

Honorable Discharge



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Letters from a Soldier

Scribed by Peter D. Laue

Dedication

I dedicate “Letters from a Soldier” to my Mother and all mothers who are praying for those who have gone off to war. It is my Mother who faithfully recorded and saved every letter this soldier wrote. Without her continued encouragement, replies, packages and prayers, the stream of letters would have quickly dried up. I dedicate “Letters from a Soldier” to all soldiers and ex-soldiers who have tasted the horrors of war – separated from friends and family.



Above all, I dedicate “Letters from a Soldier” to the many unnamed and unknown prayer warriors who battle behind the scene on their knees. You know who you are. I thank you and my Lord Jesus thanks you for your dedicated and unheralded and hidden lives.



INTRODUCTION

December 2010

The letters you are about to read were scribed over a period of two years. America was still embroiled in the Korean conflict when the author was drafted. He was two weeks shy of 20 when he stepped over that magic line at the induction center in Los Angeles, California and was officially and immediately a soldier with the serial number: US 56192300. He was discharged two years later on February 8, 1955 at Fort Ord, California. Although foreign born, he loved America and considered it an honor to serve his adopted country as a soldier. He spent all of his active duty in Germany, the country of his birth.

Life as a soldier was a daily challenge for the author. His religious leanings and idealism made him conspicuous amongst his comrades and superiors. He was a conscientious objector and a vegetarian at the time he was drafted. At first he was able to demonstrate that this should not disqualify him from being an asset to the army. Eventually, however, he “caved in.”

In August 1953 an inner struggle began to ravage his soul. At first he was able to hide the terrifying and exhausting conflict from others. Eventually, however, his ability to concentrate and perform his duties as a clerk typist in the office of admission at the Army Hospital in Nuremberg, Germany became apparent. He was hospitalized on the psychiatric ward of the hospital. He pleaded with the chaplain, the psychiatrist and his superiors not to give him a medical discharge.

He was treated with unusual care and kindness; and after a few weeks was able to resume his normal duties. However, his religious zeal was severely compromised and he began to model his life according to a new and less demanding set of standards. In one of his letters, dated March 24, 1954 he wrote:

“If a thousand wolves are howling around you and you don’t howl yourself, then you get eaten up alive. My voice and power is not so great that I am able to raise my voice above the thousand voices. I did think it was possible, and maybe it is for someone who is stronger than I am?”

Many years passed before the author had the courage, stamina, emotional equilibrium and inclination to look into the rearview mirror of his life and meet PFC – Private First Class Peter Dieter Laue for a second time. He was surprised, amazed, stunned and humbled by what he saw. As he reviewed each letter he felt as if he was standing in front of the High Priest making his confession. He remarked to himself, “Had I not known that my High Priest has a heart of mercy, I would not have had what it took to meet the old, flawed Peter.”

This scribe has made himself purposely transparent and vulnerable to let others know that striving for excellence in the world may become a sign of misguided pride and zeal. Polishing our ego and putting it on display for others to admire stinks to high heaven. Not even Jesus allowed Himself to be praised or called “good” while He walked amongst us. In a subsequent book, [To Hell and Back](#) the author continues to chronicle the journey of his soul.

With few exceptions, the text has been left as originally transcribed from letters that were mostly handwritten.



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Peter
*The Lord's Scribe
and Storyteller*
www.stretcherbearers.com

February
1953

Fort Ord, California - FORT ORD

February 3, 1953

My Dear Ones,

As yet I cannot give you any important news. During the first week we have had basic training. It is possible that we might be sent to another place after the first week here. As yet I cannot give you a mailing address; possibly in two weeks. Tomorrow we are going to receive our uniforms. The complete military wardrobe costs \$170.00, which is naturally paid for by the government. After that, we are going to be given various psychological and intelligence tests, a complete physical, vaccinations, and who knows what else?

Food is available in abundance. The boys eat like horses and there is plenty left over for the pigs. I do not have to go hungry. At nine P.M. the lights are turned off.

Your Dieter.

I AM ALWAYS FINE.

(This letter was written in German and was translated by the author. Dieter is the name as it appears on his German birth certificate. While in junior high school in York City he adopted the name Peter because his classmates either could not pronounce his name correctly or made fun of it.)



February 4, 1953

My dear Ones – Mutti, Papa, Hellmut,

Today we had to get up at 4:30 in the morning. At first I was disoriented; I didn't know where I was. Then suddenly I had a revelation. I am currently only an observer. Despite the outer circumstances, I shall remain strong on the inside. I am finding many opportunities for spiritual development, especially the opportunity to practice patience. We have had to stand in line a lot during the last couple of days. I carry Clay's little booklet with me. I read a few lines and then meditate on what I read and try to follow the advice. The most important part of my life the army cannot control; my thoughts and my spiritual world. I serve my country, but concurrently and far more important is my commitment to serve in God's army. The main thing is that He is satisfied with me.

February 5, 1953. Do not worry about me. That does not help me one bit. But I will never turn down thoughts that bless me. I feel more and more that the spiritual realm does not need to be influenced by the physical world. Today I experienced some beautiful hours. After tumultuous hours the clouds break apart and the sun appears.

Boy, oh boy, this is quite a life. Yesterday evening I went to the PX – Post Exchange. Hellmut can tell you what kind of a place that is. What goes on there has to be experienced; it cannot be explained. Beer and ice cream are the top favorites on the menu, and the Los Angeles smog cannot compete with the smoke that is created there. The conversations cannot be repeated. They are so putrid! I would not want to be that lost maiden amongst those boys. One can only

feel sorry for the stomachs of the boys; they are bathed in beer and their lungs get smoked like bacon. In reality the whole scene should be viewed more like a play.

Today I had a nice experience with my wallet. I reached for it in my back pocket and it was not there. Worry? Who worries? It serves no purpose. There was still a remnant from my old worry nature. But then I realized that losing something was not a reality. Everything of value we carry on the inside. At first I wanted to write you and ask you to send me my U.C.L.A. combination lock. I wanted to put my electric razor in a safe place. Only a fool does such a thing. I'd rather share my things. That way no one will be jealous.

In a few weeks I will need the tube of sharpening compound and the brush to sharpen and clean my shaver. I will give you my address, but you cannot write me until I receive my permanent assignment. I will notify you immediately when that happens. At that time I will be in need of a shoeshine kit for brown shoes and a writing table with a thick cover because I use my backpack as a desk. Fifty dollars is all I am permitted to send you from my check until I have completed basic training. Those are the rules. If I have money left over above that amount, I will send it in a letter. My postcard to you was addressed to me because I did not show a return address.

I just want to mention that the chairs here have no backs to lean against. Now I have to learn to sit straight without the aid on a normal chair. But somehow I am adjusting and am schooled by necessity. I am eager to learn. The opportunities to learn are all around us. The desire and will to learn is paramount. Only after I fully comprehend Clay's little booklet am I the buy another one. So many things we only learn partially and so little completely.

It is a joy for me to chat with you all. Aren't things more colorful now that one of the birds has left the nest? In my thoughts I am sharing a glass of apply cider with you and say "to your health." Is Hellmut a good boy and occasionally makes juice for everyone?

Please do not write until I tell you. It might create a problem for me if you do. It is 8:15 P.M. A few of the boys are already in bed, others are reading. A few are talking or writing like I am I meant to tell you, almost forgot, my wallet did not get lost.

Greetings to you from the one who loves you.
Dieter

Friends, relatives and acquaintances are all included.

(This letter was translated from German. Hellmut is Dieter's older brother)



February 7, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa, Hellmut,

I receive my first paycheck today – 17 dollars. On the 28th of February the next check is due. I will send you the money which I do not need. The first 15 dollars are for Hellmut. Next Monday I will receive my permanent assignment. Most likely I will stay here in Fort Ord for the first sixteen weeks or possibly less because I am a C.O. (Conscientious Objector). I will send you my mailing address as soon as I have it.

This afternoon we had a G.I. party; that means a thorough cleaning of our barracks. It is a lot of fun when everyone does a part of the job. Tomorrow I will be working in the kitchen. That's where I feel at home.

Just now I am looking out the window. The fog has lifted. What do I see? – The ocean!

I want a friend to mail this letter for me and will therefore not start a long philosophical discourse. At the moment I am in no mood to do it. I must first store up some treasures. My barn is currently empty. After some more living and thinking my thoughts will be in gear again.

One thing I wish you all, the desire to always want to do the right thing.

Good-bye until we meet again.

Always in love,
Peter

Love to all at S.R. F. and everywhere else.

(Translated from German by the author)



February 9, 1953

Dear Mother, Papa, Hellmut,

For the first 8 to 9 weeks my address is:

Pvt. Peter Laue, U.S. 56192300
Fox Company, 63rd Infantry Regiment
For Ord, California

During the next weeks this body must learn to subordinate itself in many ways. I view this as a good cure or exercise for the spirit. Nothing will harm me. I believe that I am under the protection of the Saints. I think about Yogananda often. Time will be at a premium during the next four weeks. But I will always have plenty of time to think about you.

Please do not send a shoeshine kit.

In love,
Your Dieter

(Translated from German by the author)



February 10, 1953

Thank you, dear Mother, for your help.

My dear Ones,

I only want to quickly share the news. "Just by chance" I saw the company lieutenant tonight. My "C.O." (Conscientious Objector) classification was granted without any difficulty. The lieutenant said he will try to have me transferred to a more suitable division. Until that takes place I will do typing and office work for the lieutenant. Please thank Reverend Bernard for his help. I will write him as soon as possible. I have already offered a silent prayer of gratitude.

Your Dieter

(Translated from German by the author)



February 12, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa, Hellmut,

The weather is wonderful today. No one can stop me from saturating my heart with sunshine. I am just in the process of getting some pills for my constipation. Maybe you could get me a natural remedy. The doctor also gave me a prescription for vitamins.

Please address mail just like my return address show on the card. It is uncertain how long I will be staying here. The lieutenant wants to move me somewhere else as soon as possible.

Your Dieter

(Translated from German by the author)



February 15, 1953

My dear Mutti, my dear Papa, my dear Hellmut,

Oh yes, Mother said I should write in English if possible. I have no objections. I only wanted to keep my German alive; that is why I wrote in German. But why would you like me to write in English?

That was surely nice to receive such nice mail. You should have seen the faces of those boys who received mail today. Those faces shine so brightly. It was a pleasure to watch those boys. But you know how it is, not everyone got mail. And it was painful for me to hold four letters in my hand and the fellow next to me held none, or have a letter returned to him that was wrongly addressed. I try to share with others, but in this case I did not quite know how to go about it.

It is not sure what the next couple of weeks will hold in store for me. The office work that I was talking about did not come through yet, maybe it will, but again it might not. The officers tell me that in the army you can't be sure what's going to happen. You might hear some interesting things. I try to be awake and ready at all times. God is looking out for me as long as I behave.

He surely sent me a nice friend. This boy is to me what my own brother would be. He is very humble and says he is not ready for the spiritual path. But I think he is doing fine. He told me tonight that whenever my palate was itching, I should reach for one of his candy bars. He got a package with candy today and home-baked cookies are on the way. He told me that his things are mine too.

Oh, there are so many nice things to write about, time is a little short, but don't ever think that I run out of material.

One of the cadre men let me write in his room, because lights are already out in the barrack. But he is ready to turn in too, so I will follow suit out of necessity.

But remember that I'll always think of you. Give my regards and thanks to the rest of the bunch, Alice, Katherine, etc. Alice sent me a beautiful and sweet birthday card. Thank her please, but when I have time, I'll write myself.

So long for now and good-night.

Your boy,
Peter Dieter



February 16, 1953

My dear Ones,

Who are those I love? Everyone, all, but especially those who have been thinking of me! You will understand that I can't write all of you. That is why I want to include everyone in the letters I write. It makes me feel very warm to know that I have so many good friends.

The boys around here are all so nice, too. There is not one I don't get along with. They sang happy birthday to me tonight. And then I opened the package. I tried to make everyone feel that each one was the one who got the package. That is really the only way. That is surely a nice package you prepared for your boy. It was just bubbling over with love. Each date, nut and raisin seems to have been accompanied with a special sweet thought. George's letters touched my heart again. He knows how to do it. He has it in him; there is no doubt about it. Katherine, Lillian, Louise, Mrs. Schaefer, Alice, they were so sweet to send me birthday greetings. Please thank them all. I'll be thinking of them and thank all of them in spirit.

I want to tell you also that air-mail gets here no sooner than the regular way.

Could you also send me a manual old razor we have flying around the house and a hair brush, an old one too. I need that stuff for a silly display for my footlocker.

I am going to be a busy beaver for the next couple of weeks. So don't get alarmed if the mailman passes you by. This is a special treat for me tonight that I can write. Most of the boys went away to take a test. So the platoon leader made a few boys a present of a couple of free hours. Today the boys got some instructions in taking their rifle apart. I was sitting on the side thinking meanwhile of God. And I tried to let the spirit shine through me that the boys might realize that love is the most powerful weapon. George surely is right that one person in the light will ultimately drive away all the darkness. It is a powerful feeling to know that God is in back of you.

I have the feeling that one of our lieutenants is a wonderful man. I have not talked to him. But his face is calm and he is simple in his ways. There are many, many nice people all over; they

are really all nice. It is our mistake if we don't see and feel this. Thanks for all you love and – good night.

Peter

Could you send a few postcards when you have a chance? Thanks



February 21, 1953

My dear Ones,

It feels so good to be able to sit down and talk to you. All week we have been kept on the run, marching from one class to the next. Some physical exercises and a four mile hike yesterday were also included in the week's activities. It's been a long week in hours, but it passed quickly for me.

Our first line-up in the morning is at five o'clock; there is no sign of the approaching day at the first role call. The stars still reign in the sky, and it is very cold. Because brother "cold" was so severe this morning, I got much better acquainted with my dear older brother "the sun". The sun spoke to me today. It is a beautiful sermon that he preaches. The sermon has made me so very happy. It has been a blessing in many ways already that I am here today. My better acquaintance with the sun is one of the many blessings.

I will try to tell you how I felt when brother "cold" was driven away by the kind sun. We marched to our first class about 7:15. I had gloves along, which was lucky for my little self. But my bigger self froze very much, because most of my friends' had no gloves. In the higher self we are all one. And if my brother freezes, I freeze too. I was disappointed in myself for not lending the gloves to someone who was colder than I. That is one lesson that brother "cold" taught me.

It is a good that I write this down, for the lesson seems much more vivid to me now. And when the first rays of the sun said good morning to me and to my friends, I realized that the sun must be a great being. It sheds light and life and warmth on all beings from the highest to the lowest. And the blade of grass and my cold friends marching with me are equally eager to receive that light and life. There is no distinction made upon who that light shall shine.

And then I felt that we are really all made of those rays of light radiating from the sun. Everything from top to bottom is made of the light of the sun. Every piece of wood, the clothes we wear, the food we eat; all of this is a condensed form of light. When I ate my food today, I got that feeling that it was actually transformed light and warmth of the sun. And when we stood at attention for a longer time today, the time today passed quickly.

We are told that in order to stand perfectly still and straight, we should fix our gaze on an object directly in front of us. That is what I always do now. I made out of this a beautiful meditation. I looked at the wooden cross of a window frame. I realized that the same light was necessary to grow the wood which also builds our body. I tried to realize that everything emanates from the same source.

There is no problem with the food either. My stomach is beginning to behave like a real gentleman. I think that the trouble was that I had practically no control over my eating habits

before. I am beginning to learn. And you know, there is not a single person who condemns the way I eat. Some people notice the way I eat and silently approve when I tell them that I do not want to eat my little brothers.

The cooks are very nice to me. This morning we all got a delicious Sunkist orange for fruit. The two boys sitting next to me at the table did not want their fruit. You see, the Lord looks out for me. And another thing I experienced with our chow. Chow is the word for food in the army. When we lose our greed, then the pleasure of someone else is our pleasure too. When the boys eat their meal or a candy bar, I am sometimes able to enjoy it with them without eating it myself. It was a joy for me to share the contents of that wonderful package with the boys. Anyone who happens to be around joins in the party when I open the package. As of today there are only a few almonds left. My friends' pleasure is mine too.

A package is ALWAYS welcome. Something in the line of what you sent is wonderful. Candy kisses would be wonderful too. I think the boys would really go for those. I also noticed today how a person becomes receptive to the needs of others if he does not want to do everything for the little self. When I sit at the table for a meal and someone asks for the butter, I usually respond pretty quickly. But those engrossed in their own meal usually don't hear. So you can see how it is in little ways. This simple little sentence: "Pass me the butter, please," has made me realize a great truth.

Another thing that I only saw tonight. Someone takes a big helping of something really delicious. No one sees it, he thinks. He does not realize that there is always someone watching and engraving all the things on a tablet. How plainly everything we do and the way we think is written on a person's face I never realized until this evening.

I have not been able to see Mr. Inwood. I probably won't see him until we get off restrictions, which is about four weeks from now. We are restricted in the company area for the first four weeks of basic.

I would have a chance to soak prunes, but with too much trouble connected with it. So if you should send me some, I would only make it a point to chew them well and eat them without greed.

Oh yes, you might like to know that I will be taking eight weeks of this basic and then have training in a medical unit. There is always plenty of room and time for change in the army; so don't take that as too definite yet. That is, though, what is on the records. It would suit me fine.

I am also learning to be silent. We try not to waste food; why should we waste words. Words are energy, very powerful energy.

Thanks a lot for your two letters, Mother. Mail is a nice thing to get. The poem is tops. I love you all very much and wish you good night and best regards to all.

Your boy,
Peter Dieter



February 22, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa, Hellmut,

I forgot to answer your question about the letter from the Chaplain. So I'll quickly add this post script to the letter I wrote last night. You do not have to do anything about the letter. The Chaplain only wants to call your attention to the fact that he will aid us if there should be a problem. I also wanted to mention that if there should be an emergency and you need me home, contact the local chapter of the Red Cross. They will verify the emergency and contact Fort Ord and have me sent home in a matter of hours. But it must be a real emergency.

I am feeling fine, the sun is shining high.

Your boy as always,
Dieter



February 26, 1953

My dear Ones,

I am sitting in a large classroom together with three hundred other boys. They are all being instructed in the correct way of aiming a rifle. To be more specific, these instructions this morning cover information about right windage and elevation of an M-1 rifle. Almost everyone has a little notebook like I have in front of him and is busily taking down the valuable information presented by the instructor. But as I have no need to know these things about the rifle, I will write you a letter. My instructor would frown upon what I am doing. But I realize that if he would have understanding, he would say, "Peter, you are doing the right thing at present." Therefore I act as if he had understanding already; because one day he will stand in the Light like the Great Ones.

It is about 8:00 A.M. now, my hands are defrosted, I have a comfortable chair to sit on, a square foot of space as a desk and good light. I have all I need to write you. And there is also a good advantage in writing, because it keeps wide awake. When I have to listen to my instructors, I often have to fight to stay awake. And you can imagine it is quite embarrassing to be tapped on the head by a cadre.

We have just had a ten minute break. The sun is warming the earth once more. It is a present to be able to stand in the sun for a few minutes and let the warm rays shine on your face. During the rest-period a friend walked up to me and asked how I was feeling. "Fine, I thank you," was my answer. We exchanged a few words. One thought was exchanged and I would like to tell it to you.

We often do not know ourselves what is best for us. How many people would take a cold shower out of their own accord? Very few, I believe. But everyone enjoys the warm feeling which follows a cold shower.

I have been receiving some nice mail. It is surely nice to see my name circled on the mail call list. But my spirits remain the same whether there is mail or not. I only feel a little sad when some people go empty-handed. But that's just the way it goes sometimes. Yesterday I silently listened to a friend who received only two letters from his wife since he is in the army. He was mad at his wife for writing so little and he told her so in a letter he wrote two days ago. But it was not for me to advise him that it was wrong to be mad. The law made him regret his mistake yesterday evening already. He received four letters from his wife in one bunch.

Two days ago – it was early in the morning right after I had eaten breakfast – I learned a lesson. These lessons are brought to me at unexpected times and in unexpected ways. I was just carrying my empty tray outside when the wind came and blew my napkin off the tray. I picked it up and someone else's napkin too, but the wind blew it off again. "Should I let it go or pick it up again?" I thought. A little unwillingly I again picked up the napkin. And then I realized that no matter how many defeats we receive, no matter how many times we are blown over, God always picks us up again. Without hesitation He picks those up who have fallen. I will attempt to follow His example and not hesitate again about stooping over to pick up a napkin. If I don't, someone else has to do it.

I would like to ask if you would like to hear about these experiences? To me they seem wonderful and I remember them very clearly. Talking about my daily classes, food, marching, and so on doesn't seem very significant to me. But let me make a suggestion. If you would make a list of questions you would like me to answer, I would be happy to do so.

Thank you a lot for the dear letter I receive from you yesterday and for the enclosed letter of Beverly, Mrs. Kritzinger and the letter from Ella.

I am beginning to get a clearer understanding of how and why certain people feel and act in certain ways. All that I may humbly say is that many things are clearing up for me. But I would like to say once more today what I told Lillian about six weeks ago. I said to her, "I'll bet you that in a couple of months from now I will look back on today and say, "How could I have been so ignorant?" The greatest mistake in my mind would be to say, "This is it! I have got it now."

Meanwhile, my surroundings have changed considerably. I am sitting cross-legged in the grass. The birds are serenading in the bushes, a black ant is crawling over my leg, shells are exploding in the distance, and the sun is moving through a clear blue sky. You can tell George that I am in the same place from where I wrote him a letter yesterday.

You know, I just thought that a pocket pad equipped with a good pencil might be a handy thing to have around. I might get a break like this more often.

You have asked me how my days are filled? I will try to give you a general idea. However, each new day brings variety so that we cannot make the rule that, at 11:00 A.M. Peter is doing ten push-ups. At present we rise at 4:30 A.M. Hellmut, do you think you can get up that early? At five we have the first formation at which roll is taken. And you better not be A.W.O.L – Absent Without Official Leave. Then follows breakfast. We get a change between fruit or juice, always milk and coffee, often lots of eggs, dry cereal, pancakes, sausage, beans and frankfurters sometimes, usually bread also. That is the general idea.

After breakfast we clean our barracks and police the area for scraps of paper. At about 7:15 A.M. we move out for our first class. That is just about the time when you board your bus, Mother, and Hellmut has a quick bite of breakfast. And what does Papa do? Classes which include physical training last until 11:15 A.M. At 11:30 is chow; chow for a lot of wow, wows. You know what I mean: Wau, Waus. (A colloquial word for dogs in German)

At 12:30 P.M. we move out for afternoon classes. The classes usually include some practice in marching and manual of arms. When we have anything with a rifle, I am a spectator. And a very uninterested one, usually keeping my mind on the Higher things.

At 5:30 P.M. or later we have chow; chow again. I always get every time enough. Also, from 5:30 to 6:30 is mail call. At that time everyone picks up his mail at the mail room window. You can see a lot of smiles and hopeful faces around that area.

At 7:00 P.M. we usually have another formation. Sometimes there is marching in the evening yet. And until 9:30, when the lights go out, you are free to take care of your personal things like polishing shoes, cleaning rifles (Pvt. Peter Laue exempt), washing and sewing clothes, and writing letters. At 9:30 I am happy if I can turn in and rest. But in case we do not get our things done, we can work in the latrine until eleven.

Saturday evening and Sunday belongs to us for the greatest part. Such is life in boot camp. When I see you all personally, I'll tell you about some of the extra things we do that add quite a bit of spice to army life. Like for example, changing our uniform in two minutes and still being on time in company formation.

My friend observed yesterday that I look better now than when I first came into the army. I feel good, and I have quite a healthy color. My cheeks look really rosy. The mirror told me so. Your boy is well provided for both by the armed forces and Higher Forces. I have a few rules which I try to follow when I eat. I ask God to bless the food. I try to sit erect, keeping in mind that I eat radiant energy of the sun whether the flour is bleached or the margarine is preserved and seeing to it that my neighbor gets enough butter and jelly and milk before I unload the food on my plate, while taking no more than I can eat safely and eating all the crumbs and also trying to realize that I am only engaged in a transitory and short-lived activity. This is only the beginning of another happy chapter of my life.

Your boy who took one unit too little. YES or NO?

(The author intentionally took one unit less than required by the draft board in order to be drafted before finishing college. A total of 15 semester units deferred students from the draft until they completed their college education.)

Your Dieter

(Postscript)

My dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

There is one thing I must tell you. It has been on my mind ever since I read a little verse in the little book which Clay gave me. This little verse has made a deep impression on me: "Better than a thousand meaningless words is one word of sense, which brings the hearer peace." I have tried to follow this rule in oral language, and I may truthfully say that my friends and I have benefitted. And I feel that the same should hold true in written language. If I cannot bring you peace and joy of a more lasting nature, don't you think that I should build up a little reservoir first? I think that one deep thought would be better than a travelogue. I remember a letter Mrs. Hatvani sent me. It was very short, only a few sentences, but it penetrated deep. She added one thought from Paramahansa Yogananda. Please let me know how you feel about this.

Clay's little book is my constant companion and a real inspiration. I cannot get tired of reading the same verse over and over again.

Your boy – loves you.



February 27, 1953

My dear Ones in the little yellow house,

I am not tired anymore, but I surely was tired this afternoon. It is about 11:30 P.M. now. Yes, that was a hard fight around four o'clock to keep those eyelids in a raised position. But then I had an idea. The energizing exercises required too much energy, so I did not do them. But I took out the picture of the Masters and concentrated upon them. Slowly, like magic, I became rested again. And we even had a big cleaning party this evening, and I am still going strong.

I told the boys that after everything was cleaned, we would all celebrate by opening your wonderful box of candy. Yes, that package was a mighty nice thing. It is really nice to have a little something extra once in a while. The food is plentiful and good; but you know about that little sweet tooth most of us have. That box of dates was gone in no time flat and please don't ask me what happened to the candy. And that letter made me feel very happy also because I felt that my mail has made you happy. That little letter is the direct cause of this one. Instead of sleeping and accomplishing nothing, I will guide my pen and mind to touch off a spark of joy in the little yellow house.

You know, today seemed like a hard day, but it was a good day. There is no sting of hardness left as I write you this letter. But there is a real joy in my heart; it is unconditional. I am sitting on the barrack floor, three hundred and fifty miles from the little yellow house, but joy has found me even here.

Today something from the Bible came to me flying through an open window. It is in the place where the Apostles speak about the beggar who ate the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table. A wonderful meaning has revealed itself to me from behind these words. I realized the greatness of this beggar who was concerned about nourishing the bodies of others before he looked out for himself. He realized that only the One Great Life was sustained whenever anyone provided food for his boy. The beggar's own life was so intimately connected with all life, that feeding others was like feeding himself.

I realize now that it takes a saint to understand the real meaning of a scripture. It was a joy to talk to you. I love to write you any time of the day or night. It is like sharing with someone. We get so very rich by sharing.

Good night to you in the little yellow house.

Your boy,
Dieter

The paper is very nice; you have provided for me with much love again, dear Mother. And I know that Papa's and Hellmut's love was wrapped in the package also.



February 28, 1953

My dear Trio,

You even have time in the army to do anything. Anything you want to do bad enough. Writing the letter to you last night convinced me of this. But since I had a valid excuse for doing this, I slept twice as tight and twice as efficient last night.

My eyelids were getting awfully heavy just now and my motor was beginning to stall. The lights are out already and the majority of souls have slipped into the dream world. Suddenly, someone sneaks up to me. He has some cookies in his hand instead of a revolver. He says to me, "Peter, here is some fuel to keep you going." That is the way it works around here. Besides the cookies, I was the recipient this evening of two candy bars, a piece of birthday cake and half a pint of orange juice. We are all our brother's keeper. There is a wonderful spirit in our barrack, but I am sure it is the same all over. There is a lot of good in all people. You only have to touch a man in the right spot of his heart and speak to him gently. I never realized how much we are the maker of our own destiny.

It is wonderful to have everyone in the whole company on your side. Someone came to me tonight and said, "Peter, I have never met anyone like you. I cannot understand how you can be the way you are." We must try to follow the Law in the smallest detail. Since a few meals I have tried to waste no crumb from my meals and also eat no more than is good for me. I am only a single person trying to waste no food. "What can a single person accomplish?" most people would ask. I found that the power of the individual coupled with the Divine Law is very powerful. What George told me about the one person in harmony with God being able to overcome a whole army of darkness is true.

Dear Hellmut, keep on plugging away until you have learned to like it wherever you stay. That is the only way. U.C.L.A. (University of California at Los Angeles) is tough; but you know that only with effort can you achieve. In the army you will get physical tempering, in school it is mental tempering. We should have both. The diamond will not sparkle unless polished on all sides.

My stomach is functioning very well. I took Aloe last night anyway. I have good results and am feeling fine. The boys here all love sweet things; candy they really eat too much. So, if you could include raisins in a package, I could make the boys happy and their stomachs glad. This second reason I am keeping secret, though. I am enclosing \$30.00 of this month's pay. Please use it for a worthy cause. What you decide to do with it will be all right with me.

The wind is blowing strong this evening. The wind is my brother, too. I am not very well acquainted with him as yet. He has tapped on the window and knocked at the door. One day I will have a face-to-face talk with him and not be scared anymore.

I am happy to know, dear Hellmut, that you have taken some of the reigns in the little yellow house. Could you send me a couple of three-cent stamps, please, Mother?

A good, good night to the trio and don't forget to say hello to the Pontiac for me.

Your boy, Dieter





March
1953

Fort Ord, California

March 2, 1953

My Dear Ones,

I have pushed one thing to one side and another piece of work into the other direction. I now have room to say hello to you. It has been a nice day; my soul has grown stronger, only my body is a little worn. But I shall send it in for a repair tonight. Tomorrow morning it will be brand new.

Yesterday I tried to write a composition. I did a lot of thinking but just did not seem to be able to write.

I would like to mention that I am insured for, I think, a sum of \$10,000.00

Sleep tight,
Your boy, Dieter



March 4, 1953

My dear Parents and Brother,

Once more I have the golden opportunity to write you. I have a comfortable outdoor desk arrangement. Have two boxes to sit on and three other boxes constitutes my desk. I am sitting in the shade because overnight the weather has turned warm. I was so happy this morning when I stepped out of the barracks to be greeted by a milder weather.

And I was so happy last night to receive three whole letters. I was still working in the kitchen when I picked up my mail. I decided, therefore, to finish my work and read the letters as a kind of dessert. I had been working in and around the kitchen since early in the morning. When nine o'clock P.M. rolled around I was not ashamed to call myself tired. Besides your dear letter, Mother, I received mail from Miss Fry and George.

All that wonderful mail acted like medicine. I just sat in one place and soaked it all in. I became revitalized again. All feeling of tiredness was gone. I washed some clothes yet, cleaned a pair of shoes, and took a long, long, hot shower. When I finally slipped into bed about midnight, I was not tired anymore, as I thought. But before very long, sleep had taken me to the beyond.

But yesterday was a good day. There was a great wisdom connected with the work I did. I learned something yesterday while cleaning a dirty, stopped-up drainage. It was quite a mess I had on my hands, and the water just wouldn't hurry up and run off. I had taken off the metal disk with holes; you know, that thing which keeps the big parts out of the water. I stuck a hose into the drain, but without any success. And about this time my teacher called my attention to an analogy. This analogy right away made 100% sense to me. Look at human beings who are greedy and selfish. These human beings want to pour as much as possible into themselves. Grease and water, scotch and milk, everything flows into the cavity. And when it does not move fast enough, the selfish and greedy removed that disk with holes from their mouth. And in flow big stones and bones and sticks along with the cleaner food. The greedy ones cannot sift out the good from the bad.

And is it a surprise, then, that greedy people get mental and physical constipation?

When I looked at that messy, stopped-up drain, I realized what effect my shortcomings have on my mind and body. It made me much more eager to practice self-control and generosity.

And there is another interesting experience which happened yesterday. Tuesdays we all eat "C" rations. It is the food which the soldiers in the field eat daily. They contain just about everything a soldier likes and needs. The ration contains small envelopes of concentrated coffee and also envelopes of milk powder. The cook throws all these things out. I was tempted to gather all the coffee and milk powder together that we might send them to Germany. I started to do this. However, I found myself getting so greedy and nervous and losing that wonderful peace such that I made myself stop. I threw away what I had gotten. And I realized that if I could not do it with calmness, I'd rather not do it at all.

What do those few dollars saved mean? It is much more important to use the time in a more divine way. And something else became much clearer to me. Those boys on kitchen police have a chance to snatch some extra things from the supply room. The boys thought they were getting something for nothing. There is no such thing. I saw that one day they would be paying for those extra matches or cookies from a few years back. I would have done the same thing the others are doing, but yesterday I saw the foolishness involved and I shall do it no more.

When I started to work yesterday, I often glanced to my side to see who was watching. When the supervisor happened to be close by, I would naturally work harder. But now I realize the folly in my way. God watches every second. Be always eager to please Him. You can be sure He never lifts His eyes from you. I was cleaning dirty, greasy garbage pails. I tried to do a good job. This attitude is always uplifting, even when you clean garbage pails.

A few days ago I saw two boys pushing each other around. I noticed how the grass beneath their feet was bending and breaking. The boys were not in the least aware of this. And then I thought, "How often do we step on other people's feelings and never realize what we are doing?" We must develop a great deal of love before we will not hurt life in its different forms anymore.

Today I looked at a flower. I knelt down in front of it and looked close. I saw a beautiful California poppy. It was blooming. The petals were so delicate. Was there ever a greater craftsman or artist than God? If anyone ever thinks that he is good, let him just remember the Creator. All of us are laymen. Just look at a little poppy flower and you will be convinced of this. There was also a cute little bug inside the flower. He was yellow with pollen. The bug was running busily around in his motel. He seemed as busy as Papa when working at the Aquarium Stock Company and as busy as Mother filing cards. I wonder sometimes whose work is more important? Some boys asked me what I found when they saw me on the ground. I found a flower. Yes, you can say that I found it because previously the flower had been only a yellow spot for me.

If you will send me a pocket-notebook with necessary accessories, I will make you a carbon copy when I write. I don't know if it pays. But it pays to make you happy. If I can make you genuinely happy, it will be no trouble to send you a copy.

You might like to know that we have another C.O. (Conscientious Objector) in our company. I spoke to the boy before but only learned today that he was a C.O.

Thanks for the letters, Mother. I received the one from Harry Herbert and McLind today. Your letter is always doubly precious to me, even if it is only a line. All your good thoughts are a big push for me. Your boy wishes you a night of rest and that on the new morning you will be strong. Always remember to put first things first.

Your boy, Dieter

Hellmut, please tell Lillian and Beverly that I have not forgotten them. Please give them a hearty handshake from me.



March 5, 1953

Dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

Then end of the day was again made rich, for a letter from you arrived. And also Ruth's letter was read, only to be read over and enjoyed once more. I received the letter from Beverly. I enjoyed that, too. Do you want those letters back? Mr. Inwood had written to me once. A weekly Unity would be quite nice. The seeds that I sowed are mainly the cause of this card. How are they doing? I am a bad boy to have forgotten about them. Please give them best wishes and tender care.

I am going to be barracks' guard for a whole week while the boys do a lot of shooting. Today they shot their rifles for the first time. Tonight they have to clean them. George wrote me. What he wrote me was just what I needed today. Please give George my love. I will think of him tonight.

Your boy, Peter



March 7, 1953

Dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

Yesterday Papa's wonderful letter arrived together with that wonderful package. I am so happy to receive so much love from you. It helps me so much to sit straight and fight on no mater what happens. A letter is so uplifting for me that it has many a time carried me over the hump. And, when I untied the string of the package, I felt such love! I could almost see the loving hands that tied the string around the package.

Yesterday was a little hard for me. I wonder if it had something to do with Yogananda's passing? In a mysterious way (here is the unfinished card) the letter has superseded this.

Your boy



March 7, 1953

Dear Mother, dear Papa, dear Hellmut,

There must be a minute somewhere to write you a letter. This morning I wrote about half a postal but just could not finish it. I wanted to let you know so badly how much I enjoyed your mail. When I read and reread Papa's letter, I could just about see him sitting in front of me. Your

mail helps me a lot. When I untied the wonderful packages, those loving hands who tied the string seemed so near to me. I don't know what it is, but yesterday and today there is a heaviness around me. I think it is because of Yogananda's passing a year ago. Somehow the amulet with rose petals seemed to slip outside yesterday. I mean, it came from under my t-shirt so I could see it when I glanced down. But I am really not sad, I am only silently contemplating and waiting, waiting for the light to break through.

Just now I had a second helping of raisins. They taste so good because they are made so good. God does not have to put a brand on His product. If it comes from Him directly, it is the best. If we just eat in a relaxed and contemplative spirit, then we would realize with how much love God grew everything. I have noticed with myself that I am thinking already about the next delicious spoonful when I have not even swallowed what I have in my mouth. In this little observation I have seen that I am not living in the present. That is one of the hardest things to learn, to live now. Most of the time you can catch yourself living in expectation of the future. People are usually sad and unhappy because they cannot be where they want to be. My friends here are not sick, they get good food, but they are not happy. Either they are waiting for the next meal or the next weekend for the next furlough, and so on.

And the raisins are also so good because they have passed through your hands. That makes a big difference.

I realized the other day that only when we have developed a great deal of selfless love, will we be able to help the world in a greater way. I have noticed that usually people have to ask me to receive help. But when I have been an obedient child of God and been unselfish and controlled, then can I enter into the minds of others and give aid and comfort to the silent question. That prayer on the bronze tablet means more to me now than when I left you a few weeks ago. Especially the line: ". . . And help me to enter into the mind, etc." I repeat to myself. I think the time has come when I would like to memorize the prayer. Mother, may I ask you to send it to me? Please.

This little notebook is just right. I can easily slip it into my pocket. I have now a portable desk. Did I tell you already that I am barrack guard for a week? I have to see to it that the barrack stays neat and clean. It is a funny thing how I seem to get this type of work wherever I go. They gave me this job because this coming week is practically nothing but rifle practice. But then again, there might be a change of orders, like so often happens in the army. I will always try to "stay in the divine trend." Then I will be able to accept any change as the right change.

Dear Papa, I was very happy to receive that good report from our garden. That the poor cucumbers died is my fault. I should have known it was too early. I wonder if any of the green peppers made an appearance? They are in the last bed next to the fence.

I was wondering which letters you would like me to return? I don't have much storage room here. Thank you for telling me to do my best in the classroom work. I doubt, though, if we will actually be tested on the material. Especially I, who am only in an eight-week cycle. Three weeks of the cycle will be over today.

I have never had Philosophy 619, but whatever it is, Hellmut will only benefit if he will do some work of his own in the class. I found that you can hurt yourself if your idea is only to get by. You are only wasting time then.

Dear Mother, I also received your dear letter this noon; the one you wrote at seven o'clock Friday morning. That was a beautiful way to start the day. I have not yet written to Alice. But I will do it. If you should call her up sometimes, please give her my best regards. Maybe it would even be nice to make a special call for this.

The other day God showed me that He watches when you do even the littlest things. On my day of induction, we had eaten our noon and evening meal in a little restaurant next to the Mode O' Day building. A boy at my table asked me for salt. There was none at our table, so I got some from another table for the boy. They boy looked like a rough and easy-going fellow. When I saw the boy a few days later, I saw the hidden beauty in his soul. A few days ago this boy remarked to a friend, "I know Laue. He got some salt for me from another table when we were at the induction center." When I heard what the boy said, I knew that God sees everything you do.

I have eaten 1-1/2 ounces of raisins less one raisin. I enjoyed them very much. I will eat the last one when I have sealed this letter. I will think of you and Reverend Bernard and Yogananda tonight during the meditation. I will see you in the spirit of the meditation.

Your boy who loves you very much,
Dieter.

Would you or could you send me a few stamps, please?



March 9, 1953

My dear Papa, Mother and Brother Hellmut,

My good friends spent all day on the rifle range. The Peter boy stayed at home and guarded the barrack against the big bad wolf. He swept the floor and watered the lawn, tucked in shoelaces and lined up footlockers. There is really not much difference between here and home. We all act like brothers together; we share in work and play alike. Before, I offered someone a candy bar. He did not want it. But he put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a Cup-of-Gold candy bar for me. There are many boys with real hearts of gold.

Today we all had "C" rations, all the food came from cans. The type of food the boys in the field eat. There are three boys sitting in the corner of the barrack who do not seem to like "C" rations. They sneaked over to the PX and bought their supper there. I can see that it exists of ice cream, pie and orange juice. My supper this evening included a big dish of mixed fruit, prunes, cherries, apricots, pineapple and grapefruit, some crackers, a cookie and two pieces of candy. One piece was included in the "C" ration; the other piece was given to me by a kind heart. And as a special dessert I received your wonderful mail. And if I should still be hungry, there are still more wonderful things left from your gift package. We are all enjoying the wonderful contents.

Your letter, dear Hellmut, made me very happy. Especially as you are so busy, it was sweet of you to find time to write. I realize that you have no time to waste anymore. But this is really a blessing in disguise. If you have to make every minute count, you will get something done. Don't you remember how much of your precious time was scattered to the wind the previous semester? Remember the little saying on the calendars: "To fill the hour means happiness."

I can see that Mother has now many things to fill her hours. She seems to have a little vise to squeeze her work together in order to make room for those extra things that always pop up. It never fails, I say, anything you want to do bad enough, you have time for.

I had this feeling that there was not this great urge in you to learn French. I am not worried at all that this semester will make a casualty out of you. The harder it is, the more you will learn, and the greater will be the reward. Remember that if you knew the stuff already, you would not be in school. And remember to give the least attention to your grades. You want something in your head and not on a piece of paper.

Stationary and stamps and Guideposts also arrived today. I will probably leave Guideposts until last. First, I write letters. I have plenty to write on now, but I am short a writing tool. Starting next week the company will be legally permitted to go to the PX. Then I will be able to supply myself with everything I need. However, a package will never be sent back.

It is nice of you to save the money I send. But please don't save all. An unknown soldier on the front line likes packages as much as your boy Peter does.

At breakfast this morning a touch of greed stuck its ugly head out from somewhere. But it was too late already to check the invader. I made myself hold a prune pit from the meal in my mouth in order to remind myself of what happened. As I walked to lunch this noon, something became clearer to me. The idea of the Last Supper and the breaking of the bread I saw in a new and greater light. Every time we put a piece of nourishment in our mouth, we are partaking of this holy ceremony of eating of the Body of God, for He is in all and He is all. God gives Himself away generously and unhesitatingly at every meal. We should learn to eat in a spirit of thankfulness and reverence.

This afternoon I silently sewed some slippers for a friend. You should have seen those surprised eyes a few minutes ago. But this boy had a hunch who fixed the slippers. A beautiful red apple slipped as silently on my bed as I repaired the slippers. Those are the simple little ways for true love to be born.

Please do not send me a pencil anymore; I hinted for one before. A friend just brought me one along from the PX.

Dear Hellmut, I think I might understand the feelings you have expressed in your letter. I will always try to act in the true spirit of love.

Good cheer to you all from your boy,
Dieter



March 10, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa, and Hellmut,

So be it, a letter tonight. I have paper and thoughts at hand and plentiful. It seems to me the Lord provided me very generously with writing paper when you sent this tablet. And I trust that God won't let me down when it comes to good thoughts to fill these pages with. I, myself, will look forward to reading these pages, for as yet the blueprints are wet. God keeps the stencil in spirit somewhere. Only with each day of obedient living will He let us take a glimpse.

Oh yes, that letter from my dear Mother arrived today. I read your sweet lines written midnight Saturday and Sunday afternoon at about eight o'clock Tuesday evening. And I read them again about two-and-a-half hours later, just before writing you these lines. I kind of get into a good writing spirit after I read your letters. I want to be sure to thank Papa for the "God Bless You" in the other letter. I sure noticed that it was his handwriting. I wanted to mention it right away, but somehow I forgot. I will leave it to you, Mother, whether or not you want to read my mail to others. Just don't brag. That hurts me very much.

The other boy who is a C.O. (Conscientious Objector) sleeps in another barrack. He is a C.O. because of his church affiliation. But there is probably a deeper reason. But I don't feel I want to investigate.

This morning was a beautiful morning. It had rained and the air was fresh and warm. The clouds had parted and some stars twinkled cheerfully during their last minutes of nightly rule. A silvery slice of the moon added a seldom seen touch of beauty to the sky. I looked up at the heaven and saw all this. This was a beautiful beginning of a new day. I was happy to be where I was. And then I knew that if we have no desire for any particular place on earth, we can be anywhere we want to be. The minute we relinquish all desire, everything is ours. That sounds quite odd, but I feel it is true.

And then there is another thought that swept into my mind as I swept the barrack floor this morning. Do you feel there is anything wrong about throwing a piece of paper on the street? If there would be the street sweeper standing in front of you that minute and he would pick up your paper, how would you feel? You would feel pretty low, I know. Most likely you would not throw the paper on the street. Why, then, be deceived by time, if you know so surely that what you do is wrong? Why let the passing of a few hours or days make you unaware and cause you to disobey a law? The street sweeper will definitely be there to clean up. And why make it hard for yourself: For in the end we all pick up our own papers.

I have room for one more thought. Do you write your letters with lots of love? Yes, I know you do. Do you care for your children with a lot of love? Yes, I know you do. Do you think an apple tree grows his apples with less love than you use in caring for your children? No, he uses equal amounts of love to grow all his apple children. Love is the element which sustains, protects and makes the apples sweet and colorful. We should learn to taste that love in the apple as I can taste your love in your letter.

Well, good night, it's time to draw a line under March the tenth and prepare for March the eleventh.

Your boy,
Peter



March 11, 1953

My dear Ones,

I am glad to have a postcard handy tonight. I am a little bit tired. I have plenty of writing supplies now. I will let you know when I am low. Thank you, dear Mother, for the messenger letter announcing the package.

From Clay I received a most wonderful letter today. I will save it, read it again, and then send it to you.

Harry Herbert also wrote a sweet letter.

Everyone is so kind to me. I try to pass the kindness along to others.

Yes, I go to church on Sundays whenever possible. I will write you about the little church I attend a little later, or otherwise I will tell you about it when I see you. When that will be is written in the stars. But it will be, I know. I love you.

Your boy,
Peter



March 12, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, and my dear Hellmut,

That wonderful package has certainly precipitated a letter for you. It makes me peppy already to see that wonderful package in front of me. You should have heard the words of praise from the boys. One comment was, "This is the best package I have ever seen!" Or, "I certainly have respect for the person who made this package." Or, "That's what's lacking here, what you have in your package."

I unpacked your package carefully and slowly, to be sure to notice all the love with which each knot was tied and each box of raisins was placed. I am enjoying your gift very much and my friends are enjoying it with me. One very fine boy loved the pumpernickel so much that I could not help but give him a package. He is transferring to another company tomorrow, so I silently slipped the bread into his duffel bag. I know that if I would have made a big give-away ceremony, the boy would not have taken the bread.

Everyone enjoys your wonderful gift with me. If you could see the good will and joy your package spreads, you would be very happy.

You know, I have discovered a way of enjoying one piece of candy as if it were two. Here is the method. Someone gives me a piece of his candy or some fruit. I accept it and am very happy about the kind gift. Then, at the right moment, I pass the gift to someone else who I think might enjoy it. His joy is again my joy. This evening someone gave me a piece of candy. Before I had a chance to think of sharing, it was already on its way downstairs. I tried to make good by buying two pieces of candy and giving them to two friends.

Somehow I realized two days ago these words of Jesus more completely: "Forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." Someone had neglected to straighten out his footlocker. Should I be mad at the boy for this? I will have to do it now. No, I will love him more in order that he may also let love grow in his heart. For when we have true love, we will never neglect to do even the smallest duty. When I looked over my past, I saw so many things that I had neglected

to do. God has been very patient with me. There is no reason why we should ever become impatient or angry.

The prunes are wonderful. Everyone likes them and everyone's stomach likes them, too. Tonight I soaked a few for someone who is not feeling very well. I think the boy will enjoy them very much in the morning. I eat them one at a time. I try to make a sermon out of each prune. Each prune contains the Great Mystery.

We just had bed check. The C.Q. in charge of quarters has to see to it that all the children are in bed. I was only on top of my bed, but that is good enough.

Today – this evening – I had an unexpected surprise. I am finished sweeping the barrack floor. I will be going from now wherever the troops go. Instead of a rifle, I carry a first aid pack. I will wear a helmet with a red cross on it. That feels so good. I had it on tonight already. The helmet makes me very conspicuous. Some people came to me already and asked for medicine in a kidding way. My medicine will always be a silent, "God bless you."

Yes, things are turning out all right. Half of my basic training is up this week. Things are going fine. It's ship ahoy! for the Peter boy. Good night and thanks a lot for your love and for your package.

A lot of boys are having sore throats here. If it is not too expensive, maybe you can send a little bit of that chewing gum along. My throat was a little bit rough for a while, but now it feels like better again.

Your boy,
Peter



March 13, 1953

My dear Ones,

Your letter, dear Mother, was again a sweet surprise for me. I am taking a spiritual vitamin tablet when I read your sweet lines. Today I was standing almost all day in the sun and ocean breeze. I have really red cheeks tonight. I learned a most wonderful lesson today while observing the carefree seagulls gliding through the air. The parable of the birds neither sowing nor reaping but still being provided for spoke to me in a very real and convincing way.

Your boy,
Peter

Yogananda's words are wonderful. Thank you.



March 15, 1953

My dear Hellmut, my dear Mother and my dear Papa,

This Sunday is drawing to a close. The stars are shining brightly for quite a while already. I don't know what time it is. You might just be in your Sunday evening meditation.

Today was the first day the boys are off restrictions. That means in the evening we can go any place on the post as long as we are in bed by eleven. And if we were good little soldiers all week, we will be rewarded with a pass on Saturday afternoon or evening to leave the post. When the boys got their first pass this afternoon, they took off for the neighboring towns like a bunch of hungry lions. But Peter stayed in the barrack and enjoyed the silence. And I also visited some friends via a letter.

The printed card you received is nothing extraordinary. Don't save it, please. I am quite happy being the Red Cross man of the company. I was called upon to fix a boy's little finger. He had a small cut on top of the finger. It was only a little thing but a big thing for the boy. I put a band-aid on the cut and blessed the finger. Tomorrow I shall do a little bit of running around to get a complete set of first-aid equipment. And, also, I might do a little bit of extra reading on the subject. If God wants it so, I will be going to medical training school in a little more than four weeks.

May I just mention the sea gulls once more? They looked so clean and carefree and healthy gliding through the air that I could not help but think of we humans. We build a house to keep us protected from the weather. We must have a fancy bathroom to keep clean and neat. We spend half of our lives in providing food for our stomachs. The seagulls do all this on the side. They have the deep trust that God will always provide for them. And God does provide for them. God would do the same for us if we would have the trust of a seagull.

I am rolling a prune pit around in my mouth since a while. And I thought this yesterday in regard to the prunes: Can you imagine, Peter, that at some time in the past this prune was a beautiful blossom and slowly it matured into the prune? A little tender blossom has changed into the prune, a fruit with a hard pit and soft flesh all around. This change was quite a miracle. It was too hard for me to understand this miracle. To think that it all starts with a little seed and then grows and grows until it is ready to support another form of life. To think that I, too, was so small twenty years ago; to think that I was only a thought in your mind. It is a great mystery and miracle. To understand God and His ways we must be very wise.

I am sending a couple of things I cannot use anymore. You will be getting \$45.00 directly from the army now every month. I don't need much money, but my brothers like a little something once in a while. What I have left over at the end of the month I will send you.

Now I will get ready for the night and for the next day. It is a few minutes before nine. It has been a nice day. I am thinking of you now. You are probably singing a closing prayer. I wish you a happy, happy week.

Your boy who loves you and tries to love all like He loves you.

Peter



March 16, 1953

My dear Papa, Hellmut and Mother,

Your dear letters of late Thursday afternoon and Friday evening are spread out in front of me. It is such a treat and temptation to write you. I enjoy reading your letters and receiving your love. It is something which does not fill me up at the expense of feeling full.

Your dear package has certainly been a package of pure love already. And there is always something left for that longing look. You know, it just wouldn't taste right anymore to put all those wonderful things in my stomach. My food is a happy smile and to hear, "Oh boy, that sure was good!" exclamation. Tonight also came those three bars of Houton's Chocolate (that was real love), the prayer and Unity.

I am well supplied now; it will be a while before I have everything digested. I do not want to accumulate lots of things here. I will let you know when I am ready for a new supply. The little black notebook with possible refills is fine to write on. But I have plenty of everything now. The stamps are coming in very handy now. The boys seem to sense that I have an extra supply. I have sold a couple and lent a couple already to those who need them.

I have also put a few band-aids on some wounds. It's a funny thing, but I had a hunch to put some band-aids in my pocket. So I returned to my locker and got a few. A few minutes later I walked into the kitchen and saw a boy looking at his bleeding thumb. My hunch was right. I put a band-aid on the boy's finger, blessed it and left the kitchen.

I know you people like pictures. If I can have some taken it will depend on how - -. Well, it is better not to wait for any. But I can tell you what my friend said, "Peter, you have put on a couple of pounds since I saw you first."

This afternoon I saw how nice the Law is working. Either my friend or I had the chance to sleep for an hour in an unmolested little room. I let my tired friend sleep that extra hour. I was tired also, but all of a sudden I wasn't tired anymore. And when we marched home at about 5:30 P.M., I was so peppy that I could throw my shoulders back and really march good. And I looked at the silvery-lined clouds of the evening sky and the California Poppies which had gone to sleep already. I was very happy. And I knew then that I was marching in the ranks of the warriors of the light, and I knew that I was trying to keep in step with them.

Dear Hellmut, remember that one sure sign that you are learning something at U.C.L.A is that it is hard for you. There is something for you to learn in school; otherwise you would not be there. Don't be ambitious for grades like I used to be. My grades don't mean anything to me now. This is a sure sign that they are only of temporary value. Don't hesitate to ask Revered Bernard for advice. He is able to know your problems and might have just the right word or you.

My basic training will probably be over in four weeks. Vacations a soldier should never expect or anticipate getting. If I will ring the door bell one day, it will be a surprise.

Good night,

Your boy, Peter



March 17, 1953

My dear Ones at home,

Your dear letter of Saturday evening, dear Mother and Papa, brought me again a basket full of joy. Tonight I will only send you a card and tell you about the California Poppies, then I will wash my clothes and then slip into bed a little earlier.

I am already enjoying the announced package. Soon I will be able to buy all things, but to know your hands have blessed a package makes it precious for me.

When we left the company area this morning and marched into the field, the poppy flowers were all asleep; the yellow blossoms were all closed yet. As the sun rose in the sky the buds all opened. A yellow hue covered the fields. Our souls don't open with the rising sun because our soul buds are tied together by craving and selfishness. Let us cut these ties and the world will be a field of light.

Your boy,
Peter



March 19, 1953

Dear Folks at home,

Again I am taking advantage of the postals you sent me. That means I will be a few minutes earlier in bed. Your dear letter, dear Mother, was again a surprise. And I enjoyed the articles about S.R.F. very much also. Someone told me about it last Sunday morning and I told the person that my mother will send me the article. I can see that you have heard what I said. I can see that I do not have to write my wishes to you anymore. I will just think them.

Do you know what empty candy wrappers mean to me? They mean unfulfilled cravings. The way to get some enjoyment and benefit from a candy bar is to share it. And the more we share, the greater is the joy.

Your boy,
Peter



March 20, 1953

My dear Ones at Home,

The candy gift was delivered this evening to Pvt. Laue. It was a sweet surprise for all of us. Everyone who was present received a piece. But the spirit of good will and brotherliness is ever strong and beautiful.

Today we sat in the rain and wind. The boys complained. But I watched the flowers and bushes. They stood silently, firmly and joyously. Many flowers were blooming now also. The scent of the sage flavored my lunch. I felt close to Mother Earth as I sat on the ground and was eating what she so lovingly had grown for me.

Do you know I had bought band-aids and iodine for others and was the first one who needed those things?

Thank you for your unselfish love,

Your boy,
Peter



March 21, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother Hellmut,

I have decided to wash no clothes tonight and to polish no shoes. Everything can wait except a letter for you. I am sitting comfortably on top of my bed with my legs crossed; the brown satchel and a folded blanket on top of my legs form the desk. I am thinking of you, thanking you for the letter of Thursday evening. It was a letter that gave me comfort in a lonely moment.

Tonight I had a most wonderful supper. I did not have the regular food that was prepared in the kitchen. Dates and pumpernickel and almonds were on my menu. Papa, I was so happy to have everything in time and always enough. I am beginning to see that if I will only let God provide for me, He will never let me down.

When I walk with my tray through the chow line now, I try to hold back from thinking, "Boy, oh boy! I would surely like to have a lot of this or that." God knows what the right quantity is. I always used to look on other boys' trays and compare their quantities with mine. Before I had even started to eat, I was already planning on getting seconds.

Now I try to be different. I know now that the food I receive is the food I need. I try to make my tray real clean every day. I start with the easy-to-digest foods like salad and vegetables. And should the potatoes be cold by the time I get around to them, I am not grieved about such a thing. All the food we eat is grown with such infinite love and patience that a meal should be a sermon in itself.

A few days ago I had received a letter from someone; I think it was one of your dear letters, Mother. I was on the verge of eating something and reading the letter at the same time. But a little voice hinted to me that there is so much love in the food and so much love in the letter that you can know neither loves if you try to enjoy them together.

When I ate the wonderful dates and nuts and bread tonight, I felt that my body was really happy because I ate slowly and thoughtfully.

Yesterday evening a friend came to me and asked, "Peter, do you have some candy for me?" I told my friend everything I had: bread, prunes, and dates. I don't remember if I mentioned almonds, but I did have some as well as a box of raisins which was also left. I remembered too late a lonely Tootsie roll. But the box of raisins made my friend happy. He wanted to pay me, but I told the boy that he should enjoy the raisins as a gift from a friend.

A little bit later I realize how I should have felt. If my dear brother Hellmut would have been standing in front of me, the spirit with which I would have given him the raisins, I should also

have given to my friend. It will be wonderful when every person will be as dear to me as my own brother, mother, father or sister.

Last night it was late, the work was done, almost everyone had gone to bed, and the moonlight and starlight brought peace into my heart. I was tired and tense and a great longing was in my soul. I had not the vision to look beyond the petty things that are today and are no more tomorrow. There was that great longing which precedes a lesson of life. Dear Reverend Joseph had written me a letter which I received last night. There was strength and comfort in his words. I saw again how God sends his angels in time of need.

But only shortly before I went to bed was the reason for my longing made clear to me. In the evening it had been raining. Then there were no clouds in the sky. When I looked out of the window the moon and stars were shining. They spoke to me and said, "Look to the moon and stars. We will always be here." And it seemed that in that moment all things which had made my heart heavy and my body tired dropped away from me. Thinking of and looking at the eternal stars and the moon gave me peace. When I looked out of the window a few minutes later, the clouds had covered the moon and the stars, but the peace remained in my heart. A few minutes before I awoke this morning, the voice reminded me several times to look at the moon and the stars.

This afternoon I think you might have heard me call for my parents and brother and the little yellow house. Almost everyone had left the barrack. The boys had received their pass and had scattered into every direction. But I had the feeling to stay put. And I also had no desire to go any place. So I leaned against the window and let the sunshine warm my face. I became very lonely. I began to pray. There was something for me to learn. "How long will it be, though?" I asked God. And it seemed that a voice spoke to me and said, "The whole world is your home, boy." And then a little while passed and the same voice rang in my ears, except that this time the voice said "my boy."

That helped me very much. I sat down on my bed and thought, and I realized that wherever there are hearts, there is my home. It will be wonderful to have the whole world as your home. And as the last rays of the sun shone over the rooftop into my window and onto my bed, those last rays of the sun told me that they will always be with me. I have found tonight some permanent friend – the rays of the sun – and the world is my home. Your boy is writing you this letter tonight with gladness in his heart. It is a wonderful thing how my heart gets happier with every word I add to your letter.

I would like to add one more thought before I wish you good night. If you see a candy bar and can stop yourself from eating it, that is good. If you see a candy bar and can stop yourself from wanting it not at all – your eyes may see it but your tongue must not want it – that is even better. There is great freedom in the second state, but I know the ladder leads higher up yet.

Dear Hellmut, do you spell your name Hellmut from now on? Dear Papa and Hellmut, what you write in the margins makes me very happy. To see everybody's handwriting is just wonderful.

O Mother, I almost forgot. Would you please add a prayer from Yogananda to your letters once in a while? I have time to do a little bit of memorizing and the three prayers of Yogananda which I know, have helped me very much already.

May sunshine and peace be your companion forever; forever,

Your boy,
Peter

All my friends I wish the same I am wishing you.

(Postscript, March 22nd, 1953)

It is Sunday morning, a beautiful Sunday morning. I will soon go to church in Monterey and listen to a little Japanese minister speak of God. He is a little man, but his heart is big and it includes many people. Now I shall have a few dates and then leave for church. I will think of you. Writing you this letter was almost like going home.

Your boy,
Peter



March 22, 1953

My dear Ones,

Once more the sun has moved from East to West. Yesterday I wrote you that my home was where there are hearts. But I think I would like to say today that where the lonely hearts are, there is my home. I tried to make an old man happy today. He was sitting alone on the bench and he looked lonely and tired. I tried to show the man that there was someone in the world who cared for him. Seldom have I seen such a radiant smile as was on the old man's face. And then God let me feel the happiness of the old man. Four eyes shown brighter after I left the old man. This is a Sunday that I will remember because of the old man.

It is seven-thirty. You are on your way to the Sunday meditation. I will think of you.

Your boy,
Peter



March 23, 1953

My very Dear Ones,

I quickly want to share the very good news this morning. There has come into me, into both body and soul, such strength and joy and peace overnight that I wanted to let you know. I had the feeling that my last card and letter had a note of sadness in it. Please tell George about it because I wrote him also a letter last night.

Love to you forever.

Your boy,
Peter



March 24, 1953

My dear Ones,

Tonight I must really make it short, although I would love to make it very long. I think it is past midnight and tomorrow we go on an overnight camping trip. Your letter, Mother, from Saturday evening, that most wonderful Santa Claus package from you, and the sweetest package of love from Miss Frey has cheered Mr. Sleepy away.

But I must not take advantage of Mr. Sleepy. I must give him a few hours to rebuild my body for tomorrow's tasks. Do you know that your package will make a lot of hearts happy? Not only mine, but many. I have packed some of your dainties into my field pack and I shall be Santa Claus when no one expects it.

Your love makes me forget everything hard about the army. It is just wonderful what miracles it works. When I have time I will write you a letter again. This is only a thank-you note.

I think you will enjoy Mrs. McLind's letter. It is so full of love.

Your boy now and always,
Peter



March 24, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

A greeting to you at seven-thirty in the morning. Yesterday we had a long but pleasant day. We spent almost all day in the field. It was close to eleven before Peter came marching home. But it was a beautiful spring day with lots of flowers blooming. The sun painted my face a healthy rosy red.

I see that it is time to move out so I have to make it quick.

Yesterday I also had a little chance to use some first aid. I am so happy to help the boys. A kind word or a prune or dates I also try to include in my medicine chest. On the way home I felt refreshed by the scent of the sagebrush. Tomorrow night we will sleep in tents under the stars.

Your boy always,
Peter



March 25, 1953

My dear Mother and Father and Brother,

The opportunity is golden to write. I have the most perfect job you could dream of. I am guarding the company's camping equipment. And do you know who is keeping me company? Kind little birds probably never dreamt that their next meal would come from the kitchen of Company F. But the birds knew they would be provided for. What more do they need to know?

This morning there was no sign of a sunny day, but I surely wished that there would be sun. It is about two o'clock now. Except for a few tiny clouds on the Southern horizon, I can only see blue sky and the sun. I wonder what all the sun can see?

We have been brought out to the camping area by truck. It is surely a beautiful place. I am sitting in a grove of old and young live oak trees. Just before I started to write you, I read the poem on the bookmark which you sent me. And then I looked at the tree trunks and branches of the trees. No one but God could ever twist and bend Life in such artistic ways. The trees are Life. There are green hills all around me except for an opening in the east. A hundred yards in front of me the water of a pond glistens. To be more specific, it is a pond and swamp combination.

Yesterday, when I was standing in line for my noon meal, I thought, "God has provided for you again." And then I happened to look at a small blooming bush. I noticed that God had not even forgotten the bumblebee, who was just drinking a cup of honey.

And how timely arrived that wonderful package with candy and raisins and figs and nuts and, oh, so much. I have a few of those wonderful things with me. Just as much as a band-aid is the proper thing for a cut, so is a candy bar proper for that tired and hungry look. I have an empty band-aid box filled with goodies for the stomach. I now call the contents, "Band-aids for the stomach."

In town and at the PX I can buy everything I need. The only – but pretty big – difference between a candy bar or box of fruit that I buy and one that you send is that you have added your love to everything you touched.

I realized yesterday much more than before why people don't always have a super-abundance of everything. I had eaten a nice and satisfying supper. My body had received what it needed. Then there came so unexpectedly that wonderful package from you. I nibbled a little on the wonderful things. Then I asked God to help me know when the right time was to eat and to share. And I think I should ask God now to give me the strength to wait and be patient. That chocolate sometimes itches pretty badly in my left pocket.

Dear Mother and Papa and Hellmut, you should have seen the package of chocolate Miss Frey sent me yesterday. That love almost brought tears into my eyes. I could just look at the gift and feel myself gently touched by love. Through your dear letters, Mother, and through the loving greetings of Papa and Hellmut, I am learning a very wonderful thing. I am beginning to see and feel that all articles written for the purpose of helping others have the same beautiful love in them as your letters. The thing that gives the special touch of love to your letters is that they are written especially for your boy by a mother's heart.

