

Civil Control Station
Perkins, California
May 25, 1942

Dr. Dorothy S. Thomas
Giannini Foundation Rm. 349
Giannini Hall
University of California
Berkeley, California

Dear Dr. Thomas:

Perhaps this delay in sending to you a written account of my background has made you feel that I was not enthusiastic about the project you about to undertake. However, I do want you to know that I am sincerely interested and anxious to be one of the workers to be included in the research study. It is that one finds it rather uninteresting and rather hard to sketch one's background not knowing just what needs to be included.

Starting with a factual outline based on the preliminary registration form of the U.S. Employment Service, I offer the following:

MARI OKAZAKI, S.S. number 549-24-6748, 1860 Washington St.
U.S. born Japanese, age, 26. San Francisco, Calif.
Birth date: January 20, 1916. TU 5212

University of California: Major: Education (Vocational)
A.B. May 1939. Minor: Decorative Arts
Extra-curricular activities: International and Race
Relations groups of the
U. of C. Young Women's
Christian Association.

Counseling as Junior and
Senior.

U.C. Japanese Women's
Students Club.

During July, 1939, following graduation, in order to follow up theoretical work in economics and education courses, participated in a "Summer Service Laboratory in the San Francisco Bay Area" conducted by the Pacific

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Southwest Intercollegiate Christian Council under the local direction of the Univ. of California Y.W. and Y.M.C.A. Lived cooperatively and worked as a volunteer in the Alexander Community House, Oakland, which serves as a community center for West Oakland Mexican and Italian people. Helped with recreation, craft and folk-dancing, as well as taking cooperative charge of excursions of youngsters to the Fair. A grand opportunity to observe how other nationality or economic minorities "take it". Mrs. Eileen Watkins, Supervisor of this center for many years and who had herself grown up in the neighborhood, had watched different nationality groups entering into the community and after reaching a certain economic status move out to other areas.

September and October, 1939. Employed at Japan Pavilion as one of the guides. Characterized by not knowing who in the world was issuing policies and instructions. Cured me of working for "Japanese bosses".

November 1939 to October 1940. In order eventually to earn means of going through social service curriculum as well as to help younger sisters to continue studies after high school, after consulting with the campus YWCA secretary, I decided to go through a secretarial training course and entered the California Secretarial School in San Francisco. Became slightly acquainted with Nob Hill apartment life while cooking my way through rather uninteresting commercial courses, although I enjoyed bookkeeping. Made some very good friends with a second generation French, an Italian and German descent college graduates as well as others of old American stock. The school was like other private commercial "all out for the students' money" schools, but the contacts with the students attending there, all middle class Americans, was very stimulating and lasting. (Every week a small group of us has a "farewell" supper at one or another's home fearing that I may have to evacuate any day.)

November 1940. Volunteered services to International Institute, an organization offering information and services to foreign born and new Americans and placed on part-time work, but was also referred by Miss Robson of the San Francisco YWCA to the Alto Psychologic Center, where I worked part-time while continuing brush-up shorthand courses at the "Y".

Until April, 1941, concurrently with part-time work at the International Institute, stenographer and secretary to Miss Annie Clo Watson, Executive Secretary, and for the technical case worker, worked at the Alto Psychologic Center as combination office secretary, receptionist, librarian in charge of circulating library on psychologic and related publications, assisting with administration and scoring of various educational and psychologic testing. Fine chance to catch up on serious reading and taking of some of the tests for my own interests; also for obtaining insight into vocational and psychologic guidance work.

In April 1941, the International Institute was awarded a Rosenberg Foundation Grant to carry on a Citizenship Project, and I started to work as office secretary for both the creative writing in connection with the educational project and the following adult groups: Council for Unity Among the American People (no direct connection with Louis Adamic's) including many programs in cooperation with other community and civic groups; the Committee on Americans of Oriental Ancestry, which were sub-headed, The American Filipino Committee and the Committee on American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, both inter-racial.

