

History of Medicine Photo Website

The History of Medicine Program, in conjunction with the Savitt Library, has created a photo website at <unr.edu/med/dept/hom/gbhphotoarchive/>. We have posted over 600 photos related to the history of the School of Medicine, Nevada healthcare, and the Nevada State Medical Association. These photos are just a fraction of our total collection and weekly we are adding more pictures. We invite our readers to view the collection and send us photos from their collection that pertain to the above subjects. We will digitalize them, recognize your contribution, and return the originals to you.

The Japanese in America- A Historical Perspective Part III of IV

By Ken Maehara, Ph.D.

*Part I of IV is found in Volume XVI, Number 3, Fall 2005. Part II of IV is found in Volume XVII, Number 1, Spring 2006. This is the third article in this series which recounts the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The final article will be published in a future edition of **Greasewood Tablettes** and will discuss the medical conditions in the camps.*

My family was relocated from the Portland Assembly Center to the Minidoka, Idaho Internment Camp, located approximately 15 miles northeast of Twin Falls. It was one of ten permanent relocation camps—the other nine being Manzanar and Tulelake,

California; Gila River and Poston, Arizona; Jerome, and Rohwar, Arkansas; Topaz, Utah; Granada, Colorado; and Heart Mountain, Wyoming. All of these camps were located in isolated, undeveloped, unattractive, and inhospitable locations. The train ride from the Portland Assembly Center to Minidoka took two days. The internees were very apprehensive of the trip because they were watched by armed guards, herded into trains with drawn window shades, and not told their destination. The Minidoka Camp existed from August 10, 1942 to October 28, 1945, during which a total of 13,078 people were interned. At its peak the



Sorting baggage at an internment camp

camp held 9,397. (Americans of Japanese Ancestry and the United States Constitution, National Japanese American Historical Society, 1987, pp. 46-47).

The Minidoka camp was built on federal reclamation land. Over 900 of the total 33,000 acres were used to construct approximately 600 buildings—including housing (staff and internees), a hospital, administration offices, warehouse, etc. It was surrounded by five miles of barbed wire and eight guard towers.

(Burton, J.F., and Farrell, M.M., *This is Minidoka*, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2001, p. 10). Temperatures ranged from -30° in the winter to 110° F during the summer. The area was notorious for its winds and dust storms. Consequently, many of the evacuees from the Pacific Northwest were ill-prepared for the severe

changes in climate. My mother said that she and the other families ordered clothing from Sears and Roebuck catalogues and that the arrival of delivery trucks was a highly anticipated event. "It must have been a windfall for Sears because we had no other place to shop, and for a while, we would be running into people wearing the same dresses from Sears," said Mrs. Hiro Fuji (Interview by Maehara).

The basic organizational plan of the camp consisted of 35 residential blocks with 12 barracks in a block. Each block included a mess hall, laundry facility, showers, latrine, and recreation hall. The government, unfortunately, didn't think to modify the accommodations for families, small children, women, the elderly, or the infirmed. Families were housed in 20' X 16' and 20' X 24' rooms, which were poorly constructed.

According to accounts of several internees, the barracks were built using green lumber which shrank, leaving gaps in the walls. Initially, there were no inside walls and internees would separate their space by hanging whatever they found for dividers. There was no insulation, so the rooms were hot in the summer and cold in the winter. There were designated areas set aside for coal to be dumped for each of the blocks. My father recalled that the coal trucks were often late with their deliveries and that internees would scavenge whatever they could to burn in the stoves.

My parents and I resided in Block #31, Barrack 9, Room F. Each room was supplied with two cots, a pot-bellied stove, a hanging light bulb, and two blankets. There was no plumbing in the barracks, so water had to be carried from the facilities. My mother, along with the other women, had to run back and forth between our barracks and the laundry to wash our clothes and my diapers in the cold, bitter months and in the sweltering heat of the summer. Mrs. Fuji recalled going to the laundry room for water one stormy winter day when she was pregnant..."filling the pot from the faucet of one of the laundry tubs. There was a cement stepping slab outside the door of the laundry room. Holding tightly to the pot of water, I opened the door and gingerly placed one



An example of one of the barracks

foot on the slab. I had an uneasy feeling because the surface of the slab was covered with a film of slippery ice. Carefully, I stepped out with the other foot and found that if I dared take another step, I would slip and fall. I stood there totally helpless until someone came to help me."

The camp was constructed so hastily that the sewer system at Minidoka had not been completed when the first internees arrived. For almost a year, internees had to use outhouses. Mrs. Mabel Boggs, in an interview with me, recalled that rattlesnakes would move into the toilets at night when the days cooled. "A flashlight was hung on the outside for us to check for rattlesnakes before using the toilet."

