

CHAPTER 2

April–October 1942

April 13, 1942—Matawan, N.J.

My dearest,

I was a little lonely when I woke up this morning, but your letter chased that all away and brought you so close to me again. I saved it to read over breakfast.

I didn't do anything exciting today... thought sure I could sleep this morning, but no luck... woke on the dot at 9:15. I walked up Fifth Avenue to Central Park and window-shopped, and watched the people. Spring is definitely in the air and everyone seemed to feel it.

When I arrived at the park, I felt like buying a balloon for myself, there were so many children there around the zoo. I enjoyed watching them. On the way up I stopped in St. Patrick's for the 12:30 service. It was very crowded. The altar took my breath away; the flowers and decorations were probably left over from yesterday. I missed you there.

I rode back on one of the open buses to 32nd St. and took the train to Matawan. I'm sitting in Marguerite's living room now and getting very sleepy, as usual.

I fixed the ring and it's shining up at me, catching the light. I'm not going to have it fixed [by a jeweler] because I'll have to give it back to you one day when I have it replaced by a permanent one. I'm really beginning to realize it all now and I am so happy and excited. I hope that it won't be too far off. There aren't words to tell you how much I love you and what it all meant to me.



Postcard from the Hawaiian Room at the Lexington Hotel, New York City, where Charles asked Billee to marry him.

Your note was so sweet this morning. I had to let you know and to thank you again for such a perfect weekend, one that I'll always remember. I can hardly realize that I'll be seeing you again so soon. I am missing your good night kiss tonight, but here is one for you.

All my love and kisses, Always, Billee

I just had a thought. Your friends must have thought me awful last night because I was so sleepy. I don't know how you held out as well as you did. I hope they didn't mind. I did enjoy meeting them after you telling me so much about them. They were all so nice to me. I hope I passed with flying colors because I know that will mean a lot.

I'm really going this time. As usual, I don't want to. Love, B.

April 14, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Here I am home, snug in my own bed. "Exhausted" is mild. What a trip! I've had a bath and lunch so I feel a little refreshed. I never closed my eyes. We arrived in Spartanburg on time at 5:50 a.m. Then I had to wait two hours and a half for a train to Asheville. If I hadn't already had my ticket, I would have taken the bus. I called Mom from Spartanburg. She thought I was still in New York.

I felt more settled after I got on the train. I really feel that I have done the right thing and somehow or other I feel it is what you wanted me to do.

My take-off was a little lonely, I'll have to confess, with no one to see me off. I blew a kiss your way when we passed Trenton about 6:30. It didn't stop there... I thought we might. The sunset was gorgeous just before we arrived in Washington... fairly took my breath away. There was a lot of gold braid on the train, both Army and Navy. They were all plastered before the evening was over. That tavern car was something else. I never saw so much scotch. I was a good girl and stayed in the observation car with my magazine. I wrote a letter, but never had a chance to mail it.

Mom is in the midst of house-cleaning. I should have stayed away longer. I think she was glad to see me. I've told her about us and she doesn't seem to mind... just that I should be very sure. There isn't any doubt about that.

Not being able to sleep... it was only natural that my vacation with our two perfect weekends should be constantly in my thoughts. There aren't words to describe what they meant to me. It took such a lot to go out of that station Sunday night. I ran practically all the way back to the hotel. I was afraid to go slow... I knew I'd never get there.

Now all I have to do is try and go to sleep. I don't think it's going to take much effort.

By the way, I saw your kitchen. The lady sitting next to me had a Saturday Evening Post. I've changed my mind about large kitchens if I can have one like that. The fireplace just sets it off. We should be able to start our ball team off very nicely in one like that.

I just had a card from my old girlfriend, married now and lives in Harrisburg. She had a baby boy while I was gone and the other girlfriend who lives in Charlotte had a baby girl. Isn't that something... more excitement.

By the way, Marguerite is leaving for home this weekend for her vacation. She has to take it right away because of her mother.

I've been reliving my vacation telling Mom all the things we did.

Miss Heffernan came home Friday. She really had an extended trip. The firemen are here from the Grove Park Inn... all middle-aged.

I'll write your mother tomorrow and Dottie [Doyle]. I remember her address, but not Marty's [Daly]. They were all so swell to me. I won't ever forget.

I think I can sleep now for a change. Mom claims I've lost weight since I left. She gave me a scolding. I don't see how I could lose that much in a week that it would be noticed.

The mountains were simply gorgeous coming in. The dogwood and mountain pinks are all in bloom, and the new leaves all coming out... definitely a spring picture. There isn't any place like it. When all this is over, I'm really going to show them to you in all their glory. I love them so. Outside of Mom, that's all I'd miss here. Now I'm going to pray for a furlough soon, and our happiness. Keep well and thanks once again more for making my vacation so perfect. I'll be looking forward to hearing from you soon.

All my love and kisses, Always, Billee

April 15, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello again, sweetheart,

Your very big "bit of heaven" arrived last night and left me breathless, to put it mildly.

We will start with your plan to return in a few weeks. Darling, if you feel you are doing the right thing—I'm sure you are. Your judgment on anything is sound enough for me. Still, I'm concerned about what [your] Mother has to say. At any other time, I'd be bubbling over with joy at the thought of having you near me. But you know as well as I that my stay here is limited. It would be very easy for our outfits to move out before I have a chance to see you. On the other hand, I may be here for some time.



*Billee and Charles on the ferry to Jersey City,
April 1942.*

And that brings us to the next subject for discussion, which should have been covered while we were together. If I could have one wish granted it would be that we could be married tonight. I want it so much it scares me! And don't you dare say, "Fraidy Cat."

But that isn't what I had planned for us, Billee, a "hurry-up" wedding, so to speak. You deserve everything that goes with it and I mean to give it to you. Yes, I know our time is short, and I'll be honest with you... I'm out on a limb, trying to weigh the merits and demerits of taking advantage of our time... now, or waiting. Like you, sweetheart, I'm not afraid of what will happen but I do think we must be sensible in anything we do. It will be the biggest thing in our lives and we have to have both feet on the ground when we decide.

I've seen fellows in the service married and I thought them insane, if only because of the terrific handicap thrown on the girl's shoulders. Finding myself in the same position, I wonder whether or not they were right. It must have been after one o'clock before I could sleep last night, trying to arrive at a decision. Finally, I realized we must wait until we can see each other again.

There are other things to talk about, too. How would your family react to our marriage now? How about mine? We are the only ones concerned, but we must consider them. Perhaps they will be agreeable... perhaps they won't.

Then there is the angle of religion. We are going to talk about that sometime and, I say that with the full knowledge that it has been the cause of much unhappiness to some people. So let's start talking about it now since there are some things you may not know and those I do not know. Let us give each other both sides of the story. I know, talking about these pertinent things, that I wish were not so pertinent, just has to be done.

These are the facts I have to face:

The Catholic faith recognizes only a marriage ceremony performed by a priest. Furthermore, the non-Catholic party must receive a few hours of instruction pertaining to ways of helping the Catholic party observe his or her religion. Father John gave Dot her instruction. Then, there is the vow, made by the non-Catholic that is responsible for a great many flare-ups. That is, that all children are baptized and raised in the Catholic faith. It would be so simple if these things were unnecessary to discuss, but we should compare notes, don't you think?

Now, let me know your feelings on these matters. Tell me just what is in your mind. If any of these things aren't clear, Marguerite should be able to help, if you want to take her into your confidence. Or, any Catholic priest can do it. Better still, you can just ask me and I'll answer. Right now, I'd love to put you on a magic carpet and fly away with you, to a place where we could be alone, forever. You see, I love you so much I don't want to share you with anyone, not even one of your smiles.

I hope I have been able to get myself across in a small way. These things should be discussed, face-to-face. That is the way I want to do it. But we can save a little time this way, can't we?

Starting with this, Billee, I'll send you that "letter-a-day," even if it is only an envelope, so you'll know I'm still here. Good night for now, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

P.S.: Do you think we might start a “farm” system, once we organize our baseball team? Regards to Mother, Marguerite and all.

April 17, 1942–Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Our anniversary again. Just three months ago. It doesn't seem possible... so much has happened.

Your letter came this afternoon. One of the girls called me so I dashed uptown to get it. I couldn't wait until tomorrow when I return to work.

Marguerite is leaving permanently. As you know, her mother has been quite ill, hence her decision to go home to take care of her. She has been so happy down here, but it is just one of those things you have to grin about and bear. I am going to miss her so very much. She has been more than a friend and so much closer to me than either of my sisters. She has been a lot of company for Mom, too. There will be an empty place in this household tomorrow after she leaves.

Now, to get down to business. I had no idea such a simple thing as getting married could cause so much trouble. I don't mean that the way it sounds...

My darling “Fraidy-cat,” I appreciate no end your concern for what I deserve. I have such a warm feeling knowing you think of me in that respect. It wouldn't be a “hurry-up” wedding.” It's been planned for years. I've just been waiting for the moment and you. Now that I've found you, there's just the moment.

Before I go any further, there is one thing that I want understood. I'm not forcing the issue. This is strictly up to you. Whatever you decide, I'll abide by it. This I know, and I have both feet on the ground. I love you so much that I've ceased being afraid of anything except perhaps of losing you, but I don't think about that. I want to marry you more than anything else, but when you want it to happen.

Times have changed now and we don't know how long they will be changed or if it will ever go back to normal again. I'll be honest... that does scare me a little. It will probably be a long time before we have things the way we want them again.

I've thought it over from all angles. Maybe you will be different when you come back. Perhaps you won't think the same... that I'm the one you want. This has been going through my mind since I came home. You will probably have had so many experiences that will change you. Things like that have happened before. Sounds silly here on paper, that anything could change us.

There is something I neglected to tell you when we were together that is most important and might have saved a lot of your worry. Then, I was living from one moment to the next, so excited and happy just being with you that I couldn't think of anything else. I made up my mind some time ago that in the event we marry, I would join the Catholic Church. Don't think me hasty in my decision

and that it was your letter, because you can ask Marguerite. I discussed it with her before we decided to go to New York.

My reason: I realize, of course, how much your religion means to you and I wouldn't have it any other way. I love you so much that I want to share everything with you. You see, you are my whole life. I have always felt at home in the Catholic Church especially so since I have been going there with you. While I know little about it, I'm sure from what little that I do know that I would enjoy living by that faith.

Here, as you know, you can be married in the church with just the instruction before, but I don't believe that law prevails in the North. You have never said, but I have an idea you wish your brother to perform the ceremony. Do you want me to join the church before we are married or after? I think my desire to join the church answered all the questions pertaining to the facts you have to face concerning marriage to a non-Catholic.

As to what my family will say... There is only Mother who is concerned and I have already discussed the above with her. As always, she leaves it to my judgment. She says I am old enough to know my own mind and if marrying you is what I want then it is all right with her. She just wants me to be very sure of myself. There is your family to think of and that is very important. From the views your brother aired Easter Sunday, you are going to have some difficulty there... that is, if you decide not to wait.

Now, about returning to New York. Had Marguerite stayed on, I wouldn't have hesitated, but now it means leaving Mom alone. Of course, that day will have to come sooner or later. I think that I will consider a little longer. If I left, I don't think she would stay here. She would make an effort to sell and return to Ohio. Sometimes I think she would be happier. It's a problem and I'm having difficulty deciding what to do.

More about you... I feel now, that I am being selfish. You shouldn't be worried about me. You have too big a job to do. No more of this one o'clock business. How are we going to make a corporal out of you that way? Please, don't worry too much. Everything will work out in its own way, believe me.

I wish, sitting here in our corner, that I could turn the clock back two weeks. I would be speeding through the night on my way to you. Better still, if I could turn it ahead five years. We would be in our own living room with all this worry and anxiety behind us. You with your newspaper and me not so far away with my knitting and somewhere in the distance, Junior crooning himself to sleep. There'll be no rocking in this family... not with a ball team in the making. Maybe we're tempting fate joking about it, but I don't care. The more the merrier. We will probably need that "farm system" or some kind of organization before it is all over with. Marguerite's sister used to joke about having a ball club. Guess what? She has eight... six boys and two girls. The oldest is fifteen.

You should have seen me yesterday and today housecleaning—don't laugh—cleaning drawers, waxing floors, hanging curtains, etc. I should have stayed away a few days longer.

Now to bed. I hope I have made all my views understood and that I have been some assistance in your making a decision. Don't forget what I said about my doing whatever you decide and that it is

up to you. I realize now we should have taken time out to come down to earth and discuss our future while we were together. I had all good intentions of doing that Saturday night, but I don't know what happened to them. I'll add one more. My shoulders are broad, Charles, and they have been used to carrying a lot around ever since I can remember, so don't be afraid that I can't "take it."

I believe that covers everything, except my goodnight kiss. I sent that in the direction of that new moon that's peeping in the window and made a wish. Don't worry too much... everything will be all right.

All my love, always your Billee

Dreamed all night last night I was making you chocolate cake.

April 17, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Evening sweetheart,

I'm a bit more lonesome than usual tonight. It's such a beautiful night—millions of stars shining almost as bright as your eyes. That sounds like Irish blarney, doesn't it? But it does apply to you.

Your "bit of heaven" came at noon today and perhaps that's why I feel so lonely. I want to feel sorry for myself, for us, but I just won't allow myself to do it. I'd rather cling to our faith and hope that these lonely days and nights without you will make us love each other more and more. At that, I don't think it is possible for me to love you anymore than I do now.

I just knew you would tell Mother about us and it made me so happy to hear she approves. Too, I can understand why she wants you to be sure. Mothers are like that. I haven't actually told my mother but I know she realizes her son has met his mate. I am going to give her the glad tidings when I see her next—which I hope will be one week from tomorrow.

You can't fool women, honey. I had a letter from Dot yesterday, a part of which says, "I haven't heard from Billee. I asked her to call me if she didn't go back today. She's very sweet, brother. I like her an awful lot. I won't ask how serious it is because my husband will say I'm too nosy. But didn't I see her wearing



Dot and Al Doyle. Charles and the Doyles grew up together in Jersey City; Dot always called him, "Brother."

your ring? I won't tell anybody." Well, I wrote back to Dot telling her it is very serious and she can tell the world for me. I want everybody to know it. And, I know what she is going to say. "Brother, I knew you would find her if you waited long enough." That is something else that makes me feel so alone, seeing how happy Dot and Al are. Marty and Bill, Berta and Jack and the rest. It is envy more than jealousy.



Penn Station, New York City, in the 1940s.

Billee, if you had followed me into Penn Station on Sunday night, you would have seen me find a secluded corner and stare into space, afraid to look behind me in fear of finding you there. If you had followed me, I don't believe I would have gone back to camp that night. I was even afraid to move because if I did it may have been back to the hotel.

That is a big reason why I'm hesitant in wanting to see us married now. It was so hard to leave you then—what would it be like if I had to tear myself away from my wife. I'd worry about you all day, and all week and turn out to be anything but a good soldier. Can you see that part of it?

I'll try to call Marguerite next Monday or Tuesday. The phones are disconnected here again and I can't say when they will be in order. If you want Marty's address it is Mrs. William Daly, 33 Hoover St., North Arlington. Incidentally, while I'm writing this, the Dalys are celebrating their anniversary. And, too, we are celebrating ours—the third!

This afternoon I was thinking of us three months ago. Honestly, I can't suppress the feeling that we've known each other ten times three months. There are two dates I'll want to remember always, January 17 and April 4. Billee, dearest, don't ever thank me for making you happy, like on our two weekends. That is my one and only ambition—making you happy and keeping you smiling. That's more than a substantial reward for me.

It's time to turn in now and I'm bringing your kiss with me. I'll place it on the pillow, inside my cheek so you'll be with me all night. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Baseball note: Jersey City had a paid admission of over 55,000 yesterday for opening day, the largest crowd in baseball for 1942. Last year it was over 60,000. The stadium can hold 30,000 – crowded. But they can still sell 55,000 tickets!

April 19, 1942–Asheville

Darling,

I've had the worst time trying to write you today. Just get started and another interruption... so, once more.



Roosevelt Stadium, Jersey City, circa 1935.

What a weekend. It has seemed like a century. I've missed you so much, there aren't words. My mind keeps going back to those two weekends and remembering all the little things that happened.

Had I known where to call, you certainly would have had a long-distance visitor. That reminds me... I suspect the reason you didn't call Friday is because you were without funds. To put it mildly... oh. The next time, reverse the charges. You know that "what's mine is yours" works both ways, so remember.

I'm missing Marguerite so. I know what that "something missing" atmosphere is she spoke of. I feel lost with both of you away. I felt so badly that she had to make that long trip alone. She had a wire just before she left telling her not to delay. Her mother must have taken a turn for the worse. I feel so helpless. She has helped me over some rough places and now I should be with her.

I thought last night would never end. I ironed the good things I took to New York and put them away in tissue paper and sachets until the next vacation, wrote you a letter and tore it up... fine way to spend a Saturday night, I think not. I missed you in church today. It was such a beautiful day that I walked part way. Honestly, I've been like a ship without a sail.

Last week this time, we were just leaving Dot's home to return to New York. What a rush we left in. Here I am, home again back in my groove and not liking it at all. I'm going to see if I can get a leave of absence and try New York for a while and see how it works out here and there. My boss is pretty human and takes an interest in us. I'll get him down for a heart-to-heart talk.

I really just started one of my notes. I've been trying to imagine what your weekend has been like. The family probably came to see you today. I hope so. They are such a nice family. I hope they like me as much as I do them. I've been engaged two weeks now. Isn't that wonderful? I celebrated by doing my ring up in fresh adhesive so it's all bright and shining celebrating its second anniversary.

I'm really going this time. I want to drop Marguerite a note.

I sent you a package last week. You should have it by now. I wanted to give it to you in New York but—don't laugh—I forgot. Goodnight, my dearest, for a little while. Take care of yourself and don't worry too much.

All my love, always your Billee

April 19, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello again, sweetheart,

It arrived yesterday, your package, I mean, and it was so sweet of you. I could, and should, say it wasn't necessary. But, I love you for it. It must have been mental telepathy, or something, because I called home Saturday afternoon, asking the folks if they were paying me a visit today. Mother said she thought they would come down for a brief visit, so I asked her to bring some stationery and perhaps some Virginia Rounds. You see, I used the last of my stationery writing to you Friday night. About an hour later, your package came with both items.

Mother, Dad and Father John arrived at 5:30 and stayed for about an hour. Mother also brought a coke, which will be attacked by five or six as soon as I kiss you good night.

I'm enclosing a clipping from this weeks "Life," mentioning a fellow from Massillon. I thought you may know him, or, of him. Then, too, I thought you and Mother might care to see a note on a hometown boy.



*Sheet music for "Only Forever," made popular by
Bing Crosby*

Billee, have you decided whether or not you will return to New York? You said your plan was to come back in a few weeks but I couldn't decide from that whether you had made any definite decision. What would I want you to do? Well, I want you to come back as soon as the train can carry you. I need you so much, if it is only the thought of having you near and within reach. But, I want you to make the decision. You will know what is best. I wouldn't want you to be here just because of me, because rumors are rampant again that we won't be here for long—several weeks or several days, it is that kind of a situation.

Just now I'm remembering:

"Do I want to be with you As the years come and go Only forever, if you care to know." [Only Forever by James V. Monaco]

I'm putting you back in my heart under lock and key now. And, an extra special kiss good night. 'Bye for now.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 20, 1942

Dear Ray,

Received your letter and your Catholic Youth Journal. The Journal is getting pretty good. I also want to thank you for the money you gave Mom for the radio. I didn't receive the radio yet but Mom wrote and told me. I didn't really need the radio that much that you and Mom and El had to buy one, but I sure will appreciate it when I receive it. I have been getting so many letters that I don't get much chance to answer them. They keep us pretty busy out here.

I wrote to Uncle John and told him where I was and asked him how everything was with him. Just as I am writing this letter I received a letter from Charley Jacobi. He was knocked down by the Army.

I'm out here with quite a few fellows from the East. We have Jack Sullivan and Lenny, Eddie Ward... Tommie, his brother, is a priest... George Lewis... his brother is a priest, too, so you can see we are well represented with Catholics out here.

Well, I have to close this letter now because we have to go out and patrol the coast. We do that every week, so... until the next letter.

Eddie

April 20, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

This is getting to be a habit, but it's such a nice one. I hope I never have to give it up. Your very welcome letter started the day out for me. I really needed it. You see, I'm suffering from vacationitis. You know how that is.

Why should you feel sorry for us? Think how lucky we are to have found each other. I must confess I have felt the same way, but it doesn't do a bit of good. I just have to look at the bright side and count my blessings. Just think... we've known each other three months and have been together approximately ten days out of the three months. In times as uncertain as these, that's wonderful. Think how much we've accomplished.

I think I've convinced Mom of my certainty where you are concerned, especially since I told her of my plan to join the church, so that is all settled.

I'm so glad Dot liked me. I was afraid they'd think me kind of "small town" or something like that and maybe not good enough for you. I didn't think I had your ring on when I was with her. It must have been Friday in New York because I know I didn't wear it to Jersey. I thought perhaps you hadn't said anything to the family and I didn't want to flaunt it in front of them without some kind of warning. They are such grand people. I hope you don't have any difficulty.

Charles, you must never worry about me, no matter what happens. I'm the one that's going to do the worrying. I'll be safe here in the good old U.S.A. and with your love to protect me, nothing can

happen to me, and besides, I'm a little bit "Irish." I know how you feel, my dear, but you see I'll either be here with Mother or else in New York near your folks.

I'm still trying to decide what to do. I don't have enough to worry me and mix me up, but somebody else has to offer me a job. It is in Black Mountain, but the salary isn't enough to warrant the commutation.

I've had a brainstorm. In the event I decide to return to New York, do you suppose your mother would rent me her spare bedroom or don't you think it would be such a good arrangement? The truth now. I thought of that last night just before I went to sleep.

One of the girls in the office had a letter from a boy in the Army she knows. It was sent from Alaska, and the letter took two weeks by airmail and half of it was cut out with a scissors here and there. Didn't make much sense. In fact, it looked like a lace doily. She didn't know much after she read it... some four pages.

It's a gorgeous night out with lots of stars and the moon still new enough to make a wish on.

By the way, if you mail a letter Friday or Saturday, don't bother to send it airmail. It doesn't do a bit of good. I'm saving us some money. I've named it "The Future Mrs. Kiley Fund." Don't you think that's a good name? You know I've always wondered about these people that write letters to the same people every day and what they could write about. Now I know.

I know you must have wished that you were there for that opening game. That's only natural. Oh, well, there will come a day when you'll be able to write all about them again and probably with me tagging along behind. Oh, I forgot about the "ball team."

I'll be on my way to take a walk to the drugstore for a stamp before the sub-station closes. I never seem to have them when I need them.

Don't worry about me, as I've said before. I don't want to be a hindrance to the defense program. That would be sabotage. Once more, I love you so much, more and more and your concern for me makes me even more so. Keep well and pray for us. Goodnight, now.

All my love and kisses, yours as always, Billee

April 21, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Billee,

I want to say, "sweetheart," "angel," "kitten," "honeychile," "dearest" and everything else. But, while I have you in my arms tonight (theoretically), I'll just whisper your name, because I love it so, together with everything else about you. When I read your letter last night, I confess, my eyes misted. Even now, 24 hours later, I'm so full up inside I have to rely on inspiration alone to try and say what I want to this night. Yet, I'm still afraid I won't be able to adequately express myself.

I am so happy I actually can feel sorry for the rest of the world. It doesn't know the happiness I know. As a result, I want to call you. I wanted to last night, and ask you to fly to New York at once. Why?

So I could slip a band on the “third finger, left hand” and say, “I’ll love you always, Mrs. Kiley!” It’s not because of what was in your letter concerning our talk about religion. And it’s not because I know you are anxious to start our happiness as soon as possible. More, it is because you are just you!

When I read the lines, “You might change. You’ll have so many experiences. I may not be the one for you,” I had to smile, Billee, because I know that if the world stood still my love and devotion to you would go on. You will never have cause to worry on that account.

Now, about your proposals:

My heart says, “yes,” but my head says, “wait,” in regards to our marriage. I’ll be frank with you. I’m really puzzled, trying to balance the scales. I believe I know, better than you, how difficult it is for a soldier to make such a decision. I could tear my heart out for even thinking of saying, “wait,” after what you said in your letter. One moment I want you to come back here and the next moment I want you to stay with [your] Mother as long as she needs you. That’s another angle. Mother may rely on your judgment, and, you know what she feels better than I. But, I do know she will miss you terribly.

I don’t want to make you think for a moment that I am satisfied to let you stay in Asheville. I’m not. It’s just that these are some of the things I am considering. And, again, suppose I ask you to come here so we can be married, and, before you get here, I leave. I know I’m wasting invaluable time talking about it instead of acting.

Now, while I’m writing, I’m going to make a decision and trust in God that it is the right one. As long as you leave it to me, I’ll make it. Billee, you stay with Mother for as long, or as short, as you feel necessary. Then, if and when you are ready to come back, just pack your bags and come.

If I’m still here, we will then take up the discussion, face-to-face, whether or not we will get married right away. My situation here may have eased by then, or it may be more uncertain. We can’t tell about that until it happens.

As for you joining the Catholic faith, I can only say that whenever you feel ready to receive instructions, start taking them. If you are in Asheville, you can go to any Catholic priest there, state your intentions and that’s all there will be to it. If you are here and would like Father John to give you the instructions, why, he’d be so happy. If not Father John, I can mention any number of priests with whom you will feel perfectly at ease. You see, conversion isn’t a matter of circumstances. That urge, or any word you care to use, comes only from God, I know. That’s why you are an angel. Oh, I could go on and on with that subject and sound like an archbishop. But then, I wouldn’t be myself, would I? We’ll talk about that another time.

While I have it in mind, I’ve been so darn busy trying to get another edition of our paper out, I completely forgot to call Marguerite. But I’m going to do so tomorrow night if I have to tie a string around my finger. Perhaps, too, I’ll get a chance to visit her.

There may have been some parts of your letter I haven’t covered but if I haven’t, I’ll try and take care of that tomorrow. Just now, it is 11:45 and my eyes are so sleepy. I’d just love to have you kiss me

to sleep tonight. So, will you tell Mother I love her almost as much as her angel-eyed daughter and will try to be the best son-in-law in the world. Good night for now.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 22, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Missed your letter today. Hope that time hasn't come yet. I realize, of course, that it must come sometime, but I have been putting it off in my mind.

Well, my decision to come to New York has been temporarily taken off my hands. The girl I work with was taken to the hospital today for an operation and we don't know how soon she will be back. Naturally, at a time like that, I couldn't just up and walk out, because I'll have part of her work to do plus my own. I wish sometimes I didn't have a conscience, especially where consideration for others is concerned. If I were different, I'd just walk out and they'd have to like it, but I never have been able to do things like that.

I have decided to leave, though, as soon as it is convenient. I had a long chat with Mother's best friend and she urged me to go on. Said she would let me know how Mom got along... to take my chances while I'm young. Of course, it's still my decision to make.

It's awful to be poor at times. Just think, I could hop a plane Friday night and spend Saturday and Sunday with you, if you have it off. Oh well, we can dream, can't we?

Just read an article by Pierre Van P___[?] in the Red Book. He claims the war will be over in 1943. I sure hope he's right. It's an interesting article.

Thanks for the [clipping] about the hometown boy. He's a little older than I am. My older sister probably went to school with him since he is her age.

Haven't had any word from Marguerite since she left. I'm so afraid something has happened. We miss her so much. The house isn't the same.

I'm sitting on my bed with your picture in front of me and when I'm not writing, I'm just looking and marveling that anything so wonderful could happen to me.

I thought the package might come in handy, besides it cost a lot of money in stamps and stationery. I have to do my bit. I had an awful time getting the cigarettes. They don't seem to be a popular brand here. I couldn't get a carton, so I tried to get two flat fifty's and one was all I could find. Do you like this kind of paper I'm writing on? You could carry more of it than the other since it is lighter weight.

Mother is feeling so well, I can't get over it. In fact, I have both fingers crossed. She has been taking some vitamin pills and they have been doing wonders for her. Then, too, business has been pretty good and that always helps.

I bummed the Saturday Evening Post off one of the girls in the office for the picture of our kitchen. I'm going to see if I can find the rest of the rooms to go with it and put them in a scrapbook, so that when I see you again, you can pass your approval on it. The kitchen is the most important part so we have a good start and we both agree on it. In the meantime, before they start rationing sugar (May 5) to 1/2 pound a person per week, I'm going to learn how to make lemon pie. I've watched Mom millions of times, but never attempted one myself. By the way, that's my favorite pie, too.

I sent Mom off to the movie, one I had already seen – “Remember the Day” – a lot like us except about the last war and he didn't come back. Very good, though a bit sad.

I feel so helpless down here, not doing anything very worthwhile, but I guess there are a lot like me just waiting and trying hard to do it with a smile. I want to see the day when we'll be able to smile with our eyes, too... laugh and love... when all this is over. I've always had a lot of faith, too much my mother tells me, and hope that everything works out for the best. I'm depending a lot on that now. Since our love is so right and we do belong together, I feel we will have our happy beginning at a not too distant date.

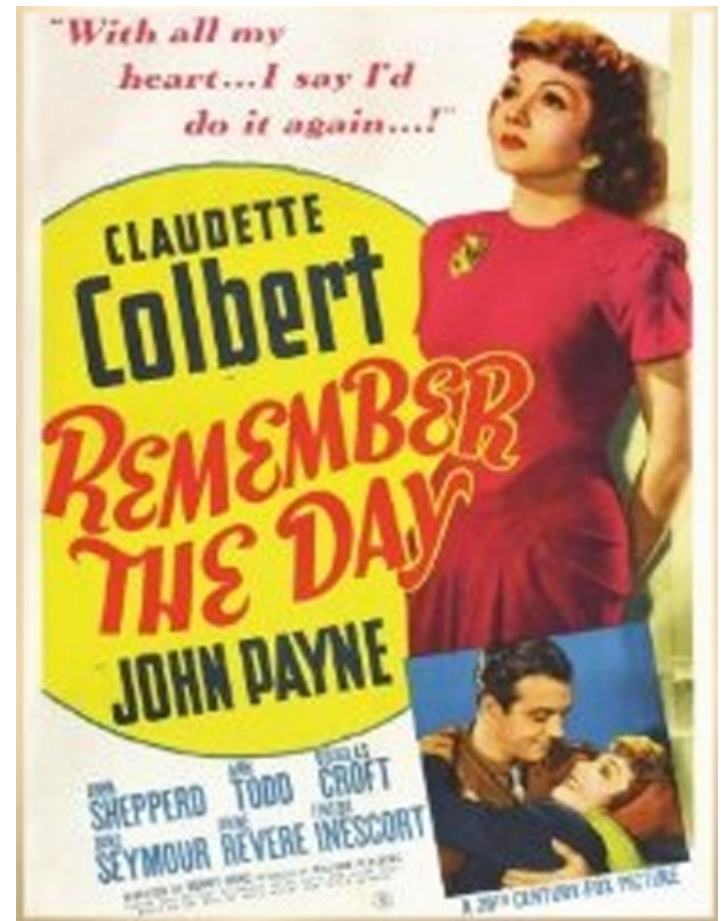
It's strange... when you want such simple things, that which makes the world go around, and they are denied to you. The, if we have to wait, they will be more precious to us. Just so we don't have to wait too long.

I have a confession to make. When I made my very brazen proposal that last Sunday night in the station, it was for a purely selfish reason. I felt that I could stand the waiting better knowing I really belonged to you. It isn't easy to explain, but I think you know what I mean. Regardless, I'll be somewhere around, waiting, when you come back.

My dearest, I'll end this before it gets away from me and put it in the nine-thirty mail. All my love and prayers go with this, and the hope that I'll be seeing you again soon. Goodnight for a little while.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: Don't know whether you saw the papers or not, about the sabotage down here. 12,000 acres in Pisgah Forest burned by set fires. They have caught three that they suspect. In the meantime, three defense factories have had to close for two days and two dams are endangered. The fire is still going on in some parts, but they have it pretty well under control now. The original fire was an accident, they think, but during the night additional fires were set. The air has been so smoky. You can imagine, since it isn't quite ten miles away.



April 23, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello sweetheart,

You are spoiling me with mail, but I love it. Honestly, I doubt if I could bear going on without you if it weren't for your letters. In fact, I know I couldn't. They mean so much to me now. And still, they aren't enough. It's not worry or concern that keeps me on edge, but just the thought that you aren't there. Tonight, I feel it so much, but more about that later.

Your letter of Monday came today and, well, what else can I say? It's getting so that it is more than "unfair." You know that I'm living from one day to the next, waiting for the time I can call you my own. I've reached the point where I'm sitting on a pin-point, waiting to hear if you made arrangements for the leave of absence, whether you are coming back, and when. I do want you back, Billee, as soon as possible. I'm selfish, but I can't help it.

All this must sound like the utterings of a desperate man. Yes, I'm desperately in love with you.

Now, I don't want you to drop everything and come a-running. But, I do hope you can get everything settled, one way or the other, so I'll know when I can have you in my arms again. If you decide to stay, I won't mind because I'll know you are doing it for the best. But if you are coming back, can't you hurry it up?

About staying with the family? I'll be honest. I can't put myself in your place because I'm not a female. I would want to be on my own. But, I know Mother will be only too happy to have you stay there if you want to. But I know, too, there will never be any talk of "rent." She wouldn't stand for it.

I'm going to try and get home over the weekend, if it is only for a short time, and I'll give you more on that later. Too, I want to have a heart-to-heart talk with John, an important one. It's not that I want any help in making up my mind on our marriage, but I have to talk to someone, Billee.

I don't know how all this sounds to you. To me it's all jumbled. When I say our marriage, I'm speaking of the time element, etc. How long it takes to make arrangements, Wasserman tests, license, etc. You see, in the event we decide not to wait and get married sometime soon, I want to be able to handle the details quickly. At the most, I'll only have a weekend pass to work with, you know. Furloughs in our company are things to dream of anymore.

A thought just occurred to me, that Mother probably would be anxious for you to stay with us since it would remove some worry she would have otherwise. In that case, consider your future address 195 Lexington Ave. Just let me know "what the score is."

Don't ever think anyone would consider you "small town," especially Dot. When you know her as well as I do, you'll find she's one of the sweetest and most considerate people in this world. We've always regarded each other as brother and sister for more than a few reasons. Too, Al and I have grown up as brothers. So, you see, there is a bond between us.

I mentioned it before, and I repeat, I want to tell the world about us.

Charles is late again. I prepared to call Marguerite tonight and then discovered I sent your letter home, the one with the information about the call. Will you send me that address again, pretty please?

I did think of calling you last Friday and, as you suspected, I was rather flat. But I won't reverse the charges. That's mine. As much as I want to hear your voice, I'll wait until I can make the call. I have the money but if I go home this weekend, I'm going to need it for fare, etc.

Now, if you go back to the second paragraph of the letter, you'll find I mentioned, "more about that later." Well, Jack Donnell came over to see me tonight and tell me he was married last Saturday in Brooklyn to Theda Franklin. When he told me all about it, I was amazed to find their case is almost an exact replica of ours. Only, they did something about it.

She is starting back to Asheville on Sunday, I believe, and she'll stay there until he comes back for her. She is staying at the Asheville Y.W., I believe, because he wanted me to ask you to visit her. He thought she would be lonely and would enjoy your company. You can decide what to do about it.

Jack was so happy, telling me about it, and it wasn't jealousy I felt, but envy. You see, they made plans a long time ago and he was unconsciously fortunate to get a five-day furlough on which to complete arrangements and have the benefit of a brief honeymoon.

That's one of the things I'll consider when I think of us, Billee. We deserve a four-star wedding and everything that goes with it. We deserve a honeymoon to rank with any and as a good start. We won't have those things now and I wonder if you won't miss them?

No, I'm not a "fraidy-cat," but perhaps I'm being too cautious and reserved. Can you help me make the decision?

I'm kissing you goodnight, darling, hoping a new day will clear some of the dark clouds away. 'Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Just reading your letters over and over again makes me feel good, but, too, it makes me put my arms out, and you're not there to fill them. I love you! 'Night.

April 24, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

Your very welcome letter arrived this afternoon much to my relief. I have come to a decision finally and it is all settled. As I wrote in the letter last night, one of the girls in my department is in the hospital, for how long I'm not sure, but as soon as she returns I'm coming bag and baggage.

I've just talked to Mom and shed a few tears over it. My conscience hurts me a little going off and leaving her alone and I said as much. She let me know that I had to live my own life and if I thought the change was what I wanted to go ahead. She realizes the little opportunity there is to advance where I am and every place is the same. I'm just too ambitious to want to go on working at the same

salary year after year. I've had a dollar raise in two years. That is a little discouraging. They feel that when you live at home it doesn't cost you much to live.

I feel better already that it is settled. Then, too, Mom and I have been very close and the longer I put it off the harder it is going to be on her. This way she will dispose of her house as soon as she can and go back to her own people where I know she will be happier. I have looked at it from all angles. The only real problem now is financial, so soon after my vacation, but I'll work that out, too.



Billee and Elizabeth Gray. Massillon, 1940.

I had a talk with Evelyn Fragge tonight about the church, since Marguerite isn't here. She suggested that I just take the pre-marriage instructions now, and to take plenty of time for study and thought with the instructions to join the church. She said the length of time it took to join was up to me, but that it was a good idea not to hurry with the study so that it would be thorough and I'd understand everything. She is going to introduce me to Father [Louis] Bour and I can take the instructions from the nuns at St. Genevieve's. Since he doesn't have an assistant now, you are obliged to go out there. I'm going to go first of the week. I thought I start them here and if I didn't finish (she said it took about three weeks) Father John can continue.

Let me know what you think about all this. I'm so glad I made you happy by what I decided, but if you were in my position, it would be the same. Can't you picture me letting you take our ball team to church by yourself? Not a bit. I know I am going to enjoy the church and besides, I don't do things in half-way measures.

Mother thinks we should wait until the duration, but her argument wasn't loud and I think I convinced her. As always, she leaves the decision up to me.

Still no word from Marguerite. I'm going to drop her a note when I finish writing to you.

I wish I had your shoulder to snuggle up to tonight. I'm in the need of moral support for some reason and I'd love it to be you. Charles, my dearest, once more I love you so much. Please don't worry about me, as I've said before. Everything will be all right. 'Bye for awhile. Goodnight, my love.

All my love as always, your Billee

April 25, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello sweetheart,

Forgive me for using a typewriter, but I have news tonight, good and bad, and I can get it off to you a bit faster.

By reading my return address on the envelope you must know by now that a promotion came through today. No, I'll have to wait a little while longer for my corporal's stripes but I took a step in that direction today by earning my one stripe as Private First Class. They tell me I have to go through the stages of a P.F.C. before getting two stripes. What's more, it means six dollars more a month, more for me to save and send you. So much for the good news.

Now the bad news is, I can't say. I'm just classifying it as bad news because we aren't likely to have time to make our big decision. I want to tell you more but it would come under the heading of censorship. My plan is to call you either next Thursday, Friday or Saturday nights. If I don't call, you'll know our time ran out.

Now, don't be worrying. I would want you to go through with anything you had planned. If you have decided to stay in Asheville, then you stay there. I can find my way back. If you come to New York, go straight to 195. They'll be waiting for you. Too, you can tell John anything you would tell me. I've told him everything and he'll be waiting to keep an eye on you. Just let the folks know when to expect you, if you come.

This isn't as gloomy as it sounds. I'm just taking precautions because of very recent developments. If they change, I'll let you know, but quickly. You just go ahead with everything we planned and if the time element still prevails, we may be able to make our decision.

This is just going to be a "quickie," because I don't want to fill your pretty head with too many uncertainties. Good night, beautiful. I'm taking your smile to sleep with me.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 27, 1942—Fort Dix, N.J.

Hello again, sweetheart,

I trust you have seen Theda and also have received mail from Father John. Too, Dot was to have written, telling you all the things I couldn't. It was heart-breaking not to be able to talk with you once more.

Both of your letters of last week were delivered today. When you said you were ready to come "bag and baggage," I fairly shook all over. I've been reading your letters all day and wondering why it is we deserve such a fate. Then, I realize it is all being done for a sound reason. I know God would never permit such a thing unless He had something in mind. We don't know what it is, but it must be good.

No matter what happens, I'll only be living for the day when we will "belong to each other." I fully understand what you meant in your letter. I know what you felt that last night because it was with

me, too. Had I been of a more impulsive nature, I certainly would have agreed on your proposal to “look up a preacher.”

I’m smiling now as I look back and picture us, sitting there; me trying desperately to make common sense overcome recklessness while you looked at me and said, “Now, who is the fraidy-cat?”

I’ve told everybody at home, including Father John, about us. Too, Al and Dot are “in the know.” Al and Bill paid me a surprise visit last night. They had a bit of a job getting in but they made it. During the time they were here, I was able to have a last heart-to-heart talk with Al. He thinks you’re grand, and why shouldn’t he? If you came to NY, you will find Dot and Al, Marty and Bill, as loving as I have. Al and Dot will write, as I said before.

Father John is waiting with open arms, too, as are all at 195. John came down today for a few moments and said for you to get in touch with him first as soon as you get to NY. He wants to take you in hand and guide you just as I would, had I been there.

I don’t want to say more, darling. What I have in my heart cannot be put into words. My letters in the future will be addressed to John who will in turn send them to you. Of course, I won’t know if you are in Asheville or NY. Don’t worry if you don’t hear from me for awhile. I’ll send word as soon as I’m able.

