Tule Lake's CCC Camp In 1940

From "Conference and Scholarship"

CAMP BARRACK TO BE RESTORED — This barrack on the CCC camp site is part of the Tule Lake Segregation Center Historic District still under federal government restoration by the National Park Service, which will administer Tule Lake Segregation Center National Monument when the site is designated as "Camp Tulelake." In future years, it will be a site where the history of Tule Lake's turbulent protest history will be told. Photos by Barbara Miller

Takami Moriori was Tule Lake's last labor camp commander. He was born 1902. Takami Moriori died in 1981.

"We thought they might line us up and kill us, but nothing happened," he said. "From there on, we never even thought about being murdered. But when we first got there it was kind of scarred us."

"We couldn't hold us there and they didn't want to let us back in the camp. So they took us to the CCC camp," Moriori recalled.

"When we got to the CCC camp, the first time there, men, when they had the submachine gun out in front, we was kind of scared, you know. We thought they might line us up and kill us, but nothing happened," he said.

"From there on, we never even thought about being murdered. But when we first got there it was kind of scarred us."

"The Block 42 prisoners were held for a month," said Takami.

"Most of our group was in one barrack. Then, a bunch of new guys took the other barrack," he said, referring to another larger group of about 100, Tule Lake camp prisoners who occupied a second barrack in the complex of the CCC camp.

While at the CCC camp, Takami described a group of Block 42 additions put to work at the Fish and Game Headquarters digging a 200-foot trench and pouring the cement for their garage. "They were happy with the job we did for them," said Takami. "As a reward, they were taken to visit the caves and caverns in Lava Beds. I understood Fish and Game caught horse for that." He laughs.

"We never told why they were being held at the CCC camp.

"Nobody told us or asked us anything. We were just in there," said Takami. "Find out later that was illegal," cause we didn't get charged with anything."

"One month later, they say, 'you guys can go home,' he remembers, and they returned to Tule Lake, back to Block 42. Life was pretty much the same as before," said Takami. "But, if any trouble started, there would be police standing outside our block.

On his return to Tule Lake, Takami married his longtime sweetheart and in October 1945 returned to Grizzly and resumed farming.

In the late 1960s he pioneered the cultivation of kiwi fruit.

"I'd do it again," Takami said of his resistance to answering the loyalty questions.

"Guess I'm just hard-headed," he mused. "I'd be more headed more than being guys, because I know what the rules are on that," referring to the fact they were never charged with a crime. "We were protesting [because] we weren't being treated as American citizens."

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) CAMP

Included as part of the Tule Lake Segregation Center National Monument, the Civilian Conservation Corps camp (CCC), where the labor camp's prisoners were imprisoned, is located near East-West Highway on Hill Road, approximately five miles from the segregation camp site.

Following a month of use to imprison the loyalty question protesters, it was used as a POW camp. It began filling with German POWs whose numbers reached 800 by October 1944.

Ironically, the German POWs were free to ride their bicycles to the farms and around town; they shopped in stores and picnicked in the hills, wearing their shirts stenciled with P.O.W. on the back, while American citizens with Japanese faces were denied the same freedom.

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