

CHAPTER 1

December 1941–March 1942

December 2, 1941—Camp Croft

Dear Ray,

May I interrupt your volcanic schedule of activity to drop in?

You seem to be the father confessor for more people than those in your parish so I don't believe you will mind including me in your flock. You are the only one I can tell what's going on, since I relate only the social life of a soldier to Mom and Pop.



Eddie Kiley—Jersey City, 1941.

To begin with, Mom wrote and told me Eddie received his questionnaire. I can only suggest that you do everything possible to have him deferred. He won't do it himself. I realize you have a million and one things on your mind but it will be too late once Eddie is passed by the draft board. The Army is always willing to take a man but it gets very tough when discharges are mentioned. If you have to see Marty Hughes in person, do so. Do everything in your power to get a deferment for him.

These sound like hard words but they are sincere.

You can use a dozen excuses. First, that one member of the family is already in the service. Secondly, the income of the family will be greatly reduced and we shall lose the house if Eddie goes. Tell him he contributes all of his salary, if possible, to the family. Tell him Mom isn't well and we are afraid of a severe shock.

I can do this Army hitch standing on my head. But I can't say whether Eddie could, nor not. Temptations are great and opportunities too easy and I honestly don't think his will is strong enough to reject them.

There is a saying: "The Army can make a bum out of you, if you let it." I can believe that. Fortunately, I can surround myself with enough fine fellows to live my way here.

Ray, the Army is tough for anyone who can't take it. I've seen fellows get so low they aren't able to raise their spirits for anything. Then, there are some who take Army life as a lark, for the fun and good times they think they are having. Instead of improving themselves, they get worse.

So much for the dark side.



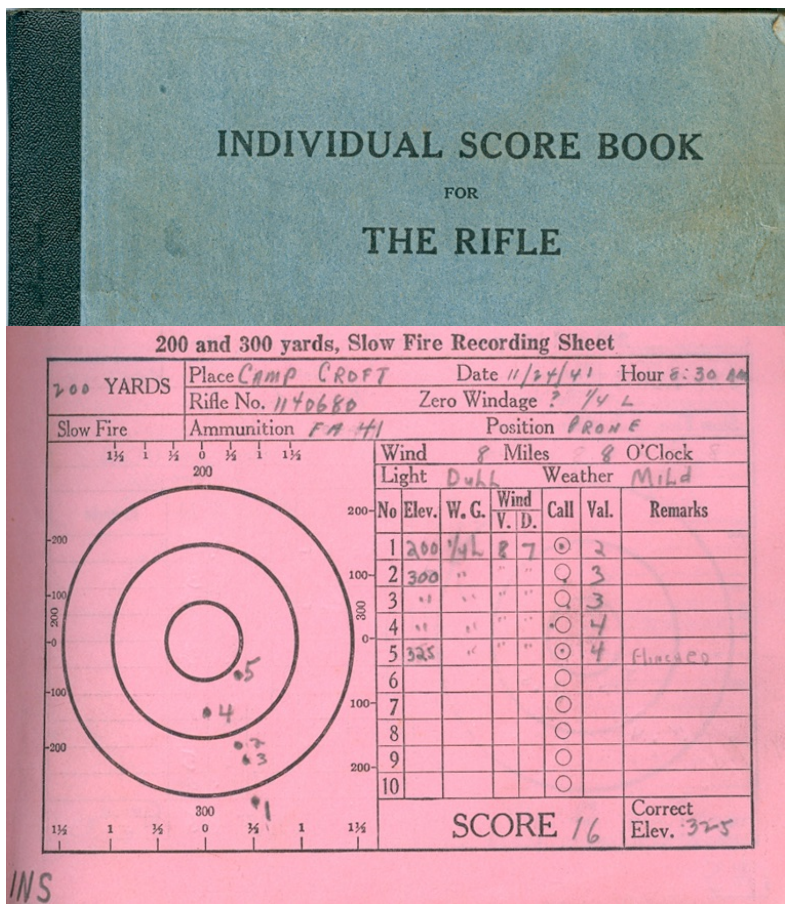
Charles and some of his fine fellows:
(above) Charles is on right, Johnny Joyce second from left;
(right) Charles in front row on left—Camp Croft, 1941.



Oh, here’s another for the “secret file.” I saw the first sergeant today about my status as a 28-year-old selectee. The answer was, as far as the law goes now I’m not eligible to apply for a discharge. The law applies only to those who were 28 before July 1 last and were inducted prior to August 15.

Now, I guess it remains for the law to be amended, or else I’m going to be a soldier for quite a while. However, I’ll keep looking for a loophole.

Furthermore, the preparedness situation is getting more serious. At least, that’s the way it looks. We had 1,000 men leave camp today for Panama. rumors have it the U.S. needs men for Ireland and Trinidad. Rather nice to look forward to, eh?



Charles’ sharpshooter scorebook
—Camp Croft, 1941.

But as I said, I can do it without a worry in the world except how it would affect Mom. But I know that doesn’t apply to everyone. Fellows, even now, are talking about going “over the hill” if they don’t get home for Christmas.

The way I feel is, as long as I’m in the Army I’m going to try and be as good a soldier as I can. I couldn’t do any more.

I’ve had a good start so far. Last week on the range I qualified with the Springfield rifle and was credited with a “sharpshooter’s” rating. There were only nine of us in the entire camp of 252 men. My score, 208 points of a possible 250, was tied with two others for first place.

Ray, if I write letters to the kids in care of you, don’t be surprised. If I send them home I’m afraid Mom will get them and there may be some things I won’t want her to see.

Meanwhile, I'm thinking of increasing my wardrobe before I go on a strict Army budget.

I'm having some civilian clothes sent down and I want to get a sports coat. Uncle John left me some money and I'm holding that to buy my ticket home on my first leave.

So, will you send me \$20.00 and with it a note on how much I have left? I have a few dollars in the Journal Credit Union and I believe I'll draw that out and send it to you to hold.

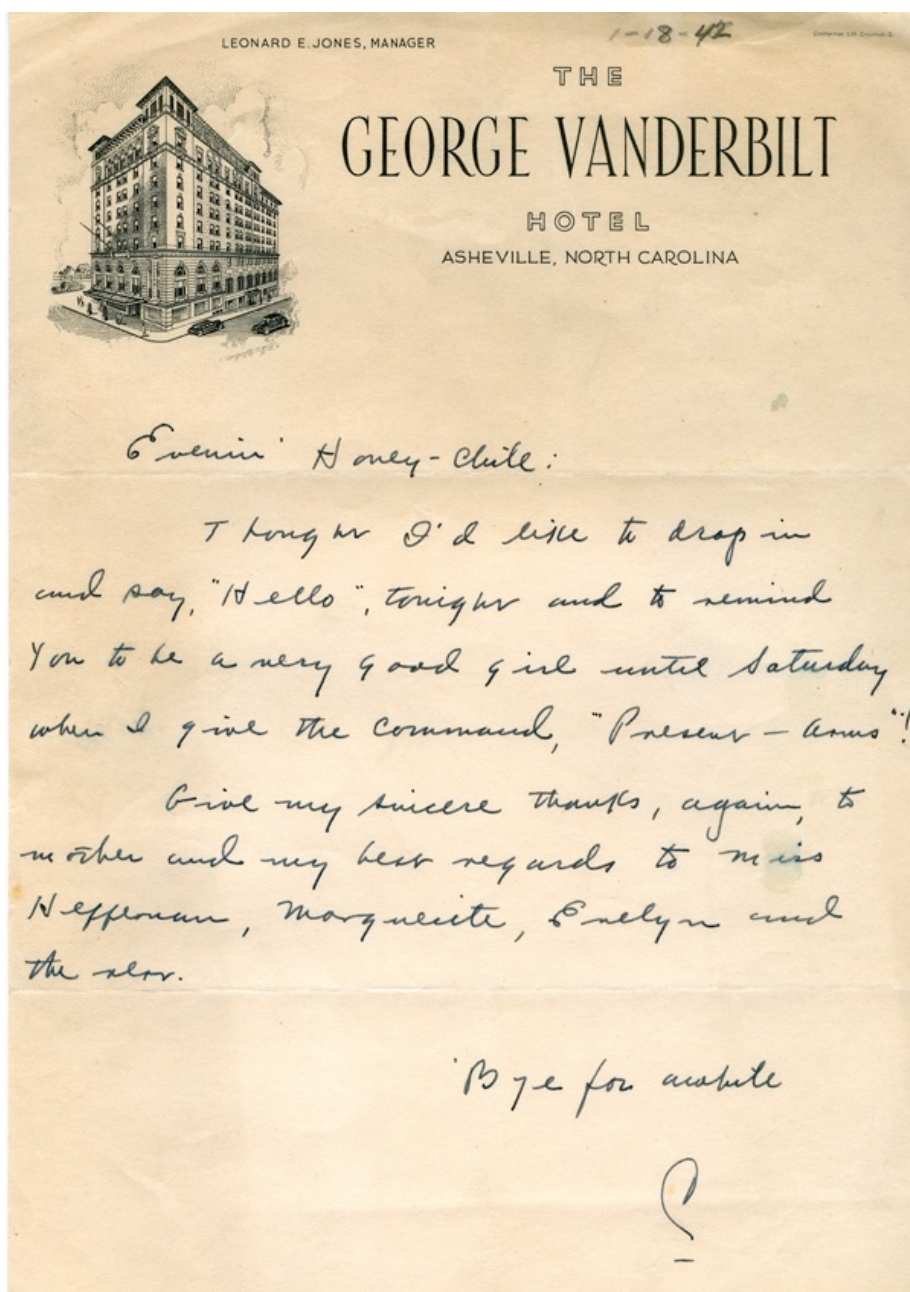
In other words, I want to know how I stand financially, so I can plan a future. From now on, I'm going to guard my money very closely as far as spending goes. I have to replenish my toilet supplies, get a few other things and then just have an occasional "big night" dinner and theatre in town to break the monotony. Possibly, I'll take a bus trip now and then to see what the South looks like.

So, keep praying everything turns out for the best and try to make Mom's worries a bit easier. I'll do everything I can from this end.

And, if there's any bad news let me know immediately and don't worry about upsetting me. I think I can take it by now.

Amen.

K.



Charles' first letter to Billee, written in Charles' hotel room while Billee waited for him in the lobby, the morning after they first met.

January 18, 1942—Asheville

Evenin' Honey-Chile,

Thought I'd like to drop in and say "Hello," tonight and to remind you to be a very good girl until Saturday when I give the command, "Present arms!"

Give my sincere thanks, again, to mother and my best regards to Miss Heffernan [a long-term guest at Oak Lodge], Marguerite [Billee's friend, who also lived at Oak Lodge and worked at an Asheville bank], Evelyn [Fragge, an Asheville friend] and the rest.

Bye for awhile.

C.



*Charles and Billee, taken the morning after they first met—
Asheville, January 18, 1942.*

January 22, 1942—Camp Croft

Dear Billee,

I had the inclination to drop in and see you tonight but I suppose the least that can be done under the circumstances (70-mile separation) is a little chat by mail.

You may have seen the news in the paper, or, heard it on the radio, that Uncle Sam is instituting a full six-day week for the Army. I haven't heard, as yet, whether it will affect us. However, if it does, I'll still be heading for Asheville on Saturday night. I understand there is a bus from Spartanburg at 6:40 p.m. that arrives in Asheville at 9:30, or thereabouts.

The last train leaves at 3:35, so I'll have to resort to the bus.

If we have our customary half-day, I'll get the train and call you at home as soon as it arrives.

I called home Monday night and gave my mother a description of the Gray hospitality. She asked me to thank your mother again for her.

Do you know, I spent another restless night Sunday. Seems like I wanted to turn back the clock to Saturday night again. I wish such things were possible.

Almost time for "lights out!" Will you wrinkle your nose for me? I'll bet I sleep better then.

I'll be looking for you Saturday.

Bye for awhile, C.

January 26, 1942—Camp Croft [written after their second weekend together in Asheville.]

Billee dear,

I was wrong, but I wish I was right; which is to say, you didn't keep me awake last night. Yes, I did sleep like a baby, just as you said, but you were the last one I thought of before the sandman dropped by. Strange, or is it... you were still in my mind when I awakened at 5:30.

As I write this I'm listening to the radio over which a broadcast from Ireland is coming, describing the arrival of the first detachment of the A.E.F. to Europe. I can't keep feeling a thrill to hear that, at last we are doing something concrete about giving peace and serenity to our people.

With the 600,000 troops sent to the Far East last week—there is no longer any doubt that we are again, "Over There!"

But we can find nicer things to talk about, can't we?

For instance, I'm looking forward, so much, to next weekend. With a visit to the Grove Park Inn cocktail lounge, not to mention approximately 21 hours with you, I'm certain it will be a weekend I'll never forget. Do you know, I believe I won't want to go to sleep, in fear of awakening to discover I've been dreaming for those weeks.

*Charles (second from left) with Jimmy Kirk on his right
—Camp Croft, 1941.*



By the way, I met Jimmy and his girl friend last night in town and he told me he was to be stationed in Bermuda as an MP. There are several members of the camp football team going with him. He feels pretty good about it but his girl friend was rather blue. For one thing, I doubt if he will see the States again until we've won the war.

I've got loads of mail to answer, so will you forgive me if I say, "Good night?"

I'd be grateful, too, if you'll wrinkle your nose and blow a kiss in this direction. I'm sure I'll get it!

Bye for awhile.

Love and kisses, C.



*(l-r) Johnny Joyce, Ben Wooley, Charles, taken on their last day at
Camp Croft, February 1942.*

*February 2, 1942—Camp Croft [written after
their third and final Asheville weekend.]*

Billee dear,

I missed your "good night" kiss so much last night, I just had to tell you about it.

We haven't much to do today except give the barracks a final scrubbing and there isn't anything I would rather do more than "talk" to you. That is, unless I could be with you in the flesh.

Do you know, we were the victims of a conspiracy. As soon as the bus got over the mountains last night the heavens were as clear as spring water and the moon was full, and oh, so big! Then I could only look and miss you

some more. Somehow, I couldn't think of much other than "our moment" Saturday night outside the Inn. Things like that just happen once in a lifetime—to me, at least—but I'll always remember and look ahead to the time when we can go to the same spot, contented instead of being restless with anxiety.

I'm wondering how your mother liked the aprons too, whether they fit. I wouldn't be surprised if she found them rather small and gave them to you.

