



Hi-di-ho, darlings! Welcome back to the fifth episode in The **Love Letter Project**. I'm so excited that you have joined me this month in getting to know these three wartime 1940s couples. One of the common denominators in their correspondence is that the boys were still stateside. In my search for love letters, I have yet to find ones to or from a fella fighting in Europe or the Pacific. They are quite difficult to attain at a reasonable cost and one of the reasons is that from a collector standpoint the value of a letter increases significantly by its contents. Not the mushy stuff but the war stuff. For example, if our GI mentions something like the liberation of Paris or the Battle of the Bulge, well, you can imagine how valuable that historical glimpse is.

In today and Saturday's podcast, we'll spend some time with 19 year old Annette's letters written to her 25 year old Army Air Forces Sergeant James. She works in an office and he was once a bookkeeper for a restaurant chain. The 1940 Census tells us that they lived three blocks from each other. Perhaps they met in the neighborhood. When we meet them in September of 1942, he's stationed out in Arizona and later in '43, his Bomb Group will be transferred to New Mexico attached to a heavy bomber squadron of B-24 Liberators and B-29 Superfortresses for training and observation missions.

I came by these letters while at a massive outdoor antique market that happens once a year at Renninger's in Mount Dora, Florida. The vendor had unorganized boxes filled with a bazillion old

letters and photographs just thrown in. If not for the heat, I would have spent more time, perhaps have purchased more letters from this couple, but three were enough for my project. I liked Annette's handwriting and I liked that she was a New York City girl from E. 86th Street. I adored that she sweetly signed her letters from his Teddy Bear.

From a history-lover standpoint, there is much to revel in about this correspondence, from the references of cost of goods in 1942 to NYC hotspots. An air raid drill and defense and office jobs, and of course, there is longing. There is, however, a bit of undercurrent that I cannot put my finger on. Maybe it's because we're coming from the rocky romance and angst-filled letters of Louise and Andy, but I'd like to hear your opinion. What do you hear?

So, let's dig in and see what the future holds for these two wartime sweethearts.

(Letters, including misspellings/punctuation are exactly as handwritten in print)

Wednesday, September 9, 1942

My dearest,

Two days and no mail from you and it seems like weeks. I begin to wonder if you are ill or have been transferred or what. Hope some mail comes tomorrow.

Not much news in these few days. Herman and Marge were around tonight. Instead of going back tonight by train he is flying back Saturday. Lucky dog – but he'll be paying that off for months, I guess.

I am enclosing those pictures I promised you. You can keep them and the duplicates you can send home for your family, providing they want them.

Am sending a package to you this week. I hope you are not transferred before you receive it because I think you will like it. Pop promised to bring home a small crate for the stuff so you will have a box if you get it in time. Some cookies, gum, soap, etc. Hope you like it.

Mrs. Valen called up tonight and I have to go see her some time next week. She spent two weeks in [Rockaway](#) and had a miserable time. Caught some kind of skin disease. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if half the people who had it called it "sun-poisoning" and let it go at that. She went to a doctor and he said there were about a thousand cases treated in Rockaway this summer. Charlie is working in a defense plant in Connecticut making about \$28 a week. Dolores is spending the last two weeks of her vacation up there because she was in Rockaway with her mother and didn't have a good time either.

Robbie said to tell you that the fellow "Speed" you knew and the girl next door to Robbie that he went with broke it off, in case you remembered them. Robbie is going out on his first trip next Tuesday to Bermuda.

Darling, I miss you so. Please take care of yourself because I don't know what I would do if anything ever happened to you. Tonight as I am sitting here at home writing this letter the house is dark and quiet. I have those blue pajamas on, that white robe, and my door is closed. I am having my last cigarette and I wonder what you are doing now — eleven o'clock where you are. This setting brings to mind the nights when you were here with me. I and just about see you tip-toeing around with no tie, your shirt open. And whispering to me in the dark. I know I cried the second night you were here, first from joy and secondly because I knew it wouldn't last long and you would have to go back. Someday, my darling, you won't have to go back anymore. Keep up the good work and all the boys who are in the service are doing their best and it is bound to be over soon. We at home will do everything within our power for you to make you happy and comfortable.

Be good my love and take care of that money for us now. Next month it will be \$78. That's wonderful. Let's see how well the Army has taught you economy. I know you don't have to be preached to now that you have something to save for, and look forward to — just a reminder.

Keep your chin up. Everything is ship-shape here.

Goodnight my love,

Just a lonesome little teddy bear —

Annette xxx

Sunday, December 20, 1942

My dearest,

You'll have to struggle through this writing because the temperature has dropped to zero and points south and my hands are so cold they're practically numb. I just can't seem to get warm.

I know you must be frantic by now wondering why I haven't written when I got your letter on Friday but you just picked a bad time to ask "write immediately — if not sooner." This is the first time I've had a little peace and quiet all by myself since Thursday.

To start it off, we had a girl at work leaving to get married. She's marrying a soldier who's coming up from Tennessee. They've known each other 7 years and been engaged 3 years. It's about time they got married. Thursday night a few of the girls stayed to fix up her desk with paper, bells, etc. and to trim the Xmas tree. I wanted to leave early because I have a bad cold — again — but they kept fooling around. We got out about nine and then got caught in an air raid drill. The kids were so anxious to get home they rushed down the subway instead of going into a nice cozy drugstore or a bar, and sure enough, we sat in the dark in the subway train in [Brooklyn Bridge Station](#) for 20 minutes. It was the weirdest thing you ever saw. The place was so quiet and dark, people whispering. Some moving around. It's something you wouldn't forget easily once you saw it. By the time I had supper and got home it was eleven o'clock and I was exhausted.