Have faith in God and in me. And pray often, won’t you? I’ll be back as soon as possible to claim you, wherever you are. Just... ‘bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, your Charles

April 28, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Your letter really started the day with a bang. I haven’t been able to eat or work. I wanted to quit right then and there and board the next train, but, of course, I had to settle down and be practical.

I got that heart-to-heart talk with the boss off my mind today. He was very nice about it all. This is what he wants me to do... stay until June 1st and then he will give me a month’s leave of absence. The girl in the hospital won’t be back for another two weeks. In the event that she does come back before then, I think I’ll just take off. This may help you decide. June 1st seems like an eternity to wait, but it won’t be that long. I’ll go out the Thursday before and arrive in New York on Friday or Saturday.

I won’t be able to begin the instructions until next week. Seems there is a K[nights] of C[olumbus] convention and everyone is so busy. Evelyn says it will take three weeks.

Now about this honeymoon and four-star wedding. We’ll have lots of time afterward for a honeymoon. In fact, we’ll take one every year to make up for the one we will be missing. A simple wedding is all I want, one that will fit the times and our pocketbooks. I’ve been wondering what I’d wear. I would think of that.

Charles, I want you to decide. I'm not very practical when it involves our happiness. I'm trying to look at it in a sane way, but I'm not succeeding very well. I just know I won't be sorry, of that I'm sure, even if we only have that weekend before you come back to stay. I just want you to be so sure... very sure. Forget about the times and try to imagine this happening to us in a civilian life before any war. Would you be the same? That's too hard. We have all changed, but see what I mean? I'd rather not even see you again than to have you make a mistake and be hurt.

I love you so much. It's beyond all time. Nothing has ever happened to me before like this, not anything so glorious. My heart is singing. You expect me to be sane and keep both feet on the ground... sorry, but I can't.

One more item... you know me so well. Of course, I'd want to be on my own. That's why I said, "rent." Even if we were married, I'd want to be with your people. I'd expect to pay my way the same way I do at home. At last we have something to fight about. I was beginning to get worried on that score.

Our fires are still burning... no rain yet. Some 30,000 acres have already burned. They have caught three more of those "fire bugs." The smoke has been terrible yesterday and today... just like fog.

I forgot to tell you... the boss offered me a dollar a week more. Some raise. I felt like telling him he could have it back.

It's 1:30 a.m. and I should be in bed getting my beauty sleep and here I sit.

I think I'll leave all my linens, silver and etc., here along with my winter clothes. Then I'll have a good excuse to come home in the fall. I haven't left yet and I'm making excuses to come home.

I'm anxious to hear how you and Father John came out. He is going to be so sensible and sane about it all, not that he shouldn't be either. I'm just a wee bit scared at what he might say. I'm not sure he liked me and that is very necessary. I liked Dot and Marty so much and I'm glad they liked me. I don't think I'll have any difficulty getting along with them. They made me feel so much at home.

What do you hear from your brother in California? My sister and her husband are coming east in June. They are coming to Asheville first to see Mom and then to New Jersey to visit his sister and back to Ohio to live on his mother's farm. He is in Class 4-F... why, I don't know.

Still no word from Marguerite. I've missed talking to her. She always manages to straighten me out when I get too mixed up with myself. She once told me, before she left, if we decided not to wait and we had just a little time that she had a very good doctor friend... one of the health officers of her county...



Billee's sister Katherine. 1940.

that would eliminate the usual 3-day to a week waiting period. She said to just let her know and she'd be glad to do it for us.

I'm really going. I can't hold my eyes open. Let me know what you decide. I'm afraid I haven't been much help. Goodnight, my dearest, for a little while. Be seeing you soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

You might misunderstand the [above] paragraph. We'd have to take the tests but he'd complete them that day. My love, B.

April 29, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

I have your airmail that came via special messenger. Theda called me tonight and said she had brought both the radio and letter with her. Of course, I didn't waste any time getting to the Y. We talked for a bit and she told me all about her wedding and how it all went off like clockwork. She looks so happy. She said she didn't mind leaving Jack as much this time as before, even though it was under such uncertainties. She also told me a little of what prompted your letter, and how well you looked and what a nice tan you have. I was envious of her, having been able to see you just this past Sunday.

I'm sorry you have to give up your radio, but I'll take good care of it until you come back for me and the radio.

Now the good news. I'm so proud, I feel like they pinned a stripe on me, too. It won't be long until you have another to go with it. Now I want a picture, if possible, to see if you've changed. That just couldn't be. I'm going to try not to worry too much because I know you want it that way. If I don't make such a success of it, that's to be expected. I'll never be very far away from you wherever you might go. Should there be a chance that you will be there longer than you expect, let me know. I can eliminate that June 1 date and come sooner.

Somehow, Charles, I think if there is a chance that we should take advantage of our time and get married. I haven't wanted to voice my views. I wanted you to decide. Knowing how we feel about each other, I think it will be best and that we won't be sorry. I'm going to follow through with my plans as near as possible unless something unforeseen occurs here at home before that time. It's hard to make definite plans when everything is so uncertain. I'm glad your family knows about us. That will help so much if you aren't there when I come back.

I'm just sitting here in "our corner" with my pen poised ready to write. I don't know what to say, such desperate things are going through my mind. I'd better be on my way before I spoil all my good efforts. All I can think of now is how very much I love you. I always seem to end up with that. It's the only thing I'm really sure of and it is such a comfort... our love.

I'm going now for a little while. Take care of yourself and remember all my love and prayers follow you wherever you may go. Goodnight, my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Tell Jack Theda looks so happy. It did me good to see her. She didn't need cheering up at all, in fact I think she did me more good. She simply radiates happiness. (Off the record, I'm envious now. I know how you must have felt with Jack telling you all about it. We'll have our day... just wait.) More love, B.

April 30, 1942—Asheville

Charles, my darling,

I'm not sure when or if you'll ever get this, but I'm going to write anyhow and continue to do so. You'll get them eventually, I hope.

Father John wrote me the swellest letter and you'll never know what a comfort it has been. He's such a wonderful person. I'm glad I'm going to have such a nice brother-in-law. It's such a gorgeous night out, with almost a full moon. I couldn't help but wish a little bit.

Your letter came this afternoon. It couldn't have been held up very long. I waited tonight until after 9:30 hoping just by accident you might have been able to get a call through.

A girlfriend of mine that teaches in the eastern part of the state is home and is going to New York Monday. Of course, she wanted to hear all about my trip and I was bubbling over to tell her all about it. It brought you back so close and the heavenly time we had together. I wouldn't part with my memories for anything in this world. No one could possibly have more beautiful ones.

I keep trying to wonder where you might be and I always end up with you beside me, reaching out for my hand. That's the way it will always be. I'm going to think of you as not too far away from me and when I need you, I'll just close my eyes and you'll be there saying, "Hello, sweetheart." I'm almost glad you couldn't call. It's better this way. It would have been torture to be so near and yet so far.

We aren't being punished, my darling. This is just what you might call an interruption before our life begins. It helps me just to reassure you. I love you so much. Nothing will ever change that and I'll be here patiently waiting until all this is over and you come back for me. The time will pass quickly and one day we'll look on this as just a bad dream.

I'm going now for a little while. It's way past my bedtime. Take good care of yourself for my sake and keep well. Don't worry about me. My chin's up in the air and I'm wearing a smile that won't come off.

All my love and kisses, always and forever, your Billee

May 2, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Another Saturday night practically gone. One more to mark off the calendar. I'll show you my calendar some time. It's sort of a diary, as small as it is. It begins on January 17, 1942. From then on it looks like a jig-saw puzzle. I have all the dates, telephone calls, letters and my vacation marked. I have it on my desk at the office.

I still can't help looking through the mail, just to see for myself.

I just finished a letter to Dotty. Hers arrived today and it was such a sweet one. I won't ever forget her for it. Every bit helps so much. I feel as if I've known her always. I'm going to put it away with Father John's among my treasures.

I'm going to scold you. Why didn't you keep your medals? I hate thinking of you being without them. You'll need them where you're going. I love you sending them to me because I know how much they mean to you.

I'll take good care of them along with all the other things I have. I couldn't possibly forget even for a moment. I have so many things around me belonging to you besides what is in my heart. Too, we have such beautiful memories, you and I. They will help with those long days ahead of us before we meet again. I'm praying so hard every day that it will soon be over.

Guess what? I'm to be an aunt in August. My older sister... she's already had two. We'll have a time catching up with her. That's something else you'll be taking on... more family... nieces and nephews.

I tried to call Theda tonight, but she had gone away for the weekend. She probably went home.

We are having a nice quiet rain outside... so cozy. I like rain especially when it is like this. Everything is so lovely and green. I can't wait to show you Asheville in the spring. There just isn't any place like it... not even New York.

I'm getting so sleepy. It's way past my bedtime. I've been trying to imagine where you might be when you finally receive this. It gives me such a lost feeling not to know where you are.

I must go now, so I can get up in the morning. Keep well, my darling. All my prayers are with you. Here's a special goodnight kiss. Remember how much I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



Billee's sister Lettie. 1939.

May 2, 1942— "Somewhere at Sea"

Hello again, sweetheart,

I was surprised to learn we were to have mail picked up today, but when I did you were the subject of my first letter. This will be censored and probably held until we reach our destination, but at least it is good to "talk" with you again.

You will forgive me for leaving so abruptly, won't you? And, too, you'll have to pardon Uncle Sam for interrupting our plans. If I had been there when you came back, we would surely have gone through with our "miracle." I know I couldn't have said, "Wait," anymore. John came to see me two days before I left and I told him I was determined. But, honey, we will have faith and trust in each other and in God. We will be together, always.

I made arrangements to have Mother's Day telegrams sent to our mothers. I hope they were delivered. I thought of sending one to you, then decided it would be proper to wait until our "pitcher" comes along. He'll be the first signed to our team.

Now, about our trip:

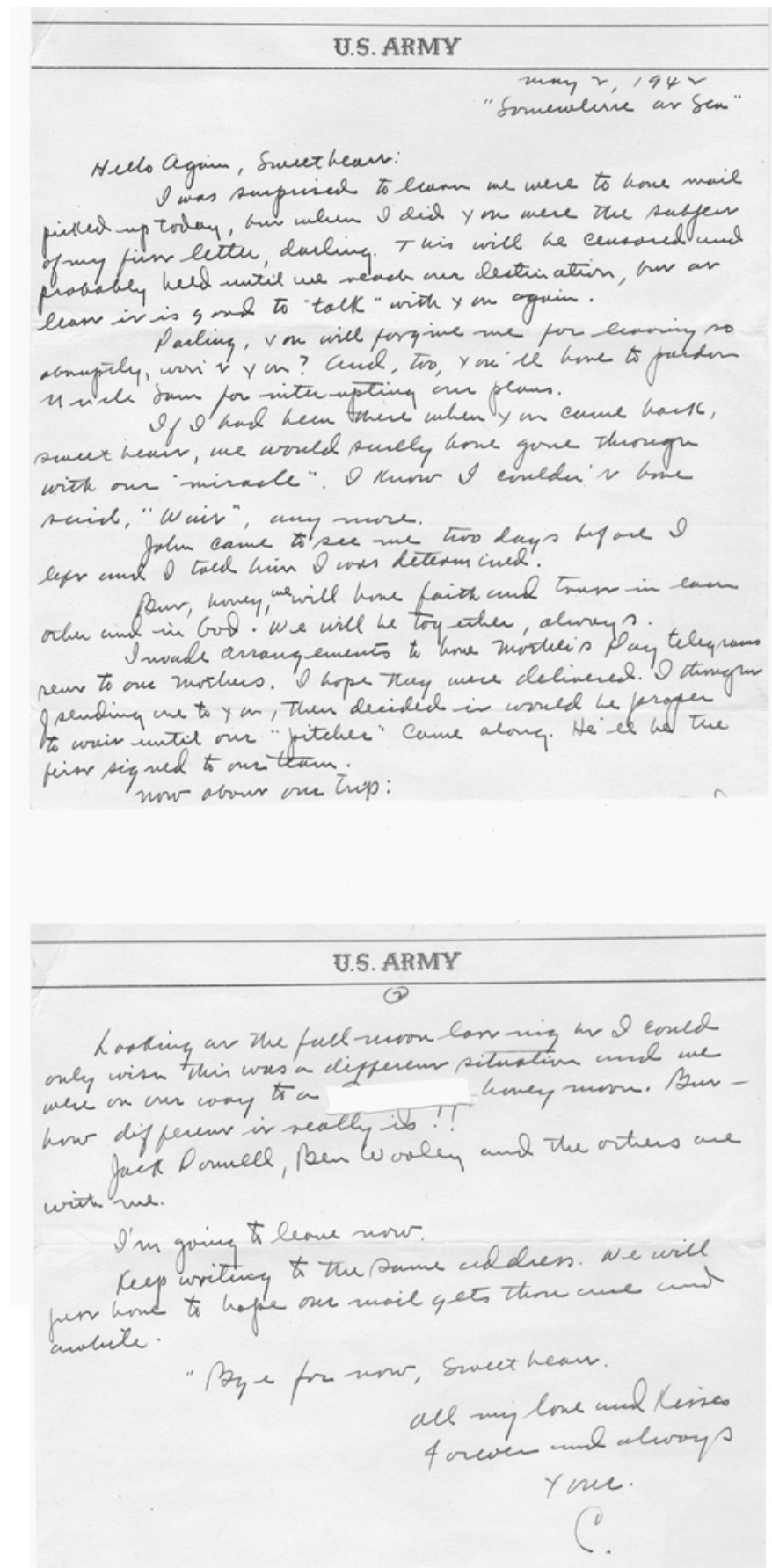
[LARGE PORTION CENSORED]

Looking at the full moon last night I could only wish this was a different situation and we were on our way to a CENSORED honeymoon. But, how different it really is!

Jack Donnell, Ben Wooley and the others are with me.

I'm going to leave now. Keep writing to the same address. We will just have to hope our mail gets through after awhile. 'Bye for now, sweetheart.

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



Charles' first letter after being shipped out, written on board the Aquitania, May 2, 1942. The censored parts have been cut out, including the entire bottom of the first page.

May 3, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

It suddenly dawned on me a few moments ago what medals you are sending me via Dotty... your marksmanship medals. I know that must be what they are. I feel so relieved... I just couldn't believe you'd send the medals from your chain.

We have had another gorgeous day and I spent it at home, sewing. I went to church this morning. The bishop from this diocese was there, and all the Knights of Columbus. The music was special and quite lovely.

I've already begun studying and I've gone far enough in the book to realize how mean I was that last night in the station. Please, forgive me. I wasn't at all responsible. I know now what was going on in your mind. I keep wishing I'd stayed a few moments longer in the station and that I hadn't come home. I'm still trying to decide. Don't be surprised when you come back that you have to make a trip to Asheville.

It will be funny if you get all these letters at one time. I'm going to write regularly even though I don't hear from you often. I'm sure you'll get these eventually.

It's like a summer night out tonight. The breeze is so warm blowing in my window here. Mom is snoring in the other bed and I'm afraid to make much noise for fear I'll waken her and she'll see the light still on. It is way past 12:00. She went to the show tonight so I spent the evening alone. Since Marguerite left, we don't have anyone to stay with the house so we can both go.

I couldn't help listening for the telephone last night... that was the deadline.

I'll be on my way once more for a little while. The breeze just took a kiss out the window for you. I hope it finds you safe and well. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 4, 1942 – "Still Somewhere at Sea"

Hello sweetheart,

Our censor was kind enough to tell me there were some parts of my first letter that had to be eliminated so I'll endeavor to keep this one "clean" for our scrapbook.



Life Magazine covered the convoy Charles sailed in and published the story and pictures the following July; Billee put some of the pictures in their scrapbook. This is the Aquitania, the boat Charles sailed in



From Life Magazine: a mass celebrated on the deck of one of the ships in the convoy with, apparently, a musical accompaniment.

It's not necessary, but I'll tell you again that I miss you so very much, and that I love you more than ever.

Now for our diary, as far as military information will permit:

I went to Mass and Holy Communion yesterday, the ship's library serving as our church. In fact, I'm going to Mass every morning at 7:00 a.m. Our company was moved to more comfortable quarters since my last letter and the trip is getting more enjoyable than ever. I've been reading quite a bit since I left, our training manuals and Reader's Digest, mostly. Today our company assembled for a highly interesting talk by one of the chaplains aboard about the customs of the people we will meet, the change in currency, etc.

Our boat drills continue along with the enforced rule of wearing life belts at all times. While there isn't any immediate danger, there is always the possibility of an emergency. The company received commendation from the colonel for the cleanliness and orderliness of our quarters yesterday and today the general passed on favorable comments on the cleanliness of the deck we are to keep in order.

That's about all for today, angel. I'll be thinking of you always.

'Bye for awhile.

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

May 5, 1942—Asheville

Hello dearest,

Here I am again, do you mind? I couldn't help but remember that yesterday was one of our anniversaries. Just one month ago that we started out on that memorable weekend... remember? I'll never forget. I wouldn't part with my memories, not for anything.

I'm having your ring sized to fit. I feel lost without it, but it won't be for long... just tomorrow. I found out first that it could be made larger so I went ahead and had it done. I'll want to give it back to you one day, but I have to have another to take its place first.

Theda called me yesterday. She had just heard from Jack. His letter was written the same time yours was but was postmarked May 1. I tried to call her several times after your letter came on Thursday, but no luck. I wasn't sure she knew.

I have been so busy at the office, I've hardly had time to think, what with meetings and extra work, etc. I can't help but stop and think, "Where is he now... how far?" I have to catch my breath when I realize what all this means. I'm proud to be able to wait for you. It won't be for long... the days slip by so quickly.

I sent your mother a little remembrance for Mothers Day. I was afraid that in all the rush you had probably forgotten. It was a silver pin in the form of a bow and a handkerchief. I tried to think what you might send. I wanted to put your name on it too, but I was afraid she would feel too badly.

The weather has been perfect here except for an occasional shower but everything is lovely. I have spring fever. I always have it worse here than anywhere else. I always want to go native and take my shoes off.

I'm getting so sleepy. I should be in bed. I sewed all evening making over a dress instead of writing you earlier.

I went to a movie last night. It was cute and very timely. Ray Milland and Paulette Goddard in "The Lady Has Plans." "Jungle Book" is coming this week. Every time I pass the billboard I think of how we sat in the last row like a couple of school kids holding hands. I loved every minute of it... couldn't tell you now what the picture was about except maybe for the snake. [Billee and Charles had seen this movie at Radio City in New York on their engagement weekend.]

That's enough for now. I can hardly hold my eyes open. Keep well. All my love and prayers follow you wherever you may be.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



May 7, 1942—Asheville

Hi dearest,

It's me again, but I couldn't help letting you know I'm thinking of you tonight, as usual.

There is such a gorgeous night out. Went out a few minutes ago to mail a letter to my sister. The breeze is bringing a kiss your way, on account of I'm missing you tonight.

I'm enjoying your radio, carrying it out to the kitchen, in the yard to sit, etc. I'll try not to wear it out before you come back. Mom just loves it. She doesn't see how anything so little can have such volume. We have ours in the bedroom, that is mine that she gave me for Christmas.

By the way, that's something else we won't have to buy... it's a table model, R.C.A., of course. I've always wanted a combination Victrola model. I guess I can cease wanting one for the duration. They are a frozen item now. I wish you could hear this program... Victor Borgia, that Danish comedian... his version of a baseball game. Most amusing.

I'm still undecided about my future. There are so many arguments for and against. I could save a little more money here for us and then it would be easier for me to get more things for our hope chest since I'm at the store. Well, it will all work out in its own way. I'm not going to worry about that now.

You'd laugh if you could see Mom. She's desperately in need of a stamp. She has the cardboard your radio was wrapped in and several very wet blotters trying to soak the stamps off.

I'm off for a little while. I have some studying to do before I go to bed. Keep well, and hurry back, as they say down here.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Mother is putting in a complaint on my cutting up the newspapers and magazines before she sees them, but they're for a good cause.

May 10, 1942 [Postcard of Union Station, Los Angeles]

Have a weekend pass and enjoying Los Angeles, Hollywood and all the places here. Will write you later and let you know about the places we visited.

Eddie

May 15, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

I've been neglecting you this week. Please forgive me, but I have a good reason.

My cousin and aunt arrived on Monday and are staying through next week so we've really had almost a family reunion. I haven't seen either in several years. You'd like my cousin... a really sweet girl. She is 25. I've told them all about you and they all think you're swell, but what else could they say? The evidence speaks for you.

I had a day off today and we went to Chimney Rock. Left here at 7:00 a.m. and went out on the bus. We walked, or rather hiked, up to the top from the gates... just a five-mile climb. We finally got all the way to the top when the heavens literally opened up on us and it just kept on raining all the way down the mountain. We looked like a couple of drowned rats. Our own mothers wouldn't have loved



us, the way we looked. It was worth it, though. The view was gorgeous. Some day, we'll go back. That was my first trip up. There weren't but just a few up there and we couldn't even get a ride down. We really had a ten-mile jaunt... getting in training for the Army. Ha.

We now have Germans and Japs in our Grove Park Inn for the duration. Isn't that something? Makes me mad every time I look up there. [The Grove Park Inn was being used to house German and Japanese civilians caught in the U.S. when war was declared.]

We took some pictures today. I hope they turned out all right. We couldn't use all our film on account of the rain.

I had two of the swellest letters yesterday, one from your mother and one from Dottie. Your mom believes Father John's story and the telegram Sunday helped convince her that much more. She was quite a bit worried before that. Oh, Charles, you don't know what a thrill your mother gave me by the way she her letter, "Love, Mom Kiley." I loved it.

My boss is leaving for the service. I don't know what is going to happen to our organization. Everyone is leaving.

I sent a Sporting News your way the other day. I wanted to see what was going on that I might be missing.

Excuse my writing on the back, but this is my last piece of paper. I'll write again soon. I'm missing your letters almost as much as you. I still love you so much. I'm afraid this is one of those Rock of Gibraltar things. Do you know the words to "You're Always in My Heart?" That's what I'm thinking of. Here goes a very special kiss your way. Got it? OK. Goodnight, my love, for a little while.

All my love and kisses, always and forever, Billee

May 16, 1942—Asheville

It's me again. Six weeks ago tonight I was engaged. I can close my eyes and see everything as if it were just happening. The dim lights and the soft Hawaiian music... you trying so hard to convince me. I was so tongue-tied I couldn't say anything, but loving you so much. No one ever had a nicer proposal or a more perfect setting. I'll have fun telling our grandchildren.

Your medals arrived today. It doesn't seem right that you shouldn't be wearing them. I'll take good care of them. I'm so proud having them with me.



Billee with her cousin, Ann Carlson, who was the daughter of Elizabeth's sister, May. Asheville, 1942.

This has been such a week since I had your last letter. I miss those airmails. I still can't help sorting through the mail, wishing all the time.

I've been studying. Evelyn gave me some books that make the study so much more interesting and a little more simple. I'm finding all so enlightening. I realize what I've been missing all these years. I'm so glad I decided to join the church.



Elizabeth Gray with chickens in Massillon, 1933.

The weather has turned a little cool. I hope it doesn't frost and spoil Mom's garden. She had some 200 tomato plants set out besides potatoes, corn and string beans. We still have another plot to plant. We will have quite a garden. Mom is going to get some chickens, too. That will save a lot. She serves a lot of fried chicken in the summertime. I'm only hoping that we will have some people to feed. It doesn't look any too bright now. We aren't going to worry about it... everything works out for the best.

Theda and I are going to take Mom to the show tomorrow night, Mothers Day. They let in all the mothers accompanied by a daughter or son free of charge.

This is one more Saturday to check off the calendar. One more close to the time when we'll be together again. Take good care of yourself and don't worry about me. I'll be somewhere around. Just remember how much I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Here I am again, but I hadn't mailed your letter yet when the wire arrived.

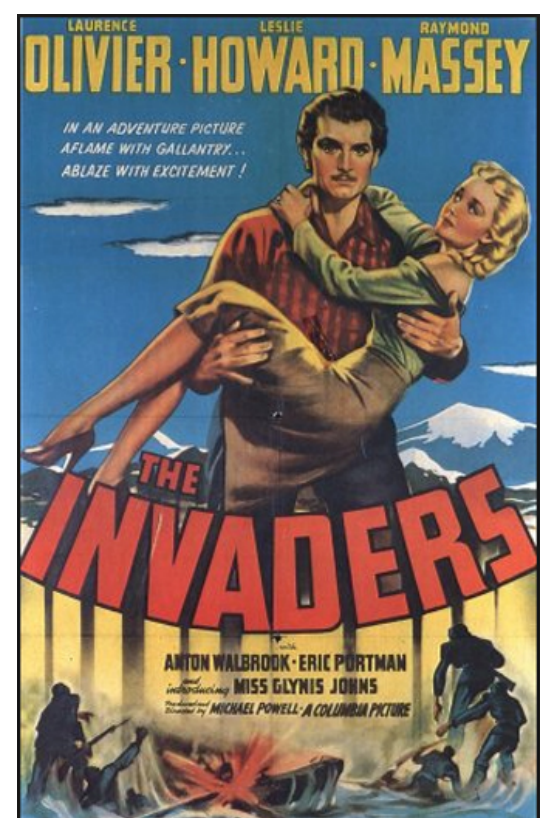
Mom was so surprised and pleased that you remembered her. It was a very sweet thought and I love you that much more for it, if that's possible. You have been so close to us today, especially since the wire arrived.

We took some pictures. It is such a beautiful day out, we couldn't resist it. I borrowed Evelyn's camera. I hope they are good.

I must go and get dressed. It will soon be time to go to the show. We are going to see "The Invaders." I know it will be a pleasant diversion. Ha.

I'll run along now. 'Bye for awhile. Love, Billee

By the way, I didn't want to leave your medals in the box so I fastened them on your picture frame, one on each side at the top, so it's almost as good as wearing them.



May 17, 1942–Northern Ireland

Hello from Northern Ireland, sweetheart,

Yes, this is our anniversary and while you are not actually with me, you have been by my side more than ever today. I've been reading your letters, those I still have, in place of mail I hope will be forthcoming soon. We have been here only a short time and this is the first time I've been able to devote to writing. It is Sunday and we have the day to ourselves.

The voyage was something to remember. I will not give you all the details until I see you. But, I can say it was thrilling at times. We are quartered here in homes formerly occupied by residents. There are CENSORED in our particular base. We have to be housekeepers as well as soldiers, as you can see. You would have enjoyed seeing me wrestle my wash this afternoon. At present, there is a scarcity of laundry soap, so, instead of "Luxing" my undies, I "Woodbury'd" them!

There are several mess halls available within a short walking distance and a building with enough showers to take care of the men. Then, of course, we have bathtubs but hot water is pretty hard to get. We use what we can for washing and shaving.

The weather? So far we have been fortunate in getting more sun than rain. It is said that it rains quite often. The scenic beauty is something to behold. I'd want to describe it but it is not permissible. However, I will say, whatever you have heard about Irish beauty did not do it justice. Extreme homeliness can best describe the people.

Radios are very rare. I've heard only one. Our electric irons and razors, etc., aren't any good because of the different current. Dry cleaning is not available, sugar is rationed along with meat, chocolate and most everything else. The average automobile is slightly larger than our Austin, which makes bicycling the usual means of conveyance.

The girls, I've noticed, are very muscular besides being homely. A pretty girl in this section is very rare. A dance was held the other night and I was surprised to see how quickly some of the girls caught on to the American style. It wasn't for me because I was an M.P. on that night, stopping in at the dance only occasionally to see that everything was in order. An R.A.F. orchestra supplied the music.

Believe this or not! We have daylight from 6:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.!

Now, about you... I wish I knew where you are and what you are doing. It has me worried a bit. Still, I'm sure you are taking good care of yourself. I've been over-anxious waiting for your letters. My Mass today was for you and your intentions. Too, my prayers were for a quick ending to the war and a speedy return to you with whom I belong.

Darling, I send you all my love and kisses, forever and always... 'Bye for awhile. C.

May 17, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Four months today. Remember, life began for us only to end for a little while.

Ann and I went to “Lucille’s” last night for a little while with a bunch. She’s my cousin. I couldn’t help but remember the times we were there together. I’m afraid I wasn’t very good company. I saw Frances Jenkins there. Remember, the girl John Joyce teased so the last Sunday you were here. She was with that fellow that drove the other car, that she got mad at, so he must still be around.

Ann and I just came back from going up to the Inn. Of course, we couldn’t go in the grounds, but we went up behind the Inn, up Sunset Mountain a way. We saw a couple of the prisoners. They have restricted the area a lot more for those than the others and it is all barbed-wired in.

It’s such a gorgeous day and I’m missing you so much. If I could only hear some word today... I felt so close to you this morning in church. Oh, well, perhaps it won’t be so long... at least, I’m hoping. All this will just be a bad dream one day.

My girlfriend came back from New York. We had tales to swap. She had a grand time, too, and saw a lot. There couldn’t be anyone who’d know the glory we had just being together. I wouldn’t swap my memories for anything except maybe some more just like them, but they would have to be with you.

It’s been swell having someone from home. We’ve had a good time visiting and talking over old times. I had a letter from Marguerite yesterday. Her mother is improving some. They took her to another doctor and he is giving her some new medicine. He diagnosed her case as “paralyses of the nerves;” more serious than either the heart condition or the high blood pressure. They are giving her these new vitamins, too. She asked for something to eat last week for the first time in months. That is some encouragement.

We have taken quite a few pictures this past week. I do hope some of them turn out. I took quite a few of Mom last Sunday when she was all dressed up. My brother sent her a large picture of himself for Mothers Day. Of course, that pleased her no end. She is so proud of him.

Our garden is coming along so well. Everything is popping up. This rain has helped a lot. Mom just loves to garden and watch the things grow. There is almost everything imaginable in it.

Dot’s letter was so sweet. It helps to be able to write to someone that knows you so well. Her letters have been such a comfort and I know she must like me or she wouldn’t go to all that bother. She says Al may not have to go so soon. He passed his welding examination and that gives him a six-month deferment. She also said that any time we wanted their recipe for married happiness, she’d be glad to oblige. I know I shouldn’t be but I am envious of them and their happiness. But, our time will come just as soon as God wills it.

I have to go and get dressed. We’re going out this evening. We haven’t decided where yet... probably a movie.

Remember how much I love you and wish I could have you sitting here beside me, instead of having to be with you this way. Take good care of yourself and don't worry about me. Here's some very special anniversary kisses going your way, one for each month and each day we've spent together.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 20, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello, angel,

Inasmuch as I have more time to write tonight, I hope our "visit" this time will be more interesting than our last. When I wrote Sunday I did so because I couldn't wait another day to say "hello, again." So, let's cuddle in our corner and really enjoy our chat tonight. I understand we may send cables now and I'll send mine to Father John tomorrow. It will merely consist of a "safe arrival" note in the event my previous letters were delayed.

I don't believe I could describe our beautiful surroundings, as I said Sunday. Of course, one cannot appreciate them as much as he could in another situation. The beauty is here but the presence of our military life takes just a bit of an edge from it. Did I mention that we have a fireplace in every room in our quarters? Well, they are rather small. Still, they help to keep you in my mind. I'd give anything to be with you in our corner in front of the fireplace we know so well [at Oak Lodge].

Billee, the people here are most friendly and hospitable. We realize how little they have and appreciate their fine spirit more. Stylish clothing and anything but necessities in food are extremely rare because of rationing, etc. The Irish appear to be splendid people, though going through life with an almost silent attitude. Perhaps it seems that way to strangers, only.

Billee, it occurred to me last night that I had forgotten to write a "remember" note on May 4 while we were still at sea. I'm afraid my memory is failing me. I shouldn't ever forget the 4th and the 17th, should I? Those were our two eventful nights.

Back to Ireland again... As in the U.S.A., our "working day" is long and quite active. We have "reveille" at 6:30 a.m. before starting our schedule at 8:00. "Recall" in the evening isn't until 5:30 p.m., one hour later than it was in Fort Dix. Daylight appears at approximately 6:00 and stays with us until almost 11:00 p.m. at this time of the year. It is 9:00 p.m. now and the sun is still shining!

We haven't had a salary since the first of April but we are expecting one any day. We are to be paid in local currency, I'm told. That means we will be weighed down with coins because when you have the equivalent of a dollar in change, it feels like five dollars or more in your pocket.

A baseball game between companies is being arranged for tomorrow and the people have been invited to watch a demonstration of the great American game.

I haven't seen Jack Donnell since we were onboard together so I can't say how near or how far from me he is located. Ben Wooley is not quartered here but I met him yesterday and he informed me he was not far away. The rest of the fellows are with me.

I'm going to say "goodnight" for now and pray your letters reach me soon. 'Bye for awhile.

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

May 25, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Hello again. It's me... do you mind? I've been neglecting you again, but for a very good reason.

Mom hasn't been well and I've been home since Friday. Getting in practice, though, for our ball team. I have seven to cook for and I haven't been getting any complaints, either, so maybe I'll come up to the standard of a new bride without having you go through indigestion, etc., the first few months before I get the hang of it. To top it all off, our maid left the first of last week so that left me to be chief cook and bottle washer and the most amazing part is that I love it. I washed today, and I haven't done it in years. It was such a gorgeous day to be outside, so balmy and bright. The clothes dried almost as fast as I put them out. Tonight for dinner I made an Irish stew and all that goes with it, and a strawberry shortcake. I made the cake myself and it was really edible. I was surprised. I can't wait to experiment on you.

The night is so gorgeous. There is quite a brand-new moon but it won't be long until it's full again and another month will roll by. It will soon be time to celebrate our second month anniversary on the fourth of June. I'll be engaged two months. Sigh.

I haven't heard from Father John as yet confirming your arrival. I thought that perhaps the message might be held up so I sent him a special with Theda's news.

My girlfriend was here tonight, the one that went to New York. Naturally, our conversation kept drifting back there and consequently, we ended up swapping tales again. They are such precious memories that I love to take them out from hiding and tell the world how much I love you.

I'm so sleepy and if this isn't exactly legible it's because I'm in bed and in about two seconds I'm going to reach over and cut the light off. 'Night, darling. Pleasant dreams. Keep well and pray often for us as I am doing.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 25, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

You will have to forgive me again for waiting four days before "sitting in our corner" and telling you I received your letters of April 28, May 1 and 3. I couldn't possibly love you any more than I did when the mail orderly handed me your mail. It arrived with the first mail our company had received. I read the letters in order as if I was getting them one at a time. When I had finished the first one I was as low as anyone could be. First of all, when you said all arrangements had just about been

completed for your move north and that your mind had been made up regarding our marriage, I... well, I wasn't sure I cared to read any further.

You see, it's so hard to feel "necessary" when we have had so many barriers to our happiness. But, I can stand anything now until we can be together. I blame myself only for being so "practical" when we had our opportunity. We could easily have had our "chip" of happiness had I been more thoughtful of you. Still, Billee, it was you I was thinking of when I decided we should go slow. You still want me to be sure of everything, don't you? Billee, dearest, I am as sure now as I was when we first decided we were for each other. There will never be anything that will keep me apart from you, except, of course, the duration of my service here or in any other foreign country.

All that I ask of you is to wait, and that is asking very much. If all this happened before or after the war (in answer to another of your questions, Billee) or at any time, it would still be the same as far as I am concerned. But I doubt if I would wait as long as I have before claiming you. I haven't passed through 28 years with my eyes closed. I've met a countless number of people but all together they couldn't stand in the same light with you.

About Father John... I was a little perplexed when you said you weren't sure he liked you. You don't know him. Then, when you said you had received his letter, my mind was at ease. Another thing... I shouldn't want you to have an inferiority complex. You're not the type. You stand head and shoulders over all, and I mean all, in my eyes. And that is all that matters between us, isn't it?

I'm glad, too, that Dottie wrote to you. I can always depend on her. As for Marty, I'm wondering whether it's a boy or girl. I'll be on "pins and needles" when it concerns us, one day.

I've been trying for three days to send you a cable, but every time I get a chance to go to the post office it is too late. You see, we have our working day up to 5:30 most of the time and the P.O. is closed then.

You said you would continue to write. Please, don't stop. Your letters now mean so much. And I'll get them some time. I'll be writing just as often as I possibly can. I still don't know whether you are coming to N.Y. Your last word was that you were. I'll continue to address my mail to you in care of Fr. John until I know your whereabouts.

By the way, I'm to be our battalion reporter for the Stars and Stripes official paper of the U.S. Army's Northern Ireland Forces (U.S.A.N.I.F.) and it will be taking up some of my extra time.

We were paid Saturday and I have already started to save. When I have a sizable amount, I'll cable it to you. There is to be a savings account for us, too. A certain amount to be paid every month at 4% interest after 6 months.

Thanks for Marguerite's address. I hope to drop a line to her in a day or so. Too, thanks a million for the uplift via your letters. I sure needed it. Keep that smile "smilin'" and pray for all of us. 'Bye.

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

P.S. Censors require that letters are to be written on one side of the paper. Can you send me a box of stationery? It's extremely scarce here.

May 27, 1942–Asheville

My darling,

The official news of your arrival came today via Father John. I felt all along that you were there but it's a relief to really know. It's sweet of Father John to take time out and keep me posted when I know he is so busy.

What an experience you are having. I know you are taking advantage of it despite the circumstances that exist. Things will soon be rolling "over there" now.

Now I have a story. I didn't want to say anything about it before, until I had all the facts. Mom has been in the hospital since Sunday. She had seven hemorrhages from the throat in three days. They made tests and they all came out negative. A specialist in nose and throat was called in and he found a blood vessel had burst in the larynx. She is out of danger now and the vessel is healing. He doesn't seem to know what caused the trouble. I've been home since Saturday, being chief cook and bottle washer, but I haven't minded, just so Mom gets better. It's good training and I'll be needing it later on.

We're beginning to believe that we aren't going to have any summer here. I had to light the fire again this morning and here it is almost the first of June. Our garden seems to be surviving the weather. It really is a "victory garden."

I called Theda today and told her the good news. She was glad to hear you are still with Jack. She said his mother had received a telegram, too.

I think Mother's older sister is coming now since Mom is sick. That will relieve my responsibility in case something may happen.

It is such a gorgeous night out. A full moon and the sky is so clear. Just before I came in from the hospital, I made a wish on it and blew a kiss your way. I wondered if perhaps you weren't looking at the moon, too, and wishing, until I remembered the difference in the time.

I cooked macaroni and cheese last night for the first time and everyone put their stamp of approval on it, so maybe I can please you, too. I remembered while I was fixing it how much you liked it. Now, all I have to do is learn how to bake a lemon pie.

I'm sending along a few snapshots that we took on Mothers Day. The sun was so bright, we didn't get the camera just right. One is of the Inn, but you'll have to look close to see it.

The men brought some flowers from the Inn, from their rose gardens up there, for Mom. [Some of the guards who were working at the Inn, guarding the internees, were staying at Oak Lodge.] They stole them and carried them home in their lunch buckets. They told me to say the Grove Park Inn sent them. I thought it was sweet of them to think of her. They are all so nice and have been so patient since I've been running things here. They haven't seemed to mind my cooking, so I guess it's all right.

The first women today applied for officers' training [in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, or WAAC]. I wanted to go, but I couldn't leave, and besides, I have to be sure of Mom before I do anything. Mom says to tell you your little radio has been a life saver. I took it to the hospital for her. It helps so much. We haven't used the battery but just a little bit.

I'm getting so sleepy. I'm afraid this letter isn't very newsy since I haven't been out to know what is happening. You hear so many stories about the war being a long one and the next one says it will be over this year, but long or short, I'll be here for you to come back to.

I'm looking forward to your letters. Seems so long now but time passes quickly. Take care of yourself, my dearest, and keep well. Remember how much I love you always, and how much I'm praying for us all.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 1, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

There is such a gorgeous moon out, a real June night but here I am and there you are... but I can still dream, can't I? I'm still at home but I have ten guests now instead of six and still going strong. We brought Mom home today from the hospital and it was swell having her in the house again. There was such an empty place here without her. She is getting along fine, but she'll always have to be conscious of her throat and she won't be able to do any strenuous work. We'll have to wait and see what happens.

I'm sending the Sporting News along with this... thought you might like to see it. There doesn't seem to be a lot in it this time.

I'm hoping to go back to work Thursday. By that time, Mom will be a little stronger and I have a colored girl coming in tomorrow. Help is really a problem around here. I really have enjoyed doing it and knowing now that I can do it in case I have to do it again.

I haven't heard from Dotty in awhile. I guess Marty's baby has arrived by this time and they are probably busy. I'd love to be up there but, of course, it never would have done for me to be up there now. It just goes to show you that everything works out for the best. My aunt came last week to relieve a little of my responsibility as far as Mom is concerned. I was afraid something would happen and she'd have to have an operation and I didn't want to be here alone.



I have almost all my material gathered for our scrapbook. I just lack a picture of the Y.M.C.A. After all, without that, my picture wouldn't be complete. I've had fun telling my aunt (this is another) about us and she likes you, too. Soon you will have been introduced to all the family, almost. Incidentally, mine is almost as large as yours.

I left you for a little while. My schoolteacher friend just called for me to come down for awhile so I went. Now it is much later and I've put Mom to bed for the night and all is quiet. I blew a kiss your way before I came in. I hope you got it all right. Seems hard to realize that it is nearly two months since our last meeting. Seems like only yesterday. I still wish I'd stayed just a few moments longer in the station and that I had told you again how much I love you and all that you mean to me. I thank God every day for keeping you there so that those two weekends were possible. I wouldn't give up my memories for anything.

