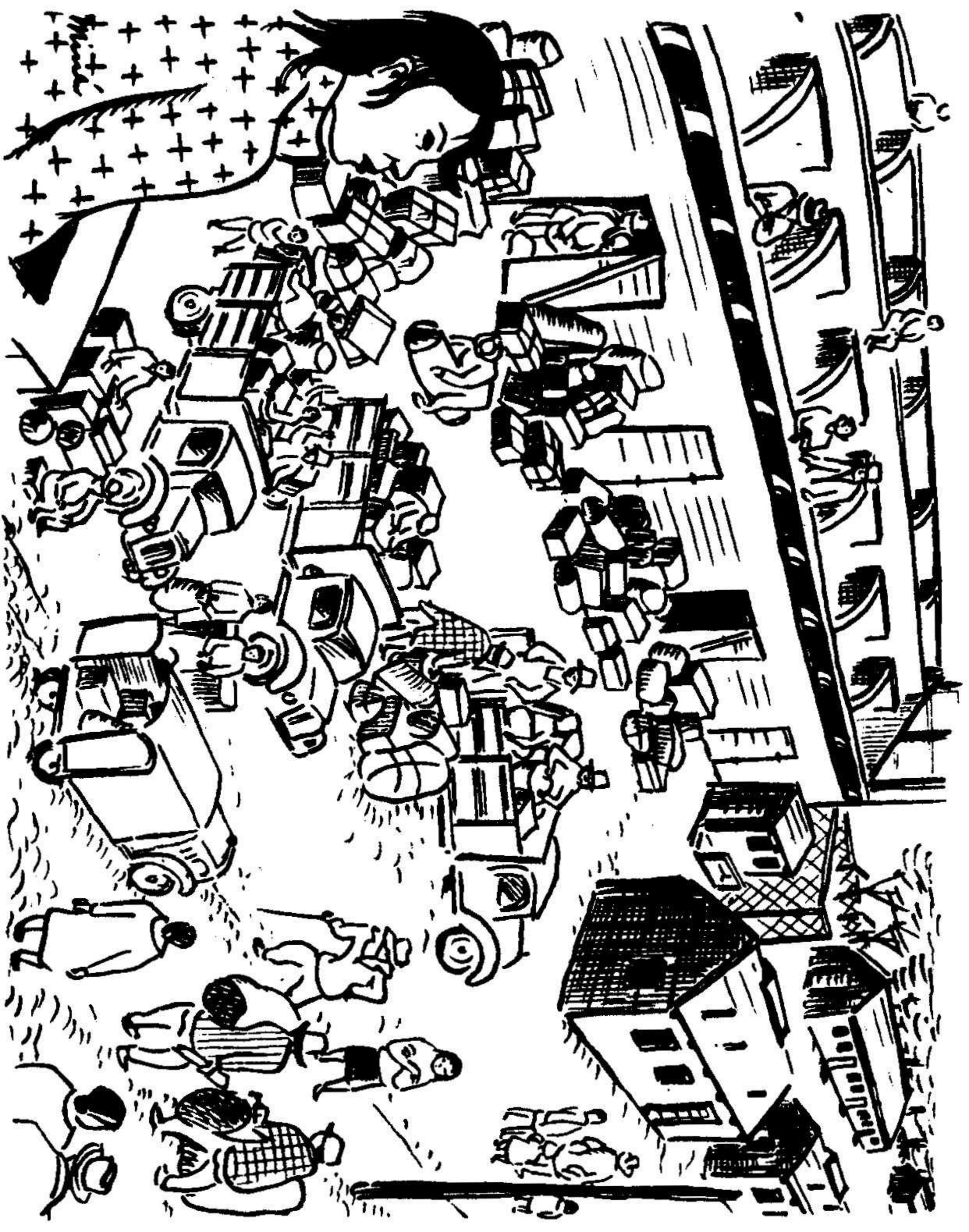


WOMEN, from grandmothers to toddlers, wore slacks or jeans.

W

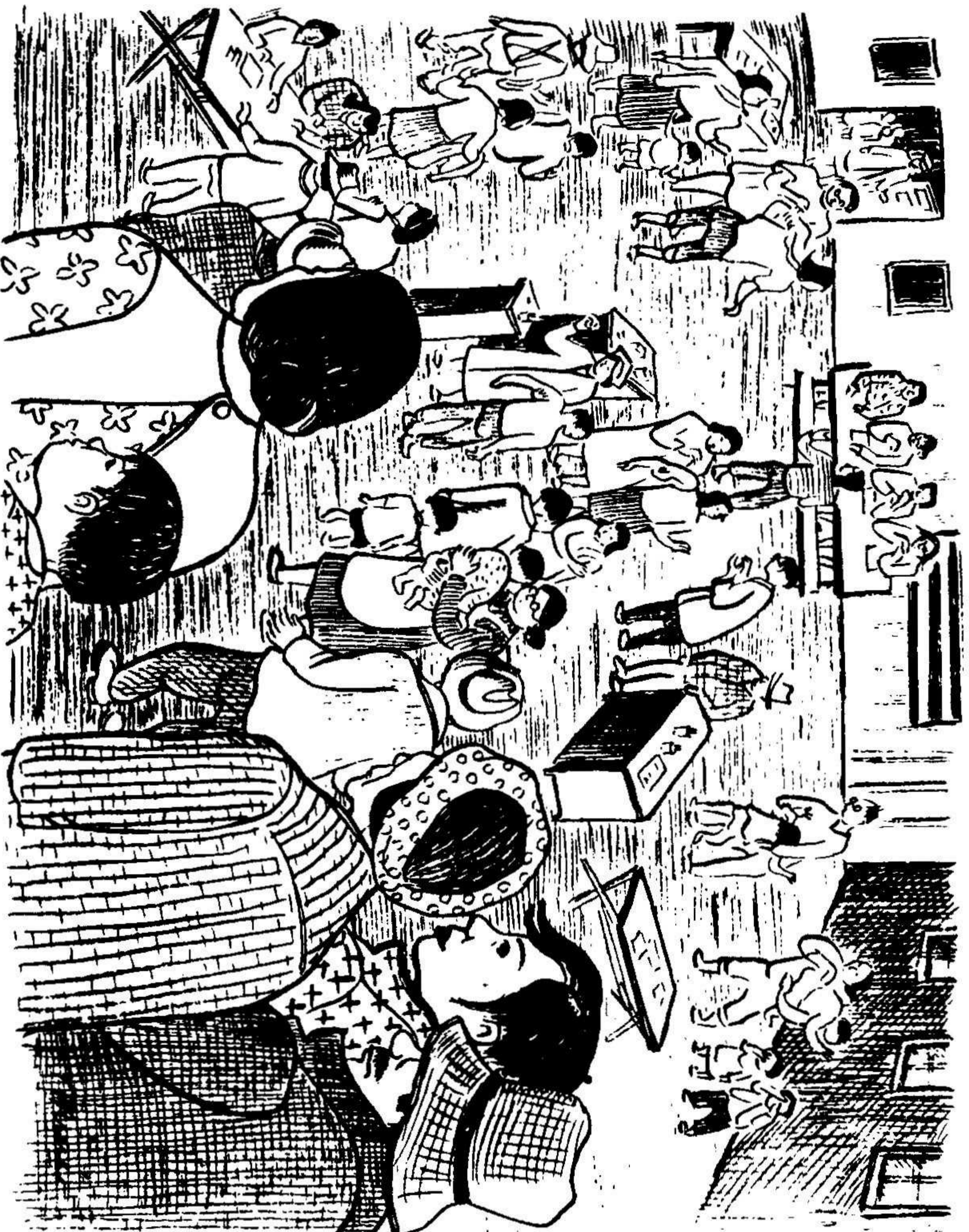


EVACUEES were coming into the center at the rate of three hundred a day. The last group of 274 arrived from San Francisco on May 20, 1942. Every time a group arrived I went out to the grandstand to watch them go through the induction steps I had gone through a couple of weeks earlier. From the grandstand balcony I watched the coming and going of the baggage trucks.

The humor and pathos of the scenes made me decide to keep a record of camp life in sketches and drawings.



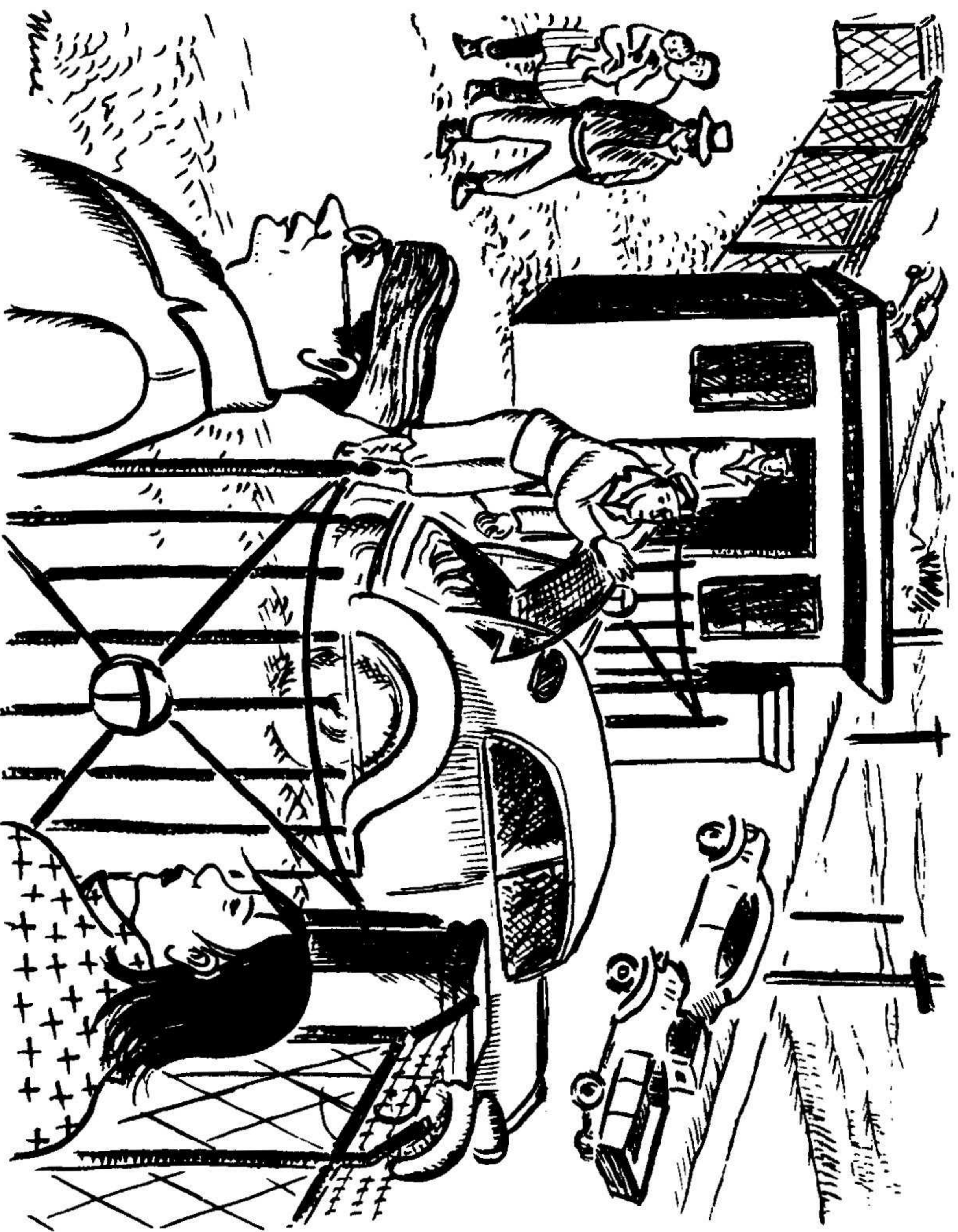
DURING the first month, typhoid and smallpox shots were given at a whole-sale rate. Everyone had to have these vaccinations, while children had others besides. For nights we heard groans in the stable. Almost everyone was sick from the typhoid shots. The baby three stalls from us cried all the time. My brother, having started his inoculations before coming to camp, took his third and final shot. He complained that the final shot was meant for a horse.



