

Yamamoto, Kiyoko

5 Letters, 1942-1943

Mainly written to Mrs. Wythe, from Tampon and Toriya

79/1  
L



Sept. 3, 1942

Dear Mrs. Probasco,

I haven't much news of interest this time. The great question at the present moment is where we shall be going and when we shall be going.

Our migration & relocation centers is to start on the fifteenth of this month and is to end on the 30th. The exact date and hour is what we are after but that and the location of our relocation center seems to be a military secret. When we are there I shall have lots of fresh news to give you.

How have you and Mr. Probasco been? Also Miss Heck. Have you heard from Mr & Mrs. Gochnauer in the East? I hope your housekeeping runs smoothly. Out here housekeeping is very simple. Washing clothes is the only big job, clothes seem to get dirty twice as

much and twice as quickly out here.

For the past 4 weeks we <sup>have</sup> been to moving pictures once a week. The picture were Spring Parade, Hold that Ghost, Elephant Boy and Letter of Introduction. The movies are held at the big hall underneath the grandstands, which in the daytime is used as schoolrooms for the high school kids. We sit on the hard bare floor with only a thin cushion or pillow underneath our seats. The one showing lasts about an hour and a half and there are usually two pauses where we can stretch and give our sitting ends a rest. With the main picture there are about two or three other features which include a color cartoon and news reels.

Sept. 7, 1942  
Labor Day.

This weekend was a gala one. There are hobby and art shows,



(2) flower show, flower arrangement show, needlework and even a baby show. You couldn't possibly attend everything. ~~last night~~ I begin with there was a mardigras parade and a king & queen contest. Then <sup>there</sup> was ~~a~~ another movie shown on Saturday, Sundays Monday night, there was also a carnival blasting away for two days.

Last night I attended the movie, it was a double feature - Tim McCoy and Kitty Foyle. Saturday night was ~~not~~ for the youngsters and so they left out Kitty Foyle. The children wouldn't have enjoyed it at all, still they were very resentful and felt that they got gypped. During the showing halfway between, there was a sort of a bing by which they gave out 5¢ boxes of chocolates. I was very unlucky.

Now that our stay here is getting short, every thing seems just about perfect. Our life has settled into a comfortable routine. For entertainment there are



music concerts and movies. There are classes of all sorts for adults - Americanization, knitting, flower arrangements, and art. The old ladies have gotten used to the showers even and enjoy taking a warm one every night. When they first came here they hated it and avoided it as much as possible. We have been getting script books regularly and in this way we get our toilet articles from the drug-store and sometimes sweets from the canteen. It is an easy life, free from worries, free from bills. But however ideal this life may be, it certainly gives one a guilty feeling. One feels that one is not contributing a bit towards the all-out war effort. I hope that <sup>when</sup> we are finally settled in the relocation camp, we shall be able to work on some project that ~~is~~ would make us feel not so much an outsider.



③

As you may have noticed, a period of several days has elapsed between some sections of this ~~part~~ letter. I hope you don't have much trouble reading ~~it~~ this.

Father has been after us the last few days to pack some of our things away and leave only the necessary things out. So I guess I better start soon. Until we are settled in our new camp we shall not be so busy as now in a state of confusion and suspension.

How is the weather in Berkeley? Yesterday just before lunch time it poured. It seems to me that here in Tanftan we get the queerest weather. Summer seems to have overlooked us. Is it due to the war, and is it just here or the same elsewhere?

Believe it or not we have a very cute little kitten here all our own.



It was born here in camp under our barrack. It was so dirty and so full of fleas that no one except my mother and little brother wanted it. However my mother killed all the fleas and gave it a bath and now it is quite tame, (in fact very tame) and playful. We are afraid we shall have to leave it here. But we and other owners of camp-born puppies are hoping that little animals will be allowed to be taken.

My letters seem to get farther and farther apart, but do not worry for I will keep writing.

My regards to all.

Sincerely,  
Kings



After 5 days, return to

*K. Yamamoto*

*10-8 Tanforan*

SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA.



*Mrs. Probasco*  
*28 Plaza Drive*  
*Berkeley*  
*California*



March 25, 1943

Dear Mrs Hyllie,

I must seem almost like a stranger; I haven't written for so long a time. I've neglected writing to Mr. Probasco also. Please remember me to him and tell him I received his letter about two months ago. That's how shamefully ~~slow~~ lazy I am.

