Chapter 9: SUPPORT FROM CAMP

Monday, December 20, 1943

Morning: coffee, bread
Noon: rice, *nimono* (corned beef, potato) – 1 full teaspoon, 2 pieces of beets
Evening: rice, broiled salted mackerel (they supplied 76 mackerels for 200 people and told us to use them for two meals), tea

I heard about how the soldiers acted during the search and seizure procedures in camp from a man, who came in on the 18th. One soldier got drunk on sake and became loud and unruly. Then, he fell asleep in the ironing room. Later, another soldier picked him up and took him back to the soldiers’ quarters.

Another soldier went through a child’s purse, and when he found a wristwatch, he slipped it into his pocket. The child saw this and cried out, “Don’t take my watch.” An officer overheard this and came over. The officer found that this soldier had not only taken a child’s watch but also all kinds of other things. The officer slapped the soldier on the face and took him to jail. Many incidents such as this were shared with me. I was told that the camp residents made a list of these incidents and sent it to the authorities.

I feel strongly that today’s youths — I am talking about males in their 20s — do not know manners. In our time, if a person was even one year older, we used words of respect. The youths, who came in here recently, have bad manners and dress shabbily. They use bad language and are obscene that even my jaws drop, listening to them. I was shocked to hear a 20-year-old address a 40-year-old with so-and-so *kun*. But that’s not as bad as another who called an elder by just, Yamamoto, without any honorifics. Even worse, some say, “Oi, Yama!” (Hey, Yama!)

From now on, the Japanese should treat people in this occupied territory with respect and compassion. Otherwise, the future of our country, for the next 100 years, will be misguided. As a matter of fact, these youths came from Japan to the U.S. during the Sino-Japanese War. We cannot deny that they are relatively from the lower class, but even so, their manners and actions have gone too far. I feel strongly that in the dojo, we must focus on this point and train the youths.

It is really difficult to live together. It is difficult to divide the food and work fairly. Even a small mistake leads to a fight. The fact that this is all done voluntarily makes the situation worse. Today, one of the youths failed to get up to start the fire in the kitchen stove. His own crew punched and beat him up. There is no tolerance.

Food is brought over if you are sick. This causes problems. Some begin to think that these men are taking advantage of the situation. It is difficult to have compassion and sympathy towards such men, and thus, it is impossible to have harmony in the stockade. Someday, this experience will be useful.
As I think over my experience in this stockade, I’ve carefully considered the question of sending my children to a dormitory. I am not saying living in a dormitory is bad. If there is a dependable leader, the situation should be fine, and even if there is no dependable leader, I believe that if the individual has had strong spiritual and moral training beforehand, that individual can avoid bad influences and choose a meaningful path.

Lunch was really bad today. Just imagine one teaspoon of *okazu* — corned beef and potatoes. Everyone put *shoyu* on the rice and ate it. For the past few days, the food was so bad that we asked a soldier, “Why?”

He said, “Right now, our country is losing the war so maybe that’s why.”

One man was brought in for curfew violation.

207 people.

He said he attended Chinzei Chugakkou (Chinzei Middle School).

One man, Mr. Mano, was released. This man’s family wanted to transfer to another camp but the man refused so the family had problems. Mr. Mano was jailed three days before me. His family, meanwhile, moved to another camp under armed guard. (Mr. Mano is around sixty.) Even when he returns to camp, there will be no family members waiting for him. Such tragedies are innumerable here.

The authorities permitted Christmas gifts to be sent to us during a one week span. Today, presents came from Ward 1 (There are nine blocks in one ward). Tomorrow, presents will come from Ward 2. The support and sympathy we receive from the entire camp is proof that we are not the troublemakers, as the commander accuses us. The authorities try to cover this up. What a laugh.

800 *nigiri meshi* (*rice balls*)
300 boiled eggs
1 large box *nappa tsukemono* (*pickled nappa cabbages*)
53 oranges
51 *apple pies*
salt

We were served the above foods in the late evening with coffee. The residents of the camp reduced their own food portions in order to send this to us.

