

2 June, 1943.



Dear Doctor East:

When I received your recent letter asking for the return of the dog owned by your son, I was deeply touched by it. I immediately directed that every effort be made to comply with your request.

Today I have received from Lt. General Carl Spaatz, Commanding the North-west African Air Forces, a report in which appears the following statement:

"It was learned that the dog, "Duckworth", belonged jointly to Lt. Richard J. East, O-792111, and to his best friend, Harold P. Taff, O-792175. Lt. East was killed in action on April 4. His plane and grave were located after our forces had moved into the Tunis area. The loss of his best friend, Lt. East, has deeply affected Lt. Taff. The Commanding Officer of the 52nd Fighter Group brought Lt. Taff, with the dog, to the airplane. Lt. Taff was heartbroken with the thought of losing his dog, and wanted to spend every possible minute with him until the plane took off. He placed him in the plane, carefully tied him, and left the plane just before the take-off. Col. West had been waiting in his car to take Lt. Taff back to his quarters, but Lt. Taff was seen to thank him and walk away from the car, to an adjoining field."

Under the circumstances, and particularly in view of the statement the dog was jointly owned by your son and his best friend, and especially as Lt. Taff has shown strong affection for the dog, I believe you will agree with me that it would be unwise to return the dog to you as you request.

The friendship of a dog is precious. It becomes even more so when one is so far removed from home as we are in Africa. I have a Scottie. In him I find consolation and diversion. For me he is one "person" to whom I can talk without the conversation turning back to the war. "Duckworth" is performing a patriotic service. I respect the quality of warm friendship shown by Lt. Taff for the dog. I am confident you and Mrs. East will view the situation similarly, despite your natural and understandable desire to have with you this close companion of your gallant son who died for his country on the field of battle.

Sincerely,

Doctor Bion R. East
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DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (signed)