We just had "mail call" and all I had was a card from a girl who was spending the weekend at Buck Hill Falls, Pa. That is the nearest thing to Asheville I can think of. I believe we should see it together sometime.

Almost time for lunch. So, I'll have to leave you for awhile. Keep smiling and reserve that little corner in your heart for me.

Bye now, love and kisses, C.

Best regards to Mother and the "girls."

February 3, 1942—En Route to Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee dear,

I hope to cover my trip in chronological order so I'm starting from the beginning. The time now is 2:30 and we are on the train waiting for it to pull out of camp. Johnny Joyce and I are seated together.

3:00 p.m.—The train pulls out with over 1,100 men aboard and the band plays "Auld Lang Syne." I have a funny feeling of wanting to stay behind, to rush to Asheville and be with you. I can't remember ever missing anyone the way I miss you now. John has a wistful look on his face, too, as he looks over the camp for the last time.

5:00 p.m.—We have passed Gaffney and have been served a hasty dinner. Not very good but there are only a few grumbling.

7:00 p.m.—I have been playing cards and reading to pass the time but now the porter is making the berths and I'll have to leave you for awhile again.

9:30 p.m.—We are stopping for 15 minutes at Danville, Va. so it is a good time for me to get a sandwich and coffee in the station if we can.

10:00 p.m.—We have "turned in" and before I put the light out, stare out the window in the night and trees rush by, and think of you, I'm going to kiss you good-night.

7:00 a.m.—(Wednesday) I woke at 6:00 to discover we were stopping briefly in Washington. Can't see much because the capital is blacked out. We passed the huge printing offices which apparently work 24 hours.

Baltimore—Wilmington—Philadelphia—and Fort Dix!

7:00 p.m.—(Wednesday) We all arrived safely and sound, but forgive me if I sound a bit bewildered. It's difficult to piece things together. I mean, what has transpired within the

last few hours. As I said, 1,100 of us—radio operators, intelligence units, message center company, electricians, etc., all specialists—came home from Croft. But now we have all been put into different outfits. That's all I can say now.

My address in the future will be: Pvt. Charles E. Kiley-32184067, c/o P.M. A.P.O. 1001, New York City, New York, Co. "H." 135th Infantry. When you write, put your return address in the upper left hand corner.

If you don't hear from me as often as you know I would write, it will not be because I have forgotten you for a moment but only because I am not in a position to write. As it is now, I don't believe we will be seeing each other for that Easter date. But wherever I am you will be with me in spirit. Please pray for me, honey, and remember that I'll be back for you some day. Bye for awhile,

Love and kisses, C.



*Johnny Joyce and Charles training in radio operation
—Camp Croft, 1942.*



*Charles training in radio operation
—Camp Croft, 1942.*

February 4, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee dear,

I'm just rushing this ahead of a letter I mailed earlier today to tell you of a new mailing address.

I was moved over to Headquarters Company from Company H, which puts me in radio again. I don't know how long I'm going to be here so I suggest you send mail to my brother and he will forward it to me. He drove down to see me this afternoon and I told him to express mail. He will know where I am from time to time and will be easier to contact when and if I move.

I told him all about you and from my description he is very anxious to see you. He is having my films developed so I'll rush a set to you when I get them.

I'll keep you posted as to my whereabouts and my work. Incidentally, our 135th Infantry, 34th Div. is supposed to be one of the "fight'nest" outfits in U.S. military history. There are 13

“major battle” streamers in our standard.

The picture I was to have enlarged will have to wait for awhile. Do you mind, honey? Just as soon as I get settled I'll take care of all those things and be able to write a letter with a little more feeling than this one. But I'll be always thinking of you no matter where I am and what I'm doing. Write soon—pretty please?

Love and kisses, C.



Billee—Asheville, 1941.

February 7, 1942—Asheville [Billee's first letter to Charles]

Dearest Charles,

I have just finished reading your most welcome letter. I was so afraid I wouldn't get it until Monday.

Yes, I'm at home. Those symptoms turned into the real thing and caught up with me yesterday. So here I am, all greased up and covered in flannel for the duration of this pesky cold. It has its advantage, thought. I have that much more time to think about us and these past few weeks.

I still have to stop and wonder if it isn't all a pleasant dream, but then I have your perfume and Mother's aprons and your emblem on my coat too. There is a certain indescribable element within that wasn't present before. I feel almost complete. There's more than just a corner of my heart reserved. Please believe me.

Mother says thanks very much for the compliment. Not many people see her as sylph-like as you do. The aprons are cute and we both can wear them even if they are a little snug for Mom. It was sweet of you to think of her.

The “girls” are fine. They haven't stopped talking about you yet.

Marguerite [Heuser, who lived at Oak Lodge] was so sweet Sunday night after I came home. I went to her room and we talked a long time. Of course, I'll have to admit you appeared more than once in the conversation. We have been quite close for more than a year; she seems more like an older sister. She gave me all of her medals for a keepsake and good luck. It's strange that two of the nicest people I know should give me something that means so much to them on the same day. It gave me such a warm, wanted feeling.

We're having real Dixieland weather: yes, snow and lots of it. You spoke of the moon being so bright Sunday night. Marguerite and I sat on the settee Monday night and watched it come over the mountain. I never cease marveling at the sight it presents. The whole mountain seems to glow.



The picture folder Billee sent to Charles, who carried it in his pocket for the entire war.

There are so many things I could say about your letter and what it means, but what would be the use. All we can do is grin and bear it and hope for the best and that it won't be long before all this will be over and we can go back to our normal living again. Perhaps it is just as well we don't have that Easter date. It would only make things harder, but then I guess we can take it. I think I'll come anyway even if you aren't there and maybe I'll go and see your mother, if you think it will be all right.

I'm sending you a picture, the one you forgot. I was afraid it wouldn't fit in your wallet, hence the folder. There's room on the other side for your other girlfriend but you'd better not let me see it. The picture was made a year last Xmas, so there isn't much change except my hair a little.

This letter seems to be going on and on. I hope I'm not boring you and that you aren't disappointed in me as a letter writer. I have five from you and this is my first. I'm not going to read it over. I'll let you

do that. I might tear it up if I do. You'll have to excuse this scribbling but you know how it is to write in bed.

Let me hear from you when it is possible. I'll be thinking of you and the day when we will be together once more. I'll always remember "our moment" and being in church with you, Charles. Everything seemed so right last Sunday morning, as if it would go on and on. I hate to close, but it has to end somewhere. All my love and prayers follow you wherever you might go.

Billee

Don't forget my picture, please. How did the ones you took turn out?

February 8, 1942—Asheville

My dear Charles,

I have your inclination tonight. Do you mind? I don't know how close upon the heels of my last letter this will follow.

I have to tell you how much we all missed you, "the girls" especially, except of course, me. I kept thinking "this time last Saturday night" and "this time last Sunday." I almost asked Mom this morning when she came to awaken me, if you were down yet.

My sniffles are still with me. I missed going to church this morning, but Mom refused on account of my sniffles. One advantage my cold has, I've caught up on my knitting and

reading. I did the back of an army sweater and a sleeve-and-a-half on a child's Red Cross sweater. You must have given me an incentive.

I can't seem to forget anything. All I do is remember. I have such a lost feeling not knowing where you are, because, of course, I realize the address you gave me is just an address. Yet I feel so close to you.

I hope you received the picture and my letter safely and that this one reaches you as well. Do you mind my repeating the ending of my last letter? Maybe all my love and prayers will keep you safe and bring you back soon.

Billee

Don't laugh, dear, but I've opened your letter and am starting again. I sincerely hope you were able to spend some time with your family. I know how much it meant to you. I was only going to write to you tonight and I've written four letters and read yours. That's me, get me started and there's no stopping me.

I'll really have to close now, no more paper and yet I am very reluctant to leave you. I'll just say, "Goodnight" this time a special "Goodnight" from Billee

February 9, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee dear,

I may be only 70 miles from home but I'd give anything to be back in Camp Croft. They said Croft was a model camp. Now I can understand it more than ever. So far, we have had snow, rain and freezing weather. Moreover, we still haven't been located with our proper outfits. I had been with one company, moved to another and then moved back to the first one again.

Too, nothing has been said about our radio work and we are only hoping it is cleared up soon so we can get down to serious work. Of course, there are plenty of rumors, good and bad, that are too numerous to list here.

I was fortunate in getting a pass to go home over the weekend. And gosh, it felt good! Mother, Dad and the "kids" were overjoyed at the family reunion. My younger brother had received his notice to report for induction so he will have his uniform in a couple of weeks.

Now, how about you?

I'm waiting for word from you every day. I told my brother, John, to send me your mail or bring it with him when he came for a visit.

I believe I told you not to count too heavily on seeing me if you came north for Easter. If I am here, there isn't anything I would want more than to just hold you in my arms for days. But everything is too indefinite. I can honestly say I don't know if I'll be here for a day, week, month or year. This is a combat unit and is liable to take off at any time. It is not fully organized as yet but then again I can't say when it will be ready. At any rate, I'm going along doing my best in whatever I'm told and hoping the day is not too far off for us to make up for lost time.

Do you know, at 11:00 o'clock Saturday night I sort of excused myself from the family to go out on the porch and stand there alone wishing I was back at the Grove Park Inn with you held close to me again. There will be one of our anniversaries the 31st of each month—together with the 17th, the day I first looked into your eyes!

Time for bed soon, sweetheart. You'll be the last one I'll think of this night, as always.

Love and kisses, C.

P.S. Best regards to Mother, Marguerite and the rest.

February 9, 1942—Asheville

Dearest Charles,

Here I am again but so relieved to know you are still somewhere close. You don't know the visions I had: boats, airplanes, tanks, etc.

I'm going in to work. It's almost noon. Mother didn't waken me this morning and I slept the clock around. I feel lots better in spite of the sniffles.

I'm sending this to your brother. Be sure and check on the letter and picture I sent to the address you gave me in your first letter.

It's nice to be with a company that has such a reputation. I know you must feel proud, especially since you are back in radio. I'm so glad you are able to spend some time with your family. I was worried for fear that you wouldn't and how awful that would have been to be so near and yet so far.

I'm really going this time. Who knows... perhaps we will see each other soon.

Love, Billee

February 13, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello sweetheart,

Your "little bit of heaven" reached me Wednesday night—letter, picture, case and all—and I wish I could get one every day. Don't take that too seriously, but it is the way I feel. It told me so many things I wanted to hear and it made me just too happy.

I'm enclosing one of the pictures taken (with Ben's camera) and a duplicate is going in the vacant side of the case. I wouldn't dare put anyone else's picture there, not only because you wouldn't want it but because it just wouldn't belong.

I might say here that it appears as if I would be here for awhile yet. How long, I can't say.



About your Easter visit... Mother will be happy to see you whether I am still here or not. In fact, the family is anxious to see my Honey Chile from Ohio and No'th Carolina.

I shouldn't have waited until now—to ask about you—but I hope and pray you are 100% again. I wish I could have been able to be with you and kiss all those sniffles away!

Do you know, Billee dear, I simply glowed from heat to foot when I read the line in your letter that told me there was more than a corner of your heart reserved for me. I know full well how uncertain things are at this time, but like you, I have something within that wasn't there before and if it's humanly possible I'll try to expand that "something" one day. Too, I can only pray that we will be welded together by hope until the time comes when we can catch up in our happiness.

I realize it will be easier for me to put everything aside and concentrate on you than it will be for you to do the same. Still, I can hope that I will always be uppermost in your affections. Will you blow me a kiss? I sure could use one.

Billee, I'm glad you have someone like Marguerite in whom to confide. I put her down as a grand girl as soon as I met her.

I'm writing this, hoping you get it by the 17th—our first month's anniversary. Gosh, it seems as though we knew each other a lifetime instead of a few short weeks.

I showed your picture to John and Ben. They sure were envious! Both want to be remembered to you. Your picture will "meet" the family Sunday. They are visiting me if I am not able to get home.

Time to go, sweetheart. Say "hello" to everybody and if you'll close your eyes I'll take you in my arms and kiss you. Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, C.

*February 14, 1942—Asheville [note inside
Valentine's Day card*

Charles,

At last, someone I can send a valentine to. That hasn't happened since my school days. You don't know how much it means.

I guess you haven't received either of my letters. I didn't get your airmail until Monday. The other one came Saturday and I answered by return mail to the New York address and enclosed a picture. The other I answered Monday and sent airmail to your brother.



Hope you don't think this is silly, but I do mean it. I've missed you more than I can write about. Write soon. Take good care of yourself and pray for a miracle that might bring about an early meeting.

Love, Billee

February 16, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Evening, Sweetheart.

It's raining tonight, but I can smile, since I have your last letter to read over and over again. Mother, Dad and my brother were here to visit me yesterday and your letter came with them, too.

I have a piece of news that is all my own and I'll save it for the end. Things like that are much better than way, don't you think?

Billee, dear, I guess we both have that same "lost feeling." This past Saturday night, for me, for terribly lonesome.

I wasn't able to get a weekend pass inasmuch as I had one the week before. And, John and the other fellows were home, which left me pretty much alone. I would have given ten years of my life to have you with me if only for an hour. But then, I do have "you" in the picture case next to my heart.

Don't worry about where I am. I've told my brother to let you know if I am not in a position to do so. I may be able to get word to him when, and if, we move suddenly.

And, as I've said before, no matter where I am and what I'm doing, I'll be thinking only of the time when I can hold you oh, ever so tightly. Because, you see, I do love you so much, Billee Ruth! Like you, I can scarcely believe it happened, and, so suddenly. There were people who interested me in the past but none who made my pulse quicken whenever I looked at her. Too, none of whom I could say, "This is it!"

I'll have to go back a bit now to catch up with my story.

I went to church Saturday night and prayed ever so hard for us. My communion on Sunday was offered for my safety, the safety of all our troops, peace and our happiness-to-be.

I hope I'm not planning too far ahead, or "taking too much for granted" but I guess I can't help myself now. Billee, I just have to tell you what is within me.

It was a relief to hear you were well enough to return to work. Be sure to take care of yourself.

And, too, you shouldn't be having those visions of "boats, planes and tanks." Just try and think of me being so very close to you. With our prayers, I'm sure God will watch over me and bring me back soon.

I'm going to say, "Good night, Sweetheart" for now. Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, C.

February 17, 1942—Asheville

My dear Charles,

You'd laugh if you could see where I'm at this minute, perched up on the last flight of stairs going to the roof. It's the only quiet place I could find. Our [work] lounge is something like a bedlam let loose during the lunch hour and you have about as much chance of relaxing as a monkey in a cage.

