

26 December 1945

Dear Ones,

It is the middle of the afternoon but I just don't feel like working ... I have guard this evening anyway, so I would have to knock off and shower and shave in the middle of the afternoon. I mailed the package this morning - cost 5.50 with insurance included - it may take months for it to arrive but let me know if and when it does, huh? I also picked up a money order which I will enclose with this note. Mail came in - letters from home covering the second week in December and cards from Mrs Emery and Miss Robinson: I will come down to the office tonight and answer them. My correspondence with the exception of home has certainly slacked off - I guess that everyone finds it increasingly difficult to find something to write and now that the war is over it is easier to excuse not writing. Frankly, I don't really care one way or the other - correspondences sooner or later reach a saturation point and from then on, despite the fact that it is always pleasant to receive letters, they become more or less of a problem. I was thinking this noon, as I went through a large section of clippings that one knack I have picked up over here is the art of reading by scanning - if it weren't for that I would be hopelessly bogged down with my reading. I feel like bitching a little, but I think I'll spare you - the word has been given so that the 50-54 point enlisted men will be on their way within 10 days.

I think that my letter this morning more or less answered your comments about "the camel and the Arab" Daddy - I will be looking for your reply to the criticism of the Hayek thesis in the Harris review of Finer's book. On the specific question of the ability to pay theory, you seemed to feel that Reuther's answer that Labor cannot subsidize inefficient management by accepting wage decreases reveals a weakness in the Labor stand. I don't feel that way - I think that he is right as rain. Labor's stake quite clearly is in a properly functioning and efficient management. That is a point that seems to be overlooked all the time - Labor doesn't like to be on strike, to have wages cease, to have production stop. Labor is not independent in the sense that management is. I am becoming more and more convinced that something must be done to divest Management and Big Business of this immunity from criticism; the press is certainly not pro-Labor... It is hard to tell what will happen when Congress takes action on the British loan; it is a move consistent with our international commitments and the UNO principles of encouraging trade by positive ventures as well as the mere removal of restrictions. It is also an opening wedge into the closed nature of British imperial policy.... The Truman suggestion on which I would really like to see action taken is that requesting overall revision and revamping of the Administrative services in Washington and on Congressional procedure to cut out the myriad duplications and put the emphasis on securing the best civil servants and keeping them....

It is now 7 in the evening - I simply refuse to see Abbott and Costello. Your letters would certainly reflect no slackening in the pace of your schedules - between sororities, Boy Scouts, and Councils and the myriad other groups in the community the Bernsteins seem to be on the go all the time. The best note was your own satisfaction with the way things are going and the fact that others can sense your happiness - I can well imagine what a relief it is to have Uncle Lou in the office and to have the happy aura of his wedding around everything you do. I may not make it for the wedding, but I ought to be there for his first anniversary - though I certainly wouldn't bet on it ( boy, do I have confidence in the Army!!) I see that Uncle Harold still faces the problems of Aunt Mel's trips to St Louis - I wish that he had things so organized so that he could take those family junkets to be with Uncle Sam and Aunt Hattie. I can well imagine that he still cannot relax as he should.. you know, a tour of Army duty might have slowed up Uncle Harold's pace a little and done him a lot of good - he would have found himself forced to slow up, I think. I guess he got out of the OPA before he allowed himself to fall into the slow grinding routines of government administration.... but that is just a passing thought...

In my long letter yesterday, I commented on the problem of being a Jewish child during the Xmas season - and now in your note of the 12th, Mother, I come to your comment about HB in that very situation. Maybe I just don't remember how I felt and I probably had other outlets for myself, but I can't recall feeling very frustrated by the limitations Portland placed upon me - in fact I imagine a psychologist might say that I thrived on them since they protected me during my long period of shyness. However, I can realize how you must feel, HB, and at times

like the holiday season the social situation in Portland becomes most difficult to bear. We must admit, though, that by now it is something to which we are accustomed - hell, it is exactly the same thing that keeps us from using the Pier at Menikoe - we have always been in a rather funny spot HB, and you realize that I do not say this with any overtones of superiority or snobbishness. Just as there is a social barrier between Bolton Street and Vaughn Street, so there is a barrier between Bolton Street and Munjoy Hill. Hell, I went to high school with Greta Robinson, Janie Pierce, and the lesser lights like Rhoda Tolford and the Woodfords crowd. ( In the same way, Mother and Daddy have always been active with their parents in the various community projects and nine times out of ten in positions of leadership.) What I didn't have in common with them, I did have in common with kids like Irvin Herman and Billy Cohen and Mickey Waks, and the girls of their crowd ( with the exception of those that went to Deering, I don't even know their names!) and yet the proper mixture of social ingredients were never there. I never did find it until I went to college, until I came into the Army. Now, I don't know whether my entire frame of mind would have been different had I grown up in Great Neck or in Nashville instead of Portland - that is beside the point, because Portland is Portland - my thought is simply that despite the social void of my life in Portland I created, or had created for me, a set of values which has stood me in good stead. What I may have missed in adolescent good times I made up for when I found the proper milieu. Some things you just miss - all the little techniques and tricks of knowing what to do, of being with a date - but the older you are, the easier they are to learn and the smoother they are. I know it is little consolation to say "Wait until you get to college" when there is big social event ahead that you are missing. And I certainly would be the last to deny that in theory you belong there in all your glory, HB. It is just that the elements don't seem to mix quite right ... you are sixteen now, and despite the denials which result, I am certain that you realize that the fault is not in your standards but is in the provincialism of Portland... well, this all must sound very confused and of course you will be reading this in 1946, when this vacation period is just a memory, but I guess you know what I am trying to get at, Toots... And just wait until I get home - we'll see if a few remedial measures cannot be taken.. I've never been to a dance at the Eastland or at the Country Club, myself... ( I have a hunch that you'll be teaching me a thing or three, Toots!!)

Thanks for the offer of packages Mother - but I see no sense in piling up stacks of nashere's. My belt is at its outside limit anyway! I enjoy your comments on the discussions going on at home concerning social welfare planning and the problem of the returning Veteran. I wish that one notion could be brought home to everyone back in the states - the average GI will not want to consider himself a separate social problem: he will want to be another citizen. And for that reason I think that you are very right in pointing out that Veterans services which are offered will have to be handled carefully and effectively - and by men! There must be the greatest coordination between all the social service agencies to avoid making a public issue of soldier-veteran aid with the result that the ex GI will shun it. Maybe I am still starry eyed but competition between social service agencies is just too much for me to comprehend - especially the Red Cross aloofness for community organization; I am truly puzzled. ( I hope you said hello to Mary Ward for me - by the way, did you get my letter asking for a list of people to whom I might drop a line? if it be on the way then my question is answered.)

I take it that the Bernstein-Seligman melding will take place in NYC - if you have sent me the specific place, I will send a cable; And as Aunt Ida says, I do wish that Juj and I could be there - hell, pretty quick we are going to earn the title of bachelor nephews and cousins - and on the Bernstein side, excluding the teen agers, we are the only ones who rate it! Where was I -- I hope that you didn't slip at the Council shindig and start talking about the CSB, Mother; with your busy schedule and a million and one things on your docket, it would have been entirely understandable!! ( I may be sorry that I said this - for this is my idea and no one in the Council may have had a similar notion - but I certainly think that the banquet highlight should have been a tribute to you, Mother - - your letters which are now on the way will tell me whether the Council is on the ball or not.)

OK for now - this is a pretty sad letter - but what it lacks in coherence and in organization it should make up in love -

*Summer*

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