We have fun kidding Mom since she came home about not being able to sing. That's one of the things the doctor told her not to do for six months. She thought it was funny. She also says that she'll never be able to thank you enough for sending your radio to me because it has been put to such good use. You can imagine Mom not being able to talk. She likes you a lot, Charles, and that means so much. There isn't a day goes by that she doesn't say something about you. The telegram pleased her so because of your thoughtfulness.

My dearest, I'm afraid this isn't a newsy letter because I've hardly had time to turn around, so bear with me until I get back in circulation again. The only thing I've been able to think about except you is keeping the house going and getting Mom well again.

As always, my darling, my prayers and love follow wherever you may be.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 1, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

I knew I could depend on you to keep me "alive" with mail. We received our second delivery on May 29 and there were three letters and three papers for me. Besides your "bit of heaven," which was what I wanted more than anything else, there were letters from one of the girls in Dot's bridge club and a fellow in the Air Corps. Your letter was the one of April 29 telling me that you received the radio. Just as you said, I was as envious of Jack as you were of Theda. I haven't seen Jack since we disembarked but as soon as I do see him, I'll pass along your description of his bride.

Yes, as I mentioned in one of my letters, I would have asked you to marry me before we left had our time been a wee bit longer. My practical characteristics just disappeared about five days before I left.

Too, I was very proud of my advancement to P.f.c., just as you were. As for a picture, "to see if I changed," I'm afraid I can't say when I'll be able to get one. Cameras are few; in fact I haven't seen one since we've been here. And film is very, very scarce. But at the first opportunity, I'll try and get one.

We are in a different location since I last wrote, and consequently in different quarters. I'm not permitted to go any further than that, but I will say I've been very busy but not too busy to miss you more than ever. I still have all but \$3.00 of my last salary saved for our fund.

I'm looking ahead to the second anniversary of our engagement on the 4th! 'Bye for awhile.

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

June 6, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

What better way to spend Saturday night than writing to you, since we can't be together. As usual, I'm missing you so much and I keep looking back to two months ago tonight. We had another anniversary Wednesday but I can't help making them fall on Saturday nights. Saturday nights seem so important to us. You know we never have spent a weekday together. But then, think of all the weeks and days and nights we will have together in the not-too-distant future.

I left you for a moment. The fire department just went by and I had to see where they were going. It's kind of sultry tonight. We're due for a shower, I guess, when it gets like this.

I had a special delivery from Marguerite yesterday. Her mother is improving slowly but there is a decided mark of progress, so that is encouraging. She wrote they picked 56 crates of strawberries last week. Imagine! It has been so dry here that we didn't get very many nice ones this year. I still miss Marguerite so much. She wrote and said she was putting a little aside each week from her budget for our wedding. She claims that no matter where it is she is going to be there. Isn't that swell? She is such a real person.

Dotty wrote me such a sweet letter this week, telling me of the arrival of Marty's baby girl... eight pounds. I hope they weren't disappointed that she wasn't a boy. Those things are always momentary anyway. I envy her anyhow... boy or girl. Dotty said both Ruths have signed up for the W.A.A.C. officers' training [Ruth Totten and Ruth Rommel, members of Charles' "gang."]



Oak Lodge, Asheville 1942.

By the way, I returned to work on Thursday. You know I had planned to leave on the first and go to New York. Mother's illness made all those plans go up in smoke. I'm going to have to stand by and see how she is going to be. It may be this house will be too much and we will have to find some means of disposing of it. That will be hard because we have so much in it that can't be valued in money. There isn't any getting away from it... we are

terribly attached to it. It was in a shambles when we took over and we have made something of it. All that will have to be forgotten if Mom isn't able to go on.

She is getting along fine now, but we don't know when there will be a recurrence. We'll just have to pray for the best, that's all, and she'll have to take the best care of herself. She thinks so much of you, Charles. She realizes that this isn't any flirtation, that this is what makes the world go around. Every day she asks, "Any word?" When I'd go to see her in the hospital, she'd write on her tablet the same thing. They wouldn't let her talk for ten days. That was really an effort.

Dotty is going to see if she can get me a picture like the one your Mom has on the mantle. She was so sweet about it. I like her so much. What a help she's been, writing me every week or so and telling me little things, as if she'd known me all her life.

I feel so close to you tonight. I keep wondering... what are you doing this minute? I have been so restless, I almost wish I could fly to wherever you are, even if it's only for an hour or a moment, just to see if you're all right, to hear you say, "Hello, sweetheart." I'd give my kingdom for just a moment.

I'm locked in my room listening to Tommy Tucker and Shep Fields on the "Parade of Bonds." The "Hit Parade" isn't on Saturday night any more and how I miss it.

The news has been so encouraging today in the Far East and in Europe. Maybe it won't be so long after all. I'm trying not to be too optimistic and just have faith and take things as they come. I guess that's the best way, after all.

The program has changed now to Hawaiian music. Remember the Hawaiian Room in the Lexington Hotel? Every time I hear Hawaiian music, that's the first thing I think of. What a night for memories.

I'm getting sleepy so I'll be on my way for a little while. Goodnight, my love. This is a very special kiss... got it?

All my love and kisses, always and forever your Billee

PS: I love you, oh, so much.

June 6, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

One of the boys is playing "Miss You" on his guitar and it puts you right beside me where I can be with you while I write.

We have had two mail calls since your last letter and because there wasn't anything for me, I couldn't help but miss you more. I'm sending another cable to Father John on Monday, asking him to pass the word



along that airmail (6 cents) brings letters here unusually fast. Several of the fellows had mail dated May 28 delivered to them today. The letters mentioned the fact that none of our mail had reached home yet. Well, I have been writing constantly since we left, which means you will be getting plenty of “hellos” at once.

I’d be sending Monday’s cable to you but I don’t know for sure where you are yet.

Honey, at times my letters may sound vague. That’s because, as I wrote, I try and eliminate all military information. Perhaps I’ll be thinking of one thing and writing another.

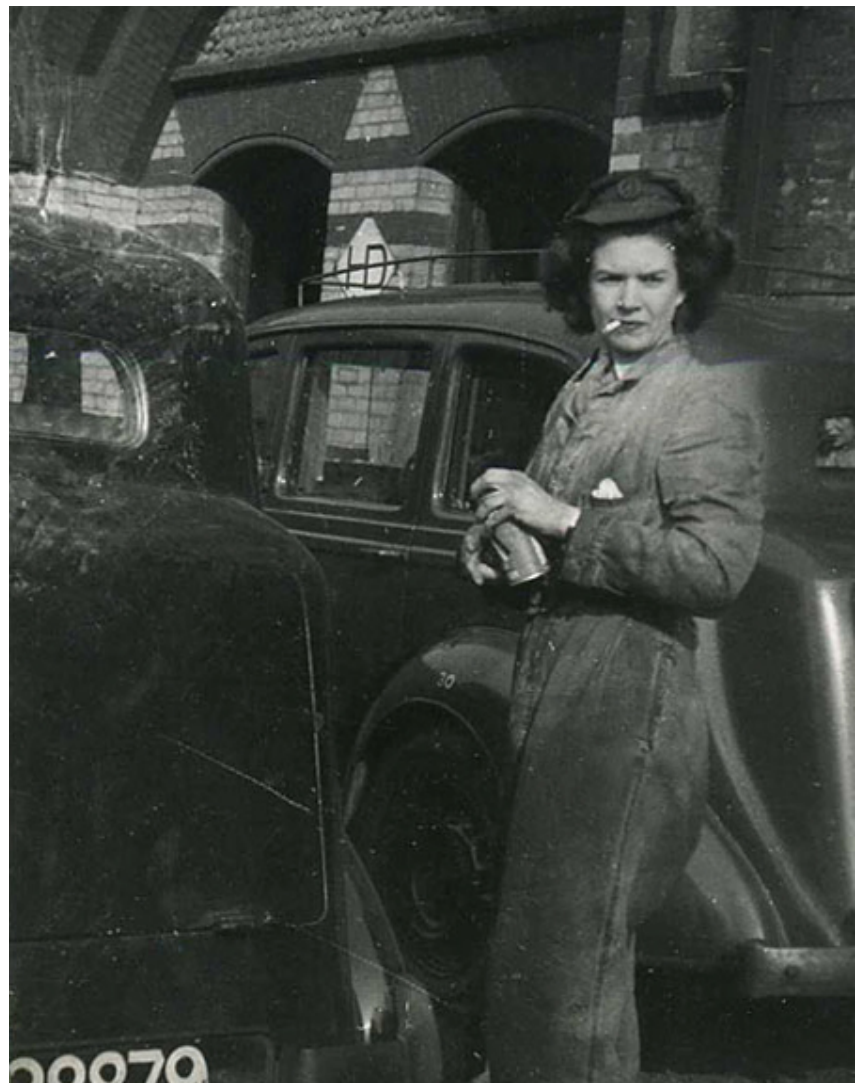
In our present location, we are more settled. There are four theaters for entertainment, more shops to visit, etc. During the week I saw “Hit Parade” and “Married Bachelor.” Tonight I intend to see “Dive Bomber.” We are eligible for passes every second or third night. During the past week, I have spoken to several British soldiers who are in training and a few of the A.T.S. girls (Auxiliary Territorial Service). The girls are trained for work as ambulance and truck drivers, cooks, orderlies, etc. They wear uniforms that I must say gives them the appearance of being too masculine. There have been a couple of dances but I passed them up. I doubt if I could enjoy myself. I would probably be thinking of us all evening. Yes, I believe I’ll save all my dances for you.

Three days ago, I met Jack Donnell and one of the other boys from Croft. They are stationed about eight miles from me and had bicycled to our post. It was the first time I had seen Jack since we were onboard; it gave me the opportunity to pass your message regarding Theda on to him. We had to smile because he had a message for me from Theda, saying how well you looked and how you beamed during your conversation.

(Continued on Sunday a.m. from Saturday.)

This is our fourth successive beautiful day. I went to a special Mass for soldiers this morning. The church was magnificent. Like Canada, Ireland’s biggest buildings are churches.

Last night we received our second batch of rations: five packages of cigarettes, three bars of candy, three cans of beer, three bottles of Coca-Cola and a can of fruit juice. Other things available are toilet articles, cigars, tablet stationery, Kleenex, shoe polish, sardines, sewing kits, etc. These supplies come now and then and are deducted from our salaries, that is, according to how much one takes.



*A.T.S. mechanic during WW2 in British Isles.
[Don't know how Charles expected any woman to work as a
mechanic in "non-masculine" clothing]*

I intended to do some shopping yesterday. I put it off when I learned how expensive Irish linen is now. Hankies are 18 shillings (\$3.60) for a half-dozen. Napkins are also expensive. I'll have to wait until our treasury is established before being so extravagant.

That's about all for now, darling. Don't forget to send "airmail" and the more often the better. Be careful.

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

P.S. This is my first airmail letter from here. Let me know how long or how short it takes to reach you. More love, C.

June 7, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Here I am again. Do you mind? I wrote last night but I had a strange dream and I felt so close to you that I had to write.

To begin with, I was so restless last night, as if something was going to happen that concerned me. When I went to sleep... I don't know where I was but it was so dark and it was raining so hard. I walked for blocks alone in some place, town or city. The streets were deserted and there was such a deathly quiet. On the side streets as far as I walked, and it seemed like miles, there were troops standing at attention, all equipped to move somewhere, countless number of tanks, trucks and jeeps. Finally I awakened and I was so cold... there was no more sleep for me then.

I couldn't help but write. Do you believe in mental telepathy? I can't seem to shake the feeling that it all concerns you. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? It just made me wish all the more that we were together. I seemed that much more close to you. Seems strange that after such a short acquaintance we should be so close. There are times when your presence is so near I have to catch my breath. I couldn't forget you, not in a million years. Every word we've spoken, all the things you have said to me are still ringing in my years as if they had just been spoken.

I think you knew that last Sunday night would be the last time we'd be together for awhile. You stared so, going back to New York on the bus and held my hand so tightly. I wondered what you were thinking of, you had such a far-away look and such a serious expression. Then, in the station, how my heart rebelled at leaving you. I wish now I had told you what was in my heart, but then, perhaps it's just as well I didn't.

I went to see John Steinbeck's "Tortilla Flats," with Spencer Tracy and John Garfield. It was so good. You would have liked it, I know. There is something so real about his characters. They are usually such simple people.



Mother was well enough today that I could leave her to start dinner and I was able to get away and go to church. I've missed two Sundays and I really missed going, but there wasn't much I could do about it.

I'm listening to the music from "Carmen," my favorite opera. I can remember Mom taking me to see it in Cleveland at the stadium. I must have been only 11 or 12. One of the events to be remembered in my life. I was so thrilled. Ever since I can remember, I've always loved music. Father John and I got along swell on that score since it was a common interest.

My dream doesn't seem so grim since I've written it down here to you. Perhaps after all it was just a dream and carried no significance.

I'll be on my way to bed. I am getting so sleepy so I'll just send a goodnight kiss. As always, my love and prayers are with you constantly.

All my love and kisses, your Billee

June 14, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

I believe it is time I started to remember what I write in my letters to you. When I settle down to "talk" with my darling, it seems I just ramble along with only one thought in mind... how much I want to see you standing before me and then take you in my arms, never to let you go. Consequently, I scarcely remember what I have been "talking" about. If I repeat myself, blame it on my everlasting thoughts of you.

Your letters have been so sweet, Billee. And, they do mean so much. While I destroy the envelopes because of the identification on them, I am saving the letters. I have before me those of May 4, 6, 8 and 27. That is the way the mail comes. Tonight, for instance, I had a May 12 letter from Dot and one dated May 27 from Al. Honey, they are still raving about you. Dot said, "Brother, I wouldn't mind having Billee for a sister." During the past few days, I've had letters from Mother, Father John, Ruth Rommel, Berta, Ruth Totten and two other girls from Dot's bridge club. The girls' husbands usually add a page. I haven't heard from Marty and Bill at all, but I know the "event" and Ede's (Marty's sister) wedding took up all of their time.

In Mother's letter, she told me of Eleanor's approaching marriage to Tom in September. I wasn't exactly surprised because those kids are too much in love to waste their young lives. I wish I could be home for the wedding, but that is asking for too much, isn't it?

Honey, while I have it in mind, if my writing is a little shaky, blame it on a rather stiff elbow. Playing baseball yesterday, I got in the way of a pitched ball and had to have my elbow x-rayed this morning. Luckily, it is only a hematoma under the skin (medical term). But for the present, I won't be able to use my arm much. That is, for a day or so. Otherwise, I've been feeling great. We traveled about 30 miles to play yesterday... and lost! Tonight, the team had a good workout by way of getting some badly needed practice.

So you are enjoying the radio. Well, it gave me many happy hours. One of our cooks was fortunate enough to rent a radio and once in awhile I listen to the British broadcasts. They have recorded programs of Jack Benny, Bob Hope and Eddie Cantor once in awhile.

By the way, I've started to read "H.M. Pulham, Esq." At the rate I'm going, I should finish by Christmas. I'm having a job reading all the Jersey Journals, too. They usually come in threes or fours. I had a letter from the publisher's daughter (also secretary) concerning our 75th Anniversary dinner. She sent copies to all the fellows in the service. The picture enclosed was in the Anniversary Edition. I'm also sending a clipping of our trip, from the N.Y. Journal-American. One of the girls sent it to me.

Honey, in your last letter you told me of your cooking qualities. You can start practicing on me just as soon as I get back.

It was good to hear you were progressing with your studying. Keep it up and let me know how it goes. It is so big, darling. And I pray hard, very hard, for you. Father John must have notified you of my arrival shortly after your letter was written, didn't he?

A thought just came to me and I'm sending one of the fellows to the cable office to send you an "anniversary" remembrance for the 17th. I think we can afford a couple of dollars, can't we?

Tell Mother to take good care of herself. That was the second time she has been ill in bed recently, wasn't it?

Your description of those beautiful nights in Asheville make me feel terribly empty inside for the moment, but, well, we'll have many more of them. 'Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, Only forever, C.

June 14, 1942—Asheville

Good morning, darling,

It's very early and I should be in bed. There has been so much happening. My sister and her husband and mother-in-law came in tonight from California, so of course there was a lot of excitement. We have been having a convention here of the House of Brethren Church... 2000 delegates. The house is filled to the top. In fact, I'm sleeping on the sofa. At the present, I'm curled up in "our corner." I was so sleepy a couple of hours ago, but I'm all worked up now.

Father John sent me a very welcome note today, bringing me the good news of your second telegram and the message it carried for me. It came just at the right time. I felt like if I had to go one more weekend without news, I'd die. I see where troops landed again, so you will probably get some mail.

I've been neglecting you again this week... don't laugh. I've had more company. This time, an old girlfriend that married and moved away. She brought her two-month-old baby and stayed all this week. We had fun, just like old times except, of course, for the baby. He was such a darling. The company still continues to come... like old home week except that it goes on and on.

It's been hot here this week. I've all but died in that office. What I wouldn't have given for a swim. I hope we can go tomorrow. I haven't been this year yet. I'm glad you like to swim. In fact, there isn't much that you do that I don't like to do except eat chocolate ice cream. I can't do that yet and I've been trying. I have to be a little different.

I'm knitting again... this time for Bundles for America. They have combined with Bundles for Britain so it's all the same now.

The aliens checked out of the Inn [enemy aliens internment at Oak Grove Inn] this week and it is open for business once more. I was cleaning out my drawer tonight and down in the bottom I found the little cocktail napkin I kept from up there that last night we were together here. I remember it as if it were this morning. Our rendezvous over champagne cocktails and then our moment on the terrace. All I have to do is lift my eyes to the hills beyond and see that red roof gleaming in the sun to remember each moment we spent there or to see the lights shining from the windows at night.

I called Theda this morning. She said she had received two letters from Jack that had been written on the boat but that she couldn't make much of them. I'll be getting one from you soon, I know.

Father John told me of the good news that Eleanor and Tom are to be married September 12. I'm glad they decided not to wait. Your mother seemed to think it would be a long time before they could marry because of his family's dependence on him. They are young and she can go on working for awhile. They may as well take their happiness while they can. You know me and my argument.

It's almost like talking to you this morning, I feel so close. All I have to do is close my eyes and look back a few months and our coming in about this time and sitting a few moments before you went to your room.

Don't laugh, but I went to see "Gone with the Wind" again... the fourth time. Believe it or not, I enjoyed it just as much as the first, second and third times. Sounds kind of silly, but I believe it's the picture of all time.

My girlfriend said tonight, "I'm glad you didn't get married." Of course, I said, "I'm not." I can't seem to make them understand that this is real, that this is what makes the world go around and no matter what happens I'll always feel the same. You've changed my whole life, everything about it, all for the better, of course. This must sound like an old story to you by now, but I can't help marveling at what has happened to us and how lucky we are to have found each other after all this time.

I'm getting sleepy again so I'd better be on my way. Excuse the scribbling, but I cut my thumb on the right hand pretty bad, and it's a little awkward writing... a good excuse, anyway.

Mom is feeling much better and back in her stride with all the people around. I have my fingers crossed. She sends her love to you. As always, my love and prayers are with you constantly. If you'll close your eyes and be very still, you'll get this long goodnight kiss. Got it?

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 17, 1942-Asheville

My darling,

What can I say? I'm almost speechless. Your cablegram arrived first thing this morning. I fairly squealed for joy. If it weren't for the law of gravity, I'd be beside you... really. That is how high up in the clouds I've been riding today.

What better day than our fifth anniversary to start my instructions? Yes, tonight Evelyn took me to St. Genevieve's. One of the nuns is going to instruct me. She is such a lovely person, quite old and French. I told her about you and, like you, she said it was God's will that our life together is being postponed. I'm still marveling at the wonderful gift we have.



St. Genevieve-in-the-Pines school, Asheville.

I had such a lovely letter from your mom yesterday. She scolded me a little for not telling her that I knew you had left. She told me about Eleanor and Tom's wedding in September and asked me to come. I'm really going to try and go. I'd love to see them all again. I'm going to write and tell her about your cable. She will want to know.

Our company and delegates from the House of Brethren convention left today so once more we are alone, Mom and I. We've had thirty people in the house for a week and what a relief for them to be gone. I can sleep in a bed for a change. I can really sympathize with you.

The night is perfect out. It was just twilight when I left St. Genevieve's and there is a new moon. I wished on it for us. Remember the first Sunday we were together; Evelyn took us up there and how lovely it was? I wish you could have seen all the flowers in bloom. It was so quiet and peaceful.

Theda and I had lunch together Monday and, of course, you and Jack were the main topic and how we met and how much alike our situations are. I was as amazed as you were. We are going swimming together one day soon and we'll take some pictures. She looks grand and seems happy even though she and Jack are so far apart. She isn't at all sorry that they didn't wait.

I must get this in the mail so it will go speeding away to you. I haven't had any mail but I guess I will in a few days. Father John is on retreat, I believe, and perhaps he can't send them. As always, my darling, my prayers and love are with you. Take good care of yourself for me and hurry home.

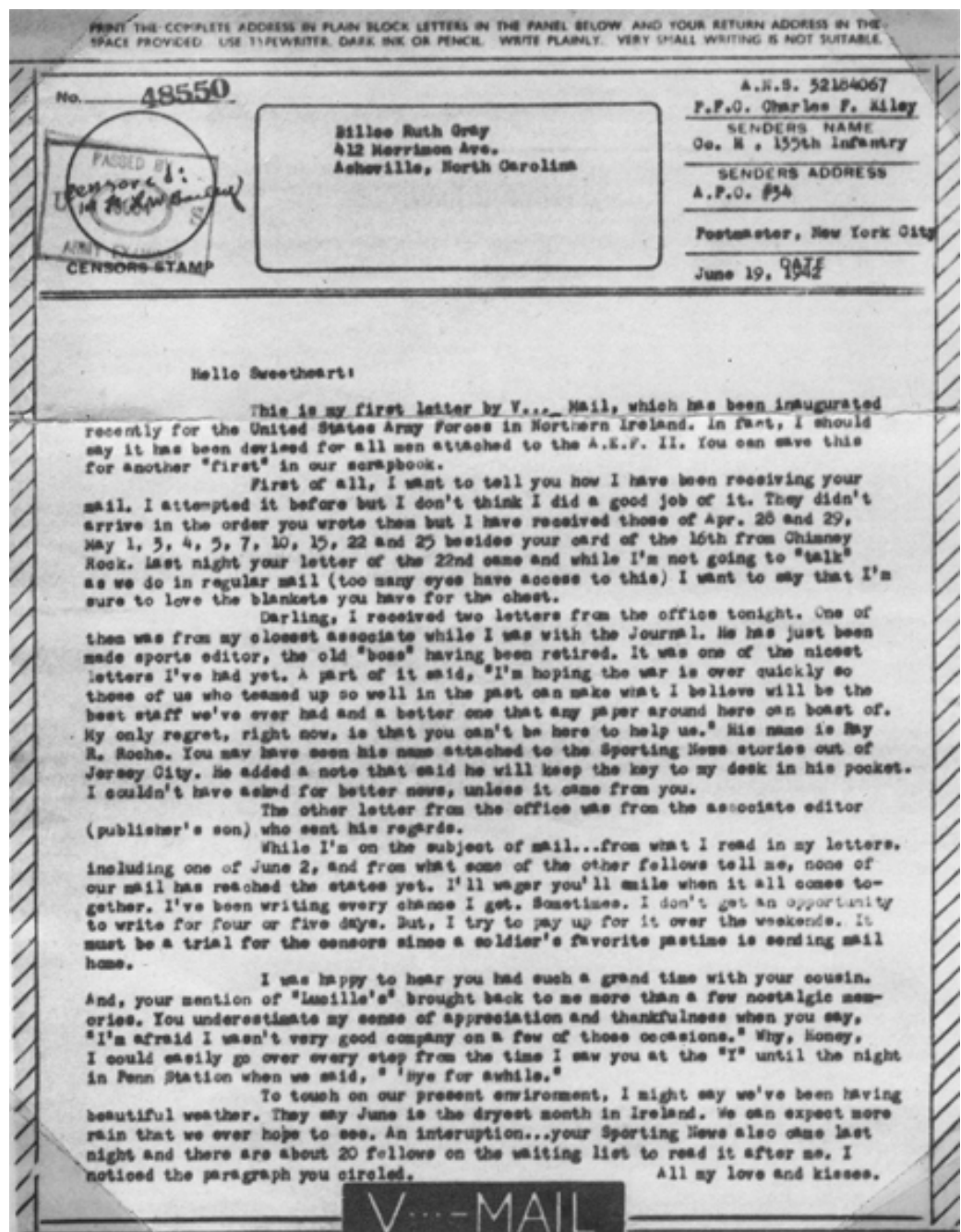
All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 19, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

This is my first letter by V-mail, which has been inaugurated recently for the United States Army Forces in Northern Ireland. In fact, I should say it has been devised for all men attached to the A.E.F. II. You can save this for another “first” in our scrapbook.

First of all, I want to tell you how I have been receiving your mail. I attempted it before but I don't think I did a good job of it. They didn't arrive in the order you wrote them but I have received those of Apr. 28 and 29, May 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 15, 22 and 25 besides your card of the 16th from Chimney Rock. Last night your letter of the 22nd came and while I'm not going to “talk” as we do in regular mail (too many eyes have access to this) I want to say that I'm sure to love the blankets you have for the chest.



Charles' first V-mail letter to Billee. June, 1942.

I received two letters from the office tonight. One of them was from my closest associate while I was with the Journal. He has just been made sports editor, the old “boss” having retired. It was one of the nicest letters I've had yet. A part of it said, “I'm hoping the war is over quickly so those of us who teamed up so well in the past can make what I believe will be the best staff we've ever had and a better one than any paper around here can boast of. My only regret, right now, is that you can't be here to help us.” His name is Ray Roche. You may have seen his name attached to the Sporting News stories out of Jersey City. He added a note that said he will keep the key to my desk in his pocket. I couldn't have asked for better news, unless it came from you. The other letter from the office was from the associate editor (publisher's son) who sent his regards.

While I'm on the subject of mail... from what I read in my letters, including one of June 2, and from what some of the other fellows tell me, none of our mail has reached the states yet. I'll wager you'll smile when it all comes together. I've been writing every chance I get. Sometimes, I don't get an opportunity to write for four or five days. But, I try to pay up for it over the weekends. It must be a trial for the censors since a soldier's favorite pastime is sending mail home.

I was happy to hear you had such a grand time with your cousin. And, your mention of “Lucille’s” brought back to me more than a few nostalgic memories. You underestimate my sense of appreciation and thankfulness when you say, “I’m afraid I wasn’t very good company on a few of those occasions.” Why, I could easily go over every step from the time I saw you at the “Y” until the night in Penn Station when we said goodbye for awhile.

To touch on our present environment, I might say we’ve been having beautiful weather. They say June is the driest month in Ireland. We can expect more rain than we ever hope to see. An interruption... your Sporting News also came last night and there are about 20 fellows on the waiting list to read it after me. I noticed the paragraph you circled.

All my love and kisses, Charles

June 20, 1942—Asheville

Good evening, sweetheart,

You should see me... I’ve moved into my summer quarters. Sounds like I’m in a circus or something. It’s a storage room that gets all cleaned out once a year for me to move into. I have a window, a single bed, dresser and closet space and room to turn around once. I don’t mind. It’s mine and I know where everything is. I have you right close by with my bunny beside you and your radio is right by my ear. Dick Jergens is playing.

It’s been a scorcher today and it’s still hot for some reason or other. That is almost an impossibility here, for it to be hot after sundown.

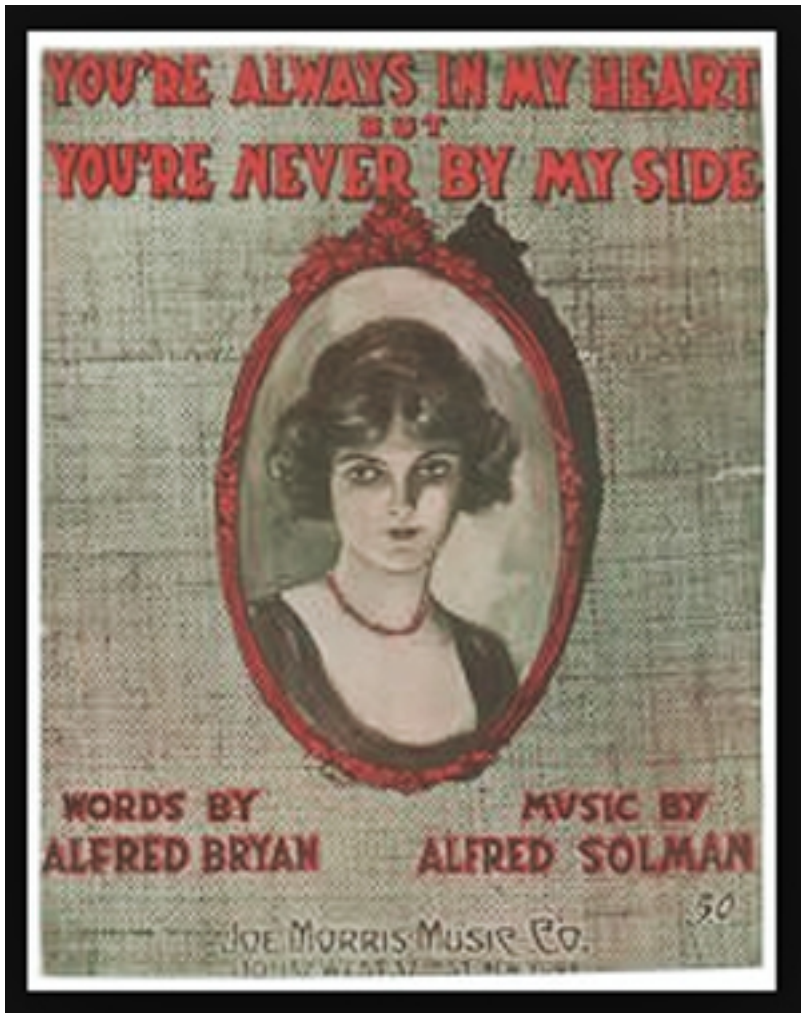
I had another instruction last night. I haven’t told anyone up in Jersey except Father John. If he told them, they haven’t mentioned it. Everyone here says what a sacrifice I’m making. Do you suppose I’m not going at it with the right attitude? I don’t feel that I’ve giving anything up. Instead, I have a feeling I’ve never had before. It is as right as loving you. They seem to go together. I feel as if I’ve just begun to live. It’s a little hard to explain, but I want you to know how happy I am about the decision I’ve made. You see, I’ve been studying ever since I came home from New York.

They are singing “Johnnie Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland.” I don’t like that song.

I had a letter from Dottie today saying that they had all received mail from you. I still haven’t had any. They were so happy to hear from you.

There isn’t much news. The boss has been away all week and you know how that is. Everyone relaxes a little. I haven’t had so much work to do.





I'd like to go swimming. Don't know what tomorrow will bring, the weather I mean.

I'm getting sleepy as usual. I washed my hair just a bit ago and that always makes me that much sleepier. It isn't rolled up on curlers either. I never will forget how funny that struck me. The second date we had and out of a clear blue sky, you asked me if I slept in curlers... remember? We've come a long way from that night.

I'm really off this time. Oh, I forgot to tell you how very much I love you, or do you remember? It's like that song, "You're Always in My Heart." Take good care of yourself and write often.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: Dotty and Al say hello and send their love.

June 24, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

At long last, two letters. Just the sight of your handwriting changed the whole day for me. I've been waiting so long, nearly two months, but it was worth it many times over. They were both written onboard ship and the first one looks like confetti almost. You'll have to tell me what they cut out. They both go in the scrapbook along with the rest of our treasures.

I've thought of you so much and tried to imagine what new experiences you have encountered. I envy you, so. I can't wait to hear all about it. You'll be able to write a book when you come home. I'm saving every bit of news about "over there" where you are.

Bad news... something went wrong with your little radio. Plays swell on the battery but not a bit on the electricity. The electrician at the store says it must be the converter in the tube or else the resistors, so it's being fixed. I miss seeing it on the dresser beside you. Since Mom and I have separate rooms, I let her take mine and I have yours.

It's just twilight and you can still see the sunset... so pretty. It's quiet out tonight except for the birds singing and in the distance, I can hear children playing. Occasionally a stray car goes by. They get more scarce every day with the tire and gas situation. We aren't at all affected, since we haven't had a car in years.

Mom was almost as excited as I was about your letters. She is feeling pretty well and sends her love and says to be sure and take good care of yourself.

I've been sewing... part of my economy program. It is so much cheaper. I've made two [dresses?] last week and this and they didn't cost me but two dollars in all. I'm also making baby clothes for my sister's new arrival in August and having the most fun... getting in practice for our "pitcher" to be. I've never saved much money before except for a vacation. Now every bit I can scrape goes into a special place for us. By Christmas, I should have about two hundred dollars. That will include the bonds I am buying.



Billee's father, William Gray, circa 1935. He and Elizabeth were divorced around 1936.

I was thinking today just before I came out of church... I couldn't help but think of your letter and what you said about waiting. When the time comes, I want to be married in Jersey City in your church. You have so many more friends than I do. All mine are scattered so and it will be just as easy for the family to go there as come down here. I think that will be quite proper. If my father were here, it would be different. I'll have to give myself to you, darling. Will you mind? I'm being a little premature, I guess, but we don't know how long or when all this will be over. Right now, it isn't very encouraging.

I called Theda and told her of your letters. She was beginning to worry about you. She heard from Jack again. I think she's had quite a few in all. She gets them two at a time and sometimes three. She said Jack had been transferred to another company; that he was in the messenger service and was trying to get in the finance department.

I'm feeling swell, except for cutting a wisdom tooth. Gives me a twinge now and then. I've been kept busy studying, sewing, knitting now and then and writing to you... a movie occasionally and a short story now and then. I haven't opened a book in months. There is always the radio and, of course, my job is always there.

That seems to be all the news. Not much happens here. The summer has been very quiet so far.

You can always tell me how much you love me. I never get tired of hearing it or get over the marvel of it. As always, my prayers and love are with you and my thoughts almost always. You're never very far away. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 26, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

I'm so filled up inside I can hardly write. Four of your letters arrived today. I wanted to laugh with joy and ended up crying. They are the letters of May 17, 20, 25 and June 6 (the airmail), which was

postmarked June 11 by the A.P.O. in New York and arrived today. The others were postmarked May 28 and 29 so I guess the censors held them up.

The stationery went forward to you today. Sunday I am going to fix a box to send you. I've been waiting to hear what you could and couldn't get. Mom and I will get out the old recipe book Sunday and it will go off Monday. I tried to proposition the shipping clerk to crate me up and send me along with the stationery but I didn't have much luck.

We all found your letters so interesting. I read the parts about the people and how you were getting on. As I've said before, I envy your experiences. Since it is happening to you, I feel that it is happening to me, too. You must be thinking of me almost as much as I am of you. That is why we feel so close to each other. Please, don't feel badly about not getting our "chip of happiness." God meant more for us than that. If he had wanted it to be that way, then the "miracle" would have happened. I know it is stretching the point, but I don't see how marriage could bring us any closer spiritually than we already are.

I can't wait to hear more in detail about the people and their customs and the conditions under which you are living. Your letters tell so much, but I know you are leaving a lot out. I was especially interested about the girls. We hear so many tales over here about how pretty they are and so many of the boys are marrying them. It must be propaganda since I'd rather believe you. I'll have to admit that song, CENSORED, worried me a little until I heard from you. ["That song," must have been "Johnny Doughboy found a Rose in Ireland," but why it was censored out of Billee's letter is beyond comprehension.]

Once more, there is no doubt. I feel so sure about everything... our love and your return. You make me all the more happy that I decided to join the church. You seem to go together.

Your radio is fixed now and playing some very soft semi-classical music. I had to have a new set of resistors put on it. So here I am, curled up in the middle of the bed with all your letters spread out before me and your pictures just a few feet away. It's almost as if you were here. You know, next Saturday, the Fourth of July, we will be engaged exactly three months. Such a short time ago. Funny, our anniversaries have fallen on two holidays... St. Patrick's Day and now the Fourth. We're just special people.

Your letters came on the afternoon mail and I dashed across to the drug store to read them... found a quiet spot. I got through the first two all right, but when I got to the third, the one you wrote after you received my letters, I had to quit or else make a fool of myself in front of everyone. I just couldn't go on. I waited so long to hear from you. Now, in a little over a week, your cablegram and six letters... more than I can stand. Don't take me literally... the more the better.

I meant to tell you I just finished buying the last of my insurance. I have two \$1,000 policies now, one twenty-pay life, and the other a twenty-year endowment. I figure the latter will start "our pitcher" off to college. It's a good way to save money.

I knew something wonderful was going to happen today. I felt it when I went into church for a few minutes at lunchtime.

I just caught a line of your letter about how hard it was to be “necessary” when there were so many barriers. You’ll always be necessary to me, no matter what. You’re my whole life and we’ll have our happiness one day, of that I’m certain. We just have to keep faith and trust in God. I remember you wrote me that once. Ours is something barriers, war or anything else can’t hurt.

I’m sending you a Sporting News along with this. I know you’ll want to see it. I’m so proud of your new job. Any chance of me getting your paper? I’d really love it. I still have that other you sent me from Dix.

I’m afraid I’ll take advantage of your army training when you come back, what with your housekeeping, and “Woodburying.” I’ll fix that... some Ivory will go along with the box.

Kate Smith is singing, “I’ll Keep the Love-Light Burning” for a Capt. Roberts in CENSORED for his nine-year-old little girl’s birthday. She might be playing it for us, it is so apropos.

Only one of your letters was cut out, the part you told me about the houses you were living in. I don’t know whether it meant the number of houses, or men. I don’t guess I was meant to know.

I’m getting stiff. I’d better close and get this in the next pickup. By this time, you should have quite a few of my letters. I’ve been writing pretty regularly except when Mom was sick. I must get a note off to Father John and tell him I received your letters. Our “get-together” is over for a time. I’ll write again Saturday.

All my love and kisses always, your Billee

Keep well, my darling, and keep writing. My prayers and thoughts are always with you. More love, B.

June 28, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

It’s just half-past twelve and my light should be out, but here I am where I belong, writing to you. I’m still basking in the glory of your last letters. I’ve practically worn them out, reading them over and over. I almost know them from memory. I wrote Father John last night and told him I had received the letters. I haven’t heard from him in some time.



Kate Smith, known as “The Songbird of the South,” was very popular in the 1940s.

I met Theda on the street today and told her my good news and about your seeing Jack. We stood and swapped tales for thirty minutes... what Jack had written, and you. It's swell to talk to someone that knows you.

I went shopping for you tonight at the supermarket. We are going to bake cookies tomorrow and fix up your box. The contents will be: 1 flat 50 Chesterfields, 1 pkg cheese, 1 pkg crackers, 1 jar jelly, 1 can salted peanuts, 1 can prepared cocoa, sweetened and with powdered milk, 1 box tea balls, 4 bars Ivory soap, 1 bag candy, cookies. [Have not been able to figure out what "tea balls" were... possibly a form of instant tea.]

I'm also going to send the Sporting News with it and a couple of magazines. I listed the above so you could check when the box arrives. I'm going to mail it Monday. I hope it doesn't take too long getting to you. I can't do any good on air express... they won't accept it.

We heard last night after I mailed you a letter about the King and Queen reviewing the troops [in Northern Ireland]. She spoke to a fellow from Asheville in the Navy and another fellow she spoke to was from Elyria, Ohio. I used to live there and two of my aunts live there now. I'm keeping the article for you.

We picked our first peas and beans from our victory garden. Mom was so pleased.

You spoke of buying Irish linen, etc. If they aren't too expensive, I need some napkins to go with a large tablecloth we have in our hope chest. Don't be extravagant, though.

It's such a gorgeous night out, with a full moon and so many stars. I know that must be strange to have sunlight so long.

They just announced that eight Nazis had been arrested for attempted sabotage. They had been landed from submarines by rubber boats. They had lists of all the places they were to bomb. I guess our F.B.I. is on the job. Four were landed at Long Island and four off the coast of Jacksonville, Fla. That's really bringing the war home. They had enough money and ammunition to last two years. [Operation Pastorius; and the FBI was hardly on the job. Two Germans involved tried to give themselves up for days to the FBI, but no one would believe them until one dumped the entire \$84,000 cash budget for the operation on the desk of the assistant director in Washington.]

I must be on my way. I have to get up early so we can get dinner over and get your cookies made and, too, I want to go to church. I've been stopping for a few minutes in the church for us. It helps so much. Take good care of yourself and keep well. Be careful. (That's what you told me... why, I don't know. You must have thought I was in New York.)

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: More love. Sunday morning: I just awakened and I dreamed about you all night. All I know is, we were together, and I felt your kiss and your arm about me as if you were really here. A wonderful dream. I want to go back to sleep and see if it won't happen again. Dreams are wonderful. What would we do without them? I have to get up and get dressed for church. Good morning, sweetheart. Love, Billee

June 30, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Another of your treasures arrived today; your letter dated June 14, postmarked in New York on the 22nd. Not bad. That makes the seventh letter. You don't seem nearly so far away as you did a couple of weeks ago.

The box really went off today or shall I say boxes. We had to use two to conform with regulations. We had both the shipping department and receiving department packing it all. We were all going round with yardsticks measuring boxes.

I'll have to come over and be your private secretary with all the mail you're getting. I know what it must mean to you. I know how it feels not to get mail, but I sure would love the job.

