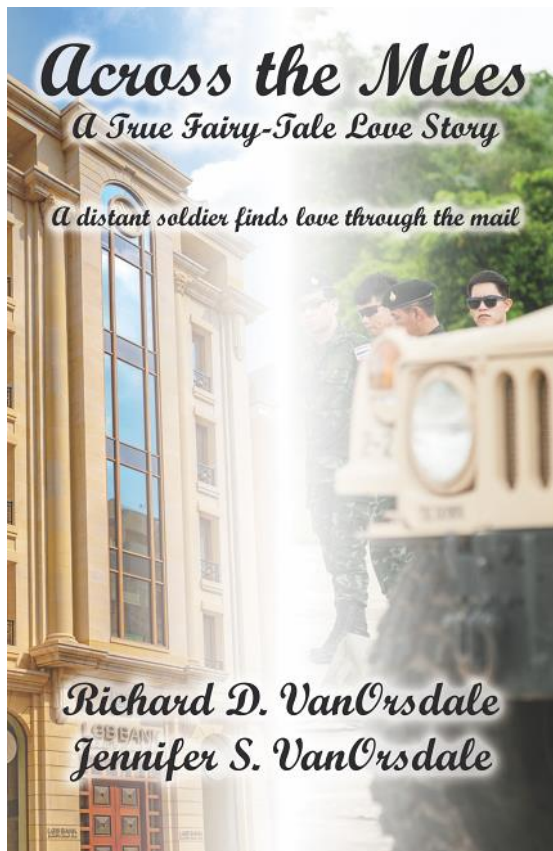




Collection of transcribed letters between a deployed Army Officer and his mother's boss in a bank in Southern California. They would eventually meet upon his return to the U.S. and marry three months later.

Across the Miles: A True Fair-tale Love Story

By Richard D. VanOrsdale and Jennifer S. VanOrsdale

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Across the Miles

A True Fairy-Tale Love Story

A distant soldier finds love through the mail

Richard D. VanOrsdale
Jennifer S. VanOrsdale

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Print ISBN: 978-1-961268-31-9

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88532-641-4

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Published by Abuzz Press, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Abuzz Press

2026

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

VanOrsdale, Richard D. and VanOrsdale, Jennifer S.

Across the Miles: A True Fair-tale Love Story by Richard D.

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2026914700

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Prologue

In 1981 I was a First Lieutenant in the Army, stationed at McPheeters Barracks, in Bad Hersfeld, West Germany, with the 3rd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. We were known as the “Workhorse Squadron” of the “Blackhorse Cavalry.” I was the Squadron S2 (Intelligence) Officer and Border Officer. We had two Observation Posts (“O.P.” in Army parlance) on the East / West German Border. I often commanded one of the O.P.s or led mounted and dismounted patrols of the Border when the “duty Troop” needed some relief.

In September of 1981, I received a letter from my mother. She said that she worked for a nice girl at the bank and that she thought we might get along. She included the girl’s name and address.

My mother had tried to set me up with girls in the past, but, when they found out that I was a professional soldier, they quickly lost interest in me. Since my mother’s efforts had never worked out, I trashed the letter. The next month, I received another letter from my mother with the same message. I trashed that letter as well.

That Thanksgiving, the Regiment had been to tank gunnery training the previous month, so I did not have time to get a card to send to my parents. Instead, I called them to wish them a Happy Thanksgiving. My mother answered the phone. The first words out of her mouth were “you haven’t written Jennifer.” I told her that she had tried to set me up with girls before and it had never worked out. For now, I told her, I was just going to play the field. If she expected a daughter-in-law or grandchildren from me, she would probably have to wait until I retired from the Army.

Undeterred, she said, “Richard, if you never, ever do anything for me again, write Jennifer a letter.” I said, “Mom, that offer is too good to pass up” and promised that I would write Jennifer a Christmas card.

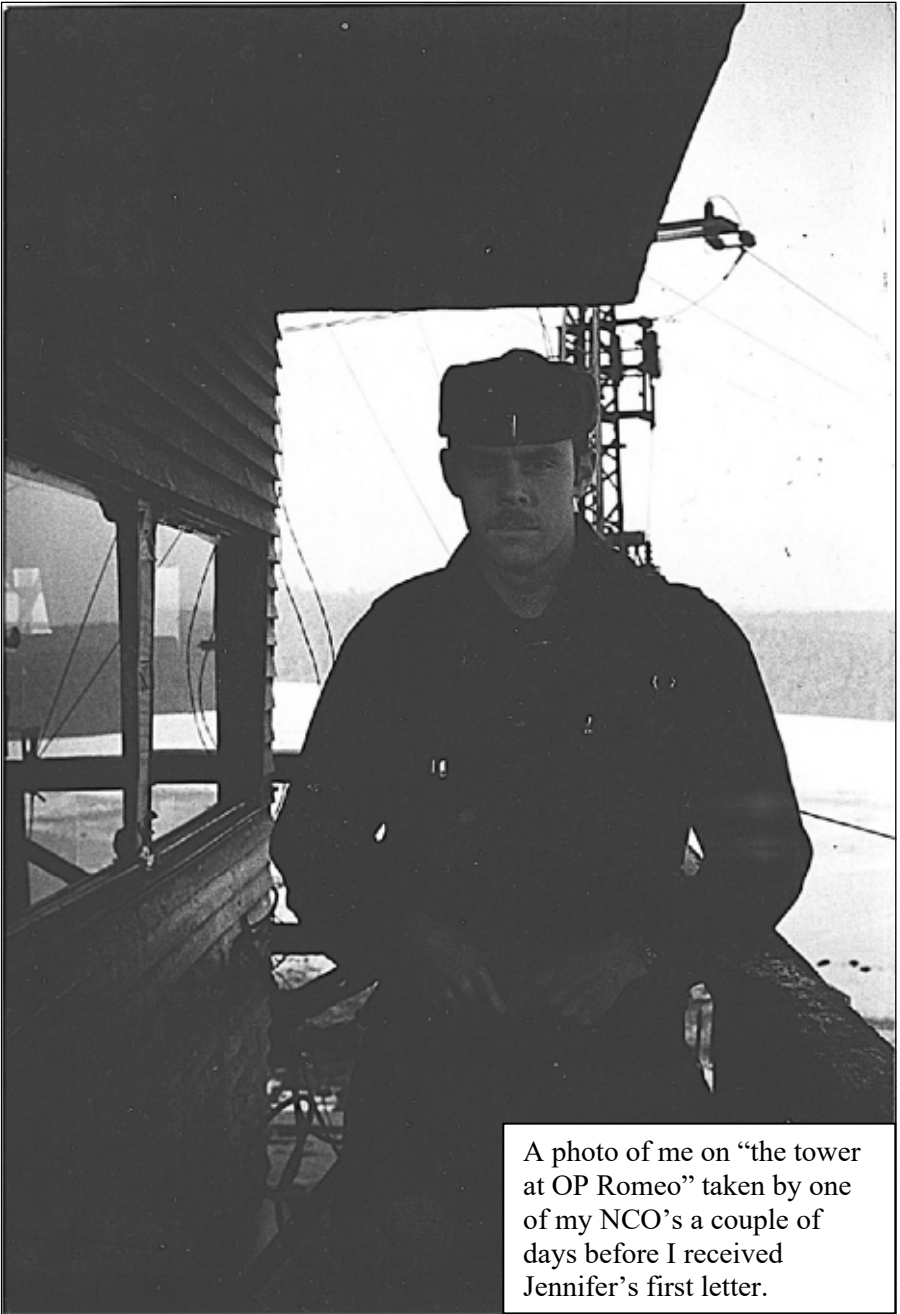
So, I got one of the special “Merry Christmas from the Frontier of Freedom” cards my Regiment had printed up, and mailed it the next day.

December 1981 came and went. January 1982 came. Before I headed out to duty as Commander of O.P. Romeo, as I was packing up, I trashed the paper on which I had written Jennifer’s name and address. “As expected,” I thought.

I had overlooked the fact that it took a minimum of seven days for a letter to get from me, to California, and another minimum of seven days for a letter to get from California to me. And, I also had overlooked the fact that mail often stacked up on the First Sergeant’s desk until there was enough of it to justify the duty driver’s trip out to the O.P.

I had been on the Border for about a week when I saw the duty driver hauling-ass up the dirt road to the O.P. He was waving an envelope out the door of the jeep like he did whenever somebody got orders that they were going home. When he stopped at the gate, I went out to the walkway around the tower and shouted down to him, “Hey! Whose orders are they? Who’s goin’ home?” His response was, “No! Sir! It is a letter for you! And it smells really good, too!”

A True Fair-tale Love Story



A photo of me on “the tower at OP Romeo” taken by one of my NCO’s a couple of days before I received Jennifer’s first letter.

Across the Miles

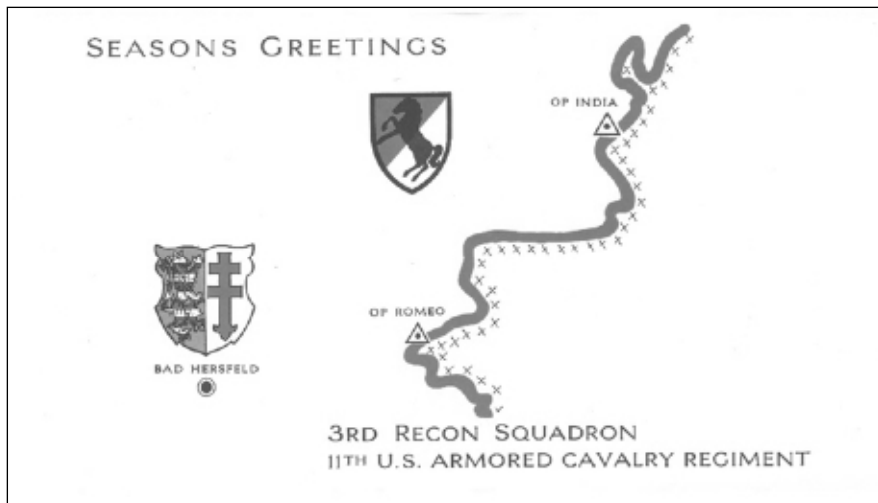
What follows are all our letters we exchanged:

Part I – Introduction and Getting to Know Each Other

The letters in this part are the, “hey, you sound like somebody I would really like to get to know better” things that are normally exchanged on “first dates.” But, given that we were six thousand miles away from each other, and it took at least a week for a letter to go each way, we were forced to “take it really slow.”

I didn’t have any “expectations” at this point. My luck with women up to then was spotty at best. Sure, there was a couple of gals whom I had been in written communications with, but, the long distance between the US and Germany had generally taken its toll. There were some ladies there in Germany, both American and German, who went with me to social events (eg, dinners and military formals) that the Regiment or the German-American Friendship Club put on, but none who expressed any interest in any long-term relationship.

Jennifer was in the same boat that I was in. She was concentrating on developing her career as the youngest Assistant Operations Manager in the Wells Fargo Banking system in California. She didn’t have much of a social outlet. To conserve money and not “live with parents,” she was sharing an apartment with an old school friend. The few times she went out to different places, she felt like “meat in a meat market.” Apparently, the men in her part of southern California were not up to her standards as ones who might be worthy of her time and attention.



A True Fair-tale Love Story

Christmas, 1981

Hello Jennifer!

My Mom wrote me about you and said you'd write back if I decided, or got a chance, to drop a line first. Anybody that my mother introduces to me has got to be an A-OK person, so I'm glad to "meet" you. I don't know what she's told you about me, so to eliminate any "incriminating" evidence, just wash away... (I'm not a bit shy... however... I am old-fashioned.)

On a bit more serious note, I hope the Christmas Season and New Year bring you peace, prosperity, and good health.

*Yours,
Rick*

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM
THE FRONTIER OF FREEDOM

Rick

December 29, 1981

Hi Rick!

I'm glad to "meet" you also! Hope you had a nice Christmas. As always, it went by too quickly. We got together with grandparents and family Christmas night at my parents' house (the annual tradition) and for once didn't all eat too much!

How is everything back in New York? I have never been back to the east coast, but hear it can get a bit chilly in winter. Where exactly are you located – upstate New York? How long have you been there?

What does your training consist of – do you specialize in a particular area? Do you travel around at all or do you remain primarily in New York? What do you enjoy the most? About all your Mom said was that you are in the Army!

Just so you know something about the person who is writing this letter, let me tell you a bit about myself. I'm a native Californian and attended college in Oregon (Willamette University). I have one younger brother who is in his last year at college. I live in an apartment with a girlfriend I have known for many years and a Siamese cat named Lucy. She's a darling cat but has some "voice." I majored in Biology at school and will always keep wildlife and nature an enjoyment. You're probably wondering how I ended up in Banking! I'll let you know in my next letter!

Have a Happy New Year and I look forward to hearing from you!

Love,
Jennifer

Pre-script: Pardon the stationery. I'm in the tower and it's the only thing I could find. See paragraph 4 for an explanation. R

13 January 1982
OP Romeo, Fed Rep of Ger.

Hello Jennifer!

I was coming close to wondering if I would ever hear from you, and lo and behold, a Jeep came to the OP (Observation Post) today with a letter from you.

I don't want to embarrass you, but I'm not in New York...I'm in Germany, stationed in an Armored Cavalry Regiment (tanks and

armored personnel carriers) which is charged with patrolling the Iron Curtain, (i.e. the Border Between E. Germany and W. Germany). As of right now, I'm OP Commander of an OP one kilometer from the enemy. My normal job is I'm the S2...that means that I'm the Squadron Intelligence and Security Officer...working directly for a Lieutenant Colonel, Squadron Commander. Since you know very little about the Army, I'll be very happy to explain everything which may confuse you. (Actually, I'm very happy that what I do is new to you because you'll have very few prejudices...I think.)

When I say I'm the Intelligence Officer it means I'm in charge of the staff section responsible for knowing everything about the enemy and making sure all our secrets stay secrets. I'm not a spy and do not work with spies; that is another sector of intelligence work. Intel is just my secondary specialty. My primary is Cavalry Officer...you know...Reconnaissance with tanks, helicopters, and Scouts. While I am a qualified parachutist, my duties do not require me to "jump."

As a matter of fact, this letter is being written on the back of a Spot Report Form. When we see the E. Germans doing something, we record it on this form and radio the report to higher headquarters...

Off of the Army...at least for a while...I'm glad to learn a little about you, and I look forward to learning more. It's been a while so I really can't remember what I told you about me, so I may be a bit redundant, (please excuse). I graduated from West Point in June 1978 when I became a Second Lieutenant. While I studied engineering, my "area of concentration" (of "electives") was international relations/international economics. I speak French and Russian and just a smattering of German. (Just enough to get me into trouble, and not enough to get me out.) I love to travel and am happiest when I'm outside in the woods or preferably, desert. I'm a licensed SCUBA diving instructor and would rather swim than do most anything else. My taste in food is anything that doesn't eat me first and my taste in music is anything but acid rock/screaming singers. (Do I ever love to

dance...especially “clutch & grab two step.”) Forties & Big Band music is especially pleasing to my gunned out ears. While my parents live in California, I was born in Texas, graduated from High School in Connecticut, and my military home of record is Phoenix, Arizona, I consider myself a Nevadan and call Nevada my “home” when people ask me where I’m from. I hope you could follow all that...I have a dog named Tonoch (pronounced tun-ook’) a Beagle-terrier mix and she is staying with my folks while I’m here in the land of beer & schnitzel. I return Stateside in August this year and will be stationed at Ft. Knox for my Armor Officers Advanced Course for about 6 months. To where after that? I have no idea. Hopefully 3 years in the States. When I take a little leave in August is when I want to meet you face to face. Do you like the beach? I’m going to finally melt the perma-frost out of my bone marrow this summer and would like some company, so I hope you can go with me.

There’s something else about me you ought to know...I’m not a “faddist.” I own a pickup truck but I’m not a “cowboy.” I like dogs & guns but I’m not a “redneck,” I like to drink a little but I’m not a “boozer,” I love the outdoors but I’m not an “environmentalist,” I’m a professional Army Officer but not a “careerist,” I don’t do dope and never have and I loathe anyone who does. I’m my own kind of person and think “to hell with what others think of me.” I believe in being totally open and honest and “up front” with everybody. I don’t play politics. I hate back-stabbers, complainers, and negative people. As a result, I’ve been called tactless and opinionated but really don’t care as long as everybody “knows where I stand.” I’m very old-fashioned but don’t hold to the opinion that the only place for women is in the kitchen or bed. And while I think I’m “modern” in many ways (at the same time as old-fashioned, if you can get my drift) I don’t believe in “free love” or “do anything you want.” Basically, it all boils down to this...I can’t fit into anybody’s “block” or “grouping” of people, and I’m glad about that.

After all that, you'll probably react one of two different ways...either you'll say "is he ever messed up" and not write me back, or you'll think "at least he's different" and therefore continue the letters...To be honest, I hope the latter is the case.

Well, it's about time for me to go inspect the billets, and eat dinner. Take care of yourself. I really do hope to hear from you again.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. (Post-Script): I hope I spelled your last name correctly. I relied on memory since I left your name & address in my quarters. R

January 18, 1982

Hi Rick!

How is everything back in New York? I've been reading about all of the cold weather that has hit the U.S. – it even got down to 20 degrees one night here in Pasadena!! That's cold for this area of the country, but would probably feel like summer back there!

I was talking to your Mom the other day at work and she said you hadn't gotten my letter yet. Depend on the Postal Service.....I really shouldn't say that – their delivery is usually very good. They were probably recovering from the holidays – I hope you have it by now.

As you can probably tell by the card, I love animals. Sea otters are some of my favorites. In driving along the California coast, I've seen the preserves for them, but never actually seen an otter playing in the water. My timing always seems to be a bit off! How about you? Are you an "animal lover?" Do you have a favorite? Although I adore animals, I was also brought up in a family that hunts and fishes. In fact, a certain amount of it is good. If we didn't have hunting seasons, the country would be a bit crowded – the animals would overpopulate their

habitats, eat up the food supply and end up killing each other off. Good grief – enough of my philosophy. I’m beginning to sound like a teacher!

Have you been out to the West Coast in your travels? This is one part of the country I know pretty well. When going to college up in Oregon, I made many trips along the coastal highway – it’s a great drive. In fact, at the end of this month, I’m taking a few days off and going up to Oregon to see a good friend of mine. A mutual friend of ours is getting married. It will give me a good excuse to play around up there! There is quite a bit of snow and, of course, wonderful country for exploring. It will be a nice break from the normal routine. I can’t wait!

As usual, I’m running out of room too quickly. I guess my promise from the first letter to let you know how I got into Banking will have to wait one more time (can you hardly wait?! Ha!) Seriously, hope all is going well for you!

Love,
Jennifer

January 21, 1982

Hi Rick!

Well, third time is the charm! I won’t ask you about New York this time! I really meant it when I said all your Mom told me about you was that you are in the Army! How exciting to be in Germany! Whereabouts is OP Romeo located? My family is originally from Germany as you can probably tell from the last name! Apparently, we had a small beer factory in a town in N. Germany called Wildeshausen on the Hunte River. Don’t worry, though, like you, I’m not much of a “boozier” either. In fact, I have quite a low tolerance and know my

limit. If left to me, the beer, wine, etc. business would probably go bankrupt!

Your job sounds interesting. Do you get a chance to see much of the country or do you remain primarily in the same area? And don't think I have any prejudices towards the Army or military in general. My grandfather was a Major in the artillery and my father was planning to be in the military until he broke his back in a car accident in college. Luckily, he is able to walk with no problem (although he looks a bit like he is always facing into the wind!) but his military plans sort of came to an end. As a result, I've grown up with quite a bit of exposure to the military (although I'm no expert by any means!) and consider myself a very patriotic person.

And now a bit of "Here is my Life." Being a native Californian, I haven't had the opportunity to see as much of the country as you have but I love to travel. I've had the opportunity to see most of the West Coast, a bit of Iowa and an even smaller bit of Florida (my roommate's parents are from Iowa and my father's parents live in Florida). I would love to be able to do a lot of traveling both in the United States, Canada and Europe. My one big adventure was when I was a Junior in college. I had the chance to live with a family in England for about four months. It was great. We travelled around England, up to Scotland, down to the Isle of Jersey and to Paris for a bit. I would have done more, but the money ran out. One of my goals is to get back to England and then see Europe. In addition, I'd like to drive across the United States and up into Canada a bit. Something to look forward to. I believe you always have to have some sort of dream or goal to work towards. Here's to the future!

As I was reading your letter I was laughing a bit – it sounds a lot like me! Although I don't own a pick-up truck (I drive a blue Rabbitt aka "Bunny.") I love the outdoors. I was a Girl Scout for many years. In fact, about three other girls and I started our own troop as Seniors because we didn't agree with all of the drinking and smoking and

flirting the girls in the other troop were doing. We built most of our own equipment and tried to get out and go camping as much as possible. We had a lot of fun. I also despise drugs and have never had any desire to ever see or try the stuff. I don't need things like that to have fun. I love to try all types of food, although I'm not particularly fond of Brussel sprouts and, like you, enjoy most types of music – everything except “hard rock.” I adore musicals and have a record of almost everyone ever made. I'm also a person who has some definite opinions and can be a bit stubborn at times! If you know anything about astrology, you can probably guess that I'm a Taurus. I'm not one of these bug astrology fans, but I always find it interesting to find quite a few similarities in traits between the books and myself. And I love the beach! Living in California I practically grew up there. If the invitation is still open, I'd like to join you in August!

Well, it is getting late. Tomorrow is the day we're open until 6:00, so I better turn in. Take care!

Love, Jennifer

26 January 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

I received your second letter today...I just got back from a field duty period and it was waiting for me. Imagine, there I was, COLD, wet, tired, hungry, and feeling unwanted, unloved, and totally undone when a letter from you greeted me. Thank you!

I'm so glad to hear that you're such an outdoors person, who understands the need to hunt & fish...we have a date when I get Stateside this August...first, we'll go to the beach, then to the

mountains, just to walk around, talk, and generally let me forget some things, OK?

Say, you'll never guess what I did a very short while ago...I came in from the Border for a day, and I bought a car. A BMW 320i, metallic gray, sun-roof, stereo, the whole nine yards, and does it ever scream down the road! It's a 1979 but only has 15,287 miles on it...my Regimental Commander is selling it because he rarely drives it and does not want to hassle with taking it back to the States. It has U.S. specs, so I'll definitely have it for a while. As you can tell, I'm really excited about it. As a matter of fact, my folks really don't know the final outcome of my decision...so, you could surprise my Mom and tell her some news about her eldest. Ha!

Something else, as of this coming 1 Feb, yours truly will no longer be a First Lieutenant...it'll be Captain. Finally. It seems like forever and not just a little over 3 ½ years. Oh well, when we meet face to face we'll just have to celebrate in the past tense, OK?

You are right about "how did you get in banking?" I'm still waiting.

Say, I enclosed a picture of me that a buddy took some time ago. According to my roommate, Jeff, the only difference is that I have a couple more wrinkles and a couple more gray hairs. I hope it doesn't scare you off...it was the third day out, no sleep, and I was waiting for an airstrike I had called in...sitting in my old APC (Armored Personnel Carrier).

I'd better be going. I have mucho to do-oh tomorrow. Hope to hear from you soon. Also, next note, send your phone number...I may get a burr and call...

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I do have a favorite animal. Actually, three of ‘em....the only Big Game animals I WILL NOT hunt... Elephants, bears, and moose. And, yes, I love the western U.S. although Oregon has not been one of my stomping grounds.

R

28 January 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

This is going to be a quick note to say hello and see how things are with you.

Everybody here is running around like chickens without heads. We got back from the field a couple of days ago, and we head out again in a few days. One of my Staff Sergeants and I will be going a day or so early to conduct some reconnaissance on the unit we’re going up against in our 5-day war. They are a Cavalry unit also, so it should be a lot of fun. However, I do not really enjoy freezing my buns off in 3 feet of snow. Oh well, such is life. (I just wish I had bought that pair of electric socks I saw last time on leave...)

Say what kind of music and food do you like? Yes, I can cook, and as a matter of fact, I’m not bad at all when it comes to cooking over a wood fire or bar-b-cueing...ask my Mom, she can verify that. One think I’ve had a craving for, however, is for broiled rainbow or speckled (brown) trout, freshly caught (by me, of course!) with a hint of lemon....argh! Here in D’land there are trout, but generally one cannot catch them himself (oneself) unless one has a German fishing license (expensive to get) and permission from the land owner (often hard to find) one cannot angle (is that the right word?). But, I’ll be back to the U.S. (we call it “the world” or also “the land of round door

knobs” since German doorknobs are long or square) in August so I’m doing my best in trying to curb my impatience. Do you have any suggestions?

I’d better do. The S-1 just came in with another “alligator.” You know...when you’re up to your ass in alligators it’s hard to remember the original mission was to drain the swamp. (So, the VanOrsdale corollary to that is “So shoot first, and continue the mission.”) Take care. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. This was a confused letter I know. Sorry.

R

29 January 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

I received your third letter today...I’m glad that we seem to be fairly compatible and that my traits didn’t really get you torqued out. YES! The beach invite is definitely still open. As a matter of fact, I’ll extend the invite that if you want to come over to Europe before I leave in August, just let me know because I can always find you a place to stay here in Bad Hersfeld. Jeff & I have lots of room, but you’d be more comfortable, I’m sure, staying with a married couple I know who have a large guest room.

In 1976 I was stationed with an English Army unit in England, Wales and Scotland, after Airborne School, and before my short assignment with the Second Cav Regiment in southern Germany. I also really enjoyed England.

Also, I was an exchange officer with the French Army in 1979, no, it was May and June of 1980, based in Laon, France, 170km North East of Paris. Of all the European cities I've seen (not that many, just a few) Paris is my favorite. If in your travels any time in the future you need a translator, just let me know.

All of us bachelors in the Squadron are planning a road rally for the last weekend in April/first weekend in May, from Bad Hersfeld, to Zurich, Switzerland. I'll have my car well broken in by then so I should be ready to duel with my roommate's Porsche. Mine is a BMW 320i, his is a Porsche 911. He has me beat on the flat & open, I have him beat in the mountains and on curvy, bumpy roads, so it should be an even race. Also in the group is a classic Jaguar, a 280Z, a Corvette, a BMW Bavaria, a Scirocco (spelling?), and a Saab Turbo. I think it'll be fun...we're calling it the "Great Gold Brick Rally"...first (& only) prize is a piece of varnished wood with a gold Second Lieutenant's bar set in it with a brass label inscribed 1st Place, 1st Annual Great Gold Brick Rally, B.H. to Zurich, 1982 (it's a homemade trophy) and a bottle of Cognac. It ought to be a kick! I'll take pics & send a couple. OK?

You said you don't like Brussels Sprouts, well, I can't stand boiled okra. Ugh!

You mentioned your family originally comes from northern Germany, well, since I'm the Intelligence Officer and have access to all sorts of maps, I'm going to find out where it is, and possibly head up there for a day trip, take a picture of the Rathaus (town hall) and send it. No promises when, but I'll try.

If you want to figure out where I'm stationed, look at a map of Germany and start at Frankfurt and go North East about 75 miles til you find Fulda (that is Regimental Headquarters), then go 25 miles Northeast of Fulda to Bad Hersfeld. I'm 12 miles from the East German Border. OP Romeo is half a mile from the "Iron Curtain."

Since I'm the Intelligence Officer (I just told you that, huh? Stupid me!) I spend a lot of time on the Border, and flying the "trace," watching "bad guys", and trying to learn as much about them as possible. Since terrorists have been active lately, a lot of what I do in Bad Hersfeld centers on keeping my Kaserne and soldiers safe....every so often it potentially gets very "hairy," but to date I've not gotten in any fire fights or scuffles.....whew! (I'm sorry, its actually a lot safer than it sounds.)