When I read in Unity Magazine today, I noticed for the first time that Great Love of the person who wrote the composition. We so often get a feeling of coldness from printed matter that has been written for the multitude. This need not be if we will try to put ourselves into the mind of the person who wrote the article.

I also read some papers from the Expression class today. I felt a great love and wisdom in those words. Would you please buy me a subscription for a year of the newly begun Expression Magazine? Beverly will be able to tell you how to get the subscription. You might like to read the monthly magazine first, and then you might send it to me or save it until I come home.

I think I am receiving a net pay of \$70.00 a month. That will go up a few dollars after I have completed a certain amount of basic training. I believe it is after I have been in the army for sixteen weeks.

You know, it is a funny thing about having a picture taken. I thought the other day that it would not be "I" tomorrow anymore because we are constantly changing. I am beginning to see what Beverly meant when she said that she does not have fixed ideas. She always leaves room for change and growth. I like the way David M. put it when he wrote me. He said, "Always try to do the best you know how, but always be ready to question it."

God has been very kind to me. While the boys are learning how to throw a grenade, He permitted me to read and write and relax.

This letter probably won't leave the post until Friday. The schedule says, I think, that we return tomorrow evening to our company area.

Oh yes, that wonderful card with all those signatures of good wishes and strength and love arrived. It made me very happy. I have it in my pocket and will look at it again. Your dear last letter I am also carrying with me, dear Mother.

It is Thursday evening. We have returned from our overnight camping trip. It feels so good to be inside at night. I surely thought a lot of the loving sun when I was trying to sleep in the tent. It was comforting to have the assurance that the sun rises every morning. Just as surely as the sun rises every morning, God will come into our hearts one morning also.

Papa, your dear letter arrived this evening. I was so happy about it. The prayer is just the right one. And that package with its wonderful contents of dates and prunes and pumpnickel, English toffee and raisins parallels exactly Peter's ideas of a perfect package. I'll bet Mother remembered my sweet tooth for that toffee. I took the closed package over to my friends and opened it while everyone was eagerly looking on. All the boys' eyes were as interested in the contents as was I. Everyone enjoyed the unexpected treat very much. Many boys thanked me and I would like to pass their "thank you's" on to you.

I am enclosing the article "The Surveyor." I think you might enjoy it. And also I am sending you a little feather which I found in the field. Good night to you for now and thank you so much for your great love you are expressing in so many different ways.

Your boy, Peter Laue

The honey is delicious.



March 27, 1953

My dear Ones in the Yellow House,

Again you made my day richer by sending me two letters. One you wrote Tuesday and one Wednesday.

Yesterday I memorized the prayer of the Divine Sculptor, and today I recited the poem to myself because what the teacher had to say made me tired.

I am eating the wonderful honey now and am enjoying it very much. It was certainly nice of those thousands of bees to fly from blossom to blossom and gather the honey. I silently thanked the bees and flowers for their gift.

Another week is drawing to a close, but let us learn not to just mark time and count the weeks that have rolled by. Let us learn to live disconnected from the pendulum of the clock and live in the eternal now.

Your boy forever and forever,
Peter



March 29, 1953

My dear Mother and Papa and brother Hellmut,

When I met Mr. Inwood while hitch-hiking, I never dreamt that I would come to his home as a soldier boy. God had very wonderful forethoughts when He gave me a friend in Carmel. This afternoon I visited the Inwood's. I was so happy when I walked around the corner and saw their chimney smoking. A cold wind was blowing on top of that. I cannot tell you how happy I was to step into the warm, friendly home. God is very kind to me. God speaks through the Inwood's.

I am sitting next to the fireplace now, writing you and drinking in the wonderful spirit of a friendly home. I also spoke to some U.C.L.A. students and their soldier-husbands. They were also enjoying the hospitality of the Inwood's home. The wives are returning to Los Angeles tonight and, as you probably know by now, I gave them a message along for you.

Today has really been a nice day. I went to the Buddhist church in the morning. I arrived early in the church. Instead of waiting outside, I joined the little Sunday school children. It was a joy for me to watch those little people so full of life. It is so wonderful to see life in its different expressions. When I looked at the wood the church was built of, I felt that there was life in it also.

Just now life locked in a log of wood is keeping me warm.

And then there was the service for the older people. I thought of you during the service. It is at the same time that the service in the chapel is given; Reverend Bernard's service, I mean. During the sermon I received the beautiful feeling of living each moment, to desire to live nowhere else but where God places you for the moment. After the service I was invited to a wonderful lunch prepared by the people of the church. While I was enjoying my lunch, you were probably enjoying a little something in the India House. I ate the rice with two sticks. Toward the end I was able to operate them pretty well.

After the lunch I visited the flowers blooming in a beautiful park. Mother Nature seems to have put on her prettiest dress for Easter.

But the wind was a little too cool and so I retreated into the Carmel Library. I had a wonderful place to write there. And do you know what my eyes happened to see? The March-April edition

of the Self Realization Magazine was lying on the magazine table. It was like meeting a good old friend. It surely felt good to look through the magazine and read something here and there. I read the poem: "I Am Lonely No More."

After I left the library I telephoned the Inwoods. "Come on over, Peter," was what Mr. Inwood said right away. And here I am.

Yesterday I was told definitely that I have only two more weeks of basic training. About sixty boys of my company will have the eight-week cycle like myself. Next Monday and Tuesday those boys who have this shorter cycle will be put together in one platoon. We will have a kind of summarized form of basic. What my definite orders are after I have completed this training I do not know yet. Where I will go and how much medical training I will receive I do not know yet. But God knows, and He knows what is best for all of us. He has taken care of me so far and will take care of me tomorrow and the day after.

I think you have received the message about the especially good box of candy for the Inwoods. I think they would love such a "thank you" note. Let me say good-bye to you now and visit with the Inwoods a little bit.

So, may I wish you all a happy week, with many joyful hours, and with calmness all the way through. The Inwoods send their very best regards along with this letter.

Your boy now and always,

Peter

Could you please thank Valerie Douglas for her loving letter. I misplaced her address but will send her greetings as soon as I find it. If I don't find it, I'll ask you to please send it to me. Thank you.

Your boy

And please say hello to Alice for me and tell her that I enjoyed her card very much.



March 30, 1953

My dear Ones in the Little Yellow House,

I received Unity and Guideposts from you today. I have read in Unity a little already and enjoyed it very much. I like the simple language.

Today we were standing around for an hour doing nothing. So I pulled out of my pocket the "Prayer at Noon" which Papa copied for me. I felt that I did something in memorizing the poem. When I returned from the Inwoods, I realized how valuable my army training has been for me. If we sit down next to a fireplace all our life, it is very difficult to know the feelings of those who stand outside our door and freeze. If we want to help people, we must understand them. And we must have lived together with them in order to know what their problems and needs are.

Your boy and brother, Peter





April
1953

Fort Ord, California

April 1, 1953

My dear Ones,

Just a quick note from the post office along with a money order. I received your dear letter written Sunday afternoon. Don't you worry, Mother. The clouds will pass for all of us in time and the sun will appear to us more radiantly than ever. If I am not writing, I am thinking of you anyway. My mailbox has been filled very generously by my good friends. So, if it is not a letter from you, Mother, it is from a friend.

And even Unity Magazine gives me great joy. Yesterday I had a chance to read quite a bit in it. I'll tell you more some other time. If you and Papa and Hellmut and I want to get the proper perspective on our daily activities, then let us always keep our eyes on the sun and the moon and the stars.

Your boy, always,
Peter Dieter



April 2, 1953

My dear Ones,

I received your dear letters yesterday evening, my Papa. That diet must have really made an impression on you. It is going to be awfully hard for me to do anything while in the army. So I'll just watch how you people are getting along.

I just wanted to let you know that it is not possible to be with you at Easter time. I don't want you to hope and then be disappointed. I'll let you know when I receive my first leave. Until I know, I will not build a dream house. I wish you all a happy, happy Easter. I am surely glad that Mr. Easter Rabbit is going to visit me soon. Maybe today already.

Your boy now and always,
Peter



April 2, 1953

My dear Papa, Mother and Brother Hellmut,

Everyone is showering me with all kinds of wonderful gifts. There is a lesson to learn. It is not easy to learn in all cases – the fruitcake for example. But the idea we should always remember is to let the light flow through you. I must always remain a channel, never become a pool; even when it comes to the delivery of nuts from the Los Angeles Nuthouse, or cake or figs. It is tempting to hold on, but I will ask God to give me strength to remain in the "Divine Trend." My locker is loaded with the most wonderful things to be found anywhere. I have enjoyed playing a little bit of Santa Claus tonight. It is a lot of fun. My stomach is not large enough to hold all the good things. All I can do is say, "Thank you so much!" to you and God.

Do you know who was waiting for me tonight as I came home from the field? My good friend and brother Leonard. He is a very dear brother of mine. One big smile lit my face when I saw him.

He invited me to supper in his car. He had nice things and, on top of that, I had your wonderful packages to open. We had some of those delicious nuts and figs from your package. And, on top of your wonderful package, Leonard left me fruit and cookies, etc. I can feed the company now the healthful way. You are all so kind to me. When Leonard left, we were both two happy people. It was a joyous meeting and a joyous parting for we knew in spirit we are always together.

Your book also arrived this evening, dear Papa. It is very sweet of you to send it to me. I have very little room here, and it is a lot of trouble to go to the post office and mail anything home. The best thing is something that goes into my pocket, into my heart, and then can be thrown away. Please don't send me anything to read anymore, except maybe an occasional prayer. I can always carry the Bhagavad-Gita, the New Testament or Clay's little book along with me. You know that too much food is not good for you, even if it is of the best kind. Too much reading is not good either. Body and soul alike must have a chance to digest and rest.

Tonight I also received some books from Alice. She sent me poems written by Eleanor Smith. You see that I have to make a halt somewhere. Food I can share with the boys, but I doubt if I could find someone just now who would like to have the literature. I have to do a little pre-digesting before I can pass the wisdom of the books and pamphlets and poems to my brothers.

The chewing gum I received quite a little while ago, dear Mother. Forgive me if I did not thank you. And the card from the bank I have returned the next day after I received it. You will probably have it by now.

Please don't count days until you expect to see me home. Let each day take care of itself. God knows best when the time should be. I would love to see you all soon, but I don't want to interfere with the Divine Plan. He is the Divine Sculptor and I will try not to handicap Him in His work. Thank you all so very much for the Great Love which you hold in your heart for your boy.

Good night to you all and sleep well that you may have strength for the new day tomorrow.

Your boy,
Peter



April 5, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Papa and my dear Hellmut,

It is a day before Easter and all over the land the bells are ringing. Can we hear the bells? Maybe we will if, in silence and reverence, we bow down to the blossoming flowers.

I will be thinking of you, especially tomorrow. I am planning to spend the afternoon (or at least the late afternoon and evening) with the Inwoods. This way I may enjoy the atmosphere of a friendly home.

Yesterday we marched across a bridge. Beneath it ran the State highway. Civilian cars were traveling on it. I thought for a minute, "There is the road to freedom." But no sooner had I thought this than the little voice inside said very definitely, "The road to freedom is in yourself."

It is time to fall out for the eight A.M. formation. I will hold you in my thoughts with love always.

Your boy,
Peter



April 5, 1953

My dear Mother and Papa and Brother Hellmut,

Once more a Sunday is drawing to a close. I am finally sitting down to write. There are many people I would like to visit; you are one of the many. I was so intent upon writing many letters today that God told me, "Peter, don't be so anxious." I realized that by being so eager in following up my idea of writing, I became unaware of the little deeds of kindness that I should do.

I spent the afternoon with the Inwoods and two old ladies. The rest of the evening, if God wills it so, I will be with you. And if time permits, with one other person. It was not according to my plan to sit with the two old ladies and have tea and cake, but I felt it would be the right thing to do.

I decided to sit together with the ladies and listen to their conversation when God gave me this thought: These two people are getting close to the great change of life, and here is an opportunity to become more fully aware that we all will someday stand in front of the gate to the other world.

The time I spent together with the ladies was not lost. I had two and a half hours of beautiful contemplation. I sat near to the fireplace again watching how God's energy was released out of the wood. And I also looked out across the sea. I feel that I have gained strength during the afternoon. I also thought of Christ. So you can see that the afternoon was not lost.

I also split a little bit of wood for Mr. Inwood. I enjoyed that very much. With these little deeds of kindness true brotherhood will come to be.

Your candy, dear Mother, arrived yesterday at the Inwoods. They really enjoyed the gift. It was really something extra special for them. With great joy just now I hear the Inwoods offer the chocolate to some friends. The Inwoods seemed very much delighted about the beautiful gift-wrapping. Just now Mr. Inwood came over to me and put three different types of chocolates right next to me. That was really the extra special gift I was looking for.

I think you are just being very modest, my dear Mother, when you say that your letters don't measure up to the standards. Your letters are so nice; I would not want them any different. They are just you, and that is what I like: You.

It is quite all right with me to let someone else enjoy Clay's letter. That is what it is written for. The more people enjoy and learn from it, the better it is.

What should Harry send me? I think my first wish would be to have him send me his favorite poem or prayer. Maybe later on, when I am stationed somewhere else, I may ask him for some dates and raisins.

One little thing I want to tell you and then it will be time for Mrs. Inwood to take me back to the Fort. I decided to have breakfast this morning from the Easter package. I was a little worried that

I would miss some good breakfast, but I said “no” and enjoyed your loving gift instead of the regular diet. When the boys came back from breakfast they told me what good food I missed: two bananas, cinnamon rolls, etc. Missing those two bananas upset me for a while. But then I had an idea which made me feel good inside. All lust disappeared. I thought, “Now someone else may enjoy those two bananas which did not go into my stomach.”

Dear Mother, thank you for your dear letters of April 1st and 2nd. They arrived yesterday. I read them after I had washed my clothes. They were like a dessert. Alice V. sent me the nicest letter ever. I love that “God bless you” every time.

How are the vegetables doing?

Your boy,
Peter

God bless you, too.



April 7, 1953

My dear Ones,

Thank you, dear Mother – and thank you, dear Papa, for your kind letters. They are always a joy to receive.

We are marching a lot up the hill and down on the other side. It is a lot of fun, especially with all the flowers blooming on the wayside.

A beautiful thing happened yesterday. I had been marching for many days with pains in my left heel. At the height of a strenuous march the pains suddenly vanished. And I also received new vitality as I was holding a Unity Weekly in my hand during the march.

I am thinking of you and thanking you for your great love.

Your boy,
Peter
Good night!



April 8, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, and dear Brother Hellmut,

I just received your dear letter from Monday night. I called for the letter at the mail window, returned to the barrack right away, went to bed, and no sooner was I lying still did I open your letter. It was very sweet of you to share with me the evening at the India House. Your letter is filled with the spirit of that evening.

Monday morning I had a nice little experience which I would like to tell you about. We have one boy in our platoon who is almost permanently active in the field of forensics. What he speaks about is beyond my field of comprehension. When we were riding out to our first class on Monday morning this boy was sitting close to me. I was trying to enjoy the beautiful morning

spirit and was on the verge of asking my friend to be silent. But I kept silent just in time. Then the little voice within said: "Unless you can still the busy thoughts in your mind, do not ask others to be silent. Start with yourself."

What happened to me with my foot on Monday certainly seemed like a miracle to me. I could hardly believe it when the pain disappeared so suddenly. And then I had the feeling that the whole Creation was like a great miracle. We take things so for granted; things which we do not even come close to understanding. Who understands the growing of the flowers or the rise and fall of the sap in the trees? These are the great mysteries of life about which we should ponder. To know the reason for these things would really be wonderful.

When I was marching home a few days ago, I happened to be marching in back of a boy who was continuously getting out of step. Everyone in the platoon was marching fine except that one boy. I tried my best not to notice it, but his heels got into my way and his shifting rhythm made me get out of step, too. I saw from this how a single person who is in front can lead many people astray. Luckily, I was marching in the rear so only two people were out of step. Therefore, it is important for us to choose our leaders and teachers with great care. We should rather follow principles and ideals than people.

Yesterday I also receive the Unity Weekly from you. During this time of my life Unity has a message for me. I enjoy reading it, but I cannot read too many. I would like to look at Papa's diet book pretty soon, and I do not want to get mental constipation. So please don't send me too much.

Now I would like to tell you something that I have especially reserved for the end. Today I received my orders for my next destination. On Wednesday the 15 of April, I will be leaving Fort Ord and going to Camp Pickett, Virginia. I have to be at Camp Pickett by 2400 hours, April the 19th. So, I have no extra time beside the traveling time. I will promise you that I will do everything possible to get a pass long enough to see you in Los Angeles. That means that you can expect to see me sometime between the time you receive a letter and next Tuesday. God knows best, and so I will ask Him to guide me and assist me. I am very happy about the way everything is turning out.

Let me say good-night to you for now. I hope to see you soon.

Your boy now and later in Camp Pickett, Virginia.

Love to you all,
Your Dieter



April 13, 1953

My dear Mutti, my dear Papa, my dear Hellmut,

There is no need for tears today. As the bus drove along the ocean, the ocean was calm. Only little ripples danced on the surface. My heart was calm like the ocean. Although more miles spread between you and me as the day wore on, my heart became filled with the ever greater assurance that we will become ever closer.

There are many hills between us but there is only one sky above us.

I rested in the bus so peacefully. I enjoyed the fruit and I will enjoy it for many days to come. In the morning I slept a gentle sleep. In the afternoon I felt so refreshed and strong that I let my eyes roam along the hilltops and the green meadows and blooming orchards. I also enjoyed reading in the S.R. F. magazine and memorized the Easter thought.

At five o'clock I arrived safely at Fort Ord. As I was walking towards my Company a little voice told me, "God is here, too." Yes, He is. I looked at the flowers and they smiled at me. I met a friend and he was happy to see me. The day was a joyous day. There are not enough minutes in this hour to tell you about all the nice things that happened. So I will borrow some time from tomorrow to tell you about today. Before I can start washing, there are still free minutes I've just discovered. I started to enjoy some dates and raisins but I think I will enjoy even more to continue this letter. My stomach is so small, but the blank sheets are infinitely many.

You should have seen how many boys were happy to see me again. I was really touched to see how many boys had missed me.

It also just so happened that tonight we were going to have a G.I. cleaning party. The boys all told me, "Peter, you are leaving Wednesday so you don't have to G.I. Go to a movie and enjoy yourself." I did not go to a movie, but I started to write you. My better nature tempted me to help the boys, but I was not quite strong enough to be tempted.

I also went to another barrack to say hello to a friend. The person that I had in mind to see was not there. But there was someone else. The boy asked me to write everyone here and let them know how I was getting along. The boy said to me, "Peter, let me know when you are leaving and we will have a party for you." We are really a happy family. When I stepped outside into the night the stars were really shining brightly. Tomorrow or the next day I can write another one.

Your boy now and always – here, in Virginia, in this world and the next also.

Your Dieter

When I was eating an apple today, I noticed that I had changed some. Twelve weeks ago I peeled my apples and neatly cut out the inside. Now I enjoy the whole apple. I remember when I was about six years old; I bet someone that I could eat the entire apple, stem and all. After fourteen years I am doing once again that which I did as a child.

May God bless you,

Your boy,
Peter



April 13, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

There is a letter in the making for you. I will finish it tomorrow. Tonight I have planned to wash all my clothes yet so that they will be dry and spic-and-span for the trip.

I arrived happy and refreshed in body and spirit. My vacation with you, although seemingly short, has done me worlds of good. The sores on my finger are healing already. I lived almost exclusively on what I had in the traveling bag. Someone had put a little box of Wheaties in my locker, which I had with figs and nuts and other delicious things. The golden amulet and my dog tags were lying on my bed awaiting my return.

Good-bye,

Your boy,
Peter



By Greyhound Bus to Camp Pickett, Virginia

Indio, California, April 16, 1953

Greetings from INDIO,

Your boy,

Peace and cheer!



BLYTHE, California, April 16, 1953

My dear Ones,

Breakfast this morning comes out of your box. It tastes good and is good, too. A beautiful sunrise greeted me in the desert this morning. I am in Blythe right now but won't be in a few minutes.

Your boy



Wickenburg, Arizona, April 16 1953, 10 A.M

My dear Ones,

It is the above time now. We have a short rest stop, a short write stop. We have traveled 347 miles so far, am in Wickenburg, I think Arizona. The sun shines here, and the people are here like any other place in the world. If you look for nothing phenomenal, you will find joy in the beautiful desert stretching for many miles across the land.

Your pen is dear to me already.

Your boy



Globe, Arizona, April 16, 1953, 2:00 P.M. Thursday

My good Pals,

I just finished the delicious orange juice. When I took the last few swallows I could surely taste Hellmut's love.

The scenery is beautiful. Too beautiful for Peter's small heart to really understand yet. But one day we will all understand.

Your boy

Next stop 180 miles from here.



Lordsburg, New Mexico, April 16, 1953, 6:15 P.M.

My dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

Six hundred fifty-nine miles we have traveled since I saw you last night. As we travel from one town to the next and one state to the other – despite boundary lines and different names of places – people and life is the same all over.

My bare feet are resting on the grass and soil. I am sitting in the evening breeze and evening shadow. A thrown-away water heater is my bench. The world seems peaceful from every vantage point. It has been a wonderful trip. The desert is not as barren as it might look. I have started to memorize "I Am Lonely No More" for I am beginning to see.

Your boy, always,
Peter



VAN HORN, TEXAS, April 17, 1953 1:00 A.M. Friday

Hello to you from VAN HORN, TEXAS – Your boy



Abilene, Texas, April 17, 1953, Friday, 8:15 A.M.

My dear Ones,

A most gentle breeze is blowing this morning, so refreshing. I have had a good night's rest. No better rest could be had on either plane or train. It all depends on the attitude. If you say, "I am going to like the bus ride," then you will like it. I lent my pillow to the soldier boy next to me and still was as comfortable as ever.

Your boy,
Peter



Pecos, Texas, April 17, 1953, 3:00 A.M. Friday

My dear Ones,

It is time I had a delicious apple break. It's an odd time to eat apples at 3 A. M., but they surely taste good any time of the day or night.

Your boy

We are all rolling along like joy old fellows, sleeping and eating and singing.



Abilene, Texas, April 17, 1953, Friday, 8:15 A.M.

My dear Ones,

A most gentle breeze is blowing this morning, so refreshing. I have had a good night's rest. No better rest could be had on either plane or train. It all depends on the attitude. If you say, "I am going to like the bus ride," then you will like it. I lent my pillow to the soldier boy next to me and still was as comfortable as ever.

Your boy,
Peter



Dallas, Texas, April 17, Friday 2 P.M.

I have really not kept you up to the hour, but I'll make good later. I had just time to write the date line in Dallas. I am in GREENVILLE now, on my way to MEMPHIS, Tennessee. The country is beautiful, like Hoherhagen, country. (A farming community near Bremen, Germany where some of Peter's Dad's family were established.)

Your boy
Peter



Memphis, Tennessee, April 18, 1953, Saturday 5:45 A.M. The washing room of the Greyhound Depot

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother Hellmut,

At 7:45 A.M my next bus leaves for BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA. This leaves me time to write you a letter. What I would like to tell you is dear to my heart. It comes from a thorough experience. It is not just a flight of fancy. It censors my food problems. I am very grateful now that you have supplied me on this trip with such a storehouse of excellent food. Out of this storehouse of plenty, which caused me quite some pain and discomfort, I learned a valuable lesson of life. It is a lesson that will be as vivid to me yet tomorrow and next year also. You are not to blame for this. I asked for it. You gave me so much to take along that I felt like a bird with a ten-pound

weight on each wing. I could not spread my wings and fly with all that weight on my wings. And I wanted to fly so badly. I did not have the divine wisdom to give it all away or throw it all away; I could not do either.

I watched birds and they did not carry their food with them. But they still found what they needed wherever they went. God has planted stores along the way from Los Angeles to Richmond. In these stores I can buy what I need, when I need it. I will not starve from one stop to the next.

The birds don't eat while they fly. You meant very well with that butter; but the butter surely did not know how to behave in the warm bus. In the end I ate more butter at one time than was good for me. The result: I had it coming out of both ends. That I managed to get the bus window open in time saved me great trouble. To see what happens to the food after it has once passed by the taste buds made me shiver. This might have done something to stimulate my self-control. Right now I feel like eating nothing.

I would only like to share my experience with you. It might also help you in certain ways. I have decided that wherever I will be from now on, I will obtain my nourishment from that locality. I enjoy walking into a store and buying something from the man behind the counter.

I do not want to store up food for the morrow. Each day will take care of itself. That way I will be doing a little more like the birds, so please don't send me any packages at all anymore. If you want to make me happy, send a package to an unknown soldier somewhere in the world. Or send a package to anyone whom you feel might be in need and in need for love. If you send me your letters with your love, my cravings will be satisfied. Please try to understand me.

Yesterday I saw a little girl or boy fishing at a pond. The bus went by fast, so I could not tell which it was. But that matters not. The little picture looked so beautiful that I thought I would tell you about it. While turning the picture over in my mind, a thought accompanied it. We must learn to gain that child-like expectancy of the fisher boy or fisher girl in our search for God. I feel if we gain that mental outlook, our greatest obstacle will be overcome.

Dear Mother, that advice your doctor gave you about relaxing when you sit down on the toilet surely works wonders. I always used the wrong techniques. Thank you for telling me about it.

May God bless you and give you the strength to do what is right.

Your boy, Peter

Thank you for the envelopes, Mother. I guess you can tell which pen I'm using



Winfield, Alabama, April 18, 1953, 12:30 P.M.

My dear Ones,

This is a little town; maybe three thousand souls live in simple little houses and huts. In these parts there are mostly green forests with lots of undergrowth. The roads are not as scientifically and expensively constructed as in California. But I love the simplicity of the country and its people. I am so greatly blessed that I may know life in other places. I am drinking in deep the beauty of the land. It has rained lately. Everything is refreshed.

Your boy,
Peter



Camden, South Carolina, April 19, 1953, 6:30 A.M. Sunday morning

My dear Ones,

It is Sunday. It is Sunday all over, both in the East and West. I feel so fresh and filled with strength. This night I slept so sound like I seldom did before in my best bed. And a dream might also indicate that strength was given me on two levels. The whole army business seems more like a wonderful dream to me now. The first part was only like a cold shower.

Your boy

Now I have the pleasant after effects.



Raleigh, North Carolina, April 19th, 1953, Sunday, 12:23 P.M.

My dear Parents and Brother,

This wonderful trip across America, the Beautiful, is approaching an end. But that does not mean an end of beautiful things to be seen, for each blade of grass and each tree is beautiful and wonderful to behold.

About an hour ago I was a little hungry and needed something to refresh me. For the first time on the whole trip a kind man selling delicious apples and candies entered the bus at the last stop. I was so happy about the apple and I thanked the man and God for looking out for me so lovingly.

In a few hours I will be in Richmond.

Your boy Peter



Richmond, Virginia, April 19, 1953, Greyhound Bus Depot, Sunday evening.

My dear Ones,

My airmail letter for you is lying in front of me. I am dropping this postcard into the mailbox together with the airmail letter.

I read today in Unity, the April 12th issue. I read about the renewing power of Spring. As I read about it, I also observed it all along the road. It was beautifully confirmed in my soul what I read, and I knew that our bodies and souls also undergo the season of Spring.

Your boy now and forever, Peter



Richmond, Virginia, April 19, 1953, Sunday evening about 7:00 P.M.

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother Hellmut,

I am in Richmond, Virginia, many miles away from you and California. But what difference does that make between you and me? We love each other as before, and even more, and that is what counts.

I am sitting in the Greyhound Bus Depot restaurant. It is located upstairs, above the waiting room and the noise. It is almost empty, except for about ten people and you and me and God. I am sitting next to the window. It is quickly getting dark and it is also raining. The people are seeking shelter from the rain. I like to see it fall, for everything is made new by it. As I write this, the window opens as if by itself and a fresh breeze blows across my face. Maybe I better close the window a little; otherwise this letter won't be legible.

I arrived in Richmond at 5:25 P.M.; that is, either 2:23 P.M. or 3:23 P.M for you in California. I missed one connection in Atlanta, Georgia; but I had enough time left over to come a bus later. I took a local from Atlanta. I like them. They show you more of the country and its people. Right now I am waiting for my duffle bag to catch up with me. If the bag does not arrive by nine, I am going to have it sent to the Camp. I judge the Camp to be about 50 miles southwest of Richmond. It takes 1-1/2 hours to get there by bus. The price is \$1.54. The Greyhound does not have buses going to the Camp. It is the Pickett Bus Company, or something like that name.

I met one of the boys from Fort Ord in the depot here. I think he started in Fresno by plane. Don't tell anyone but his fare was \$186.00.

I also talked to a boy from Camp Pickett. He has one more week of training left. He had eight weeks of Infantry basic like I did, and the next seven weeks he had what I am going have. He told me that the first four weeks will be classroom instructions, the next two weeks are amateur hospital work, the seventh week is practical application in the field – no actual cases, you only play pretend. The eighth week, which the boy will undergo starting Monday, is only processing. He will find out his order this coming week. He has no idea where he will go. He said that some boys continue with special schooling, others go overseas and other stay here in hospitals.

Please do not try to unveil what God has planned for me. He knows best, and He knows best when to let us know. As the pages of the calendar turn, I will write you what is written on the pages.

The trip across America I will remember, and many of the reasons why I will remember it, I have told you about on the little postcards. But there are more. There is one experience which happened to me this afternoon. This one I would like to tell you yet. The others I will let rest in my storehouse of memories for a while.

It happened that I was just enjoying my lunch while the bus was rolling along. I was enjoying a piece of Klaben (German fruit cake), Pumpernickel bread and dates. It really tasted good. In the midst of all this the bus slowed down and then stopped. The driver opened the door and an old colored man, dressed in what I think must have been his Sunday best, started to climb the steps into the bus. I think the man was also using a cane for support. The colored man gave the driver

a ticket. The driver said the ticket was not good for the Greyhound line, he would have to wait for the next bus to come and take him along or else buy another ticket. The colored man was on this way to church. The colored man stepped out of the bus and waited some more.

Before all that had happened had registered in my mind and heart, the bus was rolling again. I had been sitting in the second row from the front while all this had taken place. I was so close, yet my heart was so far away. I had been too busy with my good meal to have the time to think of the needs of others. No sooner was it too late than it dawned upon me that I could have easily slipped the kind old man one of my dollars, or maybe two. Oh, how it hurts me that I had failed to do this little deed of kindness.

But it also taught me a lesson. How easily we forget others' needs when we are too busy with ourselves. I am sure I have failed many times before to do a deed of kindness, but only now, when I really should know better, does my negligence hurt me. Only after I asked God to forgive me, please, and said a prayer for the colored man, did I feel comforted in my heart. It seems to me that the colored man had faith. He wanted to go to church but did not even have the money to go back home.

You might also like to know that it takes two and one-half hours by bus to Washington, D.C.; that is, from Richmond. And it takes eight and one-half hours from Richmond to N.Y.C. It is 365 miles from Richmond to N.Y.C. How many miles is it from you to me? I think that we are so close to each other that we can measure the distance in inches.

Once more I would like to tell you, dear Mother, how happy I am about what told me in regard to digestion. I can't believe it yet; I can hardly trust my eyes. Effortlessly I can have (bowel) movements now. When there is something in the system ready to be shipped out, it comes as soon as I relax. Would you please thank your doctor in H.P. on my behalf? I might have been using for many more years the wrong method if it had not been for you, your thoughtfulness, and you kind doctor. And I guess that God was also a partner. I know He was. Thank you, dear God, and my dear organizer Mother and dear Dr. Vaughn.

I will mail you a postcard with regular mail at the same time as I send this letter to you by airmail. That way you will know what the difference in time is. You can probably figure an additional day from Camp Pickett. I will send you my address as soon as I know it. Till then, just think of me.

It is dark now. I cannot see what I saw earlier, but I know it is there. It was a cross on a church that I saw in the dusk. So, as you can see, the people know about God here, too. And when I step through the Camp gates in a few hours – maybe three hours – God will be stepping through the gate with me. If I am wearing a uniform or civilian clothes, whether I am here or in California with you, God will be with us all wherever we may be.

Best wishes and love to all my friends and to you.

Your boy, always – Peter



Camp Pickett, Virginia

April 20, 1953 – Monday

My dear Ones,

Just a postcard to let you know that I am safe and sound and to let you know my address. I am here in a processing center until I get assigned to my training company. How long that will be is indefinite. I might be in the center for a few days or a few weeks before I start school. It is indefinite.

The country is beautiful. I know I will be spending many of my Sundays with God in the woods. But one thing is sure, you are always as satisfied and content in the place you are now as you were at the previous place. I am learning. It is wonderful to learn.

Your boy as always,
Peter



April 22, 1953

My dear Brother Hellmut, my dear Mother, my dear Papa,

I have two and a half hours this morning to tell you of the great beauty all around. But I cannot tell you of all the wonders for the beauty is great and it is always growing.

If I could only find the words, I would tell you about the beauty of the little spot where I am sitting now. If I were a painter, I could paint the scene for you. I think you might even become homesick for the place where I am now, could you only see it.

You are far away, so they tell me. But I do not feel it. I feel you are right next to me. I am feeling even closer to you now than when I was at For Ord. It is only in the mind that distance exists. When I see the green grass here and the same birds singing as I hear in our garden, then I am sure that all is One.

I should not and will not say, "I am sure." I will say that I have an inkling, a hunch; for this attitude of mind I am leaving room for greater expansion.

I have a perfect part of the day - - . No, every part is really perfect. It is as perfect as we can make it. I am spending the morning hours with you. I am working from 12 noon till eight in the evening at present. My morning hours I can spend as I want to. I am a fire guard. The job is just right for me. I take care of eight coal furnaces and see to it that the fire is burning nicely. Usually I can work for an hour and then rest for an hour or read or write because the fires don't need constant attention. That means I am working as a fire guard about four hours per day.

As far as I can see, I will have this job till I finish processing and get assigned to my training unit. After that I will be fire guard only once in a while. But we will wait and see. I have the job today yet and tomorrow is far away, only known to God.

The barracks and water are heated with soft coal. It burns very good. The work makes me a little black but that washes off easily enough. When I put the coals into the stove, I am puzzled every time how so much heat can be locked up in the black stones.

I have walked about out 150 yards in order to be where I am. I have come 150 yards from my barrack, but I am already in the beautiful green woods. Since I am writing this letter, four noseey rabbits have already investigated who had entered their domain. The sunshine is falling scattered on the dry leaves, the fern, the flowers, the grass and me. There are deciduous and pine trees here. The biggest tree I can see has a trunk two feet in diameter. And the littlest tree I cannot see. The younger generations of tree are very plentiful. Their stems are about as thick as a thumb or little finger.

Everything is stretching for the sun,. Each little tree has faith that he will receive his diploma one day. This faith gives him the strength to do his work today. Likewise, we all have the faith that one day we will know our Father and return home; otherwise, we would not have the strength to live.

Dogwood is also blooming during this time. Dogwood is a tree. The trunk is about as thick as an arm, ranging from big arms to children's arms. The blossoms are white and look like Jasmine blossoms. The flowers have a faint smell. The flowering trees were so plentiful along some parts of my trip that it looked as if snow was hanging in mid-air in the woods.

And there are also wild Azaleas blooming.

Two feet in front of me a little brook is flowing. The water silently travels through the forest. One day this water will meet another water. And then two and three waters will become one. More and waters will join hands until one day all will meet in the big ocean. Like those little waters from the forests join hands, so can we humans join our forces when we unite in friendship and love. Each new friend makes the river bigger, and bigger rivers flow swifter to the One ocean. And bigger rivers can also overcome obstacles easier.

Just now as I was resting on my elbow and stretching my legs a little, I notice a happy little squirrel taking its morning walk through the tree tops. I tell you, it is all so beautiful. And the weather is so nice. I do not have to freeze anymore. A mild air and a gentle breeze, that is the weather report for today.

We had two days of what is nicknamed "Dogwood Winter." When the Dogwood blooms it is usually cold for a few days. But after that is over, the weather is like today. And you don't have to worry about me freezing for I have that nice brown sweater along.

And maybe you can send a warm thought to the boys in Fort Ord because they are still cold.

Human nature is peculiar. The boys from here are anxious to get assigned to a station in California; the boys in California told me how much they would like to come along with me. Everyone seems to want to go somewhere else from where they are at the moment. The same beauty is all over; we must learn to realize this. When we once get along with ourselves, there is not a place in the world then where we would not like it. The boys don't realize that they have the daily duties of sweeping floors and washing clothes wherever they may be. To be able to wait, and wait patiently, we should learn no matter where in life we may be. Whether we are a

clerk in an insurance company, a salesman in a tropical fish store, a student at U.C.L.A., or a soldier in the army, we must learn patience before God will open the door to greater happiness.

I had the feeling that it was time to leave my little place near the brook. God told me just at the right time. For a second I thought it might be late and so I hurried up my step. But then I knew that God would not let me be late. And so I slowed down again to walk in rhythm with nature. We must try to do everything in rhythm with the Great Heartbeat. When we eat it is so wonderful to try to remember this, for it helps us to eat for the purpose of building a more perfect body/temple for our soul. When the vegetables assimilate the elements of the earth together with the sunshine, they do it in a definite rhythm. A cabbage does not eat faster on Monday than on Tuesday.

The meals are very good here; I really get enough. I am also drinking a bottle of milk in the morning now. When I get the bottle, I put it inside my shirt and leave it there until I have eaten everything else. By the time I have finished everything, the milk has warmed up a little.

I hope that you people are managing all right with your food problem. It is really no problem. We make it one. One thing I would like to suggest to everyone in regard to any problem, and especially the food problem at the moment, is to never have the feeling that you have found a permanent solution, but always be ready to make alterations. As we grow, the old garment – the old ideas – won't fit anymore. So it will be necessary to make some adjustments.

I would like to mention that it will be better if no one goes to the trouble to visit me here. The camp is not too easy to reach if you don't have a car. I plan to stay in the immediate vicinity and to walk and rest in the woods when I have time off. Not until I get my next assignment, which will be after my medical training, do I plan to travel any big distance. If someone would like to visit me, a letter and a thought are always welcomed visitors.

My best wishes and my God bless you,

Your boy, always
Peter, Dieter



April 23, 1953

My dear Ones in the West,

The east shall meet the West in the beautiful woods next to the quiet little brook. Again I may spend one hour in the forest. It is so wonderful. Last night, when my work was done, I visited the forest. The weather is so perfect that you can lie down in the forest at night and sleep. I thought I would think for a while in the forest last night. I lay down on the dry leaves and before I knew it I was asleep. I slept so sound; I do not know how long, maybe an hour.

I have been a little anxious this morning to start my schooling soon. I thought that the sooner I got it over with, the better. But God let me know how foolish it was for me to be so anxious. He said, Peter, every moment of your life you are in training." To think that training will only start next week is foolish. We are being trained every moment of the day. If we realize this, we might make a greater effort to graduate. We will realize that many times we had to repeat classes. I am beginning to see that training does not consist of sixteen weeks of Basic, but of life-times of

fundamentals. We are so far only trying to learn the A-B-C of life, to be free from desires and love God above all and know Him in all and love your neighbor as yourself.

I noticed the other day how people tend to stick to their own circle of friends. When I was assigned my bed, I was next to boys I did not know at all. I was at first sorry I could not sleep next to a boy from Fort Ord. There were several boys from Fort Ord in the barrack. But when I thought for a moment, I was glad to be where I was put because I could meet more people and make new friends being in a new environment. The boys from Fort Ord were automatically acquainted with me.

Do you ever notice how certain people always bunch together? It is time to make the circle larger. Do you know how some people like to add one new word to their vocabulary each day? Why not add one new friend to our circle of friendships each day or each week? That way we will become the member of a wonderful big family one day. Sometimes it takes only smile or a kind word to make a friend.

Mother, your pen ran out of ink just when it was time for me to return from the woods. You can probably see where the writing grows faint. That was God's way of telling me what time it was.

I think it might be better if you don't send me any letters until you get my new address. I will probably get transferred to my training company tomorrow or Saturday.

I notice that many more boys read the Bible here than at Fort Ord. We have quite a mixture of religions here. Each person trying to find God in his own ways. They are from all states. Yesterday, several boys even arrived from Hawaii.

It is a beautiful evening, so wonderful. It seems like a reward for the day's labor. We do not have to heat the barracks any more. The air is just right now. I am enclosing something for you which I liked very much.

Your boy, who really is quite close to you, but especially close when he keeps in the "Divine Trend."

Peter



April 25, 1953

My dear Father, my dear Mother, and my dear Brother,

Do not look for me in the mailbox so much; look for me in the spirit. You will find me more often in spirit than in the mailbox. I will write you whenever I can, but there are others also I would like to write to. You know that I always love you, but there are others who do not yet know that I love them. I would like to tell them. I also know that you love me always. So, instead of sending me many letters, send also a letter to someone who does not as yet know that you love them. This way we can spread more joy and find more joy in the world.

I would like to interrupt here for a moment to tell you what I just heard and then saw. A few rustling leaves betrayed my little friend and brother. A turtle about eight inches in diameter is just taking its morning stroll through the forest.

Yes, in the beautiful forest I may spend this morning again. I have not gone to church yet. But I have gone to the woods. The woods are my chapel. It is open to anyone. It is open in the day and at night. It is never locked. But how many seek God in the woods? We are so close and yet so far away. It is like with the eyes. We have eyes, but yet we do not see.

It is a joy for me to write you. Do not feel that you have to answer or acknowledge my letters. I know that you love to do it. But if you turn that love to one of my brothers or sisters, we will all be blessed. God is giving me calmness and joy even as I write. Should I ask for more for myself? It is so wonderful here, so peaceful.

But we should remember that it is peaceful anywhere, if it is peace inside ourselves. I see other boys hurry and I see them restless where there is no need. The world will go on whether we are calm or excited, and it is really much better to be calm. You can see many boys bow their heads here in prayer before each meal. It is wonderful to see, even though if it is only a few. If only a handful of persons make a start to be calm, it is good. If we want to wait for the majority to calm down before we calm down, we will have to wait for a long time.

Remember, Mother, in your business to make calmness your first business and filing cards the second order of business. And Papa, remember, first comes calmness, then come the sales. And Hellmut, first comes peace and a quiet mind and then comes the physics problem. And in eating, first comes thankfulness and peace and then comes eating.

Yesterday I was a little tired when I went into the forest. And God again helped me and lifted my burden. He spoke to me and said, "If the task of the week is too heavy, take the task of the day by itself. And if the task of the day is too heavy, then take each hour or each ten minutes by itself." I felt so much lighter when I stepped out of the forest chapel.

I am also meeting some wonderful boys. It seems as if I am just rediscovering them. When two souls meet again, there comes a great joy. Do you remember how happy you were when I came home to you? It is a joy like that, only a little more inside, expressed more through shining eyes, when two souls meet again. We will all meet again, and we will know each other by our smiling eyes and an invisible rainbow of love and peace which we are building between us today.

Give my best wishes to all my friends, your boy – as always, Peter, Dieter



April 25, 1953, 6:40 P.M.

My dear Ones,

When I returned from the forest I was told that I was being looked for. I checked the source of the rumor and found it was true. In ten minutes I should be ready to ship to a new company. It all happened sooner and more unexpected than I thought. And the nice thing is that there was no previous excitement. The hours before, I spent in calmness in the forest together with you.

My new company is a happy company and my new platoon is a happy platoon, a happy family. This evening I will go to church with my new-found friends. I will meet them at ten after seven. They are the three boys from Hawaii.

Well, I'll give you my new address. It will be my home for the next couple of weeks.

Pvt. Peter Laue, U.S. 56192300

Co. D., 7th M.T.B.

M.R.T.C. Camp Pickett, Virginia

May calmness be yours and our first order of business and may God bless us in our new undertaking.

Your little medic boy,

Peter, Dieter

I am still close to the forest, even closer than before. Your boy



April 26, 1953

My dear Ones,

Have you heard about those unscheduled airlines? Well, this is something like it. This is an unscheduled letter per airmail. I wanted to write you just a little postal greeting, but I had no postals and therefore no postal greeting but an airmail greeting to tell you of my dilemma. So could you please send some postcards so that I may return them to you soon?

But one other thing I would like to tell you. I spent most of the day with my new friend in the forest. He wrote letters all day, sitting quietly on one spot for many hours. But I wrote, rested, wrote and rested. And before we left the forest we said a prayer. Our souls blend together in the One Great Spirit of Christ and God. We have found each other and we are so happy. This boy is in a different company, but together we are in Spirit.

I knew you would be very happy to know about my friend, my brother. I thought it was worth an airmail letter to tell you that I have found a diamond, a beautiful, a radiant diamond in my friend. Am I too enthusiastic? I do not think so for my friend and I understand each other in the silence also.

Your boy and may God bless you,
Peter



April 28, 1953

My dear Papa, my dear Brother, my dear Mother,

Yesterday, dear Mother, I found your letter which you sent along with the box of Lindt Chocolate. It is a letter filled with motherly love. I read it more than once. And I hope you won't mind if I read the letter to my friend. It is a letter not for me alone, but for any boy who's far away from home.

Last Saturday evening you would have loved to see your boy together with some of his friends. We were sitting outside on a bench enjoying the mild evening. We were all dressed in our

Sunday uniforms because we had met to go to church together. Your box of Lindt Chocolate was especially ordained for that evening. I told everyone about the quality of that chocolate and the love wrapped up in the gift. The boys agreed, the candy was more than candy. The spirit of brotherly love was very strong that evening. The candy is gone, but the seed has been sown and it is growing.

Just now a boy brought me your first two letters. I had planned to send this letter by regular mail, but because of your first two letters, I will add another stamp. May I open your letter now? I think I will do that.

I have eaten supper twice tonight. At five-thirty I enjoyed potatoes, celery and carrot sauce, spinach, lettuce, a piece of bread and butter, and a delicious fruit salad. My second meal was spiritual in nature: your letters. Thank you, dear Mother.

I was in doubt yesterday whether or not I should donate blood. I knew God gives me the strength always to carry on. I put the question to God. But God thought it would be better for me to keep my blood this time. I was turned down because my blood pressure was too low.

I had been keeping some of the food you had given me along for the trip. I did not quite know for what day I had been saving the food. But I knew on the day of the blood donation. To those boys who had given blood, I gave that extra bite. I remembered how I felt when I had given.

There are two favors I would like to ask for. Could you send me one metal plaque with the prayer, "O Lord, grant that each - -," and could you send me two or three of the German plays I was reading at U.C.L.A.? That is, if you have not as yet been able to find someone else who can use them. I have a friend here who would like to continue his studies in German. And he likes plays. So, if there are any textbooks left, would you please - - ?

If you would like for me to, I will send you my thoughts by airmail. I can see from the enclosed envelopes that you do. But what if I only send a card so that I might send someone else a letter? Still airmail? My letters are not of the current events type, but of the type that try to be of lasting interest.

Today was a beautiful day. I have found a new brother; he is your brother too. He is the tree in the forest. The life flowing in its stem and making it grow is the same life that is in you and me. I am happy because I see so much beauty all around. Let us pray for a friend who told me yesterday, "I am so unhappy, because I see darkness." No man will keep his heart closed to the powers of unselfish love. Even the most lowly man and lonely soul cannot help but unfold into a beautiful flower in the presence of the Great White Light. There is no darkness except as our imperfect eyes think there is.

The training is much less strenuous here; it is more like a Boy Scout camp than an army camp. God does not train us harder than is good for body and soul. Keep up the good work, my dear Ones. Today might be our last day.

Your boy,
Dieter!

GOD BLESS YOU!

This is extra; it is for that extra little deed of kindness for someone, so that a flower might unfold a little further. In a gentle, silent way we must send out the Light. Your boy.

(a dollar was enclosed in the letter)



April 30, 1953

My dear Ones,

It is close to 7:30 A.M. A beautiful sunny morning. There are many rich promises in the hours that stretch out before us. If we remain steadfast and true, we will be very happy when the sun is setting in the west.

One thought I would like to send you this morning. It might help you as it is helping me now. Remember how I was speaking of the cold at Fort Ord and was wishing for warmth? Here, it is quite warm around noon. Should I be wishing for a cool breeze? No, I must not make the same mistake again. I must not ask God for the end of the cold or heat. We must ask God to give us the strength to bear the heat cheerfully and steadily to the end.

May God give you the strength today as He has never failed to do. He has never let us down.

Your boy, today and always,

In love,

Peter, Dieter



April 30, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Father, my dear Brother,

If one could see, he could see that God never fails those in need. I knew that God would help me today. He did in a wonderful way. At one o'clock today a forced road march was scheduled. The day started off with a clear blue sky. It promised to be warm. To march four miles in fifty minutes with about fifty pounds on your back did not promise to be too easy. During the morning hours I was very tired. I called upon the One Help that never fails. By noon the sky was covered by clouds. As we were ready to begin, I asked for strength once more. Suddenly I realized that all needed help, and so I asked in everyone's name for strength. I then started looking around me to see if I could adjust a field pack a little better for someone. I found someone whom I could make things easier. As we started marching I was filled with strength, enough strength to cheer the others along. I told them that I eat the same rations as they do. There was no excuse for them to give up. During the march we were all refreshed by a refreshing sprinkle from above. We finished the march in forty-seven minutes with His help. This evening I am filled with more strength than in the morning. And again I am filled with the assurance that God never fails His children. If the need is great enough, our prayers will be strong enough. Each time we take a step, we also receive strength for the next step. But we must start walking in faith. After we returned from the march it started to pour. Lots of fresh water came from above. Dressed in a good raincoat, we stepped outside to go to our next classroom. I enjoyed the refreshing rain. It is helpful to say, "God, help me to understand You in all Your manifestations; the cold wind, the

warmth of the noon hour and the evening raindrops. Good night, my dear Ones. A brother of mine in the barrack gave me this card for you, dear Mother. Your boy, Peter

GREETINGS TO MOTHER

I love you, my dear Mother, for each thing you do
To bring me joy each day.
I love you for your tenderness
That smoothes my cares away.
I love you for your faith and trust
And understanding, too.
And MOTHER dear, with all my heart,
I'll keep on loving you more each day,
Until one day my love will know how to span
All space and time, until through you
I may find the One Great Love.

At home or away, I will be and am with you.

Your boy,
Peter, Dieter

The moon and stars are shining always, during the day and night. Sometimes they are behind the clouds, but they are there.





May
1953

Camp Pickett, Virginia

May 3, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Hellmut,

You are spoiling me so much, dear Mother. What shall I do when one day you won't be able to write me any more letters? Don't forget me then, when you dwell amongst the angels and I am still on my pilgrimage. I feel like writing you this letter soon and sending it by airmail. How quickly comes that last hour and how sad we will be if we have not been kind to the last moment. Oh, dear Mother, teach me to know you wherever you may be.

Yesterday noon there came a sadness in my heart as I was sitting in church. I was tired in the morning. I came to church to look for my friend and to look for strength. My friend was not there, so I sat down in the church. I tried to pray. It is hard to pray and I can only try. But who do you think soon sat down silently next to me? My friend! Like an angel of God he came. For the first time in many years I cried. The tears came from an unknown river in my heart. My friend somehow understood me and my tears.

A thought came as we were sitting together and softly speaking to each other. We did not say many words, for our hearts are so close to each other. A kind and peaceful world cannot blossom forth overnight. Kindness and peace starts with a little seed. It takes several months before a tulip bulb grows into a flower with deep red petals. The growing might be a little hard for the flower at first. It has to overcome many opposing forces like weeds or a cold night. Christ and Guru and Saint Francis and all the other saints have sown the seed. The plant of kindness has grown many leaves already. It is our job to nourish the plant daily with little deeds of kindnesses. One day we will see the most beautiful blossom our eyes have ever beheld. It will be a blossom that blooms forever.

And then we will become the blossom and bloom forever.

"Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I." Whenever I am together with my friend, I am beginning to feel the meaning of those words. It is a mistake to feel that a handful of Conscientious Objectors are like a drop of water on a big hot stone. If we have Christ or Guru as our example, we cannot be disheartened any longer.

During the first few hours of first-aid instructions, I could not understand how we could learn very much. This real interest to help was seemingly lacking on both teachers' and students' sides. But I am beginning to see a little better now. I am amazed at the masterful construction of our body. And now it is much easier for me to stay awake in class. You can never tell how a little something that I can learn might save someone's life. If we are interested, we are not tired anymore.

It happens sometimes with me that I am quite tired, but as soon as I do something for someone, I am tired no more. I am beginning to see that only if we are doing something for others are we alive. In little ways I am beginning to feel the joy in freedom from desire. The state of tension which a turkey dinner produces with the boys is not worth the tiny pleasure of a few mouthfuls of turkey. Unless we stand on the side without desire for turkey, it is hard to believe that there is much peace in freedom of desire from turkey.

But I have the feeling now that the joy in freedom from the bigger and more powerful desires must be very great.

Yesterday I realized how selfish I was. But I am glad I realized that this weed was still growing in my heart. The sky was cloudy. It seemed that it would start to rain very soon. I had on a nicely pressed uniform but no raincoat under my arm. I was wishing that it would not rain so that my neatly-pressed clothes would not get all wrinkled. How selfish of me to think this way. The plants and trees are all thirsty and would like to drink. And I, just because of my uniform, don't want the plants to have any water.

I was so happy about your letter of Wednesday evening, dear Mother. You know, the one with the five airmail postcards and your love note and the two airmail envelopes. The mailman had put your letter under my blanket. Just as I was slipping into bed about ten-thirty, I discovered your letter. That was a real surprise. The lights were already out in the barrack, so I decided to save the letter for Sunday morning. I slept so nicely with the feeling of having a letter from you.

I have received the letter from Mrs. Bloss. I have also written her. The boys say, "I got to write a letter," but with me it is different. I want to write my letters. With great joy I wrote a letter to Dr. Bloss. I think she has it already. I sent it by air. The letters to the old address are all being forward to me. The last letter from you was already to my new address. Everything is under control. I also received a kind letter from Reverend Walters. I think it makes you happy to know that so many kind souls remember me.

What can you send me, dear Mother and Papa and Hellmut, but what you have already sent. Your love in letters and meditations is the greatest gift you can give me. It is the greatest gift that you can give to anyone. A prayer chosen by you – one prayer chosen by each of you – that is what I would love to have. I will memorize them. And when I pray then, I will think of each of you. Each time I say your chosen prayer, I will think of you. I think this is a wonderful idea.

Today I was just about to read and throw away the Unity Weeklies I had read. Someone just happened to cross my path who was happy to have them. I was very happy about this.

The day is drawing to a close, but there is still enough light in the forest to write you. From a nearby church I hear the organ music. God gives me such beautiful hours of peace and rest. I have never found a better employer. He pays the highest wages in the world – Eternal Joy. Is that not much better a wage than a few dollars with which to see a show and pay for a steak dinner?

I will say my evening prayer together with you in the forest tonight.

"The day is done. Refreshed and sanctified with the sunshine of the day, we four pass through the portals of evening, dimly adorned with the faint stars, to enter into the Temple of Silence and worship Thee. We worship Thy Spirit of approaching calmness. What prayer shall my Mother and my Father and my Brother Hellmut and I offer, for we have no words to offer Thee? We will light a little fire of devotion on this altar of our souls. Will that light suffice to bring Thee into our dark Temple? – our dimly-lighted temple, dark with our ignorance. Come, we crave, we yearn for Thee. Come, we crave, we yearn for Thee. Om. Peace Amen!"

May peace grow forever in our hearts like the trees in the forest grow forever bigger.

Your boy in eternity, Peter



May 6, 1953

My dear Ones,

I have not written since Sunday. But I have been thinking of you. I forgot all about the postcard system. I shall make use of it more liberally. One little thought on a postcard can set a whole train of thoughts going.

Today I was not quite truthful about something. I tried to ease my conscience and excuse myself by saying to the little voice that it was only a little bit untruthful. But that is unwise to do. It is delaying our growth. As we grow, the dividing line between truth and untruth becomes finer and finer. In the end there can only be complete truth. Truth alone will never rust or decay.

I felt pretty bad about what happened, but as soon as I admitted my guilt to myself and asked for forgiveness I felt better.

I received your letter with Sonja's and also the plaque came. Thank you so much. Do you want Sonja's letter back? May God and truth be with you always.

Your boy, Peter



May 7, 1953

My dear Ones,

I surely enjoyed your letter again – the typed one with the airmail envelopes. I received it when I came back from a six-mile march. That was surely a happy surprise. That airmail envelope came in very handy. I am going to travel home to you by letter this weekend again.

For tonight only a postal! I have only one more airmail postal left.

Everything is very fine with me. I am receiving enough energy just in time and just enough. I could feel Christ and Guru walking beside me on that march today. Without them I could not have made it. We have such wonderful soul and body – refreshing rains here. I am so happy and thankful for them.

Your boy always, Peter

Sure, you can send the money and letter to the Shut-ins.



May 8, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother Hellmut,

God knew that this letter would be written, but I did not. It happened all so suddenly, so unexpectedly that God lifted me into joy and gave me the strength to carry on. The sorrow of this week, the tired feet, the sleepy eyes, all of these things are so petty now that God has

shown me His Great Love. His Great Love is always there, but I am only a blind little baby that has only been a few days in this world.

Just before I received this Great Gift of Love, I hesitated to spend a dime to make the Giver happy. I did not spend this dime for a piece of candy for someone. Oh, how I was ashamed a few minutes later. For a few minutes later, a colored boy came to my barrack from another barrack, and he asked me to come with him and share what he had received from home. A wonderful package he had received from home, filled with candy, fruit and nuts. He wanted to give me more than half of what he had received and was ready to give me all. We had divided his gift in the greatest brotherly way. Each one had a heap of wonderful things.

My colored brother, Brooks is his first name, pointed to his heap and said, "Do you know whose this is?" I said, "That's yours." He said, "No, that's yours, too. Whenever you are hungry, just come over to me and we will share this until it is gone."

Oh, I can tell you, when such a things happen, you feel great remorse for every little deed of kindness that you have failed to do. I felt so light and happy that I could not help but share again what I had received. That joy of God we cannot possibly store in a closet for ourselves and save it for a rainy day. We must pass it on to another thirsty soul. I was very thirsty tonight. I prayed to God and asked Him to help me understand His ways. Alone, I could not continue on this dusty road. My feet were so tired. I thought it was the food; I had the idea that the diet was getting me down. I don't know what it was; just another test, I guess. But I know that God's Great Love makes everything new. No matter what the illness may be, God is the one Healer who knows how to heal all diseases.

I was quite worried for a while that I would not get money back that I had lent away. I was afraid I would not have enough. What silliness to be worried. God will help me when I am in need. He has not let me down so far. And tonight He paid me back with the richest gift that exists: LOVE. No dollar bill compares to the joy of God.

When an old man walks up a hill carrying a heavy load on his shoulders, we should hurry up and help him. We should not wait to help until we are asked to help. Jesus did not ask the farmer to carry His cross. And Jesus would not have asked for help, except that He asked God for comfort. God sees every need. There are many lonely and hungry people in the world. They will not come to our doorstep and ask for bread. Actually, all are asking for bread, but we have as yet not learned to hear their pleading voices.

May you know for sure that God is guiding you when you are walking through the dark forest.

Could you send me a filler for the pen, please? And when you think you have some good tablets for me to take, I will take them gratefully. I will know then that they were meant for me by God.

I had two airmail postals left, not one like I wrote you before.

Your boy, always, Peter



May 9 & 10, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, and my dear Brother,

There is an irresistible stream flowing between the little yellow house and wherever I am. When my thoughts just enter into the edge of the stream, I am carried away quickly. And before I know what has happened, I have landed at the little yellow house. That is why my first order of business is so likely to be a letter to you.

Did I make a casual remark about shortage of cash? That was a slip of my pen. I do not need anything in that department. I must confess that money is no longer safe in my pocket. I don't seem to be able to manage to keep more in my pocket than what I actually need. If I would die tomorrow the excess dollar would not purchase the ticket to heaven; but the dollar I gave to someone who needed it would purchase the ticket.

It is not always easy to give so freely. Sometimes, anxious feelings creep into my mind when I lend away the money. I try to say good-bye to it when I lend it away. That way I do not have to worry about getting it back. I might not receive it from the same boy I lent it to, but I know that God is my bookkeeper. I felt that God gave me a very good interest rate on my investments when I received the gift of Love from the colored boy.

When I scratch the bottom of my pocket, I have a strong tendency to become anxious. Then I pray to God to help me understand His ways. I have to use that affirmation, "God, help me to understand Thy ways," quite often. But God always helps.

Today, starting at six P.M., I am earning that dollar which will probably come in handy at an appropriate moment. Besides earning ten dollars, I make a boy and a mother happy. I was not very excited about working during off-duty hours, but I felt that it was God who asked me to please make a mother happy. I took a job from a boy so that he might be home on Mother's Day. The job is really quite simple and also easy. You walk slowly up and down the street for two hours in a comfortable uniform. The next four hours you can rest or do anything you like and then walk again for two hours. This we do until we have walked altogether eight hours. I can look at many stars during this time and say many prayers.

A friend asked me for an extra pencil the other day. I lent – or, rather, I gave him a pretty nice pencil costing in the neighborhood of five whole cents. I noticed that many a letter was written with that pencil; and today my friend is still using the pencil. I was happy to know that my pencil (instead of lying uselessly in my locker) had spread so much happiness already. It is now wonderful to think how a little piece of pencil lead can bring so much joy to others.

Did I tell you how kind God is to me? He lets me go with my brother Richard to church on Saturday mornings. That is a lot nicer than training. That means that I actually have two days a week when I am on my own. The troops usually train only half a day on Saturdays. Today – this morning – my friend unexpectedly called for me and we happily walked to church together. It was a beautiful sermon that we heard. There are many people close to God.

Dear Mother, may I leave it for you to do to keep my writing supplies above the empty line? I have about enough to last me for another ten days or so. Thank you so much. I don't know why I am asking you for this. I could buy the things in the P.X. But to receive it from my Mother's hands is so wonderful. My Mother's and Father's and Brother's hands are so very dear to me.

Well, I just came back from my first two-hour walk. Somehow I slipped onto another page. I wanted to sign off at the end of the first page, but I see now that I need a little more room. I will

tell you what I will do. It is about 8:30 P.M. now. I will save this page unfinished until tomorrow. I will use the hours until midnight to gain new strength for my next walk.

One little thought before I go to sleep. Your boy is always fine. Don't ever worry about him but pray for him. I will pray for you.

May 10, 1953

I am all finished walking guard. God was very kind to me, too. Instead of eight hours, I only had to walk five hours. I chanted and prayed; I walked straight and tried to breathe deep. The hours I walked are not lost. God strengthened my soul through Christ and Guru. I called to Master many times that night. I had the locket in my hand and asked Master to please walk beside me. The first two hours were lonely, but nevertheless necessary. God wants to strengthen and test our love for Him. But his tests are never beyond our strength to pass them. The other hours were beautiful. I saw a shooting star. I wished for one thing. What could be?

I saw a visual sign of God's all-knowing wisdom this morning. My guard duty was during the time while breakfast was being served. I would have to eat later on by myself. The boys had eaten their breakfast and many of them came out of the mess hall with an orange in their hand. One boy asked me if I would like to have his orange. It was a beautiful orange. I had never seen the boy before. He was in a different company. I gleamed all over and gratefully accepted the gift. Contrary to regulations, I believe, I ate the orange while still on guard duty. I enjoyed the fruit very much. When I went to the kitchen for my breakfast, there was plenty of everything left for me. Only the oranges were all gone. But I had received my orange already in a wonderful way.

Dear Mother, I would like you to stop adding to my bank account the money which I am going to send from now on. I want you to put it towards the house. The house is our first order of business. After the house money is all there, we will hold counsel again on what to do next.

I have taken a nice refreshing shower after I was finished walking guard, and I also put on different clothes. Now I am sitting under my tall brother, the pine tree. He is standing so straight. I must sit and walk straighter also. The sky is blue. It is nice and warm. Under the tree in the forest, in the shade of the kind leaves, there is rest and peace and comfort. I will tell you what I am going to do now for I feel that it is just about ready. Then I will return to the forest and fall asleep on the bed that Mother Nature has prepared for all her children. The dark brown earth covered by many leaves will be my bed. Oh, how wonderful a bed! What forethought does kind Mother Nature have for her children!

It is Mother's Day today. I am thinking of you today and every day. I thank you for the love and tenderness with which you have watched over me. I will never be too old to be your boy. I will never be too old to sit next to you and feel your loving hands on my forehead and gliding over my hair. O Mother dear, I will always love you. Oh Mother dear, I will love you always.

Your boy, forever your Dieter

I have slept so wonderful. I am tired no more. The forest will from now on be my hotel. I have never had such good accommodations. But I woke up to tell you, dear Papa and Brother Hellmut, that I love you as much as my Mother.

Your boy, Peter, Dieter



May 12, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother Hellmut,

Your dear letters inspired me to do a deed of kindness tonight and they gave me the strength to do the deed. I did something that others consider the worst duty. But for me it was a joy to work for my Father. You cannot imagine what a joy it is to work and help when you are not asked to do so. The world will never unite if we only talk about peace across the conference table. When the boys saw what I was doing, they just could not understand. I'll be called crazy for this, the boys, said. But you should have seen the grateful "Thank you!" I received from one boy. The boy said that I'll never receive help from anyone in return. The thing they don't know is that I am working for my Father. More boys noticed me because of a few dishes I washed than all the talk about goodness would have accomplished.

After a while my platoon sergeant, who happened to come into the mess hall, forbade me to work any more. He said, "You can't take it." But he has not learned about the wonderful ways God works. And even if I shall be working a little more than the rest, I'd rather die while working for others than sitting in an easy chair smoking a cigar.

It is no surprise to me anymore that we have wars. Just think, the person who sleeps with me in the barrack told me not to carry the load for the old man. But he only convinced me that I will help wherever my eyes see the need. May my eyesight become stronger with the years and may God give me the strength to always be true to Him.

