

Chapter 5

August–December, 1943

August 1, 1943—Jersey City and Matawan

My dearest,

You'd like this place I'm writing from today. I have a chair pulled up to your dining room table. El is in the kitchen washing the baby's bottles and fixing the formula for the day. Bette and your Dad are having a nap for themselves. It's too hot to crochet so I gave up and decided to write to you.

We all had a little excitement today listening to "The Stars and Stripes" [a radio show broadcast from Britain, featuring *Stars and Stripes* reporters, hosted by Ben Lyon]. When Ben Lyon was giving the buildup for Andrew Rooney I thought it was going to be you. They switched the program from the WAAC back to London and the way he announced it, I thought sure it was going to be you or Philip Bucknell. Maybe one of these Sundays, we'll get a break.

I went to Dottie's yesterday for a while. Al finished up his vacation by going golfing with Mr. Drayton and Artie so Dot and I went to see Grace. Ruth T. and Berta were there. Grace has a lovely apartment, one of the five-room apartments. Her baby, Faith, is adorable. Looks a little like Grace but more like Artie I believe.

Dottie looks very well... any day now. She's anxious for it to be over now. I think she's a little frightened. She didn't say anything and don't you mention it either but I think she is, but then I guess that's to be expected. Maybe I will be, too. They had received your letter Friday and gave it to me to read. We all had a laugh over "Charlotte." Al says he's going to write now and address it to Sgt. Charlotte Kiley.

Tom is supposed to get a three-day pass sometime this week.

There's a swell breeze coming in this back window. I should have brought my crocheting here.

The pictures have been taken once more so here's hoping. It seems the camera was new and I was its first victim and since it wasn't adjusted properly, it made a mess of me. Mr. Todd was swell about these. I think he took more this time than last... surely one of them will be good.

The above is as far as I got at 195. I'm back at the Heuser domain now. I got back just in time to have a big chicken dinner. That's two big dinners I've had today. At the rate I'm going, there will be an additional five pounds picked up along the way. Right now, I feel as if I've had enough to last a week.

There was a V-letter waiting for me and one from Mom. I had reason to worry. She was sick. That's why I didn't hear from her. That's what frightens me sometimes and makes me wonder if what I'm doing is right.

Ruth T[otten] mentioned Saturday that there is a young book on the way, that she has been writing for months telling you all the dirt. I know... you must miss hearing from them because, after all, they are part of your life. All these babies are keeping them busy. Ruth Rommel's father has been quite ill. She hasn't been to see Dottie in quite a while, so that's probably why you haven't heard from her.

As for 195, El has her hands full with the baby and keeping house. Tom only hears from her three times a week now so it's up to Bette to do most of the writing and, of course, Father John always has a good excuse for not writing. He's the busiest man I know.

Your Dad looked well... busy with dinner as usual. This morning he went to an early Mass and we went to quarter to eleven. I slept until 9:00 this morning. That's the first Sunday in quite a while. I made the five-fifty-four to Matawan tonight and was it scorching coming down!

I guess El or Bette couldn't tell you much about the christening since neither of them were there.

She's getting so big, Annice I mean, 10 lb. 8 oz. now. She notices things now and those big blue eyes are going to get her most anything she wants. She's a little like Tom around the eyes, but definitely Kiley from there on... nose, dimples, mouth and chin.

Say, what's this you are saying about furnishing 50% of the quota for Father John's house? I take it you are referring to you and I. Aren't you expecting a little too much? Seems to me Father John said forty nieces and nephews. I think we'll let the others do their share, too!

I think that's what has been my trouble here of late, seeing too many movies. I liked "The More the Merrier," though, even though I did wish I could reach out in the movie and find your hand. Our "dorm" isn't quite that bad.

You don't think any of those WAACs will be taking over your job? I hope not.

Expanding the paper as Andrew Rooney described will make more work for all of you. He said there would be a magazine section on Friday, with short stories, etc. Hearing him talk about the familiar names of Bob Moora and Bud Hutton made you seem so near. I wondered if you were there at the broadcast.

I've covered a lot of pages here, but they are small, skimpy ones. You'll be thinking you're getting something.

I keep wondering if it does me any good to go to 195 but I keep going back for more. You're always so near and yet so far away there. There are so many things to associate you with there... little things.

Your letter did me so much good... the airmail. My mind has been at rest for the first time in days. I should have told you about it before instead of putting it off. Now I can look at recruiting posters without a qualm of conscience hurting.

It's late again and I want to dash a note off to Mom before turning in.

I'm missing you again tonight. It's so nice out... the stars are bright and they seem to be shining just for us. I almost wish I was at the Replacement Depot so I could call up and say, "Meet me in London at the Washington Red Cross Club." Maybe we'd have a coke and sit in a corner somewhere.

I love you so much... always remember that. Keep well and no misbehavin' now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

You get two letters on this mail. Just discovered the last one didn't get mailed. I was sure I mailed it Saturday in J. City... that's your scatterbrain for you.

August 3, 1943—London

Hello Sweetheart,

It appears as though we did boast too much about our speedy mail service. Still, the three I have received from you during the last few days make me feel 100% better. Almost two weeks after the one of July 14 arrived, the ones of July 7, and 9 came along.

You asked lots of questions... just lots. And, I'm using this to answer those I can. I'll cover your 10-star special of the 14th in a special airmail of my own.

After seeing Eddie with his GI haircut you wondered if I had one and if so, to make proper adjustments. While I was in Ireland it couldn't be helped and I had one for six months. One of the company clerks was a barber. Now, although I've had my locks shorn by barbers from London to Plymouth to Liverpool to Glasgow to Oxford to Edinburgh, it doesn't look too badly.

I enjoyed the word picture of you pushing the perambulator bearing Annice. Nothing like getting used to it... me holding babies on trains and you taking them for airings.

You also asked if the photographer in the picture was from Life. No, he wasn't. The Life photogs over here are Dave Scherman and Hans Wild. And, while we're on the subject of pictures, I sure would like to see the motion pictures Father John has but if I did get them I don't know where I'd find an 8mm projector. Signal Corps uses only 16 and 32. Unless he has already sent them, I think I should wait.

About your pictures, you said you knew I'd favor the "glamour" snap over the others. Looking back over the letter that accompanied the pictures, you'd never know. You just won't give me credit, that's all. I distinctly remember you saying that you were sure I wouldn't like it and in so many words intimated you were just including it with the others. Still, when you say you know me pretty well, that makes me feel great.

You shouldn't feel too badly about "breaking" Todd's camera. I always said he was a shoemaker, instead of a photographer. And since he can't take a picture of someone as photogenic as you I know he's a shoemaker. All right, so I'm giving you the Irish blarney.

You needn't worry about my hand, Billee. It really isn't anything. I had about a dozen violet ray treatments, then was forced to skip a week because of travel, but I've started to take them again.

As far as boarding a ship and heading this way after the war, as per advice from John, you've got me in the same boat with Benny. He's trying to figure out some way to get his wife over here now, he's that bad.

I've written to Ray Roche, keeping in mind the possibility that he mailed the letter to 195. If so, El will have it.

This isn't meant to be one of the love letters you like so much. More to come.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 5, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I have every reason to be in bed, but here I am. It's very late, but I've neglected you all week and after getting your letter today, I had to write. Now I'm the one that's ashamed. Is that a scolding I hear coming up?

Seems like every night something has happened to keep me from writing. We've worked late all week and had company a couple of nights so it just didn't get written.

It's a gorgeous night out. There must be a million and one stars and they all seem to be shining especially for us.

Can you imagine Asbury Park dimmed out? It was my first visit tonight. Agnes and I went to Red Bank to take in a movie and discovered we'd already seen it so at her suggestion we went on to Asbury. It was fun but dimmed out you couldn't see much, not even the ocean. They have a heavy canvas screen all along the boardwalk to keep what light there is in. Only in one place, away from all the lights, did we find a place to see the surf. We sat for awhile watching it, both of us lost in our thoughts. I was seeing you atop the cliff above the channel thinking of me and sharing your loneliness, too. But I never feel really lonely so long as I have you in my heart.



Asbury Park, circa 1940.

We just got home a bit ago. We walked quite a bit, taking in the sights and had popcorn and a candied apple on a stick. I haven't had one since I was a kid and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

I called El today to wish her a happy birthday. Twenty-one, already. She seems older than that, Charles, but then she's had plenty to make a young woman of her this past year.

Your trip sounded like a pleasant one. Mom will enjoy hearing that you were in Cardiff. Both her parents came from there as children.

I love the pictures of you holding the baby... practicing? I can imagine the little "junior miss" was quite thrilled at being asked to tea by one of those dashing Yank soldiers. She'll probably tell her

grandchildren about that incident in her life. I can see you taking her hand and guiding her through the train to wherever you had tea.

I'm sorry there wasn't mail for you, knowing how I feel when that happens to me I can appreciate it only too well. Cheer up, though, there should be a few on the way.

How in the world are you going to get all those letters home? 145 of them... enough for a book almost, isn't it?

I was selfish for writing the way I did during that time we were making our memories and I'm truly sorry.

Sometimes, of course, I wish we could have been married before you left but that happens when I get to feeling a little sorry for myself.

For your peace of mind, I'm glad you were practical. You would have worried about me a great deal and possibly there might have been that "pitcher" on the scene by now and it wouldn't have been fair to you, both of us having so little time together. It sounds like I've turned practical too but I have had a lot of time to think about it. Since it was done this way, I'm glad, but if we had it to do over again, there would be a different story. My letters would be addressed to Mrs. Charles Kiley.

The fall of Mussolini has seemed to change the whole course of events, together with the conquering of Sicily almost complete... Catania fell today... it seems as though our prayers are being answered.

There was an article about Lt. John Kiel in one of the N.Y. papers and his part in the Rome raid. He was a bombardier on one of the Forts. One of the captions was, "Ex-Altar Boy Bombs Rome." He is stationed in Cairo. He sent a message to Edie [one of Charles' Jersey City "gang"] via another Lt. and said he would be home in September.

My brother is getting his furlough this week and going to Massillon. He expects to be sent somewhere here in the East and mentioned Mitchell Field. Mom is going to Massillon to meet him. I'd like to go but I'm afraid not this time. The boss told me definitely my vacation would begin October 4... two weeks, and I'm going home.

Mind if I turn in here? I'm falling asleep and I want to make First Friday in the morning. Goodnight, my darling. I love you. I'll write over the weekend.

More love and all my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 6, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

I have a few minutes before I go home, so thought I'd dash off a note to you via V-mail for a change.

I called Dottie a few minutes ago and she feels swell... nothing happening yet. Her doctor has had a nervous breakdown and his assistant is in the army so she had to take a new doctor to her, an oldie. I had to laugh. She asked him when???. And he said her guess was as good as his. I think I'd be tempted to hit him with something. Good news... Al has been deferred until January. He's in 2B now. That's a relief to them, I know.

Today dawned warm again even after the cool breeze we had last night, but thank goodness I haven't had any trouble sleeping through all the heat. The only bad night was the other night and that wasn't due to the heat. I can blame that on my bedfellow. A mosquito decided to take up quarters with me for the night and what a time I had. Every time I turned the light on he'd zoom away and leave me cussing at him. What a night. I never did catch him, but he sure got me more than once.

Last night I dreamed about you for the first time in ages and you had come home. You were still in uniform and as near as I can make out we were all at Marty's... the whole gang. There was snow on the ground. Maybe it's a sign or something, but it made nice dreaming.

I've lost \$600, and this isn't the way to find it, I know, writing to you but I'm disgusted. Don't get excited; it's only in my ledger. I'm waiting now for Marge to check it another way. I could have been home long ago if it hadn't been for that.

I hate to be piggish, but I hope there is a letter waiting for me when I get home... maybe one like that one that came yesterday. I'm still waiting for word from my brother. I know they expect me, but I'm afraid not this time. I'll pray that he'll be sent here in the East and maybe I can see him then.

Marge and I got up early this morning and made First Friday. My Mass and Communion this morning was for Sister Mary Annice. You know she died, didn't you? Father John was there last Thursday and she died on Friday. That was her wish, though, that he be there as soon before it happened as possible. I'm very glad that he was able to be there. El said that in spite of his expecting it that it was a shock. He went back again last Sunday night.

That seems to be all this time. Marge has finished so I'll have to go. I'll write again on the weekend.

I love you, and miss you more than ever but something tells me that it won't be long now. 'Bye for a bit.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 8, 1943—London

Evening sweetheart,

Yes, I've broken that promise never to type a letter again unless it was V-mail. But, it was a question of doing this or letting another day or so go by without writing and I want to say much more than I can fit on V-mail. This blasted paper doesn't hold ink very well and it's all that is available. Forgive me with a great big kiss, pretty please?

I should have started this with, "Evening, stepchild," because I've given you reason to feel that way during the last couple of weeks and your "airmail" of July 28... yep, got it today... says you have been feeling step-childish because of no mail. Still, while I have sent out a couple a week, I do feel as if I'm neglecting you when it takes time to reach you.

When I received the letter today, on the heels of your "news from heaven" dated July 21 and 22, I noticed a little smear of lipstick on the back of the envelope. And, I love it. Maybe it sounds silly, but it brings with it the fact that your lips have touched the letter. Do you still use my favorite flavor?

After pouting a bit in recent letters because I was feeling step-childish re the mail, your letters during the week have been lifesavers. The ones dated July 21 and 22 arrived together on Thursday (this is Sunday) and earlier in the week, I had three. So, getting six in a week puts me in the class of privileged characters.

I wish I could tell you how much your letters mean, Billee. You see, they not only tell me those things precious to us but I'm beginning to rely on you to tell me just about everything taking place at home. Of the last 20 letters I've had, at least 16 or 17 have been yours. Why, I get more news of 195 through you than I ever received before—even where Annice is concerned. You make it sound as if she were your daughter. There are the little things about Father John and Eddie being home, Tom home to take the baby for an airing, how Dot is coming along, etc. And this past week, you've written such long, long letters. I could love you to pieces for every line.

I'm glad you gave Dad the hankies for Father's Day. He loves to be remembered and it is a comfort to have you think of those little things I can't handle now.

You asked me if Col. Peterson, who failed to come back from a P47 sortie the day I was there, has been found. No word that I know of. And, I am looking ahead to the day when we can talk about the things I want to now but must hold. We'll save the stories for rainy nights because I'm going to be much too busy telling you and showing you how much I missed you these long, long hours that have turned into days that have turned into months.

You said Axis reports claimed the San Lorenzo basilica was hit during the Rome raid. The reports were correct but even at that the bombardiers did a remarkable job.

The raid was rehearsed for weeks and special crews picked for the job and hitting only one non-military target is amazing. The British press scream when a church or school is hit and I'm not being at all unpatriotic in saying they're all wet. I've talked with bomber crews about it and I have never heard one, either RAF or USAAF, say they could tell a church and school from any other building at a bombing altitude, or, even at low level going at high speed. The targets are designated by areas and if a church or school happens to be in



the area it's just a case of bad luck. Still, there is lots of evidence to the contrary in London. Churches have been demolished in places where other buildings were comparatively untouched. In

many cases, though, buildings have been repaired whereas churches have not and that makes them stand out so much.

Billee, I repeat, when and if you run short of \$\$\$ you are definitely to go into what WE have. Not that it is a heck of a lot now. I'm still trying to put away a little here and there and send it on. But it costs so damn much to live in London. It only takes a movie or two at 7, 8 and 9 shillings a show (\$1.40 to \$1.80) to get away from the office, plus a meal out when you're tired of terrible British cooking, to put you behind.

It was so good to hear news of Warren. You sound so much like the big sister I can't picture you to be when you talk of his ruined romance. Yes, I remember when I was 19 and I DIDN'T get engaged at that age. I waited until Miss Right came along to take my heart completely and for good before I thought of saying, "Sweetheart, will you come live with me?"

I loved your remembrance of the night I asked you if you put your hair up in curlers. Didn't I ever say why I asked you? I'll tell you. You see, I knew I'd never rest until you were mine, after being with you one short weekend. No, it wasn't hasty judgment. And all the time I wasn't with you I planned our lives. Was it presumptuous? No, it wasn't. I imagined how you'd look in the kitchen, in our corner, in an evening gown, in gingham. And I thought I wouldn't be able to sleep at night if I was coming in contact with those wire curlers, or whatever they are. I don't know... they always seemed to haunt me. Do you mind? You know, too, I do like blue ribbons.

You sound jealous, saying you'd swim the ocean to check one WAAC off the list. Believe me, Mrs. Kiley-to-be, I still wouldn't trade even a little wrinkle of your nose for all the women in the world, and I do mean ALL.

One of the fellows in the office, Joe Fleming (step up and meet my sweetheart, Joe) has listened to me rave about you and asks if you knew a Paul and Eunice Bonham who lived in Asheville, now live in Philadelphia, but who go back to Asheville most every summer. He's a newspaper circulation man and does quite a bit of traveling. He also adds the information that they have a niece called Florentine or something who is in the WAVES.

I have lots more to say, but I'm going to save it for tomorrow. I believe I'll be going away for three days after tomorrow and I want to spend another night so close to you. This trip will take me back to Cornwall on the southwestern coast.

About Bob Moora censoring our love life, I doubt if he's read a line of it. He knows we, or at least I, don't take liberties in mail and just puts his name on the envelope.

I do miss you more than ever, Billee. Love you more and more, and will always. Good night.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 9, 1943—London

Hello again, sweetheart,

Calling on you tonight after reluctantly allowing you to slip from my arms last night. You remember I said I had so many things to say I wanted to save some of them for tonight, before I leave tomorrow for three to four days.

First, I want to tell you how beautiful you looked last night. But that's getting ahead of my story.

I don't often dream. That is, not lately. But you must have been on my mind so much last night that I just took you to sleep with me. I said you were beautiful and I say that because every time I started to say something to you I couldn't speak. Just the craziest dream ever. I don't know where we were or how we came to be together but I could see your face, and, as I said when I wanted to talk with you, I couldn't. I woke during the night some time, thus interrupting the dream, and hoped it resumed when I went to sleep again... but it didn't.

I had a letter from Eddie today, with the enclosed pictures. I'm sending them along for scrapbook possibilities.

Since you described "our scene" in Stage Door Canteen, I'm anxious to see it. But I doubt if it will show over here. There isn't much appeal to a British audience and the chances of me catching it at one of the camps is rather slender.

The cartoon you sent re the child asking his mother what she did in World War II was a riot. But you can tell the ball team their daddy took care of the "doing" while Mummy built the foundation of their lives. And you are taking care of a most important item for me... keeping our corner occupied.

I don't know what to do about those Christmas packages, Billee. Don't know as I want anything special. I can always use cigarettes, cookies, maybe another of those four-star fruitcakes, but even all these can be passed up. You know what I really do want more than anything else, but I can't have it. Or, rather, I should say I can't have you.

I agree with you that Agnes must have tremendous faith. But love is faith... real love and real faith. Someone once said, "you have not known love until you have earned it through faith."



Eddie with his friend, George Fincke, 1943. George Fincke contacted Billee in 2001, after Charles' death. George had seen an obituary and wanted to know if Charles had had a brother named Eddie. George and Eddie had gone through Army training together; he sent Billee about a dozen photographs of Eddie.

I'll be praying you get your vacation, and that you have happy days in Asheville again. Keep me posted when you might go. Another day... a kiss... loving you ever so much... will you come to sleep with me again? 'Night for awhile.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 10, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Did you think I'd forgotten you? This is the first chance I've had to write since Friday when I dashed off the V-letter.

Remember the part-time job I talked about? It materialized this weekend and I worked Saturday and



Buttonwood Manor, Matawan.

Sunday. I'll tell you more about it at a later date. [Billee and Agnes worked on the weekends waiting tables at the Buttonwood Manor in Matawan.]

Last night I went gallivanting with Agnes. A friend of hers had an appointment in Keansburg and stopped by to invite Agnes to go along and she in turn asked me to go. That Keansburg is certainly a rough place... I was glad to leave there.

No mail again today but I guess it's what I deserve for not writing so soon again.

I read over your last letter again tonight. I love the description of the cliff overlooking the Channel. I could think of the "White Cliffs of Dover" then. Your letters always seem to almost breathe, there are so much you.

In order to count your letters, I'd have to take an evening off but I'll do just that. How in the world are you going to bring them back with you, because there will undoubtedly be a few more to add to the total you already have. I love the picture of you reading them over. I do it so often myself, especially when I think I should be getting mail and don't. Some of them already look a little worn from so much handling.

I just finished talking to Mom... sounded swell to hear her voice. We're still awaiting word of Warren's furlough. She says I'm to come for a weekend. She gave me h— about my part-time job and I should come home, etc., but I'm not going home. I'm staying right here on the Jersey Shore 'til Hilter shows that white flag and my "G.I. Joe" comes sailing home again. I hope I'm not being too optimistic when I say I don't think that day is too far away. Something tells me it's going to be sudden and unexpected when it happens. Those people in Europe have been pushed around just long enough and they aren't taking any more. We'll have to wait and see what Churchill and Roosevelt

cook up in this “pow-wow” [the Quebec conference, August 14-24, 1943, during which FDR, Stalin and Churchill decided on the D-Day invasion strategy].

Isn't it amazing about the Normandie? Shows what perseverance and patience will do. [During World War II, French steamship Normandie was seized by US authorities at New York and renamed USS Lafayette. In 1942, the liner caught fire while being converted to a troopship, capsized onto her port side and came to rest on the mud of the Hudson River at Pier 88, the site of the current New York Passenger Ship Terminal. Although salvaged at great expense, restoration was deemed too costly and she was scrapped in October 1946.]



Normandie capsized at Pier 88. Charles and Billee had seen this sight from the top of the Empire State Building in April 1942.

I'm an airplane spotter. Agnes and I, every other Thursday we report to our post from ten 'til two p.m. The first time will be next Thursday. Between now and then we have to learn the types of planes by sound so we can report them correctly.

I wonder if all the pages we've covered with our “dates” wouldn't almost make a bridge across the ocean. We've written a good many miles, that I'm sure of, but miles that have brought us closer together and strengthened our love if that was possible to make it any stronger.

I've felt so good here of late, both mentally and physically in spite of the heat. I think the weekend work helps a lot. The time just flew. I'm probably in for a scolding, but I don't care. I never could sit around much. I like to be busy.

My pictures should be here this week. I'll send them right on via airmail, if I can. I'm anxious to see what the finished product will be like.

I called Dot yesterday. She's fine and has decided to wait for the original date... August 18. Her doctor still isn't back yet.

Did I tell you how her dad has fixed the spare bedroom for the nursery? He painted all the walls and the furniture, even “appliquéd” animals on the furniture. He's really having himself a time. I suggested to Dot, talking about names now, that René would be nice if it was a girl, too. None of the names seem to hit the right note.

Before I forget it in this letter... about your Xmas package, we can send five pounds without a request. Tell me something you need and would like to have. How about underwear, etc? You must be running low after all this time if you haven't been able to buy anything without coupons. I'll find something to surprise you but we may as well send you some things you need. Do you want anything in the food line? When I go home for vacation, Mom and I will make another fruit cake for you.

Four bonds came yesterday: Nov., Dec., June and July. I have to check with the ones in the safety deposit box, but I think that leaves just two missing, January and February. We'll have quite a nice little stack. I should be saying "me" I guess. I love saying "we" and "us" and "you and I."

I'm getting sleepier by the minute and I have my hair to put up... washed it tonight... and I've been waiting for it to dry.

Charles, here I've covered all these pages and never said once "I love you, my darling." My Mass and Communion Sunday was for us again... our reunion... Please, may it be soon.

As you see, the time hasn't seemed so long even though it has been a long time since we've been together, but each letter I write and I receive from you shortens the distance that much more.

Goodnight, my darling, 'til it be tomorrow. Pleasant dreams, my dearest. Be seeing you soon, I'm praying. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 12, 1943—London

Evening, sweetheart,

Bombers going out over the Channel again tonight. Lots of them. Thank heavens they are ours, tonight. I happened to be "on the spot" last night when Jerry took a crack at what the papers first called "a south Anglian town."

These raids aren't like the hit and run London affairs. They mean it in Plymouth, which has more property destroyed than in use, I'm sure. More about that later.

I got back to town about two hours ago (it's now 11:30 p.m.) after a few days in "south Anglia," principally Newquay and Plymouth. Stopping off at the office before coming home to see if my angel left any calling cards while I was away, I was rewarded with two, the airmails of July 29 and Aug. 1. You are priceless and precious. A bit weary from travel, I'm sure I would have come home with a long face if I didn't have "you" to talk with.

There was something significant in both letters, and it made me smile... honestly, it did. You closed out both with a warning about "none of this misbehaving, now." I love you for that. Even though you are ribbing me, I can assure you I ain't misbehavin' ... I'm saving every inch, ounce and particle of my love for you, and only you.

You spoke of changes in both of us. I don't know, Billee. There may be some outward change in me that I'm not aware of but I'm being honest with myself and you when I say I can't notice the semblance of an inward change in the guy who left you behind. And, trying to picture you from your

letters, I can't notice any change in you, either. True, I have met new people lived in new surroundings and in a new country, and as you say, I'm not getting any younger (dammit) but as sure as I'm sitting here tonight, I know I can throw them all away and be the same as I was when I met you.

Some of the best news I get concerns your visits to 195 and N. Arlington. I knew Dottie would be frightened when the time drew near, despite her encouraging tone. But then, I guess, everybody feels like that, for the first, anyway. Sure wish I could be with her for a while. Not that it would do her any good but I think I'd feel better. If anything ever happened to her I'd never get over it, believe me. It may sound strange to hear me be so concerned but I couldn't be more concerned if she were my sister.

You have me worried about Mom, now. I know as well as you do that you should be with her. And if you think it's right to go to her, you go right ahead. I can't tell from your letters whether or not her illnesses are serious but don't let anything stop you once you feel you should go back.

No, the WAACs won't be taking over our jobs. That's one job that men can beat women six different ways. I've seen and met several "sob sisters" over here, Americans, too, and while they're nice people... well, why go into the rest.

I'll have to tell Rooney you caught the broadcast. Yes, maybe one of these Sundays you will get a break and I'll be on one but don't hold your breath until then. Andy's done a couple of stories for the weekly magazine supplement he mentioned. I've been too damn busy getting local stuff to turn in anything for that.

I hope this will be the last typed airmail. Over the weekend, I'm going to try and get some decent stationery. Meanwhile I'm going to dash off a note to Ben's wife. I've been looking at her from a picture frame for six months now and Ben suggested I meet her by mail. I told him she should be very well acquainted with my private life, looking down at my writing to you and he told me to tell her about it. 'Night angel.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 12, 1943—Matarwan

My dearest,

Just a line to let you know I'm thinking of you this night as all the nights that go by. It's lovely out... the moon is shining and there's a soft, gentle breeze that has the smell of rain about it. Something has happened to my star. Haven't seen it in a few nights. What did you do with it... decided I didn't need watching over any longer? Tell it to come back. I miss it.



Agnes and I went to the movies after work and saw Cary Grant in “Mr. Lucky.” I enjoyed it. Maybe you will if you have an opportunity to see it.

I heard Bing sing “You’ll Never Know” tonight. I like that very much. Next time you hear it, pay particular attention to the words. They seem to say so well what I’d like to tell you.

Funny... I’m so bold with my pen and full of confidence. When I see you I’ll

probably choke on the words I want to say and turn shy, but I love you so much I’ll probably be telling you a hundred times a day.

Can’t you see me picking up the phone and asking for the Jersey Journal and then for Charles Kiley? You answer and I’ll say “this is Mrs. Charles Kiley and I just wanted to tell you I love you, darling Mr. Kiley.”

I’m going to love being Mrs. Kiley. Even now, I say the name over and it sounds as if it belongs to me.

Follow up on the “Memphis Belle” in today’s paper. He is to wed a girl from Texas now. I mean that Capt. Robert Morgan. He didn’t waste much time after the Memphis Belle broke the engagement.

Did I tell you about the young commando that is back? He went over about the same time you did. I think in the same convoy. He’s only 21 or 22. He was in the Dieppe raid. [The Dieppe Raid was an Allied attack on the German-occupied port of Dieppe during the Second World War. The raid took place on the northern coast of France on 19 August 1942. The assault began at 5:00 a.m. and by 10:50 a.m. the Allied commanders were forced to call a retreat. Allied fire support was grossly inadequate and the raiding force was largely trapped on the beach by obstacles and German fire. Less than 10 hours after the first landings, the last Allied troops had all been either killed, evacuated, or left behind to be captured by the Germans. Instead of a demonstration of resolve, the bloody fiasco showed the world that the Allies could not hope to invade France for a long time. A total of 3,367 of the 6,086 men (almost 60%) who made it ashore were either killed, wounded, or captured. It involved 5,000 Canadians, 1,000 British troops, and 50 United States Army Rangers.] It was there that I think he was wounded pretty seriously. He was sent back here to Massachusetts for awhile and then home. He has a savings account in our bank and he came in soon after he was home to draw some money. He had such a funny look about him. My heart ached for him. Since then, he has been married and is working in an aircraft factory somewhere near. He came in today to change his account to a joint one and he is so changed. That look is gone and he seems more natural. Guess he is adjusted to civilian life once more. The war is over for him, I guess. John Charanko is the name. Maybe you came across him in your travels.

Did I tell you my vacation time has been definitely settled? Two weeks beginning October fourth and I can hardly wait now. I'll spend a good part of it with you. I'll be in Asheville on the fourth of October and that's an important day for me. I'll be a Catholic a year that day and I'll be engaged to you eighteen months. I think I'll have Father Bauer say Mass for us that day. I'll be there, of course, in St. Lawrence's. I'm going to make my reservations now on the Southerner into Spartanburg. I like that train. I think I'll surprise Mom, not tell her exactly when I'm coming.

The mosquitoes are eating me again tonight. It's late and I should be in bed but I wanted to get this off to you in the morning.

Send along another request for cigarettes, darling. I hope the last packages are there by now. No mail this week yet.

The papers are filled with post-war plans. Things really look bright. God must be listening to us all. Please, may the end be soon.

I love you and miss you more than ever. Keep well, my beloved and no misbehaving. More love.

All my love and kisses, always you Billee

August 16, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

I didn't know whether to start this letter with such an endearing term. But, since I believe I am a very broadminded person and ever willing to give anyone the benefit of a doubt... I did so.

To make a long story short, I want an explanation. In fact, I'm sure I'm entitled to demand one. I've seen a share of brazen actions but this surpasses any of them.

If I said I was shocked, that would be the world's greatest understatement. After all, we have meant to each other. The promises, plans, memories... oh, I can't go on.

What am I talking about? Suppose you examine your conscience and then tell me what you mean by "my bedfellow" even though it is a mosquito. The trouble is, you failed to say in your V-mail of Aug. 6 whether the "skeeter" was a male or female!

I love to tease you, especially on a night like this when a full moon is glowing and I love you so much.

Sitting here, wearing your pajamas (blue set) for the first time, the radio plays "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," and I couldn't agree with anything more.

The packages, 'jamas and hankies as well as the cigarettes and lighter, came today. Don't know what I'd ever do without you, honestly.



I had contemplated wearing more glamorous ‘jamas on our honeymoon, but I’m going to use your blue ones. The size is just a wee bit large, just a wee bit, but after a couple of launderings, they’ll be snug.

No word about Dottie. I laughed over the nonchalance displayed by the new doctor. And you were the first and only one to break the good news about Al’s deferment.

Yours was the first word I had on Sister Mary Annice, too, although I expect John will be telling me soon.

Had letters from the two Ruths during the week, Ruth R. telling me of her father’s illness and Ruth T. raving through 1,000 words over Freddy, her guy in Iceland, is it?

A Jersey Journal, just arrived, carried the story of Johnny Keilt, Edie’s husband, being in Cairo after getting in on the Rome raid. I knew he was down there and figured he went on that job since it was an ideal one for Liberators.



Plymouth, England. 1943

I started to tell you about the raid I was caught in last week but forgot to finish it in my last letter.

The papers said it was Plymouth so I can identify the city. It’s on the south coast where fighter-bombers can get in and out without much trouble. They hung around for an hour while myself and a dozen others took refuge in a basement under a huge oak table.

These raids aren’t like the hit and run London affairs. They mean it in Plymouth, which has more property destroyed than in use, I’m sure.

Don’t get worried, because it’s not often I pass that way. I’ll save the rest of the story for a night in “our corner.” Remind me to tell you.

Brig. Gen. Osborn, head of Special Services in Washington, is here on tour and had an informal conference with about 20 *Stars and Stripes* men this a.m. He’s our big boss and evidently a good one. Congratulated us on putting our Army publication in any theater and he didn’t make it sound like soft soap.

Got to have a tub, curly-locks. Dream about me some more, huh?

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 17, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

I started typing a V-letter tonight but the typewriter is acting up so you'll have to put up with the next best thing. I'm wondering if one of these days I'll be getting a letter like one Warren sent me. "For heaven's sakes," he says. "Can't you write a little plainer? All the words look alike." I won a prize once when I was in the sixth grade for penmanship, believe it or not. Today I'd probably get the consolation prize... you and me together.

According to the paper, sudden activity along the southern coast of England gives the impression that we might be approaching that long-awaited eve of invasion. They are evacuating civilians from those coastal towns. Rickenbacker's report in tonight's paper says that unless a miracle happens, Germany can hold out another year, so I believe in miracles but even another year is better than not having any idea at all. With all these post-war plans crowding the war off the front page, you'd think the enemy had already shown the white flag. We'll just have to sit tight and pray a little harder.

Don't look now, but I think we're going to have a black out. Just heard a siren. I rather imagined you'd spend your time outside the shelters during the air raids. Just be careful, but remember everything so you can tell me. Guess the siren must have been a false alarm, I hope. They usually last an hour and by that time, I could have my letter written.

I rank among the privileged characters now. Two airmails came today, one written the eighth and the other the ninth of August. Not bad time. I was really surprised but pleasantly so since for the past few weeks I've been getting one letter on Thursday. I wanted one tonight and kept hoping on the way home.

My uncle was in New York again. He called last night but I was out (more about that later) so he called again this morning. I won't get to see him this time since he is pretty busy and is leaving in the morning for Baltimore. Sometime I'll tell you what he does. It's interesting but a little on the dangerous side. In fact, I'll have to tell you what it is since it wouldn't be wise to write about it. I would have liked to have seen him, but maybe next time. [Uncle Fred from Massillon. He represented a company that manufactured explosives.]

Today brought a new picture of my sister's children, almost as if they walked in the room. They are such beautiful children. The girls think Johnny the baby looks like me but that's because he looks like our side of the family. He's very blonde so he couldn't be much like me.

I called Dot this morning and everything is still quiet there. I called last night and no one answered so I got a little excited and called Marty to see if anything had happened. She was just visiting the neighbor so it was all for nothing. Dot laughed at me this morning for getting excited, but I can't help being concerned. Yesterday was the sixteenth and she said the eighteenth so you can't blame me for getting alarmed.

Last night, Agnes and I and one of the fellows we work with and another fellow that used to work in the bank but was drafted went out after work. He just got his release because of his family so they asked us to go have a beer before we went home by way of celebrating. We had definitely planned to

make the 6:01 train but that left without us as well as all the others until the ten-twenty four. We did make that one but we had fun. I danced for the first time in months and guess what? I haven't forgotten how. We went to three different places looking for dinner and they had all stopped serving so we ended up with hamburgers.

Tomorrow night, or rather Thursday we go plane spotting from ten 'til two. I hope I'll be able to stay awake.

Look, stop worrying about me. I'm sorry I mentioned my financial difficulty. Since then the problem has been solved temporarily so please go to the movies and eat out whenever you feel like it in spite of the cost, because you'll be going for me, too. That won't make it seem so much. That makes me a little angry when so much is given out over here to their sailors and soldiers, but I guess you all are so many in comparison to the number over here but still it seems like a lot.

Marty said Edie expects John home in September. He has already completed twenty-seven missions. She's getting very anxious now. I don't know how I'd last if you told me you'd be home in September, so don't tell me when the time comes, just come home because I don't think I could take the disappointment if something would prevent you from making it.

Tonight is an anniversary night for us again... a year and seven months. Funny, it used to be just weeks, then months, and we add a year on the time, but as I've said before, it seems like yesterday.

I can't understand why you don't hear more often from 195. El, I know, stays very busy caring for Annice because she does it the way it should be done and she doesn't have much time, but Bette should write. I loved remembering your Dad. It's been a long time since I had a Dad to remember.

I must have asked you a million and one questions in that letter. Fact is, I'd almost forgotten what I asked. You never told me about your inquiry into the matter of metal curlers. I always wondered what was going on in that mind of yours that night because you were so quiet for so long and then to come out with something like that. You'd wonder, too, and remember. I promise not to use the darned things. I'd have to sleep sitting up if I did use them.

Tell Joe the names didn't sound familiar to me, sorry. They were probably "summer people" as we called them, we "natives" of Asheville. Joe is a new name in the office... don't think I've heard you mention him.

I love you dreaming about me even if it was crazy. I'll see what I can do about spending a night or two... in your dreams. I don't think with all the dreaming I do that you've been there more than a half-dozen times. The only time I don't dream is when I eat before I hop in bed. I know there must be something wrong with me. For an example, a week or so ago I ate a cucumber and cheese sandwich and finished a bottle of beer someone left in the icebox and then went to bed and nothing happened... no dreams. I slept like a baby.

When I go home in October, Mom and I will bake you a cake, but there ought to be something you need that we could fill up those five pounds with. Think hard. I'm anxious to hear if the last packages arrived. Write me another letter for more cigarettes. At least I can send you those.

Mother Müller is at St. Genevieve's of the Pines. She'd love getting a note from you, which reminds me... I should answer her letter, too. There is a book she loaned me when I was studying that she borrowed from someone else. When I go to New York again I'll go to the Guild Studio there by St. Francis and see if I can get it to take back to her in October.

This stationery is a riot... this is nearly the last resort. I've been digging in my letterbox trying to salvage anything I could write on. This one has a little scribbling on the other side you can ignore. Since the paper is running out, I guess I'll have to say goodnight, too. I love you and miss you more than ever. Dancing last night brought you back again so close. Here's a special anniversary kiss. Keep well and love me always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 18, 1943—Matawan

Hello again,

It's a lazy day today... not much business so I sit on my stool behind bars and dream about us. I have my money all counted up so that when two o'clock comes, I can finish in a hurry... maybe something like three o'clock... really banking hours.

Much cooler out for a change so this would be a good day to do most anything except go swimming. We might take in a movie or something like that. Father John tells me you spent quite a few afternoons in the movies when you would finish up at the Jersey Journal. That's the only chance I have to go now ... on days like this... what with gas rationing.

Speaking of the Jersey Journal, Father John saw Ray Roche and said he hadn't forgotten about the letter so I'm relieved on that score.

What number film would I buy for your camera? I'd like to have some more pictures so I guess I'll send the film. I have a lot of nerve asking for pictures. Maybe Harry will take some more one of these Sundays soon, again. He has to get in the mood.

Running out of space, but I was missing you and had to dash off a line if only to tell you I love you so much and miss you more than ever. I'll be back again soon in an airmail letter... all right?

'Bye now. All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 21, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

A quiet and restful day, our Saturday, yours and mine, this week. Benny and I took a stroll along the Thames embankment this afternoon on our day off. But I left him to come home and read, and write, and miss you. When I finish, I'll be off to Confession. My intention at the altar rail tomorrow will not be for us, and I know you won't mind. You see, Monday is Dot and Al's second anniversary and my offering will be for them. But I won't forget to ask, "Please, God... somewhere a girl is dreaming... praying."

Your beautiful letter of July 24 in which you enclosed the “Please, God” picture took more than the usual time to reach me, but it was the kind I’d love to get every day I’m away from you.

In parts of your letter, especially in the beginning, you were a bit down-hearted (you call it “rebellious”). But, in the end, you were in my arms again and for the umpty-ninth time warning me, “no misbehaving.” I love it... not the misbehaving but the way you keep an eye on me.

You said you had been thinking of the home we will have, you and I. What will it look like? A fireplace, a corner just for us, a nursery, and what else?

You mentioned Russ Jones being on the radio. [Jones, later with United Press International, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1957 for his coverage of the Hungarian revolt against Russian occupation.] Yes, he made a recording at the same time as Andy Rooney. He went to Africa in December with Ralph Martin and the rest. He came back when trouble started between the London and Algiers editions. I never did tell you about that, did I? Briefly, a Lt. Col. who went down to take over as C.O. of the detachment, wouldn’t give the fellows a free hand in putting the paper out. Relations between the men and C.O. became strained and we brought back all who wanted to come. Only Ralph stayed. While the paper is doing a swell job down there it doesn’t compare with ours, mainly because we have far more experienced men up here and the brass doesn’t interfere.

Like you, I frequently take the “blue ribbon” off your old letters and read them. It’s like reading a book... tracing our love back to the start and following it through the months.

No news of stork activity at N.A. yet which leads me to believe he’s going to be a bit late. The date was Aug. 18, wasn’t it?

Tying together a lot of loose ends surrounding activity by the Air Force and ground force over here. I can foresee a lot of action from here in about two months. So far, more of it has originated from N. Africa and the Middle East, but I’m sure our turn isn’t far off.

I’d like to tell you more, but can’t. Most of the Air Force sorties have been to enemy airfields lately, especially those in the coastal areas. That always has been part of pre-invasion plans. Furthermore, Germany is reported to have rushed 40,000 to 50,000 troops to Denmark. [This was in response to tremendous activity on the part of the Danish resistance to German occupation, possibly aided by Allied support in an effort to divert German troops away from fighting Allied troops. Later in 1943, under the noses of the occupiers, Denmark smuggled nearly all its Jewish citizens to Sweden.] It might well be that a stroke from the west will be coordinated with the usual Russian winter offensive in the war.

I’m going to leave you now. But only for a day. I’ll be back tomorrow to taste your lipstick again, lift you in my arms and just tell you how dear you are to me. Goodnight, sweetheart. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 23, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I was so pleased to find your letter waiting for me today. I always like to get one on Monday to start the week off right.

Once more, “Jerry” finds you on the spot. How do you manage to always be there? I worry and then I don’t because somehow I know everything is going to be all right where you are concerned... perhaps. I’m too sure but that is the way I feel now. There was a time when I didn’t have that assurance but that is past. I’m anxious to hear what happened. In spite of my assurance, take good care of yourself.

Today is Dot & Al’s second wedding anniversary. I wanted to call today but when I found time it was during Al’s sleeping hours. At lunchtime, I went to try and send a telegram and what do you think? They wouldn’t accept it. They are out for the duration. I had one of my own made up. I knew that they no longer had those fixed text messages but I thought you could send one of your own. I did the next best thing... found a cute card and thought of “The Anniversary Waltz” so I did that up (the record) and tacked the card on the front and sent it out this afternoon so it should be there in the morning. I’ll get something later on in the way of an anniversary present. Perth Amboy doesn’t have much to offer in the way of a shopping center.