Well, my dear, I must go. It's quite late and I have to work a full day tomorrow. (Yes, it's Saturday tomorrow). If you don't hear from me for about a week it's because I'm going to the field and won't be back until 5 Feb. But, I'll write a long one when I get back.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. Don't forget the pic.....R

31 January 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Dear Jennifer!

I got a break, finally! Yesterday everything became official, including paperwork, (orders) etc. I am now a bone fide, dyed in the wool, Captain. The Squadron Commander verified it yesterday. At long last. I've been using CPT as my title on return addresses since I knew it would be official by the time any response was received. (So, pardon the slight jump ahead.) But, YAHOO! Anyway.

We also got another break! I don't go the field this week. Maybe next week, but at least we get a couple of days off. (I don't have to work until Wednesday morning....after spending the past 10 days on

mission, getting ready for the field, I think I deserve it.) Anyway, at least I'll be able to write a little more.

I hope you don't mind my writing so often, but when I get a chance to put thoughts on paper, or get some "bitching" done, I feel a lot better for it. I realize it may be an imposition, since you don't know a lot about the Army and that you don't need someone else telling you their problems. Just let me know if I get boring, over-imposing, or generally you decide you're not interested. As fair retribution, if you ever have any gripes to air, and would feel better for writing them down, feel free to bounce them off me....it would be OK.. I know person to person is best but it's a little hard to do 5000 miles away, so mail or phones will have to make it happen. What do you think?

You know, after being a Lieutenant for almost four years, it's really hard to remember that I've been promoted. I'm still prone to answer the phone "Lieutenant VanOrsdale speaking," and when my men call "Hey, Cap'n" I don't always respond as quickly as I would to "L.T.!" but it's growing on me. What will have no trouble at all with growing on me will be the extra \$250 a month. But, I'm going to start sending that straight to the bank...After all, I want to have some fun when I get back stateside this summer, and it'll take a little bit at least to "feed" my car and assist my travels.

One place I'd like to go is to the Grand Canyon, and even Death Valley...if we get along as well in person as we do via correspondence, maybe you'd like to come along. Question.....if so, what do you think would be better? Pick-up (w/ air conditioning) or BMW (without air conditioning but with a sun-roof)? I have no idea, so maybe you could knock me off the fence. Also, if you have a better place to suggest than Death Valley and Grand Canyon, please do so.

The last weapons & sensitive items report just came in so I'd better get this in the post box and go home. (I'm going to sleep for a week....)

Take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

2 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

This is just a quick note to say hello and “see what you’re up to.” Today was my first “work day” as a Captain. It was officially a training holiday but I was called at home (Jeff & I call it “the Pit”) to come in for a couple of problems. I “drew sabres” and did battle with our Dep. Sub-Community Commander, another Captain. It was great. No more “Yes, Sir,” “No, Sir” Bull _____. I just told him he was wrong, that he was an ass_____, and just walked out of the building. I’d been waiting to catch that SOB in a screw-up for two years, now.....YAHOO! My first victory as a Hauptmann....

Gotta go. Take care...

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I apologize for misspelling your name so many times previously....I know now....Sh, not Sch. Oh, well, chalk it up to being in D’land too long. R

3 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Today has really been a s___ day. And it isn't even 1100 hrs yet. I found out a half hour ago, I go on mission this afternoon, and also on 12 Feb. Somehow I really am getting tired of getting into plain clothes and seeing German intelligence people....I call 'em "gook spooks" because a lot of what they do is reminiscent of what I hear the Vietnamese spooks were like...concerned with who had arms and why they had 'em, and not concerned with where they were coming from and who was peddling them.

Just mention "terrorist" to a Kraut and he gets all bent out of shape. Last Spring I came within a moment of icing one and while it was scary for me and my partner and our back-up men, it was all under control. No sweat. (But afterwards, did the effects of adrenalin & nerves ever settle in! Oh Boy!) Anyway, these Deutschers really have to learn a little "savoir faire."

Enough of my complaining. Sorry. Am I ever glad I get back to the land of round door knobs this August. You would not believe how much I look forward to meeting you in person, amongst other things...you know I said, sun & fun....surf, too!

I called my Mom on her birthday last weekend, and she was all set when I asked her how you were doing...she gives you "high marks" and when she describes you as a "good, old-fashioned girl" with "plenty of brains and savvy" she hits center target with me.

Of course, an Einstein I'm not...I graduated in the bottom quarter of my West Point class (academically – although I was the exact middle man of my class in General Order of Merit – combined military and academic) and I generally have to work harder than the next guy

if I want to “get anywhere.” (I almost flunked out of W.P. a couple of times.....)

Say, I have another question....when I get back, I'd like to go out in the desert and go “tin can shooting,” would you like to go with me? Nothing really elaborate or long term...just go out, pepper a few beer cans and milk jugs, to stay in practice. Do me a favor....would you ask my Mom where the Japanese Restaurant is that we went to back in, oh, I guess it was 1971....if I remember right it was named Cherry Blossom and it was somewhere near downtown L.A. I'd like to go there one night if it still exists...you're welcome to accompany me, if you can or want to. (I love Japanese fried squid....)

I took the liberty of enclosing a few pictures I found last night while rummaging around in my picture drawer. The one in E. Berlin is somewhat rare since very few westerners ever see Berlin, let alone go into the Eastern Sector (some people call the Commie side the “Drone Zone”.....get it?)

Hope you like 'em. Don't worry about it....just reciprocate.....OK? (I'm beginning to sound like a broken record, huh? No Excuse, Ma'am!)

Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. You told me you are a Taurus.....when is your birthday?

R

This was written in a Valentine's Day card with Snoopy and Woodstock on the front, and the message "Dear Rick.....Happy Valentine's Day.....Love, Jennifer." It was postmarked the 4th of February, 1982. Inside was the following letter from Jennifer:

Hi Rick!

I don't know if I told you, but Snoopy is my hero. So when I saw this card, I had to get it for you!

I had a wonderful trip up to Oregon this last weekend – as always, the time went by too quickly. The flight was only two hours but it seemed more like four – I think I was just a bit anxious to get there! That afternoon, Sue and I went down to visit Willamette U. (where I attended college) to visit people and also see the new science building. I couldn't believe it! They gutted out the old building and it looks like a whole new place! I graduated too early!

The day after the wedding, we went up to Mt. Hood. It was beautiful – 190 in. of snow. We went inner-tubing and then up to Timberline Lodge, a wonderful old building they built in the 1930's. It was even snowing – I'd kept my fingers crossed. We don't get much snow down here!

Well, I've got to get off to the Bank, but I wanted to set this off in the mail. I hope it gets there before the fourteenth!

Happy Valentine's Day!

Jennifer

6 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Ah! The weekend is finally here, a chance to relax.....

Yesterday, I had to go to Frankfurt for a special mission. I almost got stuck with having to stay down there, and work today. But, thank goodness I didn't have to, because, last night was my promotion party. Myself and 3 other guys who got promoted this month had a big blow-out at the Officers Club for all the Officers and their wives. From 1800 to 0100 it lasted.....I danced my buns off.... (Since I'm a solo, I asked all the wives at least half a dozen times each) and surprisingly only drank a total of 5 beers. I suppose Dad would be happy to hear of my basic absentia from booze is still in effect. Just between us, I really used to be a big boozer....you know, young Lieutenant and all that stuff....for the past year, I've cut to almost nothing. I do enjoy a small snifter of Cognac in the evenings and will go through two bottles of Remy Martin a month, so that's not bad, huh? Just call me an old staid Captain...

You know something? There hasn't been a "Captain Van Orsdale" for a hundred years. Dad was a "squid" (Navy man) and my grandfather made it to First Lieutenant in the First War. Great-grandfather John T. VanO made his Captaincy in 1882 during duty on the frontier...somewhere around Montana I think. He made it on his frontier and I made it on my frontier...18km away from the "Iron Curtain" and the sworn enemies of free people. (The hackles on my neck arose at that thought.)

Anyway, it's an interesting thought, I wonder how "far" I'll get...

The weather here is warmer than last February, but it has only been so for the past week. Now, it's coldish but drizzly and rainy. YUCK

weather. I'm thinking about crawling back into bed and crashing for another couple of hours, it's that kind of day. I'm sure you know what I mean.

What do you think of tweeds? I picked up a brown/olive two piece tweed suit I had ordered (about two months ago) just this past weekend...Wow! Do I ever like it! It's sort of rough on the legs, but it reminds me of my old cadet days...wool grays rubbing all the hair off one's knees and legs. It's kind of a light brown/olive small herringbone material with a tiny maroon speck here and there...my Squadron CO, LTC Cxxxxxx told me I could walk down the Thames and be mistaken for a misplaced country gentleman....(he served in Great Britain for two years). "Oh! I say..." (I think he is BS'ing me!)

One of these days I'm going to go back to my British Regiment for a visit and see how many of the old crew are still there from 1976. Probably just a few of the older NCO's. They really took a hit in N. Ireland in 1979. Two of my buddies were wounded and one was expelled from service due to wounds. Not a good average....such is life.

Well, Jen, I've gotta go. You take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. Please say hello to my Mom for me when you see her. Thanks! R

February 10, 1982

Note: I'm not forgetting about pictures. See end under "P.S."

Hi Rick!

I decided to be devilish tonight and indulge in one of my favorite things – ice cream! I'm an "ice cream-aholic" (don't worry, though, I'm not a two ton Tillie!) So, here I sit with my chocolate mint ice cream, a purring Lucy (our Siamese cat) blissed out in my lap and pen in hand. What a combo!

Thank you for all the great letters! Mary and I so often peek into a mailbox devoid of anything but bills, catalogs or fat envelopes claiming we can win \$1,000,000.00 However, after seeing the order in which they arrived, I'd really like to see how the Post Office functions! Your earliest letter arrived today along with #'s three, five and six! #2 arrived Monday and #4 came yesterday! A bit bizarre!

How long do my letters usually take to get there?

Congrats on your new position! What happens when you get a promotion? Fanfare or is it short, sweet and quiet. What new duties to you have? (If you ever get tired of me plying you with questions, just let me know. As you can probably guess, I'm pretty clueless about military life and really find it interesting ie. what in the heck are alligators?! You mentioned swamps and guns-I hope they didn't dump a whole trainload of Florida "immigrants" at your doorstep!)

Also, how exciting about your new car! As you can gather, your Mom's news about the car reached her before your letter to me did. So much for a possible surprise. It sounds super – a sun roof is great and (another question) what are US specs-license plates?

Well, I've been promising to let you know how I got into banking for a while, so I'll finally keep it. To tell you the truth, it was a bit by accident! When I graduated from Willamette in Biology, the two big

fields were Microbiology and Lab Research – not quite my main area of interest. In fact, those microscopes drove me crazy after about ½ hr. My eyes would have an attach if I had to spend all day looking at “specks!” My favorite area is the animals – I would love to go and observe them – polar bears are my favorite! However, after even more thinking I decided to keep my Biology as an enjoyment, rather than “a job.” So, needing a job and \$’s, I hit the want ads. Wells Fargo Bank had an immediate opening and I got it! I started as a teller, ground zero, a year and ½ ago and am now an Asst. Operations Officer. I supervise all the tellers, handle the “Express Stop” (our automatic teller machine) and am branch liaison to two of our biggest customers. Things have turned out really well, considering it was all accidental!

You definitely hit a weak spot of mine when you mentioned trout. It’s been quite a while! My family and I used to spend vacation in Idaho – they have great fishing there, especially along the Snake River. We used to have fresh trout (primarily rainbow and brown) every night. It was wonderful! Apart from Idaho, my knowledge of trout fishing spots is a bit limited (and even that has been a while!) Oregon has great salmon fishing! I’ll check with my dad and locate some good spots.

What sort of hunting do you do. Unfortunately, my dad doesn’t do as much as he used to – we used to have venison quite a bit. Some of my favorites we still do have are duck, dove and quail. I’ve never had pheasant or goose. How about you?

When you mentioned the Grand Canyon, you brought back some fond memories. I went there about 10 years ago when I was in Girl Scouts. The one thing that stands out in my mind is the sunrise – we got up at 4:00 am and watched the sun creep up over the canyon walls. It was spectacular! It would be neat to go back and if given a chance of air conditioning or sun roof? Definitely the sun roof! I love driving with an open roof and rolled down windows. In fact, one of these days, I’d like to drive across country. There are so many wonderful spots to

see in the U.S.! I certainly wish I had more than two weeks for vacation – you hit a soft spot when you mentioned an invite for Germany!

Speaking of Germany, I spotted Bad Hersfeld right away. I didn't even have to plot a course! What type of town is it ie, small, medium? Does the name have any special meaning?

Your road rally sounds wonderful – you'll have a lot of fun! How many miles does the course cover? I was in a type of rally when I was in high school (I can't remember the exact name of the thing.) There were two of us in the car – driver and navigator and we had checkpoints all around the city, ending up at a pizza parlor! We came in second. It was a lot of fun, but definitely not the same as yours will be. I'd love to see some pictures if you get a chance to take and/or send them!

In answer to your question in the last letter – yes! I'd like to go "tin can shooting." My dad took us all out once and I had great fun. We used a .22 and some old beer cans. Warning! It's been a while – I'm probably pretty rusty!

Good grief! I got a bit carried away here! I better wind down so you can stretch your legs and I can hit the hay! Take care and I'll write again soon!

Love,
☺ Jennifer

P.S. All my pictures are at home ie Mom & Dad's. I'm going over there tomorrow and pick up a few so send along!

P.S.S. I'll check with your Mom about that Japanese restaurant. Except for those old Brussel sprouts, I'm ready to try anything!

P.S.S.S. I'll give you a hint as to when my b-day is if you promise to do the same with yours. Think of mothers.

P.S.S.S.S. In answer to letter #1: (213) 577-1151

February 11, 1982

Hi Rick!

It seems hard to believe another week is winding to a close! Especially nice is the fact that we also get a three-day weekend. Love it! Mary and I aren't quite sure what we'll do – it all depends on the weather. I love the rain (we need it!) but I hope the sun comes out for at least three days!

As I'm writing this, you're probably getting ready to go on mission. Is it an eight hour time difference between "here and there?" I hope all goes well. What exactly do you do on mission? I'd love to hear about anything you could tell me ie. what is a typical day (or night like, etc.)

I got a chance to ask your Mom about that Japanese restaurant you mentioned. You hit the name square on. Sounds like a good spot! Mary and I have discovered a fun Japanese restaurant near us called "Shogun." It has a sushi bar as well as Teppan dinners ie cooking in the middle of your table on a hot grill (similar to Benihana if you've been there). Mary and I get a kick out of watching these guys cook. In fact, I think we contributed the major portion of revenue to them this last year!

I finally gathered up some pictures to send to you. I didn't realize how often I didge the camera until I was looking for some. My mother always threatens to kill me after I get home from any kind of trip. I take lots of pictures of scenery and other people but forget about myself! As you might be able to guess, these are from Oregon. There are a lot of neat spots for taking pictures!

You mentioned you "love to dance." Do you give lessons? I've always wanted to learn some of those great "oldies." I've danced a lot with my dad, but, his style is a bit more mellow. And my brother has

the old “pump the well” rhythm when it comes to anything but rock and roll. If we stood still while dancing, we’d probably strike oil!

It’s getting late, so I better sign off if I want to function tomorrow! Hope all is going well and I look forward to hearing from you!

Love,
Jennifer

11 Feb 1982

Hello Jennifer!

I realize this will not reach you by Valentine’s Day, but I want to wish you a Happy Valentine’s Day, belatedly. I also want to thank you for your card...it’s been a helluva long time since I’ve received one from a young lady not family. Thanks. It has definitely boosted morale in the VanO department.

Two days ago when I came back from a mission up North I filled out my “redeployment packet”that is the initial paperwork required for my rotation back to the States. I’m going to take 30 days leave and will spend about 8 or 9 days of in in Ohio and Iowa with Jeff (my roommate) and Steve (my old partner) fishing and generally forgetting Europe.

One thing I’m looking forward to is being able to take a good ole American HOT, steamy, STAND UP shower. These Kraut jobs are a spray head on the end of a flexible tube, and the tubes are never long enough to stand up and still spray your face. Also, you need 3 hands...one to hold the spray head up, and the requisite two to wash. What I end up doing is squatting in the tub, lathering up then rinsing at the end. It’s work to take a shower around here! (Now that I’ve bored you to tears...I’ll go to another subject.)

But, it sure is funny how when you've done from home, even the simplest "home style" things are missed. I'm sure you understand what I mean since you're very well-travelled yourself.

Say, can you think of anything you'd like me to send you from "the land of the sit down shower?" (my new nickname for Krautland, in addition to the doorknob nickname). Wood carvings are big around here. So, if you can think of anything....let me know and I'll try.

Well, Babe, I gotta get back to work. I go on mission tomorrow up north to a place called Wanfried to deal with some Zolls (short for Zollgrenzendienst or Border Customs Office).

Yours,
Rich

P.S. Don't forget to send your phone # and acceptable times (Calif times of course) for me to call.

R

February 13, 1982

Hi Rick!

Thank you SO much for the beautiful flowers!! I was so excited – you definitely made my day! It was so funny because I left my desk for a bit to get some wires ready to be sent (our "wire girl" is sick and I'm the only other one that knows how to do them.) I guess I get pretty deep in thought or something when I'm in the middle of doing something because I started walking by my desk to drop something off and continue. I must have jumped back about three feet because right where I usually have my scribbled note and miscellaneous garbage were the beautiful flowers! At first, I thought they'd been put on the wrong desk. What a wonderful surprise to find out they were from you!

Your “spy” did well! I adore roses and carnations! It is really super – thank you!

It was so nice to be able to sleep in a bit this morning! I usually get up at 5:30, when it is still dark (what a fool) so it is really strange to get up in broad daylight! Even so, my “sleep clock” is too programmed – I usually can’t sleep in too well. Every little bit helps, though!

Well, here I am faced with a three day weekend. I love it! Mary and I are still thinking on what we want to do – maybe drive up the coast to Santa Barbara or something. The weather looks like it is going to hold out. We’re keeping our fingers crossed!

We do have one project, though. We were very lucky when we moved into our apartment in that we were able to furnish it pretty well from past accumulations and parents ie, things sitting down in the basement ready to be used. However, our “kitchen table” is merely a card table with one of those “extend-a-tops.” It works great until one of us accidentally hits one of the legs with our knee. Instant chaos! The coffee comes flying out of the cups (or milk, or juice....), followed by a short set of exclamations from one of us. It’s also a kill to erase paper on the table. As soon as you start, the table starts jiggling and we feel like the table is moving rapidly over a bumpy road. Needless to say, it would be nice to have something a bit more solid! Well, my parents rescued an old table some friends were going to get rid of so Mary and I are going to strip off the old paint and fix it up a bit. I think it will make meals a bit less challenging!

Speaking of challenges, has your Mom ever mentioned Mxxx Pxxxxxxx to you? He’s the Vault Teller at work – talk about learning how to be tolerant! He drives everyone crazy and lucky me is the one that deals with him the most! He is one of those that won’t come over if he wants to go get money or if he wants to ask you something. It’s “Jennifer” across the room. I now just ignore him until he comes over and gets me and then, I almost died last Tuesday when he came into

work. He had frosted his hair! For a while, I had to bite my lip in order to not laugh! He was all excited – a friend had done it for him. I’ve heard of girls getting it done, but not guys (if you get the drift). Enough of my comments – everyone has some good in them, although it may be a bit hard to find sometimes! Well, I’ve got to get going. Thank you again SO much for the beautiful flowers! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

14 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Here I am, sitting in my favorite chair, munching a block of cheese, drinking a Pepsi, listening to Boz Scaggs tapes, and writing you (what else?) Anyway, I’ve gotten a new calendar and am generally counting days until I can get out of here. I have Emergency Action duty today...so it’s kind of hard to relax (I have to carry around a “beeper” [like doctors have] and if a message comes to the Squadron, I have 15 minutes to haul-a__ to the Kaserne.) But, I’m attempting it with great vigor, and am indeed succeeding.

Jeff has been up on his mountain for the past 4 days and this place is a little quiet and boring, but it affords me a great opportunity to mellow out and catch up on some things...reconciling my bank account, completing the import forms for my pistols, writing the narrative on some SEER’s (Senior Enlisted Efficiency Report) and studying some of my French & Russian. French is still right up to level, but now has my Russian suffered during the past 2 ½ years!!

Steve and Doug are trying to get me into a “Dungeons & Dragons” adventure with them....they need my 4th level Fighter...but talk about

a waste of time! Any spare minute I get these days is relished, and I really don't want to spend it with a lot of people.

Last night I did manage to have some excitement. At about 2200 hrs there were two soldiers captured by E. German Border Guards (called "Vopos" for Volks Polizei or Peoples Police) as they proceeded into E. Germany by train (they fell asleep and missed their stop). We got 'em back OK but as you can imagine, all sorts of people with all sorts of Brass were climbing down yours truly's throat trying to get answers, etc. After I informed the requisite people, I finally told some others who were just being nosy exactly upon which rope, at which elevation, they could urinate...(I love being a Captain...while the workload and responsibilities have increased 10-times, the power to inflict embarrassment (spelling?) upon others has also increased.) Even though things were a little hectic, I did get a message from one superior, a "stellar" individual if you know what I mean, who said I handled the situation well.

(Jennifer, I hope it's OK to brag a little to you...I generally don't tell anybody what happens around here and it's somewhat embarrassing when my boss or his boss or higher "pat my back" for just doing my duty...I really can't tell my folks because they always ask questions...I'm not trying to "impress" you, I just have to have a forum where I can get some things out in the open without fear of somebody "shooting at me." OK?)

The mission I went on this past Friday was a great success. I got a chance to meet some real "heavy-weights" in the Zoll as well as BGS. You know, the really important desk-jockeys that every organization has in their hierarchy. Not a bad group of fellows, though. After the meeting we adjourned to a nearby Gasthaus and drank a couple of beers and ate dinner.

Tonight all the members of the old BOQ (Bachelor Officers Quarters) are getting together and going to go see the movie

“Cannonball Run.” I’ve never seen it but Steve says it should psyche us up for our B.H. – Zurich rally. Tomorrow is a training holiday which means I’ll be the only one in the office....I get more work done when nobody is around to hit me up with questions, etc. I’m sure you’ve been in the position before.

Well, I’d better get back to the EER’s. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.....

Yours,
Rich

P.S.



HAPPY VALENTINE’S DAY



(Did my “surprise” get to you OK?)

16 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

I hope your day was good. Tuesdays are usually very good days. Mine was the pits. Tomorrow is Wednesday and “hump day”.....after tomorrow it’s the downhill slide to the weekend. This one coming up is what the Krauts call “Rose Montag.” Or Rose Monday and is a national holiday. The Regimental Commander, Colonel John Sherman Crow has also declared it another 3-day weekend. Maybe I’ll be able to take this one off. Let’s hope nothing comes up for me where I have to go into the office.

It's about 2200 hour (10:00 PM) and I just got back from a super lousy movie that was showing on post. The only redeeming factor was that I got to see some desert. The name of it was "Survival Run" and it was about 6 high schoolers, 3 male and 3 female, who got stranded in the desert when their van broke down. They met some dope smugglers and insto-presto the classic struggle plot. "Not enough sex to hold any interest and not enough violence to whet an appetite" was Steve's comment. It was pretty drab, take my word for it. There was an interesting collection of weapons in it but I won't bore you with any details.

Hey, Babe, I gotta go. All of a sudden the infamous bag monster hit me over the head with his "Z club"....you know, he hits you and you Z-out. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

18 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Oh, no! I just got notified I gotta go back to the office. Later.....

20 Feb 1982

Hello Again Jennifer!

It's now Saturday morning, 0930, and I'm sitting up in bed writing this; the sun streaming through the windows (shhhhh! Don't say it too loudly...you may scare it back into the fog) and it's overall a GREAT day to be alive.

Hey, I received 3 letters from you yesterday...dated 10, 11, & 13 Feb. I'll mention things in answer to each letter, in order of writing, OK? (Actually, with my head the way it is now, "over organization" is the best thing...)

So, you are an ice-creamaholic. Super! Do you like homemade ice cream? I love it. One thing I want to do is to make some good, old fashioned vanilla, but, I'll have to wait 'til I hit the States. Prep Mom for me, OK? If we start early, she won't be shocked when I come home with gallons of makin's. I'm going to need a lot of help and I'm drafting you...THE U.S. ARMY (or at least a small, small part of it) WANTS YOU! A recruiting poster I'm not, but you're drafted into "Cap'n Van's" Ice Cream Legion....

You're so right. The P.O. is mighty odd...usually it takes 7 days for your letters to reach me. How about mine?

Thank you for your good wishes on my promotion. I won't go anywhere different, and I will remain the Squadron Intelligence Officer. My duties? Amongst other things, I am responsible for security of a military post (McPheeters Bks), an ammo dump, and a fuel-rail point. All guards, both military and civilian work directly for me and they usually run 12 civilians and 28 military. I'm also responsible for personal protection and security of visiting VIP's...you know, Generals, Congress persons (hey, I remembered!), film crews, etc. That means I'm a little bit bodyguard and a whole lot bullet stopper. (Yes, my flak jacket is always worn on a uniformed security mission.) Following orders from Dad, I'm usually so armed to the teeth that I look like a refugee from a John Wayne movie... submachine gun or M-16, .45 auto in a hip holster, my long barrel .357 under my coat, and enough rounds to take care of the Mongol Horde. Another part of my job (and foremost during war) is the collection, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence about the enemy. Oh, well, enough about my work. (Also, I don't mind questions....if I "can't answer" anything, I just won't, OK?)

Very interesting about your banking start. You're doing VERY WELL. Since you like animals, I'll bet you love the zoo. I went to the Berlin Zoo about 2 years ago and it was absolutely fantastic.

I'm glad I hit the right spot with trout. Something else we have in common. Maybe you and your folks, me and my folks could kit up on some trout fishing. My Dad and I love to fish, I'm sure your Dad does, too...we could all head to the mtns and fish for a day or two. Just a thought...what say? Or, maybe just you and me go after 'em...

As far as hunting goes, mainly it's Desert Jackrabbits and Coyote, but I have been known to chase deer and elk. I haven't been after birds so much, but am equipped with a slide action shotgun and a fair follow-through so maybe I can arrange for a pheasant or goose dinner.

I guess it's the Bimmer we'll use for travel, OK? The sun roof seals it...of course it's also loads of fun to drive, but let's go for the "wind in the hair", OK? I also wish you had more than two weeks' vacation. With my hitting on all these soft spots, it looks like we may wind up the "Tremendous Travelling Twins" for 14 days.

You asked about Bad Hersfeld...it's a 1500 year old town of about 40,000 people. The "Stiftsruin" is the ruins of a church that was built in 750AD and is in the middle of town. Every year, they (the town) put on a play "Dr. Faust" in the ruins, is it ever eerie! "Bad" in Bad Hersfeld means "Bath"...Hersfeld is a famous "Kur", or cure, or spa town because there is a fountain near the Stiftsruin that bubbles up some god awful tasting but super if you're sick water. You know, iron, sulfur, calcium, etc. etc. etc. The invite remains open for as long as I'm here...if you suddenly do win one of those \$1,000,000 giveaways and can quit...come on over!

It's settled, you and I are going to go out and hunt the elusive, cameleonlike, rapidly growing (increasing) in numbers critter called the tin-can...or to you Bio types out there, *Cannus tinnus Beerian*. (Did I get it right? Or is it *Cannus Beerus tinnian*...)

Thanks for your telephone # & birthday (Mother's Day, huh?) Now about my birthday. Here is the hint: Consider the alphabet...and Love...Love fits in the alphabet where the day fits the month...the month is known for Love, too. (Does that make me a "square lover" or a "Lover Squared"? Ha!) Anyway...if you really get stumped....ask Mom, or ask me for some more clues.