Some boy told me tonight that he envied me for the way I am. People are asking me quite often what my religion is.

You got the right spirit, Mother. With that juice and the cake for the bus driver, we spread the true religion. The little deeds of kindnesses will sell S.R.F. to all the world.

I am not surprised that as yet people are still unkind to each other. There was a peach tree standing near the athletic field. There were little green peaches on the tree. Those little green peaches were the children of the tree. The children were little yet and still needed the mother's care. During our free time some boys went to the peach tree and plucked many of the little peach-children. The boys threw the little green peaches at each other. I am sure that the mother peach tree wept when she saw what was happening. How can we have love for each other if we are so cruel to the peach tree?

Yesterday, some boys (including myself) were picked for a job contrary to our liking. We had to go and see a baseball game. At first I was also unhappy about this. But then I was happy again. I said to myself, "How wonderful that I may go, because if you go, someone else does not have to go."

May I quickly answer two questions from a previous letter? I have written the Carlbergs about my things long ago. But I have, as yet, not received an answer. Maybe Ella will take care of this for me. I have written her twice since I am in the army. I still like to write her.

I am enclosing an address from a boy who would love to have a year's subscription of Weekly Unity. I am enclosing a little money for the subscription and the house. The boy's address is: Pvt. Mateo Infrate, U.S. 56125924, Co O-7th Bn., M.R.T.C., Camp Pickett, Virginia. Don't worry about me losing money; there is no such thing.

I think it is time for your boy to go to bed and go to sleep. The last few days have been so rich. Don't worry, but trust.

Your boy, forever, forever,
Peter



May 13, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother Hellmut,

I said to God last night that I would not go to bed late today. God helped me so wonderfully during this day. Without God it would have been impossible; with God's help it was easy. We had a six-mile road march today. I thought as I was walking along the road. God supplies each cell each second with new oxygen and food. He never forgets to feed even one cell of our body for a minute. I felt then that God also grew the plants along the road and in the field, always being aware what each cell of the animals and our bodies need. And I felt that those that were wise could go into the field and eat from the same table the animals eat from. And the wise ones would be nourished and healthy. The deer of the forest does not worry about the table not being set. Should we not copy the deer a little bit?

So much mail has been coming from you. It is so wonderful to receive mail from you. It is part of my diet. But there are many people all over the world who are in need of our love.

I also received the package today. The package is adding another member to our great family. Candy is very good, but in this warm weather it is hard to send. The chocolate and pecan clusters arrived, though, in excellent condition to eat. The food is quite plentiful and good here. So I might ask you not to send me anything with the idea of supplementing my diet. The only thing I like to nibble on are some nuts. I usually have eaten a few almonds every day. Please send, instead of me, a package to some other soldier boy. We are all in the same family. There are many boys who are still hungry.

Your love is so strong and so pure that I can feel it over here without the tangible package. And even if letters come seldom, I can feel your strong love and joy often, very often. I do not have to depend upon your letter to know that you always love me and, all times to come, will love me. You see, I have to learn to depend on wireless love, because between heaven and earth there is no such mail service as exists here.

Now I would like to tell you something important and ask you for a favor. The sooner you can take care of this for me, the nicer it would be. Would you please ask Reverend Bernard to write another letter for me containing the same information that the other one contained. But, in addition to that, it must include the additional two things: that I have always been a member in good standing, and also that Reverend Bernard knew that I already held my present ideas about killing previous to the time of my induction.

And it would also be better if the letter were notarized. This is not essential, but it would be a little better. And when you have this letter, dear Mother, would you please send it to me? I will then give it to the commanding officer of our company.

But please do me a favor. Please remember to stay calm in doing this for me. That is always important, no matter how important the other thing might seem. You can copy anything from my letters you like. But always remember that they are not really mine, they are His.

Thanks a lot for all your troubles in organizing this thing for me. I will try to think of something in regard to your question. But first I must think and sleep a little. Thank you for all your love and letters and the sweet package.

Your boy, Peter



May 14, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa, and Brother,

Just a note of thanks to you for the writing supplies. They came in very handy. Right away I found someone who could use the pen tonight to write a letter of love. I am not worried about lending it. Everything comes back to its own.

A little sweet package arrived today. I will open it together with my friend when I see him the next time. All I am going to do tonight yet is to feed two slices of bread to the birds, bread that would have otherwise gone into the garbage pail for the pigs; then I will take a cold shower and then I hope to be in bed by 9:30.

Good night. May God bless you,

Your boy, Peter



May 16, 1953

My very dear Ones,

The sunrise this morning is so very beautiful. If we trust in the sunrise, we can have no fear.

I was so happy about your letter, dear Papa. It was written for me.

I am going to church this morning and will be on my way very soon. Other boys might not be able to live the way I do. But I trust in God. And as great as my faith is, as great will be my vessel to receive His blessings. Passing along the blessings we receive makes our vessel larger and larger. I wish you the peace and faith that rises with the sun.

Your boy, forever and always, Peter



May 16, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa and my dear Brother,

It is like a prayer for me when I sit down and write you and talk with you. You are God's messenger. God speaks to me through your voice and your letters and your love. You are showering me with so much love; may God send you His angels of peace as He is sending them daily to my side.

I wish I could write you a letter every day, for to write you is to be with you. But I feel that I must do other things also. I know you will understand. When we feel a little bit of peace and joy in our hearts, we must share it with all alike. My friend Brooks Smith, the colored boy, said that he wished we two could stay together for the next two years. I feel also that this would be nice but probably not quite right. If we have found a fountain of peace in our hearts, we must let the water run on dry and barren soil and not on the fields so much that are blossoming already.

My heart is so full of many little things that God told me these last days. May I only tell you, in this letter, that one day I will tell them to you. In these next few weeks there is work to be done. Do not worry that I will forget, for what is true and good is eternal. I will try to sleep a little more so that I may be strong.

One pearl I would like to show you that I found this week. Whenever we do anything, let us volunteer to do it. When we volunteer to work, the work changes into joy. We have the feeling, then, that we work for our Father. Already most of the boys know me just because of this little change of attitude. When work is to be done, I volunteer. And within a few days most of the personnel of the company has come to know me. Now I am more often turned down, when I volunteer, than accepted for the job.

But the spirit of willingness is starting to spread. Some boys tell me that they are embarrassed when they see me helping others. The fire can't help but catch other hearts on fire. The boys tell me often that no one appreciates enough what I do, or they say that I am being taken advantage of. But there really exists no such thing as being taken advantage of. How many of the lepers thanked Jesus for their being healed? Only one. Jesus did not stop ministering to the needs of others because of this. When he received no "Thank You," He showered the people with even greater love and light. Only the light can drive away the darkness.

Tomorrow I am working for my Father in the kitchen. Once we want to do everything, we like to do everything. Dear Mother, this wonderful thing, I learned, it came through the inspiration of your letter to me. I think it was May 8th. I worked in the kitchen that evening without being asked, remember? After working in the kitchen, I still wrote you a letter. That is why my letter showed some tiredness.

But who doesn't not get tired after a day's work? Even God needed to rest after creating the world. Well, maybe God did not have to rest, but He did provide for the night and Sunday that you and I may rest. Don't worry, my dear Ones, God sees my every need; He walks by my side. He gives me almonds through your hands and He fills my tray every day with what I need. The greater our Faith, the closer can we feel His great Love and guiding Hand. "Become you as little children" is such a wonderful counsel. Until I was about thirteen, I do not remember that I worried about the tomorrow. I knew that my parents were caring for me. And now I am once more beginning to feel that my Heavenly Father and Guru and you are always caring for me. Under Divine Mother's wings I am safe.

Dear Mother, in regard to your plans of sharing the teaching of the Master, I have not had an inspiration. I will continue to think and pray for this. And when I think of something, I will write you.

I am eating quite a few eggs each week. I think about one or sometimes two a day. I also drink a bottle of milk again each morning. Cheese I eat whenever it is served, but we don't have it too often. But I have the feeling that milk and eggs are building my body now. I have no bad effects from them. My body is functioning better now because I asked God to help me. Or, rather, I am asking God to take over.

Unity I have not yet written, but I will write. I will write today yet. I will write about the sheets and blankets also. I have written once, I think. I will ask Ella to do this for me. I am altogether sure that she will do it for me with great joy in her heart.

Dear Mother, you ask if my friend knows the teachings as we do. Yes, my friend does, for there is only one teaching and that is love. I love that prayer, "The Unfailing Prayer." I am going to memorize it. It is so strong; the prayer has risen from a searching soul's heart.

Dear Papa, you say that your letter which accompanied the package had no special purpose. It had the greatest mission in the world; that is, to spread love.

Dear Mother, my nails and teeth are fine. My teeth will be checked and, if anything is wrong, they will be fixed before I leave here. Candy I eat very little. I will let you guess when I am supposed to be leaving here. You are always pretty good about guessing what time it is. God only knows the date and my next assignment. I only have an idea about the time when I leave this forest and go to the next forest.

Fruit we do not get here very much; I mean, fresh fruit. We can buy canned fruit in the P.X., but I do not have the feeling for doing it. This morning I shared the chocolate with my friends, and I also gave Richard Shim one of my sermons. The chocolate was very good. My friend has a sweet tooth, although he tries to replace sweet thoughts of God for the sweets. Please don't send any fruit. It does not pay and God is managing everything pretty good without a fresh basket of fruit each day.

Thank you for wanting to send me the interpretation of the Gita. Your idea is sweet, that is what counts. But I have all I can handle right now. What I could use quite well, please – and thank you so much – is a booklet of three-cent stamps. I am enclosing some stamps that I had a little trouble with. All right?

I have no trouble what-so-ever reading your letters, dear Mother. But how about mine? Just write me or think of me as the thoughts come into your mind. Whether it is about the sermons or the office or the home, everything has the same love in it. It seems that I have covered quite a few of your questions now. What is the name of my friend and where is he from? Which one? The one from Kula, Maui or the one from Alabama?

I am going to be thrifty. I don't know how it happened, but this is already the third page.

It is worth the effort, my dear Ones. People say, "If you give someone a finger, they will take the whole hand." But what difference does that make? Does not God give you His whole Hand when you lift only a finger for Him? I was so happy today about something. Twice it happened.

One boy first asked me if I prayed for him and then asked me to please do so. And another boy asked me to please pray for him and his wife when I go to church. I told the boy that if I do not go to church tonight, I will still pray for him before I fall asleep.

I had lent the other boy a dollar about two weeks ago. I did not think of getting it back from him. But when I spoke to him of God and love and asked him if he needed anything, he said that he will give me the dollar tomorrow. He is working for someone else in the kitchen and that way earns a little extra money.

Please, please, use my money. Keep it flowing. God looks out for my everyday need. Today I came a little late for supper. But there was plenty left. At the moment there were no canned pears left. The cook wanted to open a new can for me. But I did not want him to do that. I thanked him for his kind offer. A little later I received a canned pear from someone who had not eaten theirs. God knows our needs. There is no more need to worry. He is keeping His ever-loving eyes on His children.

May your faith grow like a little mustard seed.

God bless you,

Your boy forever, Peter



May 18, 1953

My dear Ones,

It is such a joy to work for God. You just don't get tired when you work for Him. Yesterday's work in the kitchen was so wonderful. It was no work. And because I did it out of brotherly love, the Word of God was spread so wonderfully. Earning the usual ten dollars would never have been so great a reward as working for the Father. My Father pays His workers so generously.

It is a beautiful morning. There is the promise of a rich day in the sky and in my heart. I arose early this morning, took a nice shower and then sat quietly in the fresh morning air heavy with the scent of flowers.

Have a beautiful day, my dear Ones.

Your boy, Peter



May 20, 1953

My dear Ones,

May I thank you for your many letters. They are so good and so real. Only love and truth is real. May I only thank you tonight so I can rest a little bit longer. Your letters are always like God-sent, just at the right moment. God knows our needs.

The vitamins and chocolate came also. I am so happy about everything – very happy.

My friend's address is Pvt. Matea Infante, U.S. 56195924, Co. D – 7th Bn., M.R.T.C., Camp Pickett, Virginia.

I don't think it pays for Harry to send me anything since I am not staying here too much longer. I am scheduled to finish training here by the 19th of June. But God only knows what happens then. Life's training will continue whether we stand here or there. We should not let dates confuse us.

Are you still thinking of those German books?

God is wonderful in the lightening and rain.

Your boy, forever, Peter



May 21, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa and Brother Hellmut,

A blue sky is above with the opening of this day. Although it is a training day today, I feel it will be a day of rest. Yesterday I spent it in the kitchen. I spent the day with God in the kitchen. I could not have done the work alone. He talked to me while I swept the floor and wiped the table.

A letter from you came also, dear Mother, in which you told me about a package that was being born in someone's mind and heart: my brother's and yours. You are carrying a share of my burden, dear Mother, in spending your time to write me. The days are much lighter because of you. Only the good things we do will live after us, so let us only do good and speak kind words. May you know that God is with you always.

Your boy, always, Peter



May 22, 1953

My dear Ones,

Yesterday is over, so our lives will be over one day. But the tree will only be dropping its leaves. I am writing you early in the morning. It is a little after six. The plants and animals have had a nice rest. There is a promise of a rich day in the air. I am sitting on a big rock. He is my brother, too, but as yet I have not learned to hear his silent language.

Yesterday came the necessary letter from Reverend Bernard. Everything is taken care of now. Reverend Bernard also wrote me a wonderful letter a few days ago. All these wonderful letters and wishes help me so much. I am still a young baby in need of tender care and protection.

Your boy who loves you very much,

Always, Peter



May 23, 1953

My dear Ones,

Thank you SO much for your love and letters. I am feeling just fine. I am just about ready to go to church. It is a wonderful day. How could it be otherwise? Everything is wonderful because God, our Heavenly Father, made everything. And He made everything perfect. I am enclosing a little something of the forest and Peter. The forest, that is where I rest and write and think of my Heavenly Father and you.

Your boy forever and forever, Peter

God bless you all, my dear Ones, and may there be peace.



May 24, 1953

My dear Papa and my dear Mother and my dear Brother Hellmut,

It is morning; it is a peaceful morning. May I come in and have breakfast with you? It is so nice to be all together. Let us not forget to pray and thank our Heavenly Father for providing for us again. He goes to a lot of trouble to feed and clothe us. How happy we are if someone thanks us for a kindness. God is the Giver of all gifts. Should we not daily send Him a letter of thanks? It would make me feel pretty sad if I would never receive any mail from you. I wonder how God feels when He receives no "Thank You" notes.

I just had an idea. If there is a dollar still left of the five dollars, would you please give it to the mailman? He is such a nice man. And please give him my best regards and thank him for delivering the mail to our little house. You see, that will make his days just a little brighter. Whenever he will pass our little house and deliver letters, his eyes will shine a little brighter because kind people live inside the little yellow house. If you were a mailman and Master would live on your route, would it not make you happy to bring a letter to such a kind man?

When I read one of your dear letters this morning, my dear Mother, I knew what it was that made your letters beautiful, why they help me and bring me strength. It is because you write to me out of love. And love creates the greatest masterpieces ever created. Feeble hands become steady and skilled when they work to do something for others. I read some articles in the magazine but could not find in them the joy that your letters bring to me. Of what avail is anything we do if it does not bring peace to others? So, the thing to do is to do everything out of love.

Have you had any idea already for your plan? The idea is to make someone happy who was not smiling before. If those persons in S.R.F. want to do something like sending one letter or a little package once a week to someone hungry or someone in the hospital, then it might be an idea. You know, a letter or package with that personal touch of love. Each thing in the package is touched with love. Oh, it would be a wonderful thing.

I think everyone would look forward to the hour when he writes the letter of love to the lonely. And when he buys the little things for the package, he will be filled with joy. And when he walks

to the post office to mail the letter or package, he will surely feel that God is walking on his side. The whole deed must be borne out of love. That is what will bring the peace.

Everyone should do a little deed each week himself. To bring lots of things together and then have an assembly line affair is not the idea. Those who receive the gift can feel the spirit in which it was given. And if there should come a thank-you letter (which we should not be waiting for) we can write them then about the way we would like to bring peace and joy to the world. When the hearts have opened, we can invite them to join us in our humble way of bringing happiness to the world.

In doing something like this we will bring peace to the world far sooner than any other way. It is only love that can unite all nations in eternal peace. And it is eternal peace that we are longing for. A peace that lasts maybe thirty years is not a great victory. So, we must be prepared to work harder if we want peace for always. God does so much for us. Here will be a little way in which we can show our appreciation to our Heavenly Father. That is a way of sending God a thank-you note.

Sending me a little thought from Master Said . . . is a fine idea, dear Mother. It was thoughtful of you to send me the vegetarian paper. I did not need it, though. Would you really like me to save it and send it back to you? If so, I will send it to you at the next opportunity.

About getting the names and addresses of the needy, I know that will not be a problem. When the love and the desire to help is there, we will see many thirsty souls waiting in front of our door.

I am feeling wonderful. I am really resting this weekend in the forest. My Heavenly Father is so wonderful.

Your boy forever and forever,

Peter

Sunday 1 P.M

My dear ones in the little yellow house,

When I finished this letter to you this morning, I put it quickly into an envelope and sealed the envelope right away. That was foolish to do. I realized as soon as the letter was sealed that I should never be in a hurry to seal a letter. Because sealing a letter is just like saying good-bye. Why should I have a good feeling to know that another letter to you is all ready to be mailed? There was something wrong. I shall try to keep my letters open from now on until there is no more chance to add anything. In keeping my letter to you open, my mind will also remain open to new ideas; and I will also remain longer together with you. If we want to know the ever new joy of God, we must never seal anything.

I am so happy to add to this letter for you. This is such a wonderful lesson God has shown me. Yesterday, I believe it was, God helped me to understand something that has caused me a lot of difficulties. Some boy asked me if I had a nice girl back home. I said, "No, I only have my mother." The boy could not quite understand and believe. But I said that I do not lie. That sounded like a pretty strong answer to me afterwards. There was something wrong in saying, "I do not lie." I could feel inside that I had to ask God to help me understand my uncertain feelings.

Then the little voice said, "Only God is true in all things. You say many lies that you still do not recognize as such." As we become more sensitive to truth and grow closer to God, we will lie less and less. But not until we are with our Heavenly Father once more can we say that we do not lie. Jesus said something like this in the New Testament. Jesus said, "Do not call anyone good but my Father." We can only try to do good, but God alone, and those who have reached His kingdom, are good.

It is really wonderful to become less and less attached to material things for security and, instead, become more and more attached to God for security. One morning my belt buckle had disappeared. I guess someone needed it or thought he needed it more than I did. The first second I noticed my loss I was a little upset, but only for a little while until God showed me how to feel about this. No one will take anything from you that is not rightfully your own. And to lose anything material is really no loss. I felt sad on account of the person who took the buckle without asking. He lost something which is eternal: HONESTY. His loss is great indeed. And so blessed the hands that were misguided that they might learn to do only those things which are right.

I would like to add something yet to the idea in regard to spreading Master's teachings and peace. To add a short poem, bookmark, or so onto each letter might, at first, be a good idea. But it must be short because, first, the people want to nibble on the new food before they take a big bite. When the people like the taste, they will then ask for more out of themselves.

This morning I saw a baby rabbit very close to me. He was so cute. In the pictures I sent, you can see a little of what the forest is like. It is very beautiful. Somewhere in-between this letter I laid down on a soft bed of dry leaves and slept soundly.

May I wish you happy, happy days filled with the joy of God. If we trust Him, we will not need a watch tonight. He will always let us be at the right place at the right time.

Your boy who loves you very, very much but not enough yet.

May God bless you, Peter

Someone gave me his extra belt buckle when I had lost mine.



May 25, 1953

My dear Ones,

Thank you so much for that last wonderful package, beautiful prayer and loving letter. I was just on the verge of asking for a little news from our garden when you, dear Papa, told me something about it.

I am getting real tired now and can only try to send you my love. But that is really the only thing I ever try to send you.

Dear Hellmut, don't be upset about the water being turned down. To keep the peace in your heart is the important thing. And God is testing you to see if you have learned to be calm whether the water is hot or cold.

The moon has traveled up into the heavens by now.

Your boy, Peter



May 28, 1953

My best Friends and loved Ones,

May I thank you for your sweet letter, dear Mother? I read it in the stillness of the evening forest. Not only did your letter make me feel very glad, but it also touched someone else's heart. I hope you did not mind that a friend read your letter. My friend said, "I never received a letter like that. It makes me feel good inside. It does something to my heart." Others can feel your love, dear Mother, and become glad. Your love is not so personal that it can only make my heart glad; it makes everyone's heart glad.

These stamps came just in time. I had the feeling they would. Thanks a lot. And thanks, also, for Unity and the S.R.F. Magazine. I am enjoying everything.

It is noon and a very beautiful and glad day.

Your boy, Peter



May 30, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa and my dear Brother,

For about three hours God has been trying to tell me something, but I did not hear his voice. My ears were stuffed up with the cotton called Pride. I was so anxious to write; the hours were passing by and my pen made only futile attempts. Three times I started to write a letter to someone but what I said was not right. Rather than saying something wrong, I kept quiet.

Then I thought, "I will write my dear parents. It is always easy to write them." And, as I started my letter to you, I realized my mistake. I am entirely dependent upon God for all these letters I have written in the past. He wanted to remind me that I cannot write a letter that will bring peace. So you can see how helpless I am without His help.

All these letters I am writing you – if they are good – they are from God and if the letters are not bringing peace, then they are written by Peter. They are written by a Peter who thinks he is a pretty good boy. But mine can never be the credit. He created us and everything good connected with our lives. The day is slipping by and not one letter is written, I thought. I was getting anxious. God knew what He was doing when He let me sit unable to write something good. Now I am glad that He did what He has done. Please think of this, my dear Ones: If my letters bring peace to you, then give God the credit.

Thank you so much for your dear letters, my Mother. I am so happy they made you happy. About the pictures? I asked my friend for the negatives, but he would rather not cut the roll of negatives into sections. There are twenty negatives on the file and he does not like to cut it up. Maybe he will have some prints made for me. I will ask. Don't worry if I can't get duplicates for these pictures. Other opportunities will arise when someone will take a picture.

Dear Mother, don't praise me for looking well and happy. It is God who has fed me and clothed me and given me sunshine. When you see a beautiful rose, do you say to the rose, "Oh, you are such a beautiful red rose; I praise you for growing yourself so perfectly?" We usually praise God when we see such perfection in nature. He is the only One whom we may rightfully praise for anything good. I could never grow the food for myself to make me healthy and strong.

Dear Mother, try to be calm and put into God's loving hands what will come next. I will only be changing positions when I am finished with the training here. The same loving Father will watch over me wherever He may send me. My life will not change as I travel from one village to the next. Only as I change inside will there be a change that is important. If I can keep this in mind, I will be able to remain calm as the end of this training period approaches.

Yesterday I noticed a little green louse crawling over the back of my hand. The hairs of my hand were like a forest for the insect. If the louse would have known how far she would have to travel before reaching the end of the forest, she might have become upset. But the louse leaves the future to God and the present moment also to God. The louse overcomes one obstacle after another and leaves the rest to God.

The other day I was peacefully eating my meal. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the corporal announced that in five minutes there would be a formation. I got all upset inside for a while because I could not possibly finish my meal in five minutes. But it was really not necessary to become upset if I would have trusted in God instead of looking at the watch. God will give his children the time to eat what they need. If I would not have known about the five-minute deadline, I could have eaten another five minutes in peace. And a little food eaten in peace is better than a lot eaten in haste.

Two days ago I was doing a certain thing. Someone said that I did not have to do that. I told the boy or, rather, God told the boy that "It is not necessary, but it is nice." When we do everything with a glad heart, we will be doing only nice things.

I received a wonderful letter from the Huebners yesterday. Mr. Huebner writes with his heart, with a heart that knows suffering, but a heart that also knows God. It is a letter written not for me alone but for thirsty souls all over. Letters written out of such devotion can spread the light and teachings in a wonderful way. I let a friend read the letter. He told me when he was finished that the letter made him think. He asked me if there were also Italian people in our church. The boy is Italian or from Italian parents. I don't know for sure. Can you see what such letters can do? I am sure that Mr. Huebner did not mind that I let someone read his letter. Two or maybe three people read it, to be exact.

Anything we think or say or write or do must be so good and true that we would not want to hide it from anyone in the world. Every thought must be a true and loving thought. What we think inside will radiate through our eyes and the touch of our hands. The people around us can feel our thoughts. We must learn to do everything so right that we would not care if we were made out of glass and everyone could look inside of us.

I have been feeling a lot better physically this last week. I even looked forward to the physical training period. I am very happy about that. I would not be surprised if those vitamins Papa sent me have a part to play. I am taking them regularly. I remember the time I looked with skeptical

eyes at all vitamin and mineral tablets. It takes sometimes the round-about way to convince us. I am sure that God has a part to play in the making of those tablets.

When I am finished with my training here, I am scheduled to have a ten-day leave, plus two or three days travel time. Maybe I have more than three days. I don't know yet. It all depends upon where my next assignment will be. The army does not pay for my carfare home. It will only pay for the transportation to my next station. If I should get stationed somewhere in this neighborhood or somewhere on this coast – I am intending to go to New York for my leave. Is that all right with you? It would really be too far and too expensive to come to Los Angeles.

I have the feeling in my heart that I would like to see Aunt Ruth and all our other good friends and relatives again. I would even like to stay a few days with Ruth in Woodmere on Long Island. There are so many people in New York who have helped us so much. I would like to go to them and say thank you. I am going to write to Ruth and ask her how she would feel about my coming to Woodmere. Just in case I should be stationed in this area, I will make this arrangement.

I won't know my orders until the last week of my training. I will let you know as soon as I know more. Until that time we can do nothing else but try to be still and awake that we may know the little needs of others.

The evening has come. The tips of the tallest trees will soon be hiding the sun. The refreshing evening wind is awakening. The tall trees and their many little leaves are bowing their crowns. Maybe this is a gesture of reverence to the departing sun? I think the sun will give me the light to write for another two hours. Just now something unexpectedly nice has happened. A little grey squirrel came to within a few feet of where I was writing. I had thrown a few crumbs of cake on the ground for the animals. Usually I can find a procession of ants carrying the food away. That is all right. But when my more timid brothers come, then it makes me even happier.

How is our little garden doing? Is everything growing all right? Maybe it is time to sow a few more seeds? I am enjoying the nuts you have sent me. I am eating a few almonds every day.

Don't worry about your looks on the pictures you had taken in the photo mat. I will always know you as my dear Mother.

Good-bye my dear Ones. May God bless you all. All praise belongs to Him. He is the artist of all the beauty which exists.

Your boy, whose pen He moves when Peter is in tune,

Peter





June
1953

Camp Pickett, Virginia

June 2, 1953

My dear Mother and Father and Brother,

Thank you so much. How much? More than I can thank you. So I will ask my Father in Heaven to thank you. Two letters written by my dear Mother arrived yesterday. They were long and they were beautiful. They are beautiful because I enjoy reading them again. And then there arrived a love-wrapped package and letter from my dear Father, all prepared with so much love. How can a little heart like mine stand all those blessings? At least, a letter of thanks must go to you soon.

I have been receiving so much love through letters lately that I have been sending silent "thank yous" to precede the written thank yous. No love is sent to anyone that will not return in time. When we have vision, we will not doubt this anymore. It seems to me that your letters are much more wonderful than you feel they are, dear Papa. But your humble attitude is really the right attitude, because when you remain humble, we have room for growth. You can see what happened to me. When we become proud like I did, we just can't go any further. By ourselves we are nothing. When we give God the praise, then nothing is impossible with faith.

I like your selection of poems. You are working very hard, dear Papa. But your day of rest will come. It is here already, only to be rediscovered by you.

You are having trouble with food, dear Mother. I do too. Today I learned a lesson in that direction. After breakfast my stomach started to ache. It really hurt like it had not for a long time. While I was in pain, I started to think. For lunch I could only eat a handful of almonds and a handful of puffed wheat. And it was very soon that I regretted to have eaten that. A little thought was born out of the pain. I remember the thought, but the pain was all gone before supper. I thought, "God, I enjoy to eat; but You made the food, so You must be even more wonderful than the food You made. I will not struggle in overcoming my appetite, but I will learn to love You even more than food."

In taking my evening walk, I picked up a milk container which was half full. Someone was apparently not able to drink all. I thought, "We can get full of food so that we cannot eat more, but the peace and joy of God will never make us so full that we cannot enjoy any more of God's love." The little voice might also remind me at the dinner table by saying, "Remember the pain?" When God sets a meal before us, we might say, "It is good and it is enough. Thank you, my Heavenly Father." That way we might learn to be satisfied and not always want more.

The writing paper and envelopes are fine. Color and size, everything is all right. This has been a wonderful day. The pain is away. God lets everything end always well.

Dear Hellmut, I wish for you that during every minute of your finals you may be still and feel God's peace. You will be able to see so much clearer when you are still. It is close to about eleven P.M. Tuesday.

May God bless you, my dear Ones,

Your boy Peter – now and always.

May I send you the greetings and promise of a beautiful day which is drawing near? It is 5:30 A.M. Wednesday.



June 4, 1953

My dear Parents and Brother,

I am sitting on the balcony of our barrack and am enjoying the cool evening and my visit with you. This noon I received your letter along with Ruth's letter; but I waited 'til evening before treating myself to your mail. I also received the letter from Sunday together with Klein's and Schachner's letter. I enjoyed all the mail very much. I read the mail from Germany twice. It seems that the trials our friends have to go through are bringing them closer to God.

My own belt buckle did not come back to me yet, dear Mother. A friend, though, had an extra one which he gladly gave to me. Rather than asking me if I had the buckle, would it not be much more in the divine trend to ask, "Peter, have you been thinking of God lately?" How much love does God give us and what small part have we learned to return as yet? In a way we are stealing if we keep His love for personal enjoyment.

Today we marched by a playground where little children were playing. One of the boys remarked that he would love to be a child again. When I saw the little children playing, I felt how wise a thing Jesus said in His words, "Become ye as little children." The little children have trust and for them only today exists.

Thank you for asking me if I would like to have a vegetable drink. Maybe at my next place I will have the facilities and need for such a thing. Here, I am well provided for. I will let you know when I feel a need arise. All right? If you could send me a stamp or postal once in a while, it would be nice. I have been lazy about making the trip to the post office. I will try to be better. You have spoiled me. And I see now that it is not healthy to be spoiled.

I feel that you did a fine thing in not using the typewriter Sunday morning. The click! click! click! might have disturbed someone's peace. I liked to listen to your episode at Ralph's Market. Your problems and mine are so much the same, although we are miles apart. Our weaknesses follow us wherever we go; the fasted train cannot carry us away from the. But the strength to overcome them is equally close by. Wherever we are, we are equipped with the tools to chisel our lives in the image of the Eternal.

Next weeks we will be sleeping, eating, and training in nature. We will have the practical training; we will try to put into practice what we have learned in the classroom. The weather is just right and nice for outdoor living. It promises to be pretty nice. It won't be too different than being a Boy Scout. To have that attitude makes everything simple. If we think we are playing a game like little children, we will have a lot of fun.

I will be a good boy and take the vitamins conscientiously as soon as they arrive. I have taken the vitamins Papa sent me regularly. I have been feeling quite well. Since it has gotten warmer, we get more fresh salads. This is very much to my liking.

I'll wish you a good night for now, eat a few nuts yet, take a shower, wash two pieces of underwear, and slip under my blanket and sleep.

Your boy,

Peter loves you.

My letters and soul needs very much polishing. Your boy, Peter



June 6, 1953

My dear Papa, Mother and brother Hellmut,

May I send you greetings of peace and gladness this evening? It is not early anymore; the stars and fireflies have been shining since quite a little while. It is wonderfully cool now. It is such a present to be outside and just relax. This letter I am writing you for a special reason tonight. Does the introduction give you a hint? It will be Father's Day soon. May I say, Papa, that you have been a kind and loving Father for all these years since we have met? Thank you for providing for me so thoughtfully for so many years; for standing so many hours on your feet and selling little fishes so that I might have a home and a meal every day. But also for your spiritual guidance may I thank you. You have always let us be and trusted that the good would win. If we only believe in the good, it alone can win.

It is not easy for you to stand on your feet for so many hours each day and sell little fishes; but there is a reason. God has placed you in this position that you might learn a certain thing. When you have learned, you will graduate from the Stock Company. And it is wonderful to know that God never tests us beyond our strength. There are many struggles which you have had, but don't you feel now that you become stronger because of them? I feel so much stronger in every way this evening than I did four months ago. And is it not the final end result which matters? Your final end result will be good because you are a brave and silent soldier. When you come home tonight, there is a wonderful rest period awaiting you. When you enter the store in the morning, then say to yourself, "I am not working for money. I am working for God." Your days will be so wonderful if you can always remember that it is God we are serving. He pays His employees much more generously than any other employer. He will give you peace and joy during the busiest days. Money cannot buy such riches. And work can no longer be called work when we do it gladly.

I am discovering here in my work that when the joy of God comes into our hearts, work is changed into a game that we want to play forever.

May I wish you – but especially my dear Father – a good night? And may I wish you a heart which knows peace so that you may see the Pole Star of your life on all your voyages.

Your soldier boy and son and fellow sailor,

Peter



June 7, 1953

My dear Papa, and Mother and Brother,

The fireflies are lighting up in the forest already. But I still have enough light to send you greetings from my heart. It is a happy and peaceful heart tonight. I feel so rich with such a heart. I have not much money in my pocket but I always have what I need. That is enough. I feel like a boy who has a dollar in this pocket and has ten cents worth of desires. Therefore, I am richer than the man who has ten dollars in his pocket but a hundred dollars worth of desire. It is not the food we eat which gives us strength, but it is the love of God on the food and all around us which makes us strong. One day we will be open to the love of God all around us and we will not have to eat anymore. A handful of nuts made me right away strong and happy this morning, because I was thinking of the love connected with the nuts.

Your boy, Peter ♥♥♥♥



June 11, 1953

My very dear Friends, Mother, Papa, and Hellmut,

Tonight is a night to be grateful to God for the help and strength He has been in my life. If I would not have been able to depend on God these last few days, the river would have seemed much wider and swifter and more treacherous. Three nights I spent with the boys in the open. One night we all had a little tent to sleep in, but the next nights a rain coat was our protection against the elements and the forest ground was our bed. Actually, we were supposed to sleep only three hours on two now nights, but I slept lots more. And God closed my eyes and gave me rest even during the time it rained.

Such rain and lightening and thunder as I saw last night I never saw before. God put the greatest fireworks out last night which I have ever seen. The lightening was so bright that it blinded me. I thought, unless we have true wisdom, we are walking in the dark. And if God would show Himself to us in the His great Gory, we could not see Him. His great light would blind us. All selfishness must have turned to real love before we can see Him. Only slowly, step by step, through little deeds of kindnesses, will we become accustomed to the Light.

I have come to my favorite spot in the forest tonight to thank God for all these wonderful things He is teaching me; to thank you for all your wonderful mail which is giving me strength and teaching me to see the light and adding new and stronger strands to my rope of faith.

Your wonderful toothbrush came to me while I was on bivouac the first day. I had neglected to take mine along. No better time could the toothbrush have arrived.

The stamps arrived tonight at just the right time. I was just out of useable three-cent stamps and had only one airmail postcard.

Before we went on bivouac most of the boys in my barrack locked up their clothes and equipment. They were afraid it might be stolen. The wave of fear also seized me for a while until God brought light to me. I was on the verge of putting away my last piece of valuable clothing when God sent me help. And then I felt that His Light is the greatest protection. What is rightfully mine cannot be taken. I unpacked everything again. A great feeling of security came to my heart.

I will always remember the story you told us a long time ago, dear Mother, about the white family who was accused for the dry weather. No one can harm you if your heart remains open and full of love.

In the morning, just before we left on our hike, fear and doubt once more came to my heart. I was undecided. But God helped me. Nothing was missing when I returned today. And besides the few material possessions that were there, my faith in God's protection grew stronger again. The material possessions were only incidental in teaching me faith. God made me also a present by letting me come back to the barrack a night earlier. I was taken back by truck because I have kitchen duty tomorrow. He knows what is best for us.

I like your picture, Mother. Please let me keep it for a while.

I have my Social Security card with me, but there should be a duplicate with my papers.

Please forgive me if I don't answer your letters individually. As far as I know, next Thursday will be the last time I will be receiving mail here. A week from tomorrow I will probably be shipping out. Now is a good time to look at the "is done" pile and thank God for the help He has given me during the last four months of training. It is good to thank God for the money we have already paid off on the house instead of constantly wishing that the little balance might be paid off.

Good night my dear Ones.

Thank your for you love.

Your little boy, Peter

I will let you know as soon as I know what my next assignment is. Now is the most wonderful time to try to be calm. God will help us when we ask Him for Help. How can such a loving Father every say NO?



June 15, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Father and my dear Brother,

We received our orders today which assign us to our next place of duty. Before you go on and read this, be calm and know that any deal we get is a good deal and the right deal. Everything comes from God. I am going to Europe. Where in Europe, I do not know yet. I will be shipping from a camp thirty miles from New York City. I might have about two weeks leave, which I will spend in New York. I will write again soon. We must be grateful for everything that comes our way.

Your boy always, Peter



June 15, 1953

My dear Ones,

Are you happy about the way God is leading me? Do not be only overjoyed for me, but please also pray for the Mothers whose sons are going to Korea. His divine protection covers every little piece of earth in all lands. If you would like to send me a letter while I am on furlough, please send it to Harry Herbert or Clay.

I do not yet know what date I am leaving for Europe. All I am trying to do now is to be peaceful and live as if only today and now existed.

The wonderful package with dates and nuts and raisins arrived this evening. It is a wonderful package. Maybe a boy in Korea would love a package like that once instead of me?

Your boy, Peter



June 17, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Father and my dear Brother,

These last few days at this camp are days during which I must learn patience and calmness. The last few days I must not waste and just hope for time to pass. On the contrary, I should attempt to fill these hours fuller with kind deeds and calmness. It is a good thing that God does not tell us when we change our place of abode. It takes great calmness inside not to be affected by future happenings. To be able to fill the hours as they roll around takes many cares from our mind. Let us ask God to help us learn this.

I saw my orders today and can give you a little additional information. Before I continue, though, may I ask you not to write about my orders to Germany. Maybe you have done so already, then we must feel it has happened because God wanted it to happen. It is no government secret where I am going. I only feel that the news will not help anyone to be more peaceful inside. They will be filled with high expectations about my coming, but their minds will not be at peace. And should I not be able to visit our friends, they will be sad. One cannot tell what God has in store for us. We should not build our happiness in the future, but now.

I am not being sent as a medical man to Europe. I am being sent as an interpreter. But my mission is the same whatever my outward job may be. The apostle Peter was a fisherman, but he said, "Thee I will serve." If I would have known about this assignment four months ago already, I would have been excited for four months. And I might not have heard the still, small voice within which told me what my real mission is. Outwardly, we might have different duties but inwardly we have the same duty. We must try to please God in every way possible.

Dear Mother, your letters are not only an inspiration for me but for all people. Please do me a favor and write others more than you write me. I will be happy when I know that others are happy because of you. The more people we can help, the greater will be our service towards God. Spreading His joy in all places, that must be our aim. One day the circle of love will be closed and we will again be one great family with God as our Father.

It might be a while before I can send you my new address. All right?

May God bless you and keep your minds at peace. Your boy, Peter, Dieter



New York – On Furlough

Brooklyn, June 19, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Father and my dear Brother,

I am using a second-hand sheet of paper but my love for you is first-hand.

God works in mysterious ways. About five years ago I was there where I am now. I am in the same place, yet I see different things. A different window pane has been inserted in the window of my soul. I am in a big city. I am in New York City. I am sitting in the kitchen of Harry Herbert. The big noise of the city does not penetrate to this quiet little corner. The kitchen window is open; the horizon is dark except for one neon sign which is flickering on and off in the distance. I am so glad tonight; it is quiet gladness of the soul. It is the peace that one may depend upon, whether he is in the army or in civilian life which I feel tonight. Real happiness is in us and we take it along wherever we go.

We all scattered into many directions this morning. Some boys went North, others South, West or East. Many good-byes were said; many good-byes touched my heart. The cook said, "Peter, I have always had something against the C.O.'s but, since I knew you, I have changed my mind." I received many wishes from the heart. I wished many friends God's blessings. They help the most.

On the way to New York, I gave my fellow travelers little helping hands. It is wonderful to help and to see the little smiles.

This thought came to me when I saw the sign:

100 MILES TO NEW YORK

When we are one hundred miles from New York City, we cannot see the City yet. However, although we do not see the towers of the City, we still are sure that there is a city called New York City. And if we travel a bit further, we will reach the City.

A similar proposition holds true in regard to God's joy and love and home. We should not have to see in order to believe. We should believe in the promise of those who have been in heaven and know of its splendor. As we travel further on the road of kindness, we will come closer and closer to the City of the Holy Grail. One day we will awaken and behold the glistening towers of our true home.

God is greater and more wonderful than all the things he has created. When I saw the complex and huge constructions of the City, I thought, indeed, God is the greatest intelligence which exists. The thing which caught my attention in this big city was not so much the big buildings but the people that lived in all the big and little buildings. Oh, what a drama this life is! I am beginning to feel more and more what work there is to be done. I need His help for this work; alone, it is a lost cause. I would not know what I should do each hour of the day if God would not move my hands and heart.

I have two weeks vacation. I do not yet know where I will spend the two weeks. I only know that I will spend the first night with Harry. I would like to visit all our friends and relatives here. I would like to feed the squirrels in Central Park and maybe take a walk on Riverside Drive. I will be

thinking of you. I will be and I am always near you for I love you. If there is anything or anyone in particular whom you would like me to see in New York City, please write me to Harry Herbert's address.

Happiness, real happiness comes to our heart in doing good and right things. We should never look for rewards for any good deed we do; we will spoil it ourselves if our heart is set on rewards.

It is a few minutes past midnight now. Harry does not know that I am sitting in the kitchen. But he knows now. He quietly stepped into the door just now. You should have seen the surprised eyes.

Two hours have passed filled with beautiful thoughts spoken between two searching souls. In speaking about the real things, time has become unreal. The army is really a blessing in my life. It has sent me all the way to New York so that I may spend these beautiful hours with a friend.

Good night, my dear Ones. Many of the best double grade "A" wishes from your dear friend Harry.

May God bless you,

Your boy and big-time traveler, Peter

California, Virginia, New York, Europe! All these places have one thing in common; God is in all of them.



Woodmere, Long Island, June 23 and 24, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Father, and my dear Brother Hellmut,

I am sitting somewhere where we sat about six and two-thirds years ago. I am sitting at the breakfast table of Aunt Ruth –

June 24, 1953

It is some hours later. The night has slipped in-between yesterday and today. It is a beautiful morning filled with sunshine and a gentle breeze. I am glad to be where I am. It is wonderful to be in Ruth's house and garden and to sit at their table and talk with them. It is beautiful here; it is beautiful anywhere. God is in all places and all beings. It is we who fail to see this sometimes. God has protected and is protecting Ruth and her family. He is feeding them daily. He is letting the children grow up. He loves the Kaplans just as He loves the Laues.

There is no reason why we should love one person more or less than any other person. It is God whom we love in all things and beings. They are all so very kind to me and it comes from their heart. I am spending about four or five days here. It is a wonderful experience to see life from so many different positions. Unless we take a little sip from all different kinds of wine, we

will not know which wine is the best. Someone might advise us as to what is the best, but we humans like to do a little bit of tasting ourselves.

Dear Ones, I am beginning to see how closely a home is representative of the mind of its inhabitants. I think it is time for us to do a bit of cleaning up and throwing out. If our mind is cluttered up like our garage and the front room, then it is time to do something about this. Once we make the start to throw the junk and unneeded items out of our house, it will be easier for us to clear our mind.

I would like you to do me a favor. Would you please only keep one outfit of clothes for me and would you please give the rest to someone who has none? It is a shame to have the clothes just hanging in the closet while others go naked. The army has given me plenty of clothes for today and tomorrow. When I went into the forest and made my bed out of leaves and let my clothes be my blanket, I felt very happy and free. We really don't need many of the things we have in our home. We only think we need them. Anything we don't use, we don't need.

Today I am sending you the cups that Papa had left here. Please don't waste your precious energy trying to sell them. Use the cups to make others happy. Maybe you could give them to S.R.F for the little gift shop. I'll mark the ones which Ruth thinks are a little more valuable.

Yesterday morning I stood by the garden gate and watched the cars go by. Everyone was going somewhere. The thoughts came to me that we are there already. God is bedside us wherever we are. I am beginning to feel that there is not real difference between army life and civilian life. A happy heart depends on us and not on our surroundings. Although the Herbert's home is simple, I am glad to be there. Although my physical accommodations in the army are simple, I can be happy there because God is by my side.

I love you, my dear Ones; I love you very much. The more I will learn to love God, the closer will I also come to you. Maybe one day I will stand in front of your door, although I am thousands of miles away.

Dear Papa, thank you for your dear letter. It came just in time. It seems to me that your letters are becoming free of tensions. You will not have struggled in vain. God is very close to you.

Good-bye, my dear Ones, and may God bless you,

Your little adventurer,

Peter, Dieter



Brooklyn, June 27, 1953

My good Comrades and Shipmates,

Let us sail together across the ocean of life towards the shores of peace. Together with you and with God we will have a good crew. The sailing date is today and now, so, let us not miss the boat.

Yesterday I returned from Ruth's home to Harry's. I spent close too five days in Ruth's home. They were five wonderful days. I have an open invitation to return any time I like. I don't even have to call first. There is a room and a bed always ready. It might take a few minutes to put sheets on my bed and to dust the furniture a little, but otherwise there is always a room empty and waiting for a guest. The Kaplans are really fine people. Their world is a different world than ours but they are still good and kind. If God would not think of them as He does of us, they could not have prospered and progressed in their realm. The Kaplans are growing in the understanding of life, like the rest of the world. Let us always first correct our own faults before we comment on the faults of others. We might think that our children are spoiled and disobedient. I thought so for a minute. But as soon as that unkind thought crossed my mind, the little voice inside became active. I am a spoiled and disobedient child, too. I am often disobedient to my heavenly Father, to the little voice of conscience. Just because we are in a different class does not mean we are better. God has an equally great amount of love for both the saint and the sinner. However, the sinner is in greater need of love than the saint. Ruth and Harry and Bethy and Linda Kaplan are all included.

Yesterday, when I returned to Harry's, I found that sweet letter from you waiting for me. Harry and his mother and I, we all enjoyed your letter. I will ask you to send your letters to other kind folks until I get a new and more permanent address. They will enjoy your letter just as much as I do – please.

Did we not have some kind of agreement that you would write to others and less to me? Let us find each other more and more in God because the outer communication system not only might but will break down one day. If we learn to find each other in God, our boat will continue to sail in fresh, sweet waters; otherwise, it might have to sail on the ocean of tears.

This afternoon at three o'clock Harry and I will be with our good friend Clay. We will be thinking of you all. We will enjoy the little sweet package together; and your dear letter, also. This will not be a climax in our lives. We must look at these rest stops as periods of relaxation and refueling so that with renewed energy we may continue our climb. Our mountain has no peak; our peak vanishes in the golden light.

I have received the vitamins from Dr. Vaughn. I received them quite a little while ago but failed to tell you about it. I have written to Dr. Vaughn and thanked him for his kindness.

I have no idea yet what my sailing date is, but I have the feeling that I will be a few weeks in Camp Kilmer before we ship out. May God keep your minds at peace. He can give you a mind that is at peace. You only have to believe He can do this for you and it is so. If you want something with your heart's desire and trust in God for help, then you are helped.

I am sitting in one corner of the sofa and Harry is sitting in the other looking through the paper. Please pray for me when you think of me that my ego will leave Peter. Your prayers will help me.

Yesterday evening Harry and I visited a good friend. We came home close to midnight. Two more hours passed like minutes filled with wonderful words and vibrations that chase away sleep.

The good things to you all from Harry and Peter



Letter number 100 only contained photographs. It was out of chronological sequence. Judging by the fact that Peter was standing next to the hospital entrance in Nuremberg, Germany where he was stationed and the picture of Peter sitting on his Lambretta motor scooter, the picture dates to about April, May, or June of 1954.

Peter first mentioned getting a motor scooter in letter number 168, dated March 24, 1954. In letter number 171, dated April 11, 1954, Peter mentions the first time about taking a trip to the Alps during the Easter holidays which he did.

Peter drove the motor scooter for maybe three or four months. He traded it in for a motorcycle. Towards the end of his tour of duty, he bought a convertible – a 1954 Opel.





July
1953

New York – On Furlough

New York City, July 3, 1953

My dear Shipmates, dear Father, Mother and Brother,

I would like to send you greetings from Harry's house. In a few hours I will be at my new camp – at 5 P.M. This stay in New York has made my life richer again. I am of glad spirit because God is everywhere. I can call for Him wherever I am. It feels so good to be with him. I will continue the story at Camp Kilmer. The Herberts send you their greetings. Harry has and will always be a dear brother to me. Till later then –

Your boy,
Peter



Camp Kilmer, New Jersey

July 3, 1953 8:00 P.M.

My dear Ones,

I am sitting in the telephone center at Camp Kilmer. It is quiet and comfortable here. I just called Harry and told him how things are. He is such a good boy. To be in his house was like being at home. We spent beautiful hours together. We spoke about the real things as far as we had realized them in ourselves. When I returned from my visits to the Herbert's home around midnight, Harry was waiting up for me. We then had a glass of milk and a piece of cake together. And after that we softly talked about what was in our hearts. Very great have been the blessings. The furlough is over but I am not sad. We must go on and on. We must go to new places and meet new people that we become evermore certain of God's spirit in all creation.

Yesterday noon and afternoon I spent with Aunt Jennie and Jettel. I brought them six roses and a cactus plant for Aunt Jennie's birthday. You should have seen the joy my little visit and flowers brought to the two old ladies. The joy echoes right back into my heart. I had my noon meal with the two old ladies. They made everything so nice for me. Aunt Jettel has such sweetness in her face.

God loves all his children. It is so wonderful how His love reaches the millions of souls living in the big city.

The evening I spent with Clay. It had rained a little before Clay walked with me to the subway station. The air was so good. We discontinued our walking to look at a wonderful view and breathe the good air. To our left stood the Statue of Liberty, below and in front some big ships were sleeping in the harbor. Straight ahead and across the East River the ferries were pulling out to and returning from Staten Island. Then there were the big downtown buildings scraping the midnight sky. Except for some few souls, the city was asleep. There was peace in the two hearts who witnessed this spectacle.

From what I have learned, we will not be long at this camp. A week's stay here might be a good guess; then we will sail across the big sea. Please do not send me any mail. I have to put on a return address because of regulations.

I am happy in the thought that you are thinking of me. I called Ruth once more last night. She was very sweet. She said, "God bless you" as I said, "Good-bye." That is wonderful.

I would like to tell you of a little idea which materialized in a conversation with dear Harry. Let us say a mechanic builds a car. It takes him a long time to put everything together and make the right adjustments. When the mechanic has finished his work successfully, he will be quite happy. He will take good care of the car because he built it. When anything goes wrong, he will know how to repair it because he put all the parts together. If a customer has bought the car and anything goes wrong, he will have to see a mechanic. And it is best to see the mechanic who built the car.

There exists a similar relationship between our bodies and minds and its Craftsman. When anything goes wrong in our lives, let us go to the Craftsman who built this body and this life. He has brought our life into existence. He will know what adjustments are necessary. He has clients working for Him, but clients are not as wise as the Master. If we want to be sure of being healed

soon and right, we must go to God. Most of us are sick in some ways. If we want to be healed, then we should go to the builder of our lives.

I will not say good-bye, but good-night. We are not apart because we love each other. I have a nice bed right in front of an open window. The stars that look into my window also look into yours. God is next to all of us. It was a joy to write you and it is always a joy to be together with you. We will sail the great ocean of life together.

Your boy,
Peter



July 5, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Father and my dear Brother,

Is it the thirteenth or the fourteenth that you, my dear Mother, have another birthday? It does not matter too much but maybe you could clue me in. I would like to be as close to the truth as possible. I have the feeling, though, that on both days my thoughts will be going out to you.

I have spent wonderful hours in my new camp already. Friday evening – the first evening of my stay here – I found a new brother. No, I should not and shall not say I found him. God brought us together because it was written in the stars that we should meet. We met under the stars about eleven o'clock. We spoke a few words to each other and we knew we had found each other.

It is so easy to love those who love us but that is not enough. We must also learn to love those who do not yet love us. What greater treasures are there in life than to have friends and to have God as our best friend? It is a great joy to meet a searching soul so unexpectedly. But really, all souls are searching. Everyone is sincerely interested to find joy in life. Everyone who is in search of joy is in search of God. And we should learn to assist willingly all those on the path.

Yesterday evening I also spent a little while in church. I could say that I sat alone in church trying to pray and meditate. But if I would say that, I would not be saying the truth. God was sitting and is sitting by my side. He is really my best friend because He never leaves me. It is wonderful to have someone who listens to our problems and who has the remedies to cure all diseases.

This morning I went to the Catholic service. I spent a wonderful hour in the church. Each hour of peace in our life is a heavenly gift. God does not ask for a fee for this gift. He only asks for our love and our hearts. God does not reach into His pocketbook and say, "I can spare so much today. You'll have to make it cover the expenses somehow." God gives to us according to our needs and more.

I reached into my pocket yesterday and pulled out some change. I questioned if I could spare what I had in my hand. The little voice said, "Don't figure with pennies."

When I came out of the church, I met an old friend. I think you might know him. He is the boy for whom you ordered Unity Magazine. He is going to the Panama Canal Zone. It is so nice to meet old friends. When we once have found God, every being will be like our best friend whom we

have not seen for many years. Then I met another friend. We talked together for a long time. Another bridge was built that bombs cannot destroy. A bridge that connects two hearts was silently built as we talked about God. We enjoyed our lunch together. We bought a little lunch separately at the P.X. Unknowingly each one bought what we both enjoy. He bought fig bars and I bought raisin cookies. It was a good meal, especially because we dined together.

There was a boy sitting next to us for quite a while. We exchanged a few words with him also, but he either seemed to be mostly dreaming or listening.

After the meal we said good-bye. My friend continued to write a letter and I returned to the barrack and my bunk. I was beginning to write you when a visitor came. The boy who came said, "I have found you." My heart was touched when I heard the boy and recognized him. It was the boy who had been sitting next to us dreaming and maybe listening. He came to me for seemingly no special reason. We started to talk a little and I had the feeling that there was a loneliness in his heart. I tried to be a brother to my friend as best as I knew how. It was the first time that the boy had been away from home. While he was in his basic training, he could go home almost every weekend. Now he was on his way to Europe and home would be very far away. I tried to tell the boy where our real home is located. I gave him some of your dear letters to read, Mother. And I also gave him Papa's last letter. These wonderful letters from you touched the boy's heart. I think there were tears in his eyes. He said, after reading the letters, "I think I will write to my Mother." I asked the boy if he had a picture of his mother. He showed me a picture. She has a simple but so beautiful face that I am not very surprised that her son feels lonely. The boy asked me if I was going to the mailbox today. He asked me to come to his barrack when I went and we would then go together.

Many boys also come to this camp on their way back from Europe. All the boys I have talked with came from Germany. One boy was stationed for a while in Stuttgart. He knew where Kerner St. 39 was (It was probably the address of Peter's sister Sonni). I had to smile when he told me this.

It is much better to live in the present. If we live each day as best we can and let God provide and plan for tomorrow, great calmness will come into our life. Anxious expectations fill my heart sometimes as I think of the voyage and the days that lie ahead. Then there is need for prayer and meditation to find calmness. It is a wonderful schooling. God plans our curricula, not us.

The night has unexpectedly slipped in-between the previous sentence and this one. I was invited to work in the kitchen at night. I mostly took the eyes out of the potatoes and peeled onions. Do you know that I could peel onions after a while and not cry anymore? The work was nice because we could feel God near us. We worked from about seven in the evening till four in the morning, and then I slept until about seven-thirty in the morning.

We were permitted to sleep till twelve; but I felt not tired. So I got up, took a shower and now I am enjoying to write to my dear Ones. If God does not want you to be tired, you will be awake and strong.

I would like to write down the prayer my friend gave me for you. I like the prayer and I think you will like it, too. You are probably familiar with it. It is the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred – let me sow love.

Where there is injury – pardon.
Where there is doubt – faith.
Where there is despair – hope.
Where there is darkness – light.
Where there is sadness – joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled – as to console;
To be understood – as to understand.
To be loved – as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

We do not have to go job hunting anymore once we are able to feel the truth of this prayer in our hearts. My friend says that when he prays, he asks God to teach him to live those prayers.

When I was taking the eyes out of the potatoes, I heard the boys complaining about the big job that was to be done. I might have been guilty of silently complaining, too. In fact, I was. I thought to myself, we complain when we have a little job like this. That is not right. God never complains although his task of growing the potatoes is very much greater than ours.

Dear Mother, with this letter may I wish you happy birthday? May you feel God ever nearer with each new day. And may I also tell you, my dear Papa, that I will be thinking of you and that I am thinking of you now. I might be on the sea or I might be on land. If I cannot reach you by letter for your birthday, I will still be with you. I try to think of you often. It is not hard to think of you, for I love you with my heart. If there is love flowing out to anyone, it is really God's love.

Of current events I cannot tell you anything new. Current events are really not important because they do not bring one peace of mind. Do not, or rather, let us not be anxious to know news but, rather, to know God and His peace.

May all your days – my Father's and my Mother's and my dear Brother Hellmut's – be filled with the sunshine of God.

May God bless you and everyone.

Your sailor and soldier boy, Peter, Dieter

Please thank God if this Letter has brought you happiness.



July 8, 1953

My dear Ones,

The moment you are thinking of me, you have sent a letter to me. Don't be sad that you cannot write me for a few days. We are really becoming ever nearer. Often only when our avenues are cut off, we will travel on the inner pathways of light.

I am spending wonderful days. God is so kind, so very kind. Try to find and know God today. Each morning when we rise, we should say, "Today I will try again and I will work a little more overtime for God than the day before." It is the overtime that counts so much. Twenty minutes of extra work for God brings more joy than a whole day of regular work. That was an experience I had yesterday.

Don't think about sailing dates and deadlines. To think of God brings much more peace to our hearts.

Your boy loves you,
Peter



July 11, 1953

My dear Father and dear Mother and dear Brother,

I am coming home to you now. It is quiet in the barracks. All the boys have gone out, and now there is only God and myself left. But that is all right and good. It is Saturday evening. The sky is growing more colorful as the sun moves closer to the horizon. I am alone but really not lonely because God is here. If I should be lonely ever, it is not because I am not at home, but because I have not learned to feel God near me. So, instead of wishing to be in a certain place in California, I will pray to God that I may be able to feel His presence.

This morning God opened my eyes a little further again. There were clouds in my heart previous to the time the sun broke through. And my body was tired although I had slept many hours the previous night. What was the matter? Suddenly, I became aware of a silent conversation in my soul. "Is it better to be an engineer, dentist or lawyer and not feel God near you, or would you rather be a street-sweeper and feel His presence?"

I remember the times I worked in the kitchen, cleaned garbage pails, washed pots, and cleaned stoves. I was very happy working because now I know that God was near. Or, to be more correct, I could partly feel His presence because He is always near. And I remember the times I had wonderful gardening jobs, but it was hard for me to work because I could not feel God's presence.

I compared and weighed these two experiences and I came to one conclusion. I'd rather sweep the streets all my life and feel His presence than to have any other job and, even though it should be the best one in the world, not feel Him near me.

Papa, your words of many years ago rang in my mind that morning. You said, "I do not care if you become street-sweepers, so long as you are happy." That is what counts. And also, if we cannot feel His nearness at times but work with the desire to please Him, that will give us the strength to wait patiently for His coming. God showed me that to be near Him was our greatest joy. It is never filling but ever satisfying to be near God.

At noon I had some delicious pineapple juice as part of my meal. It tasted so good to me that I wished the whole world – all people – could have a glass of this. But then the little voice inside said, "But how much more wonderful would it be if all Beings could drink the divine Nectar that never fills but ever satisfies?"

Shortly after the wonderful experience of the morning, I spoke to my good friend Paul. I told him what had happened and, in talking together, wonderful things were revealed to us. Paul and I felt God near us and it seemed as if Paul's bed had become an altar. I was touched by Paul's great love. He gave me his crucifix which he had used in his daily prayers. His love touched me deeply because he gave so great a part of his heart to me. I realized then that it is the love we give which counts. We can give a little wheat seed away, and we can make someone very happy if true love is attached to it. The greater and truer our love becomes, the ever smaller an object will we be able to attach our love to. Until one day when our love becomes so pure and strong that we do not need to attach it to anything.

Visible objects are only temporary aids of giving expression to our love. The rose petals and locket are only temporary aids to remind me of Master's love and protection. The crucifix was left to the world for the same reason. Those things help to build the bridge and they help us build bridges between the seen and the unseen world.

For the first time yesterday, I felt the freedom which can be gained through the way of the Cross. I had the feeling that the crucifix was like an ancient map to a very great treasure. It was like an old map which held the key to the greatest lost gold mine. At first, it was hard to find your own position on land and then find that place on the mystic map. But he who searches earnestly will find his way. And once you have caught a small glimpse of the Truth, you will say to yourself, "How could I have been so blind" It is all so plain!"

The crucifix in itself holds the key to freedom. It is like a map which Jesus left for us. I can no longer doubt that He was on earth and has now ascended into Heaven. Once we learn to give up our life consciously for God, we will have found freedom. Our life is the sum of all our desires. Our life is the greatest treasure. When we can give away our greatest treasure consciously to God (from where it came), we will be free.

Our body is really only like our house; it gives us temporary lodging. As we walk consciously out of our earthly house, so should we learn to walk out of our earthly body. It takes effort and sacrifice and help from above to give up our body like Christ did. He has shown us the way, so let us try to follow. We can learn to free ourselves from our body through little sacrifices at first. Only by sacrificing something that is dear to us do we gain freedom. We should try to say no to an ice-cream, a cup of coffee, a meal or something like that. That food we did not eat might have built two or three extra cells of our body, but how much harder must it be to sacrifice all the cells of our body?

We cannot do this job alone. Unless God will help us, we are helpless. We are like an empty vessel without Him and filled with a lot of nonsense if we look to the world for aid. I don't like the word nonsense. But without Him, we are nothing.

I do not understand how I deserve such great blessings as have come to me since I joined the army. The help from Reverend Bernard and Master and God and the Saints is becoming more real and more important and necessary for my life every day. Prayer is really a very great force. If someone prays for you, you are receiving a great blessing.

My dear Father, may your coming birthdays see an ever greater enfoldment of God in you. Your life is still so long because you are not saying anymore, "Tomorrow I will meditate and look for

God.” Now you are saying, “Now I am looking for you, my God. Please come to me and light my house.” Your letters are showing that many bulbs are burning already.

When you receive this letter, I will probably be moving out to sea. We ship out probably on the fifteenth. Bremerhaven will be our first destination, if God so wills it. Would you please put the little offering silently in the basket for me? “You are digging for gold,” says Reverend Bernard, and Reverend Bernard is helping me dig.

Your boy forever and ever,
Peter



July 13, 1953

My dear Ones,

Please do not feel anything is wrong if my letters are not coming in so punctually. You probably can feel that I have been spending wonderful days. But it seems to me now that I have to listen a lot more deeply before I write.

Tonight Santa Claus came to me. When I opened my AWOL bag (Peter probably meant his duffle bag), I found fruit and cake from my friend Paul in it. What a blessing to have such friends.

If you write me one letter to the address I give you, I might just receive it when I step off the boat in Germany. My address will then change again. So please, do not send me more than one letter.

Your boy loves you.
Peter



Crossing the Atlantic Ocean

July 17 to July 24, 1953

My dear Comrades,

We are moving onward and eastward steadily. God must have had a good reason for creating so much water. I wonder what His reason was. Such a journey is good because you have much time to wonder. Our own world is really a very small world. How much territory can we encompass with one sweep of our imagination? I do not think it is much larger than the size of a pea. Why is it that we can think of so little when the world is so very large? It is because we are in a prison. It is a prison created by our likes and dislikes. Our likes tie us and our dislikes separate us so that we are really living on an island with only very little contact with the world.

How can we expand this little world of ours that it will become more like the world in which God lives? We must cultivate an equal love for everyone and everything. God has no favorites. He loves the sinner as He loves the saint; and so should we. He feeds the criminal as well as the saint, and so should we. We should love the rain as much as the sun. We should love bread as much as cake. We should love suffering as much as joy. Only one thing we should love more than anything else: the Creator of all creations.

When someone sees a beautiful painting, he will sometimes remark, "I would love to meet the painter." This is because he somehow feels that the painter must be greater in wisdom and talents than his art. The painter will be able to show you how he painted the picture. If we want to learn about the mysteries of the world, our best teacher is the Creator. It is often difficult to meet a Michelangelo but if we persist, we cannot fail. We must search for Him in every face and every flower. He has the habit of revealing Himself in the most unexpected ways. He might be behind the patience and humbleness of a street-sweeper. He might be behind the endurance of a very ill and crippled child. The type of job does not signify the greatness of the person. But the way a person carries out his duty will reveal his greatness. Is he patient and neat, willing and cheerful in his work?

I spent part of the day scraping rusty paint off the boat. The job itself was not important. But then again, it was important because it showed me how I am lacking the qualities I mentioned above. No job is a lowly or a princely job. We make the job what it is. We do not need to wear the robe of a priest to be a priest. We do not have to wear the clothes of a prince to be a prince. If we live like a prince, then we are a prince. We do not have to wear the words of God on our lips to be a preacher. If we live the Word of God, then we are a preacher.

