

4742 Brooklyn Ave.  
Seattle, WA  
Oct. 12, 1918

My dearest and most beloved mother,

Through the mercy of God I am fine here and hope you are also, and everyone else there. Last week I posted a letter to you which hopefully you'll receive before this one. It was to let you know that we are no longer with Mrs. Nelson, that we have our own place and working for ourselves. In the previous letter, I didn't tell you whether I had accepted the offer from the university. With God's help, I have accepted the position offered by Dean Johnson of the College of Pharmacy. I will be his assistant at the Food Laboratory. The reasons for accepting are first, it is a very decent position and secondly, it is an honor. Here in America, it is very difficult to obtain the kind of job I have just been offered and accepted. Before they offer to a person of color<sup>a</sup>, such as Filipino, Japanese or Chinese, the jobs are first offered to whites. So, I am indebted to Dean Johnson, that although I am a person of color, he offered me the job ahead of everyone else.

Dean Johnson, in addition to his academic duties, is the State Chemist for Washington State. The Food Inspectors bring samples of milk, eggs, sugar, extracts such as lemon, ginger, vanilla, etc., and other foods. My job is to experiment with and test the products brought by the Food Inspectors for purity, adulteration or dilution<sup>b</sup>, and minimum standards. For example, the state of Washington requires a minimum of what they call butterfat for milk. Sometimes the butterfat has already been removed. The extracts, such as lemon, have to be exactly from the plants indicated and not from substitutes. I report all the results to Dean Johnson who passes them on to the Food Inspectors. It is up to the inspectors to fine the vendors, processors or factories of such food products, when necessary. In other words, my work is a great responsibility plus a large help to me in my studies. Dean Johnson credits me academically for my work experiments and encourages me to continue my studies although I am already finished with my degree<sup>c</sup>. The salary is generous, and I have the opportunity to become the Specialist in Food Analysis.

So now I am both a university student and employee of the Food Laboratory. Assisting me in my work is a young American student, a former classmate, whose task is to clean and prepare my glassware and instruments used in the experiments.

In my previous letter, I indicated that the embroideries you sent have arrived. There were six in total but two are still at the Post Office because the value of each package exceeded \$100. It cannot be sent to the house, having to pass through inspection and I have to appear before the Post Office inspector. It has been a month since the packages arrived, but I was in Alaska then.

Don't worry about my claiming the packages. Every time there is a ship that departs<sup>d</sup>, send a package, but value should not exceed \$100. Otherwise I have to again make an appearance at the post office and pay extra.

I'm also letting you know that the former buyer is no longer buying from me. They have found someone cheaper<sup>e</sup> but more importantly, the yokes already have ribbons and sizes marked. They no longer need to bother with attaching the ribbons and sorting out the different sizes. So, I will

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be looking for another buyer. If I can't then I could sell piece by piece. We would make more profit that way! If you could order with a ribbon and sizes marked, it would be much better.

As quickly as you can, send 150 baby yokes, like the 7 you shipped before. I have someone who has agreed to take them. Send it right away! Do not change the fabric but I leave the embroidery up to you.

I wrote this letter on the 12<sup>th</sup> but I wasn't able to drop off, having run out of stamps, as I've been too busy to purchase some more.

I have not been sick and am more robust than before, so don't worry. I am the one always worrying about you, as you might have difficulties in making a living.

Take care of your body as a healthy body is of principal importance. Eat well, consume nutritious foods such as meat, eggs and milk, if available in the morning<sup>f</sup>. Don't overexert yourself and get enough sleep. You should be in bed by nine p.m. and get up at seven a.m. You need lots of sleep.

Abundant greetings to all my sisters and brothers, and especially to you. Likewise Ate Tia and Nanang<sup>g</sup>.

Your daughter who is waiting for your blessing at all hours,

Maria Y. Orosa

Footnotes:

a – In her letter, Maria actually wrote “de color”, which are Spanish words. It isn't a concession to the more current and popular term when referring to minorities today.

b – Maria used the Tagalog words “*dinagdagan ng tubig*” or literally adding water, in reference to milk. Apparently, during those days, processors tried to stretch their milk supplies. Remember the issue a couple of years ago with some Asian exporters adding amines to milk powder to increase the protein analysis? Not much has changed in 100 years, just the technique for cheating!

c – Maria received her Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry in June of 1918. She would receive additional degrees, a Bachelor and a Master of Pharmacy in the coming years.

d - A cursory examination of ship schedules showed only a monthly voyage from Manila to Seattle. However, it is possible that merchandise could be transshipped on more frequent voyages between Manila and Chinese or Japanese ports.

e - Could it be Made in China?

f – the remark about milk availability in the morning indicates that it has to be purchased fresh daily. Refrigeration was non-existent then, at least in their town of Bauan.

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g- Nanang is another term for mother. But we sometimes call older women relatives nanang. I'm not sure who Maria is referring to in this case. Like most Filipino households then and now, extended families and multiple generations live together.