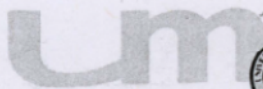


1976

RICHARD
HUGO
PAPERS



University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59801
August 2

Dear Tatsumi:

How wonderful to hear from you after all these years. Yes, John Mitchell is easily one of the great human beings--he always was, even when we were young. I remember you often, the letters we exchanged during the war. And for many years I tried to write a poem about you, or maybe about the farm where you lived. Recently I got one, a letter poem, that talks about you a bit. It will soon appear in Graham House Review, a new literary magazine and then it will be in my next book. I'll see you get copies.

Do you have an address for John? I had one but he moves so damned much I seldom keep hold of him.

✓ Yes, that awful damned camp at Puyallup. I didn't realize until now that John, Elaine and I were the only ones ever to see you down there. By the way, why in hell do you call me Mr. Hugo? I'm still Dick. Even more so.

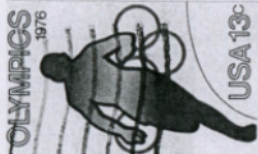
I only have two books in print bright now. Both from Norton. The Lady In Kicking Horse Reservoir and What Thou Lovest Well, Remains American. I have a chapbook of early poems, from my first two books, called Duwamish Head. It is put out by Copper Canyon Press in Port Townsend, Washington. That is where I am now for a week or so. Also, I have writings here and there. I have a long essay in a book called American Poets In 1976, published by Bobbs Merrell, edited by William Heyen. It is called The Real West Marginal Way. You should be able to get those ordered by your bookstore.

I hope you like the letter poem (copy enclosed). And I hoped you ar everyone else woulda forget that poem in the 1940 (not 1941) Kimtal Don't remind me.

Anyway, please know that you come back to me over and over. I trust you have found some happiness. Certainly I hope so. You deserve it if anyone does.

Fondly

Dick



Tatsumi Tada

Glendale, Wisconsin 53209



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LETTER TO MATTHEWS FROM BARTON STREET FLATS

Dear Bill: This is where the nisei farmed, here where the blacktop of a vast shopping complex covers the rich black bottom land. Lettuce sparkled like a lake. Then, the war took everything, farm, farmers and my faith that change (I really mean loss) is paced slow enough for the blood to adjust. I believed the detention of Tada, my friend, was temporary madness like the war. Someday, I thought, it will all be over, this tearing out everything, this shifting people away like so many pigs to single thickness walled shacks in Wyoming where winter rips like the insane self righteous tongue of the times. In Germany, Jews. In America, Japs. They came back and their property was gone, some technicality those guardians of society, lawyers found. Or their goods had burned in unexplained fires. Tada came back wounded from honest German guns and got insulted in White Center-- I was with him--oh, a dreadful scene. He moved justly bitter to Milwaukee. Haven't seen him in years. Why do I think of this today? Why, faced with this supermarket parking lot filled with gleaming new cars, people shopping unaware a creek runs under them, do I think back thirty some years to that time all change began, never to stop, not even to slow down one moment for us to study our loss, to recall the Japanese farmers bent deep to the soil? Hell, Bill, I don't know. You know the mind, how it comes on the scene again and makes tiny histories of things. And the imagination how it wants everything back one more time, how it detests all progress but its own, all war but the one it fights over and over, the one no one dares win. And we can deport those others and feel safe for a time, but old dangers (and pleasures) return. And we return to the field of first games where, when we find it again, we look hard for the broken toy, the rock we called home plate, evidence to support our claim our lives really happened. You can say this all better. Please do. Write it the way it should sound. The gain will be mine. Use my Montana address. I'm going back home, not bent under the load of old crops, still fat and erect, still with faith we process what grows to the end, the poem. Your good friend. Dick.

Richard Hugo
NY