THE vaccinations kept the medical staff busy. Evacuee dentists, pharmacists, and optometrists assisted the few doctors and nurses.



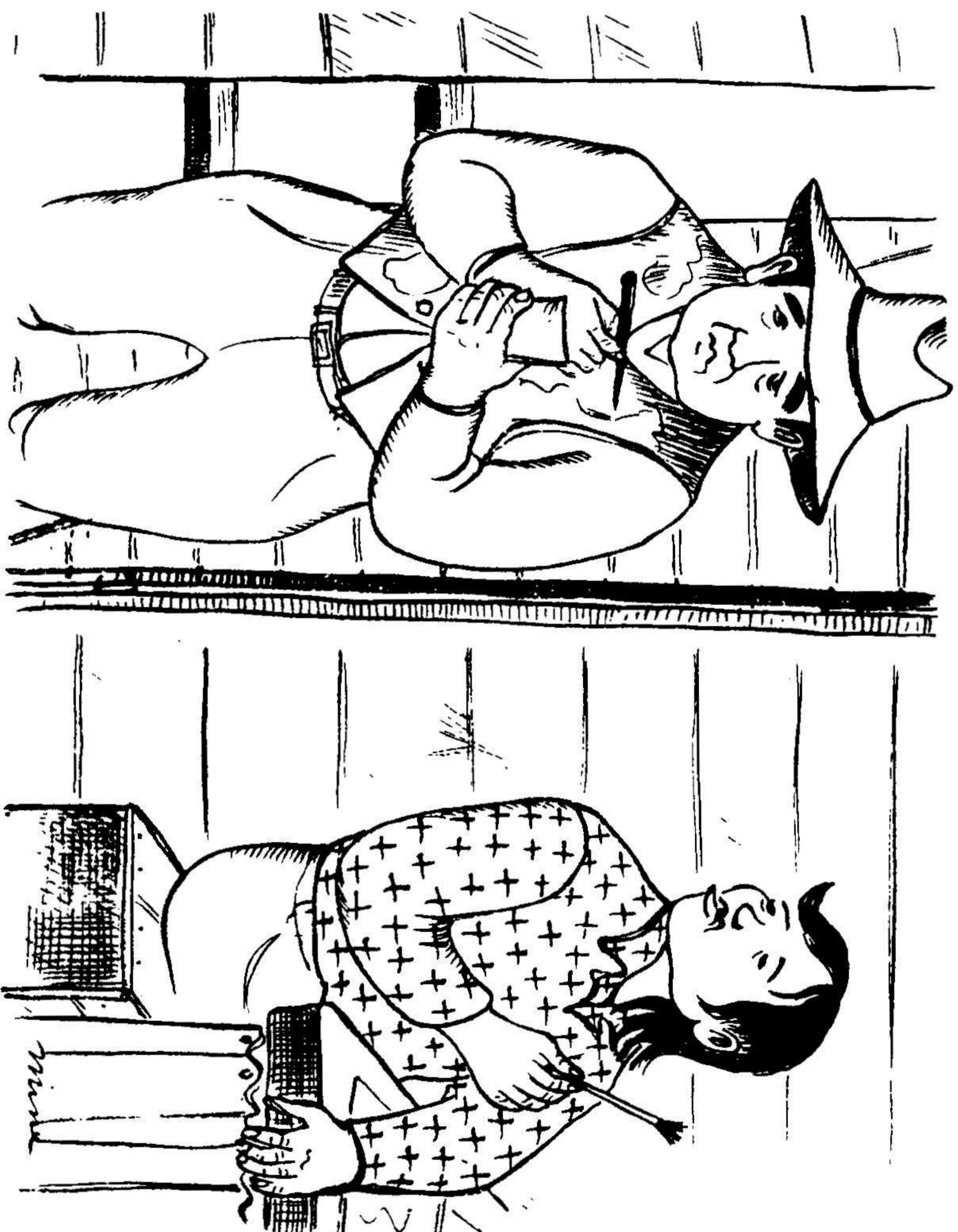
THE weather in Tanforan was fair. It was sunny on most days but always windy and dusty. My stall faced north and the sun never reached it. It was uncomfortable. I had a cold most of the time.



EVERY person leaving or entering the center was searched. No evacuee was permitted to leave the center except in case of emergency or death. Rules were very strict.



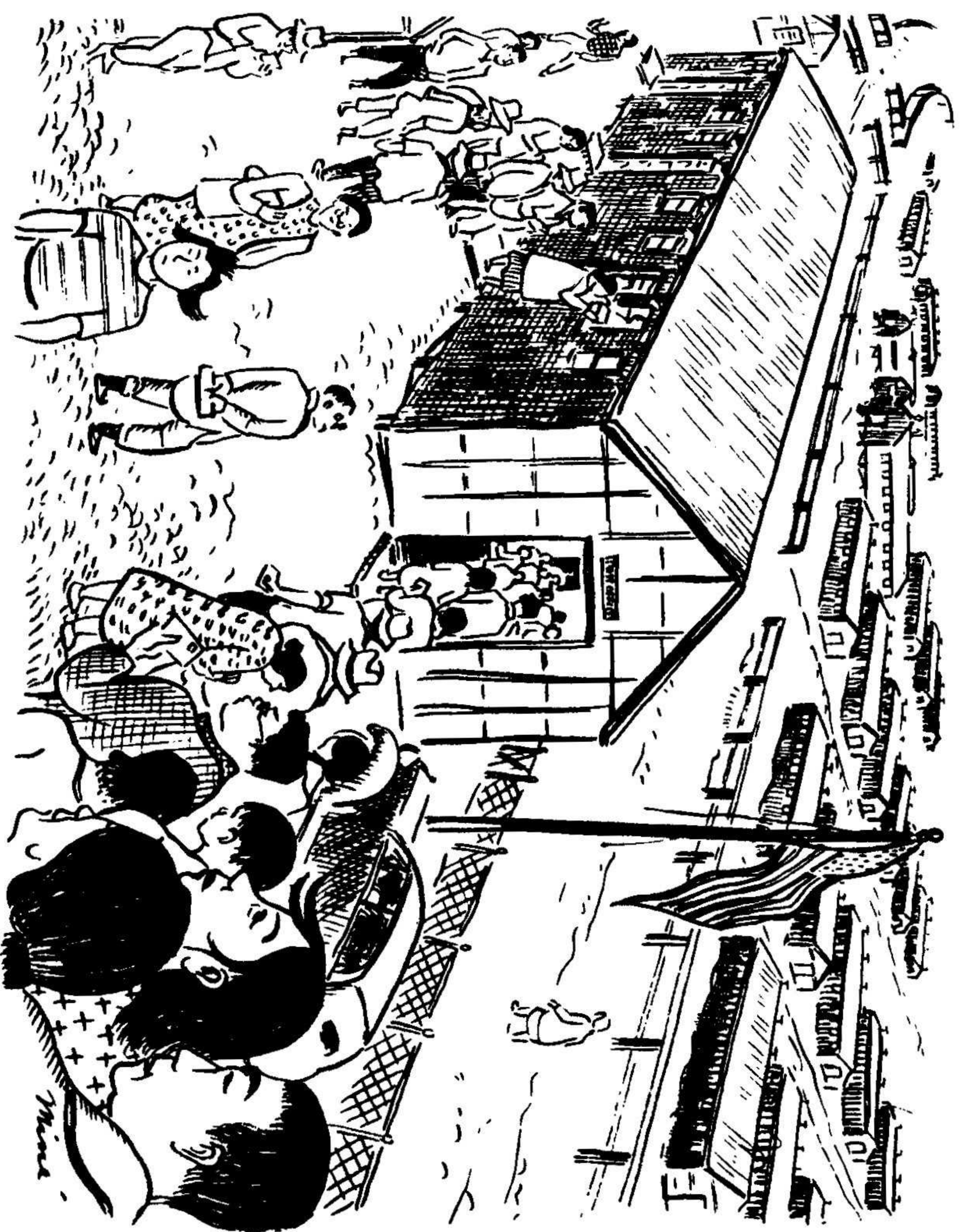
IN case of death, a rickety hearse arrived. Old men sitting in front of the hospital would watch and wonder, "When will my turn come?" Only immediate members of the family were permitted to attend the burial services, under armed guard.



CURFEW was imposed, and roll call was held every day at 6:45 A.M. and at 6:45 P.M. Each barrack had a house captain who made the rounds to check on us twice a day.

