

April 30, 1945
Newell, Calif.

Dearest Folks:

I will try to make up in this letter for all the ones I haven't written. Johnny's first letter addressed to here came Friday so from now on I'll have to keep you posted on him as well as myself. I am enclosing a letter to you that was in one of his letters. Sorry I didn't send the other one, but now I can't find it. He sent me another cotter pin--this one from a bomb dropped in the first mission he went on with his new squadron--the "Scotty" squadron. He also sent me a letter from Jackson who is now in the Phillipines. Johnny is now in the Molucca Islands--wherever that is. Guess you know that from his letter to you.

About Tule Lake--Well, its something spectauular! Its something you'd never find anywhere else in all your life. The country itself is full of a great history. The whole valley was once an inland sea. But before that it was in the same order a tropical jungle and an active volcano. Its still marked with lava formations and, incongruously, covered with layers of sea sediment--shells and fossils of tropical animals and plants. In addition there are the remains of the Indian tribes which once made this country their center. The Japanese gather the shells--in size from a pinhead to a silver dollar--polish and paint them, and then make jewelry that is beautiful, delicate, and intricate.

Every year, during almost the whole year, geese by the millions come to habitate the many miles of the Tule Lake Valley. "Millions" is not an exaggeration. It would come nearer being an understatement. How many millions of geese have passed by here would be hard to estimate--and I'm not the one to try. Day and night you can see and hear the "Honkers" flying in their perfect formations--coming from you wonder where, and going to equally unpredictable places. But always they stop by Tule Lake.

And the Japanese. They are all pro-Jap or they wouldn't be here. Yet we live with them, wandering about during the day, and behind patrolled barbed wire fences at night. The "Colony" as it is called, is a minature Japan. As near to the original as the delicate-handed Japanese can make it. They have their stores, their homes (barracks). And behind the walls of American government issue barracks are carried on in royal style the ancient customs of Japan--robes, tea ceremonies, hand weaving, kow-towing, and so forth. They even fly their paper kites in honor of their great predecessors and to celebrate their holidays. And yet their children speak English, wear sloppy Joe sweaters and skirts, work in WRA offices and go to schools provided by America and taught by American teachers.

Some of the Japanese women wait tables in the mess hall. Its quite a blow to hear someone--usually an official interpreter or an ex-missionary, of which there are many here--address the waitresses in their own tongue and receive a kow-tow and a reply. Its all so impossible anywhere but in America. Everything has to be seen to be believed. There's a little Japanese kid who works at the Rec Hall named Mike. I went up to him the other day and asked him for a deck of cards. He said, "Sure, Britt"--and you should hear him say "Britt"--"what are you going to play?--Bridge?" I told him I didn't know how to play bridge--that it was too deep for me, and he said, "Bridge?"--and laughed, "Bridge is a good game,. I won the bridge championship down in the colony." And yet he'd be the first to slip the throat of any American if he'd get the chance.

Betty Lou--Sheet 2.

One night a bunch of the Japanese came up to the Rec Hall to have a jam session--you know, hot music played any way the musicians want to play it. There were about 10 of them--just kids of anywhere from 15 to 20 years old. They had all been in on the big trouble Tule Lake had last year so they are on the most restricted list. They had proved beyond any doubt their alliance to Japan. Anyway, some soldiers wandered in with some instruments and started ~~max~~ playing too. It was really beautiful to hear--and equally hard to describe to someone who doesn't know about jam sessions. Its like this--One musician will want ro play a song so he'll start tapping his foot and play the first couple of bars. One by one the others will join in--each with his own version. If one player is exceptionally good the rest will indicate that he should solo. The soloist will really swing it hot with the rest for a background. And then another will solo and so on. That's the way it was that night--the soldiers--half of them with ribbons indicating service in the S.Pacific--and the Pro-Japanese evacuees, united in just one love, that of swing music, with no thought that their countries were at war and yet deep down they knew they hated each other and would without qualms knife each other for a cause that each knew. Where but in America could it happen?

And me? It's a wonderful life. You work your time each day--easy work--and at the end forget responsibilities until another morning rolls around. By the time I've finished work, eaten, and put up my hair, its time to write to Johnny and then go to bed. Time simply flies! There should be monotony in it, but there is always something different to see and learn so that without your knowing it you find you are having a wonderful time doing nothing.

My face has been swell and I have felt pretty wonderful with the exception of last week when I was in bed with that old bronchitis. The climate around here is deadly in that colds suddenly and without warning become pneumonia or something drastic.

The most important thing that has happened to me or rather for me is that I have been given an apartment with another girl. I'm not really elligible you see, so its quite marvelous! The only drawback is that I will need to have you send me a few million things that I wouldn't have otherwise needed, and, too it will be more expensive. I'm afraid I won't be able to save much until we get the apartment fixed up. These are the things I want you to send right away if you will, please--

Sheets and pillow cases - towels - blankets

My radio & lamp--these are "musts". There Has to be some way you can ship them. There is a man here who will fix my radio

Luncheon cloths

Hangers--lots of them - aprons--I'll need a couple--make those two frilly ones (one's yellow)

An iron--if you can scare one up somewhere. I'm desperate!

Kleenex--I'm almost out and there just isn't any to be had

My rimless glasses. The camera and some films.

My saddle shoes--both pair. Shoe polish, black, brown & white. Suede brush.

I can think of a million things I'd like to have you send, but I guess its too much. We're just plain setting up housekeeping with nothing. We're going to have to buy stuff like glasses, dishes, silver-ware, pots and pans, and so forth. Its discouraging as well as expensive, but we'll manage. I'd tell you about Caroline, my roommate but 've had writer's cramp for the last three pages, so g'bye now! Loads of love.