

Answered Aug. 19

Barrack 10 Apt 9
Tanforan Assembly Center
San Bruno, California
August 9, 1942

Virginia Halbraith
Evacuation And Resettlement Study
207 Giannini Hall
Berkeley, California

Dear Virginia,

Last week the Administration issued a statement further restricting the hours of visitation. From now on visitors will be permitted to enter Tanforan only on afternoons between the hours of one and four o'clock. I am informing you of this matter so that you may meet no complication when you come here again.

Because of my recreational work, I find very little or no time to work on my agricultural material. It is my hope that once relocated I shall find time to do some heavy studying in agriculture, but all this depends on the nature of my work in the Relocation Center. As yet I haven't the faintest idea where or when we're moving. And this uncertainty is really bothering me.

Last week an Army Intelligence officer came here to interview some of the nisei college graduates to find out how much Japanese we knew. Each of us was given a very brief examination. Most of us tried our very best to flunk the examination but that didn't seem to help. Although I was given a zero rating in my examination, nevertheless the officer told me that the Army may need me very badly in near future. I carefully noted that he wrote on the paper the following statement: "A very good man". So it looks as if any day I may be called to arms.

If it isn't asking you too much, can you send a copy of last week's Colliers in which there appeared an article on the Japanese evacuation? Thanks.

Sincerely yours,

Nobi Takahashi

Barrack 10 Apart 9
Tanforan Assembly Center
San Bruno, California
August 29, 1942

Virginia Galbraith
Japanese Evacuation Study
Giannini Hall
University of California

Dear Virginia,

Thanks a lot for sending my box of material. I cannot tell you how much I really appreciate your kindness.

First group of workers will leave Tanforan on September 9th, just two days after our big three-day Mardi Gras. It is certain that we'll be relocated on the Utah project, 125 miles southwest of Salt Lake.

After studying all the facts concerning the Utah project, I am inclined to believe that agriculture will not play a very important part. Beside being a desert, without a tree, it has a very short growing season.

I sincerely hope that you will find time to drop in here just once more before we move out.

Thanks again for everything.

Sincerely,

Noli Takahashi

Aug. 24, 1942.

4206-E

Tule Lake, Newell
Modoc, Calif.

Dear Virginia:

I do hope my hasty post-card has prepared the way for this letter. But along with about two-thirds of the people in the world, I'm afflicted with what's known as chronic letteritis. Emphasis on the chronic. So please don't think too badly of either my mother or me.

Especially of my mother, who has been running around frantically to this and that. Tonight, she has gone to make up 60 dancers in the recreation department to look like Spanish senoritas. Then two nights a week she advises a GR group, along with Mrs. Shibutani. Two nights a week she must attend the Social Welfare Dept.'s staff meeting with Dr. Jacoby in charge. One night a week she must go to Little Theater meetings. And in her spare time she holds down an eight-hour job.

So that here in camp, my mother is probably of much more use, considered in terms of service, than she would be outside. Of course, she protests against this volunteer work, but of course, you know, she really loves it.

So now, since I have protected my mother with her alibis, How is your thesis coming along? Have you visited any other centers or relocation projects? The reports we get up here are to the effect that Arizona is terrible. 150 degrees four inches from the ground and 118 in the house. The water there is salty and tepid, so that the poor colonists buy water -- 75¢ per 5 gallons.

That's one thing we can really be thankful for since the water here is good and very cool.

I suppose Tom Shibutani has told you about the strike of the agricultural workers here. They demanded their pay by the 15th of the month, and surprisingly enough, the administration gave it to them. Then the workers struck or rather, they said they were willing to work but simply couldn't because the food was not nourishing enough. A great mob of them met last Sunday night. It's the first time I've ever seen anything like it, Virginia. The information was simply passed along by word of mouth, and when the mob assembled, there was no one to take charge. The technicians on stage kept calling for the leaders and protesting that they were only the stage-hands. After 20 minutes or so, a certain Mr. Kato took charge. His attitude was very conservative as were those of all the others who spoke. My mother and I fully expected these moderate speakers to be booed off the stage, but the crowd seemed rather surprised itself that it had gotten together; it seemed as if, having gotten itself assembled, it didn't know what to do with itself. So we all milled around and wouldn't go home. Then a "manzai" -- a sort of vaudeville fast patter man -- started to kid the crowd and a marvelous job he did of it, too. But still the people wouldn't go home. Then the most touching thing happened, Virginia. A very old man, hair white, a longish beard, in dirty over-alls, got on stage, saying that he was only a conceited old man to be getting up on here in the first place, but really, people, why don't we all go home, it's getting late. He spoke so gently that everyone laughed and the meeting broke up.