No wonder you said the trip was thrilling at times. Our paper didn't carry a story like that. I had no idea. All we heard was that it was an uneventful trip. We might as well be in another world. I can't wait to hear your story. I'll keep the clipping along with the others.

I had a sweet letter from Eleanor yesterday, begging me to come to the wedding. Transportation facilities being what they are not I'm not sure I'll be able to go, not because I don't want to. I'm going to see what can be done. She said they had had mail from you several times and how good it was to hear from you.

I meant to ask about that picture. You remember, your mother asked about it when I was up there. I was hoping I'd get the paper or a clipping. I don't get the "Vic Mature angle." I can't say I see the similarity. I'll have to write them a letter. Maybe they don't know you as I do.

The letters you mentioned receiving didn't amount to much, I don't imagine. I still hadn't heard any word and wasn't sure where you were except the last one, that was written after Father John notified me of your arrival. I was still home then.

I don't care how much you repeat. I'd probably do the same thing. You're never very far from my thoughts and I go just so long before I have to find a pen and paper and tell you how much all this means to me. By the time all this is over you're going to know it all by heart. I wrote you last night and was going to mail it this morning when I got your letter.

I went to St. Genevieve's again last night. The nun that is giving me the instructions is French and very old, named Mother [Johanna] Müller. She was so delighted when she discovered I spelled my name "Billee" instead of the other way. She says it is French and she pronounced it so cute... [Bill-ay]. She says it is so much more feminine than the other spelling.

I'm getting along fine. My study before I went has helped a lot and it all comes very easy and natural. I realize now what I've been missing all this time. I can't wait until I'm received in the church. Mother Müller says she thought I could be received in time to go to Eleanor's wedding, if I can go.

We have a holiday Saturday. I wish you were here... I'd like to go on a real old-fashioned Fourth of July picnic... swimming and lots to eat... potato salad, etc., that goes to make a picnic and maybe dancing. Think of all the holidays we'll celebrate for the first time. Won't it be fun?

Of all things... me worried for fear you'll get shot or something and you get hit with a baseball. I'm glad it wasn't serious. Your writing didn't seem so shaky, but I know it must have been painful. It's probably better now, I hope. Tell me to be careful... practice what you preach, please.

I didn't know you played semi-pro football. Learning things. There are probably lots of little things we'll learn about each other. Fun!

I don't care how much that cable cost. It was worth ten times over. That was the first word I had. I'll never forget.

I notice the same lieutenant censors all your letters. I don't think I'd like that job. My letters aren't photographed, are they? We saw pictures in the newsreels. That must be for those going long distances, like the Far East. [V-mail was photographed and reduced to about 3.5 x 5 inches.]

They had the final registration today for boys 18-21. Warren, my brother, just missed. He will be eighteen July 5.

I haven't read anything in so long. I've been wanting to read "H.M. Pulham, Esq." for some time. Missed the picture, too. I've been so busy studying, sewing, etc.

All the new summer [radio] programs are coming on and all the old ones going off for the summer.

I've rambled enough, so off I go again for awhile, this time to the drug store for stamps. I wish I had as lovely an ending... it was perfect, darling, but all I can say is...

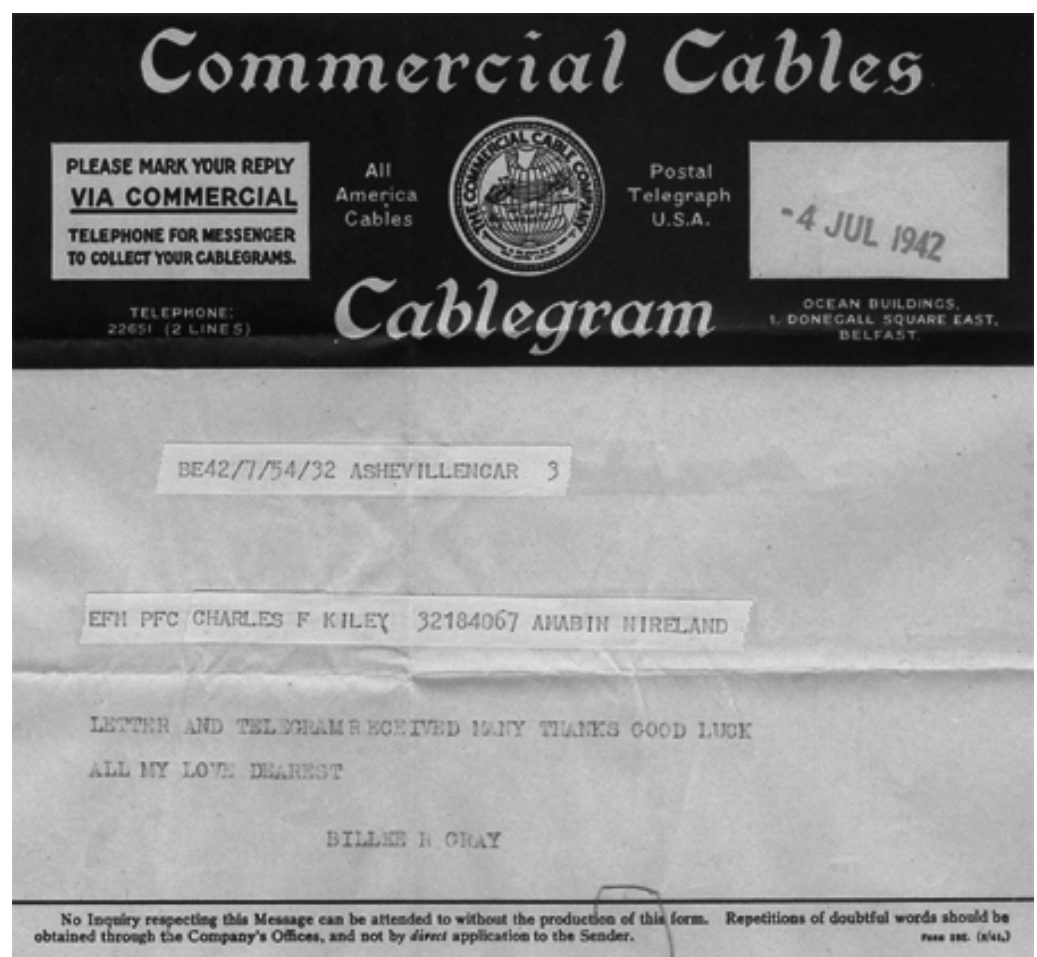
All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 4, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Here we are again... another anniversary apart and almost gone. Exactly three months ago tonight... seems like only yesterday. My memories are all so fresh, so new. I can still bring them out and go over each little incident and happening. They are all so much a part of us.

Before I forget, your cable came yesterday. I answered it with one of mine. I hope you have it long before this reaches you. The Postal Telegraph



has a new service to the Expeditionary Forces anywhere in the world... pretty nice.

You'd like the program I'm listening to: a tribute to George Gershwin with Paul Whiteman, Bing Crosby, The King's Men and Dinah Shore. Of course, they are playing all his compositions. He died five years ago tonight.

Today has been very quiet. Mom was very disappointed that we didn't get any guests. A year ago we had thirty-seven and filled all the neighbors' spare bedrooms. It's to be expected with the gas and tire situation the way it is. We're going to have to change our way of life.

I went to St. Genevieve's again last night. I told Mother Müller about your cable. Together we prayed for you, Charles. I felt so close to you there in the little chapel in the convent. It is so lovely, like being in another world. Mother Müller is so interested in us. Each instruction is more interesting than the last and makes me even more certain that what I'm doing is so right.

I played hooky yesterday. The boss was away so when I finished what I had to do, I picked up and left. I felt a little like you must have the time you went to Boston. I remember you telling me about it. Someone will tell on me, but I don't care.



They're playing and singing "Summertime" now. I'm sorry now that I didn't see "Porgy and Bess" when I was in New York. I've always loved the music so.

Charles, I think I'm beginning to see now why you didn't want us to get married before you left and you were so right. We are probably an exception to the rule, but I know you were thinking of me. I read an article in the new "American," written by a minister. He brings out your point so well. Please, don't misunderstand that my mind has changed about us. I'm even more certain that nothing can ever change that. It's hard to explain, but that restless feeling I had has been replaced with something so steady and reassuring. I believe that it is your love together with my intention. I've never before had such a feeling as this. It's like a ship that has been

off its course and finally gets back on the beam again. You could probably express it so much better than I can.

Mother has gone to the show so I'm by myself. She gets out so seldom and we never can go together now.

I started to go through the newspapers I've been saving since Pearl Harbor. I want to make a scrapbook of all the main events and sidelights. It's going to be a job to catalogue it all but it will be worth it. Junior will appreciate it all when he goes to school.

I know what your cable must mean. Of course, I know they didn't send you over there to pick shamrocks, but I've been putting the action off in my mind. The only trouble is, I don't know

whether this was held up and you are already where you are to go. We had word yesterday via Berlin that our troops were in Egypt. Wherever it is, the quicker we really get in it, victory will be that much closer than it is now.

One advantage I would have had had we been married is that mail would get here quicker. Theda had mail long before I did and I've been told since that they sort out the wives and families first.



All the magazines came out this month with a waving flag for a cover. It is very impressive except you have to look twice to see what magazine you are getting. They are talking about putting the World Series on tour and playing all the army camps. Swell idea. I haven't seen a ball game in so long. Think I'll wait until I can tag along with you.

I haven't been able to dance or do much of anything without you. I've been out twice since we were together. That was when my cousin was here... social obligation. I'll probably be very rusty when you get back.

Mrs. Davidson gave me a beautiful pair of pillowcases. She said they are for you and I. They are some she had for company use when she kept house. She is such a sweet old soul. She is failing so fast. I don't believe I ever want to get that old.

I've rambled enough, but this is our Saturday night and I had to spend some time with you. Please, be careful and take good care of yourself for me. My prayers and thoughts are with you always. I love you even more than I did three months ago tonight... our night. Our song was never more fitting than that night... "Tonight We Love."

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: Today's "Standings and League Leaders" enclosed.

July 7, 1942—Asheville

Hello, darling,

It's me again. Another letter came yesterday, dated June 1, not sent airmail. By the time you get my letters answered, I've forgotten almost what I wrote. I guess it works both ways. It doesn't matter as long as we get them through to each other.

I had such a sweet letter from your mother. She was so pleased to have so many letters from you and also the cable she received last Thursday. She expressed the hope that we wouldn't have to wait too long to be married. She said she guessed you must be very much in love with someone... she couldn't

imagine who! Charles, it makes me feel so good to know that they like me. She wouldn't write the way she does... I'm sure we'll get along.

I had my first letter from Marty yesterday, telling me all about the baby. I love her name... Janet Cameron.

Your mother said Father John was home for a week of his vacation and Tom is staying with them. She's getting the house all ready for the wedding, painting, etc. The first wedding in the Kiley family... that is something to get ready for. I just kind of wish it was ours, but I am so happy for Eleanor and Tom. Our time will come one of these days. I hope I will be able to go. Your mother wants me to come in your place. I couldn't ask for anything better.

We had reports last night that Northern Ireland was bombed. It was denied this morning, so we'll have to wait for official confirmation. I hope it's wrong.

I stop in at St. Lawrence's most every day to pray for us. I feel so much closer to you there than anywhere.

When I asked for a picture, I didn't think you'd be going so far away. You probably weren't allowed to take cameras with you.

Sunday I went to see "Sergeant York." I missed it when it was here before. I've never seen anything that impressed me so much. I don't remember whether you said you'd seen it or not. I can certainly see why Gary Cooper won the Academy Award.

There isn't much news. Mom and I are both well... that's important now-a-days.

The [enemy] aliens are due to take over Grove Park Inn again this week. They aren't making any money on the public. Take good care of yourself and keep well. Goodnight for awhile.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



July 9, 1942—Asheville

My dear Charles,

So much has happened since my last letter. To begin with, things have been so dull here at home... no business at all. Mom and I have been practically pulling our hair trying to figure a way out.

I may have mentioned in my last letter that I thought the [enemy] aliens were coming back. They did yesterday. The three guards that were here before brought seven more with them and one man's wife and child. Now our little family has expanded to the number of sixteen. You can imagine how

excited Mom and I were. That's the way this business goes... like gambling. We'll really be busy while they are here. The time isn't definite... anywhere from two weeks until the duration. Much as I hate having those darn aliens in our Inn, as the old saying goes an ill wind always blows someone good.

The mail brought me a long letter from Marguerite and one from Dottie today. Marguerite's mother isn't getting any worse or any better. They aren't at all encouraged. Marguerite has her heart and hands full. They depend too much on her. She still talks about our wedding and asks about you in each letter. She wanted to know this time what I wanted her to wear. Can you imagine? It's so she could dream on it. You see what we have in common... she is such a swell person. I still miss her lots.

Dottie sent me the announcement that was in the paper about El's engagement. She used the picture that was on the mantle. Dottie said Al was working days and they were spending evenings together for a change and how much she was enjoying it. I dropped her a line when I received your last cable. You've brought me so many friends. It's all so wonderful, the many blessings I have.

Victor Borgia is playing "You Are To Me Everything;" expresses my thoughts so well right now.

Lately so many people have asked me if I'm Irish. That never happened before. You must have brought all my Irish out where people could notice. They say my eyes give me away.

We had a shower early this evening and everything is so fresh and green. The air smells wonderful. It really has been warm here today... a little sultry.

I went to see "Shores of Tripoli" last night. It was taken at the CENSORED. [Portions of the movie were shot at the Marine training base in San Diego; the movie was the single best Marine recruitment tool during the war.] Very good... you must have gone through practically the same... that is, the basic training. The story was good, too.

Well, that's all the news tonight. Oh, I forgot... Theda is going to be transferred to the Greensboro office, so she'll be leaving soon.

I'm going this time. I have some other letters to write... Marguerite, your mom, Marty and Dottie. I doubt that I'll get them all written tonight. Goodnight, my love. Be seeing you soon.

Always, your Billee

July 11, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello angel,

Your "bits of heaven" are still coming. I might say they are life savers. One arrived tonight, dated July 1. Too, I have six others on which to comment since I was able to write last. Three of them, plus the



cable, were delivered to me while we were on maneuvers. Yes, we were out for eight days, during which I had to postpone my correspondence.

Now, before going any further, may I say I love you so much! Remind me to give you a special reward for each letter received. They are priceless but I'll try to find something.

I cabled 10 pounds to you today (\$40.20) and each month I'll be sending more. I'll be getting \$67.20 a month now and I'm sure I can put \$50 of it in our "hope chest."

Your pictures were swell, honey. I had hoped to get to Belfast on a weekend pass and see what I could do about pictures but I doubt if we will get any more weekend passes. While we were on maneuvers, I met Jack and Ben Wooley. Had a long talk with Jack about you girls and promised ourselves a royal time together, with our wives of course, when we get back.

Billee, I was very distressed to hear of your mother's illness. While she has been included in my prayers since Jan. 18, I have been praying for her more since you mentioned her hospitalization. You must have been rushed to death with all the company you had. I had to smile when you mentioned my preference for baked macaroni and cheese. I wondered how you knew, and then remembered you must have overheard us at Marty's house.

Have you heard all the news of the Daly infant? She was named after a sister of Marty who died several years ago. I haven't heard from them yet but I realize how terribly busy they were. Speaking of babies and your knitting... what are you doing for our "pitcher?" I wonder if he'll have your turned-up nose? Are you smiling or is that a frown I see?

Mom told me she had asked you to visit for El's wedding and I do hope you can be there. At the same time, I know you can't do the impossible and will be there if you can. El thinks a great deal of you and she would be awfully pleased to have you there. Since Tom may be drafted, they have decided to live with Mom and Dad for the time being. I am happy, also, to hear you and my other "sister," Dottie, are corresponding regularly. It all serves to let me know everything is going well at home.

Your Sporting News was certainly appreciated but then you always know what I want. Your anniversary card was a sweet thought. We'll never forget our important dates, will we? On July 4th, I was trying to weather Irish rain under a pup tent during maneuvers. I thought of what we might have been doing. Your clippings were worth their weight in gold. I passed the poems Dot sent around to the boys. One of them copied the good one and sent it home.

About your instructions... You will know more contentment and happiness than any of us, I know. I don't know what is going on inside of you, but whatever it is I do know it is good! Regardless of what is said, Billee, it won't be a sacrifice you'll make. Rather than that, I imagine, you will find something like we felt that night on the outside of the Inn. That is the way I see it.

You frightened me by saying, "Bad news..." and then mentioned the radio not working properly.

Now, about being married in Jersey City. It doesn't make any difference to me. If you said "Timbuktu," well... we'd go there. Jersey City is all right by me, if you say so. If you change your

mind, that will be all right, too. Just as long as you are happy. That's my problem. Too, you have full charge of the "fund." Do what you think best with the money.

You mentioned the fact that my mail is censored by the same officer. Yes, he is my platoon leader. This morning, he suggested you might visit his wife in Williamston, N.C., if you are in the vicinity. I'm sure you would have a lot in common to talk about. Her address is: Mrs. Sarah H. Bailey, Route 1, Box 170, Williamston, N.C.

I'll have to stop now since this may be too heavy for airmail as it is. I'll be back in a couple of days. I caught all of your "Goodnight kisses." Have one from me. 'Bye for awhile.

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

July 12, 1942—Asheville

Evening sweetheart,

I started to write last night, but fell asleep over the letter. Here goes another attempt.

Yesterday was miserable. I took my last typhoid shot and was vaccinated. The combination made me deathly ill. My arm is still sore but I have more use of it tonight.

We have been busy with so many folks in the house. The men are all nice and are easily pleased, so that is something. We have been alone for so long it seems strange to have so many in the house again.

I went to the early Mass this morning so I could help Mom with dinner. In my last instruction, Mother Müller told me I could make spiritual communion until I am received in the church. I made my spiritual communion for us and peace. I kept wondering where you were going to church or to service. Each Sunday brings me closer to you.

It's so still tonight and kind of warm. I'd like nothing better than a swim right now... it's not quite dark yet. I love to go in this time of night. In fact, I'd rather go in at night than in the daytime. I'm glad you like to swim. You're probably lots better than I am, but I manage to keep from sinking.

Saw the best movie this afternoon, very unusual, called "Moontide" with that new French actor, Jean Gabin. I think you'd like it. If, in your travels you should have an opportunity, see it. The story is very unusual... the acting super.

As soon as the Civil Service board accepts applications for the new government hospital, I'm going to put mine in. They are going to put up a special examining board. I guess I'll be here for the duration, waiting for you.

In the paper today were pictures of a large English convoy



arriving in India. There was no mention of American troops so I guess you aren't there. I'm right back where I started from, wondering where you are. I keep consoling myself that one day it will all be over and I'll come home from work one day and find you there waiting for me just like that, and all the long days and nights waiting will be over.

Your mom said in her letter that she guessed from the way you wrote that you must be in love with someone and she couldn't imagine who... teasing me. So long as I know that love is there, you are still very "necessary" to me. Don't ever forget.

As I look up from my letter, first my Easter bunny catches my eye and carries me back to New York. Then your picture with your medals. There is another snapshot framed, the first picture you gave me, remember, in Danziger's that first Sunday. I'll never forget your remark, "Gosh, we sure are making time." What would I do without my memories and dreams, I hate to think.

Marguerite wrote me about a girlfriend of hers that has been writing to a boy for months without hearing a word. One day a cable arrived from Australia worded "Greatest day of my life. Received 30 of your letters." Can you imagine?

Evelyn asked about you this morning. They are still entertaining the soldiers on Saturday night. There seem to be quite a few of them in on the weekends. We have a new U.S.O. center opposite the store. It isn't completed as yet. Friday has been declared Heroes Day... our anniversary, too, by the way. They are going to have a parade and military ball... to celebrate our anniversary... ha.

Doris, my girlfriend, has just come in so I'll have to go. One more day to mark off my calendar and one more day closer to our life together. As always, my darling, all my love and thoughts are with you always. Take good care of yourself and keep well.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 17, 1942, Our Anniversary—Asheville

My darling,

This has been a day of days. I've been riding on pink clouds all day, since early morning. To begin with, your check came. Our fund really took a jump. We now have over a hundred dollars... more about this.

Mother's cable arrived this afternoon. She was so excited when she called that she couldn't remember the message they had delivered over the phone. She's writing you a letter and when she does that, it means something, for she's the world's worst correspondent. You are sweet to be so thoughtful.

Just as I was leaving tonight to go to St. Genevieve's, your cable for me came. I was so excited I almost forgot my lesson. Mother Müller was so interested and almost as excited as I was. She is such a lovely person. I hope you can meet her some day.

Today was declared Heroes Day and we had a parade and a special breakfast. In accepting the invitation, you had to buy a \$500 bond. They set the goal for Buncombe County for \$125,000 for today and at last report, about 5 p.m., they had accounted for \$300,000... not bad. I relieved at lunchtime in our booth on the first floor and sold \$1,050 in an hour. I nearly passed out when this man passed over \$375 in cash. I could hardly write out the application and five minutes later along comes another man with a check for the same amount. I felt as if I'd done away with an army of Japs.

Back to the second paragraph of my letter. I was undecided about just where to put the check, it being our anniversary and Heroes Day I decided to buy bonds. I hope you approve. We have two twenty-five dollar bonds made out to both of us. We are co-owners. The balance of the check I put in the credit union with mine. I'll soon have a bond, too. I'm buying mine on the payroll deduction plan. By the way, there was a note from the bank saying that hereafter such remittances would be handled through Washington.

The bookkeeper thinks we're married and she keeps calling me Mrs. Kiley. Today when I went to get the bonds with the check, she says, "Now I know it's so... first cables and all those letters and now a check." That was all she needed and I can't persuade her differently.

I saw a swell movie tonight. I had to do something to celebrate. "This Above All" – it is Eric Roberts' story that appeared in Literary Digest in condensed form. Perhaps you read it. There was a line in it that I want to remember. "God blesses a man and woman that truly love each other. They are the luckiest people in the world." I think that must be us. I've never had such wonderful things happen to me since I met you. Everything seems to be all right and in order with me. I've never felt like that before. In spite of all the turmoil that exists and our separation, the feeling still persists. I know that everything will be all right and one day all this terror will be over and life for us will begin.

The time is going by so swiftly. Just think, it is six months since we met. Seems like only yesterday. Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could think we'd really be together six months from now? That is too much to hope for. Still, miracles do happen and I can still dream. Your cables relieved my mind so after the last one that came. I sent you an answer today and used almost the same wording you did... mental telepathy. I wanted you to know that the check came.

It has been so warm here this week... really awful. Thank goodness we can sleep nights. We have a new moon. I made a wish on it the other night for us. It was such a gorgeous night. I wished so hard that you could be with me.

Mr. Fugote [?], our Florida guest, brought home a croquet set the other day and we've been playing. I'd forgotten how much fun it was... such a strenuous game... ha! By the way, all our guards left again.



They took away so many of the aliens and the government has to pay for those rooms anyway that they decided to move all the guards up there until they get some more aliens. As I've said before, this business is like gambling.

We are beginning to eat out of our victory garden. I've eaten string beans until I think they'll come out my ears most any minute, besides the Swiss chard and beets. The tomatoes aren't quite ripe yet, but we have bushels. I guess we'll can from now on.

I'm so sleepy. I hope you are able to read this. I'm propped up in bed using my knees for a desk and getting sleepier by the second. I almost wish I could go back six months and relive our first kiss. It was just about this time. Little did I know where it was leading me. Goodnight again for awhile. Take good care of yourself and be careful. There aren't words to express my feeling about the cable. I needed it so badly.

Always, your Billee

PS: I love you... forgot to tell you. This is a very special anniversary kiss for the happiest six months of my life. All my love.

July 18, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

Another of our Saturday nights together, and a brief visit to church tonight gave me an opportunity to pray for the both of us.

Your letter of June 28 arrived tonight, the sixth to reach me since I was able to write last. Those of June 2, 7 and 9, sent by regular mail, came together as did those of July 1 and 4 via airmail, during the week. And, they are all so... how shall I describe them? There isn't anything I'd rather have now than your letters. They couldn't bear a better message unless they were delivered by you. That is asking a lot, but, like you, I can dream, can't I?

Your letters arrive so often I have a difficult, but enjoyable, task in trying to sort all of the questions you ask and answer them. You realize, of course, that there are a great many things I must eliminate in the mail but am saving for you.

You said that Father John hadn't written for some time. Billee, I can't think of anyone who does more work than he does. If he has a spare moment during any day, he's disappointed. I know! I'm sure he hasn't forgotten.

Too, there was mention of receiving my seventh letter. I must have written three times that many.

I remembered our sixth anniversary yesterday and sent a cable to my angel. There was one for Mother, also... Mother Gray, I mean. Don't fail to let me know how her health is. It must have been discouraging to her, not having any guests over July 4.

I was unable to suppress a shout when I read your inventory of the package that is on the way. You thought of just about everything, didn't you?

During the week I received a very nice letter from the daughter of the Journal publisher. She has taken it upon herself to receive and pass on the news of all the Journal men in the service. A carton of cigarettes from the Journal Employees also came with it. One of the boys was in the battle of Midway and another presumably is having a warm time in Alaska.

I failed to mention in previous letters that the King and Queen of England reviewed some of our troops here. They were on a limited visit and didn't quite get around to meeting our unit.

Will you give Mrs. Davidson my personal thanks for the gift, and my regards to the other ladies? I'm a little ashamed for not having thought of them before. You see, my excuse could be that I'm thinking of you so often I just can't think of much else.

About the linen napkins, I hesitated to get anything but if you let me know what kind, I believe I can get them. I imagine you would want white, yes? Should a man know?

Did the folks send a copy of Eleanor's picture, published in the Journal in connection with her engagement? I saw it tonight in one of the four papers I received.

It is things like picturing you listening to Gershwin's music, or walking along the path at St. Genevieve's, or sitting with Mother Müller that give me more peace of mind than anything else. Just thinking of you like that gives me the grandest feeling. Sometimes, while we are on the march, or even rolling along in our vehicles, I allow my mind to wander back to Asheville where you might be sitting in "our corner," rocking on the porch, clicking your heels across the square or curled up in bed writing to your "Johnnie Doughboy."

And, since you spoke of your dreams, I want to wish you happy ones. The first you described frightened me a bit because I know how it disturbed you. The second one was one I'd like to experience with you in my place. Funny thing, though... as much as I have you on my mind, I don't dream at all any more.

Billee, when I get the next opportunity, I will write a letter of thanks to Mother Müller for all she is doing for you. I'm sure she is all you describe her to be. You might tell her that I have never heard a more beautiful name than Billee. No, that isn't any Irish blarney, either.

You said, too, that you are glad, in a way, that we weren't married before I left. As I've said before, I wonder at times if I did right. Yes, I was thinking more of you than myself. At other times, I feel as though I did the right thing. My one consolation is in the thought that God is just and will bring us together one day, however near or far off that day is.

I finished "H.M. Pulham, Esq." and I must confess I didn't care too much for it since it ridicules, in a way, the sanctity of marriage as well as any ideals attached to it. I've started "Wuthering Heights" now. Having seen the picture quite awhile ago, I'm anxious to make the comparison. The author, Emily Bronte, died at the age of 29 after writing her first and only novel.

I enjoyed your clippings so much. It was a revelation to see Jersey City only one game out of first place. The Stars and Stripes had two stories on the All Star game and the game between the

American League Stars and the ex-players in service. I've been so busy I haven't had much time to devote to my job with the paper. I'm endeavoring to get off a couple of stories I have in mind.

In close, perhaps I should have started off with this. I will not be able to write for a week or so because of the same thing that prevented me from writing a couple of weeks ago. Still, I'll be back with you as soon as I can, sweetheart. You are always in my heart.

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

July 18, 1942—Asheville [V-letter]

Darling,

Just received your first V-letter, so here goes my first. Try and keep it to match with mine. Theda received six this week, nearly all of them V-letters, but she hadn't received mail in three weeks. I sent an airmail this morning that I wrote last night. I'm anxious to know which one you get first. It certainly isn't very private but anything is fine, so long as we get our letters through to each other. I don't care if President Roosevelt, himself, has to read them.

I've had fun showing your letter around. Of course, I didn't let them read it but everyone was so interested and it is the first one any of us have seen. I'm going to put it with the rest of my treasures that go in my scrapbook. I wouldn't part this them for a million dollars.

The post office issues three blanks per person. We just received ours here. I had my name down to be called when they arrived. I wrote this on scratch paper first, but golly, my typing is rusty.

We've been busy planning for a picnic Tuesday night, that is for the office force. The only trouble is there is quite a scarcity of manpower and so many of the girls aren't overly anxious to go. We're going to post a notice in the U.S.O. Headquarters and see what happens. There aren't many in town during the week so we probably won't have any luck. There is to be swimming and square dancing and we're going to take steaks to fry. I think we'll have fun, especially me because I just love picnics.

I know how that letter from your new boss made you feel. I'm so pleased and happy for you. You can hardly wait to begin work again under the new management. I sent another Sporting News today. That makes four or five that are on the way somewhere. They take longer than letters. You must have some of my mail now that I wrote after all yours arrived. This makes the tenth letter. The last one was dated June 14.

This has been such a lovely weekend so far, with your cables and check and today your letter. Almost like being with you, but then nothing could be like that. This is almost the end. I guess when I want to write more than one page, I'll have to write "continued..." like a magazine story. I'll have Mom write one on one of the other blanks I have. Take good care of yourself and remember all my love and prayers follow you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 20, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

Remember me? It's late but I'm not sleepy and there is some good dance music on your radio. I'm propped up in bed writing on my knees. That's usually where I end up writing. I seem to be able to think better in bed. I still can't get over our sending each other practically the same message... and I came so close to saying, "Happy Anniversary," instead of "Received Money," but I knew you'd want to know that would be quicker than the mail.

I'm looking forward to the picnic tomorrow. I wish you could be here, so I could show you off to the gang. That's not the only reason. Don't misunderstand, I'm afraid if you were here that our picnic would definitely be a twosome.

I had another instruction tonight. Everything was so quiet and cool out there that after we came from the chapel, I begged Mother Müller to finish outside. I love going out there. Perhaps I said before that it is like being in another world. I'm getting along fairly well. She says I should be ready to take communion in September.

I just dozed off last night when the telephone pole out front got in the way of the automobile. What a mess. Three were slightly injured. It sounded like it was in my room. Of course, I had to go and see for myself.

Theda called me today. She is fixing a box for Jack, and she wanted to know what I sent. I'm anxious to know how it came through and if.

They must be having maneuvers around here somewhere. We have had pursuit planes chasing each other around all day. I thought they were going to take our chimney right off one time.

They are taking the applications now for the buck privates in the W.A.A.C. I can't make up my mind what to do on that score. I know there isn't anything I can do until I finish off my debts and then there is Mom. The officers began their training today. I think they will be a big help to do all the desk work so as to release men for active service. I think that if I went in, I could get a specialist rating with the kind of work I do.

Each day brings me so much closer to you. I never cease marveling at that fact. You see, I'm not taking you for granted, thank goodness. I'm still living in the glory of your cable and letter. Mom hasn't stopped talking about hers. You are sweet to be so thoughtful of her. There aren't many who are.



I dreamed last night that Father John was here on a visit. Funny, I could see him so plain. Dreams are funny. I've been doing so much of it lately.

I'm just rambling along. I'm beginning to get sleepy now, but this is better than reading a story to get sleepy. How I love you. I almost wish I could sprout wings or something. To be so near and yet so far. Oh well, it's only for a time. I'm really going this time. This is kind of a special kiss going your way. It carries all my love. Keep well, and take care of yourself. My prayers are always with you. Good night, my love.

All my love and kisses. Always, your Billee

July 24, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Mind if I stay a little while? I'm afraid I'll have to ask your forgiveness for neglecting you. Seems like something has prevented my writing all week. Like you, I try to make up for it on the weekend.

I'll tell you about our picnic. We had so much fun, to begin with. Five of us went swimming before we ate... it was wonderful. There's nothing like it to top the day off. The pool was small but nice and clean. We had our table and fireplace beside the lake and it was lovely. We had so much to eat, but we did away with most everything. You know all the stuff that goes toward making a picnic. We all ate so much that we had to postpone eating the watermelon until later.

We cleaned up our mess and headed for the dance pavilion, where the string band was warming up for the square dance. The couples began coming in, really young hillbillies, but could they strut their stuff. I forgot to mention that we were short three men. Yes, I was the one left over, but we all took turns dancing.

My first experience square dancing. You haven't lived until you've danced that... what an endurance contest. I went twice around. I felt like going swimming again, but it was fun. My girlfriend and I went outside to cool off and we sat on the bank overlooking the lake, and watched the moon and just wished... you can imagine what. I missed you so much, because I know you would have enjoyed all of it so much.

This Friday has been quite a bit quieter than last Friday, with all the cablegrams and check and my selling the bonds. I'll have August 17 to look forward to now. Something nice has happened every 17th since we met, you know.

It's so late. It seems like this is the only time I can write when we have folks in the house. Our Florida guest's family joined him this week for a time and we have another lady from Georgia that came in today for the rest of the summer. It still isn't a fraction of the business we were doing a year ago. We have to make out the best we can under the circumstances. That's the least we can do.

I see so many nice things like linens, etc., that I'd like to get for us, and then I think of having to pack and move them all one day. Mom says just so I stay away from dishes...

The new Life this week carries pictures of the A.E.F. in Ireland. I'm saving it for you. Also, there are pictures of an Atlantic convoy going across to England [this was the Life issue that covered Charles' convoy]. I got "H.M. Pulham, Esq." to read. Haven't started it as yet, but I've been wanting to read it for a long time.

We had a sale today, the first in quite some time. The women were waiting outside both doors to get in. I haven't seen such a wild scramble in years. You should have seen them tackle that merchandise in nothing flat. They just stripped tables and racks, I guess buying for next summer.

Our heat wave finally broke Wednesday with a hard rain and it's been cool ever since, thank goodness. I couldn't have stood much more. One of the buyers returned from New York Monday and she said that it was just unbearable up there. I haven't heard from New Jersey in several weeks. I hope they are all well. The heat is enough to keep anyone from writing. You just don't want to do anything.

I'm anxiously awaiting the arrival of that box so I can send another. You know I had to put it all in two boxes to conform with regulations. I have since learned that you can't send but one a week, so perhaps one was held up somewhere.

I had a letter from my sister and she expects to go to the hospital most any time so we'll have a new family addition very soon. That reminds me that I still owe Marty an answer to her letter.

Here I am rambling again. Hope you don't mind, but so little happens here and I go out so little except to work and St. Genevieve's, so if my letters are a bit of the rambling type, you'll have to excuse it and bear with me. I miss you such a lot and try so hard to tell you how I feel and can't find the words that this is the result.

I'm getting along fine with my study. We are taking the Rosary now and I'm in the middle of the catechism. She is so patient and sweet. Each time she asks about you.

I really must go. I'm almost asleep. If you could see the way I'm twisted around trying to read this. I forgot to tell you how much more I love you and miss you... more than they sing about. As always, my love and prayers are constantly with you. Goodnight, my love.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 25, 1942—Asheville [V-letter]

Hi darling,

Here I am again. I sent out an airmail this morning, but I have some time on my hands so thought, what better could I do than write to you. There was an article last night about our boys in Ireland and what they were doing about their spirit and how anxious they were to get started. The only thing they missed was letters from home. It made me feel guilty for neglecting you this week. I'm saving it to put with the rest of my scrapbook data.

Two of the girls in the office are planning to go to Daytona Beach, Florida, on their vacation. They are quite excited and would like me to go, but one vacation a year is all we are permitted. Business has been pretty slow, in fact so slow that I'm afraid they are going to have to make some adjustments in the office. We all seem to be holding our hands. I almost wish they would; then, I could leave to do something different.

It has been so nice and cool today with scattered showers... you know, raining when the sun is shining.

This is U.S.O. day today. The "Junior Commandos" paraded. They are a group of young girls and boys that have collected so much scrap and donations for the U.S.O. and they have been given that title. They were so proud, marching along with a police escort today. The reports haven't come in yet as to whether or not they raised their quota.

This stationery is a little different than I am used to writing on... a little formal, don't you think? [V-letters had to be written or typed on an 8.5 x 11 form; the form was photographed and reduced to 3.5 x 5; each V-letter had to fit on the form.] I'm going to type all these that I send like this because they will be easier to read. I know I couldn't have read yours had it been written in longhand without assistance.

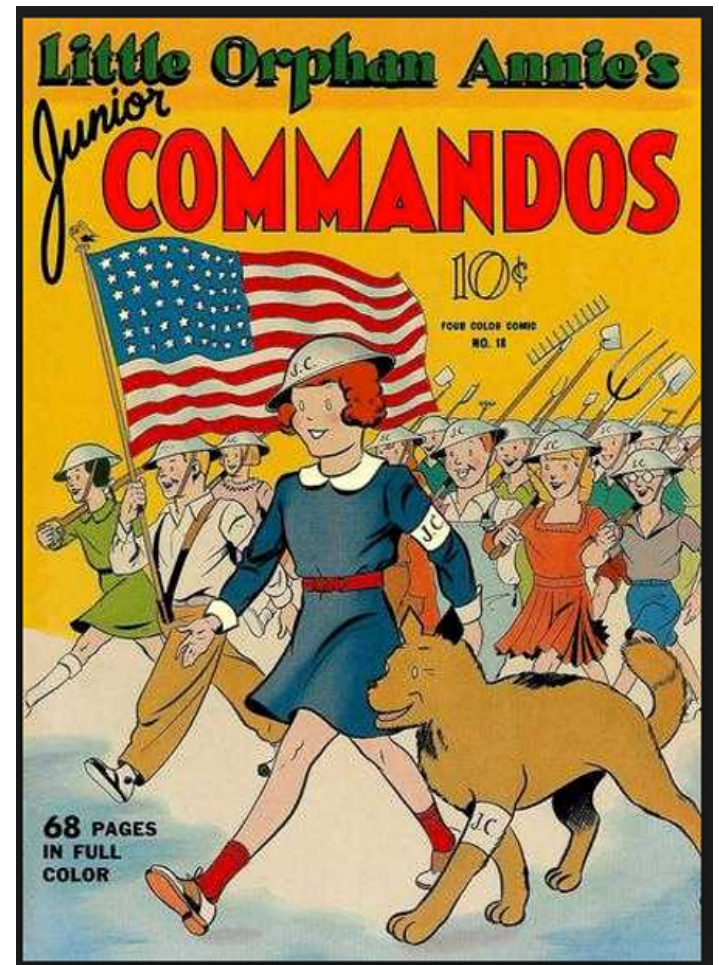
I've been trying to decide on a name to take when I am received in the church. My patron saint is Stephen and Mother Müller said that I could take the feminine form, Stephanie.

I wish that after the war is over the president will declare all Saturdays to be national holidays, because I just hate to work on Saturday afternoon.

If this should seem a little mixed up it is due to the confusion that is going on around me. You might as well be in a monkey's cage for all the order there is.

I've practically worn your last letter out reading it over and carrying it around in my bag. I always carry the last one that I get until another comes, so I'd better hurry and get another before this one won't go in my scrapbook. I'm forced to close now... no more space. Take good care of yourself for me and remember all the things you're supposed to, darling.

All my love and kisses always, Billee



Children actively participated in the home front war effort. The Junior Service Corps, or Junior Commandos, bought war bond stamps, collected scrap metal and paper. The idea for the Junior Commandos actually came from the Little Orphan Annie comic strip.

July 27, 1942—Asheville

Darling,

I tried to write yesterday and made several attempts but gave it up as a bad job. Seems that I missed you so much this weekend, I was afraid to tell you how much.

Saw a swell movie yesterday, "Mrs. Miniver." You know, Jan Struthers' bestseller. Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon certainly scored another hit together. I'm enjoying "H.M. Pulham." Seems like he is so confused mentally and doesn't seem to know what he wants. I haven't finished yet so maybe he gets straightened out.

Today is really gorgeous, with the sun shining once more after several days of rain.

I have an appointment with the dentist in ten minutes. Ugh, how I dread it. There isn't so much to be done, thank goodness.

Mom called and said I had a letter from Eleanor. That's the first word I've had in several weeks. I hope everything is all right.

Our Oriental rug man is here again. He makes an annual visit to the store. His rugs make me dream all the more. What do you suppose will happen to that sable coat you promised me for my birthday next December? Do you remember the condition under which I would accept it? That you deliver it yourself? That discussion took place one Sunday morning going home from church on the bus. I remember how amazed you were that I didn't have any desire for a fur coat.

I'm starting in the Red Cross Room Wednesday night. This is the first time they have been open at night... 7:30 to 9:30, to roll bandages. Seems that the Red Cross furnishes 90% for the Army and Navy. I had no idea that it was that much.

By the way, I've been to lunch and back again, way back there in the paragraph about the fur coat. I went to the dentist, had lunch and went up on the roof to study my lesson for tonight.

I'm going to have a miniature made in the dress I wore that very special Saturday night in New York. I don't like the picture that you have... not so much the picture, but what it represents. I want you to have this one. You can have it for a Christmas present. That will probably be about the time you'll get it. Do you know, you've been over there nearly three months? I'm so glad the time is passing quickly. I hope that it is for you, too.

My week's work is laying here beside me untouched and all ready to be posted. I guess I'd better go. I just had to be with you a little bit. I kept hoping this morning coming to work that there would be a letter, but no luck. Be seeing you soon. Keep well and take special care of yourself for me.

