

c/o Shigeru Morita
13 - 2 - D, Minidoka Project
Hunt Branch
Twin Falls, Idaho
April 3, 1943

Dear Dr. Thomas:

Thank you for your letter approving my itinerary to Chicago. I should have informed you immediately of the above address, for that is where you can best reach me while Michi and I are here at Minidoka. If you have heard from the SSRC, I should appreciate your informing me of their decision regarding my application for renewal. Miss Barrett has also arranged for my travelling expenses quite satisfactorily.

My report on the registration has been delayed because of our moving, but I shall finish it here, I hope, within the week. It will be only a running account of all that took place in Tule Lake during the registration up to the time I left, and will include relatively little of analysis.

Our trip up was quite uneventful. We were accompanied by Tom and Tomi as far as Boise, Idaho, and though it was more to our advantage than to theirs that they took the northern route to Salt Lake City, I hope they enjoyed our company as much as we did theirs. The Elbertsons were our escorts to Klamath Falls, and Ruth Elbertson had previously arranged for a quick luncheon before our departure from that point with the wife of the OPA administrator there. Mrs. Bischoff, our hostess, was most pleasant, and we found our brief stay in their lovely home most enjoyable.

The bus to Bend, Oregon, was not overcrowded, and the people were friendly. At the several stops that we made, some of them joined us in conversation and showed no unpleasantness whatsoever. Of course, we slept most of the way, tired after our anxieties about packing and shipping our belongings ahead, but still we could sense that the Bohlers showed no abnormal interest or enmity toward us. At Bend, where we reached about suppertime, we felt that some people stared at us, though whether merely out of curiosity or hostility we could not tell, but there again the waitress at the restaurant where we had dinner treated us very cordially.

From Bend to Boise, the bus was constantly crowded, and it was uncomfortable trying to sleep in the crowded circumstances. A couple of drunks riding near us were extremely noisy and kept us awake far into the night, but this was as disturbing to everyone else as much as to us. One of the drunks who fell into dead slumber early in the evening kept insisting upon putting both feet on my arm rest and once almost swung his legs on my shoulders. The other fellow who held his liquor much better, a big tall fellow rough as they come, was most apologetic and kept saying to the other fellow, "Hey

2

what the hell's the matter with you. They're Japanese but we don't want to rub it in. He's paid his fare and he's got a right to ride on this bus just as well as anyone else. Keep your feet down where they belong." The fellow was most apologetic, even in his drunken loud condition, and kept explaining to others about him that he'd only picked up his companion and couldn't account for his conduct. He brought the other fellow around out of his drunken stupor, finally, and the latter too apologized profusely, "I'm sorry, sir," he says, "I've got a couple of ribs that were damaged and I don't know what I do in my sleep."

You can imagine that all of us were sensitive to the attitudes of the Caucasians toward us, and we were probably more or less on constant lookout to see what their action toward us would be. The striking thing was the cordiality of all those with whom we had any business. Clerks and waitresses in particular seemed to put on a very friendly manner toward us. At Boise one woman came up to inquire about a certain friend she has here at Minidoka, and then joined us at the breakfast table. Whatever may have been the thoughts of all the Caucasians we encountered on the trip, those who held any hostility toward us must have kept their distance for we felt little of it, and those who looked favorably on us made a special effort to be cordial.

The comparison between Minidoka and Tule Lake already promises to bring out some interesting contrasts. Of course, I have my bias favoring the former Seattleites here and I shall have to watch myself in making comparisons, but the first thing that struck both Michi and me as we boarded the bus at Twin Falls for Minidoka, crowded with Nisei out for shopping, was their cityfied appearance. The youngsters seemed dressed in better taste than at Tule Lake, though to be sure it may have been because they were out visiting the city, but even their faces seemed brighter and more American in make-up. There was a marked absence of the Japanese language in their conversation, there was more restraint in their behavior, and there seemed to be a definitely American atmosphere about their thoughts and ways. I suppose Michi and I naturally looked upon all this with approval.

