

9-10-D

Jerome Relocation Center
Denson, Arkansas

My dear Virginia:

Don't be alarmed to learn that this letter is from one, Sam Nakano, of Fresno! Remember? I first met you while working together in the WCCA office in Fresno, and later became further acquainted through correspondence from the Fresno Assembly Center. It's been nearly four months since I left California, and nary a word to you in all that time, for which I feel very negligent, indeed, Virginia. If I recall correctly, I told you that I'd write you from my new location when I had arrived. Well, I have arrived, but no letter yet, and am I sorry, really, and really.

My first impressions of this center were so disappointing that it took some time for me to get over that impression of feeling thrown together in an unfinished camp. But things have improved to a great extent, now. Our only major worry and problem to all of us now is the matter of fuel for the stoves in our rooms. At the present time, every available man-power is now engaged in an emergency wood-cutting project, being drafted from all the blocks and all non-essential jobs. This fuel is so serious that it is doubtful if we will have enough to last the residents through this winter. It seems, ^{not} that no matter how much wood we may have for our use, it is enough to keep the people warm, once a rainy spell or a cold spell sets in. This Arkansas is unusual in that one can never tell what kind of weather we will have the next day. When it rains, it pours, and the ground becomes so soft and soggy, it is almost impossible to get around. We have alleviated that by constructing walks around the blocks.

Back to wood-cutting, all non-essential men and volunteer men from the blocks are called to the woods to fell trees, which are sawed into smaller logs and brought back to our blocks by mules and wagons--yes, mules and wagons--for that is the only means of getting into the forest after the rain. It is slow work and tedious to all, including the mules, but it has to be done. For me, who has to work at the office every week-day, I go out to do this work on week-ends; so I really have no time for myself, at all. Any spare time that I have, I am cutting or chopping wood. But, the exercise is good for you, and I feel the change already.

As to the actual conditions here, I would say now that it is much better than we ever anticipated before. The rooms we stay in are much nicer than the ones in Fresno, and even the food is better. But, the water is something awful, leaves a sulphur taste in our mouths. Caused by the new pipes laid in the area, so it is said. The staff of the administration is swell in the whole, their attitude being much more hospitable than

those back in California. I can believe this talk of that old southern hospitality now. Considering the fact that many of these people have never seen the likes of before except through rumors and newspaper accounts, I can well appreciate the fine treatment we are receiving and the manner they are counter attacking any bad publicity given us by local residents and local papers. Of course, things like those that happened in Manzanar doesn't help us out, any, except for the fact there were only a few pro-Axis sympathizers against the majority of anti-Axis sympathizers. But the wide spread publicity given this stunt by the papers more than offset that fact that there are a large number of loyal Americans of Japanese Ancestry among the lot of us.

I am now assisting the Placement Officer in the matter of employment, a nice office job, but lots of work and responsibility, but a position with some possibility of advancement perhaps on the outside if I should ever given an opportunity to leave the center. And this matter of resettlement is being the prime object of the WRA--their trying to relocate as many of us throughout the Middle West and the Eastern States as possible. Already quite a number of us have already left the center for outside jobs, or to school, and more applying every day.

This matter of Santa Anita and Fresno people being thrown together in this center and not being able to get along is all a myth, for there are some 8,000 of us Californians and some 600 from the Hawaiian Islands, who were evacuated from there recently, all living together, and thus far, we have had no major disturbances in this respect. Of course, there have been some trouble of just a mild nature between "gangs", but those were solved on spot without any consequences. Some of this has to be expected in a community as large as this, although this is one of the smaller projects in existence. By the way, and this is just a statement of fact, and not to be taken otherwise, there are a number of attractive, even charming girls from the Santa Anita center.

Being in this part of the country gives a number of soldiers of Japanese ancestry to come to visit relatives and friends whom they have not seen in a long time, and this is a good thing. Naturally we have them coming and going all the time. Many have received promotions and they all agree to the way they are being received and treated on the outside.

The schools here which were supposed to start in mid-November, finally got started the first of the year, with some 2,000 or more registered for nursery, kindergarten, elementary, and high school. Not much recreational activities going on yet, mainly on account of the inclement weather. Indoor activities include dancing, talent nites, and minor sports, such as ping-pong.

Now that I've written this much, it will make my next letter to you much easier, so watch for it. I shall continue this writing very soon. Perhaps the follow-up will be in the mails before this arrives at your door.

Sam Nakano

9-10-D
Jerome Relocation Center
Denson, Arkansas

Dear Virginia:

Now that I have broken the ice by writing to you, after such a long delay, further letters seem that much easier. Having just mailed a letter to you yesterday, here I am writing another one to-day. That is progress, my dear lady, with a capital P.

We just had a cold, cold spell, our first freeze, when the thermometer dropped to a mere 10 degrees. This is coldness to me in its barest nature, for I do not remember any such weather back in California. All this happened after a heavy rain, so the rain puddles were all frozen over. First time that kids were able to skate on frozen rain water that I ever saw. To-day the sun is out again; so you can imagine what changeable weather we are having.