Before I continue on, (I'll be answering your 11 Feb letter now) THANK YOU for the pictures....Damn! You are a very pretty lady, Jennifer! I placed the pictures under the glass on my desk and all my men came in and made comment about you. ALL of them approve of you...even a couple of my crusty, paratrooper NCO's. The general comment was "Wow, Sir, what's fine lookin' lady like her doing with a fellow like you?" That's some pretty high praise...Jen, the truth is though, that somebody's looks are really not what counts...personality, character, and intelligence are the real "meat and veggies"...looks is like dessert. Is that thought compatible with your thinking? I have a feeling it is.

On to other subjects: I have no real "typical day." But, if I'm not in the woods playing Army on maneuvers, I generally get up at 0530, get to work by 0615-0630, come home /get off work at 1900 and go to bed around 2300. Of course, if I go on a mission out of town and it's a "civilian appearance", there can be no regular hours, and if we're on maneuvers or alert I can be gone in the field for days at a time...even weeks. Of all things, though, I actually think I work too hard. But I do it so I can pass the time quicker because when I'm not bored, I'm happy. I kick my men out of the office at 1700, unless we really have a big "alligator" nipping at our heels, because all but 3 are married with families and those 3 have gals to go see. I usually try to sleep and otherwise relax on weekends, but often the boredom gets me and I go into the office. When I pick up the BMW...that's when nobody will see me on the weekends...I have buddies in almost every large city in

D'land, so, I'll hit the road. And with only 6 months left here...well, I can stand on my head for 6 months....

Your Sho-gun restaurant sounds fine. Let's go there, too! The Cherry Blossom is kind of a sedate place but I prefer a little action...a Japanese cooking dinner on my table with their knives and forks flying around sounds like some great fun.

On to 13 Feb letter...

You are certainly most welcome for the flowers. I'm very glad you liked them. Yes, my "spy" does have good taste, but I just had to be sure the deed was done correctly...that's why I didn't just wire some.

Maybe Mom told you, we used to live near S.B. in a little town named Goleta. Let's go there one afternoon...I want to see how much the town has changed.

Mom mentioned Mxxx Pxxxxxxx as a trying person, but that's about all. Frosted hair? Does he wear silky clothes and paint his fingernails? (I think I got your drift...) You're right, everybody does have some good in 'em...the trouble is finding it.

Hey, Jennifer, I gotta be going...I'm going to get up and go shave...No, I think I'll stay scruffy for a few hours. Anyway, take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

February 18, 1982

Hi Rick!

What a day – I knew it was going to be “one of those” as soon as I got out of bed this morning. My tacky buzzer alarm went off and I came springing (well, maybe a bit more slowly than that) out of bed to

plug in the old coffee pot and feed Lucy. As I was opening the old can, I noticed, with my half open eye, a few ants meandering across the counter. Pits. I zapped them but they kept appearing – after a quick look under the sink, I discovered the source. A can of cat food had not been completely rinsed – a trail of ants was making its way up and down the wastebasket! I went charging outside in nightgown and bare feet with the trash in hand (our neighbor was just leaving. I think he thought I was crazy!) After getting rid of the little beasts and getting ready for work, I was about to leave when I was greeted by another sight – Lucy had gotten sick in the living room! Mary cleaned that one up, but I was ready at that point to evict our cat!

Work was a bit better, but not much – at least there were no ants! One of our employees was terminated due to excessive absenteeism, we had lines in the lobby most of the day and Mxxx was his usual self – obnoxious! At least your mother provided some peace of mind – she is always so cheerful and nice! Mxxx should take a few lessons! Speaking of your Mom – did she tell you about her new position as New Accounts Rep? She seems really excited and will do a great job. We'll miss her back in operations!

Well enough of my traumas! How is everything over in the continent? Mary and I had a good weekend. We headed up Sunday for Santa Barbara in my Rabbitt and were a bit worried at first! The weather was all cloudy and overcast – not quite the ideal condition to head to the beach! However, when we were about 30 min from the coast, the clouds broke all of a sudden, revealing blue sky and sunshine. It was great! We visited the Santa Barbara Mission, walked around some of the more historical parts of the town (indulging in some ice cream along the way – of course!) and went walking down on the beach, one of my favorite past-times. How about you? What are some of your favorite spots? I really enjoyed learning a bit about your family in your last letter ie, your grandfather and his Captaincy. That must be really exciting for you. One of these days, I'd love to find out

more about what my family did. My grandfather (on my mother's side) recently gave me a book about our family going back to the 1600's. I've only had a chance to read bits and pieces, but it is really fascinating to learn about all the things they did and all the different spots they were in. One of these days, I'd like to find out where they were and what they did in England (with a name like Buckingham, there's not many other places they could be from!)

Your new tweed suit sounds wonderful! I love tweeds! In fact, when I was in England, we visited the Isle of Harris, where they make the Harris Tweed. We got "stranded" on the island for a day longer than we were planning due to the bad weather. The ferry couldn't make the crossing between Harris and Skye. I'm glad the weather was so bad, because we had a wonderful experience. We stayed in a bed and breakfast with the dearest couple. The town is tiny (maybe half a block with a few small shops), but the weather was so bad – huge winds and strong rain, that we stayed inside all day by a peat fire talking, playing cards and having tea. I think it was one of the more special times during my stay because the way of life on this island was so different from anything I'd ever known. It was all so peaceful and serene. I'll have to show you some slides when you come out. At times, I wish I had taken photographs – they are a lot easier to pull out and look at!

Well, I've got to get ready to hit the hay or I'll not make it through tomorrow. Take care and I hope to hear from you soon!

Love,
Jennifer

(over)

P.S. I meant to thank you earlier for the pictures! They're great! I love looking at them – if you run across any extras, don't hesitate to send them!

Across the Miles

P.S.S. Thanks again for the flowers! They still look great and smell wonderful. You couldn't have done anything nicer! 😊

Part II – Becoming Comfortable Writing and Getting to Know Each Other

By this time, mid-February 1982, Jennifer and I had exchanged enough letters, to the point that we kinda knew each other well enough to each think that there might be “something there” with the other. We had learned that our tastes in music and food were similar, and that our favorite activities were mutually agreeable.

Regarding the photographs we had exchanged, I was extremely impressed with her “physical countenance.” I had always been a “sucker” for fair-complexions and red/auburn hair on a gal, and she was solidly in the “high approval” category.

She told me later that when she saw some of the photos that I had sent her, she was very happy at how I looked. Also, one of the photos that her mother saw, her mother just said, “Ooooooooooh! Wow!” (It was the photo of me in the back of my “command track” after about three days of maneuvers.....a former co-worker who saw the photo when she came over to the house for dinner with Jennifer and me said, “Oh! Your eyes are smoldering in that photo!” Hence, we call it the “Smolder Eyes Pic.”) Here it is, below:

Across the Miles



19 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

This will have to be a super quick note. I have to go inspect our ammo dump security in 20 minutes and cannot take a long time with this.

We get our “official” pictures taken today so maybe in about 3 months I’ll send you one. We call ‘em “squeeze photos” (since a soldier always sends one to his “main squeeze”) or “propaganda photos” since they are taken in front of an American flag, wearing our greens and all decorations, etc. I sent my folks one taken about a year or so ago. I’m sure if you ask Mom, she’ll show it to you. Anyway, that’s the type of photo.

I hope everything is going well with you. My weeks steadily get worse and worse as the time for our annual General Inspection draws nearer.

Babe, I gotta go. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

21 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

I can’t believe it! I actually slept ‘til 1100 this morning without getting a call from anybody at work. Let’s just hope the trend

continues. I went to Sunday Brunch at the Officers Club (we call it the “O Club” for short), and am now listening to Casey Cassem (?spelling?) on american top 40 on AFN (Armed Forces Network) Radio. Foreigner’s “Waiting for a Girl Like You” is #36, down from #9, did you know that? It’s not a bad song...no screaming...and I’ll bet it’s a super one to slow dance to.

As a matter of fact...I’m actually trying to stall cleaning up the apartment. Jeff is still up on his mountain so all the mess is mine...YUCK! It’s always go, go, go during the week, then cool out on the weekend. Laundry Sunday day and clean-up Sunday evening. It’ll probably take me three hours to do it all...I’ll open a Pepsi, put on some Al Stewart and commence to give it hell.

But, first, I’ll finish this letter. And if my procrastination skills are up to par, this may be a long one, and I may not get done cleaning the room ‘til tomorrow morning.

Enclosed is a picture Dad took when he and I went fishing last summer. I was at my absolute grubbiest...and loved every minute of it. The hat perched on top is my absolute most favorite in the whole world...since I got it in 1971, its been everywhere with me. I’ve worn it on Border Patrol, I wore it covertly at Airborne School, at West Point teaching younger cadets tactics in the field, you name it and I’ve had it with me. Ask Mom about my grubby green floppy hat and she may remark something like, “Oh! That old thing!” since it’s a great part of my “relaxing ensemble,” and she hates it.... [Note to reader: The photo is included after this letter.]

I have a couple of questions...do you have any places you want to go this summer? You probably want to go up to Oregon for a couple of days, well, just say the word and leave the driving to me. OK? (Of course, if you’d like to share the “chore” it’s OK. While I do love to drive, and we’ll have the Bimmer, its not heart burn here at all.) The

next question is, if you have any ideas of some things to do or see, will you let me know?

Tonight, Steve, Don, Doug, Mike (we call him “Peachey”), and Mark and I are going to see “Moonraker”...you know, the James Bond film. It’s not exactly the best one Roger Moore has made, but it’ll do for a bunch of scrungy dudes on a Sunday eve. (During duty hours we’re Officers & “gentlemen” (?) but on weekends we allow ourselves to get a little grungy).

This letter will probably reach you on the same day as a couple more I wrote. Oh, well, nobody ever said “Long distance relationships” were easy, huh?

I’ve procrastinated enough...I gotta hit the apartment. “The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer” and my corollary...”and cleaning up my room takes the longest.”

Take care of yourself, Jennifer. I look forward to becoming a “pain-in-the-neck” for you while I’m on leave.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I couldn’t pass up the comic enclosed...ask Mom...cream puffs, cheesecakes, and Boysenberry pies....YAHOO!

The picture on the fishing boat I mentioned above:



22 Feb 1982 (for some reason, I
originally wrote 22 Dec – must
have been tired)
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

It's my day off...and I only had to go into the Kaserne for three hours today. The rest of the day was spend here at the apartment listening to tunes. It was a super beautiful day, but a little too cold. If it had been as warm as it looked, I would have gone out and pursued some rays. Oh, well...

Has mom told you anything about me and my poetry? Don't laugh...I like to write poetry. I won't bore you with any of it except if you'd like me to send a couple. I know it's weird because of what I do for a living but sometimes it's the best thing for my head to relax in a soft chair and write. Especially after a very bad or demanding day. You know, salve for the soul.

Enclosed is a snapshot of myself and three of my buddies here in Bad Hersfeld. There is a description of the picture on the back. [Note to reader: Photo is included after this letter.] By the way, a FIST is a Fire Support Team and the reason John's branch color is red is because he's an Artillery Officer. (As if you didn't already know, with your grandfather an old Cannoneer). It's one of my favorite all-time pictures. I have a blow-up that I keep in my photo album. You know, to remember "the good old days."

I have a question. Which beach is your favorite? If you let me know which one(s) you like to go to, maybe I can research how to get there. Of course, you can always guide me, but it would be a construction project for me to find out some good routes, etc. One idea

I had was to drive south along the highway that follows the coastline ...what is the name of it? Pacific Coast Highway?

You know the picture of the waterfall you sent me? I have to see that. Where is it, exactly? I realize it may be too far out of our way but if there's any earthly way to get up there, think about it. OK?

Jennifer, I've gotta go. We may have one of our practice alerts tomorrow and if so, I'll need some rest. 0330 comes mighty early. Take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I hope you don't mind me sending all these pictures. The way I figure it, if you get to "see" me in several different situations, I won't scare you away. R



“Lieutenants of the Evil I”.....

I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th Armored
Cavalry Regiment, McPheeters Bks,
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

24 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

I didn't get a chance to write yesterday. We had a practice alert which caused me to get up at 0345, and proceeded to foul up the entire day. By the time I got home at 2000 hrs, I was absolutely dead. After a quick shower, I hit the hay. I forgot to set my alarm clock, but my head woke me up at 0630. That means I got about 10 hours of sleep and to tell the truth, rarely have I felt so good getting up in the morning. Of course I was late to the office, but so was the Major and Lt Col Cxxxxxxx, so when we all bumped into each other at the coffee pot, we had a good laugh.

So, while yesterday was a total pits, today started out and is continuing to be a great day. Maybe it's the ebb before the tide, but believe me, I'm **NOT** complaining!

One way it has been a good day is that we had scheduled a big shot VIP to land at our small airfield nearby because he was going to visit a SIGINT site (SIGINT = Signal Intercept or Intelligence) nearby. Yours truly was busy putting on the "tools of the trade" and coordinating a couple of jeeps for airfield security when I got a call cancelling the show. Apparently, the VIP told his pilot to fly directly to the site and land there, so my people (and me) were unnecessary. OUTSTANDING! (The thought of getting perforated is not a particularly happy one.)

Jennifer, I had a thought...it is contingent upon the leave dates for Steve and Jeff, but it is this: What do you think of the idea that when I get to the U.S., if I call you and let you know when I'll be a certain place as I trek across the country to L.A. Then, if you can, you fly to meet me there, I pick you up at the airport and we continue on, both of us. You mentioned that you'd love to travel across the country, so, this

may be an excellent opportunity. (It would be, a novel way to start a vacation, wouldn't you say?) Anyway, let me know what you think of the idea.

I must go for now. I'll continue on with this a little later on, or, well, let me change that to: I'll write again later on, but will get this in the mail ASAP. (As Soon As Possible). Take care of yourself.

Yours,
Rich

25 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

It is now 1700, I'm about to go home...it was a S__tty day! Let me tell you about it; I'll do it in chronological form:

0330 – Wake up, shave, pack my pistol and ammo for the alert (I got some advance notice...I have "spies" everywhere! Ha!)

0400 – Arrive at the Kaserne to await the alert

0430 – ALERT! (The second one this week...Oh! No!)

0431 – Commence to run around getting things squared away in the section.

0450 – After getting in my working clothes...chemical suit, shoulder holstered weapon, LBE (load bearing equipment), steel pot (helmet), rucksack, issue weapon, I get ready to go.

0455 – Find out the alert is just a muster...thank goodness!

0500 – Get out of all my gear.

0600 – Report to SCO (Squadron Commanding Officer) LTC (Lieutenant Colonel) Cxxxxxx for an intel update.

0700 – Argue with First Sergeant M Co. about guards.

0730 – 1700 {Generally try to fight all the alligators before they bite me. Win some. Lose some....you know.}

The only pleasant thing that happened to me today was that I received a letter from you, the one where you described your trip to Santa Barbara & your bad day at work.

One of my favorite sunset watching spots (ask Mom about me & my sunset photos...) is along the Appalachian Train in So. Connecticut. It's a cliff that looks out over a long valley looking westward. Sunsets are always purple/red/orange/blue when seen from there. I found it while hiking with my Boy Scout Troop back when I was in Connecticut. It's a super place! I think you'd love it.

Another of my favorite spots is out in the desert West of Las Vegas, just at the base of the mountains...there is some rock formations that look like a layer cake...red/green/orange/brown/blue rocks. We will probably see that place together, OK?

I'm glad we're so much in agreement about Tweeds. I particularly enjoyed your story about hour stay on the Isle of Harris...several of my sport coats are made of Harris Tweed...it's not the smoothest of materials, but it is so rustic that it is my absolute favorite. As for your slides...I can't wait! Let's make an evening of it? OK? I'll bring the Cognac, you the glasses. Deal?

Enclosed is a pic a buddy took of me & my old partner-in-crime Steve Sccccc, who I'm planning on visiting when I'm driving through/across the U.S. (If his leave gets approved) There's a description of the picture on the back, but it was a good chance to relax...I had to go to work shortly thereafter. (I'm sending so many snapshots I'll have to send you an album...)

After reading your description of your victorious ant battle...I'll have to call you the "Ant Assassin"...I hate 'em, too! Go get 'em!

Say, have you received a surprise yet? Maybe I'd better not mention it, yet, anyway...

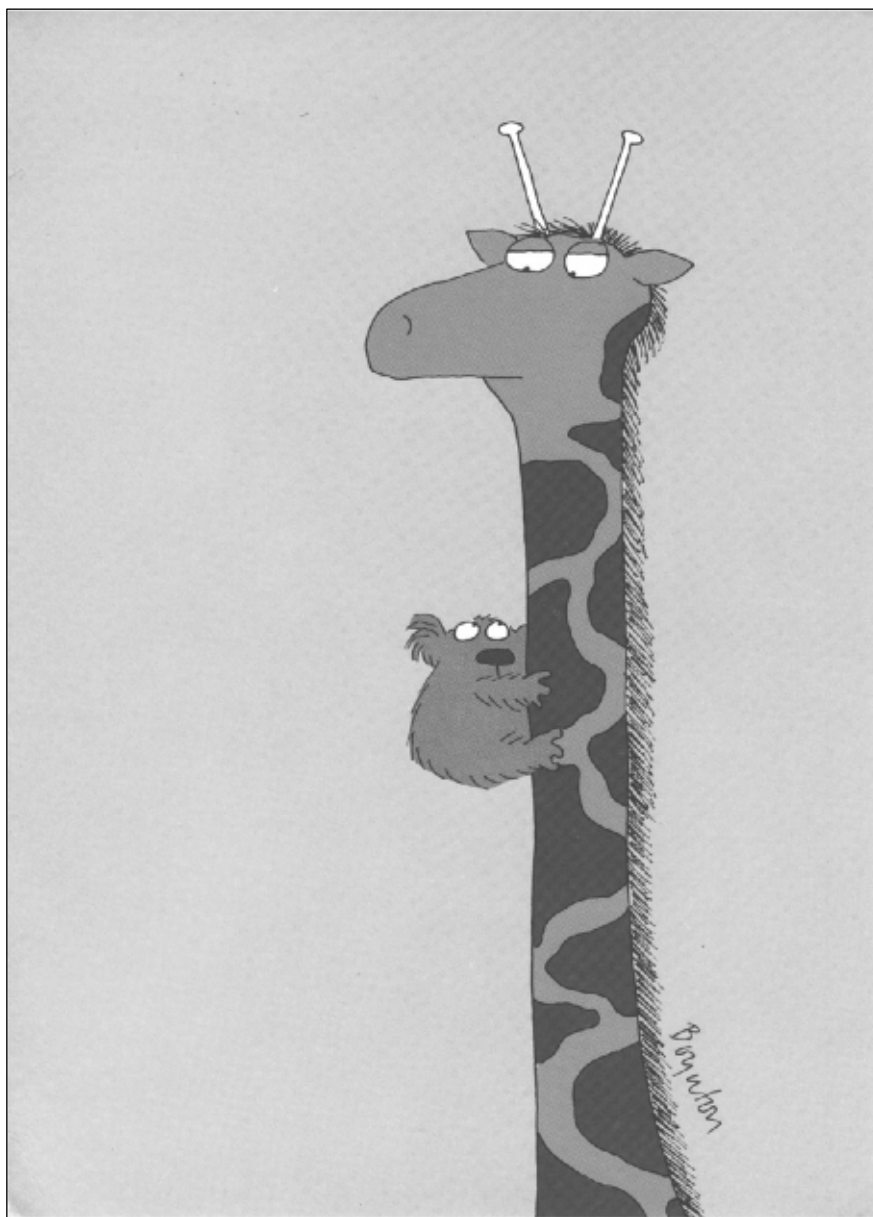
Jennifer, I really am looking forward to meeting you. As a matter of public record (I now decree) you, or should I say meeting you face-to-face is my number one priority when I hit Stateside. Any heartburn about that?

Well, Babe, I gotta go. I'm beat and I need my much valued rest. Take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I'm glad the flowers have lasted for as long as they have (until 18 Feb when the letter was dated)...I'll have to commission my "spies" again for another mission...in a little while... Do ckopobo! (Russian for "Later!") R

This was what was written on 26 FEB 1982 in the card Jennifer
mailed to me



February 26, 1982

Rick! [Note to reader: She was still calling me “Rick”)

Well, I just finished the old kitchen duty routine, and thought I would drop you a quick note before I hit the hay. TGIF!! Fridays are definately a day of “goods & bads” – it is the one day we’re open to the public until 6:00. Consequently, these tend to end up being 12 hr. work days. I only live about ten minutes from the office and am almost always the first one to arrive. I conduct “the search” where we check to see if anything is hidden (human or otherwise). I’ve never found anything except a paper bag lying on the counter (pretty exciting, if you get the idea) and I always wonder what I would do if I did find someone (or something). To tell you the truth, I’m very happy to have my discoveries consist of nothing more than paperbags!

Fridays are also good days – they signal the approach of another weekend! It’s going to be pretty quiet around here this weekend except for my parents coming over Sunday for dinner. I love to cook, so it is always hard to decide what to have. As a result, Mary and I still haven’t made our decision!

We finished working on the table last weekend and were both surprised with how well it came out (if we may say so ourselves!!) It is amazing what a bit of sanding and paint can do. The apartment has smelled like paint for a few days, but we haven’t spilled even a drop of coffee. A card table just doesn’t work very well!

Well, here I go running out of room again – I just get carried away with my “quick notes”! Take care and I’ll look forward to hearing from you!

Love,
Jennifer

February 27, 1982

Hi Rick!

What a Saturday! When I got home last night at 7:15 (early for a Friday night!) I thought.....The weekend! A chance to wind down and catch up on my sleep a bit. Wrong! I had almost forgotten - one more day of waking up to my tacky buzzer alarm and heading off. All for a good cause, though. I recently became a member of the Junior League of Pasadena, a group of trained volunteers who devote their time to various community projects. Right now, I'm going through a Provisional Course, where we attend meetings and take "tours" in order to learn about Pasadena. I've lived here most of my life, but in the last few months, I've been able to see and learn about things I had only heard about. It's amazing how many things we take for granted when we live in a place for an extended period of time!

Well, back to my original train of thought.....as Provisionals, we have to work three half-days at the thrift shop run by the League (four times when I become an "official" member). Today was my first shot, and I went at it full steam. I worked th3 whole day, instead of two separate times. It was almost like a sixth work day (I worked six hours), but it was worth it. I felt good about being able to devote something of value (time), free of cost, to a worthy cause. The day really went by quickly and I enjoyed all of the people contact – a lot of the people are regular customers, are older, and love to talk when they come in to browse.

You were right when you said your letter (dated 2/21) would arrive with the others you had written. The Post Office definitely doesn't deliver letters according to dates! It makes life more interesting, though! Your letters usually average anywhere from six to ten days traveling time, and usually arrive in groups. It's a lot of fun to open the old mailbox and see three letters waiting for me! In fact, it is just as fun seeing one letter! I really enjoy hearing from you and learning

about life in Germany. And the pictures are great! Where was that last one taken – somewhere in the Atlantic? (Good grief – that was a pretty dumb question. Where else?) Seriously, could I find out a bit more history on the picture? (ie, what were you fishing for?)

[Note to reader: The picture referenced was the one included above, that was taken by my father a year before Jennifer and I started writing, when we were on a deep-sea fishing trip off the coast of California. So, Jennifer wasn't crazy!]

I must say, when it comes to hints, I sometimes think I'm a bit clueless. I didn't make the right connections at all, but Mary got it right away (she had somewhat of an advantage, though. Her birthday is also in June.) In fact, I had asked your Mom yesterday, anyway. Since the mail is so erratic, I didn't want to miss the day!

So you are going to be going to Iowa for a bit? Mary's family is from there! Whereabouts in Iowa? The Mxxxxxxx's are from a little town in Northern Iowa called Humboldt. I was back there about seven years ago and had a great time. It was my first time on a farm and we did everything. I drove a tractor, climbed a silo, rode in with the soybeans to be put into storage and almost died with the weather! I don't mind the heat so much, but the humidity did me in, and to make matters worse, the only pool in the town was closed down the day after we arrived! Ah well.....c'est la vie! (Note: you have now been exposed to my vast library of foreign language knowledge. Apart from a few other phrases, I would be lost!)

You asked if there was anything you could send me? The first request is easy; the second I promised I would ask about for my Dad. One of my longtime hobbies is stamp collecting. Do you have any easy access to German stamps? (*-see end of letter) Nothing fancy – just regular postage or anything with you guessed it, animals. I would really appreciate it! In fact, is there anything in particular I could reciprocate with while you are still over there? Just let me know!

Here goes with the second request. My Dad collects a few things and has always been interested in guns, among other things. He has never made it over to Germany, but has always been interested in a Mannlicher-Schoenauer .270 rifle, with a full length stock. I know how busy you are and I'm sure you don't have a lot of time to run around – these items (stamps and the rifle) are not a matter of life and death. However, I promised my Dad I would ask you about it – any info at all would give him a thrill.

One more question – when are you going to be coming out West? You mentioned August, but is it the beginning or end of the month? And when are you going to be in Iowa? Oops – I blew it. That was two. Oh well, being a banker doesn't guarantee I can count!!

Well, Rick, it's past midnight here, so I better hit the sack if I want to be any good tomorrow. I hope all is going well for you and I hope to hear from you soon!

Love,
Jennifer

* - Good grief! I must be tired! That was a pretty silly question! Please excuse my lack of intelligence at this time of night!

28 Feb 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

It's a dismal, drizzly, depressing Sunday afternoon, so I'm kicked back with a glass of cognac, the tunes are on, writing a letter to a certain special young lady....(guess who!) After a while, I'll be able to say that I beat the drearies.

Later on this evening, I'm going over to Steve's place. He's been trying to get me into Dungeons & Dragons game and I'll probably play tonight. The game is a total waste of time but can be quite fun when there is a large group. Do you know anything about the game? I have a character whose name is Arras. He is a 4th level fighter with special weapons, and a bag of guns he's collected. If you know anything about the game, I'll tell you more, but if not, I won't bore you further.

Not a whole hell of a lot has been going on for the past week excepting that it has been another totally lousy week. Three bad ones...back-to-back-to-back. Maybe March will bring better times. I hope so.

I'm almost positive that by the time you receive this letter, that my surprise will have reached you. Let me know if you'd like me to do another one, OK? It takes me a while to turn one out, but definitely the kind of thing good for a rainy day. Germany has many rainy days ahead. Mom will certainly ask you if you've heard from me lately, so you can say yes, literally, now. Ha!

I have another question: Do your folks know about me? If you think I should, I'm willing to write them a letter basically introducing myself. Or, if the best thing would be for me to do it in person, I will.

Jeff just came in, we have to go into the Kaserne. I'll be back a little later. Bye for now.

Rich

01 March 1982

Back again!

It's now Monday night and we're having a tremendous thunder storm.....I LOVE IT!! Lightning, pelting rain, loud crashes, just like in all the horror movies. Every Spring Germany has them and they are

absolutely wonderful. I turned off all the lights, opened up the blinds and cracked the windows; lit a candle and am now writing this by candle light. (I also have an oil lamp going in my bedroom, shedding light in the living room.) If I only had a fireplace, bear rug and a big old snifter of cognac, it would almost be perfect...you want to complete the picture?

I know a great place here in Europe, it's in the Austrian Alps, however, I'll need to research it as for a place in the U.S. (preferably West Coast area...)

Today was technically a day off (the third Monday training holiday in a row) but I had to go in anyway. Even so, just for a few hours. I then went downtown and picked up a couple of things I think you'll like. I have a couple more ideas, but I thought the first two things would be best for an initial group. You should be receiving a box within a day or two of receiving this letter.