But the thing that really struck me about that meeting, Virginia, was that all the people there were Issei or Kibei. No Nisei. Everything was said in Japanese. As a matter of fact, one of the fellows on stage, in calling for order, asked for it since Japanese was going to be spoken here exclusively, and of course we would all want to hear what was said in our native tongue, etc. Of course, That may have been only a stage manner to get some order, but still --

Then the general attitude seemed to be that the Administration was not to be trusted, since it had promised them so many things, but had not delivered. The trouble is that these people, not ~~xx~~ being able to read English, don't have the slightest idea that priorities and shortages ~~xxx~~ exist. Of course, I shouldn't say the slightest. But they think of WRA as part of the government, so why can't the government get everything it wants, etc. Tom Shibutani pointed out that the Administration made a serious mistake in not allowing a Japanese Language press in camp, so that the Non-English reading could have some idea of what's cooking. This point impressed me so that I prattled it off at a newspaper meeting, giving, please believe me, Mr. Shibutani full ~~xxx~~ credit for the observation. Whereupon, two days later the assistant editor runs a page editorial on this same point, signs it himself, and gives no credit to anyone for the idea! I haven't had a chance to tell Tom about this yet, but I think he'll be amused rather than angry.

However, ever since this fizzled-out demonstration and the threatened strike, the food has been markedly better. So here's hope that all quiets down. After all, No one would like to see WCCA or the Army itself take over the camp.

You must be psychic, Virginia. The fate you prescribed for me has been carried out. Kismet. I am now attempting to Eng. to isseis and Kibeis. But don't think I'm really so affectedly blase. It's really the job I wanted, and it's swell. The Issei women are so anxious to learn. So patient, so willing to be helped. Women of fifty and sixty, Virginia. They've wanted to learn Eng. all their lives, and now that they've got the leisure, and the chance, they're really going to it. They're rather slow in learning, but I know the trouble they're going through.

E.G. "What is the number in your family?" Well, the Japanese sentence if translated directly or literally into Eng. would run like this:

You of family in how many there are ka, which is the interrogative participle. Sooooo. I knew a girl at Cal., Virginia, taking intermediate Japanese who knew an amzzing number of characters and grammatical rules but she couldn't say, "Please close the door." In Jap. ile. So my heart really bleeds for them. Except when it's too hot. Human, All Too Human.

Well, this prattle must end. I do hope I'll hear from you, Virginia. Give my love to the Campanile, and sit on the Senior Men's Bench for me.

With best regards from my mother and me,

Constance Murayama

Blk.19 Bldg.9 Apt.E
Topaz Relocation Center
Topaz, Utah
December 21, 1942

Dear Virginia,

As the holiday season approaches us, I cannot help thinking of those many Christmases of yesteryears and of my numerous friends thousands of miles away, some of whom will spend their Christmas on bloody battle fields, others on the vast, waste desert lands of Arizona, Colorado, etc. I know that to all of them Christmas means more than just gifts and tinsels. Yes, even more than Santa Claus himself.

During times like these when there is so much injustice and suffering in this world and when there is so much hate, bitterness and despair, it is difficult to think of Christmas in the way we used to know. But despite all this, I am very glad that the true spirit of Christmas still prevails throughout this country. As I note this, I can still see signs of hope and peace. As long as we can keep in our heart the spirit of Christmas, mankind hasn't lost its footing on this earth.

So in true America tradition, I send you my most sincere Christmas greetings from Topaz City. May you also have a pleasant Christmas holiday and a cheerful New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Noli Takahashi

P.S. Will you please send my Christmas greetings
To Dr. Thomas?

copy.

Blk 19 Bldg 9 Apt E
Topaz Relocation Center
Topaz, Utah
October 17, 1942

Dear Virginia,

Warmest greetings to you from the City of Topaz, the youngest, busiest and fastest growing city in Utah! It now ranks as the fifth largest city in this State.

Slowly but surely our city is taking form. A staff of engineers and landscape designers are busy at work on plans for community beautification. Over 10,000 shrubberies and trees, suitable to Topaz climate and soil, will be planted by the end of this ^{year}. These will definitely eliminate the dust that now plagues the City.