The layout of the camp here is somewhat more inconvenient than at Tule Lake, and geographically the latter seems far superior to Minidoka. For one thing, the wind blows across the desert constantly and dust seems to be one of the main sources of conversation and complaint among the Minidokans. But the thing that struck us again as soon as we reached the project was the friendliness and obligingness of the people on duty. Because of our rather early arrival at Minidoka (one bus early), the arrangements for receiving us had not been made. However, the Nisei warden on duty at the gate immediately took us in hand, arranged for a truck to come and pick us with our baggages up to the block where we were to stay, and in general made all the arrangements without fuss or confusion. In no time, a truck came along to pick us up (this was after 5:00 o'clock in the

evening), a couple of fellows went to work energetically handling our baggage, and transported us immediately to our new home. Visitors are apparently not infrequent here, and the block manager had previously made arrangements for an apartment for us with all the equipment to go with it. All this is part of the detail of getting established here, but I mention it because it was the source of our impression that affairs here run off more smoothly and with less fuss than at Tule Lake.

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The layout of the apartments ~~are~~ better, and though the walls are not lined with sheet rock as at Tule Lake, the flooring is finished with regular three inch or four inch floor boards and give the apartments a much more finished appearance. The stoves are in the corners of the rooms rather than in the center as at Tule. The washroom facilities are much better being equipped with porcelain wash basins and roomier showers and toilets, and the women's bathrooms have four regular bathtubs. The dining halls and laundry and ironrooms are cleaner.

As we rode in the thing that immediately struck me was the cityfied appearance of people. There were more suits among the people on the streets, and there was much less of farming attire among them. Women looked simply but more neatly dressed than at Tule Lake. Young fellows and girls looked like young collegiates out on a roughing. There are fewer baseball and basketball fields here than at Tule, but here and there one would see little gatherings of young people and older folks gathered around some game or activity that was going on in blocks during the waning hours of the evening. In other words, social activity seemed to go on at a more intensive pace than at Tule Lake and with greater ease. The summary view which I gathered as my first impression of the camp was that there was less depression here than at our former home, that people were ~~more~~ happier and better contented with their lot.

It is the latter which strikes one as the chief contrast between the Californians and the Northwesterners. If this community is better adjusted to the life in the relocation center, there is also less of the drive of opposition by which one may organize any kind of political movement among them. The feeling of "We Japanese" is certainly not absent among the Mindokans, yet there is less of it than I observed among the Tule Lakers. There is not as much of the rebellious spirit here through which a sustained drive to gain demands might be carried on, but rather is the attitude that ends may better be gained through an attitude of cooperation coupled with a pressure for the understanding of the evacuee point of view. From the American point of view one might speak of these people as possessing a healthier outlook; it would be said that they are more understanding and reasonable. But from another point of view, it is as if these evacuees have not yet fully realized their predicament largely because their experience in the Northwest has not been as bitter as in California and the caste lines between the Japanese and Caucasians have never been as clearly defined for them. The

4

difference between Minidoka and Tule Lake is about like the difference between the United States and some European countries, like Germany. If the conception of class structure has figured much more distinctly in German sociology than in American, presumably, it is because classes are vaguer here in the United States and the people of this country have yet to realize the implications of class differentiation. Similarly, it may be that the trend of events will ultimately lead the Japanese to feel distinctly their lower caste status, yet the Minidoka people have not yet reached the point where they are to realize this fact. The one person whom I have talked to ~~xxx~~ since arriving here that mentioned anything about having to fight for what ~~were~~ are our rights is a fellow visiting here from Heart Mountain.

This is a brief account of my first impressions of Minidoka, corroborated by Michi, and they may be mistaken due to bias. Yet my visit here promises to bring out some interesting points of difference as well as ~~in~~ similarity with Tule Lake. Speaking of similarities, there is here all the underlying resentments, irrationalities, mass suggestibility, feelings of frustrations, etc., that were so marked an aspect of Tule Lake, but all of these are here in lesser degree. During the registration issue here, one father is said to have gone to Jimmie Sakamoto, the blind JACL bigwig here, and slapped him in the face. The difference between slapping and beating is symbolic of the difference in temper of the people here and at Tule Lake.

I shall have more to say about this place later. Since we arrived on Friday evening and rested most of yesterday, we've yet to see Spicer and other people whom we plan to see before we leave here. I shall see Mr. Stafford, the Project Director, and inquire about returning here in the event that we desire to carry on further investigations in this project. I was unable to see Mr. Coverly on the same point before leaving Tule Lake, but I shall write to him and ask permission to return there for further study if we desire.

