

## Appendix 18

### Letters between Jane in Leeds and Joan

**24/12/1943** From  
2 Westfield  
Chapel Allerton  
Leeds  
**From Jane To Joan**

Dearest Joan

Your letter was one of the nicest surprises I have had this Christmas; I absolutely delighted to hear from you. I have so often wondered what had happened to you - I guessed you would join one of the services and I guessed you would be married! Congratulations on your son you have beaten me to it in that respect as we have no family. I am most grieved for you at the loss of your brother because I remember what good friends you were - and I can imagine how lonely you must be feeling this Christmas without both your husband and Peter. Raoul must be a great blessing to you. Why did you call him Raoul ? It is most unusual isn't? I like it very much. Compared with your life mine has been very uneventful. We celebrated our 4th wedding Anniversary last Tuesday so we are quite an old married couple these days. With being married, and also having a husband a good deal older than myself still at home, I wasn't called into the services. But for the last two years I have been a member of the Mechanised Transport Corps, employed by the Ministry of Supply in Leeds. There are about 25 of us, and we drive, clean and service the ministry cars. We cover all the North West Riding, going as far as South as Nottingham on occasions. The hours are quite good - 9am till about 6 pm

(unless you are on a late job) but we only get one week leave a year ! But we can live at home and get most weekends free - so it suits me quite well. My husband is kept frightfully busy both at the Mill and as a member of the observer corp, so even though we share a flat we don't always see each other for a couple of days at a time ! Life is busy thank God, because time goes by much quicker - and really we are one of the fortunate couples to have been able to keep a home together.

I was in London most of October taking an Advanced Training Course at G.H.Q. it nearly killed me ! If only I had known your address we could have met. It's awfully hard to keep in touch with friends these days. Mine are so scattered, and with only one week a year off I can never go and see them. Do you remember Alison Bell who was at the hall with me? She got engaged to a regular Navy type at the beginning of the war and waited two years for him to come home and get married. Unfortunately he fell for some other girl in Malta or somewhere and got married to her without letting Alison know about it ! I felt frightfully sorry about it.

My dear you just would go and be a despatch rider - how you didn't kill your self I don't know. Secretly I am filled with admiration because I know I should never have had the nerve. You don't tell me any of the nice details of where you met your husband, what he does in peacetime or what he looks like ??? Are you living with your relations or with his or in your own home. I expect all these questions will go unanswered for a long time - but it doesn't matter as long as you occasionally let me know you are alive and kicking. Once one gets a conscience about not writing to someone it gets harder to make the effort. So don't bother unless you feel inclined. Do you look back on the years we knew each other with pleasure, or have you had nicer things

happen since? I shall always remember you rampaging up and down those tine Q.A. rooms like a caged lion - saying you must leave the place come what may " Poor Jo, you did hate it - and us sometimes." How silly it is that I still think of you as someone who needs looking after and here you are far more responsible and experienced than I am.

I don't think I have changed much - I still can't cook, I still like clothes too much , and love parties. Fortunatley Harold has all the virtues I don't possess except writing and keeps my feet on the ground. He is an absolute dear - I am always thinking how lucky I am. I don't want a family just yet, because there are so many things to do before I want to settle down. After rthe war we hope to travel around a bit, that is if it stops before we become quite doddering.

By the ime you get this letter Christmas will be over,so I must wish you a Happy New Year instead. I do hope you have good news of your husband very soon ( I wanted to marry a Tony too, you know.) May 1944 be a Happier year for you than this one has been- or the end of it anyway. Again let me say how sorry I am about Peter - truly sorry. DO you ver visit Notton or the Wheatsheaf ?? !

Muich Love and many thanks for you letter Jane  
ps What about your piano?

**01/12/1944** From Meols Date Estimated  
**From** Joan **To** Jane

Jane Darling,

You last letter reached-Nottingham just after we left there and was forwarded on to me here. I meant to have written to you then, but only a short while after we were here I had news of Tony's death out in Ceylon, he was drowned whilst attempting to rescue another person.

It was a ghastly shock, and I just couldn't believe it for a time.... but letters came from his fellow officers and I realised that I had got to face it.

We both had such faith in his safe return when he went away....and after he had come safely through being torpedoed on the way out, and was then stationed in Ceylon,...away from the fighting zone. I just never let the thought materialise in my mind that he might not come home again.

Auntie is very good to us here (she is one of my father's sisters) and now I am feeling comparatively contented, but I dread the time when we have to go home.

The flat contains so much of Tony and we had such a glorious time building it up.

...But Jane, I meant this to be a long letter of good wishes for Christmas, and here I am instead telling you bad news.

Raoul is growing a big laddy now. he's awfully fit. Of course the air up her is so bracing though lately the weather has been foul....hard rain and bitter gales almost continuously, but it all helps to toughen him up. And in the summer, he thoroughly enjoyed himself on the sands.

Do you ever come near Chester or Liverpool on your travels ? I shall be so disappointed if we cannot find an opportunity to meet sometime before we go south again....tho' that won't be yet awhile me thinks....certainly not until it is quite safe for Raoul to be home. Very best wishes to you Jane darling, for Christmas and 1945. with fondest love God bless.. .

**29/12/1944** From  
2 Westfield  
Chapel Allerton  
Leeds

**From** Jane **To** Joan

Dearest Jo,

I cannot adequately express how sorry I was to hear of your sad news, or how heartless I felt having sent you a card wishing you a Happy Christmas.

All I can say is, after reading your extremely brave letter, that through all your grief you must have developed into a rather marvellous person. If anyone can face the troubles that you have had to contend with, and not become dreary and embittered, I am certain that life will hold other comforts and good things in store. How easy it must seem for me to write these things, so comfortable and smug with my husband at home with me. I only know that my mother had similar trials to bear and through them has become such a sympathetic and humorous person that she has friends wherever she goes. YOU have Raoul to build the future with and some lovely memories that must be worth the world to have had. Can you hold onto these things in the bad times that must come until gradually your life becomes gradually back to normal - I believe you can.

You never mention your music in your letters, surely it must be an outlet for your feelings and energy?

Remember the old days, when after a successful elocution or music lesson you used to hurl yourself at the piano, and fairly let off steam?

Legs, long dark hair, fingers - all flying about in every direction in your exuberance? Do it now,

We were practically fogbound at Christmas, which rather spoilt our plans. However we ventured out on foot to occasional parties, and breathed so much foul air into our lungs on route, that even the gin that awaited our arrival failed to kill off the germs and I for one have been in bed ever since. I expect I shall come in for a lot of leg pulling at the office on Monday, about "not being able to take it".

My brother was home for his leave this Christmas, having completed his initial three months in the Army. He seems to have spent the entire time sleeping and eating! Do you happen to

remember Alison Bell at the Central School with me, dark and attractive? She has just married this Christmas. The reception was at the Dorchester, and wanted so much to take a weekend off and be there but couldn't manage it. In another month or two's time I might manage to get to Liverpool, it certainly would be fun to meet again. Would we recognise each other, I wonder? Anyway the first opportunity I get I will write to you and see how you are fixed. I hope that 1945 will bring you peace of mind my dear and I know you will have courage to face the future with with new hope if only for Raoul's sake.

All my love and forgive me if in anyway I have been clumsy in my choice of words

Jane