

March 14, 1973

Dear Hobe:

I am sure you will recall Captain Jeremiah Denton who was the first man to step off the plane at Clark Field a few weeks ago and ended his brief remarks with, "God Bless America."

I received a very moving letter from him just recently, a copy of which I am enclosing. After getting the letter I asked him to come in privately to see me this week and had a two hour talk with him.

He is one of the most impressive men I have ever met. Like others, he suffered terribly during his captivity. For four and a half years he lived in a cell in complete solitary without ever seeing another American. He saw only his captors. He said during the time that he was in captivity -- seven and a half years -- he had vowed that he would write a book when he returned. He is terribly concerned about the issue he discusses so perceptively in his letter -- the moral and spiritual deterioration that he sees in America as a result of what he calls a "soft environment."

I think you will agree that this is a book that ought to be written. He intends to take off a year for the purpose of writing it. Whether he has the ability to write a book remains to be seen but at least he has a theme which is powerful and with the right kind of advice could have anecdotal material which I would think would be tremendously persuasive.

Perhaps you might want to get in touch with him and have a talk with him. My guess is that people like Denton will fall into the hands of promoters who will use them and drop them by the wayside. He deserves far better than that and I would hope that you might be able to guide him to a good publisher in the event you think well of his idea.

With warmest regards,

Sincerely,

Mr. Hobart Lewis
President
The Reader's Digest
Pleasantville, New York

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Operation Homecoming
U. S. Naval Hospital
Portsmouth, Virginia 23708

February 27, 1973

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your letter. Even more, thank you for your firm, effective leadership, the fruits of which have now unmistakably reached a brilliant blossoming stage. Most particularly, thank you for "biting the bullet" in the political sense by arriving at the decision to use the B-52s which not only brought us home but perhaps put many of our previous "half actions" in the Vietnam War in better perspective.

Those of us who ran prison camps may have had jobs similar to yours in microcosm. I realize that we had an advantage because we and the men under us were under constant physical pressure during the early years. As you surely know from personal experience, pressure catalyzes the ennobling process involved in questing for and inevitably finding sufficient Divine help to "hack it" somehow.

Though I have pride in America's past and hope for her future, I believe that recently too many of her citizens may have developed, through soft environment, a blurred awareness of fundamentals such as a recognition of the rights and needs of authority. Such rights are corollary to the very first of the Ten Commandments and are the life-blood of nations. With such weaknesses prevalent among many of our citizens, including Congressmen, added to the bewildering complexity of your problems I can sense something of the immensity of the pressures acting on you as you pursue your mission. You must truly be a superman to bear up so well. I believe the nation is most blessed to have had you in office in this, perhaps the most trying, time in our history.

So many Americans have expressed to me the hope that God will use us returning POWs to arouse our citizens to some new awareness. I intend to tackle this task as opportunity permits, not by providing physical pressure but by motivating people to the self-imposition of their own intellectual pressure.

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I have been more than compensated for my ordeal: my own simple satisfaction with having done my duty; my family's and my countrymen's expressed appreciation therefor; the glorious worthiness of our national spirit which deserves any sacrifice expressly appreciated or not; -- any one of these three factors would have been more than compensation, but thank you again for the treasured expression of your own personal gratitude.

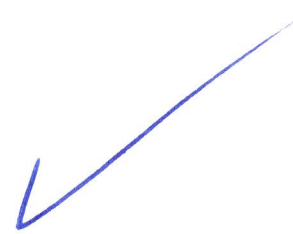
Very respectfully,

s/ Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr.
Captain, U. S. Navy

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

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U.S. Naval Hospital
Portsmouth, Virginia 23708

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