If my letter was "a bit of heaven," yours was the sunshine we didn't have yesterday. What a day. Rain... literally buckets of it all day long and far into the night. I don't as a rule mind rain, but coupled with the bad news we've been getting, it was a little more than I could take, hence you can see you saved the day.

You're sparking me with your letters, Charles. I've had one almost every other day since you left. I'm not complaining, either, in fact. I love it and your letters. They are so much like you and few people can do that. I can close my eyes and almost hear you say what's written.

I'm feeling much better, but I know I would have had a much more speedy recovery and far more pleasant if I could have followed your prescription.

I'm sending a little something along with this to help keep those Yankee breezes away. I'm hoping that it fits. The size was a guess and I had to be the model since we don't have any men-folk around to try things on. If it doesn't fit give it to someone it does, and who needs it.

I haven't been doing much lately. This cold together with your sweater and first-aid classes have kept me pretty busy. I was to have gone to a service party Saturday night, but somehow I just couldn't make myself go... not just yet, anyhow.

One of our large schools near Asheville is being turned into a naval academy. There is also talk of the building of an Army airfield to be used for training purposes, that is to familiarize pilots to mountain flying.

I showed our picture to Mom and, of course, she turned it over to the back, and this is what she said: "My, he certainly made up his mind in a hurry." She has taken my cold and isn't feeling so well. Everyone else is well and all ask to be remembered.

I was wondering if Ben and John were still with you or whether you had been scattered. I appreciate his thinking of me.



Downtown Asheville with Ivey's on the right, circa 1940s.

I'm going to take part of my vacation at Easter, I've definitely decided. Now, all I have to do is convince the boss. Marguerite has Easter Monday off and she is going to take Friday and Saturday.

This is our anniversary and your letter arrived in time. You were sweet to remember. Somehow or other, Charles, you manage to make me feel so important and necessary. No one ever made me feel like that before. I don't find at all hard to concentrate on you. Besides, I never have been one to gallivant much.

One advantage of our having known each other for such a short time is that we won't be able to forget even the little things that happened, at least I won't. I can hear you say that we've known each other a lifetime, but you know what I mean.

I forgot to mention, I've had to move from my perch and I'm really writing under difficulties. We have so many sick in our office that we are all having to do double duty. I'm in the tube room where all the sales tickets come, trying to make change and write in between.

This really started out to be a note and look what happened. I hope you don't mind getting long letters because I never know when to quit. I do want this to get off this afternoon. I had so much to do last night that I just couldn't get around to writing.

I hope I was "met" with approval by your family Sunday. Families mean a lot, don't they, even ours, scattered as it is. I'm glad you are able to see them again and hope your good luck continues.

It's time for me to go back to my own work, so I'll have to close for the time being.

Love and kisses, Billee

Please, stay 'till Easter. Wouldn't it be wonderful or, "divine," should I say?



*Hank Gornicki, a repeat guest at
Oak Lodge*

February 22, 1942—Asheville

Dearest Charles,

I've been trying to write this since Thursday, but without much luck. Thursday night we had company and Friday night I went to first-aid class and the movies afterward. Last night we had company again.

Hank Gornicki's wife and baby are here to stay while he is in spring training camp. John Fanning's wife was here last night for dinner. They are good friends and I know Wynne Gornicki quite well. We have been quite a merry household. It's a very pleasant change to have a little one around again.

It's almost time to get up and go to church. I haven't been since you were here. I was sick the one Sunday and Mom wasn't well last Sunday so I had to be chief cook and bottle-washer for the day. I do it every so often so as to keep in practice.

Charles, I enjoyed your letter so much and the picture arrived safely. I was so happy to see “you” again. I put it on my dresser so that when I open my eyes in the morning, you’re the first thing I see.

I approached the boss with my proposed plan of vacation. He agreed to a part of it, but we still have some compromising to do. I’m going to try and leave midnight Friday night so as to arrive in New York at noon on Saturday. We’re almost sure Marguerite can get the time off, too. I am getting excited at the prospect of seeing New York again, but more at the slim chance that you may still be in the vicinity. I’m trying hard not to count too much on you being there so that I won’t be too disappointed.

Charles, my dear, you don’t think you are being too hasty in declaring yourself? Of course, I love you saying it, but I don’t want there to be any doubt. I know what I’m talking about.

Charles, you will have to know this sometime, so it may as well be in the beginning.. there won’t be any doubt or disappointments. As I have said before, I never have gallivanted much, because I went with someone through years. We both came to a mutual agreement last summer and broke it off. We were to have been married.

I’m just thanking God and all his guardian angels for preventing such a marriage, because I know now that it never would have been right. It makes me shudder to think I might have gone through with it and then met you, because that had to happen sometime, somewhere, war or no war. This is why, Charles, I want you to be sure for both our sakes. I know, now, the difference in what is real and what isn’t. Everything is so right about us. I am fairly bursting with joy.

I have prayed so hard for both of us and the rest of the world. I do so want to see you again before they send you away. I miss you a lot, Charles, but I’m not lonely because I feel you are always nearby. Many times I feel that if I closed my eyes and reached out my hand, you would be there to take it.



An early picture of The Grove Park Inn.

There is a James A. Fitzpatrick Traveltalk of Asheville and the Smokies. We had the premiere here this week. It is in technicolor and simply gorgeous. Our Inn and the terrace where we walked is in it and all the other interesting scenes in and around us. I know you will enjoy it.

I saw “The Man Who Came to Dinner” this week. It was excellent and so funny. I haven’t been to the movies in weeks.

It was a gorgeous night last night. Marguerite and I went for a walk.

I have to stop now and get dressed to go to church. I’m in the most uncomfortable position, but I never was good at writing in bed. I’m going to miss you in church this morning, but I’ll be thinking of you and wishing you were here.

All my love, Billee

February 25, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello Sweetheart,

Can you forgive me for not writing sooner?

I thought I’d be able to write over the weekend, but I was able to get a pass and spent Saturday p.m. and Sunday at home. Even then, I started to write twice but I was interrupted both times. It seems as though everyone wants to see a soldier when he is home.

My brother had two of your letters for me when I arrived home which made my visit 100 per cent perfect. One of them was your lovely valentine. I might add it has a special place among your letters, all of which I’m saving. We’ll have such a grand time one day reading them again, won’t we?

I received the sweater and, Billee, you couldn’t have sent anything I would appreciate more, except your picture. I’ll never part with either. I don’t have to tell you how thankful I am. Surely you must know. Had it been—oh, a piece of paper that I knew you touched—I’d treasure it.

Sometimes, I imagine I overdo it in trying to say how much you mean to me. I try not to be “gushy,” but when I do “speak” with you this way I find it hard to restrain myself. Like you, this has never happened to me before. Once, or twice, I may have thought so, but I never wanted to be near anyone as much as my “honey-chile.”

Your letters “lift” me up so much. So, don’t ever worry about me getting too many or that they are too long. The longer they are and the more often I receive them, the more I love them. And honey, if my little remembrances make you smile, or bring home the thoughts I send, it makes me so happy. I want to make you the happiest girl in the world if I can.

All this may sound rather small, coming from someone who, just now, isn’t in a position to make anyone happy. Still, I’d like to believe I can, one day. I don’t mean to get heroic, or wave the flag, but I do know that what I have to do now must come first. You can understand that, can’t you?

You said, “...sometimes I think I have too much imagination.” Billee, I love every bit of your imagination. Too, I might say I’m always thinking of our “divine” night. And, I get so lonesome for you. At night I close my eyes and try to reach out and hold you so close. Just the memory of things like that make me feel low—and high—all at once.



Do you know, I never think of our meeting as something that happened by chance. Yes, I know to think otherwise is too “story-bookish.” But then, it happened to us, didn’t it? I’m sure it didn’t take five minutes for me to just want to be concerned with everything about you. When I kissed you first, I couldn’t believe I had done it. I guess I just had to.

I couldn’t suppress a smile when you said your mother remarked that “I had made up my mind in a hurry.” You see, I’ve been told I am not impulsive. Perhaps I hadn’t been before. But it took you to make me the most impulsive man in the world.

Of course, I showed your pictures to the family as well as several friends. In fact, I showed them to everyone I met since I received them. And I have yet to hear any of them say I didn’t “strike gold” in Asheville. Mother’s opinion was that you were “so sweet.” My sisters, Eleanor and Bette, just said, “Ah!” I did take a bit of ribbing from my brothers, Ed and John, but I loved it. Ed, by the way, expects to be in the service by March 16.

Now, about my weekend...

Johnny Joyce and I went home together and arrived in J.C. at 3:45. I was home by 4:00 and stayed in all night. I met some of “the boys,” from the neighborhood, at church Sunday a.m. and stopped to chat with them for an hour or so.

John, laden with moving pictures of me, came into the house Sunday and showed them to us. Later in the afternoon, the fellow I was best man for at his wedding in August called and asked me if I would go to a formal dance last night with a friend of his wife. I accepted and enjoyed myself as best I could without you... honestly, I’m not kidding. I was dancing when the orchestra played our song and I excused myself by saying I’d rather sit it out. I hope I wasn’t rude but I don’t believe the girl minded.

At any rate, I left the dance at 12:30 and Al, my buddy, drove me to the train. I was in camp at 3:00 a.m. and said, “Good-night, Billee,” at 3:30 before closing my eyes. My pass was good from 1:00 p.m. Saturday until 6:00 a.m. today. The situation now permits me to get a weekend pass every two weeks. So, I’ll probably be in camp next week.

Honey, don’t worry about discouraging news about the war. Everything will be all right soon. And, when we start rolling, it will be over in to time at all.

I’ve got to leave now (it’s 9:55) but I’ll be praying for you and always thinking of you. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, C.



Eleanor and Bette Kiley around 1936.

February 26, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello Sweetheart,

I'm still here, hoping and praying that my duty will detain me long enough to spend our first Easter together. It will mean so much to me that, like you, I hesitate to become too enthusiastic in the event I am sent to another post and thereby disappointed as I've never been before.

I received your latest "bit of heaven" yesterday morning, and, although I wanted to write immediately, I was prevented because of guard duty. However, I have the chance now and I'm going to make the best of it.

You ask if I'm not "being hasty in declaring myself." And, I can very easily understand the question. It is hard to believe such a thing could happen when we have known each other for so short a time. Too, when you consider the barriers we face, it becomes a more difficult problem, doesn't it? But, if this is any more assurance, I know I have never been as certain of anything before as I am in loving you.



(L-r) Charles, Ruth Totten, Dorothy and Al Doyle (Charles' closest friends in Jersey City), Berta and Jack Kenney, at the Doyles' wedding—Jersey City, 1941.

Yes, I've known girls before, just as you have known men. Too, there was a time when I thought I had met "her." But never once had I made plans, and that is one reason why I am sure that you were waiting somewhere. Sometimes, when my closest friends were being married, one after another, I wondered whether or not I had "missed the boat." But I never failed to find consolation in the thought that my time would arrive—perhaps a bit later than I had hoped—but it would come, nevertheless. Because it came during such trying times, when I wasn't able to capitalize on it, it seemed so unfair. Still, if that is the way it is to be, I figured there isn't much to be done about it.

Now and then, especially at night while I lie awake in the dark, I try hard to think that you feel as I do, and, no matter what happens, you will never allow the flame to go out. That sounds awfully selfish, doesn't it, Billee? But I can't help it. That's just the way it is. You said once that you never had the feeling of being so necessary. There never was anything more necessary.

What can I offer? Nothing, at present, but the solemn promise that I'll never bring you unhappiness. I believe I told you that before. When all these barriers are removed, I am sure I can rehabilitate myself within a short time and then set about finding you, wherever you are.

Still, if all this is not enough, Billee, I'll never think less of you. To me you will always be the angel I once met on earth; soft, tender, affectionate and sincere. And, the girl with the cute tilt to her nose, whom I once held in my arms and wanted to keep there forever.

I was glad to hear you have company in the person of Mrs. Gornicki. I'll bet you have a great time winning and losing the pennants, or, don't baseball widows care to talk "shop?"

Your vacation plans sound swell. I do hope they materialize. Just in case I'm still here, I am making elaborate plans for us. We'll paint New York so red it will look like one great big smear of lipstick!

Honey, I hope you will always miss me, the way you do in church, because it is the same with me. We have devotions in the chapel every night for 30 minutes and I'm there whenever possible. While you pray for me, I'm praying for you. In that way, I don't believe we can miss, can we?

If I have to remain in camp over this weekend, I'll have company because John will be confined. He overstayed his pass last weekend and was told he would be eliminated from pass privileges for two weeks.

I didn't mention this before because I wasn't sure it would work out, but we are publishing a company paper and I've been doing some work on it. I'll send you a "first edition." It won't be so good because it will be mimeographed and practically all of the fellows never had experience in publishing.

I spoke with our morale officer the other night and received permission to try and get the films issued by the American and National Leagues. My brother has a screen and projector and will gladly come here to show the pictures. The National Football League also has a film and I'll try to get that, too. I intend to call my paper's office in work hours and have one of the fellows make the arrangements to procure the films. I'll let you know how I make out.

Time to go now, Sweetheart. but I'll be back soon to hold your hand and "walk" with you. I hope I was able to remove any doubt that was in your mind. Have I? Bye for now.

All my love and kisses, "forever and a day," C.

February 28, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Sounds sort of possessive, doesn't it, but I like the way it sounds. Hope you don't mind.

I'm not at all sure how this letter will read when I finish, because I'm awfully sleepy. It's quite late and I'm curled up in our corner of the sofa wishing you were here so I wouldn't have to write.

I finally got all the old ladies tucked in for the night. Miss Heffernan is such a "night-owl." It's like nothing less than pulling teeth to get her to bed. Mom has been in bed for hours. She doesn't feel so well. I think her cold is still hanging on. I have both your letters. Mrs. Gornicki brought them to the office for me both days and I'll have to admit I wasn't much

good the rest of the day. I literally floated on pink clouds the rest of the day and night. You can see how your letters “left” me.

The only reaction I had today from your letter was to hop a plane and come the fastest way possible to reassure you that there isn’t any doubt in my mind as to your feelings or mine. Like you, I have never been impulsive although I’ve always wanted to be, but that practical side always rose above it... then the exception had to come someday. Besides I’m tired of being practical.

But Charles, you’re giving me all you possibly can at this time... your love, sincerity and your promises. How can I hope to ask for more at a time like this? I love your selfishness. You don’t know what a wonderful feeling it is to be necessary to someone. You must, though, because the thought just struck me how necessary you are to me.