The fundamental course for public speaking is a course in right living. I am pointing to myself as I am writing this. To speak of something which you have not experienced yourself is like reading a story that someone else has written. First-hand information is much more inspiring than second-hand information. We'd rather talk to someone who has lived with the African tribes than someone who reads about them. We'd rather talk to someone who knows God than someone who has read about God. It is hard to imagine how large this world is just by looking at a map. How can we possibly imagine how much water the blue on a map represents? Only after we travel for many days and see nothing but water from morning till night does our soul get a glimpse of God's great creation.

Dear Mother, the day before I left Camp Kilmer I received four letters. One of them was from my Mother. The mail made me very happy. The letters were like a teacher. I would like to explain. I was standing in a line which found its terminal point in the cafeteria. Most of my thoughts also

found their terminal point in the cafeteria. Suddenly I remembered the unopened letters in my pocket. I had the idea that I would like to read part of the mail while waiting in line. No sooner had I started reading the kind letters than all thoughts of food were gone. And in their stead were the kind thoughts of my friends. Once again, God showed me that when you bring the light, darkness has no room.

I remember another instance. One morning my dog-tag chain and the gold chain with the locket and rose petals were twisted together. While waiting in line for breakfast, I separated the two chains. Shortly after I had sat down, I finished the little task. Then I suddenly realized that God was showing me how we may, at first, be able to keep our minds on Him. This is the kindergarten stage. When our minds are so young, these material aids help very much to build the bridge between the seen and the unseen. God speaks to us daily. God is so anxious to get our attention. We, like God, must be anxious to discern His voice in every voice.

Dear Mother, you have asked me if I was taking this journey through life because I wanted to, or whether I was following this path because I had committed my intentions to other people? Mother, I am on this journey in search Truth because I am hungry for it. I am searching because I feel a real need to find a deeper meaning in life than to eat and drink and be merry. If no one in the world would know me, I would still feel compelled to find food for a hungry soul. Many people are alarmed about the starvation and great need which exists in the world. The physical hunger, I feel, is only a reflection of the great need and hunger of the soul. Only by satisfying the great hunger of the soul will we find the answer to man's misery.

If I would give the boy next to me a cigarette and a piece of candy, his restlessness and hunger would not be satisfied. But if there would be a way for removing his desire to smoke and eat sweets, that deep-seated hunger would be stilled forever. If we try to find joy in the senses, we are engaged in the impossible task of filling a sieve with water.

I am hungry, dear Mother, and my brothers are also hungry. I am searching for the food that will satisfy. I do not know what got me started on this road. I am not blaming anyone for giving me the initial push. Rather, I will thank those who have shown me this road. I could not find a meaning in anything else.

There is a mistake, though, which I have made. I should live more in silence. People should not be told what we want to do. They should only receive the blessings of what we have actually done. It is of no benefit to you if I will tell you that I shall be home on a certain date. It might even fill you with anxious expectations to know in advance. God does not announce His coming years in advance. He will enter very unexpectedly into our consciousness one day.

Rock-a-my baby. There is a pleasant wind blowing and a clear blue sky above. What a little toy we are on this mighty ocean. How important and how wise we think ourselves to be. We think ourselves wise and do not even know why we are riding across the ocean. We do not even know why God has created the big oceans. We know so very little. How can we ever accept a diploma with a feeling accomplishment? I may truthfully say that I have forgotten most of my book-learning. We should not be working and learning for the sake of a diploma. A diploma would signify a termination point. Wisdom is infinite. We are going to school daily, whether we want to or not. If we don't learn our lesson today – if we are truant – we come back to school that much more often.

The ride across the ocean is showing me how restless my mind is. I cannot sit still for long and watch the waves and think of God. But I am trying. Yesterday I tried for a while. I looked at the waves as they grew out of the sacrifice of another wave. Each wave only lived for an instant. As soon as the wave had grown to full size, it sacrificed itself that other waves might be born. The water which was in one wave might one day be spread through the whole ocean. I felt that the waves were showing man a true example of selfless love. I felt that we must become willing to sacrifice our lives unhesitatingly like the waves. In that way our consciousness may cover the whole ocean and the whole world.

If we do not strive diligently daily to do the best we can and to become more aware of the Truth, our faculties of perception will fall asleep. "To him that has, I will give more; to him that has not, I will take away what he has." This is so true. I noticed that during those days on the ship when I occupied my hands and mind with nothing, I became very tired and lazy. Sleep would only make me more sleepy. I noticed that I was even too lazy sometimes to write or memorize a poem. And if I did not make the effort to write, my mind became very blank. I could not even sit on deck and simply smile.

July 19, 1953

Now it is Sunday afternoon, the fourth day of our journey. I am happy to be where I am and to have experienced what I have written you. I cannot forget these experiences so easily. You can tell a child that fire will burn you and that the burn will hurt. But not until the child's hand has made contact with the flames will the child understand what you mean. If we could learn from books, we could save ourselves a lot of hard labor. Someone can point out the way for us, but the road we must walk ourselves.

This morning God let me taste the reality of His strength and joy. Two church services were given on the top deck under the clear blue sky. During the first service I was tired and was always falling asleep. My heart could not reflect the blueness of the sky. I stayed for the second service. During the second service a change came over me. My tiredness was gone in an instant and the joy of God filled my heart. It was not because of something I had eaten that this change took place. He showed me again, as so often before, how much we depend upon Him for all we are and hope to be. These little experiences build our faith strong. He is reminding us again where we can find the lasting peace and joy.

July 20, 1953

It is evening; it is a Monday evening. I am glad of spirit because this day has not been spent in complete idleness. Some boys are working together with the ship's crew. I am among the boys. Today we chipped old paint off a tiny area of the boat. One does not have to be smart to do this job, but one needs patience. I was not tired this evening because I was of some little use.

I remember some days of the trip when I did not work at all. On these days I was tired in the evening and unhappy about the empty bank account. I imagine we will have similar feelings in the evening of our lives. In the end our once seemingly long life will only seem like one short day to us.

Yesterday evening I worked a little for a friend. That was the nicest part of the day. Before I went to bed, I went on the deck once more. The stars shone brightly, and their brightness found an

echo in my heart because I had helped a friend. The moon built a silvery road up to heaven. God rewarded me very richly for the little helping hand I had extended.

Tonight I had a big surprise. A boy I did not even know offered me two candy bars. I do not want to love candy more than potatoes because our preferences will bring about suffering. But it was more the unexpected gift of love which made me happy.

Do you know that the more salt we put on our food, the more we will suffer? We must not only become even in our mind but also even in our taste. God has grown all food with an equally big love. He loves His beet and spinach plants as much as His strawberry plants.

The hands of the clock have made a few turns since the last sentence and this one. I have attended another church service in the middle of the ocean. We sang together and prayed together and then listened to a sermon. After the sermon, I looked over the ocean once more and then I leisurely prepared myself for bed. Now I am sitting on top of my bed – the beds are four stories high – and thinking of you. This boat is like a twin brother of the Ernie Pyle in physical features. (AUTHOR'S NOTE: My family and I immigrated to America from Germany in 1946 when I was 13 years old. The ship which we sailed on from Germany to America was the Ernie Pyle – P.D.L.)

Yesterday I read a prayer. It was like another clue to the ocean's mystery. Our work will not be completed until the last one of God's children has found rest. One wave cannot exist in the ocean by itself. We all have our life in the ocean. The suffering and struggle of one soul is the concern of everyone. In helping others, we are helping ourselves for we are all one.

For this day I will close my eyes now. It has been another good day. God is very kind. In the end everything always turns out so well. Now He is going to rock me gently to sleep.

Most of the boys are hoping that land will come soon because there seem so little to do on the ship. I am hoping that God may come to all of us.

I will wish you a good night, my dear fellow shipmates. We are always sailing together. How can anyone be separate in the ocean?

July 21, 1953

Jessie is a kind man silently working in the service of God. He is kind and does not know because it is his nature to be kind. If we think we are kind, we must ask God to teach us humility. Jessie works in the tool room of the shop but besides that, he is a helpful man and a general handyman. At all hours of the working day, the workers ask him for this and please to do that. And he is always ready to help. During the break-time, he sees to it that we boys get a cup of good coffee. He calls us in time for the meals and sees to it that we get fed right away. Jessie is a kind man that few people know about. But God knows. I have only seen a little bit of Jessie, but a man who is kind during one part of the day is sure to be kind during all parts of the day. God has many faithful workers who do good but say nothing about it.

Today the ocean was a source of strength for me. As long as I can remember, the ocean has been moving. And as long as you can remember, the waves have been forever rolling. Ever since people can remember, the ocean has been in motion. The little voice said, "God is forever present and forever working. Where there is movement, there must be a mover." As yet we do

not know God. But we know He is real because of the things He is doing. And as I was looking over the ocean, another ancient thought entered my mind, "You can read these same things in many places."

I asked a friend why the Rosary was said so fast. He told me that it was because of the pressure of time. I thought about what he said. This morning the little voice said that rushing is a habit, not a necessity. As with other things, it is the same way. Worrying is a habit, not a necessity. We are doing more things out of habit than we probably realize. Habits are so easily formed but so hard to break.

I was speaking to a man who was smoking. He said that he had been smoking for seventeen years. He tried several times to free himself from the cigarette but as yet could not. He told me that he would gladly give five hundred dollars away if he could stop smoking.

Today, Tuesday, was a beautiful sunset. If you look at the light, there is little room for negative thoughts. It is wonderful to look at the light. It must be even more wonderful to be in that light.

July 22, 1953

The sun is shining high in the heavens. Everything is fully awake at 128 North La Jolla Avenue. Where we are traveling now this day – your birthday, my dear Papa – is nearing its end. There is about a six-hour difference between the little alarm clock standing on our blue kitchen table and the watches here on the boat. There are about 5,600 miles between us. But these figures don't concern us very much because I love you and you love me. We have about 900 more miles to go before this little part of our journey is over.

We cannot measure the length of the journey in miles but in deeds of kindnesses done for those in need. You have traveled many earthly miles during your present stay in this world. Those earthly miles don't register on our spiritual speedometer. Only when we expend effort ourselves are we covering distance. If we step into a car and let it take us to a distant city, we have usually not gone very far. We may say the car has gone far, and people say they are world travelers. Usually it is the boat or the plane that may honestly say such a thing. I have the feeling that you have covered more real miles while working at Aquarium Stock Company than you have covered while crossing the ocean.

Yesterday I went to another church service inside the ship and pretty near the water level. The minister told us something I liked very much. He said that this incident happened during one of his character guidance classes at Camp Roberts, California. During a class he asked this question, "Is there any one of you boys who would be willing to tell me everything or rather, who would be willing to tell the class everything that has taken place in his life?" One boy raised his hand. He asked the boy why he was so willing. The boy replied, "God knows everything about me, so I don't care what people think about me." I thought that was a wonderful way to feel. That boy was probably very humble.

July 23, 1953

Meanwhile, time has skipped by. It is evening on the following day. The coast of England is very clearly in front of us. Everybody seems to be very happy that there is land and the end of this journey is in sight. But our journey really does not end at Bremerhaven. Our journey will not end

so soon, but it will end when we least expect it. I remember here the story that Reverend Bernard told. You know, the one where different men asked when they would find God.

This evening I thought what it is like to eat a piece of candy. It is like taking a warm shower when the weather is cold outside. As soon as you step out of the warm shower, you will freeze and be uncomfortable. As soon as the taste-thrill is gone, you will be uncomfortable. Living in the sense-world is like trying to take a warm shower all your life. That means that we will be living in a small world because most places do not have warm showers. Because of our specialized desires, we limit ourselves to a small world.

July 24, 1953

I have begun this letter on the ocean and I would also like to drop it in the mailbox on the ocean. It has been a very good trip. We are now about 200 miles from Bremerhaven. It is almost seven o'clock here. We will be in Bremerhaven sometime tomorrow morning, if it is God's divine plan.

It is Friday. It is not just another Friday but an entirely new Friday. We must try to make each day a new day and the beginning of a new life. I have tried to write a little travelogue of this trip. Do not thank me for this letter if it has good points in it. All our praise should go to God. Please do not identify the good words with my name but with God's. My reward has been in writing this letter. I have spent many happy hours with a pen in my hand and this tablet in front of me. May God bless you, my dear parents and brother. Please give greetings of joy and peace to all our good friends. May you also know that God's strength and peace is always with you. Just think of the eternally moving ocean and the Mover.

Your boy and fellow-traveler,
Peter



Zweibrücken, Germany

July 29, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Father, and my dear Brother,

Only we humans draw boundaries and make differences. But in God there exists no boundary. There is no such thing as this is "Germany," and that is "France," or "This is home, and across the river there is a strange land." Our notions that one city is nicer than the next will make us suffer at one time or another and also divide us. We must build the city of peace in our hearts. That will be our greatest and most sure source of happiness. I felt this morning that no matter if bullets will fly and the earth will shake beneath our feet, that the city of peace will be unshaken. The philosophers say that knowledge is brought forth from the inside. That city of peace which will spread across the world can only be built from the inside to the outside. All other types of cities will eventually crumble to pieces.

At the moment I am at a processing camp in Zweibrücken. This morning I was again anxiously, wondering where I might be sent and just what I would be doing soon. The little voice inside once more reminded me silently, "You have your orders already. Serve God wherever you may be." Human orders are so unsteady. They change so quickly, but God's orders hold true for all eternity. I received the military orders a little later. I will be stationed near Nuremberg. But even human orders have their source in God. And if we have learned to hear His voice, we will be able to hear it in all voices. I do not know yet when I will have the chance to see our relatives here. I am waiting and trying to wait patiently for the day God sees fitting. I am so close to them and yet as far away as you are. I passed through Bremen with the train; I was a few miles from Ruth. We also passed through Worms. Life is such an interesting drama. The little voice reminds me again and again to be patient. As surely as day follows night, so will we be brought back again to those we love. But only when we love all, will we be together with everyone always.

The lunch hour has slipped in-between this sentence and the previous one. But something else has slipped in-between that is more wonderful than the lunch hour. Joy from God has slipped into my heart. I have talked to a friend about what I have written. And I have gotten an inkling of the joy which exists in knowing these things with your heart.

There is no such thing as German, French or American soil. It is all God's soil. There is no real ruler or president of any land. God is the only One who may be called King. The earth is God's kingdom, and rich and poor alike are His children and servants. I am just now looking out of the window into His beautiful Kingdom. In the valley below a peaceful town has grown out of the earth. The red-tiled roofs separate the village from the surrounding meadows, fields and forest. The hills remind me of the calm waves of the ocean. The land seems to be so well cared for and heavily laden with fruit. I have the feeling that many people here are working in close unity with God. Although there are army camps in the area, the city of peace is slowly and silently growing in the hearts of men.

The other day the little voice whispered something to me. It was about saints. Saints are the most wonderful people, who live on earth. But you know how I think saints feel? Saints consider themselves greater sinners than any other class of people. Once they have felt God's greatness, they become aware of their own littleness. How can we ever think of raising our voice, when we are just a little wave dancing on the great ocean? If every blade of grass would raise its voice like we humans do, we would have quite some noise on the earth.

On the day the train brought us from Bremerhaven to Zweibrücken, I was looking at newly planted apple trees. Those people that plant trees that will only bear fruit after a few years have quite a bit of faith already. Farmers have quite a bit of faith. They trust in the rain, the sun, the soil and the seed. The merchants who trade in stores have not much faith usually. Many keep a close watch over their riches. They lend away their wealth when there is some gain in sight. Those that have great faith do good deeds for others with never a thought of gain in mind. They know the law. They know that God and eternity and eternal life is real.

I have so much room again since I started a new page that I will tell you a little story. It is the story of the cake that was made holy. In Germany German men and women do the kitchen chores in the American camps. It gives me great joy to speak to the workers. I have the feeling that they are all my brothers, mothers, sisters and fathers. I do not feel strange talking to anyone. They all have so much less than I do in material ways. I shared a little of my great bounty with one of the mothers working in the kitchen. She felt such joy just because of the little I had done that she wanted to do something for me. She offered to bring me anything my heart would desire. Finally I settled for a cake. It turned out to be a Topf Kuchen (Bundt Cake) baked with the true love of a mother. When I came to the cafeteria the following morning, a cake had been created for me. The lady gave me the cake with all her love. She gave me more than I had ever given. She showed me a picture of her mother and little daughter. I think she told me that she had lost two boys, but yet her face was calm and her eyes were filled with love. When we parted, I knew that another eternal bridge was built. With the cake in my hand and happiness in my heart, I returned to my barracks.

Next to my bed there was La Lou's bed. He is a new brother, yet I feel that I have known him for a long time. He was sitting on his bed when I came in with the cake. I wanted to share with him the cake. He did not want any cake. Suddenly I grew eager to give him the whole cake. I remembered that a few days ago he had his twenty-fourth birthday. I said, "La Lou, I want you to have this cake; it is your birthday cake." I had told him the story of its birth. He received the gift. It was the only visible gift he had received. The cake built a strong bond between us. But in the end he kept only half the cake. He took half the cake to France. I sneaked a little note into the cake package. Remember, Mother, like the notes you slipped into my lunch bag? I did this because I remembered the joy that your notes brought me. I wrote the note on the card, which you sent me. The card has a little verse on it that starts like this, "Give me good digestion, Lord, and something to digest." It seems to me now that I saved the card especially for my brother La Lou. On paper the story has come to an end, but in spirit it will continue to live on.

I imagine that the new address I have now I will keep for a while. May God bless you all

Your boy,
Peter





August 1953

Army Hospital – Nuremberg, Germany

(The author spent his tour of duty in the above mentioned hospital. The title is a link for anyone who might want to reconnect with someone who has a connection with the hospital; as for example, you may have worked in the hospital or possibly were born there.

August 2, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother,

Mothers and Fathers and Sisters and Brothers and kind hearts and homes you can find on all continents. When we are in need, God opens a home and heart for you. It is so wonderful to know that where there is need, there is help. I went to a German church service this morning. I was moved in my heart; I cannot tell you how much.

Something came into my heart this morning that was really always there but which was sleeping securely. It is more wonderful to share the meal of a beggar than to dine with a king. It hurts me to eat in the cafeteria, to see the waste and then remember the way other people live. God provides for everyone. We are not the ones to equalize the scale. But at least we should never try to get more than our neighbor. We should rather aim at becoming equal to the ones that have less than we do. Our desires to have more and more can never be satisfied. We should rather aim in the other direction. Bread will turn to stones in our mouth if we will not share with hungry souls. We can try to forget this for a while, but not forever. You cannot stand under a hot shower all your life. One day the warm water tank will be empty and then the shock will be great.

These months in the army are the greatest school I have ever attended. To be in Germany with an understanding of the American way of life, and a little understanding of life in general, is the greatest experience I have had in many years. People of the world do not get along so well not because they are bad or mean, they just don't understand each other. If we would have the understanding why people are the way they are, we would never dislike anyone. It is understanding we must seek. We should always try to understand rather than be understood.

This story is endless. My life has become so full. But I will tell you first of something that happened today. When I came out of the church, I was moved so deeply because I felt the needless differences which exist between the Germans and the Americans. There came tears into my eyes out of shame, I think. I could not hold back the tears. It seemed to me that they had been stored up since years past. Yes, I cried and somehow it made me feel a little better. I sat outside the church on a bench in the garden which surrounded the church. A man who was helping out in the church came to me to help me. And after a while the minister came. He put his loving hand around me like a father. I was his son. He gave me his hand to comfort and steady my heart. He took me by the arm and drove me home in his car. I shared the meal with him and his family as if I were their son. He made me sit down in his garden and rest. He gave me Mirabellen (a fruit similar to cherries but mostly yellow) grown in his garden and he gave me apples grown in his neighbor's garden. He told me that his house was my home and that I was always invited. I am writing you now at his desk and am using his stationary. When there is need, God is the closest to you.

It is hard to believe that I am in the army. I am stationed in a hospital. I have accommodations like a prince. I sleep in a big room on the sixth floor of the hospital. Sixteen other boys sleep in

the room. We can either walk up the stairs to our room or take the elevator. I do not as yet know my duties but they will be pleasant. But I would like to say one thing and underline it. Your physical surroundings, your physical comforts do not change you as a person. If you were happy in a hut and with a crust of bread, you will be happy anywhere else. If we are not content with what we have now, we will not be happy with twice the amount. The city, the kingdom of peace, is in ourselves and in God who is in us.

I say, may God bless you. May God bless the kind of people where I am at home now. If you would send them some little something from America just once, that would be very wonderful.

In a few minutes I will be having cake and coffee with them in the garden. Oh, how wonderful it is to be 7,000 miles from home and yet to be home. What more wonderful thing in life is there than to make a home for the homeless?

Your boy forever, Peter



August 4, 1953

My good Comrades,

It is a new day. The dew is still heavy on the grass. Shortly I will be going to work or, rather, switch jobs. I am pleasantly busy now. I shall try to be pleasantly busy whatever I do. It is a beautiful morning, and I just wanted to sit down a moment and tell you this. I am busy now trying to build another home around this hospital. With God's help, it will be done. And your prayers are big forces in my life.

God is watching over me and all of us here and everywhere. Without Him life is an impossible task. I was able to get a special diet in the hospital. I am getting food that is easier to digest. I get more fruit and vegetables. I just have to ask for fruit and I can have anything they have in stock.

Today is an extra special day. It is Ruth's birthday. All our thoughts and hearts will be meeting in Pad Pymont. I will see you there, my dear Comrades.

May God bless you and keep you strong. He is the only one who can do it.

Your boy, now and always,
Peter



I love you with my heart, with the heart that God gave me.



August 8, 1953

My dear Comrades,

God has led me to a place of beauty and rest. Where may it be? I would like to let you guess. It is the first stop on the road to our heavenly rest. I imagine that you'll be able to guess. The

cemetery is not a sad place for me. It is rather a place of joy and fulfillment and justice. Whether we had a little or much or nothing, we will be equal. Everything that came from the earth, the earth will claim again. The hand with which I write you now, the earth will claim again. I feel that the building force will eternally remain the same, but all that is built will change.

It is a little cemetery where I am. I think it belongs to the people of the nearby village. One part of the cemetery is surrounded by a hedge and the remainder of the resting place is surrounded by a wall. And all around there are fields. It is a beautiful, sunny Saturday afternoon. The little park has many visitors. It is touching to see the people come with fresh flowers and watering cans and garden tools. Then the old women and young children work on some grave and make it nice.

Such a beautiful garden as a cemetery is seldom found in any other place. Everything is done with so much love and that is what makes all the difference. Only after we lose something do we understand what the real worth is of that which we have lost. How many people will bring to their living friends the bouquets of flowers and of love that the departed souls receive? I wonder how much good our departed friends receive from our gifts of love. Maybe our departed friends would be benefitted more if we would offer our love to lonely living souls? All these things we will all know one day.

Next to me on the bench an old lady sat down. She is doing some knitting. It might seem like an unimportant task. But I don't think it is. I believe that the executive in an office who is pushing a pencil all day long is not doing a more important job than the lady.

I see that a friend just came. It is an elderly lady whose husband departed a year and a half ago. I met the lady a few nights ago while taking a walk through the fields. She has opened her heart and her home for me. She said she will be my mother while I am here. She said that I am a homeless bird which she has found.

I would like to ask you for a favor. Could you send me a Spanish-English, English-Spanish dictionary? It can be old and not big – a size that is comfortable to carry around. And could you please include a Spanish story which is easy and enjoyable to read? I have plans. And then I would like to ask for another favor. Could you send me, perhaps, my flannel pajamas? For the Fall and Winter they will be very welcome.

The evening I spent with the old lady. I could almost say, with my mother. She treats me just like a mother would treat her son. She shared her meal with me selflessly. What she gave me, she gave me with her whole heart. God led me to this lady because she would be able to teach me more out of the schoolbook of life. She taught me very much last night and just at the right time. She let me see and believe that an exclusive concentration on religion may make a person ill. Our mind will need some time to relax and rest.

I can see now where we may reach a state where spiritual truths are revealed to us more and more often. But that is not always so good. If one part of us grows too fast, we will be putting a strain on other organisms that can't keep pace. When I realized the truth in the lady's words, a great strain left me. It seemed as if a great load was being taken from my shoulders. A change – another phase of growth – is coming soon.

A few days ago I had asked for an understanding and help along these lines. I knew something was wrong because there was too much strain on me, and my stomach is always a good

thermometer. It seems to me that there is now a period of assimilation and digestion at hand. It is a period during which I must learn to make practical application of what I have learned. I must and will become so free that strain and care will not exist anymore. I like what a doctor told me the other day. He said, "Let's say forty people would tell me their problems each day. If I would let each problem weigh me down, I would soon be carrying an impossible load. You cannot help others by suffering with them. Rather, try to make them see the unreality of their problems."

Sometimes, however, we have to experience the suffering of others in our own mind and body. Only when we have tasted suffering ourselves, will we receive an understanding and the ability to help those that are in need. But we do not have to suffer permanently. It seems that I am once again entering into a new life today.

Meanwhile, it has become the ninth of August and it is Hellmut's birthday and a birthday for me, too. It is the most beautiful day since I am in Germany. The sun is shining brightly and the flowers are blooming so pretty on the meadow where I sit. Happy Birthday, dear Hellmut, and a happy life. And you know the saying, "A sad saint is a sad saint, indeed."

I know that no problem exists with my stomach. There is no chronic ailment in my digestion. But I need to have these discomforts for a while to learn certain things.

I would like to say once more today that I have learned very much during these six months in the army under the tender care and guidance of God. No amount of money would I take in exchange for what I have learned. Any material thing would seem like pennies in comparison. And yet, there is still more to come. I am doing little for the army in comparison to what the army is doing for me. I wish every boy could say this. We all have the same opportunities to learn and grow, but many of us don't take full advantage of the opportunities that are offered. We all have a tendency to step underneath a roof when it rains. Maybe a little rain in our face would not hurt us at all but would awaken us.

I have another little favor, please. If you run across some enjoyable book, would you please send it to me? I am not thinking of any religious books, just a nice story or book of travel. I know you have a good feeling for such things, dear Mother.

I hope that you are getting along fine, too. I know God takes care of you. Just take life step-by-step. Don't try to skip away. One step is built upon the other. I would like to wish you a good-bye for now until we meet again. Would you please say hello to our friends for me and wish them a happy voyage through life? Your voyage, dear Papa, is at hand soon. I am sure it will be a happy voyage for you. And you, dear Hellmut, may I wish you happy school days. It really does not pay to worry about exams.

May God bless you all and keep you happy and strong.

Your boy, Peter



August 10, 1953

My dear Mother, my dear Papa, my dear Brother,

I am receiving many presents from God. The sum total of today's presents was a pleasant day. Once again the tunnel I have been going through has turned out to be a gate into a more beautiful garden of flowers and understanding. At the end of our pilgrimage we will not feel that it was only a long dreary journey. We will feel that it was only a short walk into an even more radiant life.

Today I received your first letter from August 3rd. That was a good report I received. I had no idea when I would hear from you, so that I was taken quite by surprise. That was good news indeed – all the way around. Something came to me, too, as I read about Papa's and Hellmut's diet problems. I went through a similar problem and only changed my ways a few meals ago. But only after I read your letter did I realize consciously why I changed my eating habits. The body needs certain food values. If it does not get those food values, it will be hungry although full. The craving for food will continue to exist so long as all organisms are not provided for. The body feels that as long as it keeps the craving for food alive, there might be a chance that the necessary foods are eaten. We must learn to know what the body needs and then give the necessary food to the body. At the moment, I believe that we cannot satisfy the needs of the body just by a lot of fruits and salads. You know that if we try to do that, we think a great part of the day about food instead of God. Saints might be able to take a different attitude, but they are saints. What I have written is only the view of my present understanding. As we grow in understanding, we will feel different again. We should not say that this is it but that this is a stepping-stone. I feel strongly that Papa and Hellmut must change their habits of eating. They are too rigid in their views.

I also received a card from Sonni today. She knew I was in Germany, but not where. That's alright that she found out earlier through Papa. No harm done. She is planning on visiting me but not at the moment because she is working. But I know that the day and the hour shall come. The idea has been planted. It will only take a little time now to mature.

Today I was assigned to my permanent job, if there exists such a thing as permanency on earth. I rather doubt it. I am working in the Registrar's Office. I will be doing office work; filing and typing and everything connected with paperwork. On the average we have a 48-hour week. It is a bright office with lots of windows and about seven nice people. At the moment there are two German ladies working in the office. There are quite a few German civilians working in the hospital. It is a bright and pleasant hospital to work in. I feel quite at home already. Everything is ship-shape and tip-top.

You are doing alright on the path, dear Mother. Don't be too much in a hurry. I tried to break open the petals of the spiritual flower prematurely. I did not realize that the spiritual flower takes time to unfold. As long as you have the deep desire to know God and make Him happy, everything is then alright. When you broadcast that desire into the universe, you have made God your shepherd. He will bring you home safely then. But I have the feeling that your flower is unfolding naturally. As long as we want to be home with God, we will be home one day. I feel so much richer because of the experience I went through. God is just as close to us while we are in the valley as He is while we are ascending the heights.



August 11, 1953

My dear Ones,

Last evening I spent with my old lady-friend again after I got a haircut from a German barber. I surely enjoyed everything about the evening. My old lady-friend feels as if she has been entrusted with my welfare. She wants me to be sure to come to her at least three to four times a week. She wants me to have a key to her apartment so that I can come anytime. She insists on giving me something to eat every time I come. She wants me to get stronger. She is sending you all her best regards. She lives on Tilly Str. 23, Nuremberg – Schweinau. Her name is Mrs. Schnuphase. It is about a 10 to 14 minute walk from her home to the hospital. (Peter wrote the previous few sentences in German and excused himself for unintentionally doing so.)

About the news of Mr. Zeidler, I am very happy. He is a struggling soul. I met him in Central Park one evening while taking a walk. We spent a wonderful evening talking together.

Today I received a letter from you, dear Papa, which was addressed to the first address. You told me the story from Unity Magazine in your letter, and you told me about your own experiences on the path. I received very great help from your letter. It brought greater peace again into my life and greater understanding. Thank you so much for sitting down and talking to me. It is very true and important for gentleness to be used in all our doings. It does not pay to hurry. If we drive our body and mind to an excessive high speed, it will wear out and break down prematurely.

May His blessings and His gentleness be with you forever.

Your boy, Peter



August 15, 1953

My dear Comrades,

Today I received a jackpot of letters – five items in all. There was, number one, a postcard; number two, a typewritten letter and a long one from the eighth; number three, another typewritten letter from the eighth with a nice poem in the lower left-hand corner of the page; number four, the long letter from our friend Mr. Zeidler; and number five, a letter from dear Beverly. There are big treasures hidden in what I received.

It's a funny thing, dear Mother, but when I read your letters, I just feel like sitting down and starting to write. You have been having it hard. I could feel that. But don't you worry. We went through this schooling together. The Master Craftsman has been chiseling on us all our lives. Our minds were somehow hardened; therefore, it took a couple of hard blows this time. But it is all for the better. The stormy weather will soon pass. And when the storm has passed, we will be delighted to feel how much stronger our spiritual muscles have become. These are just growing pains.

I have a wisdom tooth pushing through the gums just now. It hurts, but there is really nothing to be worried about. Through the physical discomforts I have even realized that worries are not real. I have been worrying for a couple of days about imaginary things. But not until the physical pains set in did I realize that I had created the obstacles only in my mind. The physical pains chase away the mental worries.

Don't you worry, God will lift us out of this storm and He will lift us higher into heaven. Some time ago we entrusted our lives to Him and He won't let us go anymore. We have signed a contract with Him and He has signed it with us. It is a contract that holds good into all eternity.

From your letters I have the feeling that we have been studying the same lessons of life. On some days, when things seem awfully difficult, the other boys laugh and joke, and then the next day the tables turn. So, if a few persons are happy in the army, that proves that you can be happy in the army. It proves conclusively that there is something wrong with you and not the army. You even have your hard days in civilian life. You will not have paradise in civilian life if you have not had it in the army.

Beverly's letter was a good letter. She was aware of my needs and wrote me accordingly. It is amazing to see how close we all are in the world of spirit. Beverly wrote me that the Wise Men took time out for a few laughs and some play. You have to allow yourself a little relaxation and vacation in the school of life. You can't be serious all the time. You must learn to laugh because when you learn to laugh again from your heart, you will learn to relax. A serene face, lost in deep thought, might be an inspiring thing; but I think that a natural smile and a twinkle in the eye is even more to be desired. People will understand a smiling face better than a meditative face.

I had the notion for a long time that the time for playing checkers was over for me. But I am not too old to play. We should never forget to play. I played two games of checkers before and I enjoyed it. Life is not meant to be taken so serious. We have work to do but we must not forget to play like children. We don't have to grow up into men and women with problems. We can stay children if we want to. When we grow up, we have a tendency to feel that we are regulating the affairs of the family and the world. But God is the one who has been regulating all affairs for all eternity. The world has existed before we were here and it will exist after we leave. Are our problems so important, then? They are really not very important and weighty, because, usually, they are only important to us.

We think our life is a difficult life in comparison to those of others. We have a tendency to compare our misfortunes with the fortunes of others. If we do that, we will feel all our life that we are on the losing end. Instead, we should compare what we have with people who have even less. That way we may consider ourselves fortunate. We will always find those who have more and those who have less. We are making ourselves unhappy if we always look at those that have better food on the table.

You are earning twice as much money as I do, dear Mother. Twice as much is quite a bit. But I still feel that I am earning a lot of money. I am earning about fifty Marks more than the German workers in the hospital. But actually I am even earning more than that because I get room and board and clothing all free. I work fewer hours than the Germans and I think I get twice as much vacation a year. The Italian soldier receives only about eight cents a day. Somehow, whether we have little or much, we all stay alive. And those who have the least seem to be able to share the most. Those who have learned to share the most have also learned to trust.

Dear Mother, your letters are just the way I want them to be. They are the way you are at the moment. You say your letters are choppy. I surely don't feel that way about them. I love your letters the way they are, for they are you and I love you with all my heart. I love all of you, whether you write or not.

Sonni knows now that I am here. I am going to visit her soon. I put in for a weekend pass for the end of this month. Sonni has just gotten a job she likes very much; otherwise she would have come to Nuremberg. Stuttgart is only a four-hour ride from here. I wish you could be with us when we meet, but you will be with us in spirit. And we are beginning to feel that the spirit is quite real.

That Papa and Hellmut are eating different and more now is really good news. We will be constantly changing our diet as we grow. I have come to a point where I will eat meat if I should really need it to be healthy. I have the feeling that the animals won't mind to sacrifice their lives if they know it is for a worthwhile cause. A mother will sacrifice her life for her child. It is not so hard to give a part of ourselves if we know that others are appreciative and are benefitted. We should not say that I won't eat this or that. We should rather say, "God, teach me to eat that which is necessary for my health." It took quite a bit of molding of my mind before I was willing to say this.

There is a little story which I would like to tell you. This story has helped me. This is the story of a good friend of mine. The lady owns a little food store right outside the gate of the hospital. I often see this lady. Just to be in her store and to be near her is a refreshing experience. This lady has strong spiritual muscles because her load has been heavy. She also invited me to her home and garden any time I want to come. She has two daughters. The little story is about her older daughter who is nineteen.

This girl loves a boy. She loves him very dearly. The boy works in a factory, I believe. The boy has one weakness. He likes to gamble. I believe the boy and the girl have plans to get married sometime in the future. But the girl said to the boy that if you want that we two should remain together, you must stop gambling. He promised the girl to stop. But one day last week, I believe, temptation was so strong that he gambled again. The girl found out about this. This was such a great shock and disappointment to the girl that she did not want to live anymore. She poisoned herself. But God did not want the girl to die yet and did not want to bring such grief to the mother. The sister happened to come home just in time. The girl was taken to the hospital and the poison was removed. I think that she is all well again.

If humans are so upset when a promise is broken, how must God feel if we are not able to keep our promise? He does not like to see us suffer. He wants us to be happy and there is only real happiness in remaining true to Him. That is the story.

If Arthur should marry, let us hope he will be one thing to the end. Under stormy or sunny skies, let us wish him and his sweetheart that they will be true to each other always.

With the package to the Tratz family, there is plenty of time. Maybe you can send one for Christmas. And at second thought, it is not at all necessary. They have helped me because it is their nature to be good. They do not think of any compensation. You can also include something in a package for me and I can then pass it along to them. It is not important. We should not try to compensate, we should try to be good. I brought this whole question up because I am still too business-like.

You are saving my letters? So many books are written already. I think the bookshelf space in the libraries is becoming quite scarce. Too much has been written and too little has been done. Sometimes I wonder if it has been worth our while to save so many books? What is true and good will always be remembered and rediscovered. And the other Stuff? Maybe it would be just

as well to forget the other things. What will live after us are not the words but the deed behind the word.

Don't worry, dear Mother, business troubles will clear up again. Smooth sailing is ahead. You are all in the "Divine Trend." We always are and always will be. We only forget sometimes that we are in the "Divine Trend." God cannot be away from us. Just a little smoke gets into our eyes. Mine, too. But the smoke is clearing away now. We must laugh a bit again; it is a good medicine.

Writing paper is coming, too? That is thoughtful of you. I still have a little but not too much.

This evening I am going to my second mother. She insisted that I come to her. At first, I did not want to go to her today because I saw her only two days ago; but now I am glad I can see her. I ate no extra supper in the hospital tonight because she always insists that I have another meal with her. And the meals always taste extra good because they are prepared by her loving hands.

I forgot to send greetings to you from the lady's niece, too. She is a fine girl, a real German girl from the farm. She is twenty-four. Lina is her name. We are friends, good friends. You know how I feel about Beverly. That is how I feel about Lina.

Mr. Zeidler's letter is really a wonderful letter. It is wonderful for me to see what happens when you see only the good in people. He is really a great warrior on the path. No matter if he has stumbled a hundred-thousand times, he has kept on walking on God's side. If you ever feel like writing him, I am sure he will be happy to hear from you.

You can say that by some accident you read the letter first before sending it to me. But, when you read the letter, you knew it was no accident because it helped you so much. When I read about a page of Mr. Zeidler's letter, I said in my mind, "Oh, dear Geoffrey." And then, towards the end, he asks me do please call him by his first name. I feel that we are quite close.

It is about 6:00 P.M

Good-bye, my dear Ones – till later.

Forever and always,
Your boy, Peter



August 17, 1953

My dear Ones,

I am going to slip this postcard into the typewriter for a minute instead of my regular Work. That is alright because we can always take a break in-between our work when we feel like it. I am asked to do a job and then I can take my time to do it. What does not get done today gets done tomorrow.

If you have not done anything about the Spanish books, please forget about it because I can get a few Spanish books in the library I discovered in the hospital. Either way is good enough.

Do you know why we usually suffer more when we grow older? Because we cannot adjust ourselves so readily to new situations. When we are young, we cry for two minutes when we cannot go to the ball game and then everything is forgotten. Let us learn to adjust ourselves more the child-like way.

Your boy forever, Peter



August 20, 1953

My dear Comrades,

Just a little note to tell you hello and to tell you I am fine.

I asked one of the men how he was a few days ago and he said, "Always a little better." That is the way to be each day.

I read a wonderful article in the August Reader's Digest. I believe it is the story of Nansen, the Norwegian. Nansen said that when you set out to explore the unexplored, don't leave any bridges by which you might be able to retreat in case of defeat. Know that you can only go one way; that is, forward. Everything that is dear to you, carry in your heart. That way you won't be returning but always doing forward. Don't leave anything you treasure behind. Otherwise, you always return to the earth.

Smile, my dear Ones, smile all day long.

Your boy Peter



August 22, 1953

My dear Parents and my dear Brother,

My guardian angel that has held my hand is holding my hand now. I have the feeling that I was close to an abyss. You might have felt something, dear Mother, but everything is happening for a reason. Even the dark and dangerous hours are necessary. Everything is well that ends well.

I have the feeling now that too much religion can throw a person off balance. That little voice inside me became a little bit too impetuous for me. I just could not carry out all the assignments that the little General inside gave me. I always had the feeling that what the General said must be done, but then the General became loud and too persistent. The General would not give me a chance to relax and rest. He kept me too busy. There was something wrong because I knew I could not last much longer at such a pace. The mind was always busy, busy, busy. I could not smile for a while and I just could not be happy.

Through the help of kind people, I realized then that a wrong General was giving me orders. God wants us to smile and be happy, but this General wanted me to be always busy and hurry up. Too much religion will not necessarily bring a person to God quickly. But even this lesson was necessary. It shows me a little of what Ruth and Sonni have suffered. If we have had a disease ourselves and have been healed, we can better help those who are ill.

A little personal illustration! A few days ago I had a mighty toothache. I hoped it would go away by itself because it was hurting in the neighborhood of the wisdom tooth. I often passed my hand against my cheek because somehow that helped a little. But when it continued to hurt, I decided to ask for some pills so I would not feel the pain. The pills helped wonderfully. They did not make me sleepy, yet they chased away all pains.

This afternoon I noticed how a lady in my friend's grocery store was holding her hand against her cheek. I asked the lady if she had a toothache. She had a mighty toothache. She had just come from the dentist who had pulled a whole row of infected teeth. I told the lady to wait just a minute in the store. I got the pills which had helped me so much. The lady was very thankful and happy for the pills. She wished me the best that life can hold for anyone. Those wishes came from her heart and they made me very happy.

I also made an appointment with the dentist. It was a cavity in the tooth next to the wisdom tooth that had given me the trouble. The dentist who filled the hole was really nice and careful. He even gave an injection so that the drilling would not hurt. The dentist also found two or three other cavities which I will have fixed next week.

Now that the crisis in my soul is lessening, I can see how blessed I am where I am stationed. I have a very comfortable home here at the hospital. We have wonderful grounds. We have many plum trees and this year the trees were loaded with plums. They are currently ripe. Every day I enjoy some plums. We also have a chapel, a theatre, and a place to write letters and read. Table tennis and other games are also available. (The above paragraph has been translated from the German by the author.)

We have access to classical records and a phonograph. We have plenty of free time to make use of these facilities. In the hospital is also a P.X., soda fountain, cleaner, barber, and probably even more.

We rise in the morning about ten minutes to six. Sometime I get up earlier than that so that I can take a shower and get ready in peace. I wear my good uniform every day because I work in an office. At a quarter after six we have a very informal roll call. After the roll call we sometimes exercise for five or ten minutes. From six-thirty to seven-thirty breakfast is served. That always gives me plenty of time to eat the meal in peace. Although I have the time now, I sometimes forget to eat in peace. I am trying, though. I almost always have cocoa and milk for breakfast. Fruit juice I have often. Then we have toast, eggs (scrambled or hard-boiled), and cereal. I never get any fried foods in my diet. Unfried food, I think, is a little easier to digest.

Sometimes I take a little stroll through the garden before I go to the office at seven-thirty. I work then till twelve noon with some breaks in-between, if I like. Then we have an hour for lunch. It is all very good food that God and the cook give me. And if I should have a general wish, the cook will try to fulfill it.

All I really wish is that I don't eat more than I really need. So far, I have always – or almost always – eaten everything that was on my tray. I think that that was not quite the right thing for me to do at times. It was because the cook sometimes judges my stomach according to the size of his own stomach. I hated to throw anything away, but are we not also throwing food away if we eat more than our body needs? It's just a little more indirect way of throwing food away. Nothing is lost, really. It all goes back to the soil.

From one to five we go back to the office. The office is open five and one-half days a week; however, we only work five days. We can take one morning or one afternoon off each week. From five to six, supper is served. Anytime we are not on duty, we can pick up our pass and leave the hospital.

I often see my dear lady friend. If it would not be for this lady, I would not leave the hospital very often. Sometimes I just leave the hospital to take a walk through the fields. Now the weather is so nice and there are so many flowers blooming. When I sit on a chair most of the day, I have the feeling to stretch my legs a little a night.

I cannot tell you how glad I am today that I have come into the army before I took any further schooling at U.C.L.A. This long tunnel I have been walking through has turned out to be another gate. I am learning now just as surely as if I would be sitting in a classroom and listening to Professor Albright's interpretation of Kant's philosophy. I am learning from life. I am learning from people who have gained their wisdom through living. Everyone can be our teacher.

Mrs. Schnuphase is one of my teachers now. She has helped me out of one of my difficult crises. As I look back at our first meeting, it seems like a miracle. Mrs. Schnuphase was the one who started to speak to me in German although I was wearing a uniform. She had seen beneath the clothes into a troubled heart. At the time I did not think I could stand to stay so long in the army, but I see now that it was not the army which was making life so difficult. When we don't get along, we usually don't get along with ourselves. We often blame our job or our neighbors for our unhappiness. When we are unhappy and worried, we can search in ourselves and we will find the cause of our difficulties. But the best thing is to bring our troubles to God and He will help us.

I always thought that when I am finished with school, there will be no more worries because there are no more tests to worry about. But I find now that if we will let ourselves be worried about one thing, then we will also worry about other things. So the thing to do is to learn to stop worrying about anything. I am trying to learn to let nothing disturb my piece of mind. It is a lot of fun to learn this.

August 23, 1953

I am in good hands, dear Mother. My Guardian Angel who protected me when the big clock tells on me is also protecting me now. And I also have a mother who is caring for me like you would care for me. There is great love in her heart. Her desires for this world are all (or almost all) extinguished. She is ready to leave this world any moment God would call her.

She told me one thing yesterday evening which touched my heart. She said that she would only like to stay in this world as long as I am in Nuremberg. She wants to live yet so that I may have a Mother and a home and a friend in whom I can confide all my troubles. From me Mrs. Schnuphase does not want a thing, but for me she wants to do everything. She has little, but she is very satisfied with what she has. She feels that her husband who passed on has even less. Through her husband's death, she has realized that we cannot take anything into the next world.

When I first met the lady, I did not think I could learn much from her or feel that closeness of hearts. I thought she was quite simple. I was conceited and had poor vision: Otherwise, I would

not have thought or felt such things. But now I feel that this simple lady has traveled far on the road to heaven. I really enjoy to go to her home now and write a letter there or to read the paper or a book. And we also talk together. She talks in a different language than we are used to, but yet it is the same truth and love which she expresses.

She wants me to tell you that you have nothing to worry about. She is taking care of me and keeping an eye on me while I am here. She wants me to get nice red cheeks, gain a couple of pounds, and have a free and happy heart until Papa comes.

I hope, dear Mother and Papa, that you have not had it hard on account of me. I feel that we are all so close together that we are all affected by each other's suffering. But if you have had it hard, then let me thank you for carrying the load together with me. We have all gotten stronger spiritual muscles. Somehow there has also come a good physical change for me. I can run up the stairs again with the greatest of ease, and when I reach the top of the steps. I don't feel tired.

Someone asked me to get something yesterday and, instead of walking, I felt like running. That has not happened since a long time that I ran out of my own accord. I was always too tired for that.

I was very happy to read that Hellmut is doing so well in school. His grades show that he is learning quite a bit. If he keeps up his studies like he has been, he will be all right if he should get drafted. If he has a little more schooling, he will probably get a job in his field in the army. Maybe Hellmut won't have to be a soldier? God knows what is best for Hellmut. I hope Hellmut was able to get those good grades without excitement. It does not pay to lose our peace of mind because of some numbers.

How is your job, dear Mother? Have you been able to settle everything and sign a peace pact between all warring nations? Some differences of opinion are bound to come up once in a while. They are also necessary sometimes. They break the monotony and force us to think and maybe change a little.

I feel that I have been changing around in my attitudes quite a lot since I have come into the army. I would like to show you one example. I was not very able in the art of sharing and giving when I first came into the army. I tried to practice the art. I had some success but there was room for improvement. I had the idea that as long as I was giving, I was doing something that was good and was helping. During the last few weeks an unknown spirit of stinginess has come over me. It was difficult for me to give freely. I made an investigation to find out the reason. So far, I have come up with two answers: One, I am not as good as I thought I was; and, two I have also been giving too indiscriminately. I had given in order that I might be good myself instead of in order to help. I had, rather, made people weaker through the way I had helped. Now I will try to learn to give help where there is a need and not for the sake of being good. I have been thinking much too much about doing good and being good and being thought of as good. It is more important that we do right, and happiness will be the natural result. I have been thinking much too much about the outcome of my actions. That is futile mental activity. A good thing to say is, "Dear, God, I have done the best I knew how today. Tomorrow I will try to do better." It is no use to suffer from past mistakes. We can try to do better the next time. To have a guilt complex is not necessary.

I have written this letter in two installments. The first page I wrote by Mrs. Schnuphase last night, Saturday evening. Yesterday she cooked for me farina with an egg and a big piece of butter on top; and I also had home-made applesauce with this. The finalé was a good hot cup of tea. She offered me some cookies but I could not eat anymore.

The second part I wrote in the hospital – two pages in the garden and one page in the library while listening to Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. The last three pages I am writing on Sunday. Today is Sunday. It is about three o'clock now. I might take a walk over to Mrs. Schnuphase a little later. She is sending her very best regards. Please remember you boy in your prayers. I wish you a nice journey, dear Papa.

Your boy, forever, Peter

Next weekend I am planning to see our dear Sonni.



August 26, 1953

My dear Mother, Papa, and brother Hellmut,

I am in possession of two more wonderful letters, the one from Papa and one from my Mother. Each letter contained a beautiful picture of our new garden with our house and our Mother. I like the garden and I like the way Mother looks. You look so young and happy, dear Mother, How is it possible. You are right Mother; Papa's letter is very beautiful. I will send it back to you. Thank you, Papa. Thank you, Hellmut, for fixing the garden. Everyone does his share in the field of his calling.

Your letter, dear Mother, was written with a lot of deep thinking in back of it. You are making good headway. Maybe I'll be holding onto you for a while now. Sometimes you can't do anything but hold on and ride out the storm. It is all for the better. We must learn to hold on tight no matter what happens. To lose faith is to lose everything. These trials come whether I would be home with you or at home with Mrs. Schnuphase. To pray for each other is the best medicine. I would also like to learn to smile with a free heart. I have met some people who always smile so I know that it is possible to learn.

This evening I went to a meeting of brothers. We were nine together. We were all German men of middle age and older coming together to learn more about God. We have our gathering in a little room, a kitchen. I was there tonight for the first time and I felt at home right away. They are all not rich, but are rich in their hearts. When I shook each hand, it felt like the hand of a brother. That is quite a big gift. The informal praying and singing and reading and discussion helped again. Thus, I have gone to school for an hour tonight. I do not get a diploma, but what do we need a diploma for? Will I have a test on what I have learned? Each new day is a test. Each trial of patience is a test.

Dear Hellmut, I wish you a nice school year. I hope you will learn that which you really want to learn. I wish you all God's blessings and His peace.

I helped out and took part in a little picnic for little boys. We can learn so much from little children. Children can often teach us things that professors are unable to teach.

May God bless you and keep you safe on the journey in this land which is yet so strange.

Your boy, Peter

The way you took care of the Ephibean matter is fine, thank you.



August 27, 1953

My dear Ones,

Yesterday evening I wrote you this letter after I came back from the gathering. It was a little late already, so I did not go into details in answering. I just wanted to send you my love. I just wanted that the mailman would not pass by our house. I wanted to tell you that I love you very much and that I will love you always. If there is such a thing, I will love you always. I think of you often. Your letters are just the way I like them, dear Mother.

I can buy the Reader's Digest here, so maybe you can send me one just once in a while. You can send it by regular mail. You know that when you send it, it is different than when I buy it.

Tomorrow I leave for the weekend to see our dear sister Sonni. I will take you along in my thoughts. I wrote this just before the working day started. Good-bye, my best Ones.

Regards to all our friends and flowers and newly planted shrubs.

Your little soldier, your little boy, Peter



August 27, 1953

My dear Ones,

I would just like to drop you this card to tell you that things are shaping up beautifully. I was just having natural growing pains. The storm has passed through the crown of the tree. The healthy branches just bent but the sick branches were broken out. Now there is more room for the healthy branches to expand into the light and grow taller. Peter is all right. Life in the army has been the best teacher. If things get hard, if growing pains come, you can remind me of that.

Your boy forever,
Peter



August 31, 1953

My dear mother and dear Brother,

How are you tonight? I am fine. I am sitting together with a friend who is also writing a letter. I think he is writing his wife. This friend is a fine boy. He is a patient in the hospital. I am together with him in his quiet room. My friend had an accident with his right hand. The fourth and middle index fingers were hurt. He nearly lost a part of his index finger. The doctors were undecided whether they should amputate or note. When fate was in the balance, the boy remained calm.

The finger will not be amputated. Harold is very thankful for this. Harold is married and has two little boys. He loves his wife and boys very much. He hopes with all his heart that he will become sergeant soon. When he is a sergeant, he may have his wife and children brought over to Germany at government expense. But if this should not become a reality, Harold has the strength and faith to wait until his twenty-seven months are over and he can return home.

Dear Mother, I am going to use my two feet again to walk on the earth. I have realized that I am no angel and that I cannot fly. I am going to walk again even if walking is a slower means of transportation. For what is the rush anyway? We are condemning the hasty ways of modern civilization and we ourselves cannot press the gas pedal down far enough. The important thing is that we are going forward. At what speed is unimportant because time is not real. If we drive at breakneck speed, we won't be able to go around the sharp and dangerous curves.

I am entering into another phase of development. I am seeing God's approving look as He sees the farmer till the soil, the butcher sell the meat, the chimneysweep clean the chimney, the barber cut the child's hair, the grocer sell the groceries. In my eyes now it seems like great conceit to think that we are chosen to change the world. God will bring about the change. All those people – or many of them – who thought that they were chosen to change the world have brought more hurt than help.

Mother, I do not want to act big or wise anymore. I am not so wise in reality, you can believe me. I have been ambitious to get applause. You have applauded me. You have never criticized what I wrote. Only Beverly (very gently) and Ella have pointed out some of my shortcomings. If someone criticized me, it hurt me. If I would have the true humility, I could not be hurt. Others know me as an old soul with great spiritual longings. I am only a young child. I am not so good as I thought I was or as others might think I am. Dear Mother, it feels so good to be little again and not to be standing on a pedestal, to feel that the simple life of a farmer or baker is good enough and is good for me. You must have had a feeling about such a change in my life. Do you remember how you asked me a little while back if I was not living the way I was because others expected it? This is another step forward. I do not want to say "upward" because I do not like to stand on a pedestal.

I have been together with our dear Sonni, my sister. It was so wonderful. I have also been together with Ernst; and we have all talked together. Ernst is very much like our dear Hellmut. He is a good boy and yet an unfinished product like you and I and all of us. With courage and endurance Sonni and Ernst will be able to live happily together and learn very much from each other. But this will take courage and determination to succeed.

When you have once started to build something, you should by all means finish your project. If we leave our work half done, we will lose faith and begin to doubt. That is why I feel Sonni and Ernst should stick together despite all obstacles. He is a good boy. If you understand him, you will love him like your sons Hellmut and Dieter. Do you remember how difficult you had it, dear Mother? The remedy was to stick to your guns. Everything will be all right if you have faith that it will be all right.

Sonni and I understand each other so well. We are so happy that we may be together again. Our first moments of meeting were an experience. To have a grown-up brother all of a sudden is like a miracle. At first we did not know what to say. But in a moment the bridge was built again between hearts. I like the way Sonni looks but I do not like the way Sonni struggles to know the truth. God must know her strength. He will not demand anything that is unjust or impossible.

I am going to try to see Sonni about once a month for maybe two days. It is a three and a half hour ride from Nuremberg to Stuttgart. The train fare back and forth was 9.30 DM (Marks).

The first night and day we were together we talked a lot and slept a little. On Sunday, August 30th, we made bicycle trip to Heimsheim, which I will always remember because it was so wonderful. Heimsheim is about 25 kilometers from Stuttgart. The pears and apples were ripening on the trees along the roadside, so we had plenty to eat. I surely ate a lot of fruit that day.

I am still puzzled how I could always again find more room. There is so much to be told, but for tonight I will close the chapter and wish you a good night.

I almost forgot, the SRF Magazine arrived today and also the package with writing paper and envelopes. Thanks a lot and may God bless you.

Your Dieter





September
1953

Active Duty in Germany

September 4, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

It is about 11 o'clock Friday morning.

No one has told me to do any special work, so that I am considering a letter to you as my next duty. Writing you a letter is one way I can improve my typing. It will take a little practice before I will be able to express myself through the typewriter as I am able to express myself with a pen. I have had a pleasant morning, and you have been largely responsible for this. I received your letter from August 29th and 30th. A letter from you gives me always new pep; and it also makes me eager to write again. Now let me see what you would like to know.

About my spiritual expeditions I have not written to Reverend Bernard. I had to work out these problems with other people that were led to me just at the right moment. And I had to work them out in myself. You cannot lean too heavily on the advice of other people. You have to develop a viewpoint of your own. At least that is the way I feel. It was a good thing that you wrote less for a while, because that put me more solidly on my own feet. For a while I really thought that I would float away pretty soon. My way of life might seem very fine to others, but it is still far from perfect in my eyes. I realized that so much in the last couple of weeks because somehow I could not adjust myself to army life and I think life in general. On the outside I tried to be like always, but my insides were really in uproar. My stomach is always a good thermometer for the way I am getting along.

For a while my stomach was really giving me trouble. It seemed as if it was tied in knots. But I am always going forward. I am gaining weight now and also feeling better physically and mentally. Previously I had the silly notion that I had to stay as light as I was and must be very careful what about what to eat and what not to eat. Now that this mental barrier is being removed, I am also gaining weight. Previously I would have a guilty conscience about buying myself a bigger belt, but now I don't anymore. Yesterday I bought myself a bigger belt. My comrades also mentioned that I seem to be gaining a little weight.

To compensate for my office work, I do some physical exercises in my spare time. After I did a little exercise I right away felt a lot better. The day I spent together with Sonni (Peter's older sister), she showed me how important it is to get out of your little house and world. Enjoying the beautiful outdoors is excellent medicine for heartaches and stomachaches. If you forget your own world for awhile, and take a look at God's world, you will see that you are caught in the small world of your thoughts. If you could have seen me, dear Mother, last Sunday, bicycling with my sister through the country, you would have been very happy. Why would you have been happy? Because you would have seen me laugh and smile again like I have not laughed and smiled in years. I really enjoyed that state of consciousness which came by just enjoying nature instead of doing a lot of philosophizing about it.

I have been doing too much philosophizing lately; and that is why I was losing my balance. I had the feeling for a while that these up and down moods were necessary; but they are really not. If you are feeling happy, that is quite all right. When these depressions would come, I always hoped for them to pass. But now I don't hope for them to pass. Now I fight against them with all the weapons at my command, I was putting on a false show of holiness for quite a while. This might be hard for you to understand, dear Mother, but it is true.

That little ego is very, very clever. We must be careful not to be fooled. I was having it so hard because I was pretending that I was someone when I am really no one. I have discovered my old ambition for recognition in disguise. I was doing, a lot of "good things" because I was afraid of what other people might think about me if I would do otherwise. That is the negative approach. I must be good because it gives me pleasure to be good and it gives the other person pleasure also. I was haunted for a long time by the fear of a guilty conscience. I am trying to shake off that fear now and replace it by courage, confidence, and the joy to live. I want to get up every morning with a bang. I want to look forward with expectancy to what good things the new day has in store, for me. I will not be worried that I cannot finish my allotted task today, because there will always be a tomorrow. God is a patient God.

Now I will put aside this letter to you for a while and do some work for the office. There will be a tomorrow as long as we still need to learn something else. As far as I know at the moment, there is nothing wrong if I enjoy my piece of chocolate, you, your cup of coffee, and tuna fish sandwich; and Papa his malted milk. I am seriously thinking of eating fish again. It will not make a bad person out of me. I have often hesitated about eating fish or meat just because I had told people that I was a vegetarian. Don't you think that is foolish? I am afraid of the opinions of people about me.

You know, it is a funny thing. When I was with Sonni, I had a chance to read some of the letters I wrote. They sounded very strange to me. What I had written sounded so lofty and really not like Peter. I even did not care very much to read them again. I have an explanation; but maybe you have one too. I would be interested to hear from you about this when you have time.

I am so glad that Papa is on his way. It is going to do him a lot of good to get into a different climate - spiritually and physically speaking. I think that when we get away from our present position for a while, we can take a better survey of the situation. It seems to me that, the whole Laue family has to be just a little careful when it starts to explore the realm of the spirit. About Hellmut, I do not have any worries in this respect. And also as long as I know you, you have always had good judgment. When I am listening to you, I can always be sure that I am listening to good advice. I know that I am governed too much by my emotions and feelings. I have to learn to use my head which God also gave us for a purpose.

I have noticed lately that I have lost very much of my mental concentration during the last few months. This office work is really a good medicine for me. It forces me to keep my mind on what I am doing. At first I made very many mistakes and worked as slow as a snail crawls. My mind was more in the spirit than on the work. But it is getting better and I am going forward.

I will give you two addresses of private families. One, the first one, is the address of a little grocery store just outside the gate of the hospital. The owners are very nice. The lady has shown me the light often when I was sad and in darkness. I go there a few times each week, usually just to say hello. But I also often wind up buying some cookies or candy. The address is: Herr Karl Werner, Nuremberg, Rothenberg Str. 315. And the other address is: that of Mrs. Schnuphase, Tilly Str.23.

If Nellie would come through Nuremberg, I would be very happy to see her and spend some time with her. Thank you for the Torch magazine. I am going to take a look at it. Maybe I will find something interesting in it. Mr. Zeidler's letter I will send back to you, but only in a little while. I took it along to Sonja. I wanted her to read it. She is really doing quite well with her English. Please don't buy any books for me, Mother, unless I should ask you for something special. If

you have read the Reader's Digest book and enjoyed it, you can keep me in mind as a recipient for the book. I have not been doing much reading lately, because I had been doing too much thinking. But I will get into the trend of reading again. I bet that pajama is ironed with a lot of love. It is going to be very nice to wear when it is cold.

My lady friend does not have any wishes. I have asked her several times; but she only wants to give. She does not want to accept anything from me. It is wonderful how she was able to help me. She has helped me through her great spiritual wisdom which is simply - unselfish love. If you have true love, you will need nothing else. To have true love is to have the greatest wisdom. I have not written Kleins (neighbors Peter stayed with during World War II) that I am in Germany, nor Mrs. Bloss. Ruth I wrote, but I did not tell her where I was. I do not know when I am going to see Dick. It will be connected with a bit of trouble. I am going to try to see our German relatives and friends first. But maybe Dick can visit Sonja since he is stationed near Stuttgart.

To have visited Sonja was a great present for me. My dear sister has it quite hard. And she has had it hard for quite a few years already. She needs a lot of love and understanding. We must not talk from our level to her, but we must try to understand her in her ways. If you can sit next to her and talk to her you will understand her better. Sonni and I have undergone a very similar education of life. Sonni needs understanding from a friend and true love. She needs someone she can tell her troubles to like I can tell mine to you. It is quite hard if one has to solve all his problems alone.

Life is a great challenge. One thing we must never do and that is give up and say, "I can go no further." I have noticed that as soon as we have given up, we have lost. If we do not give up, we cannot lose. Do you remember the story of the three frogs swimming in a pail of milk? Whenever we have set ourselves a task we should finish it. The job in itself is not so important, but the confidence we gain in seeing the job done is what counts. That way we will gain the confidence that we can do any job that comes our way. Finally we will be confident that we can know and find God. Our confidence must be developed to a high degree, to the highest degree before we can take that final step. That is why I want to make a real success of my time in the army. If I can make a real success of this, I can tackle a little bit harder job again. Hellmut has the right spirit. When he starts something, he finishes it. And he tries to make a perfect job every time. That is the way to do it. Dear Mother, you are not getting tired in business because you are getting older. I have never seen you so young looking as on those pictures you have sent me. You are getting tired maybe because you are seeing that others are getting more money for less work. Either you must make a change in your position or your mental position. You should see those German workers in the hospital. They work about three times as hard as most of the GI's, and they get about half the pay of the lowest paid GI. If they would want to compare, they would make themselves very unhappy. It takes great souls to be humble like those workers. And they are still grateful that they may work in the hospital. When you, get the right attitude again all and even more of your vitality will return. I can see that in my own case. I was feeling for a while almost like a dead duck despite good food and light work. Now that I try to get up with a bang in the morning and enjoy the day and laugh, I am also alive again. The mind is really an unexplainable, yet a powerful part of us.

I talked to a friend on the train back from Stuttgart. He had been for several years in a Russian prison camp. He never gave up the hope that he would be able to return home one day. That strong hope and confidence and prayer to God kept the man alive. He told me that those that gave up hope died in a very short time.

Let me say good-bye now, dear Mother, and dear Hellmut. Papa will probably be on the boat already when this letter reaches you. I'll be thinking of you. Let's always carry our banner high. It's about seven-thirty. I am going to see my lady friend for a moment after I have closed this letter.

Always, Private Peter Dieter Laue

Mr. Zeidler is a business man, I think. What business he is in I do not know.

Your Comrade



September 11, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

I can either write you a letter in the big office or in the little office. Since I only happen to have the key for the little office in my pocket, I am going to use the little office. The little office I can call my office pretty soon. The boy whose work I will be taking over is going back to the States in November. I do most of his work now already. The boy usually spends his time now going on errands for the captain. I think I will be going on errands after a while also. I am going to get myself a GI driver's license, and then I am allowed to drive a jeep or truck or whatever is called for. Unofficially I drove a jeep and ambulance already, but it will be better if I do it officially.

I am putting my heart and interest more and more into my work and my life in the army and my life in Nuremberg. I cannot live in the spirit now or with you in the pretty little house with the pretty garden. I tried to do that for a while and I almost floated away. I am no angel yet and I have no wings. I must still walk on the earth like my comrades. You cannot grow wings overnight. But that is what I tried to do.