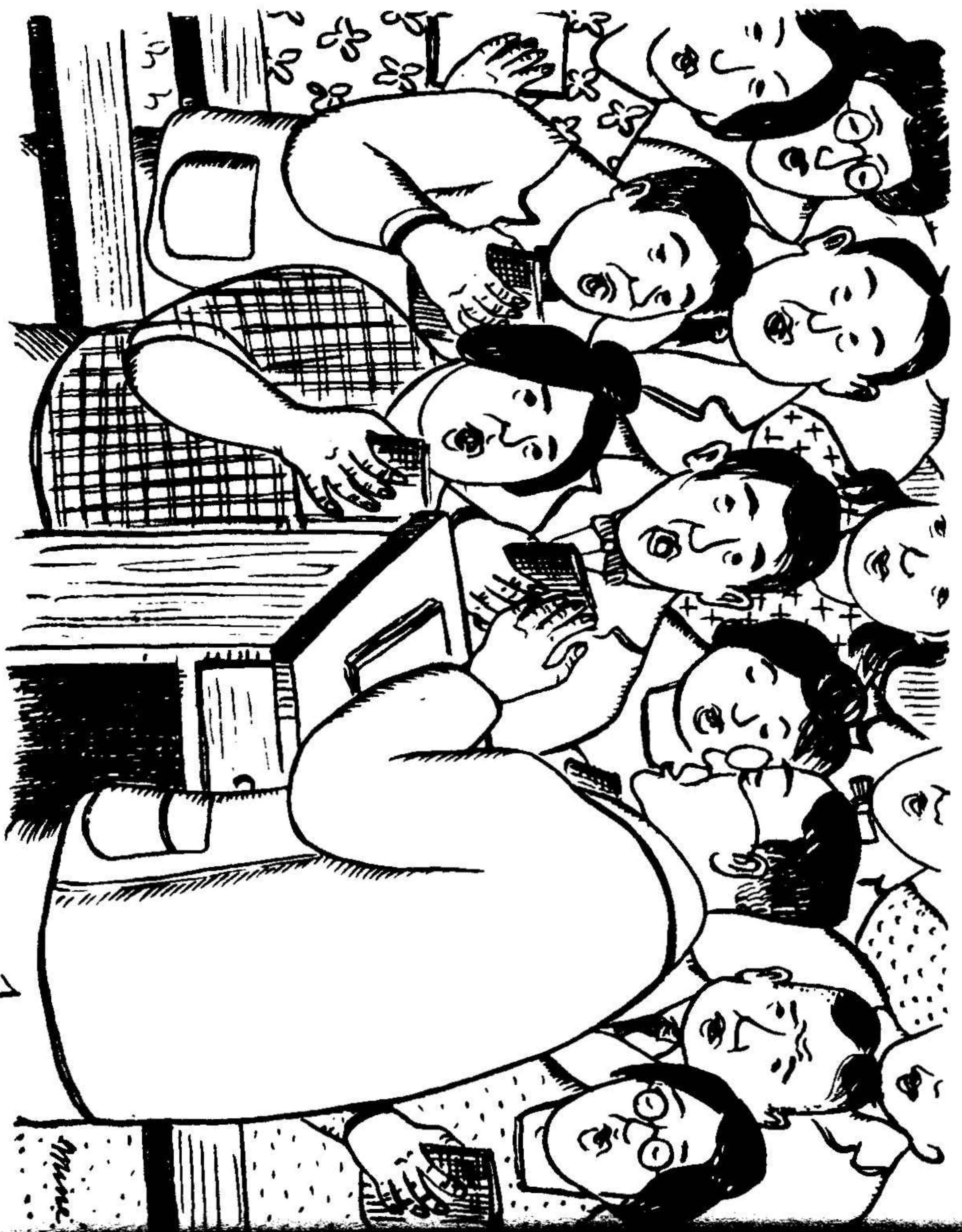


DAY and night Caucasian camp police walked their beats within the center. ("Caucasian" was the camp term for non-evacuee workers.) They were on the lookout for contraband and for suspicious actions.



THE Tanforan post office was one of the busiest places in the center. All packages were inspected. Many of them contained goods ordered from the indispensable Montgomery Ward, and Sears, Roebuck catalogs.

The infrequent letters from my father were always postmarked from a new camp in a different state. Letters from my European friends told me how lucky I was to be free and safe at home.



CHURCHES were early established to bolster the morale of the bewildered and humiliated people. There were Protestant, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, and Buddhist groups.

Another help to morale was the opportunity to work. Jobs of many kinds were open to able-bodied evacuee residents but employment was optional. Most of the adults worked.

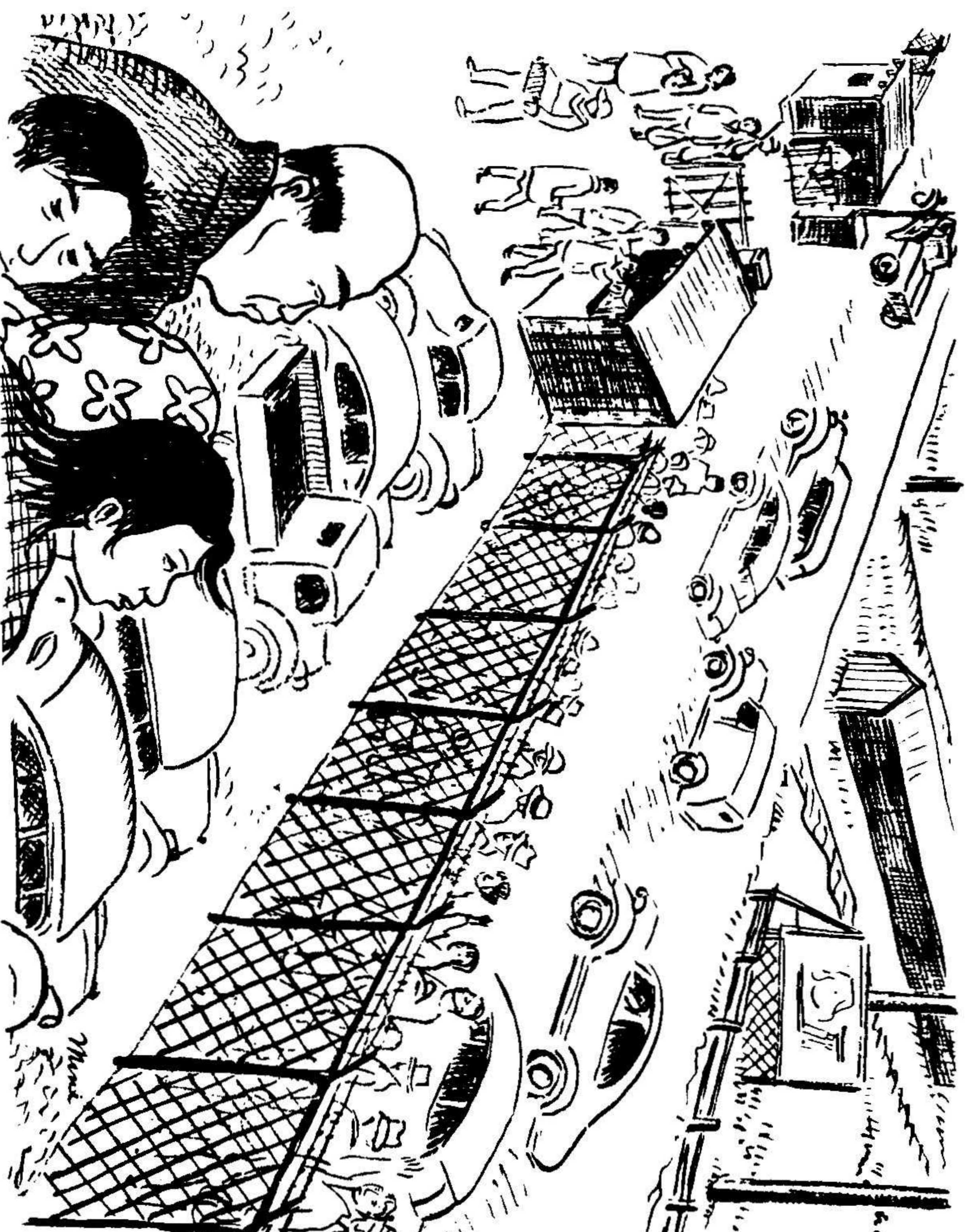
At first we did not receive any wages and we did not know that we would get paid, but as time passed we were told that we would receive the rate of eight, twelve, and sixteen dollars per month for full-time work, depending on the type of work and the skill of the worker. In addition a clothing allowance credit of \$3.75 per month was given each worker and his dependents, with allowances scaled down for children. The smallest of the first pay checks were for four cents; it cost ten cents to cash them.



NEARLY four hundred bachelors were housed in the grandstand "dorm." They slept and snored, dressed and undressed, in one continuous public performance. Some built "walls of Jericho" of sheets or blankets.

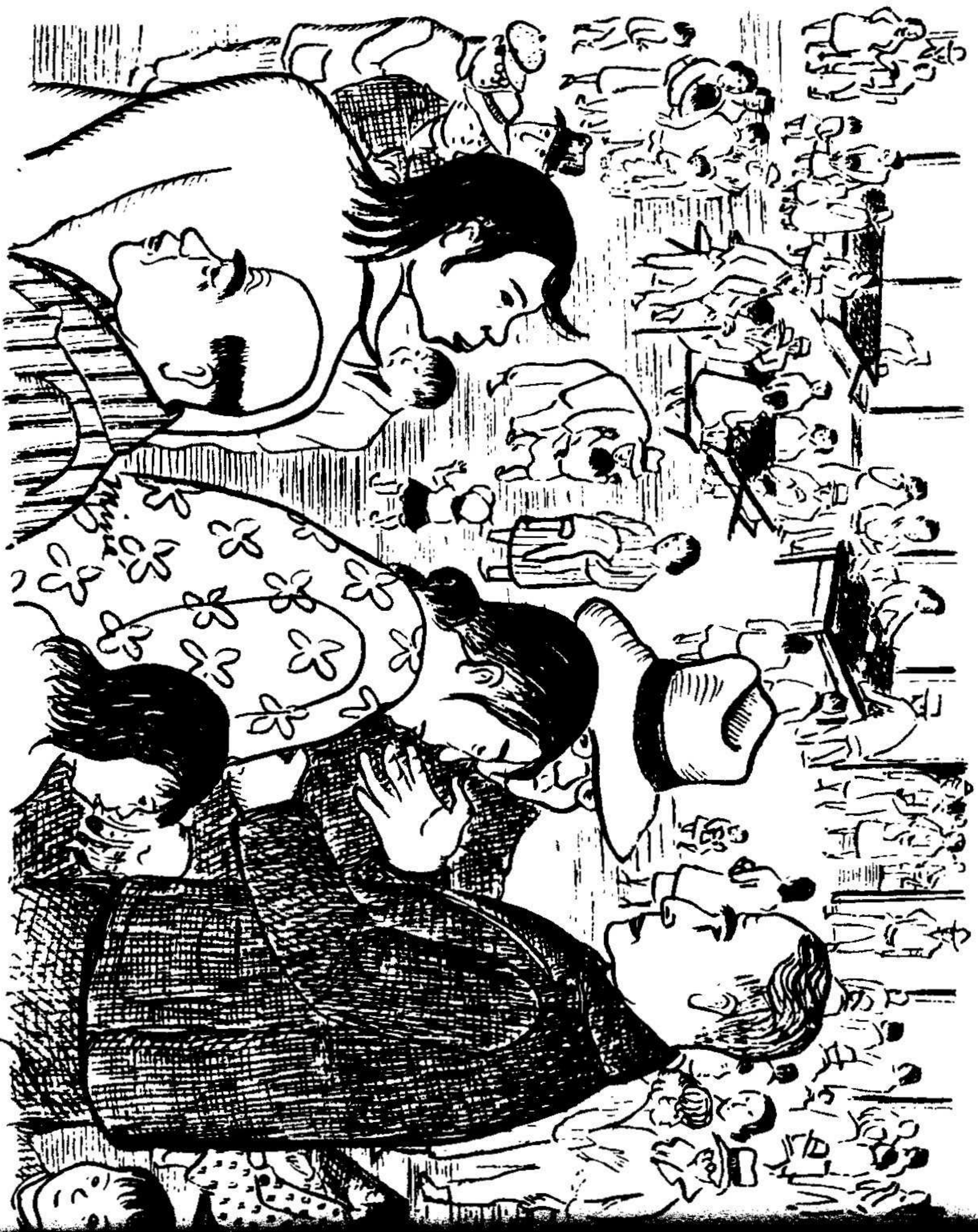


THE sewage system was poor. They were always digging up the camp to locate and fix the stoppages and leaks in the pipes. The stench from the stagnant sewage was terrible.

