

FST Forum

Some of Ann's Favorite Letters

Esther "Eppie" Pauline Friedman Lederer, better known as Ann Landers, was best known for writing her famous syndicated advice column for 47 years. It was a regular feature in many newspapers across North America. These are a sampling of letters that were written to Ann Landers. All the letters she received throughout her years as an advice columnist involved a wide variety of topics, which ranged from relationships to politics and included anything and everything in between. There was no topic that Ann Landers would not write about. Although she was unable to put every letter in the column, Ann Landers did send a response to every letter with a return address. Featured here are several of the letters Ann Landers responded to in her advice column:

Dear Ann Landers,

Ten days ago, I had a breast removed, and I want to tell the world how lucky I am. I was terrified when during a routine examination the doctor said, "You have a lump here. We'd better do a biopsy and find out what it is." Immediately, I thought of all the women I knew who had died of cancer. I was filled with panic and fear. When the biopsy revealed a malignancy, I was sure my life was over. I checked into the hospital that same day for the removal of a breast.

The first thing I remember after coming out of the anesthetic was the doctor saying, "We caught it very early. You are going to be good as new." Eight days later, I left the hospital wearing a prosthesis given to me by a group called Reach for Recovery—an organization for women who have had breasts removed (I never knew the group existed.) These women meet regularly. Their purpose is to help new "members" lead a normal life. You can't imagine the lift I got when the club representative called on me. Her visit gave me renewed strength and hope.

I will return to work—exactly 19 days after the lump was discovered. I feel marvelous. At 48, I look forward to a long and happy life. I consider myself a lucky woman. Lucky because I refused to let anything interfere with my annual physical checkup and therefore caught the malignancy very early. Lucky, too, because my doctors were observant and talented. Lucky that I have a wonderful husband who has let me know the disfiguring operation in no way diminishes his love for me.

God is good.

--S.L.D

Dear S.L.D.,

As I read your letter, I thought, "This could have been written by my sister-in-law." When I came to the signature, I discovered it was.

Thank you, Sylvia.

Dear Ann Landers,

I'm really sorry you found that old song of mine crude and offensive. Actually, "Cold Ethyl" is just a harmless number about necrophilia. The point I want to make is that the kids are not bothered by this—their parents are. The kids see the song and gruesome antics, like with the guillotine, for exactly what it is—satire, done with a sense of humor to a rock and roll beat. Kids know I am harmless. It's their parents that make me out to be some kind of monster. I would like to see you print the in your column, Ann.

Sincerely,
Alice Cooper

Dear Alice Cooper,

Thanks for writing. For those who don't know what necrophilia is, it's sexual intercourse with someone who is dead. You can call it funny if you want to, Alice. I call it sick. I like satire as much as the next person, but chopping off heads and spurting blood all over the place is not my idea of entertainment. I caught your guillotine number in Chicago several years ago and almost lost my supper. (Guess I'm an uncool cat.) You have in your group some exceptionally talented performers and you're no slouch yourself, Alice—I just wish you'd clean up your act.

Dear Ann Landers,

If the two strongest nations in the world, the United States and Russia, don't agree to put a freeze on nuclear weapons, your readers won't have to worry about anything because they will be vaporized in a matter of minutes—along with millions of people. Talk about a limited nuclear war and plans for civilian defense are insane. It would be impossible to evacuate the cities.

Where would people go? What would they eat? What would they drink? Who would take care of them? The physicians and hospitals would be blown to smithereens.

You are more than an advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist, Ann Landers. You mold public opinion. People believe in you. For the love of mankind and its survival, please address yourself to this issue.

--Terrified in D.C.

Dear Terrified,

Thank you for writing about a subject that is plaguing us all. Dr. James E. Muller of the Harvard Medical School said, "The horror of nuclear war is so great that many people choose to deny it exists. An all out attack on the United States could kill as many as 150 million Americans. Their immune systems, weakened by radiation, would succumb to fatal diseases. At least 80 percent of the doctors would be incinerated."

As the Rev. Theodore Hesburgh said at a UCLA peace rally, "The living world would envy the dead." The *New Republic* pointed out in a recent editorial that the global arms budget for all countries is now \$550 billion a year. And \$100 billion is earmarked for nuclear weapons.

