

Chapter 2 – The Boys of Summer & A Brewing Storm [v3]

George was only twelve years old at the beginning of the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the 20th century. Much has been written regarding the beliefs, values and psychology of the children of the depression era and my brother and I certainly saw that in value system in our home when we were growing up. That period from his childhood in the roaring 20's and his teenage years during the depression is a whole other story that might be written some day (for now it will be a growing collection of many unidentified photos in Chapter 1). But for this chapter of the story I want to focus on the most important relationships that developed for George as a young man – his closest friends - Cousin Gilbert Rauh, best friend Michael Iriarte and future wife, Hazel Schuch.



Gibby

Clockwise from top left:

On Grandma's knee at the age of one

Gibby's father on the left with a young Fred Hofmann at a garage in Hawthorne, New York around 1915

First on the horse with his siblings and family on the farm in White Plains, New York



Mike is the one with his head tilted to his left (apparently a common pose for Mike). This photo was probably taken by Hazel from the window of her 104th Street home on the West side of Manhattan. Obviously George had no idea the photo was being taken but Mike surely did as he tipped his hat.

That may be Mike in the cocked hat at the right of this photo but that is certainly another good friend, Bob Swayze, to the left



George cooling his heels in Central Park





As you can see in the faces of the young men, they were quite content. The great depression had ended, people were employed and dreaming again but although the US was once again on its feet the war to end all wars was quickly becoming a distant memory as Germany once again began to assert its power in Europe.

By the spring of 1939 President Franklin D. Roosevelt began rapid expansion of military forces for the defense of the Western Hemisphere.

Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act (STSA) of 1940 on September 16 creating the country's first peacetime draft and formally established the Selective Service System as an independent Federal agency. The World War I conscription system served as a model for that of World War II. The 1940 STSA instituted national conscription in peacetime, requiring registration of all men between twenty-one and forty-five, with selection for one year's service by a national lottery. In the massive draft of World War II, 50 million men from eighteen to forty-five were registered, 36 million classified, and 10 million inducted.

Motivated in part by their patriotic spirit and youthful invincibility, but also to have some say over where they ended up, in January of 1941 cousin Gilbert Rauh and best friend Mike Iriate enlisted. George who had registered with the draft on August 16, 1940 as required by law and was rated 1-A by April of 1941 followed in their footsteps, enlisting on May 15, 1941.

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE
 This is to certify that in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States

George (First name) Hofmann (Middle name) Hofmann (Last name)
 502 West 135th St. N.Y.C. N.Y.
 (No. and street or R. F. D. No.; city or town, county and State)

has been duly registered this 16th day of Sept., 1940

(Signature of registrant)
 Registrar for 37 (Precinct) 13 (Ward) N.Y. (City or county) N.Y. (State)

BE ALERT (Keep in touch with your Local Board. Notify Local Board immediately of change of address.)
CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES

D. S. S. Form 2 16-17105

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE	HEIGHT (Approx.)	WEIGHT (Approx.)	COMPLEXION	
White	6' 3"	190	Sallow	Light
Negro	Blue	Blonde	Ruddy	Dark
	Gray	Red	Dark	Dark
Oriental	Hazel	Brown	Freckled	Light brown
	Brown	Black	Light brown	Light brown
Indian	Black	Gray	Dark brown	Dark brown
		Bald	Black	Black
Filipino				

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification

The person named herein whose Order No. is 909

Has been classified by Local Board Board of Appeals

in Class I-A until further notice
 General Military Service (Date)

Notify your employer of this classification April 21, 1941 (Date)

Member of Local Board

This card may be cut on dotted line for convenience in carrying.

D. S. S. Form 57

SELECTIVE SERVICE

NEW YORK (STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Mr. George Hofmann

502 West 135th St

STAT PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO PAYMENT OF 20

No doubt influenced by their long friendships, the boys of 1941 followed the same training and specialty path through their military careers – from civilian life to Regular Army, Army Air force Cadet training school, Bombardier school and ultimately front line combat. Sadly, combat ended it all.



Gibby



Mike



George

At the time of their enlistment Great Britain had been at war for over a year and the news from the front painted the horrors of war but gave the image of far more civility than warranted. The British January 31, 1941, issue of *The War Illustrated* gave hints of what was to come – but it was too early for anyone in the US to take it seriously.