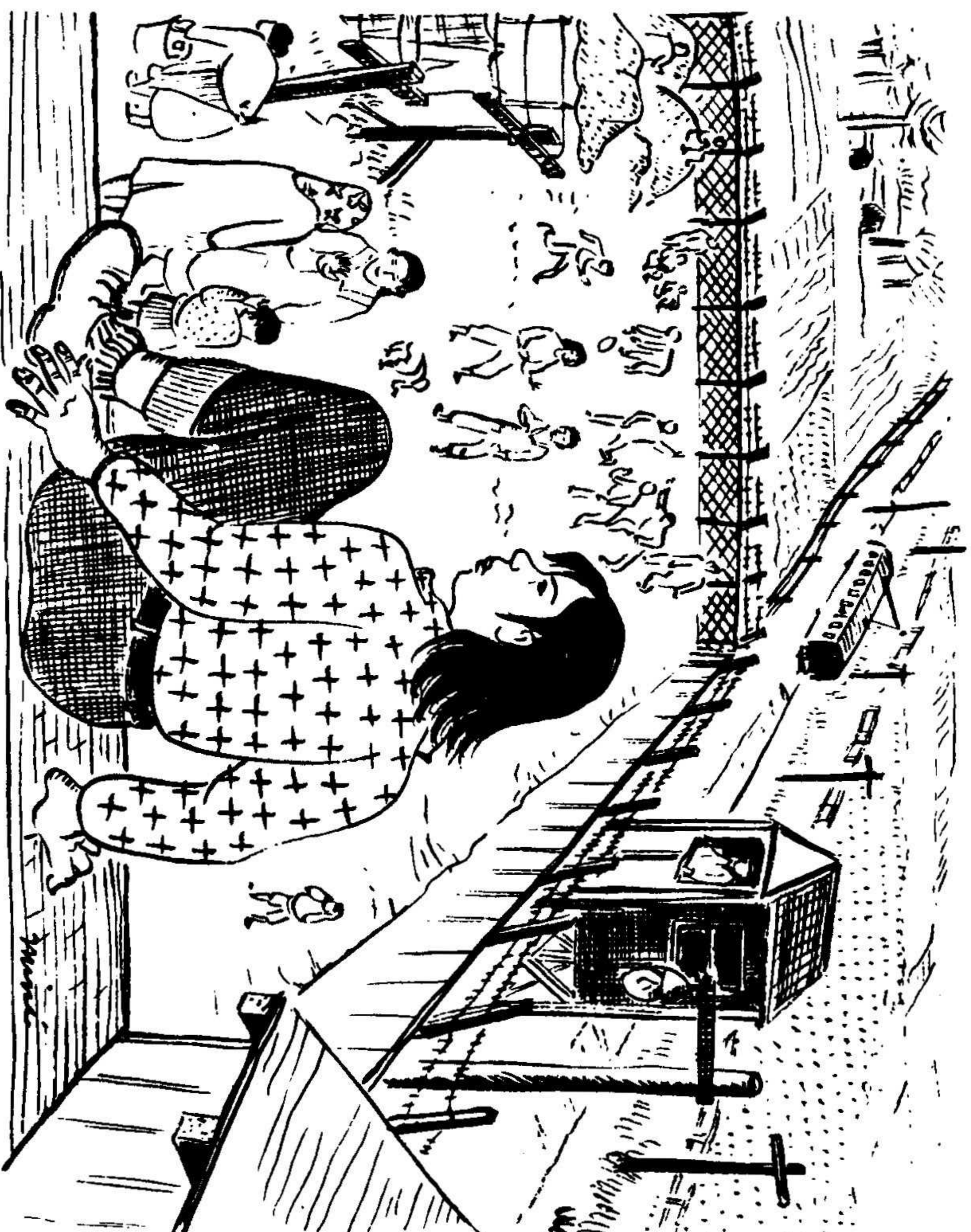


RESIDENTS were allowed to receive visitors in the grandstand from ten to twelve in the mornings and from one to four in the afternoons. The orders in the centers were strict, and much red tape was involved in getting a visitor's pass. The line of visitors was gaped at by passing motorists.

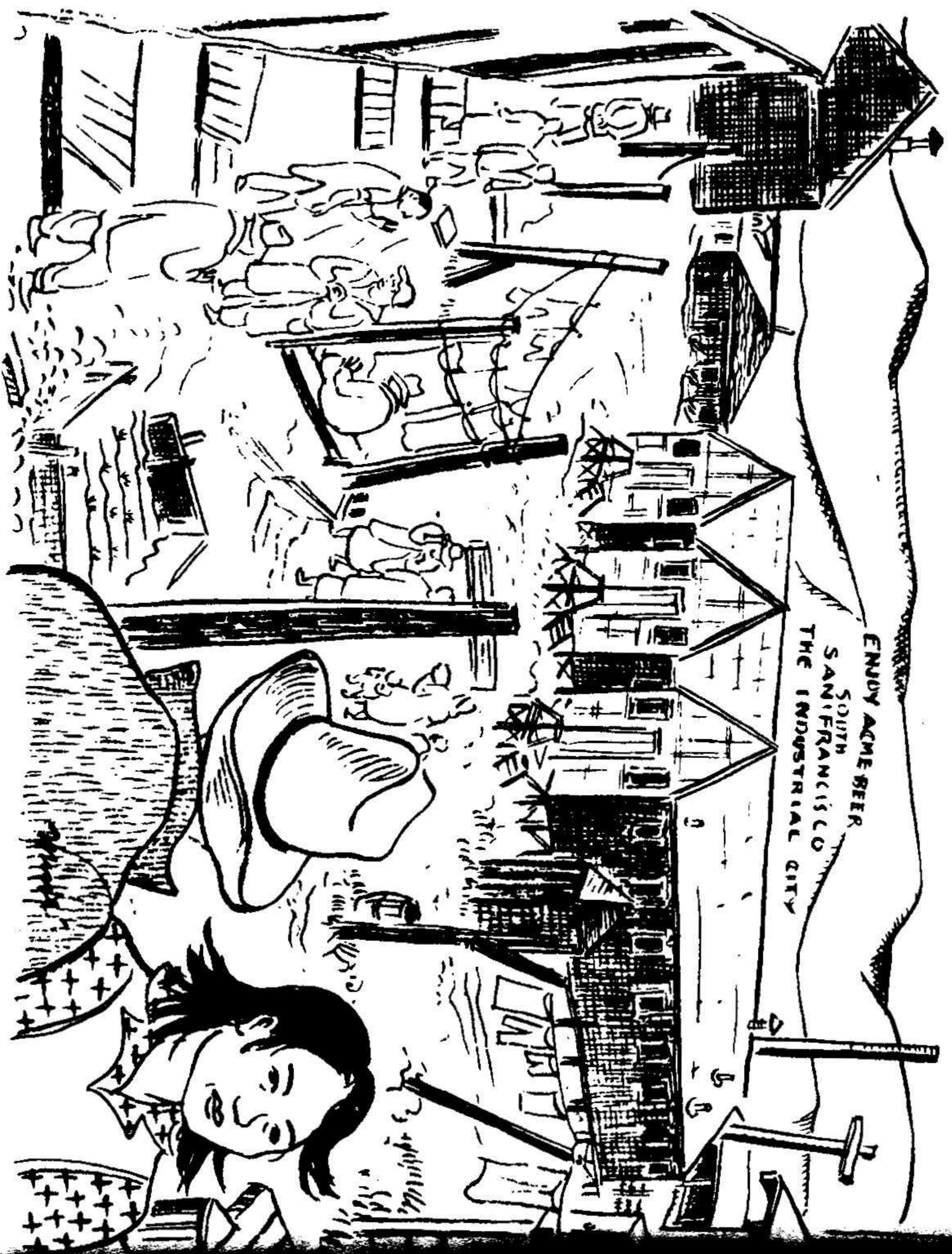
Friends often brought me food. One day a friend brought a Chinese meal, including my favorite egg-flower soup. After three hours of waiting in line he was finally admitted at the gate. He greeted me with a dripping carton. "Here is your egg flower—the soup is on my pants." After this I discouraged friends from bringing food. In fact I discouraged them from trying to visit me.



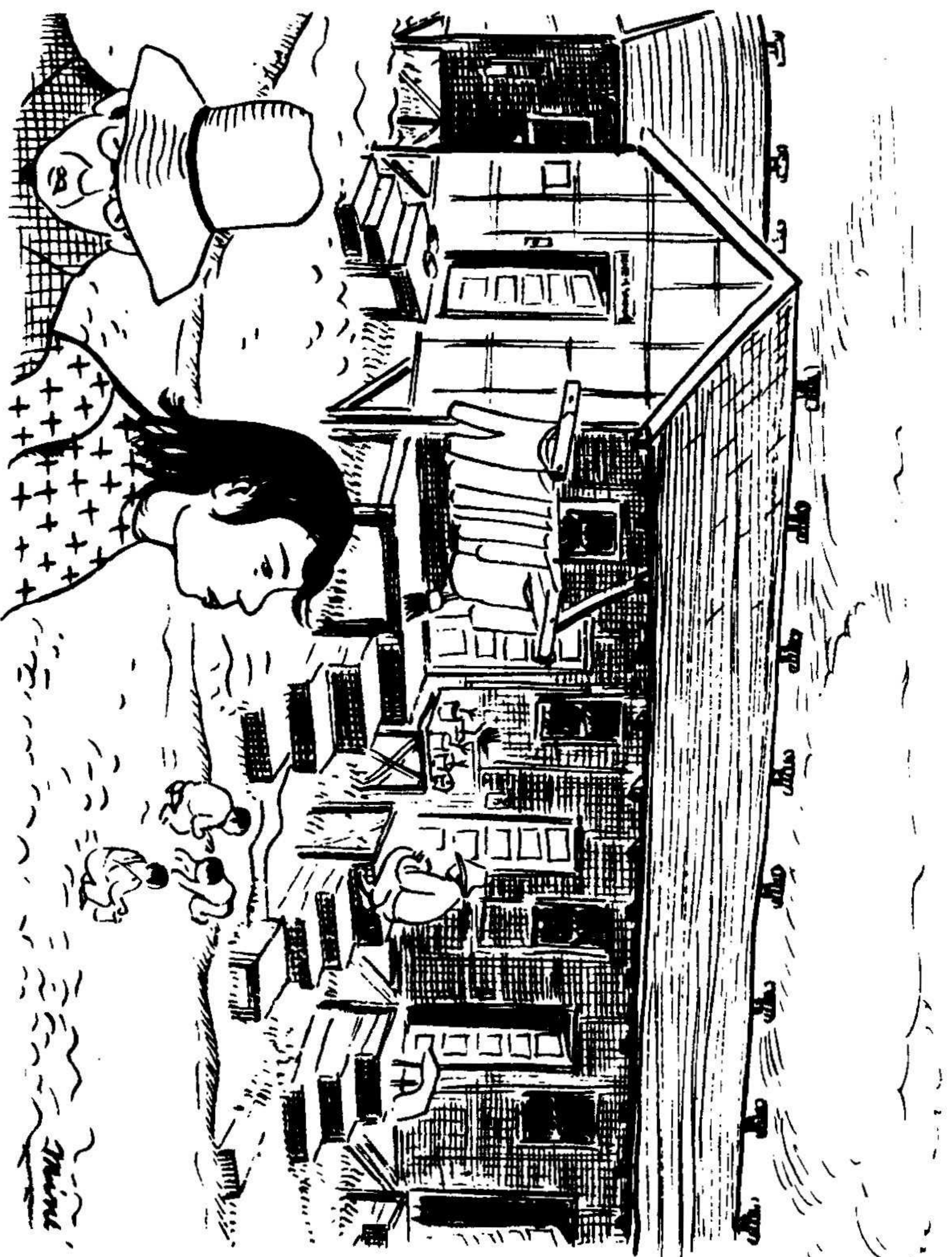
AT some of the centers, residents were allowed only to talk to visitors through a wire fence. At Tanforan a room on top of the grandstand was reserved for receiving visitors. Children under sixteen years of age were not allowed to visit the center. Pets that had been left behind with friends were also barred.