When one considers that \$500 billion equals the entire annual income of the poorer half of the Earth's 4 billion people, one begins to grasp the magnitude of that expenditure. Meanwhile, we are cutting programs that benefit the elderly, the handicapped, and the poor. More cheery news: Our secretary of the Treasury, Donald Regan, says, "Our economy is dead in the water."

The standard reference is the Hiroshima bomb. It destroyed the city with the equivalent of 12,500 tons of TNT. (This is 12.5 kilotons). The newest nuclear bomb is not measured in kilotons but in megatons. The yield would be equivalent to approximately 12 million 1-ton trucks filled with TNT. The Poseidon submarine carries 16 missiles, each with 10 warheads. Each warhead had three times the explosive force of that single bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

We can already kill every Russian seven times. Now we are trying to build our arms supply so we can kill each Russian 14 times. The United States and other major powers are spending themselves broke on a war we dare not let happen. Jonathon Schell wrote in *The New Yorker*, "The machinery of destruction is in place, poised on a hair-trigger, waiting for the button to be pushed by some misguided or deranged human, or for some faulty computer chip to send out the instructions to fire."

I implore every person to sign his or her name across this column and mail it to President Regan, the White House,

Washington D.C. An overwhelming response might prevent a nuclear holocaust that would mean the end of all life on this planet.

Do it today. Nothing on your calendar can be more important.

I have said many times in my column that my readers are my friends, and when I ask them to do something, they respond, bless them, at once—and in numbers that stagger the imagination. I am happy to report that they did not fail me. Apparently, the response caught the president's attention because I received a letter from him. Here it is:

Dear Ann Landers,

I am writing about your recent column regarding the letter from "Terrified in D.C." I want you to know that I'll take second to none in my concern over the threat of nuclear war. That is why in my April 17th radio address to the nation, I said: "To those who protest nuclear war, I can only say I'm with you. Like my predecessors, it is now my responsibility to do my utmost to prevent such a war. No one feels more than I the need for peace."

It is indeed my highest priority to deter and prevent such a war, for its consequences would be disastrous for mankind. That is why I've called for negotiations leading to major arms reductions, not limitations that only that only codify high levels. Under so-called limitations of SALT II the Soviet Union and the United States could substantially add to their nuclear arsenals.

I have instead called for the reduction of the most destabilizing strategic elements, the ballistic missile warheads, by one-third in the first phase of negotiations on strategic arms reduction. In the area of intermediate-range nuclear forces, I have also proposed the elimination of the most threatening systems, the land-based missiles.

During the last decade, the United States restrained its deployment of new nuclear forces while the Soviet Union enormously increased its forces. We, therefore, now face a serious imbalance, which decreases the credibility of our deterrent.

That is why we must modernize our own forces to reduce the dangerous imbalance and to make clear to the Soviet leaders that they should join us in negotiating the kind of substantial, equal and verifiable reductions in nuclear arms the world demands.

Ann, we have tried many times since WWII to persuade the Russians to join us in reducing or even eliminating nuclear weapons, with little success. Perhaps, instead of sending copies to me, your readers should send copies of your May 17 column to President Brezhnev.

Sincerely,
Ronald Regan

Dear Ann,

I've been going with a wristwatch salesman for 16 months. He takes me to the most expensive places, and last year for my birthday he gave me a beautiful watch. Something weird is going on, and I can't figure out what's at the bottom of it. His stenographer is overly

interested in our personal business. She wants to know where we go, how much he spends, and what we talk about.

Last night, I'm sure I saw her following us in her car. The night before, she sat directly behind us at the movies. I asked my boyfriend to explain this. He said he didn't want it to "get around" because it'd be bad for business, but she's his first cousin. He claims she's very competent and he can't tell her off because she might quit. He asks that I be patient and overlook her odd behavior. What do you make of it?

--Shadowed

Dear Shadowed,

A watch last year, but *this* year, you're getting the works. The reason the girl is so interested in what's going on is because your boyfriend has probably been making time with her, too. Plain, ordinary, everyday cousins don't go to such lengths to find out what's buzzin', unless they're kissin' kin, that is. Tell your watch salesman to unwind himself from this private eye or you'll try to find a boyfriend from a less closely knit family.

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