Always, your Billee



July 28, 1942—Northern Ireland

Billee dearest,

On a night such as this I want to reach out and take your hands in mine, and hold them forever. Why the feeling is stronger at times is hard to explain. Probably because I love you so much I endeavor to increase that love then there isn't space for more. Things are quiet tonight, after another of our recent maneuvers, and quiet leads to thinking... of whom? It could only be you, and us.

I have your last three letters of July 8, 10 and 13, and they sound better every time I go through them. They all reached me while we were on our latest maneuvers and made a few dark nights very bright. Each line of your letters is still that little "bit of heaven" that I need so much, to tell me everything is all right from your end.

Mother Gray's illness worried me and then the lack of people at 412 Merrimon Avenue [Oak Lodge], and last, those typhoid shots you had. I prayed long and often for the first two but I knew the shots weren't serious because I've had them with Uncle Sam's compliments. You can be proud of yourself, because I've seen big men fall in a faint when they received typhoid injections.

You wondered where I was going to church. We have a church near at hand and I hadn't missed Mass until a few weeks ago. In all, I've missed twice because we weren't in a position to attend Mass. I went every day on the boat coming over. Too, I've received communion as often as possible.

I'm awfully tired tonight, sweetheart, but I'm going to stay with you as long as I can keep my eyes open.

I started to write last night but felt the need of a walk. It developed into a movie: "Adam Had Four Sons." How many will we have? Nine? Earlier this evening another fellow and myself met a very sweet fourteen-year-old girl, Gwen Magee. She was one of the most fascinating youngsters I've ever met. She was evacuated from Dover, England, two years ago and sent to Wales from where she came to her present home with relatives. Her father has been in the British army for three years. She claims the "Yankee" soldiers have been so pleasant and courteous, she understands why she has heard so many people wanting to come to America. Coincidentally, we received our "luxury" rations tonight and I gave her three bars of candy for being such a charming companion. She refused, rather vehemently, at first, but accepted them. Later, she



Gwen Magee. Northern Ireland, 1942.

said the candy would be a real treat since she doesn't have much of it. She recalled how her Daddy once brought her candy and wondered if he ever will again. I can honestly say I doubt if many American children her age could speak so intelligently with elders.

Your spiritual communions will surely be rewarded. And tell me more about your instructions. I haven't found time to write to Mother Müller yet, but I will.

In a letter from the office, two of the fellows insist that you stop in and say hello if you get there for El's wedding. They are Ray Roche, sports editor, and Mel Shapiro. Ray, in particular, wants to meet you. I think you'd like to meet them, if you get a chance.

A cable addressed to me was delivered last week. The contents, however, were addressed to someone else. I had no way of knowing if it was from you or not.

We will be paid again in a few days and I'm sending \$60.00 more to you. At least, I think it will be that amount, or perhaps a little less. Will you use part of the money to send a wedding gift to El and an anniversary gift to Dot and Al on August 23? Your judgment on everything will be good. And they are to be sent from "Billee and Charles" to El, and "Billee and Brother" to Dot and Al.

I'm probably leaving out many things, but I'll be back in a little while.

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

July 29, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

Your message came today and how I needed it. They sent it to the store. I guess they've been getting so many over there that they know where to send them during business hours. Before I forget... I love you so very much. Not just because you're so thoughtful and considerate about how I must feel back here, but because you're you. Every day makes that fact more clear and wonderful to me.

Theda called me today and said she was leaving Tuesday for Winston-Salem to work in the office there of the company she is employed by. She said she had been thinking very seriously of going back to New York but this transfer changed her mind, until Jack returns.

I can't make up my mind whether your message meant you received my wire or letters. Anyhow, you heard from me and that is the most important thing.

We've been having the loveliest nights this week, with a very full moon. That's the only time I get really rebellious. I was wondering last night if they still have daylight nights over there or if you are seeing this moon.

They had another article in the paper about you all "over there." I'll put it with the others.



This might be the cover of the Collier's weekly magazine Billee sent to Charles; it is the July 25 1942 issue.

I sent you a Collier's today that has a cute story in it and the main character's name is Jakie Kiley, about the boys in Ireland. Thought you might like it. Of course, it isn't very diverting, but anyhow it is amusing.

Remember, quite a way back last spring... our letters about dreaming? Today I was browsing around in the bookstore and happened to pick up Ted Malone's "Scrapbook of Poems." There was the loveliest poem in it titled "Bridges." The main thought was that "dreams are bridges to realities." One of these days when I feel like splurging, I'm going to buy the book and I'll send the rest of the poem to you. That is the way I like to think of the dreams that are with me now and, too, that it won't be long before we can cross that bridge together.

It's almost time to go home so I'll close. I was going to write tonight but I have to work for the Red Cross. I appreciate the message so much. Some day I'll be able to tell you how much they all mean to me.

For the present, remember how much I love you and miss you. Take care of yourself and keep well. You are always in my prayers.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 31, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Just a goodnight note. It's awfully late and I have a busy Saturday ahead of me.

This has been such a nice week, filled with the Kileys: a letter from Eleanor, from your mother and Father John today, and not to mention your cablegram. I was so relieved to hear from Father John. It has been weeks since I heard. He apologized... vacation, etc. The letter was so nice. It made up for not hearing from him. He told me about a nun that was at the school who knew you, and now she knows about me and is sending me a medal and chain besides a pair of rosary beads. She is quite ill with cancer, which makes the thought all the more precious. I've never had people be so nice to me since I've known you... wonder why?

Your mother sent me the letter you wrote that was published in the Journal [haven't found this]. It was swell. I hope someday you'll really be able to do something with your writing. I mean, more than sports reporting. Of course, that will be the first thing, then, perhaps on the side, you could do other writing. I promise to cooperate... sharpen pencils, etc. Anyhow, you know what I mean.



Most of the bandages used on American WWII casualties were rolled by hand, by volunteers like Billee, and like these women.

Went to the Red Cross workroom Wednesday to make bandages and met a girl from the store... a bride. Her husband ferries bombers. All the time we were working, we kept praying neither of you would need our bandages. There were ten of us and we made 200 bandages. How's that for production by beginners?

There is a couple here on their vacation from Newark and they keep teasing me about Jersey City, as if I were a native already. They are awfully nice and we are

enjoying them. It will seem strange to live normally again... that is, not having strangers in your house all the time. Seems like now, though, that we never meet any strangers any more. I guess we are getting used to it.

I'm sending the Sporting News tomorrow. There is a paragraph that suggests bringing the World Series teams to the A.E.F. overseas in transport planes to play exhibition games. Swell idea if it works. What won't they think of next?

Darling, I'm off. See you again in a few days... maybe tomorrow. Remember how much I love you and take care of yourself. Pray for us. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 2, 1942—Asheville

Darling,

Another Sunday night. How quickly they seem to slip by.

How do you like these letters? You might be tired of hearing the same things. Things are so quiet here. Only the blowouts seem to cause any disturbance and they are quite frequent now.

I've spent a quiet day... attended 9 o'clock service this morning to begin with. We had nine for dinner so there was that to dispense with, then I wrote a long letter to Father John and attended to some correspondence for Mom. My girlfriend called and we went to a movie. Not much good or else I wasn't in the mood. Here I am again, writing. When I finish, I'll have to study for tomorrow's lesson.

Theda and I are going to have lunch together. She is leaving Tuesday for Winston-Salem to take over her new job. I'll miss her calling me and me calling her to share our news of you guys "over there." She had a letter from Jack and he said he had seen you several times.

Mom and I were talking just now and if we can't get enough business this winter, we will close the house and go home for awhile. Between the two of us, we will be able to make the payments, because we have to hang onto it. I think the change will be good for the both of us. The only thing... I'll miss you, because you were here and we were together many places that I go and I can't forget. I don't know whether I could find you up there. Here, all I have to do is close my eyes and I see you in the chair as you were those Sundays with the paper, waiting for dinner or sitting on the sofa in "our corner."

The report came tonight from Moscow that America and England had decided on a second front for 1942. I don't know whether to be glad or unhappy. I only pray for it to be over and you to be home once more.

I'll probably be such a nuisance... I don't know that I'll let you out of my sight.

This couple from Newark keeps teasing me about my competition "over there..." the Irish colleens. I told them I wasn't worried.

My dearest, I'd better go for tonight before I have to tear this up. Please take good care of yourself and keep well because I love you so much.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 4, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello, sweetheart,

Great day today. Your letters of July 18 and 21, one from Mother and two others came, and... I was notified I have been made a corporal. Furthermore, before your letters arrived I had filed an application to buy a bond a month, \$37.50 to be deducted from my salary. Of course, you are co-owner, to do whatever you see fit with them. They will be mailed to you from Washington. When you have all those bonds, people will surely be convinced we are married. Your idea to



Corporal Charles F. Kiley. Northern Ireland, 1942.

buy a bond with the money I sent last month was fine, but I don't know how it will interfere with the buying of presents for El and the Doyles. so, as soon as I can get to a bank, which should be later this week, I am sending you \$50.00 more.

I hope you don't get the idea that I've developed into a millionaire, but I have set my mind on saving as much money as possible now, inasmuch as I didn't have the foresight to do when I had the opportunity. And, it will help to give us a good start. Why, we may have a bit left over to start a "college fund" for the team. But then, I'll bet they are so good they will all get scholarships. With your looks and your brains, how can they miss?

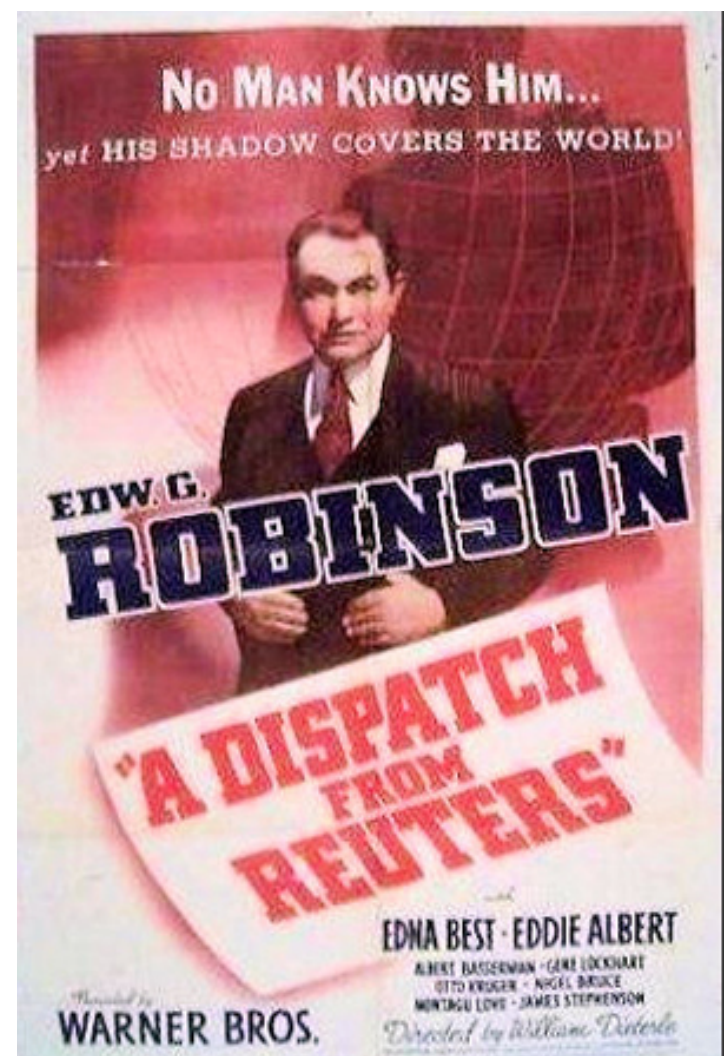
At the end of this month I will draw a salary of \$79.60, I believe. From that will be deducted \$6.90 (premium on \$10,000 insurance) and about \$3.00 for canteen supplies (cigarettes, candy, toilet articles, etc.) Then, I will send at least \$50.00 to you, possibly more. The bond money will be deducted starting with September's salary. Even with that deduction I'm sure I will be able to send a little more back to you each month. Have you got a sharp point on your pencil or do you think we should hire a bookkeeper? And, I still love you so very much, Billee Ruth.

We were notified a few days ago that soldiers could purchase the bonds with an arrangement for a deduction of their salary. I am assisting our bond officer to handle the details and am really enjoying it. It was good to see how the men, making the sacrifices that they are, flocked to the call of "Buy War Bonds." Every one that I signed so far is buying a bond a month. They have the alternative of having as little as \$1.25 a month deducted but they are going all the way.

Your letters were as they always are, everything I want to hear and more. If you only wrote three words, they would be all I wanted, but the rest is always so nice.

I was glad Mother Gray liked the cable. I'll be looking for her letter every day. That will make me feel as guilty as h—l because I haven't written her a single line. I'm sure I promised to before but this time she will be one of my regular correspondents.

Now, as long as I know how happy the cables make you I'll be sending them more often. It's not always that I get the chance but every time I see a cable office it will remind me to send you one. Tomorrow night I hope to send one concerning the promotion. While I'm in town I might see "Shepherd of the Hills." I understand that is playing. The last picture I saw was "This Man Reuter," with Edward G. Robinson. It was a story concerning the first news service (one that is still in existence) and was especially interesting to me. I couldn't help but give a start when, during Reuter's younger days, his wife remarked, "It isn't fair." I'll never forget those words,



This 1940 movie may have been retitled "This Man Reuter" for the UK market.

whispered atop the knoll surrounding the Inn. It is little things like that that keep you with me constantly.

Judging by your sale of \$1,050 worth of bonds, I'd say you were a super-saleswoman. Funny, isn't it? There you are selling bonds and here I am doing the same thing. We just seem to do the same thing almost always, such as sending almost identical cables.

I was sorry to hear some of the guests left. But, wait and see, others will take their places. The victory garden, as described by you, should draw them like a magnet.

My Mass and Communion on Sunday was offered for your success with the instructions. As you say, everything does seem peaceful when you know everything is clean inside and when you are working for Him. You can tell Mother Müller for me that I am looking forward to meeting her, too. We will, the first day we go back to Asheville. I haven't had time to write to her yet, but it won't be long.

Mother's letter was filled with plans for the wedding and more than one mention of you.

The Aug. 1 issue of the Stars and Stripes shows Jersey City six games out of first place. How come? It was only a game away two weeks ago.

Honey, about the WAAC... I wouldn't try to influence you in any way if you had your mind set but I do think you should stay with Mother, just as I advised when we were in New York. You have a job to do watching over her, since her illness. You just keep selling bonds and the home fires burning. We can do the rest.

I received your anniversary gift.

No, honey, I didn't forget that another thing also makes this a great day, as I said in the first paragraph. I wanted to save it for the end. I would like to tell you how happy I've been since Apr. 4 and that was four months ago today.

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

PS: The only package I received so far contained the stationery. C.

August 4, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

I'm floating right up in the clouds. Why? Yesterday your letter of July 9 came and then again today your letter of July 18, and such nice long ones.

I'm going to have to learn not to let my imagination run away with me. Here I had you in Russia or somewhere and all the time you were right there. What a relief.

I hardly know where to start first.

I couldn't help but laugh at your paragraph about my box. I suppose I did send too much, but with so many suggestions offered from all sides, you're lucky you're not having the supermarket shipped to you. I only hope it arrives intact.

Before I forget, this is the first mail I've had in a month with the exception of that V-letter that arrived on the 18th, so you see how the mail is coming through. I believe it is being held in New York because the first one, July 11, is postmarked the 19th and the other the 23rd.

Mother says she doesn't see how I can write so often without saying the same things. I hope they aren't too much of the same pattern. It's just that I love you so much and feel so close to you that I have to write.

I see your stationery hasn't arrived as yet. You can send as many as eight sheets for six cents. It is airmail stationery.

I should keep carbon copies of my letters because I forget sometimes when I wrote when I get your comment on whatever it was that I said... if that makes sense.

All the reward I need for my letters is your safe return and I can see you the way you looked bounding up the steps in Penn Station that Saturday afternoon. I'll never forget how my knees were shaking. I was so afraid you'd be disappointed.

Before I forget, "Happy Anniversary." Four months ago tonight we were engaged. Funny, I still love you.

We're having Asheville rain tonight, torrents of it. My instruction night, so I went anyhow. I gave Mother Müller your message and I said a special anniversary prayer for us. She is so comforting and interested. I read bits of your letter to her and she was so pleased.

I had a letter from Dottie today. Seems her father has been ill and she has been quite busy. She received your handkerchief and letter and was so pleased. She sent me a picture of Eddie that was in the Journal, so now I've met all the Kileys. He looks more like Father John than you, but then you all look alike.

I have the clippings of the visit of the King and Queen to put in my scrapbook. It's a shame they didn't get to visit your unit. They really missed something.

I gave your message to Mrs. Davidson. She was so pleased. She said, "You know, I like that boy."

I'm so glad everyone is being so faithful about writing. I know what it must be like to get all the news from home. I hope it will always be that way as long as you're over there.

Theda and I had lunch together yesterday and, of course, you boys were the chief topic. She left today for Winston-Salem. I'm going to miss calling and sharing my news with her. Now I'll have to do it by writing. She's such a swell person. The little bit that I've known her, I like her a lot.

About the napkins, dear... never mind. I think I can match them here. I've been thinking it over since I wrote. They are probably quite expensive and something might happen to them on the way over and there would be that money wasted. I'm glad you thought to ask before you sent them.

Dottie sent me the clipping of Eleanor's wedding announcement. I don't remember whether I wrote you that or not. I have it with my other clippings. I know those Jersey Journals are helping lots. Nothing like your home paper when you're away.

I try so hard to picture what your life must be over there, but not much luck. I seem to see you as you were here. You're never very far from my thoughts or dreams. They all seem to operate around you.

You'll love "Wuthering Heights." I did. I read it many years ago and then read it again to compare with the picture. You're over there practically in the setting. That will make it all the more interesting.

I believe that I will set up a special account in the credit union to put our money in since that pays 6% and is as reliable as any bank. \$17.20 isn't leaving very much for yourself, though. At that rate, we should have a nice "hope chest" by the time this is over. [Can you imagine getting six percent interest?]

Our "pitcher" couldn't have anything but a turned-up nose. If he doesn't, you'll have to disown him, but then there are some long noses on Mom's side of the family. I'm smiling, reading about our "pitcher" and marveling, too, at us and how lucky we are.

I'm getting along fine with my instructions, and have started on the last part of the catechism. I still can't get over how wonderful all of it is and the new life I've found. I'm so grateful and trying so hard to be worthy of your trust and the thoughts you have of me.

Williamston is quite some distance, almost on the coast, so I'm going to write to Lt. Bailey's wife, since I won't be able to visit, at least not at the present time. It's a small world, isn't it?

I'm so sleepy, darling. I don't know whether this will make sense or not. I have both your letters here before me, trying to read them as I go along so I won't forget anything.

Here is a letter Mom is sending, along with mine. This is really something for the books... she hardly ever writes. I have to set her down with pen and ink and say, "Write," to get her to do anything, but tonight when I came home, she had this all written. She is as proud of you as I am. Talks with me about you quite often. She helps no end.

I really must go. I'm yawning something awful and it isn't the company, so don't go just yet.

I'm so happy to hear from you. I don't know what to do... seems like an eternity from one letter to the next.

My prayers and love follow you wherever you go.

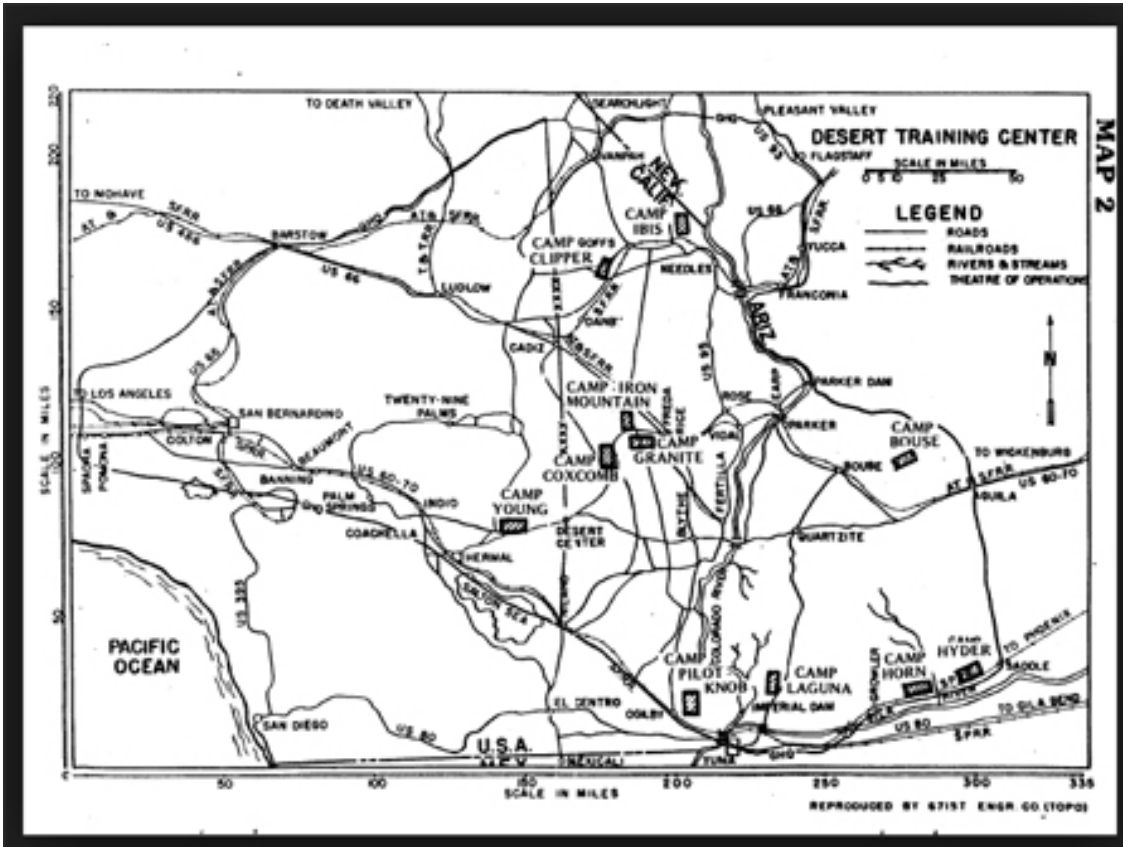
All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 6, 1942

Dear Ray,

Received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear from you. The reason I haven't answered you sooner was because you addressed the letter wrong and took a while to get to me. I'm glad you like the picture. I've just sent a few pictures home in my last letter. About Brother [Charles], I haven't heard from him since he left Dix. I can understand why he doesn't write very much. We're pretty busy in this man's Army, Ray, but I imagine he's all right.

Every time I write to Mom, I tell her that everything out here is like heaven and it's not so bad. We get to see a lot of interesting things... like last weekend we went to Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Hollywood and a few other places. We saw a baseball game in Los Angeles, a radio broadcast in the N.B.C. studio in Hollywood; we went to some of those high class places where the stars go and we saw a couple of them, so all in all it's pretty good out here.



Map of the Army's Desert Training Center in California, 1942.

Tomorrow we go on maneuvers. We leave about 9:30 a.m.. We are going to the Indio desert and they say we are going to be on them about two or three months so we don't have to worry about leaving this country for quite a while.

I am going to write El a letter now and tell her I can't be there for her wedding on account of these maneuvers. I sure would like to see her married, but I will be there in spirit.

So I will close this letter, Ray, and may God keep you and the family and give my regards to them all.

Eddie

August 8, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello darling,

I have just returned from cabling you \$50.00. This is the money which you can use to get the gifts for Eleanor and Dottie. If you think you should use it all, go right ahead. If you think more reasonable gifts are apropos, that's o.k., too. In other words, you are the lady of the house and your judgment is final.

Your letters of July 24, 27 and 29 arrived together last night, together with the V-mail dated July 18. The latter was postmarked July 29. I received very good service with this last batch of mail. They were the only letters I received this time, so you can see why you are the most thoughtful angel ever. And why I love you so much. I spent about two hours reading them over and over. The V-mail was the first of its kind I have had and it was a novelty to me. It gave me an opportunity to see how mine look when you get them.

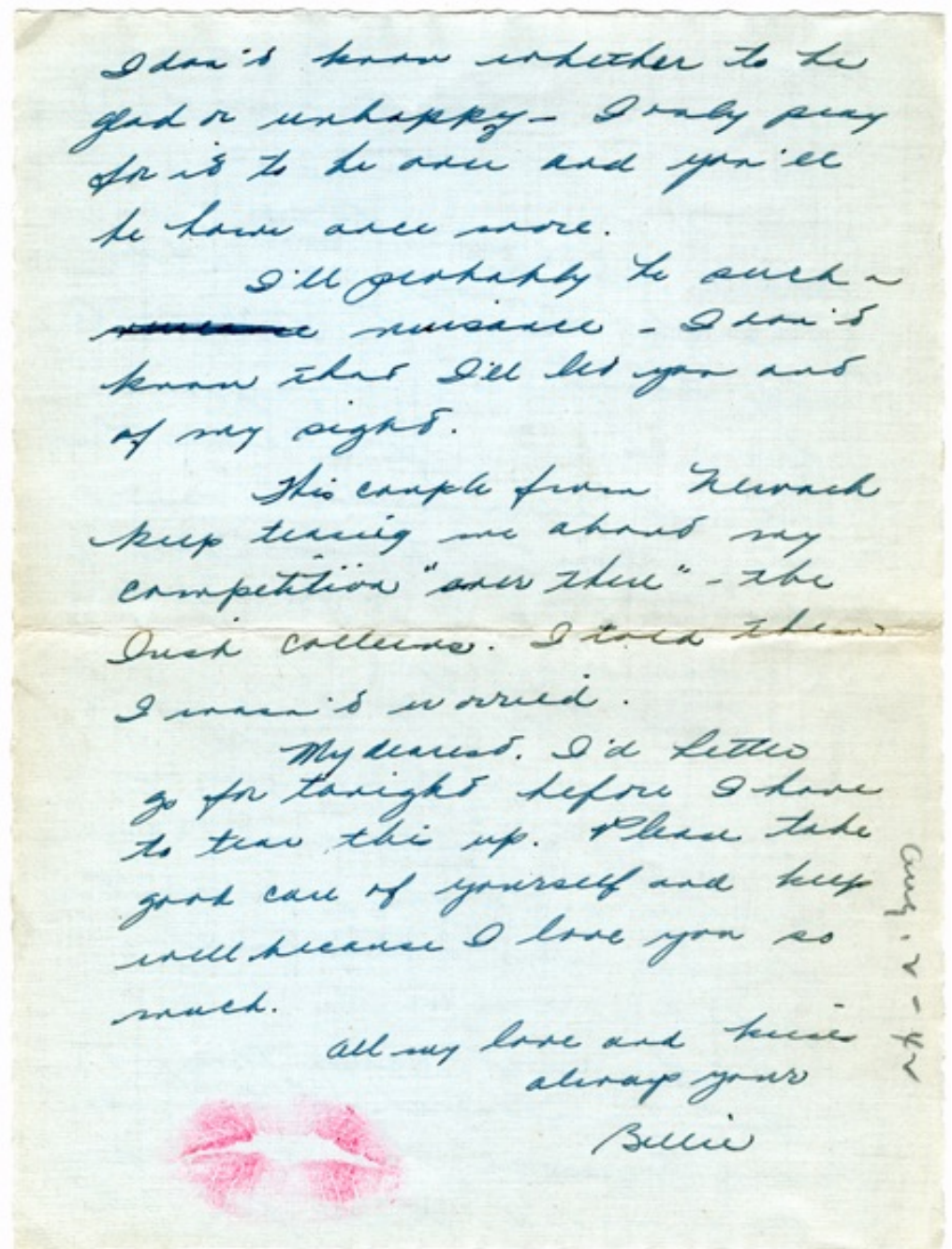
In my cable today I told you I had been made a corporal. I've been so busy of late I can't remember whether I wrote during the week and told you of it. I'm sure I did, now, because I recall it was on the 4th, one of our days. And it was in the letter that I outlined our plans and bonds, yes? My memory is failing me of late.

Your description of the picnic was perfect. And don't ever worry about your rambling letters. The more they ramble the better I like them. The most important thing is that I get them. I can't imagine how you have written so often. To me, letter writing should only be done when one is so inclined because it is so hard to write when you are not up to it. That is why I marvel at your ability to write such beautiful letters so often. One is always better than the preceding "bit of heaven." I wish I could sit at the foot of your bed and just watch you curled up with pen and paper.

In your letter of the 27th you enclosed something that I wish I was able to receive in person. I always did like the taste of your lipstick.

I haven't seen Jack in quite a while so I can't compare notes with him re Theda. He is stationed only six miles from me but transportation isn't what it is in the U.S., you know. There is one of my special buddies here who lives in Winston Salem. His name is Gee, Harold Gee. I doubt if that will mean anything to her but then again she may meet some of his family. He was with Jack and I at Croft.

I wanted to tell you of our visit to Baronscourt, the vast estate (27 miles by 9) of the Duke of Abercorn, during the past week. I can give you an outline now, but I hope to get out a story on it for the Stars and Stripes and I'll send the details on the story, if and when it is used.



Last page of one of Billie's letters.

The Duke, another in a long line of the Sir James Edward Albert Hamiltons, is Governor of Northern Ireland. That is one of his many titles. The Hamiltons are described as the "illustrious House of Hamilton" of Scottish decent. The first Hamilton on record was Gilbert de Hamilton, who lived during the reign of Alexander II, King of Scotland, late in the 13th Century. Do you recall the film, "That Woman Hamilton?" Well, she was part of the family and left her husband to take up with Lord Nelson, British naval hero.

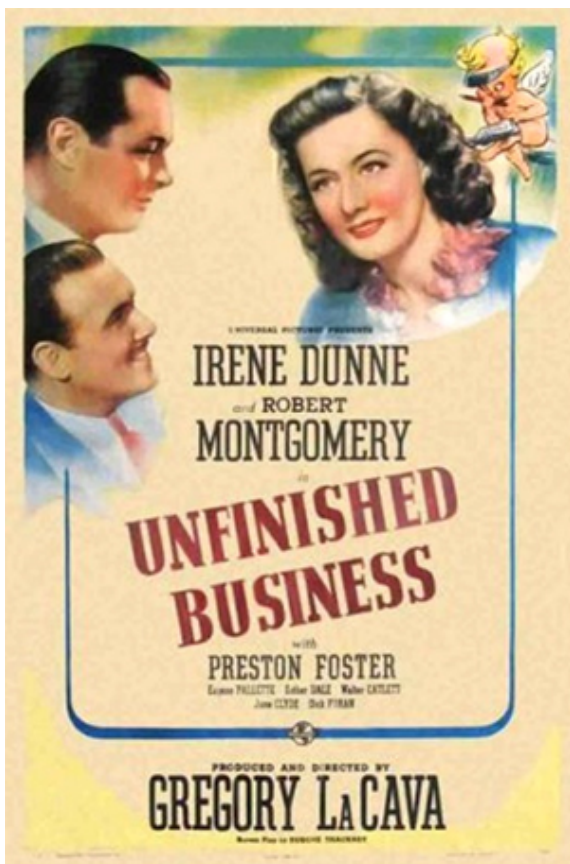
The estate is a mass of woodland, glens, trails and has four lakes (Katharine, Fannie, Mary and Castle). It houses so many rabbits I can't start to guess the number, plenty of deer, fish in the lakes, etc. You almost expect to see Robin Hood, Friar tuck and the rest of the Sherwood Forest boys swing down from the trees.

There are approximately 90 rooms in the main house, 28 of which were ruined by fire two years ago and are now in the stages of reconstruction. Two of the Duke's daughters are ladies in waiting to the Queen and Women of the Queen's Bedchamber. Sounds funny, but it is an enviable position.

So much for Baronscourt. I might say I'd love to turn a place like that over to you one day but I think we will be happier in our two by four.



Baronscourt, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland.



This will be my last letter for awhile, again. The reason will be the same as it was previously. I'll send a cable when everything is o.k. again so you can check this with the cable to keep the dates straight.

Time to go. "Unfinished Business" (Bob Montgomery and Irene Dunn) is playing in a nearby theater (cinema, I should say) and I'd like to see it. Afterward I'll try to get the story off to the S and S. I can't even remember whether or not I sent you a copy of the paper. Have I? I'd better send one anyway.

'Bye for awhile. Love to Mother and regards to Mother Müller, Miss Heffernan, Miss Davis and the rest. I'll be seeing you. By the way, what's cookin', good-lookin'?

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

PS: Here is the first shamrock I've seen. Got it at Baronscourt.

August 8, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Kind of a late date tonight for a Saturday night. I went to see a girlfriend tonight. She is to go back teaching in a week or so. We have been friends ever since I've lived here.

I've been neglecting you this week again, but I've caught a summer cold somewhere. Of course, it could have been washing my hair on a rainy night and leaving the windows all open to the top to sleep, but I love the smell of rain. Scatterbrain... that's me. How do you stand me?

We lost our boss this week to the Army Air Corps. He went into the Administrative Division as a First Lieutenant... pretty nice. He is very capable and I'm glad he was able to get what he wanted. At the present time we are like a ship without a pilot since there has been no replacement. Everything happened so suddenly that I am still a little bewildered. You see, I've never worked for anyone else so this will be a new experience. He has been such a wonderful boss, I don't see how anyone could take his place. We all kissed him goodbye and sent him on his way with a new Elgin watch as a farewell present. He said he'd only be gone a few months.

We've had a lot of rain this week, more than we need. Tonight is lovely. The sky is so clear and it is much warmer. We had to light the fireplace this afternoon for some of the folks, they were so cool.

I wrote to Mrs. Bailey last night... a new experience writing to someone I don't know. I like doing things like that. I hope she answers.

Another of my old girlfriends came to town today with her baby. She is four months old, born while I was in New York. I was a little envious. I don't guess I'll ever catch up to them.

I brought a book home to read over the weekend, Emil Ludwig's "Quartet." I'm not sure I'll like it, but it was the best the drug store had to offer.

I'm writing this between sniffles. I should know better.

Had a letter from Eleanor today, still begging me to come, but I'm afraid it's impossible. She was telling me about her wedding... sounds lovely... all white including her attendants. I think I'll write Marguerite and see if she will go so I can hear all about it. She can be my representative.

I bought a new pair of shoes. I couldn't resist them. They look like a chocolate soda made with vanilla ice cream, if that makes sense, but they have extremely high heels. I know you'd like them. I wish you were here to help me break them in.

We are fairly busy now and have prospects of being that way for the rest of the month. I'm so glad for Mother's sake. She gets discouraged so easily these days. I have to keep her well before all things. I think we are going to close the house for the winter and go home. We both can get work and I think the change will do her good. She can get to know her grandchildren before mine, or rather ours, come along and confuse her.

By the way, I forgot to tell you. Mom and I were discussing the sale of the house that will come some day. This is what she said: "When I sell, \$1,000 goes to you and Charles to buy a lot or whatever you

have in mind.” Isn’t that wonderful? I always have been closer to her than the others, but I didn’t expect anything like that. She is pretty swell and, have I told you how proud she is of you?

I must close, darling. I’ll be back maybe tomorrow. I love you so much... please remember. Keep well, dearest.

All my love and kisses always, your Billee

August 11, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

I wrote last night and forgot to mail it this morning. Now, isn’t that something?

Your lovely handkerchief came yesterday. What a sweet thought. I’ll treasure it always... make an heirloom of it. I’ve shown it off with such pride.

I have a sad tale to tell. I lost your insignia pin and found it again in front of the house in the gutter, very much mangled since a car had run over it. I almost cried, I felt so bad because I have worn it so much and I was supposed to keep it until you came back for it. The catch was a little loose and it must have fallen off while I was waiting for the bus. I carried it to the jeweler, but he said it couldn’t be fixed.

We experienced our first blackout last night and it was a huge success... all of western N. Carolina. I was home alone when we got the alarm. I locked everything up and went out in the yard. What a night! There must have been a million stars out twinkling... really a sight. I couldn’t help but take advantage of the moment to pray for us and also to thank God that it was only a sham alarm.

Business has picked up considerably this month. We have an unusual couple here. They have only been in this country for two years. He is Yugoslavian and she is Hungarian. Very interesting and so pleasant. She learned to speak English going to the movies. They are from Miami Beach.

I wish I could write. There has been a world of experience pass through our house. It would be wonderful to write my impressions of them, but then I’m not gifted along that line. The only thing I can write that sounds convincing to me is the fact that I love you so much.

I saw a crazy picture on Sunday. Abbott and Costello in “Pardon My Sarong.” I was just in the mood for something like that. The Ink Spots were in it and, of course, I can listen to them any time.

That book I mentioned in my letter, Emil Ludwig’s



“Quartet,” is wonderful, so well-written and such an unusual story. I’m not sure you would like it.

My darling, I’m getting so sleepy that I’m almost asleep sitting up. We had some beer and cheese and crackers a while ago and that always makes me that much more sleepy.

We’ve been having so much rain, not steady, but showers. Doesn’t seem to affect our garden any. We are getting everything for the table now and it looks so nice. All the neighbors are commenting on it.

I swapped our yellow blanket for a rose one today. There was a little difference in the price, but not enough to matter and this is an all wool blanket. Nothing but the best will do for us.

My summer cold still hangs on, but seems a little better. I’d love to give it to you... cheerful little someone, aren’t I?

The manager of the store said that all those girls who wanted to visit husbands or sweethearts in the camp would be given the time off. I’m going to see what he can do about managing a trip to “over there.” Wouldn’t you be surprised!

I must close. I’m practically paralyzed for sleep. Here’s a very special goodnight kiss, for being so thoughtful.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee.

August 14, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

Or should I say, “Darling corporal?” Sounds wonderful, doesn’t it, and calls for a celebration... perhaps like that Saturday night we spent in New York or in the cocktail room in the Inn.

I think when you come back that I will want to go dancing every night for a month or else to just sit and look at you to make myself realize that it is all over and everything is not just a dream. What will you want to do? I shall probably want to go a million miles away from everyone, because I won’t want to share you with anyone. Selfish little brat, aren’t I? I’ve had fun planning what we will do and keep wondering if your plans will conflict or vice versa. You’ll laugh if you could see some of my dreams.

I forgot... your letter dated July 28 arrived yesterday. How I needed it. We had a sale yesterday and we all went through the mill. We were short four girls in our department. I could have crawled under the door when I got home, but your letter changed the whole day.

The check arrived today and the message written across the check. Since your letter arrived yesterday, I’ve been shopping for suitable presents. You didn’t give me much to go on... “use part of the money.” There should be a limit because I can be extravagant. I’ll do the best I can. That “Charles and Billee” gives me such a warm feeling inside.

I see my stationery hasn’t arrived. It’s been nearly six weeks.

The little girl sounds nice. I see she isn't an CENSORED from your description. I can't wait to hear all the things you're leaving out because, of course, I realize it is impossible to tell me everything. Seems strange that a bar of candy should represent so much... something that we take for granted. We have too many things, I'd say.

I enjoyed "Adam Had Four Sons" some time back. The book was excellent and the picture follows closer than any I've seen. I am an admirer of Ingrid Bergman. She is an excellent actress. I always make an effort to see her when she is in a picture. She has been picked for the part of Maria in Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls."

My cold is better, so I am feeling more like my old self. Mother is well. She tires easily but as long as she gets plenty of rest she is all right.

We had a long letter from our boss today. They have already taken two inches (he is quite a big man) off his waistline in a week. He says it is hard, but he likes it very much. They are stationed at the Embassy Hotel, one of the finest in Miami. We are still without a boss but getting along fine, just as if he were here. Two of the girls leave tomorrow for Daytona Beach, so one of the other girls and I were elected before he left to double up on their work. There won't be any spare time for dreaming or anything else but work.

I had a long letter from Marguerite this week. Her mother is quite bad. In fact, it is just a matter of time and they expect the end soon. Her disease is incurable.

She must have something planned for my entering the church because she asked me for the date. I hope she can come down here then. Next to you, I don't know who I'd rather have.

I'm an aunt again for the third time. My oldest sister gave birth to a boy last night... seven pounds, named John Guy for his grandfather. I know they are proud. I am, and envious, too. Do you guess we'll ever catch up? We'll have to have some little girls too, to keep the boys from getting sassy.

Kaltenborn [H.V. Kaltenborn, a popular radio commentator.] was on a little while ago. He just returned from over there. From his description, he must have spent some time with you all. He said he talked with a New York boy that was headed for home on the next boat for a leave. I hadn't thought of that possibility. I wonder if that is too much to hope for.

How is the newspaper work coming along, or are you too busy? Something tells me you are going to have a pretty full winter ahead. That isn't far distant. The sooner it comes, the quicker all this will be over, but I'm still putting it off in my mind.



Before I forget... I sent a cable the 17th of July, with contents as follows: "Received money. My thoughts are more than ever with you at this time. All my love." I can't imagine how they confused it, but I guess we all make mistakes.

I'll be glad to go see your editor and friend when I go back to Jersey. I've given up the idea of going for the wedding but maybe later on. I hope they won't be disappointed in who you've picked out for a sweetheart. I'll have to brush up on my baseball. I'd like to see where you work. I've seen Ray Roche's name in the Sporting News. All I read in that is the column about the sports writers, then I roll it up and send it on to you.

I meant to ask in my last letter when I told you of the accident to your pin. Would it be possible to send me another or do you have them over there? I'll keep this one, but I would like one to wear, or a miniature.