'They're Prisoners-of-War in Germany'

In thousands of homes in this country and in the Empire overseas thoughts turn to a husband or father, son, brother or lover who is "kicking his heels" in a German prisoners-of-war camp. Some account of the camps and of the prevailing conditions is given in the article that follows.

IN Germany and German-occupied territory there are at the present time, it has been estimated, some 2,500,000 prisoners-of-war. Nearly two million of these are French, hundreds of thousands are Polish, tens of thousands are Belgian, Dutch, and Norwegian, while the British number about 44,000.

This vast host is quartered (except for those enlisted in labour gangs) in prison camps, of which there are three types, known officially as Oflag, Stalag, and Dulag, contractions for Offizierslager, Stammlager, and Durchgangslager, respectively. Oflag is a camp used for officer prisoners, while Stalag is one for privates and N.C.O.s. Dulag is a transfer camp, i.e. a camp to which officers and men are taken soon after their capture, and where they are graded before being dispatched to either an Oflag or a Stalag.

The camps are periodically visited by delegates of the International Red Cross, and reports on some of them have been published. Thus a few weeks ago two Swiss doctors, Dr. Marti and Dr. Des Coeudres, reported on Oflag VII C, where there are

1,245 British officers, including a general and five colonels, 31 chaplains, and 39 doctors. It is contained in an old castle in a Bavarian town, and the quarters comprise three floors, the number of prisoners in each room varying from nine to 120. The food, though rather monotonous, is not too bad, and British cooks are employed. Most of the prisoners,

the visitors found, were at that time in need of warm clothes; shirts and so on could be purchased at the canteen, but they were very dear. Four British doctors are on duty in the hospital, and, generally speaking, the health conditions are satisfactory. Hot baths are available once a week and there are facilities for playing games. On Sundays four religious



WULZBURG CASTLE, near Weissenburg, Bavaria, where these photographs were taken, is a prisoners-of-war camp in which the majority of the prisoners are British and French. In the upper photograph some of them are seen making articles of clothing under the supervision of a Nazi guard. Lower photo, the organ provides solace, during recreation hours, to those who are fond of music.

services are held. Books are scarce, but the supply is being augmented by the Y.M.C.A.

The same two visitors inspected Stalag XIII, where there are 1,036 prisoners—not only British, but French, Poles, Belgians, Dutch, and Norwegians. This prison camp was found to be decidedly overcrowded, and the delegates commented unfavourably on the fact that the beds had only one sheet and two blankets, and that the only heating was a small oven in the centre of the room. "This seems inadequate heating," they said, "during a severe winter, and the health conditions seem generally defective."

Dr. Marti also visited some of the camps reserved for R.A.F. prisoners. In one Stalag he found 231 N.C.O.s and 57 privates; the camp leader was Flight-Sergeant Hall, No. 569838. These were housed in three wooden barracks, which Dr. Marti described as comfortable; "food, good; prisoners, satisfied." The men, he went on, "like to work in the labour detachments, in which they receive a minimum of 20-8 marks per month, and are well treated."

In Oflag IX there are 44 naval officers and 17 doctors. Dulag Luft, a transfer camp for airmen, consists of three large, well-heated barracks, with running hot and cold water, accommodating 102 men. Here are Dr. Marti's notes on the place: "Rooms with one to three beds; tables, easy chairs; exceptional comfort; dining-room; whisky every evening; papers; various games; walks outside camp; food excellent, similar to that received by the German officers of

Photo, Fox

Where the Nazis Hold Our Men in Captivity



P.O.W. CAMPS in Germany and Poland are shown in this map. There are 106 within the boundaries of the Reich (including Poland and Austria) and 62 in France. OPG ("Oflag") denotes a camp for officer prisoners; STG ("Stalag"), a camp for other ranks; "Luftlager," camp for airmen; "Dulag," a transfer camp. This map, compiled from a list supplied by the Nazi authorities, was published in the French newspaper "Paris Soir," and reproduced in the "Daily Telegraph."

the camp; well-stocked canteen; receiving pay; correspondence received irregularly."