I called El today and everything is fine there except they haven’t had any mail from you in some time. Father John says not in a month and they can’t understand, so if you haven’t been writing you’d better. El says you should have pictures of the baby by now. Eddie was home this weekend and Tom last weekend. He is still at Greenville and Eddie still is at Pine Camp. She said your dad was well and not having to do any night work lately.

I forgot to tell you that we were rudely interrupted for over half an hour by a blackout. I spent it stretched across the bed taking a catnap.

I was reading about the illustrious Major Morgan of the “Memphis Belle” in yesterday’s Sunday News. His name and face have been familiar to me and still I couldn’t place him in Asheville. Now I know... his father owns the Morgan Manufacturing Company at Black Mt. They are pretty wealthy, but they really aren’t from Asheville. I’m sure the home is in Black Mt. It was a furniture factory before the war but now it’s defense. He must be quite a guy... 24 and married and divorced three times. No wonder the girl in Memphis changed her mind.

Mom is much better now and soon I will have my vacation and I can see for myself but something tells me that I’ll be on the Jersey Shore when that boat drops anchor and my sweetheart disembarks for good. I’ll be near enough to get to you in a hurry, anyhow.

We got Agnes off to Sea Island, Georgia on Saturday. We all had a hand in packing her off. I never thought she’d make the train. Dagwood must be blushing from shame because it was sure a “super Dagwood Dash.” I hope she has fun. She got word from the Red Cross that she could send Jack a package on the “Gripsholm” so now the sailing date has been advanced and Marge and I have to get it together for her this week... has to be in New York by Friday. According to the address they gave



S.S. Gripsholm during the war.

her, he is interned in the Philippines. [From 1942 to 1946, the United States Department of State chartered Gripsholm as an exchange and repatriation ship, carrying Japanese and German nationals to exchange points where she then picked up US and Canadian citizens to bring home to the USA and Canada, as well as packages and letters to POWs held by the Japanese. She sailed under the auspices of the International Red Cross, with a Swedish captain and crew.]

Had a letter from my brother Saturday and twenty-seven days after he graduated from radio school, he's still in the same place doing fatigue duty (whatever that is) awaiting a furlough and shipping orders. Is he disgusted!

I love that line in your letter... you haven't changed except as I said, getting older (dammit). You have a long time to worry about that. Let's see, I'll be twenty-three in December and you'll be thirty in November... right? Seven years isn't so much... just right. I was kidding about you getting older. I'm not getting any younger myself.

I didn't tell you about our airplane spotting... did I? It was exciting. An observation post out in the country with the sky for a roof. The stars were so bright and so numerous that we had a time distinguishing planes from the stars. One in particular we saw a long time before we heard it and it was so low... just missing the trees that I almost reported the damn thing as a glider. Now, wouldn't that have been something? We didn't hear it until it was over our heads. We drank coffee... seems like gallons of it, to keep warm and ate tomato sandwiches to help pass the time away. Not exactly. The air made me awfully hungry but then I always could eat, regardless. Next Thursday I'll know better and wear my woolen slacks and a sweater besides the coat.

Marge's birthday is Sunday but since I'm working this weekend I suggested a visit to New York... shopping, I said, but I'll take her to a dinner and show and we'll stay over and come back Saturday morning.

I had a busy day today. Mondays get worse and worse. I'll almost be glad when we stay open Saturdays again. Everyone and his grandmother was in today.

I think I've covered all the news from this end. I almost forgot... I won't tell you not to "misbehave." Just kidding but you told me that once. Always wondered if you really meant it. I love you and miss you so much I don't find time for "misbehaving." Be careful and keep well. My love and prayers are always with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 24, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

I called Dot this morning and everything is fine. She hopes now that Kevin won't put in an appearance until Sept. 1 when her doctor returns to his practice once more. She was more than pleased with your cablegram. I didn't know whether you could still send them again or not. I more than understand how you feel about Dottie. She's a swell person. Didn't take me long to discover that, either. Everything is going to be all right so don't worry too much. They'll let you know the minute it happens.

Have to go back to work now. See you again soon.

I love you, my darling. More love, Billee

August 26, 1943—London

Evening, angel

I've been sitting here for an hour, or so, just thinking.

I've been thinking, and truly believing that our love cannot be compared with anything I have encountered... ever.

Perhaps it isn't good to search for reasons at the root of anything as wonderful and remarkable; for it is just that, and more.

Instead, perhaps it would be wiser to leave well enough alone, lest one's imagination interrupts the dream.

But, I haven't been afraid to search for reasons, Billee, and I'll tell you why.

I know, first of all, that my love for you is endless and will live as long as I do. I know that because I have never, for a single moment, wanted anything more than I have wanted you to "come live with me."

There have been countless opportunities and temptations to satisfy, for the moment, the loneliness I have in my heart for you. But, our love has made it so easy to laugh at them all.

Everything I do is pointed at one thing... our lives together. If I were to stare death in the face, I know I'd survive if only for you.

This, after a separation of 501 long, lonely days!

In short, sweetheart, I just love you as much as anyone, or anything, could be loved. Someone once said, "they do not love who do not show their love."

I'll show you.

Our correspondence has turned upside down again. First, came your letter of Aug. 18, then the one of Aug. 5 and lastly the V-mail of Aug. 18. I have been envied, too. Ben hasn't heard from Jane since Aug. 3 and Andy Rooney. from his wife since Aug. 2. There is a definite slowdown in incoming mail

with the exception of V-mail, which has been arriving on time. Your combination of airmail and V-mail has worked out well.

I finally received the letter from Dot and Al asking me to be godfather by proxy. I cabled, “yes,” then followed with a letter. But, I still haven’t heard whether or not the baby has arrived. Here it is eight days overdue and I’m worried... not a little bit, either.

I just finished a letter to Mother [Elizabeth], giving her my impression of Wales. Funny, I immediately remembered the 412 Merrimon address, after all this time.

You asked me how I was going to transport all of your letters. I’ll leave everything behind before I’ll leave them. I’ll manage... no fear of that.

I, too, read John Keil’s story out of Cairo. He’s been lucky so far. Hope he does get home soon.

I’m going to save a lot for another letter tomorrow, but I’m going to give you my list for Santa Claus. As you know by now you don’t need a request to send Xmas packages.

Naturally, I’d like cigarettes, a couple of pairs of tan socks, couple sets of underwear, a light tan shirt (light weight) and, if possible, an identification bracelet. Nothing expensive, please, because the travel risk is too great, with name and serial number: “Charles F. Kiley – 32184067.”

That’s about all... except if I had a request, just one, that could be fulfilled... I’d want you.

‘Night, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 27, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Really I don’t know whether I should write or not. To think that you would lead me on that way... teasing me that way. You’re a meanie but I have to love you just the same. You rally had me worried for a few paragraphs. I couldn’t imagine what I had written or done that could bring on such a barrage of words. I almost forgot the answer... our “dorm” is strictly female so it couldn’t have been anything else but a female “skeeter.”

You kept me smiling all the next day. Everyone wanted to know why I was so amused but I told them it was a secret.

Thank your guardian angel for the oak table. Another experience to tell us about. You frighten me but I’m glad you tell me about it. I know then my prayers are being answered.

I’m glad the package arrived safely and in such good time. Never mind the “glamour” in your pajamas. I definitely don’t like loud pajamas. If that’s the kind of taste you have in regard to pajamas. I’ll take care of the purchasing of those items. As for “glamour,” I’ll take care of that. Hmmm... guess that’ll hold you. By the way, I put a note in the pocket of the blue number. Did Friend Censor remove it or didn’t you find it?

If they are too big, send them back and I'll take a tuck in them or better still, I'll run over on the weekend and fix them up. I should be able to get a priority for that. "G.I. Joe" needs a tuck put in his pajamas. Can't think of a better reason that would prompt such a trip, could you?

As you can tell from the stationery [Perth Amboy National Bank] I'm doing this on the job. For the first time in weeks, my work is all caught up and all I have to do is sit here and wait for my customers to pay me a visit, instead of having to worry about a million and one odd jobs.

I had a note from Warren. He will be in Massillon the 30th so I guess I will spend Labor Day weekend in Massillon. It will be swell being

with them all again if only for a few days. The traveling part will be terrific and as a good citizen, I should stay at home but heaven only knows when I'll have another opportunity to see him.

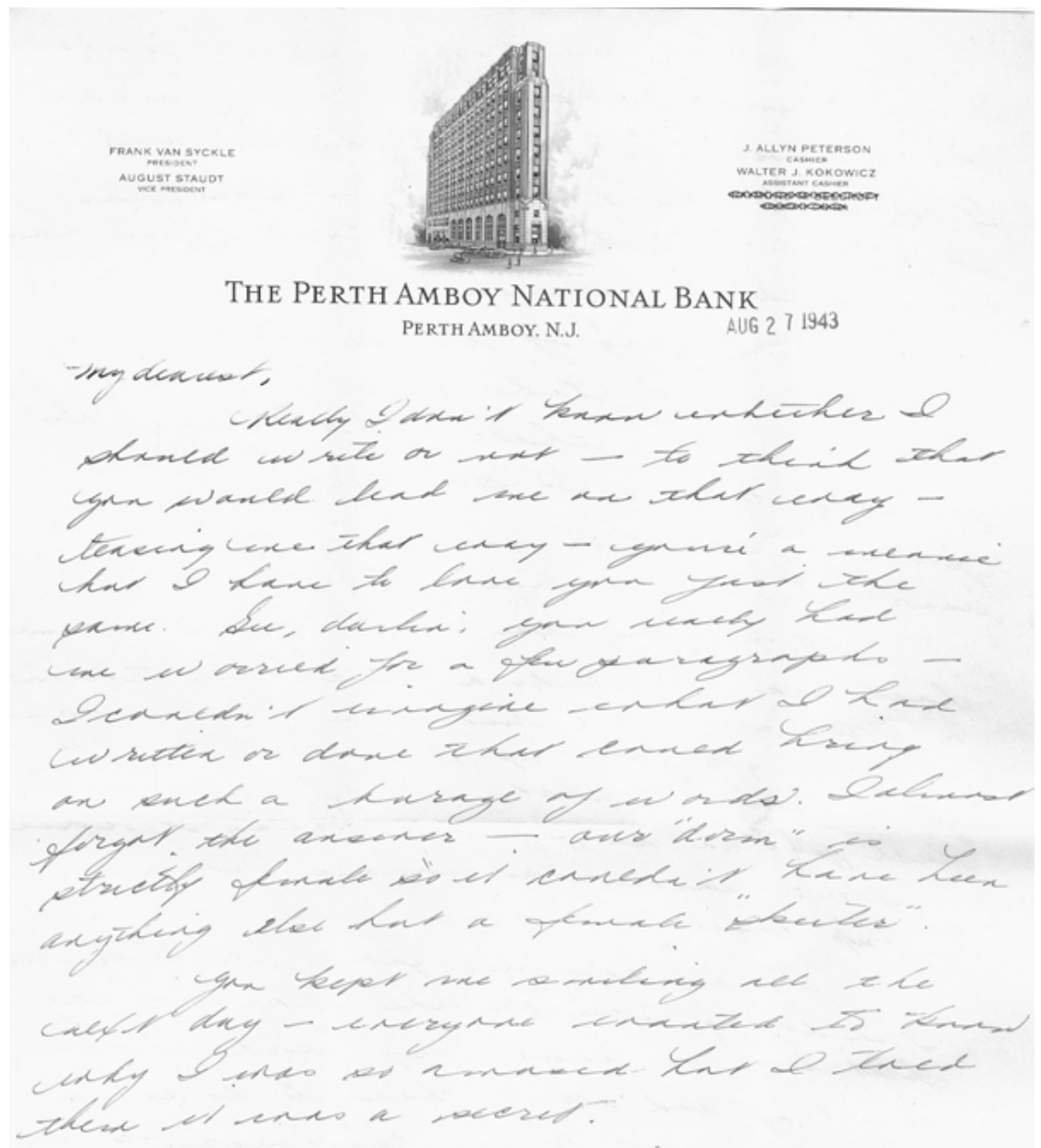
We are having a little rain for a change and how we need it. I'd like to go walking in it if I was prepared but I don't even have an umbrella with me today.

Send me another request for cigarettes. At least we can keep you in your favorite brand. If you could get a carton a month then you could stand to smoke the Chelseas in between, yes?

Something else I wanted to ask you. Are you any heavier than when I last saw you? In the last picture I have, the one taken with the photographers, you don't appear to be but then pictures can be deceiving.

Speaking of pictures, I called Mr. Todd to see what had happened to mine and he has them waiting for me to come in to pick them up so now he will mail them. I should have them today or tomorrow.

I got reckless again, what with the heat and all, and had my hair cut again... a regular G.I. It's about three inches long all over my head. I feel a little sheared if you know what I mean, but everyone says it's becoming. I'm wondering if you'd like it. Made me look younger I think, so that's one redeeming feature. I swore I wouldn't have it cut again, that I'd let it get long, but I can't seem to stand the stuff hanging around my neck.



If this sounds a little confusing, it's because I've been interrupted so many times. Now I'm finished for the day. All I have to do is sit and wait for the four-thirty-eight.

We were short a teller today so I didn't get to eat 'til 2 o'clock. Almost starved, especially since I'm so used to eating at twelve.

I called El again to get some additional directions on making the carriage cover and they still haven't heard from you either there or through Father John. She says Bette has been writing all along and you should have letters with pictures enclosed. By this time, you probably have them. Your Dad has to work Saturdays now... a 48-hour week. He's going on retreat this weekend and he will have the rest of next week off. I haven't seen them in a month. I'm going to go in during the week. I've been holding off, expecting a call from Dottie any day.

Grand news about the Aleutians being cleared of those yellow _____ finally. We can all breathe a sigh of relief over that. I don't think it will be too long now before Tokyo will be paid a visit from us again.

That seems to be all the news again this time. Not much happening around here at the moment. I'll write again Sunday.

I almost forgot to tell you I love you and miss you more than ever, my dearest. Please don't stop calling me "sweetheart," just because of the one night spent with "my bedfellow." Keep well and be careful.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 30, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

It finally came today... Al's cable telling me of a "daughter born. Everything fine." Poor Kevin. I guess God just had him promised to someone else, or is saving him as a brother for my godchild.

I'm envious tonight, because of that cable. Yes, I know our day is coming, but I'm still envious. Two years ago it wouldn't have made any difference. Oh, I've always loved children and looked forward to the time when I'd be a daddy but it never disturbed me the way it is now.

That's the ever-so-pleasant penalty of loving you.

With the cable came your airmail of Aug. 10 and one from El, in which she enclosed pictures of Annice. I'm sending a couple back with a word or two on them. El said the baby looks like me. Good grief... look at these pictures and say it isn't so!

In my last letter, I said I was saving something for one to be written the following night. It had to be postponed, first because the Fortresses came back from their England/N. Africa shuttle raid and I had to rush out to one of the fields. Then, last night, I started this again, but Ben and Andy coaxed me into a game of hearts that turned into a marathon until 2 a.m. See what we do with our "spare" time.

Young lady, you can step right up and take your scolding, inasmuch as you predicted it. What is all this part-time job business? My honeychile isn't satisfied working five days. No, she has to work seven! And then she says she'll tell me about it later! Why all the secrets? Please, I've just finished worrying about the arrivals of two children.

Billee, whatever possessed you to go to Keansburg? But then, it probably was your first visit. Just now, I can't think of a place I'd rather not be in than Keansburg. Belfast would even be a better choice, and that's bad enough.

Tell me more about your plane spotting.

You said you had to learn to tell a plane by sound. Who is responsible for those instructions? I want to meet the person who can do that, even after years and years of actual work on planes. It takes tedious study to even tell one from another in pictures let alone identify them in the air, and they want it done by sound!

By tomorrow, or the next day I'll know whether or not I go away for a while for an aerial gunnery course.

Don't get excited, hon. It's just that we feel there should be more than one in the office with the training. Bud Hutton plans to go and is checking to see if the Air Force will take two of our men. If so, it will be me.

Too bad about the Memphis Belle romance, wasn't it? Still, it happens every day, and I did read that Morgan became engaged to another girl in Texas.

I covered my Xmas requests last week but failed to mention film. I still have some 120 and promise to take some pix at the first opportunity.

Goodnight, sweetheart. Keep your heart warm and miss me as I miss you. I have a surprise for you but you'll have to wait a couple of months for it. No, I'm not coming home. I wouldn't tease you with that.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

August 31, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

The last day of the month almost gone and tomorrow will be September. I am here six months nearly and I can hardly believe it. I can't help but wonder what the next six months will bring to us but then I'm always wondering.

You were waiting for me when I got in tonight in the form of a letter written August 21. It was good to hear from you. As many letters as I've received, I still get that special glow of pleasure when I see that familiar handwriting on an envelope... your magnetic personality maybe?

Your line in the letter about Denmark certainly was timely in view of the course of events that have taken place in the past two days. I'm afraid that it is taking place a little too soon for our invasion, at least, so Churchill says. The second front must wait. I can imagine you all must be even more jittery

than we are anticipating that day. I hate to see it come but then when that day is here it will bring victory that much closer. [Germany had declared martial law in Denmark because of the citizen unrest there.]

You never mentioned the strained relations in the N. African office. That's too bad because I imagine the fellows down there really look forward to the paper. Seems a shame there couldn't be cooperation. They should have sent a new C.O. there to take over. I was wondering if Ralph Martin was still there.

I see where John Steinbeck is in N. Africa now. His first article was in yesterday's paper, describing his leaving England... very good.

By this time, you should have Al's cable telling the good news that Dot gave birth to a 7 lb 10 oz baby girl, nameless so far. She's fine... both of them. I called Al again this morning. He was so excited when he called Sunday soon after he heard the news that I forgot to congratulate him. But, I was so sure she was going to have a boy. Before I forget, we have stopped planning that ball team right now. Maybe it will happen then because I do want boys. We'll wish for a girl's basketball team or something from now on. Funny, I put the finishing touches on the carriage cover Saturday night, so now I'll have it cleaned and blocked and put the pink angora around the edge. Wish I'd bought the



blue now. Maybe I could have used it. Al mentioned two names this morning... Dorothy and Carol Ann. I've had one in my mind for awhile now and I like the sound of it... Sheila Anne Doyle. A good Irish name, too.

I called El today and everyone is fine. She had the baby's picture taken so you will have one before long. She had them taken at home. Your dad is home this week, finishing his vacation. I told her about Dot and Al's new arrival.

Speaking of pictures, believe it or not but yours is being mailed tomorrow. I hope you like it. I had one tinted but I don't care too much for it, so I'm sending one of the others. I think you'll like it. It isn't too formal. The dress I have on is just a simple cotton number that Marge and I made. I was thinking about you when it was being taken so remember that when it finally reaches you.

Agnes and I went out last night, hence no letter, to the Metuchen Inn. It's quite a nice place. We met Ed, the ex-soldier I told you about and had a couple of rum Collins... good, too. I'm afraid I'm being spoiled, going out when I've been so used to staying home. I'll be wanting to go out all the time.

Agnes is back from Sea Island. She had a swell time. She said the place is lovely, and ideal for honeymooners. No suggestion, just quoting. I still want to be surprised, except not by being taken to Niagara Falls.

I almost forgot to tell you I'm leaving Thursday night for Massillon. Mom left Asheville Sunday and arrived about the same time Warren did. She sounded so excited Friday when I talked to her. Warren is being shipped to the West Coast so heaven only knows when we'll see him again. The boss was nice enough to give me Friday off. Well... not so nice at first, but he came around to my way of thinking. I'll leave there Sunday night and be in New York Monday. I'm going to go and see Dottie and then 195 before I return to the Heuser homestead Monday night. I'll probably be half dead but I'll manage. Wish you were going with me to meet the family... really a wonderful opportunity. Heaven knows when we'll all be together again. I'm getting a bit excited about seeing them all, especially Mom, to see how she is and how she's been doing.

This is Wednesday now. I fell asleep last night over this. Fine thing, but I was so tired. Enclosed is a picture of what might be "our corner." What do you think? I love the early American period. This is, of course, only a suggestion. I have seen better selections than these. I like the fireplace and beams overhead. Marge and I have fun devouring magazines for ideas. She is very good at decorating and arranging. I think she missed her calling.

I like the picture of you along the Thames. I'm glad that you are somewhere that is familiar to me. I'd hate it if you were in some out of the way place that I couldn't picture your surroundings. Being in London, you seem very close.

My bag is all packed and I've had my bath so when I say goodnight to you I can hop right into bed.

Marge is going to see me off, so we'll go to Confession at St. Francis and then dinner. I started my nine First Fridays in July so I don't want to have to start over again. My train will arrive in Massillon in time for an early Mass before I go to my aunt's house. They'll be asleep at that hour in the morning anyway.

Guess I'd better close now. Not much news except my going away. I'll try and get a letter off over the weekend. You smile at my reminder, "no misbehaving." I like keeping an eye on you, but don't think I won't feel your eyes on me. I like our kidding back and forth. Fact is, I like everything about you. Surely there must be something wrong with you. Maybe you snore or talk in your sleep or do something else that might annoy me. I'm going to love learning about it.

I was going, wasn't I? Keep well, darling. I love you and miss you more than ever. I won't tell you anymore "no misbehaving." Think you know by now without my writing it... you'd better! Goodnight... be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Early September, 1943—London [DATE TORN OFF LETTER]

Hello sweetheart,

Has your star returned to watch over you? It should be there tonight, among the millions looking down on me.

I've been unfaithful again, as far as mail is concerned. This is my first letter in almost a week but two trips, plus unsettled conditions in the office have kept me from any correspondence. Forgive me?

Meanwhile, I have been kept happy by your airmails of Aug. 12, 25 and 27. I couldn't ask for more, could I? Oh, I guess I could ask for it but that would be too selfish. Still, I could very easily be selfish enough to want one every day.

Thanks to your directions, I did find the note tucked in the pocket of the pajamas. I'm glad you told me because I never would have thought of looking there.

While we are on the subject of pajamas, since you don't favor "loud" colors, I guess you will have to do my shopping. I do prefer solid white flimsy stuff, but once in a while a change-over to stuff that blazes!

Hon, send me a picture of you in the new hairdo, huh? You looked so cute in the "glamorous pic with an "upsweep." I'm wondering what a short cut has done to you.

Ben's wife, incidentally, sent him a dozen snaps of herself in various attire, a couple of them real "cheesecake."

For the record, and in answer to a couple of your questions, you were right about my age and my weight at present is 171, a gain of nine pounds since I took off my civilian clothes and five since you saw me last.

While I'm writing this, you are probably on your way to Massillon to visit Warren. Tomorrow is Labor Day but merely another working day in the Army.

While you are at Mass on Oct. 4 in Asheville, I'll be remembering everything at Mass here. I haven't heard when the christening of my godchild is taking place so I'm going to communion every Sunday so as not to miss it.

For the first time in years and years, I hear a ukulele playing. Must be one of the Associated Press fellows in the apartment. He's playing "Sweet Sue" and I'm sure there isn't an Englishman with that much jive in him.

You wondered about our cable service. The EFMs were stopped long ago but we can still send regular cables at eight shillings (\$1.60) to New York and vicinity. The banks have also stopped cabling orders for flowers. I learned that when I tried to send some to Dottie last week. Haven't had a chance to try American Express Co.

I think I have the mail situation solved at 195. I got off a couple of letters before I went away and some more tonight.

Remember I told you about the gunnery school? It still isn't settled but I may have final word on it tomorrow.



Winchester Cathedral. Charles revisited Winchester and its cathedral in 1993 with Billee and Anne; in that year, the cathedral was celebrating its 900th birthday.

My recent trips took me down around the south coast again the Bournemouth and Southampton. Also had a chance to stop at Winchester, one of the principal cities in England during medieval times. The castle of William the Conqueror is there, one of the world's finest cathedrals and in the castle, the table around which gathered King Arthur and his knights.

In Southampton I saw "Hello Frisco" and heard the words you said were yours: "You'll Never Know." They are so appropriate, aren't they?

I don't know the ex-commando you mentioned. Are you sure he was a commando? He may have been one of the Yanks in the Canadian army who went to Dieppe or one of the few Rangers who took part in the raid. Never heard of an American in the commandos, though.

You said you would be telling me 100 times a day you love me, even calling the office to remind me. Well, I'll wait before I make any promises. In fact, I'll wait until I can tell you.

About the cigarettes:

Dear Postmaster: Will you allow this beautiful young girl (see for yourself) to send me a carton of cigarettes and some stationery? Thank you.

Don't blush!

The R.A.F. just went out, taking 50 minutes to fly over London. Just a constant roar overhead. Once in a while, a squadron leader flicks his signal lights on and off but otherwise nothing can be seen. While you are plane spotting, think how long it takes for a few planes to pass overhead and you'll have an idea what this is.

A letter from Berta and Jack mentioned your visit to see them. It closed with, "Hurry home and move next door with Billee."

There were a couple more, too, from the boys in North Africa. I must get something off to them tonight.

Never did hear what happened to Jack Donnell. I can find out



from fellows who were in his outfit, though.

Now that we're in Italy... where next?

Don't worry, darling. It can't be too long now. Goodnight, sweetheart. Love to Agnes and Marguerite.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

September 6, 1943—Jersey City

Darling,

Just a line to tell you I returned safely. I'm as far as 195 now and soon El and I will be on our way to Kearny to see Dot and the new Doyle heiress.

It was good to be with the family again. We had a regular reunion. Mom arrived last Monday and Warren came in Tuesday night and I got there Friday morning. They both looked well. Warren has gained weight and looks so fit, quite dashing in fact. He's a gunner and second radioman on a bomber, a B25 I think. Don't know much about the type. He likes it very much and thinks he'll stay in after the war. This really wasn't a furlough, instead a delay between orders. He goes to Salt Lake City to receive his orders. He had all his equipment with him, flying suit and even his parachute. Mom was so glad to see him. We had fun together. Saturday night my sister Lee and her husband and Warren and I went out and painted Akron red. It was fun; we danced and didn't get in until 3:00 a.m.

Lee's children are all well. Little Billy, the one who had infantile paralysis, is remarkably well. He doesn't walk but he crawls quite a bit. Funny, he's only three and a half and it's been nearly a year since he was stricken, but he can remember when he walked. He's so afraid he isn't going to be able to walk. It's a little heartbreaking but the doctor claims he has every chance. He gets braces this week and a pair of crutches. Pray for him, he's such a little fellow and he has been so patient.

Little Johnny is an angel and seemed to remember me. He's the image of my mother.

I had a good train coming back, air conditioned and reclining seats. I slept nearly all the way and it only took ten hours.

I called Marge and reported myself back. She said I had a letter from you waiting for me. I'll go back on the eight-thirty train tonight.

Now to report the progress of Eleanor's Annice: she's adorable. The spitting image of Father John and what a size she is for eleven weeks old. She's such a strong-looking baby. Her hair is going to be light, what there is of it. Her eyebrows are very light. El looks very well. She's lost a little weight but it's becoming. Your dad is still home. He didn't have to work today. Bette is at work so I haven't seen her yet. We have the radio turned on to hear Churchill. I haven't listened to any news or read the paper since I left. I'll have to catch up on my world events now.

Warren is to take three months combat training and then he expects to be shipped out. When that time comes, I promised him I'd go home and stay with Mom. He's worried quite a bit about her so that's the least I can do. Maybe I made a mistake... I don't know. I'll just have to let things work out.

She has done very well from what she says since her return. She still isn't giving any meals, for which I'm more than thankful. I'll be home a month from now so I can see what goes on.

It's warm today... very close. Remember the place we had breakfast on that last Sunday in Journal Square? I had my breakfast there this morning and couldn't help but remember us... Bickford's, isn't it... that's the name of the place.

Going to Massillon I rode with a chief petty officer. He'd been in the Navy fifteen years and seemed like such a young fellow. He was going to Colorado to drive his mother-in-law back to Philadelphia to take care of his wife and little girl. The wife is to have a new baby this month. He's been in quite a few foreign ports and has done



Bickford's was a chain of restaurants popular in the NYC area from the 1920s to the 1970s; this one was on 8th Ave. in Manhattan.

a lot of patrol duty but as yet hasn't seen any action. He said they felt like it would be over in Europe between November and April. That sounds right to me, too. I hope he's right.

You know Mom told Warren she thought I had changed. I can't figure that one out. Warren said he didn't think I had. From what my sister said to me she hasn't yet resigned herself to my coming East, so I don't know... maybe that's it.

There's a nice breeze coming through the window here. I'm in the dining room... so you'll know where I'm writing from. I missed writing to you over the weekend. It has been since Wednesday that I wrote last.

I'll write again after I see Dottie. I hear via 195 you are to be godfather by proxy. I wonder who's going to stand up for you. Guess I'll know this afternoon.

Gone all this way without telling you I love you oh, so much. Keep well and be good... none of this misbehavin' business. 'Bye for awhile.

My love and kisses, always your Billee

September 8, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

The most important news today is the surrender of Italy. I heard it at twelve-thirty today. Everyone was jubilant. Guess they had quite a demonstration in New York. That's one down and two to go now. Surely, it can't be much longer.

I have two letters to answer this night, the one that was waiting for me Monday when I arrived home and the one today... August 26 and 30.

So you are relieved to know you are finally an uncle to a bouncing Dorothy Jean. Dot looked well Monday. She didn't have too bad a time. She's anxious to get home now. Al is quite proud... you should see him. He and Mr. Drayton have been "batching" it, of course. From what he said, they've been having quite a time. I met Ruth R. on the bus going out. She was going to see Dottie, too. That's the first I've seen her in months. She tells me Ruth T.'s Freddie is home on a 30-day leave from Greenland. So, if you don't hear from her, you'll know why. He seems quite nice from his picture.

Eleanor went with me to the hospital. Sunday is her wedding anniversary. I've been wracking my brain trying to think of something and have decided to wait until after this mess is over. It's hard to give them something when they aren't housekeeping. We can make up for it when everything gets straightened out. I really don't know what she has or doesn't have since everything is packed away. do you approve my decision or not?

I stayed for dinner Monday night and caught the nine-forty-two back to Matawan.

I meant to tell you about the above... I think Tom is to be home, at least we're hoping, and Eddie should be here and your Uncle John is due to come in from Philadelphia, so it will be a family reunion almost.

I wanted to write last night but I was exhausted from no sleep that I had all I could do to get my laundry done and bathe and fall in bed. I slept as though someone hit me.

What is this surprise I'm in for? Now, aren't you something to arouse my curiosity and then not tell me... sounds like me. I know you're giving me a taste of my own medicine. It's a good thing you said you weren't coming home, because that's the first thing I would have thought. I can't imagine what it can be.

We have a hint that my cousin Fred may still be alive and a Japanese prisoner. [He had been reported early in the year as having been killed.] They have found a Marine that was with him after the date he was reported killed and he saw him captured by some Japs with eight others; another Marine from Fred's home, who is still in the islands, has checked and there is no grave for Fred. I have never given up hope... they've made too many mistakes. [In fact, he had been killed, as the family learned later.]

Agnes received two cards from Jack, one Saturday and one yesterday, the first word directly from him. They are form cards but with his signature and she said that is definitely his. She was so excited as all of us were. She gave a talk this morning on the War Bond Drive for Public Service in Newark. Her husband had a very good job there for a number of years. One of the girls brought her radio in and we heard it this morning. She was very good. What she said was simple and to the point. They had several high-ranking officers there so Agnes provided the feminine touch.

Marge and I were discussing your Xmas box tonight. You're wonderful, darling: you tell me what to get but don't tell me the sizes. A big help you are. I'm glad you told me what you want, anyhow. Between 195 and me we'll fix you up. You never can tell but your last wish might be fulfilled too!

I had to smile at the line about Kevin... only you would think of that. But remember, we aren't planning any more on Kevins or anything else... then we won't be disappointed.

Since you're going to be godfather, I'll have to get something for Dorothy Jean for you... something she will be able to keep. I'll give them a ring tomorrow, and talk to Ruth R. She's going to be there for a few days. This is the second week of her vacation. I have the carriage cover all finished and ready for cleaning and then the edge of angora will be put on. Al said something about a bottle of champagne for the christening.

I love the picture of you. It's really good. Is the empty chair for me? I'll be right over. Torquay sounds like a heavenly spot. I remember you telling me about it before.

I've had a brainstorm. Is your surprise Officers Training School? That takes a couple of months. I know of some good ones here in the States. Tell them to send you over. You'd make a first-rate lieutenant especially with me keeping you company.

I don't think I need to go into the matter of the resemblance of Annice... she is definitely a Kiley, so you know what that means. Personally, I think she looks more like Father John.



Didn't you tell me the photographer sitting by you in the picture you sent me some time ago was Sammy Schulman? There is quite an article about him in the new Cosmopolitan and the part he played in the N. Africa invasion and scooping all the photographers and reporters on the Casablanca parley. I'll save it for you or maybe send it to you.

About Keansburg... I just went along for the ride. It certainly isn't a place I'd care to visit a second time. It appeared to me to be a place that had definitely seen better days.

Our plane spotting was neglected last week because of my trip to Ohio. We had to get someone to take our places. About telling the type of plane, we tell from the sound if they are one, two or four-

engine planes. That you can tell from the sound, especially out there because all you hear are the planes. With gas rationing and the O.P.A. you don't hear many cars. Is that cleared up? We definitely aren't experts but we do our best.

Mom will appreciate the letter about Wales. She's quite proud of the country. Her family is the only one there or here. The name is Esaias, so if you come across that name over there you'll know they are some of my kinfolk. Seems to me they own a big department store in Cardiff. [In fact, they owned a funeral home in Glamorgan, which still does business under the name Esaias & Son.]

I'm terribly sleepy. Mind if I finish this and write more tomorrow? My hay fever is acting up tonight. I think I've covered all the news items in this letter. Tomorrow I'll write one for us.

Mind if I tell you I love you more than ever, even after 500 days? More about that later. Goodnight for now. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 9, 1943—Matawan

Hello again darling,

Remember me, the girl you had a date with last night? Seems she got sleepy and had to do a fade-out just as she got a good start.

The good news still continues about Italy. It's wonderful. We've been talking and have come to the conclusion that perhaps the Vatican had a lot of influence there. Let's hope it will be over this year. Surely, they must see the handwriting on the wall now.

I called El today since we are getting together on your Xmas box. She had bad news... poor kid. Tom called her Tuesday and said he was on his way out to an embarkation point... said he had been issued clothes, etc. Now we're waiting to see where he will be sent and I'm praying there will be a delay. She was looking forward so to this weekend when he was to be home. I prayed so that he'd be here when the baby was born. He wasn't exactly Johnny-on-the-spot but he was still there nearby. She's had so much to take. It doesn't seem right but then, there I go being rebellious again.

Speaking of rebellious feeling, Ruth T.'s Freddie makes me mad. How does he rate a 30-day leave from Greenland when he hasn't even seen action and he hasn't been gone more than three months? I know he left here since I've been in the East. The way some of these guys rate gets me. I wonder if there will be wedding bells there. She seems to be very much in love with him. We'll have to wait and see.

I've been more than envious seeing Eleanor's Annice and now Dot and Al, visiting Grace and her family, Berta and Jack and the Dalys. Seems there ought to be a place for us in there somewhere. The weekend got me, too, being with my sister's family, in spite of the heartache of having Billy ill and not able to get around. I'd still change places. We were talking about it and she is so happy, even with all the bad breaks they've had.

You call it the penalty of our love... this envy. It's been going on a long time. You said 501 days. I haven't counted them. I just know that it's an awfully long time.



Eddie with Annice, 1943.

The picture of the baby and I is really something. I was trying so hard to get her to straighten up in the picture I forgot about myself. I like the one with Eddie.

I still can't help but worry about your taking the aerial gunnery course. Couldn't they pick on someone else? I'd just as soon you didn't know how to do that. One in the family is enough. Of course, if you have to go, you will, but I still don't have to like it.

Once more, you leave me breathless with your love for me, breathless and still a little frightened... and then so filled with happiness that you still have that same love for me. It's still so wonderful to me that I feel as if it were a precious jewel that should only be brought out on rare occasions.

It isn't a dream. That can be interrupted. What we have is the foundation for our life together and it's as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. Nothing can keep us apart, not anything... please God it won't be too long until we can begin that life together.

True, the waiting hasn't been easy but I've done pretty well. Needless to say, I've been tempted too but I tried to remember you and our love. I think the most vivid memory I have of you is the way you kept looking and looking at me on the bus back to New York that last night, as if you were trying to memorize every feature. Your love was so obvious then. That picture has never been very far from me.

The frightening aspect of it all is, in spite of our love and how much we mean to each other, being Mrs. Kiley is a pretty big order and I still can't keep but wondering if I'll fill the bill. I know we've been over all this ground before but I'm still a bit scared. I'm pretty sure that when you hold me in your arms again my fears will fade away but right now they seem a little ominous.

I think we must have something very precious, that we can write love letters even after 501 days. Maybe we should patent it or something.

I love your thoughts and dreams. They are very close to me. Without your letters and the way you write I'd just fold up and blow away, I guess.

Here I go getting sleepy again. I can't understand it... and it isn't even ten-thirty. Must be from living in the country.

Everything is quiet now. I like it when everyone leaves and I can be alone with you and the letter I'm writing. I don't even turn the radio on so I have only you to keep me company.

I've wondered if you did get that loneliness in your heart. I've felt it so often... not exactly loneliness but that feeling of wanting to be near you and only you, that I could reach out and touch you just to know you were there. I thought, maybe with all the activity over there you might not have time for loneliness, and it would be a good thing, perhaps.

I've almost worn your recent snapshot out taking it out and looking at it. I love it, it's so like you. We'll have to remember that place. I noticed the palm trees you spoke of or rather wrote about, in the background.

Seems to be all this time, my dearest. I love you so much. You'll never know because I can't think there are words that can tell you. Please go on loving me and missing me the same old way. Here's a taste of your favorite brand of lipstick... Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 11, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Another of our many "miss you" nights. Yes, it's a Saturday, too... beautiful full moon and everything. During the week it isn't so bad when I'm always on the go, but when the Saturday holiday comes, I just think about you all day long.

It's too early to tell much about the Italy affair. Germany will naturally fight a delaying action and hold the country as long as possible. It is probably in control in the northern area and grasping what it can in the center. Yesterday it was rather well established that Rome was in German hands and that means more bombing.

Just like the Africa invasion, this one has probably taken a great deal of shipping and planes to the Italian section and consequently mail delivery is slow again. I haven't received a single letter for over a week but I know they are on the way. Of course, I love you Sunday, Monday and always, but particularly on Saturday. And I had lots of time to think of you and love you today.

The tempo in the office was up 100% this week with the capitulation of Italy, the American landings, etc., and I worked until at least 11 o'clock and sometimes 12 every night. So, it was natural for me to sleep late today, take in a movie and come home to relax. Not that I ever do more on my day off but this was one that was a natural for relaxation.

In conjunction with the recent shakeup in the office, Hutton and Moora transferring to different posts on the staff with Benny and Len Giblin (a new name to you) taking the desk jobs as news and city editors, things have been a little confusing.

Ordinarily, I'd be in and out of town but with routine a bit disorganized for the present I stayed in all week to help take the strain off new men, and doing the lead story on Italy since the capitulation,

handling Russia, the Pacific and Balkan unrest at times. And when the paper went to bed last night I sighed with relief at the prospect of a holiday today.

New men have taken hold of new jobs in pretty fair fashion now so I'll be off and away again next week. I'll work in a mid-week letter though. I have been neglecting you terribly. Pout just a little, will you? I love to see your lips quiver.

I'm anxious to hear more about my baby. All I've had so far is news of her arrival. Fine thing when I don't even know her name.

I'll have to get off some more mail tonight, too, because I won't have much opportunity during the week.

My next couple of letters will be sent to Asheville so you will get them there.

That moon is going to waste, darling. Benny is homesick for Jane tonight, too, so you can easily picture what a happy household we have. All we need is a body and we'd have a funeral.

Best to Marguerite and Agnes.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

September 13, 1943—Matawan

Hello my darling,

No weekend letter again. Just laziness. There's a gorgeous moon out, a Jersey harvest moon, orange and hanging low in the sky... just made for us.

No letter for me today either but maybe tomorrow. I called El today and Tom was home over the weekend. She's already had a card from Uncle Sam changing his address to a New York A.P.O. Tom himself is in Massachusetts but has been issued heavy clothing suitable for either Iceland or Greenland so this is it, I guess. I'm glad he was able to be home for their first anniversary. She sounded more reassured today than last week. Write her often. She'll need your letters now.

I talked to Dottie on Friday. She sounded well, but she said she was a little tired. After all, the baby was only two weeks old yesterday. Ruth R. was just leaving when I called. She stayed with Dot for a few days. I can hardly wait to see her.

I haven't had any word from Mom or Warren since I last saw them and I'm anxiously waiting. Warren was to report to Salt Lake City Saturday so it will be a few days or more before I hear from him.

We're having some cool weather. In fact, today I near froze in the bank, it was so damp in there. We'll probably have another heat wave before it settles into fall weather.

I think I'll go to Newark shopping tomorrow. Haven't been in quite awhile. I'm fixing up a box to send to the kids and I have a few more items to get.

I was thinking over the weekend probably the same way you were thinking that prompted that last letter. I've been thinking quite a bit about that letter, and I'm marveling at us. Do you realize that

actually we weren't together but five weekends? You can't even call it ten days because we only had a part of those days together and we've stuck this long on such a... bit! We have something not many people have.

I've often wondered, did you think after awhile I'd get tired of writing and we'd just drift apart? I imagine other people did even if you didn't.

We crowded so many memories into those few days we had together that we couldn't forget, could we?

Sometimes I get frightened and I pray every night that our love is real and not just an illusion and a dream we've built up. And then I think, but we're adults, not children. We should know the real thing by now. If it wasn't to be, I think God would have taken a hand to it long ago, and we would know by now that it just wasn't meant to be, you and I together until death do us part.

It wouldn't be right, to me, to live now and not have you around teasing me and loving me from across the sea, sharing our memories. Each letter has become such a part of us it's almost like seeing you grin at me. Did I ever tell you, I think maybe it was the grin that got me, finally. Now I feel sure that it won't be too long before we'll be making new memories and I won't have to imagine how you look when I'm reading your letters. Now please, don't misunderstand that last line. I love reading your letters but it'll be good to have more of you than just a couple of sheets of paper, in fact it will be heaven.

See what happens when I start thinking? But, truly, what we have is rare and precious and I intend to hold onto it for the rest of my life. See what you have in store for yourself... me, "tagging along."

I'm tired, but I almost forgot to tell you about my dream. I could see a plane and knew you were in it, and they told me it exploded in the air and that all aboard were gone. I was crying and the next thing I knew you were there holding me, and that it was all a mistake. I could see you and feel your arms around me as if it were really so. Then, I was seeing you off at a station somewhere and the train was made up of flat cars carrying troops and the last I saw of you going down the tracks with the rest was your handkerchief waving to me. I didn't like that... in fact, I woke up after that. I very seldom dream about you and I dream a lot as you know by now.

This is the last sheet of paper so I'll have to say goodnight, my darling. I love you so much. Keep well and be careful.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 16, 1943— "Somewhere in England"

Sweetheart,

You know how much those ten letters mean to me, don't you? And it will always be so.