Everything that I enjoyed I tried to do without. But you know what happened after a while? The joy to live and the joy to get up in the morning became very small. But now I can write you that it is becoming very different. I look forward to my meals; I love to do the physical exercises in the morning and I am sorry that they only last for a half an hour. I am finding joy in my work. I love to read a good book again. At the moment I am reading "Kinfolk" by Pearl Buck. Previously when I read a few lines I fell asleep when reading. Now that the interest is returning, life is returning also. I have also seen two German movies. When I went the first time to the movies my world was still more real to me than the story on the screen. During the second movie I forgot myself and laughed again. I have a new approach now to life. The way I want make others happy is my smiling being happy myself.

A sermon given with a serious and sad face is no sermon. I have noticed that a happy disposition is contagious. Several boys have helped me consciously by their happy nature. And when I do some work, I want to put my whole heart into it and try to do a good job. The first weeks I was here I had my mind always chasing rainbows while I was working.

I am going to tell you something which I think will make the headlines. Last Sunday I was invited at a friend's house. The boy's mother prepared a nice meal for us. There was a nice piece of meat on my plate and I ate the meat without any bad feelings. I do not have the feeling any more that I am a better person because I eat no meat. I saw a chicken eat an earthworm the

other day. Then I thought we eat eggs and yet call ourselves vegetarians. Where is the dividing line I thought? As long as we do not carry any hateful feelings in our heart against anyone or any things, we are not doing something wrong. And it is only human to make a mistake. I was afraid to live for a while because I was afraid of doing something wrong. And it is only human to make a mistake. I was afraid to live for a while because I was afraid of doing something wrong. God does not expect us to be perfect overnight. He is patient and He is patience. A friend of mind told me that it took him twenty-eight years to overcome his smoking habit. He did it in the end and that is what counts.

I can hardly believe that my Mother is in front of me when I look at your latest picture. What have you been doing with yourself, dear Mother. My friends say that you look like forty. Some say that you look like a young girl. They cannot believe that you could be my Mother. And everyone also likes your smiling face. Can you tell me where you got it, or is it a secret? It is so nice to see you smiling. I have not seen you smile like that for a long time. And I like Hellmut's picture too. He looks also very happy; but I really don't know him otherwise. And he also looks healthy. I approve of those gold adventures now; although one does not find gold one finds health and good cheer. And that is more important than gold.

Sonni bought a bicycle for me in Stuttgart for forty Marks. She is going to send it to me in the next few days. Then I will take little excursions into the country and tap again my strength and endurance. We are a big power plant and we must keep it running physically, mentally, and spiritually. If we don't keep it running, it is going to get rusty and useless. You know what happens when you do not use a language! You forget the language. Or if you do not type for a long time; then you forget how to type. Since I am doing some physical exercise again, I feel a lot better. When I am physically alive, then I am also mentally more alert and am able to concentrate much better.

Just a little thought in-between. I am just thinking of Papa. Nothing but water is probably around him now. I am very glad that he has taken a vacation. He deserves and he needs it. But how about, dear Mother, would you like to take a vacation like that also once?

Tomorrow I have two visitors from Muenster. The parents of a boy I met in Camp Pickett are coming to Nuremberg. I sent the parents regards from their boy and told them that I was a friend of his. The parents must really love their boy. They are extra making this long trip to be able to know a little bit more about the life in America and army and their boy. They are only staying for the afternoon and evening and then taking the train back home. They are the parents of the boy who took the picture of me in the forest. I just think of it.

Thank you for the nice pictures you have sent me and for your letter. And I also received Papa's letter; but I think I will thank him in person.

I will close the office now and wish you a good night. And best regards also from Mrs. Schnuphase and the girls here in the office. Mrs. Schnuphase was a little worried yesterday. She asked me if you would mind that she has somewhat taken over temporarily the Mother position? I told her that she would not have to worry at all. I told her that my Mother will be happy to know that I have a home and someone who cares for me here.

Good night and may God bless you and dear Hellmut.

Always, your boy and comrade – Dieter (Peter's name as it appears on his birth certificate – Bensheim, Germany - 2/16/1933)



September 12, 1953

My dear Mutti and Hellmut,

I am sitting in a small pub with two dear people. These people are the Mom and Pop of one of my comrades I met at Camp Pickett. I told you about the people in my last letter.

We are experiencing some very precious hours. I am feeling healthy and alert. I already feel at home here.

Good-bye and so long,

Lovingly,

Your Dieter (the first name on my German birth certificate)

Note: this letter was written entirely in German and has been translated by the author



September 15, 1953

My dear Mother,

Just a quick little card in-between –

I received your dear letters from the sixth and eighth. I could not help it; but they brought tears into my eyes. I am sad and am sad because you are lonely; but especially because you think I have gone off the path and have gone astray.

It hurts me if you believe such a thing. I will believe in God that He will not let anything happen to his child. Mother, when there comes such a time when you do not want to live anymore, you plead to God to help you. Do you not think He is helping you and me wherever we might be and whatever we might do? It is all a part of our schooling.

I have received the Bhagavad-Gita at Clay's house, but not the silver charm from Miss Brackeler. Please do not send me any books for the time being. Books I can get here and I can even go to school here. Please be of good cheer, dear Mother, and trust in God. If you will trust in God, you will know that He will also not let me go.

I hope and don't think that the land will be bought now.

Your boy, Peter



September 15, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

I will sit down and write you a little more about what has gone on in my life. I need to fill in some of the loopholes. It is a little harder to put my thoughts on paper with a typewriter than by longhand, but I will try my best. I can only tell you a little in a letter about what has gone through my mind during the last few weeks. What I have experienced will fill many pages maybe one day.

Through my thirst for truth and my eating habits I had become very sensitive to good and pure things, but also to dark and evil forces. I really don't like to say evil forces. I would rather say, to the two poles of life. How much I was imagining and how much was real, I could not tell apart anymore during the last few weeks. Forces, for example, which can make a drunkard out of a person, were raging in me. Oh, it is so hard to put these experiences on paper. These forces grew so strong that I was becoming afraid of them. But still I wanted to experience them in myself in order to know what goes on in other people. I had also told myself that I was as bad as the worst criminal, because my eyes were desiring a pear on someone else's tree. I could not walk with pleasure through the fields anymore, because my eyes constantly desired the fruit I saw on different trees. My stomach could be full, but still, I would so desire what did not belong to me that eyes began to hurt whenever I opened them to look at something.

I was imagining that people were thinking something bad about me. My whole being was seized by great depression which I could not shake off. I would have to wait till it would pass in some mysterious way. The depression came more and more frequently. Only seldom did I experience spiritual renewal. I was at the mercy of these alternating forces. My stomach felt as if it were tied in knots. Often I craved for some chocolate, but I always said no. Some people told me that I should stop worrying, others told me to go to the movies. I had told no one what was going on inside of me. Each day this voice inside of me became more real and persistent; and I could not ignore it. If it had told me to run away from the army, I would have done it. I became physically very exhausted. It was hard for me to walk up the steps. I felt like lying down for a long time. I thought I needed a rest. There was no joy for me in living. Almost all my concentration and memory had disappeared. I made many mistakes in the easiest work and was very slow. I had a difficult time keeping myself awake. I had lost interest in life. It had become too difficult, and I did not see how I could manage much longer. I did not feel like doing anything anymore. That voice inside had exhausted me.

Then one day I felt that if I continued to listen to the voice, I would not live much longer or would become insane. Therefore I began to do just the opposite of the things the voice told me to do. I made myself read a book, although I fell asleep almost every few lines. I tried to become interested in the story on the screen. I went to the carnival. I made myself run up the stairs even though I was tired. I made myself smile even though I did not feel like smiling at all. I bought myself chocolate. I had a craving for something sweet, so I bought myself a pound of grape sugar. I had eaten that in a few days.

Slowly the life force and the desire to live returned. There has also come a change in my being. I have begun to use reason and feeling, instead of just feeling. I do not give away my last penny like I used to do before. Previously I gave away money merely because I was asked. The boys then often used it to go to the show or drink beer. I lost seventeen dollars during my first few weeks in the army. I was really going all out to give myself away. I was acting almost entirely on feelings.

For a long time I thought that it was wrong to use reason. I wanted to be led by God altogether. That was all right for a couple of months, but then some wrong forces sneaked in. I was afraid that some forces would awaken in me over which I had no control. Suddenly I became aware of great explosive forces within me. Now I am not surprised anymore that men like Hitler or Saint Francis of Assisi lived. Tremendous powers are in us. If we learn how to channel them, they will accomplish much good, if not, they will destroy others and us. It has been a great schooling. I am and we all are continually going to school.

I did not want to tell you how I was feeling, how little interest I had in life, because I did not want to worry you, dear Mother. You are the best thing I have in the world. I do not want to cause you any grief. I am still thinking about God and my desire is to know the truth. More than anything else I want to do the right thing. God knows my heart. He won't mind that I read a Donald Duck funny book.

You have said that from a distance you see everything a little different. I also see things differently from here. Our family makes so much ado about food. We are influenced so easily and so completely by new diets. We are not very stable in our views. I hope that Hellmut's friend will not only marry a girl only because of her unique diet. I wish he would not marry yet. It would be much better if he would wait, maybe until he is out of the army. We should ask the advice of other people who are standing on the sideline and are not involved.

Whatever you write, dear Mother, I am going to think about. I have done quite a bit of thinking, observing myself and inquiring if I shall or shall not eat meat. I have decided to eat it again. I do not have any mental opposition anymore. I do not know for how long I will eat it. I am going to see what effects it has. I have the feeling that no meat in our diet makes us more sensitive.

May I wish you a good night and pleasant dreams. We are going forward.
May God bless you,

Your Peter

Best regards to Arthur.

The other questions I will answer later on. Many loving greetings from Mrs. Schnuphase and Lina. Please believe me, Mrs. Schnuphase is a dear soul. How much it would mean to me would you be here with me. Ask our loving heavenly Father. He will tell you that Mrs. Schnuphase is acting with agape love towards me.

Your Dieter



September 22, 1953

My dear Mother and Brother,

I received your dear letter with Papa's pictures. Your letter gave me a mental and physical boost again. I still need a lot of boosts to regain my mental equilibrium. It is not so hard in our family to get mentally lopsided. I have been thinking and philosophizing so much that I had gotten in a

deep rut. When I wanted to stop thinking I could not. I had lost control over my mind and partly my body too. Thanks a lot for your letter.

I am going into the field for three days; so I quickly wanted to send you this card. Mother, your love and your letters about sound living will help me to become well again. I cannot digest much of Yogananda's teaching at the moment. Your last letter has shown me that you are gaining the balance which I would like to gain.

With love,
Your Dieter



September 26, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

Yesterday I received your letter from the 19th. I read your letter at my friend's house after supper. We had potato salad, fish and green salad. My friend Johann brought me home unexpectedly, yet there was a big plate full ready for me. As a desert I read your letter. My friend took me by the hand and took me home with him because I was so tired – mentally. It is really touching to see how there are always people to help you when you are down. He gave me his fountain pen with which I am writing now as a token of his friendship. This friend has understanding for other sad hearts because eight weeks ago his father died.

What we are experiencing now, dear Mother, is another period of transmutation. I feel that we will both regain our courage and faith which are really one. I feel that with a period of rest I can go on and ahead. I feel so good and glad tonight because I have been permitted to come into the hospital as a patient this afternoon just to rest for a few days.

I never realized that there was anything like nerves which might go on the bum sometimes. I cannot blame the army for this. It is due to my own doing, due to my eagerness to know and understand this world and the next. I am resuming my search, but with a different approach. Through the grace of God I would like to learn His mysteries. If we want to know the truth regardless, we will come into dangerous water. If we learn things we are not ready for, they will hinder us rather than help. And truth we have once discovered we cannot cover up anymore. If we discover the secret of the atom before we can control it, this great and true discovery will become our destruction. So I have asked God to let me know no more than I am ready for. If we ask to know the truth, we should keep that in mind. In my case, I wanted to get ahead quickly because of vanity.

We have a tendency to think that others lead a superficial life. I wonder if that is the right thing to think? Are we not putting ourselves that way on a pedestal? Are we not saying that we are leading a more pleasing life to God? Only God can truly judge. Some people need to have the mentality to be farmers, tailors, carpenters or teachers. How could we otherwise live if no one wanted to till the soil? Should we say that farmers lead a more superficial life than ministers? I don't think we should identify (define) superficiality or talk about the world we live in now with a low-grade character. Each world has its place; otherwise God would not have created it. It is good if we can also understand the superficial or so called superficial world.

It had become so bad with me that it was a torment for me to live with those who thought differently than I did. I had lost my ability to talk with anyone who did not speak my language. I

had not a single person I could confide in. If we have isolated ourselves that much from people, there is something wrong with us. We should be able to talk to all types of people. Our world is not the only world that is good.

My search is also changing in another way. For a long time I was a good boy because I was afraid of the consequences if I am not. I want to do the right things because it is fun. If we do it the other way, we are hypocrites.

Only God knows if the split between Sonni and Papa can be mended? I think it can. I will try. I think it is Sonni's nerves that are worn out. She needs a good rest and everything will be all right. Since the money question has come in-between, I doubt if she will come to America. I think it would have done her a lot of good. Papa wrote me today. He is playing the part of a doctor, trying to nurse his brother back to health.

I am going to take a shower now and then go to bed. Tomorrow I will write a little more. It is a little after nine now. At ten the lights have to be out. Boy, oh boy, I am getting some wonderful rest now. Good night my two good friends.

Your boy Dieter (Peter)



(The next day – Sunday)

Good morning, dear Mother and Brother,

It is a wonderful Sunday morning. Blue sky and peace is in the air. What is disturbing my personal peace now is the chocolate sickness. I love chocolate as others like to smoke a cigarette. It is really terrible how much I like chocolate. One day that must be overcome by the grace of God. Another trouble I have been having is that I have a craving to be all alone. I want to be by myself.

It is an odd thing how many of my former traits have returned again. I had prided myself already that I had overcome them. That was bad. It is through God's grace that I had not been bothered with them for almost two years. It is the ambition to shine which prompts me to do many things. I had signed with the name, Peter, because I thought there was a connection with Peter in the Bible. Now I sign, Dieter, again. This knowledge of former incarnations had really upset me.

Should we not rather let bygones be bygones? If I don't get the right solution the first time, then I get it the second, third or fourth time. We don't hit the bull's eye every time we shoot. It takes training to hit the bull's eye. Just because we don't hit the bull's eye the first time is no reason why we should give up. Right? Right!!!!

I see now that I am too much affected by what others think of me, tell me and do. To be sensitive is all right. But being too sensitive is wrong. If you are too sensitive you are not the captain of your boat anymore. I often come back to Hellmut. He knows what he wants; he carries out what he wants. And also if what he does is wrong, at least he gains strength in trying.

Who are we to say this is right and that is wrong? If I would be back in the States now, I would get a kick out of going on an adventure with Hellmut – gold-mining or any kind of an adventure. And Arthur must come along also. I would not want to forget Arthur. I surely wish Arthur a happy marriage. Nothing but the best for Arthur and his wife!

Note added in 2010 by Peter at age 77: Arthur eventually divorced his wife Rosalie and Hellmut married Rosalie. They had four children. Rosalie eventually divorced Hellmut.

A few weeks ago I said, "I want to gain some weight." Do you know what happened? I gained ten pounds. But that is also due to the fact that I have sought an escape in food. When I become more stabilized, it will be different. If someone gave me or offered me something to eat, I could not say "no" although I was already full. My mental strength was very low and still is so. But, it will build up again.

I am going to the chapel for an hour now. I will see you later The service was nice. However, I only got a little out of it. Mentally I am so tired at the moment that I have difficulty in staying awake in class or church. I think what I need is rest and patient waiting for grace.

I again received a very nice letter from Geoffrey. He asked me for a picture. Could you please send him one? I have no pictures of myself here.

What did your last letter do to me? It made me happy and it made me eager to sit down to write you again and tell you how I feel. It is a peculiar thing how we experience the same thing. We must both try not to take everything so serious. I give this advice but I wished I could also follow it.

I am sleeping and resting in a light and airy room with two other men. I feel so good to be able to relax for a while. The army does not expect the impossible. If it sees that you are in need, it will try to help you. So, don't you worry!

You are receiving the first letter from the new writing pad. The blank paper is holding many secrets. But no, we must not think ahead. That is why we make it hard for ourselves. Don't worry what my letters will sound like. It makes it hard for me to come back if people expect me to be a certain way. Mother, I know that if no one understands me now, you will. I am sure you have gone through times in Germany when you felt that your nerves will not cooperate properly.

You should see how Mrs. Schnuphase is concerned about me. You can always be sure that there is someone a few minutes from the hospital who loves me very much.

I also receive Guide Posts a few days ago. I am enjoying reading it very much. Thanks a lot. Your intuition is working excellently.

I received Hellmut's pictures. Thanks a lot. I really think that he doing fine. Let's hope that he can stay out of the draft for a long time yet.

You know, I think what Sonni needs is a rest. If you will ask her to come to America with that idea, I think she might seriously consider. She is also a little afraid to come because she feels that you will heap Yogananda's philosophy upon her.

I will wish you and Hellmut and dear Mrs. Hatvani, Arthur and his wife, Mrs. Devine and all the rest of the gang a good-bye and a good day now. I am enclosing a picture of the front of the hospital. The tents are gone. They were only set up for a special occasion before I came to the hospital. Maybe I'll get a cheap camera and also take some pictures for you? What would you think about that?

The best wishes and lots of love from your boy Dieter (Peter)

And may God be with you all and always.

During our maneuvers last Wednesday, Thursday and Friday we twice set up a series of tents like you see in the pictures.



September 29, 1953

(Translated from German)

My dear Papa and my dear loved Ones,

I do not know what I should say about all that has been happening. We must learn to submit ourselves to that Will that is higher than ours. We must not question that whatever happens to us is eventually intended for our best. If we try to understand and analyze everything, we will eventually go insane and question God's grand design of the world.

In this season of my life I have allowed everything to impact my heart. We must not allow ourselves to be overly sensitive. To ponder about everything that is going on is unhealthy. I now try to fulfill the daily assignments placed in front of me. I went astray, drove myself insane as I tried to fathom God's mysteries. Faith and speculating are incompatible. I now try to police my thoughts. Thinking and thinking and thinking all the time has exhausted me physically and emotionally. I lost a large amount of my physical and spiritual stamina.

I did not lose weight. On the contrary, I am heavier than before. I am only very tired. At the moment I am in the hospital as a patient trying to rest and relax. Please do not worry about me. I am being treated with a lot of tenderness. Would I be at home, you could not care for me with greater love. It is shortly before ten. At ten I must be in bed. I am sleeping exceptionally well. I am sleeping like a bear that is hibernating.

On Thursday I have a date to meet Horst (an older cousin). That is bound to be a very good day. Good night, my dear ones. Good health to you and give hearty greetings to Uncle Theo.

With love, your Dieter (Peter)

Do you think you might come to Nuremberg? That would be nice! And why should you consider coming to Nuremberg? You should come because your Dieter (Peter) is there.

Your little son Dieterchen or Dieterlein (diminutive and endearing words for the name Dieter)





October 1953

Active Duty in Germany

October 1, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

I can either buy myself a bar of chocolate and a piece of bubble gum or buy an airmail stamp to send you a letter. I am still taking it easy and relaxing. Monday I think I will be going back to work with renewed interest and vigor. These last few days I was playing the role of the prince of Spain. I had lots of time to write; but I did not even do that. I mostly slept, dreamt and read and reorganized my mind. Rather, I did not reorganize too much myself, I waited for Someone else to help me do it. Another chapter of my life is nearing its end. One day I will tell you all about it. I will wait till I come back home. Then we have something to look forward to. It will be an interesting book one day, I think.

I finished all of the three Guideposts and enjoyed them. I passed them on to the hospital library. Yesterday I received the package with the pajamas, coffee, cashews and tootsies. I was very happy about the whole works. The coffee came in perfectly handy. Mrs. Schnuphase did not want to take the coffee but I made her take it. She made me take flowers, candy, cookies, cake and pears when she visited me yesterday. She also sends you her best regards. She is really concerned about my welfare. When she knows I don't feel well, she worries like you would but you should not.

I only packed 15 cups. That is all there were. It is a beautiful day today. It is about 4:30 now. I am sitting in the library listening to Grieg's piano concerto. Outside the window the sun is shining, the leaves are turning to rusty red and golden; it is Fall. Mother Nature is calling life back beneath the blanket of the earth. Mother Nature looks out for her children very lovingly so big man winter can't do any harm. That is pretty nice of her. Isn't it? In the music and the beauty of nature I find a wonderful peace today. Such is life; it is changing. I'll quickly finish this letter so that you may have it one day sooner.

With lots of love, your brother and your son – your Dieter (Peter)



Sunday morning, October 4, 1953

My dear Mother and Brother,

Today is my last day of rest in the hospital. Tomorrow I will be discharged, ready to go back to the typewriter. I have slept during these nine days in the hospital as much as a little baby. During the day I slept a lot and during the night I could sleep fine also. I could not understand how I could sleep so well and so much. But I think sleep is healing. During sleep wiser forces are at work than our thoughts.

Mother dear, I can no longer permit myself to think and philosophy about eternal, infinite and abstract ideas, otherwise my head will burst and I will become a mental casualty. The instinct to survive and come back home in one piece is still stronger than some other forceful ideas I had.

I would like you to do me a favor. Please have me cancelled as an S.R.F. member (Self Realization Fellowship). If you would not like to do it, I will write myself. But I think it is a simple matter for you. I have had enough theoretical ideas. I will ask God to let love guide me. To have

true love and nothing else is to have the greatest wisdom. That is not something we can learn overnight in a couple of years. It takes longer than that. I do not want to imagine anymore that I can understand the forces which rule the universe. I just want to play my part and it well. If I can't smile and can't do my work well where I am placed, then I am a poor actor.

I am not condemning S.R.F. Only for a mind like mine it had some unpleasant effects. Maybe when I am older I can try again. But right now, no more. To thrust these abstract ideas upon a young mind can sometimes be harmful. It is not so easy to be a saint. I am going to let someone else try. When I see what happened to Sonni and Ruth, I rather take it a little more slowly and wait a couple more lifetimes.

Thanks a lot for your letter of Saturday night. It is always a pleasure to hear from you. I was also glad to see your handwriting, Hellmut. It was not much but I was glad to know that you still remembered your Dieter (Peter) in the good old U.S.A. Army. If you are a good boy I'll even help you and Arthur dig up some of that yellow stuff (gold). We will see. I have also four years of college coming my way free when I am discharged.

The girl who wrote the note I remember, but her name I do not. I remember a certain conversation we had about being photogenic. Maybe you remember also? If I remember Julie's handwriting, the girl who wrote the note writes much like Julie, or maybe like the girl I met in the mountains.

If you would like to read the book Richard sent, please do so first, otherwise you can send it to me by regular mail. By the time it reaches me I will either want to read it, and if not, I will give it to the library. If Sonni will come to America is pretty unsure. I think the different climate would be good for her. Maybe you can throw out some bait.

Arthur's girl is a nice girl judging from the picture. But a picture does not tell everything. I surely wish Arthur nothing but the best. The thing I don't like is the fanatic ideas. They are often good, but they can also run riot sometimes. Please give Arthur my best wishes for his wedding.

You can send me the Torch by regular mail. I even have a better idea. Phone up the Ephebian Society; tell them I am a soldier and tell them to send me the paper directly to Germany.

Yesterday with your letter I also received the news that Theo had passed on. I was near losing my balance again. I had someone to go to who talked to me and helped me. My mind is not capable of comprehending the mysteries of life and death. Human minds are not meant to know all. That is why we are human. When we see a beautiful rose growing in the garden, we should not want to have it right away. We should be content to admire it. In the same way we should be content to admire reverently God's mysterious ways of doing things. And we must trust that He knows what He is doing and what is going on.

I am glad that you made everything white. It looks so much nicer. I am also glad you are cooking so nicely for Hellmut. When I come back I want him to have muscle power in addition to willpower.

I think we have everything on paper now. It is about 10:30 AM. Instead of going to the chapel at ten, I continued to write you. That is not such an awful sin. Is it?

This afternoon I am going to sit in the garden for a while and read, "God's Men" by Pearl Buck. I like the book.

For lunch we have turkey and for dessert, ice cream. May I invite you?

Best regards and love from you boy,

Your Dieter (Peter)



October 6, 1953

My dear Mother and Brother,

I am back at my job. I have a definite job at the typewriter and I like it. I am living in a smaller room now with three other boys. Just a note to tell you that I am feeling better. People with ideals always have it a little harder than others. One cannot be too rigid, otherwise he will break under the burden. Rome was not built overnight. So you cannot expect to be perfect overnight. It takes time. Yesterday I went to a German movie with my German friend, Heinz Ruehman played in it. I enjoyed it.

In love, your boy - Dieter (Peter)



October 10, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother Hellmut,

I made up my mind to write you a letter this afternoon and so I am going to do it. The sun is shining brightly outside and it is almost a sin to sit in the office. The letters, however, will be written before anything else is done. I have noticed that it is good to make up your mind to do something, and then do it. One should know what he wants and then go and get it. That is why you are succeeding so often, Hellmut. Once you have made up your mind to do something, you have practically got the prize in your hand.

I am feeling quite a bit better; but I still have to watch myself that my mind does not run riot. And I also have to work to build up my emotional resistance. One thing I am not doing anymore or at least not try to is to be concerned about my spiritual development and progress. That will take its natural course if I will just leave it alone. It does not help you to be thinking about your indigestion. Just let nature take its course and everything will be all right. If I think about my indigestion, it is very poor; but if I let it take its natural course, it is very good.

I can tell you that it is not easy for a person with ideals to live among those who only or to a great extent just follow their impulses. Almost all the boys I know have a very sordid nightlife. I think you know what I mean. The boys let go of their excess energy by spending a night with a woman. To be able to channel those forces within each human being into the right direction is a big job. Your letters and prayers will always be a help for me. I think the reason why you have so much energy to spend on the mining adventure is because there is no woman that steals your mind. I do not find anything wrong in knowing nice girls, only the type of relationships the boys have seems not right to me. How do you feel about this subject, Mother and Hellmut? I have spoken to some ministers about this subject; and they all confirm my ideals. To have ideals is to have battles, and that is a great blessing.

My attitude toward a religious life has undergone a drastic transmutation. First of all, I am not going to try to separate body and spirit by putting more emphasis on Spirit and trying to ignore the demands of the body. And I also do not wait for salvation to come to me on a mystic cloud. In fact I want to forget about salvation. It will come or it will not come with or without my thinking about it. I am not at all interested in seeing the great spiritual wonders anymore like I used to. My policy is to work for an hour to be able to give a hungry child a piece of bread. Now I want to fight for what I think is right instead of meditating on goodness. I like the saying, God helps him who helps himself. I am not waiting anymore for miracles to happen. I have solid ideas already about what I want to do and how I want to be of service. These ideas are giving me so much energy and eagerness to live again that I m just amazed. These ideas have grown out of the period when I was feeling so low. I have become aware of a type of suffering of which I previously knew nothing. I have told myself that if I get out of this period successfully, I am going to help those who feel the way I did. To be run down with the nerves and to be altogether tired of living is the worst suffering that can come upon anyone. It is the worst type of disease I have come in contact with so far. Hellmut's goldmine will come in pretty handy for my future plans. But I know whatever I will need I will be able to get.

Last night I took a bicycle ride out to my friends, the Tratz family. It always gives me a booster if I can be together with people that understand and like me. It was about a quarter after eleven when I rode home with my bicycle. It was a nice ride both ways. But I had a dilemma when I came home. My right trouser cuffs were all greasy from the chain. So I had to bring them to the cleaners this morning which cost me thirty-five cents. The next time I am going to use clips on my pants.

I have a favor to ask of you. Starting next month we will be able to wear civilian clothes. Could you send me the following per regular mail: One pair of good pants. Please don't buy any but send me a pair from my closet. The blue checkered flannel shirt from Alice, and a long sleeved sweater. I think I still have the green one from Bertha. That is all, no more please. Thank you very much. But a pound of coffee is always welcome. You know how I love coffee – to give to someone I love.

This week I really and truly enjoyed my work. In fact, I was looking forward to my work. Without my work I don't see how I could carry on. I am not as efficient yet as I would like to be. But I am improving. One good thing is that I don't make quite so many mistakes. And also that I have not been tired during the day.

This evening I am going to the theatre or to a show with someone. Would you like to know with whom I am going? I bet you would. But I am not to tell. That is about all for today. Have a nice Sunday and give my regards to our friends in the church, to Arthur, Lillian, Mrs. Devine, and the girl in business whom we brought home with the car several times. She lives next to a big church. I forgot her name. She lives near Hollywood and Western. Do you know whom I mean?

With lots of love,

Your boy, Dieter (Peter)



October 14, 1953

My dear Mother and Brother,

Thank you for your dear long letter. I appreciate that you are trying so hard to show me what to do. We just have to hope for the best. Do you know it is this way with your boy. He has been surrounded with so much love and protection all his life and with such high ideals, that this world he has been thrust into is like unto a den of lions. I am such a sensitive flower, too sensitive to kind and evil words. Believe me, that makes it often difficult for me. That can't go on like this, because I am only a little human being. Just pray for me that I become real able again to deal with life and don't mind to take a couple of blows and also don't hesitate to deal out a couple. I have forgotten to give a real good punch and forgotten how to take it.

With lots of love,

Your Dieter (Peter)



October 16, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

Thank you for your last letter Mother and Hellmut. I was surely happy to hear from you. Your letter, dear Hellmut, was really a big surprise and a big present. Everything you wrote I like very much. I am really looking forward to going to the mountains with you and Arthur and his wife. But I am also looking forward to going back to school. All in all, I am looking forward to coming back home. Boy oh boy, that will be nice. I am so glad I feel that way again. Home sweet home! But I also want to stand more and more on my own feet.

Things are brightening up for me. I have found a friend and a friend has found me. I can't tell you what a wonderful present that is. I almost feel like saying that he saved my life and saved me from losing my mind. If you have no one to share your ideas with, no one who understands you, then you become very, very lonely. I have never been so lonely in all my life. Now I can imagine how wonderful a thing a marriage can be and a family. Maybe one day I might also have a family. If the right girl comes along! I don't know how it could be otherwise. But for the time being I won't think of it.

You must have really used psychology Mother, in bringing up your sons. Practically all the boys fool around with girls, drink and smoke and say bad words; but your son Peter won't even think of doing such things. It is surely hard to be so different; but it will probably pay off in the long run.

Now that I have found a friend it is so, so much easier. I love my work – typing, and I love to be with my friend. Maybe I will buy myself an accordion, a small one. From the bicycle I have lots of pleasure. My friend, Louis, will get himself one too. If you have not sent the civilian clothes yet, please send me instead of the pants a complete suit. Maybe Hellmut will give me one of his light suits? And please then also enclose a white shirt and a tie.

I surely hope you can settle the draft question to your satisfaction, Hellmut. But if you have to go, then you have to make the best of it. I doubt if the army has been a bad thing for most

people. On February 2nd I'll be celebrating my first anniversary in the army. I will also have gotten well adjusted.

Now I am going to polish my shoes and brass for tomorrow's inspection. And then I will go to the top floor and play ball and exercise with my friend.

I want to ask, "How much land is it that WE are buying?" I am getting to be interested. I am eager to keep up with the Laue current events.

I don't know how much your sweater costs yet, Mother? Thanks for the Reader's Digest.

You can let my S.R.F membership ride along. I won't do anything about it.

Let me wish you a good night and don't worry about me any more.

With lots of love, Your boy Dieter (Peter)



October 18, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother,

It is really important that we do not reach for something that is beyond our reach. One step at a time! Do you really believe that we can reach salvation in one incarnation? I surely thought so for a while; and I tried everything possible to confirm my belief. But I tell you, I took too big a mouthful at one time. Sometimes I feel like crying for having tread on ground where angels fear to tread. I was so very eager to adjust myself properly to any situation in life that would confront me! But you know the funny thing is, the more I think about adjusting myself, the poorer a job I am able to do. If I could only take things as they come and forget about the philosophy of the thing, I would be a lot better off. But since I have found a friend to chum with, things look a lot brighter. When I feel so terribly low, my eyes and my forehead hurt. I can go to my friend then. And in the presence of my friend, the low spots pass with much less pain. But there are also times when I feel so happy and content, that I am actually glad that I am where I am.

Do you remember how much enjoyment I got out of reading? When I try to read now, it often is an impossible task. My mind just won't stay on the subject. It roams all over the earth when I try to read a nice story. I looked so much forward to this time, but I don't have the concentration. Isn't that a funny setup? But I am not going to give up. I am going to sit down and read; and I will force myself to concentrate until I have learned to read again. I have to be strict with myself or I am going to have a very disobedient mind. I am going to learn to read again; that is not an impossible task. I am going to be the boss of my mind. I just won't allow my mind to get depressed any more. That is all there is to it. I am going to give it a good beating if it is going to act up on me.

You know what I would like? I would like you to tell me for what and how you spend the money you receive from me every month. If I know you get some pleasure out of it, I am going to be twice as eager to work for you. If I know that you can buy yourself an ice-cream soda with the money, or if I know that I can invite you to the movies, I will have a good feeling as I pound away at the typewriter for forty hours a week. Then I will look at my work more as a job that has to be done.

How are you going to repay the loan, Hellmut? Maybe I could help you out. I would be glad to. It's not much money that I earn. But one thing you can be sure of, that little bit of money will come in regularly for sixteen months more. A little bit at the right time. When I know that you can make good use of the money, I will look forward to the time when I know that you receive your check. You can make me feel real good just by telling how happy you are about the money.

Do you know something? I have the feeling that if I get married one day, that I am going to love my sweetheart very much. Do you know why? Well, I figure it out this way. Most of the boys hop around from one girl to the next, giving each girl a little of their attention and a little of their love. Most of us do not have so much love that we can love each person very much. I am not spending my love on the girls now. I am saving my love, so that if I marry one day my love will be my greatest gift to the girl. Or if I should not marry, I will have a reserve of love to work out my dreams.

For the first five months in the army I loved everyone regardless if I was kicked in the face or if I received a word of thanks. Now I cannot be like that any more. I have become distrustful, because I was kicked in the face too often. Now I have to find the golden middle way. I am too easily persuaded to do something for someone if I am asked. Let me tell you what happened a few days ago.

Someone asked me for money. The way the boy asked for it, I really thought he was in trouble and needed it badly. Besides that I knew the boy a little and he seemed like a nice fellow. So I helped the boy out. I did not exactly give the boy any money, but I made it possible for him to get some. First I wanted to give him or rather lend him three dollars, but then I changed my mind. In the evening through some accident I found out for what he wanted the money. It was midnight and the boy thought I was sleeping. I heard the boy tell some other boy in the room that he had fooled around with several girls that night. And you know that costs money! The boy thought I was sleeping, otherwise he would not have said anything. When I asked him the next morning about the previous night, he said that I must have dreamt. But confirmed reports told me that I was wide awake.

Today I lent away another two marks, because I was again softhearted. Now I could kick myself for doing it. The man said that he wanted to go the museum and did not have any street carfare. I wonder if he did not want a couple of beers? You know, usually at this time of the months most people are broke, except Peter and a couple of other fellows. Tell me, what am I going to do about this thing? I either have to tell the boys that I am broke or that I am no bank. I would not mind to lend the boys a dollar. The trouble is that it is usually lent for keeps. I don't mind to help someone. The thing that hurts me is to be fooled by my soft-heartedness and be made a sucker. I feel that if I have the guts to tell the boys off and will not care if I will lose a couple of so-called friends, I will have much firmer footing under my feet.

Last night my friend and I took a nice walk into town, about a forty-minute walk; then we went to a movie and then we walked home again. We sang a few tunes as we walked along; we had our hands swinging at our side, our shoulders were thrown back, our chest was out, and we walked in step. We were really proud to be Americans. We also promised something to ourselves yesterday. We will not mention anymore how many more months we have to stay in the army. That does not help a bit. When the time is there to go home again, then is the time to think about home. We will do our job; and we are proud to keep America what it is.

You know what we had for dinner today? We had turkey, and for dessert we had ice-cream. That was really a good meal. You will be surprised when you see me. I have gained some pounds since I left the States.

Next week I hope I will see Papa. Yesterday he arrived in Stuttgart. He did not say anything about coming to me. But I know he won't forget his Dieter (Peter) boy if he can possibly help it. I will be very happy to have someone to talk to who understands. There is a patient here, a Mr. McGaw, who also understands me. He is leaving tomorrow for the States. He helped me a lot to get back on my feet.

Actually you were not supposed to get this letter. But you know how it is. I wanted to write to David Mallory a letter at first; but I made so many mistakes in the first line that I changed my mind. I know you don't mind mistakes.

If you want anything from here, I would be glad to buy something for you and send it. There are no customs problems.

With lots of love,

Your boy Dieter (Peter)



October 26, 1953

My dear Mother and dear Hellmut,

I received two letters from you today. One was from the 18th and one from the 21st. The last letter upset me terribly because somehow I did not read it right. Instead of reading: "I am sure that you will find your way again out of this turmoil," I read: I am not so sure that you will find"

Reading this wrong brought many tears into my eyes and brought my mind close to an abyss. You can see how terribly sensitive I have become. It makes it so very difficult to live in this rough world. I feel that my conscience has developed abnormally. I am so easily hurt. And tears are never very far away. It's only a great blessing that the doctors in the hospital are so understanding. I would be quite a lonely chicken Understanding is what I crave so much. So few people understand my pains. Do you? When I am through with these trials, I will understand many problems. Just pray for me that I get good and strong mentally and physically. It would be a terrible shame if I could not make use of all I have learned.

You can speak to Miss Frey once about me. I think she understands many things. She was so right when she said that it is wrong to praise me into high heaven. That way terrible pressure is put upon me.

I have gotten myself into a fine mess. I have to get out of it myself. It does not do any one any good if I blame someone else for my heartaches.

I have no intentions of joining another religious movement. I have had contact with Ella, though.

Today I also receive the Reader's Digest book and the little magazines. I have enough little magazines for a while. Please don't flood me as soon as I give the green light. Too much is as bad as too little. We have a nice library here where I can get plenty to read.

Papa gave me the green sweater. I surely hope you have sent me the civilian clothes by now. You can send the dark suit or the light; it matters nothing to me. And don't forget the raincoat. I am glad we have the land. I am looking forward to go mining. It will be good exercise.

Greetings to you,

Your Dieter (Peter)



October 26, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Brother Hellmut,

I just want to tell you about an idea that I had. I have found a reason and maybe the reason why I have it so much harder now than most of my comrades. I tell you why.

Do you know how the birds bring up their young ones? They do it this way. As long as the children are little, the bird parents care for them very lovingly. But once the birds, I mean the young ones, can stand on their own feet, the parents no longer care for them. The parents teach the young ones how to fly yet; but as soon as the young ones can fly, the parents leave them entirely on their own. The parents might still love their young ones after they have become adults; that I don't know. But the parents probably through instinct know, that if they look out for their grown-up children, the children will never stand on their own feet and try their wings. That instinct is a very sound one.

I feel most surely that the same principle exists with human beings. The silver cord that exists between parents and children, but especially between the mother and the child, must be cut as soon as the child is able to find his own food and shelter. This might seem cruel, but it is not. It is nature. In my mind it takes greater love and wisdom for parents to say to their children, "You are on your own now," than to shower them with love far past their adulthood. Many children follow unconsciously the way nature follows, but there are many grownups where the silver cord has not been cut yet. If the cord is cut through a natural process, it does not hurt so much. But if one has to cut the cord consciously, like I have to now, it is very painful. But now that I have become conscious of these things I might be able to help others. If someone pulls adhesive off your tender belly quickly, it hardly hurts. But if you pull it off slowly yourself, it is very painful.

I am eager to become strong in every way. Nothing must shake me or throw me off balance. I don't want to lose my compassion for others, but to suffer with other is unnecessary. Those people that are mentally unstable are usually those people who had the highest aims in life. Those people have suffered more than anyone else. Insanity and greatness are very close together, so close that we can often not tell them apart. To understand those who have suffered or are suffering mentally and then to help them would be my desire.

How Reverend Bernard must have suffered already. I don't want to think of it or I will become scared. He has paid a great price for his hours of ecstasy. There are many who would like to feel what he feels; but there are many who have not made the grade. It takes a very great and strong soul to carry the burden that a man like Bernard is carrying. S.R.F (Self Realization Fellowship) is good, but are we ready? Each hour of ecstasy has its price; and the price is not small. Each thing has its time.

Last night I went to a gym and played basketball. That helped my mind a lot. And then I lifted weights and then I boxed against a dummy. That is as important as meditation – and for me more important than thinking of God. Even to write a letter like this is a strain on my mind. But I feel that I have to tell you some of these things, so that you can understand me better and also help others. Do you know what I am seriously thinking of – to take up boxing or some sport that will toughen me up?

Good night my dear Ones, I will always love you, but I am on my own now. Best regards to all my friends, including those at SRF.

Greetings from your Dieter (Peter) boy.



October 29, 1953

(Translated from German)

My dear Papa,

Many thanks for your loving letter and sound counsel. The counsel is good. However, the bottom line is executing the suggestions. My main focus now is for my soul, spirit and body to be strong and healthy. Of great value for me is to be involved in some sort of sport. And what will be of particular benefit is a sport that makes me physically robust. When I exercise, my thought life is healthier.

I am no longer a little bird, but Mutti (diminutive word for Mother in German) still treats me like I was that little bird. That is the reason I am in so much anguish now. I am now a mature bird or at least hope to become one. The process of growing up is painful. I cannot continue to engage my mind in thoughts like I am penning now, lest I get a severe headache.

My friend and I have already had a lot of fun playing the accordion. The candy was yummy. I am about to go to dinner. I am genuinely hungry because I have been typing a lot and have not been preoccupied with a lot of unhealthy thoughts. Tonight I will be exercising again. The will to win is foremost in my mind; you can believe that is so. I have learned very much. It would be a shame if I could not make use of what I have learned.

Please let me know when you will be in Bremen, Bensheim, and Bad Pyrmont. Thank you Grandma, for your postcard. I am always happy when the mailman has a letter for me. Uncle Theo has died. That was hard for us. But if we have that selfless kind of love, we will be happy for uncle Theo. Now he will be able to get that real rest after working so very hard.

Greetings,

Your Dieter (Peter)





November
1953

Active Duty in Germany

November 1, 1953

My dear Mother and my dear Hellmut,

I surely loved that letter with those pictures and Hellmut's letter and Mother's. I liked your letter very much, Hellmut. It was short; but length does not matter. What I liked is that it was so down to earth. It was so real and tangible. Everything you do, you do with so much zest and joy, and that is wonderful and the way it should be.

We have gotten the silly notion in our family that everything that is earthly and material is below the spiritual plane. We think that sin is connected with the earth and that spiritual things are connected with real happiness and goodness. But God created both worlds and I know both worlds are good.

The spiritual world has its temptations as much and as real as the physical world. When I think how a new life is created through love and earth and air, then I marvel at what God has created. I only marvel, but understand I cannot.

The question of girls has been built into a problem in our family. And girls and marriage should be as natural a thing as to eat and drink and sleep. If we only let nature take its course! There is nothing sinful about nature. It is so wonderful to see a cat with her little ones or to see a mother horse with its young ones. Such is nature; and to hold up the course of nature is a difficult thing and of no benefit to anyone.

I think it is one of the most wonderful things to see a young innocent baby in the arms of her mother. How did you feel, Mother, when you held us little ones in your arms? Was it not a wonderful thing? To think we were only earth a year before we came into the world! It is really a miracle that has happened. And it is a good thing that it has happened.

Dear Mother, if you like to eat certain things, just go ahead and eat them. There is nothing wrong about enjoying a good meal. What is bad is if you think that it is bad when you enjoy a meal. We have in our family developed an oversensitive conscience that makes life very difficult for us. I think our conscience is created more by what others think of us than what is inherently good and bad. At least I am a slave to what others think of me. Just forget about the comments of the others sometimes and have the courage to do that what you would really like to do. Courage is so important. Without courage we are like a boat without a rudder and without a sail. Hellmut has courage and I admire him for it.

I surely hope that you will get back on your feet with your health. When you feel physically on top and your nerves are not worn to an edge, then you look at life altogether different.

Since I have been eating meat again I feel that I am not brought so easily out of balance. Just listen to your good common horse-sense. And don't have scruples about everything you do. I would like to have a healthy and happy Mother when I come back. About Hellmut I don't have to worry. I think you know what to do to stay on top. Don't feel bad if you don't go to SRF (Self Realization Fellowship). Don't worry what other people think about you. I have not been to church in four weeks. Do you think I am sinful boy if I don't go? I was at first concerned what the people might think about me if I don't go.

Yesterday I received a wonderful letter from Beverly. I really think she is a wonderful girl. The wise things she told me showed me that she has had many hard trials already. You like Beverly already, I think; but if you would read her letter, you would like her even more. Now that I am establishing contact with the world again, I don't only see in Beverly the wonderful mind, but also a sweet girl that I love.

I feel quite happy today, and for every hour and for every day I feel happy, I am grateful. It is really wonderful to be happy just with the way things are. I have told myself not to will things to happen but to just let go.

Those pictures of the land, I love them. I am looking forward to helping you work the land. A person has to have some healthy physical exercise besides his mental work, otherwise the mind is put under too great a strain.

Today is the first day we could wear civilian clothes. I will be happy to wear them again when I get them. Yesterday I went to a German movie and enjoyed it. There was a lot of singing and a lot of love. And I surely wished there would have been a sweet girl next to me. But I got to be patient.

Today I stayed till 12:30 in bed, mostly sleeping and also reading a little. I just finished "The Razor's Edge" which I enjoyed a lot. Now I am starting "East of Eden" by Steinbeck. At 12:30 I got up and went to lunch. I have been writing all afternoon. The first letter went to Beverly and the second letter to you, my dear ones. Writing paper I do not need for a long time because I can use the paper in the office. And since I type most of my letters, I use little of your paper. Thanks anyway.

Please give my regards to Reverend Bernard. In a way I pity Reverend Bernard. He is very wise now. But has that poor man suffered and is he still suffering! A man like Bernard has probably been in hell in order to be where he is now. I would wish upon no one the intense suffering that Bernard is tasting. I rather take a couple of lifetimes more and have my suffering spread a little thinner on a larger piece of bread. I would not want to go through again what I have been through the last months. But whatever comes, we have to accept it graciously out of the hand of God.

May God bless you all and bring you peace,

Your Dieter (Peter)



November 4th, 1953

Thank you for your card. I was also thinking of seeing you once more, but I decided in the contrary. What I need to know you have told me, and now it is for me to get along and assert myself and fulfill my job. By right means the bird is old enough to fly. I have to fly without support from anyone else. It is intended by nature that when the young ones have reached maturity that they go away from home and even that the parents throw them out of the nest. You should have thrown me out long ago. I am on my own. It is up to me to make something out of my life. You

cannot hold that protecting hand over me any more. You see, if you do not send me away from home, some higher and wiser force does it.

I am amazed how it is with the sexual forces now. Mother made so much hush, hush about it and covered it with a veil of sin. But it did not help; nature is speaking very strong in me now; and I will go out and experience it. I see it is not good to suppress anything. If I do not recognize the sex force for what it is, and that it is a natural good thing in man, it will break me. I have had some difficult days. But now that I recognize the urges in me for what they are, I am climbing up. I wish you some enjoyable days in Germany yet; and I will see you in the States in 15 months.

Many loving greetings to you, Ruth and Nati (Ruth is Peter's older sister and Nati is his niece.)

Your Dieter (Peter)



November 6, 1953

My dear Mother and dear Hellmut,

Today I received a short hand-written letter. I enjoyed that letter very much because it was so down to earth. It told me about the gold and also how you all are anxiously waiting for mail. I was especially happy to read how anxious Hellmut is about the way I am getting along. A letter like that surely calls me back among the living. I tell you, I am as anxious to come back as you are anxious to have me back. It's surely nice to have a nice brother.

I am looking forward to doing a lot of things together with you. Going mining together, going to parties together, going on double dates together. You can have a nice date lined up for me the next day after I come back. How would it be if we rented a small apartment together and be on our own for a while? Those are just some dreams. I don't want to attach myself to them too much, otherwise I might be disappointed. You know that is something I learned. Don't attach yourself too much to anything. Don't even attach yourself too wholeheartedly to spiritual things, because if you do that, and your spiritual strength leaves one day, you will be in pretty bad shape. That is why I have gotten into such a sad shape.

How merciful is that veil which leaves us ignorant. If our ambition is great and we want to know too much ahead of the time, we pay a very great price for our nosiness. I try to forget those things of the spirit that are upsetting me so much. It was not the right time. Because when the right time is there, knowledge will not upset you so much. If you wait for the right time, you will also have the strength. It seems to me that the Laue family is in a great spiritual rush, except Hellmut, who is naturally wise. Most people drive their cars too fast. We are driving too fast also in another way. Is there no one who knows what the safe speed limit is on the path?

I am going to supper now and will continue a little later. Tonight we have roast beef; at noon we had "fishies." It tasted pretty good. I had two pieces of meat and two pieces of cake, beets, coleslaw, and a glass of milk, and now I am really full to the rim. Now I don't have to think about it any more. I had also two candy bars in-between today. For breakfast I got up late. So I had two oranges I had put away. Then I sneaked into the ward kitchen and had some juice and cocoa. So I had a pretty substantial breakfast after all. I am gaining weight – that is sure. With

clothes I weigh a hundred and fifty pounds. I think that is pretty big news. When I come back, I will be in shape to work the mine.

I am also improving on the typewriter. Today I only made a very few mistakes. If nothing extra comes in-between now, I can do the job of typing these reports alone. There will always come something extra up, though, in the army. Though, the thing to do, is to type faster and faster. And if I can't manage the work, there is nothing to worry about, because then someone else will help out.

I decided something today; no one in the States is going to get anything from me for Christmas. Maybe, if you are so happy to get a letter from, I will write an extra one during December. If there is something you want, you will have to send me the money and I will get it for you. I will tell you why you won't get anything for Christmas from me. My friend here wants to buy a big accordion, because he loves to play and wants to play together with me. Since I have the accordion, he played it most of the time. He could ask his parents to send him the money, but he does not want to do that because he wants to surprise them. So I am going to help buy the instrument. And after we have paid for the instrument together, I will get my money back in installments. I will enjoy it a lot not to go to the movies so often and do things that cost money, so that he can have the accordion soon and we can play together. Anyway, I could not have sent you too costly a thing for Christmas. So you have not been cheated out of too much. It will be much better for you and everyone else, if you don't eat the candy I had intended to send you.

Tomorrow we have one of those stupid inspections. We usually have one every week. I don't like them at all. We have to display our field equipment in a definite way, have our foot and wall lockers neat for this one; and the other boys also have to have a carbine lying on their bed. Well, if you don't pass the inspection, the officers can't do anything to you really. They can take away your pass for a few days, but that is about all. But it seldom happens. But this stupid sensitive mind of mine is so easily brought off its rocker, even if nothing happens. I'll just say in my mind, you stupid son of a, you can't do a thing to me. I am enclosing a few pictures which are good enough for the stove, but it is better than nothing until something better comes.

I received also that leaflet about the Cinerama, and Geoffrey's letter, thanks a lot. You want Papa to write so often? He is a pretty busy fellow over here. You are putting pressure on Papa if you want to receive a letter every other day. That is just the way it was with you and me and my grades. You are put under unnecessary pressure, and learning becomes no fun any more. Just be happy with whatever comes along. Hellmut is under pressure in school because of the draft. That is not too comfortable a feeling.

A bit of pressure can't hurt. But if it is so much that it squeezes the joy of life out of us, then it is too much. Some people can stand more pressure than others. But do we know how much each one can stand? I often think that some people can't read my pressure gauge, because many times the kettle was near its breaking point. I have been having trying days. My letter does not show a big trace of it, I know. But you can take my word for it; during these times I just can't sit down to write you a letter. But when I get out of these terrible spells when my mind won't cooperate, I am all right again. And then I feel almost as if nothing had happened – only that I am still somewhat exhausted. You know what helps me a lot? When I get these letters from you and others in which you tell me how anxious you are to have me back; and then I also think how sad you would be if I would not come back. If I remember that, it helps me a lot.

In connection with this I remember what Reverend Bernard told about someone very dear to a dying person whispering into his ear and calling the person back to life. There is nothing more strengthening than the reassurance of a dear friend. I sometimes think of Beverly now. I am eager to receive her next letter to see how she reacts to the last one I wrote her. The last letter she wrote me showed me that she has suffered a lot already.

It seems to me that I am getting fond of Beverly now. But before I get too fond of anyone, I would like to see the town with my brother. Do you think you can stay single until I come back, Hellmut? We will see the town then and sow our wild oats before we rush into anything. Are you going out at all now, Hellmut? I think you would enjoy it if you can just get over that silly feeling that we two boys have in us that there is something about having a nice date. It's pretty hard to hold back nature. If we recognized the forces that exist and deal with them openly, we would not have so much trouble. And trouble I have been having of late. I don't even want to think of it. I see that I am making too many mistakes now, so it will be time for me to say good-bye to you, my dear ones.

With lots of love, your Dieter (Peter)



November 9, 1953

Dear Mother and Hellmut,

I had such a nice working day today that I just want to tell you. I have a feeling that the tides are turning, and that things will become easier. I have seen myself in a light that I never need to boast of myself again. I might be cleverer than the next fellow, but better I am not. Tonight I played chess instead of writing letters. Wednesday night I will go to the circus with Lina. Papa knows her.

Your Dieter (Peter)



November 9, 1953

(Translated from German by Peter)

My dear Papa and dear Ruth,

Many thanks for the postcard and pictures. Just a brief greeting to let you know that I am getting better. I had the feeling today that I have hit bottom and that I am on my way up. The thread that I was holding onto was very thin at times, but it held. Today my workday was enjoyable and I look forward to tomorrow. This is the first time in a while that I look forward to tomorrow. What a blessing.

Your Dieter (Peter)



November 10th, 1953

My dear Hellmut and dear Mother,

Today I received your letter, dear Hellmut, with the Photostat of the assay certificate, together with your letter. Boy, I surely enjoy those letters; also if they are only in the form of a note. It's sure worth a six cent stamp.

I will take the hint from you about the sport. Today I signed up to play basketball on the hospital team. I hope we start practicing soon.

If I think you will be going into the army, I have to smile. Do you really want to take the step before you are taken? You know the army has not hurt anyone yet. It is a good schooling also; but it is not always the most comfortable place. One thing the army will teach a person is to subordinate his wishes to the group spirit, and also to the person who has a couple of stripes on his arms.

It is surely nice of you to take into consideration that we will only be separated a year then. But you know if you get through with your schooling, you will get a job in the army that will be nice as a civilian job. Think things over carefully before you rush into anything. Give your ideas a chance to sort themselves out. If I would have rushed into everything headlong that came into my mind these last few weeks, I would probably be in a pretty neat fix. You know, one thing I am learning lately – one cannot be too stringent with his own ideas in the army and I think in life, also. You have to allow some leeway in your thinking so that you will fit in with the group spirit. For to be outside the group spirit means continuous struggle that can in the long run wear a person out. One can have ideas, but they should not be so singular that they make a barrier with our fellowman. It is not good to be so holy that we cannot associate with others. And you know, that is what I have been doing.

The other day I noticed that I am no better than anyone else. I was in such a state of mind that I was ready to go out with a girl and have an affair. But that I did not do. Something prevented me or held me back. Now this sudden fanatic idea has subsided again; and I am again myself. The impulse to go out was so strong I could hardly control it. Now at least I know that I am not an angel, and that I am prone to make as many mistakes anyone else.

I do not hesitate to say that I enjoy having a date once in a while. Last Saturday I had a date. Before we went to the movies and saw "The Diary of a Lover," we took off window shopping together. We walked arm in arm, and I enjoyed it. After the movie we both had a glass of beer. It was the first glass I had so far. But so far chocolate is still my favorite. But eating too much chocolate is as harmful as drinking too much. We should do everything in moderation. Tonight I am going to the America House to see some movies about America and also to get a little out of the hospital and get some fresh air. Today I had a pretty nice day. When the depressions wanted to come, I talked with some common sense to them. And so they did not bother me much.

It is the following morning. I have been to the America House. I saw two really nice movies; one was about constructing bridges and the other one about an island and its people in Greece. After that I walked with two German friends through the city. Both are interested to go to America. But that is nothing unusual. Everybody wants to go to America these days. I still hope that I can find something nice for you for Christmas. It won't be costing very much. If something should come, you know that it is selected with lots of love. Everyone is doing so much Christmas shopping so that I am getting affected by the group spirit.

Last year at this time it had snowed here already. But this year we have not had any. The air is cold and clean and fresh – no smog. The sky looks as if it might not be too long until the snow falls down. I guess that the temperature is about 38 degrees Fahrenheit. Today we have a free day; it is Armistice day. I have slept till ten o'clock, and now I am writing you. And later I will do some window shopping with some actual shopping, maybe.

How is school coming along, Hellmut? Is it hard, but interesting? You will get through the semester all right; you have done it every other time before. How about the girls at UCLA, are they taking any of your attention? I don't think there is anything wrong if a girl takes slice of your attention. That is nature. Do you see Lillian anymore? She seems to have dropped out of the picture. I wonder what and how she doing now? I could not think that Lillian would be the girl for you.

Papa bought me another electric razor while he was here. It's a Philips. I like it very much. It cost eleven dollars. Papa paid seven dollars and I paid four. I do not need a transformer to use that razor here or in the States. For the Sunbeam I always needed a bulky and heavy transformer, because we have 220 volts here. I saw last night Christmas calendars in a window. It would be too late now to send you any unless I send them air mail. The ones I saw cost twenty cents, and they were nice, too.

That will be all for today, dear Hellmut and Mother. I will be skipping along into town pretty soon. To walk into town takes about thirty-five minutes. I often walk. And when I don't feel like walking, I take the streetcar. One ride on the streetcar costs 25 pfennig. That is a lot of money for the Germans. Twenty-five pfennig to them is like twenty-five cents to us.

I have not yet started to read the book you sent me. When I read it and have read it, I will tell you how I enjoyed it. I am able to concentrate better already now. I sleep tight at night. I am looking forward to what is going to happen the next day, whatever it is. But yet too often I get to dreaming of sunny California. But I imagine that one day I will have finished that dream too.

Tomorrow one of my friends is leaving for the States. I always get a funny feeling when somebody leaves. Next week I am going see Horst (Peter's cousin). He is coming to Nuernberg. Today I talked a lot to my brother, Hellmut.

Good-bye my friends, Brother and Mother

Your Dieter (Peter)



November 18, 1953

My dear Mother and dear Hellmut,

It is Wednesday afternoon. I have off now. I am sitting in my room writing you and listening to the radio. Mrs. Schnuphase gave me her radio yesterday. Since her husband died, she does not want to listen to the radio anymore. But she was glad to give it to me. It brings more life into the joint and keeps you from thinking silly things.

About my typing it was this way. Whenever I had an interview and was asked what I could do, I told them everything I could do and also if I could only do it a little. Usually if you have some

college behind you, you land in an office. And if you like other than office work, you say that when you get permanently assigned. This hospital here was my final destination and not until you get this far can you be sure what you will do. If you try one job and you don't like it and don't get along, you can ask for a transfer. The only thing that I was tested on was the German. But that is a snap.

If you really think of becoming a GI, try to call somebody's attention to the fact that you have a brother in the service in Germany. The army makes it a policy to keep twin brothers together. Mother and you with your determination might accomplish something. It would really be wonderful if that could be worked out.

The package with civilian clothes arrived – with tea, coffee and chocolate. I enjoyed the chocolate. I ate a lot of it at one time. That was a few days ago. Today and yesterday my stomach did not want anything sweet. My appetite in general was very poor. My stomach was full, I guess. I did not eat the pie at lunchtime and that happens seldom. But I know some other reason why I have no appetite. Sunday I drank some beer with Horst. Maybe that is the cause. I rather think so.

Sonni wrote today. She said that her papers won't be ready till the 25th. I am going over to Stuttgart next weekend. Last night we played basketball. I was so wonderful to run around and feel the sweat running over your face. That was healthy. Do you know what I have seen? I am no saint. I am a hypocrite. But to realize that is already a big step ahead. I rather like the boy who sleeps next to me. He smokes, drinks, and has fun with girls. But that does not make him bad. For he is good to me and his friends; he is always happy and he does his job well. With his way of life he has made a lot of people happy. He is leaving for the States next Friday. He has served his time and served it well. There is a boy moving into the room who is just as nice and very nice to me. We know each other from Camp Pickett. I mentioned him to you in my previous letter already.

Well, I'll just take things with an at ease attitude. Each day is a separate parcel. Those people who know nothing about reincarnation have a lot less to worry about. They live more in the present and the reality of today. Do you know that I am getting skeptical about reincarnation? No one said anything pro or con about this to me. Just as it happened to my attitude about meat, this is coming about; and I let it be.

Good-bye and keep smiling so that others can smile. Your boy and friend,
Peter

I like the ties. I already enjoy looking at them. They brighten up my locker a lot.

Your son and brother Peter



November 18, 1953

(Translated from German)

My dear Papa,

Manifold greetings and I wish you a nice trip home. Aunt Barbara wrote me a loving letter today. Please also greet Oma for me.

I am doing significantly better.

Greetings to you,

Your Dieter (Peter)



November 23, 1953

I was in Stuttgart; and I enjoyed it very much. Sonja was in Trossingen; but I could be together with Ernst. Do you know that I like that boy very much? He is a wonderful fellow and I hope that one day Sonni and Ernst will get along well together. I will ask you for \$10 for Christmas. I am going to buy myself a new pair of pants. The 20 lbs I gained are noticeable in my clothes.

Good-bye and a happy December.

Your soldier-boy, Peter



November 24, 1953

My dear Fellows,

I just finished another good day at the office. The work went smoothly and pleasantly. I received your letter from the 17th this morning and like it very much.

Here is something I learned. We should be tolerant with others, but also with ourselves. If we do not forgive ourselves our mistakes, we will break down under the guilt of our conscience.

Tonight I would like to go to a movie. Maybe I will see "Intermezzo" with Ingrid Bergman in German or I will see "Life begins at 17." Sonni booked a passage for the 26th of next month. Today Karl Groetker stepped into the office. Remember him?

Your Peter



November 27, 1953

My good Fellows, Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

I just picked up some pictures I took. I send you the negatives to make it a little more interesting. The pictures I am sending to someone else. The coat arrived today with the chocolate in its pocket. Yesterday I wore my suit for the first time. It felt grand. Yesterday was Thanksgiving. In the afternoon I did the following. I took a steam bath with a friend, went to a German show, and in the evening I went dancing. I had a fine conversation with a man who sat at my table. In the

morning I naturally slept long. Thanks for the package. We are pretty busy just now. At the end of the month we always have to meet a deadline and get caught up with all our work. It has not snowed here yet, but it has been below 32. The weather has really been very nice. Mr. Inwood wrote me a nice letter. That is about all for today. Good-bye and may God bless you and keep your chin up.

As always your friend and son and brother, Dieter (Peter)



November 29, 1953

Hello, dear Papa, Mother, and Hellmut,

It is ten o'clock Sunday morning. It is a nice day; the sun is shining, and it is not uncomfortably cold outside. I have my civilian clothes on. It feels good and looks good. I had the coat pressed right away. Yesterday evening I went into town I sat down in a café where there was dancing. I enjoyed watching young and old have their good time. I ordered a glass of wine. I sat in the café for two hours; then I slowly went through town, looked at the decorated windows and at 1130 hours I caught a streetcar which took me back to the hospital.

You are wondering if I am going to make a rank pretty soon. Well, I might. The boys who have been in the army the longest get advanced first. I don't care whether I get a stripe or not. It means a little bit of extra money, and that I do care for. My ego would love to get a stripe. I would love to get ten stripes. When I put PFC on my letters instead of PVT, then you will know that I will have one stripe on my sleeve and about ten dollars a month more in my pocket.

I am sorry that you are so sorry about the package. You sure do not remedy the situation by being sorry. You get yourself all upset about that which does not upset me in the least. The package will come sooner or later. And if it should not arrive, that would be no reason to get all upset about. I see that our problems are very personal.

This past week I had a pleasant week. There was lots of work in the office to be done. That did not upset me; it rather helped me forget about silly personal problems. Previously the office work grew into a problem for me. I thought how can I finish this work all by myself? Now I say, "I do what time permits and that is all." I do not come in after hours and work. That is used to do. There will always be someone to help me or do my work. I am not indispensable.

I do not know if I shall see Ruth or Renate of Xmas. I will not get a furlough because I did not apply for one soon enough. Three days is the most I could get during Xmas. But I told Ruth I would for sure visit her in the spring. At the moment I have two weeks of furlough time coming my way. I get thirty days a year.

Mr. Zeidler sent me the stub from the sweepstake ticket. We did not win anything. I am not heartbroken that I did not win. I did not expect anything. If I would have had money in my pocket now, then I would have bought a little car over here. I can very nicely, though, get along without a car. But when I get back to the States, then I will look forward to driving again.

I have been about four months in Germany now. That time past fast as I look back. But when I look forward, then the year I will be here looks like a long time. So, the thing to do is to do your work today, and not always to philosophy about the future. Whenever I occupy myself with

anything else but the present, I get into a depressed mood and also become discouraged. Again I say, "How merciful is the veil which hides the past and the future."

I am sure Papa is glad to be back in the States. It is really a wonderful place to be. I am proud to be a soldier in the American Army. If I would enter the Army today with the knowledge I have now, I would be willing to carry a rifle. It is only natural that we want to protect that which we love. When I am married and someone would want to harm my wife, then I would use my fists to protect her. To use only love as a means of defense is a wonderful thing, but love is not understood by all. This is my attitude today. It is different than it was several months ago.