Friday, the big to-do in the office with loads of candy, cake and stuff and then we had to take the girl out for a drink. Then home to supper about eight and there was some shopping I just had to do and I got home late again. Yesterday, I worked half a day and then some more shopping and then Robbie took me out for my birthday. About that later.

Just as I was writing that last page your friend, Joe B., called (3rd time) and finally got to speak to me. I would have like to have met him but he says he's going back tomorrow. Be sure to thank him for giving me your messages. He sure sounded like Cupid's own messenger. He asked me, (apologizing first for such an embarrassing question) for you, when I was coming out and when we were getting married. Darling, I wish I knew. It's mostly a question of money right now. Of course, if you go to Texas it might be cheaper for me to get out there. Patience, love.

I finally got a card and a letter from Jeanne Mecklenberg. Seems they were almost married but not quite. If he gets east for the holidays they surely will get married and come visit me in New York.

I'm glad you liked your Xmas package. The socks, tie, and hankies were from Mother and Dad. The scarf, Mother made herself. Did you see the secret pocket inside the billfold and the wallet? You didn't say anything about the pictures in the box with it. Did you get them?

I didn't even notice that was a Navy dress that I showed you. It was just what I wanted but I guess I can't get it now because I had to spend my bonus on Xmas presents. For Dad I got a Rolls Razor \$12.50 and some funny soap \$1.50. For Mother I bought a pretty sweater \$6.00, some cologne \$1.58 and a pin \$1.00. I bought Bette a blouse (\$2.00) and Emily, Margie and Marion presents. I bought Robbie a traveling set, genuine pigskin – sold for \$12.50, with my discount \$7.50, from the both of us because he has been so good to us. I finally got all my cards off. By the way, I'm putting from both of us on Mother's & Dad's presents, all right?

Darling, I wish you wouldn't go back to Savarin's. You know you'll never get anyplace there. And they just made a sucker out of you paying you what they did. The Waldorf itself might not be so bad or H&H, but don't you think you could do a little better than Savarin's? I know it's going to be tough going for all you boys when you come back but think about married life. You want some comfort and pleasures, not just an existence and that's what you'll be getting there. And you can't expect to bring children up on what they'd pay you. Budd Koenig is a good example.

My dearest, I'm not angry with you for not writing, please believe me. Joe told me how hard you worked and what little time you had left to yourself. I can understand perfectly. It's just that we have so little now (practicing what you preached) and it seems foolish not to take advantage of the little pleasure you can have. I just wait and wait for your letters and read them over and over till I can just hear you saying it to me. There's not much more to say without repeating everything I've said before and still it didn't do any good. I'll admit, I'm not much better at writing but I try awfully hard to make sure you hear from me every few days.

Robbie took me out last night for my birthday, a la orchids and everything. I wouldn't have had a good time but at the Diamond Horseshoe we met an awfully nice couple who had been married just four months. He was in the Navy, had just returned from Africa and was going to California to ferry planes from there to the Solomons. They were from Biloxi and she worked in Keesle for 13 months as a secretary or stenographer. She promised to call me before he left so we could go someplace again. She isn't going west with him but staying with friends in Massachusetts. It was so sad, I knew exactly how you felt when you see the other boys with their wives. Darling, it won't be long. I promise you. Just a few more months to get set financially and brother! Here I come. If you've made First Sgt. I'm sure we can manage beautifully.

Going to bed now because it's so cold (I've been interrupted sixteen times since I started this letter.) Darling, take care of yourself for me. You know I love you and want to be with you more than anything in the world. And I'm not even a little angry with you. Have a nice holiday as nice as it can be while we're apart. I can't say Merry Xmas because I know it won't be but you have my prayers for peace, victory and a quick return. Goodnight sweet. Love & Kisses, from

*Yours alone,
Mrs. Teddy Bear –
Annette*

P.S. I heard that song “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You, Baby” and while I like it so much, it made me blue.

P.P.S If you really want a teddy-bear like mine and can carry it with you, I’ll get you one.

*Love,
Annette*

Well, what do you think, friends? Do you get the feeling she’s a bit ... I don’t know ... maybe a nag. For a gal who just turned 19 in her second letter, she certainly “directs” her 25 year old fella, but gently, of course. I definitely get a modern-day passive aggressive vibe there. But she’s definitely in love, no denying that. Like I said, it could just be me – and like Louise and Andy, maybe his background necessitates her gentle suggestions about money, job, saving, health, letter writing. Maybe she feels helpless in her worry and fear for him, unable to do anything else for him but express her concern. Heck, maybe she’s just “making conversations!” For all I know, he didn’t think she was a nag. After all, we assume that he kept these letters for sentimentality.

But what is really evident is the vital importance of sending and receiving letters. It’s the glue holding together the relationship in a way. And while today we have Skype and email – nothing really has changed. Staying connected to your sweetheart in any manner you can lifts morale on both ends of the line!

So come back on Saturday when we’ll be wrapping up The Love Letter Project with the last letter from Annette and James and find out what happened to our New York City couple. It’s also the last day of our Podcast from the Home Front 1940s Experience, but who knows, maybe I’ll pop back in in August to tell you all about my trip to D-Day Ohio and the house that Jack built! Thanks for tuning in, friends.

YouTube Link: “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You” by Harry James/Helen Forrest - [HERE](#)



Diamond Horseshoe nightclub

