

DorleLettersF L0001 (English)

Toronto, July 20, '55.

Dear Mother!

I'm sure you've all been waiting for a detailed account of my trip, and now, here it is at last. To put it briefly, it was magnificent. I saw so much of Canada that I have a completely different impression of it now. But I want to tell you everything in order. The reason I haven't written again is that I have too much to tell and want to write it all at once. So, on Thursday, June 30th, we chartered a car, the Vita 3, because, as you already know, we then needed groceries for the first few days, I still had to pick up photos from Braunmüller, bathe, pack, eat, etc., so that we started punctually at 10 o'clock. Inge helped me make sandwiches; by the way, she did end up going away with Inge, but she'll tell you about that herself. - Now I'm writing to you from my diary, which is just perfect, as I wrote every day, often while driving, after cooking, before going to sleep, or somewhere else. June 30th, 10:15 in the evening: We drove off from 53 Spadina Rd, packed as we are. Everything is in order except for: an increasing smell of gasoline in the suitcase (Siegfried's, awful), a pistol without a marksman, not-quite-perfect suitcases... the rest will reveal itself in time. Since I've already run around quite a bit today, I'll fall asleep soon; my head on Siegfried's lap, and when I wake up, we are diving into a gray haze for the first time. The gasoline here already costs 44 c/gallon. I go right back to sleep, because my stomach feels like a stone.

July 1st. It's only a quarter to 6 and I'm already up. So, we've now had supper; I made potato and bean salad with lots of onion, both served with luncheon meat | peaches for dessert, a gift from the hospital. To drink, there's only Johnnie Walker, morning and evening. But now, back to the diary. We are in Cobalt on Lake Timiskaming, where we will have a wonderful breakfast (pumpernickel, sausage, tomatoes, onion and mustard, though only I eat the latter) and are in the best of spirits. The lake glistens like Lake Constance - now I get to watch, Siegfried is already snorkeling (yuck!), but he drove very well, otherwise I wouldn't have slept so well. After 6 1/2 hours of driving (375 km) on bad roads that still call themselves 'Highways', past forests in the morning, I'm tired once again. - Shortly before Hearst, Siegfried pulls off the road again. When I wake up, there's nothing but forest around us, a sparse forest, which, as I saw later, was ruined by a forest fire last year. Along the road, there are signs everywhere like: "Use the ashtray, prevent fire," etc. At one very large spot, where the topmost branches on the trees were still green, it said: "this happened through carelessness." Between Hearst and Kinglac (135 miles) there is nothing on the map that would remind you of a village, and indeed, Siegfried seemed to have forgotten to refuel in Hearst. But then, by great luck, there was a "Transcanada Lodge" with a gas station in the middle of the woods. In my joy over this, I wrote a poem:

The lodge was our saving grace, for what bread is to us in this place, is for the "Chev" (Chevrolet) the gasoline, and we wouldn't have lasted long, it would seem.

Since I drove again after Geraldton and Siegfried was sleeping, I pulled over shortly thereafter next to a beautiful lake to cook and swim, so that Siegfried could get some proper sleep. The lakes here in Northern Ontario are magnificent: forests, old logs pulled into the water