It's quite late and the storm is continuing, and I'm going to hit the sack. Take care of yourself, Jennifer. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

March 1, 1982

Hi Rick!

How was your Monday? I had one of those weird ones – I had great plans for getting things accomplished at work, but nothing seemed to happen quite right. I know I did something, but at the end of the day it just looked like my papers had moved around a bit. Do you ever have days like that? Very frustrating!

As fate will have it, the weather was against me again. I washed my car yesterday and the sky opened up today. I should have suspected

something when I turned our calendar to March 1. We have a big “Ziggy” calendar in the kitchen – the picture for March was Ziggy washing and waxing his car. He is just about done and the car looks great. Then the eyes look up and a little higher. Unknown to Ziggy, about twenty birds are perched above saying “Let’s wait until he’s finished.” Poor guy! At least I only had to worry about rain!

Well, you have a recruit! I’m glad you love ice cream, too! My parents have a hand-crank ice cream maker that we always use during the summer. For many years we made peach ice cream. Our neighbors had a peach tree that, of course, had all the fruit ripen at once. We would get bombarded with bags of peaches. We made everything you could think of that contained peaches! However, now that the tree is gone, we miss all those bags!

Have I told you about the seminar I’ve been taking at our Regional headquarters? It’s called MST (Management Supervisory Training) and has been meeting once a week for the past five weeks. Tomorrow is the last one – the class has been great. Being new to supervision, I’ve learned about different ways to deal with your employees in order to gain their cooperation and respect. The primary emphasis is on “active listening (identifying an emotion and trying to get to the root of a problem). We see different video modules and then have to role play. Have you ever been video taped? Nerves! It is so funny to see yourself on film and hear your voice, which of course sounds like someone else. Have you been video taped at all (WOOPS.....short memory. Senility must be setting in!) About the only other time I’ve been filmed was in high school. I was in a debate (we had to take speech) and each of us was filmed as we spoke. When they played it back, I took a double take. I spent the whole time rocking in my chair! It took me a minute to realize what I was doing – I was so nervous I had to do something. I was wearing knee socks and spend the whole time pulling them up! It looked a bit strange and I learned my lesson. Never wear knee socks when preparing to speak!

Before I continue on, I'd like to let you know I don't mind you "bragging a little" to me. I think it is great that you get complimented for "just doing your duty" and I'm glad you feel comfortable enough to tell me about it. I'm a great "listener" and always enjoy hearing things. So don't ever hesitate to use me as a forum or even a sounding board. (Note: Please excuse the scrunched first page and my mistakes in this paragraph. I'm sitting in bed with my quilt and Lucy decides she wants to be affectionate. Have you ever tried to write with a purring Siamese rubbing your hand and trying to sit in your lap? Doesn't work too well!)

I better get to bed so I can be alert for my seminar tomorrow. Take care and I hope to hear from you soon!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. Thank you for the compliment on the pictures I sent. I must have blushed through that entire paragraph!

A True Fair-tale Love Story



These are the photos Jennifer sent me. I placed them under the glass of my desk so that I could see them whenever I was in the office, at my desk.

2 Mar 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Today has been a pitsy day. I had to go to Regimental HQ in Fulda and go to a briefing...two and a half hours later I finally got out of there. Major Sxxxxx (the Regimental S-3 [Operations Officer]) is a long-winded guy who only speaks with 50% brains and 10% common sense, the rest is Bull____. Oh, well, there's an old Army axiom: "Screw up, move up." I'm sure your Grandfather knows it well, having seen it when he was in service.

I haven't heard of when my orders get cut but from what all is going around the Branch, it still looks good for a 15 August freedom bird. The only problem I'll have is that I'm only authorized 66 lbs baggage (one well packed duffel bag can weigh as much as 80 lbs) and must take fatigues, boots, etc as well as civvies. I have one solution...I'm going to mail two suits home and ask Mom to get them pressed. I figure that if you and I go anyplace fairly fancy, I'm going to want to look the part.

Enclosed is an LOI (Letter of Instruction) my predecessor published the day he left the Squadron. You wanted to know about "alligators", well, this may be a humorous answer to how I fight them all day long. Carl is now an ASIC (All Sources Intel Center) Commander for a Division here in Europe, so, he's doing quite well for himself.

Jennifer, I must make this a short one because it's quite late and I have to get up at 0445 tomorrow to take Jeff to the train station. (He'll be gone for 3 weeks on mission up in NORWAY! The lucky stiff...oh, well!)

Take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

[Note to reader: Here is the original LOI for Alligator Control mentioned above]

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 3d SQUADRON, 11TH ARMORED CAVALRY
APO NY 09141

AETOC-SCJ

21 APRIL 1981

SUBJECT: LOI for Alligator Control

TO: All Concerned Individuals

1. PURPOSE: To provide the Squadron with guidelines for the management and control of those alligators that crawl out of the swamp in our area of control.

2. DISCUSSION: The most critical factor in the control of alligators, prevalent in all facets of the program, and causing the majority of all frustrations, is that all alligators have government protection and political immunity; they cannot be killed. Although this is somewhat of a handicap, the experienced Alligator Control Officer (ACO) is not dismayed; over the years several very effective means of disposal have been developed. In fact, this field has been the scene of some of the most remarkable demonstrations of initiative seen in the military since Hannibal started playing with elephants. Some of the more common methods are:

- a. Chasing the alligator into someone else's area of operations, or the old "Hand-off" method. (Of course, others are chasing them toward you)
- b. Chasing the alligator back in the swamp. (Which means, of course, that he may come back, and probably will have grown in size.)
- c. Taming the Alligator. (They still grow, need lots of food, and quite often turn on you.)
- d. Ignoring the Alligator. (Usually not a viable solution.)

By nature the alligator is a nasty brute, having little ability to differentiate between those individuals who really deserve to be bitten from those who are completely innocent. Another annoying fact is that the beasts tend to travel in packs, and will quickly overwhelm the inexperienced. This is why it is important for all good ACO's to be able to prioritize the strengths of his opponents, determine which must be run off first. It is here that the truly outstanding ACO can be recognized; the agility with which he dodges between the open maws, the flair with which he lures the monsters back to the waters edge, the artfulness of his ruses, all attesting to his mastery of the craft.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. Command Groups:

- 1) Identify and train ACO's with experience, slot them in positions commensurate with their control abilities.

A True Fair-tale Love Story

AETOC-SCJ

Subject: LOI for Alligator Control, dtd 21 April 1981.

2) Prioritize the alligators as they emerge, offer encouragement when needed.

b. Primary Staff:

1) Determine the proper method of dealing with each alligator. (Back to the Swamp? Send to 1st Sqdn? Tame?)

2) Man the perimeter of the whole AO so that none of the beasts sneaks in unnoticed.

3) Try to keep the biggest alligators from getting through the perimeter to the troops, as they lack both the assets and the number of experienced personnel needed to control the really big ones.

c. Remaining Staff: Help out where you can.

d. Units:

1) Try not to feel paranoid - the staff does stop as many of the critters as is possible.

2) Train new officers in control procedures. (Deceit, Tap dancing, Blowing Smoke, etc.)

3) Remember that when you chase a gator toward the swamp, it has to go through the staff perimeter first, where it will usually catch them with their attention facing the new ones arriving.

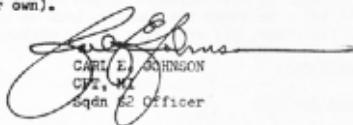
4. COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS:

a. Try to avoid chasing alligators into the AO's of the other units, sections within the Squadron; a united front is needed (also prevents grudges). Chasing them to other Squadrons or Regiment is acceptable but it is preferred that they be sent to other organizations in USAREUR.

b. Ensure that any tamed alligators are kept on a very stout, and short, leash.

c. DO NOT go into the swamp to hunt/stir up gators; glory hunting is always frowned upon. If there aren't enough alligators for you, notify a neighbor, he is bound to have a few extra.

5. POC: N/A (you are on your own).


CARL E. JOHNSON
CPT, MA
Sqdn S2 Officer

March 3, 1982

Hi Rick!

It's "Hump Day" and all downhill from here to the weekend! I'm now propped up in bed, having some difficulty writing this letter. Lucy, our cat, has again decided to be affectionate. She is purring madly, crossing back and forth over my lap, tail swishing under my nose and rubbing her chin on my pen. Ah.....now it is a bit easier – the bod is curled up in my lap. Her sense of timing is not always perfect!

I hope you had a good day. Mine was pretty quiet – sort of a nice change. Today was Region's annual event of taking the staff out – non-officer staff for breakfast, officer staff for lunch. As a result, we officers were the only ones in the branch until ten minutes before we opened! It was especially nice for me. My "dear friend", Mxxx Pxxxxxxx wasn't there to bombard me with questions and requests. I got some extra things done, but life was a bit hectic at 10:00!

We headed out to lunch at 12:30, had a nice time eating good food and talking about the changing direction of banking. It was really interesting – the emphasis is really changing from a business of making loans and providing many free benefits and services to one of sell, sell, sell. In addition, services always taken for granted, from purchasing rolled coin to giving good customers a Xerox copy of something will no longer be free. I can't believe the increase in fees for things like stop payments! Well, enough of my banking ramblings.....

This evening, I went to my weekly meeting with the Junior League and listened to a wonderful speaker from JPL (Jet Propulsion Lab) in Pasadena. He spent an hour talking and showing slides from the Voyager mission to Jupiter and Saturn. It was fascinating. Unfortunately, it was not a good time to have a lecture in a dark room with slides, when one gets up at 5:30 and has a full day of running

around. (Definitely not as exciting as some of your days sound, though!) I'm definitely not complaining. I enjoy my job – but tonight I felt like just coming home, getting into my sweats, turning on the stereo and mellowing out a bit!

In one of your last letters, you mentioned AFN and good old Casey Casson (My guess at spelling this is about as good as yours!) Is that a 24 hour broadcast, based in Germany or is it broadcast from somewhere else at only certain times? Also, I caught the name “Stars & Stripes” on the comic you sent (I loved the comic!) Is that sent over daily from the U.S.? Well, enough of my questions.....

There we go.....much better. Lucy just bounded off the bed. (Mary just got home from her class) Lucy is all love when Mary is gone, but as soon as that key hits the door, she's gone. Definitely loyal to her Mom!

The idea about driving across the country sounds like fun – I hope we can synchronise times! With all of the things to do, from going to Germany to spending a day at the beach, I wish I could take more time off! Believe me, if I win that \$1,000,000.00 you'll know what I'll be doing!

The old eyelids are getting a bit heavy so I better close. Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. I hope they give you a break before your next practice alert. And I thought 5:30 was early!

March 4, 1982

Hi Rick!

Well, I'm depressed..... I went to the freezer to partake of my favorite of favorites (ice cream) and found nothing more than frozen vegetables, ice cubes and bread. What a let down! I guess I should keep closer tabs on the freezer!

TGITH! (I believe in starting early!) Hope you had a good Thursday. We had a busy one at the Bank – there were lines all day long! And it drives our manager crazy! If there are more than two people in line, she comes running over, frantically saying “We need more tellers!” Needless to say, she drives everyone a bit crazy!

I really enjoyed your two letters (2/22 & 2/25) that greeted me when I got home. It was another one of those twelve hour days and nothing does more for the soul than a good letter – even better, two good letters! Every Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, I head down to El Monte where Difference Research is located. This is the department where all the bank film, etc, records are kept. One of our biggest customers has many unanswered problems (some from 1978!) that they have been trying to get resolved. That is one of my biggest projects. I got permission to use the facilities there – much nicer than what we have in the branch. I am having some luck, but it is definitely time consuming. All of the work is located by batch number on film and microfiche. With an average of 140,000 items received each day, you can imagine the amount of resource material!

No.....your Mom has not told me about “you and your poetry.” I think it's great, definitely not “weird.” I wish I could be so creative! If you get a chance, I'd love to hear some!

Which beach is my favorite? That is a tough question.....the beach is one of my most favorite spots. In California, Del Mar ranks number one. Just to give you a bit of a project, I won't tell you where it is.

However, we definitely have to go there. The water is great for swimming, the beach is wonderful for walking and the sunsets are gorgeous!

To continue with my answer session.....the waterfall picture I sent is known as “Multnomah (oops!) Falls along the Columbia River. “The Gorge” as it is known, extends all along the river and is packed with waterfalls and all sorts of beautiful spots. In fact, there aren’t many spots up there that aren’t beautiful!

Hopefully, Friday won’t be too busy tomorrow. They are known for being busy, which makes it a bit hard, considering our later hours. Hopefully, I won’t be too late – a friend of Mary’s is coming over for dinner tomorrow night. Keep your fingers crossed I’ll make it by 7:30!

I’ve been bitten by that old sleep bug again, so I better close! You know, I’m going to have to start writing some letters during the day. I’m getting into a rut – you must think I’m a very tired person! And don’t worry – it isn’t the company at all! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S.Your “priority” of meeting me certainly doesn’t give me heartburn! I’m looking forward to it!

06 Mar 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer,

I finally made it to Saturday. YAHOO!! It’s about 0945 right now, I’m in my office waiting for my driver to get the car ready...I have to go out on a mission today...what a bummer. Oh, well, at least it’s only

a 1 day job. I should be back by 1900 hrs tonight. Then it'll be recuperation city.

Jeff is still in Norway so I'm going to sit back with a small glass of Cognac and watch some movies on his VCR (video cassette recorder) this evening until whenever I get tired, then it'll be hit-the-hay time. I'm not even going to set my alarm. That sure feels good to be able to say that, even better to do it.

I received a card and letter from you yesterday...thank you! I needed it/them. This past week was a real dog; not quite as bad as those before it, but still, enough to really make me antsy to get home to the States.

As soon as I can, I'll scarf up some stamps for ya'. And as far as your Dad's Mannlicher, since I'm looking for a Drilling double rifle, I'll get any info I can at the same time. From what you tell me, if I ever get to meet him (and I hope I do) we'll get along famously. (However, I promise to spend most of my time with you.)

Do I have any requests of you? You betcha! Send more pictures.

Gotta go. My driver is here. R

07 March 1982

Back again...

Not a bad mission at all, even if I do say so myself. It was a beautiful day. Not a cloud in the sky, cool and windy. I got back at 1800 and at 2000 I decided I'd go out to dinner. I went out with SSG Fxxxxxx and his wife to a really small place near here in a town called Kirchheim. The place is fantastic. One only gets in by reservation unless you know the owner (SSG Fxxxxxx does). There are only about 5 tables in the whole place. The food is three-star. The owner is the maître d', waiter, cook, and bartender all at once. His wife helps out in

the kitchen. The recipes are all handed down from the owner's (his name is Dieter) grandmother. The beers are poured from wooden kegs. He has some of the best Cognac in the world, (Hennessey XO) and he serves it in slightly pre-heated snifters. I just can't say enough about the place. If you look at the small parking lot you'll see license plates from as far away as Wurzburg, Frankfurt, Kassel, Heidelberg, and Stuttgart. Just to eat at the place. It's called Dorfstad'l Kirchheim.

After I got back (2330) it was impossible for me to stay awake any longer. I slept until 1230 today. Rested at last. I'm going to clean up "the Pit" and then go see "Raiders of the Lost Ark" at the post theatre. I've heard it is a super flick. Have you seen it?

Well, Jennifer, I have to go. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

March 4, 1982

Hi Rich!

[Note to the reader: This was the first time Jennifer used my preferred nickname "Rich." She told me later that my signature looked like "Rick." Also, this is the response to a "voice letter" I sent her on a cassette tape with me talking and recording some songs.]

The card was signed: To "The Mystery Man" – I saw this card and couldn't resist it! Words aren't always the best way to say things! (Alluding to Snoopy's tail going "THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!")

Love,
Jennifer

This was the “letter” written in the “Snoopy” card.

Hi Rich!

You’re great! The surprise arrived yesterday in the mail! I had a bit of a hunch it might be from you (although the Pasadena address made me look twice!) but your hints “old fashioned” and “the Bimmer special” gave you away for sure. What a neat idea! I really enjoyed listening to you and the music (where did you find a group called “Horse Lips” – that title cracked me up, but the song was great). It must have taken some time to put together – I really appreciated all of your efforts. Thank you!

Hope you had a good weekend. As always, it was gone before I knew it. We had absolutely gorgeous weather – almost like summer. Yesterday, I went on mini bus tour of Pasadena with the Junior League. It was primarily to view the architecture in various parts of the city and was quite interesting. It only lasted about 2½ hours, after which I was invited to see the Marine Corps Battle Color Ceremony in the Rose Bowl. It consisted of the Color Guard, the Drum & Bugle Corps and the Silent Drill Team. Quite something to watch! Unfortunately, we had one of these rude women with an awful child sitting in front of us. She kept talking and her little boy pretended he was beating drums on the bleachers. Didn’t lend much to the presentation.

Your Sundays sound about as exciting as most of mine – housework and wash the car day. I was upset while drying my Rabbit off – someone spilled or placed white paint on the road. As a result, I have little white specks all along the bottom and sides of my car, which is dark blue. I’ll be able to get it off okay, but it makes me mad when people do things like that! (I now have a “spotted Rabbit”)

Since today was my day to be “domestic”, I decided to finish off the day doing something fun. I made some soup. We had a ham bone, so I made some split pea soup*. Mary and I love soup for dinner once

in a while and there is certainly nothing like homemade! I'll have to "create" one night when you are out on leave!

Well, Rich, I better close. Take care and.....don't worry.....I'll keep the letters coming!

Love,
Jennifer

*Woops! This card has an echo!

P.S. Thought you might like to see how the flowers turned out. They were beautiful!! ☺ J.



← this was the picture she sent me of the flowers I sent her for Valentine's Day.

March 9, 1982

Hi Rich!

I was just going to sit down and write you a note when the doorbell rang. We don't get a whole lot of visitors at night, so I carefully looked out our little peep hole. I should have known.....our neighbor

downstairs is a very nice, middle-aged woman. One problem – she loves to talk! She visits us pretty regularly in order to get our copy of “Cash Word”, a crossword puzzle in our paper. She is always very friendly and I enjoy saying “Hi”. However, she ends up talking for 20-30 minutes each time she comes up! Thank heavens I’m a good listener!

Say, do you have a smoke alarm in your apartment? I’ve never lived anywhere before where they have been installed so I wasn’t aware how sensitive they are. I was cooking dinner one night. As I frequently do, I had not planned terribly far in advance so was cooking a frozen meat patty. Well, the phone rang before I got a chance to turn the fire down and all of a sudden, my heart skipped at least two beats. The pan was smoking a bit and set the alarm off! Talk about an awful sound! I quickly finished the call and raced around the apartment opening all of the doors and windows I could. It probably only beeped about 5 seconds, but it seemed more like 50! The traumas of modern life!

Your sunset watching spot along the Appalachian Trail sounds wonderful! Sunsets are one of the prettiest things to watch. One of my favorite spots is at the beach. I love sitting in the sand around a fire, roasting marshmallows or s’mores (an old favorite from Girl Scouts!) and watch the sun disappear into the ocean. These sunsets all primarily pinks / purples. I could watch them forever!

I’ve been meaning to ask you....what sort of living arrangements do you have over in Germany? You mentioned an apartment – is it housing located on a base or do you actually live in the town in a separate unit. Do you shop for your own food or do you have a cafeteria type arrangement? I have many a fond memory of college.....We had a food service called Saga that actually didn’t do too badly, considering the number of kids they had to handle. Most of the stuff was pretty edible. However, there were always those entrees

called “Saga Surprise” or “Chef’s Special.” It was decided never to attempt a meal of one of these. When we thought of all the leftovers.....

I’ve listened to your tape you sent several times already (four to be exact!) and enjoy it more each time I hear it. You really hit home after the “Rain, Rain, Rain” song. I love sitting near a fireplace, listening to the rain, with a mug of hot chocolate in hand or some nice dancing music. That is one thing I miss in the apartment – the closest thing we have is a gas stove that ticks! Definitely not the same! Do you have a fireplace where you live?

The evening is nearing its end so I better sign off. Hope you have a super Wednesday (‘m going to be taking an Interviewing Skills class, which should be interesting. I’ll write and let you know how it went. Keep your fingers crossed for me that the video machine is broken!) Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. It’s a deal! I’ll have the slides and glasses for cognac ready for you!

09 Mar 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer,

I picked up the Bimmer today! YAHOO!! You would not believe how nice it is to drive 85mph, sun roof open, tapes going, and weather relatively warm and NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY!!

I received your letter today where you acknowledged your draft into the Ice Cream Legion. So, you used to make peach ice cream? I’m still partial to good ole vanilla, but let’s make some peach....maybe

even some strawberry (I'll scarf up some humongous strawberries out in the Calif desert vic Barstow or wherever I find some as I drive home.)

Mom told me your vacation is in July....oh! pit! How 'bout it if I "kidnap" you for a while in August...seriously, I figure we can work something out. What say, Sweetie? As soon as I can get a pic, I'll send it.

Do you have any names to suggest for the car? I've thought about it and came up with one, but I'd like to know if you have any ideas. You're probably wondering what I thought of: "Ghost Machine." You know why? Because come the weekend or leave, or when I get off from work, NOBODY IS GOING TO SEE ME...I'll be a Ghost. (What is the verdict?)

I named my old car "Fritz"....He was an Audi Coupe Fox. Did I ever have fun driving that car! I bought it the summer before my Firstie Year at West Point. (Firstie Year is First Class Year or Senior Year). I drove the smoke out of it until I sold it in May '79 before I came to Germany. (I bought my pickup since the folks needed something a little more "practical"). You may have seen Mom drive the truck around. It's super for the desert. The capper top makes it nice during the hot sunny day and at night with all the windows open the breeze makes it cool to the point of almost being cold. (Of course, as you know, deserts do get cold at night.)

Last night I went to the movies again...for the second time I saw "Raiders of the Lost Ark." ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC MOVIE!! Have you seen it? I think movies like that are better than flip tops on beer cans or sliced cheese.

Oh! I found some of my last batch of "hero pictures." They were taken about a year ago so they are relatively "accurate." When the new ones come back in a few weeks, I'll send another one, OK? But until then, I hope this one will suffice.



The “hero picture” I mentioned.

Well, I gotta go. Take care of yourself. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. Say Hi to your folks for me...I look forward to meeting them.

R

10 Mar 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Dear Jennifer!

Today was hump day and did I ever bust buns...I wish there were 34 hours in a day so I could work 28 of them. We've really been busy getting ready for our AGI (Annual General Inspection) and I found out today our sister Squadron S-2 shop is somewhere around whale s__t (which is the lowest thing in the bottom of the ocean). Needless to say, the S-2 over there will probably receive a definite ass-chewing if not get relieved. Good thing I have SUPER people working for me!

THANK YOU! I received two letters from you today, dated 3 and 4 March. You have no idea how good for morale your letters are...or, maybe you do...

You received another compliment today. My direct boss, Major Txxxxxxx saw your pictures under the glass on my desk and said, "Hey, Rich, who's the fine lookin' young lady?" After I told him a brief version of our story he added "No wonder you're so adamant on getting back home" and then he walked out of my office. So, in addition to being OK'd by the men, you have "Command Approval."....

I'm glad you don't think my poetry endeavors are weird. Like I said, sometimes it's the only way I can loosen up.

Enclosed is one I wrote once before I was to go on mission. Maybe you can detect a sense of anticipation..

This letter is short. I must dash. Take care of yourself. Hope you like the poem.

Yours,
Rich

The night before a journey,
Hearts and minds taut as a sail in wind,
Waiting for the word
To set man into motion.

All points of the compass covered,
All means of transport employed,
We go with great expectations
Of what in life we shall find.

We think not of our return,
Such a short time hence,
For, we may not see some,
Their time may be spent.

But, the night before the journey,
When all hearts and minds are tense,
We hear the starting gun.
Time is being spent!

March 11, 1982

Hi Rich!

I just finished “playing teacher” and thought I’d drop you a quick note before fading off into Z-land. What is a banker doing “playing teacher” you may ask? We just hired two new tellers at the Branch who are going thru their teller manuals – a set of four books with all of the hairy details about Wells Fargo Bank included. At the end of

each unit, they take a small quiz. It isn't scored but is merely to let them know what they do and do not know. I only had to check two – I don't think I'd like to have to do fifty of them at one time!

My interviewing skills class was pretty good yesterday, but it could have been better. Our instructor was the Personnel Director for our Region and spent most of the day running between our class and the telephone – apparently one of the branches was having a serious personnel problem. I definitely got something out of the day, but really could have learned much more if the instructor had been able to say in one place!

After the class, I went and saw the Gamble House in Pasadena, designed by Green & Green, two architects who built several beautiful houses in the early 1900's. If you like to see different types of architecture or just old houses (I like the latter!) I'll have to take you when you're out here in August. It is really a spectacular place!

Well, I got zapped tonight! Every Wednesday & Thursday afternoons, I do research at our Regional Headquarters for one of our "biggie" customers. I'm issued a security badge and pass for the two days and just go right in. This afternoon, it didn't work! I'd only been signed up for one day and my badge had expired! The guards recognized me, so I didn't have any problem, but it gave me a start!

Time to go! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

12 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Everything today is very quiet and it looks like I may even have a good weekend. However, I find out today at 1500 if I must work tomorrow. I was planning on spending the weekend in Heidelberg visiting my old West Point sponsor Major McDonough and his family. Mom & Dad know the McDonoughs well and I know for a fact that the boys (Jimmy, 11 yrs, Mike, 8 yrs, Matt 5 yrs) remember them and ask about 'em.

As a matter of fact, and keep this under your hat, Dad thinks Pat McDonough is the perfect officer's wife. Pat doesn't know about Dad's hypothesis and it would probably shock her if she ever found out!

My sister, Anita, may take leave sometime in April. If so, she'll probably head out to California for a couple of weeks. I think you may have met her when she and her fiancé Carl were in L.A. over New Years. When they got engaged, I got a ferocious ribbing.....you see Carl is a Lieutenant here in Bad Hersfeld, and it was I who gave Carl her address and Anita his address over a year ago. It's sometimes very difficult to correct/chew out a Lieutenant when he's your future bro-in-law, but, I've learned how (much to his chagrin). ARRAGGHH!

He still calls me "Rich" and never salutes (or at least forgets to much of the time) so I've had to jump down his throat a couple of times. (In a private social atmosphere it's OK, but not on duty with soldiers observing.) Oh well, c'est la vie de soldat. Let me get off the boring subject.....

Next week I'm scheduled to go to a German Kaserne (base) a little north of here to shoot with a bunch of Krauts. You know, submachine

guns, pistols, rifles, auto rifles, etc. It should be a lot of fun. I'm going to take up my personal weapons and go through the urban combat assault course they have. If I can do well enough I might qualify for the German "Schutzenschnur" or "Shooting Rope." (Their equivalent of our Q badges [Qualification Badges]. Let's hope my partner on the course can tell the difference between me and a target. (I am definitely allergic to lead. Ha! Ha!))

I gotta go. Take care of your beautiful self.

Yours, Rich



14 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hi Jennifer!

I had a super weekend in Heidelberg! I went to a place called Miramar to a health spa and swam, got whirlpooled, and saunaed until when I left 4 hour later, I felt better than I have for a long time. For the first time in about 5 years my back and shoulder do not hurt. (I sat in a HOT whirlpool with some eucalyptus stuff added for about 35 minutes. Even my knees don't hurt.) If you think I'm a physical wreck, you're not too far from the truth...bad knees from too much sport, bad back & neck from a parachuting accident, and a right shoulder that wasn't put back together right. (Don't let all this turn you off....us "beat-up ole Chevy" types are good for the long run....Ha!)

I read a few of the manuscripts from the book Major McDonough is writing. It's about his platoon in Vietnam, while he was the Platoon leader. Some pretty gruesome stuff at parts. Anyway, it was some very good work. He hasn't gotten a title for it yet, but I'm sure when it comes time to print, he'll have one.

