

Block 12G, Building 1, Apartment F
Amache Branch, Lamar, Colorado
September 30
1942

Dear Eva...

Here I am in the wilds of southeastern Colorado... Meant to drop you a line immediately upon arrival, but so darned many things kept popping up that I didn't have the chance. For one thing, the mess hall feeding our block was short of workers so like a darned fool, I volunteered to work as a dishwasher... Me and my big mouth! It was terrible backbreaking work for awhile as there were only four of us picking up, stacking, washing, and rinsing dishes and pots and pans for over 500 people... Later, they increased the crew to 7 and had the cooks' helpers wash the pots. Inasmuch as there is a possibility that I'll be able to get out to school, I quit working... I thought I'd catch up on my correspondence and studies... Ha! good joke...

The day we came (Sept. 21), it was blowing a gale and the dust was kicking up like nobody's business so we couldn't see a darned thing... It cleared up two days later so I was able to look around, and, to my surprise, I find that I rather like the joint... There's nothing but sagebrush around here, but at least it's not all flat monotonous desert like most of the relocation centers... We're up pretty high, but the whole area seems to be some sort of a plateau; I sort of miss the mountains because I've always been used to seeing them in the background... Outside of the dust, the greatest discomfort is the lack of water... The taps carry water unfit for drinking, and they're always running dry anyway so even washing is very difficult... Drinking water is shipped in and stored in open pots and pans in the mess halls where we can scoop it out when wanted... unless the crazy truck fails to bring it for several hours at a stretch in which case it is unavailable; what little may be left is then needed for cooking... But as I've already said, I rather like the place; there are no searchlights at night to make us realize our position as at Santa Anita... I think there is a barbed wire fence around the camp, but the place is so extensive that we're not aware of it... Then too, I figure that if there were plenty of good water and no dust, they wouldn't let the Japs live here... At least we have electric lights in our barracks so I don't feel completely like an Okie... Some of the other blocks haven't been wired yet so they have it pretty lousy.

The barracks are pretty nice and much more home-like than the ones at Santa Anita; we have ceilings ~~we~~ so there should be no leaky roofs; also they should keep the rooms cooler in summer and warmer in winter. The walls have no linings yet, but I understand that they'll give us some fiberboard for that pretty soon. At present we have brick floors, but it's possible that they'll give us wood to cover them with; the housing department doesn't promise anything but there's a rumor to that effect making the rounds; of course, that may be only wishful thinking... We're pretty fortunate in having a level floor, but some have bumpy floors... Also some guys have bricks laid on top of ant hills and they're always having to

sweep out ants and dirt dug up by the ants...The water situation should be cleared up in a few months...The main trouble right now is in chiseling contractors; they laid down gas pipes instead of galvanized water pipes so the water comes out rusted; they only soldered the joints instead of welding so leaks are springing up all over the camp...As for the dust, they tell us that ~~wex~~ they are going to landscape the whole camp so that should keep the dust down; I don't mind wind that is dirt-free...I've swallowed so much dust that I feel that my intestines are lined with cement...In a year or so, this camp should be pretty good and as it is it's a lot better than the several relocation centers they have scattered throughout the other states.

We have quite a few rattlesnakes in the brush around camp as well as blue racers; there are also snapping turtles in the creek nearby; however, they leave us alone...~~hat~~ what worries me is that a lot of the kids have brought live rattlers home and have put them on display in cages outside of their apartments...Some guy with a twisted sense of humor is liable to let them out one of these days or nights; I'd surely hate to find one of those babies in bed with me.

The climate is pretty good...It was pretty chilly the first few days, but now we are having a regular Indian summer; can't open the windows to let the air in though as the wind is raising a rumpus again...The dust seeps in under the walls and through the windows even now though...I suppose wall linings will help though. Getting back to the weather, it's hard to realize that we're not in California yet...I suppose winter will hit us pretty suddenly though.

There are quite a few people from the Merced Assembly Center here too...Mostly people from tank towns around Sacramento...The Santa Anita people have pretty lousy reps because of work strikes, and that little affair where a cop was beaten up for swiping stuff during an "inspection" and a Korean stoolpigeon mobbed, so the Merced people, who came in here quite a bit before we did, started a petition to bar Santa Anitans from this camp...Of course, it failed, but when some of our guys who think they're tough got wind of this, they were all set to raise trouble...So far, ~~xx~~ nothing serious has happened however...There was a near-ruckus when the first contingent of S.A. people pulled in however...they came on the 19th and it so happened that the Merced group was having a dance then...It seems that some of the S.A. rowdies went and didn't like the way Merced people were dancing (they are simple country folk and not jitterbugs) so they started tossing pennies out onto the floor...Pretty cheap trick if you ask me...Most of the Merced people are all right; they are a lot more good-hearted than guys from L.A...they go out of their way to do things even for strangers. If there's any trouble, 10-1 it'll be the fault of two-legged snakes from L.A...excluding myself of course.

If I can't get my permit to go to the U of Nebraska within the week, I think I won't go until next semester as school started last Thursday and I don't want to be too far behind; I'd have a

heck of a time catching up...If I had someone like you to copy notes from it wouldn't be so bad...If I can't make it, I'm going to try to get a teaching job; they tell me that teaching certificates are required by state law so I'm afraid I'm out of luck; I might be able to do some practice teaching and get college credit for it, though...there are also jobs outside topping sugar beets, harvesting broom corn, etc...If I get out to school, I'll drop you a card the first thing, but in the meantime, drop me a line here...We're in Granad, but it's such a hick town that we have to use the Lamar post office; we also get our food from there...Speaking of food, the food here has it all over that garbage we were getting at S.A. Probably easier to cook for us as each mess hall at S. A. had to take care of several thousand people...The Merced guys tell us that they had much better stuff at their assembly center than they have here so they must have really had a swell diet...In Santa Anita there was probably a lot of graft going on too as we weren't getting our allotment.

Among things I miss are football games...The Denver papers don't carry much news about the West Coast so be sure and give me pretty complete details on our games...I hated to see an outside team do it, but I was glad to hear about the Trojia getting whapped...I've searched all over for news of the Ucla opening; ~~xx~~ I heard that we lost to T.C.U. 7-6, but I haven't seen anything definite and it's pretty hard for me to imagine Ken Snelling missing that point after touchdown. We can get only two stations clearly during the day and they have a strange conglomeration of cowboy music and screwy serials.

I suppose that you're studying pretty hard and I've probably taken up too much of your time already...Let me hear from you soon and be sure and tell me what courses you're taking this coming term. (come to think of it, school hasn't started for you yet has it?) Anyway, I've written enuff so...so long...

your broon pal..

Joe

p.s...i knew my typing's pretty sloppy, but you know how my writing is...i'm sorry for typing this, but it would have taken me hours to write it...i won't even apologize for grammar etc.. as communication is the main purpose of writing and if you can half-way understand this it'll be okay.