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C O P Y

Manzanar Relocation Center
June 4, 1942

[DR. EMBREE]

Dear [REDACTED]

Of course the story regarding the human side of the vast evacuation project cannot be accurately told by anyone other than the Japanese involved. This I intend to write you at greater length soon, perhaps this week-end.

My work is interesting in as far as I see almost all the people in camp, and get to talk to most of them. I have been fortunate in ^{becoming acquainted with} acquainting many leaders among the Japanese-Americans, and at the moment is asking me to join his group which will be formed to criticize, suggest constructively, and improve the many deplorable conditions here in the community.

Life among the California niseis is a novel experience for their psychology is at much variance from the kanaka-Japanese outlook on politics and life. They talk a more flawless English than the Hawaiians, but their previously isolated community life that gave them little opportunity to mingle with the haoles and the ever-present economic and social discrimination have warped their thinking, embittering them and causing them to lose faith in the white politicians particularly, and the other white population which they are wont to call Jews.

But who can blame them, for they have been exploited, especially before the evacuation when extreme injustice was done to the majority of them through the inequitous handling of their properties. At sacrifice prices the disposition of goods was effected, and in many instances the Japanese were compelled to leave their furnitures, fixtures, etc., in their domicile without reaping any returns for them.

Sad but true, the Japanese pride impelled many to leave (throw in literal Japanese translation) their belongings because the prices offered by the white buyers were ridiculous.

What do you think of this:

A restaurant proprietor wanting to sell his business and fixtures for \$1,500 when actually at normal times they could be sold at \$3,500. But when the sale was finally executed, he collected some \$535. This is not an isolated and an exceptional case. I know of businessmen and friends in San Francisco who could not get

angry but merely laughed when the ridiculously low prices were suggested for valuable articles.

Ice boxes everywhere were sold for a song, with a \$200 GE recently bought being sold for \$65 to \$85. Furnitures in many instances, because of the precipitate eviction, were left behind.

It seemed to me that all the dealers and the people anxious to buy were in legion against us, and what a sad commentary it was for the people who are professedly fighting for Democracy, freedom of the masses, and human decency.

— has asked me whether this is a free community or a prison. I must say that we're in confinement. Much of our civil liberties are curtailed, and here in the camp no freedom to cross the sentry posted next to the outskirts of the inhabited community prevails.

No one has left the camp to even visit the snow capped mountain area which you no doubt saw in the magazines. The stringent rules prohibiting the crossing of the sentry line is adhered, and thus far only one "accident" has occurred. The person shot won his bout with satan.

When I evacuated from Los Angeles, I anticipated that in Manzanar and the other centers, the niseis will take the leadership. The war and the precipitate evacuation should have made the Japanese, both citizens and residents, realize that the time has come for changing hands in leadership among us. But such is not the case, and this must be lamented.

The block leaders which were elected by the people here comprise mostly isseis, and they manifest no hesistancy in running the only representative (do not take the word literally) group of the Japanese residents in camp in the customary Japanese manner. They want the meetings to be a closed session, and whenever trouble occurs in labor relations, they try to settle it by having a power exerting person caution the underdog.

Time and time again I have suggested to some block leaders that a labor board or some like committee having representatives of the workers and the heads of each department be set up to hear all grieviences which purport to create disturbance continually. Thus far there is no effort to improve the machinery of handling the "beefs".

Other suggestions have been made by members of our group, and this has brought little action. Now that the confusion and the mix-up phase attendant to a formative community has passed, we hope to get some response.

Recreation in camp is at present limited to softball competition in which even old men participate. We have a music hall (barrack) and in time we anticipate musical recitals, and even drama performed on the stage (this we hope will be constructed.).

The people are having difficulty in adjusting themselves. The often mentioned fact in the newspapers and the periodicals about the people crying for something to do because they have too much time does not improve the making of adjustments. Boredom and do nothing drudgery bring idlers' gossiping and definitely lower the morale of the people.

One can say that we are living a communal life, and others who are extremists say that this is a prison. I shall let you come to your conclusion after reading my detailed letter.

I am afraid that I can do little to help ———. We were forced to evacuate, and we are given no freedom thus far in matters regarding social intercourse. For instance, it is difficult to have friends (haoles) visit us here, and if permission is granted after much cutting of the red tape, our visitors who have made the long trip could talk to us only at the police station which has no fit chair to sit on. So people talk while standing on the ground in front of the station.

Tonight's camp bulletin informs that no "loved ones" or fiancées will be permitted to move from one center to another for uniting with the other parties.

