

May 25, 1945.

Dear Kazuo:

I got your letter today and before I go any farther I want to tell you that I feel like a darned fool about your subscription to the local paper. Tsugiye told me while you were sick that it was running out and asked me to renew it. Well, I don't know what causes me to forget to do things, but anyway, I forgot all about it. I had made a note to take care of it and the note slipped into a book on my desk and stayed there until a couple of days ago when I was looking through it. Today I went into town and went to the office only to find that you had sent in the money yourself. I want to tell you that it was nothing but pure forgetfulness on my part and I am sorry that it happened this way.

Your letter about your problem and the future certainly gives one something to think about. What a shame that a country that promised freedom and equality for all has to stoop to such tactics because of a few ignorant, selfish, intolerant people. I tell you that things are getting more and more upset everywhere and each and every citizen is going to have to think for himself and try to work this thing out. We are surely heading for domestic trouble if we don't take care of some things pretty soon. Right in this district the sentiment against the return of you people is very acute. Quite a number of us are trying to talk with some of those who we are sure feel resentment and when we do get a chance to discuss it with them we try and find ~~why~~ why they feel that way. In some cases we have been able to at least make them admit that they are wrong and that something can be worked out, but some of them get indignant and won't listen to any sort of reasoning. Those are the ones that worry me - the ones that talk it over and admit that they are partially wrong, that they really have nothing against any of your people excepting that they will always feel that you can't be trusted - those people can usually be talked down and I am sure that kind of a person would not resort to violence or be any part of it. For the past month I have talked this thing over with everyone that gives me an opening and I feel much better than I did before I started this. I am surprised to find so many who can see the light and feel as I do - that this is America and we should keep it America - that we have a paper called the Constitution of these United States - that it sets forth certain privileges for all, regardless of race or creed, and that we had better stick by it. Freedom and equality for all doesn't mean for just a privileged few - a traitor is a traitor in any sense of the word, be he white, yellow or black, but when a person is judged as loyal, lives a decent life and upholds the laws of God and Country, then I say for Heaven's sake, let us give that person the same chance that we would have! Listen Kaz, I haven't got a lot of grey hairs for nothing since this thing started - Gosh, I have talked for hours at a time to different people, then come home exhausted and wonder why the world is so crazy. About a week ago Mrs. Karlson and I got together again and we went over all of this. The next day I met a business man in town and he and I talked it all over and he told me in the course of the conversation that he thought it was nothing less than ignorance that made some people so intolerant. He was very much in sympathy with the return of those who owned their homes here and thought they should be fully protected and respected. Right after I left him I walked up the street and met a woman whom I have known and respected for years. I had not seen her for months and so we discussed her family, mine, and things in general and then she mentioned her son-in-law who is overseas in the Pacific. Well, you might imagine how that goes - she wondered if the Japs would be coming back here and I said yes, I was pretty sure they would. Well, that started her off. She proceeded to tell me that you had no right

here, that the biggest part are no loyal and that Mr. Ickes should take all of you back where he lives if he thinks so much of you. Well, I asked her what she thought about those who were born here without any decision of their own and by law are citizens, what were going to do about them? And, what do you think she said to that? Now, mind you, she is well educated and all...well, she said that they should have never been considered citizens since their folks were not and have always been loyal to Japan and expected their kids to be that way, too. Now, I ask you, what can you do with people like that? I just sort of shrivel up after a battle with one like that. She and I went around and around about the Negroes also - we always bring them in when we discuss the subject because they are becoming a problem and we worry that a race riot will break out any day in the bay area. When I came home from town I went out to sell war bonds and at one place we talked about this affair but the folks there were in complete sympathy with my ideas so I got my spirits up again for a while. Joe went to town the following day and came home with a belly full he got from a fellow he met there. This guy is just terribly bitter and is always talking about what he would do and what he is going to do with the first one that comes back. Joe told him that it didn't do any good to get hot around the collar because the ones that owned homes were coming back and the old crackpot said that the WRA just couldn't shove these so-and-sos back on us and that he told some of the officials that very thing. Well, Joe told him that it wouldn't be wise to start any fuss, that the law was going to protect these people, etc. He then said that if he could get about 150 men to back him up he would run every one out of the county as they came in. Then he proceeded to call a farmer all kinds of names - some guy who he heard was hiring a Japanese fellow. Right after Joe told me all this I went up to the corner here and met a fellow that I used to sell peaches to. We talked about the peach crop, apples, etc. and then drifted to the problems of war, the conference, and finally, to the return of the Japanese people and the Negro problem. Well, again my spirits began to rise, because this fellow and I had exactly the same solution to both problems....that any disloyal person be dealt with, whether he or she be white, black or yellow, but that the rest of them be given every opportunity and respect, and above all, that all discrimination be stopped immediately if we want to avert a race war. At the same time he told me what he had overheard in town some weeks ago at one of the pool rooms. He said that he was having a coke and listening to the various conversations when he overheard three fellows whom he did not know, discussing how so many trials had been made to burn down the church just out of town here. They mentioned the fact that it had been tried again and again and that each time one of the neighbors right close would put it out. They thought that they ought to catch the guy that put it out the next time they tried it and tar and feather him or them. He said he just thought it was drunken talk and paid very little attention to it but after he got home and thought it over he was sorry he didn't pay more attention to them and if anything like that happened he could turn them in. Well, we are still lousy with crackpots and I hope this hasn't turned your stomach - I just gave it to you as a picture of what your old home town is like.

