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Topaz, Utah
May 27, 1944

Dear Friends:

Mr. Ernst has been writing to you about once each month and now he has asked me to write to you to say that he has been called by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for overseas duty in connection with the restoration of displaced persons in Europe to their homes.

His address for the time being will be c/o United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 1344 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C.; and he would be very happy to hear from you and to write you if it is at all possible. He wishes you the best of luck and hopes that some day he may see you again.

Any correspondence connected with the project may be written to ~~his~~ successor Mr. L. T. Hoffman.

Sincerely yours,

T. Nakata

T. Nakata
Secretary

M-785

Topaz, Utah
March 23, 1944

Dear Friends:

Since writing you on February 5 I have been back East to a meeting in Washington, D. C. of all Project Directors with Director Myer and his staff.

As you probably know, the War Relocation Authority has been made by presidential action a part of the Department of Interior. Among other things this means that a member of the President's Cabinet the Honorable Harold L. Ickes is now available to Mr. Myer for advice and counsel and action in behalf of the program of the War Relocation Authority.

This is undoubtedly the biggest single advance step in behalf of the evacuees that has been made since the recognition of the nisei by Secretary Stimson in January 1943, and again in January 1944 when the Selective Service procedures were reinstituted.

We are all very much encouraged by the knowledge that the affairs of the men, women and children of Japanese Ancestry can now be brought before the entire Cabinet of the United States by a man who understands the problems involved and has publicly pledged himself to aid in solving these problems.

Mrs. Ernst accompanied me on my trip East and we stopped off at Battle Creek to visit our son David who is in training at Fort Custer. While at that camp I had a nice visit with Ted Miyahara who is an enlisted man working in the hospital laboratory; also his two sisters who are stenographers in the camp stores operations.

Then Mrs. Ernst and I went to Boston where she is now staying with relatives and I came back to Washington, D. C. for the Project Directors' Conference.

While I stopped over in Chicago, New York, Boston and Washington I had the pleasure of visiting former residents of Topaz, all of whom are doing fine work in introducing their new friends and fellow workers to the nisei.

I returned to Topaz on March 15 to find it covered with a new blanket of snow, also, several vacancies in the project staff. Mr. Hughes has gone into the Navy; Mr. Cornwall has been transferred to a Relocation Office in Rochester, New York; Mr. Barnhart, Project Attorney, is sharing his time between Minidoka and Topaz and is being

transferred to the Washington, D. C. Office; Mr. Roy Potter is leaving to go into the Indian Service and Mr. Carl Rogers is on his way into the service.

This week the newly organized USO of Topaz with the sponsorship of the City Council arranged a very nice banquet and entertainment for the first contingent of Topaz men who have passed their physical examination and will probably be inducted early in April. USO has fixed up a room in Rec. 4 and they have already stimulated a fine wholesome interest both in the soldiers who come back on their furloughs and the men who are now going out to enter the service.

As of today 1900 Topaz people have relocated on indefinite leave.

As I write this, we are expecting a visit from Director Dillon Myer. He has been speaking to organizations on the Coast and today has spoken to a joint meeting of the Salt Lake City Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Club. After that meeting, he is going to drive down to Topaz and stay over Sunday with us here. The Topaz City Council and the residents have planned several meetings with Mr. Myer and we are all confident that his visit will be very helpful to the residents as they make their individual family plans for the future.

I want to thank you for your good letters this last month and I want you to know they are most welcome. Good luck to you.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Ernst

Charles F. Ernst

M-734

May 19, 1944

Dear Former Topazans:

It's been some time since I wrote to you and as time flies here at Topaz a number of things have happened. I have heard from many of you--good reports on things you are doing, successful first steps in relocation, problems in getting satisfactory housing, new friends, news about old friends. All of these things convince me that you have "what it takes" to adjust again to life outside the center and make it possible for me to see that you are getting a thrill and new confidence from overcoming difficulties. Keep up the good work, and remember that we here at Topaz are always interested in knowing how you are getting along.