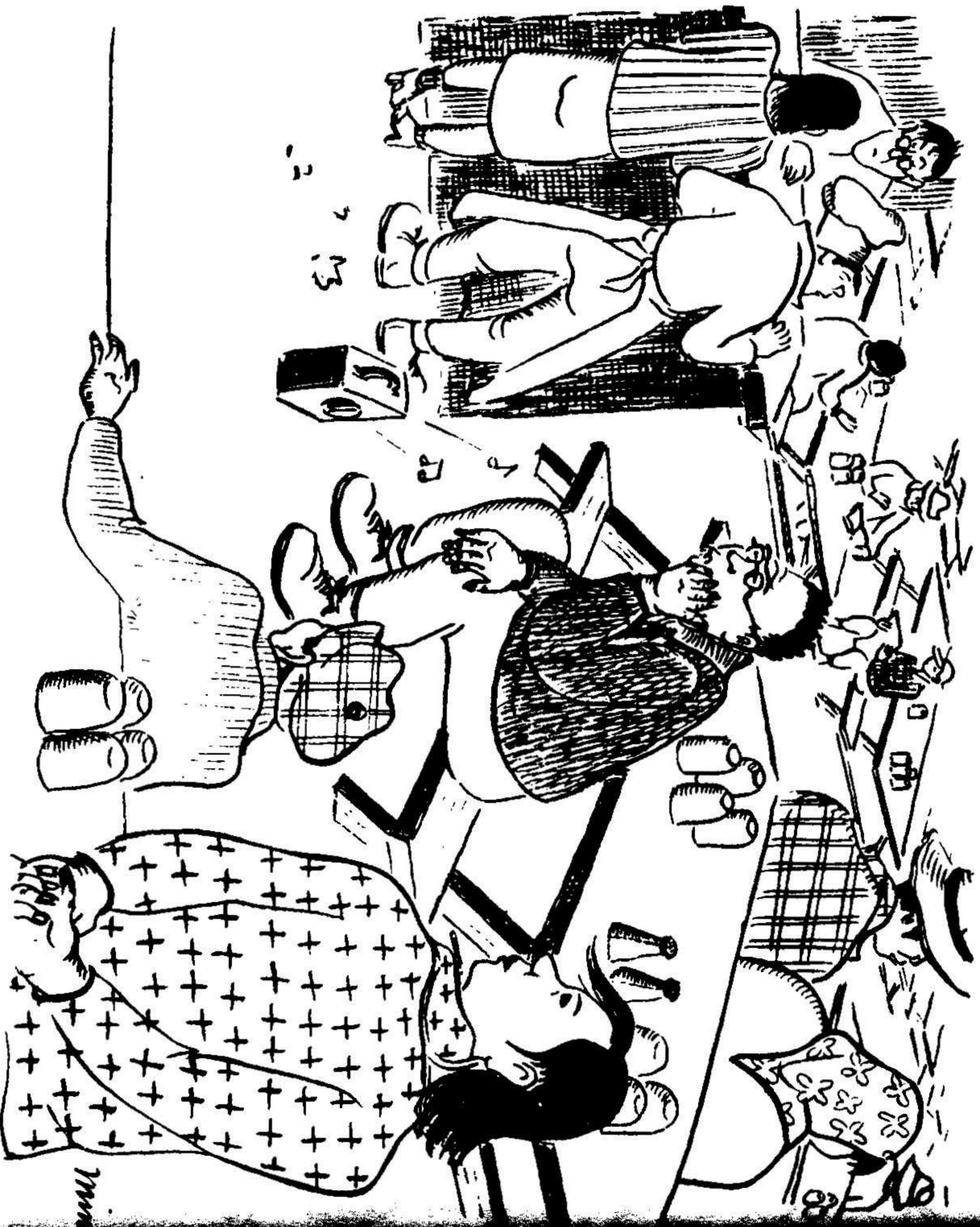
WE were close to freedom and yet far from it. The San Bruno streetcar line bordered the camp on the east and the main state highway on the south. Streams of cars passed by all day. Guard towers and barbed wire surrounded the entire center. Guards were on duty night and day.



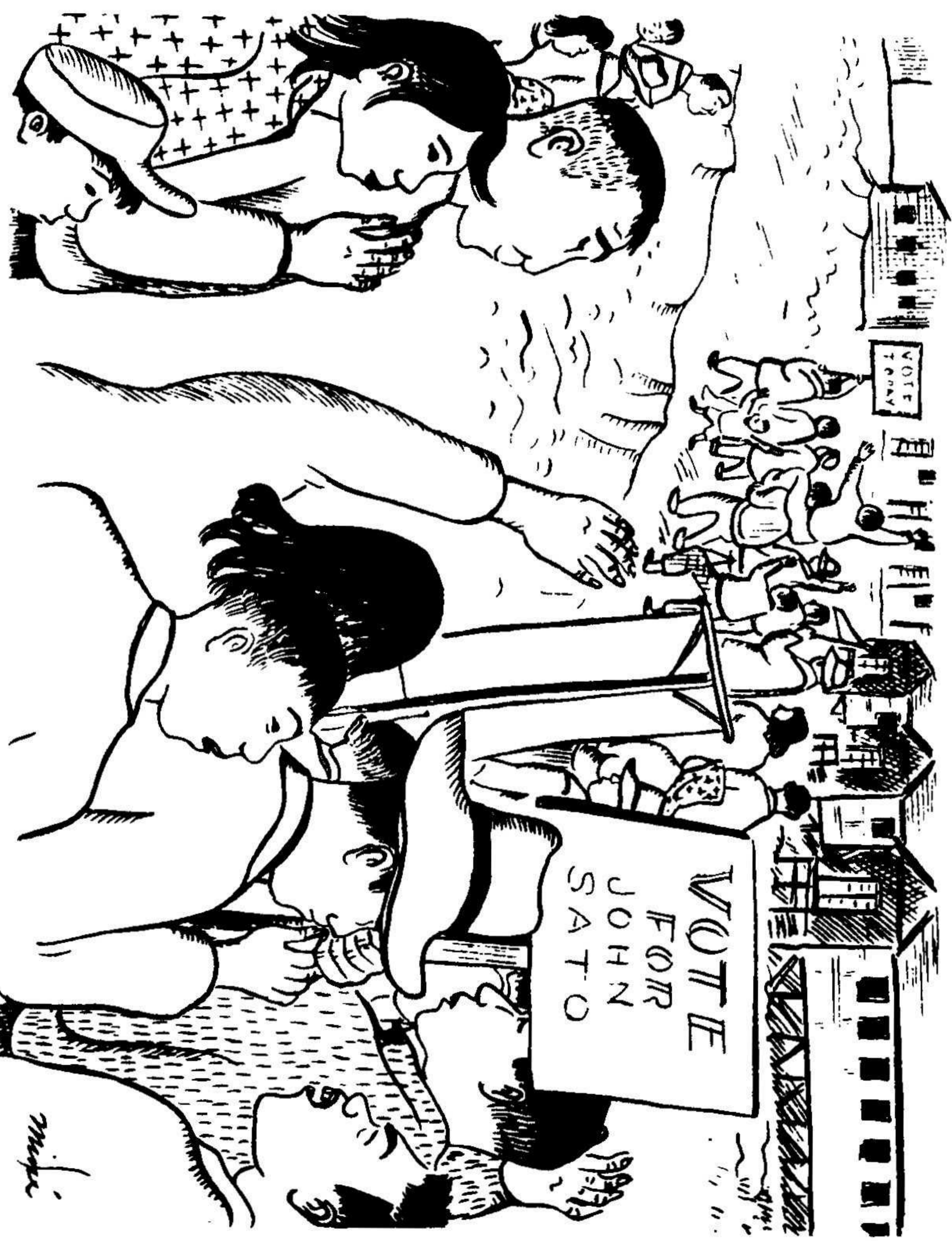
A huge sign, "Enjoy Acme Beer," stood out like a beacon on a nearby hill. The sign was clearly visible from every section of the camp and was quite a joke to the thirsty evacuees, especially on the warm days.



ON the barracks in the center field and on the stalls, ingenious family name plates and interesting signs were displayed with great pride. All signs in Japanese were ordered removed, but many fancy names, such as Inner Sanctum, Stall Inn, and Sea Biscuit, lent a touch of humor to the situation. To discourage visitors, I nailed a quarantine sign on my door.



IN the grandstand mess hall, even when no meal was in progress, people sat around for hours.