Today, someone said, “Life in the Tule Lake stockade has become longer than my life in the general Tule Lake camp when I first arrived.” Come to think of it, I came to Tule Lake on October 9th (1943). My stay in the stockade has become longer than my life in the Tule Lake general camp, too. I remember playing with Sayuri and Masako after finishing our meals. I carried buckets of hot water to bathe them. All that seems like a
dream. How lonesome the children must be. I think the authorities are inhumane. I received a personal present from camp: candy, peanuts, and grape juice.

**Tuesday, December 21, 1943 — Gifts from Camp**

Morning: bread, boiled egg (from camp), pie, (from camp), coffee, mush  
Noon: rice, *miso shiru* with cabbage, vinegared cabbage, tea  
Evening: rice, curry (rice, 3 pieces of meat, cabbage), tea  

*Yushoku* (supper): *tamago maki zushi* (egg sushi), mackerel sushi, *ohagi, nigiri meshi*, *kuri manju* (chestnut rice cake with bean paste confectionary), chicken cooked in sweet sauce.

The *miso* from the government is terrible. To prevent spoilage, they put a lot of salt in it, and it almost looks like powder. I don’t know who made this but it is awful.

The cook cut up six mackerels and mixed it with vinegared cabbage. (This is part of the seventy-six mackerels that were to be used twice, and so, we did.) To find the mackerel bits in the cabbage was harder than finding meat in the *gomoku meshi* (rice mixed with vegetables and meat) made for rabbits.

Alas, it has been cloudy every day. It’s been so cold that if I go for a walk, the cold seeps through to my bones, so I stay in the room. I have nothing to do, so I read *Saikontan* and pick through English magazines. I’ve also scribbled some poems.

“Winter sky, white frost and the blanket is so thin. One month in jail and my beard and mustache grow long. Not enough food but my *chin chin* is strong. Someday soon I will need 1000 wives.” *(penis)*

“Rising sun on the east clears away depressive mood. Justice will prevail and restore order. Before long, dreams of being released will come true. Comrades, unite and drive away the dogs and rats.”

“Idle prison life. We talk about fishing. Don’t talk about raw fish sashimi. Born as Japanese, we entertain our stomach. When we return to beautiful Japan, we will have bountiful fish.”

“I got used to the smell of urine in this life in jail.”

No way will they beat Japan. I came up with one poem (as I saw a picture of an airplane): “Super bombers fly across the Pacific Ocean but Japan is far away.”

There was a notification in the bathroom: “It’s all right to smoke cigarettes in the bathroom, but if you throw cigarette butts into the bowl, they will clog the pipes and stink up the place. The cleaning person is having more and more problems with this.”

**Ward 2 Gifts**
Kuri manju (chestnut rice cake with bean paste confectionary) 25; tamago maki sushi (egg sushi) and saba zushi (mackerel sushi) 37; ohagi 39; nigiri meshi; and sweet style chicken, two gallons (30 pieces) came in at 8 o’clock in the evening. This was not enough for everybody but we really appreciated this tasty food. Since there weren’t enough ohagi and some other food items for everyone, we cut them in half so everyone could have a little bit. This is the first time we’ve eaten such tasty food since we came to camp.

One box of oranges was sent from Mr. Nakamoto to Takada-kun and Todoroki-kun, as well as to me as a special gift. He gave me persimmons before. I really didn’t know him from before but I appreciate his gesture. We decided to collect all the gift boxes of oranges that everyone had received and divided the contents amongst everyone.

Mr. Hoshiko received a letter from his family, which said Yuriko and Sayuri had caught a cold and were resting in bed and getting better. Hoshiko-san was brought in last Saturday. At that time, they were still healthy, so I think they’re probably not that sick, but they must be having a rough time without me there. It’s frustrating that I can’t do anything.

Two men were brought in, and two men were released. It seems that those who get arrested and those who don’t are different kinds of people. Those who speak up in public surely get arrested.

