

Jan. 7, 1944

I am writing this in so many spurts - I don't even know what I have already said. Well, first it is one thing and then another, it seems. Yesterday I spent all day washing clothes and patching rabbit pens when I wasn't cooking for this hungry bunch. Joe is sitting up now and his appetite is coming back, and of course, the kids are eating like little pigs. Last night I attended the meeting and didn't get home until midnight, so I couldn't very well do any letter writing at that hour and after struggling a meeting of that kind. We didn't accomplish much, but did find out that we violated the law this summer when we raised wages and now we have a long winded form to fill out and file with the Gov't asking for their approval of this raise. If they refuse, we still stand as law breakers and are liable to a severe penalty any time in the future. Nobody seemed to know whether we will be able to collect the amount we want from CPC through this move, but the opinion there was that they will come through, anyway, very soon. I made up my mind that I won't wait for that, I am going to see Geary this afternoon if at all possible. If he insists that I file a statement without the returns for the dryers, then I will do so immediately.

Gosh, things are getting worse all the time - one farmer reported to the official last night that some growers have gone as high as 1.50 per hour for pruners and that one man he knew was making as high as 30.00 per day on piece work pruning. It now appears that the outside labor can go as high as the sky, according to how crazy the employers are. Then when it comes time to operate packing sheds and dryers we won't be able to hire anyone because we can't pay as much as the outside work. The whole thing is the fault of the growers - if they would just hold these workers down to a decent wage, we could hire just as much help. There is only so much help to start with and raising wages sky high won't bring any more, it just makes hogs out of the ones that are here and they won't stop at anything. As far as I am concerned, we have reached the peak of what we are going to pay on this place for pruning.

I thought perhaps Sam would be down to tell me whether or not he would take the pruning contract, but haven't seen hide or hair of him so far. If you can get around to it write and tell me what you think about this - do you feel that I should pay him by the hour, whatever he asks above the 1.00 that he will now receive? I would surely like to know just what your ideas are on this so I can talk more sensibly with him when he asks me to do things. I am sure that he wants to prune it badly, partly because he wants to stay in the house there and partly because he is figuring on taking the ranch next year and wants it in good shape. He remarked to someone that he didn't care particularly about it this year due to the fact that it would not have a crop, but that if I would sign him up for 4 or 5 years he would take it. I have told him time and again that the court would not sign up for more than 1 year as they don't know what changes will take place, but he thinks that is just my excuse. I am glad that it is that way, because as I told you before, he is no different than the rest of them, he is in it for Sam alone. He knows how to do the work, it is true, but at the same time, don't think for a minute that he is going to put out any money to help you unless he is darned sure he is going to get it back double.

Henry Singmaster wants the place quite badly, but there is another headache for me. He made me awfully mad this summer when he moved those Mexicans right in where I didn't want them and let them do as they wanted around there. I did nothing but yell and kick every day for two weeks until finally I cornered him and read the riot act to him, then he moved them down to Sam's cabin and they continued to raise hell there. From what I saw of him, he has no respect for the property, outside of what he was interested in. I know it was hard to get help, but he didn't need to defy me when I told him I didn't want that type around the house and expected them to keep their kids out of trouble if they moved in near the dryer. They raised hell in the orchard with the fruit that was

picked up and broke up boxes playing war, etc. Gosh, I could write a book on the misery I went through this summer with that lousy outfit. On the other hand, if I had rented it out to someone, it might have been a lot worse. I wouldn't have been able to go up there and raise hell when things went wrong and I would have had to face all the damage when the lease was up and everyone was gone. Either way, it is a problem, but if I have to be responsible for the damage done and the outcome, I might as well be responsible for the total and take the blame rightfully, rather than for someone else. I think that with these people in the house, there won't be much chance for anyone taking advantage of the situation, as this fellow already told me that he would not tolerate anyone around there without a good reason and he said he is going to make it his business to find out what they want when he sees them. I am putting high hopes on this family and I hope they don't dissappoint me too much.

Well, the kids are up and harping for breakfast and I haven't gone out to do my chores as yet so I guess I had better lay off and get busy. Am sorry that I can't send the statements as yet, but there is no use making up two sets of them and I am sure that money will come through any day now. If Geary tells me anything of importance or makes any decisions this afternoon (if I can corner him) I will drop you a line. In the meantime, please concentrate on this Sam proposition and let me know just what you would like me to do in his case. As I said before, I don't care how much I pay him if I know that you people want him to do the work at all costs.

The Bank gave me the notice for your safe deposit box - or rather the one in the name of your Grandad and Grandma and told me to mail it to you. I had collected 4.00 for persimmons and had it here so paid the 3.60 on the ²⁰ box out of that and I will send you the receipt when I ~~xxxx~~ send the statements later on - right now I haven't time to hunt it up. I could only get 5¢ a pound for persimmons and at that, a lot of them went to waste on the stands around here. It seems that everybody that had trees had a big crop and they all threw them into the stores and stands locally so they were overdone. Being traffic is cut to a minimum on account of the gas shortage, the stands are not doing the usual business and they are usually overloaded. It was the only out for me so I let them go at that. I imagine if a person ~~xxx~~ could get them into the cities it would pay, but there was just no way of doing it. I still have about 40 pounds to collect for - it is just that I haven't had time to call for it - that is from the Davidsons up the road.

I will write again as soon as I can get around to it with whatever news I have and hoping that I will be able to give the returns for last year as well.

Trust this finds you all well, we are improving daily.

Best regards from us all,

As ever,
Lea