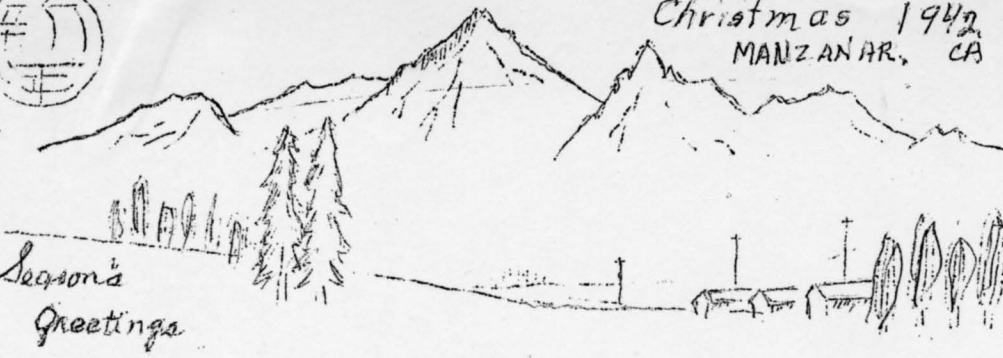




Happy  
New  
Year

Christmas 1942  
MANZANAR, CA

Season's  
Greetings



It is a good thing that Christmas comes at least once a year, otherwise we might not even write to you that often. This Christmas season finds many of us in situations that didn't even exist last Christmas. We have been living and working in the Manzanar Japanese Relocation Center for three months. Our tasks have been teaching school, aiding religious activities, and assisting in the relocation of "in-mates" into normal communities where they may live productive lives.

Things are happening here every day which remind us that putting thousands of people behind closed gates and barbed wire can bring no good to anyone.

As you drive along the highway at night and come in view of Manzanar, the lights of this city of 10,000 sparkle and make a more impressive sight than any other city in Owens Valley. When dawn breaks and paints the jagged peaks to the west of us a brilliant shade of rose, the outlines of some 750 dusty black barracks may be seen as we look out almost a mile across camp. There are 36 blocks each containing 14 barracks for living quarters, a mess hall, a recreation hall, two latrines, a laundry room, and an ironing room. The camp is spread out somewhat by firebreaks which go both ways every two rows of blocks and make the camp into clusters of four blocks each. We have a 250 bed hospital and a Children's Village, which is really an orphanage. There is also a small section for administrative offices and personnel.

The morale of the people as a whole has been at a low ebb. A great many of the people have been employed but much of the work is uninteresting and the remuneration is so small that many have worked only half-heartedly. Occasional incidents of violence give an inkling of the general dissatisfaction. The very nature of this camp could be the cause for the breakdown of law and order of the past two weeks, which has made newspaper headlines. But camp policies and individual feelings and attitudes have contributed their bit. Although interesting, the events of the past few days are not as important as the future. After arms have been used to the extent of killing two people and injuring ten the affair cannot be ignored nor forgotten in a few days. At present the soldiers are still here as policemen, but the project is officially under the direction of the project director, a civilian. In reality the camp is still governed by a few Japanese who do not wish to cooperate with the administration. This committee decided that the people would go back to work yesterday so they did, although many Japanese employees found themselves replaced by Caucasians. This has not made for a happier relationship. The canteen and general store reopened today. Schools will not reopen until after New Years, if then. They have been closed since December 7. The teachers could either stay here and work in the offices and draw their pay or go home without pay. In fact the mess halls have been the only functioning units in camp, except the Caucasians who have been working in the offices. The administration has been waiting for the camp to put its own house in order--so to speak.

For the past couple of months we have been the house parents of the Y.M.(C.)A. Dormitory. We are enjoying living in a block of Japanese and becoming familiar with their ways and customs. The boys in the dormitory are all Kibei (born in the United States and educated in Japan). These boys have really a better understanding of Japan than the United States. Very few of them speak much English. A couple of weeks ago we had a party as a kind of open house and the boys invited girls from this block and their special friends. Yuichi, the general secretary for the Y.M.A. planned games and the boys of the dorm took care of decorating our living

rooms and the refreshments. We had typical boys' "ests"-- noodle soup (a favorite among the Japanese), crackers, sandwiches, tea, cookies, cake and fruit. About the middle of the party we realized that we were the only Caucasoids (Caucasians) there. We feel so much at home that we hardly ever realize that we are of two different races.

During the past few days we have been receiving boxes of gifts and money to buy gifts for the children here. These are deeply appreciated. Today we received a note from the residents of Block 36 (our block) thanking us and the ones who contributed these things. This came even before the children received the gifts, but we have already given some of them to the block leader's wife for distribution.

In the last two weeks while interviewing applicants for relocation we have found that there are many more applicants than there are jobs. So we are especially interested in finding jobs of all kinds so that these people may get out of here as quickly as possible. Only in this way can they be assimilated into this country. This is really the only reasonable, satisfactory, and democratic solution to a thorny minority problem. Please let us know of available jobs in the middle west and east.

As we remember the birth of His life, let us pray for the birth of a new life for the oppressed, the unfortunate, the underprivileged the world around. Peace on earth to those of good will.

Keigu  
(Peace) (Sincerely yours)

Ralph and Mary Smeltzer