Those, who keep quiet, are saying such things as: “The army considers those in the stockade as criminals. We can’t do anything about this as long as the army says they are criminals” or “We better preserve the peace in camp and select new representatives, so that the punishment for those in the stockade can be reduced. The army will trust the representatives we select.”

Some of the arrested men say that unless the situation is resolved, the exchange boat will not arrive, but the army never listens to men like that.

Why do they call us criminals when they are Japanese just like us? For what reason? Even the army cannot find any evidence of criminal activities. Here’s the problem — It is not the Japanese in the camp against the Americans. It is a predicament in which Japanese Americans are involved.

We must never give in to any kind of pressure and fight for truth, for humanity, for Japan. Philosophical thought is lacking among the Japanese in this country. I feel sorry for them, but at the same time, I am angry. How will they be able to return to the mother country, Japan, after such disgraceful conduct?

Wednesday, December 22, 1943
Today is Sayuri’s birthday. She is eight-years-old. I think it is probably a lonely birthday party. Since she is eight and old enough, she will probably remember this for a long time.

Morning: coffee, corn flakes, French toast, green apple
Lunch: rice, nimono (corned beef, cabbage), sushi and nigiri meshi (gifts from camp)
Dinner: *nigiri meshi* (gifts from camp), *tsukemono* (gifts from camp, which included *nasubi miso-zuke* (eggplant in miso paste), turnip, nappa, smelt, tea

**Ward 2**
Christmas gifts: egg and *kaki* (persimmon) *oshi zushi* (layered & pressed, rather than rolled, sushi) (28). *Nigiri meshi* mixed with chicken and *gobo* (burdock root) (38), *nigiri meshi* with carrots, eggs, wiennie (26), and pie (29). It was supposed to come yesterday but arrived today. The taste of the persimmon sushi is simply wonderful. It is a truly rare food in camp. The food from my block is especially tasty.

A lieutenant colonel from another area came yesterday to view the stockade. We explained the food situation to this lieutenant colonel. Subsequently the next morning, the lieutenant in charge of goods was angry and called the cook (Japanese) and our spokesman to his office. It seems as though they were scolded. I wonder if the lieutenant colonel simply came to see the stockade. Perhaps this incident had something to do with this, but two cases of grape juice came in. (“Maybe this was in error?” we laughed.) The lieutenant in charge of the stockade is really arrogant. He rejects any small request by saying, “This is the army’s order.”

Three were released from the stockade.

Total: 203.

There was a lot of food that came in as special gifts. We used the gift foods for our dinner meals and that provided us with enough food. I appreciated the rare treat of *nasubi no misozuke* (eggplant pickled in miso paste).

**Ward 3**
*Gifts: nigiri meshi about 1,000; tsukemono (nasubi no misozuke, nappa, turnip); powdered oboro shrimp in twelve colors nigiri meshi (white and mixed) 30; packages of buns shaped like snails, 40 packages; pies, 20; bottles of nori tsukudani; one gallon shoyu;* and personal gifts in addition to this. *Nishime* (carrots, shrimp, *konyaku* (yam cake), *take no ko* (bamboo shoot), *iwa okoshi* (puffed rice coated with sugar), *unagi meshi* (eel and rice), apples, donuts, peanut candy, etc. (I considered how much affection the camp people showed by packing these gifts.)

Letter to the block people, block managers:

*Dear Gentlemen,*

*I thank you for what you have done for us. In jail, food, especially, delight us. Soon, I believe peace will be bestowed upon the innocent and to the community. I hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I am depending upon you for my family’s welfare for the duration of my time in the stockade.*
Notes: *Saikonton* by Koji, Sei was a recluse hermit, who lived during the Ming Dynasty. He had innovative and new ways of thinking, based on Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism.

Mushanokoji, Saneatsu (1855) was a writer whose main concept was humanism (beliefs in people), influenced by Tolstoy (Russia). He was also interested in education and culture. His brother was an ambassador to Germany.

Fujioka, Masaki was a doctor and writer, born in the early 20th century.

I heard there will be a talent show in camp soon, so the committee is working hard. There are so many actors and singers that it is hard to organize a program.

