

DELTA, UTAH
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TOPAZ

Dust, dust, dust ----- that's what we've been having since yesterday. It's really a hell-hole. After trees and shrubbery are planted and roads paved, things should improve considerably.

I've decided to lay off secretarial work for a while. In the meantime I'm volunteering for sugar beet work on the outside. This is a contract labor, 24-acre patch--which we should be able to finish in at least a month. My group whom I got together today are two kibeI boys. We leave Friday for Cache County to a place near Hyde Park (near the northern border of Utah). I'll miss many of my friends her but I guess the chance of going out is well worth it. We're the first group of volunteers from this center.

The administration here seems very liberal--I mean very understanding and cooperative. The true personality and character of many of the Japanese are revealed.

On each train-load of arrivals, the mad scramble for the best jobs is disgusting. First come, first served is a bad policy and unfair to those who have not yet arrived. People who have little or no experience are getting into responsible positions. There should be a system to judge individual qualifications before responsible jobs are given--since their act or deed concerns the welfare of the whole community.

My volunteering for the beet fields will serve three purposes: helping the war effort by saving this vital crop, replenishing my exhausted funds, and to relieve the dull monotony of this camp life.

(Note: This is an excerpt of a letter from a Topaz resident to a girl on the outside.)

Henry Ebihara
October 1, 1942

CENTRAL UTAH RELOCATION PROJECT
DELTA, UTAH

TOPAZ

Since my arrival in Topaz two weeks ago, life has gone on uneventfully. Daily we are smothered in a choking dust storm--the howling wind, whipping the white alkaline dust and turning all visible things into obscurity.

Many of the people, soon after their arrival, are seen scurrying to the placement to obtain the choicest jobs. Petty rivalry, personal gain, selfishness seems to reign supreme. Attainment of social prestige shoves back into second place the desire for community welfare. It thwarts cooperation, making impossible the need for the unity of the people toward a common goal.

What a dusty reception for the poor, incoming people from Tanforan tonite! On top of that, the acute housing situation. Some of them wandered aimlessly about the camp trying to find a place to sleep--even laundry rooms afforded a welcome shelter. Little wonder, many persons downheartedly shook their heads, "this is too much".

REFLECTIONS CENTRAL UTAH RELOCATION PROJECT
DELTA, UTAH

Minoru trudged wearily homeward, fighting step by step through the raging inferno of wind and dust. For three days, the camp was engulfed in a blinding dust storm. A week before, the residents shivered in the icy grip of a sub-zero weather. Where would it all end, questioned Minoru silently.

Minoru's mother was in bed with a lingering cold. Yes, many people were going down with cold and pneumonia. Poor, poor people, thought Minoru, they didn't want to come to this desert wasteland. They are so unused to such extremes in the weather and to such terrible vengeance that Mother Nature can wreak upon them.

Minoru could not sleep that night. He worried about his sick mother. She was breathing with difficulty, her face was contorted with suffering.

Where would it all end, asked Minoru again. The memories of his old home in California, the sudden declaration of war, the evacuation--they all came back to him.

With an effort, Minoru tried to shake himself out of the depths of his moody lethargy. Why, mused Minoru, why, I am being selfish and petty, thinking only of ourselves and falling into self-pity over our unfortunate lot. What about the brave Russians who are fighting, fighting with unyielding tenacity for every inch of their soil against a ruthless foe? The free people all over the world, their spirits unbroken, struggling valiantly to preserve the principles they hold so dear. What about them?

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Memories that had lain half-buried in the dust of time now rushed poignantly before Minoru. Time receded . . .back back back

There he was in a cozy little apartment house in the fog-laden city of San Francisco. By his side on the davenport sat Michiko, the cute little nisei girl who was his 'steady'. He could see the terror in her eyes when the world the two had planned came crashing asunder--that was the fateful day of December 7, 1941. She was snuggling closer under his protecting arm.

"Oh, Minoru," she had cried, "father lost his job. I am so afraid. What is to become of us?"

And he too, had looked bewildered by the sudden turn of world events. Kissing the tears that ran down in little streams from her lovely brown eyes, he had assured her weakly, "Aw, Michi, everything will turn out all right. Just you wait and see. Now dry your eyes and smile like a good little girl."

That was a year ago. Minoru's eyes clouded with tears in his recollection of that blissful moment. Now the two lovers were parted--each in a different relocation center.

Some day, thought Minoru, some day we'll meet again in a world that will be free once more.

A SUNDAY HIKE TO THE HOG FARM (Recreation)

At the gate a sentry stopped us. "Let's see your passes," he said. We showed him our cards. But Eddie absent-mindedly showed his draft-registration card. "What are you trying to pull, sonny?" demanded the M.P. And Eddie sheepishly fished out of his pocket, the proper card. So we cleared our first obstacle--the sentry post.

In a happy-go-lucky mood, we went skipping over the rocks, over the irrigation ditches, over the sage-brushes, over the desert fairyland that surrounds the City of Jewel--Topaz.

We came upon a number of young boys flying their model planes. The rubber-powered balsa models were soaring gracefully through the blue sky. The youngsters seemed so happy and carefree--even in this last outpost of civilization.

As we continued on our hike to visit our friends, the pigs, we could see the snow-covered eastern hills, rising phantom-like over the blue horizon and bits of fluffy clouds overhead standing motionless in the azure sky. Now and then, we would see sparrows twittering and skimming over the sage-brushes.