Our Canteen, one of the busiest spots, is now operating on the cooperative basis. The Topaz Co-operative Congress has also been organized. All persons 16 years of age or over are eligible for membership in this Co-operative, and tentative plans are that a person may buy only one share and have but one vote, and that each share is to be sold for one dollar.

Soon various essential services such as beauty parlor, laundry and cleaning, shoe repair, and barbershop will be provided on cooperative basis.

Because of the recent change in the policy of the WRA, hundreds of competent and able-bodied men are leaving this Center. Majority are leaving for the sugar beet fields in Idaho, Utah and Oregon; others are heading toward East for private employment or for colleges. There is definitely a drainage of good men, and I'm beginning to wonder how this community is going to survive. Already we who are remaining on the project are beginning to feel the tremendous effect of this exodus. Our land cannot be plowed because of lack of men to drive the tractors at 16 dollars a month. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, every body is pitching in to help the community. Thus far, no conflicts have occurred between the issei and the nisei. Most of us who are planning to stay on this project for at least a year realize that unless we work together this project is certainly going to fail. This means that some of us must work as never before...putting in all we've got.

The Agricultural Division here is headed by a very competent man, Mr. Roscoe Bell, formerly of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics at Berkeley. Incidentally, he is primarily responsible for the Tolan Committee report on the Japanese agriculture of California. During the last two weeks I have been working on the soil survey of our project, getting samples from the field and testing them for alkali in the laboratory. Next week I shall be working on the field record. My task will be to record details of every field on our 18,000 acre project.

Just in case you would like to know more about our project, following is a brief description on location, climate, soil, and agriculture of the Topaz Relocation Center.

Location:

The Topaz Relocation project is located approximately 140 miles southwest of Salt Lake City in the northeastern quarter of Millard County. It lies along the eastern boundary of the Sevier Desert. Delta, situated 16 miles directly east of the project, is the largest town in this vicinity and has a population of approximately 1800.

The Relocation Center comprises about 18,000 acres, most of which is in greasewood and other desert brush. The City Proper occupies exactly one section or 640 acres.

Topography:

The area, constituting part of the bottom of former Lake Bonneville, is rather a smooth desert plain sloping toward the west and north. In the distance around three sides of this center are mountain ranges, north, west, and east.

The elevation of the area ranges from 4560 to 4650 feet above sea level. The slope ranges from 5 to 20 feet per mile.

Climate:

The Topaz area has a distinctly arid climate, having about 8 inches of rainfall during the year.

The atmosphere is comparatively dry. Seasonal temperatures vary from slightly over 100 degrees during the summer to as low as -20 degrees during the winter. Temperatures below zero occur quite generally in cold winters. The mid-summer season is usually hot and dry, with little or rainfall, and with clear, sunny days. Nights are crisp and cool. It is not uncommon for temperature to drop below 50 degrees at nights during the warmest summer months.

Owing to the comparatively dry air, actual frost seldom forms though crops may be damaged by temperatures of freezing or lower without frost.

Snowfall is light and seldom covers the ground, except for shorter periods after the heavier storms.

The average frost-free period is approximately 120 days. The last killing frost in the spring usually occurs during May and the first killing frost of the fall occurs during the latter part of September.

Soils

Since the soils of the area have been developed under arid conditions, they are somewhat low in organic matter and in high alkali concentration.

A striking feature of the soils here is the high ratio of clay classes to the entire area. Approximately 85% of the soils in the vicinity are clay. Thus, the internal movement of water is retarded by the compact heavy subsoil. Soil alkali and poor drainage are the most serious soil problems.

Agriculture

The principal crop grown in this area is alfalfa. Up until 1925 this area was one of the largest alfalfa-seed producing sections in the United States. During past years it has been somewhat difficult to attain the high yields of seed that were formerly produced owing in part, at least, to the lygus bug and its effect on the setting of seeds by the plant. In the past three or four years fairly good crops of alfalfa seed have been produced on many farms.

In recent years the major income of farmers in this area has been from livestock. Many of the farmers have found sheep enterprise as a profitable business. Sugar beets and small grains are also grown here.

Because of the prevalence of late spring frosts, growing of vegetables and fruits is rarely attempted on commercial basis, although a variety of garden vegetables can be grown successfully.