Most of our winter came this year after March 1st when spring should have been with us. Blizzards, snow, rain, and cold weather so that we have only done about two weeks of field work on the farm since mid-November. Today is bright and beautiful so my hopes are up that we may get to work on the farm again tomorrow. In spite of the weather, we have been going ahead with many things--fencing our summer pastures, repair of farm machinery, building of poultry houses, and care of beef and hogs.

We have some peas and other early vegetables planted along with about 300 acres of grain, ditches cleaned, dikes repaired, land cleared so that when the weather is good we can start planting again.

Our Plant Beds (hot houses and cold frames) are in full operation with tomato, cabbage, broccoli, pepper, celery, and eggplants by the thousands being transplanted and cared for. We are really proud of this addition to Topaz--all of us, the construction crews, the gardeners, and the administration. The plant is located near the hospital heating plant (where we had some excess heating capacity). It was constructed mainly of scrap materials--you remember the truckloads of scrap lumber we brought in last spring from the Remington Arms Plant in Salt Lake City. The steam pipes are patched up pieces of old water lines which were replaced last winter after giving us so much trouble. We reduced the steam pressure and have all pipes exposed so we can weld them up if they spring a leak.

The plant flats were made by saving old ammunition boxes (rejected faulty boxes from Remington Arms Plant) in two. Our cold frames covers were made by a group of our women workers sewing up into one piece a lot of cotton bags (mainly those in which cracked wheat cereal came). Quite a sewing job! 100 feet long and 15 feet wide! But they do make good covers and the ladies did a fine job. It is a good greenhouse setup. The men and women are enthusiastic and the plants are doing fine. There's nothing like growing plants in the spring to give a person a lift! Besides saving some \$5000 in purchased plants, we will have good plants when we want them which should increase our yield by at least 25%. The land is ready so we have scheduled our first plantings about May 15 (cabbage).

Other parts of our program are going well too. The hogs, in the new farrowing house, are giving us good litters of pigs - 8, 10, 12, and as you know we have been feeding the center, as far as pork is concerned, since last

fall - 30 a week slaughtered. Construction at the swine plant is nearly complete (fences, gates, feeder houses, sheds, etc.). The water line is in so we don't have the long water haul. We have about 1000 pigs and hogs of all ages. Mr. Sekiguchi, Mr. Asano, and Mr. Hoshiga are still on deck at the hog farm. George Nomoto relocated to the vicinity of Chicago where he is working on a hog farm.

At the Cattle ranch, Kaz Shikano is really operating a fine unit under the general direction of Mr. Adams and Mr. Palmer. The cattle herd numbers about 700 with 200 in the feed lot fattening for current slaughter at the rate of about 16 weekly. The others are on pasture and will remain out to be slaughtered as they grow out and get fat on schedule through the summer, fall, and on to next winter. We are buying stock so that we will keep up our numbers for home use and be able to provide beef for the Minidoka project beginning August 1st. By continuing the program now in operation and by close figuring and full use of our land, we can produce the necessary beef.

Our Poultry plant too is rolling along! Last November we hired a teacher and started a class in farm construction, recruiting the members of the class from the Agriculture and Engineering Sections. Mr. Ohye was one foreman who enrolled. They started in on irrigation headgates, fence gates, and then worked on an adobe house construction. During the winter months, they constructed frame houses. After a month of intensive instruction, a new class was recruited - and so on thru about 4 classes - with the first classes getting less attention as time goes on, largely due to a shortage of instructors. The enthusiasm of the classes has resulted in a Poultry plant which is ready to house our spring chicks of which we now have 6000. Over 1500 laying hens are giving us 700 to 800 eggs daily so we are helping to feed the center on eggs. Next fall our chicken numbers will be one hen per person for the center - about 7000. Mr. Yamane is still on the job, as conscientious and hard working as ever. He has the assistance of a number of good men and women whom he has trained through the past year.

This season of the year as last year, we have much the same difficulty with the grain. Only 400 acres are seeded with 700 acres yet to seed. The weather has been impossible. The land is nearly ready so we will keep the drill rolling 16 hours a day again starting tomorrow and we'll be able to get the grain in the next three weeks, with reasonable luck. We've been irrigating for about three weeks now--two weeks of which was wet, sloppy weather. Mr. Nakahara is heading up this work with his brush crew.

