

*Letters from Tule Lake Stockade*  
*Kokoro kara from her heart*

Lili Sugimoto was born in Montebello, California, on October 31, 1916. She grew up on an alfalfa farm in Lancaster alongside of twelve other Japanese families. She met Tatsuo Inouye, a kibe, who came to America in 1928. He taught Japanese language classes and Judo in the Mojave Desert to those early pioneers. He married her on September 9, 1934 and took her on a one year long honeymoon to the Great Wall of China, Korea, and then to his home in Kumamoto, Japan to meet his family.

During the winter of 1943 through 1944, they were separated by a double barbed wire fence while he was held at the Tule Lake Segregation Center Stockade because he was a Judo Instructor and "No No" boy. Since the letters were written while he was in the stockade, they were checked by the military regularly thereby, limiting its contents. Tatsuo Inouye wrote in English to his American born wife, Yuriko, age 27, who was a spirited girl who left her parents and six siblings in Poston to be a family by going together to Tule Lake Segregation Camp block 42 on October 1943. She was alone with two young children, Sayuri and Masako when he was arrested and confined in the military stockade. After the war, they returned to Folsom Street in East Los Angeles, where she worked as a floral designer for many years, and raised three daughters. Inouye was head instructor at Senshin Judo Dojo at night and was a gardener by day in the Monterey Park and San Gabriel Valley. Lili's hobbies included traveling to Yosemite and Sequoia National Park, the East Coast, Hawaii, and toured Europe. She loved Van Gogh and learned how to paint the smile of each grandchild in oil.









### *Dedication*

*Yuriko Sugimoto Inouye was a strong, loving wife and continued to be a bright star for her daughters.*

### *Letter to Yuriko*

*Everybody healthy? Getting along ok. I am 100% perfectly safe. Never worry about me. Army treat me nice, there is nothing to worry about that point. This morning- 3 eggs with a lot of bacon. First I don't feel like eating this thing. I know you are eating such a poor food every day; it kind of stopped my appetite. Anyhow, don't worry about me, I want for you to take care of yourself and watch Sayuri and Masako. If it is possible, send me Durham. If there is a chance I will write again. Goodbye.*

### *Letter to Yuriko:*

*"Order geta, paper and pencil (stationery). Is everything secure and in good health, I hope? We are all healthy. We are eating good food. The food in camp is getting better. Next time, when I meet you, you will be surprised. Guess whether I am fatter or skinnier? Sing songs, exercise, and good food. Just wait and see. Say hello to the neighbors. I know Sayuri and Masako are healthy. Send me geta, slipper, tablet, dictionary, Durham, and pencil. I received the stuff you sent me last time. I could see you were prepared to send it before my letter came. I am proud of you, your calm attitude. Take care of yourself. I will write again."*



### Letter to Sayuri and Masako

Be nice girls and obey your mother. Sayuri, study hard. If you study hard I will ask Santa Claus to send you something good. Masako if you go to sleep early you will be a good girl. Play with Sayuri nicely then when Christmas comes, I asked to send you something as nice as your big sister. Daddy is well. When I come home I will be fat. Give my regards to Hayashi san. Tell mom to send me my blue pants. Goodbye.

### Letter from Yuriko

Dear Tatsuo Inouye,

November 18, 1942 7pm

Everybody is so nice to us. So please don't worry about us. Man next-door helps us a lot and one lady in this block (Kuramoto Ken) she gave each children shoe. Grandma sent Sayuri a lot of funny books, playbook, paper dolls and magazine. I am occupying myself with little studying at 2 AM. Masako is getting along just fine playing with Sayuri. Take good care of yourself. Write when you can because the children really feel happy. Whenever possible, I will be waiting.

Love,

Lili Inouye

### Letter from Yuriko

Dear Mr. T. Inouye,

Receiving your letter made us very happy. Sayuri read it, and was reading it to Mitsuko san when I came back from mass. So I guess she was very happy. Masako also understands the letter perfectly. I cannot stand to think that you are not going to enjoy the first white Christmas with us. I will hope and pray that we may be together by then. Mr. Furuzawa brings in the coal for me every day and that lady in block 39 came to see me every day hoping to cheer us up a little I guess. Mr. Hayashi made saba - sushi and invited us to dinner; it certainly was good! Gee, I wish you were here to enjoy it with us. The food mass is getting much