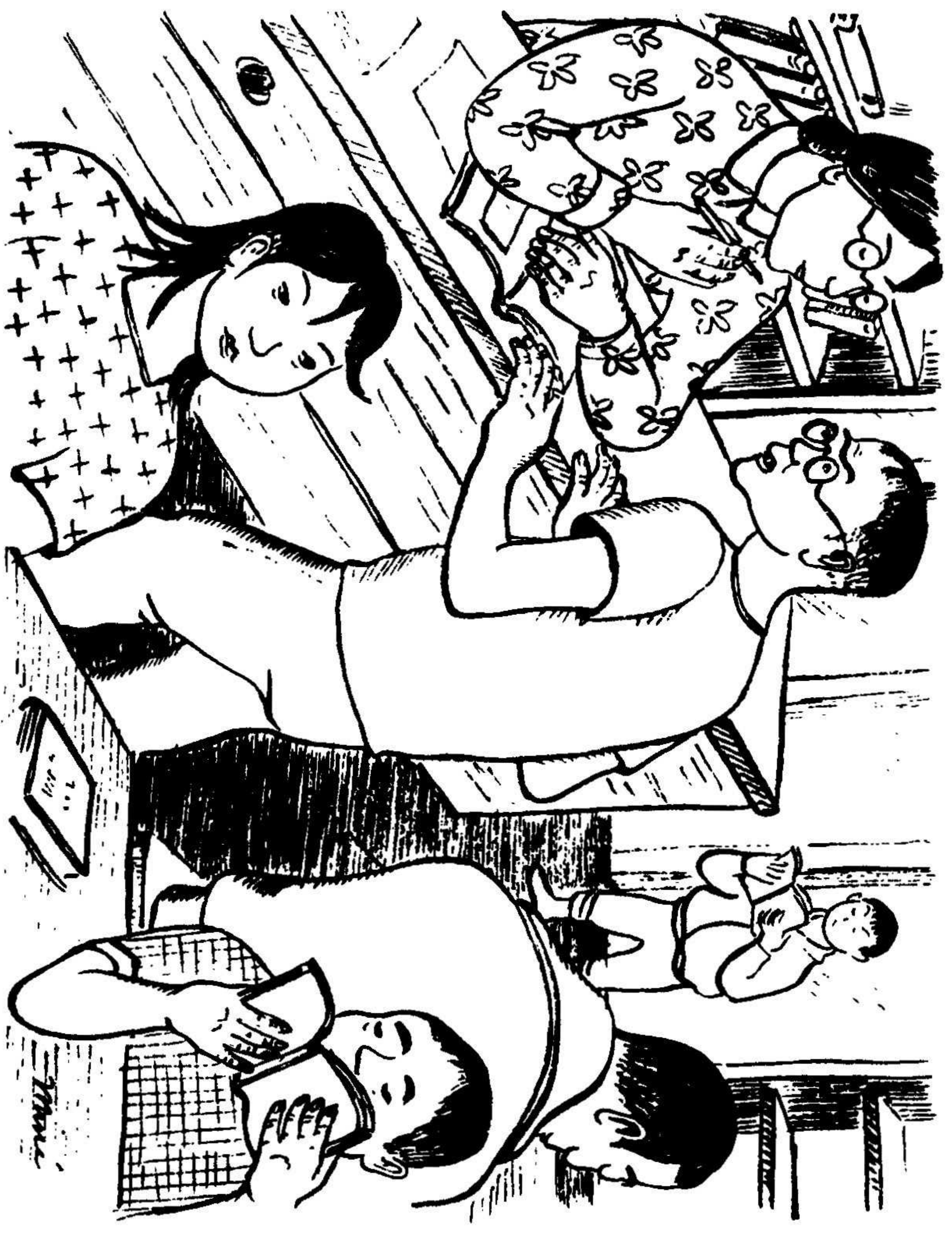


IN Tanforan Assembly Center a movement for self-government was started by the evacuees. They organized a campaign complete with slogans and rallies to elect an official Center Advisory Council. The election gave the Issei their first chance to vote along with their citizen offspring. But army orders later limited self-government offices and votes to American citizens. To our disappointment, in August an army order dissolved all Assembly Center self-government bodies.



SCHOOLS were late in opening and difficult to organize because of the lack of buildings and necessary supplies. Volunteer evacuee teachers were used. Classroom discipline was poor. There were special adult classes in Americanization, history, sewing, art, and music. Preschools were very important in the center. Busy parents were assured that their children would have good care and good training. These schools were an effective counterinfluence to the bad atmosphere of the camp.

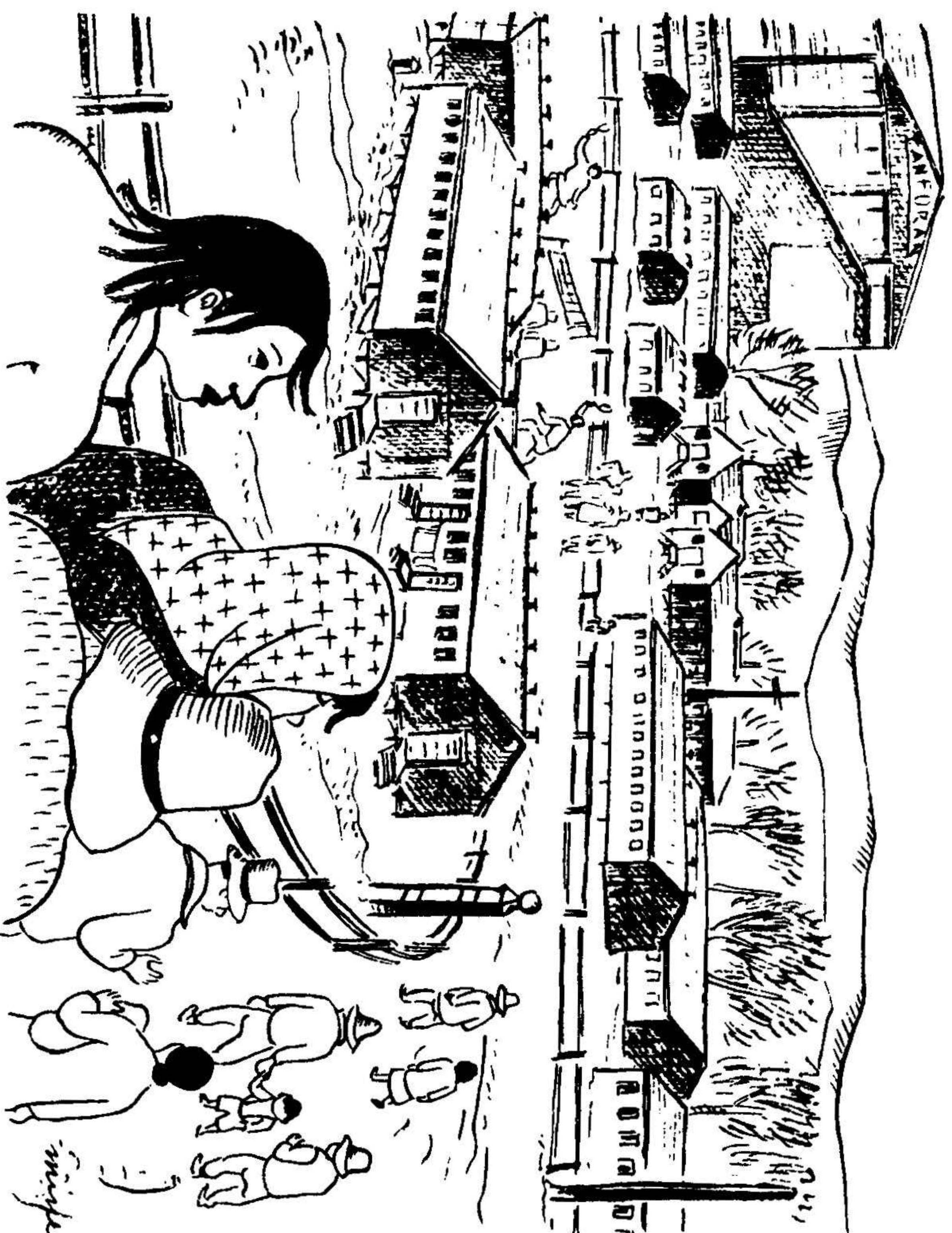
In Tanforan I was an art instructor. I had elementary classes and college classes, and worked 44 hours a week for \$16 a month.



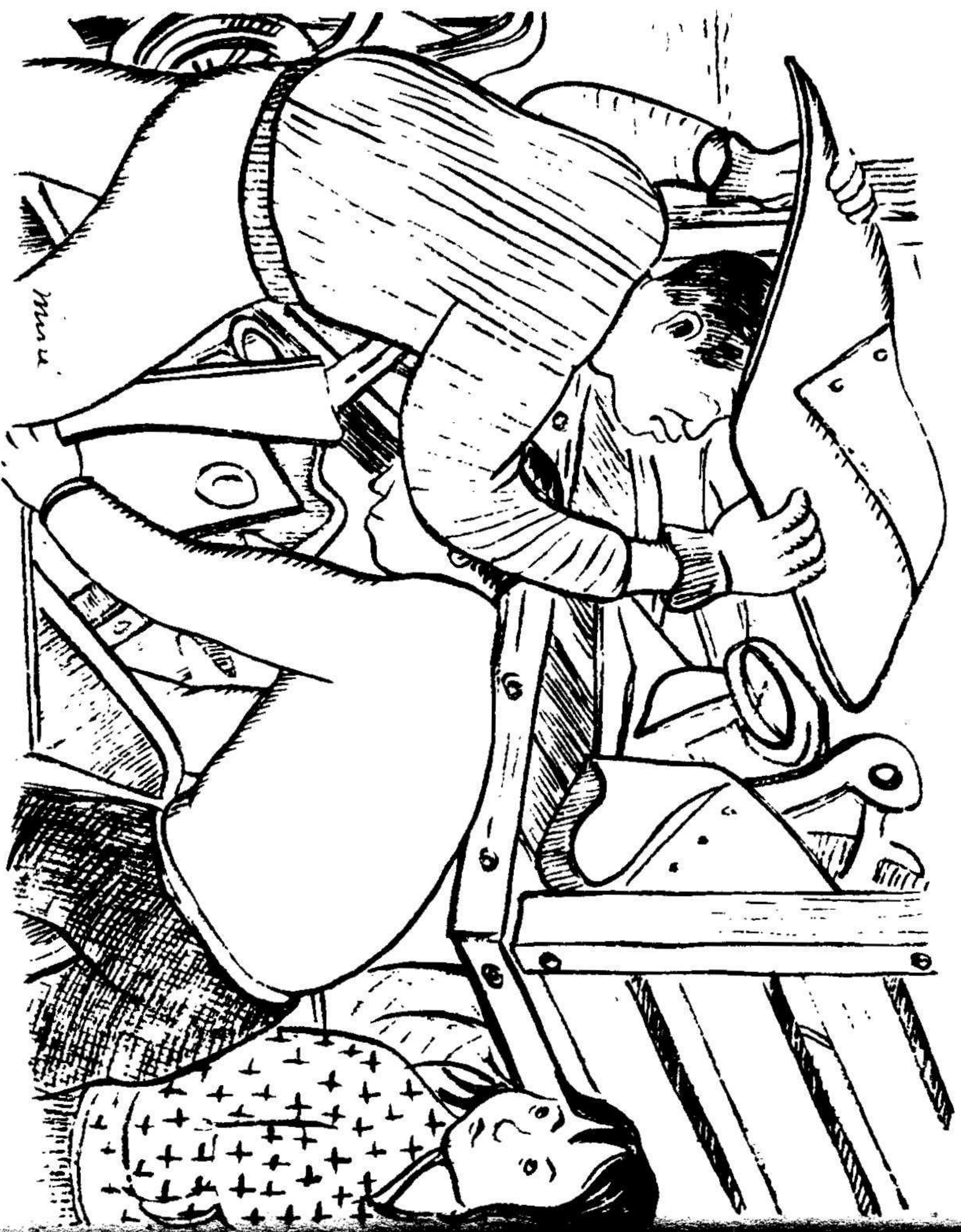
THE library opened with sixty-five books. A great many magazine and book donations came from "outside" to help build a substantial library in the center.



RUMORS of all kinds were quickly picked up and quickly spread. One of the wildest was that the San Francisco Bay Bridge had been blown up.



ON a stroll around the track all kinds of amusing scenes greeted us. Trying to forget, people occupied themselves in games and sports or in just staring up at the sky.

