

## Chapter 3

# November 1942–February 1943

*November 1, 1942*

Dear Ray,

I received your letter and also the check. I sure do appreciate the money and I will pay you every cent when I come back from the furlough. I am trying to get it at the end of this month but they haven't told me if it was ok yet.

They are letting twenty-five at a time go. The first bunch came back today and the second twenty-five leave tomorrow. I will probably be one of the third twenty-five, I hope.

I told Mom I was coming, Ray, so she ought to be glad. She was always asking when they were going to give me a furlough and now they are going to.

The way I have it figured out, it will take me about four days to get home, stay about seven and four days back. That will be my full fifteen days.

I received the magazine you sent and I must say you look pretty good alongside the bishop and with that trophy, too. Boy, you must be doing an awful lot for those kids in your parish. I hope they appreciate all that you are doing for them.



*Eddie training in the desert—October 1942.*

Well, Ray, we are getting ready to leave the desert. They tell us we will be sent out of here by the fifteenth of this month and then back to Camp Cooke. It sure will be great to get back to camp.

I am having some pictures developed and I will bring them home or mail them to either you or home. They were all taken out here on the desert and they are pretty good ones.

Well, I will close now, because I have a few more letters to answer, so take care of yourself and thanks again for the money. May God bless you.

Eddie

PS: We had a big religious day out here last Sunday and I received Holy Communion. The service lasted about two hours and we had a fine sermon by a young priest. It was swell.

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A. N. WILLIAMS  
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1201

SYMBOLS  
DL=Day Letter  
NT=Overnight Telegram  
LC=Deferred Cable  
NLT=Cable Night Letter  
Ship Radiogram

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

HT 14 CABLE=HO SANSORIGINE 26 1  
NLT BILLEE=  
GRAY CARE MRS FRED GILBERT 1215 RODMAN AVE NORTHEAST  
MASSILLON (OHIO)=  
NEW ADDRESS THE STARS AND STRIPES APO 887 NEWYORKCITY  
EXPLAIN IN LETTER LOVE=  
CHARLES KILEY.  
1942 NOV 2 AM 7 58  
1215 APO 887  
THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

*Charles' cable to Billee about his transfer—November 1942.*

*November 3, 1942—London*

Hello sweetheart,

The cable I sent yesterday must have been as much of a surprise to you as my sudden move here was to me. To sum everything up in a short space of time, I'm with the Stars and Stripes headquarters now and enjoying my work immensely.

Whereas the paper was published as a weekly since April it became a daily today. You can realize how much work it will mean for the

staff. Still, there is a very capable group of men to do the work and I'm sure it will be a great success. Bob Moora and Bud Hutton, two members of the editorial board, were former N.Y. Herald-Trib[une] and World-Telegram men.

One of the first assignments I had was an interview with Col. (Mrs.) Oveta Culp Hobby, director of the WAAC. I'm sending today's paper to you so you can read the results for yourself. Wish me luck.

I have your letter of Oct. 12... have had it for almost two weeks now and this is the first chance I have had to write since then. Even now, I'm squeezing in a few minutes with you. When everything gets down on an even keel again I'll be able to devote all my spare time to you.

Before I go any further, I'll have to tell you this, too. My plans for Christmas shopping may "go with the wind." Living expenses here are a bit higher than they were in N.I. However, I'll still endeavor to do my best to send the money I mentioned. If it doesn't come in time you will know why. I'll keep you posted from time to time on my progress in that department.

Now, another thing about the bonds. I haven't had a moment to spare and see the proper people about the change in address but I've had some information on it. If you didn't get the Sept. bond, I've been told not to worry about it since the Treasury Dept. may be a bit slow in getting around to the deliveries. I'll keep you informed about that, too.

I have my fingers crossed regarding my Christmas package. No doubt you have seen the news report that quite a few of our packages are in possession of Davy Jones at present [an allusion to "Davy Jones' locker," i.e., at the bottom of the sea]. In our paper today, one of our officers made the appropriate remark that he hopes Davy has a lousy Christmas.

Now that I've had a bit of good fortune in getting back in the "game," as it were, I miss you more than ever because I want to share my good fortune with you.

All I can say, though, is that you are ever uppermost in my thoughts, and that I love you, so much. We were together for a while at church yesterday.

I'll be back, saying "hello," soon. 'Bye.

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

PS: Love to Mother and the Gilberts.

*November 4, 1942—Massillon*

My darling,

How do I rate a cable and two letters since Monday? The only think I can make out of the cable is that you have been made one of the staff members of the *Stars and Stripes*, but where? Ireland or London? I'm so thrilled and proud. Now you can go on with your writing. I can't wait to get the letter telling me all about it.

We had fun in London. That's the way I feel after reading your letter... bless you. How I envy you... it sounded like a Cook's tour, but you probably saw more on your own. To think I missed the broadcast. Were you excited? I wouldn't have been able to say anything. I'm glad your side won.

If I repeat in my letters it's because I don't hear from you as often as you do from me. I did get all the letters that you mentioned in this last one.

I'm tired, but I want to stay with you as long as I can because I won't have a chance to write in the morning. Yes, I started to work yesterday on that 3:30 to 12:00 shift. I don't mind it so much. It definitely takes up your evenings. I only work five days. The job is simple and when I think of the responsibility I had at Ivey's and the little bit I've got there, I have to laugh. I think they figure on working us in on the jobs that quite a few young fellows have, since they will be called for service before long. The job is in the order department where all the orders from the different companies are typed, filed and figured, etc. I'm not sure yet just what goes on. I just do what they tell me.

There are a nice bunch of girls working there. Most of them I know either directly or indirectly. A lot of the fellows I went to school with or swimming so I felt right at home. The office is right in with the

steel mill. They are to take new ones through the mill on special days so we can appreciate what we are doing. It is definitely different than what my former job was, but I think I'll like it.

It's almost like an army or something around here. You know they work three shifts and there is always someone either going from or coming to work. You see everyone with a lunch basket. This is the production army I've heard and read about.



Since it is only five days, I was called to the Mercy hospital where Mom works... they wanted me for full time, but I had already accepted the job at Republic Steel, so I am going to work over there on Saturdays. It will mean about \$15 extra a month and that isn't to be sneezed at, eh?

So far, I haven't received the bond, but I guess it will come in good time.

Your letter of the 27th came yesterday but since the letter of the third had come before I didn't pay any attention to the fact that your furlough might be postponed.

I can just see you pecking away at the typewriter trying to see by candlelight. I read parts of your letter to the family about the trip. They enjoyed it so much.

Talking about "solitude," my dear, you're always with me... when I walk along the streets by myself, going to church, taking the day for a run, even dancing with someone else... you're there. In other words, I love you. Amazing after all this time, it still gives me a new thrill to even think about it, to see that familiar scrawl on the envelopes. We want so little and have to fight so hard to get it, but I know it's worth every minute of our separation.

I love football games. I hope to be able to go to our Canton-Massillon game. That's always a battle royal here and I haven't seen a good game since I left. They even close the stores here on the days of home games so everyone can go. Everything closes except the mills. I never saw anything like it. The town is definitely football mad.

Before I forget, the brother of one of the girls I work with went over at the same time you did. They received a cable of his safe arrival, but no word since then. He is in a reconnaissance unit in Company A. I know there is one chance in a million that you might know him or anything about him. His name is Edward Snyder. I used to go to school with him in Junior High. His mother is nearly crazy not hearing anything in all this time.

Little Billy played patty-cake last night. His dad is so thrilled. His legs haven't shown much improvement. We were out to my sister's Saturday night and had a surprise party for my aunt. A

cousin of mine that I haven't seen in nine years was here over the weekend. Mother's two sisters and families came from Elyria (about 55 miles from here) for Sunday dinner so we had a regular family reunion... more fun.

Don't be worried about a gift for me. Just keep well and come home safe and sound... that's all I ask. I'm glad you had your pictures made. I'll be patient. Your mom will be so pleased.

I'm going to have to adjourn until tomorrow. I'm falling asleep. It is about a quarter of two, but I didn't get home until twelve-thirty from work and Warren and I had a lunch. He is working 3 to 11 this week. Goodnight... here's a special kiss.

Back again. Speaking of lazybones, I didn't see the light of day until 11:00. Mom has a day off today. It's the first time I've seen her since Monday morning. How about that?

Today is beautiful, almost like Asheville. I don't know how cold it is but the sky is so blue.

Reading over your letter again, you say you sent me a cable from London. I didn't get it. The only other one I've received besides the one yesterday about the *Stars and Stripes* was the one that was relayed from Asheville with that Xmas message in it.

Just a couple of black sheep together. It does make you think, though. You don't know because you've always gone to confession. Maybe you can appreciate how I felt.

I told you in another letter what I wanted for winning the Series bet... remember?

You did all the things I would have wanted to do in London and vicinity. I would have enjoyed the trip to Windsor Castle and Eton. There is probably a lot that you haven't told me. Maybe it won't be so long until I'll be able to hear all about it.

Didn't you like "Mrs. Miniver?" It has been very popular here. I saw "Gay Sisters," but didn't care so much for it. I guess I wasn't in the mood. I would have loved the play, especially Vivian Leigh. She's tops in my estimation.

I can imagine how you must have enjoyed those hot tubs... real luxury. I'm so glad you were able to go. The change will do wonders for you.

I guess I'll have to go. I have some work to do and Warren's and my uncle's lunches to make, but I'll be back soon. 'Bye, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Your letter was just what I needed.

*November 5, 1942—London*

Evening, sweetheart,

It's been so long since I've had any mail from you, and that old lonesome feeling is getting me down. Still, as long as I can think of you, it will do, "until the real things comes along." There were times when you were with me on Irish moonlit nights (the few we had), on days and nights during

maneuvers when we all didn't know how we'd ever come through it, through rain and mud... now, you're still with me in a different atmosphere, which makes me feel good all over again.

The delay in mail is due, no doubt, to my transfer since I haven't had any from Co. H as yet. They should have my new address and I'm expecting the old mail any day. I hope there's plenty from Billee Ruth Gray. I still haven't been able to find time to straighten out the bond situation insofar as the change of address is concerned, but I will shortly.

I'm enclosing, and this time I'm making sure of the enclosures, my first two byline stories. I told you of the Col. Hobby interview.

**Mayor Asks Yanks To Tea  
And Winds Up As A Guest**

**By Charles Kiley**  
Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

"Who's t'rowin' dis party for who?" Mayor Richard H. Kent, of Hammersmith, a London borough, might have asked this question Wednesday afternoon if he had lived in Newark, N.J., U.S.A.

But he doesn't live in Newark—he's Mayor of one of London's cities-within-a-city—so the question had to be asked with a broad "A."

It seems Mayor Kent asked the Red Cross to bring him a group of American soldiers from his favorite U.S. city, Newark. Only one Jerseyite came, and when the party got going, the Mayor said, the soldiers did most of the entertaining.

Mayor Kent's son, Harold, lives in Newark, N.J., and it was for this reason the mayor specified Newarkians. His son, he said, married a Newark girl, Miss Doris Adams, after they met at Bonn, Germany, in 1939. They went to the U.S., and still live in Newark, where the son is helping with air raid protection.

The one Newarkian in Wednesday's party of nine Americans was Sgt. Harry Goode, Air Force. Sgt. Goode, it developed, attended the same high school in Newark where the mayor's daughter-in-law was a teacher when she met her husband on a European holiday.

The non-Newarkians included Cpl. Oscar Deneault, Central Falls, R.I., who, having visited Cologne and taught French, acted as unofficial master of ceremonies; Pfc Ernest Witwer, Cable, Wis.; Pfc Harry Lalor, Eagle Grove, Iowa; Cpl. Lawrence Thalacker, Tarrytown, N.Y.; T/4 Edward R. Pray, Rutland, Vt.; T/4 William J. Wicker, Newberry, S.C.; T/5 William B. McCormack, Des Lacs, North Dakota.

After Mrs. Kent had served tea, with peach and apple pie, in the official parlor, the Mayor led the Yanks through the almost palatial City Hall.

Sgt. Goode, who at home lives under the paternalistic eye of Boss Hague, took one look at teak-panelled council room walls and sighed:

"Jeest! Frank Hague'd give his eye-teeth for this joint!"

*Clipping of Charles' byline story for the Stars and Stripes—November 7, 1942.*

Yesterday I handled a visit by American soldiers with the Mayor of Hammersmith, a London borough. I arrived about an hour before the men and had a very enjoyable chat with the Mayor and his wife (she's called a "Mayoress" over here). His son met a Newark girl in Bonn, Germany, a few years ago, married her and settled in Newark. They gave me their home address and extended a standing invitation to visit them when I have an opportunity, and gosh knows when that will be. He said he enjoys

speaking with Americans a great deal. I guess I was a good listener.

I hope to be able to send a small, very small, Christmas gift to you. And as the old story goes, for those without the wherewithal, it won't be the gift so much as it will be the thought behind it. Prospects of my sending that Christmas present money are very dark. But, if anything breaks favorably, it will be cabled quicker than quick.

I'm wondering whether you favored the visits to J.C. and vicinity, and if you did, what happened. There's a million things I can worry about but I'll try not to. Love to Mother and the Gilberts.

Allmyloveandkissesforeverandalways, C.

*November 8, 1942—Massillon*

Evening darling,

Now for a sample of my typing. My uncle brought his typewriter home this weekend to leave so I'm taking advantage of the convenience and also the opportunity of practicing my typing on you. Mind?

I've had a pretty full week... five days at my new job and one day at the other new job in Canton. Seems so funny to go to work at 3:00 in the afternoon, but you certainly don't have to worry about how to spend your evenings. The only trouble is that when I get home, I'm wide awake and can't seem to go to sleep. Consequently, it is anywhere from one to two-thirty before I finally get to bed. The work isn't hard, in fact it is almost an insult to my intelligence, but I don't think it will be for long. As I said before, practically everyone in the office that works the same shift I do I already know, so we really have a swell time. The boss leaves fairly early in the evening. Of course, we do the work that is laid out for us but we feel a little more free. Next week they start taking us through the mill so we'll know our way around if we have to go on errands and so forth when the fellows are gone. I'm looking forward with interest since this is the closest I've ever been to a steel mill. Night before last I spent part of the time watching them make steel in one of the mills close by that I can see from our office window, the twenty-four inch mill I believe they call it.

The atmosphere at the job in Canton in the hospital is so entirely different that it's funny. Everything is so quiet that you can almost hear yourself think. Sister Marie is so sweet to me. She gave me some prayers for the Way of the Cross and explained it to me. Mother Müller didn't tell me very much about that, but then she hardly had time. Mother is getting along fine with her work and likes it better every day. They are going to put her in the nursery just as soon as they can get someone to take her place. They are already working her in there a little at a time and, of course, she is in her glory. Sister Marie took me all through the hospital when I was there last Sunday and showed me the nursery. You should have seen all the tiny babies, especially the one in the incubator. He looked like a little worm.

My sister's little boy turned over in bed himself the other night when they took the packs off his legs. We are all so thrilled and pleased and very grateful. A few nights before that he reached up and scratched his head. You can't imagine little things like that meaning so much, can you? He was always such a lively little fellow... all boy. You'd love him. I've been having fun taking care of the youngest offspring, John Guy. He's got so he knows me now when I pick him up. Lee says she's going to give him to me if I spoil him any more. He loves to have me hold him.

I did something last night I haven't done in some time, in fact not since New York. I had a date with a fellow I met at the dance Warren took me to. He is a nice fellow and a perfect gentleman, but not you. All I could think of while we were out was, "I'll be glad to get home." I guess I'm spoiled and you know who's responsible for that. Guess I'll save all my dates for you. Will that be all right? We went to a nightclub near here that was nice, but the floor show wasn't so hot, and what a mob!

Today I went to some friends of mine for dinner... Mr. and Mrs. Blumenauer... Jess and Ernest. You'd like them. We have such fun together. I've known them for years. Of course, they are interested in you. I read them part of your letter about the trip to London and they enjoyed it so much. Their son is in Puerto Rico. I believe I told you about him before. He is married to an Asheville girl. She is teaching me to play bridge when I have time so that I can play with Dottie and the girls. I had one lesson just before I went to work and got along fairly well and I think in time I will learn to like it. She had enough there for a table... some other girls that I know and Mom.

This wiping up of those blankety-blank Germans makes me feel swell. You'd laugh if you could hear the girls and me over lunch boxes, fighting the war and what we are going to do afterwards. One girl is married and her husband is stationed near Seattle and the other girls both have boyfriends in the service, so we have a high old time hashing and rehashing... a real hen party.

I'd have given a lot for your shoulder last night. I don't know when I've been so tired. I guess I'm not used to these hours I've been working, and then I had to get up so early yesterday morning to get to Canton by eight-thirty (eight miles away). My date wasn't until twelve o'clock (he had to work) so I went to bed until eleven. Remember that Sunday afternoon we listened to the concert in "our chair?" That's what I would have loved to have done last night. We'll spend a Saturday night like that sometime, only we'll have one of those record change victrolas and radio. Think we can?

Everyone has left and gone to bed. Guess the clackety-clack got them down. I'm going directly as soon as I write a letter to the girls in the office at Ivey's. I guess they wondered what has happened to me, since I promised to write.

I was rereading some letters tonight and came across the one you wrote me from the McAlpin Hotel in New York. I still think it's the sweetest one, and yet it is the shortest... one of my favorite memories. [This letter is missing.]

We've been having swell weather here for some reason or other. Hope it stays like this for the last football game. I'm hoping to go. It's always the best one of the season... with Canton. Everyone is so enthused about it. Massillon just won its 51st consecutive game. Can you imagine? No wonder this town is football crazy. I've never seen anything like it. That's all anybody talks about... that and the war.

I think I've done enough prattling for one night, except I hate to say goodnight. This typing is really something. Guess I'd better stick to my pen. If you could see the ones I've torn up, you'd laugh. I'm not bad at copy work but when it comes to writing a letter of my own... oh boy.

I was going, wasn't I? 'Night for awhile, darling. I almost forgot... we had an anniversary the other night and I didn't get to write to you. Seven months ago last Wednesday we were engaged and I still love you that much more. Amazing, isn't it? My prayers and thoughts are always with you. I'm still looking forward to the letter concerning the new address. Keep well.

All my love and kisses always, your Billee

*November 11, 1942—Massillon*

My dearest,

Just got in from work a few minutes ago and found some more souvenirs. I hope nothing was lost... the envelope was practically ripped apart. It contained two ticket stubs (Savoy & Aldrich), a book about Windsor Castle, and small album of scenes in London and three programs. The other pictures and postcards came this morning.

I feel as if I were right there now, or a little like I was looking at storybook pictures. How I envy you. I'm so very glad you were able to go.



I saw the picture, "The Man Who Came to Dinner," with Monty Woolley, and enjoyed it so much. You didn't say how you liked it. Of course, it was awfully light and a little silly in parts. I was probably just in the mood for something like that.

Do you have trouble reading my letters? My brother tells me he had an awful time. I used to write very legibly. In fact, I won a prize in school, believe it or not, but mine is a case where practice doesn't make perfect.

We're having typical Massillon weather today... is it awful. This morning, rain... afternoon, sleet... tonight, snow. Our boss brought three of us home tonight so that was a help. I have to walk about 1/4 mile to the bus from the office and it's all open and does that wind blow through there! Oh, boy.

Your pictures came today from your mom, the one like she had on the mantle that I liked so much. You should see my dressing table now... looks like a special exhibit of Charles Kiley. I've had to resort to using part of Mom's. I put Eleanor and Tom's picture over there, and my Easter bunny (still toting it around) on Mom's dresser. On mine, I have that postcard of you and I framed, besides the enlargement you gave me and the snapshot framed of you with your corporal's stripes and now this new picture. How's that? I'll have to start hanging them on the wall.

I should be practicing my typing, but it makes such a racket this early in the morning. As soon as I get a pay, I'll buy some more stationery. This is some my uncle donated to a worthy cause. I'm as bad as you having to resort to GI [stationery].

My uncle has some wonderful books in his library and my aunt says she thinks he might give me the ones I'd like to have. I've always been his favorite niece. His father was a Methodist bishop and when he died, the books were divided among three children.

Everything is so quiet. I like this time of the night... morning, I should say. I'm beginning to get sleepy now.

Everyone is excited about the second front opening. We didn't get much done for discussing what would be the next move. Everyone I've talked to seems so relieved that some real action is taking

place in that theater of the war. I heard someone say that there were troops sent from Ireland and England. I'm anxious to get your letter explaining the last cable.

The girls up in this office thought I was married, too. I don't know why. Maybe I have that look or something, or is there a married look? Seems so funny. I do feel bad having to tell them no, but I know it won't be so awfully long now.

I haven't heard from Marguerite since her mother died. I do hope she is all right and that the ordeal wasn't too much for her. They probably left all the responsibility up to her. I don't understand her family.

That seems to be all the news. Oh, I think I like my ideas for our 2x4 better than Windsor Castle. Mine are a little more practical and livable, but we'll keep them in mind.

Funny, in all my crazy daydreams and those at night, too, we're never apart... always together. When you come back, I'll really be a pest with my "tagging along." Just sitting here writing you makes the whole world seem all right to me now. I was feeling a little low tonight, but it's all gone. I'll say goodnight, or rather, good morning.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Here's Preview of Our  
Own WAACs—and  
They're Nice

By Charles F. Kiley  
Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

She's about 5—3, weighs 110 pounds,  
is 23, uses lipstick, speaks our own  
"slanguage" . . . and, brothers . . . she's  
nice !

That's a picture of the average CWAC  
(Canadian Women's Army Corps). If  
you haven't met her yet, you will. More  
than 100 of them just arrived in Britain  
with the first detachment to proceed  
overseas, and there's more on the way.

Like a lot of us, you're wondering what  
our WAACs will be like when, and if,  
they get over here. The CWACs give you  
the nearest thing to a preview of our gals  
inasmuch as the only line that separates  
them is the 49th Parallel, and that's only  
imaginary.

Don't get a wrong slant on this, buddy.  
The ATS are swell. So are the WAAFs  
and WRNS. But these Canadian girls  
are as close as you'll get to the one who's  
waiting back home . . . you hope.

*The beginning of Charles' CWAAC story—November  
1942.*

*November 12, 1942—London*

Hello angel,

Still no mail, since your letter of Oct. 12. But I'm not the only one who is missing out on it. Most of the other fellows are having the same complaint. Although, your last letter indicated you were ready to go to Massillon, I haven't anything definite that you left. I did, finally, arrange to have your address changed for bond deliveries, though. Another thing I'm waiting to hear is whether or not you have received either the Sept. or Oct. bonds. I wish that mailman would speed things up. It's been about three weeks, I guess, since your letter arrived but I suppose you've waited that long for mine, too, haven't you?

During my rush, I forgot to cable on the 4th but I didn't forget the day. I'll try and remember to send one tonight or tomorrow for our "17th."

In a few days, I'll have a few more articles to send to you. I had one on a fellow here whose dad is a private in the Army, another on the CWACs (Canadian Women's Army Corps) who recently

arrived in Britain and a review on the Alaska-Canada Highway.

Too, I'm sending you as many copies of the S. and S. as I remember to. I say that because sometimes I forget a lot of things during the rush of a working day. Everything except you.

The CWACs, or "Quacks" as they are called, are just about the closest thing to American girls you'll find. That's only natural, I guess.

The other night I had to check on the arrival of Kay Francis, Martha Raye, Carole Landis and Mitzi Mayfair. They are here to entertain the troops. One of the fellows covered them at a press conference last night and agreed with me that Mitzi was the nicest.

I'll have to close with a rush now, honey. Just a short "hello." I'll be back soon. Love to Mother and the Gilberts.

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

*November 14, 1942—Massillon*

Hi darling,

Another of our Saturday nights together except it is a little late for dating and I'm pretty tired. Think you can stand me?

Your cable was waiting for me when I returned from the hospital tonight, a little premature for our anniversary, but it is here. As always, you never forget... a special hug for that. If I turn my head just a wee bit, you are looking at me. Don't think me crazy. I'm just talking about your picture that is just at the right angle.

Yesterday brought a letter from your mom and one from Dottie. They have evidently heard from you since I have because Dottie says, "What do you think of Charles being a war correspondent? Isn't it wonderful?" I'm so thrilled and excited for you because I know what it means to you. Too, "war correspondent" always sounds so adventurous and exciting. You're a lucky guy. As much as I'd love to have you right here beside me, I'm glad you are having this experience... really. Don't think I'm being noble or anything, because I mean it.

I had lunch by myself in Canton today so I brought out your London letter to reread and enjoyed it just as much as the first time. What a relief not to eat sandwiches... Now, I'm not complaining about carrying a lunch bucket, but I do get tired of those sandwiches.

My uncle is having fun teasing me about you. He calls you my "wild Irishman." Of course, that title fits all right. You'll like him a lot. I've always said he was my favorite uncle. He claims he is going to give me away at the wedding, since I wouldn't ask my father.

I'm adjourning until tomorrow. 'Night, darling.

I'm back again and it is tomorrow and what a beautiful day. The sun is really playing havoc on this paper but I hate to pull the shade.

I'm being nursemaid at the present time. My sister and brother-in-law went to Akron to see Billy and they brought Sherry and Johnnie for me to watch. They are both such good children that they don't require much watching. Johnnie is at peace with the world. He has his bottle and is slowly but surely going to sleep. Sherry is overseeing this letter, telling me what to write and what not to write. She says I can tell you that she is my niece, but that you're not to tell anyone else. She just asked me what I was to her so I've been explaining this aunt and niece business. She's just six and just at the questioning age, and can she ask them!

Warren just came in so things are buzzing around here now. I think he is going to enlist very soon since this bill went through. [In fact, on December 5, 1942, a presidential executive order changed the age range for the draft to 18–38.] Mom hasn't said very much. We were talking about it in bed last night and she seems to think he is right. I'm so glad that she feels that way because it will make everything easier when he goes. He is in the heat treat department of the metallurgy laboratory where they make up the formulas and test them. I believe he is thinking about going into the metalsmith division of the Navy Air Corps... that will be something like the same thing he is doing here.

Your mom said Eddie would be coming home after the fifteenth of November. She said he would probably be shipped out after that. She will be so glad to see him, I know. I haven't heard from Father John in quite some time. She didn't say whether he had decided to enlist or not. She and Dottie and El have already decided what kind of shower they are going to give me, so they are making their plans for us, too.

Marguerite called me the other night and, of course, I was at work. Her father has been quite ill. He had an operation on his eyes but is getting along fine now. She is going to either spend Christmas with us or come right after. Golly, will I be glad to see her.

If this letter makes sense it will surprise me, because of all the activity going on... I feel like I'm in Grand Central Station.

I was waiting on the bus yesterday morning and some fellow comes up to me and says, "Who won?" and I said, "Won what?" He looked at me like I was crazy because I didn't know what he meant. If you don't know who is playing football and where, and what the score is, you just aren't anybody at all.

Warren wants me to join the WAVE. They passed a bill to say that those women wouldn't be sent out of the country. There was a WAAC in the office yesterday. She looked good in her uniform and seemed to like Army life. She was a former employee in the bookkeeping department... in the hospital, I mean. I would consider joining, but I'm afraid I might land in Timbaktu by the time the war is over and you'd come back before I would. That would be terrible. I don't like to even think about it.

Everyone is putting their word in for me to say they all think you are pretty swell, from what I have told them, and want so much to meet you.

Your beautiful Christmas cards came the other day. Mom was so pleased that you remembered her. I love my card. It will look good in our scrapbook. Our first Christmas together... well, not exactly together, but our first Christmas.

Do you know it will be our tenth anniversary this time and it won't be long until it will be a year? Makes me dizzy to think how short a time it has been and much has happened. Maybe we can spend our twentieth one together or would that be asking too much?

I wish you could see me writing now with the baby on one knee and using one finger. Sherry is helping me when I have to shift. She is learning her letters now and does right well. They teach them a different method now... all by memory.

"I am Sherry and I can count to one hundred by tens and I wish you were here. I have a brother and he is nice and I have another brother who is sick in the hospital."

The above is Sherry's contribution to my letter. She wanted to say something to you. She always asks me if I have had a letter from my sweetheart.

I started this letter a long, long time ago and here I still am. I've done just about everything since I started, had dinner, and my sister and brother-in-law have returned.

