

arvon dale ORCHESTRA

3634 woodcliff road • sherman oaks, california

June 24, 1966

TORO 2X79
Scout Dog
Sentry Dog Kennel
Fort Benning, Georgia

Dear Toro:

I want to write you a "birthday letter" as this is the first birthday you will spend away from home, and it will be a very lonely one for us.

You will be four years old - a month from today - on July 24th, and I guess it's about time I stopped referring to you as our "puppy"; you certainly are no longer a puppy, but a big, grown-up boy - of whom we are so very proud.

There are several things I want to tell you as I may not get to write you very often from now on. I will probably not be able to resist doing so on your birthdays and Christmas, etc., but even if we can't correspond, I'm sure you will know you are always in our thoughts and hearts, and that there isn't a single day we don't think of you and remember all your loving little ways and what a wonderful boy you have been.

You didn't get to see the pictures we took of you the day before you left, so I'm sending them to you -- also, one of each of us - your "family". Doubt if you will have anyplace to "keep" them, so you can just leave them at the base --- I just wanted you to have them for your birthday.

Remember the "birthday cakes" you had each year - made with horsemeat and frosted with cottage cheese - and a candle for each year? I have such darling pictures of you "taking each bite" until the cake was all gone - remember?

Every day your mother, Jana, looks for you to "wrestle" with her like you always did. She tries to get your father, Atlas,

to "play" with her and he seems to understand and makes a big effort to "take your place", but it's not the same. They both miss you, I know, and we take them for "rides" in the station wagon as often as we can, but it just doesn't seem right without you. Remember how we took the three of you in the wagon almost every Monday out to Thousand Oaks and let you out to "run" in the hills? We all loved that, didn't we!

Atlas hasn't felt very well since you left - in fact, he has been very sick, with arthritis in his back and rear legs, etc. It got quite bad just after you left and I'm sure that's why he was sometimes "cross" with you. He just didn't feel well, Toro, and needed to rest more, I guess. He will be nine years old next November 11th (Veterans Day) and your mother, Jana, will be six, October 20th. Attie has had to have many "shots" and pills every day now, but as long as we can keep him "comfortable" we will have him with us.

Jana is fine - beautiful as ever - and she tries to make up for your being gone by sleeping up on our pillows at night just like you used to do - remember? I know she misses those "play sessions" with you, but both she and Attie are very proud of you - just as we are.

I remember so many things, Toro ---- The way you played - all by yourself - with one of Arvie's socks in your mouth, batting the ball with it - out on the patio (where I am now).....

The way you played "hide and seek" with Jana every time you went from the bedroom to the kitchen. I caught her - the other day - looking around the hall corner, waiting for you to come 'round and "pounce" on her - It was so sad!

Your "toy chest" is still full of marrow bones - and toys --- You always used it more than Jana and Attie did!.....

And how we miss your little head "in the refrigerator" -- It was always there - everytime I opened the door. How many times you "sneaked" little bites of meat from "your" shelf!.....

And remember how Daddy used to "slip" you a slice of bread each time you went with him to the kitchen at night - when we watched T.V.!

These are the things I worry about, because the Air Force - or Marine Corps - doesn't know how much you love milk - or a slice of bread, etc. And I know they have to be very strict with their rules about diet - and can't do the little "special" things we did at home. Remember how I hunted for your little "milk bottle" squeeze toy, just before you left? It was your very favorite toy - and I was so upset because I wanted to put it in the crate with you. Perhaps it's better that I found it the next day - as you couldn't have kept it with you - and it means a lot to us.

What did the Air Force think of the things in your crate --- my pajama top, Sabrina's baby blanket, Arvie's sock and your ball ??? They probably wondered what kind of a crazy family you had!

I hope you weren't afraid on the train. Of course we know you aren't afraid of anything, but still, you had never even been in a crate. And the hardest thing I ever had to do was to watch you walk right into the crate like such a good boy - and then give me a big kiss through the bars. I'll never forget how good you were and how hard it was for Avon and me to say "goodbye" to you at the station. We had to leave quickly and we couldn't even talk all the way back home. If you had behaved badly or put up a "fuss", it would have been easier, but I knew you understood ----- after all, we had really said "goodbye" the night before - when you stayed in the den with me real late, while I typed the shipping instructions for your trip. We had spent the whole day with you that day before you left - and took pictures of you by the wagon - and also that night in on the den sofa - remember?

I hope you ate well and that they took you "out" during the trip -- we worried about you the whole five days you were on the train - and wished we could have been with you.

Tor, we didn't know what was happening to you, as we never received notification of your acceptance. So, after three and a half months, when I finally couldn't stand it any longer, I telephoned Lackland and talked to the Sentry Dog Purchasing Agent. He was so kind - and looked up your "file" --- It seems that somehow the "paper work" had gotten "fouled up" - and we had never been notified that you were "accepted"!

Of course I knew that they must be keeping you - (How could they resist you) but I wanted to be sure - and to know you were all right.

I was so relieved and happy to know that you were adjusting so well --- I felt sure you would. It's just hard for me to realize that you are a big boy now - and are on your own, living such a different life.

Must tell you one more thing ----- Last Tuesday, when Arvon and I went to our Dog Club meeting (GSDC of Los Angeles Co, Inc.), the most wonderful thing happened! Bill and Dorothy Hixson presented us with the most beautiful trophy you ever saw (much larger than any of Jana's or Attie's). It is two feet tall with a gold Shepherd on top, a large trophy "cup" and a wood base with a gold plaque, engraved:

JANADALE'S JARRETT
"TORO"
SCOUT DOG
2X79
U.S. MARINE CORPS 1966

Dorothy made the most beautiful "speech" about you and us - and how what you are doing is so much more wonderful than just being a Champion or a U.D.T. Obedience dog..... Everyone at the meeting had tears in their eyes - and came over to see "your" trophy and tell us how proud they are of you!

After calling Lackland and "hearing" about you I cried for two days - and then finally decided to "grow up" and be proud of you. And I am proud of you, Toro -- tremendously -- but I can't help being sad, too. I guess it's mainly us I'm sad for, because we won't be able to see you again or know how you are doing - and if you are well. It is much harder than I thought it would be.

But we are very, very proud of you, and I hope all of your Marine "buddies" will love you as we do. I know you will do your very best to protect them and serve your country well.

I only hope that sometimes - when you are "off duty" - you will remember all the wonderful times we had together - all of us ---- and how very dearly we love you. You were always very "special" to us, and now you are performing a greater service than most German Shepherds ever get a chance to do.

Did you know - that you were the only one of our four "children" which we didn't "buy"; the only one we "bred" and kept; the only one we had from the day you were "born"? You were really our son in every respect ----- perhaps this is why you were the one we had to give up. Do you remember when we "bottle fed" you with the goats milk --- bet ya don't. Your "cousin" Brent took such good care of you - and helped me so much with your obedience training. He always felt you were "really" his - and he is lonesome without you, too.

Happy birthday, dear little Toro. We will all be thinking of you - especially on July 24th.

I hope you have a handler who will love you as we do. Take care of him and all his boys, and know that we are thinking of you always - and we'll someday be "together" again!

Our dearest love,

Judy and Arvon

and Jana & Atlas