

am a very rude old man. I have all the cares of the Soviet Union on my shoulders and I cannot afford to relax and be cordial and gay.

“Molotov here (He was standing in the corner.) He can afford to be friendly and carefree – I make his decisions for him.”

And then for two and a half hours he talked and Mr. Johnston said it was the most fascinating experience he ever had. At the end Mr. Johnston asked him for an autographed picture. “Better than that,” Marshal Stalin said, “We’ll have our picture taken together.

But Mr. Johnston said, “It’s midnight and there are no photographers around.”

Stalin said, “I have a better idea, we’ll have a moving picture taken.

Mr. Johnston said again, “But it’s midnight and there are no photographers.”

Stalin pressed a buzzer and the door flew open and in walked three photographers with their camera equipment all set up.

Mr. Johnston said, “Let’s get Harriman into this picture too.”

So the three had their picture taken.

Stalin said, “What do you think of this? A communist between a Republican and a Democrat. Maybe I’ll be the means of bringing you two together.”

But Mr. Johnston said, “No. You will never do that because ours is not a one-party administration.

Mr. J. as I suspect we all must do, puts all his faith in the UNO’s Security Council and says, “we must make it work.

“Otherwise there will be no civilization.”

Well I hope I haven’t bored you with all this conversation. It thrilled me so, of course I got it first hand, that I thought you would like to hear a little of it...

...BILL HERE AGAIN – So I have kissed the hand that shook the hand of the man who conducted an intimate conversation with Joseph Stalin. I hope that you enjoyed Edna’s letter. Visit billserle.com and click on the *Edna’s Love Letters* tab to see more.



ME AND JOSEPH STALIN

I find myself the proud custodian of a bit of world history. I published the material in *Edna's Love Letters, An important Life*, Compiled by her favorite son, in 2015. It is primarily a collection of loving letters written by my mother, Edna, to her sister Virginia Roets.

Aunt Virginia gave me the letters in 1975. She had saved them all, about 40 letters, dated from 1923 through 1955. Edna passed away at the age of 52, in 1957. So this was a precious gift that helped me, and my family, better appreciate the woman ho they never met.

I crafted the book, *Edna's Love Letters*, as a kind of biography by incorporating family photos and other materials into a bound book. I printed about 40 copies for family and friends and then put the whole thing on my website, *billserle.com*. It came out as 175 pages in 8 1/2 x 11 inch format. Most of the letters were handwritten on small sized stationery and could not be scanned for print. I transcribed the majority of the, them, but was able to just scan a few that were clearly typewritten.

The following is a fragment of a letter dated Sunday, March 24, 1946. It is a nine-page letter typed on small notepaper. It is on page 131. It started, "My Dearest Virginia," and contained loving family thoughts and news. Halfway along, Mom typed:

Eric Johnston, president of the US chamber of commerce, as you may or may not know is the president of our office, now called the Motion Picture Association of America. The other night his secretary, Merrie Smith, invited me to attend a banquet at the Commodore, a convention of Purchasing Agents of America, at which Mr. Johnston was to be the sole speaker.

We had a table right under his nose next to the dais. He is the most fascinating speaker I have ever heard.

He told us all about an interview he had with Stalin a year or so ago, and Virginia, his description and delivery was so vivid that actually I felt as though I were looking at a movie of the whole thing. He spoke way over an hour and he had everybody's rapt attention. He certainly was a great deep force of thought, and vision and such keen intelligence - some day I wouldn't be surprised to see the rumors materialize about his running for Presidency.

He gave a vivid description of Russia, and her vast natural resources and potentialities. He told us of the interview that he spent one-half hour trying to draw Stalin into a conversation; all the while Stalin kept doodling. Finally Johnston asked him if he was drawing Miss America in distress, and for the very first time Stalin looked him square in the eyes and said, "No. Why?"

And Johnston said, "Well I am in very great distress. I have been trying to talk to you for one-half hour and have been unsuccessful."

Stalin slowly and deliberately put down his pencil, and drawing himself back in the chair said, "Mr. Johnston, I owe you an apology. I