*better so please do not worry. I am going to school from 1 o'clock to 3:00pm every day with Miss S. Hayashi. We started from book 5; it is kind of hard but I hope to catch up because I recall some of the words I learned 6 - 10 years ago. Sayuri and Masako play at home with Mitsuko san while I'm gone. Masako behaves very well while I am gone. Masako got up calling for pa-pa-pa-pa - she said she dreamed that pa-pa came home. She is getting a little impatient.*  
*Love, Lili*

*"Mr. Miyamoto wrote, he is coming to Tule Lake."*

#### *Letter to Yuriko*

*I am happy to hear everyone is okay. I am fine too. You said you are going to study Japanese, study hard. Please thank Mr. Nakamura for sending me persimmons. Also thank Mr. Sakuuma. I heard Mr. Furuzawa carried the coal for you. Thanks to Mr. Furuzawa. Everyone is sending us how much we feel we need nothing more. We receive so much we appreciate and we need nothing more. The mother of one of the young boys in the same room sent ohiji. Young *Rogaywa* is the youngest of all, and a nice boy so everyone is fond of him. I don't know when I will return but it's not too long. Don't send food because it is prohibited. I wish the day would come when we could eat "Saba zushi" together. Send me "Sai Kontan", Chinese philosopher, -Shuto.*

#### *Letter from Yuriko*

*"If you want clothes I'll send it, please tell me. If you receive the ones I sent before or not. Masako's cod liver oil supply is out so I purchased some at the canteen. Seems like this is the longest Thanksgiving Day I ever spent. Sayuri says "I bet Daddy had a turkey dinner, because he lives with the soldiers." I am going to school every day and Sayuri too. I take Sayuri and Masako to the library. While I attend classes, Sayuri plays with Masako. I'm trying to make dolls and toys for children. I'm trying to make them as happy as they would be on a usual Christmas. Our neighbors' kid*



want snowshoe. Should I buy it for him? I can't decide. Grandmother sent shoe stamps to us.

#### Letter from Sayuri

Dear Daddy,

Masako says she wants a big dolly. I want a cute dolly and most of all I want you. Daddy I am studying hard everyday and help my mother clean house and watch Masako everyday. I went to library to get a book to read so I can study. Tell me what you are doing every day daddy.

Your little girl,  
Sayuri

#### Letter from Yuriko

"I am sending 1 shirt. Today is a nice day, which is rare so I went to the canteen. I bought cups and dishes, needles and paint because Mr. Hayashi said he's going to make a bed for the dolls so I'm going to paint it. I gave Sayuri .15 cents to spend at the canteen today. She bought .10 cents worth of this paper herself and bought ice cream for Masako! I was surprised at Masako- she ate so much okai you and imo rice sweet potato. It was very good. When we went to the mess, Masako didn't eat because she doesn't like beans. SO it was very good she ate Hagashio. The kitchen doesn't give us butter-its only cooking purposes; so everyday we go to the mess to eat. Masako plays with ice everyday. I realized I used to play with ice when I was small so I don't scold her."

#### Letter to Sayuri, Masako and Yuriko

Sayuri, Masako Inouye, Dear Children,

I am awfully glad to hear from you. Isn't it good to write a letter once in a while? Good thing to hear is you are studying hard and help clean house everyday. Moreover, I sure could know that you are getting better in writing and spelling English. I will not forget to ask Santa Claus to carry my gift to you. For this, you



must be nice and be very good to your mother. What you please mother pleases me. Things you like to buy from canteen, such as snowshoes or anything, you go and buy them with mother. I heard that you bought papers for ten cents instead of ice cream and gave an ice cream to Masako. Well, that is what I like to hear. You've done a fine deed. Someday, you will be a great one by doing that way. Well children, you asked me what I am doing. I liked to tell you this before, it I forget it. I am running and trying something on my business. But you cannot understand about men's job, can you dear? You could listen to my story all about as soon as I get home. Write you soon. Be very, very nice.

#### Letter to Yuriko

Send me Saikontan. Chinese Philosophy. You have made a mistake twice to send me the book I was reading the night I was arrested. Don't forget to give Masako cod liver oil. Don't forget to make Sayuri do homework. Don't send anything unless I ask. Give my thanks to Mr. Hayashi. Whenever you need money, look in the medicine chest for my money and spend it. Make sure the children have enough food. If there isn't enough go to the canteen. Anyway, have no worry about me. Since you know what sort of man I am, ha ha! Do not forget to keep promise I made with children."