by beavers, and rocks. You can tell that the area here is sparsely populated; you hardly ever see "Private Property" signs. In the small towns, there are mostly wood factories or sawmills, for example a huge one in Smooth Rock Falls and Geraldton. The lakes are full of logs. You have to be content with the roads; apart from a few spots, you can still drive 50-55 miles/h. The weather is magnificent, wind, clouds, sun. - It's a quarter to 11 now, and it's a good thing I'm letting him drive again, because he seems to be a bit snappy. The area here at Lake Nipigon is magnificent, the lake with the setting sun (that was a bit earlier) and the countless trees, with high, steep rock faces to the right and left in which caves seem to have their nests. The road, for once, isn't straight, but wonderfully winding, and it goes up and down. We sleep in the car on a side street in Port Arthur. July 2nd. Set the clock back 1 hour. We have driven 1125 km so far, completely without a dent and all the way through. The weather is wonderful again, the forest smells different than at home. After Port Arthur, at a small lake, we had breakfast in the open air. It was a bit chilly at first. For breakfast we had: oatmeal, water, and sugar. - From Port Arthur to Kenora I'm driving again, it's not a pass, the lakes just don't end. In Kenora, the last larger town in Northern Ontario, we stop to get the car greased and have the oil changed. Kenora is a nice town on the Lake of the Woods with many Indians (but decent ones). Right after Kenora is the border to Manitoba, the smallest province in the west. Here we stopped at a gas station in Winnipeg, where gas only costs 40c again. Winnipeg doesn't have many sights, it's quite old (but not beautifully old), with lots of awful streetcars and flat, monotonous surroundings. Since it wasn't late yet, we also saw Portage la Prairie, the gateway to the prairie. There, in the middle of the prairie, it is an endlessly flat, green expanse, the evening glow says it all. (We were to find that out the next day, too.) July 3rd. We set off at 6 o'clock this morning. At first, we wanted to swim in the lake, but a storm had raged quite a bit during the night. At first there were only puddles, but soon the whole road was covered with water. It was a magnificent area, like we were in a bird sanctuary, but Siegfried had his hands full trying to keep us from getting stuck or sliding off into the lake on the right or left. But when we finally reached the village on the beautiful lake, the entire yard was under water, so we couldn't get to the lake. That was a disappointment, since the prairie was starting now and the lakes were ending. I was tempted to wash myself in a very muddy puddle, but I came out considerably dirtier. - We just got onto the road to Saskatchewan. The roads are even better, just great. I'm always driving 60 M/h (96 km/h), which you can easily do in these cars, and especially because the roads are dead straight and you therefore have a long view. In Manitoba they had quite a few oil wells; here the grain elevators are starting, the landmarks of the prairie, which stand at every tiny train station. The weather is very hot again, a bit cooler than yesterday; due to the storm, many fields here are also quite flooded. - We just drive through Regina, it doesn't seem to be a special city. In the afternoon we arrive in Saskatoon. Saskatoon on the South Saskatchewan River is the most beautiful Canadian city I've seen so far. (But that's about to change.) The city lies on the left and right of the river, which is crossed by five beautiful, large bridges. In a magnificent park with illuminated fountains stands a castle-like hotel; it was glorious. (But tons of mosquitoes.) We're spending the night here again. July 4th. When we left Saskatoon this morning, it was quite cool; we are already quite far north. By the time we reach the North Saskatchewan River, where we swim and have breakfast, the weather is lovely again. At the spot where I washed myself, there was a dead calf with its hide and everything, yuck! I

then started driving at 8 o'clock, because Siegfried always has rheumatism in his legs in the morning from sleeping. The roads here are bad again, and I usually get the worst stretches. At 12 o'clock in Lloydminster, Siegfried took the wheel again; he usually likes to take it when I've been driving for so long, even though it's going well. - We'll soon be in Edmonton, where Siegfried's friend lives, with whom he worked in Germany. Since we hadn't washed ourselves with really fresh water for days, we are now desperately looking for a lake. The lakes indicated on the map were all in swampland. So we drive 25 miles from Edmonton to Elk Island Park. We were just about to eat at a picnic spot that was completely empty, but since it had rained heavily during the night and Siegfried is so fond of sleeping in the car, we soon got stuck deep in the mud. I'm just glad, Mother, that you reminded me about the shovel, because we really needed it here. I wrote in my diary: 1. When getting stuck in the mud, never put wood underneath, as it's incredibly slippery and the tires get hot. First, shovel some of the mud away so nothing splashes, then put stones under the wheels to provide a solid surface. Siegfried didn't even have a tow rope with him, which left me speechless for a moment. If I had asked before the trip if he had a rope, he would have surely told me not to meddle in everything. - Well, the main thing is that we got out again, though we were ready for a bath. Here, too, you can only swim at a designated sandy beach; the other spots are too swampy. That also meant more laundry. It was such bad luck, because when we got out of the water, there were 5-6 leeches hanging on our legs, which are very hard to get off. That really gave me the shivers, and I was so looking forward to the lakes in Ontario. Now we're heading back to Edmonton - to rest, get the car greased, and buy a wedding present. But since all the gas stations were closed, both plans fell through. Evening in the car in Edmonton. The preparations and the futile effort to find a wedding gift were all for nothing, because Siggi's friend left on his honeymoon yesterday. Siggi is in a very bad mood, which I don't blame him for. Whether the money and time will last until Vancouver is too risky for us; besides, we wouldn't be able to stop anywhere, and that's not worth it. So it's better to really see the area of the national parks between Calgary, Banff, and Jasper properly. So tomorrow morning we're driving to Calgary, where Siggi also has a friend. - Edmonton is also on the North Saskatchewan River, and although the surroundings are also quite flat, the city is built up the slopes on the left and right of the river, which always looks nice. Edmonton is the fastest-growing city in Canada; it's the gateway to Canada's north and therefore unfortunately also has all the worst kinds of people. These are largely old gold prospectors from Alaska who can't work in the winter, or other adventurers. Of course, the whole city doesn't consist of these people, but we saw them right on the main street, so I wouldn't have liked to spend the night there. By the way, Siegfried's friend told us later that many people go to Northern Canada or Alaska in the summer to work in sawmills or gold mines. You can even go up there privately and try your luck, although 2/3 of it then goes to the government. In the winter, they come back to Edmonton and usually spend all their money again, because after half a year of this monotonous life, they want to live well again. But some also go up there because of the magnificent landscape, which is said to be unique. - July 5th. I woke up at half past 10 in the morning to pouring rain and a bad weather forecast. The drive to Calgary is monotonous; I slept. Then we first looked for the friend's apartment. The streets are divided by numbers and cardinal directions, so it's easy to find your way around; for example, the friend lives at 2126 25A St. SW. We then had the car greased, washed, and the oil changed. Calgary makes a good impression right away,