Mr. Matsuoka is still in the Ag office doing a fine piece of work as always. He and Mike Kudo arranged for an Ag show (good will) at the auditorium which was a success. Vernon Ichisaka is a member of the Council again this term and with duties as Chairman of the Selective Service Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Operations Committee, has little time for farm work, much to his regret.

You can see from the above resume that our Ag program is functioning very well and has much better chances for real success than a year ago when we were struggling with lack of equipment, lumber, supplies, buildings, etc.

I'm expecting big things especially because the spirit of our farm crews is high, and we'll have most of what we need for the work.

Other parts of the "Operations" of the project are going well too. A root cellar is complete and is being used for storage of our seed potatoes. A new shop (CCC building) was constructed at the farm for use in the assembling of minor repairs to farm implements.

An additional CCC shop building is being put up at the garage for motor maintenance. The tractor repair shop is really functioning well. We exchanged with the Army some of our oldest trucks for some 1939 models which are in much better condition. So we are now equipped to continue hauling gravel for the repair of roads, walks, etc. in the city and on the farm. Dick Arimoto, our mainspring at the Motor Pool, is relocating. Joe Taniguchi, our driver trainer was accepted by the Army and Tosh Endo is also relocating right away. Such is life at Topaz! Selective Service will hit our Motor Transport and Maintenance Section harder than any other branch of operations. 58 out of 98 workers are eligible for Army Service. Even though it will be hard (or even impossible) to replace many of the boys, we are glad to see them have a chance to do that which they want to do and which brings them one step closer the return to normal lives.

Construction of the Science wing of the high school is under way by an adult class under the direction of Mr. Decker, a new construction teacher recently employed. (This will be the last of high school construction.) The Buddhist and Protestant churches have been completed, (by volunteer labor from old CCC buildings) on the high school square, and were dedicated last Tuesday. The most troublesome of our pipelines were replaced last winter but we have a few more to work on now.

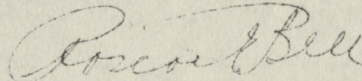
We had our largest fire about a month ago in one of the staff apartments under construction--loss was about \$1000. Our fire record still is good, however, and losses have been below the average for the ten centers, and less than 5% of the losses in other American cities. Mr. Owen, our Fire Protection Officer, transferred to the department at Tule Lake and Mr. Miller is acting in his place.

Our Industry Section under Harry Konda has just recently gotten the Tofu plant in operation. Enough tofu is produced to make two servings per week plus three servings of soybean milk for the center. It is a very nice plant, constructed from an old CCC building, located near the hospital laundry. The soybean milk helps a lot as a supplement to our supply of cows' milk. Bean sprouts are still being delivered to the dining halls once a week under Mr. Tanaki's direction. They are of fine quality and have been our cheapest source of vegetables during the winter months.

Yoshino and Roy Kitashima are relocating to Cleveland this month. Masumi Inazumi (my present secretary) is going with them. Yoshino has been teaching shorthand to a class organized from the office staff. I hear excellent reports on the work she is doing.

No doubt you will tire of reading this if I ~~make~~ the letter longer. I hope this will bring you up to date on some of the Topaz happenings and aspirations and serve to let you know that I still think of you and am indeed glad to hear from you. Do write again both to me and to your many other friends. Keeping in touch with friends, especially in California, will help to speed the day when you and your parents can return to California—if you still want to!

Sincerely yours,



Roscoe E. Bell
Assistant Project Director

17-771

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Topaz, Utah
May 21, 1944

Dear Friends:

It is my turn to be on "Sunday duty" in the office today so what could be a better occupation for a quiet Sunday than to write to some of my friends to whom I owe letters. Even though time for letter writing is scarce, we do think of you often and wonder how you are. I know you will understand my having this letter mimeographed just so I can write to more of you. So many of you commented favorably on our Christmas letter even though it was mimeographed. I'm ready to try again on a "wholesale" catching up of my much neglected correspondence.