I will go to eat now. When I come back I will wish you good-bye and add anything that might in the meantime enter my mind yet. I will tell you what we had to eat. We had roast beef, rice, mixed vegetables, fresh fruit salad, green salad, milk, coffee and cake. That was again a delicious and rich dinner. But, you know, they can cook the best meal for me, and it won't taste better than a simple meal. All the delicious things that I loved to eat so much don't mean much to me anymore, because I have those delicious things almost every day. Even my sweet spell has worn off a great deal.

Some of my buddies want to go into town tonight and see a movie and flirt with some girls. Maybe I will go along. I am rather tired now. But when I get into the fresh air and among young life, I feel fresh again. I am seldom tired during the day like I used to be; that is because I don't think so much. To think, and especially to think in a problematic way, wears me out faster than anything else. My concentration is still not up to par, but it is already a little better. Sometimes this poor concentration gets me into embarrassing situations. It is six o'clock now. The day is done over here and only beginning in California.

The central part of the day was occupied with watching a football game and watching out for the six-year old girl of my boss. I like little children. Little children help a lot to let a person forget about his own problems. I am sure you had also many happy years, Mother, because there were four children in the house. I will be a good father when I am married and you will be the grandmother and the grandpapa. Won't that be nice? But you must not spoil my children. Okay? The love that exists within a family must be a wonderful thing. Those things still lie ahead. It is nice to dream in that direction. I see that I am growing up, otherwise I would not be thinking that way. I hope, that you, Hellmut, will find a good and natural relationship with girls. It is a shame that the question of women has developed into a problem in our family. It need not be that way. To have a family and a girlfriend is the most natural thing in the world. It is nature, and is there something wrong with the way God has organized his Kingdom?

It has been nice chatting with you. I have let you look into my life again. I feel that I am growing up now. I am deciding for myself. We all have to, one day, and the sooner we learn this, the easier will it be one day for us when our parents have gone home. When we attach too much importance and love to one object, we will cry very much one day.

Good night and my God bless you,

Dieter (Peter)





December 1953

Active Duty in Germany

December 4, 1953

Dear Folks, Mutti (endearing word for Mother in German), Papa and Hellmut,

It's Friday morning and that means that another working day is ahead of me. Just a little greeting to you this morning and also a wish. I noticed last night that my gray suit won't last long. Along the pockets the thread is worn and the pockets are tearing in. Please send me another suit. I would like the blue one from Mallorys. So when you have time, please send me the other suit and also a belt. My trousers will stay up without a belt; but it is custom to wear one, so I will wear one. I'll see you later; and I will tell you then what I did last night.

Last night I just had to take a trip into town. I just had to get into town and look at people and see if anything exciting was going on. First I went to the America House and looked at movies. But I could not sit still. So I walked with my German friend through town a little. After that I had a glass of beer, and then I was on my way home. But as I was waiting for the streetcar, I was attracted by the sign "Hilly Billy Guesthouse." I went in. I met a few of my friends there. I had another bottle of And I did a bit of dancing. I surely enjoyed it. The girls who were in the guest house surely knew how to dance and cater to the interests of the American soldiers.

I tried to dance the jitterbug. I did not think I could do it anymore. Against my expectations I could dance that thing wonderfully. I am smiling now when I think of last night. I would have stayed all night, but at twelve I had to be back to make bed check. The boys are telling me lately, "We can talk and joke with you now, Peter; we thought you so religious that no one had any connections with you." I am adjusting myself to the society I am living in. The adjustment is not easy, but it is getting better all the time.

I want to tell you that the second bottle of beer did not agree with me so well. It gave me a splitting headache all night. But now it is gone. A glass of wine I really like better than beer. When I feel extravagant I buy some wine.

Back to duty time and good-bye to you! The box of candy arrived yesterday. We all enjoyed it very much. I ate the most. We have been having wonderful weather all the time. The sun is shining as wonderfully as in California, but I still prefer California.

Your friend, brother and son,

Your Dieter (Peter)

How is Hellmut getting along, and what are you going to do in February? I am real happy I am adjusting myself that I can do my work and live with people. I am proud to wear this uniform for two years. I love you all very much. I really do.

So long



December 7th, 1953

Dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

There is such a big line at the mess hall that I will write you a letter instead of waiting on line. Let's see how much I can write in a few minutes. The typewriter is coming in handy because I am improving a lot. And now I can write a lot faster on the typewriter already than I can write by hand. That is one thing I am learning anyway.

The other night, it was Saturday, I went to a café with my friends to have a glass of beer, to meet a girl, and in general just to have a good gay time. We danced, we drank we flirted, we talked, and we were all having a grand time. A man was sitting at another table who asked us if we wanted to have our picture drawn. I figured that I could not lose too much if I invested twenty-five cents. I am enclosing the results.



I stayed out till three that night. Actually I was supposed to be back by one. I will tell you how I pulled this trick without getting into trouble. I phoned up my friend in the hospital and told him that when the officer comes around to make bed-check, then he should get into my bed. After the rounds were made, he could get out of my bed again. My friend was on emergency duty that night. When 1 A.M. came around, he told the nurse that he wanted to go to his room to pick up a pack of cigarettes. Everything worked smoothly. It is surely fun to pull a few tricks like that and to have the courage to do it. That going out business has a good influence on my work. If I have some fun at night, then I can concentrate on my work much better the next day even if I only slept two or three hours. There is so much fire in me, that I just can't sit still and do my work properly if I do not go into town a few times a week.

I received the wall paper letter and the money order this morning. Your letters are so real and down to earth, that I love to read them. Keep 'em coming; even if I am slow on the draw. Your letters and Hellmut's are one of the things that I look forward to. Another thing I look forward to is going out with the boys. I love to be with boys now; they do not have to think and say the things that I think about. When I am with the boys, then I have fun with them and joke with them.

I am putting in for a furlough from the 4th to the 14th of January. I will go to Ruth. Xmas I am spending with my friends in Nuernberg. Mrs. Bloss wrote me a very nice letter again. I think a lot of her. She is down to earth and yet spiritual in a practical fine way.

That is about all the time I have; it is 25 minutes after 12. I am not buying civilian trousers, I am buying another pair of army trousers. I am also enclosing a little calendar for someone's room. I was very happy to read that you have made an improvement in our home. I love to have a comfortable, nice-looking neat home now. I hope Hellmut has a date about once a week. It is very easy to lose contact with the girls if we do not associate with them. And girls are really one of the sweetest things that God has created. Women will probably feel vice versa. Not probably, but surely.

Good-bye to you all and happy home-coming to you dear Papa,

Your son, Peter



December 10, 1953

Laue, Peter D.
56192300 Pvt.-2 – Med.
Det. 16 Field Hosp.
Age: 20 – Race W. Length of Service 10/12
Date of Admission: 11 Dec.
Source of Admission: Direct.

1. (101010) Tiredness reaction due to typing for seven hours since seven-thirty this morning.
Official time now: 16:30 hours

Hello, dear Folks, I thought I would start off with a little joke. These are the cards I type every day. At the moment I have increased my speed to about 50 cards a day. At the beginning of my career I typed about 18 cards a day. Now the keys are really clicking. I also make one carbon copy.

I received your letter in which you told me about Papa's homecoming. I bet you were thrilled.

I received the telegram one day after I read about it in your letter. I received a package from Alice today. I won't open it yet. She is really wonderful to think of me. I know Alice will have her pleasure when she sees how I have changed – a real big boy with lots of silly ideas and lots of pranks stored away in his head. I am very much one of the boys, and yet I am still Peter. It's mighty, mighty tough at times to be happy all the time. But I am learning it.

I received a letter from Mrs. Redfield yesterday; it was written on the 19th of November, and it came by regular mail and without the APO number, and it only took three weeks. How do you like that? I heard that first class mail, not air mail is also going by air from New York. Send once a regular letter and I will tell you how long it took. I can send you one too.

I had a date last night, the girl and I went to the show. It was real nice. I did not pay too much attention to the show. I have been dancing with many nice girls lately. There was one real cute, blonde one who I wanted to see again. I think she was a little scared to give a soldier her address after the first dance. Maybe I will meet her again? Next week I will meet a young married couple, and I don't know what they are like. The man is a professor and his wife is a sculptor, so I am told.

Thanks for the tooth brush. My old one is worn to the bone. I threw it away already. Write the Ephebian Society once where I am. Maybe I will see my name in the paper also and get some interesting mail. I think I told you that I am taking a furlough at the beginning of next year which I will spend with Ruth. I probably missed to answer a couple of your questions. If they are important tell me so and I will tell you the answer.

This weekend I have an overnight pass, Saturday night and Sunday night. I don't know what I will do yet. I might go out with my friends. Maybe I will go to the Hilly Billy Guesthouse. That is a German place for the Americans. It is really a noisy place, but fun anyway for a change. And after sitting all week on a hard chair in the office, I just have to get out and hear some noise and jump around a bit.

I am glad that my package is taken care of. I would have been sad if nothing would have come for Christmas for me. Everyone is getting something, and so I did not want to be left out. I wonder what is in the package. You make it sound real exciting. Is Hellmut really going into the Army? I can't believe it yet. That time will pass also, Hellmut. And you can have a lot of fun if you go about it in the right way. These two years can be very nice. You don't have to study all the time. Let the time approach you. It is good to go along with the rest of the fellows to some extent. You live with the boys, eat with them, train together, go to the same bathroom; you might as well have a joke or two with them.

Well, good night, I will try to get the letter off yet this evening. I won't read it through. I enjoyed the letter, Mother. I was wondering today if I would not get some mail. This week you kept me pretty short. But I do the same thing with you, so I am not permitted to complain.

Best regards to all and to Beverly and merry, merry Christmas,

Your son



December 15, 1953

Hello Mutti, Papa and Hellmut,

Happy Christmas and New Year to you all. Mine will be nice too. I will be with very nice people and with my friends. The package has arrived. I will open it on Christmas. I wonder what is in it.

You know, I was just wondering if Hellmut is doing the right thing to step voluntarily out of school and get himself drafted. The more schooling he has had the better it will be for him in the Army of the United States of America. You see, what is happening in Peter's case.

People who have a profession that the army needs, like scientists, social workers, doctors, etc. go into the army with a commission. They are officers as they come into the army. Think things over clearly, Hellmut. Don't be so fanatic about the gold. You will get it soon enough. Money is not so important that you should give it that much consideration, because if something should once go wrong in that mining enterprise you will be very disappointed. I am speaking out of my own experience. I learned the hard way that it is not good to be fanatic, not evening a good way.

A very happy Christmas to you all. Please give my best regards to Beverly and to Lillian. Have you had a date? I have. And what a date, vow, I would like to have a good talk with you about that, Hellmut.

Lovingly, Dieter (Peter)



December 18, 1953

My dear Parents and my dear Brother Hellmut,

Today I received one letter from the 10th from Mother, one letter from Papa, and another two letters from Mother and Hellmut written on the 12th. That was a big harvest.

Dear Hellmut, after I had read all the letters, I was most anxious to write you. But I would even rather have spoken to you. I wished you would be here now. I love you very much and that is why I want to tell you some of the things that have been happening in my life lately. In a way it is hard for both of us to get a good understanding, because there is this love which is between us. Because of this love, we will always feel that what the other person says is right or at least should be given thorough consideration. If I should say something which goes against your grain, then you will be hurt much more than if a stranger would say the same thing. For this reason I was often hurt by mother's letters. I love Mother so much, that I thought that I have to agree with Mother always 100 per cent. I was often depressed for a whole day because there was some disagreement between what Mother wrote and what I thought was right. So, there came a time in my life when I knew that I had to decide what I should do instead of always depending on Mother and Papa. It was like cutting the cord that connects the baby to the mother for a second time.

Dear Hellmut, I wish so much that the question of girls will resolve itself in a very good way for you. I wished I would be with you now, because there are many things I would tell you. It is only in a few families that the question of girls turns from something natural into such a problem. It is meant by God that the boys like the girls. It is such a joy for me now to go dancing with a girl or to go to a show. It is so wonderful to hold the girl's hand or to let your hand brush over the girl's forehead and hair. Just look at the animals how much they love to be petted. We are no different, Hellmut. Have you not felt very happy when a girl was just a little affectionate to you? I know I have. And a girl feels the same way when you are affectionate to her. These feelings God has created in us; they are good. I do wish I could help you overcome your inhibitions. These inhibitions are not inborn. They are created through the society that we are living in and particularly through our upbringing. You know how I was for two years. No girls existed for me, everything material I considered as something sinful and low. That is a misconception. God created everything, both matter and spirit, and the one is as good and important as the other. For two years I was going into extremes in a spiritual way. And that is as bad as being extreme in a material way. There would not have been much missing and I would not have found my way back. Now I am becoming more practical, more a part of the world that I am living in now instead of being a part of the world that is to come later on. I am trying to see what good there is in the way most people live. I see today that there are a lot of good things in the way the average person lives.

Today I go on dates with girls again, and I am enjoying it so much. I have dated a great variety of girls. To have a date is not a problem like it used to be for me. I just ask a girl, "Do you want to go dancing or to a show or just take a walk through the town?" Or I just go to a café with the girl and we have a glass of wine or beer or coffee together. There are so many restrictions in the Laue family. It is perfectly all right to have a drink together or smoke a cigarette together. That is no mortal sin, dear Hellmut. It happens so often that if we are so set and extreme in our ideas, one day we go ahead and do that thing we considered as wrong previously. Just look at this Peter boy eating candy these days. I have made up a hundred times already for all the candy I have missed to eat in two years. Now I am sometimes so tired of sweets that I enjoy a pickled cucumber.

You said in your letter that it was more difficult now to find a girl than it was previously. That should not be, Hellmut. You have grown even further away from the girls. I would so much wish that you would meet a fine girl who would take you into her arms and show you what it is like to be loved. But be careful that you do not fall very much in love when a girl is affectionate. Find a

girl whose nature it is to be affectionate, because not all girls have that disposition. It is in most cases the boy who takes the girl into his arms. Once a girl has taken you into her arms, the second time it will be a lot easier for us to do it.

Since the last few weeks I have been going out with many girls. This pleasant diversion and wonderful entertainment has a marvelous effect on my work. I can accomplish twice as much, plus that the work is a pleasure. Just imagine, typing all day is becoming a pleasure for me. Now when I have work, then I really work. Previously when I worked my mind was often on something else, and it was usually on girls. Do not tie yourself down to one. Sometimes you just have to gracefully say to a girl that you are busy. How often have girls done that to you? You do not have to feel bad to say "no" to a girl so that you can take out someone else. I think I have said about everything on the subject for this time.

Our family is a family packed full with a lot of problems. It need not be. With all we have learned, we should surely by now be able to solve a few of them. If we cannot solve them, then our philosophy is not very practical.

I am surely looking forward to the music you have sent. I have not played much. But the times that I have played have made me happy. Maybe when I get some good music, I will get down to business. I surely started something with the accordion. So far three other boys have bought themselves an accordion. It is good, because it keeps them many a night out of the beer halls.

Today I was a bad boy in my eating habits. Eating no breakfast is a routine thing with me. I rather stay in bed $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour longer. I usually eat enough at night to last me through the noon meal. During the morning I had three cookies, a cup of black coffee – I always drink it black, a glass of grapefruit juice; at noon I had half an orange and a glass of grapefruit juice; in the afternoon I had a little candy that Horst sent for Christmas. He sent a fruit cake (Klaben in German), some nuts, dates and candy. That was very nice of him and Edith. In the evening I had a half a package of dates and a bag of peanuts. I must admit that it was on odd diet. I did not feel like eating a square meal today, so I did not do it. You don't have to worry about me losing weight.

This afternoon I went over to the shopping center and bought another pair of army pants for \$10.30 and a pair of socks for 60 cents. The pants have to be made a little shorter yet. They will be ready next Wednesday. They are a size larger than the ones I have on now, and they also have a zipper instead of buttons like my pants have now. What else can I tell you? From Sonja I have not heard anything. Maybe she is still in Trossingen? I am completely in the dark.

This morning I received two little airmail packages from Mr. Zeidler. Isn't that nice of Mr. Zeidler? He is a man with a lot of personal problems and a very good heart. I know what is in one of the packages, because I wished it. Should I tell you what is in the package? Will you understand? If you will, I will tell you, otherwise I am going to keep it a secret. There is a pee, pa, pipe in it. Yes, I wanted to have a pipe. I did not want to buy it myself. When Mr. Zeidler asked me if I wanted anything for Christmas, I told him that I would like to have a pipe. I remember the time in Bremen. I was about ten years old then. I went into the bathroom and rolled up toilet paper and smoked that. Do you know of that? Did you ever catch me doing it? I told you my black deed now. Will you give me a spanking? Please don't?

I had two sweet dates Wednesday and Thursday with a very nice girl. She did not speak any English, and she never went out with an American. In fact, her parents are very strict and

boyfriends are taboo. She was only for a few days in Nuremberg. Today she went home again to her parents. She lives near Ansbach. She is a farmer's and carpenter's daughter. The first night I went to the Storch (Stork) Club with her, a fine American place where one can dance, drink and listen to music. It closes at 11 PM. So you can see that it is a respectable place. But to tell you the truth, I have also been in unrespectable places that close in the morning. Now back to the girl and the date. Her name is Hilde. She loved it very much on our first date; and I also loved her and the date. I loved the way she was dressed. She had a very red blouse on and a black skirt. Her hair was light brown to blond, and her eyes were brown. When we danced together she went up to my shoulders. Maybe she is 5'5" tall. She was two months younger than I was. We did not speak much about serious things; we just acted our age. The next day I took my date in a taxi (the first time she had ridden in a taxi) to the American theatre in downtown Nuremberg. I explained to her the movie as well as I could. During the show Hilde gave me something. It was a chocolate horseshoe wrapped in golden paper. I am going to hang it up in my locker. Was that not a sweet thought of Hilde? She said that if she would have known that I was going out with her again, she would have bought me something much nicer. Through these little things you can tell a lot what a girl's heart is like.

I think that is about all I can write you tonight. I am getting tired. You know, I have typed all day already. Maybe I will play some gin rummy with my friend Eddy yet when I go to my room. How do you spell that game correctly? I would like to write Beverly yet, but I am getting too tired for that now. You can do me a favor. Call Beverly up for me and wish her a postponed happy Christmas and a happy New Year from me. She is in Los Angeles until January 4th, 1954. I sent her Christmas greetings to San Diego which she will get when she goes back to school.

Whenever I hear that some improvement has been made on our house, then I am very happy. When I come back in about one year, I will be very happy if there is a nice cozy corner.

Something else that might interest you. Last Monday I met a new family. I might have told you that the husband is a teacher and the wife is a mother and sculptor. They live on health foods and are almost vegetarians. They have read the Autobiography of a Yogi, and they were very much interested in the book. They liked many of Yogananda's ideas. However, their enthusiasm was not quite as highly aroused as it was in our family. If we can be so enthusiastic about a new diet, it is no wonder that the same thing also happens on other planes. I am stepping a little closer to religion again, but I do it with cautious steps. I am not stepping closer to any particular religion. When I think of religion then I draw Christ into the picture. To church I have not been for a long time. But around this Christmas season I want to become peaceful and listen to the angels.

I will give each one a kiss on the forehead – Mother, Papa, and Hellmut; and Hellmut may give one to Beverly from me, a kiss of friendship.

Your son, your Dieter (Peter)

I just received the music. I am very, very happy about it. I will practice this afternoon – such wonderful songs. Dieter (Peter). Merry Christmas and merry New Year.



December 26, 1953

My dear Brother, Mother and Papa,

I bet you selected that sweater, Hellmut. Well, I'll tell you – it's just wonderful. It goes well with my shirts and with my pants and with the suit you are sending me. It is so soft and smooth. I cannot help but like it very much. It comes in very well. You know that we must wear a tie when we wear civilian clothes and you also know that I do not always like to wear a tie. Here is my newest scheme. I wear a sport shirt and sweater on top with the collar outside. When I go out I wear a scarf and then I am the only soul who knows that I have no tie on.

Everything else from the chocolate to the nuts and figs I enjoyed very much, coffee and tea included; but the sweater was tops. Today I am wearing your sweater and the shirt which Alice sent me. If I ever knew a fine woman, it is Alice. I don't care how much she smokes or how many cups of coffee she drinks, she is swell. She cares for her family, she has lots left over for friends and me, and she is always cheerful when you visit her. She also gets along with everyone. That is important. I realize that since I have come into the army. If we are so particular with whom we will chum, people like ourselves will have it tough in the army. It is good if we can feel at ease and mix with any crowd.

I almost forgot. With the radio you have made me a very great pleasure. I love to listen to it; I am listening to it right now. It is standing next to my bed. It is also such a nice radio that I am proud to own it. It is also making my comrades happy.

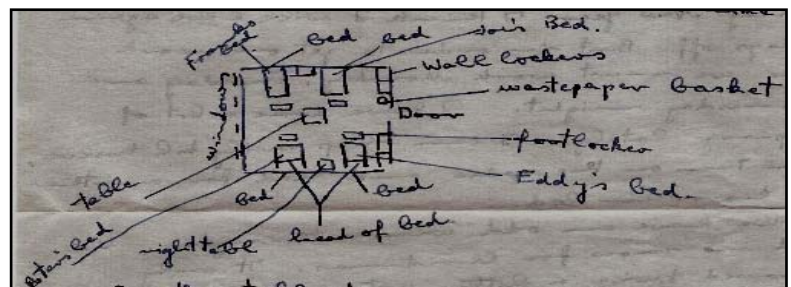
It has been another experience for me to spend Christmas so far away from home. It did not quite seem like Christmas. Christmas eve I went to church; however as much as I tried to feel the Christmas greetings, I did not feel the peace. On Christmas day I went to the opera. I saw "The Walkuere" (Opera by Wagner) together with my friend. I enjoyed this and hope to go to the opera more often.

I met that evening a soldier who has similar difficulties as I have been having. I hope here will be my first case of really helping someone. It was wonderful for me to see how relieved my friend felt after we had talked together. And he is so happy to know there is someone who understands him. It creates very great tensions in a person if he has to keep his ideas to himself. That is why I enjoy and have to write sometimes – in order to express my ideas.

I have noticed that great tensions are created in a person if too many restrictions are placed in his life. These restrictions are either developed at home or through the church. If the idea of sin is not taught in the right way, it makes life difficult. No one should live out of fear of God.

I received so many presents this Christmas, more than any other year. It was good to know that so many people did think of me.

Yesterday we changed our beds around. Now it is more like a living room. There is a night table between each bed. The beds are now parallel to the windows like this:



On the table there will soon be flowers.

I am thinking of getting willows. I am enclosing a layout of our hospital that you know where I sleep, eat, and work.



I am going to watch out for the next letter from you and see if you have noticed anything different about this letter. Let me know who spotted the difference first. Then we can see who is most observing.

Did you have a nice Christmas? How did you spend it? I thought of you. How is Arthur and his wife? I hope they will find each other. It is such a blessing to have a nice companion. How are you doing Hellmut? I do wish that you will feel perfectly at ease together with girls. I hope this question of girls will be solved before you come into the army. Do you really intend to enter in February? Sonni wrote me, but she wrote me nothing concerning her trip. She spent Christmas with Ernst in Heilbronn. How was the trip to the mountains? I am interested to keep up to date with the newest developments.

I have had the last 3½ days off. Tomorrow morning I go back to my typewriter. During New Year I think I will have again 3½ days off. But in order to get our work done we must work Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday night. I have done a lot of sleeping lately. I can sleep easily till twelve, then turn on the radio and read for another two hours in bed.

We have an odd winter this year. We had no snow for Christmas. It only snowed twice a little bit and then the snow did not stay. I was so anxious to have a white Christmas this year. But my wish did not come true.

Good-bye and may God bless you all,

Your boy Peter

I received your "Quickie" this morning (28th) with Geoffrey's letter, thank you. Love





January
1954

Active Duty in Germany

January 1, 1954

My dear Mother, Papa, and Hellmut,

By now we have all landed safely in the New Year of 1954. Boy, that was a long ride. Are all hands safe on this first day of 1954?

I am sitting in my room; the radio is playing some popular tunes. Everything is to my satisfaction. Yesterday we had a new addition to our room. It is standing on the table – a beautiful vase about eight inches high. There are willows, pine branches and artificial tulips in the vase. It looks very pretty. I love it very much. The vase is so pretty and was given to me with so much love that I will take it with me to the States if it survives 1954.

I spent New Year's Eve with my friend Ed who sleeps next to me. We browsed together through Nuremberg making a short visit to all the American cafes and one German café. At 12 midnight we were at the Hospital's Enlisted Men's Club. We had our New Year drink, dance and kisses. As I had no date I borrowed a friend's girl. I surely took advantage of his generosity. I used my gentleman like tactics, my German, and some smooth dancing to win the girl. I was taking her by the hand and in my arms at first during the dance. But it was not too long and she was taking my hand and putting her arms around me during the dance. When the going was good and I had seen that I could win the girl, I brought her back to her rightful owner.

At 1:30 I went back to the hospital. Then as we say, we shot the bull till three. We slept till 12 noon today. My New Year's wish is to do my duty in this coming year, to keep smiling and not to let sentimental feelings sway me from one extreme to the other. And if it is supposed to be, I would like to be state-side-bound a year from now. I wish for everyone in our family, well I have thought about what I wish you all, but I hesitate to tell. I wish you a balanced life and that you not will not have to go through what I went through. Broad interests, not to be pinned to a single idea, not to let feelings alone guide you.

I received the two pictures from Hellmut. You are very handsome. That report is confirmed by a girl. Try to mix; just because it is hard for the Laues to mix does not mean that it is not good. You don't solve the problem by running away from it, by putting your whole attention on some other thing.

Don't send me new music yet. I can't play well enough yet. I can use a good accordion school.

Tonight I will see the Marriage of Figaro. I hope it is nice. Monday evening at 21:40 I am leaving for Bad Pymont. The picture is from downtown Nuremberg at Christmas time.

Best wishes for this New Year.

Your Peter



Bad Pymont, Germany, January 14, 1954

(Translated from German – postcard from the city in which Peter's Brother Ruth lived)

Your letter, Mutti, with Papa's picture arrived this morning. If I have sufficient peace to write, you will receive a letter from me.

Greetings from the heart,

Your Dieter (Peter)



January 17, 1954

My dear Mutti, Papa and Hellmut,

I just came back from furlough. I cannot tell you how nice it was by Ruth because there were no words to tell this. It was wonderful and we were very happy together. A greater love a sister cannot have for her brother and a greater love a brother cannot have for his sister. Ruth knows how to make everything so nice. If Ruth would not be my sister and be a few years younger, then I would no longer have to look for a wife. That puts everything in a little nutshell. That was very thoughtful of you to send Ruth twenty-five dollars to make everything extra nice. She surely used the money to do this for me. With Nati I also had much fun. We went sleigh riding together when there was snow. We all played games together. As big as I am, I still love to play little games. Together with Mr. Pfennig it was also wonderful.

Now I am back at the hospital. It is also a nice place to be. I doubt if I could be at a nicer place. All my friends were very happy when I came back. I am not a big joker, but I am just a good guy they like to have around. This afternoon a friend brought me two bottles of beer along just to make me happy. I did not say a word about beer. On my night table there stands now a potted flower – a primel. It looks very nice and brings so much warmth and hominess into our room.

When I came back from furlough I got a different job in the office. It is much less work. I have nothing to do with the typewriter now. I am working with statistics connected with the patients in the hospital and the number of cases of each disease. I am satisfied with the change. I got to be because I am in the army – ha ha ha. I am a soldier. Isn't that something! The other day I met a colored fellow who was not getting along with himself and the army. When I came back he had been sent to the hospital in Stuttgart. He wrote me that he is getting a discharge shortly. Poor boy, he is really having a hard time.

Thank you for sending my other suit away. It will come in handy. Next Tuesday my dancing course is beginning. A dark suit is more suitable than a light one. In Germany everything is still much more formal. I will let you select the accordion school. If you go to a good store there will be someone to advise you. You can't tell when Sonni will get around to it. Please see to it that Sonni will rest first before she begins anything. She really needs a rest. Ruth, Sonni and I were together for one day and Nati was there also. Sonni will tell you about it.

I am so interested what will happen to Hellmut after he leaves school. Are you going to be drafted, Hellmut? If you should be sent to Germany, then I would extend for nine months. My time is only half over. I have even thought of extending nine months because I can be with Ruth longer and I can also go 1½ years longer to college. I am not sure yet what to do. Maybe the time will change the picture around. I am going to let this day decide for the next.

I am happy to hear that you received the check again. Tell me sometimes what you are doing with the money. That is what would interest me. I know that you must be doing something else besides buying ice-cream sodas and corned beef sandwiches. Maybe there will be a beautiful home waiting for me when I return? I hope you will make it real nice for Sonni. She is anxious to go up to the mountains with Hellmut. When I told her that he is going up in February, she right away said that she will go along. At this moment she is on the water. If it is as windy on the sea as it is here at the moment, the America will really be rocking.

The shirt that you sent me, Hellmut, I wore most of the time on furlough. I have three shirts of that type now. Thank you Hellmut.

I am thinking of you in love,

Your Dieter (Peter)

I received the letter with the different papers this morning. Thank you, Mother. I would like a nice pipe for my birthday. The book you mentioned I have not read yet. And some nice music for my accordion I would also enjoy.

Would you like me to come home in a year or stay here a little longer and be able to see Ruth once in a while?

I love you all

Your son – Peter

I will probably also type up birth certificates. Always learning something new! That is fun. You said you would not send the letter air-mail, but you did anyway.



January 20, 1954

My dear Mother, Papa and Hellmut,

Hello Hellmut, is there any mail in the mailbox? Yes, there is. A letter from Dieter arrived today. Does he write anything important? No, nothing special, just a nice letter; I'll let you read it when you come home. "Okay," says Mother, I'll be home early tonight. I am anxious to read what our Peter boy writes; whatever it is, it is all important." ---- So it goes maybe at 128 N. La Jolla Avenue. So I sit down at my typewriter tonight that Hellmut will say to you, "We got mail."

That is quite a cute flower you made. Whoever gave you the idea? Is it your own? Then it is fine. I like original ideas. Two days ago I bought myself for 75 Pfennig a funny green hat. I usually wear it when I practice the accordion. I got a lot of laughs out of it already, because no one has done it before. I enjoyed reading Nellie's letter. She writes very nice. She is a smart girl to do something like that. I did not think she had it in her to undertake a trip like this.

Things in the office are becoming more interesting as I go along. The German girl who works here is going on furlough for two weeks and I was told today that I would do her work which

cannot be held over for two weeks. She transfers the patients to the other hospitals, usually the one in Stuttgart. I can concentrate a lot better on my work and make less and less mistakes.

Today we got two big new typewriters. I don't have the direct benefit. I got another person's typewriter that is better than mine. And I told the supply sergeant that as soon as he gets a new small carriage typewriter in, he should let me know. It is a lot more fun to work on a smooth operating typewriter.

Yesterday I went to my first dancing class, the first of ten, one each week. It was a lot of fun. First we all received instructions on good behavior. I had forgotten a lot of the formal German customs. You should not cross your legs when you sit, keep your legs and feet together, when you stand do not have your legs apart, do not cross your hands in front or in back of you, have them hanging to the side, make a small bow when you come into the dancing class if there are pupils present already, but do not look at the people, make a small bow when you ask a girl for a dance. There were still other things, maybe Papa knows the right way yet. At the end of the dancing class we bring any one girl home if she does not live far from where we live, otherwise we just bring her to the streetcar.

Poor toothy, poor Mother, but you will forget about it sooner than you think.

I just came back from supper; we had turkey, corn, celery, olives, ice-cream, and oranges. Now I am enjoying my after-dinner pipe. It is my "Schnuller" (pacifier in German). Big babies also like to suck on something. Sometimes I put the pipe in my mouth without lighting it.

Oh, thank you for the package with my suit and the coffee. I like it. When you send me the next time a package I would like two more ties and a tie clip. A belt I am going to buy myself here now. I looked at the suits the other boys in the dancing class are wearing and mine fits in just perfect.

I received from Trossing a letter recommending me an accordion teacher. I got in contact with his wife only – the teacher's wife. Her husband is on vacation just now; but when he comes back I will see what can be done.

I am rooting with you when I hear that you are improving the looks and comforts of the home. I'll be twice as anxious to come home, when I know that there is a cozy corner waiting for me. In the evening I will put on my comfortable slippers, turn on the radio, take a book from the shelf, sit back in an easy chair, light my pipe and really relax; and next to me will be sitting my good girlfriend Mother, or maybe some little girl my own age. I see that I am really the homey type. And on the table will be standing a vase with some carnations.

Here is the way I see the picture now in a philosophical way. When you are a man of flesh and blood, then make it as nice for yourself and the people you are with. The next world will also in its own particular way, that I do not know about now, offer its opportunities to make it nice. Mr. Pfennig considers his stay here on the earth as an assignment which he wants to fulfill as good as he knows how. I like him very much. I have never heard him speak about his troubles.

I wish you, Hellmut, the best of luck as you now with all seriousness and strength undertake the next step, going out of school and going up to the mountains. I would like to go with you. I could use the fresh air and the exercise. I bet you are going to develop a strong body when you work

on the mine. I surely like to see people with such a daring spirit. You have to have confidence to undertake something like that; and you got it and I see it in you.

The girl question will settle itself with time. It's nothing too be concerned about. Nature takes its course, if you are not unnaturally unnatural. It's quite natural to have a family and a wife. But you know, don't shove the girls back just because they eat and drink a glass of wine --- I mean eat meat naturally. You do not want to marry a diet. You want to marry someone who has the ability to really love you. That is foremost; the girl should also share your interests, but need not share them all the time. You got to expect that the other person is not your replica. But you got time, and you also have the mountains which are now more important.

And so we close another chapter in the life of the man they call "Peter." It is an interesting story, is it not? Especially when you compare one chapter with another, and when you compare the first one with the latest one.

Welcome Sonni, welcome to America and to California and welcome to our home at 128 N. La Jolla Avenue.

Are you all sad now? Are you just so, so, or are you happy? I don't know what I am. I wonder if anyone else knows? I haven't told anyone.

Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye my dear Trio plus one

Your PFC Peter

I would like a nice, nice pipe with an extra special good filter – something original, but not so odd that I can't use it in the office.



January 29, 1954 – the last Friday of the month

Dear Mother, Papa, Sonni and Hellmut,

How are you all? I am fine. I received your letter from the 23rd of January. It sounds good. I am surely glad that you are fixing things up at home. No use to store everything up for a rainy day. It probably will never come. Now is the time to make it nice. Deciding what pipe you should send me is your baby. I can buy a lot of fancy pipes in Germany. But it is no fun for me to buy it myself; I like someone to select one for me and give it to me as a present. When you are all alone at home, you don't bother to cook a dinner for yourself. That is the way I feel about the pipe.

What happened to Arthur is a shame, but no catastrophe. It will make him and Hellmut much more level headed. In this age we boys are in, we often go overboard in one way or another. That is youth. You cannot do anything about it, but just let us be. With time we will calm down and strike an even pace. In every young boy who is growing into manhood one finds a big drive for one thing or another. Arthur, just don't sorrow after it. We often and we all make some miscalculations.

I have been having a busy, busy week in the office. In fact, everyone has had his hands full of work; and still we are not getting our report out in time this month. Last month we sent out a bad

report, so we have to be doubly careful this month. I have been awfully tired at night, but happy despite. These last few days there was so much to do, that the time flew like a jet. The pipe and coffee kept me right on the ball. Last Tuesday I was not able to go to my dancing class; and the way things look right now, I might have to skip the next class also. But I am not putting in any overtime that is not required. When I am told to work, then I work. But otherwise I only will come into the office when I want to write letters.

This week it has been very cold here. I pity the units that go out into the field on maneuvers now. This week we had about twenty-five frost bite cases and there are more coming. Some of the boys really look bad. If you see those swollen and blue limbs, you will be extra careful. One of the wards is so crowded that extra beds had to be put into the hallway of the ward.

Last Saturday on a sudden impulse I went to Bensheim (place of Peter's birth). I had gone out of the hospital with my civvies and with the intention to go dancing. But then I got the idea, and I carried it out. For twelve Mark and sixty Pfennig I bought my train ticket. All the riches I had left amounted to 2.50 Mark. Therefore my supper amounted to three salted pretzels and three glasses of hot milk. And then I bought myself for 15 Pfennig a German newspaper. I was sitting in the train at six o'clock at night. The German newspaper I used as a decoy, because I did not have the proper pass. And I figured that with a German newspaper under my arm the MPs would never suspect an American GI in me. And I figured right. Everything went very smoothly.

At twelve o'clock midnight I rang Klein's doorbell. Boy, were they surprised. And they were so happy to see me. They always treated me like their son; and that is the way they received me last Saturday midnight. I also saw Mr. Herzberg. I enjoyed talking to him and eating his delicious cake and drinking two cups of his good coffee. Schachners and Hornungs I did not see. The time was too short. I came back Monday morning at four o'clock. And then I walked for forty minutes from the train station to the hospital. Trolleys don't run at that time and for a taxi I did not have enough money. By no means do I want you to send me any. I have enough money but sometimes I don't budget it right. It belongs to a soldier's life to be broke sometimes. I slept for 1½ hours that night yet, and then the busy week started. I got through this week pretty good. I stored up a lot of energy while I was on furlough. And then I did not have any blue spells, which means all the difference.

When I get back to the States, I will really let myself get spoiled by you for a couple of weeks. Breakfast in bed! Mother will bring me my slippers and so on. All I will do is to pick Mother up from business. And then after business I will invite you to dinner, and then we will "take in a show" as we say here. Time is going awfully fast. Six months I have been over here. I am also looking forward to my next vacation with Ruth. During my time in Germany I will be able to take thirty days furlough. That is very nice I have one of Ruth's pictures hanging in my room. The picture makes me happy every time I come into the room. It is called "Sonnenschein" (sunshine). Papa might have seen it.

I am surely glad that Hellmut's finals are over. I know they are a pain. It will do him good to rest his brain for a time. I could not stand to study all the time, either. You get a nervous breakdown if you do not relax in some way. Hard and enjoyable work is the best medicine. Since I am so busy in the office and enjoy my work, I am a different person.

Last week I saw a movie I liked, "From Here to Eternity." It is very realistic, but especially realistic to a soldier. If you should see that picture you will know a lot of things I have also seen and experienced. I have also something to talk and write about one day. I have surely gathered

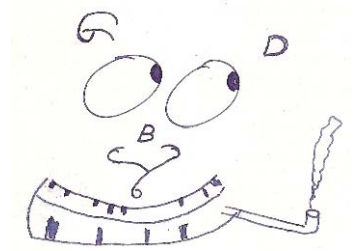
a lot of new experiences. I stiffened my chin and I am smiling. Tra-la-la. I will tell you now – when I get home, we will all sit in our cozy corner; I will light my pipe and you will drink a cup of coffee, milk, juice, water, or wine, and then I will tell you a big story. You don't know what you have missed, Papa, by not being a soldier for a couple of years. Everyone, I think, should live together with a big bunch of boys under discipline, not to keep an army ready, but in order to make men out of boys. It is the real test of our ideals, to live in a group that you had no previously not contact with.

Good night to you. I have to step out yet to pick up my coat which was pressed for me. Tomorrow we have an inspection and everything has to be ship-shape. I am having my mess gear chromed. You should see how nice it looks. I want to bring it home. Then I have something for my camping trips and something to remember my army days by. I can have my name officially changed to Peter Dieter Laue without cost or trouble. I will have it done when I have a chance.

Say hello to everyone, Sonni included –

I love you all and Arthur too,

Your son, Peter Laue
Please call up Alice and give her my best regards and wishes.



Caption under the drawing:

WHO FIGURED THIS ONE OUT FIRST?

(Peter saying good-bye, smoking his pipe and piano keys on the accordion for Peter's mouth.)



WHO FIGURED THIS ONE OUT FIRST?

(Peter saying good-bye, smoking his pipe and piano keys on the accordion for Peter's mouth.)





February 1954



6 Febr. 54

*Happy, Happy
To all
is some*

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

*To all of you
from
my father*

*I need no other clothes,
than As*

"I thought your motto was love 'em and leave 'em.
How come you're married?"
"I didn't leave soon enough."

Dora: "Where are you going, dear?"
Paula: "Out for a ride with Jack.
Will I need a coat?"
Dora: "I should say not! You'll need
a fan."

He: "I'm going to marry a girl
who can take a joke."
She: "That's the only
kind you could get."

Faith: "Why do you call your boy friend 'Pilgrim'?"
Hope: "Because every time he calls he makes
a little progress."

Country Girl: "Paw's the best rifle shot in this county."
City Slicker: "And what does that make me?"
Country Girl: "My fiance."

Courtship: Period during which
the girl decides whether or not she
can do better.

Some girls will scream bloody
murder at the sight of a mouse--
and go right out and crawl into
the car with a wolf.

Willie was precocious.
He drank some gasoline;
Willie wandered near a fire.
Since then he's not benzine.

Handsome—"Can you read my mind?"
Beautiful—"Yes."
H.—"Go ahead."
B.—"No, you go ahead."

Lawyer (to gorgeous witness):
"Answer me, Yes or No!"
Witness: "My, you're a fast work-
er, aren't you?"



February 12, 1954

Dear Mother,

As you are the only one who is writing me at the time, I will address this letter to you. You are writing me that I am failing to do some of the things that I really should be doing. There are many things I would like to do, but I do not have the peace to carry them out. I have tried to sit down and take care of my correspondence, but I could not do it.

I know that as my Mother you mean it very well. But as you do not at this time know my state of mind, it is hard for you to tell what is the right and the best thing for me. I am not hurt on account of the letter you have written me. I know that you have the best intentions when you write me. These are trying times for me despite the fact that my letters are cheerful. When the ideals that you have held so dear have crumbled beneath your fingers and your life is hanging on the thinnest thread, it takes time before you have the necessary courage to go on. It is a hard thing when you experience these things so early in life. Believe me, Mother, I sometimes asked myself if I will ever see the States again; so I am still at times beset by a restlessness and anxiety of the future.

Usually my courage to live is quite good, but it is by far not good enough. I want to serve my two years in the army, and when I have passed this test I hope to have gained the necessary courage and zeal to take the next step. At this time learning has no appeal for me. A homey home and a nice job and a nice family spirit I would enjoy now. It might seem that I am all well again and up to par. But that is not so. Only time will tell if I will fully recuperate from the shock that shook the foundation stones of my life. I hope, indeed, that I will succeed in fulfilling my place in the Army. Is it really a great and wonderful ideal that makes us take the attitude towards the Army that we are taking? No, I cannot change the world. If I should be called again to defend my country, I would not hesitate to fight for it, because I love America. I really do. And I am sure that if someone is called into the serve, he will get that job which is best for him.

If Hellmut and Arthur are really drafted soon, it will show itself how well they can endure the demands of the general society. Wish me luck, Mother, I am looking forward to that day when I hold my discharge papers in my hand. And I surely don't want it to be a medical discharge. But I believe that I am perking up now. I surely hope so.

I am able to get the Coronet (magazine) here, thank you. I need nothing else to wear. I am looking forward to the game. I love to play nice games.

I wrote this letter on company time because I wanted you to know some of these things.

With love, your son,

Peter





March
1954

Active Duty in Germany

March 1, 1954

My dear Mother, Papa, Hellmut and Sonni,

Dear Mother, thank you for your letter from the 22nd. It was fine to hear from you. Just write me when you feel like it. Whether I receive mail from you or not, matters not. I know that you do think of me often. I know that you will always love me because you are my Mother and my parents, no matter what I do. That is the nice thing about parents. Sometimes we just don't feel like writing; I understand, because I am in the same boat.

The time will come when we can talk everything over. When seven thousand miles and thirteen months are separating us, the picture becomes blurred. Today we have gotten paid, so that means I am again another month closer to the good old USA.

Mother, I do not have the negative of the picture you are asking for. I did not see the movie you mentioned in your letter, but I did see a movie last night that I like very much – "The Glen Miller Story" with Jimmy Stuart. It was wonderful.

I do not need another pair of pajamas, thank you. And you can also forget about the pipe. If you would like me to buy a Contax-3A, I can get them in the PX just now for 180 dollars. I believe it has a 1.5 lens. See what they cost in the States; I would be interested what the difference in price is. I hope you are all feeling fine. Give my regards to Alice. I wore her shirt yesterday with the red tie and I liked it very much.

It is close to five o'clock and quitting time. I want to get this letter into the mail for you before the box is emptied at five.

Your son, Peter

Copy of a letter from the commanding officer for my birthday:

16 February 1954

Dear Private Laue:

Happy Birthday!

On the occasion of your birthday I am happy to send congratulations and best wishes for many happy return of the day.

It is a pleasure to have you in the organization.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Everett G. King, Colonel MC
Commanding



March 5, 1954

My dear Parents, Brother and Sister,

It is Friday evening, nine o'clock. At a quarter after five I left the office and went to the mess hall to eat supper. It was a long day because I was very tired this morning when I got up. I surely wished I could have stayed in bed and slept, but that I could not do. Do you know why? Guess? - - - because I am in the Army and one has to follow orders.

The afternoon went faster than the morning because I did something I liked. I worked with numbers. Although I did not continue with math, I still love to work with figures. After supper I went up to my room and stretched out on my bed and read. Did I tell you I was just reading "Cain Mutiny" by Wouk? It is a fairly interesting novel. Tonight I read a rather well expressed sentence. The gist of it is that if you watch for the water in the pot to boil, it will never boil. So it is. When I figure out that there are so many days left before I am finished then I get frustrated.

I received a letter from you, Mother, and also from Papa. Mother, you always make that silly excuse to me that your letters are just wishy-washy talk with no backbone in them. But let me tell you, Mother, that I enjoy those letters more than a long philosophical treatise. To continually go into the abstract is just like watching the water boil. I like to hear what you have done and how you have applied all those theories to every hour in the day. Mother, you will probably read Papa' letters and say, "Now, there is a letter the boy will get something out of." But that is by no means always the case. You know how much you enjoy reading the examples and the little stories Yogananda gives in his book. You see, unless you do put that knowledge into daily practice, the philosophy is not a working philosophy. And that knowledge which you do not put into daily practice is dead weight and becomes a burden to your conscience. So, it is a sound idea to know as much as you can use. If you got ten pounds of bananas and only one stomach, half the fruit will rot. If you overstuff yourself on bananas, the result will be that you will feel mighty uncomfortable in your stomach. I have had that experience time and time again. You can only eat one banana at a time, earn one dollar at a time, and type one report at a time. If you try to do more than one thing at a time, the result will be that you cannot do one thing right.

Last Wednesday the game, tie clip, stockings, ties, Coronet, music and the book arrived. So far I have enjoyed the ties, tie clip, stockings, and the chocolate the most. My joy for the things was in sequence of the articles as I have listed them; the first item was first. My friend likes the tie clip very much and has asked me to ask you to buy one for him. Will you tell me the price, and he will give me the money. My friend has worn the clip two nights in a row already. He feels himself like a rich man with that tie clip. The game I don't know what to do with now, because here you find seldom a person who is interested in such a thing. And you do need a partner to play games. I have an idea to take the game to the Tratz family, because even the grownups there like to play, or at second thought, I can also take it to Ruth. She likes to play. We enjoyed a lot of games together. Mr. Pfennig also took part in the games.

Last Tuesday was the last night of the "Fasching Season" (carnival season during February of each year). You should have seen the crowds in town! I have never seen such merry-making before. The main streets of Nuremberg were jammed. On the streets there was dancing. You could dance with anyone, and no one would refuse to dance with you. I took part in the fun together with a German family that I met quite coincidentally last Monday night. I was working last Monday night by myself in the office. I would have loved to go out that night, because practically everyone went that night to some party. While I was working in the office, about 20:30 hours, two German fellows came into the office to find out where a certain man might be who

was playing in a band. I put on my thinking cap and thought deeply and made several telephone calls. And I located the person. And then I told the boys about what I would rather do instead of what I was doing just then.

They invited me right away to a party that they were going to. They took me along in their car and also brought me back again. At the party I met the wife to be of one of the boys. It had really been a long time since I met such a sweet girl. We had a fine time together. The boy took a picture of the girl and me. If it comes out good and I get a print, I will send it to you.

The following day, Tuesday, the mother of the girl called me in the office and invited me to come with them and enjoy the last day of the Fasching. At six o'clock I was called for with the car. At first we all took part in the merry-making on the street and after that we went to one of the finest clubs in Nuremberg. It was just like a club in America. There was a wonderful floorshow and dancing and good wine and everything that went with it. My friends invited me to everything that goes with it. At three o'clock in the morning they took me home. The mother of the girl was with us, so you can see that the people still stick to old traditions. My friends said that they would introduce me to some nice young girls. I will see what comes out of it. When I go to the home of the family, I cannot wear my uniform because of the bad reputation that the soldiers have. You can imagine that the boys, being a couple of thousand miles from home do not always show themselves from their best side. And then, young boys are young boys; they are always up to a lot of tricks. Most of the young soldiers are sowing their - - - - oats here.

Yesterday I inquired about getting myself a portable typewriter. I have 200 Marks put away for it, but I will have to double that sum before I can buy it. If I order the typewriter now, I will get it at the end of the month. The company does not keep a stock of typewriters with the American keys. The company can make almost any keyboard, including the Greek. I also want to buy myself a camera for a hundred dollars. And I would like to buy it soon so that I can have the pleasure in taking pictures. Will you send me the money? I am just not able to make any headway with the money that I get. The camera I want to get is a Contessa 2 F. It has a built in light meter. It is not too big and not too small, just nice and handy for my purposes. And after a while I want to add a flash attachment. It will be one of the new flash attachments which have a bulb which lasts for a thousand shots or more.

Tomorrow a friend of mine is leaving for the States. He lives in California and I think you have heard of the name of the town he lives in – Los Angeles. I gave him your name and telephone number. He said that he would call you up when he gets to Los Angeles.

It is eleven o'clock now. I better go upstairs to my room and give my shoes a quick shine. Tomorrow is shoe inspection. I wonder how you will like such a thing, Hellmut? I wonder if you will ever get drafted? Maybe the army will overlook you, and I know that you will do everything to look the other way when the draft board is looking your way. I wish you all the luck. And I thank you for your birthday presents and your letters.

With best wishes, your son,

Peter

This morning your letter with the orange-country postcard arrived – thank you.



March 9, 1954

Dear Mother, Father, Brother and Sister,

Well, Mother, I see that you came through with another letter for me written on the 4th of March. I don't remember the 3rd and 4th of this month for anything special. But at the moment I do feel pretty good.

This morning, as usual, I was working in the office, and this afternoon, as usual, I went to class – every Tuesday afternoon. This afternoon we saw first a movie on leadership. I did not go to sleep during the movie, which is really quite unusual. I enjoyed the picture, because there were a lot of scenes from basic training in it, which reminded me of what I went through about ten months ago. Now I chuckle about those four months of basic training. The second hour the chaplain talked to us about prejudice. That is also one hour I enjoy, because Chaplain Quick talks on everyone's level. He is from the South, and he has a pleasant dialect that I like. The fourth hour we had physical training and the third hour we had dismounted drill, which means marching around. I must say that we did not look like soldiers as we were marched around the field in front of the hospital. Next Friday we are going on maneuvers for a day and a half. We leave Friday morning by truck and come back the following day around noon. In October was the last time I went on maneuvers. If the weather stays as nice as it is at them moment, we will all enjoy it very much to go outside and pitch our hospital tents. I am on the detail to put up the latrine for the men.

I have another wish; please send me my leather jacket. I think it is a little torn inside. Please fix it for me before you send it. And if it needs cleaning then also have it cleaned. If you have Levis that will fit me, please send me also a pair. I have gained about twenty-five pounds since I have left you thirteen months ago. I think that will be all for the time being.

I have something else on my mind too. Since two months a new regulation has been put out regarding early discharges from the army. It is going into effect on the first of April, next month. I will tell you about it after I come back from chow. Well, in the meantime the clock has turned to 2000 hours, because of chow, instead of coming right back to the office, I went to the game room and played a few games of pool; and I watched a lot more than I played, because I was always on the losing end.

I will tell you the story of the early discharge. The army will discharge a man up to three months earlier if a college semester begins at such a time that the man would be able to enroll in that semester if he would be discharged sooner. Is that clear? I don't think so. Well, I'll try again. Let us say the semester would begin at the end of November. The army will then discharge me in time in order to enroll in that semester. But I have to show that I am going to be accepted by the college. The same idea holds true with a job. If certain contract jobs are only open at a certain time, I could be discharged earlier, if I would show that I would lose the job is I would not be back in time. Naturally I would have to show that I was accepted for the job before I apply for the early discharge. I would have to put in this requisition three months prior to my rotation date. The rotation date is the day a soldier leaves Germany for the States. That means, if I wanted to be rotated at the end of October, I would have to put in the requisition at the end of July. So I will leave it up to you, whether or not you want to undertake anything. I would not mind to work for a year before I return to school. I would also return to school first if the opportunity would offer

this. I am sure that you could also obtain the same information, and the more exact information from the Army Department or the draft board in Los Angeles. I will come back as soon as the opportunity comes. However if I will stay till December, I know, that the two months won't kill me.

The sergeant who was at the head of the office is leaving for the States on the 17th of this month. He was here five years. Now he is going to Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is a twenty-year man. He has it pretty nice since his family can go with him wherever he goes unless it is to a combat zone where he is sent. Then the family stays in the States.

Today at twelve I had a visitor here. Do you remember the people I told you about who took me along to the Fasching? They came to the hospital this noon. They asked what day I had off so that they could call for me. Actually I am supposed to have a half a day off extra each week. Everyone is supposed to get that half a day. But since we have been so very busy, we have not gotten that extra time. When my friends came, the captain of our office was just sitting outside in the sun, and he was apparently in good humor. I took advantage of this and the fact that my friends were just there. So I asked the captain if I could have tomorrow afternoon off. My friends had something planned for me, I told him. He could not say "no" very well; and he did not say "no." Sunday afternoon my friends also want to call for me with the car. But where they are planning to go, I do not know yet.

Thank you for the five Marks. I can always use some extra money. Five Marks is a dollar and nineteen cents in American money. There has come a time now where I wished that my salary would be higher. Don't be surprised if I should ask you for some money. I hate do do it, but - - -

I am going up to my room now. I have been very tired lately, and so I will go to bed earlier tonight. I will read a while, yet, and then I will sleep. My friend lent me a book I think I will enjoy. "Das Leben von Axel Munthe." (The life of Axel Munthe). That's the approximate title of the book.

I really wanted to write Alice tonight and not you. But suddenly I got the idea of the leather jacket and the Levis; and that is why I wrote you instead of Alice. And then again, I was feeling pretty good tonight, and that is also why I wrote a letter at all. I read Alice's letter once more this morning which she sent me in December; and I liked it just as much the second time as I did the first; and that is why I wanted to write. Please do call her up for me and give her my regards. And if you like, you can also let her read this letter, or at least tell her the things that would interest her.

I wish you all a pleasant night, and the best wishes from your son

Peter

Please send me my brown suit. I would like the Los Angeles paper. Letter from the 8th arrived this morning. It's the 15th of March. Thanks



March 13, 1954

Dear Parents,

I guess your son and daughter are in the mountains, so I can address my card to just the two of you. I just got back from our field problem this morning at ten. I am glad it is over. I got a terrible migraine headache last night in the field, and thought I could not stand the pain. But someone had some APC's along. I took three of those and walked for half an hour in the cold fresh air. And from that it got so much better that I could sleep. This morning the pain was gone.

I received the nuts, and boy, are they delicious. I am eating them just now. And I have to reach into the box over and over again. Last Tuesday something unpleasant happened. Someone stole something from me that I liked. I'll tell you some other time what it was. Papa, instead of you sending me dollars, could not the money come from your income in Germany? I can use Marks as well as dollars. I received your letter from the 6th today with the postcards. Thank you, Mother.

Your son Peter

Please send me my brown suit. I would like the Los Angeles paper. Letter from the 8th arrived this morning, 15th of March. Thanks. (Peter must have finished or mailed on the 15th)



March 21, 1954 - The First day of Spring

Dear Folks,

In just a few minutes I will be sitting on a saddle riding into the first day of Spring with a friend of mine. At the moment I am in no mood for this undertaking, but I believe that once I am on the saddle and kicking my legs, I'll overcome my lethargy. You know that is a common ailment among soldiers, tiredness.

It is Monday morning. I don't have the time to continue your letter now. Maybe I will get to it during the day sometime when the boss is not around, or otherwise tonight.

I would like to get this letter off today yet, so I'll cut it short and quickly write it on company time. Our excursion on the bicycle was to Heilsbronn. Roundtrip it amounted to 60 km. It took us about five hours. In Heilsbronn we stopped for a cool beer. But the reason I want to get this letter off soon is because I want to ask you for some money. It seems that you don't like to send me any. I don't know why you feel that way, maybe you think that I waste it. I really have good use for a hundred dollar money order right now. I won't tell you for what I want the money. I have been rather short lately, and I hate to be scratching at the bottom all the time. One hundred dollars would really do the trick. The money is not for a girl; I want to do something for my personal pleasure. The captain came into the office. So, good-bye. And thanks a lot; I would really appreciate it if you would help me out.

I need my birth certificate to have my name changed.

Good-bye – your son Peter



March 24, 1954

My dear Parents,

You are really pretty swell about the mail lately. I received two letters this week from you already, one from Papa and one from Mutti together with Hellmut's letter from the mountain. (Peter's brother is looking for gold). I also received the pasted together letter from Hellmut in which I receive moral instructions. I know that Hellmut means very well, but I doubt that he knows the circumstances that I am in. Your see, you first have to be a soldier yourself to understand him and his way of life. If a thousand wolves are howling around you and you don't howl yourself, then you get eaten up alive. My voice and power is not so great that I am able to raise my voice above the thousand voices. I did think it was possible, and maybe it is for someone who is stronger than I am. Maybe Hellmut is stronger than I am; I hope so.

I am glad to see that he is in such excellent spirits in the mountains. I love to see people so full of adventure, vigor and courage to go into such an enterprise. Good for him.

I doubt if you understood me correctly – about getting an earlier discharge. You see, the semester at UCLA only starts in February, so that I would not have to be discharged earlier to attend the spring semester. My contract job or college semester must begin around November or December in order for me to be discharged sooner. I am sure that you can get the official bulletin about this from the draft board.

Tonight a play is given in our hospital theater. It is called, "The Moon is Blue." I am going to see it. On the poster advertising the play it is written that the play is only for adults. I guess that I can call myself an adult now. I wonder what the play will be like?

The play was called off. Why, I do not know. So, instead of going out or going to a movie here, I played billiard until now. It is 3:30 PM. If I do feel blue sometimes, and there is a billiard table handy, my melancholy soon disappears. My accordion I do not use very often. Only when I want to overcome some uneasy feeling do I play. When I do feel in good spirits already, then I don't feel like playing. I also received some more notes from you. Thank you, Mother and Papa. Because you, Papa, earn a big junk of the money, that is one reason why you are included. I know that whatever Mother does, that you have your spirit in that also. I know that you two work like a team together. And that is the way it should be in a family, and between a Papa and a Mama.

Speaking of families, I just heard the rumor today that a friend of mine is going to get married over here soon. He knows his girl only since a few weeks. I have not seen his girl. I really don't know what she is like. I hope it works out. But the wedding bells have not rung yet, and the word has not been spoken. Love is a mysterious thing that cannot be explained. If we do want to explain it, the beauty goes out of it. I just want to take life as a gift from God. That makes life much more worth living. Have you not also found, that as soon as you want to analyze and reason out these mysteries in our human way that the beauty fades away?

I am really looking forward to a dance that a friend of mine invited me to next Sunday. The girls will be wearing long dresses. And you know how much I love to see the girls that way. The boys will naturally be wearing dark suits. It is a good thing that I have my blue suit. We will all be going in style to the dance. My friend has a car. It will be just like in the States, only that the people are speaking German instead of English.

I will be very glad to send you my paycheck every month if I can get Marks instead. It is little trouble to exchange the Marks for script again. (Script is money soldiers use to purchase items at the PX). I can also exchange larger sums if you would like me to do it.

Today I got my army driver's license. I will also get a civilian license in a few days. I am now permitted to drive trucks up to and including two and a half ton trucks. I enjoy driving those trucks. This morning I drove a two and a half ton truck through the hills and through town. It is no harder to drive those trucks than it is to drive our Pontiac. How is the Pontiac doing anyway? Is it still in good condition?

I am enclosing a letter from Ernst, which he told me to forward to Sonja. He told me I could read the letter. I do hope that Sonja will be able to see everything with clarity. I personally like Ernst; but I am not married to him, and therefore I cannot see the whole picture. I have not been in Stuttgart since December. Maybe next month I will have the chance to take a run over there and see Ernst. Arthur is in a similar tough spot. I hope he will be strong in himself to find a wife that has the strength to love in a deep, wonderful way. We all need love to grow and to unfold our best possibilities.

Well, I just noticed that you did not want me to mention that I received that letter from Hellmut. I have forgotten. I won't type the letter over for this. Also, let me know if you want to have Hellmut's letter from the mountain back, otherwise I will tear it up.

By the way, the nuts arrived in a very tasty condition. Did I acknowledge the tie clip? If I didn't, I want to tell you that I received it. Thank you very much. My friend won't get the clip until payday, otherwise he will forget about the money if I give him the clip now. Everyone is broke at this time of the month, including your son. But I have put two-hundred Marks away for something I want to buy soon.

Yes, I have heard about Star Daily. Do you know from whom? I heard his name mentioned the first time in our family some time ago. Please don't send me his book. If I should want to read it, I am sure that I can also obtain it here.

I just want to say that the tie clip you sent is just like the one I have. My friend is crazy about it. But don't send me another one unless I ask for it. I am happy to hear that you sent my leather jacket and the other suit away. I hope the clothes arrive soon. The grey suit is shut to pieces. The buttocks side is so thin that you can see my white underpants. It was a mistake to send it. I imagine you didn't notice how worn the pants were.

Next week our registrar, Captain Hoffman is leaving for the States with his family. He is getting out of the army to enter civilian life again after ten years of service. He was supposed to have stayed here till next March, but since he got a good offer as registrar of a civilian hospital, he asked for a discharge and he got it.



No, Mother and Papa, I do not have sweetheart over here, yet. I have had a number of dates. The girls, however, were not my type. But I am looking; you can believe that. Through my new friend I am getting into a very nice circle of people. And I do think that I will soon have a sweet girl in my arms. Mother, will you be jealous? I know that Papa won't be. Will you, Papa? You also have been young; or are you still young?

That's all there is; there "ain't" no more today. From writer I will turn to artist and draw this letter to a close. (Picture of Peter pounding on his typewriter)

Your Peter



March 24, 1954

My dear Papa,

I am going to tell you for what I would like to have the money, because Mother would worry unnecessarily about my undertaking. I would like to buy myself a motor scooter. I will buy the scooter whether you can send me the money or not. The thing is that if I will have to finance the whole thing from the pay I get over here, I will be very short for the rest of the time I am in Germany. The money I get from you will pay for half the cost. I will also only buy a cheap camera here because expensive things get stolen too easily. If you have not sold the camera when I get back to the States, I might buy it from you. If you can get the Marks to me over here, I can send you every month 300 dollars. My pay at the moment is 57 dollars. Thanks for your letter Papa. I receive it this morning. It was misdirected. Sunday I am invited to a big dance; and a girl is also invited for me.

Good-bye and God bless you.

Your boy, Dieter (Peter)



March 30, 1954

Dear Parents,

I received your letter of March 22nd. Thank you very much, Mother. If you would give me Marks instead, that would be alright with me. I hope I will get a boost in pay from you because then I can do some more things I would like to do. The money is holding me back at the moment. I will gladly send the coffee and clothes along to Ruth.

The Mirror (newspaper) would be fine. You should see what I bought over here last Saturday – on partial payment so far. Your eyes would pop out. You can guess, I guess, Papa. The color is red; it's a beauty.

My friend invited me to a wonderful, wonderful ball last Sunday. And he invited a beautiful girl for me. I am really in the chips since I have met this friend. I drank "Bruederschaft" (a special way of toasting in Germany that seals a friendship) with this girl and my friend's girl. It is the first time I did this. It's a nice custom. Some other time I will tell you more.

If you don't help me with a bit of extra doe, I might discontinue my allotment and you what is left.

God bless you,

Your son Peter





April
1954

Active Duty in Germany

April 3, 1954

Dear Parents,

In a few minutes my German friend Heinz will be coming to take me along. He invited me to supper at his house tonight. I like to eat out once in a while and enjoy a good home-cooked meal together with friends that are not soldiers.

It's four o'clock in the afternoon now. I have changed my clothes. I am wearing the grey suit, Alice's shirt, the blue tie and the tie clip. I worked till three o'clock today; and the last two nights I worked till ten. It is the end of the month, and there is plenty of work for everyone in the office. You could almost say that I wore my fingertips to the bone, typing report after report in the last few days. Except that I was making an unusual amount of mistakes towards the end, I have no bad after effects from the work now.

The only complaint I have at the moment is that my stomach muscles are very sore. Last Tuesday I took a physical training test, and I put everything into it that I had. I did very good on the test. Today I can still feel how good I did. Hellmut, try once to do thirty-one pushups. That is what I did. If you can do more than forty-five, I must really compliment you. You must also put into consideration that I work in the office all day, and I have little opportunity to do physical work. And you work in the mine and do lots of physical work and get lots of fresh air.

Papa, I looked in our PX how much the camera costs on which you sent me a circular. I can buy the same camera here in the PX for 55 dollars.

Dear Mother, I received your letter and the birth certificate this morning. Thank you very much. I also read that I will receive the money from Lilly. I am very happy about that. I have made my monthly payment on what I bought already, and after that I had about twenty dollars left for the rest of the month. I really do appreciate that you are sending me the money. I don't like to discontinue my allotment if I can help it.

A little while back you asked me several questions. At the moment I have no heart to answer the questions. Probably I will wait to answer them when I am back in California. The time is going by, and I will be back shortly. It has been just about a year since I have seen you. That time has gone by and the rest will too.