I wrote to Yuriko:

*I received the medicine. I am sad that I could not attend Sayuri’s birthday party. I will not forget her lonely birthday forever. I hear that you and Sayuri are ill (from Hoshikosan.) Let me know how you are. We receive many gifts from camp every day. This shows how much they support us. This is proof that they realize our situation. You should appreciate this and don’t forget about it. Thank Mr. Nakamoto for me. I know everything is inconvenient when you are sick and I am not there, but you must endure this for the honor of the Japanese. I think this situation won’t last too long. I want you to take care of your health."

There are many Japanese books coming in from camp. We must prepare for a long war. I read Mori Ogai’s book.

**Thursday, December 23, 1943**

Morning: coffee, grapefruit, donuts, snail-shaped buns (from camp)
Noon: fried rice (mixed with eggs), *nori no tsukudani* (seaweed in soy sauce, from camp), tea
Evening: rice, *nimono* (cabbage, wiener, carrots), tea

Someone heard the sounds of bullets early in the morning. Someone said that he saw soldiers lined up and standing at attention, but when the fog lifted, it turned out that they were a row of electric posts. Everyone laughed with relief.

One man was brought into the stockade. According to him, there is a flu epidemic in camp. The school is closed.

The flu is spreading inside the stockade, as well. I am getting better but not quite fully recovered. Earlier, I had asked Yuriko to send Milk of Magnesia and Mentholatum, but I hadn’t mentioned my cold to the family. I guess Yuriko was also trying to hide the fact that she was ill, too, but I found out through the letter Hoshiko’s wife sent. Only Masako is not sick. But I can’t do anything about the situation. I can only depend upon my neighbor’s kindness.
I first borrowed a bottle of Vicks from Kimura but he got sick, too, so I returned the bottle.

There are residences for civilian workers near the stockade. I saw someone selling Christmas trees to them. I bet Sayuri and Masako are anxiously waiting for Christmas.

One man was brought in; seven released.

Total: 197

Why are they released? Why are they arrested? I cannot understand.

**Ward 4**
A big box of marshmallow cookies and snail shaped buns in 37 colors; 2 boxes of ring cookies; 4 boxes of cookies; 3 boxes of pie; 7 boxes of sushi. Uyeda and Yamamoto received personal gifts of 7 boxes of sushi.

The people chipped in to buy these things, so it felt more impersonal. I appreciate it more if the people get together to make **nigiri meshi** themselves, even if it doesn’t taste good. But I am not complaining. This is just the way I feel.

Mr. Nogawa recounted stories of horse races. Mr. Mohri shared bawdy, sex stories. Mr. Mori talked about literature (perhaps of an erotic nature).

The lieutenant-in-charge announced that there will be only one spokesman, and he picked Mr. Yoshiyama. No one else was to have the right to speak up, so Yoshiyama-kun resigned. Mr. Tsuda and Sugimoto-shi are smarter than the lieutenant, so he has a difficult time dealing with them. That’s why he picked Yoshiyama because he is younger.

Later, the lieutenant sent a corporal to the stockade. As expected, they wanted Yoshiyama to be the spokesman. Tsuda was recognized as the spokesman for food supplies (probably because Mr. Sugimoto makes more concessions than Tsuda). This lieutenant is a Jewish man, over 30. He started to make compromises, little by little, with the spokesman.

Two people were brought in around 8 o’clock.

Total: 199

The two were assigned beds. Around 10 o’clock, they came into the room in distress and bloodied. One was around 35, and the other, around 60. I had heard voices, yelling, “You’ve thrown dirt on the Japanese face (honor). You are a disgrace.” Because of the disturbance, a guard was called.

The guard said, “Bring them to the gate.” One fellow fell twice on his way to the gate, but every time he fell, he didn’t forget to pick up his hat. He came into our room and lay
down on the bed, soiling the blanket, here and there, with his blood. He held one side of a glove in one hand and seemed to be looking for the other glove. Just outside our room, people were shouting, “Let’s beat them up.”