If you have any specific suggestions for investigation here, I should like to have them. I find information easier to get here due to my extensive connections with the former Seattleites here, and I may be able to do quite a bit of work before leaving for Denver and Chicago.

Michi and I look forward to seeing you in Denver. I presume that is where we shall meet. Best wishes.

Frank

p.s. I sent some of the Kibei posters on the registration from Tule Lake. Hope they reached you. F.M.

December 15, 1944

Dear Dorothy:

It's good to be back again and at work. I arrived here as scheduled on the 12th, and although the train was six hours late getting into Chicago due to snowdrifts in Iowa, I regarded the delay insignificant after my experience of last June.

I had a very pleasant visit with Michi's folks in Minidoka and with a few of my relatives who are still there. I had counted on three full days of visiting since I was to arrive there on the afternoon of the 7th and leave on the morning of the 10th, but visits never seem to go off as planned and I saw scarcely half the people whom I'd intended looking up. Michi's folks were extremely pleased to see me--you see, we've been able to maintain pretty good in-law relations with our respective families, probably because the evacuation has somehow drawn us closer together--, and they were bent on making me as comfortable as possible. I had originally suggested that I be put up in one of the bachelor's quarters in the block, but unknown to myself Mama (that's how I address her) had arranged her own bed in a separate corner, with plenty of blankets and comfortors, for me to sleep on. For herself, I discovered on the first night that she arranged several cartons and a bench into a very crude and rough bed, and although I felt rather badly about her discomfort, she insisted, "If you go to the bachelor's quarter, you can't sleep and rest at will. Papa slept there when Michi visited us, but he doesn't like to sleep in other peoples' quarters. Anyway, it's urusai (troublesome, creates obligations, permits invasion of privacy) for you to sleep elsewhere, so we felt this was the best arrangement." What surprised me most was that Mama even came to meet me at the gate, walking a good three quarters mile, when I hadn't even told her exactly on which bus I would arrive.

Even Papa was excited, or I should rather say pleased at my visit, although he generally hides his emotions. He came in about mid-afternoon after finishing preparations for the evening meal at the Block 13 mess where he's chef, and greeted with me the familiar "Frankie, yoku kita naa. (Lit.: it is well you came.)" He immediately proceeded to relate the experience of the previous day when he and two other Issei went out into the sagebrush and trapped on a noose a live wolf (coyote). It was nothing to bring in dead wolves, he explained, but a live wolf was a showpiece. Mama chided him for bragging and proceeded to relate all the housework that had been leaded on her just because he'd skipped out on this expedition without her knowledge. She is the quicker head of the two, and has always had her thumb on Papa. But there was also less of exasperation and more of a joking relation, such as wisecracking and gentle hitting, than I'd noticed when their children were with them. The Moritas were essentially a matriarchy before the war with the mother and children forming a unit and the father somewhat outside this circle of relations, but now with the children gone, there seemed to have developed a renewal of intimacy between the parents and a greater interest in Mama on Papa's welfare.

The folks entertained me royally while I was there. For dinner on the first evening, Papa brought home two plates of turkey dinner and a couple of individual cakes for Mama and myself. Mama explained that the block people had been giving money gifts to Papa for his conscientious service as chef, and since

there was no equitable way of dividing the sum among the mess workers, the turkey dinner for mess workers only had been devised as a way of using up the accumulating funds. The first person to give such a gift had been a bachelor who had come in with the Tule Lake group, and there had been some question as to how the gift should be publicized when there developed some comments in the block that the first announcement posted on the kitchen bulletin board thanking the donor for the gift was merely a means of suggesting to others that similar gifts be given. In spite of criticism, Papa and some of the block elders agreed there was no other way of showing proper regard to the donor than by publicizing on the kitchen bulletin board; and, in any case, it was agreed that the kitchen bulletin board was not a public bulletin. Even while I was there, a young matron, a Mrs. Matsui, stopped in at our apartment with a money gift in an envelope, the customary practice, as a token of thanks and also as a sign of greeting upon the birth of their child. Well, it was a part of the dinner paid for out of these funds that Mother and I had on the first evening. For dinner on the second evening, a Mr. Shono, an assistant cook in Father's mess-hall, who according to Mama was very anxious to cook a dinner for me, fried some chicken so that I again had dinner at the apartment with Mother. On the third and last evening, Papa-san had his own show with a couple of beautifully roasted chicken, and as it happened that Jim and Hattie were with me, we all had dinner together at the folks' apartment. Since I ate breakfast at home in mid-morning, it wasn't until the morning I left Minidoka that I even looked in at the block mess hall.

