonies speaking only English and urging that American songs be sung. The whole program was reminiscent of a high-school program of a similar nature. A good many Issei did attend however. There were about 1,500 present and in this case the audience was less insympathy with the performers. There were comedy acts, clowns acting as acrobats, a demonstration of model airplanes, and finally a community songfest. The audience was asked to sing rounds, popular songs, spirituals, and to play games with songs. The game took the following form; the audience was divided into two parts, the idea being a kind of contest. The M.C. would suggest a sentence to be made from a name of a state. The side that thought of the last sentence won. Such a game as "What did Ida-hoe?" "How did Wiscon-sin?" etc. The audience was restive and not much response was given to the singing. The Christian young people attempted to carry the whole burden of singing while their Buddhist neighbors looked rather askance at them. The show was not a success. Group singing, any activity, in fact, in which the audience must take a kind of impromptu role, is unpopular. The Japanese do not like to show off except when there is a formal occasion for doing so as on the stage. It is surprising to note that many older people take a very active part in stage shows of the Japanese type. Older men will present themselves to an audience to sing while some older women can be prevailed upon to sing or recite.

These are the organized recreation activities of the communities as Gila. It will be necessary to do a further study of such organized groups and their relation to the community as a whole. Only a suggestion has been given here. But the organized activities do not affect all classes in the community. Organized recreation, whether sponsored by the administration or by the settlers themselves,

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cannot provide a full time occupation for all classes within the community. The occupation of leisure time, of which, for some groups there is a great deal, is an important subject. A baseball game, an engekai, a dance, cannot occupy all the leisure moments of the Japanese. Just how individuals in the community occupy their time when not concerned with work, with organized amusement and the like is important to the morale of the center. It is hoped that some of the answers to this question may be given here.

Aside from the fact that they believe evacuation demoralizing for the young people, most of the older, settled Issei are not strongly opposed to living in the relocation center at Gila. They argue that they formerly had to do a great deal of work, that their social circles were limited, and that it was hard to meet rising prices and engage in the difficulties of making a living on the outside. In the relocation center, although they do^{not}/have all the privacy they would like, they feel that they are amply taken care of, that they have an opportunity for social intercourse which formerly was denied them. Most of them would not admit the fact that they actually like the lives they lead in the relocation center. Of course there are chronic complainers who would not be happy under any circumstances. The group referred to here is the fairly extensive one composed of older people who have reared their children and who have "retired" in the Japanese sense. Conflicts with their older Nisei children are not so marked as among active Issei with children who have just arrived at maturity. This Issei group does not work. The women meet and visit, they sew and gossip, go to the mess hall, sleep late if they choose to do so, and find that they are free to come and go as they wish in the center. Since they know^{no}/other associations but Japanese, they prefer to remain where they are and the sense of confinement does not touch them. The same is true of the men. In

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pre-evacuation days, both "retired" men and women had to do some amount of work. Often they had to help in the farm, shop, nursery, or other business. Now the men can argue as they please and have all the time in the world. They play go-shogi, rest during the day, read, visit, and talk. On Sundays most of the older people go to church. To be sure, many of them are dissatisfied with the situation, many were used to better and more comfortable lives in the pre-evacuation period. In the main there is contentment among the older Issei. A recreation program does not need to touch them; they are living as full a life as they know.

The younger Issei, men and women still able, people of middle age and even younger, are a greater problem. The Issei range in age from 25 - 30, of whom there are very few, 30 - 40, of whom the majority are closer 40, while the major Issei age group is that of individuals between 50 and 65 or 70. The Issei men of the ages between 40 and 60 prove the most difficult. These individuals often have lost money, position, or business through evacuation. They attempt to control the young people, to be the masters in their households, and to maintain their rightful Japanese positions as family heads. They participate in Japanese activities but in the main are inclined to view the attempts the administration is making at recreation for them with some suspicion and uncooperative bitterness. They seem to resist attempts on the part of the administration to offer them recreation. On the other hand, most of them are responsible family men and willing to cooperate with the administration by working, by engaging in political activities, and by attempting to help the Caucasian staff make the community habitable. I am of course attempting to depict the trends of the majority; there are numerous exceptions to this group. These men resist when their own recreation is mentioned. Perhaps they wish to see a program of recreation more fully under way for the Nisei, although many such Issei believe that work, rather than play, is to be the salvation of most of the Nisei. The project for

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an older men's baseball team was dropped because of lack of interest, even though the older men follow the Nisei intramural baseball league with interest. Similarly the Older Men's Club, although it has some members, has not launched a successful program for recreation. This Issei group seeks its amusement in a number of ways, however. The Issei men watch the games of the Nisei, they witness judo matches, they visit and converse at great length with one another. Best of all, however, they like the talent shows and the go-shogi contests in which they can and will participate. Aside from the go-shogi club sponsored by the administration, there are literally hundreds of the various go games going on every evening. (No pun intended) These, along with traditional Japanese hana, a game like poker, form the evening's entertainment for these Issei. The men meet at engekai and laughingly encourage some of their members to perform. So keen is their interest in amateur dramatics, that they are eager to help out where they can in the informal block entertainments. It was from among their number that a group volunteered to build the recreation division's outdoor stage. Most of the individuals in this group are employed. They work on the farm, around the camp as laborers, truckers, gardeners, etc. The 44-hour week is long. In the main they retire early and for the most part are glad to spend their leisure time with family and friends and in the activities mentioned above.