It's very late, past midnight as a matter of fact, I'll continue this later. Take care. R

15 Mar 82

Hello Again!

I hope the above makes sense. I wrote it while I was "unwinding" from the weekend. I'm glad the weekend was good because this week can very possibly be a real BEAR....

Everybody is getting hyper about our AGI. As the days progress people get "snappier" and "crankier." I'm also learning some things

about people I wish I did not know...there are several people who are sprucing up their files and records through backdating reports, etc. I've mentioned it to them and all I get is a ration of s__t. Why are so many people (not just military or civilian) only interested in covering their asses at the expense of their ethics? I guess they think they'll "look good" but why don't they concentrate on BEING good and not worrying about the looks? It sure is disheartening. I think of all the times I got my butt fried because I told the truth rather than make something up to please my bosses, and I really do wonder...am I a masochist? But, I will not allow myself to compromise my own honor or ethics just for the sake of the Army, or of reputation. I once thought, "What is wrong with me?" "Am I abnormal?" but, came to the conclusion that in this world, I am abnormal but nothing is wrong. So, needless to say, I'm used to being a bit of a maverick, and being alone a lot of the time. I'll also say that it sure gets difficult at times. Hence the reasons why most of my hobby or off duty pursuits in general are of the solo variety. (Hunting, shooting, fishing, etc.)

I'm not saying I'm a paragon of virtue or anything infallible....quite the opposite is true, but at least when I've blundered or otherwise screwed up, at least I "took my licks like a man." (for want of a better expression) Maybe if I was a little less blunt and honest my life would be easier, but I don't see any point in changing at this stage of the game.

What do you think of this subject? I hope I haven't caused you to think I'm weird, or crazy or a hermit....I just wanted you to know a little more about me. Frankly, I think it would be super if we were compatible in this area....

I must go. Coffee break is way over and I gotta get back to my B.S. paperwork. Take care. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I still haven't found anything on your Dad's Mannlicher .270. I haven't found a double rifle either. R

P.P.S Did you get the package? I hope nothing was broken. R

This was the "letter" written in the "Turtles" card. (March 15, 1982)

Hi Rich!

How is everything going? Monday evening is winding to a close, but I wanted to get a quick note off to you before I crashed. I don't know why, but Mondays always seem a bit longer than usual!

You said you'd like some more pictures, so I thought I'd scrounge up a few. In case you couldn't tell, one was taken with a pocket Instamatic and the other with a Nikon. Bit of a difference!

I thought you might like to "meet" my family before you got home so I enclosed a picture taken last July at my parents' 25th wedding anniversary. My brother, Bob & I got together and plotted a surprise party. Everything went like a tee – we invited about eight couples (some of their really old friends) and my parents were super surprised. It was great! In case you're wondering, I'm usually not that red! Like a fool, I spend all day at the beach before the party. I'm very fair-skinned, but always hate to use lotion – it always causes all of the sand to stick to me! As a result, I usually get burnt to a crisp. I love the beach, though, and a sunburn doesn't bother me. I have too much fun to worry about the sun!

The second picture was taken about a month ago – I had just finished washing Bunny. It is sort of dark but I thought you also might like to "meet" Mary. Unfortunately, my picture inventory, except for scenery pictures (I think I told you about my means of avoiding cameras!) is pretty low. I'll start working on it, though, so I can send some more!

You're right....."Oh! Pit!" That's about what I said when I found out you were coming home at the end of August. I can always change my vacation, except that last part of August. Suze, the other AOO chose that as her vacation, and she has seniority over me. Darn! And both of us can't go at the same time because Pat would be left on her own. I tried to see if I could overlap a week with Suze, but no such luck. If you leave ends up being in the beginning of August, let me know! I'm a bit more flexible there! At least I'll be able to get two floaters and weekends. Keep me posted!

Take care and I hope to hear from you soon!

Love,
Jennifer



A True Fair-tale Love Story



15 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hi Jennifer!

It's now 2000 hrs, I'm home, taping some Loggins & Messina, and of course, writing you about my day. I'm sure that by the time you receive this, you will have received the letter finished during a break earlier today. Well, the day ended up absolutely lousy.

Do you recall my subject in the last letter? Well, ethics came up again this afternoon. I had a heated verbal altercation with another Captain about what he was doing today with reference to the discipline in his unit. What really got my spirits down was when he said, "Shut the f__k up, Rich, what do you know of discipline? You're just a staff officer." That really cut deep. Yes, I am a staff officer now, but when I get back to the States, I'll have a Company or Troop. Anyway, all I could do was walk away....for one of the few times in my life I was totally speechless. What does one say to that? Do I ever feel low right now.

Jen, I've heard a couple of that CPT's men say that if it was war time, they would hope he got killed. At that point I had to soundly chastise them, but now I'm beginning to see exactly what they meant. How the subject went from my discussion of honesty to his frontal assault, I have no idea. Maybe he is just being nervous or antsy [about the AGI].

Enough of this...I don't want to get you down, too.

Poem time:

I sit here on the beach,
My feet and hands feeling a thousand grains of sand.
The sunlight dances warmly on my face.
The sound of the waves echoes through my mind.

I smell the fresh salt air,
And taste the happiness in my spirit at being alive.

I wrote that this past summer and have cultivated it since. It's probably the piece I've spent most time on, line for line, that I've written. What do you think? On the back is another one. I haven't experienced it, but it's a "romanticist's imagination." I hope you like it.

Mountains to my left,
Stretching to my right.
The road in front of me
Stretches out of sight.
My thumb, an appendage in the air
Asking for a ride.
The drizzle down my neck,
I try but cannot hide.
Two lights come into view,
Slow down as they approach.
I see a lady behind the wheel,
Her presence raises my hopes.
I see a familiar pair of hands
Through the windshield of the car.
The driver rolls down the window.
My heart stands ajar.
She says that she is sorry.
She says she loves me dear.
She says she would do anything
If only I were near.
My hand touches her shoulder.
She tilts her head to touch my hand.
She smiles, a tear falls slowly.
Now, I understand.
The ocean now swells in front of me.

Across the Miles

The mountains are left behind.
I am one with Poseidon
And a brother to the wind.
She stands to me as if a sail,
To me, a brother to the wind.

Take care. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

16 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

I received two things from you today....a card and a letter.
THANKS! You definitely helped my day.

I'm glad you liked the tape. Yes, Horselips is a very interesting name for a musical group, but while they are relatively unknown, the music is OK. Some of the groups like Queen, I don't like totally, but do have some songs that are OK, too.

You were very correct when you said in your card that words aren't always the best way to say things. Thump, Thump, Thump, Thump. (I ought to call you "Thumper".....how's that for a "pet" name? If you don't like it, let me know...I'll promise to keep it a secret, though.)

You asked about how I live here in D'land. Well, I once lived in a BOQ (Bachelor Officers Quarters) but due to necessary renovations of the building, I now live in quarters off post, "on the economy." Jeff and I live in the 1st floor of a 3 story building. For two scrungey bachelors there is a lot of room. Jeff and I both have our own bedrooms

on opposite ends of the apartment (he snores and can it ever bring the roof down), there is a kitchen, living room, bathroom, and the “inner Sanctum” (a small children’s room we have converted to a bar/stereo/reading/guest-on-the-couch room). All utilities, etc. and rent run about \$310 a month (it varies with the exchange rate). So, when it comes to eating, sometimes we cook, and sometimes we go to the O Club (Officers Club) to eat. To tell you the truth, I prefer to cook (a \$200 Club bill is a bit heavy) but often times, I’m so tired at the end of the day, all I have energy for is to go to the club, eat two cheeseburgers and fries, and then go home to RELAX.

I enjoyed the “Garfield popcorn” cartoon. When the BOQ was in existence, at night watching TV, somebody would make a grocery sack full of “corns” and we would generally have a good time, together. Did we ever have some parties, marathon risk games, poker games, water fights, and stereo wars! (Put 15 bachelor Cavalry Lieutenants and Captains together and who knows what will happen!)

Gotta go get this in the mail. Take care of your beautiful self.

Yours,
Rich

17 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Today was a s__t day. But, one thing happened that rescued it totally. I got a note from the Colonel (Squadron Commander). Basically he told me that I was doing a super job, that he rides my ass a lot and kids around with me, but that he appreciates my being a professional and being in his command. How about that?! Isn’t that enough to brass your buttons? (Sorry for bragging about it, but I’m so

happy about myself right now I can't see straight!) But, like we said before, and agreed upon, we'll be each other's sounding boards. Anyway, my OER is due very soon (OER=Officer Efficiency Report) and an OER can shoot an officers career down the tubes if he gets just one bad one. So far, I've done well, and it looks like this coming OER may be good, too. YAHOO! (Since I just made Captain, my next promotion is not due for about 7 years, if I do get promoted. And, good OER's are paramount. [Of course, I'm not about to compromise ethics or honesty or morals just for good OER's or promotions.]

Babe, I really do appreciate all the letters you send me. It definitely keeps my morale up knowing there is somebody, you, back Stateside who is "concerned" about me. (Excluding parents & "family.") I owe you. There's no doubt about it.

I promise, we'll watch several sunsets together when I finally get to California. Some from the beaches, some from the mountains. What say? One thing I should tell you right now, plan on having your free time monopolized...by me!

Another question: How amenable (?spelling?) are you to receiving another tape? I'm planning on making another one fairly soon. Hopefully, I won't be quite so nervous. (It's very strange...I can brief Generals all day long and not sweat, I can "hunt people" and not feel perturbed, I can be a VIP bullet stopper and be calm, but I get the jitters when I think of how I relate to ladies, particularly ones I care about...it's especially poignant with you because I don't ever want to present an image to you that I'm a jerk. I don't think I am, as a matter fact I know I'm not, so, if I ever appear to be...LET ME KNOW, OK?) Enough of that.

I must say adieu for now. Take care. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

March 18, 1982

Hi Rich!

I just finished one of the most boring (and sometimes depressing!) duties of life – paying the old monthly bills. I’ve just sort of been throwing all of my mail in a cupboard the past few days – I haven’t really even had a chance to sit down and look at it! – and decided tonight was the night for getting all of my financial affairs in order. It wasn’t as bad as I thought. Done for another month!

Before I go any further.....THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!!!! You’re wonderful!!! Your package arrived today in the mail. I had sort of a long day at work, so it was definitely an upper! They’re beautiful – I was so excited, but no one was home (except for Lucy!) – Mary was at her parents for dinner. Well, I had to tell someone, so I called my parents! Both the pencil holder and coaster are in a place of honor in the living room. One question – what is the little scene painted on each? It looks like there are two beautiful churches. Have you been to either?

How is your preparation for your AGI going? It sounds like it is definitely keeping you busy! The whole process reminds me of the audit we went thru last fall. It was definitely tense time! You see, I started at this branch as a teller, but it was only last September that I came back as an officer. Well, Pat and Suze had just come to the branch about two weeks before me, replacing two temporary operations officers. Considering these two officers were only there 9:30 – 3:30, the staff was undergoing a tremendous turnover (125% at the beginning of 1981) and our branch is one of the busiest in the region, you can imagine the condition of things. I couldn’t believe how far downhill things had gone just in the three months I was gone on my training course. Let me just say we worked quite a few weekends and late nights! Well, the auditors came in November – we hadn’t gotten everything done we wanted but had at least re-established

controls, knew where the problems lay and were trying to correct them. We got a satisfactory - definitely a nice rating. Anyway, best of luck on your inspection. I'm sure you'll have no problem!

I also want to thank you for the poem. I really enjoyed reading it. I could definitely sense what you were probably feeling. Do you have a notebook where you write all of your thoughts down? When I was in England, I kept a book of all my thoughts and things I did. It is really neat to go back and read it!

I'm really looking forward to this weekend. No great exciting plans – I'm just going to relax, maybe read a book or something. The rain is supposed to clear up, so the weather should be gorgeous. I'll probably spend quite a bit of time on the balcony!

I was hunting thru a few more pictures and found a few more – these are some beach pictures when Mary and I drove up to Santa Barbara. Hope you enjoy!

Well, Rich, it is time for me to hit the hay. Thank you again for the beautiful gift. You're great!!

Love,
Jennifer

19 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Well, it's late Friday afternoon, and before I knock off work I thought I'd drop you a belated letter. (I missed a day.) Anyway, the day was OK. Not too many alligators climbed out of the swamp. I managed to chase most of them away, and shoot the remainder.

Jeff, my roommate, got back from his mission in Norway. He said it was cold but definitely tolerable. He also told me it is very much a bachelor's paradise. He said that Norwegian girls wear their pants tighter than even German girls, and that's TIGHT! (He said he tripped over his tongue a couple of times until he learned how to keep it and his eyes in his head.) Frankly, tight pants are OK (in my opinion) but I prefer a lady wear a skirt that goes just below the knee with some medium-high high heel boots (even with the length of skirt) and some type of normal fitting shirt or sweater. Having been in high school during the days of mini-skirts/dresses, I got a gut full of that. (To me, "blatant" is not sexy.) What do you think? Of course, I fully acknowledge that my views on what looks good on women is old-fashioned, but it's also the kind of view which will always stand me in good stead, I think, because while I am not a particularly gentle man, I do consider myself a "gentleman" and adhere to many of the old chivalric codes. (But, at the same time, I've also been described as being "crusty"....I guess it all depends on one's perspective.) This is just a little more about me, but I hope it hasn't "scared you off...."

Tomorrow, Jeff, Steve, Carl, me, and a few other of the "old Q" (BOQ) are going pistol shooting. We'll get to "burn powder" and "throw lead." After shooting with my German guards yesterday, I'm of the distinct impression that I need BOOCOO practice. However, I'm still up to par with Black Magic (M16A1 Rifle) and the Snake (submachine gun). Be prepared to spend several hours in the desert with me, throwing cans and spotting rounds. Of course you get to burn more powder than I do because I need even more practice "coaching."

I can't wait until we get to see some sunsets together. One idea I had was...we'll go on top of one of the high hills/mountains by Lake Meade (near Vegas) and watch the sunset over the mountains with the lake below us. How's that?

Even though I've thought about a lot of things for us to do, and you've thought about a lot of things too, the primary thing I want to

do is get to know you a little better.....wrong....a lot better is what I want to say. So, I'll be content to just sit and talk or otherwise have quiet times, too.

Well, Jennifer, I must go. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

March 21, 1982

Hi Rich!

Well, another weekend is winding to a close – it was one of those that was practically over before it started. The weather was absolutely gorgeous! We had about 70° temperatures, blue sky, clear air and a super view of snow covered mountains. In fact, right now I'm sitting on our balcony, feet propped up, soaking up some late afternoon sun and writing a letter to you (what else??)

The weekend wasn't quite as relaxing as I was hoping it would be – Pat, Suze and I worked yesterday. The time spent was very worthwhile – I got some things accomplished I've been trying to finish up for quite a while. You see, during the week, it is hard to get much of my own work done because as soon as the tellers walk in the front door, my attention is turned to them, ie, answering questions, approving checks, getting things from the vault, etc. I usually get to work a bit earlier so I can get myself put together for the day but some things come up that take more time and require quite a few reference materials that are locked up in the vault. Oh, well, think how dull life would be if I always got everything done with no problem! The only bad thing about yesterday was having to be inside a building when the weather was so gorgeous. I wish I could have cut a big hole in the ceiling – instant sunroof!

This afternoon, after Mary and I finished up with all of our “Sunday housework,” was spent at Descanso Gardens in La Canada. It was really pretty – all of the flowers were in bloom and we had a great time walking around. All through the gardens you come across little ponds and streams, filled with ducks and other assorted “beasts.” Mary and I were watching some ducks in one pond and saw a little boy on the side, trying to feed them. All of a sudden, he just slid in and submerged for a second! Poor thing – it scared him to death and his mother was ready to kill him! That water must have been pretty cold!

Your weekend in Heidelberg sounded super! I bet it felt wonderful to just soak and relax for a while! The only thing similar to that I’ve been is a jacuzzi (sp?) up in Oregon. A group of us spent a weekend at a place called “The Inn at Seventh Mountain.” We had a great time ice skating, cross-country skiing and just goofing around. The place has an outdoor jacuzzi and we all donned our swim suits and headed over. The water was wonderful and warm, so warm that we didn’t want to get out. The air temperature was only about 30°! On the way back to the rooms, our hair froze! It thawed out quickly once we got inside, but for a minute, we all felt like icemen!

After reading the end of your last letter, when you talked about not compromising your honor or ethics, I thought immediately of my father. I think it is super you think the way you do and agree with you 200%. If more people thought like that, the world would be a much better place (to coin an old phrase) and.....like father, like daughter. I also have never compromised my beliefs or values just to be “part of the group” or because everyone else does it. I have little respect for people who try to present something as it isn’t, just to “look better.” That type of person ends up hurting himself and others in the long run. So, believe me, I definitely don’t think you’re “weird, crazy or a hermit.”

Woops! I just looked at the clock! Mary’s parents are coming for dinner and we have to finish up a few things. Where did the afternoon

go!! I hope your week wasn't the "BEAR" you were expecting it to be! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. Thanks for checking on the Mannlicher .270 for my dad. He was all jazzed when I mentioned you were looking and don't worry if you don't find anything. I appreciate your just looking!

P.S.S good luck with finding that double rifle!

22 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetie!

I received your card and pictures today. THANKS! I especially appreciate being "introduced" to your family. (I'm jealous of your sunburn in the picture.) I've forgotten....how old is your brother? The pictures also got some additional comments from my men. In addition to the seal of approval, you got the "Oh! Wow!" award. Not bad at all!

I'm going to try and call Branch (Armor Branch in the Pentagon) and see if I can move up my DEROS date about a month. No guarantees...all I can do is try and I will do that. If I can't, well, I guess we have weekends, and evenings, huh?

I apologize for missing a few days in writing. We're getting ready for our AGI and the antsy people are getting worse...and are dumping more work on everyone else. Also, I've had a few things go on out at the Border.

By the way, enclosed is a picture from the cover of Army magazine. It is a picture of the OP where I wrote you that I was Commander back in January, OP Romeo. Pictured is a typical winter day. It looks as cold and forbidding as it really is. Also enclosed is the short little blurb that was in the magazine about the picture. It doesn't tell where the picture was taken, or who is in the shot. Anyway, I hope you like it.

You know something? (I'll get back to a previous subject) You are a very pretty lady. Not exactly glamorous, but very, very pretty. I will definitely be proud to be seen in your company.

Jennifer, I'm sorry to cut this short. I'm really beat from all my "in-fighting" during the day. Take care of your beautiful self. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

March 23, 1982

Hi Rich!

How's life over in D'land? Things are going great here except for one small problem....I've got a cold. The definite pits. I hate being sick and colds are very frustrating. I'm well enough to work, etc. but I either can't breathe or am running around with a Kleenex in hand and nose shining red. It's been a while since I've had a cold so I guess I'm due – everyone has been sick at work. I guess the old immune system finally gave in!

I just got home from my parent's house, and thought I'd drop you a quick note before crashing. I don't know if I've said anything before, but my brother is home for Spring Break. He is only going to be here in Pasadena until Thursday – he got in last night – so mom, Dad, my

grandparents and the two of us got together for dinner. It was great fun – I hadn't seen him since Christmas and won't see him again until his graduation in June. Spring break has been a quick visit – he spent the weekend at Catalina SCUBA diving and is then heading down to Mexico until Sunday to do some surfing. I was glad to see him at least for dinner! At one point, he wasn't going to be home at all, but he decided to stop by for at least a few days. He's the type that is always going – I'm glad his original plans fell through!

Well, Rich, I'd love to keep going but I'm afraid I'm definitely fading. I'll have to continue this a little later, but at least wanted to say a quick "Hi!" Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

23 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

So far, I've had such a lousy day that I just had to take a break. I've been "fighting" all morning. All I want are a few simple answers to some basic questions, and a few decisions which are over my head as a Captain. My immediate boss, a Major, must be a eunuch. He's afraid to make even a basic decision. He apparently is trying to cover his ass by always sitting on it, and I'm oh so tired of going out on limbs for him. I feel so old. The Squadron Commander supports me, but why should I go to him when I need support? Isn't that what bosses are for? (In addition to kicks in the butt when deserved.) He's a hell of a nice guy, but that's all. I'm sorry....here I am dumping frustrations on you again. On to nicer subjects: (But, I do feel a lot better about things now) (THANKS!)

Anyway, at least the weather is improving, bit by bit. Instead of frost on my car windows in the morning, it's now dew. Also, since it's not as cold, I feel a little better, too. However, in the mornings when it is damp or when it rains is another story. (Me and my extra strength Tylenol will make it through the day.)

I hope my letter about a week ago didn't make you think I'm a hopeless wreck...just a regular wreck (Ha!) and could I ever use a neck rub right now! (hint, hint) Of course, I promise to reciprocate.

I'm still doing song research for my next tape. The more I do, the more I enjoy it. Jeff is even getting into the act by being my source of albums, etc. Even though his taste in music [is] a bit on the hard rock side, he's been keeping a lookout for albums with certain songs I want.

You haven't quite given me a clue as to what you want for your birthday. (I know it's May 9, but what year were you born?) I don't know if Mom told you but it's 1956 for me.

Say, enclosed is a fairly risqué cartoon Jeff found in Playboy magazine. He knows how much I dislike Yankees (especially New Yorkers) and how even though I was born in Texas, how much I dislike old-line braggart Texans, and gave this to me for my bulletin board here in the office. So, if you ever run across an obnoxious Texan, or have a good friend who is good-natured and a Texan, you'll be all set.

Lunch hour is just about up and it's back to the grindstone. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

24 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweet Jennifer!

It's almost quitting time and I'm absolutely beat. I had so many things to do today that I only got a few of them even half-way done.

First, I went to Jeff's mountain for a super hairy briefing. It took an hour to get there, an hour for the brief, and an hour to get to the Border where I had another mission. Two hours later I was back on the road and returning to Bad Hersfeld. I arrived Bad H. 1330 I got back. (Left at 0700) Oh, well, hard work is "good for the soul," eh, what?

My "in" box was so full, the people started stacking it on the desk. But, how, after a concentrated 3½ hours of work (writer's cramp abounds) the in box is empty, out box empty, hold box semi-full (and trash can overflowing). Have you ever had days like this?

Oh! Craig Bxxxxxxx (the S-1, Personnel Officer) just called. I gotta go. Be back later.

Rich

The Next Day ---25 Mar 82

Whew! That turned out to be a very long interruption. It's a wonder I got home at all before 2000 hours. I can't go into what actually happened, but it was definitely interesting. As a matter of fact, well, on to other subjects.

It's lunch break now and I will have to spend several hours this afternoon finishing up some of the paperwork that swamped me this morning. That has been a load that would break any camel's back. But, by the time this evening comes I can promise myself, and you, that no work will cross my threshold (spelling?) One thing I will not ever

make a habit of doing is taking work home with me. Either the problems/trouble, or the actual work. (Of course there always is the possibility of the quick emergency.) Do you ever get called at home to fix some foul up at the bank? I hope not, I know how exasperating that can be.

Hey, I gotta go and I'll get this in the mail ASAP. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. Expect a phone call, soon. R

March 25, 1982

Hi Rich!

What a great way to start a Thursday! And was I ever surprised (as if you couldn't tell when you said "Hi!") It was really strange because my alarm and the phone went off at the exact same second. When Mary said I had a phone call, I thought she was crazy. And then I started thinking it was the alarm company calling me to say I had to get down to the Bank right away. I'm glad it wasn't! I hope I wasn't too incoherent, what with just waking up, in addition to having a cold. I really enjoyed talking to you - thanks for thinking of me!

I hope your mission went smoothly. Do you regularly get "assigned" to one? Do you go solo? My day at the Bank was rather uneventful - quiet, so I could get some stuff done. One nice surprise - my brother stopped in to say "Hi!" He is on Spring Break (the lucky kid) and was going to head down to Mexico with some friends to do a little surfing. I can't believe my "little brother" only has one more quarter at college left. He's had a job offer down here in S. California

that I hope he'll take – if he moved off we wouldn't be able to see too much of him. Keep your fingers crossed for me!

Well, Mary is deserting me this weekend. She and a friend are going to Palm Springs so I'll have a quiet weekend here, taking care of Lucy. My brother will be home Saturday night from Mexico before heading back to school, so we'll probably do something. Do you have anything exciting happening?

I'm afraid this will have to be another quickie. Thanks again for the phone call – it was great! Take care and I'll write you a long one this weekend!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. Has anything arrived in the mail yet? If so, I hope it made it okay!
☺

26 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetie!

This is going to be a super quickie, I'm up to my a__ in alligators. I had to take a break. I received your letter and beach pictures yesterday. I used to live in Goleta, near Santa Barbara, so the beach looks very familiar. (I'll tell you what...even with your "sun in the eyes frown" you're still the prettiest lady I've seen lately!) You are definitely going to have a certain Cav Captain attempting to monopolize as much of your time as possible. (Any complaints? I hope not!)

I have to get this in the post office before it closes. Take care of your beautiful self. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. Sorry for the rush job! R

26 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Слава Богу, что сегодня пятница.

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
Thanks to God that today (is) Friday

I made it through another week! It's especially noteworthy since I still have part of my a__ left, after battling alligators all week long.

Babe, after this letter, I probably won't have much of a chance to write until sometime around next Tuesday or so. I go to the field Monday morning and am not scheduled to return until Tuesday evening. Then Thursday I prepare for a super hairy security mission on Friday. Mission: VIP security. If I get a chance and one of my men has a camera, I'll have him take a picture. This will be one of those in uniform, day time jobs (flak jacket, submachine gun, etc.) that always presents such opportunities to screw up and get drilled but where everything usually goes OK and most of the work is for naught. (Thank goodness!)

There's nothing new to report about changes to my scheduled arrival in the U.S. It still looks like 15 August. (142 days left.) Antsy is not the word to describe how I'm feeling. It's getting so bad, I've had to start running and swimming (when I get the chance) longer and longer distances. I've gotten my two-mile time down to 14:15 (for me, that's cookin' right along!) and my non-stop swim distance is one-mile (that's so many laps in a pool it boggles my brain to count that high) (72).

I started to overdo it a while ago, so I slacked off. The knees were really beginning to complain. The run time is not constant, but the swim distance is, generally. Don't think I'm a sports freak, please. I just want to be able to "relax" when I sleep, rather than wake up tense and keyed up...I think you know what I mean.

The AGI is still on everybody's mind. Late nights are a general rune...."notches in the ethics sticks" are also being made by lots of others. (I made myself a promise. I'll approach each offender personally, and will remember exactly what they did. If I ever get in a position to "do things" I'll make sure those type offenses never occur.) Needless to say, if the Inspector asks me certain questions about my own Section, I'm not going to lie....therefore, I may be looking for a job sooner than I want to. Know anybody that wants a "broke down" Intelligence Officer?

Well, hell, I guess I'd better be going. Take care of yourself. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

March 28, 1982

Hi Rich!

The old tea kettle just finished boiling, the stereo is on and Lucy is furious at me. She was blissed out in my lap and I had to kick her out – it's pretty hard to write a letter with a big ball of fur asleep in the spot you need for writing letters! (that sounds a bit strange – I have one of those writing “desks” that is soft on one side so you can put it in our lap, settle into a couch and write. One of man's better inventions!)

The weather finally made up its mind – I can hear rain on the roof. The sun has been coming and going all weekend (mostly going) and today was one of my favorite types. The sky was filled with big, white, puffy clouds. The wind would come up, opening up big blue patches and the sun would come streaming thru. I don't know if I've told you before about the gorgeous view we have from our windows on the north side (being on the second story). Well, when the sun came out, the mountains are absolutely gorgeous (covered with splotches of sun). There I go again.....rambling on and on. Enough of weather jabbering. I hope you didn't doze off on that one!