The educational project involving a coordinated use of government, industrial and cultural community, and teacher-student resources, all fresh direct material uncontaminated by previous publication, was a lesson in the creative use of every-day experiences. Working with adults in the various community groups substantiated a vague theory of mine, that, in spite of differing nationality backgrounds, many of the peoples who have come to know San Francisco as their home have parallel interests and that each of them have slightly divergent but rather patterned way of reacting to certain situations, fortunate or unfortunate as the instances may have been.

Since December 7, 1941, having some acquaintance with various community groups, family members belonging to both Buddhist and Christian Church groups, with myself strictly belonging to neither although active in the Japanese Business Girls YWCA group, I have been functioning as a Japanese community worker. Although on excellent terms with the National President, Mr. Kido and National Secretary, Mike Masaoka, of the Japanese American Citizens League, I have been the constant thorn in the side of the San Francisco chapter of the JACL, in which I have been the rather ineffectual minority opinion among the Board members who think agreeably on almost all issues. However, I am on good personal terms with all of them and enjoyed observing what they thought necessary procedures. At the same time, one can sympathize very heartily sometimes with anti-JACL people, while considering them very inadvised and childish at times in their methods of objection. These other groups really have something to offer, if both sides could only learn to give in a bit. As a whole the youthfulness of the leaders in the Japanese communities may have a great deal to do with the clashes of opinion of so-called "conservatives" versus "radicals". Given entree into either side, I can see that they have a great deal in common and much of the mud-slinging on either side is really unwarranted. Sometimes, I wonder whether or not I am too much on the fence about being neutral, but as an observer, sometimes it has been most revealing though possibly not the most comfortable while trying to be diplomatic. Trying to reconcile the JACL to opposers while being its most articulate minority ~~is rather~~ is rather trying on one's spirit at times, however; and when case work became too heavy with constant phone calls even in the evening at home, I began to skip JACL Board meetings with the result that the local JACL people think I have utter disregard for them. However, the national JACL people understand my position and see where there is a great deal of work to be done in public relations outside of the inner mechanics of running their organization.

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Since being employed by the Wartime Civil Control Administration in the Social Assistance Division, there has been very little time between Civil Control Stations to do much extra-curricular activities, but in going about from one town or city to another, it is interesting to notice how much the small-town JACL groups have been able to coordinate with authorities and to interpret the mechanics of evacuation to bewildered community people. Being authorized to issue disbursing orders, one does have the chance to ascertain the relative economic status of rural and urban communities as compared to each other at this time.

One of the main reasons why I did not want to go directly into social work was that it seemed almost predicated that I work only in the nationality group into which I had been born. Somehow resentful of segregating myself even in a professional line, I was very glad to be permitted an opportunity to work with an inter-racial organization such as the International Institute and not to be always with the Japanese. It was particularly valuable to observe the methods by which Miss Watson, the I.I. Executive Secretary was able to use existing community resources for the accomplishment of certain objectives the organization was working toward in inter-nationality and inter-racial community attitudes. I treasure especially the experience of being the secretary of the American-Filipino Committee, with whom I worked through several projects in public relations, and felt just as strongly about their relative position and observed the public reaction to them before and since the outbreak of activities in the Philippine Islands--and rather disappointed that the Filipinos in the United States still have so far to go in gaining a measure of equity in their rights. Perhaps, one does get rather impatient for them.

Another means of keeping a wider perspective has been my membership in the YWCA Business and Professional group, the San Francisco B. and P. group keeping close touch with the Japanese Center group. An interesting experience I am now having is working with the larger Western Area Business and Professional YWCA Council as finance chairman, although travel restrictions have hampered carrying out my functions. Would that more of our Japanese women would take more interest in the position of the "working Gal".

Have also been part of an informal discussion group of college graduates but am afraid they have been rather sterile as far as social consciousness and even intelligence is concerned. However, they seemed to enjoy being "cultural" and I suppose that one did enjoy some of their social activities, at least I enjoyed the latter. They 'petered out' when war was declared, however.