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I couldn't have been shown more attention had I been the/lost son of the family. Mother seemed bent on giving me the best time possible while I was there and sought to relieve me of all burdens. Papa, as block chef, used his cooking as a method of showing his hospitality. I suspect that my academic connections give me some status among the block Issei, who undoubtedly have learned all about Michi and I from the folks, and perhaps this was a partial reason for the hearty welcome. But they were also genuinely happy to see me.

Mama-san, in her usual way, bubbled over with news, gossip and questions about those of us in Chicago. There seemed a thousand things to say, yet neither time enough or the words to say them. While Mama and Papa were intent on indicating to me through various accounts that they were reasonably well off at the camp and there were no reasons for anxiety about them, I on my part felt obliged to put their mind at rest about Michi and Shig. By way of reassurance, Mama-san declared: "After Michiko left with you, and Shigeru and Fumiko went out shortly after last summer (1943), I tried not to let my spirit get low but I must say I was often lonesome. I tried knitting to keep my mind occupied, and attended the English language classes. But I was continually catching colds all winter, even in the spring, and I dropped the language class because I thought I shouldn't be out in the cold in the evenings. About four months ago, I became the baby dietician in the block at the request of the young mothers living here. Previously, there had always been complaints about the baby diet and although several women had tried it before me, they all quit when the complaints became loud. I didn't want to take the position because Papa is the chief cook and I was afraid of what people might say about my working in the same kitchen, but although I stalled off the mothers several times when they asked me to do the work, they continued to plead with me to handle the baby diets since there was no one else they trusted, and I finally decided to help them out for a while. The mothers were very well pleased with the way I handled the diet kitchen, and for one reason or another I've stayed at the job although

I originally hadn't intended to remain at it so long. But the surprising thing is that ever since I started working, I haven't caught a single cold."

My mother-in-law, I should explain, is a small, wiry woman of fifty-five, a very active person who likes to keep herself busy from morning until night, and with a frank, expressive personality for an Issei woman. She is very clever in both artistic and practical things, possesses a quick intelligence and a sharp temperament and is therefore impatient with dullards. She thinks well of herself, though with some right to be an egotist, and is keenly conscious of social status. Her sharp tongue and unveiled verbal barbs often antagonize people, yet she is generous and friendly to those who are her friends. There is in her an abundance of emotions, but through the years most of her emotionalism was channeled into affection for her children. She is a personality with a strange admixture of liberal ideas and conformance to tradition; on the one hand she adopts modern views with surprising readiness for an Issei woman and is willing to try anything, but on the other hand she lays great stress upon appearances and conformance to certain Japanese proprieties.

As we talked, tears came to Mama-san's eyes a half dozen times, for no obvious reason that I could see in the conversation. When I visited Mrs. Hamada, a close friend of the Moritas whose eighteen year old son I had met at the Chicago station for them, this woman too was half crying and half smiling as we talked. My aunt, Mrs. Hashiguchi, who bore nine sons in her lifetime of whom three died in years past, two are in Japan, two are in the Army at Snelling and in France, and only two married sons remain at Minidoka, showed too evidences of depression at the scattering of her family and the perils of her soldier sons, but she has something of a masculinity about her character and possesses a stoicism and fatalism. She did not cry. What struck me was the underlying, often concealed, loneliness of the Issei parents in camp whose children have left them for the outside world. It is evidently the womenfolk who especially feel this, and I suspect if the Issei husbands showed more willingness to follow the children out, there would be a far greater number of Issei resettlers. From these observations, I should say that family ties are a significant factor in the question of relocation.