I'm writing this from an Eighth Air Force base where I've been taking the aerial gunnery course. That was the trip I mentioned in my last letter. This is my fifth day and I took the last of my exams

this evening. Since Sunday, I've been going from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. plus a couple of hours each night for study. Now, it's just about over.

I didn't want to say anything in my last letter until the course was over. But we aren't keeping secrets from one another, are we?

Honestly, hon, there wasn't anything to it.

I received my grades an hour ago: 82 in aircraft recognition, 96 each in sighting, operation and emergency repair of the caliber, 50 machine gun, 92 in first-aid. The course also included skeet shooting plus lectures on security, use of oxygen at high altitude, ditching, etc.

All of which adds up to what?

Don't worry. If and when I go on a mission you will know about it. As in the case of expectant fathers, the Fortresses haven't lost a correspondent yet. Sorry... they did lose one, but it was an exception. Furthermore, if I do go it won't be for awhile.

Tomorrow we are making a proactive flight in a Fort for target practice and to get familiar with the use of oxygen at 30,000 feet. Our pilot, co-pilot and navigator are all 25-mission men.

I'm not going to say anything to 195 because they may make mountains out of molehills, and what they don't know won't worry them.

Incidentally, I've earned "wings," too. I'm entitled to wear them, but I won't. Like the rest of the correspondents, I feel only the real combat men should wear them. I'm keeping mine for a souvenir, though. So much for gunnery, and please don't worry because there isn't anything to worry about. I'm just telling you all this because we don't hide anything from each other.

I didn't get any mail this week because I've been away. But I just know there's some in the office. I'm sending this on to London with one of the instructors so it can be censored and sent out as quickly as possible.

It's a beautiful night, my beautiful darling. And you are so close.

Somehow, the night reminds me of the surprise I mentioned a few letters ago. I'll go a little further and tell you... you'll have to wait until Christmas. It's the best Christmas present I can think of, short of coming home to ask you just once more, "Sweetheart, I love you so will you come and live with me?" Goodnight, Billee dearest.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Back in two days.

September 18, 1943—Matawan

[Note at top of page] No *Stars and Stripes* for over a month.

My dearest,

It's a gorgeous night... must be a million stars out. I watched them for a while, wondering if maybe somewhere you might be looking up and remembering. I haven't liked this week... not one letter from

you. That's the first time in several months that has happened. Monday will be here soon. Maybe it will bring good news. Mom said she had a long letter from you. As always, you're thoughtful to think of her. She enjoys hearing from you.

Two weeks from tonight, I'll be riding south on the train and I'm more than looking forward to it, to going home. I'm very fortunate and I'm really appreciating that fact.

Thursday night we went airplane spotting. An awful night... ceiling zero so there wasn't much traffic. It would clear and then cloud up and rain awhile. Part of the time we spent outside until we were a little on the wet side and then we went inside. I couldn't help but think of you doing guard duty in the rain that week I was in New York... remember?

Quiet tonight... everyone has retired. Marge's brother's girlfriend is here for the weekend. She lives in Irvington and comes down occasionally. Marge returned from New York a bit ago, worn out so she went to bed early.

We went to Newark Wednesday night to shop. What a mob. Every time I go in those nights the stores are open, I swear I won't do it again. You almost risk your life in an attempt to get a few necessities.

While I was in Newark, I bought a spoon and fork set for your god-child and had them engraved, They will send them to Dottie. I also enclosed a card that I thought might sound like you... "Love and kisses, Uncle "Kike." That's what the children seem to call you... Berta's little boy... oh? I thought you would probably want her to have something she could keep.

The carriage cover came back from the cleaners, all blocked and fresh and even if I did make it, I'm a bit proud since I never crocheted in my life before. I have the pink edge to put on and then I can take it in to her.

Still no word from my brother. I'm getting a bit anxious now.

I called El yesterday. Tom was still in Massachusetts Tuesday and though he might get home once more. I hear you told on me for scolding you about not writing to 195. Now, is that nice? El said they had a long letter from you so maybe my scolding did some good. I love to scold you. I can just see the way you look and can almost hear you say, "Sho' 'nuff, honeychile." I remember you kept saying that after I first met you. One of the men in the bank calls me "you-all." Can you top that? He says it with a drawl. They tell me I'm acquiring an Eastern accent so I'll have to do something about that. Can't let the south down, can we?

I'm a little more relieved about the battle for Italy today. Looked bad there for a bit this week, but so far, so good. Surely it can't be much longer. The big fight has really begun now. God only knows what the next few months will bring. I'm anxious to hear about your gunnery course and if you took it. I hope you didn't have to take it. I'd rather think of you with both feet on the ground and not up in the clouds somewhere.

I've missed writing to you this week but I have been busy and I don't like to be that busy because it cuts into my favorite pastime... being with you. We had an anniversary last night. Twenty months ago... soon I'll be writing two years. Doesn't seem like that long and then again it's a h— of a long time. A long enough time to make me love you even more.

Sitting out the other night on duty with the sky for our roof brought you so much closer. I like doing that... gives me a lot of satisfaction. I'm speaking again of our airplane spotting. The fellow that relieved us laughed when we picked up our weapon to go home. It's a wicked-looking thing... one of Mr. Heuser's garden tools. We've not had the occasion to use it but it's nice to have around, just in case. Heaven help whoever's on the receiving end of it!

I'm wondering if John Kiel got home yet. I meant to ask Dottie when I called.

The sandman is hard at work... my eyes keep getting heavier. You'd laugh if you could see the position I'm in... both knees practically under my chin, using them for a desk. Mom and Marge both say there isn't anyone who can write like I do... in the worst positions. I never could just sit at a desk and write. I have to be comfortable in my own way. See what you are going to have to put up with? I'm just breaking you in gradually... dropping a hint here and there so you'll know what to expect. Considerate of me, don't you think?

Did I tell you? El said that if we waited longer than a week after you arrived in the States to get married that she'd be terribly disappointed. She figures we've waited long enough as it is. That I agree with but a week is awfully short notice and then again, it isn't. Maybe I won't let you wait that long.

I'll have to go to bed. I'm falling asleep. I'm so comfortable... hate to move. See what you do? Just thinking about you makes me feel at peace with the world and I can just go right off... I'm gone. I love you, and miss you more than ever. Keep well, my dear, and miss me. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 19, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

I've been sending too much mail to Asheville, I think. When I started this I realized I must have sent my last two or three letters to 412 Merrimon. So, I'd better get something along to Matawan, hoping it reaches you before you leave. After this, I'll continue to send them to Asheville until Oct. 1; then, switch back, ok? Wish we were

helping each other pack for the trip and looking forward to moonlight on Lake Lure, a dance or two at Lucille's, maybe champagne cocktails at the Inn and a million hours together in our corner before the fireplace. A fireplace sure would feel good tonight, because fall is in the air and I have a bit of the sniffles.



Your letter of Aug. 31 came today, proving that delivery is slowing up again. But your letters are still my biggest morale boosters. I fretted something awful waiting for mail the last 11 days.

You mentioned Ralph Martin in your letter. Oddly enough, I received a letter from him the day before yours arrived. It was written from a hospital in North Africa where he is recovering from malaria. He passed out on a flight from Sicily to N. Africa and they rushed him to the hospital.

The clipping of the room was strictly out of this world. We certainly do favor the same things. I'm saving the clipping for the time when we will be looking for ideas. Perhaps we can get Marge to do our interior decorating. But then, I'm pretty handy with a paint brush if somebody tells me what to paint and what colors to use.

Your picture hasn't arrived yet but there's a place reserved for it in my room. So, I'll just look and look at you, wishing our bundles are girls just like their mother. According to your suggestion, maybe we'll bet the boys then, after all.

Pretty soon now, in about a month or so, I'll send you money for Christmas shopping. I know it's only September but I'll send it just the same. I don't know how to figure out a shopping list but I'll manage somehow. After yourself, Annice and my god-child come next. From then on, it will be difficult. Still, can't do anything about that fur coat, can I?

You said there might come a day when you would find out something about me... snoring in my sleep, for example. I've never been accused of it, hon, and I've slept with a lot of people in my time, the "people" being male, of course. Thought I'd better get that in there before you begin to shout at me from across the Atlantic.

Love to the girls.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, C.

September 19, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

I'm re-living familiar and unforgettable moments tonight. The night we first met... our lips quivering with our first kiss... "our corner" and when we held each other on the Inn terrace. How many times have we re-lived them in our letters?

They are with me tonight because you reminded me in your letter received today that I "call it the penalty of our love... this envy... it's been going on a long time." You said you hadn't counted the days we have been apart but just know "it's been an awfully long time."

Yes, it has been a long time, Billee. A very long time. And, we really don't know how much longer it will be, do we? We just go along on faith, hope and prayer. Poor substitutes when you love and want, yet can't have.

So, those familiar moments come to life because they frame a picture of a boy and girl... the boy looking so longingly at the girl, yet so puzzled.

He's puzzled because he has to make a decision. Separation is near. He makes his decision, fair or unfair be damned, and his love is outspoken.

Separation most always kills love with the finality of a dead pulse. But this love can't be killed because it's real. And that's all we have... real love. Undeveloped, you might say... while others have everything.

I have also envied everyone who has those things I want, and which really aren't too much to ask for. And I've been lonely, so much at times I could hardly bear it. Perhaps I should be too ashamed to admit wiping tears away, but I have, Billee, staring through darkness at night, missing you and loving you so.

There isn't much fear in me, but I can't help going soft all over just thinking of you.

Your airmail of Sept. 9 came today, a day later than the one of Sept. 1. I hadn't heard about Tom moving out but I can imagine what a bombshell it was to El.

I can appreciate your feelings regarding Ruth T.'s Freddie. That's the way things go. I imagine it all resulted from illness, although Ruth didn't go into details in a letter received yesterday. His return may have been routine because I don't know what kind of work he does but normally a quick return like that, plus a furlough, adds up to illness.

About my aerial gunner training... Please don't think I put you away in the corner of my heart when I go into something like that. Uppermost in my mind is the fact that I'm coming back to you in one piece. If I thought this would put the odds against me, I wouldn't do it.

This may sound a little silly, but will you go for a walk alone tonight and try to pretend we're together? Tell me what it was like.

Love to mother. Goodnight, angel.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

September 20, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I have that "step-child" feeling. That's right... no mail in nearly two weeks. It's tragic after all this service I've been having... at least one letter a week. I say to myself, "maybe tomorrow," just before I close my eyes tonight.

Finally, word from my brother. He is still at Salt Lake City and expects to be there for another two weeks; then, he will be assigned to a bomber crew as second-radio man on a B17 or B24. He had quite a trip out on the train, really exhausting. He has grown up so for his nineteen years, I can hardly believe he's my kid brother. Give you a funny feeling to see what a few months does to a kid.

I've written a letter to him, my sister and Mom tonight. I wasn't going to write you but, as you see, I decided I'd have a short date. I love dates with you, even those by mail. We'll make up for the miles we've traveled in pen and ink. I wonder sometimes how many miles I might have written by now. I think of the casual things to figure out but no matter how long or short we'll make up for them.

I've been busy tonight getting a package of things off to Lettie and her children: sweets and toys for the little boys and some fancy under things for young Sherry Ann that she'll feel very glamorous in, and some new hair ribbons. I bought candy from Lofts for all of them. Lettie says they haven't been able to buy candy there for ever so long.

At the last line above, I fell asleep and woke with the pen still in my hand. What a gal you have. I'm getting to be like a little old woman falling asleep so early in the evening. Must be from living in the country.

I forgot to mention that it's Tuesday now. Marge and I have been busy altering a dress tonight. I've either lost weight or the darn thing stretched. I'm trying to get my clothes in order, to go home.

I bought the prettiest sweater today... not yellow and not gold but sort of in between, with long sleeves. It feels wonderful on. I'm having a dark green woolen jumper made so I had to buy something to go with it. Last week I picked up the cutest beanie with tiny bows tied on it, if you can imagine anything that looks like that. If I seem a little enthused about my purchases, it's because I haven't bought anything new in so long for myself. Seems like I've been giving everything away I've been buying here of late.

No letter again today. Now, I do feel like a stepchild but tomorrow is another day. Who knows what it will bring?

Agnes and I are going to Newark tomorrow. I want to pick up a few more things to take home.

Still no *Stars and Stripes*. I haven't had any since the first of August so you'd better check on them. I have all the issues you have sent me personally and what the office has sent. It's a shame you have to buy them. You have three subscriptions, don't you? Dot, 195 and mine? Do they run you much money or do you get a rate on them?

You should see all the girls with these handbags made in Africa. They must be doing quite a business down there with our boys. Our telephone operator has had one for several months that her boyfriend sent. He's in Sicily now, I believe. The bags run around five or ten dollars, I believe all handmade and all leather inside and out. Personally, I don't think too much of them. Still the battle rages on in Italy. I expect now that Churchill is home. Things will start humming from that end.

Once more, I'm sleepy. Isn't this awful? I wish I could curl up in "our corner" and go to sleep for a few hours with you to keep me company. I must say goodnight for now. I love you and miss you more than ever, if that's possible. Keep well, darling, and miss me. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 22, 1943—Matawan (V-mail)

Hello again darling,

Just in case the other letters are reaching you... here I am again another day this week. I sent an airmail off this morning and them got to thinking that maybe you weren't getting them either, so may this will go forward a bit quicker.

As I said in my other letters, it has been two weeks now since I had a letter and you know me, that old “miss you” feeling is on the rampage again, plus the “step-child” feeling, but then I always say tomorrow is another day. I should be more patient but I think you can appreciate the way I feel, since we seem to take turns going through this.

I’m dashing this off before train time. Agnes and I are going into Newark to shop tonight so we’ll make the 4:09 for a change. I’ve done quite a bit of shopping lately... I always like to. I guess it’s a hangover from working in the department store I always feel so at home in them. I’ve been getting a box off to my sister and her children... and, if it didn’t take some shopping to get everything together, what with shortages and what have you, but I finished it off and the express people have it now.

Seems like such a long time since I wrote a letter this way. I should have been doing it more often, since it seems that the airmail isn’t going through as quickly.

I’m still very curious about my surprise but I’ll be patient so it really will be one, and won’t go prying it see if I can find out. But then, you probably wouldn’t tell me anyway.

I called El today and Tom was home again over the weekend but rather suspected it would be his last. Eddie was home, too, so it was like old home week. I’m going in next week one day. Kay Emerson is going to get me a ham to take home with me on my vacation. You’d die if you could see what I have to take with me. Ed, Marge’s brother, is trying to find me a pint to take home. Mom can’t get it down there except from a bootlegger and she doesn’t like to be without it in the house so I’m going to have to get that... and besides, I want to put some in your fruitcake. The ham is for her, too. Seems like it’s hard to find ham down there... more than here for some reason or other. Can’t you see me boarding the streamliner with a pint under one arm and a ham under the other? It won’t be quite that bad... the ham I’m going to send ahead by fast express but the pint is going to be where I can keep an eye on it.

I’ve missed hearing from you more these past few weeks than any time I can remember, for some reason or other. Must be because I love you. Do you suppose that could be why? I wouldn’t be surprised. Maybe we could get us some trained pigeons to carry our letters back and forth so we’d be sure of getting them more quickly.

I have to dash now and get my things together. It’s getting close to train time. Please excuse the typing but this is the most I’ve done in ages.

See you some more... maybe tomorrow. In a rush but I love you more than ever.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 24, 1943—Matawan (3 V-mails)

Hello darling,

Feel wonderful... had mail from my two favorite people yesterday, you and my mom. I don’t know when I’ve been so happy to see that familiar airmail envelope.

Guess what? Your Lt. Wilkerson tore the date off the letter. I knew what date it was but I imagine it was more because of the “London” that you always head your letter with. You mentioned in the letter that it was the day before Labor Day.

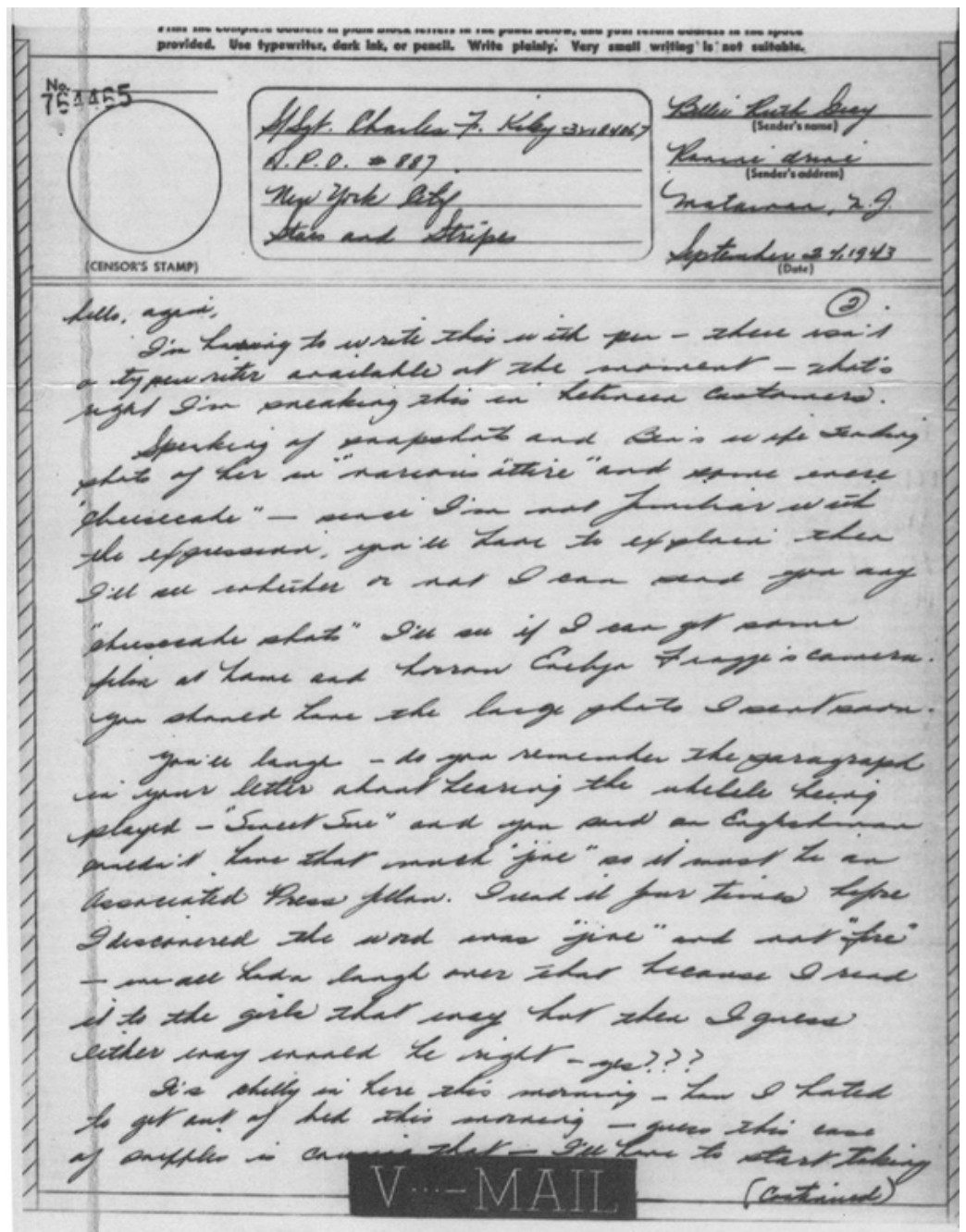
I thought perhaps you were doing some traveling around again here and there. I always liked the stories about King Arthur and his knights... thoroughly enjoyed “Ivanhoe” in school. Shifting from one part of the country to the other, I studied it twice but didn’t mind.

Marge and I have decided that the next time I send pajamas to you, you’ll be sure and find the note without any difficulty. Agnes said she appreciated the message and the end of my letter. You said, or rather wrote, “Love to Agnes and Marguerite,” but she has decided she’d rather have it delivered in person. She feels so much better since she received the cards from her husband. I always feel awkward when I complain about not receiving any mail. It’s been so long for her and then to only get two printed cards with his signature...

I’m having to write this with pen. There isn’t a typewriter available at the moment. That’s right... I’m sneaking this in between customers at work.

Speaking of snapshots, and of Ben’s wife sending shots of her in “various attire and some were cheesecake...” since I’m not familiar with the expression, you’ll have to explain. Then I’ll see whether or not I can send you any “cheesecake shots.” I’ll see if I can get some film at home and borrow Evelyn Fraggie’s camera. You should have the large photo I sent soon.

You’ll laugh... do you remember the paragraph in your letter about hearing the ukulele being played... “Sweet Sue...” and you said an Englishman couldn’t have that much “jive” so it must be an Associated Press fellow? I read it four times before I realized the word was “jive” and not “fire.” We all had a laugh over that because I read it to the girls that way but then, I guess either way would be right.



Billee's handwritten V-mail. This is about the actual size of a V-mail.

It's chilly in here this morning. How I hated to get out of bed today. Guess this case of sniffles is causing that. I'll have to start taking vitamins again before cold weather sets in. At the rate I'm going I'll be pretty well broken in as far as weather goes, by the time you get home... so I won't be a sissy when that old north wind blows.

For some reason I'm not busy so we aren't being interrupted much, and I'm not a bit sorry.

I still haven't seen my star lately. Wonder what happened to it. It hung so low in the sky for so long and was so bright. I miss seeing it.

We go spotting again next week. It's every two weeks, but it sure rolls around quick. This month has flown by. Hope my two weeks' vacation slows it down a bit. I'm leaving next Saturday on the one-thirty train from Newark. I couldn't get reservations on the streamliner going down or coming back so I'll go "sit-up" in the coach train. I arrive there about nine a.m. Sunday morning. I'm getting excited about going home. As I said before, I can appreciate more than ever you being away and what it means to you.

I called Dottie yesterday and everything is fine there. Al was in the basement washing diapers (don't you dare tell him I told you) and Dot was feeding the baby when I called. I told her I thought she was training Al just right and decided you'd have to get a job on a night shift so you could help out around the house. I can just picture you in an apron helping the washing machine along with the diapers. I'm going to insist on a washing machine, because I won't have your hands ruined. Do you still love me after seeing that picture? I don't think it will be quite that bad.

Marge has about decided to go south on her vacation, too. She'll meet me at the station on Saturday and I'll see her off. In other words, we'll practically pass each other going in opposite directions. Wish we had the time together and a little extra money. I'd like to go to Canada for two weeks, but I wouldn't go alone. That'll be a trip for us to take some time. I have been just over the border. That was the time I went to Niagara Falls several years ago but I want to see more of it. That Alcan Highway will probably make Canada ever more of a tourist's dream after the war is over. Imagine driving all the way to Alaska. Maybe we'll be able to fly there in our helicopter... that would be fun.

This is fun... I've spent the whole morning with you save for a few interruptions. I almost spoke too soon... I just got rid of a line. The teachers must have been paid today.

Back a few paragraphs about reading some of your letter to the girls... it was only "some." I read them parts that might interest them or when it's amusing, but I'm not one of those girls that share everything with their roommates, just in case you're wondering.

I have to go to lunch so I'll close for now. This is really getting long.

'Bye for awhile. See you again soon. Miss me and "behave." My love and prayers are ever with you. Anxiously awaiting outcome of gunnery school.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 27, 1943—London

Darling,

I don't know how many of my letters, especially the recent ones, have been based on a sympathetic theme, the sympathy being rather personal. Whenever I begin to write, the first thought in my mind borders on something akin to the whole world being against me, and us. It's only because I miss you so terribly much, Billee, and can't do anything about it. It's because I want you for my own, to hold you forever and tell you I love you, instead of writing it. But, that's all I can do, and it seems so, so inadequate.

So, when I love you this way and feel sorry for myself, it's a lonely heart that is talking. I honestly don't believe I'm built that way, always feeling sorry for myself, I mean, and I know you will forgive me.

I suppose I should be trying to make you smile, instead of looking across the ocean at you with sad eyes. Still, I can't help loving you and feeling the way I do.



Charles with Billee's picture. London, 1944.

Your picture came today, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if that started me off. Billee, I... well, I just melt whenever I look at it, and that has been about every five minutes!

There ought to be a law against pictures like that. Either that or a law against Billee Ruth Grays. You are so alive in that picture I can almost hear you talk, and that isn't good for people in my condition. I told Ben if the war wasn't over pretty quick there would be a one-man rampage around the globe, beating people's heads together.

While it was, in a way, a morale "tearer-downer," the picture was the biggest lift I've had in ever so long. Name your reward and it shall be yours.

I'll have to give you a rain check on it, though, as always.

Your letters of Sept. 6, written from 195, and the 9th were waiting for me Saturday when I came back from a trip to a Fortress base. I'm working on a story of a 25-mission man, a gunner whom I brought home with me for the weekend. Somehow, Ben wangled a chicken somewhere, and actually cooked it for us.

In your letter, you said when Warren goes away you will go home with Mother. I think you should, and my opinion isn't necessary, I know. I don't really believe Mother thinks you have changed, either. She misses you, that's all, which is only natural.

So Warren flies in a B-25. That's a "Mitchell," named after the late Gen. Billy Mitchell, and the plane used for the Tokyo raid. It's a twin-engine medium bomber. They don't use them over here, or haven't so far. The B-26s, "Marauders," have done the bombing by mediums.

About little Billy, I've never stopped praying for him. I always think of him because I love children, I guess.

I wouldn't ever give up hope where your cousin is concerned, unless it is definitely established that he was killed. I've met fellows here who were missing for as long as ten months, and turned up.

Your decision to let anniversary presents pass for the time being is perfectly sound. We'll have to draw the line somewhere and sometime.

I wish I could say my surprise for you was O.C.S., but I'm afraid your hunch was a little off. The War Department froze all direct appointments over two months ago and even if there were a possibility of leaving the *Stars and Stripes* for three months, which there isn't, the one and only O.C.S. here is being suspended in December or January.

I'm going to keep you guessing on this one, sweetheart.

Sorry I forgot my sizes in the Christmas request. Just like a man, isn't it?

If you still have the clipping on Sam Schulman, I'd like to have it. Haven't seen him for about a month now. Wouldn't be surprised if he were in Italy.

Jim King, a fellow I know with Associated Press here, did a piece on the *Stars and Stripes* last week and sent it back. Keep an eye out for it. He was in for a visit with Ben and me Saturday night. In fact, he stayed so long it forced me to postpone a "date" letter to you.

Like some of the other civilian correspondents, he either stops in the office or home to pick up leads for stories they can't get from troops the way we can, or to get soldiers' reactions to things. Inasmuch as we are in constant contact with the men, we can get a better idea than a civilian can.

Thanks for the news about Annice and Dorothy Jean. You were the first to tell me what my god-daughter's name was.

Give the "mostest of the bestest" of my love to Mother. 'Night, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, C.

September 27, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Another welcome airmail arrived Saturday. I was hoping I'd get a Saturday night letter off but things didn't work out that way and here it is Monday again.

We aren't too busy again today so I have time do dash a few lines off.

You have been busy and doing big things. You failed to mention, in regard to the "shake-up" in the office, whether or not a promotion was in store for you. Are you just being modest? Nosey me, I have to know everything, but that's just concerning you. I have a reputation to minding my own business, usually.

I've been busy getting my things together to go home. I'm glad you're sending some mail to 412. Don't think I could take the two weeks without a letter or two to make my vacation a nice one. I was going to say "perfect," but that wouldn't be right. No vacation would be perfect without you. the last vacation I had I shared with you... remember?

We're still having our touch of fall weather. I awakened this morning hearing the radiators singing that old familiar tune. Mr. Heuser had been down early and started the furnace up. It sounded good because it was one of those mornings that you'd have to put your clothes on in a hurry or else freeze. I'll bet it will be something on the observation tower Thursday night. I'm getting chilled thinking about it!

I talked to Dot last week but she didn't mention the christening. I'll call again within week and see how she is.

This is as far as I got at the bank... then I tucked it in my bag and came home, so here I am all settled, to spend a bit of time with you. It's a gorgeous night. There must be a million stars out but I don't see ours... might be it isn't as bright as it used to be.

I called El a bit ago to find out how things are there. Tom called yesterday. He is still in Massachusetts awaiting shipment. Poor guy, you know about what he is going through after all the time you spent at Dix waiting. We were discussing your Xmas boxes. You're really going to be fixed up proper but those darn little boxes... the things are really going to be squeezed in.

I had a long letter from Mom today. She said the President of the Wachovia Bank contacted one of the girls I used to work with to find out where I was and if she thought I'd be interested in a job there. I'm afraid to go back for fear I'll be shanghied. Ivey's called Mom and wanted to know if I'd come home to stay... that they certainly needed me... that they'd pay anything I asked. How about that? As I told you before, the only time I'll go back is if Warren is sent out of the country. I can't get the picture of my aunt, the one whose son was reported killed at Guadalcanal, out of my mind. She has almost lost her mind completely. The last time I saw her she hardly knew me and my sister told me when I was home that she is worse. We'll have to see how things work out.

I'm anxious to get the *Stars and Stripes* now for your front page stories. I meant to ask El if they were getting the papers. I haven't seen one in over a month. I'll probably get them all at once, one of these

days. You haven't sent me any of your stories in ages, not since the WAC story. That's about the last paper I received, too.

I was going over some things the other night, pasting some in our scrapbook and counting letters. 125 approximately from January 18, 1942 to this one dated September 11, 1943. Not bad. I have them all. I've finished, except for some touches here and there, our scrapbook for 1942. It's so filled up I decided to start another for 1943. It's the best place I have found to keep the letters and everything together. By the way, would you rather have the complete issue of Life Magazine concerning your convoy over, or will I cut the pictures and article out and put it in the scrapbook? I think the whole magazine would be of more value to you. What do you think?

I like your Saturdays. Mine have been so busy for the past few months, but not too busy for me to think about you and miss you a little more than during the week. The weekdays I seem to be able to take but it's the weekends... Still, I haven't adjusted myself after all this time. I always miss you that much more. I'd love to tag along after you on one of your Saturday holidays.

You're going at quite a rate, working the clock around. I hope it isn't always like that. They'll be wearing you out. That's why I didn't get any mail for two weeks... and I was making excuses for you. Just kidding. I realize you're busy but I do miss your letters so, when they don't come when I think they should.

We all think that it's time you had a leave... a 30-day leave. Think I'll write the president a letter. If he only knew how much we missed each other, I'm sure he'd do something. I'm not hoping for one but others seem to be getting them. I can't help wondering... it would be awfully hard to see you go back again, but I think seeing you for five minutes would be worth it all. Paper is gone so I have to say "goodnight" my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 30, 1943—Matawan

Evening darling,

It's really a terror out. You've probably heard wind like this before but it really howls out here in the country with nothing to stop it.

We're at the observation tower, or trailer I should say and I wouldn't be surprised to see the top go right off. If there are any planes out tonight, somebody is crazy.

My clothes are nearly all packed and I have one box packed ready to send to you. I accomplished a lot tonight, more than I thought possible.

I'm a little on the sleepy side tonight but that's because last night I went to 195 after I finished shopping in Newark and stayed the night. Your dad and El and I sat around the kitchen table until the wee hours discussing the war and what-have-you. I was showing El how to knit and your dad was fixing vegetables for Friday's clam chowder. He was to make it tonight. Other than a cold, he seems to be doing fine.

Tom called El yesterday and obviously the line was open and someone was listening. All he said was he had been to Mass and communion that morning and that he wouldn't see her for while, so I guess this is it. She is taking it very well... at least last night. Thank heavens she has the baby. That will keep her busy and her mind occupied. I wish I could do something to help but in a case like that, there isn't much you can do.

You should see the baby. She's adorable and everything a baby should be. Sometimes, she looks like you, but I think she favors Father John more. She weighs 15 lbs now and is very healthy-looking as you can imagine.

Young Terry [Tom O'Connor's younger brother] was there, or has been there several weeks. He wasn't quite as active this time. He had a cold and wasn't feeling up to par. I don't know whether you met him or not, but he's all boy. I like him.

Had a letter from my sister. The package I sent arrived safely. The kids thought it was Christmas. She said they had fun opening the packages. Young Bill... (Had to leave then... just heard a plane overhead.) ... was measured for braces from his hips down. It's heartbreaking when you think about it. He's such a little fellow.

We have a pot-bellied stove in here that's really throwing the heat. I'll have to shed a sweater or two. So far, we haven't had to go outside yet.

I forgot to tell you the V-letter of Sept. 19 arrived Tuesday explaining the delay in mail. If that's the reason, I've stopped complaining. I'd rather have mail on my vacation.

I'm sorry to hear about Ralph Martin. It's a shame to be so far away from home and sick, too. Let me know what you hear about him.

Marge says she'll be glad to let you do all the painting, and she'll tell you what to do. I have some more clippings at home I'll send... another fireplace that is really nice. We'll probably have a time decided when the time comes.

I have all the things for your other box now. I saw so many nice things that I thought you'd like but none of them were meant to go with GIs.

This will probably be the last letter I'll get off from Jersey but as soon as I get home, I'll dash off a few lines.

It has started to rain now, to make it an even more pleasant evening.

We just had a visitor, the first since we've been "spotting." You would have laughed if you could have seen us. We heard a knock on the screen door. I parked by the telephone with our "weapon," a really wicked-looking thing—one of the farm implements—behind my back. He just wanted to know where a certain highway was, so that's all there was to that.

While at 195, I had an opportunity to see the latest *Stars and Stripes*, from the last week in August. One of the stories accounts for some of the time you spent in Southern England.... the one regarding the gunnery school. Is that where you will go if you take the course, or is that a military secret?

I see we have a new censor; is he as nice as Bob Moora, or is he the nosey type?

The time is slipping by. I write a bit and then Agnes and I talk a bit. We really have some discussions. I want to say something about the “commando.” I probably didn’t think... he must have been in the regular Army and went in with the commandos. Were the Rangers organized at that time? Anyhow, whatever he was, he was in the Dieppe raid.

My pen went dry last night and I had to stop, so now it’s Friday night and I have just a few things to do to finish packing for my trip. Right now, I need a couple of toothpicks to keep my eyes open. I’m exhausted. Sure will be glad when I board that train.

Wouldn’t it be fun if we were packing our bags together, to go just anywhere so long as it was with you? But Asheville sounds pretty nice, to go back and retrace our steps of, what is it, about twenty-one months ago now. I like our memories. Wouldn’t part with them for anything.

The storm continued today. What wind and rain... really nasty. Marge and I got up early and caught the seven forty-five so we could make First Friday Mass and communion. This is my fourth month now. My intention was that you’d be home at the end of the ninth month, or at least there would be an armistice. Five months to go now. Guess I’m planning or rather praying for too much.

Now I am finished and all I have to do is take my bath and crawl in bed, so I’ll say goodnight for now, darling, and when I write again it will be from home. That word sounds good to me.

Miss me, and I’ll be thinking of you more than ever at home. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 3, 1943—Fortress Bomber Base, England

Hello sweetheart,

My first letter in a week again and I have to break my “rule” once more by using a typewriter. I’ve been here for a week now, with the exception of yesterday, “sweating” out my first mission.

Here’s the story:

Bud Hutton, Andy Rooney and I are flying from the same field on the same mission; the first time a stunt like that has been pulled. That is,



Bud Hutton, Charles, Andy Rooney. England 1943.

having three men cover one mission first hand. We came here a week ago, were grounded by bad weather and then ducked into London yesterday, after it appeared as though we would be inactive for another day. While we were gone, they did go out... and raided the naval base at Emden in Germany. So, we hot-footed it back again today.

While I was in town, I collected my mail and as I recall (I left the letters home) there were two airmails and three V-mails. In one letter, you said you hadn't heard from me in two weeks. By now, you know it was because I was too hasty in sending mail to Asheville. I should have waited a bit longer.

There was also the paragraph about the bad dream you had, the mistaken news that I got tangled up in a bomber accident. If this is going to affect you like that, I'm going to call the whole thing off and stay on the ground. I know what wild thoughts the families and sweethearts of combat crews must have while these fellows are operating and I definitely don't want you to have them. I suppose I should have kept this stuff from you but you would find out about it some way and besides, we don't have any secrets, do we? Please, honey, let me know just what you are thinking. I know you said you didn't like it, but... well, just what do you think about it? I honestly don't believe it is as risky as a lot of people make it out to be. True, the risk is greater than it would be if I stayed on the ground and stuck to the dull, routine work. But I have to live with my conscience, too. And just know it's hurting something awful.

I was up on two practice flights last week while we were waiting for the real thing. The crew I'm with is swell. The pilot, Lt. McIlveen, is quite capable and the gunners... well, you can tell they know their stuff by just talking to them. The ship I'm flying in is called "The Stars and Stripes," named for the paper and making its maiden flight after we christen it tomorrow. One of our artists, Dick Wingert, is here to paint the name and the characters on the nose of the ship. Bud is flying with the "Lady Susie



Stars and Stripes bomber with Dick Wingert drawing England 1943.

II," piloted by Lt. Sam Dickson, son of the ex-governor of Alabama. Andy is going with the "Mission Belle," but if we go tomorrow, he'll go in another ship. The Mission Belle crew is due for a leave starting tomorrow.

I haven't done much writing in the past week or so, waiting for this trip to come off. However, I am working on a story built around a kid who has completed 25

missions. I mentioned that in my last letter. He was one of the boys who sat in on Benny's chicken dinner feast. It is to run this week and I haven't even started getting it in shape. I started to work on it tonight but I was thinking of you so much I just had to get this off.

I just looked in my pocket to make sure I had a few things with me. They include the four-leaf clover you gave me so long ago and the picture of you in the leather case. They go with me whenever we go.

I'll get off a letter as soon as the trip is over. Please don't worry and love me lots. 'Night.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

I don't even have a pen to sign this.

October 5, 1943—Asheville

My darling,

Did you think I wasn't ever going to write? I've been here since Sunday but it seems like I haven't had a moment to call my own. Your letter of September 19 was waiting for me when I arrived. It was almost like having both you and Mom awaiting my arrival. It's good to be home, more than anyone will know... to look up and see my mountains, to see Grove Park Inn and remember "our moment" there... Mom isn't as well as I hoped to find her. More about that later. I haven't as yet received the letter regarding the aerial gunnery school but perhaps I will in a few days.

So far the weather has been perfect. It's a little on the fall side but then it is fall. I had an uneventful trip. I left Newark at 1:45 p.m. and arrived here at 9:15 am. Not too bad... at least I had a seat all the way down.

Mom has five permanent party air flight boys with her, besides three nice girls in the apartment that work for the Postal Agency. She also has the cottage rented to two business girls. Thank heaven she isn't serving any meals. That has made the work much easier. One of the boys here was at New Caledonia. He had the misfortune to contract jungle fever so he was sent home in August. From his conversation, it must have been pretty awful down there. He doesn't like to talk about it. One of the other fellows has been here several months. He's been in the service for three years with a year and some months spent in Greenland and then back here for thirty days, and then again to the arctic region in Canada. The cold finally got him down and he was transferred to the States again. The boys have been a lot of company for Mom. She has enjoyed having them.

Asheville has really waked up. It looks like Saturday every day in the week. Things are really booming. The hospitals around here are filled. You see quite a few of the convalescents on the street, some with crutches. That's the part I don't like to see but then that all goes with the war. They have five hundred air flight boys that go to school in the City Hall besides all the postal employees, so that brings a lot of extra residents here.

I met one of my girlfriends for lunch yesterday. We went to what used to be Lucille's. It's under new management now, and called the "Rendezvous." Quite nice... but I missed Lucille's.

Yesterday morning, since it was my anniversary, I went to Mass and communion. I arrived in time on Sunday to attend 11:00 Mass. I was so happy to be there. You were so close. I missed you but somehow I felt you were near, even more so yesterday morning. I'm going out to see Mother Müller tomorrow. She'll be surprised because I haven't told her I was coming.

We had a letter from Warren yesterday. He was due to be sent from Salt Lake City to his new post within the next few days. Mom is worried about where they will send him... I hope not out of the States yet.

Being home, all the memories of our first days together have come rushing around my mind. Last night I took the long walk you asked me to take... trying to imagine you were beside me. I closed my mind to all my surroundings. I could almost reach out and touch you... and then it came all over me that you weren't really there, and I missed you terribly. But, just for the moment then, I pulled myself together and stuck my chin out and held my head up, and decided I could take some more, no matter how much longer. That's all we can do... and just go on loving each other the same way.

I love you telling me you aren't taking any chances. That's a little hard to believe but I'll believe it for my own good. Do you mind? I love you so much, for all the little things you write in your letters.

Coming home again... It seems like only yesterday that we were making memories. It's a year this month that I left here. Now I feel as if I'd ever left at all. Tonight, it doesn't seem like such a very long time.

Wish you were here. There are so many things we could do together. I wanted to go to Grove Park Inn and have a champagne cocktail for us but decided I wouldn't be able to take it. Maybe I'll muster up enough courage before I go back to Jersey. My boss wanted to know if I were going to stay in Asheville and if I'd come back, etc. Their help situation has been desperate, but I told him I was only on a vacation. It wouldn't be safe to stay around here if you didn't want to work. You'd soon be shanghied!

There was a gorgeous, almost brand-new moon last night. I forgot to tell you when I wrote about our walk. I'm going to try that again before I go home. I'll let you know if it's any different. Mom is busy

tonight putting an edge on some blankets to send to the kids. It's good to see her sitting there... to be in my own living room. I have missed it a lot but then, I'm not alone in that. When I think of all the people that are away from home, then I feel ashamed and selfish.

It's early and I'm getting sleepy. Instead of resting on Sunday, I just kept going. The soldier I told you about, that's been here so long... the one who had been in Greenland... took Mom and I to a movie. We saw "Salute to the Marines," with Wallace Beery. It was good, too.





Today, Mom and I went uptown and had lunch with one of the girls. We shopped and took in a movie: Bob Hope and Betty Hutton in “Let’s Face It.” We had supper out, too, and came home. Quite a day we had, but nice.

I’d better close, I guess. This is getting long. Maybe I won’t get it in the envelope if I keep on.

Let me tell you again... it was swell of you to meet me in Asheville, even though in the form of a letter. I loved it, but then you always seem to remember everything.

Keep well, and don’t worry about me. I’m ok. I’ll go on just as you’ll go on with all the hope, faith and love we have in God and each other and perhaps it won’t be too long.

Tell me something... if such a miracle should happen and you would get a leave to come home, would you take it? It would be hard to say goodbye again, but it would be worth it. Hard for both of us, but we can take it, can’t we?

Goodnight for now, my dearest. A special “hello kiss” coming your way for our vacation. Incidentally, I’m in “your corner.” Mom has the sofa back in the same place.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 5, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Your wandering boy is back, safe and sound. I’ve just returned from the bomber base, and in keeping with my promise, I’m getting this off without delay.

I heard the Associated Press sent back a story on the raid, how the *Stars and Stripes* covered it, etc., so you may even know by now that everything turned out all right.