Another delegate, Dr. Marcel Junod, was commissioned by the International Red Cross to visit prisoner-of-war hospitals in Brussels, Malines, Ghent, Paris, and Rouen, amongst other places. On the whole his report was not unsatisfactory; thus the wounded at Malines hospital are "satisfied," being under the care of two Army doctors, Major R. W. Ganderson and Major D. N. Stuart. On being passed fit the men are given a complete double set of underclothing by the Belgian Red Cross before being sent to the prison camps in Germany. But warm underclothes were badly needed in some of the hospitals, and the wounded often asked for soap.

Now here is a letter from a British officer who is imprisoned in Oflag VII C/H; it was dated December 10 and was received by his



BRITISH PRISONERS in Germany lead a monotonous life, and after their day's work, which may be arduous road-making or canal construction, games provide a very welcome diversion and keep their minds occupied. Two prisoners above are keeping their wits alive with a game of chess, while their comrades follow the moves closely.

Photo, Fox

Lives of Toil and Boredom Are Their Lot //



wife on January 8 by air mail via Lisbon. " We rise at 7.30 a.m. and have a half-litre of ersatz coffee. Parade or roll-call is at 9.15. Lunch is at 11, and usually consists of soup, sometimes thin and sometimes thick, and potatoes. Twice a week we get a meat and potato mash instead. Next meal is at 4 p.m., of more soup and potatoes, or on Sunday a 2-oz. Camembert and some jam with coffee, or Red Cross tea if we have any. Two other meals a week in the afternoon are

either cheese or sausage, tea or coffee. We get half a litre of milk two or three times a week, which we pay for. Our supper comes out of the above, with 10 oz. of bread which we get every day. Naturally, parcels are we comed for a change of diet ! "

Thus it is clear that, while the prisoners may receive rations comparing quite fairly with those issued to their Nazi guards, they may well complain about the quality and monotonous character of their diet.



PARCELS OF FOOD and comforts, dispatched through the British Red Cross, are eagerly awaited by our men who are prisoners-of-war in Germany for the rations of a prisoner are by no means lavish. Small wonder, then, that the arrival of the parcels post at a P.O.W. camp in Germany is a red-letter event in these men's lives. Lower photo, British prisoners are seen clearing away the debris of bombed and shelled buildings in Calais, work that puts a keen edge on the appetite. Centre, parcels are being stamped prior to dispatch at a parcels centre of the British Red Cross.