As you probably know, the whole program of the War Relocation Authority has changed from its initial plan, in that now emphasis is being placed on resettlement, rather than making these centers permanent. Which, I believe, is a good thing for all of us. The program is so set up that the WRA is contemplating resettling some 25,000 of us by July from all the centers into areas which are acceptable to us, and if the jobs offered are up to standards. By that I mean that it is no use for us to accept only domestic jobs and such which offers us no advancement, for that would lower our own standard living wages to a peon stages and into a rut which will be hard to get out of. Among our lot, we do have many doctors of philosophy, as well as men of muscular abilities with and without special skills, and our abilities and aptitudes should warrant better positions than inside housework. What do you think? As for me, I intend to stay in here until the right opportunity comes along before I venture into this uncertain world on the outside. I'd like to get out and have some sort of a hold on my economic status before the war is over.

By the way, how is your work getting along? Have you completed that survey you were making? What kind of results were derived from it? How are the people of California taking things in regards to us-favorable or unfavorable? You know, I sure ache to see some of you back there, and to see the many familiar sights, altho I realize how the rationing has hit everyone. There still is no place like home, sweet, home.

Oh, the holidays here! They were a far cry from the kinds we used to know, but I imagine that this was the case all over the world. The kids especially benefitted on account of the candies and many gifts donated to us by many groups. The administration even gave us the opportunity to go out Christmas shopping in nearby towns in truckloads, and the chance to get out for even for a while was very welcome. Like breathing again after holding your breath for a long while. We were welcomed by the merchants on the whole, and I can't blame them. Only I wish it were because they really feel that way inside, and not because of the business we gave them. The colored people, who are considered lower than low by the white people, in these southern states, dominate the towns, as far as patronage is concerned.

This center is so large, with a population of some 8,000, that we office workers are given transportation to and from work, and to and from lunch. But the irony of it all is that we ride and the school kids have to walk. It is said that this center could never afford enough trucks to transport all the school children to and fro, but handling the office personnel calls for the services of only three trucks. That is, of course, besides the transportation given the hospital workers by ambulances and special trucks. I, myself, walk half of the time anyway, for I only live three blocks away from the office, in a straight line, but actually six blocks if I hit all the corners, which I have to when bad weather intervenes.

Ask me all sorts of questions in your letter, and I shall certainly oblige with an answer.

Believe me, it feels good to be corresponding with you again.

Do you ever get the chance to see Hilda? Where she is now, and has she gotten work, or is she still going to school?

Write soon, won't you?

Saw Nakano

9-10-D
Jerome Relocation Center
Denson, Arkansas.

Miss Virginia Galbraith,
Berkeley, California.

Dear Virginia:

Following close upon the previous two letters is this third writing from this far off state of Arkansas.

We are just on the verge, in fact, in the midst of a first freeze. That is, we had plenty of sleet one night, and the next morning, it was frozen all over--in places it was from four to six inches deep. Icicles hanging from the roof-tops, not a bare sight for miles around--one month earlier and we would have had a real white Christmas for all. The kids are having a field day, making sleds, using washtubs and washboards, etc., in order to have a lot of fun on the white surface which so resembles snow that many do not know the real difference. One must realize that there are many in this center who have never seen sleet or snow, and to them this is a real "treat" of a lifetime.

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By the way, did you receive a souvenir copy of the "Vignette" which gave a brief history of the Fresno Center while we were there? It was a documentation of the center, so to speak. If you did not, I shall be glad to send you one from here. At the same time I would appreciate receiving any reports which you may have compiled through your work relative to this evacuation problem and to us in general. I am very interested in any matters to this effect. The JACL Headquarters in Salt Lake City is also sending any information in this respect to me from time to time, and the reading has proven very interesting and helpful. I do hope that you are ^{receiving} some of the same for your information.

Among the ranks of the residents who make up the population of the center of Jerome are some 600 evacuees from the Hawaiian Islands. Most of them are women and children, whose husbands are interned either here in the United States or back in the islands. The last batch who got off the train--it was pitiful to watch. Women, with five to eight children--record number was a lady with eleven children, ranging from one to 16 years of age--were the rule while getting off the train. Because the matter of fuel is of great importance here, each block is donating cut wood to these residents, each block has already donated a sum of some \$1,000 dollars to them, because of their low financial condition, and each block ~~is~~ donating any surplus clothes that ~~they~~ may have.

It seems that most of their money is frozen back in the islands, and the amount of baggage they were allowed to bring was very limited, as I understand it. Thus, the generous contributions from the center at large, even tho there are families here who are in just a destitute state as they.

The adverse attitude being taken by some of the organizations back in California is having its effect in this state, also. The American Legion Posts of the outlying districts are taking a similar stand in regards to us people as those in California before we left--that of taking the authority out of civilian hands into the power of the army, and of deporting us from the states back to Japan, and taking away our citizenship. Yes, we are getting our share of bad publicity through the newspapers here, also.