Sherry sat on my lap and I called the letters to her and she hit them and that's what happened. Then she would read over what she wrote... quite proud of herself, too.

I've rambled enough for one night. Enclosed are two pages out of our Sunday paper that I thought you might like. 'Night, darling. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*November 16, 1942—London*

Evening sweetheart,

At long last... mail. Yesterday I received seven letters, all old ones, but letters, nevertheless. Among them was yours of Oct. 4. I've read it at least a dozen times, and it sounds better every time. It really does.

You said, "I wish I could express my feelings," in regards to your big day on the 4th. You couldn't have done any better if you were a playwright. It was a grand coincidence that it all happened on our anniversary. And, it was like you to remember it. Things have happened so fast recently that I've missed some of our "big dates." You'll forgive me, won't you?

Still, I know that tomorrow is the 17th and that is one of our days. Ten months ago tomorrow night. I sent a cable the other day, hoping you'd get it by tomorrow.

I had to laugh when you spoke of "the butterflies in my stomach," because I can appreciate the feeling. I've had it lots of times. You don't think I took everything in a casual manner those nights at

the Inn, Hawaiian Room and the day at Penn Station, do you? I wish I could bound up the stairs and hold you this minute. I could try it but I'm afraid it would be a mirage.

I believe I told you what I did on the morning of Oct. 4. Your letter, telling me of the date, came on Oct. 3, I believe. So, while you were at the altar rail in Asheville, I was at one "somewhere in Ireland." We were together, asking for the same things.

I'm not surprised Dot didn't say anything about the heir or heiress. I told you it was a false alarm, didn't I?

About the "apartment or house" item. We'll have just what you want. If it has to be an apartment, it just has to be, at first. But we'll get that house some way. As far as anything being temporary, I could be at home in a pup tent with you, honestly.

Dot told me of the places in North Arlington and it sounded swell. Still, I wonder if they will be available when... The picture in No. Africa looks pretty good. In fact, it looks good all over. But, there is plenty to be done yet. I'd like to wake up tomorrow morning and find myself in J.C., with you knocking on the door. You can even dispense with the formality.

I'm going to write to Mother Müller again soon and thank her for everything. Hope I don't forget it.

I met the latest arrival of Hollywood people. One of the fellows had the assignment but I accompanied him. Mitzi Mayfair is very nice, Carole Landis is not as nice as she is on the screen. Martha Raye is a bit disappointing and Kay Francis very charming. I haven't seen their show yet but I was told it was good.

I'm enclosing some more clippings. Too, I'm sending the paper along regularly. I can't say when you'll get them, but they'll get there eventually. Love to Mother and the Gilberts.

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



*(L-r) Carole Landis, Mitzi Mayfair, Kay Francis and Martha Raye. In 1942 and 1943 the women participated in a U.S.O tour to England, Northern Ireland and North Africa. In 1944, they made a movie about their tour called "Four Fills in a Jeep."*

*November 18, 1942—Massillon*

My darling,

Just got in from work and as usual can't go to sleep. I must have insomnia or something. It's one now and I've been up since a quarter to six.

It is soupy out... raining cats and dogs. Funny part is that it is so warm, like spring almost.

My first letter from London came yesterday, just one page. There must be another on the way because this doesn't explain the transfer. Your two stories were enclosed and I've passed them around to the family. We all enjoyed them. Did it look swell to see your name under the heading! I can imagine that you felt the same way, to see some of your writing in print again, signed and all.

I can't imagine what the Christmas present could be. The best things come in small packages. You shouldn't worry about my Christmas. Loving you is enough. What I would like is to spend Christmas with you. When I think we could have had last Christmas together if we'd met just a few weeks sooner... What fun, but then we have our first Christmas together to look forward to.

Enclosed is a booklet I bought in St. Peter's on Saturday when I went to confession. It is next to the hospital in Canton. This is so beautifully written that I had to send it to you. Mother Müller went into the subject a little in my instructions, but not like this. We thought we'd have more time afterwards. Since taking my instructions I have realized how much more marriage means than I did before, and if I haven't told you, I meant to... that you waiting to marry me means so much more now than when you left, because I wouldn't want to get married any other way but the proper way, now.

I've sent several letters to the new address, so I suppose by this time they are there, and the old lonesome feeling is gone. How I had it Saturday night, first time like that in a long time. The cause, I believe, was that I got too tired, but I had it. I couldn't even write because I didn't want to make you feel bad. I'm anxious to hear about what you are doing. Perhaps you will be able to tell me more than when you were in Ireland.

I meant to tell you before how we stand with our finances. We have a fifty-dollar bond that can be cashed should you need some money, and \$21.63 balance of the \$50.00 you sent me for the presents. We don't really have it because I owe it to you. It's been so long since I had a pay and, of course, our move to Massillon made extra expense. There didn't seem to be any other way out. That would about take care of the presents for Christmas so that's the way I'll make it even, ok?

There was something else I forgot to tell you. Mrs. Davidson died week before last in St. Joseph's Hospital. We just heard last week. She wasn't very well when we left and we hated to have her make the change, but there wasn't any alternative. We were hoping her nephew would take her until she felt better, but he wouldn't. I guess the change wasn't so good. Mom and I both feel so badly about it. She did seem like one of the family. She was such a sweet old lady. She liked you so much. I heard her say many times that she wouldn't be sorry to go. She had been pretty lonely the last ten years without her husband. From what I've heard, they were devoted to each other, not having any children.

I really must try and sleep now. Goodnight, my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*November 20, 1942—Massillon*

My dearest Charles,

Two letters waiting for me tonight. I know this isn't our regular date night, but I had to write and maybe tomorrow night I won't have the opportunity. These letters are those written October 22 in N. Ireland and the long-awaited letter of explanation concerning the cable.

As I've said before, I'm so pleased and proud you are back in the newspaper work once more, and I know how much it means to you. Of course, I knew what the cable must mean, but I'm glad the letter is here.

I love the one you wrote in N. Ireland. I can just see you all gathered around in your quarters trying to amuse yourselves. You are probably missing those fellows in London. Did I ever tell you how much I love your letters, especially when you talk about us? Sometimes it seems like a century since I last saw you and then again like yesterday. These nights I come in from work and everyone is in bed, I feel so close to you and not at all alone. I'd be lying if I said I didn't get rebellious and feel like throwing things because you aren't here to take me in your arms when I feel like that, but a letter comes and I'm ok again until the next time. Oh well, one of these nights I'll come home and you'll be waiting for me...

I've been trying to imagine what that meeting might be like. It's been placed everywhere but Timbuktu... my over-active imagination. I don't know what I'll do... probably pass out and miss everything.

Don't laugh, but I'm very comfortable and I see a blue garter. I can't help but think of the circumstances around that purchase. It was in New York and you know the story. I was saving them, but decided I could buy a new pair when the time came. Sometimes, I feel that maybe we should have gone ahead and taken the step, but most of the time I'm glad we're waiting. The reason for that is my entering the church. This way, marriage will mean so much to us, or perhaps I should say, to me.

Please, don't worry about my not having a ring. I wouldn't trade mine for all the "blue-whites" in the world because it isn't every girl that can wear a ring that you can call "ours." You wore it a long time and that means so much to me now. Oh, if we were together, then it would be different. All I want now is the mate to the "blue-white." That's all we have to be concerned about, so please don't be disappointed.

The only company I have now besides you is Rex stretched out in front of me fast asleep, positively the ugliest mongrel I've ever seen. He's so homely, he's cute.

I'd like to have my picture made to send to your mom and you. I'll see if I can't get it done before Christmas. I could send it airmail and maybe it would be there to spend Christmas with you. I sent your package after the incident of those packages being sent to the bottom. What a shame. I hope the duplicates get there in time.

There isn't much chance of you being sent home since you are in this kind of work now... just a thought. Mom and I were talking about it the other night.

No bonds yet. If they were sent to Asheville, they'd be transferred here anyway because they send them registered mail to assure proper delivery.

We have a new corner, by the radio. No fireplace, darn it, but we don't need it. It's almost like a summer night out. I can hardly believe it. This is the eve of the big Massillon-Canton game, the last game of the season. Naturally, this is the chief topic of conversation everywhere. The office was simply buzzing and the money being bet was terrific. Not only money but coffee, sugar and scotch.

Did you by any chance notice the cartoon on the back of your story about the mayor of Hammersmith, entitled "Damyankee?" Seems like I've heard that somewhere before, spelled like that. The girls got a kick out of that.

It's getting earlier by the minute and I'm getting sleepier. Don't you love my method of bringing on sleep? I know you must feel complimented. A quarter to seven rolls around in no time at all. Goodnight, my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

If I'd ever turned around in Penn Station that night and looked back, I'd been a goner for sure. You'll never know how much it took to go the other way. I don't know yet how I made the hotel because I couldn't see a thing for tears. B.

I'm enclosing some stamps... thought you might need some.

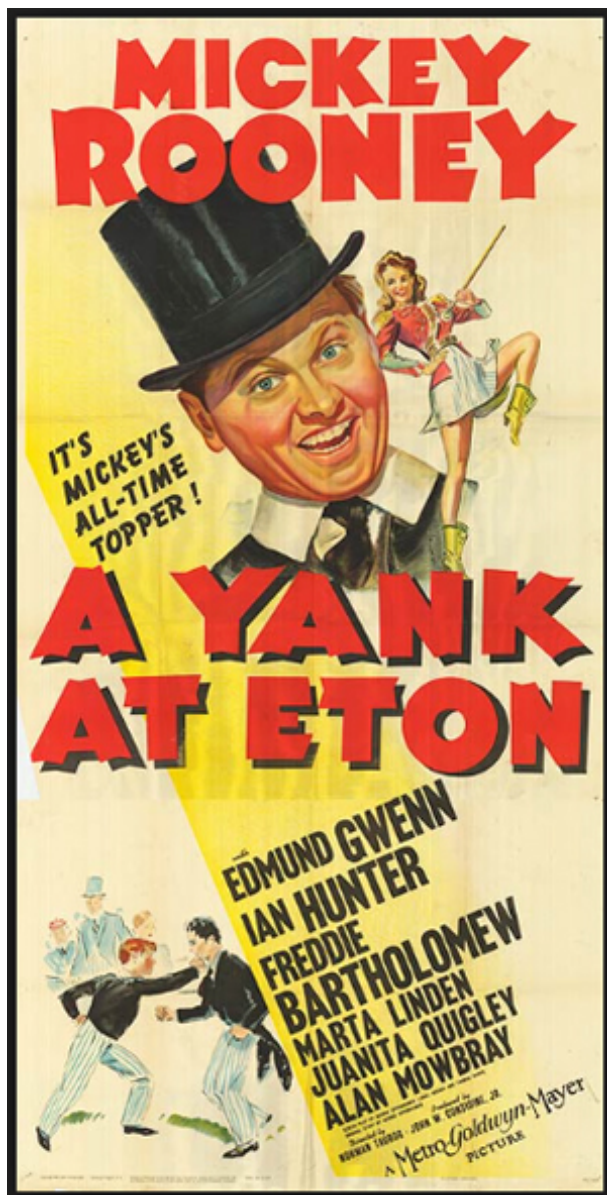
*November 21, 1942—London*

Evening sweetheart,

Saturday night... not anything unusual but it is one of our date nights. And, I can't forget it is two days before my birthday. I'm afraid it's going to be a rather dull birthday, too. That is, as far as the customary celebrations go.

The best birthday present I could receive from you came two days ago...your letter of Nov. 4. Apparently, you had written some before it that I haven't received yet because until I read that letter I didn't know you were working for Republic, I didn't know Mother was with Mercy hospital, I didn't know about little Billy and I can't remember hearing what you wanted for winning the Series' wager. However, I expect that letters which have been delayed will give me the answers.

Now, I've gone 15 lines without telling you that I love you so much. Forgive me?



I certainly would have written as soon as your letter came. I wanted to but I was just preparing to leave on a two-day trip... assignment. I came back this morning and after getting my work done, I went to see M. [Mickey] Rooney in "A Yank at Eton." It gets a bit lonely wandering around on a day off. Saturday is our light day since we don't publish on Sunday. That's when I miss you the most.

Big Ben has just tolled 6 p.m., reminding me that I haven't eaten since before noon. I have three or four letters to get off so my stomach will have to wait.

Getting back to "miss you..." The other night I sat in the lounge of a Red Cross club here and listened to all but one of our favorite records. Yes, the missing one was the Concerto.

Often I think I can tell you all the things that are in my heart but when I read my letters, they still sound so inadequate. Even this one doesn't seem to say what I want and I'm trusting you understand. I've said that so many times before it is wearing out, isn't it? At night I still try to create a little consolation by thinking about us... when we'll be together, how long it might be, wishing I was near you in whatever you were doing,

worrying about you, and cursing Hitler for the day he was born. Then, a letter from you arrives and everything is fine again, for a while. The "miss-you" feeling creeps back all over again, and I love you more than ever.

I said I was worried about you. Without sounding like an old woman, I am concerned about those gosh-awful hours you work. I know there is work to be done and Republic has to function, but Billee, please don't let it run you down.

It must be enjoyable to meet the fellows and girls with whom you went to school. I'll bet you looked like a stranger, no? Still, you have a face that isn't likely to be forgotten soon. And I AM envious (call it jealous, if you will) of those guys who have the opportunity to see it. I haven't seen it for seven months and nine days, but I can tell you every characteristic of it, right down to the tilted nose.

You asked me about an Edward Snyder. You were right in saying there might be "one chance in a million" that I'd meet him. Was he in the 135th? You mentioned Co. A, but that could be plenty of units. If I knew his address, I might be able to locate him and find out why his people haven't heard from him.

About the pictures... you should have some now. But, those I took while on furlough were being developed when I moved. A fellow promised to send them to me but I haven't received them. Too, the miniatures I had made in London were sent to Co. H, and I haven't had them yet, either. All I can do is be patient, I guess.

I've received two Christmas packages from home, one of which was pretty badly mangled. A letter from Dot came recently, too, and with it some pictures they took. Al is presently disabled by an injured wrist. I'm enclosing the pictures as well as some clippings in a letter to accompany this. I hope you get them at the same time. In one of the packages from home was a carton of cigarettes, the first Virginia Rounds I've been able to smoke in a month. Mom also sent a compact kit of toilet articles and a gabardine money belt. Don't ask me what I'm going to put into the money belt, but I might use it to keep old stubs, cancelled checks, etc.

I hope everything is going right with the bonds. I've been told it may take a bit of time before they are delivered. Besides, I hope the Asheville P.O. has your forwarding address. There I go, hoping again.

Time to say goodnight, sweetheart. I'll be back again soon. Let me know if the Christmas cards arrive o.k. Love to Mother and the rest.

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

PS: Honey, the nicest part of your letters is the end... always your Billee.

*November 23, 1942—Massillon*

My dearest Charles,

Happy birthday! I sent you a wire today that should arrive in a few days. Really meant to do it several days ago so that it would arrive in time but the days went by too quickly. I hope my card arrived in time to be with you today since I wouldn't want you to think I had forgotten. Enclosed is a letter I wrote last week that came back for more postage so I'm sending them together.

It's nasty out again... rain as usual. I have a cold I can't get rid of. Wish it would snow or something.

The biggest upset of the year... Massillon lost to Canton for the first time in eight years and its only loss in heaven knows when. 35-0. You can imagine what a blow that would be. They've had regular riots here since Saturday. Canton hasn't stopped celebrating yet. We have two high school kids in jail and the school is on a walkout until they are released. People have been stoned in the street by Canton passersby in their cars. You can't imagine people carrying something like a football game to such extremes. There's a limit to everything. Anyhow, the Yankees and Massillon got beat this year. What upsets!

Spent a very quiet weekend. Went to the midnight show with my brother and brother-in-law and then dancing afterward. Sunday, went to 11:00 Mass and spent the day with Jess and Ernest Blumenauer. I took your picture along so you are officially introduced now. They both gave their approval so everything is all right. They brought me home and spent the evening with us.

That seems to be all the news. We'll spend your next birthday together... I'll bet you!! I'd love to give you a special birthday loving, and I could do it. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*November 26, 1942—Massillon*

My darling,

Happy Thanksgiving. It's very early but still Thanksgiving morning and I know this will be the only opportunity I'll have to write even though you'll be with me and the folks. The last time I had turkey was with you... remember our first dinner together at 412? I have so many things to be thankful for.

I'm curled up in bed trying to get sleepy. Mom has gone to Lettie's [Billee's older sister] to play nursemaid to the kids while they go to a dance so I'm sleeping alone tonight.

A note came today written November 12 and you say, "still no mail." I know just how you feel. Some should be there by now, I'm sure. They will probably all come at once and you'll have to get another furlough to read them all.

This place will really be buzzing a little later on when the rest of the family gets here. We expect 20. Warren and I are going to a dance later on in the evening. He is waiting on his birth certificate so he can get his enlistment papers. It won't be so long now. I'm going to miss him. We get along well together and I'm really just beginning to know him. His year away from home has changed and made him older than his eighteen years.

They are starting to break in the girls on the day shift on the jobs of some of the fellows who have already received questionnaires, so it won't be long now. Some of them are very complicated jobs. I've got my fingers crossed. Heaven only knows what they will give me.

I had a long letter from Marguerite today. It came with yours. I hope she can come soon. If ever a girl deserved a break for a little personal happiness, she does. She's another of my blessings... being able to call her my friend and know that it means something. I should be writing her now instead of you, but I knew just how you must have felt with no mail, so I'm sending some more on the way to keep you company. I wanted to send you a cable for Thanksgiving and forgot until it was too late.

How am I going to stand up against such competition as all these celebrities, I want to know... Carole Landis, Kay Francis, Martha Raye and Mitzie Mayfair (who's she, by the way?). I wonder if I could rate a seat on a clipper to spend Christmas. I'd be entertaining a soldier and anyone else you might happen to have around. Nice I can dream... Christmas in London with you. What would we do? If I'd joined the WAAC I'd probably be on my way now, but the only trouble is that it might not be England. Oh well, it won't be so long now. I have a hunch, a very strong feeling that you'll be home sooner than we expect. I'm praying that hunch is right.

A goodnight kiss going your way... a kiss of thanksgiving. Next time I'll be able to give it to you personally.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*November 28, 1942—Massillon*

My dearest one,

What a pleasant surprise... your letter written just a week ago! Can you imagine? Congratulations Uncle Sam. Keep up the good work.

You must be wondering about a lot of things if you received the letter written the fourth and none before. I'm sure everything is straightened out by now. I wrote last night, but didn't mail it, so I'm writing again... our date for tonight.

Do I catch just a note of discouragement in your letter? Don't forget my morale. Everything will be all right one of these days and you'll be back in your own little groove again, a bit crowded since I'll be there, but all this will be just an interlude... a sort of nightmare, you might say, and we'll never be lonely again, ever. I'm propped up in bed and when I look up there, you are watching me from the dressing table. I love that picture.

Today was very busy for me and I'm a wee bit worn out. Too, I've had a cold that seems to like my company so much, it doesn't want to leave me. The mornings... Saturday mornings at the hospital, are always so hard for me. I can't get awake. I caught myself nodding several times over the typewriter. Good thing I was in an office by myself. I get up at a quarter to seven in order to go that nine miles by eight.

I forgot... yesterday brought another letter written the sixteenth and the article on Alaska, by far the best. I enjoyed it so much. Even if it hadn't had that very important name of "Charles F. Kiley" attached to it, I would have known it was yours. The family enjoyed it, too. My uncle's comment: "Hmmm, for a sportswriter, he doesn't do bad at all." He's such a tease. I'll bet Ray Roche was pleased about your promotion. What did he have to say?

I'm so glad you received the Xmas box from your mom. You bum, you opened it. You have to have a place for those studs. You can dream, can't you... so the money belt comes in handy. A pup tent, a trailer, a tree... anything just so long as we're together. Houses or apartments aren't worrying me.

Still no bonds, but I guess it takes time. You have some sort of receipt, don't you?

My Xmas present to us from me came yesterday... our blankets. I finally finished paying for them. We'll be warm, if nothing else, in that pup tent. I'd forgotten how beautiful they were.

[Note in margin] It's a good thing I'm reading this over... nothing makes sense.

Our Thanksgiving family reunion was a huge success. All that was lacking was your presence. You missed a great opportunity to meet all the family at one time. What a dinner! Warren took me dancing afterwards so it was a very nice Thanksgiving. I couldn't help but wonder if you were sharing someone else's. Of course, I know that's a good old American custom, but I know they must have had something for you fellows.

No one would have ever known the butterflies were raging that night in the Hawaiian Room. You seemed so much at ease, as if proposing to me might have been an every day occurrence. I don't

mean to be pinning laurels on you, but one of the things, your qualities I mean, that got me was your appearance of self-assurance without being overbearing or conceited. That's just one among all of them that made me succumb (what a word, but it's down there now) to your charms... ha. Don't throw anything yet until I duck. All kidding aside, you've done wonders for my self-confidence. I'm a new woman. No remarks, please.

I've been waiting patiently for some word about Dot. I am sorry. I know they must have been disappointed. I know how I'd feel. She probably thinks I fell in a hole somewhere. Yes, I owe her a letter, but I never seem to have any time to myself anymore. I miss those quiet evenings in Asheville when my time was my own. I'm going to try and write to her tomorrow, and to Marguerite and Father John. I haven't written him in over a month. I tried to do some Christmas shopping, but didn't have much luck. I needed more time. I'll drop a note to El tomorrow and see what suggestions she has for Mom Kiley.

Don't ever think your letters are inadequate. I love every little letter that makes up the words. They are music to my ears... no kidding.

Seems so silly sometimes when I think of it. Why couldn't I hop a plane and be with you over there. I wouldn't get in the way, not even to tag along if it couldn't be done at that time. I could file orders over there just as well as in Republic Steel here. I think they have a subsidiary over there. I'll look into that. I know I'd get pretty far... "I want a transfer to England, please."

I knew that Saturday morning that you were close to me in thought. I felt a little lonely going into church, but when I walked through the altar gate and into the sanctuary, I knew you were somewhere near. I couldn't help but think that the next time I did that, we'd be together, and I could reach out and really take your hand and we wouldn't be dreaming. Not so long now... just a little more patience.

Don't worry about me. You have enough to do. I'm all right and a little hard work never hurt anyone. I hope my Xmas package arrives in time to be with you and that Davy Jones doesn't have the pleasure of unwrapping it.

I seem to have covered all the news this time. I'll be back, though, and soon. I hope my letter makes as good time as yours. Just a week ago. I can hardly believe it. There are probably not so many with your address. Maybe that accounts for it. I'm looking forward to the *Stars and Stripes*. Fine competition I have... all those glamour girls. Quite a change from covering sports events, huh?

God willing, I'll always end my letters this way...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

It just couldn't be any other way.

November 29, 1942—London

Evening sweetheart,

I could say that I love you more than ever, but I wouldn't be telling the truth. It's because I couldn't feel any closer to you than I do now, no matter what happens. I've told you that my love grew more and more each day and it was true to a certain extent. But, when I consider everything, I know it is the same now as it was last Jan. 17, and it will always be thus.

You may wonder, why this opening flood of "amour?" It is because the Christmas packages arrived? In a sense, you'd be right. The packages did come the other day while I was away on another three-day trip and they were almost too much to ask for. Now that I have dispersed the contents, I can't remember whether it came in one or two packages, I was that excited. But, even if the Christmas cheer never came I'd feel the same. The packages just served to show how thoughtful you are.

I'm wearing the gloves... perfect fit. I needed the hankies so bad I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw them. Oh, just everything was swell.

Now, the cake... my, oh my. I'm letting you in on a secret that you'll have to promise to keep. Naturally, I shared it with the boys; then, I typed a little testimonial to Mother's baking and had the fellows sign it. I enclosed it in another Christmas card. Incidentally, one of our cartoonists, Dick Wingert [creator of the a disheveled GI comic strip, Hubert], designed a Christmas card for the fellows and I sent a few of them out. You'll get one, together with Mother and the Gilberts. Hope you like them.



*Not the Dick Wingert Christmas Card, but an original Wingert cartoon from April 1942 found in Billee's scrapbook.*

Today I received another Christmas package from Marty and Bill as well as a carton of cigarettes from Dot and Al. Had a long letter from Ruth Totten, too. First one from her in a long time. She's all tied up with USO work in New York. A letter from Mother said she hadn't heard from you recently but she didn't know of your unstable hours, I guess. She asked for your new address but I presume she has it by now.

Before I go another step, I see by the papers that Massillon High woke up one recent Saturday afternoon to discover itself on the short end of a 35-0 score. How come? Is it because Paul Brown is missing, or is the once-famous Massillon team fresh out of good material?

I had two shocks today regarding football. The biggest was Boston College's unmerciful beating of Holy Cross and Navy's win over Army. Tom Bernard, our Navy writer, has been walking around

today with an expanded chest and a triumphant look on his face. The rest of us have been rather silent.



*(L-r) Charles, Vivien Leigh, Diana Wynyard and Ralph Martin at the Red Cross Center opening—London, November 1942.*

This afternoon, a new Red Cross center was opened here. By this afternoon, I mean early evening, Vivien Leigh, Diana Wynyard and Miriam Jordan as well as an Army glee club and orchestra were on a transatlantic broadcast through NBC, 6:30-7:00 p.m., our time over here. That would make it 2:30 to 3:00 Eastern War Time, I believe. Ralph Martin, who accompanied me on my recent trip, covered the story. While we were talking with the stars, a Signal Corps photographer snapped a picture. I'll try to get one and send it on to you.

Incidentally, while Ralph and I were on the trip, we stumbled on a good story. Kay Francis and Mitzi Mayfair, here on tour with Martha Raye and Carole Landis, were in an Army hospital down with colds, etc. Mitzi sustained a sprained shoulder while tossing a sergeant over her shoulder during a jitterbug act. We were allowed to see Mitzi, whom we had met before, but not Kay. As usual, Mitzi was very pleasant. We chatted for 45 minutes and then phoned the story into the office. To our surprise, nobody else had the story. It was good from our angle because they were forced into the hospital as the result of entertaining the troops.

Another story we gathered concerned a man who jumped from tech sergeant to captain by direct appointment. I'm sending the story separately. What I want to tell you here is that he comes from JERSEY CITY!

This morning I had breakfast in a Red Cross club and there met another J.C. boy. He's a sergeant in the Air Corps who lived on Journal Square. Small world, huh?

I don't know whether I mentioned this before... Do you think you could stow away somewhere with the next group of movie stars to come over here? I'll promise to meet you at the station and take the steps two-at-a-time again.

I received some of the snapshots taken at El's wedding and I'm sending them to you separately. They'll be good for our scrapbook.

And now, I'm going to try and get a couple of more letters out of the way before I leave tonight. I made a list of those I should write and stopped when I got to 19! I haven't written to the office in ages, so that will be next. Love to Mother and the Gilberts.

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

PS: Missed our Sat. night date, Billee. What were you doing? I was busy right up to 11 p.m., getting off the stories we gathered on the trip. I had only one thought when I was finished... a hot tub and a soft bed.

I just discovered your letter of Oct. 21 in my mailbox. It told me of your arrival in Massillon, about little Billy's misfortune and... sweetheart, I'll never tire of hearing you say you love me. I'll be back soon.

*December 2, 1942—Massillon*

My beloved,

Yesterday brought two *Stars and Stripes*, Nov. 20 and 21 with your article about the CWAACs. I feel like enlisting right away, it was so good. That must have been an interesting interview, seeing and speaking with all of them. I'm still tempted to enlist, but the thought of Mom halts me.

They wouldn't accept Warren in the Navy because he stutters a little when he gets excited or overtired. We've done everything... he's lots better than when he was younger and I think in time it will leave him entirely. The recruiting officer suggested the Navy Reserve. I hope they accept him because he will be so disappointed. As much as I don't want to see him leave, you have to look at it from his side and he does want to go so badly.

We're having some real winter out... snow and wind. Yesterday it rained all day and was so messy, but today is very different and the wind is whistling around the house for all it's worth. I've been catching up on my correspondence... wrote to Father John, El and Dottie. I'm going to bake some cookies and fix up a box to send to Eddie for Christmas. I'll try and get it off this week but I'll have to wait for the address from Father John.