The activities of the women of this age group are closely allied with those of the older women. Some of these younger and middle-ages Issei matrons have smaller children, or at least children of high school age. They must care for the house, wash the clothes, mend, and the like. Their mornings seem to be occupied with activities of this sort, with their children, and with other home tasks. In the afternoon they visit with other women, walk about the community, and are very content with the life they lead, becoming disturbed when conflicts arise between

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father and children, or when the Nisei children protest against evacuation. The women of this group do not attempt to resist the efforts of the administration to keep them amused and occupied as do their men. There are women's sewing classes, a Woman's club, and sewing circles to which many of them belong. They are not too occupied but they seem content with their existence.

The foregoing remarks indicate that the Issei men and women, old and young alike, are fairly well adjusted to community life. Their tastes are simple for the most part and they do not have the restlessness and lack of stability which comes out so clearly in the Nisei groups. To be sure, there is nostalgia, some bitterness, some hopelessness, and a number of maladjusted individuals. One cannot help feeling that the Issei in the main, opposed though they are to American ways and activities, are attempting to live at peace with themselves and their children, trying to make the Gila center a habitable and pleasant place, and to understand the processes of evacuation in order to prove themselves loyal and patriotic in their adopted country. This is the rule rather than the exception. Unfortunately, the bulk of these people live peacefully in the background; the troublemakers and the maladjusted come to prominence.

It is difficult to portray the infinite number of ways in which the Nisei spend their leisure time. So much depends on the background of the individual, his tastes, his degree of Americanization, his position in the community, the locality from which he came, his associations, his religion, his education. The Nisei seem to ally themselves socially on a basis of education and interests. Sakoda's description of typical Nisei as opposed to progressive, liberal, etc. Nisei is certainly applicable at Gila. The typical Nisei finds his social outlet in his own group. At Gila the typical Nisei ranges in age from 14 to 27-28. The interests are much the same; there is a kind of timid hold on American ways and a marked preference for them as opposed to the precepts and customs of Japan. This

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group is anything but constructive in its application of leisure time. Conversation, gossip, dances, ^{dates} shows, games, entertainments of all kinds, in short, a kind of adolescent outlook which persists into young adulthood. Some of them marry, but when they do they seem to drop out of the business of being typical Nisei and at Gila, at least, revert to a more conservative stand demanded of young married people by the Issei in the community. This group is rather typically Japanese in its fear of ridicule for failure to conform to the standards of the group. Most such Nisei at Gila have rural backgrounds, a high school education, either completed or in process. Struck with a fervent love for things American, they are at a loss to understand why they should be evacuated and have to suffer the rigors of an internment camp. They are eager to be of help in the community. The boys work around the camp in semi-skilled positions, the girls are waitresses, secretaries, clerks, and assistants to a number of enterprises. In the leisure-time activities, there is much to keep this group occupied. This is the group which fits exactly into the prescribed recreational program of the administration and finds a host of activities to keep themselves occupied. Games, dances, social events are their aim and purpose. They want to be amused and they succeed. Their penchant for sociability is a worry to their parents, but, at least, they of all the groups at Gila are the busiest. Attention must be paid to the more specific ways in which they occupy their time and the number of individuals who participate in the organized recreational aspects of the community. In the main these Nisei are not intellectual. I should estimate that about half of the Nisei fall into this typical Nisei category. The rest are divided between conservative, progressive, liberal, and intellectual Nisei who rather look down their noses at such a whirlwind round of social events.

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The educated group among the Nisei seeks companion/^{ship} among its own group. The group on the whole is small. Attempts have been made to launch a program of adult education and university extension courses for this group. It is among these individuals that the most dissatisfaction occurs.

There is considerable further information available on the Nisei recreation problems but space and time do not allow the full description necessary. It is hoped that this section will be continually supplemented by observers in the field.

The following items were not discussed in this report because of the lack of time in which to complete it. A supplementary note will be forwarded shortly from Gila.

Elaboration of the recreation program and the discussion of leisure time for the individual and the social group.

Social disorganization

1. Gambling
2. Drunkenness
3. Rumors
4. Thefts
5. Brawls and fights
6. Malicious gang activities

Attitudes, manners, personal relations, etc.

Personalities in the Gila Center

Fears

LANGUAGE

Cooperative institutions in the pre-evacuation days such as tanomoshi or

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kumi-ai and their present application in the Gila Center.

There are of course, many additional problems for further research which will be taken into consideration on my return to Gila.