Dear Governor and Mrs. Lehman:

When Dante met Beatrice and celebrated that fatal interview in the Nuova Vita, he entered upon no newer life than mine here at Camp Lee.

The last few weeks in the office were busier than usual, and some of the recurrent problems of personality conflicts, jurisdiction, and power and prestige—like the Chief's are controversial—just about exhausted my patience, sense of humor, and respect for human motives during a time of national emergency. In other words, I was tired. Then, too, we had to break up house and put an entire household into storage. Next to saying goodbye at the Pennsylvania station, this was the hardest thing I had to do for we had found one of those charming old, high-ceilinged houses opposite Washington Park, completely modern, yet completely reminiscent of another age of quiet and dignity.

My one and only day in New York was crowded and with little room for thought, except when I saw you and when we were at Charlie's. While everyone...

...
there was riding high on the first returns, Charlie remained realistic and said he had been through all this before and knew what the innumerable election district returns from upstate could do to an even ample plurality. Along about ten o'clock, I could see that Charlie began to realize that he might lose by a small vote. Later, he said as much, and added that he would rather lose by 100,000 than by 10,000. Of course, his running seemed to me, despite the loss, a really magnificent one, as the Times editorial stated as well. Whether that vote will mean anything to Charlie four years from now remains to be seen.

After staying up until four o'clock Wednesday morning, we staggered back to the Commodore still ignorant of the results. George called at eight and told me while he was still struggling to coordinate my ears, eyes, speech, and telephone, that Charlie was winning. The Times later told me nothing of the sort. I left N.Y. still in a daze and remained that way until Washington.

After all this, Camp Lee is like the Retreat at Hartford,
a haven for the weary, only much cheaper, and with just as cagey psychological devices for your good.

The first few days I spent running around getting forms filled out, getting a bunk, getting signed up for mess, and getting Government Issue shoes (which are comfortable as can be at preposterously low prices), fatigue clothes, 5.1. trousers and all the other rough stuff I'll need for basic training. Since the Commissary is open only until 11:30 each day, you have to rush - cut corners to get over in time. A better way to start men in, although confusing, would be hard to devise because you can't think too much about how lonely and green you are. Besides, you are in the company of other officers just as green, lonely, and confused. One of them confessed to me that when he came in late one night, after finally being assigned to a room, sat on the cot and thought of taking the next train back. Another remarked that he was worried that he wouldn't know how to salute.
Correctly and would be spotted immediately as a rookie. As for me, I felt as I did at 6 when Dad marched over to the Webster School in Washington and left with kids I never knew before and a teacher who looked nothing like a mother, being dearly thin.

But one day here evaporates all of these doubts and feelings of insecurity. The camp itself is very well kept. The landscaping, while plain, is homelike. Some cosmos, literally 5 feet high with amazing thick stalks, are still in bloom. These, along with zinnias and marigolds, decorate the barrack terraces. The walks are bordered with grass and some of the borders have just been fall sown. They will be handsome this spring. The buildings are kept painted and are the traditional barracks, for the most part clean, utilitarian, and severe — the grandfather as Lewis Mumford so aptly pointed out, of the modern testament.

And Jo don’t think they are very different from the barracks recently unearthed in the vicinity
of the Great Pyramids where the
workmen and their families
lived. Given a problem in
mass organization, I don't think
the essential lines change much
with the millennia. In Egypt, Camp
Lee, or the Sampson Naval Base,
you house and feed thousands
of men the same way, despite
the difference of centuries. Strangely
enough, as I think of this, I feel
better because I feel closer not
only to the dominant pattern of
my own time, but to other ages
and men who have had to act
in the same way for whatever
different reasons. Since I have
been here, I have thought a good
deal about something Thomas Mann
said in The Nation years ago. You
may recall that he did not break
with Hitler immediately. He explained
this when he finally denounced
the Nazis by saying that a writer
must be an integral part of the
culture he seeks to interpret and
he cannot be part of it unless he
feels and understands the
dominant, impelling thoughts and
forces of this culture. You cannot
do that without being there, in
your own country. Now that
I'm here, I feel so much closer
to what we are doing as a
nation. And I know that I'll be more valuable as a citizen when and if I come out of the Army.

The Army is doing a remarkable job in their personnel selection. The men I have met who come as officers directly from civilian life are able, intelligent, and here at real personal sacrifice. Many have wives and children. The those who are here from Officers Candidate Schools are equally fine and competent. Everyone has sacrificed something big or either a job which was growing in importance, a happy family life, or financial security. But all are cheerful and anxious to get going.

We get two weeks of basic training and two weeks technical training. The basic includes drill, manual of arms, rifle range work, machine gun range work, obstacle course, drill and other rough tasks. All the men think this is a wonderful opportunity to learn essential Army techniques and are waiting for Monday when we begin.

After my basic, I go on to General Administration Technical
school, and after two weeks, I'm ordered out. Where that will be, I haven't the slightest idea. Sometimes, even after your training, you may have to remain here as much as 30 days. Sometimes you're called before your training is complete. I'm praying each night that I'll get assigned to a tough job because after this month's vacation, I'll be ready to start again.

I might say that the food here is excellent, not only in quality, but in preparation. We had loads of turkey and dressing for dinner today, along with Cranberry sauce, Cauliflower, salad, celery, olives, pickles, coffee, rolls, and ice cream and cookies for dessert. The breakfasts are enormous; the service prompt and informal. As a matter of fact the atmosphere throughout the camp is informal. Officers in blazers, rather than shirt & jacket, are unusual here.

My first four days here have given me a great deal of hope for us and the news today is really too wonderful to believe right away.
I shall try to keep you informed about this pilgrimage of ideas from time to time.

You'll be interested to know how much you're known by men outside of N.Y. State and how much detail about your administration is known. You'd be very gratified to hear some of the conversations in our recreation room when your name is mentioned, as it is, because politics is a common touchstone here.

If I survive the next few weeks of scheduled classes from 7:45 to 9:30 P.M., I shall see you soon again.

Yours, as ever,

Maurice.