It’s strange how different people can be. There never has been anyone I could talk to or write to the way I am doing to you. That must be complete understanding. It makes me believe all the more that this is the right one and makes me add your phrase, “this is it.”

Your weekend in New York sounded like fun. I’m a little envious of that girl. There will come a day. You know I still haven’t heard “our song” since you played it that last Sunday. It doesn’t seem to be on any of the music boxes or the radio.

When I received your letter Thursday with the pictures, it was before lunch, so I really had lunch with “you.” I went to Lucille’s and sat at our table and had full intention of playing “our song” only to find it had been taken off. The best I could do was “White Cliffs of Dover,” one of your favorites, I remembered. I appreciate all your friends’ remarks and being shown off, too.



Marguerite Heuser at Oak Lodge, Asheville, 1942.

Charles, I’ve meant to tell you before how much I admire your spirit and reaction to your present position because it is definitely a sacrifice. It would be different if you were just out of school, but you were making a career for yourself and you haven’t said anything or written anything that would lead me to believe you felt sorry for yourself. You make me feel very proud.

As I have said before, I love your letters. They have become terribly important to me. In fact, I’ve become quite a pest, calling Mom to ask for mail. She kids me quite a lot about it. I haven’t told her as yet how we feel about each other.

Marguerite is making you a pair of gloves. I’m not supposed to be telling this, but I’m afraid it will be summertime before she finishes. She’s experimenting on you. She has almost finished one and it looks like the real McCoy. She said I was supposed to be the one that made them.

I finished my first-aid course; now all I have to do is work for my grade and certificate from Washington and I'll be all prepared. I'm going to take the air raid warden's course next and the advanced first-aid course. I sincerely hope I never have to use it, but then anything can happen.

I'm really getting exciting about my New York trip. I can hardly wait. I've been checking calendars and, if you are still there and your weekends work out the same way... the first weekend in April will be yours. It seems too much to hope for, but I am.

We have had snow all week long for the first time in six years... imagine. We've had light snow falls but they melted as soon as they fell. You can't imagine how beautiful the inn and the mountains were. One morning, in particular, the sun was so bright with everything white and glistening. I wish you could have seen it. That's a laugh. I'll bet you're seeing plenty of it if we are having it.

I have just looked at the clock and it's one a.m. and way past my bedtime.

Mrs. Gornicki is lots of company, but I'm afraid there hasn't been much baseball discussed. I'm enjoying her baby. She and Mom went to the show the other night and I stayed with her. We had a big time, the baby and I, getting her in bed and settled for the night. She doesn't let me out of her sight when I'm home. She is smart for her age, but her dad has been with her a lot and takes an interest in teaching her.

I bought my Easter bonnet for our Easter date. I tried to look at it from a man's viewpoint but I doubt if I'm succeeding. Anyhow, it is cute and definitely an Easter bonnet.

I can hardly wait for that "first edition." I'm glad you all have found something to make your spare time interesting. Who knows what hidden talents you might disclose in your company? The films should help, too. I hope you succeed and I know you will. You're doing all right now.

You have definitely removed all doubt. I have felt it from the beginning, but it just seemed too good to be true, hence my doubt as to your sincerity. I have waited so long that I was afraid I never would find it since I was so sure once that I had. Of course, now I know how wrong I was.

I really have to say "goodnight" now. It is very late, but I wanted to mail this after church. "Goodnight, my love." (I always liked that song.)

All my love, Billee

March 1, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

I've done such a dumb thing. I wrote you a long letter last night in answer to the two I received, one on Thursday and one Saturday. Marguerite mailed it for me today and I know just as well that I left out 135th Infantry in the address. Here I am again, in case you don't receive that one because I'm afraid you'll think I'm ignoring you and that would never do.

I've been trying to find a good view of the Inn to send so you won't forget. I have all your letters, too. I didn't think anyone else saved letters like I do. I have some I've had for years.

We can make a scrapbook some day after we're caught up on our happiness and we'll have a lot more to put in it.

Charles, you more than reassured me. If I was in doubt, it is all gone. I'm just not used to things happening so fast. There isn't any more doubt, so I'm going to accept your love and promises for the present and in turn I am entrusting all my love and sincerity to you without question. I have been saying "why" to myself, but no more. I'm just going to trust in God and hope that the day will come soon when we can make the most of our good fortune.

Something wonderful has happened inside and I know it all revolves around you. Suddenly, my old restlessness has gone and I'm going to content myself to stay put for the present.

Never have I been able to write to someone and really say what I meant and wanted to. This makes me all the more sure that we do have complete understanding and that all is right. And I might add your phrase, "this is it." We have something that other people spend years together and never have.

You have already made me very happy, more than you will ever know. You're very necessary and important to me, too, now. So you see it works both ways.

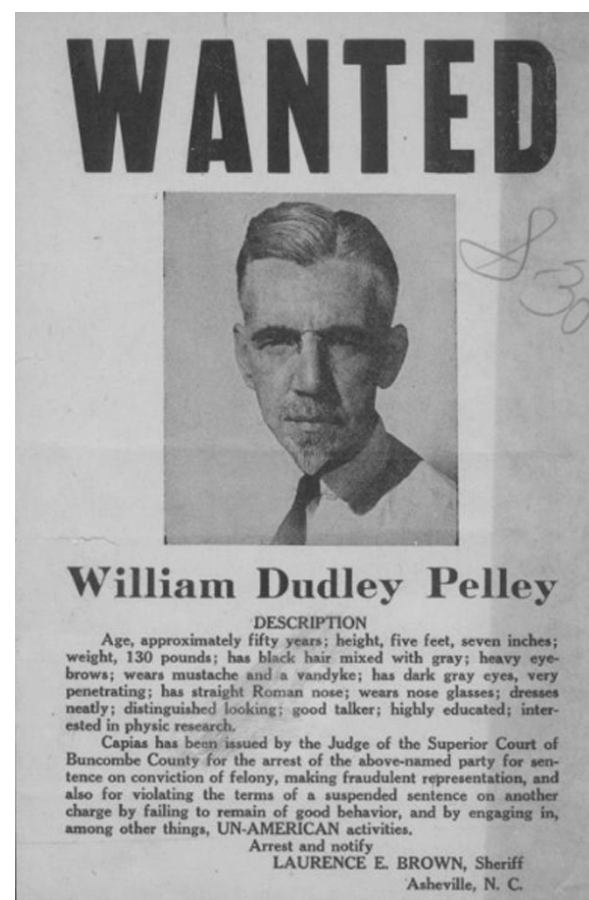
I'm trying not to get too excited about my trip, but I hope my good fortune holds until vacation time and permits our Easter date. Just being with you will be enough and I'm sure I can provide the lipstick in case we do want to do a little painting.

Everyone is curious about your button on my coat, but it's still too wonderful to talk about. I have a few special friends that know a little and to whom I showed your picture. They all agreed you were definitely smooth, nice and they liked your looks.

Mom hasn't said much. She has kidded me a lot about pestering her for mail on the telephone every day. As yet, I haven't told her there is anything serious.

Do you remember going by that rock house on the mountain and me saying it was rumored a Nazi spy lived there? They caught him the other day... in fact, a whole gang. The fences and gates were all electrified and they had to kill four large dogs before they got in. They found a high-powered sending and receiving set plus other damaging evidence. It hasn't been published, but the information came from an authoritative source. They were all taken to Washington. The man who built the house has been in Asheville several years, but the house was built last fall. He lived at the Inn all last winter. I imagine he's been under surveillance for some time. [We have tried and tried to authenticate this story but failed. It may refer to a raid on a house belonging to William Dudley Pelley, head of a U.S. fascist group called The Silver Shirts in the 1930s.]

I've been wanting to tell you how much I admire the spirit with which you are taking your present position. It is



definitely a sacrifice because you had a career in the making. Those boys just out of school or not finished yet aren't nearly so affected. But you haven't shown me in any way that you might feel sorry for yourself. I admire the quiet dignity with which you are going about it without any fanfare or flag-waving. I'm so glad that is the way you feel. You make me very proud.

I finished my first-aid course. Now I'll have to wait on my certificate and grade, then I'll be prepared. I'm going to take the advanced course and the air-raid warden course next. I sincerely hope I'll never have to use them, but it is good to be prepared.

It will be funny if you do get the other letter, too, and have to read practically the same thing twice. By the way, did you receive the letter I wrote the night you called? I expect you did, but we had so many crossings with each other at that time.

I really must close now and get this off in the next pick-up. I just wanted to be sure you heard some word from me in case that letter was delayed. I hope I have reassured you. I'm afraid I'm not very good at writing exactly how I feel. I could show you lots better that all doubt has been removed. Goodnight for now.

All my love, Billee

March 2, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee dearest,

I'm not waiting for your letter to write tonight. And, I prefer it that way. Just to sit down and "talk" to you.

It is a rather unusual setting, too, because I'm on guard duty again and I'm writing this during my four hours off, in the guard house. I can hear a soldier playing, "You Made Me Love You," on the piano in the Recreation Hall next door. It seems appropriate because it reminds me of Asheville. Not that you did make me love you—that was as natural as the rising and setting of the sun—but we danced to that song, by Harry James, so often didn't we?

I was able to get home for a few hours yesterday as the result of a 12-hour pass. I left at 11:00 a.m., reached home at 1:00 p.m., started back at 8:00 and was in the barracks at 10:30. Johnny Joyce had his restriction lifted and made the trip with me. Next weekend I'm due to get a weekend pass.

There were 300 men moved out from our regiment yesterday—destination unknown—but none from my company. I hope they continue on that scale until after I see you, and hold you, again. It was a sad parting for some of us. Fellows with whom we trained in Camp Croft were among those leaving. They were notified Saturday night to pack their bags and left yesterday morning. That's how it happens.

I wore my sweater home yesterday to show it to the family. When they visited me last I left it behind in the barracks. But everybody liked it. I did have time to show it to Mother and Dad when they were here but the girls hadn't seen it. I believe I "introduced" my sisters, didn't I? There is Eleanor, 19 and Bette, 18. You'll love 'em.

How have you been, honey? I just know your eyes are still sparkling, as I saw them last, but I hope you haven't been annoyed with colds and things.

I called the office [Jersey Journal] last week and spoke with my boss. I don't believe he intended to make me feel badly but he told me he was leaving tomorrow for the Jersey Giants' training camp. Gosh, how I'd love to be leaving now, with you, for a month or so, in Florida, Louisiana or some of the other training sites. Bet we'd have loads of fun.

It's almost time to get out to my post again, sweetheart, so I'll have to leave you for awhile.

Remember me to all and take care of yourself. By the way, do you know the words to "Only Forever?" Well, I'm thinking of them now: "Do I long to be with you as the years come and go..."

'Bye for now.

All my love and kisses, C.

March 4, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Evening, Sweetheart,

I've been lying on my bed for the past hour or so, reading your letter so many times, just being happy and so much in love with you. Billee, I wouldn't share my happiness with any one tonight, unless it was with you. So, I preferred to remain "in" with my radio and you. Your "bit of heaven" arrived today at noon. It was the second one you wrote. I do hope the other one reaches me soon because I'll be impatient until it does.

I want to say here that my letter of Monday must have been very dull. Perhaps I shouldn't have written then, 'cause I was a bit tired and must have reflected it my letter. Then, I intended to write again last night but I just had to devote a full evening to the camp paper. More about that later.

By the way, how about a great big smile and a bigger kiss for me, huh? I'd love 'em.

Billee, your letter was all I could have hoped for, and more. Like you, I have so much to say and still find it hard to do in a letter. You do say all the things I want to hear, and yet I can't find words to equal yours.

I want to tell you what I felt when you said, "you are necessary and important to me." And, "I am entrusting all my love and sincerity to you without question." I'll do everything humanly possible to be ever worthy of that trust, believe me. It is something like that I want to tell you while you are close me, instead of writing about it. But, I'm steeling myself to be content until I can tell you all the things I have in my heart.

And, sweetheart, I'm sure you know how much your letters mean. If I could only find a suitable adverb for it. I'll merely say I love every inch of you, more and more as the days go on, and believe that you understand. This is such a strange time to make plans. But I find myself making them with you, in every one of them.

Please don't be envious of anyone I'm with. I could have been with a thousand girls that night but when I looked at them, I'd see you. I could almost hear the familiar click of your high heels. I'm sure I can tell yours apart from any others.

I was flattered, indeed, to hear that your friends gave me a good "mark." Still, it doesn't mean a thing in comparison to your opinion.

Do you know, I can close my eyes and see you almost like a madonna in church, praying so ardently for us. Don't ever stop because I'm sure He is listening to you.

Billee, it certainly was a surprise to hear that the "man in the mountain" was actually a spy. I recall that I had mentioned it was a good spot for a short-wave radio. John and Ben can't get over it.

From your description of "Asheville in the snow," I feel awfully "homesick." We have been having mild weather after a bitter cold snap when we arrived.

I did receive the letter written the night I called. And that reminds me to tell you I am going to call again next Wednesday, Mar. 12, at about 8:00 o'clock. If the call is late it will be because the lines are tied up. It will be so good to hear your voice again.

Your estimation of my spirit, etc. makes me blush. I'm just trying to be a good soldier but if it makes you feel proud, I'll try to be that much better. I'll never let you down, Billee.

Now, about the company paper: it was 50% worse than I expected, and I did feel pessimistic. I couldn't expect to accomplish much with the meagre equipment, time and help but things turned out pretty badly from my standpoint. However, everybody else thought it was a good effort considering our handicaps. In other words, instead of making a good thing of it, the idea of the paper is to give the men a little more interest in extra-curricular activity. In the end, I had to write, edit and rewrite practically everything. Because I wasn't on hand to watch the printer, he made several mistakes. Well, as long as we're happy, we'll get by. I hope the next issue can show a marked improvement.

Time to close my eyes and dream of you. Bye for now.

All my love and kisses, "Reassured," C.

P.S.: Best regards to Mother, Marguerite and all at "412."m [Oak Lodge was located at 412 Merrimon Avenue.]

March 5, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

I didn't expect a letter until Saturday, but your very pleasant surprise arrived today. I love getting letters that way.