If I am not mistaken, as the result of General DeWitt's recent order, ——— might have been affected and his freedom or mobility frozen. Perhaps his present domicile is in Parker Dam area reception center. It is best for him to evacuate to the closest reception center and witness and experience the processes of the human exodus.

The Arizona area centers will be mainly agricultural, and friend ——— will fit in perfectly. Before the termination of the war, he will, I hope, come out a leader among the niseis.

We need militant democrats among the niseis who can educate the other Japanese politically. The world issues of the present conflict must be explained, and this is no easy matter when many of us have to live down the manifold sufferings experienced previous to evacuation and which is still to vivid in our memories.

Since I last met you, I have been errant, crossing the continent to Georgia and then back to Frisco via Seattle. Writing has been incidental to me for quite a while; Now that I am in internment, and have time hanging heavily on my hands, it should require little inducement for me to write, but I must admit my indolence shamefacedly.

My intentions are good, and they outrun my actual output. However, I am seriously contemplating on doing some writing for publication.

I have been wondering whether we evacuated Japanese could successfully apply for help from the ----- Foundation in the establishment of libraries that could be used for the advancement of our young students who totally lack books. Art collections, musical instruments, qualified teachers are much needed.

Will you outline for me the proper steps we must take in applying for the foundation's help? If the outlook is promising, some of us here will draw up letters and will also contact the Manzanar administration in regard to the matter.

The War Relocation Authority which is in charge of our present and future destiny might help us in the accumulation of books, but I strongly doubt it.

At the moment we have a canteen which makes a profit of \$15,000 to \$20,000 a month. From this profit the administration is intending to purchase our books, recreational facilities, etc.

Our remuneration for the 44 hour week is \$3. for the common laborer and \$4.50 for the professional workers as physicians and doctors. How we can survive comfortably is out of the question, though we are given food and shelter gratis.

The above mentioned store will be a cooperative, and the profit supposedly accruing to the populace. This merely is nicely put. Why cannot the cooperative be non-profitmaking, or at least the goods sold at prices below the LA or existing nearby community prices.

Our pay up to this month has been \$8 to \$16, the gradations of pay falling in the following category. Unskilled-\$8, I rating \$10, Skilled-12, professional \$16. WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED A SINGLE CENT YET.

Think of the people who were jobless before the evacuation because of the circumstances resulting from the war, and think of the families with children who want candies and men who smoke. Frugality must be practiced to the EXTREME.

Thus far the canteen has been swallowing the money of those who came here with money. There are few who still are capitalists in a small way, and a small group who have thousands of dollars. The majority are broke.

I see no justice in the WRA putting the burden of the purchasing of books, etc. upon us. We have made great sacrifices, and we would like to live normal lives or ones closely approximately them.

Our present library comprises a few volumes of contributed material, and one can imagine the meagerness and the paucity of the resource by recalling the manner in which the disposition of properties was effected before evacuation. Books and magazines were given away.

Our branch libraries have a few old copies of the Readers Digest, some G. Housekeeping, and the Newsweek. And the buildings are all barracks without desks and tables and benches.

Only the main library has books, and according to my erudite friend, "Microbe Hunters" is the best book he found there on the unattractive racks.

I shall write more fully about the camp conditions in my next letter.

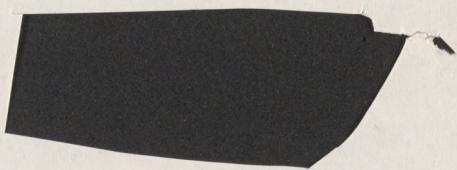
Quite a while back I received letters from Hawaii informing me that steps are being taken by _____ and several others to have me returned to Hawaii.

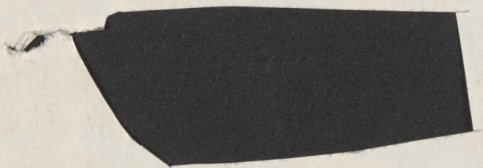
.....(Chinese friend in Hawaii) and others have written me that they have a place for me in Hawaii right now. I understand that they desire my service in giving the nisei morale a boost, especially down the waterfront. Also they want me to return with the information on the evacuation, since there is much rumor on the forced exodus of the Japanese from the coastal area, all of which is demoralizing our people back home. (i.e. in Hawaii).

..... wrote me that he had contacted the army officials, and the army authorities in Frisco phoned the Camp Manager here to ascertain my presence in this camp 4 weeks ago.

The army Major then told me that he might call me again, and he might not. The latter course has been followed evidently, and my chance of being shipped back to work in the Morale Department of the Office of the Military Governor has been spoiled. I am hoping that the military red-tape is still being cut.