My weekend was very quiet, what with Mary being gone – it was sort of nice for a change. Don't get me wrong....Mary and I get along great and don't get on each other's nerves or anything. But, once in a while, it's sort of nice to relax and do exactly what you want with no one else around. Believe me, though, if I had to do this all the time, it might not be so enjoyable. I'm not a hermit and I enjoy having someone around to talk to, laugh with and do things with.

Speaking of talking (did that make sense?) and quiet times (your 3/19 letter) – that sounds great! Since your leave and my vacation don't coincide (a fact which definitely bums me out) a lot of the time will probably be spent in the evening (apart from the weekends). I usually don't get away from the office until anywhere between 5:30

and 8:00. (I'll try and get away by 5:00 while you're here!) Unfortunately that doesn't leave many hours for driving to many places. However, I can definitely get into just talking – there are a lot of great little spots near and in Pasadena. How does that sound? Beware, though, I'm also known for being impulsive! And....there are quite a few hours in the evening.....

Wow, the rain is really coming down! The clouds have completely covered the mountains. I hope the weather was good in Palm Springs! Mary and Loretta will probably come back burnt to a crisp!

I'm very amenable to receiving another tape! I loved the first one! And, no....you didn't sound too nervous. I can relate, though. By the time you get this letter, you'll probably (or at least hopefully) have received my attempt at a tape. It was a very strange feeling for me to talk into a microphone....in fact, it took me awhile to get started. Once I did, though, it was great – I had a lot of fun choosing music and trying to time it right – many a time when I've recorded music, the song was a little longer than I figured (or should I say the tape shorter than I thought!) and I've lost a song right in the middle of a word. Very frustrating!

Our ideas on fashion sound pretty similar, except for one thing – I don't have any boots. I like them but I guess I've just never been brave enough to invest in a pair! *(I'm a penny loafer kid!) And, I definitely don't get into mini-skirts or TIGHT clothes. The primary reason I avoid the latter is simple – I enjoy breathing and being able to move! It cracks me up when girls at work (or at college) tell stories of how they love their new pair of jeans that they have to actually lie down and pull on for about fifteen minutes – just to get on! I've never been one to do crazy things just for fashion. Comfort comes first! And when I see old pictures of me when mini-skirts were in.....we all wore some pretty short ones!

Well, Rich, it's time for me to play chef. The old stomach timer just announced it's time to get going with dinner. Hope your weekend went well! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. I just want you to know I appreciate your letters just as much! It's great to come home from "one of those days" and have one of your letters waiting! And please don't feel you owe me – I wouldn't do it if I didn't want to! I enjoy getting out the old pen and paper and sending you a quick note (or novel, depending on the time frame!)

P.S.S. Here are those Mt. St. Helens pictures I promised I'd send in the tape!

March 29, 1982

Hi Rich!

Well, I'm supremely jazzed! Mary and I just finished watching the Academy Awards (the 54th annual) and my favorite movie won "Best picture" – Yeah! Have you seen "Chariots of Fire" yet? You've got to go see it – a wonderful movie. As they were reading off the nominations, I was sitting on the floor, fingers crossed and ready to burst with anticipation. When they announced the winner, the whole neighborhood must have heard. In case you can't tell, I was just a little bit excited – Ha!

It was a pretty tough competition – I was also rooting for "Raiders of the Lost Ark," which I know you've also seen. What a great adventure film! However, there was just something about "Chariots" that really did something for me. Needless to say, Mary and I are going to see both again this weekend – along with the rest of S. California!

How was your Monday? Mine was pretty good, for a Monday. My morning was a bit frustrating – our computer system decided to be belligerent, so I spent a good part of the morning (from 10 -12) talking to the computer center up in San Francisco (and getting Cauliflower ear!), fiddling with switches, entering supposedly magic codes and trying to get the blasted machine to work. I hate to say it, but I didn't succeed. Apparently, the bad weather we're having doesn't agree too well with the computer lines (telephone cables). The system spent the whole day coming up and going down, primarily the latter. It is very difficult to function in a bank without one – we have definitely become dependent on that old machine!

I had a nice surprise today – I got to meet your Dad and Anita! They stopped by the Bank to see your Mom before they headed down to Tijuana (oops! I think I just massacred that spelling!) for the day. A brief but enjoyable meeting. Their stop in Mexico was definitely a quickie (they didn't leave the Bank until around 11:15!)

Speaking of parents.....both Mom and Dad say “Hi!” We're a very close family (the only way to go!) so I stop by at least once a week, usually two or three. I hope you don't mind, but I've told them about you already and they're both looking forward to meeting you. You mentioned in one of your letters about writing them a letter to introduce yourself – I think I've already done it! Thank you for the offer though – that was nice of you to think of them!

I just peeked out my window – the rain finally stopped. It was really coming down in buckets there for a minute! We have a flat roof (ie, no attic) so we can really hear the rain when it falls. It's a neat sound and neat to watch thru the window. I'm finally glad we're getting some – I didn't think it was ever going to come!

In past letters, you have referred to yourself as being “old fashioned” – I think that's great. Too many people get carried away these days. I don't mean that in the sense of doing crazy or impulsive

things. I love to do crazy things like drop everything and head to the beach, drop an ice cube down someone's shirt (I did that to my brother once and he almost killed me!), buy an ice cream cone at midnight – when it's cold and rainy. I don't get into going to bars and trying to get picked up by a guy or cruising down the streets of Hollywood. I'd much rather get together with good friends, have a BBQ on the beach or even just go to a good movie. What do you think?

I don't know how this came into my head, but I laugh everytime I think about it. Have you ever locked yourself in a bird cage? I'm serious! My parents have a parakeet cage on their patio that is big enough to walk inside (about 4' x 5' and maybe 8' hi). Well, everyone was gone one day and I went to clean out the cage and give the bird fresh food. I stepped inside for a second to reach something and didn't catch the door quick enough – it clicked shut. I almost died. Thank heavens I hadn't taken the spray millet out – I was able to stick it thru the wire and unlatch the door. It gave me a bit of a start for a minute, though – no one was going to be home until later that afternoon. I didn't get too excited with the idea of spending my day sitting in a cage with a parakeet!

I must be going, so I'll sign off here. Take care and I hope to hear from you soon!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. I'm looking forward to having you “monopolize my time” while you're here! Any definite dates yet?

March 30, 1982

Hi Rich,

Today was one of those days I call “half n’ half” – it started out as being terrible, but ended up being terrific (at least it ended on a good foot!) To start off with, we had to count the cash in the ATM (our Automatic Teller Machine). We had about \$30,000.00 to count and, of course, it didn’t balance the first time. As a result, it took us about three times longer than it usually would (altho we did finally get it to balance!) Then Suze had to leave for a meeting (Pat left Friday for six weeks of surgery) so I was the only one in “the back shop.” Well, one of our tellers was \$500.00 short (his cash was this much less than what his paperwork said he should have) so we had to detail all of the teller’s cash. As luck would have it, we had to wait until 15 min before the Bank opened to do this since all of our tellers are only 30 hr people (9:45 – 3:45). When the doors opened we had only two people open (one girl was sick and one late and one off as it was) and the whole City of Pasadena must have walked thru the door, and our manager was having a fit (she gets upset if three people are waiting in line), I had questions coming from all directions...to make a long story short, I had to take two aspirin around noon. What a morning!

Things did get better, though. After work, Mary and I went over to the Los Angeles Zoo. My mother is a docent there and had an extra pass to see the preview of the new koala house. It is an enclosed area that was finished about a month ago and is really spectacular. There is a passage you walk around, surrounding a viewing area. There are no glass barriers or anything, so the koalas are right there. It was really well done – we even got some great views of the koalas eating and slipping. The certainly lead a life of leisure!

Rich, I better be going. I’ve got to get up extra early tomorrow. I’m going to be leaving the office around 2:30 to do some research for one

of our clients at our center in El Monte and I want to take care of some things I didn't get done today. Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

31 March 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Dear Sweet Jennifer!

You are wonderful! Your tape arrived yesterday. I had just returned from two days in the boonies, morale was lower than worm s__t, and I needed the boost. I'll address each point you made in another letter, but I'll tell you this....I may forego some of my plans to get to California sooner. You mentioned my kidnapping you for a day or so, well, it may be for longer than that!

I'll tell you something else. You have a beautiful voice. I can literally listen to you for hours. It has a melodious quality I've never before heard. If you like to talk as much as I like to listen to you, we'll be in for a grand ole time.

Your tape making ability is also extremely good....unsurpassed, in fact! Thank you for taking the time to make it.

I'm afraid that this will be just a short note, compared to what I want to write, but since the AGI is coming, I get to work at about 0630 and don't go home until 2100 (9:00 PM). This is the rule around Squadron. You can bet "after AGI," all the officers (over 45 of us) are going to the O Club and get "celebrated." (That evening I'm looking forward to, the morning after, I'm not...It'll be one of the few times I'll allow myself the chance to get blasted.)

Late night 31 Mar 82

The “rehearsal” for my 2 April mission is tomorrow. Before any biggie security mission like this, there is always a full dress rehearsal.

Babe, I’m beat, I gotta go. Catch you tomorrow.

1 April 1982

Hello Sweetie!

It’s 1930 and I have two more hours of work to do tonight. Our rehearsal went OK today, its tomorrow I’m worried about. On missions like this I usually have about 30 men working for me. But, I have gone on other types of missions alone or with just one other person. Those are the scary ones. (Don’t tell any of my men....my “fear” is a carefully guarded secret. But, if I wasn’t a little afraid, I’d be stupid, or I’d do something foolish and probably get hurt.)

I’m so glad you don’t think I’m weird due to my stance on ethics. One thing is for sure, I’m no Saint, but I’ve never knowingly hurt anybody or broke regulations or did anything else wrong. Of course, I have had my share of a__ chewings and have committed my share of screw-ups, but, at least I’ve been honest in the long run. I can still look myself in the mirror when I shave, and I’ve never let the old chivalric West Point honor code down...”A Cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

Enough of that....I guess the B.S. of what guys are doing around me is getting to me. Jen, I need a hug so badly right now it’s not even funny. You know, the kind of hug that makes one feel “worth a damn”....Well, while I don’t “know” you in person well enough, I know you in spirit...when I get to L.A. I’m going to give you a hug, and hopefully collect one, that will make your ribs groan and hopefully also, put a smile on your face and a warm feeling in your heart.

I've gotta go. It's super late. Wish me luck for tomorrow. (An old Sergeant Major told me once that I'm the kind of person who always comes back...maybe messed up, but always comes back.) Take care. Stay beautiful, stay sweet.

Yours,
Rich

**P.S. I'm really getting "homesick".....can hardly wait 'til August.
R**

April 1, 1982

Hi Rich!

Happy April Fool's Day! I must say April Fool's in the business world is not as much fun as it is in school! I remember doing all sorts of great stuff – gluing things down on the teacher's desk, taping his drawers shut, sticking chalk in the erasers...How about you?

Today was a long day. To start off, our couriers, who bring all of our work to the branch from San Francisco (ie computer reports, deposit tickets, etc) went on strike! As a result, we didn't get all of our work until after 10:00 and being the first (of the month)....well, you can imagine. We had quite a crowd in the lobby!

We also had quite a sight around 1:00 – there was a torrential downpour that turned into a hailstorm! We haven't had any hail for a couple of years. It looked as if someone was dumping white paint from the sky. I went outside for a minute right after it stopped to close our Automatic Teller Machine down for servicing – it was beautiful. The air had that clean, cold, crisp feeling and smelled like a pine forest. I wish I hadn't had to be inside working!

I had a fun Wednesday – after work, we all gathered at the Acapulco (a great little Mexican restaurant in Pasadena). I'm sure your

Mom has mentioned Tony Marrinan – the fellow from Ireland she drives to and from work. Well, yesterday was his last day so we all gathered for a little farewell party. Your Dad and Anita were there also and after indulging in a few margaritas, sangrias and daiquiris, we (Tony, his wife, your Mom, Dad, Anita, and I) went into the restaurant section and had some dinner – everyone else had eaten too many hors d’oeuvres! We had a great dinner and then, after taking Tony and his wife home (they had to finish getting ready for their move) the four of us went and saw “On Golden Pond.” It was great! Henry Fonda and Katherine Hepburn were super – we were all laughing most of the time! And the scenery was beautiful – it was all filmed in New Hampshire.

Mary and I are going to try and do something fun this weekend but no definite plans yet. Are you getting “The Bimmer” in shape? The race will be here before you know it!

I enjoyed your picture on the cover of “Army” of the OP. It definitely looks a little chilly! What is in the tower itself – chairs, tables and equipment? For some reason I was expecting it to look a bit different altho I’m not quite sure how, if that makes sense!

Well, Rich, as usual I’m writing this right before bed – the eyes are definitely at half mast! Have a great weekend and take care!

Love,
Jennifer

3 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetie!

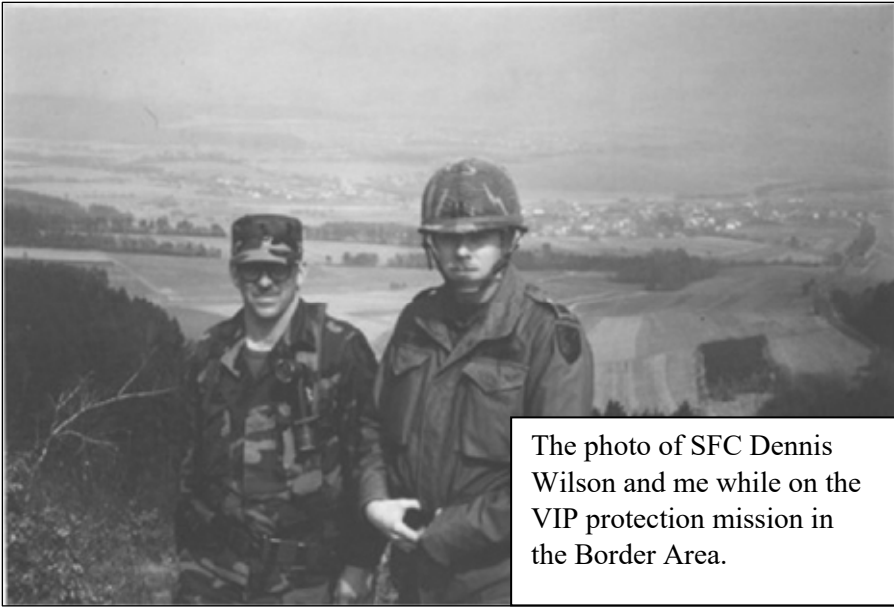
Well, my 2 April mission went without a hitch! The VIP even commented that he felt safest with us compared to the other eight areas he visited. You should have seen it. The men all looked sharp, ramrod straight, weapons at port arms, and faces “determined and vigilant.” Those were the fellows pulling site and route security. The ones in the bushes were so well camouflaged, I couldn’t see them from 50 meters.

Of course, he should have felt safe. He had 24 people screening out to a distance of 250 meters, 5 in close for personal security, 15 more screening the route, BGS personnel on site, a helicopter covering avenues of entrance and egress, and a trigger man Captain between him and any possible trouble areas. (guess who the Captain was?) Anyway, an ant couldn’t come into the area without it being reported to me. I sure am proud of my “bullet stoppers and weed beaters.”

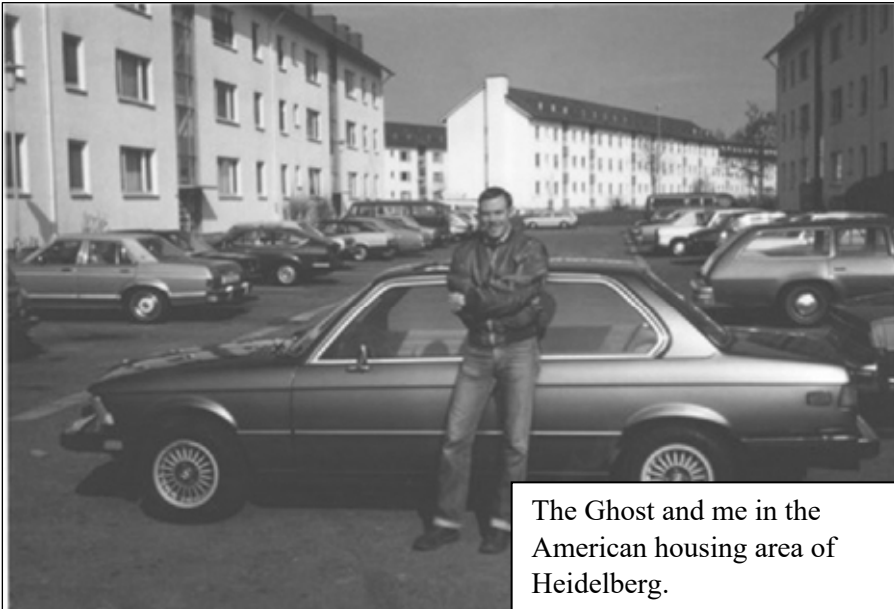
One of my buddies took a picture of me and my NCOIC, SFC Wilson, and when the film gets developed I’ll send you one of the prints. Nothing fancy this time....I only had my .45 (The VIP is the kind of fellow who becomes nervous when he sees a lot of weapons.)

Everybody around here is super hyper about the AGI, like I said last letter, and the condition is steadily getting worse. Oh, well, “this too shall pass.”

Across the Miles



The photo of SFC Dennis Wilson and me while on the VIP protection mission in the Border Area.



The Ghost and me in the American housing area of Heidelberg.

The Ghost is running extremely well. I haven't had much of a chance to wash/wax it due to my heavy work schedule so it looks a bit raunchy right now...but still runs and drives like a dream. I'm sure you'll love it as much as I do. Just driving to Fulda and back, when I have to go to Regimental Headquarters, with the sun roof open, I've been able to start establishing the base for a good face tan. (Plan on lots of sun this summer...I promise I won't let you get burned too badly.)

I still haven't found my double rifle or your Dad's Mannlicher. I did find a Sauer .270 but it wasn't a full stock (Mannlicher) variety. You can tell him I'm still looking, though.

In your tape, you mentioned Mom had asked you over for dinner...has that happened yet? If you really want to know what kind of fellow I am, it's a sure bet that Mom, Dad, and Anita will give you all the gory details. I hope Tonoch, my pooch, didn't/doesn't give you a hard time. She loves people and has a habit of going a little overboard at times. Buster, the other pooch in the house can also be a pain in the derrière (spelling?) but is a very likeable little dog.

Oh! I finally decided what I'm going to send you for your birthday. You should get a real kick out of it...now that I've raised your curiosity level to the stretch point I'll change the subject.

I still need a hug. By the time I get to California I'll probably need several so I hope your "hug muscles" are in shape for the task.

You know something? As time goes on and we continue to correspond, I find it increasingly easier to "talk" to you. I don't know what it is, but I feel I'm really getting to know you. Of course, I realize I know only what you let me know, but I have faith in your honesty and also believe that you are presenting a "whole picture." For that, I say thank you. Conversely, I think you're getting an accurate picture of me from multiple sources...me, my Mom, and when you meet them, my Dad and Anita. Jennifer, like I once said, I'm often pointedly

honest and when you ask me something, if I choose to answer, it is the 100% truth. (I reserve the right to decline answering though...Ha!Ha! You can take the man out of the S2 but you can't take the S2 out of the man.....)

This is probably making your eyes hurt and I have to get back to work so I'll close. Take care of yourself. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours,
Rich

April 4, 1982

Hi Rich!

Here it is Sunday and another weekend is getting ready to bite the dust. From your last letter (March 26) it sounds as if you had quite a full schedule last week. I hope all went well!

Mary and I finally succeeded with our "plan" – we did something fun this weekend. Suze asked me if I wanted to work this weekend and I immediately said no. it was a long week and I was definitely looking forward to getting away from the Bank – I did not want to spend my Saturday playing with numbers. I'm not a workaholic (altho sometimes my roommate wonders!) – maybe I'm too conscientious sometimes. However, when I do a job, I do the best I can, even if that means putting in a few extra hours. I like to spend those hours, however, during the week, either a bit earlier in the morning or a bit later in the evening. I don't want to become a permanent fixture!

Rich, I'm sorry to cut this short, but I'm really "Z'd!" I'll write again tomorrow and tell you about my weekend. Until then.....

Love,
Jennifer

This letter was written in a **red felt tip** pen

**4 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG**

Hello Sweet Jennifer!

It's Sunday, I'm at work, the alligators are deep and I had to take a break so I decided to say Hi! So Hi!!

I called the folks this morning before I came in, and they told me that you and they went to see a movie after some other function...Great! How do you like my family? (A secret: Everybody is very impressed with you...Anita gives you the "kid Sis seal of approval"...)

AGI prep is still kicking everybody in the rear end...I'll be working until 2100 again tonight...S__T! (The VanO male's most used expletive...you know when you made an error on the typewriter, wipe out your spit shined boots, smudge your highly brilliant brass, etc...)

Anyway, I just wanted to touch base with you, let you know that I constantly think of you and when work gets really bad, I just look down at your pictures under the glass on my desk, and wish I was in So.Cal. with you....

I gotta go. Stay beautiful and stay sweet.

**Yours,
Rich**

5 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

As I write this, I'm just about half "out of it." I had two wisdom teeth cut out today. The right side. Top one was easy, 15 minutes. Bottom one was a different story. An hour and a half. It was a real bummer. My jaw had to be worn down, the tooth cracked, and pieces extracted. Holy smokes. I know I've been in more pain, but I really can't remember when. The doc gave me some super little pills, and they dull the pain some, but it still hurts like hell.

I got what we call "Quarters" for 24 hours. It's not bad not having to go to work, but I'd rather not have to be home for this reason. However, one must look at the bright side of things. With distinct lack of food intake, I'll be sure to lose a few of my winter insulation pounds. By the time I get to California, I'm sure to be down to my ole fighting weight of 153. (161 is heavy for me...you know, a long lean lanky fellow and proud of it.)

I still haven't completed the next tape I'm going to send. I guess I'll have to wait until the AGI is over until I finish it. Sorry, Sweetheart. I promise I'll get it done as soon as I can.

Hey, I gotta go for a short while....I'll be back as soon as I can.

6 April 1982

Hi Babe!

As you can tell, it's been a short while since I stopped writing above. My pain pills wore off at about 1030 this morning, so I decided to go to work. Wrong move. I hurt until about 1700 when I took two Tylenol tabs, then it was just a dull ache. But, I did have one of the

best experiences of my career today...I re-enlisted one of the best Senior NCO's I've ever worked with in the Army. SFC Rusty Miles took a "burst of four" (re-upped for 4 years). He specifically asked me if I would do it...no sweat. It was quite an honor.

I also received two letters from you today. It was great hearing from you. I'm glad you don't mind my plan to monopolize you during my leave. Weekends will be "our time"...Say, I really am looking forward to meeting your folks. I'm also happy that they don't mind you having a crazy Cavalryman in your life.

It's super late now and I've got to go. Take care of yourself. Stay beautiful and stay sweet.

Yours,
Rich

P.S. I'll have to wait until after the AGI to finish your next tape. I promise it won't be long after before I mail it. R

P.P.S. Thanks for the pics. Let's plan on going up there when everything is OK again. R

P.P.P.S. I know this will be late.....Sorry...But,

HAPPY EASTER!

April 5, 1982

Hi Rich!

Well, I kept my promise.....I'm picking up where I left off last night! Talk about instant fade-out – it must have been that wine I had with dinner!

Today was pretty good for a Monday. I didn't have a lot of time to arrange my bin for today on Friday so I sort of threw everything in – it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be! In fact, I think I actually reduced the size of my pile! Even so, we had lines out the door most of the day. Everyone worked together though, and we moved everyone quickly. For a busy day, it wasn't too bad!

As I mentioned in my letter yesterday, I had a good weekend. Friday, after work, I had Suze over to the apartment for Mandarin food. It is nice to get away from the Bank and talk about “business” or other things you really can't discuss with everyone else around. Not that I spend all of my free time thinking about the Bank. However, once in a while it is nice to have the chance to talk about it in a bit more of a relaxing atmosphere!

I think we had the most fun on Saturday. Mary and I got together with a friend of mine from college and headed north in my Rabbit, sun roof down and stereo blasting. It was a gorgeous day – perfect for a drive. We headed up “1” to “101”, coming across some really pretty beach scenery along the way. We rolled into Santa Barbara about 2:30 (we got a late start!) and had a really strange experience. We ran into a swarm of bees on the highway! It was so sudden, that we all ducked and shut our eyes, including me, the driver! Thank heavens none came in the car!

We drove through the “main drag”, headed out past Goleta and then turned east and headed up over the San Marcos Pass – what beautiful scenery. The hills were beautiful and green and the wildflowers were all out. At times, I forgot I was driving – I love to look at all the scenery. The old “Bots Dots” or exclamations from Mary would bring me back to reality!

We spend the rest of the afternoon in Solvang – have you ever been there? I've heard about it, but never made it there. It's a cute little town but there is only so much you can do, ie, eat! We indulged in all sorts

of pastries plus did a little wine tasting. I'd never done the latter. There is really a technique and so many varieties! Have you ever been wine tasting before? It was a lot of fun!

The town closed down about 5:30, so we headed west on a little road that wound through some more super country. We even saw some deer grazing at one point. We ran into 101, heading north to Buelton where we had dinner at Andersons. It was definitely a nice day. When we head up to Goleta, we'll have to be sure and drive thru the San Marcos Pass and surrounding country.

The rest of the week should be pretty quiet in terms of plans. Hopefully, things will slow down at the Bank a bit, ie. lobby traffic. We have really been busy lately! Ah well, it keeps life exciting! Have a good one!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. We had some excitement at work today – we are having some new signs put up in front. They were putting the main one up along the front of the building when all of a sudden, we heard a big crash. The poor workmen dropped it! Being plastic, it shattered. The poor guys – they just stood there for a minute. I get their names are mud!

P.S.S. My brother is almost twenty-two, believe it or not. Everyone thinks he is about eight years older!

April 7, 1982

Hi Rich!

What's new? I hope you aren't being attacked by too many alligators! Apart from yesterday afternoon, the week has been pretty

quiet so far. In fact, we've actually had moments in the lobby where there has been no one. It's so quiet it is almost eerie!

We've been having some new signs put up in front. (I guess the Region figures we aren't noticeable enough from the street!) Did you know (no, I guess you probably didn't!) that our building used to be a restaurant?! Our old building was 1 block west of our present location in a super old building. One problem – it leaked. As soon as the rains came, we had to place buckets all around on the floor and desks. The poor customers had to dodge water and buckets! Our present location is supposed to be temporary, but, I'm not holding my breath. (There is an office up in Santa Cruz that was supposed to be temporary – it been there 13 years!)

Anyway, back to my original train of thought.....the workmen had been working on the big one most of the day (it's about 25 feet long). They had the frame all in place and were in the process of putting in the Plexiglas insert. All of a sudden, we heard a big crash and all looked. They had dropped the sign, which shattered. Those poor guys – they just stood on their ladders looking down at it for a minute. I think they were ready to die!

How neat that you might be able to change your leave date! As you said, I know there are not guarantees, but all they can say is no, and we do have evenings and weekends. I also have one floater left (Pat said maybe she could get me two – I told her I'd wanted to get some time off in August if possible) so as soon as you get the dates, be sure and let me know so I can grab a day!

Well, Rich, I've to be going so I better close. Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. Happy Easter Egg!

P.S.S. The year is 1958!

Part III – I Decided I Would “Put All My Eggs In One Basket”

By early April, I found myself “falling” for Jennifer. I was getting to know her without her perfume scrambling my brains, as was sometimes the case when I tried to get close to a gal. I could tell from her letters that she was beginning to feel something similar. The fact I had been in Germany for thirty-two months and I only had about five months remaining on my tour certainly was something that I became more and more aware of, with every letter I wrote, and every letter I received.