I expect you have read about our mountains being isolated by snow... 18 inches in fact and that is a snow here. They really make much of it down here. The war news almost took the second page. They closed the store at noon Tuesday—no business—so we all went home and played in the snow. I borrowed Evelyn Fragge's candid camera and took some pictures. I'll send them to you as soon as I get them back. I'm not so good at taking pictures, so I don't

know how they will turn out. I would have loved to have you see the mountains in all their glory. It fairly takes your breath away. So much for our snow. That's the only real news we have to offer.

I'm so glad they all liked my sweater. I was so afraid I had made it too small and you'd have to give it away. I've been trying to imagine what your family is like and I'm hoping that I'll soon have the pleasure of meeting them all with you.

Just imagine being away with you for a month just anywhere. There will come a day when all this will be a memory and we'll be making new memories.

I've been very well. The sniffles are all gone. There has been a lot of work to do both at home and the office. This is a busy buying season and since I have accounts payable it all falls on me. Our maid joined her husband in Chicago last week, hence Mom and I have had all the work to do at least until we can find someone else.



Billee in the big snow—Asheville, 1942.

The fire department closed the theaters until the snow leaves the roofs. They are afraid that it is too heavy for the roofs to hold... imagine. We've all been saving our money. I haven't been going quite so often. I used to go twice a week, but sometimes I don't go at all. It is just a habit I guess.

For the first time since you left, I heard "our song" yesterday morning just before I got up to go to work ["Tonight We Love."] Mother turned the radio on and that is what they were playing. I closed my eyes and felt you take my hand in yours and call me "Kitten" and remembered how many times we had heard it together. I went around on a pink cloud all day. I'm not at all sure what I did yesterday.

Every time I think of going to New York (which is practically all the time) and the prospect of seeing you again, I can't help but get excited. I've tried to imagine all the things we might do. I have had to take into consideration the fact that you may not be there and then you may not have that weekend, but I've pushed such unpleasant thoughts to the back of my mind. I even had you with a furlough in one of my wild day dreams, but then anything can happen I've learned, since January 17.

Bing Crosby just finished singing "White Cliffs of Dover," one of your favorites. I remember you playing "Only Forever" that Sunday afternoon in the drug store. I've always liked it.

One of the girls in our office returned this week from her honeymoon spent in New York. Her first trip north and she hasn't stopped talking yet. Of course, we swapped tales. She saw more of it than I did. [We have no idea when Billee went to New York before April 1944.]

You should have this by Monday so I'm hoping you spent a very pleasant weekend at home. I'll be thinking of you. I have so many things around that remind me of you, I couldn't

forget if I tried. Be good and no restrictions, please, or anything that might prevent our Easter date. "Talk" to me some more. "Goodnight, my love."

Billee

Do you have your stripe, yet? I forgot to ask.

March 6, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Evening angel,

I'm back again to drop in and talk with you because I have time on my hands tonight and I couldn't spent it in a better way. The mail was very kind to me, because I received your letter yesterday. That is, the one you thought might not reach me. I loved it, too, sweetheart. Honestly, it didn't seem like a letter that was re-written.

Just now, I'm listening to Kate Smith's program and she's singing, "She'll Always Remember, So Don't You Forget," and that brings you so very close to me, Billee, dear.

Do you know, my happiest moments during the day are those spent thinking of our few weekends together. I don't know how many times I've covered the time, from our first moment together until the last.

The first time I saw you, the first words we spoke. I remember I didn't catch your name when you introduced yourself. It didn't seem to matter because I was much more interested in the girl. Then, I remembered I'd have to know your name and found it on your tag.

Our first dance... do you remember the song? (Kate is singing, "Miss You.")

Then, when I kissed you and something reached out and touched me, something I never quite new before. I wanted to say a million things then. But I know I stopped to think and told myself... it couldn't happen!

How I couldn't sleep right away in the hotel, thinking and thinking, with Jim's coughing helping me to stay awake. And the next day, when you asked if you were "tagging along." I was a little bewildered then, darling, because I thought I'd done something I shouldn't.

I remember, too, how I sat in your living room, pretending to read the paper on Sunday morning, all the while watching you wherever you went. Wondering why you were out of my sight so long when it was really only for a moment or two.

I remember so many things, all beautiful, the kind you would lock in your heart and throw away the key. Our night at the Inn and how proud I was of you at the President's Ball. The Sunday mornings in church, and how I longed to hold your hand but didn't think it would be very dignified. How much I missed you during the week, trying to speed up the time when I could see you.

And now, sweetheart, I remember that I miss you dreadfully, and always will, but I love you so much I can stand anything. Goodnight, angel,

All my love and kisses, C.

March 6, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

I started this letter some time ago this evening, but was interrupted by a telegram.

Miss Heffernan's mother is dying and they sent for her. Naturally she was very much upset. She has decided to go in the morning so we have her settled in bed now with hot milk. Her mother is ninety and to me, death would be just a beautiful and welcome ending to one of that age.

Mother decided to call her two sisters in Ohio, so we talked all the way around. Now I can resume. Everyone has gone to bed and I should be before long.

You're keeping me busy but I love it... a letter yesterday and today. I answered one last night and here I am again, curled up in our chair with one ear to the radio and trying to write.

Our snow is almost gone. Today dawned beautiful, bright and sunshiny and has melted a good part of the snow away. That is Asheville weather, though... from one extreme to the other.

I have both your letters here before me, nearly worn out from being read so much. I know how you felt when you wrote Monday night since I've been there many times myself. You're liable to be my victim one of these days. You give me such a nice feeling inside writing to me at times like these. I'm glad you aren't one of those people that write just because they have a letter to answer. You probably won't get the first letter now since it wasn't addressed correctly. They were both almost alike. It wasn't hard to write you because the words keep going through my mind.

Charles, you just have to be there at Easter. We have so much to talk about and catch up with. Something keeps telling me that you will be there. I hope I'm not hearing things.

No one else could make as much noise as I can with my heels walking on pavement. Remember going to Grove Park Inn that Sunday afternoon and me trying to keep up with you?

Charles, I have so much faith in Him that I know everything is going to be all right with us. It will just take time. He has saved Mom and I from many a calamity since we have been in this business that I know He is listening to us.

Charles, my dearest, I'm looking forward to the call, but could you call Tuesday or Thursday or any other night? We were all going to the concert that night... Mom, Marguerite and I. If you can't, I'll stay until you do call and then go on. I can't wait to hear



Elizabeth Esaias Gray with her three sisters: (l-r) May, Elizabeth, Katherine, Letitia—circa 1907. May and Katherine lived in Ohio in 1942.

your voice again and this time I'll dispense with my audience. If you decide to call one of the other nights call station to station because I'm always here and nine times out of ten answer the telephone.

We have an anniversary the seventeenth... St. Patrick's Day, our luck.

I'm sitting in our chair wishing I could turn the clock back to a certain Sunday afternoon so I wouldn't have to write. Instead I'd be laying my head on your shoulder and whispering all the things I want you to hear. That would be so much better than trying to write. You'd laugh if you could hear all the plans I've made but then we can dream, can't we... thank goodness.

We are going to have our first air raid practice Monday. It seems hard to realize that anything could happen in this isolated place. but then anything can happen and we'd best be prepared for what may come.

It does seem hard to let friends whom you've worked and been with so much go, but then that's the way it goes. It is doubly hard when the destination is unknown. I'm so relieved you weren't among those present, at least for a time. I know that the day will come, but I hope not until after we have seen each other once more. It will mean so much.

I'm sorry about your paper, after you put so much effort to it, but I know it couldn't be as bad as you say. I'm more inclined to take everybody's word about it. What happened to my first edition, by the way?

We had a birthday party for Mrs. Davidson [another long-time Oak Lodge guest] the night of the big snow. She was 80 years old. We had cake and ice cream for her and Marguerite and I bought her cut flowers. She fairly beamed, she was so surprised. Her nephew always has a dinner for her, but the weather was so bad he couldn't come and get her. Naturally she was disappointed until our surprise. She is such a sweet old lady. We all love her.

Darling, I should close and go to bed. I'm so sleepy and it is way past my bed time. I had all good intentions of figuring my income tax and getting that off and here I am still writing. I'm so happy that I reassured you properly. I love writing to you. I guess I could go on and on. I know I'd better close now. They are beginning to tell ghost stories on the radio and I have much more pleasant thoughts than that so off it goes and me with it. I'm leaving a goodnight kiss behind for you.

All my love, Your Billee

March 8, 1942—Asheville

Charles dearest,

Just a line to tell you we both have our dates mixed. Wednesday is the 11th not the 12th, which is Thursday and the night of our concert. I'll be home Wednesday night and not many miles from the telephone if that is the night you meant to call.

It has been a long weekend and not very cheerful... rain continually. Spring is just around the corner. It is so warm out and the maple trees across the street are all budding. It doesn't seem at all possible when it hasn't been a week since our blizzard.

I heard something today that I hope you heard too: “Tonight We Love” played as it should be in its original form by the New York Philharmonic. [The music of this song was taken from Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto #1.] Of course, I couldn’t think of anything else but us. It was beautifully done. In fact, it left me breathless.

I’ve missed you a lot this weekend specially this morning when I looked around in church and saw so many soldiers. Then, too, last night I could have done very well with your company. A month from last night we should be together. It’s too wonderful to believe.

The baby has certainly added a lot to this household. I hope we aren’t spoiling her for Wynne. She is so sweet and everything a baby should be. I have a lot of fun with her. she knows now when I should be home at night and she watches from her window for me to come up the drive.

This is just a note to tell you of our [date] errors. I’m hoping it reaches you in time. You know for the first time since we met I dreamed of you last night. It was all very mixed up, but I know you were there.

Marguerite and I spent the day, practically, discussing what we would take and what we would do and the places we were going to go when we get to New York. The trip seems less like a dream every day, but I won’t believe it until I board the train at Spartanburg.

It seems good to be with you for a few minutes again. I can almost visualize you reading this short note. That’s what it started out to be, but I’m still here and it is getting later. I’ll say goodnight for now, wishing you were here so I could do it properly.

My love and kisses, Billee

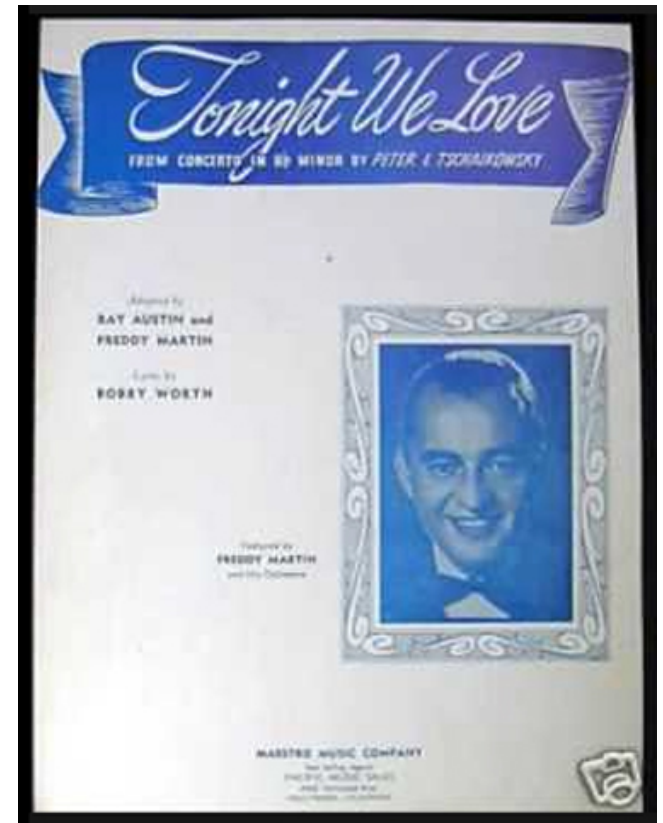
“Expectantly”

March 9, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello darling,

First, may I kiss you twice, now? One for each of the letters I received today? And, of course, I wouldn’t dare kiss you without telling you that I love you so much I can’t find an end to it. Just now, I can close my eyes, put the end of the pen in my mouth, and see you looking so beautiful, curled up in “our corner.”

I hate to get off a pleasant subject, but the pictures of the storm were good to look at, not because of the nasty after-effects, but because I could just picture how beautiful everything was. Too, I’m anxious to see your pictures. I haven’t taken any pictures since I’ve been here but I hope to take some this week.



I still have my fingers crossed, but hard, so that it may help keep me here until I've seen you. And we will have a gorgeous time. I have been making plans for that. Wonder where I'm going to find time to do everything I want to do and still tell you all I have to tell.

Speaking of plans, I loved to hear you say you were making plans, Billee, dear. Would you divulge some of them, or, would you rather keep them locked up until we can see them materialize?

Don't worry about me not being able to get a pass for our Easter weekend, sweetheart. I'll arrange my passes so I'll be eligible for one at that time, if I'm still here. I'm trying not to think much about the latter.

Darling, you said you were looking forward to meeting the Kileys. Well, they are anxious to meet Miss Billee Ruth Gray. I might introduce them, briefly, now.

Dad... he's Charles, Sr.... is the best in the world, to me. The head of a family of six children (a daughter passed away 13 years ago) he has worked hard to give his family the best possible and I think he has done a fine job.

Mother... my best girl, since I have a sweetheart now, is to me what your mother is to you. Need I say more, darling?

Just plain folks, but they are priceless to me.

Then, there is John, Father John, the eldest of the children. And, the pride of the family. He was ordained four years ago. You'll love him, Billee. Eddie, just 22, is next. They say he looks like me. He will be inducted one week from today and uppermost in my mind is the effect it will have on Mother. I hope it won't be too bad. Eleanor, the "beauty" of the family, I claim, is 20 and worth her weight in gold. Bette (she was Betty until a year or so ago... you know how girls are) is the "baby." She is a little more shy than El and possibly wouldn't win any bathing beauty prizes (she is rather chubby, and 18) but she has a disposition that can't be beaten. Well, there they are. I may have been a bit prejudiced but perhaps I can't help it.

By the way, I was home over the weekend. I spent Saturday night at home but was "shanghaied" by the "gang" Sunday afternoon and Sunday night. The gang includes those of my best friends. You'll meet them all, I hope.

I received a letter from Jimmy Kirk in Bermuda today. He wasn't able to say much because of censorship but he was able to tell me of the sea-sickness aboard on the trip and that



*Eleanor, Bette, Josephine and Eddie Kiley
—Jersey City, circa 1927. Josephine died in
1929 at the age of 12.*

Bermuda “has to be seen to be appreciated.” I think we might keep Bermuda in mind, after we have seen Hawaii. We should see Hawaii first, shouldn’t we? I’ll never rest until I have.