Sincerely yours,





MEMORANDUM

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TO: Bob Brown
FROM: Roy M. Takeno
DATE: January 7, 1943
SUBJECT: Problem for the administrators
(~~As of December 11, 1942~~)

Confronting the War Relocation Authority is a maze of problems requiring study and decision, with a host of prejudicial conditioning factors as references. The W.R.A. must manage the projects and simultaneously plan relocation for the Japanese without a specific guiding precedence.

Only by going back as far as the post-Civil War period, and the liberation of the Negro slaves, can we find the faintest similar precedence. And there the comparison stops for want of similarity in causes which led to the confinement of the Negroes and the Japanese. The Negroes, as we recall it, were not given by the government any organized counsel on relocation or readjustment. The traits of the two people and their backgrounds, of course, are worlds apart. The end results sought for the two people, however, are the same. There is the significance.

It is knowledge, it is intimate acquaintance with the traits and problems of the Japanese people that we now would seek to enhance for the W.R.A. administrators. We would enable the authorities in every way possible to add to their already acquired fund of knowledge regarding our traits and our problems.

A number of channels are open for the W.R.A. to gather this information----all in addition to the pre-Pearl Harbor documents and observations made by government agencies and presumably available to the Authority. Project newspapers are sources of information. Reports forwarded to W.R.A.'s headquarters in Washington by Offices of Reports from the 10 relocation projects is a big reservoir for source materials.

The significance of events occurring in the projects, big and small, cannot well be under-estimated. It is not the immediate results of the spreading of a rumor, that creates the primary concern for officials of the Authority. Noteworthy to the officials is the blunted incentive of the heretofore industrious energy of the evacuees through their confinement. It apparently breeds rumors. Noteworthy to the officials is the evidence that in the face of the oft-asserted low morale of the evacuees, there are residents inspired efforts that help to sustain morale. These variety programs (engi kais) sponsored by block residents, for instance, are tangible morale builders. We note that this also is true at other projects. It goes toward proving the observation that often a spontaneous effort of a group of people, inadequate though it may be, help lift morale more effectively than professionally devised programs imposed on the residents by the authorities for this purpose. By the same token, resident-devised self-government, amateurish thought it may be, is more acceptable to the people than ready-made self-government formula imposed upon them by the W.R.A. The extent of satisfaction felt among the residents, incidentally, over the special efforts made by the management to secure for them special food articles for their New Year's Day menu, cannot yet be fully appreciated. It definitely helped to sustain the people's morale during the first post-

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riot days.

It may not be too presumptuous to suggest that the tendency indicated in this paper, is not limited to the Japanese, but to all nationalities and races, especially the minorities.

/mn

LETTER FROM A NISEI SOLDIER TO HIS FATHER

Saturday, Nov. 20, 1943
10:00 P.M.

Dear Dad,

Thanks a million for your very nice, heart warming letter. To tell you the truth, it was the best letter I've ever received in all my life. Before I forget, please tell Mom to write to me as I miss her very much. She could write to me in Japanese if it is easier for her. I'll probably have some trouble in reading it but I could ask one of my friends who is studying Japanese to help me out. I've given up the idea of going to S..... as I find the folks here are O.K. Besides that, I've signed up for the Medics, so I'm hoping to be transferred as soon as my basic training is over.

Every morning the band wakes us up around 6:30 A.M. with a very tuneful march. You know, Dad, how much I liked music and I guess I'll always enjoy it as long as I live. Well, it almost tempts me into joining up with the infantry band but I figure it wouldn't do me much good overseas. I want to help the boys the best I can, so I'm going to be or try my darn best to become a tough, well-trained first aid man. I want to be right up in the front with my buddies so I can help them whenever they need me.

Don't worry about us fellows because we are going to do our best in everything we do. I didn't want to brag but this outfit is really tops. There's quite a number of Caucasian outfits stationed here but my infantry has them all beat. We made the best scores in the recent tests. Right now the whole outfit is training awfully hard. They're never in camp because they have to go out into the bivouac area from various military problems. Last week they went thru live machine gun fire with dynamite blowing up all around them. This week they had to eat and sleep in a fox-hole for about four days. When the company goes out they close the mess hall so we (recruits) have to eat at some other mess hall.

I'm going into my sixth week of basic and it's getting tougher every week. I belong to the 11th platoon, which is the latest platoon to be organized. In our platoon there's always some soldier coming in from the outside, one by one. Most of them are drafted from back east, or from another outfit. Gee, the soldiers from another outfit look as white as a ghost, even though some of them have been in the army from 2 to 3 years.

You ought to see me now, Dad. I'm as dark as some of the colored neighbors we used to have. I've also gained a couple of pounds and worked up an awful appetite. Right now I've got a slight cold because of the queer weather down here. It's always changing from hot to cold.

