

## **Four Letters from Louise Ogawa to Miss Breed dated between January 1942 and September 1943, part of an online exhibition of the Japanese American National Museum, 1997.**

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LETTER #1

January 6, 1942

Dear Miss Breed,

I received the sweater and my brother's shorts. Thank you very very much for going through so much trouble for me. You need not have hurried in buying them. I wish you had shopped during your leisure time. Thank you again. The shorts are just fine. They fit perfectly. My sweater is excellent. I just love it!!! I am sorry I did not mention the price. Hearing that sweaters have gone up I did not write the price. No, you need not worry about the cost because I intended to pay about that much.

I was very glad to hear you liked the flowers. I wish I could have sent 10 dozen Am. beauty roses (real ones) to show my appreciation for everything you have done for me.

In my last letter I said the fence was torn down -- well, it is up again. This time a few feet further out. We have been told that the reason for the fence building was so the cattle won't come near our homes. In other words cattle is going to be grazed outside the fence. But as yet, we have not seen any. Yes, I think the fence tends to weaken the morale of the people.

New Years I attended the New Year Festival which was held in Camp II. It was held 3 days, Jan 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. There were various exhibits. The Camp II Industry exhibit—displayed various kinds of things made by the department. Education was very interesting too. There the works of the school children were displayed. Agriculture was another. In this building were many different kinds of vegetation. They were very green and looked as fresh as a daisy. The one I enjoyed most was the Arts and Crafts. The longest line was in front of this building. My girl friend and I actually waited half an hour in line. It was worth the waiting time, I thought. Men have gone to cut mesquite trees and have made lovely flower vases out of them. The crooked branches and the bumpiest ones make the prettiest vases. In the vases there were many varieties of artificial flowers. Many beautiful cases were made too. Such things as ash trays, book ends, pencil holders, fruit baskets, vases, little jewelry chests, and crochet and checker sets were made out of mesquite.

When we saw the rolls and rolls of beautiful artificial flowers—chrysanthemums—in a green house, after standing in the hot sun, it gave us a refreshing feeling. I wish you could have been there.

We had our annual “mochi tsuki”; making rice cakes. Our parents were very happy to be able to eat “mochi” again. No one ever dreamed of eating them again. The gov't. is very good to us and I am truly grateful.

We now have oil stoves in our homes and school. But it does little good because you have to be near the stove in order to receive any heat. By keeping all the windows closed the room may become warm, but we were warned against it. Several people have been sent to the hospital because they did not leave any windows open—they inhaled the fume which comes out of the stove. In school the stove is in one corner and I am in the opposite corner so the warmth does not come near me. It certainly took a long time to get the stoves because of too much red tape involved. We still have no books to study out of. We are taught the progressive way. It is like a lecture form. The teacher talks and we take notes. When test time comes we have to study our notes. I hope by next semester we will be able to study from books.

I have been having trouble about my credits because we did not get credit for the last semesters work. I am lacking 1/2 credit for graduation this June. But with the help of our Vice principal, Mr. Tashiro, I will be able to graduate.

We now have a school constitution. A student from each Case Studies class (history and English classes) formed the Constitutional Convention. At the present time it is being ratified. Next week we are going to have election of Student Body officers.

This morning we had an assembly at which time we had the opportunity to hear Mr. Head, project director; Mr. Popkins, construction director and Dr. Casey, Education. Mr. Popkins showed us the plans of building a new school. He stated that Japanese-American architects drafted the plans. The building is to be made out of adobe. The adobe bricks are going to be made here.

The movie for this Friday night is “Confirm or Deny” I am very anxious to see it.

As a Christmas gift we, the students of Poston III High School, received \$500.00 from the McKinley High School of Honolulu—this is to buy athletic equipments. Dr. Casey, who is our Superintendent of Schools in Poston is a former principal of McKinley High School.