It was quite an experience. I don’t believe we could have handpicked a tougher mission. The target was Frankfurt, about 600 miles from Britain and 100 miles inside Germany. It was one of the deepest penetrations made by Fortresses, roughly a 1,200 to 1,300 mile flight. I’ll try to give you a chronological story and perhaps give you a better picture.

As you know from my last letter, written at the base, I waited a week before weather permitted a mission. I was to fly in “The Stars and Stripes,” named by the pilot and crew after the paper. Andy Rooney and Bud Hutton were to go on other ships.

We were awakened yesterday morning at 2 a.m., had a quick breakfast and gathered with our crews to be briefed. The target was said to be a tough one. Ground defenses should be fairly strong and fighter opposition could be expected. It was to be a seven-hour flight, five of them on oxygen. You see, above 10,000 feet you have to have oxygen and we were at 25,000 most of the time.

We took off at 7:30, gradually forming with other formations until the sky seemed to be filled with Fortresses. When we crossed the Channel and went over Belgium, I had my first look at continental Europe. When we reached Germany, the ground defenses opened up on us and there were a couple of fighter attacks just before we reached the target. On the homeward flight, it was a little rougher, but not bad.

Inasmuch as our ship was in a lead element, we didn't have it so bad. The fighters concentrate on the rear groups, usually. Six Focke-Wulfs made a pass at us over Holland but a turret gunner in the ship next to us shot one down and scared the rest away.

It was pretty cold up there, 29.7 below zero, and I was glad to see the English coast again. The oxygen was starting to get me, too. I rode all the way in the nose of the ship with the navigator and bombardier and, while we had a heater up there, it was still rather chilly.

Back on the ground, we discovered we were hit in two places but no serious damage. Other planes weren't so lucky. We lost 15 Forts in all but claimed quite a few fighters and really plastered what used to be Frankfurt. The R.A.F. went back there last night, and guided by the fires we started, finished the job.

So, here I am. Nothing to worry about, see?

The worst part of it was the few hours before the takeoff, especially since we knew it wouldn't be a picnic.

Yes, I was thinking only of you all the time. When we took off, I saw you sound asleep at 2:30 a.m.

I remembered what day it was... October 4 and your anniversary. You said you would be at church that morning and I promised I would be, too. There I was in the nose of a bomber and while you were in church, I would be where I shouldn't be... over Germany.

I prayed, and never lost confidence. I was too busy to think about much besides what was going on but while we were between Frankfurt and Holland, I had the craziest idea that you would love to see the pattern of continental Europe from 25,000 feet.

Andy's ship got back without a scratch, but Bud's had to turn back shortly after we took off because of mechanical trouble. Consequently, he was a bit disappointed.

I have several pictures taken in my flying gear, etc., and I'm sending them along separately. Now, I'll be able to tell our "ball club" about the day Daddy "bombed" Germany.

Two of the pictures were taken after we landed, so it will give you a "before and after" idea of how it affected me.

My story for the *Stars and Stripes* wasn't so good (I'll make excuses now) mainly because I had to dictate it over the phone. By the time the crew was interrogated and I was able to get a long distance call through to London, there were only 20 minutes until our deadline.

However, they did run a 2-column picture of Andy, Bud and I with my story. Andy didn't even have time to do one.

Our chief purpose in making the flights, though, was to get background material for future stories.

Forgive me, if this is a bit shaky, but I still have a bit of a headache from using that oxygen and I am so, so tired.

I'd give a million dollars to have you here with me. You would have been so nice to come home to. Despite the excitement, I never let it slip from my mind that I love you, ever so much.

After about 15 hours of sleep, I'll be back tomorrow night and go into your letters. I have an airmail of September 15, two-page V-mail of September 22 and the five-page special for the 24th. 'Night.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

October 7, 1943—Asheville

My darling,

Another night almost gone of my vacation. It's really slipping by.

Let's see... yesterday I stayed home nearly all day and Mom and I had a steak dinner in the kitchen of Oak Lodge. It was really a feast. Then I made my way to St. Genevieve's to surprise Mother Müller. I couldn't help but remember going up the path, how many times I had done that before, mumbling my catechism over to myself and stopping here and there to peek in my book when I'd stumbled over a phrase. One of the nuns said I was their most faithful student, that I never missed a lesson.

Mother Müller looks well. She was surprised but pleased. She asked particularly about you and we said a prayer together for you in the chapel.



I called Mom when I arrived at the square, to meet me and we took in another movie, "Heaven Can Wait," this time, with Don Ameche... amusing and unusual.

Today I helped Mom with the work; then, I walked almost all the way to the Inn. It's been a beautiful day, with the sky as blue as indigo. I walked around slowly to the terrace, trying to catch your presence, and I did. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to take it, but I did. I stood on the terrace and looked across the mountains, saying a prayer that would bring us together again, then I

walked a little more, still feeling you so near. I started to go then, but decided to go to the cocktail lounge. Perhaps I'm an incurable romantic, but I sat in our same corner and ordered a champagne cocktail. I whispered a toast to you, with my love; then, I drank another one for you. I sat a little while longer, then made my way to the bus. That's the first time, I'm sure, since you left that I've been there, and that's the first cocktail since we had ours together. While I was drinking your cocktail, the radio played "As Time Goes By." Really. It was a precious moment.

No other mail since the letter on Sunday. Marguerite dropped me a line and said three more of our bonds had arrived, so that's good news.

I sent postcards to 195 and the rest. I'll stop by there on Sunday before returning to Matawan... that's Sunday a week.



Fanny Brice played the Baby Snooks character in vaudeville and radio from 1912 to 1951.

Mom and I are listening to Baby Snooks. I've heard the radio more since I've been home than I have in weeks. We heard the third game of the Series today: 5-2. What an exciting game! I hope the Cards win again. You, of course, are betting on the Yankees. Some day we'll see one together. I told Mom she'd have to come and see us in October so she could take in the Series, too. How she loves the game.

We are still holding our own in Italy. I'm hoping they don't make a battlefield out of Rome. It seems so sacrilegious. Already, the Germans are looting the city, according to a report from London.

I'm writing this in "our corner" again. It's wonderful being here where the memories really belong to us... all of them here and our Saturday night in New York belong to us. We didn't share them with anyone. The night we stayed in Evelyn's car and discovered each other. I

remember I kept looking at you after we did go in and saying to myself, "did it really happen?" Then you turned shy on me, or I did, and you didn't kiss me goodnight. You just left me at the door with a "I'll call you in the morning."

I'm hoping Evelyn will invite me to the canteen party Saturday night. I'd like to see the new canteen they have in St. Lawrence's. It's in the basement of the church. I'll have to have an invitation and maybe she won't think of it.

It's a beautiful night out. We couldn't ask for more if we were seeing it together. I enjoyed today. I felt as if I really spent it with you. The mountains are lovely, just turning a little but lovely. There were quite a few people playing golf I noticed, when I walked down the steps from the terrace.

That seems to be all the news this time, my darling. Be back with you soon. Remember how much I love you and keep your chin up. Oh, yes... none of your misbehavin'. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 7, 1943— London

Billee dearest,

I do hope my last letter, written so hurriedly, wasn't too confusing. I'm sure I didn't do justice to the letter you deserved. But, I did want to get some word off to you as soon as possible so you would

know everything was all right. I'm not even certain I answered all of the questions I tried to picture in your mind. Let me know if I neglected any.

Isn't it strange how that number "4" came up again? The mission taking place on Oct. 4, I mean. It certainly has been significant in our lives. Do you think there is a possibility of it meaning we will only have four players on our team? Perhaps it means we will have four boys and four girls. Or, better still, four sets of twins.

Now, what are you smiling about? After all, my feelings have to be considered and I think I'll be able to bear up under it.

I mentioned in my last letter that the rushing about prior to the mission didn't give me much of an opportunity to say anything about your sweet "bits of heaven" received. The airmail of Sept. 15 was, well, the kind of letter I dream about. You make me just quiver all over with letters like that.

You said we have something not many people have... everlasting love after such a short time together. In one way it wasn't much, was it? But, I know it would be the same to me if we had only ten minutes together instead of 10 days. I could never have forgotten you, if we separated at the "Y" that night. I'm sure of it. I'll confess, Billee, I was never attracted to anyone the way I was attracted to you. Had you said you couldn't see me the next day, I would have made a pest of myself. I couldn't let you go, then or now.

You ask if I thought you would get tired of writing after awhile and that we could drift apart.

Sweetheart, I love you. I have more faith in you than anything and everything else on earth. So, you see, I couldn't even have entertained such thoughts. You are, to me, everything that was, is and will be! There isn't any need whatsoever for you to be frightened and wonder if our love is real. It is so hard for me to reassure you from here when I want to have you in my arms, and show you how much a part of me you are, to have you see the "grin" you seem to like.

When you told me of the dream you had, in which the plane exploded, I came very close to passing the raid up. I couldn't see the justification in it if your reaction was along those lines. Then, I realized you wouldn't be very proud of me if I backed down.

It's beginning to look as if airmail is slowing up again for the winter and I'll be sending occasional V-mails. But, I still favor these.

Agnes and Marguerite want my "love" delivered in person, do they? I'll do it one day. I don't know as I'll have much left over. You will get every ounce of it. Still, maybe you'll let me save a little for them.

I'm surprised you don't know what "cheesecake" is. You'll make a swell newspaperman's wife. Ask Dottie. She'll tell you what it is.

And, before I go any further, my love. I don't care if Al makes that trip to the basement every day in the week and twice on Sunday. You won't have to ask me twice to help around the house. But, when it comes to diapers! That's what they have a diaper service for. Even a washing machine won't change my mind. I suppose you will be able to change it, though, by pouting.

Our letters are personal but I don't care who reads them. By that, I mean I don't mind Agnes and Marguerite reading the parts you show them. In fact, if I had the opportunity, I wouldn't hesitate in broadcasting my love for you all over the world.

Almost forgot... I've told Dad about my trip to Frankfurt. He may have read the Associated Press story and wondered why I hadn't said anything to him. I told him I didn't want to worry the girls unnecessarily but since it was over, I was free to talk about it.

A letter from Ruth R. came today. I'll quote a part of what she says: "You are the luckiest man I know, Charlie. There must be millions who would want such a girl as Billee. She loves you so much. Just listening to her talk of you, and the way her face lights up when she does, shows how much love she has for you. What did you ever do to deserve her?"

That's what I keep asking myself. So, you see, other people have noticed. I have witnesses to support me in a breach of promise suit.

"Bye for awhile. Miss me and love me lots. Love to the girls.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: A letter from Jack Donnell in Africa... he asks to be remembered to you.

October 8, 1943—Asheville

Darling,

Settle back, my dear, if you want to stay with me, but I'm warning you that you might be sorry because the both of us are going to get a scolding.

I'm almost sorry I sent my picture if it made you feel so low. Look, I've been thinking it over today and wondering if we aren't carrying things too far with our memories, etc.

After all, there are an awful lot of us in the same boat except some aren't as lucky as we are... and then there are a few that seem to get all the breaks. So what? Our day will come and maybe it's not so far off.

At least I know where you are. I average a letter or two a week. You're in a comparatively safe place, for how long I don't know but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. And, after all this time you still love me as much as ever... more, maybe! If I seem to complain or gripe a little, chalk it up to that good old American custom.

And, I agree with you. Your letters have been on the personal and sympathetic side... too much so. Sometimes I think Ben is a bad influence. Tell him I said so. He needs a scolding, too. After all, this can't last forever (I keep telling myself) and please God, make that come true. In the meantime, we have to keep our best foot forward and stay in the game.

I realize only too well, my dear, more than you know, just how lonely you can be. Sometimes I wonder if I can take it another day or night and I wish that I were a man. Maybe I'd turn into a barfly. Please, don't take that last line as a suggestion.

You get a general idea of what I'm driving at without my nagging you any longer. Now when you look at my picture, think of me as saying, "Keep your chin out in front, just for me, because I'm counting on you." You won't be able to do that if you're going to brood in a corner somewhere. That isn't at all becoming to a staff sergeant, especially Staff Sergeant Charles F. Kiley. You know I have two pictures of you in a double frame. The one looks a little lonely but the other I love. It gives me courage every time I look at you, with that grin of yours and the light in your eyes, or twinkle, I should say. It sends all my fears flying away and my loneliness too, most all the time. You seem to say, "Cheer up... it won't be long now." I don't know what I'd do without that picture. You're here in Asheville, you know. I couldn't leave you all alone in Jersey. See, your picture is really a morale builder.

I almost forgot... this all started when your letter of September 27 arrived today telling me my picture arrived. The picture flatters me, and that isn't just my opinion.



Mom and I just came in from dinner and a show. We saw "Swing-shift Maisie." Ann Southern, of course. It was really amusing and relaxing.

I saw Evelyn F[raggie] today and she invited me to the dance, so I'll tell you about that. It's a canteen dance. Haven't been to once since I met you.

It's a gorgeous night out. The moon looks so nice, but then you're seeing it, too. Our friend Jerry saw it too, last night over London. I always get the shivers and say a little prayer when I hear reports like that, hoping against hope you weren't in the

vicinity of the bombing. I guess they are doing their best to retaliate, no matter how small the effort. They just don't seem to want to give up.

I'd loved to have seen you there with your chicken dinner. Be sure and have Ben give you a few pointers on his cooking technique, because you'll likely need them. I can see where his wife will appreciate him.

I'm giving up guessing about my surprise. There's only one thing left but we settled that long ago: my ring. I remember saying or writing very plainly that I was more than proud to wear yours and no "blue-white" would take its place. Remember! It must be something nice. I was hoping it would be a commission because I know you'd love that. As for me, private or general, you're still my sweetheart and that's all the commission you need for my money... so, I'm still guessing.

I saved the magazine already for you about Sam Schulman. The title is "Where's Sammy?" by Robert Considine. It's an excerpt from a book he is writing. I haven't as yet come across the article by Jim King but I'll be on the lookout and save it for you. Maybe Father John will spot it.

Are you still with me after that scolding? You're forgiven, my dear, long ago, but I just wanted to put my two cents in. You see, the picture of you so lonely and downhearted isn't a pleasant one. It's hard to imagine you like that, but then we all have our moments. Just go on telling me you love me by pen and via the airways. It'll be adequate until I can feel your arms around me and your lips on mine again. We'll make up for all the loneliness and despair, but just don't get too lonely!

I'm going to turn in now. If it isn't too late, I'll write when I get in tomorrow night and tell you how the dance was.

Am I forgiven for my scolding? I feel better already just listening to myself. See what you have in store for yourself? You won't even be able to get lonely in peace. Already I'm henpecking you. Remember, straighten up and don't forget I love you. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

I just happened to think of something... writing, perhaps you might misunderstand. Please, don't think I'm making light of our love or our loneliness. Our love is such a glorious, precious thing I couldn't do that and it is so glorious, we shouldn't be lonely, but it can't be helped. We'll try not to be so morose about it... yes? Everything all right now? No misunderstanding? That's good. I can sleep in peace now.

More love, your Billee

October 10, 1943—Asheville

Good morning darling,

I just got in from the canteen dance. Remember, I said if it weren't too late I'd tell you about it.

First of all, it was at the George Vanderbilt [Hotel]. I don't think I've been inside the place since the Sunday we sat in there. I remember I went to my first big dance there.

They had quite a nice crowd. Not many familiar faces, though, among the girls... just a few that I knew. I felt like one of the soldiers, that someone should come and talk to me.

I danced quite a bit, more than I have in a long time. My feet hurt now and they are a little bruised from being stepped on. I shagged with a sergeant, a master sergeant. He had four service stripes on him... twelve years, isn't it? He was amazed that I could, and I had to confess that I was just following him, that I'd never done it before.

Then I met a young intelligence... not officer, but a Pfc. in the Intelligence Division. A nice enough fellow and a perfect gentleman, but did he think he was something. I felt like sticking a pin in him. He was just my age but had a good enough education and should have grown up a little more by now. He danced with me quite a bit, I guess because I was a good listener. I did get a word in now and then, but what an effort!

The orchestra wasn't too bad for three pieces and they didn't play too much boogie-woogie for a change, but they did have to end up with "Pistol-packin' Mama." I hope that hasn't struck London yet. It's corny.

It ended promptly at twelve and I had a bite to eat and just got in. OK for a Saturday night. We could have had such fun. I hope I can do a little more dancing before you come home so I won't be completely a back number.

You know what I did today? A washing... four lines full. Mom didn't feel so well so I got it all out of the way. It was good to be outside all day. I forgot to mention I slept until nearly twelve but there wasn't much to do except wash since I did everything else in the house on Friday. I've done more housework since I'm home than I've done in seven months. It felt good to get back in the swing.

Have you recovered sufficiently from my scolding of yesterday to want to read another letter from me? That wasn't too bad, though, was it?

Elise, my girlfriend, came in this afternoon and we went uptown for awhile. She had a few things to pick up and we checked the drag a couple of times. Perhaps I should explain... that means we walked up one side of the main street and down the other to see who we could see. It's been a beautiful day and a gorgeous night. If we were having the weather made to order it couldn't be more perfect since I've been home. Each day is prettier than the one before.

I think I've covered all the happenings since yesterday. Say, how do you rate? A letter practically every day... pretty nice, but then, you do rate it. The Pfc. was just your height and I couldn't help but wish he could trade places with you, if just for one dance. He wasn't too good, anyhow. I'm very sleepy now and I want to get up early so I can go to communion in the morning. Goodnight for awhile.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 12, 1943—London

'Lo sweetheart,

I can see now that I started to send mail to Asheville sooner than I should have, or else our mail service has reached a new low. Your airmails of Sept. 20 and 22 just received, point out that you hadn't received mail in two weeks. Perhaps it was the beginning of the annual slow-down in airmail. Whatever it was, it didn't make me feel so good. You sounded so neglected, which tells me you miss me.

We had a pretty good show here the other night. A force of German bombers, said to be only 15 but I believe there were more, got through the outer defenses to London. They caught three of them in the spotlights and fired everything in the book at them. There must have been blind men on the A.A. guns because they didn't hit any of them. There weren't any bombs dropped on the city but they did drop some in the suburbs.

I had a good seat for the hour-and-a-half show on the outskirts of the city. Together with several others, I was driving back after covering the first WAC-soldier wedding over here.

Speaking of weddings... You said a week may be pretty short notice for us when I get back. I don't know for sure how long it will take for preparations but I do know that I'm going to marry you so quick it will make your head swim.

My plans now are to take a month's vacation after I am discharged. During that month we will be married and well on our honeymoon. If we don't care to cut our honeymoon short, we'll just go on having one until our money runs out. Of course, that will force a halt and send me to work but I'll always have you to come home to.

Seriously, though, I believe I can straighten out my business entanglements in a couple of days and the rest will be devoted to launching our long-awaited happiness. I love you so much... well, I love you so much there isn't a simile to use in comparison.

I wish I could see you in the new "not gold or yellow, but in between" sweater. In fact, I wish I could see you in anything. I've been missing you something terrible lately.

It was thoughtful of you to get the spoon and fork set for my god-child. I haven't heard much about the christening except that it was rather quiet. I think Ruth Rommel mentioned it in a letter. She said that only both families were there.

I got your subscription to the *Stars and Stripes* straightened out. When I investigated today, I found they had lost the mailing plate with your name on it. I'm sending you a copy of my "raid" story under separate cover.

Warren is flying in the heavy bombers, is he? It's a favorable break for him to be shifted from the B25s (Mitchells) to the B17s or 24s (Fortresses and Liberators) because the heavies are much safer ships to fly in, I think. Wonder if he'll come over here.

I'd almost forgotten how you say "sho-nuff" and "you-all" until you mentioned it. I'd never be able to tell by your letters. If you still use those southern expressions, you sure don't write like that.

Billee, you don't have any doubt in my mind that my operational work with the Eighth Air Force is worrying you. I can tell it even before I get your reaction to the raid I went on. So, I'm going to make you a promise. Before I go on another one, I'll wait for a verdict from you. I don't have to go. It's an Air Force rule that no one can make you fly. From our standpoint, it's strictly a voluntary job. And, as Andy Rooney says while thinking of his wife, "There really isn't any justification in it."

If it doesn't worry you too much, I'll try and work one in now and then.

'Bye for awhile... miss me.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

October 14, 1943—Asheville

My dearest,

Last night and tonight have been like Christmas Eve with bright wrapping, ribbons and all the seals littering the living room and kitchen.

You know, for some reason you're awfully popular. There are four boxes on the way to you, or at least there will be by tomorrow. In Mom's package is your fruitcake and a Christmas tree. I'd love to see your face when you open that box. Mom will throw a fit when she discovers a branch from her shrubbery is gone, but it's a little like a Christmas tree.

You know, I couldn't get the Xmas spirit last year when I fixed your box. They told us we couldn't wrap anything and that spoiled things. Then, I couldn't think of things to send. Now this Xmas is almost here and I was so sure you'd be home by now and this would be such a beautiful Xmas for us both... but I guess it isn't to be. The best I can do now is to make this second Xmas away from home as much like Xmas as possible.

Mom added another personal touch today to your fourth box... what she is best at doing. You've probably guessed that it is something to eat. They look awfully good. I won't tell you any more. I wanted to make them but, with sugar and butter ration points so scarce, I was afraid to experiment, so I thought it better to let a veteran at cooking like Mom do it.

My vacation is almost over. I leave Saturday at 11:05 a.m. and I'm supposed to arrive in New York at 6:43 a.m. Sunday. It's been a good vacation. You would have made it perfect. Mom looks better than when I first arrived, for which I'm grateful.

I had a letter from Marguerite and her vacation has been cancelled for the present. Remember the Marine I told you about who was shot, whose brother worked in the bank? He is still in critical condition and his brother hasn't returned to Jersey as yet so until he comes back, vacations are cancelled. I'm sorry because she really needs one.

The mountain across the way was beautiful when I arrived but now it's beyond words. I don't know when I've seen it as beautiful. I seem to rave on about my mountains, but I can't stop talking about them. I guess I'm as much of a "tarheel" as Mom.

We had a letter from Lettie, my sister, and little Billy has his braces now. She said they've had more than one battle over them. He doesn't want to wear them but she won, on the condition that all his short pants are put away and long ones bought for him.

The victory at Rabaul is good news. Really a surprise attack paying them back bit by bit for their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the lousy... censored.

I'm wondering what will go on in the Balkans. In an article today, they were saying that demobilization of troops would take from four to five years and that married men would be mustered out first.

I haven't had any mail this week from you. Maybe I'll have some waiting in Jersey. None of my other letters have been returned from New York, so I guess that was just a mistake... I hope. I'd hate to have these boxes come back.

Met another girlfriend yesterday that I haven't seen in a long time. Her husband has an interesting job teaching a class of French soldiers in Florida about the art of aerial gunnery. Incidentally, he is French and speaks it quite fluently.

Well, once more, I've told you all the news. As always, I'm missing you and loving you more than ever. It won't be too long, and we'll be together again for always. We'll just keep praying and have a little more patience. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 15, 1943—Asheville

My darling,

I've been neglecting you since Saturday night. Just laziness, and more than usual to do.

Sunday, Mom and I listened to the World Series in the afternoon. What a game! Mom gets so excited and I did my share too of shouting. In the evening we took in another movie, "Thank Your Lucky Stars," with a galaxy of stars... really excellent.

I had lunch yesterday with a girlfriend and then met Mom in the afternoon so we could see "Pride of the Yankees." Both of us had missed it. I imagine you saw it. Remember..

the life of Lou Gehrig. Both of us enjoyed it immensely and I can imagine you did, too, if you saw it.

I couldn't help but think of you when I saw the press room in the different stadiums and wondered how long it would be before you'd be seeing a ball game from that perch.

A glimmer of hope in an article from London predicts the fall of Germany once more this winter... if they are only right.

Mom and I spent the day today making one of your Xmas presents. We made more than just one... that's why it took so long. Did you guess... your fruit cake. They smell so good now. They are just about ready to be taken out of the oven. We had to practically beg, borrow and steal the ingredients but we made it.

Say, have they moved you or something? One of my recent letters was returned yesterday... reason "insufficient address" and I addressed it just as I always have. I'm wondering if the others will be returned. This is the first one that I wrote since I'm home. I can't figure it out.

My vacation is nearly over. I'll leave Friday or Saturday and spend Sunday at 195. It's been swell being at home.

Mom went to the doctor yesterday and the report wasn't the best. She'll have to take it easy for awhile so I guess as soon as I can I'll return home to stay until a certain Sgt. Kiley comes to claim me as Mrs. Charles Kiley and I mean to stay this time.

It's a gorgeous fall night out with an almost full moon shining in the sky over the mountain here. I can't wait for you to spend an October in Asheville. It's by far the loveliest time of the year here.

I just happened to think, you haven't mentioned the Frosts in quite awhile. Do you still go to see them? They seemed like such nice people.



I happened to think the other day... if I were to send you some vitamin pills, would you take them? They might take the place of some of the foods you are missing and maybe keep the sniffles down. I probably sound like a worry-wart but I remembered you telling me how the English rations were affecting some of the fellows.

One advantage about coming home... there will just be two of us to cook for. I'm going to have Mom let me in on some of her secrets about cooking so you won't have to suffer the first few months of me trying to cook. I really want to know how... not only cooking but baking, too. As yet, I've never baked a pie. That's awful.

She hasn't asked me to come home but it's so plain that she needs me. She is already better than when I came home last week. She has too much time alone to worry about Warren. She doesn't eat right either, just having herself to cook for. I think it's best that I come home. I'm going to miss being so close to you, seeing the ocean and knowing you're just on the other side.

I'll probably just get home and settled when you'll come home and I'll have to start all over again. If I thought that would be so, I'd never even bother about going back home. I'd just stay.

That seems to be about all the news this time. I have to dash a note off to Marguerite before I turn in.

Keep well and keep loving me. Goodnight for now... pleasant dreams.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 17, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

Every night about this time, I miss you so, and love you more. It's natural, isn't it, that loneliness is more prevalent at night. And, I'm lonely. Can't seem to get out of this mood, either. But then, I know everything is all right when I'm lonely for you. Doesn't give me a chance to think of anyone, or anything, but my angel.

Now that you are back from vacation, I'm anxiously waiting to hear about two things. The first is your stay with Mother and the second your reaction to my escapade in the Fortress. Don't scold me too much, will you?

I have your airmail of Sept. 27. It came today, so you can see how our service has slowed down. Still, we shouldn't complain.

There was also a long letter from Mother. I enjoyed it more than anything, with the exception of her darling daughter's mail.

In one part, she talked about the Gray reunion in Massillon and said the next time you all were together she hoped I would be there "as one of us." That made me feel so good. Too, she said Warren never received the letter I had written to him. She gave me his new address so I'll have to meet him all over again.

While I'm on the subject of Asheville, Miss Gray... your very jealous suitor sincerely hopes his sweetheart didn't look more than once at soldiers while she was in Asheville. Mother said there were quite a few of them there, including those who stayed at "412."

Sure, I have more faith than that in you, but you can't stop me from being jealous. There isn't anyone any worse than Charles Francis when it comes to that.

You make me feel terribly ashamed, hon, when you say I've written 125 letters since January 18, 1942. I get that many from you in a couple of months, don't I? Well, almost, anyway.

I think you could keep the entire Life Magazine, re the convoy, for the scrapbook. If we want to cut it later, we can.

I can understand you thinking I should rate a furlough home now. It made me think of my first few weeks in service when the folks at home figured I should have one after being in only a few months. I'm afraid it's next to an impossibility over here. But, if and when, the slightest opportunity is presented I'll make it as big as I have to.

Had a long letter from Dot the other day. First one since before the baby was born. She made me laugh so hard Benny thought I was getting a bit simple. The high point was Al telling his family the baby looked like "a goon" when he saw her for the first time. I wouldn't say that about our daughter, would I?

Your speculation on a promotion for me as a result of the office shakeup is way off. At least, I don't know anything about one. I'm quite happy to be roaming around the country instead of working out of the office. Of course, if they want to add another stripe or ten, I'll take them. But we do have only so many ranks and must abide by them. After all, with my four stripes I'm only 11 promotions removed from a four-star general like Eisenhower. Not bad, is it?

I'm going away for a week tomorrow. There's a good story, I think, on an "assault training center" and I'm going through the training for a week in order to get material first hand. Can't ever say I don't work for my stories. Perhaps I have a little soldier in me and enjoy getting out in the field with the boys once in awhile.

Mass and communion today were offered just for us, Billee. Miss me and love me, pretty please. I'll have a lot to tell you when I get back.

'Bye, love.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

October 17, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Vacation over for another year and I'm back in Matawan at the Heuser domain.

I arrived in Newark at 6:30 a.m., so I freshened up and decided to go out to Blessed Sacrament for Mass and communion. Father John didn't say Mass but he helped give out communion. I surprised

him. That's the first time I've seen him since July. His first words were, "What do you think of the bombing mission?" He proceeded to tell me all about it since I haven't received your letter as yet.

I hardly know how to explain my feelings... dismay, anxiety and relief all at one time. Then I thought, how many more times will it be? Please, be careful and don't take too many chances. The gunnery course wasn't to be used, huh... I might have known. You're there and I'm here and then, you're still in the Army so all I can do is pray you'll be safe and come down in one piece.

Eddie was home this weekend. He looks well. He's still in Pine Camp as an acting Sergeant. He's doing all right for himself. First thing you know he'll catch up with you.

How does Thomas O'Connor rate being let in on this here surprise? You know, you're going to be sorry you mentioned "surprise" before it happens. I promise not to talk about it again. I'll just wait and hope for the impossible. Miracles do happen.

My trip home was uneventful. I'm sure the train was a troop train because I know there weren't a handful of civilians aboard. In my car, there was a mother, her daughter, the Army, Navy and Marines besides myself. They were all very nice to us. We played cards to help pass the time away. I learned to play whist and brushed up on my casino and learned another new game called "dirty eights." There was no gambling. The trip wasn't too bad and we made good time so that made up for the rough spots... having to stand for a time.

You should see your niece. What a size she's getting to be and she's looking a little more like you now. She has your dimples. You could very well claim her as your own and you'd get no arguments. El looks pretty good. She's worried about Tom, of course, since she hasn't had any word from him yet.

Bette bought her boyfriend a pretty ring for Xmas. She thinks he's going to be shipped out. Your dad is just the same, a bit older-looking, but ok. He cooked a delicious dinner today. Too bad it isn't a case of "like father—like son," because I could use a good handyman around the kitchen. I'll break you in gently. Will that be all right?

I have the clipping of your mission. You rated the front page but then, why shouldn't you? I didn't know the ship was named "Stars and Stripes." Speaking of *Stars and Stripes*, I'm still not getting them. Haven't had one in six or eight weeks.

I'm falling asleep, but then I haven't seen a bed since Friday night. Be back very soon. Goodnight for now. I love you more than ever, and miss you even more. Be careful and keep well.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 18, 1943—Matawan

Hi dear,

Another line or two just to let you know I'm thinking about you, as usual. I kind of thought I'd have some mail today since I'm so anxious to hear about your part in the raid over Frankfurt.

I talked to Dot tonight. She said they'd been wondering how I would take it. What could I say or do, since you're over there and go where you're told. Besides, I'm envious as usual. I wouldn't want to

miss anything either, but I can't help getting butterflies when I think of you up there in the clouds over Europe. I guess that's only natural... and then I thought of the 60 bombers lost last week. So I'm on pins and needles until I know, but I don't feel as if there were anything wrong.

News... I'm to be confirmed either the end of this month or sometime next month in the vicinity here... I think in New Monmouth. Father Burke told me tonight after Novena. I've started a new one for you, but I'm not going to tell you what it is. See, I can keep you guessing, too.

Al is back to normal now, on the day shift. Dot says she misses her "wash-lady," though and doesn't feel she can ask him to do it at night. She says they are all well and the baby is getting along fine. She weighs 10 lbs, 8 oz. I haven't seen it, as yet. I'm anxious to see who she resembles.

It's pouring rain out and kind of nasty and cold.

Today was an effort to get back in the swing again of the daily grind. Guess I just wasn't cut out to be a career girl.

Marguerite asked me today if you come on leave, would I get married? I told her I'd probably give you just time enough to change your mind if you wanted to, before I'd dash up that aisle to meet you... so you can see what's in store for you if a miracle would happen. Things like that I try not to think about. I have to shake my head to brush thoughts like that from my mind... much too good to be true.

I'm sleepy again. Just finished writing to Mom and thought I'd say goodnight to you. Keep well and be careful. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 20, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

It's such a beautiful night I had to drop you a line. Maybe, too, I'm a wee bit lonely. No mail again today but tomorrow is another day.

This has been a busy night. Marguerite went to spend the night with a relative so I helped Agnes with the kitchen work. Since then I've had a bath, gave myself a shampoo and a hair-do and just now finished my manicure. Oh, I forgot. In between, I ironed a few pieces and the clock just struck ten-thirty. Not bad timing for an evening's work.

Poor Agnes is having a time with the baby tonight. He's cutting teeth and his parents have gone out for the evening. He cries quite a lot in his sleep. Right now, he's very much asleep, and we have both fingers crossed.

I called El today. Still no word from Tom and it's three weeks. I see by the papers that a large convoy arrived in the British Isles so I'm wondering if perhaps Tom isn't among them. I hope you can find him or he finds you. He's a nice guy. I like him lots and how he adores El. El and I have a date November 2. It's a bank holiday so I'm going in Monday night and Tuesday we're doing New York...

dinner and a show... then I'll make the seven forty-five on Wednesday morning. We should have fun. Bette will play nursemaid.

Oh, by the way, it's time I submitted a financial report. I checked the bonds I have in my possession today. Our financial standing is as follows: Cash assets = \$65.00 approximately; Bonds: September through August with the exception of March = \$550.00; Other bonds including the one Father John has = \$100.00. The only liabilities I can think of is one: 3,000 miles of water between us and no priority available for shortening the distance. Back to the bonds: September, October and March will probably come together. They are still being sent to Massillon, too.

The sixty-five in cash is what I've been putting back. I'm doing pretty well. You'd laugh if you could see it. I have a glass Esso bank and I'm trying to keep track of what I'm putting in it, so I can watch it grow. That must be the miser in me.

There was a hint of winter in that wind tonight. Both Agnes and I made the four-thirty-eight so we walked in or rather the wind pushed us home. I'm hoping that you sent the story of your trip to Frankfurt to me since the *Stars and Stripes* seem to be passing me up.

I've had a strange feeling that maybe you might be getting a leave to come home since your 18 months of overseas duty will be completed next month. I've had an idea here of late but I keep pushing the idea out of my mind that you might be meaning that for my surprise. Father John shattered my hopes yesterday. He just couldn't believe it possible and I can't either now, even though I believe in miracles, but something like that seems much too good to be true.

I'll have to leave you, darling. I'm falling asleep again. I haven't recovered my loss of a night's sleep last weekend. I need another vacation. Keep well and remember...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 21, 1943—*Matawan*

Hello again,

Remember me? I was with you last night, too. Same old story... no mail again. I know very well that it must be held up somewhere. I never did get the letter from the gunnery school, not even a note from the censor in case you told me too much.

Today was slow and I finished early, so I decided to go see "This is the Army." Pretty good, but I think I like "Stage Door Canteen" better. I made the five-



thirty-two home, just in time for spaghetti. I was hungry for it, too.

I've decided to write every day until I get a letter. Now, isn't that something?

Oh, I almost forgot. September's bond arrived today so that's all but March now. When it comes that worry will be over.

I have a confession to make. I'm ashamed of myself, in fact. As many times as I've done the same thing... in fact, I did it for you once before. It was going to be a surprise when you opened your Xmas box. Hmm, guess I'd better tell you. I made you a new sweater and was rushing to finish it to make the deadline of October 15 when I discovered as I was putting the last finishing touches on that it was all wrong and would never do. I have to rip it out back to the armhole and proceed from there. It's a good thing you weren't around for my thoughts were anything but lady-like. Now you will have to send me another note for our friend the postman to read so I can send you the sweater. I was making it out of finer yarn than the other and got mixed up on the stitches. Moral: haste makes waste. It's been knit on all over from Matawan to Asheville, back and forth every day on the train, to New York a couple of times and in the kitchen at 195, so it's quite a well-traveled sweater... a little like its prospective owner.

Marguerite is falling asleep over her magazine here in the next bed and I'm not far behind. I dashed off a note to Mom and my sister so I guess I'll hit the hay before long.

I liked that song in the picture today... "I'm getting tired so I can sleep, I want to sleep so I can dream, I want to dream so I can be with you." That's what I like to do. Poor substitute but it'll suffice until the real dream comes along.

Picked up a Jersey Journal tonight but there isn't a thing in it about you. Not sarcasm! Really, I was disappointed.

I was going... I've only missed one day writing this week but it's because I've been missing you more than usual and this always brings you closer. Please take care of yourself if you can and remember how I love you always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 22, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Success at last. That's right, a letter and the one written from the gunnery school came via 412 Merrimon.

You did well for yourself as a gunner... really rated those wings you won. I'm proud of you. Do you still get a thrill from going up after all this time? I don't think I'll ever lose that thrill. Of course, I've only been up once. I loved the feeling up there in the clouds.

I love you not wanting to hide things from me. So far, I've been able to take the unpleasant with the pleasant. I don't think I'll fail you at this late date. Just take care of yourself as best you can. That I don't worry too much about... your carelessness. You're old enough and sensible enough not to take

needless chances, or risks I should say. So, I say get all you can out of it. I hardly know what “it” covers. A lot of territory, I guess but I’m sure you know what I’m writing about. They put you through the mill so far as hours are concerned. That was an endurance contest.

I had to laugh when I came to the paragraph where you sounded doubtful at the prospect of taking part in a mission. Since then, you’ve been over and back again. So... as in the case of expectant fathers... one never knows, does one? Now we have a pair of silver wings to put away among our souvenirs... and then, what next?

Telling me not to worry about you would be like telling me to stop loving you. I’m only human and after being greeted with headlines last Sunday, I don’t know what I’ll see or hear next. It was a shock, even though I should have been prepared for it, I suppose. Father John thought I knew already or he’d have been a little more gentle about breaking the news.

Another of my letters was returned today, this time for more postage. I think something or somebody is agin’ me writing you. Those post office employees must be awfully temperamental or else they just like to pick on me, maybe because I make them work.

Your surprise has me puzzled now. It couldn’t be a ring unless you won a sweepstakes race or something. I’d like the present you mentioned. That would be all I’d ever want in the way of presents or anything else, “to come live with you always.” I’ll just be surprised, I guess. I can’t think what it could be now. I was halfway hoping as I mentioned before that it might be a leave to come home, but I’ve given that up as an impossibility much to my disappointment. Maybe someday there’ll be a way.

By the way, in today’s Daily News is a story about a young sergeant, a member of the crew of “Gremlin’s Delight” that had a game of catch with a live grenade. Seems to me Father John told me a similar story about the ship that went along with yours that Bud Hutton was aboard. What he said was a little hazy because I was thinking about the fact that you had been on a mission and I was trying to digest that fact, so to speak. I’m saving the story just in case, for our scrapbook.

Speaking of rings, I’ve never ceased admiring yours. I always go for red anyway, but I find myself gazing into the stone time after time. It has such depth. It’s the way it’s cut but looking into it, the stone seems much deeper than it is.

I’m beginning to get sleepy again. See what you do to me? I’m all ready to hop in when I finish this. I’m glad the letter was waiting for me today. My morale definitely needed a lift.

So, once more, it’s “Goodnight” via the railways. Won’t it be good to kiss you goodnight, turn the light off and not lay there for a time, wondering “What’s he doing now... wonder what kind of a day he had... did he think about me this way before he went to sleep...” Then, I whisper goodnight and blow a kiss towards the window, hoping God or somebody will take it to him.

I was going. Be back soon. Keep well and remember...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 23, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Back from a week with the infantry and its final amphibious assault training. I use the word “final” because I’m certain the next move will be one that counts. I don’t know when that move will take place but they are putting the men through training that adds up to one thing, “rehearsal for invasion.”

Yes, it’s good to be back after a cold and wet week of mud, tents, rugged living and no mail. But you were here waiting for me with three airmails, from Sept. 28, Oct. 2 and 7, plus three cards from Asheville. You always seem to know when I need you. If you weren’t here waiting for me, I should have been so disappointed. I missed you so much. But now, everything is right again, or as right as it can be.

Apparently you hadn’t heard of my raid when you wrote the Oct. 7 letter. A letter from the Journal, same date, told me they ran the story on page 1. So, I’m still waiting to hear you say, “You can’t do this to me!”



*Amphibious jeep; believe it or not, they were called “seeps” for “seagoing jeeps.”
No wonder they never caught on.*

While I was away I had an opportunity to ride in the amphibious Jeeps and larger “ducks” for the first time. It felt strange, speeding along a hard, sandy beach then plunging into the sea to continue the trip.

Later, I accompanied a detachment during a practice assault on pill boxes and became a casualty. I had a tumble, skinning the knuckles of my right hand. Just now those knuckles are a wee bit tender and if my writing is unsteadier than usual, forgive me.

Wish you were here to kiss them and make them better. Remember when you were young and had that done to you?

During the week I also had a chance to see quite a bit of Cornwall, one of the most picturesque and historic sections in Britain. It is situated in southwest England. Still, I’ll take Asheville.

Your postcards were swell. You said on one that you didn’t think you could “take it” when you visited our places, but did. If our positions were reversed, I don’t think I could. I’m glad, though, you did visit them. I guess I’m just a big sissy, but I had a tiny lump in my throat when you gave me a perfect picture of you standing on the terrace and in the cocktail lounge.

You have me in a bad way, wondering what my packages contain. You said you saw so many things, but none of them were meant to go with GIs. Did you see any silk 'jamas with lavender stripes? But then, you don't like them fancy, do you?

Had a letter from Ralph Martin, so I'm able to give you a late report. He's well again, apparently, and anxious to go to Italy. He said he wrote a piece for the N.Y. Times Sunday magazine section and got \$100 for it. It had to do with junior officers in the field.

I'm sure God is listening to your prayers on first Fridays. And, I know if He wills it, I'll be home in four months, but between us, and I'm not being blasphemous, I doubt if He is going to will it. But, you aren't praying for too much. At least, I wouldn't think our happiness is "too much." To me it is the No. 1 priority. Like you, I'm constantly praying, planning and waiting. They can't keep us apart much longer... not much longer, dearest.

I could almost see you as a little girl, going along the path to St. Genevieve's, "mumbling my catechism and stopping to peek in the book," Billee. You sound so proud to be "the most faithful student" the nuns had.

You should be proud. I am, just knowing you are mine. Believe me when I say I can't do anything any more without associating you with it. Ben is like that, too, in regards to Jane. I guess that's why we click, because we have so much in common. When some of the boys go out to let off a little steam, we just find our way home to you. We don't pretend to be angels... at least I don't... but there isn't a desire to "get out with the boys" you might say. They used to coax us to come along to a club, a party, a date, etc., but they gave up a long time ago. I actually believe some of the men think I'm well married.

That's why I smile when you tag on the end of your letters, "no misbehavin'." I couldn't put it better than to say, all of my "misbehavin'" is being saved for us. I wouldn't think of wasting ten seconds of it. Besides, I don't think I'm missing a thing.