You must have heard Churchill's speech. ["Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." Winston Churchill, November 29, 1942.] I was feeling very optimistic until I heard that. He is very right... this is only the beginning and as you say

there is so much to be done yet, but I do feel we hold the upper hand. It just can't last too awfully long for the sake of our ball team...

Little Billy, my nephew with infantile paralysis, wiggled his little toes the other night for the first time and moved his one leg by himself. That means so much progress. My sister is feeling a little better.

We had some bad news over the weekend. My cousin I told you about, in the Marines, was killed in action at Guadalcanal. We're hoping and praying they've made a mistake. While I haven't seen so much of him in later years, when we lived here before, our families were always so close. He is your age and such a swell fellow. He was quite outstanding in sports in high school and played football three years at L.S.U. I still can't believe it... none of us can. It's certainly bringing the realization of it all home to us. So many thoughts have gone through my mind since we heard but I guess they are better left unsaid.

I went to a dance Saturday night, the kind I didn't think they had any more. Everyone from junior to grandpa was there, with a string orchestra. Part of it was square dancing and the rest round dancing. They ended up with the Home Waltz and everyone stood at attention and sang the Star Spangled Banner. Whenever I hear it and sing it like that, I think of the times we sang it holding hands, in Asheville, the night of the President's Ball and in Radio City. I closed my eyes and pretended you were there. I was so disappointed when I opened them. That's the trouble with those dreams.

I'm looking out the window at all the neighbors' houses that my life has been associated with for so many years. I still can't believe I'm actually here. It's a funny world. You go through the same routine day after day for so long, then all at once, something happens to change everything and then you find yourself in a new routine or pattern of life... whatever you want to call it. I wonder how many more changes and adjustments I'll make before I bid farewell to this world. I'm crazy today... how do you stand me and my screwy ideas?

Everything is so peaceful right here. I'm curled up in bed listening to the concert.

You didn't tell me what kind of place you are staying in. I presumed you weren't living in "a pup tent" where you are now. Are you under the same discipline as before, or not?

Warren enjoys your *Stars and Stripes* so much. He takes it off me when he comes in, before I've had an opportunity to finish reading it. How do you like that?

Warren took me to a Thanksgiving dance Thursday night and some of the kids were quite a bit younger than I and, don't laugh, I got stuck with a high school graduate. He took it for granted I was as old as he was and did I have a time. That brother of mine, instead of answering my S.O.S., sat in the corner and made fun of me. I'll get even with him yet. I'll think twice before I go to one of those again. I'd hate to disillusion the guy.

Charles, I've rambled all through these pages and haven't told you how much I love you... taking things for granted again. I'll never learn. I've got that old "miss you" feeling, too. In fact, I keep it most of the time, but I guess that's to be expected. You know I hope that when you come back we never have to write another letter to each other. Wouldn't that be wonderful... never to be that far apart again? Something to look forward to.

Are you still with me or asleep by now? It's time I closed this rambling. Take care of yourself. My prayers and thoughts are always with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*December 6, 1942—London*

Dearest Billee,

This is my Christmas letter to you.

Letters, which will follow, may reach you before Christmas. Perhaps they will not. At any rate, I do hope this gets to you before Dec. 25 at least.

I am not writing this as a "special," sweetheart, because anything and everything I write to you is very special. Still, inasmuch as we will not be together for our first Christmas, I want to try and say some things that I would be tempted to say on such an occasion. We won't pretend we are together, in Asheville visiting the places we knew together or sitting in "our corner," clinging to the things more realistic than hope, or in New York and Jersey making our Christmas a never-to-be-forgotten one. And, we won't pretend we are in Massillon with the folks I am so anxious to meet and know.

Instead, let us face the situation just as it is. I'm here and you are there, thousands of miles apart yet as close to each other as we have been and will ever be, everything considered. By that, I mean you and I are part of each other now and no matter how many miles separate us we will know that everything is "normal."

I have been thinking of what to say that will tell you how much you have meant and do mean to me. You have heard it many times before. But, let me tell you again, please?

I am not using something out of Hollywood, or out of a fiction story, when I say you are everything that is to be, every hope I possess. Too, you are everything lovely, soft and tender. I hesitate to ever say anything "gushy," and I trust these things aren't in this case.

Having wandered aimlessly, as it were, for so long before meeting you I can fully appreciate what you are to me. For that, I'll ever be thankful. Remember how we called it "fate," meeting each other and loving all that followed? Perhaps it was just that. I don't know. What I do know is that they were ours, those days, hours, moments we were together.

That night I saw Al in Trenton for the last time, four nights before I sailed, I told him what my plans were when and if I got back. Know me as he does, I was a little surprised to see it wasn't exactly news to him. "I wondered, many times, how long it would be until you realized women were something more than dates for a dance, a party, football game, theater or things like that," he said in so many words. What he didn't know was that no one struck me just right. And, I'm not being egotistical by saying that.

I've known girls, some of whom I thought were Miss Right as they say. But, in time, I realized they weren't. With each one, Al and Dot used to say, "What next?" So, when I told Al you would be Mrs.

Kiley, and how humbly thankful I was, he threatened to “crease my skull” if anything happened to those plans. I assured him he would never have to take such drastic steps.

How I kept loving you more and more every day I’ve been away from you, is history. How much I looked for your letters, gloried in showing off your packages, pictures, etc., is over, too. Until the next, of course. And, when on Christmas day I meet God at the altar rail, my thanks will be for having you.

It won’t be a bright Christmas because I’ll be thinking of you. I suppose that should be a lift, but it affects me just the opposite. In a way, I’m glad it does. I appreciate you more.

Perhaps a year from now we will be looking forward to better things, planning our first Christmas tree. (We couldn’t very well have any of the team there, could we?) but, I am looking ahead to the Dec. 25s that we will have the boys, and the girl(s) to tell of “The Night Before Christmas.”

What I’m really trying to say, darling, is that I love you.

Billee, I have your last three letters before me. That is, those which have reached here last. They are those of Oct. 8 and 27 and Nov. 16. The first two were delayed by the transfer from Co. H, and the latter was held up a bit because you addressed it to APO #887, without including “The Stars and Stripes.” However, they still were your “bits of heaven,” as always.

The Oct. 27 letter included the prints of the picture I sent. I showed them to Ralph Martin, my sidekick here, which brought the remark, “Don’t ever show this to Billee. God, you look 45 if you look a day.” I had to tell him you had seen the picture. Then he wanted to know when we were going to be “divorced.” Looking at it again, I DO give the impression of being kind of ancient, don’t I? Perhaps it’s the GI haircut.



*Ralph Martin and Charles in the Stars and Stripes office—London, November 1942.*

I was glad to hear you were stepping out and having a swell time with Warren. The “Billee Kiley” nom de plume was good. Honey, will you wear a ribbon for me? I love girls with ribbons in their hair. That is, I love you with a ribbon in your hair. I’d better be more explicit.

You wanted to know more details on shopping for Dad, Eddie and Father John. I imagine it's too late for that now. If you went through with it, ok, but if not, we'll let it rest until next year, or perhaps on their birthdays.

Oh, incidentally, the Sporting News (those you sent) were swell. I did get them all, I think. After reading them, I passed them on to the Red Cross clubs here.

You can tell Warren we cross the bridge (re, wearing that "monkey suit") when we come to it. Before I make any plans whatever for the wedding you are going to have the first and last say in the matter.

As for waiting until Christmas to open the packages... I couldn't wait that long. It's just like asking me to stand around with my hands in my pockets when we first see each other again. I did keep the cake for two days. Then, one day we had tea in the office and I brought out the cake.

Your letter of Nov. 14, in which Sherry was introduced (I love her) was a perfect picture. Billee Kiley keeping house with two children. I like that.

About Warren enlisting: there isn't much anyone can do about that these days. Letters from home tell me how all the kids are getting the itch and nothing keeps them out. Yes, a great many of them are young but I've seen real youngsters over here doing the job of men. Some of these RAF lads, veterans of many flights, are barely in their 20s. If Mother wants to, she might be able to stall Warren for a time but if he has a mind to get in, he'll go. From what you say, I'm sure he can get a good post with the Navy Air Corps. As for enlisting, we carried a story yesterday saying that all manpower in the Army and Navy will be handled by Selective Service. In that case, he won't be able to enlist, even if he wants to. I can discourage you from thinking about the WAAC and WAVE, too. I do think you should be with Mother.

As for me, I'm still as busy as ever. First, I'll tell you of my "flat." I don't believe I told you in my last letter. In fact, I don't believe I had it then. We were put on subsistence, inasmuch as we have to work pretty much like the civilian war correspondents, traveling out of town, working unstable hours, etc. So, I have a swell room, in a nice residential section, overlooking a park. There's plenty of closet space, a bureau, desk, table and bathroom, all part of a room-and-a-half "flat" as they call it here. I have breakfast served in my room every morning (oh, my yes). Since rooms are hard to get here, I enlisted the aid of a very sweet woman, a volunteer in the Red Cross. Her husband is an officer in the British medical corps (skin specialist in civilian life) who is now in North Africa. She knows everybody from generals on down, is quite well-to-do, mixes in a set with Lady So-and-So, etc. But she is a peach. She tracked down this place and sent me to it. In return, I'm trying to buy a doll for her only child, a daughter of six. Dolls are as scarce as can be, believe it or not. She mentioned once that she had been trying, without success, to get one before Christmas, I don't know how successful I'll be with it.

Bad news, too. I can't find the miniatures of the pictures I had taken. I was to have a few of them enlarged. Hope I can find them. I'll let you know. Love to Mother and all at 1215 [the number of the Gilberts' house] and vicinity.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

December 6, 1942—Massillon

My dearest one,

I've sneaked away from the family awhile... so much activity. Sherry Ann and the baby are here. I just came in a few minutes ago from having dinner out, at Jess and Ernest's again.

(I had to leave again... supper this time. I'm off to a bad start.)

We had a big Saturday night last night giving my brother a sendoff. Yes, he was accepted in the Air Corps, Maintenance Division. He goes to Columbus Tuesday for his final examinations. He looks like such a kid to be going. I can hardly believe it. Poor Mom, she's not showing it but she's heartbroken, especially since the news of my cousin.

There were eight of us last night. Lee, my sister, and I gave him a spaghetti dinner and then we all went dancing and ended up at five o'clock this morning for breakfast, but we all had a good time, in spite of the occasion. I couldn't help but wish it was for a homecoming or something. He's such a kid, but oh, how he tries to be really grown up and quite the man of the world.

I walked home from Jess's this afternoon. It was so pretty... yes, we've had snow. My mind was a million miles away and we were walking somewhere together. Oh, just anywhere, but together. I was disappointed I got home so quick.

Mom gave up her job over at the hospital. Since Warren is going, it will take more money for our expenses. She is going to come down where I'm working, the same shift for the time being until she gets acquainted with the work, which doesn't require any special experience. The work at the hospital was a bit too hard for her since it required her being on her feet all day. We have to take care of her. She and Warren are downstairs visiting. This working on shift hasn't given them much time together.

They have taken my nephew out of isolation so that's good news. He isn't so lonely now, what with ten other small children around him to talk with and play with as much as they can.

No letter all week long. I've missed you. We could have fun tonight. There's ice skating just a block away. Haven't tried out my skates yet.

They probably need a lot of work done on them. I'll have to have someone to hold me up... eight years is a long time. I used to love it.



*Bill Strohaker (not the child in the picture) was treated with physiotherapy developed by Elizabeth Kenny (Sister Kenny, right, in 1942). She was an unaccredited Australian nurse who was the first person to treat polio victims with exercise instead of immobilization and is credited with founding the science of physiotherapy. She moved to the U.S. in 1940.*

Gone this far without telling you I love you. I missed you last Sunday at Mass since my cold was too bad for me to go out. You were there today... I went to 11:00 Mass, lazy me, but then I didn't get in until 5:00 a.m. Couldn't help but wish for you to be there. You would have loved the party.

I'll have to close. Going to the show and my face needs washing. Wish you could go with us... not to wash my face, but to the show.

'Night, darling. Be back soon. We had an anniversary Friday, remember? But I know you do.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*December 9, 1942—Massillon*

Evening darling,

That's right... just in from work in our new corner armed with a fried ham sandwich and hot chocolate... hungry. Have a swell program on, real soft music. Only one thing lacking. You guess right... you. If you were here I wouldn't need this afghan to keep me warm.

We've really had some cold weather, down to 8 above. When you aren't used to it, that's something.

I got a Christmas present this morning from El. I don't know what it is because I'm not opening it yet. Your ever-welcome cablegram came yesterday. I'm so glad to know the package arrived in good time and I suppose you had to open it... yes?

Warren is in Columbus at the induction center. He passed his physical in Akron but as yet we don't know how he made out in Columbus. Mom is taking it pretty well, better than I expected. She started a new job yesterday and that helped.

Yes, I'm breaking Mom in on the same kind of work I'm doing... well, a part of it. Seems so funny, but she's catching on quick and it's lots easier on her than the hospital work. They were short of help over there and consequently a great deal of extra work was falling to Mom, so this is better and I can keep an eye on her here. The evening work won't make her miss Warren so much because that's about the only time she saw him.

Still no mail this week. Your cable helped but I'd still like a letter. Except for the paper it saves, would you think me awfully silly if I ask you to write me a letter once in a while in longhand? I have a funny idea about it, that's all.

They have been skating on the reservoir this week, but I haven't been able to go yet... no time. They'll be plenty more yet. This cold weather is only the beginning.

Mom and I are lucky. We've found a ride in the neighborhood back and forth to work. That makes it swell in bad weather because we had about 1/2 mile or better to walk in the mill property before we get to the mill office.

Things are still looking brighter in [North] Africa. I pray that it continues for the better.

We've just learned another cousin of mine is in the Solomons. He's in the Marines, too. He's on my father's side. I knew him very well as a young boy, but I haven't seen him in about nine years.

The house seems so empty without Warren. He usually waited on me at night and we'd have something to eat and talk awhile before we'd go to bed. Another one of those things that makes the world go around.

I'm going to do your Christmas shopping Friday morning in Canton. My sister and I are going. We're going to get Mom a nice sweater. She needs one to wear under her coat. I still don't have much idea about what to get. I'm hoping El answers my letter in time so I'll know the sizes and etc., and some idea for your pop. I haven't shopped in so long that this will be a treat.

There doesn't seem to be much more to write. I haven't received any more papers and still no bonds. Don't forget, I love you oh, so much. Goodnight, my darling. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*December 10, 1942—London*

Evening sweetheart,

Since I wrote my Christmas letter to you a few days ago, I have received five of your letters. Please don't tell me I'm a good correspondent. You take all the honors in that department. There aren't any left for me.

The letters were those of Oct. 31 and Nov. 9, 21 24 and 27. The one of the 24th also included the one that came back for more postage, which really makes it six letters.

The pamphlet you sent came yesterday. I read every word of it last night.

You are probably wondering about the enclosed pictures. They are four of the miniatures I had taken. The ones with an "x" on the back are being enlarged. If you make a selection and send it back to me, that's the one I'll send to you. The others will go to 195 and Dottie. The one without a mark is being sent to let you see how somber-looking I can be. The sad-looking one of those marked "x" was selected by me for enlargement for some strange reason. I still don't know why I picked it. I look like someone sitting in the electric chair. So much for the pictures. [Have not been able to identify this picture.]

The cartoon on "Charles" was sent by Ruth Rommel. I thought you would like to know what kind of a guy you are going to wed. I might try to lift 1,000 lbs, but I will not wear a mustache.

It was a relief to hear that Billy is improving. Infantile paralysis puts a child under a terrific handicap. But, I have seen people who recovered completely. One fellow, with whom I went to school, wore a brace on his leg for several years. Time did all the healing. Later he became a topflight college basketball player and boxer. I'll be praying for Billy.

Describing your tour of the hospital, you must be an attraction to the nuns. Still, you are attracted to others (me, for instance).

Since the Blumenhauers are such good friends of yours, you might invite them to the wedding. Say, that's not a bad idea. Let's compile our invitation list now, and when the time comes, we can alter it to suit ourselves. If the idea is agreeable, let me know and I'll send my list in installments. Add it to yours and that will be one headache dismissed.

You longed for a quiet night, listening to a concert and hoped we had our record-changing victrola and radio. We'll spend lots of nights like that, just the two of us. And I love the way you describe your "rebellious" mood and wanting to throw things. You won't throw things at me, will you? Pretty please? That is, nothing that will put a lump on my head?

You wondered what our next meeting will be like. Be calm, just be calm. Let me do the passing out. I've acquired a good many first aid treatments (thanks to the Army) but I believe I'd get panicky if you passed out on me. I was thinking I might surprise you and not say anything about coming back. Then, I'd continue on to Massillon, arrive at 1215 while you were at work. When you stepped in the front door, I'd be sitting there, rather unconcerned, and say, "Hello, sweetheart. Long time no see." Come to think of it, you'd hate me for the rest of your life, wouldn't you?

About the mate to the "blue-white," when we do meet again, I hope to have both of them in my pocket, but in order to do so I will have to have your size, naturally. Do you think you could give me your size with a piece of string? I've heard of that before, somewhere.

You said you might be with me for Christmas, in the form of a picture. There isn't anything I'd rather have than that but if I don't get it by then, I can wait. That seems to be in style now... waiting.

As I mentioned in a previous letter, I believe, the next time I cross the Atlantic will be when the war is at an end.

Another thing you wanted to know was about the cartoon on "Damyankes." It was done by one of our soldier artists and was meant to portray an ATS girl after a date with a Yank. You know, very few people over here refer to us as "Americans." They still stick to "Yanks."

Billee, I wouldn't cash the \$50 bond you have for anything pertaining to the Christmas gifts unless it would be for yourself. I'm sending Mother something from here as well as something to you and Mother Gray. It's not much, just a reminder that I'll be with you all in spirit on the 25th. And it's just about the only thing we can send. I mean, Christmas shopping is practically nil.

I was really sorry to hear of Mrs. Davidson's death. She was such a kind woman. I could almost realize how lonely she was. I can't understand why her family couldn't give her some consideration during her last few years.

Say, you certainly are stepping out with Warren, aren't you? Do you still wear the ribbon and call yourself Billee Kiley, or have you discarded the mask?

Before I turned in last night, I ran through some of your letters of way back. I still have every one received over here. Those before that are with Father John, locked up. Together with those received in the last few days I think the total is 68 or 69, or just about one every three days. You're going to get a big reward one day.

Thanks a million for the stamps you sent.

A little about my activities:

As usual, I've been buzzing around here and there. I'm enclosing two stories in a separate envelope. One concerned the graduation of the first class of the first Officers' Candidate School ever established outside the United States. While simple, it was a very impressive ceremony. One of the graduates was a fellow from Newark. I chatted with him for awhile, talking of mutual acquaintances. And, during the conversation I learned that he had proposed to his wife at 1 p.m., on Dec. 7, 1941. Minutes later the headwaiter told him that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Recently he received a wire telling him he was a daddy.

In handling the assignment, I had to travel on the General's train. Comfortable Pullman accommodations overnight, etc. On the return trip I beat Dave Scherman, LIFE photographer, five straight games of Casino (do you know how to play that?). He said the only other man to beat him was a Marine who was shipwrecked with him on an island in the South Pacific a year or so ago.

The packages still arrive. A book from Eleanor and Johnny Scott (Eleanor is in the Bridge Club), cigarettes from Father John, everything in general in a big box from Ruth Rommel, same from Dot and Al, a picture of Janet Daly and an assorted package from Marty and Bill, another one from home, one from the office. I'm just a lucky guy.

Time's up, sweetheart. Love to Mother and all. Smile again. You are always in my heart, only forever.

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

PS: One of the Xmas gifts will be for Dec. 25 and one for your birthday, ok?

*December 12, 1942*

Hello sweetheart,

A date night that I couldn't pass by, even though I haven't much to talk about tonight. As always, my nights are spent with you, particularly Saturdays.

I received a couple more packages since my last letter, one from cousin Jacqueline [Warren] (newlywed) in Denver [Jacqueline was the daughter of Ella's sister Josephine], one from Marty's parents, one from Ruth Totten and a carton of cigarettes from a doctor in J.C., head of the Special



*Dave Scherman (1916-1997) covered WWII for Life Magazine.*

Services bureau of the Board of Ed. If cigarettes are supposed to be nails in coffins, mine will consist of nails only. There won't be room for the wood.



*Gert Miklas, one of Charles' gang in  
Jersey City—November 1942*

Enclosed are a couple of pictures sent by Dot, taken at a shower for Gert (Rahikka) Miklas. As I described on the back of the picture, she went to Mississippi to marry her soldier-boy. The other is what I think is a very good snap of the Bridge Club, or as I like to call them, "The Women." I can remember when we were high school kids together. Now, Grace has one (Nope, two by now... one due around Christmas) children, Gene and Berta one apiece, Eleanor (Whitehill) Scott's husband, Johnny, went into service recently. Grace, Gene, Dot and Berta have their men at home.

I'm also enclosing a story we ran today on the opening of a "second front" by the *Stars and Stripes* in Africa. The men who are putting the paper out and who arrived after Neville and Levinson worked on the first edition, left from our office here. So, if you get mail from Africa, kind of sudden-like, you'll know what happened. Don't mention anything to Mother about it but there's always the possibility of me going, too. If I'm told to pack, I'll pack and go, that's all. I envy the fellows down there a bit, inasmuch as they get the opportunity to get

around somewhat.

That brings our date to an end, sweetheart. Seems as though I'm setting a new record for brevity on this one. Still, I love you, and the three words with which to say it aren't very long, either.

Love to Mother and the rest.

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

*December 14, 1942—Massillon*

My darling,

I missed our Saturday night date but I was busy getting our Christmas box off to your mom and the rest.

No mail in over two weeks with the exception of your cablegram telling me of the arrival of your Christmas box, and two *Stars and Stripes*. I get a lost feeling when I go this long. Tomorrow will probably bring some, I hope.

Today brought a letter from El. I suppose you know by now you are to be an uncle. How do you feel? I'm very happy for her. She has taken Tom's going away so hard that maybe this will ease the misery and give her something else to think of. I'm a bit envious, too. Everyone is getting a head start on us.

I hope she has a little boy for the first one. She said in her letter that she was writing you so should you get this before hers, be surprised because I know she will want to tell you herself.

It's been cold here, 4 above zero and I don't like it except when I'm inside. You wouldn't think eight years would make that much difference in getting used to the weather. I don't remember minding the cold.

You'll want to know what I did for your family. I took matters into my own hands and this is what I did; incidentally I had a swell time shopping... first time in a long time.

Your mom: a beautiful sheer woolen scarf in the shade of rose and a bit of blue, and stockings; your pop: a beautiful blue... slate blue plaid with just a fleck of gold in it... a real Scottish plaid... muffler and handkerchiefs; El and Bette: Revlon manicure sets; Tom and Eddie: stationery kits; Father John: our favorite Piano Concerto in the original score, recorded by Arthur Rubenstein. I remember hearing him say he liked that and I thought he'd like to hear it on his day off.

I didn't buy anything expensive, but everything was nice and I think they'll be able to use everything. I thought about buying for just your mom and dad, like you said, and then I decided to stretch the money and remember them all. I spent \$13.39. How was that?

I couldn't help but wish when I was tying them up (I used white paper and red cellophane ribbon; they looked very nice even if I did do them) that you could be there oh, maybe to put your thumb on the string or just... be there.

We went to Elyria to see my aunt yesterday, the one whose son was killed. We decided to have a quiet Christmas together here. At least, we can be together, as many of us as there are.

Warren called Saturday morning from Columbus and told Mom goodbye. He didn't know where he was being sent and we've had no word as yet.

I had a card from Tom. He expects to leave Ft. Eustis and was to get a three-day pass to go home. I was so surprised to hear from him, but I thought it was sweet of him to remember.

I love you oh, so much. Didn't I ever tell you? Do you get tired hearing the same thing? But I have to tell you because I'm afraid you might forget. You might, but I don't think you would. Take good care of yourself.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*December 18, 1942—Massillon*

My dearest,

Good morning. Wonder what you're doing about this time... let's see, it's 2:00 a.m. here, so that would make it about 8:00 a.m. You must have started your day by now. Tell me what you do... can you? I mean your routine. I stop a hundred times a day and say to myself, "Wonder what he's doing now?"

I suppose you can tell... I have that old "miss you" feeling pretty bad. No mail in nearly three weeks. I had a long letter from your mom today and a lovely Christmas card. She said you had sent for your garrison cap and dress shoes. That was good news for her. She was so tickled and she told me all about Eddie's being home. I'm so happy for her, that he was able to be home. I suppose now he'll probably be sent somewhere.

I've done an awful thing.. am I in the dog house? I was reading over some recent letters, the ones since I've been here, and came across the ones you mentioned about Christmas. I forgot about the Daly and Kenny infants and it's too late to send to Dottie for the address for the latter and I wouldn't want to send to one without the other. We'll have to remember their birthdays or something. Do you suppose they'll understand? I'm sure they will. What an absent-minded wife you'll have. Still think you want to take the plunge with me? Can't keep your affairs straight before we're married... what will I do after?

We are having more snow and ohhh, is it cold out. I'm almost tempted to head for good old Asheville. Think I've had enough already. I'm going to get up early to go to 8:30 Mass and here I am still writing. Last Friday I went to 7:30 and it was still pitch black out and I slipped on the ice and went flat on my face. If I wasn't a pretty picture. Luckily I had old clothes on because I was all over black soot and snow and mud... you can imagine. But I went on and it was still dark before I got home again. See how you affect my equilibrium? That's twice in about three months.

I have to finish my Xmas shopping tomorrow and Saturday for the children. We aren't exchanging much in the family this year. We're just glad to be together, as many of us as can be. We drew names at Thanksgiving. The plans aren't complete but I believe we'll all be together for Christmas, too.

Warren is still at Columbus. His clothes came home yesterday. I will pack them and put them away so Mom won't have to. I know it would make her feel bad. Mom is getting along swell with her work and likes it better all the time. It's very simple and I keep an eye on her that she doesn't do things wrong. You'd die if you could hear her interpretation of her job... the filing and etc.

The picture and clipping came this week. I had already received the paper that clipping was in but it didn't have your little note on it. After me telling you about my date... isn't that something? Anyway, all it did was make me appreciate and love you all the more, if that's possible.

Our boss's son is stationed in Newfoundland and he met an English girl there and they were married last week. They flew to New York and then on to here to be with his family. They plan to stay in Newfoundland after the war, he likes it so well.

I really should go but I hate to. That old "miss you" feeling is fading away. Wonder what would happen if you were here... oh, gee. Same old story, my dear. I love you as always... ain't it awful? Oh well, won't be so long now. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

December 19, 1942—London

Evening sweetheart,

Just to make it a perfect date, your letter of Nov. 28 came today, the first of yours in a week. I'd love to say your letters only take a week to get here but I'm afraid I can't. Still, a little bit of heaven three weeks old is as good as it is a week old, yes?

For a change, I'll tell you what has happened over here first, before going into your "hello."