In February we had a questionnaire or rather "An Application for Leave Clearance" papers to fill out. And in that we had to get five Caucasians for reference purposes, and they had to be not our employers. Therefore I had rather a difficult time trying to think way back to my high school days to see if there were any teachers that would remember me. There was only one teacher that I could count on for I had him for 3 years. The other teachers I remember well but I was afraid they would not remember me for I had them for only a term or two. So I used one teacher's name, a ~~former~~ former neighbor of mine and yours. I hope you would not mind and I know that if they should write to you for my character reference, they would not expect too much for they know the duration of our acquaintance.

I should have written to you before this, but there was a lot of fuss and fuming over this compulsory registration. There



were meetings to attend nearly every other night until the whole business was through. Then after that my & youngest brother, 4 years, got pneumonia and he was in the hospital 15 days. He is well now however, thanks to everything and everybody. And now my sister next to me is recovering from an appendicitis operation. She'll be home in a day or two so she is out of danger also. But an illness one right after the other certainly leaves you in a daze.

There certainly has been a lot of appendicitis cases here and pneumonia also. We wonder why. I know of a family whose fourth daughter just had an appendicitis operation. The first three girls had theirs out every Tuesday 3 weeks in succession. It must be the food or the dust or something. You know, we used to get a lot of fig bar cookies for dessert for a long time, and some people used to say that that was the cause of it, but I hear the doctors say that food is not a cause for appendicitis. Well anyway, whatever the cause, a lot of people are getting their appendixes out free.

There ~~at~~ are only four doctors here and they really have to work hard. They are literally working all day and all night. There is a shortage of registered nurses also, but I suppose that is the case everywhere at present. The nurses aides do most of the work since there



are altogether about 12 registered nurses.

My sick sister was one of those nurse's aides and her bedside companion recovering from the appendicitis operation was also a nurse's aide. There were about eighty of them and it was said that they needed about fifty more and so on top of the shortage, these illnesses must cause extra hard work on the poor girls.

Instead of talking so much about it, I suppose I should go out and work at the hospital too. But years ago, when my one burning desire was to become a nurse, it was dampened by everyone. And since then, it hasn't even smoked. I guess it wasn't the true ambition.

After that I wanted to become a bacteriologist and then they made me compromise and made me agree to becoming a pharmacist. And then money seemed to rise out of nowhere and so I came face to face with the fact that life does not turn out as you dreamed it would. And now I am a person with not a single ambition to become anything in this world.

I've started piano lessons. I used to take them years ago and about ~~after~~ ten years ago, I decided I had enough and quit. But now, I find I want to play again. I may sound as if I were an expert, but I'm not. I am taking it up solely for



mine own enjoyment or rather amusement.

Yesterday was a warm day, but today is cloudy and cool so I guess we needn't worry about the heat yet. All of us are afraid of the coming summer heat. And with the advent of warm weather comes our greatest fear scorpions and mountain ticks. Rumors go around saying that the scorpions are deadly and that just from one sting comes instant death. However whether that is a fact or not we don't know yet.

Well so much for a very cheerless letter. I hope you are all getting along fine. How is your garden this year?

A friend of mine wrote us that the people who bought our house let our vegetable garden go to ruins last year and that our back yard was a dump yard. Very heartening to hear isn't it? She adds however that they are starting one of their own this year; I hope their will power sticks with them and they make a success of it this year. Because if you do not like to work in the earth, you'd need a lot of will power to grow a garden.

Sincerely yours,  
Kings



After 5 days, return to

*K. Yamamoto*

*10-10-C, D*

TOPAZ, UTAH.



*Mrs. R. E. Wyllie  
59 Parkside Drive  
Berkeley  
California*



Aug. 17, 1943

Dear Mrs. Kyllie,

It seems to ~~be~~<sup>me</sup> each time the intervening time between my letters ~~seems~~ gets longer & longer. And each time I have less to write about because I seem to lose contact with you.

However I would like to hear about Berkeley and San Francisco and I suppose you would like to hear about things in here.