My pen is getting heavy as well as my eyes, so I'd better close, but I'll be back soon. We have another anniversary Monday. Seven months... doesn't seem possible. How I'd love to see that other stripe, but most of all what's under it. Aren't you proud? I am. Keep well, my darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Here's a very special kiss for the promotion and because I love you so very much. B.

August 16, 1942 - Asheville

Hello darling,

It's me again. This is just a line to send with this prayer book that I saw in the Holy Shop this morning. If you have one, you can give this to someone else.

I just sent you a message for our anniversary and your promotion.

I deposited the check in the bank yesterday and when I looked back, the teller was still looking at the check and grinning. The message was written right across the face of the check. I have the copy for our scrapbook.

Such a gorgeous Sunday afternoon, meant for walking in a park or going somewhere. I'm going to the movies as soon as I finish to see "Holiday Inn," Irving Berlin's new musical.

About Eleanor's present... by the time this reaches you, I will probably have decided what to get. I enlisted the assistance of your mom. I found a beautiful clock... Seth Thomas... uptown that she could use in her bedroom



now and later on anywhere in her house. I'm sure she would want something she could keep and use now, since it will be from you. I asked your mom if she thought they would like that. It's the kind of a clock that is timeless and it will last forever. Old Mrs. Davidson has one that she has had for fifty years. She won't let anyone move it but her. I think her husband gave it to her.

I'm reading a good book, Louis Bromfield's newest, "Until the Day Break." Very exciting... the story of occupied France. I've been reading "White Cliffs of Dover" a little at a time. The verse is lovely.

I must go and dress so I won't be late. My schoolteacher girlfriend and I are going.

When I sit in this chair and listen to the symphony I can't help but go back some months to that Sunday afternoon that we were here together. Just such a moment as this and how I secretly prayed that John[ny Joyce] wouldn't come. I'm selfish, I guess, where you are concerned.

I was going, wasn't I? I want to write something in the prayer book, but I'm afraid you have one. I'm going to anyway. My prayers and spiritual communion yesterday and today at Mass were for us, my darling, and victory.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 17, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

And, happy anniversary. A dull, misty night to spend with you, but it is a seventh anniversary for us and that makes it a beautiful night. Too, it is the end of a perfect night when your letters of Aug. 3 and 5 arrived together with the one from Mother Gray. That makes four now accounted for in my returns since I have your letter of Aug. 1 and the V-mail of July 25 to answer. The latter two came while we were away again and at a time when I was unable to answer them.



I would like to say now, honey, that my airmail letters will be fewer, at least for the time being. My lieutenant gave us permission to send letters home and to our sweethearts by air, but the others (unless they are important) should go by V-mail or regular mail. There has been such a flood of airmail letters from the troops that the plane service, or I should say the airmail service, has been slowed down. That is the probable answer as to why you hadn't heard from me in a month. The family hadn't heard for the same period. So, while I will be able to send one airmail letter or so a week to you and to the folks, the rest will have to wait a while longer for theirs.

We have a phonograph in the room and the boys are playing one of my favorites, and THE No. 1 song of Dottie and Al, for our anniversary, "Stardust."

There isn't much new from this end so I'll spend most of our night going over your mail and others I have had recently.

This is a deep, dark secret between us (no mention of it to Dot, even) but I suspect there may be an heir or heiress in the Doyle family one day soon. Al dropped a hint, saying I would be the first to know when they were sure "of something." They have been away over two weekends to the Jersey shore, I believe, in lieu of a vacation this year. Jack and Berta were with them once, but I presume Dorothy has told you of it. [The juxtaposition of these two news items is hilarious.]

While I think of it, Billee, we may as well start our plans early. I am writing to the Doyles tomorrow and asking Al to be our best man. When we were kids, we agreed we would be best men for each other, and I have already fulfilled my end of it. I just know he is waiting to do his part. You are so high in their affections, I am a little jealous. They never fail to devote parts of their letters to you.

Your decision on "Stephanie" is all right with me, Billee. Not that my opinion counts but I'd like to mention it.

And, don't ever worry about anything you repeat in your letters. As I've said before, you could send the same one all the time and it would still be that "little bit of heaven." I can almost tell your moods by reading your letters. Sometimes you are concerned when you haven't had word for awhile. Then, something comes and you are happy. That's just the way it is with me, only your letters come often enough to prevent me from wondering very long.

I can't think of the nun's name you mentioned, the one with cancer. I wish you would send it to me so I might write to her. I'll ask Father John for it, too. I know that Sister Louise Mary was ill a few years ago, but I didn't know it was that serious. Still, it might be another.

I haven't seen the clipping of my letter to the Journal. In fact, I didn't mean for it to be published. It was simply a regular letter to the boys and girls. I had a letter again tonight from Ray Roche, telling me of the testimonial dinner they gave him when he was made sports editor and how he "was proud to tell those assembled that he wished Charlie was back at the desk and able to share the jobs we shared together for so long."

About one of your letters tonight... I'm still praying that everything works out the way you want it to as far as business is concerned. But, if for any reason whatsoever our money is needed, I insist you use it as you see fit. I say that, not realizing how it will strike you but you know me well enough to understand what I mean. I don't pretend to know any of the circumstances but anything I send to you should be used as you want to. Why, you can give it away if it would make you happy. That's what I mean. Don't ever mention it to Mother, though. I wouldn't want her to know, ever. And, we won't say any more about it, huh?

Don't you bother about the colleens, either. You'll always be my colleen. I shouldn't even stop to give you that assurance, should I? I still see Gwen, the little girl from Dover occasionally. You'd love her, she's such a pretty thing. I haven't seen Jack for quite a while now so I can't compare notes with him about "our women."

You mentioned the credit union. If you think that's the best thing for our money, you bank it with them. I know what the CU is like, having been a director for five years with the Journal unit.

Billee, I'm enclosing letters to Mother and to Mother Müller in order to get them off by air and to save stamps. I have plenty of stamps on hand, thanks to some received tonight from Marty and Dottie. By the way, I "hit the jackpot" tonight for the first time in a long time. Eight letters and four Journals. There were your two letters, two from a girl who was Dottie's bridesmaid (Ruth Totten, who is anxious to join the WAAC and one of my long-standing friends), one from the Dalys, another from Ray Roche, one from the Doyles and one from a cousin in Denver. The latter tells me she is getting married in October. Well, it makes the world go 'round, doesn't it?

During the past week I received two packages from home. Mother sent some airmail stationery as well as a package of tea balls and a can of chocolate. I don't need them now but you never can tell what the future will bring.

'Bye for now, sweetheart. I sent a cable tonight to remind you I hadn't forgotten the 17th and to tell you I was able to write again.

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

PS: Sorry I can't match the "specials" you added to some of your letters. My own brand are on the way, though.

August 22, 1942 - Asheville

My dearest,

I'm almost ashamed to write. I've neglected you terribly this week and for no good reason. Please forgive me. I tried several times to write but the attempts ended up in the waste basket. They reflected my mood too much. Tonight, I feel fine and all ready for a visit. Your letter of the 8th came today postmarked August 13. Your cablegram arrived Wednesday, the 19th and dated the 17th. I hope mine arrived in good time.

I see you have received my stationery. That's good. Probably by this time you will have received the boxes. There is to be no more food sent through the mail... new regulations. They must have seen what I sent you... ha. You mention sending a letter August 4 that I have not as yet received, concerning "plans and bonds."

The moon is shining so bright in the window here, making a lovely setting for our visit and causing me to dream impossible dreams at the moment. Never mind, there will come a day when that old moon won't be wasted.

Your trip to Baronscourt sounds wonderful. Another reason I'm enjoying your experience... at least this part of it. I love historical settings. I have my Robin Hood from a way back and it is very well-worn from being read and re-read, so I can appreciate your description. You either neglected to put

the shamrock in the letter, or it was removed because there was no shamrock. And it was the first one you had seen... I'm sorry.

There has been definitely a fall note in the air yesterday and today and I'm not a bit sorry. This always makes us busier at the store, for the grand rush to prepare children and teen-age girls and boys for school and college.

We are still without a boss and getting along fairly well. The two girls on their vacation make it kind of tough on a few of us, including me, since we have to double-up, but we'll survive.

By the time I got your letter telling me you are off again, I had already received the cablegram that everything is all right. Those messages are wonderful... there aren't words.

Back to Baronscourt... there is a book that has been written recently concerning "That Hamilton Woman," under the title "Bride of Glory." I haven't as yet had the opportunity to read it, but I've learned that it is excellent. I saw the picture some time ago. Vivian Leigh and Lawrence Olivier played the parts.

Our "two by four" sounds wonderful. I have some ideas on that, too. Don't you think it will have to expand a little? For our nine little players?

You flatter me about my letters, but I'm glad you are enjoying them. There aren't words to describe the joy I feel at the sight of those familiar airmail letters of yours, waiting for me when I get home.

I can assure you that if you were sitting at the foot of my bed, I wouldn't be curled up with pen and paper! I can see you sitting there when I close my eyes. I'm by the radio tonight. Everyone has retired and I should be there, too. I'm all ready to hop in when I finish and say goodnight to you.

Dot and Al's present is on the way. In fact, it should be there today. Since receiving your letter today... maybe I didn't spend enough money. I'll have to admit I was a little at a loss to know what to get, but I had fun shopping and wondering, would this or that be the thing and what the result would be.

I ended up in a mountain exchange shop for the Southern Highland Association. They have such lovely things I could hardly make up my mind. I finally decided upon a handmade pewter bowl on a pedestal formed by three tiny logs. The bowl is made in such a way that looking into it gives the effect of a dogwood flower in full bloom, if you can imagine that. They can use it for a million things. It cost \$5.25 with postage. I hope they will like it and that my choice suits you. It was so unusual, I thought Dottie might like it.

I'm waiting to hear from your mom concerning El's present. I thought I'd better enlist her aid on that since we don't want a duplication and there might be something special she would like to have.

I have resumed my instructions. It won't be long now until I can be received. I'll be sorry in a way because I've enjoyed going to St. Genevieve's so much.

I'm reading "This Above All" [by Eric Knight] and comparing it with the movie. I've never read such descriptions. His battle scenes are so vivid I could almost hear the sound of cannon in my ear. It is anything but diverting, should you happen to have an opportunity to read it.

I must be on my way, I'm so sleepy. I promise to be more faithful. This is what you get for bragging on me.

I'm not sure I've covered all the news, but I'll write again soon.

I thought you might think my personal enclosure a little silly, but it seems to be the best I have to offer for the present. [??]

Keep well, my dearest, and remember how much I love you, more and more every day.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 22, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

This is another of our Saturday nights. I wonder if you have picked up your pen yet to keep our date. It is only 7:30... a little early for you, perhaps. Your letter of Aug. 8 came last night. With it came the Journal in which my letter appeared and your Sporting News of July 17. The packages are still among the missing, but I'll be looking for them.

Listen, "scatterbrain," I hope that summer cold is gone. It should be by this time. You wanted to know, "How you stand me?" "Scatterbrain," or any other name you care to call yourself, doesn't faze me in the least because I'll always "love you to pieces," so to speak.

So, your boss is in the Air Corps. I envy him. But then, if my age hadn't prevented me from enlisting, "we" wouldn't be, would we? I hate to even think of that. When he said he would be gone for only a few months, I believe he was a little too optimistic. Still, I hope he isn't far wrong.

I didn't have an opportunity to tell Lieut. Bailey of your correspondence since he will be away from us for awhile. That's about all I can tell you except that I'm a bit tired tonight following a trip, and I spoke with my little friend, Gwen, for the last time last night. I'll miss her since she and her younger brother, Bertie, were charming company for us. These British children have a way about them that is all their own. She didn't know it was our last meeting.



Charles, Bertie Magee and goat in Northern Ireland. 1942.

You speak of the beautiful sunshine, warm evenings, etc. I'm sure I can get 1,000 men who would give 10 years of their lives for one hour of that. Rain, chill and mud have been the order of the day for so long now. We did have a bit of sun today, though.

You are a little envious of your maternal girlfriends, are you? You must know how I feel, too, when I hear of all my paternal friends. Still, don't you worry. If God wills it we'll have our "day in the sun" to catch up to them all. Bet none of them will be able to put that baseball team in the field.

Speaking of baseball, I see by the Sporting News that Asheville isn't doing so well. Do you go to any of the games? Bill Delancey is manager there, isn't he?

I am sorry you can't be in J.C. for the wedding but I do understand why you should be in Asheville. It would be nice if Marguerite could make it. I'm writing home tonight and I'll tell them to be on the lookout for her in case she is able to be there. El wrote and asked me to give her some information on Maine in the event they go there on their honeymoon. To save time, I referred her to Dot and Al.

This is as good a time as any to plan ours, Billee. But then, I guess we'll have to wait awhile until we determine how much we can afford. Have you any suggestions? Personally, I'd want to have it in Asheville—that is, one of the stops—but then that may not be novel for you. You might wear those new "chocolate-vanilla" shoes.

It was good, so good, to hear that prospects are good for a successful summer, as far as business goes. Too, perhaps it will be well for Mother to close up for the winter. But I remember the time she said there was no place like Asheville. I think she will miss the place.

Billee, Mother's plan to present us with \$1,000 if she sells leaves me rather speechless. On the other hand, I hope and pray she won't ever have to sell, that is unless she really wants to. Do you know, one of our girls will be named Elizabeth after both of our mothers? Mom's is Ella, you know.

You ask me to remember that you "love me so much." That is something I couldn't forget.

I still spend my last moments at night with you. I just fold my hands behind my head and think of you, and us, and all the things we will be doing one day. Sometimes, I see you in that oh, so beautiful gown you wore on our engagement night. Then, I see you with your apron in the kitchen... walking in the snow, your tilted nose a little pink and coooold! Enough for now or I'll be getting that "old feeling" of loneliness again. Love to Mother and the "girls."

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

August 25, 1942 –Asheville

My dearest Charles,

I don't know how far I'll get. I left my pen in the office and I'm having to use a stick pen, so here goes.

First of all, I feel like something of a heel about Al and Dottie's present that I didn't get something more expensive. I bought it before I received the other letters and in the first one, you said "use

part.” I’ll do better with Eleanor’s. Do you suppose Al and Dot will notice the difference? What did you get them for a wedding present? You’ll have to chalk it up to the fact that I’m not used to buying expensive presents, so be patient with me.

Your letter of the 4th came yesterday. You fill me with such pride that you are trusting me to handle your savings. I think it’s wonderful that our boys “over there” are more than doing their part by buying bonds, too. I could go on forever about the faith they have in the good old U.S.A. With that kind of morale, we can’t help but see victory and soon.

You’re still head man in this family. You’re making \$5.20 more a month than I am. How about that? I think I’ll join the Army.

There was a soldier from England on Sunday a week ago on the Army Day program who said that he thought their raise should be kept on this side for them... that they didn’t need all that money over there. Too, that it created a feeling of animosity between the British soldiers and the Americans because the British didn’t have as much money to spend. I believe the boys would rather handle their own money and I imagine the majority of them are doing as you are. Your letter proves that point.

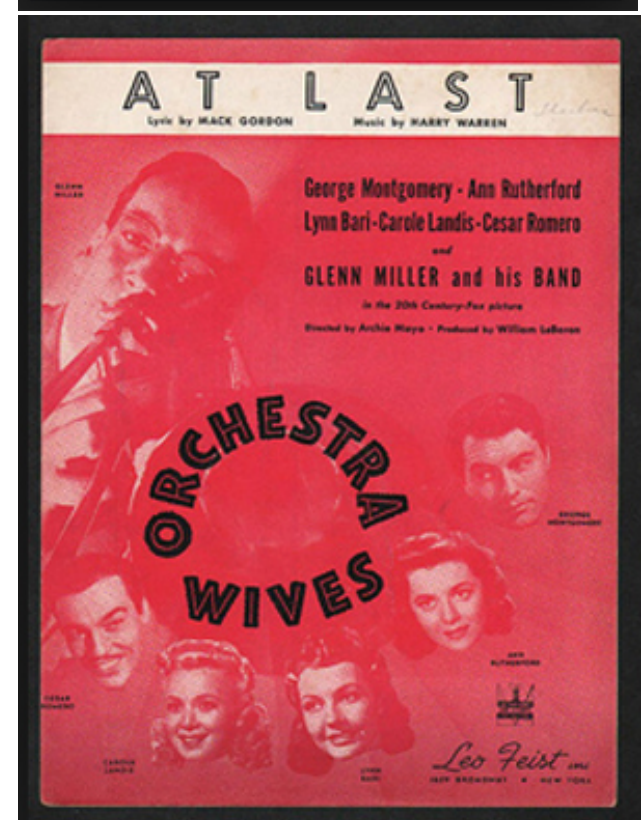
I’m saving all I can, but it won’t be as much as you are, naturally, since I have to pay my own way.

I had to leave you for awhile since eight extras came in and five of them had to have lunch. They are all tucked in for the night now and the tables all set to serve 17 for breakfast. Just like old times before Pearl Harbor.

It’s very late now and I had planned to do so many things tonight and I haven’t even finished your letter as yet.

By the way, there was no clipping in the letter. You’re either getting absent-minded or else the enclosures are being removed. How about it? If it’s for the first reason, what’s cookin’ over there to make you that way? Just so it isn’t a blonde.

I saw “The Pied Piper” last night, with Monty Woolley. The story ran in the Collier’s last winter... a story of occupied France and an Englishman trying to return to his country. An excellent story and so well cast. Sunday I saw “Orchestra Wives” with Glenn Miller’s orchestra... really smooth and very entertaining. There is a new song in it that just hits right... “At Last.” That’s what you are... my “at last.”



My brother, Warren, will be here Saturday. Mom is getting excited. We probably won't see much of him since he has a girlfriend here that he has kept in close contact with since he left home. She is a nice girl, but they are so young. He was only 18 in July.

Mother Müller told me last night that she could tell me on Friday the date that I will be received in the church. I can hardly wait. She is so swell and has helped me so much in more ways than one. I'll be grateful to you the rest of my life, Charles, because if we hadn't met, I'd probably still be drifting aimlessly along instead of having so much to live for.

I'm going to do something tomorrow I've never done before... model for a fashion show. I'm scared stiff just thinking about it. I said yes before I thought about that angle. I'll probably fall down or something and make a spectacle of myself.

Back to the money... I've been guilty, too, of not having the foresight to save. Every time I started to save anything, I always ended up on a train or bus bound somewhere. That's all I thought money was worth saving for... a vacation. Now, I think of all the things I can get and we can have to start life together in our "two by four."

I think I've had enough bookkeeping to take care of keeping our fund straight. I'll have to get me a little book and turn in a statement to the boss (you, darling) every so often, so you can see how we stand. I believe I'll rent a safety deposit box to keep our bonds in and, too, I have some other things that should be in a safer place.

If we have scholarships handed out to any of our team, it won't be due to any outstanding qualities of mine, but rather because they will have such a smart father. Give yourself a little credit. Speaking of our team, Mom says we're tempting fate to talk about having nine children. Time will have to answer that.

My heart turns cartwheels every time I think of those few moments outside the Inn. I shouldn't have said what I did, really. I wasn't being fair to myself or you to say that. The injustice of it all carried me away, I guess.

A thought just occurred to me. We could give Eleanor and Tom their silver... not sterling. We could start that if she has picked her pattern. I'll ask your Mom.

I'd better go before this gets any more jumbled and while I still make a little sense. I'll send some more stationery this week and some cigarettes since it takes so long.

About the WAAC... there is to be an A.E.F. sent over some time in the fall. Now I wish I had joined. Wouldn't that be something if I turned up "over there?" I can't afford to join now. I have too many obligations, and Mom, of course. I'll take your advice.

I'm really saying Goodnight this time. I love you more than ever. Keep praying for us and take care of yourself.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

August 29, 1942—Northern Ireland

Evening angel,

The packages—omigosh, I should say “carloads”—finally arrived yesterday and a cable is winging its way to you with the news. I didn’t bother to check the earlier list you sent because there just couldn’t be anything left out. Now, I have enough of everything to last a long, long time. It seems you thought of just about everything. We had a few cans of beer and some “cake” saved and had a party with some of the things. “Share the wealth,” you know! It was a regular celebration, thanks to you. To make it a perfect day, your letter of Aug. 15 came with the packages.



Charles and friends enjoying Billee’s package. Northern Ireland, August 1942

May I interrupt our conversation to say, “I love you, so much?”

You asked me what I wanted to do when we get the chance to do it. I have ideas, but I know I’ll never let you out of my sight while I’m putting them into effect. Just now, while everything is uncertain, I’m merely sending all my worldly goods to you. That is the first step, to get a foundation built. When it is time to drop everything and start back, I’ll have enough time to get plans set and put them into action.

Meanwhile, let’s you and I dream awhile. Let’s pretend I’ll be back in a month... only God knows how long from now. What would we do? That month would give you time to pack and get ready to move, yes? Then, I would want about a week to get straightened out with the Journal, replenish my wardrobe and look at you. If you were already in J.C. [Jersey City]... fine. If not, I’d cut my week to two days then take a plane to wherever you are, then start back to J.C. If we had enough to go ahead, the wedding date would be set as soon as possible, if not sooner. In between, we could do our shopping and whatever else was necessary.

How about the honeymoon? Of course, that would depend on what we had but I believe I could spread your wings and fly you around a bit. It would depend on the time of year... Miami, Berkshires, Adirondacks, perhaps a trip to the coast, Atlantic City if you prefer, or Asheville! How about Bermuda if you like boats.... Miami on a train... a trip by car to anywhere? What appeals to you?

Have you awakened from the dream yet? Nice, wasn't it? I can see us lying in the Miami sand... hot days and cool nights... standing on the rail on the Monarch or Queen of Bermuda, on our way; maybe dining on the porch of the Le Bourget at Lake Placid or driving along Lake Champlain to Fort Ticonderoga. While we were in the vicinity, we might stop at Cooperstown. We may stand on the same spot outside the Grove Park Inn, looking ahead instead of saying "Goodbye."

I'm writing, at last, to Marguerite tonight. (Yum, your pineapple is good.) Too, if I have time, I'll try to get one off to Berta and Jack. Had one from them last night.

Say, you can tell your sisters they had better be consistent because if they aren't we'll pass them by, going top speed. That is, if God is good to us. What will their names be? That will be solely up to you. Yes, there will be girls. Even with the ball team, you wouldn't be content with all boys, would you?

We had quite a laugh over your report on H.V. K[altenborn] telling of the fellow who was on his way back for a "leave." Wow! That was news! If true, I can't understand it. To us, it is incredible.

I have been too busy to devote much time to the Stars and Stripes but I have sent a couple of "quickie" stories that haven't been published as yet. There was a note from them today asking for more copy. The stuff I sent wasn't very good, mainly because material is scarce.

As far as that "full winter" is concerned, you, over there, probably know more about it than we do. But we'll be ready if it comes.

I did get that July 17 cable, eventually.

Ray Roche and Mel Shapiro, my buddies on the Journal, are awaiting you whenever you get there. Don't be worrying about them being disappointed. You'll stun them.

Billee, there isn't any way I can get more pins. Not over here, anyway.

'Bye for now.

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



Charles with Bill Daly at Cooperstown, 1939.

August 31, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

What a time I've been having this weekend trying to write you. So many interruptions that I had to give up. Now, if my eyes will stay open, I think I can get along fine.

This has been such a wonderful week. Your two long letters... anniversary letters... of the 4th and the 17th came, one on Monday and the other on Saturday, besides your cablegram Friday and the one this morning. How could I ask for more?

I'm glad the packages arrived safely. I was in doubt when I packed them, if all of it could be put to use. I was going by some already packed boxes we had in our stack and they contained practically the same things. I'll have to tell them they aren't needed over there. You can probably find some civilians to give the trimmings to.

Besides your letters, a long one came from Dottie and one from your mom. Dottie thanked us for the anniversary gift and told me a little of their celebration. They started out in the Taft Hotel Tap Room. That brought back memories of a four-star celebration begun there some months back... remember? You'd better.

I hope Al's hint is true. They seem so happy. Never fear, I'll wait until I'm told. You'll have to bring me down out of the clouds when that happens to us for I'll be walking on air.

Reading about your plans for our best man gives me such a warm, reassured feeling. I hope we can have that four-star wedding, but anything will do so long as we belong and are married the right way.

Mom enjoyed your letter so much and has tucked it away among her insurance policies for safe-keeping. Of course, I read Mother Müller's letter since it was right on top. I began to think I was being left out... kept turning pages and no familiar "Hello sweetheart."

I'd never thought much about you being a little boy. I enjoyed her letter almost as much as mine. It made me wish I'd always known you and all your dreams. How many of them came true? As I've probably said before, I can't help but be envious of the Doyles, Dalys and the two Ruths and Jack and Berta for knowing you so long.

What kind of a weekend did you have? Pleasant, I hope. Can't wait to hear about it. Your message made me feel as if I were sharing it with you. Did you remember the pictures?

About the money... I appreciate so much what you said, but only if the necessity is very great will it be put to use and then just temporarily. Think of our nine little ones. We've struggled out of circumstances before when you weren't around so I guess we'll survive this time. Don't worry about us.

I'm so glad you are finding Gwen such pleasant company. Her name is Welsh... is she? I'm a bit jealous, but that's because she can be near you and I can't.

Don't ever stop reassuring me. There are times when I get a little rebellious and you seem far away. That's when I need the feel of your arms about me. That doesn't happen often... maybe when I don't hear from you when I think I should, or for some silly reason.

Your mom's letter was filled with the wedding activities. Seems Tom is to report sooner than expected. I'm so sorry but it's good they can be married and have a little time together. I think I'd be tempted to move the date up a bit. I told her in my last letter of my instructions. She is very pleased and sent me a Miraculous Medal and a booklet of its history. Father John sent me a medal, also a Miraculous, and Rosary beads. They are lovely and I'll always treasure them. He never told me the nun's name.

Saw the best movie this afternoon: "Talk of the Town" with Ronald Coleman, Cary Grant and Jean Arthur. Really a marvelous picture. I know you'd like it.



Really, I have to go. I'm falling asleep. You make me love you all the more if that could be possible. Sometimes it overwhelms... our love. Remember how much I love you always. Keep well and write often.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Now I'm in Woolworth's having a second breakfast. I just read this over and it sounds awfully sleepy. Another letter came from your mom this morning about Eleanor's gift. She thinks the silver will be fine so I ordered it. More love, B.

Enclosed are some stamps for my airmail letters. I'm really sending this off now.

August 31, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

Tired tonight, but I wouldn't pass up the opportunity to call on you.

Yes, I missed our Saturday night date because a weekend pass enabled me to visit Belfast. The cable I sent from there may not have told the entire story but I did want you to know I was thinking of you. Before I describe the visit in detail, I want to tell you that your letters of Aug. 12 and 16 arrived since my last letter. The one of the 12th came after that of the 14th so I didn't fully understand the "accident" to the pin. At any rate, don't fret about the pin. I'd buy you a million of them if I could but they just aren't available.

And, the prayer book. It... well, it was just like you to send it. I'll never have it out of my pocket. You can rely on that. I have a larger missal I can use during Mass but I'll use yours in between. The words of dedication, shall I say, make it perfect.

I liked your exchange of the blanket. You are more like a rose, anyway.

You said, "I wish I could write, but then I am not gifted in that way." You know my sentiments along that line so let me quote from a letter received tonight from Ruth Rommel. "I know from Billee's letters to Dot that it is easy for her to write. Dottie sometimes reads parts of Billee's letters to me. Yes, Billee can talk about the most commonplace things and make them sound so very important, things like the weather, for instance. You both have that knack of writing that makes letters seem much more than paper and ink. Billee impressed me as such a sweet girl, and I like her even more because I know how it is with you. There is everything to gain and nothing to lose, except your minds, which usually happens when people are in love."

You see? You don't doubt me now, do you? This may explain, in part, why Ruthie has long been one of my favorite people.

By the way, your Yugoslav friends sound very interesting. I know what you mean because I've met many strange and likable persons. We'll compare them one day, yes?

Now, about our visit to Belfast:

A fellow from West Virginia and another from Indiana accompanied me. The ride, in rather ancient trains, was an experience in itself. When we arrived late in the afternoon, our first stop was at the American Red Cross headquarters. There we were given a ticket for lodging at the U.S. Consulate building. The cost... one shilling (20 cents). The beds were stretched out on one floor, dormitory style. It felt so good... soft mattress, fresh linens, etc. A cold chicken dinner preceded a second (for me) attendance at "Gone With The Wind." G.W.T.W. is, or was, playing its second week. Seats were 2, 3 and 4 shillings.

On Sunday, we attended 9 o'clock Mass, had breakfast at the Red Cross and then boarded a double-decker tram (trolley) for Bellevue Park, one of the "things to see."

Oops, forgot something... the blackout. When we came out of the theater, we had to walk hand in hand in order to stay together. When they say blackout over here, they mean it. Before getting back to camp, I luckily stumbled on the purchases of a Brownie box camera and one roll of 620 film. I'll need the sun to take pictures and wait upon the development. But, I'll share them as soon as possible.

A small, but important note: I was paid by Uncle Sam today, for services rendered, and as soon as I can make arrangements, I'll be sending \$40.00 to you. We are paying cash for our canteen rations now instead of waiting until the end of the month, so I'm holding a few dollars extra for it. The cost of the first bond should be deducted from the September salary.

I did tell you I had received your cable on our anniversary and about the promotion, didn't I? And now, like yours, my eyelids are getting heavy. I'll be back soon. Goodnight, sweetheart.

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

September 3, 1942

Dear Ray,

Everything is going along fine out here and I have a pretty good tan. Yes, Ray, this half-track I am driving is a pretty complicated thing. It takes some time to operate it completely. We also have a radio on it and I have to know how to operate it, too, and all the large and small guns on it. I have to know how to take every piece of these guns apart and put it



Eddie, second from right, training in the desert with his half-track. California, 1942.

together again and know how to shoot each one of them. The personal gun I always carry with me is a Tommy gun or a Thomson sub-machine gun.

The reason I never write home about the guns I shoot is because I don't want Mom to be worrying about me getting hurt.

These problems that we are having out here last as long as a week and they're not like the old maneuvers where they play hide-and-go-seek. These maneuvers are serious and tough.

By now you probably know that I have made Tech Corporal and one up to Brother now. The only thing is that I can't go any higher unless I go to mechanics' school and they only take a few out of the regiment. You see, that's all a half-track driver calls for.

Well, I will close now and hope the wedding goes fine. Give my love to all and may God bless you.

Eddie

September 3, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

I've neglected you shamefully this week, but I've been so busy. My work is so far behind at the office and on top of it all, this is the end of the month. This is the first night this week I haven't worked.

Don't laugh, but remember you falling up the stairs coming out of the subway? Well, I did the same thing except instead of stairs it was the curbing and I didn't have anyone to hold on to. Consequently, I fell flat on my face, practically crippling myself. I've been hobbling around all week. My knee is a little better tonight but still pretty sore. Such a stupid thing to do, as many times as I've stepped over that curb.

We've had word of the trouble in Belfast [IRA riots]. I know you won't be able to tell me, but I've prayed you avoided any trouble while you were there.

Eleanor's silver went off today. I tried to get the same pattern as ours, but didn't succeed. I thought we could swap back and forth if she wanted to have a party and needed more, or if I did I could use hers. Mom and my aunt did that and you'd be surprised how many times that came in handy. The pattern I sent is pretty. I hope she likes it. You know, it's on the frozen list now and is very scarce. Your mom thought she would like silver and it is something she can always keep.

Mother Müller was so pleased with your letter. We sat under the trees in a little secluded corner and read it over several times together. She is going to write you and let me put it in with my letter. We have been praying together for you for a long time.

Your mom delivered your message in her letter. Her letters mean so much to me, as all those do that come from Jersey City, but hers in particular. I'm so glad she likes me. Charles, I don't see how we can help but be so happy together with so many people anxious for our happiness.

There have been rumors that there is to be a registration of women this month 18-65, for occupation, I presume. [This remained a rumor.]

Our move north is pretty definite and gets more so every day. I don't think Mom will wait until October. If I had my way, I'd like to stay until after Xmas and get my bonus after working this close to it.

I had a message from Marguerite tonight. Last week was her birthday and I sent her a little remembrance from both of us. She didn't have time to write. In her message she said her mother's condition was definitely serious. The end must be close. I wish I could be with Marguerite now because she really needs me.

We've been having some of your dull, misty weather here, but today has been lovely, more like our old Asheville weather.

I'm spoiled. No word as yet this week. Last week was swell, with two letters and two messages. I felt so rich. When I think of all we have to do together, I get a little impatient. You know we've been engaged five months tomorrow. I'm glad we have such pleasant memories to live over together, even though there is such a great distance between us. Our memories bring us so close. I am looking forward to the time when we can take up where we were interrupted by Uncle Sam.

I was almost asleep. One of these days, I'll be able to write you earlier in the evening when I'm more wide awake instead of having to write after I get to bed.

I saw the best movie the other night when I finished working. I didn't feel like going home. "This Gun for Hire" with



Veronica Lake and a new actor, Alan Ladd. He looks so much like Father John that I had to gasp for breath when he appeared on the screen, not so much in profile as in full face. The part he played, of course, didn't fit, but the resemblance was certainly there.

I really must go this time. I'll write again and soon.

This is one of the things I'm not supposed to say. I read it somewhere, but I hope you never stop loving me as you do now. Never is a long time, but I can dream... Goodnight, my dearest. My prayers and thoughts are with you more than ever on the eve of our anniversary.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 5, 1942—Northern Ireland

Evening angel,

Saturday night, and I have a bushel of news for you as we pass by another of our "date" nights. I had hoped to celebrate our anniversary with you last night but special duty prevented me from doing so. The delay might be considered timely, in a way, because your letter of Aug. 23 arrived this afternoon, enabling me to answer some of the questions you asked and to add something to the things you mentioned.

Since you hadn't received my letter of Aug. 4, in which I wrote of my purchase of bonds, I'll tell you of it again. Still, I presume you have received the letter by now. About a month ago, perhaps a little more, I applied for the purchase of a \$37.50 war bond each month. You will be co-owner and have my consent to use them as you see fit.

There may be other letters that haven't reached you. We can't do anything about it except write and hope that Uncle Sam's couriers come through. As it is, I still write an average of two letters a week. There have been occasions when a week went by, but it couldn't be helped.

Besides the bonds, which will be sent to you from Washington, I hope to be able to save a bit more, and from time to time send additional cash to you. It all should aid in swelling the "hope chest" of Billee and Brother.

I couldn't have thought of a better signature for the Doyle's gift and the wire. Dottie's letter, telling me of the gift, arrived yesterday. Your selection was perfect. They thought so, too.

In your letter, you said, "I am almost ashamed to write." When I think of the 46 letters I have received from you over here, I have to smile. Yes, I counted them the other night. Remember, we will only write when we want to talk to each other. If you aren't "in the mood," I can wait. I never have considered correspondence a duty but a pleasure. More fun that way, isn't it?

You said you didn't get the shamrock. I may have forgotten to enclose it. Still, here is another. I found three of them today.

Too, you claim to possess ideas concerning our “two by four.” Keep them in mind because we will have a bit of planning when the time comes. If the two by four becomes a little crowded when the team reports, why we’ll just have to have a larger “field.”

Billee, I’ve been praying faithfully and earnestly during your instructions. If I haven’t said enough about it to you it is because it is so big, words are very inadequate. I would like to say, though, that I am so proud of you. Not that it means much in itself... that is, my feelings. You will know and love your transition, so to speak.

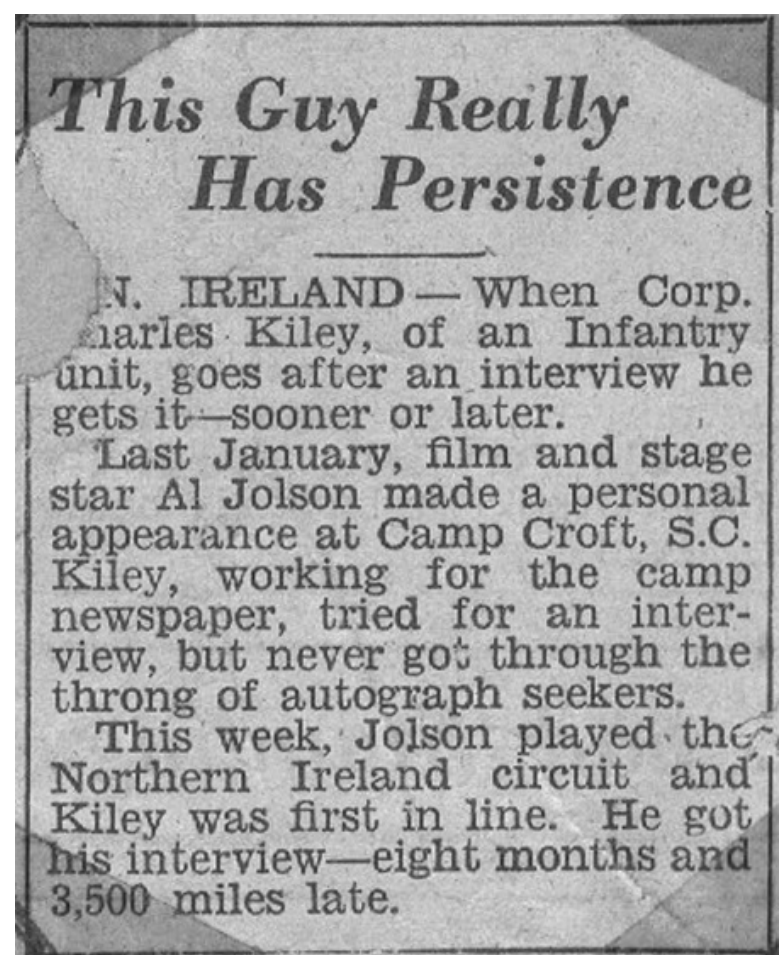
Don’t ever feel that your “personal enclosures” are silly. I was going to wish they were real, but I seem to be constantly wishing for something, don’t I? For example, I do so long to be with you when you talk of that great big Carolina moon we knew so well. And for the warm but comfortable evenings... watching the mist roll over the mountains. Perhaps, I’m too much of a dreamer. Still, I’m sure it is only human to yearn for those things we want the most.

One of the fellows with us had his “dream come true” a few days ago. He had applied for officers’ training quite a while ago and was finally accepted. His orders were to report to Camp Croft! Could I ask for anything more? His name is Al Lange. Naturally, I gave him your address and asked him to say hello, if he had a chance to get to Asheville. His wife was to meet him when he returned to the states.

Having saved some choice news for the end, I won’t wait any longer to pass it on to you. Last week, some of us handed in requests for furloughs. I’ll confess, I was astonished when the request went through and I signed the papers. All that remains is official approval and I’ll have nine days with which to visit London. One of the fellows who went with me to Belfast is going, too. The furlough will start either Sept. 29 or Oct. 6. I’ll keep a diary of it for you. After a somewhat active summer, the furlough will be a blessing. the activities, of course, are not for publication.

How would you like to have a 15-minute chat with, let’s say Merle Oberon and Patricia Morrison? Besides informal interviews with, oh... Al Jolson, Frank McHugh and Allen Jenkins? I’m not trying to be subtle but that was my happy lot the other evening. They appeared at our camp in a show, which is touring the service units in the British Isles. As the Stars and Stripes representative here it was my lot to handle a story on the show and the cast. Being a little rusty, I was a bit uneasy at first but before long we were talking as informally as a couple of soldiers.

I sat backstage with the women for 15 minutes before the show and for awhile during the show. They were



This brief piece ran in The Stars and Stripes in September, 1942.

more gracious and more willing to talk than the men. Jolson was a smooth hit. I didn't have an opportunity to see him long since he sat in the audience until he went on.

What did we talk about? Mostly of their tour. A little about our life here. The orchestra was making so much of a racket on the stage it was difficult to speak with any degree of intelligence.

Here is another confession. I trust it doesn't give the impression that my mental attitude towards the finer things in life is turning blasé. But, when the show was over, I should have been elated for having had the opportunity to interview such personalities. Yet, I wasn't. I just don't know why, either. I've been more excited over less important things.

I snapped a picture of the group, from too much of a distance, I think. I hope it turns out well.

And so to bed, darling. 'Night. Love to Mother.

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

PS: Sporting News and Colliers arrived ok.

September 5, 1942—Asheville

My dearest

I wish you were here right now so I could give you a good hug for sending your letter to the store. I wouldn't have had it until Tuesday if you hadn't. We have a holiday Monday and no mail delivery.

I felt like I had to get some word this week. For many weeks now, I've had either a letter or a message. I'm just spoiled, but I am loving it. The picture is darling, or rather Gwen is. I'm sorry you had to say goodbye and I know she will be disappointed. I'll take good care of it for you.

I really am a scatterbrain about some things. You'll probably be enlightened on a number of my shortcomings when we cross that "bridge." Mom says there must be something wrong with you. I told her I didn't know what it was... do you snore or something?

I can readily understand your desire to be in the Air Corps because every time I see a plane, I get excited and a thrilled feeling. I've only been up once, but that was just enough to make me want "wings." Still, I'm very glad that you aren't in the Air Corps.

Your trip made me wonder, but I can see you are still in Northern Ireland. Perhaps I guessed wrong at the city you visited last weekend and I was worried about the trouble there for nothing.

We're having your rain now, but it sounds nice. I wouldn't like it for a regular diet, as you are having.

