

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

WASHINGTON

Box 47  
Folder 7  
Item 98  
Page 1

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

DEC 27 1943

Lt. Col. Harrison A. Gerhardt, G.S.C.  
Assistant Executive  
Office of the Assistant Secretary of War  
War Department  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Colonel Gerhardt:

Enclosed is a letter from a young volunteer in the Combat Team at Camp Shelby to his father at the Central Utah Relocation Center, which was furnished me by the Center Director.

The letter is indicative of the fine spirit which must exist in the unit and for this reason is passed on to you with the thought that Mr. McCloy may be interested or possibly the Regimental Commander.

Sincerely,

*D. S. Myer*  
Director

Enclosure



Box 47  
Folder 7  
Item 31  
Page 2

342.18 JA  
442nd Infantry

28 December 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDING OFFICER, 442nd COMBAT TEAM,  
CAMP SHELBY, MISSISSIPPI:

The attached letter has been received in this office from the Director of the War Relocation Authority and is forwarded to you for your information. It is thought that as the regimental commander you would be interested in knowing the thoughts of a member of your command regarding the fine spirit which exists in your unit.

Pence, C. W. (Col.)  
Gerhardt  
WRC (Myer)

HARRISON A. GERHARDT  
Lt. Colonel, General Staff Corps  
Executive to Ass't Secretary of War

Enc.  
Cy. ltr. 20 Nov 43.

29 Dec 43

OASW:HAG:maw

Commanding Officer, 442nd Combat Team  
Camp Shelby  
Mississippi

Saturday, November 20, 1943  
10:00 P.M.

Dear Dad.

Thanks a million for your very nice, heart warming letter. To tell you the truth it was the best letter I've received in all my life. Before I forget, please tell Mom to write to me as I miss her very much. She could write to me in Japanese if it is easier for her. I'll probably have some trouble in reading it but I could ask one of my friends who is studying Japanese to help me out. I've given up the idea of going to S..... as I find the folks here are O.K. Besides that I've signed out for the Medics, so I'm hoping to be transferred as soon as basic training is over.

Every morning the band wakes me up around 6:30 A.M. with a very tuneful march. You know, Dad, how much I liked music and I guess I'll always enjoy it as long as I live. Well, it almost tempts me into joining up with the infantry band but I figure it wouldn't do me much good overseas. I want to help the boys the best I can so I'm going to be or try my darn best to become a tough, well trained first aid man. I want to be right up in the front with my buddies so I can help them whenever they need me.

Don't worry about us fellows because we are going to do our best in everything we do. I don't want to brag but this outfit is really tops. There's quite a number of Caucasian outfits stationed here but my infantry has them all beat. We made the best scores in recent tests. Right now the whole outfit is training awfully hard. They're never in camp because they have to go out into the bivouac area for various military problems. Last week they went thru live machine gun fire with dynamite blowing up all around them. This week they had to eat and sleep in a fox-hole for about four days. When the company goes out they close the mess hall so we (recruits) have to eat at some other mess hall.

I'm going into my sixth week of basic and its getting tougher every week. I belong to the 11th platoon, which is the latest platoon to be organized. In our platoon there's always some soldier coming in from the outside, one by one. Most of them are drafted from back east, or from another outfit. Gee, the soldiers from another outfit look as white as a ghost, even though some of them have been in the army 2 to 3 years.

You ought to see me now, Dad. I'm as dark as some of the colored neighbors we used to have. I've also gained a couple of pounds and

worked up an awful big appetite. Right now I've got a slight cold because of the queer weather down here. Its always changing from hot to cold.

So far I've hiked 78 miles and this was done mostly during the night time. Night hikes are O.K. if we didn't get so sleepy. Every night I have to clean my rifle, no matter how late I come home from a hike or night problem.

Last week I learned how to take a light machine gun apart. It sure looked complicated but after I learned the name of some of the parts it was pretty easy. Most of our basic has been devoted to dry firing with our rifles because in a couple of weeks we're going out on the range to shoot for record. We're going to sleep in our pup tents and a couple of blankets for about two weeks. During this time we're going thru live machine gun fire just like our companys did. Also we're going to shoot carbine and all kinds of targets at different ranges. I'll probably freeze out there, but if the fellas in the company could take it I guess I can.

Sunday, November 21, 1943

Here I am again, Dad, with so much to tell you that I just couldn't finish it last night. In my hutment there's ten regular cooks and K.P.'s. Most of the time they're not in because they have to go out on the field for a week. They come home Friday nights and take off again the following Monday morning around 4:00 A.M. Yes, Dad, they're really on the ball, as we say it in the army.

The food in the army is O.K. but I don't get enough of it. I'm always running down to the P.X. for sandwiches. Usually on night hikes I store up with candies and sandwiches as I'm awfully hungry when I come home.

The hutments aren't as warm as the ones in Topaz but that's the army. Anyway I received another blanket which makes a total of three blankets and a comforter. Besides this I have the coal stove right close to my bunk, so I'm quite warm at times. Every Monday morning we air out the mattress and change the sheets.

This Sunday I almost had K.P. detail but I finally talked my way out of it. It would have been my third Sunday detail if I worked today. K.P. isn't bad on week days but on Sunday, No Sir!

Hey, Dad, I bet you'll make a hell of a good Lieut. in the army from the way you boss Hiro Ukagi and Jim Kushida around. Kidding aside,

how's your job getting along?

This morning I went to church and Chaplain Yamada from Hawaii was the speaker. This infantry outfit has three chaplains now. The other two are Chaplains West and Higuchi. Chaplain Yamada spoke to us about the true meaning of Thanksgiving. Boy, I sure had a lot to be thankful for, Dad. Thanks a million for understanding my volunteering into the army. Boy, I sure tried like hell to make you understand how I felt towards volunteering. I guess if Mom said "No", too, I probably wouldn't have volunteered. To both of you I'm greatly indebted and this is my way of showing how much I love my folks, so that we may be together again in a nice home.

Gee, Dad, I sure hated to go against your work but it was one thing in my life that would have bothered me if I didn't. I guess if the Japanese boys from Hawaii could come all the way down here, I don't see why the mainlanders can't. They're Japanese just like me or any other nisei in the mainland. Some of them might never see their folks again but they are willing to take a chance and it's a darn good gamble if we come out the way we wanted it to be. So Dad you can just about understand how proud I am to serve in the Japanese American Combat team. A month ago I saw a news reel which showed the Japanese Americans of the .....th Infantry fighting over in Italy. All of us fellas whistled and shouted because we were so proud of the fine record they are making.

No, Dad, I won't be coming home this Thanksgiving or Christmas as I haven't finished by basic training. Sure wish I could be there to enjoy the Christmas Holidays. But don't worry, I'm coming home on the first furlough I get. So, until that day comes, I'll always be thinking of you folks.

Again I want to thank both you and Mom for understanding the way I feel. It just makes me feel glad all over when I can say "sure my folks are backing me up 100 percent and more with all their love". Some of the fellas aren't as lucky as I am because their folks have gone to Tule Lake. Just the same they're training just as hard as anybody else and more.

Well, it's time for chow so I'll close this letter. Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain,

Your loving son.

P.S. Don't forget to tell Mom to write, too.