Photo, Fox, Photopress and Planet News

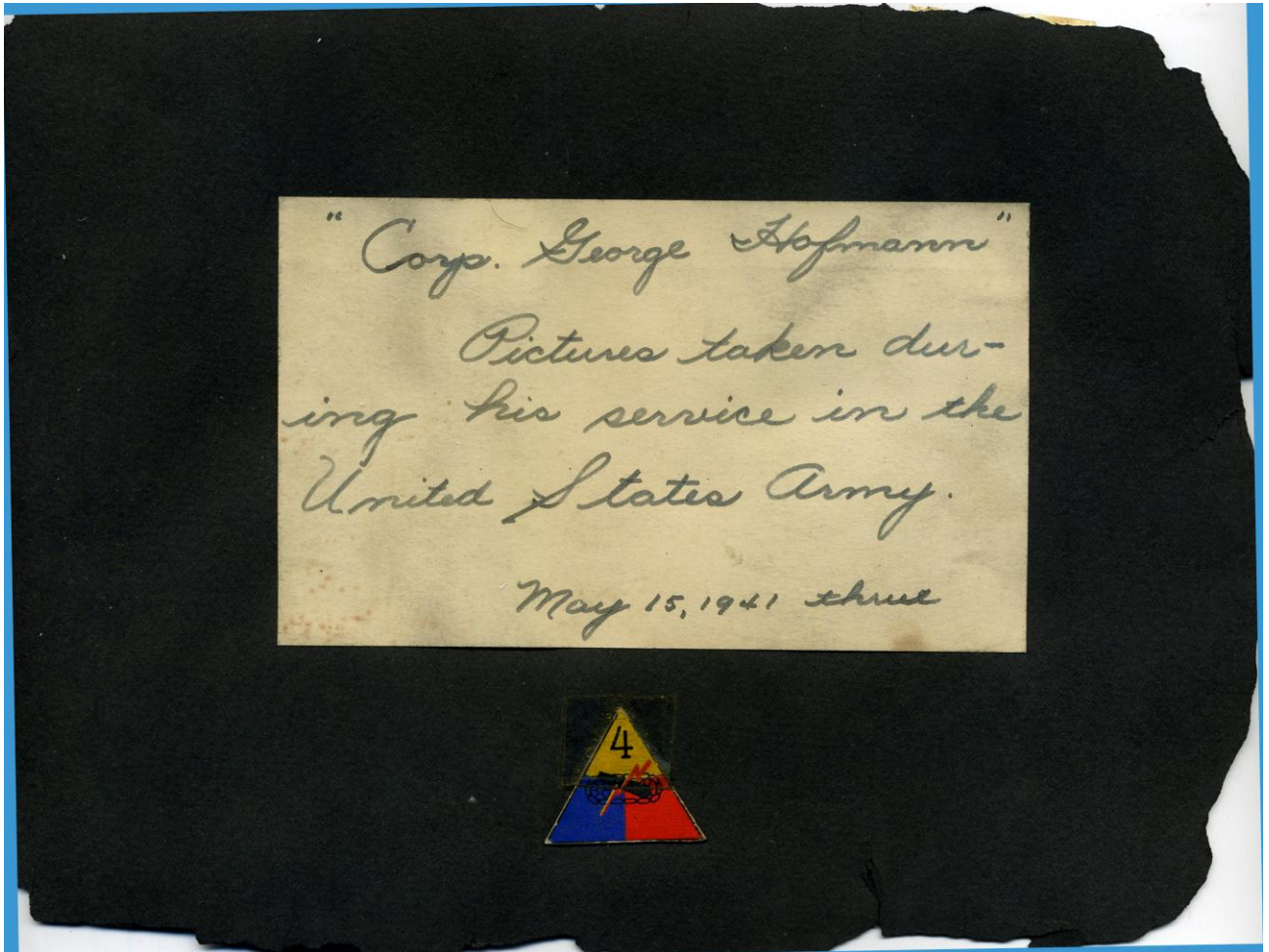
Packing Parcels of Good Cheer for the Prisoners



THE RED CROSS organization faced a difficult task after the Battle of France in sending parcels to prisoners of war in Germany. Many of the thousands of men posted as "missing" were prisoners, but for a time the Red Cross had in its possession the names of only a fraction of the total number. Moreover, parcels have to travel from a British port to Lisbon, thence by rail to Barcelona, from Barcelona by sea to Marseilles, and then overland to Geneva. A 10-lb. parcel is sent by the Red Cross every week to each of our 44,000 prisoners of war in Germany. *Photo, For*

BASIC TRAINING

As she often did in life, George's girlfriend and future wife kept a scrapbook of memories. I find it ironic that the cover page reads, "May 15, 1941 thru ..." with the final date never filled in.



Pine Camp

Pine Camp: In 1907 the Black River Great bend area was first used by the NY Guard for summer maneuvers as Camp Hughes. In 1908, Brigadier General Frederick Dent Grant, son of General Ulysses S. Grant, was sent there with 2,000 regulars and 8,000 militia. He found Pine Plains to be an ideal place to train troops. The following year money was allocated to purchase the land and summer training continued there through the years. With the outbreak of WWII, the area then known as Pine Camp was selected for a major expansion and an additional 75,000 acres of land was purchased. By Labor Day 1941, 100 tracts of land were taken over. Contractors then went to work, and in a period of 10

months at a cost of \$20 million, an entire city was built to house the divisions scheduled to train here. Eight hundred buildings were constructed; 240 barracks, 84 mess halls, 86 storehouses, 58 warehouses, 27 officers' quarters, 22 headquarters buildings, and 99 recreational buildings as well as guardhouses and a hospital. The three divisions to train at Pine Camp were General George S. Patton's 4th Armored Division (Gen. Creighton Abrams was a battalion commander here at the time), the 45th Infantry Division and the 5th Armored Division. The post also served as a prisoner of war camp. Pine Camp became Camp Drum in 1951.



World War II Expansion.