Looking over the above account, I have come to the conclusion that instead of sticking to objective facts, I have strayed into quite a subjective attitude, and perhaps this may dismay you. However, it makes writing about oneself slightly less boring to do so and may prove a little more enlightening to you. I have written to Sam Hohri about possibilities of being part of your project and have suggested his writing directly to you if he is interested. Being away from the city, I cannot know what he might have written to me regarding this matter.

The main attraction in participating in this project to me is the opportunity of directing one's effort into the professional field in which I hope ultimately to function; namely, vocational guidance or rehabilitation, which is so dependent on knowing the psychological background of those concerned. Later opportunities to continue graduate work may be directed and assisted a great deal on the need which will be evident from the type of observation that will be done in these centers.

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With all wishes that no matter whom you select to assist you on the research, that you will have a most successful study, I am sure that any of the workers whom you choose should put a great deal of interest and energy into such a significant project.

Very sincerely yours,

Mari Okazaki

Mari Okazaki

P.S. When I return to San Francisco from this assignment, I shall hope to know what Sam thinks about it; and in any case, I shall communicate with you immediately by telephone.

M.O.M.

(This must have been very difficult to read indeed. I tried to sandwich this typing in between doing my job at the Civil Control Station with the M.P.'s in the background tsk - tsk-ing everytime it was evident I'd made a mistake.)

June 16, 1942

am

Dear Dr. Thomas,

You were probably rather startled by the wire I sent you yesterday regarding my being part of your research staff to work at Manzanar. Having heard that the authorities were probably ceasing to send into Manzanar any more occupants from northern assembly centers, I became a bit apprehensive about our getting there. Since I was told on such notice of the Reedley assignment, it seemed impossible to communicate in person with the W. R. A., as suggested by Mr. Verrier before I left, to make sure of being sent there.

Last Sunday, Kime Nakaya, the other Japanese worker sent down to handle the rush of interviewing & recording, and I had a surprising chance to go into Visalia where we splurged at Sam Togasaki's Mutual Supply Co. & sent all sorts of Japanese tidbits into Tanfo & Manza. There we met several friends from the Bay Region. Kelly Yamada, the optical lens worker, formerly for Wehara's in Oakland, Dr. Ieru Togasaki (both K.M. & I. radical "shot" dodgers flinched as she offered to give the needle to us - neatly avoided her offers)

the Takao family, the Fukushima family,
etc. etc. Then going across the street as
we tried to catch at 2:00 o'clock bus
to Tulare camp — we met Mrs. Kenji
Kasai, ^{ywca board member & head} of the International Sewing School
in S. F. (the nearest thing to a "Bride's
School" here in the U. S.) who used to teach
us "o-sahi" or etiquette to us Camp
Five Girls. She was so glad to see us that
we missed the bus... which was fortunate
as she begged us to take her '36 Packard
for the ride down to Tulare where Kimi
had friends from Orland, Santa Maria
and Guadalupe. I went for the ride
but decided to try to see some college
friend, but couldn't remember their married
names and had to ask for one of the
brothers, a total stranger to me, except for
what I knew of his JACL connections,
Ken Utsunomiya, whom I later discovered
had been appointed welfare commissioner.
While waiting for what friends could be
found, he told me of conditions there.
It was interesting to hear that here the
JACL still retained most of its prestige
and that their "big-shots" had responsible

active work to do. He did express keen dis^②
appointment that a Pasadena leader, Nobu
Kawai had been beaten by 7 votes in favor
of an Issei after several recounts of the vote
and that 4 out of 20 elected as block
_____s were Issei. I commented that
since Issei did compose a good portion of
the population, it was a healthy sign
they were taking interest in democratic voting
procedures. Altho, from the little I remember
of my year's visit in Nihon, it is quite
evident that the ballot meant a great deal
to the Japanese over 12 years ago. Perhaps,
now their influence as voting citizens may
be as ineffectual as ours is here in the
United States. Soon, his sister Kyo, who
had been one of the liveliest coeds - both
mentally & intellectually as well as socially -
until she left after her I. C. from the
university, came to meet us with her husband,
a member of the police staff, evidently
from his star. She shook her head & her
bright eye snapped once or twice but said
that on the whole outside of the heat &
boredom, it wasn't so bad - that she wasn't
working. She seemed glad not to be. Then
told me of Ada Okamoto, who wasn't married
as I'd suspected. Ada had been one of the