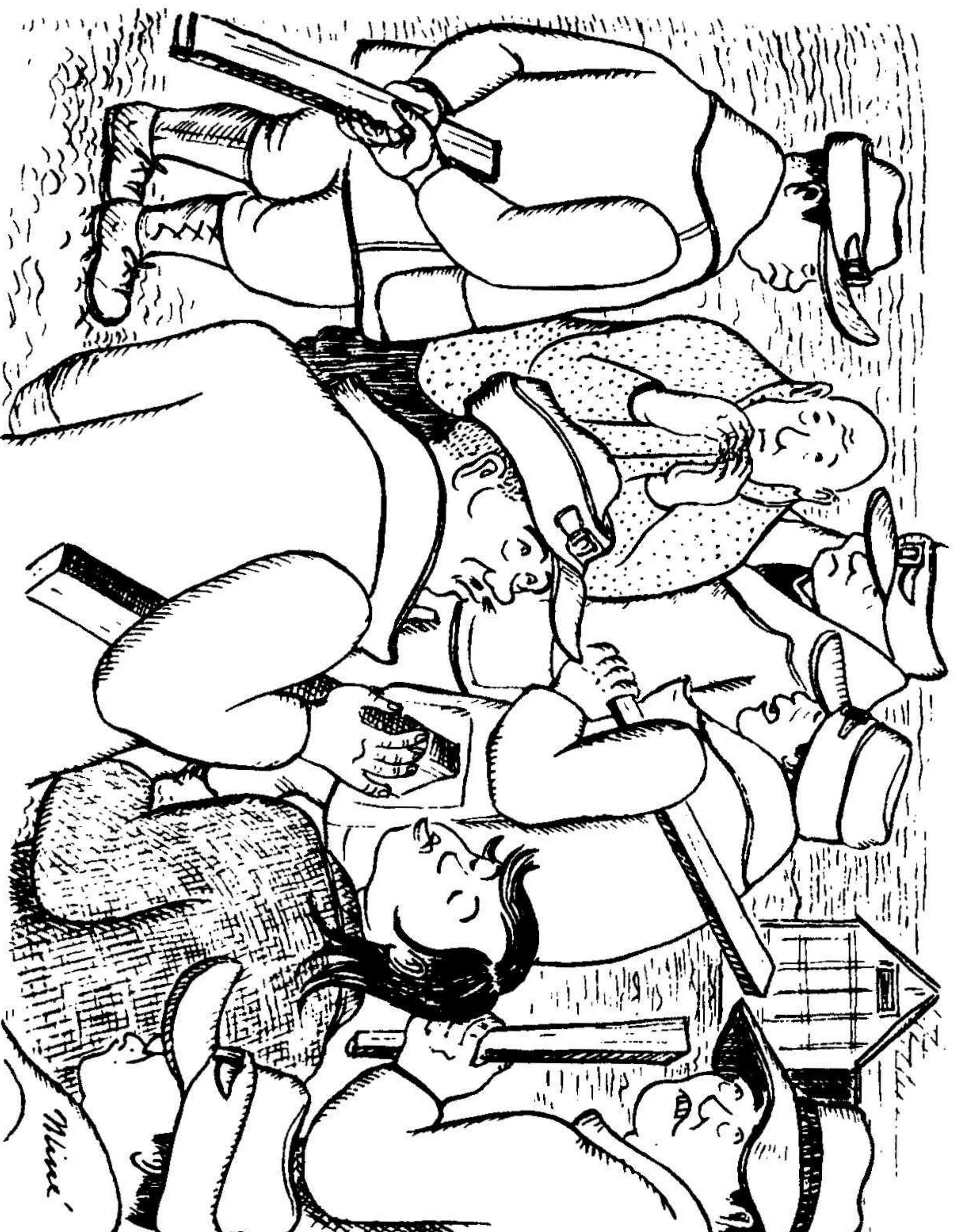


THERE were scrap-metal drives, bond sales, Red Cross drives, and blood donations to help us keep up with the outside world.



ON January 29, 1943, President Roosevelt announced that volunteers would be accepted in a Japanese American combat unit. A recruiting team came to the center, and a printed form was submitted to all men of military age. It contained 28 questions to determine loyalty and willingness to fight. Question 28 read: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign power or organization?"

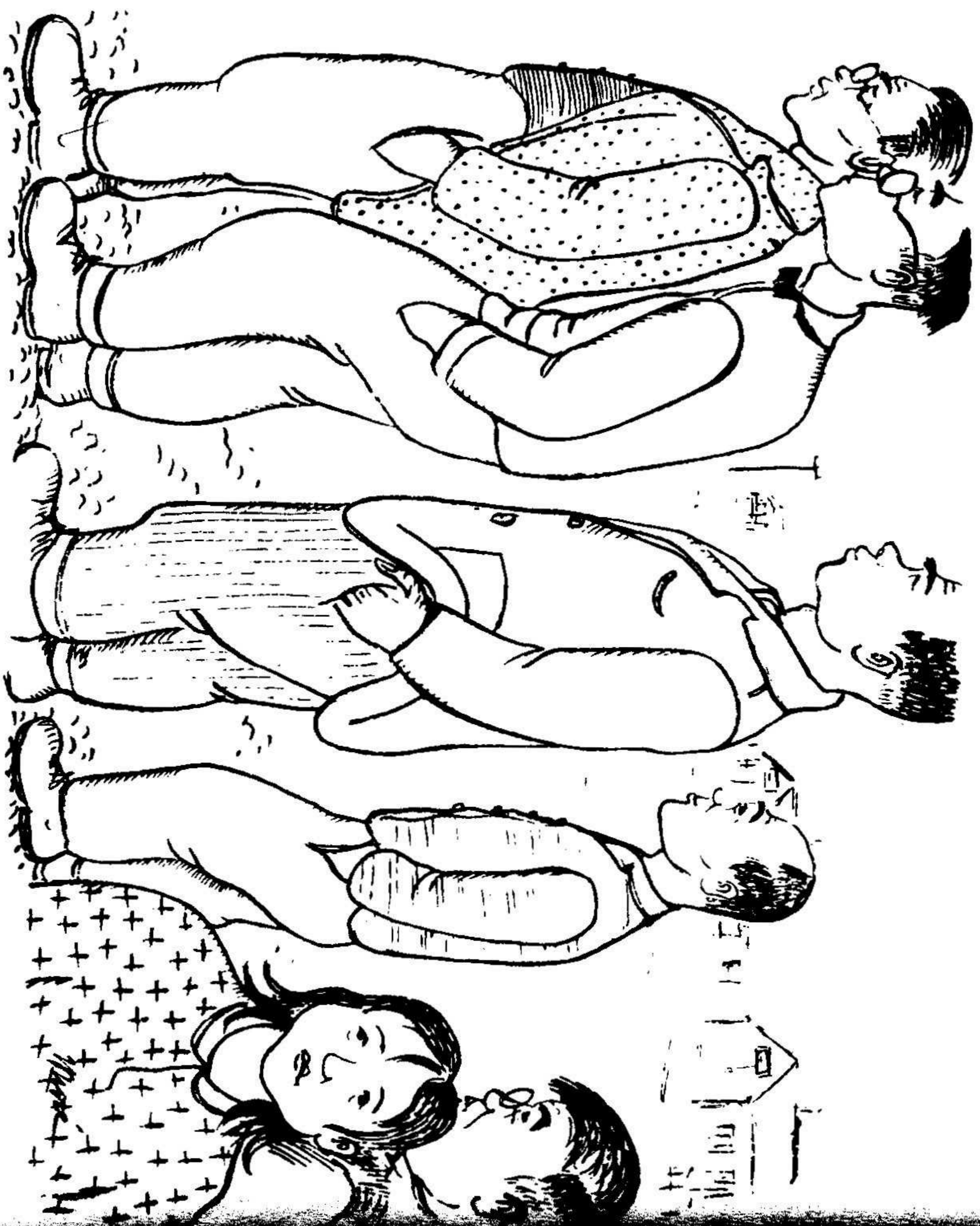
At the same time, the War Relocation Authority, yielding to increasing pressure, decided to conduct a general registration of all persons in the camp seventeen years of age or older. To determine their loyalty, Question 28 was used. It brought about a dilemma. Aliens (Issei) would be in a difficult position if they renounced Japanese citizenship and thereby made themselves stateless persons.



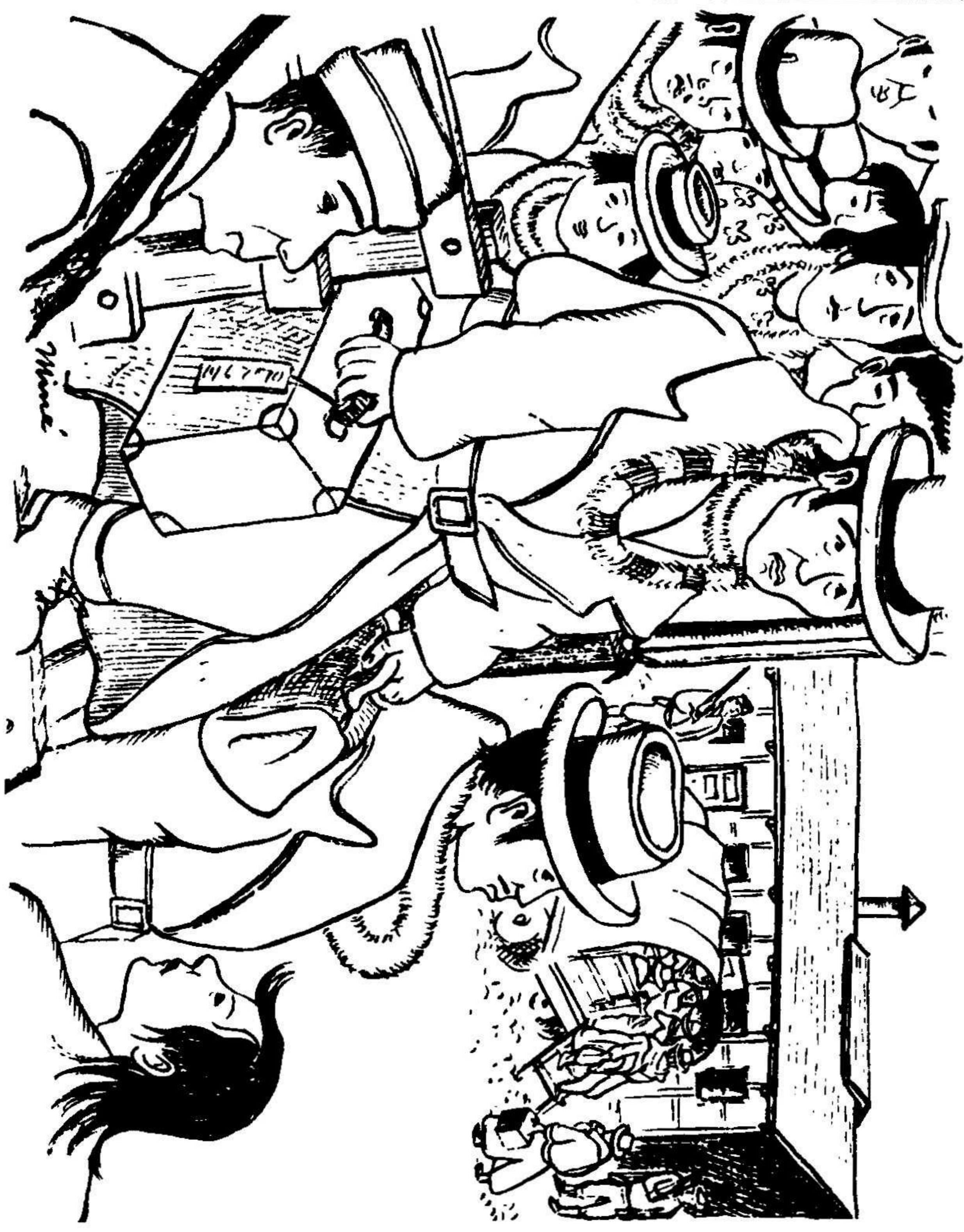
STRONGLY pro-Japanese leaders in the camp won over the fence-sitters and tried to intimidate the rest. In the end, however, everybody registered. On the basis of the answers (plus further investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation), the "disloyal" were finally weeded out for eventual segregation and the "loyal" were later granted "leave clearance"—the right to leave camp, find a job, and "relocate."