Now, what I want to tell you is this - those of us who believe that right must prevail, believe that sooner or later some of you will have to break this ice. Just who will be the ones is for you to decide, but certainly if you ever expect to return to your homes you must face it. We believe that you have a lot to face - that this will die down very slowly, but we are sure that you will win out - your past records have proven that. We are determined to help you all we can - if our plans work out you will be ~~xxxxxx~~ more a part of the community than you were before and instead of having to provide separate entertainment for yourselves you are going to enjoy what every other American enjoys - in

other words - discrimination must go! I wish I could tell you that this will happen soon, but it can not. It will only come about with time and education of our sons and daughters, but I am sure that as you watch your children grow you will see the change. I know that my sons are growing up to be tolerant and to treat every human being with the respect he or she deserves regardless of race or standing. That is all I care to impress upon them as they grow up - that they are no better than any other person, unless that person has committed a crime against the laws of our country or the word of Christ. I am sure that the WRA authorities will do all in their power to aid you from the talks I have had with some of them. They are going to be able to do more than some of us because they have no strings around here and have no one to fear. We will have to tread very lightly and feel our way around at first, but I feel sure that after you are resettled and going about your own business that many of those die-hards will realize that their fears are unfounded and will mind their business. There is one thing that bothers me and that is that so many of the people who are against your return always bring up the fact that when the service men return they will be hard boiled, killing will mean nothing to them and especially those who have been wounded will not tolerate any Japanese and will do bodily harm to any they run across. I worry about this, because so far I have not had the chance to talk with one returned veteran and have no idea as to what his feelings are after having gone through hell, but I hope with all my heart that he has had enough of war when he returns and will not want to harm anything as long as he lives. A cousin of mine is on his way home and I want to talk with him when he gets here - I want to know how he feels after being over there over two years and having been through some pretty hard fighting. None of the kids I write to ever express their sentiments along these lines - I think because they don't dare, due to the censoring.

A couple of WRA men were here for hours the other day, checking on the lease and rental of the house and ranch up there, also on Tsugiye's place. We hashed this thing all over and then over again and I told them just what some of the conversations had been with some of my supposedly friends. They admitted that things were pretty tight around here and couldn't see through it, but were willing to try and soften it up some. I understand they have talked with a few around town since then and they have talked to some clubs in Petaluma and Santa Rosa. Nobody wants to stick their necks out and invite them to speak before clubs in this town - get the sentiment? That shows just how the feeling is - when I asked a fellow why he didn't ask them to speak to his club, he told me that he knew that most of the business men in his club didn't care one way or another but they pretended to be against the return because they knew it was best for their business, therefore, he didn't think it advisable to have them speak there. He thought it would just be a waste of time and might cause the wrong impression on the part of some against him. We spoke of these rentals and the lease and the fact that the people now on the places would require sufficient time to find homes to move to and they agreed to that perfectly. They could see that it is next to impossible to find homes around this section and I understood from them that plenty time would be given to the tenants in the event that you decided to return. I hope this is true, because that alone would cause trouble - that is, if these people were kicked out with no place to go. So please, as soon as you can make up your mind, let me know, so I can very gently and nicely tell the tenants to be looking for a new home. Believe me, I will be very happy to do so, because then my worries will be partially over...trying to worry about somebody else's place is no fun at the best, and I must say you people have been too

patient and considerate of everything. Another reason why I know that you deserve respect and a chance to prove yourselves decent citizens.