From Iulene people that
I understand, James Sakoda was able to go to Iule Lake from
Iule through the fact that she is a project staff member.

popular Nisei coeds, majored in Art but had
always hankered for Los Angeles on a back
East "art-school" background, had been given
a nurse's aide job but got tired of taking
orders from an 18-year old squirt and
left the job. She is happier now helping
a friend doing recreation work, and is
busy making colorful, attractive signs for
the recreational & other programs. Before
I could ask anymore, one of the Los Angeles
YV girl whom I'd been greatly impressed
for her up-to-date ness regarding legislation
and attitudes concerning business women &
girls hailed me. One of the unusual, very
attractive, but willing to use her brains
Nisei girl, Dorothy Wada. Incidentally,
in asking for her address, I found she
had become Mrs. Ken Uteunomiga. I think
she had been doing some of Los Angeles
JACL secretary work - probably did the
work for the exec. sec. there. She was enjoying
a honeymoon at government's expense as
she jokingly put it and seemed content
to give up of work for a while. I'm
afraid she's one of us who've been rather
overworked during the last year or so,
trying to avert what the others were too
willing to let trap all of us. (That doesn't
sound right, but I'm writing after a full-hot day
& still lacking stenog. help with our S.O.S. reportedly answered.)

(3)

Right now we commute 23 miles each way every day into Reedley, where they estimate 2000 have come from coastal regions to add to the approx. original 1000 Japanese in Fresno County. (These are not actual but merely approx. guesses) Our main job is trying to get cases written for summaries to be considered by Army authorities at Hotel Whitcomb so that people may leave California (you should see the questions they have to answer!) or to join families in established camps. It's a disheartening job, especially the latter because the Army is really not concerned with joining people from similar communities or members of what the Japanese consider to be family groups. (Brothers & sisters who have married-in-laws & cousins who have been very closely associated altho living at different addresses) They are so disappointed and resentful since they thought they had done the govt a favor by voluntarily evacuating at their own expense. The order came out so suddenly that those who had planned eastern moves were really just stuck. Usually a day or two have been given but this time the 12 noon June 2nd order was posted after the stated time.

I try to work on cases at night, but having to leave at 7:15 a.m. & getting

back to the hotel between 6:30 & 7:30
every evening leaves little time, especially
as the valley heat is so enervating.

Many of our friends would like to
have us visit them, but we get so weary
from discussing "evacuation" & finally
ending in a very resentful mood that
Kimi & I have to just refuse & that's the
reason why we commute.

Somehow, not given definite assurance
yet that the Okazaki family will be admitted
to Manzanar gives me a feeling of sitting
on the edge of my seat — a very good
mood as I try to tell people not to depend
on having their case considered. It's funny,
but I deliberately have to break down their
faith in the U.S. Govt — or the Army — so few
realize that we are controlled just as much as
any enemy country — by our military
authorities — The fact that exclusion orders
have not been announced is a source of great
discomfort & uneasiness. Valley people & understand
are petitioning to have the Japanese stay until
Sept. when the grapes are harvested. — If this will
last until then, I know one Public Assistance
Worker who will just melt away both
mentally & physically. "It's 6:30, good-morning"
says the phone. I hope this doesn't read too
confusedly — but that's the state of affairs now —
Most sincerely yours, Mari

P.S. My best greetings to Virginia
& Martin — mine.

