

## Letter From Germany · *James Brasfield*

for my father  
(1909-1952)

Many things have been done  
And many hours merged into so many days  
Since I last had time to write you.  
It has rained all day and the blossoms  
Have nearly all been beaten down.  
The bareness and the gray scud clouds  
Add to the gloom. Cold rain  
Keeps us aware that there is a war on.  
With the wind behind it, the rain feels like  
Someone slapping you with a wet towel.  
And the mud is like Prairieville mud.  
I was fooled last month,  
It was pleasant and the fruit trees bloomed.  
I fell to 145 pounds at the front  
And I am somewhat embarrassed  
The way my clothes drape about me.  
I am on swing shift tonight.  
Staring into the river, I quit thinking  
For a while. I have this dream that I pass  
A place called "Hotel Moderne":  
I want to rent a room and don't have the time.  
The first chance I get, I am going back.  
It looked clean from the outside.  
Last night I went to the USO show.  
Three performers in an old building.  
I felt sorry for them. The dancer  
Couldn't dance for sour apples,  
But got a big hand from the boys  
Because she had so little on.  
The comedian was good, the best  
Was the old fellow who just sang.  
He was not good. We wanted his songs  
And he sang them. Tonight  
There are flares and tracers, stories  
Of paratroopers, but no sign of them.  
I bought a doll finally for the little girl.

I didn't pay much, it was the best  
I could find: there are more dolls' heads  
Than dolls on the shelves. I have a radio  
Now and get the news hot off the air  
And real American jazz. I need  
A particular big eyed, light hearted woman  
To dance with. But she is not on this side  
Of the Atlantic. Looking  
At your picture, I have almost  
Forgotten how you are. Alabama  
Better have a big sweet potato crop  
The year I come home. And get a bottle  
Or two of bourbon stashed away  
If you love me. It has been too long.  
There is nothing normal left.  
The smell of guns massed in this valley  
Hangs bitter in the air.  
A town burns across the ridge.  
I know the distance. It is late,  
And being out of candles, I have to quit.