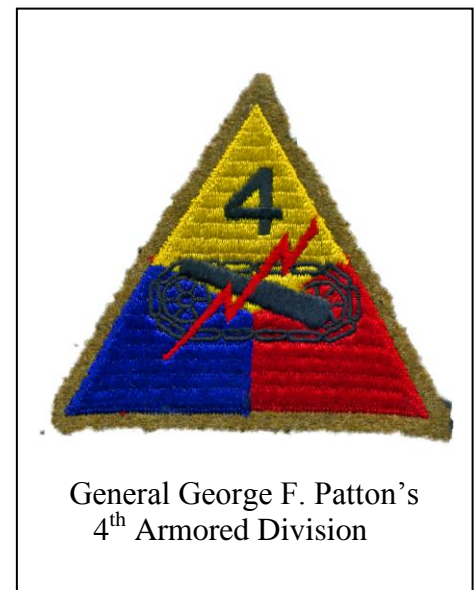
With the outbreak of World War II, the area now known as Pine Camp was selected for a major expansion and an additional 75,000 acres of land was purchased. With that purchase, 525 local families were displaced. Five entire villages were eliminated, while others were reduced from one-third to one-half their size.

By Labor Day 1941, 100 tracts of land were taken over. Three thousand buildings, including 24 schools, 6 churches and a post office were abandoned. Contractors then went to work, and in a period of 10 months at a cost of \$20 million, an entire city was built to house the divisions scheduled to train here.

Eight hundred buildings were constructed; 240 barracks, 84 mess halls, 86 storehouses, 58 warehouses, 27 officers' quarters, 22 headquarters buildings, and 99 recreational buildings as well as guardhouses and a hospital. Construction workers paid the price, as the winter of 1941-42 was one of the coldest in North Country history.

The three divisions to train at Pine Camp were General George S. Patton's 4th Armored Division (Gen. Creighton Abrams was a battalion commander here at the time), the 45th Infantry Division and the 5th Armored Division.

The post also served as a prisoner of war camp. Of those prisoners who died here, one Italian and six Germans are still buried in the Sheepfold Cemetery near Remington Pond.



General George F. Patton's
4th Armored Division



Issued to... Hofmann Pine Camp, N.Y.
 Station
 Date Issued... 6.14 Ammunition Train, 66th F.A. (AT&A)
 Organization
 Due Back... 6.16 June 14, 1941
 Date

Hofmann, G.A. Pvt. 32091685
 Name Rank ASN

of this organization has permission to be
 absent from Camp and his organization from
1:00 P.M. 14 1941 to 5:00 A.M. 16 1941
 for purpose of visiting N.Y. City
by rail
Ansel P. Challenger
 Capt. Commanding, XXXX

..... Pine Camp, New York
 Station

.....
 Organization

.....
 Date

.....
 Name Rank ASN
 of this organization has permission to be
 absent from Camp and his organization

.....
 for the purpose of visiting N.Y. City

.....
 Captain XXXX
 Commanding.

No. 240483

**MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S
 PERMIT**

Serv & Am Btry 66th Armd FA Bn.
 (ORGANIZATION)

Pine Camp, New York
 (STATION)

16-2226 GPO

Q. M. C. Form 226
 (Rev. Apr. 17, 1939)
 (Rev. May 13, 1940)

Pine Camp, New York
 (Place)

March 1, 1942

George A. Hofmann
 George A. Hofmann

Tech 5th Serv & Am Btry 66th Armd FA Bn
 (Name, rank and organization)

I CERTIFY THAT Tech 5th George A. Hofmann
 has demonstrated proficiency in driving (par. 16, A/R 850-15)
 the types of vehicles listed below as per signed authentication.

TYPE VEHICLE	AUTHENTICATION (Signed by a Commissioned Officer)
Car, half-track	<u>JFW MacRae</u>
Car, passenger	<u>JFW MacRae</u>
Motorcycle	
Tank, heavy	
Tank, light	
Tank, medium	
Tractor	
Tractor-truck (semi-trailer)	
Trucks, cargo, 3/4-1 1/2 ton	<u>JFW MacRae</u>
Trucks, cargo, 2 ton & larger	<u>JFW MacRae</u>
Vehicle, wheeled, combat	

16-2226

66th Field Artillery (Arm'd.)