The chances of going back to good, old California seem to be getting more remote day by day. But, perhaps this idea of resettling in the surrounding states is better, in that we shall have no more Lil Tokyo's. At least, I am willing to go out as soon as a feasible job comes up. I only wish that I had more connections back East, which would be very helpful, indeed.

I was just reminiscing the other night about the last time I saw San Francisco--not the last time I saw Paris! I should be glad to see it again--just to be able to walk down Market Street, to see the Golden Gate, the beach, and all the other sights. But I do realize that this is war-time--and conditions are not the same, but you can't help a fellow from dreaming.

Let me hear from you in the very near future.

Good luck, Virginia.

Sincerely yours,

Sam Nakano
Sam Nakano

May 1, 1943

Hello,

This letter is being written from far off Cleveland, Ohio. Yes, at last, I, too, was afflicted by the re-settlement fever, and at present am engaged in defense work in this city. I hope that this will eventually prove to be my first step in regaining my foothold in normal pursuits of livelihood.

It is over two weeks now since my arrival here, and I can't quite make up my mind as to just how good it feels to be on the outside again. Oh, things have changed all right, that's to be expected. But they are not all changes you can see, but changes you can feel very strongly at times. Of course, we've never encountered any incidents of actual discriminations, but headlines that carry such news as top executives of American fliers doesn't help to relieve that "certain tenseness" in the

air).

Since our arrival here we seen snow, rain, hail, and even a tornado, which doesn't speak very well of the spring weather as it should be. We even experienced a one day city wide street-car strike and did that paralyze transportation in this industrial city? And the coal miners' strike - I can't quite figure it all out. And General DeWitt's statements - a person of his caliber - to commit himself to such prejudiced statements. All these incidents could very well be used as good arguments for our cause. Why should our people be subjected to further confinement and restrictions when such going on exists on the outside? These are genuine acts of labor sabotage in time of war. But, there, again, I suppose these are good examples of just what we are up against in this war.

Well, it's been a long time since I met you, and under such critical circumstances. It was such a short acquaintance, but one that I feel very deeply towards, mainly because of your frankness and friendliness

and your charming personality. I could certainly use some of that here where I feel so alone in a big city. I have had no social life to speak of as yet, and I must surely do something about soon.

I trust that this writing finds you in good health, and that Hilda is making out all right in her new "career".

Sincerely,
Sam Nakano

Nakano ?
Oct. 1943.

800 Barnes Road
Clayton (5), Mo

Hello Virginia,

Here I am, now writing you from a suburb of St. Louis, where I have been for five months since leaving Cleveland. Since I did not hear from you while there I'm wondering what's happened to my pre-association friend.

off and on I've thought a lot of you and the kind ^{of work} that you are doing. Our experiences during the past year and a half keep popping into my mind. Then my thoughts drift back to the WCA days, and the unexpected and interesting chance meeting I encountered with you.

Since my last letter I have really traveled and seen the country, having visited Chicago, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Newark, and New York City. Finally, I wound up here in a world Seriff town, and the atmosphere here is most

congenial. There are a number of us
niseis here already, and most of them,
in fact all of them are quite con-
tented with their work and surroundings.

The only objection I have
about this relocation problem is
that in many instances the WPA
is allowing releases to those who
should never be out on their own in
the first place. By that I mean that
there are those who are irresponsible
because of their youth, having no
thought of the welfare of others than
themselves, who until this opportunity
came along, had not been away from
home and parents before. Because of
this, when they do go out on a specific
job, they are not there very long,
and eventually are drifting from one
job to another without any respect
for the employer who has graciously
offered to use us niseis. This type of
"drifting" gives our group a none too
favorable reputation as stable workers

✓

and hinders the chances of other
nisei who are really serious about
relocation. Then there are those who
get "homesick" for their friends back
in the center and eventually return.
This latter group numbers a very
small percentage. Again, I might
say that relocation is not solving
the "Japanese" problem entirely. As
it is now, it provides opportunities
for individuals and couples, but
the number of families seeking re-
location is relatively small, due to
many obvious factors. When whole
families start moving out of the
camps, then it will be something.

Judging from the attitudes and
the successes many evacuees are
having in the middle west and
eastern states, I doubt very much
whether or not they will ever return
to "home" in California. At least,
these states have given us a chance
to start anew again, and we owe

them something, to say the least.
As long as we lay off reading the
Hearst papers, we are not aware
so much of the Japanese problem.

How are things in California
now? I've heard conflicting stories
about the conditions there and
I hardly know what to believe.
Has your work showed any
definite results yet? Is it
in printed form and available
to the public? Matters concerning
our people and evacuation and
all should prove interesting
reading now that it is all in
the past.

Are you still in touch with
the J.A.C.L.? How about becoming
an associated member?

Marital-minded Hilda, and
how is she faring? Regards to
her.

Sam Nakano