You don't suppose we're being greedy wishing for a "ball team," do you? I wouldn't want to be that way. I like the idea of Elizabeth. I wanted to take that name when I entered the church, but it is my sister's name, too. I also had planned to name the second boy John (the first is to be "the third") but my sister named the latest member of the family that for his grandfather. We'll just have to have two Johns in the family.

Before I forget, do you still hear from the little boy in Jersey City, the one that had the sister he told you so much about? I've been wanting to mention it for some time and I'd remember when I was putting the letter in the mailbox. I imagine he is getting quite a thrill hearing from you "over there" if you are still corresponding.

Asheville hasn't had much of a team in several years, not since Gornicki and Ray Mueller and those fellows were here. Did I tell you that Jim Grilk was killed in California? He used to be a catcher here and played in New Orleans and Sacramento. He married a girl from Asheville. [Grilk, a minor league player, had volunteered as a civilian to coach the team at the Sacramento Army Air Base while he was waiting for his Army Air Force commission to be finalized; he was killed in a car accident.]

There is a lot of this country around here that I haven't seen. I've always had a yen to go to Bermuda, but as you say, we'll have to go where we can afford. In fact, I used to say when I was very young that I wouldn't get married until I found someone that would take me to Bermuda for my honeymoon. One thing... Niagara Falls is out. Anywhere with you, if it were Timbuktu would be a swell honeymoon. I'm not at all concerned. Dot and Al's sounded like fun.

I sent you an anniversary message yesterday. Soon, we'll have to notify Postal to make us up a new set of phrases. We've about exhausted the lists, but the same old words always sound swell and make me so happy when I see that name I love so much signed to it.

Mom loves Asheville, but I know she wouldn't stay here after I leave. She'll sell and go home when the opportunity comes along. That has already been settled. [In fact, Elizabeth stayed until 1980.]

I heard the prettiest song yesterday. Occasionally, my girlfriend and I haunt the music counters at lunch time. She has a victrola so we really buy records now and then. She bought this one yesterday, "Just as Though You Were Here" —Russ Morgan's arrangement. She is going to get the words to it. It might have been written for us. One consolation... we aren't alone in the world.

I see you so many times like that... stretched out with your hands clasped behind your back. I remember you telling me that was how you listened to the radio back at Dix and thought of me. I always go to sleep thinking of you, where you might be and what you are doing and wishing a little, dreaming what we could be doing. See, we do practically the same things.

Your letter was really a life saver today. Did I feel good when one of the girls held up that familiar airmail envelope and said "Billee... from some corporal." I corrected her of course. You aren't "some corporal."



I'm the one at fault now. I've been neglecting to write Father John since I received the Rosary and medal. He'll think me an ungrateful something or other, but you're lucky you've been written to these past ten days, I've been so busy. I also want to write to your mom tonight and tell her what a nice son she has to write me so often and to tell his mom such nice things about me.

Next week this time Eleanor will be Mrs. Thomas O'Connor. They are such swell kids. I know they'll be happy. I'm really going now. Goodnight, my dearest for a little while.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 8, 1942—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

You should have the Congressional Medal of Honor pinned on you for spreading so much sunshine. Yes, your letter came today, the one concerning our honeymoon and I'm still smiling. You're crazy, but I love you just the same.

I'm so glad you enjoyed the box. I sent enough so you could have a party. I knew it wouldn't be any fun unless you could share it. I'm glad that it all was still edible.

Enclosed is a letter from Mother Müller. She tickles me. If I say something that she doesn't exactly approve of, she very politely changes the subject. I think I was telling her about something I had read in the America magazine [still published today by the Jesuits]. She said I shouldn't read magazine stories, and too, that I shouldn't dream. That's the only thing I've disagreed with, but I didn't tell her. So long as they are nice dreams, what harm can they do? Same old argument.

I spent a very quiet holiday at home. I slept until 12 o'clock, something that I haven't done in months, then helped around the house and went to see Mother Müller, topping the evening off by seeing "Wake Island." What a picture, based on the actual records sent out by the CO during the siege. They had the Marine recruiting officer in the lobby all week, taking enlistments, but they wouldn't take girls. That picture was enough to make you want to get a gun and start out.

I'm having trouble with Mom now. She wants to join the WAAC as a cook. They've sent out a call that they are short of cooks. She claims she's going down in the morning.

We're having super weather, good old Asheville weather, not cold and not hot. We only have two of our summer guests now. Three left today to go back to Florida.



I love your dreams. They coincide with mine. We've practically been around the world and back again. I've never been to Florida, Bermuda or the New England states, or to the Adirondacks. We'll have to put all the names in a hat and draw... that will be fun. All I have to have is an inkling that you are on the way and I'll be waiting at your disembarkation point and then I'll start tagging along. I know that the longer you are away the more of a foundation we'll have, but I'd lots rather have that honeymoon in a two by four somewhere, even Jersey City. I can pack all my things in a very short time. All your ideas appeal to me.

Did I send you pineapple? It's been so long since I sent the box, I've forgotten almost what was in it.

This is to be a 50-50 proposition. Don't you care what our young ones are named? Leaving it up to me, they are liable to get almost any kind of a name. The above goes for everything, too. I have some pretty strong arguments on that point, except that it's more than a 50-50 partnership.

Didn't I retract my statement about H.V.K.? I meant to, if I didn't. The man was one of those laborers sent over to work in the shipyards. I can imagine what a laugh you must have had. I'm glad you didn't take it seriously. Please accept my apologies.

I've been having a time going over my clothes. I'm so glad practically everything is wool, to go back home this winter. We are so used to mild winters. I'm looking forward to ice skating this winter if I have time. It's been so long ago that I'll probably have to learn all over again. I remember the last winter that I was up there. I almost learned to ski. Of course, I spent most of the time you know where, but I did manage to make a couple of three-point landings.

How I love your letters. How do you do it...write such swell ones... but I remember a long way back you told me. I'm still waiting for a copy of *Stars and Stripes*. Of course, I want one with your John Hancock signed to the copy.

Signing off for tonight, darling. This is the night to wash my hair and it's already almost too late. Goodnight for now. Remember how much I love you. Your plans excited me so much today that I did two days' work in one and I'm not at all sure what I did, since I was sitting right up on a pink cloud. I was going, wasn't I?

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 12, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

It has been just a week since I was able to keep our date but this is Saturday night and I couldn't let this one go by. More of my free time during the past week has been taken up with correspondence to those I've been neglecting. There were quite a few of them, too. Meanwhile, your "bits of heaven" dated Aug. 26 and 31 arrived.

Your selection of the Doyles' anniversary gift was perfect. I mentioned that in a previous letter. Too, the silver for El and Tom could not have been better. If these were different times we could have

been more extravagant with Dot and Al but we have to save our pennies, too. My wedding gift to them consisted of a pair of end tables for the living room. Rather expensive but I could afford it at the time. So, I'm expecting you to be thrifty with our savings. The children are going to need shoes some day.

You said you were proud to handle my savings. They are not mine, but ours. I understand you aren't able to put away as much as I can. I wouldn't want you to. I shouldn't be happy unless I knew you were doing all the things you wanted and enjoying them.

I may be absent-minded in regards to the enclosures but it isn't a blonde that is causing it. You are all the blondes, brunettes and redheads I'm even slightly interested in.

Tell me of your brother's visit. I wouldn't worry about him and his girlfriends. I went to my first formal when I was 17!

Billee, you said you would be grateful to me for the rest of your life because you might still be drifting aimlessly instead of looking ahead. My thoughts are these: you would have gone ahead with your instructions without me because God would have given you the grace, sooner or later. However, if I aided in it in any way then it is me who will be grateful. Besides, I'll ever be thankful for getting the opportunity of loving you.

Let me hear about the fashion show. You didn't fall, did you?

There is mention in your letter of sending the "boss" a statement of expenses. Well, in that case you would have to send it to yourself. I won't need any. Just let me know how much is there from time to time so I won't be overdrawing our account. Christmas will be here soon and we'll have to do some shopping for that. As it is, I won't be sending any cash to you until I get October's pay. With the deduction of the bond, I'll draw about 8 1/2 pounds per month (\$34.00). I have 10 pounds now and will need the 8 1/2 from Sept. for my furlough, if I get it.

Still, I'm not going to be much of a Santa Claus this year. We will remember our parents first and consider the others afterward, yes? Very inexpensive gifts from my end could go to Father John, El and Tom, Betty, Eddie, Dot and Al, the Daly and the Kenny babies. They will understand. Why, last Christmas I sent aprons to Dot, Marty and Berta from Spartanburg. That's how much of a shopper I am. With all this work piling up, aren't you a bit sorry you went to the "Y" on Jan. 17? I'm saying that with a smile.

Your idea of the safety deposit box is fine, darling.

I hadn't heard of the WAAC coming over here. But I did see American nurses recently, the first I had seen over here.

Enclosed is the one picture I took with another fellow's camera quite a while ago. The ones taken with my camera are now being developed. Will you have a dozen reprints made of this negative and send them to me? We can't have more than one print made over here. You can send one of the prints to Mom, another to Dot and the remaining 10 to me. The other fellows in the picture would like some.



*HQ Platoon; Co. H.; 135th Inf.: Back l-r: Charles Kiley; Stan Marcziuski; Ray Von Felot; Ev Dreyer; Bob Paulus; Front l-r: Elvy Collette; Russ Gooden; Jerry Pieper; Dave Kaster.
Northern Ireland, August 1942.*

Notice the G.I. haircut I'm wearing. On the right is Bob Paulus, who went with me to Belfast and who will be with me on furlough.

In the letter of the 31st, you said there were times when you were a little rebellious when you don't hear from me for awhile. I wish I could put my arms around you and reassure you. But under the present handicap, I can only say...

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

Love to Mother and the women.

September 12, 1942—Asheville

Evening darling,

This is really a date. Your letter of August 31 came in this morning's mail. Was I pleased!

As usual, I'm tucked in for the night and very sleepy and tired. Sleepy because of the bottle of beer Mom and I just had and tired because I've really been put through the mill today. We haven't had a full office force in so long; hence, I'm still filling in. I'm going to get me a nice quiet job on an assembly line where I only have to worry about doing my job.

I enjoyed your letter so much in spite of the interference of our indispensable friend, the censor. You left me in the middle of a blackout on your weekend trip and I'm still wondering... guess I will be for the duration. Your weekend sounded like fun. I can't wait to hear about all of it. I've said this before... how much I envy your experiences. Speaking of "Gone With The Wind," I made my fourth trip in May and enjoyed it just as much as the first time.

I have another Sporting News I'm sending along with this. There is an article by your friend Ray Roche. Made me feel good to see it and say to myself, "That's my sweetheart's boss." There is talk of holding a lottery for the World Series. Some man has cooked up a scheme by which the government would profit by six billion dollars. Sounds pretty good to me. They do it in Ireland and Cuba and a great deal of our money goes there for those lotteries, so I guess we can do it here.

If you appreciate my letters and enjoy the way they are written, give yourself credit because you must be my inspiration. Since I've been writing to you, I find that it comes so much easier. Perhaps it's because we have so much in common and you understand so many little things.

Yes, I enjoyed meeting Ruth [Rommel]. There was something about her straightforwardness and freshness that I liked. Even the little bit that I was in her company, I sensed it. I've always had a liking for people that are themselves and don't put up a front, if you know what I mean. Those are usually trying to hide the kind of person they are and I don't go for that. As for being in doubt, I don't know the meaning of the word now. Not that I'm taking everything for granted, either... heaven forbid. You, together with Dot and your mom and now Ruth, but mostly you, have erased all meaning of the word.

I wonder where El and Tom are tonight. I'd give a lot if we could change places with them, but all in good time. Since I couldn't be there, I went to Mass this morning for them and I said a prayer or two for us. I sent them a telegram this morning to be delivered after the wedding. I signed both our names because I was afraid you might not have the opportunity or be handy to a cable office. I started to call last night, but thought they'd probably all be very busy.

I had a long letter from Theda. Jack has been made O.F.C., did you know? She is getting another transfer, to Greensboro this time. Seems that the housing situation in Winston-Salem is quite a problem and spoiling her job. She plans to return to Asheville for a few weeks before taking her new job. I'll be so glad to see her again.

Mom and I are planning your Christmas/birthday box. This time it will be a surprise, but you can rest assured there'll be no extra non-essential trimmings. The Post Office has issued an order that the boxes should be mailed by October 1 to assure delivery on time.

News of the camera was very welcome. I'm praying for sunshine now so we'll have the pictures. I'm glad to hear you all are being so well taken care of over there by the Red Cross on your weekends. I know it must give you a secure feeling to know there is a place you'll be welcome.

The girls and the rest of the force in the shipping department were all glad to hear that you received the boxes in such good time and that everything was still edible. They have been asking all along if you received it. We had quite a time packing it and all the suggestions and kibitzing we received was really something.

I'm beginning to make preparations to wind up my affairs here so I can plan to leave by the fifteenth of next month. I'll send you a cable, if I can, so the addresses won't get confused. It will really take a miracle to solve our problem another way so I do feel that I'm going this time. This will be the third time I've resigned, so maybe it will work this time. My address when I get up there will be c/o Mrs. Fred Gilbert, 1215 Rodman Ave, N.E., Massillon, Ohio.

We will stay with my aunt. She has a large house and is there by herself practically all the time since my uncle travels a lot. Talk about baseball fans... those two are. My uncle is an old ball player from a long way back. He played on one of the first professional teams. You'll like them... my favorite aunt and uncle.

I love the service Uncle Sam is giving us. He is to be congratulated... 12 days for a letter. I think it's wonderful.

This is getting awfully long, and you've practically put me to sleep. All I have to do now is turn the light out and say my prayers and I'll be fast asleep. Goodnight, for a little while. I'll be back soon. I love you so much, especially on Saturday nights.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

I'm glad you liked the prayer book. I thought if you already had a small one you could just tear out my "dedication" page and pass it on. I'm glad you didn't have to so that I know you have mine now. Sounds kind of muddled, but you know what I mean. More love, B.

September 17, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

I'm sending a cable on our eighth anniversary, besides keeping a very special date by mail. Your letters of Sept. 4, 6 and 9 arrived at the same time, on the 15th. Mother Müller's sweet note was enclosed.

In my last letter I believe I failed to acknowledge the stamps you sent, so I'll do so now.

Judging by your letters, you and Mother may be leaving Asheville soon. When you are certain, let me know the new address as soon as you can. I know how much Mother will dislike leaving Asheville but she must know what is best. And... she wants to join the WAAC, does she? I don't know what to say about that.

Father John wrote the other day, telling me he was having difficulty trying to decide whether or not he should enlist as a chaplain. Mother told him to use his own judgment but he is worrying about the effect it would have on her, with three sons in the service. I mustn't forget to tell him he resembles someone you saw on the screen. He'll love that!

My letters aren't the type that make you unsteady on your feet, are they? Your unfortunate stumble on the curbing is a bad sign. We'll have to have the street department remove that obstacle.

I was sorry to hear Marguerite's mother is nearing the end. I wrote to her not long ago. I don't believe she was able to get to J.C. for the wedding. [NOTE: according to Billee, she did.]

Billee, your mention of my correspondence with the youngster in J.C. reminded me to write again. I've sent only one letter to him. There haven't been any from him which is the chief reason why I had forgotten him. You do remember those little things, don't you? For example, you recalled me with my arms clasped behind my head. And, our little "tagging along" incident. You did look so strange when you said that in the Vanderbilt lobby. I believe your words were, "I'm not just tagging along, am I?" Wonder what Jimmy Kirk is doing now. I haven't heard from him in a long time.

One of the fellows in the picture I sent, Johnny Quentin, left us the other day to go to the company with which Jack Donnell and Ben Wooley are attached. A letter from Johnny Joyce came yesterday. He is at Maxwell Field for pre-flight training and enjoying it. He wanted to be remembered to you.

A package from Dottie and Al contained a camera and two rolls of film reached me the other day. I'll not waste the film. If my furlough goes through I'll have it to use in London.

The trouble in Belfast did not concern us. It happened a week or so after I had been there. The city was put "off limits" for U.S. forces until the storm had passed over.

I can't understand why Mother Müller said it wasn't good to dream. Certainly there isn't anything wrong with ours. I couldn't force myself to stop dreaming of you. You are on my mind all day, so it is only natural you would be there at night. Yes, I love you more than ever. My thoughts are filled with our "2x4," the ball team, our memories... and of you. They will never disappear.

You said something of the "perfect setting" for our engagement in the Hawaiian Room. Billee, it could have happened any time or any place after Jan. 17. I had it in my heart. But, not until April 4 did it come to my lips. I wanted to say it outside the Inn. A million things were racing through my mind then. I remember thinking it wouldn't be fair to you until I found out where I would be a few weeks from then. I doubt if I ever would have asked you the "big question" if you had not come to New York. I wanted to be holding your hands and looking at you when it happened. As you say, everything will be 50-50 with us. but, I just know I'll give in to anything you say.

About the *Stars and Stripes*... the latest issue is the one to send and it will be on its way tomorrow. My story didn't get a byline and it was cut a bit because it ran long. But, you may enjoy it.

Didn't you say something about sending stationery? It will be useful now. I'm almost out of the last box but will use other paper until it arrives. Since I didn't get mail today, I'm going to read some of your letters again. The last time I did that there were 41 of them, each one better than the other. 'Bye for awhile. Love to Mother.

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

*September 17, 1942 [Postcard of
Kimo Theatre, Albuquerque]*

Having a swell time out here.
Have been through the state
of Arizona and now in New
Mexico.

Eddie.



September 17, 1942—Asheville

Evening darling,

This is such a gorgeous night, like summertime, besides being our eighth anniversary. I just had to write. How are you tonight? Not too tired, I hope. You're probably fast asleep right this minute since there is some six hours difference. Soon it will be time for reveille. I'm in a little early tonight, but I want to go to church in the morning.

Tomorrow night I've been invited to spend the night with a girlfriend. She works with me. They have just moved into a new home in the Grove Park section and she was been wanting to show off her new home for some time. This is the first time in her life that she has ever moved. I've lost track of all the times I have. This is the longest I've ever stayed in one place... seven years this month!

So here I am, fortified with some very good beer and crackers. A toast to us, darling. I had to celebrate some way...

Haven't heard anything from the family yet. Guess they are recovering from the wedding and awaiting the return of the honeymooners.

They pulled another sale on us today. Omigosh, what a day, especially to wear high heels. I ran my legs off. After five years, I should know better.

We have our first football game tomorrow night so fall is officially ushered in. I'll really see some good football at home. You have, no doubt, heard of Massillon's famous high school team. Nothing but champions turned out. Coach Brown's team... he's now Ohio State's football coach. The town built a stadium to take care of the population of the town—30,000.

The Cardinals are ahead tonight. Wonder what the outcome will be. I'd love to see a World Series game. I sure would like to see Billy Southworth make it this time. He was awfully nice to me once.

We're having our bond rally tonight. Jane Wyman and John Payne are officiating. Up to the time of the rally tonight, they had sold \$457,000. I think that's marvelous. It's more than the last time and all the figures aren't in.

The other night, Tuesday, I went to St. Genevieve's. It was the first day of school and all the boarding students had arrived... sounded like nothing less than a bee hive. We had our lesson in the garden. What a contrast... only the birds to bother us. Mother Müller didn't know until the other day that you had been to St. Genevieve's. She was so pleased. I wish



John Payne and Jane Wyman, 1939 publicity still.

you could see it now with all the flower beds in bloom. They have a linden tree that is a picture in itself. I hope we can send our Elizabeth there, if only for a year.

Last night on the radio I heard cheers from the camp program, from Camp Forest in Tennessee. Their favorite song is our “Piano Concerto” and they used it as a background through the whole program. One fellow had been an instructor at the Peabody Institute and he played it on the piano, the original music as it should be played. He left me breathless. I rarely ever hear it played now, but it still thrills me, not so much the song but the memories it brings back.

I was sleepy before, but this beer has practically paralyzed me. I missed hearing from you today but tomorrow is another day and may bring something. I love you so much, not only today but always, so much more than eight months ago. My prayers and thoughts are with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 20, 1942

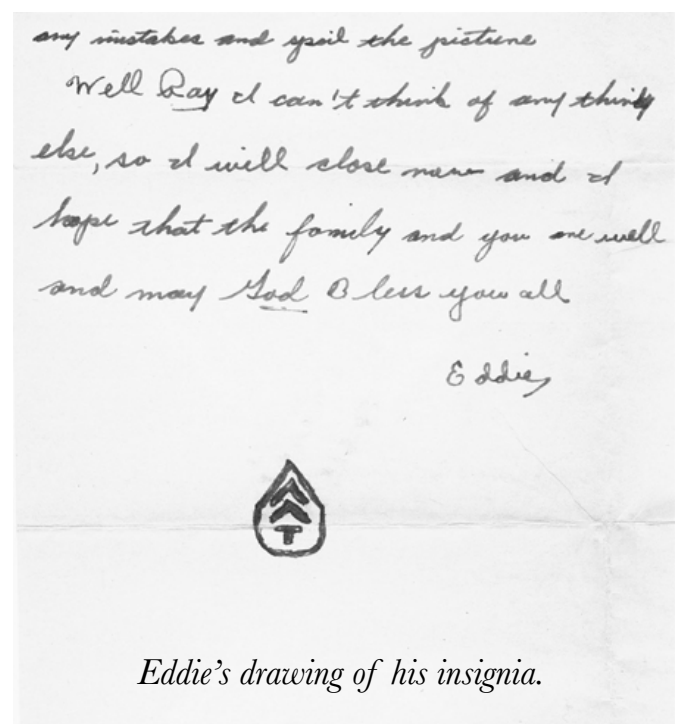
Dear Ray,

I was glad to hear that the wedding went along good. I sure did wish I was there. I sure do hope the pictures come out all right. I'd like to see them when I get back there.

About that insurance, Ray... I have decided and I am going to take it out when I get back to camp. You see, there is no means of making any policies out here [Eddie was still training in the desert] and there is nobody in charge of that, so when I get back to camp I will take it out. I thought I told you in the last letter I sent you. I know I told Mom about Lenny Sullivan. I do see him once in a while. He and his brother Jack are in the same regiment but in a different battalion. You also know Eddie Ward... he is connected with the medical company of the regiment. I see him once in a while and we get together and discuss about home and if there is any chance there. He's a pretty regular fellow. I didn't know him very good when I was home but now we're pretty good friends. I don't know if Simonetti [?] told you or not but Lenny got married out here. Who he married I don't know.

Out here on the desert on maneuvers, Ray, one just can't go to mass or confession. In fact, since we've been out here we only had two Sunday masses in almost two months and I haven't heard where anyone could go to confession. The priest never can make a time or place because we never stay in one place more than one or two days, so you can see, Ray, it's not so easy. The priest told us not to worry if we miss Sunday mass out here because we are excused.

I bet, Ray, the pictures you drew must be pretty good, because you did some good work before. You said you put corporal stripes on the picture. I hope you put a T on the bottom of it. At the end of this letter I will try and show the



chevron I wear, so you won't make any mistake and spoil the picture.

I can't think of anything else, so I will close now and I hope that the family and you are well and may God bless you all.

Eddie

September 20, 1942—Asheville

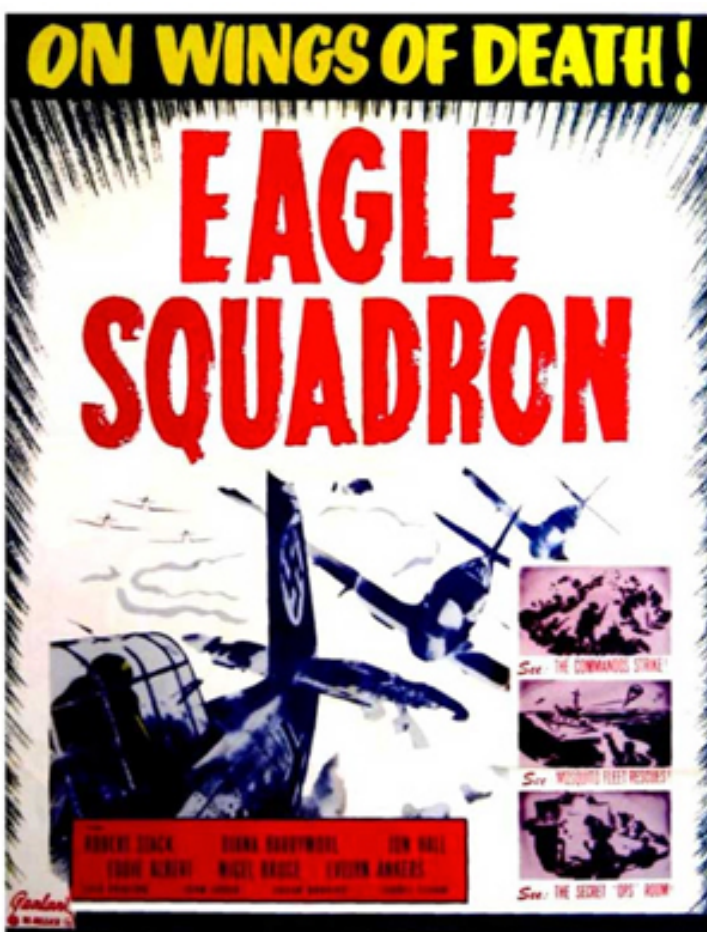
My dearest,

Another Sunday almost gone... such a quiet day. I went to 11:00 Mass and we had dinner for only four today. Mom went to bed and I washed the dishes, and spent the rest of the afternoon mangling [put clothing through a mangle to get the water out] sheets and towels with the radio for company and you in my thoughts. Since we don't have a maid, I try to save Mom as much as I can.

I had a long letter from Father John Friday, all about the wedding and you. I enjoyed it so much. Marguerite went to the wedding, he told me in his letter. I'm so glad.

I am to be received October 4... our sixth anniversary. Six whole months as the future Mrs. Kiley. What a warm feeling it gives me just to be able to write it. How lucky I am.

I had a quiet but pleasant time with my girlfriend Friday night. Their new home is lovely, with everything exactly where you would want it. Their kitchen is simple and practical. I still like yours better, but this is nice. We spent a quiet evening knitting and talking. They are a Jewish family and very nice. I've known her for five years. At one time they were very well off. He had his own business. They were most considerate and had fish for me.



We have a very cool wind tonight, in fact, almost cold. There must be a storm brewing somewhere.

I saw such a good movie last night after I came from St. Genevieve's, the reason for no Saturday night letter. I didn't feel like going home when I got to the square and I was in time for the last show. Oh, the movie: "Eagle Squadron," the story of the American squadron in the R.A.F. Robert Stack played the role of an American pilot who fell in love with a WAAF, and kept calling her "honeychile" all through the story. Of course, you know what I remembered.

I've been busy trying to fix my clothes, my winter ones, in preparation for going away. I've lost about seven pounds since last spring and everything I have has to be taken in. I'd just as soon start from scratch and make something new.

I'm feeling swell. Work agrees with me, I guess. Mom is well, but a little let down at not having as many people in the house. She's anxious to leave now for home. I hope she doesn't back out on me. I really want her to go regardless of business matters here. She needs the change.



I heard a new song today. A Negro gunner made it up; it sounds like a spiritual, called "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." It's really something. [In fact, Frank Loesser wrote the song; the phrase was first uttered by a Navy chaplain during the Pearl Harbor attack, who was encouraging the gunners on his ship, but not shooting the guns himself.]

As yet, Theda hasn't come back to Asheville that I know of. I owe her a letter.

I'm beginning to realize what a really swell person your brother is. Of course, even with the little I saw of him, together with what you told me of him, I realized how much he meant to you. I'm so glad that I know him and can write to him.

There are four pages of pictures in this week's Life about what a Yank should know about the English people and their language... their expressions, etc., and how they compare with ours. It's very interesting and amusing, too, with some of the mistakes our boys make.

I wanted to be with you a little while tonight. There isn't much news as you can probably tell by now. I love you so much, and more every day if that is possible. This is a special kiss goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 21, 1942—Northern Ireland

Evening angel,

Cuddle up a wee bit closer, because yesterday was the last day of summer and there is a definite chill in the air. Better put another log on the fire if we want to be comfortable in "our corner" at 412 Merrimon Ave.

Your most recent bit of heaven of Sept. 12 must have established a record for delivery since it reached me six days later.

I was told the other day [my furlough] had been approved by HQ. I may have mentioned that in my last letter.

Now, about your letter:

It was so good, knowing you were keeping our Saturday night date on the 12th with me. reading the letter, I could close my eyes and see you “tucked in.” Honey, do you wear a blue ribbon in your hair? Seems to me you would.

You mentioned Ray Roche’s article in the Sporting News. I mentioned it in my letter to him yesterday. In regards to the lottery you mentioned, it sounds like a good idea. Anything to raise money for the government would be considered a good idea.

You were thoughtful, as usual, in sending the wire to El and Tom. I was able to get off a cable from this end but it must have arrived a few days ahead of time.

I didn’t know Jack Donnell had received a rating because I haven’t met him in quite a while, as I mentioned in my last letter.

You have me guessing about the surprise package for my birthday/Christmas gift. I have one for you, too, if everything works out the way I hope it will.

I have your new address safely put away and will continue to send the mail to Ivey’s until I get your cable. I’m sorry you have to leave Asheville. Your uncle will be one man I will definitely like... an old ball player.

The Collier short story was super! It had a peculiar style of its own and I’ve passed it on to our officers since some of them may have had the same experience.

In regards to your footnote: if you had said “No,” the first time I doubt if I would ever have had the nerve to ask you again. I suppose every girl has to right to refuse three times but I don’t know why she would, do you?

In closing, I want to ask you if you would care to pay another visit to J.C. and North Arlington before you settle down in Massillon. I mean, after you were there you may want to take a small trip. Dot has mentioned it to me again, saying she would love to have you with her for awhile. Says she has so much room she doesn’t know what to do with it. I know Mom would love to have you but if you stayed with Dot, she would understand... young people.

Too, I insist you use our money, or what is left of it, to offset the expense of the trip, if you decide to go. Still, perhaps it wouldn’t be right for you to rush off after just getting to Massillon. Since Dot mentioned it to me, I wanted to see how you felt about it.

I’d better go to bed now, but before I do, I’ll “throw a kiss in the ocean” to you.

Love to Mother and all.

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

September 24, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

At long last... something or other seems to have prevented me from writing all week.

Yes, I received your cable Monday and your letter of September 5, and was I pleased. The cable carried a different address, in fact, it said “Sans Origine.” Heretofore, they have had “Great Britain.” Makes me wonder, but that’s all I can do.

I enjoyed your letter so much... bringing such good news. A furlough and interviewing such notables! Al Jolson just arrived in New York today.

Your furlough sounds exciting. Suppose I meet you there at, let’s say, Westminster Abbey, and we’ll see the sights. I’d love to see the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and take a boat trip on the Thames; I’d love to go to all the little out-of-the-way places that people don’t ordinarily visit. I realize, too, that it will be a changed London and not the London we’ve been reading about for years. Still it will be a trip for our memory book in spite of the changes. I’m so happy for you, that you are going to be able to have a rest and change.

I couldn’t help but shout when I read about your friend having to report to Camp Croft! Is it possible? Could there be a chance, or didn’t you ever sign up? Or well, all things come to him who waits long enough. I can imagine how jubilant his wife must be.

The Home Guard is marching up Merrimon. I just watched them go by and couldn’t help but see that harvest moon peeking over the top of the mountain. I’m going to miss that when I go home. Yes, I gave my resignation today to the general manager. We are still without a boss. He said, of course, that he was sorry I had to leave, but if I didn’t like it when I got to Ohio to write him a letter and I could have a job any time I wanted it. That made me feel good, since I will have to come back with Mom when she decides to return, unless by that time you are within speaking distance.

I’ve read and reread your letter and cable all week. I’ll have to admit I was afraid at first you might have forgotten our anniversary, but then I knew you couldn’t.

I think I know why you didn’t feel elated over your interviews, or excited might I say. If that had happened under normal circumstances, it would have been different, but circumstances change situations and we are all in this together. I can’t explain very well, but I think you understand. What you are doing is so much more important than what they are doing. Oh yes, I know they are doing their part too, but in a different way. Don’t worry about your mental attitude towards the finer things going blasé because it isn’t. That has nothing to do with it.

I hope the pictures turned out ok and also I hope you remembered to let someone else take a few of Corporal Kiley for the folks back home, with the stripes, please.

About Al Jolson, you really owe him a lot. It’s a long story but I’ll cut it short. When my mom and dad were courting, he was quite a popular figure on the stage. They were both living in Philadelphia at the time and, of course, used to take in



Al Jolson, circa 1916, when Elizabeth and William Gray were courting.

vaudeville quite often. Mom had to be home early this one night, and, when they tried to leave, Jolson had the spotlight turned on them and asked them, “What’s the hurry?” They couldn’t think of an excuse, being very young, so he had the orchestra play the wedding march and, since they had front row seats, they had to march the length of the theater to that tune. Were they embarrassed! Dad, fortified by that experience, popped the question and so they were married!

I just finished counting. 16 letters and 8 cablegrams. What in the world are you going to do with 46 letters? You’ll have to keep them and use them for fuel this winter. I had no idea there were that many. I think Uncle Sam does swell on the mail service.

I’m glad the Doyles liked their present. Any more news about the newest addition? I haven’t heard in a while.

Do you think 46 letters stand for duty? I love writing you, though sometimes I want to write and I can’t seem to find anything to write about.

Still no shamrock. That censor officer must have an aversion to them or something.

I know you haven’t said much about my instructions, but I know you were thinking of me and that’s all that’s necessary. Do you mind my being grateful, because I can’t help but be. You’ll never know the strength and peace of mind I’ve known. I can hardly wait until the fourth because that day will bring me so much closer to you and I’ll no longer be an outsider. At first the step was taken for you, but now not anyone or anything could make me change my mind. As you say, words are inadequate.

I can hardly wait to get the story from the *Stars and Stripes*. Hurry it up! [Note: we could not find the Al Jolson story in the *Stars and Stripes*.]

We have been having some real fall weather, making it necessary to light the furnace, mostly for Mrs. Davidson’s benefit: the kind of weather that makes you want to stay in bed five minutes longer because it’s so nice and warm.

I hate to leave, but I have to. I have some things that have to be done before turning in. Oh, by the way, did you see the story I marked in the Collier for you to read? Mom read it and then I did. She said, “Be sure and send it to Charles,” so I did. Oh, yes... I was leaving. No enclosure... my lipstick is all downstairs, but it’s here just the same. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

September 26, 1942—Asheville

Hello darling,

Do you mind my being here for a little while? It’s Saturday night again and we should be having our date. We’re having a nice quiet rain and the cars are almost playing a tune when they go by. We had such a vivid sunset last night that I knew we must be in for a change of weather and sure enough, that’s what happened. Our beautiful fall moon is in tonight... nothing but rain.

Excuse the paper, but this is the last resort. I'm all out with the exception of about three sheets that I'm saving to write Father John on. Please don't feel slighted... I really thought I had more.

I've been having a good time at the office, cleaning out my desk and files and changing them all for the year. Everything is in apple-pie order and I might add that that wasn't the way it was turned over to me. I always did like to clean house. The drawers and closets were always turned over to me. I wish my own personal things were in as good order as those at the office. Now I have to buy a trunk, something I've never owned before, but it will come into good use after the duration.

I heard today that the Grove Park Inn and the Battery Park Hotel are going to be used by the government to house convalescent soldiers that are well enough to leave the new government hospital that will be completed in a few weeks.

We had a letter from my aunt and they are all anxiously awaiting our arrival. Our room is all ready to move into. It will be good being with them again, and seeing the little ones.

I have a feeling Marguerite will be here next week for the fourth to be with me. I hope I'm right. She would surprise me, of course.

You know I was thinking the other day about where we might go on our honeymoon and decided that I wanted to be surprised so don't tell me... promise?

I am studying now for my baptism and confession next Sunday. The latter is bothering me a little, which is only natural. I guess because I've never done anything like that before. I've done so many things wrong in my lifetime that I'm having a time sorting them all and filing them in their proper places if that makes sense. I'm happy the day is so near.

You're here in front of me and I'm just noticing here under the light that your medals need polishing. I'll do it before I put you in the trunk for the ride to Ohio.

You'll be getting ready for your trip to London, I expect, if you go on the 29th. I hope you remember a picture this time and please remember to take your hat off.

I stopped in to see Evelyn for a minute last night, returning from St. Genevieve, and she asked about you and the others. Her brother has just been inducted.

Mom is feeling well and anxious to leave, but I'm afraid every day now she will change her mind, especially since I've resigned. I do so want her to go if only for the winter. She definitely needs the change.

I've rambled quite enough for one evening. This is such a newsy letter... ha. I wish I could put the stamp on me and climb in the mailbox instead... what a wish. Goodnight, my love... see you soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee.

Mailed a Sporting News yesterday.

September 27, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

I hope my inability to write hasn't worried you. The truth is, I'm going to cut down on my correspondence for the time being, of necessity rather than of choice. My letters to you and those going home will be written as often as possible but the others will have to wait until I can devote more time to them. You will probably be able to tell from my writing that I'm not in a very comfortable position. But, if I have to stand on my head and try to write in the dark I'll continue my visits to you. Since I haven't written lately, I made arrangements to have cables sent last night to you and 195 [Lexington Ave., the address of Charles' Jersey City home].

While I'm on the mail subject I might say I've received only one letter and a few Journals in the past week. The letter was a V-mail from Ruth Totten. I hope the next week brings better results. The situation is the same with the other fellows, so I can't complain.

I wasn't able to go to confession last night, but I prayed for you at Mass this morning. It was the first time I attended Mass in this particular church and it made me wish I had a dollar for all the different places in which I've heard Mass over here.

The weather is getting cold. We had a few snowflakes the other day. I doubt if it is as cold in the States.

I inquired about my impending furlough last night and was informed that everything was in order. But, instead of going on the 29th, which is next Tuesday, or on Oct. 6, it appears we will have to wait for a date suitable to division HQ.

If I had a simple wish come true, it would bring a letter from you today. But I'll have to wait until tomorrow, at least, since there isn't any mail delivery on Sunday. Yes, I'd like one of those eight-page specials, like the last one you sent.

By this letter, you know I missed our date last night. And, like you said, "I love you so much, especially on Saturday nights." I'm making a promise right now that we will never have a dull Saturday night. There will always be something doing for "Billee and Brother" on Saturday. Just now I'd like to be on my way to Princeton, West Point, the Yale Bowl or one of the other fields to see a football game. The weather is just right for it. We're going to see lots of them, with dinner and a show afterward. I've done that so many times. Ruth Totten was good company at a football game.



Charles with Ruth Totten, 1940.

I haven't much more to say today. Forgive me if this is brief. Perhaps, in a day or so, I'll have something to talk about. Love to Mother.

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

September 29, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

What would I do without your thoughtfulness? Your cable arrived today with that same address... "Sans Origine." I missed my letter this week but tomorrow is another day.

I'm trying to get this in before our blackout begins. We are to have one sometime between 7 and 11. It's now 8:30. We really have blackouts here, too. The last was downright gruesome, so here we go again.

There is a change in my plans, or else I misunderstood. I am to be baptized and go to confession Saturday morning and receive my first communion Sunday. I'm getting off part of the day. There isn't much time now, and I can hardly wait as I've said before.



I saw the cutest movie Sunday, with Ray Milland and Ginger Rogers... "The Major and the Minor." She gets stranded in New York with not quite enough to go home to somewhere in Iowa so she dresses up very convincingly as a twelve-year-old and buys a half-fare ticket. Her adventures from there on are really something. I enjoyed it so much, but then I've always thought Ray Milland smooth.

I'm really believing that we are leaving. Now all I have to do is get Mom convinced. She says she's going, but I know she doesn't really believe it.

I'm enclosing a clipping about the Cardinals. I'm so happy for them and what I wouldn't give to see that opening game. Box seats are going for fifty per. That's one of our musts except that you might have to put a muzzle on me before the game's over because I get awfully excited.

I can hardly see after sitting in the dark for an hour. This was better than the last one. Mom was here to sit with me.

We had a long letter from our boss today. He is in Salt Lake City temporarily, minus 18 pounds and 5 inches off his waistline. He is a big man in his early 40s. The calisthenics accomplished what he's been trying to do for a long time. We sure would love to see him. I'm really going to miss the gang at the office and the old timers in the store. There have been so many changes in the past few years, but there are still enough of us old ones to be part of the store family, as they call us. The business is six

years old in the spring and I've been there five years as of the first of November, so I'm practically a fixture.

I haven't heard from Theda yet so I don't know whether she changed her plans or not. I'd like to see her before I leave.

I'll bet Bill Daly feels bad about the Dodgers losing. He is a Dodger fan, isn't he? I remember you telling me about how sore your ribs were after seeing a game with him.

We're listening to Bob Hope. He's back for the winter... crazy program. Do you get it short-waved over there?

I've rambled enough, darling, but I wanted to be with you. I'm wondering if you left for London today. I hope you have a simply super time for me, too.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

As always, my thoughts and prayers are with you. Received your postcard yesterday.

October 3, 1942—Northern Ireland

Evening sweetheart,

There were a million stars in the heavens last night and each one shone as brightly as my love for you. It was a night that certainly was not made for war; rather, it was a crescent-moonlit darkness that surely should have us together.

Don't mind if I feel a bit dreamy this afternoon. If you will pardon the expression, I am surrounded by one hell of an atmosphere for dreaming, but my thoughts of you make almost everything all right. Simply the hope of being near you one day is enough. Still, I go further and see us in our "2x4." I try to picture you wearing everything from an apron to the white evening gown you wore on our 4th of April, just six months ago tomorrow night. And, darling, you look so good in everything.