Many of the Nisei also resented the question because of the assumption that their loyalty might be divided; it was confusing that their loyalty to the United States should be questioned at the moment when the army was asking them to volunteer.

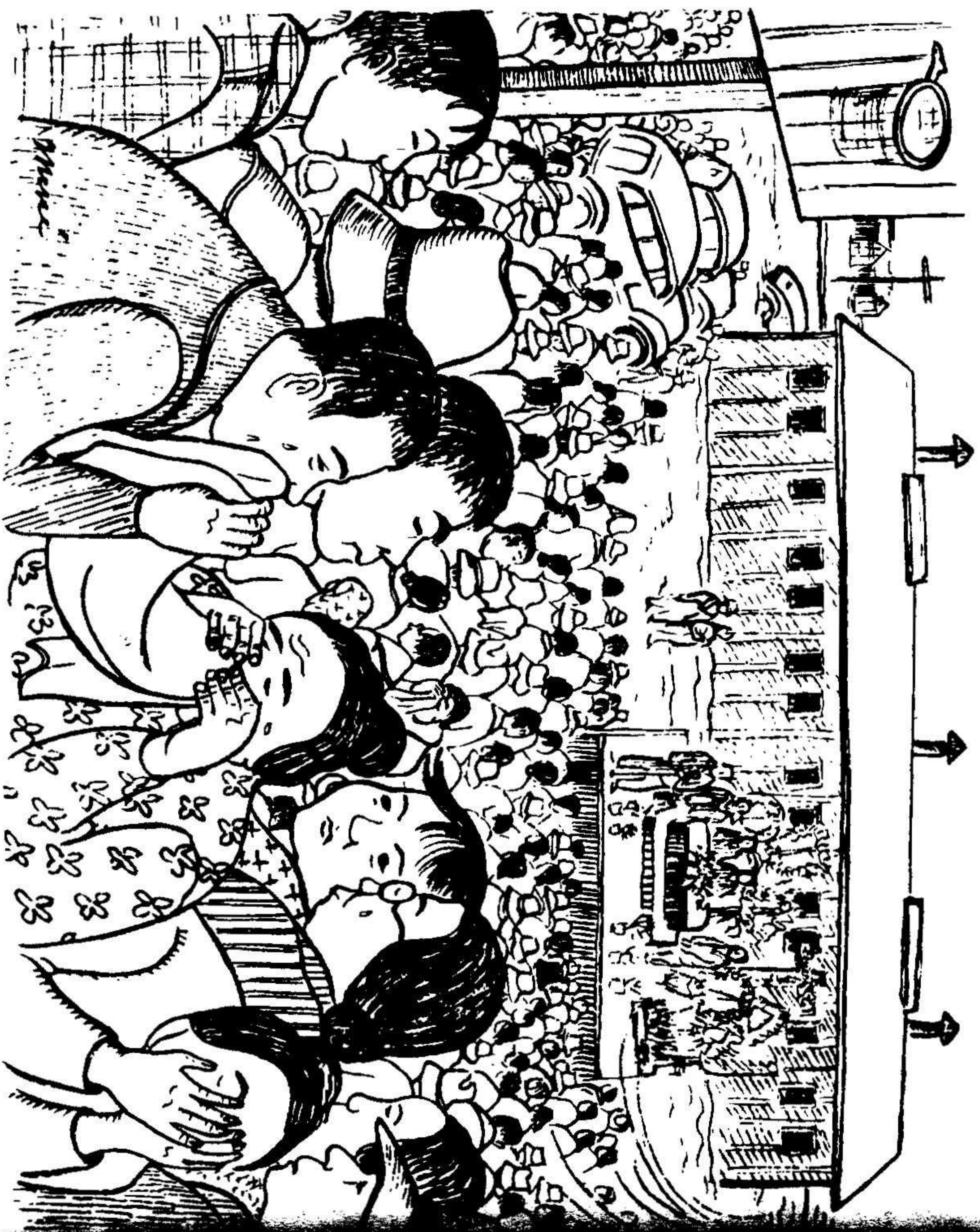
The registration form was long and complicated. The questions were difficult to understand and answer. Center-wide meetings were held, and the anti-administration rabble rousers skillfully fanned the misunderstandings.



DESPITE the registration misunderstandings and the threats, 105 young men were accepted for service in the Japanese American Combat Team, out of the many—including aliens—who volunteered. Our university friend was one of the 105.



THE excitement of registration had just begun to subside when 230 evacuees from Hawaii arrived to take up residence in Block 1. The travel-weary people were greeted with cold Topazian stares. Even the welcoming notes of a small band died away as the pathetic procession alighted from army trucks. The men looked like turtles in their outsize khaki coats. The bright leis around their necks gave the scene an incongruously festive air. There were few women and children in the group.



A few weeks later the Wakasa case stirred up the center. An elderly resident was shot and killed within the center area inside the fence, by a guard in one of the watchtowers. Particulars and facts of the matter were never satisfactorily disclosed to the residents. The anti-administration leaders again started to howl and the rest of the residents shouted for protection against soldiers with guns. As a result, the guards were later removed to the rim of the outer project area and firearms were banned.



AN impressive memorial service was held for the unfortunate victim. The women of each block made enormous floral wreaths with paper flowers.



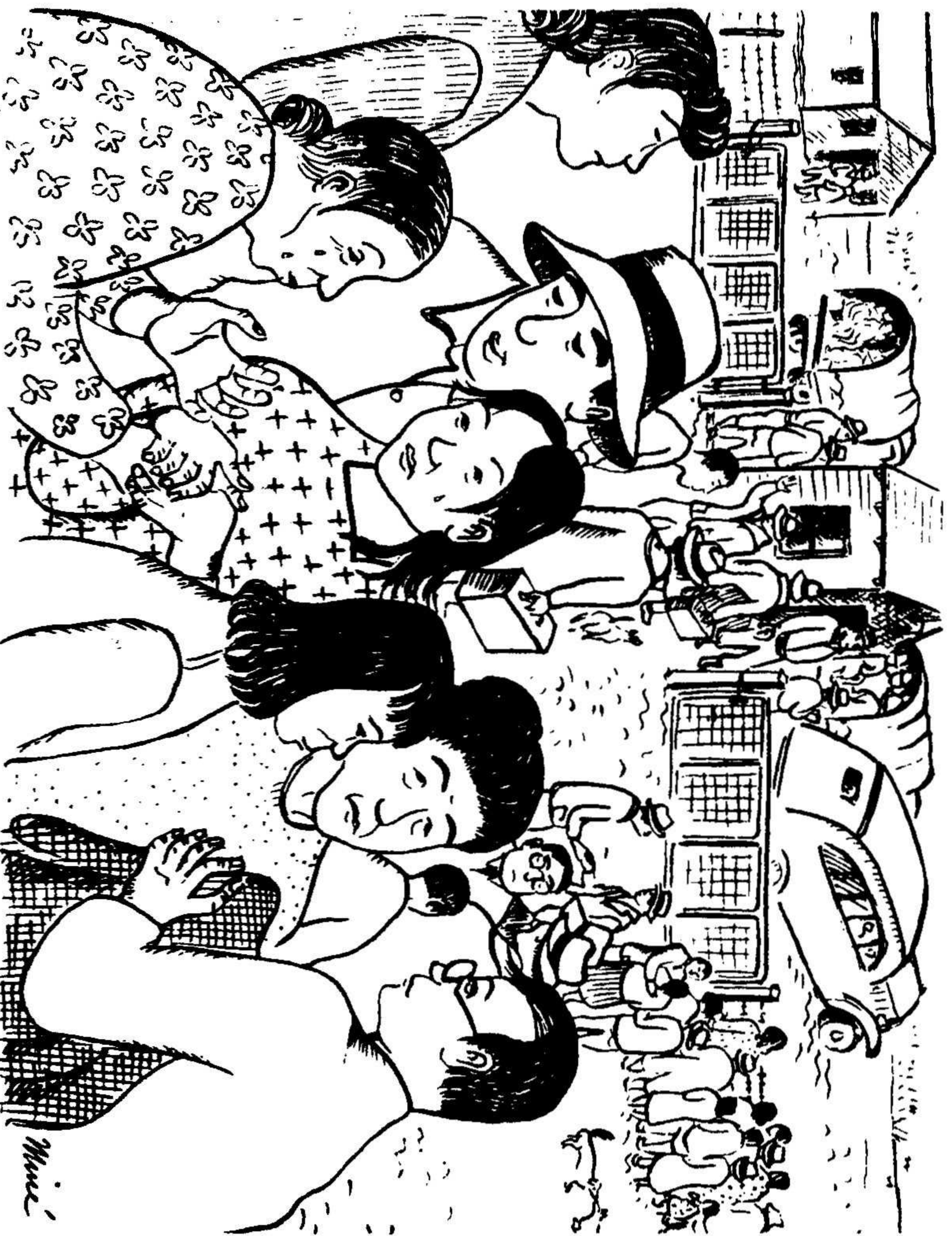
RELOCATION programs were finally set up in the center to return residents to normal life. Students had led the way by going out to continue their education in the colleges and universities willing to accept them. Seasonal workers followed, to relieve the farm labor shortage.

Many volunteered for the army. Government jobs opened up, and the defense plants claimed others. The Intelligence Division of the army and navy demanded still others as instructors and students. My brother had left in June to work in a wax-paper factory in Chicago. Later he was inducted into the army. Much red tape was involved, and "relocatees" were checked and double checked and rechecked. Citizens were asked to swear unqualified allegiance to the United States and to defend it faithfully from all foreign powers. Aliens were asked to swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to do nothing to



interfere with the war effort. Jobs were checked by the War Relocation offices and even the place of destination was investigated before an evacuee left. In January of 1944, having finished my documentary sketches of camp life, I finally decided to leave.

AFTER plowing through the red tape, through the madness of packing again, I attended forums on "How to Make Friends" and "How to Behave in the Outside World."
I was photographed.



THE day of my departure arrived. I dashed to the block manager's office to turn in the blankets and other articles loaned to me, and went to the Administration Office to secure signatures on the various forms given me the day before. I received a train ticket and \$25, plus \$3 a day for meals while traveling; these were given to each person relocating on an indefinite permit. I received four typewritten cards to be filled out and returned after relocation, and a booklet, "When You Leave the Relocation Center," which I was to read on the train.

I dashed to the mess hall for a bite to eat, then to the Administration Office, picked up my pass and ration book at the Internal Security Office, and hurried to the gate. There I shook hands with the friends who had gathered to see me off. I lined up to be checked by the WRA and the army.

I was now free.



I looked at the crowd at the gate. Only the very old or very young were left. Here I was, alone, with no family responsibilities, and yet fear had chained me to the camp. I thought, "My God! How do they expect those poor people to leave the one place they can call home." I swallowed a lump in my throat as I waved goodbye to them.

I entered the bus. As soon as all the passengers had been accounted for, we were on our way. I relived momentarily the sorrows and the joys of my whole evacuation experience, until the barracks faded away into the distance. There was only the desert now. My thoughts shifted from the past to the future.