Topaz Agricultural Program

Diversified type of farming will be carried on as much as possible. Of the 18,000 acres on the project, it is hoped that at least 7,000 acres will be in cultivation by next spring. Approximately 700 acres, scattered over the area, will be in truck crops, including spinach, celery, tomatoes and carrots. Melons, cucumbers, sunflowers will also be grown. Field crops, such as alfalfa, barley and wheat, will be raised, but their use will be limited to that of feeding the livestock on the project. A few acres will be set aside for experimental work on raising such crops as herbs and medicinal plants. Beef cattle, hog raising, poultry, sheep enterprises will be developed.

Within a few weeks our project will receive about 10,000 laying hens, 300 brood sows, 30,000 broiler fowl and possibly some 200 heads of beef cattle. Also, about 200 bee hives are expected to arrive here in near future. No dairy project, however, will be carried on.

Our project will receive about 20,000 acre feet of irrigation water from three major canals. These canals were originally constructed by the Mormon pioneers of the mid-nineteenth century and have undergone a number of repairs.

I should like very much to have you send me rest of my materials; therefore I am enclosing three dollars to defray whatever cost that may incur in forwarding me the packages. If this amount is not sufficient, please let me know so that I may be able to pay the balance as soon as possible.

I sincerely hope that everything is well with you and that you are making some progress in your work. As soon as I find time, I shall forward to you some of my agricultural material which you have been requesting for some time.

My very best wishes to you and Dr. Thomas.

Sincerely yours,

Nobi Takahashi

19-9-E
Topaz, Utah
May 12, 1943

*Zakahashi
Topaz*

Dear Virginia,

I am sending you, under separate cover, some of my notes on Japanese agriculture in California. I really don't know how helpful they will be to you, but at least you can look them over and keep only those that you can use. I had long promised you to help you compile information material regarding the Japanese agricultural situation in California prior to evacuation but because of my work here...have completely forgotten about the matter until now. I'm afraid it's too late now since I'll be soon leaving Topaz for Camp Shelby.

This Army life, which I am to enter very soon, will certainly be new to me. In fact, at times it may even be interesting and exciting; but much of the time, it'll be nothing but hard work to toughen us for actual combat service. Don't worry, I'm not kidding myself as to what I'll have to go through during the coming months of training at Camp Shelby...but that's not saying what Hell and fire I'll see at the battle front. No matter how long this war lasts, it certainly will not be won. Wars are never won, but always lost.

More than anything in the world, I want this blasted war to end at this very moment. But you and I know that this is impossible... but at least we can hope and pray for an early finish. But if you ask me, as things are happening everywhere, this war will be a long, hard one. One thing is, however, certain; millions and millions of lives may still have to be sacrificed before this mess is over. This is indeed very tragic but one of those things which we must expect from all wars.

If anything, I hope I can pull through this Hell alive so that I can continue my agricultural work and have a part in building a better and saner world. But this is only my prayer. Whenever I think of all the sacrifices and efforts I made for my career, how worthless they seem. But I can't complain now. During war times, many must give their all in order that others may live.

Today is indeed a very beautiful spring morning...an ideal day for church going. Clear blue sky overhead; bright morning sun; soft, cool breeze; and Topaz City in its finest spring outfit. But Topaz is still drab in color for flowers and plants simply will not grow because of the high alkali condition of the soils in this area. However, some of the trees which have been planted here, are now turning green, adding some color to the city. Day by day weather is improving. By mid-afternoon it is generally very warm, but we are still far behind our planting schedule. Because of our desert climate, we can still expect some frost mornings, which will certainly hinder our farm program. But everything is moving along fairly well in spite of the many difficulties.

Yours sincerely,

Noli Zakahashi

May 6, 1943

Mr. Nobu Takahashi
19-9-E
Topaz Relocation Project
Topaz, Utah

Dear Nobu:

Some months ago, Virginia found herself a good teaching job as assistant in the Economics Department and is no longer doing work for this study. Therefore, your farm material has come into my hands and I would like to thank you very much for it. With your permission, I would like to keep it until we can get "an expert" to look into the farm situation, or until you want it again.

Both Dr. Thomas and I noticed your name among the Topaz volunteers, and we have talked about you several times. We both wish you the very best of luck in your army experience, and look forward to seeing you again in Berkeley in the not too distant future.

Virginia, of course, has your letter and will reply to it--if she has not already. Again, thank you for your data, and for thinking of the study. Again, accept our very best wishes.

Very sincerely yours,

Morton Grodzins
Research Assistant

MG:mw