I was certainly sorry to hear of Miss Heffernan’s mother. Gosh, I never imagined her mother was alive. If you believe it will do any good, you might tell her I’m writing to my brother tonight, asking him to offer one of his Masses this week for her mother. Miss Heffernan was so kind to me I’d want to do something, however small, for her now.

When you get this you will have talked to me on the phone since I am putting the call through tomorrow night. My knee, upon which I am writing, is getting stiff, which means it must be time to go. So, goodnight sweetheart—for now.

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

PS: Remembered I failed to answer some of your questions. I’ll remember to do so in my next letter.

March 10, 1942—Asheville

My dear Charles,

Our minds must work as one because I started your letter Friday night listening to Kate Smith’s program, too. You have a better memory than I since you say “Miss You” was the first tune we danced to. I always sort of connected that with us but I didn’t know why.

I enjoyed your letter so much especially since you really didn’t owe me a letter or anything. You just wrote because I was uppermost in your mind at that moment and you wanted me to know.

I’ve wondered many times since that night what might have happened if I hadn’t decided to invite myself to that party. You might have met someone else... a real “honey-chile” and not a transplanted one or perhaps a little “hillbilly” girl as they call them around here.

I remember sitting beside that empty chair and wondering who was going to occupy it. Then, I saw you making your way toward our table and thinking “Mmmm, he looks nice. Maybe he’s the one,” and you were. I kept wondering what I was going to talk about and what a relief when I discovered we had a mutual interest... baseball. That is really a coincidence.

I can’t remember having such wonderful times as those three weekends. I remember our first kiss. Somehow I knew you were going to and I didn’t make any effort to prevent it and the thought went through my mind, “He’ll think I’m a fine one that I just go around letting everyone kiss me.” It was such a rare moment. I was afraid to move for fear I’d spoil it all and then I wanted you to do it again. You see, I needed reassurance.

I especially remember that afternoon we dropped in the drug store and played all the records, songs I’d heard so many times but they never meant as much to me as at that moment... and you holding my hand. I wanted you to hold my hand in church but I thought, of course, he won’t. That would look silly and young. Those few hours I spent in church with you have meant so much to me. I’ll never forget.

I made up reasons to come back in the living room. I just couldn't believe it all happened. I kept saying to myself, "This can't be me... watch your step or you'll be falling," but that was a laugh. I had already done that. That last night I can't even write about. It was all too "divine." There just aren't words to describe how I felt. I'm still afraid it's all a dream and maybe that's what you have have fallen in love with. I want so much to see you again, not to reassure myself, but you. I don't want you to be disappointed.

Everyone has gone to bed and it's late again. I'm all ready to hop in, too, soon as I finish this. I like these moments when there is no one around. I can almost feel I'm talking to you instead of writing and if I look up, you might be there, wrinkling your nose at me. There is

so much around that reminds me of you... the chair you held me in, our corner of the sofa, your room upstairs. We had your favorite steamed pudding Sunday and lemon pie last Sunday. They are all just ordinary things but they all remind me of you.

They are playing the "Shrine of St. Cecilia..." another reminder. I'd give such a lot at this moment to have your goodnight kiss. We can still dream, can't we? But sometimes it isn't enough.

I have to turn in now and get my beauty sleep. Goodnight for now, my love.

Billee



March 12, 1942—Asheville

Charles, my dearest,

You made me so happy with your call last night and letter today, I feel even more reassured after hearing you tell me yourself. Charles, I wanted so much to tell you, too, what you told me but I couldn't make you hear without everyone in the house knowing, too. It is still much too wonderful to share with anyone yet. Then, too, it will be so much more wonderful to be with you and tell you how much you mean to me. The only thing is, I'm afraid when the moment comes I'll be so tongue-tied I won't be able to say it.

I haven't made any plans with you. If it is our good fortune that you will be there, then my time is yours to do with what you will as long as I can be with you. The other things I planned I can do alone. I want to see a play. Radio City Theatre, attend a broadcast, go on a shopping tour (wishing tour), walk through Central Park in the afternoon, see the Metropolitan Museum, see or visit the Statue of Liberty. I missed it the last time. I would love to walk up Fifth Avenue on Easter Sunday, if possible, with you. I hope the weather is nice, but the sun will be shining for me even if it is raining, as long as you're there.

I can't get over what you do to me. There never has been anything like the way I feel. Amazing people, these Irish. I love it all, the way I feel and you.

I can almost see your family, Charles. I hope they won't be disappointed in me and that they won't be expecting too much. I am looking forward very much to meeting them, even though I am just a wee bit scared.

We all went to the concert tonight and enjoyed it very much. The artist was fairly new, a South American soprano. I couldn't help remembering the last time I was in the auditorium was with you. I'm very much afraid the music just made a background for my thoughts of you and the wonderful time we had that night.

I've always had a yen to go to Bermuda. I always swore I'd save that for my honeymoon, but then those things always work out differently. I almost went to Hawaii once when I lived in California, but the crash prevented it. I've always wanted to go. Who knows, perhaps we both may see it one day, together. It's too bad John had to be transferred. I know you will miss him lots since you were together so much. Your paths may cross again.

When we came home, Wynne was waiting up for us so we made a lunch and now I'm so wide awake. I know I won't be able to sleep and it isn't p.m. any longer.

My cousin enlisted in the Marines and is at Parris Island, S.C. for the present. He is to have six days at the end of his first six weeks so his family is going to meet him here—[his mother, May, is] one of Mother's older sisters—so we'll have a family reunion soon. We haven't seen any of them in so long.

I had to laugh at Mom last night after you called. She said, "Hmmm. He must have it bad." And then a little later, "At last I think you have met someone that appreciates you." She asked me if I was to see you in New York and I said I wasn't sure and she said, "I don't see any point in going, then." These mothers don't miss a thing.

Charles, you were sweet to think of Miss Heffernan. I'll tell her when she returns from Savannah. I know she will more than appreciate your thoughtfulness.

We're really having spring weather here, now. It's been perfect for three days, so warm and bright. You'd love it.

I thought after I asked you to postpone the call that you might misunderstand, but Mom likes me to go with her to the concerts when we have them. We do have season tickets. I thought you would understand... taking things for granted again. I thought of all the things I wanted to tell you after we had to hang up. The telephone is wonderful, though, to be so close and yet so far away.



Elizabeth Gray at Oak Lodge—Asheville, 1942.

I really must go to sleep. I'm writing this in bed and practically standing on my head. Mom has already gone to sleep and I'm afraid any minute she will waken and pull a "black out" on me since she is nearest the lamp.

I'm glad you had such a pleasant weekend and that your friends "carried you off"... southern expression; same as "shanghied." I hate to say goodnight, but I guess I'll have to. These working girls have to get their beauty sleep. Hope this arrives Saturday. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, Billee

March 13, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee dearest,

Your letter of Tuesday arrived today at noon and, since I have plenty of time this afternoon I can sit down and talk with you again. We are to have an inspection of our equipment and the inspecting officers aren't expected until 3 o'clock.

You mentioned in your letter that I had written, not because I owed a letter, so to speak, but because I just wanted to write. Well, that's the way it will always be. I don't believe writing is worthwhile unless you want to write. To do so because you feel you "owe" a letter is like fulfilling an obligation. Don't you feel that way? So, when you and I want to talk to each other we will simply sit down and "let go," yes? I know you have been doing just that by the way your letters read, but they are so beautiful.

While I think of it now, Billee, I may have been premature in telling you Wednesday night that John, Ben, et al., were going to leave here Monday. It did look that way for a time but now it appears as if they will stay awhile yet. I know if they were going none would be granted passes. Jack Donnell, a friend of Theda's [an acquaintance in Asheville], was given a three-day pass today in order to visit his mother in Virginia.

If I had the slightest notion that I could get a three-day pass, I'd be in Asheville in 24 hours, so help me. I believe Jack's brother, who is stationed at Fort Custis, is very ill, which explains the pass. He came over to see me this morning to borrow some money and since he appeared upset I didn't ask him any questions.

Now, let's talk about you! If I hadn't met you at the Y.M.C.A., I probably would have met a "honey chile," or a "hillbilly." Perhaps, I never would have met you at all. Then, I would still have that empty space inside, the space you filled so completely. There isn't a fraction of an inch there for anyone else... not anyone.

Too, I can acknowledge not having a single thought that you "go around letting everyone kiss me." I'm not infantile enough to hope you had never kissed anyone before. But, I know you never meant it the way you meant it for me. Perhaps, it didn't strike you that way at the moment but it must have later. I say this because that was the effect it had on me. I can never forget the tingling that I had when our lips met. Funny, but I get the same feeling whenever I hear a band play the national anthem. There is absolutely no connection but those are the only times I get that thrill: kissing you and listening to The Star Spangled Banner.

Sweetheart, it meant so much to me to talk with you the other night. I suppose I shouldn't have been so outspoken by telling you how much I love you, not realizing that someone would be within earshot of your voice, preventing you from saying things that perhaps you wanted to say.

One of the fellows was outside the phone booth when I called and later remarked, "Wow, you dropped so many quarters in I lost count!" I told him it was only \$1.10 but was worth many more times that. I believe I'll surprise you with the next call, huh?

Billee, I'm enclosing our regimental insignia, another of my forget-me-nots, which you may hold for safe-keeping. Better still, you may wear it if you wish. It is the standard insignia of the 135th Regiment. The colors are blue and silver. The clover leaf in the center signifies the "Minnesota Volunteers" who formed the first 135th prior to the Civil War and who fought seven major battles in that war. The crossed swords signify action during the "Philippine Insurrection," while the figure on the right was carved during the Spanish-American War. The "fleur de lys" on top was earned in World War I. The motto, "To the last man," was adopted and incorporated in 1929 and was taken as the result of action when sent out regiment into battle to hold a key position. After weeks of intense warfare, the battle was won and the 135th reported every man present or "accounted for." I am told there were more casualties in the 135th in that action than there were in any other regiment in any battle during the last three wars.



135th Infantry Regiment insignia.

It may sound grim but those are the things we are supposed to uphold. With feats such as those to equal, we can't lose, can we?

I have to leave, darling. This may be Friday the 13th, but I feel as though I'm the luckiest man in the world, just to be able to say... Bye for now, sweetheart

All my love and kisses, C.

PS: Usual regards to all. Give the baby a kiss for me, will you?

March 15, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

It's been a lazy afternoon. We all really relaxed. We've had a steady rain all day until now and the sun is trying hard to put in an appearance

I saw the most wonderful movie last night with Marguerite and Wynne: Leslie Howard's "Mr. V." Excellent. He produced and directed it. I have always liked him, but this is tops.

This is just a note that I hope you will receive in time for our second anniversary. I am enclosing a little something I picked up last week. You were all I could think of the moment I saw it and since it's St. Patrick's Day this time, it is very timely. I hope you will like it. You don't have anything lasting except the sweater and that will wear out. I hope it will bring you good luck always.

The war is coming home to us here. We have lost four boys in the community, one I went to school and worked with for several years. That is the hard part of it all.

Miss Heffernan is still in Savannah and I guess will stay on for a time. She has sent for some more of her clothes.

Three weeks from today, if it is our good fortune, we will be together. It doesn't seem possible. I am looking forward to it so much. I can hardly wait for the time to pass.

My girlfriend in the office went on her vacation to Columbia, S.C. to visit her cousin and 60,000 soldiers. We had a lot of fun teasing her, but she has a good sense of humor. She is going to take over my work when I go.

We had word from my young brother [Warren Gray] and he will be home for the Easter holidays. Mom is getting quite excited. He is the only boy and the pride and joy of the family. He is so grown up now with his job and newly assumed responsibility. It seems hard to realize... he was such a little fella for so long.

These past two months have been the happiest I've lived in a long time because they have been filled with you. Yourself for three precious weekends, your letters and calls. The time has gone by so swiftly and yet I feel I've always known you. Even if we never have any more of each other, I'll not ever forget. There will always be a special place for you, a dream come true for just a little while. I don't sound very optimistic today, do I, but you know what I mean.

We had some excitement the other day. Mom tried to burn the kitchen down. Luckily it was caught in time before any real damage was done. She had to call out the fire department. The whole one corner of the kitchen is charred black and the floor and linoleum was burned, also a chair. It's all covered by insurance, thank goodness, and no one was hurt. Mom was just scared pretty badly. It happened in the afternoon and she was alone.

I have to leave for a little while. It's near suppertime but don't go away... I'll be back.

Here I am again and it's quite a lot later and I've missed the last mail pickup tonight.

I had an idea since I wrote the beginning of this letter. I'm going to spend two weekends away from home. The first in New York with you if possible. I don't suppose you would be able to have a pass for the next weekend. I'm wondering if there is a place nearby that I could stay and see you a little bit the last few days of my vacation. Of course, it is just a thought. I don't know any of the rules or regulations.

You spoke to me once of Officers Training while you were here. Have you been in long enough or does that determine your eligibility?

I'm tired tonight for some reason or other and I'd give a lot to have your shoulder under my head for a little while. I know I could relax. I have done quite a bit today, and I've been up since 8:00 a.m. getting breakfast, helping with dinner and supper, the usual Sunday routine. Then I had to fix my clothes for this week. These working girls have to use Sunday for that. I enjoyed those Sundays I spent with you. I just put everything off for another day, but I had a good excuse.

I have just read this letter over to see if there is anything more I might add and I had to laugh at the third paragraph, "This is just a note." This makes the fourth sheet I've started. Some note. I could go on indefinitely telling you how very much I miss you and that you are always in my thoughts. What I'd give for just a moment with you tonight. It seems like such a little to ask for and yet you may as well ask for the moon.

I'll have to close and catch up on my sleep... a half-hour earlier in the morning so I can catch the early air-mail pickup at the post office. Goodnight, my love. Here is a special kiss for our second anniversary.

My love and kisses, Billee

March 17, 1942—Asheville

Charles dearest,

Happy anniversary and thanks a lot for the pin. Knowing what it stands for I am even more proud to wear it especially since it belongs to you. By this time should should have my little remembrance. I hope you are going to like it. It is part of your insignia, I notice. A shamrock is almost a clover leaf.

I feel in the mood to celebrate tonight—go places and do things—but since you aren't here to share my mood this is the best I can do. The boss is out of town, so I played hooky this afternoon and started preparations for my vacation.

A three-day pass. Gosh wouldn't that be wonderful, especially if it happened while I was in New York. Pleasant dreams.