Part of the conversation with my in-law folks was in the form of o-negai (requests) with reference to Shig and Michi. The form, "Yoroshiku o-negai itashimasu, (I request of you)" crops up again and again in Japanese conversations, particularly when a person is acting somewhat as messenger as I was. Mama-san declared she really had no requests to make to me about either Michi or Shig since she knew they were in good hands with me--a courtesy, but also the kind of ~~xxx~~ compliment that reemphasizes responsibilities. But both the folks were quite anxious that Shig should find a wife now that he is of reasonable age (twenty-seven) and were quite excited about the news that Shig had recently started going steady with a girl. They leaned on my judgement as to the character of the girl and were eager to know my opinion as to whether she would make a suitable wife for Shig. My description of her and my estimate as to her suitability as a wife seemed to reassure them. Mama-san declared: "Since we are both so far from Chicago and won't have a chance to see whomever Shigeru chooses, we must depend on you to advise him for us. I am sure that if you say this girl is a good girl, she is all right, and we shan't worry at all about the matter. It doesn't matter, as you say, if she isn't a beauty and if she doesn't have a college education; it's the character and the intelligence that is important. Both Papa and I feel it's time for Shigeru to get married. ~~He was~~

Papa married me when he was twenty-eight, so Shigeru is not too young to think of marriage. Please tell Shigeru not to worry about us. Both Papa and I are working and we make more than enough for our needs. We don't need any money, and neither of us is yet too old to get along somehow by ourselves. We request of you that you explain all this to Shigeru, and to advise on any matters in which he may have doubts."

The other major point which we discussed was their relocation to Chicago. Some time in November, Michi and I learned from Evelyn Rose that conditions in Minidoka were now as bad as they were at Tule Lake and that the administration was having innumerable troubles. We immediately pictured a situation in which the center people were required to take definite stands pro- or anti-administration, and were fearful that because of Papa's position in mess hall committees he might get involved to the extent of incurring either public wrath or of WRA wrath. In our discussions at home, we decided that if the folks were of a mind to relocate, and they could arrange to come out at the same time I left Minidoka, I could be of considerable moral and physical aid to them. There was an interchange of letters in which it was evident that Mama-san was anxious to relocate, but Papa continued to hesitate about taking the step. Actually, our suggestion was on too short notice to permit immediate action on it.

Mama's position was: "If it were not for Papa, I would like to go out to Chicago. I don't like the pettiness of the people here, and one doesn't gain anything by living among stupid people like our neighbors. People are always quibbling about one thing or another, and it's very troublesome living here. But you know how it is with Papa; you remember how he was at Puyallup when we first got there; he didn't have any work to do and just sat around in a terrible mood so that we all thought he was going to get sick. If there were a good job waiting for Papa in Chicago where he could run the kitchen as he did at the University Club and he also had a garden or something to occupy his time outside of work, I think he wouldn't hesitate about going out. I know that all of you would take care of us if we went out and I'm still young enough to work, but it's Papa I worry about. It's no good for him unless he has something definite to do. He would only get sick if he just lolled around." (Michi's father is sixty-six; the kind of man whose life revolves around his work, his garden, and two or three friends.)

Papa was verbose and defensive in explaining his hesitation about going out. In part he admitted his weakness, his difficulty in making adjustments to new situations that were not to his liking, but he also offered a variety of other reasons why he felt it undesirable to relocate at the moment. "If the WRA decides to close the center, we can't do anything about it and will relocate, but I would rather wait until that time came. There's no problem about moving out of here; we can do that any time. But as things are, I feel it's better for us to remain here for the present. We would be a burden on the children if we went out, but right now we don't need any money and we don't have to depend on anyone else. Another thing, if the West Coast is opened up and we can go back to our home in Seattle, (the Moritas own a furnished home there), it would only require extra expense if we went to Chicago first. Fundamentally, the thing is I would go out anytime if I thought Japan were going to be defeated in this war, but it's evident that Japan is winning the war. I understand the American army is being pushed back in the Phillipines. They'll

never take the Phillipines." The last was the most strongly emotional rationalization of them all. I knew it by the vehemence with which Papa said it. I knew it because I recognized that it was the one point in his declaration which I could not discuss with him objectively or which I could not permit myself to question. At the same time, Papa declared, "If we are to relocate, you don't have to worry about us. I spent only twenty years in Japan, but I've spent over forty-five years in this country, so I know enough about this country to make my way."