So far I've hiked 78 miles and this was done mostly during the night time. Night hikes are O.K. if we didn't get so sleepy. Every night I have to clean my rifle, no matter how late I come home from a hike or night problem.

Last week I learned how to take a light machine gun apart. It sure looked complicated but after I learned the name of some of the parts it was pretty easy. Most of our basic has been devoted to dry firing with our rifles because in a couple of weeks we are going out on the range to shoot for records. We're going to sleep in our pup tents and have a couple of blankets for about two weeks. During this time we're going through live machine gun fire just like our company did. Also we're going to shoot carbine and all kinds of targets at different ranges. I'll probably freeze out there, but if the fellas in the company could take it I guess I can.

Sunday, Nov. 21, 1943

Here I am again, Dad, with so much to tell you that I just couldn't finish it last night. In my hutment there's ten regular cooks and K.P.'s. Most of the time they're not in because they have to go out on the field for a week. They come home Friday nights and take off again the following Monday morning around 4 A.M. Yes, Dad, they're really on the ball, as we say it in the Army.

The food in the army is O.K. but I don't get enough of it. I'm always running down to the PX for sandwiches. Usually on night hikes I store up with candies and sandwiches as I'm awfully hungry when I come home.

The hutments aren't as warm as the ones in Topaz but that's the army. Anyway, I received another blanket which makes a total of three blankets and a comforter. Besides this I have a coal stove right close to my bunk, so I am quite warm at times. Every Monday morning we air out the mattresses and change the sheets.

This Sunday I almost had K.P. duty but finally talked my way out of it. It would have been my third Sunday detail if I worked today. K.P. isn't bad on week days but on Sunday, No Sir!

Hey, Dad, I bet you'd make a hell of a good Lieut. in the army from the way you boss Hiro Ukagi and Jim Kushida around. Kidding aside, how's your job coming along?

This morning I went to church and Chaplain Yamada from Hawaii was the speaker. This infantry outfit has three chaplains now. The other two are Chaplains West and Higuchi. Chaplain Yamada spoke about the true meaning of Thanksgiving. Boy, I sure had a lot to be thankful for, Dad. Thanks a million for understanding my volunteering into the army. Boy, I sure tried like hell to make you understand how I felt towards volunteering. I guess if Mom had said "no", too, I probably wouldn't have volunteered. To both of you I'm greatly indebted and this is my way of showing how much I love my folks, so that we may be together again in a nice home.

Gee, Dad, I sure hated to go against your word but it was the one thing in my life that would have bothered me if I didn't. I guess if the Japanese from Hawaii could come all the way down here, I don't see why the mainlanders can't. They're Japanese just like me and any other niseis in the mainland. Some of them might never see their folks again but they are willing to take a chance and it's a darn good gamble if we come out the way we wanted it to be. So, Dad, you can just about understand how proud I am to serve in the Japanese American Combat Team. A month ago I saw a news reel which showed the Japanese Americans of the -- Inf. fighting over in Italy. All of us fellas whistled and cheered because we were so proud of the fine record they are making.

No, Dad, I won't be coming home this Thanksgiving or Christmas as I haven't finished my basic training. Sure wish I could be there to enjoy the Christmas Holidays. But don't worry, I'm coming home on the first furlough I get. So, until that day comes, I'll always be thinking of you folks.

Again I want to thank you both, you and Mom, for understanding the way I feel. It just makes me feel glad all over when I can say: "Sure, my folks are backing me up 100 percent and more with all their love." Some of the fellas aren't as lucky as I am because their folks have gone to Tule Lake. But just the same they are training just as hard as anybody else and more.

Well, its time for chow so I'll close this letter. Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain,

Your loving son,

/s/ Walton

P.S. Don't forget to tell Mom to write, too.

Mr. Cozzens
reports

April 14, 1943

Mr. Ralph P. Merritt,
Director,
Manzanar Relocation Center,
Manzanar, California

Dear Mr. Merritt:

In connection with Community Analysis Report No. 2, there is a statement on page 5 implying that at Manzanar a man was arrested "simply on suspicion". The choice of words here is not too happy, especially as it applies to Manzanar. The main point was to show the serious trouble that can come from an arrest, especially if made without a regular warrant. No criticism of your administration was intended. In the event of any re-issue of Report No. 2, the final sentence of the paragraph will be omitted.

I have just read with interest Mr. Opler's first report dealing with the problem of the motives behind yes and no answers on registration. He seems to have established a good rapport with the residents of Manzanar and I hope his work will prove fruitful in creating an understanding of social and psychological developments within the center.

Sincerely yours,

John F. Embree, Head,
Community Analysis Section

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