Now, I must answer your questions before I forget about them. Yes, many varieties of X'mas cards were made here in Poston. I do not know who the artist is that made the card I selected. I wish I knew. There is no art school here. Yes, there is a famous artist here in Poston. I do not know much about him. The little I know of him is—his name is Mr. Isamu Noguchi, a famous sculptor. He has gone to New York on a short “furlough.” He expects to return in a few months.

As time marches on, more and more Poston seems like a home to me. After leaving home for a visit to Camp 1 or 2, it certainly feels good to be home again. No longer is the thought of being in a camp afloat in my mind. But every time I see the fence, it seems like a dark cloud has lifted and a realization of camp life comes before my eyes. Often I use to think as I laid on my pillow, “What will happen to be if I had to live in this camp for 5 year?” but now, I don't seem to think about camp. I guess I have adopted myself to this situation. But many a time, I have wished with all my heart that I could go back to San Diego.

Yes, we can hear conversation through the partition. We can hear every word our neighbor is saying. The apt. is divided into 4 units. There is no closet or chest of drawers to keep our clothes in. Father made a closet to put our clothes in. We keep just the necessary amount hung in the closet. The rest is still packed in our suitcases. Yes, the food shortage has affected us. We have had no butter or egg for about two months. We have enough meat, though. Just tonite we had steak, mash potato, spinach and rice for supper. Oh yes, about the menu for a week. I am sorry I did not send it

to you. To be honest—it slipped my mind. But this time I shall be sure to keep the menu for a week and send it to you just as soon as a week is up. We are allowed 1 tablespoon of sugar to 1 cup of coffee. We eat rice only once a day now. We have fresh milk. It comes all the way from California. We have tea too but it is black. Yes, Mr. Anderson does wear a wig. Margaret noticed today that he has no eyebrows. Could this be possible?

The school paper is published once a week.

I certainly was surprised to hear of the film shortage. I don't blame you for wanting to take a picture of a 8 month old baby. I imagine he or she is very cute. I certainly wish we were allowed to have cameras. I'd like to snap our living quarters, school etc. It will be such a nice souvenir and a good remembrance.

Miss Breed, do you know if shower caps are on the shortage list too? I would very much like to have:

2 hole note-book paper lined -- 2 pkg. or 1  
1 eraser 1 little pencil sharpener like the ones in a pencil box.

Please do not rush this because I am not in a hurry. Please remember your work comes before my shopping! Thank you!

Please do write during your leisure time and let me know how everything is with you. As I count the pages, I have written 4 pages. I never realized how much I was writing. I imagine by the time you finish the 2nd page, you'll become hungry.

Most sincerely,  
Louise Ogawa

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LETTER #2

July 15, 1942

Dear Miss Breed,

Thank you a million times for the delicious candy, soap, and the most interesting book! I was most interested in the book because I have read, Peggy Covers Washington, London, and Peggy Covers News. I enjoy Emma Bughee's books very much. The books which you so kindly have sent are now scattered all over this camp and I won't at all be surprised if one of them has entered Seabiscuit's stable.

I shall never forget that day you visited us. At the sight of your smiling face a big lump formed at the pit of my throat never dreaming I would see you again. I was very glad to see you in the best of health.

The distribution of our second checks began today. It was, of course, my first check. I felt so proud to receive it because I really earned it all by myself. It makes me feel so independent. We receive about 37¢ a day. For 11 days work I received \$3.04. I am going to take advantage of your

generosity and ask you to go on a little shopping tour for me in your leisure time. Will you please send me the following:

2 yards of printed seersucker (something that would look nice when made into a drindle. I already have 2 striped ones—green & white, red & white—so please do not send striped one.) cost = not over 50¢ a yard.

1 1/2 yd. of plain white seersucker. (about same price has printed one)

Boys 2 Cropper-Jockey shorts—size: 28 waist, store: Walkers

1/2 yd. of muslin (going to use it for stiffening)

1 small face towel (cheap one is all right) .05 4) 1 card of snaps

5 Hollywood curlers 6) 2 shower caps 7) 1 bottle of brown liquid shoe polish—10¢

1 bottle of Strip royal blue ink 15¢

1 mirror sold at Kress for 15¢

I have enclosed \$4.50 in money order. I hope this amount will be sufficient—if not please let me know. I hope I'm not causing you too much trouble.