above all, it's clean. There are residential districts here, well-bred cattle, and nice cowboys. - The car is just coming back from the garage, freshly washed. Siegfried is therefore in the best of spirits, because he loves his Chev more than anything else.

July 6th. The weather is glorious; by the way, it was nice yesterday too, and I'm in the best of moods. Last night, Siegfried, his friend, and their friend Dieter and I were in town. They showed us the city, the city gardens (zoo), and the petrified wood from the Rockies. Then we drove to a park where we rode the carousel and swung on the swings. It was a nice change of pace. Besides, the two of them are so nice; they are also well-rounded men, which you can't say about Siegfried. The two of them, one 26, the other 27, live together in a nice basement apartment with a bedroom, living room, and kitchen. Each has his own car, a Ford and a Volkswagen. They are a carpenter and an electrician, and live nicely, about half an hour from Calgary. It was a matter of course that we slept at their place. In the morning, I was woken up by music, which automatically starts 10 minutes before the alarm. That's just the thing for me! - I also wrote in my diary there: If the Hofmann family ever moves to Canada, only Calgary would be an option, because it's the most similar to Germany with the Alps. The city (185,000) with its many beautiful single-story bungalows, the two rivers, the Bow and Elbow, the forest-like park where you can camp, and most importantly, that you can be in the middle of the mountains in 2 hours by car. What Northern Germany is to Germany, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are to Canada (I've driven through them now), and Southern Germany corresponds to Alberta and B.C. Right after Calgary you can already see the snow-covered mountains. I think I know what a feeling that was for me. The foothills and the mountains begin right away. At the park entrance, 5 miles before Banff, you are already surrounded by magnificent mountains. - In Banff, we first went to the mineral museum, the animal exhibit, and got some brochures about the area. By the way, you can also hire mountain guides here (but that's not for us?). - We cooked our lunch at a very secluded spot on Lake Minnewanka; it's just as lonely and quiet here as in the Alps. Siegfried would have liked to fish at places that I thought were suitable, but since he's a city boy, that's out of the question for him. - In the evening, we took a long walk through the forest, always uphill, away from all the tourists. One of the 2 hot sulfur springs is also here, with a temperature of about 44°C. It stinks like rotten eggs and the rocks also have a yellow shimmer. Up above Banff, a bath has been made from it with a temperature of about 38°C. We went for a swim too; it's wonderful, but afterwards you're so exhausted that you just want to sleep. By the way, it's the best way to lose weight. July 7th. The weather looks a bit worse this morning, but we're driving to Lake Louise anyway (80 miles). The drive is magnificent, even if a few high peaks are hidden in the clouds. At Lake Louise we park our car; it's quite cold. Then we walk along the lake, through the forest, always higher up, then over again, across rocks, all the way to the hanging glacier. The whole thing is called a "plain of six glaciers," which I like so much, do you remember from the Birkenkopf thing? It was still a bit different, you're much more directly up in the mountains. I think it's the air, too. The mountains made a powerful impression on him, even if he doesn't have much respect for their dangers, because he cheerfully scrambles up a brittle shale wall in sandals, not entirely free from vertigo. We had a cup of tea in the small teahouse. After 6 to 7 hours, we arrive back at our car, and we immediately looked for a spot to cook, in a small forest clearing not far from the Chateau Lake Louise hotel. It was a nice spot, until suddenly a large, brown bear trotted past very