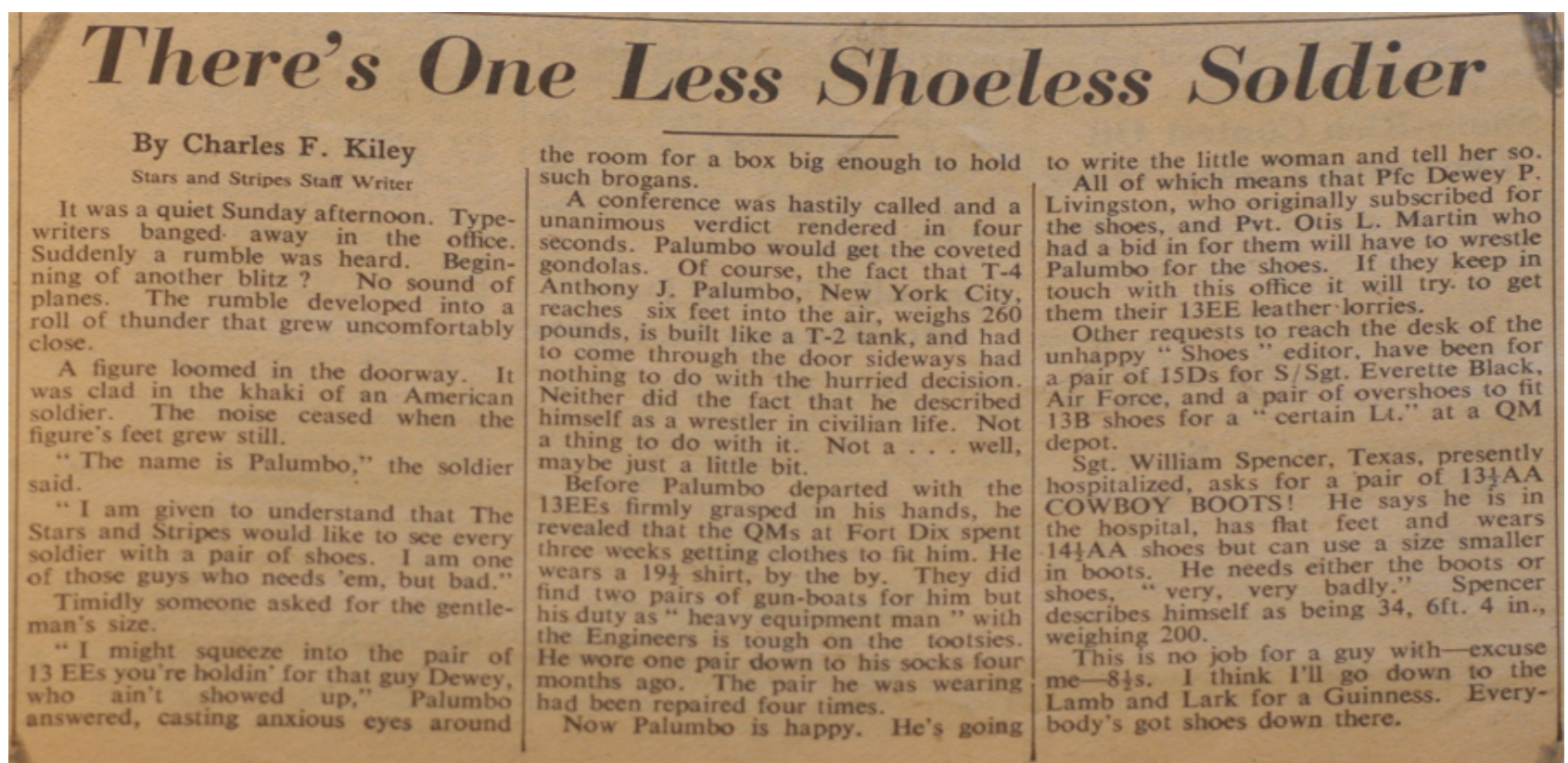
During most of the week I have been busy rounding up the Red Cross Christmas plans. It was quite a job. Too, I went out of town for a day, traveling almost 100 miles only to discover, when I got there, that the story I wanted wasn't available. So, I'm going back Tuesday.

The other night, Thursday, Jack Donnell called me. He was here on a 24-hour pass. It was the first I had seen him since the day I left my old outfit. It was good to talk about old times. We spent a bit of time in a Red Cross club Thursday night and I managed to squeeze in a couple of hours Friday with him. He asked to be remembered to you. Ben Wooley was with him. Remember Ben?

That's about all I have, honey. Doesn't sound very interesting, does it?

Here's one I almost forgot. I interviewed Dwight Deere Wiman, one of the biggest theatrical producers, who is here as director of Red Cross entertainment. The enclosed story will tell you about that.

The "portrait" of me, also enclosed, is the result of recent stories on fellows with oversized feet looking for shoes. Dick Wingert, one of our cartoonists, and Lt. Wilkinson whom you know as our censor, were responsible for the very good likeness of me [this "portrait" has not been identified].



*There were many stories in The Stars and Stripes about the "Help Desk," run for much of the war by Lou Rankin, a long-time friend of Charles, but this is definitely the funniest. —December 1942*

About the bonds... I'm going to make another inquiry tomorrow. My receipts are the deductions from my salary noted on my service record.

I'm anxious to see your Christmas present to "us." Do you mind if I say you can keep me warm by just standing 15 or 20 feet from me? As you get closer, I start to melt. Another thing I remember about the night of Jan. 17 was that when I first saw you, I swallowed hard and said to myself, "G-g-g-gosh!"

Your description of Thanksgiving at 1215 made me a bit nostalgic, I'm afraid. I would have loved to have been there. Mine wasn't very impressive, as I mentioned in a previous letter [Note: not found], and even at this late date I haven't any plans for Christmas. Many fellows have accepted invitations to spend the day with British families; others will be having parties for orphans, underprivileged children, youngsters of British soldiers overseas, etc. If Ralph Martin were here, we would be able to cook up something between us but he's with our staff in Africa now. We got along well together here.

I wish you were here as I read how you "succumbed" in the Hawaiian Room. Honey, that's practically a "True Confession," and I love you for it. You said you didn't want to pin any laurels on me and then decorate me with all you can find. Despite everything you said about my self-assurance, I was scared to death. And, I'm not ashamed to admit it.

Billee, you said you hoped your Christmas package arrived in time. I did get the one I acknowledged by cable and later by mail. At least, I think it was only one. It included the cake, gloves, hankies, stationery and all of those other things I mentioned. It can't be that you sent another package, can it? Or is it the same one?

And, now a goodnight, sweetheart. Love to Mother and all. I'll be back on Christmas.

'Bye for awhile.

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

*December 19, 1942—Massillon*

My darling,

Here's another Saturday night going by and what a busy one for me. Didn't get home from the hospital until after seven, then dressed and went to a hen party at Padale's restaurant, as famous around here for its spaghetti as Caruso's in New York. We had fun for a hen party. I got home about ten and wrapped Christmas presents for the kids and Warren.

When I wrote the other night, I didn't realize it was our anniversary, but I knew I had to write that night so it must have been going on in my subconscious mind or something.

Mom and I got notices yesterday from the express company telling us that flowers were being sent to us from you. We were so surprised, but tickled. Mom is so pleased she can hardly wait for them to arrive. As always, you are so thoughtful. What would I do without you? I just don't know. That song keeps going around in my head, "You Made Me Love You." Remember how you sang it in my ear

when we danced and then you'd say you didn't have anything to do with it? That doesn't seem so long ago. A year ago, we hadn't had the good fortune to meet and look at what's happened since then... our whirlwind courtship.

Warren called last night. He had ten dollars stolen from him and we were to wire him some more. He says if he's still in Columbus Tuesday, they'll send him home for Christmas. I've said a little prayer and I've got my fingers crossed.

I must be going crazy or something. I lost those snapshots you sent of Dottie and Al and the clipping. I had them in an envelope... I showed them to Mom and I've searched high and low in this house and I haven't seen them since. I haven't given up... I even went through the wastebaskets. Tonight I dashed out to the cab and got in and we start to move... I look down and low and behold, I have two purses! Why, I'll never know. It must be from watching your picture when I was dressing. I was about three thousand miles away from Massillon in the eastern direction, about the neighborhood of London, I'd say. See what you're doing to me, and from that far away?

We're having awful weather. It starts to thaw and then it snows again. We've had the ground covered for about three weeks now. The highways are just sheets of ice. It's awful to try to drive. I don't have to worry about that. A car is a worry now, what with gas rationing, no tires and what have you.

I got good and mad today, but I held my tongue. Going to Canton on the bus this morning there were quite a few older people on the bus. I don't mean to be nosey, but I get a kick out of listening to the snatches of conversation that come my way, but today the general trend of the conversation was that this younger generation couldn't take the hardships that were coming our way, that we were too soft. Now, how do you like that? Sabotage, I call it. I felt like putting my two bits in, but then thought better of it.

It's getting earlier by the minute and I want to go to early Mass. I couldn't get away in time this afternoon to go to confession, but you'll be in my prayers tomorrow. Still no mail or bonds either. Is there any way I could check from here?

Goodnight my dear.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*December 24, 1942—Massillon*

My dearest one,

Almost the evening of our first Christmas and here we are apart. Seems wrong somehow, but what must be, must be, I guess. There must be many Christmases in the future that we will spend together, at least that's what I like to believe.

We are to have today off... I have to say that because it is 1:30 a.m... and Christmas off. Isn't that swell, except for the fact that we don't get paid for it. But then, five years or one year from now we'll never know the difference.

Today brought a package from New York, but since it didn't have any sender's address, naturally my curiosity was aroused and I couldn't wait so I opened it and found a beautiful oil painting of Christ with a hand carved frame, from Father John. Isn't that swell? For the present, it will be in Mom's and my room, but then when we get our two by four or pup tent, it will hang on our bedroom wall. How's that?

If you could see how I'm stretched across the bed writing here you'd laugh and all this writing is going uphill. I'll have to get me some lined paper for this kind of writing.

Father John sent me the nicest card that came yesterday. I believe he made them, or the stencil for it. If I remember correctly, your mom said he did things like that.

I sent your Christmas message this morning in the hope that you will receive it on time. They voided the regular cable messages until Dec. 28 because they were swamped. The forms they used I didn't particularly care for, but I guess you'll have to imagine what I'd be saying.

I think of such crazy things when I'm trying to go to sleep. Like you, everything comes back so vividly and I relive our memories trying to bring you closer, then I try to imagine oh, say five years from now and what we might be doing. I suppose I let my imagination run away with me. Do you suppose we'll ever do any of the things we dream about? I hope so, because we do have fun in our dreams. The part I like best is that we're always together. That's the part I want most of all to come true.

Still no mail. You can imagine how I'm feeling. It's nearly four weeks... it will be on Saturday. It must be the fact that the mail is so heavy. They delivered twice on Sunday, so you can imagine... and this is not a big place.

The temperature has risen some and we've had rain to wash the snow away some, but I'm afraid that the weather will be awfully sloppy for Christmas.

I hadn't heard anything from Marguerite in so long—thought maybe she might come for the holidays—but a beautiful card came today for Mom and I, so that's out, I guess.

We're going out to my sister tomorrow night to decorate the tree for the kids. We're going to have just a small table model. We're having to make decorations out of nothing, practically, since we left my aunt's decorations in Asheville. I told Mom we should have brought them.

A postcard came from a shop in New York telling me that a package was being mailed to me from you. Of course, I can't wait to see what it is. Mom's been teasing me, trying to guess what it might be. It hasn't come yet so we can't even guess from the size of the box. I like to be surprised.

Here I am writing when I'm going to get up early to go to Mass. Goodnight, or rather good morning. Be back soon. My prayers and thoughts are with you always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Merry Christmas, darling,

I've been thinking about us all day... just couldn't help it... and wondering how you spent your day. I hope under the circumstances that you had a nice day with good company and a good dinner.

Ours has been a very quiet one. We didn't have a tree here at the house, but we decorated with pine and tinsel and cranberry strings with big holiday candles. It looks nice, even if I did have a hand in it.

Christmas really began yesterday with your lovely flowers, by far the nicest present I ever received. Mom is so thrilled and pleased with her poinsettia plant. You can't imagine how beautiful it is, nearly a yard high with six blooms that are easily eight inches across. She's going to write you a note, but at the moment, she's resting. We didn't sleep much last night. Mom's plant came first, and I began to worry a bit about what happened to mine and then they came a few hours afterwards... a whole dozen of the most beautiful pink roses I ever saw. I just love them... how did you know? I made a corsage of two of them with a pine sprig and red ribbon and put them on my coat to go to Mass this morning. They looked so nice. I have a new winter coat, gray, and the pink looked so pretty on it. You couldn't have done anything nicer. Uncle Fred says you should be promoted from a corporal to a Lt. Colonel. How's that? Maybe next Christmas we will be together. That was one of my prayers this morning. Seems like such a little bit to ask for and yet it means our whole lives.

Mother and I went out and spent the night with my sister so we could be with Sherry in the morning. Lettie went to Mass with me. I was glad because I would have gone by myself. She got us a ride with a neighbor. The Mass was at 6:00 a.m. You should have seen the altar and church. I've never seen anything so beautiful, with the pine and lights and all. The whole left side of the church was fixed as a manger. You had to almost pinch yourself to make yourself believe you weren't dreaming. I enjoyed so much being a part of it all, my first Christmas as a Catholic. You know, I'm still so glad and grateful. My only regret was that you weren't beside me, but I knew that somewhere you'd be with me in thought and it was such a wonderful feeling to know that you were doing the same thing and that we could be together that way. That was the nicest present of all. I was selfish... my Mass and communion was for us and for victory in the near future, but I couldn't help it. Still, I wouldn't want victory unless it was under our terms and a lasting peace, not one like the last war. I suppose it's a natural feeling, but I don't want our children to go through what we are going through now when they are our ages. I just heard Arch Oboler's play, [creator of the radio horror series, *Lights Out*] "Christmas Wish 1942." I wish you could have heard it, but perhaps you are hearing this program via short wave... the Elgin Watch program with all the Hollywood stars. Bette Davis acted the leading role in the play.

It was good having Christmas with the little ones. Sherry Ann was so excited over her doll and playthings. She made me feel just a wee bit old when I realized she's actually my sister's and she's at the age where she really appreciates Christmas. Both of my brother-in-law's parents were there and Mom and I. Even Johnny was excited. He couldn't get over the lights on the tree. It is such a beautiful tree... no trimming except tinsel, lights and a few blue balls that Sherry could tie on.

Your mom and pop sent me the loveliest bag, black with a bright, shiny penny in the change purse for luck. Tom and El sent me a beautiful pair of pigskin gloves. They look good enough to eat. Think I'll save them. A new five-dollar bill came from my father. That will come in handy. A bright, shiny new lipstick, real glamorous-looking. I always get such a kick out of a new lipstick, like a new hat. Oh, yes, Harry, my brother-in-law, gave me a book I've been wanting, "Stories of a Hundred Operas" by Deems Taylor. I almost forgot, and how could I, my little soldier boy. He's so cute. He's sitting on the radio now alongside my beautiful roses. He arrived last night just before we went to Lettie's. I couldn't imagine what it could be and had to wait until this morning to open it up. As always, you think of the nicest things and I love your sense of humor. In all, we had a very nice Christmas. It was good being with our own folks for a change.



*Red Army Lt. Ludmilla Pavlichenko (center) with Eleanor Roosevelt in Washington, November 1942. She was the first Soviet citizen ever to visit the White House, on a tour arranged by the President to bolster American support for the Russian war against the Germans. She later toured U.S. military installations in England, when Charles interviewed her for a Stars and Stripes profile.*

We've been having some fresh snow this afternoon. It really looks like Christmas now.

That about covers Christmas. I'll have to close now. We're having a special service at 7:30 and I'd like to go. Maybe Mom will go with me. I'd like her to see the altar.

I almost forgot, the lost is found. The envelope with the clipping and snapshots. It had slipped behind my drawer in the dresser. I feel lots better because I wouldn't want to lose them for anything.

We're enjoying the *Stars and Stripes* so much. Several more arrived yesterday with your stories about Ludmilla Pavlichenko [the most successful female sniper in history], the father and son in the Army... that was cute... and your story about the Alaska Highway, then the one about the French fleet at Toulon. I liked the one about the little war orphans and the soldiers adopting them. That's such a wonderful idea.

I was going to close, wasn't I? Kind of hate to for some reason or other. I love being with you. Here's a special Christmas kiss. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*December 26, 1942—London*

Hello angel,

In England, this is Boxing Day, derived from the custom of placing alms in boxes for tradesmen and needy people. It is also the day after Christmas, 364 days before the old man with the white whiskers comes around again.

More important than anything else, today is your birthday. I missed your last one by 21 days. I'm missing this by about 4,000 miles! Dec. 26th is another day we'll never spend apart, and it also reminds me that you are going to be a very expensive wife. Not that you will want to be but rather because I'll want you to be. It will have to be a fur coat (the one I promised) for Christmas and a couple of thousand dollars worth of decorations for your pretty neck, wrist, or something on your birthday. Wonder what I can get in the five-and-dime for a thousand \$?

In a more serious vein, all my love goes out to you today, as always.

How about a word about my Christmas? It wasn't a white one despite Bing Crosby's recording efforts. But it was a more enjoyable one than I expected.

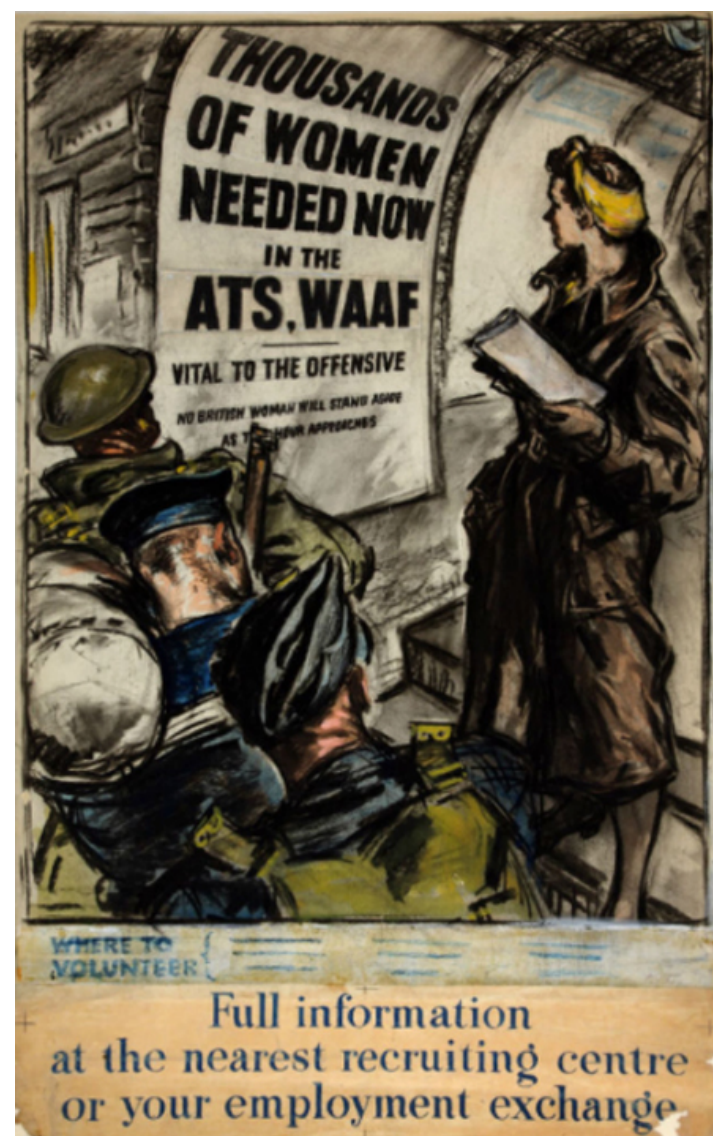
I had been out of town for three days and arrived home Christmas Eve. Stopping at the office, I met one of the men who works here on *The Times*. I have known him since I've been here so it wasn't a casual invitation he extended to spend Christmas with him and his family. I was happy to accept.

He lives in a cottage in Kent, 12 miles from London, has a daughter in the WAAF [the U.K.'s Women's Auxiliary Air Force] (a radio operator), a son who works in an aircraft plant and a younger daughter, 12 years old.

I went out there Christmas morning after Mass, met the family (the WAAF was home on furlough), had a Xmas dinner (turkey and all the trimmings) and had a most enjoyable day and night just sitting in front of the fireplace talking about a million and one things. They seemed to enjoy my impressions of Britain in comparison with America. The younger daughter was a veritable question box. Wanted to know all about Hollywood, New York, etc.

I stayed overnight and came back to the office for a few hours today. Before leaving, I had to promise to go back tonight and spend another night there.

I felt rather ashamed, not having time to bring a gift or two with me but I'm going to remedy that today. I've packed some of my candy (received in packages) and a couple of cartons of cigarettes with me tonight. If I can



*WAAF Recruiting poster.*

get it, I'll bring a bottle of sherry with me, too. Wine and liquor are pretty hard to get here, you know.

On Christmas night, Mr. Frost's daughter gave me an example of a WAAF's skill in wireless by taking 22 to 24 words a minute in Morse code. It was coming over a short wave station in French. This was the first time she had been home in six months and I was tempted to ask her to go to a stage play here in London before she goes back, in part payment for the hospitality I received there. But I remembered that this was your birthday and decided perhaps another night next week would do. I'll let you know what develops. If it takes place it will be my first date in the British Isles, and honestly, I'm afraid I won't know how to act.

I inquired about our bonds this morning and was told we needn't worry about the delay in delivery. Some fellows who have bought bonds for six months haven't had a receipt of delivery. The deduction of salary on my service record, they said, is my receipt for the bonds and no matter what happens we'll get them some day.

Since my last letter, I've received two from you as well as your Christmas card. The latter was here waiting for me on Christmas Eve and was the only one received the day before Christmas! That was perfect timing.

The letters were those of Nov. 12 and Dec. 3. Don't ask me how they came to be delivered together. In the earlier one, you said you received the souvenirs of my furlough. From what you say, I believe you received everything I sent. You also asked me if I have trouble reading your letters. Goodness, no. But while we're talking about that, why do you think I type mine? Surely, not because I'm an artist with the pen, which you must have realized before I had access to a typewriter.

I'm anxious to see some of your uncle's books. And, while I don't want to sound too forward or beggarly, we could use some for our own library one day. I intend to save those I get over here and bring them back with me if I have to rent a ship for myself to haul everything.

It was pleasant to hear that you have "that married look" in the eyes of the girls in the office. You shouldn't have told them you weren't married, though. Just that you were in a way and in another way you weren't. Then, let them figure it out for themselves. It's lots of fun keeping people guessing.

Say, if my story on the CWAACs made you feel like enlisting, I'm not going to write any more stories like that again. Sorry to hear, too, that the Navy didn't accept Warren, inasmuch as he had his mind and heart set on it.

Do you know where I heard Churchill's speech? Right here in the office. One of The Times departments has a radio and we gathered around and listened to it.

When you mentioned your cousin in the Marines being killed at Guadalcanal reminded me that I had forgotten to tell you a lad I knew was killed down there, too.

You make me awfully homesick when you picture yourself curled up in bed listening to a concert. I want to give 20 years of my life to just curl your head in my arms and listen to the music, too. My

best substitute so far has been to spend an hour or so at one of the Red Cross clubs playing records that remind me of you.

You said when we are together again you wouldn't want to write another letter to me. On the other hand, I'm going to write to you lots of times. You can read the letters while I'm out and tell me what you think of them when I get home. Sounds silly, doesn't it?

And with that I'll have to kiss Mrs. Gray's very beautiful daughter goodnight, and while saying "Happy Birthday," I'll mean so much more than that.

Love to Mother and all.

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

*January 1, 1943—Massillon*

My dearest,

I didn't know any better way to start the New Year than to dash off a letter to you. Besides, I haven't been able to write all week. My aunt hasn't been so well, so that made extra work, but I am here once more. This is being written on the company's time, but we have done everything there is to be done. This typewriter is one that I'm not used to. It's a noiseless and the touch is different, so perhaps I can excuse the mistakes that way.

Today was pretty after all the rain we have been having. It turned off into snow and everything was blanketed when we awakened this morning. I can imagine you have been having the kind of weather we've been having for the past week, a steady mist of rain. The rivers are all very high and some of the nearby towns have been flooded as a result, so we are grateful snow and colder weather has arrived.

We spent a very quiet New Year's Eve. The biggest part was spent here in the office until 12:00; then, home we went. My uncle made us a highball and put a little extra in Mom's. I thought we'd never get her to go to bed... she talked her head off. You should have heard her. She's like me... she just

can't take it. I couldn't help but wonder how you were spending your New Year. Your Christmas and New Year message arrived on Monday... the same one I sent you. Do you believe in mental telepathy? I hope yours arrived in time.

I was twenty-two last Saturday and spent it by myself. I took in a double feature when I finished work at the hospital about 7:30. Saw two good pictures, "Once Upon a Honeymoon" with Ginger Rogers and Cary Grant, plus "Falcon's Brother" with George Sanders and Tom Conway, who really are brothers. They weren't very diverting.. both



concerned the war and espionage. When I finally got home about eleven-thirty, I found Mom had baked me a birthday cake and my sister and brother-in-law were waiting for me to come and cut it, so we had a party after all. Speaking of pictures, I saw an excellent one on Christmas night. Everyone went to bed so I decided to take in a movie. It was Bette Davis in "Now Voyager." About halfway through it suddenly dawned on me that I had read the book last winter. Maybe you'd like it... that is, if you like Bette Davis.

If I had seen you yesterday I could have cheerfully pinned your ears back. To begin with, I've had no mail for five weeks, unless something comes tomorrow. Yesterday an envelope came that I thought contained a letter only to find there were some pictures in it. I'm afraid there were a few tears of disappointment shed, but I just couldn't help it. Please, after this put a little note in those "free mail" letters, even if they only say, "Hello."

I'm glad the holidays are over. Maybe I'll lose that old lonesome feeling. I know I would if that old mailman would just come through. By the way, I still haven't received any bonds yet. Seems like after all this time one would come through. Everyone seems so optimistic once more that everything will be practically over this time next year. Makes me feel pretty good, but I guess it will be over when it's over. I try not to listen too much to predictions, but sometimes you can't help but wonder if they are right.

It will soon be our real anniversary... a whole year... and one that should be celebrated, but how, with about three thousand miles between us. Maybe we can be together on our second. That's something to look forward to.

This has been practically a holiday around here today... the mill worked, but the fellows in the office are still recuperating, speaking of celebrations.

I can't help but trying to figure out why no mail. I've thought of you being shipped somewhere else, then the holiday rush, then I happened to remember the letter I wrote about the date I had... but I couldn't lay it up to that until I got the message written on the clipping concerning the CWACs, but that just couldn't be. I'm letting my imagination run away with me.

I hate to leave, but I guess I'd better get away from here and look busy if nothing else. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



*January 2, 1943—London*

Hello angel,

“I’m afraid you might forget...” Was that what you said in your letter of Dec. 16, received yesterday? Yes, I might forget a lot of things, but not what you had in mind.

Trying to read between the lines, I gathered you were a little uneasy because you hadn’t received any mail from me in a couple of weeks. I know that uneasiness. I had it when your “bits of heaven” were delayed. But, I never forgot... never will.

Your letter and one from El came together. Since I usually save yours until last I received the surprise from El. An UNCLE, canyamagine? Don’t feel too envious, though. We’ll have our day.

While I think of it, I also received your cable of Christmas and New Year’s greetings yesterday. Today, I sent a cable for our Jan. 4 anniversary. Hope you got it in time.

About the shopping you did for the family... it was perfect. I haven’t had any word from home about the gifts but I just know they were tickled with them. I was. If I had done the shopping I probably would have spent ten times that much and not been capable of getting gifts half as good or as appropriate. Still, you didn’t mention anything about a gift for your mother. I’ll take you over my knee if you didn’t get anything for her.

I know what you’re going to say: “Why, the big lug... first he asks me to do one thing, changes his mind half a dozen times, I do my best, and he still finds fault.” But, I love you just the same.

Do you know what would have happened if I had been there to “hold my thumb on the string?” We never would have wrapped the packages.

Billee, you said Warren called from Columbus... I don’t get it. I suppose it’s another case of a letter written earlier telling of his leaving, and not getting here yet. I’m anxious to hear all about it.

It was very thoughtful of Tom to drop a line to you. He’s been very fortunate in getting home as often as he has... TOO DAMN OFTEN, if you ask me. But then, I’m only kidding. I’m happy for both of them. Wonder how Mom feels, on the way to being a grandmother.

You mentioned the cold weather in Massillon. We haven’t been having an early spring over here, either. But I never knew you were cold-blooded. I’ll have to remedy that.

Taking advantage of my day off today, I went to the “cinema.” Saw “Major and the Minor.” I liked it even though it lagged at times. I started the day off on the wrong foot, trying to check the marriage of Carole Landis and a Major in the Air Force. We carried the story a week ago, saying they might be married Jan. 1, her birthday. Later, we heard it was a publicity gag. I called her last night and she said it might come off early next week and asked me to come up and see her (not in the Mae West style). I called her this morning but she was “rushing off.” Have to check again with her tomorrow night. Somebody ought to kick her where it would do her the most good. Mind if I try it?

My New Year’s Eve was very dull. Worked until 9 or so, stopped for *a* drink and was home early. I remember last year I called Dot and Al from Spartanburg. The usual celebration was going on with

about ten couples. I spoke with them all. Just seventeen days later, an angel smiled and stole my heart, and from that moment, I vowed she would have...