#### Letter from Yuriko

A letter of condolence from Mr. Miyamoto. My mother-in-law was worried because she didn't hear from me for a long time. (I hope nobody tells her what's going on.) July sent me a lot of magazines so I will send them to the stockade, share it with the others. Letter from Hagro stating he will try to be at Tule Lake by Christmas. Christmas hid the dolls at Mr. Hayoshi's place. Hayoshi's daughter, Seichan made a hat for the dolls and a bed, which we painted. I decorated the room to look like Christmas so the children are very happy. Hayoshi-san fed us imo ohayayu potato rice. At breakfast they haven't have anything to eat so I had to get a fire, soup, doughnut, fruit, etc. at the canteen so they



will not get hungry. This morning that lady that I said was nice to us came over and the children were eating the leftover from last night so she brought over some fried potato with eggs. Sayuri and Masako certainly gobbled them up quick. This morning Masako got up and said, "I saw daddy at the army camp and he was teaching Judo" and she said, "I thought he was sleeping with me." I guess she dreamt about you but she really thinks she saw you. Hoping you will be back soon. Mr. Hayoshi again invited us for dinner, this time he cooked a chicken soup. Sayuri ate 3 bowls full and Masako ate 2. Gee, I guess they liked it very much. Gee! Everyone is so kind to us and I really don't know how to thank them. Mr. Kagawa's daughter is very nice to us. Sakuma-san gave us 6 cans of milk. There is no milk in the kitchen.

#### Letter From Yuriko

The man next door is bringing up the coal for me everyday. I guess people around here are different. I felt quite lonesome for a while but these people in this block try their best to humor us and always come to see me and tell me all about your camp that you are just fine, so I feel much better. It seems like Sayuri wants a birthday party but I said we better wait until Daddy comes back. Take good care of yourself.

#### Letter to Yuriko

- 1) Did you receive the letter I wanted sent to Poston?
- 2) Bring my fingerprint certificate.
- 3) Thank everyone in the block.
- 4) Keep all of the newspapers.
- 5) Don't wait for my return; go ahead with the birthday party.  
(Sayuri's wish)
- 6) Don't send anything I didn't ask for.
- 7) You have nothing to worry about concerning me. If our sacrifice makes camp life better, I'm satisfied.



### Letter from Yuriko

- 1) I received your letter, which I sent to my mother in Poston.
- 2) I am sending your fingerprint certificate.
- 3) Mom and July sent Christmas present and I am trying not to open then.
- 4) I am studying Japanese from Mr. Hyashi.
- 5) I bought Sayuri gold colored toiletry box \$1.25. I am going to say you sent it for Sayuri's birthday present.
- 6) Sayuri really minds me and takes care of Masako.

Everyone is healthy so I don't worry. Chiyoko sent me cookies. Mama sent pants and dress. A typewriter and paper doll for the children. Since Grandma sent a present to us, Sayuri wants to send her a spool holder that she made. I wanted to send Bull Durham but since I couldn't find it I am sending velvet brand. Sayuri was thinking very hard what to give you for Christmas, but she says I think tobacco is the best. Sure made me laugh. She asks me everyday how many days to Christmas. I guess she is waiting for it everyday. Masako still talks about you at least 2 times a day. When Masako sees a funny book Masako always wants to send it to Daddy.

### Letter to Yuriko

I am glad to hear everybody is healthy. Thank you for the present. Thank you Masako for the funny papers. Everyone should consult one another and send a present to Grandma. I want Sayuri to write a letter to Grandma in Japanese. I am going to send something good for Sayuri's birthday party through mama. You're a big girl so keep nice. I already sent a Christmas present. You will get a present from Santa Claus on Christmas Eve.

Everyone cut their hair short in my room except me. It would be bad if I catch a cold. Send me mentholatum and milk of magnesium. I don't know when but as soon as I finish my business I will return. I hope everyone stays healthy.



### Letter from Yuriiko

Well I heard pretty good news today. I hope its not gossip again. Masako said papa is better than Santa. So I guess she really loves you and missed you. Masako has a toothache.

### Letter to Yuriiko

I received the medicine. I am sad that I could not attend Sayuri's birthday party. I will not forget her lonely birthday forever. I hear that you and Sayuri are ill (from Hoshiko san.) Let me know how you are. We receive many gifts from camp everyday. This shows how much they support us. This is proof that they realize our situation. You never appreciate them and remember. *Nakamoti shi* Thanks very much. I know everything is inconvenient when you are sick and I am not there but you must endure this for the honor of the Japanese. I think this situation won't last too long. I want you to take care of your health.