The more I read your letters, the more I wonder, again, how long I can be resigned to our separation. You talk of our corner, the memories which belong to us alone... and, Billee, I get so angry with everything and everyone I can hardly stand it.

Like now, when I just put my head down in my arms and re-live the so-little time we had. I can feel your lips and your arms around me. I see your eyes looking at me. We don't say anything... just stare.

And they wonder what we think about over here!

You shook me by saying I didn't kiss you goodnight. I mean, that first night. I couldn't have let you go that way with simply, "I'll call you in the morning." Maybe I was out of this world by then, but even if I was in a coma I can't see me letting you go.

If I could have a wish come true... no, two wishes... one would be to be with you, or to get letters like these, always. They are so like you they couldn't be improved upon.

Don't change, even a little bit, will you?

Shortly after the first of the month I am sending you \$50 for Christmas shopping. I hate to ask you to brave those shopping crowds but I have to rely on you. I'll follow the \$50 with another for the same

amount later. These are the people I want to remember: Dot's baby, Dad, El and Bette, Marty's baby, Berta's baby, your Mom (and mine, now) and whoever else you think we should. The gifts don't have to be elaborate by any means.

Oops, forgot Annice. That would never do. I think by getting something for the children it will sort of make up for the forced disregard of the Doyles, Dalys and Kennys. They'll understand.

I've already ordered flowers for Mother Gray but I'd like to get her something else. You would know what to get.

I'm not being a pest with all these requests, am I? And if you have to use all of the money, use it. Let me know what you think.

I'll be back soon. Awfully tired now and my hand is sore.

Love me and miss me lots.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

October 23, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Imagine... a Saturday night date for a change. You've probably been wondering why you've had so few letters written on Saturdays during the last two months or so. I'm not going to tell you now. It's a "military secret" until I see you. Now, aren't you curious? You might as well forget it because I'm not talking.

I had a big part of the evening alone. Agnes and Marguerite haven't come back from shopping in New York and Henry and Theresa were out for awhile with the baby. Mr. Heuser went to a banquet and meeting tonight.

This was a lazy day. I was home by two o'clock. I had lunch and started in. I cleaned our room good and straightened up my dresser drawers and laundered a few pieces. I played with the baby for a while. He'll be a year old next Sunday. He stands by himself now and will take a few steps if you hold his hand. He's cute as Christmas and so much a boy. We get along swell. The rougher you play with him, the better he likes it. Your niece is like that, too, by the way. She delights in being tossed about.

I gave the baby his bath and dressed him for Theresa so she and Henry could leave early. Henry is such a drip. If she isn't ready right on the dot when he comes for her, he has a fit. I'd crown him with a vase or something handy if he was mine.

I started to write this downstairs but I like it better up here. I forgot to tell you, I'm in bed and I can look at your picture now and then while I write.

Speaking of pictures, were you able to get a frame for "me?" I hope so. I started to put one in one of your boxes. It will probably look better in a frame, too. Most pictures do.

I had a letter from Mom today. She says she feels much better. I hope she really means that and isn't saying it for my benefit. Painters and carpenters went to work on "412" last week or this week. The house needed painting badly.

I've been trying to pick out two patterns for two new dresses. I have the material for one. I've been hoarding it for a year. It's black and I want it made into something glamorous. Too, I have visions of a cherry-colored wool that I'd like to have for Christmas. I don't know what this surprise of yours will be but I want to be dressed for the occasion. I found one pattern that's cute. It has sort of a bustle effect in the back, sleek lines to the front, if you can imagine anything like that. Here I am, boring you with my ideas again. I've found a good dressmaker so I'm really going to give her something to do. I can't seem to find what I want ready-made. Guess I'm hard to please.

I heard some good dance music a bit ago. I'd love to be tripping the light fantastic with you now instead of keeping this pen and paper company. The evening would just be getting a good start if we were doing New York.

I wonder if Tom knows to make for the Times building in London for your office. I hope so. I have a feeling he landed with this last convoy. He's been gone just long enough.

I think this is Mr. Heuser coming home. He went out all decked out in a new suit and hat tonight. He was getting all our opinions. He looked quite smart. He's in his seventies, but a nice-looking old man.

I should close. I've rambled quite a bit. How do you stand these letters, darling? No news in them. I love you as much as ever, but that isn't news. That would always make a deadline without any trouble. "Flash!! Billee Gray still loves a certain sergeant in London as much as ever and misses him even more." Too, she wishes she might have him here for just a minute or two, to kiss her "goodnight." It would only take a minute. I was going and here I am still rambling... spinning day-dreams again.

I love you. As simple as that and my thoughts and prayers are always with you. Keep well.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: None of this misbehavin' either.

October 24, 1943—Pine Camp, New York

Dear Ray,

I am dropping you a line to let you know what happened to the hub cap. You see, this is the first chance I have had to write. We went on a problem just after I came back off my pass and now I am on guard. I have just posted my men to their posts and I have time to catch up on my mail.



Pine Camp, New York. Now Fort Drum.

The reason the hub cap was knocked off was I was turning a corner and you know how low the street sinks in where the opening of the sewer is... well, I cut the corner close and the rear wheel went in the hole and the hub cap hit the curb. I am awful sorry. I wanted to stay around that morning but I had already made a date to meet this fellow's family I hang around with up here in camp... he lived in Queens. I will send you five dollars for fixing it and if it cost any more let me know. I say again, Ray, I'm sorry it had to happen. Of all the Army cars I drive I never had even a scratch on them and then it would have to be my luck to go and knock the hub cap off your new car.

This morning I was picked for usher at the 8 o'clock Mass for our battalion. We sang hymns during the Mass and most of us received communion. I think I told you the captain of our company whose name is O'Keefe is a very good Catholic. I was talking to him and he told me he was keeping his eye on me for the past month and he said as soon as these new battalions get straightened out he was going to put me in for sergeant. I sure hope it isn't too long. I could use the extra money for the coming holidays.

I guess that's all for now Ray. Take care of yourself and may God bless you.

Eddie

October 26, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

Your package came today, the first I've received in ever so long now. And, it was grand. The bracelet was perfect. I'll have to have about four or five links taken out because it's a bit loose. But, it is swell. I had just about forgotten what the scent of perfume was like until I found the bit of lace in the box. I'll bring it back, just as quickly as I can. That scent sure does things to me. I'll bet I'll recognize it anywhere. The cigarettes and stationery were a boon. You can tell by my letters what I have had to resort to. As for the gum, well... I'll be chewing from now on, I think.

Thanks again, a million times, for everything. When I have the bracelet fitted for size I'll never take it off, you can be sure of that. And, not exactly as an afterthought, I love you so much.

Still no word about your reaction to the Fortress trip. You have me worried. It wasn't that bad, honestly. I'm wondering if you had to wait until you got back to Jersey to hear about it. I can just about picture you stopping at 195 and having them tell you about it. Were you surprised? I'll bet Dad, El and Bette were, too having the news broken to them on page 1 of the Journal. I had a letter from the office telling me what they did with the AP story.

I've been doing a little shopping for Christmas cards today. After making out a list (there are only 88 people!) I concluded that the APO is going to be rather peeved at me. So, if you get yours a little early, you'll know it was because I wanted it to get to you before Christmas, at least. Don't ask me why I'm sending all those cards. It's simply that I've received cards from them in the past and while I can, I'd like to let them know I haven't forgotten.

Got off a letter to Mom Gray and Warren. I believe I told you Mother said Warren didn't get my last letter so I made another attempt to meet my intended brother. I don't believe I told you, Mother said we ought to spend a long vacation in Asheville. I'm sure we can, don't you?

I've been awfully lax in my mail lately and have about a dozen letters piled up that haven't been answered. I have a day off today (I'll be out of town on a job over the weekend) so I'm going to make an attempt to take care of some of them.

I sent an airmail to you last night but this will probably reach you a week or more ahead of it. I'm afraid we will be faced with that problem all winter now.

Be a good girl, sweetheart (same as "no misbehavin"). 'Bye.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

October 26, 1943—Matawan

Hello my dearest,

Here we are again, but today when I arrived home I discovered the storm had blown in five familiar airmail letters. Only two letters and a note... the other envelopes contained pictures and articles. This is wonderful... a letter every day this week and two long letters in one day. I guess everything comes to he who waits long enough, so we shouldn't despair.

The letters were those of October 5 and 7, the ones I was so anxious to get concerning your reaction to the raid. What an experience. No wonder Father John was so excited when he talked to me. I was so excited before I finished them I could hardly eat. They had to call me three times before I heard.

After lecturing you last night, I'm at a loss for words because I'll sound like a hypocrite, but this is the impractical side of me revealing itself, the Billee that wanted to drag you off to a preacher that Sunday night in Penn Station. It must have been exciting and I'd give a million dollars or more to have seen it with you, but I think if I had to choose between going on the trip with you and being on the ground waiting for you to come back, I'd take the latter. It would have been more fun to hear you tell me about it and I still have that to look forward to. Yes, I'd have given a lot to have been waiting for you in your apartment in London after that experience. It's great to talk it over with the boys but then I think maybe you would have liked to talk it out with me.

You didn't say whether or not you were scared or aren't you talking? I think you must have been or else I don't know you very well. I wouldn't like it if you weren't scared. The worst time I can well imagine was while you were waiting to take off. Your imagination was probably working overtime, wondering what to expect.

How in the world did you have energy enough left to tell me about it? You made me want to be there so I could make you comfortable somewhere and just let you sleep and sleep. You look tired in the picture... a little drawn.

You were still in the air that day when I was receiving communion for us. I'm glad if it had to be, that it was that day. Seems to be a coincidence... our fourths. Our engagement, my baptism in the church and now an experience like that.

You know I'll bet that's the reason you went on the raid... just so you could brag to our "ball club" about your bombing of Germany. Who knows, maybe that bombing raid was a turning point and the end isn't so far away. You don't seem to be concerned about how I'll "bear up under it," as you put it. Who's worried about you? I'm not. Four sets of twins... now that's going some. We've really set a goal for ourselves, I can see.

I can see where I should have played "hard to get." I'd have to have seen you making a pest out of yourself. I'm not very smart, I guess. The first meeting left me in a daze. Say, do you throw all the girls you meet for such a loop? If so, the girls "over there" must be in a daze now, and really badly off.

Now that you are back safe and sound, and I'm reassured by your letter that everything is all right, I wouldn't have had you miss the experience for anything. Please, don't rush right out and do it again, though. The next time might spoil the first time.

I think you're mean not to tell me what "cheesecake" means. Now I have to go and air my ignorance to Dot.

Ruth must have written you after she saw me at the hospital. Remember, I met her on the bus when El and I were on our way to see Dottie. We went back to Journal Square together and had a coke before we parted company. Seems like you always become the center of conversation when I happen to be with any of the gang.

I'm so glad to hear you've had word about Jack Donnell. I've wondered I don't know how many times. I was going to try and contact Theda when I was home but didn't get around to it.

On the contrary, I think your story is swell. That must have been exciting too, dashing to a telephone to make the deadline and dictating it in. How do you do it? How does it feel to have stories written about you instead of the other way around? The one about the twenty-five mission gunner is super. I feel like I know him now and such a kid, too. I wonder how his wife feels about all this.

As exciting as it all is, I still get a sick feeling and a case of butterflies when I think of being up 25,000 feet in the air over Germany. I can't quite agree with a short paragraph in your letter: "So, here I am... nothing to worry about, see?"

If this letter seems jumbled, it's because I have your two letters before me and I keep reading them, back and forth.

I wrote such a long letter last night. Didn't think it would be possible to do another the next night. The girls all wonder how I can say so much. Poor Agnes can only write a 25-word letter a month to her husband. I'd be sunk for sure if that's all I could write.

I meant to tell you, your letters are no longer stamped on the outside with "887," your APO number. Instead they have "14 BPO," whatever that means. Could mean "British Post Office." Maybe that's why they have been delayed?

I must close. I have to get at your sweater. Seems all I've done since I'm home is write letters and most of them to you. This is really getting to be a habit, a nice habit, so long as this is the nearest we get to a date now.

I love you thinking of me first, and getting the letter off to me even though it was delayed. I feel better than I have since Father John first broke the news to me... more reassured that you are all right.

I love you so much... scares me sometimes. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses,
always your Billee

The pictures are super, and will have a special heading in our album. Our "pitcher" will really have to believe his daddy bombed Germany when he sees them. Funny thing... everyone has a parachute on but you and Hutton and Rooney. How come? Don't tell me you forgot it... that will be the payoff.



Bud Hutton, Andy Rooney, bomber pilots (with parachutes) and Charles, doubtless taken before the mission, and before the Stars and Stripes writers put their parachutes on.

October 26, 1943—Matawan

My dearest Charles,

Another letter today. That's two this week. The one yesterday was written Oct. 3 from the Fortress base (more about that later) and the one received today was written Oct. 17. That arrived in good time. The other was delayed quite a bit.

We have had and are still having a raging "northeaster" like something I've never seen before. The wind has howled and the rain has played quite a merry tune against the house. I'm wondering if there is any rain left in the heavens. The tide is very high. It was up over the road we traveled over to the station and the trains are only going as far as Red Bank. It's good weather for ducks and fish and that's about all.

My brother is in Ephrata, Washington. I don't know whether that's a jumping off place for the Pacific theater of war or not. I hope not, at least not for awhile. I haven't had anything but a postcard as yet so I'll hear more about it. I've been elected to carry the news to Mom in the event he is shipped out.

I called El today and still no news from Tom. I see where another large convoy sailed through the Mediterranean yesterday.

It's good to be hearing from you again. We both received on the 17th. That was the day I arrived in Newark and I went to Blessed Sacrament to hear Mass. I think I told you in a previous letter. I love it when we do things together like that, even though we are miles apart.

I can just see Al when he saw the baby for the first time. What did he expect? A "glamour girl" to begin with? I can't wait to see her myself. Dottie says she's making out swell.

So you're the jealous type? Heavens, you must have been green when you read about my going to the canteen dance. Maybe it's a good thing I didn't tell you I had an escort home that night. I failed to tell you, too, that the soldiers stationed in Asheville are the IB type, definitely not 1A. I never saw so many pairs of glasses in my life. It looked like the Japanese army. They sure aren't like the group that I found a certain private in. You have no need to be jealous. I haven't seen one yet that measured up to you, so don't be worrying that way. Besides, on second thought, it wouldn't be any fun if you weren't a little on the jealous side... that I can take, all right.

So you're anxious to know my reaction concerning the Fortress raid. As I said in an earlier letter, I was in a daze when Father John broke the news... very surprised although, as I look back, I should have expected as much. I'm still in a quandary. My sense of everything that is sane and sensible rebels at the idea of anything so risky, but then the other side of me is envious to say the least of you being a part of anything so exciting. Let's listen to the sane side of me. It is risky business, especially when it isn't necessary, since you say if it worries me too much, you'll give it up. Even you should know that. Too many things can happen up there and we have so much to look forward to.

I can understand how you must feel about it, except one thing. I can't see where your conscience should be bothering you. Anyone that has covered the territory you've covered, taken in the Ranger training, field maneuvers I don't know how many times, besides a gunnery course and now a new assault course (whatever that is) for the sake of gathering material for the paper shouldn't have conscience trouble. You should know as well as I do how necessary that paper is to those boys over there and certainly just not anyone could be doing your job. You and a few others happen to have that gift that is put to use in helping the war effort in that way, instead of on the battlefield. Certainly your job is as important. Maybe it does seem dull and routine but there are a lot on this side that are in the same boat. Father John, for instance, would give a lot to be in your position. So, the conscience angle doesn't work.

If you have to go, all well and good... that's an order in this man's Army, but for Pete's sake, do you have to volunteer for everything! I'll bet there isn't a soldier in the Army that's taken as many courses as you have. First thing you know, you'll be a one-man Army. I'm kidding you now. Truly, I am glowing with pride for you. You've done so well in your work but the flying part is a little hard to take.

If that makes you happy, and it's what you want, I'll take it the best way I know, with a prayer that you'll be safe and taken care of, and that soon you'll be home again. I guess God will look after you for me up in the clouds as well as when you are on the ground.

The girls are kidding me, wanting to know what name I'll take for confirmation, that will fit in with Wilhelmina Ruth Marie. Heaven forbid that I should add another to it. I started to go see Father Bauer to see if we couldn't do something about the Wilhelmina, but at the last minute got cold feet. Maybe Father John won't use it. I hope.

You should see me stretched across my twin bed on my tummy writing to you. When I look up, the first thing I see is that grin. Then I have to recover before I can write again.

It's amazing how we can both get so lonely and still be so much in love. Lots of people I know wouldn't take the loneliness. They'd find something to cure it. So long as we can be lonely for each other we'll be all right.

Oh, I almost forgot. I picked up the New York Times magazine Sunday and a familiar byline caught my eye. Sgt. Ralph Martin, under a heading, "What the Soldier Thinks About." Very good. I'll save it for you. That's pretty nice, having it published in the New York Times.

This is really long and I'm sleepy now. I hate to leave but tomorrow is a busy day. I miss you and love you more than I can write about. At the rate the week is flying my goodnight kiss should get there in no time at all. It may be a little on the damp side but maybe you'll accept it anyhow.

Take care of yourself and non of your misbehavin' darling. I love you, oh so much.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 30, 1943—Matawan

Hi darling,

I have to wait for Agnes to finish her work before we start for home and since it's raining out once more, there isn't any sense in being out in that so I thought, what better way to spend my time than dashing off a few lines to my "better half." I can almost say that, can't I?

This is a lovely Saturday afternoon. I can see that with the weather like this, we'll just go home and do some of the things we should do.

I did go and look for a birthday card for you but none of them seem to be what I want. They are either so sad they'd make you cry or else they are just plain silly. But don't despair, you'll get one if I have to make one up myself. That will be something.

I had a long letter from Mom yesterday. She had heard from Warren so she felt much better, even though he has been sent so far away. They have one coat of paint on the house and she says it's really going to look nice. Hank Gornicki and his wife and baby are there for a few weeks. Remember, they come every year about this time. He plays for the Pittsburgh Pirates. I think I told you about them before. I'll miss seeing them this year.

I haven't received any more mail since the windfall on Wednesday night but I guess I can't rightly expect any more for a few days... but then, I'm always looking for a letter. Get's to be a habit, I guess. What am I going to do when you come home? There won't be anyone to write to me then and the mailman will cease to be the man of the hour in my life. Won't it be wonderful?

I just heard something wonderful today. Seems my dentist's niece is married to a sergeant and he has been stationed in England for many months. One evening last week he walks in the house. Just like that, with no warning. It seems he had orders to board a transport and report to a commanding officer in a camp near here. When he reported, the officer failed to have any idea why he was supposed to report and the sergeant didn't have any idea either. The outcome is that he gets a thirty-day furlough and goes back. I wish they'd make a mistake where you're concerned, and send you on a wild goose chase that would end at 195, but there I go, wishing again. You can't help it much when you hear things like this.

It's a lazy day. I've been going to bed too early, I'm thinking, for all the yawning I've done this week. Last night I fell asleep over your sweater at ten-thirty. I never was in bed before twelve until the last six months. Now, I'm there almost before the chickens find a roosting place.

This is payday, besides being Saturday, and I feel like celebrating but have no one to do it with. Marguerite is going away for the weekend. In fact, she left on the one-twenty. Agnes says she wants to go home, so that leaves me on my own. Guess I'll go home, too, where I belong. Eleanor and I will make up for it Tuesday. I hope she has heard something from Tom, else I know she won't feel much like going. I don't know what we'll see... probably Radio City. Agnes and Marguerite saw it last Saturday and enjoyed it. The stage show is supposed to be very good, also. Then again, I'd like to see "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" with Betty Grable, a musical that should be good. Tommy Tucker's orchestra is on the stage. That's playing at the Roxy. We'll have to decide when we get together.

We have another holiday this month, too, besides Thanksgiving.. Armistice Day. I think Marguerite, Agnes and I are going to see "The Merry Widow" if they don't change their minds before then. I'd like to see a few good shows before I might have to go home. I have my fingers crossed, hoping my aunt and uncle decide to go south and stay with Mom for the winter months. That would be wonderful... then I could stay on here so long as they would be there with her. It's the loneliness for her that I mind more than anything. Having to eat alone and not having anyone of your own close, to talk over things or go to a movie with.



This is lovely typing, I know, but I've hardly touched a typewriter in six months except for writing to you now and then. I really need a brushing up course for that, and my shorthand. I know... when you come home and write your book, you can dictate it to me. By that time I will be in practice again. Didn't you know you were going to write a book? I decided some time ago. I haven't decided what it will be about yet, but give me time.

I think I've rambled enough. Know what I'd like to do? Go off to our hunting lodge for the weekend. You could bring in a lot of logs and we'd lock the doors and unplug the telephone and just forget everything but us for two days and two nights. We could broil steaks (if I remember what they taste like and how to do it) and have everything that goes with them and oh, have a wonderful time. Don't you love the hunting lodge part? Not ambitious, am I? Somewhere in the Catskills.

I'd better go after that. I love you... remember, and I miss you more than I can write about. Take care of yourself and keep well. 'Bye for now... just a bit and I'll be back.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 1, 1943—London

Good morning angel,

Surprised to see me up this early? Yes, it has been a long time since we had a date at 8:00 a.m. Still, you are as beautiful at dawn as you are at dusk and I don't mind the hour a bit. I started to make love to you last night but the sirens and about five minutes of gun fire interrupted us. I felt a bit worn after a long train ride and decided you would rather see me after a good night's sleep anyway. So, I went to bed... and here I am bright and early the next morning. Do I look any better?

I wanted to arise early and stop at the bank, too. When I'm finished telling you how lonely I am for you I'm going to send \$50 to you. Later on, not later than a month, I'll send another \$50. That should be more than enough for Christmas presents, don't you think?

We are going to have an awful pack of "mail trouble" again this winter. Today I received your airmail postmarked Oct. 19. The one before that was Oct. 7. I know there are some in between.

I'm sure some of my recent letters corrected a wrong impression you gathered concerning my flying. Perhaps not. But you say, "What can I say since you are over there and go where you are told."

I don't have to go anywhere I don't want to go. I've never turned down an assignment yet but my Ranger training, operational flying and more recently assault training were all voluntary. There isn't anyone who can make a man fly. That's one reason why men aren't drafted into the combat end of the Air Force.

In our case, we felt there were stories to be told on those things and I asked for the job. You'd be surprised to discover what a relief that can be from routine stuff. You see... I'm not so dumb.

So, my little girl is getting confirmed. Will you wear a white dress and veil? White cotton stockings and white shoes? I'd love to have a picture of you in that. Say, I just thought... will you have to take another name? Let's see... Billee Ruth W———a "Whosis" Gray. You'll sound like royalty.

You don't play fair in our "keep you guessing" game. How could I possibly guess what your novena intention is? Can't you give me a hint?

Had a few funny experiences during a three-day trip just concluded. I can't tell you much about the purpose of the trip but we had a press party of 42, including a dozen or more English correspondents and photographers. There were three women in the party: Ruth Cowan of AP, Ann Harmon of U.P. and some gal from Australia. After driving around a large encampment area all morning we stopped for lunch with soldiers in the field. The women, first off, wanted to know where a rest room was. You'd think they were in the Hotel New Yorker instead of out on the English moors. A captain laughed at their question and pointed to a tent covering a couple of 3x5 trenches. "That's the best we have, ladies, he said.

Believe it or not, they had to take him up on it. I've seen red faces before, but... wow! Serves them right. I've never met a woman who could handle this stuff yet.

Billee, you should do these things to me... talking about miraculous leaves and how you would march me to the altar. Makes me stay awake at night trying to figure out the possibilities of such a miracle taking place.

If anything like that happens, you will be duly warned to have everything in readiness for a swift trip on the matrimony express.

'Bye, angel.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles



Ruth Cowan was one of the first accredited woman war correspondents in the US. Far from "not being able to handle it," she had covered the war in North Africa before this incident, reporting on hospitals and operations. Later she covered the invasion of Normandy, the liberation of Paris and the Battle of the Bulge. She was born in 1900, so she was 43 years old when she started covering the war, with 20 years experience writing for newspapers. Charles had a large blind spot when it came to women journalists, which he never lost.

November 4, 1943—Matawan (V-mail)

Darling,

When I arrived home last night after spending two nights and a day at 195, you were there to welcome me back in the form of two letters and such nice long letters. I feel like I'm being courted again... or, yet, I'd better say, shouldn't I?

Before I forget to tell you... I'm being confirmed Saturday afternoon at three-thirty, November 6, in the church at New Monmouth. Father Burke hailed me Sunday morning after Mass to tell me so that's good news to me. Your dad was quite pleased, too, when I told him Monday night.

I'll tell you more about our day in New York via an airmail. I'm going to send a V-mail letter every few days just in case the others don't get through, now that the mail will probably be so heavy through the holidays. We had fun... didn't have much time to shop, just long enough to spend all El's money. She'll probably tell you about that. She was so concerned. We were in Macy's and she saw a snow suite for the baby and succumbed to the temptation. It took practically all the money she had. That worked out because I had planned for the lunch and show to be on me, and knew I'd run into an argument, so everything came out OK. The snow suit is a honey... pink, of course.

Now, since you are leaving the verdict up to me as to whether you should make a habit or not of taking part in the raids over Germany, here is my opinion in a few words. I've gone into it before but maybe this will get there before those letters do. If you can get out of going gracefully, without your conscience bothering you, by all means turn down the opportunity. As Andy says, "there isn't much justification in it," especially when we have so much to look forward to, you and I together. It is risky business. I'll feel a lot better about it if you don't go up again.

I'll be on the lookout for the money and I'll do the best I can. We have another holiday next Thursday so if it comes before then, that will be a good day to go to New York. It's going to be fun Xmas shopping in New York. I always wanted to do that. As ever, you are so thoughtful about remembering Mom. She loved the flowers last year. It looks like we will be separated this Xmas for the first time in my life. I don't think she will go to Ohio and the trip is too long for me to go to Asheville for one day.

El hasn't as yet heard from Tom but she is doing all right. She's worried about him but the baby keeps her occupied. A family down the street heard from their boy and he was in the same camp Tom was in. The letter came from England. She should know by now, I hope.

Be back tonight by airmail.

All my love and kisses, Billee

November 4, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

You must feel neglected. I haven't written since Saturday but this has been a busy week so please forgive me, this time. Yes?

When I arrived home last night from my holiday at 195, I was welcomed back by you in the form of two letters, and such nice long ones, the kind I love to get. these were dated the 12th and 23rd.

I went from Novena Monday night to Jersey City, and arrived a little before ten. The girls were waiting for me in the kitchen. Your dad came in soon after I arrived... he had to work late. Everything seems to be fine at 195. It would be lots better if they'd hear from Tom but El is doing swell under the circumstances. The baby is a dream. She's looking a little more like Tom now so you can relax, in regard to her resemblance to you.

Ell and I slept late... 9:00 a.m., but Annice kept us busy about that time, making little cooing sounds, so we had to sit up and play with her. Finally we got up and had breakfast. El dressed the baby and I wheeled her to the butcher shop to pick up the meat for supper. She's so cute and still looks enough like a Kiley that she could be mine if there were a Mrs. in front of my name. She fell asleep on the way home. The neighbors are all getting to know me now and pass the time of day; all the kids say "hello" to me.

We didn't get to New York until after twelve. We shopped for a bit in Macy's and did a little shopping for Annice, of course...

Excuse, please. I had to leave for awhile to go and eat. Spaghetti tonight; we have it every Thursday. I can wind it on a spoon as good as the Italians themselves, if that's anything. After Marguerite and I cleaned up the dishes, we peeled almost a basket of pears to can. We just finished so I'm back to stay this time.

Back to New York... after a quick lunch we hopped a bus to the Roxy to see "Sweet Rosie O'Grady." Pretty good, with Betty Grable; strictly a musical and very light. The stage show was good: Tommy Tucker's orchestra and Danny Kaye. We went back to Jersey City about four-thirty on a 108 bus. Ell and I will have to do it again soon.

I stayed at 195 Tuesday night, too. Got up at 6:15, dressed and dashed down Lexington Avenue to catch a bus to Journal Square. It was turning to rain and I didn't tarry along the way, but I couldn't help thinking how many times you must have done that same thing at that hour in the morning.

I almost forgot... El and I stopped in to see Ray Roche, but he wasn't in. It seems you have to know the right people to get a wedding announcement in the paper and a girlfriend of El's asked her to try. Since Ray wasn't in, an elderly woman asked us if she should help. I never did hear what her name was. She was filing in the "morgue." She knew you, of course. El told her who we were. Incidentally, you're in the "morgue." She brought out your "record" and showed it to us. I had to laugh when she said, "Hmmm, all the girls in Jersey City and Charlie had to go south to find one." She was very nice and took the pictures from El. Now I know where you worked. You must have



worked inside somewhere. There was one desk as you entered the office, then the “morgue” and another office beyond that. the door on the left going in was shut so I couldn’t see what was in there.

I sent you a V-letter today with my verdict in, so we won’t go into that again. I haven’t changed my mind, so it still stands.

I had a long letter from Mom today and one from Warren. They have sent him from Ephrata, Washington, to Ardmore, Oklahoma. How do you like that for shifting around? He’s really done some traveling in the last two months.

Back to my verdict... I don’t know now. You go all the way to Germany and back without getting a scratch and then you go out on a few maneuvers and become a casualty. What am I going to decide now? Just kidding... it must have hurt and it takes so long to heal right in the joints. Wish I could make them well. Take good care of them so they don’t get worse. How about the hand you had all the trouble with? Any recurrence?

By the way, I see by the paper that rationing of coal in England is going to be even stiffer than before, there is such a shortage. Could you use some warm pajamas? Just say the word and I’ll send them as quickly as possible. I don’t want you to get sick over there from the cold.

You talk about the “show” you witnessed so casually. Every time I read that the damn Jerries have been over London, I get the jitters until I hear from you and know everything is OK. Not worrying about you much... just can’t seem to help myself.

I’m glad to hear Ralph Martin is better. The article I have from the New York times must be a second article, since it isn’t the one you mentioned. He must have made another \$100. Not bad.

Your idea about honeymooning until our money gives out sounds wonderful, but terribly impractical. But then, we have time to be practical later. I lay the law down now about one thing, in regard to the bonds. There are going to be enough of them set aside and forgotten until the arrival our “pitcher,” because we aren’t going into debt for hospital and doctor bills unless we absolutely have to. I decided that the other day.

Now that the trip to the Inn is over, I wondered myself how I did “take it” but it was fine, being so close to you once more, and the scene was breathtaking, the sky so clear and blue and the mountains with so many colors.

I’ve read a lot about Cornwall. It must be lovely. The day I went to see Mother Muller, I was looking through a calendar in the parlor, with scenes of English countryside, some very lovely.

I love the picture of you and Ben making your way to the apartment to spend a quiet evening at “home” with Jane and I. My line “no misbehavin” is definitely out of place. I’ll remember not to use it again. You have a picture of me going home every night with the girls. I’ll be such a stay-at-home I won’t know how to react to the novelty of going out again, but I’m willing to try any time now... but with you.

I wasn’t even looking at pajamas and certainly not any with lavender stripes but, if that’s the kind you want, I guess I can stand it even if they are sky blue pink. What I did see was some pretty shirts and ties, scarves, accessories... definitely not G.I.

Agnes and I decided Saturday night on going to Red Bank for confession, that we could stand the waiting another year... then we're taking things into our own hands and going on that rampage you mentioned a few letters ago. Even another year seems too much, but my patience will stretch that far, I believe.

I still insist you didn't kiss me goodnight. You'll have to do it again so I can remember... but I'm sure you didn't. I would have remembered. That's an extra one I'll get when you come home. Remember to remind me to remind you.

My darling pest, I'll love shopping for you. I don't think you need to worry about the Doyles', Dalys' and Kennys' understanding your disregard. They will. Getting things for the children will more than compensate. I'll do my best to get appropriate gifts and spare the expense. I don't think we need use all the money. Half should be sufficient.

Your last line... "awfully tired now and my hand is sore," made me miss you even more, because I'd like to make you comfortable, tuck you in and take care of your hand. I hope it's better by the time this finds you.

Could we miss each other any more? I don't think so. It gets to be such an ache. When I look out and see the stars so bright or the moon so full, I want you to be there to see them with me. I can't be too long now. The "show" is definitely in our favor now, for how long we'll have to wait and see... but surely it can't go on a lot longer. How can those countries stand much more? We'll just have to have a little more patience and bide our time.

I'm falling asleep and I want to get a letter off to Mom. Keep well and take care of yourself. I love you still sounds so inadequate but I do just that, oh so much. They'll have to make us a special word to do it justice because I can't find one in the dictionary. Goodnight, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 4, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

Couldn't let another "4th" go by without commemoration. That number has been an eventful one for us. Apr. 4, '42; Oct. 4, '42; Oct. 4, '43... and I'm wondering when it will suddenly bob up again. Let's see... could be the war will end on the 4th in '44. I might see the little lady I've been wanting to see for a million years again on a 4th. We could keep that date with Father John on a 4th. And who knows, we might start the ball club on a 4th with the whole infield. Maybe that's asking for too much, but there's always the possibility.

We had a big day here yesterday. Eighth Air Force sent out over 1,000 planes in daylight raids on the German naval base at Wilhelmshaven and three airfields in France. The 1,000 included the largest force of Forts and Liberators ever dispatched by the Eighth to hit Wilhelmshaven. Thunderbolt and Lightning fighter escort and Marauder medium bombers to hit the airfields. The best part of it is we lost only five heavy bombers, two fighters and two Marauders. The RAF big boys then went out last night to pay a visit to Dusseldorf and Cologne making the total tonnage of bombs dropped by all

bombers for the day... more than 4,000 tons. I don't know how much it means to you, but it's an awful lot of grief to whoever caught it.

I've been out with the infantry again. I know you approve of that more than the Air Force. I was going to send you clippings of a couple of the pieces I did but since all mail seems to be going by boat I believe you'll get the papers just as quickly. Bud did a swell piece on his trip to Bremen in yesterday's magazine section. When you see it you can get a good description of what I was trying to tell you after my trip. The fellows he mentioned were all quartered in the same hut with him and I while we were at that bomber base. He also speaks of Lt. McIlveen, pilot of "The Stars and Stripes," who took me over, and what is more important, back again.

I was just wondering where you intended to spend Christmas. Will you be able to spend it with Mother, or won't you have the time? I know where I'd like to spend it but I just know it will be the last one we'll have apart. Let's make a bet on it.

This is an old story, and I thought I'd be able to get by without mentioning it, but... well, perhaps it's because I've been looking at Ben's long face this past week. His complaint is the same as mine. Bad service with the mail. He's had three letters from his wife last month, the same number I received from you. We know they're on the way, but we're hoping they hurry up and get here. Be a good girl, angel.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

November 6, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

Saturdays seem to be important in our lives, for this has been an important day in my life. I was confirmed this afternoon at New Monmouth in St. Mary's Church. It was an impressive ceremony and I'm glad it's over. Now I'm really a Catholic. I've received three of the sacraments now. The next one will be up to you. There were seventy-five in the class, ten adults among them including two soldiers from a nearby camp. Bishop Griffin administered the sacrament. Marguerite was my sponsor. It felt good to feel her hand on my shoulder. I'm so glad she was able to be there.

Now, you can come home any time. Marguerite said afterwards to be sure and tell you that she and the rest have done all they could for me singly and together, that everything else was up to you now. I'm glad that there are no more stumbling blocks in the way except the big one now... 3,000 miles of water.

It's been a pretty day and the night is even more lovely. You should be on hand tonight so we could celebrate together... but then, you should just be here.

The check for \$50 arrived yesterday. I'm going to do my best to stretch half of it. I did pretty well last year but there are three more names added to the list so it will take a little more. As yet, I don't have an idea and I'm planning on taking advantage of Armistice Day.

That's all the mail there was today... the check. I was half-way hoping there would be a letter from you.



A U.S. military presence was maintained in Greenland for much of the war. Greenland was a Danish protectorate; Germany invaded Denmark early in the war, and even after the U.S. occupied Greenland, they continued to build secret weather stations there. One was detected in the fall of 1943 and bombed by the U.S., although the Germans had already evacuated it. The picture shows U.S. Army personnel inspecting some of the material left behind at the station.

You will probably know by the time this reaches you that Tom is in Greenland and not England. El had a letter from him Wednesday dated Oct. 25 and sent ordinary mail... not bad. He has a good chance of coming home in months from there instead of years, because of the climate. If you have an opportunity to read this week's Life, November 5 I believe is the date, there is an article covering present-day England. I'd like to have your opinion about it.

Too, you have probably heard what happened in Tuesday's election. Certainly a definite trend toward the

Republican party. What next? I don't think Roosevelt will run again. He wouldn't risk defeat if this election means anything. We'll just have to wait and see. How did I get started on politics? Guess because we were discussing the situation awhile ago... Marguerite, her brother and I.

These are my last two sheets of stationery, hence the writing on both sides... so I'm forced to leave early tonight. So, once more, I say goodnight until next time. It will be soon, never fear. Wishing again, but I did wish for you to be somewhere around today.

Mass and communion will be for us tomorrow, and our not-too distant reunion.

Keep well and be careful. I won't say "no misbehavin'" since there isn't any reason. Gee, darling, I am reassured.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 7, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

Your letter of Oct. 8 arrived today. What I have to say about "carrying things too far with our memories, etc." is being said in an airmail. You really sounded off, didn't you? Makes me feel like a boy who has been at the whipping post for a couple of hours. O.K., I have it coming to me, BUT I

STILL LIKE THE PICTURE AND I WOULDN'T SEND IT BACK EVEN IF YOU ASKED FOR IT!

Receiving your letters this way (the one of Oct. 5 came the day before yesterday) is like reading a book backwards. The Oct. 5 eight-page piece was worth reading half a dozen times to start with. I'm saving that for the airmail, too.

Meanwhile, it's beginning to look like Christmas is here a bit early. Packages from the Doyles and Ruth Rommel came today, the first since yours. They had everything in them but a Flying Fortress. And, I suppose I'll find one of them before I'm finished wading through the stuff. There were stationery, candy, gum, cocoa, cheese, canned walnuts, books, razor blades, shaving cream, tooth brushes, handkerchiefs, cigarettes, crackers camera film... let me look again to see if there's a kitchen sink with hot and cold running water. Dot even sent pictures of the baby. They didn't have to tell me who she looks like. If anybody says she looks like anything but an infant, they're lying. All the wolves in North Jersey will be howling at her door in 18 or 20 years but she doesn't look like any other baby I've seen after five weeks on earth. Still, there is something singular about her.. must be her godfather's influence.

I spent a few hours this week shopping for and mailing Christmas cards. I got them all off yesterday. I don't suppose you'll particularly care for the one I picked for you, but there it is. I'll look around for another one. After all, you are important enough to me to rate two of everything.

You said Warren was moving again. I sent him a letter and a card to the Salt Lake City address. I'll wager they don't reach him either.

Haven't had much of an opportunity to even think about making another flight, but I did get in two practice trips over the weekend. Both of them were in Marauders (B-26s). The two-engined planes rock and roll a good deal more than the big fellers. Personally, I like the big boys better. Feel safer in them because they are so big. I guess. Or, maybe it's just that it was a first love.

This is just a "hello," sweetheart. I'll be saving the rest for airmails. Feels like you want to get more personal in them.

'Bye for awhile...

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles



The Martin B-26 Marauder was a World War II twin-engined medium bomber built by the Glenn L. Martin Company from 1941 to 1945.

November 8, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

If I live to be as old as Adam, I'll never forget your letter written just a month ago which tells of "carrying our memories too far."

Reading it the first time... yes, I was frightened, and angry. If my jaws tighten when I'm angry, they were locked then. I wanted to say something but couldn't, because there wasn't anyone to say it to.

The answer was... I've never been told off like that before. And, between the two of us, you can really sound off when you want to.

Reading it the second time, I laughed, because I loved you so much for it. I could almost hear you saying between clenched teeth, "This young man has to be told a few things about the facts of life."

Besides "curing" me, you also proved a point. I'm not such a hot writer.

Let me try to give you a picture of your "feller" from the time he arises until he goes to sleep again. Perhaps you will get a better picture and form a nicer opinion.

Getting up the in the morning, he's pleasant enough. After breakfast, he's downright jovial. When he gets to the office, the first think he looks for is mail. If there is some, it's a fine day. If not... a shrug. He thinks, perhaps in a day or so. Unless he's pre-occupied with a story he just can't get his teeth into, he looks happy... acts happy.

That goes on all day, most of the time. At night, he's usually tired, more so mentally because his mind has been active. At home, he starts to write a letter, and it's the part of a day when it seems everything relaxes.

What does he think about?

A job to be done, a story just written, but mostly he thinks about home. It is while he is in this mood, these thoughts whipping through his mind, that he writes.

But this doesn't apply only to him, but to all the Billees everywhere. The big difference is that he is inconsiderate and she's... well, she's Billee.

He never really means to sound so low. It may be he loves her so much, he is self-centered when he thinks of her. Too, he says many things which to him sound differently than they do to her.

When he says her picture gives him the "blues," he means the sight of it stirs him... it doesn't make him despondent at all.

So, while he misses her and loves her, he's not such a sour puss, after all.

Amen.

And, I haven't misunderstood you. I needed something to wake me up and that never-to-be-forgotten letter did it.

I never did hear a girl fuss so much about a surprise. It's not a commission or a leave. Commissions in the ETO have been frozen for three months. As for a leave to go home... well, there just aren't any

such things. Still, if there were any possibility at all, I'd go after it. Even if it meant being with you for just a few hours.

Seriously, Billee, if I were able to get back for a few days, I'd ask you to marry me. That doesn't sound much like the "sensible" guy you used to know, does it?

With your "scolding" letter came another (Oct. 5), the first one written from Asheville. Your mountains sounded as beautiful as yourself.

The unpleasant note was about Mom not feeling well. I'm sure she felt better after you were home a few days. I'll be anxious to hear how she was when you left.

Could you really "almost reach out" and touch me while you were walking, Billee? I had hoped you would. At least, know that I've taken walks like that with you many times.

Hon, inasmuch as the mail department seems to be going screwy entirely, I'm going to write a V-mail with an airmail every time I write. In that way, we'll get some through.

'Night, angel. Yes, I'll think of you before I sleep. And, I'll smile when I think of you sounding off!

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

November 10, 1943—Matawan

Hello darling,

Back again tonight. I dashed off a few lines this afternoon via V-mail, so here I am once more.

Today brought a letter from Warren. He expects to leave around the first of the year, for the same place you are, so don't be surprised if you look up some day soon from your desk and see Sgt. Warren Gray. There is a family resemblance, they tell me, but I couldn't see it, in case you are thinking he might look like me. He's a swell kid even if he is my brother. So, since I promised him I'd go home when that happened, you can see what is going to happen. That gypsy you picked out to be Mrs. Kiley will be on the jump again. The more I think about it the more I hate the thought of it... leaving all this now when the end seems in view, but I promised.