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

*January 4, 1943—Jersey City [This is the only letter we have from Ella]*

Dear Son,

Received your letter Monday dated November 29. That is the first letter I got from you since the first week in November.

I was beginning to worry about your transfer... I thought perhaps you were sick or something. I received your beautiful flowers and a few papers, but no letters.

Billee said she didn't get any letters either, but she received the beautiful roses you sent her and her mother.

Charles, did you enjoy your Christmas? I felt lonesome for you and Ed, but was praying for both of you at midnight Mass and now, choking back my tears in front of the others. We had Ray for dinner and Tom was in on a 7 day furlough. He is still in Virginia, but finished his training, and moved to another camp three miles from Fort Eustis called Camp Patrick Henry. From there he expects to be sent somewhere else. El is so blue. She is happy when he comes home and when he has to go back she cries for a couple of days after.

I have a surprise for you. I think when you get back again, you will be an uncle around the month of June. I hope it is around Ray's birthday on June 7 or Tom's brother's birthday on June 4. Everyone is hoping for a boy but me, I am hoping for a girl. Ray and Pop hope it is a boy but I said to Ray the reason I hope it is not a boy is because I wouldn't want El to go through what I've been through with my boys. But Ray said... think about it. This way he could be a priest. But anyway, I am so thrilled to think Pop and I will be a grandmother and grandpop. We just can't wait, and of course, Bette will be the godmother, if God spares them both.

Charles, I hope this will be over soon... at least before June, so Ray won't go as a chaplain, but if he wants to go I will give him my consent, although with three of you gone and only Pop home it is going to be pretty lonesome. But we have to give all we've got, to win this war fast.

Well, son, I will say goodnight for now and hope you are well. May God be with you always, and take care of you for me.

Love from all of us... El, Bette and Pop.

And love from your loving Mom. XXXXX

PS: Write soon.

*January 4, 1943—Massillon*

Darling,

At long last, a letter written... guess when? Nov. 29, and the last one I received five weeks ago Saturday was written Nov. 21. That's what I get for bragging.

My whole outlook has changed since this morning. See what you do to me? I'm afraid that we are going to have to resort to V-letters, since that seems to get preference over personal airmail. There is a girl in the office whose husband is in England, too, and for every V-letter he sends, the next one he sends airmail, and all she has received in the past month or six weeks are the V-letters and only occasionally an airmail comes through.

I'm so glad the box arrived in good time. And you went ahead and opened it, you bum. That was for Christmas. If you could have seen me fitting all the gloves in the store trying to find the size that I thought would be all right, since I didn't know your size. All I knew was what I remembered from holding hands... pleasant memories... that my hand was as long as yours but yours, of course, is broader. I'm amazed that they fit. Tell me what else you need in the way of accessories. If I had known you were so desperate for handkerchiefs, I would have sent more. Why don't you tell me these things? Mom will be tickled about the testimonial. I'm so glad you all enjoyed the cake and that it was still edible. I wrapped it good in that muslin after soaking it very generously in good whiskey... remember, I said that was Mrs. Davidson's gift. I can't wait to hear what kind of Christmas you had, especially after opening all your boxes ahead of time. You must be as curious as I am.

Old Man Winter is raging again tonight... oh boy, it is cold out, but it's better than this awful rain we've been having.

You're having quite a time running around interviewing all these stars and celebrities. Quite different from covering football games and following baseball teams and players around. Which do you like better, or should I ask? You ought to be able to get on the good side of one of them and see about getting a ride for me on one of those bombers or let me conveniently stow away and come over for the duration. We could set up housekeeping in London as well as North Arlington, in a pup tent or bomb shelter, or just any old thing. Stranger things than that have happened. If I had enlisted in the WAAC I might be over there by now since that first contingent arrived in December. I suppose you've been visiting there for interviews. I'm only kidding about your interviews so please don't take me seriously. I'm so glad you're doing that I don't know what to do, even if I do get a little jealous of them, being able to talk to you when I can't, besides being near you.

Notice the date... one of our anniversaries. Nine months ago, just about this time, because it was really the fifth when you slipped this ring on my third finger, left hand. So much has happened since then, I can hardly realize that it has only been that long, because I feel like it's been forever. I don't like to remember the time that I haven't known you, and loved you.

I enjoyed your article about the Sergeant being given the rating of Captain overnight. You could be a captain, too, maybe. Eh, but I like you just as well being a corporal. I'll bet his family was pleased

and very proud. We have lots of stories to go in our scrapbook now, under the heading *Stars and Stripes*. Incidentally, I'm very proud of what you are doing.

Saturday night I met one of the girls after work, the one whose husband is a Marine, and we went to see "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Hope you get a chance to see it because I know you would enjoy James Cagney in that role. You should see him dance! Afterward, we went to a restaurant, the one where we had the spaghetti dinner, and met several other girls. We ate and talked until it closed at one o'clock. The other girls left before we did so we talked about her husband and about you. You both would have enjoyed the conversation, I know. She has been married about 18 months but her husband enlisted before their first anniversary in June. He left in May. They went together seven years before they were married... not a whirlwind courtship like ours.



I've got to go eat and go to bed. I'm so sleepy I can hardly see... it's way after two a.m.

I love you so much. Have I ever told you? No? That's too bad. Anyhow, I do, an awful lot. I thought I did an awful lot on April 4, but now it's even more. Can it be that it grows more and more every day? If that's the case, I'm liable to blow up by the time you come home. I'd better go to bed on that one. I'm getting silly.

Goodnight, my love. Be back soon. It's still very Christmassy here with your poinsettia blooming right in front of me. I'm going.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee.

*January 7, 1943—London*

Evening sweetheart,

You have received your last typewritten letter from me. That is, if my "Parker" holds out.

When you asked me to write a letter once in a while, I paused to consider how I would feel if all of your letters were typewritten. Forgive me for being so thoughtless.

Last night I was "home" at 7:30, the earliest I have been finished at the office in weeks. Following my bath I spent over two hours with you. This morning I discovered I had written on both sides of the stationery so I'm back tonight for a "rewrite."

Your picture is looking down from above the “fireplace,” which has an electric heater instead of a log or two. And it attracts my attention every minute or so. Consequently, I’ll be with you for a long time tonight, between the time I spend writing and the time it takes to tear my eyes away from your smile.

Odd, isn’t it, how much a picture means when it is the best substitute for the real thing?

I have your letters of Dec. 6 and 9 here with me, too. They are Nos. 67 and 68 received since I’ve been “over here.”

You have been more than a sweetheart, Billee, and I’ll never make you sorry you smiled at a soldier one night.

Your letter of the 6th told what I had been wondering about Warren. I hope Mother continues to bear up. You don’t have to tell me how she felt when he left because I’ll always remember Mom the day I went away. She tried so hard to make it easy for me. Yet, it wasn’t difficult to see how she really felt.

At any rate, Mother must be consoled by the knowledge that Warren’s military experience will be beneficial to him. Besides being practically non-combatant, he will receive training from some of the world’s greatest experts and will certainly acquire a background that will be helpful to him in civilian life.

You said Warren tried to appear so grown up. He will be fully grown after a year, perhaps, in service. Being self-reliant in the Army does great things for the youngsters if they hold their heads.

The “farewell” you and Lee gave him sounded swell. I wonder if he dislikes farewells as much as I do. I recall how uncomfortable I was when the office gave me a farewell dinner and later when they had a “time” at Dot’s. I needn’t mention our farewell in New York.

Billee, let me know how Mother gets on. With her recent illness in mind, I can’t help but worry about her.

Say, when you talk about ice skating to me you are talking to a novice. Throw a football, baseball, or basketball at me and I’ll know what to do with it. But, when you mention ice, that’s where I don’t come in. Still, you can always give me lessons.

I was anxious to know what you received for Christmas. Yesterday a letter from Mom informed me of two items sent by 195.

Did I tell you in my last letter about the letter I had from Marty’s brother-in-law? He’s a lieutenant in the Air Force over here. I knew him well in Jersey City. He called later from his station but I wasn’t in the office. We are planning an evening or so together when he is able to get to London again.

Carole Landis married a captain in the Air Force the other day and C.F.K. turned society reporter for a day. To use a worn-out expression, “she was a beautiful bride.”

You may wonder, when you read the story, where, why and how I got the fashion details. Yes, I had to ask someone. Mitzi Mayfair, the bridesmaid, arrived at the church about ten minutes before Carole, giving me a chance to get what I wanted. When I asked her, she laughed and said, “I’ll bet the boys



*Charles' sole attempt at society reporting for the Stars and Stripes—January 1943*

are dying to know what we are wearing!" I sent the clipping of the wedding and part of a card sent to me by Ruth Rommel.

Love to all. 'Night sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

*January 7, 1943—Massillon*

Good morning darling,

It's really morning and very early but I'm not sleepy, in spite of the beer Mom and I had a bit ago. Besides, another letter came today written Dec. 12, with the article about "Shoes." I loved that. So like you, and the other concerning the *Stars and Stripes* "second front," as you call it.

Perhaps I'm wrong, I hope so for my sake, but I have an idea that's where you are now and perhaps that is the reason for the holdup of the mail. I've had that in the back of my mind all along.

I know just how you feel about going. I'd want to be in the midst of it, too, so long as I was over there. From the article, Neville and his assistant certainly need some help. Please, wherever this finds you, take awful good care of yourself. We have a lot to do together when this is over.

Even though the letter today was brief, it was so welcome, you'll never know. But then, you did go quite a long while without any when you were first transferred to London.

I had a letter from your Mom today telling me about her flowers arriving for Christmas and how pleased she was. She was a bit blue, though, that she hadn't received mail since November, but I know she has by now since I've had two this week.

Bette wrote me, my first from her since I've been writing to your folks, thanking me for her gift. Both our names were on the cards. I thought you wanted it that way, or was I taking

things for granted again? Her boyfriend was home for Christmas, so I know she was happy.

Charles, it's so pretty out. We've just had a fresh snowfall and the air is so clear and the sky full of stars. I wish you could see it. We have had some very cold weather. I had to invest in woolies and, believe me, you don't catch me out without them, I had to buy some to sleep in even.

I keep trying to wonder how you spend your days and nights... what you do. Your job takes up a lot of your time, I know, but that's the kind of work you like, so that's all right. I never mind spending extra time on work I like. I can imagine you're probably the same. Like going to Africa... I know you want to go and that would be a wonderful opportunity, being associated with someone like Robert Neville, a former news editor of Time magazine, despite the circumstances.

The snaps are cute. They always look like they have such fun. I still wonder when I see pictures of Ruth Totten how I happened to rate (I can already hear what you are going to say). She's so pretty and looks like such a lot of fun. I'll put them away safely with the others.

I can't seem to cut my letters short like you can. Maybe sometime I will, but it seems like, when I get started to write to you, I hate to stop. Writing brings you that much closer and I suppose it should be the opposite.

Received a letter from Bob Paulus' mother today about the pictures. I'd almost forgotten I'd sent them. She has been ill with a bad leg. She hasn't heard from Bob in some time.

It's really goodnight for me, darling. All my prayers and thoughts are with you and, oh, I'd give anything to give you a goodnight kiss.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 10, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My darling,

I'll certainly have to write short letters now or else start "continued" ones. Now that would be something new. I'm hoping this will find its way to you wherever you are quicker than your letters have reached me.

First of all, in case my letters have been held up... I love you more than ever in spite of not hearing from you as often as usual. That makes the fact all the more so. Second, I'm well... as well as I could be away from you. We are all well, in spite of all the bad weather. Little Billy is improving, for which we are very grateful.

I can't help but wonder where you will spend our anniversary, a real one this time. It's good that we can dream... it's a week from tonight. I'll spend the evening alone. Of course, I will attend Mass, a special one for us, my darling. We missed going together that first Sunday but we made up for it later.

Saw such a good movie last night, with a story so much like ours, he was even Irish. She had more sense than I... she asked him to marry her. Yes, he did. They met at a Canteen Party.

I'm being forced to close. I'll have to take some lessons from you on brevity. You can always say more in fewer words than anyone I know. There's still room to say, "Goodnight, my beloved."

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 13, 1943—London*

Evening angel,

I can't think of a better way to begin my letter tonight than by telling you how much I love you, how much you mean to me and how much I miss you. It's an old story, isn't it? But, to me it will always be brand new where you are concerned.

Your letters of Dec. 18 and 19 came yesterday and were "devoured" with the usual zest. However, they did cause me to worry more than a little, too, since you repeated the fact that you hadn't received any mail from me in weeks. While I'm hopeful it will all get to you some time, it is discouraging to hear that it takes so long.

You said the lack of mail gave you that old "miss you" feeling again. Yes, and I could tell by reading the letters. Still, we'll have to get used to it, Billee. By that, I mean the longing for each other.

We like to think our troubles will be over soon but one day follows another and it still looks far away.

I don't mean to sound discouraging but we can understand how much is still to be done, can't we? Too, I'd feel 100% worse if I didn't have some hope on which to cling, and you are that hope.

Forgive me if I'm being melodramatic, but if I didn't have you to go back to I don't think I'd care to go back at all. That's how much of a part you hold in my future. You are the foundation of my "house of cards," as it were, and if you weren't there for me, my "house" would collapse.

Billee, you can forget about our failure to get Christmas gifts for the Daly and Kenny infants. There will be other times. As far as me still wanting to take the "plunge" with an absent-minded, curly-headed, tilted-nose sweetheart... well, if you were here or I was there, I'd demonstrate how fast I can move sometimes. And, listen, if I upset your equilibrium, please don't let it affect you where it will cause damage. If you must fall, try to be standing near a bed or something soft.

It was great news to hear you say Mother was taking to her work. But, continue to keep your eyes on her. I was relieved to hear the flowers for Christmas were going to be delivered, at least. Now, I'm anxious to know what kind of flowers they were and what they were like. If they made you happy, I'm satisfied, but I did want to make our first Christmas a better one than that.

You bring back such pleasant memories when you mention, "You Made Me Love You." I remember very well how I sang it. I also recall how I sought to convince myself that I shouldn't allow myself to "fall in love..." not when I was practically on the transport and might never see you again. But, "you made me love you" by simply looking at me.

Do you know, I don't believe there was an instance when I didn't have the urge to kiss you, just by looking at you.

I was interested in your remarks about overhearing the conversation surrounding the inability of "this younger generation" to take it! I wish those people could accompany me to one of our Bomber Command airdromes and watch the Flying Fortresses coming back after a raid. I'd like them to see for themselves how much those fellows of "this younger generation" can take it, and dish it out.

It was good to hear your correspondence with 195 was continuing. How about the others? Do you still hear from them?

Aside from your recent letters, the only others I've had during the past few days have been from Mom, Ruth Rommel and Ruth Totten.

About the bonds... I don't believe you can check from your end and get any better results. However, I'm going to make another inquiry along those lines and I'll let you know. At least we have the satisfaction of knowing we own four now. At the end of this month, I'll send you a money order for \$100, representing my savings during the last few months. I'd like to cable it but we are restricted from cabling money now. It must go by money order from the Army Post Office.

I'll be back Saturday night... also on the 17th. Love to Mother and all.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: The censor "hates" you for not liking typewritten letters. Told me to tell you so.

PS: I was only kidding! The Censor.

*January 14, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My darling,

Another night of work gone by. Now I am trying to get tired so I can go to sleep and maybe dream a dream or two of us.

I wish I could dream up a letter or two. No mail since last week and that was dated December 12. Still no bonds. Uncle Sam is cooperating beautifully, yes?

Our bad weather still continues. I've seen more snow in the past three months than I've seen in seven years. I'll still take my mountains, or else New York. I know, New York has snow, too, but then you go with New York so that would be all right. Do you think that perhaps we could spend our old age in Asheville with my mountains after our little ones are grown and on their own? I'd like that.

Not hearing from you gives me sort of that lost, empty feeling, but it will soon go away, I know, I do love you so much... mind? I'm firmly convinced you are in Africa. I do hope I hear differently but this long silence seems to make me believe that.

Under the covers for me... sleepy now. You'd laugh if you could see me in this oversize flannel nightgown my aunt wished on me. It is warm but I look like someone's grandma. Goodnight, my dearest, wherever this finds you. Keep well and don't forget to pray for us both. (Hope you can read this.)

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 17, 1943—London*

Billee dearest,

This afternoon I walked a bit on my holiday. I stopped for an hour or so along the Thames embankment near Waterloo Bridge.

It was there I went back over the past year, month by month, until the night of Jan. 17, 1942. It has been a year of trials, hasn't it? But in more respects it has been a glorious year.

This was our day and we spent it together, at Mass this morning, during our walk this afternoon, and now tonight. I'm afraid we are going to be interrupted, though, because the air raid sirens have commenced to scream.

The R.A.F. made a mass raid on Berlin last night and it looks as if "Jerry" is going to repay the compliment. I can hear the ack-ack guns starting to boom a few miles away and it appears as if the batteries in the city will open fire soon. There they go! A look out the window made me feel as though I was at the World's Fair watching the fireworks display. The planes seem to be on the other side of the city, judging from the anti-aircraft activity.

A couple of batteries started firing a few blocks from here and, if you will excuse me, I'll be getting out of here for the time being. On the top floor of a corner building, I am in a very unhealthy position. I'll be back soon...

It's all over for the present. I went down the street a few blocks to one of the Red Cross clubs and watched the fun from there. It lasted two hours. That is, the alert did, but the planes were over for only 10 minutes. Some bombs were dropped on the other side of the city but I won't know until morning how much damage was done. Couldn't have been much. That's a devil of a way to spend an anniversary, isn't it?

I stopped in the office long enough to get my mail and was rewarded by receiving the one thing I wanted most today, a letter from you. It was the one of Dec. 24. Perfectly timed, your cable was also there. I'll write to Father John tomorrow and thank him for the picture. I love to think of all those things in our hope chest.

You were right about the delay in mail around Christmas. And, I do know what it meant to you not to have any for almost four weeks. I'll bet it took you quite a while to read it all when it did arrive.

Say, what name did you give your G.I. boyfriend? The one that came for Christmas? I wish I could have wrapped him in a mink coat, put a diamond ring on his finger, and then sent him.

I had a letter from Mom today and, like you, she hadn't received any mail from me in weeks and was quite worried. Still, the best I could do was tell her, again, the delivery isn't always as good as we'd like it to be.



*Charles sent this doll to Billee for Christmas in December 1942.*

You wondered what we would be doing five years from the time you were writing. I can draw you a picture:

We will be in our own “corner,” perhaps decorating our tree, perhaps waiting to have the Doyles, Dalys, Kennys, etc., call on us. Perhaps we might be visiting ourselves (if we can get someone to mind the children). But, one thing is certain, if God wills it. We will be together.

Speaking of Dot and Al... another secret. A letter from Dot said they have their fingers crossed again. In a short time, she hopes to let me be the first to know that they are infanticipating. She said they would be terribly disappointed if it wasn't so, this time.

It's 10 a.m., [Jan. 18] and I have seen the morning papers. But first, listen to another tale of woe. At 4:45 a.m., “Jerry” came back again this time the barrage was noisier but the Luftwaffe didn't stay around very long. The papers say there was damage to a few houses, a few stores, and several people were killed. A few were killed by falling shrapnel from our own A.A. guns. I did get dressed when the guns started earlier this morning but was too sleepy to leave my room. Charlie White, one of the *Stars and Stripes* boys who has a room next to me, and I sat up for 45 minutes, smoked a couple of cigarettes and went back to bed.

And so ends our anniversary... a rather lively one. Love to all, sweetheart. Don't say anything to 195 about the raid. They will only worry. They'll probably read about it in the papers but I'll just let them use their imaginations.

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

*January 17, 1943—Massillon*

My dearest Charles,

It's me again after last night, but this is our day. I've been remembering all day... walking to Mass this morning, or rather skating... we're having ice again for the order of the day... and when I came out of St. Mary's I couldn't help but remember the first Sunday and you were waiting for me... and then going home. I was so afraid you'd feel out of place in our old lady's home, but everything went well... our turkey dinner and I even remember you coming back for seconds on Mom's pudding. We went out to St. Genevieve's that afternoon and how lovely it was... my first trip there and I'm so glad it was with you because it was to mean many happy and peaceful hours in the chapel and the gardens with Mother Muller. We went back to the hotel from there and I waited in the lobby while you gathered up your belongings. Couldn't help but wonder why you were so long, but the letter the next day explained, of course. Then we waited, listening to the radio for time to go by until your bus left... looking forward to the next weekend as if we had always known each other. Tonight it seems just like yesterday or last weekend, everything has remained so vivid in my memory. I'm glad we have such nice memories... our moments together are always such happy ones except for the leave-taking.

We had a letter from Warren. He's still in Miami Beach but not for long. He will go to Radio and Mechanics School in Illinois for six months. In his letter, he had just finished KP duty, seven hours of

peeling onions besides all the other work, but he still likes army life. Mom is very pleased about him going to school.

We received word that little Billy will be home in six weeks or two months able to walk... isn't that wonderful? He will have to take treatments for a year, but even at that, it is miraculous. We didn't expect him to live, so our prayers are being answered.

Your message is still running around in my head. Every word means so much. Once more, I love you so much. It comes natural to write that and say it to myself, just like breathing. At first, it just didn't seem possible, but now I know it wouldn't be living without your love.

I have a confession to make, but it is better in a way because I can organize it better and know a little bit more about what will go in it... yes, I'm starting on the scrapbook and don't know when to stop. I found a beautiful brown leather one, quite large and one that you can add pages to, but we need that kind. I have it all planned out, how I'm going to arrange everything. Hope you'll like it.

That seems to be all again... once more, time to close. My Mass and communion were for us this morning, as I know yours probably was. I know our prayers must be helping because every day brings me closer to you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 19, 1943—Massillon [V-letter]*

My darling,

I'm a new woman. My mouth turns up at the corners now. One of the girls said yesterday, "Why so happy?" I replied, "Oh, I just got a letter and a cablegram." "Mmmm," she says. "Wish my husband would write a letter that would do that to me." So, you can see what a change has been made.

I'm relieved to hear your opinion of the shopping I did. It would have been fun tying packages with you. Oh, eventually we might have finished but it would be fun your way.

You've probably heard about how elated the family is over the new arrival. Your mom is tickled and from what I hear, Father John is quite excited. I'll bet that we have the first Kileys... then they'll be excited. Hope he looks like you.

I see where your movie star, Carole Landis, did get married. You must have finally run her down to get the story. Now, if it were me, I wouldn't be so hard to catch. She's in Africa now, I see.

Speaking of cold weather, it is exactly 2 degrees below out, and believe me, that's too cold. If it gets this cold in New York, I'm going out and buy two more blankets. Guess I'm just a sissy. I'll continue this in another letter.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 19, 1943—Massillon (V-letter continued)*

Hi darling,

It's me again. I'm making them work overtime today... that is, if you get both these on the same day. Me and my eight-page letters don't fit so well in these close quarters.



*World War II Home Front "E" Production Award Pin (not Billee's, which has not been found).*

We were awarded the Navy and Army "E" for Efficiency today so I have a medal, too, to show to our baseball team. Your letter gave me so much confidence yesterday that I went in to the boss to ask for my release so I could take the job at Goodyear. They are trying desperately to hang onto me, much to my surprise, and I think they will come to my terms. I'm beginning to find out that he who squeaks the loudest gets the most. With your letter running around in my head, I stood my ground. I surprised myself.

Didn't know I could stand up for my rights. See what you do to me 3,000 miles away? If I can stay on here, it will eliminate that 36 miles every day.

I have to laugh at Mom now, washing out her hose and undies along with me every night. She used to laugh at me, but now, since we've made a business gal out of her and she dresses up every day, she has to spend more time on herself. She's even taken to wearing lipstick. She tickles me, but we do have fun together. Goodnight my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 20, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My darling,

Think you can stand another date this week? Yes? I'm glad. I've just raided the icebox and I'm in bed with cheese and crackers and a very tall glass of milk. One of my failings, dear... eating in bed.

I've decided to keep this job. It's something new and I did get a raise, but not quite as much as I wanted. After I learn the job, I think the rest will come through. This work probably won't be of much use to me after this is over, but at least I'll be feeling like I'm doing my bit. I'll be a schedule clerk, night and graveyard shift for the Open Hearth of the mill. The time goes so much faster working nights. I'll still be able to keep my job at the Mercy Hospital.

London was bombed last night. I haven't heard any news since noon so I don't know about tonight. I can't help but say a little prayer every time that happens. Please be careful.

Had a long letter from Eleanor. I think she's feeling better. Your letter helped a great deal. Father John is still determined to go into the service. They all enjoyed the gifts so much. I had fun buying them. That's all, darling... no more room, darn.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 23, 1943—London*

Billee dearest,

The excitement over London has ceased for the present, so I don't believe we will be interrupted as we were last Sunday night. The bombers, the few that got as far as London, were back on Monday and Tuesday. The biggest damage was done to a school not very far from the office, in which 45 children lost their lives. It happened shortly after noon while the kids were having lunch. I won't say any more about it because the rest are gory details.

Now, let's cuddle up in a corner for a good, old-fashioned "house date."

Throw another log on the fire, turn on the radio and we'll be all set. A kiss, about ten minutes long, followed by "I love you more than ever."

Your letter of Dec. 28 and the V-mail of Jan. 10 arrived within a day of each other, the latter reaching me yesterday. Judging by what you said in the V-mail letter, you must think I'm in Siberia! You said, "I hope this reaches you wherever you are, quicker than your letters have reached me." I can tell you I'm still getting my mail at the same place. And, in order to put your mind at ease, I sent you a cable.

The truth of the matter is, your letters are coming across much quicker than mine are going back. I've explained the reason in previous letters so we won't have to discuss that.

Too, you said your love has increased since you haven't heard from me "as often as usual." I don't know what I'd do without your faith.

Inasmuch as V-mail is much quicker at this time of year, I'll have to send an occasional letter that way just to let you know I'm well, and writing. I don't want to be brief when I'm "talking" to you, so I'll save our long evenings for airmail letters.

I loved the way you planned to spend our first real anniversary. My letter of Jan. 17 told you how I spent mine.



*A class picture from the Sandhurst Road School in London, bombed on January 20, 1943. 38 children were killed and more were permanently injured. Many of the children were in the playground outside; the German pilot, killed himself seven months later by the RAF, waved to the children before dropping his bomb.*

It was great news to hear that Billy is improving and that our prayers are not going unanswered.