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Send the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

Form 2 Dbl

Reedley, California June 19, 1942 9:30

Dorothy Thomas
University of California

YOUR OFFER ACCEPTED WITH THANKS. GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR CONTACTING
BANNISTER. TODAY PHONE CALL FROM NEWTON SAME OFFICE INDICATED REFUSAL
NOT IN ORDER FOR OKAZAKI FAMILY TRANSFER TO MANZANAR IF CONFIRMATION OF
MARI OKAZAKI APPOINTMENT WITH REQUEST HAVE FAMILY ALSO SENT MANZANAR
SENT BOTH ADMINISTRATIVE AND HOUSING AVAILABLE IN MANZANAR ADVISE BOTH
HOHRI AND OKAZAKI TO ARRANGE THROUGH RESPECTIVE MANAGERS

Mari Okazaki
Public Assistance Worker

POSTAL TELEGRAPH-CABLE COMPANY

TRANSMITS AND DELIVERS THE WITHIN MESSAGE SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

To guard against mistakes or delays, the sender of a message should order it REPEATED; that is, telegraphed back to the originating office for comparison. For this, one-half the unrepeated message rate is charged in addition. Unless otherwise indicated on its face, THIS IS AN UNREPEATED MESSAGE AND PAID FOR AS SUCH, in consideration whereof it is agreed between the sender of the message and this Company as follows:

1. The Company shall not be liable for mistakes or delays in the transmission or delivery, or for non-delivery, of any message received for transmission at the UNREPEATED MESSAGE rate, whether caused by the negligence of its servants or otherwise, beyond the sum of FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS; nor for mistakes or delays in the transmission or delivery, or for non-delivery of any message received for transmission at the REPEATED-MESSAGE rate, beyond the sum of FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS; nor for mistakes or delays in the transmission or delivery, or for non-delivery, of any message received for transmission at the SPECIALLY VALUED MESSAGE rate, beyond the sum at which such message shall be valued, in writing, by the sender thereof when tendered for transmission and for which payment is made or agreed to be made of the amount of the repeated-message rate and an additional charge equal to one-tenth of one per cent of the amount by which such written valuation shall exceed five thousand dollars; nor in any case for delays arising from unavoidable interruption in the working of its lines, or for errors in cipher or obscure messages.

2. The Company is hereby made the agent of the sender, without liability, to forward this message over the lines of any other company or by any other means of communication when necessary to reach its destination.

3. Domestic messages and incoming cable messages will be delivered free within one-half mile of the Company's office in towns of 5,000 population or less, and within one mile of such office in other cities or towns. Beyond these limits the Company does not undertake to make delivery, but will, without liability, at the sender's request, as his agent and at his expense, endeavor to contract for him for such delivery at a reasonable price.

4. No responsibility attaches to this Company concerning messages until the same are accepted at one of its transmitting offices; and if a message is sent to such office by one of the Company's messengers, he acts for that purpose as the agent of the sender.

5. The Company shall not be liable for damages or statutory penalties in any case where the claim is not presented in writing within sixty days after the message is filed with the Company for transmission.

6. It is agreed that prompt and correct transmission and delivery of this message shall be presumed in any action for recovery of tolls thereto; subject, however, to rebuttal by competent evidence.

7. Special terms governing the transmission of messages under the classes of messages enumerated below shall apply to messages in each of such respective classes in addition to all foregoing terms.

8. NO EMPLOYEE OF THIS COMPANY IS AUTHORIZED TO VARY THE FOREGOING.

POSTAL TELEGRAPH-CABLE COMPANY

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A. H. GRISWOLD, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

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SPECIAL TERMS APPLYING TO DAY LETTERS. In further consideration of the reduced rate for this special "Day Letter" service, the following special terms in addition to those enumerated above are hereby agreed to:

(a) Day Letters may be forwarded by the Telegraph Company as a deferred service and the transmission and delivery of such Day Letter is, in all respects, subordinate to the priority of transmission and delivery of full rate telegrams.

(b) This Day Letter is received subject to the express understanding and agreement that the Company does not undertake that a Day Letter shall be delivered on the day of its date absolutely and at all events; but that the Company's obligation in this respect is subject to the condition that there shall remain sufficient time for the transmission and delivery of such Day Letter on the day of its date during regular office hours, subject to the priority of the transmission of full rate telegrams under the conditions named above.

NIGHT MESSAGES. Accepted up to 2.00 a. m. at reduced rates to be sent during the night and delivered not earlier than the morning of the ensuing business day. Night messages may at the option of the Telegraph Company be mailed at destination to the addressee, and the Company shall be deemed to have discharged its obligation in such cases with respect to delivery by mailing such Night Messages at destination, postage prepaid.