Gee, I know I must have bored you to death if you have read it up this far and I am going to talk about something else now. Please believe me, I have tried to paint the picture as bad as it could be for your own sake and to give you a better chance to make a decision. I still say I hope you decide to come back - and incidentally, I think for the good of all of you, it would be better if too many didn't come in at once. It is just that the psychological effect will be much different if one or two families come back instead of six or eight all at once. It gives people a chance to get mad and then cool off before another bunch in another section gets mad and cools off. Too many mad at one time aren't healthy - understand me?

Joe and I went to the ranch the other day and Sam had four boys thinning apples. The crop is lovely where we walked, but I had pretty good shoes on and the ground was too wet to walk around much. They were thinning in that corner near Norton's and believe me, that has a crop. Sam told me that there wasn't much down the center of the orchard. He said the late stuff was tremendously heavy. He told us that Sam Ono, Mr. Masuoka and a couple of other fellows talked with him. Then the woman in the house was all excited and told me that your Granddad was there and talked with her. I nearly died because I didn't <sup>think</sup> of you would come here without stopping in, so finally I found out from Sam who some of them were. A few days later the WRA men were here and told us that they went up there and talked with the woman and that the boys were with them. When we talked with her she told us that she hadn't been able to get any hot water for two weeks and that the septic tank was overflowing again. Gosh, I had that tank cleaned out only eight or ten months ago and I am not going to do it again unless I have to. I can't imagine why it fills up so fast, but when the fellows cleaned it out they told me that they couldn't find an outlet for the overflow so in that case it was built wrong and nothing can be done until an outlet is put in it. We never have to clean ours out excepting when the pipes going out get clogged up due to the tree roots getting in between the joints; otherwise that overflow pipe takes care of everything. Anyway, I talked around her and we got away without doing anything about it. Joe told her what to try on the boiler to get the hot water and she said she would have him do it when he got home. Gosh, they are so helpless. I almost hate to go there because she is always asking for something. They have been wonderful about taking care of things and it always is so clean and neat - I know I couldn't have had better tenants for that, and I believe they can be trusted implicitly as far as lifting anything. They put up a lot of applesauce last year, but she asked me if she could pick up the apples and of course, I could hardly refuse her. The kid picked up dryers and I think she used to take home a bucket full every day to put up... pretty hard to stop anything like that and in the long run it wouldn't make or break anyone. They are paid up until the first of July, water bill and all.

Well, I had better get to bed - today I went to town and sold some bonds - tomorrow we start to spray again and I promised to be on that tractor for the whole time which will be about five days. Joe says he'll bet I'll get some excuse to quit before it is over so I will have to get plenty rest and show him up. I even ran it for discing a couple of afternoons in our Gray and Baldwin blocks, but I won't try it on the rented place... there are too many steep hills in that. We need thinners so darned bad there - have only two and the apples are getting too big. I intend to get busy as soon as the spraying is over, but I can't help much, we should have five or six there right now. I often wish Joe had not taken it, but maybe we'll come out very well on it and I don't want to discourage him too early.

About the washer - the fellow that looked at it thought it was much too big. He said he thought it was for a large packing house. I have tried to contact that Bean salesman and Weeks' bookkeeper is after him to see me, but so far we haven't met. She said he told her that he didn't think you could sell it for the ceiling price - that nobody would give that. I gave her to understand so she would tell him that it was not going to be given away to someone - that if ceiling prices were being paid for that type of machinery that one would have to bring the ceiling price. As soon as I talk with him and get his reaction I will know better just what he feels he can do and I will also get all the information on the model, etc. and then if he doesn't know of anyone interested I will run an ad for a couple of days. The Co-ops have built a new packing house and they will be buying new washers, but I imagine they will want them uniform and bigger than that. That is why I wanted to see that darned salesman, I figured he knew all the deals around here and would know if it were possible to place that size. He comes over on Saturday and I hope he will call me up or come out tomorrow.

Now I am going to shut up - Joe just got home from a dryer Ass'n director's meeting and I notice that it is 11:30 so I know I had better hit the hay.

We hope your troubles will all be straightened out soon and that everything will work out alright. Write again when you can and if you ever Tsugiyé ask her for me 'what is the matter?', I haven't heard from her for ages. I got letters from Ted and Earl last week - they were both in Italy and Ted's was written a couple of days after surrender.

Be good and take care of yourself...hope your Grandad and Grandma are as well as ever.

Sincerely,

*Lee Perry*