Well for one thing it is hot, and it was hot and I suppose it will be hot. We are getting lazier and lazier because of the heat. Those of us who stay home, sleep in the afternoons and those of us who don't like to sleep ~~in a~~ drenched with perspiration sleep under the beds. The mattress acts as insulation and they say it's not nearly as hot under the bed as it is in the room elsewhere. The heat is retained in the room till late at night. So that nearly everyone doesn't get to sleep till eleven or past and consequently we have a hard time getting up for breakfast which is from 7 to 7:45 am.

The trees that have been planted



here have taken root but none of them are very large and they are planted so sparsely that they do not give shade. The dust is ever-present, although the ground is packed down hard now, it doesn't take much of a wind to stir it up.

I never saw such infertile soil as there is here in Topaz. My father dug up a small plot about 4 ft. by 8 ft. and he made my mother and me go with him to get 3 ~~sack full~~ sackfuls of manure. (I never undertook a job more distasteful.) And yet with all that fertilizer in that small plot only about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the seeds sowed came up. Then we watered faithfully but the young seedlings remained young seedlings for a month or more. After that my father decided the sun was too terrific for them so he made a sort of a canopy over them out of burlap. Yet 3 or 4 months later our garden seems to be in the early spring stage, when it ought to look like it was ready for harvesting. Our three tomato plants are only about a foot high. The celery and onions are standing bravely but they do not grow nor fatten. They look stunted like me who hasn't grown an inch since twelve years of age.



However some parts of this center seems to be good enough. For in some blocks I see huge sunflowers growing as tall as five feet or more. So I guess we picked out about the most unfertile soil in this desert land.

When I see pictures of gardens and huge trees shading houses in the house & garden magazines or in newspapers, I look at them as if those pictures were of a place in foreign lands. They seem so faraway and unattainable.

Last month I went to Delta. That is a small town about 10 miles or more away from this center. Everyday, Monday thru Friday a bus takes the people out to Delta for shopping. Each block in the center may let two people out every week to shop for the block. So that a lot of money is spent in Delta, I guess they are having good business because of us here. You can easily spend \$10 in about an hour or so. I went and bought \$3.50 worth of fresh fish, (That's the Japanese in us, we love fish) and then an umbrella for \$4.00 (the sun is so hot everyone carries an umbrella) and about \$2.00 was spent at the drugstore and the rest was spent at the 5 & 10 cent store. All that, I bought in about three-quarters of an hour, then I had to sit in the bus for about an hour and a half twiddling my thumbs, till departure time.



The town is so small that you can't do much window-shopping, the main street is only 1 block long. Imagine, I just had a chance to go to Delta so I went with nothing in mind to buy except the fish and when I came back, I had one penny left in my purse. I was broke for the rest of the month. Never again will I go.

It is nearly a year since the passing of Mrs. Probasco. Please give my regards to Mr. Probasco.

He will be moving soon to Tule Lake Center. That center is supposed to house repatriates to Japan, disloyal citizens and others not to be trusted in the outside world. I do not know what our treatment will be from outsiders. But I hope they can understand some of our reasons for going there.

My father is taking us there, because as far as I can see he cannot take us outside and start a new life for us. It is almost impossible for a family of our size with mostly young children who have to be taken care of. There would be only my father and my sister and I who could work and earn a living. If what we earn would be very little for we are none of us



prepared for any kind of a profession. My mother did work back in Berkeley and she brought in more money than I did but in a new community she would not be able to do so. Because in Berkeley she worked in a laundry whose owner was Japanese, and she could be understood. Therefore with so few wage earners and low wage earners at that we could not scrape up enough to keep us going. On top of that since we are resettling ourselves and since we sold everything for a song at evacuation time, we need money to furnish a house. That alone costs a lot of money, you know that we do not have a single mattress, bed, chair or table to our name. We would need kitchen utensils, dishes to eat out of, and a million other small items that people need in a regular home. The brooms, mops and buckets, even the door mat is government issued, so that when we are to leave this center for the outside world what we have will be our immediate personal needs and some sheets & blankets. You simply do not realize till you are told to relocate yourselves and start a regular life outside again, what the evacuation did to you.

We shed a secret tear, when we first entered our horse stall in Tanforan,



and we cried again when we heard our little brother 3 years old cry out ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> nite, that that was not his bedroom, his bedroom was upstairs. And we still get tearful everytime we think of that.