### Letter from Yuriiko

First Sayuri had fever, then Yuriiko. We stayed in bed. I felt so chilly that I drank 2 cups of sake and I got warmer. Masako was the only one up and about. The neighbors didn't know we were sick until Setsuko san came over around one pm and found us all in bed. Anyway we couldn't eat so that was all right.

Sayuri got up the next day but Masako got a fever and staying in bed. Sayuri took care of us both. Poor thing started to get a fever again so she had to go back to bed. The two are in bed now but it's not too serious. Next-door Mrs. Hayashi and others in the block are helping. So we are taken care of.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the block are down in bed with the flu. I want you to take care of yourself in the stockade. I made a New Years' dress for Sayuri at Hayashi sano house. I promised Sayuri that after she gets well we will finally have her birthday party. Hayashi san invited us for a Christmas party but



we were sick. They brought over some terumake and it was so tasty.

On New Year's I plan to make some soup to help the children regain their health. Well today is Christmas but the children don't seem to be happy. They look very lonesome. I hope next year you will be a lucky year. Setsuko san gave the children stitch cards. Sayuri is busy making paper dolls playing with the stitch cards. I am sending a paper cigarette holder. Rub it so as to make a finish with the oil from your hand.

#### Letter from Yuriko

I hope you won't catch a cold. Everyone is well at our place. I still feel headachy so I will stay in bed. I drank some *Wakamoto* (medicine for my stomach). I started to wash clothes but since I feel badly I decided to go to bed. The children are okay and want to play outside but I'm going to keep them in until New Years. I hope you will come back by New Years, as we are really lonesome. All the neighbors are really nice to us. We don't know how to thank them. Mr. Good sent us candy, nuts and homemade cookies. The neighbors cleaned the house, went to the post office and brought coal for our house. It was really helpful. Masami and Mr. Hayashi are the only ones in their families that are well. Mrs. Hayashi helped us so much that now she caught a cold and is sick in bed. The children sleep every night with their dolls. Did you receive the pipe? As long as the children are healthy I feel very well.

WE THE UNDERSIGNED AS OF SUPPER, DECEMBER 31,  
1943, SOLEMNLY VOWED TO UNDERGO HUNGER STRIKE  
UNTIL SUCH TIME AS EVERYONE IN THE STOCKAGE IS  
RELEASED BACK TO THE COLONY SIMULTANESLY AND  
UNCONDITIONALLY

(INOUE COPIED BY HAND FROM MEMORY)



CAMP TULELAKE

TULE LAKE CALIFORNIA

3 JANUARY 1944

SUBJECT: FOOD

FOOD HAS BEEN PROVIDED (1 DAYS RATION)  
WHENEVER ADDITIONAL FOOD IS NEEDED. SOME  
WILL BE DELIVERD UPON PROPER NOTIFICATION  
(SIGNED)

LEONALD G. SCHANER 2<sup>ND</sup> LT CORPORAL  
PROVOST MARSHALL

Letter to Yuriko

1-22-44 Military Area

Dear Yuriko, Sayuri, Masako,

How are you getting on? I guess you are all healthy but I am kind of worried about you because Sayuri has not written for a while. I have heard that the school has reopened. You have to obey and be a good student and show me how you are becoming a Japanese girl.

Sayuri, try to write a letter in Japanese to your grandmother to tell her that I am quite okay. I have the things that your mother sent me vitamin pills and newspaper.

On the day Mr. Hoshiko was released and sent home. I will surprise you with my long whiskers like Santa Claus. Masako must not forget to take the right quantity of cod liver oil to get fat and strong as Sayuri. I want you to obey me on this point for the time being. I will give you each a good reward if you obey your mother. I will not forget to bring things for you when I go back home to join you. Be very very nice!

Good by for the present.

Daddy



### Letter From Yuriko

I asked Masako what she wanted to say to daddy. She said, "Hurry up and come home." She wonders why Teshi san's daddy came home and you don't. So every morning when she gets up she asks if you came home. Every night she asks when Daddy is coming home. I am going to sleep with him. I guess she misses you very much. Tell the truth and you will be released hoping it will be soon. After all, you haven't done anything.

Sayuri is going to American school in the afternoon. Near the High School I have to take Masako with me to the school. She follows me everywhere even to the latrine. So I asked her what she is going to do if I go to the hospital like Toshiko san's mother. She says that she will go with Setsu chan and Sayuri stays better with Obasan. I doubt is she will stay because when I have a little business at the front she won't stay with Setsu chan. So I have to send her to school with Sayuri.

