

April 25, 1942

SANTA ANITA - SUKIYAKI STYLE

Alfred Cohn

IN front of the stall which once housed temperamental Whirlaway sits a couple on a home-made bench, a slant-eyed young Casanova holding hands with a pretty, revealingly-sweated, orange-pekie-skinned Lana Turner. A short distance away, sitting on the grass under a tiny pepper tree, three bandy-legged Issei smoke and converse in low-toned Japanese. You get the impression that this new life is a welcome change from squatting over rows of carrots and onions twelve to fourteen hours a day. A kid carrying a baseball glove dashes out of a stable-home making for the diamond inside the half-mile training track. His mother cries out some instruction in Nipponese to which the boy replies with an "Okey-doke!"

In the shade of the olive trees at the rear of the massive grandstand, a score of girls, ranging in age from kindergarten to high school, are playing one of those ring-around-rosy games to an obligato of piercing shrieks and excited laughter. In the nearby paddock where sleek thoroughbreds once nervously awaited the bugle call, placid women pad in and out of what is now a well-equipped hospital in charge of Nipponese physicians and trained nurses. Three of the beds are occupied by mothers who have given birth since their arrival. In the adjoining receiving barn, the circular row of stalls has been converted into showers, half for each sex.

In the huge area beneath the grandstand once packed with noisy throngs of bettors trying to reach the mutuel windows, three thousand men, women and children are finishing their midday meal, the second of two relays of diners. The old Isseis seem more than solemn as compared with the laughing Nisseis, so typically American, with their collegiate manners, or the younger Sansei, offspring of the Nissei. There is a general air of gaiety. Men and the older boys light cigarettes as they rise contentedly from the rough-carpentered tables and benches. Girls form groups preliminary to afternoon activities. Hundreds of teen-age boys and girls start clearing the tables. Nearly all of them are laughing and chatting as they pile metal dishes on double-deck perambulators and roll them over to the dishwashers. The din is terrific.

There are a few Caucasian faces among the white-capped cooks. These will disappear when the next *évacués* arrive with their quota of café employes from urban Los Angeles. Looking out towards the once multi-colored

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infield where millions of pansies and marigolds painted gorgeous designs on the floor of the mountain cyclorama provided by Nature, a great change has been wrought. The floral designs have been destroyed by ploughs. A long, one-story warehouse has been thrown up. It seems to be a part of the "tote board," now deprived of its thousands of lights. Behind this are rows of motor vehicles, the gasoline craft which brought the *évacués* and their belongings, now impounded for the duration. There are trucks, old rattletraps and glistening new ones; jaloppies and late passenger-car models. In the many acres once devoted to parking, just outside the entrance gates are row upon row of houses with black tar-paper roofs, all identical to the most minute detail, laid out in blocks as symmetrical as architects can design them. Spaced around the vast enclosure are high sentry towers for the military police of the army. That's Santa Anita today!

There are more than 6,000 Japanese housed in the stables which once accommodated 2,000 horses. Box stalls don't sound very appetizing as living-quarters, but you'd be surprised if you saw what the Army has done with them. Each stall has had a room built on in front with door and windows, and the floors have been covered with a layer of asphaltum which seems to have killed the stable aromas. The horsey smell seems to have disappeared.

Having lunch with the chief administrator of the "reception center" was as novel as it was entertaining. Novel because the executives use the press box on the roof of the grandstand as a dining-room. My hosts of the day were Russell Amory, state director of the W.P.A., and the assistant director, Gene Wilbur. These executives have been placed on the Army payroll, as have all other W.P.A. personnel assigned to the place. They even have their own police force as the Army uses military police only in guarding the exterior. Amory, who is a cousin of President Roosevelt, has done a great job in organizing the place. About 1,400 of the Japanese have been put to work. There will be a sewing project for the women and it is expected that all articles of wearing apparel for all *évacués* will be made by them. When inducted, the Japanese are classified as to occupation, and suitable work is found for them. There will be schools for the children and recreation for them and their elders. All bills are paid by the Army which also purchases the excellent food.