close by. That was a bit too much for us and we looked for another nice picnic spot. We have avoided these public places so far, but it was so nice there. There are open-air spots with 6 tables and a fireplace where you can cook something, etc. Above all, you can stop there even when it's raining. To be honest, it's also quite cool outside, not like here where it's still 38°C in the evening. - They often commented on my dress, not that it doesn't fit, but that Siegfried's dress shirt would be ruined at the slightest mishap. Now he also sees that it's good if I don't buy bananas for 45c/lb, etc. July 8th. Well, it's gotten quite late, but I couldn't get up earlier because I had such a stomach ache all night like never before, it was terrible. It's raining a little; we're driving to Jasper today. We'd rather skip the Columbia Icefield, though we considered driving up, but the weather wasn't good enough for us. The mountains are quite high, up to 3800 m with a lot of snow and glaciers. Shortly after, we see a mother bear with her little cub playing and being photographed right in the middle of the road. Feeding is strictly forbidden, because then the bears don't get enough and smash the car windows. As soon as you have a door or window open, they come in. Now I'm sitting on a rock on the bank of the Athabasca River, waiting for a tow truck. The man in the perfect but impractical eight-seater, in his pursuit of comfort, drove as close as possible to the riverbank to eat. The main thing is that we're now heading into Jasper, albeit with almost no gas in the tank, no oil in the engine, and a half-broken spring. A pleasant situation. July 9th. It's 5:30 in the morning, glorious weather, cold but wonderful. We're driving back to Banff today. Right after Jasper we saw another bear; they know they're most likely to find food near people. The drive is a delight, because all the peaks are clear. This time we also drive up the glacier; it's a magnificent feeling. - In Lake Louise we stop again at the picnic spot, and since it's only 5 o'clock, we make a pot of coffee and paddle a little way up the Bow River. It's magnificent here. The river is quite narrow, wild trees hang into the water, and you can drift along so beautifully under them. I know what a canoe looks like, it's pointed at the front and back and therefore tips quite easily, but it's more beautiful than anything else. July 10th. Today we didn't get up until 8 o'clock, the latest so far. We get permission for Hans-Peter from his parents. Just as they are about to return to Calgary, we meet Siegfried and Franke, who are both going to the hot springs. We spend the rest of the day with them in Banff and at 5 o'clock we drive back together. We sleep in Calgary one last time and drive through the night; it's simply a magnificent night. In a small restaurant where we drink a milkshake (ice cream with milk), we heard the "Polka of the Fishermid" (Fischerin vom Bodensee). July 11th. Siegfried, Dieter, and I went to the Stampede parade this morning. It's a large, colorful parade, the same as all parades, except that here they have western cavalry (cowboys), Indians, etc. Then we look at the Stampede fairgrounds. In the evening I meet a few nice girls and then we all went from Calgary to the cinema, because it was already starting to rain just as we wanted to get the tourists to bed. Siegfried absolutely wants to leave right after the cinema, so at 12 o'clock at night, with a heavy heart, we say goodbye to beloved Calgary. Quiet and wet. As a farewell gift, Dieter gave me negatives to enlarge, because you can't get German photo sizes in Calgary. Wasn't that thoughtful of him? July 12th. It rained almost the whole night, because when I wake up, we are in the ditch. The road is soft, and it's still raining. Siegfried didn't even pull over; because the outer edge (50 cm) of the paved roads isn't tarred, you can't see it in the rain. It was 5 o'clock in the morning, so we were lucky to get a tow truck in daylight to pull us out. The tow truck owner gave Siegfried a piece of his mind, because the speed limit