Now that the food is much better and there is more of it, I do not have to buy so much at the Canteen. I continually give her cod liver oil.

We will be seeing each other soon.

Lili

### Letter from Yuriko

This afternoon, Masako and I went past the Warden's office. We saw many men with their suit cases. I guess they came from the Stockade. Masako said, "Let's go home and see if Daddy came home." So we didn't go to our destination and came back home. You ought to see her discouraged face. I will not forget that for as long as I live. Later she said, "How come Daddy didn't come home?" I told her I guess his work isn't finished yet. As you know, she still thinks you are working.

Sayuri knows better. She asked me, "What did Daddy do that he can't come home fast?" Gee. I really don't know what to say to that. Only waiting and waiting for your release. I was glad to hear that you moved out Barrack F but tell me, is that true? As usual we are



going to Hayashi sans for dinner about two times a week. Masako often wants to go over there and sit with them as she loves to play with Masami san, Ogisan, Obasan and Setsu chan. They are very nice to her. She loves Setsu chan very dearly.

#### Letter from Yuriko

Last two weeks I will try to get you out of that place. It is almost three months since I have seen you. I know it has been a heavy stress on you as much as it has been on me.

It has been the most strain on me that I hope I will never face it again. One thing I hate is being sad. Sometimes you make me sad but when you are gone, I am sadder. I am thinking about how nice you are to me and lots of little things you have done. I couldn't sleep or eat. I guess I love you. Now I am confessing in a letter but you now when I met you I can't close things.

I had gone to the processing building a number of times alone but I did not stop to see if you were out because I is very sad-to see each other through a fence between us. It really hurts my heart.

#### Letter from Tatsuo

I have told you what all I had in mind for a long time and that makes me feel better. Masako, how are you getting along? Tell Setsu chan that Daddy says,

"Thank you very much for taking care of my baby, Masako."

#### Letter from Brother in law

February 28, 1944

Dear Mr. Inouye,

How are you getting along since you left us? I believe you are working for the betterment of the camp. I wish you all the luck in the world.



*My wife writes to me that Block people are starting to work for my release from the stockade. I told my wife to go to see Mr. Shimizu, and Reverend Mohri so they can get some help. If they initiate the movement I wish you would help them out in any way you can. Everyone in the stockade is well and as healthy as ever so don't worry about us. Atmosphere within here is very good in spite of limited activities.*

*I wish you would extend best regards to your family.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Andy Sugimoto*

#### Letter from Yuriko

*Mrs. Nakano and I went to the processing building and was so glad to recognize you, but it's funny you didn't recognize me. You certainly look thin. I am sending you some vitamin pills. Take some everyday so you can gain weight. I told the children I saw you out there. First thing they asked me was did he have long whiskers? Nesan sent us some fruit and candy the other day. Mama sent me two packages of powdered soap and also six bars of soap and also John's paycheck. I guess she thinks we are getting short on funds. Ha! She is very much worried about us. As you know, someone told her that you are in the stockade and I had to tell her the truth. As soon as you are released, we will have to send a telegram. Tell Mr. Hoshiko, Toshio chan is getting along fine. She came over on Sunday and played with the children all day. Poor thing, she looked very lonesome.*

*I asked Masako what she'll do if I went to the hospital. She said she is going to ask Hoshiko san to come over to sleep with her. She likes her very much. She came over and helped me put them in ah. She washes Masako and I wash Sayuri. Oh, but she is waiting for you to come home every day. She says "papa" about every other word.*

*Well! School starts from today so I will have something to do, so I won't be lonesome. Sayuri is going to block 26 for school. The room is smaller so it is much warmer. The children were happy because the sun cheered them up. They played outside all afternoon.*



*The man next door fixed our front. He made the sidewalk for us  
and as usual, he brought in the coal. Well, we got a radio from  
Hoshiko san. He had two radios so he let us use one. It sure is nice.  
We are just fine so do not worry about us.  
Take care of yourself,  
Lili*

Vocabulary

Chan	child
Geta	wooden sandals
Kibei	person born in the USA, educated in Japan, returns to USA
Nesan	big sister
Obasan	older woman like an aunt
Ojisan	older man like an uncle
Saba zushi	mackerel on vinegar flavored rice
San	honorific adult

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