

October 7, 1942
Concentration camp
Colorado

My Dear Alice:

I guess you are wondering whatever happened to us. As you know everyone of us of Japanese descent are in the concentration camp and don't like it a bit, to put it mildly. Our pride is hurt. We don't believe America is practising "freedom, liberty, equality and justice for all". Even in Hawaii, the American citizens of Japanese ancestry have the opportunity to help win the war and although there were rumors that they were the fifth columnists, there wasn't a single evidence. In U.S. there wasn't a single instance of it either and we, citizens, are in concentration camp!

Well, anyway we have been confined nearly six months and I don't know how long to come.

First we were placed inside barbed wire fence at Merced. The Caucasian administrators were most kind and efficient. We miss them very much. They tried to make the unfortunate situation bearable for us and our relationship was most friendly. Here we find the administrators inefficient and do not know how to organize the camp life. We have experience now so if they would let us, it would make life more hopeful but it isn't the case. They want no suggestion. Everyone for himself. Mr. Backman, the chief of police of Merced camp was telegraphed to come here and help organize but after staying here three days, he got disgusted and returned to California. He said, "I hate to get mixed with this bunch of WPA workers."

The living quarters for us is much nicer than Merced. We have privacy here which were denied before. The drinking water is hauled in from Granada, three miles away (nearest town). The camp is unfinished, we go blocks and blocks to take a shower and find no hot water. The laundry rooms are located in the same place. The water is clay color, so you can imagine our "white" linen.

There are nearly 9,000 of us here. 4,800 from the Merced camp and 3000 from Santa Anita. Those who registered at the L.A.M.E. Church were all sent here, so all my old friends and Charles immediate family, his relatives and friends are all here. However there is marked difference between the L.A. and Merced bunch. The latter is countrified and shy. They came from Colusa, Yuba City, Walnut Grove, Petaluma, Stanislaus-Merced Counties. The L.A. kids show off and get into lots of trouble.

Molly Oyama was sent to Wyoming. Her sister is here. Edith Tsuruda, another classmate of mine was helped by her American friends and she got out of the Santa Anita camp and went to Minneapolis.

Ever since we came, my child who is now 5 years of age, has been sick. She had the asthma and then the diarrhea. She hasn't completely recovered yet. This sickness seems to be prevalent. Yesterday Charles went to the doctor and there were 10 patients with same

sickness. When he saw the doctor, he said he already treated 30 patients and 10 more were waiting. He ran out of medicine!

Both of my parents are always sick. This concentration life is very hard and pathetic to the little children, the aged and the sick. When they are sick, there is no soup or milk or any nourishment. They either eat the regular starch and unappetizing meals or go without it. In Merced, we had plenty of milk but this is denied us here. When an orange is given to us for dessert, I save mine for Aiko because we see so little of fresh fruits and vegetables.

About 30 college students left to continue with their education. This was after hard and long negotiations. Colleges are not accepting the Japanese due to race prejudice. Nearly 1000 left for the sugar beet farms. This is temporary.

Today is a hot day but without slightest notice, the weather will change and we will have a big dust-storm. Now we know what "dust-bowl" means because we are on the rim of it. It becomes black with sand and it's really no use trying to keep your living quarters dusted. This place is over 3000 ft. above sea level and so the mornings and evenings are chilly. We are looking forward to the snow in winter. We are gradually getting acclimated to this weather. I had a bad case of eczema at first. This is some kind of skin disease which little children have and I thought it only belonged to infants!

The contractors have not finished this camp and there are many "Okie" laborers. We find them a menace to this camp. A friend of mine was "attacked" according to rumors. They want to flirt with the Japanese girls. When one starts a conversation, they always talk about sex. One had the nerve to ask me where the "sporting girls" lived. He said he heard about it. Did I put him in his place! The Japanese wardens patrol all night to protect us from these cheap laborers.

All the children under 16 years of age is compelled to go to this camp school. However I heard many say, they can't respect the teachers because they talk and dress like "Okies."

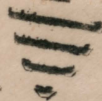
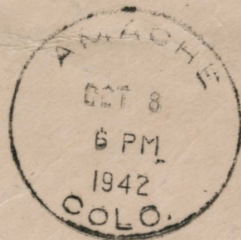
We received clothes rationing from the government. Some of the clothes are "screaming" and others, especially the under garments are fine. We get a limited choice from the Sears Roebuck Co.

I often think of the Training School bunch. If you write or see them, please give my best regards. They are so fortunate to have freedom. We are just stalling for time--just waiting day by day, wondering when we can live our normal lives again.

Most Sincerely,

Yuki Kamayatsu

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