I also found out, much later, that this was around the time when Jennifer began to fantasize a little bit about my name, in that she often walked past my mother’s desk, and saw my mother’s desk nameplate “Barbara VanOrsdale” and thought “Jennifer VanOrsdale” sounded very nice.

7 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetie!

I'm at work, it's 0900, my jaw hurts and I decided I'd take a break and write to you (one of my all-time favorite things to do.) Well, it's more or less official....an E-5 (Buck Sergeant) from another section came into my office to deliver some classified documents and saw your pictures under my desk glass. When he went out, he asked one of my E-6's (Staff Sergeant) "who's the Babe under the Cap'n's glass?" My E-6 replied "Oh, she's the Dai-uy's girl back home." (Dai-uy is Vietnamese for Captain or Boss Man or Chief and is pronounced Die-wee). So, I guess that makes you my "Girl back home," as decreed by one of my NCO's.

For married soldiers the main two ladies are "wife and Mom," for bachelors it tends to be "Mom and the Girl Back Home," so you fill an honorable position. (Of course, be sure and let me know if it causes you any heart-burn or other indigestion Although I hope not!)

Basically, it makes me really feel "worth a damn" to know that you're waiting for me to come home. While I realize that I may not be the only fellow in your life, it does make me feel a lot better knowing that you care enough about me to write, send tapes, etc. Aside from you, my Mom, Anita, and my Grandmother, there are no women I want to see when I return Stateside. If it sounds like I'm putting all my eggs in one basket, you're right. I didn't come to this decision lightly, however. It took a lot of hard, cold, thought. While I can't say that I don't know any ladies in the States, I can and will say that I won't see 'em anymore. Like I said many times before, I plan on monopolizing your time while I'm home. Enough....I guess you got the warning....

Jennifer, my break is way over. I gotta go and get this in the mail. Maybe it will even be posted out to the U.S. today, if I hurry. Take care of your beautiful self.

Yours, Rich

8 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetie!

This will be a super quick note since it's 0730 and my boss has a meeting very soon. The mouth and jaw feel a lot better by now. I ran out of pain pills, but normal Tylenol tabs are doing the trick nicely. (I hate taking pills!!)

I hope this letter finds you very well and in good spirits. If you need a big hug, just put it on my account and I'll pay off this summer. So far, my accounts due is 5 big hugs & 12 medium hugs. Not too many for you to handle...eh? (I hope not!)

Haven't had much of a chance to look for your Dad's Mannlicher or my Drillig, I'll have to wait 'til after AGI to hit it full steam. Gotta go, I'm running out of time & room. Take care of yourself, Sweetheart.

Yours, Rich

8 April 1982

Hello Jennifer!

Super quick note. I'm thinking of you...(just thought I'd let you know)

With AGI right around the corner, everybody's tempers are about as short as ant legs...mine, too.

Gotta go. Take care, Sweetie!

Yours,
Rich

April 9, 1982

Hi Rich!

Here it is Friday evening (Yeah!). I'm sitting here with a cup of tea, listening to / recording the soundtrack from "Chariots of Fire" (super music!) and generally relaxing. It was a great Friday – we were only open to the public 10-12:00 (Good Friday) and we were all gone by 12:45 – it was great! And what made it even nicer was that the lobby wasn't as much of a zoo as we were expecting it to be. You should have seen some of the frustrated looks on peoples' faces when they tried to open the doors after 12:00. Luckily, we didn't have any of those violent types that throw things at the building. Some people really get irritated. I heard one story where some man came to use an Automatic Teller Machine at some Bank. Apparently, he was so mad when he discovered it was closed that he went home, got a shotgun and tried to shoot it! Well, the front of the machine is bullet-proof, the bullets bounced back and killed him! Not a great way to end one's life!

It was neat of you to call last night! Thanks! I enjoyed hearing from you! Sorry I was a bit hard to get hold of! I tried to call Mary and let her know where I was, but she was out cavorting. By the time you get this, I'm sure your AGI will be over. I hope all went well (I know it did!)

Speaking of last night, I had a GREAT time at your parents. Anita was finishing up her packing to head to the Great Lakes – it reminded

me of packing for college. Too much stuff! You should have seen me packing come home after four years of college. My parents had our good old tank station wagon, which we loaded to the hilt (back, backseat next to me and top). In addition, we shipped home a trunk, suitcase and box. I'm definitely a packrat. I'd been trouble with a 66lb weight limit!

Your Mom's a great cook (thank heavens for Moms and their culinary talents!) and your Dad and I had a great time talking about everything as I mentioned on the phone, he reminds me a lot of my father, ie, his views on different subjects and general opinions of life. I didn't realize how fast the time was flying – all of a sudden it was 11:00! It was a neat evening – and I'm glad I was able to see Anita before she headed off. It was fun talking to her between duffles!

Well, I'm definitely looking forward to not setting my tacky buzzer alarm tomorrow morning – thank heavens for the weekend! Mary and I are thinking of going on a picnic – keep your fingers crossed that the sunshine stays!

Well, Rich, it's time to crash. Thanks again for the phone call and Good Luck this next week! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. I meant to ask on the phone – did the tape arrive in one piece?

9 April 1982
McP Bks
Bad H, FRG

Hello Dear Sweet Jennifer!

Hey, you sounded SUPER this morning when I called you. I had no idea that you were over at the house for dinner. Aren't my folks a

trip? Did the dogs make themselves a pain? Oh, well. I guess you also saw all the old pictures of Col. John T. VanO, and got the hard-core V.O. party line. Tradition is neat but it's presence or absence really doesn't amount to a hill of horse apples.

Isn't it odd that I called the day/night you were at the house? I'm amazed at how fate works sometimes. I knew you were going to get an invitation, but did not know when. SUPER!

When the AGI is over, I'm going to get the Bimmer's wheels realigned and do some maintenance checks from stem to stern, in prep for the Rally. I promise, Sweets, I won't drive too fast. I'm planning on taking the back road route anyway, and that'll prevent any overzealous speeds.

As more time passes, I'm really getting more and more anxious to get to California, home, and you. (I know, I know, I'm sounding like a broken record...) And, I'd like to get to know your family as well.

Gotta go!

I'm back! I just got off the phone with "Branch" (Armor Branch, MILPERCEN, you know, that monument to Murphy's Law; 4 walls and a spare, the Pentagon) it looks as though I won't be able to leave Germany until mid-or even late-August. S__T! What are your chances of a September vacation? Like, the first two weeks in September? Damn Army is screwing with my life again. I must keep telling myself "Patience, Rich....this, too, shall pass."

Major Q_____ in Branch also told me there is a chance I may get to go to an other than Armor Advanced Course, so I quickly asked for Marine Corps Advanced Course (Quantico, Virginia) or Infantry Officers Advanced Course (Ft. Benning, near Columbus, Georgia). (Actually, being considered for them is a big honor, so I guess I should be happy. Yeah!) Anyway, if that happens, it looks like I may be stationed at Ft. Stewart, Georgia, to command a Company or Troop.

It's not the West, but at least it's warm! (Do you like to stroll under the Magnolia Trees?)

In other words, no commee home earlee...so Solly, girly. (So solly, Richee, too!) (also, Mommee and Daddee!)

Enough of that...I gotta get back to work. (I need another hug..oh, well, I can wait.)

Take care of your beautiful self. Thanks for your letters. (My morale is floating on them in the sea of disappointment.)

Yours,
Rich

April 9, 1982

Hi Rich!

Happy Easter! As the weatherman predicted, the clouds have been letting go today – we even had some pretty good lightning/thunder shows. I think the storm is nearing its end now, but we had a few downpours.

Right now, I'm sitting in the living room listening to records and dropping you a quick note before heading up to my parents. We're getting together with my Mom's parents and an old family friend for dinner. Mary is also joining us – originally she was going to have her parents down, but they had to fly back to Iowa to take care of some sick relatives. Fortunately things are going well, so they'll be back Tuesday.

I was wondering.....you don't have to use a pay phone when you call do you? I don't know about those in Germany, but I can certainly remember the ones we had in England – a bit different than ours! When I flew over to England, I wasn't with a big group. I caught a charter

out of Los Angeles at 10:00PM. I was tired from a day of packing (I was being organized as usual!) so about the only thing I remember of the flight was stopping over in Bangor, Maine, eating a meal and sleeping! The best part of the whole flight was coming into Gatwick Airport. It was about 6:30 in the evening and the sun was a big orange fireball above a thick layer of puffy clouds. It was gorgeous! We headed down through the clouds and the sight below was like a fairy-tale. Gatwick is south of London in the country so the whole landscape was beautiful ponds, fields, trees and tiny winding roads. It was dusk, so everything was getting dark – the only light was one small set of headlights winding along the road. It was really something!

Since this was my first experience at travelling, I was glad everything was in English! I made my way through customs, etc. fine and spent the night near the airport. The next day, I just barely made it on the train heading up to Victoria Station in London. On the way, I sat across from a young woman and her baby. I think she knew I was a “foreigner” and new to travelling! When we arrived in London, she was wonderful! She helped me with my bags and showed me where to go. It was so neat to have a total stranger be so kind and helpful, especially when I didn’t have much of a clue as to where I should be heading!

I had my “family’s” number and was supposed to give them a call when I arrived at the Wood Green tube station. Sounded easier than it turned out to be! First, there were six phone booths to choose from. Of course, I chose the one that wouldn’t work. When I finally found a booth with a functioning phone, I dialed the wrong number, a hospital! Good job....Third times the charm....I reached Audrey finally. I was right in the middle of talking to her when all of a sudden, this awful beeping commences. It was loud and really startled me. After my initial shock, I came to the conclusion that the only possible thing it could mean was “more money.” To finish off, I couldn’t find the right coin, dropped it when I finally had it in my hand, had the stupid phone

beeping louder than ever.....poor Audrey must have wondered what happened to me! Needless to say, the next time I had to use the phone I was all prepared with the correct number and plenty of correct change!

Good grief! This turned out to be a long quick note! I get carried away sometimes, especially thinking of things that bring back good memories. In fact, I better hurry if I'm going to be ready in time to head up to Mom & Dad's. I didn't realize how late it had gotten until Mary came out all dressed! Ah well, writing to you was worth a little bit of hurrying now to get ready!

Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

11 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweet Jennifer!

Happy Easter! Did I ever have an adventure today! This morning I decided to shuck it all for a few hours and go up to Jeff's mountain to eat Easter Dinner in his unit's Mess Hall. Well, I made it about $\frac{3}{4}$ up when the SNOW STORM messed up the roads so badly that I was weaving in and out of so many cars I felt like I was Grand Prix driving. Anyway, when dinner was over, I had to get back to Hersfeld for work, and when I went out to the Bimmer, there was about 6 inches of snow all around the car and I had to dig the car out and then get down the mountain. I went the back way out and promptly got lost for about 20 minutes until I could figure out which way was North & South (it was snowing like crazy and I could not see the sun.) I eventually got on the

right track and made it back to Hersfeld. (The Ghost is a super car in the snow...and I haven't lost my driving skills, so I'm feeling OK about the Rally coming up.) What really gets me is that there is such a snowstorm on Easter Day. Oh, well, such is German weather...I've gone into great discourse about it before.

Enclosed is a definition sheet of what "the Border" consists, and how it looks. I'm responsible for the Patrolling, monitoring, etc of 140 km of this Border, among my other Intelligence Officer duties. Before anybody comes to work for me in my Border Operations section, he has to know the Border so well, he could take me to any of our many checkpoints from any other one.

Aside from my anti-terrorist worries, most of the hair-raising times have to do with the Border, and the enemy troops who patrol their side. (More times than I'd like to remember I've been called out at 0200 or 0300, put on my boonie-stompers and bullet launcher and sped out to the Grenze (German for "Border") to go "snoopin' and poop'n in the bush." I used to fly the Border quite a bit, but haven't been up since October. While I did not fly right seat (Pilot) I was the left seater. (Observer/Co-Pilot). I don't have Pilot's wings, but to tell you the truth, I can fly the hell out of a helicopter. My hovering is not really good, but I can land where I want with a minimum of bump.

When I get back to the States, I want to go ahead and get my pilot's license. I'm going to get my fixed wing, then multiple engine licenses first. Maybe get my rotary wing license, but Jennifer, I do want to get my Pilot's license....someday. I guess I'll have a long time to fly, huh?

Well, Sweetie, I'll be going for now. Take care of yourself. I'll be writing more later.

Yours,
Rich

12 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hi Jennifer!

It's lunch time, I'm in the office, tired as you would not believe, morale is shot to hell, so I decided I'd "drop a line to my Girl Back Home".....I can't wait 'til all this is over and I can get back to 12 hour days. I think I'm going to go to the Airfield and talk one of the Pilots into taking me up on a Border flight this Saturday. You know, get up where the air is clear and I can do some flying myself.

I sure hope I don't bore you with all this mundane stuff about the AGI and so forth....right now, hard, long hours are the rule and I haven't done anything "exciting" for a few weeks. (With the exception of yesterday's Easter snow storm and search for Bad Hersfeld.)

As of today, I haven't received any clues as to what you'd like from Germany for your Birthday, so in order to make the P.O. work and get it to you on/in time, this weekend after my flight, I'm going to get what I decided on. (If guidance from you comes before Sat, I'll follow it, if not, then I'll use my discretion.) I figured on something you can definitely say, without a shadow of a doubt, came from D'land.

I called the folks on Saturday and wished them a Happy Easter. They told me "all about" your visit...you made quite a hit! It seems that Dad thinks you're "the best thing that's happened" since sliced bread, flit-tops on cans, and electricity...Seeing as my Dad and I think a lot alike in many, many ways, I feel I have nothing at all to worry about when it comes to "getting along" with you. (Of course, I also say that I didn't need Dad to tell me that....our letters, tapes and phone calls confirmed it to me a long time ago.)

One of my men, SSG Pete Fxxxxxxx, is going to Defense Language Institute in Monterrey, California to learn Polish. He will be there in July and I figured that some weekend, you and I could drive up there to see him and Eve, his wife. I'm going to buy his old set of golf clubs and would like to hit a few rounds of golf while I'm up there. Eve hates golf, and it would be nice if you two kept each other company while "Sergeant Pete" and I played golf. What say? They are a super couple...she is German and speaks fluent English. He speaks fluent German (he is my interrogator) and is a great fellow. Do you play golf? I have taken several "records" on some courses I've play on.....Record Highest Score....Record Worst Player, Record Sand-Pit Golfer, Record Water Player, Record Slice, Record Hook.....all this means that if I were a Pro golfer, I'd starve to death and wouldn't even make one season. But, I LOVE to hit that little ball. If you don't play golf, how about both of us starting out and learning at the same time? If you are a good golfer, how about my taking you on as my private tutor? (Please? Please? Pretty Please? Sugar on Top?)

Dad also told me that you are an Episcopalian! Super! However, I rarely go to church....it's not that I don't want to, but it's because I love the old style Episcopal service and can never find a church that does adhere to the old Book of Common Prayer. How 'bout you? Wouldn't that be great if we could go to church together some Sunday? I'm such an old-style Episcopalian, when I was a Boy Scout, many moons ago, I earned the God & Country Award. (Of course, Mom PUSHED me...just goes to show behind every successful man is a woman.)

I'm glad you don't mind the styles of women that I like. As a matter of fact, you sound like you fit them to a "T." I can definitely understand why you aren't used to boots, or don't have any...So. Cal. Is not exactly cold enough to induce a lady into buying boots.

Oh! Talk about Prophetic, AFN is playing "California Dreamin'"I love that song. And, I am California Dreamin'.....

I'm back, "Galveston" is on now, another of my all-time favorites. AFN (Armed Forces Network) Radio is playing all sorts of mid-60's music today...not the rock, but the easy listening stuff...the kind of music we could slow dance to.

How much is the news back home playing up the Falkland crisis? Everything is cool around here, but I'll bet there are a few Divisions in the States that are a little antsy. Oh, well, I don't think much will happen....Brits may fire a few shots and drop a few bombs to let the world know that they are in the area, but that's about it (I hope).

How about that guy who shot those Arabs in the Mosque there in the mid-east? An American-born Israeli...I can see it now...before another 10 years goes by we'll be drawn into a desert war because some over-zealous Arab or Jew will hassle some equally proud Jew or Arab. I really don't want to wage war in the mid-east, but as a soldier I'll go where I'm told and do what I must. (There is only one "group" of people who I will hunt and kill unmercifully and unhesitatingly, with no regret...and they are Communists... especially the Officers in the Russian and East German Army.) Enough of that...sorry to get on my anti-Commie soap-box. (If you ever want to get me "rollin' and hot" just take me to a party where the people are a bunch of leftist, bleeding hearts who have never heard a shot fired in anger or seen what life is like in a Communist country.)

There are a few anti-American demonstrations planned in the big cities around here. You know, the young s__t-heads get out in the Spring and raise hell. It's funny though, wherever there is trouble near the Border or it looks like the East Germans are getting a little "uppity", the young punks are the first to come up to the jeeps and try to be friends. We have a saying about what we wouldn't do even if they were burning to death, to show our disfavor.

Well, Sweetheart. I must be going. Take care of yourself. I love your letters.

Yours,
Rich

13 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetheart!

The AGI is upon us. It is now 2000 hrs and we're getting ready for a continued inspection tomorrow. The whole thing will be over this Friday...Today was not so bad. My classified documents vault passed with "no faults noted" and it was a 12 hour inspection. The inspector left out of here mumbling to himself because he could find nothing to gig us on. YAHOO! My Physical Security Plan was inspected...all 85 pages of it (does your bank or does anyone you know need a Physical Security Consultant?) and it passed "over and above." Counter-Intelligence passed no gigs, and Personnel Security had only one "non-gig note." We did not put a man's rank on a security card. My Border Ops section gets hit tomorrow, along with my map custodian and our basic load of maps. All the Arms Rooms get inspected, too.

Actually, I think we'll do, overall, very well. However, it's all due to my SUPER NCO's (Sergeants). This Friday, when it is all over, I plan on going to sleep for two days.

Gotta go! The Major just called.

14 April 1982

Hello Again, Sweetie!

Sorry I couldn't get back to you last night. Too many little alligators crawled out of the swamp and attacked me. By the time I got home at 2200, I couldn't do anything but take my boots off...I woke up at 0300 sprawled across my bed in my fatigues, freezing my buns off. Seconds later I was snoring comfortable under the covers, my uniform in a rumpled heap in the middle of my bedroom floor.

It was so hard to get up at 0530 this morning. I guess that's what people talk about when they say "Discipline." I crawled into the bathroom, turned on the cold water and flopped into the tub. ZINGO!! Instant awake! (I hate cold water.)

I made it back to work by 0630 and prepared for the onslaught...The bottom line is that all the Arms Rooms were finished off, as well as ammo dump, and everything passed. Maps get hit tomorrow, they were postponed along with Border Ops. I should be happy about the Arms Rooms, but I'm too tired...I just want to go to sleep. What is really bad is that I have another day and a half to go. I sure wish I had stock in Maalox Company. I've been sucking so much of it down, I ought to be called "Capt. Chalk." Seriously, the old gut has been acting up, but not super badly. I'm still looking for the paperwork so I can DX (Direct Exchange) some body parts...I'll have to hit you up for some good ole TLC. (I hope you have a lot of excess on hand...I can use every little bit I can get...)

We most certainly will go to Solvang via the San Marcos Pass. Also, maybe we can visit the ranch I worked at in 1970...The Circle Bar B Guest Ranch, Santa Barbara County, California. (Just over the Mountain from Rancho Cielo...Pres. Regan's Place.) The ranch was a real dump, but I'd like to go back and see it. Let's also stop at Goleta Beach and soak some sun for an hour or so, just for the H of it. Since I'll be driving, you will be more than welcome to look at the scenery.

Mom, Dad, and Anita and I went to Solvang about 12 years ago, and I loved it. Anita went back last summer before she went in the Navy and said the place was still a great place to go. As for wine tasting, YES, I remember a place in Solvang that had all sorts of exotic wines...we'll have to check 'em out and get a bottle of our favorite. Or, maybe two bottles....or three...

Enclosed is a memorable article in the Stars & Stripes about something that happened last May. The incident mentioned here near Coburg (way south of where I am) had a sister incident the same day, same time, in my sector. I'll tell you about it when I get home...it did not make the papers...this day marked a special time for me. It was my first major mission along the Border, as the Squadron S-2...talk about sweating...

Well, Jennifer, I'd better be going. You take care of your beautiful self.

Yours,
Rich

[Note to reader: The incident referred to happened in May, 1981, when an East German helicopter had violated the East-West German border near Coburg (55 miles north of Nurnberg) and US military helicopters, in a "pincer movement" intercepted it and forced it back across the border into East Germany. The same day and time that it happened north of Coburg, an East German helicopter came across the border "fence" in the 3/11 ACR sector that I was responsible for. When our OP alerted my Squadron Border Ops and we in-turn alerted Regimental Border Ops, the Regiment scrambled two attack helicopters (AH-1 Cobras) that promptly "faced down" the East German helicopter. I had rushed to the border to take command of the immediate reaction force from the OP and witnessed the Cobras doing what I called, and still call, the "Cobra Dance," as they "pushed" the

East German helicopter back across the border fence. The East German turned and started flying northward along the border, and he was “shadowed” by one of the 11th ACR Cobras, with the second one in what could be called an “overwatch” position just about 200 meters behind the “shadowing” Cobra. It was a very intense several hours. There were also a hundred or so (probably a company size unit) armed VolksPolizei (also known as the “Vopos”) on the ground on their side of the border, but very close to the actual border....Close enough that from my hide position in the bush, with a dismounted patrol I took from the OP, I could smell them...I don’t know how long I will live, but, I will NEVER forget those rather tense hours....]

April 14, 1982

Hi Rich!

It’s “Hump Day!” You’re probably right in the middle of your AGI at the moment – I hope all is going well. Are the tensions still high? I remember when we had our audit last Fall, most of our employees were new. I don’t know what they had been told or heard about the event, but they were absolutely paranoid! This one girl was sure the auditors were going to come in with their stone faces and large briefcases and fire us if everything wasn’t perfect. I must admit, the branch had been allowed to fall apart a bit, but we knew where all the problem areas were and had put controls back in place when we arrived in September. I’m sure you’re in much better shape than we were and I know you (and all the other officers!) will have a super time celebrating!

What happened to your mouth and jaw!? You mentioned in your last letter they were feeling a lot better – I hope it wasn’t anything too serious! I’ve been very lucky – the worse thing I ever did to myself was Freshman year in college. My eight o’clock class second semester was in the oldest building on campus on the fourth floor. As a result,

there was a climb up four sets of steep, narrow stairs and back down again every morning. One day after class, I was talking to a friend, having a great time, but not paying a whole lot of attention to where I was going. Rule #1: Always pay attention when traveling upon steep narrow stairs. I knew something was going to happen, but couldn't do anything about it (has that ever happened to you?) – my foot slipped off one of the steps and there I went, rolling down a few steps right in the middle of “rush hour traffic.” What a klutz! I mean if I'm going to sprain my ankle, it would be nice to have an exciting story to tell ie, I was injured while playing field hockey or while trying to rescue a cat in distress or something! Ah well, such is my plight (I shouldn't complain – actually I'm not, but falling down stairs sounds just a bit clumsy!)

I had a pretty good day – in fact, I had a very nice surprise today! My “favorite” employee Mxxx Pxxxxxxx came back after being ill Monday and Tuesday. When he came in this morning, he presented me with a white bag. He spent the weekend up near Pismo Beach and had bought me a present – I couldn't believe it! It is a dune buggy with driver made out of shells – it's really pretty cute! It really made me feel good – he was someone who can be such a turkey, going on a trip and bringing me a “souvenir.” Do you remember me once saying everyone has some good in them? I think it is true – I thought that was really neat of him.

After work, Suze and I got some Chinese food – to-go and went over to visit Pat (she just got out of surgery two weeks ago, with four weeks to go before coming back to work). She looks great and we had fun seeing her. I think it would drive me absolutely crazy to have to stay in bed or recuperating inside for six weeks. I got nuts if I'm stuck inside sick for just two days. Thank heavens I'm healthy (knock on wood!)

Yes! I could definitely use some good hugs right now! You're already signed up and my “hug muscles” are in great shape. A bit of

trivia....did you know that a person needs about ten hugs at least a week? Well, since Mary and I don't go around hugging each other and Lucy isn't much for giving hugs, I'm definitely behind my "weekly quota." It sounds as if the two of us could use a few good hugs!

The old clock is approaching midnight so I'm going to turn in. Thank you for all your super letters, your "hug cards" and phone calls. I hope August approaches quickly! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

April 15, 1982

Hi Rich!

What a frustrating day – I have to "talk"! I think one of the worst things is to be in a job or position and not know where you stand. I'm a firm believer in constructive criticism. If you're doing something wrong, someone should tell you rather than let the situation worsen or result in a large loss. Conversely, praise should be "constructive" – be sincere. If someone really doesn't deserve praise, don't give it to them and above all, be supportive to your employees. Back them up when they do something, and if they do something wrong, don't make them feel like a jerk.

What brought this on, you may be asking. Our manager unfortunately, is the type of person who doesn't display these qualities. And what is making it hard for me is that initially, I had almost a totally opposite picture of her. In fact, she was the one that was going to lose me to another bank and resulted in my staying. You see, last June, I was getting a bit discouraged about my job. They were going to be phasing it out, the Branch was having a lot of problems (both in terms

of morale and operations) and I just wasn't that happy. I got a job offer at Security Pacific and gave my two weeks' notice. Our manager called into Region, talked to Personnel, got me into a management training program and gave me a better offer, resulting in my staying with the Bank. She was really great and I appreciated her efforts.

Now, in the position of an Ass't Operations Officer, the picture has changed. She is still nice to me and thinks I'm "great" – it is her treatment of Pat and Suze that really gets to me. And in watching her actions, it really makes me feel insecure in the fact that it appears as if I'm doing OK, but at the same time, I really don't know how I stand. Her praise doesn't really seem that sincere. I feel awful saying that, due to the fact that she has done so much for me. But to tell us we're doing super (both Suze and I are Assistants and are "running the shop" in Pat's absence) and then come today and insinuate that things are falling apart doesn't sit too well. She doesn't sit down and want to have a discussion or prevent any problems by giving us some sort of constructive criticism so here Suze and I are, feeling as if we have things under control and getting praise from the manager when "BAM!" – things seem to be falling apart. (According to her.) Do we need any help? Is it too much? I don't mean to keep going on, but it really frustrates me to be in position where you are unsure of how or even where you stand and from our standpoint, everything is under control. Pat delegated most everything to us anyway, even while she was here, so our "daily life at the branch" isn't that different now than when she was here, altho we miss her!

Well, enough of that.....thanks for "listening" to me. I'm going to have to continue this later – I'm a lot more tired than I thought! Until then.....

April 16

Hello again!

I just received your phone call – I'm so glad your AGI was successful! (I knew it would be!) And it sounds as if you are all psyched for a super weekend! Great! I hope the weather holds and you have a ton of sunshine and blue sky!

Well, I've got to get ready for work (TGIF!) so I better close so I can get this in the mail. Thanks for the phone call and congrats again!

Love,
Jennifer

16 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetheart!

Like I told you this afternoon (morning your time) IT IS ALL OVER! The AGI meant a lot of work, but we knocked the snot out of it. The Squadron got no major areas unsat. My section, for the first time in at least 5 years, had no unsats at all, as well as no unsats in any of the line units with my section as the responsible staff section. YAHOO!

Your voice is habit forming...I've listened to your tape at least 30 times and I sure wish I could call more often. It is the sexiest voice I've ever heard. As long as I can hear, you'll have someone to listen to you. Deal?

Today after I called, I finished a roll of film I've had in my camera for a little while. As soon as I get them back, I'll send some prints. The

film was slide film, so I'll have to get prints made. My estimate is that in two weeks I'll be able send 'em.