I had an unexpected trip to 195 yesterday, prompted by some bad news. Do you remember Kay Emerson's little Marilyn? She was killed Sunday afternoon while crossing the street to go home. It was such a shock. I had gotten to know them all so well. Marilyn was in and out of the house all the times I have been there. I went in and spent the night with El, and came down early this morning. I couldn't make the funeral. It still doesn't seem possible. El will probably tell you about it, too.

Father John got in just a few minutes before I arrived yesterday and stayed for dinner. You should see Annice stick her tongue out at him. Your dad taught her that. The best one was, though, Father John giving her a ride on his knees, singing "Pistol Packin' Mama." I'd love to have a candid shot of that to send you. El looks better now that she has heard from Tom. Eddie is mad because he hasn't been sent over. He says he's been in longer than Tom. By the way, he's expecting a 15-day furlough over Christmas. Lucky guy. Have you heard about the girl in Rochester, or did I tell you before?

Father John said you had asked for shoes. He was glad to be able to send you something at last so he said he'd go to Bamberger's and see what he could find. He's all wrapped up in a show he's putting on and incidentally the Kiley living room furniture is being confiscated for the scenery, drapes and all.

Eleanor gave me a suggestion for a gift for your dad but I'm at a loss as to what to get Father John. Last year I gave him a record. I'm afraid to get any more for he already had it. I hear he has quite a few. Maybe I'll think of something.

I just caught myself falling asleep. I was up until 2:00 a.m. this morning and then got up at 6:30 so I didn't get too much sleep. I'm missing you so. There's a gorgeous harvest moon out tonight. Seems so inadequate to keep saying I love you and miss you so much, but it seems to cover those facts that are so clear to me.

I'll have to say goodnight for now, for a day, anyway. I'll let you know how I come out with the shopping. Go on missing me and loving me, and I'll not misbehave. 'Night, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 11, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My dearest,

Your V-mail came day before yesterday. It made a blue, or rather gray, Monday awfully bright. We were having more rain again.

Really glad to hear one of the packages arrived—thank you, Uncle Sam—and you opened it already. I was a little disappointed in the engraving on the bracelet. They scratched the surface in several places but there wasn't much I could do about it, not in these times. I'm glad you liked it. the lace was just a whim. Thought it might bring your birthday a bit closer to me. What was it my girlfriend in Asheville called me? An "incurable romanticist." What do you think? Maybe so...

The other packages should be arriving soon and I suppose you'll be opening them, too. Then, when Xmas comes, there you'll be with nothing to open.

I'm dashing this off at the bank. No business. By the way, they had a stamp across the top of the letter "Advise Sender Writing is Too Light." You'd better get a new ribbon on your typewriter.

Tomorrow I go shopping so I'll let you know how I make out. Be back soon via airmail. Almost forgot... I love you oh, so much, and I'm not misbehavin.'

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 12, 1943—Matawan

Hello, darling,

I should be doing this V-mail but the house is so quiet I hate to start typing now. It would spoil the moment. Everyone is in bed and I should be too, after all the gallivanting I did yesterday.

We're having crisp weather, the kind that makes you walk a little faster. There's something clean and fresh about the air.

No mail from you today. A long letter came from Mom and an application for a job in Asheville... see how I get around.

Marguerite and I had fun yesterday. We made the 8:30 express to New York, uptown. We went over on the Ferry from Jersey City and I loved it... saw the Statue of Liberty on the way over.



Founded in the 1870s, Wanamaker's was one of the first department store chains. They had two Manhattan locations. Billee probably visited this store at 4th Ave. and 9th St. The building has been demolished but 9th St. between 4th Ave. and Broadway has been renamed Wanamaker Place.

I cashed your check in Wanamakers and did a little shopping there. I got gloves for Mom for you to give, and a pretty hanky. She'll love them. I asked El for suggestions for your dad and she said a shirt. Armed with the size and style, I went on a search for an Arrow shirt and found it in McCreery's, with a pretty Arrow tie. For Annice I found a pretty pink dress in Altman's and picked up a cute Bambi in Wanamakers to go along with it. For the Kenny baby I decided on a toy since I don't know his size. I found a little jeep that carries a gun behind. Looks like the real McCoy, so he should like that.

I still have the Daly and Doyle infants to buy for, besides El and Bette and Father John and I almost forgot, Eddie. He's to get a 15-day furlough around Xmas time, the lucky guy. What we could do with 15 days.

I thought I could do all my shopping in one day but I discovered I couldn't. Every time I'd decide on something, either size or color was wrong. But, I had fun and this give me an excuse to go back.

We had dinner about 2:00 in McCreery's Big Top Restaurant. The food is excellent there. When we finished shopping we checked our packages at Penn Station and had supper in the Savarin, an oyster stew and did it hit the spot! It was really good. We made Radio City by 7:15 and by 7:30 were comfortably seated watching "Claudia." The stage show was super, the best I've ever seen. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole program.

I've only been twice since we were there together and I never cease getting a thrill out of going. This is the first time we had seats close up beyond the balcony so I could see the whole interior. When the

lights came up, it was almost as if time went back a few months and we were sitting there together... but just for a moment, and then it faded.

“Claudia” is a simple story about a newly-married couple. I enjoyed it very much. There was a line in the script I want to remember. In a conversation with his wife, the young husband says, “when you like the person you love, that’s marriage.” So simply put, but the truth really hits home. The whole foundation of a happy and successful marriage is in that one line... or don’t you agree? You know, come to think about it, I do like you as much as I love you.



Of course, we didn’t get out in time to make a decent train home so we saw a little more of the picture over and walked from Radio City to Penn Station down fifth Avenue. It was a gorgeous night. My star was shining so bright and the moon was full. The moonlight was so bright, even the effectiveness of the “brown-out” in New York was faded.

Speaking of the new “brown-out,” you can see where you are going now but I don’t think they should have lifted the blackout yet. It makes people more optimistic than they should be.

I had such a nice time yesterday but I missed you. I kept wishing you were at my elbow, helping me select the Xmas gifts, and then in the show I missed you more than ever.

I keep telling you how much I miss you. According to these articles on “How to Write to Your Serviceman,” letters should be cheerful and so I shouldn’t let you know how I feel. What do you think?

By the way, I know what “cheesecake” means, and I didn’t have to ask Dot. I’ll tell how some time. So, it’s “cheesecake” snaps you want, hmmm. Don’t know what I can do about that.

I’m falling asleep in the chair here and I have a bath to take yet. I’ll be back tomorrow night for a Saturday night date again. ‘Bye now. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 13, 1943—London

Evening angel,

I’m making a strong resolution tonight, that is to especially reward you for each of the 15 October letters I’ve received so far. I couldn’t hope for much more after getting eight all at once the other day, but two more arrived today, both dated the 26th.

There has been so much in your letters, I hardly know where to begin by way of answering some of your questions.

The most suitable beginning, however, is to say, “You are still my first and last love.” It’s something you will hear as long as we see night and day, Billee. Will you love me as a grand-daddy, as you do now?

I wondered if the pictures and report on Frankfurt would ever reach you, but your letters today supplied an answer. You flatter me ever so much with all those nice words.

Too, you enabled me to form a clear picture of your reaction to this business of flying. I assure you, again, that I’ll always think of you, and us, in anything I undertake.



Seymour Green, a cast member in “This is the Army,” in 2013. The show premiered in July 1942 and played in every theater of war until V-J Day.

All cast members were in the military except for Irving Berlin; the show raised millions of dollars for the Army Emergency Relief Fund.

Two of the boys of the “Stars and Stripes” crew were in London on a pass over this weekend and stopped in to see me last night, Danny Sullivan and Charlie Rotunda. Today, Benny and I took them to see “This is the Army,” the original stage production which Irving Berlin has on tour over here. It was a great show. During intermission we met Eddie Barrett, the “Stars and Stripes” tail gunner who was with me in the picture of us looking at a hole in the ship. After the show we went to the “L’Aperitif” restaurant for dinner, and between us did away with a quart of “Johnny Walker.” It was a swell reunion and a grand day. The boys said they have installed a special

intercom connection (inter-communication with the crew and other planes in the group) in the nose of the “S&S” for me, when I can go out with them again.

I also heard some bad, and good, news. Lt. McIlveen’s brother, who co-pilots a plane at the same field, went down last week, but he’s safe. My “Mac,” the boys say, is really a “hot” pilot right now. Other skippers regard him as one of the best at the base.

I’m having a difficult time trying to figure out whether you plan to go back to Asheville for good, or not. You sounded as if you would in one letter, then didn’t mention it again. As I see it, it’s dependent on Mom’s health. Don’t hesitate if she needs you. I’ll give you plenty of advance notice when to meet your homecoming solder-boy.

You thought Ephrata might be a springboard to the Pacific for Warren. Not necessarily, Billee. Most of the fellows I know here went though Salt Lake City and Ephrata. I don’t mean to sound pessimistic, but you should know. From Ephrata he should go overseas although it’s difficult to say when. It might be weeks, or months.

He may even go east to Maine like some of the crews have before coming here, or going wherever his assignment takes him. when I know for sure he has left the country, I'll get off a letter which I think may ease Mom's mind.

Since this letter seems to be all Air Force, I may as well stick to it and answer some more of your queries, hon. Was I "scared" on my trip? I won't disappoint you. From the time we were "briefed" at 3:00 a.m. until we took off at 7:30, I thought of a million things, mostly about you and us. I was jumpy but once we were in the air, I was honestly too busy doing and seeing things to be concerned about safety. Once, when four Focke-Wulfs zipped down and in close, my breathing stopped for a moment. And, when a formation above us and to the right dropped their bombs I didn't know where they were coming from. They appeared to be awfully close, and I gulped. Otherwise... well, it was a "nice" ride; as nice as any bomber mission is.

Leaving the Air Force... you wanted to know if I "knock all the girls for a loop" over here. I wouldn't know. In fact, I don't see how any of them could form an opinion. There was the WAC whom I helped do a story for her home town paper. She said I was "sweet," and cooed like a sick calf, if calves coo. Then, there are Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Saltmarch, the "glamour girls" who keep the apartment tidy. Every day when they come in, Mrs. Taylor says, "Charlie, m'love, you been 'upstairs' again? Blimey, I wish you'd stay on the ground so I wouldn't have to worry 'bout you." Mrs. T. is a typical Cockney lady... a grand old gal. When she looks at your picture, she's apt to say, "Miss your love, don't you, boy?"

So, there you are. If that's "knocking them for a loop," I must be slaying 'em.

And, how about you, my little queen bee? How about the escort you had home from the canteen dance? And the "protective" company of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps on the train? And, another point! This Saturday "secret" business. I recall making a request for information on your extra curricular Saturday activity long, long ago. Now, you said it's to be a mystery for the duration. You're being downright unfair. I reveal anything and everything to you and this is what I get in return. I'll have two FBI friends of mine in Newark do a bit of investigation for me if you persist.

As for "secrets," Tom knows nothing which you aren't already aware of. His "secret" concerned the gunnery course. I told him about it in a letter but asked him not to tell 195.

Like you, I am tired enough to sleep so I can sleep to dream and dream so I can be with you. I'll continue this in another letter tomorrow.

'Night, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, your Charles

November 13, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Another Saturday night nearly gone. I'm waiting now for Marguerite to finish her bath so I can take mine. After all, it is Saturday.

Speaking of baths, I hear yours are rationed over there on the honor system. They aren't giving out coupons for them yet. Do you find it inconvenient? I would, but then you can get used to anything. "Adjusted" is a better word, I guess.

I mentioned learning what "cheesecake" meant by accident in last night's letter and I happened to think of something. "Cheesecake Manor?" Did that prompt the name of your manor house? Or am I being too inquisitive?

I forgot to mention, while in New York I decided on your wedding present. The only difficulty is, will I be able to find some? I'm not going to tell you, either. There will be a presentation ceremony on our wedding night!! Nothing like arousing your curiosity, is there?

It's a gorgeous night out. A little on the cold side, but clear. The moon is gorgeous. A swell night for a Saturday night roundup, partying here and there.

In tonight's Sun there is an article about a sergeant, an aerial gunner who hitchhiked via airways from North Africa to New York, by way of England and Iceland. He really got around. That's an idea... try it next weekend. Hop on over and then pick up another at La Guardia and go back. Even for a Saturday night it would be worth it. That would be something... and I'm afraid Sergeant Kiley would be front-page copy again, but it wouldn't surprise me.

It's nearly eleven and I'm stretched across the bed falling asleep... a swell Saturday night date I am. I've been catching up on my correspondence. This makes the fifth letter tonight. How I am doing it I really don't know.

Marguerite came in and she's laughing at the position I'm in. Only I could manage it, I'm telling you. I must have a little acrobatic talent somewhere.

Foiled again... Agnes slipped into the bathroom ahead of me so I'll have to wait a bit longer. Think you can put up with me yet awhile?

I decided I had done enough gadding so I came home today, cleaned out my drawers and did a few things I've been putting off. I have to catch up on our photo album and scrapbook, too. Volume II has to be started on the latter for 1943. I think I mentioned I took the other one home.

By the way, I bought a new hat in New York the other day. It's kind of cute. Marguerite says it looks nice on. I'm still looking for one with a feather, like the one you suggested for me one day. I can't remember whether it was New York or Asheville, but I've never found just the right hat. I found the red wool, too, for my Christmas dress, so I'll have to have that made right away quick-like.

The airmail you mentioned in your V-mail received this week hasn't come as yet. Maybe Monday, I hope.

I'm missing you tonight as always. A letter today would have boosted my morale but it's still pretty good. I know they must be on the way somewhere. Our telephone operator hasn't heard from her boyfriend in eight weeks. The last she heard he was in Sicily so now he's probably taking part in the Italian campaign.

I'm sending along an editorial that was in the Times on Armistice Day, regarding the holiday that might have been. I thought you might be interested. Marguerite and I saw a bit of the Armistice Day parade. It was just forming as we rode down Fifth Avenue on the bus.

I meant to tell you about an incident that happened Thursday as Marguerite and I came out of the Savarin. There was a woman there with a crowd gathered around her. She had half a can on and she had just dropped about three bottles of beer. You can imagine the mess. She kept saying over and over, "I dropped all the beer. The Lord deliver me." It was really a riot until they led her away. She was middle-aged, too. She was feeling no pain. You never know what you might see in Penn Station, especially since they've turned some of the lights on.



The Savarin Restaurant in Penn Station, circa 1943.

Wish Agnes would hurry. I'm falling asleep. By the time I do get the bath, it will awaken me for the night, but I want to go to early Mass so I'll take it now anyhow.

You've read my ramblings long enough. I want so much to write to you, to be with you this way but there doesn't seem to be much to write about tonight. As always, I love you so very much and oh how I miss you. Keep well and remember my prayers and thoughts are always with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 16, 1943—London

Evening sweetheart,

I thought I had a lot of big news for you tonight but when I got back to town tonight from my (favorite) Fortress base there were two birthday V-mails from you, a V-mail of Nov. 4 and an airmail of Oct. 30.

The Nov. 4 letter was the one that made me say, "ouch." In it you said, "I'll feel a lot better if you don't go up again." So, here I am with a tale to tell and I don't know how to tell it. However, I'll tell you everything in an airmail when I get back in a few days from a trip to Liverpool. The story is... I went out again with "The Stars and Stripes" yesterday to... of all places... Norway. There was a reason, hon. The ship was doing its 13th trip and I did a piece on it. All I'll tell you now is that it was nothing but a long, frigid trip. No fighters, no flak, almost like a practice flight. But, I'm beginning to

see your way and you have my promise not to go again if I “can get out of it gracefully without my conscience bothering me.” It will have to be something extra special, O.K.?

I’m anxiously awaiting your story on the confirmation. My, I’ll bet you looked pretty. You would whether you were being confirmed or not.

I haven’t heard from Tom yet but I did get a letter today from Larry Doyle, Al’s older brother. He says he’s 160 miles from here so I’m going to start a manhunt. I put a notice in the *Stars and Stripes* “Help Wanted” personal column Monday, asking Tom and Larry to get in touch with me. Larry responded immediately. He must have come over in the same group as Tom.

Had a long talk with a chaplain while I was at the fort base. Only a young fellow, 26, and a Protestant chaplain. The boys call him “Chaplain Jim.” Last name is Kincannon, and a Kentuckian. He talked of the letters he receives from families, sweethearts and wives of boys who go out and don’t get back. Even showed me some of them. I guess that was what I needed to open my eyes. One fellow whom I knew, a 1/Lt. [first lieutenant] and a pilot of a ship, who was lost about two months ago. He has a three-month-old daughter he had never seen and the letter from his wife was a story in itself... calm, sensible, but still so full of anguish and sorrow. Chaplain Jim’s work has its humorous side, too. The “morale officer” of a war industry near the base wrote to inquire if a certain sergeant was dead or alive, etc., because a girl who worked there hadn’t seen or heard from him in six weeks and was worrying a great deal. Chaplain Jim called the fellow to his office and asked him, “What about it?” The sergeant answered that the girl had been “pestering” him and he thought the quickest way to get rid of her was to have one of the fellows tell her he was “missing in action.”

Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

November 17, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

Hi, darling,

This is by way of being another anniversary day for us... twenty-two months ago today. Remember? I like to say it in months... then it doesn’t seem like such a long time.

No mail from you this week and only one V-mail last week. I haven’t received the airmail you mentioned writing the evening before you wrote the V-letter. Yesterday brought a long letter from my brother. He is definitely coming over to pay you a visit after the first of the year. Incidentally, they have changed his position in the crew and made him a tail gunner, of all things. I wanted to write last night but the letter from Warren kind of got me. He is such a kid and that is such a dangerous position, but then all I can do is pray that he’ll be ok, along with you. I have the task of breaking the news to Mom when he leaves and as I told you before I promised Warren that I would go home, so my days in Jersey are numbered.

I called El this morning and she received a twenty-two page letter from Tom written on his trip to Greenland. He gave it to a merchant marine to mail so it wasn’t censored. I can imagine it is quite interesting. El said he didn’t leave anything out. I called to get a suggestion for a gift for Father John

and what do you think she said? “Are you kidding?” It seems she’s in a quandary, too so I didn’t get much help there. I imagine it will be records again.

We are anything but busy today so Marguerite and I are going to try and make the 2:29 train to Newark and do a little shopping. I have to get my coat out of storage. It was 28 degrees this morning and I really felt it.

I picked up an old Sunday News last night dated Nov. 7 and in the rotogravure section was one of our pictures... that is, one of the ones you sent me taken after the raid. The pilot of the “Stars and Stripes” and his brother... remember? I was so surprised. I kept the page for our scrapbook. I kept looking further to see if maybe yours was there, too, but I guess they were just interested in the pilot and his brother.

Really feeling swell, except a little down from that letter I received from Warren but other than that everything is fine, just in case you might like to know. So far I’ve escaped any sniffles. I’m knocking on wood... and all the other ailments that seem to be going around.

I have to run if I’m to make that train. I’ll write more tomorrow. Just wanted to let you know I’m thinking of you today and remembering this is one of our days. Keep well and take care of yourself. I love you, as always... the same old words but they seem to mean such a lot.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 18, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

This is my report on “Norway.” It is being written only a few hours after your letter containing a frown on my flying arrived. So, it is with a certain amount of timidity that I’m writing.

Before going into the trip, let me say that I’m not flying for the thrill. I know that isn’t your impression but some people who have written seem to think it’s just a “Coney Island” roller-coaster ride.

First of all, I don’t have to fly. In fact, all the generals in the Army can’t make a man fly. But in my case, although Andy says “there isn’t any justification in it,” it’s our job to get the best stories, and get them right.

The two trips I’ve made were for specific purposes... not only to get stories on those particular raids but to also get background material for future use.

We never know whether it’s going to be a big raid on an important target or a “milk run” as the boys call the easy ones. Fortunately or unfortunately, it’s been my fate to draw big ones.

But, and you’ll favor this, today Col. Llewellyn, our C.O., told me I was to concentrate mainly on ground force material. He said it before but made it a little stronger this time. The only time I’m to fly is when I’m on the spot and an important job is coming off. Seems as though we aren’t getting all the ground force stories we should and he has put part of the problem on my shoulders.

So, in a day or so, I’m going to start seeing more of the infantry, armored troops, etc.

Now... for Norway.

Lt. McIlveen and the crew were taking “The Stars and Stripes” on her 13th mission. I went up to the bomber station and made arrangements to go.

It was a cold, cold morning when they awakened us for briefing. The target was a chemical plant in Rjukan, a bit west of Oslo.



B-17s over Norway during the Rjukan bombing raid. The power station at Rjukan, Norway had been adopted by the Nazis for the production of 'heavy water' for use in its nuclear program. As a result of this raid, a B-26 raid the following day, and sabotage by Norwegian partisans, Germany abandoned production of heavy water.

It was a long ride over the icy North Sea, and while the temperatures varied between 40 and 55 below zero at high altitude, we were fairly comfortable with our heavy, heated clothes.

Yes, I was riding in the nose again with Gene Shoher, the navigator, and Bill Williams, the bombardier.

We didn't see a sign of enemy fighters until we crossed the Norwegian coast; then, a few of them showed up and disappeared.

The snow-covered mountains were beautiful. Here and there we passed over wee villages with pretty little white houses.



The Rjukan power station before the bombing.

The target looked like a new, white-bricked high school, but after we passed over there wasn't too much left of it. The part I didn't like was the destruction of some of those "doll houses" surrounding the plant. But, we can't help that.

On the way back I saw a lone house on a mountainside and had a crazy thought... it seemed a perfect spot for us!

All the way back over the North Sea we didn't see a thing but water. Eddie Barrett, the tail gunner, called "aircraft at nine o'clock" over the intercom once but they were Liberators

that were out to hit an airfield in Norway that day.

Back at the base we talked with one of our crews that never left England. Their ship developed engine trouble and they had to bail out only 50 miles from the base.

Lt. Earl Mazo, the public-relations officer at the field, went along on the raid with a crew that was finishing its tour of operations. They'll be going home soon.

Earl is here at home with me now, writing to his wife in Charleston, S.C., asking her to forgive him for going. You see, he just likes to fly, although he doesn't have to. He's going to stay with Ben and I for a few days while he's on leave.

So, there we are, angel. Don't worry... and when have I heard that before? I'll bet you asked the Colonel to get me away from the Fortresses.

I had that "cold sweat" feeling again before takeoff, thinking of you. I don't think I ever love you more than at those times. When we leave at 6 a.m., in the darkness, as we did Tuesday, it's 1 a.m. in Matawan and I see your very beautiful head on the pillow. In my way, I lean over and kiss you, and say... 'Bye for just a little while, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

November 18, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

Hi, darling,

Back again by way of V-mail. Decided I'd better start sending a few of these off in case you are in the same boat I am... no mail since last Monday. I talked to El last night and she says they haven't heard either.

By the way, Eddie is home on a fifteen day furlough. He will be home for Thanksgiving.

Marguerite and I made our train yesterday to Newark and I did what shopping I had to do and picked up my coat and we made the five fifty-nine back to Matawan. I bought some new shoes, strictly dress ones. You'd love them... quite high heels, black suede, toes out with a sort of pinwheel design on the top, low-cut pumps. I have a new outfit now, or will when I pick up my dress from the dressmaker's Thursday: new black dress, hat, shoes, bag and gloves. For the life of me I don't know what I'm getting dressed up for. Morale, I guess, but then I have been invited to 195 for Thanksgiving. That should be reason enough.

It's a gorgeous day out if you can believe that, sun shining very brightly and the sky wonderfully clear. It's three o'clock and I'm finished for the day. I'm thinking seriously of checking out in the next few minutes and taking in a movie. That's the wonderful thing about being a teller in a bank. When you are finished with your work, you just leave and no one says anything as long as your work is complete.

I have that stepchild feeling again this week. Here it is Thursday and no mail from anyone except my brother the other day. How about that? I usually get a couple of letters a week from Mom. Maybe there will be some waiting when I get home.

The *Stars and Stripes* for the week of October 18 came yesterday, believe it or not. I didn't get a chance to look at them last night so that will be something to do tonight when I finish my laundry.

I still have to take a day off sometime soon and go to New York to finish our Christmas shopping. I have a few places to go on Fifth Avenue where I might find what I'm looking for. These days, it doesn't do to decide on anything because when you get there they never have it, so you'd just better be in the mood to look, when you start in.

I forgot to tell you, hunting season is on around here. Marguerite's brother has brought home quite a few rabbits. In fact, I'm getting to feel like a rabbit I've eaten so much of it here of late. He goes gunning during his off hours. He has three nice rabbit dogs. They know me now, since I've fed them a few times for him. [Note: Marguerite's brother also shot squirrels; the Heusers and Billee ate those, too.]

This seems to be the end...

Miss me, darling. I love you. Always your Billee

November 19, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

Hello darling,

Me again and still the same wail... no mail again. Here's hoping when I go home today...



Finished again at 3:15. Some fun but then we make up for it the first two weeks out of the month. The movie I saw yesterday was cute, "Lady Takes a Chance" with Jean Arthur. Kind of cute if very diverting. The other picture was "Sherlock Holmes Faces Death." You can imagine what kind that was but I enjoyed it for a change. When I was a little younger I devoured everything that Conan Doyle wrote along with S.S. Van Dine and some of the other authors but I never read them now. Just a phase, I guess.

I had another letter from Warren yesterday. He may get a five-day leave around Christmas time so he will go home. He seems quite enthused about his new position. Their colonel and the instructors have just returned from the European Theater so they are learning all the newest tactics. He says it's very near the real McCoy; that is, their practice missions. He is still waiting for your letter and is quite anxious to meet you. To quote from his letter he wants to make sure that I'm not just

sitting around waiting for just any "GI Joe." I hastened to reassure him in my letter last night so you will probably get a once-over when you do meet. I think you'll measure up to his expectations. You aren't worried, are you?

This is another pretty day... almost too good to be true. Thanksgiving will probably be awful. Wish we were going to have dinner at the Kileys' and then go to a football game and end up at some nice place like the Governor Clinton or just anywhere in New York or vicinity, so long as you were there. You know a lot more places... it will be fun finding them again.

I read practically all the *Stars and Stripes* last night, but wasn't able to find any stories with your byline. Father John said you must be doing a lot of rewrite work. I see Ben's name with the list of editors... pretty nice. Doesn't he do any of the art editing now?

Marguerite is cleaning house in her department. You should see her. She has her equipment spread out all over and she's washed all the drawers out and put fresh paper in them. I'll get around to that eventually too, when I know what I'm supposed to do with a lot of this junk that my predecessors left behind. right now I'm introducing a filing system with some old records that haven't been touched in years. I never saw such an unbusinesslike way to do things. I sound a little fussy... I hope not like an old maid but I don't like things messy. I have to run. Marguerite is ready to go now. She's finished for the day so we'll get an early train. 'Bye for now. Love me as much as always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 20, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

It's quiet tonight. The radio is playing softly—nice listening music—a few good dance numbers but for some reason I'm quite content to sit here with pen in hand being with you. You don't suppose I'm getting that settled feeling, that I don't want to go out Saturday nights. Maybe it's just that finally I'm getting used to staying at home. That hasn't been hard though, in case I've given the impression that it was. All I had to do was remember your smile and our moments together and everything was made easy.

Tonight you seem very close, more so than usual. Maybe you were writing to me tonight, too. Lately, I've had such a restless feeling, sort of expectant, as if something were going to happen. I thought perhaps Warren's letter last week was the culmination of the feeling, but it still persists. I find myself looking at new clothes and I even bought a new dress as if I were preparing for something and I've caught myself looking in shop windows that contained flimsy what-nots that only a bride would need. Then, I say to myself, "No need, Billee. Save your money a bit longer," but the feeling still persists. What do you think, that maybe it's just a case of wishful thinking together with the over-optimism in the papers?

One of the girls in the office reads palms as a hobby and yesterday she read mine. This is it: a long life filled with much happiness, good health, money and children. Who could ask for more, except for you to share it with me. I'm anxious to know when all this starts. She told Marguerite there were two marriages in her hand. Marguerite said a number of years ago, before she was married, an old lady read her palm for the fun of it and said the same thing. I don't take any stock in it, but it's fun.

I had a long letter from Mom. Friends of ours have invited her to their home for Thanksgiving and Xmas, too, if she is to be alone. I'm very grateful. I wouldn't like the idea of her eating alone. You know, this is the first time in my life I'm away from home during the holidays. It won't be so bad since I'll be at 195. That has come to be my second home. I really feel at home now. Bette and El have stopped fussing, "company fussing" if you know what I mean. I'm more like one of the family and that means very much to me.

Warren wrote home that he didn't have any sheets to sleep on... would Mom please send him some. Mom was very indignant at this man's army, that her son had no sheets to sleep on. Bless her, she misses him very much, but she knows how "to take it" along with the rest of us.

The trend has changed now on the radio to Xavier Cugat, so you know what that means... South American music. Do you remember? I've always wanted to know how. I can, a little. In fact, I did a bit of it at the canteen dance I went to while I was home. I've always wanted to do the La Conga... looks like such a lot of fun.

The other day in my letter I was bragging about feeling so good and not having any sniffles. I'd done well not to have mentioned it because I've really got a swell case of them. I've been doctoring all day. Marguerite went to New York so I came home early. I got upstairs and pulled my clothes off,

thinking, “I’ll do my laundry now.” The bed looked so good I decided to lie down for a bit. The next think I knew, Theresa was calling me and it was five o’clock. I slept nearly three hours like a log. For a minute when I awakened, I thought it was morning.

I’ve been here long enough. I have to get up early in the morning. We are going to 8 o’clock Mass. My Mass and communion will be for us. Go on loving me as you do now and everything will be all right. Be careful and take care of yourself for me. I love you.

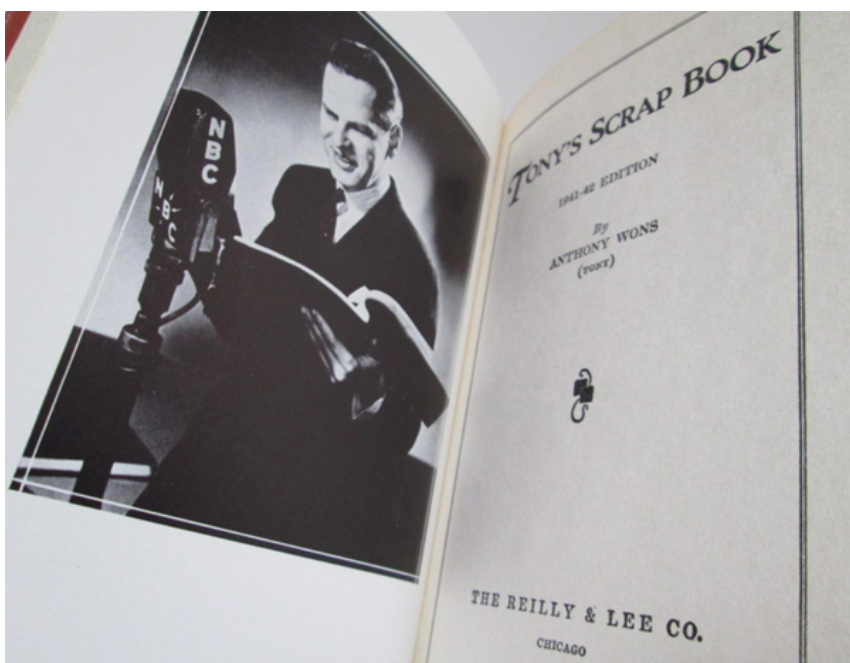
All my love and kisses, always, Billee

November 21, 1943—London (V-letter)

Evening sweetheart,

With apologies to T.W. and his Scrapbook, “You never saw a broader smile than the one I’m wearing.” The reason: the Christmas packages from you and Mom came today!

Don’t be disappointed because I opened them now. I just couldn’t wait a month. But I was tempted. Everything was so neatly wrapped, I hated to ruin your handiwork. In fact, I swelled with pride over the care you took with the wrappings as much as I did with the gifts. They were swell, sweetheart, and into my little black book goes another notation for a belated reward to you. How many is that I owe you? I have the little bit of Christmas tree hanging from the chandelier in the living room, bells and all. The doll (I’ll never live that down) and the worry bird are over the fireplace keeping company with a cotton Santa Claus who sits astride a model Hurricane fighter plane, which in turn is mounted on four caliber 50 shells. Mementoes of Frankfurt.



Tony Wons was a popular radio personality during the depression and into the 1940s. He collected works of writing from Shelley, Whitman, and other great writers, read them on the air and published them in a series of books.

I’ve been reading Tony Wons tonight and enjoying your notes on favorite pieces, missing you and loving you so very much.

The cake won’t be touched until Christmas... at least I’ll have that to look forward to. It is so securely wrapped it looks as if it would keep for ages.

Your Thanksgiving card, V-mail of Nov. 10 and airmail of the 5th also came. More about those in an airmail of my own, except for one thing.

You said a girlfriend in Asheville once called you “an incurable romantic,” and asked for my opinion. Here it is: sure you are. But so am I. And won’t we be happy together? Who wants to be cured, anyway?

Hon, I don’t remember whether I made the request for the sweater in a previous letter. If not, I’m making it now. Please, Mr. Postman, may my honeychile send me a sweater.

Had a letter from Father John today, too, telling me Tom is in Greenland! I hope he has a big supply of “long handles,” or heavy underwear. I got off word to El tonight, trying to compensate for Greenland by making it sound as if it wasn’t so bad. Of all places to be sent, that is the one I wouldn’t like to be sent to.

Another thing I failed to cover in previous letters was the “financial report” you sent. As treasurer of the firm I’d say you’re doing swell. And, here’s a bit of good news. I have my budget working now so that I’ll be able to send between \$50 to \$100 to you every month, barring unforeseen expenses. Don’t ask me how I’m going to do it. I hardly know myself, but I’m going to try.

Be back tomorrow.

All my love and kisses, forever ‘n’ always.

November 23, 1943—Matawan

Happy birthday darling,

I couldn’t let your day go by without spending a little of it with you. It will be the last hour, too, because the clock struck eleven just now.

I’ve thought of you more than once and wondered what you might have done today. You’re thirty... feel any older or is it 30 years younger?

Called El this p.m. to tell her the time I’d be in tomorrow. First this she said was, “Know what day this is?” So they didn’t forget you either. My birthday prayer for you is that your next one we celebrate together. I have it all planned even to the menu. Do you like chocolate cake best? Won’t tell you any more because it will be a surprise.

Thanksgiving is to be quite a day at 195 with the O’Connors, Eddie, your uncle John and me. We need you to make it complete. I picked up my new black dress at the dressmaker’s today, all finished for Thanksgiving. Looks nice. She’s really a wonder at making and fitting clothes... almost too good to be true. I think you might like this number. It has the new neckline... a bit low. Marguerite is loaning me a necklace, really lovely. I didn’t seem to have anything that looked just right. El says we are all going out tomorrow night. Where or how I don’t know, but we should have fun.

We had our first snow today to welcome your birthday. The ground was quite covered this a.m. and it is snowing again tonight.

Now that I have covered all the latest events, we’ll get down to business. At long last, your two letters dated Nov. 1 and 8 arrived yesterday after two weeks of not a line. I’m preparing myself for the worst with this mail situation for the next few months. Maybe I won’t be too downhearted and low about it.

I’m waving the flag of truce and offering peace terms. Please, forgive me for my letter of Oct. 8, the one that prompted the name “Rebel.” I wasn’t mad at you really but at the circumstances keeping us apart and that were making you feel so miserable. You just happened to be the one that bore the brunt of the attack. Now I’m even madder that we misunderstood each other all the way around. Honestly, the frame of mind I thought you were in when you wrote that letter, I was afraid to

sympathize with you. My heart ached for you when I read that letter and then I had to go and sound off. Not very understanding of me, was it? The only thing about it that I'm glad of is that I made you laugh.

After reading about how your average day is spent, we seem to do pretty much the same thing. Except, for excitement I go to Jersey city or New York instead of going on a mission over Germany or taking an assault course. What I didn't understand until now is that your day can be pretty much routine and commonplace and I can't blame you a bit for volunteering for the extra activities. A little more about that later...

Once more I can be rebellious against the forces keeping us apart for bringing us to "pen points," shall I say, through misunderstanding in our letters. Seems like I try awfully hard to say what's in my heart but I guess by the time it crosses the ocean it doesn't sound much like it did when I wrote it. Do you think we could kiss and make up now? Or do I have to say, "I'm sorry" again... all my fault... and then you'll probably be saying the same. All joking aside, you frightened me. I've never seen you angry. Is it a quiet anger or do you bellow when the person involved happens to be around? I usually take the former course and find a quiet corner or take a walk to get rid of it, but if I get very mad I start throwing the first thing I get a hold of... fair warning.

What worries me now is that you won't share that "low" feeling with me again. Please don't do that. I promise not to "sound off." Do I get another chance?

But, I didn't prove a point... that you aren't such a "hot writer." On the contrary, you are. You convinced me so of your mood. You just made it a little worse than you really meant it to be or maybe you really did feel that depressed. I'll save it especially to see what your reaction is. Please, don't scare me any more. I do love you so much and this does seem to be a misunderstanding. If I could only see you just for a minute I know I could make you understand but this way the odds seem to be against me.

You aren't a "sourpuss," and I'm not sure I want you "cured" as you put it. I'm not sure I know what you mean about "making up." Those lines are what scared me a bit.

So now we won't go any more into that. Just let me know I'm still in your good graces and you didn't mean "Rebel" the way it sounds.

By the way, I've given up any ideas of a leave. Just praying that you'll be home soon and let it go at that, whether it's a leave or the duration and six months.

I've found you many times not only in Asheville but walking in from the train... at night trying to get to sleep. I can reach my arms out and almost feel you take me into yours... then I can't go to sleep when I find you like that.

I wanted to send this V-mail but I haven't been able to get near a typewriter so I'm praying this will find you as quickly as the V-mail.

I love being written to in the morning. I'm glad you aren't a grouch. Anyone that can get up and write a letter like that at eight a.m. I won't have any trouble living with. These people that can't say a pleasant word until noon I've no use for.

You should have my other letters by now, telling you that the fifty arrived. That will be more than enough.

Back to your volunteering and my lack of understanding about your work... and who said you were dumb? (Here we go again.) I don't know what to say except, do what you think best about your voluntary work. Since you know better than I the risks involved, just take care of yourself. I know you are sensible enough not to take "scatterbrain" chances so I'm relying on your good judgment on that score. Besides, it's your work and you know how it should be done. Just know that my love and prayers for your wellbeing go with you wherever your voluntary assignments, or shall we say just assignments, take you.

My name is Wilhelmina Ruth Marie, I'll have you know. I was afraid to take another name for fear you'd disown me as the future Mrs. Kiley. I like that name best of all. You'd have laughed if you'd been with me when I went to see the priest of the parish I was confirmed in. He asked my name and for a minute I didn't know what to say, until I finally stuttered out the awful truth. He must have thought me a bit whacky but after all, that's a lot of name to remember.

We are all amused at your experience with the "ladies of the press," but I can imagine their embarrassment. Perhaps I shouldn't say it but you fellows must have forgotten your manners when you didn't think to offer the ladies your helmets.

Please note, I haven't mentioned "surprise" in the last ten letters I know. I've given up ideas, so I'll just be surprised.

I've written so much and I'm tired but I love you so much, even when you scare me. I thought I had hurt you, and I couldn't take that. I'm missing you more than just a bit. Miss me and love me as much as you did before I sounded off. Goodnight my dearest. Here's a birthday kiss going your way for all 30 years.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 23, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

By stretching my imagination I could call myself "a big boy" today, couldn't I? Or, don't you think I've reached the adult stage yet? In any case, I hope all of my future birthdays will start with a kiss from my favorite sweetheart. Promise?

Didn't have much of an opportunity to do any celebrating today since I've been riding the trains again but I did get back to town in time for a cup of chocolate, a look at your picture and a "pen and ink" date with you. I don't know how I could "celebrate" any better.

I'm not going to stay long tonight, because I'm train-weary and I wouldn't dare fall asleep on you. Still, I thought we might talk over your airmail of Nov. 4, the last one I received. It was a beautiful letter, and a long one.

When you mentioned Tommy Tucker's work I wondered if Don Brown was still vocalizing for him. I met Brown about four years ago, I think, just before he joined Tucker. It was in the summer and during one of the Doyle-Drayton quarrels. Ask Dot about them sometime.



Don Brown.

Dot met Brown at a summer place in Port Jervis, N.Y., where he was singing with a band. I made a weekend trip to see who "my sister" was getting on the rebound, as it were. I formed my opinion and when Dot asked me what I thought about him I frankly told her she'd better spend a nickel and phone Al. It wasn't long afterward that the Doyle-Drayton romance was on again and, of course, they are living happily ever after. Oh, I have a million stories like that to tell you.

You referred to an "elderly" lady you met in the Journal when you were with El. It sounded like Mrs. Smith, the woman's page editor, but I never considered her elderly. One of my favorite people, too. When John said his first mass, she came over from uptown New York on a rainy Sunday morning and on her way into church slipped and injured her leg. However, she stayed for the mass and then spent a week in bed recovering. Incidentally, she's not a Catholic.

I remember too the day John was ordained, I was doing a weekly column and on that day inquired of my readers (both of them) if they minded my talking about my brother for a while. When the paper came out, Mrs. Smith called me at home to tell me that it made her cry. It must have been what the trade calls a "power piece" because I saw Dad shed a tear or two when he read it. A couple of nuns at St. Aloysius and some of the neighbors said they wept.

It all made me little confused because I didn't intend for it to be sorrowful or weepy.

Speaking of the neighbors... it won't be long before they say, "Good morning, Mrs. Kiley." But that will only be when we visit 195.

I don't know how much convincing I'll have to do, but I'm building up a strong argument against living in the city. Just as you laid the law down about "Bonds for Our Baby."

All told now, Boss (and I say that with a smile) we have \$637.50 in "Baby Bonds," or \$850 maturity value.

By the way, how much do they charge for babies these days? Naturally, we want only the best... nothing second hand!

Three more Christmas packages today, two from home and the other from “Janet Daly.” Christmas cards and birthday cards still coming, too. Almost forgot I knew so many people.

Even though I’m not with you on my birthday, Billee, I’m glad I’m not in Berlin tonight. You have been hearing of the blitz bombing, I presume.

So, goodnight, sweetheart. It was so good being with you for even a little while.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

Thanksgiving Day, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

I was thinking just now, there must be thousands, perhaps millions of people who today looked upon Thanksgiving with a good deal of irony, I mean, those who really don’t have much to be thankful for.

On the other hand, there must be many, like myself, who do have a great amount of gratitude.

Sitting here with you tonight gave me an opportunity to think about it, and thank God for all he has given to me.



In an address known as the Four Freedoms speech (technically the 1941 State of the Union address), Franklin Roosevelt proposed four fundamental freedoms that people "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy: freedom of speech; freedom of worship; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

Just being alive is something everybody should be grateful for. I have my health, friends, the “four freedoms,” contentment with my work.

But most of all, I am thankful for having you. That’s only natural, I guess, since you are associated with my happiness and enjoyment of those things.

