

June 1, 1942

Dearest Helen:

Our family is now settled at Tanforan after first making our "furniture" out of scrap lumber picked up and salvaged, piece by piece, in the junk-yard section of this Assembly Center, painstakingly washed and scrubbed, then sawed and nailed into benches, stools and crudely built tables and shelves. We were quite limited as to our baggage, and the most inexpensive (15-20¢ yd. cottons) materials are treasured to serve as drapery and covering for our dressing tables and closets. We are really pioneering. There wasn't a stick of furniture but cot beds and hay in our horse stalls when we came into these very drafty barns.

Paul and our father have since been busily engaged in filling huge cracks in the floor and between each board in all the walls, and also under the eaves, where the carpenters forgot to finish building the wall. We have arranged our iron cots and the hay mattress (a bag given to us, into which we stuff hay) in the inner portion of the stall (where the horse slept), and in the outer part of the stall, formerly the shed for the horse, we have placed shelves, tables, benches, etc.

We have no windows for ventilation at all but one stationary one for light. We open the door to air the place. The odor was not pleasant at first, but we grew accustomed to it. It is not a pleasant life we must lead, as our surroundings are not pleasant.

We must watch cuts and bruises for tetanus. The hospitalization is totally inadequate for a community of any size, much less 8,000 people here at Tanforan. For accuracy's sake, let's say 7,796 persons.

Yesterday Sunday May 31st, another funeral was held. It has been the third funeral here since May 10th, Mother's Day, when we arrived here.

There are 300 women who are in pregnancy, 76 expecting within two months, 3 already born (1 born at San Mateo County Hosp.) 2 here---the delivery takes place at any room convenient--the table was fashioned in the carpenter shop of available wood by Japanese volunteers, with their own tools brought from home. They had no mattress so they had to "swipe" one from the stretcher of the San Mateo County Hospital ambulance. They have to lift the patient or mother in labor, mattress and all, from make-shift table to make-shift litter, etc.

Our new "home" is very snug compared to the "pre-fabricated" barracks that others were assigned to--there they sleep 7 adults to a room--! The ^{SINGLE}walls are all plywood, both outer wall and partitions between rooms, as well as the roof. Then the outer walls are covered with tar paper, and the roof of thin roofing paper, and considered finished. The floor is made of 1x10's just hacked together. Since the wood is green, it rapidly shrinks, and the slits between the boards are in places $3/8 - \frac{1}{2}$ inch in width where grass comes creeping thru daily--since the soil beneath is QUITE FERTILE.

By what we hear from friends in other camps, we are not alone in daily dust storms. It seems to come in from everywhere covering everything - tooth brushes, mirrors, soap, not in their soap boxes, books, everything becomes yellow-grit covered every day. We cannot buy anything in cash at the Canteen--we are required to buy a book of scrip at \$2.50 each (the Newspaper-fabled monthly personal allowance we were to be "given") and with these we buy newspapers, bar candy, cigarettes and kotex. That is the complete stock. Nothing more.

One rare day they had 6 crates of oranges at 20¢ a dozen. It lasted 5 minutes. The line to the canteen is always a block long. We always had to wait in line to visit the toilet, but now we have one nearer our place, just erected this week. I haven't seen hot water since we left home. I always shiver and shake in the shower--the shower is one which I have not yet seen--very public--so I go in the middle of the day--then I don't have to keep company with 7 others. The toilets---"Latrines"--are better here at Tanforan than at Manzanar or Santa Anita. Ours flushes and we have partitions between seats for a depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet. This means our faces, knees, etc., protrude but it is better than none. Here too, provisions are made for 8. For about the first 3 days we were so disappointed and found these places so repulsive that we would go there, look, groan, and plod home again, to use the bedpan with which we furnished ourselves before coming here.

We stand in line for our meals, too. On rainy days it is very inconvenient because the soil here is clay, and we sink deeply into the slippery slush.

Our first week was very hard for us here--we arrived half ill because we were sleepless, having packed in a frenzy after receiving a 12 hour notice by telegram to evacuate (from the WCCA). We had to undergo inspection for health and also for baggage--it started to rain, our stalls were dusty, dirty, bare and drafty and my sister had a fever and was shaking on the hay--and our baggage was not delivered--no blankets or anything. The only thing we had was Paul's rain coat, which he took off for her to have.

Our neighbors are clever and have planted gardens and made window boxes for geraniums, etc. they have found around. We have volunteered for work so we don't have time for gardening. Eleanor is the only one working for pay--or rather the only one on a job that may lead to a paying position--she's Inspector of ~~the~~ Kitchen #2 and #4 under the Sanitation Division. This department comprises inspection of latrines, showers, garbage disposal, entomology (mosquitoes, flies, etc.), rodent control, hospital staff, etc. Her part functions under Foods.

EQUIPMENT,
MESS HALL

Utensils and

Because of an apparent shortage of dairy products thru the State, we have not had milk or butter--butter, a pat for breakfast only on Sundays--but otherwise no milk unless pregnant or under 16. We can't buy it, as it is not sold. There are some whose friends buy it in cans and send it in. Otherwise the food is wholesome altho not always filling--but I guess they do try hard. After all feeding 960 each meal three times a day is a big job for our one field kitchen. They use coal for fuel--the neighbor boy goes at 3³⁰ in the morning as stoker for kitchen #3. It's all voluntary work, too--so far none, even those working since mid-April, 14 hours a day, have been paid. I've volunteered and am working teaching Americanization & Adult Conversational English classes. Paul is on the paper--a mimeographed 6 page weekly "Tanforan Totalizer."

My sister's work is the most interesting--we love to hear about it each day--there is a tremendous string of measles and mumps cases here under quarantine.

We had Memorial Day Exercises here and it was sort of pathetic as was the Flag Raising Ceremony ~~was~~ dedicating Tanforan Assembly Center. We all sang "God Bless America" with voices shaken with tears of mingled emotions. We are awfully grateful for the protection and housing and facilities provided us, but I do want to go home soon. The Americanization classes were offered as the result of a great demand by the older generation for the opportunity to study English and American ways. So I conducted a survey, ~~none~~ WITH of 10 barracks scattered throughout the area--and got a teacher's position and a good sunburn to boot. I am also taking lessons myself--in painting. Funny?

A GROUP OF GIRLS
ANOTHER GIRL

Lovingly yours,
Margaret
Tanforan
San Bruno, Calif.

P.S.- If you would be lady bountiful, we certainly would love to receive gifts of things like a few rolls of toilet tissue and cheap envelopes for letters.

Dearest Tomoye -

Page 3

Oh, how glad I was to hear from you - & such a grand long letter.

I haven't a blessed thing to say in return - I'm too upset about what you write - but I want to ask you for something - permission to print.

I don't know how a more vivid job of description could have been done, & I think you owe it to the public to let it be read - in very much its present highly personalized form.

Please say I may send it to the Nation. (Besides, you might get

a bit of money out of it.) I want to remove more identification?

Will you please?

Love, Helen

P.S. - If you would be lady downfold, we certainly would love to receive bits of things like a few rolls of toilet tissue and cheap envelopes for receipts.