However we have finally realized that no matter how much we cry or how much we let our friends back home know that we cried, we cannot go back. Neither to the time nor the place can we go back. Realizing that has taken quite a lot out of us, especially my parents. They are not young any more. This war is not between you and me, yet it has affected us. And it has affected us in such a way that my parents deem it best for everyone concerned if we remained in camp. In all of the ten centers the directors are encouraging everyone to relocate themselves outside as soon as possible. But at present it is pretty much impossible for us and so we are being sent to Tule Lake the latter part of next month because we are loathe to cooperate with the U. R. A.

This letter is getting too long so I shall write to you again. I hope you can understand part of our plight.

Sincerely,  
Kings



K. Yamamoto

10-10-C, D

Topaz, Utah



Mrs. R. Wyllie  
59 Parkside Drive  
Berkeley  
California



Nov. 19, 1942

Dear Mrs. Hyllie,

Last Friday the 13th, I picked up my pen and paper to write to you but it was no go. I guess it wasn't a good ~~to write~~ day to write.

There is much to tell but I can't get my thoughts assorted out.

I have a new job now. When I last wrote to you, I think I was working in the Dining Hall. But not later than a week after that, I luckily got a job as a time-keeper. I check the workers in the kitchen 3 times a day. Then I make a daily report which I hand in at the timekeeper's office in the morning of the following day. It doesn't take up all of the 8 hours that other jobs do so that it gives me more time for myself which fact I like very much. It is about 5 weeks now since my new job and for awhile my sister was one also. But now she has become a nurse's aide and she is almost happy. Her heart and soul is in her work and I am very glad for her. She had always wished to become a nurse and although that ambition is not really fulfilled, she has come nearer to it than she ever dreamed she could. Being near the top of a large family is certainly not a help towards realizing your ambitions.

So in a way the war has taken her out of an almost certain rut and let her have a fling at her wishes. Life is certainly unfathomable. To most everyone this war has brought or will bring ill fortune, yet in a way a little good, or blessings have popped up in innumerable ways, things which wouldn't have happened at other times at all. My mother is getting a rest for the first time in her life. And rest in body is not the only thing that was enforced on us, but rest in mind - a freedom from the never ceasing bills and other money matters. However this release from mundane matters has turned our life into a rather dull



and deadly existence. We live from day to day with no stimulus to perk up our lives.

I sometimes wonder what the children are becoming. I wonder whether they will spring back to a normal home life. What will they think about doing the dishes, running errands, help getting meals and cleaning bath-rooms. I also worry about their education. School started over a month ago but really today is the beginning. For up till now, school has been hit or miss, what with this bad weather and inadequate heating. Finally now the school rooms have been winterized and stoves put in so that from today the children started from the morning to go to school. They are definitely a half a year behind. To most children half a year ahead or behind wouldn't make much difference but to these high school seniors who were to graduate this December or June it is very ~~encourage~~ discouraging.

My only hope is that the war will end soon and that with the ending shall come greater understanding.

Medical, engineering and other sciences have made great progresses but this art of living together is back in the primitive stage yet. I think everyone should make a thorough study of psychology before one goes out into the world. Maybe I'm off the beam, but something definitely should be done or wars and petty jealousies and quarrels shall never cease.



Nov. 30, 1942

I hadn't mailed the letter yet, so I decided to bring the letter up to date.

We had a regular Thanksgiving Dinner Thursday evening. But no anticipation or excitement was connected with it, because we did not do anything for the preparation of it.

It is almost a year now since the war began. Also a year since the Probascos took me in, I have ever been aware of the fact that they took me in after the war started. A lot has happened. Sometimes fate seems to take things over for awhile. As for the present I'm letting him have his fling and not making any plans.

I had a letter a couple of weeks ago from a neighbor in Berkeley. He says it is so crowded there, that people are living in trailers and that there is one in our old back yard.

How I shall miss California in the springtime. I sometimes hear the sound of a motor pattering in the distance and it instantly brings back the putt-putt of a small motor boat out on the bay on a clear Sunday morning. The cries of the seagulls early in the year is something I shall want to hear again also. You see, I spent seven <sup>years</sup> of the most impressionable period in one's life in Tiburon and I don't think I will ever lose or get over the nostalgia I feel for it. In a way I regret that we ~~ever~~ had to move away from there, yet I'm deeply grateful to my parents



for taking us there. So many whom I know have spent their whole childhood in the ugly Japanese town of San Francisco. Others have lived only in Berkeley and they think the world of Berkeley. But to me, Berkeley is second rate compared to any town in Marin County. You may think I am prejudiced but then everyone of my sisters feels the way I do and that is only natural. Someday we shall have to live near a bay or ocean again. And by living near, I mean right by the water, not near as meant by Berkeley or San Francisco.