Mrs. Hamada was out on seasonal work during the past summer working in a fruit cannery near Ogden. She remarked, "It was good to be out. Oh, I enjoyed being out of the center. When you come back here, you realize what a dull and restricted place this camp is. I've told Morita-san that she should relocate too because once you've had a taste of the outside world, you can't bear to stay in a place like this." Mrs. Hamada is a woman of about forty-seven, large and still very active, has two grown sons, and is superficial and impressionable. She is tied down by a husband, a cook by trade, who is much older than she and was recently very ill with heart trouble.

At my uncle and aunts place there was little talk of relocation. They are about sixty-eight and sixty-six, respectively. Even their Issei son, about forty-seven, and his wife showed no intent of relocation, although the wife, a bright woman, would probably go out if she were alone. Haruo-san, the son, is a tall, physically able person, but despite his college training at Keio University in Japan, he lacks the ability to make a living. He has turned out to be a dogmatic intellectual, somewhat embittered by his failure to achieve whatever ambitions he may have had. My uncle is a shrewd man with blind spots, the kind who is capable of launching into big business but can't finish what he starts, a man with good intentions and a good heart but who has his weaknesses which he covers up by a sharp temper and tongue. He is a testy old individual with a good sense of humor. His wife is a stolid, rugged character.

Our conversation was pleasant, yet there was an underlying anxiety and bitterness about the dangers of their soldier son in France. My uncle: "I wish this war would end. I can't understand for what purpose people start wars. There's no good that comes of it; it only brings tragedies to many families." I read the V-Mail from Hachiro, the boy in France. The talk turned to the number of dead and wounded listed in the latest Irrigator, and we quickly dropped the subject. Haruo-san was bitter about it, saying, "The recent draft from Jerome County (Idaho) is all of Nisei. There isn't a single keto listed. All they do is take Nisei soldiers and send them out to the most dangerous positions." My aunt, "The Nisei boys fight so hard and well, that's why they get sent out to the very forefront. They ought to know better; it doesn't get them anywhere. I can't understand why they take such risks." Haruo-san: "Well, after all they have Japanese blood in them." The last time I saw Haruo-san just before I left, he said, "Well, so you're leaving. You'll be coming back here now and then, won't you. Well, we'll be here a long time, the war's not going to end very soon, so we'll probably be here when you drop around again." My uncle and aunt insisted I take some pickled radishes to mother, but I begged off when they invited me to dinner.

I find that Minidoka isn't the place it was a year and a half ago. For one thing, I had to use considerably more Japanese this time than before. From the moment I reached the gate, I discovered that the clerks at the desk there and the truck driver who hauled me in as well as my companions on the truck were all Issei or Kibei. Even the Nisei use Japanese to a large extent. It's difficult for a Nisei unaccustomed to the use of Japanese because one has to be careful to place honorifics correctly and get in all the proper usages. I felt hesitant about addressing the Issei for this reason, and I'm sure my conversations with them was faltering.

Another thing, I think many are weary of camp life, especially its pettiness, but there is the anomalous situation that they are more deeply settled in the project than ever before. Despite the underlying discontent with the affairs of the center which is expressed in complaints about the administration and the troublemakers, there is no longer as much interest in relocation as I found before. The last time I was there, one of the striking conditions of Minidoka was the real curiosity shown by the Issei in their discussions of relocation. They were interested to know what the outside world is like; but now that interest has very much deteriorated, and the more predominant discussions are of reasons for continued residence in the center. I am sure the departure of that age group interested in relocation has contributed much to this change of atmosphere. Because the younger children have little influence upon their parents, the community now gives the appearance of having aged greatly in the last year.

When I started this letter, I hadn't intended writing at length of my impressions of Minidoka during my two day visit there, but since I got into the subject, I have written down the impressions in some detail since this outline will afford the basis of a longer account which I might write for Jim's benefit. The picture is admittedly sketchy, but Jim might find some use for impressions drawn by an outsider.

I must hurry on to other work. I am at the moment working with Charlie on the topic headings under which his case documents might be classified. The line of approach is to keep the thing as simple as possible, and though the headings will be quite general as a result, refinements can be made at a later stage of classification.

We are having a cold spell in Chicago. It's quite a contrast from the mildness of Salt Lake City.

Sincerely,

Frank