I am not surprised to hear that Lillian is engaged. But I am disappointed that Hellmut did not get into closer contact with her. She is a fine girl. Something in her line Hellmut would need as a friend, as a girlfriend. Two weeks ago I received a letter from Beverly. She writes me very nice. At the moment I feel that Beverly is the girl I have understood the best so far, and who has understood me the best. I have met many girls already in America and also here. Yes, I could love them all to some extent, because they are girls; but a real understanding I could share with none of them. And also Lillian was more than a girl to me. And yet, she had the womanly qualities that a man likes. I do hope that she met someone nice and someone who is true to her. She is so much the motherly and homey type of a girl, and that is what I like.

The clock has turned to 2000 hours, Sunday the 4th of April. Yesterday evening I went to a movie here at the hospital. It was a musical called "Geraldine." I enjoyed the picture. We see here the newsreel, a short, and one feature; and the admission is twenty-five cents in script. After that I went downtown with a friend to the Americana Club and played billiard or "pool", as

we say here. After that I dropped in at the Storch Club to see if any of my friends were there. I did meet friends, some boyfriends, and also three nurses from our hospital. I joined them. We danced, listened to the music, talked and had a drink together. And after the Storch Club closed, we did not call it quits yet. We went to a German café and did some of the same we did at the Storch Club. We went home at two o'clock today. Today I visited some friends near Heilsbronn together with my friend whose name is also Peter. Now I am really tired. As soon as I have finished this letter, I will go to bed. First I will take a shower, and then I will sleep until duty calls me tomorrow morning.

I was happy to hear that Lupe called you up so soon. I thought he would be coming back to Nuremberg. That is what he told me. Probably he has changed his mind after he realized again how nice it was to be back home. He is a fine boy. He was always very nice to me. He left here the beginning of March. I was surprised to hear that he got home so soon. I hear that once the boys get back, they are discharged very quickly.

I don't know what to say about Clay. He is such a fine chap. I do hope that he can carry the ideals he has set for himself. It is a very big load. It seems that he is living under a strain at this time. I can see it easily when someone is carrying a load in himself. I know it from my own life. It is difficult, indeed, to truly know to what extent we are helping others and ourselves, when we live a life like Clay or the renunciates (an ascetic life) of SRF. If we live that way we are living in a world of our own. God only knows what the climax of a good life should be. Every day I would be fighting a battle if I should think that I am in the wrong place here. Yes, it is a great deal simpler to live secluded and protected. The test really is if we can live with other people in the world, in the army, in a business, in a fraternity, and so on, and still uphold what we consider right, and still be able to smile and joke and be a jolly good fellow. Every person has a different sense of values. What is right? Yes, what is right? That is a question I do not dare to answer.

Sometimes an idea comes into our mind, and we cannot rest until we have found the solution we deem as proper. Just think, Mother, when you were young and were falling in love with Papa, you could not rest until Papa gave you his name. Put yourself once again into that time when you were twenty. I am twenty-one now, I am a young man, and many feelings have come into me which I never knew a year ago. I very well can understand my restlessness that often comes. This is the time when the forces are great in people, and they seek expression.

Good night dear folks, and sleep well,

Your son, Peter



April 11, 1954

My dear Parents,

Today was the most beautiful day of this year. The sun really accomplished a great deal of work in bringing forth new life out of the sleeping plants. I wish you all a very happy Easter. Just look at nature during these days. That which you will see is more real and true to life than any sermon. If the weather is nice, I will drive for three days into the Alps over Easter – with my own transportation. Today I was invited to a “confirmation” celebration by family Tratz. They are sending best regards. Thank you for two letters I received from you, Mother.

Your son, Peter



April 14, 1954

Dear Parents,

Two days ago I received 420 Marks from Lilli. Thank you very much for the money. The scooter is just about my own now. I have already had lots of pleasure with it. There is no more waiting for streetcars unless the weather is bad. These last few days the weather has been extra fine. I have gotten real Spring fever. I want to get out, out, out. I want to let my feelings ride into the great green yonder or the sunny April days. Saturday, Sunday and Monday that is – the coming weekend, I will be riding, riding, riding. And when the gas is gone, then I will put some more into the tank and ride again. We will be riding into the Alps.

Papa, I received your letter from the fifth of April yesterday. Papa, I do not want to start what you suggested about the cameras. I don't like to get involved in that camera business. But for interest's sake, I will see what the prices are. The cheapest way to get these cameras would be in the PX. I wrote you that a new Voigtlaender is only 55 dollars; that would only be five dollars more than you say it should cost, and besides, it is new. Why don't you send me 220 Marks every month, and for that you will get fifty dollars from my pay. You can also send me more Marks. I can very easily change them into dollars. Please let me know what you plan to do. If you ever want to send me some extra money, I won't send it back. I don't need extra money, but I can always make good use of it if I do have it. A good watch and camera I still want to buy before I get shipped back to California.

I will try to get to Bremen the next time I will visit Ruth. It will be in June for 10 to 13 days.

Best regards from you son,

Peter

Thank you for the stamps, Mother. Two Guideposts also arrived.



April 21, 1954

Dear Mama and dear Papa,

Yesterday I received the pansy letter. Is the flower from our garden? Thank you, Mother, for sitting down two hours and writing me a letter. My donkey just does not want to sit down and write. I have always heard that donkeys are very stubborn animals.

I was also very stubborn about my trip to Garmisch. It was raining and hailing and snowing most of the trip. There was a foot of snow in Garmisch when I got there with my friend. Boy oh boy, we were frozen through and through. Do you know why, because we went up there on the scooter? It was a real adventure and not much of a pleasure. It took a lot of concentration and willpower to make the trip. The scooter held together excellently, but these bodies of ours were ready to fall apart. But after a good night's sleep together with a warm water bottle, I felt my own self again. I was sorry to say that the warm water bottle was only made of iron with h₂O inside.

It was snowing continuously up there – no, we did not have a chance to take pictures. The mountains are very beautiful. If I will still have time to take another trip during the summer, then I will climb one of them to the very top – the very, very top. I remember the time, Mother, when you were afraid to let Hellmut and myself climb to the top because you were afraid. I am still mad about that. And now because of this, I will climb to the top of a high mountain, and stand on the very peak with one foot and on my tiptoe. That is life.

Now comes the second section of the note. Do you know what a note is? I solved a crossword puzzle the other day. It asked what a short letter is. A short letter is a note. I started this letter during my lunch period. The train got stalled, though, because of lack of fuel. By fuel I mean time. From one to five o'clock I was typing sick reports. In a month or so I will be doing another job in the office. I will be taking over the job of one of the boys. We are already looking for two good typists, but we haven't had any luck. We also have a new boss. He is pretty nice. He says "thank you" when you do some work for him. When he is in the office, we call him Lt. Olson (40 years old). When he is out of the office we refer to him as Elmer.

I am at my friend's house in Zirndorf now. He picked me up with the car from the office. First I write my letter to you, and later his girl is coming over and we will have a private party.

I also got the package with the leather jacket yesterday. The jacket is in poor shape. I'll have to have it reconditioned before I can wear it.

Yes, Mother, I can see that you have a complex about the food. It is such a silly thing. I even suffered about this thing. We want ourselves to be more perfect than we can manage to be. And then when we don't achieve what we like to, we get a heartache. We all have limitations; and when we continuously suffer under them we are fools. Tell me, have you ever earned a buck by worrying about it? Heck no! One hundred and one errors we make every day, or we make no errors at all. It is just the way you look at life. The stricter your mental straight jacket is, the tougher a time you have living with yourself. When you want to weigh 120 pounds and you weigh 130 pounds, then you feel in poor shape. If your ideas about errors are too strict, then you will be a sourpuss to the people you work and live with.

Yes, I bought a red scooter, and love it. It works like a charm. I get from here to there in no time flat.

The nuts were delicious, very delicious. One bar of chocolate I have eaten. Two bars are in my locker waiting for me to become hungry. The clothes I'll send to Ruth when I am in the mood. You know, I am a pretty moody fellow. As far as my duty in the office concerned, I am always in the same state of mind. I either work because it is my job; but I also have days when I enjoy pecking at the typewriter. Only when I make too many mistakes and have to write a report over and over again, do I become disgusted. Then I feel like picking up my typewriter and throwing it through the closest window.

Dara (Beverly changed her name to Dara, I believe) wrote me and also sent me two of my old essays. I can only say now, "It was so nice to dream." I would have liked to go on dreaming. The army life was too noisy. Good-bye dear folks, God bless you.

Your soldier son sends you his love, Peter



At the Storch Club, April 25, 1954

Dear Folks,

There is a Mr. Horst Laue sitting next to me enjoying a good strawberry "Jam Session." Horst came to Nuremberg yesterday on a business trip. He is combining it with a pleasure trip as far as Nuremberg is concerned.

I really like the idea of buying a bigger place. Thanks for the pictures. I have no negatives of the pictures I sent. I still would like the daily paper at least three times per week.

Good-bye, Peter

An add-on by Horst, Peter's cousin: I really enjoyed the Sunday at Nuremberg with Dieter. We had such fun and I think we will have some more. Greetings to all of you – Horst.



April 30, 1954 – 1430 hours

Dear Parents, Mother and Papa,

Why did I underline "Mother"? Because one week from next Sunday is Mother's Day. A good enough reason, isn't it?

(The Next Day)

It's a sunny, sunny day. I do not work today. I could have slept real long today, but I could not. The sun was tickling me in the face. So I could not resist, and I got up. This morning I will write a little, and after that I will take off with my friend on the scooter. We will ride into the green below and blue yonder.

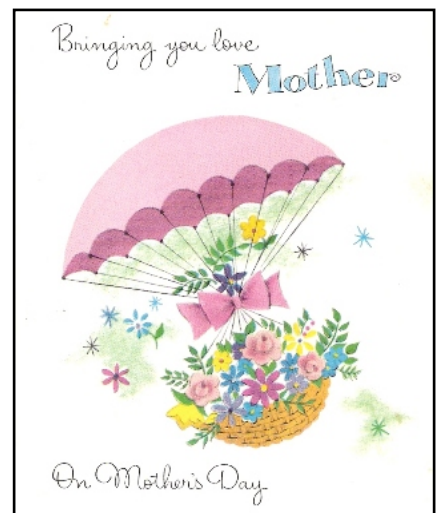
Did I tell you already that the brown suit has arrived? Thanks. The left-over of the package will soon arrive in Bad-Pyrmont. I also got a box of candy. It's still in my draw. I have not opened it. I also got the very fascinating book "How to Scratch a Match." Then I got mail from you, too. One letter from Papa and a letter from you, Mother, plus the enclosed letter from Sonja. That was a big bunch of mail. I also have a very nice correspondence with Dara.

Mother and Papa, the weather is too nice to stay a minute longer in the office.

I have a wish; please send me a bathing suit per airmail, waste size 31.

Good-bye, your son, expect to see you in 8 or 9 months.

Peter



Bringing you love M O T H E R
Mother's Day

To my Mother!

A million and one loving wishes
For today and each day of the year
Because you are one in a million –
Because you're especially dear.

Although I have had rough going at times, through your love and the determination in me, I have fulfilled my place like a man. I bet you had it rough, Mother, but you better believe it that I will help you when you need me.

Your son, Peter





May
1954

Active Duty in Germany

May 5, 1954

Calling WA-4074. Is that the correct number? I don't even remember. It has been too long since I have dialed that number. I will look forward to saying hello to you over the telephone.

I have received two letters from you, Mother; one of them is the letter written on the last Sunday in April; the other one is written on the last of this month, I believe. It makes no difference anyhow. The main thing is that I received them. I have had a busy day at the office. Two fellows are on furlough. And the two that are on furlough are also going home next month. This day went by like jet plane. I could use eight hours to complete today's work. But it is five o'clock; and at five o'clock I stop unless I am told otherwise by my superior. That is the way I do it, Mother. You must also do it that way. That is a direct order from your PFC son. Don't you disobey an order now, Mother or Papa, otherwise I will have you court marshaled.

Do you know when I went to bed last night, real late. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. And I slept till this morning at 6 o'clock. That is what I call, getting a good night's sleep. I was getting one of those silly common colds, and I figured that the best medicine was to sleep it off. I can't afford to get sick these days otherwise the office will be in a jam. And I love the army too much to let that happen. But tonight, although my cold is not gone yet, I will go to my friend in Zirndorf and play chess with him. Papa, you will be my partner when I get back, so you better start training now.

What all did you ask me in your letter? I do a little reading, not enough to make it a major issue. I have started a book by Pestalozzi and in contrast to that, a crime story. The tan suit has arrived. I have worn it a couple of times already. I'll check on the Lode mantel (a lightweight coat) when I get into town during an afternoon. I'll also forward the coffee when it arrives. Congratulations for cleaning up the backyard, Papa. Another thing I want to mention. Don't worry about me getting into trouble with the scooter or on the mountain peaks. I'll be in greater danger when you worry about me, than when you wish me courage. I know that my life is dear to you, but it is even dearer to me than to you. So that automatically precludes all worries from your side. The typewriter I am not buying. First of all, I see that I really don't need it badly, second of all, I have plenty of typewriters in the office which I can use at any time, and thirdly, there are other things I would much rather get. The first thing would be a camera. Maybe next month I'll buy one. This month I paid the rest on my scooter. Now it belongs to me.

I just want to mention the meat problem in our family. The tensions that are created about it are more conducive to ulcers than any amount of meat you could eat. I have been eating meat right along since the last eight months. Not in the least do I think that it hurts me. I also enjoy it. And I have no reason to stop eating it. It agrees with me fine. Yes, you could say, you don't know what will happen in ten years. Only then will you feel the results of the meat diet. So what, why should I worry what happens ten years from now? One day I will die anyway. If there are so many tensions connected with this diet problem, then I will give you the advice to just forget about the diet. So you weigh 130 pounds, Mother. Is that a crime? I weigh 155 pounds. Is that too much? Are there not other things to think about, that are much more uplifting?

I received also the letter from Hellmut. I enjoyed reading it. I sure like the initiative which my brother has. Whatever comes out of it, it will be good. You won't change what Hellmut has started; and I don't see why you should. Whatever Hellmut or Sonja or Arthur are doing, they are responsible for it. The children are now passed the age where they will listen to the parents.

If you do not approve, the only thing you can do is not send him any money. But if it does not hurt you to send him ten dollars a week, then I would also think that it is nice if you send it to him. It is nice to have someone backing you up. I am not putting in my two cents about the way they live up there in the mountains. Everyone lives the way he likes it best. As long as I know they are happy, I will not say anything. I like to see people happy, and if they are happy, then God bless them whatever they do. It has been so long that Sonja has been happy and smiling. It would be wrong to destroy her optimism. Life molds us the way it needs us. You know that about me; I was so sure about the way I was living that I never thought that there would come any change. Believe in the divine plan of the Great God who rules the universe, and you will know that everything will take its proper course. I have always admired Hellmut for his optimism and determination. Do not destroy that. Only someone he loves could shake his belief in himself. We boys are young; our ideas can't possibly be those that you have.

It has been an awfully nice day. The sun has been shining, and I have been in good spirits. I hope you have also enjoyed your day. I always enjoy a letter from you, but my spirits are not affected either way. When I get a letter, that is just fine. When I don't have any mail, I am happy just the same. So just write me when you really and truly enjoy talking to me. The only thing I am really only looking forward to is when I can have that verbal conversation with you.

Your son wishes you all the best in the world. I have never seen two people so eager to do the right thing. Our intentions are valued as highly as our actions. You really mean it well.

God bless you for it.

Your son, Peter



May 13, 1954

Dear Parents,

I received your letter from the 6th this morning. You are right, I really enjoyed Hellmut's letter from the mountain. So much interesting news is really stimulating. I am happy to see how full of ideas and good common sense plans my brother is. The months and years Hellmut and Arthur are spending in the mountains is as wonderful, and maybe more so than the final results that might and might not come out of it.

I think you might enjoy the picture which I am enclosing. It was taken in our American Club, "The Storch Club." It is quite a nice place. We can dance there, listen to music, see a floor show once a week, etc. I usually go there once a week with my friends. The little sweet girl is a casual acquaintance that I made a week ago. I had three dates with her. Now she belongs to the storybook of my past experiences. She does not have the mind I need for supplementing mine. But I had a good time anyway. I met quite a number of girls already, more than in the States. But for "the girl" I am not looking over here because I have decided to find a girl in the States. In fact, I have some definite ideas already.

What about Hellmut's draft? He thinks so surely that his notice will come soon. Maybe he will never be called. I would be very happy if the boy would not be called. Two years living together with a hodge-podge of people is not as simple as it might look. There is where you have to learn to depend entirely on yourself. In most situations Hellmut is able to do this better than anyone

else in the family. I would not like to see the boy unhappy. Two years is a long time to be waiting to return to his great goldmine adventure. It will be like waiting for your best girl for two years. I have eight more months to wait for my dreams, an honorable discharge from the US Army; and then I will be a veteran.

Yesterday I went paddle boating on the Dutzenteich (probably a small lake). That was nice. Tonight I will be lying under the blooming trees, and I will be reading and just relaxing. How wonderful! It is a little after five now. I want to change my clothes and take off. I have really been working the last few days. And at ten o'clock I don't go to bed either every night. I'll add a few lines tomorrow morning before I start work. Tonight the letter won't go out anymore anyway.

Well, it is the next morning. I had a very nice evening in the garden. Here are a few, two, to be specific, flowers from the garden. We have had the most beautiful weather you can imagine. Sunday I will go to the park. Next Saturday I am invited to the silver anniversary of my friend's parents.

Good-bye dear Mother and Father. Don't you give me this stuff of "your friend Harry and Jo." You are my parents, and I will always call you Mother and Papa. I got only two people in the world I can call that, and I can call a lot of people my friends.

Happy days are coming our way,

Your soldier son, Peter



May 18, 1954

My dear Parents, Mother and Papa,

I have your Mother's Day letter in front of me. Thank you, Mother. I took care of the birthday greetings to Vera right away. I wrote the letter during my lunch period. It should arrive in time for her birthday. We do not have any books by Sherman in our hospital library. And if the books can be gotten in the German language I do not know as yet. For Papa's camera request I have not had any time yet. My hours coincide with the hours the stores are open, so I have to wait until I get a day off during the week. It will be taken care of as soon as possible.

Yes, you wrote me that Clay wrote you a letter explaining the situation. I am sure the boy is often under great strain. We cannot expect a person always to be the same. It is only human to be angry or moody or sad sometimes. If someone tells me something I do not like, I cannot merely say, "Well, the fellow does not know any better, and let it go at that." You got to have the guts to speak up and say what is on your mind. If I would put all the comments into my hip pocket, I would just boil over. And sometimes I do boil over, believe you me. There are a lot of men that have more rank than I do, then there are men who have the same rank or less than I have. Sometimes I also say "AMEN" to something someone says, because I know that their intentions are good. I surely will be glad to be a civilian again. Yesterday I dreamt of you, Mother. You were happy to see me, and I was happy to see you, and you were surprised to see how well I looked. It was the first time in a long time that I remembered a dream.

I am sending you a couple of pictures that we snapped about three weeks ago when we made a Sunday excursion to the Fraenkische Schweiz (tourist retreat area in northern Bavaria). The

boy, called Martini, sleeps next to me. He is a very fine fellow and I like him a lot, but apparently he does not know how to take pictures. Don't ask me for the negatives because I don't have them. The other two pictures, where we are in uniform, were taken last year in August. That is the Tratz family; they are very nice people. I saw them about two weeks ago the last time. The other soldier in the picture is another friend from the hospital. He is an alright guy, but that is about all. He works in the operating room. He is also a conscientious objector; that is why I thought I would like to know him.

Thank you for ordering "The Mirror" (newspaper) for me. I know I will enjoy reading something from my home town. I hope that the first copy will arrive in about a week. I also received two magazines from you, one "Rays of Sunshine" and one "Guideposts."

Today I am not as tired as yesterday, because yesterday I went to bed at six o'clock at night. When I go to bed at six o'clock, you will know that I am truly tired. I usually go for a couple of days very late to bed, and then suddenly it will hit me. Then I just have to go to bed as soon as I have finished at the office. Two weeks ago I once went to bed at four in the afternoon and slept till the next morning at seven without waking up. Isn't that some kind of a record?

Last Saturday I went to my friend's house and helped celebrate the silver anniversary of his parents. We celebrated till way into the morning hours. I slept at my friend's house that night. When I woke up the next morning, I thought I was at home, and I was very happy. But then I realized that it was not that home which I thought it was, and then I was not quite that happy anymore. But it was a good feeling anyway to be sleeping in a private home. It had been over a year since I had slept the last time in a nice private home. Correction please, I remember that I stayed at Harry's (Herbert, I believe was his last name) house during my furlough.

I do not know for sure, whether I will take my furlough in June or July. We are rather busy in the office and there is a turnover of personnel. So I imagine that it will be more like July before I can take my furlough. I will let you know. Well, seven to eight more months to go. I am soooo saaaaad to leave this sooooo wonderful Army life (Peter is teasing his folks).

Spring is here all the way now. The chestnuts are blooming, the lilacs are blooming, the trees have practically all their leaves now. Time is marching on. It is passing by faster and faster. The swimming pools have opened last Saturday. I am really looking forward to my furlough. I wish I could leave tomorrow. I have sixteen days to the good. I am going to let myself get spoiled by Ruth again. And when I get back to Los Angeles, I am going to let myself get real spoiled by you for a few weeks.

I better stop writing this way; otherwise I'll be getting the blues. And that is one thing I completely dislike.

You asked me if I wore civilian clothes when I went out with Horst? Yes, I did. It is very seldom that I wear uniform clothes when I am off duty. I feel a hundred percent more comfortable in civvies.

How is the project of buying a new house coming along? I hope there will be a big garden to go along with it. I would also like to buy a house when I get back; that is not a little dream but a big one and a strong one. Why don't you buy one for me, and then I can pay the rent to you. We can also have the debt put on my name, because I get a cheaper loan as a GI; that is, after I am out of the service. But the house should not be directly in the city. It's an idea; maybe an

opportunity arises to make it real. I would love to have my own home. I am the family man type. I want to have my own place before I want the family.

Mother, is it nice to have a family? Is it nice to have a family, Papa? It must be. I have spoken to a girl here who has a little boy two and a half years old. The girl is not married and would love to marry. The father of the boy is in America. It is one of those sad stories that you hear so often. She said that if the man would have a million dollars and would love her, but would not love the child, she would not marry him. A mother's love for her children must be very, very great. It gives real meaning to life.

I have seen life now from so many different angles, and so many of them are very sad. Many young people start life with so much enthusiasm and with great ideas, but because of some disappointments they have given up their ideals; because disappointments are the greatest drainage on your strength. The person who has learned to overcome disappointments with a smile and without loss of determination, indeed, has that in him which the whole world needs. You know how it is, Mother, if you don't lend in good faith a couple of books away and don't get them back! Your readiness to lend books away has been greatly slackened.

If we do want to achieve something in life, we have to take one little step after the other. Each success will give the strength and the ambition for a greater success. Here is the way I figure now. First I finish the time I have left in the service. Then I will take a little rest. Then I want to have my own home and my family. Those things are definite. What comes after that has not crystallized out clearly. When the time comes, though, then I will know. I hope that you will still be able to play with my children and your grandchildren, Mother and Papa.

Please initiate me into all news concerning house buying. I am very interested. I also enjoy reading Hellmut's letters. I am throwing them away after I read them. If you want me to send them back, please let me know. Give the boy my regards. There is a debt of three dollars to be paid for the Epehian Society. I would appreciate your paying it, Mother. I am rather short his month yet because I paid the last 100 Marks on my scooter. Good-bye and God bless you all, the whole bunch of you.

Your sunny boy, Peter

The Edelweiss (a flower that grows in the Alps at high elevations) is from Garmisch.



May 20, 1954

Dear Mother,

I received your letter this morning. I guess you know which one I mean. I just sent you a letter two days ago, saying that everything was running on schedule. I am feeling as always, sometimes happy, sometimes blue, sometimes grey, but always looking forward to coming back and seeing my big and little sweethearts. Sometimes I feel so that I don't even feel like eating. But that passes again and then I eat as I always do.

Yesterday I saw a movie that really made me both glad and sad. It was a movie mostly about life in Los Angeles. It was called, "The Golden Garden." I saw the CBS Television City, the

Belmont Theatre on Vermont, Safeway and Ralph's on Vermont. I was trying to see Constitution where you work, but no luck. Vine and Sunset I saw, the post office in Beverly Hills, Hollywood Boulevard and many places that I don't even have room to mention. Just to let you know that I am all right and not to worry about me.

With all my love, Peter



May 21, 1954

Dear Papa and dear Mama,

Two days ago I drove downtown on my red scooter and got the information you asked for. I could not get a folder for the camera, but the price is 600 Marks. As you can see, the extra lens costs 77 Marks. I also got a list of used cameras presently available at the Photo Post. A new list is printed every two months (of used cameras). This list is ten days old. See what you can do with it.

Yesterday I spent a very nice evening with my friend Heinz. After business was over at five, I went upstairs and slept till 2030 hours, and then I drove out to my friend. We both needed to talk to each other and confide what is moving our hearts. I did not at first think I could talk with Heinz in such a way, but I was entirely wrong. He has a heart of gold. He told me I could have anything from him except his girl Hildegard. You will see a picture of the two one of these days.

I would like you to explain something to me if you can. How is it possible that I have not been able to cry a tear in over five months? It is a heavenly relief to do this if you are sad or disappointed. You are a bit older than I; maybe you have had this experience also. Sunday I will go with Heinz on another excursion if the weather permits.

Don't do anything about a house without consulting me also. If you are ready to buy a house, please send me a picture of it. I hope it will be located somewhat out of town – some place where there are many birds and wild flowers.

In love,

Your soldier-son Peter

Papa, dear, why did you not write any of your own words in that letter with that poem? You should have said hello and told me how everything is growing in our garden. Say hello to Alice for me and Polly, too.



May 26, 1954

My dear Parents,

Thanks for both your letter Papa and Mother from the 20th, together with Hellmut's and Sonja's letter and the stamps. It was a real nice break in our busy schedule these busy days. The monthly report is due once more, and everyone has to be a little more on their toes at that time. Tonight I worked from 7– 9 overtime with no extra pay, but a nice bottle of cold beer from our boss. That was really a good refresher.

I want to send you a line to tell you that I am fine and make use of the stamps which you have sent me. It was a beautiful day today, nice enough to go swimming. But I was sitting in the office and was working. O boy, would I have loved to go outside and drive to the green pastures on my scooter. Maybe it will be nice this weekend; then I will catch up on what I have missed.

Yesterday we had a wonderful show at the hospital theatre, "The Phillip Morris Show." Little Johnny, who calls for Phillip Morris, was there in person and signed my program. Also something else new happened. We had to turn in all our script money for altogether new money. This is done in order to stop the black-market business which has developed around the military money. The new money looks a lot prettier than the old.

Also, thank you for the pictures; that was very quick service, quicker than with the coat which I have still not inquired about. Thank you also for sending me along Hellmut's and Sonja's letters. That is good enough for me if I get their mail through you. I know that they don't have the time to write every Tom, Dick and Harry. I don't feel like writing to everyone either. It is an obligation to me and not a pleasure to have such a big correspondence. You can always forward my letters to the mine if the kids are interested to know how their kid brother is getting along in Germany. He is having a jolly good and rough time, depending on how the wind is blowing. As the saying goes; you get nervous in the service. I will need that good old civilian life in order to simmer down again. But I always say, it is a good experience to be living with Tom, Dick and Harry, and to be taking orders from Joe Shmo. I wonder how that independent brother of mine will feel if he is one day robbed of his wonderful freedom of doing what he pleases?

Did you say in eight months I will be sailing? By now it has been cut down to seven. I am really surprised at myself what a good soldier I have turned out to be. I really can be proud of the work which I am doing for our country. Maybe Hellmut and Arthur will be my replacement here. You can never tell, although I do not wish it upon him. I just can't see my big brother as a soldier and in uniform.

I am sending you three of the many pictures which were taken at the silver anniversary. The girl I have my arm around was my girl for that evening. She is the cousin of my friend; she is pretty with real big eyes, but should be two years older. When I come back to the States, my big brother and I have to go on some double dates. How about it Hellmut? Has Hellmut no girlfriend yet? I bet he is too busy at the mine to pay much attention to them. The other girl on the picture is my friend's girlfriend. Her name is Hildegard; my girl's name is Inge. And my friend's name is Heinz, as you know already. So much for today, dear parents, I'll leave this letter open until the mailman has come tomorrow. Maybe there is a letter from you in the mail.

Good night my dear Mother and Papa. You are my Father and Mother, are you not?

Your son,

Peter

I have many friends in this world but there are only two people in the world who I can call Mother and Father. Why be only my friends when you are my Mother and Father?





June
1954

Active Duty in Germany

June 1, 1954

Last Saturday I received the first two L.A. (Los Angeles) paper from the 7th and the 8th of May. I have read, studied and enjoyed them. Thanks a lot. I also received a letter with some more airmail stamps, together with Hellmut's and Nellie's cards.

Yesterday I had off. I went downtown for you, Mother, and inquired about the coat (Loden Frey). The store where I went really had a big selection of colors and styles. The catalogue does not do justice to the selections they have; but it will give you an idea. The plain coat costs 122 Marks. Others with camel wool cost up to 160 Marks. There are also some where perlon is combined with the "Loden." Just let me know what you would like to have, but be specific and I will buy it for you. The company is also exporting to the States. The people did not know though if any stores in L.A. were carrying the coats.

I have had Saturday, Sunday and Monday free. That was really nice. I did not do much but visit some people I know. If the sun would have been shining I would have been real brown today. The sad story is that the sun is usually shining when I sit in the office. I find that the best medicine for my mind and body is to be lying in the sun.

I have definitely postponed my furlough till next month. Ruth just wrote me that she had no other visitors scheduled at that time. I am planning to take thirteen days beginning the sixth or eleventh of July. I am really looking forward to this vacation. It gives me a chance to relax, recuperate and get real spoiled by my sister.

Bye-bye dear parents, tell me what's new when you find time. If there is anything new that is. Otherwise drop me a line when you find the time and feel like it.

Best wishes and love from our son, Peter



June 5, 1954

Dear Parents,

I am herewith forwarding the money which I received this morning. You have something special in mind with it? I also received four LA papers this morning; and I received the edelweiss letter yesterday. The colored pictures from the mountains I will take along to Ruth on my furlough. I hope you are all fine. Yesterday I read a little book I really enjoyed. It was a collection of ten letters written to a friend by Rainer Maria Rilke. Maybe you can get it from the University Library? Sunday and Monday I have off. I can understand why you do not want the conflicting spirit of Hellmut and Sonni in your kingdom. You want a quiet evening. But it is still good that the young people have lots of guts and pep in their veins. They are young.

Good-bye, may that spirit of calmness be in your house that comes after a life lived to the best of your know-how!

Your son, Peter



June 10, 1954

Dear Mother and Papa,

I received your letter from the 30th of May, Mother, plus your letter from the 31st of May, Papa. As you know by now, I forwarded the money because I did not know what you had in mind.

I do not remember the candy which I received from Huebner. It must have been a long time ago that I received it. You also made a hint about writing to Mrs. Bloss. I am sorry that I disappointed you, but you must understand that I don't have the spirit to write certain letters. I know that it would make you happy to know that I write to her. But again, the heart must be in it.

It is a peculiar thing the way I feel about certain things now. I enjoy receiving an order instead of being asked to do something. I like people to speak to me firmly and gently. And that is the way I like to do it. I respect and love people for such a way. My boss is sometimes rough, but the next minute he will buy me a cup of coffee. Under roughness there is a very kind heart. That is the way it is in the army and in life also.

It is difficult for you to understand this because you only know me as being very gentle and ready to make someone happy. It is rougher in the outside world than under the protective environment at home. Great disappointment hit me when I found this out. I was not ready to enter into such a climate. But life has placed me in this position. Now is really not the time to speak about this yet. Everything is still a bit strange. If I talk now, it will probably upset you; so I rather not say anything at all. I don't want you to worry about me. But I want you to leave it up to my good judgment and the strength within my power to do the best I can. There has come the time now when I must learn from life. You have given me the seed and the foundation. Now I must rely upon myself to build from there on.

Maybe you understand me, maybe not. Many people have been misunderstood. The only thing is that it hurts a little if the parents don't understand the growing up of their son. I will trust that you will believe in what I do although you do not always understand it. I want you to feel that you have done a good job on your son. Be happy when your children are sure of what they want to do and are able to take care of themselves. Children do not do wrong if they want to deviate from the way of life the parents have led.

This is not exactly a Father's day letter. I will have a different design in my life. The world progresses only if we want to improve on the old system.

No matter what happens I will not forget that you have given me this life and cared for me when I was not able to care for myself. No matter what road a child chooses, the child will always be loved by its parents.

I am happy to read that the evening hours of your life fill you with more peace and joy than you have known before. Each one for himself has to find his way through experience and struggle, joy and sorrow.

My love to you all, but Papa is especially meant today.

Peter



June 16, 1954

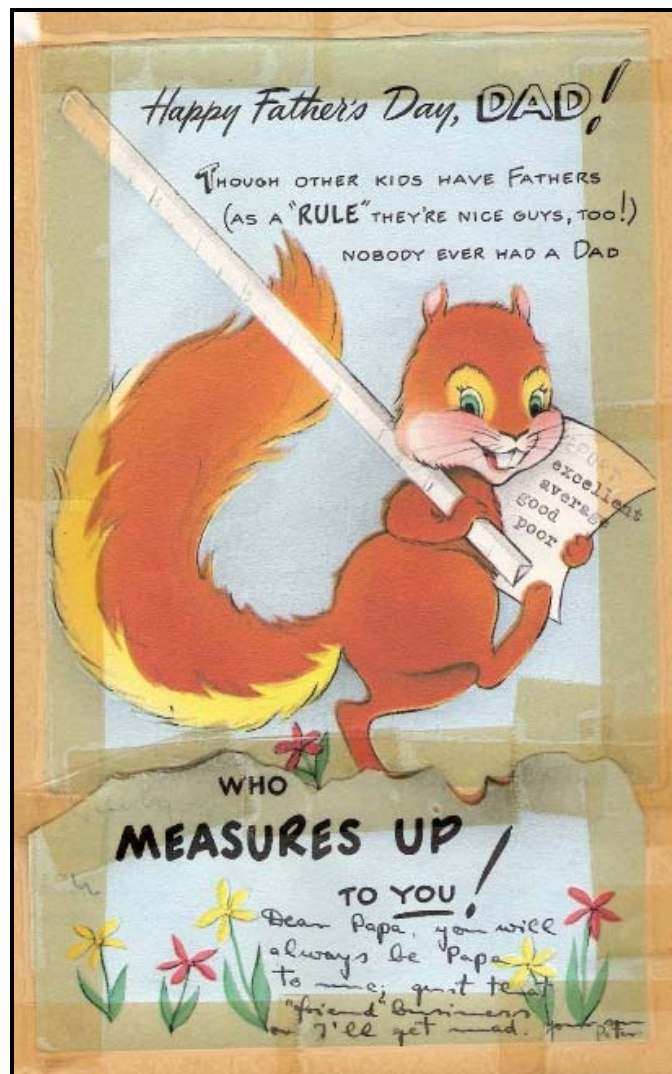
Dear Parents,

I received your letter from the 9th of June this morning. Thanks. Listen, Mother, I perfectly understand if you don't feel like writing because you are tired and not in the mood. I feel the same way. I'll see you anyway in about seven or eight months and then we can catch up on all the news without any trouble.

I have been having lots of work and responsibility in the last few weeks, because I have become very well informed how our office is run. Last week I arranged for a plane to take a patient to another hospital and did all the transfer work. So you can see that I am pretty sure of what I have to do. Yesterday I had a little disappointment with my scooter. When it was parked in front of a friend's house some kids must have thrown it over and broke off the starter. Too bad! Otherwise everything is fine. I have been happily working and abiding my time. I love the newspaper.

With love, Peter

Father's Day – 1954



June 21, 1954

Dear Mother,

I received your letter from the 15th of June today. I can definitely see that conditions at home are not in the best shape. I know that it affects you more than anyone else because your own daughter is involved. I know how much you would like to help, but still are powerless to do anything. That is hard. I do not think that you can do anything. You have to let Sonni go. At the cost of all your energy you might and might not achieve something. You have seen a lot of life and lived a rather normal life. You are doing your work nicely in the office and get along with everyone. That is a sure sign that you are fine. You must assert your position. That is the only way you can preserve your happiness. I am real proud of you if you can and will do this. Sonni is a very difficult person to get along with. I myself will not make an attempt to tell her anything. She is moonlight walking. I am not able to look into the deepest corner of her heart. I cannot say if there is mentally something the matter with her. I know that she has been under terrific strain for the last ten years. She is a very eccentric girl. And with this attitude will not be able to make use of what she might know. The reason why she wants to write is because there are so few people she can actually talk to and find understanding and approval. Although Hellmut is also fanatic in a way, I approve of the way he handles life.

Believe me, Mother, you will be proud of us if you can see that we boys have a solid footing in life. We cannot just copy your life if we don't feel like it. I see that you understand this now. Are you not proud of me when you think of me? I am wearing the best uniform in the world. I am healthy and strong enough to be a soldier like anyone else. And I am doing a good job. I bet you would have been sadder about me today if I was home because of a medical discharge and still pulling on your apron string like a little child. When you married you wanted a man not a little boy. You wanted someone who was strong and could assert his position. Believe me, Mother, it was tough for me at first, because my life at home in no way prepared me for a soldier's life. If you do not rather see me as I am today, then I am sorry that I have hurt you. I must be independent now and decide for myself. If you have the right understanding, Mother, then you will be prouder of me as a soldier then you were previously when I was an "A" student. But it is up to you how you want to feel. I want you to be a happy person. At the moment you might also have your heartache about your son, maybe not. I don't know anymore. But one day, I know that you will be happy to be playing with my little tots.

Life is a fight in a way. You have to assert your position. Know what you want and don't let anyone confuse you. I am happy that I had my time in the army now. This has placed me in life with both feet. I have my struggles, too. But shucks, I am not going to let anything get me down. Don't let anything get you down, nothing. Did you hear that? For my sake, be yourself. The way you get along with people at work is a sure sign that you are a courageous woman.

Now comes something else. I need the money which I sent home from over here. Either Papa will let me keep the German money or I will stop my allotment. It does not matter to me which way it is done. But the money I get from Bremen this month I will keep for myself, because I cannot stop my allotment this month any more. Let me know which way you want me to do it. In two weeks I am going on furlough. I am really looking forward to it. I am going to have the best time in my life.

Your letter today has really made my happy, because I have seen that you are more sure of yourself than ever before. Let Sonni go. Let Sonni work for her living like any other human being has to. If she has no roof over her head and nothing to eat, she will get down to business. You

need not support her anymore. I am proud of it myself that I am old enough and strong enough to shift for myself. If she supports herself, she can be like she wants. Only little children can't shift for themselves.

So long, Mother,

Peter



June 24, 1954

Dear Parents, dear Brother, and dear Sonni – you are included if you like to listen to such worldly talk.

Yes, Sonni, you can take some advice from the very youngest brother of the Laue tribe. You know the saying, “the one who laughs last, laughs the best.” Well, the one who is born the last will love and live the best. Yes, folks, you have a son who wants to see the job finished and done right. If you are looking for satisfaction, that is the way to get it. But you won't get it by leaving your job half done. Isn't that right, Hellmut? If you stop your mining business now, you would be in a real mess.

That was really an accomplishment for you to write me such a long letter. And I am not even your girlfriend. How is that explainable? Are you trying to get me interested in the mine? Or is it just plain brotherly love? Whatever it was, I enjoyed the letter. But you know, I also am not crazy about writing letters. But I write you anyway once in a while to let you know how everything is progressing.

It looks as if the mine will pay off one day. Hellmut, if your mine pays off when I am still in Germany, send me about a thousand bucks. There are a couple of things I want to buy here if there is some money flying around loosely. Otherwise don't send me nothing. I am going to earn everything that I really want to buy.

My scooter is a 1951 model, NSU make. It is a lot of fun to ride it. But I will not bring it back. The newest and the best I will only bring back. Your girl looks cute, just like a real “Lauser.” You need a tomboy kind of a girl who will love to wear Levis, Hellmut. You can't use a princess. You need someone full of life and fun.

I am having a lot of fun with work lately. Tonight I am playing tennis. And maybe after that I will go swimming in the river. Two days ago I went after work to a café by a lake together with a friend. We listened to a fine outdoor orchestra there. And while listening we had good cold beer. I am sure I will miss that good German beer when I get back to the States. It tastes better than a coke.

On the fifth I am going on furlough. I will use my own transportation. I have gotten American plates now. Now I can get a ration book for gas. I am entitled to 20 gallons per month. Twenty gallons cost me three dollars and twenty five cents. That is not bad at all. Boy oh boy will I have a lot of fun. I am a good worker, but also a real adventurer, just like Hellmut, only with a different angle to it.

As you will notice by the abrupt finish in my letter, I am going. I will play tennis. That is a lot more fun than sitting in a stuffy office and pounding away at the typewriter. I have been pounding away at it all day anyway already.

Mother, you can write me anything you want. What I don't like or can't agree with will go in one ear and out the other. And I will be honest to tell you about everything that I cannot agree with. Fair enough?

Bye-bye, Peter

Have I told you yet that I will send no more money home? I am going to keep the money from Bremen, or if you don't like that setup, then I will stop my allotment.



June 28, 1954

Dear Mom,

I can't work anymore, but maybe I can bring a letter for you together. I received a letter from you today from the 23rd. Things don't look too cheery at home. I am glad you got your own room where you can preserve your good cheer and a healthy way of life. One thing I will tell you, Mother, if things have not straightened out by the time I get home in January, then I will get a place of my own. Your son Peter is one boy who can stand on his own two feet. They are pretty large, too, size ten you know. And through the marching in basic training they have been enlarged. And the ten fingers are well trained to shift for themselves. They are so well trained that they can even feed two mouths. If Sonni does not straightened out and begins to shift for herself, she is going to drop off of my list. If she would be my child, she would not have gotten a penny since she was 21. Supporting her for such a long time was a big mistake you have made. I would be ashamed to take money from my parents if I would be that age and had two healthy hands. Just look at yourself, Mother; your one hand is crippled and you don't depend on anyone. That is wonderful. I am proud of you.

Well, well, well, Hellmut has taken Barbara for a ride. I wonder if Hellmut is still the same bashful fellow that he was two years ago when I went out with him. Maybe he is not. It comes all of a sudden sometimes.

If you want to call me Dieterle (endearing, diminutive name for Dieter), I won't be mad at you. I have grown up, that's true. But you have not seen me for such a long time that it might be hard for you to know how your Dieterle really is.

Your foot will be alright again. You can have it operated on if it does not go away by itself. In our hospital all operations are done, from the biggest to the smallest. I had a cyst taken out of my head four weeks ago. It did not hurt a bit. I even had a couple of stitches put in. There was nothing to it. We got good doctors here. Only once in a while someone dies. My hair is grown back. You can't see a thing today anymore.

That is about all. Keep up your good work and the good spirits, just like the Irish.

So long, Peter

It does not pay to get a post office box. I will be the only one who will write you there.





July
1954

Active Duty in Germany

July 1, 1954

Dear Papa,

I received your letter from the 25th of June this morning. I am glad that you will not bother me with the camera thing; but yesterday I bought the Voigtlaender Prominent for 377. I bought it because you did not retract your words about that camera yet. I spent more money than I could afford because as you know, I am keeping my whole pay from now on. I hope to get the difference back when I go to Bremen. I will send the camera to you after I return from my furlough. I hope you will like the camera. It looks pretty fancy.

I am having a lot of fun here. But I have become too nervous with all the fun. When I hit the Sunshine State, I will simmer down. Next week I go on furlough. It better not rain. Have a good time in the mountains. And give my regards to the whole bunch.

Your son, Peter



July 3, 1954

A BIRTHDAY WISH FOR YOU,

M O T H E R

Hello, hello Mutti

For all you've done and all you do,
For every loving word and smile,
For kindness and encouragement,
For understanding all the while,
For all the things that "Mother" means - -
The things that are a part of you - -
This brings a grateful, loving wish
For happiness your lifetime through.



I am going on furlough tomorrow, wonderful, wonderful. Want to come along? This afternoon I will make some preparations. I bet you would have the best time if you come along with me. I am glad you are feeling good; received the letter from Sunday, 27th. I am happy to have brought happiness into your life, my dear Mother.

Your son, Peter



Bad Pyrmon, July 18, 1954

My dear Papa,

I just don't want to get wet, so I am extending my furlough. I am sending a telegram to my outfit today that I just can't make it by Sunday, that is today, midnight. Two wheels on a wet road at 75 km is more like ice skating, and I don't like to fly on my behind, because in this skating sport you don't always get up. And you know how happy Ruth is for every day I steal.

You know, Papa, you are pretty lucky that you have a birthday this month. You know why? Because otherwise you would not have gotten a letter. The fun and work at hand is much more interesting and important. The three last evenings or nights were ala mode. Yesterday evening I danced from 21:30 until 3:30 with the sweetest girl I have met in a long time. And you should have seen the jitterbug I danced; it was phenomenal. Every rhythm that you could remodel into a fast swing, I remodeled. When I went to bed at dawn, I practically fell in the bed. But today I could do it all over again. The last four nights we had some kind of a party every night. Even Ruth is getting into the swing of things. But now the fun is over for a while. As soon as the roads are dry, I will saddle my horse. And then within ten hours I will be a soldier of the US Army again. The next time the curtain goes up, I want to be in Paris; and at the last curtain call, I will be in the Sunshine State, drama, "one" will end there and number "two" will begin.

Now about your letter, Papa. You want me to buy the Exacta. But you know that I bought the Prominent for 377. The balance of the money I kept for myself because I need my full paycheck from now on to buy certain things and to finance a trip to Paris. I would prefer it, as I have written you already, to keep the Marks I get each month instead of stopping my allotment. If you want the camera and cannot give me the Marks from here for it, you can always send me dollars. There is really no problem involved. I will mail you the Prominent when I return to Nuremberg. It is in a safe place now.

I was in Bremen for one and a half days and visited everybody and everything old. Oma (grandmother) was in Heiligenfeld visiting Niebuhrs at the time. I stopped there on my way back. Niebuhrs send you also regards. Tante (aunt) Barbara had just moved to her new but still unfinished apartment. She lives now at: An der Weide 32, near the train station. The apartment is very nice. Horst was on a business trip and I did not get to see him. One night I slept at Franz Wilhelm's bachelor apartment in the office. The next night I stayed with Heilo, a swell girl. That was a lot nicer. She sends you regards, too. I also visited Lilly and Helga. Helga really surprised me. She has become such a nice girl. Too bad she is my sister. I saw Mrs. Hauck and Mrs. Lichte – health food store. The lady who worked for Mrs. Lichte, her name is Gertrude; Mother might know her, lives now in Compton near Los Angeles. I visited Emmes here, Holzmanns, and Luttmans. Herman Luttmann is going to New York on the 28th of this month, Mrs. Sagebiel and Mrs. Helmke I also visited. I only met Mrs. Holzmann. Emmes had to give up their mill after 24 years. Their lease was over and they could not renew it. Naturally everyone is sending you all best regards.

So long my Papa; to me you were so wonderful, to me you were so good. Do you know that song? Keep up the good work, but don't get to heaven before I do. Happy birthday to Sonni. Good-bye till later.

Your son, Peter

(Note: Bad Pyrmont was one of the refuge cities where Peter & family hid during World War II.)



July 24, 1954

Dear Mother,

Yesterday morning I started to work again. I had a very, very nice furlough; but now I am glad to start to work again. I received a bunch of letters from you, but at the moment I have not time to answer any of them. It is Saturday morning and I have to work. But I wanted to tell you that I am fine. At least this will be one trip now that you will not make in vain to the post office.

Your son Peter is always fine. This is one boy you won't have to worry about. He'll get along anywhere. You should call me Dieter if you like. It makes no difference to me. I love the book and the game you sent me. That is just my speed. Keep up the good work, Mother. You are doing fine and I am proud of you. You will be proud and happy about me, just wait and see. Hellmut is another fine kid. He is going to go places. Dara feels the same about him. I am happy that I can keep the money from Bremen. Thanks a lot.

Well, I'll see you later; time is going so fast and I don't know where to. That's O.K. with me.

So long, your son Peter



July 26, 1954

My dear Mother,

I must compliment you for writing me so many letters. Today I again received three letters from you.

It is nice to hear from you what is going on back home. You and Hellmut write me the most interesting letters. You are writing me what is going on all around you; however Papa dear and Sonni are writing me too much what is going on inside of them. That is of no particular interest to me. You know, I just have to look into myself if I want to read such philosophical letters. I like to hear about our garden and about how the house is furnished now, what kind of work Sonja is planning to do, and so on.

Yes, dear Mother, I certainly noticed that in one of your letters you were particularly interested to tell me that I should not be too hasty about marrying. Don't you worry, Mother. I have grown a pretty realistic head on those shoulders of mine since I have been the army. No one is pulling the wool over my eyes. I am only finding out over here what makes the world go around. I like companionship and nice girls; over here it is a very harmless entertainment. I will marry one day; that is sure. I hope you will then agree with my choice. But if you don't, there is nothing I can do about it. Anyway, I will be living with the girl I will marry. I cannot marry someone whom

you would like to live with. The whole thing is no sugar pie; but I know it's an undertaking that is wonderful. Tell me, Mother, why did you marry? I am sure you know the reason. Don't worry Mother, I can take care of myself.

Your idea about my having a room for myself is not bad at all. I will definitely do this if I do not find life at home agreeable to me. There is one thing I want to tell you. I think it is lousy if you will move out of your house. If things do not clear up between Sonni and you, then Sonni will have to go and not you. If she will let you move out, then she is a louse. Papa and you get along fine. That means that Sonni will have to move out.

I am happy I can keep the Marks and still continue my allotment. It seems to me that you are doing something special with the money, but I have not the faintest idea what it could be. You might use it to buy yourself an ice-cream soda and a corned beef sandwich every day. Who knows, but you and Papa and Hellmut. I'll have to see if someone won't squeal. I am getting curious now.

Boy oh boy, has the banana tree grown. I might be able to pick the first bananas when I return. Thanks for the pictures. I get along with my paycheck all right now. The book is wonderful. I told you once, but I'll tell you again, because this time I mean it. Guideposts I do not want anymore. I still have two unopened ones in my desk. That is how I like them. With the game I have been killing my brain and patience already. I am surely glad our home is once more clean. I surely don't want to come back to a garbage dump.

Tell me, how is it with Hellmut's draft proposition? Will he, or will he not be called? This really would interest me. If Hellmut would have been smart, he would have entered with me. I am all finished in a few months, and he would have been, too. It's too late now. He missed the boat. I will be getting off the boat, and he will be getting on. What a shame! ! ! ! ! I bet Hellmut will be rich one day. He only has to give me enough for a swimming pool and tennis court. The rest I can manage myself.

My vacation was tops. I will make a short summary of it. All told my vacation added up to 19 days. I covered 1,400 km on my furlough, using my own transportation. On Sunday the 4th I left to drive or ride up to Ruth. I was not supposed to leave until the 5th, so keep this under your hat. I arrived safely. And luckily no MP's (Military Police) stopped me. On the 12th I rode up to Bremen. I stayed there till Wednesday, and then I returned to Ruth. There I stayed till the morning of the 21st. I was supposed to be back on the night of the 19th; but due to strong continuous rains, I did not want to risk it. See how intelligent a boy I am. I called up my outfit and explained the story. The CQ – Charge of Quarters, said he will straighten my matter out. My commander was very nice when I returned. He had extended my furlough five more days. He also could have put me in the stockade if he wanted to; but he did not.

Twice on my trip I was stopped by the German police because I violated traffic regulations. Once I overtook where I should not have; and I drove in a part of town which was off limits for my type of conveyance. I just played dumb. I just said, "Nix verstehn – American." So they said to each other, another cop was along, "We'll have to let this fellow go." This time I was smarter than the cops.

At Ruth's place it was dull the first few days. Ruth did not want to let me go out, because she was afraid I was going to cut up too much. But then we went out together with the neighbors. We had a wonderful time. Going dancing and doing every little thing that goes with it. I had to

even borrow fifty Marks from Ruth in order for me to show Ruth and a little girl, 17 years old, not so little anymore, and myself a wonderful time. So you can see that without the Marks I would be a real "Stubenhocker" (couch potato). And I am just the opposite of that. It takes a little money to get around. And I am eager to earn enough to see something, do something, and buy the things I like.

You want coins? I got to write that behind my ears. If I would not have reread your letter, I would have forgotten all about it.

I certainly agree that you should have a print of the picture made, especially if it is for me. With what kind of a camera do you take those pictures? If I can swing it before I leave, I will bring a good camera along for myself. So, the dog got some young ones? That is cute. I wonder if Hellmut will bring them up as vegetarians?

I am glad that the marriage is annulled. But I am sure that this experience cannot be forgotten so soon by Arthur and his mother, and maybe Hellmut too. One should really knock off his horns beforehand. Then one is much more sure, and the price will not be a divorce suit.

The movies you mentioned I never saw. I'll be living for a long time. I'll have enough chances to see it yet if it is really so good. Thank you also for Hellmut's letter. Thank you also for the stamps. You must have guessed by now that only a small fraction of them is returning to you. But they are all being used by me; so you can see that I am not as lazy as it may rightly seem to you.

Please give my regards to Alice and Polly. I like them a lot; and I will visit them very shortly after I return. Are they still living at the old address?

Good-bye Mother, you are a good woman. And if I tell you this, you can really believe it, because my words are worth their weight in gold. Oh, if words have no weight, they are not worth anything. I am just kidding. You are steadily earning your money since almost eight years. That is more than my sister can say. You are so busy working now that you do not have the time to worry about us. That is the way it should be. I can see that you are worrying much less. You can put me into the same category. You see, when you work, you can't worry; and if you worry, you can't work. That is very simple, isn't?

So long Muttchen, (endearing word for mother)

Love, Peter

Call me Peter, Pete or Dieter, use your imagination. You have a splendid one. To be on the safe side, you can send Hellmut and Arthur birthday wishes. I am sending you this four-leaf clover. I just found it in my pen. That's for a lucky strike.





August

1954

Active Duty in Germany

August 6, 1954

My dear Mother,

Thanks for your two letters of July 29 and August 1st. You told me a lot that was of interest to me. I'll try to get what you asked for. I expect to have off this afternoon, because I worked overtime last week.

For Papa this mountain living will be a great thing. He has always been a nature boy. With me you won't be able to count on going to the mountains to live. I'll just use the place there for a working vacation spot. I will go back to school when I return; but only in September. I want to work in a summer camp for the greatest part of the time.

It is perfectly all right with me if you want to sell the house. Papa will want to move to the mountains anyway. And for Sonni and yourself it is silly to have such a big place. Most likely I will be living on my own when I return. You are happy that you can shift for yourself, and I am too. I am young and strong and want to prove myself. You can understand this surely. You will have a big pleasure to see me again. Everyone whom I have lived together with says that I have changed to my advantage.

I have been having a good time lately, a reason for my few messages. Yesterday evening I went to a movie; after that I went swimming with my partner. I got home in the morning. It was wonderful. Tomorrow I drive with a friend to Heidelberg, and also expect to go to Bensheim (Peter's birthplace). Just a weekend pass. So we plan something every week that we enjoy. We always keep busy doing something nice. This afternoon I have off and will go swimming.

About my work for the future I have definite plans. I want to work with kids, teach them how to play, work, be happy and grow up into strong and sensible men and women. I strongly hope to have a job as a counselor this next summer. My time in the army is a good backbone for this work. Maybe I will get connections through the Epehbian Society (an honor society for students who did well in high school).

I have landed in the swimming pool. There is lots of activity here. The water is ???, and the temperature of this sunny day is 27 C (centigrade). Do I have it nice to be outside in the sunny sun! We really have a very progressive and liberal 16th Field Hospital. In an infantry outfit I would be running up and down the hills. There is surely no harm in that, but no particular fun either.

I ran around for close to an hour before I came to the pool trying to hunt up some coins for you, but no luck. I got the knife for you, though. It's a cute knife. Even for a lady it would be nice. It is about as long as my little finger with a mother of pearl covering. It has two blades and a fingernail file.

Today I got a note that I am receiving Monday again 208.50 Marks. I do not know if something else will come this month for the camera you want me to buy for you. I really would like to make a down payment on the camera you want me to buy. Because then I could take some decent pictures. I really can't say how I stand with the money. So far I have only received 210 Marks a month. That I used to pay for my personal things. So if you still want me to buy the Exacta you have to send me the money. I still owe 100 Marks on my cycle – want to buy a camera for myself and a watch. That will come out just even, because I only draw four more paychecks in

Germany. Just think of it – only four more. I figure that in about four and a half months I'll be sailing once more across the Atlantic. And if I am sailing across the Pacific one day, but God forbid – also there I will get along.

Life is colorful indeed, so many shapes and shades I see now. And some of them are very attractive. Bathing suits are more conservative over here, though. I only paid a quarter though (probably the admission charged to the swimming pool), and for that a beauty show I cannot expect.

I'll tell you what I did this morning in the office. I wrote an S.O.P. – Special Operating Procedure – on how to transfer our patients to larger hospitals. I enjoyed doing this. My knowledge of how to make an outline came in handy. Once in a while you need something you learn in school.

I never saw the big tank – have been gone too long. (Probably an aquarium).

Yes, about the knife once more. You wanted one for a lady to put on a chain. The one I got you cannot hang up. But since I liked it, I bought it. Someone will be happy about it. You can even save it for me if you can't get rid of it. The knife was 15 Marks. Three bucks will cover it.

Thanks for renewing the Mirror, two more months is about the right time. After I received the last paper, I'll only have a little over a month left.

My boss in the office is leaving for the States the same time I am.

I would love to hit Paris before I leave. I don't know today if I have the chance. My German friend had to cancel the trip. By train I will not go, by cycle it is too far. Maybe one of my comrades who has a car will go? I can take fifteen more days leave over here. I am thinking about the Alps and Switzerland.

Helga is not a beauty contest winner, but sweet she is – a very homey girl. I would have dated her if she would not be my sister.

My friend who sleeps next to me likes the lamp book you sent. It was lying on my night table for two weeks; he got curious and started to read in it in a dull moment.

I am glad Papa gets along with Sonni. I am carved of different wood. I like to have people around me who are not so much occupied with their own self. We just can't work decently if we only get ourselves on our mind. One thing at a time is all I can do. If I dream and philosophize I cannot work.

You really can sell the house and build in the mountains. Now I can get along by myself.

So long Mother and Papa,

Your son, Peter



August 10, 1954

My dear Mother,

Yesterday I received your letter from the 4th of August. As far as I can recall I have not spoken to any of our friends or relatives about Papa's plans of quitting at the Aquarium Stock Company. I hope my memory is correct. I will not mention Papa's plans to anyone.

Mrs. Schnuphase has two old coins which she wants to give me for you.

As you will know by now, the camera has been mailed to you. I put the value of the camera at 200 Marks so you will not have any trouble with duty. I hope you won't. When I have my orders to return to the States in December, I can take any amount of merchandise along without having to pay duty. Everything which I send now which is worth more than \$50 costs duty.

Over the weekend I went to Bensheim and Heidelberg with my friend Dennis. It was a nice but a bit strenuous trip. Tonight I will go to bed early to be on my tiptoes tomorrow again.

It's a shame that Arthur has such a temper, but that is just one of those things.

With best regards,

Peter



August 15, 1954

My dear Mutti,

I received two letters from you last Saturday, yesterday. Your letters of late I enjoy very much. You tell of the news at home. And your attitude towards the changing conditions are definite. You are sure of what your place is in our family. I am also happy that you are taking an encouraging attitude towards my way of life. You are my Mother and it means something to me when you approve. For your sake, too, it was for me a challenge to be a good soldier for two years. I know that it is not simple for a mother not to see her son's face for two years. But that happens to many parents. Although I have been on my own now for many months, our love is the same, has even grown more understanding. I hope it will always remain this way. I have seen many cases where it has been otherwise.

I am not doing anything to return prior to my regular discharge date. As of October 1954 the possibility to get discharged earlier is not in effect anymore – a few more weeks earlier or later makes no difference to me now. The only thing is that I would have enjoyed to be home for Christmas.

Did I tell you that our trip to Heidelberg and Bensheim was wonderful? I love to take little excursions with a friend on my cycle. I wished I had about two months furlough. Then I would travel to almost every country in Europe. Well, the United States is large too, and my life is long.

My friend who sleeps next to me has looked into the book "Light from many Lamps." He likes it so much that he asked me to get one, may it cost what it wants. Please send me two more books. I have another friend who I would like to give one to.

Yesterday evening I went dancing. It was very nice. One of my friends was along. We often have a good time. Next weekend I plan a weekend trip to a place a little after Bayreuth. I hope the weather is good. There hasn't been a day in the last two weeks where there was not some rain.

Do you think our mine will produce anything this year yet? If anything comes out of it, there is one person here I would like to help. So you can see that money is very often needed for a good cause.

It makes me feel good that you feel happy in my room. I tried to keep it neat. When I return I would like someone to do it for me.

Well, dear Mother, keep up your spirit.

Your son,

Peter



August 23, 1954

My dear Mother,

Thank you for your two letters from the 17th and 18th of August. Circumstances are certainly changing rapidly up and down the ladder. If you do buy a triplex, I hope you do it soon, that you may again have your own place where you feel at ease and happy. A person needs a quiet spot.

I should say Arthur has a big temper, but still he is not a bad fellow. No sooner has he done something, does he regret it. That is the way it goes. We all often act without considering the consequences.

Was I ever your soul-mate? Oh, I don't know. These thoughts have been very far removed from me for many months.

Tell me, are you still attending S.R.F.?(Self Realization Fellowship). I feel no more binding to the group. If you have not cancelled my membership, than I will do it now.

Ruth is a brave girl. As far as spiritual hallucinations are concerned, she is completely over that. What gets her down is the lack of a steady companion, a husband. When she thinks about her loneliness, she gets melancholic, and her physical health suffers from this. Her heart bothers her when she is lonely. She is not optimistic enough to make her happy and strong.

I will be on the boat in December. Nothing will keep me here longer than necessary.

The little dogs are nice, but I don't like Sonja's looks. I cannot say what I don't like about it.

I was near Hof, Oberfranken, over the weekend. When I came back Horst was waiting for me. I have a busy week coming up. Horst is here; I have to work overtime and prepare for an inspection; an alert is scheduled. If you do not know what an alert is, then ask a GI (GI stands for "government issue").

Bye-bye my dear Mother

Your son Peter



August 27, 1954

My dear Mother,

Thanks for both letters from the 19th. Am I going to bring my cycle? No! I will buy a new one in the States. I am just crazy about riding a motorcycle. If I get a sidecar with it, I would take my sweetheart for a comfortable ride. I have given several sweethearts a ride on my cycle. Most of them like it a lot.

What a shame with Mary McLind. It was really a blow when I read this about Mary. The world is not ready for such people. A perverted or too idealistic attitude towards love and sex can cause many difficulties in young people.

It was a major problem for me. It's a good thing that I got the idea out of my head that you have to marry the girl you have a love affair with. Better to sow your wild oats before than after.

This experience must have left a deep wound in Mary's soul. People of her disposition are too easily carried away by emotions which they mistake for the real thing. We all have common sense, and we need to use it if we want to get along. Parents MUST NOT try to make their children overly ambitious. The child will never come to rest and be a serious wreck in no time flat. I am glad you are standing on your own. Be firm and stick to Papa. He needs you, although he won't show it. Papa will seldom show himself as he feels inside. I have the feeling that a tremendous struggle is on the inside, otherwise he would not change ideas and plans so rapidly.

The most harmful and devitalizing character traits are inferiority complexes. These complexes are all built in our mind. I am happy to know that you are getting rid of them.

As far as writing letters to various people, I would like to say this. I do not know what to write them. Sure, they have been very nice, and I have thanked them for this. I am in no mood to write. This friend of mine I cannot write any more because of his pessimistic attitude towards my mental well being. I need to associate with happy and positive people. That is why it is even a drain on my energy to be together with Ruth. But since she is my sister, the right thing for me to do is to cheer her up.

I am happy to know that you visit Walkups once in a while. Those are some of the people I like and I don know why. Give them my regards.

At least Papa and Hellmut and Arthur have some land if there should be no gold. To own a part of the beautiful earth is a treasure. I love the earth because so many nice things come of it.

My love to my Mother,

Peter





Peter
*The Lord's Scribe
and Storyteller*
www.stretcherbearers.com

September
1954

Active Duty in Germany

September 2, 1954

My dear Mother,

Got a letter from you today which sounded as if the picture was brighter again as far as Hellmut and Arthur are concerned. Sure hope so. The strongest horse can't last under those frictions. I am not entering the picture. I got my own sweet and sour little troubles.

I got several letters from you lately. I don't have them with me now, and I don't recall any questions. I am writing this letter while a lieutenant is lecturing about independence. That's what I call real freedom, when I can even write a letter now and get away with it.

If there is anything you want me to buy for you while I am still here, then let me know now. The time is going fast now. Now that I have my cycle all paid and all bills paid, I can buy a few things for myself. Today I have bought something I have always wanted. I have bought an "Omega" wristwatch. It is a 17 jewel self-winding watch. It's a honey. In the States it coast about 15 to 20 percent more. I could manage without the Marks now. But I am happy there are still four hundred more Marks coming my way before I leave. There are still a few more items plus a furlough for which I can use the money.

I am getting along fine here these days. There is plenty of work and more than enough amusement to keep me busy and entertain me. But all this work and fun won't and can't keep me here. There are a few certain "somebodies" whom I just got to see in the States as soon as possible.