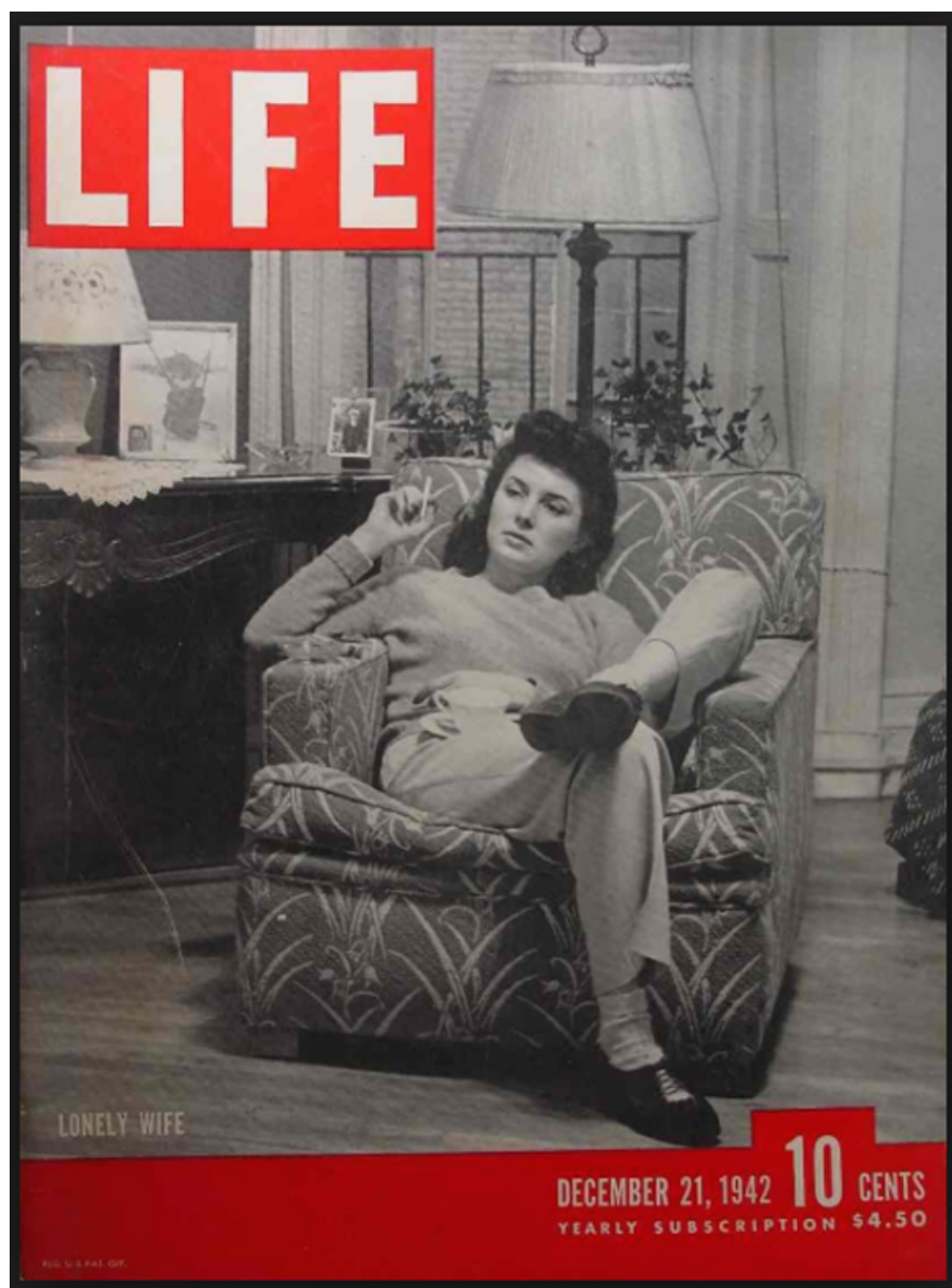
Billee, when I mentioned your letter of Dec. 28 earlier, I meant your Christmas letter, which was postmarked the 28th. At any rate, I recognized it as something right from your heart. I've read it at least a half dozen times and will do so again before I go to bed tonight.

When you mentioned the pink roses, I could just picture your face framed in hundreds of them. I had hoped Mother would like the poinsettia. As for the soldier doll... well, he was told to keep an eye on you until I can relieve him. It's an assignment I'd give anything for but since I couldn't come I selected someone who wouldn't be much of a rival. What did you call him?

I can understand how you felt in church on Christmas. It must have been beautiful. I wrote to Mom, congratulating her on the selection of your bag. I can't tell from here what it's like but you sounded enthusiastic. That goes for the gloves you got from El and Tom.

Did you know Father John has "Stories of a Hundred Operas?" You must be of the same musical temperament.

Billee, I'm sure Sherry Ann and Johnny made you feel as I did when I read of you being with them. Do you suppose ours will be as nice as they must be?



Before I leave... will you continue to spoil me the way you have with four letters, Dec. 18, 20, 24, and 25, in seven days?

Love to Mother and all.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Tell Uncle Fred I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint him on that Lt. Col. business. And, while I think of it, have you seen "Life," Dec. 21? The girl in "So Your Husband's Gone to War" could be you! [Except for the cigarette!]

*January 23, 1943—Massillon (V-mail)*

My darling,

We didn't have our date this weekend... a pretty busy one for me. I worked until 8:00 Saturday night and then went to a party our department had for three boys that left for the Army on Monday. Both Mom and I went and had a swell time.

Mom looked so nice and was quite the belle of the ball. I looked for her once and there she was with two of the big bosses by the piano singing “Daisies Don’t Tell.” She had such a good time. We rented the dance hall at the Legion Hall, and had quite a crowd, about 50 in all, I think.

Yesterday was Sherry Ann’s birthday, so we went out there and spent the day. I watched the baby while Mom and Lee and Harry went to Akron to see little Billy. Johnny is getting so big and cuter every day. I really believe he knows me now. We get along fine. He knows I’ll pick him up and hold him when he cries but I fooled him yesterday. It was awfully hard to hear him cry but I won out. My sister is going to ruin me if I spoil him any more.

We are having almost spring-like weather without any sun... I’ve almost forgotten what it looks like.

I had a letter from your mom today. They are busy buying baby clothes already. Tom wants a girl so he can name her Eleanor and she wants a boy so she can name him Thomas, Jr. I’m so happy for her. It’s going to be hard not having Tom around when the big event takes place but then miracles can happen. She didn’t say where he is so I guess he is still in Virginia. I’ve thought of another name for one of our boys, maybe the second baseman: Michael Francis. That’s a good Irish name.

As always, you’re so thoughtful. What a lift that cablegram gave me. It was dated the 21 and was waiting for me on Saturday night when I came in from work. I’m so glad you are getting my mail all right. To date I’ve had three letters since the last week in November, and none since the one written January 2. They will all come at once one of these days.

Eleanor said she expected Father John to be in the service by June, but maybe I told you that before. Your mom is wonderful about it.

I miss the letters, but so long as I can write to you and a cablegram comes once in awhile, I’ll be all right. I love you so. I couldn’t help but remember Saturday night that a year ago we were together. Remember waiting on the wrong corner? I was so afraid I’d missed you. We had fun. I was falling fast then but didn’t want to admit it to myself. ‘Bye for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 25, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

Evening darling,

It’s me again, just come in from work. I’m not sleepy, as usual. Wrote a letter this morning to you, but thought you wouldn’t mind if I dashed off another. After being used to writing these eight-page letters, I hardly feel like I’ve written.

The party Saturday night was the main topic of discussion today. Everyone had such a good time, including me, for a change. I wished you could have been there, you would have enjoyed it. Practically all the fellows are married and they had their wives with them so we all had a good time together. We paid \$1.00 apiece and the fellows brought the liquor. Out of that, we paid for the hall and gave the two fellows that left, \$15.00 apiece. It reminded me of the parties you told me about.

I'll have to admit I got to feeling a little better than I should have, but that is because it's been so long since I had anything to drink that I couldn't take it. The girl I work with, whose husband is in the Marines, and I stayed pretty close together. We had fun. She'd take a drink and say, "This one is for George," and then she'd say to me, "You take one for Charles." She says we have to get together after this is over, in New York. She's so cute... you'd like her. About five foot and blonde; her husband is six foot two inches. You can imagine what a combination that would be. They plan on having another party in two weeks. I don't think I can take another like that. It's all right if you were here. All the big shots were there, our big, big bosses, and they had a merry old time. So many funny things happened that we have laughed all day.

It's cold again tonight... almost zero. We have two more months of this, I'm afraid.

Mom is going to night school to learn typing. They have a five-week course here, two nights a week. She's all enthused. I don't think she wants to go home. She had such a good time Saturday night. She hasn't been out like that for years. I thought maybe she'd be shocked because they do drink quite a bit, but she wasn't in the least.

I started on my new work tonight. It's a little complicated, but I think I'll catch on. Little by little, the making of steel is soaking in my brain, but there are so many things to remember. I don't know what good it will do me after this is over, but I'm stuck now unless I go home. That's the only way I'll get a written release from the company, I might as well be in the Army.

Everyone is in bed and it's getting later. I want to dash off a letter to your mom before I turn in for the rest of the morning. Do you mind? I love you and I'd give most anything just to see you. Goodnight, my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 28, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My dearest,

A letter! today, the one written January 7. Here I have finally gotten you around to using a pen again and now I have to use the typewriter so I can get all I want to say on a page. That's irony.

It sure made me feel good. The night just flew at the office tonight. I learned something about where you stay. You do have a fireplace even if it does just have gas logs. I miss ours at home, especially when you are there to keep me company. We had a couple of fires in there when you were there, didn't we?

I love you, so very much... not just because I got a letter, either.

Had a long letter from Dottie, the first in quite a few weeks. I suppose by now you know the good news. She's so happy, but who can blame her? We'll have to start a baby fund. I hope Al won't be called. She told me all about her Christmas. She didn't get the silver fox jacket.

I'm laughing at my aunt. She's had her upper teeth out and she's trying to get something to eat. She says, "I'm tired of these soft foods, I want something solid." She's so funny. You'll like her. I'm trying to get Mom to go to bed. She's been so well... I've got both fingers crossed. She's crazy about her job and likes the people she works with, so that makes everything swell.

So, you finally got Carole married. She had every right to be a beautiful bride. She's very pretty. You must have finally run her down to find out where and when. You usually get what you go after, eh?

Pictures mean so much. I couldn't rest until I finally got the one like your Mom had. It was so much like... or rather is you. Too, you look like you might be looking right at me. I like the other one, too... the enlarged snapshot of the one taken in N. Ireland. I'd be in an awful fix if I didn't have those.

I have my hair short again and just as soon as it gets a little bit longer, I'll have another picture taken. I said that once before, but this time I will. Leaving home and all upset my plans. It's shorter now than it was when I was in New York.

Warren is still in Miami Beach, but expects to leave in a few days. He likes it a little better. They have moved 2700 WAACs down there and he's having quite a time, what with U.S.O. dances and all, besides his basic training. Said in his last letter that he had danced with a WAVE [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the women's auxiliary of the U.S. Naval Reserve.] This training will do him a world of good. He had a good job, but a little too much money to spend. This will tend to settle him down a bit. Not having a father around during the years he really needed one has made a difference, too, so I think he will benefit from all this. Continued in the next letter.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*January 28, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

Darling,

Here I am again, but I couldn't say all I wanted to in the other one. Damn Hitler for making me have to write like this. Damn Hitler, period.

I never did get near the ice. These hours I work certainly keep me from doing anything but eating and sleeping and working. My aunt hasn't been well, and since Mom is working days now, I take care of the house. I don't mind... keeps me in practice. They have indoor ice skating in New York, don't they? You'd like it once you knew how. I love hockey games... ice hockey, I mean.

Swell of Marty's brother-in-law to let you know where he is. You should have fun. You can show him London, and all the movie stars. That wasn't meant for sarcasm. I like to tease, mind. I meant to tell you all the clippings and cards arrived with the letter. Uncle Sam is giving us a little better cooperation. He's a pretty nice guy after all. I just get a little peeved when I have to wait so long for a letter. If it wasn't for those cablegrams in between, I'd start swimming.

I guess things will start to move after this N. African parley. [Roosevelt and Churchill met in Casablanca in January 1943 to plan the next stages of the Allies war offensive.] Everyone was so

excited about what the news would be. They kept announcing several days before the news broke that there would be this very special news at 10 o'clock Tuesday night. We sneaked a radio in, so we could listen. I couldn't have been any more surprised than if they had said our president was in Timbuktu. I had an idea he was out of the country, but never expected it to be there. I hope they got results or will get it, anyhow. We are all feeling pretty optimistic... I hope not too much.

The wedding sounded like fun and so does Mitzi Mayfair. I see they are in Africa now.

There are a series of cartoons being carried in our little town paper bearing the name, "The Yanks in England," by Bruce Bairnsfather in the *Stars and Stripes*. Know him? They are in every night now and have been for about a week or so. By the way, I haven't had a *Stars and Stripes* in quite some time. They must be coming via Cape Horn. It does take a lot longer I guess for them. Some of them came in less time than the letters.

I've had the best time reading and re-reading your letter. Read parts of it about the wedding to Eleanor Reese, the girl whose husband is in the Marines, the one I went to the party with. She enjoyed the clipping.

This Saturday will mark another anniversary for us, the night of the President's Ball... remember? And our trip to the Grove Park Inn. Seems just like last weekend. Such a gorgeous night and everything was perfect... "our moment." Where are John and Ben now? Or is that a military secret? Goodnight for now, dearest. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



*Bruce Bairnsfather was one of the most widely-published cartoonists in England during WWI, but during WWII he became official cartoonist to the American forces in Europe, contributing to Stars and Stripes and Yank. He worked in a much more finished style than most of his contemporaries; he drew cartoons at American bases and nose art on U.S. aircraft. His works are considered to have influenced artists such as Bill Mauldin.*

*January 30, 1943—London*

Billee dearest,

This is another “remember” night. We do have so many of them, don’t we?

Still, of all the memories to which we cling as consolation for our separation, the one we have of tonight, a year ago, is most dear.

I find the date easy to recall because it is the president’s birthday, and it was the President’s Ball in Asheville’s Auditorium. I can swiftly rush through the hours and the minutes prior to the time when we found ourselves on the terrace of the Inn, looking over the moonlit hills, thoughts running wildly through my mind. Thoughts that asked me to decide, then and there, whether it would be fair to both of us to continue something that would have an indefinite postponement.

And then, when you trembled and looked at me, how it became as clear as anything could be that there would always be a hollow space within me unless you were there to fill it. I have often wished that I were an artist and I could paint our picture on the Terrace.

Looking back on that night brings out some other very interesting data. So much has happened during the year. Johnny Joyce was with Theda. Jack Donnell was in the hospital. Now Jack and Theda are married and Johnny is “keeping ‘em flying” somewhere. Ben Wooley was at the Ball that night. Now, I have every reason to believe he and Jack are together in Africa. Jimmy Kirk was engaged then. He is in Bermuda now... engagement broken.

A few hours ago, I returned from a two-day trip. The purpose of it was to look into a huge athletic program undertaken by one of the units in Britain. I say “unit” because censorship forbids the mention of company, battalion, regiment, or division. However, the program is big enough to have almost 1,000 men taking part in a boxing tournament, many more in a basketball tournament and a large group in rugby and rifle competition. I had the occasion to discuss it with the commanding general, a great sports enthusiast. Athletics are compulsory for these men, one hour a day, seven days a week. You can see fellows taking part in a dozen or more sports.

Before I left on the trip, there was America’s first bombing of Germany, when the 8th Air Force’s Flying Fortresses and Liberators paid a visit to the naval base at Wilhelmshaven and the industrial sites in “Northern Germany.” I accompanied 18 other correspondents to Air Force H.Q. and from there went to a bomber station, arriving just in time to see the first Fort coming in. It was a great sight. After the crews were interrogated, I had time to talk with four of the crews before leaving for London. I had to hustle like hell to get the story up. But, it was one of the best days I’ve had overseas.

And, with that, I’ll say “Goodnight, sweetheart.” Love to Mother and all.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

*January 30, 1943—Massillon*

My darling,

A little late for a Saturday night date but here I am. Worked until eight o'clock tonight and cut out a jumper dress afterwards, the only new addition to my wardrobe this year.

All the time I was cutting and listening to the birthday program for our president, I was thinking of a year ago tonight and how we danced at the President's Ball, having a celebration of our own for our moment on the terrace of the Inn. Seems like last night. I can still see the stars so bright and feel your arms so close around me. I'm awful glad you decided to see Asheville for a change and that you made that stop at the "Y" to take in the party. I wonder where else we might have met?

My last Sunday tomorrow, to say "a year ago" until Easter. The time has gone so quickly for me, I can hardly believe it.

I'm going to early Mass. My Mass and communion will be for us tomorrow and victory. Please God that my prayers will be answered.

Keep well. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you. I have fun trying to imagine what you're doing at such and such a time. Sometimes I wonder if you can feel my thoughts, they are with you so much.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 1, 1943—London (V-letter)*

Hello sweetheart,

It appears as though we will have to rely on V-mail more often than we have in the past even if it means cutting down on the length of our letters. I will continue to "write" a letter a week and add one or two of these along with it.

Your V-mails of Jan. 14, 16 and 17 were waiting for me when I returned from a three-day trip Saturday. I didn't get them until yesterday so I wasn't able to acknowledge them in my "date" letter of Saturday. But they came over with more speed than the airmail letters and I assume these will reach you quicker than my airmails.

First of all... those three little words. I love you. Couldn't very well say anything without telling you that. And, in answer to a question you ask so often, I never tire of hearing you tell me that you're lonesome, that you love me more and more, because when you say that I know everything is all right. If we weren't lonely or didn't have the "miss you" feeling, there would be something... missing.

I inquired again about the bonds today. I was told that they should be delivered 90 days after payment which means you should have received the first one early in January. There may have been a delay with the change of address but if you don't get at least the first one early in February, let me know and they will start investigating from this end. I'm sending \$100 in three days and you should receive it a few days later.

You said you were sure I was in Africa because of the delay in mail. No, I'm still in the same place. I cabled you a few weeks ago, acknowledging your mail and telling you mine was probably delayed and I hoped you would gather from that message that everything was o.k.

Billee, I do hope you can land that position in Akron. You sounded as though you wanted to get away from the other place. It makes me boil to have you surrounded by anything that is unpleasant and I will make it up to you one day. If I were you and the Akron job was what I wanted, I'd try everything to get it. Let me know what progress you make.

Your memories of Jan. 17, 1942 were grand. And, since you say you'd like to spend our "old age" with your mountains, so shall it be done. We're making a lot of plans, but with God's help we should see them materialize.

I had a laugh over Warren on K.P. I'll never forget the first time I had it. I knew his work would be interesting and I'm happy for him. Why don't you send me his address? I'd love to write to him. The news about Billy was great, too.

I'll be sending some pictures for our scrapbook soon. Your arrangements on keeping it are o.k. by me. Love to Mother.

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



*Ella, around 1930.*

*[Fr. John to Charles] February 2, 1943—Jersey City*

Dear Kike,

Mom passed away this morning at 1:45. I know how this will shock you. It was so sudden, none of us realize it yet. We didn't send a cable because we wouldn't be able to send all you wanted to know. This is the next best thing. Chin up. [Charles did not receive the news that his mother had died for several weeks.]

This is the hardest letter I shall ever expect to write, so bear with me. Here are the particulars:

Thursday we had a pretty big snow storm. Mom had a kid clean the sidewalk off, but more snow came down. Friday morning when the kids were going to work, they slipped and slid. Mom was probably afraid others would do the same thing. When she couldn't get a kid to finish the job, she did it herself. As near as I can gather, she had it all finished when she fell. Whether she slipped or whether her blood pressure brought on the stroke, we'll never know. Anyway, Mrs. Roach across the street and Midge Finn helped her into the

house. Mrs. Doyle came over. They called Dr. Keegan and then called me. I came in right away and arrived about 1:30. Mom was on the couch when I got there. The doctor had been and gone. I called him. He said her condition was serious at present, but she might respond to treatment. Her whole right side was paralyzed and she had lost her speech. I brought the little bed downstairs and we moved her to that. She was conscious but very foggy. I think she knew I was there. Father McHenry anointed her. She couldn't receive. Then she went into a coma and never came out of it. Keegan advised either the hospital or a day and night nurse. Pop and I decided the hospital, and Mom was taken to St. Francis on Friday night. Saturday, she was a little better, but still serious. Sunday about the same. We kept going back and forth, but yesterday noticed a change for the worse. Keegan said she wasn't responding to treatment. I called him at midnight and he said she would not live until morning. I picked up Pop, Mrs. Doyle and Mr. Brennan. Pop didn't want the girls to go. We got there at 1:15 and she was dead a half-hour later.

Mom had a swell death. Peaceful; no struggle. I read the prayers for the dying and gave her absolution just as she breathed her last. Then I leaned over and kissed her for all of us. Pop took it kind of hard, but I don't think he realizes it yet. El was swell. So was Betty. We sent a telegram to Ed yesterday and another when we got home. I hope he makes it. The funeral will probably be Friday.

I just came back from saying Mass for her soul. She died on the feast of the Purification of Our Lady, and I know our Blessed Mother took her to herself. She was too good for anything else. It'll be harder on you than any of us, but keep your chin up. I'll write again. Billee knows.

*February 2, 1943—Massillon*

My beloved,

By the time this reaches you, you will have heard the sad news from Father John about our mom. I feel I can say that because she would have been my mom, too.

I've never been so shocked. Only yesterday, a letter came from Eleanor telling me she was fine, especially since she had received your letters and cable. It must have been very sudden.

My darling, what can I say or do to comfort you? You are so close and yet so far away. I'll be beside you when you pray for her. I'm going just as soon as I receive the funeral arrangements. I want to, very much.

All I can think of is how wonderful she was to me when we were in New York and how much her letters have meant to me since we have been corresponding. Then I think how alone you are over there. Please, be brave, but then I know you will be. Seems like we have to take so much as we get older.

Last night I was remembering her in my prayers and this morning I went to the Candlemas service and when I came home, the telegram was waiting for me. I thought it was another cablegram from you and then I opened it. I'm leaving just as soon as I receive word from Father John. It isn't a long trip from here and I do want to be there.

This is a difficult letter to write, my dear. I can't seem to think of the right words to say. They don't express at all what's in my heart. Perhaps my love can express it. I would love so to be within reach of you so I could hold you in my arms, but miracles don't seem to be happening these days.

I'll close now. It's time to go to work, but I'll write and let you know what I do. My prayers and thoughts are with you, my dear, and all I can say is...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 5, 1943—London (V-letter)*

Hello sweetheart,

I'm sure you don't mind typewritten V-mail letters. In fact, I know I couldn't say all I want by using my pen so it is of necessity rather than by choice that I favor my typewriter on these forms.

Your V-mail letters continue to pour in. The ones of Jan. 19 (both of them) and 20 arrived together yesterday. It was a relief to hear that you were working at something more suitable. This latter impression rescinds an earlier one whereby I encouraged you to try and land Goodyear [the Akron job]. However, if you are satisfied with the new work, that's all that matters. Still, I'm not very happy about the night work. I know what that "graveyard" shift is like, only we called it the "lobster" shift on the Journal. I guess all newspapers call it the same.

I sent the \$100 off yesterday and a little Valentine's Day remembrance today. Everything is going along smoothly now. If only the bonds would start reaching you, I wouldn't have much to worry about... not much.

If you'll close your eyes and lift your chin a little, I'll do the rest by way of taking time out at this juncture to tell you how much I love you.

It was good to hear you had mail from 195. How about Sister Dorothy? You haven't mentioned any correspondence from her but then that's probably because you haven't been getting any. I'm waiting for an important announcement from that quarter but haven't had any mail from then in almost a month. I gather they are sticking to airmail which explains the delay.

I saw the luckiest guy in the European Theatre of Operations today. He is with "Yank" magazine, the weekly published in New York and Britain for the forces. His wife, a British subject, whom he had married in New York, arrived in our office looking for Sgt. Harry Brown. A phone call brought him flying to the place. She had just arrived. You can imagine my thoughts.

This will be my last letter for a few days again. I'll be going out of town tomorrow or Sunday for three or four days. But, when I get back I'll keep our date.

Yesterday was another of our anniversaries... two more months and our pledge will be a year old.

During the week I received what will probably be the last package I'll get for quite some time in keeping with the recent restrictions on packages from home. Have you read of them yet? We can only ask for specific items from home after it has been judged that they are necessities and cannot be

bought here. The package I received contained a fruitcake, mailed in October, and sent by Marty's mother for my birthday!

Love to Mother and all.

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

*[Fr. John to Charles] February 6, 1943—Jersey City (V-letter: there must have been two, but the second one is missing)*

Dear Kike,

I hope you are over the first shock at least by this time. You can't realize it, I know. I don't think any of us do yet. While I'm here at the rectory, there are other things to occupy my mind. Most of my days off, when I took them, were spent at home. I'm more than glad now I did. Of course, there are some regrets that I didn't get there more.

Everyone was sweller than swell. The traveling, with all the snow and ice was miserable, but the place was crowded. I'm sure all your friends paid their respects. There were plenty of them. And the people who traveled from Newark to J.C... so many kids came one night, we had to let them in the house in three shifts. And my mail... I'll never get caught up thanking them. Masses, masses, and more masses.

Billee came on. She was swell. You got yourself something there. And Eddie flew back from the coast in 21 hours. Pop is taking it quite well but there will be times without number he's going to be blue. El's not going back to work. That will be some help to have her. And when the baby comes, you can be sure it will be Pop who'll do the spoiling.

Your boss, Mr. Dear, came down one afternoon about five, walked right into the kitchen and extended his sympathy to Pop. Said he couldn't write to you until first he could tell you he had paid his respects. Pop thought that was the greatest thing. Ray Roach came down one night with a big spiritual bouquet from the Journal employees, and a mass card from himself and wife. Mel came one afternoon and we chewed for an hour.

The church was crowded for the Mass. In spite of it being First Friday, 48 priests were present. I said the Mass. Witchie and Dave were on with me. Al took the absolution after Mass. Father Farrell gave the absolution at the cemetery. Mom is buried with Jo.

El was sensible. She took her rest. I guess Bette lost the most sleep. She stayed up one night herself, after Pop had fallen asleep in the chair. Bette broke once. I had her quiet after 15 minutes. Eddie took it hard in the beginning and during the Mass. Frank McGurk [Ella's half-brother] was in. Bette's boyfriend was on a furlough. Tom also got in. The place looked like an Army camp.

The more I think of it, the more consoled I get. If Mom had lived she would have been paralyzed... her whole right side. You can imagine how she'd take that. I'm even glad in a way that she never

came out of the coma. The pain would have been terrific and when she found out about the paralysis, that alone would have killed her.

*February 8, 1943—Massillon (3 V-letters)*

My darling,

Another hard letter to write, but I told Father John that I would write the details following your mom's death. Writing it makes me think I'm in a daze, it is still so unbelievable.

I tried writing while I was there, but no go, so I decided to wait until I returned home. Arrived home this a.m. about six-thirty and would have written sooner but had to catch forty winks so I could go to work.

I'll start with my arrival Thursday morning in J.C. about nine o'clock. Father John came and picked me up in front of Loew's and took me home. He was so wonderful about my coming. I didn't know at first whether I did right or not but I feel now that I did, that you would have wanted me there.

The first thing I did was to go and see your Mom. [Ella's wake was held in the house, as were most wakes at that time.] She looked so peaceful and happy that you couldn't feel sorry. She did just go to sleep, as Father John told you in the other letter. There was no pain that we know of, for which I'm very thankful. She was dressed in a lovely orchid robe with an orchid corsage pinned to her shoulder. She looked so natural. It just seemed like you had to be there, my dear. Everywhere I looked, I could see you and feel you near.

Eddie came downstairs about eleven. He arrived by plane from California about three in the morning. The arrangements were made through the Red Cross. He didn't know until he arrived that it was all over. Tom had come in on Tuesday to be with Eleanor for which I was very glad.

They have all stood up wonderfully. I don't see how they did it. Of course, there were several times that they started to break but Father John was right there at that moment to give them courage and comfort. I knew at the time I was there last year that he seemed to be all and more of what you told me of him, but in my estimation, there isn't anyone like him. If you could have seen him through all the ordeal, how wonderful he was to them all when I know how he must have felt himself.

The people were beginning to come in when I arrived and kept coming all day and night. She must have been well loved because they were all friends. The flowers were gorgeous and I've never seen so many. The mass cards were still coming when I left... hundreds of them. A very lovely one from the Jersey Journal employees, and from all your friends. Nearly all of them came while I was there. Dottie, Al, Bill, Marty, Ruth T. and Ruth R., Gertie, Ray Roche, Mel Shapiro, Jack and Berta. Ray and Mel came the night before I arrived so I didn't get to see them. Your boss, the publisher of the Jersey Journal, came to represent you, he said, and to extend his sympathies. I thought that was very thoughtful of him.

This is getting down to the bottom of the page, so I'll finish this with another. I started to take a chance on airmail but knew you would want to know as soon as possible. I'll never get one of these

letters that I won't think of the message one carried to you, but Father John thought that would be easier than a cablegram, leaving you without any details. I know the shock must have been very great as it was, but it would have been so much harder to have received just a cable. I knew that he wrote it in a way that you would be comforted at the same time...

Your Uncle Frank came from Miami Beach and your Uncle John from Philadelphia, I believe. He was so nice to me. I like him. Your mom's cousin Irene stayed nearly all the time and Tom's mother was there.

I was worried about Eleanor when I heard because of the baby, but Tom's being there helped so much. We stayed busy fixing things to eat and meeting the people so that helped a lot, too. Your dad was marvelous. He broke down when I came in Thursday morning and once or twice after that, but Father John was there beside him. Bette was good until she got a little overtired. Thursday night I made her go to bed with me. I told her I wouldn't unless she did. The rest helped her courage a lot. Eddie, her boyfriend, was home on a furlough. He was so thoughtful and kind to her and stayed there quite a bit of the time.

