

Dear Mr. Bengston

At last "the gal from sunny Cal" is making her debut in the epistle world with the first in her series of messages from Jerome. After such a prelude - in fact two in a row etc- you may think you are going to receive something of value but I'm warning you now that it would be wiser to expect nothing.

I've often wondered what you have been doing. Did you take the trip to Nevada with Mr. Merrill? I should certainly like to hear of your "roughing" adventures there. If what I hear is true, you of the Fresno Assembly Center Administration Staff must have had some blow-out. I only got a general idea of the party so I'll have to see Mr. Pimental for the particulars.

Call me a big baby or what have you - but a train going northward by our Center still gives me that longing feeling to go back to Fresno. Talking of trains and so forth takes me back to the 4 day trip which began on a Friday, which will be awfully hard to forget. We left with such an empty, helpless feeling as we saw you become a vanishing figure that before we knew it a deluge of tears overcame, I can't remember sobbing like that for a long time. It took us until Fowler to regain our composure.

It was good to see the countryside once again. Cows in the pasture, vineyards and orchards, the farm houses basking in the late October sun, the faint outline of the Sierras in the distance, all had a peaceful and quieting effect. I somehow felt that liberty is something dearer than we realize under ordinary circumstances. All along the trip the feeling stayed with me. If not for anything else, the trip was of value to me.

About 5.53 we passed Kingsburg and as we went over Kings? River (near Kingsburg anyway) I tried to guess which might be your ranch. Our first meal on the train was at 6.15 that evening. We walked through about 6 cars to go to the dining car everytime, and on the way we of course would see many friends as we did so. The porters were very nice and the meals were very good.

I'm sure you heard about our berths from Helen. On the first night she and I slept in together on the lower - we woke up in the middle of the night and talked for about half an hour.

On the second day of our trip we saw the Salton Sea. Also on this day we made our first visit to Car #8 where most of our friends were located. We did it legitimately through a sergeants approval. 2.04 p.m. mountain time and so long California - we were in Yuma, Arizona.