I suppose it should be hard for either one of us to say we are happy in our love, and it is hard because our greatest happiness is still before us. You might say we have the stars and

are waiting for the moon. Still, darling, I am thankful for the stars.

In just a very few words, Billee dear, you are my Thanksgiving and I couldn’t hope for more than that.

After writing to you the other night on my birthday I received a call to hustle out to a bomber base and that’s where I had my Thanksgiving dinner today, turkey and all the trimmings. I caught a train back to London in time to spend this little bit with you.

Your airmails of Nov. 6 and 10 were waiting for me, and you must know how much better they made me feel.

You sounded so proud about your confirmation. I do so wish I could have been there. As Marguerite said, the rest certainly is up to me.

I was expecting word from you regarding Warren. I figured he was just about ready to go overseas. And, please don't worry about going home. It doesn't make any difference to me whether you are in Matawan, Asheville or Singapore, I'll be around to claim you as fast as travel will take me. I'm not going to tell you not to worry about Warren. You will, and rightly so. Just keep praying faithfully for him. He couldn't ask for better support. I'll look after him as much as I possibly can when and if he gets here.

El told me about little Marilyn. Damn it... I get sick when I think of things like that. I still feel so badly about it I don't want to talk of it.

I haven't seen the Nov. 5 "Life" yet so I can't give you my impression of the story on England. I'll keep an eye out for it, though.

And now, I'm going to kiss you goodnight. I'll be back with a V-mail. Miss me lots...

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

November 26, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My dearest Charles,

Thanksgiving has come and gone and a nice one it was for me, thanks to the hospitality of 195. I didn't get the least bit lonesome except for missing you. This is my first Thanksgiving away from home. As I told you before, I planned on going in Wednesday night from the bank which I did, and we started Wednesday night having a super time. Mrs. O'Connor and family were there when I arrived and Eddie. Bette's boyfriend came in unexpectedly and she was all smiles. They did New York while El, Mrs. O'Connor, your dad and myself did Jersey City with Mr. & Mrs. Geo. Emerson and another couple. We had loads of fun. I danced with your dad... he's good, too. I learned how to play shuffleboard... really an achievement. We didn't get home until the wee hours.

Your dad had more ambition than we did and was up bright and early preparing the dinner. I don't see how he does it. The rest of us rolled out about ten o'clock. Your uncle John came in from Philadelphia about twelve and Father John came in soon after. We had dinner about two-thirty. You should have seen El and I after your dad turned the dinner over to her. We had everyone working. I put the vegetables on the plate, handed it to one of the kids to give El so she could put the meat and gravy on and then to another to carry it in the dining room. A system... Then we ate. What a dinner! Father John, El and I managed to eat dessert but no one else saved room. The turkey was delicious. We took movies in the afternoon and Father John showed us his most recent pictures. Most of them were the baby. We all went over to the Emersons' after and stayed a couple of hours after Father John left. He had a date to take seven kids to the Ice Show at Madison Square Garden so he left early. I stayed over and came down early this morning... needless to say I'm a bit exhausted.

You should see Uncle John and the baby. She was asleep when he arrived and he could hardly wait until she awakened so he could hold her. He looks quite well. This is the first I've seen of him since

Easter. I wish you could see Annice... She is such a dream baby. You can't believe a baby could be so cute. Not cute, really... she's beautiful. El takes such good care of her. Your dad claims she's the image of you and he's going to get out your baby pictures to show us. I can see Tom a little but she is mostly Kiley. She has your dimples, definitely, and your blue eyes.

Bette has her fur coat now. You should hear Father John rag her about buying it on time. It looks nice on her. You should have seen how glamorous she looked Wednesday night when Eddie came for her. Both Eddies are getting disgusted that everyone is over but them. Bette's Eddie has been in about three years now and hasn't left the state of Virginia yet so you can imagine what a state he's in. He's a nice fellow. I like him. I'm beginning to believe I know your future brother-in-law and your brother-in-law better than you do. El was telling me last night that Tom is very much like you in his ways and how well he fit in the family.

Father John mentioned you having two albums already of pictures and I have one filled now, too and ready to start the second. By the time we get all our things together and go to housekeeping, we'll have to get an extra room for our souvenirs and trophies. He's waiting to hear from you about the shoes. I just happened to think you mentioned your shoe size in an article back in the summer. Remember? The one you did about finding shoes for those soldiers who wore odd sizes? I wonder if that would help.

The weather was perfect... almost like a spring day yesterday. The sky was very clear. The way it acted up a few days before I thought we'd be in for a white Thanksgiving.

I called Mom last night from your home. The call went right through... the shock of that made me almost speechless. She stayed home and cooked Thanksgiving dinner for all the boys in the house and the three girls in the apartment. She said they had a regular party and it was still going on when I called at eleven-thirty. My sisters called her earlier in the day. They were all at my aunt Katherine's, and she talked to everyone down to little Johnny. I was glad to hear that. Up until the time I called she hadn't heard from Warren. Maybe he got through after I did. The girls are sending her train fare to come up for Xmas. She's going if the weather isn't too bad. I think Warren might get a leave before he goes over. At least, I'm hoping, so maybe it will be at that time. He has never had one officially... the ten days he had was a delay between postings.

Marguerite is about ready to go home. We're making the five thirty-two so I'd better be on my way. I'll be back tomorrow. Thought maybe this might make better time than airmail. We had fun yesterday and Wednesday but I missed you very much. It would have been a perfect holiday had you been there. Remember how very much I love you and miss you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

November 26, 1943—Matawan

My dearest Charles,

I wrote a two-page V-letter at the bank today just before I came home, telling you about the holiday at 195.

When I arrived home today your V-mail of Nov. 7 was waiting for me. The one written about the same time as the airmail that came Monday.

I've ached to see you before, until I thought I couldn't stand it, but not anything like the past few days, ever since Monday when your letter came. I'd give half my life to have ten minutes with you to state my case. I'll never know why that letter wasn't one of the ones I tore up. Missing you so much and you feeling so badly prompted it I guess. I understand now that it was a different feeling than I interpreted and now I feel that something precious to both of us has been hurt. Reassure me that I'm forgiven and everything is all right. I'll be waiting.

Father John's comment on my picture... "Hmmm, not bad, but a little dreamy about the eyes." Incidentally, it's next to yours on the mantle at 195. Gives me a nice "glowy" feeling to look up there and see us together.

I'll tell you about Dot's baby when I see her Sunday. We have to work late Saturday so I think I'll go in after Mass Sunday morning and spend the day. I've been doing some gallivanting here of late. Just called the Doyles' residence to see if Sunday would be OK to come in, and it is. Dot and her dad have gone to the movies, so Al is playing nursemaid. They heard from you a couple of days ago. You said you had received nine letters in one day from me. You must have had to ask for the morning off to read them all. Maybe I'll get another letter tomorrow telling me.

What do you mean, I won't like the card you sent me. I'll love it if it just has "Love and kisses, Charles" on it. As yet I haven't found one I liked. Hope my Thanksgiving card arrived in time. I thought it might make you smile.

I'm tired and I should write to Mom tonight before I take my bath and go to bed. I'm anxious to hear if any more of my packages arrived. You'll be able to set up a P.X. of your own with all that you are getting. Must be nice to be so popular.

I thought El was getting thin and every time I go in she looks that much smaller. Last night we weighed ourselves over at Kay's and guess what? She weighs more than I do... 116 to my 112. She looks well, though. The baby keeps her busy and makes the waiting easier.

So, you like the big Fortresses better. I can imagine they would be steadier. I'm trying to remember the sensation of my first and only airplane ride. It was a fourth of July, the one before I met you. We were at the airport, a couple of girls and myself. A friend of one of the girls had part interest in a Piper Cub and he took all of us up that day. I loved it. We rode quite a ways over the mountains and back again. Then, just before we landed, he decided to do a little stunting... a barrel roll. I think my stomach is still hanging on that cloud... but it was fun. The plane was such a little bit of a thing. You'd wonder how it would stay up there. Funny thing... high buildings bother me. Remember the day we went up in the empire State Building? I couldn't wait until we got down to street level again, and I couldn't look over that railing, but once to save myself... but up in the airplane, it never bothered me.

Hey, did you read about the girl that stowed away on a plane from England to Canada? Canada is treating her royally, they say. Gave her a job and she has permission to stay six months. Think I'll go

to La Guardia and hang around. The trouble is I'll probably get on one that's going to Africa instead of England. So I'll bide my time. That would be exciting, though, wouldn't it?

The papers over here are all filled with the Patton incident. Seems to me they are making much ado about something that concerns the Army only. But then that's the American way. Suppressing it as long as they did added to the news interest

I'm falling asleep, and I still have the bath to take. Hate to leave but guess I'd better. Love me as much as always. Wish you could have been with us yesterday... we missed you.

All my love and kisses, always, your Billee

November 30, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

Hello darling,

This is really going to be a hello. The boss is hanging around wondering when I'm going to leave but he can just wait a bit longer. Agnes and I are playing nursemaid to her two nephews so I have to wait until she finishes with her appointment at the hairdresser.

I went to see Dot and Al on Sunday. I caught the ten o'clock train after Mass and spent the day. I haven't been there in some time, not since before the baby was born. She's darling, Charles. Marty says she looks like a nephew of Al's but I think she has Dot's eyes and so do a few others, so maybe we are right. She's very sweet and a good baby. She did display a little temper when Grandfather Drayton tried to feed her Sunday afternoon. Seems she wanted the bottle before the vegetables so he compromised and she got them together. He's wonderful with her and helps Dot a lot but she's probably told you about that.

A friend of Dot's and her son came in Sunday afternoon: Elsie Lorenzo... I think that was the last name. She used to work with Dot at Montgomery-Ward and she asked to be remembered to you. She's an attractive girl and young to have an eight or rather nine-year-old son. I enjoyed the day very much. We had the remains of the Thanksgiving turkey. Wished you could have been there. Dot is a really a good cook. That was the first turkey she ever cooked and it was delicious. Hope I can do as well.

I wanted to catch an early train home so Al took me to the station. I just missed it by a minute so I had to resort to a double feature until the next one at nine fifty-eight. I saw two good pictures, though, so it wasn't too bad. "Hers to Hold" and "Two Tickets to London." I enjoyed the latter very much. Most of the setting was in wartime London. I tried to imagine you walking around those streets and in the station. Gives me a better picture of where you are. Deanna Durbin was



excellent in “Hers to Hold” with Joseph Cotten, but then, he’s always good.

Yesterday brought your V-letter of November 4. You always remember, bless you. I loved the last line, that you’d bet this would be the last Xmas “over there.” That made me feel good. I’m spending Xmas with the Kileys at 195. I talked to El today and she asked me if I had decided and I said yes. I’m sure I won’t be able to go home so I’m not planning on it. Funny thing.. as much as I’d like to be with Mom I want to spend this Christmas in the East. Seems very right that I should.

Running out of space and time. I’ll write more. Sent your Xmas cards off today.. hope they get there in good time. Keep well and remember..

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 1, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

Sorry to hear the mailman was away from your door for so long. I’m in such a fog with my correspondence I don’t know whether or not I’m to blame. Still, I don’t think it was entirely my fault. Consequently, I’m going to get off more V-mails from now on to make certain. Besides the letters I write regularly, and there are quite a few, I have had to acknowledge 18 Christmas packages which gives you an idea how I spend my spare time.

Meanwhile, your letters are reaching me regularly enough to keep me on peaceful terms with the postal service. I have your airmail of Nov. 12 and the V-mails of the 17th, 18th and 19th. Couldn’t as for more than that, could I?

Your selection of gifts for the folks were ideal. Once more, I don’t know what I’d do without you. As for the prospects of us shopping together, which you mentioned, you’ll have a willing assistant in me. I never had much confidence in myself but seemed to manage if I had someone with me.

You wanted to know if you should write your own style or follow the method advised by “morale experts.” Listen, Mrs. Kiley-to-be, if you start sending me those stereotyped letters that make everything sound rosy, I’ll divorce you, so help me. I am quite satisfied with the ones I’m getting. If you feel like crying, just cry all over the page. But write as if you were talking to me and don’t spare the moods. How can I get a true picture otherwise?

About Warren being a tail gunner... don’t start worrying over little things like that. There isn’t any position on the ship any more dangerous than the others. In fact, of all the tail gunners I know there isn’t one who would change his job.

I suppose my Irish temper should boil over and curl my hair after hearing that Warren wants to make sure his sister isn’t waiting for “just any G.I. Joe” but I don’t blame him. Brothers have to be pretty careful these days.

I was a little disappointed about Tom’s letter to El. I’d like to kick him where it would do the most good. Last week I met five gunners who had just finished their tour, have been decorated with D.F.C.s, Air Medals with three clusters and two of them with Purple Hearts. Ordinarily, they’d be on

their way home soon. But, they are awaiting a court martial for sending home uncensored mail. The outcome will probably be reduction to privates for all and three to six months in the guard house. Nice, isn't it?

I'll be back tomorrow. Miss me and love me lots.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 2, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

There should be snow on the ground and wreaths at the window at Christmas carols on the radio or just Bing Crosby singing "Silent Night" instead of "How Sweet You Are" to fit this evening. Your Xmas card found me today, a bit early but welcome just the same.

I love it. Is this the one you said I wouldn't like? I thought it might be when I saw the "Why Must It Be, Dear, Why?" It's like you. I can see you, pondering over this card and that one, trying to decide... will she like this one because I went through the same thing myself? I hope you like mine as well as yours was welcome. You were more fortunate than I in finding one that really fit. After looking for nearly an hour I was beginning to think all the verse writers must have been drafted, too.

Marguerite got her card, too and she thanks you very much. It seems you are due to get a letter while she is in Canada. She told me she was going to tell you "the awful truth." Figures it's about time you had a letter from her after my living with her for so long. she's been swell to me all this time. They've really made me feel at home. I've been here nine months!

We had kind of a busy day but my work went smoothly and I finished early in time to take in a movie and catch the 6:00 train. I saw "Phantom of the Opera" and enjoyed it immensely. Maybe you wouldn't like it because of the opera scenes but I enjoyed it a lot, especially Nelson Eddy singing. He's a ham actor but he could sing all day to me.

Bing is singing "I'll be Home for Christmas." Haven't heard it before. It goes, "Please have snow, and mistletoe and presents all around."

Our first Xmas is going to be one for the books... everything Christmas should be... soft lights, candles, wreaths, and yes, mistletoe hanging all over the place. Stockings hanging, maybe even eggnog to really make it a Christmas. But most of all, I'm looking forward to going to St. Al's with you. All the rest is minor.

I've said so many times, "Why must it be... why only darling instead of dear" but I never get an answer. Just has to be, I guess. Maybe sometime we'll know just why we have to wait.



In the meantime, I'll just go on loving you more than ever and trusting in that faith and love to bring you home to me soon, as soon as is possible. I seem to be blessed with a lost of patience, thank heaven, and I still have a lot left.

Did I tell you Warren received your letter and enjoyed it very much? You'll probably have an answer by now. He wants a new uniform for Christmas. How about that? He's planning on seeing New York before he goes over.

I'm wondering how the meeting with Stalin is going to come out. [The Tehran Conference was a strategy meeting of Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill from 28 November to 1 December 1943. It was held in the Soviet Union's embassy in Tehran, Iran. It was the first of the World War II conferences of the "Big Three" Allied leaders (the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom).] I feel like I'm sitting on Mt. Vesuvius and I guess everyone else does, too. From the reports tonight, Japan is in for the next offensive. How do they feel over there about it? We've heard rumors that all the lights are going on again at Christmas time. Speaking of lights, there goes the air raid siren. Lights out! Be back, darling.

All clear after forty-five minutes, and me almost going to sleep. I couldn't help but think what the sirens mean to you all over there. Thank God we don't have to hear the sound of anti-aircraft fire. We most always have the planes overhead during the alert. Just came over the radio that Berlin was bombed again tonight. What a beating they are taking. The last report Berlin was already in shambles. Sherman was right... ["It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell." William Tecumseh Sherman.]

In getting the lights out a little of the apple I was eating got mixed up with the letter. That explains the splotches. Nope.... they aren't tears. I'll admit I messed up more than one letter that way but they always were torn up. I'm too happy tonight to cry. Why, I'm not sure. Your card makes me glow with a special price (huh?) and just on general principles. I'm loving you an awful lot. Maybe it's "why," or just "because."

I've prattled on quite enough now. I'm sleepy. That's from sitting in the dark, but I was very close to you. We were in our "two by four." I see us there lots of times. We have such fun discovering each other.

Really now, I'll have to say, "goodnight." Miss me and love me as much as always. I love you, oh so very much.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 2, 1943—London

Evening angel,

More mail from you today... the airmail of Nov. 28 and 23, and so it is for a special reason that I'm back with you after only a 24-hour separation.

I've never heard of anyone expressing himself as properly by mail as he could in person, and now I'm convinced of it. First you tried to tell me something, then I attempted to answer you. All we accomplished, it seems, was to create more than misunderstanding. I didn't mean to frighten you one little bit. It was just that I knew I had a shaking down coming and wouldn't want it from anyone but you. Even if you didn't mean it, I loved it. But I never thought my answer would be received the way it apparently was. I wouldn't say all those things and mean them for anything in the world. I called you "Rebel," because you really sounded like one. And I still think you are a rebel when your temper is blazing. About "waking up," Billee dear, I did all my "waking up" on Jan. 17, 1942. Any and all resemblance to that is purely coincidental (and where have I heard that before?). So don't stretch your imagination any further.

What I like about it best is that it gives us a chance to "kiss and make up." I could do that from now on. Just put your head on my shoulder. I'll hold you ever so close and say, "I'm sorry, dear." And, I'll take back what I said about not sharing our moods and promise to stay as close together as we've always been.

I agree with you in saying "if I could only see you for a minute, I know I could make you understand." How many times have I wished for that!

I wish, too, I could see you in the new dress. From your description I know I'll like it. Low neckline, huh? Maybe a little cheesecake? All kinds of cheesecake, you know. And... where did you find out what it meant?

Thanksgiving at 195 must have been great with all the folks there. There was something missing, though. I haven't forgotten. It was always a busy day for Mom but she enjoyed making it what it was for us. I may not say much about it, but there are times when I remember a lot of things about her. No Christmas packages from her this year, no birthday cards or Christmas card. Still, I try to stay as near to her as I can with prayer and I know she is looking over us.

So, goodnight, angel. I do miss you more than ever and love you much more than that. I'll take your birthday kiss to sleep with me.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 4, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

There's still a little of our anniversary left if we go by God's time. I just got in a bit ago from New York.

I went in to do a little shopping and see Marguerite off to Canada. She is staying over and catching the morning train. I went in earlier and got her room at the Martha Washington and then we met. I couldn't help but remember as I came down the elevator in the hotel, twenty months ago tonight how excited and happy I was doing that same thing. I was going to meet you. I'll never forget how good you looked to me.

I was remembering all day today. We had dinner tonight in the Pennsylvania Hotel. Marguerite decided we'd have cocktails so I looked at the cocktail list and the first thing I spotted was a Jack Rose [recipe: applejack, grenadine and lime juice], so I ordered that. I'd almost forgotten how I liked them. The only time I ever had any was with you that night. We had a good dinner and I enjoyed watching the people. There was one couple in particular I was watching. He was quite young and a flight officer... captain... and the string of ribbons he had on! I wasn't close enough to see what kind, but there were enough to make me curious and have the yen to talk to him about those ribbons. He looked a bit like you from a distance. Maybe that's why I was curious. The girl was little and pretty. They seemed to be having such fun being together.

New York is more like its old self since they turned the lights on. Speaking of New York, it's really a small world. I was in the Savarin having lunch today. Across from me was a sailor and a girl. He kept staring at me and I kept staring at him because I knew that I should know him. Directly, he came over and he said, "Is your last name 'Gray?'" and all I could think of was "George." He was one of my younger sister's former beaux. That was quite serious. They were to be married, etc. He joined the Navy for six years. He was a nice boy. He had a leave last summer and saw Mom, and wanted to know where Kay was. He told me today he was married Tuesday. That was his wife with him and in the next breath he wants to know when I saw Kay last and how is she. My sister was quite a heartbreaker. We were all relieved when she got married.

Received two batches of *Stars and Stripes* tonight. I'll save them until tomorrow. Did read your story on the assault training. It was swell, but you forgot to tell your readers what you went through to get the story and about you being a "casualty." Maybe they'll appreciate you more... kidding you again. I was hoping for a letter but the papers seem to be second best in that respect. They represent such a great part of your life now.

I'm exhausted I think. I made every store on Fifth Avenue and so many pretty things, but yuck! The prices... they make you gasp.

I wanted to tell you that I hadn't forgotten today. In about an hour twenty months ago I said "yes," a blushing "yes" I've been told. I'm so glad you asked me and that I was there to hear you. We didn't have to do that by mail.



I have to say goodnight. My eyes feel like coals of fire. I love you... a special anniversary kiss coming your way.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Incidentally, I can bake, too... everything but pies, yet.

December 7, 1943—London (2 V-mail)

Billee dearest,

Remember two years ago today? I hadn't found you yet but it wasn't long afterward. I was in Tryon, N.C. for the weekend with Jimmy Kirk and Ben Wooley when the news of Pearl Harbor broke. Seems such a long time ago, mostly because we've been apart, I guess. When you wait for something as precious as that which we have, days are as long as weeks, weeks like months. Little did I know on that day two years ago that within 41 days my search for the sweetest girl I'll ever know would end.

Your airmail of Nov. 13 came today and gave me reason to wonder. I suppose one surprise deserves another but why keep me waiting until our wedding night for mine? Isn't fair. I'm going to demand it as soon as I have my arms around you. I don't know where you got the idea our baths are "rationed." I can't speak for everybody but in our case we have our own and can take to the tub as many times a day as we have time for it. As it is, once is enough for me.

Your inquisitiveness about "Cheesecake Manor" deserves an answer. You see, while Ben was picture editor, he handled all the "cheesecake" we used. When we moved to the "manor," he wanted to give it a name and simply decided on "Cheesecake."

What have I been doing with myself? Well, I was out last week to get a story on our "flying nurses.." They call them the glamour girls of the Air Force and I can understand why. They are stationed temporarily at bomber bases here waiting for the invasion from the West when they will evacuate wounded soldiers by air from the front. They have been doing great work in Africa, the Pacific and Alaska. They aren't pilots, but nurses who are charged with keeping severely wounded personnel alive until they can reach hospitals.

I have some more pictures for the album. While I was away I had some taken of "The Stars and Stripes" crew. The following day, Harbison, the ball turret gunner, flew with another crew on a raid and didn't get back. They think he might be safe, though, because some of the boys saw a flock of 'chutes come out of the ship. Dick Yoder, pilot of the plane on which Andy Rooney flew to Frankfurt, also was lost with his crew on the same mission, his 23rd. I had Lt. McIlveen, my pilot, as an overnight guest last night. He came to London on pass and stayed the night with Ben and I. I told you his brother went down, didn't I? That was about two months ago and Mac has never talked about it. It's easy to see what he feels. Perhaps I shouldn't talk about these things because you'll probably worry more about Warren. the fact is, actually we aren't losing so many at all now.

Received a couple of more packages in the last few days. Cigarettes from Grace and Artie together with stationery and a book, from Ruth Totten. Almost forgot a very important item, too. Your Christmas card, which also came today.

I haven't told you one of our fellows is getting married this week. That's Tom Bernard, our Navy man. A British girl working in the American Red Cross public relations office said, "yes." I was delegated to get a gift from the boys. So, with the aid of a woman from the Red Cross, I bought a 50-piece set of old English silver. That is rather rare these days but we were lucky to get it. I almost fell in love with the silver and bought it myself.

I haven't been able to meet Al's brother yet. I thought I'd be able to get to Wales before this but it just hasn't worked out. Maybe in a week or so.

Another test for my memory. I can't remember whether or not I told you I received your package with the cookies and candy in it. If I didn't, let me tell you now they are all gone. That might give you an idea how they hit the right spot. They arrived in pretty good condition and with the help of Ben and some of the boys who stop in for coffee and a few hours of shop talk, I finished them all.

I'm going to leave you for awhile, and see if I can meet you in my sleep. Love to Marguerite, Agnes and the rest... miss me lots.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, C.

December 7, 1943—Matawan

Hello my darling,

At long last a V-letter... seems like an awful long time since I've had a letter but I guess I did get one last Monday. These V-mails just don't give me the same satisfaction as a letter. I read them, then wish I had a letter, but for goodness' sake, keep on writing them because they do seem to be getting through.

I'm glad the packages arrived. You have one more to receive yet, that has cookies and candy in it. Maybe friend censor decided you were getting enough and kept that one. I'm glad too that you seemed to like everything. The doll was a little silly but it looked so cute waddling across the table. I thought you might laugh, too. I'd love to see what kind of shape that Xmas tree arrived in. That was just a whim.... thought maybe it might seem more like Xmas. When you open that cake, you'll probably wish I sent the bottle instead of the cake because Mom did saturate it with Old Overholt. If the brand doesn't please you, you'll have to like it because these days we aren't choosy about brands.

I finished getting my niece and two nephews their Xmas things today. They are all wrapped and ready to mail tomorrow. What a time I had trying to find toys for them, but I succeeded. I hope they like what I bought. I wrapped them all "Xmassy" tonight. That's the first time I ever wrapped when I was alone. Mom always was around or some of the family observing. I missed them. The Heusers don't do much for Xmas. They are a strange family, Charles, the kind of people you never really understand. I miss Marguerite. We had a wire from her yesterday that she arrived in Montreal safely.

Today was beautiful and tonight even more so. The moon is so bright. I couldn't help but think when I wrote the date on this letter... two years ago I didn't know I'd find Charles Kiley and you were only 60 miles away. That was an unforgettable day. I'll never forget what a bombshell that announcement was. I was listening to the concert with Marguerite and Mom and we did so many Sunday

afternoons. We've come a long way since that day and so many things have happened to change our lives.

I've been reading about the "rat" trouble you've been having over there. That must be awful. The thought of those varmints running around loose gives me chills. I can't stand anything that crawls. Too, I've been reading about the threat of a flu epidemic. Do be careful and if you get a cold take good care of it. Let the *Stars and Stripes* go hang for a few days and see that you get better. I'm hoping you've escaped the sniffles as I have so far, except for a slight one two weeks ago that I threw off very quickly for a change.

Agnes received a card from her husband again. It came on the "Gripsholm." We're almost sure it's been written within the past three months. He uses a new address that was sent to Agnes in September. His signature is good, too.

You would have laughed to see me last night and tonight making a doll dress for my niece's little doll I bought her. I didn't like the dress she had on. I never made one before and the doll is only five inches height so you can imagine how small. It didn't turn out too bad but I almost lost my patience.

These are the last two sheets of paper I have available so I'll have to go. I'm missing you and loving you so much. I caught myself talking to you all the way home yesterday, walking in from Cliffwood. Isn't that something? You can see I have it bad. Keep well and remember I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



December 9, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Everything is quiet and the future Mrs. Kiley is in bed chomping on an apple and trying to concentrate on what to write to her darling this night.

What did I do today? I was awfully lazy for one thing. I stayed in bed until the very last minute and had to leave for the train with only a cup of coffee in me. That always starts the day off. The day wasn't too busy but I had so darn many little odd jobs to do. I had to balance a savings ledger and the ___ thing came out a couple of thousand over. Of course, I couldn't find it at one time. It had to be in four or five different places. I've been trying to make a movie all week... "The Watch on the Rhine," so today I finally succeeded. I enjoyed it immensely. Didn't you see the play on your furlough in London?

It's a strange story. They say over here it's all propoganda but it didn't strike me that way for some reason. I was quite impressed. I couldn't help but realize that none of us know now and, God willing, won't know what war really means... the bombing and destruction of our homes, etc. Sometimes I

think maybe that's what we need to make us realize what is going on. When I read of the petty quibbling going on in Washington over insignificant matters when such great things are at stake. I've often wondered how New York, for instance, would react to a bombing. Enough of that... I should go to more diverting movies. The movie was enacted so well you could feel their hate against Nazism and all it stands for.

I got a Xmas present today from my Aunt Katherine and I didn't open it. I want to have something to open Christmas Day. Won't be Christmas if I don't.

I had two long letters from Warren. They're really training them all for the real McCoy. Morning after morning they drag him out at 2:30 a.m. as if they were going on a mission. It's pretty definite he's leaving. He even went so far as to name a date so I will go home about the fifteenth of January and break the news to Mom. He was telling me about the Marauders and how he likes the Forts better. He compared being in a Marauder to riding on a whip. Too, he was telling me about the first time he was sick up there. Bless him, he didn't like that at all. Several of them got sick that day and he said they were all ready to transfer to the motor pool when it was over. He still seems so young to me. I can't get used to his being in the service.

I couldn't help but be amused. He used to take a drink now and then like most kids these days. Now he's decided drinking and flying don't mix so he's definitely on the wagon. You should see his letter... you'd enjoy it. He said he answered yours, so possibly you have it by now. He sent it V-mail.

I guess both of us are sentimentalists but it's a good thing we both are, isn't it? I don't want to be cured at all. I just want to go on loving you the rest of my life. I hope your airmail comes soon. Haven't had one in several weeks. The latest ones have been V-mails.

Agnes received another card from Jack. He tells her a little more on this one. He received her cable, the one that cost so much, and he tells her he is a farmer and is quite well. He's been there a long time. This is four messages from him now. The last two came on the "Gripsholm."

I meant to tell you that you could use the bells off the package on the tree, too. I did enjoy fixing everything for you.

I'm falling asleep. Imagine... fine date I am.

Take good care of yourself and remember...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 11, 1943—London

Hello my sweetheart,

Are you missing me tonight as much as I'm missing you?

Yes, I know you are, because it couldn't hurt the way it does inside unless someone was sharing it.

I'm not feeling sorry for myself, or for us, just thinking about you and us, trying to daydream into the future.

Perhaps it was the wedding I went to today or the film I saw later. Pictures that remind me of something or someone give to me a nostalgic feeling.

At any rate, while I was sitting here tonight, comfortably settled in my new dressing gown and slippers, and reading, I couldn't get you off my mind. Not that I wanted to, but it was taking me minutes to read one sentence in the book while you were in my thoughts.

So, I closed the book and shut my eyes to think of you, and us.

I wondered a little, too. Silly things, I suppose. I kept asking myself questions, like, "Will she really love me as much as I want her to?" "Can I hope she won't be disappointed and will find in me everything she wants?" "Can I really make her as happy as I want to?" "Will she be patient with me and understand my shortcomings?"

To answer those and other questions, I always said a confident, "Yes." I used our confessed faith in each other and in our love as a supporting crutch. Still, I think about those things, and wish for the time when we can answer the questions ourselves.

I get a lot of other funny notions, too, like wondering what kind of picture I'll be to you in civilian clothes.

I wonder what our first fight will be about and whether you'll cry, and which of us will give in first.

When I think of us, I also see us doing crazy things, like being stretched out on the floor, maybe in pajamas, telling each other, "I love your funny nose," or stepping out in evening clothes, you with the white dress I'll always remember and me in my "tux."

And I think of how we'll be as a father and mother. If I'll have any love left over for our children after giving to their mother.

So, after dreaming of you and us tonight, sweetheart, I sat down here to talk with you about it on our Saturday night date.

I hope you don't mind me adoring you so much.

The wedding I spoke of earlier was the one involving Tom Bernard, the Navy fellow on the paper. They were married in St. James, which doesn't convey much to you, but it is a Jesuit church to which I sometimes go. There was a reception later and after staying for a couple of hours, Ben and I left.

We walked a bit in Hyde Park, a good snappy day for walking, snappy enough to bring a 30-minute flurry of snow this morning.

At Leicester Square, where most of the movies are, we dropped in to see "Claudia," giving me a chance to hear those words again: "When you love someone you like, that's marriage."

As soon as I saw the girl in the picture, Dorothy Maguire, I thought of Marty Daly. I suppose there isn't any resemblance to most people, but there was to me.

You see, I know Marty better than most people, I think. At times, I wondered if I didn't understand her better than Bill. Marty was (don't know whether she is now) like Claudia in a lot of ways. She bounced around like that, stomping her foot, pouting and doing crazy things. Some said Marty was

over-effective too often, consciously trying to be a different person than she was. But, as I said, I saw her with her hair down and was very fond of her.

I suppose she's grown up a lot since she's been a mother. That's what's the matter with this world. Everybody grows up and gets so properly stiff, it's painful.

So, goodnight, sweetheart. Please don't ever grow up. Miss me.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 12, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

I missed our Saturday night date last night because I was much too busy baking cookies for my brother and your brother. Sat up until 1:00 a.m. waiting for them to finish baking. They didn't turn out too bad... the same kind I sent you when you were stationed in Ireland. Marguerite's brother was being cute, I guess, when he said "if they eat all these they should be given the D.S.C. or else the Oak Leaf Cluster." I thought they were good, and I baked them.

I feel wonderful... received two airmails, Nov. 13 and 18, and a V-mail from Nov. 17 since Thursday. Wonderful place, this world... I was really getting down not having seen that familiar writing for three weeks. Fifteen letters of mine already. You must have struck a windfall... and eight in one day. After digging through all that you can still come up with, "I love you." You're wonderful... have I told you?

Another raid and the thirteenth at that. Not that I'm superstitious but I'm glad that's behind you, even though it was rather on the uneventful side... just God answering my prayer for your safety and well being. I realize only too well that it isn't just excitement or a thrill to you. In my estimation, Sherman found the right words for his definition of war. Fits it perfectly. I don't know who the people are that think you are just out for a thrill, but it seems to me they don't know you very well.

I think I should recommend your Col. Llewellyn for a couple of promotions. He could wear four stars on each shoulder and I wouldn't be mad. Seems to me was a Major the last I heard, so he did get a promotion already. No, I didn't drop him a line but it wouldn't have been a bad idea. Tell him I think he's swell.

I've had us in my "dreams," in just a spot as you mentioned seeing in Norway. I've had us so many places but I like this one place. It's a cabin-like house but comfortably built with an enormous fireplace. There's been no one around but us, and the snow to keep us company. We're been there summer and winter. Maybe some day, when the world gets right again and we settle down as Mr. and Mrs. Kiley, we can have that "cabin in the woods." Sometimes when I see a middle-aged couple together I wish we were that old. It seems to me everything would be simpler but then we wouldn't have all that living to look forward to, would we?

I get that scared feeling just imagining you're going on a mission. The flying part doesn't bother me. It's just the idea of the raid, the war, hostile territory, etc. That's what scares me. Surprised that I should say that about the flying?

Your evening out with the boys sounded like fun. The show, restaurant and the bottle of Johnnie Walker... I'm glad you had such a good time. Did you tell them I was a sissy about your missions? Maybe the above paragraph will clear me a little since it isn't the flying that I object to.

I have definitely decided to go home next month. The boss is on vacation and when he comes back I'm giving him notice. Truly, I wish there were some other way out, but I can't see it. I hate pulling up stakes again, now that I'm settled here in the east. I like it and I do feel so much closer to you. I guess that's because of 195 but that's being selfish. There's no reason why Mom should have to be alone when she will need one of us with her when she learns of Warren's leaving. Since I'm the only one available and in a position to go home, that's the answer to the problem. I have told her I want to come home so she won't suspect. She will need the letter from you. I'll let you know when. He mentioned approximately January 16 but that could change before then.

I wondered about the W.A.C. Not jealous... not me... but you never said anything more. You are "sweet," but I don't want anyone else telling you. As I said before, the escort [to the canteen dance in Asheville in October] was a "drip" and I mean one, too... so darned conceited I thought he'd explode any minute. I'd forgotten about him until you mentioned him. Incidentally, all the boys in the house in Asheville have been transferred to camps... just in case you might be interested!

My extra curricular activity on Saturdays came to an end when I took my vacation. Still not going to tell you. Your F.B.I. friends won't find out either. You haven't even made any guesses, but I know you'd never guess so there isn't any point in trying.

You probably know Eddie has been moved from Pine Camp. We are waiting a new address and rather expect an A.P.O. to be the new address from what he says. Something else for your dad to take, with the holidays around the corner.

El had a letter from Tom the other day. He tells in every other line, "not to worry" and that "everything is wonderful." In Greenland, that's believable all right.

My letters seem to arrive at the wrong time... the one about the dream just before you went on your first raid... and again the one telling you not to go again after you'd just been... wonderful timing. Perhaps it doesn't make for a good story but I'm glad it was just "a frigid trip."

Speaking of dreams, I've had this same one three times now since that fateful day, Jan. 17, 1942. Seems I've almost been married each time... crowd all gathered and the ceremony almost performed when I get cold feet and think about you and run away. Each time I haven't been able to figure out who the guy is but I know it isn't you. Some dream. I hope I don't have it again, unless it is you.

I'm so sleepy and tired. Been up since 7 a.m. but since I couldn't be with you last night, it had to be tonight. It's been gorgeous both nights but very cold. The moon is full and the sky was lovely last night... a perfect setting for us.

Goodnight. I love you so much and miss you something awful. Keep well and take care of yourself if you can. Here's a special coming your way...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 12, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello Sweetheart,

Received two letters yesterday, one from my favorite angel and the other from her big brother. Give you two guesses who they are.

Warren repeated your news in the probability of him coming over here soon. I liked the way he boasted about his crew and his modesty in admitting “the crew is green but we’re all willing to learn.” Don’t worry, he’ll get by. He didn’t say anything about being anxious to make sure his sister isn’t waiting “for any old G.I.,” but said he was looking forward to the time when he meets yours truly. He thought you would be going back to Asheville “after the first of the year.” He didn’t have to tell me why. I should mention some of the flattering things he said about his “big sister” but I’m afraid you would puff up with pride... and burst.

Your letter was the V-mail of Nov. 26 in which you gave me a perfect picture of Thanksgiving at 195. Talking about dancing with Dad made me see how much he thinks of his future daughter-in-law. I’ll bet he dances better than I do now.

A letter from Dot told me you visited the Doyles. She started out with “just said goodbye to your darling. We had such a nice visit. I wish she wouldn’t be such a stranger.” Better keep on good terms with the neighbors. Never know when we’ll have to borrow an egg.

I’m writing this at the office, and just now I was interrupted by the delivery of more mail. A letter from your Mom and another from Jack and Berta. Mother’s letter was enclosed in a birthday card. Says the house looks like a snow drift with its new white paint. I’m going to be awfully jealous when you go to Asheville. There will be those eight fellows certain to make love to you 24 hours a day. If I even get an inkling that any one of them is saying more than “Good morning, Miss Gray,” I’ll hitch a ride back and give out with some real Irish disorderly conduct. Don’t say I didn’t warn you.

I’ve almost got enough to send back another \$100 for the savings account. I was going to send \$50 on the first of this month but decided to wait until I got the hundred. Do you think we ought to start our hope chest about now? You know... some of the things we’ll have to have. I don’t know much about preparations like that. Just thought I’d ask.

I’ll be back tomorrow with another “hello.” Be a good girl and love me, more than a lot. ‘Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 17, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

You have every right to feel neglected this week because I haven’t had a date with you since Monday. I’ve been awfully busy. Father John’s play was Tuesday night and we all went, El, Bette, Mrs. O’Connor and your dad. He really scored a hit despite the flu epidemic. His long hours and planning were well rewarded. I enjoyed it lots.

Wednesday night I finished wrapping packages to mail and last night El and I went shopping in Newark and I stayed the night at 195. So you see, I've really been gallivanting around.

I bought the presents for Dot and Marty's babies last night, a napkin ring for Dorothy Jean to go with the ones Dot has. She has so much to wear, so I decided to get something she could keep for her from her godfather. I found a cute doll for Marty's baby, rather unusual-looking but it caught my eye. She's a bit Frenchie looking. I couldn't find anything in the toy department so I found this in the baby department. They are all wrapped now ready to send to Janet, Dorothy Jean and Jackie. When I get something for Father John, my shopping will be finished. The stores were mobbed last night.

El has been hearing quite a bit from Tom, thank heavens. Tom is so afraid Annice won't have a big Christmas... says he lives next door to Santa and he's going to see that she has the best first Xmas ever. She's beautiful, Charles... really one of the loveliest babies I've ever seen and such a good baby. I wish you could see her. She suits your dad just fine... just what he needed. I laughed at him the night of the play. He leaned over to me and said, "I'd rather be at Nick's," but he stayed until the end. The settings and costumes, makeup, etc., were really professional-looking.

You sounded tired in your letter received Wednesday, written Nov. 23. We'll make up for your birthday with a little extra celebrating. Fine thing... have you reached the adult stage? I should hope so but you still have a little of the other quality, that indescribable quality I love... not too grown up, I might say.

We've been having cold, cold weather once more. I had to drag out my woolies and my flannel nightgown. You should see me... I look like "Grandma." Really glamorous. See what you'll have to put up with when it gets cold? El and I near froze last night in spite of the "woolies" and flannel pajamas she had.

Please accept my apology for describing Mrs. Smith as elderly. I just meant she wasn't "young." I can well imagine you are one of her favorite people, too, judging from the way her face lit up when I mentioned your name. She was very nice to El and I. I have a copy of the column you did on Father John. I've read and reread it, and have decided it's one of your best. I sent it to Mom and she also commented on it as being really super. Judging from the effects as you write them in your letter it must have increased your readers from two to quite a few more. I didn't think it "weepy." I just read it with pride that you should feel that way about your brother and be able to put it in words. He must have felt proud, too, when he read it.

You don't have to do any convincing about our not living in the city. I'd like No. Arlington or Kearny. Close enough to the city without being in it. I like Arlington better than any place I've been. El says she and Tom plan on being on Long Island.

Babies come high these days. El did tell me how much it was... around \$150, I think she said, for the hospital, doctor, etc., and then there are all the clothes, etc. They aren't cheap. Merchants are really taking advantage of these new mothers. Makes me mad.

According to El's letter, you're eating the fruitcake. Xmas will come and you'll have nothing to eat. I'm scolding you... did the cookies and candy arrive?

I could have told you you're quite a popular person, especially with me. Seems like I never find any other words that take the place of "I love you." Twenty-three months ago tonight about this time we were dancing at Lucille's and you were singing in my ear. You can hardly say now that we're having a wonderful courtship. Twenty-three months... doesn't seem so long when you say it like that.

Twelve o'clock. I'm trying to put a call in to Mom to see what she's going to do about Christmas. I hate having her alone and I hate seeing her take that trip home [to Ohio]. I put the call in at ten-thirty and I'm still waiting.

Received a Christmas card from Dot and Al and the baby, cute.... and one from your brother, Eddie. Seems he's off women again. The girl in Rochester seems to have spoiled her chances by inviting him for the weekend too often. He tells El, "You know what that kind of stuff means." Don't you tell him anything. I like him, Charles. He isn't like you at all. When he talks, the motions he makes with his hands are like you... but that's all.

I'm falling asleep here sitting up. I'll write again tomorrow. Marguerite should be coming in tomorrow from her vacation. Seems like she's been gone a long time.

