

Sebastopol, Calif
January 17, 1943.

Dear Kaz:

Sorry I haven't any news for you - am sending copy of the statement I made up for the court and perhaps if you have time you can make a copy for your Grandpop. Gosh, I have been wanting to write him for ages, but just can't seem to get the mail I have to get done out of the way when necessary. Things are still at a standstill as far as the ranch is concerned, excepting that we are going on with our plans for fertilizing and pruning, etc. I was going to haul the fertilizer the early part of the week, but when Archie told me that the sacks weigh 175 pounds apiece I decided to wait until somebody could lift them a little easier than I. Sam is so busy pruning I hate to take him off to do that and Bob Herring came for a few days, but is leaving for camp in a few days so guess he won't be back any more for a while. Joe started to haul it when he was home one day this week - started Johnny's truck and got outside the gate then discovered he had a flat inside tire and came back to fix it. There was something wrong with the valve that had to be fixed and by the time he had that fixed it was too late to get the fertilizer. as it stands now I am going to haul it as soon as I can find somebody to help me lift it. Archie told us to put it on as late as we can so there is no harm if we don't get it home for a while, but the stuff is scarce and everybody is begging so if it is out of sight they like it better down there. I think Archie told me it will cost \$41.80 per ton plus tax. We got ourselves two tons and you two tons.

I did see ^{JUDGE} Geary finally this week but got nowhere as he has to see Comstock before he can give me any advice. He took all the papers and said he thought he would see the judge that day. I have to go to Comstock's chambers next Thursday with a friend as a witness and there may be a chance to see Geary after that. He advised me the other day to go right ahead with the work and use the funds in the account and then if any lease is signed he said the expense can be transferred. Sam is always asking if I hear from you on leasing the property and I have to tell him each time that it is up to the judge whether or not Joe and I can have anything to do with a lease. Sam seems to think that everything would be alright - all he has to do is sign a lease and then Joe and I can foot the bills and give him a percentage over wages. It sounds fine, but it takes money to run the business and we have very little of it and will probably have less as time goes on. I wish Sam could finance it himself and make a good job of it, but guess he knows himself better than we do. He claims he is flat right now. I offered to settle up with him the other day for our pruning and he refused it, because he says if he has it he spends it (or loses it, I should say). At that rate, it would be fatal to trust him with the entire running of the ranch, as he would run into trouble as soon as he owed wages and couldn't dig up. Joe and I are perfectly willing to have manage the running of it and finance him, but not having the money means we have to borrow and pay interest and then we can't afford to take too many chances because it is going to take plenty money to run this place. I've had a number of people ask me if the place was leased or not, but every case had the same old story-the old labor trouble. If they could get the help they would not mind having it, but they just don't know where they would get the help. I see Jess Winkler gave up the Case ranch - a fellow from Hessel is going to run it for the buyer. Mr. Cochran told me the other day that he leased his to his hired man and Dick Fletcher as partners. Mr. Cochran furnishes all the equipment, all fuel and all materials and they get 60%. All they furnish is the labor and Mr. Cochran told me the pruning was almost done and the fertilizer was already spread. He said they ought to make some money because they could do all the work up to harvest time.

He said he tried to beat those terms, but nobody seemed able to handle the labor problem and those two got together and decided they could do most of it themselves. One alone wouldn't have taken it for the world.

When I talked with Geary the other day he said he thought the best deal was for me to run it as Guardian, that if labor was impossible to get, I should do the best possible and wouldn't be held responsible in case some of the crop wasn't harvested for lack of help. I mentioned the Sam deal in a roundabout way and he thought we were very foolish to back him, he thought we would be in for some trouble. I told him that I felt he thought that because he didn't know Sam at all and knowing him made us feel that everything would be alright. He still shook his head and told me to proceed very cautiously. I'll say this for both Tauzer and Geary - they have both displayed utmost fairness up to now - I mean in considering any kind of a deal concerning you folks. Geary told me the other day that people like Winkler tried to take advantage of the situation and were very wrong in thinking that they would be allowed to get away with it. I told him that was the way I felt in refusing the lease, because I felt that Winkler would do the least possible and would not put himself out for you folks at all. As I told you before I could have leased the place to some like that - they are in it for all they can get and after they get through with the season there wouldn't be much of a place for anyone else. They probably wouldn't take it any more and then the poor sucker that did take it would be out all the expense of putting it on its feet again. Rather than do it that way, I will do my best at running it purely as guardian. If it comes to that I will have to put in for my gas and time spent running back and forth because my time is going to be very valuable around here. I am sure that you will not kick against this in view of conditions existing in regard to gas rationing and the tire situation. Right now I hold only an A card for the Buick which allows me right now four gallons per week and I can't make very many trips up there on that. I will have to file for additional gas - as a matter of fact, I already filed for a B card and was refused on the grounds that I should drive the truck for any ranch ~~xxx~~ business. When the time comes that I really need it I am going after it with some strong language to help out. They gave us enough gas for our Ford truck to drive around the oak tree about five times and if we do any outside work we won't have enough gas to get to the jobs. I am sure we can straighten out the tractor gas and maybe the truck gas, but I don't know about the Buick and Joe's Ford when he quits his job. He has a B card now because he uses it for work, but when he stays home they may want to take it away from him and give him an A card instead. I hope this tire situation clears up soon - it is working a hardship on everyone, especially those of us who use their pleasure cars for trucks, hauling feed, sprays and everything else that fits in it.