Much has happened since the Christmas season with its programs, Christmas carols, New Year's celebration and all that combined to make it another highlight in our life at Topaz. The Young Peoples' choir at the Protestant Church (about 50 voices) rendered the "Hallelujah Chorus" beautifully--a real compliment to their director, Gladys.

At the end of January, Gladys and I took a much needed vacation. Two weeks' trip to Spokane and Pasco, Washington visiting our parents, Portland (visiting my sister and friends and checking on property), Berkeley (friends), Los Angeles (friends and relatives) and home to our children who had been batching during this time. It was a strenuous but very welcome vacation. Shortly after returning to Topaz, Mr. Ernst (Project Director) went to Washington so I was Acting Project Director during that time. Everything went fine, thanks to the full cooperation of all members of our good staff.

Spring started to come in February but backslid a little during March and April with blizzards and rain so that we've only had about two weeks during which time we could do field work. We used the two weeks tho, and have some of our early garden in--peas, lettuce. Most of the land is ready so we can go right ahead (probably it will be dry enough tomorrow) to plant our 800 acres of grain (total 1100), our 300 acres of vegetables and finish cultivating, diking, ditching 1000 acres of alfalfa, and 1500 acres of pasture land.

Beef cattle and hogs are going fine much as stated in my last letter but we have about 5600 new chicks with 6000 more coming. They are doing very well indeed.

We now have our greenhouses in operation and are we proud of them! Constructed mainly from salvage materials--short scraps of 2x4 and 4x4 which we picked up last summer at Remington Arms plant in Salt Lake City. Salvage water pipe (for our steam line) welded together and exposed so we can repair any leaks which develop. Salvage flour sacks and cereal (cracked wheat) sacks sewed together by a crew of women this winter to make the covers of the cold frames 100 feet long and 15 feet wide. Some sewing job!!!

The plant "flats" were constructed from rejected ammunition boxes, picked up last summer from the Remington Arms plant--"Swords into plowshares"

The cabbage, tomato, celery, pepper, broccoli, etc. plants are growing fine and many have been transplanted from seed flats to plant flats where they will remain till set in the field starting with the more hardy plants about May 15. We expect to save about \$6000 in plant costs and have better plants too.

A new industry has been developed in Topaz by our Industry Section. It is the manufacture of Tofu, a kind of cottage cheese made from soybeans. In the process, we use everything from hull to whey! The process in outline is as follows--soak the beans, grind them, cook the soup for about 20 minutes, strain out the pulp and hulls leaving "soy bean milk". Curdle the milk by adding lime, press out the whey in a wooden mold about 18" square, wash and cut the "cheese" into cakes 2x2x4" for delivery to the dining halls. We like both the milk and the tofu and oriental people are very fond of both. The milk is excellent substitute for cows' milk and tofu for meat (both of which are rationed to us). Our little factory turned out about 3500 cakes last week--each of which will serve 3 people so we had enough to go around twice to the center. We make tofu 3 days a week and milk three days.

Easter Sunday was an eventful day here, especially because it was the Buddhist celebration of the birthday of Buddha. An outdoor Easter sunrise service was well attended even though it was cold and cloudy an inspiring service near the east side of the city with a huge white cross outlined against the sunrise. The Protestant service held in the auditorium was attended by a capacity crowd of about 1300 persons. The Buddhist service in the afternoon was similarly well attended.

Two church buildings (Buddhist and Protestant) have just been completed from portable CCC buildings which were moved in and erected by volunteer crews. The dedicatory service was held on Tuesday. It gives the people real satisfaction to have a building they can call their own for use as a chapel, for weddings, funerals, and for regular worship although a 20x100 building is only large enough for church services of the issei (old folks) Japanese speaking church. The young peoples' services are held in a dining hall.

We certainly have made intensive use of our high school gym-auditorium since its completion. Basketball, gym classes, high school assemblies, plays, community events, etc. keep it busy practically all day every day and every evening. We are not expecting to complete our other school buildings but rather use barracks for everything except auditorium, shop and science building for which barracks are not adaptable.