I really would like to have your parents' address...how about sending it to me and warning them that I'll be writing 'em a letter. I just want to say hello.

Tomorrow, Jeff, Sergeant Pete and I are going to play some golf. I hope the weather stays good. Say, what about us playing some golf? Since you played in college, will you help me out? I guess I asked you before, huh?

Jennifer, it's super late. I'll finish this tomorrow.

Yours,
Rich

17 April 1982

Hello Again!

Jeff, Staff Sergeant Pete Fxxxxxx and I just got back from playing golf. We spent all day, and it was GREAT! My total score was 167....not bad for me. 86 for the first nine and 81 for the second nine. The sun was out and the sky was cloudless...mark the day down in history! If tomorrow is the same, I'll wash & wax the Ghost...

Anyway, I figured out a lot about what is wrong with my golf game. Back swing, follow through, grip, etc. However, you are definitely going to have a chore on your hands to try to teach me any better golf.

I also came up with a better idea about when I come home...Since Jeff and Steve will be taking off before me, I've been thinking of shipping the car to Long Beach and me flying from FRG to McGuire AFB in New Jersey and immediately taking a flight from La Guardia

or JFK Airports to L.A. International. Then, the next day, going to Long Beach to pick up the car. What is your opinion of the idea? I can think of a few benefits to this plan, the most important one being that I'd get to L.A. Eight or nine days sooner than I would if I drove to Jeff's and Steve's homes. That would also mean that we would have more time together. Since you won't be able to get vacation then, eight or nine evenings and the weekend therein, will be more than worth its time than gold per hour.

You know, if I can work it right, you might even be able to go with Mom and/or Dad to get me at the airport.

Oh! I just thought of a super idea! (At least I think so.) What if I take a bus from the airport to Pasadena, call you, you pick me up where the bus dumps me off, and then, we go to the house and I surprise Mom & Dad? (I hope this idea doesn't imply pressure on you. If you can't do it, just let me know, OK?) Let me know what you think, and even if you don't think it will work, tell me how I could change the "plan" to where it would work.

I also got your Birthday present today while I was on the way to the golf course. I got it at the same place where I got Mom's Mother's Day present, so they are the same type of present, but different...(are you interested or has your curiosity been aroused?) Anyway, it's something purely German. The only time/place I've seen anything resembling it was in Austria.

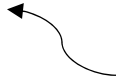
I'd better be going. You take care of your wonderful, beautiful self.

Yours,
Rich

Across the Miles

P.S. Thank you for “standing by me” and supporting me with your letters and thoughts during my AGI. You eased the long hours and days. R.

XOXO



Kiss, hug, kiss, hug



IN OTHER WORDS,
YOU DONE GOOD!



Here's to your success
with the AGI ! I'm so
glad you did well ! (of
course, I knew you would !)
A toast to Cap'n Van !

This was a Snoopy congratulations card and included the following letter:

April 19, 1982

Hi Rich!

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I had “one of those days” at work (good old Monday) and three of your letters were waiting for me when I opened the old mailbox. I really can’t tell you enough what an upper it is to see a letter in thee with the familiar address up in the corner. Just to know you take the time from your busy schedule to drop me a line is really super.

I also want you to know how flattered I am to be decreed your “Girl Back Home.” It really made me feel “an honorable position.” Believe me, it doesn’t cause any indigestion! And just for the record, apart from my family, there is only one other “man in my life” – I’m writing him. I hope that doesn’t cause you any heartburn!

Did you have a good golf weekend? I bet you had a ton of pressure removed from your shoulders (along with everyone else)! It always seems hard to believe how quickly something can pass when you have been building up to it for a while. For me, the big thing was my Senior Research Project at college. We had to do research for three months, compile and analyze our data, write a paper and then do an oral presentation (the latter being filmed and recorded – nerves) I worked on it from September until December, doing one thing or another, but working toward my December goal . When the day finally came, I got up, spoke, answered some questions and it was over! It wasn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be! (As you can probably tell, public speaking is not one of my all-time favorites!)

I had a great weekend! Saturday was my Mom’s 25th college reunion so my Dad was all by himself. I went up in the morning to help him with the weekly gardening – it was a gorgeous day and all

the flowers were out in full bloom. I then just sort of googed off the rest of the afternoon until about 5:30 – I went back up to Mom & Dad’s for dinner. Mom was all jazzed – syhe had a great time seeing the old “Alma Mater” (sp?) I sometimes wonder what my 25th reunion will be like – it will be interesting to see how much people changed!

Sunday, Mary and I got up early and headed south for San Diego. Another gorgeous day. We opened the sun roof, turned on the radio and drove down the old Coast Highway to Del Mar, our first stop and my most favorite of favorite beach spots. Whenever I go to the beach, I can’t bear to be in shoes, so off went the shoes and up went the pant legs. The water wasn’t too cold – I could walk all day at the beach. After I had sufficiently soaked the old pant legs, Mary and I headed off again. When I talked to you Friday, I said we were going to go to the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Well, we changed our minds and decided to hit the zoo. They have some darling koalas and a super polar bear (two of my favorites!). We spent most of the afternoon there and then headed over to Coronado. We peeled off the old shoes again and headed down the beach, picnic in hand. We found a nice spot in the sand and watched the sunset as we were eating. It was definitely the way to end up the day! It was different from a lot of beach sunsets I’ve seen due to the fact that were weren’t directly on the coast. As a result, the sun didn’t “sink into the ocean,” but disappeared over the hill. It was still just as good tho!

Well, bummer....no go until end of August/September, huh? I’m sure your Mom has told you – no one gets vacation in September. Keep me posted on definite dates!

Well, Rich, I can see I’ve gotten carried away with my writing again. You’ve probably got things to do! Hope you had a good Monday (at least better than mine!)

Take care!

Love,



Jennifer

P.S. I hope you don't mind me and all of my snoopy cards. As I said before, he is my hero and I tend to gravitate towards "Peanuts" cards. Let me know if you're getting "Snoopy'd out"!

April 20, 1982

Hi Rich!

Happy Tuesday! Mary and I just walked in the door after a wild evening (actually, we just went out for dinner) and I thought I'd drop you a quick note. Mary and I are great ones for spur-of-the-moment plans. I was all ready for a quiet evening reading, etc. when Mary said lets go out to dinner. We went to a neat spot in Glendale and had a great time. Much more fun than sitting home!

How is your first week after the AGI going? It must be nice to have things back to normal! I remember how great it was after our auditors had left. They were really great (as auditors go!) but it was nice to be able to "function normally," without the feeling that someone was always looking over our shoulders!

We had a bit of "excitement" this afternoon – an accident at the intersection near the bank. Luckily, nobody was hurt (as far as I know), but they just missed my car. It was parked on the street and one of the cars spun after the initial impact. I was down just far enough to avoid being hit – thank heavens!

Well, it's getting late and I've got to do a little "homework" before I go to bed, but I just wanted to say "Hi!" and let you know I was thinking about you. I hope you haven't had any more encounters with the snow!

Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

21 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Super Quick note: I've been in Parade practices all day yesterday, today all day is another, and tomorrow, the REAL thing. I get home late and still have my S-2 business to do, and usually crash at 2330. Please forgive the absence of letters for a couple of days....I'm still thinking of you and even though I may not get to write as often.

Yours,
Rich
XOXO

22 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetheart!

Even though I called this afternoon, I still had to write. You don't know how good it was to hear your voice...you were my island of calm in the sea of confusion today. The change of command parade

went flawlessly...it was super to be “marching for a purpose” again, after so many practices.

You mentioned your Mom and my Mom met today. My question...how did they seem to get along? My thought is that it went quite well. Mom is relatively easy to get along with and if your Mom is anything like you, she, too, is easy to get to know.

I still want to write ‘em (your folks) a letter, so don’t forget my request.

Say, what’s the story on the “fire storm” there in the L.A. area? Don’t you dare get yourself hurt in anything there in So. Cal. (mudslides, floods, fires, etc.) If I have to be careful here in Germany, you have to be careful, too, OK? I definitely want to pay off all those hugs I owe you, and receive a few from you, too. Let’s see here, 10 hugs per week, 52 weeks a year, that equals 520 hugs a year...you may OD on hugs. (one year’s quota each week I’m home.) (I promise.)

In order to drive in Switzerland I need an International Driver’s license, so, I went downtown to et my picture taken and then to the Polizei station for the permit. Enclosed is a copy of the mug shot on my driver’s book. (What a criminal look, huh?) Oh, well, I guess it could be worse!

I gotta go. Take care, sweetie. Thanks for your two letters today...

Love,
Rich

XOXO

April 23, 1982

Hi Rich!

TGIF! It's Friday morning and I thought I'd drop you a quick note before I head off to work. I was going to write last night, but didn't get home until 1:00 (yawn). Suze and I went over and visited Pat again last night after work and took her some Mexican food for dinner (it was great!) Suze left about 9:30 but Pat and I got talking. Next time I looked at the clock it was 12:30. Let me tell you, my alarm definitely went off too early!

Thank you for the phone call yesterday! And that was great timing! Five minutes earlier, and I would have been in the shower! I hope things are going okay – you sounded a bit down. I'm sure you're still unwinding from the AGI. Just remember – if you ever need to get anything out, I'm a great listener!

Well, Rich, the minutes have ticked away and I've got to get going. I'll write you again tonight (when I have a bit more time!) Good luck with the Gold Brick Rally!

Love,
Jennifer

This was a photo postcard I sent to Jennifer from Meggen Switzerland, with a photo of the Hotel zur Balm on the front.



23 April 1982
Meggen, Switzerland

Hello Sweetheart!

The 1st Annual Great Gold Brick Road Trip has been a great success...Pictured is Steve's & my Hotel. A great place. It sits overlooking Lake Lucerne (Vierwaldstätter See), absolutely beautiful. I promise to kidnap you if necessary and bring you here sometime in the future (I promise) you'll LOVE it. We took some pics of some castles on the way down. You'll LOVE them, too. The people speak more German than French, but Steve is still impressed with my ability to get around. The mountains all around still have snow and the road

to Brunnen is still closed...(it is a very romantic spot.) Well, love, I gotta go. Take care,

Yours, Rich

April 24, 1982

Hi Rich!

How is my favorite Captain? Looking at my watch and making a few quick calculations, it must be about 10:15PM over your way. How is the rally going? You must be seeing some super sights!

Right now, I'm thoroughly enjoying myself – it is an absolutely gorgeous day with the sun shining and a slight breeze blowing. Perfect weather for bare feet and shorts! I'm sitting on our balcony mellowing out after a long week. I'm really glad we found an apartment with a balcony – it is really nice to be able to sit outside and enjoy the sunshine (or rain, depending on the season!) I go crazy sometimes at the bank when I see how gorgeous it is outside and I'm stuck inside a building. I'd love to cut a bit "sun roof" in the ceiling!

Mary and I don't have any definite plans this weekend, although we may go to the beach tomorrow. I love the beach and am definitely a fool when it comes to being sensible about the sun. I hate wearing lotion (the sand always sticks to me!) so I usually try and remember to bring a shirt, and what makes it harder is that Mary is one of these "sun worshippers" that tans in a second and can be out in the sun for hours. I don't have a whole lot of patience to lie in the sun more than 20 minutes. After that, I'm either walking or swimming (two of my most favorite things to do!). As a result, we usually have to compromise a bit when we hit the sand. How about you?

You know, I got to thinking.....when we finally do meet each other, even though we've never met in person, it will be like seeing an

old friend. I really feel I'm getting to know you via letters, tapes, phone calls (and your Mom!). I've never known about a person before meeting them! And I really enjoy writing you – it is so easy to start out and just keep going. I feel very comfortable “talking” to you and it certainly makes my day to receive a letter from you! Just as nice is being able to hear your voice first thing in the morning, rather than my alarm buzzer! I just hope I'm not too incoherent when you call!

Our “skill” in golf sounds pretty similar. I was known for my ability to hit a ball and send half of the fairway with it (The Divot Queen!) I haven't hit any balls since highschool, but I'd love to give it a whirl again!

Now it's my turn – any clues for me as to what you want for your birthday? I didn't mean to “ignore” your inquiries, but I love to be surprised. If the feeling is mutual, I have a few ideas to work on!

The Falkland crisis is definitely on everyone's mind here – it is front page news everyday. I don't think it will develop into a full blown crisis (at least I hope not). The British position in the world has really changed a bit since the two world wars, but the British still have a lot of national pride and patriotism left.

I better close – I want to get this in the mail in time for the PM pick-up. I'm really looking forward to August!

Love,
Jennifer

April 26, 1982

Dearest Rich,

Hi! How is life over in Germany? Another Monday is winding down to a close and I thought I'd drop you a line. Nothing out of the ordinary happened today at work – the same old routine. In fact, it was

pretty quiet – no long lines out the door. They’re all waiting until Friday!

Mary and I just splurged – we went to one of my most favorite spots – Basking and Robbins (you know me and ice cream!) I don’t know if I’ve told you, but we both have a special attachment to B&R (especially Mary). Her Dad was the “Flavor Chef” for about ten years. In fact, he invented Pralines and Cream (the best!). I’ll never forget – one year for her birthday, Mary’s Dad took us all down to the plant in Burbank. They were making chocolate chip and it was great – a big stream of vanilla was cascading down from the ceiling with sprays of chips shooting in from both sides. It was great! After our tour we went up to Mr. Moffitt’s “lab” where he had all of his ingredients. Using his vanilla base, we could make (or invent) any flavor we wanted, ranging from bubble gum to chocolate to a combination. Being a true chocolate lover, mine had everything chocolate you could imagine in it. It was super!

Well, daylight savings time has rolled around again – I don’t mind gaining an hour in the Fall, but losing an hour in the Spring is for the birds! Everyone at work was complaining how tired they were! The only difference I noticed was that it was darker when I got up this morning!

I must make this a quick one – it’s getting late! Hope you have a super week! Take care!

Love,
Jennifer

P.S. I packaged a little something up for you this weekend. I’ve never done any long distance mailing – I hope it gets there okay!

Editor’s Note: The box Jennifer sent contained her baking specialty Zucchini Bread. The path straight to my heart, thru my stomach!!

April 27, 1982

Hello Dearest Rich!

I am so excited I can hardly stand it – my curiosity is definitely stretched to its limit! Your package arrived yesterday (pretty quick delivery time! Your letters take at least six days!) I didn't get the package until today – one of those little pink slips to pick something up at the post office with "09141" as zip code of origin was waiting in the mailbox. My mom had some errands to do today and asked if I'd like her to pick it up for me. I stopped by the house after work to retrieve it – the package is huge! I can hardly wait until May 9 to open it (my Dad wanted me to open it then, but, I'm a firm believer in opening presents on "the day," although it is going to take real willpower not to peek inside! Thank you!!!

The day had sort of a funny beginning. Mary has her alarm clock next to her bed and usually sets it for about 6:30. I'm usually getting ready to leave the house by 7:00, at which time Mary is out in the kitchen playing chef. Well, it was awfully quiet – at 7:00, Mary was still sacked out. I woke her up to check and it's lucky I did! Apparently, Lucy had walked over the alarm clock and turned off the alarm! I guess it is a very common occurrence – when Mary lived at home, her clock was under a window. The cats were constantly walking over the clock, either turning it off or even turning up the volume! I'm glad my alarm is "cat proof" (at least I hope it is!)

I think your idea for coming home straight to LA sounds great, although I admit it's a little selfish – will you get to see Steve or Jeff at all? I would love to be able to spend those extra days with you – time passes too quickly as it is (although I'm glad these months before August are shooting by!)

And I would love to pick you up (if your parents don't mind!) You know...what might even be better I could pick you up directly at the airport, rather than have you take a bus into Pasadena. I love going to

airports to pick people up and it would save you a bus trip into Pasadena. What do you think? I also don't feel your idea "implies pressure." I feel very comfortable with your parents and, as I said in an earlier letter, meeting you for the first time will almost be like meeting an old friend (a very special friend). So, whatever is most convenient, or suitable, for you is great for me!

I've got to get some "homework" for the Bank done before I hit the hay so I better close if I want to get any sleep tonight! I'm really excited about my package – thank you! You are really super!

Take care!

Love,
Jennifer
(over)

P.S. A little added note – a strange thing happened when I got my mail today. A letter had come from you dated 4/16/82. (Yeah!) But the packaging was a bit strange. The entire right side of the envelope, including the stamp (about one inch) looked as if it had been torn off! However, the letter was totally unharmed and in one piece. We must have little beasts running around in our mailbox!

27 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

This will be a real quick note because I'm busy as hell and want to get it in the mail. Switzerland was SUPER! Your kidnapping will take effect as soon as I can arrange it. You will love the place. You should be receiving soon (as soon as I can find a box, etc.) a remembrance of Lucern....

Work is going OK, we are finally getting back into the swing of normal work hours. Thank goodness! There is something about normal hours that help morale...I'm sure you know what I mean.

Well, Sweetie! I must be going. Take care of yourself. (I need a hug right now that you would not believe!)

Yours,
Rich

27 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Sweetheart!

Today was almost a real pit. The only saving grace was that I received two letters from you. Actually, one card and one letter. If you were here right now you'd get one big hug and one big, wet kiss. It makes me feel very good inside to know you care enough to write, bolster my morale and be concerned about how I'm doing.

No, I am not "Snoopy-ed out." Many things Shultz draws are down-to-earth and very accurate. I really don't have a favorite character, but in all the Snoopy and Peanuts Cartoons I enjoy watching Pig-Pen, and can identify with Charlie Brown a lot of the time. You know, everybody dumps on him and he still comes back for more. His search for the elusive red-haired girl, his nemesis of the kite eating tree, Lucy pulling the football out from under him, and his always getting beaten at baseball...I can identify...

However, I am a winner in one area...I've got you. When you mentioned that I'm the only other man in your life (other than family) I felt wanted and needed. No, I have no heartburn about that. Take it

from me, there is nothing you could do to “scare me away.” You’re stuck with me, as I’ve said before in a couple of letters. Ask Mom, I have a lot of faults, but among my better attributes is loyalty. I’ve gotten in trouble due to my loyalty, but I think if that causes me problems then along with my position on ethics and honesty I’m in for a rocky road. However, I’m really not worrying about it.

There has still been no firm dates as to my rotation home. How about my plan? Do you think it will work? Do you think you can help me? All I can say is to be prepared for a super hug when I see you. (I guess I told you that before.)

I turned in my slides to get prints yesterday. They’ll be ready sometime around next Monday. You’ll get some of ‘em as soon as I can get ‘em in the mail...one of the Ghost, one of me and the Ghost, one I told you about taken on my security mission with SFC Wilson, and one taken when I was on the Border this past winter. I’ll send the same to the folks but I wanted you to get a chance to peruse the car before it gets Stateside...also, the pic on the Border will give you a graphic picture of how grungey I can get when I’m doing the field soldier thing. You would not believe it. When we really get bad we play jokes on each other. After three or four days in the boon-docks the favorite trick is to stand up-wind of somebody. One must be a master of subtlety to converse with someone and eventually work around to the up-wind side. It really doesn’t matter what rank the other man has (no pun intended here) all are fair game at the “war of noses.”

I remember you said you are a stamp collector, so when I was in Lucerne, I got a couple of packets of Swiss stamps. So, I hope you like ‘em. Still no word for your Dad on his Sauer. I haven’t even had a chance to hunt for my double.

Well, Jennifer, I’ve got to get this in the mail and hit the hay. (I plan on getting A LOT of sleep tonight.)

Take care of your beautiful self.

Yours,
Rich
XXOOXXOO

If this is a bit confusing, I'm writing it at work at about 2000 hrs. I went home to get the stamps and eat and came back to "create" the envelope and dump it in the post box.

April 28, 1982

Hi Rich!

Here I am sitting at work, all is quiet (at least for the moment!) and I thought I'd drop you a quick note to say "Hi!" and let you know you were on my thoughts and also forget about my desk for a moment! I had rather a start this morning. My alarm clock went off at the normal time but yours truly was more tired than I thought. Next time I looked at the clock it was almost 7:00, the time I usually leave. Ooops! Needless to say, I ran around a bit!

I must be going – quiet moments are few and far between (and brief!) Hope you are having a super day/week!

Take care!

Love,

Jennifer

P.S. My parents' address:

Mr. & Mrs. Michael H. Shlaudeman
1977 Midlothian Dr.

Altadena, CA 91101

They'd get a real thrill to hear from you!! Jennifer

29 April 1982
McPheeters Bks
Bad Hersfeld, FRG

Hello Jennifer!

Even though I just called this afternoon, I had to write. You're something else, Sweetheart! You really helped morale today. I don't believe you haven't opened the box yet.... You have some kind of will power! I'd have ripped that hummer open quicker than greased lightning.

You'll never guess what...it hailed today. The 29th of April and it hailed. Penny sized hail stones. Then, 5 minutes later, sun shine, blue skies, no problems. God save me from German weather. The first thing I'd like you to do is dump me on a beach when I get home. Actually, it's the third thing I'd like you to do...a great big hug and kiss are the first and second. Of course, by the time I fly in I'll probably smell like a horse, but if I stand downwind maybe you'll be able to stand it. (19 hours on airplanes is my limit so with 8 hours across the pond and 5 across the states I'll be 6 under my max limit.)

How about all this Falkland Islands business? I have a couple of buddies still in the Brit Army and I'll bet they are really getting itchy.

You'll never guess what I did today. I called RPAC (Regional Personnel Admin Center) and got my travel mode changed for when I go home. I will now fly directly from Frankfurt, Germany to Los Angeles, California. I'm going to take a civilian flight and considering how much the Army is going to reimburse me, it'll only cost me \$150. Not bad, huh?

This also means that I will wind up getting to L.A. (and you) sooner than if I had to mess around in New York trying to get a flight. The way I see it, I'll save at least 5 hours. I have one request; I need to know if you want me in uniform or in mufti (civilian clothes). It makes absolutely NO difference to me, either way. So, "have it your way." If you do meet me at the airport it may be a little easier to identify me, but I think you've already more than gotten accustomed to my face, at least by picture, so again, it all depends upon how you want to "meet" me for the first time.

(Note to reader: Jennifer let me know that she would like for me to be in uniform when she met me at LAX. Accordingly, I procured a brand new, well-tailored Class A uniform (the old Army Green uniform), including service cap, and the day before I departed I got a fresh haircut. When I departed Germany, my two senior NCO's (Dennis Wilson and Rusty Miles) took me to the airport and we all shared some bourbon and beer, waiting for the flight to board. I ended up flying from Frankfurt, Germany to New York City JFK International Airport, going through Customs, and from there to Los Angeles International Airport, where Jennifer met me at the gate. I was the LAST person off a packed 747. She thought she had the wrong gate, there were so many people getting off ahead of me.)

As for when I'm going to be home, still no word. According to RPAC again, as well as Branch, I'll probably receive my orders toward the end of May, Port Call of when I don't know. Those God-d__n REMF's had better get their heads out of their duffel-bags and get me some word or I'll detonate on 'em. (REMF is a term used by combat-types.....REMF stands for Rear Echelon Mother and I'll leave your imagination to figure the F.) (It's not a nice term but it is accurate of how we feel about the non-combat-arm types around Frankfurt, Mannheim, Heidelberg, Giessen, Hanau, Stuttgart, etc.)

1 May 1982

Hello Again Sweetheart!

I had to do something and one thing led to another and I couldn't get this mailed. Oh, well! At least it means I can write some more.

I'm all excited about the box you told me is in the mail...[Have you gotten the tape yet? [Voice letter #2)] I haven't gotten a chance to mail your other Lucern souvenir...whenever I go to get a box or packing material, something comes up and I have to be side-tracked.

It hailed again today, and has been so cold and damp, the ole bones are hurting like hell. I think tonight, after I set up my Dress Blues I'm going to take a HOT shower and go to bed early.

Tomorrow, the Squadron Commander, and several of us on the staff and a couple of unit commande4rs are going to Mannheim for a special German-American Friendship Ceremony. Retired General Blanchard is being awarded a special commemorative medal...(I say "Big Deal") It will be an all-day affair and we should get back around 1900 or 2000. I really don't want to go. All the guys going will take their wives/girlfriends and I usually feel like a third wheel at these things. But, since LTC Cxxxxxx is going, and I am his Intelligence/Security Officer, I owe it to him. (He even told me that I didn't have to go, that it was voluntary.) He's a super guy! One of these days you'll have to meet him.

It looks like I'm running out of room. And, I'd better be going. Take care of yourself. I'll write more often, I promise.

Yours,
Rich
XXOOXXOO

April 29, 1982

Hello Dearest Rich!

You sounded super this morning when you called! I thought it was going to be my Mom – what a neat surprise! A definite upper for Thursday. Thank you!

My day at the branch went by quickly – I spent the morning in El Monte. Or region has an Operations Officer meeting once a month. While Pat has been out, Suze and I have been alternating. It was an interesting meeting and also a nice break from the office! The only problem – I didn't get much on my desk completed. No biggie – I can always catch up (at least my bin is only halfway to the ceiling! Ha! Ha!)

I had a quiet evening at home – Mary went out to dinner with a friend from work, so it was just Lucy and me. I finally got a little reading done, which was nice (I don't know where the time goes, but I hardly seem to read the paper!)

What do you think of the situation in the Falklands? The whole thing is getting a bit more tense what with Britain's air and sea blockade. And now apparently, there are thoughts of Chile perhaps taking advantage of the crisis and moving against Argentina. I hope your original conclusion holds true – I never quite know what to expect when I turn on the radio each morning.

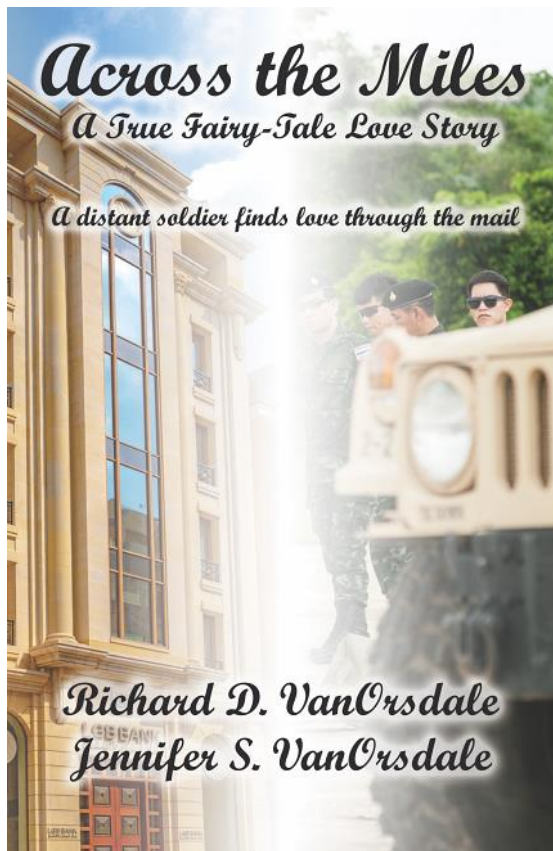
It sounded as if you had a good time on the "Great Gold Brick Rally", even though there were only two of you! I've heard that whole area is absolutely gorgeous. I'm looking forward to hearing about the whole trip!

Well, I'm still dying of curiosity. Maybe it's a "superstition" with me, but I always wait until the actual day (I know, you're probably thinking what fool – so is everyone else!) The box is sitting in my room, giving me absolutely no clues by shape, weight or "sound."

(I've shaken it a couple of times!) I'm really looking forward to opening it!

As usual, I'm writing this at a late hour and am fading out quickly. Have a great Friday (GIF!!) and take care!

Love,
Jennifer



Collection of transcribed letters between a deployed Army Officer and his mother's boss in a bank in Southern California. They would eventually meet upon his return to the U.S. and marry three months later.

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