I've just been pleasantly interrupted by your surprise call. My hand is shaking so I can hardly write. My heart is still pounding. You shouldn't have done it as much as I love you for it. That's being too extravagant.

Your news was music to my ears. My plans seem more concrete now. I'm getting more excited every day. You'll never know how happy you've made me. I've been building up for something nice to happen all day and I was't disappointed. I really expected a letter tonight and I was a bit disappointed since it is "our day." I didn't expect you to call me again so soon.

Marguerite has just told me to tell you something... that if you are lucky enough to meet us at the train to have somebody else along that might be interesting to be with while we made up for lost time. She says she is just a wee bit jealous of our good luck at finding each other after all these years. She says she's never seen anything like it.

I'm so glad Ben and John are staying. Maybe when you do leave it will be together.

Mom and Wynne went to the movies so Marguerite and I are keeping the baby. I attended to your P.S. I'm going to miss her so when she leaves. She has certainly filled the empty places in this household.

I'm writing this under difficulties. First, Bob Hope and now Red Skelton [on the radio] and, too, I can still hear your voice telling me the things I wanted to hear.. truly the end of a perfect day.

Charles, you don't suppose we are dreaming too much. I feel so close to you that way. I read an article today that made me sort of sit up and take notice.. that the day of dreams and ideals are over and that we should be more realistic and see things as they are, that we should weigh all the facts and not look at life through rose-colored glasses. It made everything seem pretty grim.



The President's Ball at The Grove Park Inn was an annual event held during FDR's residency to celebrate his birthday. He stayed at the Inn in 1936 while campaigning for his second election. This picture was taken in front of the Inn during a campaign speech.

I've never been compared to The Star Spangled Banner before, but I understand what you mean. One of my favorite memories is standing at attention so close to you at the end of the President's Ball that last evening. It was a precious moment and I think you felt it, too. Some things you just can't talk about and I knew somehow that you felt the same way I did.

I'm still writing and it is much later. Marguerite and I celebrated over ginger ale sodas since your call. The rest are still out. I should

close and go to bed. It is still lovely and warm out, a night meant for celebrating something. It's just this festive mood I'm in. Goodnight for awhile. I'll be looking forward to your letter. As always, my last thoughts will be of you.

All my love and kisses, Billee

March 18, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Evening sweetheart,

I have to ask your forgiveness again for being more lax in writing than I had ever hoped to be. I believe I have those of your letters here that reached me since I last took my pen in hand to "talk" with you. But, I have been terribly busy, or should I say "active," for the past four or five days. Still, I shouldn't want to neglect you and I promise not to, ever.

To my surprise, I was given a pass over the weekend, a surprise since I had one the week before. That meant a day and a half rushing home, getting about to see people, and rushing back. Then, on Monday night, we worked on the Company “paper,” if such it can be called, and also last night. So, here I am, at last. By the way, I’m sending a copy of the latest issue. Bear with us and one day I’ll try to send one that is really worthwhile.

Now, getting up to date...



Soldier (not Eddie) in front of tents at Ft Dix in 1941, to illustrate the living conditions.

Do you know, you fairly beamed over the phone last night. You sounded so happy. It made me feel so good inside afterward. Before I called I visited my brother here at the Reception Center. He was inducted Monday, you know. Poor kid, he looked a little bewildered by everything. I guess I looked the same way once. Mother and my elder brother came down today and I took them over to the Reception Center to see Eddie. He will be leaving here in a day or so for his training camp.

Billee, dear, your “snow pictures” were swell. I showed them to some of the boys here and they couldn’t believe it... a storm in N.C.! Too, your shamrock was a sweet thought. I have it around my neck with my medal.

About the Officers Training, the only way we can apply for it is through our company commander when the notice of application is posted. I inquired about it twice since I’ve been here but was told there weren’t any calls yet. So, the only thing I can do is wait.

I’m looking forward to your visit like I never have anything before. Only two and a half weeks now. Your plans sound swell. I’ll do what I can to elaborate on them. First of all you can count on me getting a pass from 1:00 p.m. Saturday the 4th until 6:00 a.m. on Monday, the 6th. If things break right, I may be able to get a pass the following weekend, too.

The nearest city to camp is Trenton, the state capitol, 18 miles away. You could stay there and I could see you every night that I wasn’t on guard duty, or something. But, I shouldn’t want to have you miss something to stay there for any length of time. I know there is a Y.W.C.A. there in case you did stay at all. Girls from New York who come down for dances here have stayed there.

But tell me, where did you plan to stay when you reach here? Is Marguerite still coming with you? Where will I meet you? And, oh, just tell me everything.

I was sorry to hear of the fire in the kitchen but glad nothing happened to Mother.

You say these last months have been the happiest for you. I could say, “me too” but it would hardly do me justice. But, I’m going to scold you. “Even if we don’t have any more of each other... a dream come true for just a little while.” You wrote that, and it didn’t coincide with my ambition.

You see, Billee, you and I are real. I know it isn't something for "a little while," at least not with me. If it was, I should have known long ago and certainly would not have you on my mind constantly. I don't mean to sound like a romantic hero, or anything of the sort. I'd be ashamed of myself.

Yes, if this "us" is not to endure, there isn't a single thing in this world that's real enough to even think about. That's the way I feel, Billee. And now, a good night kiss... Bye for a little while,

All my love and kisses, C.

March 20, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Your very welcome letter came today. I've been looking forward to "listening" to you again since Tuesday. I was beaming all over the place when you called and long afterward. I was so choked up I could hardly talk, you made me so happy. Everyone has gone to bed so I have you to myself again in "our corner" for a little while.

I had a session with the boss today and received permission to leave on Friday instead of Saturday. Marguerite hasn't asked for her time off as yet, but she is quite sure she will have no trouble. Here is our plan. We leave Spartanburg midnight Friday and arrive in New York at approximately 2:00 p.m. I had planned to spend the weekend with Marguerite until I was sure you were going to be able to be there. Now in order to save traveling time all the way around I will go the hotel, the Martha Washington on Twenty-ninth Street, East and stay until I hear from you. How's that?



Ad for the hotel, probably from the 1930s. The hotel still exists, but its slogan is now, "Exclusively for Everyone."

I didn't have any idea I might be able to see you during the week. I can go to Trenton for part of my week if it won't interfere with Uncle Sam's work. That is the most important item. Our personal happiness is secondary at the moment. I realize that only too well.

I can do all I plan to do in a few days. I was just going to stretch my activities out from one weekend to the next. A weekend was all I had hoped for. Now this is so much better and makes my vacation even more exciting. Whatever you plan to do will be all right with me. I don't think I'll even ask. I like to be surprised.

I just finished listening to the war correspondent from Melbourne telling of MacArthur's arrival. It was quite stirring and so realistic, I felt as if I were there. He certainly has made history in a very short time. His escape was something you only expect to find in fiction and not real life. [There are several opinions about MacArthur's "escape," where he left an entire standing Army, including nearly 100 Army nurses, to be interned for the rest of a long war.]

I know how your Mother must feel with both her boys in the Army now. It's a help, though, that you are together for just a little while. Perhaps he will be sent South as you were. Wherever he's sent I wish him lots of luck. I'm wondering how long it's going to be before my young brother will go. He will be eighteen in July. My mother will certainly take it hard, he being the only boy and the baby in the family. I dread it, but if it comes we'll just have to take it along with the rest.

I sent our picture to him and he sent it back today and you have passed with his 100% approval. He's quite a boy, but then I'm prejudiced, since he is the baby in the family and the only brother I have.

Spring is definitely here. The shrubs and blooming and the mountain folk are in every day now with pussy willows and daffodils, selling them in the streets. Craggy's [Great Graggy Mountains] maple trees are in full bloom. It's a welcome sign. The winter has seemed so long. I love to watch the spring. Every day there is a difference in everything. The fall and spring have always been my favorite times of the year.

I'm so glad you were able to go home again. You must have been extra good or something that you were able to get another pass.

Two weeks from tonight this time I'll be speeding through the night on my way to you and our weekend. It hardly seems possible.

Charles, I shouldn't have written that night. I had been in the dumps all day and missing you more and more and all at once you seemed so far away. Now, you have made everything so real and solid, I'll never feel that way again. It's just that no one else has ever meant so much or shown that I mean so much to them before. It's hard to explain, but perhaps you will know what I mean.

I needed the scolding but it was worth it just to have you tell me again. I am trusting and believing and trying to know the same faith you have. We are real and this really happened to us. I keep telling myself that and remembering a line of poetry "My ultimate place is close by your side" from a poem I've very fond of.

I'll say goodnight now, for a little while,

All my love and kisses, Billee

I'm looking forward to receiving the paper, so don't forget. By the way, send your letters to the office from now until I leave. I'll get them quicker. I send the mail and sort it anyway. Just address is c/o Iveys, Inc., Asheville, NC, and I'll get it.

March 22, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee dearest,

The day of dreams and ideals may be over, for those who want to believe it, but for me that day will never come. As least, not the way I interpret my "dreams and ideals." You may think it strange for me to start our "visit" today with such a thought. Still, that is what is on my mind now and it worries me a little.

You see, I shouldn't want the slightest bit of doubt to remain with you, concerning us, whether we were meant "to be," or not. And, when I see you reflect on our "true story," wonder whether or not we are "dreaming too much," I must confess it shakes me a little.

Too, when I put myself in your position, I can readily understand why, and how, those thoughts appear. So, I can't really blame you for wondering. Perhaps, it is because I'm so enthusiastic about it all, allowing my own emotions to blot any other possibilities from the picture that I refuse to see another side, the "practical and realistic" side.

But, I do know I'm right in loving you. Yes, we can say it happened by chance. It could have happened to a million others. Thousands of men, soldiers too, meet just as many girls in much the same manner. It happened to me in this case, and that's all with which I'm concerned. I've known dozens of girls, Billee, and undoubtedly I'll know dozens more. But there is only one who means anything to me and she's a girl I've seen only three times. It is incredible, isn't it?

At this time, I can't promise you a single thing, except one! And that is to love you always, and not bring you a single moment of unhappiness. I believe I told you that once before. In offering you so little, I feel very poor.

Of course, there will always be within me the desire to give you everything you deserve, to see your smile from dawn to "lights out." And, again, I feel so inadequate because there may be a time when you see these things in someone else and will be able to capitalize on them instead of trying to go along on the promises of another, far away.

I may be involved in the same situation, but I know what I will do. I'm selfish as anyone could be, but some time I'll want to know what my "dream and ideal" will do.

So, here we are, sweetheart, all worked up because someone said, "the day of dreams and ideals are over." I suppose it is all in the way you look at it. Me? Oh, I'll always have mine, dreams and ideals, I mean. Do you think you will? Let's think it over, shall we? And, won't we have so much to talk about over our next weekend? By the way, have you ever seen Fifth Avenue in the spring? If you haven't, you will.

This has been my weekend "in," honey. I was on guard at the airport here from yesterday afternoon until today at 1:00. After a nice, hot shower I stretched out on my bed listening to the wire broadcast of the Yankee-Cardinal exhibition game. Now, I'm devoting as much time as possible to you.

My days are going to be rather full now. I was put in charge of



Airport at Fort Dix, now McGuire Air Force Base. 1943.

a squad yesterday and will have to attend a school for non-commissioned officers, 6:30 to 8:00, every week night until further notice, also Saturday from 1:00 to 4:00. Prospective “non-com” material (that’s me) also have to attend. I believe I can make arrangements as it won’t interfere with us when you come no’th.

I’ll try real hard to have someone with me when I meet you. If I can describe Marguerite to whoever it is, it won’t be difficult. But, when the fellows are able to be off over weekends, they usually head for home. However, as I said, I’ll try.

Can you tell me what train you will arrive on and what day, or night? I’ll call you again before you leave but perhaps you can tell me beforehand. Let’s see, will it be all right to call on the Wednesday night before Easter?

You say I’m extravagant for calling you. Why, don’t you know now that there isn’t anything too extravagant for you? There I go again with my enthusiasm.

I did receive the pictures you sent, Billee. I told you how swell they were when I wrote last week, didn’t I? Too, your shamrock was a sweet thought. I slipped it on the chain around my neck where it will stay, always. Goodnight for now, sweetheart,

All my love and kisses, C.

PS: Regards to Mother and all.

March 26, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

I’m sneaking this in on the company’s time so I may be interrupted. I wanted to write last night but Wynne decided she wanted to go to the show.

I’ve had plenty of time to let your letter “sink in.” I certainly caused a furor when I wrote that letter or rather when I read that article. Perhaps it’s just as well.

You forgot one little item darling: the fact that I love you. I’m beginning to realize that more and more every day I live. Perhaps it has been your enthusiasm that made me a little skeptical, but it is your enthusiasm and willingness to express yourself that makes it all so wonderful. But as I’ve said before, nothing like this has ever happened before to me.

I’m not about to give up my dreams and ideals just because of an article and you wouldn’t be the Charles I know if you didn’t have the same dreams and ideals I think you have. Don’t let anything ever happen to them.

I’ve just been out to second breakfast so I’ll resume once more.

I’m going against all the rules and regulations about holding a man but I don’t want you to be in doubt of my sincerity. Anyhow, we are above all that.

You made me sound a little like a “gold-digger” on a man-hunt, capitalizing on material things. That isn’t my idea at all. I’ve been looking for someone that I could love, cherish and share their joys and sorrows and help make a worthwhile life with, just simple things, Charles. It is hard to write about it. There is so much in my heart, but I know you’ll understand. Now that I’ve found that someone, I’m not so apt to forget him just because he

doesn't happen to be close at hand. I'm not made that way. Promises are good enough for me at least until we can do something about materializing them. Besides, we are together in our dreams. You are never very far from my thoughts and it will always be that way.

I'm afraid I'm not expressing myself as well as you did. I'm not so handy with the pen as you are. Your letter really took my breath away for the moment. We'll just go on dreaming and having our ideals regardless of what happens to the rest of the world. That's what makes us individuals, what goes on within us. How can they change that?

Spring on Fifth Avenue has almost the same magic as "Paris in the spring." I can well imagine that it will be much nicer here than over there, now. I can hardly wait. Seems as if I've said that so often. It isn't so long, now. I'll let you know definitely the time of arrival. We have made our reservations, but they haven't as yet received the report from Spartanburg.

Don't worry about finding an escort for Marguerite. We were only kidding. Some of her family are to meet her. I forgot I'm just writing and not talking to you.