Well, it looks as though Joe and I are going to have the ranch to pay for if the deal goes through smoothly. The girls are all willing to sell and Mr. Cochran has already appraised it for a loan so tomorrow I am going in to talk with Cochran and Hottle and then we will start worrying about how we are going to pay for it. It may be a big bite and may be the worst mistake we ever made, but we are going to tackle it - after all, we couldn't stand by and see it sold to some outsider. Just pulling up all our roots and getting out wouldn't seem right and we realize that staying will mean years of hard work and skimping, but with a little luck and good health we may someday own it. We figured that if we didn't take a chance now while the war is on ~~xxx~~ and the government is buying all these commodities then we just as well forget it later on. Joe plans on quitting the first of the month and we will start spraying immediately. We are using elgetol again and it can be put on any time now. We are going to try and find another man for the hose and then I will drive for them. I hope we get a little better weather by that time - we are still having those foggy days, but worse now, because there is always a nice heavy frost along with them. At 9:30 this

morning our orchard looked as though it had a blanket of snow on it. Sam and the other fellow don't get out until 8:30 or 9:00 and some days they don't get out at all. They don't like the cold at all. We still have a few rows of brush to haul out here and then we are going to do Johnny's, then to Forestville. We will catch up with the pruners, I am sure, before they get done. I certainly hate to see Bob leave us - wish he could stay until Joe gets home, but orders are orders!

Looks as though Lloyd may be leaving us for a long while. His folks got a letter from him recently in which he said he was getting shots and that usually indicates moving before long. Gosh, how we miss him around here at this time of the year! The funny part of it is that we will miss him a lot more later on.

Suppose you have seen in the paper about the outfit that bought out the cooperative plant in Graton. Everything is going to be power machines this coming season around here. Mr. Weeks said he has ordered over 30 machines to date. The Okamoto dryer is going to have new ones, Harry Silva is adding one, Alfred Halberg is putting in two, our neighbors on the hill are trying to rent the Joe Valentine dryer and intend to install new ones there and if this deal goes through alright we are going to install two of them. Barlow Brothers are going to modernize their dryer and put in new ones for this coming year. They had said they didn't intend to run dryer again, but now they are fixing it up and intend to hit it harder than ever. There are rumors that shipping will be very light on account of car shortage and that means more for the dryers if the crop is normal so everyone is preparing for the heaviest season in a long time. The guy who thinks that he can hire help for hand peelers is just out of luck unless he has a crew of old men and women already hired. I haven't talked with anyone during the past month who has anyone in mind that he could hire to work in the dryer if he had to have them. It's just unbelievable how few working men are around and the papers are full of ads wanting men of any age or ability. Joe and I figured the only chance was for power machinery and young kids like Halberg, Oehlmann and Garcia used this year and the only necessary man there is the kiln man. We can always fall back on Lloyd's dad for that if worse comes to worst and with Joe home he can sort of 'break in' too. To tell you the truth, the coming season worries me greatly, yet I feel that if we can manage to struggle through without losing ~~xx~~ too much of the crop we should make some money. Sam still says that he thinks he can get a crew for the dryer up there but I am afraid he is not figuring how many of the boys have been called and are still being called. I sent ~~xx~~ in for a deferment on the fellow who is helping with the pruning and I still haven't had an answer. I am just shaking in my boots for fear he will be denied. If he goes we are sunk as far as pruning is concerned, because Sam alone just can't get over all of it in time and I doubt that he can get the ones he was figuring on helping him at Forestville. Some of them have gone and the rest of them have to finish the string tying and the hop contract when the time comes to start on that.

Well Kaz, I meant to make this just a short note, but as usual I find myself rambling along here at length. My head is so full of fretting about this and that I can't help but burst forth with it. My sister-in-law and her family are still here - Manuel is getting along fine, but not able to do much for himself as yet and I think they will stay another week. They found a place to move into as soon as they can get a few things together and he feels better.

I hope you will bear with me on this ranch affair - I assure you that everything will turn out O.K. I can understand how miserable you must feel wondering how things look and how they will turn out, but we are doing the very best possible and I am sure the court will help us see this thing through so nobody will be hurt in any way.

As ever, *Lee Perry*