Where, in all the places you have been would you like to live again? I know that one can't go back to some place and expect to pick up the threads of life exactly as one left them, so I am asking you, where and when would you like to relive again?

They say it is a sign of old age when one starts to look back instead of forward. So perhaps I'd better steer my thoughts in another direction.

I have not yet seen Chico Harano. This center is so large that we hardly see people living in other blocks. And I think the weather is another factor that keeps people from visiting around too much.

Give my regards to Mr. Probasco and Miss Heck.

Yours sincerely,  
Kings



Jan. 4, 1943

Dear Mrs. Hyllie,

Happy New Year to you and your family. And thank you very much for the box of candy. Everyone enjoyed it very much. I heard candy is hard to get now outside. I know it must be, because they hardly ever have any at our canteen. However, everyone from the outside outdid themselves trying to give us a good Christmas, and we appreciate the spirit very much. All the children received games and candy and were made very happy. That fact in turn made the parents very happy.

A Mrs. Kingman from Berkeley, California came all the way over here with materials to give the pageant "The Other Wiseman". They gave it the 3 nights before Christmas. She certainly went to a lot of trouble for us and spent a lot of her time also. ~~much~~

~~much~~ Santa Claus brought me a nice & cold for Christmas. In fact I had to climb into bed from the day before and had to stay there for 4 days. It was the first time I ever spent Christmas day in bed.

Everyone was wishing for a white Christmas since snow is a comparatively new experience for us, but we did not have enough snow for it to remain on the ground. There was a flurry of snow in the afternoon of Christmas day but that was all. It had been so cold the few days before Christmas that snow was certainly expected by everyone. It is still cold



and we had a dusty wind a couple of days ago.  
But no snow yet.

As we review the past year, so much has happened that was unexpected. I hope just as much that is unexpected but to the good will happen this year. This last Christmas was the first one ever since I can remember that ~~we~~ we had a Christmas tree. My father is such an impatient man that he used to buy and decorate the tree all by himself about 3 weeks before Christmas. Even when we were too young to know anything he used to do it. And as we grew older he still loved to do it and usually did it mostly by himself, although in these later years the kids wanted to help.

I just wish that we won't have to spend next Christmas in camp. It seems an almost impossible thing to happen though.

I knitted a pair of socks for Mr. Probasco for his Christmas present. But when I learned he would be away, I kept it back to send later on. I hope they fit him. As I remember, he did not seem to have such large feet so I did not make them very big. Please tell him not to think of sending me anything in return, for that is not the purpose with which I made them. I often used to think of Mrs. Probasco mending and darning his socks and I wished I could help him now. That is why I made them.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. Everyone says the socks are too small. <sup>Kids</sup> make them a little larger. So I'm not sending them now.



K. Yamamoto  
10-10-C, D  
Topaz, Utah



Mrs. Hyllie  
59 Parkside Drive  
Berkeley  
Calif.



WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
WASHINGTON

To Mrs. Wyllie  
59 Parkside Dr.  
Berkeley, Calif.

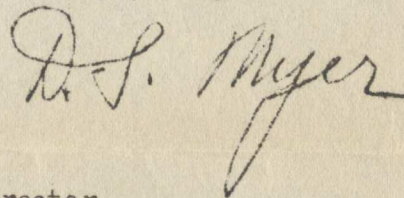
Dear Sir/ Madam:

Kiyoko Yamamoto has given your name as a reference in connection with an application to leave a relocation center of this Authority for employment, education, or residence elsewhere.

We should appreciate it if you would give us your opinion of this individual with respect to such matters as the extent of Americanization through education and upbringing, general standing and reputation in the community, and occupational abilities. If you have ever employed the applicant, a statement concerning the quality of the work performed for you would be helpful.

An addressed envelope which needs no postage is enclosed for your reply.

Sincerely yours,



Director

Enclosure

In your reply  
please refer  
to the following:

Central Utah

10-10-C, D