We marched on singing gaily and stomping to its irregular tune. Passing by the irrigation ditch--half-filled with stagnant water, we paused to toss stones and watched the ever-widening circles over the still surface. And over the piled-up mounds of dirt, we trudged, following the leader.

n We got a lift from a farmer going eastward and dropped off at the hog farm. We knew it was the hog-farm. Yes, by it's smell. The odoriferous creatures didn't even seem glad to see us. They

would grunt and slop themselves all over the nauseating garbage. Some were taking a beauty treatment in the oozy mud. Some blinked at us from their shady nook and dropped back to sleep.

We hurried away from the farm, as it was spoiling our appetites, and walked to the cool banks of the irrigation canal. There we sprawled out and munched on our delicious lunch.

It was past four o'clock when we started back but we reached home in time for supper. This concludes the end of a perfect day.

A BOY AND A GIRL

Moonlight cast long shadows between the rows of tar-papered barracks. The lights of the city blinked out one by one. A boy and a girl were walking slowly homeward. Their fingers carelessly interlocked, both looking down, deep in thought.

Shizu glanced up at Nobu's face. It had changed, she mused. It had grown more sure of line, more settled. His eyes were still dark brown; they still had something of the wild flame in them, but controlled now. She remembered the night they first met at a dance in the Tanforan Assembly Center several months ago.

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The hall was decorated with crepe paper streamers in all the colors of the rainbow. The red, green, and blue light bulbs gave the room a soft, informal atmosphere.

She saw him standing in the far end of the hall, watching the dancers gliding rhythmically before him. It was at the end of her second dance with Tom, when he approached them.

"Hey, Tom, how about a knockdown to the chick?"

Tom introduced her, "Shizu, this is my friend, Nobu Adachi. Better watch him, he's a first class wolf."

And she floated away on the floor in Nobu's arms. He didn't say much and when she spoke to him, he would answer in an incoherent, embarrassed way. Dancing with him was so different. She never felt this way before when she danced with Tom or the other boys. She scarcely heard the soft, melancholy strains streaming from the record player, but only felt an inexplicable ecstasy by just being held close to him. She prayed that the music would never stop but go on and on forever. The music came to an abrupt end. He was feeling more at ease now and Shizu felt that she had known him for a long time. They began to dance again as the next piece started to play. She liked to hear him talk, to tell her of himself.

"You and I belong to each other," he whispered to her.

But she laughed and said, "Oh, Nobu, we are both so young and so unsure of what we want."

They had been going steady ever since that night. He seemed so frustrated in life then. But, he fervently told her, that his principles and ideals ^{would} ~~will~~ never die, come what ^{might} ~~may~~.

In September, they moved to the Topaz Relocation Center. And in December they announced their engagement. They had planned to be married in the spring. They

wanted to be sure for they both knew that love can be so blind and that "the lives of young people are like young trees in the forest covered with crawling, vine-like things, in danger of losing all of the romance of life."

And on January 28, 1943 when she read the War Department's announcement, an ominous fear crept into her heart. What would Nobu do? Would he volunteer and leave her? What of their future? What would life be without him? Many unanswered questions flashed through her mind.

Then it came one evening. Nobu sat down beside her. She could sense the weariness in him, the kind of weariness that comes from one who has been trying with all his heart and soul to grope his way along some difficult road of thought. He clasped her hand into his. For a moment, he stared at her silently.

"Shizu," he began hesitantly, "please try to understand. I know that what I am about to say to you isn't so easy or so simple. It means our future, Shizu, our future happiness. For the last week, God knows how many nights, I had lain awake pondering over it. But now I know that it was the only decision I could make. I had to be true to myself and to my principles. That's why I volunteered today, Shizu."

For a long time, she looked at him blankly. She felt his words cutting painfully into her heart. Then it's true, it's true, she thought in anguish. What she had feared had come true. She could not hold back her tears and she buried her face in Nobu's lap, her sobs wracking her body convulsively.

"No," she cried, "no, no, no! You couldn't, Nobu. You just couldn't!"

Nobu stroked her hair gently, letting her cry herself out.

"Darling," he began, wiping away the tears from her moist, brown eyes with his handkerchief, "we got to take life as it comes. We can't be selfish. After all, we're not the only ones who are going to be separated by this war. Besides it will be all over in a year or two and then we can start life again from where we left off."

She got up and walked to the window. The glaring searchlight from the sentry tower pierced the darkness and illuminated the monotonous rows of tar-papered barracks.

It has been ten months, she reflected, ten long months behind the barbed-wire fence. She walked back toward Nobu. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him on the forehead.

"I'm sorry darling, I didn't know. I'm proud of you."

The room was quiet, save occasional muffled voices from the adjoining apartment. The pot-bellied stove glowed and the flame rising and falling showed through the small opening. It gave the room a comfortable warmth. The boy and the girl in a loving embrace, their hearts beating as one, were lost in a cloud of bliss.

"Oh, darling," came the sleepy voice of Shizu, "when are we going to get married?"

"Tomorrow," replied Nobu.

"Nobu, be serious."

"I am serious," said Nobu, "let's make it soon as possible."

"Let's make it Saturday, darling," said Shizu. "We can go to Salt Lake for our honeymoon."

The pot-bellied stove glowed brighter than ever. The room was becoming unbearably stuffy. Nobu wiped away the perspiration from his face.

"Gee, it's getting warm in here."

Shizu got up and tugged at his hand. "Come on, lazybones, let's go outside for a little walk. We'll go to your place and break the news to your parents."

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The two figures walked hand in hand down the gravel road. Night soon enveloped them.