I got a letter from Ernst today. He told me how he was getting along. And he also wrote me in regard to Sonja. I feel there is no harm in letting only you read the letter. I must agree with what he has written. I feel that Sonni is sick. These mental conflicts and disorders are frequent in our age. People, though, are afraid to admit to themselves or others that they are living under terrific mental strain. Many of us live under tension, but within normal limits.

I often feel that there is a great strain on my mind and I become depressed. If these depressions become too severe, there is something wrong. It is only slowly that I have extricated myself out of these depressing feelings. It was till last March that I had a consultation with a psychiatrist almost every two weeks. The thing is when you live under a bunch fairly normal and healthy individuals, you find by and by your way to the even road. If you live alone, your eccentric feelings will multiply. Sonni has been too secluded in her world. To live by yourself results with many complications in yourself. We need people to talk to and share our thoughts with. I would be like a chicken with his head cut off if I had to live all alone. In my estimation there is no use to argue with Sonni.

Another wind than that of the Laue family has to blow through her mind. Unconsciously she may feel that her parents are responsible for her present way of life. And therefore she will not accept advice from you. She is not sure of what she wants, otherwise she would have settled down ten years ago to pursue her goal. In an undirected life there cannot exist real happiness. A woman who is not a mother must have a very satisfying job in order to direct her creative feelings.

So long, best wishes,
Peter



September 8, 1954

My dear Mother,

Thank you for your letters. I always enjoy to hear from you. The news is very dramatic. I am keeping my distance altogether as if I did not belong to the family. Maybe Papa will leave his hands off, too. He cannot gain anything out of it. He never wanted much money. Working twenty-two hours a week will be enough. But Papa should have a nice garden he could take care of. A house outside of L.A. would be much nicer.

I am happy that you have come to see that S.R.F. was not the ideal solution to all problems. It is too complicated and too fanatic and too emotional. I agree with you. I need something simple in the way of religion. You know, I don't care a bit if I have 100 more lives on this earth. It is not a bad place to be where we want to escape from.

I have no other wish, dear Mother. I am inquiring though at the moment what the difference of prices of motorcycles is between here and the U.S. I want to buy a new one.

Best wishes to Hellmut and Papa,

Your son Peter



September 12, 1954

My dear Mother,

My little sweet Mother has a few grey hairs; I am sorry to hear this. That is no wonder, though, since the excitement at home has been great. I have nothing to add to the excitement; I have nothing to say. The children will come back in time. You will have to let them wander into life. One day they will come back to you. But you have Papa. He is a good man. He needs your love, dear Mother. He will not ask for it, will you Papa? But you are happy when Mother brings your slippers or when you love each other.

Helmut is smart to let Arthur try to manage alone. He has fought with him long enough. The whole thin isn't that important. There are other ways to earn a buck. And Hellmut is smart enough to know this.

The man in New York is the man I meant. He is negative about life. You remember how I used to be. I loved everyone, especially those with problems. This is a fire which has burnt itself out. My love is a steady one now for a few people. I like people and love to be able to do something for them. A sudden big enthusiasm never lasts long. But a little likening has a chance to get bigger.

No thanks, Mother, I do not want the book you mentioned. I have all the books here I need and that I have time for. But thanks anyway.

Kleins have received a print of those pictures, thoughtful Mother. I will also let you know as soon as I cancel my membership at S.R.F. It will be very shortly. It's good to hear that you enjoyed Dr. Bail's talk. I am always happy when you report to me about good movies you saw, etc. You should drag Papa more often to the movies and to the drugstore.

I am buying myself a reward for being such a good soldier. I am taking a brand new motorcycle along with me. I have selected the type already. It's a honey. For your comfort, dear Mother, it's not the fastest one either. Please don't make it tough for me with the money. I do not know how much of my money you have saved. But I can console you by telling you that you can have 300 of the 500 dollars back when I am discharged. I will need the \$500 the 15th of November.

Tell me, is the Pontiac still in running condition? It will be rather awkward to take my sweetheart for a moonlight ride on the cycle. It is past one o'clock in the morning. I wrote my sweetheart a letter first; that's why it got late. I also went to the show this evening. I saw an Indian picture. It wasn't good but exciting and got my mind off of California. Last night I saw Quo Vadis. It was good. Returning home on my cycle, I got soaked. But this morning everything was dry, except my trousers lost their crease.

And now I will give this sheet of sharp their crease – and greet you.

Good night,

Your son Peter



September 14, 1954

My dear Mother and Papa,

I received your letter from last Tuesday and was very happy about it. I am glad you are getting out of the hurricane of excitement. Let them all go, those affairs which are connected with Sonni. I have begun to settle down to a more even pace myself. I was wearing myself out with all the fun and excitement. Now I am eager to sleep more and just take it easy. I hope to be leaving the middle of December; however, it may be delayed till the 2nd of January 1955. You seem to have a big surprise for me in store. If it is connected with money, and the \$500 – if it interferes with that surprise, then let me know right away. I do not want to interfere with the surprise because I have a hunch it may be bigger than the motorcycle. I am getting anxious to know what the surprise is. It is not easy to wait. Thanks for your letter. Regards to Papa.

Love, Peter



September 14, 1954

My dear Papa,

I am writing you these secret lines to get a hint about those secret plans which Mother has for me. Are they really so good and exciting? And are they worth it for me not to buy a motorcycle here? From my letters you must have guessed by now how I love to ride a motorcycle. Sooner or later in the States I want to earn myself a motorcycle. With shipping costs the motorcycle which I was planning to get here comes to about \$650. I wrote Mother this morning to forget about sending me the \$500, because she says she has something special planned for me and I don't like to cut into her finances too deeply. But I was just wondering if this surprise is worth it for me to renounce that motorcycle which I would just love to have gotten. Motorcycle riding is a sport for me which I love. I was planning on the newest NSU model, 250 ccm (cubic centimeter of piston displacement.) sports type.

So long, your son

Peter



September 25, 1954

Dear Mother,

I received your letter from the 20th and I was stunned by the way approached me. You say that you do not care what we do, but Know that your care a lot. And you could hide that in your lines. Motorcycle riding is a sport for me. I love it so much that sooner or later I want to get one for my fun and leisure. I do not expect to take my girl for a moonlight ride on the cycle. But there will be a backseat. But do you know how much I hate to ask for money; also if it is only a loan for a few months. I would have loved to take a cycle from here along, because I can get just the size I like. I have not bought a cycle yet. You misunderstood me. I sounded a bit peeved, I guess, but don't let that upset you. I don't know how much it hurts Papa to lend me the money. If it does hurt him then please don't send it to me. I have patiently stayed in the Army two years, and won't mind to wait a year for a cycle. But I love you despite what I wrote.

Love, Peter



September 26, 1954

My dear Mother,

Your last letter still bothers me. And I have to speak out my mind about it. You have written me that you have been slapped so often by life, and I imagine that you meant your children in part by this, that you can take this, too, what I have done now. I was indeed hurt by your remark, because I felt that I have so far carried myself in such a way that you can be proud and respect me as I have love and respect for you. Have I not stood my man where I have been placed? Out of respect to my parents and my own self I have always been eager to do right. Indeed I have had many bitter pills to swallow, especially during these last twenty months. But I know it has been worth the effort. And in part I have tried hard that my parents may be proud of their son. That you may know that you have brought up a child who is a credit to you now, and later, when you may not be here anymore.

I know you are concerned about my life and my health. You do not want to see me get hurt. I am just as concerned about my health. I want to be strong and able in every way. But if you mean this, then please do say this. Do not say that I have hurt you. Believe me, Mother, the mental suffering which in part was brought about by S.R.F. has been far greater than any physical pain which I have known so far. And how well did you mean it, dear Mother, only to realize yourself that it was not the right thing.

I have driven a scooter for three months and a motorcycle for almost four months. I have driven over 6,000 km. They have been 6,000 happy kilometers. Aren't you happy that I have enjoyed the 6,000 km? My motorcycle has been my joy and pride. I am very sad that I have to sell my motorcycle tomorrow morning at eight o'clock. I will



be losing too much money if I wait till December. Now I will be riding the street car again. I have made many excursions with my cycle; and someone was always eager to come along and ride on the backseat. I looked

yesterday once more at the cycle I had planned to buy with rather sad eyes, remembering your letter. It took a chunk of my joy. I will not proceed with anything now until I receive a very frank answer to this letter. I will not take any more furlough. I still have two weeks coming until I know what is what. So that in case I do bring a motorcycle along, I may pay you back as soon as possible. Please write me soon about this.

Did I tell you that I spent a three-day pass in Bad Oberdorf? I took a hotel room in a fine hotel – Alpendorf – it's on the way to Oberjoch. They were three wonderful relaxing days with breakfast in bed. I saw Mrs. Brutscher for a few minutes. All we did was reminisce a bit. I only stayed there for twenty minutes. Her husband died last year. Sonthofen is only a five hour ride by train from Nuremberg; and there is no changing of trains. While I was there I climbed the Isler (a mountain) with a friend. Do you remember that mountain? (Many of the higher peaks in the Austrian Alps have crosses at the very top. Many hikers who reach the top like to carve their names or initials into the cross. That is what Peter is doing.

I have not inquired about the pins yet. The girls in the office have never heard about garnet. Your jacket costs about twenty-five dollars.

Well, dear Parents, that is about all for this Sunday. I have spent a very relaxing day. I went to clean my cycle a little yet since I am selling it tomorrow. However, the rain makes this job rather unpleasant.

I have a short three months left over here. I will be very happy to return. I know our differences will be ironed out by then. You know it is a bit unpleasant to know there is a difference or misunderstanding if you have to wait a week, or rather two weeks for a reply. You and I both mean well, and we will get our differences ironed out.

Best regards,

Your son, Peter



September 26, 1954

Dear Papa,

Thank you for your quick answer to my postal. I am happy you are so nice about the matter. The money is what draws me back. I have not earned it yet and would have to borrow it. My sole purpose is not to have a cheap transportation, but the pleasure I have riding a cycle. Southern California is the best place to have a cycle because there is so little rain. Very plainly, my position is this, if it is too much of a burden for you to lend me the money, I will wait till I have earned it. But, Mother, please don't calculate that later on I will have become more sensible.

I am glad you are happy when I return. My sweetheart tells me that much more often. I have received the two books. Thank you.

By-bye, your son Peter



September 28, 1954

My dear Mother and Papa,

I received your letter from the 21st today. I see that you will be able to send me the money, and I am very happy about it. Don't you worry dear parents, you will always be proud of me; that is part of my aim in life. In small things I may have disappointed you, but on the whole, can't you be rather proud of me? Money I will always be able to earn, but that is the least. I have proven to you and myself that I can hold a job and do it well during these twenty months in the army. I may honestly say that I have become rather proficient at office work. I will ask you to send me the money as soon as possible, so that I can send the cycle over soon before I will arrive once more in the country and to the street which is so very dear to me. This week I will be arranging the sale. I am happy you are well, Mother. Please don't get grey hair on account of me.

With love, your son Peter





October
1954

Active Duty in Germany

October 2, 1954

My dear Mother,

I really did not want to tell you this; but since you are living under enough anxiety, I will relieve you of a small part of it. I do not want a motorcycle, but a small convertible German car which I am in love with.

If you can keep this under your hat, please do so. I wrote Horst about this, but told him not to say peeps. The \$500 plus my cycle will be enough for the down payment. And the rest I will send from the States. I only hope now that Horst will vouch for me so that I can get it financed. Are you happy about this?

I sure feel sorry for Hellmut. The news does not upset me, though. I like your mail. I will be the one to take you for rides when I come back if the deal goes through. I sure hope it does. Keep this under your hat so that at least someone will be surprised. I wrote Ernst and asked for the stamps. No answer, though, yet. O.K. that you did not renew the Mirror. I am feeling fine.

Love,
Your son, Peter



October 6, 1954

My dear Parents,

How are you these days? You yourself seem to be all right. Only what concerns your children causes you anxiety. Children are always a lot of fun, but also a lot of trouble. Don't you agree?

I was surely glad to receive a letter from you, Papa, after such a long silence. How about pulling yourself together and writing me once in a while? For me mail is getting scarce these days. There used to be a day when I got a letter almost every day. But those days are over for a while. I'll be satisfied if you write once in a great while; and Mother writes me about every eight to ten days.

You big philosopher, Papa; in that way you will always be the same. I always get one big letter on a single thought from you, that does not interest me at all, plus two or three sentences of news, which I enjoy very much. I do not like so much bull about philosophy, because with time it rises to you and drives you nuts. Don't you agree? To tell you the truth, that meditation business almost drove me crazy about a year ago. I want none of it anymore. About a week ago I cancelled my membership with S.R.F. (Self Realization Fellowship). I am not going to be persuaded no more to join any of those mystical sects. In our family we are all persuaded too easily. That is a weakness. We do not exactly know what we want, except that we want the good. And that can be a very vague and shifty thing.

The steady and dear correspondence with a certain girl I knew and you knew, too, has been cut short a few days ago. The girl has fallen in love head over foot with someone else. So, another chapter has been closed for now. Well, there are many sweet girls in this world; and I am young, too. As far as marrying goes, I could marry in a few weeks the nicest girl you could think of, but I just have to use my head a bit, too. Don't you think? who knows, maybe I will return to Germany one day and fetch her. But first of all I am anxious to leave Germany and see you again. The

second job will be to learn my profession. And only then, if I am smart, will I look for a sweetheart. But before I do look for one, I am going to have a lot of dates.

I am very happy that you sent me the money now, although it has not arrived yet. I am really thrifty now in every way. I wished you would order another camera which I would bring along, and then could buy from you afterwards; because at the moment I have to figure with my money and can't buy anything else for myself.

It looks to me as if Hellmut is going to be a miner for the rest of his life. Come hell or high water now, he has to go through with it. And he will, too. He has a pretty thick skull.

Tomorrow evening a sergeant and myself from the office are invited to a cocktail party by the officer from our office. I put in for an overnight pass, because it promises to be a happy and long affair.

I will certainly be looking forward to come home. It is getting pretty close now. But I won't make it for Christmas. That is a shame, but can't be helped. You can fix me a Christmas party after I come back. If you want any Christmas calendars then let me know right away. I can send you as many as you like with the necessary cabbage (Peter is hinting for money to buy the calendars).

I am looking forward to a nice invitation from you to 128 N. La Jolla Avenue. because the more eager you are for me to come back, the more eager I am. About a two weeks vacation I will take when I return. And then I will go to work. Later on we will talk about school. Maybe I am smart enough already. As far as philosophy is concerned, I know that I know enough. I want to learn something down to earth. I can go to college in heaven when I get there. I am sure they have schools up there, too. Thanks for all your letters once more, dear Parents. How about writing to 128 N. La Jolla again from now on? The P.O. Box is really not needed anymore

Bye-bye,

Your son Peter



October 8, 1954

My dear Mother,

It is certainly good to have you around. I sure feel that I can talk to you. You see, I get mail seldom these days. My girl wrote me every day; but that is over now. I took that like "a man of will" should. It was a blow, though, since it came wholly unexpected. Dara fell in love overnight with someone else. But I would not run after her. I am young and I am proud, too. It is not difficult to find a girl. It takes time, though, to meet the right one.

Just by coincident, Horst came to Nuremberg. It was very noble of him to vouch for me. Keep all this under your hat, though. This car deal is between you and me for the time being. I figured that I deserved to make myself a present of something real nice for being a soldier for two years and doing a lot of things which were not to my liking. You can be sure that you will also share in the pleasure of that beautiful car. Tell me, are you a bit happy that I do not bring a cycle along? Here is what I want to talk to you very frankly about.

I do not know how much of my money you have put on the bank or if you have put any on the bank. I know you are a good banker; but I also know that I put it to your discretion what you want to do with the money. You may know that after I have paid the 2,000 Marks Papa is sending me, plus my cycle, I will still owe 3,500 Marks. I do not want under any circumstances that you loan me any money from the German account. Taking money from that account hurts Horst's business a lot. But, dear Mother, if there is any more money left on the account which you opened for me, then please send me that money through a money order as soon as you can. I feel that it is wise to erase as much of the loan as I am personally capable of.

On my discharge I will receive \$200 and the following two months I will receive \$100 each. I will also get \$190 to drive from New York to California. But the trip will cost me only \$35. So you can see that I have not gone out of my reach very much. And then if I work for five months, I will be sitting pretty. I am quite a sensible guy. If there should only be \$100 or maybe \$200 left on my account, it would be quite a help. I am eager to show Horst that I can be depended upon 100 %. So you can see how I need you yet for this or that. Especially since I have no sweetheart anymore, you better start fixing my room for my return.

There is another favor I have to ask you. Call up the Motor Vehicle Registration Department and find out what I have to do to get my California plates sent over here. It will be 1955 when I drive my car across the States. The car is a 1954 model, new. It is an Opel Record, convertible with a 40 horsepower engine. That information would be a great help. Maybe it would also be possible to have the car insured from an agency in California. Your services would really be appreciated.

Two years is quite a while to have been away from home. I am looking forward to coming back. My face will show it when you see it. It is hard for me to believe that a big journey will soon be in store for me. It will be a happy day. It will be my Christmas present, although a bit delayed. And the car is a wonderful present for me. Although in a way I am on my own now, home is home. Please, no word of this to Papa.

Your son Peter and a kiss.

Thanks for your last letter. I believe it was from the second of October.



October 9, 1954

Dear Parents,

I am sending you the first prints from my three-day pass to Hindelang, plus a couple of pictures of some friends. Those pictures were taken right after an inspection. As you can see, everything is neat. More explanations will follow personally next year. You can have the negatives if you like after I have prints made for my friends.

I received 208 Marks today, thanks. I guess I will receive it one more time after this. The \$500 I have not gotten yet. But hope they will arrive next week. You are swell about sending the money.

Best of luck,

Peter, your son.



October 11, 1954

Dear Mother,

You may enjoy this picture of your son, taken at our enlisted men's club. As you can see, I was in good spirits that evening. I enjoy going over there and have a beer, a hamburger, and a couple of swings. You can see that I don't sit in the barracks all the time but like to go out on dates. This girl's name is Irmgard. I have had many nice dates with her; but she is not the only one. You may also remember that billfold. That is the one Hellmut gave to me about two years ago. A lot of money has passed in and out of it. I think I look pretty good in uniform.

I remember the day I left the house to go down to the induction center, and you were real sad, and you did not even want to come along. Everything looks a bit brighter now. Doesn't it? I believe you are happy now at the turn of events. Anyway, it ill not be very long now, and you will be rushing to the door to see me again. Two years seemed like a long time at first. Didn't it?

I received your two letters from the 4th and 5th of October. I was glad to get some mail. And especially good mail! I guess I will have to put up with another letter from Alice now, even though you know by now what kind of a motorcycle I wanted – the newest type with four wheels.

Yesterday I spent a very nice afternoon in Rothenburg on the Tauber. You may have heard of that old historical city? It was about the last trip on the cycle. I am expecting the money any day now. The papers for the car have all been signed. I have the contract in my pocket. The last payment of \$90 will be due on the 10th of October. I can pick up the car today already, but wanted to wait for the money. Now I don't feel like waiting anymore. You will be very proud to ride with me in that car.

The two books I have received from you. I gave my friend the book as a token of friendship. You may also know by now that I have cancelled my membership at S.R.F. You still talk about a surprise when I get home. What could it be, I can't imagine? Maybe I have a cozy room waiting for me. We'll see.

Tomorrow morning at 8 I have to see the major of the detachment. I wonder what he wants? Maybe he wants me to re-up. But nothing doing! For now two years is enough to have been away from California. I want to be my own boss again.

I hope you get that job business straightened out to your satisfaction. I'll be taking a job, too, for a few months when I get back. But I know I won't have trouble finding one.

I won't encourage or discourage you about buying a coat. But buying women's clothes is always an unrewarding task. I'll see if I can get some pictures of what you want.

Best regards to everybody. You can call up Alice and tell her my plans. However, if she is still interested in writing a newsy letter, I'll enjoy that. You worried in vain again, dear Mother. Poor Mother. But I worry, too. I got a strain of that in my blood, too. And I hate it. I see myself as a fool when I worry. What worrying does to me is cut down my appetite, making me nervous and making me downhearted. Those are things I do not like. Motorcycle riding never worried me. I don't know why. But I always felt very safe on the cycle. Do you know that worrying produces ulcers? Yep, that's true. So, let's cut it out. Agreed?

So long, Peter



October 12, 1954

My dear Mother,

It is one o'clock now. In a half an hour I will be getting the enclosed car. I will be going over to the Nuremberg Sub-Area Post to get my plates and sign the bill of sale. As far as the ownership title is concerned, I will be complete owner, although I have only paid one-third so far. I am very happy about the whole thing and can hardly wait. I tell you later sometimes why I bought the car.

You asked me a lot of questions in your letters from the sixth and seventh for which I have no time now. To bring the car to the States costs me nothing. So, you can see, there is a benefit in being a GI. The government is very big-hearted.

You probably know by now how I feel about taking more money from Bremen. It hurts the business too much. But the final decision I must leave to you about that. I would, though, prefer to get the dollars. The \$200 would really hit the spot.

This morning we had an alert, and so I did not have a chance to see the major. But I know now that he wants to talk to me about re-enlisting. Nothing doing brother! Two years is all I want and all I needed to straighten me out and put a head on my shoulders. No, I won't be tossed around by any more monkey business like S.R.F. I have a mind to tell them a piece of my mind. They are driving too many people insane. And I meant it. If the army would not have come in-between my thick headed skull, I might be some place else today. Everything is going fine. I am dying to see California again. And I am beginning to cross the days off now. That's all. See you later.

Your son, Peter



Garmisch, October 17, 1954

Dear Mother and Papa,

With my new car I took a trip to Garmisch. We are just at the Eibsee Hotel. Just had dinner. The day is wonderful. Going to the ice show and dancing tonight if my buddy can finance it. Tomorrow at 8 AM I am in the office again.

Love, your son, Peter



October 18, 1954

Dear Parents,

I received your letter from the 12th, Mother, and your letter from the 13th Papa. So I see that you can't teach a dog that is old new tricks. Can you, Papa? You again talked yourself out of writing me anything else but philosophy. Well, I'll have to take you as you are. And I'll do that rather than not taking you at all.

I am not sure which girl you mean, Mother? The one that is real nice I don't see at all. I am not interested in catching fire shortly before going home. But I know that this girl has a very special place for me in her heart. But circumstances are not favorable to get better acquainted. I am young. And since my special intentions as far as Dara and myself were concerned are annihilated, I will be going out on dates a while longer yet. And I am still young and have a nice home waiting for me. I can't tell you how much I am looking forward to coming home. Boy oh boy, a TV set, that is great! That was real good news.

I don't remember exactly how often you wrote me. But it does not matter. I used to be getting a letter from Dara every day practically and that used to be the nicest pleasure during the morning. I dropped her completely. I told her that she does not need to write any more at all, that I am not interested. I'll find a girl soon enough if I want to. I could marry tomorrow as far as that is concerned. But I am not in a rush. I am not a bit worried that I won't find a wife. I can have one on every finger if I only want to. But I shall marry one day. I know that. I like the home too much. The life of a vagabond won't please me in the long run.

I can tell you now that Dara wanted to get married soon after I was discharged. And I was eager too. She could not wait so long till I returned. I took it graciously; but I also told her a piece of my mind. You know, I am not going to play second fiddle.

I inquired about your coat personally last week; I could not find anything. They told me that the season for those coats is over. But you can get nice pins for \$1 a piece.

I certainly will be having steak dinners with you. I am no diet fan. I eat what I just have an appetite for; although I don't have much appetite lately. I am too eager to get back to California. I figure that it will be towards the end of January that I will be in Los Angeles. No, don't bother about sending anything for Christmas. I will either be packing about that time, or I will be on my way. We shall have a Christmas celebration when I get back. Yes, there are TV sets in Germany, but very few. A set costs one thousand Mark. There are not many channels, either.

I had a great weekend in Garmisch. There are beautiful installations for the soldiers. And the scenery is grand. During the afternoon we went rowing. To give the weekend a grand finale, we went to the Cass-Carisa club – a wonderful place. I will describe it later on. We saw a two-hour ice show. After the show as over, a beautiful parquet platform slid over the ice where we danced. It was great, great, great. At 2:30 in the morning we began our return trip to Nuremberg. We arrived just in time for breakfast and work. But today I am pooped. I have not had any sleep since the last thirty hours. It is four P.M. now and I will be very happy when I can head for my bed. Although I am very tired now, I don't regret a bit the way I spent the weekend. I am enclosing a few more pictures and some negatives. Two of the prints I gave away. You may enjoy having the developed again. I only have a small picture of the girl I mentioned. Her birthday is towards the beginning of April and her name is Hilde. That's all I know just now. She is 21 like myself.

Love, Peter

Dara has a lot of my pictures. But I will be getting them back now.



October 19, 1954

Dear Mother,

I got the letter from the 14th today. Good news indeed. Sure nice of you to help me out. I can naturally swing this thing by myself, otherwise I would not have made the deal. But since you are willing to help me, I will gratefully accept. I have paid 2,800 Marks so far. I still owe 3,400. That's the score.

I do not know if I have all the negatives yet. But the ones I have I will send you. I have the negatives just now in the PX to have some more prints made for my friends. I will take them out of the PX as soon as I get paid. Yesterday I had to see the major about re-upping. My answer was a flat "NO". I'm not interested to stay in the army any longer now. I may have to stay long enough later on and longer than I want to. I believe you have gotten the letter by now where I have answered all the questions in connection with the car? If not, let me know.

How about fixing a welcoming party for me?

I am very happy with the car. It rides so nice, looks so good, is so cheap on gas, and goes fast enough for my needs. Top speed is about 70 miles an hour. I only tried that speed out once on "The Autobahn". On long stretches and good roads I drive 50 to 55 miles. And in town I drive real nice too. You will enjoy the car, believe me. I had and am having a lot of good times in the army. And I will never look back at those two years as lost time.

I am writing you during office hours. There is not much work at the moment. Therefore I am goofing off for a while. As far as army language is concerned, I know that up and down and backwards and forwards. Between soldiers I talk like a bum. Maybe I am one? I am going to let you decide that.

If you follow sports at all which I doubt, you may know that I am very happy about UCLA. The football team is rated second in the country. I was thrilled to hear that UCLA beat Stanford by a score of 72 to zero. That's just great. I am sorry I will be too late coming back for the football season. Well, next year I will go to the game. I once will have to take you along and eat hot dogs, popcorn and drink Coca-Cola. I love Coca-Cola these days. And Phillip Morris is my favorite brand of cigarettes. I wonder if you can send any cigarettes in that package? I doubt it though. You can tell Alice that I love Phillip Morris. It is her favorite brand. And I love a good Tom Collins, if you have any idea what that is. I will tell you when I get home, if you don't know. A good bottle of German beer hits the spot once in a while. I don't like the American beer.

I would like to get a job in a car repair shop for a few months so I will know enough to do minor repairs on mine. Maybe you can get one lined up for me. I don't intend to go back to school until fall.

So long for today, enjoy your steak dinner. In a few months I will invite you to it.

Your son, Peter



October 21, 1954

Dear Parents,

I received your letter from the 16th of October today, and I thank you very much. About the Opel – I have no desire to change my mind. In fact the deal has been closed and cannot be made retroactive. I am now only waiting for the money. Von der Heyde said it should arrive any day now.

I was in Garmisch with the car last weekend, and I was very content with the way the car handled. The car is in my possession already and I have driven it over 1,000 km by now. It is very reasonable on gas. I get a little over 30 miles to the gallon. For the time being a big car would be too expensive for me to keep up. I remember that Hellmut was always filling in gas and spent over \$5 on gas a week. The trip to Garmish, which was over 300 miles, cost me two dollars on gas. In the States it would be a little more, because the gas costs here only 16 cents a gallon. And the big cars are only better because you can go faster. A small car can give me the same good service as a big car. That car is a real treasure for me. I bought it new, because I want to take care of it from the beginning. I only hope that the money from Bremen will come soon, although my friends trust me all the way.

There are also two officers in this hospital who have bought themselves the same new car. The Opel factory here is a branch of General Motors back in the States. Don't be concerned about parts for the car. That is all taken care of and all right. There are quite a few Americans who have bought themselves this car. So, please let me be happy with this car, because I have decided on it. Whenever a bigger venture is made, there are naturally always some doubts and questions. And I do understand your thinking. Mother, you may also be again concerned that I can get killed easier in a small car than in a big one. Stop that, Mother, or I will become very angry. You always felt safe when I was driving. Didn't you?

I still see the people I met at the Fasching. In fact, those are the people from whom I bought the car. My friend Heinz I see very seldom these days. He has a lot of work and a lot of disharmony in his family. And his mother watches over him like a little baby. He is a very nice boy. But his mother is awful. He is very sad about the position his family takes about marrying a girl who has less money than they do. He has to break off with a girl because mainly for that reason. Isn't that awful? I just hate those kinds of people. He'll get over this, though, I hope. He is still young. The family Tratz I see maybe once every six weeks.

Mrs. Schnuphase I see about two times a week. She has been very good to me. She has washed all my clothes since the last nine months. She has knitted me six pairs of wonderful socks and is knitting me six more. And she is doing many other nice things for me. She is having a signet ring made for me which I will get this Saturday. On it will be "Nbg 53-54". She is 100% selfless. And she is very happy that she can do something for me.

My car was just picked up to be serviced. I am having a lighter installed and two ashtrays in the back, and also a hook that you can hang up a coat when you go on trips. If I get some money from you soon, I want to get a Motorola radio from the shopping center. They cost here only \$31. I might be able to swing the radio from my next paycheck. You may know that I draw every month about \$55 plus your 200 Marks from Bremen. I am getting from Bremen one more check for 200 Marks next month, the last one.

I sure wish I could be in the States already. I can hardly wait now. I am very happy that I have such a nice home to come back to. I read the clinical records from the psychiatric section usually. I have observed that most of the soldiers or also civilian dependents go on the rocks

because they have come from a broken home and a very unbridled and ill-directed childhood. I am speaking from personal experiences here at the hospital. You cannot leave it up to a child what he should do in his youth. A child must be guided and guided strictly in order to be able to guide his own life in later years. A child is needy of protection; and only a good home is able to offer him this. That is why a good home will decide the outcome of a child.

What Socrates wrote about marriage appeals to me; and I agree with it. That joke was cute with the dust.

I found out the dates of the girl for you. Hilde Margarete Wimmer, born on the 9th of April 1933. The hair is dark blond and she has brown eyes.

You must have received by now the pamphlet on my car. Do you like it?

I enjoyed the letter from Hellmut very much. If he does not come to L.A. when I come back, then I will visit him in Bagby. It will be enticing to work with him for a few months. But I do not want to get stuck there, because I want and need a real profession. I have three years of free education coming my way, and I would be a fool if I don't take advantage of that. Hellmut is working very hard, but I see that he is happy. I am glad that you are helping him out. He has enough willpower to move a mountain.

So long, your son, who is eager to see you as soon as possible.

Love, Peter



October 22, 1954

My dear Mother,

Please do not leave me in such uncertainties about the money. You may still be under the impression that the car has not been bought yet. But the sale has been signed and sealed, and I am driving the car for two weeks already. I am beginning to feel rather uncomfortable because the money from Bremen has not yet arrived, although I am expecting it any day. And I sure hope you have not cancelled the money from Bremen. I would certainly be in a very uncomfortable position then. If you do decide to send me the whole amount, I sure wish it would come soon, so that I know what is what. If you cannot send me the money, then please send me the money that is still left on my account. I would appreciate greatly a very quick service on this matter. You can imagine yourself that I am beginning to feel rather uncomfortable in my present position. I would have sent you a telegram about this but I did not have the money. So you see how I feel.

The Swedish girl I don't remember. It's been too long that I have been away. And I am not so much up to date on the local gossip anymore. But for that I know enough local gossip around Nuremberg.

The TV is a great addition to our home. We have waited long enough for it, too. Don't you think? We shall go to a movie anyway, though. And after the show we shall go to the soda fountain.

I am looking forward to a good married life. I know that it can be nice. But it gives me an idea how it may be, and it promises to be good. I know the actor who wrote that article. I like him very

much. I like him the best. He played the leading male role in "The Glenn Miller Story" and a picture called "Shane."

The joke was good. I'll have to tell you one too. It's a bit sloppy, though. You will excuse that, my lady. But you may know that those are the most frequent and enjoyable jokes, especially in the army.

An English general had just spent his furlough back home in England. He was returning now by ship to his place of duty in India. Another English celebrity recognized the general on board of the ship. He went over to him and started talking to him. He asked him the usual polite questions. He asked him how he enjoyed his furlough, how his wife and kids were, etc. And then he asked the general, "Now tell me general, I don't see that your wife is accompanying you to India. Why don't you take her with you?" And the general answered, "I will tell you, my good friend, when I go to a banquet, I don't take my hamburgers along." Catch on? Ha, Ha!

About the insurance I will inform you as soon as I have the necessary information. Schoebels have written to the factory, requesting the agencies in the States that service Opel cars. But I would really not need collision. It will be enough if the car is insured for theft, fire, liability, and property damage. I will let you know as soon as I know on what day I am expecting to arrive in the States, and from that day on you can take out an insurance policy for the car. O.K.?

Good-bye and please clear me up on the financial matter as soon as possible.

Your son, Peter





November
1954

Active Duty in Germany

November 1, 1954

Dear Parents,

Do you know what it means when the eagle drops his load. That is payday for us. I invited myself to a German and to an American movie over the weekend, plus a couple of hamburgers, plus a few beers. I am very satisfied with my weekend. A date made everything even sweeter. And it is also November 1st today. I can say that next month there will be a change of surroundings for me. It's great indeed. I can hardly believe it is getting near the time. I am glad that I did not quit ahead of time. But it is about time now for me to come back. I am having too much fun. That is not good in the long run, so they tell me.

I have a lot of buddies, and it is always fun to gang up together and have an evening of fun. Yesterday I sneaked my friend out of the hospital. He is a patient at the moment. He had a knee operation. He was discharged today; but he is still on crutches. Martini Fleming and myself went out yesterday afternoon. We had dinner at a nice Gasthaus (pub), plus two bottles of beer. After the dinner we went for a drive through the countryside. The forest is very beautiful at the moment. I picked a bouquet for the vase in my car. It looks tops. After the drive we picked up our dates and headed for the movies. We saw a picture you may also have seen, "Magnificent Obsession." Everybody enjoyed it 100 percent. We were home about 2315 hours. Martini was marked AWOL by a stupid sergeant who happens to be German whom I know. The nurse, a lieutenant, was covering up for him and a stupid sergeant took down his name. I am going to have a talk with him. But Martini was lucky like always and nothing happened. If I would have been caught for every time I stayed out after bed check time, I would have a pretty black record. In the army the saying is that you can do everything, but don't get caught. But boy, will I be glad when I don't have to worry about MP's and bed check anymore, plus inspections, maneuvers, and everything that goes with it.

What time is bed check at 12 North La Jolla Avenue? If it is at midnight, I will be in sad shape, because I am used to staying out a bit later. And I am even used to going right to work after I come back to the hospital. It is half as wild as it sounds, but it is wild enough. The army is sure a funny life at times and a big joke. I take my work serious, but after duty hours I am a clown. But after 21 months, and that is exactly how long I have been in the army, you get tired of clowning around. And that is why I am very interested to come back.

I would love to go to Paris for a week yet, but I cannot do this unless you make it possible for me. What do you say about twenty-five dollars would be wonderful? This will be the last chance I can find out what the French girls are like and go to the top of the Eifel Tower. It would be a rather nice finish to my vacation in Germany. If I go, it will be about the 20th of this month. I expect that I will have to bring up my car to Bremerhaven about the beginning of next month. If I should get another three-day pass this month, I will also take another trip to Garmisch. I really love that place. I am very eager to see the new ice show which started two weeks ago.

Thanks for your letter, Papa. You know what I mean. We got secrets, too, Mother.

Do you know, Mother, that I have become a real coffee baby. We will have our cups of coffee together from now on. Do you like Hamburgers? Now you may tell me, Mother, if you are looking forward to my coming back. You are not imposing in any way on me if you say anything that direction. In fact, I would enjoy hearing a remark in that direction from you now. Are you

marking the days of on the calendar like I have been doing lately? Tell me the truth. Or are you glad if I am gone for a while longer?

The fall is very beautiful here this year. It is cool but sunny. I feel like going outside every day and take in the fresh air and watch the leaves turn all different kinds of colors.

My car is running very well. I have had very much pleasure with it already. If I would have known a year ago what I know today, I would have bought a car right away. You can have so much fun and see so many places. I am still a motorcycle fan as far as that goes. But I would not want to have one now for the sake of having transportation, but only for sports reasons. But don't worry; I am not buying another motorcycle. It is four o'clock now. I have one more hour in the office and then I am finished for November 1, 1954.

About getting another stripe, it looks very bad. About getting promoted in the army it does not go according to what you do and what you know, but how many months you have been in grade. I would have enjoyed to have another stripe, but, nix can do.

So long,
Your Son
My nickname is "Stromer" – Peter Stromer (tramp).



November 6, 1954

Dear Parents,

Today I received your package, but I have not opened it yet. I have also received two letters from you which contained Hellmut's letters. I am sorry, but I threw Hellmut's letters away.

I do not know yet if I will have any money left for pins. I calculated the money for the car to the last penny. But if I do, I will bring them along. I have not received any money yet for the car. I am waiting anxiously and I am wondering what is holding matters up. In four weeks I am taking the car up to Bremerhaven to be shipped. But it is a funny feeling to do this before having received the money. I signed my card yesterday for going home. I am leaving within six to seven weeks. I do hope the car matter will be cleared up by then. I received the last two hundred Marks this morning. I thought I might have been the other money when I saw the envelope, but it was not. If I get a pass next week I will visit Garmisch once more.

Best regards and love, Peter



November 9, 1954

Dearest Parents,

I received your letter from the 4th of this month plus Hellmut's letter. I enjoyed the correspondence.

I am hoping for a three-day pass for the coming Friday, Saturday and Sunday. If I do get it, I am going to surprise Ruth. It is not 100% yet.

The money for the car has not arrived yet. And I can't understand what is holding up the works. In three weeks I have to bring up the car to Bremerhaven, and I certainly like the matter to be straightened out till then. Papa, how about a little pushing from your side? I have to count on the 2,000 Marks for sure, otherwise I am lost. Please send me the \$200 you are speaking of as soon as possible, so that in case I do not get the whole amount, I am covered for the 10th of January payments plus a few incidental expenses which may arise. If I don't need the money I will naturally bring it back. We cannot do much talking about the money business per letter anymore, because before an answer has traveled back and forth, I will have to leave for Bremerhaven.

Don't worry about the \$5 for the pins. I will have that money available. I thought later that it was pretty squeamish of me to quibble about five bucks where you have given me so much.

If you can tell me something definite about the money, I would appreciate such information, because I cannot get any definite idea about when the money may come from what Papa said about the money traveling from one bank to another, etc.

Yep, it is true, I have not written for a couple of days. But I am feeling fine except for being real hyper about the upcoming trip home. By the way, I wrote Hellmut a letter the other day. He should have received it by now. You know, I just thought the other day, it would be a swell thing for Hellmut to pick me up in New York. It is an expensive idea, and I am going to let the three of you hash it out together. Hellmut will probably argue that he can use the money for the trip a lot better for the mine. That is certainly true. I will take two soldiers along in the car from New York so that they can help me drive. As you know, that is my original plan and actually the most sensible. In about four weeks I should know the definite day of debarkation.

Not much new these days. I spent a nice Sunday. I went to a concert with a date and two soldiers. From there we went to a very nice café where Viennese music was played and had a bottle of wine together. For relaxation and pleasure I am just reading a book called: "The Naked and the Dead". It is very realistic. I enjoy it because it is about soldiers, and I am one of them. But don't you read it, Mother or Papa, otherwise you will get red in the face.

Mrs. Schnuphase was very happy about the coffee, but especially happy that you had sent it extra for her.

I am very satisfied with the car. Tonight I will stay in, because the car is at the garage, plus the fact that I can use some extra sleep. I am having fog and back-up lights installed, plus a grease job, etc. I would be very happy if I could still get a radio for it. A German Phillips radio would be better than the one I could get at the PX. They all don't fit.

Otherwise there is nothing new. I hope I can give you soon some good news about the money and the debarkation date.

So long, your son Peter

Please let me know what the new telephone number is. I want to call you from New York when I arrive.



November 15, 1954

Dear Mother,

I received your "hasty" letter this morning after returning from Pymont. And an hour later I received the letter in which you retracted the statement of the yellow note. You will be surprised to hear that I don't have the time to visit Paris. I wanted to go very badly and would have gone if circumstances would not have prevented it.

But you will also be surprised to hear that Ruth and Renate are with me here in Nuremberg just taking it easy. They are living with Mrs. Schnuphase, and she is doing everything to make it a real vacation for Ruth. She told Ruth last night when we arrived that she will get breakfast in bed. Ruth was overjoyed to come along. She will stay here till the first of December when I will bring her back with the car. You should have seen Ruth's face when I came. She practically fainted. I will try to make everything as nice as possible, circumstances permitting.

By the way, the money has not arrived yet. It seems like a very sloppy organization. You know that I have at the most only five or six weeks left here, and possibly only four.

Renate is badgering me to give her a tour of the hospital. The trip is a big thing for her (Renate is Peter's niece – 10 years old). As soon as I have time I will take her and show her everything.

The next favor I want to ask of you is to inquire if you can get Cortisone ointment (translated from German). Chucks, I wrote German and did not realize it at the moment. That is for a skin disease. I know a girl who has the disease since a couple of years and can't get rid of it. That medicine can also be given in injection form. Please inquire for me if you can get it and how much it costs in both forms. It is a new medicine, and we don't have it here at the hospital.

Otherwise everything is here under control. There is a mountain of work at the office at the moment. It is a shame, especially since Ruth is just here. But she is happy if she knows that I come in the evening. She sleeps as long as she can and goes to bed early. But you know that money would have come in handy to enhance Ruth's stay here. Too bad you did not send it. I may get a loan from Mrs. Schnuphase and pay her back payday. If you still decide to send the money, I will not send back.

I am also wondering if Papa is intending to pay the whole amount on the car? You people surely let me dangle in the air.

I feel it was a mean trick from Papa to write Ruth the way he did. I can judge better than anyone else what her physical condition is, and it is not a hundred percent. She does not have the vitality I have. She was feeling very sick the first two hours of the trip. The girl really does not have a strong heart. And it looks to me that her heart will give her a lot of trouble. She is very eager to find a husband who fits to her and who will be able to support her. But it is not as easy as it looks. Ruth is a girl who needs love. She is more eager to be independent of Papa, than Papa might be. Ruth is not mentally sick. You are making a big mistake to write such a thing. You can only say that she is a sensitive girl. With anything else you say, you are wrong. Well, that is the way I look at it from here, if you want my opinion, and if my opinion means anything to you. I know that Ruth will be eager to come over on a visit proposition for a year. If I had the money, I would give her that chance. And if she is able to adjust herself to the new surrounding, then she can always stay. It was hard for us to adjust at first, wasn't it Mother? I am personally feeling O.K. You don't have to be concerned about my welfare. So long for today.

Your son, Peter



November 24, 1954

Hello Folks,

I am sitting with Ruth in the snack bar; it is 1800 hours. Ruth just had a BLT (bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich), plus a cup of Java coffee. I had a Coke. For dinner I had roast pork. Today I did not do much work, just a lot of kidding around. Everyone talks of orders. A friend of mine who gets discharged a week before me got his orders today.

This morning I brushed my teeth with brushless shaving cream – what a mistake. I am losing my head these days.

I wish you all a nice Christmas. I am looking forward to a good party with enough booze to keep everyone happy.

Your Son,

Peter



November 24, 1954

Dear Mother,

Ruth went downtown yesterday and inquired about the sweaters. A Berchtesgardener sweater costs 20 Marks; but Ruth does not advise that one at all. She looked at a lot of sweaters and says that in order to get something good you will have to spend 75 Marks. But then you have something good. A fairly good sweater you can get for 55 Marks. Ruth suggests a size of 44. I don't know. What to do you say? You will remember the German sizes yet. Ruth also bought five very cute pins for 17 Marks. She forgot about the earrings and will get those this afternoon. This afternoon she is going to a movie, and after work I am going to pick her up. Nati is going to a play in the Lessing Theatre. She will see "Tishlein Deck Dich" (Brother Grimms' fairy tale – Table-Be-Set). Tomorrow we will have our Thanksgiving dinner.

Next Tuesday I am going to have my car serviced once more and a radio built in; and a week from tomorrow I will take the car up to Bremerhaven. The people trust me all the way, and I am going to send the money from the States as soon as I get discharged. I may also ask Oma (Grandma in German) for 2,500 Marks and let Papa straighten things out with her. I expect to bring about \$350 home with me, plus I will get \$100 each month for the following two months. So, if Papa wants to arrange to give me the money in Marks, he can have approximately \$500 from me. It really does not make any difference to me at all if I change the dollars to Marks or give Papa the money and get his Marks from here. But one thing is sure, that if the Marks have not arrived by the time I am in the States, I am going to make my payment in dollars.

Alice wrote me a very nice letter. Along with the letter she sent me two nice ties. The ties are nice, however for my young age too conservative in their design. I like alive and colorful designs. The letter was really swell. I always had a soft spot for Alice. She said I should save myself the trouble of writing her a letter, because it won't be long that I see her now. But you can phone her up anyway and say hello. And you can tell her that I am expecting a dinner invitation

as soon as I come back, and I would like to have a tender steak; and after dinner I would like to relax in front of the television set and drink a glass of wine and talk about all the fun I had. You can tell her that I did not lose my heart over here. You know, these girls that GI's have a chance to meet are nothing for marriage. You can have a lot of fun with them, but that is about it. It looks to me that these girls are so used to running around with men that they can't stick to one anymore.

It has gotten pretty cold here already. We have admitted 17 frostbites to this hospital the last two days. I also had a vase in my car which busted because the water froze solid. That reminds me of the time Hellmut and I went to Big Bear Valley skiing.

Everyone envies me because I am soon going to sunny California.

By the way, Ruth is continually sending her best regards, but I always neglect to mention it.

So long, folks, take care of yourselves,

Peter



November 30, 1954

Dear Mother and Papa,

I received a letter from both of you today. You will be happy to hear that Ruth and Renate are still with me. And tomorrow I will find out if they will be able to stay for another week. You see, it is this way. I heard on the radio last night that the port at Bremerhaven was not accepting any cars for shipment until the 9th of December again. So I won't be able to bring up my car until the 9th and that is when I will take Ruth and Renate along. I will personally confirm those reports, though, myself. Maybe I can squeeze out a three day TDY order anyway, because not everybody knows about this. And if I can do this, this will just mean a three day pass for me because after three days I will come back and just say that I was in Bremerhaven and they would not accept my car. And that way I would get another three days next week. That would be great. My sergeant is pulling for me.

I sent the pins off today. They are very nice. Ruth bought them for me The Hummel figures cost 15 Marks a piece. If Ruth is still here when the money for the sweater arrives, I will let her buy it. She will know better what is best for you.

Ruth has been very happy with me here. She has no pains or aches although we go to bed late. She probably told you that she won twenty dollars playing bingo at the club with me. She gave me half of the jackpot. I was very happy. She bought herself a handbag for the money.

You have a different approach toward life than I have, Papa. It is your privilege and mine to live the way we want to. I am not going to change my way of life; I will only improve on it as time goes along. I have been very happy the last few months, and as long as I am happy I will not change anything. I am very sad that you have so many struggles. I like to see my parents happy; but I will not change my life in order to accomplish this. Life is harsh and brutal often, and if we take notice of this and become sensitive to it, it is mental suicide for us. I am going to work and enjoy life, have a family later on, and a lot of dates now. More I do not want.

I will certainly support that Ruth shall come to the States as soon as you can arrange the papers. Ruth would have loved to go along with me. She wanted me to stay here until she can come along, but I am not willing to do this. Ruth is willing to work and very willing at that. Nati is also old enough now that she does not need such close supervision. She will be in school until three o'clock anyway.

By the way, the money has not arrived yet. But von der Heyde wrote me that the money arrived from Bensheim and that he can forward it to me now. I have agreed to make this arrangement. I will pay my monthly payments from the Sates until Papa's money is available. And then the rest is paid in Marks. You still have to understand that these are monthly payments, payable on a certain date to the bank here. And in a case like that it is not possible to tell the bank that your word is as good as the Bank of England. You understand this, don't you, Papa?

Today was payday. I drew \$57. Ruth and I will play bingo tonight again. It is a lot of fun.

Your Son,

Peter





December 1954
&
January 1955

Last Month of Active Duty in Germany

December 1, 1954

Dear Mother,

I forgot to write you about the insurance. Please insure my car. That is a must by law, plus theft and fire insurance. This is the data on the car: 1954 Opel Record, convertible, color is grey with a black top. The horsepower of the car is 40. The motor number is: 1, 5 L-54-43383; the body number is: Cly-53-CZ-103419; the title of the car is in my name. My present license number is: 4C-69687. I am not sure if I have to get New York plates when I arrive in New York or if I can drive the car across the States with my army plates. I also don't know if that makes any difference with the insurance policy. I would like to have the car insured from the 12th of January on. I appreciate your service, Mother.

I am surprised that the money from Bremen has not arrived yet, because von der Heyde wrote me that he has sent off one amount. When I go to Bremen I will speak to Oma. Maybe she will lend me her money and Papa can pay her back when he has his finances straightened out.

Tomorrow morning I am leaving with Renate and Ruth for Pymont; and a good friend of mine is riding along too. We are planning to return on Sunday. A week from tomorrow I will drive up to Bremerhaven to finally bring up my car for shipment.

Ruth and I had another delightful evening yesterday. These two weeks went fast for all of us. It will be a day over two weeks that Ruth and Renate and I were together. I will try to get a Monopoly game for her in the shopping center tonight. We played the game once and she loved it a lot. Yesterday we played bingo once more, had a good dinner together and danced. Oh yes, we also went to a one hour movie. If Ruth is in the States, I told her that going to the States is like going into the army. Once you are in the army you don't turn around anymore. She is eager to go, but is only sad now that she has to wait so long. Have you any idea how long the whole works takes?

I see the draft board has not forgotten Hellmut. What classification did he have before he got his 1A-O? 1A-O is a good classification for getting drafted. It means that he is healthy and fit. And the O means that he is a conscientious objector. It is a big shame the two of us did not come in at the same time. We would have been all through with it by now.

I had the whole week a case of tonsillitis. Today it is practically gone. The doctor gave me some medicine which did not help. So I got some penicillin shots which worked wonderfully. If that tonsil of mine is going to act up on me more often, I am going to have the son of the gun taken out.

Thanks about getting the information about "Cortisone." But you know, I would like to know the price although it is only to be gotten by prescription.

Did you send me a money order for the sweater or did you intend for me to take the money I get from Bremen? It is impossible for me to take any of that money, because that is even sixty Marks short of the down-payment I need for the car. When I asked for the \$500 I was counting on the 2,100 Marks. Those extra 20 cents add up when you get into the hundred dollars bracket.

I got a beautiful radio for the car now. Really a swell one! I have all the extras now you can get. I sure got good service, too. My friends in Zirndorf always pick up my car and deliver it again. I haven't received my orders yet. I'll see you later – Peter



December 6, 1954

My dear Mother,

This morning I received your letters from the 28th and 30th of November. It was a shock to me, too, to hear that Hellmut was drafted. If it would only affect Hellmut, it would not matter so much; but I see that the whole family is involved, except myself. Well, it can't be helped. Be happy that at least I am coming home soon. I'll make up to you a part of Hellmut's absence. I knew Hellmut would be drafted. There is no getting away from that; but it was a shock anyway. After he got his 1A-O classification I knew it would be soon that he has to wear the uniform.

Yesterday evening I returned from Bremen. Ruth and Renate went along with me, and my friend Martini, too. We did a lot of driving and had a lot of fun. I was with Ruth and Renate at the American Consulate in Hamburg and got the application for immigration. Ruth is definitely going to the States now. She will send in her application this week yet. Please send to the American Consulate in Hamburg the affidavit of support for her. Only after the Consulate receives that and Ruth's application will the Consulate be able to process the papers. It will take approximately six months for her before she can leave Germany. In Hamburg we also went to the Hamburger Dom (an amusement park) and had a lot of fun there. My friend Martini was very generous and invited Nati to every ride that she wanted to have at the carnival. Martini and I also took a ride up to Bremerhaven for the kick of it; and we took a look at the big boats which will take us back to the States in a few weeks. I will probably not be leaving Germany until the 1st of January. I am expecting my orders any day now. I will let you know when I receive them.

In Bremen I stayed with Barbara (Peter's aunt). She was very nice. Little Barbara looks charming. I also saw Helga and Lilly. We spent an evening together at Barbara's house. Other guests present were Ruth, Nati, Oma and Martini. Ruth told me the past three weeks we were together were the nicest weeks in ten years. That made me glad.

I talked to von der Heyde about the money. By the way, when I came back from Bremen yesterday I found a letter from the Bank worth 1,200 Marks. The remaining 800 Marks I brought along from Bremen right away. Von der Heyde told me that it was not possible for him to give me the money for the car. He told me that he got 5,000 Marks from Bensheim; of that money I got 2,000 Marks, Lilly gets 1,500 Marks, and there is some money going away for Christmas presents. So there is not much left. So I am not figuring with any more Marks from Bremen. And I would like you to send me the money which I have still left on our joint account.

We will rock the little child gently, Mother. I am full of good spirits and I am bringing a new happy life into the Laue family when I get back. I have learned a lot in the army. I know that through dreaming alone you can't get anywhere. Hard work is important; and I am not afraid of it. But besides that you have to have some fun.

I am really jittery these days. Boy, oh boy, only about 25 days left over here. I can't believe it. Next Wednesday night I am driving to Bremerhaven once more. I am staying overnight at Horst's place. He has a very nice apartment; and I also like his wife. Horst is a good kid.

Let me know as soon as possible what Hellmut's address is. I want to write him a letter. Maybe we will be discharged through the camp where he is stationed and then I can visit him there. I can give him a couple of tips about the army. So long everybody,
Your Son, Peter

P.S. Thanks for the \$25. It pulled me out of a ditch – a deep one at that.

Dear Mother,

I just received another letter from you from the 1st of December. I have not bought the sweater, but I will do so as soon as I get the money from the bank. I did not realize the \$25 were for the sweater. But I would have borrowed the money anyway for a few weeks, because I was practically broke already.

So long for now – your Son Peter

I hope Hellmut gets the extension.



December 12, 1954

Dear Mother,

I got back from Bremerhaven at midnight last night. My car is now waiting at the port to be shipped. It will leave Bremerhaven on the 7th of January 1955. It was possible for me to have the car shipped to San Francisco; so that's what I have done. It will arrive there on the 31st of January. Right around that time I will also be discharged from the Army. And if I get discharged from Fort Ord, I may go up to San Francisco first and pick up the car before I return to Los Angeles.

My orders have not arrived yet. The latest they may ship me back is on the 2nd of January. I really don't care about a couple of days one way or the other. I was drafted on the 2nd of February, and my discharge is about the first of February two years later. If I get discharged before that, it is only due to luck. In about seven weeks I will be back.

I am very happy that Hellmut's request has been granted. In order for the two of us to be together yet, he would have to get an additional thirty days. Let him try to get these thirty days. It is not such a weighty matter with the army if you come in today or tomorrow. I hope that he gets his mine so far now that it will start producing and Papa can take over. About my working up in the mine we will speak about it when I get back. You all know that I have the car to pay for yet and that I can't afford to take a job which will not get me returns.

You have written me that you still have \$200 for me on the bank. Would you please , please send me the money. I do



not have the time anymore to correspond with you about this. I am leaving the latest in three weeks, and

there is no time for the mail to travel back and forth. The \$25 I have received. I have acknowledged the money in a previous letter already as far as I can recall. By now you must also have received the pins. They were mailed by air mail at least ten days ago.

Another thing I want to say about the insurance. Do not have the car insured yet but wait until I let you know. I may do it myself in San Francisco if it does not cost too much delay. You can also give me Sonja's address in San Francisco; and I will look her up when I am in town. Have you been able to send Ruth's affidavit of support already? I would be interested.

By the way, I had the greatest time on my three-day trip to Bremerhaven. A nurse with the rank of major went along with me. We stopped in Bremen and slept there. You couldn't say that we slept. After driving 13 hours we did not go to bed. The two of us went to the Excelsior and had a gang-bang-slam time. We celebrated all night. Then we slept two hours in the car to sober up, and then we drove up to Bremerhaven. The major picked up her '52 Buick and I delivered my car. At about one o'clock Friday we came back from Bremerhaven. In the afternoon I went shopping with the major in Bremen. She bought herself a skirt and sweater so that she would have something decent to wear in the evening. The evening before she wore something from Edith (clothing she borrowed from Horst's wife. Horst is Peter's cousin). Friday evening Horst invited us to the Astoria. You remember Papa, don't you? That was a good night, too. It was close to three when we got bed. At seven I got up again and at nine-thirty we left for Nuremberg. I did all the driving for her, and you can believe that I am still pooped. I even took her into my arms for stretches so she could sleep on my shoulder. I know just what pleases the girls. It's Sunday afternoon now. I am going to bed again in a few minutes. The major and I both agreed that we were very tired when we got back, but we had a real good time, and that is what counts. The major and I have to go out again. She has the car and I have the looks. That combination makes a grand couple.

So long, Peter

By the way, I wish you all a good Xmas and a Happy New Year. We shall celebrate when I am back.



December 12, 1954

Dear Mother,

I couldn't trust my eyes when I got the letter from the bank that you had sent 3,500 Marks. You had not told me a thing about that. I borrowed the major's car during lunchtime today and had the money transferred to the bank in Zirndorf, where I owe the money. I am very happy about the sneak attack you played on me. You shall have the money as soon as I have it available. Does Papa know anything about this? Yesterday's letter is void now about the \$200.

Otherwise everything is fine. Yesterday evening I spent a couple of nice hours with the major. It's a funny thing for me to be going out with a major. This is strictly taboo as far as the army is concerned; so we have to sneak out together as quietly as possible. Next weekend the two of us are planning to visit Munich and look around. I have been having all kinds of luck lately.

I wish you a very nice Christmas, and I am looking forward to see you again soon. How is the rest of the family?

Good-bye, your son Peter



December 15, 1954

CHRISTMAS CARD



December 22, 1954

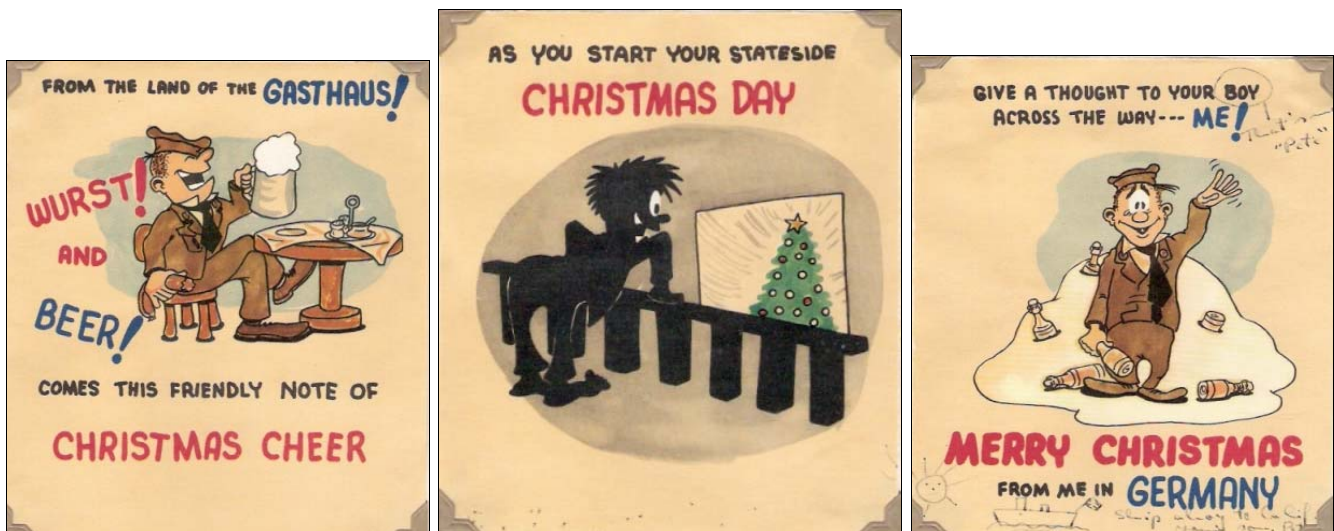
Dear Parents,

Do not send me any more mail because it will not reach me any more. I received my orders yesterday. I will be leaving Nuremberg on the 1st of January 1955. I have to be in Bremerhaven on the 2nd of January before 1000 AM. Next week I am sending all my personal things home. If the box gets there before I do, do not open it. I also sent home a guitar last week, which should arrive before I do. I would like you to open that box and find a good place on the wall to hang it up. Be careful when you open the box, because the instrument is squeezed in tight. When I get to New York I will give you a ring. I will be there around the 13th or 14th of January. My orders read that I will be shipped to Fort Ord and released from there. I will also call you from there and find out if Hellmut is drafted already or not. If he is drafted already, I can look him up.

I got your last letter and the enclosed one from Ruth. A turn of events like this was to be expected; but I still know that Ruth wants to come to the States more today than she ever wanted before. Ruth needs a push. She likes fate to do the deciding, instead of deciding herself. Many people have that type of a disposition and especially women. That is why I do not mind and know it is right to do some prodding myself.

Christmas I am going to Schnupphase's house with Martini for our Christmas dinner. In the evening I will go to the opera with major Giles to see Kavalaria Rusticana and the Bajazzo. On the 26th I am going to Munich. Tomorrow morning will be my last hours of work at the hospital. When you get this letter, I will be leaving for Bremerhaven. I wonder what my room will be like? Papa did some painting, I hear. I am bringing along a few nice knick-knacks to beautify my room. Did I get you a sweater? Don't expect me before the 1st of February.

See you later and happy New Year, folks – Peter – This will be my last letter until I call you up.



**Ship ahoy to California,
Your Son Peter**



January 20, 1955

Telegram sent from New York,

Peter visited his aunt Ruth Kaplan in Woodmere, Long Island prior to flying to Los Angeles. His uncle's name was Harry. Ruth Kaplan was his Mother's only sibling. She helped her sister immigrate to America in September of 1946 when Peter was 13.

Peter had been given extra travel time and stopped to see his parents in Los Angeles prior to going on to Fort Ord, California where he was discharged. Before leaving for Fort Ord and while in Los Angeles, he enrolled at UCLA where he continued his schooling immediately upon discharge from the army. His schooling had been interrupted by the Korean War after Peter had completed three semesters. He graduated from UCLA in 1957 with a degree in psychology.

This telegram was Peter's last documented communication prior to being discharged from the service on February 8th, 1955.

This file of army correspondence had been faithfully copied and filed in chronological order by his mother Josephine Laue who gave him the letters prior to her death. Peter did not have the emotional strength to review his life as a young soldier until he was 77. It was an eye-opener for him.

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Epilogue

The person who received an “Honorable Discharge” from the United States Army of America in February of 1955 was far different from the innocent, idealistic, and zealous boy who was drafted two years earlier. He had compromised his morals. He had left his innocent and child-like nature in Germany. In its place he adopted a vocabulary that was worldly and crude. He adopted the ways of the world as his own and unknowingly slipped into spiritual darkness. He was driven to succeed and excel but all for the wrong reason.

Yes, God allowed him to taste a measure of success for a season; but that season did not last. The day came, some 15 years later, when God took pity on his wayward and prodigal son and stripped him of all worldly rank and applause and brought him home to Himself. It took failure on many fronts to humble him. But the mercy and grace of God finally triumphed over another wayward soul. As you read these words, may more hearts be turned towards home. Yes, yes, the mercy of God is greater than His judgment.

“This is for my son Peter, who must know My Love for him.”

There was a time when I called out to you in my Love: “My son, My son where art thou? Come hither unto Me, for thou art mine alone.” But you were lost in a desolate world and could not hear My voice. I created thee to know Me, love Me and acquire mine attributes, to be holy and sanctified, so that thou would be a worthy bride unto My Spirit.

But lo, thou turned away, leaving My heart empty and grieved. I willed to call thee unto Myself in intimacy. So, I took all that was not of Me away, never to be part of thy life again. I made thee to hunger and thirst after Me alone and if thou didn't search the entire universe over, thou would not be satisfied, except in relationship to Me. Thou art My precious treasure. In thee I live and move and have My being. It is thou I cherish, for thou now has a heart after mine own.

When thy life contained only absolute nothingness, then your wandering in the Valley of Search was over and your journey unto Me began. For all begin in the creation of the longing of My Love and all will return unto Me. I began anew in thee, reconstructing and molding thee from dust to clay to Spirit. For I AM God and thou art My creation. As soon as thou turned thy uplifted face to behold Mine, in full submission to My will, prostrate before Me, I could begin to reveal myself to thee.

O, what joy abounded in the heavens as holy angels rejoiced at our reunion! Heaven and earth stood still as I embraced My beloved once again; and thou became mine forever.

Continue ye in thy love for Me and pray without ceasing unto Me. I will not disappoint thy heart ever again, nor wilt thou ever be far away from Me. For we are as one mind, one heart and one spirit. I AM well pleased to call you son and thou shalt have an anointed place at My right hand. Thou shalt call Me thy Father God and I shalt call thee My best beloved son; and I shall name thy name in the Book of Life. We will always know of our love for one another, one Spirit, singing praise in perfect harmony, rejoicing in our love forevermore.

By Mary Hartle

Note from the author: “Letters from a Soldier” are copyright free.