We all enjoyed your Company paper so much. I knew before I reached the bottom of the front page that it was your contribution to the paper. I'm looking forward to the next copy. [No copy of this paper has survived.]

The mention of you going to "non-com" school is swell. I know how you must feel about it all, that you are really accomplishing something with your work and that you're not just "in the army."

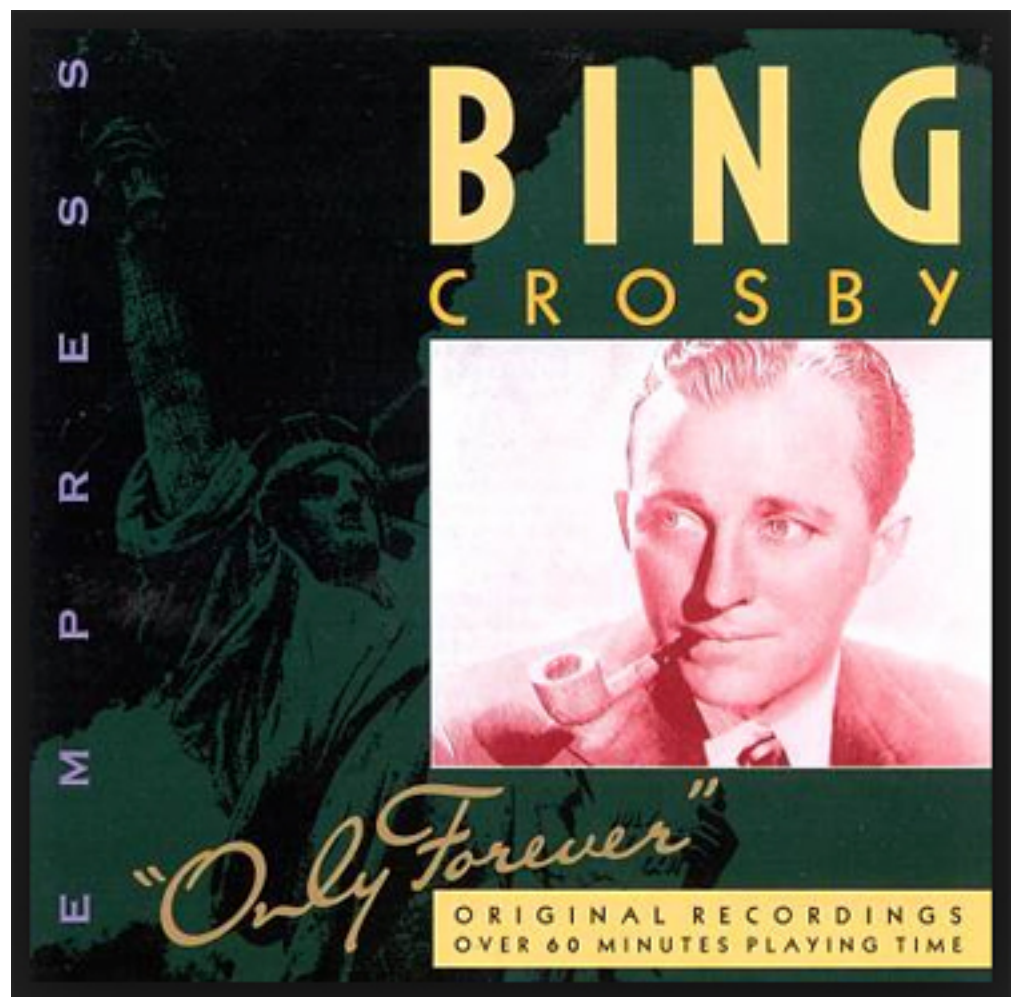
I'm not sure how this letter reads. I've been interrupted so many times. I've tried to look busy, but they keep putting things on my desk. My work is so far ahead now, I could go on a vacation right this minute.

I hope I have erased any doubt you might have had about me and my dreams. It's wonderful to know that I'm a "dream and ideal." I only hope I'll never do anything that will spoil that thought and that I'll always be worthy of it.

I really must close now and go to work before I get fired. I'm going to take a trip to the record room at the music store so I can hear that song you ended your letter with ["Only Forever"]. I hope the melody is as lovely as the words. Bye now, for awhile.

All my love and kisses, Billee

Don't worry about my interfering with your school, because that can't





be. We'll find a way somehow without doing that, because I am only secondary to that. Everyone wants to know where I got my pin and I feel so proud to tell them the history of it.

I've seen two good pictures since I last wrote. "Son of Fury," a swell interpretation of "Benjamin Blake" and "Song of the Island" last night. I couldn't help but think of our trip to the Hawaiian Islands.

Of course, it will be all right for you to call and I'll be home Wednesday night. Mom says you're too extravagant, but I love it. I'm really going this time. I don't think I've left anything out now. "Bye again."

Billee

March 26, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello sweetheart,

Will you forgive me if I just stay a few minutes with you tonight? It is 9:35 and "lights out" is at 10:00. I've been wanting to write since Tuesday and this is actually the first chance I've had. We have been so busy I'm practically running around in circles trying to do the things I want to do.

Still, while I may not have the chance to scribble off our regular "dates" by mail, I'm constantly thinking of you. I can hardly wait until a week from Saturday reaches the top of the calendar.

Your letter arrived Tuesday and was the usual "bit of heaven" for me. Honestly, Billee, your letters are so beautifully written I feel inadequate in my attempts to even approach them. While I can't see you, it only takes your letters to make me love you more and more, if it is possible.

I'm not going to try and cover everything I wanted to tonight because of the time element. I probably won't have time to do it tomorrow, either. But, Saturday I'm going to write a "book." That's a promise.

I must say, honey, I didn't mean to "scold" you for anything. I really couldn't do that.

I'll let you know in my next letter all about your trip and what we will be able to do.

Forgive me, for just scrawling off this note. I just had to let you know I was still alive, though. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, "Only forever," C.

P.S.: If I'm not able to call Wednesday, I'll make it Thursday. It will be necessary for me to go to town to make the call.

More love, C.

March 29, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello angel,

At this moment, one week hence, I'll have you smothered in a pair of lonely arms. I can't think of anything to which I looked forward more than your visit. Hearing the expression, "counting the seconds" before, I used to smile. Now, I can't help but laugh when I know I'm doing it myself.

Your letter of Thursday came at noon today in time to keep me company over the weekend, since I'm staying in camp this week in order to ensure my pass next week. I may get a chance to get home for awhile tomorrow but it will only be a brief visit. If I do go home, John is coming along with me.

Sweetheart, I didn't intend to make you feel as if you created a "furor," but if your "furious" mood prompts you to write letters like the one I received today, I want you to be "furious" always.

And, I haven't forgotten that ever-so-big "little item," that you love me. When I locked that in my heart, I threw away the key. Nothing can make me forget it. If I never see you again, which terrifies me to even think of it, and I lived to be 1,000,000, I'd love you then, as now. In short, you would still be the angel with a tilt to her nose who only had to look at me to overwhelm one who isn't easily overwhelmed.

Billee, dearest, I had no idea my letter of a week ago would cause you to imagine such things as, "gold-digger on a manhunt," "capitalizing on material things." Like a little boy who has misbehaved, I can only say, "I'm sorry."

Too, you added some things to our chest of dreams that I will take up when I see you. I could have said them long ago but I would rather say them myself than using pen and ink.

Once, I wanted to withhold telling you of my love until I could do it myself, when we were face to face, but I didn't have the will-power, so had to tell you by mail and telephone. And, don't you ever worry about not being able to express yourself as well as me, or, that I'm more handy with the pen. True, my vocation led me to the "pen" and that may have given me a gift of expression. But, if my writing gets my thoughts across to you as well as yours does to me, well I guess it is because we are so in love, and it is grand, isn't it, darling?

Honestly, whenever I haven't something military on my mind, I can only think of plans for us to catch up on the happiness we are missing now. Oh, I can't remember how many times I went back to the Inn, to our night... holding you in my arms, and your murmur, "It isn't fair!" It makes me more determined to force the time when everything will be "fair." You'll help me, won't you?

Billee, I have so many plans for our first weekend that I just know 32 hours won't be enough. I went ahead and made a schedule without including a visit home to the family! That will never do, will it? Still, I warned Mother that I would want to do so much. She shouldn't be disappointed if we didn't linger. Sounds shameful, doesn't it?

Too, I am supposed to have you visit my "special people," that are some of my closest friends. There are Dorothy and Al Doyle, for whom I was best man last August. And

Martha and Bill Daly, for whose baby I am to be godfather (rather early in May, they think)! But, I had to tell them, too, we will try to drop in. This is to be our weekend and I shouldn't want anything to interrupt it for any length of time.

By the way, honey, the weather chilled up a bit today, like fall instead of spring. It has been chilly at night here and mild during the day. I'd suggest you be prepared. It's nothing like Asheville, you know.

Billee, this non-com school may interfere with my mention of you coming to Trenton during the week. They have been insisting on strict attendance and at present it looks doubtful if I could spend more than an hour or so with you on any evening. However, the situation may be altered in time. Meanwhile, I suggest you carry on with any other plans you had that did not include Trenton. Too, as much as I'd want to see you, even for a moment, there doesn't seem much point in spending so much time there for so little when there are millions of things to do and see in New York.

I was able to get to a nearby town, Pointville, for a moment last night in order to call home. Mother thought enough to ask whether or not I had invited you to stay with them for a few days on your visit. Truthfully, she caught me a little off guard, but not too much. I had thought of it when you first mentioned the trip but realized you would rather enjoy your vacation than spend part of it with people who are strange to you now. At least, I tried to put myself in your position and judge accordingly.

You see, it would take an hour and a half to get to New York from Jersey City and I believe you do want to spend your time in Manhattan. Then, I didn't know whether you would be with Marguerite... Oh, I didn't know what to think.

But, if you do want to or, I should say, in the event I have been all wrong on my suppositions, forgive me, and accept the humble hospitality of the Kileys. There is no hurry. You can wait until I see you to let me know.

Mother also told me my younger brother left camp last Sunday and she hasn't heard from him since. I have an idea he may have gone to the west coast for his training, which would explain the delay in notification. They may have heard from him today.

That's about all for today, darling. As I said, I'll try to call Wednesday and if I can't get to a phone on that night I'll call Thursday.

Meanwhile, smile a while, and remember that, "You are always in my heart," with apologies to the writer of the song. Bye for now, sweetheart

All my love and kisses, "Only Forever," C.

P.S.: "Hello" to [your] Mother, Marguerite and the rest.



Marty and Bill Daly—1939.

March 28, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

I was so afraid I wouldn't get a letter until Monday when there wasn't one in the mail this morning. I felt sort of let down. If you hadn't sent it to the store, I wouldn't have had it until Monday. We have an afternoon delivery.

I love having you call. It brings you so much closer to me, but it's a kind of expensive way.

It's a gorgeous night out. I'm thinking ahead about a week from tonight and wondering what we will be doing. I have to pinch myself now and then to believe it is actually going to happen. A week from tonight we'll be together.

I enjoyed your letter so much even though it was sort of short, but you can say more in less words than anyone I've ever known. I felt as if you had breezed into the office for a moment to "talk" to me. I am looking forward to your "look." This must be your weekend in.

I wrote tonight for my hotel reservations. Our train reservations are still hanging fire. If we can't get them on the streamliner, we'll leave on the 5:00 p.m. train from Asheville. It arrives in New York about 10:00 a.m. I'm hoping we can get the reservations. It is a much more pleasant trip. I'll let you know as soon as I do.

You will probably have that "look" I wrote by now. I still haven't recovered from the impression it made on me... your letter, I mean.

My girlfriend and I decided to splurge today for luncheon so we went to the "Rathskeller" for spaghetti and played the music-box—"Tonight We Love," "You Made Me Love You," "Everything I Love," "How 'bout You," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You." The last two reminded her of her vacation. She met a private at Fort Jackson. The rest all reminded me of the times we were together.

It is very late and I should be in bed. Marguerite is just saying "goodnight." I have so many things to do tomorrow in getting my things together, etc.



The "music box" at the Rathskeller might have looked something like this 1940s Wurlitzer.

The time has slipped by so fast. I haven't minded at all. It seems no time at all since I was meeting you on the wrong corner... remember? Goodnight my dearest one for a little while. I'll soon be seeing you. It looks so real on paper.

Bye now,

All my love and kisses, faithfully, Billee

It's a funny thing, Charles, but when I write to you, I always hate to stop. I feel as though I could go on and on. I never cared a lot about writing before, but I have enjoyed writing to you so much even though they are poor attempts, in spite of what you say, my dear.

March 29, 1942

Dear Ray,

Well, here I have a chance to write to you and tell you how everything is. To start off first, I am sorry I didn't have a chance to see you before I left Camp Dix. I was home last Friday and Saturday, which you probably know. We left Camp Dix Sunday morning. We didn't know where we were going but believe it or not I'm at Camp Cooke, California. We had a swell trip... that is, four hundred of us... and the sergeants and lieutenants treated us pretty good.

It took us four days to get here and we went through eleven states. This camp we're at is an armored division with plenty of advancement because it's a new camp, about a year old. Well, I can't think of anything else except they have a chapel out here and masses at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. and all us fellows went to the 8:30 a.m. because we get up at 6:00 a.m.

Don't forget to write.

Eddie

March 31, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello sweetheart,

This will be my last visit with the postman before my angel appears with her "little bit of heaven," in person. Too, this is another night that didn't leave me much time to spend with you. So, since the lights have been out for 30 minutes, I'm trying to be with you for awhile, at least, and a flashlight for a companion. "Where there's a will, there's a way," is my practical tonight and the flashlight is helping me prove it.

Your letter of Saturday arrived today and your mention of the "gorgeous" night in Asheville reminded me to tell you there is a full moon in the heavens here and I only hope it stays there for awhile. When you receive this I will have spoken with you on the phone and received the latest details on your train reservations, etc. So, we won't have to discuss much of that, will we?

The only thing I am vitally interested in is getting to see you as fast as my feet and other transportation will carry me.

Incidentally, Billee, the phones here have been connected again and I'll be able to make the call from camp. That is, if I can do it during my "off" hours from guard. I am assigned to the guard detail around our airport from noon tomorrow, Wednesday, to noon, Thursday. If I am unable to call tomorrow, I hope to do it Thursday.

Will you forgive me again for rushing away so soon. I'm making an awful mess trying to write in semi-darkness and in an uncomfortable position. Still, you know where my thoughts lie and I trust that makes up for it a little. Goodnight, honey-chile.

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