The army ordered about forty-five youths from the room where the beating took place to line up under guard of bayonets and machine guns. They were sent to the tent stockade. On this bitter, cold night, a few of the youths were only wearing geta on their feet. Some only wore a shirt. We watched this from the window. When the searchlights crisscrossed the area, we could see the area filled with soldiers. They took away the Japanese in this manner.

We protested immediately. We asked them, “Why are you arresting those youths and taking them away from the stockade?” We called the guard twice, and we couldn’t understand why he didn’t act right away.

We demanded that they bring all forty-five youths back to the stockade immediately. (I have experienced the tent stockade before and could imagine how terrible it will be for those youths.) Lt. Steiner said, “Anything connected with the stockade is my responsibility. Until we find out who is responsible for the beating, we will not allow any gifts from camp to be delivered to you. Those in the stockade and tent will have only bread and water.”

Friday, December 24, 1943 — Bread & Water for Christmas

Morning: snail-shaped buns (from camp), coffee
Noon: rice, nimono (cabbage, carrot, weenie), tea
Dinner: rice, nimono (cabbage, weenie), Jell-O, tea

During last night’s disturbance, the nurses at the nearby hospital were watching curiously. (We beat an inu! — (*literally a dog but also meaning an informant.)) A nurse replied, “Okay!” It is really interesting that they would answer “OK” as they are girls of Yamato (Japanese).

Last night, the lieutenant said we would be served only bread and water as our punishment. Everyone was saying, “We might as well not eat.” I ate very slowly at lunch because I felt I would not be eating rice for a long time. I chewed thoughtfully. At 1:15 p.m., the soldiers took three slices of bread for each person and water to the tent stockade. (They had eaten nothing since this morning.) We resolved not to eat until those in the tent stockade were released. They will have to be returned to the stockade when it is their time to be released anyway.

A soldier brought bread to the stockade gate. No one went after it. Then, it started to rain and snow, and the bread turned soggy. The soldier repeatedly told us, “Come and get the bread.” We flatly refused, and we started to negotiate with the lieutenant.
The lieutenant said, “I don’t care who beat whom or who killed whom, but if things like this go on in my stockade, it is going to be a problem for me. The two victims are dying, and we aim to find out who did this. We almost have it nailed down.”

He further added: “We can release those youths in the tent if you write down the names of the culprits who beat the two and turn in the names by 4 o’clock. If the names you list and ours match, we will assure you of their release.”

The lieutenant’s request was ignored.

At 4:30 p.m., all forty-five were returned to the stockade, carrying some bread. They said that in the tent stockade, they had agreed not to eat the bread. Both sides — the stockade and tent stockade — although never conferring with each other, had commenced upon a hunger strike simultaneously. Our spirits were lifted.

I don’t know why they released the youths. Perhaps it is due to the spirit in which both sides started a hunger strike or the fact that it was Christmas Eve and they would rather not invite trouble.

Five had been interrogated and beaten the previous night. One young man was pressured to confess and was beaten until he fainted. Another had his eyeglasses broken.

Everyone had answered, “I don’t know,” to the questions. One answered, “I was in the bathroom, so I don’t know anything.” Another said, “Those fellows must’ve fallen and gotten hurt.” Still another said, “A piece of wood from the bed must’ve flown at them on its own.” The soldiers got nowhere with such answers.

One of the youths in the stockade was in critical condition and taken to the hospital. The army requested a blood donation. We told them that we had no problem donating blood but it is difficult to do so since we live on bread and water. The army’s attitude was: “We don’t care if you donate blood, but there is a Japanese dying, and you choose not to donate blood? That’s okay with us.”

The army made such rude remarks. The Japanese will give blood even if the Japanese person was not dying. One man, who came from the youth’s hometown, planned to donate blood, so he went to the hospital. The army had said this was urgent, but when the man arrived, he was told that the transfusion would take place the next day or the day after the next.

Three more were brought in.