Billee, it appears as though I'll be leaving Tuesday, three days from now, on my furlough. That means I will be unable to send any mail for nine or ten days. I'll write in London, telling you just about everything I can, but I will have to wait until I rejoin my company before the letters are censored. By then, I may have received word you have moved back to Massillon. When that word comes, I will have your address changed for bond deliveries.

Inasmuch as the cost of the first bond was deducted from my salary the other day, you should be in receipt of it now. Too, it should be our down payment on the 2x4, or on the college tuition for Junior, Elizabeth, et al., whichever is needed first. Wonder how many bonds we will have before the last shot is fired?

I believe I'll have to ask your forgiveness and postpone one of the premature dates we made. The sable I promised to deliver on Christmas will have to wait, it seems. I won't forget it, though... cross my heart.

I was going to tell you how desperate the mail situation has become until a few moments ago, when the mail clerk opened the door of our “home” and handed me eight letters! Prior to today, I had received only the letter from Ruth and yours of Sept. 17. I am now in possession of all the news concerning El’s wedding and also of your latest “bit of heaven” of Sept. 21. Father John told me of Marguerite’s visit (and, I’ll have to thank her so much). And, there were letters from Mom, Betty, Ray Roche, the office, Ruth Rommel and the mother of a fellow over here.

My Mass and communion tomorrow will be for you, Billee. I couldn’t offer anything better. It will be one day that I would not want to share with you because it will be yours alone. When you said you were being received on Oct. 4, I felt so futile. I sent you a cable last night but it was for our anniversary. I wish I could at least kiss you tomorrow. Tell me all about it.

You said our Elizabeth might spend at least one year at St. Genevieve’s. Yes, she will. Perhaps more. [She did not.]

Too, you said, “How lucky I am,” in regards to the Mrs. Kiley-to-be. I’m going to teach you a lesson some day, about that inferiority complex. I know who is the fortunate one. Why, Ruth Rommel said in her letter today, “You wonder what you would have done if you didn’t meet Billee... since you knew she had been waiting somewhere for you. I thought, a few times, you had met THE one, but not until I saw you and Billee together did I realize how wrong I was before.” So, you see.

Father John used Eddie’s picture with which to model a piece of art. He didn’t say whether he used oils or not. Now, he wants me to have a photographer take my picture so he can do one of me. I had to laugh at that one. Still, I may find a photographer in London. Speaking of London reminds me that our bank deposit will suffer for a couple of months. Without being a spendthrift, I know I’ll spend over 20 pounds (\$80). With the bond and \$6.90 worth of insurance deducted each month I draw about \$35 each month. From that I have to buy canteen supplies, which leaves about \$25 a month to save. Can’t make much progress on that, can we? Still, we can try. Meanwhile, I’ll do what I can and try to send enough to you to cover the Christmas gifts.

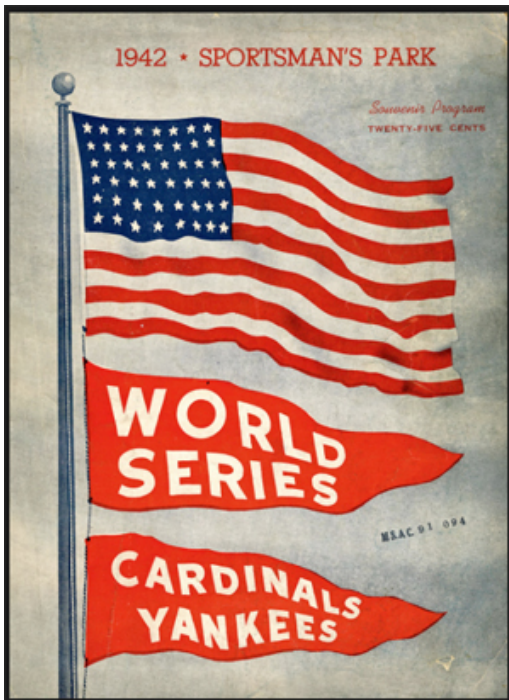
By the way, I hope you can make that visit up No’th. Ruth R. told me of the celebration they had on the Kennys’ anniversary. Also told me another girl in the Bridge Club, Grace Reichard, was expecting a daughter (or, a second son) around Christmas. I’ll have to write to her.

That is one of the many letters I have to get off over the weekend, or wait until I get back from furlough.

Your mention of the “Piano Concerto” reminded me that I haven’t heard it more than once or twice since I’ve been here. A fellow had a record of Freddy Martin’s version but it was broken.

I’m wondering today how the World Series is coming. This time a year ago I was running back and forth between Yankee Stadium and Ebbetts Field. I remember I took Bill Daly to the series’ opener in the Stadium. It was the first series game he had ever seen. Later we went to the Commodore Hotel for the dinner set forth by the Baseball Writers Association. He enjoyed it so much.

I’d like to root for Billy Southworth but I’m afraid you are stuck with a dyed-in-the-wool Yankee fan. Tell you what... you take the Cards and I’ll have the Yanks in the series. The winner, between us, can



have anything he or she wants on the day of the first series' game we are together... bet? I haven't heard the results of any series games yet. A resume was to be broadcast every night over BBC at 10:15 but I haven't been able to get near a radio.

I'm going to kiss you good-bye, angel. If I am to leave Tuesday, I'll send you a note to that effect.

Love to Mother and my best regards to the rest.

All my love and kisses, only forever.

PS: This is the last of your stationery. I'll be trying some GI for awhile.

October 4, 1942—Asheville

My darling,

This is really a date in more ways than one. Most important, it marks a new anniversary for me... my first communion and of course our six month anniversary. Six months ago tonight we were together... and again this morning.

I wish I could express my feelings, but I can't. I'll tell you what happened. I had yesterday morning off and met Evelyn and Mother Müller accompanied by another nun. I was quite calm except for the butterflies raging in my tummy as they always do on important occasions in my life. I remember I felt the same way that Saturday afternoon I stood at the top of the stairs in Penn Station and watched you bounding up to take me in your arms, and again over the table in the Hawaiian Room when you asked me the most important questions in my life... I almost forgot our first moment on Grove Park Terrace.

Back to Saturday morning... everyone was so kind and considerate. The whole ceremony took nearly an hour. Of course, I went to my first confession after baptism and that took more time. I'm so glad that it's all over and now I'm really one of you and not an outsider anymore.

My first communion was for you and Mom. I couldn't help but remember as I knelt in front of the altar the Sunday morning that I knelt between you and Marguerite and Father Bour blessed our throats... remember?

Marguerite sent me a lovely leather-bound Sunday missal. Evelyn gave me a tiny sterling Rosary book with the mysteries and the days to say them engraved inside. It has pages like a book, about an inch by three-quarters of an inch. A friend of Marguerite's in New York that took me to lunch while I was there sent me a St. Anne medal that came from the shrine in Canada, with the sweetest letter.

Everyone has been simply wonderful. My heart is so full, there just aren't words, but I know you understand.

Mother Müller told me that when I received my first communion that I would be united with you and she's so right. I never felt closer than this morning since you've been away. I hoped that you were doing the same somewhere.

Father John wrote me the sweetest note that I received Friday, telling me how pleased and happy he was for me and that his Mass Sunday... today... would be for me.

I had a letter from Dot, but no mention of the heir or heiress. She said how pleased Al was to be our best man and spoke of some apartments nearby so we could be neighbors. I'd like that, but just to start out in. I want to live in a house. Apartments have always seemed so temporary to me.

There was a school friend of Warren's here a little bit ago inquiring for him. He's in the Air Corps and just eighteen. We didn't know him, he's grown up so. Mom is getting anxious to go now so she can be with Warren. He is the only boy and the baby, you know.

I forgot to tell you... all the nuns at St. Genevieve's are so interested in you, especially since you wrote to Mother Müller. She read it aloud during one of their recreation periods. They are all praying for us. They have been so lovely to me, I'll never forget. I'm almost sorry the instructions are over, but they said I must feel free to come any time.



Nuns at St. Genevieve's School, circa 1940.

Yesterday and today have been perfect... such gorgeous days... real Indian summer.

The trees are just beginning to turn because of a light frost we had the other evening. How I'm going to miss my mountains.

Hank Gornicki and his wife and child were in the other day to spend the night on their way to her home. He had a fairly good season after they took him out of the dog house. Little Elaine remembered both Mom and I. She has grown so.

The Yanks and Cardinals are even today. I want the Cards to win so much. They have it coming to them. By the time you get this it will all be settled. How I'd love to see just one game. I didn't even get to listen to it on the radio today.

It suddenly dawned on me a few days ago that the last cable was sent for the 27th, the first date for my reception, but I'll pretend that it came yesterday. Now it means even more.

I have several other letters to write tonight, my darling, so I'll close for now, but I'll be back soon.

I couldn't love you any more than I do today. Six whole months as the future Mrs. Kiley. Take care of yourself, my dear.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 7, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

Couldn't go to sleep tonight without being with you a little bit.

How are you? Well, I hope. I haven't heard now except for the two cablegrams in two weeks, so I presume you must be where you can't write.

I had a letter from Theda telling me she hadn't heard from Jack in the same length of time, but that a letter came Saturday. I don't guess I'll get to see her before I leave.

I went by today and picked up my Baptismal Certificate and talked to Father Bour a bit. He is very nice, and told me he had lost 127 families from his parish; they moved to defense areas and forty-some boys went into the army.

I received a long letter from your mom Monday with snapshots of the wedding and the letter was about the wedding. Now they are all talking about ours. I would like to have one like Eleanor's, but I'm afraid I couldn't afford one like that so I guess we'll have to have ours on a more simple line.



Ad from a 1942 World Series program.

I'm enclosing copy on the World Series. I'm so thrilled the Cardinals won, I don't know what to do. The Yankees still don't know what happened. Time someone else had a chance to win; they've had the honor for many years.

Your mom is going to have a picture like the one she has of you on the mantle made for me. I can hardly wait. I had all I could do when I was there to keep from asking for the number or something so I could have one made. It is so like you. In fact, when I was there during the week I kind of hung out in that room. You looked just like you might say, "Hello, sweetheart," most any time.

Here is some unpleasant news, my dear. Marguerite's mother died yesterday. It seems like a blessing even though I shouldn't say it. She suffered so much and there was no hope. God was good to take her.

We have only Mrs. Davidson with us until next Thursday and then Mom and I will be by ourselves to get the house in shape for closing. I get dizzy when I think of all that has to be done.

By the time this letter reaches you we will be there. How I wish the move was made and this suspense was over. A new job and all, but it will be a new experience.

The mountain behind Grove Park Inn is getting so pretty, with every day a little more color. For our second honeymoon, let's come to Asheville in October so I can show you around. How gorgeous everything is at that time.

I am sleepy now, so I'll close. I'm reading "St. Anthony's Treasury" and by the time I read a few pages, I'll be asleep. Have you ever read it? So interesting and beautifully written.

Goodnight, my dear. 'Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 11, 1942—Asheville

My dearest,

Another Sunday gone by. I didn't write last night because I had to pay a visit to the hospital to see a friend of the family. When I got back, Mom and I sat out and talked until after one... about what, I couldn't tell you. So I never did get around to our "date."

Most important of all, your cable came yesterday for our anniversary last Sunday. You'll never know how happy I was to get that. I almost hugged the messenger boy. It's the first word I've had in nearly two weeks since your last cable.

This will be my last week to work for Ivey's. I can hardly believe it. After all, five years is a long time to be part of an organization. It has been so much a part of my life. I kind of grew up there, you might say, because I was very green when I went there.

Your Xmas/birthday package goes out tomorrow. Seems like such a little, but they ask that we keep the packages small.

Mom and I baked the fruitcake this morning... one for you and the other for my cousin in the Marines. I'm sure it will arrive in good shape because of the way we are packing it. By the time it reaches you, it will have aged sufficiently. The very special flavoring is Mrs. Davidson's contribution and she sends it with her best wishes.

How I wish you could see our mountains today. They have almost reached their peak of color. You've never seen such brilliant splashes of color... there aren't words.

I've been a member a whole week. I wish I could tell you how I feel. The words are in my heart, but somehow I can't express them. My communion and Mass was just for us today. I'm sure He is listening to us.

I wanted to get you something really nice, but I didn't know what to get and, too, what I decided was too risky to send. You'll have to have your Xmas when you come home.

Oh, my dear, I'm falling asleep. I wanted to tell you about the very amusing picture I saw this afternoon, "My Sister Eileen." It was a best-seller and then a play. Rosalind Russell and Janet Blair played the leading roles. You'd love it.

Now I must go. Write again, soon. My thoughts and prayers are more than ever with you. Take care of yourself, my dear.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 17, 1942—Northern Ireland

Hello sweetheart,

Yes, I'm back on the job after a super-swell "vacation," safe and sound. This is the first opportunity I have had to sit down and talk with you about it and even now it will have to be done with a certain amount of difficulty. We are having a bit of trouble with our lights and this is coming to you by candlelight. Besides, it is Saturday night and an anniversary night. I shouldn't want to wait another day.

Before I start on the trip to London, I want to say that your letters of Sept. 25, 27 and 30 were waiting for me when I returned. I could not have asked for a better end to a perfect leave. Just about that time, I needed mail from you, badly.

And, Billee, I got a tremendous kick from your story concerning Al Jolson and your mother and dad. It made me think and remember that I did not need any encouragement, did I? Just looking at you was enough to make me say, "Will you?"

In reply to some of the things you said in the letters:

I did read the Colliers clipping and I'm sure I mentioned it. I passed it along to Lt. Bailey (who is no longer with us). I'll miss him, as will the other men in the platoon. He was a first-rate officer. He left while I was away. I'd like to meet him again.

The fellow who went back to Croft did have a stroke of exceptionally good fortune. I'm merely waiting and hoping. It is a long process (one chance in a million, perhaps, since we are here). It is a very long story that will have to wait.

You said there were 16 of my letters that reached you. Wonder where the others are? I sent a cable from London to you at Massillon and this is my first letter to that address. Since you stated that you had resigned from Ivey's I'm taking steps to have your address changed for the bond deliveries.

In reference to what you said about the instructions... I told you what was on my mind and in my heart in a letter that probably reached you shortly after you wrote. I sent it early in Oct. I am proud



of you. Guess I love you more than a wee bit, too, and I'm still praying the time will not be long before you will hear it from my lips again.

One of the clippings (all swell) that you sent asked the question, "What do I want of life?" I want one thing, Billee, and that is to come back safe and sound to you. I hope that isn't asking too much.

I'm waiting to hear whether or not Marguerite surprised you. I do hope she did. You would want her there.

You said there were "many things you had done that were wrong." My dear, don't tell me we have a Marie Antoinette in the family. We'll have to compare our wrong-doings sometime. I'll feel like a black sheep, so help me!

And, while I have it in mind, you win our series' bet. I can't understand how the Yanks let me down. I sort of hedged on my bet by wagering with Bob Paulus. I figured there was an outside chance of the red-hot Cards to continue their spirit against what must have been an over-confident Yankee team. OK, hon, where would you like to go and what would you care to do on the night of our first series game?

Diary of a Furlough...or...Johnny Doughboy Visits London

Accompanied by Bob Paulus and three others, including our First Sgt., I had an uneventful 24-hour trip to London. I'm not at liberty to discuss the means of transportation or the routes we used. But we arrived in London at 9:15 a.m. on October 7 (Wed.)_

WEDNESDAY: Having confirmed our reservations at the Hans Crescent Club (a former hotel now being operated by the American Red Cross) we set out to make a short tour. While walking along Piccadilly about noon we espied a sign, "American Bar," where I had my first side-car in ever so long. More walking about after lunch and then back to the Club. Bob and I took advantage of the Club's offering of tickets to a B.B.C. Quiz Programme broadcast that night and set forth to the Overseas

League House where the broadcast was to take place. We were the only "Yanks" in the audience and were asked to take part in the broadcast. There were 10 guests, all servicemen. Two R.A.F., a flier from Rhodesia, another from Nigeria, two British officers, an Australian sailor and Canadian soldier joined Bob and myself. We were divided into two teams, and, our side won... 4-1/2 points to 4. The prizes were cigarettes, gifts of two women in Wichita, Kansas. I had two questions to answer. The first was one concerning the purchase of Manhattan Island by the Dutch settlers from the



Piccadilly Circus, London 1942.

Indians for \$25.00 and the other was something about a window, 6 x 8...how can it be made 8 x 10 or something. I knew the first and with the help of a kibitzer got 1/2 point for the second altho I didn't and still don't have the faintest idea of what it was about... It was a Trans-Atlantic broadcast, 6:30-7:00 p.m., or, 12:30-1:00 p.m. EWT. I still wonder if anyone I know heard it. The introductions were simple (Corp. Charles Kiley of New Jersey, U.S.A.) and we didn't have time to say "Hello" or anything like that... Together with the two R.A.F.'s, Bob and I accepted an invitation to attend a lecture by a Member of Parliament (MP) at the English Speaking Union after the broadcast. We had dinner at about 9:30 (stumbled into a would-be nightclub) in the blackout.

THURSDAY: Ahhhhh...so good to arise at nine...hot tub... breakfast (served by the Red Cross women) and a visit to the House of Parliament. We all went, conducted by a Mr. Phillips Price, M.P. Very interesting visit...House of Commons, House of Lords, a good view



Houses of Parliament, London 1942.

of the Thames, a glimpse of the Prime Minister (W.C.)...Lunch at Toni's on Regent St...Visited the *Stars and Stripes* H.Q. in the afternoon to say "Hello" to those I've been sending my stories (as few as they have been). In the evening, "The Man Who Came to Dinner," starring Robert Morley at the Savoy Theatre.

FRIDAY: Played table tennis with Bob most of the morning at the Club...dropped in to the Eagle Club and the Washington Club, other places operated by the Red Cross. Visited the Tower of London in the afternoon [before] seeing Anton Walbrook and Diana Wynyard in "Watch on the Rhine," a very good show that had quite a run on Broadway. Trying to find a restaurant in the blackout, Bob and I found ourselves in a Chinese place...So, what else could we say but "Chop Suey."

SATURDAY: A most memorable visit to Windsor Castle, in Windsor (23 miles from London). To see and listen to the guide in St. George's Chapel was worth the trip. But there were the other parts of what is incorporated in Windsor Castle...the main buildings, residence of the King and Queen...Frogmore, where the Duke of Kent was buried recently and where many English kings and queens are interred. King George V, King Edward VII, Queen Alexandra, King Henry VIII and Jane Seymour are among the many buried in St. George's Chapel. Sculptured marble likenesses of them all, lying in state, are placed above



*Charles' ticket to
"The Man Who Came to
Dinner."*



1942 postcard of Eton College.

"tails"....Tea in a quaint place near the station and back to town in time to see a marvelous film, Noel Coward's "In Which We Serve," a tale of the present activities of the Royal Navy.

SUNDAY: Eight o'clock Mass at Brompton Oratory (rather unusual name for a church, I thought) and then a 45-minute ride to Sudbury Town where Bob and I were guests of a Capt. Elliot on a really tough golf course. Darling, my 114 put me in a class with the worst duffers of all time. Bob had a very good



game. A dance at the club in the evening was interesting for about 30 minutes to us. Without having a dance (didn't feel like it, to be truthful, since I was thinking of our dances). So, another hot tub (No. 1,001) and to bed.

MONDAY: Morning and afternoon we browsed about...me on the lookout for a gift I could get for you. Everywhere it was "No coupons, sorry." Or, everything worthwhile was so expensive it would have been silly to get it. I did get my Christmas cards, though and before the day was over had them all addressed (44 of 'em). Got a special one for you...it hit me just right since it was titled "Solitude"...on Sunday night I had been sitting at the window of my room, staring into the darkness that was pin-pricked in a very few places with lamp lights (I never thought such a complete blackout could be achieved in such a large city). Still, one needs to simply glance about to see why the city is as cautious as it is...It was then that I wanted to share my vacation moments with you so much, as we planned, but sweetheart, you seemed so far away. I don't think I realized how far it was until then. Not that you were far away from my thoughts, ever, but the States did seem a million miles away that

night. When I did go to bed I re-lived "our" lives again for the millionth time...To me it was "solitude."

TUESDAY: I should say now that the weather was beautiful during the entire trip. We had rain...all of five minutes of it one night. So, on this day Bob and I spent the morning in Hyde Park feeding the pigeons (peanuts we had brought with us). Everybody seems to get to Hyde Park and we must have seen every Allied nation in uniform parading before us that morning..male and female....Saw "Gay Sisters," a film with Barbara Stanwyck and George Brent in the afternoon...after dinner at the Lancastershire House (veddy swank, oh yes) we couldn't resist "Doctor's Dilemma" with Vivien Leigh, another hit on Broadway.

WEDNESDAY: Vacation almost over... slept until 10:30... lazybones, yes?...but still time to catch "Mrs. Miniver," very good wasn't it?, at an early matinee before catching a late afternoon train back...



We took two rolls of film but so far haven't had an opportunity to put them in for development. Too, Bob and I had pictures taken in a studio... 48 miniatures from which we single one out for enlargement. But, we won't get the miniatures for six weeks and ten weeks after that we should get the enlargement. Be patient.

And that just about winds up this "Gulliver's Travels." I've written to Marguerite tonight as well as getting off letters to Father John and 195. My love to Mother. 'Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, only forever, C.

PS: Stamps from Dot were a life saver. Send a few, huh?

Bob Paulus and Charles in London, October 1942.

October 21, 1942—Massillon

My darling,

Settle back for this is to be a long one.

At long last two letters came today special delivery via Asheville. As you can probably see by the postmark, I am in Massillon.

We arrived yesterday, several days sooner than we expected. We had to close the house in a hurry. Friday my uncle called to say that my sister's oldest boy (the one that just had the new baby) has been stricken with infantile paralysis. He's not three yet. Naturally we were all just heartsick, because he's such a dear little fellow. He is in the best of care and his age and healthy condition are in his favor so we are all praying that he will be all right.

The trip was very uneventful except for the fact that connections were so close we nearly starved on the way up. It's good we had to leave in a hurry. It didn't give either of us an opportunity to lament over our leaving. That was a minor detail and still is.

My dear, it's so good to be all together again, but you can imagine. We're all so happy that we decided to make the change and I'm sure everything will work out fine.

This is really like home. I've been coming, since I was just big enough to put in a dresser drawer, to this very house. I've grown up with all these surroundings and I know more people here than I do in Asheville. It's going to be fun to start looking up the kids I went to grammar and junior high school with... not kids any more. Strange.

Below: Fred Gilbert, Billee and Katherine Gray, 1930. Right: Billee, unknown, Elizabeth and Katherine Gilbert, 1932.



What can I say? Your letters of Sept. 17 and 21 today came with the pictures. I haven't had a letter in four weeks. You can imagine how I feel. Your cablegrams have been coming through. There was one waiting for me yesterday. I don't know whether they got the numbers mixed up or whether you meant for it to be like that, but I certainly am wondering. (I left a forwarding address at both Western Union and Postal.) This is what the cablegram said: "Very happy to hear from you, dearest. Am fit and well, all well and safe. Happy Christmas and New Year." A little premature, don't you think? I hope the numbers are mixed up, that's all.

I love the pictures. I wanted so much to send some film in your box that I mailed and I forgot. The one of you all eating the cookies is so cute and I love the one of you by yourself. It's so like you. The stripes are gorgeous... so important-looking. You must have had some sunshine... it looks so bright.

I haven't been to the church here as yet, but plan to go tomorrow. I'm going to miss St. Lawrence's, and a lot of everything down there, but I do feel that what we did is right. Mom already feels better. She and my aunt are so close. My brother is so grown up and changed since I saw him in January. He's taking me out Saturday night to see the high spots, he says.

I'm taking this week to rest. Next week I'll look for a job. There seem to be plenty here. All I have to do is decide what I want to do. I think I'll try and get a factory job. I'm a little fed up on office work and I'd feel I'd be doing something worthwhile, too, since I can't join the WAAC. I'll probably join the army of girls in slacks. How would you like that?

Father John mentioned something to me when I was up in the spring about going into the Navy. He was afraid your mom wouldn't be able to take it. I can well imagine how he must feel, especially since there is such a need for chaplains now. Whatever he decides will be best, I know.

About going to New York... I couldn't go now since little Billy's illness. If I can be of help out there, of course, I want to be on hand. I had thought of New Year's if I can get away for a few days. I do so want to see them all again. It will be like going home almost. Their letters have made me know them so well.

I do believe I have the copy of Life from July 27 if that is the one with the pictures of troops in N. Ireland. I tried to pick you out and there is one... but I'm still in doubt. I'm going to send for one anyhow just to be on the safe side.

Now, you have my curiosity aroused about my Xmas package. I do hope yours arrives in good time. Your mom told me what she sent, so I know now that we didn't duplicate anything.

I'm so glad Dot and Al sent the camera. I wasn't sure you'd be able to have one.

You look so well in your picture... not changed at all. I feel swell tonight with your letter and pictures lying around in front of me here.

We received definite news that my cousin in the Marines is in the Solomons. My cousin, his sister, sent us a card. She lives about fifty miles from here.

I have the Sporting News that covered the World Series to send. You'll enjoy it. The sidelights of the games are swell. I read it on the way up... carried it all the way from Asheville to Massillon to mail.

I can't wait to hear about your furlough. I know you'll enjoy it.

The Stars and Stripes arrived last Thursday before the letter... how about that? This mail has been held up so much longer than any other that I've received.

I thought John Joyce went over with you all. Did they send him back?

I see your Lieutenant is back [he was censoring Charles' letters]. I never heard from his wife, so I guess she didn't think it worthwhile following up because of the distance.

I had such a sweet letter from your mom telling me how pleased and happy she was to hear that I had been received in the church. She has enrolled me in the Miraculous Medal association along with "the rest of the family..." were her words. You'll never know how I feel about knowing your family and their writing me.

I thought of you last Saturday night, the 17th, but we worked so late packing and all that I was too sleepy to write. Nine months... they are really slipping by. Soon it will be a year and it all seems like yesterday.

Could I ever be able to tell you how much I love you? You're so much a part of me now that I just can't imagine life without you. What did I do before Jan. 17, 1942? I certainly wasn't living... not like this. Everything has a purpose, and aim, now. Do you get tired of me telling you that? Can't seem to help it.

I'm very tired. Went out to dinner tonight with some old friends. Their son has just arrived in Puerto Rico. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve and a month later had left the country. How's that for fast work? He married an Asheville girl.

I'm falling asleep. I'll write you again very soon. Goodnight for now, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

October 22, 1942—Northern Ireland

Evening sweetheart,

The mailman is up to his old tricks again. Your Sporting News has been the only piece of mail I have received since I returned from London. I've been patiently waiting for final word of your moving to Massillon, but since your last letter of Sept. 30 indicated you were ready to go, I'm taking it for granted that your new address is 1215 Rodman Ave. N.E. In that respect, I am awaiting an application to change the address for bond deliveries but so far it hasn't come through. I doubt if it will get through channels in time for the delivery of the Oct. bond to Massillon but I'm sure you will get it in due time. Keep me informed on it from time to time and if anything goes wrong I can check it from this end.

While I'm sitting here "talking" with you, perhaps you would like to know what we do with our nights. Well, as for the "family" in our billet: Bob is stretched out reading a "Coronet" sent by Dot; Stan has the top of his pen in his mouth trying to think of something to say to his wife; Jerry, Earl

and Russ are playing three-handed bridge; Elvy is saddle-soaping his shoes; Erv is out trying to find a place to have my furlough pictures developed; and here I am. There is a movie in the mess hall but I felt like visiting with you. I could pretend the fireplace is glowing and that we are snug in our corner. Think you'll be able to find a corner for us in Massillon?

Last night I was thinking about what I had written some time ago about our Christmas shopping. I don't know whether we should consider everybody I mentioned. I'm realizing now how much the cost of my furlough, plus the bonds, have reduced my money belt. As much as I would want to remember everybody, I believe it best to consider only our folks. That is, those are the ones I would list. Mother and Dad, and perhaps something for the Kenny and Daly infants. I aim to save \$25 from October's salary, which would allow me to send \$50 to you on the first of December. That would leave me with enough to buy my rations each week. Let's hear what you think about it. Of course, I'd want you to get something very handsome for your mother. I haven't the slightest idea what you could get for Mother and Dad (I'm a big help, I know). Eleanor or Father John could give you a hint or three.

I know what I'd be giving you, and it will be the big disappointment of my life not being able to. If I had those two weekends of ours (the last ones) to live over again I would have slipped that "blue-white" [ring] on your finger instead of the one you have. And, remembering all I said, I'm sure you would have its mate, too. I, or should I say we, were too sensible, almost to a fault, Billee. Perhaps I'm saying that because the longer I'm separated from you the more I wonder how long I can stand it.

Sometimes, I can't keep two things straight in my mind, just thinking of you. This letter is an example, I suppose. I think that's the way most of my letters to you sound. I start off on one subject, drift into another, and slip into the subject I love most... you.

There are so many things I want to see... now. I want to see you standing at the head of the stairs at Penn Station. I want to see you walking from the hotel elevator in that cloud of white. Gosh, you were beautiful, Billee. I want to see you in the Hawaiian Room or sitting at the table in the Asheville "Y," wondering who those two soldiers were walking in your direction. I want to see you in the cocktail lounge of the Inn or on the hill at St. Genevieve's. I want to



Penn Station, circa 1940.

see you sitting in the Daly's living room or at the Doyles'. I want to see you walking away from me at Penn Station because if I did I would go back after you and never let you go again, ever.

'Night sweetheart.

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

Love to Mother and the Gilberts.

October 25, 1942

Dear Ray,

I received your paper and it's pretty good. What seems to be the trouble with the senior baseball team? Did it fold up?

Ray, believe it or not, they are giving furloughs out here. It was so sudden it surprised everybody. I could have had one of the first furloughs and they are leaving tonight, but, like I told you, it was so much of a surprise that none of the fellows saved enough money to buy a ticket. So they are writing home and are borrowing it, so I am asking you if you can spare the money. I will be able to pay you back \$25 every payday.

The cost of the whole trip will be about \$100. I know that sounds like a lot of money but I could easily pay it back. You see, I have about \$20 a week to spend.

I sure do hope you can see your way clear, Ray, because when they ask me again I won't have to say no. You see everybody in the company is taking one and I wouldn't want to be one of the ones left behind.

Ray, as I say again, if you can see your way clear, don't say anything to Mom, Pop, El or Betty that I am borrowing the money off you. They will want to know what I did with the money I had from the Army, but they don't know that a fellow has to spend a lot of money to see this part of the country. We never did figure on getting furloughs away out here. So, Ray, I will wait and hope you can lend it to me. Give my love to all and may God bless you all.

Eddie

October 25, 1942—Massillon

My darling,

At long last, I'm able to sneak away from the family to write. I just dare anyone to open the door. I haven't put off writing because I wasn't in the mood, but because I couldn't get off alone anywhere.

I've just returned from spending the afternoon with my sister and her family. Mom and Warren were along. Their youngest took to me right away. He's all boy and so cute, I could hardly leave. Sherry Ann, the little girl, has always been a favorite and we got along fine together. I told Mom when I put

Johnnie back in his basket that I still wanted nine. I know that's what I was meant for, and to look after you.

Your letter of Oct. 3 came Friday via Asheville. I was so happy to hear. This has been a perfect week... four long letters and pictures. I could really give you a bear hug.

I've had a full weekend, with two heavy dates... with my brother. We had fun. He took me dancing Friday night with a crowd. He hasn't told them yet that I'm his sister. I put a ribbon in my hair and no one knew the difference. Warren gave me a name... Billee Kiley from Jersey City. How's that? He said I may as well get used to it.

Last night we went with another couple to see Ted Lewis and his show in Akron. It's the first time I've seen him in years. We went riding afterwards and took the fellow's girl home and ended up at a drive-in eating 12 inch hotdogs. Can you imagine? They ate two, but I had all I could do to get one down.

My sister has a new home. There is still a lot to be done but it is so nice. They are in a new section and it looks like you're turning the pages of a Better Homes and Gardens. I can't make up my mind which I like. One is so much nicer than the next.

My social security card hasn't come yet, so I'm still among the ranks of the unemployed. Can you imagine being so unbusinesslike as to lose something like that? It will mean a few more days to rest.

I told Mom I felt like I was playing house, helping Aunt Katherine with the housekeeping. Our place was so large, Mom can't get over not having to walk so much in the house.

My dear, you know I'll love dearly doing your Christmas shopping. Please, though, give me a little idea of what for your Dad, Eddie and Father John. The rest I can handle all right, I think. One day I was in a bookstore at home and came across two small books, by Deems Taylor. They go together. (I have to go eat.)

I'm back now with the dishes all washed and everything in order. Part of our dinner was accompanied by Freddie Martin's orchestra and he played "Piano Concerto." Of course, I needn't say anything more.

Back to Deems Taylor, the author of those two books. They are stories of symphonies and operas and criticism. (I'm trying to think of another word, but it has escaped me.) Anyhow, I thought of Father John when I saw them.

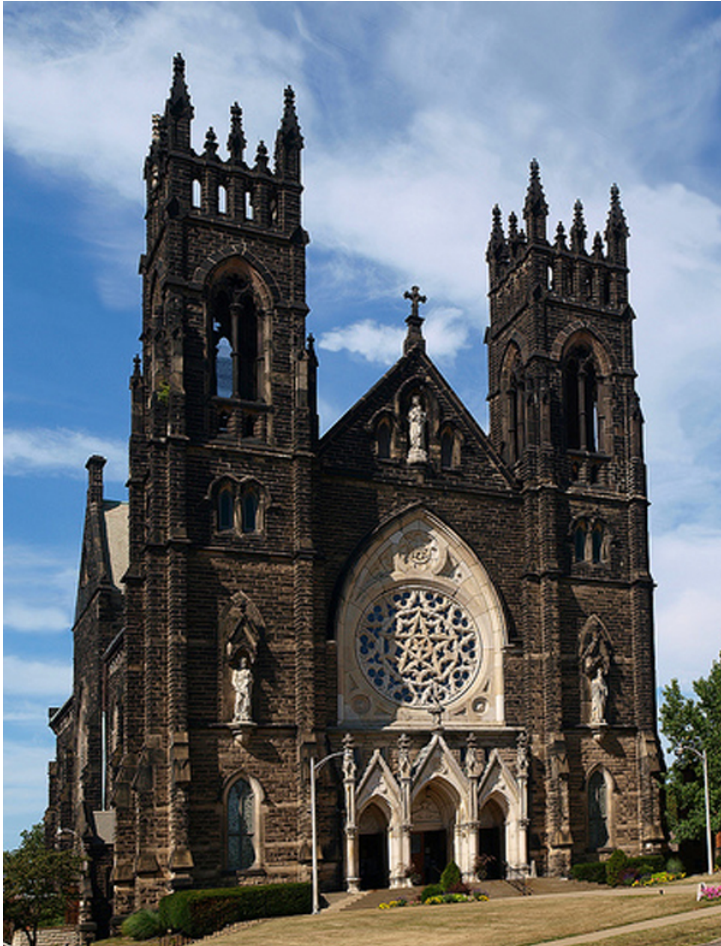


Ted Lewis and his orchestra, circa 1930.

By this time you know I won my bet. I can't think of anything I'd rather have that day than just being with you. Easy to please, aren't I? I'm glad the Cardinals won. They had it coming to them. You'll enjoy that Sporting News and the stories about the games. I didn't get to listen to any of them, but they must have been pretty exciting.

I had forgotten how football crazy this town was. You start a conversation and sooner or later it ends up football. They don't seem to have anything but champions... seven years they have held the title.

I can't wait to hear about the trip. Don't worry about our bank account. We'll manage all right. I want you to have a little change, too, if it takes all we have. Besides, you'll be spending for me, too.



St. Mary's Church, Massillon.

I found another church closer to my aunt's house. It is beautiful... St. Mary's Church. Very large and the most beautiful white marble altars. The form is a little different than at home, but I'll get used to it. I went to 8:30 Mass Friday morning and all the school children were there. You should have seen them. I couldn't help but think of you as a little boy when I watched them... but that is stretching the imagination.

Your mom said Father John did the work on Eddie's picture in oil... that he made four. I hope you did get to have a picture made. I'd love to have one.

I can imagine the quandary he must be in trying to decide what to do about enlisting. Whatever he decides will be for the best, I know.

The bond hasn't come yet. I imagine it will take time for the first ones, because there will be so many and, too, it will have to be forwarded.

About my inferiority complex. I can't understand, but I've always been like that. I'm improving with age (ha) and you've done wonders for me so by the time you come back maybe I'll be cured. I'm still lucky, though.

Well, I'd better say goodnight for now. I want to write to Dottie and another before turning in. I have to get up at 5:30 and get Warren's breakfast. He has to get a six-fifteen bus to go to work.

Here is a very special kiss going out the window in your direction for being so patient and for just being you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Monday...

Hi, darling,

I wanted to tell you to be sure and not open that package until Xmas since I forgot to mark it on the outside. Don't forget.

Eleanor and Tom's picture came today and it is beautiful. They both look swell in it. Warren tickled me... I asked him if he'd give me away and he said that only for me would he wear one of those monkey suits like Tom has on.

I'm really off this time. Hope Mom brings some stamps home. More love, Billee

October 30, 1942—Massillon

My darling,

Seems like an age since I last wrote. I've been doing so much, dashing hither and yon.

To begin with, my social security card finally arrived on Tuesday so I started out with that and my birth certificate and both knees shaking, but I've talked to so many people since then that I haven't had time to be scared. My first stop was Republic Steel Corp., which is the biggest around here. My brother works there. I filled out an application and was ushered into the big



Republic Iron and Steel Company, Massillon. Postcard, 1941.

boss's office... thick carpets and a huge desk that was polished so you could see yourself in it. He seemed to like my qualifications and took up nearly an hour of my time. He put me at ease right away.

From Tuesday until last night I talked to scores of people, took a trip to Canton and filled out applications over there. Last night at suppertime, one of the bosses at Republic called and asked if I could come to work Monday. You can imagine how relieved I was. You know I've never been out of work before... it was beginning to get [to] me.

So I start Monday afternoon at 3:30 and work until twelve. Isn't that terrific? But, I'll change shifts and it's only five days unless I have to put in overtime. I don't know exactly what the nature of the work is, but it's in the order department of the mill, so I'll be in the midst of all the activity.

I feel like I'm joining the Army... all the fingerprinting and examinations I'm to take and all the papers I've already signed. The salary isn't quite as much as I wanted to start with, but I don't think it will be long before I'll get a raise and the overtime will make up for the difference.

Mom has been working since Tuesday in the big Mercy hospital in Canton doing nurse's aid work. She took the Red Cross home nursing course two years ago so it is paying dividends now. She has a nice starting salary and her meals. The routine is a little tiring until she gets used to it. She has never worked out like that before. It is a Catholic hospital and the sisters have been lovely to her. I'm so pleased, I don't know what to do because it is helping me a lot. She wasn't entirely pleased about my joining the church. She wanted me to wait until we were married, but I had my own ideas. She is coming around, though, and tonight she was telling me which of the two churches I should go to.

I had a long letter from your mom. She is going to have the picture enlarged. Father John thinks that perhaps he will be able to do an oil painting from this one snapshot of you by yourself... remember? It is a swell picture and so like you.

I read the four last letters over again tonight and they were better than the other times. I find something new each time. The second *Stars and Stripes* arrived. We have all enjoyed reading them so. Your story was swell even if they did cut it.

Last night Warren took me to a coed dance his club held at the "Y." The kids were fairly young... his age and not many older than me, but we had fun. I've done more dancing in the past ten days than any time since New York and Asheville when you were there, and am I rusty!

The jitter-bug craze is still going strong here. You should have seen them last night, "zoot suits" and all. What a sight. We went dancing elsewhere after that and didn't get home until three; then, I was up at 5:30 to get Warren off to work and back to bed until 7:30 and up again to make 8:30 Mass. I'm laid out now.

My aunt's birthday is today, but we are going to celebrate tomorrow at my sister's house... a surprise. I'm to go tomorrow afternoon to bake the cake. I have all my fingers crossed because I haven't baked one in so long.

Little Billy was some better tonight. He has the use of almost both arms now and his shoulders. His legs are completely gone... that is, the muscles. It is going to take time, but they are performing miracles with this new Sister Kenny treatment so we can't help but feel encouraged.

We are having some real Asheville weather.. so mild and very unusual for around here. We have a big park just a block away that I take the dog to walk in. It used to be one of my favorite haunts as a child. I can't help but look back at the games we played in the snow and the leaves and the deep grass in the summertime. I had a dog that I was wild about. We had her from a puppy until we went to Asheville. She went with me everywhere. I see her now running in that field when I take this dog of my aunt's. She was part English whippet and fox terrier and just like greased lightning. [Billee's dog, Fawn, died of distemper after they moved to Asheville; she grieved over Fawn for the rest of her life and refused to ever have another dog (see picture on page 137).]

My sister's little girl was over and we went through all my jewelry tonight and I gave her what I didn't want... buttons, earrings, necklaces and whatnot. Did she have fun decking herself out! What a little bit it takes to satisfy them. She is such a dear.

My dancing brought you that much closer. I couldn't help but think how wonderful and how much more fun it would be if it were you I was dancing with instead of someone else. Those old wishes again. Oh, well... I can dream, can't I? Thank goodness. I love you that much more if that's possible. I'm awfully glad you're you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Excuse the paper, but I cut it myself... all I had on hand. More love. 'Night. Billee