I want so much to repay you for all the nice books, candy, and soap but do not know how I can. In my spare-time, I made this bookmarker. It is made very crudely but I hope you will be able to use it.

Please give my best to Miss McNary.

Yours very sincerely,  
Louise Ogawa

PS. If there seems to be some money left after deducting the shipping expense I would like to have some Butter scotch balls or Fruit balls or drops. Thank you again.

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LETTER #3

Sept. 27, 1942

Dear Miss Breed,

I was overwhelmed with joy to hear from you. I was very glad to hear you like the little "geta." I'm sorry to say they were not made from a knot. Yes, the knot-carvers are very skilled people. I was very interested to read about your doll collection and Fusa. I can imagine how Fusa stole the show. Miss Breed, I wish you told me about your doll collection when I was in San Diego and I would have been more than happy to add something to your collection, as I remember, you often had doll exhibits in the library—were they yours?

Thank you Miss Breed, for asking questions because it has helped me a lot—for then I know this letter has something of interest to you. Now to answer them—yes, we do have chairs and tables. Father made them out of scraps of wood which we found here and there. They may not be the best but they are substantial. We also have pillows which we brought from San Diego. But we do not have mattresses. We use some of our blankets as mattresses. In Santa Anita we were issued a spring bed and mattress, but here we were just issued a cot. Many people who are skilled are making beds.

They say a wooden bed is much better for your posture. The cot sinks down in the middle while the wooden bed stays straight.

Miss Breed, it's a good thing you didn't see me eat my first meal with a knife. I would have been embarrassed and you probably would have grown impatient writing for me to finish that you would have told me to eat with my fingers. If Emily Post saw me then she would throw a fit.

The movies are just grand. We see one every Saturday evening. It is shown outdoors. The screen is placed right in front of the oil tank and we sit (bring our own chairs) or stand and enjoy the movie. So far we have seen the following:

- 1) There Goes My Heart -- Frederick March & Virginia Bruce
- 2) The Last of the Mohicans -- Randolph Scott, Bonnie Burns
- 3) Doomed to Die -- Boris Karloff
- 4) Topper Takes a Trip -- Roland Young & Constance Bennett
- 5) Abraham Lincoln -- Walter Huston & Una Merkel

The water and electricity is turned off on Sundays when the men work on the water pipe, or while making canals etc. It has not been turned off for a long time now. The first Sunday we were here it was turned off. I'm glad it is not turned off regularly because oh, how inconvenient it would be!

The police and the post office and fire dept. is run by Japanese Americans. As yet I have not seen any persons connected with the army. There are no fences around this camp has there was in Santa Anita.

School has begun yet and I do not know who the teachers are. But I shall write more fully about it after school begins. Yesterday we saw how a teacher's room is going to be furnished. There was a nice bed was a spring and mattress, nice Spanish style bedroom set, a soft chairs, lamps and linoleum on the floor. I was almost tempted to sit on the soft chair, sit before the large dresser and lay on the bed.

You may have read about the boys leaving Poston to work in Idaho and Nebraska on the farm. About 45 San Diegans went. We expect them back in a couple of months. But while there if they find a job they can call their family and stay there. ??? Kawamoto (twin's brother) Sammy Shimamoto, Walter Hayashi, George Watanabe (June's brother) were among the ones who left for Idaho. A few more boys left for Nebraska too.

Here's something quite interesting which I read in a very recent edition of the Pacemaker—The man who lived in Santa Anita forgot and left all the money he had, \$218.00 in a money belt under his mattress, and left for Heart Mt, Wyoming. One of the working men found the money while picking up beds and mattresses. Then several days later the loser wrote back for the money and requested that 10% of it be given to the man who found it. This may sound incredible but I guess when your mind is on moving you can even forget your most precious possession.