The funeral was at ten o'clock Friday morning. There aren't words to describe the Mass. It was so lovely that you couldn't help but feel so happy for her. There were forty-eight priests on the altar besides three Monsignors. Father John said the Mass. How he did it I'll never know. He was assisted by Father Al and Father Eddie I believe, or else Father David Pathe. You couldn't help but be brave and happy for her seeing him on the altar. Father Al gave the absolution. Father John told me before that he knew he couldn't do that. That is the way she would have wanted it, and now she won't be worried about her boys any more because she is where she can watch over all of you. Now I know she must be so happy, except for the fact that Eleanor won't have her when her child is born.

Friday after the funeral and when the house was straightened, the people all left and we were alone. They all went to bed and rested. None of them except El and Tom had been to bed. Eddie was for awhile after he first arrived, but neither Father John nor your dad had been to bed. That evening we were all together and the Jersey Journal reporter came in for the details of the funeral. Your dad was wonderful about telling him and, of course, Father John was there to help.

While the family was going over the mass cards and making lists, Father John and I had a long talk, the first opportunity we had... a little of everything. He told me quite a bit about his work and, too, of his desire to enter the service. I don't think he will do anything until after the baby is born, at least I hope not. I can understand the way he feels, but it will be hard for them to see him go.

I'll continue this in another V-letter... thought I could finish in this one, but I see I'm running out of space.

Before I forget, I should have told you quite a way back. Before we went to St. Al's, I kissed her goodbye for you. That was when it seemed like you had to be there beside me. If only I could have been there when you got the letter... or better still, Father John. It seemed so hard to tell you. I know our prayers for your comfort and strength are being answered. I feel like your mom will be there when that letter arrives to help you face the shock...

Father John went back to the rectory Friday night and returned again Saturday, bringing his movie picture projector and screen to show me the pictures he took of you going to camp and those of you and Eddie at Camp Dix. They are such wonderful pictures and so like you, my heart turned over when I saw them. He also showed us some of those he took of the kids on their outings and their basketball games and his trip to Canada. He brought four of his paintings with him including the one of Eddie. That is so wonderful. It looks as if he might walk right off the canvas. The others are so good, too. I guess I just stood there with my mouth open. What talent he has. He is waiting patiently for your picture. The miniatures arrived today and I'm sending them back separately. He took movie pictures of all of us, with quite a few feet of me. I hope they turn out all right. He made me laugh quite a bit and I don't suppose they will be good.



*Fr. John's painting of Eddie.*

He left in the afternoon after we had dinner, in time for confession. I slipped away about five-thirty. El and Tom were in bed so I said goodbye to Pop, Bette and Eddie. I wish I could have stayed longer, but at the present time, I couldn't. I have a plan that I'll discuss a little later. It was so hard to tell them goodbye. Eddie has until the seventeenth and then he has permission to ask for an additional ten days if necessary. I think he will. I like him; he is like you in some ways but he is quieter. He likes

the Army very much from the way he talked to us about it. Thursday night we fixed dinner for your dad, Father John and the two uncles and then El, Tom, Eddie and I went to Oyster Bay for dinner. Eddie said you used to eat there so much, so we'd go there. He was so thoughtful.

Saturday, after I left, I went to Dottie and Al's to spend the evening. Marty and Bill came over and Ruth Totten was there. We had a very enjoyable evening, under the circumstances. They are all so sorry and ask to be remembered to you. They will all write when they are sure that you know. Al and Bill were so sorry and wished they could have been with you, or



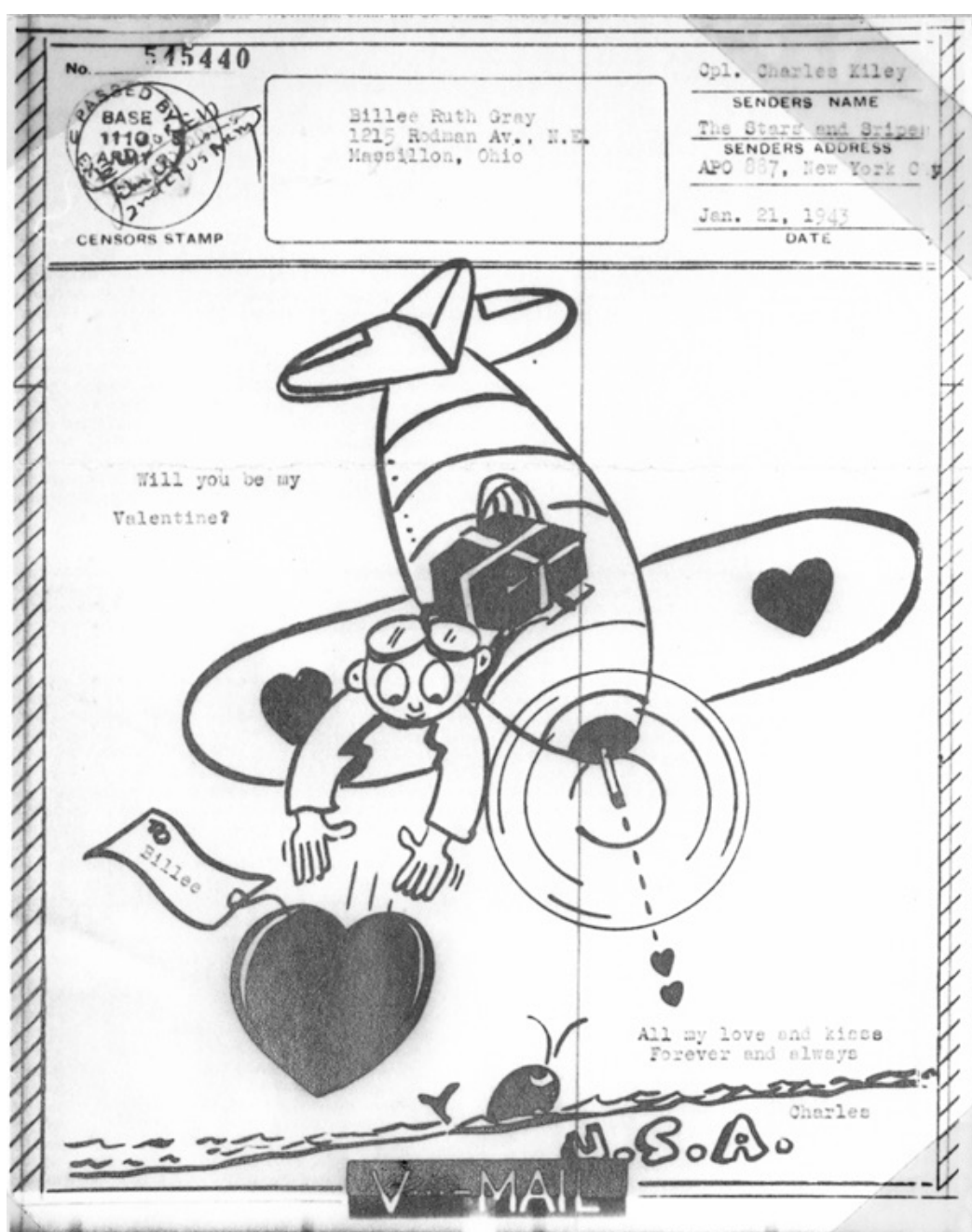
*Billee at 195 (still from Fr. John's film footage).  
Jersey City, February 1943*

that they could change places with you so that you might have been here. They were all so good to me. I'm glad that I was able to go and see them. Dottie looks very well. It's still a secret about the baby. I like Ruth. That's the first opportunity I've had to meet her, and Gertie, too. She asked to be remembered to you as well. Ruth had a sailor friend there from Louisiana. He does convoy duty between here and N. Africa.

I'll send another letter tomorrow straight mail. Seven letters came today together with clippings, pictures and your \$100, which goes into savings this time. We may need that in a hurry one of these days.

My prayers are especially with you now, and my thoughts as always. If I could just be there for an hour. It seems like such a little thing to ask. Be brave, my darling, and keep your chin up. Remember I love you so very much. I know it won't take the place of your mom's but I'll try hard. It will be hard to write, I know, but let me hear from you very soon.

All my love and kisses, always and forever your Billee



*Charles' valentine to Billee, possibly drawn by Stars and Stripes cartoonist Dave Bregar. January 1943.*

*February 9, 1943—Massillon*

My dearest Charles,

This will probably take a little longer to get there, but I'm tired of writing V-letters. Find a nice quiet place somewhere because I think this is going to be long.

From the time I left last week until yesterday, seven letters came from you, besides Christmas cards, valentines clippings and pictures. The letters were written Dec. 6, 10, 13, 17, 19, 26 and your V-letter written January 25.

The valentine is darling. Did the cartoonist draw it or you? I never had one made to order especially for me before. Everyone liked it and thought it so original. I hope mine arrives in time.

The miniatures are good. Would it be too expensive to have two made for me? One like the one you have a yen

for and the one I marked for my choice. [Again, these have not been identified.] You have such a faraway look in your eye in the one you like, as if you might be thinking about me... yes? The snapshots are swell. I like the one with the little boy. Speaking of looking ancient in pictures, the one with Bob Paulus makes you look a little old. All I could think of the group picture that you wrote about was how much heavier you looked. Maybe the G.I. haircut had something to do with that. The somber one isn't so bad... you do look a little bored, though. You couldn't have been thinking about me!

At long last I've been able to find out where you were staying. It sounds so homey, especially after an Army camp. I'm so happy for you that you are able to be there and that you found such a nice place. Thank the nice lady for me for taking such good care of my darling. Ruth Totten, I believe, mentioned that you were living in a boarding house, the first that I knew about it until your letter came yesterday. I was a little afraid of meeting her because you talked so much about her in your letters, but she's swell. I wish the reunion with Dot and Al and the rest had been under different circumstances. It was nice being with them again, except I had that lost feeling again. It seemed like you had to be there, too... maybe in the other room helping Al and Bill mix the drinks or something.

The way they have accepted me as one of the crowd is wonderful and I'll never forget. Bill told Ruth's sailor friend that I was their sister until we were married, and then I'd be their friend. He meant that in every sense of the word. We discussed the coming baseball season a little, when Marty couldn't hear. He bet on the Cardinals, too... said he knew they'd win. Marty brought pictures of the baby over for me to see. She is so adorable. Al took me to the bus on the corner and waited for the bus to come. The ride back to New York on the same bus we took that last night... for some strange reason something drew me to the same seat. My thoughts were only of you, and how much I loved you.

I enjoyed the clippings so much, and the cartoon. Not a good likeness at all... tell that guy he can do better than that. He has so much to work with. You have charge of the shoes now. Maybe you could find a pair for me. They passed the rationing bill: three pairs a year per



*Another cartoon valentine to Billee. February 1943.*

person. Doesn't worry me. I never have bought that many in a year. Mine are sure kind of worn now.

You took the air raid so calmly. I hope it was far enough away from you. You just sat there smoking a cigarette when they came back the second time. I thought you had to go to the shelters. I was quite a bit worried when we received the news, but your cablegram came a few days after that and I breathed a sigh of relief. It's only when I read things like that that you seem so far away. Please, be careful and don't take any chances. Remember our "ball team."

You rode in the general's car... that was swell, but then that's as it should be. Nothing but the best. That photographer has been around quite a bit. I can imagine you enjoyed talking with him and then beating him at casino. That is probably the only game I know how to play, outside of rummy. You're going to have a time on your hands teaching me how to play cards. Thought this would be a swell opportunity here, my sister plays so well, but working nights doesn't help any extra activities. I do well just to write letters.

When I said write a letter "once in awhile," I meant it. You took me literally. I know you'd rather type them and I wouldn't want the censor to get mad at me. He might take it out on you. Tell him I just meant you to write me one once in awhile. It did get so I'd forgotten what your handwriting looked like.

I thought Jack Donnell and the boys would be in Africa by now. That was good of them to stop in and see you. How do they like England?

The picture of Ruth was really nice... so like her. She's such a pretty girl. Can't understand how she's still single. I didn't get to see her this trip. She had a date Saturday night with a soldier friend, I believe.

I'm relieved to hear about the bonds. I thought surely by this time that some would be on the way, but I guess it takes time. Father John mentioned \$50 he has of yours that he said he'd send to me to put with our collection. The \$100 that came yesterday I'm going to put in savings. I think that will be all right with you.

So glad to hear that I won't have to go through the ordeal of you growing a mustache. That's quite a relief. Of course, I was worrying about it... ha. I don't think it would be at all becoming.

I like the idea of the list for our wedding guests. Do you think we should be married in J.C. now, since your mom won't be there? I'd rather be married there than here or in Asheville. So long as Mom and Marguerite are there, that's all I'm worried about. I do want Al and Dottie and Marty and Bill and the rest there. Whatever you think best will be all right. I'll leave it up to your good judgment. Give me your ideas.

I've wondered many times how you might go about your return and have thought about the surprise angle. I'm away all day and I can't receive outside calls unless it's an emergency so when I get home, anything could have happened. Saturdays are the days, though, when I go to Canton and don't hear anything all day until I get home. One the way home I always get sort of panicky-feeling... wondering what might have happened while I was gone. I always liked surprises, though, just so you

don't wait too long from the time you land until you get here. Then I'd like to be surprised. When you go about surprising me, please don't look "unconcerned." Then I will hate you.

By this time, you will have heard from Dottie about the expected Doyle heir. She looks well and is feeling good. It is to be a secret for a while from the gang so don't tell. The big event will take place in August.

I loved my birthday letter. I'm going to love being expensive, even though I never have been.

I wondered for so long how you spent your Christmas. I'm glad you had such a nice one. It sounded very homey. They sound like lovely people. You had a taste of real English hospitality, yes? I appreciate you waiting to ask the daughter to a show another night. That was birthday present enough, my darling. How was your evening with her? I hope you had fun and I'm sure you didn't forget how to act. I've been confining all my dates to the armchair, and pen and paper. The two or three dates I had didn't work out so well, so I decided I wouldn't make another attempt. My family gets quite disgusted with me, but I don't care. You've spoiled me, I guess, but I'm glad you did.

The Christmas card was cute. Mom was so pleased with your testimonial. Remember my telling you she was enclosing a note in my letter? Well, I didn't send it. Something made me read it and when I did, I knew it would never do.

At the time, I had a very bad cold. In fact, I was in bed for awhile with it. Never had one that hung on so long. I had pleurisy along with it and not getting any mail didn't help any. Mom's letter was telling you all about that and I knew you'd only worry and by the time it reached you I'd be rid of the cold. I can write that now because I feel swell... the cold is all gone. I guess I just wore it out, and I'm getting mail, so everything is all right now. She will send you another note in a few days.

I'm getting sleepy. I'm afraid I'll have to close. I can't help but wonder if you have the news by now. Remember, my beloved, how much I love you, and how very much you mean to me. If I could only ease the pain a little, but you're so far away. My prayers are with you always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 10, 1943—Massillon*

My dearest,

I tried writing a V-mail, but no luck. The words wouldn't come and it seemed so cold, getting one like that. If just by chance this goes airmail, I'll be so grateful.

You may wonder when you received the letter I wrote last night, why no mention of the Christmas letter? It was so special that it demanded a special answer.

Seems like fate that it was delayed so long because I never needed anything more when I returned from Jersey City Monday. It seemed like you just had to be there... I missed you so much... seeing and being with the people there.

It took so much courage to go into Penn Station late Saturday night to meet Marguerite. I hurried past our farewell spot. Going back brought everything so vividly that it seemed like yesterday.

There aren't words to describe my feelings while reading the letter. I'll have to admit there were tears shed both for happiness and sorrow. Happiness because I love you so much and to know that our thoughts are so nearly alike. Sorry because for the first time you really need me and I'm so far away. I've been with you constantly for the past week, trying to reach you with my prayers and thoughts to comfort you in your loneliness, forgetting of course that you didn't know yet.

In spite of what you say about the others being "special," this is the letter of all letters and I'll treasure it always. I've read and reread until I know it from memory almost. The phrases have been going through my mind all week. You can type me a letter like that every day of the week. That was all the Christmas I needed. I wouldn't trade the gift that my letter told about for all the minks or trinkets in the world.

You weren't "gushy," and even if you were I wouldn't care because I know you mean all of it... every word. I'm convinced now.

You're every dream I ever had come true. When I met you I was very prejudiced about love and everything attached to it. Don't take me wrong, because there was no rebound. What I had thought was the real thing proved to be one of your "aimless wanderings." Something happened that first night... we'll call it "fate" if you like... but it happened. When I went home that night, Mom was awake, luckily, because if she hadn't been I would have awakened her to tell her about the "Irishman" I met. She, of course, advised me, "Proceed with caution."

We can write thousands of words, but it all boils down to one fact. We were meant for each other. You make me so proud. No matter what happens, I'll wear your love like a shining light, always. And I'll be somewhere near at hand when God wills your coming home. Please, don't ever stop loving me. I shudder to think what would happen if you should suddenly decide I was one of your "aimless wanderings." There wouldn't be anything left... then my house of cards would crumble.

Thinking of you on Christmas day definitely didn't give me a lift because I missed you and needed you so much. I thought it would be a happy Christmas because I did have your love and the family for the first time in years, but, like you, I'll appreciate our Christmases together more for having gone through this last one without you.

Marguerite and I stayed at the Martha Washington and when we went in, the women were scrubbing the floor. Immediately the thought of us sitting on the far side of the lobby, dodging the scrub women entered my mind. Even the weather outside was the same. I had to pinch myself to be sure you weren't there. I remember you promised us a "neckathon" when you returned!

We cover pages, don't we? And end up the same way. "I love you." Three words and they seem to mean so much.

My communion is always offered for my gratefulness in having found you and I ask God to always make me worthy of your love. Seems like I always have to add that because I do get so rebellious at times.

Like you, I feel like saying, “Don’t you get tired hearing or rather reading my declarations of love for you?” Seems like you would, but I’m glad you don’t. I’ll close now, my darling. Reading it over, the words seem so inadequate after reading yours, but then that’s to be expected. I know what’s in my heart and even if I can’t get the words down on paper, I know you understand, because you love me. Wonderful, isn’t it? My deduction, I mean.

Goodnight, my love. All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 12, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

*My dearest Charles,*

Received your V-letter dated February 1. Not bad for delivery. I can see that mine must be making about the same time. It’s late and I’m kind of sleepy, but I couldn’t rest without dashing you off a note (when I say that now, I have to mean it). Thank goodness for a typewriter in a case like this, what with last of space and all. The four of us girls go to a place on Friday nights called Scrubby’s and get fish sandwiches and beer before we go home. Our weekly outing, but they are awfully good and taste swell about 12:30. I had two tonight and I feel kind of full, but they fry them fresh for each sandwich and they are so good.

I have an idea that Father John’s letter and I hope mine arrived today, judging from the time of delivery on the last two V-letters I have received. I’ve been thinking about it all day, wanting so much to be there. I can say, “it isn’t fair,” and mean it. Seems unbelievable that a week ago tonight this time we were gathered around in your living room talking. Father John didn’t leave until after midnight for the rectory. I feel so helpless... can’t even think of the right words to say. I can’t bear to have you hurt. My heart aches for your loneliness, because I know that is the way you must be feeling. If I could only be there, or someone close.

You have the news by now that I’m stuck with Republic for the duration unless I move away from the vicinity and I can’t very well lie, with Mom working there, too. I have a plan, but I’ll wait awhile before I tell you. I’m still debating and considering angles.

Perhaps I didn’t tell you, but Warren has been moved to Tyndall Field, Florida, to aerial gunner school. When he finishes his six-week course, he will have a staff sergeant’s rating and if he doesn’t wash out will go on from there to officers training school. The training is very rigorous and he has very little leisure



*Tyndall Field cadet class book, 1943.*

time. In fact, his outline for one day left him with one hour of leisure between nine and ten. He would love hearing from you. I've told him so much of you that he almost knows you. His address is: Pvt. Warren H. Gray, Class 43-10, Receiving Squadron, Tyndall Field, Panama City, Florida.

Will you have your commanding officer write out a letter or permit to send you a package so I can show it to the post office? New requirement now. Tell me something that you would like to have... something you need. It's so hard to know just what to put in and what to leave out.

I started pasting in our scrapbook last night and decided to put the letters in for the time being. Then they will be all together. I had to read each one before pasting. I got to the ones where we were planning my trip to New York. I couldn't help but smile—I must have been hard to convince—at the persuasive phrases used, but I love and treasure every word of them. I'm so glad now I have all the letters your mom wrote to me, too.

The space is about gone, so I'm forced to close just when I get a good start. As always and especially now, my dearest, my prayers and thoughts are with you almost constantly. Be brave and remember my love for you. It seems so hard not being with you when I could be of some help now, for the first time.

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

*February 13, 1943—London*

Hello sweetheart,

It seems ages since my last letter even though it has only been about a week since I was able to write last. In that letter I said I was going out of town for a few days. the “few days” developed into a week, bringing me back this morning. The first thing I did was stop at the office for my mail, and you didn't fail me. There were six letters, five of them from my darling. The other was from the office. The letters, all V-mail, were those of the 25th, 28th and 30th of January. There were also bundles of magazines from Dot and Eleanor Scott. I brought them all to my room, had a good hot bath and read them in comfort. This afternoon I saw the film “The Moon and Sixpence” and now I'm back in the office to keep a Saturday night date with you. The radio is playing “Melancholy Baby” and “Lover Come Back to Me,” both of which are very appropriate at this time.

Billee, the news I have been waiting to hear from Dot and Al hasn't arrived yet so you were the first to break it. Dot has probably sent the news by airmail which will keep me waiting for awhile yet. I



couldn't be any happier unless it was happening to me. I'd give anything to be there for it. But then, I wanted to be there for the Daly's big event, for Eleanor's wedding, and I'd like to be there when my niece or nephew arrives, and I want to be home with you... but I can't.

I believe you are getting more mail from the folks than I am. I haven't heard from home in weeks. Still, I presume it's because they are using airmail, too.

You mentioned getting my letter of Jan. 9 without mentioning previous ones so I guess they didn't arrive yet.

The party you had for the fellows entering service sounded like fun. But listen, when you start a series of toasts, you make sure I'm around. Still, you can tell George's wife it's a date. We will get together for a real celebration in New York some time. In fact, you can invite them to the wedding now. Or, if they want to wait, our guest room will always be open for them.

About your new hair-do... I insist on a picture right away quick so I can see what you look like. I received my pictures today. That is, the portrait pictures, and without waiting to get your selection I'm sending the one I think you'll like best. Too, I have enlarged snapshots to send for the album. The baby picture, of Miss Janet Daly, taken in my room with a simple Brownie camera was the result of a 30-second time exposure with nothing but an overhead light.

Your mom deserves a world of credit for her initiative and I know you're proud of her.

I'll be back tomorrow with a Valentine's Day greeting.

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

*February 14, 1943—Massillon*

My dearest,

I'm so glad I'm your Valentine. This is the day and how well I know it, with your dozen dark red roses at my elbow. Every time I look that way I have to stop. They were waiting for me last night when I returned from the hospital. Bless you, my dear, for your thoughtfulness and here's a special kiss going your way. I think I'll add a hug, too, since you deserve it. It was such a surprise and you know how well I like surprises because I didn't expect any more after receiving your V-Valentine, but I'm awfully glad you remembered. Oh, yes... I love you, too, an awful lot and I can't understand why (sarcasm) the last line, not the three words.

Just wrote a letter to El on the typewriter so decided to write yours the same way. I'll be getting a letter from you... "please write me a letter once in awhile..." After receiving my "special letter" typed, it doesn't matter now if you have to carve them out on a piece of board or something... type all you want. That will put me on better terms with friend Censor.

I've been pasting all evening in our scrapbook and progressed as far as your furlough in London. I really didn't realize that I had so much. I have almost filled all the pages that I have. Ours will have to have an extension built on it or else we'll have to put it in volumes I've been enjoying reading the

letters over again. Some things I had forgotten. They are all so priceless to me, I hate to think of what I'd do if anything happened to them.

I can see how your letters have changed from the time you first started writing. I don't know how to say it exactly, but now they are a little more settled, almost as if we had been married awhile. Don't take me wrong. They aren't those "let's take things for granted" letters. If they were, you'd hear from me in double-quick time. But there is something deeper and more precious about them. I can't exactly put my finger on the change. I think it started with your move to London. Perhaps it's living an almost civilian life again. This is making less sense with each line... I'd better get off this subject.

The weather... that's always acceptable, and believe me, we're having it. A blizzard and it's sooo cold out, the windows are all froze up... that very dry cold. I walked to Mass this morning, not expecting it to be so darn cold, and it is about a mile. When I got there finally, I felt like an icicle must feel when it's thawing out.

Mom and I played nursemaid to the grandchildren again today. I gave Sherry Ann the message in your letter. She was delighted and intends writing one all by herself. She is very smart and remembers everything. You'd love her... great big brown eyes and does she use them. Johnny is getting so big... six months old now. He gets so now he holds up his arms for you to pick him up, especially me because he knows I can't resist him. He's definitely all boy. I hope I have, or rather we have, one as nice as he is. He's such a good baby. He never fusses much at all except if dinner time comes around a little late. He is just starting on a little solid food. We gave him a crust of bread with butter on tonight and you'd have died to see him try and find his mouth with it. He's also discovered that his thumb is awfully good to suck and he lets everyone else know it, too... what a racket.

The first nice Sunday we have I'll take some pictures of the family and send them to you. That will be one way of meeting them at present.

Charles, I have a plan. I don't want to do anything about it until I hear from you so answer this V-mail when you get this letter. I'm going to write to Father John, asking his advice also. Please, don't tell me to use my own judgment. Here goes... the facts.

For some time I have been dissatisfied with my job and there doesn't seem to be much that I can do about it. In a way, I have been frozen... that is, to go to another war plant in the vicinity, and the non-defense plants don't pay enough salary, so consequently I am stuck. I feel, with my qualifications, that I could be doing so much more good elsewhere, doing the kind of work that I know how to do. I have had it in the back of my mind to go to New York for some time. Then, the trip to Jersey City and the circumstances and all has made up my mind. I don't think I'd have any trouble finding what I want there and from what Father John says, the salaries are much better. I have noticed that from the New York Times that I get occasionally.

There is another angle. Mom has decided to stay here for the duration. We have written back to the company holding our mortgage to see if they won't be able to rent it to some private family who would want to sublet the apartment and cottage. I'm waiting to hear about that. As you know, Mom and I have been very close for a long time, ever since our family broke up about eight years ago. I

have been the only one who stuck by her, really. Of course, my older sister was already married and had her family. This closeness has been more than mother and daughter. We've worked together and shared so many hours of happiness and disappointments, along with all the sorrow and heartache that the kind of business we had can bring, besides the growing up of my younger sister and brother without a father around. This is all leading up to something, of course. I haven't been able to help but think of the time when you will come back and the break will have to be made. I couldn't bring myself to think of it in Asheville and leaving her alone there. That was one of the reasons I didn't go back to New York before you left. Something made me stand by and it's a good thing that I did, with her illness and all that occurred so soon after you left.

Now seems to be the first opportunity that I have had to leave her and I think in a way it would be the fair thing to do, now that she is here with the rest of the family and her sister. It will be so much easier on both of us, me knowing that there will be someone around who cares if she does get ill, and her having them around to ease the break. It's going to be hard because she depends on me for so many things and, of course, I do too. It works both ways.

The other angle is that something tells me that it won't be so terribly long before you'll be home. I don't have any wild visions of this year or anything like that. I'm trying not to be too optimistic about it, but now, since your mom won't be waiting for you in Jersey City when the time comes for you to come home, I want to be there. Need I say more? You know and understand how I feel about that. Another angle is that it may be necessary for me to work for awhile for us to get started when you come back, and I will want to. I won't deem it a necessity at all because we'd be working together and for one aim. It won't be easy to get a job there after this is over. This way I could get settled in a position of some kind.

There have been so many questions come to mind. One of the biggest: "Will I be shirking the responsibility of Mom?" I hope that it doesn't sound like that but it is so hard to know what to do and what not to do. She has talked of nothing else since we've been here, and she realizes from working with me that it is not the work I'm qualified for and capable of doing, but my joining one of the auxiliaries, preferably the SPARs. In fact, I have an application... but I gave up that idea long ago. I think I've given you all the facts. Now all I have to do is await the verdict. Help me to decide, please.