Fortunately we were able to get some 1934 models of motor vehicles to replace some of the old 1925-1935 models which were pretty badly worn out before we got them and which were a real problem to maintain with parts (especially for old models) almost impossible to get. Our evacuee mechanics and truck drivers are mostly (58 out of 98) young men of draft age so we will be losing them soon. Mechanics' positions are available outside the center, many of them relocate too. We constantly train new men on the job so operating training schools is an essential part of our work.

The re-institution of Selective Service for loyal citizens has been a big forward step and generally is being welcomed as a citizen's privilege even though it creates many problems unique to the relocation center. Boys and

wanting to leave their families to grow up in a relocation center, and yet not having a home to which to send their families outside the center, is one of the major problems. Some are leaving the center to get their families established before they are called. It was an inspiring sight to see 130 boys leave for pre-induction physical exams in one day. Those who failed to pass were pretty heartsick. The U.S.O. is active here entertaining soldiers returning to visit relatives and giving send-offs for the new inductees.

The daily farewell ceremony at the gate is a Topaz institution. Farewells to relocating families - 2 or 3 up to 20 leaving in a day, an average of 125 per month.

So goes life at Topaz--over changing--always interesting and providing opportunities to learn that the so-called "oriental psychology" is simply human psychology after all and that skin color is really a very thin veneer.

Our children still enjoy school work, all four of them happy and busy. It keeps them on their toes to keep step with their classes.

Gladys had to drop her activities because of illness (glandular) but she's getting back on her feet now. Says she "hates to have to be lazy all the time". She would rather just "be lazy when she wants to". I'm feeling fine - too fine in fact!

I'll not tire you further with reading a long letter, but do remember that Gladys and I always enjoy hearing from you. We do sincerely hope that you are using every opportunity to improve your skill at doing something and preparing for a life of greater usefulness in the years to come.

Sincerely yours,

Roscoe and Gladys

Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe E. Bell

Topaz, Utah
April 24, 1944

Dear Friends:

My last letter to you was dated March 23. Many interesting things have happened since then and I would like to mention a few.

Director Dillon Myer came to Topaz to stay from Thursday, March 23 to Monday the 27th. He talked to the City Council, to the workers, to the high school students and to the Administrative Staff. His visit was helpful to the people of Topaz and their discussions with him were beneficial to him.

I left Topaz on March 30 and attended meetings in Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, returning to the project on April 7. Out of my experience talking with people in California, I derived a good deal of encouragement for the success of the WRA Program with respect to both issei and nisei. After my return to the project I said at several meetings of the residents that I thought they would be wise to keep up their correspondence with former friends and acquaintances in California. May I pass on the same word to you who are reading this letter for I am sure it will be helpful some day to those who plan to return to the Coast if former friends in California learn about your present experiences both in the Service and in civilian life.

The people of Topaz observed Easter whose meaning seemed more significant this year than ever. In this connection I would like to report receipt of a beautiful V-Mail Easter Card from Pvt. Saburo Kitagawa mailed from Italy. Saburo is on my mailing list for this monthly letter and I know he will agree with me when I tell all of you that he and others in the service will be glad to receive letters from their friends.

You will be glad to know that the Buddhist and Christian Churches are now completed through the volunteer labor of their respective members. Last week we had a meeting in the Community Auditorium to dedicate these two buildings and afterwards we made an inspection of both the buildings which you may know are located one on either side of the Civic Auditorium.

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Last week about 130 fellows went up for their pre-induction physical examination and about 96 passed the examination. Another group is going up for their physical examination early in May.

Plans are now underway for a Spring Festival to be held at Topaz about the week of May 8. It will include elements of spring clean-up and Child Health Day, as well as, Maypole Dances.

Relocation continues to be a matter of interest to many and approximately another 150 have gone out on indefinite leave since I last wrote you which brings up the number to about 2050. So long for now, good luck to you and write to me when you can.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Ernst.

Charles F. Ernst

M-741