I received a letter from a friend who is now in Lamas, Colorado. During the days they were on the train, they had—fried eggs for breakfast—fried chicken, fried turkey, cookies, cakes, and canned fruits. When I read about this, my mouth watered and I certainly envied them. If I can only eat fried eggs and fried chicken just once more—maybe, as the saying goes, if I am a nice girl my wish will soon be granted.

The food here is grand. Every Sunday morning we have 2 pancakes, 1 boiled egg, cocoa. I think that's a grand breakfast. This evening's meal was the best we ever had here 1 piece of steak, 1/2 sweet potato, lettuce, rice, veg. salad and catup. If you are interested I shall keep the menu for one week and inform you of it. Oh my—I should be ashamed of myself for rattling on without thanking you for the padlock and keys. Thank you!!  
Thank you!! Thank you!!

I have enclosed \$1.50 in money. If that isn't sufficient please do not hesitate to say so I will be angry if you don't. All the ink I have is what's filled in this pen so I'd better say "good luck to you and I hope you will write soon"—before it runs out. Until I heard from you again loads of happiness to you and please watch your health as it gets colder everyday.

Most sincerely,  
Louise Ogawa

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LETTER #4

Sept. 3, 1943

Dear Miss Breed,

Thank you ever so much for the iron which I received yesterday. Everyone was overwhelmed with joy when we saw the iron. I have been wondering all night how I can put in words my gratitude. And I always seem to end up by saying "Thank You." I hope in the near future I will be able to show how much I appreciate everything you have done for me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you!

I ironed with it last night and it works beautifully. I wanted to write you as soon as I received the iron but I thought it best to wait until I received your letter. I hope you will include every penny you spent to purchase the iron.

Poston seems to be still the same hot, dusty place. With the heavy rainfall we had the other week, the grounds have become a little harder, and the wild grasses seem to have grown a little thicker, to my father's disgust.

As I recall, you asked in your last letter if I applied for leave. Well, I have not as yet. But to my surprise, my Eastern Defense Clearance Papers came the other day. The thing that was so surprising was that I didn't even apply for it. At the present time, I am trying awfully hard to convince my father that I should go out, but he feels that I should wait a little while. He believes I am too young in mind if not in age. But at the rate I am pestering him, he'll give in sooner or later, unless his patience holds out! I talk to him so that he says he even dreams of me talking to him of going out. I can just about imagine how he finally said yes, in his dream of course, but this doesn't satisfy me because it was not in reality. But just you wait and see, I'll be writing soon saying, "I'm finally going out Miss Breed!" Oh what happy days that will be. But on the other hand, the thought of leaving my father leaves me hesitant.

School is scheduled to commence September 20th. Everyone in the office is kept very busy with registration etc. The office is still being remodeled, but hope it will be finished very soon.

Tonight's movie is going to be "Take a Letter, Darling." I am very anxious to see it since I have heard so much about it.

One of my girl friends relocated to Cleveland, Ohio, and she wrote and said that she just couldn't get use to the indoor theaters. In Poston the movies are shown outdoors, under the stars. She kept looking up at the ceiling thinking she would see the stars. While waiting for the movie to begin, everyone looks up at the sky trying to find the Big Dipper etc. (This is in Poston, of course). I can imagine how much she enjoyed the picture sitting in the soft-cushioned chairs.

I never thought I would have friends in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Colorado, Arkansas, Utah, Idaho, or Wyoming, but I do now!

One of these days, I'll be traveling all over the United States just visiting friends. I think that'll be such fun!

September 5, 1943

Hello Miss Breed!

Well, here I am again! I thought I'd wait a few days for your letter but not a day longer, so off this letter will go. I know you are very busy but I do hope you will write very soon and inform me of the amount (total) I owe you.

"Take a Letter Darling" certainly was an enjoyable comedy! It kept us laughing all through the picture.

Well, Miss Breed I have finally joined the Poston Indian tribe. I imagine it'll take you centuries to join this tribe! You see, the only way you can join it is to become "black." Wooo Wooooooo me out of news

Most respectfully,  
Louise Ogawa

My best regards to Miss McNary.