DEAR DIARY
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Dear Diary,

I just had to write you; Mother’s over caring for Mrs. Tucker while she recuperates from radical surgery and Daddy's still at work. Robb, I suppose, is still working on the Brown’s car. (You know how well he enjoys doing this! He has "tinkered" on cars and with cars ever since he was a wee little fellow,
Father and Mother have said. So he's "in his field," doing this job for the Browns.) At any rate, I'm alone. For a while, at least. And since I have no one here -- presently -- to tell this to (and I felt I just had to "talk it out"), I decided I'd tell you. You have shared so many of my "talks," even though it is always only in writing. I am jubilantly and exultantly happy. Here's why:

You know Ashley, the new girl in our neighborhood? (I wrote you last week that I had met her in the grocery store and I liked her immediately.) Well, today we went down to Starr's Department Store together. (With our mothers' permission, of course.) I had a super-grand opportunity to talk to her. Just the two of us! (I like her even more than I felt I did last week, Diary!)

Ashley and I stopped by the little Weiner Schnitzel place on the corner of Third and Falls Street. We sat down on their uniquely-different but utterly-soft and positively-comfortable chairs, and ordered. (Our waitress was really cute, dressed in true German attire furnished by the Weiner Schnitzel.) By the way, I "deviated" from my usual weiner with kraut and ordered something all new to me -- to my taste buds, I mean. Was it ever delicious! And I can't even remember what it was called! Talk about absent-minded! But truthfully, some of those German names are real tongue twisters. And, generally, they're never pronounced the way I pronounce them. (Do you think I should take some courses in German, Diary?)

Well, like I stated previously, Ashley and I were in the Weiner Schnitzel and we were enjoying our meal immensely. (It was her first time there.) In the round of our very-ordinary conversation, I told Ashley how very thankful I was for our daily family devotions. "I couldn't make it through the day nearly so well without them," I added as I buttered the last half of the homemade roll I was eating.

"Family devotions!" my friend exclaimed, drawing her brow together in a puzzled frown. "What ever are they; vitamins? exercise? Do you eat them or drink them or. . .? Hey," she remarked, looking suddenly wise, "you said devotions. Right?"

I nodded as I bit into the deliciously-light roll. "Devotions!" Ashley stated again, with an exclamation mark sounding in her voice. "I should know what that means, but. . . ."
"Do you never have family devotions?" I asked, incredulous, trying to conceal my shock.

"I never heard of this until just now, Kimberly; when you just mentioned it, or them or whatever, a minute ago. But I'm really curious; what do you do with them?"

Oh, Diary, I'm ashamed of myself: we take so much for granted. So many things..., our everyday scripture memorization, our daily time of praying and Bible reading for instance, have never once been named or heard of by those 'round about us! And yet Jesus stated that we, yes, I said we, were to be witnesses unto Him "in Jerusalem [at home], and in all Judaea [our neighbors], and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

I hung my head in shame; I felt like crying, Diary! I felt like I was guilty.

"Kimberly, what do you believe happens when one dies?"

Ashley brought me quickly and abruptly out of my deeply contrite thoughts with her new question. It was like she pulled it right out of the air and projected it to me.

"What do you mean, Ashley?" I asked.

"Well. . . ." She studied my face for a long time. "Do you believe there's more?"

"More what?" I wanted to know.

"Well, is there something more after one dies or does death end it all? I mean, do we just die like the animals and that's the end? My folks say that's it: it's the grand finale."

"Do you believe this, Ashley?" I asked, trying to hide and conceal my shock once again. I brushed my hand across my eyes, wanting to fully realize and believe that I was actually still in America and not in some remote heathen village.

"I . . . I don't know, Kimberly," she stammered. "I've tried to believe it; tried telling myself that my parents wouldn't lie to me. Still. . . ."
"You are in doubt, right?" I said.

Again Ashley's eyes studied my face eagerly. I thought she was going to cry. My heart ached for her: for sixteen years she had been taught that death ended everything; that there was no hereafter. Imagine this!

"I . . . I'm not sure," she confessed candidly. "I want to believe my parents, and I try to believe them, Kimberly. But deep inside, well, I . . . I'm afraid."

"Of dying?"

"Of dying, yes, and of the unknown. Since I met you, well . . . Kimberly," she cried, "I'm afraid my parents haven't told me the truth. You believe differently. And . . . and you are different. I feel good in your company; I'm never afraid or worried that you'll want to do wrong things nor go to places where we'll get into trouble. What is it, Kimberly? Please tell me. Help me. You have such inner serenity about you. What makes you so different from the others whom I've met since moving here?"

Tears literally and actually spilled down my face, Diary. I had been praying for the right opportunity and time to speak to my new friend, and now God had opened the door wide for me.

I began with my early conversion. By "early," I mean I told her that I was nine years old when I became mightily convicted of my sins and for my sins and that I came to Jesus for forgiveness and pardon. A short time later on, I said, God's Holy Spirit cleansed my heart and filled me with His Spirit.

I told Ashley about my wonderful Lord and Savior in as simple a way as I could; told her how Jesus had left Heaven's glory and splendor and come to earth to die for our sins... hers, mine and everybody's. On and on I went, using scriptural portions as the basis of everything I said. I told her the meaning of my term "family devotions" and why we had this on a regular daffy basis and what it had done in strengthening our family ties as well as our ties connecting us to Heaven; told her that, yes, there was life after death and, no, death did not end it all; there was a hell to shun and a Heaven to gain.
I quoted Jesus, and what He told Nicodemus about being born again, stating that it was the only way to get ready to die and be ready for Heaven. She sat on the edge of her seat, Diary, her eyes never leaving me while I spoke. Her face was a study of true concentration. She reminded me of a baby robin with its mouth wide open for the next bite of food. She literally absorbed every word I spoke, taking each thing in like a sponge takes in water.

Oh, Diary, I have no way of really describing what all took place nor how fast it all happened. My dear, new friend was so open and receptive to everything I said and told her that she finally grabbed my hand and, clasping it like it was a life and death matter, which, by the way, it truly is, she cried out, "Oh Kimberly, I must have this forgiveness, too! I must! I must! I want to go to Heaven. Even if it means going alone. I'm going to go. Help me. Please help me!"

And here's the wonderful part, Diary; while clasping my hands there in the Weiner Schnitzel, I prayed with Ashley and she was gloriously converted! Oh, it was wonderful; it was real and genuine. Her face lit up like a bright light with Heaven's glory. We laughed and cried and thanked God, then laughed and cried some more. I was ecstatic with joy and blessing; I had won my first-ever soul for Jesus. It gave me a glorious feeling; a feeling and a desire that I wanted to make this a constant thing in my life. I had witnessed before, to be sure; many times, in fact. But I had never seen the fruit of my labors like I witnessed today in Ashley. Now you see why I couldn't wait until my folks came home; I feel like I'm about to soar with joy and thanksgiving to Jesus for saving my friend.

Thanks, Diary, for "listening." I just had to tell someone.