Total: 200

The sergeant who takes care of the stockade said, “If someone is getting beaten, contact us earlier.”
We responded: “We called the lieutenant twice, but he did not take action immediately so the situation escalated.”

The Block 38 Women’s Club sent me a gift: 12 cigarette papers; books; 1 large can of Velvet brand and Granger brand tobacco; 1 box of oranges; 9 boxes of peanuts; 1 carton of Wings cigarette. Mr. Furuzawa sent me nori tsukudani and a large can of olives. I appreciate their thoughtfulness, but I’d be happier if they had given them to my family. I divided the peanuts with the youths from Hawaii.

I wrote a thank you note to the Block 38 Women’s Club:

*It has been one month since I was put in jail. The period of time is longer than the time I lived in Tule Lake camp. Everyone has been so nice to my family during this time and it is greatly appreciated. My wife has written each time that everyone has been so kind. On top of that, the 2 gift boxes were sent. I really appreciate your thoughtfulness and I don’t know how to thank you. I eat your gifts with my roommates. Please take care of my family while I am not home.*

*The righteous will be justly rewarded. I believe peace will come to the camp in the near future. I hear that there is a flu epidemic in camp.*

*Please take care of yourself, Women’s Club of Block 38.*

**Saturday, December 25, 1943 — Christmas**

Morning: coffee, toast
Noon: roast beef, rice, boiled carrots, apples (from camp), three cookies (from camp)
Dinner will be written on the next page.

Gift from Ward 5: One carton cookies, 10 cans of honey, 24 peanut butter
Gift from Ward 6: 3 Christmas cakes, 3 cartons of oranges, 3 boxes of teriyaki chicken, 1 box of mixed nuts, 5 boxes of sushi (egg, saba (mackerel), smelt)

Dinner: sabazushi (mackerel sushi), egg sushi, smelt sushi, cake, Jell-O (orange and apple), chicken teriyaki, nappa tsukemono, tea

Christmas Day:
Full of snow. My heart can picture the happiness and sadness of Sayuri and Masako. I guess they received many presents. I feel very lonely that I can’t see the joy on the faces of the two girls when they discover their dolls by their bedside. They still believe in Santa Claus. I wish them happiness and many blessings.

The flu spread throughout the center, and the hospital is filled to capacity. I wonder if Yuriko and Sayuri are well. I know my neighbors are nice to them, but they must feel lonely without me there.
Yesterday, I received two big boxes from the Block 38 Women’s Club. There is enough tobacco for two months, and there was so much peanuts that I gave them to the youths from Hawaii (They have no relatives in camp). There were so many gifts of cookies, oranges, and candy that we can hardly eat them all. I am sure my children would be happy if I could give them some. Some young men are making snowmen using coals for the eyes and nose. If I was in camp, I would make a snowman for my children, one that would really please them and they would remember it for a long time, but I am not there.

I guess roast beef was served for lunch because it was Christmas. However, it was the size of a small senbei (hard rice cookie). In any case, this was stockade food at Christmas time. I received some apple cookies from camp. I watched the happiness reflected on the faces of the mustached and bearded men as they enjoyed them. I guess sweets make men happy, regardless of age.

Evening dinner was one weenie (We were 20 weenies short so some didn’t even get one.), and Jell-O (the fruit inside the Jello-O was from camp).

The weenies and Jell-O were supplied by the government. The rest of the food came from camp. My favorite foods were sabazushi and teriyaki chicken. We couldn’t finish the feast supplied from camp so the weenies were left. There was more than enough sushi for everyone so people wrapped them in the bread wrapping paper and took them to their rooms. This was a sumptuous dinner. The people in camp must not be eating as well as us. The 200 in the stockade tried to finish the cakes but were unable to. (The large size had been ordered.) Can the army still label us as gangsters, after seeing all this support from camp? Look at all these wonderful gifts from camp!

We are going to have a talent show on the 29th, so we are practicing in the kitchen.

For our evening snack, we ate oshiruko (sweet red bean soup) and sushi, etc. We were unable to finish them. I read assorted novels by Emi (Suiin) and Murai (Gensai).