I know that this is probably the weekend that our news arrived, and I've been with you almost constantly. They gave me a job at the hospital that didn't require any concentration and all I could think of was how and when and who was around when you received it... and then last night, I worked on our scrapbook. This morning, my Mass and communion was for your comfort. It still all seems to unbelievable.

I'm almost asleep, my dear. It is very late and I'm getting cold. Even the afghan doesn't help now. I love you so much. My prayers and thoughts are always with you. Goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

There isn't anything I like better than dark red roses.

February 15, 1943—Massillon

Evening darling,

Just got in from work a little while ago and had some hot chocolate and a piece of cake with Mom. She stayed home today with her cold, but she feels better now and will be back on the job tomorrow. This will probably be written in spurts because I'm eating a bowl of chicken soup on the side. Yes, I'm still hungry. Isn't that something, to be eating at 1:00 a.m.? I think I have a tape worm or something. All I do is eat and the more I eat the less weight I seem to gain.

I wrote a long letter last night but sent it via airmail. In it I told you of the blizzard we have been having. Went down to five below and believe me that's cold. I walked to Mass yesterday morning, not realizing it was that cold. I felt like an icicle when I finally arrived... a distance of a little over a mile. Soup's all gone now so I won't have to stop and I feel lots better.



*The Stars and Stripes office, as it appeared in Life Magazine. Unfortunately, Charles is not in the picture. London, 1943.*

One of the fellows told me tonight that the *Stars and Stripes* staff is in the new Life magazine. The one week that I wouldn't buy it, of course. I tried to buy one in the only place that was open on the way home but they were all sold out. I'll see what luck I have tomorrow. I wonder if your picture is there. Even if it isn't, that will be great for our scrapbook.

Your roses are still so lovely. I have them in my room so that the last thing before I turn

out the light I see them and the first think in the morning. I have always wanted to get a dozen real dark red roses. You do the nicest things. As I said in my letter, I'm glad I'm your Valentine. Too, I love to be surprised and that was such a lovely surprise.

I meant to say in one of the other letters after receiving our hundred dollars... that's quite a bit to save. Do you have enough to go on? If you should need any of it, just cable for some and I'll send it. I don't know whether I could do that or not, but I think I can. Seems like on the back of one of the

regular cablegram blanks I've seen the regulations. I'm trying to manage a Christmas Club and ten percent for bonds, but it doesn't seem like very much to save... but it's the best I can do now.

Received two letters from Warren today. He's so enthused over his gunnery training. He always did have a yen for guns. His training will take quite a long time. Mom is a little upset over the fact that he will have to learn to fly but she'll have to get used to the idea. I'm very envious of him, because I'd love that, too. From the way he writes, his training will extend a way over six months. I wonder what six months from now will bring. Just have to wait and see.

Everyone else is fine here with the exception of Mom's cold, but we're taking care of that. Little Billy is sitting up in bed feeding himself, for which we're very grateful. He will be home in another two months. That will be a happy day.

No more space, darling. I love you. My prayers are with you more than ever now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 16, 1943—Massillon*

Hello darling,

I know, I can almost hear you say, if you could see the time, "You should be in bed, sweetheart." It's five minutes after one. I've just tucked Mom and my aunt in for the night. With a bottle of beer and cheese and crackers, you must think me a sot by now with all the beer I've been drinking. But, it's been my only salvation working on the night shift. Just so it doesn't make me fat, I'll be all right.

Our cold weather still continues. The snow is still so dry, just like powder.

I sent you a letter via V-mail again last night, so here goes one this way. Let me know how much longer it takes these to arrive. Also got a letter off to Dottie and Al, and one to my brother. It's the first chance I had to write since my return. Charles, they were so wonderful to me, just as if I'd always known them. I think they're a swell gang and I'm looking forward so to knowing them better. I've never known people like them. You're a lucky guy, but then, they're kind of lucky, too. I'm not prejudiced or anything.

One of the fellows said to me last night—I was in the little storeroom we have, filing— "Who do you go with in Massillon?" I said, "No one." "You aren't married, are you?" he says. I answered, "No, I'm engaged." "Even though you're engaged, you could go out, couldn't you?" I said, "No. I'm not interested." He says, "That's funny. Aren't many like you." Incidentally, he's married, as most of them down there are. Like one of the younger fellows says (he's still in high school and works seven hours on our shift), "A bunch of wolves that got married," but we manage to keep them in their place. They aren't a bad lot, just aren't used to having so many girls around to work with.

I dreamed about you last night for some reason. Couldn't be that you were the last one I thought of before closing my eyes... Seems we were in New York. You were in uniform and we were riding in one of those hacks in Central Park and we went to some apartment. I couldn't tell whether it was

mine or not. I don't very often dream of you, but they all have been pleasant except that one last summer. Funny, but I like those kind of dreams. I'm always sorry when I wake up.

Do you remember me telling you about Marguerite's sister's husband who was a captain in the engineers on Corregidor? They just received word recently after months of not a bit of news that he is a Japanese prisoner. They don't know where, but he was on Cebu when it fell. The word came via the Red Cross in the form of a letter from him. When I hear things like this, I'm grateful that we're so fortunate you aren't somewhere like that.

This is definitely not a newsy letter, but be patient with me. I've never been closer than these past two weeks. I have to write. My darling, I love you so much and I feel so helpless right now. I'm trying in my small way to be of some use.

I'll say goodnight, my dear. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you, but for now...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 17, 1943—London*

Evening sweetheart,

It has been four days since Father John's letter and yours of Feb. 2 arrived simultaneously, telling me the news of Mother's passing.

I wanted to write immediately but, truthfully, I wasn't up to it. In fact, I haven't been "up" to much since Sunday. Ironically enough, the news came on Valentine's day, on which I never failed to bring home with me flowers or something for Mom.

However, I'm pretty well straightened out now and I'm rather ashamed to admit I felt too sorry for myself during the past few days. It was a terrible shock but it took a while for me to realize how foolish it would be to mull over it.

I'm waiting to hear everything that transpired from the time Father John wrote. With him there to help Dad with everything, I'm sure they went through it all right. He said El and Bette were bearing up well. But I'm worried about Dad. He and Mother were constant companions, seldom going anywhere or doing anything without each other. It is going to be a trial for him.

Your letter was so well done, Billee. If I needed comfort, that gave me more than I could hope for. I hope the journey to J.C. wasn't too much of an inconvenience for you, although I realize that funerals are anything but pleasant experiences.

A letter from Eddie today was written the day before Mother passed away so I can't tell how he took it. He was a favorite of hers so I can expect him to take it rather badly. Father John said he cabled him but I'm not too hopeful he was able to get across the country in time, even if he were granted a leave of absence.

I finally got my pictures yesterday and mailed them out, one to you, one to Dad and one to Al and Dot. The fellows here said they were good but I'll leave that up to you. I sent you the one I thought was best but you'll have to see the others to make the comparison.

I got off letters to Dad, El, Bette and Eddie yesterday and today, and I'll write to Father John, but I don't believe I'll attempt to write to the others for a while yet, possibly next week when I'm not sounding so low.

That's all for now, sweetheart. I'll be back in a couple of days. Love to Mother and the rest.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

*February 17, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My dearest,

Another anniversary gone by. I should have changed the date on this because it is the eighteenth already. That's right, just came in from work. I know that this anniversary won't be remembered as the other are, but I understand and love you so much.

Your letter written Jan. 23 came this morning. I liked our "date" so much... the fireplace and all, and especially the 10-minute kiss. We're going to break all records. That's what I don't like about these V-letters... their brevity... but that's such a little thing now. I'm so grateful you're receiving the letters I'm writing. You seem to be getting all of them.

I got a copy of the Life Magazine that you are all written up in, but of course, your picture isn't in there unless you are in the shadows, but at least I have an idea of where you work. I got a thrill out of seeing the office and the fellows you work with. I'm going to make a separate scrapbook for the *Stars and Stripes*, that is from the time you went to London permanently (as permanent as anything is nowadays), but I think that will be a better idea. How soon do you get to be a sergeant? All those fellows seem to be sergeants. Let's see.. I met Bud Hutton and Bob Moora and Sgt. Hodenfield and one private, Joe McBride and the art editor, Benny Price. You could be in one of the pictures, but it's a little shadowed and the one you might be in is the corner using the telephone. All the Lifes were sold out so one of the fellows brought me his to keep. Wasn't that nice of him? I just had to have it.

I call my little G.I. boyfriend "My Darling," after you... especially now since the assignment came especially from you. He's such a good model of you that I had to name him that... cutest little turned-up nose and the nicest grin. He has sort of a cocky look about him... very Irish. He has a special place on my dresser. Sherry Ann was so tickled with him when I opened the box Christmas morning, but she's very good about him... just looks. She seems to know that he's special and not to be played with.

Eleanor (the girl I work with) and I had a good time comparing notes with the girl in the Life Magazine story, "So Your Husband's Gone to War." We decided we must be doing the same things all the girls are.

Please take good care of yourself. When you said that school that was bombed was near the office, I had to shudder. Then I thought of all those little kids. That's when I get so mad, but it seems like we can't do much about it. The news from Africa isn't so good now, but I guess we have to expect some reverses before we get started down there.

My uncle just came in from Buffalo and they are busy talking in the kitchen, so if this doesn't make much sense, that's the reason. Usually I have the downstairs to myself this time of the morning.

The space is running out as usual, just when I get a good start. I'm afraid you're in for a lot of spoiling. Hope you don't mind. I'm afraid you'll have your own way about every little thing. You can say "jump," and I'll jump, loving being ordered around by you. Goodnight, my dearest. As always, my prayers and thoughts are with you.

All my love and kisses, Billee

*February 20, 1943—California*

Dear Ray,

I finally got back to camp and no more than I get back than we had to go down to the coast and be on guard for twenty-four hours. We slept down there and it rained all the time. Tonight it stopped and the moon came out. The rainy season should just about be over by now.

It sure was a tiresome trip back. It took me from Sunday to Thursday. I met a fellow from Johnstown, Penn., who was going back to his air base, which is in Ogden, Utah. He is a mechanic and had a twenty-day furlough. He was a very interesting fellow. He'd been in the Army for three years, but has only been in the Air Corps about a year.

I guess you will probably know by now that I didn't leave Penn Station that afternoon when I left you. When I got there, I asked for a ticket for Los Angeles, and he told me it cost sixty-nine dollars. I told him that I had already payed seventy-four dollars for a round-trip ticket [for his furlough the previous November]. He told me that I was right... that it did cost that much for a round trip. I still can't figure that one yet.

It's getting late and I have a few more letters to write, so take care of yourself and drop a line or two when you get a chance, and may God bless you.

Eddie

PS: We are leaving to go to the place I told you about when I was home [Pine Camp, Tennessee]. They say in a month or so but when we leave I will give you my new address.

*February 20, 1943—London*

Hello sweetheart,

A Saturday night together, at the end of my holiday. I felt very lazy today and spent it just that way... lazily. Lots of time to think and miss you as always, and loving you so much, as always.

I received a batch of airmail yesterday, yours of Jan. 8 among it. Another V-mail from Father John, too, telling me of the funeral, etc. He said he was glad to get the chance to know you better and appreciate his sister-in-law to be more. How Eddie was able to fly in from the coast, how nice everybody was, etc., was mentioned. I could not think of anything Mother would have wanted more than to have him say her Mass with Father Pathe and Father Wotycha, two of her “boys,” assisting him. And with the rest of them on the altar.



*Farewell party at The Jersey Journal. L-r: Mel Shapiro, Charles, unknown, Ray Roche. October, 1941.*

His letters and yours of February 2 were the only ones I've received so far concerning Mother's passing away.

Among yesterday's mail was a letter from Ray Roche asking me to forward him your address so that he could mail you a picture taken at the “farewell” party the office had for me when I left. It was a pretty bad one, as I remember it, but since I'm not exactly photogenic and can't select special ones for you, I sent him the address today.

Your letter of Jan. 8 made me smile since you took it for granted I had moved. I was anxious to go with those who went, but it wasn't to be. Perhaps it will be my turn to go into a different theater.

Just now I'm looking ahead to next week when I visit the Rangers for awhile. As you know, they are the American commandos. Yesterday I went out to an airfield and had an opportunity to talk with some of the boys who went over to St. Nazaire the other day. On Monday I'll be going out to see the GI boxers I covered all last week. The tournament ends Wednesday but I'll only be able to stay for the semi-finals before getting back for the trip to the Rangers.

In your letter you said, after seeing pictures of Ruth Totten, you wonder how you rated. You're making it very difficult for me to believe you have conquered that complex. If I don't see an improvement, I'll be forced to tell you in every other line that you stand head and shoulders above the field, if there were a field, but there isn't.

About Bob Paulus, the news isn't good. We corresponded while we were in the British Isles, but when my old outfit went to the place where you suspected I was, the letters stopped. I haven't heard from any of them since. Another fellow, stationed here now, has been writing to them but can't get answers. We assume mail is being delayed. Will you send me Bob's home address? I haven't got it and I'd like to write to his mother.

Love to Mother and the rest.

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

*February 21, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My darling,

Another brief visit... mind if I come in for awhile? That's good. Light the gas in your fireplace (that is the kind you have, yes?) because I'm a little bit cold. I missed our regular date last night due to the fact that I had another, with Mom and Mrs. Blumenauer. They surprised me... met me after work last night and went to a super-colossal show, "The Star-Spangled Rhythm," and it was good. You must see it when it reaches London. I think every star in Hollywood was in it and it's really swell entertainment. In fact, it was just what I needed.

I went home with Jess Blumenauer last night because she was afraid to walk from the bus stop, since it was the wee hours of the morning. Slept until the last minute to arrive at Mass on time. The church is on the next corner from their house. It isn't the one I go to regularly, just when I go down there because it is so convenient. Of course, we talked almost all night, about what I'll never know... a little of everything. Just like women, eh?

My brother-in-law came and took me home early so I could play nursemaid again, but I didn't mind. Little Johnny said "Mama" today for the first time. You should have seen the excitement. We have a little seat now that fits over a chair and he sits up in that just as pretty as you please, and loves it.

I saw the first sign of spring today... some little fellows making an attempt to fly a kite down in the field. They still do it. Made me feel good. The weather has been very balmy yesterday and today, quite a change from our below zero weather and a welcome one at that.

Your letter of January 30 arrived yesterday, together with the clipping concerning the success of the raid over Germany. Was I thrilled to see the headlines and then your byline right below it. I've been showing it off to all the family. They are getting to be as proud as I am. The story was swell. I can just imagine how you felt going alone with the other correspondents and seeing the Forts come in. Did you by any chance get to talk to the leader from Asheville? I remember seeing his name in the paper and I'm sure his wife had an account at the store. I'm so thankful that you are having this wonderful opportunity. Did I tell you your bosses are afraid you won't come back there to the *Jersey Journal*, that they know you will have offers from New York papers? Father John probably told you all about it after he talked to Ray Roche.

Warren called us from Tyndall Field today. He was a little homesick, I'm thinking. It was good to hear his voice. He will be there until some time in March. He is getting along fine and passing all his tests. He is so enthused about it and that means a whole lot, to be doing something that you like. You should know.

The space is running out once more. I'm writing you a longer one when I finish this and sending it via airmail (I hope). Yours didn't make such bad time. It was postmarked February 4 and arrived on the 20th... 16 days.

As always, my darling, and more than ever, my thoughts and prayers are with you. My Mass this morning was offered for our speedy reunion.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 21, 1943—Massillon*

Evening darling,

How does it feel to be written to twice in one night? That's what's happening. I just finished dashing off a V-letter, so that it would get there quicker.

Your very welcome letter of January 30 came yesterday. The mail is coming more regularly now since I received those seven at one time. We were doing the same things on Jan. 30. By now you probably have my letter too, written on that date. I'm so glad I trembled and looked at you the way I did. Just think, maybe this wouldn't have happened. We can both be grateful for that night, yes? At the time, I had no idea what was going on in that mind of yours, but I knew what was going on in mine... I was listening to my heart and telling my mind to go to the devil. See what kind of a gal I am? But I'm glad my heart ran away with me. The setting was perfect. Do you ever remember seeing so many stars, or was I just dazzled? There couldn't be any artist that could paint that picture, and there aren't words to describe it. No picture could possibly have or show the feeling contained in that special memory of ours.

I was wondering about the fellows the other day and wondering how many of them were in Africa. I was under the impression that Johnny Joyce went over with you. Was he sent back here to the States? I don't remember you mentioning it. Ben is such a nice fellow, and I know Jack must be, but then I didn't meet him. I remember Jimmy Kirk and his "cold" that helped keep you awake and prompted the addition of the "spirits" to our party that first night. I must write to Theda. I haven't heard from her in a long time. When all this is over, one of these days, we'll have to have a reunion and fill in all the empty gaps.

The athletic program you mentioned sounds like something stupendous, with all those men taking part. Now you go from movie stars to commanding generals. You do get around, don't you? This is right up your alley and probably much more interesting than the glamour gals. Your trip to the bomber base was exciting, I know. I wish I could have "tagged along." Would I have been in the way? Very likely. As I said in my V-letter, the headlines and your byline written below it, complete with the

picture and all on the front page, gave me such a thrill and a feeling of pride. I'm so happy for you because I know what all this means to you and your future.

I did some more pasting in our scrapbook but I'm still on our furlough in London. I decided that I'd better get some little photograph tabs to put those pictures in so they can be removed easily. I wonder how soon it will be before I can paste the last bit of material in and then present it to you?

My mom isn't feeling very optimistic much... she picked out a wedding dress for me in the rotogravure section of the Sunday paper.

Can you turn the gas up a little higher or move in a little closer? That's right... I'm getting cold. It could be due to the fact that I've got my shoes off. My worst habit is taking my shoes off... seems like I can concentrate better. They are practically wrapped around the chair. Everyone has gone to bed and I have the place to myself, with your latest letter spread out, all four sheets to the left of me and my Sunday wash all spread out and ironed. That's what I did tonight while the family was around I didn't want to share you with anyone else. Selfish little somebody, aren't I, but you'll get used to it.

Sister Marie from the hospital asked me to send the enclosed. I thought it was sweet of her to think of you. I didn't have an opportunity to call her before I left to go to Jersey City so when I went the following Saturday, I explained my absence. She has been so lovely to me that I look forward to my Saturdays over there even though I do work harder than I do all week long. You probably already have a Sacred Heart Badge, but she asked me to send this one. She gave me one, too. I had one that Father John sent me when I was received but when I had pleurisy this winter and was taped with adhesive all over, it got sticky so I had to burn it. The prayers are lovely. I've been wondering if you've been remembering them the past few weeks because I've thought of them so much and of what you must be going through alone except for our thoughts and prayers to comfort you. I've prayed so for the Blessed Mother to comfort you and to be with you when you received the message. I hope my prayers were answered.

I must be on my way. I have a few more letters to write; one to Father John. I haven't written since I came home. And I have to send one down to Asheville to the office to ask them once more to send my figures so I can figure up the old income tax.

I'll say goodnight for now, dear, and I'll be back soon.

All my love and kisses, as always, your Billee

*February 24, 1943—London (V-letter)*

Hello sweetheart,

A last word before going on a trip that will prevent me from writing for a few days. There isn't much I have to say tonight but I did want to talk with you before going, inasmuch as I will have to postpone our Saturday night date this week.

Your airmail letter of Jan. 1 came yesterday, as well as the two page V-mail of February 8. The latter gave me all the details of the funeral I could hope to get. Father John passed them along also and between you answered a lot of questions that were in my mind. Since you kissed Mother for me, I feel satisfied. It could not have been me, but you made up for it. I was glad, too, that it gave you an opportunity to know everybody better because you'll be seeing quite a bit of them.

Too bad you didn't meet Ray and Mel. I know they were anxious to see you. A letter from Mel today told me that Ray was at the Mass. I know I shouldn't wise-crack about it, but I can't help thinking the church must have looked like a seminary or a monastery, with all the clergy in the sanctuary.

In mentioning some of those who were at the house, you said, "Ruth R. (I believe)." You met Ruth Rommel. You have her name confused with the other Ruth, I'm sure. I can't recall whether or not you met Ruth Totten.

Yesterday also brought a letter from El. the poor kid is worrying about me when all this time I'm worrying about her. I haven't heard from Eddie yet but I've written to him, as I mentioned in a previous letter.

Your letter of Jan. 1 was swell. In it you scolded me for sending pictures without enclosing even a "hello" and then you also wondered why you didn't have any mail for five weeks. You speculated, and then thought I had turned sophomore and was pouting because you mentioned a date. If you were near me when I read that, my tilted-nose darling, I would have taken you over my knee, so help me.

The last thing I would want you do is to go into seclusion. I'd be as jealous as hell if you were brightening up someone else's life on a date, but I'd never let you know.

I failed to mention in earlier letters that I received a beautiful note of sympathy from the family with whom I spent my Christmas. I'm sending it to Dad, asking him to pass it on to you. I'm also sending more pictures tonight (with a "hello.") A couple of them are going to Ray Roche and he in turn will pass those on to you.

Love to Mother and all.

All my love, Charles

*February 25, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

My darling,

Do you feel neglected? If you don't, you should because I haven't written a line since last Sunday, but so many things have happened and I've had to write so many letters that you just got neglected. Awful, but I'll make it up to you. Am I forgiven? Yes? I feel much better now.

Before I go any further, I love you so much. Haven't said that to you since Sunday. Oh, I do just before I close my eyes, in the hope that you might hear it.

I think that before long I will be in New York or Matawan. I had a long distance call and special delivery from Marguerite. There is a vacancy in her bank as of the fifteenth of March and I am

being considered for the position. A wonderful opportunity and right up my alley... savings department teller beginning at \$110 a month and I'm having a week's vacation thrown in. I really feel if I am accepted that I shouldn't let the opportunity slip by. Mother is reconciled to the fact that what I am doing is right. I've prayed so for guidance to do the right thing because I don't always seem to be able to depend on my judgment, except where you are concerned. I'd give anything if I had you to talk to but then I wouldn't be worrying about this, would I, if you were here. I'm waiting to hear from Father John. I bothered him about it since I couldn't get an answer from you right away. Marguerite is making arrangements for me to stay with her, of course, on the same basis she stayed with us.

I mailed a letter to you from Mom today, with a little note on the bottom from me. She's such a swell person and she does think so much of you. She was so pleased about the card from all the fellows, especially now that she has seen their pictures in the magazine. I had a letter from my brother today and he is writing to you, too. He has about seventeen more days at Tyndall Field and then to radio or armor school. He is getting along fine and I don't think, with the grades he has been getting, that he will wash out. He was letting his mind run away from him in one of his letters and I had to give him a little lecture. He was concerned about learning and studying so much just to learn to kill, but I think I straightened him out. He's a good fellow even if he is my brother. He has some funny ideas. Of course, there is some logic to them but they are a little far-fetched. He must take after me for imagination.

We've been having some Asheville weather recently, thank goodness. I had a letter from there recently telling me the jonquils and forsythia has been blooming since the latter part of January... imagine... and they have been having days with the temperature hovering around 84 degrees.

The darn space is running out. Oh, by the way, the wife of Lt. Jack Gompf, one of those flyers interned in Lisbon, works in the adjoining office and she wondered if it would be possible to find out anything more about him or the whereabouts of the fellows. She hasn't read or seen any more about them. I told her I'd ask. She's a girl I went to Junior High School with. [In late 1942, a U.S. Army Air Corps fighter squadron on its way from England to North Africa were forced to land at Lisbon in Portugal (neutral during the war) due to bad weather. The pilots and crew were held in Lisbon for six months before being released, but Portugal retained the planes and reassigned them to their own air force.]

That seems to be all... just room enough to say I love you again.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

*February 27, 1943—London (V-letter)*

Hello sweetheart,

I've been able to keep our Saturday date after all. When I left the other day for Scotland, I didn't expect to be back so soon but the job was completed quicker than I figured.

First, let me acknowledge another batch of your letters (bless your heart) and hand over to you all the love I have. Page 3 of the Feb. 8 V-mail, as well as those of Feb. 12 and 15 were waiting for me when I returned today. A Jan. 25 airmail letter from Dottie told me about the visit from Sir Stork at last. However, when I write to her, I'll pretend it was the first news I had of it. She would be disappointed if she knew I heard of it otherwise. She also mentioned the fact that you and her dad were the only others to know. Still, I suspect that the Bridge Club girls know it by now. You can't ever keep much from them for very long.

I was glad to hear that you had a chance to visit Dot and Al and meet some of the others. Ruth Totten is holding out on me about that sailor from Louisiana. She hadn't told us about him, although Ruth Rommel passed along word that a "guy in uniform was taking up her time."

Your letter of the 12th also gave me Warren's address and when I finish this I'm going to say "hello" to him for the first time. About the packages... There isn't anything I need just now and I doubt if I will in the near future so you can forget about it for the time being.

There was a notice issued today that makes me apply for the purchase of war bonds before March 31. I'll renew my purchase, hoping that they all catch up with us some time. I've been told that as long as the record of purchase is on my service record, everything will be all right. However, unless I receive word from you soon that they are starting to be delivered, I'll request a further investigation.

If you are putting letters in our scrapbook, we'll have to get several volumes to hold them, won't we? Still, it sounds swell and you fix it up to suit your taste. I know it will suit mine. but, what are we going to do with the letters I have? I think I have an idea what I can do with them, so you leave that to me.

If you were able to get Life, I hope you weren't disappointed. I was out of town when Dave Scherman, the Life photographer, took them. I haven't seen a copy myself yet.

The trip, from which I just returned, brought me over to Scotland to watch our Rangers in training. they are the U.S. equivalent of the British commandos. In fact, both the Rangers and commandos are trained in the same camp and by hard-bitten British instructors. I'll go on record as saying the Rangers come out of that camp as the toughest fighting men in the Army and possibly in any branch of American service. In my story, I'm going to try and describe what a rigorous training course they go through. I only hope I can paint the true picture. They are a swell group of fellows, too. I'll be back in a day or so. Love to Mother and all.

All my love and kisses, f&a, Charles.

*February 28, 1943—Massillon (V-letter)*

Evening, darling,

I missed our regular date again last night. Your gallivanting girlfriend, again. Eleanor [whom Billee worked with, not Charles' sister] and I took in a movie and stopped on the way home for something to eat and a beer. We got to talking and it was after one before I got home. We saw a marvelous

picture, one of those “must sees,” “Random Harvest” with Ronald Coleman and Greer Garson. I think you’d like it.

Today we went to see my aunt in Elyria and her family: I went with Lee, my sister, and her husband and family. We haven’t seen my aunt in several months. She is the one whose son was reported killed in the Solomons, but from the little bit of information they have received and the way it is all confused, I still think there is some mistake. They haven’t received any of his identification tags or any of his personal belongings.

Here is some news. I don’t know whether you are going to like it or not, but I have a job in the Perth Amboy National Bank as savings teller. I received the telegram yesterday telling me the job was mine on my terms. There was an unexpected vacancy in the bank where Marguerite works and she recommended me. I believe I told you in my last V-letter. I am going to leave at the end of the week and I’ll send you a telegram with the new address. So far as I know, I will stay with Marguerite for the present time. Have you ever felt as if you were being led? That’s the way I have felt ever since Marguerite called me. I feel sure that what I am doing is right. I want to give it a try anyhow. Maybe a little later I can induce Mom to come and stay, too. She could get work there just as well.

I had a long letter from Father John and he thought my decision was all right. He didn’t know at the time that I had the job, but then I didn’t either. He said Pop had received a cablegram from you. He said too that Tom’s little brother was staying with them and what a good time they were having with him. Pop was enjoying him so much. He suggested my staying with them, but I don’t believe I had better. I know I would be welcome, but I would rather be on my own. I think you know how I feel, and understand. He mentioned that Eddie was being transferred to Tennessee.

I forgot to tell you how much I love you. Coming home, I held Johnny all the way. Of course, I had to dream a little. He is such an adorable baby and so good. They are going to take some pictures and I’ll send you some. We have to wait until the weather gets a little better. Little Billy is so much improved they almost have to tie him in bed to keep him from being so active. Isn’t that marvelous?

The space is running out. Wish I didn’t have to go... I do love being with you, even if it is only this way. ‘Night, darling. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you.

Here’s a special kiss for you, for neglecting you this week.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