NIGHT LETTERS. Accepted up to 2.00 a. m. for delivery on the morning of the ensuing business day, at rates still lower than night message rates, as follows: The fast telegram rate for 10 words shall be charged for the transmission of 50 words or less, and one-fifth of such rate for 10 words shall be charged for each additional 10 words or less.

CLASSES OF SERVICE

SPECIAL TERMS APPLYING TO NIGHT LETTERS. In further consideration of the reduced rate for this special "Night Letter" service, the following special terms in addition to those enumerated above are hereby agreed to:

(a) Night Letters may at the option of the Telegraph Company be mailed at destination to the addressee, and the Company shall be deemed to have discharged its obligation in such cases with respect to delivery by mailing such Night Letters at destination, postage prepaid.

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NIGHT CABLE LETTERS at reduced rates. Must be in plain language of country of origin, or of destination, or in French where transmitted by telegraph to destination. Subordinated to the priority of transmission of full and deferred rate messages. May be posted, when sender so directs, to countries where this service is not available, at tariffs to countries from which such messages are posted. Under latter circumstances, messages must contain complete mailing address including chargeable posting instructions (i. e. "Post London," etc.). Minimum word basis of twenty to twenty-five words applied. Code addresses may be used except for messages delivered by post. Figures explained by text admitted. Indicator "NLT" required and charged for as one word. For further particulars apply to any Postal Telegraph office.

NO EMPLOYEE OF THIS COMPANY IS AUTHORIZED TO VARY THE FOREGOING.

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EDWIN C. WHITE, SECRETARY
HOTEL FRESNO, FRESNO

Monday 6/27/42
6:30 a.m.

Dear Dr Thomas,

At last our stint is over. On Thursday, the 20th, we are to report to San Francisco and "be assisted" in our plans to join our families or go to whichever center we request.

Thanks to your efforts, the "Okies" received notice that they were to leave San Joaquin on Monday, the 27th, and at this minute may be on their way to Mangum.

I hope they will be just as busily and usefully occupied at Mangum. Both of my sisters who were assisting with the kindergarten & the 3rd & 4th graders liked their work very much. I hope the youngest one can find some college freshmen just as interested in the vital problems of the day as she is. She likes to have fun but likes a nice discussion once in a while & may miss her young "cynic" friends.

I do not know ~~to~~ how much time the army will give us to prepare for our own evacuation. Most of us now realize that we have some chance of getting out - Schools & jobs further East - but we're all decided to try out "camp" life. We feel as if we're missing something by skipping the centers. I suppose ~~I~~ we should be able to work something out if we find camp life too intolerable. As long as the present trend to add restrictions does not become too much for our spirits and we can do creative constructive work, the experience should not be without its fruitful aspects.

I wonder how my family will compare assembly center life with S.F. Bay region people with the conglomeration they will find in Manzanar.

I shall try to see you before I leave and if they will not give us enough time shall telephone you.

Please give my best wishes to Virginia, Gordon & Spencer. (I'm afraid maybe I have last names & first names mixed however.)

Sincerely yours -

Kari Okagaki

June 18, 1942

Miss Mari Okazaki
Public Assistance Worker
WCCA
Reedley, California

Dear Mari:

I am enclosing copies of letters to Mr. Nash and Miss Bannister. I hope we can arrange things to your satisfaction.

I was delighted to get your long and informative letter today.

With cordial regards,

Sincerely yours,

Dorothy S. Thomas
Professor of Rural Sociology

DST:rj
Enc--2

June 18, 1942

Miss Phoebe Bannister
Social Security Board
785 Market Street
San Francisco, California

Dear Miss Bannister:

Confirming our telephone conversation of yesterday,
I hereby request that you arrange the transfer of Mari
Okazaki to Manzanar upon completion of her WCCA assignment.

Very sincerely yours,

Dorothy S. Thomas
Professor of Rural Sociology

DST:rj

cc: Miss Mari Okazaki