Adjusting to communal living was difficult for the internees. My parents said, "It seemed as if we were standing in line for everything...meals, showers, toilets, laundry...

"Privacy was essentially nonexistent—families lived together in a single room with no insulated wall separating the rooms. Toilets initially were constructed without partitions dividing them, showers were communal, and

meals were eaten in an open mess hall. My mother's cousin said that the Japanese men had a difficult time adjusting to the fact that they were no longer the bread winners of the family. She also stated that sociologists blame the breakdown of the family unit to these internment years, where families no longer ate their meals together, men, women and children tended to congregate in their own small groups, and the lack of privacy wore on families.

Addendum regarding Bergstein

In the last *Greasewood Tablettes* (Winter 2007, V. XVII, Number 1 "Henry Bergstein, One of the most Important Doctors in Early Nevada") we stated there was no record of Bergstein's death in Nevada. Subsequently, we received information from Guy Rocha, Nevada Archives and Records, with information on Bergstein's

death. According to the Reno Evening Gazette on December 22, 1930, E.B. Gregory sent a Christmas letter to Bernstein in San Francisco and it was returned marked "deceased." Furthermore, Bergstein was listed in the 1930 U.S. Federal Census as living in San Francisco.

The following books and others are available from the History of Medicine program:

\$35.00 Each:
Nevada Veterinarians

Frontier Surgeon and Georgetown Medical School Dean (available mid-October 2007)

\$20.00 each:
Leslie Moren: Fifty Years An Elko Doctor

Serving Medicine: The Story of the Nevada State Medical Association

Good Medicine: Four Las Vegas Doctors and the Golden Age of Medicine

The Cutting Edge: Reflections and Memories by Doctors on Medical Advances in Reno

Pestilence, Politics, and Pizazz: The Story of Public Health in Las Vegas

To order: Send Check or Money Order with price of book plus \$3.00 shipping charge for each book. Make checks payable to the History of Medicine and mail to Anton Sohn, MD; Pathology/0350; University of Nevada School of Medicine; Reno, NV. 89557

In Memoriam

Greasewood Tablettes was founded in 1989 to preserve medical history and to recognize individuals who have devoted themselves to better the lives of their fellow citizens. This section of our newsletter recognizes these individuals. Unfortunately, we do not have the means to keep abreast of the lives of all healthcare practitioners. If we inadvertently miss a particular obituary, we invite you to send us a one-paragraph memoriam.

James Windsor Decker, MD

Dr. James Decker passed away February 21, 2007, at his home in Minden, Nevada, from complications of diabetes and cancer. He was

born in 1928 in Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Medicine. Jim did a pathology residence at U.S.C./Los Angeles County Hospital and came to Reno in 1961 where he joined Drs. Lawrence Parsons, V.A. Salvadorini, and Jack Callister in Physicians Consulting Laboratories. Drs. Ken Falconer and Tom Hall joined the group and it eventually became the largest pathology practice group in the West. Jim was staff pathologist at many northern Nevada hospitals. .

Franklin Ray Black, MD

Dr. Franklin Black died at his home in Reno on May 3, 2007. Born in Bellaire, Michigan, February 26, 1916, Frank served in the U.S.

Army in World War II, and later he was part of a surgical team in Vietnam. He came to the Reno VA Medical Center (VAMC) as chief of surgery. He was active in the medical community as member of the Reno Surgical Society. Frank was a fine surgeon and a gentleman.

Frances Selsnick, MD

Dr. Frances Selsnick, surgeon at the VAMC in Reno, passed away on June 10, 2007. She was born in New York December 23, 1918. Frances was in London at the start of World War II to study music, but decided to move to Edinburgh, Scotland, to study medicine. She was a member of the British Royal College of Surgeons and came to Reno in 1965 where she practiced at the VAMC for over 40 years.

GREASEWOOD TABLETTES © is a quarterly publication of the Department of Pathology, Great Basin History of Medicine Division, University of Nevada School of Medicine. Anton P. Sohn is our editor. Teresa Garrison is the associate editor. Lynda D. McLellan and Gussie Burgoyne are our production assistants. The newsletter is printed by the University of Nevada Printing Shop. **The cost of publication is paid for by a grant from Parks, Ritzlin and Sohn, Ltd.** The editor solicits any items of interest for publication. Suggestions, corrections and comments are welcome. Please feel free to write or call us. The address is Department of Pathology/350, University of Nevada School of Medicine, Reno, NV, 89557. Our telephone is (775) 784-4068. The name GREASEWOOD TABLETTES © is derived from the greasewood plant or creosote bush, a plant that was used by Native Nevadans for medicinal purposes. It is still the subject of pharmacological research today.