on this construction stretch was 25, and he was definitely driving 50. Now we're driving behind a truck; I don't think he'll speed anymore either. A road began with construction sites, ditches, gravel, clay, and lots of water on the road because it was still standing in the ditches. Besides, it was pouring rain. After 3 hours Siegfried is driving again. The road is good, only he's annoyed that I drove for so long off the bad road, but I just have much more practice in that area. But after only half an hour, the next construction site comes up, we'll see. The welcome sign goes all the way to the hall. Because of him, and every truck has to wait 3 hours until the construction vehicles are done with their work. I'll be glad if we even make it to the next town. Just as Siegfried had taken over the wheel for tomorrow, he notices that the clutch isn't working properly anymore. He yelled at me quite harshly that I had driven it into the ground, but as I have now learned from expert sources, it can happen from all the water we drove through. It was also completely fine again the next day. July 13th: We slept near Regina last night, though in a bad mood. The clutch had to be repaired; the cable couldn't handle the bad roads. We decided it would be better to make the 135 miles without a workshop, because with the rain, the road there would have gotten worse too. - Today we've already been driving for 6 hours again, in the heaviest prairie rain that makes everything dark. In the rain, we had the car greased and then overhauled. Afterwards, the steering started to rattle very badly; you can barely hold the steering wheel. Since it costs about 40 dollars, he thinks it will last until Toronto. He said I should tell Mom not to worry. We're spending the night in Kenora. July 14th. So I set off again with the broken steering and the completely worn-out speedometer. It's pouring rain and the morning sun is once again very sparse, which you can see quite clearly on me, because I haven't washed since Calgary. After breakfast, Siegfried always likes to let me drive, and so I'm now driving through Northern Ontario again, that land of countless lakes, where raspberries and blueberries grow in the endless forests in huge quantities, and they couldn't taste any better. We stopped to pick up mail; it stayed at the farm for Siegfried for the time being, as he's going to Newmarket too early, because the post office is also by the Superior (large lake). The area here and around Port Arthur is rocky right up to the huge lake. I drove for 8 hours today; it didn't feel like it went very well.

July 15th. The sky is still overcast, but at least it's not raining, so I can finally have a proper bath in a wide, empty lake. The journey continues tomorrow. I drive through the simple landscape, which looked much more beautiful on the way here when the sun was shining. I drive to Longlac, where the road goes uphill for a bit. The road isn't paved, but it's not as dusty as before. Everything goes much faster than during the day, at least that's how it seems to me. The fresh air dispels the old grogginess and the weariness in my limbs and mind. Forests where the last big forest fire did its work (by the way, there were 138 forest fires at once in Ontario), rocks with mountains, lakes with logs and little islands, water lilies, the forest usually goes right up to the shore, after the water lilies. After Cochrane, we drove another 240 km until 1 o'clock in the morning (Standard Time) to Cobalt, the place we left from on Friday morning. The night was foggy and rainy. When I arrive, I'm dead tired, and feel correspondingly bad. July 16th. The last day has dawned. As nice as it is, I'm looking forward to Toronto again, the club, and the people. In beautiful weather, we arrive in Toronto at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Perhaps for later, it would be possible to see something more of the west, then we would have had the time - the people. My address:

247 Franklin Ave, Toronto / Ont.

I can't fully assess the trip, but I have a completely different impression of Canada now, which is worth a lot. Everything was very much for itself, but the mountains were the nicest. I hope you can all imagine it to some extent, especially when you see the slides or maybe the camel hair blanket (?) that I'm bringing you, though not by airmail. Some of the color slides turned out nicely too, but it's too late now for you to see them; I'll show them to you in person. We'll see about the trip, whether it works out. I'll write to you about that in the next letter. It's better if I start. You're not getting something. I'm doing well, only I'm quite homesick for the pious ones, for Johannes, the berry harvest, chocolate, going to the movies, etc. - it's terribly hot here. As I said, it's always 36°C, sometimes even 38-39°C for hours. It's terrible, you can hardly do anything in the evening when you come into the room. In the whole house, by the way. September 1st, because we need to for tennis, especially with no roof downstairs. But the heat is making me tired. Otherwise, I want to help diligently and not always postpone things, because I forget.