This seems to cover everything. Be back soon. I love you, as always, and my prayers are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 18, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

This is another of our Saturdays but I'm afraid we won't have our customary date. You see, today is also a wedding anniversary for Ben and since he hasn't Jane to help him make whoopee, or whatever married people do on anniversaries, I'll have to fill in. It won't be a whoopee for me unless you call dinner at an Indian restaurant and a show exciting.

Your airmail of Nov. 26 and V-mail of the 30th are here. After reading the airmail, I'm not going to waste any time in re-assuring you again that everything is all right. I won't say you are forgiven because there wasn't anything to forgive and I love you so much more than I can tell you.

Father John saw your picture the same way I did. I believe I told you about those dreamy eyes. They still do something to me when I look at your picture. And, if you didn't tell me, I would not have guessed you were such a flyweight... 112 pounds. I'll be able to carry you over the threshold in one arm.

I did read about the girl who stowed away for shipment to Canada, Billee, but in regards to things like that we can only dream. Can't you picture me getting a call saying a girl who knows me is in Scotland, held in custody after thumbing a ride across the ocean?

I'm wondering what kind of flowers they delivered to you for Christmas. This morning I tried to cable you orchids but found the censors have stopped everyone from ordering flowers by name. All I

could send was a “corsage” and hope they made it orchids. I also wanted to send roses to 195 but could only send a “bouquet.”

A letter from the boys of Co. H in Italy carried a little bad news the other day. It included a message from five of them. The bad news told of Harold Gee, an old buddy who lives in Winston-Salem being wounded, and of Tom Scott being taken prisoner. Jack Donnell sent his best and passed along Theda’s address... Box 286, Greensboro, N.C. Sounded as though they are all getting a little tired and would certainly welcome a furlough at home. But then, there are thousands and thousands like them.

Still don’t know what Christmas will be like. We’ll have a three-day holiday but I doubt if it will be anything more unusual than an ordinary weekend. We are planning to have “open house” at our place for the fellows in the office providing we can get a couple of bottles to make the visits worthwhile.

On my way now, darling. Miss me and love me lots.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 18, 1943—Matawan

My dearest Charles,

Two V-letters waiting for me today... more than welcome and the ones I’ve been wanting for some time. Now I really feel kissed and made up with you. I hope when we get down to the business of being Mr. and Mrs. Kiley and we have “misunderstandings” that it doesn’t take this long to really know I’m still in your good graces. Other letters received since that one have reassured me that everything was all right. I’ll see that my imagination doesn’t work overtime.

I called Mom tonight. Her cold is better and she doesn’t think she will go home for Christmas. She has an invitation for Christmas Day that she will accept. It was good to talk to her. She hasn’t heard from Warren this week so she is a bit worried but I had heard so that made her feel better. I hate her being alone. It isn’t good for her. She has too much time to think and worry.

I’ve noticed that you haven’t said much about your mom to me, Charles, but I understand why. I have thought of her so many times. Little things she said in her letters... I have all of them, and the cards she sent me. When I was sick in Ohio, she sent me such a lovely card with a note on the bottom. Maybe I didn’t tell you about that... I had pleurisy for about three months off and on and finally had to be forced to bed with it. I’ll admit it took some coaxing from the whole family, then they had to practically tie me in. I only stayed the week. I went around encased in adhesive plaster for weeks... what a mess that was. In one of my letters written in bed I mentioned that I was laid up and by return mail she sent the card to me. Your dad misses her a lot, which was only to be expected. He told me a lot about her.

At long last, you’ve finally done something that I had just about given up hope for. It kept getting worse and worse until the last time it was almost impossible. I was beginning to get impatient with you but everything is all right now. I know the Army must be as happy as I am about it, especially

those that had to handle them... I almost forgot to tell you why I'm so elated and relieved... you finally put a new ribbon in your typewriter. Thank you... you've no idea what a difference it makes. These two are perfect models of V-letters.

We're really having a date... everyone is out except Mr. Heuser and he's in bed. I finished my laundry and ironing. My bath is over, my hair brushed and my face all greased up. This weather is terrific on my puss. It feels like the gravel road out here. The wind dries it so. And here I am curled up in the chair, feet propped on the hassock, flannel gown and quilted robe to keep me warm and soft music playing... can't you just see?

Where did I find out what "cheesecake" meant? Well now, I get around. Kidding you... From a line or two in Life Magazine a few weeks back in the review of a new play on Broadway the word was used and by putting two and two together I came up with the definition of "cheesecake." I never heard the expression used before you mentioned it in your letter.

I mailed the packages to Dot, Marty and Berta this morning. The guy at the post office says, "What, you again?" He claims I send more packages than anyone in the vicinity.

Eighteen packages... really, now, what goes on? I can account for ten but the others throw me. What a man! You must be the most popular man in the ETO.

A fruitcake goes to 195, too. Did I tell you we baked one for them, too? Should be there Monday. Mom said tonight she had sent it.

I sort of expected Marguerite home tonight but so far no sign of her. She's really staying until the last minute... surprising, too. She's always sensible and comes home two days early.

My curiosity is improving. I have two packages... one a Christmas present and the other a birthday present and I haven't opened them. I can't believe it myself but it's all your fault making me wait so long for my surprise. I've worn my curiosity out... that must be the answer. Receiving your letters today with all my names stretched out there made me wonder if that was really me. All you have to do is send one with Wilhelmina on it... that will be something. Maybe I won't know who it is. Marguerite's brother can't get over than name. Now he calls me "Miss Wilhelmina" since my confirmation.

I haven't had any real "moods" for awhile. I've been feeling unusually well both physically and mentally so to speak. I miss you as much as ever but your love keeps me company and I seem to be convinced that if won't be too long before I won't have to be doing this... that I'll be able to look up and see you sitting in your favorite chair in our own two by four.

It was foolish of Tom to take a chance like that with his letter. It might have gotten into the wrong hands. Not good to take chances like that. I hear an awful lot of loose talk in the bank and wonder who else is hearing that might be putting it together to make something of it. I guess he wasn't thinking of anyone but Eleanor, knowing she would want to hear from him as soon as possible.

I'm getting sleepy and I didn't think I would tonight. I have been on the go pretty much. I had an unpleasant and nerve-wracking experience today. As many years that I've handled money... over six now... I had my first difference today. Oh, maybe a dollar before but not over that. Today I checked

out \$20 short and for the life of me I don't see how. It's still worrying me. I looked and checked and figured long after everyone left but no luck. Maybe it will turn up but I doubt it. I was pretty busy today but I've had busier days. The joys of being a bank teller. 'Tain't funny, believe me. You get that sinking feeling when those figures pop out of the adding machine with a difference.

I'll have to leave... falling asleep. I love you, such an awful lot. Sometimes I wonder if it's too much but I don't think so. Seems to agree with me. I'm missing you so much but find myself very close to you. Love me, as always. My prayers and thoughts are never far from you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 22, 1943—London (V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

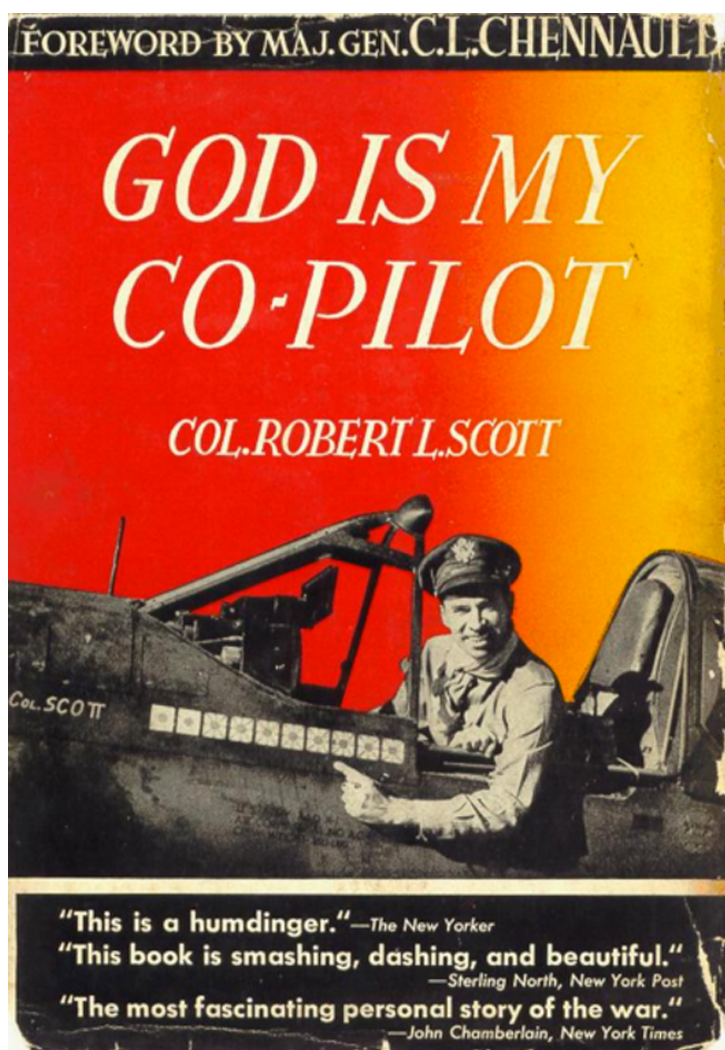
This is the first time I've tried writing to you in bed. Still, I guess there has to be a first time for everything. I don't believe I could get comfortable, like you, using a pen but our portable seems to be just the thing for writing in bed.

I've been here (in bed) since yesterday and probably will be here for a couple of days more. Don't get excited, it's just a wee bit of the flu, they tell me. Actually, I feel like a sissy. After 20 months in a country where sniffles, colds, etc. are as common as tea, I finally succumbed. First time it got me down to a point where I had to stay in bed. I started to get up yesterday morning but just couldn't make it. I thought a day's rest would cure it but when a medical officer came 'round to see me (Ben sent for him without me knowing) he said I better take it easy for a few days. According to him I

should be up for Christmas and able to spend the day with the Frost family, as I did last year. Mr. Frost called today to see how I was and asked me to spend Christmas with them.

Propped up the way I am I can see you smiling at me from your picture. I close my eyes now and then, pretending you may be standing in the doorway, smiling like that. I'm sure I'd be up tonight if I had you here to nurse me. I've been passing most of the time reading but I've been thinking of you, too. Missing you and aching for you more than ever.

I've been reading a book Ruth Totten sent to me for Xmas, "God is My Co-Pilot," written by a Col, Robert Scott about his life, including action as a fighter pilot in Burma and China. From what I gather it's a best seller in the U.S. I get a funny reaction from it. He described personal experiences that are supposed to be "breathtaking," if you get what I mean. Hell, bomber



crews and fighter pilots over here go through more in one mission than he did in four months in China. I don't know why it is but papers at home play the Pacific theater more than the European. I guess it's because most Americans feel the way against the Japs is their own and that the one over here belongs to England and Russia. Still, fliers who have been in combat in the Pacific as well as here call the European theater the "Big League." You can easily make the comparison by the losses we suffer in the air. The best feature of the losses, however, is that an average of 50 percent of our crews that go down live to tell about it. Besides, the German prisoner of war camps are 100 percents better than the Japs'.

I haven't received any of your December letters, although I'm not fretting. I'm used to winter mail now.

I shouldn't have overlooked anything but to make sure I'm going to acknowledge three packages I received from you and Mother, as well as your birthday, Thanksgiving and Xmas cards.

All my love... C.

December 23, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

You must think I had forgotten you were around, as if I could. I haven't written a line since Saturday night. Can you imagine? But it seems I've had a million and one things to do and to top it off the epidemic caught up with me and I've been trying to keep going. So far I'm all right and today I feel more like my old self, so please forgive me.

Received page one of your V-letter written December 7 day before yesterday and as always it was more than welcome.

I read in the paper somewhere where they asked the English to bathe and do their laundry only once a week and on the same day to conserve water. Fine thing, but at least I learned that you take a bath once a day. That's something.

The article on the flying nurses sounds interesting. They're doing a swell job and I envy them, especially for their work and then they had the pleasure of you interviewing them.... nice. I'd like that.

I thought surely by now they might receive some word concerning Lt. McIlveen... no news is good news, I guess, but I know how anxious his brother must be. I imagine the prisoner of war lists are slow coming through, and then it probably would come here first. I do worry about Warren even now and he hasn't left yet, but I want to hear about everything, so keep telling me. I guess I can take it.

We've had cold weather again and this has been a hectic week. Marguerite and I did New York for last minute shopping Tuesday night and she went in again today. Her vacation was a success. She looks well and it was good to see her again. She likes Canada.. I'm kind of anxious to make a trip there myself.

Mom sent my Xmas box to 195 so I'd be sure and not open it but in her letters she keeps hinting about this and that but I can't seem to figure out what it might be.

Only tonight and tomorrow, and then I'll know what my surprise is, I hope. The next time you start in three months in advance telling me about a surprise I'm going to crown you. Me with my curiosity... fine thing.

One of the girls that works with me... married and quite nice... I tell her little things you write. She says we must have a good time back and forth with our letters. She just doesn't know, does she? They are much more than letters... right now they are our life. Am I right? Have to run... be back.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December, 1943 — Matawan

My darling,

I'm not dating this letter because I want it to be a special letter and I'm sending a prayer along with it that you will receive it before Christmas. Remember last year, you wrote that memorable letter to me that I was to receive for Christmas but it arrived a bit late... I loved it just as much. I've been thinking for some time what I would like to say in my Christmas letter and I think tonight that I can write it. It's almost a year ago now since you wrote yours.

Christmas has always been very special to me in so many ways. Mom always said I made more fuss over Christmas than the rest of the family put together. It's a little hard to explain but I always liked looking forward to it even after I got over the disillusionment of no Santa. There's always been something expectant about it and a sort of new feeling the comes to me Christmas Day. That sounds as clear as mud I know, but it's hard to explain. It always meant our family being together and happy that day, for so many years.

Last Christmas was my first as the future Mrs. Kiley. I always felt Christmas was special before but with the thought of you and your love to keep me even more happy... that day took on an even more special meaning. Being a Catholic, too, has made Christmas more to look forward to.

When last Christmas came I said to myself, this will be the only one we'll miss sharing but the holidays are here again and I know nothing short of a miracle would bring you home. I believe in miracles, but I'm afraid that's too much to hope for.

This Christmas is going to be even more precious than the last one. I plan to spend Christmas with your family... and mine, now. I'm looking forward to receiving at the altar in St. Al's that day. I know I'll find you there. I always feel at home there and you are always very close. I guess it's because you grew up in St. Al's so to speak. I can imagine you as a little fellow kneeling there, your head just above the altar rail. I've already decided on my intention for that day and I seem to feel that this time God will take heed and answer my prayer... that the next Christmas will find us kneeling side by side at that same altar rail, our life together already started.

Does it seem like too much to ask for? I don't think so.

Sometimes I get a bit frightened and lose confidence in myself as the future Mrs. Kiley. We saw so little of each other and it's been twenty months since we've been together. Our love has kept us so close through the long months, and it's as bright and shiny as the evening star still. Have you noticed my star is back again? Not only has our love stayed bright and shining, it's grown through these months into a lasting beautiful love that will carry us through the years. I was a bit on the breathless side... windswept, you might say... when you left, but I settled down to the realization that I was meant to be your wife. I haven't used that word before... it has a lovely sound... not just "wife" but "your wife." Even though I do realize all this sometimes I get that scared feeling and think "maybe he'd like to change his mind." Maybe that's only being human... or else it's that darn complex of mine cropping up again.

So, I'm sending my love, all my love, on this Christmas Day with a prayer that it doesn't find you feeling too lonely. I'll be with you. Close your eyes and I'm sure you'll find me. I'll be taking out our memories... yes, those I so foolishly said we were reliving too much, and remembering them all. For instance: our first few minutes alone in Evelyn Fragge's car that memorable January 17... the Sunday afternoon you put all the nickels in the music box and we just sat and listened and shared each other's thoughts... you held my hand, too... the moments we spent in "our corner," you kissing me good morning so nonchalantly in my own living room... having breakfast together. Then there are our memories in New York... all my dreams coming true in one Saturday night... hearing Mass together Easter Sunday... the ride back from Dot and Al's that last night. They are like Christmas presents, each one more memorable than the last, all done up in ribbon and bright paper. I almost forgot one special memory... "our moment" on the terrace of the Inn. I could feel your rebellion that night as you held me but it only matched my "it isn't fair." I'll be thinking, too, of the new memories we'll be making together when the lights go on again.

That's the day I'll be looking forward to, when our worries will be silly, such as "wonder if you'll like what I'm having for dinner," or "will my pie turn out all right." Little, commonplace worries but they'll be important then. It won't be so long now. At least, that's what I'm telling myself. In your letter yesterday, that was music to my ears... "I'll bet this is my last Christmas overseas."

So, I'm praying that this won't find you feeling too "down." At least this time I'll understand. Try to think of our future... maybe that will help. It will be some time before I know how you spent your day. Last year it was with the Frosts. I hope it is there, or with someone as hospitable. You and Ben will probably console each other. Goodnight... here's my special Merry Christmas for you...

With all my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 25, Christmas Night — London

Billee dearest,

I woke up this morning wishing for Christmas gifts I knew I would never get. Not this year, anyway. Still it was nice to be able to wish for them.

I wanted to be able to turn my head a little to one side and see you looking at me quietly without saying a word, just smiling. I wanted to be able to say, “Good morning, glory and Merry Christmas, angel.” I wanted to see your nose wrinkle a little, to reach for you and hold you and kiss you, to put my head down and hear your heart beat, to stay there forever. I wanted to love you, Billee, to be able to tell you. I wanted to think I wasn’t asking for too much. But, I knew I was.

All this happened at eight o’clock this morning. I wondered what you were doing and thinking at 3:00 a.m. Christmas morning. I hoped you were wishing for the same things. I wondered, too, what you said, or thought or felt when you say the ring... if I had done the right thing... if you were disappointed, not with the ring but the way I had to do it.

All this was part of my Christmas. At least, it was the beginning of it. Yesterday started a three-day holiday at the office and I celebrated by getting out of bed, confident I had the flu beaten.



At the “Lamb and Lark.” Ben Price is in the back row, next to the pillar.

I went to confession in the afternoon, then met Andy Rooney later. We paid a visit to the Churchill Club, poked through the library there for a couple of hours. After dinner at a French restaurant, “L’Aperitif,” we headed for the “Lamb and Lark.” That’s the favorite pub near the office. Most of the editorial crowd were gathering there. I stayed until about nine, went home to read for awhile before going to midnight Mass.

This morning, I took an early train to Beckenham, Kent, for my Christmas with the Frost family. Mr. Frost, his daughter Doris and son Gordon, met me at the station. Before going to the house we stopped for an hour at a country tavern for a few tankards of brown ale. It was a cozy, picturesque place and while I hoped a grizzled, round-bellied tavern keeper would be there to complete the picture, I found a couple of very modern maids behind the bar.

When we reached home, Mrs. Frost and Lorna, the 13-year-old baby of the family, were waiting for us. You know what a passion I have for fireplaces... well, I had one today. We had a big turkey dinner, a bit of wine and later went for a two-hour walk. In the evening we just talked and listened to the radio. Doris, a wireless operator in the WAAF and a very interesting speaker, and I compared notes on the RAF and Eighth Air Force. We heard a recorded broadcast of Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat" in which he named the second front leaders, then a Christmas "Command Performance" program from Hollywood.

All in all, it was swell just being with a family. Often during the day I stared into the fireplace and thought of other Christmas days, as well as ones to come. Once, Mrs. Frost offered the "penny for my thoughts," and I told them you were worth much more.

They remembered you from what I had previously told them but I brought them up to date on everything. when I start to talk about you, I don't know when to stop. But they seemed interested.

Mr. Frost drove me to the station for the last train at 10 o'clock and here I am at 11:58 now, telling you about the best Christmas present anyone ever had is mine. And that is... your love. I pray I'll always be deserving of it.

If I said I know our Christmas next year will be spent together, me turning my head a little to see that smile, the wrinkle... I wouldn't be telling the truth.

Let us have faith in God, though. He'll make it right for us.

Now, I'm tired, so I can dream of you. Hold your arms open a little longer... It won't be long. 'Night.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 25, 1943—Jersey City

My darling,

This is just for us. I'll write another letter tomorrow and tell you about the holiday and what news there is, but tonight there will just be you and I.

My heart is so full tonight with my love for you. I could say you shouldn't have done it... that the other ring, your ring, suited me fine but I'm very proud and happy that you did surprise me with my "blue-white." No one ever had a lovelier ring. Father John has excellent taste. The simplicity of the mounting sets the diamond off beautifully and the engraving makes it all the more perfect.

I'll have to tell you about the great moment. I was at Kay Emerson's mending her fur coat when Father John came and El came over and suggested we go back. First Father John gave me a package from him... a lovely gold bracelet... then "the" package and the letter. Your dad gave that to me. I

started to read the letter first and it only took a few lines to tell me what was in the box. Together with the tears and your dad I opened the box and he put it on my finger and presented me with a kiss. Sissy me had to cry through it all. I think we all cried. I'm not sure why I cried. I missed you so terribly at that moment and yet I was so proud and happy. You figure it out.

We truly have the stars you mentioned in your Thanksgiving letter. At least I have one that I can really see and as soon as God wills it and something tells me it will be soon, we'll reach out and get the moon together.

You've been with me constantly this memory-making day and I've tried to imagine your Christmas today. I'm praying you weren't too lonely. I called Mom and shared my happiness. She was so pleased and happy for me.

Father John was a bit bowled over at your request but quite pleased to do it, I'm sure. [Charles had asked Fr. John to pick out the ring.] Just before he left tonight he took my hand and said he was as happy as I about everything. That meant a great deal, to know he really approves.

It's been a lovely Christmas even though it was a lovely one without you and Tom, and your Mom was more than missed. Somehow I felt she was with us anyway and you were, too.

When you come home, we'll pretend you've just given me my blue-white and you can put it on. Will that make up for missing today? I'll have a special kiss waiting for you, mind. Once more, I love you so very much. Wish there were words but they all add up the same.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 26, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

In my letter last night I failed to mention your Christmas letter because I wanted to talk about it in a separate one. The card and the letter came two days before Christmas and after reading the first few



Billee wearing her engagement ring. 1944.

lines I decided to put it away and read it on Christmas. I knew it contained a special message. So, when I returned from midnight Mass early yesterday I read it, slowly, over and over again.

The best way I can describe my reaction is to say the words you wrote, practically talked from the pages, they were so real, so alive.

I didn't picture you writing the letter but actually leaning over my shoulder telling it to me. The way you said, "Mom always said I make more fuss over Christmas than the rest of the family put together," didn't sound to me like anything people write but something they say to each other.

"I was meant to be your wife," told me more in seven words than you could in a book.

But, don't be frightened of our love. Instead, let it be warm and comforting always. Like you, I wonder if you will ever change before I get back and prevent it. When that happens I strongly reassure myself because at the same time it reminds me you said you love me. And your statement of love is the best insurance in the world.

When you talk the way you did in the letter, it makes me resolved to achieve a primary ambition, to be worthy of your love.

Our memories? I think we have the most precious and priceless memories anyone has had. There will be many more, too, Billee.

No, please let me send a special kiss for the special letter. 'Night, sweetheart. I'll be back tomorrow.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 26, 1943—Jersey City

My darling,

I heard you say Happy Birthday this morning. I awakened and El had gone downstairs, so I lay there and looked at my ring and pretended it was Dec. 26, 1944 and we were together. I'm beginning to realize the ring really belongs to me. I love it. I'll probably tell you that from now on.

It's been a long day. I started this before but company came in, Terry O'Connor and Kay Emerson came over so we had to watch Terry open his packages. [Terry was Tom's younger brother.]

195 was much too good to me... spic and span white gloves from your dad, a slip and gown from El and Bette and a cosmetic kit for my birthday from Bette, and perfume from your favorite niece. She, of course, was well blessed with gifts. We gave her a dress and a stuffed lamb and a little angel plaque that I found in the Guild Studio in St. Francis in New York. I love that place.

Last night, your dad, Father John, El, the baby and I went to Dot and Al's. I didn't tell them when I called. They were surprised but Mr. Drayton said he thought it was that. They thought it lovely and are happy for us. They have a beautiful tree and I love the village. Dot says next year they will have the trains set up.

It's been a lovely Christmas but a bit lonely for us all. You were more than missed and El missed Tom so very much. I hope Christmas for both you and Tom wasn't too lonely a day. Your mom was

missed, needless to say, but even I felt it. I'm sure she was with us all. We all went to the cemetery early yesterday.

Bette's Eddie is home and your brother Eddie, too... lucky guys. Bette's Eddie gave her a lovely bracelet to match a ring she has.

The tree is lovely, with blue lights, cotton and tinsel. It just clears the ceiling. Dot and Al's tree is larger but then their room is bigger. Father John, El and your dad fell in love with their home just as you did.

Tomorrow it's back to the old routine, but I have a different feeling. You know, I thought I didn't want a diamond before, but when I opened the case and saw yours, I knew I had always wanted one but it had to be yours. My heart is filled with love and pride when I look at it. I had decided to wear yours on my other hand but instead I'm putting it away until you come home, then we'll have it made larger for you.

It's snowing out and has turned quite slippery and cold. Mom said yesterday it was raining and she could use the umbrella I sent her.

I was kidding El tonight, telling her I thought I'd use all my names in the announcement... Wilhelmina Ruth Marie Gray. We'd have to have a special column... what do you think about the announcement. I hadn't thought about an announcement even until Bette and El said something. You should be consulted, don't you think, or should I just go ahead. I meant to say something to Father John and forgot. I was hoping he'd come in tonight again. I'll see him again soon. I'm having another picture made, this time at Davis.' El and the baby are having their taken, too. You'll get one. Think you could stand another around of the future Mrs. Kiley? Oh, I'll love being Mrs. Charles Kiley! Does that answer your question, "Will you come live with me?" Yes, I'll come proud and filled with love to be your Billee always and forever. Please, hurry home and bring the moon with you.

It's taken me nearly all day to write this. We just had supper... turkey sandwiches, some of Mom's fruitcake.

This fancy stationery was a gift from my aunt and uncle, initialed and all.

The family gave Father John a beautiful surplice, really lovely, and we gave him a beautiful white scarf, a Navy officer's scarf. He wore it last night to Dot and Al's.

Everything is quiet tonight. El is crocheting a sweater set for your cousin in Colorado that just had a new baby girl. Your dad is listening to Gildersleeve [radio show], Terry is playing with his new toys, Bette and Miriam are finishing supper in the kitchen and Annice is asleep. There you have a picture of us. I'm at the dining room table.

I'll close for tonight, but I'll be back very soon. Just can't stay away from you.

Did I tell you Mom loved her yellow roses... bless you.

Keep well and remember...

All my love and kisses, always and forever, your Billee

Terry and Bette just serenaded me with Happy Birthday.

December 27, 1943—London

Evening angel,

My patience has been rewarded at last. When I walked into the office today, thus terminating my three-day holiday, there were three airmails from you. there were also about a dozen Christmas cards but your “hellos” were what I was looking for. They were dated Dec. 2, 4 and 7.

Besides your letters, there was other big news: the appointment of Gen. Eisenhower to command Allied invasion forces with British Air Marshall Tedder as his deputy and Gen. Montgomery leading British Army units. It's a good team. I have heard Jimmy Doolittle will be brought up from the Mediterranean to replace Gen. Eaker as boss of the Eighth Air Force. That will mean Warren will have a new boss.

Gen. Spaatz, another good man, is also due in Britain from Africa to lead all U.S. air forces here. Looks like Eisenhower is bringing his gang with him. Eaker, who has done a terrific job with the Eighth Air Force will probably take over where Spaatz left off down below.

So much for the war.

What is this “awful truth” Marguerite is going to tell me? Have you girls been hiding skeletons in your closets? Remember how I sounded off when you were keeping company with that fly? Let that be a warning to you.

You said our first Christmas together will be memorable. Yes, we'll see to that. In fact, we'll try to make each succeeding one more memorable than the one previous.

It sounded odd to hear you talk of “air raids.” I'm sure the sirens do not convey all that a raid means. I also agree with you that most people at home haven't the slightest conception of war as it really is. Even those who lost husbands, sweethearts and brothers. To them the loss is a blow but I hardly think it tells the story of war.

I've talked to numerous men who took part in the African, Sicilian and Italian campaigns. It was pretty awful and it will be much, much worse, I think, when the real invasion gets under way.

I don't mean to be an alarmist; merely telling you and sharing with you my impressions.

You said Berlin “must be a shambles.” It has experienced something like 85 raids, had thousands of tons of bombs dropped on it, but it is hardly a shambles. It took much more than that to reduce Hamburg, which is a much smaller city.

I loved you remembering our anniversary in the Dec. 4 letter. You described your sister, Kay, as a heartbreaker. I wonder what she thinks of her sister, Billee. I could tell her something.

If you were able to describe the ribbons worn by the Air Force captain you saw in Penn Station, I probably could tell where he had been and what he had to dine.

The average flier, officer and enlisted man, who finishes his tour of 25 missions in heavy bombers or 50 in mediums, wears the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with three clusters, ETO ribbon, and Defense (service prior to Pearl Harbor) ribbon. He probably had them all.

Me? I can wear three but I never do, because they don't mean anything and because I believe they hand out medals these days like souvenirs.

I should have acknowledged your package of cookies and candy. The cookies were a little beat-up but we salvaged and enjoyed most of them. I weakened and ate the cake before Christmas, too.

One of the cards I received today was from Jane, Ben's wife. She added a note which said, "I had a perfectly lovely dream last night in which I brought lots of bottled cheer to you and Ben. This must be a poor substitute."

I must have received more than 75 cards in all. Hope I remembered everybody, although I know I didn't send that many, I don't think.

"Bye for now. Be a good fiancee and love me lots. Miss me.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 28, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

My second day back on schedule but I'm still very much in the clouds... can't get used to all the "sparkle."

Of course, it didn't take the bank crowd long to spot it and I didn't go waving it around in their faces, either. I was congratulated on all sides and wished the best of everything. They all thought it very lovely but not half as lovely as I think it is. Funny, I never cared for diamonds before, until I saw my own. I fell in love with it at first sight. My letters from now on will probably be filled with my ring, but I do wish would could see how lovely it is.

Your V-letter written Dec. 12 was waiting for me Monday. I loved it, especially the paragraph about did I think we should start buying for our hope chest. I have quite a few things that I have accumulated through the years, since I've been working. I'll tell you a few.. I think we have enough to start, with the exception of dishes, etc.: 8 sheets and cases, 12 towels and 6 wash clothes, 1 two-yard table cloth, 4 luncheon sets, 1 complete dresser vanity set, 1 set silver service for 8, 1 white candlewick bedspread, 1 wool blankets and 1 set silver candlesticks (from Mrs. Davidson).

I can always get more and there are other things we will have to have. That won't be enough but see, I haven't been idle. I thought you'd come along some day and I'd be able to use them. Mom said she didn't care what I bought so long as I didn't buy dishes, so those I stayed away from. You know what I'm particularly envious of... Dot's glassware. How I love that. She has such a nice assortment and so usable.

I can't imagine what Warren could have been so flattering about. He's off women for the present so I average two long letters a week. He's a good kid. He hasn't had all the advantages he should have had but he's coming through with flying colors. there was a time a couple of years back that Mom had a time making him see things sensibly but I guess they all go through that. A father around

would have helped immensely, but then those things do happen and we have to make the best of them.

I didn't want to be a "stranger" at Dot's but my "extra-curricular" activity interfered so you'll have to excuse. Think I'll call and see if Sunday will be all right. I'll go in Sunday a.m. as I did the last time.

Don't be worrying about the eight fellows at Mom's in Asheville. They are no longer there and if there would be eight times that many it wouldn't make any difference. Seems to me I said "I love you so very much." What do you think anyhow? They were nearly all attached somehow or other and weren't the least bit interested so don't be worrying... but this gives me an idea... if I thought that would bring you home... well?

Are you running a racket on the side? Please let me in on your budget... I don't see how you're doing it. Here I get a "blue-white" that's really a knockout and you're sending me a hundred the first of the month? Are you sure you are getting enough to eat? However long it took to save for my ring, it was worth every bit of saving. You've made me very happy. I was happy before with your ring but this is a different feeling and I love it.

Having Father John select it and your dad putting it on my finger almost made up for not having you here. Something keeps telling me... soon, now.

I'm enclosing our horoscopes. Yours is a riot. Please note the last line. Marguerite says we should go look for a dress but I'll have time.

I must call El tomorrow. Everyone was asleep when I went out Monday a.m. Bette didn't go to work since Eddie was there Sunday evening and didn't leave until early a.m. and El and the baby were sleeping peacefully so I went out as quietly as possible. I sure felt like staying snuggled up to El myself and staying there until I felt like getting up. I hear you like to sleep, too. Poor El, she missed Tom dreadfully but she kept up swell until I had to break down over the ring, but she snapped out of it and we all went on as before. It being the baby's first Christmas and Tom not there to see her in her rocking horse had a lot to do with it. I hear she knew about the surprise, too, but she didn't give it away.

You must have smiled when you received the letter guessing about the ring and giving you the argument about why you didn't have to buy me a ring. You'd love hearing Father John tell about getting the ring. Marguerite had about decided you were going to put a trans-Atlantic call through. I think that was one of the things I didn't guess.

Marguerite catches me looking at it, with a look of unbelief, and says, "It belongs to you... wake up," and Father John caught me and he said, "It's true," so you can see what a state I'm in. You can imagine what's going to happen when I get the mate.

I'm tired. Haven't slept much lately... much too excited. I'd better close, especially if I want to look wide awake in that picture next week instead of dreamy-eyed as Father John says I am in the other one.

I hope you have the cable by now. The poor Western Union man must have been embarrassed. He wouldn't read the message back to me as is customary but I had to tell you...

Take the best care of yourself and remember what Andy Rooney said. My love and prayers are always with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 28, 1943—London (2 V-mail)

Hello sweetheart,

You are getting special attention this week. This is my fourth date with you in as many days... two airmails and two V-mails. But, why not? Aren't you the Woman of the Year, Miss America and the Girl of My Dreams all wrapped into one? Sure you are.

Received two more airmails from you today, too. that makes five in two days. Nothing like mail to get me busy. Today's were Dec. 9 and 17. I can't figure out why they came together. They're here and that's all I worry about.

I hope this gets to you before you take off for Asheville because I wish you would cable me when you leave so I can get mail started to 412 Merrimon as soon as possible. As it is, if you leave on Jan. 15, there will be mail that will arrive in Matawan after you leave.

Say, if babies only cost \$150 (without accessories) according to El... why, we ought to have a half-hundred, at least. I thought they were much more expensive that that or I would never have settled for a ball club. Hell, at that rate, we ought to be able to furnish two teams, a crowd to watch them play, a couple of batboys, a scorekeeper, a couple of cubs [reporters] to cover the games, maybe a photographer to take pix for the album and a few umpires. Oh, I'll manage both clubs if I have to. All you have to do is see that they show up on time, OK?

\$150... may that's only for ordinary babies. Since ours are going to be extra special-like, they will probably come a little higher. Still, I think we can mange. If we going to have 50... let me se... that will have to be about five sets of triplets, 15 sets of twins and... Oh, sure. We can do it easy, can't we?

The napkin ring for my godchild was super. I never would think of those things. I probably would have bought her a five-pound box of candy or a pony. The doll was OK for Janet Daly, too.

I liked the bedroom, nursery and living room clippings you sent, with one exception. Instead of those two chairs in front of the fireplace there will be one, big enough to hold both of us. You can't get rid of me that easy. I'm going to stick so close to you I'll look like a postage stamp. After awhile, you'll wish I didn't have any arms, they're going to be wrapped around you so often.

When you mentioned putting a call to Mom reminded me of the calls I used to make. Wish I could make a couple now. On New Year's Eve, 1941, I called Dot's from the Cleveland Hotel in Spartanburg and talked to about 20 people, I think. I'm wondering if the crowd will be together this year. Usually, most of them are. but I haven't heard of any plans this year. The babies will have a lot to do with it, I guess.

Judging by your remarks, Warren is getting ready. He might as well become accustomed to getting up at 2:30 a.m. for practice missions because he'll do a lot of it over here. Only he'll be getting up before

that most of the time. I know what he means by airsickness. I've never had it bad. In fact, I only had symptoms of it once while flying from here to Ireland over the Irish Sea about seven months ago. After that, I never had any trouble. By the way, I'm wondering if my letter, or letters, covering my Nov. 16 trip to Norway ever reached you. Perhaps they were held up.

I have a new blue robe... in case I didn't mention it before. Looking at Earl Mazo here with me brought it to mind. He's the public relations officer at my favorite bomber station who usually takes the extra bed here when he comes to London. He's in for a few days now. He bought the robe for me at the officer's post exchange. Also go me a pair of shoes. The robe is navy blue with blue and white piping on the sleeves and pockets and a blue and white sash.

I had the afternoon and evening off today (worked from 8 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. yesterday) so Earl and I went film crazy and saw two pictures, "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "Jane Eyre," both very good. I know it's not my imagination but whenever I see Ingrid Bergman I see some kind of a resemblance to you, Billee. It might be a few mannerisms, or a tilted nose. But there's something. When I saw "Claudia" last week I saw Marty Daly of a few years ago in Dorothy Maguire. Odd, isn't it, how you get these impressions?

My predictions of Gens. Doolittle and Spaatz came true today. And. Gen. Eaker went south together with Gen. Devers, who had been ETO commander. Gen. Eisenhower, who was here prior to Africa, takes over again. Can't understand the Doolittle-Eaker swap because the latter has done a tremendous job here with strategic bombing whereas Doolittle was the tactical air force man down there. Strategic Bombing means precision bombing by heavies. Tactical means use of mediums and fighter bombers for support of ground forces usually. With the naming of Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory of the RAF (head of RAF Fighter Command) as chief of Allied air forces in on the invasion it looks like everything will be centered around support for the ground forces. See? I'm getting to be an armchair strategist already. Can't you picture me in my old age fighting these battles all over again with my grandchildren?

Time for bed. Close your eyes, now. No, I'm not going until you close them. Sure you have them closed? OK, now open them. Did you see anything, or feel anything? Hmmm. I was afraid you wouldn't. 'Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles



December 29, 1943—Matawan

Hello darling,

Feel like an old engaged lady today but I still can't get used to the "sparkle" and don't want to. I wrote a long letter last night but thought maybe this might reach you earlier since all I've been receiving here of late are V-letters. I'm not complaining... they are as welcome as the flowers in May.

Today is cold again but clear so it isn't too bad. We are supposed to get snow sometime today.

I called El this morning to see how everything was there. She received five letters from Tom. Poor guy broke his arm but he didn't tell her until it was almost well. They were to remove the cast December 26. He fell off the back of a truck. El is worried but he says he's getting the best of care and she's not to worry.

Oh, I forgot to tell you... the little luncheonette where we eat at noontime is owned by an Italian couple and when he saw the ring he really exclaimed, and said "What a mortgage he has on you." How do you like that? My dentist said, "Mmmm, he must be in the chips." I had to pay him a visit yesterday. I'm scared to death of something happening to my teeth and when they don't feel right I go to see him... but there wasn't anything wrong again this time and so I can breathe again.

I haven't had the right opportunity to tell the boss that I'm going home. He's had four people give notice already so you can imagine the mood I will find him in. I'll be the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak. I was hoping my aunt and uncle would go south for the winter but they seem to have changed their minds, so before I go home tonight I'll have to tell him.

My work went smoothly today for a change and I got a lot accomplished. My customers cooperated beautifully by staying away today. The work was getting over my ears in depth and I hate it when you have to practically dig to get it out of the way.

You should see me perched on my stool behind my barred window. Marguerite and I are the only ones left. We plan on making the four thirty-eight so you see what a racket the employees have here. We have to work New Year's Eve until heaven knows when posting interest. Isn't that a heck of a way to see the new year come in? But we'll make up for it next year... we better.

Told you all the news last night... I'll be back tomorrow.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 30, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

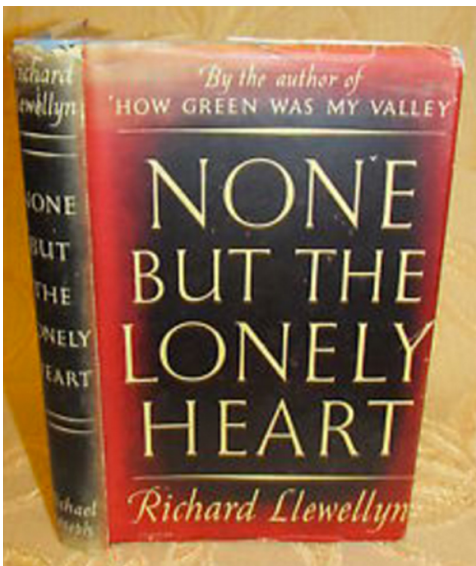
One more day left of this year and the papers are screaming "Victory in '44" so perhaps it won't be long. Last night I couldn't help but think of the radio reports of the preparation being made on the English coasts for invasion and I get an awful sick feeling knowing what it is going to be like, but I guess it must be, before we can get that victory we all want so badly. I'm wondering, too, if you will take part in it and I've been praying so hard, Charles, that maybe you wouldn't. It's a selfish prayer, I know, but I get it's only natural.

I told the boss last night and he wasn't too nice about it, but I guess you can't blame him. Nevertheless, he didn't have to be quite as rude as he was. We aren't speaking today. He'll get over it and two weeks after I'm gone he will have forgotten I was ever in his employ.

I hate starting over again and I'm going to look like a "will-o-the-wisp" to some people, flitting here and there but you and I know that it isn't the way I want it. It's something that I can't put off any longer and still stay on good terms with myself. Maybe that sounds selfish... I don't mean it that way because I know Mom needs me... not me, but someone belonging to her, so I'm not going to worry any longer. The fifteenth I'll make tracks for home and that will be that until you come home for me, and please God let it be soon.

Received the rest of your December 7 letter last night. Wondered what had happened to it. I'm glad you received the one package... you hadn't mentioned it before. I hope you had a little more than just crumbs out of it and that the fudge hadn't melted all over, or was it just hard?

The wedding sounds exciting. I love the picture of you selecting the silver... sounds lovely. We have one set but one like that would be a treasure. Was it very expensive? Just curious.



Received "None But the Lonely Heart" by Richard Llewellyn yesterday from my little brother. I was surprised because I told him a card would be sufficient since I knew he didn't have too much money and that he should get Mom something. He said he bought her a warm sweater and had a small picture made for her dresser. I'd love seeing him pick out the sweater.

Marguerite just left for a shopping trip to New York... shoes this time and I'm going to be able to make the four thirty-eight. It means the long walk in from the station but I feel like it tonight. I don't think it will be too cold, besides, you'll be along to keep me warm.

That's all for today... this seems to finish my day off nicely. Taking time to dash a note off to you even if this darn V-mail does seem a little impersonal, but I'm getting used to them now and they seem more like letters to me.

'Bye for now... Be back tomorrow to wish you a Happy New Year.

All my love and kisses, your Billee