Name George A. Hofmann

Grade Pvt. Organization Am. Trn.

Has permission to be absent from his organization
 and station at any time when not on duty.

Peter J. O'Rourke
 PETER J. O'Rourke
 2nd Lt. 66th FA (Arm'd)
 Commanding

NO. 32091685



"all set to go"



"Pup tents"

"Army dog house"



"X marks the spot"

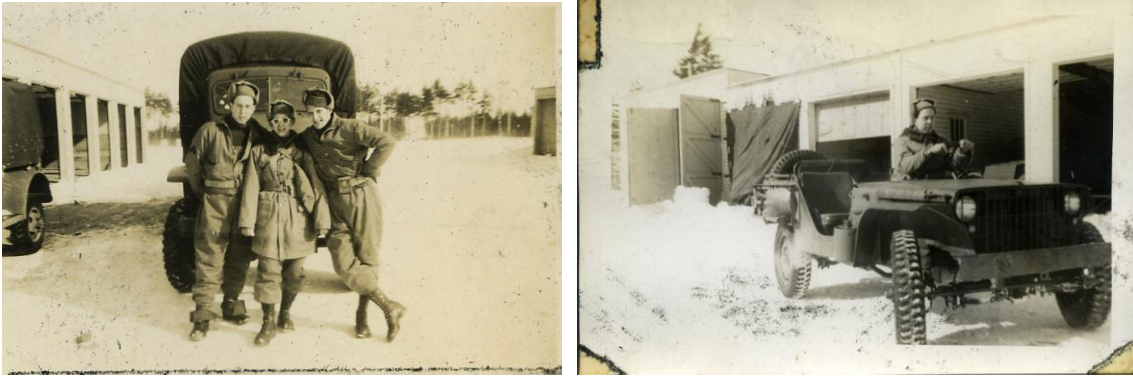


"Some truck! eh"

"The first truck."

Winter in Watertown, New York was a new experience for George. He had never felt cold like that before but many trips home on weekend passes made it manageable.

Unfortunately, on the cold winter's day these photos were taken, 6000 miles away it all got serious. There were no more games. This was preparation for war.



It was December 7, 1941 – a day that would indeed live in infamy.

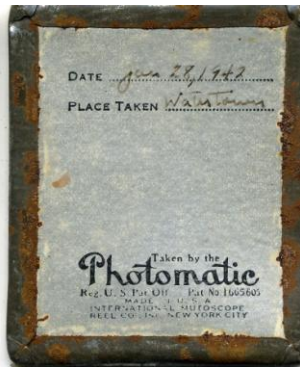
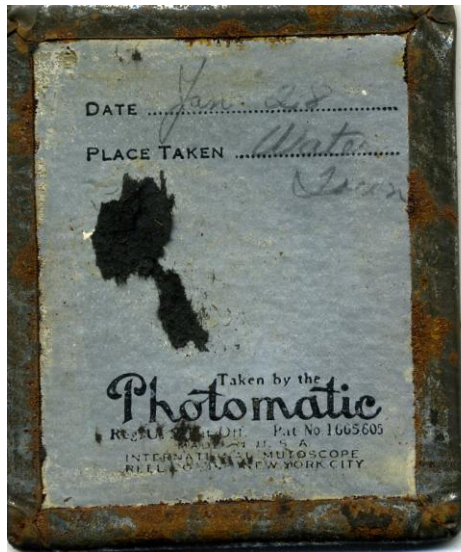


Photo # 80-G-40556 Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack, 7 Dec. 1941

Everything started to move at light speed. The trips home were more treasured as the future was now ominously up for grabs. Plans were made quickly and George and Hazel were wed in a hurried ceremony in upstate New York on January 28, 1942.



Remembering her ever present radiant smile, for me the photos on her marriage license told of a woman who was very frightened of what was to come and the poem she wrote came straight from the heart.



My dear, as I send you this
message
I know, though we seem far
apart
We really are not, for we
can't be
When always you're here in
my heart.

In thought I am constantly
with you
Wherever you go, I am
near
Repeating, "Good Luck and
God Bless you,"
For always I'm loving
you, dear.